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## Charles Street trolley idea accelerates

Baltimore Business Journal - 5:05 PM EDT Wednesday, June 20, 2007 by [Daniel J. Sernovitz](#) Staff

The clang, clang, clanging of a trolley could soon be heard along the Charles Street corridor in Baltimore City if an engineering study supports the plan.

The Charles Street Development Corp. said Wednesday it is launching the first part of a two-year, \$620,000 preliminary study to evaluate whether a fixed-rail trolley system can be set up to run along the 7.5-mile stretch of Charles Street from the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Campus to the Inner Harbor.

"It's pretty much what we'll work to determine, to really see if this system can physically work," Kristin Speaker, executive director of the development corp., said in a telephone interview. "We see it as really enhancing a lot of what's already in the corridor and spurring additional economic development."

Speaker said the trolley system could potentially stimulate the redevelopment of underutilized sites along the Charles Street corridor and encouraging tourists to explore other parts of the city beyond the Inner Harbor area. It is also being looked at as a commuter system for residents who live in parts of the city like the Charles Village neighborhood but work at Johns Hopkins.

The development corporation has been studying the feasibility of the project since 2004 and held community meetings with groups along the proposed route to get their feedback about the project, Speaker said. Among the topics discussed with residents and other interested parties was the route the trolley would take. As proposed, the trolley would head north on Charles Street north from the Inner Harbor to Johns Hopkins. Heading south, it would then take St. Paul Street to Mt. Royal Avenue, down Maryland Avenue to Cathedral Street, Hopkins Place and Conway Street.

On Wednesday, the city's spending board voted to contribute \$200,000 toward the cost of the study and has committed to match the development corporation's fundraising efforts for up to \$800,000 toward its overall cost, projected to total \$1.6 million.

Mayor Sheila Dixon, following the city Board of Estimates' meeting Wednesday morning, praised the idea but noted it is only one of several options being explored to make it easier for city workers, residents and tourists to travel within the city.

"All of this is a way to have a smooth in-and-out way to get around Baltimore," she said.

The study is expected to take two years but is being broken down into one-year increments by consulting firm Kittelson & Associates Inc., a Portland, Ore., firm with offices in Baltimore. Ed Myers, of Kittelson & Associates, said the first part of the study will focus on technical aspects, including conflicts with underground utility lines, connections with other modes of transportation including the light rail, and what lanes of traffic the trolley would take. The first year's study will also include cost estimates and a ridership survey.

Myers said the second year of the study will look more closely at specifics of the system, including where to put trolley stops, the physical design of trolley stations, environmental and historical

considerations, and possible sites for a maintenance facility.

As proposed, there would be 10 trolley cars running in increments of 10 minutes.

The development corporation has scheduled a pair of public meetings on the plan. The first is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, June 21 at the Baltimore Convention Center. The second will be held at 6 p.m. June 25 at the Baltimore Museum of Art.

"We very much want the community involved in this process and strongly encourage the public to attend these meetings, see the initial plans, and offer input," Karen Stokes, executive director of the Greater Homewood Community Corp., said in a news release. Stokes is convening a Trolley Community Steering Committee to gather input on the plan.

The study's funding will come from a variety of sources, including the city, a Baltimore Development Corp. pledge of \$100,000, and commitments from private developers for \$60,000. Speaker said Baltimore developer Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse Inc. is among the developers who have pledged funds for the study.

Tom Noonan, president and CEO of the Baltimore Area Convention and Visitors Association, said in a news release he believes the system will help connect a broad array of landmarks in Baltimore, including the Mount Vernon Cultural District, Penn Station, the Lyric Opera House and the Myerhoff Symphony Hall.

"We envision the trolley creating a vital connection linking some of the City's most dynamic assets," Noonan said. "The Trolley itself will be another exciting attraction for Baltimore, as well as a convenient and accessible mode of transportation for tourists and locals alike."

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