

**BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD 6
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 18, 2010**

ATTENDANCE:

D. ABRAHAM	J. ARMER	W. BLUM
J. COHN	N. COX	J. IGNERI
D. KUMMER	H. LINK	T. MISKEL
M. MURPHY	R. RIGOLLI	R. SLOANE
J. THOMPSON	M. VERRET	

EXCUSED:

S. BURZIO	R. OBERLENDER	G. REILLY
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ABSENT:

D. GIULIANO	J. LEVIN	A. MCKNIGHT
V. MILNE		

GUESTS:

A. ALEXIS - REP. FOR HON. SARA M. GONZALEZ, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
C. HRONES – REP. FOR THE DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
T. WRIGHT – REP. FOR THE DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION
E. MCCLURE N. EL-HINNAURY

*****MINUTES*****

Transportation Committee Minutes 11/18/10

Chris Hrones from the Department of Transportation presented an overview of the **Red Hook Streetcar Feasibility Study**:

Study started about 1½ months ago.

Federal funds secured thru Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez’s office with the help of Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce.

The City is conducting this study because they are looking for more sustainable methods of providing transit, ways to reduce congestion and improve performance.

These principles are in alignment with goals of PlaNYC.

There have been no streetcars in Brooklyn for 50 years.

Other cities have been developing streetcar systems.

Mr. Hrones emphasized that this is a feasibility study, not a plan for a proposed system.

The focus area is Red Hook due to its lack of rail service and objective would be providing connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

He provided a short review of history of streetcars in Brooklyn.

Noted that streetcars are generally restricted to ‘local’ transportation, usually without a dedicated right of way, and share road with other traffic.

Streetcars generally have lower speeds and lower capacities than other rail transit systems, more similar to buses.

All streetcar types are being studied, from historical to contemporary to emerging technologies (such as those without overhead wires).

Three existing systems will be studied for comparison: Portland, Philadelphia and Seattle.

Noted that increased economic development is associated with areas that have streetcar service.

Shallow track systems (such as Portland’s) mean less street reconstruction, less impact on adjacent property owners and businesses. Must be evaluated for suitability to NYC existing streets.

Philadelphia re-used existing track systems.

During the study, possible alignments will be identified. Costs will be estimated and if the project seems feasible, an ‘alternatives analysis’ will be performed.

The study will try to estimate additional ridership.

Study schedule is as follows:

- a. Nov-Dec 2010: examine case studies.
- b. Dec 2010: identify alignments.
- c. Dec – Jan 2011: construction feasibility and cost estimates.
- d. Jan – Feb 2011: feasibility analysis.
- e. Feb 2011: final report.
- f. During this time there will be 3 Community Advisory Council meetings and 1 public meeting (one CAC meeting has already been held).

Q: Will study assess impact on B61 bus service?

A: Depends on alignment. Study will include estimates of ridership based on data from other neighborhoods and other cities with similar conditions.

Q: Will transfer between bus, subway, streetcar be available.

A: Probably – but operator is unknown at this time.

Q: What would operating schedule be? 12hr or 24hr service?

A: Study will address frequency of service and hours. DOT would not want to reduce service from what is currently provided.

Q: Is the system design on the website?

A: There is no design – this is a feasibility study.

Q: Who are consultants and what is the study methodology?

A: Prime consultant is URS. Information about methodology is on the website.

Q: Are any of the case studies about a system that does not work?

A: Case studies are not yet complete - the answer to this is unknown.

Q: How will the various modes (bus, cars, trucks, bikes, streetcars) coexist on one street?

A: This will be addressed by the feasibility study.

Q: What is the purpose of having streetcars in lieu of buses?

A: No decision has been made to have streetcars – the purpose of the study is to determine whether they are feasible. If the study moves to next phase, an alternative analysis will compare streetcars to buses.

Q: Is one of the goals to connect Red Hook to nearby subway lines?

A: Yes.

Q: Are the case studies of systems located in similarly underserved areas?

A: Seattle and Portland systems were located in manufacturing areas, although not quite the same as NY.

Q: Will the study include pedestrian safety?

A: Yes, it will also include impact on other modes such as cars, bikes, etc.

Q: Why not meet the needs of the community with buses? Can't the MTA establish demand based on its data? Is this likely to be a tourist oriented system?

A: This is not an MTA study; there will be coordination with MTA and the study will use MTA data. The MTA may or may not be the operator. There is no plan for a system – this is a feasibility study. If the outcome of this study warrants it, an alternatives analysis will be performed which will compare a streetcar system to a bus system. Re tourists: streetcar system is conceived as local transit, not necessarily tourist oriented.

Comment: Suggest study consider connections within Red Hook to knit the community together.

Comment: Con Ed should be contacted to be sure that sufficient power is available. There should be additional local generating capacity to ensure against loss of service in power failure.

CH: System would have backup and contingency plans for emergencies.

Ted Wright of DOT presented an update on the status of the **Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway**. He started with a summary of the presentation at the Red Hook workshop:

Working toward publishing a master plan of the project in 2011.

Current efforts include preliminary design, implementing and improving segments.

2 workshops held already, 1 more planned.

North Brooklyn: 3 miles completed.

Columbia Street and Brooklyn Bridge Park 1.5 miles completed.

The workshop identified several alternative routes through Red Hook. Wright showed the routes and drawings of the proposed improvements to streets along the routes. The most desired route

is generally along the waterfront although there are feasibility challenges with them. The routes and their alternatives are:

- A. Imlay street then over to waterfront and south: problems include access to private property along the waterfront.
- B. Skip waterfront by going along Conover.
- C. Direct route down Van Brunt – problems include the narrow width of the street.
- D. Along waterfront south of Fairway – problems include access to private property and narrow width of the space along the waterfront, crossing the water between piers.
- E. Along Beard Street.
- F. Through the Red Hook Recreation area following Halleck Street which is currently closed.
- G. Through the Red Hook Recreation area using local streets such as Bay Street.
- H. The last leg through the industrial areas on Court and Smith Streets are challenging due to the intensive current commercial and industrial use.
- I. The connection to Sunset Park is complicated by Gowanus Canal and probable necessity of routing the Greenway along Hamilton Avenue. There is a lot of interest in a bridge, but this is a major capital expense.

Q: Is the Greenway conceived as a recreational route rather than a commuter route?

A: Both; especially important to provide a safe route for children, but commuters will also benefit. The section along Columbia Street and thru BBP is a good example.

Q: Is bridge over the Gowanus still being considered?

A: Yes, as a long term goal, but there is no funding available at present for this type of element.

Q: What will be the impact on the working waterfront? Will any of the routes preclude maritime development?

A: We are coordinating with the relevant agencies such as Port Authority; the goal is not to interfere with waterfront use, and it is a consideration in the design.

Q: CB6 has in the past promoted extending (Conover?) Street through the port. Can you work with EDC and Port Authority to reconsider?

A: EDC and PA have been helpful in getting this area more open.

Q: How will you work with the private property owner at the Fairway site?

A: There is probably not enough space for the greenway to go behind the Fairway building.

Discussion regarding the **proposed alterations to Plaza Street bicycle paths at Grand Army Plaza**. Daniel Kummer stated that CB6 did not have adequate time to review and consider the proposed alterations at the full meeting. He proposed that the issue be reconsidered and opened for more community input.

Chris Hrones stated that DOT had no problem taking more public input. The proposed work is not scheduled until late spring, so there is still time to review.

Bill Blum stated that DOT made a clear presentation in April 2010 and the plan was supported unanimously by the Transportation Committee. He stated the issue shouldn't be revisited.

Daniel Kummer stated that the Board was not aware of certain portions of the plan.

Consensus was that there was no reason to revisit the matter; no motion necessary; no more input from the committee required.

John Heyer II made a presentation on behalf of Van Westerhout Cittadini Molesi Social Club **proposing co-naming the block of Court Street between 3rd Place and 4th Place** as the "Citizens of Mola Way". Several community members spoke in support of the proposal.

Bill Blum made a motion to approve, seconded by Daniel Kummer, and motion was passed.

Motion made to approve minutes of previous meeting by Bill Blum, seconded by Roy Sloane, passed.