

March 12, 2014

Dear Governor Beshear,

Today I am writing on behalf of to the Town Branch Trail, a city-wide greenway in Lexington. Over the last 15 years our creek and trail advocacy campaign has been a big success. Not only has Town Branch been incorporated into the ambitious plans for the Rupp Arena renovation and Town Branch Commons, but we have also secured **\$4 million** in land and funding for **three miles of the trail**, two of which have been built. Completed sections of the trail have attracted strong public support and heavy use. Additionally, a number of retail businesses in Lexington and a new local bourbon have adopted the “Town Branch” name.

I am writing to you today about a crucial and specific section of the trail - where it intersects and runs parallel with the expansion of the New Circle Road in Lexington as it crosses the Town Branch Creek and the CSX rail line. It is ***essential*** that the bicycle and pedestrian trail be incorporated into plans for the New Circle Road expansion to connect it to other sections of the trail. This requires the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet to build a tunnel under New Circle Road and an attached bridge for the bike path as the state rebuilds the limited access highway bridge.

Town Branch Trail has had extensive engagement with District 7 transportation staff and has conducted substantial due diligence and research on this issue. Here are their findings:

1. US Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood ***specifically*** calls for this type of bike and pedestrian urban corridor to be integrated into highway expansion projects such as this where existing and proposed urban trails can benefit.
2. National guidelines set by AASHTO (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials) provide specific drawings and dimensions for bike pedestrian paths to be constructed along highways and suggests that this type of integration on bridges can be the **most cost-effective solution**.
3. There are **dozens of existing precedents** for this type of trail building around the country. (links to all data can be found at:www.townbranch.org)

4. The Town Branch Trail project has been working with local and state entities for over a decade on long range transportation planning. Our proposal was delivered to Joshua Samples of District 7 in March of 2013 - presumably ample time for the design to be integrated and the project budget to be adjusted for this design element.
5. The proposed trail section is estimated to cost approximately \$800K, which is one percent of the \$80 Million New Circle Road project budget. Thus by definition, it is well within the general contingency allowance for typical transportation projects.
6. Constructing the trail along with the highway will provide **cost and time savings** in bidding, logistics, and help bring thousands of Lexingtonians vastly improved access to Downtown Lexington without the need for a vehicle.
7. If faithfully implemented, this trail project will reduce traffic congestion and associated air pollution, improve outdoor recreation opportunities, promote urban redevelopment, and **enhance the quality of life** in Lexington.

Despite these benefits, to date we have received no assurances from the Transportation Cabinet that the Town Branch Trail will be fully incorporated into the New Circle Road expansion.

The bidding process for the project is eminent. Without full integration with the highway project, development of this popular trail will be delayed, possibly by years.

Please assist the citizens of Central Kentucky in their goal of building a scenic and functional greenway corridor to connect our world-class rural landscape with Masterson Station Park, McConnell Springs Nature Preserve, the Lexington Distillery District, The Rupp District, Town Branch Commons, all the way to the Isaac Murphy Memorial Art Garden on Third Street. This bike pedestrian corridor will connect the Masterson Station, McConnell's Trace, Marehaven, Townley and Meadowthorpe neighborhoods and the Leestown V.A., Military Reserve and BCTC campuses with downtown Lexington.

Sincerely,

Contact Governor Beshear

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