

Fall River area benefits from \$1.5T Fed spending package

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FALL RIVER — The \$1.5 trillion spending package passed by the House last week will give a boost to a number of projects in the SouthCoast, one of which will help bolster Fall River's waterfront redevelopment.

It's a project that Mayor Paul Coogan's administration has been working on for some time, and now with a \$1.5 million earmark in the huge spending plan, it will likely come to fruition and provide much-needed parking and open space along the Taunton River.

Coogan said he has been in negotiations with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to relocate the two giant salt sheds the state agency owns, located under the Braga Bridge and across from Battleship Cove.

The administration has identified a relocation spot for the two sheds, which hold a total of 24,000 tons of salt, to the area around the former Sam's Club on Brayton Avenue, now owned by the US Bedding manufacturing plant.

"Where the salt sheds are now, is obviously prime parking for the waterfront," said Coogan. "We showed DOT the spot we identified for them with its easy access to Route 24 and I-195. The plan I have is for a swap."

"Now we have the funding mechanism. It's going to be beneficial for that whole area down there. It's going to be good."

Patrick Norton, executive director of the Narrows Center for the Arts on

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Package

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Anawan Street, said he's been looking at the salt sheds for years and has been urging administrations as far back as Mayor Ed Lambert's to take some action to free up the property.

"It's taking up prime waterfront, it never made any sense to me," said Norton.

He said the lack of parking in the area has been difficult for area businesses like Boneheads restaurant and Troy City Brewery.

"Parking is like economic development. Without more parking you literally cannot add more businesses here," said Norton.

"Paul listened and Jake came through," said Norton, referencing Congressman Jake Auchincloss, who helped secure the funding in the giant spending package.

Auchincloss, during a Zoom conference call with media on Monday, said the \$1.5 million allocation will "help lay the groundwork for urban renewal along the waterfront in Fall River."

A windfall for Bristol Community College's Wind Institute

Leading the way in workforce development in the burgeoning off-shore wind energy in the region, Bristol Community College's National Off-shore Wind Institute is receiving \$2 million.

"Offshore wind can help do for the SouthCoast what the life sciences were able to do in Boston and Cambridge which was to be the base of a cluster of economic development that can create good jobs and also be a hugely important source of clean energy as we transition to a sustainable economy," Auchincloss said.

"We are going to make Bristol Community College really a hub of workforce development and an important complement to the infrastructure being put in place in Fall River, New Bedford and Somerset," said Auchincloss.

Other local projects to benefit from \$1.5 trillion in spending are:

The town of Somerset is receiving \$975,000 for emergency dam improvements.

The Bristol County Chamber Foundation is receiving \$500,000 for the entrepreneurship program, EforAll, serving Fall River and New Bedford.

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