

Land Use and Transportation

The form of transportation in which a city invests will fundamentally change how the city grows around that system. Auto-oriented transportation will ultimately lead to auto-oriented architecture, land use, and planning. The same is true of pedestrian-oriented transit and development. The built environment, that is a city's infrastructure and buildings, grows in relation to the transportation system that serves it. Looking to the future, Colorado Springs will have to analyze different transportation systems and decide whether or not they provide the desired finished built environment.

The Wasatch Front in Utah was recently faced with this issue and found that by investing in transportation in tandem with infill development, the region will remain an affordable place to live in the future. Through a study called Envision Utah, they discovered that a balanced growth strategy would help prevent 171 square miles of land from being developed. Of the land preserved from development, 116 square miles of agricultural land will be kept from being converted to urban use. If the region did not change its growth patterns, it would be faced with \$13.5 billion in new infrastructure costs which is now being addressed through the combination of land use and transportation planning.

Envision Utah's more recent 3% strategy will help keep infrastructure costs lower and will preserve farmland and open space by locating 33% of new development between now and 2040 on 3% of available land. This is only made possible by simultaneously developing excellent transit.

Colorado Springs is finding itself in an increasingly similar position. The urban environment created by the streetcars will help create a more affordable growth pattern for the Pikes Peak region.

Streetcars Defined

Streetcars are electrically powered rail transit vehicles that run in city streets, sharing lanes with mixed vehicle traffic. They travel at the speed of traffic when in the street and achieve higher speeds when on dedicated right of ways. Streetcars are substantially less expensive than light rail, at an average of \$17.5 million per mile compared to light rail's average \$50 - \$60 million per mile construction costs. Streetcars excel as urban circulators, but their role is much larger than transit. Many communities use streetcars as an economic development tool and up to 90 American cities are exploring streetcars as a way to encourage and create urban livability. More information is available in the feasibility study.

Types of Streetcars

There are three broad types of streetcars, shown below. Final decisions on style of car will be based on citizen input and the findings of the next round of studies.



Contemporary Streetcar.
Used in Seattle, Tacoma, and Portland.



Vintage PCC Streetcar.
Used in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and Kenosha, WI.



Vintage Replica Streetcar (new car body on old chassis). Used by Tampa Bay and Little Rock.

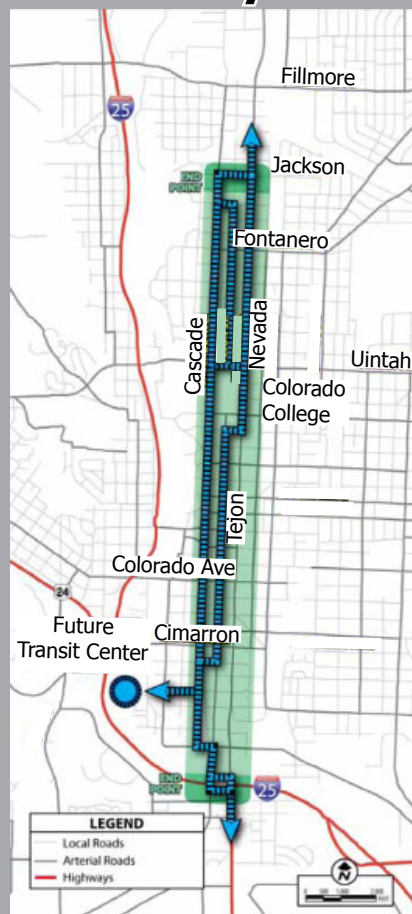
Next Steps

The Colorado Springs Streetcar Feasibility Study was completed in June 2010 and found that it is feasible and fundable to build a streetcar starter system in downtown Colorado Springs. In order to receive federal funds for construction of the starter system, two more federally required studies will have to be completed. Fundraising for these reports is currently underway, and they should begin in the summer of 2011.

More Information

Established in 2009, the Colorado Springs Streetcar Task Force is a private, citizen-led effort looking at tools to spur economic development, job creation, and infill growth in Colorado Springs. The task force worked with a consultant team and local agencies to produce the feasibility study and can be reached at info@cstreetcar.org. Visit www.cstreetcar.org for more information.

The Downtown Starter System



Shown above is a map of a downtown starter system, as well as future extensions to Penrose Hospital in the Old North End and a southern extension to I-25 and Tejon. The starter system loop could connect Uintah on the north end to Moreno or Cimarron on the south end.

The feasibility study identified a larger future network that could ultimately link UCCS, Academy Blvd., Ft. Carson, and Manitou Springs to downtown. A map of the entire regional system can be found in the feasibility study.

Image source: Colorado Springs Streetcar Feasibility Study. URS Corp, 2009.

Produced by:



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The Economic Development and Urban Infill Role of Streetcars in Colorado Springs

February 10, 2011

Produced by the Colorado Springs Streetcar Task Force

Far more than rolling nostalgia or amusement for tourists, the potential downtown Colorado Springs streetcar will have major effects on redevelopment and mobility patterns in Colorado Springs. This document has been prepared for political candidates and other interested parties in order to provide an initial overview of the proposed system and its crucial impact on local growth patterns.



The combined effects of high quality public transportation and walkable, mixed-use architecture have had a profound impact on Portland (above right and right), Denver (left), and Seattle (center).

The streetcar will help enhance urban environments and will spur redevelopment.



The downtown starter system will help create an urban core in Colorado Springs, which is crucial because developing a medium-dense central business district keeps growth, and thus tax revenue, in the city. Furthermore, the streetcar will help promote the brand of Colorado Springs, making the city more vibrant. This makes businesses more likely to relocate to Colorado Springs.

Medium-density urban areas are designed for an evolution of uses. All commercial and residential areas undergo cycles of development with certain uses becoming more, and then less, viable (e.g. the viability of streets like Union, Circle, and Academy has declined, while the viability of Powers is growing). Transit-oriented, mixed-use areas are able to retain their value, even when uses come and go. They are able to evolve because the form of buildings in these districts can accommodate various uses. Such neighborhoods are planned to endure, with much longer time lines than standard suburban projects. This is consistent with the long-term commitment of a streetcar and helps make feasible higher quality, mixed-use development.

Urban redevelopment will also lead to more downtown jobs, heightened business activity, and increased property and sales tax revenues from new businesses, housing, and shopping options downtown.

Urban areas also help support smaller businesses by offering a broad variety of commercial and office space, allowing businesses to evolve and stay in one area as they grow.

Looking at the Numbers:

- More than 90 US cities are looking at streetcars for their ability to help generate infill development and to offer excellent transit.
- Approximately 12 of these cities are in the final design stage or are currently constructing a system. Such cities include Cincinnati and St. Louis, which will soon begin construction on their starter systems. Portland is currently extending its existing system.
- The starter system in Seattle has been so successful that the city is actively pursuing four more lines and is building a city-wide streetcar network.

The streetcar is fiscally conservative.



Compared to Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) projections, the streetcar will help Colorado Springs grow in a less expensive way and therefore keeps taxes lower. PPACG projects that by 2035 the urbanized area of El Paso and Teller counties will be twice what it is today, and that the region's density will have decreased by 25%. This will mean higher taxes will be needed to support roughly twice the infrastructure, and there will be fewer people per square mile to pay for these services.

Even if developers build initial infrastructure, the City's tax infrastructure must increase in order to pay for the long-term maintenance and operation of the system (e.g. roads, utilities, plowing, and other services). By using the streetcar to help draw development downtown the City can produce the same or more tax revenue, but it does not need to extend and maintain new services on the urban fringe.

Moreover, the starter system can be built and operated without raising taxes.

Looking at the Numbers:

- Initial \$67 million construction costs will be more than surpassed by an estimated \$1.23 billion of private-sector redevelopment in the area.
- The starter system has a very strong Return on Investment, with a ratio of 18.3:1.
- Twenty-five year cumulative tax increment revenue to Urban Renewal Authority is estimated at \$91 million.
- Twenty-five year cumulative tax increment revenue to the Downtown Development Authority is estimated at \$46.5 million.
- Streetcars will help increase property values for land in proximity to the system by 10-20%.
- Local capital investment of \$1 will be matched by up to \$4 from the federal government for construction costs.
- Currently, the City of Colorado Springs' road budget is less than half of what it was in 2007 and has been steadily decreasing. Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority's portion of roadway maintenance has continued to grow (2010 Quality of Life Indicators Report).
- QLI also reports, "In 2007, the modeled backlog of needed maintenance activities in the two-county MSA (El Paso and Teller Counties) was \$1 billion. Without new sources of funding, this backlog is forecasted to grow to \$6 billion" (p. 92).

Streetcar figures from the Colorado Springs Streetcar Feasibility Study, available at www.csstreetcar.org. Page ES-7.

The entire city will benefit from the strong downtown created by the streetcar.



By increasing the desirability of Colorado Springs, the streetcar will assist in relocating businesses to the city. This will also help tourism and will encourage the growth of institutions like the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Colorado College. The combined growth of these assets will generate new tax revenue for the City by helping spur economic development. The community as a whole can thus become more wealthy without having to raise taxes.

The streetcar will also provide a park-once-and-ride option for downtown mobility. This reduces the need to "cruise for parking" - circling a block looking for a parking space - which in some cities accounts for up to 30% of urban vehicle traffic. (Chatman, Dan. Lecture, 11/2/10, UC Berkeley).

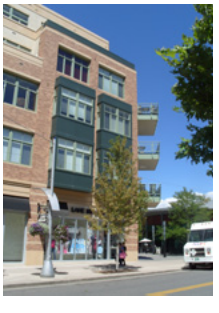
The streetcar will leverage existing assets, such as Colorado Springs Utilities (CSU). The urban environments and clean, quiet transit created by the streetcar will help facilitate greater economic development using CSU's electricity. Furthermore, with CSU providing the electricity used by the streetcar system, the system will offer more predictable operating costs compared to diesel- or gas-powered transit vehicles that are subject to fluctuating oil prices.

Urban Renewal Sites and the downtown Form-Based Code will help increase the economic power and success of a streetcar system. These pieces are already in place. Lastly, the streetcar will strengthen Mountain Metropolitan Transit, reducing auto dependency in Colorado Springs.

Looking at the Numbers:

- The Feasibility Study projects that by 2035 ridership on the starter system between 3,000 and 4,000 per day.
- The study also shows a projected population increase of 4,892 downtown.
- Households in Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) are twice as likely to not own a car and to own roughly half as many cars as an average household (*Street Smart*, p. 28).
- People who live in TODs are five times more likely to commute by transit, and employees working in TODs are three and a half times more likely to use transit (Cervero and Wilson, 2005).

The streetcar will help align the city's mixed-use urban areas with future demand.



National trends indicate increasing demand for walkable, mixed use neighborhoods, which is expected to make up 31% of 2000-2010 homeowner growth (Arrington and Cervero, 2008). However, Colorado Springs currently offers little to no units of this housing type. Moreover, by 2025 singles and couples with no children will make up 55.5% of total households, and they will comprise up to 64% of total demand for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) housing (Arrington and Cervero, 2008). Retiring Baby Boomers are also demanding greater volumes of this housing.

The varied forms and price points of mixed-use neighborhoods permit families to remain in a neighborhood as their needs change (e.g. having children, becoming empty nesters, etc...). This helps create a stronger community city-wide.

The streetcar will help the City offer varied forms of housing, creating up to 3,700 new dwelling units downtown.

Looking at the Numbers:

- Only 24.2% of Colorado Springs households are married families with children. The national average is 21.1% (Brookings Institution).
- However, roughly 70% of local housing stock is single-family homes (2010 QLI Report).
- Colorado Springs housing stock is thus misaligned with national trends and demand.

The streetcar will help create the downtown rooftops needed to support strong downtown retail.



The Imagine Downtown Final Plan of Development for Downtown Colorado Springs calls for an estimated 2,000 new dwelling units to "... establish a sustainable residential neighborhood with a diversity of housing types, including both work-force-attached housing and market-rate-attached housing" (February 2, 2007, available at www.downtown80903.com/dda).

The findings of the feasibility study surpasses these figures by projecting 3,700 new dwelling units and more than 2 million square feet of redeveloped commercial space.

The streetcar will also help Colorado Springs retain and grow crucial demographics. Young professionals are quickly leaving the city for other urban areas. This makes Colorado Springs less attractive to "high-impact, high-value, knowledge-based businesses" (2010 QLI report). The urban environment created by the streetcar is a major component of creating a city that will retain the demographics that Colorado Springs will need to stay competitive in the future.

Looking at the Numbers:

- According to QLI, since 2002, young professionals (ages 25-44) are making up an ever smaller percentage of the community.
- Since 2004, the number has dropped below the necessary 30% of population mark, a critical threshold used by many consultants.

The streetcar will facilitate lower-risk development downtown.



Streetcars have a proven history of attracting and spurring private sector development, leading to significantly higher property values in close proximity to a streetcar line. This is because the combination of streetcars and Form Based Codes create what is sometimes called "Uniform Predictability," that is to say all development in the district will take a familiar form. Therefore, a property owner has more incentive to build because they know neighboring buildings will take a similar form.

Currently there is lower interest in redeveloping property in corridors such as South Academy or North Nevada, because there is no guarantee that other nearby properties will also be improved and will therefore increase the value of an owner's property. Uniform predictability mitigates this risk, ensuring new development nearby will serve to increase the value of an individual's land. This has the secondary benefit of encouraging higher quality construction from all.

This lower risk translates to banks, making them more willing to loan money to projects and enabling smaller builders to benefit from the streetcar. Excellent case studies of this phenomenon are available from Gateway Planning (www.gatewayplanning.com).

Even in the midst of this recession, walkable, transit-oriented urban areas are performing well, meaning there is nascent demand for this product. The streetcar will provide Colorado Springs the opportunity to capture some of this growth despite slow economic times and will allow the city to position itself now for post-recession growth, competing with other western cities for economic and job growth.

Looking at the Numbers:

- Portland, OR, has seen 8,000 new residential units on their streetcar line in the last 13 years.
- Developers in Portland have constructed projects at 90% of allowable density within one block of the streetcar route, at 75% within two blocks, and 40% three blocks or more from the line. (*Street Smart*, p. 29).

6 Facts

The Colorado Springs Streetcar Feasibility Study is an example of a public-private partnership. No City general funds were used for the study. The 80% of funds supplied by the federal government could only be used for transportation planning, and they therefore did not compete with Mountain Metropolitan Transit's bus operations. Local match funds for the study came from various private companies, organizations, and individuals. Download the full report at www.csstreetcar.org.