

REPORTER SEAN RYAN

Milwaukee leaders impressed with Kansas City streetcar

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Kansas City's streetcar already was filling up just before noon on June 13, when a troop of Milwaukee business leaders and Mayor [Tom Barrett](#) jumped on for a spin.

The trip was coordinated by the [Greater Milwaukee Committee](#). Milwaukee business officials who went to bat for the downtown streetcar went along, including [Marcus Corp.](#) CEO [Greg Marcus](#), developer [Barry Mandel](#) and [Beth Weirick](#) of Downtown Business Improvement District No. 21. They rode the Kansas City, Mo., system to the end of the line at Union Station.

"It was interesting to me to see how much business support they have for this," Barrett said.

Developer [Gary Grunau](#), who visited Kansas City last year before the streetcar started service, said he noticed three new developments had sprouted along the route since then.

"They've got some surface parking lots in their downtown like we do, and one of their main goals is to eliminate those surface parking lots and get housing, or hotels or offices," Grunau said. "Everybody that went came back and were saying, 'Wow, this is going to change Milwaukee.'"

Kansas City is paying for the streetcar partially through property tax assessments, and parking lots along the route have a higher rate to encourage their redevelopment, said [Linda Gorens-Levey](#) of General Capital Group, Fox Point, and a co-chair of the Greater Milwaukee Committee's Downtown Task Force. Gorens-Levey said she was impressed by the amount of coordination between the streetcar and local bus system.

"They worked smart," she said. "They used it to spur additional development."

Milwaukee attorney [Greg Wesley](#) was impressed by Kansas City's use of data from the streetcar. It shared with businesses various ridership data, as well as information on how many people get off at each stop.

"It gives a business owner the ability to say this is a good place for me to put a pop-up shop or a food truck," Wesley said.



ANDREW GRUMKE | KCBJ
The KC Streetcar opened for service in early May.

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