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LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES REFINEMENT: WESTPORT ROAD ASSESSMENT



East-West
Transit Study
RideKC



Locally Preferred Alternatives Refinement: Westport Road Assessment

At a joint Midtown neighborhood meeting in December 2023, there was significant support for utilizing Westport Road (which turns into 43rd Avenue west of State Line Road) west of Main Street. The suggested alignment was Westport Road (west of Main Street) to Rainbow Boulevard, connecting north to UKHS.

The project team previously evaluated 43rd Street in the prior study phase. The project team committed to re-evaluating the western segment with a Westport Road alignment due to strong neighborhood support. After further technical review, the Westport Road segment was determined to be infeasible for Streetcar due to the following engineering and operational considerations.

- **Track Engineering:** An alignment using Westport Road west of Main Street would encounter several engineering challenges. The Main Street Extension project includes a crossover track between the northbound and southbound tracks at the Westport Road intersection. This crossover would have to be relocated to allow for the installation of the turnouts to the new west segment. Removing and relocating crossover track is cost prohibitive and would lead to excess “outage” times of existing service during construction of an east-west corridor.
- **Flooding & Draining:** Proceeding west from Main Street, the route passes through the Westport neighborhood. The area in the proximity of the Mill Street intersection has historically had significant flooding problems. While the city is working to address this issue, it is uncertain whether and if it could be mitigated to an adequate degree to allow for construction of a streetcar alignment and operations. Areas of excessive and consistent flooding also lead to accelerated track degradation.
- **Intersection Geometry at Southwest Trafficway:** Another engineering challenge for this segment would be the intersection of Westport Road with Southwest Trafficway and 43rd Street. The “Westport Triangle” is a complex intersection with multiple traffic signals, heavy traffic, and constrained geometry. Developing a configuration that would facilitate safe and efficient streetcar operations would take extensive analysis and may lead to mediocre outcomes for all modes.
- **Agency Coordination:** West of Southwest Trafficway, both Westport Road and Rainbow Boulevard feature wide sections that could be suitable for streetcar alignments. Coordination with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) would be required for the Rainbow Boulevard segment, as this street is flagged as US Highway 169.
- **Street Closures & Operations:** On weekends (typically Friday and Saturday nights), Westport Road is closed to auto traffic between Broadway Boulevard and Mill Street to erect a security cordon. Passage of streetcars through this cordon would be complicated and add delays to the route’s runtime.