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In Key Step Forward City Selects Project Manager for Streetcar

URS Firm brings Streetcar expertise to project, will solidify Streetcar timeline and budget working with City agencies, non-profit L.A. Streetcar Inc. and Office of Councilmember Huizar – The City has also submitted formal request letter to federal government to enter project development

LOS ANGELES (December 17, 2013) – Councilmember Huizar joined with the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), Bureau of Engineering (BOE), and the non-profit Los Angeles Streetcar Inc. (LASI) to announce that the City of Los Angeles has selected nationally renowned streetcar car experts URS as Project Manager for the Downtown L.A. Streetcar project. URS has a proven track record of working on some of the biggest streetcar projects in the nation. The Streetcar project is coming to fruition out of a public-private partnership project championed by Councilmember José Huizar’s Bringing Back Broadway initiative.

URS will function as the overall project delivery manager, working with LADOT and BOE staff to provide the technical knowledge needed to deliver the streetcar. BOE will oversee construction of the project and LADOT will operate it. Some of the firm’s main tasks as Project Manager include creating a deliverable project timeline, identifying and resolving utility conflicts and generating an independent cost estimate. Additionally, URS will work with LADOT to develop a financial plan to fully fund the streetcar, including looking at public-private partnership opportunities.

“URS brings national expertise in moving streetcar projects forward. They are an excellent choice for Project Manager,” said Councilmember José Huizar “This project will help us bring economic revitalization to Downtown Los Angeles and move the City into the next era of transit service. We will soon make Los Angeles the first big city in the United states with a modern streetcar system.”

URS is the recognized leader in modern streetcars, specializing in implementing streetcars in downtown urban settings. URS has served as engineer of record for 10 major streetcar projects including those in Seattle, Portland, and projects currently under construction in Tucson, Dallas and Atlanta.

“URS is thrilled to collaborate with the LADOT and L.A. Streetcar Inc. on this landmark project to revitalize the Broadway corridor and connect Downtown’s many emerging districts and destinations” said Steve Ortmann, URS Vice President, and Streetcar Project Director. “We’re excited to be part of the team charged with bringing historic streetcar service back to downtown to help stitch together the urban fabric of an increasingly vibrant downtown, while enhancing connectivity with other regional transit services.”

URS has been involved in every phase of streetcar system development, construction, and operation. They have been instrumental in developing new streetcar technology and designs for the industry, improving constructability with cost-effective installation methods, and improving the approach to bicycle and pedestrian safety associated with these systems.

URS has developed leading edge engineering and construction solutions for streetcar projects that lower costs and reduce construction impacts when compared to conventional rail construction, bringing efficiency and added value to streetcar projects across the country. URS is among the world leaders in providing engineering, architecture, planning, and construction management services. With over 55,000 employees in 330 office world-wide, URS is headquartered in San Francisco and has been a significant presence in downtown Los Angeles for over 65 years.

“It's critically important to the Downtown property owners who are being taxed to pay for the construction of this project that the streetcar be seamlessly delivered and on budget,” said Steve Needleman, Chairman of Los Angeles Streetcar Inc. “URS has the technical expertise and streetcar experience to make this happen and will be an excellent partner to the City and LASI.”

The selection of URS comes a week after LADOT submitted an official request to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to enter Project Development within the Small Starts grant program, during which time the project will be comprehensively developed in partnership with FTA towards the goal of receiving up to \$75 million in federal funding. Selecting the Project Manager and submission of the Project Development request are major milestones for the streetcar project, and demonstrate the City's commitment to advancing the project forward to realize both transit and economic development benefits that will further transform Downtown into a world-class destination.

The streetcar project will represent the first time LADOT will operate a diversified fleet for the City, adding the fixed-rail streetcar system to its existing DASH bus circulator program.

“The Downtown L.A. Streetcar project will enhance transportation options for local residents, businesses and visitors alike,” said Jon K. Mukri, Interim General Manager, Department of Transportation, City of Los Angeles.

Costs are being refined as engineering proceeds, and early estimates project the budget at \$150–160 million, excluding utility relocation costs, since those specific costs are not yet known. \$10 million from CRA/LA and \$1 million from City of Los Angeles Measure R Local Return is approved and allocated. A Community Facilities District was approved by voters in December 2012 to generate \$62.5 million for streetcar construction through a special tax on private property within a few blocks of the streetcar line. City Council has approved a 30-year operational plan estimated at \$294 million.

The remainder of construction funding will be sought through state and federal grants, the FTA Small Starts program and a possible public-private partnership known as a DBOFM, to Design, Build, Operate, Finance and Maintain the streetcar. Environmental review is underway with a draft EIR expected in early 2014.

Streetcars are environmentally friendly, ADA-compliant, efficient, attractive, and user-friendly. They provide a convenient way for residents, workers, and tourists alike to better connect to public transit and reach destinations without using a single occupancy vehicle. Streetcars are a much-needed “first and last mile” solution. Streetcars run on surface streets, in the same lane of traffic as automobiles, making them easily integrated into neighborhoods. Because they load at the curbside with no steps required to board, they are accessible for all. Ridership for the Downtown streetcar line is projected at more than 6,000 riders per day.

Streetcar lines attract new development and stimulate economic activity along their alignments. In 2011, AECOM conducted an Economic Impact Study for the L.A. Streetcar. The report found that the streetcar project would result in significant additive value generated throughout Los Angeles over the next 25 years, including: \$1.1 billion in new development; more than 9,000 jobs; \$24.5 million in annual tourism spending; and \$47 million in new public revenue (above projections for Downtown without a streetcar.)

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