



New trolley ain't folly

By Joe Maniscalco

One of the keys to turning Coney Island into a world-class amusement park, according to Coney Island USA's Dick Zigun, is keeping automobiles out. The neighborhood showman — late of the Coney Island Development Corporation — has an idea that a trolley or some other sort of “people mover” could deliver throngs of giddy

thrill-seekers to a totally re-imagined amusement park via off-site parking facilities established in an area between Neptune Avenue and Hart Place. Trolleys haven't been seen traveling up and down Surf Avenue since GM, Standard Oil and Firestone teamed up to put the lines out of business following World War II. But it turns out that a comprehensive plan to bring back

the cheap and cost-effective passenger conveyances to Coney Island already exists. Bob Diamond, president of the Brooklyn Historic Railway Association and subject of a forthcoming documentary focusing on the “lost subway tunnel” he uncovered under Atlantic Avenue, submitted the plan to government officials last year. Despite the deafening

silence the plan elicited, Diamond says “now would be a great time” for the trolley's to make their triumphant return to Coney Island. “They would be a wonderful draw for the area — the same as San Francisco's cable cars,” Diamond told this newspaper. Not only that, but Diamond says that running a

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Here's how Coney Island used to look with trolleys.



Many think trolley cars like this one make sense in Coney Island.

Trolleys for Coney Island

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trolley loop around Coney Island's amusement district would be inexpensive to operate, employing energy efficient cars that could actually pump electricity back into the system as they brake. According to Diamond, similar trolley cars costing about \$5 an hour to operate are now being manufactured in the Czech Republic and could be had for the compa-

table price of a fossil fuel-burning bus. Diamond has more about trolleys at <http://tinyurl.com/6h69r9>. “They're growing all over the country and there are reasons for it,” said Arthur Melnick of the Brooklyn City Streetcar Company — another group advocating for the trolleys' return to Brooklyn. Courier-Life columnist

Lou Powsner can still remember falling asleep to the sounds of the trolleys coasting along Surf Avenue. “It's possible and vital,” Powsner said of bringing the trolleys back to Coney Island. “This is something that would be good and also ease automotive congestion.” Two trolley lines once laced Surf Avenue, and Diamond says new trolleys

could easily integrate with existing traffic. Passengers could ride for free or the cost of a MetroCard depending on the funding model employed. The only thing missing, according to Diamond, is the political will to make it happen and a political champion to shepherd the project through the city process. Ladies and gentlemen, step right up.