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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Mayor Breaks Campaign Promise By Failing To Secure \$91 Million In Federal Funding

By vetoing the Common Council's Milwaukee Connector resolution, Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett broke a campaign promise to Milwaukeeans made during the 2004 Mayoral campaign, Ald. Michael S. D'Amato said today.

"When Tom Barrett was running for office he assured Milwaukeeans that his experience in the United States Congress would help Milwaukee secure more than our normal share of federal funds," said Ald. D'Amato, chair of the Common Council's Judiciary and Legislation and Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development committees.

"Instead, by vetoing the Milwaukee Connector resolution he has done the very opposite and sent \$91 million specifically earmarked for transit improvements in Milwaukee back to Washington," the alderman said. "It seems that the mayor believes that the status quo in Milwaukee is just fine and that some other city could use the money more than we can."

In fact, Ald. D'Amato said the \$91 million was not the only federal money at stake in the mayor's veto. Connector proponents had formulated a plan that would have leveraged an additional \$120 million in federal funds and nearly \$20 million in state funds to create a clean, efficient and modern transit system for Milwaukee that relies on electricity, not high-priced gasoline.

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Mayor Breaks Campaign Pledge/ADD ONE

“What’s most puzzling about the mayor’s position is that these are not new tax dollars,” Ald. D’Amato said. “The funds that we’re seeking for a modernized transit system are specifically set-aside for that purpose. Now, rather than coming to Milwaukee those funds will go to cities like Charlotte, Buffalo, Tampa, Las Vegas, Minneapolis and Madison.”

Ald. D’Amato continued: “As a long-time member of Congress and someone who talks about solving Milwaukee’s ‘brain drain’ and attracting young professionals, one would think that Mayor Barrett would know this information. Instead, he sends the money back without even offering an alternative plan for its use. That may be the way Congress works, but Milwaukee deserves a Mayor who provides leadership on big issues.”

The Milwaukee Connector is a 13-mile guided system of electric street tram buses that would link city residents to key areas, including downtown, the lakefront and UW-Milwaukee. The project is supported by a broad coalition of business and neighborhood groups as well as labor representatives and downtown leaders. On Tuesday the Common Council passed the Connector resolution on a vote of 9-6.

According to Ald. D’Amato, that resolution specifically stated that City of Milwaukee property tax dollars could not be used to build or operate any new system. If the mayor’s veto is overridden by the Council, the resolution will allow the Connector project to continue into a preliminary engineering phase that would further answer questions regarding costs and funding for the project, as well as study ideas on how to raise the required local funding match. If the mayor’s veto is sustained, the project is likely dead and the federal funds lost.

The state of Wisconsin, Ald. D’Amato said, ranks 48th in the nation when it comes to federal tax dollars being invested back in the state. “The City of Milwaukee doesn’t fare much better, and in two years in office Mayor Barrett hasn’t brought in any more federal dollars than our city would have normally received and now he kisses goodbye the chance to invest some \$200 million federal dollars in Milwaukee,” the alderman said.

“Sure sounds like a broken promise to me,” he said.