

Funding in place for long-awaited sidewalks on Grand Island Boulevard

- By [Nancy A. Fischer](#), Published Mon, Apr 24, 2017

Making Grand Island a walkable community went a big step forward with the announcement of a state transportation enhancement grant that will fund 80 percent of a \$1.2 million project to develop sidewalks along a 2-mile stretch of Grand Island Boulevard, between Webb Street and Fantasy Island.

Grand Island Supervisor Nathan D. McMurray said the improvement is something residents have talked about for years, and will give the community a true "town center."

"Right now no one can walk in the center of the Island. They walk along what is essentially a highway," said McMurray. "To be selected for this project shows the dire need for this and shows the faith the state has in Grand Island."

He said the sidewalks will improve the safety of those who shop or catch a bus.

McMurray said the next push targets making the overpass at Whitehaven Road pedestrian friendly, connecting the west to the east side of Grand Island. Currently, he said, it is impossible to walk directly from west to east, without walking all the way around the island.

McMurray said the sidewalk project could come this year but it might have to wait until next year, depending on when the funding is released by the state.

Other changes on Grand Island planned for this year include:

- [Scenic Woods](#), a \$400,000 trails project that is partially funded by Niagara River Greenway. The project was revived after almost losing its funding because it remained undone for several years. The trails will run through 260 acres of town woodland.
- The state [Visitors Welcome Center](#), a \$20 million project announced by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo in January as part of his Buffalo Billion Phase II. The site will serve as a regional welcome center.
- [West River Parkway](#), which is being converted by State Parks into an 8-mile trail for bikes and pedestrians along the Niagara River, between Long and Oakfield roads.
- Plans also are underway by a private developer to turn the long-[abandoned Dunlop](#) office building on Long Road into a hotel.

Cuomo late last week announced \$112 million in transportation enhancement grants as a way to promote pedestrian and bicycle travel by improving roadway safety and increasing access.

The Grand Island sidewalk project was among \$20 million earmarked for Western New York projects, including:

- \$5 million to the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to purchase buses that run on compressed natural gas.
- \$4,630,400 to partner with Norfolk Southern railroad to replace two locomotives to ones with clean technologies.
- \$1,520,000 to establish Highway Emergency Local Patrol (HELP) truck service.

- \$332,000 to optimize traffic flow on Walnut Avenue and Ferry Avenue in Niagara Falls.
- \$588,000 to Chautauqua County for shoulder widening along Dale Drive.
- \$1,424,000 to Buffalo to implement Phase I of the city's bicycle master plan.
- \$482,946 to Springville to construct pedestrian and bicycle improvements.
- \$1,338,700 to Erie County to construct Phase II of pedestrian and bicycle improvements.
- \$530,933 to the Town of Niagara to install American with Disabilities Act-accessible sidewalks and curb ramps.
- \$511,245 to Niagara Falls to expand the regional bike-sharing program.
- \$756,000 to Wheatfield for ADA-compliant sidewalk construction.
- \$400,000 to Jamestown to develop a comprehensive digital and static wayfinding system to support tourism.
- \$976,000 to Amherst for pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.
- \$541,913 to Olean for Phase II of the Walkable Olean transformation project.