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O'CONNELL CONTINUES DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS WITH TWO MASSDOT GRANTS

Taunton, MA...Today Mayor Shaunna O'Connell announced the City of Taunton will be making key enhancements to the pedestrian safety of sidewalks and crosswalks through two grants received from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

The City received two grants from MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program. A grant in the amount of \$99,000 will be used to make pedestrian safety upgrades to the three crosswalks on Main Street. The project will include the installation of push-activated flashing beacons to aid in pedestrian crossing. Crosswalks will be replaced with material that is visually different than the roads in order to stand out better to drivers. These improvements were suggested in the 2018 Downtown Taunton Plan and have been implemented in many other communities.

"As we continue to work to vitalize our Downtown, we are making these pedestrian friendly improvements so that we attract more foot traffic for our local businesses. I want to thank Council President Phil Duarte for his advocacy of this project," O'Connell stated.

A \$50,000 grant will fund the purchase of a Ventrac, a multipurpose machine used for removing snow from sidewalks as well as various other functions such as brush cutting. Having this additional Ventrac machine will be critical in the City's efforts to clear snow from sidewalks in the Downtown area and around schools.

Since the inception of the Shared Streets and Spaces grant program in 2020, Taunton has received four grants totaling \$339,000. These grants are part of a larger effort to target and improve multiple areas in the City of Taunton, including Weir Street (paving, sidewalk installation, street lights, parking meters and additional trees), Whittenton (chosen as a Transformative Development Initiative District and received a package of resources for neighborhood improvements over a three year period) and the Weir Municipal Parking Lot (repaving, new bus shelter, and the first level-three fast-charging electric vehicle station in the City).

In addition, parks in Taunton are undergoing upgrades and renovations, including Flannery Playground with two new play structures, double basketball court, walking track, and adult exercise stations and Walker Park which includes replacing the bandstand with a gazebo and adding a walking path and picnic tables. "This is a great time to be living in Taunton," enthused Mayor O'Connell.

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