Rochester's Subway Development

August 14, 1924

One hundred years ago, on October 27th, the people of the City of Rochester celebrated in an elaborate fashion the opening of the Erie Canal. On that date the first boat from Buffalo arrived at Rochester and crossed the Genesee River via the Aqueduct on its way to New York. The occasion was a notable one for the young city and marked the beginning of an era of growth and prosperity for our people. A century later we find ourselves celebrating at the same point an event of no less importance to the city. We are dedicating anew the old Canal and the old Aqueduct to a continuance of their function as an instrument of transportation and communication. The vision of our forefathers who planned the Erie Canal never pictured it beyond an inland waterway. We have now before us the realization of a utility of the Canal which transforms it from an open watercourse bearing slow-moving barges to a rapid transit subway tracked for electrically propelled trains and decked over for a portion of its length to provide for a crowded city a fine new street.

We are today for the first time making use of the completed portion of the subway as a public street. We are dedicating to public use a splendid avenue paralleling our Main Street for several blocks and forming a junction beyond the heavy traffic section. This street will provide a very considerable relief to the traffic problem, a relief which will be greatly augmented when the new street is extended eastward to Chestnut Street.

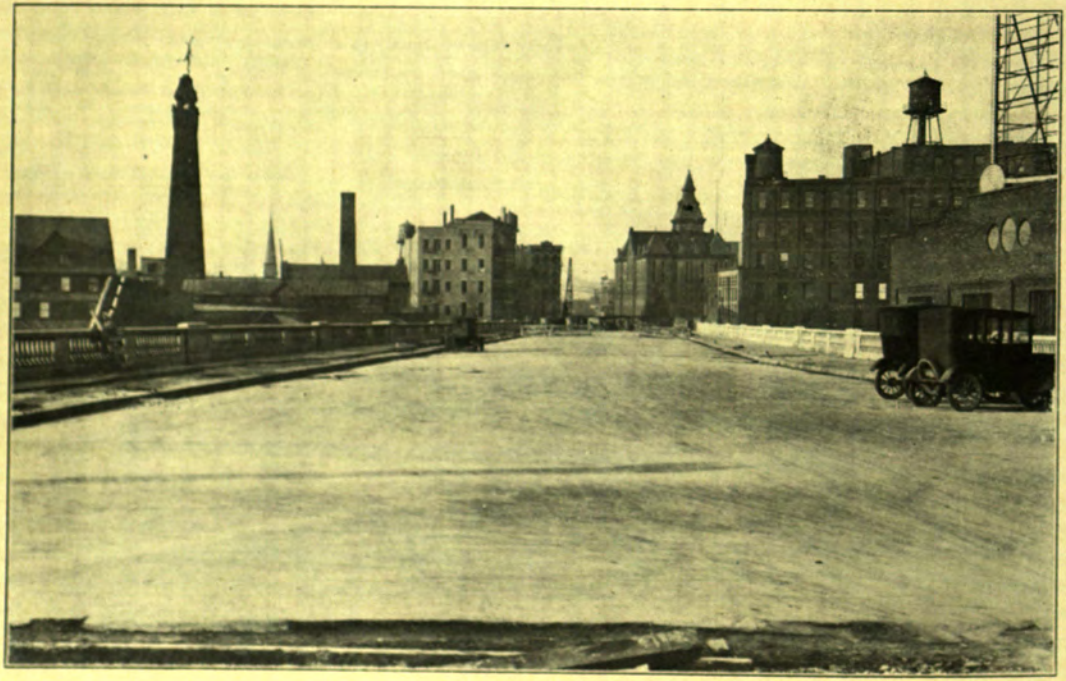
To the benefits accruing from street traffic over this new thoroughfare we must add the great benefit arising from the improvements in property utilization in the area adjacent to the new street and a consequent increase in property values.

While today we can travel over and enjoy the use of the completed street in its entirety we should also consider the subway itself and its meaning to the people of Rochester. We are on the way to become the possessors of a subway extending from the Western Widewaters eastward eight and one-half miles to a junction with the Rochester & Eastern Railway near Pittsford and traversing the central portion of the City. The community is rare indeed which has had the opportunity to secure without extreme difficulty and great expense the right of way and property required for such a project.

For convenience in handling the work has been divided into three parts which have been called Contracts I, II and III. Contract I comprising the central portion extending from Court Street westward to Oak Street—the decked over portion of which we are dedicating to public use today—was awarded to the contracting firm of Scott Brothers of Rome, N. Y., on April 11, 1922, for $1,183,780.00. The second section, Contract II, extends eastward from the old Aqueduct at South Avenue to the junction of the Rochester & Eastern Railway, near Pittsford, and is five miles long. This contract was awarded to the I. M. Ludington Sons of Rochester on May 16, 1923, for $1,654,-765.00.

Contract III, the portion from Oak Street to the Western Widewaters, is to be let at an early date. The benefits from the subway transportation system will not be felt until the three contracts are completed and as a consequence it is very desirable that this work be undertaken as soon as possible.

It is planned to have four tracks, two for passenger service and two for freight, from the Western Widewaters to Brighton, a distance of 6.5 miles. The remainder of the distance is to be double tracked and used jointly for freight and passenger service. It is hoped to bring all the interurban cars directly downtown over the subway tracks. Great advantages will be realized in the way of quick transit of urban and suburban population and in the way of service to our increasing number of industries. Every steam road, suburban electric road and surface car line in the City touches or crosses the subway, and every main artery of highway transportation entering the City crosses it.



From the Western Widewaters to Winton Road is seven miles. From the City Hall to Winton Road is three and one-half miles and the time required to travel it at present is from 30 to 40 minutes. When the subway is completed this time will be reduced to 13 minutes.

From the City Hall to the Western Widewaters is three and one-half miles. The present travel time is from 20 to 25 minutes which the subway will reduce to 11 minutes.

The distance from the City Hall to Pittsford is eight miles. Thirty minutes is the present time required. This will be reduced by the new line to 24 minutes.

The distance from the City Hall to Fairport is ten and one-half miles. The present time is 40 minutes. The new time will be 30 minutes.

It is estimated that there are within walking distance of the subway 80,000 persons constituting a tremendous potential traffic when the subway begins operation.

The elimination of congestion in our streets and railroad terminals is one of the greatest questions before Rochester today. Rochester has grown from a population of 155,000 in 1897 to upwards of 325,000 in 1924 and from an area of 10,850 acres in that year to 21,000 acres at the present time. Downtown streets are no wider or more numerous than they were then. This rapid growth has made necessary a constructive plan for dealing with the congestion problem as a whole, including traffic in the streets and in the terminals.

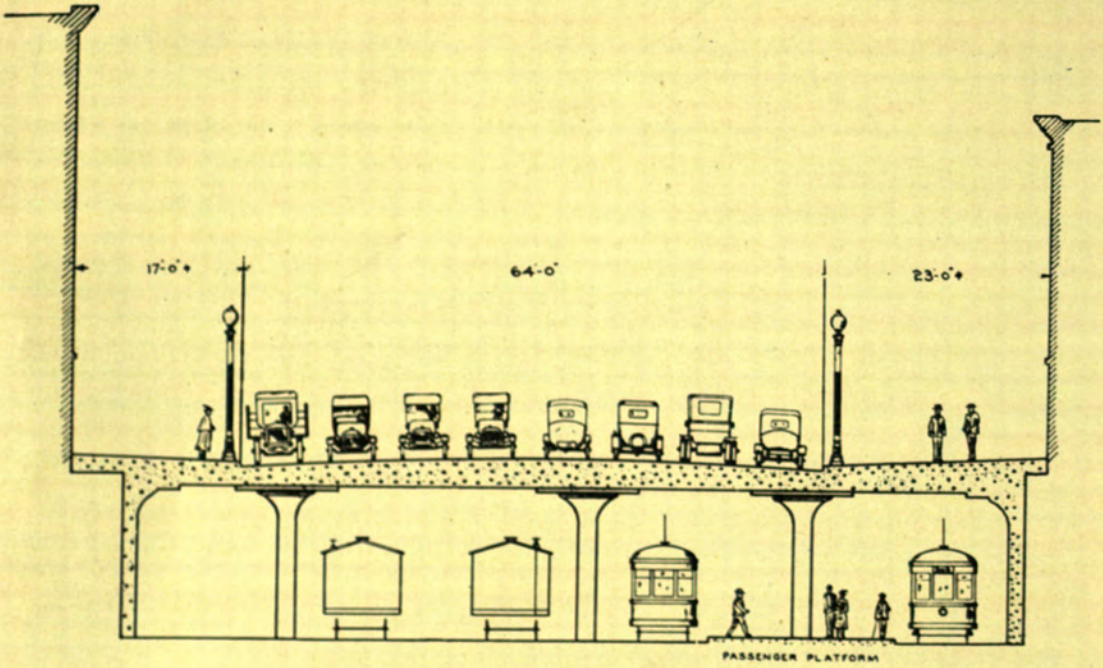
In addition to the passenger transportation benefits the industrial or freight transportation facilities are of tremendous value. Inter plant and inter railroad connections will be available and the car switching problem greatly simplified. The forty or fifty manufacturing concerns now located on the subway will be brought in touch with all the railroads and approximately 270 acres of industrial territory will be given adequate rail connections. An unlimited additional acreage is available beyond the Western Widewaters. The Barge Canal Harbor will be connected with the system and every railroad entering Rochester will then have access to the canal facilities.

Briefly summarized the subway will:

1. Relieve the streets from the operation of the heavy electric interurban cars.
2. Eliminate the trucking of freight through congested streets by making it possible to move cars directly to private sidings.
3. Provide freight facilities to and from various freight terminals.
4. Prevent discrimination against industries in one section and in favor of those in another section of the city.
5. Tend to relieve congestion at public sidings by increasing the number and use of private sidings.
6. Establish Rochester as an open railroad port where railroads serving the city can render a maximum transportation service to industries having sidings, while shippers having private sidings are afforded access to and from all railroads serving the city.

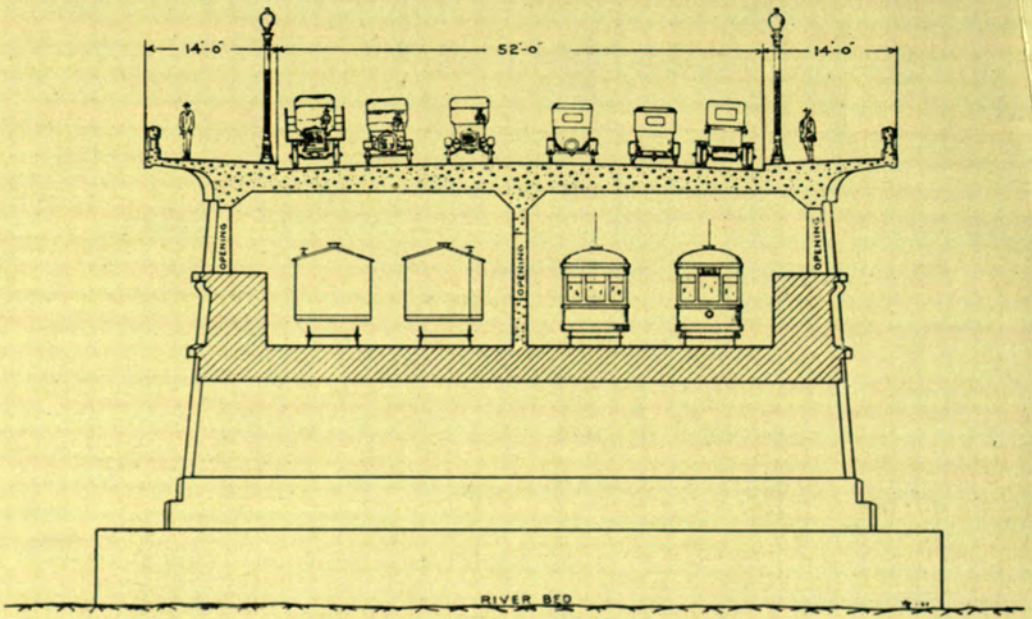
From every standpoint as the subway nears completion its importance in the development of both the industrial and residential growth of Rochester becomes more and more apparent. The wisdom of our city in improving the unique opportunity made possible by the state's abandonment of the old Erie Canal prism becomes increasingly evident as the great project approaches reality.

Our ancestors dug for us, and they builded better than they knew.



CROSS SECTION AT CITY HALL STATION

LOOKING WEST



CROSS SECTION AT AQUEDUCT

LOOKING WEST

SCALE

SOME SUBWAY STATISTICS

Distance, South Ave. to Oak St.....3,500 ft.
Width of Aqueduct bridge..... 80 ft.
Pavement width..... 52 ft.
Sidewalk width..... 14 ft.
Width of pavement bet. Exchange St. and Main St. except at Subway Sta. Entrances..... 60 ft.
Width of sidewalks bet. Exchange St. and Oak St. ..... 20 ft.

Four tracks in cover with siding for Erie R. R. operation between Exchange and Fitzhugh S. of Track No. 4 and a siding W. of Fitzhugh bet. Tracks Nos. 2 and 4 for layover storage.

Street Railway connections on ramps at Exchange St. and Oak St.

Waiting rooms with toilet facilities and platforms bet. Exchange St. and Fitzhugh, bet. W. Main and Oak. Entrance and exit stairways at Exchange, Fitzhugh, W. Main and Oak Sts.

City Hall Sta. platform.....21 ft. wide 250 ft. long
W. Main Sta. platform.....20 ft. wide 250 ft. long

CONNECTIONS WITH LOCAL ELECTRIC STREET LINES

Connection with Monroe Ave. line of New York State Railways.

Connection with South Ave. line, New York State Railways.

Connection with Exchange St. line, New York State Railways.

Connection with Main St. and Caledonia Ave, New York State Railways.

Connection with Dewey Ave. line, New York State Railways.

Proposed connection with future Driving Park Ave. extension and LaGrange St.

Future extension of passenger tracks under South Ave. and Clinton Ave. S., connecting Park Ave-line through James St. and Main St. lines through Elm St.

PROPOSED CONNECTIONS WITH STEAM LINES

Connection with Auburn Branch—N. Y. C.

Connection with Lehigh Valley R. R.

Future connection with Erie R. R. when Carrol and Fitzhugh Race is abandoned.

Connection with B. R. & P. R. R. completed.

Connection with Penna. R. R. through old Genesee Valley Canal under W. Main St. and B. R. & P. R. R.

Connection with N. Y. C. R. R. Also to freight house and yard for suburban freight.

(Possible)

Connection with N. Y. C.—Charlotte Branch.

Connection with B. R. & P.—Charlotte line.

PROPOSED CONNECTIONS WITH WAREHOUSES, WHARFS, ETC.

Connection with Barge Canal Terminal.

Connection with N. Y. C. R. R. Also to freight house and yard for suburban freight.

Proposed future extension to Barge Canal through abandoned Erie Canal.

PROPOSED CONNECTIONS WITH INTERURBAN ELECTRIC ROADS

Connection with R. & E. Suburban Ry. to Canandaigua and Geneva. Owned by New York State Railways.

Connection with R. & S. double track electric line—Rochester to Syracuse.

Connection with R., L. & B. R. R.