

Frequently Asked Questions about the Columbia Pike Streetcar

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What is the Columbia Pike Transit Initiative? It is a joint project of Arlington and Fairfax Counties to bring enhanced transit services and facilities to the Columbia Pike corridor. It has led to such improvements as *Pike Ride*, the proposed Super Stops, and the Columbia Pike Streetcar.

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What is a “streetcar”? A streetcar is an electric tram that runs on steel rails set flush into the surface of the street. It uses vehicles that generally are bigger than buses but smaller than commuter trains (VRE) or heavy rail transit (Metrorail). Streetcars can operate either in dedicated lanes or in mixed traffic.

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What is the “Modified Streetcar Alternative”? Following a transit Alternatives Analysis study, the County Boards of Arlington and Fairfax adopted the “Modified Streetcar” as the Locally Preferred Alternative. This alternative uses a combination of streetcars and buses. Streetcars would run all day long, but Metrobuses and local buses would still be used for additional services, especially during rush hours.

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Why did the counties adopt the Modified Streetcar Alternative? This was the option that best achieved the goals of the Alternative Analysis: increased capacity and mobility, better regional connections, cost effectiveness, environmental friendliness and incentives for economic revitalization.

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What is the proposed route for the streetcar? The route runs from Pentagon City in Arlington to Skyline in Fairfax County. From Pentagon City it runs on S. Hayes St. and Army Navy Drive to S. Joyce St., along Columbia Pike through Arlington and then along S. Jefferson St. to Skyline. Future extensions could be made at either end of the line.

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Will the streetcar have stops in the curb lane or in the median? Generally, the system will have curb-side stops, using the sidewalks for boarding. Median stops will only be used where there is enough street width to construct them, such as in Skyline and Pentagon City.

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Will the streetcar cause traffic congestion? The streetcar is not expected to cause any more congestion than the current bus service that runs in the curb lanes in mixed traffic. Because streetcars carry more passengers than buses, fewer transit vehicles would be needed.



**More information:
703-892-2776**



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Will there be overhead wires? While it is likely that the streetcar will have overhead wires, it will use a single wire that is less intrusive than multiple overhead utility lines. There are also alternatives to overhead power being developed in other countries that may be more widely available when the power technology is selected.

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Won't the streetcar have fewer seats because it has doors on both sides? Some modern streetcars have four doors on each side — to load more quickly and to accommodate both curb and median stops. These vehicles are larger than standard buses and can accommodate more passengers despite the additional doors. The smoother operation of the electric streetcar makes it better able to accommodate standees during peak periods.

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What is the timeline? Environmental planning and preliminary engineering studies including community meetings will be conducted over the next two years. Assuming funding is available, final design and construction could begin soon thereafter, and streetcar operations could commence by 2014.

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What is the cost of the streetcar? The estimates are very preliminary and will be refined as the project moves into engineering. The capital cost for the Modified Streetcar is estimated at \$160 million or about \$34 million per mile for the 4.7 mile system. This includes planning, design, and construction of the track, stations/stops, power system and maintenance facility, and the purchase of streetcar vehicles.

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Is the streetcar project funded? Arlington and Fairfax Counties have been cooperating in the analysis of potential funding strategies and are currently developing capital budgets for planning, design, and construction that will be submitted to state and regional agencies and funding sources. As a result of recent Virginia legislation, new funding sources for transportation are expected to be available at the local, regional, and state levels.

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Who will run the system? No decisions have yet been made on the operation of the streetcar. It could be operated by Metro or it could be built and operated by a private contractor for the two counties.

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What is Fairfax County's role in this project? The initial Modified Streetcar system will be 4.7 miles long – approximately 85% in Arlington and 15% in Fairfax. Collaboration between the two counties is taking place as both counties make planning, engineering, funding and management decisions about the future system.

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How can I find out more about the streetcar? You can look at the Web site for the Pike Transit Initiative: www.piketransit.com. You can also contact Richard Hartman at Arlington County at 703-228-4019.