BULLETIN December 2006

Our Albuquerque Urban Rail Preferences

Now that the Modern Streetcar initiative is going to the voters for another try, this is how we think the proposal should be modified:

- The University and Central routes are excellent, except that we think that the Central (Red Chile) line should extend westward to Coors and eastward to Eubank; this would facilitate cross connections to most of our population and employment centers via other transit as well as bike and auto.
- ABQ Ride should move to acquire potential transit-related properties, such as the empty drug store at the northwest corner of Central and San Mateo and the near-empty auto service building at the northeast corner of Central and Louisiana.
- We should go for full-fledged Light Rail Transit (LRT), or at least set tracks heavy enough to support same in the future. In the interest of pay-as-you-go, we are not completely averse to installing the tracks, then sticking with the Rapid Ride busses till the city can more easily afford rail cars. Rail lines can last for centuries. Let's shell out once and get it over with.
- These rail cars don't have to be new, or even bought. We could buy or lease reconditioned late-model rolling stock; which might make good sense if we start out with streetcars and want to upgrade later. Is there a rent-to-buy option in the rail car business?
- We need to look closely at innovative track-laying systems such as LR 55. See our Web site.

We tend to think that any Rail is better than no Rail, but we'd like to see a system

we won’t want to tear up and renovate for at least a generation or two. If we run Streetcars on Central, we should plan for full Light Rail Transit along other East-West arteries and upgrade the University line to LRT.

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