

AL BEHRMAN/Associated Press

Heavy equipment sits idle at the site of an unfinished streetcar project in Cincinnati. Work on the 3.6-mile line was getting back on track Thursday after a groundswell of public support prompted the City Council to vote 6-3 last week to restore the project.

Streetcar project gets back on track

Construction resumes after officials debated whether to scrap plans

By Jason Williams
Cincinnati Enquirer

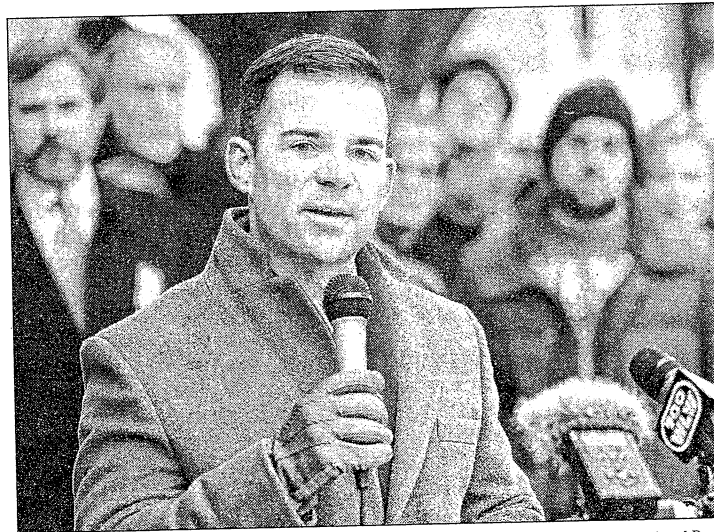
Work on Cincinnati's streetcar project resumed Thursday with the delivery of nearly 2,100 feet of rail — officially ending a drama-filled three-week delay on the controversial project.

"It's a beautiful thing," longtime streetcar supporter Noel Prows said as he and his two young sons watched a crane unload 80-foot sections of rail off a truck in Over-the-Rhine on a sunny day.

Two tractor-trailer trucks carrying 26 pieces of rail arrived from the manufacturing plant near Fort Wayne, Ind., on Thursday morning.

It's enough rail to completely finish the Elm Street portion of the project — stretching from 12th Street at Washington Park north to Henry Street.

Workers planned to begin installing the rail between



AL BEHRMAN/Associated Press

Ryan Messer, leader of We Believe in Cincinnati, speaks at a Dec. 9 news conference outside City Hall in Cincinnati. The grass-roots group helped save the \$133 million streetcar project that was in danger of being canceled by the city.

Green and Henry streets near Findlay Market on Thursday afternoon. The first full day of resumed construction work is scheduled today.

We Believe in Cincinnati, the grass-roots group that helped save the project, is planning a construction re-

start party at Findlay Market near Elm and Elder streets.

The project had been paused since Dec. 4 as Mayor John Cranley and the City Council debated whether to fully cancel or move forward with the \$133 million project. The City Council voted 6-3

on Dec. 19 to move forward with the streetcar despite Cranley's concerns the project will financially hamper the city for decades.

About 2,600 feet of track had been installed before the delay.

It remains unclear how much the delay will cost. Contractors were given a month to file paperwork on delay costs. The delay is expected to cost between \$1.7 million and \$2.8 million, according to an independent auditor's report released last week.

City Engineer David Krusling said work to install rail at the busy Elm-Liberty intersection is tentatively scheduled for the weekend of Jan. 10-12 — the final step on the Elm Street portion of the 3.6-mile route through Downtown and Over-the-Rhine.

Despite the delay, project leaders are optimistic work will be finished by the original deadline of Sept. 15, 2016.

"Right now, it looks good, but we haven't heard back from [all the contractors and suppliers] yet," Krusling said.