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Time to move on streetcar

EDITORIAL

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Staff Milwaukee Business Journal

There may be no more controversial project in southeastern Wisconsin than Milwaukee Mayor [Tom Barrett](#)'s proposed streetcar for the downtown area.

The intense debate picked up steam recently as Barrett announced he is backing a plan to raise \$49.3 million through two development districts to start construction on the project and a spur to the lakefront by late 2015.

But if Milwaukee finally wants to do something to improve its public transportation system, aldermen need to approve Barrett's request and finally get the project underway. The streetcar is not the only way to improve the region's transit system, but, as we have said before, it is a good first step and has been successful in other cities.

Critics of the plan, many of whom live outside of the city of Milwaukee, need to realize the benefits it can provide in spurring economic development and drawing additional visitors to the central business district.

The envisioned 4.6 miles of track would cost \$123.9 million.

The additional tax incremental financing money would allow the downtown loop to proceed, despite uncertainties over utility relocation costs.

It also would finance a new spur leading to the downtown lakefront, where several major projects could be developed.