



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**

Office of the Mayor  
2023 JUL -3 PM 3:28

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July 3, 2023

Honorable City Council  
Newton City Hall  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton, MA 02459

Honorable City Councilors:

I respectfully submit this docket item to this Honorable Council requesting the acceptance and expenditure of \$1,250,000 earmark in the 2022 state Economic Development Bill for the Christina Street Bridge and Path project.

The proposed renovated/new bridge and path will provide a multi-use path crossing of the Charles River between Newton and Needham to create a new bicycle and pedestrian connection for transportation and recreation. The bridge and path will serve the neighborhood in Newton along Needham Street that is seeing additional multifamily and mixed-use development, while the Needham neighborhood is home to new commercial and residential uses. The project will serve residents and the regional workforce, and will provide connections to existing and future trails along the Charles River, as well as to the MBTA Green Line.

The bridge and path will be designed and constructed in close collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, which "owns" the river and the land on the Needham riverbank. The \$1,250,000 earmark will be supplemented by developer and anticipated Needham-side contributions for an estimated total project cost of \$4,300,000. This estimate is preliminary, subject to further design, and is based on a 2021 feasibility study by VHB with cost escalation factors applied to design and construction.

The 2021 Christina Street Rail Bridge Feasibility Study can be found [here](#).

The earmark was submitted by State Representative Ruth Balsler.

Attached is a memo from Josh Ostroff, Director of Transportation Planning on the matter.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ruthanne Fuller



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning and Development  
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Barney S. Heath  
Director

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller  
From: Josh Ostroff, Director of Transportation Planning  
Date: July 3, 2023  
Re: Christina Street Bridge Earmark  
Cc: Jonathan Yeo; Barney Heath; Jennifer Steel

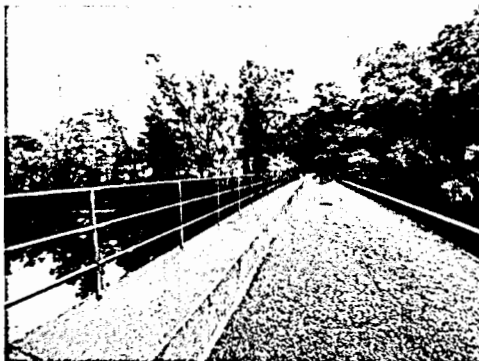
Honorable Mayor Fuller,

Thank you for your consideration of the acceptance of a state earmark to help fund the Christina Street Bridge project.

This earmark is one of several for Newton included in Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022, An Act related to Economic Growth and relief for the Commonwealth, also known as the 2022 Economic Development Bill, and was included at the request of Representative Balser.

This project will provide a highly beneficial recreational and transportation connection between Newton and Needham to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity. The Newton side is experiencing redevelopment, while the Needham side has new residential and commercial uses. Improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity is central to the City's transportation strategy and is complemented by other projects and initiatives, both in the project area and citywide.

The city has worked closely with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for several years to advance this project, which will fill a critical gap in the Charles River pathway system. The bridge will directly connect to DCR's Charles River Reservation path on the Needham side of the river.



*Existing bridge looking east from Needham*



*Right of way seen from Charles River Reservation path, looking east*



*Needham trail entrance at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue*

Work to date has included a survey conducted by DCR, a 2021 feasibility study, and community engagement including discussions with nearby property owners, Needham representatives, and the public. Please see this [project page](#) for more information.

With the state earmark and anticipated developer contributions, the City will work with DCR to fund project design and construction. Based on updated preliminary cost estimates, we anticipate a project budget of \$4.3 million, but we expect

this number to be refined as we proceed to update construction cost estimates through the design and engineering process. There is no expectation currently to request City funding.

The Christina Street Bridge is part of an emerging network that will provide enduring benefits. For example, City staff are working on related project elements, including a privately-funded extension of the pathway across Needham Street that will connect with the Upper Charles Greenway (which is the subject of a separate planning effort known as the Community Way).

This earmark is a reimbursement grant, for which the City will submit funding consistent with a defined scope of services. Funding must be expended by December 31, 2026. The Planning and Development Department (Environmental and Transportation) will lead this work, in partnership with other City departments, DCR, and the Town of Needham.

As this exciting project advances, staff will provide updates to the Council and the public.

Thank you for your consideration, and for any questions that we can address.