

August 25, 2016

For Your Information

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Harry Black, City Manager **HB**
Subject: Cincinnati Streetcar Safety

This provides an update on two recent streetcar incidents and the continuous improvement of the Safety and Security Management Plan (SSMP).

As final testing completes and revenue service begins, the primary goal of the Administration is to ensure the safety of riders, pedestrians and Downtown drivers by, per the operating agreement, closely supporting SORTA's efforts to promote streetcar safety.

While accidents happen, everything possible is being done from a safety and security point of view to minimize the opportunity for injuries and property damage to occur. Similarly, the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority (SORTA) and the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) are each involved in investigating streetcar incidents and using lessons learned to continually improve the streetcar's state and federally approved SSMP wherever possible.

Recent Streetcar Incidents

Fortunately, both recent traffic incidents were minor in nature insofar as they did not result in any injuries. Per state Law, the City and SORTA are limited in the ability to provide details of the streetcar accidents until such time as ODOT completes required investigations, which are underway with full cooperation from the City and SORTA.

In summary:

- On August 15 just after 7:00 p.m., a car traveling westbound ran a red light and collided with the front corner of a streetcar vehicle at the intersection of Third and Main streets in Downtown. There were no injuries; however, the driver of the car was taken to the hospital as a precaution. There appeared to be considerable damage to the car and some damage to the front right corner of the streetcar vehicle. The streetcar operator underwent mandatory drug and alcohol testing as required under the SSMP.
- On August 21 at approximately 11:25 a.m., a streetcar heading southbound on Walnut Street was in a fender-bender with a pickup truck entering the Fountain Square Garage between 5th and 6th Streets. Damage to the pickup and the streetcar vehicle

was minor and there were no injuries reported. It was originally reported that the driver of the streetcar was cited for a moving violation in this accident. However, this was not the case. The Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) is expected to conclude its investigation soon. Any citations will be issued by CPD at that time.

Safety Procedures & Driver Training Program

The streetcar SSMP includes standard operating procedures for moving in traffic and other operating safety protocols and was developed by Transdev and SORTA safety professionals working in conjunction with ODOT and FTA. The City's streetcar team, CPD and the Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD) also participated in the process. The SSMP has been developed through more than a year of work and approved by ODOT and FTA as being consistent with industry best practices.

Independently of the SSMP, as a transit/streetcar operator throughout the US and internationally, Transdev brings extensive safety experience to the operation of the streetcar. Transdev subjects its newly hired operators to a rigorous training program. Training includes significant classroom time followed by vehicle training in the maintenance facility yard. This is followed by 50 hours operating a streetcar vehicle with continuous onboard instructor feedback, and an additional 100 hours of training time before being eligible to take a final certification test to operate a streetcar vehicle.

The Administration takes streetcar safety issues very seriously. I have asked SORTA to perform a full review of the SSMP. In addition, I have asked the Department of Transportation and Engineering to consider whether additional traffic safety measures could be taken to further reduce the risk of conflicts between streetcar vehicles and other modes of transportation in the City's streets. For example additional signage and traffic aids will be coming soon to the area of the tracks close to The Banks.

It is apparent, however, that as revenue service commences a significant part of the challenge continues to be public education about streetcar safety.

Public Education

Under the SORTA-City operations and maintenance agreement, the City has a limited role in the day-to-day operations of the streetcar. Now that the pre-revenue service phase has begun, per the operating agreement, SORTA is primarily responsible for all media and public outreach. The City has taken over the advisory role that SORTA had during the construction phase when the City led the media and outreach efforts.

The City remains closely involved in an oversight capacity as owner of the streetcar system; however, SORTA produces media and outreach products and disseminates per the operating agreements. To date, the City's role has been to reinforce SORTA's safety messages by posting updates on the cincinnati-streetcar.com website and social media, by echoing SORTA's message at City Council meetings, and through construction-related public outreach by the streetcar project team. In addition the City works to ensure City employees and others requiring Streetcar Track Access training receive it. City staff is also delivering public presentations with or without SORTA as necessary.

RoadmapCincy.com is another useful tool the City uses to reinforce messages regarding traffic and obstacles in the right-of-way regarding streetcar traffic safety, focusing on responsible driving at all times and places. SORTA has been working on a social media campaign to get the word out about safety and how to drive along the streetcar route. This includes the production and promotion of an engaging series of streetcar safety videos.

Currently, the City answers, or refers to SORTA as appropriate, all questions coming to the Cincinnati Streetcar website.

Existing METRO PSAs are being re-packaged with introductions by City officials, CPD and local personalities. New PSAs are also being developed featuring the City Manager and the Police Chief.

Conclusion

A brand new piece of transportation infrastructure is coming online in Cincinnati, which will alter the transportation landscape in Downtown and over-the-Rhine (OTR). As the streetcar moves into revenue service, additional emphasis continues to be placed on ensuring the safety of passengers, pedestrians and drivers. This includes traffic signaling, signage and public education.

The required collaborative safety planning process has gone on for months and has been approved by the state and federal governments. As additional information is gathered and lessons are learned, the City will move swiftly, along with SORTA and our other partners, to make improvements.