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Audio: Final approval given to Atchison improvement projects

(KAIR)--The Atchison City Commission has given final approval to three improvement projects, including the extension of the Riverfront Trail, the 2nd Street Corridor Project, and the Safe Routes to Schools Project for South 5th Street.

Approval was granted during the Commission's February 4 meeting.

MSC Radio News Director Brian Hagen talked to Assitant Atchison City Manager Justin Pregont about the projects. The interview is below.

Editor's note: below is a press release issued by the City of Atchison following Commission approval of the projects.

ATCHISON – The City of Atchison will be embarking on a trio of projects adjacent to downtown this spring that will improve walkability and provide sidewalk upgrades and extensions.

The projects include a doubling of the Riverfront Trail, extending the popular attraction to the north.

When it's done, the trail will be just under a mile long.

The other projects include the 2nd Street Corridor Project and the Safe Routes to Schools Project for South 5th Street.

“Improving the quality of life for our residents and visitors is a key priority for the City, and this is one way to make an impact,” Assistant City Manager Justin

Pregont said.

The 2nd Street Corridor Project is intended to improve the walking experience between downtown Atchison and Benedictine College. The project includes curb/gutter and sidewalk replacement along 2nd Street from Commercial Street to Division Street. Part of the project is the installation of Stresscrete street light poles in the same fashion as those downtown.

The Safe Routes to School Project will improve sidewalks from the 5th Street viaduct all the way to U Street – with some additional work done on some of the connecting side streets along that corridor.

All three of the projects make extensive use of grant funding. The Riverfront Trail Extension makes use of a \$250,000 federal Recreational Trails Grant.

Combined with an \$80,000 contribution from the Atchison Riverfront Foundation, this project should be completed with minimal use of City funds.

The 2nd Street Corridor Project is expected to cost about \$920,000, with \$525,000 coming from a Transportation Alternatives Grant. The Transportation Alternatives Program is a KDOT initiative that uses Federal Highway Administration funds.

The Safe Routes to Schools Program is also part of the Transportation Alternatives Program, and the South 5th Street Project will utilize \$400,000 of this funding – 80 percent of the expected cost of the \$500,000 project.

“Any time we can make use of grant funds to help stretch our budget further, that is an added benefit for our residents,” Pregont said.

The three projects come on the heels of the AMS West Sidewalks Project and the Downtown West ADA Project, both of which combined for \$419,000 of outside funding through the federal Community Development Block Grant program.

Collectively the projects are part of an effort to increase pedestrian accessibility to downtown and to enhance the pedestrian experience throughout the core of Atchison.

“I’m incredibly excited about our upcoming trail and sidewalk improvements,” Mayor Shawn Rizza said. “To be able to move forward with all three of these projects this year is a testament to our staff’s ability and dedication. The Riverfront is by far the most utilized park in the city, and we are about to double its length. The 2nd Street Project will beautify the connection between downtown, the Amelia Historic District, and BC, encouraging people to travel between all three. The Safe Routes to School initiative on South 5th Street will give our kids a protected path to school with improved street crossings, and new sidewalks. This will have a great impact towards improving the overall health and appearance of Atchison.”

The City Commission approved the three projects during Monday’s regular meeting. Construction on each project is due to begin in March, with estimated completion dates in mid-summer.