

# **Board of County Commissioners**

## **Agenda Request**

Date of Meeting: February 17, 2009

Date Submitted: February 2, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Lindsay Stevens, Assistant County Administrator  
Scott McDermid, Public Safety Director  
Fran Councill, EMS Director

Subject: Request Board Consideration and Approval for Wakulla County EMS to Apply for a Matching Grant for an Off Road Vehicle Package

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### **Statement of Issues**

This agenda item requests Board consideration and approval for Wakulla County EMS to apply for a 75/25% matching grant through the State EMS Office for an Off Road Vehicle Package, which could broaden the availability of equipment deployment to difficult access areas including Smith Creek.

### **Background**

Under Board direction on October 20, 2008, Wakulla County EMS was requested to look into alternatives for an off road ambulance or other alternatives to improve access and response time for the citizens in Smith Creek with EMS needs.

A large portion of our County is unincorporated forest (approximately 673,000 acres shared with our rural neighbors) whose terrain has limited and potentially no access for Wakulla County ambulances. As an example, there have been three accidents in the month of January 2009, in which the ambulance could not respond to the actual scene location because of the terrain. Currently, EMS employees are forced to walk into inaccessible areas carrying equipment. Obviously, this method is not in the best patient interest and therefore causes a potential liability to the County.

### **Analysis:**

There are all terrain and off road vehicles which can be outfitted with a stretcher carrier that could improve access to the remote areas of our County, including a large portion of the Smith Creek area. In addition, our County beaches cause similar difficulties in reaching and bringing patients to the ambulance. To solve the problem effectively and efficiently for the entire County, including the Smith Creek area, two of these vehicles are needed. One could be located on the Smith Creek side of the County and the other centrally for access to the coastal and eastern portions of Wakulla.

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There are three types of vehicles which have been identified.

1. Four wheel drive ambulance.
  - Positive: This would be a fully equipped ambulance which could transport patients and equipment
  - Negative: It would be too big to go into many of the areas of the County where it would be needed. Its weight would also limit access, even with 4 wheel drive.
  - Cost: \$150,000. This is for a single vehicle. The match would be \$37,500. EMS does not have this match in its budget.
2. An open, 4 wheel golf cart-type vehicle having a location to place an immobilized patient.
  - Positive: It could access anywhere in the County, including on beaches and forest land.
  - Negative: It has no protection around the patient. There have been two recent incidents in other counties involving this type vehicle. One in which a tree limb hit the patient and caused injury. A second incident was a roll over that injured the patient.
  - Cost: \$100,000. This would include two vehicles, two trailers and one SUV vehicle to deliver them to the area the vehicle would have to go “off-road”. The match would be \$25,000. EMS does not have this match in its budget.
3. An enclosed patient compartment 6 wheel drive type vehicle.
  - Positive: It could access anywhere in the County, including on beaches and forest lands. It would also be safer for the patient and staff tending to the patient.
  - Negative: There were no incidents of patient injury found. Highest cost of all the options.
  - Cost: \$160,000. This would include two vehicles, two trailers and one SUV vehicle to deliver them to the area they would have to go “off-road”. The match would be \$40,000. EMS does not have this match in its budget.

Wakulla EMS is requesting to submit the grant in order to meet grant extended deadline of February 18, 2009. Staff will quickly work to identify match funding sources outside of the existing EMS budget. Under Board direction to find alternatives that could solve the EMS needs in Smith Creek, research was done and options were investigated. The State of Florida EMS grants cycle offers the opportunity to possibly obtain funding for 75% of the cost. If funding sources cannot be found to pay the match, the option would still be open to pull the grant from consideration, without penalty, from the State EMS office.

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**Options**

1. Approval for Wakulla County EMS to apply for grant funding for a 4 wheel drive ambulance for Off Road Response.
2. Approve for Wakulla County EMS to apply for grant funding for a 4 wheel drive open golf cart type vehicle for Off Road Response.
3. Approve for Wakulla County EMS to apply for grant funding for a 6 wheel drive enclosed patient compartment vehicle for Off Road Response.
4. Do not approve to apply for grant funding for an Off Road Vehicle Package.
5. Board Direction.

**Recommendation**

Option #3. This vehicle provides the best off road diversity with the greatest protection for patient and EMS staff.