

From the Milwaukee Business Journal:

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Milwaukee approves funds for streetcar's Fourth Street extension to new Bucks arena

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The plan to spend \$20 million in city money to extend the downtown Milwaukee streetcar on Fourth Street gained Common Council approval Wednesday on an 11-4 vote.

The money will support a \$40 million extension that would run between West St. Paul and West Highland avenues along North Fourth and Fifth streets. It would extend the system to Boston Store and The Shops of Grand Avenue, the downtown convention center and future site of the **Milwaukee Bucks** arena.

The city applied for a federal grant to cover half of the project budget. The remaining \$20 million would come through three tax incremental financing districts. Those districts would earmark property taxes from three areas of downtown to pay for the project.

The Common Council on Wednesday approved that spending plan with little discussion. Ald. **Mark Borkowski**, who was among the four who voted against the plan, made the only comment. He said Milwaukee has issues beyond downtown, and city officials should not put "all of our eggs in one basket."

"The discussion of whether or not the streetcar is going to happen, that ship has sailed," Borkowski said. "We are now working on extensions which I kind of consider pretty dangerous. I'll tell you why. We are becoming a tale of two cities — downtown and the rest of the city of Milwaukee."

Construction on the streetcar's initial loop through downtown Milwaukee will begin this fall. That line, and an extension to the lakefront, will open in 2018 and 2019, respectively. If the city secures federal money for the Fourth Street extension, it could be built and open for service in 2020.

Of the city spending, \$8 million is dependent on the city bringing a new development to its parking lot at Fourth Street and Wisconsin Avenue. The city issued a request for proposals for that site, and is awaiting responses from developers by Sept. 30. That development could include a public plaza and a stop for the streetcar.



The extension would run the streetcar north and south on Fourth or Fifth streets downtown.

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