

Manatee County / Palmetto BUILD Discretionary Grant Program

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Manatee County is preparing to make substantial investments in the Lincoln Washington Park in the north river in the City of Palmetto and unincorporated Manatee County. As part of these improvements, the capital improvement program has identified a competitive pool for Lincoln Park, upgrades of the athletic football field at Lincoln Park to artificial turf and a multi-phase recreation and preserve enhancement at the County owned 88 acres at Washington Park. Along with these capital improvements, the CIP has identified Manatee County Government's participation in the state sponsored "Sun" Recreational Trail, made up of a "rails to trails" alignment along the CSX railroad line at Lincoln Park, leading eastward to the Gamble Mansion and points north along FPL tractage.

Likewise, the City of Palmetto and its CRA are progressing with plans to advance pedestrian trail connections from the Palmetto youth center to Lincoln Memorial Charter School, Lincoln Park and points beyond.

These activities have attracted the attention of FDOT's Central Manatee Network Alternatives Analysis (CMNAA) working group who have stepped up to coordinate a partnership between FDOT, Sarasota/Manatee MPO, Manatee County, City of Palmetto, the Palmetto CRA, and Manatee County School Board. This work group has met to assemble a Palmetto trails network plan involving the participation of all entities with short range planning assistance from FDOT's transportation consultant VHB.

A significant Federal grant opportunity has been identified by FDOT and VHB to support the planning, design and construction of the interconnecting trail network, intersection improvements at US 41 and 17th Street E., improvements to the pedestrian underpass linking the trail connections and Lincoln charter school to Lincoln Park and neighborhoods east of US 41. Under the Federal DOT BUILD Discretionary Grant Program. The BUILD Grant Program is a congressionally approved remake of the former TIGER Grant Program. Passage of the BUILD Grant program in the 2018 Omnibus Federal budget bill tripled the amount of funding available in the program from last year's TIGER appropriation and increased emphasis in prioritizing grant awards for multi modal transportation alternatives in under served communities with emphasis on infrastructure improvements and job creation.

Following a coordination meeting of the project partners during the week of April 23rd, a consensus was reached that the grant application would best be originated by Manatee County BCC to increase its competitive position and allow a linkage of the Lincoln/Washington Park Community project area to a greater regional focus, extending from Port Manatee and its Army Corps partners work in restoration of the 88 acres south to extensions of the Sun Trail network from Palmetto into the City of Bradenton.

Preparation of the BUILD grant requires an extensive effort even with the technical assistance from the project partners. Should the Board accept the opportunity to be the BUILD Grant applicant, it is anticipated that grant writing assistance will be needed from the same consulting group who provided assistance in last years TIGER Planning Grant effort for trail and infrastructure improvements on Anna Maria Island. This grant planning assistance would be made available to the Department of Parks and Natural Resources to complete the application on behalf of the Board.

The minimum BUILD grant application is for any amount exceeding \$5 million dollars with an 80% Federal, 20% non-Federal match. A final cost estimate for the works described above has not yet been determined however, local match can be met from all participating non-Federal partners in cash, and in-kind project construction. By including in the existing budgeted and planned improvements of the City of Palmetto, Palmetto CRA, FDOT, and Manatee County (recreation infrastructure, Washington Park Environmental Restoration through ACOE commitments and proposed Sun Trail construction) it is anticipated that local match accumulated over the life of the proposed BUILD project can be met. The grant application deadline is late July 2018 requiring work to begin immediately after approval. During the week of May 7th members of the Board of County Commissioners will be traveling to Washington DC for the Annual Legislative Priorities meetings during which select members of the House of Transportation Committee with authority over the BUILD program can be briefed on Manatee County's desire to take advantage of this highly valuable grant opportunity. As more details are known and roles of the many partners are better defined, it is anticipated that staff will be in a position to request Board action to approve preparation of a grant application during their May 22nd Board meeting.