

Taxpayers ultimately will foot the bill for Columbia Pike streetcar

By Joyce and Roy Gamse
August 26, 2014

We urge Arlingtonians concerned about the cost of the proposed streetcar project to read the Aug. 15 issue of *The Economist*, which contains the article “Streetcars and Urban Renewal: Rolling Blunder.”

Here are a few of the more salient points:

- “Operating expenses [for streetcars] are more than twice those for buses, according to data from the FTA [Federal Transit Administration], and capital costs are hefty. Tucson’s project, for example, cost nearly \$200 million and opened years late.”
- American streetcars “tend to inch along with traffic . . . Indeed, their slow speeds and frequent stops mean they often cause more congestion. A bus route could move up to five times more people an hour, says Randal O’Toole of the Cato Institute.”
- “Well-designed bus routes can spur development, too, and at far lower cost, says Adie Tomer of the Brookings Institution.”
- “According to the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, Cleveland’s rapid-bus service has attracted \$5.8 billion in private investment . . . it was built in 2008 for around \$50 million, just a third of the cost of the District’s streetcar.”

We would add it doesn’t matter if it’s state, federal or local taxes being used to finance the streetcar. We taxpayers are still the ones paying too much for the wrong solution to transportation needs.