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RAISE the bar: Shaker applies for \$5.5M federal grant on Lee Road Action Plan

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Shaker Heights City Council has signed off on "improvements to public land" for a new Blue Line rapid train and bus station proposed by Greater Cleveland RTA in the Van Aken District, with construction tentatively scheduled for August and expected to take a year to complete. City of Shaker Heights/Greater Cleveland RTA

By Thomas Jewell, special to cleveland.com

SHAKER HEIGHTS, Ohio -- With potential funding opportunities available from both the state and federal government, the city will continue to retain lobbyists at both levels to advocate for numerous local projects.

That includes the Lee Road corridor project, for which the city plans to forward a \$5.5 million application to the U.S. Department of Transportation for 2022 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant.

The city should hear by mid-August if it will receive the highly competitive grant, which could cover engineering, construction, right-of-way consultants and environmental studies for the proposed Lee Road Action Plan.

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The plan is a \$12.8 million project, with Shaker offering to kick in up to \$5.1 million of the total in local shares.

Shaker is applying to a myriad of other potential funding sources and also working with bordering Cleveland on its end of a “community-driven, visionary, targeted reinvestment plan” primarily for the [Chagrin-Lee commercial corridor](#).

There would be no local match required for this grant, since the project falls within USDOT-designated “Areas of Persistent Poverty” and “Historically Disadvantaged Communities.”

The work would provide for reconstructing, resurfacing and reconfiguring all of Lee Road, updating traffic signalization, and, south of Van Aken Boulevard, installing targeted pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

With construction proposed in 2025-26, “this plan and funding strategy uses similar techniques as other successful projects, most recently the Chagrin-Warrensville intersection reconfiguration and public improvements in the Van Aken District,” the Shaker [Planning Department memo](#) notes.

Prior to authorizing the grant application on March 22, City Council approved a new one-year contract with the consulting firm [G2G](#) for federal government advocacy and lobbying services, as well as an extension for the CJR Group working as its counterpart in Columbus, with services retained from each for \$60,000 a year (\$5,000 apiece per month).

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City Economic Development Director Laura Englehart outlined some of the funding opportunities available now and over the next few years, including “a second tranche of pandemic recovery dollars under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), as well as new infrastructure funding for Ohio under the federal Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (IIJA, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law).

"This unprecedented infrastructure funding could align with local projects, such as the Lee Road revitalization and our ongoing work with sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) in the city," Everhart told council last month.

Van Aken station

Years in the making and at no cost to the city, council last week signed off on "improvements to public land" in the Van Aken District for a new Greater Cleveland RTA comfort station for buses and the Blue Line rapid train.

It will feature one of the only public restrooms in the system, which will be managed and maintained by GCRTA and RMS Investment Group, developers of the Van Aken District.

The approval from council will allow GCRTA to proceed with final design and bidding, with construction planned for this August and taking a year to complete, City Planning Director Joyce Braverman said.

Additional improvements to the south of the station are also proposed, eventually relocating one of the tracks closer to the busway, as well as creating another waiting area, gathering space and green space, with better access to Chagrin Boulevard.

Councilwoman Nancy Moore complimented the City Planning Commission and the Architectural Board of Review for ongoing work on the design of the station, which will also include a break room for RTA employees and equipment upgrades.

Councilman Ifeolu A.C. Claytor commended the continued effort to improve pedestrian access and make Shaker an even more walkable community.



This rendering shows another view of the new Warrensville-Van Aken Blue Line rapid train and bus depot, this one from the "Tuttle Road elevation," with more GCRTA improvements planned in future years. City of Shaker Heights/Greater Cleveland RTA

Construction inspection

Council also approved a new three-year, \$275,250 contract with ECS Midwest LLC for [construction inspection services](#), including projects getting under way this year that do not enlist federal funding.

These include the city's \$1 million street resurfacing contract, running from April through October, as well as:

-- the \$606,000 Warrington Road water line and street resurfacing project, running from June through September

-- the \$1.3 million Ardmore water line and street resurfacing, with construction dates still to be determined

-- [Scottsdale Boulevard](#) green infrastructure, traffic calming and street resurfacing set for August through October, with the contract cost still under development

-- Shaker Town Center parking lot resurfacing and dumpster enclosures, with date and cost still to be determined

-- Sewer repairs at various locations around town, expected to run from July through October at a cost of \$500,000

The total cost would be split over three years, with ECS having done similar work from 2019-21, Assistant Public Works Director Christian Maier said.

The city will also get reimbursed for a portion of the construction inspection services by the Cleveland Water Department on the Warrington and Ardmore water line replacements, Maier added.

Read more from the [Sun Press](#).

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