



July 29, 2026

Ald. Peter Burgelis
(414) 286-3446

Ald. Burgelis Introduces Ordinance to Crack Down on Unauthorized Street Closures

In response to a growing pattern of utility companies and contractors closing public streets without City approval, **Alderman Peter Burgelis** has introduced Common Council File #260554 to significantly strengthen penalties for unauthorized closures of Milwaukee's public rights-of-way.

The proposal follows yesterday's unauthorized closure of W. Lincoln Ave., which disrupted traffic and restricted access to the Department of Public Works' operations yard, the Self Help Center, and the City's tow lot. After extensive intervention by City staff, the traffic control plan was reconfigured to restore access while allowing work on the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's Jackson Park project to continue.

"Milwaukee's streets belong to the public, not to contractors who decide to close them without authorization," Burgelis said. "When major roads are closed without approval, residents, businesses, emergency responders, and City operations all pay the price."

Current City ordinance imposes a forfeiture of only about \$350, twice the cost of a street closure permit, for unauthorized closures. Ald. Burgelis notes the current penalty provides little incentive for compliance on multimillion-dollar construction projects. The new proposal would increase the forfeiture to up to \$1,000 per hour, per lane closed without City authorization. The proposal applies only to non-emergency construction activities and would not affect emergency utility repairs needed to protect public safety or restore essential services.

-More-

Penalties for Unauthorized Street Closures/ADD ONE

"Construction projects are necessary, but accountability is too," Ald. Burgelis added. "Contractors should obtain the required approvals, follow approved traffic control plans, and provide advance notice to affected neighbors and businesses before closing public streets."

Unauthorized closures can delay emergency response, disrupt City services, divert traffic into residential neighborhoods, reduce customer access for local businesses, and create unsafe conditions for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders.

"Our permitting process exists to coordinate projects, protect public safety, and minimize disruption," Ald. Burgelis said. "Road construction is inevitable. Chaos isn't. Everyone must follow the rules."

Common Council File #260554 will be referred for committee consideration in September.