



Ken Smith's design team sketched out this vision for a park streetcar system.

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

**13 minutes** – travel time between Spectrum and Great Park sports park using the system (same length by car is 21 minutes).

**3,500 feet** – length of optional underpass for streetcars and buses under part of the Great Park.

**\$280 million** – total cost of system (operations will cost \$7 million each year).

**53 trains** stop at the Irvine station daily (2030 estimate is 112 trains).

*Source: Amtrak, Metrolink, city of Irvine*  
Tuesday, July 10, 2007

## **Irvine to consider transit for Great Park area**

### **Council votes tonight on a \$280 million combination streetcar and bus system that would span five miles.**

By **SONYA SMITH**  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**IRVINE** – The City Council decides tonight whether to try to lure the masses to the Great Park and move them around with a mass transit system.

The 5-mile-long combination streetcar and bus system would link the future Great Park, Irvine Spectrum, Irvine train station and the Lennar Corp.'s housing, commercial and educational development that will surround the Great Park. The project is estimated to cost \$280 million based on rising construction costs. Operations are expected to cost \$7 million each year.

"The guideway is something that will be good for the park – bringing people to the park without using cars and parking lots," Lead Great Park Designer Ken Smith said Monday.

Would you use the proposed Great Park guideway?

Yes

No

Vote

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The proposed system would:

**Have 3.4 miles of streetcar track** in the northern Great Park portion. The southern Spectrum portion would have 1.6 miles of bus route.

Mostly have **street-level stations**, except for an elevated portion near the Irvine train station.

**Have wait times of 10 to 15 minutes.** Service would be available between 5:30 a.m. and midnight, seven days a week.

**Have nine stations**, including: The DoubleTree Hotel, Irvine Spectrum, Irvine Technology Center, Irvine train station and the Great Park sports park.

**Include trees** on both sides of the Great Park streetcar route to minimize the intrusiveness of overhead electrical wires that charge the streetcars.

**Add a lane** for the bus system on each side of Alton Parkway.

**Have an estimated 5,000 riders each day**, with 6,500 during peak demand.

**Provide service to a growing population.** Population within four miles of the system is expected to grow by 38,676 residents and 118,755 workers before 2030.

But building such a system won't be an easy task. Beyond the needed Irvine City Council approval, the city will need to gain Orange County Transportation Authority and California Transportation Authority backing for the project – especially funding support.

The city plans to use \$121 million that was first allocated to the city in 1990 for a transportation system near John Wayne Airport. The money was rerouted to Centerline in 1999 – a light-rail line that would have stretched 11.4 miles across Irvine, Costa Mesa and Santa Ana; that was voted down at the ballot in 2003.

To use the Centerline money, the city must obtain state approval to reallocate the funds while finding a matching \$121 million and another \$38 million to build the project. City officials plan to look to Measure M funds, state proposition 1B funding and federal money.

Sarah Catz, director of UC Irvine's Center for Urban Infrastructure, is optimistic that Irvine can find the money, especially if the city applies for the Measure M renewal funds first.

She said the guideway is an integral piece of the county's transit system because it would

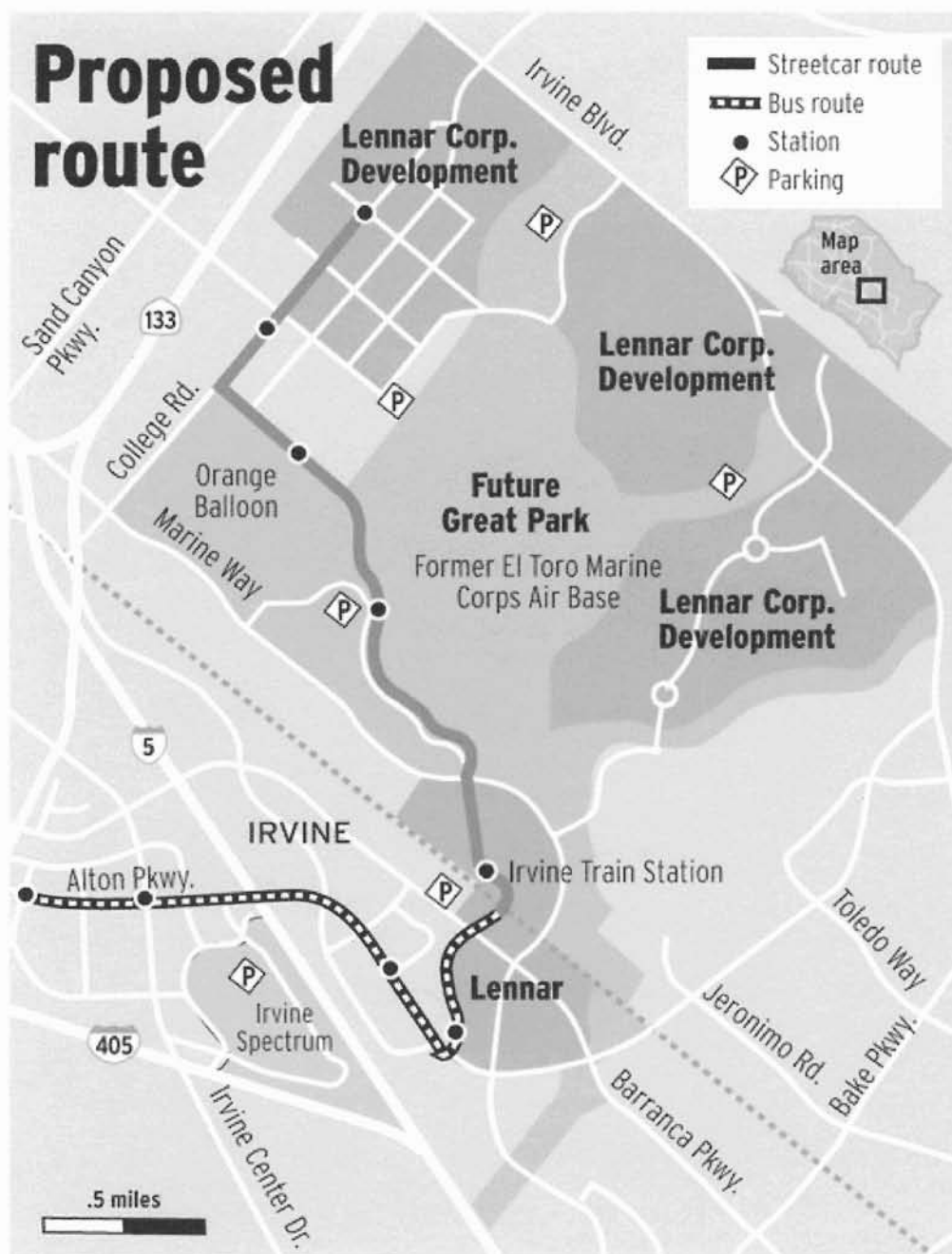
allow other cities to add connecting transit pieces to the Great Park system. She said mass transit is important because it is better for the environment than driving, reduces traffic congestion and allows an option other than using gasoline – if a system uses alternative fuels.

Charles Lave, a UC Irvine professor emeritus of economics, disagrees. He said mass transit does not work and will not work in the Great Park.

"People ride transit because they're poor, and people in this area are not poor. People ride transit because they want to avoid congestion, and there isn't congestion in this area," Lave said.

He said that even if Irvine finds \$280 million for the transit system, the \$7 million in operating expenses is very difficult to find. Lave said that only 30 percent of average mass transit operations costs is covered by rider fees; the other 70 percent, he said, comes through taxes.

"They'd be better off not spending any of this money on the guideway," Lave said, rather than "behave like teenagers and manage a way to spend it all."



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**TIMELINE**

**November 1990** California voters approve a \$1.99 billion bond measure for funding rail systems. Irvine is allocated \$125 million for a transportation guideway.

**Early 1990s** Irvine City Council puts the bond money into a monorail for the John Wayne Airport area.

**October 1999** Council reallocates the bond money to CenterLine – a light-rail line that would have stretched 11.4 miles across Irvine, Costa Mesa and Santa Ana.

**June 2003** Irvine residents vote their approval of light rail but reject CenterLine.

**Today** City Council votes on Great Park transit system.

**2009** Spectrum bus portion opens.

**June 2012** Great Park streetcar portion opens.

*SOURCES: Register reports, city of Irvine*

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