



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Matthew R. Walsh, Interim Deputy City Manager - Development

DATE: April 28, 2023

SUBJECT: I-93 Bow-Concord Widening Project “Bridge Park”

Recommendation:

Accept this report and set the attached resolution appropriating the sum of \$200,000 of General Fund supported bonds and notes for completion of a Bridge Park Feasibility Study in conjunction with the State of New Hampshire’s I-93 Bow-Concord Project for public hearing on June 12, 2022.

Background:

In the early 2000s, the NH Department of Transportation (“NHDOT”) began planning and permitting work for the widening of Interstate 93 located between the junction of Interstate 89 in Bow to approximately Exit 15 in Concord (the “Project”). The Project became known as the I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

The advent of the Project was the primary catalyst for the City’s 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan (the “Plan”). The Plan served as the City’s policy statement to the NHDOT concerning Concord’s hopes and aspirations for the I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

Over the past 20 years, the NHDOT’s work on the I-93 Bow-Concord Project has been somewhat sporadic due to a variety of factors. However, the NHDOT recently refocused its efforts on the Project.

During the late summer and early fall of 2022, the NHDOT held a series of meetings with the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce, the City’s Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (“TPAC”), and City Council. The purpose of these meetings was to reintroduce the Project to the community for the purposes of securing public input on key design details related thereto.

During the aforementioned community meetings, members of the public expressed interest in having the I-93 Bow-Concord Project include a “Bridge Park”. Specifically, the Bridge Park would be an elevated platform constructed over the I-93 rights-of-way intended for passive recreational activities, and pedestrian connectivity between Downtown and the Heights.

The concept of a “bridge park” was included in the City’s 2006 Opportunity Corridor Master Plan. However, it is important to note that several of the key assumptions and design parameters that were critical for the viability of the 2006 Bridge Park concept are no longer included in the State’s current preferred alternative for the Bow-Concord Project.

During the City Council’s November 14, 2022 meeting, several members of the community expressed that a Bridge Park is necessary to facilitate east-west pedestrian connectivity between the Heights and Downtown. Staff notes that the \$25 million Loudon Road Bridge Renovation Project (CIP 588) includes a new 14’ wide shared pedestrian path to facilitate the Merrimack River Greenway Trail and said interconnectivity between the Heights and Downtown. This project is currently scheduled for construction in FY2025. The State will be financing 80% of project costs.

Discussion:

During its November 14, 2022, the City Council directed City Administration to solicit proposals from the City’s on-call engineering consultants for a potential Bridge Park. Core elements of the project’s scope of work are as follows:

1. Identify and evaluate one or more potentially suitable locations for a bridge park, or other pedestrian bridge, over the highspeed rail corridor and I-93, generally between Exit 13 and 14, to connect Downtown to the Merrimack River within the context of natural and man-made constraints;
2. Develop concept plans for said structures, including profiles (cross sectional views) of said structure, together with layout plans, drawings and renderings therewith;
3. Develop plans demonstrating how said structure(s) would connect to Storrs Street, to the Merrimack River, and Loudon Road (if viable);
4. Identify private property acquisitions and major infrastructure improvements that would be necessitated to make such structure(s) feasible; and,
5. Develop preliminary cost estimates for each concept.

The project scope also includes multiple public meetings, as well as meetings with the NH Department of Transportation and its consultant for the I-93 Bow-Concord Project, and private property owners whom may be impacted by potential Bridge Park designs.

The project scope of work was issued to consultants on February 5, 2023. Proposals were received on March 3, 2023. Interviews were conducted on March 10, 2023.

Fee proposals ranged from approximately \$175,000 to \$575,000. Staff is recommending a budget of \$200,000.

Pending appropriation of required funds by the City Council, staff will complete the consultant selection process and negotiate final scope and fee within the limitations of the proposed \$200,000 budget.

Presently, City Administration anticipates this project will take approximately 12-14 months to complete.