

ICYMI: Florida Receives More Than \$24 Million for Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) recently awarded Florida grant funding for more than \$24 million under the Fiscal Year 2020 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.

"The Florida Department of Transportation is grateful for the Federal Railroad Administration's steadfast commitment to improving rail safety in Florida and across the country," said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Kevin J. Thibault, P.E. "This grant funding is a critical investment which will allow Florida to continually work toward a safer, more efficient rail infrastructure for our state's residents and visitors."

The FRA announced funding totaling \$320.6 million for 50 projects in 29 states to receive competitive grant funding under the Fiscal Year 2020 CRISI Program.

FRA will provide rail safety improvement grants for the three projects in Florida below. Read more about the projects [here](#).

- St. Lucie and Palm Beach Counties – Rail Crossing Improvements and Dynamic Envelope Markings (Multiple Opportunity Zones) Up to \$2,309,531
- City of Boca Raton – Boca Raton Passenger Rail Station Up to \$16,350,000

- Kissimmee – Central Florida Rail Corridor (CFRC) SunRail Phase 2 South Capacity Improvements Up to \$5,653,819

The FRA selected projects that included a wide variety of railroad investments that improve safety. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorized the CRISI Program to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail systems. Of the 50 projects USDOT awarded grants, 32 are located in [Opportunity Zones](#), which were created to revitalize economically distressed communities using private investments.

The Florida Department of Transportation urges motorists to use caution near all railroad crossings and when driving in areas with road construction.

- Only cross at designated rail crossings.
- Pay attention. Pedestrians and bicyclists: remove headphones and look up from cell phones.
- Trains move quickly and cannot stop quickly. Red lights mean a train is on its way. Do not walk or drive around lowered gates.

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About The FDOT

The goal of the DBE Supportive Services Program is to increase the number of DBEs participating on FDOT contracts and facilitate the opportunity for DBEs to obtain contracts. The services are designed to:

- Assist established construction firms to move them from bidding as a subcontractor to bidding as a Prime Contractor to produce sound bids.
- Provide access to training increases DBE expertise in handling of daily business operations.



About The Program

The Construction Estimating Institute (CEI) works with FDOT as the statewide provider of the federally funded Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) Supportive Services Program. We want to increase the number of certified DBEs participating in highway and bridge construction, as well as assist DBEs in growing and eventually becoming self-sufficient. Additionally, CEI provides supportive services by assisting prime contractors and consultants with identifying DBEs for subcontracting opportunities on priority projects.

6 Steps to Fine-Tune Your Takeoffs & Bid More Accurately

Estimate quantity to improve your bid quality

As a leader in the construction industry, one should know what they are committing to before bidding on a project, and quantity takeoffs are the definite way to attain that knowledge.

They not only get a company suitable projects, but quantity takeoffs also help create seamless construction processes, which, in turn, helps teams stay within budget while preparing for contingencies and optimizing workflows.

However, the cost fluctuations, errors, missing items, unforeseen circumstances and even small mistakes in calculations can easily make a quantity takeoff redundant, sabotage a project and eventually come back to haunt the contractor and its reputation. Therefore, it is a wise business move to invest time, money and energy into creating a process that produces consistently better quantity takeoffs.

Quantity takeoffs involve breaking down the whole project into a detailed list of material quantities and activities alongside their feasible prices. When added up, the individual costs create the material cost of the project, which is then factored for material waste, surcharge, overhead, taxes, contingency costs and, of course, labor costs.

The following article outlines six steps to help improve the quantity takeoffs being done at your company.

1. Build an Ideal Estimating Department

An estimator has the spotlight during the bidding stage. They create the quantity takeoffs, so they should possess certain technical and soft skills that will help ensure their report can be trusted. An ideal estimator should have the following skills:

- A technical background
- An attention to detail and recordkeeping
- A proficiency with the latest takeoff technologies

More often than not, a small or midsize business owner may not delegate this responsibility. It is understandable, because trusting others with your quantity takeoffs is a huge leap. But your business needs to grow, and you should actively look for professionals who can wear this hat.

2. Understand the Purpose of Quantity Takeoffs

Quantity takeoffs are prepared at many stages of a project life cycle. The estimator should know the level of detail needed to match the requirements. During the conceptual phase, a takeoff report could be brief, whereas bidding against a construction set will require more details.

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Supportive Services Offered:

- Estimating Training
- Building Capacity
- Mobilization Financing
- Bonding Assistance
- Marketing Plan Development
- Creating a Business Plan
- Building a Website



Within the past 3 months,
CEI assisted DBEs
in obtaining

**\$6 MILLION
IN BONDING!!**

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CEI is an educational organization providing the highest quality construction training in the industry. Over 100,000 owners, estimators, project managers, field supervisors, office support staff, foremen, laborers, and key management personnel have attended courses that are offered nationwide. The courses provide students with construction skills training and the critical information needed to be effective within their companies and organizations.