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Arkansas River Trail Loop Continues to Close

LITTLE ROCK (June 15, 2017) – The City of Little Rock has received a \$1.6 million Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant to create a ramp connection between the bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific tracks just west of the Department of Arkansas Heritage Building (estimated completion Spring 2018) to the Medical Mile. The grant will also buttress and repair the western terminus of the Medical Mile, which is currently falling into the Arkansas River. Together, the bridge, the ramp, and the riverbank stabilization/repair will complete a continuous off-street trail from the Clinton Bridge to the Dillard’s Data Center.

“Closing the Arkansas River Trail loop has been one of my top priorities as mayor,” said Little Rock Mayor Mark Stodola. “It hasn’t been easy. Little Rock’s riverfront is more developed than North Little Rock’s, creating challenges that have proven difficult and expensive to solve. This grant solves a big one, completing the trail from the Clinton Bridge to Dillard’s, strengthening the connection between the Big Dam Bridge and the Clinton Bridge on our side, and most importantly improving safety for our cyclists and pedestrians.”

The purpose of the FLAP is to better connect and increase visitation to federal lands. This grant will strengthen the connection between three federal lands, the Clinton Presidential Library, the Trail of Tears at La Petite Rouche in Julius Breckling Riverfront Park, and Murray Lock and Dam under the Big Dam Bridge.

This connection will also facilitate active transportation in our community, making the Arkansas River Trail a more effective east-west artery of our bicycle and pedestrian transportation network, encouraging physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle, and providing an independent transportation option for those who cannot or choose not to own a vehicle.

“The City of Little Rock is committed to making it safer and easier to move about our city on bike and on foot,” said Little Rock City Manager Bruce T. Moore. “The Arkansas River Trail is an important tourist attraction for the city and it also has the potential to be an important active transportation corridor. With some of the work we’re already doing at Taylor Loop and N. Rodney Parham roads, this grant will help us develop the Arkansas River Trail into a commuting route between West Little Rock and Downtown Little Rock.”

This grant is Phase One of the proposed Central High Corridor, which will create a 12-foot wide paved trail from the Arkansas River Trail at the Union Pacific tracks to the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in three FLAP grant cycles. This trail will accomplish FLAP’s mission by connecting the two most visited and historically significant federal lands in Little Rock with a quality bicycle and pedestrian trail and promoting cross-tourism between them.

“We have a challenge in getting the necessary right of way from Union Pacific and others to make the Central High Corridor a reality, but when the trail is complete, we will have connected two nationally important Little Rock landmarks,” Mayor Stodola said.

The Central High Corridor will also create an important bicycle and pedestrian transportation route that will link to the Arkansas River Trail.

“We are improving our east-west trail connection in the Arkansas River Trail, but we currently have no equivalent north-south trail connection,” said Little Rock Public Works Director Jon Honeywell. “The Central High Corridor has the potential to create a safe, comfortable trail for people on the south side of I-630 to get to Downtown Little Rock where they work and enjoy some of our city’s amenities.”

The Central High Corridor will also be the first new construction of the proposed 63-mile Southwest Trail from Little Rock to Hot Springs. A separate FLAP award was granted to Pulaski, Saline, and Garland counties for a planning and engineering grant for the entire trail. The Southwest Trail will address FLAP’s mission by linking Little Rock’s federal lands to Hot Springs National Park which is also federally run.

For more information regarding the Central High Corridor, visit www.littlerock.gov/BikePed or contact Little Rock Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator John Landosky.

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