



MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

December 8, 2014

Michael J. Murphy  
District 10 Alderman, Council President  
City Hall  
200 E. Wells, Room 205  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear President Murphy,

I am writing to urge you to support the proposed modern light rail plan for downtown Milwaukee. I may be in a unique position among Milwaukee leaders to have lived in a community with light rail and having ridden light rail regularly as a resident of San Jose, CA while directing the San Jose Museum of Art. As with other great cities and regions, San Jose installed its system decades ago. Milwaukee is woefully late to the stage of establishing great city amenities like modern light rail.

It is important to understand that light rail is a critical component to Milwaukee's competitive brand strategy. Too much emphasis is being placed on the first phase limited access—the “It's too expensive” argument. Developing light rail is a multi-step commitment to mass transportation for generations to come. It is a commitment that already is the expectation of next generation business leaders searching for great communities in which to invest, and of a younger workforce looking for great places to work. A plan for the future must start today and be executed in a deliberate and phased manner preparing Milwaukee for next generation transportation needs.

Most importantly, we must begin today to develop a Milwaukee brand strategy that is competitive with other cities. The research is clear. People want to live, work, play, stay, and invest in communities that offer destination amenities. Exceptional modern public transportation is an essential component of a great community brand strategy.

In 20 years, 60 percent of the world's population will live in cities. Within 30 years the toddler age demographic will be a minority "majority" nationwide. The minority suburban migration written about by Alan Ehrenhalt in *The Great Inversion* suggests that Milwaukee and the region must prepare today for next generation demands on its infrastructure including mass transit systems and regional connectivity. The automobile is not the long term solution to these increasing mobility demands.

I appreciate the fact that mass transit systems and solutions are expensive. The only thing more expensive than planning and implementing an extensive light rail system is doing nothing to prepare for the demands of the future. Failure to act places Milwaukee at a competitive disadvantage for future economic development as well. Milwaukee can no longer wait and see to develop and implement a public transportation strategy that includes light rail.

Milwaukee is not on the bleeding edge of mass transit solutions. It falls woefully behind our competitive city aspirant cohorts. Combined with increasing global competition for next generation business development and workforce, acting today to develop community strategies for tomorrow is the wisest decision and best investment you can make as a City leader. Our assumptions today regarding where people will live are being upended by well-researched trends that indicate that diverse millennials and younger generations will likely not subscribe to the generations old love affair with the automobile. As suburbs become more diverse and urban centers more dense, a light rail system centered downtown and eventually feeding communities outward makes sense.

Modern light rail for Milwaukee is an expensive but necessary component of a multi-faceted strategy for future economic development. We are late to the game but not out of the running...yet. A comprehensive plan to propel Milwaukee forward must include modern light rail; an affordable, safe and frequent rubber tire bus system; world class culture, sports and entertainment; and a public education system second to none.

It's a tall order for Milwaukee, but failure to act on any of these components will result in a deteriorated City brand, further loss of competitive edge, and continued sliding of economic opportunity for its citizens. Light rail for Milwaukee is not an either or proposition. It is a "Yes and" strategy for success. I urge you to support the light rail component of Milwaukee's plan for the future.

Thank you for your leadership in the community and your support for strengthening Milwaukee and the region.

Sincerely,



Daniel T. Keegan  
Director

Cc: Milwaukee Common Council  
Mayor Tom Barrett  
Beth Wiereck