



Transportation Committee - Board of Representatives

Robert "Gabe" DeLuca, Chair Terry Adams, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Thursday, October 15, 2009
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Republican Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard

The Transportation Committee met as indicated above. Present were Chair DeLuca and Committee Member Reps. Franzetti, McNeil, Raduazzo, Young & Zelinsky. Absent/excused were Committee Member Reps. Adams, Giordano and Lombardo. Also present were Ben Barnes, Director of Operations; Stuart Popper, David Chase and Stephen Gazillo of URS; Josh Lecar of the City of Stamford; Jack Conclin of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce; Marty Levine; and Maddie Shapiro.

Chair DeLuca called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m, and noted that New Haven is looking at a similar system.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. T27.061	REVIEW; Light Rail Study .	REPORT MADE

Mr. Gazillo circulated a 6-page summary of the study ([attached](#)), and noted:

- There is strong national interest in light rail;
- The NY Times recently did an article on a proposed light rail project;

Mr. Gazillo also distributed a table with 31 other U.S. systems ([attached](#)) and noted that Stamford falls in the middle of the 31 other cities. Mr. Gazillo gave a brief presentation (see slides [attached](#)), and noted:

- Stuart Popper and David Chase are in attendance, Mr. Popper is responsible for looking at the systems from a municipal planning perspective; Mr. Chase is the lead engineer.

- The economic development impact assessment is one of the first studies of its kind in the U.S. that tries to project what the potential impact is, using valid data. There will be a detailed economic report included in the final report.

The Committee members & guests asked questions of URS staff, and in response, learned:

- Street car operators are usually bus drivers.
- There are four types of cars under consideration – ranging in cost from \$1.3 million to \$3.3 million.
- The \$25 million contingency is recommended by the Federal Transit Authority.
- The cost estimates are very preliminary as no engineering has done.
- Ben Barnes noted that the City is moving forward with a design for the Atlantic Street underpass. This is a critical access point to the South End regardless of whether Stamford adopts a light rail system. Cost estimates range from \$30 to \$65 million dollars.
- Bus ridership is 13,930 rides per day for the entire city; the downtown area, Bus Route #31, which is Bedford – High Ridge, has a daily ridership of 1,451.
- Mr. Lecar noted that this project is designed to attract new riders who currently don't use city buses.
- There are 78,960 daily trips into Stamford; there are 2,500 shuttle users from the train station to office buildings with about 50 different shuttle vehicles.
- Mr. Franzetti asked about the grade limitations for the street cards; a 6% grade is possible, though 5% is the desired grade.
- Mr. Lecar stated that this service would most likely be operated by CT Transit, which currently operates the bus system. It is not expected that the City would contribute to any operating costs. The price of a trolley ride is expected to be the same as a bus ride.
- Rep. Raduazzo questioned how the \$800 million property value increase was arrived at. Mr. Gazillo explained that existing commercial and residential buildings along the route would eventually be renovated to a greater density. He concurred that Master Plan & zoning changes would be necessary.
- Rep. Raduazzo asked for a description of a typical rider. The target market is not commuters who drive into the city. It is designed to attract a population that will have fewer cars, who want a downtown living situation (e.g., empty nesters) and includes those who typically don't use public transportation.
- Mr. Gazillo stated that the study did not include a ridership assessment component.
- Mr. Raduazzo stated that the cities used as examples are not similar to Stamford. He questioned the demand, citing his parents as an example,

who live in North Stamford, and could only theoretically use it by driving to an access point.

- Mr. LeCar stated that Park & Ride has been considered, but until a final route is decided on, this was still only an option.
- Rep. Zelinsky stated that it was his opinion this is not needed, that this will result in Stamford residents paying for a transportation system that will be only used by commuters. Only 2 of the cities cited as an example are smaller than Stamford. This is a luxury, not a necessity. With a 30% vacancy rate in downtown Stamford, and with a project that will take ten years, he is not in favor of it.
- Rep. Mallozzi asked why a marked lane and increased bus service wouldn't be feasible – especially because it would cost tens of millions of dollars less. Mr. Gazillo responded that many cities initially consult with URS for an increased bus program, but eventually switch to a light rail project.
- Chair DeLuca noted that a majority of the Board of Representatives approved the study, and he did not want the generally unfavorable view of the committee to be considered the opinion of the full Board.

Chair DeLuca asked for comments from members of the public who attended the meeting:

- Ms. Shapiro questioned whether these buses are “green,” and was assured that they are environmentally friendly. She expressed concerns about increased taxing that could result from this project.

Mr. Gazillo offered to arrange a tour of the Jersey City system, so that the members of the Committee (and others) could see the economic development that took place along the route.

- Mr. Levine expressed misgivings with the route because the City's Master Plan calls for intensive commercial development in the downtown core, not up Summer & Bedford Streets. Further, the route under consideration goes through well-established single-family residential neighborhoods, and he is concerned that those residents would not be in favor of a system like this. Mr. LeCar stated that the system is intended to support some existing buildings and is intended to help certain properties on the line that have difficulty remaining occupied. Mr. Levine felt that a fixed transit line doesn't offer the flexibility that Stamford really needs.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Robert “Gabe” DeLuca, Chair