



North End Neighborhood Council

To: Mayor Baarsma and Tacoma City Council Members
Re: Tacoma Streetcar

I am writing on behalf of the North End Neighborhood Council in support of a feasibility study for reviving Tacoma's streetcar system. Increasingly across the nation in large and medium-sized cities alike, people are finding great value in the use of streetcars. In cities as different as Dallas, Portland, Memphis and Yakima, the cost of this particular form of mass transit has proven minimal compared to the benefits reaped by its implementation.

Although some benefits may seem obvious, others are equally important. Streetcars encourage greater ridership than bus service, which will reduce automobile traffic and parking pressure. They complement a pedestrian streetscape, thus helping to make neighborhoods more livable. They offer clear routing for both visitors and residents, and they help connect folks to the regional transit systems and to different neighborhoods. They have also proven themselves to be an effective economic development tool.

In Portland, the downtown streetcar encouraged over two billion dollars in investment after the announcement of the streetcar route in 1997. Dallas has seen a once quiet downtown housing scene surge around streetcar and light rail lines. Riders from Toronto to San Francisco are predominantly "choice" riders, which means they have other options but choose streetcars. In Tacoma, ridership on the Link Light Rail, which is really a streetcar line running on light rail right-of-way, increased 500% over the free bus service that once covered the same route.

Cities are not investing in failure when they invest in a streetcar system. Although streetcar lines are expensive, they are much cheaper than light rail lines and have modest operational costs. Plus, aren't unrealized development opportunities and a lack of neighborhood connectivity ultimately more expensive? Streetcars might very well be one of the most important investments that will help Tacoma become the city we all want it to be. Please give streetcars a look.

Sincerely,

Kyle Price, NENC Board Secretary
On behalf of the North End Neighborhood Council