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Community Preservation Committee Funding Recommendation for Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign

Date: September 30, 2020
From: Community Preservation Committee
To: The Honorable City Council
CC: Her Honor Mayor Ruthanne Fuller

PROJECT GOALS & ELIGIBILITY

This proposal requests CPA Recreation Funding to complete the 100% design for the construction of a new recreational amenity that replaces the north carriageway of Commonwealth Avenue, between Lyons Field and the Charles River Bridge in Auburndale, with continuous pedestrian and bicycle paths surrounded by new green space. The project's goal is to increase the amount of usable green space in this section of Commonwealth Avenue and to link myriad trail networks including the Charles River Path, the Riverside Greenway trail network (in development), and Weston's planned shared use path (currently at 25% design). An additional goal is to increase the visibility of, and access to, the historic boathouse on the Charles River and improve transit access in the area by upgrading bus stops and pedestrian crossings. The project will be coordinated with the upcoming reconstruction of the Charles River Bridge and reconstruction of Route 30, allowing the City to take advantage of construction funding which would not otherwise be available for this project.

The project is eligible for CPA funding for the creation of a Recreation resource.

RECOMMENDED FUNDING

At its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 15, the Community Preservation Committee unanimously recommended, with a vote of 8 to 0, the appropriation of \$390,000 in Community Preservation Act Recreation funding to the control of the Planning & Development for the completion of the 100% design of the Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign in Auburndale.

SPECIAL ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CPC

Funding leverage & project costs: The CPC recognized and appreciated the tremendous leveraging of CPA funding achieved by this project. As currently proposed, CPA funding accounts for less than 7% of the overall project costs. The \$5.9 million project has already been awarded full construction funding in the MassDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program's FY2025 budget. This funding was achieved through the City's work to convince the State to expand on its existing project to reconstruct the Charles River

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CPC Funding Recommendation for Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign

September 24, 2020

Bridge and Route 30 to create an additional transportation and recreational amenity, showing a commitment from the community and administration to the achievement of this goal. Further, the City Council has previously awarded funding in the amount of \$200,000 to complete the 25% design for the project, and the conceptual plan was completed by the City with funding in the amount of \$47,900 from the Solomon Fund.

Community spaces & services: This project will create an entirely new recreational resource for the City by converting an existing traffic lane and its surrounding right-of-way lands into a developed bicycle and pedestrian pathway that will provide a critical link to other existing systems. The proposal notes that this is the only section of Commonwealth Avenue where the northern carriageway has not already been converted to a limited access roadway that is widely used by pedestrians and bicyclists. The project creates a safe path system along Commonwealth Avenue for pedestrians and bicyclists which will provide increased accessibility to Weston's proposed bike path and link Newton's existing trails to the north and south of this project. The applicants also noted that public meetings will be held as part of the design process and that this project will improve pedestrian crossings and bus stops along Commonwealth Avenue.

Project Timeline: Both the CPC and the Applicants noted the tight timeframe of the project, which has been expedited to take advantage of the recently approved FY2025 MassDOT construction funding. The City will need to work closely with MassDOT to coordinate the project with their construction on Route 30 in order to take advantage of this opportunity. Completing the 100% design was noted to be a key element of the project and a significant step towards meeting the FY2025 construction deadline.

Accessibility: This project proposes to improve accessibility in this area of Newton by creating accessible pedestrian and bicycle paths which are fully separated from vehicular traffic along Commonwealth Avenue.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS *(funding conditions)*

1. CPA funding is limited to the hiring of consultants to complete the 100% design of the new Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign in Auburndale between Lyons Field and the Charles River Bridge (Weston border).
2. The funding must be used within two years of the City Council's approval of this recommendation. If this funding deadline cannot be met, the Applicants must submit a written request to extend that deadline to the CPC.
3. Any periodic reports or interim deliverables prepared as part of this project, and any City or State reviews of those deliverables, must be shared with the CPC for online posting.
4. Any remaining CPA funds at the completion of the 100% design project will be returned to the Newton Community Preservation Fund.

KEY OUTCOMES

The Community Preservation Committee will evaluate this project based on its success in completing a 100% design for new bicycle and pedestrian pathways in place of the northern carriageway of Commonwealth Avenue in a manner which meets the neighborhood and City's transportation and recreation goals for the area.

CPC Funding Recommendation for Commonwealth Avenue Carriageway Redesign

September 24, 2020

ATTACHMENTS

- 2020 Proposal and selected attachments submitted to the CPC for the September 15, 2020 review
- Project Presentation given at the September 15 CPC meeting.

Additional information not attached to this recommendation, including petitions and letters of support, are available on the CPC's website at:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/cacr.asp>