

**TOWN OF NARRAGANSETT
COUNCIL COMMUNICATION**

CC: 22

Amend No. _____

Date Prepared: 01/28/20
Council Meeting Date: 02/03/20

TO: Honorable Town Council
FROM: Councilmember Jesse Pugh
PREPARED BY: Councilmember Jesse Pugh
SUBJECT: Response to RI DOT regarding the William C. O'Neill Bike Path

RECOMMENDATION:

A MOTION TO APPROVE the draft response written by the Town Manager and to send it to RIDOT.

SUMMARY:

Following two Bike Path workshops held in October and November of 2019 the Town Manager has followed the direction of the council majority and drafted a response to RIDOT expressing the Town's desire to apply the \$3M in TIP funds towards planning, design, and permitting of Bike Path alternative #1, #2, or #3A. Attached is the formal response.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft response letter

Mr. Thomas Queenan
Chief, Program Development
State of Rhode Island
Department of Transportation
Two Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Mr. Queenan:

At the request of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Narragansett Town Council (TC) held two (2) work sessions, (October 21, 2019 & November 6, 2019), to review the “Alternatives” identified in the “Readiness Report” prepared by VHB Engineering Inc., relating to Section 4B of the William C. O’Neill Bike Path. At the workshops, our Community Development Director, Mr. Michael DeLuca, discussed the recent changes made to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) amendment #19 resulting in a reduction of funding from \$8.43 Million to \$3.0 Million for the completion of this final section. Mr. DeLuca noted that the VHB report concluded that none of the various alternatives identified in the 2015 revised feasibility study (the STUDY) conducted by FST, Inc. (Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, Inc.), would meet the standard of “least environmentally damaging practical alternative”. Mr. DeLuca further stated that it would be unlikely that any alternative would be permitted if a significant alteration to wetland would occur. In conclusion, Mr. DeLuca reported that Alternative 4, modified to show the least wetland impact, could be completed with minimal resource and construction cost impact.

During the workshops, a number of TC members and Town residents expressed their opposition to the use of on-road segments of the bike path. The alternatives involving Wanda Street and/or Othmar Street were overwhelmingly opposed. This opposition was universally directed towards all design options from potential re-striping for one-way service to simple upgrading limited to directional signs and sharrows.

Since the original plan for the bike path was to end at the beach, the TC did not want the designated \$3 million to be lost altogether and several suggestions were made on how these funds might be utilized. Noting that the Town may have some excess funds left over from Section 4A, (currently under construction), a TC member suggested those funds be pooled with the allocated TIP funds to pursue design and permitting of one of the currently supported alternative alignments, (The Study: #1, #2 and #3A). On Tuesday January 22, 2020, the TC voted down an Agenda item calling to terminate that Bike Path at the Community Center a decided to amend the Agenda item to reflect the following position to be forwarded to the RI DOT.

The following bullet points represent the Town's position:

1. Reiterate that either of Alternatives #1, #2 and #3A would be the Town's preferred route.
2. Emphasize that the Town does not, and will not, endorse an "on-road" option with the modifications that were discussed.
3. Request that RIDOT authorize flexibility to expend some or all of the \$3 million for advanced design and/or permitting of Town preferred alternatives.

The Town, with assistance from our legislative delegation, specifically State Representatives Teresa Tanzi (District 34) and Carol Hagan McEntee (District 33), would work toward receipt of all permits and final design while simultaneously seeking additional and outside resources to finance the construction.

On behalf of the TC, I am asking that the RIDOT make any necessary amendments to the TIP or other Transportation Plans or policies to authorize the transfer of funds to the Town allowing us to carry out the above noted objective. The Town understands that no further State funding is guaranteed for this worthy project yet we may pursue other funding options through our legislative delegation who stressed that they would assist us in this endeavor.

Please contact me or Community Development Director, Michael DeLuca, if you or your staff should have any questions in response to this correspondence.