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Now that the City Council has passed the extension of the Famous Transportation Tax to the voters for consideration in October, we Urban Rail advocates have our work cut out for us.

Most of us finally know we need more and better transit. Most of the world, plus a few of Albuquerque's leaders, are aware that Rail must be a part of all this. And yet a smog of suspicion and doubt hangs over Albuquerque concerning the very transportation solution already long since embraced by most of our sister cities—cities of all political reputations..

Why has Rail become a four-letter word in Albuquerque, and what can be done to change this? Absent conspiracy theories, I see these reasons for this impasse:

- 1) A brainwash-inspired fear of taxation, good or bad; the roots of which are worth a few Op Eds in their own right;
- 2) Our nearsighted obsession with up-front cost alone at the expense of long-term benefit;
- 3) Contention between the Mayor and the City Council, complicated by the political ambitions of several Councilors;
- 4) The focus of our pro-Rail political leaders on a Downtown-Nob Hill Streetcar line and its benefits to development along this route.

The first three of these deserve a lot of attention somewhere, but let's explore the fourth here:

The latest hot-potato Streetcar proposal (Central between Atrisco and San Mateo) is not a bad Rail beginning for Albuquerque (see Streetcar II, etc, Journal, April 6), but

to us at Rails Inc, not the best one for the whole city. Nor do we think it's been effectively presented to the Albuquerque public. The 21st Century Transportation Task Force heard several Streetcar presentations, all of which were geared to rejuvenation along "Inner" Central and nearby neighborhoods (a process already underway anyhow). Little attention was paid to the many virtues of Rail transit as good transportation for everybody.

We believe this narrowly considered approach, with its lack of attention to the needs (and the politics) of most of the city, has set back the cause of Rail transit in Albuquerque; possibly for years. So what now? Let's try these:

- 1) **Have an easily understood transit plan:** Where should our transit corridors be? When? Why? For whom? What goals do we want transit to help achieve? How do we want to change our land-use patterns? How daring or innovative do we want to be?
- 2) **Make new transit projects serve this plan:** How would the various types of transit vehicles and infrastructure serve our stated goals? How would Rail or better bus service contribute to the expansion of transit into all neighborhoods? What's the best deal for the taxpayer in the long run?
- 3) **Look at creative funding:** A good example of this is the private sector. Several cities have started successful Streetcar lines funded by the businesses who stand to benefit from same. As to neighborhood transit; private shuttle, "colectivo" and "jitney" services operate successfully all over the world. For these of course we'd have to have in place a stringent inspection program for both vehicles and operators.
- 4) **Present the plan and its component projects to the general public with regard to their benefits to the general public:** Let's talk about fuel / energy economy, less congestion, greater passenger-mile capacity per ton of materials and acre of land, smooth on-time performance, the tire disposal problem, long system life and low maintenance. A lot of people can relate to these.

The rejuvenation of Central may be just the ticket for Albuquerque (or not), but our far-flung public, right or wrong, doesn't care. Most of us are not developers. What we care about in transportation is safety, reliability, low long-term cost, greater health and cleanliness, peace of mind — and the hundreds of our dollars a month freed up by not needing our cars for essential everyday use (there's a Stimulus for you).

We Rail advocates already know that extensive Rail-anchored transit will achieve all of the above and more. We also know that the cost of your transit ticket, added to your share of a Rail-anchored transit tax, is still a huge bargain compared to needing your car every day (think instant \$4.00-an-hour raise).

We know all this, but so far we've done a poor job of convincing most of our fellow Albuquerqueans. Let's back up and start over.

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