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## **LVPC AWARDED \$21.2 MILLION GRANT TO BUILD COMMUTER ROAD AND TRAIL**

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has been awarded a \$21.2 million grant to build a scenic commuter road and trail from the Allentown's Lehigh Riverfront into Whitehall Township.

The money, awarded through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Transportation Discretionary Grant program, will help fund a \$55.6 million project creating a robust multimodal commuting, emergency management, and equitable access corridor connecting urban, suburban and rural neighborhoods along a 3.5-mile stretch from Hamilton Street in Allentown, beyond Route 22, and into Whitehall Township.

The LVPC, with help from dozens of businesses, government and community partners, applied for the federal grant money to be added to the \$34.4 million in matching funds which includes money from state grants, the City of Allentown and The Waterfront Development Company, which is owned by Jaindl Enterprises, owns the right-of-way and is building a \$425 million business and residential park along Allentown's riverfront.

The Waterfront Development Company, and its major development project, played an integral role in providing matching funds and information for the grant application.

The grant was announced in November by U.S. Senator Bob Casey.

"Today, I am proud to say that Allentown can begin to take action on a project vital to the economic and community health of the region," Casey said. "Building out Riverside Drive will connect marginalized communities to the rest of the Lehigh Valley, incorporating equity into our Nation's plans to invest in infrastructure. This project would not only improve pedestrian safety, but address pollution issues and facilitate commutes for workers. As we build back better, I will continue to advocate for resources to come to Allentown and the Lehigh Valley."

Congresswoman Susan Wild was instrumental in helping the project through the grant evaluation process.

"I couldn't be prouder to have worked alongside the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to help finally make the Riverside Drive plan a reality," said Wild, "This RAISE Grant will not only create good-paying jobs and bolster our local economy, but it will fundamentally improve the quality of life for families across my district. This project just goes to show the significance of infrastructure investments for communities like ours, and I am thrilled to see it move forward."

The week after the announcement, Wild and U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg visited the site to get a glimpse of the impact US DOT's investment will create.

"We look for projects where there is deep community support, where we know there is public-private partnerships. Those are the projects we know are going to succeed and they are going to be amazing," Trottenberg said during a November 19 news conference at the site. "This one checks so many boxes -- sustainability, equity, job creation, restoring a brownfield (site). It is really a fantastic multimodal project."

More information about the project and grant application is available at [raisersiversidedrive.com](http://raisersiversidedrive.com)

Once complete the road and trail would give some of the region's most disadvantaged neighborhoods greater access to the Lehigh River and improve safety by enabling people to navigate between different housing and work zones without getting into their cars.

“This closes a key trail gap, helps create jobs, improves emergency services access, reconnects people to the river after a century of being blocked, and it makes a real equity impact, linking housing to shopping, business districts and educational sites,” said Becky Bradley, Executive Director of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. “It’s rare that a project checks this many important boxes. This project is transformational.’

Riverside Drive is a centerpiece of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

“The Waterfront Development Company is proud to be a part of the Public-Private Partnership responsible for securing the RAISE Grant for the Riverside Drive project,” said Zach J. Jandl, Principal/Chief Operating Officer of The Waterfront Development Company. “This grant will be integral to uniting multiple communities and economic centers while further reintroducing the Lehigh River and establishing it as a destination for work, life, and recreation.”

It was the sixth consecutive year the LVPC has applied for the grant, but the first time the Lehigh Valley was approved for funding in an extremely competitive grant process that often funnels most of the money to larger cities such as Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York and San Francisco.

RAISE offers \$1 billion in discretionary grants, with maximum awards of \$25 million and a maximum of \$100 million being awarded in any one state. The LVPC began applying for the money in 2015, when it was called the Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant program.

“We always believed that if we kept trying the merits of this project would eventually win federal support,” said Tracy Oscavich, the LVPC’s Director of Development. “This is a big win for the Lehigh Valley.”

Riverside Drive will extend from the Hamilton Street bridge in Allentown, through the Waterfront project, beyond Route 22 and north into Whitehall Township. The first roughly milelong section of the project would be a two-lane road, and ten-foot paved path for pedestrian, bicycle and wheelchair use, extending from Hamilton Street in Allentown to Wood Street in Whitehall Township. A section extending north of Wood Street is expected to allow only trail and emergency vehicle access.

The section through the Waterfront would include a Riverwalk outside of several proposed office buildings, restaurants and hundreds of riverfront apartments.

The Riverwalk will overlook the Lehigh River, connecting two outdoor plazas and an amphitheater, while the corridor connects to other regional trails including the Jordan Creek Greenway Trail, Northern Lehigh Rail Trail, Lehigh River Water Trail, Slate Heritage Trail, 9/11 National Memorial Trail and the Appalachian Trail.

Among the biggest advantages is that it would help close the largest gap left in the D&L Trail. Organizers more than 20 years ago began with an ambitious mission to create a 165-mile scenic pathway from Bristol, north of Philadelphia, to just outside Wilkes-Barre.

Today, most of the trail is open and passable by foot and bike, and according to the D&L Trail website, only the section that passes through Allentown is listed as “unimproved, open, travel at your own risk.”