2018 BUILD APPLICATION

Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study
Pasco County, FL

APPLICATION INFORMATION
Type of Application: Planning Study
Amount Requested: $1.38 Million
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pasco County and the Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) along with Pasco County residents have a longstanding interest and demonstrated commitment to multimodal transportation facilities within the County including multiuse trails such as the proposed Bi-County Trail (aka Orange Belt Trail). The proposed Bi-County Trail will span the entire County from the southwest to the northeast corners and provide an essential “backbone” for regional trail connectivity as well as to rural developing communities throughout Pasco County particularly in the central and northeast regions.

A testament to the local commitment came on November 6, 2012 when Pasco County voters overwhelmingly passed the 2015 Penny for Pasco Local Option Sales Tax renewal referendum. The Bi-County Trail is specifically identified and prioritized on the 2015 Penny for Pasco Projects list along with other bicycle/pedestrian trails and other multimodal projects (e.g. Coastal-Anclote Trail, etc.). Pasco County is requesting a $1,380,000 BUILD Grant in order to initiate a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. The PD&E Study will meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The total cost of the Bi-County Trail PD&E Study is estimated to be $2,300,000. The remaining $920,000 will be funded by the Penny for Pasco infrastructure revenue and is programmed (fully funded) in the County’s current FY 18/19 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Currently the FY 18/19 CIP includes $15,800,000 committed for final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction. The PD&E Study will provide improved estimates of the anticipated final design, right-of-way and construction costs.

Pasco County’s 2014 MOBILITY 2040 is the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) prepared by the Pasco County MPO. The MOBILITY 2040 LRTP reflects a substantial transition from a highway-oriented plan to a multimodal plan that includes significant investments in transit, highway maintenance, and other multimodal transportation investments (over $2.6B in total). Key MOBILITY 2040 multimodal improvements include multiuse trails and the Bi-County Trail is specifically identified as a priority trail project. The Bi-County Trail is currently the Pasco County MPO’s Regional Trail Priority Project #7.

Bi-County Trail Merit Criteria

SUMMARY

- **Safety**
  - Safe alternative to bicyclists and pedestrians
  - Reduces crashes

- **Quality of Life**
  - Promotes healthy lifestyles
  - Boosts local activities and attractions

- **State of Good Repair**
  - Converts railroad infrastructure to County maintained trail

- **Environmental Protection**
  - Provides protected species connectivity
  - Habitat preservation

- **Innovation**
  - Phased/Segmented construction
  - Smart Phone Applications
  - Local surtax financing

- **Economic Competitiveness**
  - Continues to promote Florida’s $58.6B ecotourism industry
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Modern transportation infrastructure is essential for facilitating efficient travel and supporting economic growth. The Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study is a critical component of our transportation network. By leveraging federal grants and local resources, this project will enhance safety, promote health, and foster economic development in our region.

### 1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION
This study aims to design a multi-use trail that connects various communities, promoting active transportation and reducing traffic congestion.

### 2.0 PROJECT LOCATION
Construction will focus on several key locations, including:

- **A. Transportation Connections**
- **B. Project Location**

### 3.0 GRANT FUNDS, SOURCES AND USES OF PROJECT FUNDING
- **A. Project Costs**
- **B. Funding Commitments**

### 4.0 MERIT CRITERIA
- **A. Safety**
- **B. State of Good Repair**
- **C. Economic Competitiveness**
- **D. Environmental Protection**
- **E. Quality of Life**
- **F. Innovation**
- **G. Partnership**
- **H. Non Federal Revenue for Transportation Infrastructure Investment**

### 5.0 PROJECT READINESS
- **A. Technical Feasibility**
- **B. Project Schedule**
- **C. Required Approvals**
- **D. Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies**
- **E. Federal Wage Rate Certification and BUILD 2018 Project Information Form**
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Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Bi-County Trail (aka Orange Belt Trail) Trail is proposed as a 12’ to 15’ wide paved bicycle and pedestrian trail that will extend 37-miles across central Pasco County from the community of Trinity to the Trilby community and provide a direct connection between the Starkey Trail Connector, a component of Florida’s Coast to Coast (C2C) Trail (Appendix C), the Suncoast Trail and the Withlacoochee State Trail. The Bi-County Trail will generally follow the alignment of the historic Orange Belt Railway which dates back to the late 1800’s. Portions of the Orange Belt Railway were most recently operated by CSX, the last railroad owner, in the early 1970s. Since that time the rails, timber crossties and ballast have been removed, however, the majority of the railroad embankment, cut sections and drainage features remain which makes this rails to trails project especially attractive in terms of low environmental impacts and reduced implementation cost.

The Bi-County Trail will provide pedestrians and bicyclists increased connectivity to an expansive trail system within and beyond Pasco County and access to residential and business development throughout Central West Florida. It will connect three major north-south trail corridors which cumulatively cover an area extending from South Pinellas County, to North Hernando, North Citrus and North Hillsborough Counties (185 trail miles inclusive of Bi-County Trail). (Figure 1)

![Trail Map](image)

= 185 Total Miles
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant – FY2018

Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Figure 1 Regional Trail Connectors
The Bi-County Trail is part of the current Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network which is authorized by Florida Statute; displayed in Figure 2 along with all other existing and proposed state trails. The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is directed to make use of its expertise in efficiently providing transportation projects to develop a statewide system of paved non-motorized trails as a component of the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS), which is planned by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

In addition to being part of the Florida SUN Trail network, the Bi-County Trail is also identified by the following agencies as a priority project of regional significance:

- Pasco County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) per MPO Resolution 16-184 signed 6/9/2016 and Letter of Support on 7/10/2018. (Appendix D)
- Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) included in Long Range Transportation Plan (Mobility 2040) (Appendix C)
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)
- Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) 2018 Regional Multi-Use Trails Network Map and 2019 Regional Multi-Use Trails Priority Projects List (Appendix C)

The proposed facility is shown on multiple region-wide trail planning maps including (Appendix C):

- Pasco County Transportation Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) 2018-2032 Map
- Pasco County Greenways, Trails and Blueways Map
- FDEP / FGTS 2018 Priority and Opportunity Land Trails Map

The Bi-County Trail has been included on the Pasco County CIP since 2015 as CIP #DSA101. It is Pasco County MPO’s Regional Trail Priority Project #7 and is TBARTA’s Regional Multiuse Trail Priority Project #8.

The Bi-County Trail will create two new loop routes (Figure 3), a smaller 23-mile loop with Starkey Park Connector Trail, Starkey Park Trail and Suncoast Trail that is entirely within Pasco County and a larger 81-mile loop with Suncoast Trail, Good Neighbor Trail and Withlacoochee State Trail that extends into Hernando County. These loop routes add significant user appeal and utility to the overall trail system.
Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Figure 2 Florida Trail System
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant – FY2018

Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Figure 3 New Trail Loops
2.0 PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed Bi-County Trail will extend 37 miles along the abandoned CSX railroad corridor from the Trinity community in southwest Pasco County to the Withlacoochee State Trail in the community of Trilby, Florida. Significant portions of proposed trail alignment are coincident with existing roadway rights-of-way and other publicly owned lands that are located within or adjacent to the numerous communities that will have access to this new bicycle/pedestrian facility. Figure 4 shows the magnitude of the Bi-County Trail’s span across the County and indicates the extent of developed and rural areas along its alignment.

Multiple Master Planned Unit Developments (MPUDs) have also dedicated land to accommodate the future trail particularly along Tower Road through the community of Land O’Lakes. Just north of the I-75/SR 52 interchange, the Bi-County Trail will pass under the recently constructed I-75 bridge included with FDOT’s 6.7-mile interstate widening project. This $8M structure was constructed by FDOT specifically to accommodate the future Ossie Murphy Road and the Bi-County Trail. The trail has also been considered and accommodated within existing communities along with rural areas.

Pasco County is located adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico and encompasses approximately 868 square miles, of which 86% is land area. Home to approximately 500,000 residents, the County is part of the Tampa-St. Pete-Clearwater Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which is the second largest MSA in the Southeast and the 21st largest in the country. Figure 5 shows the project location within the MSA.

The growth of the Tampa Bay area extends into the southwest and central boundaries of Pasco County, otherwise known as the Gateway Crossing South Market Area. This area is a prime location for economic growth, considered the premier location for employers and is anticipated to experience a 61% increase in population over the next several years. The rapidly growing communities in this area that will be directly connected to the Bi-County Trail project segment are Land ‘O Lakes, Odessa, Trinity, and Wesley Chapel. The Wesley Chapel market is to the south of the proposed trail and is recognized as one of the nation’s top 40 fastest growing communities. Wesley Chapel offers extensive commercial, residential, educational, and industrial facilities, encompassing 2,000 acres of employment center infrastructure. Additionally, this area was selected as a pilot community for the State of Florida’s Connected City initiative. Attraction to the high-tech and other unique aspects of this new community coupled with the broad governmental and private sector support will further enhance support for the Bi-County Trail.

While Pasco County is part of the Tampa Urban Area, significant portions of the County are located outside of the Urban Service Boundary. The County has approximately 460 square miles
of land located in non-urban areas; over 50%. According to the 2010 US Census, a population of 43,990 or 9.5% resides in rural Pasco County. Land use along the majority of the Bi-County Trail route remains largely undeveloped, over 23 miles (61%) of the trail’s total length is outside the Urban Service Boundary. The trail also bisects the Northeast Pasco Rural Protection District. The Bi-County Trail traverses through/around the rural communities of Trilby, Dade City, San Antonio, and St. Leo.
Figure 4 Proposed Trail

Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study
Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Figure 5 Bi-County Trail Location within MSA
Approximately 23 miles of the Bi-County Trail are located south of SR 52 and west of I-75, with the remaining 14 miles north of SR 52 and east of I-75.

The Bi-County Trail will also serve numerous MPUDs that are existing, under construction or planned in the south western and central portions of Pasco County. Major MPUD’s include Starkey Ranch, Bexley, Connerton, Connected City, and Villages of Pasadena Hills. These MPUDs recognize the benefits and public appeal of the proposed Bi-County Trail and have expressed to the County their interest in having the new facility located within or adjacent to their prospective developments.

A. Transportation Connections

As previously stated, The Bi-County Trail will follow the portion of the abandoned Orange Belt Railway route within Pasco County. This is a 133-year old transportation corridor which was constructed in 1885 and had provided service from Sanford to St. Petersburg, Florida. CSX was the last owner/operator of the railroad and service was discontinued in 1972 with removal of the tracks in the following years. Many of the towns and communities adjacent to the Bi-County Trail were originally established as a direct consequence of the Orange Belt Railway service, including San Antonio and Trilby.

According to Pasco County Parks and Recreation, the current County trail network comprises 106 miles. The majority of these existing facilities are located in west Pasco County which also has a higher population density. In terms of potential County trail connections, East Pasco County has three trails in Dade City and Central Pasco County has some trail locations with the closest connection at Wesley Chapel District Park. The lack of County trails in the eastern portion of the
County does not provide a functional trail network for visitors and residents and the Bi-County Trail would provide much needed connectivity to larger regional trail systems.

Connections to other major transportation facilities will include links to US 301, US 41, SR 52, and SR 54, all of which have bicycle and pedestrian features which further expands connectivity within the County. In addition to enhancing multimodal accommodation within the communities mentioned earlier, the proposed trail facilities will also support business developments, schools, and recreational centers. Additionally, transit routes run through the communities connected to the trail including service in Land 'O Lakes, Dade City, Trinity, and Wesley Chapel.
3.0 GRANT FUNDS, SOURCES AND USES OF PROJECT FUNDING

Pasco County is requesting BUILD grant money for use in conducting a PD&E Study for the Bi-County Trail to determine the location and conceptual design of the proposed trail improvements and the associated costs and impacts and to comply with NEPA requirements. The proposed study effort is associated with the route study and preliminary design line items included for CIP Project # DSA101 in the Pasco CIP as found in Appendix C.

A. Project Costs
The current total estimated project cost, as found on the County’s CIP, for the entirety of the Bi-County Trail from study to construction is approximately $18,100,000.00 with the PD&E Study component totaling $2,300,000.00. Although the amounts displayed in the CIP are estimated project costs, the project is funded to the budget amounts shown in the CIP. Figure 6 displays the total trail project cost by phase. The PD&E Study will provide improved cost estimates of the final design, right-of-way and construction phases. It is anticipated that the right-of-way cost and construction costs determined in the PD&E Study may be significantly higher than the current CIP estimates. (also refer to SF 424C in Appendix A)

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<th>PHASE</th>
<th>COST</th>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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B. Funding Commitments

Pasco County is requesting a BUILD Grant of $1,380,000 which is 60% of the estimated total cost of the PD&E Study. The balance of the study funds, $920,000, will be provided by the County from the Penny for Pasco Infrastructure revenue. The additional $15,800,000 estimated to further develop the Bi-County Trail is already committed local non-federal money through the CIP. The requested BUILD Grant funding is an essential catalyst to kick-off the study effort for this prioritized trail that will solidify the concept and allow subsequent project phases to proceed towards construction.
4.0 MERIT CRITERIA

A. Safety

About 15 million Floridians participated in outdoor recreation activities in 2016, or 75% of Florida’s population, joined by an estimated 102 million out-of-state visitors. Applying the same ratio to the population of Pasco County (479,909), approximately 360,000 residents in Pasco County participated in outdoor recreation activities. While outdoor water sports and activities are the most popular, many visitors and residents to the state and Pasco County use multiuse trails for hiking and bike riding. It is important to have regional trails, such as the Bi-County Trail, to provide safe connections between popular multijurisdictional facilities.

The proposed Bi-County Trail will provide connections within Pasco County from the Pinellas Trail and the Suncoast Trail to the Withlacoochee Trail’s existing southern trailhead, also providing access to the Florida Coast to Coast Trail. Without this new corridor connection, many residents of and visitors to Pasco County would have to drive, bike or walk along state or County roadways to access these existing trail facilities.

Unfortunately, Florida has experienced disproportionately high per capita bicycle and pedestrian fatality rates over the years, especially in the greater Tampa Bay region. With Pasco County’s population projected to grow by 300% by 2035, it can be presumed that more cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians will encounter each other on local roads with or without adjacent bicycle/pedestrian amenities. As shown by Figure 7 and displayed in Table 1, there is a significant number of bicycle and pedestrian accidents along SR 54, US 41, and US 301, the current facilities that provide direct access to the two major trails. The Bi-County Trail provides an alternative facility that is safe, scenic, and connected to other trails and with the majority of its overall length on sections that are completely separated from motorized vehicular traffic and with a limited number of at-grade crossings with major roadways. The Bi-County Trail also bolsters the “Vision Zero” goal adopted by FDOT and Pasco County to eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries.

Table 1 Pasco County Bicycle and Pedestrian Crashes

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<th>Injury</th>
<th>Property Damage Only</th>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1135</strong></td>
<td><strong>124</strong></td>
<td><strong>1365</strong></td>
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</table>
Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Figure 7 Bike and Pedestrian Crashes
B. State of Good Repair

The proposed Bi-County trail will contribute to a state of good repair through the conversion of the existing abandoned Orange Belt Railway corridor into a County maintained trail. The trail will also contribute to the maintenance and resiliency of local roadways by redirecting pedestrian and bicyclist traffic onto the trail system. The Bi-County trail will serve as the major east-west “backbone” connection to the many regional trail systems that are currently being accessed by pedestrians and bicyclists through the local roadway system.

The Pasco County Parks and Recreation Master Plan also upholds a vision of management and maintenance for their facilities. Facilities are to be consistently safe, clean, attractive, well-maintained and well managed to protect the County’s natural resources. As a subcomponent of the Pasco County Parks and Recreation Master Plan, this new trail will require a separate Needs and Priorities Assessment and Implementation Plan in which the trail’s maintenance needs are assessed and maintenance requirements are appropriately established. Once assessed, the facility enters a phasing maintenance strategy by the County to allocate funds needed for the repair of facilities, in addition to routine maintenance and upkeep.

The MOBILITY 2040 LRTP also places emphasis on maintenance and preservation of the existing transportation system and reflects a substantial transition from a highway-oriented plan to a multimodal plan that includes significant investments in transit, highway maintenance, and multimodal transportation investments. In addition, MOBILITY 2040 LRTP highway maintenance investment increased significantly, from 2.4% in the previous 2035 LRTP to more than 9.6% in MOBILITY 2040 (by dedicating all of Pasco County’s 1st Local Option 5-cent Fuel Tax to highway maintenance). Maintaining the existing transportation system has become increasingly important, as evidenced by this commitment.

Due to the Bi-County Trail’s regional significance and primary location within underserved rural areas, the trail has the support of multiple transportation agencies. The Bi-County Trail:

- Is part of the current Florida SUN Trail Network;
- Is in the Pasco County CIP Fiscal Year 2018 thru 2022 (and since FY 2015);
- Is supported by the Pasco County MPO Resolution 16-184 signed 6/9/2016;
- Is identified in the MOBILITY 2040 LRTP as Regional Trail Priority Project #7;
- Is included by FDEP on the 2018 Priority and Opportunity Land Trails Map; and
- Has multiple public and non-profit partners that have endorsed the project as a priority.

The broad support of these local and various regional agencies provides assurance that the Bi-County Trail will be properly maintained and preserved in order and to maximize the long term utility of the asset.
C. Economic Competitiveness

Florida has long held the economic value of trails with significant importance. In fact, in 2010 the state passed the “Resolution of the Florida Greenways and Trails Council Recognizing the Economic Value of Trails and Greenways to Florida.” In general, trails are considered a part of the outdoor recreation industry and according to Outdoor Industries Association, in 2017 Florida contributed $58.6 billion in annual consumer spending, 485 thousand direct jobs, $3.5 billion in state and local taxes and $17.9 billion in wages. The outdoor recreation industry employs more Florida residents than the information technology sector and the aviation/aerospace sector combined. According to the Florida Park Service, Florida State Parks have over 1,600 miles of trails and receive over 32 million visitors annually, creating 48,622 jobs. In fact, according to VISIT FLORIDA, visitors to Florida also desire access to nature-based activities while traveling, with 98% of visitors indicating outdoor recreation as very important. The most frequent information requested at VISIT FLORIDA’s Welcome Centers is “Where can I bicycle in Florida?”

Local impacts of trails to Florida communities has also been demonstrated with the West Orange, Little Econ, and Cady Way trails in Orange County generating 516 jobs and an estimated economic impact of $42.6 million in 2010 according to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. Pinellas County, Florida is immediately south of Pasco County and has demonstrated similar benefits with the implementation of the 47-mile Pinellas Trail through the small City of Dunedin downtown. Per Florida Department of Environmental Protection, this trail has become an economic engine increasing business occupancy rates from 30% in 1980 to 95% today.

The proposed Bi-County Trail corridor encompasses several types of land use including rural, agricultural, residential, commercial, public, and industrial and will connect small rural towns and communities with all of these land uses. This enables this facility to be more than just a place for recreation but a driver of economic development for the region. Some of the major bicycle/pedestrian generators in proximity to the trail include Pasco-Hernando State College, St. Leo University, the planned Pasco County Industrial Park and Connected City, the shopping areas of Wesley Chapel, and the residential communities of Land O’ Lakes, Odessa, and Trinity. According to the National Association of Home Builders, a 2012 survey demonstrated that trails are considered one of the most influential community feature homeowners seek when buying a home, which further supports the benefit of this trail’s proximity to the various residential communities.
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Communities along the route. Additionally, according to a 2011 study from the University of Cincinnati, homes located within 1,000 feet of access to the Miami Scenic Trail witnessed increased value by $9,000.

D. Environmental Protection

The Bi-County Trail will provide the public with an attractive and healthy alternative to vehicle use thus reducing road congestion and improving air quality through reduced vehicle emissions. This more sustainable transportation mode will help balance the competing economic, social, and environmental needs of the community. By offering residents and visitors multiple viable and attractive transportation options, vehicle trips can be reduced along with greenhouse gas emissions and the consumption of non-renewable energy sources. By providing trail facilities that encourage and support the use of alternative forms of transportation, Pasco County aims to remove vehicles from the roadway, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality in the region. Completing the Pasco Bi-County Trail will help keep ozone emissions from rising and provide a significant benefit for the environmental sustainability of the entire region. Recent surveys show that trail use for non-recreational reasons is substantial, resulting in fewer vehicle miles traveled on the surrounding surface roads.

According to the National Park Service, additional environmental benefits of trails include providing natural buffer zones that limit pollution run-off and create natural area corridors within developed lands that can enhance connectivity for wildlife.

The Bi-County Trail is expected to have minimal impacts to areas/land not previously disturbed by the railroad corridor construction/operations or other development.

E. Quality of Life

Trails offer an enhanced quality of life to the areas with access to these facilities. According to Rails to Trails Conservancy, areas with strong trails and greenway planning have demonstrated more active lifestyles including walking, biking, transit use and less driving, lower body weights, lower rates of traffic injuries and fatalities, lower air pollution and emission exposure, and more mobility for non-driving populations.
Florida trails bring demonstrated quality of life impacts which can be replicated in Pasco County with the Bi-County Trail. Winter Garden is an example for this in which in approximately 1 million people use its segment of the West Orange Trail annually according to the City. After the introduction of this trail, the downtown has increased businesses such as brewers, theatres and shopping, increased property values, family recreational facilities such as a splash pad, and also added more events surrounding the trail such as the Winter Garden Farmer's Market which attracts residents from around the region. According to the Florida Department of Health, from 2015-2017 Pasco County had a heart disease mortality rate of 1,291 per 100,000 people. Compared with the State of Florida, 150.8, Pasco County is almost 5 percent higher than the statewide average rate. Diabetes is also higher with a rate of 26.7 compared with 20.0 for the state, which is 33 percent higher. Regarding access, 9.58% of residents indicate they are living within ½ mile of an off-street trail system compared to 18.23% for the State of Florida. The Bi-County Trail will increase access for these residents to trails and address opportunities for improved physical activity.

F. Innovation
i. Innovative Technology

As part of the Bi-County Trail PD&E Study, staff and community partners will use the latest in geographic information software and “path of least resistance” techniques to develop the alignment and overall design features for the trail. This software along with aerial pictography and remote sensing tools will be used to map the trail boundaries, highlight environmental features, delineate wildlife habitats, and photograph key features to design a route that minimizes both the impact to the environment and the costs of the project. In addition, for at-grade trail crossings of major roadways, warning signs and lighted crosswalks will be utilized to enhance safety. The goal is to construct a facility that provides a seamless integration with the surrounding environment that provides a pleasant and safe experience for its users.

As major segments of the trail are constructed, it will be added to the Florida Trail Smartphone Application. The application provides an interactive experience to plan future hikes along the Florida Trail Network. The application allows the users to:

- Choose from a map-based or data book interface, or use both;
- Use maps offline or online;
- Click-to-dial phone numbers for trail services;
- Automatic calculation of distance between next and previous waypoints, water sources, and campsites;
- Reverse Trail Direction switch for southbound mileage calculations;
- Built-in GPS function shows where a user is in relation to the trail;
- Share location information while on the trail with friends and family via text or email; and
- Draw a route based on where a person hikes, and share that GPS track with friends.
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Using Wi-Fi or 4G/5G, trail users have access to even more features:

- Hyperlinks crucial information like requesting a permit, checking flood gauges along rivers, checking hunting season dates, and booking campsites;
- Leave notes in a virtual Trail Register that other hikers using the app can see, and that trail maintainers or Florida Trail Association (FTA) staff can respond to;
- Share photos;
- Share location information on social media;
- Check on Trail Conditions and leave notes of your own about them; and
- Check on News Bulletins from land managers, the FTA, and Floridahikes.com.

The application is free to download but there is a cost to add the different state sections, such as Central Florida West where this trail would be located.

ii. Innovative Project Delivery

Considering the significant length of the Bi-County Trail, it is anticipated that segmentation of the 37-mile project will be established during the PD&E Study in order to expedite final design and construction of those portions of the corridor that require little or no additional right-of-way, and which have minimal permits involvement. Project segments will be determined based on logical termini, right-of-way/easement needs, permitting requirements, utility impacts, cultural resource involvement, public input, etc. Once LDCA is obtained, final design and permitting of multiple trail segments can proceed concurrently. In addition, design-build delivery of one or more of the project segments may be employed to further expedite construction of the trail. For those trail segments that will require additional right-of-way, the acquisition of all needed parcels identified during the PD&E study for the Preferred Build Alternative can proceed concurrent with the final design development of the individual trail segments.

Strategies for accelerating right-of-way and easement acquisition will be employed so that all right-of-way is clear for design-build or construction activities to proceed as soon as possible. These strategies include advancing title work and legal description reviews concurrent with the appraisal work and initiating required appraisal reviews concurrent with the appraisal development. In addition, Pasco County’s Real Property and Planning Division has developed a “Right-of-Way Small Acquisition Incentive Bonus Program.” This program includes public meetings with affected property owners, property appraisals, offer letters that include monetary incentives to property owners that want to sell promptly and can accommodate an expedited transfer of property. The process has been utilized successfully in land acquisition for several projects in Pasco County.

With all of these strategies, the goal is to accelerate the schedule and minimize litigation which has the most significant impact on schedule and cost.
iii. Innovative Financing

In early 2012 the County launched an extensive public outreach and education campaign to inform all stakeholders of the merits of extending the 1% Local Option Sales Surtax also known as the Penny for Pasco program which expired on December 31, 2014. Numerous stakeholder meetings and workshops were held with municipalities throughout the County and the broad support for more multi-modal infrastructure and specifically for the Bi-County Trail was solidified. On November 6, 2012, over 70% of the voters of Pasco County approved the extension. The approval of the referenda was an extension of the tax which created a $502+ million revenue stream over the 10 years between January 2015 and December 2024 dedicated to economic development (20%), public safety (20%), environmental lands (20%) and transportation (40%) including bicycle/pedestrian trails. The Bi-County Trail is specifically identified on the 2015 Penny for Pasco Projects list along with other bicycle/pedestrian trail priorities.

According to the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, trails influence business location and relocation decisions. Companies often choose to locate in communities that offer a high level of amenities to employees as a means of attracting and retaining top-level workers. Trails can make communities attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate both because of the amenities they offer to employees and the opportunities they offer to cater to trail visitors. The Bi-County Trail will attract significant amounts of businesses along its 37 mile tract allowing for the stimulation of the local economy and the attraction of potential private funding.

As noted previously, several MPUD’s have already dedicated right-of-way for locating the Bi-County Trail through or adjacent to these planned communities. MPUD’s and other developments are also expected to construct selected portions of the trail.

G. Partnership

Pasco County (Grant Recipient)

Pasco County is independently seeking receipt of a BUILD grant to fund the Planning Development & Environmental Study of the Bi-County Trail (aka Orange Belt Trail). Pasco County is governed by five elected Commissioners and an appointed County Administrator, who has executive powers to implement policies and procedures set forth by the Board of County Commissioners. The County government oversees a billion dollar budget, 2,000 employees and more than 60 departments and divisions.
The Pasco County MPO has been strategic in the prioritization of the Bi-County Trail. The project was included with the MPO’s 2017 Transportation Plan Priority Projects and the MPO passed a resolution of support for the project in 2016.

The partners expressing support for the Bi-County Trail project include:

- **FDOT**
- **Pasco County MPO**
- **Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA)**
- **FDEP**
- **Senator Bill Nelson**
- **Representative Gus Bilirakis**
- **Pasco County Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee**

Partner support letters are included in *Appendix B*.

The State of Florida in general has a demonstrated history of successful trail network coordination. In fact, in 2008 Florida was honored with the inaugural award of “BEST TRAILS STATE IN AMERICA” for coordinated efforts to develop a statewide trail network. This exemplary level of multi-agency coordination will also be brought to this effort in Pasco County with the implementation of the Bi-County Trail. Strong collaboration will be essential during the development of the Bi-County Trail Project. Pasco County and Pasco County MPO have a robust plan for providing sustainable, local funding for this project and have sought support from a variety of partners including FDOT, FDEP, Florida Office of Greenways and Trails, and several of the local communities.

The FDOT recently completed a $71M design-build project on I-75 in Pasco County from north of CR 54 to north of SR 52. The 6.7-mile I-75 widening project (from 4 to 6 through lanes) included reconstruction of the existing I-75/SR 52 Interchange and construction of a new 93.5-foot single-span bridge just north of the interchange to accommodate the future Ossie Murphy Road and the future Bi-County Trail. FDOT’s support and current investment in the Bi-County Trail concept and the strong partnership between FDOT and Pasco County is clearly evident with the construction of this structure (the approximate cost of which is $8M) which provides a ready underpass for the Bi-County Trail. It is anticipated that the Bi-County Trail construction will precede construction of the future Ossie Murphy Road, and the I-75 Bridge provides sufficient space for both facilities.
H. Non Federal Revenue for Transportation Infrastructure Investment

As previously stated, Pasco County will utilize funding from the 2015 Penny for Pasco infrastructure revenue which will go towards funding the PD&E Study as well as the subsequent phases of the project. The trail itself is not expected to generate any revenue, but as described in the Economic Competitiveness Merit Criteria Section, Trails have a proven positive impact on the local economy. A BUILD Grant award of $1,380,000 will go toward the estimated $18,100,000 total Bi-County Trail project cost (PD&E through construction). Every federal dollar spent will leverage $12.8 dollars in non-federal spending.
5.0 PROJECT READINESS

A. Technical Feasibility
During the study, the location and conceptual design of feasible build alternatives for the proposed trail improvements and their social, economic and environmental effects will be determined. A No-Build Alternative will remain a viable alternative throughout the study. The PD&E process ensures project development and comprehensive public involvement to ensure the recommended build alternative is properly established. A NEPA compliant PD&E process also ensures that future phases of the Bi-County Trail project will remain eligible for possible federal funding.

B. Project Schedule
The PD&E Study Phase is scheduled to kick off in the spring of 2019 as soon as possible following the BUILD Grant award. The 20-month study is anticipated to be complete in the fall of 2020; meeting the September 30, 2025 BUILD schedule requirements. Once the PD&E Study selects a preferred alternative and LDCA is granted by FDOT/FHWA, the subsequent phases of right-of-way acquisition and construction follow with full project completion anticipated by fall 2027.

As stated in the Innovative Project Delivery Merit Criteria, the trail will be split into multiple segments based on right-of-way needs, logical termini and other key considerations. Not all trail segments will require right-of-way acquisition which allows for accelerated design and construction and expedited project delivery for certain project segments.

C. Required Approvals
   i. NEPA Approval
A PD&E study is finalized when review of the PD&E documentation and recommendations is carried out by the FDOT pursuant to Title 23 of the United States Code, Section 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 is executed by the Federal Highway
Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grant – FY2018

Bi-County Bicycle/Pedestrian (aka Orange Belt) Trail PD&E Study

Administration (FHWA) and FDOT and then provides a Location and Design Concept Acceptance (LDCA) of the recommended Build Alternative. LDCA would be anticipated for the fall of 2020.

ii. Environmental Permits & Reviews

In order to meet NEPA compliance, the PD&E Study must produce an environmental document along with supporting documents assessing the social, economic, and environmental effects of the recommended alternative. Once the effects are assessed the project will secure all required permits during the design or design-build phase. Any local permits required will be prioritized and expedited.

iii. State and Local Approvals

The Bi-County Trail has received support and approval from regional transportation planning agencies. MOBILITY 2040 is Pasco County’s LRTP and it is a comprehensive, multimodal “blueprint” aimed at meeting the transportation needs of Pasco County and the incorporated cities/towns of Dade City, New Port Richey, Port Richey, San Antonio, Zephyrhills, and St. Leo over the next 25 years. The MOBILITY 2040 LRTP was adopted by the Pasco County MPO on December 11, 2014.

The Pasco County MPO has been strategic in the prioritization of the Bi-County Trail. The project was included in the 2017 Transportation Plan Priority Projects and the MPO passed a resolution of support for the project in 2016.

iv. Public Involvement

The public was engaged through the development of the MOBILITY 2040 LRTP and various County plans which have listed the Bi-County Trail as a project and a priority. Support has been overwhelming for infrastructure in Pasco County as evidenced by the passing of the 2015 Penny for Pasco Referendum. The Public will be engaged throughout the PD&E Study as required through each stage and their input will directly impact the outcome of the recommended alternative. Public engagement will continue through the use of a PD&E Study website, public meetings, public workshops, and mailings associated with the PD&E Study process.

D. Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The nature of a PD&E Study is to assess the risks of the project alternatives and commit to any mitigation measures for any impacts associated with the project. The Bi-County Trail PD&E Study will assess viable build alternatives through an extensive evaluation before a recommended alternative is selected. If the study finds that all build alternatives cause excessive social, community, economic or environmental impacts even with reasonable mitigation measures, the No Build Alternative would be selected and project would not move forward into subsequent phases of development.
There are no foreseeable obstacles to the conducting of the PD&E Study aside from the anticipation of being awarded BUILD grant money in order to initiate the study.

E. Federal Wage Rate Certification and BUILD 2018 Project Information Form

Please refer to the online Appendix A for a copy of the Federal Wage Rate Certificate and the BUILD 2018 Project Information Form.
ADDITIONAL APPLICATION ELEMENTS

The following appendices are available online at:
HTTPS://WWW.PASCOCOUNTYFL.NET/3246/BI-COUNTY-BIKEPED-TRAIL-BUILD-GRA NT

APPENDIX A:

- BUILD 2018 Project Information Form
- SF 424
- Federal Wage Rate Certificate

APPENDIX B:

- Project Support Letters

APPENDIX C:

- Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization MOBILITY 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan
- 2018-2032 Transportation Capital Improvement Projects (page 153)
- MPO’s 2017 Transportation Improvement Program (List of Priority Projects)
- Pasco County Greenways, Trails and Blueways Map
- Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) 2018 Regional Multi-Use Trails Network Map and 2019 Regional Multi-Use Trails Priority Projects List
- 2018 Florida Greenways and Trails System/Priority Trails Map
- 2018 SUN Trail Coast to Coast Connector Map

APPENDIX D:

- Pasco County Board of County Commissioners Resolution No. 12-248 approving 2015 Penny for Pasco
- Pasco County Board of County Commissioners Resolution No. 16-184
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