

Governor Vetoes Two City Projects

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TEMPLE TERRACE - The city's hopes of receiving appropriations of \$1 million each for a pedestrian bridge on Bullard Parkway and safety and streetscaping improvements at Bullard Parkway and 56th Street have been dashed by Gov. Charlie Crist's recent line-item vetoes in the state budget.

'Both of those vetoes really hurt, but the pedestrian bridge was really a tough one because we had a recent fatality there,' said Temple Terrace Community Services Director Ralph Bosek.

The purpose of the bridge, between 56th Street and Ridgedale Road, is to improve safety for pedestrians crossing Bullard, which carries about 40,000 cars each day. Crossing the street poses safety problems in particular for students on their way to or from nearby Temple Terrace Elementary, as well as for patrons of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

The bridge, Bosek said, also would be a signature entrance to the city's 38-acre redevelopment area, a mixed-use project of retail, commercial and residential components to the south of Bullard.

'It's a natural link to our revitalization project,' Bosek said. 'We have visions of six-story buildings, and we would like people to safely be able to cross Bullard to get to and from them.'

The cost of the bridge, estimated at \$2.5 million, was to be supplemented by community investment tax dollars, U.S. Housing and Urban Development funds and tax incremental financing.

'I don't know where we'll get the funding we'd hope to get from the state,' Bosek said.

Another aspect of the city's attempt to improve safety and revitalize the Bullard Parkway/56th Street area is to remove and/or relocate its hodgepodge of utility obstructions. Among them are Tampa Electric poles, wires, transformers, city water lines and Verizon and Bright House above-ground and buried cables.

The city budgeted \$1.4 million for the project April 3, anticipating the state would appropriate \$1 million so it could move forward.

'Without the money, we'll obviously have to back up and find other means to fund the utilities. We're talking with the utility companies as we speak to see where we can get funding,' Bosek said.

State Sen. Victor Crist, R-Temple Terrace, and state Rep. Ed Homan, R-Temple Terrace, were instrumental in getting the appropriations through the legislative process.

'Out of all the appropriations I did this year, those two projects personally meant the most to me,' said Sen. Crist, noting that he has worked for years to make improvements to the Bullard Parkway/56th Street area. 'My heart is in Temple Terrace. It's truly a community-driven community.'

Crist said he had spoken with the governor and that he appeared to be in favor of the Temple Terrace improvements. Sen. Crist said he believes the decision was driven by Gov. Crist's 'green' staff, which wasn't familiar with the protocol of notifying legislators in advance when their pet projects are red-flagged for a veto.

'I'm very disappointed. I thought that would be the least of my worries,' the senator said. 'It's also a big disappointment for the city of Temple Terrace. They never ask for anything, and they didn't deserve this.'

That's not to say, however, he has washed his hands of the projects. 'When I get back up there Tallahassee, I'm going to ask him the governor why and enlist his commitment. I have three years left, so there is still time,' Sen. Crist said.