



District Department of Transportation

# PR 18-1164, the Streetcar Project Comprehensive Plan Approval Resolution of 2010

Public Roundtable

Testimony of  
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Adrian M. Fenty  
Mayor

Committee on Public Works and Transportation  
Chairman Jim Graham

Wednesday, November 17, 2010  
2:00 PM  
Room 120

Good afternoon Chairman Graham, members of the Committee, and District residents. My name is Gabe Klein, and I am Director of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). It is a pleasure to appear before the committee to provide testimony regarding the District of Columbia's comprehensive streetcar plan.

The information we have provided to the DC Council in this plan is twofold. We have submitted for your review and approval the comprehensive streetcar system plan, along with a detailed plan for the H St/Benning Road streetcar line. As you know, Council approval of the Streetcar Project Comprehensive Plan Approval Resolution of 2010 will make the Fiscal Year 2011 budgeted \$34.5 million available to DDOT to move its streetcar program forward. This funding is on the heels of the \$14.5 million the DC Council has previously appropriated and DDOT has since obligated for this project.

Across the country, major cities, including those that compete directly with the District for residents and employers, have renewed their investment in transportation infrastructure. In New York, there is construction of \$27.7 billion in new transit infrastructure, \$18,020 per capita. In Los Angeles the mayor is advancing the 30/10 proposal, an effort to make thirty years of infrastructure investment in ten years. In San Francisco the city is spending \$5.578 billion, \$6,895 per capita, to expand and improve access to downtown. Locally, Virginia is spending \$6.43 billion on the Dulles Metrorail Extension, and investing in streetcars in Arlington, new Metro station entrances, and a new Metro station – resulting in an investment of \$4,999 per capita. Maryland is spending \$7.023 billion on highway and transit improvements - \$2,002 per capita. These investments will make it attractive for businesses to locate in suburban Maryland and Virginia – making it more challenging for the District to attract and retain employers.

Given this level of investment in transit by comparable jurisdictions, DDOT's proposed long term investment in a \$1.5 billion streetcar system - \$2,500 per capita – is modest and essential to maintain our position as the center of the region's economy. The development of large infrastructure projects spans decades. The Washington Metro system was conceived in the 1950s and was not completed until 2001. The Dulles Metrorail Extension has been planned for almost 40 years and finally broke ground last year. Likewise, the DC Streetcar is the product of long-term planning. In 1997 Mayor Marion Barry's Department of Public Works published "A

Transportation Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan for the Nation’s Capital”. Central to this plan was investment in light rail – a precursor to modern streetcar – along H St and Benning Rd and several other corridors throughout the District. In the intervening years the District has continued to refine these plans. Transit alternatives were selected to advance into more detailed development in WMATA’s “District of Columbia Transit Development Study (2002)”. The DC alternatives Analysis and System Plan, completed in 2005, evaluated specific streetcar and enhanced bus service options for corridors that were identified in the 2002 Transit Development Study and included an extensive public, agency and stakeholder review process. DDOT initiated an update of the transit system plan in 2008 based on re-evaluation of potential streetcar segments, taking into consideration the impact of substantial growth in the District since 2005.

The District has continued to refine these plans with the April 2010 DC Streetcar System plan. This plan lays the foundation for a 37-mile streetcar system. The proposed system will provide critical transportation links, alleviate capacity constraints on the Metro system and provide improved access to jobs for District neighborhoods with chronically high rates of unemployment. Likewise, the streetcar system is designed and envisioned to support the District’s emerging retail corridors.

This system plan lays out the streetcar corridors, recommends a phasing plan, and offers financing alternatives. It is intended to guide but not dictate streetcar development and financing. DDOT expects that as the plan progresses phasing, alignments, and funding sources may change. DDOT is working closely with its sister agencies to ensure that as the District invests in streetcars, it is carefully coordinating District land uses and capital investments. Council approval of the streetcar system plan represents the start of the streetcar development process, not the end. DDOT will need Council approval before moving forward with any streetcar line or procurement.

As an element of our submission to Council, DDOT has also provided a more detailed plan for the H St/Benning Rd streetcar line. This plan provides details on DDOT’s decision-making process for specific design elements of the H St/Benning Rd streetcar. It also provides a greater level of detail on the operating characteristics of the streetcar. This plan does not purport to answer every question related to streetcar operations on H St and Benning Rd. However, it does

provide a timeline for developing detailed operations plans. This is a standard process when developing infrastructure projects where many different elements move concurrently rather than sequentially. The current 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridges construction project, DDOT's largest in its history, is an excellent example of this dynamic process.

To that end, with \$14.5 million in funding already made available by the DC Council, DDOT has engaged HDR, Shiel Oblatz Johnson, ZGF, and Jeffery Parker and Associates to assist in bringing streetcar operations to fruition. These firms are national leaders, playing critical roles in developing the three modern streetcar systems currently in operation in the United States and leading the development of new systems across the country. DDOT has issued task orders to develop an Operating and Maintenance Request for Proposals, formulate and staff a Streetcar Finance and Governance Panel, and a Request for Proposals for two new streetcars that are identical to our existing fleet and for one new streetcar that will meet DDOT's objective of operating streetcars without overhead wires.

We have made considerable progress in advancing the design of the H St/Benning Rd streetcar segment. We have completed 30% design and will be prepared to issue a Request for Proposals for a Design/Build team to complete the H St/Benning Rd project by December 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. Further, we have had renewed and positive discussions with Potomac Development Corporation and Amtrak – the two entities that share use of the H St Underpass.

The City Council has passed emergency and temporary legislation permitting the use of overhead wires on H St and Benning Rd. DDOT believes that this authority is critical to successfully launching streetcar in the District. However, we remain committed to operating streetcars without overhead wires across areas with critical viewsheds.

We have one technical request regarding the Streetcar Project Comprehensive Plan Approval Resolution of 2010. DDOT would like to request that the committee strike Section 3, subsection 2 of the approval resolution, as we fear it may prejudice the NEPA process DDOT has initiated this week.

I want to thank Council and this Committee for its continued commitment to streetcar in the District of Columbia. Prompt approval of this plan will allow the H Street/Benning streetcar

segment to remain on schedule by releasing the additional \$34.5 million budgeted by the DC Council for this Fiscal Year. Moreover, we appreciate the opportunity to gain Council's approval and share our many accomplishments with regard to streetcar planning with the public. We look forward to continuing this partnership to make streetcar in the District a reality. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks, and with your permission, our team would now like to walk through some of the details of the streetcar plan in our PowerPoint presentation.