

# City of Cincinnati



Date: September 29, 2010

To: Mayor and Members of Council  
From: Milton Dohoney, Jr., City Manager  
Subject: Cincinnati Streetcar Project Update – September 2010

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The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the progress of the Cincinnati Streetcar project.

## **Funding/Financing**

To date, approximately \$114.5 million in federal, state, and local funding has been identified for the streetcar project. This represents approximately 90% of the \$128 Million total capital project cost.

The City continues to pursue several state and federal funding opportunities for the streetcar project, including:

- **TIGER II**  
The City's application for \$35 Million in TIGER II funds was submitted by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) by the August 23 deadline. The Cincinnati Streetcar was one of 12 applications submitted by ODOT. While it was not required that state DOT submit the applications to the TIGER II program, ODOT's request that the Cincinnati Streetcar be part of the suite of applications that they submitted further demonstrates ODOT's high level of support for the streetcar. Funded through the FY 2010 Transportation /HUD Appropriations Bill, the TIGER program makes approximately \$600 million available for National Infrastructure Investments. The minimum grant award is \$10 million. Awards will likely be made in late 2010.
- **TRAC funding**  
The City has submitted two applications for the next round of funding through the Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Review Advisory Council (TRAC). The City submitted a Tier 1 application for \$35 million in construction funding for Phase 1 of the streetcar and a Tier 2 application for \$1.75 million to fund planning and design work for Phase 2 of the streetcar. The Tier 2 application coordinates planning needed for the Uptown Circulator that will comprise Phase 2 of the streetcar with SORTA's plans to locate a transit hub in the Uptown area. ODOT staff are currently reviewing and scoring applications. A draft list of awards is expected in December 2010.

- *Alternatives Analysis Grant application*  
The Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Alternatives Analysis Grant program assists transit projects in financing the evaluation of all reasonable modal and multimodal alternatives and general alignment options for identified transportation needs. The City has applied for an Alternative Analysis Grant to fund AA work related to Phase 2 of the streetcar. This work will help determine the best means of connecting the Uptown Connector to the planned Transit Hub in the Uptown area and is a critical component of FTA's New Starts grant process, which is envisioned as a potential source of funding for Phase 2. The award announcement is expected in the fall of 2010.

City and project staff have been working diligently with staff from the FTA regional office, which serves as the lead federal agency on the project, to navigate the federal grant process, including:

- *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SORTA*  
As the eligible local recipient of FTA funds, SORTA will serve as the pass-through agency for the federal grant funds that have been awarded to the streetcar project to date. A MOU between SORTA and the City outlining this arrangement is necessary to facilitate the processing of these grants by FTA. A draft MOU, developed in consultation with FTA regional staff has been submitted to FTA for final review and approval. We anticipate completing the MOU in the next few weeks.
- *Procurement Review*  
City and SORTA staff continue to work with FTA regional staff as part of FTA's review of the City's procurement process to ensure compliance with FTA requirements. This review is anticipated to be complete in the next month.

### **Environmental Document**

In addition to the reviews and approvals listed above, the most critical next step is FTA's approval of the Environmental Assessment (EA) document for the streetcar project. The federal grant funds that have been awarded to the project cannot be expended until approval of the City's EA is complete. In addition, this approval will allow the project to remain eligible for current and future federal funding opportunities.

A revised draft EA was submitted to FTA on August 30. The revised draft responds to a number of comments received from FTA, who is currently reviewing it. Likewise, as part of the EA review, a revised Cultural Resources document, responding to comments received from the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) was submitted to OHPO on September 3. The Cultural Resources report is part of OHPO's review to determine the project's potential impacts on historic properties in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NEPA).

### **Operating Plan**

Development of the operating plan for the Cincinnati Streetcar is ongoing. The most recent estimates reflect an annual operating and maintenance cost of approximately \$3 million, a decrease from the \$3.5 million annual operating cost projected in 2007.

The project team is finalizing analysis of revenues, as well as updated ridership estimates that will be part of the operating plan.

### **Schedule/Construction**

Deliberations on the route for the Uptown Connector have concluded. After three meetings with Uptown stakeholders, and further technical analysis by the project consultants, the Vine Street route was chosen over West Clifton as the final alignment for the Uptown Connector. While the West Clifton route offered more immediate economic development impact, the Vine Street route offered fewer safety and technical complications, provides a more direct route up the hill, and better positions the streetcar to connect to the jobs centers in Uptown in the next phase. The Vine Street route is also less expensive, as cost estimates showed that the West Clifton route would add between \$6 million and \$18 million to the total \$128 project cost. A matrix outlining pros and cons for each route is attached.

Coordination with 3CDC regarding the streetcar's interface with the Washington Park project continues. Concerns raised by 3CDC's project team regarding garage access, on-street parking, and pedestrian access are being incorporated into decision making about potential stop locations around Music Hall and Washington Park. The construction contractor for the project is also working with 3CDC to identify potential space along the route to serve as a construction office for the project.

The project team continues their efforts to coordinate with the various utility companies that may be impacted by the project in order to plan for efficient relocation of utility lines in the right-of-way. The project team has met with the Greater Cincinnati Water Works, Metropolitan Sewer District, and Cincinnati Bell, and will convene coordination meetings with both the gas and electric divisions of Duke Energy in the next two weeks. This work will be consolidated into a master utility coordination document for use by the project team for coordination and relocation design work.

### **Transit-Oriented Development Zoning Classification**

The Department of City Planning and Buildings has applied for Community Challenge Planning Grant funds through the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The project submitted for funding will include the development of Transit-Oriented District (TOD) regulations.

This report is provided for informational purposes only. No action by City Council is required.

Cc: Chris Eilerman, City Manager's Office  
Michael Moore, Interim Director, Department of Transportation & Engineering