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Local News and Commentary

08/28/09 • Publisher: NewsLanc.com, LLC • Combined Circulation: 80,000 monthly • Volume II, No. 81

City may not order full streetcar study

According to Pat Brogan, Mayor Rick Gray's chief of staff, the City will first engage an engineering study regarding the feasibility of a streetcar system in Downtown Lancaster before investing additional funds in studying the economic feasibility of such a system. The City is taking this route in case the engineering study shows the proposed system to be technically unfeasible.

Last week, the Commissioners passed a \$20,000 grant for the City of Lancaster to engage what was described as a \$150,000 feasibility study regarding the possible introduction of a streetcar loop in Downtown Lancaster City. With \$40,000 lined up in City and County funds, a source for the remaining \$110,000 was not clearly identified—although one County planning official indicated the possibility of contributions from the Red Rose Transit Authority.

NewsLanc asked Brogan to clarify the source of remaining funds. In the course of her response, Brogan stated the driving questions behind City's consideration of streetcar feasibility: (1) The economic benefit ("*if any*," Brogan asserted) of such a system. (2) Whether such a system could operate without taxpayers' subsidy. (3) Whether such a system could reasonably work within the City's existing infrastructure.

Brogan concluded that the mayor wants to determine the answer to that last question before spending any additional money on the others. For this reason, the City will not yet be in need of funding beyond the \$40,000 that has already been allocated.

Circumcision reduces chances of HIV/AIDS by 50%!

The *Intelligencer New Era* carried a page A7 story from the *New York Times* headed "**U. S. weighs circumcision to fight HIV risk.**" It reports how circumcision reduces the chances of spreading AIDS through heterosexual activity by 50%! The impact on an entire population is many times greater, because of the multiplier effect due to each diseased individual potentially spreading HIV/AIDS.

This information has been available for the better part of a decade but has not been widely disseminated.

Sadly, we are probably another ten years away from when health officials and the general population will take heed and encourage that this very minor, safe and quick operation takes place for every male infant, unless there is a medical or a strong religious reason to the contrary.

LETTER: Protest Against Lancaster's Surveillance Cameras

"The Citizens Against Public Surveillance (CAPS) is holding a large protest against the implementation of surveillance cameras deployed in Lancaster, PA, and is inviting all who want a voice in [**Continued on back**]

this matter to attend. CAPS is a recent offshoot of the Lancaster Coalition for Sensible Security (LCSS), and is organized to end the hasty deployment of the privately run, Orwellian surveillance system in a city of 55,000 people with a 25% poverty rate.

“The CAPS protest will be held this **Saturday at Farnum Park (Water & Conestoga Streets) at 1:00 pm on Saturday, August 29, 2009.** The protesters will then march to Lancaster Square at 2:00 pm for the rest of their rally. The theme of the rally is – “Take the cameras down”. More information can be found at www.stopthecameras.com, or email to info@stopthecameras.com.”

NEW ERA: The editorial “**City trolley study gets us nowhere**” observes the following:

“Financially, the project is a money loser from the get-go....taxpayers dollars—would be needed to pay for the ‘bulk’ of the \$14.1 million project...The same study estimated annual operating and administrative costs to be \$685,000—less than half of which would be covered by passenger fares and other revenues. What this means, then, is that the Lancaster trolley line is destined to be one more permanent taxpayer subsidy...trolleys, with a network of tracks embedded in the

pavement, seem ill-suited for the city’s relatively narrow streets and sharp corners... We have no objection to another trolley study, per se. It’s just that we don’t think the taxpayers should have to pay for it—or a trolley line that can’t pay for itself.”

WATCHDOG: Three wags of the tail! So who is behind this bird brain scheme that would cost tax payers \$150,000 to find out what we already know? Deja vu the Convention Center Project for which Mayor Rick Gray requested a feasibility study and then ignored it?

Compass Mark favors treatment over incarceration

The second in a series by Cliff Lewis

Dave Bender, Executive Director of Compass Mark, is optimistic about the potential for addiction treatment services to improve quality of life in Lancaster County.

According to Bender, “Substance abuse has always been treated as a moral issue and as a criminal justice issue, and it’s rarely been looked at as a public health issue....For the most part, the typical elected official—whether you’re talking about the State or Federal level—rarely sees this as a public health issue....”

In the mid-1980s, Compass Mark spoke out against mandatory sentencing for nonviolent drug offenders, Bender said. Such legislation was emblematic of an expensive tendency toward incarceration as a manner of dealing with drug

addiction and distribution: “*Back then,*” Bender noted, “*The state prison budget was \$250 million a year; now it’s \$1.8 billion and growing rapidly.*”

From Bender’s perspective, to abate swelling prison costs, the State should place a cap on such expenditures: “*Somebody at the State level has got to have the courage to begin to cap that figure,*” which would necessitate progressive investment in reentry, treatment, and harm reduction initiatives—which have all been known to reduce the need for incarceration. As Bender puts it,

“We’re helping the State Budget by reducing recidivism, which means we’re definitely helping that \$1.8 billion prison budget from getting bigger,... but by cutting us off, and cutting off that prevention that should continue, they’re just going to be looking at a prison budget that’s \$2.5 billion to \$3 billion ten years from now.”

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