



CITY OF RICHMOND

Department of Planning & Development Review *Staff Report*

Ord. No. 2022-286- To declare a public necessity for and to authorize the acquisition of ±16.87 acres, in fee simple from CSX Transportation, Inc., and in connection therewith, to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Purchase Sale Agreement between the City and CSX Transportation, Inc., for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the James River Branch Trail project in the city of Richmond.

To: City Planning Commission
From: Department of Public Works
Date: October 17, 2022

PETITIONER

Lamont Benjamin, P.E., Capital Projects Administrator, Department of Public Works

LOCATION

CSX Right-of-Way located between Westover Hills Boulevard and Hopkins Road

PURPOSE

To declare a public necessity for and to authorize the acquisition of ±16.87 acres, in fee simple from CSX Transportation, Inc., and in connection therewith, to authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, for and on behalf of the City of Richmond, to execute a Purchase Sale Agreement between the City and CSX Transportation, Inc., for the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the James River Branch Trail project in the city of Richmond.

SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The City of Richmond developed the concept for the James River Branch Trail more than a decade ago. The initial plan called for construction of 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 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 rail, which is receiving significant funding from the Commonwealth. Implementation of the JRBT project has remained idle due to the costs of acquiring the property along the abandoned rail corridor from CSX, which will be provided by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Funding for the design and construction of the JRBT has been allocated in FY22 and FY23 for \$4.5M each year from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

This PSA covers CSX owned property comprising an approximately 1.8 mile linear corridor extending between Westover Hills Boulevard to the west, and Hopkins Road to the east. In order to implement the JRBT project, these properties comprising a portion of the railroad corridor must be acquired from the CSX. The City will acquire CSX property along the railroad corridor totally

approximately 16.87 acres, more or less, allowing for the implementation of the initial phase of the JRBT for the construction of a shared-use path. The actual acreage conveyed will be determined by the survey required by the Agreement and the resulting legal description. The acquired property will be under Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (DPR&CF) and the path will be maintained by DPR&CF. This property purchase will be accomplished utilizing the budgeted State funds at a cost not to exceed \$4.028M as stipulated per the attached Agreement.

Separately, \$9,000,000 in Federal ARPA funds are being provided for the design and construction of the JRBT. Total project cost is estimated at \$13 million.

The Department of Public Works Recommends approval of this ordinance.

FINDINGS OF FACT

SITE DESCRIPTION

CSX Right-of-Way located between Westover Hills Boulevard and Hopkins Road, consisting of ±16.87 acres

PROPOSED USE FOR THE PROPERTY

Industrial, Residential, Destination Mixed-Use, Industrial Mixed-Use, Corridor Mixed-Use and Community Mixed-Use

MASTER PLAN

Open Space and Cultural uses are listed as appropriate primary and/or secondary uses in all of the recommended future land for the subject property.

The subject property is also identified as part of the Greenway Network in the Richmond 300 Master Plan. Greenways are universally accessible paved paths that are a minimum of 8-foot wide and intended for non-vehicle users, such as pedestrians, joggers, cyclists, rollerbladers, skateboarders, wheelchair users, people pushing strollers, and other users that are not using a vehicle for transportation.

ZONING

M-1 Light Industrial
B-3 General Business
R-4 Single-Family Residential
R-5 Single-Family Residential
R-48 Multifamily Residential
R-53 Multifamily Residential

SURROUNDING AREA

The subject property runs east to west through properties characterized by single-family, multi-family, industrial, and commercial development.

Staff Contact:

M.S. Khara, City Engineer, DPW, 646-5413
Lamont Benjamin, Capital Projects Administrator, DPW, 646-6339
Nissa Dean, Deputy Director, DPR&CF, 646-5619