

Federal greenbacks for city greenway?

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GREENSBORO - City leaders might learn as early as today whether the Downtown Greenway will get \$625,000 from the federal government's economic stimulus package.

The project, scheduled to begin construction next week, is among those competing for a cut of \$22 million in stimulus cash earmarked by North Carolina officials for pedestrian, biking and roadside beautification projects.

The project has been recommended by more than one group and has a reasonable shot at landing some of the money, said Tom Norman, director of North Carolina's bicycling and pedestrian program.

But it also has a lot of competition, he said, from a long list of projects in other parts of the state.

"That \$22 million is just the beginning of the amount needed across the state for important greenway projects, sidewalk improvements in our towns and cities, and on-road bicycle facilities," Norman said.

Norman is not directly involved in deciding which projects are included in the \$22 million. But he said Monday that he heard informally there might be some word as soon as today.

In fact, Gov. Bev Perdue is scheduled to announce a "first round" of infrastructure projects today in remarks at Kinston, Mint Hill and the Interstate 40/85 rest area on the Guilford/Alamance County line.

Kate Dixon of the N.C. Coalition for Trails and Active Transportation said she also heard that state officials "will make a decision really soon" on the pedestrian, biking and beautification money.

Dixon's group wants state Secretary of Transportation Gene Conti to earmark \$8.1 million for the Greensboro greenway and five similar "jobs ready" trail projects across the state.

"These are projects that have been cleared to go or are only days away from having final approvals," she said.

Conti's department is divvying up \$838 million that the recently approved \$787 billion stimulus plan sets aside for North Carolina highways, bridges, transit and other transportation projects.

The city greenway eventually will be a 4.8-mile loop around downtown that includes landscaping, lighting, benches and art. The 12-foot-wide pathway will be for walking, biking, running, skating and general enjoyment of the outdoors.

"Federal folks are doing due diligence right now, checking on the readiness of the projects," Dabney Sanders, the greenway project manager, said Monday. "If we get the stimulus money, we have construction drawings and are ready to go on that phase."

The section under consideration for the stimulus money runs just north of Lee Street along Freeman Mill Road to Spring Garden Street, a distance of 1,450 feet. Costing about \$1.1 million, it would be the second phase of the 5-to-10-year project.

Work should begin next Monday on the first phase. That section will cost \$1.3 million and run from the ramp at Freeman Mill through the Greensboro College sports campus south of Lee Street to South Eugene Street, a distance of 1,800 feet, about one-third of a mile.



Part of the planned Downtown Greenway would run alongside Murrow Boulevard.

Credit: [File photo](#) / News & Record

Construction of that initial section is being paid for by a variety of sources, including local charitable foundations. It should be finished, except for landscaping, by early summer.

The greenway was also touted for stimulus money by the city Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Other projects being promoted by Dixon's coalition include \$3.25 million for a section of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail through the Triangle, \$2 million for the East Coast Greenway in Wilmington and \$1.25 million for the Carolina Thread Trail in Charlotte.

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