

Trolleys for Lake Geneva:

A Smart Investment in Mobility & Tourism



WHY NOW?



Hwy 50
Construction
Disruption



Downtown
Congestion



Need for
Walkability

BENEFITS FOR LAKE GENEVA

**LESS TRAFFIC
& PARKING STRAIN**

**BETTER
ACCESS FOR ALL**

**CONNECT HOTELS,
LAKEFRONT & SHOPS**

**SCALE FOR
EVENTS & WEEKENDS**

PROJECT COSTS

CAPITAL
\$100K Two Trolleys
+ Storage Facility
• Branding by Sponsors



OPERATIONS
\$55K-\$95K Annually

- Drivers
- Fuel & Maintenance
- Insurance

WHO HELPS FUND IT?

CITY OF LAKE GENEVA

- City Funding & Grants



DOWNTOWN BID

- Sponsorships & Ads

LASTING VALUE



REDUCED CONGESTION



BOOST TO BUSINESSES



**REUSABLE for EVENTS
& SEASONS**



Trolleys for Lake Geneva:

Financial Summary

Capital & Annual Operating Costs



ONE TIME COST

Category	Estimated Cost	Purchase Source
Trolleys	\$ 100,000.00	Under Consideration of Source
Storage Space	\$ 150,000.00	(Impact Fees/CIP)
Administrative Fees	\$ 1,000.00	—
Totals	\$ 344,664.54	\$250,000.00

ANNUAL EXPENSES

Category	Estimated Cost
Driver Wages*	\$ 49,056.00
Benefits	\$ 3,955.72
Maintenance	\$ 18,152.82
Insurance (TBD)	(Between 8-128-Cost (TBD) cettntion)
Trolley Fuel	\$ 7,500.00
Marketing Development	\$ 15,000.00
Totals	\$344,664.54

– Initial City Cost **\$250,000.00**

= Annual Operating Costs **\$94,664.54**

– BID Contribution **\$40,000.00**
50% Sponsor Sales

– Initial City Cost **\$250,000.00**

= Annual Operating Costs **\$94,664.54**



– BID Contribution **\$40,000.00** 50% Sponsor Sales

– Tourism Grant **\$15,000.00**
(for physical marketing assets administered by the BID)

– Other Grants
(to be applied to City contributions)

City Ongoing Contribution

\$39,664.54

*Assumes 8-10 drivers at \$28.00 an hour average with 110 days of trolley operation between Memorial Day and Labor Day with 12 weeks shoulder season operations of 3 days per week for total of 146 operational days



Proposal for Joint Purchase & Operation of Two Tourism Trolleys

A Cooperative Initiative of the City of Lake Geneva and Downtown Lake Geneva BID

1. Executive Summary

Lake Geneva is preparing to navigate a period of unprecedented challenges in visitor mobility, with the upcoming **Highway 50 repavement project expected to disrupt traffic flow, parking availability, and visitor access for two full seasons**. At the same time, tourism demand continues to rise, and visitor expectations increasingly include **convenient, attractive, and environmentally friendly mobility options**.

To address these evolving needs, this proposal recommends a **joint purchase and operation of two Tourism Trolleys** to serve downtown Lake Geneva and surrounding high-traffic visitor areas. The initiative would be co-funded and co-managed through:

- **City of Lake Geneva** – Ownership, insurance, driver staffing/operations, vehicle housing, and integration into municipal mobility planning.
- **Lake Geneva BID** – Marketing, sponsorship acquisition, route advertising, rider information, and partnership development with local businesses.

This initiative not only provides a needed service for the upcoming construction disruption but also forms the foundation of a **long-range transportation and walkability enhancement plan** that aligns strongly with **Wisconsin Department of Tourism TEA grant priorities**.

2. Project Purpose & Need

2.1 Immediate Need: Highway 50 Corridor Reconstruction (Two Seasons)

The Highway 50 reconstruction project will significantly limit:

- Downtown access
- On-street and near-downtown parking
- Traffic circulation for visitors
- Walkability between business districts

Tourism trolleys will directly offset these disruptions by:

- Providing convenient circulation between peripheral parking areas and downtown
- Reducing congestion through fewer individual vehicle movements
- Enhancing pedestrian-first zones by minimizing the pressure for central parking

2.2 Long-Term Need: Mobility & Walkability for Tourism Economy

Lake Geneva's tourism economy depends heavily on:

- Visitor ease of access
- Multi-district connectivity (downtown, lakefront, hilltop lodging, parks, Flat Iron, Horticultural Hall, piers)
- Smooth movement between destinations without requiring visitors to re-park multiple times

Trolleys become a **permanent enhancement** that supports:

- Walkability
 - Visitor satisfaction
 - Local business revenue
 - Our tourism brand
-

3. Project Description

3.1 Equipment Purchase

- **Vendor:** Jones Bus Service
- **Total Cost:** \$100,000 for two trolley vehicles
- **Vehicle Type:** Tourism-style trolleys suitable for short-route circulators; 26 seater with handicap accessibility. (Would require a licensed CDL driver)

3.2 Operating Structure (Shared Responsibilities)

City of Lake Geneva

- Vehicle ownership and insurance placement
- Hiring/coordination of CDL-qualified drivers
- Routing, scheduling, and operational oversight (Considering as a seasonal operation)
- Maintenance, fueling/charging, and vehicle storage
- Integration with citywide mobility and traffic planning

Lake Geneva BID

- Lead marketing, promotions, and route communications
- Secure trolley sponsorships and advertising revenue
- Shape seasonal campaign tie-ins (Oktoberfest, Wine Walks, Summer Weekends, Maxwell Street Days, etc.)
- Lead data collection for ridership, economic impact, and visitor engagement
- Participate in performance review and ROI tracking
- Research and co-application for potential grant resources

3.3 Route Concept (Initial Framework)

- Peripheral parking → Downtown
 - Flat Iron Park → Riviera/Piers → Main Street shopping corridors
 - Hotels at the top of the hill → Walkable lakefront areas
 - Possible stops at: Veterans Park, Library/City Hall, Horticultural Hall, the Beach, and municipal parking lots
-

4. Financial Plan

4.1 Capital Costs

Item	Cost
Two tourism trolleys (Jones Bus Service)	\$100,000
Branding/Wraps (provided by BID sponsorship revenue)	Sponsorship-funded
Storage space	\$150,000*

*Funded by Impact Fees for larger DPW proposed project for multiuse.

Estimated capital investment may cost between \$150,000-\$250,000 dollars depending on funding source for the storage space. Alternative could be that storage space is rented annually through Mac's Storage for a two-year term and put into Operational Costs (Costs TBD)

4.2 Operational Costs (Annual)

Estimated city-managed costs include:

- Driver wages
- Insurance coverage
- Fuel/charging
- Routine maintenance

Estimated annual expenses may fall between **\$55,000–\$95,000**, depending on route hours and seasonal usage.

4.3 Revenue Opportunities

Administered by the BID:

- Annual trolley sponsorship tiers
- Side-panel advertising
- Interior promotional displays
- Seasonal “event route sponsorships”
- Grant research and co-application with City to offset operating costs

Projected BID sponsorship revenue could offset **30-50%** of annual operating costs.

5. Grant Feasibility

TEA Program Alignment (Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism)

The Wisconsin **Tourism Equity & Access (TEA)** Grant supports projects that:

- Improve accessibility and equitable access to tourism destinations
- Enhance infrastructure supporting walkability and visitor movement
- Strengthening transportation options connecting tourism assets
- Support local economies and remove barriers to visitor participation
- Advance long-term tourism sustainability

Additional grants BID and City of Lake Geneva Parks Director are actively researching:

- Rural Development State Program – Transit Assistance
- Federal Formula Grant Program for Rural Areas
- AARP Challenge
- Recreational Trails – TAP
- Travel WI – Tourism Development Grant
- Community Development Investment Grant WEDC
- WI Clean Cities, mass transportation

Grants focus on these impact areas:

5.1 Tourism Accessibility & Movement

The trolleys provide transportation for:

- Seniors
- Families with young children
- Visitors who cannot or prefer not to walk long distances
- Guests parking in peripheral lots

Potential funding for marketing materials and for wayfinding may be applied to Tourism Grant funds.

5.2 Economic Impact Expansion

By connecting hotels, parks, attractions, and retail areas, trolleys:

- Increase visitor dispersal
- Boost foot traffic throughout BID districts
- Enhance evening economy potential

5.3 Infrastructure Enhancement

The project becomes a **cornerstone of a broader multimodal transportation initiative**, including:

- Walkability expansions
- Visitor-friendly pedestrian corridors
- “Park once” mobility philosophy
- Future integration with bike rentals or microtransit

5.4 Strategic Timing with Construction

The Highway 50 project creates a **compelling urgency** that strengthens grant competitiveness, demonstrating a clear public need and long-term benefit.

5.5 Strong Partnerships (Highly Weighted in TEA Scoring)

The collaboration among the **City** and **BID** is exactly the type of cross-agency partnership TEA prefers to fund.

6. Implementation Timeline

Phase	Timeline
Partnership Approval & Agreement	30–60 days
Grant submission (if pursued)	As soon as cycle opens; prep 45 days prior
Purchase order with Jones Bus Service	Immediately upon funding approval
Delivery estimated	4–6 months from order
Branding & sponsorship package rollout	Begins immediately upon vehicle confirmation
Pilot route launch	Prior to Hwy 50 construction season

7. Measurement & Evaluation

- Ridership numbers
- Visitor satisfaction surveys (QR-enabled)
- Business revenue change in trolley-connected districts
- Parking congestion reduction metrics
- Operational performance and cost tracking
- Sponsorship ROI reporting

The BID will lead annual reporting in collaboration with the City and Tourism Commission.

8. Conclusion

The Tourism Trolley Initiative represents a forward-thinking mobility solution that strengthens Lake Geneva's tourism resilience, enhances visitor experience, and positions the city as a statewide leader in innovative transportation planning. The collaboration between the **Tourism Commission, City, and BID** creates a sustainable model with shared responsibility and high community value.

This project is **timely, feasible, and strategically aligned** with various Wisconsin grant goals and Lake Geneva's broader vision for improved walkability, accessibility, and economic vitality.

We respectfully request consideration of this proposal and authorization to move forward with formal partnership agreements, grant development, and the purchase of two tourism trolleys from Jones Bus Service.

Financial Summary:

Capital & Annual Operating Costs

Category	Estimated Cost	Purchase Source
<i>One Time Cost</i>		
Trolleys	\$ 100,000.00	Under Consideration of Source
Storage Space	\$150,000.00	(Impact Fees/CIP)
Administrative Fees	\$ 1,000.00	
<i>Annual Expenses</i>		
Driver Wages*	\$ 49,056.00	
Benefits	\$ 3,955.72	
Maintenance	\$ 18,152.82	Mechanics, Vehicle regular cleaning
Insurance	(TBD)	(Between 8-12k cost estimate)
Trolley Fuel	\$ 7,500.00	
Marketing Development	\$ 15,000.00	(Tourism Commission Grant)
Totals	\$344,664.54	
-Initial City Cost	\$250,000.00	
= Annual Operation Costs	\$ 94,664.54	
-BID Contribution	\$ 40,000.00	50% Sponsor Sales
-Tourism Grant	\$ 15,000.00	(for physical marketing assets administered by the BID)
-Other Grants	\$ TBD	(to be applied to City contributions)
City Ongoing Contribution	\$ 39,664.54	

*Assumes 8-10 drivers at \$28.00 an hour average with 110 days of trolley operation between Memorial Day and Labor Day with 12 weeks shoulder season operations of 3 days per week for total of 146 operational days.