

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

GRANTS & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2025
7:30 PM (Approximately)**

Chairperson: Maggie Epstein

Vice Chairperson: Andrew Gavrin, Ray Courtney

AGENDA

1. **RESOLUTION - DCED LOCAL SHARE ACCOUNT GRANT APPLICATION FOR CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LINK**
2. **RESOLUTION - DCED MUNICIPAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION FOR TREE PROTECTION CODE REVIEW**



Township of Lower Merion
A FIRST CLASS TOWNSHIP

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Grants & Community Development

ITEM: **RESOLUTION - DCED LOCAL SHARE ACCOUNT GRANT APPLICATION FOR CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LINK**

Consider for recommendation to the Board of Commissioners adoption of a resolution authorizing the Township to submit a grant application in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the DCED Local Share Account (LSA) to partially fund the accessible trail link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Issue Briefing - CHT Spur DCED Grant 10-03-2025.docx](#)

[Resolution - CHT Spur DCED Grant 10-08-2025.docx](#)

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION
Parks & Recreation Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Submission of a Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) Local Share Account (LSA) Grant for the Accessible Trail Link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel

Prepared By: Donna Heller, Director of Parks & Recreation

Date: October 3, 2025

- I. Action To Be Considered By The Board:** Adopt a resolution authorizing the Township to submit a grant application in the amount of \$1,000,000 to the DCED Local Share Account (LSA) to partially fund the accessible trail link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel.
- II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:** The Board of Commissioners must pass resolutions authorizing the submission of a grant application.
- III. Current Policy Or Practice (If Applicable):** Projects included in Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), seek grant funding whenever possible.
- IV. Other Relevant Background Information:** The Board received Cynwyd Spur Trail Feasibility and Planning Study in 2015. This study determined the trail's feasibility and construction options to connect the Cynwyd Heritage Trail (CHT) to the riverfront, which has an 80' to 100' grade differential. At that time the Righter's Ferry residential development was constructing their riverfront trail and Pencoyd Bridge which connects directly to the Wissahickon Gateway and ultimately the Schuylkill River Trail.



Also, at that time the Township was also negotiating with Norfolk Southern (NS) for the 33' wide easement between the Township property and river that passes under the Norfolk Southern railroad bridge. Now that the NS lease has been obtained and the work

has been completed on the railroad bridge, the focus has moved to the accessible trail connection from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel.

There is funding in the 2025 CIP for the construction documents for the trail connects, with anticipated construction funding in 2026. One of the primary concerns for the alignment of the trail connection was accessibility by cyclists and pedestrians of all abilities. Therefore, the construction documents alignment will meet ADA trail requirements. This is a vital trail gap identified in the regional trail network.



Matching funds are not required for the DCED LSA Grant.

- V. **Impact On Township Finances:** The \$1,000,000 maximum grant request would offset the cost of construction of this trail connect which is currently estimated at \$1,800,000.
- VI. **Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends that the Board of Commissioners adopt the Resolution authorizing submission of Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) Local Share Account (LSA) Grant for the Accessible Trail Link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel.

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF
THE TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION AUTHORIZING THE
APPLICATION TO THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR A
STATEWIDE LOCAL SHARE ASSESSMENT GRANT TO
PARTIALLY FUND THE ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LINK FROM
THE CYNWYD HERITAGE TRAIL TO THE NORFOLK
SOUTHERN TUNNEL**

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania “the Commonwealth” passed the PA Race Horse Development and Gaming Act (Act 2004-71), as amended, provides for the distribution of gaming revenues through the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) to support projects in the public interest within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (the “PA DCED”) has established a Statewide Local Share Assessment grant to distribute the Funds; and

WHEREAS, the Township of Lower Merion is an eligible applicant as a municipality for a grant that shall not exceed a total of \$1,000,000; and

WHEREAS, eligible projects improve the quality of life of citizens in the community; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Capital Improvement Program for the Township of Lower Merion includes Service to People Project No. 4500, Connelly Site Master Plan allocates funding for the Accessible Trail Link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel; and

WHEREAS, the Township seeks to apply to the PA DCED through its Statewide Local Share Assessment grant program for implementation grant funds of \$1,000,000 to construct the Accessible Trail Link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel for the project estimated by the Township Engineer for the cost of \$1,800,000; and

WHEREAS, the Township fully understands the application requirements, including the contracting process if awarded grant funds from the Statewide Local Share Assessment grant program; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Lower Merion hereby authorizes the Township Manager to submit an application to the PA DCED requesting a Statewide Local Share Assessment grant in the amount of \$1,000,000 from the Commonwealth Financing Agency to be used for the construction of the Accessible Trail Link from the Cynwyd Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Southern Tunnel.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Township hereby designates Ernie B. McNeely, Township Manager, and Donna Heller, Director of Parks and Recreation, to execute all documents and agreements between the Township of Lower Merion and the Commonwealth Financing Authority to facilitate and assist in obtaining the requested grant.

RESOLVED this _____ day of _____, 2025 by the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Lower Merion.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

BY: _____
Todd M. Sinai, President

ATTEST:

Jody L. Kelley, Secretary



Township of Lower Merion
A FIRST CLASS TOWNSHIP

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

COMMITTEE: Grants & Community Development

ITEM: **RESOLUTION - DCED MUNICIPAL ASSISTANT PROGRAM GRANT APPLICATION FOR TREE PROTECTION CODE REVIEW**

Consider for recommendation to the Board of Commissioners a doption of a resolution authorizing the Township to submit a grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Municipal Assistance Program grant application for a Tree Protection Code Review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Issue Briefing _MAP Grant 10-03-2025.docx](#)
[MAP Grant Resolution 10-08-2025.docx](#)

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

Grants and Community Development Committee

Issue Briefing

Topic: Resolution to Submit an Application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Municipal Assistance Program grant for a Tree Protection Code Review.

Prepared By: Paloma Vila, PE, Sustainability Manager

Date: October 3, 2025

- I. Action To Be Considered by The Board:** Adoption of a resolution authorizing the Township to submit a grant application to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Municipal Assistance Program grant application for a Tree Protection Code Review.
- II. Why This Issue Requires Board Consideration:** A resolution must be passed by the Board of Commissioners to commit a funding match should the grant be awarded.
- III. Current Policy or Practice (If Applicable):** Currently, Township tree-related regulations are dispersed across multiple sections of the Township Code and have not been comprehensively reviewed in many years.
- IV. Other Relevant Background Information:**

The Lower Merion Township Comprehensive Plan identifies trees as “an integral component of Lower Merion’s environment and infrastructure system” and recommends measures to strengthen tree canopy preservation and management, both on public and private property. Recommendations include improving large tree preservation regulations, integrating urban forestry and conservation design practices into stormwater and land development codes, and encouraging tree planting through outreach and incentives.

In 2022, Township staff engaged with graduate students at the University of Colorado Boulder and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) Nature-Based Climate Initiative (NCI) to identify best practices for a tree canopy management plan. Their work outlined a five-phase approach. Phases 1 and 2 (canopy assessment and Shade Tree Division review) are underway and expected to conclude in 2025. A review of the Township’s tree protection regulations is identified as a subsequent phase in the overall approach to preserving and strengthening the community’s tree canopy.

Currently, Township tree-related regulations are dispersed across multiple sections of the Township Code and have not been comprehensively reviewed in many years. They may not fully reflect contemporary best practices in arboriculture, environmental sustainability, or

public health. Conducting a third-party review will provide specialized expertise and an objective assessment, ensuring that the Township's codes are consistent, enforceable, and aligned with current best practices. Benefits include:

- Expertise and objectivity: Access to consultants with specialized knowledge in urban forestry, tree protection, and stormwater management.
- Modern, best-practice standards: Ensures that the Township's regulations reflect the latest in arboriculture, environmental sustainability, and public health considerations.
- Consistency and clarity: Helps unify scattered code provisions and reduce gaps or conflicting requirements.
- Strategic alignment: Supports Township goals identified in the Comprehensive Plan and ongoing tree canopy management initiatives.
- Risk reduction: Minimizes potential legal challenges or enforcement difficulties.

A consultant's review will complement the Township's ongoing efforts to implement a comprehensive Tree Canopy Management Plan. Based on estimates from contractors that bid on earlier phases, the cost of this review is expected to be \$18,000-20,000 and included in the Township's proposed 2026 Operational Budget.

The DCED Municipal Assistance Program (MAP) provides funding assistance to help municipalities implement sound planning and development initiatives. In speaking with DCED, the Township identified and confirmed the eligibility of conducting a tree protection code review for funding under this program. Grants under this program require a 1:1 or 50% match from the recipient.

- V. Impact On Township Finances:** The full cost of the project is included in the proposed 2026 budget request. Should the tree protection code review remain in the 2026 budget, a grant award under this program would result in a potential cost savings to the Township.
- VI. Staff Recommendation:** Staff recommends adopting a resolution, authorizing submission of DCED Municipal Assistance Program grant application, including commitment for required matching funds in the amount of \$10,000.

TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION TO THE
PENNSYLVANIA MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the Township of Lower Merion will be undertaking a project to review and update Township codes related to tree canopy enhancement and protection; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development makes available grants-in-aid to such projects through the Municipal Assistance Program;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Lower Merion Township hereby authorizes submission of an application to the Municipal Assistance Program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Lower Merion Township hereby commits municipal resources in the amount of \$10,000 as match for said project.

RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Lower Merion this day of _____, 2025.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION

By: _____
Todd M. Sinai, President

ATTEST:

Jody L. Kelley, Secretary