

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: DOWNTOWN STREETCAR, Authorization for Application for and Acceptance of \$800,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration for an Alternatives Analysis study (Deputy Director, Economic Development Administration).

REPORT: 1455-04

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

The South Central Regional Council of Governments completed a streetcar assessment for the City of New Haven in 2008. The City of New Haven continued this work with a Concept Plan and Preliminary Alignment Study in 2011. As part of the 2011 study, City and State officials briefed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on the project and expressed interest in continuing this project as a transportation and economic enhancement for Downtown New Haven.

The next step in the FTA process is an Alternatives Analysis Study to assist potential sponsors of this future federally-funded transit project in the evaluation of all reasonable modal and multi-modal alternatives and general alignment options, and to address the transportation needs in a defined travel corridor.

On June 27, 2011, the FTA announced the availability of FY12 discretionary funding for such studies to be awarded on a competitive basis. The City intends to apply for \$800,000 in federal funding. If approved, the local share match would be \$200,000 using city capital funds as available and/or state transportation planning funds.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The proposed starter alignment for the streetcar spans approximately one and a half miles through Downtown New Haven. This area is bounded by the medical district and Union Station in the south and Science Hill and Yale University in the north. This study area represents a promising market for a streetcar system. The area is home to more than 56,700 residents, and its population density compares favorably to the population densities around streetcar alignments that are either in operation or have received Federal funding. There is an active base of pedestrians and bicyclists as more residents live closer to work. The study area is also home to growing regional economic center. The market consists of approximately 2.8 million square feet of commercial office space. The vacancy rate stands at just 12.6%, well below the national average. It includes some of the largest employers in the region and approximately 75% of the 78,000 jobs in New Haven.

The New Haven Streetcar is intended to connect communities through more public transportation choices, grow the local and regional economy, and contribute to thriving neighborhoods through sustainable investment in transit. Downtown New Haven is a central hub for local and regional transit services, but it lacks a seamless, highly visible connection between transportation hubs and Downtown activity centers that are beyond walking range.

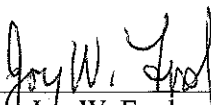
Besides promoting economic growth, transit helps neighborhoods thrive by giving community members an alternative to automobile ownership and use. Approximately 29% of all New Haven residents do not have access to a private automobile. Transit helps protect the environment and improve neighborhood livability by diverting cars from our city streets and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Neighborhoods with transit preserve mobility, encourage walking, support higher property values, and promote overall public health.

ADVICE

The Commission is pleased to recommend approval.

ADOPTED: August 17, 2011
Roy Smith, Jr.
Vice Chair

ATTEST:


Joy W. Ford
Planner