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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Michael S. D'Amato
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Moving Ahead On Milwaukee Connector Project Only Way To Ensure Approved \$91 Million Investment In The City Of Milwaukee *Kenosha-Racine Commuter Line Not Eligible For Federal Funds, Ald. D'Amato Says*

Ald. Michael S. D'Amato predicted today that failure by the Common Council and Milwaukee County Board to act positively on resolutions regarding the Milwaukee Connector study will lead to the loss of \$91 million in federal funds reserved for mass transit improvements in the City of Milwaukee.

“There should be no misunderstanding -- if we do not act now and move the Connector project forward -- Milwaukee will most surely lose this \$91 million and with it an opportunity that comes along only once in a generation,” said Ald. D'Amato, chair of the Common Council's Judiciary and Legislation and Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committees.

Ald. D'Amato said federal agencies “have waited 17 years for Milwaukee to get its act together regarding these earmarked funds.” “Unfortunately, our policy regarding future transit options has been defined by inaction, indecision and gridlock,” he said. “But today we have finally built a consensus around the Milwaukee Connector that includes business, labor, community groups and educational institutions, and now it is time for us to move forward.”

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Time For Connector Project To Go Forward/ADD ONE

The Milwaukee Connector is a 21st Century mass transportation enhancement to Milwaukee's bus system. It includes the option of a 13-mile in-line rubber tire street tram that would connect downtown attractions as well as provide easy access to Marquette University and UW-Milwaukee. The estimated \$300 million project will create hundreds of construction jobs and will spur development and economic activity along transportation routes. The governing boards of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce and the Wisconsin Center District have recently voted to endorse the findings of the Connector study and move the project on to its next stage. Ald. D'Amato serves on the Wisconsin Center District board.

Ald. D'Amato said that discussions of using the federal funds for alternate projects, including those outside of Milwaukee such as the Kenosha-Racine METRA extension, don't take into account the many legal and administrative hurdles that make transferring the funds unlikely.

"Using the \$91 million dollars for the METRA extension is not an option," said Ald. D'Amato. "That project does not meet the criteria set out in the legal settlement governing the use of the funds that requires that they be used to improve 'the transportation needs of not only the Milwaukee central business district, but low-income, minority, elderly and disabled residents of the City of Milwaukee,'" the alderman said.

"Obviously, a project that does not even include a stop in the city of Milwaukee can't begin to address those criteria or contribute much in the way of added jobs for Milwaukeeans," he said. "Instead, it will only invite additional lawsuits by advocates for the poor, disabled and elderly."

"Now is not the time for indecision and selling out Milwaukee's central city and minority neighborhoods," added Ald. D'Amato. "Now is the time to take a stand for Milwaukee's future and support what is perhaps the biggest economic development project that this city has seen in many years."