

DRAFT

City of Middletown, CT

Economic Development Committee

Parking Study Transit Sub Committee

Draft Minutes from the February 29, 2008 meeting

Members Present: I. Greenberg, D. Bauer, J. Alexander, T. Cheeseman, M. Kalita-Leary

Also Present: J. Elmore, J. Saines, B. Emory, N. Zullo, C. Johnson, T. Hibbard T. Nigosanti, R. Kearney, C. Duncan

A Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM.

B Public Session: none

C Minutes: none

D Communications: none

Old Business: Greenberg recapped assignments from last meeting. Kalita-Leary questioned whether federal funds could be used to purchase parking meters, and whether the funds are a grant. Cheeseman responded the funds are federal earmark funds and can be used for capital improvements-not operations. Federal grants require a 20% state match and the state currently has \$124M in projects but the state can't fund them because they don't have the 20% match. Bauer asked if the city can provide the match. Cheeseman, Chair of CPTC, stated if the state declines to make the match the city can make the match. 10F Capital Projects to go from TIP to STIP to prioritize things. Need political clout. Fairfield County getting all the attention regarding mass transit funding

New Haven Parking Authority said (Mike Piscatelli) uses TIFF to finance as an Economic development tool. Streetcars will not compete with existing bus system. They are trying to figure out operating costs. 87\$ of operating bus annually is labor cost (little difference in price for operating streetcar)

New Haven has 4 electric buses, but batteries go @ 7 years (\$77,000 each)

There aren't enough mechanics in the business for hybrid vehicle repair.

Cheeseman noted New Haven is holding a streetcar seminar on 3/4/08. General discussion of streetcars ensued. Johnson noted the cost of \$10M/mi. Alexander discussed the cost of track v/s bus along with maintenance costs. Cheeseman noted 80% of costs are labor and fringe benefits. The Army doesn't use hybrid vehicles so when people are trained they aren't funneling into the trade afterward like they do with the conventional vehicles. Hybrid

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vehicles battery costs are \$77,000 per bus there is a shortage of technicians. Many of the hybrid projects are in large cities due to the experimental nature and changing technology of hybrids. Saines questioned how many vehicles would be needed for a shuttle service. Cheeseman stated 2 since 1 vehicle would be a maintenance backup vehicle. Cost of \$286,000 each in service in 2010. General discussion of costs to design transit lane, signs, etc. Cheeseman noted corners are good spots for pickup/drop off due to the extra space and striping at a corner.

Discussion about streetcars

Bauer stated: Create a livable downtown. Do what's best for Middletown. Put it there, and then everything will want to be there. We need a car to operate in each direction (up, and down Main St). We can extend our reach: Use the bus first as a pilot program, then when streetcar system installed, use the rubber tire trolley on Washington St, and then build that streetcar system.

Discussion about bike paths and bike routes

Goal for presentation March 10: We don't have to write the dollar amount in the story. We just have to write the story.

PRICE of gas is getting more serious every day.
50% of all trips are less than 3.5 miles
Enhancing commercial downtown. Growing the grand list.

Nigosanti presented information on the bike paths. Bauer requested further overlays of retail, employment, places of worship, educational facilities and residential areas to show the concentrations of activity in planning bike paths. Bauer asked for a complete build out plan of a bike path system that would connect with neighboring towns. The bike path maps must distinguish between Paths and Lanes. Note: bike paths are mostly capital costs. Once established, maintenance is minimal. Cost List: Easements aren't included in rough estimate.

Cheeseman stated he would research how the federal funds could be used for bus purchases. Nigosanti stated he would research the bike path build out costs.

The committee discussed their preferences for the federal funds. Greenberg stated she would compile the list and distribute to the committee.

Discussion on where best to spend the money

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Alexander noted the need to make better connections to Main Street. Install awning or glass canopy on ramp (ROW) from 7 story Middlesex Corporate Center parking garage to Main Street (adjacent to Citizens Bank annex building).

Bike paths to downtown are the priority.
Downtown residents can bike to work on RT 372.
Showers downtown, and covered bike parking at each end.
Possibly put showers in parking garage.
Start bike amenities downtown.

Cheeseman stated bike paths are closed during the winter. We have to start spending money continuously.

Elmore stated we have to start thinking in brave new ways. Bike paths are the priority. Impacts the bottom line

Kalita-Leary stated people don't know where parking is, either as visitors nor those who work here and stated the priorities are signage, bike racks, and streetcar.

Greenberg stated that we have parking lots but there's a perception problem. The lots need to be cleaner, more pleasant. Greenberg prefers the "flexibility" of a rubber tire trolley (bus) or supplement streetcar with rubber tire trolley. Start with downtown bike routes, signs, racks, etc.

Saines stated we must accommodate both streetcars and bikes on Main Street. Saines suggested to buy the vacant Court Street building (next to Order on Court restaurant) and use as the new multi-modal station bus lobby.

Johnson stated changing the sidewalks is an option for streetcar by reducing the street by 24" each side. Bikes and pedestrians can share sidewalk if bikes stay to outside of sidewalk. When it gets crowded, people naturally get off and walk their bikes.

Emory stated Lance Armstrong is buying a building in downtown Austin to create a bicycling center, with shoes and lockers and bike parking. Work on downtown first: 1 square mile. A Broad Street cycling route would allow bikers to park behind buildings within blocks to avoid Main Street sidewalk conflicts.

Zullo stated the need for visibility and accessibility to parking areas. A bike path Newfield to Washington St is most important.

Bauer stated we spend \$5 million annually to upkeep our city streets (214 miles). We have this revenue stream here already. We could maintain a streetcar once it's in place.

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E New Business

F Other

G Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 2:20 PM.