



## Benning Road Streetcar Extension Feasibility Study Transcribed Comments from Public Meeting #1

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### Location:

Department of Employment Services, 4058 Minnesota Avenue NE  
September 6, 2012

**Meeting Time:** 6:00pm-8:00pm

**Total Number of Participants:** 47 participants

### Meeting Agenda:

6:00pm	Open House
6:30pm	Presentation
7:00pm	Break-out Group Discussions
7:30pm	Break-out Summary & Meeting Wrap-up

### Welcome – Circe Torruellas, DDOT

### Study Overview – Selman Altun, AECOM

- DC Streetcar Proposed System Plan
- Study Purpose: engineering and planning feasibility
- Corridor Needs: additional capacity to relieve crowded bus lines; connect Ward 7 neighborhoods with employment and activity centers
- A closer look at two termini options represented by dashed line on slides
- Study Timeline: currently beyond the mid-point, stakeholder outreach. Next public meeting is slated for late fall or early winter.
  1. Data Collection
  2. Initial Engineering and Planning Analyses
  3. Development of Conceptual Options
- A review of previous planning dating back to 2005
- A look at other related studies:

### Stay Connected

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1. Far Northeast Livability Study
  2. Great Streets
  3. Revitalization of Minnesota Avenue
- A review of expected ridership based on development
    - Engineering considerations
    - Bridge structures
    - Roadway geometry
    - Utilities
    - Right-of-way
    - Multimodal traffic
    - On-street parking effects
  - Planning considerations: stop locations; allows for future connections to other streetcar lines, etc.
  - Initial termini options
  - Community considerations and input
  - NEXT STEPS: technical portion of study continues; Public Meeting #2 in late fall of 2012 to present draft recommendations

### **Question and Answer Period**

Q: Is DDOT exploring ways to alleviate the traffic congestion that already exists, especially at the Benning Rd and Minnesota Ave intersection?

A: Alleviating traffic congestion is the primary focus of the study. Pedestrian concerns are being considered first, then traffic concerns.

Q: If the line is extended, would you add additional streetcars?

A: Possibly. DDOT's goal is a turnaround time (also called headway) of ten minutes.

Q: So, if there is a 20-minute headway, that requires four cars, right?

A: The goal is 10-minute headways. We will already have vehicles in rotation. Adding additional service, or stops, could mean adding more vehicles if the existing fleet are unable to keep 10-minute headways. The number of additional vehicles will depend on the length of the extension, the number of stops and the current size of the fleet. Once we know the parameters, we will review and run the math.

Q: Resident and Circulator Driver: It looks like the streetcar will be in the same lane as traffic.

A: The streetcar as indicated here would run in mixed traffic, just as it will on the rest of H/Benning and it does in other cities. We are also studying the possibility of having a portion of the bridge dedicated to streetcar.

Q: The operators will need bathroom access. Is that being considered at the terminus points?

A: Yes.

Q: What is the decision for the use of the overhead catenary wires?

A: The H/Benning line will use overhead wires, and this extension is currently expected to follow that policy. Early technology for wireless streetcar vehicles does exist, but is not yet affordable at a

practical scale. However, the District is keeping a close eye on this technology and how it might be used here. If there is a shift in policy on overhead wires, we will communicate it.

Q: What is being done to partner with developers to help with revenue?

A: The Office of Planning is exploring economic development potential that will result from the streetcar line – many cities experience substantial economic development in and around a new streetcar line. OP's Streetcar Land Use Study examines this topic and is available online at [www.planning.dc.gov](http://www.planning.dc.gov).

### **Break-out Group Discussions**

#### Breakout Session, Table 1:

1. Traffic is very bad on Benning Road. Is it possible to remove the Shrimp Boat?
2. I'm glad DC is doing this extension; it doesn't make sense to end the line at Oklahoma Avenue. Ward 7 needs this.
3. Left turns are difficult at the intersection of Minnesota & Benning. Review the roadway geometry, turn lanes, etc.
4. Streetcars can't go around parked cars. Remove parking lanes on Benning Road east of Minnesota Avenue. Curbside running would force the elimination of on-street parking.
5. The original streetcar system prior to 1963 went to Baltimore, via Kenilworth Avenue. Restore the dedicated right-of-way on Kenilworth (Dean St).
6. Median-running is better for dedicated right-of-way.
7. Streetcars should loop at each end. Doors are on one side of the vehicle, and this would allow for more seating on the streetcar.
8. Need special signalization for streetcars, so they can go first through each intersection.
9. Should westbound stops be on the south side of Benning Road before the intersection with Minnesota Avenue, or after the intersection on the east side of Minnesota?
10. Streetcars should replace some bus service on H Street NE and Benning Road (X1-2-3-9).
11. The WMATA board member from DC could suggest supplanting some bus service with streetcar service.
12. Minnesota Avenue is currently scheduled for rehabilitation, so can DDOT put the tracks in simultaneously, as they did with H Street NE?
13. Improvements to Benning Road should include more traffic calming to slow cars. The light at 39th Street NE has helped with pedestrian safety.
14. Why have the streetcar run in mixed traffic? Streetcars get bogged down in the same traffic as cars if there is no dedicated lane.
15. The streetcar terminal should be right here at Minnesota Avenue Metro Station. A loop allows the streetcar to connect with buses and provides a layover/recovery time location.
16. Don't have the streetcar terminate at Benning Road Metro; extend it down East Capitol Street to Capitol Heights Metro. This will provide more economic development. There is already a median on East Capitol Street to facilitate this. A Wal-Mart is planned at 58th Street, and a streetcar extension to Capitol Heights would serve it.
17. The spacing and location of stops seems adequate. Kingman Island could be skipped in non-park hours.
18. Access to areas in the far east of the District will facilitate economic development.

19. How will streetcars turn at the intersection of Benning & Minnesota? It's a complicated intersection. How will new development at this intersection affect turning movements?
20. The frontage along the north side of Benning Road is not owned by the National Park Service. Is there the potential to widen the roadway here?
21. There is not much on-street parking as it is on Benning Road, so removing lanes shouldn't matter.
22. Can the Police Station and Shrimp Boat on Benning Road be relocated?
23. Watch out for "tail-swing" from turning vehicles.
24. Is DDOT looking at extending the streetcar line west of Union Station?
25. Will there be better coordination with traffic and roadway people at DDOT? Don't waste money.
26. Top priorities for this group:
  - a. Redesign the intersection of Benning Road and Minnesota Avenue.
    - i. Turning movements, pedestrian safety, etc.
    - ii. Egress at Benning Road is dangerous.
  - b. Look at future expansion of the streetcar line to Capital Heights Metro, Deanwood, and west of Union Station.

Breakout Session, Table 2:

1. Curbside pick-up preferred to middle of the road.
2. With more doors for streetcars, you have less room for seats.
3. What is the density of residential and commercial populations?
4. Kiss-and-ride area might be a good termini for Minnesota Avenue since it is underutilized
5. Possible caveat: WMATA has the right of way for kiss-and-ride, so negotiations would have to take place.
6. Whatever proposed termini are, they need to meet the 70' turning radius for streetcar.
7. Terminal points: Minnesota Ave, 1<sup>st</sup> stop, Benning Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> stop.
8. Pedestrian safety issues to consider at the Minnesota/Benning intersection.
9. Frequent, consistent communication re: timing of construction, phases, duration.
10. Potential stops: major intersections, anywhere where there is a Metrorail or bus stop, possible shared stops.
11. Media.
12. Metrobus and Streetcar, collaboration: staggered service (every 5 minutes), shared stops.
13. Concerns with median drop off: ADA compliance issues, difficulty with baby strollers.
14. Concerns with curbside drop off: loss of parking, businesses negatively impacted, traffic holdup for turning vehicle that have to wait for boarding and de-boarding.
15. Top 3 priorities for this group
  1. Safety at stops and crossings (ADA issues)
  2. Servicing both residential and commercial
  3. Timing of construction and effective communication

Breakout Session, Table 3:

1. Having the terminal at Minnesota Avenue Metro makes sense in terms of the turning radius and existing right-of-way. It also will serve more students who go to school there, and will reduce pedestrian conflicts. On the other hand, having the terminal at Benning Road will allow the

streetcar to serve more people and provide more opportunity for development. The reconstruction of Benning Road doesn't make a difference.

2. Stop locations: Need more stops in the River Terrace area – every quarter-mile.
3. Need dedicated right-of-way on the sides of bridges.
4. What will the construction impacts be from Oklahoma to 34th Street NE?
5. A lot of people ride the Metrobus X2. What will the effect of the streetcar be on local bus service?
6. Streetcar operations:
  - a. Consideration for disabled people and seniors;
  - b. Curbside alignment will allow for more auto traffic, and pedestrians would not have to cross the street;
  - c. On Benning Road, the alignment should be curb to median to curb.
  - d. There are parking issues for residents who live along Benning Road;
  - e. Metrobus should not replicate streetcar service. Have streetcar service be more express, and have buses provide local service;
  - f. Can the streetcar tunnel under Benning Road at Kingman Park?
  - g. Provide a boarding location near Spingarn High School. Kids cross the street there; so be concerned about pedestrians.
7. Additional concerns:
  - a. The location of the car barn should be in the RFK Stadium parking lot, not near Spingarn High School;
  - b. Benning Road has a lot of pedestrians and car traffic; and the roadway has just been improved, so why tear it up? The 7D ANC commissioner thinks it's not a good idea to have the streetcar on Benning Road east of Minnesota Avenue;
  - c. What is the timeframe for the streetcar extension project?
  - d. What will be the economic development impact on the streetcar segment of Benning Road between H Street and Minnesota Avenue?

#### Breakout Session, Table 4:

1. Having the terminal at Benning Road Metro:
  - a. Advantages
    - i. Provides longer commuter service
    - ii. Allows more development opportunity at Benning Road Metro area
    - iii. Captures more riders
    - iv. Reduces congestion
    - v. Works well with future streetcar lines
  - b. Disadvantages
    - i. Existing Benning Road construction
    - ii. No accommodations for parking
    - iii. No Park & Ride – won't alleviate traffic into the District
2. Having the terminal at Minnesota Avenue Metro:
  - a. Advantages
    - i. The parking lot makes a useful turnaround
    - ii. Would work well with future Minnesota Avenue Line development
  - b. Disadvantages
    - i. Existing traffic
    - ii. The left turn onto Minnesota Avenue from Benning Road is difficult

iii. Competition with existing bus traffic; narrow, single lanes

3. Stations:
  - a. Kingman Island – not needed now, but maybe in the future. People can walk there from Oklahoma Avenue. Would there be NPS issues? Is it a waste of money?
  - b. 34th Street NE – lots of residential communities south of here; future development to the north.
  - c. Minnesota Avenue – can the stop be placed in front of the library? Then it would serve the proposed development at the shopping center.
  - d. 42nd Street NE – Move the stop west to the Boys & Girls Club. Concerns about refueling station at this location.
4. Curbside running streetcar is the preferred option, because of safety issues, although it would be noisier for homeowners. Parking may or may not be an issue depending on the location.
5. Bus service may or may not be complementary with streetcar service; it depends on the location and time of day.
6. Additional concerns:
  - a. Construction on Benning Road
  - b. Power outages
  - c. Build a separate bridge for the streetcar
  - d. Will mode changes occur? Will people leave their cars at home?

Comment Sheets:

1. I believe that we (residents of Ward 7 east of the Anacostia River) need a streetcar connection to the rest of the city. I'm also interested in public art. I hope the streetcar extension offers more opportunities for public input. For local residents who live one block from the Minnesota Avenue Metro Station: what other community benefits can we have?
2. Why not take the streetcar right up East Capitol Street through the medians and connect to Capitol Heights Metro? This plan would really bring economic development to the ward. It would give businesses and companies a reason to come east of the river. That strip of East Capitol Street is a desert for food, entertainment, community centers, and economic development. I think overhead wires make the streets look cluttered; and with the way Pepco operates, we would never have consistent power for the streetcar system. To pay for streetcars, we should look at selling aesthetically pleasing local advertisements.
3. Refer to "Capitol Traction and Electric Proposal" regarding Route 10.