



Brevard County Board of County Commissioners

2725 Judge Fran Jamieson
Way
Viera, FL 32940

Legislation Text

File #: 3327, **Version:** 1

Subject:

Approval of a letter request to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a Section 206 study of the feasibility of an ecosystem restoration project at the 528 Causeway in the Banana River

Fiscal Impact:

The first \$100,000 of initial investigation is 100% federal

Any additional feasibility study cost requires 50% non-federal match

Project design and construction, if feasible, requires 35% non-federal match

Dept/Office:

Natural Resources

Requested Action:

Approve the Chair to sign a letter request to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requesting a Section 206 study of the feasibility of an ecosystem restoration project to remove the earthen causeway in the Banana River under Highway 528

Summary Explanation and Background:

Slow flow and long residence/retention times makes certain segments of the Indian River Lagoon in Brevard County highly vulnerable to nutrient pollution and harmful algal blooms. Several modeling efforts indicate that causeways contribute to compartmentalization and flow restriction. The northernmost segment of the Banana River has experienced intense and prolonged algal blooms contributing to a dramatic loss of seagrass and associated fish and marine life.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a program to investigate the potential benefits and cost effectiveness of locally sponsored ecosystem restoration projects. Through this program, the Army Corps can investigate the extent to which the causeway supporting Highway 528 across the Banana River contributes to ongoing water quality issues, associated harmful algae blooms, consequential seagrass losses, and whether removal or modification of the causeway could be a significant part of ecosystem restoration for seagrass, fish and marine life.

The attached letter, would request an investigation and express the County's willingness to serve as the study sponsor. The first \$100,000 of the initial investigations would be 100% federally funded. Feasibility study costs in excess of \$100,000 would be cost shared 50%-50%. The non-federal cost share for project design and construction is 35%, if a feasible plan is identified. The sponsor's cost share may include cash, work in-kind, or a combination and will be delineated in a

Project Partnership Agreement, to be executed before construction commences.

Prior Board Action and Community Support for Examining Causeway Impacts and Options:

On February 26, 2019 the County Commission approved a recommendation from the Save Our Indian River Lagoon Citizen Oversight Committee to request the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) evaluate options to improve circulation by replacing portions of the State Road 528 and 520 causeways over the Banana River with elevated bridge spans. A letter was sent from the Commission Chair to the Secretary of FDOT, District 5.

On December 5, 2018 the Canaveral Port Authority adopted a resolution supporting efforts to study and evaluate improvements to 528 and 520 that would benefit the lagoon, the economy and the resilience of essential transportation corridors and infrastructure.

On March 14, 2019 the Space Coast Transportation Planning Organization adopted a resolution asking FDOT to evaluate causeway impacts and estimate the costs of bridge and causeway alterations.

On February 8, 2019 the 5-county collaborative Indian River Lagoon Council approved a resolution supporting planning studies for 528 and 520 transportation improvements beneficial to Indian River Lagoon restoration.

On August 20, 2020 a letter was sent on behalf of the Indian River Lagoon Council to a new Secretary of FDOT, District 5 reiterating the need for the State Road 528 design to consider Indian River Lagoon water quality improvement options, including quantification of costs and benefits, and addressing coastal vulnerability concerns.

Most recently, on August 24, 2021, at the request of the Economic Development Commission, the County Commission approved sending a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers requesting a feasibility study for restoration of natural water flow and wetlands associated with transportation corridors serving the Kennedy Space Center. On August 30, 2021 Congressman Bill Posey sent a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers supporting the County Commission's request. Congressman Posey noted the national and regional economic and ecosystem benefits of addressing the federal legacy of impacts on the Indian River Lagoon.

Clerk to the Board Instructions:

None, if approved, Natural Resources will coordinate with the Chair to print the letter on the proper letterhead and send the signed letter to the Army Corps