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## **Federal Transit Administration and City of Detroit co-sign final environmental impact statement for Woodward Light Rail project**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and City of Detroit have co-signed a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for Detroit's Woodward Light Rail Project, marking a major milestone in a process to bring light rail transportation to the city.

"This is a landmark moment in Detroit's journey to make light rail a reality in our city," said Mayor Dave Bing. "With the support of FTA staff we have reached this target faster than many believed was possible. From the beginning, we pledged that this administration would work tirelessly to get this project off the ground and today we are one step closer."

The Mayor said the signing of the FEIS is the latest step in a process that will result in the entering of a final Record of Decision (ROD) by the FTA on September 1. That, in turn, will clear the way for the City to use the \$25 million TIGER grant Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced was being awarded to the city during his visit last August.

The ROD also will lay out the guidelines for expenditure of more than \$300 million in federal funds the City will apply for through the federal New Starts process. City Council has approved the issuance of \$75 million in bonds to provide a portion of the local match and a group of business and civic leaders (M-1 RAIL) has pledged an additional \$100 million in funding. An additional \$12.5 million in federal and state grants bring the project investment to more than \$500 million.

Bing said early engineering activity already is underway on the project.

The FEIS lays out a route for the project on Woodward stretching from the heart of downtown to Eight Mile Road with 19 passenger stations. In the downtown area it will turn west down Congress to Washington Boulevard, then north to the Rosa Parks Transit Center. From the transit center it will head south on Washington Boulevard to Larned, east on Larned to Woodward and then north on Woodward to Eight Mile Road.

The final route incorporates a series of major proposals sought by the M-1 RAIL group of business and civic leaders who have pledged private funding to be part of the local matching funding on the project. These modifications to the final route include:

1. All stations originally proposed by the M-1 RAIL group were retained in the final plan,
2. The downtown route stays on Woodward all the way to Congress and Larned as proposed by M-1 RAIL and
3. The route incorporates a side running track alignment sought by M-1 RAIL in the downtown area all the way to Adams on the north end of Grand Circus Park. At that point the line transitions to center running to and from Eight Mile.

The final route was selected based on 12 separate detailed criteria that were a part of the FEIS process. The criteria cover a wide range of concerns from passenger and pedestrian safety to assuring the smooth flow of motor vehicle traffic to concerns raised by the Detroit Fire Department. The criteria are:

1. Follow design principles set by Safety and Operations Workshops with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). These principles include:
  - a. Maintaining vehicle lanes a minimum of 11 feet in width, except where necessary and for short distances, such as bridges over I-75, I-94 and the Davison Freeway.
  - b. Maintain a minimum of two lanes in each direction for automobile and truck traffic.
  - c. Limiting areas in which the existing curb must be moved.
  - d. Allowing sidewalks at least 15 feet in width where possible.
  - e. A minimum parking lane width of 10 feet along the route when next to train operations.
2. Meet the fundamental Purpose and Need for the Project:
  - a. Serving the long-term vision of Woodward Light Rail as the first phase of a regional transit system.
  - b. Enhancing the region's transportation system.
  - c. Improving mobility of the population that is dependent on public transportation.
  - d. Supporting economic and neighborhood development.
3. Design and Build a Service to Meet Projected Ridership

- a. Ridership forecasts a demand that will require two-car trains to handle all riders efficiently, rather than single-car units.
  - i. That, in turn, means station platforms will need to be long enough to accommodate two-car trains.
- b. The system must maintain services during the hours and days predicted by ridership forecast.

#### 4. Maintain as Much On-Street Parking as Possible

- a. The FEIS determined that there would be significantly more on-street parking along Woodward through using the center running option with the dedicated track.
  - i. Specifically, a proposed side running option in which the rails were located on the curb would have eliminated 249 on-street parking spaces on Woodward.
  - ii. Only seven on-street parking spaces would need to be removed with the original median running/dedicated route option, though additional on-street parking will need to be removed if stations remain at Temple, Canfield and Ferry.

#### 5. Design and Build using Existing Bridges

- a. The goal was to avoid any need for modifications and/or reconstruction of existing bridges on Woodward.
  - i. The study determined a proposed side running option was not possible under the Amtrak bridge south of Milwaukee due to:
    - 1. A low overhead power line that restricts passage by high profile vehicles and
    - 2. Bridge footings that are located under outside lanes on Woodward would force the track alignment to the center.

#### 6. Maintain Existing Businesses - Minimize Land and/or Property Takings

- a. The proposed side running option would block a number of driveways along Woodward.
  - i. Specifically, between nine and 11 driveways would need to be removed if the side running option were used, resulting in property and/or business acquisitions.

#### 7. Address Fire Department Concerns Raised During Draft Environmental Impact Statement

- a. The Detroit Fire Department requires 20 feet of clearance between buildings and structures to assure access to buildings in the event of a fire.
  - i. Thus the placement of overhead power lines and supporting poles within 20 feet of buildings would create safety concerns.
  - ii. In addition, any emergency response to a building along the side running route would require shutting down rail operations for the duration of the emergency and clean-up.

#### 8. Provide a Safe Pedestrian Environment

- a. Jaywalking is a concern under both options.
- b. Stations associated with the center running option provide pedestrian refuges in center of Woodward.
- c. Pedestrians would cross at marked crosswalks every 1/8<sup>th</sup> to 1/4<sup>th</sup> mile with the center running option.

#### 9. Provide Safest Alternative for Bicyclists

- a. Under both options, bicyclists will travel in the lane closest to curb.
- b. The side running option creates a safety concern due to bicyclists traveling in lanes with uneven surfaces, inconsistent materials (steel & concrete) and gaps that could catch wheels due to the embedded track.

#### 10. Minimize Vehicle / Train Conflicts

- a. Under the Median Running / Dedicated Option, trains operate separate from traffic and left turns are limited, thereby minimizing the opportunities for motor vehicles and trains to come into conflict.

#### 11. Provide Reliable and Consistent Rail Service

- a. Trains operating separate from motor vehicles avoid unexpected delays due to: turning vehicles, bus pick-ups & drop-offs, valet service, disabled vehicles, improperly parked cars, double-parked delivery vehicles, etc.

#### 12. Public Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Statement

- a. 91% of comments received during the public comment process indicating a preference favored the median running option.

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