

Mills River Town Council approves Highway 280 multi-use path

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A multi-use path to run alongside N.C. Highway 280 has been given the go ahead for the north Mills River area.

The Town Council met Thursday night and voted to seek funding for a preliminary engineering plan needed for the path, set to run from the N.C. Highway 191 and 280 intersections northbound to Broadpointe Drive.

The path was originally envisioned to run along Highway 280 from Westfeldt Park near the Asheville Regional Airport to the entrance of the Pisgah National Forest at the U.S. Route 64 intersection.

However, during a January budget session, the Mills River council decided to support the northern part of the trail, but abandoned the path southwest of the 191 and 280 intersections to the Transylvania County line.

Proponents of the larger project said the pathway would be a boost to the local economy and provide a recreation option for pedestrians. Detractors said it will irrevocably harm landowners along the route, taking up front yards and income-producing properties.

The new length of the path runs 2.7 miles along 280 from the former Food Lion northbound to the town limits at Broadpointe Drive. The feasibility study shows the path will most likely run alongside, and separated from, the road on the north/west side of the highway.

Conserving Carolina Executive Director Kieran Roe made a presentation to council members Thursday. Half the crowd in the full council room rose when Roe asked for those to stand in support of the project.

“We are here to say we have a lot of local folks who support the project,” said Roe. “We hope the town will support moving forward on this section of the path as well.”

The council authorized Town Manager Jeff Wells to request funding under the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization’s locally administered project program by March 30 to fund the preliminary engineering – estimated to cost \$300,000 with a local \$60,000 match.

Once the P.E. is complete in 2019, the town will determine the first piece to construct – likely the section between 191 and North Mills River Road – and request funding from the MPO for the first section.

Construction of the first piece is likely to begin in 2021. The plan is to construct the path piece by piece over time.

The town plans to use a combination of fundraising events, donations and grants to pay for the project.

Town awards basketball court contract

A full outdoor basketball court is coming to Mills River Park this summer.

The town received bids from four companies for the project, ranging from \$72,835 to \$106,990. The council awarded the contract to the lowest bidder: Arden-based JLS Company LLC.

The full six-hoop asphalt court will be built off the extended parking by Town Hall.

The initial schedule has the project set to be complete by June.



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