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City reaches deal with streetcar manufacturer



Brookville Equipment Corp.

A rendering of a Brookville streetcar in Milwaukee's Third Ward. Milwaukee's streetcars will be manufactured by U.S.-based Brookville Equipment Corp.

By *Mary Spicuzza of the Journal Sentinel*

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The City of Milwaukee has reached a deal with a streetcar manufacturing company, city officials announced Friday.

The agreement, which calls for Brookville Equipment Corp. to initially build four streetcars for the city, was approved by the city's streetcar committee in a Friday morning vote. A contract may be signed by the end of the day, officials said.

The vote by the Joint Committee on Downtown Streetcar Implementation came about three weeks after Ghassan Korban, commissioner of the city's Department of Public Works, said the city was close to finalizing a deal with its preferred vendor.

The agreement also comes less than a month after the city was awarded a \$14.2 million federal grant for construction of a line connecting the streetcar with the lakefront.

Streetcar construction could start before the end of the year.

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.

On Oct. 26, local and federal officials announced the city had been awarded a \$14.2 million federal grant for construction of the spur connecting the streetcar with the lakefront. The award was from the federal TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) program.

The Lakefront Line, which was approved by the Common Council along with the first phase of the streetcar in February, aims to connect Cathedral Square to the lakefront using Broadway and Milwaukee, Michigan and Clybourn streets. It will also link the streetcar to the Couture development, which has a stop planned.

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 streetcars are expected to start running in fall 2018.

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.

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