



CITY OF CONCORD

New Hampshire's Main Street™

REPORT TO MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL

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

DATE: January 25, 2024

SUBJECT: Authorizing the City Manager to apply for Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the purpose of designing and constructing a portion of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP #543).

Recommendation

Authorize the City Manager to apply for “Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity” (RAISE) funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the purpose of designing and constructing portions of the Merrimack River Greenway Trail (CIP #543).

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 extension of a 12.7-mile multi-use trail through Concord. For many years, the community has desired to create this trail through Concord, connecting to the Northern Rail Trail at the Boscawen town line to the north, and the future Pembroke Rail Trail at the southerly City line. These connections would facilitate a continuous regional trail (the Granite State Rail Trail) from Salem to Lebanon. 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 is scheduled for construction at the Gully Hill Road agricultural fields in Spring 2024. The City is current working with NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) and CSX Transportation to acquire approximately 5.2 miles of abandoned rail corridor for construction of a rail trail. In 2021, NHDOT approved a \$1.6+/- million Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds for the construction of the trail between Sewalls Falls Road and the Boscawen town line. TAP funded

portions of the MRGT are tentatively scheduled to proceed to design in FY2025, with construction in FY2029.

Approximately three non-contiguous miles of the 12.7-miles are funded for design and construction. The MRGT is an important alternative transportation infrastructure improvement for the City, and the key to success is the completion of a continuous trail.

Discussion

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) released a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the federally funded RAISE program. The focus of the program is to fund planning or construction of surface transportation infrastructure projects that will improve safety; environmental sustainability; quality of life; mobility and community connectivity; economic competitiveness and opportunity including tourism; state of good repair; partnership and collaboration; and innovation. Applications are due February 28, 2024. The Central NH Regional Planning Commission and the FMRGT have committed to assisting with the preparation of the application materials.

Based on the eligible activities of the program, staff recommends that the City participate in the application process for the design and construction of currently unfunded portions of the MRGT to create a continuous trail. Proposed segments included under this application include: the boardwalk connection between Phases 1 and 2; rail trail between Horseshoe Pond Lane and Sewalls Falls Road; and, any supplemental connections, parking areas, and sidewalk connections identified during the design process.

The program funding is comprised of 100% federal funds with no local match required.