
The Underline

Health Impact Assessment

About the M-Path¹

“The M-Path is a nine-mile paved multi-use path in urban Miami-Dade County. The M-Path was built in 1983 by Miami-Dade Transit as part of the original Metrorail construction. The path meanders within Miami-Dade Transit right-of-way under the elevated Metrorail guideways. The path generally runs contiguous to US 1 – South Dixie Highway and SW 1st Avenue.¹” Approximately, 400,000 individuals or 15% of the County’s population reside within a quarter mile of the path.

About The Underline²

Friends of the Underline is a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 status whose mission is to transform the land (M-Path) underneath MetroRail into a contiguous 10-mile walking/biking/exercise path and linear park, from Brickell Station to Dadeland South Station. The Underline is modeled after successful nationally known railroad conversion to trail initiatives such as New York City’s High Line and Chicago’s 606, and envisions Miami having its own highly visible mobility corridor and linear park that reconnects the suburban/urban South Dade corridor.

In order to understand the full scope The Underline’s implementation, please reference the following link to [The Underline’s master plan](#)

The Underline is dedicated to achieving seven goals, which include:

1. **To increase MetroRail ridership** – by enticing and encouraging auto commuters to use MetroRail as a healthy, economical, and efficient alternative to driving.
2. **To encourage exercise** – 400,000 residents within one-half mile of the Underline will be able to safely walk, ride, and recreate in an urban environment.
3. **To increase public green space** – by transforming currently underutilized land or “Red Fields to Green Fields” into regenerated natural, native habitats and new public assets.
4. **To provide an economic impact** – an estimated \$800 Million annually.
5. **To reimagine US1** – from a congested road just for cars into a corridor that moves people from their homes to business, whether driving, riding MetroRail, walking, or biking.
6. **To connect communities** – with a safe, accessible, and beautiful greenway along one of Miami-Dade County’s most-heavily trafficked roads.
7. **To collaborate** – openly and transparently with Miami-Dade County residents, public servants, donors, stakeholders, volunteers, and vendors.

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Under the full-time leadership of Meg Daly, Founder, President, and Director, objectives and activities to achieve each of these goals are being discussed and pursued by the various subcommittees. Two of the most publically notable tactics include solidified stakeholder engagement and commitment, as well as proposed alternate designs and engineering modifications to straighten, widen, and enhance access points and amenities along the path.

About Health Impact Assessments³

In 2011, the National Academy of Sciences, Health Impact Assessment Committee adopted the following HIA definition from the International Association of Impact Assessment: “Health Impact Assessment is a systematic process that uses an array of data sources and analytic methods and considers input from stakeholders to determine the potential effects of a proposed policy, plan, program, or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those within the population.” HIA’s provide recommendations on monitoring and managing those effects.

The Underline Health Impact Assessment Purpose

The Health Impact Assessment will determine the potential community health effects of the full implementation (including all planned elements) of The Underline.

Project Rationale

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends the HIA as a planning resource.⁴ Health Impact Assessments are ideal for evaluating health impacts of land-use projects that may affect a population utilizing that space. An HIA of The Underline’s implementation would help determine the potential health effects on the population. Underline elements that demonstrate greatest potential for positive health outcome would be prioritized, then recommendations to enhance and replicate positive effects or mitigate negative effects would be provided based on the findings. Now is the time to complete the HIA before the implementation begins and while the HIA still has the opportunity to make an impact on decision-making, ensure a better use of resources, and ultimately help enhance positive health impacts. The HIA is aimed to be completed by December 2016.

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Project Process⁴

The Underline HIA will follow the standard accepted process for HIA's, which includes 6 steps:

- **Scoping** — The first step includes identifying which health effects to consider in the assessment and by what methods to consider them. The Underline, as with parks in general, has the potential to possibly affect (positively or negatively) a range of public health issues, including injuries, mental health, and pollution exposures. An important interaction between parks and health is through physical activity. Physical inactivity and obesity are independent risk factors for many of the same diseases, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, joint and bone disease, and depression. Traditionally, modeling and forecasting has been done to determine the greater needs of the transportation system. A similar model for non-motorized or active transportation will be vetted with the Workgroup and considered for this project. The pathways for the decided health effects will be developed taking into account determinants of health. These types of health effects and interactions would be considered in the Scoping phase and studied in the Assessment phase.
- **Assessment** — The second step includes the actual assessment of health effects including risks and benefits as well as who and how they will be affected. Available data, research and other methodologies may be used in this step to determine baseline data, the potential health effects, barriers, and possible alternative solutions. The assessment plan will be finalized in the Scoping phase of the project and implemented based on what is determined to be the best way to assess the health effects of implementing the proposed elements within the Underline goals.
- **Recommendations** — The third step includes looking at the results of the assessment and developing suggestions to the proposed elements in order to either enhance or promote positive health effects or mitigate negative health effects. Recommendations will take under consideration the distribution, severity, likelihood, magnitude, and the strength of the evidence behind each health effect to prioritize and support.
- **Community Consultation** -- The fourth step includes presenting proposed recommendations to different community stakeholders (e.g. community residents and business representatives located along The Underline) to obtain locally informed and nuanced input. It is expected that these presentations and resulting conversations utilize poster boards and are translated for each audience (both in language and in technical and layman's terms) in order to maximize understanding and engagement. Community consultations should be announced through a variety of channels to targeted groups (i.e. presentations, fact sheets, social media, news media). A specific dissemination and translation component will be included in the stakeholder engagement plan and acted upon in this step.

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- **Reporting** — The fifth step involves presenting the results and proposed recommendations to decision makers to obtain their feedback and ensure that the decision makers are aware of the findings while making decisions related to The Underline’s elements.
- **Monitoring and Evaluating** — This final step involves evaluating the HIA to determine whether it can have an effect on decision-making and monitoring the process to determine whether the HIA affected the decisions, as well as measuring the actual effects of those decisions where possible. The Underline’s Health Committee will collectively decide which organizations are responsible for monitoring and evaluating effects of the HIA. This step is crucial in demonstrating the HIA effects on decision makers' decisions and to what extent.

Request for Proposals

The Underline’s HIA Workgroup is soliciting proposals that provide 1) qualifications of the applicant to carryout a Rapid HIA on a large scale, land-use project, 2) a description of the proposed methodology of the Rapid HIA of the Underline determining the potential community health effects of the M-Path Master Plan implementation with and without the proposed elements associated with the Underline design, implementation, 3) a proposed line-item budget and budget narrative not exceeding \$10,000, 4) a list of references from previous clients.

The Rapid HIA should include three health impacts assessed in detail, should provide a detailed overview of potential health impacts, should involve collecting and analyzing existing data with additional input from experts and stakeholders and should be carried out within 8 to 10-week time period. The entire proposal packet should not exceed 15 pages.

Please email proposal packets by Wednesday, September 7 to:

Peter Wood
Vice President of Programs and Community Investments
Health Foundation of South Florida
pwood@hfsf.org

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Resources

1. <http://www.miamidade.gov/mpo/documents/default.htm#m>
2. <http://theUnderline.org>
3. http://hria.org/uploads/catalogerfiles/hia-policy-and-practice-report/HRiA_HIA_Guide.pdf
4. http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/parks_trails/