



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

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UMTA 76-117

### FEDERAL GRANT TO STUDY IMPROVED TROLLEY SYSTEM FOR PITTSBURGH

A decision to provide funds for engineering and environmental analysis for a first stage major upgrading of the existing trolley service in the South Hills area of Pittsburgh was announced today by Robert E. Patricelli, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA).

In its decision, UMTA invited the area now to prepare a formal amendment to the already funded Early Action Program which would reprogram funds for this purpose. Approximately \$3 million is expected to be required to carry out the necessary environmental and engineering work.

Today's announcement represents a major step forward in resolving long-standing questions about how best to serve the transit needs of the South Hills corridor in Pittsburgh. Local parties decided in early 1975 to reconsider the then-existing Skybus plan for the South Hills area. Following that decision, the area began an analysis of alternatives for transit service in the corridor, including conventional rail rapid transit, major upgrading of the existing trolley lines, Skybus, and substantially improved bus service. Based on that analysis, local and State leadership agreed in April of 1976 that the upgraded trolley or light rail proposal was the best option.

By its action today, UMTA concurred in the community's recommendation. In a letter to James R. Maloney, Executive Director of the Port Authority of Allegheny County, Patricelli cited several factors contributing to the UMTA decision, including the existing ridership base for trolley service, the fact that "none of the other exclusive right-of-way transit alternatives investigated...was demonstrably more cost effective" than the

trolley project, the lack of available highway capacity in the area to support any all-bus alternative, and the strong community support for the upgraded trolley approach.

Patricelli's letter stressed that the UMTA action "does not constitute a commitment beyond engineering of Stage I," and noted that construction funding decisions could not be made until detailed cost estimates had been developed through engineering and environmental clearance processes were completed.

Patricelli stated, however, that "we would not be taking this important engineering step forward without an expectation that it will lead to a significant multi-year commitment of UMTA capital grant funds once the above conditions are met."

The Stage I trolley upgrading project, if approved, would cost approximately \$200 million in 1975 dollars, according to preliminary estimates developed by the Port Authority. This project would include the purchase of new light rail transit vehicles, a major reconstruction and upgrading of existing trolley facilities, including new power and signal systems, new stations and parking lots, and a new maintenance facility for the entire trolley system serving the South Hills corridor.

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For additional information contact Mr. James R. Maloney, Executive Director, Port Authority of Allegheny County, Beaver & Island Avenues, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15233, (412) 237-7000.

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