### Project Title
Examining the Development Effects of Modern-Era Streetcars: An Assessment of Two US Cities

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Mineta Consortium for Transportation Mobility

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### Brief Description of Research Project
Streetcars once dominated the landscape of American transportation before giving way to the bus in the mid 1900’s. Recently, this mode of transportation has experienced a re-birth with thirteen systems being constructed since 2000, and many more currently under construction or in the planning phase. Most cities pursuing streetcars are doing so for their purported development effects, yet there is little evidence on these effects due to a lack of empirical research. Most work simply presents descriptive development outcomes within streetcar corridors as a measure of the streetcar’s development effects. Alternate factors which may have influenced such development are not considered, placing into question the validity of such measures. This study addresses these limitations by accounting for the many elements which aid in the stimulation of economic development alongside streetcar corridors.
This is done in order to isolate and quantify the impact of the streetcar.

This study examines the development effects in two U.S. cities that implemented streetcar service between 2000 and 2010: Portland, OR and Seattle, WA. Historic construction permits and assessed parcel data was acquired in order to analyze post-streetcar announcement development patterns. The square footage and number of residential units produced as a result of new construction are tabulated for areas within ¼ mile of streetcar corridors. A control group is developed via a matching technique which consists of census block groups not serviced by streetcars but with similar growth potential at pre-streetcar conditions. Development outcomes (sq. ft., valuation, and new residential units) between streetcar corridors and the control group, downtown area, and city will be compared. The development effects are further explored through analysis of assessed parcel data via a hedonic regression model. This model allows the estimated influence which streetcar proximity has on property values to be captured while controlling for key factors which may also have some influence.

The quantitative analysis is followed by a qualitative component which consists of in-depth interviews and document review. The questions which the qualitative component of this study seeks to address are 1) What amenities do developers value the most when deciding to build within streetcar corridors?, and 2) How are growth inducing amenity packages developed? Interviews will target entities heavily involved in the planning and development of the streetcar corridor within each city. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted which seek to gain greater information about the streetcar planning process; corridor development goals; the development and use of mechanisms/amenities/ policies to attract growth; and the influence of the streetcar, relative to that of other growth inducing elements, on the decision of developers to build within the corridor. Additional data will be collected through the review of documents such as city council meeting minutes, city plans, economic development plans, and city ordinances.

It is hypothesized that streetcar corridors will experience growth in terms of composing a greater proportion of citywide square footage, valuation, and living units. It is anticipated that development outcomes in streetcar corridors will be comparable to those of the control group, showing the significant influence of alternate amenities which often accompany streetcar investment in attracting development. Due to the limitations of the streetcar as a transportation option, it is anticipated that developers will not value the presence of the streetcar over alternate location specific
amenities.

Describe Implementation of Research Outcomes (or why not implemented)

Place Any Photos Here

Impacts/Benefits of Implementation (actual, not anticipated)

Web Links
- Reports
- Project website