

**TESTIMONY OF HARRIET TREGONING
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF PLANNING**

**BEFORE
THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
KWAME R. BROWN, CHAIR**

**COMMITTEE ON LIBRARIES, PARKS, RECREATION AND PLANNING
TOMMY WELLS, CHAIR**

**COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORTATION
MARY CHEH, CHAIR**



The District's Streetcar Land Use Study

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2012

10:30 AM

ROOM 500

1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Good morning Chairman Brown, Chairman Wells, Chairperson Cheh and members of the Committee of the Whole, the Committee on Libraries, Parks, Recreation and Planning, and the Committee on the Environment, Public Works and Transportation. I am Harriet Tregoning, Director of the Office of Planning (OP). I am pleased to be here to share with the Committee the results of our analysis of the potential land use impacts of the District's proposed 37-mile streetcar system.

As you know, the District is a growing city. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the District had almost 618,000 residents as of July 1, 2011. Over 16,000 more residents now call DC home in the 15 months since we completed the 2010 Census, when the population stood at 601,723. The 2010 Census results also showed a 5.2% increase in the District's population since 2000. Much of the District's population growth is coming from domestic and international migration—this accounted for 66% of the increase in the July 2011 numbers.

These new residents are being drawn to the District for many reasons—jobs; livable and lively neighborhoods; the city's diversity, including a large international contingent; high quality educational and cultural offerings; and varied and low cost transportation options. Over the last decade or so we have seen transportation preferences change. Many residents are living car-free or "car-light." You can walk or take Metro, Bikeshare or Circulator to many destinations across the city. From 1994 to 2008, the share of transit, walking and bicycling trips increased in the District from 40%

to 46 percent. Residents are also driving less. Between 2005 and 2008 the percentage of passenger vehicle and motorcycle registrations in the District decreased by 11 percent. The proposed citywide streetcar system will be a major improvement in premium transportation that will better connect residents to jobs and amenities across the District.

Streetcar Planning

In 2010, OP initiated a citywide Land Use Study for the District's proposed streetcar system in an effort to ensure that that we maximize this important transportation and community investment. This proposed streetcar system offers a wide range of benefits. It will complement the regional Metrorail and Metrobus lines, the Circulator bus and Capital BikeShare; improve connections between neighborhoods and job centers; help revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors; enhance property values; unlock development potential in emerging areas; and offer significant opportunities to create housing, jobs, retail, and other types of development that will serve the District's current and future needs. The availability of multiple transportation and transit options is critical to achieving the District's job creation and economic development goals. Enhancing the District's transportation choices improves links between residents, jobs and services; creates more opportunities for active living and recreation; sharpens the competitiveness of job locations in the city and helps to diversify our economy; and supports the continued growth of the District.

The Streetcar Land Use Study provides an assessment of the citywide benefits of the system in terms of access to jobs and schools, quality of life, transportation costs for households, job growth, and the real estate market. The study also considers the challenges of introducing streetcar service such as the impact on historic and cultural resources, on housing costs and on small business retention. The report examines the benefits and challenges along each proposed corridor and proposes some alterations to phasing and small segments to maximize mobility and the economic development of the investment.

The Phase 1 findings of our study detail the benefits of the streetcar system for residents, employees, and visitors and document proposed corridors' impacts and geographic distribution. During later phases corridor planning will take place at the level of small area planning, three to four blocks on either side of the corridors.

The Streetcar Land Use Study serves as baseline information which OP, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and other stakeholder agencies may use to make recommendations regarding the District's streetcar system. As DDOT completes system planning for each corridor, extensive public outreach to local residents and businesses will take place. Final decisions for the system will ultimately be subject to all applicable District and federal laws and regulations.

Study Methodology

Over the course of a year, OP met with multiple stakeholders including District agencies, non-profit and community advocates, Business Improvement Districts, and Main Street organizations to fully understand the existing conditions of land uses, affordable housing, retail and office development as they relate to affordable and accessible transit options. In addition, we reviewed existing plans prepared by OP and other agencies that would potentially be affected by the implementation of streetcars. A housing and office market analysis was completed as part of the overall existing conditions analysis. Throughout the entire planning process, we were cognizant of the need for future community input as each segment is planned at the neighborhood level. As this system will take decades to achieve full build out, we understood the limits of being able to make specific land use or policy recommendations at the neighborhood level within this plan. The Streetcar Master Land Use Plan presents the broader benefits and impacts of such a system on the City as a whole.

Why Streetcars?

Streetcars are not new to this city. The District had an extensive streetcar network for 100 years, between 1862 and 1962, and many of the new system's routes follow the old corridors. Many of our historic neighborhoods were formed around streetcars. Since the 1970s, Metro has been the District's signature transit service, but it is not equally available throughout the District. The proposed system is intended to reach more outlying areas and tie them to other streetcar lines, Metrorail and Metrobus, and major employment centers. The proposed streetcar system would provide a dramatic increase in access to premium transit; it would open the door to a

set of significant land use benefits, as well as a smaller group of challenges, that represent major considerations in evaluating and planning the streetcar system. Land-use impacts reflect projected growth over ten years, calculated as if the full system began operation in 2010; the report uses 2010 dollars.

In developing the study we considered a multitude of citywide goals and the advantage that streetcars have over buses in helping to achieve many of these goals. Land use impacts, opportunities and limitations along the proposed corridors were identified through several perspectives, including the transportation, development, neighborhood, citywide and human capital perspectives. This was done to ensure we covered the broadest range of issues in this first phase of planning. The planned streetcar system needs to promote transit-oriented, community-based development; positively influence local neighborhood goals and initiatives, either planned or underway; optimize historic and cultural resources; and address real estate speculation pressures. From a citywide perspective, the plan identifies ways in which the streetcar system can meet the District's goals for job creation and economic development, including improved linkages between jobs and housing, and fully capitalize on District resources.

The remainder of my testimony will focus on the presentation detailing the study's findings (attached and included in the public record).