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Failed city council candidate, conservative advocacy group, continue opposition to streetcar

By Cynthia Sewell - csewell@idahostatesman.com

The community is starting to get involved in the streetcar debate.

Here are some recent developments:

STREETCAR DISCUSSION NOV. 11:

The Idaho Freedom Foundation, a conservative, nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank, hosts "Debunking Portland: How Streetcars and Light Rail Have Made Portland the City that Doesn't Work" with Randal O'Toole, senior fellow with the Cato Institute.

The luncheon event takes place noon to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 11, at Old Spaghetti Factory, 610 W. Idaho, downtown Boise. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. \$9 for veterans.

For more information call Idaho Freedom Foundation at 921-6749 or go to www.idahofreedom.net.

STREETCAR PETITION UPDATE:

Former Boise City Council candidate Dave Litster is continuing his petition drive to ask the city to hold an election and obtain 50 percent approval before committing city funds for a streetcar.

Litster needs to collect 6,500 signatures by early-January. About 1,500 signatures have been collected so far.

He said Thursday within two weeks he would create a political action committee "to advance this effort and other important issues facing Boise." He said by December he hoped to have the 5,000 additional signatures needed to complete the petition.

"Once that is completed, the voters will have the final say, not just the vote of three city council members plus the mayor," concluded Litster.

The petition reads: "Before the Boise City Council can enact any ordinance, measure or resolution for the purpose of spending City funds to construct, in the downtown section of the City, a streetcar or trolley system, with railroad tracks in the streets and electrified cables overhead, the Council must first obtain approval for said expenditure by the vote of over 50% of the legal voters of the City."

For more information e-mail dave4boise@gmail.com, call 371-3283 or go to www.dave4boise.com.

MORE ABOUT THE STREETCAR: The City of Boise is considering building a \$60 million streetcar system in Downtown. The 15-block route would run from St. Luke's to 15th street along Main and Idaho streets. The streetcar would cost about \$1.2 million annually to operate.

The \$60 million cost would break down like this: **\$40 million:** Federal stimulus grant. Grant recipients will be announced by the end of January, but about 1,500 applications have been submitted from around the country for a pool of \$1.5 billion. **\$10 million:** City would create a local improvement district (LID) to assess a special fee on Downtown property owners. The city is not required to hold an election to create an LID — it can be created by Mayor Dave Bieter and just three members of the City Council. **\$10 million:** The city and its urban renewal agency, Capital City Development Corp., would each kick in \$5 million.

Learn more about the streetcar by following the links to the right of this story.