



**Transportation Committee –
Board of Representatives**

Robert "Gabe" DeLuca, Chair

Terry Adams, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Thursday, June 24, 2010

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, Vice Chair Adams, and Committee Member Reps. McNeil, Raduazzo and Young. Also present were Clerk of the Board Summerville; Robin Stein, Land Use; Josh LeCar; Transportation Planner, Stephen Gazillo of URS; and approximately 15 members of the public. Those members of the public who were present at the public hearing are listed on the attached sign-in sheet.

Chair DeLuca called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. <u>T28.005</u>	PUBLIC HEARING; review of the final Light Rail Plan.	Report Made

Chair DeLuca opened the public hearing. Members of the public had various comments both for and against the use of light rail in Stamford and questions about the use of light rail and the report, as follows:

- Light rail could ease the burden on the City from increased commuter traffic and growing demands on the City's infrastructure
- Light rail may address the uncertainty of future energy costs
- Limited phased introduction and use of used equipment could ease the burden on the city
- Light rail would promote development in the City
- Light rail would be more environmentally friendly and faster than buses
- The streets of Stamford are not designed for use of light rail and would require the elimination of street parking
- Light rail would increase traffic problems of people trying to reach the Merritt
- A better approach might be to increase the number of buses
- Light rail might increase the draw of people to Stamford as a tourist or shopping destination
- Use of trolleys would be too inflexible
- Tracks in the pavement could create problems of people tripping and difficulties for snow plowing and the overhead lines would interfere with the parade
- Stamford does not have the population density to support light rail
- The proposed light rail route "doesn't go anywhere"
- The report does not address all issues

- Stamford would benefit more from an east/west trolley, but there is no way to do that because the city is not a grid
- It is good to consider all the alternatives, since no change will come on-line for 15 to 20 years
- Cross-traffic would create a problem
- Co-use of streets by trolleys and cars would block traffic
- Stamford does not have the real estate available for light rail
- An elevated monorail or subway would be preferable
- The construction of this type of project could bring the city to its knees
- Consider connecting to the future ferry service
- What happens if the city loses electricity
- This would decrease property values
- The city should try a bus loop system or jitney first
- Why is this any better than transit buses with light prioritization?
- Who would use this service?
- What need is being filled?
- Light rail would be a way to attract younger people to the City who are more concerned about their carbon footprint and may not have cars
- Streetcars are not reliable and breakdowns would cause traffic problems

A copy of one member of the public's written statement is attached [hereto](#). Chair DeLuca closed the public hearing.

Stephen Gazillo, from URS, the consultant hired by the City to prepare the report, responded to some of the concerns and questions raised during the public hearing. The report is available at <http://www.stamfordlrtstudy.com>. He stated that URS was asked to explore the feasibility of streetcars in Stamford. He noted that the report suggests that dedicated bus lines may be a way to start. URS was not asked to do an alternatives analysis; that would be the next step in the process. An alternatives analysis would include a ridership analysis. Their experience is that streetcars do reduce traffic and attract development, although potential economic development was not a question they were originally asked to address. Their experience is that streetcars provide attractive options to cars. Josh LeCar said that the Transportation Department has been looking at ways to make Stamford more sustainable. The premise in looking at streetcars is that they would have the same operating costs as buses, which come out of the state budget. Funding of streetcars would be through federal grants; the federal government has been encouraging cities to look into streetcars and light rail. He said that light rail tends to increase development. In those cities where development has not increased, there have been declining regional economies. In response to questions from the committee, Mr. LeCar stated that at this time, no eminent domain issues would be raised by the light rail. Light rail is used in many cities with worse winter weather than Stamford, such as Toronto and Buffalo. The study helped the department focus on using light rail as a way to increase economic development and to attract a broader ridership than is currently using the buses. Mr. Gazillo noted that in planning a light rail, the city would involve bicyclists and be aware of potential safety issues for cars, pedestrians and bicyclists. He noted that the cost of a monorail would be prohibitive. He said that traffic disruption during installation could be minimized because the tracks are only 18" deep and the work could be done one block at a time for a few weeks per block. The route proposed in the report is a starter system from which the City could expand. Mr. LeCar provided the committee with the [attached report](#), entitled "Keep Stamford Moving, Is it time for a Transportation Management Association in Stamford?"

Chair DeLuca stated that the committee realizes that this is a major project and due to economic conditions is something that will not be accomplished in the next 3-5 years. He noted that they recommend that the City should continue to study the feasibility of a new transportation system. Possible alternatives to be considered are: monorail, streetcar, jitney systems to name a few. He reminded the committee that the Swam Report done in 1926 regarding the Mill River Corridor has taken the city 84 years to accomplish, however we would hope that a new transportation system will happen sooner. Needless to say that we feel a project of this nature would not have much trouble under good economic times to obtain funds from the Federal/State Government and developers.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert "Gabe" DeLuca, Chair