

Will Meek Inherit the Worth (of the Project)

The Clang! Clang! Of the Trolley will be pleasing to those who anticipate using the conveyance to get from east Manhattan Beach to West Downtown. The would be less euphonious to those residents who are opposed to increased traffic—every 30 minutes—on already overburdened streets.

In December, 20008, city Council authorized a contract for a trolley feasibility study with Greg Meek of Rural transit Consultants. His presentation was on the April 20 city council agenda and included cost projection for two trolleys (10-14 hours per day), salaries, benefits and associated expenses.

Securing the two trolleys would be the City's responsibility, whether for purchase or lease. While Manhattan Beach received Measure R funds (one-half cent sales tax approved by L.A. County voters), there is the possibility that the \$390,000 cost projected may not be met by Measure R funds.

In his presentation, Mr. Meeks recounted conversations he held with residents, many of whom emphasized the need to get downtown for dinner and night life on weekends.

Less attractive was his recommendation that the City look into "Theme" red and green trolleys, providing a "Disneyland-esque environment". It was at this point that a number of residents reacted unfavorably: the thought of a Disneyland-like trolley driving up and down their respective residential streets, every 30 minutes, 10 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week, was rejected. The route and frequency will be a major consideration.

The advantages of the trolley system, while providing reduced traffic and increased resident downtown shopping or beach accessibility, must be carefully studied. An earlier Observer article written by Jan Dennis, told of three previous attempts (later aborted) to initiate such a service. In 1986 the City funded student passes when riding RTD buses, but this was also a failed program.

Some residents were skeptical of Meeks' statement that students in Middle and High Schools would use the trolley, thereby eliminating much traffic in the school areas. This is a move which must be fully explored.

At the December, 2008 City Council meeting, when the proposal was first heard, Assistant to City Manager Coe-Joel, added that there would be nothing obtrusive to the neighborhoods. An option to subsidize costs with advertising inside the trolley was not considered.

The Trolley Transportation concept will be brought back at a later date. To be heralded with a resounding Clang! Clang! Clang!?