



TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Greg Chavarria, City Manager

DATE: September 19, 2023

TITLE: Resolution Supporting and Authorizing the Submittal of a Grant Application to the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Discretionary Grant Program of the United States Department of Transportation in Partnership with the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization - **(Commission Districts 2 and 4)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission adopt a resolution supporting and authorizing the submittal of a grant application to the United States Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities Pilot Discretionary Grant Program. The proposed grant application is in partnership with the Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to complete a transportation planning study to remove existing mobility barriers through the creation of grade separated railroad crossings in the urban core.

Background

Under the new Federal Administration, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) was passed, which includes increases to existing transportation grant programs, as well as several new transportation funding programs. These programs have created new funding access to complete transportation projects at the local level with a focus on the priorities of Safety, Equity, Economic Strength, Climate and Sustainability, Transformation, and Organization Excellence. One of those programs is the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program.

The purpose of the RCP is to reconnect communities by removing, retrofitting, or mitigating transportation facilities such as highways and rail lines that create barriers to community connectivity. The program provides grant funding for planning and capital construction to address infrastructure barriers, restore community connectivity, and improve peoples' lives. The variety of transformative solutions can include such things as trails, roadway redesigns, complete streets conversions, and pedestrian walkways.

In 2022, the City of Fort Lauderdale submitted an RCP application focused on the New River Crossing and proposed tunnel. The application did not receive an award. City staff received feedback from the grantor on the 2022 application and recommendations for a future application submission. As a result, the City of Fort Lauderdale partnered with the MPO to develop a transportation planning study focusing on railroad grade separation

rather than the benefits of a proposed train tunnel. The grade separation considerations are for Davie Boulevard, Broward Boulevard, Sistrunk Boulevard, Andrews Avenue, and Sunrise Boulevard. The proposed separation includes vehicular underpasses with pedestrian facilities with the train tracks remaining at-grade.

The grant application and project management processes are being led by the City of Oakland Park. The anticipated grant request of \$1,500,000 requires a 25% match (\$375,000) that will be provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale. The grant application is due on September 28, 2023. Awards are anticipated to be announced in early 2024.

In addition to this grant application, the City of Fort Lauderdale intends to submit a joint RCP application with the cities of Wilton Manors and Oakland Park to complete a transportation planning study to remove barriers of access in relation to the future Broward Commuter Rail (BCR) station in Oakland Park. The related CAM 23-0916 is also requesting a Resolution of Support.

Resource Impact

If awarded, there is a fiscal impact in the amount of \$375,000. Funding will be available from the General Fund balance.

Strategic Connections

This item is a Top 2022 Commission Priority, advancing the *Transportation and Traffic initiative*.

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2024 Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:*

- Infrastructure Focus Area
- Goal 2 - Build a multi-modal and pedestrian friendly community.
- Objective - Improve roads, sidewalks, and trails to prioritize a safer, more walkable and bikeable community

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale Vision Plan 2035: We Are Connected*.

Related CAM

23-0916

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – Project Area Map

Exhibit 2 – Resolution

Prepared by: Ben Rogers, Director, Transportation and Mobility

Department Director: Ben Rogers, Transportation and Mobility