

STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
**TYPE 1 CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION
CHECKLIST**

650-050-12
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
06/17

Financial Management No. 435471-1-22-01

FAP No. N/A

CE Number: (c) (3) or (d)

Title: South Sumter Connector Trail from Good Neighbor Trail to James A Van Fleet Trail

Work Mix: BIKE, EQUESTRIAN, PEDESTRIAN PATH/TRAIL

District: FDOT District 5

County: Hernando & Sumter Counties

Project Description:

A Preferred Alternative has not been identified at this time since the project currently is not moving forward to the design phase. The Preferred Alternative will be identified when the project moves forward to the design phase. However, a recommended alternative has been identified. The Recommended Alternative proposes a 12-foot wide shared-use path beginning at the intersection of the Good Neighbor and Withlacoochee State Trails and continuing easterly to a pedestrian/equestrian bridge crossing the Withlacoochee River. Following east along C.R. 673 and then north along U.S. 301 to a pedestrian bridge crossing U.S. 301 and the CSX Railroad. The Trail follows C.R. 478 east to S.R. 471 and then south to S.R. 50. The Recommended Alternative closes the gap and connects the existing Good Neighbor Trail to the west and the Van Fleet Trail to the east.

The Trail is divided into five segments as described below and shown on Figure 1.

Segment A: Beginning at the eastern terminus of the Good Neighbor Trail and its intersection with the Withlacoochee State Trail, the Trail travels 0.25 miles (approximate) north along the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Duke Power easement. The Trail follows the power easement 0.5 miles east where it turn south toward the Withlacoochee River Crossing. The Trail crosses the Withlacoochee River to the Iron Bridge Day Use Area, then south 0.20 mile turning east 0.9 mile along an existing hiking trail (parallel to and south of Forest Road 13) crossing under Interstate 75 (I-75). Once under I-75, the trail continues east 0.20 mile along an abandoned railroad bed turning north along the Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF) eastern boundary for 0.7 miles to County Road (C.R.) 673.

Segment B: At C.R. 673 the trail continues east 4 miles intersecting U.S. 301. Turning north along U.S. 301 for 0.5 mile intersecting C.R. 478.

Segment C: At the intersection of U.S. 301 and C.R. 478, the trail continues east crossing U.S. 301 and the CSX Railroad along a pedestrian bridge. The trail continues east along C.R. 478 for 5 miles to the intersection of State Road (S.R.) 471 in the City of Webster.

Segment D: At the intersection of C.R. 478 and State Road (S.R.) 471, the trail turns south and continues for 4 miles terminating at S.R. 50.

Segment E: At the intersection of S.R. 471 and S.R. 50, the trail turns east and continues for 5 miles terminating at the Van Fleet Trail (*technical analysis and environmental evaluation completed as part of the S.R. 50 Widening Project (FM Number 435859-1-22-1)*).

Note: The items below consider the requirements described in 23 CFR § 771.117 (c) and (d) for listed Categorical Exclusions (CEs). The constraints of 23 CFR § 771.117(e) are addressed in this form for CEs identified as 23 CFR § 771.117 (c) (26), (27) and (28) or (d) list projects.

⁻ This action **will not** induce significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area; travel patterns; involve significant air or water quality impacts; or cause substantial controversy on environmental grounds.

Verified

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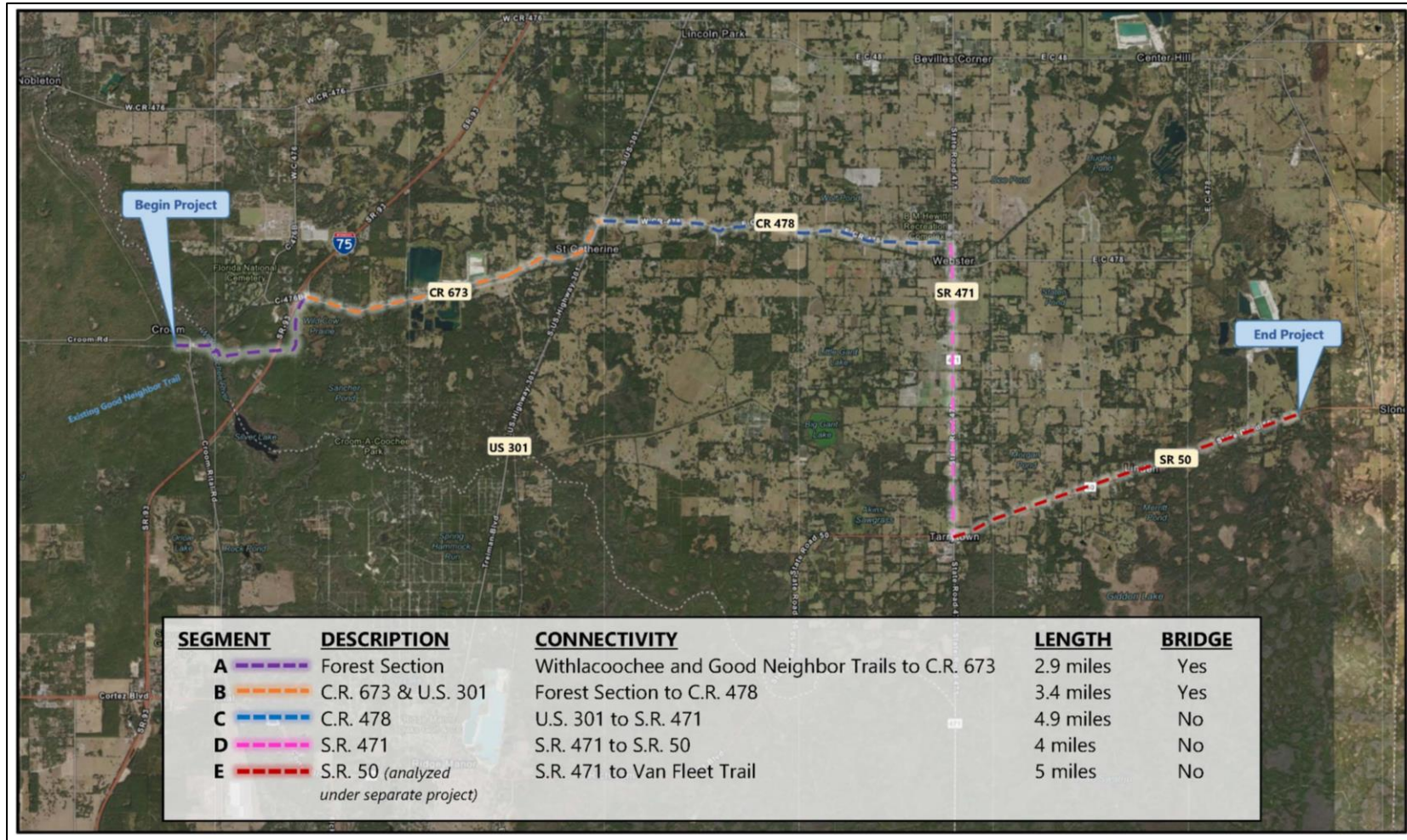


Figure 1. Project Segmentation Map

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1. Right of Way (ROW)

Comments:

Table 1 below presents estimated parcel impacts and additional ROW required by segment.

Table 1. Recommended Alternative ROW Requirements by Segment

Segment	Description	Acreage	Number of Impacted Parcels
A	C.R. 673 – Left	11.66	16
B	U.S. 301 – Left	1.49	10
C	C.R. 478 - Right	10.73	61
D	S.R. 471 – Urban Right	0	0
D	S.R. 471 – Rural Right	4.73	36

2. Wetland impacts that would require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) under the Clean Water Act, Section 404, 33 U.S.C. § 1344 and/or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act:

Nationwide permit

Comments:

The Recommended Alternative will require a Nationwide Permit (NWP) 23 (for “trail projects”) from USACE for compliance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. FDOT will consult with USACE prior to submittal of the application to seek concurrence of permit type. USACE requires compliance with the state water quality program; therefore, issuance of the USACE permit is subsequent to issuance of any state (e.g. SWFWMD) issued permit.

3. Bridge permits required from the United States Coast Guard (USCG):

The Withlacoochee River will be crossed within the Withlacoochee State Forest.

Comments:

The USCG has determined that a bridge permit will not be required.

4. The project involves a floodplain encroachment other than functionally dependent uses (e.g., bridges, wetlands) or actions that facilitate open space use (e.g., recreational trails, bicycle and pedestrian paths):

The Recommended Alternative has multiple areas located within floodplain Zone A, areas with no base flood elevations determined. The Withlacoochee River floodplain is within Zone AE with an average base flood elevation of 51.90 feet (NAVD). There are no regulatory floodways within the project limits.

Comments:

The Recommended Alternative will impact floodplains and depression storage areas requiring replacement of storage lost as a result of Trail encroachments. The SWFWMD prefers a “cup for cup” mitigation approach if the floodplain encroachment only involves storage impacts and the encroachment and compensation both occur within the same basin. If floodplain encroachment involves conveyance impacts or if the compensation is provided in another basin, then modeling will be required to demonstrate no adverse increase to flood stages. Detailed encroachment impacts and associated modeling will be completed during final design.

It is anticipated that floodplain compensation volume will be accommodated within the ditch adjacent to the Recommended Alternative. A Bridge Hydraulics Report (BHR) will be required for the Withlacoochee River crossing to document the hydraulic impacts of the bridge. The bridge length proposed as a part of the Recommended Alternative may need to be increased as a result of the BHR findings.

Actions that facilitate open space use, such as recreational trails, that encroach upon a floodplain do qualify for a Type 1 Categorical Exclusion under 23 CFR § 771.117(e).

5. Construction activities in, across or adjacent to a river component designated as a Wild and Scenic River, a

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Study River, or listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI)?

Project crosses the Withlacoochee River.

Comments:

No designated Wild and Scenic or Study Rivers, are present within a quarter mile of the project. The Withlacoochee River, from its headwaters south of the Lake County line to the US 41 bridge above Lake Rousseau is an NRI-listed segment.

6. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, as amended, or Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA):

ESA listed species and/or Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) present.

[X] Used key, no consultation required

Names of Species:

eastern indigo snake, wood stork

Comments:

No critical habitat rules have been published for the eastern indigo snake which is listed as threatened. However, habitats adjacent to all alternative corridors may be used as foraging habitat by the eastern indigo snake. No indigo snakes were observed during the field reviews, but there were numerous gopher tortoise burrows observed in many parts of the project area. During construction, the FWS's "Standard Protection Measures for the Eastern Indigo Snake" will be implemented during site preparation and project construction. Any snakes inhabiting located gopher tortoise burrows will be removed prior to construction. Finally, no motor vehicles will be allowed on the trail. As a result, and per the Consultation Key for the Eastern Indigo Snake (FWS, 2013), it is anticipated that the proposed project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect*, the eastern indigo snake.

The endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker, or "RCW" inhabits open, mature pine woodlands that have a diversity of grass, forb, and shrub species. The proposed project is within the USFWS consultation area for RCW. Also, the Withlacoochee State Forest is actively managed for this species. This population, and the associated cluster areas, are tracked and documented by the FFS regularly. All of the clusters are located west of the Withlacoochee River. The proposed trail will come through the forest from the east and cross the river, where it will then use existing cleared paths to tie into the Good Neighbor Trail. Consultation with the Florida Forest Service (FFS) revealed that the habitat near, and to the east of the river, is of poor quality and currently not suitable for RCWs and that the FFS currently does not have plans to manage this area of the forest for new clusters. Due to the information regarding RCWs in the forest, lack of suitable habitat outside the forest, low impact nature of the project, and the continued coordination with the FFS, FDOT proposed that surveys for this species are not necessary. FWC concurred with that determination. Due to continued close coordination with FFS, the nature of the project, and the habitat characteristics above, it is anticipated that the proposed project will have *no effect* on RCW.

The Florida Scrub-Jay is listed as *threatened* under the ESA, and is known from Sumter, but not Hernando County. The species inhabits fire-dominated, low-growing, oak scrub habitat found on well-drained sandy soils. It may persist in areas with sparser oaks or scrub areas that are overgrown, but at much lower densities and with reduced survivorship (Hipes et al 2001). Prime habitats are generally not found along the study corridors, but patches of scrub areas are adjacent to some proposed ROWs where work could occur. The Withlacoochee-Panasoffkee-Big Scrub "Important Bird Area," or "IBA" is approximately eight miles north of the study area and provides important habitat for Scrub-Jay; it is possible that individuals may forage in the project area, but none were observed during field efforts to date and prime habitat is not located within the project footprint. Therefore, it is anticipated that the proposed project *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the Florida Scrub-Jay.

The Snail Kite is listed as *endangered* under the ESA. It prefers large open freshwater marshes and lakes with shallow water, less than four feet deep, and a low density of emergent vegetation are preferred foraging habitat. It is dependent on apple snails (*Pomacea paludosa*) caught at the water surface. Individuals usually nest over water in a low tree or shrub (commonly willow, wax myrtle, pond apple, or buttonbush, but also in non-woody vegetation like cattail or sawgrass). Although Sumter County is within the consultation area, because there are no suitable habitats within the project footprint, it is anticipated that the proposed project will have *no effect* on the species.

The Wood Stork is listed as *endangered* under the ESA. No Wood Storks or signs were observed during the field reviews. GIS database information also indicates there are no wood stork colonies within one (1) mile of the project corridor. FWS wood stork data indicates that the core foraging area (CFA) radius in Central Florida is 15 miles. Thus, any project within this area may require mitigation for impacts to wood stork habitat. However, it is a regularly accepted practice to provide in-kind habitat replacement within the project area to offset impacts. Most suitable Wood Stork foraging habitat (ditches and ponds) within the project corridor will also be present in the post-development scenario if they existed pre-construction. If any habitat is adversely affected and not restored,

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compensation will be provided within the appropriate CFA or within the service area of a FWS-approved mitigation bank. Thus, based on the consultation key in FWS (2010), it is anticipated that this project *may affect*, but is *not likely to adversely affect* the wood stork.

The West Indian manatee is listed as *threatened* under the ESA. Individuals are highly mobile and may be encountered in a variety of environments including estuarine habitats, canals, rivers, saltwater bays, and occasionally coastal oceanic habitat. Although the Withlacoochee River is within the native range of the manatee, individuals are generally prevented from accessing reaches above Lake Rousseau due to the lock on the Cross-Florida Barge Canal and the Lake Rousseau dam at Inglis, Florida. The species has not been observed recently in the reach of the river over which the proposed trail will pass. Therefore, it is anticipated that the proposed project will have *no effect* on the West Indian manatee.

While other protected plant species *could* be present within the study area, only two species, the endangered Florida filmy fern and the threatened scrub buckwheat are federally listed. There appears to be little if any suitable habitat for these species in the study corridor, and neither species was observed during the field reviews. It is anticipated therefore that the proposed project will have *no effect* on these species.

7. Will the action impact any properties protected by Section 4(f) pursuant to 23 CFR § 774?

Exception or Exemption (attach description of type and Official with Jurisdiction (OWJ) concurrence) [See 23 CFR § 774.13]

OEM Coordination Date: 12/02/2019

Resource(s):

Withlacoochee State Forest

Comments:

The Recommended Alternative begins at the eastern terminus of the Good Neighbor Trail within the Croom Tract of the WSF. The Croom Tract is owned by the State of Florida and maintained by the FFS. The primary function of the Croom Tract includes picnic areas, fishing, canoe launch, nature, hiking, equestrian and off-road bicycle trails.

Trail construction within the WSF Croom Tract does not create a change in land ownership; the nature and magnitude of the changes to the property do not create permanent adverse physical impacts, nor interfere with protected activities, features or attributes of the property. The land will be enhanced to a condition which is at least as good as what exists prior to the project. As the Official with Jurisdiction (OWJ), the FFS states, in correspondence to FDOT dated March 27, 2019, it is in agreement regarding proposed improvements and resulting conditions

The proposed pedestrian/equestrian bridge crossing the Withlacoochee River, along with the Trail, will provide enhanced access to recreation facilities on the east and west of the river for use by non-motorized transportation modes including pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian users. The improvement will provide recreational connectivity enhancement to the existing hiking trails expanding use of and access to recreational resources throughout the WSF. There is no acquisition of State-owned land and no proposed easements. Construction within the WSF will be a small component of the overall project construction and will not impede public access to, or use of, the WSF. The OWJ has been involved with this project since inception and supports the Recommended Alternative.

The Recommended Alternative qualifies as an Exception or Exemption by specifically meeting the Section 4(f) criteria in Title 23 CFR § 774.13. Specifically: per 774.13 (g)(1) and (g)(2) Transportation enhancement activities, transportation alternatives projects, and mitigation activities, where: (1) The use of the Section 4(f) property is solely for the purpose of preserving or enhancing an activity, feature, or attribute that qualifies the property for Section 4(f) protection; and (2) The OWJ over the Section 4(f) resource agrees in writing to paragraph (g)(1) of this section.

8. Historic and/or Archaeological Resources protected under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Determination of "No Effect"

Comments:

In accordance with the procedures contained in 36 CFR Part 800 and in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), a Cultural Resource Assessment Survey (CRAS), including background research and field survey, was completed in May 2019 for the project's Area of Potential Effect (APE). An addendum to the CRAS for the Withlacoochee State Forest preferred alignment was prepared in October 2019.

The archaeological field survey included visual reconnaissance and subsurface examination of the project ROW. In total, 264 shovel tests were excavated with 30 positive shovel tests resulting in the documentation of one previously

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recorded archaeological site (8SM00422, Wild Cow Prairie), six newly identified archaeological sites (8HE00863, 8HE00864, 8SM01137, 8SM01138, 8SM01139, and 8SM01216), and two isolated prehistoric lithic artifacts (Archaeological Occurrences [AOs] 1 and 2. Newly recorded site 8SM01137 and previously recorded site 8SM00422 were identified within the Recommended Alternative east of I-75. None of the sites documented during the CRAS meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). No further archaeological investigation is necessary for these sites.

The architectural survey resulted in the identification of 71 historic resources within the APE, including five previously recorded and 66 newly recorded resources. The previously recorded resources include two historic structures, two historic linear resources, and one historic cemetery. The newly recorded resources include two historic cemeteries, four historic canals, and 60 historic structures. The segment of the Seaboard Air Line Railway (SALR, 8SM00463) is a newly recorded segment of a previously recorded linear resource. The overall SALR linear resource has previously been determined NRHP-eligible by the SHPO in 2017.

Based on the results of the current survey, the segment of the SALR located within the project APE is recommended as a contributing segment to the overall NRHP-eligible linear resource. The proposed improvements will require no ROW from the SALR and will not impede or require the rerouting of rail traffic. No historic fabric associated with the SALR will be removed or altered by the Recommended Alternative and therefore, will have no adverse effect on the SALR.

The remaining 70 resources within the Recommended Alternative APE lack integrity or the architectural distinction and significant historical associations necessary to be considered for listing in the NRHP and are recommended ineligible. Bridge Nos. 180027, 180028, and 180029 are concrete stringer/girder bridges constructed in 1965. The bridges are post-1945 concrete bridges excluded from Section 106 consideration the bridges were not recorded or evaluated by this PD&E Study.

Although ground disturbance is not anticipated to be deeper than 2.0 feet (0.6 meters) in the areas of Resources 8SM0034 (Wild Cow Prairie Cemetery) and 8SM01206 (Stewart Chapel Cemetery), GPR survey should be undertaken to safeguard potential unmarked graves.

The SHPO reviewed the CRAS and provided concurrence with the findings on February 20, 2020.

9. Noise considerations

The project does not require a Noise Analysis.

Comments:

The project is classified as a Type III noise project and does not require a noise analysis.

10. Contamination Considerations

The project was evaluated.

Comments:

A Contamination Screening Evaluation Report (CSER) was completed for the project. The CSER activities included a review of public regulatory files and historical data sources, and a site reconnaissance of the project study area.

Based on the results of the contamination screening activities, Contamination Risk Potential Ratings (CRPR) were assigned to 27 sites. The contamination potential risk rating system was developed by FDOT and incorporates three levels of risk: Low, Medium, and High. Eight sites were rated as Low, 14 sites were rated as Medium, and five sites were rated as High.

Based on their proximity to the Recommended Alternative, Level 2 Contamination Impact Analyses (CIA) may be required at the Medium Risk and 5 High Risk sites. However, depending on adjustments made during final design, some Level 2 CIAs may not be necessary. The District Contamination Coordinator will provide construction support for any areas found to have potential to interact with contamination.

11. Planning Consistency

This Project will be reviewed for fiscal constraints for the implementation of all the phase(s) of the Project at the time the Project proceeds to final design.

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The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated December 14, 2016 and executed by the Federal Highway Administration and FDOT.

Signature: _____
Environmental Manager or designee

Date: April XX, 2020

The following is a list of any supporting activities (e.g., field reviews, as appropriate, etc.), reports, or technical studies that were prepared and are included in the project file that were necessary to support the conclusions reached on the checklist:

- 1 South Sumter Connector Trail Preliminary Engineering Report. December 2019. FDOT District 5.
- 2 Permits Required Memorandum. November 2019. Memorandum from Lynne Marie Whately, TranSystems, to David Graeber, FDOT, November 22, 2019.
- 3 Preliminary Geotechnical Report for Bridge Development Report (BDR), South Sumter Connector Trail PD&E Study, From the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Van Fleet Trail, Hernando and Sumter Counties, Florida. Financial Project ID No. 435471-1-22-01. GEC Project No. 4037G. Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants, Inc. May 9, 2019.
- 4 Contamination Screening Evaluation Report South Sumter Connector Trail PD&E Study, From the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Van Fleet Trail Hernando and Sumter Counties, Florida. Financial Project ID No. 435471-1-22-01. Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants, Inc. Revised August 2019.
- 5 South Sumter Trail from Withlacoochee State Trail to Van Fleet Trail, Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study, Natural Resources Evaluation, Sumter County, Financial Project Number 435471-1. Prepared by Johnson, Mirmiran, and Thompson (JMT) for FDOT District Five. October 3, 2019.
- 6 Section 4(f) Exceptions/Exemptions Determination. South Sumter Connector Trail from Good Neighbor Trail to James A. Van Fleet Trail. FM#: 435471-1-22-01. Prepared May 7, 2019.
- 7 Cultural Resources Assessment Survey of the South Sumter Connector Trail from the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Van Fleet Trail Hernando and Sumter Counties, Florida. Financial Management No. 453471-1. SEARCH Project No. 3930-17074T. Prepared by SEARCH for TranSystems and FDOT District 5. May 2019.
- 8 Cultural Resources Assessment Survey Addendum of the South Sumter Connector Trail from the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Van Fleet Trail Hernando and Sumter Counties, Florida. Financial Management No. 453471-1. SEARCH Project No. 3930-17074T. Prepared by SEARCH for TranSystems and FDOT District 5. November 2019.
- 9 Value Engineering Final Resolution Memorandum. From Ashraf Elmaghraby FDOT District 5 to David Graeber FDOT District 5. December 20, 2018.
- 10 Final Utility Documentation for the South Sumter Trail PD&E Study – FPID 435471-1-22-01. Prepared by Horizon Engineering Group, Inc. September 12, 2019.
- 11 Final Location Hydraulics Memorandum. South Sumter Trail from Withlacoochee State Trail to Van Fleet Trail/South Lake Trail. Financial Management Number 435471-1-22-01. Prepared for FDOT District 5. September 9, 2019.
- 12 FDOT Long Range Estimating System – Production. Project: 435471-1-52-01. FDOT District 5. September 5, 2019.
- 13 South Sumter Trail Project Alternatives Public Meeting Summary. Prepared by FDOT District 5. October 23, 2018.