Seattle’s First Hill Streetcar
Challenges of Operating a Streetcar through a Fast-Growing City

Western ITE Conference
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Presentation overview

• History and background of Seattle’s First Hill Streetcar

• Challenges and issues with the current operations

• Solutions

• Future of the Streetcar
Background of First Hill Streetcar

- 2.5-mile modern-streetcar line
- Connects the Capitol Hill, First Hill and the International District neighborhoods in central Seattle
- Construction began in April 2012, and was completed in June 2014
- Delays in the delivery and testing of the streetcar vehicles delayed the opening of the line to January 2016.
Origin and History

• First Hill is considered a regional destination due to its concentration of major medical facilities and Seattle University

• Deep-bore Link Light rail station was originally planned and then removed

• Neighborhood residents, institutions, and business owners strongly preferred a streetcar

• $134 million line was funded
Streetcar Station Features
First Hill Streetcar Challenges

1. Streetcar delays
2. Low ridership due to poor service
3. Safety issues with bicycles and general-purpose vehicles
Spot Improvements

- Jackson St
- Yesler Way
- Broadway
Jackson Street

Problem: Delay from vehicles and lack of transit signal priority
Yesler Way

Problem: Delay caused by vehicles and signal timing
Broadway

Problem:
Delay caused by vehicles blocking streetcar

Solution:
• Modify signal at James Street
• Install streetcar-only lane between Pine and Madison
Bicycle Safety

• Streetcar vs. Bicycle
  – Relatively Minor Issues
• Tracks vs. Tires
  – Education
    Audience
    Tourists
    Shared Bikes
  – Speed (Terrain / E-Bikes)
    – Awareness / Navigation
      Signage
      Pavement Markings
  – Other Options
    • Flange Fill

Table 39. Rail/Flangeway Gap Bicycle Warning Sign Alternatives Selected for Evaluation.

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<td>![Tracks in Pavement]</td>
<td>![Bicycles Cross Tracks with Care]</td>
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First Hill Streetcar Future

1. Continue to prioritize streetcar with improvements:
   - Streetcar-only lane
   - Transit signal priority
   - Bicycle safety improvements

2. Finish construction of streetcar extension

3. Add more service and frequency
Questions?

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