

February 23, 2023

Ms. Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Re: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley:

I am writing to offer the Capitol Region Council of Government's enthusiastic support for the CT DEEP Recreational Trails grant proposal being submitted by the Town of Coventry to seek funds for the design and construction of a section of the Nathan Hale Greenway on South Street in the vicinity of Silver Street and Woodbridge Road.

This project presents an exciting opportunity to initiate elements of the Nathan Hale Greenway, which was facilitated by a previous CT DEEP Recreational Trails Grant awarded in 2017.

This trail section would allow users to access Town open space property and the Skungamaug River. The trail construction would provide the Town of Coventry an opportunity to reach Plan of Conservation & Development goals for public access to green space, which closely aligns with the Grant's mission.

The proposed project aligns with regional policies and planning documents, including our Regional Plan of Conservation & Development and our Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments strongly supports this project and I urge the Department to give strong consideration to this application. I am happy to address any questions you may have regarding our letter of support.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

cc: M. Gosselin, Coventry Wetlands Agent & Erosion Control Officer
J. Elsesser, Coventry Town Manager
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

February 23, 2023

Ms. Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Re: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley:

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is writing in support of the 2023 CT Recreational Trails Grant application prepared by Goodwin University in East Hartford, CT. If awarded this grant, the University would use the funding for Phase VI of the South Meadows Trail Expansion. This project will create a new natural trail along the CT River past the south end of the Putnam Bridge connection and continue the bituminous paving in Glastonbury from the Wethersfield line to the southern terminus. A paved picnic area will be created at the southern terminus and a picnic table will be installed for visitors to sit and decompress. Additionally, equipment will be purchased for trail maintenance and field improvements near the Pavilion. When completed, this project will provide a continuous trail/walkway system from the Putnam Bridge to the Riverwalk trail network.

The proposed improvements to the South Meadow trail align with regional policies and planning documents, including our Regional Plan of Conservation & Development and our Metropolitan Transportation Plan. In addition, the trail expansion is designed to eventually link up with larger trail systems. Goodwin University previously participated on the advisory committee for the Putnam Multimodal Trail Connections Feasibility Study, along with representatives of the Towns of East Hartford, Wethersfield, and Glastonbury, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and others. Goodwin's trails are an important element of CRCOG's Bike Ped Plan to complete a multi-use path system in the region.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments fully supports the proposed effort to expand the Goodwin University South Meadows trail as part of an ongoing effort to provide a network of recreational trails throughout the region.

For the reasons mentioned above, I urge the Department to give strong consideration to this application. I am happy to address any questions you may have regarding our letter of support.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

cc: Mayor Mike Walsh, East Hartford
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

February 23, 2023

Ms. Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Re: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley:

The Capital Region Council of Government (CRCOG) is pleased to support the Town of South Windsor's application submitted under the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's 2023 Recreational Trails Grant Program for the construction of the South Windsor Crosstown Trail.

The Crosstown Trail, designated as a Connecticut Greenway in 2017, serves as an important link in the region's network of multi-state trails. It provides access for residents of South Windsor to the Charter Oak Greenway in Manchester, part of the multi-state East Coast Greenway. This regional network of trails is an important policy recommendation in CRCOG's 2014 Plan of Conservation and Development. Under the plan's Transportation Section, policy recommendation number 11 calls for the region to: "Work with local and state officials to develop new, dedicated bicycle and pedestrian trails and connect existing trails to form regional and interregional trails, with a particular focus upon completing the East Coast Greenway through the region."

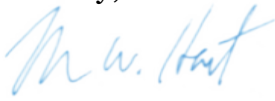
This proposal would also help the region implement goals found in its 2019 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. That plan calls for expanding the region's multi-use path system with a particular focus on linking greenways. Much of the region's primary trail system is complete, or nearing completion. The bulk of the work now is providing access to these trails and connecting them to commercial and residential areas.

Finally, this proposal would serve as an example of innovative trail development for others to follow. In a time of fiscal instability and increasingly scarce resources, the project would leverage a partnership with Eversource to build the trail within the utility's right of way. Not only would this reduce overall costs for the project, but it would also help preserve maintenance access for the utility.

Andover | Avon | Berlin | Bloomfield | Bolton | Canton | Columbia | Coventry | East Granby | East Hartford | East Windsor | Ellington | Enfield | Farmington | Glastonbury | Granby | Hartford | Hebron | Manchester | Mansfield | Marlborough | New Britain | Newington | Plainville | Rocky Hill | Simsbury | South Windsor | Southington | Stafford
Suffield | Somers | Tolland | Vernon | West Hartford | Wethersfield | Willington | Windsor | Windsor Locks

The Capital Region Council of Governments strongly supports this project and I urge the Department to give strong consideration to this application. I am happy to address any questions you may have regarding our letter of support.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

cc: Town Manager M. Maniscalco, South Windsor
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

February 28, 2023

Ms. Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Subject: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley:

CRCOG is pleased to support the Town of Newington's application for a Connecticut Recreational Trails Program grant for the proposed multi-purpose trail that would link and leverage existing trails, connecting the City of New Britain trail to the West Hartford trail system.

As the Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments and a former town manager, I know that key recreational trails are investments for the future that promote connectivity among residents and transportation corridors, economic development, and a healthy and safe option for residents to enjoy the town.

Not only would the proposed multi-use trail increase opportunities for safe biking, hiking, and walking in Newington and surrounding communities, it would help meet Connecticut's Recreation Tail Plan Goals, including:

- making communities better places to live by preserving and creating open spaces;
- encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles;
- creating new opportunities for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation; and
- preserving culturally and historically valuable areas.

The trail's planned inclusion of interpretive guides and other materials for use on trails would provide users with more than just exercise. There would be many opportunities to educate the public about environmental protection, natural resources, culture, and history while taking advantage of recreational trails. For example, the trail would pass through a historic neighborhood, where trail users would enjoy seeing historic homes and other natural and cultural resources that would be highlighted along the route.

Another benefit of the proposed project is its proximity to other towns and cities (New Britain and West Hartford), three neighborhood schools, and Central Connecticut State

University. Other planned elements include ensuring parking and access to the trail for persons with disabilities, providing opportunities for all to enjoy the trail.

Funding for the proposed trail would leverage other state and federal grants as the town seeks to revitalize the area as part of its overall TOD plans. These efforts would support the economic development activities surrounding the trail and provide job opportunities to any existing and new businesses accessible by trail users.

Based on the reasons stated above, CRCOG urges the Department to approve the Town's application to the Recreational Trails Program Grant. I am happy to answer any questions you may have regarding our support of this exciting project.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

CC: Mayor B. DelBuono, Town of Newington
James Krupienski, Acting Town Manager
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

February 24, 2023

Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Re: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley:

I am writing to convey the Capitol Region Council of Governments' (CRCOG) support for the Keney Park Connectivity Project, which proposes to connect existing trails in Keney Park to the Connecticut River.

As one of the largest public parks in all New England with nearly 700 acres of land, Keney Park is a regional treasure with a rich history. The proposed connected system of trails would provide safe and equitable access to healthy recreation, especially for North Hartford area residents and for visitors. The City's vision for this multi-use trail includes a solution for the park's gateway entrance at Windsor Avenue that is ADA-accessible and would prioritize pedestrians over vehicular traffic. The proposed project would also connect to the adjacent community of Windsor and link to the new riverfront park proposed by Riverfront Recapture. This connection to the new Riverfront Recapture park would unlock access to the Connecticut River and provide additional opportunities for healthy recreation, community events, socialization, and housing.

While the basic infrastructure exists, the current environment is not welcoming or safe for pedestrians. The proposed project would upgrade existing infrastructure in a way that better accommodates all users, makes the experience safer and more welcoming, and provides a high-quality experience for the surrounding Hartford neighborhoods that currently experience some of the lowest health outcomes in our State and region. This connection would provide free, attractive access to outdoor recreation for a community that has been historically and systematically disconnected from nature.

Interstate 91 and parallel railroad corridor currently present large physical and psychological barriers between these two regional assets. CRCOG is excited about the City's vision to connect Keney Park to the Connecticut River and supports its application to address these challenges and capitalize on this amazing opportunity.

The proposed project aligns with regional policies and planning documents, including our Regional Plan of Conservation & Development and our Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments urges the Department to approve this application based on its merits. I am happy to address any questions you may have regarding our letter of support.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

CC: Owen Deutsch, City of Hartford
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

February 28, 2023

Ms. Kimberly Bradley, Trails & Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: DEEP Connecticut Recreational Trails Program 2023 Grant Application

Dear Ms. Bradley,

I am writing to convey the Capital Region Council of Governments' (CRCOG) support for Riverfront Recapture's Recreational Trails Program application to expand its security camera network and to utilize new technology imbedded in those cameras to enhance data collection related to park visitor counts. Count information assists Riverfront Recapture in its advocacy efforts and helps secure grant funding to continued expansion and improvement to this amazing regional asset.

Riverfront Recapture has participated in CRCOG's annual Bike/Ped Counts since we started the initiative in 2009. CRCOG's counts are part of a nationwide effort that aims to provide a consistent model of ongoing data collection for use by planners, governments, and bicycle and pedestrian professionals.

While the counts are an important data collection tool for CRCOG, we see our current framework as one that could be more efficient and consistent, and we stand to benefit from Riverfront Recapture piloting this new count technology. CRCOG has also recently begun considering supplementing or replacing our counts with technology. For context, the current bike/ped count we undertake at CRCOG relies heavily on staff time and recruiting volunteers to conduct manual counts. Our counts are also conducted on a rotating three-year basis – only one third of our locations are counted every year. The manual counting approach results in counts that are not done as frequently as best practices would suggest and data that can be inconsistent (for example, one location counted once every three years could be very susceptible to changes in weather temperature on the day it gets counted).

Riverfront's capacity to utilize new technology to efficiently collect consistent and accurate data related to bike and pedestrian use has the potential to serve as a vital tool in planning, funding, promoting, and maintaining trails throughout the state. CRCOG is eager to learn from Riverfront's pilot experience with this technology and our organizations are already committing to discuss methodology, technology, data, and lessons learned. We foresee this pilot as being a valuable part of our counting effort that could be replicated in other locations.

Riverfront Recapture is steward to one of our key regional assets, the Connecticut River and the surrounding park and trails. As such, it is no surprise that more than an estimated 17 million visitors have utilized the park since 2000. We are proud to support Riverfront Recapture's application and strongly urge the Recreational Trails program to fund this important project.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

CC: Martha Conneely, Riverfront Recapture
CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning

March 10, 2023

The Honorable Antonia Moran
Audrey P. Beck Municipal Building
4 South Eagleville Road
Mansfield, CT 06268

RE: 2024 Community Project Funding – Town of Mansfield Pedestrian Safety Improvements

Dear Mayor Moran:

On behalf of the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), I am pleased to support the CT Route 195 (Storrs Road) Pedestrian Safety Improvements Project proposed by the Town of Mansfield.

This project, which would provide a pedestrian connection between the Four Corners mixed-use district and UConn's main campus, is consistent with CRCOG's regional vision of providing multi-modal access and complete streets infrastructure between important destinations. This arterial road has narrow shoulders, low to no lighting, and limited visibility due to hills and curves, creating hazards for pedestrians who are often observed walking in the travel lane. With more than 800 housing units proposed at Four Corners (80+ units restricted to households at 80% AMI), pedestrian traffic in this area will only increase. Additionally, the trail would connect to an existing multi-use trail along Middle Turnpike that is often used by senior citizens, students, and other residents. As a rural community, Mansfield has limited transit options, and this project would provide safe bicycle and pedestrian access to employment and essential services, expanding housing opportunities to households without a vehicle.

Within CRCOG's 2020 Complete Streets Plan, this segment of Storrs Road is specifically identified as a roadway within the Complete Streets Network, a defined network of routes prioritized for complete streets efforts. Similarly, the proposed improvements support CRCOG's Metropolitan Transportation Plan's goal of extending the region's bicycle and pedestrian networks and offering multi-modal options for travelers. Furthermore, the project is a direct outcome of a recommendation contained in the Eastern Gateways Study (2019), which was administered by CRCOG.

Based on the information provided to CRCOG, the project appears eligible for federal transportation funding under numerous FHWA programs including, but not limited to,

Surface Transportation Block Grant, Congestion Management and Air Quality, and Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside funds. In anticipation of Federal earmark funding, this project was deemed to be eligible under Title 23 (Highways) and was added to CRCOG's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in 2021.

As this project is eligible for federal funding and would advance the goals of our regional vision, we strongly encourage its consideration for Community Project Funding.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

cc: CRCOG Policy Board & Transportation Committee
R. Aloise, Director of Transportation Planning
C. Radzins, Deputy Director of Transportation Planning