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# County asking for federal help to fund Poinciana Parkway

Posted by: Lilsis on: June 17, 2010

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By Marvin G. Cortner

Osceola County commissioners June 7 agreed to join with Coral gables-based Avatar Properties in requesting more than \$55.3 million in a federal grant to fund construction of the proposed Poinciana Parkway.

The 10-mile road, which would cost as much as \$174.7 million to acquire right of way, to engineer and then build, would run through parts of Osceola and Polk counties. The roadway would begin at Marigold Avenue and Cypress Parkway in Poinciana and run northwest to County Road 54 and U.S. Highway 17-92 in Polk County, providing access to Interstate 4.

Before the economic downturn, Avatar proposed building the roadway itself and has spent approximately \$40 million so far on the project. The company cannot continue to develop Solivita, its active adult community, without additional roadway capacity to handle the additional traffic.

County Commissioner Brandon Arrington, whose district includes the Poinciana area, said another way in and out of the community is desperately needed and that if the county does fund the roadway using public money, then it would become county property.

The parkway would be the first leg of a route going from the St. Cloud area to Poinciana and then to I-4, with the proposed Southport Connector going around the southern end of Lake Tohopekaliga as another leg of that roadway, Arrington said.

The Southport Connector would allow traffic from Poinciana to get to Florida's Turnpike to go north to Orlando or south to Miami without first having to go through Kissimmee via U.S. Highway 192.

“Transportation is a huge issue in Poinciana where roads have not caught up yet with development,” Arrington said, adding that the county would make the roadway a toll road as a way to help pay off construction costs and to reimburse Avatar for its investment in the project.

The commissioner also said the recent approval by Gov. Charlie Crist of an expressway authority for Osceola County is a “huge step in solving the county’s transportation issues.”

More specifics on

the federal request

The joint county-Avatar request is for \$55,341,000 through the Transportation Investments Generating Economic Recovery II program, or TIGER II, a competitive grant program that has \$600 million available for surface transportation projects. According to information on the U.S. Department of Transportation website, individual awards can be from \$10 million to \$200 million, with up to 80 percent of project costs eligible for federal funding. Projects in rural areas are eligible for 100 percent reimbursement, with \$140 million available.

No one state can receive more than 25 percent of program funds. The grant program runs through Sept. 30, 2012, and pre-applications must be submitted by July 16, with final applications due by Aug. 23.

Priority for grant funding, according to the department, would be given to projects that contribute to the economic competitiveness of the nation, that foster livable communities and increase transportation choices and access to transportation services, that improve energy efficiencies and reduce dependence on oil and finally and that help create and preserve jobs.

In addition to the grant, the county has requested approximately \$55.3 million in funding through the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, or TIFIA. This federal program provides federal credit assistance in the form of direct loans, loan guarantees and standby lines of credit to finance surface transportation projects of national and regional significance.

According to the county manager’s office, the total cost of building the parkway would include TIFIA credit fees of \$6.97 million. Funds needed to build the roadway beyond the federal grant and federal loan would come from other sources, such as state or federal government appropriations.

Fernando Valverde, a Poinciana community leader, said another roadway in and out of Poinciana is badly needed, especially during any possible emergencies

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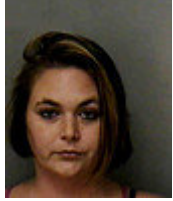
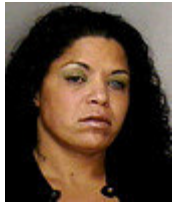
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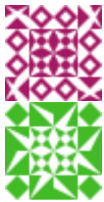
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