CONCEPT PAPER

Mike Padgett Highway Corridor Resilience Planning with Valencia Way Major Employer Arterial Focus

Corridor-Wide Resilience Planning and Targeted Design | Proposed FY 2024-FY 2026 FHWA PROTECT Planning Grant

PRIMARY APPLICANT **Augusta-Richmond County**	**ECONOMIC-DEVELOPMENT PARTNER** **Augusta Economic Development Authority (AEDA)**
GRANT AND DURATION **PROTECT Planning Grant | 24 months**	**STUDY AREA AND FOCUS** **Mike Padgett Highway corridor | Valencia Way priority subarea**

Executive Summary

Augusta-Richmond County should pursue a PROTECT Planning Grant to assess, prioritize, and design resilience strategies for the Mike Padgett Highway corridor and its connected critical access roads. The corridor-scale effort would examine current and future weather hazards, drainage and infrastructure vulnerabilities, emergency mobility, freight and employer continuity, and opportunities for resilient design. Valencia Way would remain the priority implementation subarea as the major employer arterial road serving Augusta Corporate Park.

Within that corridor framework, Valencia Way is the most acute single-access risk: it is the sole roadway access to the approximately 1,794-acre corporate park and serves more than 1,000 employees today with the potential for more than 1,000 additional employees in coming years.[6] PROTECT would fund corridor vulnerability analysis, emergency-access planning, resilient alternatives, and design of qualifying resilience elements - not ordinary widening, general capacity, or routine roadway design. The resilience-purpose and cost-segregation requirements remain controlling.[1]

> **Recommended positioning. A corridor-scale resilience program for Mike Padgett Highway, anchored by an implementation-ready Valencia Way major employer arterial planning and design component.**

Opportunity Snapshot

Program fit	Planning Grants support corridor resilience planning, vulnerability assessments, predesign, design, data tools, technical capacity, and evacuation planning.[2]
Federal share	100% of eligible planning activity; no local match required.[3]
Funding context	Up to $79 million is available for Planning Grants; anticipated awards are $100,000-$10 million.[4]
Deadline	October 9, 2026, 11:59:59 p.m. ET; anticipated awards the week of December 7, 2026.[4]

Project Need

Mike Padgett Highway and its connecting roads support industrial employment, freight, emergency response, utilities, and daily travel in south Augusta. A corridor approach can identify where extreme rainfall, flooding, drainage failure, erosion, severe storms, heat, debris, communications loss, or roadway blockage could disrupt the network and compound impacts across multiple access points. Valencia Way is the highest-priority subarea because disruption of this single park entrance could affect more than 1,000 current employees, emergency responders, freight, utilities, and future employers. Study limits should be confirmed with Augusta Engineering, Emergency Management, ARTS, and GDOT during application development so the proposal remains data-driven and implementable.[5][6]

Proposed Corridor Scope of Work

1. Corridor definition, data, and asset baseline

Define the Mike Padgett Highway study limits and critical connections; compile roadway, bridge, culvert, drainage, pavement, utility, traffic, freight, crash, maintenance, hazard, climate-projection, event-history, and employer/first-responder data.

2. Corridor vulnerability and consequence assessment

Evaluate exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity under current and future conditions; model closures, degraded operations, detours, emergency-response delays, freight impacts, and economic disruption across the corridor.

3. Valencia Way major employer arterial focus

Complete detailed resilience planning for Valencia Way as the corporate park's sole access serving 1,000+ current employees and potential growth of 1,000+ additional employees; assess drainage, roadway, emergency operations, employer continuity, and design needs.[6]

4. Emergency access, evacuation, and network redundancy

Test evacuation demand, responder ingress, recovery-resource movement, incident management, accessible communications, alternate routing, operational strategies, and contingencies for blocked or degraded corridor segments.

5. Resilience alternatives and targeted design

Compare drainage, culvert, pavement/subgrade, erosion, nature-based, communications/power, shoulder, and operational measures; advance predesign/design and environmental coordination for Valencia Way and other priority resilience locations.[1][2]

6. Corridor implementation and funding package

Deliver a corridor resilience framework, prioritized project list, Valencia Way basis-of-design, phasing, O&M plan, performance measures, eligible-cost estimates, and roadmap for construction funding and capital-program integration.

How is a Protect funded Resiliency Design Different than a typical corridor capacity expansion?	
PROTECT corridor planning and design scope	**Increased capacity / development scope**
Corridor hazards, vulnerabilities, closures, detours, emergency access, and future-conditions analysis	General mobility or capacity studies whose primary purpose is accommodating growth
Drainage, culvert, erosion, resilient-material, nature-based, communications, and emergency-operations alternatives	Routine widening, resurfacing, standard pavement/geometry, lighting, streetscape, or site-access design without a resilience purpose
Valencia Way and other priority-site resilience plans, estimates, permitting, O&M, and implementation materials	Final design or construction costs not demonstrably tied to resilience

Partnership Roles

Augusta-Richmond County - applicant and recipient: Lead the application, corridor limits, procurement and compliance; own the products; and confirm maintenance responsibilities.

AEDA - economic-development and Valencia Way partner: Coordinate employers; validate the 1,000+/1,000+ estimates; document economic consequences; and lead the Valencia workstream and cost separation.

Corridor technical and operational partners: Augusta Engineering/EMA, ARTS, GDOT, responders, utilities, communities, and employers provide data, validate limits and scenarios, and review strategies.

Proposed Timeline

Period	Decision gate	Primary outputs
Months 1-4	Corridor limits confirmed	Limits, partners, data, hazard and asset baseline
Months 5-9	Risk profile accepted	Vulnerability, consequences, access and employer analysis
Months 10-15	Priorities selected	Corridor priorities and preferred Valencia Way concepts
Months 16-24	Implementation decision	Corridor plan, targeted design, cost split, O&M and funding roadmap

Preliminary Planning Budget

Eligible planning work package	Amount	Share
Corridor definition, baseline data, stakeholder and employer coordination	**$240,000**	14%
Corridor vulnerability, future-conditions and consequence analysis	**$330,000**	19%
Emergency-access, evacuation, network operations and continuity planning	**$240,000**	14%
Valencia Way and priority corridor resilience alternatives and targeted design	**$800,000**	46%
Implementation plan, performance framework and grant administration (Indirect + Administrative Costs)	**$130,000**	7%
Total preliminary planning request	**$1,740,000**	**100%**

Budget note: *Initial planning estimate only. Validate limits, procurement, indirect costs, and cost eligibility. No general widening, routine resurfacing, or construction is included.*

Anticipated Outcomes

A corridor risk profile and prioritized investment program; an implementation-ready Valencia Way design package; emergency-access and network-continuity strategies; and cost-segregated projects positioned for capital programming and construction funding.

NOFO NOTES

[1] FHWA-PROT-26-001, p. 10-11: PROTECT funds are limited to activities primarily for resilience or inherently resilience-related; eligible Planning Grant development-phase costs include environmental review, preliminary engineering, design, and other preconstruction activities.

[2] Id., p. 7: eligible Planning Grant activities include resilience planning, predesign, design, disruption-scenario data tools and vulnerability assessments, technical capacity building, and evacuation planning/preparation.

[3] Id., p. 11: the Federal share of an eligible Planning Grant activity is 100 percent.

[4] Id., p. 3 and p. 16: up to $79 million for Planning Grants; no statutory minimum/maximum; anticipated $100,000-$10 million range; application due October 9, 2026.

[5] Id., p. 22-24: Planning Grant merit criteria are Program Alignment, Planning Activity Approach, and Innovation, including current/future vulnerability analysis, data-informed critical-infrastructure planning, evacuation planning, and nature-based or innovative risk analysis.

[6] Local employment figures are AEDA planning estimates supplied for concept development: Valencia Way currently serves 1,000+ employees and could support 1,000+ additional employees in coming years.