



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Committee on Public Works and Transportation

District Department of Transportation Budget Oversight Hearing

Statement of

Monte Edwards

Tuesday, April 21, 2015

My name is Monte Edwards. I am the Vice-Chair of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City. The purpose of my testimony is to present the Committee of 100's recommendation concerning two items:

1. The need for a comprehensive Rail Plan for the District of Columbia.
2. The need to provide a streetcar propulsion technology assessment as required by DC Code §9-1174, and to evaluate the feasibility of using non-aerial wire propulsion for streetcar extensions beyond the H Street/Benning Road line

1. The Need for a DC Rail Plan

Our City must have a comprehensive rail plan, and DDOT proposes to prepare such a Plan. A comprehensive Rail Plan would enhance Amtrak, VRE, MARC and CSX rail service; coordinate the different rail-related projects; create an Office of Rail Safety to monitor and investigate rail operations; optimize the greatest public benefit from their operation and encourage commuter and passenger rail as alternatives to people commuting in cars and adding to pollution and congestion.

The Committee of 100 recommends that the scope of such a plan examine whether responsibility for rail planning, regulation and safety should be a part of DDOT or should reside in one or more separate entities, as is done with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the Virginia Division of Railroad Regulation, both of which are separate from the Virginia Department of Transportation.

2. Streetcars

The Committee of 100 understands that DDOT will concentrate on correcting the deficiencies of the H Street/ Benning Road streetcar segment, and over the next 6 years, extend that segment west to Georgetown and east to Anacostia. To do so, there are at least two statutory requirements that must be addressed: the streetcar propulsion study and the requirement of evaluate the feasibility of using non-aerial wire propulsion for those extensions.

A. Streetcar Propulsion Technology Report.

DC Code § 9-1174 requires DDOT to submit a comprehensive assessment of *Advances in Propulsion Technology* to the Council and for the Council to hold public hearings on that report.¹ The report entitled *Comprehensive Assessment On Streetcar Propulsion Technology*, dated July 31, 2014 and subject of a hearing before this Committee on February 4, 2015 does not satisfy that requirement.

The 2014 *Comprehensive Assessment* report is basically a *survey* of the available technology, with limited and dated evaluations of technologies now in service in different parts of the world. For example:

- Report, page 2: “CAF supplied offwire vehicles to Zaragoza, Spain in 2011, and won additional orders for Granada, Spain in 2010 and Kaoshiung, Taiwan in 2012.” *The Report does not describe the experience with the CAF systems. What has happened since 2012?*

- Report, page 4: “The initial testing of the PRIMOVE system began at the Bombardier facility in Bautzen, Germany in 2009 and testing on the streets of Augsburg was completed in 2012. Montreal is expected to begin testing at the end of 2013.” *The report does not describe the results of those tests. What has happened since 2013?*

Rather than provide evaluations of specific systems or to update the status of the various projects, the Report concludes at page 8:

¹ DC Code § 9-1174

(a) By January 1, 2014, and by that date every 3 years thereafter, the Mayor shall submit to the Council an assessment on the:

(1) Advances in propulsion technology;

(2) Feasibility, including cost, of converting to non-aerial motive power where aerial wiring has been installed;

(3) Feasibility, including cost, of using non-aerial motive power on such segments of the streetcar system where construction has yet to be initiated; and

(4) Any recommended amendments to this chapter, including a potential sunset date.

(b) The Council shall hold a public hearing on this report.

”At this time, off-wire streetcar technology remains largely in a developmental stage. While off-wire vehicles have been implemented successfully in limited applications, the various technologies have not proven capable of providing an reliable off-wire system for the entirety of the DC Streetcar system within the District’s operating environment.”

The report does not provide current information about off-wire technologies, does not provide evaluations of the different technologies, does not provide specific recommendations, and does not satisfy the requirements of DC Code § 9-1174.

B. Feasibility of using non-aerial wire propulsion for streetcar extensions.

DC Code §9-1171 limits the installation of aerial wires “to the H Street/Benning Road streetcar transit line **until the requirements of §9-1173 are met.**” [Emphasis added] DC Code §9-1173(a) requires that:

Prior to the expansion or construction of aerial wire-powered streetcar transit beyond the H Street/Benning Road line, authorized pursuant to § 9-1171, the Mayor shall develop a plan for the use of aerial wires for each phase or extension of the streetcar transit system and submit the plan to the Council, along with a written report that includes:

* * *

(5) The feasibility of using non-aerial power as a means of propulsion for the phase or extension. [Emphasis added]

The draft Environmental Assessment and Section 106 Review for the Anacostia Streetcar Extension neither acknowledges nor complies with DC law. The entire Environmental Assessment is based on aerial (or overhead) wires to power the streetcars. Before any further engineering work can be done or regulatory approvals considered for the Anacostia Extension or any other streetcar extension, the non-aerial propulsion feasibility analysis required by DC Code §9-1173 (a)(5) must be submitted to Council and subjected to hearing.

Thank you.