

## **Fort Worth streetcar plans move forward**

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Fort Worth's streetcar plans are moving closer to construction.

In late 2009, the Regional Transportation Council allocated \$1.6 million to kick start an initial Downtown segment of the streetcar project. The Transportation Council's funding, which will be funneled through the Texas Department of Transportation, will be matched by \$200,000 each from the Fort Worth Transportation Authority and the city of Fort Worth.

Also, the city's Modern Streetcar Task Force has recommended a contract to the City Council with the Fort Worth office of HDR Inc., an architectural, engineering and consulting firm, which would be led by Project Manager Charlie Hales, said Dana Burghdoff, deputy director of planning and development for the city of Fort Worth. Hales, the senior vice president of HDR, previously served as city commissioner to Portland, Ore., where he helped launch Portland's streetcar system.

While aspects of the streetcar plans are moving along, some City Council members are in disagreement about where initial Downtown routes should go. At the Jan. 12 pre council meeting, Council member Carter Burdette, who represents District 7, said he wasn't sure Downtown was the best place to start a system because of limited economic development opportunities. Economic development is a key issue in the streetcar plans because the city may receive funding from grants applied for through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Council member Joel Burns, who represents District 9, said he thought Downtown was the correct place to begin the system in order to begin creating a seamless transportation system in Fort Worth.

"The whole idea is having an integrated public transportation system," said Robert Parmelee, chairman of the board of directors of the Fort Worth Transportation Authority. Parmelee also is a member of the city's Streetcar Task Force.

The next steps in the streetcar process, said David Gaspers, a senior planner in the city's planning and development department, will be to get approval from the City Council on the contract with HDR Inc., work through agreements with TxDOT to get funding in place, and then to move forward with decisions on where initial streetcar routes will be constructed.

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