

For Immediate Release

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The Riverline Awarded \$900,000 in FY22 Federal Budget

The Riverline was awarded \$900,000 in federal funds in the recently approved federal budget, as announced at a press event early this week. The event featured New York State Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand; Congressman Brian Higgins; Mayor Byron Brown; Thomas George, Director of Public Transit at the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA); Jeff Lebsack, The Riverline Director; and Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy.

The funds will be received by the NFTA, project partner and owner of the former DL & W corridor, which runs from Canalside to the Buffalo River across from Tesla where The Riverline is planned.

The Riverline, spearheaded by the Western New York Land Conservancy, was accepted into the prestigious High Line Network's consortium of infrastructure reuse projects—one of only 39 such projects across North America. When The Riverline is complete, it will be a one-and-a-half-mile nature trail and greenway through the Old First Ward, Perry, and Valley neighborhoods. The Federal money will help build the first gateway of The Riverline, and fund additional pre-construction activities and priority improvements.

“We’re ecstatic to receive funding in this year’s federal budget,” said Jeff Lebsack, The Riverline’s Director. “This money provides the most substantial funding to date and it is expected to attract additional federal, state, and private funds to help us get shovels in the ground.”

“I have been a strong supporter of The Riverline ever since the Western New York Land Conservancy took the exciting project on nearly five years ago,” said Congressman Brian Higgins, who sponsored the funding request and shepherded it through the budgeting process. “It will bridge Buffalo’s rich cultural and industrial past with its bright future as a modern, green destination city by revitalizing one of our most iconic places: our historic waterfront. I am so pleased to see my funding request for The Riverline in this year’s federal budget. The 1.5 mile stretch of greenway is a valuable asset for our city, as this funding demonstrates.”

“Throughout this project, the Land Conservancy has included the Old First Ward in discussions about what the DL & W corridor will become,” said Patrick Gormley, Executive Director of the Old First Ward Community Center. “They have asked for our thoughts, and they have listened carefully to our hopes and concerns. We’re thrilled to see The Riverline in the federal budget, and we look forward to seeing additional progress, and tangible results, over the course of the next year.”

Once it is built, The Riverline will be a vibrant, safe, and welcoming space for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to connect with each other, with nature, and with the waterfront. It will be an inspiring community gathering place alive with the history and voice of the surrounding Old First Ward, Perry, and Valley neighborhoods, with walking, bicycling, and winter activities like snowshoeing and sledding. It will connect to parks and kayak launches along the Buffalo River, and it will connect to trails that go to Canalside and the Outer Harbor, as well as the Larkin District and beyond. By transforming the corridor, the project will provide a model for how to connect people to nature right in the heart of the city.

The Riverline has been developed in collaboration with neighborhood groups, project partners, and ongoing community feedback over the past five years. The concept designs, published in July of last year, envision a string of vibrant and engaging experiences in nature that everyone can enjoy—only minutes from downtown. A variety of experiences along the trail have been designed to match their surroundings: The Del – where tight-knit neighborhoods are right next to the trail; The Junctures – where the legacy of the railroad becomes a place of connection; and The Basswoods – where nature takes center stage. Entrances have also been designed to respect the character of the communities. Gateways provide high profile public access points while neighborhood connectors provide more subtle approaches for those who live along The Riverline.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, or donating to create The Riverline, please visit the website for The Riverline: theriverline.com. You can also reach out to the Land Conservancy at (716) 687-1225 or info@wnylc.org.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for current and future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 87 in New York State. Land trusts have protected over 56 million acres of land. To learn more about the Land Conservancy, visit wnylc.org.