

St. Lucie awarded grant to build sidewalks near Fort Pierce school

By Laurie K. Blandford

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FORT PIERCE — New sidewalks and crosswalk signs are expected to help Fairlawn Elementary School students and its neighboring residents get around in about four years.

St. Lucie County School District officials found out this week that the state Department of Transportation approved a Safe Routes to School grant for the project, which will cover 31st Street from Okeechobee Road to Tennessee Avenue.

District and Fort Pierce officials collaborated to apply for the grant about a year ago. Fort Pierce is slated to receive \$383,563 for the sidewalks and signs in the 2013-14 budget year.

“It is a benefit to the community,” said Marty Sanders, the executive director of Growth Management, Land Acquisition & Inter-Governmental Relations at the School District.

Sanders said the sidewalks would benefit the school by giving students an alternative to walking in the street to and from school.

The project wouldn't be happening without the grant, he said.

“Certainly not in these budget times,” Sanders said.

The city is responsible for the development of design plans. Sanders said construction would last about six months.

“It's a good location,” he said. “It certainly provides an amenity that the residents currently don't have.”

Two weeks ago, the School District also received notice of two approved grants for sidewalks and a pedestrian bridge in Port St. Lucie.

The \$1.77 million project for Savona Boulevard includes sidewalks from Bouganville Avenue to the south side of the C-24 canal and a pedestrian bridge over the canal.

The nearly \$500,000 project for Mariposa Avenue includes sidewalks from Lennard Road to Mariposa Elementary School.

Still, the city won't receive the money for the Savona sidewalks until near the end of 2012 or the money for the Mariposa sidewalks until a year later.

Sanders said the Fort Pierce project is less critical because of an alternate route where people could walk a block away to use a sidewalk.

The Port St. Lucie projects were critical locations because there were no alternate routes, he said.

