

GARDNER RECEIVES \$230,000 FROM FEDERAL SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL GRANT

Funding To Be Used to Create Vision Zero and Road Safety Plan

GARDNER – February 12, 2024 – The City of Gardner was recently awarded \$230,000 from the United States Department of Transportation's Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant program to develop a Vision Zero and Road Safety Action Plan.

In December, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced \$813 million from the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law for 385 Safe Streets and Roads for All grants. The Safe Streets and Roads for All program grants go directly to regional, local, and Tribal communities for implementation, planning, and demonstration projects driven at the local level to improve safety and help prevent deaths and serious injuries on the nation's roadways.

The funding helps communities address roadway safety through a comprehensive approach that uses all types of interventions, which aligns with DOT's National Roadway Safety Strategy. These funds will help tackle the preventable crisis of deaths on the nation's roads through safer people, roads, and vehicles, appropriate vehicle speeds, and improved post-crash care.

"In the last three years, Gardner has invested heavily in our infrastructure –however, there's still more we need to do," said **Gardner Mayor Michael Nicholson**. "The funding received from this grant will help us plan for what our next steps should be in making sure our streets are safe for all methods of travel for the people who visit the Chair City."

Since 2020, the City of Gardner has invested nearly \$25 million in infrastructure upgrades. These upgrades have included installations of new sidewalks, new lighting fixtures, ADA compliant crossing ramps, water mains, and repaved over 20% of the roads in the City. Additionally, the City has installed several miles of bicycle travel infrastructure. This funding will help guide the City's actions in the future to ensure that increased travel methods are done in a safest and most effective way for Gardner's growing population.

"The safe growth of our community's population, businesses, and recreation relies on smart planning and careful attention," said **City Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas**. "A transportation master plan will prepare and attend to the essential safety efforts for growing Gardner. We are fortunate to have federal partners invested in our road and pedestrian safety."

According to the 2020 Census, Gardner's population grew ten percent between 2010 and 2020. Aside from this, the City has over 225 housing units that are currently being

planned for the Downtown area alone, leading the City to conduct a review of all transportation methods around the City to plan for this growth.

This award allows the City to create a “Vision Zero” plan to pre-emptively plan for that anticipated population increase in the safest way possible. Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate roadway deaths and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. It is built on the belief that all people have the right to safe mobility. The foundation of Vision Zero is the Safe System approach, which recognizes that people will sometimes make mistakes and that human bodies are vulnerable. This plan takes a comprehensive look at finding ways to ensure that if accidents happen, the proper safety measures are in place to make sure the least harm comes as a result. The Safety Action Plan will include a set of actions to improve the safety for vehicle movement, pedestrians and bicyclists. The actions could include low-cost, quick turnaround projects as well as the more extensive construction type projects and examine topics like speed management and safe pedestrian accommodation throughout the City. It is currently expected that final federal approval with the City will be received in early summer with the project beginning shortly thereafter. Having a Safety Action Plan will enable the City to apply to Federal Highway in the future for funds to implement the proposed actions. The City will coordinate with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission that is addressing safety planning at the regional level.

The Safe System approach focuses on the responsibility to do all we can to both prevent crashes from happening, and to minimize the harm caused when crashes do occur. Vision Zero is more than a goal, or a slogan, or even a new program – it is a fundamental shift in how we think about and work on roadway safety.

“I voted for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law so Massachusetts roads will be safer for everyone, including drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. I’m glad to see nearly a quarter million dollars in federal funding announced for safer streets in Gardner,” said **Congresswoman Lori Trahan**. “As a member of the Regional Leadership Council, I look forward to the work ahead to make sure the Chair City and communities across Massachusetts get every dollar we deserve from this once-in-a-generation investment in our infrastructure.”

“We must ensure that pedestrians and families feel safe to walk, bike and drive in our communities,” said **U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren**. “Thanks to funding from the

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that I fought for alongside President Biden, the city of Gardner will be able to make critical investments to help prevent avoidable accidents and make our roads safer for pedestrians.”

“I’m proud to have supported Gardner’s application for a Safe Streets and Roads for All grant,” said **U.S. Senator Ed Markey**. “Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and our delegation’s advocacy, this funding will help ensure the safety of drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists alike. Together, we can enable a future with zero serious roadway accidents in the Chair City.”

Between road safety improvements, updates to fixed bus services, renovations at the City’s airport, increased multimodal travel paths and lanes, and others, transportation in Gardner is certainly on the move.

“I’d like to thank all of our federal partners for helping bring this funding to Gardner,” concluded **Mayor Nicholson**. “The unprecedented amount of growth we are seeing is a direct result of the investments we have been able to make in our City and its residents. The strong partnership and collaboration we have across all levels of government has truly benefited our community and I look forward to seeing what we are able to accomplish together in the future.”

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