



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Committee on Public Works and Transportation

*District Department of Transportation*

*Performance Oversight Hearing*

Statement of Meg Maguire

On behalf of The Committee of 100 on the Federal City

March 21, 2014



Benning Rd., NE –streetcar stanchions and wires – (Photo: Meg Maguire)

I am Meg Maguire, Chair of the Transportation Subcommittee of Committee of 100, testifying on streetcars within the 3-minute personal time limit.

Overhead Wires: Let me begin with some very good news and kudos to DDOT. The Committee of 100 has a longstanding commitment to achieve a world-class wireless streetcar system for DC. In 2011, we worked with Council to enact DC Code § 9-1174 requiring DDOT to file a comprehensive assessment of *Advances in Propulsion Technology* by January 1, 2014 and every three years thereafter. DDOT has now completed The *Union Station to Georgetown* study that includes Appendix C, a 49-page, well written, informative and optimistic assessment of advances in streetcar propulsion technologies around the world.

[http://www.unionstationtogeorgetown.com/images/pdfs/AA%20Report/Appendix%20C\\_Propulsion%20Report.pdf](http://www.unionstationtogeorgetown.com/images/pdfs/AA%20Report/Appendix%20C_Propulsion%20Report.pdf)

The installation of stanchions and overhead wires on the H St./Benning Rd., NE streetcar route is, as we had feared, unsightly and not befitting the future of this rapidly developing area. DDOT's *Propulsion Study* holds the promise that DC does not need to settle for lining our streets with a maze of wires and heavy stanchions at the same time that we are on the forefront of cities under-grounding other utility wires.



H St. NE – streetcar stanchions and wires – (Photo: Meg Maguire)

The next two steps of the process should be initiated this spring.

First, as required by DC Code § 9-1174, Council should hold a public hearing on the report to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of a wide range of rapidly improving technologies including ground level power supplies and on-board energy supplies (super-capacitors, batteries, flywheels, on-board fuel tanks, fuel cells).

Second, since the Capitol Region Transportation Planning Board has included expansion of three additional segments of the system by 2018 and 2020 at a cost of \$638 million, it is urgent to implement DC Code § 9-1173 requiring the Mayor, before expanding the system beyond H St./Benning Rd., "...to 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." We believe that the next step for DDOT in fulfilling both of these requirements is to issue an RFP requesting companies that can provide non-overhead wire propulsion systems to address the physical conditions (grades, curves, weather conditions, etc.) that will be encountered on DC streetcar routes and how they compare to the physical conditions of already installed systems; the actual installed and operating costs of the in-service systems; and the maintenance and reliability experience of the systems that are now in service.

Overhead streetcar wires are unsightly, expensive and potentially unnecessary.

*We ask this Committee to set a fixed time for a hearing on the current report and to allocate funds for the next phase of technical study on the propulsion technologies best suited to the District.*

Planning:

This is the fourth year -- and the third year since publication of our streetcar report, *Building a World Class Streetcar System for a World Class City* -- that the Committee of 100 has called on the Council and the Mayor to adopt a financial, governance and management plan for streetcars before proceeding to enlarge the system. The DC taxpayers have already invested over \$47 million in the first segment of a streetcar system without the basics of public administration in place.

The Mayor's Task Force on Financing and Governance gave us hope that, at last, the city would answer basic questions and implement a transparent administrative structure. We testified before the Task Force, applauding their efforts. Today we find no record of their proceedings on DDOT's web site beyond a meeting last March 2013, nearly a year ago, and we understand that the timeline for completing their work has been lengthened. *We urge this Committee to call Mr. Lew and other members of the Task Force to testify on its progress and findings; and budget no further funds for streetcars until the Task Force report is presented.*

In addition, the failure to have a maintenance facility siting plan led to an outrageous decision to locate the first car barn on the historic Spingarn High School campus adjacent to the historic Langston Golf Course. The community deeply resents the location of this industrial facility in their residential neighborhood and has pointed out other nearby sites that would have been more appropriate but were not adequately considered.

Unfortunately, the Union Station to Georgetown feasibility study fails to propose specific sites for the 8-9 acre Vehicle Maintenance and Storage Facility outlined on pages 36-41 consisting of a storage yard to accommodate 12 streetcars (2-3 acres), a vehicle maintenance shop building, automobile parking and an Operations Control Center (6 more acres). Where will DDOT find 8-9 acres with appropriate industrial zoning between North Capitol Street and Georgetown?

*We ask that siting of the maintenance facility to serve this route precede any further expenditure west of Union Station.*

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.