

# THE STAR

## Grant could make Shelby RAIL Trail a reality

**Dustin George**

Shelby Star USA TODAY NETWORK

The city of Shelby has applied for a \$25 million federal grant which would provide all the necessary funding for the entire 10.2 miles of the Shelby RAIL Trail without the need for any local funding.

RAISE Discretionary Grants, awarded by the DOT, are competitive and awarded to only a select few communities across the country each year, so officials are looking for public supporters of the project to help increase their odds in the grant project.

In June, the city launched a community support page on the RAIL Trail website where residents could sign their name as a show of support and leave comments about their hopes for the trail.

In just over a week, the form generated more than 1,000 responses.

“They keep coming in. I think we are up to around 1,170 right now. It has been extremely well received,” said Chip Nuhrah, city spokesman. “And many of them have not only left their name but also left comments about why they support it or how much they support it.”

Nuhrah added that the form has received input from people living in every municipality in Cleveland County and some from outside of the county in areas which already have similar trail systems showing support for the project.

Such support goes a long way for the people who decide which projects will receive grants.

“It does help. It doesn’t seal the deal. We had a strong application anyway and when a community is showing that much support behind a project it really helps,” said Nuhrah. “It is a very competitive grant. I think there were 900-something applicants for the grant, and they only give them out to a few communities.”

The city has been planning the development of a rail trail since 2007. The Shelby RAIL (Regional Access Improvement Line) Trail is a trail system that will include 10.2 miles of unused railroad corridor that runs through Shelby, Patterson Springs and Earl.

The Shelby RAIL Trail projected to bring significant economic impact to Shelby and Cleveland County while contributing to the health and well being of local citizens and visitors from across the region.

“The city of Shelby has worked diligently to secure grant funding for the RAIL Trail project for many years, and we are cautiously optimistic success is around the corner,” said City Manager Rick Howell. “We have a great project that has scored well in the grant process. It checks all the boxes by providing a project that will attract visitors, provide another recreation opportunity, promote health and wellness in the community and, most importantly provide a safe transportation alternative for people to get to work, school, access shopping and recreational amenities along the corridor.”

If the city receives the full amount of the grant, it could shorten the amount of time needed to build the trail by a measure of years.

“The future Carolina Harmony Trail will truly be transformational to our community. We have a critical need in Shelby for safer pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. This trail will go a long way in addressing this need,” said Shelby Mayor Stan Anthony. “I can’t think of any other amenity that will be so universally used and appreciated. If we are successful in securing our RAISE grant, it will allow us to complete the trail on a much quicker timeline, reducing the overall cost of the project.”

Information about the RAIL Trail and the community support page and form are available online at [cityofshelby.com/visitors/shelby-greenwaysystem/shelby-r-a-i-l-trail](http://cityofshelby.com/visitors/shelby-greenwaysystem/shelby-r-a-i-l-trail).

*Dustin George can be reached at 704-669-3337 or [Dustin.George@ShelbyStar.com](mailto:Dustin.George@ShelbyStar.com).*

July 10, 2022

