

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

AGENDA ITEM II



**CITY OF FRANKLIN
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

September 2, 2014 City Council Meeting

From: Richard Lewis, Director of Planning and Zoning

Subject: Consideration of Grant Application for a Pedestrian and Bicycle Pathway in the Mill District

Proposed Motion [Please refer to the Alternatives Section Below]:

“I move that the Franklin City Council authorize the City Manager and City staff to work to facilitate the preparation and submission of a grant application to the NH DOT for the Transportation Alternatives Program.”

Discussion:

Earlier this summer, the City was made aware of a grant opportunity for projects that enhance alternative transportation opportunities and specifically creates walking and bicycle routes. Two examples of these types of projects are the Northern Rail Trail and the Winnepesaukee River Trail. The minimum project limit is \$200,000, and the maximum is \$800,000. The project does require at least a 20% match. In order to be eligible to submit an application, the City has already sent a Letter of Interest to NHDOT. The application is due 9/26/14.

The City has been approached by Todd Workman, who, as you know, has been working on downtown revitalization efforts and options for several months. Todd is proposing a pathway that will connect Trestle View Park to Marceau Park to Odell Park. The route would go through the downtown / mill district area, and would travel through or over several privately owned properties. For your information I am attaching a copy of the Letter of Interest, which contains a map showing the proposed route.

The Letter of Interest was a basic outline of the project. The formal application for September will involve higher levels of detail and supporting information. The State is requiring that a person from the City who will be working on the project to attend an Informational Meeting to be held later in August or early September. At this meeting, I anticipate that more details will be available on the required materials for the application and an explanation of what may or may not be eligible to count towards the 20% match. Typically, some in-kind contributions from City staff can count towards a match; it is possible that purchases or gifts of land or easements for the project might also count.

In mid-August I presented Todd with an outline of ideas, thoughts, questions, and concerns for this project; the reason was to review issues that might arise during staff review of the issues or the City Council's discussion. The position of staff was that since the project, if constructed, would trigger fiscal costs to the City [maintenance and repair] in the long term, and in the short term might involve in-kind contributions, it seemed appropriate for this project to be brought before the City Council. I

recommended to Todd that he his own overview of the project and that he appear at the 9/2/14 meeting to discuss it and answer any questions.

Below is an outline of some key issues and questions [some coming from the more detailed attachment] for this project:

- Are all of the impacted property owners fully committed to this project and able to sign Intent to Participate documents, and can these documents be completely submitted to the City by 9/12/14?
- Will the City be able to provide in-kind contributions [if needed] given the existing workloads?
- What will the fiscal responsibilities be for the City as far as long term maintenance and repair costs of the pathway?
- Will the City be required to provide for hard dollar matches for the project?
- Is the project a necessary component to the overall downtown revitalization efforts?
- Is there enough added value for this project to justify any fiscal costs for the City in the long term?
- Can the pathway be located so that there is safe and appropriate travel ways for both motorized and non-motorized transportation routes?
- Can the pathway be constructed so that there is no loss of existing municipal parking spaces?
- Is Todd Workman able to provide the necessary assistance [for example preparation of concept drawings or cost estimates]?
- Is this proposed project a bit premature since many details relative to the overall downtown revitalization effort are still in the early stages?

These points, along with the more detailed attachment, provide a review of the pros and cons for this project. In a nutshell, if there are substantial fiscal impacts to the City, or if the pathway impacts the number of parking spaces, or if the pathway does not provide for safe and appropriate travel for pedestrians or auto traffic, then the expenditure of time and resources by the City on the application becomes questionable. If the fiscal impact is minimal, and if parking spaces are preserved [or created in a new location], and if the path can be made safe, then the City could move forward on what will hopefully be a successful application.

Concurrence:

The issues raised in the Issues attachment and this CAR has been reviewed by the City Manger and the Municipal Services Director and they concur that the decision of whether to move forward depends on the level of assistance from, and the assurances from the property owners provided by, Todd Workman.

Fiscal Impact:

Alternatives:

There are three basic alternatives available to the City Council:

- a. Vote to move forward with the application due 9/26/14 based on a determination of minor fiscal impacts, evidence that all impacts owners are committed to participate in the project, and that the pathway will be safe and preserves municipal parking;
- b. Vote to not move forward with the application based on inappropriate fiscal impacts, a lack of evidence of commitment from property owners, a lack of a safe route, or an adverse impact to municipal parking spaces ; or,
- c. Vote to allow staff to make a determination of whether to proceed with the application based on the sufficiency of additional materials presented by Mr. Workman later in September.

This could be an valuable project for the downtown area, but the questions of added value and whether this project is needed right now are questions worth debating.

Attachments : Copy of the Letter of Interest dated August 6, 2014
Copy of an outline of the "Issues/Questions/Thoughts on the TAP Project"



CITY OF FRANKLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
"The Three Rivers City"

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August 6, 2014

Thomas Jameson, TAP Program Manager
NH DOT Bureau of Planning & Community Assistance
John O. Morton Building
7 Hazen Drive
P.O. Box 483
Concord, NH 03302-0483

Re: Transportation Alternatives Program; Letter of Intent for the City of Franklin

Dear Mr. Jameson,

On behalf of the City of Franklin, I am pleased to submit this Letter of Intent for the grant funds made available through the Transportation Alternatives Program [TAP]. In general terms, the City is wishing to utilize TAP funds to design and construction a pathway for walking and bicycle use through the core downtown area. As shown on the attached map, the proposed route is as follows::

- ✓ The path will start at Trestle View Park, on the east end of downtown; this park is located across Central Street from the termination point of the Winnepesaukee River Trail, which currently runs to Tilton, near Exit 20 from I-93.
- ✓ The path will cut through the eastern end of the historic mill district area, and then hook up with Marceau Park, located in the heart of the downtown.
- ✓ The path continues past a portion of the Stephens Mill building, and passes by the former R & D paving building, which is under agreement to the Franklin Business & Industrial Development Corporation. The R & D building is being considered for a small intermodal transportation center for bicycles, zip-cars, and as a bus stop for regional alternative transport opportunities.
- ✓ The path is then routed past or through a portion [to be removed] of the Stephens Mill Building, before entering Odell Park, which is a key recreational park owned by the City. This pathway would connect to the recreational trail that circles Odell Park.

In 2009 the City began to benefit from federal funds to design and construction transportation improvements to provide for better access to and from the mill district area and the municipal parking area behind the north side of Central Street. Those improvements are now complete, and the City is looking to take the next important step. By creating linkages to the Winnepesaukee River Trail and the three parks mentioned, the City can achieve enhanced opportunities for the broader utilization of alternative modes of transportation. The project will take advantage of several key resources:

1. All of the buildings that will be part of, or adjacent to, the proposed pathway are located within the City's Franklin Falls Historic District.
2. The pathway will be located immediately north of Franklin City Hall, home to the Opera House, which is a regional performing arts facility.
3. The path will facilitate improved access to and enjoyment of, the Winnepesaukee River, what runs through the heart of downtown. South of Odell Park, the Winnepesaukee and Pemigewasset Rivers join to form the Merrimack, which has a rich history for the region and the state.

In the opinion of the City, this proposal meets the threshold for funding through the planning and construction for both off-and on-road trail facilities for walks and bicyclists. Additionally, the trail will be constructed for full access for individuals with disabilities. Since the pathway will be located in the core downtown area, all of the users will be able to then access to commercial and cultural areas for shopping, entertainment, and improved employment opportunities that will be created by revitalized downtown.

This project is not simply important for its own sake; it is part of a comprehensive effort to bring new life and vitality to downtown Franklin. The City has suffered the same fate of many other older mill communities. Franklin was once a vibrant regional center, but as the mills closed and jobs were lost, the economic turn-down took its toll. The City Council, the business community, and many interested individuals recognize that the City can regain its lost vitality through this comprehensive effort which encompasses the re-purposing of several downtown buildings as well as the revitalization of the remaining mill buildings.

The City will be seeking approximately \$600,000 in TAP funds for this project. We recognize the need for a 20% match, and we look forward to further discussion with your office to determine the ways in which this match can be achieved. Since the overall downtown and mill district area is comprised of parcels owned by many individuals, the City and others interested in this project are working to establish relationships with the owners and lay the groundwork for a combination of purchases or easements for the pathway. Due to time constraints, one or more properties may need to be purchased before any decision can be made on the City's September application. The City hopes that consideration can be given to these purchases as counting towards the match given the importance of these properties to the overall success of the pathway project.

I will be the contact person for the City of Franklin. My contact information is as follows:

Richard Lewis
Director of Planning
City of Franklin
316 Central Street
Franklin, NH 03235
603-934-2341
dlewis@franklinnh.org

Thank you for your review, and consideration, of, this Letter of Intent for what the City considers to be an important project.

Sincerely,

Richard Lewis
Director of Planning and Special Project

Cc: Elizabeth Dragon, City Manager
Todd Workman

Issues / questions / thoughts on the TAP project

A. Easements / Land purchases / and the proposed route

1. Are the required easements / purchase agreements in place for all of the affected properties? In order for the application to be viable, the property owners must be committed to the project and the construction of the proposed route. I do not believe this is a case where we can go very far down the road on the application or any planning/design efforts without full commitment and buy-in.
2. Ideally, all of the necessary buy-ins from the affected property owners could be documented by the September 2nd meeting of the City Council. If the documentation is not possible by the 2nd, then I think that some cut-off date will be necessary (no later than 9/12/14), otherwise City participation in the preparation of the application becomes less cost-effective and meaningful.
3. In your discussions with the property owners, have you discussed the possible implications for modifications to their parking / access ways/ possible impacts on truck traffic / etc.? The proposed route must intersect safely and appropriately with the municipal parking lot and all travel ways.
4. How will the total cost of the easements and/or land be calculated, and when will that figure be available?
5. Are you proposing that any purchase of easements or land be paid for through the FHLB funds made available by Franklin Savings Bank [i.e. being purchased by the DDA using FHLB funds]?

B. Costs / Funding / Matches

- i. What are the expectations for the City of Franklin relative to providing match funds?
- ii. How is the cost estimate for the actual construction of the path being calculated and when will it be available?
- iii. Even if the project can be moved forward without any hard dollar matches from the City, there are still some cost implications for the City in the short [staff time, maybe some in-kind work/assistance] and long term [the maintenance of the pathway (trash, repairs, signage, winter conditions for snow and ice)]. Given the fact that MSD is already constrained by staff and budget issues, what do you see as the costs impacts for the City and how do you see the City managing these cost implications?

C. Value for the City / Questions on the Route

- 1) What is the added value from the pathway? It has been mentioned by two individuals that the overall downtown might be better served by having persons wanting to travel from Trestle View Park to Odell Park to utilize the Central Street sidewalk through the heart of the downtown and past the storefronts where they might shop or visit.
- 2) Given the unlikelihood that the route will not be able to follow the river as it goes past 20 Canal Street, won't the path basically be going through a parking area / street scape? The same could be true of the route as it goes by the Stanley Mill & Armory, given the anticipated brownfield issues.
- 3) The proposed path has been discussed in relationship to the municipal parking, with the statement that no parking spaces will be lost. Are there any available sketch plans that support this statement?
- 4) You discuss relocating one lane of traffic from Canal Street to a new travel way through the municipal parking area. This may create safety concerns for both auto and pedestrian traffic that must be addressed.

D. Process Issues

- For the City Council meeting of September 2, 2014 City staff will prepare a Council Agenda Report regarding the City's submission of the full application due 9/26/14. This report will outline the project & issues for consideration by the Council [including costs to the City], give a general pro/con review, and present a draft motion for their review.
- I recommend that you prepare a summary document [I would suggest 2 pages maximum] describing the project and providing an update on the easement /land purchase matters. For the meeting on 9/2/14, you will need to attend and present an overview of the issues and help to "sell" the idea to the members of the City Council.

TO: City Council
FROM: Todd Workman
DATE: August 22, 2014
RE: Bike & Pedestrian Connector Trail

Discussion:

The proposed bike and pedestrian connector trail is well supported by the City of Franklin Master Plan (2005 & 2014 Updates), the Plan NH 2006 Charrette and the 2013 Lakes Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as follows:

- Pedestrian paths should be provided throughout the mill district connecting the Winnepesaukee Trail, the downtown, and Odell Park (Either along the river or through the interior of the mill area).
- Reconnect Central Street to the mills, weave the Winnepesaukee Trail thru downtown, and reintroduce the downtown to the rivers.
- Several highly visible pedestrian crossings should be provided along Central Street.
- A key to the success of the mill area will be improved access and visibility from Central Street.
- The overriding views expressed a desire to *strike a balance that creates a vibrant and lively downtown, yet one that is not focused on the automobile.*
- Extend Winnepesaukee Trail thru the mill area to Odell Park. The notion and desire to expand many of the multi-use trails through the mill area and into Odell Park creates yet another alternative to travel into and through the downtown.
- Integration of the Winnepesaukee River and the Trail into the mill area.
- Enhance the rear lots of the businesses along the north side of Central Street to help integrate the mill buildings and Central Street.
- Create a more efficient and attractive use of the municipal and private parking areas.
- Connect mill area and Bow Street: allow for off-site parking.
- Provide an integrated, all-mode transportation system in the Lakes Region which offers efficient, effective and safe movement of people and provides more choice wherever possible while enhancing and preserving the character and livability of the neighborhoods and the natural, socio/economic and historical environments where transportation facilities are located.
- As the mill buildings in the downtown area are redeveloped, providing for appropriate transportation options for new residents and workers becomes important. The City's central location makes it an ideal hub for different types of transportation initiatives *that do not require vehicles.*

- ❑ The Northern Rail Trail can be merged with the Winnepesaukee River Trail to create improved east-west links for recreational trail users. The trails can be excellent economic boosters. Promoting and building upon these recreational networks is an important tool for the City.
- ❑ Recognize that recreational trails and the preservation of unique buildings are important to maintaining the region's quality of place, sense of community, and identity.

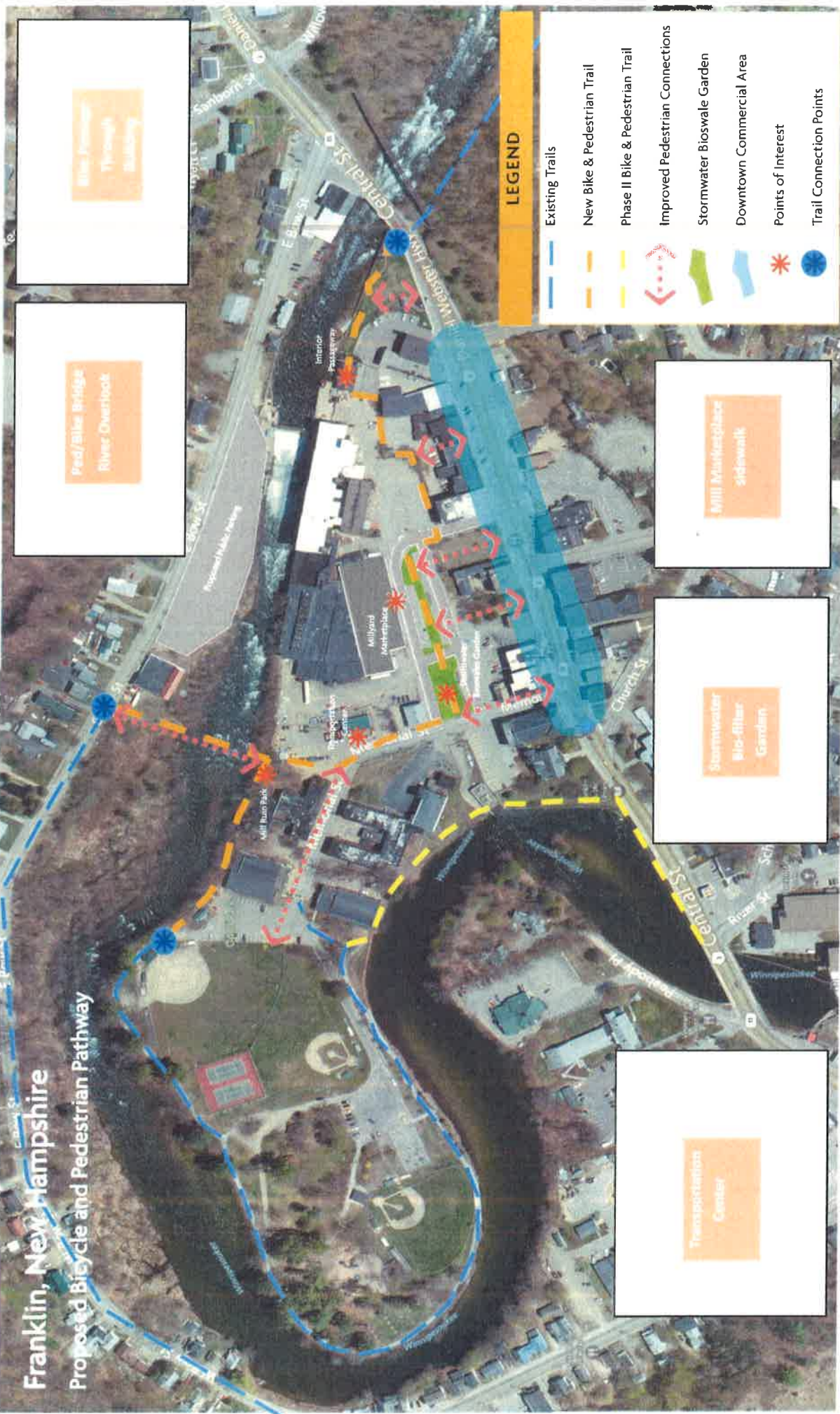
Additionally, this project helps to provide the following benefits:

- ❑ Multiple safety improvements
- ❑ Project connectivity
- ❑ Socio-economic benefits
- ❑ Multi-modal connections
- ❑ Recommendations for an enhanced Downtown Parking Management System

While not part of this discussion, the pathway could provide support for future design components for the mill district that could help improve stormwater that eventually flows in the Winnepesaukee River. Further, the construction of the pathway might facilitate improved management of the solid waste generated by the Central Street properties that back up to the mill district.

Franklin, New Hampshire

Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Pathway



LEGEND

-  Existing Trails
-  New Bike & Pedestrian Trail
-  Phase II Bike & Pedestrian Trail
-  Improved Pedestrian Connections
-  Stormwater Bioswale Garden
-  Downtown Commercial Area
-  Points of Interest
-  Trail Connection Points

Mill Pond Through Building

Ped/Bike Bridge River Overhead

Mill Pond Marketplace Sidewalk

Stormwater Bio-filter Garden

Transportation Center

Interior Passageway

Mill Pond Marketplace

Mill Pond Bioswale Garden

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