Common sense prevails on downtown streetcar project

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
May 9, 2013

Needless to say, I am pleased with the action today by the Legislature’s budget committee to approve a budget motion that very likely means the end of the line for the downtown streetcar project.

The budget motion, submitted by Rep. Dale Kooyenga (a member of the legislature’s Joint Finance Committee who represents a district that includes Brookfield, Wauwatosa, and Milwaukee), bars utility companies from passing along costs to rate payers that are associated with moving utility lines related to a streetcar project.

With the cost of moving those utility lines estimated to be approximately $70 million – all placed on the shoulders of Milwaukee taxpayers – I believe chances are slim to none that the full Common Council will stand pat and let the project go forward.

That said, I want to make it clear that while I certainly respect my colleagues and their opinions, we simply do not agree with one another on the streetcar project. But now we need to move forward and come together on a plan that seeks to secure an approved reallocation of the $54 million. I believe that money should be used to fix our crumbling streets, and I have a Legislative Reference Bureau estimate stating that for $54 million we could re-pave 1000 blocks of city streets!

In my view, that kind of infrastructure project would go a long way toward creating jobs and stimulating the local economy.

To me, that would also be a project that would have the very strong support of our citizens – the people we are working for.