

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Multi-municipal Effort Results in \$1.471 million of Additional Grant Funding to Complete Key Segments of Kennett Greenway and Improve Public Access to Open Space

Kennett Square – On November 19, 2021, the Commonwealth Financing Authority announced \$1.471 million in grant funding through the Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) program for the Kennett Greenway Connectors – Birch Street and Magnolia Underpass. The project is the result of a joint effort between the Borough of Kennett Square and Kennett Township, with direct support from New Garden Township and dozens of community stakeholders, to further advance the development of the Kennett Greenway.

A decade-long initiative, the Kennett Greenway connects Kennett Township, Kennett Square Borough, East Marlborough Township and New Garden Township, and extends across the state border into Delaware. Once completed, the 14+ mile pedestrian and bicycle loop will safely and effectively connect the greater Kennett community to everyday destinations, the area's natural beauty, and various points of interest. This network of trails linking Kennett's preserved open spaces, recreational facilities, and other community assets has been advanced through a phased approach, with strong community support, local government cooperation and county and state elected advocacy.

Senator John Kane stated, "I'm very proud of the \$1.4 million we helped secure for the Kennett Greenways project. This project will provide an inclusive greenway for residents and help preserve open space in Kennett Square the surrounding area." The Kennett Greenway runs through the 9th Senate District and 158th and 160th House Districts.

The Kennett Greenway Connectors – Birch Street and Magnolia Underpass (Project) is aimed at addressing two significant and complementary segments of the Kennett Greenway (Greenway) through the creation of a "complete street" along Birch Street in the Borough of Kennett Square, and the construction of a railroad underpass, to be known as the Magnolia Underpass, in Kennett Township. The new MTF grant will complement \$400,000 in previous MTF grant funding awarded to the project earlier this year and will allow the inter-municipal project to finally happen.

Remarking on the additional award, Representative Sappey stated, "I'm thrilled that this funding has been approved to support outstanding local projects. These grants increase safety and traffic flow, connect communities by trail, conserve open space and provide recreation opportunities. I was pleased to support these applications for funding and look forward to seeing the results."

The Birch Street Streetscape portion of the project will address stormwater issues along Birch Street including the implementation of stormwater best management practices and roadway reconstruction, and will promote alternatives to traditional vehicular travel through the installation of new sidewalks, ADA curbs and ramps, crosswalks and appropriate signage. The MTF funding will be utilized in addition to a \$500,000 Chester County Community Revitalization Program grant through the Chester County Department of Community Development to facilitate stormwater improvements along Birch Street.

Borough Mayor Matt Fetick expressed his appreciation for the support stating, "The Borough is most appreciative for the support received from our elected officials. We must thank Senator John Kane and Representative Christina Sappey for their unwavering advocacy which was instrumental in this successful outcome. Representative Craig Williams also provided a letter of support and our County Commissioners have continually provided support for the project."

Multi-municipal in nature, the MTF project also includes the construction of the Magnolia Underpass in Kennett Township, which represents a critical rail crossing for the Greenway. The proposed culvert underpass will cross beneath the East Penn Railway, who has already expressed support for the project, and will provide a long-awaited bike and pedestrian connection between the Township and Borough trails. Locally-owned Kennett Business Park LP has also committed to completing the trail from the underpass into the Borough.

Eden Ratliff, Kennett Township's manager commented "The Greenway is integral to the future vision of Kennett Township as a place where people can safely and easily walk or bicycle, whether for recreation or necessity. The underpass will eliminate the physical barrier of East Penn Railway that prevents trail users from easily and safely accessing both sides of the rail tracks. The Township is grateful for the support and unrelenting advocacy of our state elected officials to secure grant funding allowing us to advance this project."

Similarly, Brenda Mercomes, President of Kennett Square Borough Council remarked, "The Kennett Greenway project will serve the community well. In fact, the support it has received, to date, has been phenomenal. I am confident that the Borough will work hand in hand with our municipal partners to complete this ambitious project."

Community support for the project was widespread. Written support was provided by Senator John Kane, Representative Christina Sappey, Representative Craig Williams, Chester County Board of Commissioners, Kennett Consolidated School District, Kennett Area Park and Recreation Board, Kennett Township Trails and Sidewalks Committee, Kennett Trails Alliance, New Garden Township, YMCA of Greater Brandywine, Friends of the New Garden Trails, Historic Kennett Square, Bike Kennett, The Commonwealth Group, West Branch Distilling Co., Kennett Square Realty, Square Roots Collective, The Creamery of Kennett Square, The worKS, The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County, South Mill Champs, Braeloch Brewing, and Montchanin Group.

In addition to funding pledged by the Borough and Township, Square Roots Collective has indicated a desire to provide funds to the project toward engineering and soft costs that may exceed the grant scope of work. Speaking as the founder of Square Roots Collective, Mike Bontrager stated “We and our partners have been working hard to ensure the public has access to the significant open space assets that the Township has had the foresight to preserve over the years. This grant will enable a critical step in that journey. It’s a journey we believe so strongly in that we are putting our own capital behind this project, and it’s gratifying to see the abundance of community support that has come together behind this vision.”

The Greenway forms a part of a larger regional trails effort intended to link nearby communities. Earlier this month, Kennett Township, in collaboration with Kennett Square Borough, East Marlborough Township and Longwood Gardens received grant funding through the Chester County Vision Partnerships Program to advance a trail feasibility study to further regional connectivity. Specifically, this study will determine the viability of several bicycle and pedestrian connections from the Kennett Square area to Longwood Gardens, laying the additional groundwork necessary for implementation and construction of new multimodal infrastructure that will support active transportation in the greater Kennett region. While Longwood Gardens is the marquee destination in this study, it will also evaluate connecting Unionville Village and Unionville High School to Kennett Borough and the Greenway, as well as East Marlborough, Kennett Borough and Kennett Township to the Route 1 business corridor, including Walmart. The study will be conducted by McMahon Associates, together with Unknown Studio Landscape Architecture & Urban Design and Biohabitats.

Executive Director of the Kennett Trails Alliance, Christina Norland commented: “We are so grateful for the public/private partnerships that have been forged to secure additional funding needed to advance multimodal transportation in our community. The Kennett Greenway is a transformational project that promotes inclusivity, health, safety, and environmental stewardship and contributes to the thriving of all members of our community.”

Please send any questions or comments to Christina Norland at cnorland@ksqroots.com
