The City of the Future

"Urban Studies" may well be the least descriptive designation in all of public and academic life—it is a term used indiscriminately to embrace everything between sewage treatment technology and zoning law. The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, however, has tied together a lecture package of only the most exciting, well-developed, and practical topics.

The first in the series was a talk and film presentation on February 9 by Brian Richards, a British transportation expert. The title of his lecture was "Travellation: The Future of an Illusion"—a zany title that acquired meaning in a surprising way as he spoke. The subject was moving pavements, an idea so old it was first tried in Paris before the turn of the century and so valid that many international expositions and cities have toyed with it.

Richards' statistics were impressive—moving pavements can transport more thousands of people per hour than any other form of transportation, with no bottlenecks and almost no noise, pollution, or danger to the pedestrian. Moving pavements are most useful in transporting large numbers of people over short distances; they would be especially useful on major thoroughfares that carry literally thousands of workers and shoppers in large cities. For major transportation routes, moving pavements would supplement and ease traditional modes of transportation, perhaps eventually supplant them. In this case central office and shopping areas could be surrounded by a ring of longer-distance transportation nodes so that pedestrians could be transported efficiently and pleasantly by moving pavement to bus and train terminals and parking lots. City planning of the future therefore involves locating stations and parking lots away from urban centers, which implies both environmental sanity and aesthetic enhancement of the city.

For lesser thoroughfares and residential areas, the "cart concept" could be eliminated altogether, and oil-streaked streets replaced with trees, strolling areas, and playgrounds.

The moving pavements seen in Richards' films are futuristic in design and completely self-enclosed with clear plastic roofs and moving handrails. The technological breakthrough that has made the moving pavement a modern possibility is a technique for accelerating the passenger from walking pace to about 15 m.p.h. in a short distance. It now remains to find the technique for accelerating city governments from the present transportation morass to a modern and humane system—as in other areas.

Lectures are presented Wednesday evenings at 6:45 p.m. at The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 8 West 40th Street, New York City. Future topics of special interest include "A Critique of Current Urban Planning Models" (March 15), "Mid-Town Manhattan—The Evolution of a New Code" (April 5), "Strategies for Regional Development" (April 26), and "Criteria for Mass Housing—New York and Berlin" (May 3). Call 974-0765 for brochure and complete listing.