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**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
Alderman, 8th District

## **Across the nation, a bad week for streetcars**

*Cost overruns, low ridership, and a fire – is this where Milwaukee’s headed?*

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan  
February 23, 2015**

February 2015 has not exactly been a stellar month for streetcars in the U.S., and I believe what we’re seeing is just the tip of the iceberg and a major source of worry for anyone concerned about the future of commuting in Milwaukee.

In Washington, D.C. – where a new streetcar line is just now undergoing testing and is more than a year behind schedule – a fire broke out on top of one of the streetcars! The fire broke out late this past Saturday, and thank goodness the driver and no one else was injured. It is my understanding that this D.C. line has been unable to pass safety inspections for six months, and now an independent review board is coming into the city to study the failures. Read more here:

<http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/blogs/housingcomplex/2015/02/22/streetcars-latest-problem-catching-on-fire/>

Also in D.C., the new streetcar is really jamming up traffic and not exactly looking like it will be an efficient, well-utilized line. Those details can be found in the link below.

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/manhattan-moment-dc-streetcars-dont-just-combust-they-also-congest/article/2560549>

-More-

Things are not very peachy down in Atlanta, where the Atlanta Streetcar is now operating and is underperforming in projected ridership (18% lower than expectations and at a time rides are FREE!). If that news isn't bad enough, the streetcar's operating costs are now projected to be 50% higher! Read about it here:

<http://kylewingfield.blog.ajc.com/2015/02/19/atlantas-over-budget-and-under-utilized-streetcar-whodathunkit/>

Lastly, from coast to coast smart people are looking hard at the “cost versus benefit” factor with streetcars in markets where bus service has generally worked well for getting people around for decades. What many are finding is that – surprise! – the buses get people around just as fast or faster than streetcars, and at a cost that is not even close to the massive price tag of installing even a mile or two of trolley tracks. Details here:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/business/to-save-on-rail-lines-market-the-bus-line.html?\\_r=0&abt=0002&abg=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/10/business/to-save-on-rail-lines-market-the-bus-line.html?_r=0&abt=0002&abg=1)

So, as you can see, the rush to build streetcar systems is way out in front of good, common sense. I have called for common sense to prevail in Milwaukee all along – I just wish the mayor would stop and listen.

But when it comes to the streetcar, apparently he's tone deaf to anything that sounds like common sense.