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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

May 14, 2012

Mayor Tom Barrett
City Hall, Room 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Barrett:

Allow me to congratulate you on your recent victory at the polls. While I am certain you are extremely busy pursuing a higher office, I'm sure you will agree that the current challenges facing the City of Milwaukee deserve our full time attention, which leads me to the purpose of this letter.

In my April 19 letter to you, I asked you several pertinent questions regarding your plans for the Milwaukee streetcar project should you win in the upcoming gubernatorial recall election. As of today, I have yet to receive a response.

I am persistent and believe in getting to the bottom of important matters and to the residents of Milwaukee, this is a very important issue, so I ask once again:

- If you win the upcoming gubernatorial recall election, will you allocate state money to help subsidize the streetcar's yearly operational costs?
- If your answer is "no," then I strongly suggest that you put the entire project on hold immediately. Your successor (i.e. the new mayor of Milwaukee) may be opposed to the streetcar project, so what's wrong with delaying it until the new mayor has a chance to weigh in on it?

- I am again asking you to prove me wrong – prove to me that a majority of city residents favor the streetcar project. Let's have a vote – a referendum on the issue – so that we have our answer once and for all. Again, I believe such a huge public project that will affect generations of city residents for decades to come deserves a public vote – especially one with such a strong public opposition.

There's one other option that I am urging you to consider for the use of the \$65 million now targeted for the streetcar project. I strongly urge you to consider using your influence in Washington, D.C. to allow us to use the \$65 million to rebuild our crumbling city streets. According to staff in the city's Legislative Reference Bureau, with \$65 million we could repave about 80 miles of local streets. That equates to approximately 1000 city blocks – about 65 per Aldermanic District.

Such an initiative would be a major boost for under-employed and unemployed local residents and could create up to 1,000 jobs. This City-wide improvement to our infrastructure would address our crumbling streets, create jobs, and would show some respect for the overwhelming majority of residents who strongly oppose the streetcar. And unlike the streetcar, these improvements would boost economic development. The transfer of these funds to paving projects could be a win-win-win for everyone involved.

This money was originally granted by Congress over twenty years ago, and it has been repurposed more than once. I find it hard to believe that it can't possibly be done again.

The economic circumstances that we are currently facing as a City, a State, and as a Country are a far cry from the relative stability we enjoyed 20 years ago. The Federal Government is no longer handing out transportation grants like they were in times of prosperity.

If you refuse to attempt to have these funds reallocated, then I ask that you pose the same basic question to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation that I have posed to you; i.e., can he guarantee that we will receive Federal funding in the foreseeable future for an expansion of this proposed streetcar line? If not, investing Milwaukee tax dollars in what has been referred to as the first phase of this project is fiscally and morally irresponsible. Personally, I am holding out hope that our leaders at the Federal level have not completely replaced common sense with bureaucracy and red tape.

You have claimed for years that “jobs, jobs, jobs” are your top priority, and I’m sure they are, so let’s have a “win, win, win” in that regard.

I await your response.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert G. Donovan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Cordially,".

Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District