



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-038- To authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the amount of \$4,122,214.00 from the Virginia Department of Transportation, to amend Ord. No. 2021-042, adopted May 24, 2021, which accepted a program of proposed Capital Improvement Projects for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 and the four fiscal years thereafter, adopted a Capital Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022, and determined a means of financing the same, by establishing a new project for the Department of Public Works in the Transportation Category called the James River Branch Trail (JRBT) project, and to appropriate the increase to the Fiscal year 2021-2022 Capital Budget by increasing estimated revenues and the amount appropriated to the Department of Public Works' James River Branch Trail (JRBT) project in the Transportation Category by \$4,122,214.00 for the purpose of funding the implementation of the James River Branch Trail project from West 49th Street to its intersection with Hopkins Road.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Land Use Administration
Date: February 22, 2022

PETITIONER

Bobby Vincent Jr., Director of Public Works

LOCATION

James River Branch Trail - Forest View neighborhood near 49th Street to George Wythe High School to McGuire VA Hospital to Hopkins Road.

PURPOSE

To amend Ord. No. 2021-042 adopted May 24, 2021, which adopted the Capital Improvement Plan for fiscal year 2022 and to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to accept funds in the total amount of \$4,122,214 from the Commonwealth of Virginia and appropriate the revenue for the purpose of funding the James River Branch Trail (JRBT) project.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The City of Richmond developed the concept for the James River Branch Rail-Trail more than a decade ago. The project will construct a shared-use path and greenway along the abandoned James River Branch Railroad corridor, located in Council Districts 5 and 8, in Southside Richmond. The JRBT will be a paved, shared-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians, extending from 49th Street to Hopkins Road. Future extensions are conceived contingent upon availability of additional segments of the abandoned railroad corridor and the funding.

The JRBT will connect to, and provide access to multiple neighborhoods along the corridor. The path and greenway will serve pedestrians, including those with mobility impairments, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users as both an active-transportation and recreational facility, linking a number of underserved communities and providing needed greenspace. Further, this facility

would link to the expanding network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities being developed by the City, including the Fall Line Trail which is receiving significant funding from the Commonwealth. Implementation of the JRBT project has remained idle due to the costs of acquiring the parcels from CSX which will be provided with this funding.

Design and construction of the JRBT will be funded by \$9,000,000 in 100% reimbursable Federal funds with \$4.5 million allocated in both FY22 and FY23 from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA). The Commonwealth of Virginia is providing the additional \$4,122,214 (the purpose of this paper) for the purchase of CSX railroad right-of-way. Total project cost is estimated at \$13,124,714. VDOT allocations are \$4,124,714 which is reduced by VDOT Admin cost of \$2,500 for the net amount to receive \$4,122,214.

City Administration recommends approval of this request.

FINDINGS OF FACT

SITE DESCRIPTION

James River Branch Railroad corridor, located in Council Districts 5 and 8, in Southside Richmond.

PROPOSED USE FOR THE PROPERTY

A shared-use path and greenway: Forest View neighborhood near 49th Street to George Wythe High School to McGuire VA Hospital to Hopkins Road

MASTER PLAN

The railroad corridor passes through several Richmond 300 land use categories. Beginning in the eastern terminus the corridor is primarily Industrial. From Hopkins Road to Hull Street the corridor is Residential with some Community Mixed-Use at the intersection of Hull Street. The corridor transitions to Destination Mixed-Use along the southern edge and Residential on the northern edge until it reaches Lordley Lane where it again becomes Industrial with some Neighborhood Mixed-Use. At the intersection of Midlothian Turnpike and Belt Boulevard the corridor is a combination of Institutional, Corridor Mixed-Use, Community Mixed-Use, and Neighborhood Mixed-Use.

Between Hull Street and Midlothian Turnpike, the corridor passes through the Southside Plaza Area Priority Growth Node. The vision for this node is stated as

“The Southside Plaza Area is the bustling center of South Richmond, offering employment, housing, recreation, and entertainment in a walkable human-scale environment. This area serves as a multi-modal transportation hub with connections to a regional greenway system via the James River Branch Trail and to the regional transit system with multiple bus lines converging in the Southside Plaza area. New City facilities anchor the redevelopment of this area by providing government services and green space.” (p. 48)

ZONING

Zoning along the corridor varies but is primarily M-1 Light and M-2 Heavy Industrial, R-4 and R-5 Single-Family Residential with some B-3 General Business segments where Midlothian Turnpike and Hull Street intersect with the corridor.

SURROUNDING AREA

Much of the area includes low to medium density residential with some auto-oriented commercial uses along the major arterials.

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