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Mayor Smiley, secretary of transportation Buttigieg, state and federal officials break ground on Woonasquatucket River Greenway improvement Project

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Providence, RI Mayor Brett Smiley hosted U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, senator Jack Reed, senator Sheldon Whitehouse, congressman Gabe Amo (RI-01), congressman Seth Magaziner (RI-02), governor Dan McKee, the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, and a number of state and local officials and partners for a groundbreaking ceremony in commencement of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Improvement Project. The project, made possible by federal, state, and local funding, will transform a one-mile stretch of the Woonasquatucket River Greenway into a vibrant, accessible and ecologically sustainable urban trail.

“The Woonasquatucket Greenway Improvement Project embodies our vision for a city that celebrates its natural resources, champions economic vitality and knits together the diverse tapestry of our neighborhoods,” said mayor Smiley. “This is a commitment to environmental stewardship, enhancing the urban-natural interface and advancing flood mitigation and stormwater management practices that are crucial to our city’s future.”

“The Biden-Harris administration is proud to join governor McKee, mayor Smiley, the Rhode Island Congressional delegation, and community leaders, to break ground on the Woonasquatucket River Greenway Improvement Project, building a safe path for people to walk, bike, or roll, separated from vehicle traffic,” said secretary Pete Buttigieg. “This fills in one of the last remaining unbuilt pieces of greenway, providing the ability to travel safely and affordably from Olneyville and points west to jobs and opportunities in the Valley District, downtown Providence, and the whole region because this will provide connectivity to the train station. We’ve seen a lot of others breaking promises; we’re breaking ground.”

In partnership with the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, the project was designed as a cornerstone of the City’s Woonasquatucket Vision Plan. The city began public outreach in spring 2019, laying the groundwork for a project that is notable for its excellent design, functionality and ecological sensitivity.

“I’m pleased to help bring federal dollars to Rhode Island to invest in increasing vital greenspaces and pedestrian-friendly pathways like this one. This project is an example of how working together at the federal, state, and local levels helps connect neighborhoods and makes the Ocean State cleaner and greener,” said senator Reed, a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, who has led efforts to deliver \$16 million in federal funding over the years for improvements along the

river. “I want to thank Secretary Buttigieg and the U.S. Department of Transportation for making projects like this a reality. As a former mayor, secretary Buttigieg understands the critical importance of infrastructure investments like this. And he’s deftly managed an historic investment in our nation’s infrastructure.”

“Thanks to continued federal investment from our Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we are making once-in-a-generation infrastructure upgrades across the state,” said senator Whitehouse. “A result of many years of federal, state, and local partnership, this project will help revitalize the Woonasquatucket River Greenway and improve bike and pedestrian connections to downtown. I am pleased to help welcome secretary Buttigieg to the Ocean State to highlight how federal dollars are delivering for Rhode Islanders.”

With funding of approximately \$10 million sourced from the RI State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Providence Capital Improvement Program, RI DEM and SNEP, the project represents a collaborative investment in the future of Providence.

“Ensuring Rhode Islanders can access the outdoors and public spaces in our communities is essential to improving their health and well-being,” said congressman Gabe Amo. “The investments being made to the Woonasquatucket Greenway Improvement Project will enhance our environmental stewardship and builds on our commitment to green infrastructure to responsibly improve transportation routes. In Congress, I will continue to work with partners at every level of government to expand our community’s green spaces.”

“Every Rhode Island neighborhood should be walkable, clean and resilient,” said Congressman Magaziner. “With this federal funding, the neighborhoods of Olneyville, Valley and Smith Hill will become greener and more accessible, benefitting residents, small businesses and pedestrians.”

The full project includes:

- Improvements to the existing Woonasquatucket River Greenway from Providence Place Mall to Eagle Square.

- A separated shared use path along Kinsley Ave. and Promenade St.

- Curb separated from street with green infrastructure and mountable truck aprons, which were designed in consultation with area businesses.

- New street trees and bioswales to reduce flooding, treat water flowing into Woonasquatucket River, and provide native habitat along the riverbank.

- Road diet along Kinsley Ave. to reduce speeding.

- Current design includes the conversion of Kinsley Ave. to a one-way in the eastbound direction.

Site prep for construction begins today and construction will continue through Fall, 2024.

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