



CITY OF DUNNELLO

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July 14, 2021

Mounir Bouyounes
Marion County Administrator
601 SE 25th Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

Dear Mounir:

As you are aware, the City of Dunnellon has long been in discussions with Marion County, Marion County TPO, and FDOT regarding the design and construction of a bicycle trail within the City that will lead to Blue Run Park (the "Project").

The Dunnellon City Council is eager to move forward with the East Pennsylvania Avenue Multi-modal Project. The City has reserved \$50,000 per year for seven years (\$350,000) from its CRA Budget to support this Project and to encourage a high priority ranking.

In 2008, Dunnellon partnered with Marion County to apply for a Florida Community Trust Grant for the acquisition for the 32 acre property that has become the Blue Run of Dunnellon Park. One of the improvements that was insisted on by the FCT Director at that time was to have a connector to the core downtown area of the City. This is the primary reason why the Multi-modal Trail Project, including a bridge over the Rainbow River was initiated.

Blue Run of Dunnellon Park has become a successful and popular destination for many forms of recreation. The people counter at the Withlacoochee River Bridge shows there are currently over 100,000 users a year on the trail. This number will grow significantly when this trail is connected to the Withlacoochee State Trail system by the start of 2022 and the remainder of the Greenway trail system a few years later.

Many visitors are walking to the park on the current CR 484 vehicular bridge. This poses a serious safety concern. The solution that was foreseen in the 2008 Park Management Plan was to have a separate pedestrian/cyclist path to provide access to and from the Park. Separating the Project and delaying the bridge to a second phase does not solve the ongoing and increasing congestion and safety issues.

The City Council believes a more viable approach is to execute the design of the entire Project as one. This would assure that the interface of the bridge portion of the design is "well defined" as far as the interface to the Blue Run Park and trail area, as well as the interface to the Pennsylvania Avenue section starting at Palmetto Way. The City's point is there should not be two Projects as far as FDOT is concerned, but one Project with sequenced construction.

The goal should be to optimize the visitor traffic flow and safety of the park, the Rainbow River and the connected trail systems. To meet these goals requires a trail bridge across the Rainbow River. Having a pedestrian bridge is a key component to the success and functionality of this exciting Project.

We look forward to further discussion with you on this matter and working towards the creation of an interlocal agreement that mutually benefits both the County and the City.

Sincerely,

William P. White
Mayor