

## Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board of Directors Agenda Item

**TITLE:** Approval of an Updated Design Concept for Magnolia Drive Trail

**Date:** December 5, 2017

**Requested By:** Blueprint Staff

**Contact:** Blueprint

**Type of Item:** Discussion

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### **STATEMENT OF ISSUE:**

This item requests the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board (IA Board) approve the updated design concept for the unconstructed phases of the Magnolia Drive Trail Project from South Monroe to Apalachee Parkway. These phases include Monroe Street to Meridian Street, Pontiac Drive to Chowkeebin Nene, and Circle Drive to Apalachee Parkway. In partnership with Leon County and the City of Tallahassee, Blueprint staff has completed an analysis of alternative design concepts and shared the updated design options with residents at a community meeting on November 6, 2017. Based on technical analysis and community review and discussion, staff is recommending the design concept be updated for the remaining phases of the Magnolia Drive Trail project to provide an 8' wide trail with a 4' landscaped buffer between back of curb and trail. Concurrent with the construction of future phases of the trail, staff is also recommending undergrounding electric lines throughout the Magnolia Drive corridor. Blueprint is currently working with the City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to complete an initial fiscal analysis comprehensively evaluating the opportunity created by the Magnolia Drive construction to underground electric lines as part of this project.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

The Magnolia Drive Trail Project was added to Tier 1 of the Blueprint 2000 Program at the April 1, 2015 Intergovernmental Agency Board meeting, and \$7,983,300 in funding was approved for implementation. The approved project is to be constructed in several phases and when complete, will add a continuous trail along Magnolia Drive from South Adams Street to Apalachee Parkway. A project map is included as Attachment #1.

Blueprint and Leon County entered into a Joint Partnership Agreement (JPA) on August 1, 2015, which stated that Blueprint would provide \$7,983,300 in funding for trail design, right of way acquisition, and construction. Per the terms of the JPA, which is included as Attachment #2, Leon County would manage the design, permitting and construction of each phase, and Blueprint would coordinate the right of way acquisition.

Magnolia Drive is a County-owned major collector roadway within the City limits and, as such, the County has assumed responsibility for construction of the trail and related improvements. The City is responsible for the maintenance of the right of way outside of the roadway, which will include the completed trail and landscaping. Magnolia Drive is a key pedestrian and bicycle corridor listed in the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) Regional Mobility Plan as well as the current and previous Safe Routes to School Study. While this project provides important connections between activities and residential areas, this project is not part of a larger trail network or identified in the Tallahassee-Leon County Greenways Master Plan.

### **COMPLETED PHASES**

#### *Phase 1: South Meridian Road to Pontiac Drive*

This segment was completed in February 2017 and includes a 10' multiuse trail on the south side of Magnolia Drive from South Meridian Road to Pontiac Drive. Leon County funded the design and permitting of this phase. The CRTPA committed \$861,000 in Florida Department of Transportation grant funding towards the construction cost of approximately \$2,000,000. The City of Tallahassee funded the water and sewer upgrades, and Blueprint funded the remaining balance of the construction costs and full time construction administrator to administer the federal local agency partnership requirements. Leon County managed the construction activities.

Upon completion of construction, Blueprint and Leon County received comments from representatives from Indianhead-Leigh Neighborhood Association regarding this phase of the multiuse trail. Specifically, they indicated the completed trail is lacking in both adequate appearance and functionality, in their estimation. Residents also noted that the trail is immediately adjacent to the curb, therefore looking like another traffic lane and not an inviting trail facility. Additionally, residents report that this trail segment is being intermittently used for vehicle parking. Leon County is currently evaluating Phase 1 to identify if modifications can be made to address these concerns.

#### *Phase 6: South Monroe to South Adams Street*

This phase will be substantially complete in December 2017. To expedite this phase and minimize disruption to the public, Blueprint combined the construction of this trail segment with the construction of the new Care Point Health and Wellness Center. The design for this phase of the Magnolia Drive Trail was based on recommendations included in the adopted Monroe-Adams Placemaking Plan initiative and as such provides an 11' multiuse trail with a 3' landscaped buffer.

### **PHASES CURRENTLY IN DESIGN**

As construction came to completion on Phases 1 and 6 and the neighborhood concerns about the completed facility on Phase 1 came to light, Blueprint and Leon County staff began working to evaluate the trail design for the remaining phases. The project team prepared an alternatives analysis to evaluate three conceptual design options for the remaining phases. The evaluation took into account several criteria including: additional right of way needs and associated costs, construction timeframe and cost, number of permitted trees impacted and removed, number and

costs associated with relocation of utility poles, and additional impacts to residential. A matrix detailing this information for each of the three design options is included as Attachment #3.

The three concepts include:

- Option 1: 10' wide trail adjacent to back of curb (current trail design)
- Option 2: 8' wide trail with 4' landscaped buffer between back of curb and trail
- Option 3: 10' wide trail with 4' landscaped buffer between back of curb and trail

Overall, the total estimated cost for each option, including right of way acquisition, construction and utility pole relocation, was as follows:

- Option 1 (existing design – 10' trail, no buffer): \$5,229,680
- Option 2 (8' trail, 4' buffer): \$5,756,492
- Option 3 (10' trail, 4' buffer): \$6,336,310

While imposing some impacts to specific areas, overall the permitted tree removal, utility pole relocation, and driveway impacts were negligible for each option. Construction time remained the same for each option by phase. However, additional time required for modifications to the design for each phase could add additional time to the project. Attachment #4 includes a graphic representation of Option 1 and also illustrates estimated tree removal for Options 1, 2, and 3.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

On November 6, 2017, Blueprint held a community meeting to gather input from the public on the completed trail segments and the future phases of the project, as well as to share information regarding next steps. Sixty-four people signed in at this meeting, though not all attendees signed the check-in sheet. A total of thirteen (13) written comments (Attachment #5) were received at the meeting or via email by November 27, 2017 and are summarized below.

### **Trail Width**

- Five people noted support for an 8' wide trail with 4' buffer (Option #2)
- One person noted support for a 10' trail with a 4' buffer (Option #3)
- One person supports staying with the original design in the interest of time
- One person noted either trail width was acceptable, as long as the buffer was 4'

### **Cyclist Concerns:**

- No bike lanes needed, cyclists should use the trail
- Design is dangerous for cyclists
- Design is contrary to AASHTO guidelines
- Consider bike lanes on N/W Magnolia Drive due to the high number of driveway cuts on trail
- Add trail access at each side street

- Separation of trail and road not good for cyclists as they are less visible
- Move crosswalk at Circle/Magnolia Drive to north

General Comments:

- Add railing/barrier at high conflict areas
- Detours impact businesses along corridor
- Avoid use of detours
- Reduce speed limit on Magnolia Drive
- Bury the overhead utilities
- Use plants, not grass in buffer
- Consider a 14' trail with a 4' buffer
- Use low lighting along trail/road to minimize impacts
- Changes will delay schedule

Spoken Comments:

- Noise and trash concerns at Jim Lee Road/Magnolia Drive intersection
- Consider location of a place for residents to deposit yard waste
- Desire to coordinate this project with other local plans

*Analysis of Undergrounding Electric Utility Lines*

During the November 6 community meeting, residents requested that Blueprint analyze opportunities to underground overhead electric lines as part of the trail construction. These comments were provided within the context of prior electric outages during Hurricanes Hermine and Irma. The current project as approved in April 2015 does not include undergrounding electric power lines. However, given the significant impacts resulting from hurricanes over the past two years, the community has expressed a strong desire for the City of Tallahassee to underground power lines wherever possible in an effort to create greater reliability in service to the citizens. In response, the City Commission has directed City staff to evaluate placing power lines underground concurrent with public infrastructure and private development projects as these opportunities occur. To support this action, the City Commission adopted a cost share policy that provides City funding for 25% of the total cost of undergrounding electric lines concurrent with public and private projects. The public or private project partner funds the remaining 75% of costs to underground electric lines.

As a result of the aforementioned public request, Blueprint is currently coordinating with City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to determine opportunities to underground power lines throughout the corridor. This evaluation is currently in progress and will include an analysis of potential impacts to the overall project cost and schedule. Staff is also evaluating the advantages of utilizing the opportunity created by the Magnolia Drive Trail construction to concurrently underground electric lines. The Magnolia Drive corridor and surrounding neighborhoods experienced significant damage to the electric utility infrastructure during both hurricanes, resulting in prolonged power outages. Undergrounding electric lines improves system reliability and minimizes power outages, as well as reduces occurrences of electric shock resulting from

downed power lines. For the City, the undergrounding of utility lines minimizes the costs of repairing damaged power lines after storm events. Beyond nearby residents, the advantages to Tallahassee-Leon County community include improved aesthetics along a main roadway.

The initial cost estimate for undergrounding all electric utility lines throughout the corridor (South Monroe Street to Lafayette Street) is initially estimated at \$4 million. As a funding partner and per City Commission direction, the Electric Utilities will fund 25% of the total cost. Blueprint would be responsible for providing the remaining 75% of funding, currently estimated at approximately \$3 million. However, this is a preliminary cost-estimate. Blueprint and Electric Utilities staff continue to coordinate to fully evaluate all options, impacts, and advantages of consolidating improvements to the electric system with the construction of the Magnolia Drive Trail.

Based on the unique opportunity provided by the trail construction throughout the Magnolia Drive corridor, coupled with the community advantages and cost-sharing partnership provided by Electric Utilities, staff is recommending the IA Board also approve the request to underground utilities throughout the Magnolia Drive corridor as part of this Blueprint project. Due to the trail design changes proposed in this item, the timetable is currently at a pause, which affords Blueprint and Electric Utilities the time to create a comprehensive plan to underground electric lines. If approved, Blueprint staff will continue to work with the City to develop both this plan and the corresponding cost-sharing agreement to fund the improvements. Once the final cost of undergrounding utility lines is confirmed, Blueprint staff will bring back an agenda item delineating the schedule for improvements, cost-sharing partnership agreement, an analysis of the Magnolia Drive project budget incorporating the design changes, and options for funding the remaining costs through the Blueprint program.



**PROJECT BUDGET** INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY

The following is a table showing the Magnolia Drive Multiuse Trail expenditures and remaining balance (without undergrounding electric utility).

<b>Starting Balance</b>	<b>\$7,983,300</b>
Expenses	(-\$1,200,000)
Encumbrances & Pre-Encumbrances	(-\$460,000)
<b>Remaining Balance to Complete Project</b>	<b>\$6,323,300</b>

Blueprint is committed to completing the Magnolia Drive Trail project from Adams Street to Apalachee Parkway. Given the information gained from the design alternatives analysis, the estimated cost to complete the remaining segments ranges from \$5,229,680 for Option 1 to \$6,336,310 for Option 3. Staff recommendation for Option 2 would result in an estimated total cost of \$5,756,492 for the remaining segments of the Magnolia Drive Trail. Additional funds above this amount are anticipated for project contingency and to fund community amenities throughout the trail corridor, including lighting, enhanced landscaping, and other amenities that may be added once the project is complete.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND NEXT STEPS**

The public comments received after the completion of the first phase of the project led to community discussions and resulted in the development of Options 2 and 3 to address those concerns through improved design. Options 2 and 3 include the addition of a 4' landscaped buffer between the back of curb and the trail, which provides a sense of separation from traffic and improved safety for trail user. The landscaped buffer area will also improve the aesthetics of the corridor by providing space for greenery, which is consistent with the Magnolia Drive area character.

Given the existing project budget balance of approximately \$6.3 million and the need to maintain this funding for project contingency and amenities, staff is recommending approval of Option 2, which will provide an 8' wide multiuse trail with 4' landscaped buffer between the back of curb and trail. Upon the IA Board's direction, the project team will move the chosen concept option into design. The design and take into account the input from the TCC, the CAC, and public comments incorporating ways to work the trail around trees and utility poles. Should extra funds be available after the entire project is complete, they may be applied to the implementation of enhanced landscape and hardscape, lighting, or to providing additional connectivity.

Concurrent with the construction of future phases of the trail, staff is also recommending undergrounding electric lines throughout the Magnolia Drive corridor. Blueprint is currently working with the City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to utilize the opportunity created by the Magnolia Drive construction to underground electric lines. Once the final cost of undergrounding utility lines is confirmed, Blueprint staff will bring back an agenda item delineating the schedule for improvements, cost-sharing partnership agreement, an analysis of the Magnolia Drive project budget incorporating the design changes, and options for funding the remaining costs through the Blueprint program to fully complete this project (including undergrounding electric utilities).

*Action by TCC and CAC:* This item was presented to the TCC and the CAC at their November 13, 2017 and November 16, 2017 meetings, respectively. The TCC and CAC both recommended approval of Option 2, consistent with Agency staff's recommendation. The TCC and CAC did not evaluate the option to underground utility lines.

## **OPTIONS:**

- Option 1: Approve the existing design for the Magnolia Drive Trail project which includes a 10' wide sidewalk with no buffer between the back of curb and trail.
- Option 2: Approve the Magnolia Drive Trail concept for future phases of the project to include an 8' wide sidewalk with 4' landscaped buffer between the back of curb and trail.
- Option 3: Approve the Magnolia Drive Trail concept for future phases of the project to include a 10' wide sidewalk with 4' landscaped buffer between the back of curb and trail.
- Option 4: Authorize Blueprint staff to move forward in partnership with City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to underground electric power lines concurrent with construction of the Magnolia Drive Trail.

Option 5: Do not authorize Blueprint staff to move forward in partnership with City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to underground electric power lines concurrent with construction of the Magnolia Drive Trail.

Option 6: IA Board Direction.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Option 2: Approve the Magnolia Drive Trail concept for future phases of the project to include an 8' wide sidewalk with 4' landscaped buffer between the back of curb and trail.

Option 4: Authorize Blueprint staff to move forward in partnership with City of Tallahassee Electric Utilities to underground electric power lines concurrent with construction of the Magnolia Drive Trail.

### Attachments:

1. Map of Magnolia Drive Trail project area, depicting the various project phases
2. Joint Partnership Agreement between Leon County and Blueprint 2000 Intergovernmental Agency
3. Options Evaluation Matrix
4. Trail Design Concepts for Option 1 with Tree Removal Impacts for Options 1, 2, and 3
5. Citizen Comments received through November 27, 2017

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