Second Lines and Street Closures Can Affect Transportation Planning in New Orleans

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Second lines, parades, festivals, construction projects and special events are familiar parts of life in New Orleans, but each can create transportation challenges when streets close or normal traffic patterns change. For transportation providers, event organizers, residents and visitors, understanding how street closures affect routes and travel times can help reduce disruptions when moving through the city.

New Orleans has a street network shaped by historic neighborhoods, major thoroughfares, one-way streets, bridges, neutral grounds and limited alternative routes in certain areas. When even a relatively short section of roadway becomes unavailable, traffic can shift onto surrounding streets and affect transportation well beyond the immediate closure.

Second lines present an additional consideration because routes may move through multiple streets and neighborhoods during the course of an event.

“Transportation planning in New Orleans often involves knowing what is happening beyond the pickup and destination addresses,” said Milton Walker Jr., owner of Alert Transportation, who takes pride in providing top-quality transportation services in the Greater New Orleans Area. “A second line or street closure several blocks away can change traffic patterns throughout an area, so route conditions and timing become important parts of transportation planning.”

Second Lines Create Moving Traffic Restrictions

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>
> *Milton Walker Jr.*

A traditional New Orleans second line is different from an event contained within a single location.

The procession moves.

Participants may travel along a predetermined route through several streets, with traffic restrictions changing as the procession progresses.

That movement can temporarily affect intersections, cross streets and access points along the route.

A vehicle may technically have a clear path to a destination when a trip begins but encounter restrictions as the second line reaches another section of the city.

Transportation planning around second lines therefore involves more than identifying a single closed street.

Timing matters.

Street Closures Can Affect Surrounding Areas

The effects of a street closure rarely remain confined to the blocked roadway.

Drivers who normally use that street must travel somewhere else.

Traffic may shift onto parallel streets, creating congestion several blocks away. Intersections receiving additional vehicles may begin moving more slowly. A route that normally requires only a few minutes can take considerably longer.

Closures near major streets can have a wider effect because those roadways frequently carry traffic between neighborhoods.

“An alternate route may look simple on a map, but many other vehicles may be using that same alternate route,” Walker said. “The impact of a closure often involves the additional traffic surrounding it, not just the street that is physically blocked.”

The French Quarter Presents Particular Considerations

Transportation through and around the French Quarter already involves a combination of narrow streets, one-way traffic, pedestrian activity and restricted vehicle access in certain

locations.

Special events can add another layer.

Street closures may affect where passengers can be picked up or dropped off. A destination located on a closed street may require passengers to meet transportation on a nearby accessible block.

Pedestrian traffic can also influence vehicle movement.

Large crowds crossing streets or gathering around event areas may slow traffic even when a roadway remains technically open.

Planning pickup and drop-off locations with those conditions in mind can help account for temporary access limitations.

Weddings Can Be Affected by New Orleans Events

New Orleans is a frequent destination for weddings, and many ceremonies and receptions take place in different locations.

Transportation may need to move guests between hotels, churches, event venues and reception locations.

A second line may even be part of the wedding itself.

When another parade, festival or public event is occurring nearby, transportation timing can become more complicated.

A route between two locations that appears short by mileage may cross an event route or depend on streets experiencing increased traffic.

Transportation schedules for weddings may therefore include additional travel time when known closures or major events coincide with the celebration.

Construction Can Create Less Predictable Changes

Not every New Orleans street closure involves a parade.

Road construction, utility work, drainage projects and emergency repairs can also affect transportation.

Some projects remain in place for extended periods, while others may alter traffic patterns

temporarily.

Lane reductions can create many of the same effects as complete closures.

A street that remains open may move significantly slower when several lanes are reduced to one.

Construction can also affect normal pickup locations when curb access becomes unavailable.

Major Events Can Change Traffic Across Large Areas

Festivals, sporting events, concerts and Mardi Gras activities can affect traffic far beyond individual street closures.

Large numbers of vehicles may enter or leave an area within a relatively short period.

Parking activity can slow traffic as drivers search for spaces. Pedestrian movement may increase near venues. Police traffic controls may temporarily change access to certain streets.

A transportation route that normally works on an ordinary Tuesday may operate very differently during a major event.

Checking event schedules becomes another part of transportation planning in a city where multiple events can occur simultaneously.

Pickup Locations May Need to Change

Street closures can sometimes make a planned pickup or drop-off location temporarily inaccessible.

In those situations, a nearby alternative location may be necessary.

The distance might only be a block or two, but communicating that change becomes important when passengers are unfamiliar with the area.

Hotels, event venues and other destinations may also establish temporary transportation procedures during large events.

Understanding those procedures can help coordinate vehicle access without contributing additional congestion near entrances.

Additional Travel Time Can Provide Flexibility

Predicting traffic conditions precisely is difficult during street closures and public events.

Conditions can change as crowds move, processions advance and police reopen intersections.

Building additional time into transportation schedules provides flexibility when those changes occur.

The appropriate amount of additional time depends on the event, location, time of day and distance traveled.

Transportation planning can also consider alternative routes before a trip begins rather than waiting until a vehicle reaches a closure.

Transportation in New Orleans Requires Local Awareness

Second lines and street closures are part of the rhythm of New Orleans.

They can also change how vehicles move through the city within minutes.

Understanding event schedules, procession routes, street closures, construction activity and surrounding traffic patterns can provide useful context when planning transportation.

In a city where a normal route can suddenly encounter a brass band, several hundred pedestrians and a police barricade, transportation planning sometimes requires more than simply knowing the destination address.

It requires knowing what New Orleans is doing that day.

About Alert Transportation

Alert Transportation provides transportation services throughout the Greater New Orleans Area, including transportation for weddings, events, groups and other scheduled travel needs.

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