



TOWN OF GRAND LAKE

STAFF REPORT

TO
Mayor & Trustees

FROM
Steve Kudron, Town Manager

DATE
June 5, 2026

ACTION TYPE: Action Requested Information Only

RE: Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) Grant Application – East Inlet Boat Ramp Rehabilitation

BACKGROUND

The Town of Grand Lake owns and operates the East Inlet boat ramp on Grand Lake, Colorado’s largest natural lake and a premier recreational destination at the western entrance to Rocky Mountain National Park. The ramp provides the primary public launch point for boating access to Grand Lake and the interconnected waters of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, a federal water system managed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The facility is heavily used by residents, seasonal visitors, and the broader tourism economy that anchors the Town’s financial wellbeing.

The East Inlet boat ramp is aging and in need of significant rehabilitation. Structural deterioration, inadequate vehicle and trailer parking, and limited accessibility features have reduced the facility’s usability and created safety concerns. Addressing these deficiencies requires capital investment that exceeds the Town’s near-term budget capacity.

FEDERAL LANDS ACCESS PROGRAM (FLAP) OPPORTUNITY

The Central Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration has issued a Call for Projects under the Colorado Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP). The program funds improvements to public transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within federal lands. The approximate annual allocation for Colorado is \$16.5 million. Applications are due August 31, 2026, with project implementation anticipated in 2029–2030.

Staff has been working with Melissa Panella, Natural Resource Specialist with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s Eastern Colorado Area Office, who has offered her support and expertise in advancing a FLAP application on behalf of the Town. Ms. Panella’s involvement provides a direct connection to the Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) sponsorship required under the program.

BENEFITS OF PURSUING A FLAP GRANT

Staff has identified the following significant benefits associated with submitting a FLAP application for the East Inlet boat ramp rehabilitation:

- **No Local Match Required.** FLAP funds are eligible to cover 100 percent of project costs, removing the most significant barrier to undertaking a capital project of this scope.
- **Strong Eligibility Fit.** The East Inlet ramp is a Town-owned public transportation facility that directly accesses BOR-managed federal waters of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. BOR reservoirs and lakes constitute eligible federal land destinations under FLAP.
- **High-Use Recreation Site Preference.** Per FLAP legislation, preference is given to projects serving federal high-use recreation sites and federal economic generators. Grand Lake and adjacent Rocky Mountain National Park draw hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, placing this project in a highly competitive position.
- **Federal Economic Generator.** Recreational boating on Grand Lake drives significant local economic activity in lodging, dining, retail, and guide services, directly qualifying the ramp as a federal economic generator under FLAP criteria.
- **FHWA Project Delivery.** If selected, the Central Federal Lands Highway Division typically delivers the project cradle to grave, substantially reducing the administrative and management burden on Town staff.

- **Established Federal Partner Support.** Ms. Panella’s involvement through the Bureau of Reclamation provides a ready FLMA sponsor — a required component of a competitive application — and strengthens the Town’s standing before the Programming Decisions Committee.
- **Broad Scope of Eligible Improvements.** In addition to the ramp structure itself, FLAP funding may cover adjacent parking, interpretive panels, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and environmental mitigation, allowing for a comprehensive facility upgrade.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Staff also identifies the following challenges and risks the Board should consider:

- **Competitive Selection Process.** Colorado’s FLAP allocation is shared among state agencies, counties, local governments, and tribes. Selection is not guaranteed, and the process involves multiple review stages through early 2027 before a final programming decision.
- **Long Project Timeline.** Even if selected, construction is not expected until 2029–2030. Immediate safety or infrastructure concerns at the ramp may require the Town to address interim needs through other means.
- **Staff Time and Coordination.** Preparing a competitive application requires staff time to compile cost estimates, visitation data, maps, photographs, and project documentation, and to coordinate with BOR and FHWA throughout the review process.
- **Limited Local Control Over Delivery.** FHWA’s Central Federal Lands acts as lead agency for project delivery. While this reduces administrative burden, it also limits the Town’s direct control over design, contractor selection, and construction sequencing.
- **NEPA and Environmental Review.** The selected project will be subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, which will add time and complexity during the scoping and development phases.
- **Federal Land Access Nexus Must Be Demonstrated.** The application must clearly document that the facility provides access to eligible federal lands. Staff is confident this threshold is met given the BOR connection, but the narrative must be carefully constructed.

FISCAL NOTE

There is no local match required under the FLAP program. If awarded, federal funds would cover 100 percent of eligible project costs. Staff time will be required to prepare and submit the application and to coordinate with BOR and FHWA through the review process. No capital expenditure is being authorized at this time.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board of Trustees authorize the Town Manager to proceed with preparing and submitting a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) application for rehabilitation of the East Inlet boat ramp by the August 31, 2026 deadline. The project presents an exceptional opportunity to secure 100 percent federal funding for a critical piece of public infrastructure, supported by an engaged federal partner in the Bureau of Reclamation. The long-term benefit to public safety, recreational access, and the local economy substantially outweighs the staff time investment required to submit a competitive application.

Staff further recommends acknowledgment of the Town’s appreciation for the assistance of Melissa Panella, Natural Resource Specialist, Bureau of Reclamation, whose partnership is integral to the success of this effort.

SUGGESTED MOTION

“I move to authorize the Town Manager to prepare and submit a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant application for rehabilitation of the East Inlet boat ramp on behalf of the Town of Grand Lake, and to take all necessary actions in furtherance of that application.”