
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Robert Bauman
286-3774

Aldermen Seek Answers On Transit Funding Debacle

Reports surfacing during the past 24 hours that Milwaukee's Downtown Transit Connector Study is frozen and that the city may ultimately lose more than \$91 million in federal money earmarked for transit improvements has Public Works Committee chair Ald. Bob Bauman and other aldermen ready to ask some hard questions.

"Is the Downtown Transit Connector Study dead? Did the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration close the account that has been funding the Connector Study since 2000? Did Mayor Tom Barrett know about this decision for months and withhold this information from the Common Council and the public? What is Mayor Tom Barrett doing about this situation and, if he is acting to reverse this decision, why didn't he enlist the Common Council to support his efforts? If the Connector Study is dead, will Milwaukee lose the \$91.5 million in federal transit funds that have been reserved for Milwaukee?" Ald. Bauman said today.

Those and other questions will be asked tomorrow (Wednesday, March 5, 2008) of representatives of the Department of Public Works at a hearing before the Common Council's Public Works Committee at 9:00 a.m. in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. Media coverage is encouraged.

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Aldermen Looking For Answers/ADD ONE

A little over a year ago, Mayor Barrett unveiled his plan to invest the \$91.5 million in federal transit funds in a Downtown Streetcar Circulator and the COMET (County of Milwaukee Express Transit) bus rapid transit proposal. Shortly thereafter the Connector Study Steering Committee voted to undertake a study of the mayor's proposal. The Connector Study Steering Committee also voted to undertake a study of County Executive Scott Walker's alternative bus rapid transit proposal that did not include a rail component. In order to tap the \$91.5 million, the Connector Study needed to review these proposals, define costs and benefits and develop a "Locally Preferred Alternative" which would be eligible for the federal funds, Ald. Bauman said.

"However, zero work has been done by the Connector Study consultants because, as it turns out, the federal government has closed the account that had been funding the Connector Study," Ald. Bauman said. "This has effectively shut down the Connector Study and will, if not reversed, cause Milwaukee to lose the \$91.5 million to another city."

"This is a big deal. Milwaukee stands to lose a \$91.5 million investment of federal funds in expanded and improved public transit. It is bad enough that indecision has allowed this potential investment to shrink from its original amount of \$289 million, but now we face the very real prospect of losing all the remaining money along with the badly needed jobs and economic development such an investment would create," the alderman said.

"What's even worse, if it can get worse, is that the Mayor and the Department of Public Works has been aware of this federal action for months but has withheld this information from the Common Council and the public," said Ald. Bauman.

Ald. Bauman added: "Mayor Barrett has repeatedly stated that his top priority is 'Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, Jobs...' With respect to this \$91.5 million federal investment, which may now go to another city, apparently he means 'Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, Jobs...' for St. Louis or Minneapolis."