

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GARDNER RECEIVES \$500,000 FOR BIKE PATH EXTENSION

Funds 3rd Phase of Bike Path Extension from the Greenwood Pool to Park Street

(Attached pictures: 2023 Awardees at Awards Ceremony, Mayor Michael Nicholson and Lt. Gov Kimberly Driscoll after the Ceremony, Map of Phase 3 of the Expansion funded by this grant, and all extensions to the Bike Path in Gardner since 2021)

GARDNER, MA – June 15, 2023 – The City of Gardner was recently awarded \$500,000 from the Commonwealth’s MassTrails Grant program to fund a portion of the extension of the North Central Pathway Bike Trail to eventually connect the Towns of Hubbardston and Winchendon through Gardner via bicycle and walking infrastructure. This portion of the funding will cover the third phase of this initiative, by extending the trail from the Greenwood Memorial Pool, through Crystal Lake Cemetery, to Park Street.

“This is the third year in a row that the City has received this funding from the Commonwealth and we are already starting to see the benefits of this project come together,” said Gardner **Mayor Michael Nicholson**. “Extending these trails, paths, and travel lanes increase the recreational opportunities Gardner can offer and give our residents and visitors a new way to travel around the City and our region.”

Yesterday, the Healey-Driscoll Administration announced \$11.6 million in funding through the MassTrails Grant Program to support 68 trail improvement projects. Across Massachusetts, these projects will expand and connect the state’s network of off-road, shared-use pathways and trails to use for recreation, exercise, and environmentally friendly commuting. Yesterday’s announcement was made by Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Brian Arrigo, Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver, and other state and local officials in Billerica’s Town Center. Gardner Mayor Michael Nicholson and Lyndsy Butler, Assistant Director of the Gardner Department of Community Development and Planning, who authored the grant application, were in attendance.

“Outdoor recreation is directly tied to the economic prosperity of our state,” said **Governor Maura Healey**. “By investing in our trails system, we can give our residents opportunities to get outside, commute for free, and showcase all the natural assets Massachusetts has to offer. This is how we grow our economy, cut emissions, and improve health outcomes all at the same time.”

“Our state’s trail network creates connections between cities and towns all across Massachusetts, from the Berkshires to Cape Cod,” said **Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll**. “Working with our public and private partners, the MassTrails Grant Program stitches communities together and we provide easier access for residents and visitors to experience our beautiful natural, cultural, and recreational resources.”

The MassTrails Grant Program provides matching grants, technical assistance, and resources to individuals, municipalities, non-profits, and other public entities. These funds go toward the

design, construction, and maintenance of diverse, high-quality trails, including hiking trails, bikeways, and shared-use paths. The program supports projects that build public-private partnerships. This year's projects will directly impact over 100 communities, helping to develop new multi-use trails, expand accessibility, create connections between towns and existing trails, support the construction of boardwalks and bridges, design and install new signage, and acquire new land for trails.

Gardner was one of five communities receiving the highest award possible, at \$500,000.

"I'm happy the State continues to fund the expansion of this trail," said **State Representative Jon Zlotnik**. "Outdoor recreation opportunities are a hallmark of this region, and this serves to embrace that."

In 2021, the City received funding from both the MassTrails Grant and Complete Streets Grant programs from the Commonwealth to create new bicycle travel lanes through the Downtown area on Central Street, the Rear Main Street/Derby Drive Corridor, and along Route 68/Timpany Boulevard to the City's border with the Town of Hubbardston.

Additional funding was awarded from the MassTrails Grant program in 2022 to extend the bike trail from behind the Gardner Veterans Skating Arena, along Park Street by Monument Park, to the new Park Street Park, and around the Greenwood Pool on the shores of Crystal Lake.

"This is awesome," said **Councilor Dana Heath**, who represents Ward 2 of the City where this work is to take place. "This bike trail will be utilized by many families and bikers from far and near. This is definitely a safe route for bikers to be able to get around the City while having a beautiful view"

"The continued progress of this project is wonderfully, especially since the City Council voted to support it with the required matching City funds in 2021 and 2022, totaling \$195,000," echoed **City Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas**. "Rep. Zlotnik and our State partners have once again shown their strong advocacy for development in Gardner. We have here yet another example of how city and state government work best when we partner together."

Work on Phase 3 of this initiative isn't expected to begin until the Spring of 2024, but residents can expect to see continued progress being made to each phase of the project currently under construction throughout the City. The City is also working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to construct a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Route 140 in 2025 and 2026 funded through the Massachusetts Traffic Improvement Program ("Mass TIP").

"I am excited to see how our residents and visitors take advantage of this new extension and the project as a whole," said **Mayor Nicholson**. "Gardner is growing and we have had an unprecedented amount of interest in our City over the last three years. Projects like these help connect that growth and progress across our City and our region, while giving people more ways to enjoy what we have to offer. I'd like to thank Governor Healey, Lt. Governor Driscoll, State Representative Jon Zlotnik, and all of our state partners for their continued support of the Chair City."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

MassTrails Release from the Commonwealth: <https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-announces-over-11-million-in-grant-funding-for-68-trail-improvement-projects-across-the-commonwealth>

2023 MassTrails Awardees:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2023/06/14/2023%20MassTrails%20Grant%20Awards.pdf>

Office of Mayor Michael J. Nicholson:

Colin Smith, Executive Aide

csmith@gardner-ma.gov

978-630-1490

City Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas:

ekazinskas@gardner-ma.gov

City Councilor Dana Heath:

dheath@gardner-ma.gov

Lyndsy Butler, Assistant Director of Community Development and Planning

lbutler@gardner-ma.gov

Office of State Representative Jonathan Zlotnik

Nolan King, Legislative Aide

Nolan.King@MAHouse.gov