

The TTC Bus Bay Situation

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In July, 2001, traffic gridlock was (and still is) a major problem in Toronto, Ontario. The TTC (Toronto Transit Commission), which operates the public city transit system, using buses, streetcars, and subway trains, wants to increase the efficiency of its bus system by removing many of the bus bays. Bus bays, located primarily in the suburbs because of the wider roads, allow buses to move out of the major traffic flow (to the right) to board and disembark passengers. This approach allows other traffic to continue. The issue, however, is that the buses have a difficult time re-entering the main traffic flow because of congestion and drivers who do not yield the right-of-way to the buses, especially during rush hour. The battle over who is the "king of the road," buses or cars, is the main issue of concern. When car and truck drivers do let the buses back into the main thoroughfare, TTC drivers often stick their left hand out the bus driver's window, acknowledging the action with a wave, or at least give an extra flash of the turn signal.

There are 1,802 of bus bays in the city. Of this number, 1,243 are on the near side of the intersections (i.e., before the intersection), 444 are past the intersection, and 115 are mid-block.

According to the TTC, by ending its use of the bus bays located before the intersections, other vehicles could use the bays for right turns, thereby speeding up traffic. The TTC also believes that some of these bays could also be moved to the far side of the intersection, if warranted. Twenty-one of the bus bays are considered too narrow for the buses and should be removed or improved immediately, according to the TTC.

The increase in automobile traffic over the past five years has meant that the TTC has lost space on the roads. Getting rid of the bus bays is one of the ways of trying to improve the flow of public traffic. Other approaches considered are setting up more lanes for just bus traffic and better enforcement of parking on major streets. Traffic bylaw enforcement on the use of the current bus lanes could also be considered (bus lanes are not to be used by cars with less than three passengers - taxis, other buses, and bicycles can also use these lanes during rush hour). The lanes can be used by any vehicle during off-peak times. Peak times are 7 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. and 3 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

Removing the bus bays is expected to irritate motorists more since they would not know when a particular bus is going to stop, thereby delaying the traffic behind the bus, while it boards and disembarks passengers.

Note: In 2004, the Provincial Government passed a law requiring drivers to yield the right-of-way to buses leaving bus bays or attempting to change lanes. Fines are imposed for failing to abide by the law. Do not consider the fact that a law *now exists* in your analysis of the case. The legal perspective, can, however, be considered in your analysis.

Questions

1. Identify the relevant marketing concepts and theories in this case.
2. What is the major marketing problem in the case?
3. What are the symptoms of this problem?
4. What are the possible alternative solutions which could resolve the problem?
5. What are the advantages, disadvantages, and implications of implementing each alternative?
6. What is your recommended solution to the problem? Why?

Note: This is a good case to apply the full-case report approach.