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City revamping plan for Brooklyn streetcar line

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A long-shelved plan to restore trolley service in Brooklyn is back on track.

The city has hired a transportation consultant to study running a mile-long trolley or light rail line from the Red Hook waterfront to Atlantic Avenue at the southern edge of Brooklyn Bridge Park.

The URS study could also look at extending the route another half-mile east along Atlantic Avenue to the transit hub at Borough Hall, sources said.

The city Transportation Dept. is finally tapping into a \$295,000 federal grant Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-Brooklyn) secured for the five-month study in 2005.

"A streetcar system in Red Hook has the potential to reconnect this neighborhood with the rest of the city and greatly improve transit options for residents," Velazquez said.

The transit starved neighborhood's only bus line is the B61 after massive transit cuts this year eliminated two others, and Red Hook has no subway; the nearest train line — the F — is more than a mile away.

Bob Diamond, president of the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association, which has lobbied to create a trolley line since 1989, has estimated the project would cost \$10 million to \$15 million to complete. Velazquez has requested \$10 million of the funds needed for the project from a pending House transit bill.

Carl Hum, president of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, said boosting Red Hook's transportation system is a key to its "long-term community vibrancy."

The study will include community meetings and a technical analysis of the area's needs and demographics as well as determine how it would affect vehicle traffic on city streets where the line would run.

Nearly a decade ago, Diamond's BHRA proposed a trolley route running from existing tracks at the Van Brunt Street waterfront, north up Richards Street and then along Columbia Street, before hitting the park at Atlantic Avenue and then heading east to Borough Hall.

Advocates say light-rail lines are much cheaper and quicker to build than subway lines and use far less energy. They run on existing streets, normally without the need to eliminate parking spots.

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