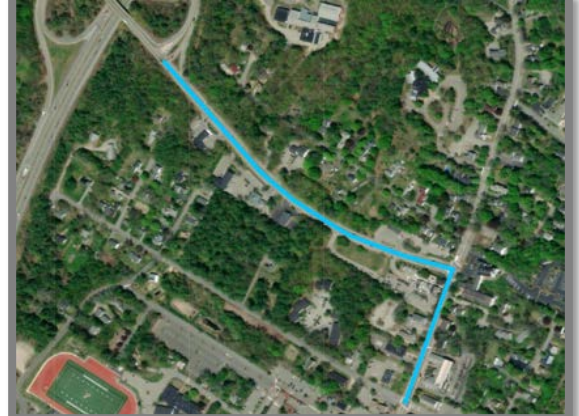


## Draft VPI Small Spot Project Request December 1, 2022

**Area of Focus** (See image at right)

### **Mallett Drive to School St.**

- Northbound highway ramps to Main St.
- Main St./Mallett intersect to School St.



Town of Freeport requests Village Partnership Initiative funds for the study and design of a comprehensive plan for Mallett Drive that incorporates these near-term projects below with the longer-term vision to transform Mallett Drive into a Boulevard that leads residents and visitors alike into downtown Freeport.

1. Multi-Use Path from McDonald's to the I-295 bridge overpass
2. Safe Routes to School connection across Mallett Drive
3. Mallett Drive re-paving (funds from MDOT...2025)

This plan would include a comprehensive view of all changes needed in order to “future-proof” and support the boulevard concept. In addition, the plan would study the transition from Mallett Drive to Main Street and develop the best multi-modal treatment along Main Street all the way to School Street.

### **Overview**

This proposed path is part of Freeport's bold and comprehensive plan (known as Connect Freeport) to restore the sense of community and connectivity enjoyed by residents prior to the 1957 construction of the I-295 corridor. Currently, there are only two available access points (Mallett and Desert Road) to connect our town residents on both sides of the highway, and to connect with the towns of Durham and Pownal. Therefore, it is critical to have accessible means for bicyclists and pedestrians to safely pass between the east and west regions of Freeport and over to Durham and Pownal, particularly in a qualifying pedestrian area.

The Mallett Drive boulevard concept is part of the Freeport Downtown Vision Plan which was a 16-month inclusive public process to create community consensus around shared vision for Freeport's downtown. Downtown Vision was a collaborative effort with widespread community involvement of Freeport residents (long-time residents and newer residents), experts who have participated in the revitalization of other towns, and a dedicated team of employees and volunteers. There is more work to be done within downtown Freeport and this path with boulevard is one component.

### **Benefits of project**

This path would remove transportation barriers that make it difficult for community members of all ages and mobility to access or safely reach daily destinations like schools, jobs, grocery stores, medical facilities, dentistry, counseling services, houses of worship, and parks. We feel these improved safety

measures will significantly increase the volume of residents walking and biking between the east and west areas of Freeport thus providing greater access to critical services.

The increased mobility and accessibility within the community, especially for children, older adults, vulnerable populations, and those with disabilities is tremendous. Currently, there is no safe, non-vehicular crossing of the highway in the downtown area of Freeport. The collaboration between MDOT and the Town of Freeport to build a 12-foot-wide multi-use path, with a full barrier separation from vehicle travel lanes on the bridge and extensions will provide a safe route for pedestrians, wheelchairs or other mobility assistance modalities, bicycles and other non-vehicle forms of travel. Our proposal for a 12-foot wide, barrier separated multi-use path along the full extent of Mallett Drive, as opposed to just the bridge and immediate approaches, is imperative for creating an appealing, accessible, and safe pathway along Mallett Drive and crossing of the highway with minimal interaction with vehicular traffic. For the first time, disabled individuals will have a safe means of crossing the highway, whether for recreation, employment, retail, social connections, or access to healthcare services including pharmacy or healthcare. Of particular relevance, Freeport Medical Center is located immediately at the West end of Mallett Drive, and Fulcrum Family Health is on the east side.

The pathway will provide safe and secure passage for pedestrians, bicycles and other mobility assistance modalities to provide universal access to all. In March of 2021, our residents voted overwhelmingly (78%) to approve raising their taxes to ensure the safety of our bicyclists and pedestrians on the reconstructed Mallett Drive bridge. This project aligns with our voters' directive for the bridge by providing the same 12-foot pathway along the entire length of Mallett Drive.

RSU5 students residing on the west side of Rt. 295, including Freeport, Durham, and Pownal, will be able to walk or cycle to six local schools (Morse Street, Mast Landing, Freeport Middle School, Freeport High School, Montessori School, and L'ecole Francaise du Maine in S. Freeport) in addition to the Freeport Library. RSU5 students residing on the east side will be able to walk or cycle to two schools (Pine Tree Academy, Maine Coast Waldorf School). Activities at schools include after school enrichment programs, athletics, and community events as well as academics. Students may attend events at several different schools throughout the day and need safe passage to do so. Athletic fields at the schools, Joan Benoit Samuelson Track and Field, Pownal Road field complex will all become more accessible to residents in both east and west regions of Freeport.

Transit connectivity is improved as more will have access to the Metro Breeze bus network and Amtrak train station thus providing affordable transportation to jobs and services in the greater Portland area. The improvements proposed will make it possible for a cyclist or pedestrian to reach any major city in the world without ever having to step into an automobile.

The project will reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and increase use of lower-carbon travel modes such as walking, cycling, rolling, or using transit. Trees along the boulevard will soak up carbon dioxide and create cleaner air. Anything we can do to reduce and ultimately eliminate our community's contribution to climate change is important and will be greatly appreciated...especially by our grandchildren.

There are significant economic benefits to the multi-used path and boulevard concept. Freeport is a major tourist destination, attracting 3.5 million residents every year. Many of these visitors come to Freeport for the outdoor experience, with visitors having spent \$632 million in Maine on recreation alone. Our Connect Freeport plan, of which this project is an important part, begins to connect seven

identified places of interest<sup>1</sup> for recreation-seekers in Freeport. By providing greater access to places where visitors can spend money, this provides new job opportunities and more revenue for the Town.

This project will improve quality of life by providing additional walkable neighborhoods, more access to nature, and many trails to explore from downtown, thus improving overall well-being. The future vision of Mallett Drive is public infrastructure that is open and available year-round to people of all ages and abilities, creating accessibility for all in the community and beyond to enjoy. The future Mallett Drive boulevard will also have an economic impact on the town of Freeport.

### **Estimated Cost and Financing Plans**

#### **Conclusion**

Village Partnership Initiative funding for planning and design for Mallett Drive to School St. is critical to the Town of Freeport for integrating near and long-term construction projects into a single, comprehensive plan.