

narrow residential streets that are not as naturally conducive to a new fixed-rail system as is H St./Benning Road, a thoroughfare of boulevard proportions. Let's get some answers before we buy more equipment or lay more tracks.

DDOT has not produced basic information about this system. To make good decisions, everyone needs the following from the department:

1. A Streetcar Business Plan - anticipated ridership; capital and operating costs over the life cycle of the equipment; acquisition of land and facilities for maintenance, storage; a capital and operating financial plan including public and private financing.
2. An Operations and Maintenance Plan - including facilities and equipment, recurring costs, training for personnel, interface with WMATA, and description of the new entity that will operate the system.
3. A Detailed Streetcar Route Plan – Site-specific information for the proposed 37-mile system including the anticipated layout of tracks, pedestrian access, and turnarounds on each segment; and the adequacy of the streets to support vehicular traffic as well as bicycles.
4. A Streetcar Technology Assessment Study on each type of streetcar technology, conducted by an objective engineering firm, to determine the pros and cons of all propulsion systems and their first time and life-cycle costs BEFORE DC commits to any one system.
5. A Public Streetcar Technology Showcase to engage the public in understanding new technologies, system interfaces, “open system architecture”, etc.
6. An Environmental Impact Statement for the entire system

The last three items on the list warrant further comment.

### **Technology Assessment and Public Showcase**

The city is racing to buy streetcars that require overhead wires without an independent engineering study of wireless systems now being installed in Europe and Japan, or an assessment of the potential application of battery and ultra-capacitor technology now available for buses in the U.S. Inadequate information is fueling a contentious public discussion with many assertions but few facts. This is not serving the city well.

Since DDOT does not seem interested in doing a technology assessment, **we ask the Council to immediately undertake this assessment.** Further, we urge the Council to establish a *Technology Assessment Advisory Group* to include representatives of the organizations most actively engaged in streetcar issues: DC Surface Transit, Committee of 100, CHRS, Sierra Club, ANCs and others. This could help to ensure that the independent consultant's work would address a full range of questions about various technologies, their costs and their applicability to DC. We suggest the same consultants who worked on the Charlotte, NC technology study who would be able to hit the ground running, evaluating our peculiar circumstances and advising us before we invest in 20<sup>th</sup> century technology to address a 21<sup>st</sup> century need.

### **Environmental Impact Statement**

We are concerned that **DDOT has no intention of conducting an Environmental Impact Statement for the entire system.** How can this be? Apparently, the Federal Transit Administration does not fund EIS's for entire streetcar systems because they are not installed at

one time. Does not the city's own environmental law require such a review? And, if so, why would the city proceed without it?

Without a system EIS at the beginning when it really counts, we will not look at all the issues the system will inevitably pose. Instead, DDOT plans to do separate and much less rigorous Environmental Assessments segment-by-segment only in sections where federal funds are involved. This is the equivalent of looking closely at the bark of a tree while failing to see the limbs, the leaves and the roots. This makes a mockery of environmental review, reducing it to a perfunctory, after-the-fact exercise. We strongly urge the Council to make funds available for a full EIS of the streetcar system to steer our choices for the future.

We urge you to move immediately on this request so as not to delay the high priority route on H St./Benning Rd. where merchants are expecting streetcars in 2012.

### **Nothing But the Best**

In closing, I want to reference the attention to streetcars in the press and on various blogs. For the most part, this has been cast as a simplistic zero-sum game informed by few facts with abundant he said/she said quotes and misquotes that pass for journalism or put-downs:

- Monumentalists vs. contemporary urbanists
- Preservationists vs. progressives
- Aesthetes vs. environmentalists
- Ugly wires vs. uglier cars

Nonsense! These compartmentalized characterizations are divisive. They assume that District residents are simpletons who cannot hold and appraise many values simultaneously. They squander good will and fragment public support. Most importantly, they deflect attention from what's really important: *Bringing the benefits of a world-class streetcar system to the residents of DC.*

This city is many things – the nation's capital and an exciting mix of residential neighborhoods. Everyday, we work together to break barriers in our city for families and singles; straights and gays; and people of every color, religion, culture and language.

We ask the Council to settle for nothing but the very best for this great city:

- Nothing but the most thoughtful planning for our streetcar system;
- Nothing but the finest transportation technology that embraces the future; and
- Nothing but the highest aspirations for economic well being, sustainability and urban beauty, not just for tourists downtown, but for neighborhood residents and merchants on H St./Benning Road, Minnesota Ave., Rhode Island Ave., Michigan Ave., 14<sup>th</sup> St., 8<sup>th</sup> St. and Calvert St.

Thank you.