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(www.railtransitonline.com)

Greenway Trolleys

A proposal to bring streetcars back to Minneapolis a half-century after the Twin Cities system was scrapped is gaining support among city officials. The proposed route would follow the Midtown Greenway, a below grade bicycle and pedestrian trail in South Minneapolis that's part of the original Milwaukee Railroad right-of-way built in 1882. The corridor, now owned by Hennepin County, is located one block north of Lake Street, a thriving commercial corridor that once carried the Selby-Lake streetcar line and is still one of the region's three busiest bus routes.

The eastern end of Lake Street crosses the Mississippi River into St. Paul, which could be part of a future phase, and a number of tourist attractions and employment centers are - or will be - located along the route. In 1999, the Metropolitan Council proposed building a busway through the Greenway, generating intense opposition from neighborhood and citizen activist groups. Local rail advocates, including John DeWitt, chairman of the Greenway Coalition's streetcar committee, suggested a trolley instead. The Midtown Greenway Coalition, which represents the 16 neighborhoods along the ROW, hired well-known heritage trolley consultant Jim Graebner to conduct a feasibility study. Graebner estimated the cost (in 2005 dollars) at \$53 million, less than either a busway or LRT. He projected daily ridership at 6,800 to 7,300 by 2020. The route, part of which would be single track, would connect with the Hiawatha LRT line and it could someday be converted to LRT. If heritage vehicles were unavailable, modern streetcars such as those running in Portland and Tacoma could be purchased. City councilman Gary Schiff has suggested a more detailed study of the proposal that could be financed by the county and city. "You've got a strong route, key destinations and significant population densities," Schiff told the Pioneer Press.

www.midtowngreenway.org/programs/transit/Trolley_Study_HTML/table.htm

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