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MAYOR HOLDEN RELEASES LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE FOR PROPOSED STREETCAR

Environmental Assessment will Evaluate Route Alignment, Stops and Maintenance Sites

Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden said the City-Parish has identified a Locally Preferred Alternative for the TramLinkBR project. The Locally Preferred Alternative is based on the project team's recommendations for a route alignment, streetcar stops and potential maintenance facility locations with input from the public and stakeholder groups the project team has been working with over the past few months.

The current phase of the TramLinkBR project includes advanced conceptual engineering and environmental analysis for a proposed modern streetcar connecting downtown, Old South Baton Rouge and the LSU campus. The streetcar, or tram, was envisioned in FUTUREBR, the East Baton Rouge Parish comprehensive master plan, to boost redevelopment along the Nicholson Drive corridor and connect LSU and residential areas with job centers located downtown.

Holden said the TramLinkBR Steering Committee he appointed to work with the project team has signed off on the Locally Preferred Alternative to be evaluated in the Environmental Assessment currently underway for the project. Holden said there will still be an opportunity for public input at a second round of public meetings held in the summer when the Environmental Assessment is released for public review. Comments on the project website are always encouraged at www.TramLinkBR.com

"This project is moving forward with consensus from the public and stakeholders for Option 2 that was presented with two-way tracks along Fourth Street and St. Ferdinand in the downtown area," Holden said. "However, we asked the project team to take a second look at the southern end of the downtown alignment to improve the transition from Nicholson Drive to downtown to assure it works well with existing traffic patterns."

Holden added, “We have been able to reach this milestone with the help of Secretary Anthony Foxx and the U.S. Department of Transportation, and I appreciate the expertise of his staff in working with us to move this project forward.”

As a result of additional analysis, the preferred alignment in this area has the streetcar running from Nicholson Drive to St. Louis Street, then one block on Europe Street to St. Ferdinand for both northbound and southbound movements. Europe Street avoids some challenges that were present at South Boulevard including traffic operational concerns and a vertical clearance conflict with the elevated freeway ramp.

The Locally Preferred Alternative proposes stop locations in the downtown area at North Street, Florida Street, North Boulevard, Government/Spain Street and Europe Street. Along Nicholson Drive, stops are recommended at Water Street (the entrance to the Water Campus), Van Buren, McKinley, Aster and North Stadium Drive with alternate or future stops at Oklahoma and Galvez.

Three operating and maintenance facility sites will be evaluated in the Environmental Assessment, which includes sites off South Boulevard, Garner Street and Oklahoma Street. In addition, the TramLinkBR project team is preparing additional information on the option of inside or outside lane placement for streetcar tracks along Nicholson Drive to present to the Steering Committee for further discussion. Both options will be evaluated in the Environmental Assessment.

The Steering Committee has directed the TramLinkBR project team to assume a service plan that would have the streetcar operating seven days a week, from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and later service on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, with 15 to 20 minute headways. The current estimated annual cost for this level of service is approximately \$4 million.

Ashley Booth, the HNTB Project Manager, said “The TramLinkBR project continues to advance with unprecedented efforts by the City-Parish, the Federal Transit Administration, the Steering Committee and project team. The project team will begin a more detailed evaluation of the locally preferred alternative and we look forward to bringing additional information back to the public in early summer for their feedback.”

“We have placed this current phase on a fast-track so the streetcar project can be in a competitive position for future funding,” Holden said. “We conducted two land-use planning workshops this week in Old South Baton Rouge and Downtown to get additional public input and to brief residents on how the streetcar project can help spur development and improve movement between Downtown, Old South Baton Rouge and the LSU Campus. I am pleased that the public response has been so positive.”

The land use workshops were sponsored by the Office of the Mayor-President, Department of Transportation and Drainage and East Baton Rouge Planning Commission.

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