

New Bedford Secures Funding for Clark's Cove Section of Hurricane Barrier Pathway

MassDOT grant award will extend recreational pathway atop the Clark's Cove section of the hurricane barrier.

The City of New Bedford has successfully secured just over \$5 million in state grant funding from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for Phase II of the project to construct a recreational pathway atop New Bedford's Hurricane Barrier. Phase II will extend the same type of recreational pathway residents and visitors have been enjoying on the HarborWalk to the Clark's Cove portion of the barrier. The CoveWalk will provide public access to the waterfront where it has been obstructed by the stone barrier for more than fifty years and will offer spectacular elevated water views unlike anywhere else in the Northeast.

Shortly after taking office in 2012, Mayor Mitchell called for the reconnection of New Bedford's waterfront with residential and downtown areas. A key element of the Mayor's strategy was the construction of a pathway atop the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier.

The two segments of New Bedford's famous Hurricane Barrier run along the base of New Bedford's South End peninsula and protect the main harbor and Clark's Cove from storm surges. Last fall, New Bedford restored public access along the harbor with the opening of the "HarborWalk"—a 3,400 foot long recreational pathway atop the portion of the New Bedford Hurricane Barrier that lines the city's main harbor. Phase II of this project will extend the recreational pathway for an additional 4,800 feet along the Clark's Cove portion of the structure on the west side of the peninsula.

In his recent State of the City Address, Mayor Mitchell reported that New Bedford had completed the design and secured permitting for the CoveWalk project and was relentlessly pursuing funding for construction from the state.

“I want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration and State Transportation Secretary Stephanie Pollack and Highway Administrator Tom Tinlin in particular, for considering the City’s strong funding pitch and lending their support to the project,” said Mayor Mitchell who provided Secretary Pollack and Administrator Tinlin with tours of the Harborwalk last fall.

“I also want to thank Senator Mark Montigny and Representative Tony Cabral for their supportive phone calls,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

MassDOT will fund the project through a “force account,” (rather than as an earmarked project) which is a mechanism by which MassDOT reimburses municipalities for discrete capital projects.

Mayor Mitchell praised the City’s Department of Public Infrastructure (DPI) for its work in designing the project and obtaining the necessary federal and state approvals. “Through DPI’s hard work over the last three years, the project was “shovel ready” and therefore highly competitive for funding,” Mitchell said.

Mayor Mitchell added, “This announcement marks an important step toward achieving our long-term goal of ringing the city with a system of waterside trails that will enrich the quality of life in neighborhoods from the North End to the South End, raise property values, and draw visitors. Our connection to the water is New Bedford’s greatest asset and we must seize this and grow our city’s reputation as a place with a unique and extensive connection to the water.”

Senator Montigny, who led Senate efforts to secure state

funding for the \$5 million project, remarked that, "The swift completion of this walkway will expand neighborhood access to our waterfront and highlight one of the most beautiful ocean vistas along the entire East Coast. This long overdue amenity for our residents will foster a further appreciation for our shorelines that have been shielded from public view for over fifty years."

"New Bedford Harbor is one of the natural wonders of Massachusetts and today's state grant will help everyone, local residents and visitors, better experience it," said State Representative Antonio F.D. Cabral. "I will continue to work with the City to ensure that the Harbor is something all residents can enjoy."

"The addition of the hurricane walking path along West Rodney French Boulevard and Cove Road will only increase the beauty and charm of New Bedford," said Joseph P. Lopes, Ward 6 City Councilor.

New Bedford is also moving ahead with the Riverwalk along the Acushnet River in the North End of the harbor. Although the Riverwalk project will take more time as it is proceeding side-by-side with the EPA's harbor cleanup, the design phase is complete.