

## Milwaukee likely to issue streetcar construction bids within 90 days

By: Alex Zank, alex.zank@dailyreporter.com January 15, 2016 3:10 pm

Milwaukee officials expect to issue bid specifications for a long-planned streetcar line within 90 days' time.

The bid documents will be for the line itself, as well as a maintenance structure, said Tim Clancy, vice president of construction consulting company The Concord Group. His announcement came Friday morning at a meeting of the Joint Committee on Downtown Streetcar Implementation held at City Hall.

Clancy said the consulting team on the project also hopes to complete a draft-financial plan and put the final touches on a project schedule over the next few months.

The approximately \$124 million streetcar project will mainly consist of a 2.1-mile downtown loop. That line is to form the basis of a system that may eventually branch out to more neighborhoods.

The first extension is already in sight. Milwaukee officials found out in October that the city will get \$14.2 million from a federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant for a line leading to the city's lakefront.

Clancy said the project schedule will be revised to take into account the plans for the lakefront line. Further extension might run to the city's northeast and near-west sides, as well as to Walker's Point, an area south of downtown.

Clancy also told committee members that vehicle manufacturer Brookville Equipment Corp., headquartered in Brookville, Pa., has been formally contracted to build four streetcars.

We Energies has produced plans showing what will happen to utility equipment that must be moved out of the way of the streetcar line and compiled cost estimates for the relocation work, Clancy said.

"We reviewed those plans and estimates with We Energies ... and (are) in general agreement with the budget and scope they've put forward at this time," he said.

Normally, utility companies are obliged to pay for moving their own equipment out of the way of public-works projects. But state legislators have made an exception in the case of the streetcar. Because of a law they passed in 2013, any utility relocation costs related to the project must be borne by the city.

Rocky Marcoux, commissioner of Milwaukee's Department of City Development, said after the meeting the streetcar project will be a boon for future development

Downtown Milwaukee is already in the midst of a construction boom. Among the most notable projects now moving forward is the Northwestern Mutual Tower, a 1.1-million-square-foot, 32-story building going up at the corner of Mason and Van Buren streets.

City leaders have said the project will spur development at nearby sites. Marcoux said he expects similar benefits from the streetcar.

As an example of one project that will benefit from new transit line, he mentioned the Couture high-rise that is planned for a downtown site near Lake Michigan. The \$122 million project will stand 44 stories and contain apartments, shops and restaurants. It will also have a stop along the streetcar's lakefront extension.

"Look at the pipeline right now," Marcoux said.

He predicted the city will see a lot more projects with connections to the streetcar route.

He said a public transportation system of this sort will give local developers a boost of confidence, especially those who cater to millennials. The generation of people born between the early 1980s and early 2000s tend to want to live in cities and have less dependency on cars.

"You're going to see a lot more developments built with less (investment in) parking," Marcoux said.



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