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Joerres, Marcus reinforce business support for streetcar before Tuesday vote

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Leaders of some of Milwaukee's largest businesses on Monday again reiterated their support for the proposed streetcar project, saying it is a key ingredient in continuing the revitalization of downtown.

The press conference comes a day before the Milwaukee Common Council will take its final action on a resolution to advance the \$123.9 million downtown streetcar system, and to pay for it through local tax incremental financing districts. They reiterated points the same core group of executives made in [January](#) and [December](#) before the Common Council twice delayed final action on the items. The streetcar is expected to be approved on Tuesday, but could be [subject to a future voter referendum](#).

ManpowerGroup executive chairman [Jeff Joerres](#) and others said the streetcar would help attract more young workers to the city. ManpowerGroup hosted the event at its downtown headquarters built in 2007 to replace its home office in Glendale.

"The vitality downtown, you can feel it and it has to become even more so, because if you are not increasing the vitality it is staying the same or going the other way," Joerres said. "When you really look at why we moved downtown, one of the prime reasons was we knew, based on our own data, that to attract talent you've got to be in a spot where they want to be. We were able to reduce the amount of recruiting costs. We are able to increase the speed at which they were able to make the decision to come work with us."

Opponents of the streetcar who are pushing for a referendum have questioned those claims, and criticized the city spending that makes up about half of the total project budget.

Greg Marcus, CEO of **Marcus Corp.**, said projects such as the streetcar attract more investment and residents to the city, much like strong school systems and parks.

"If you can't get to the restaurant easily, you most likely won't eat there," said Marcus, calling

out to Milwaukee restaurant operator [Joe Bartolotta](#), who was in attendance.

"Transportation systems generate demand, thus we must invest in them," Marcus said. "The streetcar is but one example among many of these types of investments and reinvestments that we need to continually make to draw people to our community."

Others speaking at the press conference were [Linda Gorens-Levey](#) of Stark Investments, [Greg Wesley](#) of law firm **Gonzalez Saggio & Harlan LLP** and [Jorge Franco](#), CEO and president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin.

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.