

\$15M Stimulus on Base Parkway

Weymouth News
By Ed Baker

Attempts to construct the East-West parkway at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station have gotten a \$15 million federal assist.

Funding for the two-lane roadway is on Gov. Deval Patrick's list of 33 priority projects under the Massachusetts Recovery Plan.

The list was announced on Oct. 26.

"We are very pleased with the developments that have occurred during the last couple of weeks," said Kevin Donovan, chief executive officer for the South Shore Tri-Town Development Corp., the next day.

He explained that the \$15 million would be enough to build a thoroughfare that would link Hingham Street in Rockland to the base entrance on Route 18.

"We are looking to phase this project by having the parkway connect to Shea Memorial Boulevard," Donovan said.

The second phase of the parkway's construction would link Hingham Street to Route 18 near the South Weymouth MBTA station when more funding becomes available.

Patrick has committed \$42.6 million in state aid to construct the road in a 30-year bond bill that lawmakers approved last year.

The funding includes \$8 million in federal aid.

Donovan said that Tri-Town is working with the state Executive Office of Administration and Finance to get bonds for constructing the parkway's first phase.

"We have been having weekly conference calls, and we are doing the necessary legal work," he said.

The legal work includes getting an easement from the Navy to allow the road to be built on a portion of the 830 acres it owns on the southern tier of the base.

“We are putting the final touches on that as well,” Donovan said. “There have been intense discussions between the Navy and the state in putting that package together.”

The \$15 million aid for constructing the parkway is being especially welcomed by LNR Property Corp., which is responsible for renovating the base into a residential-commercial complex.

“Obviously, this is incredibly good news,” said William Ryan, spokesman for LNR. “The \$15 million in stimulus funding will complement the state’s \$30 million bond investment. It is definitely sufficient with getting a (construction) contract funded and getting the parkway moving. We are anticipating the start of construction in the early part of 2010.”

Ryan said that LNR is moving forward with completing a final design for the thoroughfare.

“We are extremely grateful to the governor and state Rep. Ronald Mariano, who has worked hard and long on this,” he said.

Ryan said that LNR also appreciates the efforts by U. S. Rep. William Delahunt, U. S. Sen. John Kerry, and the late U. S. Sen. Edward Kennedy to get the stimulus funding for the parkway project.

“We are very pleased about this,” Donovan said. “This will help put people back to work, and it will be a positive attribute for the South Shore and labor, who are in need of the work.”

The parkway will give drivers access to the new amenities at the base that LNR plans to construct during the next 14 years.

“With respect to the East-West parkway at the South Weymouth Naval Air Station, the funding is the culmination of years of hard work, and (it) will

help jumpstart the next phase of redevelopment at the base,” Delahunt said in a statement.

Patrick has designated the base makeover project as a municipal growth district.

This title permits state officials to label these locations as “development ready” to get commercial and residential development on the fast track.

These advantages will help LNR to construct 2,855 homes and two million square feet of commercial enterprises at the base in phases during the next 14 years.

The dwellings will include rentals and ownership housing.

LNR’s blueprint also includes a hotel, an 18-hole golf course, a conference center, boutique shops, restaurants, hiking paths, walkways, recreational fields, and a two million square foot commercial complex to accommodate a pharmaceutical company or biotechnology firm.