

# **TOWN OF EAST HADDAM**

## **LAND USE OFFICE**

Town Office Building - P. O. BOX K  
EAST HADDAM, CONN. 06423

**Type of Project Request:** Implementation Grant - Letter of Intent

**Project Name and Location:** East Haddam/Haddam Village Project - Connecticut  
River Enhancement and Access Plan  
East Haddam and Haddam, Connecticut

**Organization:** Towns of East Haddam and Haddam - State of Connecticut

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**Estimated Grant Request** \$2,460,000

### **Project Description**

There exists a regional and national objective to protect and better utilize scenic waterways such as the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River Watershed is such a resource and has recently been designated as a American Heritage River; the lower section has been designated one of the "Last Great Places" by the Nature Conservancy; and the entire river designated as the Silvio O Conte Wildlife Refuge by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These assets endure to be shared by all but are presently fragmented and connected only by the traditional array of transportation options. The Towns of East Haddam and Haddam are proposing projects that compliments and enhance the present transportation options available to residents and visitors.

Alternate modes of viewing and accessing the historical and natural treasures of this area will be available in the form of trails, both walking and biking. As a result, the traditional bottleneck of the historic East Haddam / Haddam swing bridge will experience significant reductions of vehicular traffic by offering visitors and residents these new options.

Development and increases in tourism, both desirable in compatible forms, have none-the-less increased the pressures on the natural resources that supply the foundation for the former. By creatively and properly developing access to these resources, these same resources will be protected and made available to visitors hampered by previously limited modes of transport and the natural site restrictions. More and improved parking, a variety of ways to pleasantly access the historic and natural environment, and the creation of improvements to existing connective facilities will advance opportunities for sustainable and appropriate commercial growth within the project areas.

The ability to bring the public closer to the Connecticut River and classic New England townships can only assist in developing an understanding of why these communities strive to preserve the scenic value of these areas. The balance of conservation, preservation, and education along with the creative reuse of disturbed areas along the Connecticut River, is one that provides opportunities for all groups while creating minimum impacts to the environment

### **Project Goals**

To create connective walk way over the East Haddam/Haddam Swing Bridge, connecting Tylerville (part of Haddam) to East Haddam Villages. Each side has many integrated factors that enhance the potential for pedestrian and bicycle traffic to historic sites, scenic areas, historic railroads, abandoned railways to be used for pedestrian and bicycle trails, and provide access for boat patrons, along with landscaping and beautification projects along existing scenic river areas.

This proposal is Regional since it also provides a destination for the Essex Steam Train Station and the Connecticut River cruise lines from Deep River. These walkways combine all of the factors desired in the Tourist Industry - Scenic Areas (The Lower Connecticut River), hiking and biking areas, Scenic Rides (Essex Steam Train, Haddam/Deep River Cruise Lines, and Goodspeed Airport), Historic Structures (East Haddam Village), Historic Rail Lines and its possible expansion (New York, New Haven, Hartford Connecticut River Rail Line), Entertainment (Goodspeed Opera House and The Camelot Cruise Lines Shows), Restaurants and Shops in East Haddam and Tylerville. The area also becomes a central destination for cyclist who wish to start in East Haddam/Haddam and tour the countryside to destinations such as Gillette's Castle, Devil's Hopyard State Park, Babcock's Wildlife Management Area, Cockaponset State Forest, or Scenic Rte 154

Educational information on the Environmental and Historic factors that have shaped the Lower Connecticut River will be made available to the public in the form of plaques, brochures, and informational tours.

### **Specifics**

#### **I. a Centralized parking areas. Goodspeed Landing and Creamery Road**

**Create a centralized parking area on the William's property along Creamery Road and Goodspeed Landing.** The parking area would be 2/3 Grassy Pavers to maintain the green landscape and blend in with an existing over grown meadow area. The edges will be planted with native species to provide a scenic buffer along Succor Brook. This additional parking area would provide access to the historic buildings in East Haddam Village and access to the commercial areas.

**b. Site of former Connecticut D.O.T. garage on Rte 82 in Tylerville.** To be used as a Tourist information center and centralized parking, Public Restrooms, and Wood Boat construction site.

#### **II. Create boardwalk along the Connecticut River to provide access to scenic areas and public access for boating, fishing, and picnicking.** The public will gain access to a presently restricted area along the river. The boardwalk loop would start at Lumberyard Road, west along Succor Brook, south along the Connecticut River to a viewing platform overlooking a created wetlands adjacent to Chapman's Pond. This walkway would return along Lumberyard Road. The Town also owns an easement for a boat launch which will be improved. The walkway will have decorative lamp lighting of the historic period of the village, picnic areas, and benches. The

viewing platform will overlook the Chapman's Pond Wildlife Area. Plaques will identify the existing and created habitats, wildlife species on site, and seasonal changes. This area also includes improving the existing parking area, the creation of grassy pavers to provide overflow parking and a green area, removal of metal rail beams and replacing them with wood guard rail system, and the construction of public bathrooms.

**III. Create a trail from the existing Town Office Complex north along the Connecticut River to the historic Nathan Hale School site and loop around to Main Street (Rte 149).**

The pathway along the Connecticut River would be cut into an 1800's rock quarry. The pathway would be protected with wrought iron railing but not lit. A platform area would be cut into the stone to provide a scenic overview of the Connecticut River and a prime location to view bald eagles and native and migratory waterfowl. Plaques will be installed to identify historic factors of the area and wildlife species and habitats.

**IV. Work in coordination with the State Department of Transportation to develop and construct a walkway over the East Haddam/Haddam swing bridge.** Presently pedestrian traffic is prohibited due to road width and safety concerns. This cantilevered walkway would allow bike and pedestrian traffic across therefore making the area more accessible.

**V. Construct a walkway with lighting from the swing bridge to Tylerville and connect two villages along Rte 82.** This pathway will link commercial areas. Presently this walk is not safe for pedestrian traffic.

**VII. Create scenic trail along the Connecticut River in Haddam in cooperation with D.E.P.** D.E.P. has indicated that this proposal is feasible. Walkway would have scenic overviews, wildlife and habitat observation sites and information on the history of the river and the function it served in developing the area.

**Purpose and Criteria:** (As listed in the grant application)

- 1. + 2.** By providing centralized set areas to park and accesses for walking and biking will reduce traffic by stopping the existing short stop and go trips.
- 3.** The reduced traffic and easier access will lengthen the viability of the historic swing bridge and eliminated a costly replacement that would cause and economical and social hardship to both communities.
- 4.** These connective walkways and parking areas are designed to accommodate the tourist, residents, and owner and employees of the existing and future businesses. These measures are specifically designed for pedestrian traffic.
- 5.** The greatest issue as one travels through these communities is the lack of direction and the inability to connect private and public entities in the villages. These connective walkways and designated parking areas will bring the villages together as one. The increases in commercial square footage, increase employee hours, and visitor satisfaction are the baseline indicators for performance measures. The goal is to make the area a destination the is convenient for the visitor and will encourage their return.

**Priorities for all Grants:** (As listed in the grant application)

**A.** The Towns of East Haddam and Haddam have already committed to the payment of twenty percent (20%) of all cost and have agreed to the maintenance of all structures.

**B.** The site could provide baseline information as how smaller communities can resolve transportation, economically, social, and environmental issues as a regional project rather than a “Town boundary” issue. Planning and innovative projects have to be accepted beyond town lines to become successful. The purpose of this project is to utilize the assets of the towns while preserving the historic and scenic qualities. To increase tourism and control traffic while preserving the environment is a challenge all Connecticut Valley communities face.

**C.** With populations of under 8,000 people per township, both applicants fall under the rural designation.

**D.** The list of partners in a project that promotes efficient motor vehicle traffic flows, centralized parking with connected walkways, while providing opportunities for hiking, biking, boating, train rides to scenic and historic sites is extensive.

The anticipated participants is as follows; Town of East Haddam, Town of Haddam, Connecticut Department of Transportation, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (Education and Information), Connecticut Light and Power (Street Scope Lighting), The Nature Conservancy (Education and Information), Middlesex Chamber of Commerce, Midstate Regional Planning Agency, The Goodspeed Opera House Foundation, Essex Steam Train Stations, Camelot Cruise Lines, East Haddam Merchants, Tylerville Merchants, and the Middlesex Revitalization Corporation.

**Time Frame**

The Towns would prepare final designs in the 1999 calendar year and start construction in the year 2000. A major component is the cantilevering the East Haddam/Haddam Swing Bridge. This is presently being evaluated by the Department of Transportation. The project, if implemented, could be completed by the end of 2002.