

MEMORANDUM

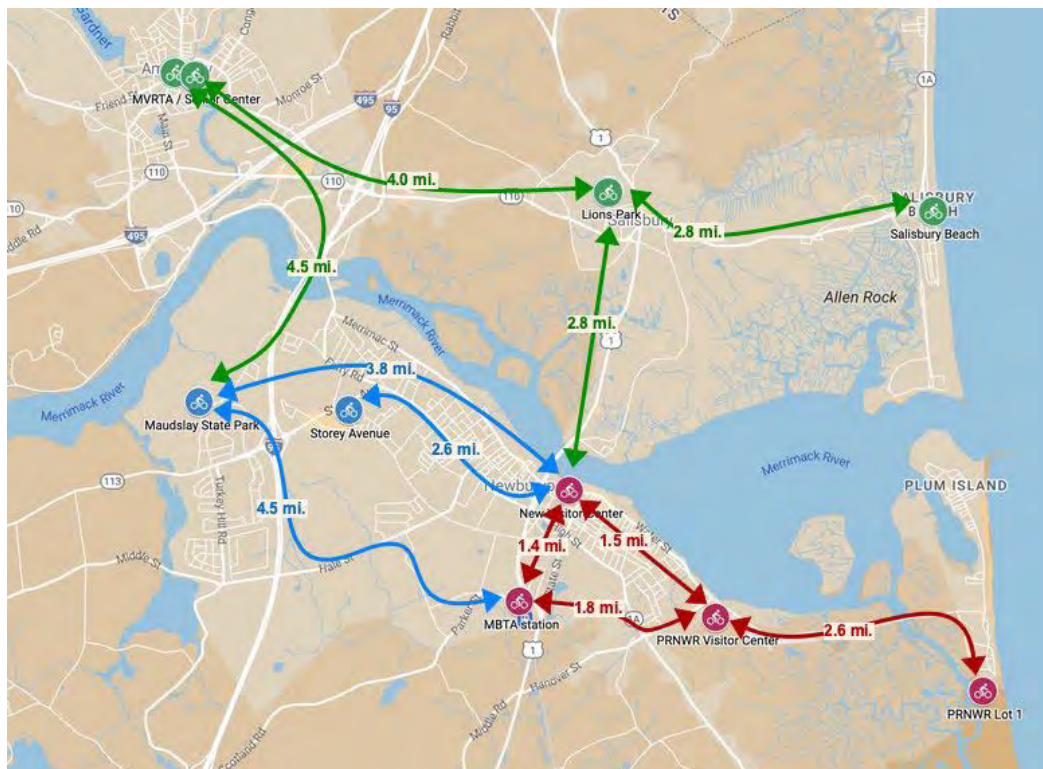
To: City Council President Cameron and Members
 From: Mayor Sean Reardon
 Date: September 3, 2024
 Re: Proposed Bike Share Pilot Program

The Administration has partnered with Newburyport Livable Streets to pursue a three-year pilot for a small-scale bike share system in the city. A bike share system is a public transportation service that offers bicycles for short-term use. This service is both convenient and environmentally friendly, encouraging sustainable urban mobility. Implementing a bike share program is one of the suggestions outlined in the City's 2018 Master Plan.

The Administration and NLS are working with regional and state officials to plan for and fund this pilot that would start operating in Spring 2025.

Background

Newburyport, Plum Island, and the surrounding communities are ideal to travel and explore by bike. The Coastal Trails network provides a safe and attractive off-road spine connecting town centers and transportation nodes. Distances between key destinations are well within a comfortable cycling range for most people, and cycling through historic neighborhoods and natural preserves is an attraction in and of itself. A bike share system would allow visitors to experience our area's resources and attractions in an intimate way not possible by car and would allow residents who do not have bicycles to get around easily between popular destinations.



Cycling distances between town centers, beaches, transportation facilities and other destinations in the Greater Newburyport area. Nodes and links in red could be the initial phase, with blue indicating possible future growth. Nodes and links in green suggest the potential for expansion of the system to neighboring communities.

A bike share system can provide a range of benefits to the City, its residents, and visitors. Affordable access to bikes for short-distance trips as an alternative to private vehicles reduces congestion, noise and air pollution, improving the quality of life for everyone.

Residents who don't have the space to store a bike or the need to ride a bike regularly could use the system for recreational rides on the rail trails or for trips to the beach. Residents could also rent bikes to access public transportation, whether the train to Boston or a MEVA bus. A bike share system could also make the city more accessible for visitors. With a bike share system, visitors arriving in Newburyport by train could rent a bike and enjoy an easy ride downtown or a pleasant trip to Plum Island or Maudslay State Park. A family who comes by car could park and explore the city with its comfortable rail trails.

Proposed Pilot

The three-year pilot will begin with 5 to 6 stations and 30 bikes in the first year, and will expand to 45 bikes in the second and third years of the pilot.



Some potential locations for bike share stations in Newburyport

If successful locally, the system could expand to Salisbury and Amesbury, taking advantage of the off-road routes provided by the Coastal Trails network. This would require support and buy-in from the respective communities but would enhance the usefulness of the system for both transportation and recreation.

While large bike share systems are prevalent in most major US cities, there are also many examples of smaller bike share systems. The town of Concord, MA operates the Minuteman Bike Share, which consists of two stations and 14 bikes. Users pay \$2 per hour and can pick up and return bikes to either station. Commuters and other frequent users can purchase an annual membership for \$30 and get one-hour rides at no additional cost. The Minuteman Bike Share system will soon be expanded to the towns of Acton, Lincoln and Maynard, and will include a total of seven stations and 42 bikes, including seven adaptive bikes.

Another small-scale bike share system is SusqueCycle in Harrisburg, PA. Starting in March 2023 with 36 bikes and 6 stations, SusqueCycle expanded in 2024 to 60 bikes and 11 stations. Ridership on the system in May 2024 was up 50% from the same month in 2023. Rides cost \$1.50 per 30 minutes, but users can get unlimited 60-minute rides by purchasing an annual membership for \$25.

Funding Plan

User fees can pay for a (typically small) part of the cost of a bike share system, but the great majority of the cost is usually financed through other sources. Our goal for the pilot program is to have it operate with no cost to taxpayers, and we are actively working to secure outside funding through grants, donations and sponsorships.

In May 2024, the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to reserve \$180,000 in federal funds for the bike share pilot (about 63% of the estimated total cost of the three-year pilot), including \$46,000 in the first year. The details of this grant will be submitted to the Council accompanying the gift acceptance order when the funds are officially granted between late October and mid-November. In addition to the federal grant, the City and NLS have received grant and donation commitments totaling \$16,000, including \$11,000 for the first year: \$5,000 from the Institution for Savings Charitable Foundation, \$5,000 from Coastal Trails Coalition, and \$1,000 from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation. User fees are expected to generate about \$6,000 in the first year, leaving a gap of just under \$15,000 for 2025. We are currently pursuing several additional funding sources, and we are confident that the needed funds will be secured.

Station Location

The Administration and NLS are discussing potential sites for the bike share stations. A number of locations are being considered, and we need to narrow these down to the five or six that will provide the greatest overall benefit in terms of destinations and number of users served. Stations must also comply with the requirements of the federal funding in terms of location and access.

In the initial phase, a station will be located at the Parker Street entrance to the rail trail near the MBTA Commuter Rail station. Additional sites have been identified along the rail trail, in the downtown, and at public parks. The final decision on station locations will be up to the City, and the Administration has included a list of proposed locations in this communication for feedback from the Council. The Administration and NLS have also brought this to the Parks Commission for their review and early buy-in.

Operations Plan

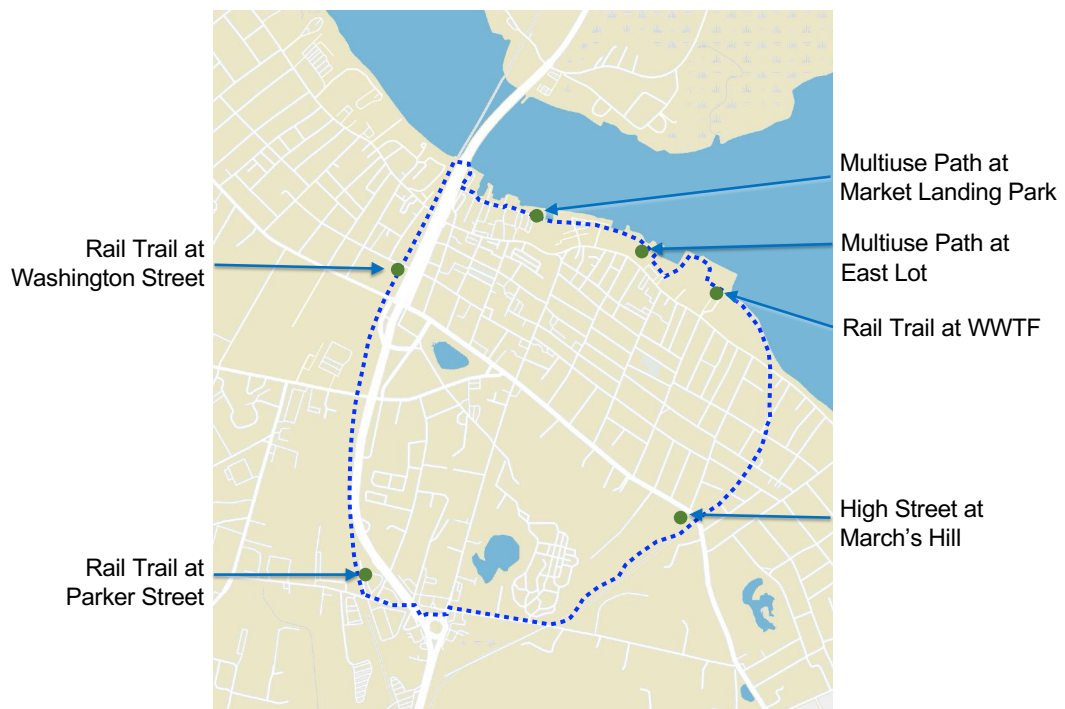
NLS researched several models for bike share systems and the Administration and NLS concluded a turnkey model would be best for this pilot. A vendor will be responsible for installation, maintenance, and customer service for the system. The Newburyport DPS will assist with initial start-up activities and we will include information on the system on the City website and public services portal.

Next Steps

The Administration and NLS are looking to close the funding gap and advance to the decision stage on site locations. We welcome all feedback from the Council and can also answer questions when you consider the gift request for the federal grant and other donations, which will be submitted for approval at a future meeting.

Newburyport Bike Share – Potential Station Locations, Phase 1

September 4, 2024

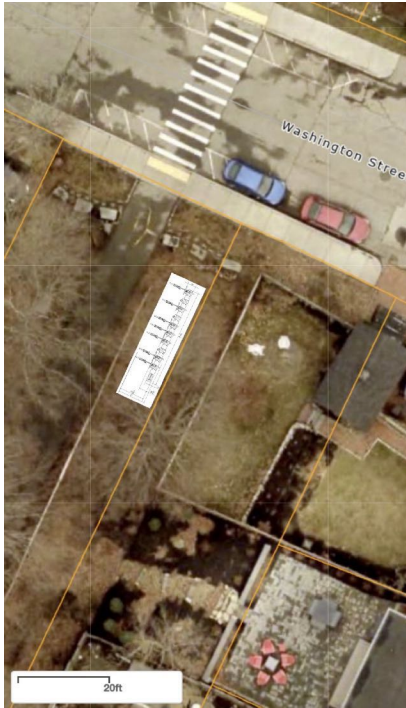




Rail Trail at Parker St



Rail Trail at Parker Street near MBTA



Rail Trail at Washington St

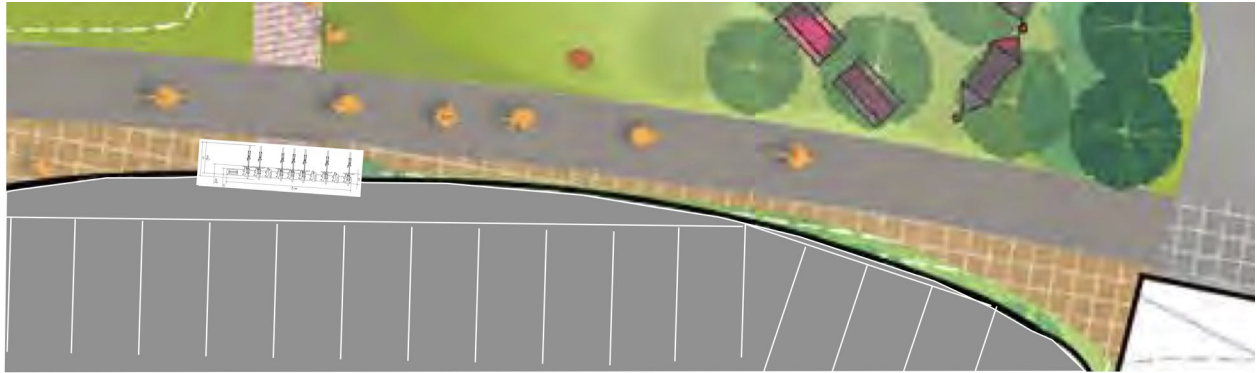




Multiuse Path at Market Landing Park



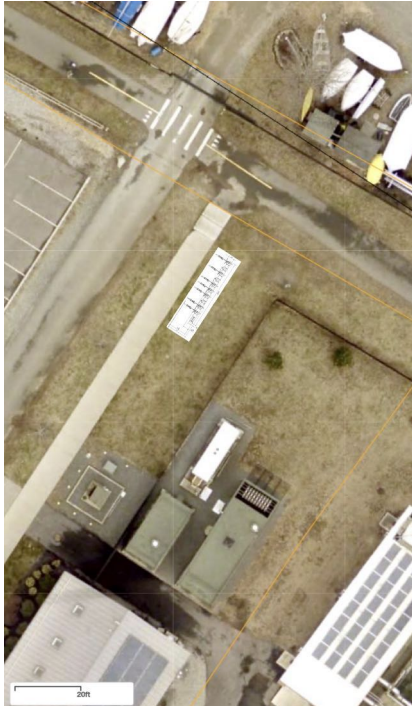
Multiuse Path at Market Landing Park



Multiuse Path at East Lot



Multiuse Path at East Lot



WWTF at Rail Trail



WWTF at Rail Trail



High Street at
March's Hill



High Street at March's Hill