

# American Public Transportation Association

## 2019 TRANSForm Conference

New York Marriott Marquis  
1535 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036

### Streetcar Subcommittee

Sunday October 13, 2019  
11:30am to 1:00pm

Eric Sitiko	Chair
Tom Gerend	Vice Chair
James D. Schantz	Secretary

#### Summary Notes

##### 1. Welcome

Tim Borchers

Outgoing Subcommittee Chair Tim Borchers called the meeting to order at 11:40 am, after participants enjoyed the buffet lunch kindly sponsored by Herzog Transport Services. The Chair thanked Herzog and invited Norm Jester of Herzog to address the group.

##### 2. Meeting minutes from Toronto, ON

Jim Schantz

Subcommittee Secretary Jim Schantz reviewed the main points covered in the summary notes of the June 23 meeting in Toronto held in conjunction with the APTA Rail Conference. The notes had been circulated in advance. After the review, the attendees voted to accept the notes.

##### 3. Old Business/ New Business

###### • FY19/20 Work Plan

Jim Schantz

Project Manager John Smatlak, who is leading the Subcommittee's work programs was unable to attend but he sent several slides highlighting the activities. Jim Schantz presented these to the meeting. The principal topics are continuing to follow state of the art developments in tramway safety technology and review and updating of the Modern Streetcar Vehicle Guidelines published by the subcommittee. In the safety area, recent developments include: Publishing in English VDV Recommendation 191 dealing with avoidance of collisions with obstacles directly in a tram's path; extension of the Potsdam autonomous tram demo into 2019; and a project in Potsdam to develop a fully automated tram depot. Other work includes setting a framework for a driver assistance pilot on a U.S. streetcar system. The Modern Vehicle Guidelines are due for a review and update in 2020, and this will include a major revision to the power supply chapter given the developments in off-wire technology. A work topic John proposed is "After the Honeymoon" dealing with viable means of maintaining complex modern streetcars after their warranty expires.

Follow this link for the English version of the German VDV Recommendation 191:

[http://heritagetrolley.org/images/VDV191\\_2019-07\\_E%20Advanced\\_Driver\\_Assist\\_Systems.pdf](http://heritagetrolley.org/images/VDV191_2019-07_E%20Advanced_Driver_Assist_Systems.pdf)

##### 4. Presentations

###### • Brooklyn Queens Connector (BQX) - Planning Update

Christopher Hrones

Director of Strategic Transit Initiatives  
New York City Department of Transportation

The Brooklyn/Queens Waterfront has seen rezoning resulting in major development in the area. Since 2000 120,000 new residents and 170,000 new jobs have come to the area and the corridor continues to grow at twice the rate of the entire city. The area has limited north-south transit and contains several "subway deserts" with no rail service. The proposed route crosses 14 subway lines. The alignment has been moved inland from the original waterfront proposal to serve more passengers, including 40,000 public housing residents. The current plans call

for 70% of the route in dedicated right-of-way with center running, side running, and transitway segments. Daily ridership is forecast in the 50,000 to 80,000 range and is expected to inspire \$30 billion in economic impact. Capital cost is projected to be \$2.7 billion with \$1.3 billion of the needed capital to come from value capture. A city environmental review is underway scheduled to be complete in mid-2021, and will include a full review of alternate modes BRT and neighborhood mobility. A major challenge for the project will be to close the funding gap potentially receiving significant funding from New Starts, private investment, Federal Flex funds or additional city funds. Public outreach is ongoing. Support will be needed from a complex web of political bodies including two borough presidents, six city council members, five community boards, and state/federal elected officials.

Follow this link for the slides Chris used for this presentation:

[http://heritagetrolley.org/images/20191011BQX\\_APTA\\_abridged.pdf](http://heritagetrolley.org/images/20191011BQX_APTA_abridged.pdf)

## 5. Round Table Discussion

- Panel Topic: **Current state of the streetcar industry and where it's headed from an agency perspective**

Panelists:

Scott Smith, CEO, Valley Metro Rail, Phoenix Arizona

Tom Gerend, Executive Director, KC Streetcar Authority, Kansas City, Missouri

Tom Gerend started the roundtable by describing Kansas City's very successful three-year-old streetcar system operating an initial fleet of four CAF Urbos cars. The system was chiefly funded by value capture using sales and property taxes in areas served. Ridership levels have exceeded forecasts and continue to grow. Higher than expected value capture proceeds enabled buying two additional Urbos cars. Two extensions, one to the north and the other to the south are in advanced planning and will be applying for New Starts federal funding. These will transform the system from a downtown circulator to a 5-mile long spine of a regional system. The value capture district is being expanded along the new route to generate needed funds.

Scott Smith described the under-construction route running through Tempe's downtown and serving the Arizona State University's campus, the largest public university campus in the country with 100,000 people coming into the compact downtown daily. Population of the area is expected to add two million people in the coming years. As there is no way to expand streets, new approaches are needed to move more people through the existing corridors. Streetcars were selected as the best technology. The streetcar route crosses the Phoenix light rail at both ends, providing easy transfer. Most of the streetcar route runs in mixed traffic, with dedicated right of way through a geographically constrained but rapidly-developing high rise office district. Value capture in the form of self-imposed taxation on businesses is covering construction cost escalation. Off-wire technology in the Brookville Liberty modern streetcars will be used to prevent cutting back or removing trees in the central area. A technical challenge is installing the light rail crossings which involves leveling the banked light rail track while maintaining a reduced level of service on the light rail. Another was designing a section of track to pass through the middle of a roundabout while making a sharp left turn. Major development is occurring within a half mile of the streetcar corridor with over 35 projects building over four million square feet with a total value of between \$12 and \$13-billion.

Following these introductions, the panelists responded to this question:

### **What do you see as the biggest challenges for transit over the next five years?**

*Tom Gerend:* Changes in mobility including Uber/Lyft, bicycles, and scooters are presenting challenges to all of transit with the result that we have to emphasize the importance of fixed rail and other assets. We need to continue to develop and explain the role of new technologies in the overall mobility offerings. Escalating costs and financial capacity at the federal level are also major challenges needing a national conversation and bipartisan support. More solutions will have to come at the state and local level. Federal partnerships have been critical to all major projects done in Kansas City in recent years.

*Scott Smith:* The biggest challenge is the escalation in costs which threaten to price transit out of the market. People outside of the field cannot fathom how much fixed rail costs and a number of projects have died due to too high prices. The amount it costs to build rail will not be supported by politicians. Only a small percentage of the voters who in many cases must approve transit capital expenditures actually use the system, so pushback on high costs is understandable. This up-front sticker shock is worse given the emergence of ride sharing, scooters,

and other new modes. Paris is building major subway extensions at about one third of the per mile cost of the recent subway extensions in New York. Costs in the U.S. need to be brought down.

Follow this link for the slides Scott used to describe the Tempe streetcar system:

[http://heritagetrolley.org/images/2019\\_10\\_09\\_SSmith\\_APTA\\_Tempe\\_Streetcar\\_Panel.pdf](http://heritagetrolley.org/images/2019_10_09_SSmith_APTA_Tempe_Streetcar_Panel.pdf)

**What is one piece of advice you would give to those planning a new streetcar project?**

*Tom Gerend:* Learn from others who have already built a system. Visit other systems and bring in people with real experience and knowledge across all aspects of a streetcar system. Perseverance is a key concept, explaining as often as necessary the long-term benefits of your project and fighting through the inevitable periods of surprise or adversity.

*Scott Smith:* Need to be much clearer in our vision of why we are doing these projects. We must learn to speak without jargon in a manner that people from outside the field can understand (6<sup>th</sup> grade level).

**How does the decision in Kansas City not to charge fares on the streetcar look after three years of experience?**

*Tom Gerend:* The decision was taken for two reasons: 1. To remove every possible barrier against using the system and 2. To save the expense and effort of buying and maintaining fare collection equipment. Consequently, they won support to increase value capture recovery to cover the loss of fares. One consequence is bus riders now ask why buses are not free as well. As the planned extension goes beyond being a downtown circulator for equity reasons other fare policies are being considered.

**6. Updates**

• **Light Rail Technical Forum**

Tom Furmaniak

At the meeting earlier in the day there were presentations on Ottawa's light rail opening, New Jersey light rail plans, Niagara Frontier (Buffalo) light rail status and plans, and plans for next generation light rail vehicles in Boston. There were also updates on planned light rail systems over the next six or seven years. As well, the second edition of the document comparing and contrasting Light Rail and Streetcars was formally released.

Follow this link to see the light rail vs. streetcar document:

<http://heritagetrolley.org/Articles.htm>

• **Election Results**

Marie Benton

Marie Barton presented the results of the recent leadership election for the subcommittee. As Tim Borchers' term as Chair ended, Eric Sitiko ascended from Vice Chair to Chair, Tom Gerend was elected as Vice Chair with 44% of the vote, and Jim Schantz, who was unopposed, continued as Secretary: A total of 81 ballots were cast, which is very good turnout for an APTA committee election. Tim was thanked for his service with applause, a plaque, and a gift.

**7. Next meeting:**

The next subcommittee meeting will be held in conjunction with the Community Streetcar Coalition – Streetcar Summit – in the period **April 26-28, 2020, in Milwaukee, WI.**

Chair Eric Sitiko adjourned the meeting at 1:01 pm.

*Summary Notes prepared by Jim Schantz*

*Lunch sponsored by*

