

The Committee of 100  
on the Federal City



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## COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Performance Oversight Hearing

District Department of Transportation

Statement of

**Monte Edwards**

Friday, March 6, 2015

I am Monte Edwards, Vice-Chair of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City.

First, let me compliment Acting Director Lief Dormsjo for his refreshing testimony at the February 4 hearing on Streetcar Propulsion Technology. He acknowledged that DDOT has approached streetcars on an “ad hoc and inconsistent manner” and promised to take an unbiased approach to non-overhead wire propulsion technology.

Mr. Dormsjo also stated that DDOT is looking closely at non-overhead wire technology for each new segment of the system, that periodic updates to the propulsion study are appropriate, and that as technology becomes available, DDOT will consider repurposing existing streetcars or consider selling them. The Committee of 100 endorses this pragmatic, objective and forward-looking approach.

### The Anacostia Extension of the Streetcar System.

But that approach was not taken when the Environmental Assessment was prepared for the Anacostia Streetcar Extension. The October 10, 2014 *Finding of No Significant Impact* (FONSI) was based on DDOT’s Environmental Assessment that neither acknowledged nor complied with the law. The *Transportation Infrastructure Amendment Act of 2010* requires that before overhead wires can be installed in parts of the City beyond H Street/Benning Road, (DC Code §9-1173):

... 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 required report was not provided to Council and the Environmental Assessment did not address “the feasibility of using non-aerial power as a means of propulsion” for the Anacostia Extension. *The FONSI for the Anacostia Extension is entitled to no weight and the Environmental Assessment for the Anacostia Extension must be re-opened to address the requirements of DC Code §9-1173.*

The Virginia Avenue Tunnel Litigation

Litigation challenging the NEPA process about enlarging the Virginia Avenue tunnel is now underway in Federal Court. Under current plans, major construction, involving excavation, could begin in late March or early April. It makes no sense to begin construction that might have to be stopped in midstream. DDOT can prevent that wasteful outcome by not issuing the construction permits until the litigation is concluded.

The Move DC Plan.

moveDC, the District’s long range intermodal transportation plan, is a good first step. But it is incomplete. Inexplicably, it fails to embrace the important role of commuter rail in removing commuters from our streets and providing better access to jobs for DC residents as well as commuters. *Commuter rail is not even assigned a transportation priority in moveDC.* The Committee of 100 has frequently and consistently expressed the view that commuter rail offers the most effective and efficient alternative to automobile commuting and would greatly reduce congestion and emissions, and we are hopeful that we can work with Director Dormsjo’s staff to ensure that this obvious and essential concept is fully incorporated into DC’s long range intermodal transportation plan.

The Committee of 100 is hopeful about the pragmatic, new direction that Director Dormsjo has announced for streetcar propulsion. But he has inherited significant problems such as the Anacostia Extension environmental assessment, the Virginia Avenue tunnel litigation, and the moveDC Long Range Intermodal Transportation Plan that will also require pragmatic readjustments of DDOT’s policies and culture.

Thank you.