

December 8th, 2014

Members of the Milwaukee Common Council
c/o Milwaukee City Hall
200 East Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Members of the Common Council:

As you prepare to take up legislation regarding the downtown Milwaukee Streetcar, I am writing to express strong support for this effort as part of a comprehensive strategy to make our community competitive for the next 50 years. The investments that you contemplate in our downtown transit, when coupled with the significant public and private investments that continue to be made on the lakefront, provide an opportunity to strengthen Milwaukee's position as a world-class city and a wonderful place to live, work, visit and raise a family.

The economic development benefits of fixed rail transit have been chronicled in numerous cities around the country and around the world. When developers and investors know with certainty that the tracks that have been laid will be there for a generation, urban redevelopment and the strengthening of proximate neighborhoods follows in case after case. Milwaukee is a city of neighborhoods, but the downtown is a neighborhood for everyone, with many of the community's public amenities – including theaters, museums, the Central Library, sports arenas, City Hall, parks, beaches and other community gems – located right here. It only makes sense that Milwaukee's conversion to a 21st Century mix of transit options begin in the downtown, at the heartbeat of the city.

In addition, the starter system proposed in Milwaukee offers the opportunity for growth and expansion in the years to come. Starting with the cultural and educational center will enhance the connections among and between these important facets of the community, and it will welcome residents and visitors to move easily and efficiently around the downtown and near downtown neighborhoods. Each and every Milwaukee neighborhood may eventually be touched by the decision you make to move this effort forward, but we can only get there as a community if you take the necessary first steps.

The inclusion of a spur to the lakefront makes the project even more exciting for community institutions like Discovery World, as we expect that the continued investment in our community's "front door" will bring more visitors and tourists to the community in the years to come. Working cooperatively with the State of Wisconsin, you have already made great strides toward addressing the future pedestrian and automobile needs of those accessing the lakefront. The inclusion of fixed rail transit will serve to complement and enhance those improvements and spur on additional private investment in the future that brings more employers and additional visitors to our most unique public asset – the urban waterfront.

In addition to my role as CEO of a cultural institution in this community, I also live here and send my children to school in the Milwaukee Public Schools. I hope that my kids continue to learn and grow here, and I would be proud to have them call Milwaukee home in the decades to come. Your decision to invest in a world-class transit system with viable options for all users will make it an easier decision for my kids Allison and Conor – and countless more like them – to start their career and raise their families in Milwaukee when that time comes.

Much of the public policy discourse these days is dominated by what – or who – you can be against. Far too much of the conversation about this project and the federal funds associated with it has been driven by the desire to find excuses to do things the way we have always done them and, in the end, to do nothing. Taking action to make the investment of resources in a modern integrated transit strategy is clearly something you can and should be for, and I encourage you to think and act that way in the discussions to come. If I can assist in any way, please don't hesitate to let me know.

I appreciate your continued work on behalf of the residents of our community, and I look forward to continuing to work with you on important issues of tourism, culture and education in the weeks and months to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joel Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Joel Brennan
President & CEO
Discovery World

jbrennan@discoveryworld.org