

JOINT FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL PUBLIC NOTICE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and Florida Division of Emergency Management have received the following application for Federal grant funding. Final notice is hereby given of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) consideration to provide funding in the form of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Funds will be provided in accordance with Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), federal actions must be reviewed and evaluated for feasible alternatives and for social, economic, historic, environmental, legal, and safety considerations. Under Executive Order (EO) 11988 and EO 11990 FEMA is required to consider alternatives to and to provide public notice of any proposed actions in or affecting floodplains or wetlands.

Funding for the proposed project will be conditional upon compliance with all applicable federal, tribal, state and local laws, regulations, floodplain standards, permit requirements and conditions.

Applicant:

Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO)

Project Title:

HMGP-4673-DR (142333) – Hardee County, Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO), Distribution Automation for Power System Resilience

Location of Proposed Work:

The area affected by this project consists of homes in the following locations:

Bowling Green substation - 1897 W. County Line Road, Bowling Green, FL 33834

Wauchula substation - 210 Metheny Road, Wauchula, FL 33873

Murphy substation - 3575 Hammond Road, Ona, FL 33865

Proposed Work and Purpose:

The Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO) proposes to provide protection to the existing electrical grid at three locations, within Hardee County, Florida 33834, 33873 and 33865.

The project shall provide protection by improving efficiency and reliability of electric grids in the area. This shall be achieved by installing Distribution Automation (DA) equipment, installation of 26 miles of both overhead and underground fiber with overhead Distribution Automation (DA) compatible devices and installing a stepdown transformer. The areas of Bowling Green, Wauchula, and Murphy currently face significant challenges in maintaining reliable communication during extreme weather events. These areas heavily depend on WiFi and cellular networks for transmitting grid data which is vulnerable when exposed to severe weather conditions. This results in a longer recovery time for outages which can play an important factor between life and death of the residents. This technology shall allow The Peace River Electric Cooperative (PRECO) to quickly detect and locate faults and other deficiencies within the distribution system which shall minimize service disruptions, balance loads, reduce system strain and optimize network performance even when there is severe weather or wind event.

Project Alternatives:

The alternatives to the project that have been and will be considered are 1) the no action alternative and 2) *to run a section of the fiber route up Florida Avenue (from Altman Road intersection North to Metheny Road) through the City of Wauchula and into PRECO's Wauchula substation.*

These alternatives to the proposed project are not viable because under Alternative 1) *If no action is taken, PRECO customers can expect to see the same result of outage time during catastrophic events such as Hurricanes Ian, Nicole, and Irma. PRECO's planning estimate for timing for this project under normal capital outlay cycles could be 15-20 years.*

These alternatives to the proposed project are not viable because under Alternative 2) *the following issues were identified. Firstly, the poles and lines within this stretch are not exclusively owned by PRECO, necessitating*

additional efforts for coordination, permitting, and extended project completion times for a mere 2-mile segment. Secondly, the existing poles and hardware along this section would require substantial upgrades and adjustments to ensure compliance with location, separation, and clearance regulations for both the new fiber lines and the preexisting infrastructure. Thirdly, the introduction of extra poles in this stretch would amplify ground disturbances and escalate traffic disruptions during the construction phase. Lastly, the adoption of this 2-mile extension would entail elevated expenses, intensify coordination complexities with other pole owners and utility providers sharing these poles, and significantly prolong the project timeline.

Comment Period:

Comments are solicited from the public; local, state or federal agencies; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impact of the proposed project. The comments should be made in writing and addressed to the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Bureau of Mitigation, 2555 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100. These are due within 15 days of this notice (*or the actual date*). The State will forward comments to applicable regulatory agencies as needed. Interested persons may submit comments, obtain more detailed information about the proposed action, or request a copy of the findings by contacting:

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