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\$147 Million-Dollar Federal Grant Awarded to the Emerald Trail

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (Mar. 13, 2024) – The City of Jacksonville, Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA), and Groundwork Jacksonville (Groundwork) were awarded a federal grant of \$147 million to design and construct five segments of the [Emerald Trail](#). This represents the largest one-time federal grant the City of Jacksonville has ever received.

In September 2023, JTA and Groundwork submitted a Neighborhood Access & Equity Program Grant from the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) to fund the construction of the five remaining trail segments under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City, Groundwork, and JTA. Mayor Donna Deegan, JTA CEO [Nat Ford](#), and Groundwork CEO [Kay Ehas](#) traveled to Washington DC in November to demonstrate Jacksonville's resolute commitment to bettering its communities. The group spoke with Reps. John Rutherford and Aaron Bean, as well as staff of Sens. Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, and other government officials about the Emerald Trail.

With hundreds of applications submitted from all 50 states, DC and U.S. territories, this joint application for the “Emerald Trail: Reconnecting and Revitalizing Jacksonville’s Urban Neighborhoods” was one of 132 awardees announced today by the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#).

“This record-setting grant is the result of fantastic collaboration with our partners JTA and Groundwork Jacksonville, the relationships we’ve built with the Biden Administration, and the experienced team we hired to bring more federal tax dollars home,” said Mayor Donna Deegan. “I’m grateful to President Biden for investing in cities and to our federal representatives for securing this critical funding. We’re all excited that more shovels will be in the ground soon.”

Direct engagement and advocacy at the national and industry levels have proven vital as the City of Jacksonville and the JTA compete for millions in federal funding each year and invest into improving mobility and constructing vital infrastructure projects across Jacksonville.

“Thank you to Mayor Deegan and our partners with Groundwork Jacksonville for your support, and to the communities of Jacksonville who entrust us to compete fiercely and continually for federal funding that is so important to improving the mobility infrastructure of our city,” said JTA CEO Nathaniel Ford. “This \$147 million grant, along with over \$180 million in highly competitive federal grants awarded to the JTA since 2016, reflects the U.S. Department of Transportation’s confidence in the JTA and the City of Jacksonville’s ability to deliver complex infrastructure projects. This funding will accelerate the completion of these five segments of the

Emerald Trail ahead of schedule, allowing our citizens to enjoy enhanced mobility and green spaces much sooner than anticipated.”

The JTA, in partnership with Groundwork Jacksonville and the City of Jacksonville, will construct the five remaining trail segments: Segment 3, Southwest, connecting Riverside to McCoys Creek; Segment 4, S-Line Connector; Segment 6, Westside, connecting the neighborhoods of North Riverside, Woodstock, and Robinsons' Addition; Segment 7, Northwest, connecting Durkeeville, College Gardens, and New Town; and Segment 8, Eastside, connecting Phoenix and Springfield.

“We are ecstatic to have secured this funding for the Emerald Trail and are so appreciative of our partners, the City of Jacksonville and JTA,” said Kay Ehas, CEO of Groundwork Jacksonville. “It was evident in our meetings in DC, and now, in securing this extremely competitive grant, that the public-private partnership we have fostered here in Jacksonville is a model to be emulated. This is a win for all of us, especially the residents of our urban neighborhoods who have been underserved for far too long. This grant will accelerate our work and bring major investment to these neighborhoods,” added Ehas.

Currently, 40% of the trail is complete, under construction, or designed by Groundwork Jacksonville and the City of Jacksonville. These include the LaVilla Link, opening this year; Hogan Street, which is expected to be under construction in mid-2024; Hogans Creek, which is in design and expected to be under construction in 2026, and McCoys Creek which is in various stages of construction or design.

“As future generations walk or cycle along the trail, they may not realize the tremendous effort and dedication it took to bring a landmark project like the Emerald Trail to fruition,” said JTA Chair Debbie Buckland. “This grant is a testament to the vision of Nat Ford, Mayor Deegan, and Kay Ehas, with the full support of our local community and our partners in Washington DC. Our promise to the Northeast Florida communities we serve is that despite any obstacles we may face, our Board of Directors, Nat Ford, and the JTA are committed to elevating our beloved city to new heights of success.”

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About the Emerald Trail

The 30-mile Emerald Trail will connect 14 historic urban neighborhoods to downtown, the St. Johns River, McCoys Creek, and Hogans Creek. The Emerald Trail will link 16 schools, two colleges, three hospitals, 21 parks and the Regional Transportation Center, among other destinations like restaurants, retail, and businesses, with an additional 13 schools and 17 parks located within three blocks of the trail. As a city-owned public park, the City of Jacksonville will maintain and operate the Emerald Trail once complete, with the support of Groundwork Jacksonville [Emerald Trail Stewards](#).

About Groundwork Jacksonville

[Groundwork Jacksonville, Inc.](#), was formed in 2014 by the City of Jacksonville in partnership with Groundwork USA, along with support from the US National Park Service and US

Environmental Protection Agency. Jacksonville is one of 21 Groundwork Trusts across the country focused on environmental equity, resilience, and stewardship, and transforming the natural and built environment in low-resource and climate-vulnerable communities.

Visit www.groundworkjacksonville.org or follow @GroundworkJax on social for more information.

About the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA)

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) is an independent state agency serving Jacksonville, Florida, and Northeast Florida with multi-modal responsibilities. The JTA provides varied mass public transit services and is a builder of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure to enhance mobility in Jacksonville. Public transportation services include BRT and regular bus service, paratransit, the St. Johns River Ferry, Skyway APM, and other mobility and on-demand services. To learn more about our role in the Northeast Florida community, visit www.jtafla.com

About the City of Jacksonville

The City of Jacksonville is the largest city by land mass in the contiguous United States, serving nearly one million residents. City of Jacksonville leadership includes Mayor Donna Deegan and a 19-member City Council led by President Ron Salem. To learn more, visit jacksonville.gov.

Embargo Details

The embargo on this award was lifted today after [announcement](#) from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT).

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