



Ascension

AdvocateAuroraHealth
Advocate Health Care Aurora Health Care



February 17, 2022

Via Email

Secretary Craig Thompson
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53705

Dear Secretary Thompson:

As representatives of Milwaukee's largest health care providers, we write in support of Representative Evan Goyke's proposal for the State of Wisconsin to purchase and own the Glendale Line in the City of Milwaukee. The State's investment would serve as a catalyst for transformational change in the City's 30th Street Industrial Corridor ("Corridor"), including multiple positive impacts on public health.

As you know, the Corridor was once home to tens of thousands of quality jobs and some of Wisconsin's most iconic businesses. Unfortunately, today the area is in need of environmental remediation after years of industrial pollution and the relocation of local businesses. Public ownership of the rail infrastructure will ensure redevelopment is successful and equitable. It will set the stage for local stakeholders and residents to take the lead and create the environment they wish to see. The State has the ability to spark this positive change through the purchase and stewardship of this railroad line through the Freight Railroad Preservation Program.

Most importantly from our perspective, this investment would directly promote health equity, environmental justice and broader public health by allowing environmental remediation and providing a safe place for the local population to recreate and utilize a much-needed green transportation option through the Corridor.

Population health data for the neighborhoods surrounding the Corridor show some of Wisconsin's largest disparities in health outcomes. According to 2019 data, 42.8%-59.4% of residents in the surrounding area are obese, higher than the citywide average of 35%. Additionally, 13.4% - 18.5% of the population have diabetes, (higher than the citywide average of 9.9%), 40.2%-49.8% have high blood pressure (higher than the citywide average of 31.2%) and 12.8%-15.3% have asthma (higher than the citywide average of 11.4%).¹

Fortunately, we can help address these differences and ultimately improve and save lives. Clean air, water, soil, and a safe place to recreate lead to better health by reducing the risk of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and premature death.² This proposal would mean the number of Milwaukee residents in the surrounding neighborhoods that can safely access a trail would increase from 25,000 to 200,000.³

¹ City of Milwaukee Connecting the Corridor Strategic Action Plan, 2020.

² Health Compass Milwaukee, 2022

³ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 30th Street Corridor Shared-Use Trail Feasibility Study, 2020

There is no other physical investment available to the state that could have such an immediate and long-term positive impact to reduce racial, economic and environmental disparities in Milwaukee with one action than this purchase. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important proposal.

Sincerely,



Reggie Newson
Chief Community Impact and Advocacy Officer
Ascension Wisconsin



Mark Huber
System Vice President Community Health
Advocate Aurora Health



Bridget Clementi
Vice President Community Health
Community Health & Education
Children's Wisconsin