

Evers says Milwaukee streetcar won't get portion of \$75M in GPR for transportation projects

Posted on Tuesday, Jul 23, 2019

Gov. Tony Evers is ruling out the possibility that a portion of the \$75 million in GPR set aside for transportation projects could fund the Milwaukee streetcar.

DOT Secretary Craig Thompson on Thursday announced the administration will create a committee that includes agency staff and representatives of local government to evaluate applications for the \$75 million. Thompson said possible uses of the money could include transit and indicated the city of Milwaukee could submit an application for funding its streetcar.

But after blowback on those comments from Republican leadership in the Legislature last week, the gov said Monday he recently spoke Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett, who pledged that the city would not put grant money towards the streetcar.

"I guess that's kind of a dead issue," Evers said.

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A Barrett spokeswoman told WisPolitics.com that the city will "work to get our fair share of funding for local roads."

Following the announcement last week, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, tweeted, "The governor is taking money from local road construction to fund Milwaukee's trolley to nowhere. Rural Dems should push back - veto override!"

Later in the day, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, tweeted his chamber was "seriously" considering an override as well, calling the possibility money would benefit the streetcar "ridiculous."

Evers knocked the two Republicans for “the knee-jerk reaction of going to that spot.” Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, meanwhile, noted that “the door was just open for them just to apply” for grant money.

“I think that got totally blown out of proportion,” he said.

But a Vos spokeswoman fired back that the issue “isn’t dead.”

“The Republican Legislature allocated these dollars to fix local roads,” spokeswoman Kit Beyer said in an email. “Thanks to a Governor Evers’ veto, the DOT now has \$75 million slush fund.”

A Fitzgerald spokesman declined to comment on the latest remarks from the gov.