



3/14/2024

Raymond Roakes
Secretary, Urban Design Committee

Re: UDC Application – James River Branch Trail, Project Narrative

Project Purpose:

James River Branch Trail is a proposed shared-use path that will connect neighborhoods, schools, & businesses, and will provide areas of recreation for walkers, runners, cyclists, and other trail users.

Project Background:

In 2010 a study was completed and the James River Branch Trail was identified as a potential rails to trails project in the City of Richmond with the intent to repurpose an old abandoned CSX railway bed.

In Summer 2023, with funding secured, the City’s Department of Parks and Recreation, in conjunction with Public Works, purchased 2 CSX parcels with the intent to use the property for a multi-use trail. In order to purchase the property, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed to identify all existing site conditions, including hazardous materials.

Currently, the project is designed to a 60% level, having been advanced from a 30% preliminary stage with feedback and comments from City staff incorporated into the trail’s design and alignment.

Project Description:

The James River Branch Trail project will construct an approx. 2-mile long, 10-ft wide paved multi-use trail, which will connect local neighborhoods, schools, and businesses. The trail is proposed within a pre-existing CSX railway bed spanning from Westover Hills Boulevard to Hopkins Road. The trail will cross five existing roadways: Westover Hills Boulevard, Midlothian Turnpike, Hull Street Road, E. Broad Rock Road, and Hopkins Road. At each crossing, either a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon or a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon will be installed to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety. Several traffic calming measures in addition to the pedestrian signals are also proposed, a raised crosswalk at E. Broad Rock Road, and a lane reduction and choke island on Midlothian Turnpike. The project will also install lighting, landscaping, benches, trash cans, and bicycle racks at each trail crossing. Additionally, and where feasible, connections to the trail are proposed directly into neighborhood streets that abut the linear property now owned by Parks and Recreation.

Community Outreach:

A public information meeting is being held on Monday, March 25th, 2024. The City will gather public input and comment for considerations of the location and design elements of the trail. The meeting materials are being submitted as supporting documents for this application, which include display boards to be presented at the meeting, and brochures, which are to be distributed at the meeting and also ahead of time to the adjacent property owners.

Additionally, this project has been accepted into Virginia’s DEQ’s Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) to mitigate environmental concerns, including any pre-existing hazardous materials on site. As part of this VRP program, an additional public meeting will be held in Summer 2024 to satisfy the VRP’s requirements for environmental due diligence.

Project Funding & Budget:

The engineering, right of way, and construction costs for this project are funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) via the US Department of Treasury . The current estimated project cost in total is \$11.1 million.

Construction Details:

The APRA funding has several critical milestones and deadlines that need to be met in order to receive the funding. The funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024, so the project will be awarded to a contractor and the City can conduct a groundbreaking in December 2024. Construction is estimated to be completed in Spring 2026.

