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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Robert Bauman
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Council Approves Wisconsin Ave. and Juneau Ave. Bridge Projects

Alderman Robert Bauman says conditions in place to ensure least possible disruptive work, expedient completion by contractors

The Common Council today approved moving forward with major rehabilitation and reconstruction work on two busy downtown bridges – the W. Wisconsin Ave. lift bridge and the W. Juneau Ave. bascule bridge, both spanning the Milwaukee River.

The \$27.6 million work, expected to get underway late next year, will be subject to specific conditions for contractors that were requested by Alderman Robert J. Bauman, whose 4th Aldermanic District includes both spans. The alderman and officials from the Department of Public Works held informational sessions with residents and downtown businesses and stakeholders to gather input and hear concerns about both projects.

Alderman Bauman, chair of the Public Works Committee, said input from those sessions, and the recent experience of the sluggish and delay-plagued State St. bridge project -- which prompted the alderman in 2007 to seek to ban the contractor from receiving any city public works contracts for five years – helped solidify the contractor conditions. “Because both bridges are heavily utilized in our vital downtown core, we are placing the contractor on notice that getting the work done early means rewards and finishing it late means big (financial) penalties,” he said.

Prior to the Council meeting today, the Public Works Committee approved the contractor conditions, including a \$5,000 per day reward for every day the work on either bridge is finished ahead of schedule (with a reward cap for each project totaling \$300,000). For each day the project is finished beyond the completion date, the contractor will forfeit \$3,500 per day in liquidated damages plus \$5,000 per day disincentive pay reduction for each project, Alderman Bauman said.

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Downtown Bridge Work/ADD ONE

The use of incentives (and disincentives) like those being used for the Wisconsin and Juneau Ave. bridge projects is rare, but DPW officials said a similar approach was used with success in the massive reconstruction of the Marquette Interchange.

Alderman Bauman said the approach is worth it if the bridges are open to traffic ahead of schedule. “We have a tool (incentives) that gives us the best possible chance of getting the bridges open early, which is the desired outcome for our residents, businesses and commuters,” he said.

Neighbors near the Juneau Ave. bridge have also been heard, according to Alderman Bauman. For instance, the project now has a proposed start date of August 1, 2011 – instead of May 2011 – as requested by neighbors, and the intersection of Juneau Ave. and N. Edison St. will be kept open during the project. Also, the project will not halt recreational boating on the river, he said.

The work scheduled on the Juneau Ave. bridge involves replacing the current bridge with a lift bridge, requiring that it be closed to all vehicle and pedestrian traffic for the duration of the project.

On the Wisconsin Ave. lift bridge, the work plan will also require that the bridge be closed to all vehicle and pedestrian traffic for the duration of the project. The bridge/stairway pedestrian access to the RiverWalk on both sides of the river for approximately 100 to 200 feet above (north) and below (south) the bridge will be closed as well. Construction is scheduled to commence in October 2011 and end in fall 2012.

Approximately \$22.8 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and state funds are paying for the bulk of the project costs for both bridges, with the city’s share at an estimated \$4.78 million.