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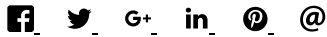
Peabody wins grant to help pay for Greenway extension

By Ethan Forman Staff Writer Aug 22, 2018



TIM JEAN/Staff photo A section of the Peabody Independence Greenway, a walking/ bike trail where it intersects with Prospect Street in Peabody. The city has received a grant to move forward with a project to expand the trail to the downtown. 8/22/18

Tim Jean



PEABODY — If you want to ride your bike on the Independence Greenway all the way from West Peabody to the downtown, you are out of luck.

The well-maintained and well-used paved trail stops at the trailhead in back of the Northshore Mall near Lahey Medical Center.

But that may finally change in the not-too-distant future as the city has won a \$100,000 state grant to help pay for a 1.4-mile extension that would connect the end of the trail at the mall to the downtown. This would make the Greenway 8 miles long in total. The grant will help pay for design costs.

The construction cost for the extension is estimated at \$1.9 million, said Curt Bellavance, the city's director of Planning and Community Development.

The grant was announced by the Baker-Polito administration this week as part of wider award of \$3.9 million for 75 trail projects in 60 Bay State communities.

The Greenway's western terminus is near the intersection of Russell Street and Boston Street in Middleton. It runs east past Aggregate Industries' quarry over to Cy Tenney/Ross Park on Johnson Street. From the park, however, trail users have to travel along Johnson and Lowell Streets, passing under Route 1 and Interstate 95, until the trail resumes at Peabody Road.

At Route 1 and I-95 — next to the Speedway gas station — there is also a .75-mile spur that runs north and connects with the Danvers Rail Trail, which then connects to trails in Wenham and Topsfield.

At Peabody Road, the Independence Greenway continues along a paved path parallel to Lowell Street to the Northshore Mall, where it ends.

The state grant is funded by both a federal Recreational Trails Program and state capital funds, according to a press release. Recipients must match their grant award with a minimum of 20 percent in funding or in-kind services.

Peabody has more than met its match. The city has committed \$262,955 toward the project so far.

Bellavance said the Community Preservation Committee and funds from the Solomon Foundation made up this match.

In addition to extending the trail downtown, the city is also hoping to address the gap in the Greenway between Ross Park and Peabody Road. Bellavance said community preservation money is also helping cover that second piece.

"We are trying to figure out a safer way (than using Lowell Street)," Bellavance said. A company is putting together a feasibility study, and the cost is approximately \$45,000.

The other piece of the puzzle, he said, is the connection from the mall to Endicott Street.

"Right now, we have part of that overall package," Bellavance said. Final designs will look at wetland delineations and places where culverts might need to be replaced.

To connect the trail from the mall to the downtown, the trail would run down Essex Center Drive and use the existing underpass of Route 128 to get onto Northshore Road. The trail would then follow Northshore Road to an old railroad right-of-way the city owns.

In 2009, \$75,000 in community preservation money was used to purchase the land to extend the Greenway to the downtown.

"We have the property, it's just basically we are creating impervious surface," Bellavance said.

The city recently submitted the extension plan to the state Department of Transportation, according to Bellavance, to get the project on the Boston Region Transportation Improvement Program for the years 2020 and 2021 to make it eligible for state and federal funding.

The goal someday is to connect with other trails, such one being planned in Lynnfield or the Border to Boston Trail. Bellavance said the city would like to also make a connection to Salem.

In addition to the Peabody project, there were several other North Shore projects that Baker's administration is awarding grants. The Ipswich River Watershed Association's proposal to establish, market and maintain a 45-mile Ipswich River Water Trail, with new landings and refurbished information kiosks, was given \$23,333 towards the project with a match required of \$15,260.

The Marblehead Rail Trail also secured \$38,400 to make drainage and surface improvements, with a \$10,549 match by the town.

In Topsfield, a \$20,673 state grant, with a \$5,168 match, would pay to install trail user activated crosswalk lights in two locations.

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