



MAYOR'S OFFICE

City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts

Municipal Offices - 166 Boulder Drive
Fitchburg, MA 01420

City of Leominster, Massachusetts

Leominster City Hall - 25 West Street
Leominster, MA 01453



PRESS RELEASE

DATE: August 21, 2017

For Immediate Release:

The Cities of Fitchburg and Leominster are proud to announce that they have acquired 3.8 miles of rail right of way necessary to construct the Twin Cities Rail Trail (TCRT) from CSX Transportation, Inc. of Jacksonville, FL. This long desired achievement is the result of years of hard work and collaboration between officials from each City, MassDOT, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and CSX. The purchase price of \$2,846,000 was paid with a combination of \$2.3 million in federal, \$140,000 in state, and \$429,000 in local funding.

This sale includes about 85% of the entire trail, and negotiations are underway for the remaining portions of the route. Once these pieces are added, the trail will connect the Center of Fitchburg to the Center of Leominster, and will represent another important step in enhancing bikeability and walkability for Twin City residents, workers, and visitors. In total, the Twin Cities Rail Trail will run about 4.5 miles between downtown Fitchburg and downtown Leominster providing bike and pedestrian access to jobs and services in both communities, as well as the commuter rail station in Fitchburg from which trains reach Boston and stops in between.

Design of the TCRT is already about 25% complete, and funding has been secured for construction. Over \$2 million for design and engineering of the trail has been provided by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and over \$18 million for construction is programmed on MassDOT's Transportation Improvement Plan for 2019. It is anticipated that the project will be put out to bid in the spring of 2019, and take two years to construct once work begins.

We extend a special note of gratitude to former U.S. Representative John Olver, who requested the federal earmark utilized to pay for a substantial portion of the acquisition 12 years ago. This funding was key to the land purchase and realization of a high priority transportation alternative between the communities of Leominster and Fitchburg. We also want to recognize that the Twin Cities Rail Trail (TCRT) project has brought together many strong advocates for the region, including the long-established TCRT Association that will independently manage rail trail maintenance and preservation through their own sources of non-municipal funding, including an endowment from the Romolo Testarmata Trust.

“The City of Fitchburg would like to thank the past and present members of the Twin Cities Trail Association who kept this effort alive on behalf of both Cities over so many years. This project is a testament to the on-going collaborative efforts of many state and local entities and individuals. The tireless determination of so many has taken us one step closer to making the Twin Cities Rail Trail a reality. The City is looking forward to this new opportunity for recreation, commuting and economic growth for Fitchburg residents and the greater community.” - **Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale**

“The City of Leominster extends deep gratitude to all the elected officials, local legislators, state agencies, and municipal staff for many years of fortitude to make this project happen. A project like this takes a lot of determination and grit to reach this point. Many times it became extremely complicated and seemed impossible. The TCRT team never faltered and together remained focused on the long-term impact this rail trail would have for our area and North Central Massachusetts.” - **Mayor Dean J. Mazzarella**

“Connecting Fitchburg and Leominster via rail trail has been a goal for these communities for at least ten years. The Baker-Polito Administration is committed to investing in assets that will offer our customers the choice to travel using the modes that make sense to them and this project, when complete, will expand the network of dedicated biking and walking facilities in the region – allowing more customers to get to more places and services,” **said Transportation Secretary and CEO Stephanie Pollack**. “In collaboration with state, local, and federal partners - with the support and encouragement of the Administration - this project is moving forward to allow residents and visitors to use their preferred mode of transportation to safely reach their friends, families, jobs, and homes, and the opportunities that improve their quality of life.”

“Trails provide critical transportation infrastructure connecting communities and regions while offering outdoor recreational opportunities for children and their families to enjoy,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “The Twin Cities Rail Trail serves as an excellent example of the Baker-Polito Administration’s dedication to the development of the network of trails throughout the Commonwealth, and we are pleased to provide both trail design expertise and important funds to this project.”

Once again, the Twin Cities are pleased to publicly share this significant news which will stimulate the economy of Central Massachusetts through tourism, recreation and connectivity for commerce, workforce, and transportation.

#####