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CITY OF MANCHESTER

Department of Public Works

August 31, 2020

Board of Mayor and Alderman
c/o CITY CLERKS OFFICE
One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, New Hampshire 03103

Subject: Rail Trail Program Update

Dear Mayor Craig:

At the request of Alderman Shaw, we have prepared a status update on the design and construction of various rail trail projects throughout the City. The Manchester Rail Trail network is comprised of four main segments in various stages of completion. To better understand the context of these construction projects, please refer to the attached map and the following summary of our network:

Riverwalk

The Riverwalk anchors this system to the downtown and has been built out from Sundial Avenue to the Fisher Cats Stadium as well as along the river in the vicinity of Arms Park. Opportunities remain to connect existing sections and extend this north-south corridor.

Piscataquog Trail

This trail system connects the downtown to the Goffstown Trail System and points west. The trail begins at the Riverwalk and has been fully constructed across both the Merrimack River and Piscataquog River out to the town line with Goffstown.

Rockingham Trail

Starting at Mammoth Road, a gravel trail exists out to Lake Massabesic and continues to the NH seacoast. A large section of rail corridor remains undeveloped back into the City and provides an opportunity for future connectivity to the downtown. This is an option being considered as part of the future Cemetery Brook sewer separation project in the area.

South Manchester Rail Trail

Located generally parallel to South Willow Street, this system connects the downtown out to the Londonderry Trails and through various communities into the State of Massachusetts. Notable construction includes a paved section from South Beech Street to Gold Street and continues with narrow unimproved paths to the north and south.

Over the past several years, the City of Manchester has been successful in winning grants from both the NHDOT Transportation Alternatives Program and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality. These awards range from \$800,000 to \$1,500,000 with 80% of expenses reimbursed and a 20% local match.

Using such funds requires a significant degree of regulatory compliance and often takes years to fully develop. It generally takes between 12 and 18 months to initiate a project following application, and construction funding may be further delayed to fit into the NHDOT budget. There is also a rigorous protocol established for these “locally managed projects” that requires approval from the NHDOT at numerous milestones and before each step in the design and construction process.

The City of Manchester has four current projects in the pipeline that are staggered to reach construction in each of the next four to five years:

South Manchester Rail Trail – Phase 2 (CMAQ)

This project will be constructed from the current southerly terminus at Gold Street, in the vicinity of Walmart, to Perimeter Road along the neighborhoods of Frontage Road and Keller Street. The project includes a rehabilitation of the existing railroad trestle bridge over the Cohas Brook and repair of a granite box railroad culvert that has partially collapsed. This project will follow the replacement of the Goffs Falls Road bridge and includes a pedestrian connection to the roadway. The estimated project cost is \$1,500,000.

Status: Engineering consultant Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) has completed an engineering study and the preliminary design. Analysis of bridge deterioration and rehabilitation has determined that the northerly abutment will need to be removed and replaced in a historically sensitive, but not exact, manner. Due to the historic nature of the trestle and culvert, the project is undergoing an enhanced review of adverse impacts per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Final design of the project is expected to begin late this year for construction in 2022/2023.

Downtown Connector/SMRT (TAP 14)

Connecting the northerly end of the South Manchester Rail Trail to the downtown has been a priority for several years. The limits of this project are from South Beech Street to the Elm Street/Queen City Avenue intersection where existing sidewalks and bike lanes complete the connection. A small portion of this connection was recently constructed along with the sidewalks adjacent to South Beech Street. The estimated project cost is \$800,000.

Status: VHB has completed an engineering study, preliminary design, and NEPA compliance review. Following NHDOT authorization to begin final engineering design, the preparation of construction documents is scheduled for completion this fall. Advertisement for bids is anticipated for this coming winter with construction in 2021.

Rockingham Trail (TAP 16)

With an existing trail in place, this project is an enhancement and improvement project. Work will be done between Mammoth Road adjacent to the CVS and Lake Shore Road. The project includes signalized crossings of Mammoth Road, the I-93 Exit 6 and 7 ramps, and Candia Road as well as stabilization of the trail through existing wetland areas and a new gravel surface. The estimated project cost is \$1,200,000.

Status: All engineering work was completed this past winter by CMA Engineers and the project advertised for bids. A successful bid was awarded earlier this summer to Weaver Brothers Construction and work is anticipated to begin in September of 2020 with project completion in the spring of 2021.

South Manchester Rail Trail – Phase 3 (TAP 18)

A final section of the SMRT will be constructed from Perimeter Road to the Londonderry town line. Londonderry has also been awarded a grant to construct their most northerly section of trail and open up a significant southern NH trail system from downtown Manchester to our southerly neighbors. Whereas their project is scheduled a year ahead of ours, we are working with them to make the connection in close proximity to the Aviation Museum of New Hampshire on the east side of the airport. This section of trail is expected to take the form of a 10-foot wide multi-use path along the side of Perimeter Road, South Willow Street, and Harvey Road. The estimated project cost is \$1,000,000.

Status: Our most recent grant was awarded approximately 18 months ago, but has been delayed due to fiscal constraints on program funds at the NHDOT. We anticipate advertising for engineering consultants this fall and expect to begin design work in earnest in 2021. Construction funds are allocated for the 2024/2025 season depending on program cash flows.

These are exciting projects that contribute to alternative means of transportation, improve the quality of life for our residents, and open up recreational opportunities across the City and beyond our borders. DPW will be advertising public meetings for a couple of these segments this fall and over the next year. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, would like to discuss any of these projects in more detail, or review opportunities for future grants.

Very truly yours,

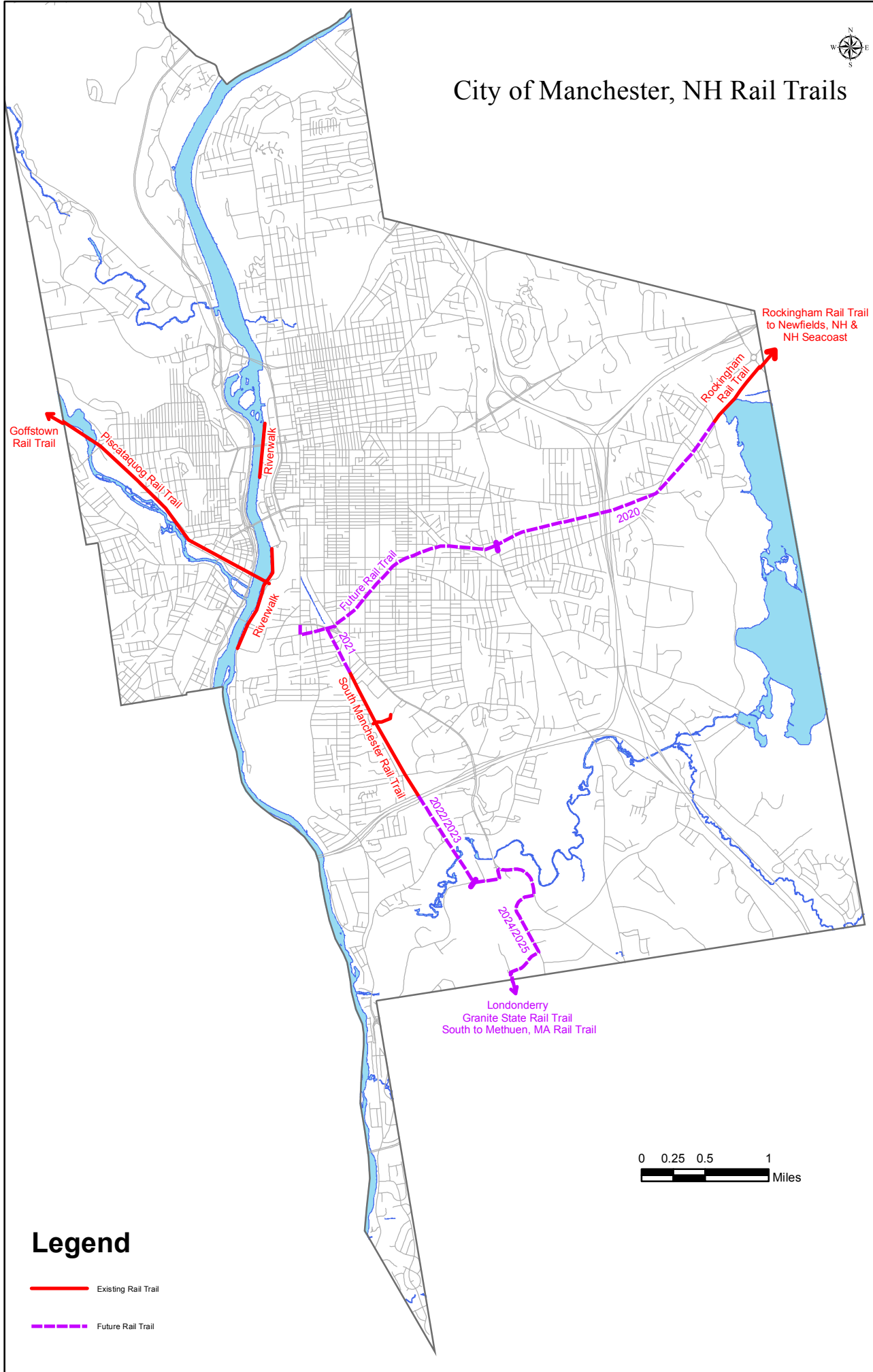


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cc/Kevin A. Sheppard, P.E.



City of Manchester, NH Rail Trails



Legend

- Existing Rail Trail
- Future Rail Trail

