



Stakeholder Meeting #3
Tuesday, March 16, 2009
First United Methodist Church
Wesley Room
420 N. Nevada Ave.
5:30 – 7 p.m.

Attendance

Approximately 65 people attended the third Stakeholder Meeting for the Colorado Springs Streetcar Feasibility Study.

Attendees included representatives from:

- The Streetcar Taskforce
- Pikes Peak Historic Street Railway Foundation
- Area business and property owners
- Green Cities Coalition members
- Downtown Partnership
- Downtown Development Authority
- Business Improvement District
- Urban Renewal Authority
- Public Personal Rapid Transit Consortium
- American Institute of Architects
- Community HOA board members
- Council of Neighbors and Organizations (CONO)
- Citizens Transportation Advisory Board
- Colorado College
- Real estate developers
- Commercial brokers
- Residential real estate agents
- Citizens from the Old North End
- City residents
- Transit riders
- Government agency staffs
- Mountain Metropolitan Transit staff
- 28 West

Presentation

Overview

The consultant team provided a presentation on the status of the feasibility study. The update included information regarding:

- A review and update on this project
- Review and evaluation of initial alignment options
- Preliminary ridership estimates

Report status

The presentation included an update of Public Involvement Activities and a review of which chapters of the report have been drafted. The first four chapters have been drafted and reviewed internally. Those chapters include:

- Chapter 1: Background and Purpose
- Chapter 2: Existing and Future Conditions/Opportunities and Constraints
- Chapter 3: Design Considerations
- Chapter 4: Initial Alignment Concepts and Screening

At the time of the Stakeholder Meeting, Chapter 5 (Detailed Evaluation) and Chapter 6 (Financing) are being drafted.

Vehicle options

The presentation included an update on vehicle preferences, which included a mixed fleet option. Based on community feedback to this point, there is no overall consensus regarding a vehicle type (modern, vintage restored or vintage replica); however, vehicles must be ADA compliant and there is a desire that vehicles accommodate bicycles.

Financing options

Financing opportunities from development are limited currently, so the primary focus for financing is on:

- Tax Increment Financing
- Livability grants and other federal financing
- Merchandising and naming rights

Alignment options

The presentation also addressed general and specific comments regarding alignment options, which included:

- The viability of using Nevada Avenue
- The need to coordinate with bike lanes
- The viability of using Wahsatch and Weber
- Priorities of potential outlying extensions to:
 - UCCS
 - Fort Carson
 - Powers Boulevard/Air Force Bases
 - Airport
 - Old Colorado City/Manitou Springs

Ridership projections

The discussion also included ridership projections based on peer city results and analysis of DASH ridership. Low-end estimates based on previous DASH ridership range from 800 to 1,000 riders per day, while incorporating land use factors from peer cities results in ridership of approximately 4,000 riders per day. A subsequent ridership estimate (based on DASH ridership, future population and employment growth, and an accepted rail “premium” factor) shows a range from 3,000 to 4,000 riders each day, which puts this system in the middle of ridership numbers for other modern streetcar systems.

Screening criteria

The initial alignment screening criteria also was explained. The criteria include:

- Does the alignment enhance mobility?
- Does the alignment enhance and promote economic development?
- Does the alignment improve sustainable transportation options?
- Can the alignment be implemented and is it affordable?

When the criteria were applied to each of the focus areas, the results indicated:

- Central Core area
 - Alignments on Tejon and Cascade have better redevelopment and enhancement opportunities, while improving bicycle and pedestrian connectivity
- Northern Core area
 - This portion of Nevada Avenue, which provides north/south continuity, has better redevelopment potential
 - Wahsatch and Weber also could be considered
- Southern Core area
 - Cascade provides maximum connectivity to urban renewal area southwest of downtown
 - Southwest and central areas have best redevelopment potential

Next steps

The next steps for the study team include:

- Reviewing the initial recommendations with the Study Task Force, and make modifications
- Conduct detailed evaluation of economic development potential; develop operating plans and costs
- Make final recommendations on system plan and starter system and financial plan options

The following questions were asked:

Q: Why don't you consider Wahsatch as an alignment option with Cascade or Tejon?

A: It's best to keep tracks no more than one block apart, so spreading the 'loop' that far apart would make it problematic from a ridership and pedestrian standpoint.

Q: Population density is really outside of the study area.

A: The study focused initially on the commercial area between Vermijo and Colorado College as a logical ridership base, which include employees, shoppers and people enjoying entertainment venues. The intent is to use that as a starting point and then serve more outlying residential neighborhoods as the system expands.

Q: For city comparisons, are Colorado Springs and Tucson similar in size?

A: Not quite. Little Rock is the best city for comparison regarding pre-existing conditions.

A: Are you able to project economic development potential?

Q: Every city is going to be different, but redevelopment has been considerable in cities where streetcars have been introduced. We will be analyzing potential economic development opportunities as part of the feasibility study.

Q: When and why was the original streetcar system removed?

A: The original streetcar system in Colorado Springs was a privately-owned system with limited funding. It was removed in 1932. The system didn't expand to growth areas.

Following the presentation, the attendees broke into three separate groups for focused and facilitated discussions on the topics of alignment options, vehicle options, and funding options. The following are summaries from each group's discussion:

Funding Breakout Group

- The \$150 million approximate cost is doable, as long as it includes 80% federal dollars
- Tax Increment Financing is a good idea
- Bonding (along with TIF) is a good idea
- Raising sales taxes – there will be differing opinions in the community on this as to its viability and fairness
- Consider a region wide Regional Transportation District
- Raising property taxes – it would provide stable funding, but wouldn't be politically correct
- Parking fees are a good idea

Vehicle Design Breakout Group

- A "mixed" fleet (vintage cars and modern)
- Use refurbished cars on weekends for tourists
- Use refurbished cars for downtown
- Modern streetcars are the way to go
 - Grew up in Pittsburgh with a streetcar and lived in other towns that have streetcars
 - Older streetcars emit a loud vibration noise that penetrates the walls of a home
 - Modern streetcars have less maintenance problems than older cars
- PCCs have less maintenance problems than modern streetcars
 - No electronics to break down
 - Less intensive vehicle maintenance training needed due to less technology
- Use older cars for downtown area and for routes west on Colorado Avenue

Alignment Breakout Group

- All the potential alignments presented look good. These recommendations provide lots of flexibility
- There is a concern regarding traffic impacts should I-25 have a temporary closure for any reason because traffic would be detoured to Nevada Avenue
- Question of interest: How will cars interact with streetcars?
- The alignments recommended are good ones, if it slows down the speed of car traffic.

NOTE: A Tejon property owner, Simon, said that there just was not enough time in the breakout sessions and that was frustrating for him.

Stakeholder meeting attendees were given an opportunity to place a dot on each of four boards to show their preference for funding options, alignment recommendations and vehicle design as well as whether or not they felt the streetcar system should continue to be explored. Results include:

Which funding options do you prefer and why? How much are you willing to pay?

Sales tax increase (low end – 1/10%) – 1 dot

Parking fee increase (low end – 5 cents) – 2 dots

Property tax increase – 3 dots

Tax increment financing – 5 dots

Other ideas – 3 dots

Which alignment(s) do you prefer?

Central core focus area

C-2 Tejon stub end – 10 dots

C-2A Tejon loop – 11 dots

C-4 Cascade/Tejon pair – 12 dots

C-5 Nevada/Tejon pair – 1 dot

C-3A Nevada loop – 2 dots

Northern core focus area

N-1 Cascade stub end – 4 dots

N-1A Cascade loop – 1 dot

N-2A Tejon loop – 6 dots

N-3 Nevada stub end – 6 dots

N-3A Nevada loop – 5 dots

N-5 Nevada Tejon combination – 2 dots

Southern core focus area

S-1 Cascade/Tejon combination – 3 dots

S-2 Tejon option – 24 dots
S-3 Nevada option – 2 dots

Which vehicle design(s) do you prefer?

Vintage restored – 16 dots
Vintage replica – 5 dots
Modern – 4 dots
Mixed fleet – 7 dots

Do you support continuing study/analysis of a streetcar system for Colorado Springs?

Yes – 42 dots
No – 1 dot