

# Monorail Transit For City Studied

By DOUGLAS MacKAY  
Free Press Urban Reporter

Mayor Steve Juba is examining proposals for a \$22 million overhead rapid transit system in Winnipeg, Deputy Mayor J. Paul Marion revealed Wednesday.

If built, the monorail system would probably run "six or seven miles" out Portage Avenue from the corner of Portage and Main Street. A north-south branch would serve St. Vital and north Winnipeg, perhaps crossing the Red River into East Kildonan.

Councillor Marion made the announcement at a press conference called after reports of the monorail were aired on a local radio station. Mayor Juba is holidaying out of the city — but within earshot of the radio station.

The mayor had originally planned to introduce the monorail proposal at a St. James-Assiniboia community committee meeting in early April, said Coun. Marion.

The firm that would build the transit system is now conducting a feasibility study on installing the monorail in Winnipeg.

City transportation officials have not been consulted, nor have any of the commissioners nor any provincial officials, Coun. Marion said.

All that has been presented to the mayor is a "preliminary report" with some sketches. No engineering study has been done.

Coun. Marion said that Winnipeg could become a production centre for 85 per cent of

the materials used in the monorail system.

In reply to a question, he said, "The hidden deal is that if this thing goes through, we manufacture." A plant would be set up by the European company to manufacture parts for sale to other North American cities.

Coun. Marion did not know the name of the company. "I believe it's a German-Swiss company," he said. Asked about the firm's credentials in the rapid transit business, he said they were good. "Steve's looked into it."

Coun. Marion said representatives of the company were here in January to survey the situation. The company is to have a full presentation ready in early April.

The monorail would be roughly at the second-storey level and held up on cantilever-shaped pylons. Downtown, these supports could be placed on the centre strip of Portage Avenue.

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# Monorail Transit Planned?

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said Coun. Marion. Two rails would be held aloft, one going each way. Stations could be located in existing buildings.

The trains would be electrically powered and would run on rubber wheels, he said. The system would be quiet.

Coun. Marion expressed per-

sonal enthusiasm for the scheme. It would cost \$1 million a mile, he said. A subway would cost 10 to 20 times more and is "a long way away."

He admitted the plan would seem to conflict with the proposals of the Winnipeg Area Transportation (WAT) study unveiled by Metro in 1969.

The WAT study called for a 5.4-mile subway system costing well over \$100 million. The route proposed for the subway was about the same as mentioned by Coun. Marion, though the monorail would extend farther west and would serve St. Vital.

"I'm totally convinced that subway is not the answer in our city," Coun. Marion told reporters.

In an interview, Coun. Bernie Wolfe, chairman of the civic transit subcommittee and former vice-chairman of Metro council, was critical of the scheme.

There are "many many inherent problems" in monorails, he said. If they were such a good idea, cities in the United States would have employed them, he suggested.

"There isn't an easy answer."

Coun. Wolfe also wondered why the mayor had not consulted any of the city's own transportation experts.

"I find this rather strange that proposals are being made without consulting people who have something real to contribute." He suggested the transit subcommittee, the works committee, and the administrators could have been asked to get involved.

Coun. Marion said the European company hasn't installed rapid transit systems in any other North American cities. He indicated the firm had heard about Winnipeg's transportation problems and come forward with a proposal.



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