



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™
Community Development Department

REPORT TO MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Beth Fenstermacher, Director of Special Projects and Strategic Initiatives

DATE: April 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP #543) Transportation Alternatives Program Funding

Recommendation

1. Accept this report; and,
2. Set the attached resolution for public hearing on May 18, 2026 1) authorizing the City Manager to enter into agreements / contracts with the State of New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding and project administration in conjunction with the Merrimack River Greenway Trail Project (City CIP #543; State Project #43732), and 2) appropriating the sum of \$1,553,928 in CIP #543, comprised of \$1,243,142.40 of Transportation Alternatives Program grant funds from the NH Department of Transportation and \$310,785.60 of City matching funds consisting of Impact Fees and Recreation Reserve funds.

Background

Several years ago, the City created CIP #543 “Merrimack River Greenway Trail” (MRGT) within the City’s Capital Improvement Program for the purposes of facilitating the development of a 12.7-mile multi-use trail through Concord. In addition to providing recreational and multi-modal transportation benefits to City residents, the MRGT is important regionally as it will connect the Northern Rail Trail at the Boscawen town line to the north, and the future Pembroke Rail Trail at the southerly City line. Once completed, these connections would facilitate a continuous regional trail (known as the Granite State Rail Trail) from Salem NH to Lebanon NH. Please see the attached maps for more information.

To date, the City, working with the Friends of the MRGT (FMRGT), has secured grant funds to design and construct portions of the trail. Phase 1 was constructed at Terrill Park in 2020. Phase 2 was constructed at the Gully Hill Road agricultural fields in Summer 2024.

Additionally, the City, through its development permitting processes, has secured easements over private property at 6 Loudon Road, 11 Stickney Avenue, and off Black Hill Road to facilitate future segments of the MRGT.

The City is also in the process of adding a 14' wide expansion of the Loudon Road Bridge across the Merrimack River to connect the MRGT from Gully Hill Road to future segments to be developed in the Downtown area.

Additionally, the City is working with the NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) to construct those portions of the MRGT between the Merrimack River, Downtown, and Horseshoe Pond as part of the forthcoming I-93 Bow-Concord Project.

Presently, approximately three (3) non-contiguous miles of the 12.7-miles have been constructed to date. Once completed, the project will yield important transportation, recreational, and economic development benefits for the City.

In November 2020, the City submitted a letter of intent to apply for a Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant to the NH Department of Transportation to support that portion of the MRGT between the Contoocook River and Sewalls Falls Road. The TAP program is a federally funded reimbursement program that provides up to 80% of funds for projects that foster non-motorized transportation infrastructure that is safe and accessible. The grant application was authorized by City Council on March 8, 2021, and the grant application was filed on March 15, 2021.

On September 1, 2021 the NHDOT notified the City that the project was selected for funding in the FY2023 budget of the State's Ten-Year Transportation Plan. However, the project was subsequently put on hold when the City's acquisition of the rail corridor was delayed.

In February 2026, the City acquired a 5.7-mile segment of abandoned rail corridor from the Boston and Maine Corporation (a subsidiary of CSX). With the acquisition now complete, the NHDOT is prepared to move forward with execution of TAP grant agreements and release of funds.

The City's adopted FY2026 Capital Improvement Program included \$100,000 for design and permitting of that portion of the MRGT between the Contoocook River and Sewalls Falls Road. Of this total, \$80,000 were grants and \$20,000 were City funds. So as to not complicate the TAP grant and appropriation of required matching funds for design and construction, staff is recommending these previously appropriated funds be rescinded. (Deauthorization will be completed separately from this report / resolution).

Discussion

The design, permitting, and construction of that portion of the MRGT between the Contoocook River and Sewalls Falls Road, as financed by the TAP grant, will be managed directly by the City via the NH Department of Transportation's Local Public Agency (LPA) program. LPA projects are transportation projects administered directly by municipalities which are funded, in part, by State/Federal grant. The Community Development Department has administered multiple LPA projects with the State.

On March 17, 2026, the NH Department of Transportation provided the City with required agreements for the project. In order to proceed, the City must adopt the necessary resolutions to authorize the City Manager to execute said agreements, as well as to accept the TAP grant and appropriate associated City matching funds.

The total estimated project cost for this portion of CIP #543 (design, permitting, right-of-way, and construction), as presently programmed in the State of New Hampshire's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is \$1,553,928. Of this total, \$1,243,142.40 are TAP grant funds (which is an increase over the original 2021 grant award due to the increase in estimated total project cost) and \$310,785.60 are City matching funds, which will be comprised of transportation and recreational impact fees, as well as moneys from the Recreation Reserve.

Once required contracts and agreements are in place, design work will proceed, and community meetings will be held to receive input thereon. Following acceptance of a preferred schematic design concept by the City Council, the project will advance to design development, and the State / Federal permitting process will be initiated. Additionally, the total project cost will be updated. In the event additional funding is required, additional TAP money may be awarded by the State subject to available funds. Additional matching City funds would be pursued as might be required.

Presently, it is anticipated that construction of the project will commence in 2028.