

**Milwaukee County**

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### City poised to sign contract with streetcar manufacturer



City of Milwaukee

The City of Milwaukee expects to announce its chosen manufacturer for streetcars in the next two to three weeks. The streetcar plan is depicted in this rendering.

By *Mary Spicuzza* of the Journal Sentinel

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The City of Milwaukee may have a contract signed with a streetcar manufacturing company by early next month.

"We are very close to finalizing all of the components," said Ghassan Korban, commissioner of the city's Department of Public Works.

Korban said the city has selected a preferred vendor and is in negotiations with the company. He added that the city hopes to announce its chosen streetcar manufacturer in two or three weeks, once a contract is signed.

As with most projects, the city will not disclose the name of the selected company until contract negotiations are finalized.

"We never announce the preferred vendor," Korban said.

The initial contract calls for the manufacturer to build four streetcars for the city. Construction could start before the end of the year, according to the department.

The streetcar plan, which aims to connect the Milwaukee Intermodal Station with the city's lower east side, was [approved by the Common Council](#) in February. That vote approved a measure establishing the project's \$124 million capital budget, its estimated \$3.2 million operating and maintenance budget, and its 2.5-mile route.

Initially, it was anticipated that the city would break ground on the project by late 2015, but the groundbreaking now is expected to occur sometime in spring 2016.

The streetcar project has faced some vocal opponents, but Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett repeatedly has touted the key role it will play as development projects spring up throughout downtown.

Milwaukee says its streetcars will be modern vehicles similar to those in places like Atlanta, Portland, Ore., and Seattle.

The streetcars are expected to start running in fall 2018, according to the [city's website](#) devoted to the project.

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In order for construction to begin, We Energies will have to complete the relocation of steam pipes along the route. The utility has asked for state approval to move forward with a \$5.7 million project to remove utility infrastructure from both the initial route as well as the planned extension of the streetcar to the lakefront.

In its [filing](#) seeking state approval, We Energies said it has reached an agreement under which the city would reimburse the utility for \$5 million of the relocation costs. A [state Public Service Commission ruling last year required the city to pay](#) for utility relocation costs, but the city has appealed and the court case is still pending.

The cost of relocating steam pipes and other utility infrastructure during the 2.1-mile initial segment is now pegged at \$5 million, according to the filing.

We Energies had initially estimated that it would cost \$45 million to move its facilities from that first phase. The city and utilities have been working on route alternatives that helped bring down the cost, said We Energies spokeswoman Cathy Schulze.

*Thomas Content of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.*



#### About Mary Spicuzza

Mary Spicuzza covers politics and breaking news for the Journal Sentinel.

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