

Reading Downtown Streetcar Report

Executive Summary



The purpose of this study was to determine the possible routing, costs and feasibility of a heritage streetcar system to circulate between the VF Outlets area of Wyomissing, the downtown of West Reading and the Downtown of Reading connecting to the Transit Center, the Sovereign Center, the Sovereign Performing Arts Center, Wyndham Hotel, Goggle Works, Imax Theater, Reading Area Community College and Giggie Works. An additional route was examined that would tie the Canal Street Area into the RACC and the main streetcar route.

In order to accomplish that mission, it was determined that a 4 mile loop track be provided that would be able to connect all of the above sites. Two routes were looked at to cross the Schuylkill River and Route 422. The first was to use the existing bridges currently carrying Penn Ave and the second was to use the existing RACC Bridge (former NS bridge) that crosses the Schuylkill River and then passes under Route 422. The Penn Avenue route was eliminated because of major traffic problems and the possibility that the bridges would be replaced in the not to distant future. Therefore it was determined that the RACC bridge would be more practical and less costly as well as providing additional connectivity and avoiding major traffic problems.

The final recommended route is Route B that uses the RACC (ex NS) bridge. That is a route that will be more scenic, connect more of the requested venues and will avoid traffic problems. This route also provides more connection options as it allows a connection to Giggie works and to a possible future route that would extend along the east side of the Schuylkill from Canal Street possibly all the way north to First Energy Stadium, home of the Reading Phillies.



Estimated capital costs for the recommended route, including track, 5 streetcars, overhead wire and a car barn; are \$40,500,000. Estimated operating costs are \$860,000 per year.

Sources for capital funding include Pennsylvania Capital Budget allocation, naming rights, tax anticipation notes and some federal programs. With the new administration now in place, we are waiting to see if the FTA Very Small Starts program is revised to allow the funding of streetcar projects without the significant front end costs that are incurred when Small Starts has been used.

Operating costs can come partially from the fare box. Unfortunately, very few, if any, transit operations can obtain their full operating costs from the fare box. In most cases it is in the 20-30% range. The remaining operating costs have got to be made up from local governments or some combination of government and commercial business' such as local taxing districts.

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