



October 2, 2024

Community Change Program
U.S. Department of Environmental Protection
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Re: Letter of Support for The Bluffline Jackson Lakes Extension

Dear Community Change Program Team,

The Northwest Florida Defense Coalition (Coalition) is devoted to enhancing the infrastructure and community support around our military installations, particularly Naval Air Station Pensacola and Naval Air Station Whiting Field. The Coalition works to strengthen the ties between military operations and regional development, acknowledging the profound impact that military presence has on the Western Panhandle of Florida—economically, socially, and culturally.

The Board of Directors of the Coalition has unanimously approved support for The Bluffline's Community Change Grant (CCG) application for the development of the Jackson Lakes Extension. This project will serve as a critical public amenity for West Pensacola, addressing key issues related to transportation safety, urban blight, and educational access. These challenges have been highlighted as significant barriers to the future operational viability of NAS Pensacola in recent studies, such as the NAS Pensacola Compatible Use Study and the Emerald Coast Military Installation Resiliency Review (MIRR).

The proposed Bluffline project is vital as it will provide a safe, pedestrian-friendly route linking Corry Station, local schools such as Global Learning Academy and Warrington Preparatory Academy, and surrounding neighborhoods. These schools are crucial for the families of both military personnel and the broader community, and currently, they suffer from low educational attainment partly due to unsafe access routes. By focusing on creating safe pedestrian pathways, this project will not only help reduce truancy but also enhance the learning environment, leading to improved long-term educational outcomes.

In terms of military operations, NAS Pensacola relies heavily on personnel who either reside in or commute through these neighborhoods. By creating a world-class public amenity and making West Pensacola more desirable, the Bluffline will catalyze redevelopment around the base and support the recruitment and retention of both military and civilian personnel. This project will also significantly enhance the safety of many cadets who currently navigate unsafe roads, thereby reducing the risk of tragic injuries and fatalities.

Furthermore, the redevelopment facilitated by the Bluffline aligns with the military's goals of enhancing the quality of life for service members and addressing risks identified as potential reasons for command realignment or base consolidation.

For these compelling reasons, we strongly recommend that you give The Bluffline's Community Change Grant application your highest consideration. This project is an essential investment in the future of NAS Pensacola and the surrounding community.

Thank you for your attention to this significant initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debi Graham', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Debi Graham
Executive Director
Northwest Florida Defense Coalition



Board Members

Chairman, CAPT Matthew Coughlin, USN (Ret), Airport Director, Pensacola International Airport & former CO of NAS Whiting Field

Vice Chairman, Col. David Piech, USAF (Ret), former Santa Rosa County Commissioner

Secretary, Stephen Moorhead, Certified Real Estate Attorney, Moorhead Law Group

Bruce Vredenburg, President, Northwest Florida Market, Hancock Whitney Bank

Ryan Campbell, Partner in Charge, Anglin-Reichmann-Armstrong CPA

Stephen Rhodes, Corporate Real Estate, Florida Power & Light & Chair of the Santa Rosa County MAC

Shannon Ogletree, Executive Director, Santa Rosa County Economic Development