

Brevard to receive \$3.1 million for St. Johns Heritage Parkway

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Brevard County will receive an additional \$3.1 million in federal fund for the St. Johns Heritage Parkway, an extra infusion that some officials say help make construction on the long-awaited road a possibility for this year.

County commissioners today will vote to accept the money, which was surplus from other federal road projects and can be spent only on acquisition of right of way for the parkway. Another measure would come back to commissioners later on spending this money to actually acquire the land.

But that extra federal contribution frees up local money for construction that otherwise would have been spent on buying land for the parkway.

“That’s very exciting. If you had asked me three years ago when we were going to start construction, I would have told you I don’t know,” Brevard County Public Works Director John Denninghoff said. “I’m hopeful we could get it started this calendar year. We’re getting close.”

The county’s leg of the parkway would run from a proposed Interstate 95 interchange at Ellis Road to Palm Bay, where construction has already started on the parkway, known as Palm Bay Parkway inside the city limits.

Brevard County would need about \$13 million to acquire the land needed for the entire stretch of the parkway, Denninghoff said. It already had \$4.7 million set aside for acquisition before the new federal funds.

It will take about \$23 million to build the 5.5-mile stretch, however officials have discussed splitting the project into two phases.

County Commissioner Andy Anderson, whose district includes much of the area that would benefit from the parkway, wants to see a construction start this year on at least the portion from Palm Bay to U.S. 192 even “if I have to go out with a shovel myself and dig it up.”

Anderson is also pushing for more action on the northern portion of the parkway. Friday he sent a letter to Gov. Rick Scott that asks the state leader to help find money to build the Ellis Road interchange and widen Ellis Road itself.

Anderson wrote that the improved access through the two projects would make it more attractive for [businesses](#)

to relocate to Melbourne International Airport and would help spur potential growth for the companies already at [the airport](#).