

The Streetcar Land Use Study
Opening Statement
February 1, 2012

Good morning, the time is 10:10 A.M. February 1, 2012. I am Councilmember Tommy Wells, Chairperson of the Committee on Libraries, Parks, Recreation, and Planning. We are here today in the Council Chamber of the John A. Wilson Building to conduct a public oversight roundtable on the Streetcar Land Use Study. I am joined by Councilmember Cheh, who is co-hosting this Roundtable as Chairperson of the Committee on the Environment, Public Works, and Transportation. Chairman Kwame Brown is also likely to join us in his capacity as Oversight Chair for the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development. *[Other Councilmembers?]*

Let me briefly explain the plan for today. I will make a brief opening statement and will then invite Councilmember Cheh to do the same, followed by any other Councilmembers present. We will then receive a presentation and testimony from Harriet Tregoning, Director of the District's Office of Planning, who led the development of this study. She will be joined by Terry Bellamy, Director of the District Department of Transportation.

We will then hear from public witnesses. Finally, we will ask questions of Director Tregoning and Director Bellamy.

I have read the study and want to begin by complementing the Office of Planning for a meaningful, concise, and groundbreaking piece of work.

Our streetcar system is the next generation of public transportation for DC. This research confirms that investing in this new transit option to connect DC's

neighborhoods will create more jobs, new local economic development, improved transportation choices, and a more livable, walkable city.”

We recently learned that DC’s growth continues to accelerate. With a growth rate of about 2.7% since the 2010 census, DC grew faster than all other states by a long shot. We nearly tripled the national growth rate (thanks in no small part to some of the talented leaders here today).

With that growth comes a responsibility to invest in the necessary infrastructure. Even before the most recent growth numbers, Metrorail was projected to hit capacity in the core of DC -- that means running full length cars, at full capacity, as frequently as the system can handle. So, either we need dig new metro tunnels, which would be extremely expensive, get more folks to take the bus, or fund something new like streetcar.

As those who attended my “rediscover the bus” tour know, I am a big fan of getting more people on the bus. But I’m also aware that in the US, bus routes haven’t inspired much economic development, and they certainly haven’t inspired private sector direct investment.

In many regards, streetcar may be the cheapest way for the District to get some of the transit capacity enhancements that we will need to accommodate projected growth in public transportation.

While this Streetcar Land Use plan strengthens the case for the full 37-mile streetcar network, it also highlights the urgency of getting our first leg up and running on H Street / Benning Road. Analysis is one thing, but nothing makes the point like having an operating streetcar that people can actually ride.

I will continue to work with DDOT to ensure that our first streetcar line on H Street – Benning Road begins operation in 2013.

With that, Councilmember Cheh, do you have an opening statement?S