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# Milwaukee's first streetcar construction contracts could be awarded this summer

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The first construction contracts for the downtown Milwaukee streetcar could be awarded in July, with heavy work on the system's track and overhead wires set to begin in one year.

That prospective timeline puts the city on course to complete heavy construction on the downtown system in spring 2018 and, after a series of tests, begin service in July of that year, according to project consultants. The construction timeline for a streetcar spur to the downtown lakefront, with a stop in the proposed Couture apartment high-rise, has not been determined.

The team of streetcar consultants on Thursday provided updates to a task force of city officials who will oversee the \$123.9 million project. Chairman [Ghassan Korban](#), Milwaukee Department of Public Works commissioner, called it the first meaningful meeting of the task force, which includes aldermen and leaders of city departments. The group will meet monthly to monitor the streetcar project's progress.

The meeting provided the most specific timeline yet for the bidding and construction of the streetcar system. The schedule still may change, but will be finalized within about 90 days.

The streetcar gained final city approval on Feb. 10 after several months of debate, but has been in the planning process for several years. Milwaukee had spent \$5.9 million on engineering through February.

Engineers are moving the project through final design leading up to construction next year. Relocation of public utilities, including sewer and water lines, will be the first construction work to start for the streetcar, said [Tom Clancy](#), project manager for The Concord Group. Those public utility contracts are to be awarded in July with construction starting in September, and being completed in late summer 2016.

The city hired Concord Group as its owner's representative on the project.

Design work for the streetcar system itself, including tracks and overhead wires, will be complete by November, with contracts being awarded in January 2016, Clancy said. That work would start in April 2016 and take two years to complete.

The city likely will hire out-of-state contractors that have expertise in streetcar system construction for much of the work, Korban said. The city is creating local hiring and training programs for the streetcar project.

"Typically what they do is move in their top management unit but then they also tap into the local workforce," Korban said.

The construction and contract timelines apply only to the initial downtown streetcar system, not to the lakefront spur, said city engineer [Jeff Polenske](#).

The downtown system will run between the Milwaukee Intermodal Station, through the central business district and up to East Ogden Avenue on the city's lower east side. It will cost \$98.8 million. The lakefront spur, which would run along East Michigan and East Clybourn Streets, would cost \$25.1 million.

The city is working to amend the contract with its engineering firms to add work for the lakefront spur, Polenske said. The timelines for the lakefront spur's construction have not been determined.

The city likely in January also will award a contract for the operations and maintenance facility for the streetcar vehicles, which would be built at Fourth and Clybourn streets. That building will take about a year to complete once construction begins.

Reporter Sean Ryan covers commercial and residential real estate for the Milwaukee Business Journal and through the [Real Estate Roundup blog](#) on the website. He also covers construction, highways and public transit.