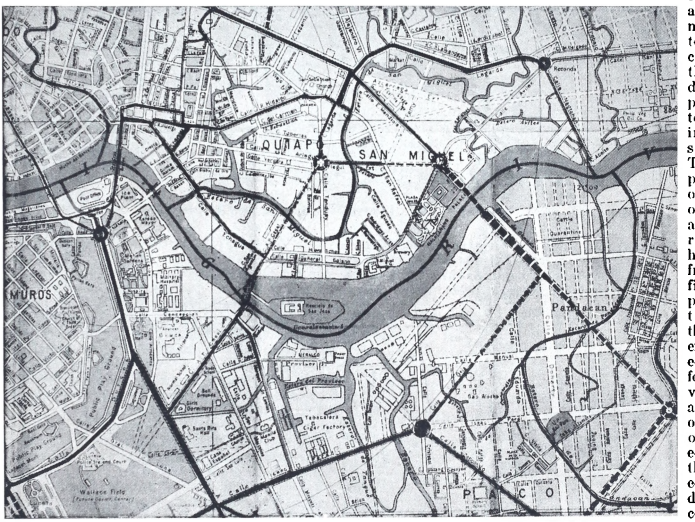
Mendiola Bridge Would Relieve Downtown Traffic 40%

Crux of problem is the unimproved condition of Pandacan, whence heavy traffic emerges from warehouses and industrial plants

By Frank Lewis Minton

It is axiomatic that the best way to relieve traffic congestion on a bridge is to build another bridge. Nowhere is the truth of this statement brought home more forcibly than in Manila, where one recalcitrant carromata pony, or one unhurried carabao, may hold up a line of traffic, however long, on any bridge or at any street intersection. On February 16, 1931, the Bureau of Public Works announced the early construction of a steel bridge across the Pasig river at Mendiola street. According to the *Manila Daily Bulletin*, Feb. 17, 1931, Mayor Tomás Earnshaw advised J. C. Cookingham, then acting Director of Public Works, that the necessary funds would be made available from the ₱2,000,000 bond issue, which was a part of the ₱10,000,000 bonded indebtedness authorized for the city of Manila.

The proposed structure was to be a steel bridge, 420 feet long, exclusive of approaches, composed of three spans each 140 feet in length. There would have been two roadways, each 20 feet clear, giving the bridge a capacity of four lanes of traffic, with a six-foot sidewalk at either side. The estimated cost of the bridge was ₱700,000, exclusive of approaches and street development.



How the Mendiola Bridge Would Rout Heavy Traffic from the Pandacan Industrial District Around the Downtown District and Along Calle Azcarraga

It was pointed out by officials, and others, that—conservatively speaking—60% of the heavy freight traffic, or 35% of all business traffic, would be diverted from the Jones, Sta. Cruz and Ayala bridges to calle Azcarraga via the Mendiola street bridge when the project was completed; that the distance to downtown points and roadheads leading to Pampanga, Tarlac, Pangasinan and the Ilocos country would be considerably decreased, thus benefiting the industrial plants at Pandacan, and their many customers and consumers who, having their own trucks or other means of transportation, take delivery of goods, bring copra or other produce to sell, and transact other business in the Pandacan district.

Again the point was stressed that the best way to relieve traffic congestion is to build another bridge, and to build it at a point where heavy traffic would certainly and permanently be diverted from the other bridges, and also from certain residential and downtown streets. It was shown that the completion of the Mendiola project and the considerable widening of callejon Jesus would greatly reduce traffic on the narrow and dangerous calle Zamora.

To the considerable disappointment of Pandacan residents, and to concerns having warehouses or plants in the Pandacan district, and to their many customers and consumers, the Mendiola street plans seem to have been indefinitely shelved. These people point out the need of short and adequate routes for heavy freight traffic, the expense to them and their customers occasioned by being forced to traverse long and circuitous and overcrowded streets, the neglected and even dangerous condition of streets in Pandacan and vicinity, contrasted with their commercial and industrial importance, and heavy tax burdens.

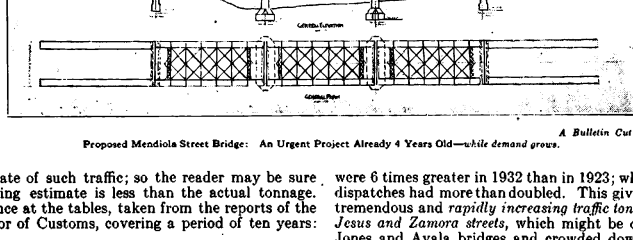
All correspondence concerning the Mendiola street project in the Bureau of Public Works was destroyed in the recent Intramuros fire, but according to such information as has yet been made available, for publication, the plan was dropped in the interests of *economy*. A few days after the Mendiola plans were made public another huge project was announced—the great vehicle, tramway and railway bridge over the lower Pasig—connecting Bonifacio drive with calle del Pan. This project was obviously too ambitious at the time. It would have cost over ₱3,000,000 exclusive of street development and the cost of land for the approaches; and it would have forced the Manila railroad to invest considerable sums in rail extensions at an inopportune time. The relative merits of the

lower Pasig and the Mendiola projects were discussed, somewhat desultorily, for a few weeks. Then the subject was dropped.

The newest project for the relief of traffic congestion is the *Ayala Bridge Addition*. It is proposed to build another bridge contiguous to the present Ayala structure, with a capacity of three lanes of traffic and 12-foot sidewalk. It is understood that the supports of the proposed structure would be of sufficient size and strength to permit of doubling the width of the new bridge when, and if, necessary. Two estimates have been prepared: one for a steel bridge to cost ₱450,000, and one for a concrete structure to cost ₱600,000. It is obvious that neither estimate includes the cost of land for approaches, nor the development of calle Pascual Casal.

In order to demonstrate the need of new arteries of traffic, leading directly to Provincial roadheads and downtown districts, rather than the development of circuitous and already overcrowded routes traversing congested districts, the writer has obtained figures which give some idea of the immense and rapidly increasing tonnage of Pandacan freight traffic, the diversion of which would relieve congestion and make for greater safety of passenger traffic on residential streets, and in the crowded downtown districts.

It is, of course, impossible to state exactly the tonnage of street traffic between Pandacan and Manila, but by consistent understatement of figures, secured from the various reliable sources, it is at least possible to arrive at the absolute minimum estimate of such traffic; so the reader may be sure that the following estimate is less than the actual tonnage. First let us glance at the tables, taken from the reports of the Insular Collector of Customs, covering a period of ten years:



A Bulletin Cut

Proposed Mendiola Street Bridge: An Urgent Project Already 4 Years Old—*while demand grows.*

MINERAL OIL IMPORTS

	Crude oils, Liters		*Kerosenes, liters*
1923	219,031,937	1923	50,795,391
1924	268,134,548	1924	65,173,701
1925	239,488,410	1925	60,028,279
1926	183,405,035	1926	67,290,999
1927	161,714,042	1927	69,006,504
1928	150,763,613	1928	69,381,305
1929	277,773,185	1929	84,621,511
1930	230,126,086	1930	68,826,433
1931	296,363,999	1931	94,656,344
1932	290,170,751	1932	57,488,701
Total	2,316,971,676	Total	693,269,288
	Motor Spirits, Liters		*Lubricating Oils, Liters*
1923	19,633,663	1923	7,194,278
1924	38,878,404	1924	10,300,961
1925	48,315,908	1925	9,057,243
1926	55,221,007	1926	11,625,431
1927	53,860,209	1927	9,140,137
1928	86,863,351	1928	15,051,711
1929	97,306,532	1929	11,593,876
1930	93,382,805	1930	14,497,075
1931	145,250,834	1931	12,544,842
1932	120,611,582	1932	17,060,949
Total	759,321,355	Total	118,012,503
	Asphaltum, Kilos		*Residuum: Tar, etc., Kilos*
1923	1,867,608	1923	367,840
1924	2,421,332	1924	1,540,461
1925	1,770,149	1925	1,783,843
1926	2,155,005	1926	927,082
1927	1,289,966	1927	853,173
1928	3,525,445	1928	1,136,667
1929	4,095,278	1929	1,178,583
1930	7,397,114	1930	925,501
1931	7,003,425	1931	2,204,385
1932	8,211,087	1932	525,690
Total	39,777,409	Total	11,238,317
Total liters	3,887,574,852		
Total kilos	51,015,548		
Kilos and liters	3,938,590,548		

A liter of gasoline weighs slightly less than a kilo. For this reason the imports of *Naphtas, other than Motor Spirits*, which amount to about 100,000 liters annually, has been left out of the above tables, and the rough total is taken as 4 billion kilos of petroleum products during the 10 years from 1923 to 1932 inclusive.

Analyzing the foregoing figures we find that, allowing for the lighter distillates of gasoline, not listed herein, over 4 billion kilos of petroleum and its by-products have been delivered in the Philippines during the past decade. Approximately 2 billion kilos of this amount has been received in Manila. Of the Manila consignments, a half, or a billion kilos have been delivered by truck or lighter carriers, the other half by rail and river.

Considerably over 90% of the Islands' business in petroleum products is handled by the 6 great companies having their storage tanks in Pandacan. This means that over 900,000 tons of petroleum products, alone, have passed through tiny callejon Jesus, and along the narrow and dangerous calle Zamora during the past ten years—an average of 90,000 tons per year. It is estimated that Spencer Kellogg & Sons, and other plants operating in Pandacan add between 20% and 30% to the huge volume of traffic passing over these narrow streets. Thus, adding 18,000 tons to the 90,000 tons of petroleum products, we find that at least 108,000 tons of miscellaneous freight pass through callejon Jesus and calle Zamora each year. *Nine thousand net tons of freight per month.*

But do these figures actually cover the present freight traffic? Let us glance again at the table of imports.

In 1932 the imports of motor spirits amounted to 120,611,592 liters, as against 19,633,663 in 1923; while lubricating oil imports jumped from 7,194,278 liters in 1923 to 17,006,949 liters in 1932. In other words gasoline dispatches were 6 times greater in 1932 than in 1923; while lubricating oil dispatches had more than doubled. This gives some idea of the tremendous and *rapidly increasing traffic tonnage which chokes Jesus and Zamora streets*, which might be diverted from the Jones and Ayala bridges and crowded downtown streets by the completion of the Mendiola project and the widening of callejon Jesus sufficiently to accommodate four lines of traffic.

To give this portrayal even greater clarity let us contrast the number of truck trips in 1923 with that of 1932. In 1923 there were some heavy trucks and bulk-lorries operating between Pandacan and the downtown districts, averaging 3 round trips per day—48 1-way trips on calle Zamora, exclusive of miscellaneous freight traffic. Today, between 30 and 35 heavy trucks and lorries carry petroleum products over this street, on an average of 3 times each per day—180 1-way trips daily, or 18 trips per hour, estimating a 10-hour day. Yet Jesus and Zamora streets are the same width, and in about the same condition as in 1923. Obviously, these streets urgently need widening and thorough asphalting.

Bear in mind that the foregoing figures indicate only net freight tonnage. Bear in mind also that the flow of traffic is not uniform. One of the largest Pandacan concerns reports freight dispatches numbering from 60 to 120 per day; while an average of 30 customers per day, having their own trucks or other means of transportation, call to take delivery of their orders from the warehouse. It is over-conservative to say that from 300 to 600 loads of freight are dispatched from Pandacan daily, not to mention the produce and miscellaneous stuff that arrives daily. More than one-half of this freight passes over the Jones, the Sta. Cruz, and the Ayala bridges, and *through the crowded downtown streets;* it is carried in every type of vehicle, from carabao carts to the 5-ton trucks on the oil distributors. Can we blame the police department for the traffic jams at bridgeheads, Goiti and Moraga plazas, and at all street intersections? Would it not be better effectually and permanently to divert from 30% to 50% of this traffic

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friendly and cordial relations with the natives, and try every possible way to bring them to a knowledge of our religion.

17. If the officials named by us are not sufficient in number, you will choose for each island as many as may be wanting; in order to comply with the instructions and orders you have been given, administer our revenue and effect everything the other officials do in the other provinces of the Indies. Such appointments will be temporary and you will give us notice of them that we may provide as may be convenient. Persons who are to have places and offices are to be paid their salaries by our treasury from the fruits of the land, from our mines; they are to be nominated by the proper officials, their nominations certified by the Governor of the Province.

19. You will take with you four religious from among those that may now be in said islands; or, there not being so many, two religious who are resoureeful and of high character, who are familiar with the doctrine and the administration of the sacrament.

20. You will see to it diligently that the Spaniards do the natives no injury or violence, that they do not wound them or hurt them in any way, or take their lands, but accord them the same good treatment they would accord their own people; and if any Spaniard offends them, you and your captains shall punish him rigorously, without delay; and not doing so, but neglecting to do so, we command you to do so with great rigor—as something we very much desire accomplished, contravention of which we shall take as a great disservice to us.

21. Arriving at that land, you will report to us an account of your voyage and the manner in which you disembarked and were received, of what you find there and learn about the country, and anything else of which you feel we ought to be apprised, with your opinion as to what should be provided, that we may better give order as to what may best con. mience the service of God our Lord and yours; and so do afterward when you deem it advisable.

22. All which we charge upon you and order you to note and comply with inviolably, as otherwise we shall consider ourselves disserved. Dated in Madrid, August 28, 1569—I the King—By order of His Majesty: Francisco de Lois.

In Europe we study Philip II in his character as a soldier, monarch of a great empire in implacable conflict with another, rising under the sovereignty of Elizabeth and the inauguration of a faith Philip believed to be impeachable heresy. In the Philippines we study him as a Christian prince sending missions to the remotest isles of the world to enlighten the inhabitants, and at the same time carefully to protect them. So we see him here in a different light altogether than the sanguinary blaze that shone over Europe from the stake and the battlefields, the bivouacs of besieging armies, the fires of beleaguered cities. We get a better view of him, and it brondens and mellows our understanding. It resembles what the French say of learning another language, it almost gives us another soul.

—*W. R.*

Mendiola Bridge . . .

(*Continued from page 6*)

from the Jones and the Ayala bridges and the downtown streets than to widen streets or bridges in the congested sections of the city?

In this article only freight traffic is discussed. Every few minutes a heavy P. U. passenger truck rumbles menacingly along calle Zamora, through a maze of pedestrians, carromatas, eyelists and carabao carts. Accidents are frequent. It is a credit to drivers that so few casualties have occurred. But it is because, realizing the danger, and speed being practically impossible, the drivers are more careful in the Pandacan district than elsewhere. The fact remains that about 50% of this passenger traffic would be permanently diverted by the opening of Mendiola street and construction of the Mendiola bridge across the Pasig river. The best way to relieve traffic jams on Manila's bridges and downtown streets is to build another bridge.