

Milwaukee streetcar RFP expected this month

By: Alex Zank, alex.zank@dailyreporter.com April 8, 2016 3:20 pm

Contractors should expect to see a request for proposals for the construction of Milwaukee's \$124 million downtown streetcar this month.

Tim Clancy, vice president of the construction consulting company The Concord Group, told officials on the city's Joint Committee on Downtown Streetcar Implementation on Friday to expect a pre-proposal conference on the project to be held with contractors by the end of April.

Clancy said he also expects contractors' proposals to be due in May. Following that, a general contractor should be selected in June.

Clancy added that consultants will put the finishing touches on a project schedule after the city receives formal approval of a \$14.2 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant from federal officials.

"We will sit down with (the contractor) to finalize what their project schedule and approach will mean to the project and how they'll tackle the different phases," Clancy said. "Then we'll incorporate that into our official project schedule."

Ghassan Korban, commissioner of the city's Department of Public Works, said Milwaukee should be able to save some money by working with the general contractor on the project schedule. He said he thinks a contractor, for instance, could help the city save money and time in ways that otherwise might be overlooked.

"We're very excited," he said. "We've never done this before in terms of the approach, but we think it's the best approach for this project."

The streetcar is to initially consist of a 2.1-mile loop downtown with a leg running the city's lakefront. Extensions to other parts of the city are expected in the future.

We Energies has already begun moving utility equipment out of the streetcar's path. Clancy said that work began March 15, and the first phase of equipment relocation has already finished.

The utility company will also put forward plans to remove equipment in the way of the lakefront line extension this month.

The city is footing the cost for moving the utility equipment after the state's Public Service Commission ruled last year that utility companies should not be responsible for any expenses related to the project.

A Milwaukee County Circuit Court judge upheld the commission's ruling in mid-February. Korban then said the court decision will not increase the project's costs.

Milwaukee officials have long maintained the streetcar will be a boon for economic development in the downtown area. They argue that the streetcar will not only provide jobs to the skilled trades workers who build the project but will also encourage commercial development along its path.

Government requirements attached to the project will call for 40 percent of the resulting labor hours to be performed by city residents certified through Milwaukee's Residents Preference Program. The program seeks to place unemployed or underemployed residents in construction jobs throughout the city.

Similar hiring requirements have been attached to other large projects throughout the city, including the Northwestern Mutual Tower and Commons project at the corner of Mason and Van Buren streets and the proposed new arena for the Milwaukee Bucks.



(Rendering courtesy of www.themilwaukeeestreetcar.com)

