



July 30, 2009

Honorable Tommy Wells
Councilmember, Ward Six
Council of the District of Columbia
Via email to: twells@dccouncil.us
And deliver to: 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20004

Subject: Streetcars on H Street

Dear Councilmember Wells:

The Stanton Park Neighborhood Association's membership area encompasses H Street, from 2nd to 10th Streets NE, and thus much of the Streetcar line that is currently being installed (between 3rd and 15th Streets NE) will be in that area. SPNA is concerned that overhead wires may be selected to power the streetcars.

Power poles and overhead wires constitute visual pollution and should be avoided if a workable alternative is available. Based on technology that was available in the past, in outlying areas of the District, overhead wires may have been the best or preferred option in certain circumstances at that time. But systems that do not use overhead wires have recently been developed (Bombardier's PRIMOVE and Alstom's STEEM) and are now in field tests in Paris and Bautzen, Germany. Both of these systems are brand new. They were made public only this year. We have time for the City to evaluate these and other non-overhead wire systems:

The H Street tracks will reach 15th Street in 2 years.

Then they have to be extended out Benning Road to the river.

Then there is the question of rebuilding the bridge to accommodate streetcars.

Then the tracks will have to be installed for the Anacostia part of the line.

As a result, it will likely be 5-8 years before the first streetcar runs.

SPNA is not advocating any specific design, but is very much concerned about the overhead wire issue. SPNA is asking that you encourage DDOT to continue its evaluation of newly emerging non-overhead wire systems and to avoid deciding on a technological approach prematurely. If you have questions, please contact me at (202) 543-3504.

Sincerely,

Monte Edwards, Co-Chair
SPNA Land Use Committee

cc: Gabe Klein, DDOT
Karina Ricks, DDOT
Joseph Fengler, Chair, ANC6A
Karen Wirt, Chair, ANC6C
Beth Purcell, CHRS