



Agenda Action Form Overview

The Board is requested to authorize staff to execute the final grant agreement between Durham County and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for the Durham Rail-crossing Engagement, Planning, and Innovative Revitalization (Durham REPAIR) Study.

Background/Justification

The agreement will facilitate the start of a study analyzing three rail-crossings in East Durham (Ellis Road, S. Driver Street, and S. Plum Street) for opportunities to improve the safety, mobility, and community near the three adjacent railroad crossings. From 1997 to 2022, there were 19 crashes, including three fatalities and nine injuries at these crossings.

The project will include an equitable community engagement effort to facilitate the selection of a preferred solution that is responsive to the needs of the residents and businesses of this area. Anticipated benefits include the avoidance of pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle crashes, improved air quality from reduced idling emissions, improved emergency response, and improved trip reliability, among other benefits. Improving these railroad crossings also supports the reliability and safety of existing passenger rail services and facilitates the expansion of passenger rail services in the state and region.

Execution of the final grant agreement with FRA will allow Durham County to move forward with the Durham REPAIR project. The draft grant agreement was reviewed at the June 3 and June 10 meetings. Staff are coordinating with FRA on the final agreement and expect limited changes from the draft agreement. Funding for the REPAIR study is reflected in the approved FY25 Durham County Budget.

Policy Impact

The Durham REPAIR project will further the County’s Strategic Plan goal for Safe Communities by addressing unsafe rail crossings in East Durham and the goal for Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity by providing better rail services that connect to jobs, education, housing, healthcare, and opportunity. Furthermore, the project will also support the 2023 Durham Comprehensive Plan goal for safe, affordable, dignified, sustainable, connected, and physically accessible transportation.

Procurement Background

As this is a grant agreement with FRA, no procurement is required currently. Once the grant agreement is executed, Durham County will pursue procurement of a consultant in accordance with all applicable County and FRA requirements.

Fiscal Impact

The REPAIR project is anticipated to be funded for \$1,525,000. Durham County was awarded a grant through FRA to fund 80% of the project cost (\$1,220,000). The remaining 20% (\$305,000) will be fully reimbursed by Durham County Transit Plan funds administered by GoTriangle. Funding for the REPAIR project is reflected in the approved FY25 Durham County Budget and the FY25 Durham County Transit Work Program.



Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that the Board authorize staff to execute the final grant agreement between Durham County and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for The Durham Rail-crossing Engagement, Planning, and Innovative Revitalization (Durham REPAIR) Study.