

## EVENTOS

### TRAFFEX '95

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TRAFFEX is one of Europe's major trade fairs and exhibitions for Traffic and Highway Engineers. This year's TRAFFEX '95 took place in April at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, United Kingdom. It was held concurrently with a conference organized by PTRC which focused on Traffic Management.

One of the key messages of the conference was that UTC (Urban Traffic Control) which has traditionally been seen as a means of reducing traffic delay, must now be put in a broader context and used as a tool for achieving wider transport and environmental policies.

Re-christened as UTMC (Urban Traffic Management and Control), today the control systems need to be used to address issues of public transport priority, improving conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing pollution levels, improving road-user safety, as well as tackling traffic congestion. With papers that dealt with the new approaches now being made in the United Kingdom to integrate land-use and transport policies into single "packages" for the purposes of obtaining Central Government funding for the transport sector, and a contribution from the Netherlands Government on what is being done to apply the concepts of UTMC at a national scale, the message was that the goals for the future for transport and traffic planners need to be expressed in terms of achieving "controlled and sustainable growth".

The opening paper was given by Sir Colin Buchanan - thirty years after the date of the publication of his famous "Traffic in Towns". It is sad to reflect that despite all the technological advances of the last thirty years in areas such as traffic control technology, information systems and transport and traffic modelling techniques, we still have not gone very far down the road in implementing the fundamental ideas and policy options that were so clearly set out in the Buchanan Report of 1965.

With over 250 exhibitors all under one roof, the TRAFFEX exhibition provided a unique opportunity to get up to date, all in one go, with what are the latest developments in such areas as traffic control technology, highway safety, the latest "Gizmos" for traffic data capture and a host of other innovations. It also provided an opportunity to spot trends and gave an interesting insight into what is happening at the practical level, rather than the theoretical level that we read about in the Transport and Traffic journals.

As a general impression, the exhibitors could be grouped into 3 major areas of activity:

- Traffic signs and signals
- Traffic control technology
- Parking systems

As far the first group was concerned, the impressive aspect of what was on display was not there were many new products or new technologies to be seen, but rather that, judging from the number of exhibitors present from all over Europe and from the USA, and the amount of floor area devoted to this sector, is the enormous size of the market. It was interesting to see a wide range of street furniture being exhibited which had been carefully and imaginatively designed to be environmentally sensitive. Bollards, railings, street lighting, planting containers, sign post, drainage channels etc in a range of designs and materials to blend in and to contribute to the aesthetics of a whole range of different urban and suburban environments. It looks as though the days of the Brutalism of engineering functionalism are finally passing. There was also a notable increase in the number of products devoted to the subject of safety for road works and highway maintenance, including automatic traffic cone placement and retrieval systems for high traffic density motorways. The technological innovations for this sector tended to be concentrated around improvements in the optical performance of matrix

displays and glass fibre transmission techniques. However, watch out for an "intelligent" reflecting road stud that changes colour according to the proximity of vehicles.

In the area of traffic control technology, there was clear evidence of products coming on to the market as a result of the significant funding for research and development that has been available from the European Union. There were several new systems on display for remote site video data capture and analysis of traffic stream performance, new and much more flexible processor units for traffic signals and traffic control, and a substantial presence of new products and systems for smart card readers and data processors for applications with toll systems and road pricing initiatives.

In the third group, that of parking systems, again we were struck by the number of firms and organizations present. Whilst there was the usual array of machinery: gates, barriers, entry and exit control kiosks, etc., this year there was a strong emphasis on systems for the management of both on-street and off-street parking. Phrases like "The Total Solution" were quite common. For both off-street and on-street parking, it would seem that the "Pay and Display" system (buy your ticket from a nearby ticket dispenser, paying for the amount of time that the vehicle will be parked, and then fixing the ticket to the windscreen of the vehicle) is becoming the most popular form for parking fee collection and for control. The days of the serried ranks of parking meters lining the kerbs of our towns and cities seem to be numbered. With an increasing trend towards parking control being managed by private sector contractors and an increasing spread in the control of on-street parking there are more options available now for total parking systems management.