

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY, FLORIDA

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of County Commissioners

THROUGH: John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator

PREPARED BY: Mark Vietze, MPO Planner

DATE: March 5, 2024

SUBJECT: Public Transportation Grant Agreement (PTGA) with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for a Service Development Grant

It is requested that the information presented herein be given formal consideration by the Board of County Commissioners at its regular meeting of March 19, 2024.

DESCRIPTION & CONDITIONS

Indian River County's fixed route public transit system, GoLine, consists of 14 routes which operate six days per week. The system currently operates from 6:00 AM until 7:00 PM on weekdays and from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM on Saturdays. No service is provided on Sundays.

To receive operating assistance through the state block grant program, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) requires transit providers to perform a Transit Development Plan (TDP) major update every five years. The most recent TDP major update was prepared by the University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) and was adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in September 2023. The highest transit service needs identified in that TDP major update were extending weekday service hours to 9 pm (two additional hours), expanding Saturday service hours to 7 am to 7 pm (three additional hours), and adding Saturday service to Route 13, which operates along SR 60 west of Indian River Mall.

Since the adoption of the TDP last fall, MPO staff has coordinated with FDOT to secure a service development grant for implementing these service improvements. The anticipated operating cost for the service improvements is \$800,000 annually. Through the service development grant, FDOT will cover half of the operating cost of the service improvements for three years, providing in total \$1,200,000 of operating assistance through the grant.

To receive the Service Development Grant funds, the County must enter into a Public Transportation Grant Agreement with FDOT, a copy of which is attached to this staff report (Attachment #2). The attached resolution (Attachment #1) authorizes the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners to execute the PTGA for Public Transportation Block Grant funds. Upon the Board's adoption of the resolution and the Chairman's execution of the PTGA, County

staff will transmit the grant agreement to FDOT. Once the PTGA has been executed by FDOT, the funds will be transmitted to the County and passed along to the Senior Resource Association (SRA), the County's public transportation provider.

The grant agreement covers a three-year period and includes funding for the first year (FY 2023/24). Any unexpended funds in the first year will carry over to the remaining two years of the agreement.

ANALYSIS

As described in the PTGA, the project scope provides for:

- **Weekday Service Hours** - GoLine currently operates on weekdays from 6:00am to 7:00pm. A service improvement recommended by the TDP is the extension of weekday service to 9:00 pm. The addition of 2 service hours on weekday evenings will benefit all GoLine riders. In addition, it will make GoLine a more viable transportation option for those who commute to jobs in the service-sector, since many service-sector work shifts end later than 7:00 pm.
- **Saturday Service Hours** - GoLine currently operates 12 out of 14 routes on Saturdays. Service hours are limited on Saturdays: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. The TDP recommends a phased extension of Saturday service. With this service improvement, the new Saturday service hours would be from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm. In addition to extending the hours of service, Saturday service would also be expanded to one route that is not currently operated on Saturdays (Route 13). Route 15, which primarily serves Indian River State College students, would continue to operate on weekdays only.

When the fixed route system began service in the late 1990s, it consisted of five routes that operated only on weekdays from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm with a 12:00-1:00 pm midday gap. Over the past 25 years, the system has grown as routes were added to serve new areas, weekday service hours were increased and the midday gap eliminated, and Saturday service was introduced and then expanded. As the service expanded, ridership also increased (from 74,000 passenger trips in FY 1999 to 1,261,000 passenger trips in FY 2023).

The most recent service improvement was an expansion of Saturday service in late 2016. That improvement expanded Saturday service by three hours to the current hours of operation (8:00 am to 5:00 pm). The service improvements now proposed for implementation are the three top-ranked service improvements identified in the TDP and were identified after extensive public outreach.

As with the FTA Section 5307 grant program, only public agencies may be designated recipients of Service Development Grant funds pursuant to state regulations. Also, activities funded with Service Development Grant funds must be consistent with applicable approved local government comprehensive and transit plans. In this case, the provision of transit service is consistent with the MPO's recently adopted 10-year Transit Development Plan and 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan.

FUNDING

For the local match, a total of \$1,200,000 over three years will be budgeted and available in the General Fund / Community Transportation Coordinator account (Account Number 00111041-088230-54001). These funds are part of an allocation given to the Senior Resource Association to provide transit service in the county. A portion of these funds (approximately \$200,000) will be used in FY 2024, with the remainder being used in FYs 2025, 2026, and 2027.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of County Commissioners approve the Public Transportation Grant Agreement and adopt the attached resolution authorizing the Chairman to sign the agreement.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Authorizing Resolution for the Execution of a Public Transportation Grant Agreement
2. FDOT Public Transportation Grant Agreement
3. Grant Budget Form