

**STAFF REPORT 04-10-2024 SPECIAL MEETING**

**PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG**

**APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2024-00153**

**ADDRESS: DETROIT PEOPLE MOVER IN LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS (MULTIPLE LOCATIONS)**

**HISTORIC DISTRICTS: DAVID WHITNEY BUILDING, GRAND CIRCUS PARK LOCAL, BROADWAY AVENUE, DETROIT FINANCIAL**

**APPLICANT/OWNER: DETROIT TRANSPORTATION CORPORATION, CITY OF DETROIT**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 03-25-2024**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 03-27-2024**

**SCOPE: INSTALL LIGHTING ON CONCRETE COLUMNS (WORK STARTED WITHOUT APPROVAL)**

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Detroit People Mover (hereafter, “DPM”) is a small, federally-funded public transit system (just under three miles in length) constructed in and around downtown Detroit from 1983-1987. The system boasts a strikingly modern design, with exposed architectural concrete guideways and support columns, along with thirteen (originally fourteen) station buildings designed by famed modernist architect and Detroit native Nathan Johnson, or subcontracted to fellow modernist black architects including Aubrey Agee, Roger Margerum, and Sims-Varner. Each station is richly decorated with public art. Although controversial for cost overruns when designed and built, the system has become a Detroit landmark (except in a strict regulatory sense), and its expressively modern 1980s design associates it with other contemporary architectural work in Detroit created during the administration of Mayor Coleman Young (1974-1994), including but certainly not limited to Johnson’s other modernist work, Sims-Varner’s Millender Center, John Portman’s Renaissance Center, and many other late 20<sup>th</sup> century streetscape additions that reimagined downtown during this transformative era. The DPM is used by residents, commuters, and visitors to downtown for convenient local transportation and sightseeing in and around Detroit’s historic districts. Both the stations and the guideways, nearly forty years after construction, are in good condition and to a large extent, maintain their architectural integrity and original design expressions, excepting the demolished and rebuilt station at the Renaissance Center.



*View of DPM Guideway at Grand Circus Park, crossing Woodward, facing northwest, from a location immediately in front of the David Whitney Building. Note wiring at center/top of support column. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*

Though only one station is within a local historic district, two sections of guideway (i.e., the track section framed by architectural concrete and support columns) exist substantially in local historic districts, as well as a very small third section along Broadway. However, it is important to note that the DPM was built prior to the City Council's establishment of any downtown historic districts in its current path; only five downtown historic districts were extant in 1987: Breitmeyer-Tobin, Globe Tobacco, Detroit Cornice & Slate, State Savings Bank, and Alexander Chapoton, all of them single-building districts. The David Whitney Building Historic District was designated in 2000, the Grand Circus Park Local Historic District followed in 2002, the Broadway Avenue Historic District in 2005, and the Detroit Financial Historic District in 2011.



*Map of downtown historic districts (in light green) combined with the route of the DPM (highlighted in yellow). The route crosses small portions of the Broadway Avenue, Detroit Financial, and Grand Circus Park Local districts, and a larger relative portion of the David Whitney Building HD.*



*View of the concrete DPM guideway immediately in front of the David Whitney Building, looking northwest. The station is the partially clipped element at left, with the lights on below it. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*



*Another view of the guideway and the Grand Circus Park People Mover Station, from Washington Boulevard, looking beyond towards the park. David Whitney Building is at right. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*



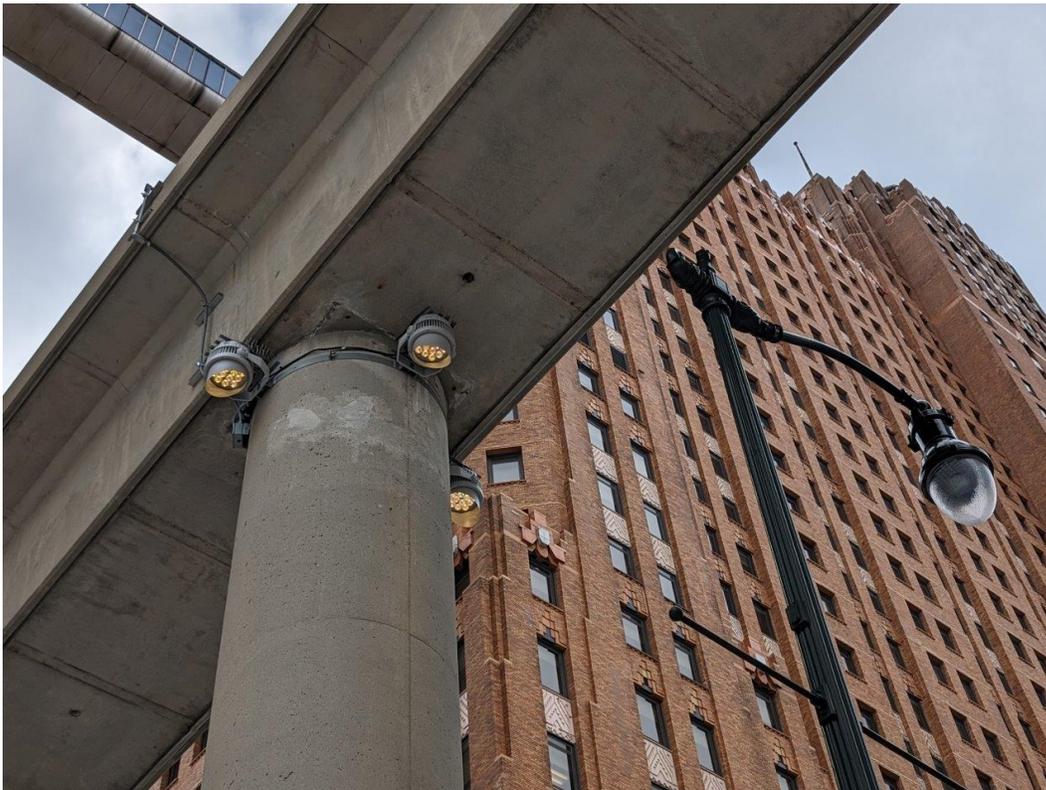
*View of the concrete DPM snaking westerly along Grand Circus Park, across the Washington Boulevard right-of-way. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*



*Detail view of wiring installation, in-progress. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*



*View of the guideway through "Spirit Plaza" along Larned in the Detroit Financial HD. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*



*Detail view of the guideway near the Guardian Building in the Detroit Financial HD. The proposed lighting is already installed in this location, and is illuminated. Staff photo, March 27, 2024.*

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Per the submitted drawings and documents, the Detroit Transportation Corporation, operator of the Detroit People Mover, proposes to add light fixtures to the tops of columns to create opportunities for pedestrian/decorative lighting. The project is intended for columns along the entire system, and will allow independent signal control of various light fixtures in terms of color, intensity, and timing to celebrate various public events or other occasions.

DYNA DRUM SO COLOR™





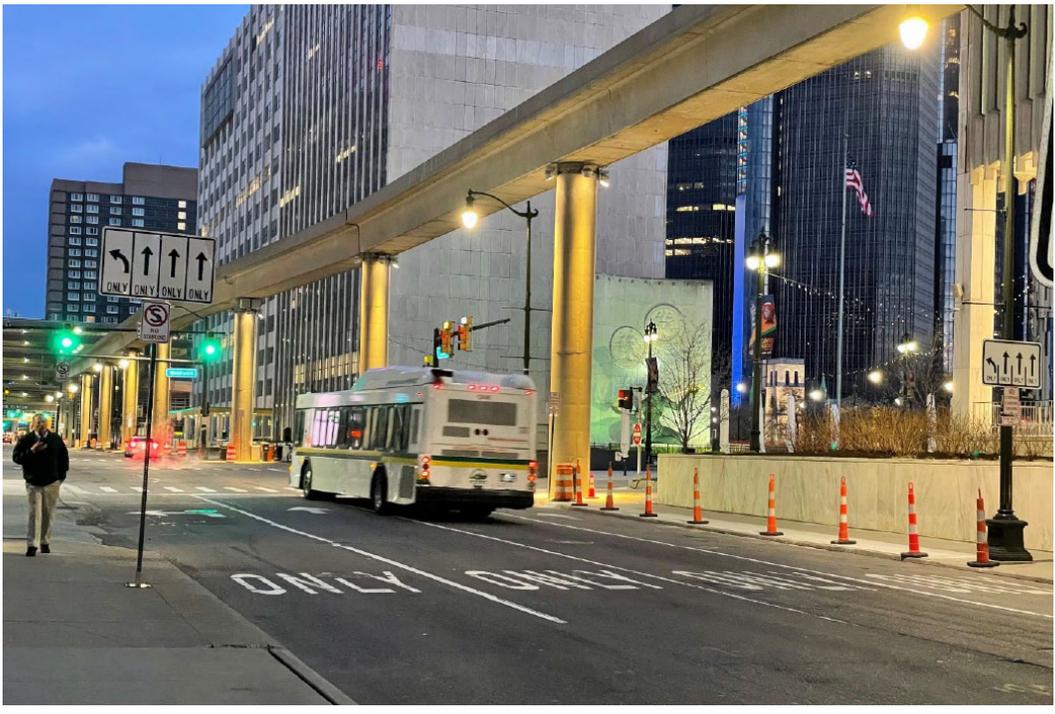
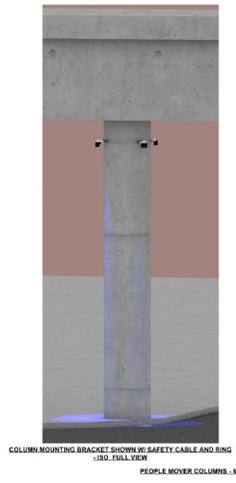
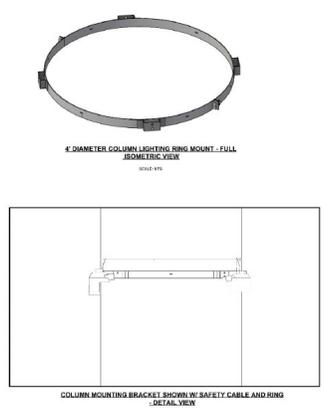
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 Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Order Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

**Spectrum**  
**aria**

**Dyna Drum SO Color** is a high output, outdoor rated, quad-color LED floodlight. It features an internal 100-277VAC power supply, optional DMX-to-0-10V driver, and each unit carries Acclaim's Aria wireless DMX technology inside. It comes with a narrow 10° beam standard, with optional quick-change spread lenses for wider applications. It is ideal for facade lighting applications and as an area floodlight.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Colors	<b>QW6:</b> RGBW (W=6000K), <b>QW4:</b> RGBW (W=4000K), <b>Q:</b> RGBW (W=3000K)
Beam Angles	10° standard, 20°, 40°, 60°, 10° x 60° spread lens optional
Photometrics	See page 4, up to 4124 lumens, 117,630 center candela
Effective Projected Area	1.16 ft²
Control	DMX+RDM, manual color setting in menu, photocell included, Aria wireless direct connect
Max Fixtures in Series	32 via DMX, power local to each fixture
Power Consumption	150W maximum
Operating Voltage	100-277VAC, 50/60 Hz
Lumen Maintenance	L70 @ 150,000 hours (25°C)
Mounting	Surface mount bracket included, optional tenon mount and pipe clamp available
Finish	Gray standard (RAL 7047), black, white, and custom colors optional
Material	Die cast aluminum, glass top lens, optional marine coating available
Ambient Operating Temperature	-40°F to 125°F (-40°C to 51°C)
IP Rating	IP66, wet location
IK Rating	IK07, protection against 2 joule impact
Fixture Connectors	Attached 5' (1.5m) IP66 hybrid cable, AC power +DMX/RDM
Warranty	5 Years, limited
Weight	30.6 lbs. (13.9 kg)
Dimensions	L: 14.17" x W: 13.37" x D: 8.38" (360mm x 338mm x 213mm)
Certifications	   <small>UL LISTED FOR              LIMITED              VIBRATION</small>



Views, specifications, and diagrams from applicant's submission.



- The report for the Broadway Avenue HD report (2002) says only that
  - ...the intersection of Broadway, Gratiot, and Randolph was known as Pingree Square, but concrete traffic islands and the raised concrete viaduct of the People Mover mass transit system that cuts diagonally across the intersection have destroyed the square as an open space.
- In the David Whitney Building HD report (2000), which is a single building district focused on Daniel Burnham's Detroit masterpiece, HDAB makes the following remarks about the teenaged DPM:
  - "[the David Whitney Building's] main (north) façade is physically attached to the steel and glass Grand Circus Park People Mover Station platform at mezzanine level. The broad concrete and brick sidewalk in front is obstructed by the large concrete pillars supporting the track..."

It should be noted that this is the only DPM station that is fully within a historic district, though the Commission has no records of approved work at this location, nor any recorded violations.

- Some transit systems operated by state authorities or other multi-state agencies are not under the jurisdiction of local municipal historic commissions, even when traversing otherwise very important historic districts (e.g., the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, operator of NYC Subways, is famously exempt from compliance with New York's strict Landmarks Law, though they have sought the advice and counsel of the Landmarks Preservation Commission on important projects). In Detroit, our city's Law Department has confirmed to HDC staff that, as the Detroit Transportation Corporation is a wholly constituent element of city government, that the Detroit People Mover infrastructure is not exempt from the Commission's jurisdiction, which is why the matter is before this body under Section 21-2-78 of the City Code, for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

## Rough ride

### People Mover took 16 years to make it to the starting line

**MOVING**, from Page 1A

**DESIGNED AS PART OF A** network of subway and rail lines, the People Mover stands alone.

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## THE PEOPLE MOVER

**HOURS**

- Monday-Thursday 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Friday 7 a.m. to midnight
- Saturday 8 a.m. to midnight
- Sunday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

**FARES**

Free for the first week.

- Boarded walk less 50 cents
- Handicapped 25 cents, by advance purchase tokens or passes.
- One-way 50 cents, but only by getting tokens or passes in advance.
- Round-trip 75 cents (unlimited rides).
- One-month pass \$1,000
- Annual pass \$2,000

Passes and tokens are not available at stations, although some stations will have money-changing machines. For passes and information call 962-9444 or write the Detroit Transportation Corp., 1500 Michigan Ave., Detroit 48226.

**EMERGENCIES**

Stations have emergency batteries to keep them lit during a blackout if some power to the train system is lost. The cars will go to the next stop and allow passengers off. If a computer malfunction, an attendant may be sent to the car at the next station. If power is lost or a serious emergency occurs, passengers can be evacuated by the department personnel, or they will be instructed by speakers or how to leave the car through the front or rear doors and walk along the guideway to safety — after the power is turned off.

**HOW TO RIDE**

1. Each station has the same general procedure: Enter through turnstiles, putting a token or sliding your pass through a card reader. Small signs usually four right to the loading platform.
2. You can take escalators, elevators or stairs usually four right to the loading platform.

**STATION-TO-STATION TIME CHART**

FROM	TO	Time
Grand Circus	Grand Circus	0:00
Grand Circus	Michigan	0:15
Grand Circus	Woodward	0:30
Grand Circus	Grand Circus	0:00
Grand Circus	Michigan	0:15
Grand Circus	Woodward	0:30
Grand Circus	Grand Circus	0:00
Grand Circus	Michigan	0:15
Grand Circus	Woodward	0:30
Grand Circus	Grand Circus	0:00
Grand Circus	Michigan	0:15
Grand Circus	Woodward	0:30

## Detroit Free Press

ON GUARD FOR 154 YEARS

Saturday  
Metro final

### PEOPLE MOVED!

Train leaves station, and city hopes ahead

**“A city is not built in one day... Every one of these projects that are built is another building block for the future.”**

**Car station from Mover critic, 7A.**

**Riders develop crush on new transit system**

**“A city is not built in one day... Every one of these projects that are built is another building block for the future.”**

**“A city is not built in one day... Every one of these projects that are built is another building block for the future.”**

Stories and banner headlines from July 31, 1987, and August 1, 1987, describing the grand opening festivities and long lines at stations.

- Although installed nominally as infrastructure, staff argues that the DPM system (including the interconnecting guideway, not just the stations) is simultaneously ambitious, design-forward, and well-executed **architecture**, and the instantly recognizable concrete guideway has evolved over the decades into a city landmark that identifies the location as downtown Detroit as reliably as the Renaissance Center, Fox Theater, or the Penobscot Building. Though officially non-contributing, it is staff's recommendation that the Commission review changes to this “1980s future modern” expression carefully and with a considered eye towards, perhaps, a later formal recognition of the DPM system as a modern architectural achievement worthy of protection in its entirety, as a linear historic district.
- The DPM proposes to install four (4), and in front of the David Whitney Building, three (3) light fixtures at the top of each round support column, tucked immediately under the concrete guideway. The fixtures

are powered, logically enough, by electricity taken off of the guideway's infrastructure, removing the need for bringing a line up from below-grade at each column.

- As the DPM Guideway is a non-contributing resource of modern infrastructure design, the proposed modern fixtures and the minimal conduit/wiring and mounting equipment required to fulfill the lighting program is not, in staff's opinion, incompatible with the character of the resource, nor does it (further) impact the historic character of the districts through which the DPM passes. It would of course be folly, and jarringly anachronistic, to propose a "historically" styled fixture on the modern concrete elements of the DPM when it enters a historic district. Such an attempt would represent a far more incompatible and detracting installation, not to mention anathema to the modernist design principles of the system's architects.
- Concern has been expressed by the management of the David Whitney Building regarding the installation of the conduit/wiring and its visibility within the eponymous historic district. Relatedly, it is worth pointing out that the guideway in this location is much lower (closer to street grade) than it is in most other areas, including along Larned Street in the Detroit Financial HD, a circumstance that regularly complicates the passage of Thanksgiving Parade balloons. While staff acknowledges that the electrical installation could perhaps be performed with more design sensitivity, staff does not assess that adding electrical infrastructure of this character on top of another infrastructural element (i.e., the concrete guideway) as demonstrably inappropriate under historic standards. Similar utilitarian installations necessary to effect modern life are found on buildings of historic age in many other districts, for better or worse. The Commission may wish to consider directing a reinstallation of the subject wiring, minimizing the use of extraneous clips or brackets to the bare minimum necessary to secure it, and choosing the least visible locations possible to make such connections.
- The Commission has, in the past, expressed concern over lighting specifications, including color temperature (i.e., the apparent coolness (blue-ish) or warmth (yellow-ish) of light), intensity, flashing/strobing, color, and other lighting effects made possible by contemporary systems installed on new or modern buildings. DPM leadership, in several discussions with HDC staff, have stated a willingness to program a number of restrictions into the lighting, and will be prepared to discuss such restrictions with the Commission, which might then be incorporated into this body's approval as a condition. As described above, the fixtures located in historic districts are able to be programmed independently from a central location.

## **ISSUES**

- None, contingent upon the Commission's review of wiring, lighting colors, patterns, and timing with the applicant.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the proposal should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Elements of Design for the affected historic districts.