



## Milwaukee businesses band together to push for new streetcar system

Posted: Dec 15, 2014 10:43 PM CST

Updated: Dec 15, 2014 10:52 PM CST

By Priscilla Luong **CONNECT**

Milwaukee - Opponents to the Milwaukee Mayor's Streetcar Project say they will try to push the vote back to January at a meeting Tuesday morning, but some local business leaders are banding together urging the city to make it happen.

"There's incredible things happening in Milwaukee and public transportation needs to be a part of that," said Andy Nelson, a spokesperson for the Pabst Theatre.

With a \$124 Million price tag, the streetcar project is controversial.

"We support public transportation, any form of it in Milwaukee," said Nelson.

Despite the controversy, many local business leaders say-- the time is now.

"It's a one time in a generation opportunity, for Milwaukee to leap into the 21st century," said Barry Mandel, CEO of the Mandel Group.

Mandel says with federal money footing part of the bill for the new streetcar system, it's a smart move for the city.

"Public transportation is an essential part of building a city's infrastructure," explained Mandel, "and there's no better time to do that when interest rates are at a historically low rate."

Many business leaders say adding the new streetcar system could lead to growth and retaining young people in the city of Milwaukee.

"Younger people today, the newer generation, a lot of them don't have cars, and don't move around that way and I think the new generation coming up wants choices," said Nelson.

Opponents to the project, like Ald. Bob Donovan, want to see the issue on a ballot first. Ald. Donovan said in a statement in part-- "The mayor has taken extraordinary steps to circumvent state law and not allow for a referendum."

Mike Crivello, President of Milwaukee Police Association also expressed opposition in a statement, saying in part-- "certainly not an essential additional financial burden to a financially strapped city."

Mandel says the project is a long term investment that is essential if the city wants to bring more jobs to the area.

"If we don't make this investment, what we do is cap our city's potential for generations to come," said Mandel.

The Milwaukee Common Council will vote on the project Tuesday, the meeting begins at 9 AM.

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