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ROBERT J. BAUMAN
ALDERMAN, 4TH DISTRICT

March 30, 2006

RE: Downtown Transit Connector Study

Dear Colleagues:

Since the early 1990s I have been intimately involved in the various studies that sought to improve and expand public transit in Milwaukee. I have served as Chairman of the Southeast Wisconsin New Transportation Alliance, I have served on the Technical Advisory Committee of the East-West Corridor Study, I am still a member of the Study Advisory Committee of the Downtown Transit Connector Study (although this committee has not met in over four years) and I was legal counsel for the central city resident who filed a legal action against Governor Tommy Thompson and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation over the Governor's decision to terminate further study of mass transit improvements in 1997. I have written numerous articles and position papers on public transportation. Over time, I have acquired considerable expertise in the field of public transportation.

I mention all of this in order to give context to my strong opposition to the current preferred alternative being advanced by the consultants hired to conduct the Downtown Transit Connector Study.

In a nutshell, the proposed \$300 Million, 3 route, 13-mile guided bus system is a very expensive version of bus service that will generate few if any public benefits. In addition there is a serious question whether the guided bus technology being proposed (which operates in only two cities in France) will operate reliably in ice and snow conditions of the type experienced in Milwaukee. Finally, the 3 route, 13-mile system will actually reduce the quality and quantity of bus service over these routes. I know this. I personally use some of these routes. It makes no sense to spend \$300 Million to reduce transit service over the routes proposed.

While everyone has pledged that property taxes will not be used to build or operate this system, the city (or some other local entity such as the Wisconsin Center District) must find at least \$60 Million to fund the local share of construction costs. The consultants are considering increasing sales taxes, and hotel, car rental and meal taxes, among other funding sources, to fund this local share. At minimum we owe our constituents clear and direct answers about how this system will be funded before we vote for any particular alternative. We give the same scrutiny to TIF projects, road construction projects and other capital projects.

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I have numerous other concerns with the details of the \$300 Million guided bus system. These include using a proprietary technology which will make replacement parts and replacement vehicles very expensive, the elimination of hundreds of parking places on arterial streets in my district, the demolition and reconstruction of \$17.2 Million worth of streetscaping work on Wisconsin Avenue in my district, and the fact that this 3 route, 13 mile system will do absolutely nothing to enable low income residents of the central city to access jobs in outlying areas of Milwaukee County and the suburbs.

My opposition is not new. I have been strenuously objecting to the direction of the connector study for over four years. I have proposed alternatives. I have proposed returning the study to its original purpose, namely building a low cost, minimally operable system connecting Downtown with Miller Park. My suggestions have fallen on deaf ears. The consultants do not want to listen.

Make no mistake, I respect the intentions and goals of my colleagues who seek to advance the \$300 Million guided bus system. A modern 21st Century transit system is needed in Milwaukee. Our peer cities have passed us by in the area of public transportation. We do need to capture the federal funds that have been made available for transit improvements in Milwaukee. However, in my view, none of these considerations justify selecting an alternative that is too costly, uses unproven technology, reduces the quality and quantity of transit service over the routes it will operate and does not improve access to jobs for central city residents.

Yes, listen to the consultants when they come and talk to you. But remember they have spent upwards of \$6 Million conducting this study and stand to make even more if this \$300 Million system advances to preliminary engineering. They have a vested interest. In my 15 years of public advocacy for improved public transit, I have never made a nickel. I have volunteered my time and effort because I love this community and because I want to see it flourish.

Thank you for your attention. I know you will all give careful consideration to this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. Bauman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert J. Bauman
Alderman, 4th District