

2026 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



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Florida Association of Counties
National Association of Counties
Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan
Planning Association

Florida Department of Transportation
Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council
Florida Gulf Consortium
Manasota League of Cities

APPROPRIATION NO. 1: **Veterans Resource Hub & Memorial Park**

The Veterans Resource Hub is a visionary, county-led initiative that will serve as a centralized access point for veterans, their families and the broader community. Located just north of Palmetto, the Hub will provide direct services and referrals through partnerships with government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Designed to promote healing, reintegration and personal growth, the facility will also include a Memorial Park that honors the American veteran's journey through commemorative installations and outdoor gathering spaces for events and reflection.

This project addresses a critical gap in service accessibility by consolidating essential veteran support programs into a single, easily accessible location. Currently, veterans often travel over an hour to reach multiple providers across the region. By streamlining access to care, resources and community engagement opportunities, the Hub will significantly improve quality of life and outcomes for veterans in Manatee County.

The County is requesting \$3 million in state funding toward the \$40 million total project cost. It was previously included as a 2025 legislative priority.

Department:	Government Relations
Total Project Cost:	\$40 million
Funding Request:	\$3 million
Purpose:	Centralized services and memorial space for veterans and families
Location:	5431 Buckeye Road, Palmetto



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| 1 Veterans Center (12K SF, first level) | 8 Paved Parking |
| 2 Historical Hammock | 9 Overflow Parking (Grass Lot) |
| 3 Shelter/Restroom Building | 10 Preserved Old Growth Tree Canopy |
| 4 Great Lawn | 11 Boardwalk |
| 5 Hero Tree | 12 Pond |
| 6 Entry Feature Monument | 13 Bus Stop |
| 7 Maintenance Building & Yard | 14 Dumpsters |
| | 15 Hero's Journey |

APPROPRIATION NO. 2:

Fresh Start, Phase 2

Department:	Manatee County Sheriff's Office
Total Project Cost:	\$10 million
Funding Request:	\$3 million
Purpose:	Renovation of facility to permanently house the Fresh Start services
Location:	1022 26th Ave E, Bradenton 34208

Fresh Start, Phase 2 is a critical initiative led by the Manatee County Sheriff's Office to establish a permanent facility for emergency shelter and wraparound services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Located at 1022 26th Ave E in Bradenton, the County is renovating an existing structure to house the Fresh Start program, which will serve approximately 100 men and women for up to 90 days. The facility will provide on-site access to substance abuse treatment, mental health care, employment support, and financial counseling, creating a comprehensive pathway to stability and self-sufficiency.

This project directly supports the County's response to House Bill 1365, which prohibits unsheltered homelessness in public spaces. Rather than relying on enforcement alone, Manatee County is investing in a compassionate, service-oriented alternative that prioritizes long-term outcomes.

With a total project cost of \$10 million, the County is requesting \$3 million in federal funding to complete the renovation and ensure the facility is fully equipped to meet the needs of vulnerable residents. Fresh Start represents an innovative solution that aligns with public safety, public health, and community reintegration goals.



APPROPRIATION NO. 3:

North/South Gateway Greenway Trail (CR-675 to SR 62)

Department:	Public Works
Total Project Cost:	\$6 million
Funding Request:	\$6 million (ask for \$3 million in each FY27 and FY 28)
Purpose:	Trail development as part of regional and state trail systems
Location:	CR-675 to SR-62

This project seeks funding for the planning, design, land acquisition, and/or construction of a 5-mile segment of the North/South Gateway Greenway Trail between CR-675 and SR 62. This trail segment is a critical link in the County's broader Gateway Greenway Trail system and contributes to the statewide Florida Gulf Coast Trail and SunTrail network. The proposed 12-foot-wide paved trail will enhance regional connectivity, promote active transportation, and provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.

The County is requesting \$3 million in federal funding in FY27 to complete this segment. The County has already constructed or committed to constructing the southern portion of the trail through other projects and partnerships. If full funding is not awarded, the County will prioritize PD&E, design, and land acquisition, with any remaining funds used to construct a Phase 1 section. This project supports multimodal mobility, public health, and eco-tourism goals while advancing the County's long-term trail connectivity vision.



APPROPRIATION NO. 4:

Gamble Creek Flood Mitigation Area

Manatee County is proposing the development of a regional flood mitigation and water quality facility on a 95-acre site along Gamble Creek in Parrish, Florida. The project includes planning, design and construction of infrastructure to address chronic flooding in the Gamble Creek watershed, while also enhancing stormwater treatment and providing mitigation capacity for nearby County roadway improvements. The County has already invested \$9.6 million to acquire the property, which includes rare habitats, forested wetlands and floodplain areas that are critical for water storage and ecological connectivity.

The proposed facility would create approximately 300 acre-feet of flood storage—more than five times the capacity of the County's Pearce Drain project—and would significantly reduce flood risk for surrounding neighborhoods. The site also supports threatened species and connects to the Manatee River, offering long-term environmental and community resilience benefits. The County is requesting \$3 million in federal funding, helping towards the \$10 million to advance this project, which aligns with the ongoing Gamble Creek Watershed Management Plan and supports future transportation infrastructure needs, including road widening and bridge replacement.

Department:	Public Works
Total Project Cost:	\$10 million
Funding Request:	\$3 million
Purpose:	Flood mitigation, stormwater treatment, and support for nearby road projects.
Location:	15150 Golf Course Road, Parrish



APPROPRIATION NO. 5:

SUNTrail (Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail)

Department: Public Works

Funding Request: \$2 million

Purpose: Construct a multimodal trail through part of the urban core of Manatee County.

Location: Downtown Bradenton

Manatee County is advancing its first segment of the SUNTrail (Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail) network, a key step in expanding regional connectivity and promoting safe, active transportation. This segment begins at Manatee Avenue and 75th Street West, weaving through Village Green Parkway, 11th Avenue West, 51st Street West, Ballard Park Drive and 15th Street, ultimately linking to the Bradenton Riverwalk.

As the only SUNTrail corridor currently in Manatee County, this project will connect neighborhoods, parks and commercial areas while supporting healthier lifestyles and reducing traffic congestion. This project aligns with state and local mobility goals. Manatee County is requesting \$2 million in federal appropriations. This investment will ensure the trail meets SUNTrail standards and serves as a model for future expansion.



SUPPORT

SUPPORT Congressional passage of the Thin Blue Line Act (H.R. 115).

- Expands the list of statutory aggravating factors in death penalty determinations to also include killing or targeting a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or other first responder.

SUPPORT Congressional passage of the Manatee Protection Act (H.R. 135).

- Requires the Department of the Interior to include the West Indian manatee in the endangered species list and give the species protections provided to endangered species.

SUPPORT Congressional passage of the Protecting Local Communities from Harmful Algal Blooms Act (H.R. 132).

- Amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to include algal blooms in the definition of a major disaster.



SUPPORT

SUPPORT Congressional passage of Goldie's Act (H.R. 349).

- Directs the Department of Agriculture to document and record detailed descriptions of violations of the act observed during inspections and investigations.
- USDA must provide a copy of all records documenting violations to state, local, and municipal animal control or law enforcement officials within 24 hours of such inspections or investigations.

SUPPORT the Myakka Wild and Scenic River Act (H.R. 642).

- Amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the portion of the Myakka River lying within Sarasota County as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Explore options to include the portion of the Myakka River in Manatee County in the bill's provisions.



FAC & NACo POLICIES

FAC Policies

SUPPORT Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Statewide Legislative Priorities, with particular interest in:

- Legislative changes to SB 180.
- Property tax legislation or ballot initiative.
- Retaining home rule.
- Support for existing federal policies.
- Fuel tax indexing.
- Beach Renourishment and Shoreline Protection.
- Public Safety Equipment

SUPPORT Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Federal Legislative Priorities, with particular interest in:

- National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) reform
- Water Resources Development Act
- Off-Shore Oil Drilling
- Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
- Public Safety Officer Benefit
- ARPA Funding Recoupment

NACo Policies

SUPPORT National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Priorities, with particular interest in:

- Reauthorization of surface transportation programs, ensuring robust funding for roads, bridges, safety programs, rail and transit systems.
- Reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with local control and flexibility.
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Reform
- Reforms to FEMA's Public Assistance Program to ensure expedited reimbursement.
- Funding of critical federal grant programs.
- Increased federal collaboration and direct federal funding to counties for election security measures.



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1112 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, Florida 34205