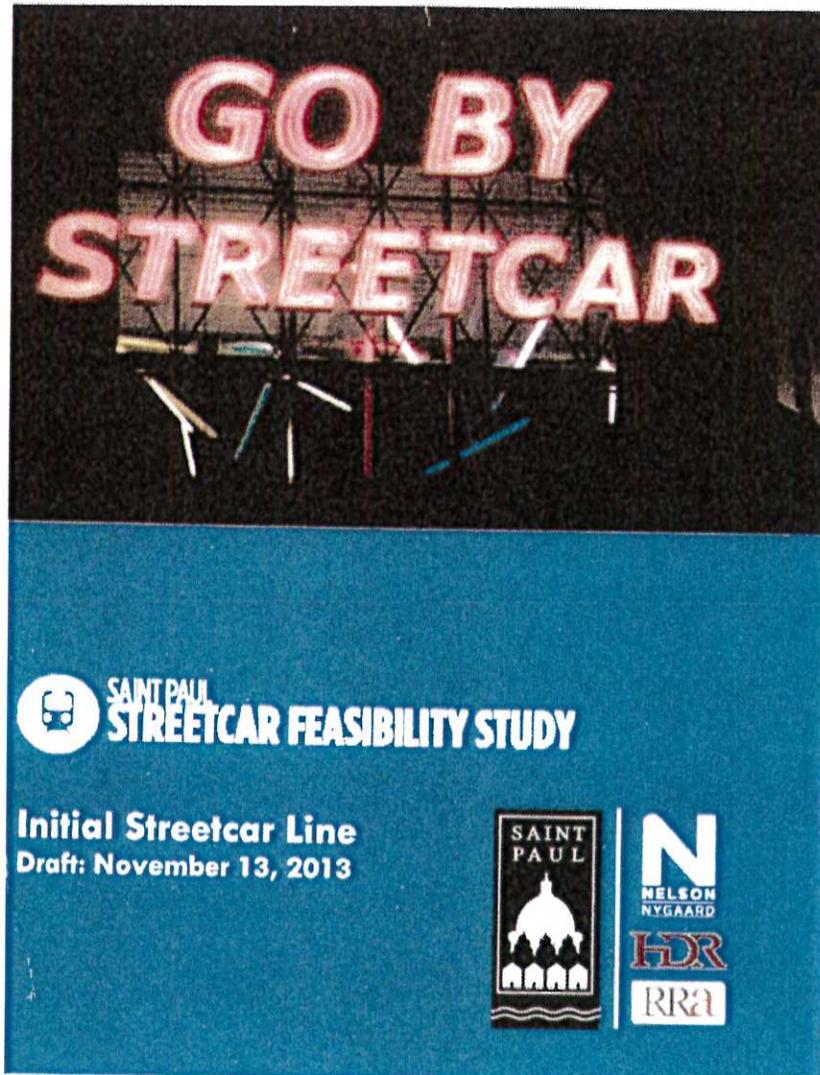


# July 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 Public Hearing



**To: All West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Business Owners**

**Re: City of Saint Paul Streetcar Line**

A public hearing is set for July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 5:30pm regarding the City of St. Paul streetcar project.

This is your opportunity to voice your opinion and facts on how it will impact your business. It is critical you attend.

Any questions please call Dave Cossetta 651-260-4440

**Meeting**

July 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm

City of St. Paul

City Hall – Council Chambers – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

15 West Kellogg Boulevard

# St. Paul City Council set to vote on controversial streetcar study

By Frederick Melo  
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In the early 1950s, streetcars passed in front of the State Capitol on what is now Martin Luther King Drive and a vacated portion of Wabasha Street. More than 500 miles of track once connected the Twin Cities metro, shuttling streetcars and trolleys across the region. (Courtesy of the Minnesota Streetcar Museum)

The St. Paul City Council will vote on a resolution Wednesday that would authorize a detailed study of a potential streetcar line along Seventh Street from Arcade Street to Randolph Avenue.

Linking East Seventh to West Seventh with a four-mile streetcar corridor would be a launching point for what could be a network of future streetcar routes throughout the city.

It's a controversial and potentially expensive undertaking -- initial projections peg construction costs along Seventh Street alone at \$250 million -- but transit advocates see a payoff.

With an eye toward boosting business along Seventh Street, city officials hope to study how modern streetcars have performed in other cities around the U.S.

If approved by the city council Wednesday, the new study will include a route recommendation through downtown St. Paul, more detailed analysis of capital and operating costs, and a review of potential economic development along the corridor.

Smaller than light-rail cars, streetcars typically operate in regular traffic rather than occupying their own lane. They also make more frequent stops, like buses.

On Feb. 21, the St. Paul Planning Commission recommended approval of a long-term network that could span seven lines: East Seventh, Grand, Payne, Rice, Robert, Selby and West Seventh.

Public reaction has run the gamut.

In a public letter, St. Paul-based museum consultant Geoffrey Curley embraced the idea of a streetcar along Seventh Street.

"I have spent considerable time in Seattle, Portland, Toronto, Milan and other cities that provide streetcar service," said Curley, whose business is based near Seventh Street in Irvine Park. "The train is permanent and easy to use, where I have learned that the buses are often unpredictable and confusing."

In a letter to the city dated June 24, the owners of the Wuollet Bakery on Grand Avenue shared their opposition to the possibility of a streetcar on Grand Avenue.

The possible loss of parking spaces, increased taxes and disruption to businesses both during construction and operation "seem to far outweigh the positive aspects," they wrote.

They added that stimulating economic development "does not seem necessary or desirable on Grand Avenue." The letter is signed by Jim Jurmu, Mike Jurmu and Doug Wuollet.

The St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development worked with a team of consultants from Nelson Nygaard HDR and Richardson Richter & Associates to map the seven potential corridors.

The Planning Commission released a draft of the network study in December for public review and held a public hearing in January, in addition to two open houses.

Frederick Melo can be reached at 651-228-2172. Follow him at [twitter.com/FrederickMelo](https://twitter.com/FrederickMelo).

# Joe Soucheray: St. Paul streetcars can't pay for themselves -- so you'd pay

By Joe Soucheray

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The corner of Seventh and Wabasha streets in downtown St. Paul was the center of operations for 10 different streetcar lines in the 1940s. A supervisor was stationed in the arch-roofed booth on the sidewalk "around the clock," according to Aaron Isaacs, editor of Twin City Lines Magazine. (Courtesy of Twin City Lines and the Minnesota Streetcar Museum)

Now that we have light rail, the progressives are ready to move on to the next step, streetcars along Seventh Street in St. Paul, with more lines to follow. The city council will vote Wednesday night to authorize a detailed study of a streetcar line between Arcade Street and Randolph Avenue on Seventh. That would be a second study, the first one being last year, your money paid out to a consulting firm from San Francisco.

Progressives are dedicated to blocking the individual while encouraging the collective, but that offers no evidence of progress of any kind. There are already many means of transportation: collective bicycles, cars, ride sharing, buses, light rail. To object to streetcars is not the same as attempting to prevent anybody from getting around. We already get around.

Because transit advocates already know that we can get around, they toss in the idea that streetcars, like light rail, spur development. Well, the jury is not only out on that one, but they are so dispersed they can't even be called back to the room. There has been a bit of publicly infused housing development along University Avenue, which might have taken place anyway.

Maybe the city council will man and woman up and actually say no, we can't afford it. The costs, remember, are incredible.

Let's review. The outfit that did the initial study for \$250,000, the one that apparently wasn't detailed enough, Nelson Nygaard HDR and Richardson Richter & Associates, gave its blessing to that Seventh Street route. It's about four miles long. The cost to build the line is estimated at \$246 million. There is no \$246 million. Supposedly there would be a federal grant of \$75 million if the project does not exceed \$250 million,

There is no such thing as a federal grant. That's your money. And that still leaves \$171 million. Where is that? Well, that is from you as well; you just haven't paid it yet.

Now, it will cost an estimated \$8 million a year to keep the trolleys running. As noted on many occasions, I am not to be trusted with the actual math, so I turned it over to others, one of whom graduated from Harvard, which should please the progressives immensely. We were told after the initial study that the streetcars will attract 3,100 riders a day, or 1,131,500 riders a year. That doesn't even seem plausible to me, but then, I am not a consultant from out of town.

OK. If it costs \$8 million a year just to operate the thing and it will attract 1,131,500 riders a year, that results in a fee of \$7.07 every time you got on the streetcar. It doesn't seem likely to be charged \$7.07 a ride, which can only mean, like other modes of public transportation, that it will be heavily subsidized. Where will that money come from and from whom?

In the meantime, our city streets still look like Bulgarian goat herder trails. The city council did get its dander up about that, offering a brief glimmer of hope that they could come together Wednesday night and say, "We can't keep spending money on projects that offer no evidence of necessity, but offer only evidence of paying for somebody else's idea of virtue. Therefore we vote no."

That would be a miracle and cause us to take to the streets in celebration of the sudden discovery of fiduciary responsibility.

Not to mention that we used to have streetcars. The streetcars were replaced by buses, which would now be supplanted by streetcars. If that is progress, then we might as well start installing pay phone boxes on the streetcorners and make plans to bring back the Montgomery Ward tower. And Porky's, too.

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