

City is awarded TIGER grant

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The city of Goldsboro captured its second federal transportation grant that provides \$5 million for continued improvements to the downtown area.

City officials learned Tuesday afternoon that the city will receive its second Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant.

The funding, which includes a city match of nearly \$1.8 million, will pay for streetscape-related improvements that weren't fully funded through a \$10 million TIGER grant the city received in 2013.

"The announcement of this will allow the city to complete the work that it intended for downtown," said Scott Stevens, Goldsboro city manager. "We're excited to leverage our local dollars in this manner."

The grant will allow the city to complete four transportation-focused projects, including the continuation of streetscape construction along the 300 and 400 blocks of South Center Street, improvements to the pedestrian plaza at Cornerstone Commons, adding signs, and building a concourse at the **Goldsboro-Wayne Transportation Authority** transfer station.

The city applied for the grant following an April city council decision, which was divided through a 4-3 vote, and learned Tuesday through the office of U.S. Sen. Richard Burr, R-North Carolina, said Julie Metz, Goldsboro downtown development director.

Metz said city officials expected a 50 percent chance of receiving the grant, but the successful completion of its earlier TIGER-funded streetscape project likely tipped the scales in the city's favor.

"I'm not really terribly surprised," Metz said. "I'm excited, though. It's a great program."

The city was able to complete the streetscape project by the fall of 2015 and within the federal government's timeline. City leaders have also been able to show the investment paid off by meeting TIGER grant goals.

"We had several things working in our favor," Metz said. "We implemented a successful award. We have had a lot of successful impacts."

The project, which totaled \$15 million including a city match, included the construction of the **GWTA** transit center, at 103 N. Carolina St., three blocks of the Center Street streetscape project, streetscape improvements connecting Center Street to the transit center, and transit center site work.

Metz said the project and future work both match the goals of the U.S. Department of Transportation's TIGER program, which focuses on capital projects that generate economic development and improve access to reliable, safe and affordable transportation in urban and rural communities.

Since 2013, nearly 30 property purchases have been made in the downtown area and 32 businesses have opened. Downtown property acquisitions, rehabilitation projects and new business openings have resulted in nearly \$6.6 million in private investment.

The next TIGER-funded project is expected to create 243 jobs and generate \$4.9 million to the economy, city officials estimate.

The completion of the downtown projects follow the vision of the city's 2007 Downtown Master Plan, a process that involved community input that served as a 10-year guide for public and private investment, Metz said.

"The project we're funding in this round will complete all the public investment objectives of the master plan," Metz said.

Overall, the improvements are expected to continue to boost downtown economic activity in years to come, she added.

"I think it's going to transition downtown into an energetic and economically viable center of our community," Metz said.

The city's funding match is planned to come from the city budget during a period of four to five years, Stevens said. The city's increasing revenue growth may be a source to fund the city's portion of the project.

"It might be that we'll be able to do it through growth," Stevens said.