

# N. Rampart Street/ St. Claude Avenue STREETCAR PROJECT



April 2014

The N. Rampart Street/St. Claude Avenue Streetcar line is part of the RTA's streetcar French Quarter expansion program. The line will run from Elysian Fields Avenue connecting to the Canal Streetcar line and Union Passenger Terminal on Loyola Avenue. Streetcars will share the roadway with vehicular traffic in the left travel lane adjacent to the neutral ground. There will be six streetcar stops along N. Rampart Street and St. Claude Avenue. They are located to facilitate improved travel time and passenger convenience. The stops are placed for consistency with existing and future land use, and as far apart as possible, while providing good pedestrian access. The stops include:

- Conti Street
- St. Ann Street
- Ursulines Street
- Esplanade Avenue
- Pauger Street
- Elysian Fields Avenue

All streetcar shelters will be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The shelters are designed to be compatible with our most historic neighborhoods that they will be serving, including the French Quarter, the Tremé neighborhood and the Faubourg Marigny neighborhood. The historic streetlights currently located on N. Rampart (between Canal Street and St. Philip Street) will also be incorporated into the streetcar line.

The construction is expected to be completed in early-to-mid 2016.

## Frequently asked questions:

### Why are the proposed alignments in the street as opposed to the neutral ground?

The project team has conducted intensive investigation of subsurface and above ground existing conditions in order to identify the most feasible streetcar design. The existing travel lanes were selected for the following reasons:

Insufficient Space - The existing neutral ground is not presently wide enough to accommodate two streetcar tracks. In many places the neutral ground on N. Rampart Street is approximately 20 feet wide or less, which is too narrow to accommodate two streetcar tracks along with the minimum space required for safety clearance between the two tracks and a streetcar shelter. Widening the neutral ground to provide the extra space required would eliminate the ability to provide the current level of traffic lanes in each direction, eliminate the ability to provide the proposed bicycle lanes, and place the streetcar tracks on top of many known utilities – which would have to be relocated.



Utility Conflicts - Significant utilities have been identified in

the neutral ground area running parallel to the proposed streetcar route. These public and private utilities consist of underground utilities and overhead lines ranging from local telephone and cable television lines, to internet fiber optic lines, to major natural gas and water pipes, to local electric and sewer lines, to AT&T's nationwide fiber optic trunk line.

The streetcar tracks can't be placed on top of these lines, since the tracks would prevent future maintenance access, and the weight from the tracks and streetcars could damage the pipes and conduits.

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Relocating these utilities would be expensive and time consuming, and the streetcar project does not have the funding available to pay for the relocations. By locating the streetcars in the street, the relocation of many utility lines can be avoided.

*Potential for Archeological Impacts* - The proposed streetcar route will travel through a very old part of the city, and there is a good possibility that excavation of the neutral ground to either build streetcar tracks or relocate utilities would uncover and/or disturb items of an archeological nature. The project schedule and budget simply do not afford the opportunity to expend the time and cost to recover and safeguard any archeological findings that might be discovered.

By keeping the tracks in the existing street, which has already been disturbed numerous times for roadway and other construction, the possibility of uncovering unknown artifacts and, therefore, delaying and increasing the cost of the streetcar project, can be minimized.

## ***Why not place the streetcar tracks along the curb?***

If the tracks were placed along the curbs, all of the parking lanes would have to be removed for the length of the route. This could possibly hurt local businesses since their customers wouldn't be able to park nearby. Additionally it would also increase the chances that an illegally parked car or truck would prevent the streetcars from getting by.

## ***How will the streetcars operate mixed with vehicular traffic? Won't this cause more traffic congestion?***

The streetcars will operate in a designated lane of traffic in essentially the same manner that buses do today, and the same way that streetcars now operate on Loyola Avenue and North Carrollton Avenue.

## ***How will the streetcars affect on-street parking?***

Parking lanes will be provided along both sides of the street along the entire route except for a very few locations, where the operations of the streetcar require a little more space to make it safe to operate.

## ***Won't operations within the street cause significant traffic impacts?***

A traffic analysis was performed by an independent consultant in September 2011 and was reviewed and updated in September 2012 for the purpose of identifying the effects of placing the streetcar in the traffic lanes on N. Rampart Street and St. Claude Avenue. Among the most significant findings of those studies were:

- Having a travel lane for the exclusive use of the streetcar for the entire length of the route would create unacceptable impacts on the level of service (LOS) on the streets;
- Having the streetcar share the traffic lanes with vehicular traffic would generally have no impact on the LOS at 16 of the 20 intersections along the route;
- Of the remaining 4 intersections:

By adding a streetcar, the average time that it takes a vehicle to get through an intersection at three (3) of the intersections would increase by less than three (3) seconds. The travel time through the last intersection would actually improve by one (1) second.

By placing the streetcars in the inside street lanes, and realigning the lanes to accommodate both streetcar and vehicular traffic, the design allowed the placement of an exclusive lane for bicycle traffic adjacent to the curb lane in the up-river directions, and a shared bicycle lane adjacent to the curb lane in the down-river direction.

For more information: [www.norta.com](http://www.norta.com) • Questions or comments about the project: Mr. Brendan J. Matthews • Chief Maintenance Officer  
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