

Circulator Group – Notes from Greg
March 31, 2012

Hi All,

I have just created an e-mail group list, and this is my first missive using it. I believe that by writing a simply "Reply" you should reach everyone on the list. A few things to report:

1.) Action Initiative Leader Meeting: Last week Margo convened a meeting of Downtown Revitalization Action Initiative leaders just to check on progress. Unfortunately, Dave Hurley (Housing) and I were the only ones able to make it. Nonetheless we had a good discussion with me, Dave, Margo and Brian Holst in attendance. Margo suggested that I contact John Kern and Nancy Waterman to assess their interest in participating in our group, that's why you see their names in the Group List. (more below). I went through the issue framing memo that I have circulated. Hopefully, you have all had a chance to review that and the attachment that went with it. Margo - as our resident "task master" wanted to know about work plans going forward, so here is my proposal: a.) within two weeks we should schedule a group meeting to go over the memo and outline next steps, and b.) in approximately 1 month I propose a meeting of our group with Keith Jones of URS to discuss the engineering practicalities of a true street car system in Juneau (more on this below.)

2.) My Memo: I apologize in advance for being late with the memo (I'd said I would get something done within 2 months of our last meeting) and for simultaneously being too wordy but not covering enough ground. I had a hard time hitting a happy medium between being succinct (the maximum 2 pages rule) and really giving proper attention to what is a fairly complex subject. But, I hope it stimulates some good discussion, and I look forward to you feedback. The "Why Streetcars" attachment is a good synopsis of the arguments for true streetcars and their function as both a mode of transportation and economic development stimulators. But, it is pretty Portland oriented. For a wider view I might suggest "Street Smart". I know Ben has a copy, and Heather has looked at it. There should be a copy available at Northwind Architect's library. Let me know if you are having trouble finding it.

3.) Nancy and John and the Group: I'm guessing that everyone knows each other, but just in case...Nancy is a member of Juneau Commission on Sustainability. She said she would like to be full fledged member of our Group, so "Welcome Nancy". John is the Superintendent of Capital Transit and, BTW, the brains behind the original Downtown Juneau Circulator of the mid-1980's. John declined our *generous* offer of full membership with all its perks, pleading workload. But he said he'd like to stay informed of our doings and is in regular contact with Ben in anyway. So, I'm confident we'll have the benefit of John's insight and many years of experience on city planning and transit issues.

4.) Why Did The First Circulator Not Continue?: This was something that Margo asked me to look into deeper at last week's meeting, so it was one of the first things I brought up when I talked with John Kern. He indicated that the basic problem was money. The circulator was supported by a one year federal grant with some additional city or state money. Capital Transit was able to stretch that funding to keep the service going for two years. But, the project operated on a "ride free zone" basis, and strictly local funding to keep it going was not available after the grant funding ran out. The project was success though, with good ridership and lots of public support.

It was interesting to learn that Juneau was one of the leaders on this type of circulator nationwide. The principle is now well-established. even though we do not have a circulator. *John, since you were the guy behind that effort, perhaps you would like to elaborate on the history a bit for everyone's education.*

5.) Keith Jones / URS: I met Keith through Gomaco (<http://www.gomacotrolley.com/index.html>) a manufacturer of replica streetcars. I have had a number of talks with Keith and he has provided me with much valuable info, including several copies of Street Smart which are now circulating here in Juneau. Keith works on streetcar projects for URS, (<http://www.urscorp.com/>) a huge international design & engineering firm. He is currently working on the St.Louis "Loop" project, has done work on Portland's system, etc. Earlier, he managed the Little Rock, AR bus system and its construction of a true streetcar, the River Rail System (<http://www.cat.org/rrail/>). I have explored the idea of having Keith come to Juneau to give at least a preliminary "ground truthing" as to the feasibility of a true streetcar system here, and generally answer technical questions, make suggestions, etc. He is quite interested in doing so, and has said if we could get him here, he would cover. other costs. If there is interest in the group, I would offer a mileage ticket to bring Keith to Juneau. Keith has also introduced me to Tim Borchers of City Rail Solutions, who I had the opportunity to meet in person in Tampa in December. (More on Tampa in another e-mail) Tim seems like another terrific source of information for us...very engaging and super knowledgeable. He has been involved in streetcar systems from Australia to Savannah, GA, to Portland, OR and now the aforementioned St. Louis project.

Anyway, enough for now. Working with Margo I'll get something out next week about setting up a group meeting.

Regards,

Greg Fisk