

Milwaukee Ald. Johnson: Foxconn announcement spotlights our transit problem

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The recent announcement by President Trump and Governor Walker that a massive Foxconn plant will soon be coming to our state highlights a glaring hole in the economic development toolkit of southeastern Wisconsin – transit.

With the potential to create up to 13,000 jobs over the course of the next few years along with a \$10 billion investment, Foxconn could serve as an economic boon to Wisconsin – especially if workers earn livable wages. Terry Gou, the Foxconn Chairman has touted Wisconsin's great manufacturing tradition as one of the driving reasons that his company decided to build here as opposed to any of the several other states vying to land the business.

People who worked in places like Tower Automotive, American Motors, Allis Chalmers and other places are the ones who helped to make Milwaukee the "Machine Shop of the World" and they should have an opportunity to apply themselves to the future of manufacturing in southeastern Wisconsin. The likelihood is that Foxconn will have to draw employees from beyond Racine and Kenosha. Some reports say that the facility may draw employees from northern Illinois and of course, from Milwaukee.

But how will they get there?

For far too long, there has been a mismatch in southeastern Wisconsin whereby the talent pool of workers in the city and employers in surrounding communities seeking a full scale workforce have both been denied a reliable, adequately funded transit system that connects them. It is my hope that not only do potential employees in Milwaukee get an equitable opportunity to seek manufacturing work at Foxconn but, I hope that the need to create reliable transit options transcends the Wisconsin Valley and further connects Milwaukee workers with family supporting jobs in WOW (Waukesha, Ozaukee, Washington) counties as well.