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Milwaukee streetcar construction begins in April

RFP issued Friday for streetcar operator

by Corrinne Hess | February 17, 2017, 11:32 AM

<https://www.biztimes.com/2017/industries/construction/milwaukee-streetcar-construction-begins-in-april/>

Construction on the main line of the downtown Milwaukee streetcar will begin in April, moving the long-awaited project from the design phase to the actual building of the mass transit project, which is expected to be operational in late 2018.

In late March, 474 80-foot pieces of rail will be delivered for the tracks. Track installation will begin on West St. Paul Avenue (<http://www.themilwaukeestreetcar.com/pdf/The-Milwaukee-Streetcar-draft-tentative-construction-scheduling-map-2-15-17.pdf>) from the Milwaukee River to the downtown Intermodal Station. From there, the work will continue on Broadway in the Third Ward from I-794 to Kilbourn Avenue.

In mid-summer, work will continue on Jackson, Ogden and Milwaukee streets and then back to St. Paul, from the Milwaukee River to Milwaukee Street. Kilbourn Avenue will be the last leg of the main line before work begins on phase two, the Lakefront Line, in the second quarter of 2018.

"If you didn't know it was a streetcar, you would think it was road construction, until the rails appear," said Mike Ethier, project manager with Kiewit Corp., the general contractor hired to build the streetcar.

During construction, the goal will be to minimize road closures by having one direction of traffic open at all times.

Because of the narrow roadway, St. Paul will be closed for four to six weeks during construction and business owners have been contacted, said Ghassan Korban, commissioner of the Department of Public Works.

"I would be surprised if anyone who lives on the route would be surprised about this project," Korban said. "We've probably sat with several stakeholders more than once to go over the details and gathered information with them and we are going to continue to make tweaks as we hear about new festivals."

The planned construction schedule (<http://www.themilwaukeestreetcar.com/pdf/The-Milwaukee-Streetcar-draft-tentative-construction-scheduling-map-2-15-17.pdf>) could change slightly depending on city festivals or business concerns.

While the road work is being done, the city will also be building an operations and maintenance facility (<https://www.biztimes.com/2016/ideas/government-politics/streetcar-maintenance-facility-planned-near-intermodal-station/>) near the downtown Intermodal Station to repair and store the city's streetcars.

The \$6 million to \$8 million 15,400-square-foot streetcar repair and storage facility will be located at 450 N. 5th St. The cost is part of the overall \$124 million streetcar project.

The city also issued a request for proposal for an operator of the streetcar on Friday. The contract would be for six years and three months with an option to renew up to five additional years. Proposals are due April 4. The city is hoping to have the operator in Milwaukee in July or August.

Korban said the steps taken today are a major milestone for the streetcar project.

"We are going to see (the streetcar) start evolving," Korban said. "We are going to see excitement along the route. It is going to start to evolve and be built."



A rendering of a Brookville streetcar in Milwaukee's Third Ward.

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