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Streetcar reroute near Cathedral Square gains federal approval

Aug 14, 2015, 10:20am CDT



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Milwaukee Business Journal

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Federal officials on Tuesday approved a new route for the Milwaukee streetcar system around Cathedral Square Park, providing a necessary but expected sign-off for the project.

It is another step as city officials continue to engineer the downtown streetcar loop on route to a spring 2016 construction start. This route includes the initial downtown loop to run from the Milwaukee Intermodal Station, through the central business district and north to the lower east side. Planning also is underway under a separate schedule for a spur that would lead to the downtown lakefront.

The city is changing its proposed routes around Cathedral Square to save costs on moving underground utilities for the streetcar track. The utility cost savings from the move are anticipated to be at least \$1 million.

The new route means that, instead of running east and west along Wells Street near the park, the streetcar track will shift to the north and run along Kilbourn Avenue. The city is considering running the streetcar along Kilbourn's median and having a more substantial passenger stop there adjacent to the park.

Also, a northbound track will no longer run on Van Buren Street between Wells and Ogden streets. Instead, the streetcar will run both north and south on Jackson Street, one block to the west.

The Federal Transit Administration on Tuesday sent the city a letter approving the route shift.



RENDERING PROVIDED

An early rendering of the streetcar along the originally planned Wells Street route,... more

Consultants on the project gave a project update Friday to the Milwaukee Joint Committee on Downtown Streetcar Implementation. Work continues with several manufacturers that are competing to build the streetcar vehicles for the system. One will be selected in late September. Design work for the overall system will be done by early winter. The project remains on budget and, with a construction start in spring 2016, would be completed in spring 2018.

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