



Alderman Donovan releases report called "Streetcar Scam"

By: Chris Patterson – March 6, 2013

MILWAUKEE -- Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett's downtown streetcar project remains a point of controversy at city hall. The streetcar debate was reignited by Milwaukee Alderman Bob Donovan who released an independent report entitled "Streetcar Scam".

Alderman Donovan introduced an independent report condemning a streetcar line challenging its economic viability, and brought the study's author as backup. Randal O'Toole from the Cato Institute, a public policy research organization, says, "You have to pay to operate the street car. You have to maintain the street car, and that means about every 30 years you have to go in, and replace all the infrastructure, the rails, the wires, the vehicles."

Randal O'Toole says he studies trains extensively, and believes streetcars aren't a good idea for Milwaukee. He doesn't think streetcars work for Milwaukee, because it worked in other cities. "First you have to subsidize all the economic development that you think you're going to get, because of the streetcar," says O'Toole. That's what O'Toole says Portland did to make its streetcar successful.

City leader who support Mayor Barrett's streetcar project went on the defensive following the release of the Cato Institutes report. Milwaukee Alderman Nik Kovac says, "A streetcar by itself is not going to suddenly make a city a smart city, but it's one of the ingredients in making the city work. Yes we're going to need smart urban planning. We're going to issue subsidies where necessary."

Donovan challenged anybody disputing the Cato Institutes report to provide evidence.