



Metropolitan
Milwaukee
Association of
Commerce

Council of Small Business Executives

April 5, 2005

The Honorable Willie Hines
President
Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall, Room 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Alderman Hines:

As Chairman of the Milwaukee Connector Study Steering Committee, and pursuant to your request, I appreciate the opportunity to provide information regarding the Connector study and its findings and to correct several statements that have appeared in recent communications from Alderman Bauman. (Common Council press releases disseminated to the media and public and a letter to other members of the Milwaukee Common Council. I refer specifically to press releases issued March 23, 24, 27, and 31 and to the letter dated March 30.)

A partnership of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County and Wisconsin Center District oversees the Milwaukee Connector project and each partner has a representative on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee directs study activity as well as sets the policy and work parameters for the analysis that is being conducted by our project consultants. All activities are consistent with the process set forth by the Federal Transportation Administration, the primary funder of the study. Every component of the locally preferred alternative including routing, vehicle technology, operations planning, capital and operating costs, financing, governance, and economic impact has been the subject of committee review and approval. The study team has conducted over 300 community meetings and the public input we received has helped shape the project direction.

I offer the following corrections regarding the operation and funding of the proposed Milwaukee Connector. The items in italics are from Alderman Bauman's communications referenced above.

"Property taxes would be used to fund the construction or operation of the system competing for resources needed for police, fire, sanitation, etc."

- Property taxes have never been considered as a funding source for the local share of capital costs for the Connector. In fact, from day one, the study team was expressly directed to exclude property taxes from any funding consideration and to explore innovative funding options.
- The \$91 million on reserve for this project is federal funding that cannot be used for police, fire, sanitation, etc. It is dedicated to the outcome of the Milwaukee Connector Study. If Milwaukee does not use these funds for this purpose, it risks losing them altogether.

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“The consultants are considering increasing sales taxes, and hotel, car rental, and meal taxes, among other funding sources, to fund this local share.”

- We have not recommended an increase sales tax, meal taxes and other general taxes. These options are not among the alternatives being considered to fund the Connector.

“The guided bus system being proposed for Milwaukee does not operate anywhere in North America and only operates in one city in the world, Nancy France”.

- The guided street tram technology that utilizes single-track guidance is being built by two of the world’s largest manufacturers of transit vehicles, Bombardier, and Translohr. Known in Europe as “tramways on tires,” systems are successfully operating in France in Nancy, Caen, Paris, and Clermont-Ferrand. In addition, three cities in Italy (Mestre-Venice, L’Aquila and Padua) are currently constructing this technology. Operational assessments are also being conducted in China and Japan.
- The United States Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recognizes guided street tram as a valid bus rapid transit technology. FTA reports published in 2002 and 2003 expressed preference for bus rapid transit as a means to cost effectively improve transit.

“Guided buses will not operate in snow and ice.”

- The guided street tram technology has been tested in snow and ice and is currently operating in snow/ice conditions in Clermont-Ferrand, a ski area in France, as well as Caen in northern France.
- Because the guided street tram is a rubber-tired vehicle, there is no reason it would not operate in the same conditions in which current MCTS buses operate. It has a dual operating system that allows for operation on or off its guidance track. When attached to the guidance track, the vehicle track wheel exerts 1,600-pounds of hydraulic pressure, more than enough to clear snow, ice and debris.

“Guided buses will actually diminish the quality of transit service in areas where the guided buses will operate, and will result in the loss of transit system jobs.”

- Overall transit system quality and quantity of service will be improved by the Connector, not reduced. During peak periods of the day, service will be in 6-minute or less intervals and at non peak times at 11- to 15-minute intervals.
- Guided street trams operating in dedicated lanes would not be subject to traffic backups and would be equipped with signal prioritization capability. Stations and stops would include real-time vehicle arrival messaging, improved ticketing and curb level boarding (low floor for elderly, handicapped, wheelchairs, strollers, and pedestrians), and a more comfortable and quiet ride for users.

- An overall long-term reduction in transit system jobs is not anticipated as a result of the Connector implementation. The current strategy to cut routes and increase fares is sure to eliminate jobs. We believe the connector will increase ridership and lead to more stability in the transit system.

6 *"The loss of street parking will not only affect residents but will hurt small businesses located on these streets which do not have off-street parking for their clients and customers." "Shortage of parking and resident anger will get considerably worse under the guided bus plan."*

- The study team is sensitive to concerns regarding lost parking that a dedicated transit lane could produce in the city's densest neighborhoods. We have been working closely with the City and businesses and residents along the routes to develop alternate parking locations and mitigation strategies. For example, although the route segments on Prospect, Farwell, Jackson and Van Buren will lose parking on one side of the street, the opportunity exists to convert the remaining lane of parallel parking to angle parking resulting in no loss of parking spots. Parking studies along the Fond du Lac Avenue route indicate that more than adequate parking exists on side streets to make up for any parking lost on Fond du Lac Avenue, where parking is currently prohibited during peak traffic hours. In addition, the following redevelopment strategies were recommended in the City's Fond du Lac and North Neighborhood Plan (approved 3/19/04):

6 *"Encourage shared parking. Create a menu of varied shared public parking options and design standards that will work for different land uses (residential, commercial, industrial, park, civic, etc.)."*

- Construction of fixed systems in other cities has resulted in significant transit oriented development (TOD) along the transit routes. Cities with fixed transit systems have experienced increased demand for housing, increased pedestrian traffic, reductions in vacancy rates, increases in rental and property values, and a flurry of rehab and new construction. (See sample case studies, attached.).
- In other cities, fixed transit has provided a solution to the costly construction of parking structures. For example, in Portland fixed transit eliminated an estimated need for 200 more full-block parking decks in downtown.

7 *"An unsightly canopy of overhead wires and apparatus will be erected over these streets to provide power for the guided buses . . ."*

- The canopy of wires that is often associated with two-wire light rail systems will not be used for the guided street trams. Instead, the proposed electric power system for the guided street tram requires a single, low-profile trolley wire that can be attached to street lamps, banner posts and building façades.

8 *"Construction of the guided bus system would also prove to be another huge headache for downtown businesses as it would mean ripping up the roadways and sidewalks that were recently rebuilt as part of the Wisconsin Avenue streetscaping project."*

- Throughout the course of the study, streetscaping improvements in the Marquette University area, along Fond du Lac Avenue, on the eastside, as well as downtown have been taken into consideration. Station planning has considered the new streetscaping and has been designed to work in harmony with its features. Connector station locations will require minimal elevation of sidewalk height in limited locations to achieve low-floor boarding. The benefits of improved efficiencies and ease in boarding will offset the short-term disruption during construction. Light rail construction would require that streets and sidewalks be torn up. This technology requires minimal disruption.

9 *The \$300 million guided bus system does nothing to address the real public transit challenge facing the Milwaukee metro area; namely connecting unemployed and underemployed low income resident with areas of job growth in outlying areas of Milwaukee County and the Milwaukee suburbs.*

- The purpose of the Connector study is, and always has been, to recommend a transit alternative to link Milwaukee attractions and improve transit mobility for residents, workers, students, and visitors to downtown and adjacent neighborhoods. The thirteen mile system is intended to be self sustaining and the routes it covers currently account for 41,000 rides per day with a projected 25% increase if the guided street tram is implemented. The proposed system in no way precludes future expansion nor precludes future consideration or implementation of other transit technologies such as commuter rail or light rail.
- If the Connector project moves forward and we are successful in attracting the federal funds needed to construct the system, more than \$200 million in construction work will be produced in the city. 80% of the cost of construction of the system would come from federal funds only available for construction of transit systems, money that will otherwise be targeted to other cities.

10 *"I have been strenuously objecting to the direction of the connector study for over four years. I have proposed alternatives. I have proposed returning the study to its original purpose, namely building a low cost, minimally operable system connecting Downtown with Miller Park. My suggestions have fallen on deaf ears. The consultants do not want to listen."*

- In July of 2004 Alderman Bauman asked the Connector Study Steering Committee to consider and evaluate the potential for a vehicle and route alternative that was not included in the original project scope, specifically, a route from O'Donnell Park to Miller Park using Portland style streetcars (light rail vehicles). Despite the fact that light rail had recently been eliminated from consideration, in deference to Alderman Bauman who had recently been elected to represent downtown, the Steering Committee directed the study team to review his alternative.

In summary, the review determined the 4.65 mile route with 11 stations and stops would cost approximately \$140.3 million (in 2004 dollars, not including the cost of full utility relocation). Annual operating cost was estimated at \$3.56 million. It was anticipated the service would generate 300 rides per day among people employed in the Valley and visitors to the Harley Museum and would not "improve access to jobs for central city residents." In fact the Alderman's alternative, reached far less low and moderate income minority households than the proposed 13

mile Connector routes. Based on the preliminary findings, the Steering Committee determined the alternative did not merit further study as part of the Connector initiative.

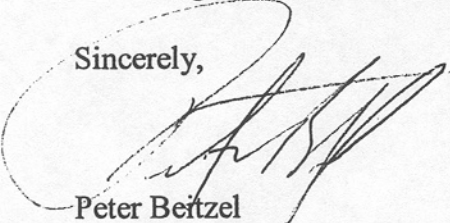
- In the study's early days from 1999 through 2001, several advisory committees were utilized to maximize community input. More than fifty community leaders and interested parties participated on four committees including community outreach, finance, land use, and ridership/revenue. Mr. Bauman did indeed serve on the Land Use Advisory Committee along with Alderman Henningsen, Alderman D'Amato, Jon Wellhoefer of the Milwaukee Redevelopment Corp, Dave Zepecki from Milwaukee County, John Stimac of the Menomonee Valley Partners, Paul Roller of the Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau, Brian O'Connell of DCD, Beth Nicols of the Milwaukee Downtown BID, Michael Morgan of the Spirit of Milwaukee, and Gary Grunau of Grunau Project Development. The group had many diverse opinions and spirited debates regarding land use and connectivity. Many of their ideas went into selection of routes that were developed and published for review in April of 2001 and were the basis for a series of public meetings held in June of 2001. Further public input and demand led to expansion of the study area to its current size. With their work completed, the committees were dissolved.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide you, your colleagues, and the public with factual information on the Milwaukee Connector project. Tim Sheehy, our MMAC president accompanied several people to France more than two years ago, rode the guided street trams and toured the plants where the vehicles are manufactured. They recognized this new technology that combines the flexibility and low cost of a bus with the longer life span, reliability, and economic development potential of light rail, as the wave of the future and a new tool for city building.

On February 27, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce Board of Directors voted unanimously to support the study alternative of the 13 mile, two route, guided street tram. The MMAC views the investment in modern efficient transit as an investment in the overall economic development of Milwaukee. In addition, our Young Professionals of Milwaukee group recognizes modern transit as a magnet issue that affects the attraction and retention of young professionals to the City.

We look forward to attending the Steering and Rules Committee meeting on April 27 and answering any remaining questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Peter Beitzel
Chairman, Milwaukee Connector
Study Steering Committee