



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

May 10, 2006

To the Honorable, the Common Council
of the City of Milwaukee

Honorable Members of the Common Council:

I am vetoing File Number 051610, a substitute resolution relating to the Milwaukee Connector project.

I have always been, and continue to be, a strong proponent of mass transit. Consequently, my veto should not be interpreted as an action against transit improvements. Rather, it should be interpreted as a call for fiscal honesty.

I have said that the current system needs to be upgraded and that Milwaukeeans deserve a first-class system. I have publicly stated, and the Council agrees, that no property tax dollars should be used to fund the project. I also concur with the Council that Milwaukee County Transit should manage and operate the preferred alternative.

I have been firm in my position that the remaining \$91 million in Interstate Cost Estimate (ICE) funds must be used for transit improvements. As a member of Congress, I fought to secure and keep those funds in Milwaukee. If necessary, I will continue that fight.

I am exercising my veto authority for the following reasons:

[1] The resolution approved by the Common Council does not include a funding source for the federally required local match. The citizens of Milwaukee deserve to know specifically how the Common Council wants the \$57 million local share to be paid. It's easy to say how to spend money. The hard part is identifying where the money is going to come from.

To move ahead with a \$300 million alternative, without details on financing, would be fiscally irresponsible. Opponents of the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission's [(SEWRPC) plan to tear up Milwaukee neighborhoods for freeway expansion often cite the financial implications of the plan as their reasons for not supporting it. I count myself among that group. The same standard should be applied to the \$300 million electric bus alternative.

[2] The funding scheme presented shows \$25 million in Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds and \$127 million in federal New Start Funds. My concern is what will happen if those funds do not materialize in the amounts presented. Will the local match increase? Will the funding source identified protect against any funding shortfalls?

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[3] I commend the Wisconsin District's study team for its community outreach efforts. Over 300 community briefing sessions were held as well as a series of public hearings; however, more outreach and input is needed from current transit riders who, in order to reach their destination, would have to transfer multiple times should the alternative supported by the Common Council be built. These individuals and those who will lose routes and current service need to be heard from.

In addition, neighborhood residents and businesses that will be impacted by the construction of overhead, electric guide wires, poles and stations, as well as the loss of on-street parking, need to fully understand what is at stake.

[4] Finally, there is no guarantee that the Milwaukee County Transit will manage and operate the guided electric bus alternative. The County Board resolution on the subject does not specify a preferred alternative. The County resolution states that Milwaukee County Transit should operate the preferred alternative – either the hybrid buses or the guided electric buses. If we are all in agreement that Milwaukee County Transit should operate the system, then why shouldn't we all agree on the preferred alternative?

The process in which the Common Council chose to support the guided electric bus alternative has left many questions unanswered. For an alternative to move forward, we all deserve to have those issues addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Barrett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "B".

Tom Barrett

Mayor