

CAPITOL HILL RESTORATION SOCIETY



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**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Department of Transportation Budget Hearing**  
Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request Act and Budget Support Act of 2010

Statement of  
**Monte Edwards**

On behalf of the  
**Capitol Hill Restoration Society**

Monday, April 26, 2010

The Capitol Hill Restoration Society supports the Department of Transportation's intention to develop and operate a 37-mile streetcar system. A well-planned streetcar system can spur economic development, connect neighborhoods, and relieve Metro overcrowding. Along with a well-maintained subway and bus system, streetcars can provide significant environmental benefits by reducing transportation energy consumption and pollution generation in comparison with automobiles, as well as increasing personal mobility.

However, we do not believe that the City has adequately evaluated or planned how best to implement our streetcar system. The District has laid track and purchased cars. Those cars were purchased in 2005, as part of a planned Anacostia Streetcar demonstration project, funded with money that we understand resulted from some even older DC Transit fare litigation, coupled with the hope of operating on the unused CSX right-of-way in Anacostia. The City wasn't able to buy the CSX right-of-way, but did end up with the three streetcars. The initial segment of our streetcar system is being designed around the capabilities of those three older cars: cars purchased in 2005 for a system that will probably not enter service until 2013. We should not put the cart before the horse and end up with a 3% solution by allowing those three cars to determine the design of even the initial segment of our planned 37-mile system that will likely require a hundred cars.

There is a claim that some compromise on the decision whether to use overhead wires is needed in order for this important transportation project to proceed, and that evaluating the use of non-overhead-wire systems might delay the project. But we know of no one advocating actions that would require any delay. There is also the claim that wireless alternatives are known to be more costly and less reliable than an overhead wire system. But there is no basis for that claim, because DC has done no evaluation of these alternative technologies.

Yes, evaluation and analysis need to be done, but the Streetcar Project need not be stopped while they are being done. DDOT estimates it will be more than 2 1/2 years until the first streetcars roll. The City needs to use the first part of that time to conduct an independent analysis and evaluation of the initial capital and long-term (operating and maintenance) costs of alternative propulsion systems, and weigh the pros and cons of those systems.

Currently, there is no systematic independent engineering study of the range of technologies and their applicability to our City. The good news is that wireless technology is in use, and our City can build on the evaluations of that technology that have been done by others. Charlotte, NC, has prepared a report evaluating non-overhead wire technology that is to be published this month. Kawasaki has been operating the SWIMO system in Japan since 2007. CAF of Spain initiated non-overhead wire service in Seville, Spain, last week, and is now installing a non-overhead wire system in Saragossa. Bombardier is installing a non-overhead wire system in Germany this summer. Those systems were evaluated and determined to be reliable and economically viable. Those evaluations can provide DC with a baseline and significant time savings in its planning and evaluation of streetcar technology.

CHRS recommends that DDOT's budget include a specific line item to perform such an evaluation so that our City can have a 21<sup>st</sup> Century streetcar system, likely to attract the best of the streetcar suppliers as well as substantial Congressional funding.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.