TREASURE COAST REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members  
From: Staff  
Date: September 21, 2018 Council Meeting  
Subject: Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan – Report and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this item is to provide an overview of the Draft Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) Plan, which was published for comment by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) – Office of Greenways and Trails in August 2018.

The FGTS Plan establishes the vision for implementing a connected statewide system of greenways and trails for recreation, conservation, transportation choices, healthy lifestyles, a vibrant economy, and a high quality of life. The original FGTS Plan was completed in 1998 and adopted by the Florida Legislature in 1999, laying the groundwork for many programs, projects, and initiatives that exist today. The updated FGTS Plan and maps will guide implementation of the connected statewide trail system from 2018 through 2022. The FGTS Plan has been updated once previously, and the current draft represents the second update to the Plan.

Overview and Analysis

The FGTS Plan includes the following components:

1. Definitions of greenways and trails and a discussion of their benefits;

2. Four broad goals, each of which includes a series of strategies, objectives, and action steps:
   a. Goal 1: Delineate Regional Systems
   b. Goal 2: Strategic Investment of Resources to Advance System Completion
   c. Goal 3: Promote and Market the Florida Greenways and Trails System to Residents and Visitors
   d. Goal 4: Establish Partnerships and Engage Stakeholders

3. A state-wide map series (updated previously in January 2018) that includes:
   a. A “Land Trails Opportunity Map” that identifies all facilities for bicycling, horseback riding, and multi-use users, including trails that are both paved and unpaved as well as multiple and single use (see Attachment 1).
b. A “Priority Trails Map” that identifies long-distance, multi-jurisdictional priority land trail corridors (see Attachment 2 for statewide map and Attachments 3 and 4 for enlarged maps for the Treasure Coast Region);

c. A “Paddling Trails Opportunity Map” that identifies paddling trails within the state and the Saltwater Circumnavigational Trail in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf (see Attachment 5); and

d. A “Paddling Trails Priority Map” that serves as a guide to direct resources to complete the state’s highest priority paddling trail projects (see Attachment 6 for statewide map and Attachments 7 and 8 for enlarged maps for the Treasure Coast Region).

Large-scale maps and corresponding GIS data layers are available on the FDEP website at the following link:

https://floridadep.gov/parks/ogt/content/florida-greenways-and-trails-system-plan-and-maps

The planning process to develop the Plan has included fourteen workshops across the state to gather public input and participation by local governments, metropolitan planning organizations, other agencies, and the public. The FGTS provides a comprehensive, well-organized approach to plan, develop, implement, and manage the state’s trail resources.

Regarding Goal 1 and the delineation of regional systems, the Plan sets forth criteria for corridors to become prioritized for funding, with emphasis on longer distance regional trails that provide connections to state parks as well as sites that are of natural, cultural, and historic significance. To help implement the goal, the Plan describes the newly established “Trail Town” program to encourage the establishment of trail hubs and expand the economic contributions of trail destinations to local communities.

To help implement Goal 2, which is focused on strategic investments to advance system completion, the FGTS Plan acknowledges the Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail program, established by the Florida Legislature in 2014 and 2015 that allocated $25 million annually for trail development. Several segments of the Florida East Coast Greenway, which is included as a Priority Trail, were funded through this program in St. Lucie County. The Plan further describes a new “Parks and Community Trails” (PACT) program, which will provide technical assistance to help rural and small communities to build new trails linking the Opportunity and Priority Corridors with local and state parks. Additionally, a new FGTS initiative to integrate trails into the management plans of state parks will help interconnect these facilities, particularly benefitting the trail system’s inclusion of Jonathan Dickinson State Park and the Savannas Preserve State Park into the East Coast Greenway Trail.

Within Goal 3 regarding the promotion and marketing of the FGTS to residents and visitors, the Plan describes the state’s anticipated messaging and branding initiatives to raise awareness for both current and potential users and stakeholders to expand the system’s utilization and utility.

Goal 4, addressing the establishment of partnerships and engagement of stakeholders, acknowledges the broad range of local government, agency, and public participants in the development and
implementation of the state’s trail network, with special emphasis on the contribution of volunteer
groups and individuals for the maintenance and promotion of trail facilities.

Conclusion

The planning, development, implementation, and management of the state trail network is a
complex, multi-disciplinary effort that requires extensive coordination among numerous local
governments, agencies, and organizations. Advance planning at a broad scale is necessary to
identify and secure multi-jurisdictional alignments across municipal or county boundaries and
maximize the utility of greenways and trails networks. In addition, knowledge of desired
alignments for regional facilities provides greater efficiency for transportation investments, enabling
the greatest leverage of facility funding with other transportation and land use projects. Implementation of the FGTS Plan as proposed will help create a more competitive, better connected region.

Recommendation

For information only.

Attachments
LAND TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Land Trail Opportunities

Conservation Lands

2018

Land Trail Opportunities of the FGTS are corridors which represent existing, planned and conceptual multiuse trails. These corridors form a land-based trail network of regional and state importance. The FGTS corridors on maps are approximated at approximately one mile wide to allow for flexibility in the proposed corridor locations.

The Land Trail Opportunity map is a synthesis of trail planning efforts conducted by cities, counties, transportation planning organizations, non-profits and other agencies throughout Florida. This map does not include all existing, proposed and conceptual trails in Florida, but focuses on land use and regional significance to form a comprehensive connected system.
2018
PRIORITY TRAILS

- Land Trail Priorities
- Florida National Scenic Trail - Priority
- Paddling Trail Priorities
- Existing Trails in Priority Network
- Conservation Lands

The FDOT Priority Corridors are the focused areas for trails in the state and rank higher for implementation than the Opportunity Trail Corridors. Priority Trail Corridors are selected from the Land Trail Opportunity map and Paddling Trail Opportunity map and must also support conservation of the Florida Ecological Greenway Network’s six levels of priorities.
Attachment 5

2018 PADDLING TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Paddling Trail Opportunities

Conservation Lands

Paddling Trail Opportunities represent the vision for a comprehensive water-based trail system. To be recognized as a Paddling Trail Opportunity, the paddling corridor must meet the following criteria:

- Be an existing or potential route, destination, or rest area
- Span a minimum time limit in length
- Be navigable during most months of an average year
- Be located with minimal impact to the natural environment
PROPOSED 2018
PADDLING TRAIL PRIORITIES

Paddling Trail Priorities
Conservation Lands

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