

Memo

Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Project: Pinellas County
 East Lake Road (C.R. 611) from Curlew Road to North of Trinity Boulevard Improvements
 FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Application

To: Ann Venables, AICP
 Pinellas County

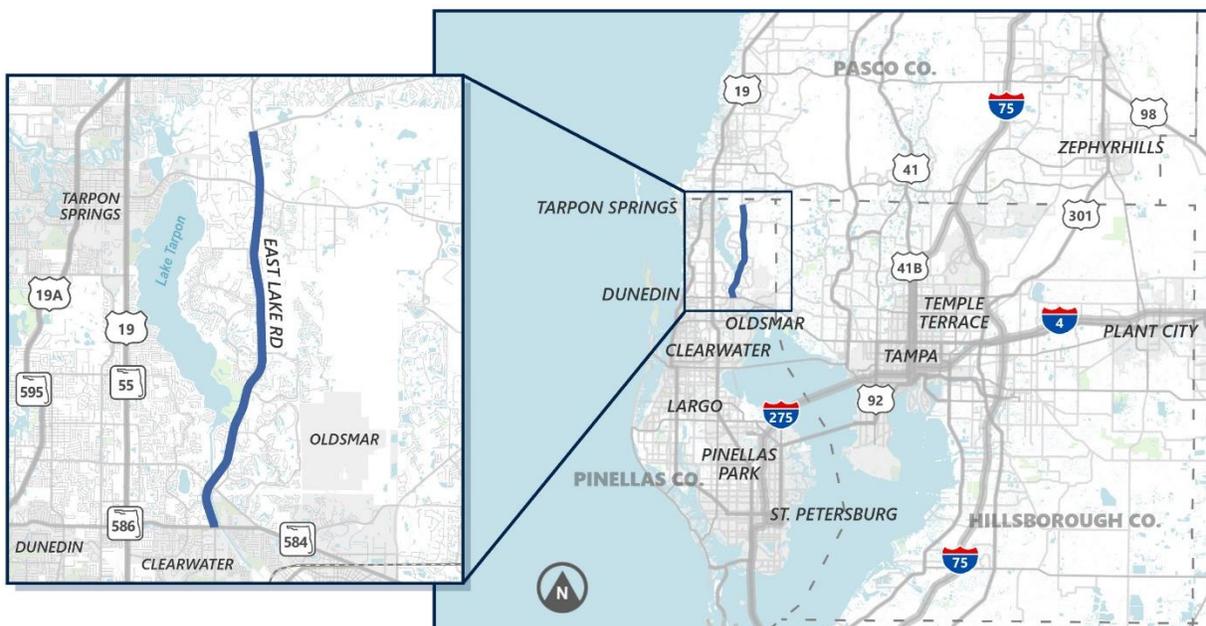
From: Stefanie McQueen, AICP
 HDR

Subject: East Lake Road Improvements BUILD Grant Application – Executive Summary DRAFT

Project Overview

The County is currently conducting a Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study to evaluate proposed improvements along the 9.3-mile section of East Lake Road (or County Road [C.R.] 611), extending from south of Curlew Road to north of Trinity Boulevard in northeast unincorporated Pinellas County. The proposed improvements include widening the road from 4 lanes to 6 lanes and enhancing major intersections within the corridor to address capacity issues, traffic operations, and safety conditions. The existing capacity of East Lake Road from Curlew Road to north of Trinity Boulevard is inadequate to meet current and future traffic volumes, resulting in congestion, reduced mobility, and a failing Level of Service (LOS) along portions of the roadway and at most of the intersections within the project corridor during peak traffic periods. The corridor has a high number of crashes, including fatal and serious injury crashes. **Figure 1** shows the project location.

Figure 1. East Lake Road Project Location Map



Existing Conditions & Proposed Improvements

Within the project limits, East Lake Road is a 6-lane divided roadway from Curlew Road to Tampa Road; it transitions to a 4-lane divided roadway from Tampa Road to Trinity Boulevard. The posted speed is 45-50 miles per hour. East Lake Road serves as a major thoroughfare for Pasco County commuters traveling south to access jobs within Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. The Cities of Clearwater and Safety Harbor are located just south of Curlew Road, and the City of Oldsmar is located east of East Lake Road within the project limits. Land use along the corridor is primarily residential as the roadway passes through over 30 residential communities. John Chestnut Park, Brooker Creek Preserve, and six schools also occur along the corridor; pockets of commercial uses are located at major roadway intersections.

East Lake Road primarily includes two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction that are separated by a 49-foot median. A 5-foot paved shoulder is located to the outside of the travel lanes in both directions. The Pinellas Trail, a 12-foot to 14-foot shared use path that is part of FDOT's Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail network, runs along the west side of the roadway; a 5-foot sidewalk generally runs along the east side of the roadway. A total of 12 signalized intersections and 7 bridges, including two crossings over navigable waterways (Lake Tarpon Canal and Brooker Creek), are located within the corridor. South of the junction with C.R. 611 Business (East Lake Business Road), East Lake Road is known as McMullen Booth Road.

East Lake Road was originally constructed with a wide median to accommodate future capacity improvements north of Tampa Road. As proposed through the *Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report* prepared for the project corridor by Pinellas County in September 2022, one additional 12-foot travel lane could be included in each direction along the inside of East Lake Road within the median to widen the facility from 4 lanes to 6 lanes. This inside widening option could reduce the need to expand the roadway to the outside and potentially impact adjacent properties. This inside widening option could also reduce potential impacts to the Pinellas Trail, which runs along the west side of East Lake Road, as well as a 5-foot sidewalk, which runs along the east side. The preliminary typical section, developed as part of the *Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report*, is proposed to include three 12-foot travel lanes and a 5-foot bike lane in both directions with no anticipated impacts to the Pinellas Trail and the 5-foot sidewalk. The proposed inside widening option will be further evaluated during the PD&E Study.

Figures 2 and 3 compare the existing and preliminary proposed typical sections of East Lake Road.

Figure 2. Existing Roadway Typical Section

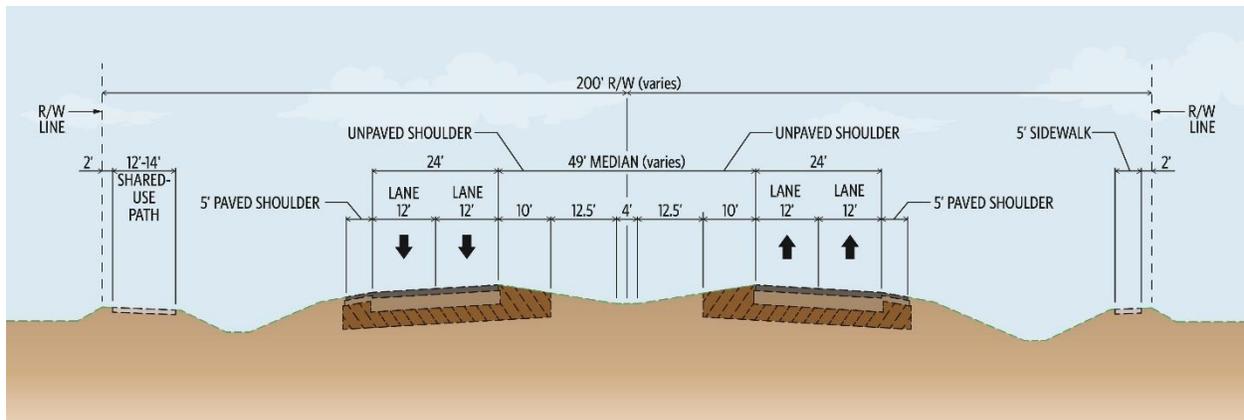
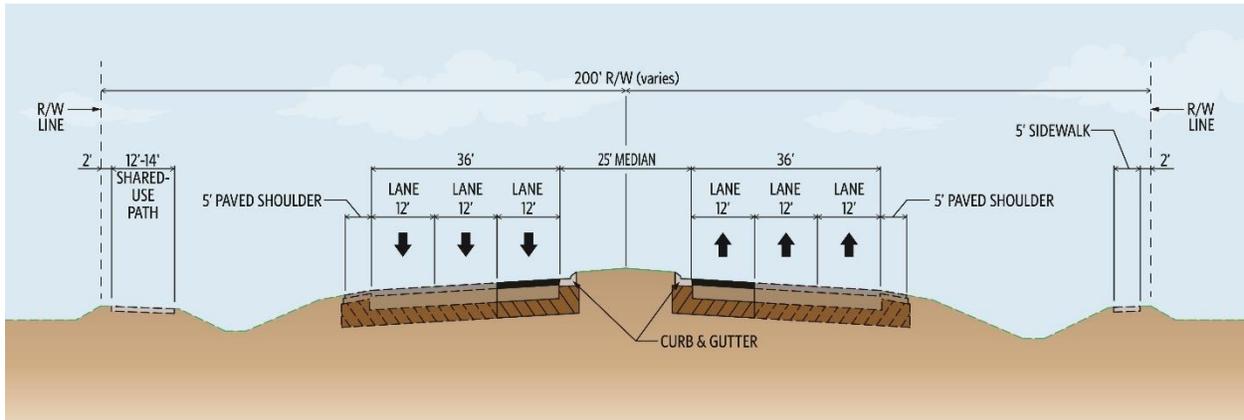
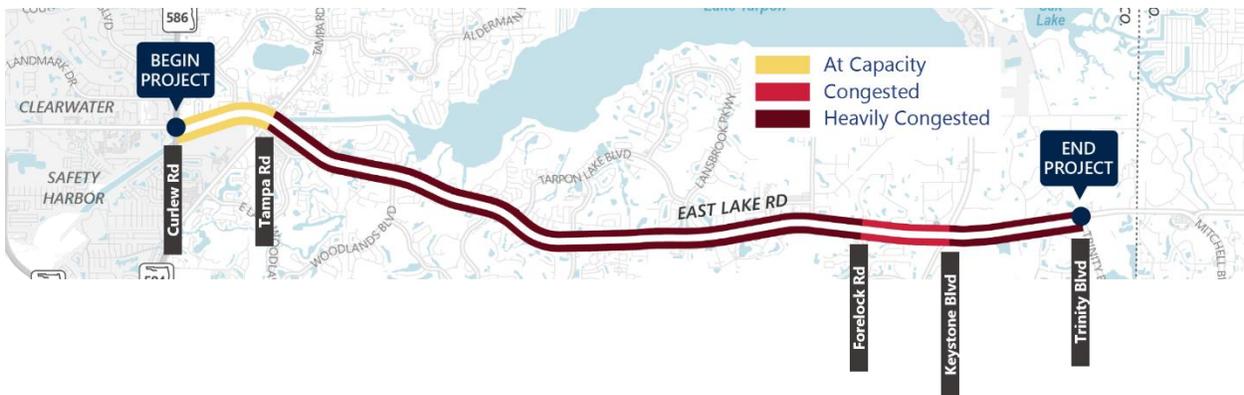


Figure 3. Preliminary Proposed Roadway Typical Section



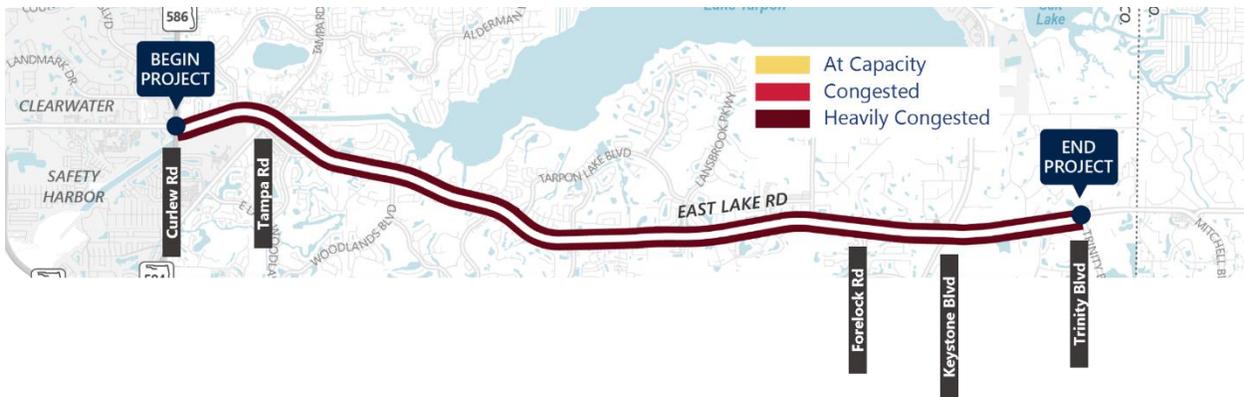
The existing capacity of East Lake Road from Curlew Road to north of Trinity Boulevard is inadequate to meet current and future (2045) traffic volumes. The corridor has frequent congestion and reduced mobility. The roadway and most of the intersections within the project corridor experience failing Level of Service (LOS) during peak traffic periods. **Figures 4 and 5** provide comparisons of existing and future East Lake Road traffic conditions.

Figure 4. East Lake Road Existing Year (2021) Congestion



Source: Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report, September 2022.

Figure 5. East Lake Road Design Year (2045) No-Build Congestion



Source: Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report, September 2022.



Funding & Costs

The total project cost is estimated to be \$178 million. To date, Pinellas County has invested or programmed approximately \$4 million for the PD&E Study to prepare this project for delivery. Other investments programmed by Pinellas County for improvements along the corridor (which exclude the project itself) total \$61 million. Additional funding is anticipated to complete the remaining phases for this project: preliminary engineering/design (including permitting), right-of-way, and construction (including utility relocation; construction, engineering, and inspection [CEI] services; and post-design services). As identified within the Pinellas County FY26-FY31 Capital Improvement Plan, approximately \$12 million has been committed for the preliminary engineering/design phase of the project through a local revenue source (Penny For Pinellas). In particular, \$2 million has been programmed to complete the PD&E Study (part of the \$4 million noted above) and \$10 million has been programmed for the design phase. **The County is seeking to obtain approximately \$8 million or 80% of the total eligible project costs for the design phase through a United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), specifically Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant.**

- Total Eligible Project Costs: \$9,988,000 (present day 2025 dollars)
- BUILD Funding Request: \$7,990,400 (present day 2025 dollars)
- Funding Request as % of Total Project Eligible Costs: 80%
- Non-Federal Grant Match: \$1,997,600 (present day 2025 dollars)
 - Local Revenue Source: Penny For Pinellas

BUILD Grant Program Overview

The FHWA BUILD grant program is a competitive, discretionary program that helps fund surface transportation infrastructure projects with significant local or regional impact. The eligibility requirements of the BUILD grant program allow project sponsors, including state and local governments, counties, Tribal governments, transit agencies, and port authorities, to pursue multi-modal and multi-jurisdictional projects that are more difficult to fund through other grant programs to meet community needs.

On December 15, 2025, the FHWA released a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for up to \$1.5 billion provided by the IIJA for FY 2026 related to the BUILD grant program; additional funding appropriated for National Infrastructure Investments through an Appropriations Act will also be included. The FHWA may also make funds available from recently cancelled or withdrawn RAISE projects.

BUILD grants are available for capital projects and planning projects in both rural and urban areas with a total maximum award size of \$25 million. While minimum grant award sizes have been established for capital projects (\$1 million for projects in rural areas and \$5 million for projects in urban areas), no minimum grant award size has been established for planning projects. In addition, the federal share for a BUILD grant cannot exceed 80 percent unless the project is in a designated rural area or Area of Persistent Poverty (APP)/Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC). Other federal funds allocated to the project must be included as part of the federal cost share.

Pinellas County is pursuing a [BUILD planning grant](#) and is preparing the application for submittal prior to the February 24, 2026, deadline.

Merit Criteria Summary

Each planning BUILD grant application will be evaluated for how the project responds to a set of eight statutory merit criteria:



- Criterion 1: Safety
- Criterion 2: Environmental Sustainability
- Criterion 3: Quality of Life
- Criterion 4: Mobility and Community Connectivity
- Criterion 5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity
- Criterion 6: State of Good Repair
- Criterion 7: Partnership and Collaboration
- Criterion 8: Innovation

An initial screening of proposed East Lake Road project shows that it would likely rate “High” in addressing the eight merit criteria for the BUILD program. This initial assessment is based on the following preliminary findings:

- **Criterion 1: Safety** – The northern portion of East Lake Road from Lansbrook Parkway to Trinity Boulevard is part of Pinellas County’s High-Injury Network according to the 2023 Safe Streets Pinellas Action Plan. Roadways of the High-Injury Network are where the most fatal and serious injury collisions occur within Pinellas County for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. The intersection of East Lake Road and Keystone Road is also a designated hot spot within Pinellas County, an intersection where a high proportion of fatal or serious injury collisions occur with the most frequency and involve vulnerable roadway users. Predominant crash types along the corridor include rear end, left turn, and sideswipe crashes; these crash types are likely attributed to the congested conditions/deficient operations of the roadway. Additionally, the roadway is both a state and county designated emergency evacuation route; it serves as one of the only north-south routes in northeastern Pinellas County with other routes being located between 2 and 9 miles to the west and east, respectively. There are several schools and parks along the corridor, which may contribute to the propensity of active transportation in the area.

The proposed project improvements are anticipated to better disperse traffic and reduce vehicle queuing/flow interruptions and collision conflict points through added capacity and intersection enhancements, including potential grade separated intersection improvements. These improvements are also intended to provide travel time savings and improve incident management and emergency response capabilities of East Lake Road, enabling it to serve as a viable alternate north-south route to other major north-south facilities of the area, including US 19 and the Veterans Expressway. As the improvements are not anticipated to permanently impact the Pinellas Trail and existing 5-foot sidewalk and include a 5-foot bike lane in both directions, the project is expected to continue to facilitate the safe movement of pedestrians and bicyclists within the area.

- **Criterion 2: Environmental Sustainability** – East Lake Road is critical in facilitating north-south traffic during emergency evacuation periods within northeastern Pinellas County. Through added capacity and intersection enhancements along the corridor, the proposed project will bolster East Lake Road’s capabilities to serve as a viable alternate and redundant north-south route to US 19 and the Veterans Expressway by improving traffic flow and operations. In turn, this will enhance emergency evacuation, access, and response times along the roadway.

East Lake Road traverses the 100-year floodplain and floodway. By potentially widening the roadway to the inside, this could reduce floodplain encroachment and minimize the need for additional right-of-way outside of the existing roadway footprint. In addition, stormwater conveyance strategies will be explored to maximize use of/optimize available existing treatment volumes within current stormwater ponds and stormwater

management facilities to meet the stringent stormwater and water quality requirements of Pinellas County and the Southwest Florida Water Management District. Incorporation of best management practices into the project’s design (such as permeable pavements, bioswales, vegetated swales and berms, etc.) will also be explored. All of these measures are intended to enhance the roadway’s resilience and help address area flooding and inundation of the roadway during extreme weather events.

- **Criterion 3: Quality of Life** – Motorists currently experience excessive delays along the corridor during peak traffic periods given traffic generated with the presence of large subdivisions and heavy commuter traffic generated from increased area development, specifically along Keystone Road, Trinity Boulevard, and to the north in Pasco County. The number of schools along the corridor also cause vehicle queuing/traffic backups during school drop-off times. The roadway is located within the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) East Lake Shuttle on demand service zone, and PSTA fixed bus routes 62 and OTC (Countryside/Oldsmar/Tampa Connector) share a stop in The Shoppes of Boot Ranch shopping plaza along the corridor contributing to roadway capacity issues. Area schools and parks additionally attract active transportation users to the corridor.

The project is anticipated to improve traffic flow and reduce travel delays and vehicle queuing experienced on East Lake Road through the addition of capacity and innovative intersection configurations. The enhanced operational efficiency along the corridor as a result of the proposed improvements is expected to make travel time more reliable for roadway users. The innovative intersection configurations are also intended to contribute to intuitive and clear operations along the corridor, enhancing roadway user experience and enabling motorists to arrive at their destinations predictably. In addition, the roadway operational efficiency is intended to enhance transit service headways and operations in the area. Shorter travel times typically correlate to lower transportation related costs (less fuel use, less vehicle wear-and-tear, lower lost job hours/wages, etc.); therefore, improved roadway operational efficiency is anticipated to positively benefit the affordability of commuter and transit travel. Finally, the proposed inside widening option is intended to minimize potential impacts to the Pinellas Trail and 5-foot sidewalk that run along the corridor. A 5-foot marked bike lane is also proposed to be added in both directions along the roadway; the buffering of this facility will be further evaluated as part of the PD&E Study. The trail, sidewalk, and bike lanes are intended to provide alternative non-motorized transportation options and improve the travel experience for families and/or children; this is particularly important with the presence of schools and recreational facilities along East Lake Road. The proposed typical section of the roadway will be developed to meet the designated C3R-Suburban Residential context classification, accounting for community preferences to maintain the rural and environmentally friendly character of the corridor.

- **Criterion 4: Mobility and Community Connectivity** – As a parallel, alternate facility to US 19 and the Veterans Expressway, East Lake Road facilitates heavy north-south traffic in the area; the roadway’s Annual Average Daily Traffic volume is 60, 615 vehicles per day. This roadway provides critical linkage and access in the transportation network for travelers in northeastern Pinellas County as natural geographic features (such as Lake Tarpon/Lake Tarpon Canal and Brooker Creek Preserve) constrain the presence of north-south roadways and north-south network connectivity in the area. The corridor hosts several residential communities as well as a number of schools and other community assets. East Lake Road is also a designated FDOT Freight Distribution Route and Pinellas County Truck Route. Commuter and freight traffic are anticipated to continue to increase with expected area growth.



The project is anticipated to improve the capacity and operational efficiency of East Lake Road by adding travel lanes and reconfiguring intersections through innovative design. The improved roadway efficiency is intended to enhance the mobility of motorists (including freight providers) using the corridor as well as transit services and users. The project is also proposed to include a 5-foot marked bike lane in both directions and maintain the Pinellas Trail and 5-foot sidewalk that are present. These facilities are expected to accommodate and offer alternative, affordable transportation options for non-motorized travelers. Context based and universal design practices will be considered as the project advances to accommodate all roadway users, particularly at intersections and other points of conflict between motorized and non-motorized travel modes.

- **Criterion 5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity** – The City of Oldsmar, located to the east within the limits of the project, is a major employment center of Pinellas County and the region. According to the Forward Pinellas Advantage 2050 LRTP, a sizable portion of future employment growth is expected to occur within the City of Oldsmar. The city also hosts the Tampa Road Industrial Freight Activity Center (FAC), consisting of industrial and advanced manufacturing uses. While most of the FAC is in Pinellas County, freight generating uses also extend into Hillsborough County along SR 580 (Tampa Road/Hillsborough Avenue) and Race Track Road. Not only does East Lake Road facilitate freight traffic and provide access to this FAC as a designated FDOT Freight Distribution Route and Pinellas County Truck Route, but it also serves as a regional thoroughfare for Pasco County commuters traveling south to access jobs within Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties. The corridor connects to major east-west facilities of the area roadway network, including CR 582, CR 752/SR 584, SR 586, SR 580, and SR 60. East Lake Road additionally attracts tourism traffic given the presence of multiple recreational assets, including John Chestnut Park, Brooker Creek Preserve, numerous golf courses, and the Pinellas Trail.

The project is anticipated to enhance traffic flow and operations along the corridor through the addition of capacity and innovative intersection configurations. The improved roadway efficiency is intended to better facilitate commuter traffic and freight movement as well as accommodate increased area development along with growing employment and freight activities. The project is also proposed to include a 5-foot marked bike lane in both directions and maintain the Pinellas Trail and 5-foot sidewalk that are present. These improvements may make the corridor and area more appealing to businesses and facilitate additional tourism opportunities, leading to increased business activity and area investment.

- **Criterion 6: State of Good Repair** – The project meets this criterion by improving the operational and safety conditions of an existing area roadway. Strategies will be explored to enhance the resilience of the roadway, given that it is located within an area prone to flooding and may be vulnerable to inundation during extreme weather events. In addition, the project will explore Advance Traffic Management System (ATMS) upgrades and integration of Smart Corridor functions/advanced communications technologies to enhance transportation safety and mobility along the corridor. Previous ATMS technologies and strategies deployed to improve the Pinellas County transportation network, including along East Lake Road, have delivered significant benefits to the traveling public and the economic welfare of the county.
- **Criterion 7: Partnership and Collaboration** – As part of the project PD&E Study, Pinellas County has developed and is currently implementing a Public Involvement Plan to engage residents, businesses, community-based organizations, and other

stakeholders to ensure those who live and work in the project area are meaningfully engaged throughout the lifecycle of the project. During the PD&E Study, Pinellas County will conduct a series of project briefings, community meetings, an Alternatives Workshop, and a Public Hearing to provide opportunities to share information with the public and secure input from the public on the project. Previously, as part of development of the *Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report*, Pinellas County conducted a virtual meeting on May 18, 2022 and an in-person meeting on June 1, 2022 to gather preliminary input on the project from the public. Pinellas County has also received preliminary input on potential project effects/fatal flaws from environmental resource agencies as part of the FDOT Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Programming Screen.

- **Criterion 8: Innovation** – A number of innovative strategies and technologies will be explored as part of this project, such as unique and effective intersection design concepts to improve traffic flow while minimizing potential right-of-way needs, Advance Traffic Management System (ATMS) upgrades and integration of Smart Corridor functions/advanced communications technologies to enhance transportation safety and mobility (these strategies could include signal preemption for emergency service vehicles or non-motorized users), and opportunities to streamline consultation and permitting with environmental resource agencies to facilitate accelerated project delivery.

Project Readiness

The project BUILD grant application is finally reviewed to determine Pinellas County's preparedness to move the project forward once the grant is awarded. Project readiness includes a review of planning consistency, project schedule as well as the obligation and expenditure of grant funds based on the project's schedule, the extent to which Pinellas County has secured necessary environmental permits and approvals, public and agency involvement and support of the project, environmental risk criteria, and identification of funding commitments.

- **Planning and Constructability** – The project is identified as cost feasible in the Forward Pinellas Advantage 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Funding for the design and construction phases of the project are included in the Forward Pinellas FY 2026 – 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Funding is also committed in Pinellas County's FY25-FY30 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the project's design and construction phases.
- **Project Schedule** – A preliminary schedule for the project is outlined below:
 - NEPA Process Start: November 2025
 - NEPA Process End: November 2027
 - Preliminary Engineering/Design Start: FY 2027 (funding to be obligated end of FY 2026)
 - Preliminary Engineering/Design End: FY 2029
 - Right-of-Way Start: FY 2029
 - Right-of-Way End: FY 2030
 - Construction Start: FY 2031
 - Phased Construction is anticipated for this project.

Pinellas County is committed to meeting the obligation and expenditure deadlines for FY 2026 IJA funding as noted below:

- Obligation Deadline: September 30, 2030
- Expenditure Deadline: September 30, 2035



- **NEPA and Permitting** – A PD&E Study is currently being performed for this project by Pinellas County with FDOT District Seven oversight. FDOT Office of Environmental Management (OEM), who has assumed FHWA responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for highway projects on the State Highway System (SHS) and Local Agency Program (LAP) projects off the SHS, will serve as the approver of the environmental document and supporting technical documents for this project. The anticipated Class of Action for the project is a Type 2 Categorical Exclusion. This proposed Class of Action will be coordinated with FDOT District Seven and the FDOT OEM. Preliminary engineering/design, right-of-way, and construction are the next necessary phases to deliver this project. It should be noted that Pinellas County received initial input from environmental resource agencies on necessary supporting environmental document technical studies and permits as part of the ETDM Programming Screen.
- **Project Support** – As part of the project PD&E Study, Pinellas County has developed and is currently implementing a Public Involvement Plan to solicit meaningful input from residents, businesses, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders on the project throughout its lifecycle. Pinellas County is also seeking letters of support pertaining to this project from Pasco County, Congressman Gus Bilirakis, Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna, Forward Pinellas, and Council of North County Neighborhoods. To date, Pinellas County has gathered initial input on the project from the public through engagement events held as part of the *Preliminary Corridor Analysis and Alternative Development Study Report* and from environmental resource agencies during the ETDM Programming Screen.
- **Risks and Mitigation** – As part of the PD&E Study, a Risk Management Plan will be prepared to identify potential project risks, quantify the probability of each risk occurring, and develop a response strategy to each risk. The plan will focus on elements that could affect the PD&E Study’s execution and delivery (such as a change in project alternatives necessitated by a stakeholder or a change in project schedule necessitated by agency reviews). Additional risk assessments (such as impacts to floodplains/environmental resources and impacts to the road/area due to rising sea levels and storm surge) will also be performed as part of the PD&E Study. Initial input on potential project effects/fatal flaws/risks to environmental resources was provided by environmental resource agencies during the ETDM Programming Screen; the agencies additionally offered preliminary opportunities to mitigate for these potential project impacts.
- **Applicant Capacity Review** – Pinellas County has been the recipient of similar FHWA grants and is equipped with the capacity, knowledge, and experience to successfully deliver the project in compliance with applicable federal grant requirements, including compliance with Buy America provisions.
- **Financial Completeness Review** – Pinellas County is seeking to obtain approximately \$8 million or 80% of the total eligible project costs for the preliminary engineering/design phase through a BUILD grant. The non-federal grant match, totaling approximately \$2 million, is to be funded through the local revenue source, Penny For Pinellas. Funding for the right-of-way and construction phases will consist of a mix of Penny For Pinellas and FDOT sources.

Conclusion/Next Steps/Action Requested

Seeking Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners’ approval to prepare and submit a FY 2026 BUILD grant application for East Lake Road (C.R. 611) from Curlew Road to North of Trinity Boulevard Improvements.