

Green Crescent Trail gets major Significant work set to start next month

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
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CLEMSON — More than \$1 million in funding has now been secured to help construct almost 2 miles of a new walking and biking trail in the Clemson area starting next month.

Friends of the Green Crescent Trail chairwoman Heidi Coryell Williams announced in a news release Friday that S.C. Parks, Recreation and Tourism (SCPRT) awarded

the group \$800,000 to fund two “shovel-ready trail construction projects” in Clemson and Central. There is now \$1.3 million in state support for the project that will build trails and trail connections between Clemson and Gateway parks in Clemson and the Central-Clemson Recreation Center in Central, Williams said. A total of \$647,000 is going to the Gateway connector

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boost in state funding



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A rendering of the future Green Crescent Trail at Clemson Park, above, and a current photo of the trail at the Green Crescent Bridge on Berkeley Drive in Clemson, left.

TRAIL: Mayor says city 'ecstatic'

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project and the remaining \$153,000 to the Central-Clemson Recreation loop.

"The value and significance of this project to the Clemson, Central and Southern Wesleyan University communities has allowed my request for \$1 million over the past two budget cycles to be approved by the South Carolina General Assembly," said South Carolina House Rep. Jerry Carter, who represents the Clemson area. "The Green Crescent Trail will not only connect our communities with family-friendly hiking/biking paths, but it also will enhance our general wellbeing and health by providing more opportunities for people to exercise and enjoy the outdoors."

The project has a host of entities involved, including Clemson University, the city of Clemson and the towns of Central and Pendleton. The Friends of the Green Crescent Trail formed in 2016 with the goal to build out a 40-mile network of multi-use paths, bike lanes, natural surface trails and public transit access points that will go into parks, downtowns and public areas.

Trail work in Clemson was bid out on Jan. 10, and construction is expected to start in March and finish in about six months, according to city engineer Nathan Hinkle. The Clemson portion of the latest funding will build a new 1.5-mile section of trail starting at the Berkeley Drive/Frontage Road intersection, con-

tinuing through Clemson Park and the Rippleview neighborhood and ending at Gateway Park, according to Williams.

Clemson Mayor Robert Halfacre said the city was "ecstatic" about the state funding.

"This is a critical connection for recreation and alternative transportation," he said. "The funding also demonstrates a collaborative effort between the city, Clemson University, the state PRT and the Green Crescent Trail group. A debt of gratitude is owed to our elected and appointed officials who have made this possible."

The Central portion will build a new 0.4-mile section of trail beginning near the recreation center on Cross Creek Road and ending in a residential subdivision at Spring Forest Drive. Central Mayor Andrew Beckner said the opportunity to add to the recreation center will make it a "continued draw for outdoor enthusiasts across the region."

PAST FUNDING

In 2020, a \$100,000 SCPRT grant funded a quarter-mile multi-use loop at the oldest park in Clemson city limits — Clemson Park — along with the construction of a pump track that was aided by a \$10,000 Duke Energy grant. The latest grant will fulfill a "shared vision" of a "multimodal network," Williams said.

"Few public infrastructure projects have as many immediate and clear benefits as a trail network — putting trail

on the ground makes better use of all our existing public assets," she said. "It is our nonprofit's great honor to be able to partner with multiple municipalities and to gain the support of Pickens County's legislative delegation for this broad effort. We look forward to continued momentum for the greater Clemson-Central-Pendleton area once our first completed and connected sections of trail are on the ground in 2023."

A trail section between U.S. Highway 76 and Gateway Park has been completely built by Clemson University, part of a school-funded widening project that will create a connection to the South Carolina Botanical Garden and the center of campus.

FUTURE GOALS

Williams said the group has a future goal of eventually connecting with downtown Seneca.

"Adding walkable, bikeable routes for the people who work, live and play here to use and enjoy also improves safety for all, which is of paramount importance," she said. "We are employing trails to connect the places we live with the spots where we love to spend time."

"Investing in trails is an investment in our community's economic prosperity and overall wellbeing. Many future generations of families and residents will enjoy the benefits of a connected trail system, thanks to the efforts of today's civic and elected leaders."