

## ***PROPOSED DINKEY STUDY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

### **• What is the Dinkey study and who is paying for it?**

The Dinkey study is actually a Federal Transit Administration-approved transportation "Alternatives Analysis" study. Its purpose is to "identify and compare the costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of transportation alternatives as a means of providing local decision-makers with the information necessary to implement transportation solutions in priority corridors."<sup>1</sup> It will examine a variety of means to improve public transit service in many sectors of the community, including Downtown, through enhanced *bus service*, *historic trolleys* and/or *streetcars*. Two areas it will definitely focus on include the Downtown-Campus corridor, and the popular Iowa State Center Park and Ride node.

The study costs \$300,000. \$240,000 of this money is *federal* money, and can be used only for capital improvements or planning projects. \$60,000 is *local* money. The Government of the Student Body and the Iowa State University administration have already made commitments to pay for their share, \$40,000. The City of Ames share is \$20,000, and it is the only body that has not yet committed to its share.

### **• Ames can't afford a Dinkey! Why study it if we can't afford it?**

You're right, Ames probably can't afford a Dinkey (on our own)! Construction costs are not known; however, this year Congress appropriated \$1 billion dollars to a new transit program that is *specifically* designed to fund small-scale Dinkey-like projects.<sup>2</sup> Communities that complete an "Alternative Analysis" study (see above) and propose a qualifying project are offered a 80% federal capital match through this program! This means that the Ames community, though local sources such as student fees, Iowa State University and the City of Ames, would be required to pay for only 20% of the construction costs.

Operating costs are not known; however, a study recently examined four cities with streetcar and bus service.<sup>3</sup> In three communities studied, streetcar transit was more expensive than equivalent bus service. In one community studied, streetcar transit was less expensive than equivalent bus service.

### **• Ames is too small. What use do we have for fixed rail?**

In fact, Ames per capita transit use is greater than Minneapolis or Chicago. In addition, CyRide's Orange Route carries more passengers per weekday than Portland's streetcar, which is considered a huge success.<sup>4</sup> We love transit here in Ames.

Admittedly, Ames is no Portland or Chicago. However, Ames can compare to the small Wisconsin city of Kenosha. Kenosha recently completed a 2-mile streetcar system for

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant\\_programs/transportation\\_planning/major\\_investment/procedures\\_technical\\_methods/9949\\_10244\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.fta.dot.gov/grant_programs/transportation_planning/major_investment/procedures_technical_methods/9949_10244_ENG_HTML.htm)

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.publictransportation.org/congress/safetea\\_lu\\_brochure.asp#link19](http://www.publictransportation.org/congress/safetea_lu_brochure.asp#link19)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.public.iastate.edu/~tborich/>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.public.iastate.edu/~tborich/>

only \$5 million dollars in construction costs.<sup>5</sup> It is credited with spurring tens millions of dollars in private investment in and near their downtown, and Kenosha is making plans to triple the length of its system. Small college towns that are *ahead of Ames* in studying rail include Santa Cruz, CA, Boulder, CO and Ithaca, NY.

### ● **How could the Dinkey benefit Downtown?**

The politically conservative Free Congress Foundation recently endorsed the use of streetcars as economic development engines, noting streetcars “bring more people downtown, and people are the lifeblood of a downtown. [They] both spur and channel development. [They] make it easy for tourists to get around, without a car. [They] help your town or city recover its own distinctive character, a character people can identify with and even love.”<sup>6</sup>

Economic development in the Main Street Cultural district means attracting people to live, work or visit the district. It makes perfect economic sense to facilitate direct, faster, permanent and more comfortable transit between downtown and the activity center of Ames (Iowa State’s Central Campus) and the tourism center of Ames (Iowa State Center complex and Jack Trice Stadium). Imagine hosting a faculty recruit on campus, and conveniently riding the Dinkey over lunch to show off the retail and cultural heart of Ames and to eat at Lucallan’s or Aunt Maude’s. Imagine parking downtown on a fall Saturday, shopping at the Cultural District’s eclectic shops, drinking a brew at Olde Main, and then riding the Dinkey direct to Jack Trice Stadium. Imagine a district full of graduate students and young professionals, attracted to live downtown by convenient access to their work at Iowa State, as well as all of the one-of-a-kind amenities downtown offers in an urban, pedestrian-oriented environment.

### ● **What would the Dinkey look like?**

There are two types of fixed rail vehicles: modern streetcars and historic trolleys. Trolleys seem best suited to link downtown and campus on a day-to-day basis, as the original Dinkey did, but large capacity modern streetcars (which would replace buses currently used on the CyRide Orange Route) could be used to shuttle hundreds of people from downtown to on-campus destinations for athletic events and conferences.



<sup>5</sup><http://www.heritagetrolley.org/existKenosha.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.apta.com/research/info/online/weyrich.cfm>