

# Coast To COAST



SOUTH SUMTER  
CONNECTOR TRAIL

## SUMTER COUNTY GAP STUDY

### ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS REPORT

Financial Project ID No.: 435471-1

July 2016





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## List of Abbreviated Terms

C2C	Coast-to-Coast Connector
CSX	CSX Transportation
EST	Environmental Screening Tool
ETDM	Efficient Transportation Decision-Making
FDEP OGT	Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FFS	Florida Forest Service
FNAI	Florida Natural Areas Inventory
FWC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GNT	Good Neighbor Trail (part of the C2C system)
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
RRR	Resurfacing, Restoration, and Rehabilitation (roadway project)
SLT	South Lake Trail (part of the C2C System)
SWFWMD	Southwest Florida Water Management District
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
VFST	Van Fleet State Trail
WMA	Wildlife Management Area
WREC	Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative, Inc.
WSF	Withlacoochee State Forest
WST	Withlacoochee State Trail



# Executive Summary

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In January 2015, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five began a Corridor Planning Study to evaluate the feasibility of potential alignments for a proposed multiuse trail facility, known as the South Sumter Connector Trail. The primary goal of the study is to identify a trail alignment that completes the largest missing segment in the cross-state Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail (C2C), a 250-mile regional trail system in Central Florida that connects the Gulf of Mexico in Pinellas County to the Atlantic Ocean in Brevard County. The proposed connection will complete the approximately 20-mile gap from the Good Neighbor Trail (GNT) in Hernando County to the South Lake Trail (SLT) in Lake County.

This study is a planning-level evaluation of safety, environmental, and geometric concerns developed as a process that combines planning, public involvement, and engineering efforts to identify a recommended corridor to be evaluated in the subsequent project phase, Project Development & Environment Study (PD&E) Study. As part of the overall analysis, the following documents were developed:

1. **Existing Conditions Report** - Documents the existing characteristics, conditions, issues / constraints, and previous studies conducted relevant to this project.
2. **Purpose and Need Statement** - Crafted to define the project need, goals, objectives, and measures of success.
3. **Public Involvement Plan** - Provides an overview of the outreach and engagement efforts conducted throughout the study.
4. **Alternatives Analysis Report** - Builds upon the Existing Conditions and Purpose and Need Statement to develop a recommended corridor.

This planning study is the first step in a larger process being carried out by FDOT to implement a multiuse trail for the C2C. Trail implementation follows the standard FDOT process. Following this study, the PD&E will further evaluate engineering and environmental factors and build on the public involvement conducted. It will take approximately two years to complete followed by design, right of way, and construction.

## Project Background & Description

The South Sumter Connector Trail has a long-standing history and has been the subject of several planning efforts by the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (FGTF) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Office of Greenways and Trails. A number of these efforts identified potential trail alignments that were screened to complete the Sumter Gap. The two initial trail alternatives that emerged from efforts predating this study generally followed abandoned railroad corridors of the CSX Transportation Company (former Seaboard Coastal Railroad). These corridors are referred to as the northern and southern corridor herein.



As shown in Figure 1, the study area comprises approximately 20 miles east from the Good Neighbor Trail (GNT) in Hernando County until it terminates at the South Lake Trail (SLT) in Sumter County. The study area is bound by the cities of Webster and Center Hill along the northern corridor and the Withlacoochee State Forest (WSF) along the southern corridor. The southern corridor extends southeast from the Trilby community along SR 575 and SR 50 into Pasco, Hernando, and Sumter counties terminating at the SLT. Segments of the northern corridor comprise the cities of Center Hill and Webster and terminate at the GNT.

### Three-Tier Review System

A Three-Tier Review System was applied as part of the evaluation process to assess potential trail alternatives for the South Sumter Connector Trail. Evaluation measures driven by the Purpose and Need were designed for each screening phase to assess the feasibility of the conceptual alignments and ensure the goals of this project were met. The Evaluation Criteria Matrix presents the results of this analysis (see Figure 20). Through technical evaluations and extensive public and agency involvement, the trail alternatives evolved to align with the goals and objectives of the study. These refinements were made to incorporate design constraints, maintain agency and general public support, leverage opportunities to utilize public rights-of-way, and minimize and/or avoid community and environmental impacts.

Tier One Screening consisted of evaluating the original northern and southern alignment (see Figure 1). This evaluation included analysis of available right of way, as well as potential impacts to right of way, wetland, floodplain, and threatened and endangered species. During the Tier One Screening process, the FDOT Study Team held several stakeholder meetings to understand the potential opportunities and challenges within the study area. Upon determining CSX owns 11 percent of the northern alignment and 4 percent of the southern alignment, the FDOT Study Team identified alternative routing options for the northern and southern corridors. Through these technical evaluations and extensive public and agency involvement, the trail alternatives evolved to align with the goals and objectives of the study.

Tier Two Screening incorporated a range of quantitative and qualitative factors to evaluate the proposed alignments that evolved from the initial corridors. The screening evaluation was consistent with the project purpose and need, including cost-effectiveness, safety, potential environmental impacts, and economic development. This evaluation captured the project stakeholders' desire to avoid community impacts and maintain consistency with local planning efforts. In total, ten alternatives as shown in Figure 19. were developed and evaluated as part of the Tier Two Screening.

Many of these alternatives used County facilities between the City of Webster and the trail's eastern terminus, including C-707, C-711, C-721, C-723, and C-727. While these facilities were generally low-volume, low-speed roadways, they had limited right of way, typically no more than 40' in most segments. In addition, these County facilities were generally tree-canopy roadways that offer abundant shade and aesthetics. These trees, however, were located within the available right of way of the facility. Locating a trail alongside these roadways would be difficult without either routing around the trees and taking more right of way from adjacent properties, or removing the trees entirely to co-locate the trail alongside the roadway. For these reasons, the ten alternatives examined during the Tier Two Screening were narrowed down to five alternatives following a review of the available right of way in the area.

Five conceptual alternatives ultimately advanced to the Tier-Three Screening phase. As shown in Figure 2, three were located along the northern corridor (Alternatives A, B, and C) and two (Alternatives D and E) along the southern corridor. These alternatives had the greatest potential based on the feasibility factors considered in the Tier-Two Screening.



Additional key factors, such as maintaining agency support and relocation potential, were also considered during the screening process. These two factors represented fatal flaws to the viability of alternatives. A fatal flaw is defined as any component of an alternative that would deem it unfeasible. The criteria for these factors are summarized below.

#### **Relocation Potential / Right of Way Constraints**

Policy guidance and sentiment from local agencies indicates that a need to relocate residences or businesses to construct the Coast-to-Coast Trail is not desirable, and should be avoided. Several stakeholders have also indicated that they generally do not support trail routes that require this level of impact.

- Alternatives A, D, and E have several properties that would likely need to be relocated to build the trail. Mitigation techniques were applied to these areas to avoid the potential relocation; however, avoidance measures were not feasible.
- Similarly, Alternative B has significant right of way constraints along the local County facilities that serve residences south and east of the City of Webster. Many of these facilities fall within prescriptive easements having widths of approximately 40', which would likely require additional right of way acquisition along this portion of the trail.

#### **Maintaining Agency Support**

The Coast-to-Coast initiative stipulates that the local maintaining agencies (Cities and Counties as applicable) shall agree to maintain the trail within their jurisdiction. Prior to construction, the FDOT requires a signed maintenance agreement to this effect. FDOT will not construct the trail prior to securing a maintenance agreement with all maintaining agencies involved within any particular segment.

- All northern alternatives fall within Hernando and Sumter counties. The southern alternatives traverse Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties. Hernando and Sumter counties have indicated their support for the northern corridor.
- Sumter County has indicated it will not maintain any alternative developed within the southern corridor (Alternatives D and E).

As a result, Alternatives A, B, D, and E were eliminated given the presence of other options that do not involve physical relocations. Alternatives D and E also did not have maintaining agency support from Sumter County, which makes up over 50% percent of the alignment length. Though Pasco County will support, Hernando County also prefers the northern options.

#### **Identification of Recommended Corridor**

As a result of the extensive qualitative and quantitative analyses supported by extensive coordination with project stakeholders and public outreach, the FDOT Study Team has identified Alternative C as the recommended corridor to be advanced for further study (see Figure 25). Given the key factors involved in the comparative evaluation, Alternative C was the only option considered fully viable, as it provides an appropriate balance of adherence to design criteria, maintaining agency support, minimization of right of way impacts and other factors.



# 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Project Background

In January 2015, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five began a Corridor Planning Study to evaluate the feasibility of potential alignments for a proposed multiuse trail facility, known as the South Sumter Connector Trail. The primary goal of the study is to identify a trail alignment that completes the largest missing segment in the cross-state Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail (C2C), a 250-mile regional trail system in Central Florida that connects the Gulf of Mexico in Pinellas County to the Atlantic Ocean in Brevard County. The proposed connection will complete the approximately 20-mile gap from the Good Neighbor Trail (GNT) in Hernando County to the South Lake Trail (SLT) in Sumter County.

This study is a planning-level evaluation of safety, environmental, and geometric concerns developed as a process that combines planning, public involvement, and engineering efforts to identify a recommended corridor to be evaluated in the Project Development & Environment Study (PD&E). As part of the overall analysis, an Existing Conditions Report was developed to document the existing characteristics, conditions, issues/constraints, and previous studies conducted relevant to this project. A Purpose and Need Statement was crafted to define the project goals and objectives. The Public Involvement Plan provides an overview of the outreach and engagement efforts conducted throughout the study. This Alternatives Analysis Report builds upon the Existing Conditions and Purpose and Need Statement to determine the recommended corridor.

The next phase of the project includes the Project Development & Environment (PD&E) Study programmed for funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. The PD&E Study will take approximately two years to complete followed by design, right of way and construction. For the purposes of funding and maintaining these projects, the FDOT is including the Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network Program in the Tentative Five Year Program (Fiscal Years 2017 – 2021) pursuant to Section 339.81, Florida Statutes.<sup>1</sup> The SUN Trail program funds the development of a statewide, paved, multiuse trail network for bicyclists and pedestrians. Beginning in FY 2015 – 2016, the FDOT is allocating a minimum of \$25 million annually to its program and resource plan for project phases. Since the C2C network represents high-priority corridors and connections, the South Sumter Connector Trail is eligible for SUN

<sup>1</sup> Florida Statutes, 339.81. 2016. Retrieved via <http://m.flsenate.gov/Statutes/339.81>.



Trail funding. As of July 2016, the PD&E (FY 2017) and Design phases (FY 2019) are programmed for funding.

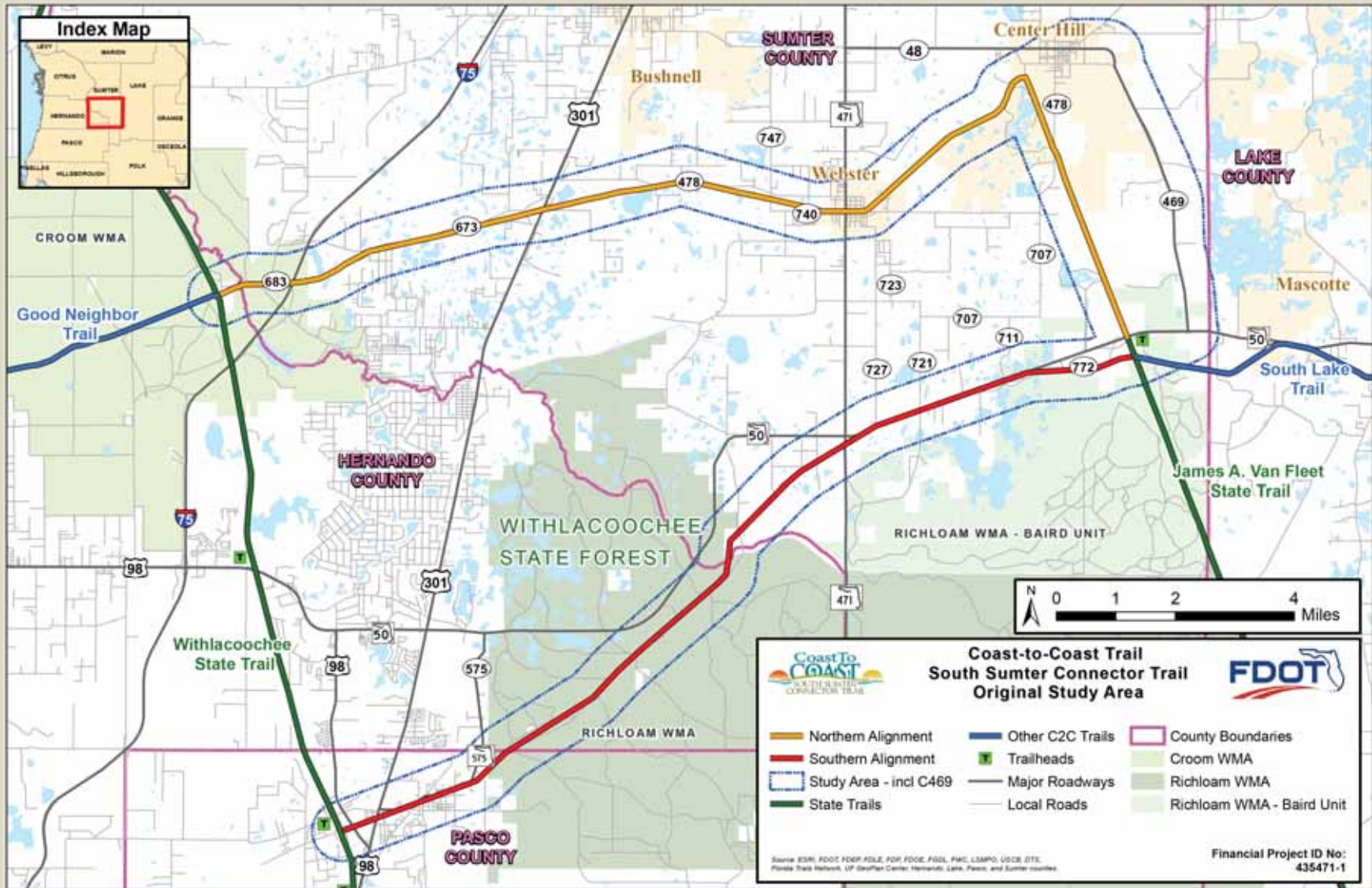
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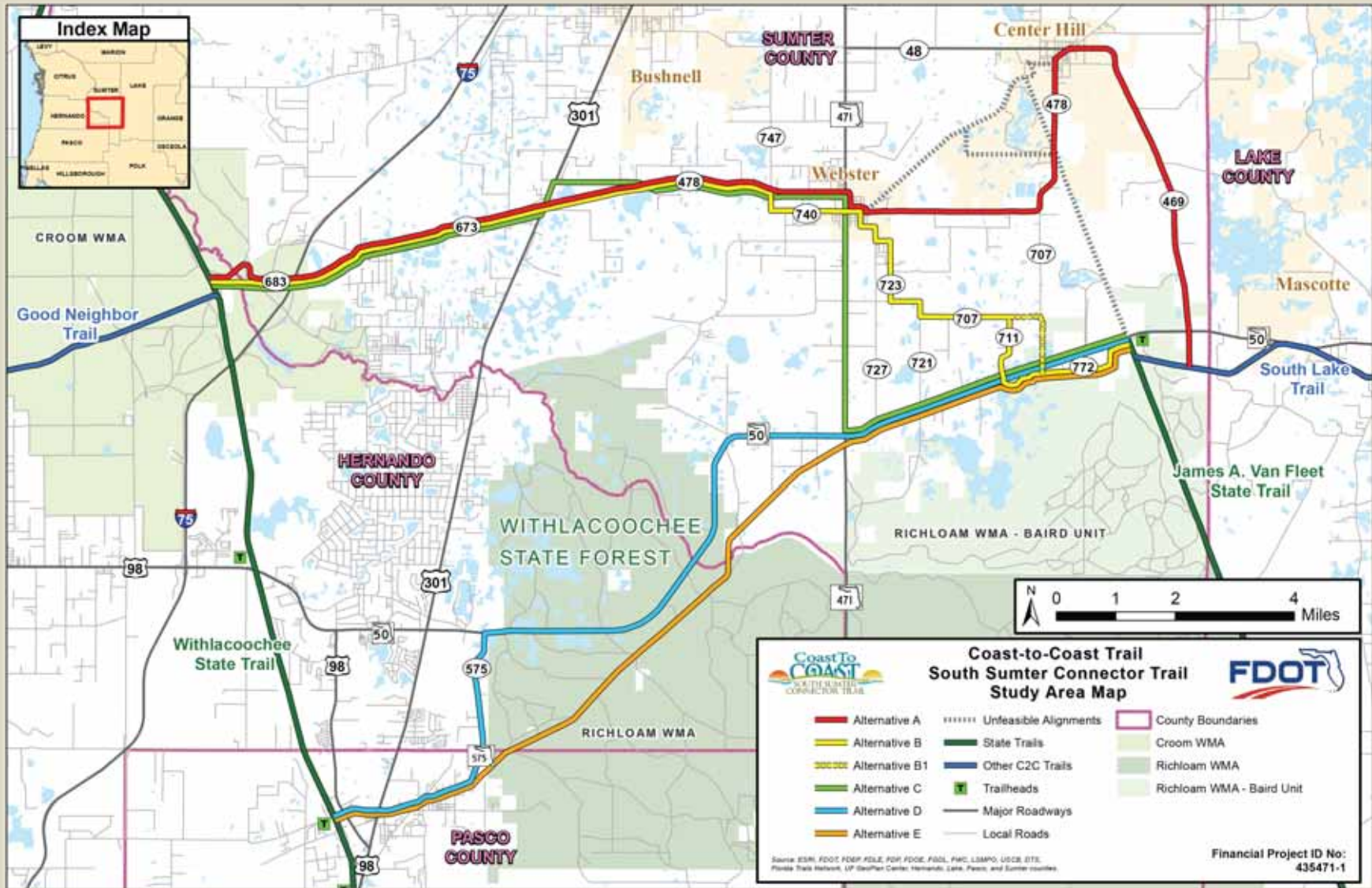
## 1.2 Project Description

The South Sumter Connector Trail has a long-standing history and has been the subject of several planning efforts by the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (FGTF) and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Office of Greenways and Trails. This study builds upon both current initiatives and long-term policies to complete the overall C2C system. The two initial trail alternatives that emerged (hereafter referred to as the northern and southern corridor) from efforts predating this study generally followed abandoned railroad corridors of the CSX Transportation Company (former Seaboard Coastal Railroad).

Figure 1 illustrates the study area at the onset of the study with the initial northern and southern corridors while Figure 2 illustrates the study area during the Alternatives Evaluation phase. As shown in the map, the study area comprises approximately 20 miles east from the Good Neighbor Trail (GNT) in Hernando County until it terminates at the South Lake Trail (SLT) in Sumter County. The project is generally oriented west to northeast and is bound by the cities of Webster and Center Hill to the north and the Withlacoochee State Forest to the south. The southern corridor extends northeast from the Trilby community along SR 575 and SR 50 into Pasco, Hernando, and Sumter counties terminating at the SLT. Along the northern corridor, the trail alignment enters the cities of Webster and Center Hill, and parallels C-673 on the west into Sumter and Hernando counties.

A Three-Tier Review System was used as part of the evaluation process to assess potential trail alternatives for the South Sumter Connector Trail. Evaluation measures driven by the Purpose and Need were designed for each screening phase to assess the feasibility of the conceptual alignments and ensure the goals of this project were met. Through technical evaluations and extensive public and agency involvement, the trail alternatives evolved to align with the goals and objectives of the study. These refinements were made to incorporate design constraints, maintain agency and general public support, leverage opportunities to utilize public rights of way, and minimize and/or avoid community and environmental impacts.





# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 2  
Study Area - Five Alternatives

# 2

## Project Initiation

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### 2.1 Overview of Guiding Principles

The following principles were recommended to guide decisions about coordinating and planning a multiuse trail corridor that completes a comprehensive connected system for the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail. The guiding principles provide a framework from which to advance the development of a new trail corridor that incorporates innovative design for pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, and users of all ages. These principles balance key priorities as it relates to the multimodal vision and the associated land use goals of the study area. In developing the guiding principles, the FDOT Study Team considered statewide, regional, and local principles for the future trail planning process which was prepared with input from the Project Visioning Team and the general public.

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#### 2.1.1 The Guiding Principles

##### *A. Collaboration*

1. **Consistency with statewide, regional, and local visions and plans. Make decisions aligned with:**
  - The goals and objectives of the Florida Greenways & Trails System Plan, and other statewide, regional, and local comprehensive plans; and
  - Long range visions of regional and local significance to form a continuous trail system.
2. **Develop a structured planning process that:**
  - Involves partners early and continuously; and
  - Coordinates trail corridor decisions with land use, recreation, health, environmental stewardship, conservation, economic development, and transportation.

##### *B. Trail Strategies*

1. **Identify the most important corridors and connections to enhance economic development potential and to serve population centers that have the greatest number of trail users – Define a destination trail that augments economic development and**

provides outdoor recreation by reaching beyond the local area to offer scenic qualities, diverse experiences, and access to natural resources, cultural, and historic sites.

2. **Maximize existing infrastructure** – Make optimal use of existing transportation, utility, and canal corridors that facilitate major connections and minimize implementation timeline.

**C. Maximize Potential**

1. **Provide a safe, accessible, and high quality experience for users** – Locate the trail corridor in appropriate and environmentally acceptable areas that support emergency response and evacuation.
2. **Design with the study area in mind** – Plan a trail corridor that fits within the character of the local area and is in harmony with the social, economic, cultural, and recreational opportunities and constraints.

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## 2.2 Purpose and Need Statement

The Purpose and Needs statement is the standard against which alternatives are developed, considered, and evaluated based upon a review of stakeholder interviews and public input. It is designed to set the framework for the development of alternatives that address the transportation need. The Purpose and Need Statement dictate the Guiding Principles and the resulting Measures of Success. The following Purpose and Need Statement reflects the fundamental reason for why the project is being considered and the rationale for how the project addresses the problems, issues, and concerns.

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### 2.2.1 Purpose

To provide safe local and regional bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian connectivity that enhances alternative transportation modes and supports opportunities for recreation, tourism, and economic development, by closing the approximately 20-mile gap with the South Sumter Connector Trail.

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### 2.2.2 Need

There are three primary issues that define the need for the South Sumter Connector Trail: local and regional connectivity, livability, and economic development. The need is reinforced by the following data and observations within the study area and surrounding region:

***Local and Regional Connectivity***

Local and regional connectivity is a major need for this proposed trail facility. The South Sumter Connector Trail is one of the largest missing segments in the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail, a 250-mile multiuse trail that spans Central Florida from Pinellas County at the Gulf of Mexico to Brevard County at the Atlantic Ocean. At the local level, this trail is needed to enhance local pedestrian, cyclist, and equestrian connectivity between two existing trail facilities including the Withlacoochee State Trail on the west and the Van Fleet State Trail on the east.



This regional trail is characterized by its interconnection to regional destinations and other statewide trails across nine counties in Central Florida. It is intended to provide long distances of travel for recreational users by connecting to major trail systems in the surrounding counties such as the Good Neighbor Trail in Hernando County and the South Lake Trail in Lake County. While these trails provide local transportation and recreational connectivity to local destinations, their primary purpose is to provide the backbone for the larger statewide trail system designed to attract users from other areas of the state or country.

The need for this trail has been consistently documented over the last few years. Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties are committed to the development and creation of comprehensive trail networks in the region. The South Sumter Connector Trail is identified as a needed project in the Lake-Sumter MPO's adopted List of Priority Projects. Support for the project can be found in Sumter County's Community Health Improvement Plan (2013), Unified Comprehensive Plan, and the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. Additionally, this trail will provide a connection to neighboring counties of Pasco and Hernando. Because of these inter-county connections, this trail is considered a keystone project within the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation's "Close the Gaps" campaign that seeks to direct resources to complete the state's highest priority trail projects. This segment is also a major priority within the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan being implemented by the Office of Greenways and Trails.

### *Livability*

A significant portion of the study area is adjacent to rural communities that can be classified as "transportation disadvantaged". Transportation disadvantaged individuals generally have limited access to automobiles (either due to the inability to own or drive a vehicle) and are usually reliant on transit, walking, or bicycling to meet their travel needs. The proposed trail is needed to enhance multimodal solutions for the region and accommodate future growth by connecting to places that can be reached by pedestrians, cyclists, and even equestrians. These facilities balance multimodal transportation systems that encourage increased mobility options and provides for efficient transportation alternatives while minimizing environmental impacts. Among the factors that influence livability are the region's ability to tie the quality and location of transportation facilities to broader opportunities such as access to jobs and natural resources, affordable housing, quality schools, and safe streets. All of these elements contribute to the sense of place, belonging, and ultimately the vitality of an area.

### *Economic Development*

Trails and greenways are increasingly an economic engine for communities in Florida. By combining regional trails together into larger systems, there is great potential to advance the area's and the state's economic development strategy. These connections are valuable resources for neighborhood, municipal, and regional connectivity. The proposed trail particularly advances several strategies including Quality of Life & Quality Places and Infrastructure & Growth Leadership that make up the Florida Five Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development. Notable among these is the creation of "vibrant, safe, and healthy communities that attract workers, businesses, residents, and visitors."



## 2.3 Measures of Success

Evaluation measures were designed to assess the feasibility of the conceptual alignments proposed for the South Sumter Connector Trail. The criteria developed for the Measures of Success is driven by the Guiding Principles and Purpose and Need Statement established for this project. They were used as performance measures to ensure the goals and objectives of this project were met. Through the following evaluation measures listed in Table 1, the FDOT Study Team can determine whether the potential trail alternatives align with the project objectives to make informed decisions on the recommended corridor.

Table 1: Evaluation Measures

Guiding Principles	Objectives	Measures of Success
A1	Support from agency partners	Letter of support / endorsement of plan
A2	Provide multiple opportunities for stakeholder input throughout the study	Widely advertise public meetings in a timely manner in a conveniently located and accessible facility for 75% of the participants or invitees
	Commitment from funding partners	Committed dollars / receive executed resolutions of support after the final deliverable
B1	Identify potential assets and access to nearby residential areas, economic development activities, schools, recreational areas, and other planned or existing trails	Quantify interregional connections to residential and commercial hubs with access to local attractions
		Locate trail near potential assets
B2	Prioritize improvements to maximize value and minimize maintenance costs and implementation timeframe	Lower cost and implementation timeframes = High priority
C1	Identify opportunities to reduce conflict points among motorists and trail users and support emergency response evacuations	Accommodations for safe trail user movements along the trail corridor that provide access to emergency responders
	Plan and design trail corridor to be safe and secure for all users and adjacent property owners	Plan treatment elements that enhance public safety and segregate trail users from private property

# 3

## Existing Conditions

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### 3.1 Initial Corridors Assessment

As described in Chapter 1, the initial corridors were derived from the efforts of the FGTF and agency partners to identify potential trail alignments to complete the Sumter Gap. The abandoned rail beds previously operated by CSX Transportation (CSX) were recognized as the initial corridors for this study due to the potential of transforming once-derelict properties into vibrant community assets. The abandoned railroad bed would be a logical starting point, as it could reduce the costs associated with right of way acquisition and construction. This chapter provides an existing conditions analysis for the initial northern and southern corridor of the Sumter County Gap Study. The assessment provided key insights into the study area that helped in the development of alternatives.

The primary transportation corridors in the study area are SR 50, I-75, US 301, SR 471, and the CSX S-line. SR 50 is a regionally significant corridor, as it is the only major roadway that provides east-west connectivity to downtown Orlando. Florida's Freight Backbone, I-75, is an integral part of the National Highway System, connecting major markets from South Florida, through Atlanta, into the Midwest and Great Lakes Region, and into Canada. US 301 is a critical north-south freight corridor that runs parallel to the CSX S-line. The CSX rail line, mainly serving freight traffic, has statewide significance as a Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) Rail Corridor.

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#### 3.1.1 Southern Alignment

As illustrated in Figure 1, the initial southern alignment runs parallel to SR 575 in Pasco County for 2.5 miles, crossing US 98, US 301, and the active CSX S-Line. It continues northeast through the Richloam Wildlife Management Area (WMA), crossing the Withlacoochee River. It reconnects to SR 50 near SR 471, and continues running parallel to SR 50 and C-772 for approximately 4.85 miles before terminating at the SLT.

Initial concerns raised by local stakeholders, including the Florida Forest Service (FFS), involved the segment of the alignment traveling through the Richloam WMA, a dog hunting ground. Dog hunting is considered more uncontrolled than still hunting, and could potentially be an unsafe environment for trail users and hunters. The FFS cited safety, trail misuse, and trail repairs as potential issues with locating the trail through the Richloam WMA. Additionally, there were concerns about emergency

response access given the remoteness and maneuverability given the environmental constraints of this section of the trail.

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### 3.1.2 Northern Alignment

As illustrated in Figure 1, the initial northern alignment travels east, from the proposed terminus of the GNT, toward C-683, continuing east under the I-75 overpass. It travels northeast to connect to C-673, continues east parallel to C-673, crosses the US 301 / CSX S-Line corridor, and continues northeast connecting to C-478. The alignment then travels parallel along C-478, continues east through the City of Webster along Central Avenue, exits the city boundaries and continues northeast toward the City of Center Hill. It then heads southeast from Ashley Lane for approximately 4.65 miles, ending at VFST trailhead on SR 50.

Local stakeholders indicated the route traveled through significant mining operations in the area between the City of Center Hill and SR 50. Several major landowners were also concerned about the alignment traveling adjacent to or through their property. The route travels approximately 1.50 miles through the Croom WMA on the west end of the alignment. However, the Croom WMA has more stringent limits on dog hunting, particularly in the section where the trail would be located.

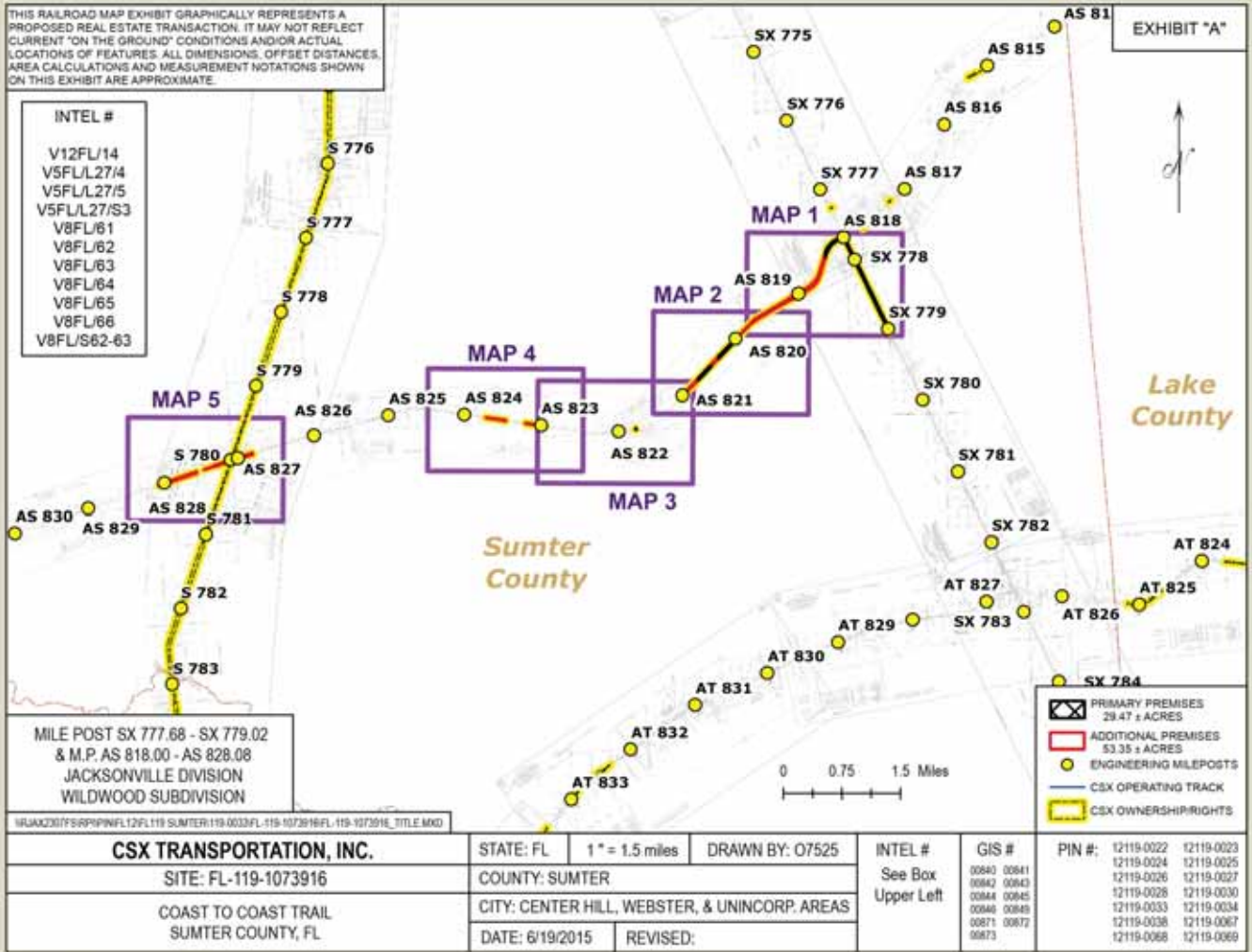
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### 3.1.3 Abandoned Railroad Bed

The original northern and southern alignments were located along the abandoned railroad bed previously operated by CSX. Property appraiser data (2014) for Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties were evaluated, and it was determined that CSX parcels accounted for approximately 31% and 14% of the northern and southern alignments, respectively. The abandoned railroad bed was considered a logical starting point for the alignments, as it could reduce the costs associated with right of way (R/W) acquisition and construction.

In October 2015, CSX completed an Internal Records Audit which evaluated 75 acres of the abandoned railroad bed. The audit determined that only 29.5 acres were still under CSX ownership. Upon abandonment of common carrier obligations in 1978 and 1979, title reverted from CSX to the adjacent property owners. After further analysis of available right of way, it was determined that only 11 percent and 4 percent of the northern and southern alignments, respectively, were still under CSX ownership. Figure 3 through Figure 8 are maps provided by CSX illustrating current CSX ownership along the northern and southern alignments.

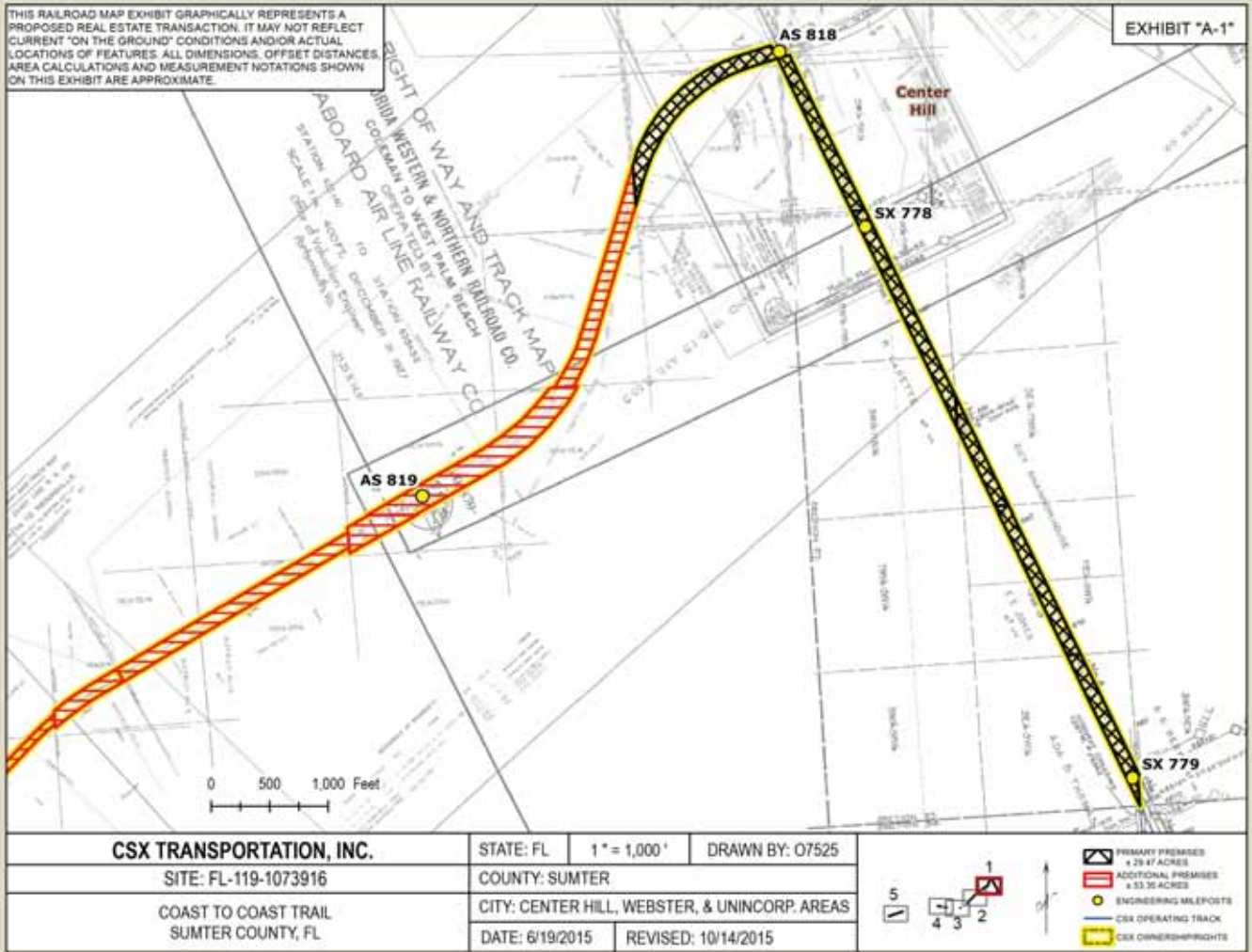
In the CSX maps, the black and yellow outline represents existing CSX ownership as determined by the CSX Internal Records Audit. The red and yellow outline indicates where the title of the railroad bed has since reverted to adjacent property owners. The initial northern alignment travels east from Engineering Milepost AS 830 to AS 818, then travels south before terminating at SX 783. The initial southern alignment is not shown entirely, but travels northeast from Engineering Milepost AT 833 to its terminus at AT 827. The active CSX S-Line, which parallels US 301 for much of the study area, is

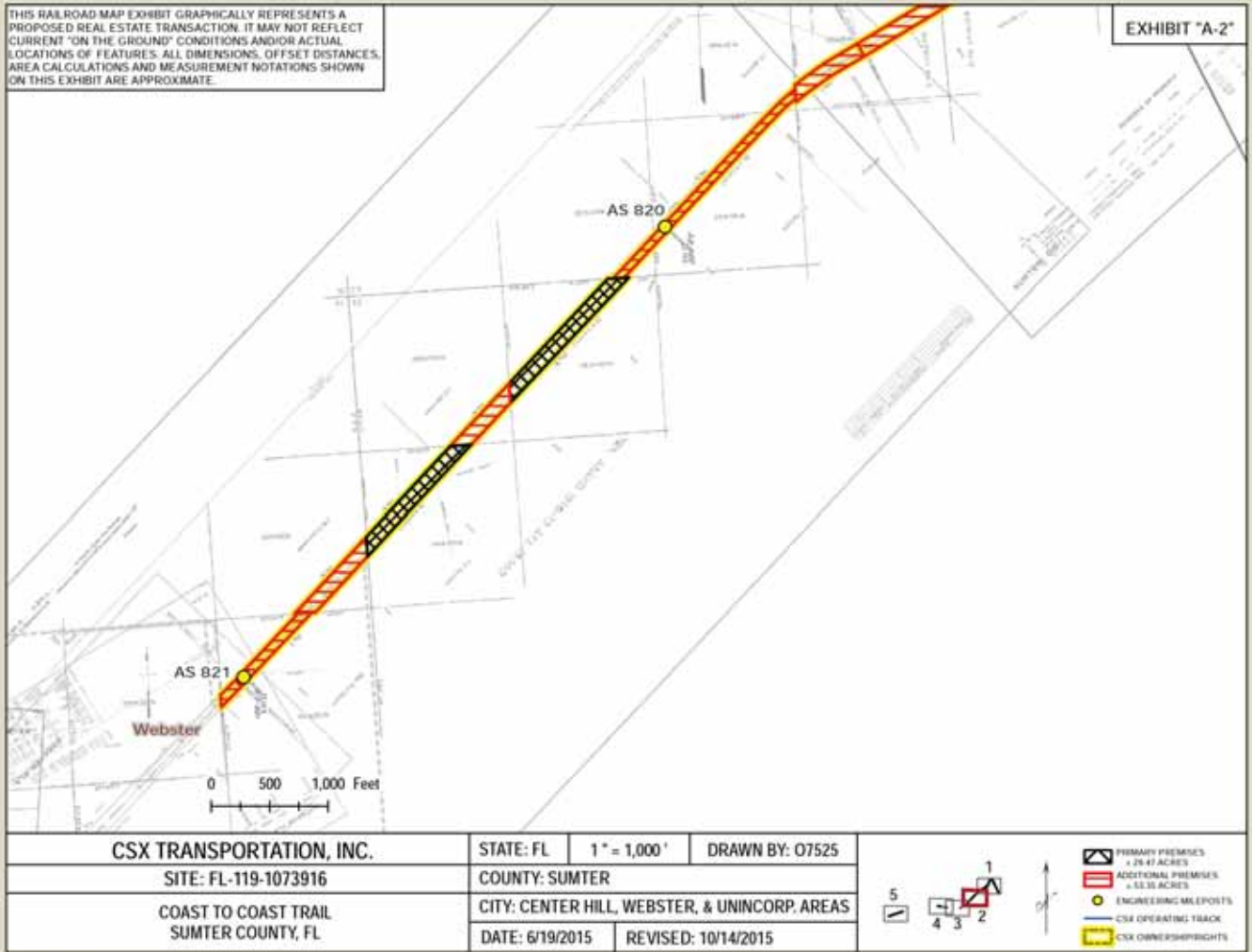


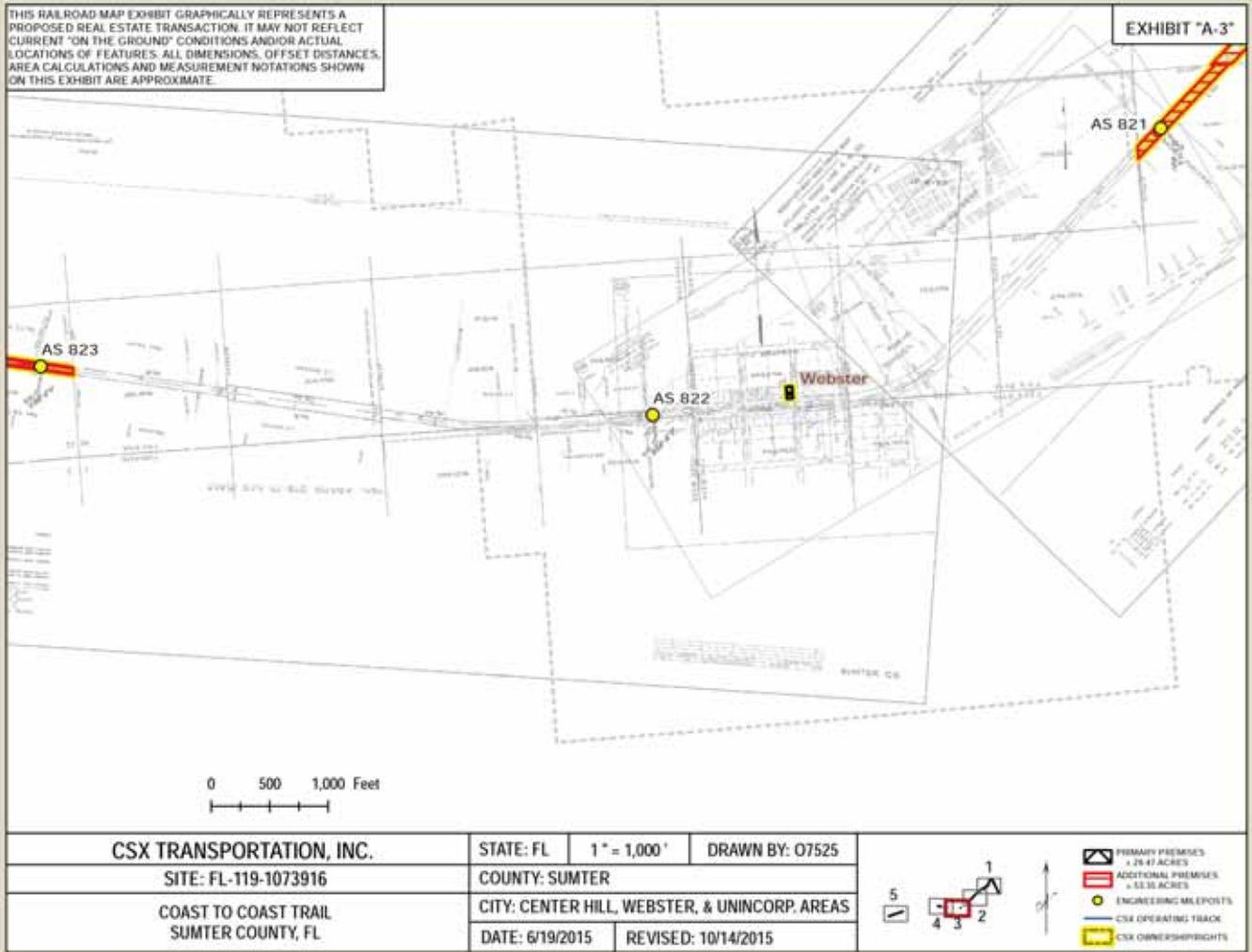
# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 3  
 CSX Internal Records Audit Title Sheet

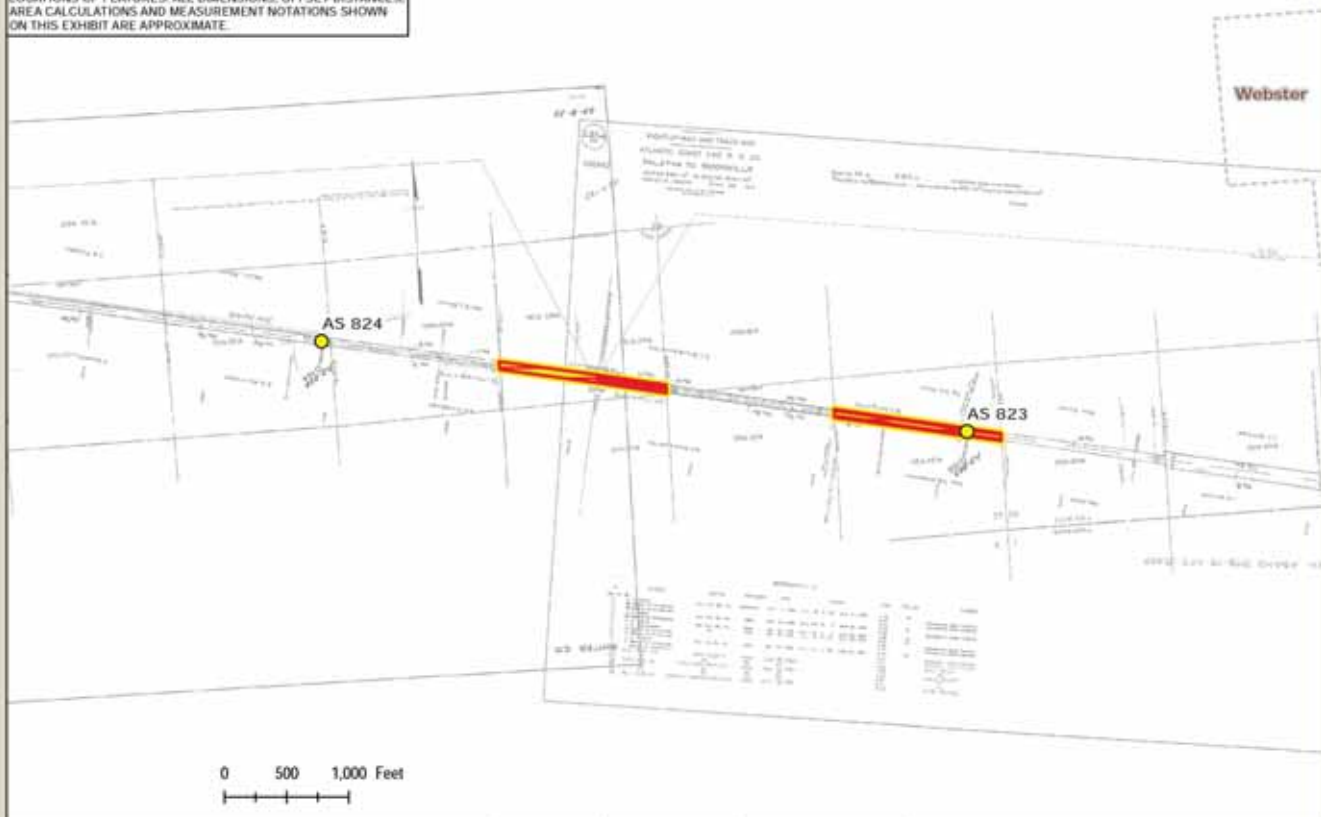






THIS RAILROAD MAP EXHIBIT GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTS A PROPOSED REAL ESTATE TRANSACTION. IT MAY NOT REFLECT CURRENT "ON THE GROUND" CONDITIONS AND/OR ACTUAL LOCATIONS OF FEATURES. ALL DIMENSIONS, OFFSET DISTANCES, AREA CALCULATIONS AND MEASUREMENT NOTATIONS SHOWN ON THIS EXHIBIT ARE APPROXIMATE.

EXHIBIT "A-4"



CSX TRANSPORTATION, INC.	STATE: FL	1" = 1,000'	DRAWN BY: 07525
SITE: FL-119-1073916	COUNTY: SUMTER		
COAST TO COAST TRAIL SUMTER COUNTY, FL	CITY: CENTER HILL, WEBSTER, & UNINCORP. AREAS		
	DATE: 6/19/2015	REVISED: 10/14/2015	



# Sumter County Gap Study

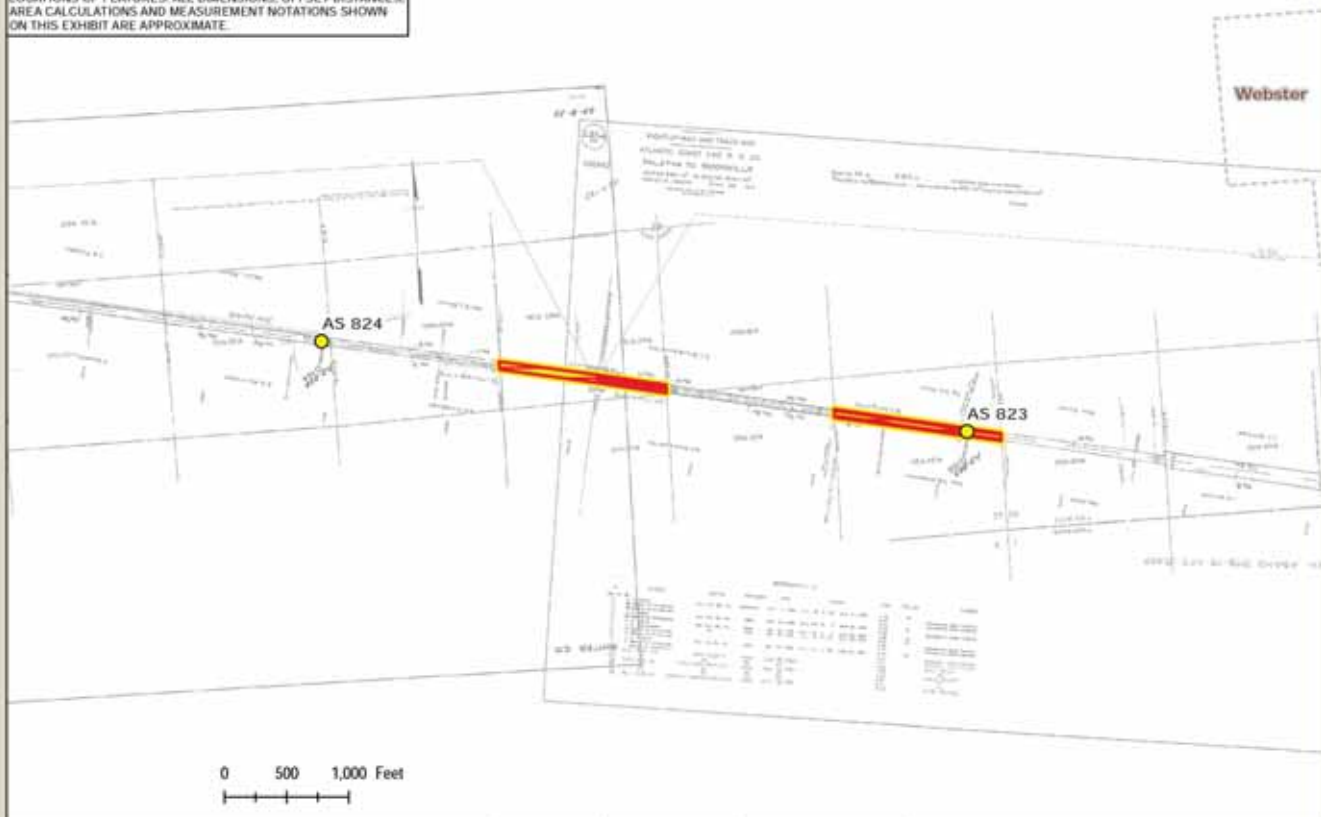
## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 7  
CSX Internal Records Audit Exhibit A4



THIS RAILROAD MAP EXHIBIT GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTS A PROPOSED REAL ESTATE TRANSACTION. IT MAY NOT REFLECT CURRENT "ON THE GROUND" CONDITIONS AND/OR ACTUAL LOCATIONS OF FEATURES. ALL DIMENSIONS, OFFSET DISTANCES, AREA CALCULATIONS AND MEASUREMENT NOTATIONS SHOWN ON THIS EXHIBIT ARE APPROXIMATE.

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COAST TO COAST TRAIL SUMTER COUNTY, FL	CITY: CENTER HILL, WEBSTER, & UNINCORP. AREAS		
	DATE: 6/19/2015	REVISED: 10/14/2015	



## Sumter County Gap Study

### Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 8  
CSX Internal Records Audit Exhibit A5

the continuous north-south, yellow and black outline shown in the western half of Figure 3, as well as in Figure 8.

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### 3.1.4 Trail User Conflict

With the expansion of multiuse trails in Florida, conflict and the potential for conflict between trail users has also increased. Historically, wildlife management areas have been used for hunting and fishing, however, the state's dramatic growth has increased the need for additional recreational opportunities on managed lands. As such, it is important to understand the relative compatibility of different recreation uses and how these activities interact.

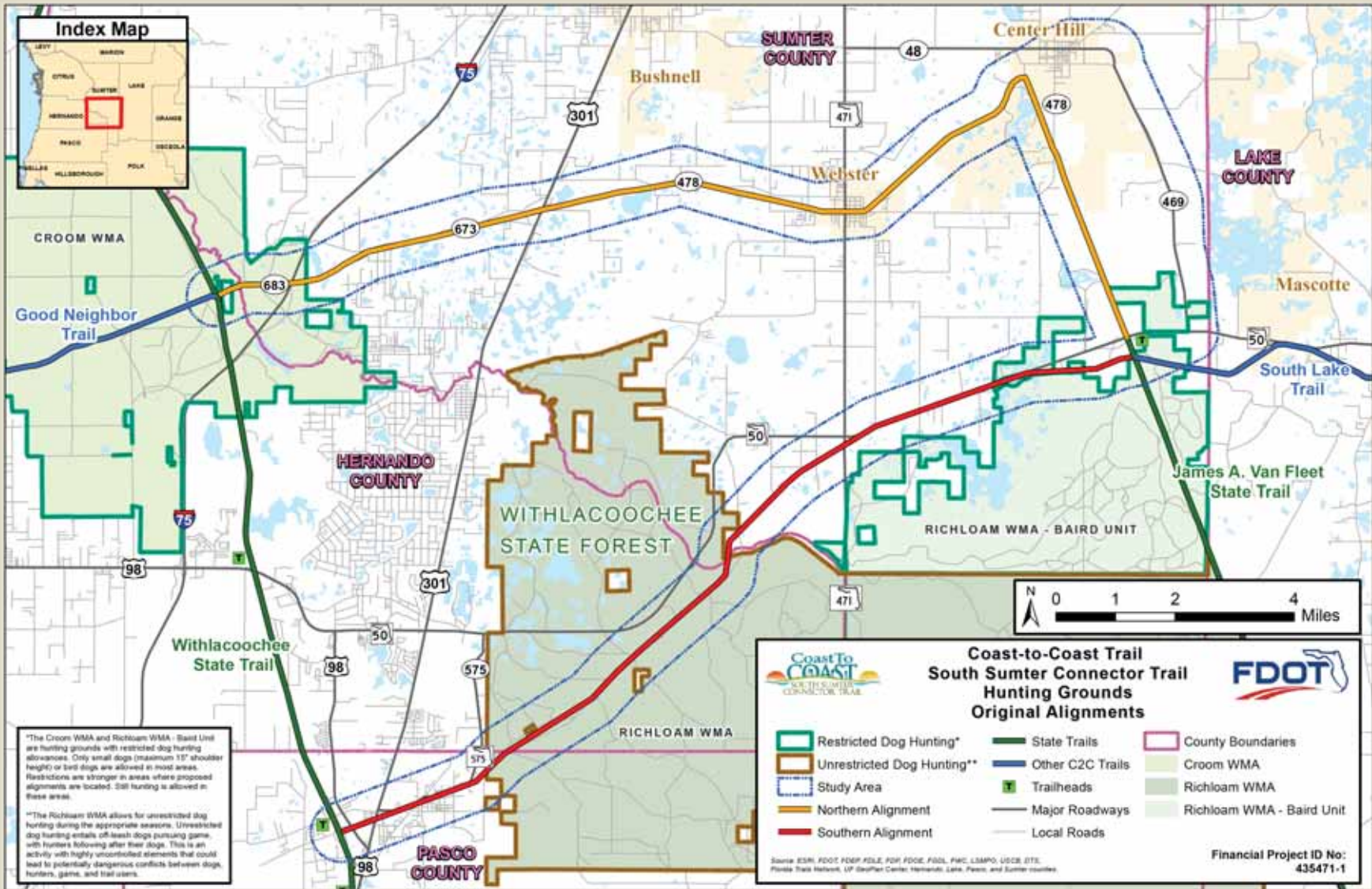
According to the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan<sup>2</sup>, activities most frequently cited as involved in some form of conflict include hunting. Conflict among recreationalists with dogs was found to occur in a majority of the states while conflict between trail use and hunting occur in almost half of the state park systems. The degree of conflict related to hunting depends on unique factors regarding the form of hunting and recreation participants in the area.

In the past, and to this day by some, Sumter County is nicknamed "Hog County" most likely because it is home to a large population of wild hogs. Hog hunting is still a favorite pastime of locals in the more rural portions of the county. As shown in Figure 9, the study area traverses three Wildlife Management Areas (WMA). Over six miles of the southern alignment traverses through the Richloam WMA and the Richloam WMA – Baird Unit. Approximately two miles of the northern alignment fall within the Croom WMA. Some of the hunting rules for the three WMAs of interest to this Corridor Planning Study include the following:

- Open to public recreational access year round;
- A marked footpath called the Florida Trail traverses the area. This trail is open to hikers throughout the year;
- Persons participating in hunting must wear a fluorescent-orange material as an outer garment;
- Hunting equipment may not be taken out to the WMA until after 8 a.m. the day before the opening season and shall be removed by 6 p.m. one day after the end of the season;
- Hunting at night with a gun is prohibited;
- Most game may be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise until one-half hour after sunset (exceptions for each season); and
- Florida Forest Service management includes prescribed burning and timber management most months of the year, including hunting season. Area users should contact the Florida Forest Service for more information and location of burn areas.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2005). *Compatibility and Conflict in Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation*.



The following general area laws and regulations apply to the three WMAs within the study area:

### Richloam WMA<sup>3</sup>

- Hunting camps require a permit for reserved camping;
- A hunting license is not required for the take of wild hog;
- Dogs may be used to pursue deer and wild hogs from ½ hour before sunrise until ½ hour after sunset only;
- Hunting with archery equipment or guns is prohibited on or from rights of way of all paved roads, Clay Sink Road or Laccochee Road;
- Hunting deer with dogs is allowed only during general gun season (November 21 – January 17);
- Archery season is from October 15 – November 13;
- General gun season is from November 19 – January 15;
- Raccoon season is from November 21 – March 1; and
- Wild Hog-Dog season is from April 28 – April 30.

### Richloam WMA – Baird Unit<sup>4</sup>

- Hunting with dogs is prohibited, except bird dogs and retrievers are allowed during the small game season;
- Archery season is from October 29 – November 1, November 2 – 6 and 7 – 13;
- General gun season is from January 16 – 19 and 20 – 24; and
- Small game season is from February 4 – March 5.

### Croom WMA<sup>5</sup>

- Hunting deer or wild hog with dogs is prohibited;
- Hunting with dogs is prohibited, except small game may be hunted with bird dogs or dogs with a shoulder height of 15 inches or less during the small game season, and dogs of any size are allowed during the fox, raccoon, opossum, and bobcat season;
  - Dogs are prohibited within the Croom Motorcycle Area and only bird dogs are allowed north of Croom Road;
- Hunting is prohibited on the WST;
- Horses may be ridden only on open named or numbered roads, or designated horse trails;
- Hunting camps require a permit for reserved camping;
- Fox, raccoon, opossum, and bobcat season is from December 15 – March 12. Pursuit with dogs is only allowed south of Croom Road and west of Croom Rital Road;
- General gun season is from November 5 – 27; and
- Small game season is from December 5 – March 5.

<sup>3</sup> MyFWC.com (2016). Regulations Summary and Area Map: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/ne/richloam/>

<sup>4</sup> MyFWC.com (2016). Regulations Summary and Area Map: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/ne/baird-unit/>

<sup>5</sup> MyFWC.com (2016). Regulations Summary and Area Map: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. <http://myfwc.com/hunting/wma-brochures/sw/croom/>

## 3.2 Community Characteristics

### 3.2.1 Communities

The study area of the Sumter County Gap Study includes the following communities:

- City of Center Hill, Sumter County (Incorporated)
- City of Webster, Sumter County (Incorporated)
- Linden, Sumter County (Unincorporated)
- Mabel, Sumter County (Unincorporated)
- Tarrytown, Sumter County (Unincorporated)
- Ridge Manor, Hernando County (Census-Designated Place)
- Lacochee, Pasco County (Census-Designated Place)
- Trilby, Pasco County (Census-Designated Place)

An overview of the study area population and demographics is provided in Table 2 based on the US 2013 American Community Survey (ACS).<sup>6</sup> The data presented is based on abutting Census Tracts. Population density is approximately 0.28 persons per acre with an average household size of 2.62 persons per household, with a housing density of 0.058 per acre. The median age is 42 years old.

**Table 2: Population Characteristics**

Population	Study Area
<b>Total Population</b>	3,629
<b>Population Density (Persons per Acre)</b>	0.28
<b>Total Households</b>	1,347
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.62
<b>Household Density (Households per Acre)</b>	0.058
<b>Median Age</b>	42
<b>Population Over 65</b>	18.46%
<b>Male</b>	46.3 %
<b>Female</b>	53.7%

Table 3 provides an overview of the socioeconomic characteristics. In the study area, the median household income is \$31,416, and 29 percent of the households are below the poverty line. Owner-occupied units account for 59 percent of the total housing units, and 18 percent are renter-occupied.

<sup>6</sup> At the time the existing conditions analysis was conducted, 2013 ACS data was the most current data available.

The remaining 23 percent of housing units in the study area are vacant. Approximately 3 percent of the households have no vehicle available.

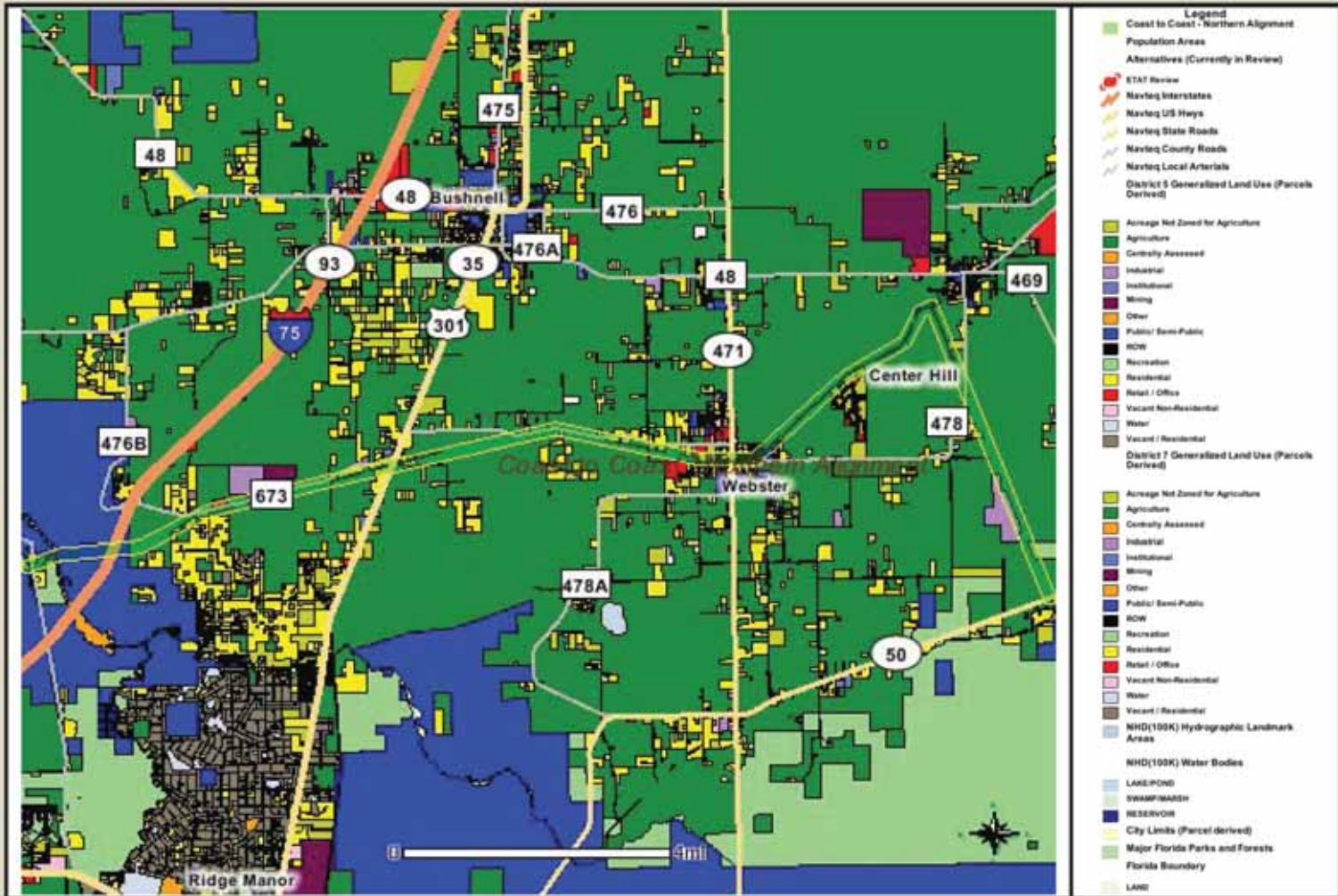
**Table 3: Socioeconomic Characteristics**

Population	Study Area
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$31,416
<b>Households Below Poverty Level</b>	29.1%
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	338
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	58.8%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	18.0%
<b>Vacant</b>	23.2%
<b>Households with No Vehicles</b>	2.95%
<b>Total Population</b>	783
<b>White</b>	83.9%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	2.5%
<b>Not Hispanic or Latino</b>	81.4%
<b>Black or African American</b>	12.0%
<b>Asian</b>	0.5%
<b>Other</b>	3.6%

### 3.2.2 Existing Land Use

The communities in this region are rural/agrarian in character. Agriculture and cattle-raising are major industries within the study area. This character is prominent along many State and County roadways, especially in Sumter County. There are also mining and industrial uses throughout the study area.

Adjacent land uses must be considered both for their effect on the trail as well as the trail's effect on the land uses. To analyze the compatibility of implementing a multiuse trail within the existing land use of Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties, as well as the cities of Center Hill and Webster, the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) Area of Influence Tool was used to evaluate the conditions in the study area. Figure 10 and Figure 11 show the existing land uses adjacent to the initial northern and southern alignments, respectively. The maps highlight the three WMAs in the study area. This land use type is characterized as public / semi-public. The existing land uses are derived from parcels based on 2014 data.



**etdm**  
Efficient Transportation Decision Making

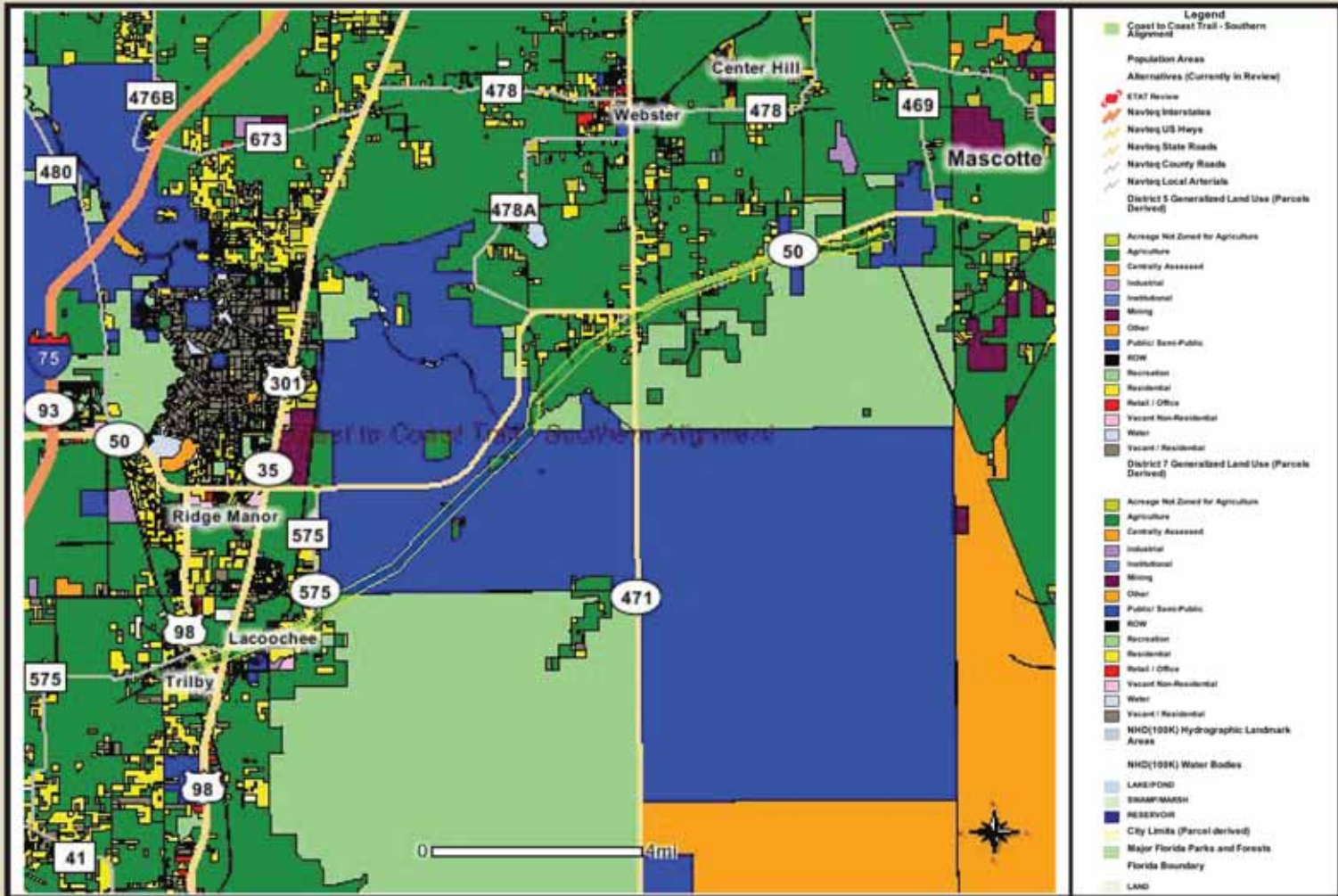
**est**  
Environmental Screening Tool



# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 10  
Existing Land Use - Northern Alignment



**etdm**  
Efficient Transportation Decision Making

**est**  
Environmental Screening Tool



# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 1.1  
Existing Land Use - Southern Alignment



Agriculture is the predominant land use along the northern alignment followed by retail/office, mining, and recreation. Approximately 50 percent of the southern alignment is located within public lands.

The segment of the northern alignment from the western terminus at GNT to I-75 is made up of primarily public and conservation land uses. The segment running along C-673 from I-75 to US 301 is adjacent to agricultural, industrial, and mining land uses. For much of the northern alignment from US 301 to Center Hill, the proposed alignment traverses through agricultural and residential land uses.

The segment of the southern alignment from the western terminus in Trilby along SR 575 to the Hernando County line travels through residential land uses. The segment from the county line to SR 471 runs through a large conservation land use, the Richloam WMA. The remaining segment of the southern alignment from SR 471 to the SLT largely parallels SR 50 and runs through agricultural, residential, and recreational land uses.

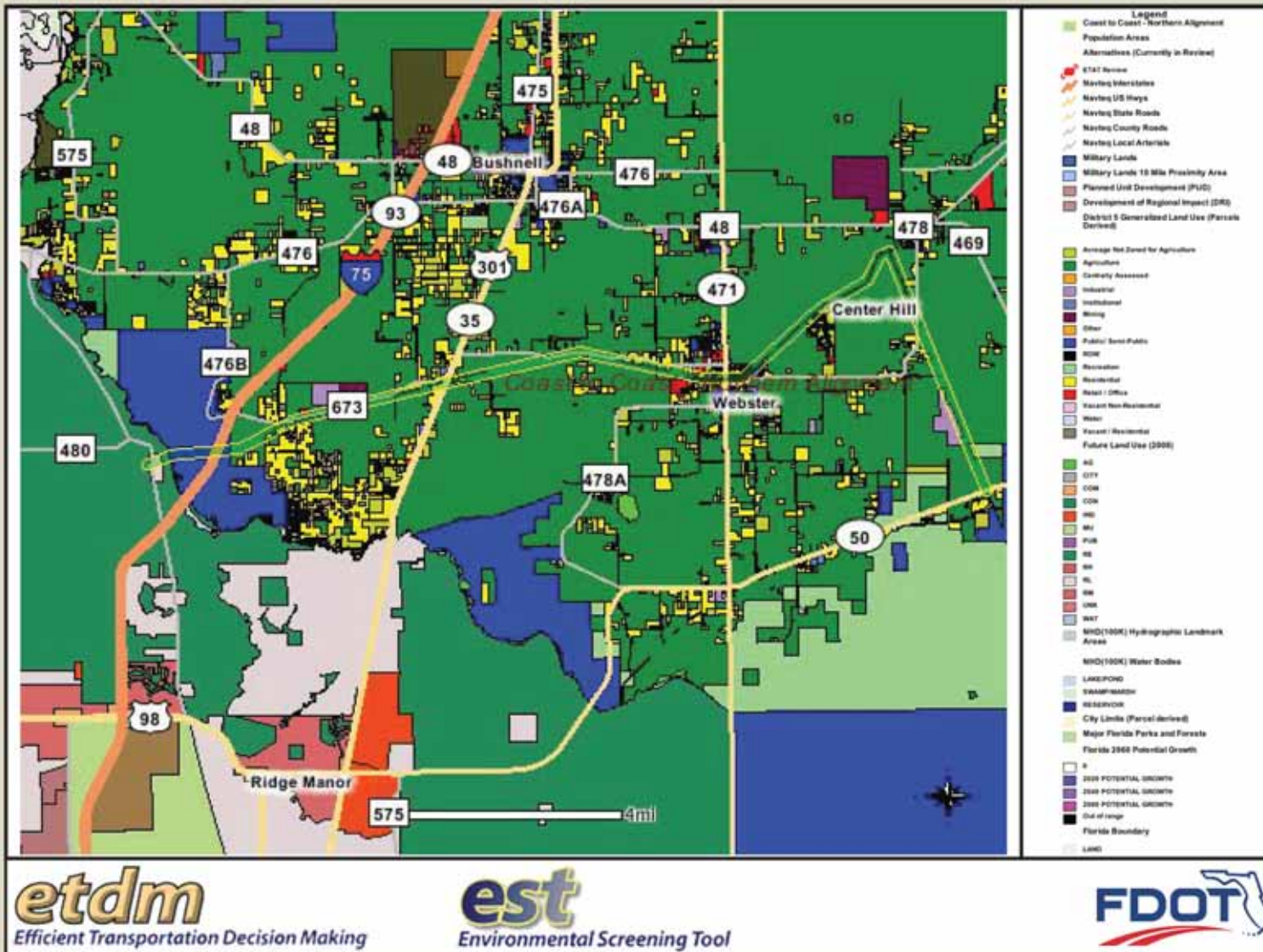
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### 3.2.3 Future Land Use

To analyze the compatibility of a multiuse trail with the future land use of Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties, as well as the cities of Center Hill and Webster, the EST tool provided in the Efficient Transportation Decision-Making (ETDM) suite was used. Future Land Use is needed in order to “protect and enhance the quality of life by encouraging the most appropriate use of land and resources consistent with the public interest by directing development to those areas with the capacity to accommodate growth in an economic and environmentally acceptable manner” (Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan, *Future Land Use Element*).

Figure 12 and Figure 13 illustrate the Future Land Use (2008) for the areas around the northern and southern alignment, respectively. Future Land Use classifications are consistent with the existing land uses which include agriculture, commercial, conservation, industrial, mixed use, and residential. The predominant future land use for the study area is agriculture, followed by residential (low), conservation, and residential (medium).

There are several specific future land uses within the study area that should be noted. The segment of the northern alignment from Center Hill to SR 50 is adjacent to an industrial future land use, which is anticipated to be another mining operation located in the area. The segment of the southern alignment in Pasco County that runs along SR 575 to the western terminus at GNT includes residential and some industrial future land uses. In addition, agricultural land uses are anticipated further south of the proposed southern alignment within Pasco County.



**etdm**  
Efficient Transportation Decision Making

**est**  
Environmental Screening Tool

**FDOT**

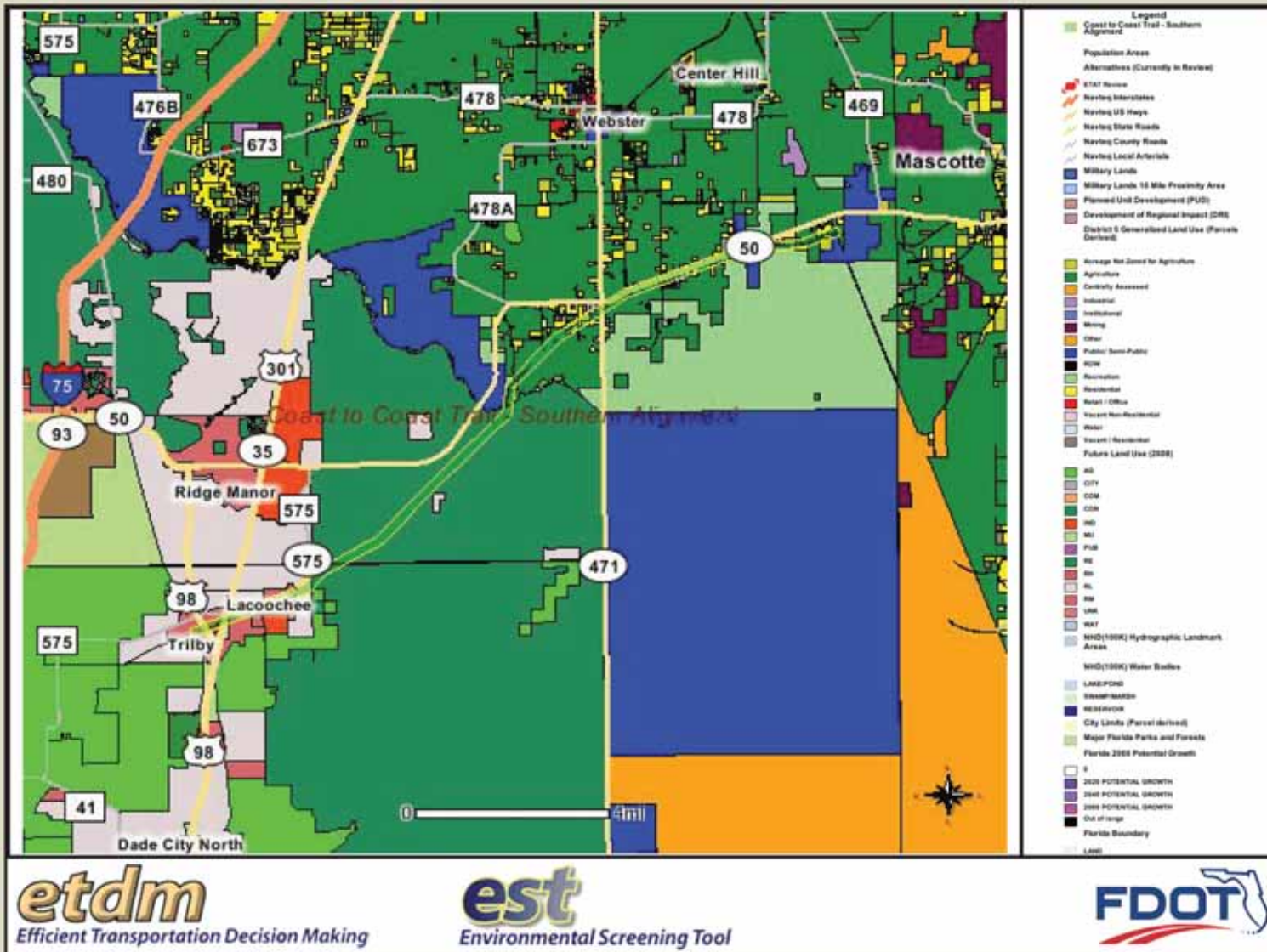
**FDOT**

**Coast To Coast**  
SOUTH SUMTER  
CONNECTOR TRAIL

# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 12  
Future Land Use - Northern Alignment



**etdm**  
Efficient Transportation Decision Making

**est**  
Environmental Screening Tool

**FDOT**

**FDOT**

**Coast To Coast**  
SOUTH SUMMER CONNECTOR TRAIL

# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 13  
Future Land Use - Southern Alignment

### 3.3 Environmental Character

The existing environmental information for the study area was extracted from Geographic Information System (GIS) datasets maintained by the Florida Geographic Data Library (FGDL). For purposes of this environmental analysis, a half-mile buffer around the initial alignments and C-469 was used for the study area.

The following were examined as part of this review:

- Wetlands
- Floodplains
- Threatened and Endangered Species
- Soils
- Vegetative Communities
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Social Resources

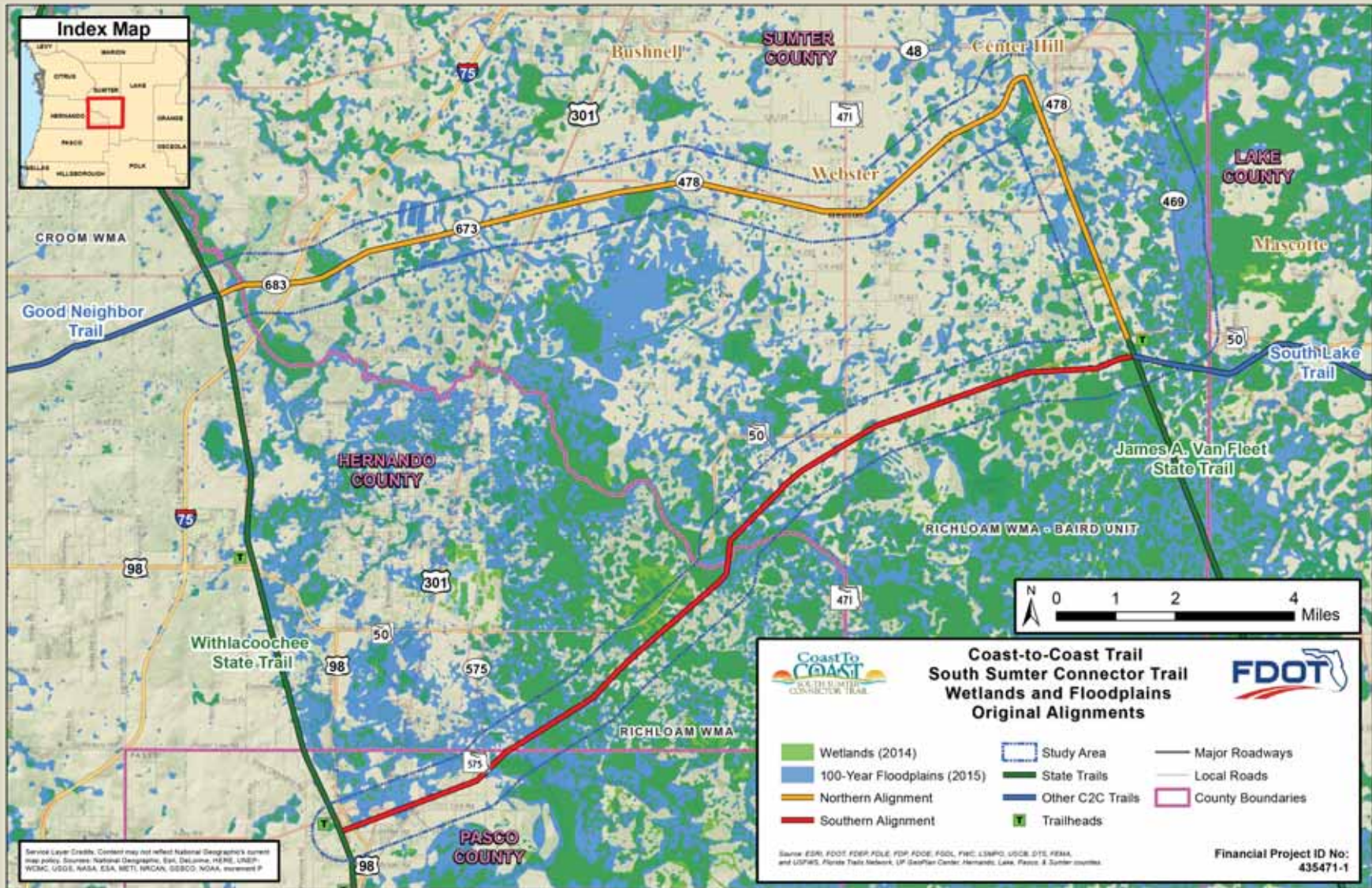
#### 3.3.1 Wetlands

The wetlands analysis used geospatial data (2011) made available from the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD). The Withlacoochee River, the Little Withlacoochee, and Jumper Creek are designated as Outstanding Florida Waters. Figure 14 illustrates the wetland locations within the study area. The types of wetlands found include Swamp, Vegetated Non-Forested, Hardwood Forests, and Mixed Forests.

As Table 4 shows, nearly three (3) miles of the initial southern alignment is located within wetlands, and nearly one (1) mile of the initial northern alignment is located within wetlands.

**Table 4: Wetland Impact**

Alignments - Wetlands	
<b>Northern Alignment</b>	
Portion within Wetlands (miles)	0.922
Total Length of Alignment (miles)	19.55
<b>Percent of Total Miles</b>	<b>4.71%</b>
<b>Southern Alignment</b>	
Portion within Wetlands (miles)	2.895
Total Length of Alignment (miles)	16.21
<b>Percent of Total Miles</b>	<b>17.86%</b>



### 3.3.2 Floodplains

The floodplains were identified using the latest FEMA Flood Rate Insurance maps and the 100-year flood plain localities. As Table 5 shows, the initial northern alignment runs through floodplains for approximately 5.50 miles, whereas the initial southern alignment runs through floodplains for approximately 6.75 miles. Figure 14 illustrates the floodplains within the study area.

Table 5: Floodplain Impact

Alignments - Floodplains	
<b>Northern Alignment</b>	
Portion within Floodplains (miles)	5.428
Total Length of Alignment (miles)	19.55
<b>Percent of Total Miles</b>	<b>27.76%</b>
<b>Southern Alignment</b>	
Portion within Floodplains (miles)	6.758
Total Length of Alignment (miles)	16.21
<b>Percent of Total Miles</b>	<b>41.69%</b>

### 3.3.3 Section 4(f)

Section 4(f) properties are publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife / waterfowl refuges, and public or private historical sites having jurisdiction over the resource. Under Section 4(f), an operating administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) may not approve a project that uses protected properties unless there are no prudent feasible alternatives and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such properties. Various trail segments impact existing Section 4(f) lands. While minimal impacts are anticipated for the northern corridor along the segment in the Croom WMA, moderate / high impacts are expected to occur along the southern corridor.

### 3.3.4 Threatened and Endangered Species

The FDOT Study Team conducted reviews of the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) and the geospatial data from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) identified critical habitat and/or consultation areas for threatened or endangered species. Consultation areas, identified by USFWS, encompass all areas where populations are known to exist.

Current data layers indicate the potential for wading bird colonies and presence of bald eagle nests within the study area; however, this has not been verified through field review. While the bald eagle database maintained by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) indicates the presence of nest territories that can restrict development, all potential nest locations are more than 660' away from proposed trail alignments. Additionally, a geospatial dataset from 1993 indicates that the Florida scrubjay, a Threatened Species, is also located within the study area.

Geospatial data was unavailable for the eastern indigo snake. However, the species is known to inhabit pine forests, hardwood hammocks, scrub and other uplands, as well as a variety of wetland habitats.<sup>7</sup> The eastern indigo snake has been listed as a Threatened Species by the USFWS, and is common to Florida and the southeast region of the United States. While geospatial data is unavailable for this species, it is possible that the eastern indigo snake is present within the project study area.

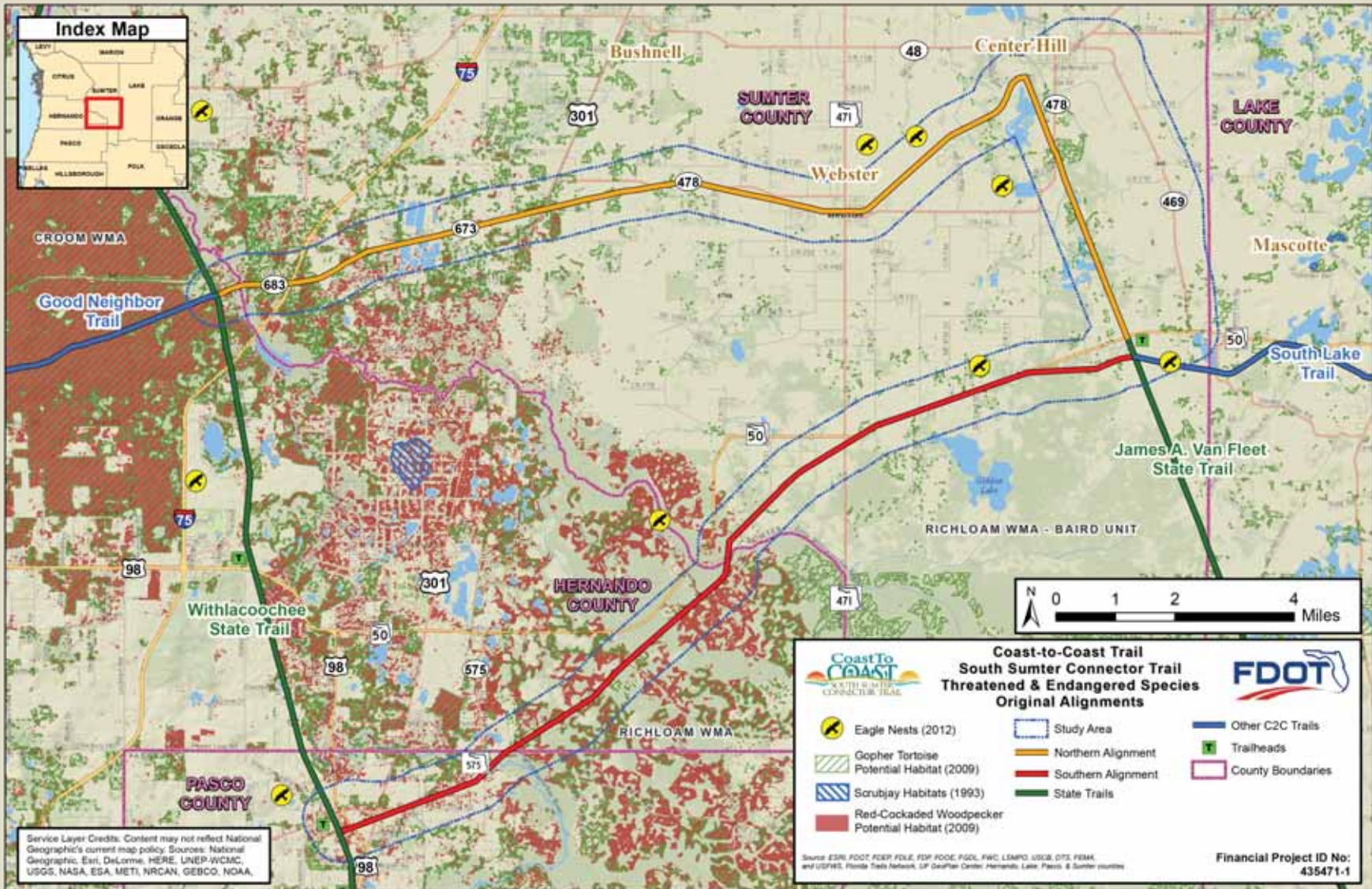
Other species for which the FWC database (2009) revealed potential habitats included the red-cockaded woodpecker (state and federal) and gopher tortoise (state). Further consideration and field exploration will be required as part of future project phases to further assess these habitats and confirm presence of listed species. The threatened and endangered species consultation areas and/or critical habitats identified through the study efforts are also summarized in Table 6 and shown in Figure 15.

**Table 6: Summary of Wildlife and Habitat**

Wildlife and Habitat	Abutting Buffer	One-Mile Buffer	Study Area
Wading Bird Colony			
Bald Eagle Nest			
Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Potential Habitat	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gopher Tortoise Potential Habitat			
Florida Scrubjays			
Eastern Indigo Snake			

Source: US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), 2011; Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI), 2009; Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, Steve A. and McGarrity, Monica E (2013). 'Black Snakes': Identification and Ecology. Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/uw251>





### 3.3.5 Soils

Soil conditions were inventoried within the study area using data provided by the National Resources Conservation Service. The soils were examined at a buffer distance within one-half mile of the project corridor. Muck soils, which are typically more difficult to construct upon, were identified. Figure 16 presents the location of muck soils within the study area.

### 3.3.6 Vegetative Communities

In 2006, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI) completed a natural community mapping project. Citrus Tract acreage was not included in the FNAI inventory. Current community type maps have been created utilizing WSF Forest Inventory data and FNAI's "Guide to the Natural Communities of Florida" 2010 Edition. The community types include sandhill, basin swamp, mesic hammock, basin marsh, dome swamp, floodplain swamp, depression marsh, wet prairie, scrub, scrubby flatwoods, estuarine tidal marsh, upland hardwood forest, wet flatwoods, xeric hammock, sandhill upland lake, and salt marsh.

The predominant natural community within the study area is sandhill, followed by mesic flatwoods and basin swamp.

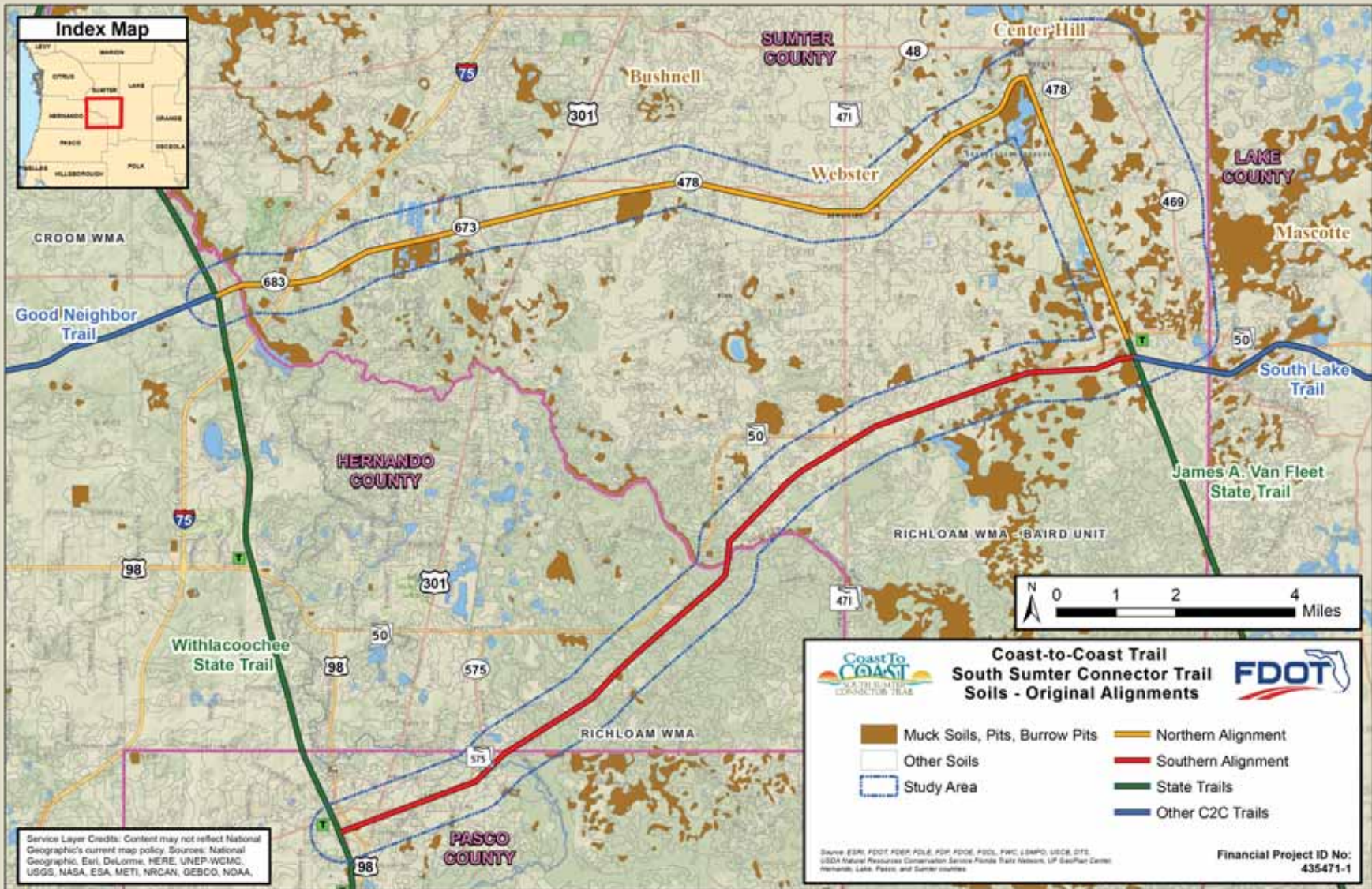
### 3.3.7 Historic and Cultural Resources

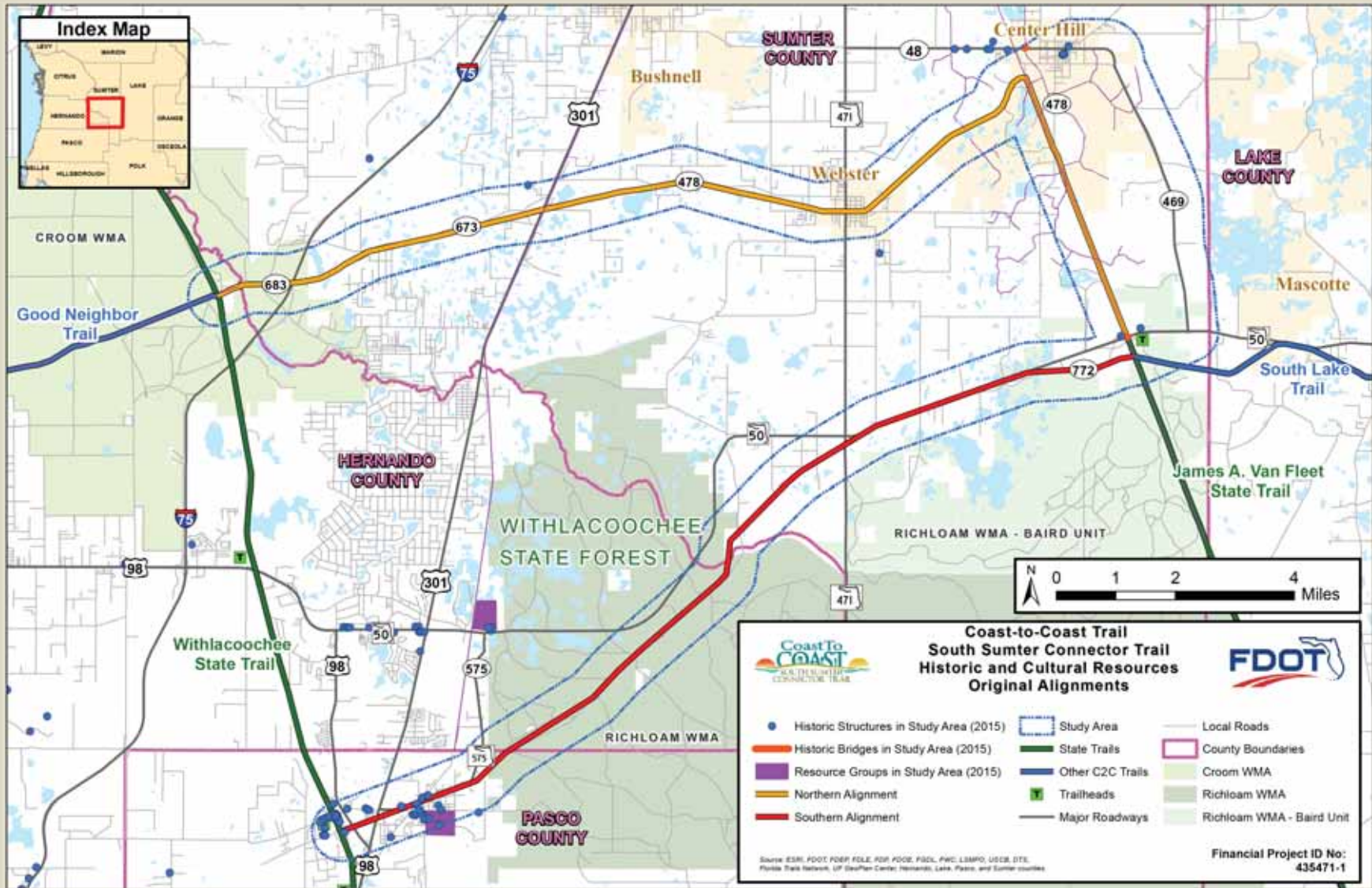
Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) provides a general process for cultural resource assessments and requires that historic and archaeological resources be considered in project planning for federally funded or permitted projects. Cultural resources or "historic properties" include any "prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)."

Any historic resources that are determined eligible, or considered potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP have been mapped in Figure 17 and listed in Table 7. These structures, bridges, and resource groups were identified by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The number of archaeological sites within the study area was determined by using the Area of Interest screening from the EST tool.

**Table 7: Summary of Historic and Cultural Resources**

Cultural Resources	Within Study Area
SHPO Structures	56
SHPO Bridges	1
SHPO Resource Groups	5
National Register (Site, District, Building)	0
Archaeological Sites	20





### 3.3.8 Social Resources

Any public or private social resources that were considered relevant to the study area were identified using geospatial data. These resources are tabulated in Table 8 and mapped in Figure 18. A detailed list of available resources is also provided below.

**Table 8: Summary of Social Resources**

Social Resources	Within Study Area
Cemeteries	6
Fire Stations	4
Police Stations	3
Schools	5

#### Cemeteries

- Center Hill Cemetery
- Garden of Memories Cemetery
- Lacoochee Community Cemetery
- Linden Cemetery
- St. Catherine Matchett Cemetery
- Webster Cemetery

#### Fire Stations

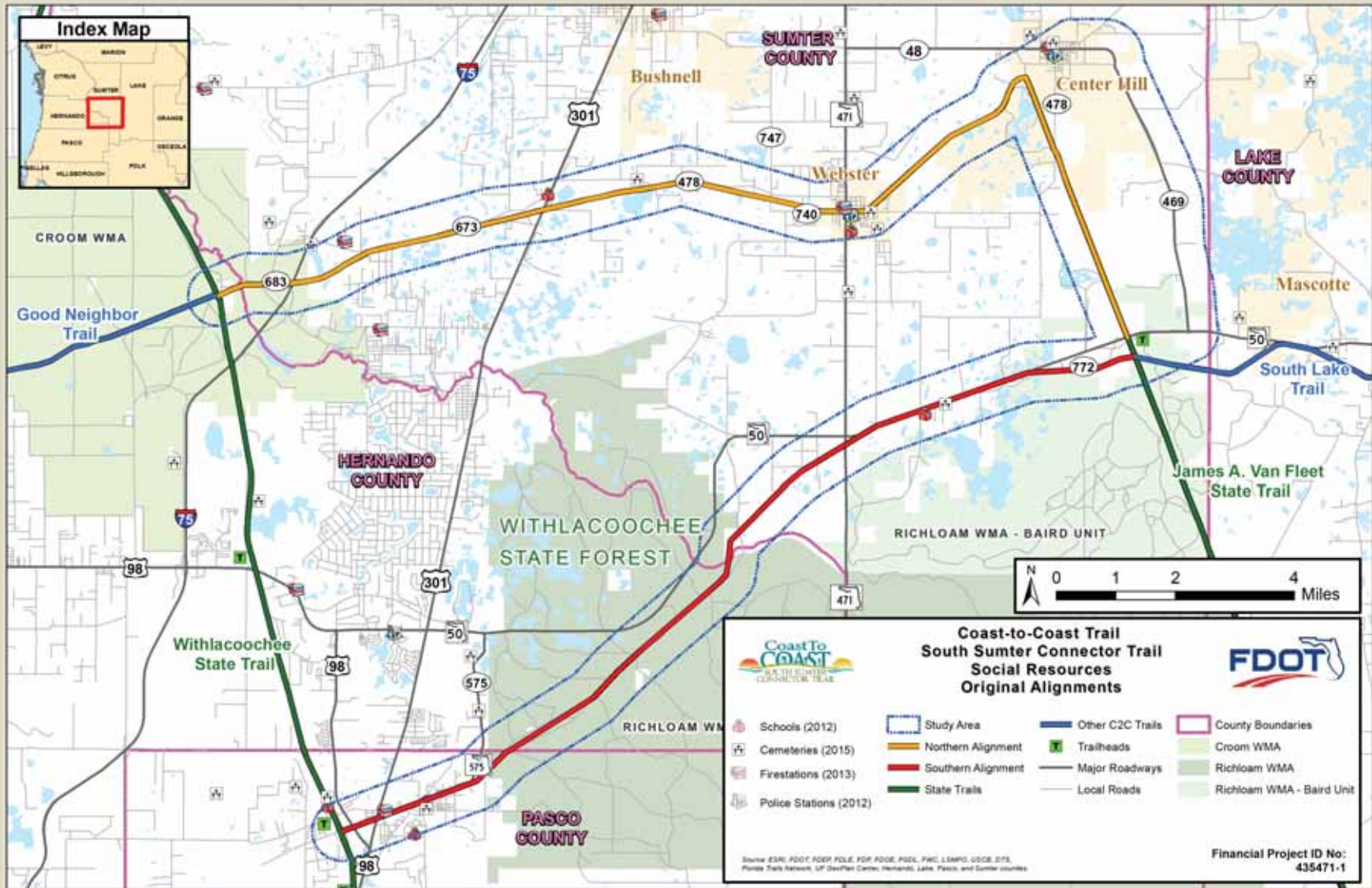
- Center Hill Fire Department
- Pasco County Fire Department and Rescue Station 34
- Southwest Bushnell Fire Station
- Webster Fire Station

#### Police Stations

- Center Hill Police Department
- Hernando County Sheriff's Office – Eastside Substation
- Webster Police Department

#### Schools

- Lacoochee Elementary School (Public)
- Linden Lighthouse Academy (Private)
- Sumter Christian Academy (Private)
- Trilby Adult Education
- Webster Elementary School (Public)



### 3.4 User Demand Analysis

In general, south Sumter County experiences a high level of trail usage. Regional trail systems that straddle the study area such as the WST and the VFST serve as generators and attractors for widespread trail activity. When complete, the South Sumter Connector Trail will not only provide important interregional connections linking these individual trails to a regional trail hub, it will also provide a crossing point for the system to traverse over the Withlacoochee River.

The projected demand for usage on the South Sumter Connector Trail is expected to vary depending on the trail segment as well as on the adjacent land uses and connections to local trails or sidewalk systems. Research on other Central Florida multiuse paved trails reveal usage from 40,000 persons per year (VFST) to almost 400,000 persons (WST). According to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the following attendance figures were reported over the past three years.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2012</u>
VFST	42,401	39,106	No data
WST	213,278	381,367	387,923

When comparing trail characteristics such as length, surrounding environments, number of trailheads, access points, etc., the trails listed below had the greatest similarities to the proposed South Sumter Connector Trail. Considering these factors, it is reasonable to assume trail usage to be relatively high in spite of its rural location. In evaluating other trail usage, it is estimated the trail usage for this project will be around 30,000 - 35,000 users per month.

<u>Trail</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Users/Month</u>
West Orange Trail	Orange	55,000
Little Econ Greenway	Orange	36,000
Pinellas Trail	Pinellas/Hillsborough	90,000
Seminole/Wekiva Trail	Seminole	27,000

In June 2015, the City of Webster was awarded a Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Technical Assistance Grant to conduct an Economic Impact Assessment evaluating the proposed trail alternatives for the South Sumter Connector Trail (see *Appendix A*). This analysis, performed by Hoke Design and the Balmoral Group, estimates the fiscal impacts of trails within a 75-miles radius of the City of Webster to determine the economic contribution of both northern and southern trail alignments. Following a project update meeting, representatives from Pasco County expressed an interest in conducting a similar study to analyze the estimated economic impact of the alignments to the Pasco County region. Above is an overview of the City's Trip Demand Analysis for informational purposes only.

*NOTE: The results of this study did not influence the recommendations of the Sumter County Gap Study. Any questions or comments regarding the outline above should be directed to the City of Webster. For an overview of the project methodology, please refer to Appendix A.*

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### 3.5 Identification of Constraints

While the initial alignments were developed based on the abandoned railroad bed, it was determined that CSX currently owns just 11 percent of the northern alignment and 4 percent of the southern alignment. As a result, the FDOT Study Team developed additional alternatives for the northern corridor to avoid existing and future mining operations. In addition, the rail bed traveled adjacent to or through private property southwest of Center Hill. This led the FDOT Study Team to consider alternatives that required use of the available right of way along County and State facilities.

There are wetlands and floodplains located throughout the study area. Wetlands and floodplains are more prevalent in the Richloam WMA and the Richloam WMA – Baird Unit than in areas north of SR 50. To the extent possible, routing through wetlands and floodplains should be avoided for the purposes of reducing environmental impacts and construction costs. Another important consideration within these WMAs is the active dog hunting grounds. Trail user conflicts should be minimized to the extent possible.

The WMAs within the study area are classified as Section 4(f) properties. Publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife / waterfowl refuges, and public or private historical sites having jurisdiction over the resource are all classified as Section 4(f) properties. Under Section 4(f), an operating administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) may not approve a project that uses protected properties unless there are no prudent feasible alternatives and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such properties. Various trail segments impact existing Section 4(f) facilities. While minimal impacts are anticipated for the northern corridor along the segment in the Croom WMA, moderate / high impacts are expected to occur along the southern corridor.

Geospatial analysis of the study area indicated there are potential wading bird colonies as well as potential habitats for the gopher tortoise, Florida scrubjay, and red-cockaded woodpecker within the study area, primarily located in the southern and western portions of the study area, especially in undisturbed, forested areas. Impacts to these protected species will need to be avoided or mitigated. There are also bald eagle nests in the region, though they are further than 660' from any proposed trail alignment. While no geospatial data is available for the eastern indigo snake, there is the potential that this species may be located within the study area as well.

Muck soils are located along certain segments of the initial alignments. Muck soils are typically difficult soils upon which to construct major transportation facilities. This effect is lessened with regard to constructing trails, as trails are required to support lighter loads. Where feasible, however, muck soils should be avoided to minimize construction costs.

As illustrated in Figure 17, there are several historical structures located within the study area. The majority of historical structures are located in and around Trilby. All such structures should be avoided in order to preserve the history of the region. In addition, there are several cemeteries located in the area of the initial alignments (see Figure 18). The trail will be required to avoid impacts to these sites.

# 4

## Public Involvement

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### 4.1 Public Involvement Efforts

The Public Involvement Program was developed at the onset of the study with the purpose of establishing cooperative working relationships between all project stakeholders including the FDOT, Sumter, Pasco, and Hernando counties, regional and local government agencies, public, and interested groups. This proactive public involvement approach helped inform the identification and development of a common vision leading to the recommended corridor. The planned public outreach efforts encourage collaboration, giving individuals an opportunity to learn about the project and have a voice in the outcome of this study.

Approved by the Florida Department of Transportation, the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was created as a stand-alone document to guide the project team in ensuring adequate input through multiple communication channels. The PIP includes public outreach goals, outlines engagement activities, and provides an extensive list of stakeholders ranging from federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, and advocacy groups, as well as businesses and community stakeholders in the study area. The PIP describes specific methods and techniques regarding the public involvement approach for the project and ensures a free flow of information between stakeholders. For more information, please refer to the PIP.

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#### 4.1.1 Information Access

Interested parties were given access to the FDOT Study Team through the following methods:

- Agency Kick-off Meeting
- Public Kick-off Meeting & Alternatives Public Meeting
- [Project Website](#)
- Project Hotline (1-800-955-8770)
- Project Information Brochure and Flyer

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#### 4.1.2 Summary of Public Meetings and Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder coordination was a critical component of this study's process. At the very beginning of the process, a list of stakeholders was developed to include business, local government, and community





leaders. Special effort was undertaken to include stakeholders that represent under-represented groups, such as individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, minority groups, and low-income communities.

Throughout the project, the FDOT Study Team met and spoke to agency staff and various stakeholders who had a vested interest in the study. This included regular project coordination meetings and scheduled updates to various agencies promoting an open dialogue on key project issues. These meetings were in addition to the PVT and scheduled public meetings. As shown in Table 9, stakeholder interviews, conference calls, and meetings were held throughout the course of the study with various officials, agencies, property owners, and special interest groups. The table below summarizes the meetings and interviews that occurred. For detailed meeting information, please refer to the PIP.



Table 9: Summary of Stakeholder Outreach

Date	Meeting / Event Description
1/15/2015	C2C Summit - Leadership Team Meeting
2/5/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Florida Audubon Society, FDOT District Seven, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway, Hernando-Citrus MPO, Friends of the Withlacoochee State Trail
2/10/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Florida Forest Service, Sumter County, Lake~Sumter MPO, Mid Coast Aggregates, Ridge Manor Property Owners Association and Robbins Lumber
2/9/2015	Field Review: Greenways and Trails Foundation, Lake~Sumter MPO, Florida Forest Service
2/26/2015	Agency Kick-off Meeting
3/18/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: City of Center Hill, Sumter County, Florida Forest Service, Lake~Sumter MPO, Sumter County Farm Bureau, Sumter Landing Bike Club, Van Fleet State Park
3/24/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Sumter Scenic Heritage Byway, City of Webster, City of Center Hill
3/26/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Hernando-Citrus and Pasco County MPO, FDOT District Seven, Pasco County
3/26/2015	Lake~Sumter MPO: A Summit on Cycling and Trails Presentation
3/31/2015	Field Review: City of Center Hill
4/9/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation, Private Property Owners, Sumter Cement, Central Beef
4/16/2015	Stakeholder Interviews: Office of Greenways and Trails
4/16/2015	Initial Project Visioning Team Meeting
4/20/2015	City of Webster Community Asset Mapping Exercise
5/7/2015	City of Webster Stakeholder Meeting - DEO Economic Benefit Analysis Grant
5/7/2015	Public Kick-off Meeting
6/10/2015	Sumter Chamber of Commerce Presentation
6/12/2015	C2C Leadership Team - Focus Group Meeting
7/14/2015	Sabal Trail Transmission Coordination Meeting
8/3/2015	Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative Meeting
9/10/2015	Pasco County MPO Board
9/23/2015	Lake~Sumter MPO Board Meeting (same as Pasco County MPO Board)
10/14/2015	Project Coordination Meeting with SR 50 Project Team
10/20/2015	Hernando-Citrus MPO Board Meeting (same as Pasco County MPO Board)
11/6/2015	Mid Coast Aggregates & Property Owners Meeting
12/3/2015	Sumter County Coordination Meeting
12/3/2015	Field Review Meeting with Property Owners
2/22/2016	Field Review and Stakeholder Meetings
2/26/2016	City of Webster Master Plan Visioning Meeting
3/1/2016	Project Visioning Team Meeting
3/10/2016	Sumter County Coordination Meeting
3/17/2016	Field Review with Property Owners along western terminus
3/30/2016	Public Alternatives Meeting, City of Center Hill (Sumter County)
3/31/2016	Public Alternatives Meeting Ridge Manor Community (Hernando County)
4/7/2016	Public Alternatives Meeting Dade City (Pasco County)
4/8/2016	Central Florida MPO Alliance Meeting
4/21/2016	C2C Leadership Team Project Update Presentation
5/25/2016	Lake~Sumter MPO Board Meeting (same as Pasco County MPO Board)
6/21/2016	Hernando-Citrus MPO Board Meeting (same as Lake~Sumter MPO Board)

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## 4.2 Public Meetings

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### 4.2.1 Agency Kick-off Meeting

Early coordination with local and regional agencies and elected/appointed officials was undertaken to provide an overview of the study process and schedule of activities. An Agency Kick-off Meeting for the Sumter County Gap Study was held on February 26, 2015 at the Community Building in the City of Center Hill. This meeting introduced the project and was conducted at the beginning of the data collection process to help identify and obtain a more complete understanding of the issues prior to the preparation of alternatives. Attendees benefited from the project information, which included a Google Tour of the project corridor and preliminary data. Many meeting participants openly expressed support for the project.

At this meeting, an overview of the Project Visioning Team was provided as well as an invitation to participate. PVT invitations were also extended via email to those unable to attend as part of the Meeting Summary following the Kick-Off. The method of invitation for the Kick-Off Meeting included a formal invitation distributed via email to the County officials, City staff and officials, and MPO representatives within the study area. Meeting notifications, materials, sign-in sheets, and the presentation are included in the final PIP.

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### 4.2.2 Public Kick-off Meeting & Alternatives Public Meetings

At the onset of the study a Public Kick-off Meeting was held on May 7, 2015. The Public Kick-off Meeting was an open house format, held at the Florida Grande RV Park in the City of Webster and was attended by over 120 interested parties and property owners. Several displays were available for participants to view and provide feedback to the FDOT Study Team. In addition, a resource station was provided at the meeting that allowed participants to view the alignments in relation to their specific property, and to provide feedback to the FDOT Study Team. Following the oral presentation that was provided during the meeting, participants were able to speak during a public comment period.

A variety of comments were received that expressed both support and opposition of the project. Generally, the most common written and verbal comments at this meeting included the following:

Issue	Resolution or Mitigation
Trail traverses through active dog hunting grounds in sensitive environmental areas *	Modify alignment to avoid segment within the Wildlife Management Area and instead parallel SR 50
Safety of trail users, especially in remote areas †	Minimize miles of trail in Wildlife Management Areas that provide limited access for emergency response vehicles
Security of property owners adjacent to the trail *	Coordinate with property owners to identify alternative trail routes and design treatments to increase buffer between trail and private property. Educate property owners on the actual security experience of property owners along trails
City of Webster opposes development of the southern corridor. In favor of the northern corridor.	Routing variations along northern corridor developed
Pasco County / MPO and Dade City prefer southern corridor	Routing along western terminus of the southern corridor modified to avoid community impacts. Additional alternative developed along the southern to address safety concerns.

\* Issues were received by written comments and stakeholder petition signed by 324 individuals.

To maximize participation throughout the study area, the final public meetings were held as a three-part series at each county as detailed below. These meetings provided attendees the opportunity to discuss the project in detail with key project team members and obtain a better understanding of any potential impacts the project may have in the study area.

Date	Location	Attendees
March 30, 2016	City of Center Hill (Sumter County)	97
March 31, 2016	Ridge Manor Community (Hernando County)	120
April 7, 2016	Dade City (Pasco County)	59

Each meeting was well attended with 276 people in total. The meetings were conducted as an informal open house with an oral presentation and distribution of comment forms for attendees to provide comments, concerns, and feedback. The presentation included topics listed below:

- Project Overview and Background
- Initial Alternatives
- Details of Evaluation Matrix including community and environmental impacts, and project costs
- Identification of Recommended Corridor

- Next Steps and Comment Instructions

Display maps illustrating the study area and recommended corridor, the study schedule, and the Evaluation Matrix were available for public review and comment. Table 9 lists the location and public attendance at each public meeting. Materials for every public meeting (which includes the meeting summary, handouts, boards, PowerPoint presentations, meeting minutes, and comment cards) are included in

A summary of the key issues and the recommended resolution is provided in Table 10 for this series of meetings. Generally, the most common written and verbal comments expressed were in regard to unrestricted dog hunting grounds, equestrian connectivity, private property impacts, safety and privacy issues, opposition to southern corridor, and support for southern corridor.

**Table 10: Primary Public and Local Agency Issues**

Issue	Resolution or Mitigation
Significant stakeholder opposition of Alternative E through unrestricted dog hunting grounds.	Additional alignment included along SR 50 to avoid segment within the Richloam WMA. The opposition to the hunting, environmental, and community impacts led to the elimination of this alternative.
Consideration of equestrian facilities.	Analysis of equestrian trail networks in the study area found existing facilities within Croom WMA.
Impacts to private property. Several property owners expressed concern with trail being adjacent or bisecting their property.	Property owner coordination to identify alternate trail routes. Relocation impacts where avoidance measures were not feasible were deemed fatal flaws and eliminated as alternatives. This includes Alternatives A, B, D, and E.
City of Webster and Sumter County opposes development of the southern corridor.	Lack of maintaining agency support deemed a fatal flaw. Southern corridor was eliminated.
Pasco County / MPO and Dade City prefer southern corridor or "loop connection" concept.*	Southern corridor determined unfeasible, due in part to the significant feedback from property owners and hunters, as well as environmental impacts, maintenance requirements, and potential safety concerns.

\* Stakeholder petition in support of southern corridor signed by 491 individuals.

A variety of outreach methods were implemented to help notify stakeholders of project-related activities/documents, including scheduled public meetings. The method of invitation for these public meetings included invitations to local/elected officials, property owners/residents within ½ miles of the study area, a legal advertisement in widely circulated newspapers, and a press release. A project information flyer was included with invitations which were mailed to over 6,600 residents and property owners. Invitations were emailed to the distributions list with over 300 stakeholders including elected and appointed officials. For a detailed summary or more information regarding the public meetings conducted for this study, please refer to the PIP.

### 4.3 Project Visioning Team Meetings

The Project Visioning Team (PVT) served as a special advisory resource that provided input, direction, and unique perspective to the FDOT Study Team. The PVT members were engaged to review and provide input into the study's key deliverables, including: the Public Involvement Plan; the Purpose and Need; Goals and Objectives/Evaluation Methodology; and each screening step through the development of the study. The FDOT assembled the PVT to help provide guidance and direction for the study. By involving and interacting with the PVT, local needs, issues and concerns were identified and addressed proactively. Before each public information meeting, this group reviewed the materials that would be presented. The PVT consisted of representatives from major stakeholder groups, such as:

- FDOT District Five
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) - Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT)
- Florida Forest Service
- Lake-Sumter MPO
- Pasco County MPO
- Hernando-Citrus MPO
- Sumter County
- Hernando County
- Pasco County
- City of Webster
- City of Center Hill
- Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway
- Back Country Horsemen of Florida
- Sumter Landing Bicycle Club



The PVT met on April 16, 2015 and March 17, 2016 to review information provided by the team and to provide input on key components of the study based on each agency's plans and positions. Prior to the public meetings, the PVT provided guidance on the materials to be presented and assisted the FDOT Study Team in distributing and publicizing meeting announcements, including placement of notifications on their respective websites, and community calendars. The meeting summaries (which also reflect the attendance of PVT members, presentation, and materials) are included in the PIP.

### 4.4 Building Consensus for the Recommended Corridor

It is anticipated that the appropriate level of public involvement activities will be conducted throughout all subsequent project phases including the PD&E Study. These public involvement activities may include additional coordination meetings with local government and environmental permitting agencies, public meetings, work sessions, small group meetings, and public hearings, as directed by the FDOT. The following meetings are anticipated for the PD&E Study:

- Two public meetings
- Two PVT meetings
- Several small group meetings

# 5

## Alternatives Development

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### 5.1 Three-Tier Review System

For this study, a three-tiered review system was used to perform the assessment of potential trail alternatives. Tier-One Screening consisted of evaluating the original northern and southern alignment. This evaluation included analysis of available right of way, as well as potential impacts to right of way, wetland, floodplain, and threatened and endangered species. During the Tier-One Screening, the FDOT Study Team held several stakeholder meetings to understand the potential opportunities and challenges within the study area. Upon determining CSX did not own most of the initial corridors, the FDOT Study Team identified alternative routing options for the northern and southern corridors. Through these technical evaluations and extensive public and agency involvement as part of the Tier-One Screening, the trail alternatives evolved to align with the goals and objectives of the study.

Tier-Two Screening incorporated a range of quantitative and qualitative factors to evaluate the proposed alignments that evolved from the initial corridors. The screening evaluation was consistent with the project purpose and need, including cost-effectiveness, safety, potential environmental impacts, and economic development. This evaluation captured the project stakeholders' desire to avoid community impacts and maintain consistency with local planning efforts. Additional key factors, such as maintaining agency support and significant stakeholder opposition, were also considered during the screening process. These factors had significant weight in the evaluation process and were deemed as fatal flaws. In total, ten alternatives were developed and evaluated as part of the Tier-Two Screening.

Many of these alternatives used County facilities between the City of Webster and the trail's eastern terminus, including C-707, C-711, C-721, C-723, and C-727. While these facilities were generally low-volume, low-speed roadways, they had limited right of way, typically no more than 40' in most segments. In addition, these County facilities were generally tree-canopy roadways that offer abundant shade and aesthetics. These trees, however, were located within the available right of way of the facility. Locating a trail alongside these roadways would be difficult without either routing around the trees and taking more right of way from adjacent properties, or removing the trees entirely to co-locate the trail alongside the roadway. For these reasons, the ten alternatives examined during the Tier-Two Screening were narrowed down to five alternatives following a review of the available right of way in the area.

The alternatives advanced through the completion of this screening are shown in Figure 2. This includes three conceptual trail alignments along the northern corridor (Alternatives A, B, and C) and two (Alternatives D and E) along the southern corridor. Section 5.3 explains the routing for each of the five alternatives that were advanced to the Tier-Three Screening.

## 5.2 Tier-Two Screening

### Northern Corridor

As constraints and location-specific issues along the northern corridor were identified, refinements were made to leverage opportunities to minimize or avoid community and environmental impacts. In coordination meetings with Sumter County, the County Administrator expressed the County's desire to maintain the trail within existing right of way to the extent possible. This approach would accommodate the trail in the western portion of the corridor and facilitate access by the County to conduct the required trail maintenance.

#### West End

The west end comprises segments west of SR 471, and consist of two proposed routes that were evaluated to complete the connection with the GNT located in the Croom WMA in Hernando County. From stakeholder input, the FDOT Study Team identified a utility corridor to cross the Withlacoochee River that is operated by Duke Energy and the Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative (WREC). This



orientation follows a perpendicular approach simplifying the river bank crossing. Both Duke Energy and the WREC were receptive to the addition of a trail component in the subject location as long as compliance with the minimum 25' separation requirements set forth in Duke Energy's *Manual for Shared-Use Paths/Trails* is met. The second proposed route travels along the east-west portion of the Duke Energy easement from the GNT east along C-683, crossing the Withlacoochee River using the abandoned railroad bed.

As shown in Figure 2, the general trail orientation of the western portion applies avoidance / minimization strategies by confining the trail segment to the existing C-683, C-673, and C-478 corridors. Routing along C-673 and C-478 falls within the corridors identified by LSMPO as "Most Popular" bicycle routes in Sumter County. These corridors capitalize on funding for planned transportation improvements for Resurfacing, Restoration, and Rehabilitation (RRR) projects. The County is supportive of making accommodations for the trail within these soon-to-be-improved sections. Planned improvements include widening lanes to 12' with paved shoulders from SR 93 / I-75 to US 301 and US 301 to SR 471. Minor frontage is currently anticipated in some of these segments with a more-detailed evaluation at the next project phase to minimize right of way needs.

#### East End

The east end comprises segments east of SR 471. With the right of way, safety, and traffic operations issues along Alternative A (C-469 and C-478), the FDOT Study Team examined the following northern



alignments that connect to the City of Webster. These routes provide linkages with a series of low-speed, low-volume county roadways:

- Traveling west via C-707, C-721, and SR 471;
- Traveling west via C-721, C-727, and SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue;
- Traveling west via C-721, C-727, and SR 471;
- Traveling west via C-721 and SR 471; and
- Traveling west via C-727, C-721, and SR 471.

Although these routes had scenic potential, based on the feasibility factors and right of way analysis, it was determined that these alignments did not have sufficient right of way to support the trail. These factors include avoidance of physical and environmental constraints and right of way needs (minimum width of 50'). Two routes ultimately emerged from this assessment and are illustrated in Figure 2.

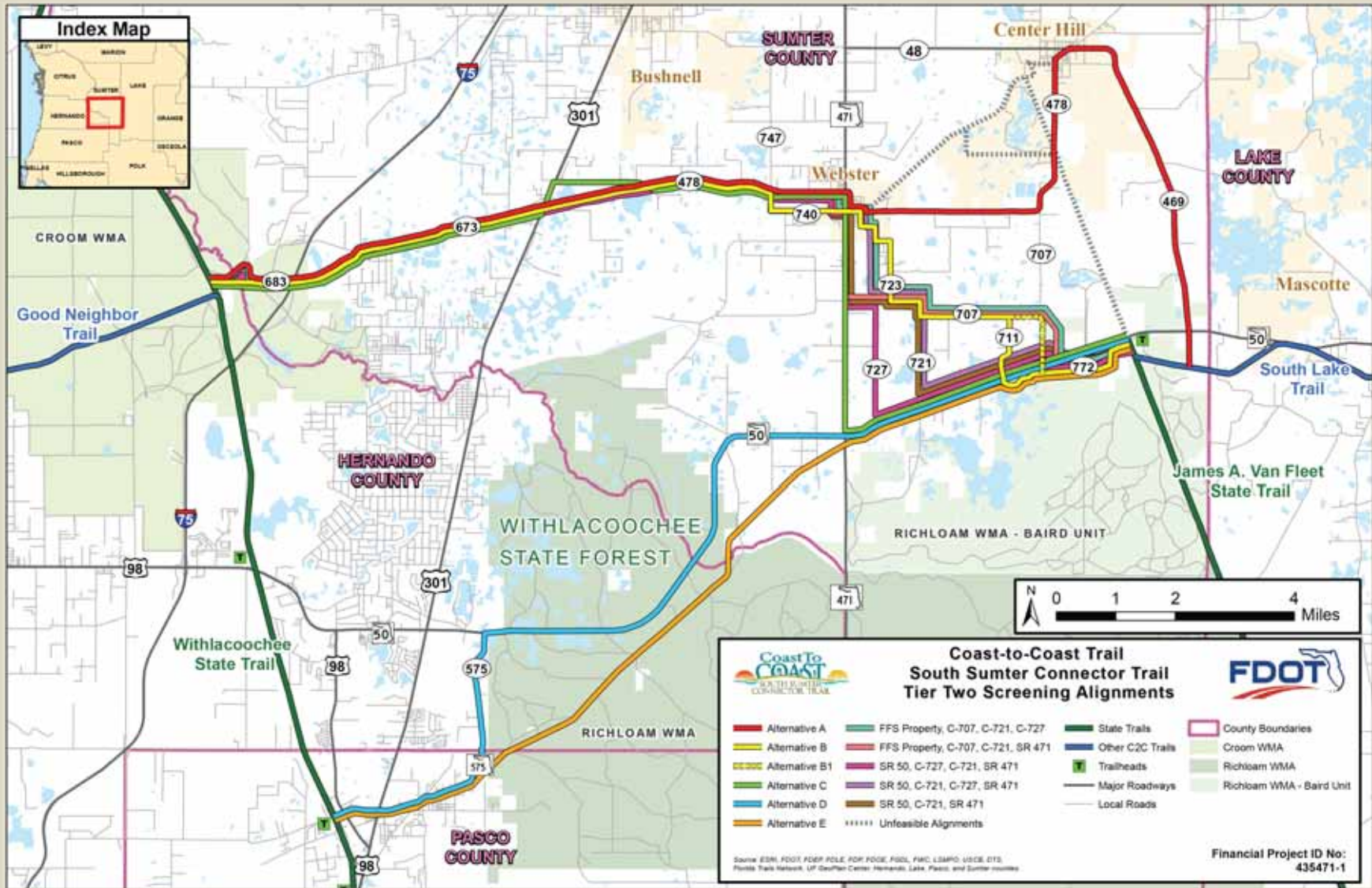
Alternative B utilizes undeveloped Forest Service property north of SR 50 to create a short section that connects to the City of Webster along Central Avenue. Coordination with the FFS revealed general support for co-locating the trail in the subject property. Within the context of the statewide Linear Policy, an assessment of construction materials will need to be conducted to determine compatibility with management objectives. This policy seeks to avoid, minimize, and mitigate any impact within forest lands (see Appendix B). Alternative C leverages right of way available along SR 50 and SR 471 in the eastern portion of the corridor. Alternatives A, B, and C of the northern corridor were included as part of the Tier-Three Screening process.

### Southern Corridor

Following the presentation to the Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 10, 2015, the FDOT Study Team developed an additional southern alignment to neutralize concerns over the dog hunting grounds in the Richloam WMA and the stakeholder opposition received at the Public Kick-off Meeting. The western segment of Alternative D follows SR 575 from the existing WST trailhead in Trilby to SR 50 in Hernando County, traveling east into Sumter County before connecting to the eastern terminus at the SLT. This alternative was developed in close coordination with a concurrent FDOT planning study evaluating improvement strategies for SR 50.

The SR 50 Corridor Planning Study is designed to evaluate an approximate 20-mile section from US 301 in Hernando County to CR 33 in Lake County. This project seeks to address the safety needs of the community and provide direction to agency stakeholders to program the next phases of project design. Throughout the study, the FDOT Study Team engaged the SR 50 Team for additional feedback regarding right of way and safety issues along SR 50. The SR 50 Team identified significant challenges along the Withlacoochee River bridge crossing indicating that it is too narrow to support the C2C Trail. High crash rates were also noted in Hernando County. The SR 50 Team also recommended avoiding the curve near SR 471 to the extent possible.

Prior to conversations with the SR 50 Team, the FDOT Study Team had considered a trail alignment that would co-locate entirely along SR 50, from the trail's western terminus at the WST to the eastern terminus at the VFST. After several discussions with the SR 50 Team, however, the FDOT Study Team determined the alignment was unfeasible due to concerns regarding the safety and comfort of the trail user.



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## 5.3 Tier-Three Screening

As shown in Figure 2, five conceptual trail alternatives were advanced to the Tier-Three Screening phase. These alternatives had the greatest potential based on the feasibility factors considered in the Tier-Two Screening. At this phase, the study area is comprised of three alternatives along the northern corridor and two alternatives along the southern corridor. The following provides a general description of the proposed routing options. Chapter 6 – Alternatives Evaluation provides further analysis of these five alternatives.

### Northern Corridor

The northern corridor is defined by Alternatives A, B, and C. It connects the cities of Webster and Center Hill through Sumter and Hernando counties following existing roadways. The northern corridor commences at the GNT on the western limits to the SLT on the eastern limits. Similar to the southern corridor, this area is primarily rural in nature with additional residential and employment centers within the cities.

#### Alternative A

The proposed routing commences at the GNT interface along the western terminus. This segment is located in the Croom WMA in Hernando County. The alignment follows the utility corridor to cross the Withlacoochee River into Sumter County. The alignment then heads south on SW 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue and continues east along C-683 under the I-75 bridge. The routing takes a northeasterly approach to C-673 where it parallels the roadway before crossing US 301 and the active CSX S-line. The northern alignment then heads northeast to W C-478, northwest of 4<sup>th</sup> Terrace. The trail diverges from C-478 and enters the City of Webster at its central district. Alternative A would travel through the middle of Central Avenue, where the railroad previously operated. Upon exiting the boundaries of the City of Webster to the east, the alignment heads toward the City of Center Hill following C-478 north to C-469. The alignment then turns south and crosses SR 50 to connect to the eastern terminus at the SLT.

#### Alternative B

Alternative B travels east from the GNT along the east-west segment of the Duke Energy easement, continues east to cross the Withlacoochee River, and connects to SW 90<sup>th</sup> Ave and C-683. This routing takes a direct approach at a narrow point along the river bank. From C-683 it follows the same route as Alternative A until it approaches the City of Webster on C-478. At the junction with C-747, the alignment takes a southern turn onto C-740 where it heads southeast following a series of low-volume, low-speed roadways including C-723, C-721, C-707, and C-711. The alignment crosses SR 50 to C-772 before terminating at the SLT. An additional approach (Alternative B1) uses existing forestry property rather than C-711 to head south, crossing SR 50, connecting to C-772, and terminating at the SLT.

#### Alternative C

Alternative C generally follows a similar path at the western end as Alternative A and B with a few variations at the western terminus and US 301 / railroad crossing. The routing commences at the GNT following C-683 east to cross the Withlacoochee River. This routing takes a direct approach at a narrow point along the river bank. To cross the US 301 / CSX S-line, this approach takes US 301 north to C-478 where it heads east into the City of Webster. Exiting the city limits, the alignment heads south along SR 471 and east along SR 50 before terminating at the SLT.



### **Southern Corridor**

The southern corridor is defined by Alternatives D and E. This study area connects Pasco, Sumter, and Hernando counties south of the cities of Webster and Center Hill. The area is primarily rural in nature with proposed alternatives traversing the WSF. The termini for this corridor is the WST to the west and SLT to the east.

#### **Alternative D**

The western terminus is located in the Trilby community. This trail routing follows SR 575 east to cross US 98, US 301, and the active CSX S-line in Pasco County. It takes a northeasterly approach running parallel to SR 50 in Hernando County where it crosses the Withlacoochee River into Sumter County, then heads northeast to connect to its eastern terminus at the SLT in Sumter County. It should be noted that there is 200' of available right of way along the western segment from the eastern edge of the WSF to US 301.

#### **Alternative E**

Alternative E follows the same alignment as Alternative D until SR 575 heads northeast. When the alignment approaches Hernando County out of Pasco County it enters the WSF. It follows the abandoned rail corridor in the Richloam WMA for about six miles, nearly one-third of the alignment. The railroad bed exits the forest in a northeastern direction and co-locates along SR 50 east of SR 471 for 3.5 miles. The alignment then diverges from SR 50 and parallels C-772 for about two miles before connecting to the eastern terminus at the SLT.

# 6

## Alternatives Evaluation

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### 6.1 Evaluation Criteria

As illustrated in Figure 20, four themes for the evaluation criteria were developed for the final screening based on the study's goals and objectives. These criteria addressed safety and environmental characteristics, economic development opportunities, project costs, and right of way needs. These criteria also captured qualitative factors such as the maintaining agency support and significant stakeholder opposition. The following comparative evaluation examines each criterion and summarizes the assessment conducted for each alternative. The evaluation process used these criteria to determine a recommended corridor to be carried forward to the PD&E Phase of the project.

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#### 6.1.1 Maintenance Responsibility

The FDOT will enter into an agreement or other form of documented commitment to ensure that a local sponsor/agency is committed to long-term trail maintenance of trails constructed by FDOT. The local sponsor/agency will be responsible for all trail operation and maintenance needs which includes: routine pavement and bridge structure repair, litter control, sweeping, vegetation management, and the maintenance of trail specific facilities and features such as ornamental landscaping, wayside areas, benches, litter receptacles, and restrooms. The local sponsor/agency will be identified prior to programming the PD&E phase. The appropriate form of commitment or agreement needed will be determined prior to letting for construction.

Trails that are constructed by FDOT within FDOT right of way shall be maintained by the FDOT. Local jurisdictions will still be required to establish a maintenance agreement with the FDOT prior to design because the maintenance and operation of any amenities established along the trail will be the responsibility of the local jurisdiction.

Evaluation Criteria	Northern Corridor			Southern Corridor	
	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D	Alternative E
	Good Neighbor to South Lake via C-675, C-476, and C-488 through Webster & Center 148	Good Neighbor to South Lake via C-675, C-476, C-723, C-707, C-761, C-772	Good Neighbor to South Lake via C-675, C-476, Webster, SR 471, SR 56, C-712	Withlacoochee (Trilby Trailhead) to South Lake via SR 575 and SR 56	Withlacoochee (Trilby Trailhead) to South Lake via SR 575, State Forest Land, SR 56, C-712
<b>Project Length</b>					
C2C Trail segment length (new construction in miles)	24.2	19.8	30.4	28.6	16.5
Variance from Shortest Option (miles)	4.4	<b>Shortest Option</b>	0.6	7.9	5.8
Variance from Shortest Option ( % )	22%	<b>N/A</b>	3%	40%	29%
<b>Travel Service / Accessibility / Safety Characteristics</b>					
Length of trail in close proximity to Census-designated places ( miles )	12.0	4.2	4.2	6.1	4.0
Number of street crossings	39	33	30	37	27
Average crash rate along adjacent roadways (crashes per mile per year)	0.6	0.7	1.1	2.5	3.4
Percentage of trail length within 3-miles of emergency response stations 2	80%	74%	73%	24%	24%
Percentage of trail within roadway right-of-way (for trail maintenance)	73%	62%	68%	97%	41%
	<i>Mostly Roadside</i>	<i>Balanced Roadside / Remote</i>	<i>Balanced Roadside / Remote</i>	<i>Entirely Roadside</i>	<i>Mostly Remote</i>
Length of trail with access / connectivity to equestrian facilities (miles)	2.9	2.9	2.7	0.0	0.0
Trail located within adjacent hunting grounds 4	<i>Low / Restricted</i>	<i>Low / Restricted</i>	<i>Low / Restricted</i>	<i>Low / Unrestricted</i>	<i>High / Unrestricted</i>
<b>Potential Environmental Effects / Agency and Stakeholder's Support</b>					
Potential impacts anticipated to listed species / habitat 4	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate
Potential impacts to wetlands (acres)	5.9	9.3	7.5	13.4	15.3
Potential impacts to 100-year floodplains (acres)	47.3	24.0	22.6	39.6	40.6
Significant stakeholder opposition 5	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Support from responsible maintaining agencies 6					
	Pasco County	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
	Sumter County	Yes	Yes	No	No
	Hernando County	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>Estimated Right-of-Way Needs and Project Costs</b>					
Number of parcels from which right-of-way is required for the trail	176	164	168	147	174
Relocation Potential (anticipated residential/business displacements)	<b>5 Total Relocations</b> 4 Residences 1 Business	<b>None Anticipated</b>	<b>None Anticipated</b>	<b>2 Total Relocations</b> 2 Businesses	<b>4 Total Relocations</b> 2 Residences 2 Businesses
Preliminary Planning-Level Right-of-Way Cost	\$13.5 M	\$10.3 M	\$9.1 M	\$13.6 M	\$16.9 M
Preliminary Trail Design and Construction Cost 7	\$14.0 M	\$11.9 M	\$12.3 M	\$11.6 M	\$10.7 M
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$25.5 M</b>	<b>\$22.2 M</b>	<b>\$21.4 M</b>	<b>\$25.2 M</b>	<b>\$27.6 M</b>
Cost Differential (Above Lowest Cost Option)	\$4.1 M	\$0.8 M	<b>Lowest Cost</b>	\$3.8 M	\$6.2 M
Percentage Cost Differential (Above Lowest Cost Option)	19%	4%	<b>N/A</b>	18%	29%

**ASSUMPTIONS / DATA SOURCES:**

- 1) Developed/populated areas are defined as a Census Designated Place.
- 2) Emergency response stations include all fire stations and police stations in the study area.
- 3) Restricted areas prohibit hunting with dogs, dogs with a shoulder height of 15 inches or less may hunt small game during the small game season.
- 4) Species habitat includes gopher tortoises, eastern indigo snake, and others. Further assessment and associated agency coordination will be conducted in future project phases.
- 5) Petition from stakeholders received with over 300 signatures in opposition of the southern corridors.
- 6) For Alignments A, B, and C, Sumter and Hernando counties would be the maintaining agencies. For Alignments D and E, Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties would be the maintaining agencies. Sumter County Board of Commissioners issued letter stating that the northern corridor is the only acceptable route through Sumter County. Pasco County Commissioner Starkey issued a letter of support for the southern corridor. The City of Webster adopted a resolution of support for the northern corridor and location of the trail alignment within the City limits.
- 7) Capital costs are planning level estimates that include railroad track/roadway improvements, construction of paved trail and bridges including engineering design, CCL, and contingencies.

Any trailheads, restrooms, or other amenities requested by a local sponsor/agency are required to be identified before design of the project. It will be the responsibility of the requesting sponsor/agency to secure additional funding and to coordinate with the FDOT regarding incorporation in the trail design and construction.

For the proposed northern alternatives of the trail, this maintenance responsibility would apply to Sumter County, Hernando County, and the City of Webster. For Alternative A only, the maintenance responsibility would also apply to the City of Center Hill. Regarding the southern alternatives, this maintenance responsibility would apply to Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties. All anticipated maintaining agencies would be required to establish a maintenance agreement with FDOT before the project could move forward into design.

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### 6.1.2 Travel Service Characteristics

Based on the results of the geospatial analysis, the northern corridor (Alternatives A, B, and C) provides the most direct connection for the overall C2C Trail system. Although the southern corridor (Alternatives D and E) provides the shortest distance in terms of new construction miles, the southern corridor adds nine additional miles of the WST to the overall segment length. Alternative A consisted of the longest route in new construction miles, as it travels through the City of Center Hill.

To determine each alignment's potential to effect economic development in the region, the extent of each alignment traveling through Census-designated places (CDP) was calculated. Approximately twelve miles of Alternative A travels through CDPs, with its approaches through the Cities of Center Hill and Webster. Alternative D travels through six miles of CDPs. The remaining alternatives are within CDP boundaries for approximately four miles.

The length of trail within existing road corridors received both positive and negative feedback. From a maintenance perspective, the co-location of the trail along the roadway reduces costs; however, trail users preferred scenic routing options away from existing roadways. The goal of the FDOT Study Team was to find the proper balance between locating alongside a roadway for purposes of maintenance and emergency response access and locating the trail apart from the roadway to offer a more scenic and comfortable experience for the trail user. In this respect, Alternatives A, B, and C appear to be the moderate options, with approximately 60 to 75 percent of the trail located along roadway, while Alternatives D and E are located along a roadway for approximately 97 percent and 41 percent, respectively. Table 11 below provides information relating to trail length for each alternative.

**Table 11: Trail Length and Character**

C2C Trail Length / Character			
Alternative	New Construction (miles)	Overall Segment Length (miles)	Length of Trail within Existing Road Corridor
A	24.2	24.2	73%
B	19.8	19.8	62%
C	20.4	20.4	68%
D	18.6	27.7	97%
E	16.5	25.6	41%

### 6.1.3 Alignment and Right of Way Needs

A planning-level geospatial analysis was conducted for each alternative to determine the potential right of way impacts to underlying and adjacent properties. Parcel data (2014) from Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco County Property Appraisers was used to determine the alternatives' impact to properties. A 25-foot buffer was applied to each alternative, to be used as the "potential impact area." The primary concern of this analysis was to obtain a planning-level estimate of the right of way needed from each impacted property, and to determine if any properties were significantly impacted to the point where relocation was a possible or likely outcome.

Many stakeholders, including Sumter County and the Cities of Center Hill and Webster, stated they would not support any alternative that required the relocation of businesses or residences.

Where the impacts occurred alongside roadways, these were designated as frontage right of way acquisitions and were not considered to be potential relocation properties. If impacts occurred through the middle of a property and removed access to a roadway, the property was considered a potential relocation property. It should be noted that potential relocations could be avoided but will result in a gap in the trail.

Analysis of existing structures was conducted using ESRI and Google aerial imagery. If buildings were shown to be within the 25-foot impact buffer, the property would be considered a potential relocation property.

Through these analyses, it was determined that Alternatives A, D, and E have potential relocations of existing buildings associated. Alternative A would likely require relocations in east Center Hill along C-469, as buildings on both sides of the roadway along this stretch of the trail have small setbacks and would likely be impacted by the proposed alignment. Alternative D and E both have similar issues along SR 575 in Pasco County. Alternative E would also likely require relocations of two properties southwest of the SR 471 / SR 50 intersection. The planning-level analysis of each route determined that Alternatives B and C would likely not require any relocation of property.



## 6.1.4 Accessibility and Safety

Aside from the trail network in the study area, there are no separate facilities for non-vehicular uses such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians, or continuous sidewalk systems or other pedestrian features that could serve as a multiuse facility. The lack of multiuse facilities in the area has led to a growing demand for more mobility options in the region. Establishing a separate multiuse facility is paramount to providing safety improvements for non-vehicular area trail users. This project will provide a safe travel facility largely eliminating vehicular conflict. Currently, bicycle/pedestrian access to these facilities is limited or non-existent. The proposed route was designed with the intent to provide access to public lands, populated areas ensuring the safety of children, young adults, and people of all ages.

In order to assess trail user safety with regard to proximity to roadways, two analyses were conducted, including average crash rate along adjacent roadways, and length of trail within three miles of emergency response stations.

### Average Crash Rate Along Adjacent Roadways

Traffic crash data occurring between January 1, 2012 and December 31, 2014 was collected from the Florida Highway Patrol, Sumter County Sheriff's Office, Hernando County Sheriff's Office, City of Bushnell Police Department, and the City of Webster Police Department. All crashes located along segments of roadway adjacent to proposed alternatives were gathered, assessed, and are included in Table 12.

The average crash rate (per mile per year) for each alternative was based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of crashes on roadway segments where trail would be co-located}}{\text{Divided by number of miles of trail adjacent to roadway}} \\ \text{Divided by three years}$$

Alternative E was eliminated due to the calculated highest average crash rate along adjacent roadways. The Alternative E route would co-locate within existing right of way along SR 50 and SR 575. These two facilities, especially in the segments where Alternative E would co-locate, have higher crash volumes than other facilities in the region.

Alternatives A and B have the lowest crash rates per mile per year, while Alternatives D and E have the highest crash rates.

The FDOT Study Team has been in coordination with the SR 50 Corridor Study Team to determine possible cooperative efforts for co-locating a trail along SR 50 for at least a portion of the trail. The SR 50 Corridor Study Team indicated there are safety issues along the entire corridor, especially along the two major curves near the Sumter/Hernando County Line and Richloam WMA. This roadway segment just east of the SR 50 curve in Sumter County to the SR 50/C-575 intersection, approximately 6.7 miles, had 43 crashes in a three-year span. That results in a 2.14 crash rate per mile per year.

In order to determine how these crash rates compare to the surrounding region, crash data was collected within the same three-year period for Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties. After

determining the paved centerline miles for the three counties,<sup>8</sup> the average crash rate for the region was calculated as 3.5 crashes per mile per year. While Alternative E was nearly identical to the regional average from January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2014, the remaining alternatives show lower crash rates.

### Length of Trail Within Three Miles of Emergency Response

To determine the alternatives' proximity to emergency response, a three-mile buffer was applied to all emergency response stations within the study area. Using geospatial analysis, the percent of each trail located within the three-mile emergency response buffer was determined. The analysis showed that Alternatives A, B, and C had a majority of their routes within three miles of emergency response. Approximately 75 to 80 percent of these alignments fell within the three-mile buffer. In contrast, only 25 percent of Alternatives D and E were within three miles of an emergency response station.

If an emergency were to take place along the trail, this analysis suggests that help may arrive more quickly along one of the northern alternatives. Table 12 provides various statistics for each alternative relating to safety.

Table 12: Safety Characteristics

Safety Characteristics			
Alternative	Percentage of trail length within 3 miles of emergency response stations	Trail located within adjacent hunting grounds*	Average crash rate along adjacent roadways (crashes per mile per year)
A	80%	Low / Restricted	0.6
B	74%	Low / Restricted	0.7
C	73%	Low / Restricted	1.1
D	24%	Low / Unrestricted	2.5
E	24%	High/ Unrestricted	3.4

## 6.1.5 Potential Environmental Impacts

### Section 4(f) and Protected Lands

The WMAs located within the study area are classified as Section 4(f) properties. Under Section 4(f), an operating administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) may not approve a project that uses protected properties unless there are no prudent feasible alternatives and the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such properties. While minimal impacts are anticipated for the northern corridor along the segment in the Croom WMA, moderate / high impacts are expected to occur along the southern corridor through the Richloam WMA and Baird Unit.

<sup>8</sup> Florida Department of Transportation (2015). 2015 City County Mileage (Data as of September 30, 2014). <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/planning/statistics/mileage-rpts/CCMRSep14.pdf>

In addition, this leads to an inconsistency with the FFS Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest and Sumter County’s Unified Comprehensive Plan, which seek to protect public conservation lands from adverse impacts. Table 13 examines various environmental impacts anticipated for each alternative.

### Wetlands and Floodplains

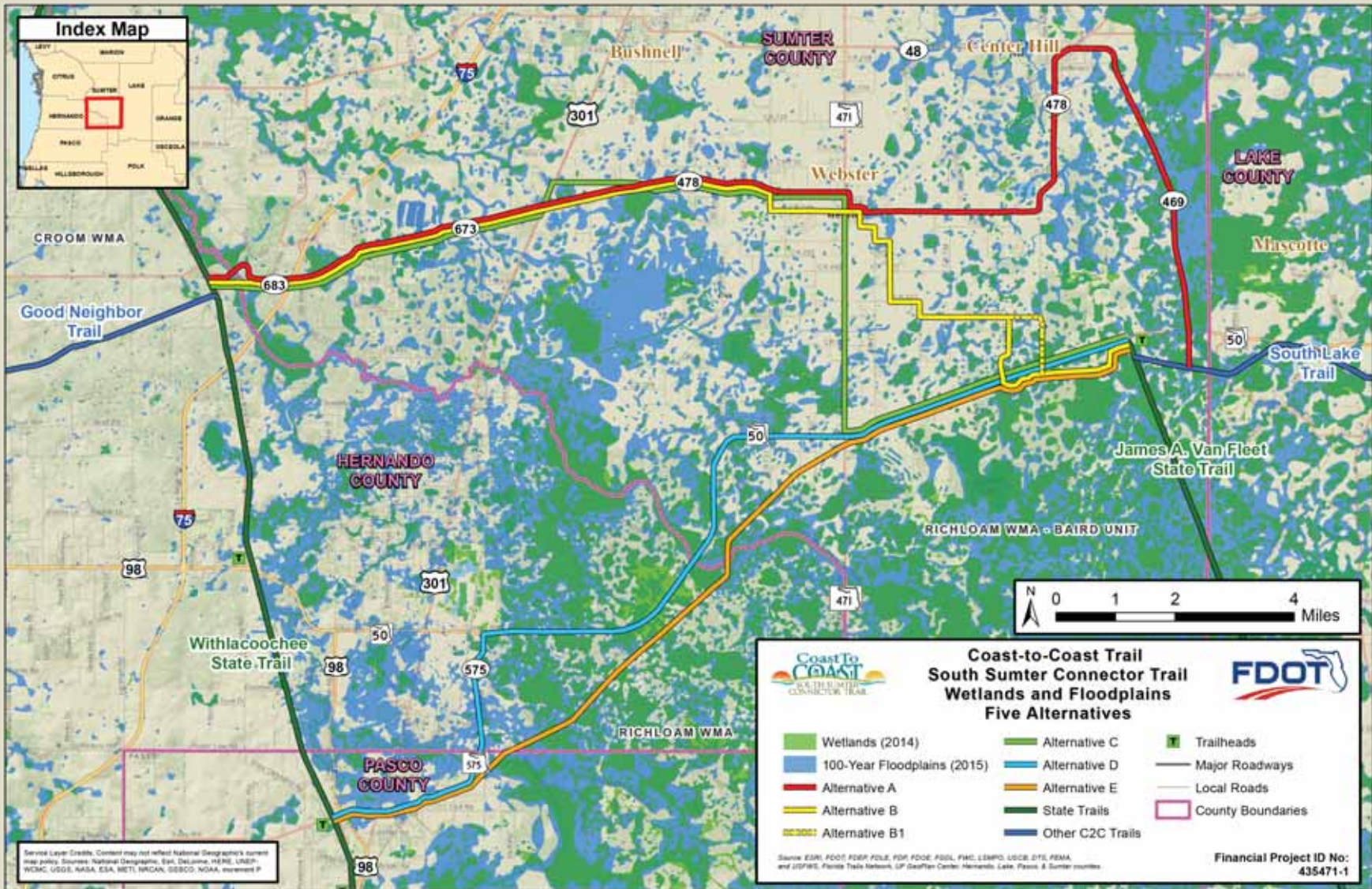
Wetlands and floodplains were identified in multiple locations through geospatial analysis and qualitative field review. In most locations where wetlands / floodplains were identified, minor shifts in the alignment can minimize impacts. However, there are locations where impacts are unavoidable. Most of these wetland / floodplain impacts are found within the southern corridor. See Figure 21 for an illustration of existing wetlands and floodplains in the study area.

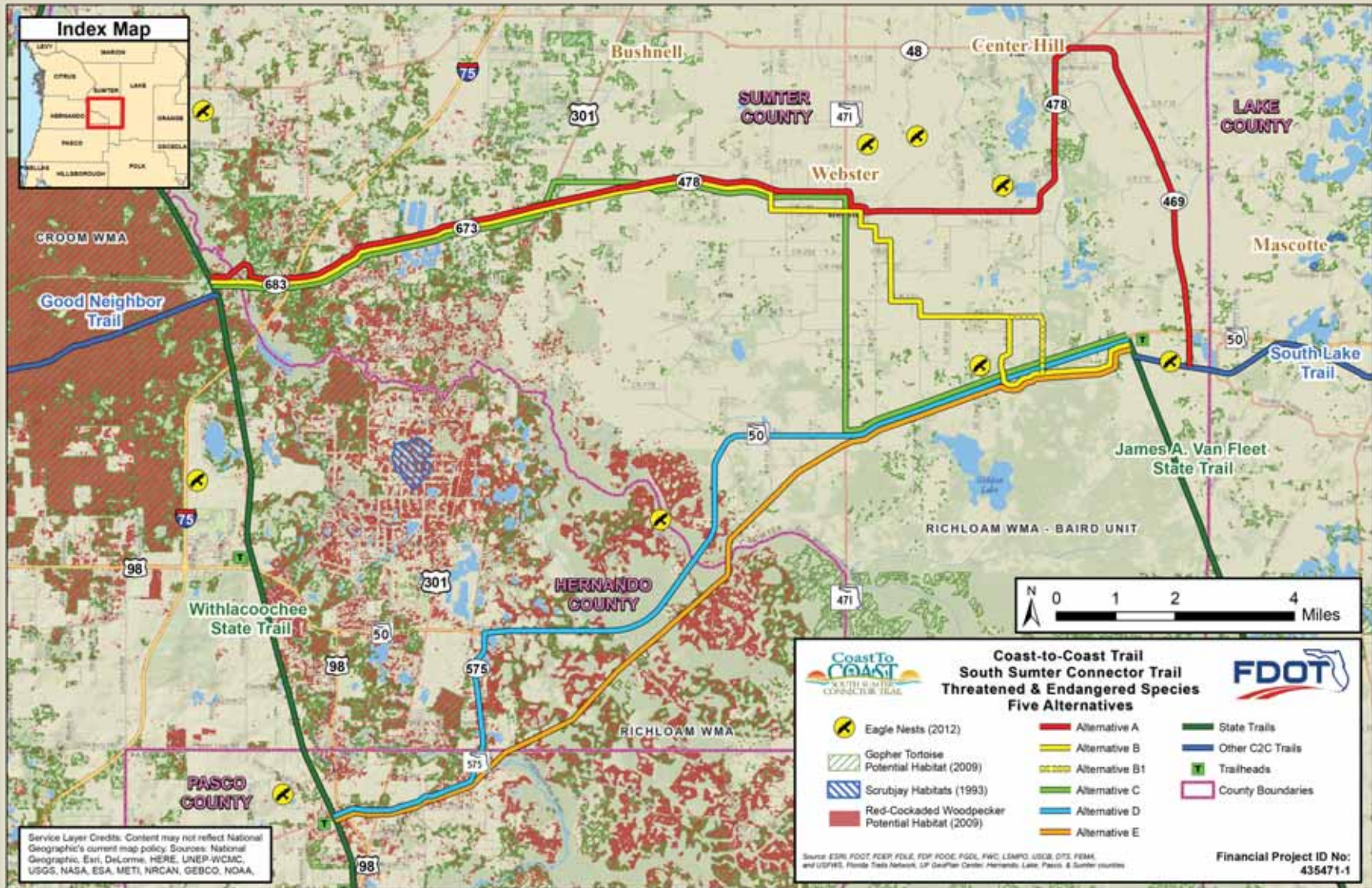
### Threatened and Endangered Species

Adverse impact to protected species is unknown. Through geospatial analysis, it was determined that there may be a presence of gopher tortoise and/or red-cockaded woodpecker in the western and southern portions of the study area, particularly in the Croom WMA and the Richloam WMA. The gopher tortoise is listed as a Threatened Species by the FWC, while the red-cockaded woodpecker is listed as an Endangered Species at the State and Federal levels. Further quantitative analysis will be required when the exact alignment placement has been determined to assess if burrows or nesting trees will be impacted. Other species may be present within the study area, but data was either unavailable or too dated to assess their presence accurately. See Figure 22 for an illustration of potential gopher tortoise and red-cockaded woodpecker habitats.

Table 13: Environmental Impacts

Environmental Impacts			
Alternative	Section 4(f): Recreational Impacts	Consistency with Florida Forest Service Management Plan	Potential impacts to wetlands / floodplains (acres)
A	Minimal	Consistent	5.9 / 47.3
B	Minimal	Mostly Consistent	9.3 / 24.0
C	Minimal	Consistent	7.5 / 22.6
D	Moderate	Somewhat Inconsistent	13.4 / 39.6
E	High	Inconsistent	15.3 / 40.6





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### 6.1.6 Hunting

Throughout the Sumter County Gap Study, one of the primary concerns for local stakeholders has been the southern alignment's approach through the Richloam WMA. Stakeholder opposition to this alignment was motivated by a number of key factors, including: the uncontrolled, potentially dangerous nature of dog hunting; accessibility and maneuverability of emergency response vehicles; mixing of two incompatible recreational uses; and additional maintenance and repair costs. Figure 23 illustrates the five alternatives in relation to the study area's hunting grounds.

Hunting with dogs is a tradition in the Richloam WMA. These hunting dogs are typically off-leash, and chase after game when signaled. Various stakeholders, including those who hunt within the Richloam WMA, have indicated that dog hunting can be a dangerous activity, especially when a multiuse trail is established through the middle of the WMA. Concerns have been raised regarding potential conflicts between dogs, game, hunters, and trail users.

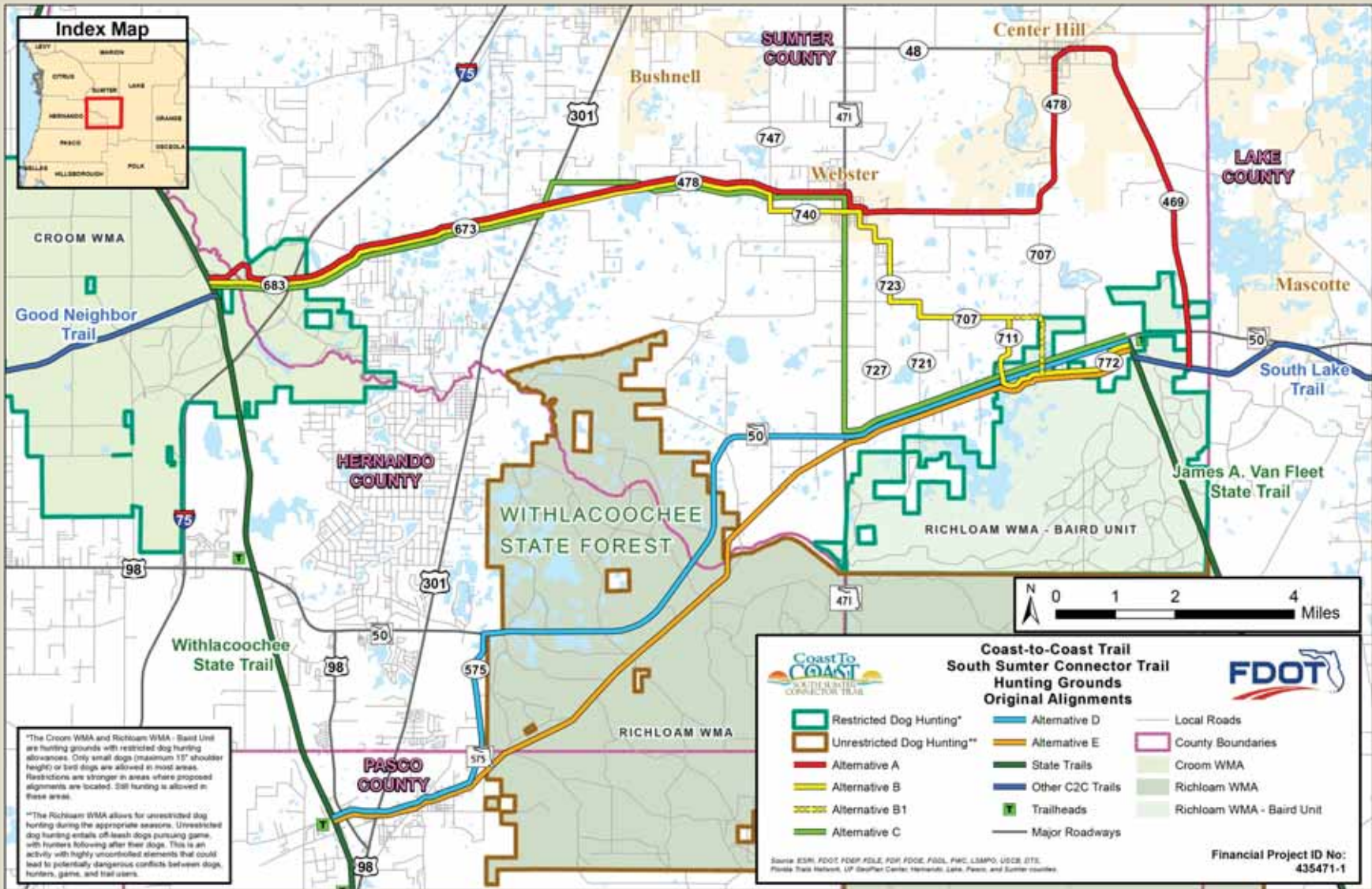
Hunters have been a vocal opponent of the southern alignment's route through the Richloam WMA throughout the Sumter County Gap Study. They have argued that placing a trail through the middle of the Richloam WMA would ruin their longstanding recreational activity. They have also indicated that trail users and dog hunting are not compatible with each other.

In addition to the hunting concerns, locating the trail through the middle of a remote forest would pose a safety risk to the trail user. It would likely be a difficult task for emergency response to offer help to a trail user located near the center of the Richloam WMA. Approximately 5.5 miles, or 33 percent, of Alternative E is located within the Richloam WMA. If the trail user were near the center of this segment of the trail, emergency response would need to travel through approximately 2.75 miles of forest to reach the trail user. In addition, maneuverability of emergency response vehicles in a confined trail corridor may also be an issue.

During stakeholder interviews, the FFS explained that cell coverage can be sporadic at best through the Richloam WMA. They suggested that any route through the Richloam WMA would need phone stations located at frequent intervals along the trail so that the trail user is able to call for help in emergencies.

In addition to the safety concerns, a multiuse trail that would travel through the Richloam WMA may also require additional maintenance and repair over the life of the facility. The remoteness of Alternative E would also increase maintenance costs for the local maintaining agency, and the FFS has indicated it does not have the resources to maintain additional facilities within the Withlacoochee State Forest.

To reduce the safety and compatibility concerns with regard to hunting in the Richloam WMA, Alternative D was developed as a second southern alignment to co-locate along SR 50 for portions of the trail traveling through the Richloam WMA. Hunting is prohibited on or adjacent to SR 50.



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### 6.1.7 Project Costs

Cost estimates have been prepared based on data and analysis available within the Sumter County Gap Study.

Using the right of way analysis detailed in Section 6.1.3, the FDOT Study Team developed a methodology for determining planning-level cost estimates for right of way acquisition. The methodology is detailed below:

- 1) Determine the land impact of the alignment's 25-foot buffer on each affected parcel
- 2) Calculate the impact percentage
- 3) Apply the impact percentage to the Just Value figure provided in the parcel data
- 4) Apply a multiplier to the value based on level of impact
  - o For partial impacts, a 2x Multiplier was applied
  - o For full impacts (e.g., relocations), a 4x Multiplier was applied
- 5) Apply an additional multiplier to the value based on land use
  - o FDOT Property (right of way, Ditches, Canals, etc.) – 0x
  - o CSX Transportation Property – 1.4x
  - o Florida Forestry Service Property – 1.4x
  - o Acreage not zoned for Agriculture – 1.8x
  - o Churches – 1.8x
  - o Cropland, Improved Agriculture, and Grazing Land – 1.8x
  - o Municipal, State, or Federal Property – 1.8x
  - o Residential (Single/Multi-Family, Mobile Homes, Boarding Houses, Vacant) – 2.5x
  - o Commercial (Office, Timberland, Vacant, etc.) – 3.5x

Through this methodology, the FDOT Study Team determined planning-level right of way cost estimates for each Alternative. In addition to these totals, construction estimates were also tabulated for two bridges for each northern alternative and one bridge for each of the southern alternatives.

The project costs displayed in Table 14 account for right of way acquisition costs, railroad track/roadway improvements, as well as construction of paved trail and bridges, including engineering design, Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI), and contingencies. Table 14 provides information relating to the anticipated costs for each alternative.

Based on this evaluation, Alternative C would likely be the lowest cost option among the five alternatives. Alternative B was 4 percent greater, while Alternatives A, D, and E were between 18 and 29 percent greater in projected costs.



Table 14: Project Cost

Project Costs			
Alternative	Preliminary Planning-Level Right-of-Way Costs	Preliminary Trail Design and Construction Cost	Total Project Cost
A	\$11.5 M	\$14.0 M	\$25.5 M
B	\$10.3 M	\$11.9 M	\$22.2 M
C	<b>\$9.1 M</b>	<b>\$12.3 M</b>	<b>\$21.4 M</b>
D	\$13.6 M	\$11.6 M	\$25.2 M
E	\$16.9 M	\$10.7 M	\$27.6 M

### 6.1.8 Stakeholder Input

Public involvement and outreach has been a key factor in identifying and evaluating the proposed routes for the South Sumter Connector Trail. Throughout the course of the Sumter County Gap Study, the FDOT Study Team has held interviews and meetings with a variety of stakeholders, as detailed in Table 9. As explained in Chapter 4 of this document, the FDOT Study Team received feedback from local stakeholders throughout the duration of the Study. This section will provide a general overview of the feedback received from various groups and stakeholders.

#### Hunters

Verbal and written comments received from self-described hunters were almost universally opposed to the southern corridor’s route through the Richloam WMA. A number of local hunting organizations rallied their membership to attend the public meetings held during the course of the Sumter County Gap Study. This interest group cited concerns relating to safety, incompatibility between hunting and multiuse trails, and tradition. Many hunters were concerned that the establishment of a trail through the Richloam WMA would disrupt a legacy of hunting traditions in the area.

#### Residents

In general, residents within the study area did not want alternatives close to their property. However, the volume of residential opposition to the southern alignments was substantially greater than that opposed to the northern alignments. Residents opposed to the southern alignment were primarily located along SR 575 in Pasco County and along the portions of the alignment within Sumter County. During the May 7, 2015 Public Kickoff Meeting, the FDOT Study Team was provided a petition with 324 signatures opposing the southern corridor.

#### Equestrians

Two major organizations were responsible for mobilizing the equestrian community, the Back Country Horsemen of Florida and the Nature Coast Back Country Horsemen. Throughout the course of the Sumter County Gap Study, a contingent of equestrian users provided feedback to the FDOT Study Team. Over 40 verbal and written comments received at the onset of the study were focused on the

incorporation of equestrian access to the trail. These comments also requested equestrian representation in the study.

The feedback from equestrian users was so extensive that Dr. Truman Prevatt, President of the Back Country Horsemen of Florida, was invited to be part of the PVT. He provided the FDOT Study Team with many insights into the equestrian community, including a PowerPoint presentation that indicated equestrian users would benefit more from the northern alignment than the southern alignment (see PIP – Appendix I).

The second round of equestrian comments was received prior to the Alternatives Development Public Meetings held in March 2016. These comments indicated preference for the northern corridor due to the connectivity to existing equestrian trail facilities in the Croom WMA.

### Trail Users and Bicyclists

Trail users and bicyclists indicated they prefer more scenic routes that are set apart from roadways. The majority of comments received from trail users stemmed from Pasco County residents who almost universally preferred Alternative E to any other option, including Alternative D. Verbal and written comments indicated the trail user experience of Alternative E would be far superior to any other alternative. They noted that the WSF would be a great environment for the trail, set apart from roadways in the middle of the wilderness.

Comments received from trail users in Pasco County also suggested that connecting the C2C Trail system to Pasco County was the better option, as the County is home to a large biking community, especially near Dade City. During the April 7, 2016 Alternatives Public Meeting, the FDOT Study Team was provided a petition with 491 signatures supporting the southern corridor.

### Elected and Appointed Officials

The FDOT Study Team received feedback from a variety of elected and appointed officials. Their comments are summarized below. For their full comment, please see PIP – Appendix G.

#### **Chairman Kathryn Starkey, Pasco County Board of County Commissioners**

In a letter provided to the FDOT Study Team at the April 7, 2016 Alternatives Public Meeting, Chairman Starkey indicated the Pasco County Board of County Commissioners' strong preference and support for the southern corridor. She cited economic development and mobility options for her constituents as the primary reasons for requesting a C2C connection to the Trilby and Dade City region via the southern corridor. In light of the presentations held on March 30th and 31<sup>st</sup> at the Alternatives Public Meeting, Chairman Starkey requested that the FDOT Study Team consider and evaluate a new corridor designed by Pasco County staff and herself. This corridor would incorporate SR 575 and C-575 in Pasco and Hernando Counties, and SR 50, SR 471, C-478, and C-469 in Sumter County. The corridor is a combination of the western segments of Alternatives D and E, and the eastern segments of Alternatives A and C.

#### **Mayor Kelly Williams, City of Webster**

Mayor Williams, a member of the PVT, offered support for the northern alignments. In particular, Mayor Williams supported one of the earlier northern alignments that traveled north along C-469 (from SR 50) to the City of Center Hill, and then traveled southwest toward the City of Webster. After discovering that CSX did not own the necessary parcels for this routing, Mayor Williams indicated her secondary preference was what would eventually become Alternative A.

Mayor Williams' primary concerns were connecting the Cities of Center Hill and Webster, as well as ensuring the trail would travel through the City of Webster's downtown district along Central Avenue. The City recently developed the City of Webster Master Plan. A major component is preparing for the inclusion of the C2C Trail. The City of Webster has issued a letter of support for the northern corridor.

**Commissioner Angela Morris, City of Webster**

Commissioner Morris indicated her preference for the northern corridor so that it could support economic development in the City of Webster. The City of Webster has issued a letter of support for the northern corridor.

**Mayor Camille Hernandez, City of Dade City**

During the April 7, 2016 Alternatives Public Meeting, Mayor Hernandez indicated her preference for the southern corridor as it would support economic development in the Trilby and Dade City region. During her discussion with the FDOT Study Team, she inquired about the evaluation process for determining the feasibility of alternatives, and also asked about the possibility of a loop that would incorporate both northern and southern corridors.<sup>9</sup>

**Bradley Arnold, Sumter County Administrator**

Speaking on behalf of the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners, Mr. Arnold, a member of the PVT, has indicated the County's preference for the northern corridor. Mr. Arnold has also indicated the County's preference that as much of the trail as possible be located along County and State right of way to reduce the costs of maintenance.

In January 2016, Sumter County approved a letter of support for the northern corridor that also opposed the southern corridor. Mr. Arnold further explained that Sumter County would not agree to maintain the trail if it were located along the southern corridor. During a PVT meeting held on March 17<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Arnold also indicated to Pasco County staff that Sumter County would not be open to considering a "loop" option at that time.

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### 6.1.9 Consistency with Adopted Plans

To the extent feasible, the South Sumter Connector Trail should be consistent with existing short- and long-term planning documents prepared by local, regional, and statewide agencies. During the course of the Sumter County Gap Study, several planning documents were examined to ensure the trail's consistency. These documents include the following:

- Florida Forest Service Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest (2014)
- Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040 – Long Range Transportation Plan (2015)
- Hernando/Citrus MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (2015)

<sup>9</sup> During the course of the Sumter County Gap Study, the concept of a loop was presented to the Study Team by Pasco County staff. The concept would encompass two phases: the northern alignment would be developed and constructed first; then the southern alignment would be constructed to provide a loop. Trail users could travel west along the northern route, continue south along the WST, and then travel east back toward the beginning of the northern alignment.

- Pasco County MPO Mobility 2040 – Long Range Transportation Plan (2015)
- Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan (2012)
- Hernando County Comprehensive Plan (2015)
- Pasco County Comprehensive Plan (2014)

### Florida Forest Service Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest<sup>10</sup>

During discussions with the FDOT Study Team, FFS staff indicated that the southern corridor traveling through the Richloam WMA was not consistent with the Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest. The Management Plan states that “management activities on WSF during this management period must serve to conserve, protect and enhance the natural and historical resources and manage resource-based public outdoor recreation, which is compatible with the conservation and protection of this forest.”

The Management Plan indicates that the protection of soil and water resources, as well as threatened and endangered species, is a key component of the next ten years. A trail through a major tract of the Richloam WMA may negatively impact a number of these protected resources. Pages 30 through 32 in the Management Plan list the known species of animals, plants, and lichens found within the Withlacoochee State Forest. This list also includes the species’ status among State and Federal Threatened and Endangered Species lists.

Impacts to these resources would be inconsistent with the Florida Forest Service Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest.

### Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040<sup>11</sup>

The Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) indicates that the MPO is a strong proponent of a regional trail system. It notes that “the Lake County Trails Master plan and the South Sumter Connector Trail project are the basis of the MPO’s two-county Regional Trails Program and are the foundation on which the program will build.”

The Regional Trails Program is also consistent with the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan. The intent of the Regional Trails Program is to provide a long-term vision for bringing a realistic and practical approach to connectivity among schools, parks, neighborhoods, town centers, libraries, and the surrounding counties. The Lake-Sumter MPO will develop policy and guiding principles following the recent adoption of Transportation 2040.

<sup>10</sup> Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Florida Forest Service (2015). Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Pasco, and Sumter Counties. [http://www.freshfromflorida.com/content/download/59644/1182419/WSF\\_2015\\_RMP\\_10\\_Year.pdf](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/content/download/59644/1182419/WSF_2015_RMP_10_Year.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (2016). Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040. [http://www.lakesumtermpo.com/pdfs/lrtp/2040/documentation/Transportation\\_2040\\_Adopted\\_120915.pdf](http://www.lakesumtermpo.com/pdfs/lrtp/2040/documentation/Transportation_2040_Adopted_120915.pdf)

### Hernando/Citrus MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan<sup>12</sup>

The Hernando/Citrus MPO 2040 LRTP “provides an expanded emphasis on transit, multiuse trails, sidewalks, and bicycle facility improvements” within Hernando and Citrus counties. The LRTP also explains that Hernando and Citrus Counties are members of the West Central Florida Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC), an organization established in 1991 to address the region’s transportation challenges with regard to personal mobility, access to jobs, goods movement, emergency evacuation, and growth management. The CCC established the GNT Connector in Hernando County as a regional priority. As previously explained, the eventual South Sumter Connector Trail will connect the GNT in east Hernando County to the SLT in east Sumter County.

### Pasco County MPO Mobility 2040 - Long Range Transportation Plan<sup>13</sup>

The Pasco County MPO Mobility 2040 LRTP indicates the MPO has adopted a Multi-Use Trail Plan for Pasco County which is included as part of the Mobility 2040 Cost Affordable Plan within the LRTP. The LRTP indicates that \$94 million has been set aside for multi-use trails, pedestrian facilities, and bicycle facilities between 2020 and 2040. The LRTP also emphasizes the connectivity of its trails to facilities in adjacent counties.

Goal 3 of the LRTP, to provide local and regional connectivity and transportation choices, includes a performance measure to increase the number of miles of multi-use trails within Pasco County from 76.3 miles in 2014 to 102.7 miles by 2040. Map 5-7 of the Mobility 2040 Cost Affordable Plan illustrates an extensive network of conceptual trails, including routes similar to Alternatives D and E traveling west along SR 575 toward the Trilby area and extending toward Dade City.

### Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan<sup>14</sup>

Sumter County and the Cities of Center Hill and Webster cooperatively developed the *Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan*. The Comprehensive Plan is a document that establishes the basic framework for development with extensive input from the general public. All development within Sumter County must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies established in the Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 4 of the Comprehensive Plan’s *Conservation Element* is to “conserve, protect and properly manage the natural resources so as to maintain the integrity of the natural systems and ensure that resources are used efficiently yet maintaining the highest environmental quality possible.” Objective 4.9 further states that “through October 2035, public conservation lands shall be protected from the adverse impacts of urbanization, and these conservation lands will be protected for appropriate public recreational use.” The Richloam Wildlife Management Area (WMA) – Baird Unit is a protected conservation land within Sumter County. Alternative E could adversely impact the conservation land within Sumter County.

<sup>12</sup> Hernando/Citrus Metropolitan Planning Organization (2012). 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. <http://www.hernandocitrusmpo.us/index.php/downloads/long-range-transportation-plan/506-amended-2040-lrtp-june-25-2015/file>

<sup>13</sup> Pasco County Metropolitan Planning Organization (2012). Mobility 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan. <http://www.pascocountyfl.net/DocumentCenter/View/21093>

<sup>14</sup> Sumter County, City of Center Hill, and City of Webster (2012). Unified Comprehensive Plan. <http://sumtercountyfl.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/Index/612>



The Sumter County Administrator, Bradley Arnold, has stated the southern alignments are not consistent with the *Conservation Element* of the Comprehensive Plan.

### Hernando County Comprehensive Plan<sup>15</sup>

The northern corridor travels within Hernando County for approximately a half-mile, from the WST to the county line at the Withlacoochee River. This portion of the trail is also located within the Croom WMA.

The southern corridor travels within Hernando County from the Withlacoochee River (Sumter/Hernando County Line) to Ladoochee Clay Sink Road (Hernando/Pasco County Line). Alternative D travels within Hernando County for approximately six (6) miles. This includes approximately four (4) miles through the Richloam WMA. Alternative E travels through approximately five (5) miles of Hernando County, all within the Richloam WMA.

Goal 6.01 of the Conservation Element is to “protect wildlife and conserve, appropriately use, and protect wildlife habitats.” Similarly, Goal 6.05 is to “protect and conserve identified wetlands and the natural function of wetlands by restricting incompatible land use activities in wetlands to those which do not significantly impact the quality and function of the wetland.”

The segment of Alternative A within Hernando County is entirely co-located within the Duke Energy easement, and could potentially provide the least impact to the surrounding WMA and wetlands. Alternatives B and C travel through approximately 850’ of forestry lands before co-locating within the east-west portion of the Duke Energy easement. These two alternatives will likely incur more impacts than Alternative A because they would travel through previously undisturbed lands.

Alternative D, which is co-located along SR 50 while in the Richloam WMA, has the potential to impact wetlands in the area due to the raised nature of SR 50. Currently, segments of SR 50 include steep embankments, particularly on the southern side of the roadway. Co-locating a trail within SR 50 right of way would require additional build-up of adjacent land in order to establish the trail at the same level as the roadway. This could potentially impact adjacent wetlands. As shown in

<sup>15</sup> Hernando County (2015). Hernando County’s Comprehensive Plan.  
<http://www.co.hernando.fl.us/plan/PlanningCompPlan.htm>

Figure 21, there are substantial wetlands located along SR 50 within the Richloam WMA. Alternative D has the potential to conflict with Goal 6.05 of the Conservation Element.

Alternative E, which would travel through approximately five miles of previously undisturbed conservation lands within Hernando County, could potentially impact the most wetlands and conservation lands among the five alternatives. It likely conflicts with the stated goals of the Hernando County Comprehensive Plan Conservation Element.

#### Pasco County Comprehensive Plan<sup>16</sup>

The northern corridor does not travel through Pasco County. The southern corridor is located within Pasco County for approximately three miles. Alternative D does not travel through any conservation lands within Pasco County. Alternative E travels through the southern portion of the Richloam WMA for nearly a half-mile. Policy 1.1.4 of the Pasco County Comprehensive Plan Conservation Element is concerned with the protection of existing conservation lands. Considering Alternative E travels through a small portion of the Richloam WMA within Pasco County, potential impacts within this portion of the WMA could be mitigated or avoided. Wetlands are also not as prevalent in this smaller area of the Richloam WMA.

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## 6.2 Evaluation Criteria Results

The following section discusses the Tier-Three Screening results for the five proposed alternatives: Alternatives A, B, and C along the northern corridor; and Alternatives D and E along the southern corridor.

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### 6.2.1 Maintenance Responsibility

Alternatives A, B, and C along the northern corridor would require a trail maintenance agreement between FDOT and Sumter and Hernando Counties, as well as the Cities of Center Hill (Alternative A only) and Webster. Sumter County and the City of Webster have issued letters of support for the northern alignment, and indicated they would be willing to sign the agreement. A letter of support for the northern alignment from Hernando County is forthcoming, and County staff have verbally indicated that the County would be willing to sign the agreement. The City of Center Hill understands there may be potential property relocations along C-469 within the city limits and has not offered a letter of support for Alternative A at this time.

Alternatives D and E along the southern corridor would require a trail maintenance agreement between FDOT and Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties. Sumter County has indicated it will not maintain a trail located along the southern alignment. Hernando County has indicated its preference for the northern alignment to capitalize on the current work underway for the GNT. Pasco County has issued a letter of support for the southern alignment and indicated its willingness to sign a maintenance agreement for its portion of the trail.

<sup>16</sup> Pasco County (2014). Pasco County Comprehensive Plan. <http://www.pascocountyfl.net/index.aspx?NID=1807>

Out of the five alternatives proposed, only Alternatives B and C would likely meet the criteria of having all respective local jurisdictions agree to maintain the trail once it is in operation.

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## 6.2.2 Travel Service Characteristics

In terms of new construction, Alternative E and Alternative D would require the least amount of construction miles. This would likely reduce some of the costs of construction when compared to Alternatives A, B, and C.

In terms of the overall length of the C2C trail, Alternatives A, B, and C are unchanged from their new construction miles. However, Alternatives D and E require including an additional 9.1 miles of the WST to make the required connection to the GNT for purposes of “closing the gap” in the C2C system. This would increase the overall length of the C2C system as well as increase the length the user must travel to continue from the GNT in Hernando County to the SLT in eastern Sumter County. In effect, Alternatives D and E would be longer than Alternatives A, B, and C.

Alternatives A, B, and C appear to have a more moderate balance between co-locating along a roadway and locating apart from a roadway. Alternative D is almost entirely co-located along SR 50, SR 575, and C-575, while more than half of Alternative E is located apart from roadways. Approximately 33 percent of Alternative E is located in the Richloam WMA as well.

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## 6.2.3 Alignment and Right of Way Needs

Alternatives A, D, and E are expected to yield several property relocations. Local agencies such as Sumter County and the Cities of Center Hill and Webster have indicated they would not support an alignment that would require residents or businesses to relocate.

Alternatives B and C are the only alignments that are not expected to produce property relocations.

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## 6.2.4 Accessibility and Safety

### Average Crash Rate Along Adjacent Roadways

Traffic accident data over a three-year period was analyzed within the study area. The average crash rate per mile per year of adjacent roadways was determined in order to evaluate the relative level of safety for the alternatives along their respective roadways. Alternatives A and B, co-locating entirely along lower volume County facilities, have the smallest crash rates per mile per year. Alternative C offers the moderate option with 1.1 crashes per mile per year. Alternatives D and E, however, have significantly higher rates with 2.5 and 3.4 crashes per mile per year, respectively. This is due to their location along major roadways such as SR 50 and SR 575. In comparison, the regional average (Sumter, Hernando, and Pasco counties) along paved roadways for the same three-year period is 3.5 crashes per mile per year.



### Length of Trail Within Three Miles of Emergency Response

Using geospatial analysis, a three-mile coverage area of existing emergency response stations was applied against all five alternatives. The analysis indicated that Alternatives A, B, and C have high coverage rates, spanning 73 to 80 percent. Alternatives D and E, however, are provided just 24 percent coverage along the entirety of their routes. This suggests that emergency responders may be quicker to arrive at emergencies along the northern alignments than at emergencies along the southern alignments.

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## 6.2.5 Potential Environmental Impacts

### Section 4(f)

The Croom WMA, Richloam WMA, and Richloam WMA – Baird Unit are all properties that support recreational uses, which introduces the potential need to consider Section 4(f) impacts as part of future project phases. While impacts to the Croom WMA and Richloam WMA – Baird Unit are expected to be minimal, Richloam WMA may incur greater impacts as a result of the southern corridor, particularly along the Alternative E route. As the Sumter County Gap Study has identified several other alternatives that are possible routes for the trail, it is unlikely that Alternative E would be deemed the only viable route. From a Section 4(f) perspective, the existence of other feasible routes that avoid the impact to hunting activities presents a challenge to any trail alignment that is located in conflict with this recreational use.

### Wetlands and Floodplains

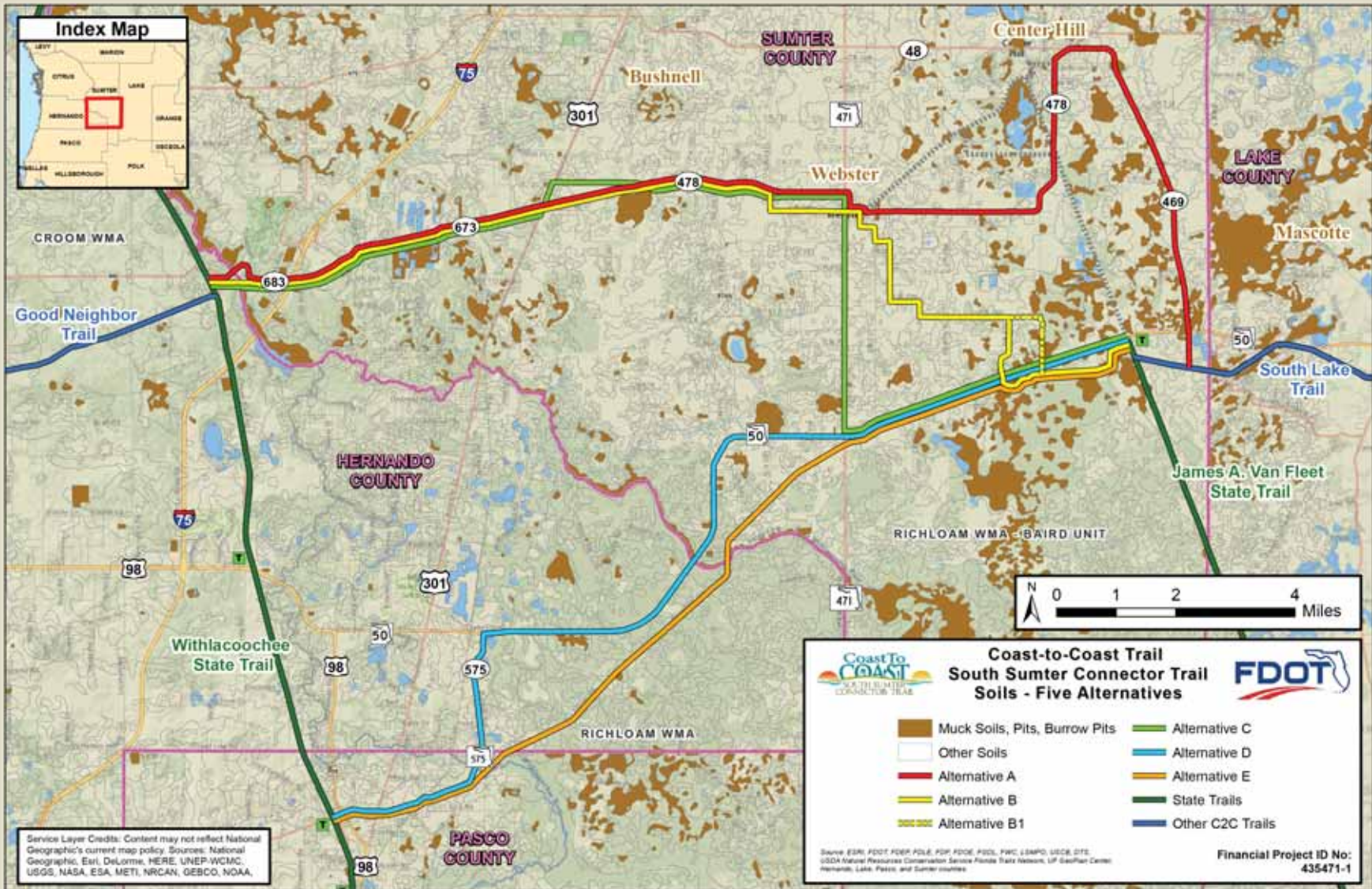
While many wetlands and floodplains in the study area may be spread far enough apart for a trail to avoid, there is a large volume of wetlands and floodplains south of SR 50 in the Richloam WMA and Richloam WMA – Baird Unit that may prove difficult to avoid. In addition, there is a large coverage of floodplains and some wetlands along the C-469 corridor that may be difficult to avoid for Alternative A. Of the five proposed routes, Alternatives D and E have the greatest projected impacts to wetlands, while Alternatives A, D, and E are expected to have the greatest impact to floodplains.

### Threatened and Endangered Species

Through geospatial analysis, potential habitats of the gopher tortoise and the red-cockaded woodpecker were identified in the western and southern portions of the study area. Impacts to these protected species will need to be evaluated further during the PD&E phase of the project. There are also Florida scrubjays within Hernando County, but they are several miles away from any alternative. Geospatial data was unavailable for the eastern indigo snake, but its preferred habitat is similar to the environment found within the study area. It is possible that this species may also be located in the study area.

### Soils

While muck soils are not as detrimental to a trail as to major transportation facilities, these soils should be avoided where feasible. As Figure 24 illustrates, muck soils are most prevalent around the Lake/Sumter County Line, near Alternative A and the VFST trailhead. Muck soils are also located along Alternatives A, B, and C near C-673 and C-683.



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## 6.2.6 Hunting

The Croom WMA and the Richloam WMA – Baird Unit are designated as still hunting areas. Small dogs and bird dogs are allowed in portions of the Croom WMA, and bird dogs and retrievers are allowed in Richloam WMA – Baird Unit, during the small game season. The northern alignments travel through the Croom WMA for approximately 1.5 miles. The entirety of Alternatives A, B, and C is located east of Croom Rital Road and north of Croom Road. The specific stipulations allowing for small dogs during small game season only apply to areas west of Croom Rital Road. Only bird dogs are allowed north of Croom Road.

The Richloam WMA, however, is open to dog hunting during the appropriate seasons. Alternative E travels through the middle of the Richloam WMA for approximately 5.5 miles. Alternative D travels through the Richloam WMA for approximately 5.3 miles, but the trail would be co-located along SR 50, a major facility in the region that hunters typically stay away from for hunting and safety reasons.

Out of the five routes, Alternative E is likely the greatest concern from the perspective of safety and the compatibility of recreational uses. The FFS has indicated this routing through the Richloam WMA is a potentially dangerous location for a multiuse trail. Hunters in the region have expressed similar concerns.

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## 6.2.7 Project Costs

After conducting a planning-level geospatial right of way analysis, and estimating the per-mile cost of construction, as well as the construction of various structures for the respective Alternatives, the FDOT Study Team determined total project cost for each Alternative. These are planning-level estimates. The projected costs are presented in Table 14. More important than the absolute costs indicated in Table 14 are the relative costs between the five Alternatives.

As Table 14 indicates, Alternative C had the lowest projected right of way costs among the Alternatives. In contrast, Alternative E and D have the largest and second-largest estimated right of way costs. Alternative E and D have the smallest and second-smallest estimated design and construction costs. Despite having the second-largest anticipated design and construction cost, Alternative C is expected to have the smallest total project cost. Alternatives E and D, however, have the largest and second-largest estimated total project costs.

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## 6.2.8 Stakeholder Input

Many comments received by the FDOT Study Team indicated opposition to the southern alignments. Reasons for the opposition included private property concerns (residents in the region); the safety of trail users and hunters within the Richloam WMA, a dog hunting WMA; and the threat of the trail ruining or causing the removal of hunting in the Richloam WMA.

In addition to these public comments, Sumter County indicated it would not support or maintain any trail along the southern corridor for two primary reasons: the southern alignment routes do not provide any economic benefit to the two cities in the region, and the routes are inconsistent with the

*Conservation Element* of the Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan. Members of FFS also indicated they preferred the northern alignments because they did not adversely affect major conservation areas and did not conflict with the FFS WSF Management Plan. They also indicated Alternative D and especially Alternative E may be potentially dangerous routes for trail users.

Support for the southern alignments came primarily from stakeholders in Pasco County. Bicyclists and trail users much preferred Alternative E over the four other alternatives because the route was located in a scenic, forested area of the region. This route would offer scenic views, shade, and distance from traffic. Public officials from Dade City and Pasco County expressed a preference for a southerly route (represented by Alternatives D and E) for the expected economic development they perceived to result within the Trilby/Dade City region.

In total, there were 324 signatures in opposition to the southern corridor, and 491 signatures in support of the southern corridor.

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## 6.2.9 Planning Consistency

### Florida Forest Service Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest

The Management Plan lists a variety of wetland, floodplain, and soil resources within the WSF that should be protected. Similarly, the Management Plan lists the known species of animals, plants, and lichens found within the WSF that should be protected. Alternatives D and E would likely impact these resources within the Richloam WMA. Impacts to these resources would be inconsistent with the Florida Forest Service Ten-Year Resource Management Plan for the Withlacoochee State Forest. Impacts from Alternatives D and E are expected to be moderate, while impacts from Alternatives A, B, and C in the Croom WMA, another tract within the WSF, are expected to be minimal.

### Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040

All five alternatives, as potential segments of the C2C system, are consistent with the Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

### Hernando/Citrus MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

All five alternatives, as potential segments of the C2C system, are consistent with the Hernando/Citrus MPO 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

### Pasco County MPO Mobility 2040 – Long Range Transportation Plan

All five alternatives, as potential segments of the C2C system, are consistent with the Pasco County MPO Mobility 2040 – Long Range Transportation Plan.

### Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan

Goal 4 of the Comprehensive Plan entails the conservation and protection of the County's natural resources. Objective 4.9 states that "through October 2035, public conservation lands shall be protected from the adverse impacts of urbanization, and these conservation lands will be protected for appropriate public recreational use." Alternative D is co-located along SR 50 through the easternmost portion of the Richloam WMA. Despite locating within the SR 50 right of way, impacts to wetlands, floodplains, and threatened and endangered species may still occur.

Similarly, Alternative E travels through portions of the Richloam WMA – Baird Unit and could potentially cause impacts to this tract of the WSF.

### Hernando County Comprehensive Plan

The five alternatives all travel through conservation areas within Hernando County. Alternatives A, B, and C travel through the Croom WMA for approximately a half-mile. Alternative A travels along an existing Duke Energy easement, with a cleared path through the forest. It would potentially impact the least amount of conservation land among the five alternatives. Alternatives B and C co-locate within a portion of the Duke Energy easement and then travel through a small segment (850') of undisturbed forest land.

Alternative D is co-located along SR 50 within the Richloam WMA for approximately four miles. Co-locating along SR 50 could potentially reduce impacts to the conservation land, but it may also impact more wetlands located nearby, as a result of the trail needing to be raised up to be consistent with the existing level of the roadway.

Alternative E travels through approximately five miles of undisturbed land within the Richloam WMA. It could cause significant impacts to the surrounding conservation lands and wetlands.

Alternatives A, B, and C would likely cause fewer impacts to the conservation lands and wetlands within Hernando County, considering the length of the segments traveling through wetlands and the Croom WMA. In contrast, Alternative D and E may potentially cause significant impacts to wetlands and/or conservation lands.

For these reasons, Alternatives A, B, and C are consistent with the Hernando County Comprehensive Plan – Conservation Element, while Alternatives D and E are not consistent.

### Pasco County Comprehensive Plan

Alternatives D and E are the only alternatives that travel through Pasco County. Alternative D is entirely co-located along roadways within Pasco County, while Alternative E travels through Richloam WMA within Pasco County for approximately a half-mile. There are also minimal wetlands within this region of Pasco County. Considering the relatively small segment within Pasco County's portion of the Richloam WMA, potential impacts could be avoided or mitigated within the area. For this reason, Alternatives D and E are consistent with the Pasco County Comprehensive Plan – Conservation Element.

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## 6.3 Recommended Corridor for Advancement to the PD&E Study Phase

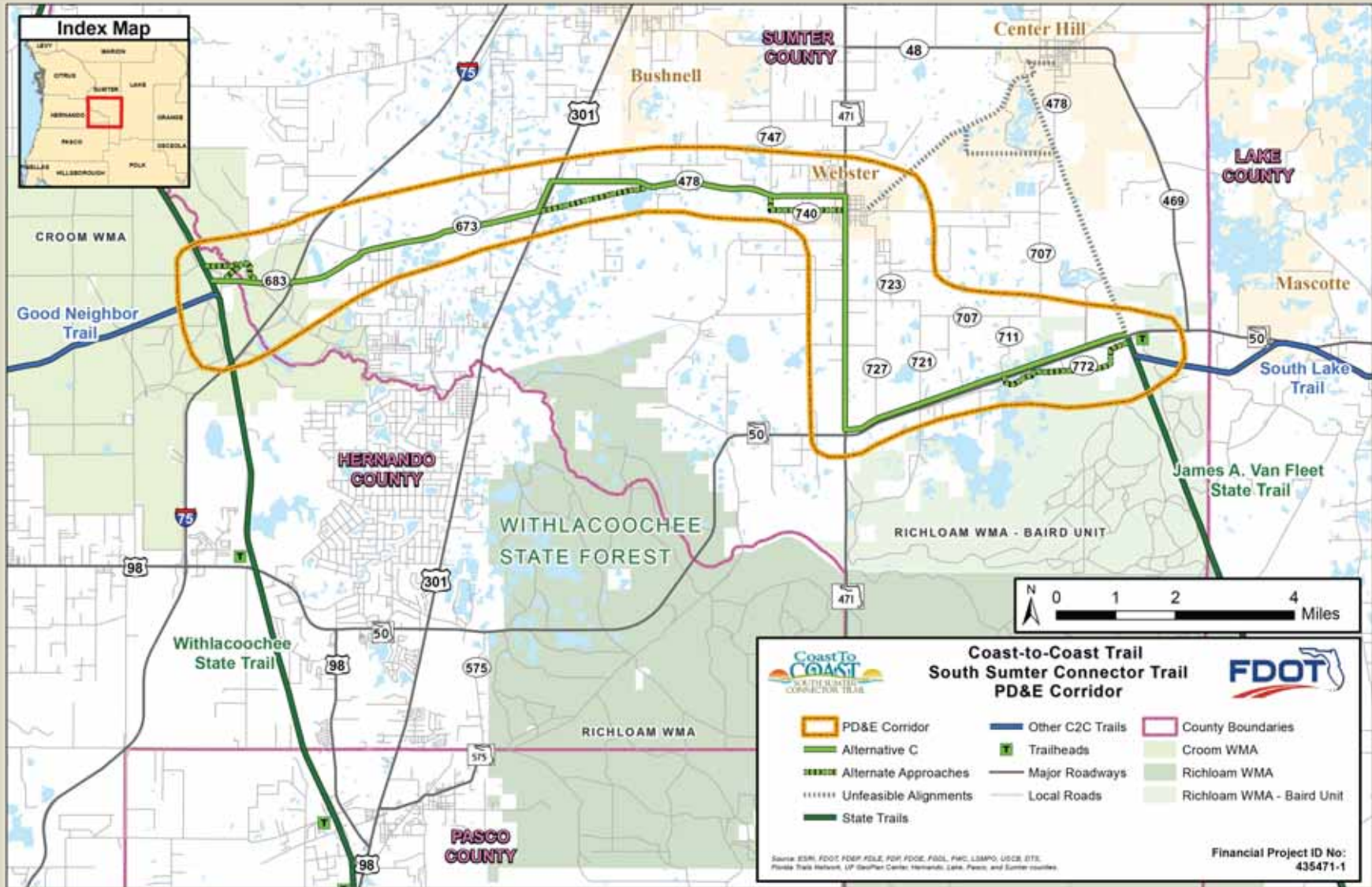
The subject planning evaluation has developed and evaluated a range of potential alternatives in order to evaluate the viability of a future trail route that closes the Sumter Gap in the Coast-to-Coast Trail network. As a result of the extensive qualitative and quantitative analyses supported by extensive coordination with project stakeholders and public outreach, the FDOT Study Team has identified Alternative C as the recommended corridor of the five options considered. Given the key factors involved in the comparative evaluation, Alternative C was the only option considered fully viable, as it provides an appropriate balance of adherence to design criteria, maintaining agency support,

minimization of right of way impacts and other factors. Additional elements that form the basis for this decision include:

- Safety concerns relating to:
  - hunting near the Richloam WMA segment of Alternative E
  - emergency response access along Alternative E
  - traffic accidents near Alternatives D and E;
- Sumter County Board of County Commissioners supports the northern corridor, and will only be willing to maintain a trail following a northerly orientation;
- Potential property relocations along Alternatives A, D, and E;
- Right of way constraints along Alternative A, B, D, and E;
- Stakeholder opposition from local residents and hunters along Alternatives D and E in the Mabel, Linden, Ridge Manor, and Trilby communities;
- Potential environmental impacts along Alternatives D and E that include wetlands, floodplains, potential for Section 4(f) issues, and resistance from both the Forest Service, and the hunting community, specifically dog hunters;
- Inconsistencies with the FFS MSF Management Plan and Sumter County Unified Comprehensive Plan for Alternatives D and E; and

As the project advances to the PD&E Study phase, it is important to bear in mind that federal requirements associated with the PD&E process will result in Alternative C being revisited in greater detail as part of a corridor assessment that may evaluate variations in the specific routing identified through the subject planning analysis. In that vein the Sumter County Gap Study has also identified a more generalized corridor surrounding Alternative C that reflects the potential for accommodating these variations. It is this corridor that is recommended for advancement to the PD&E Study. Illustrated in Figure 25 along with Alternative C, the recommended corridor includes several areas of opportunity that may be further evaluated. These areas include:

- Alignment specifics from the western terminus with the WST to C-683, including the crossing of the Withlacoochee River from Hernando into Sumter County;
- The western, eastern, and southern approaches to the City of Webster;
- The area southeast of the City of Webster with low-volume, tree-canopied County facilities; and
- The SR 50/ C-772 segment near the VFST trailhead.



# Sumter County Gap Study

## Alternatives Analysis Report

FIGURE 25  
PD&E Alternative and Corridor

# 7

## Typical Section Considerations

### 7.1 Typical Section Concepts

There are multiple existing typical sections and right of way widths along the Recommended Corridor, presenting a challenge when implementing a multiuse trail, as not one set layout will fit every condition. Keeping the context of the trail in mind as it traverses a variety of conditions, several concepts and alternatives were developed to include a new 12-ft wide multiuse trail. It is anticipated that at least one of these three alternatives can be applied to any typical section along the proposed trail corridor.

The first typical section involves removing the existing swale and placing the multiuse trail beside the existing roadway. This can be done using the FDOT minimum offset of 5' from the roadway. The benefits of this option include leaving the existing roadway and swale on the opposite side in place, thus reducing the costs of replacing or moving these features. The drawback to this alternative is the limited spacing between the roadway and multiuse trail. Although meeting the FDOT standards, C-673 is a rural roadway, which typically serves vehicles traveling at higher speeds. This alternative is illustrated in Figure 26.

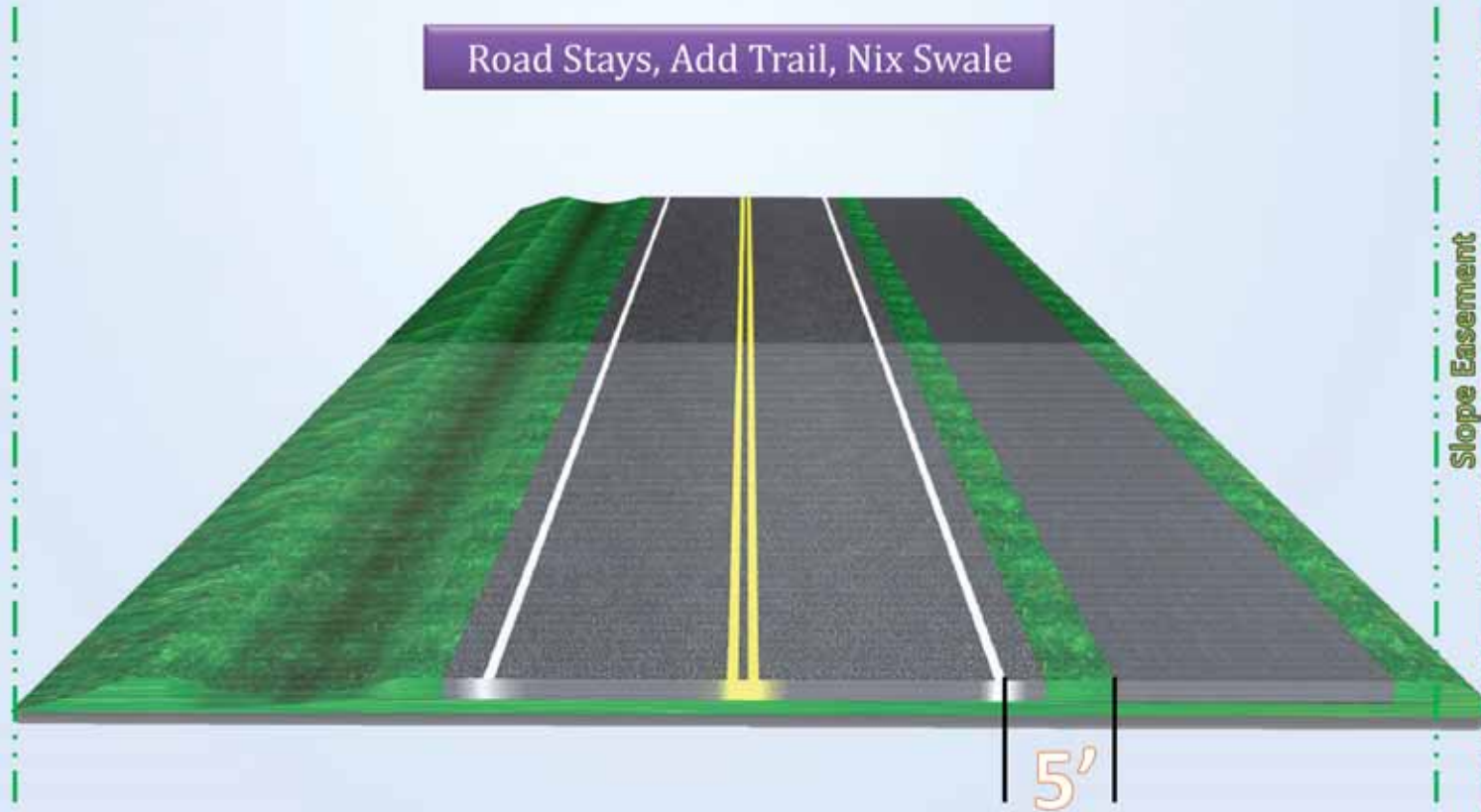
The second typical section alternative uses a similar concept as Alternative 1. Alternative 2 also does not alter the existing roadway and swale, while placing the multiuse trail on the opposite side of a new 12-foot wide swale. This alternative provides a wider buffer between the roadway and the new trail, while also serving as an added feature for drainage. As with Alternative 1, there will be no added cost of re-aligning and moving the roadway. The drawback to this plan is that the entire layout will not fit within the 60-foot right of way. Furthermore, implementation of this plan will require the purchase of the needed right of way along the corresponding side of the roadway. This approach is illustrated in Figure 27.

Alternative 3 was created as a Compact "Hybrid" Approach, using features from both Alternatives 1 and 2. This alternative places the multiuse trail within the existing right of way and creates a 10-foot wide "V" Swale as a buffer between the trail and the roadway. However, this option does not leave the existing roadway and swale. The roadway will be relocated and the existing swale will be removed. To provide additional drainage, a curb and gutter system will be placed along the outside edge of the roadway. Figure 28 illustrates the hybrid approach for typical sections.



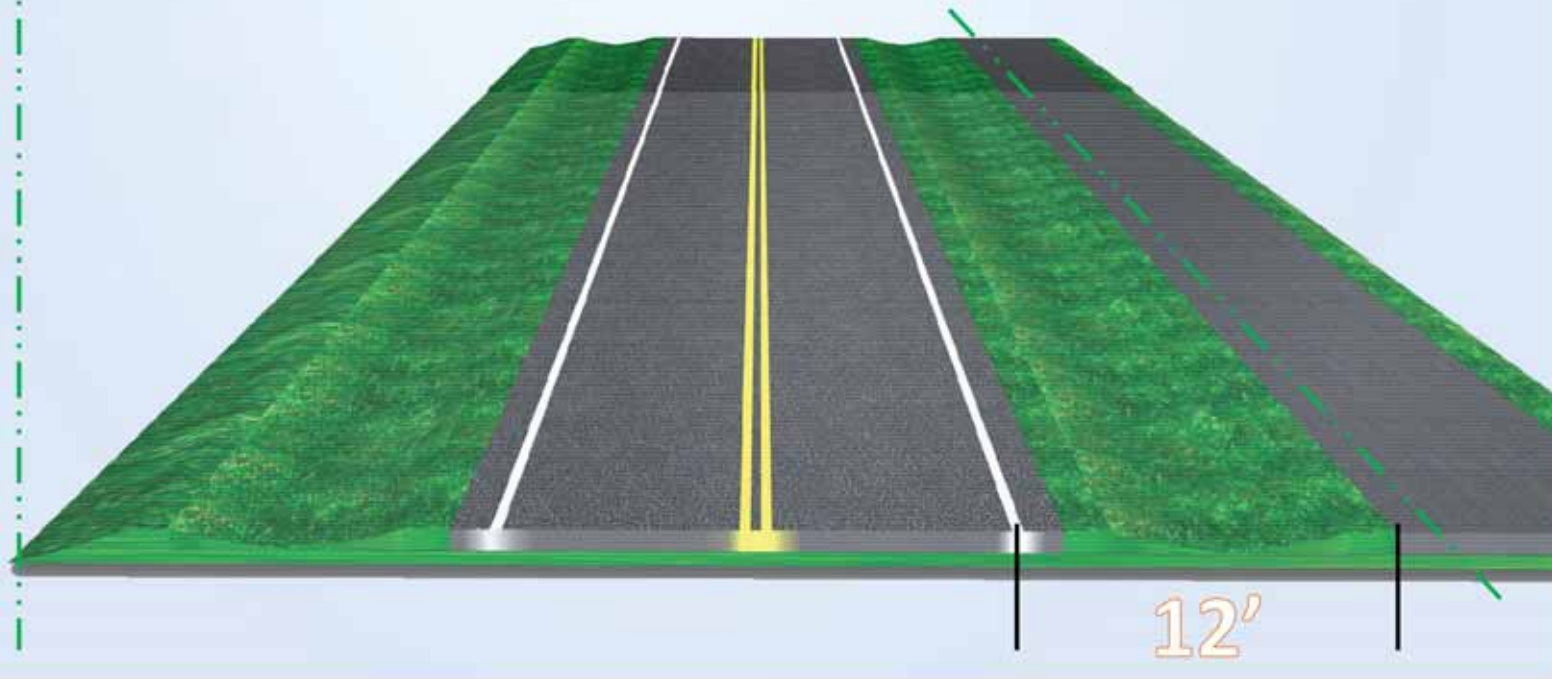
# Typical Section Considerations

Road Stays, Add Trail, Nix Swale

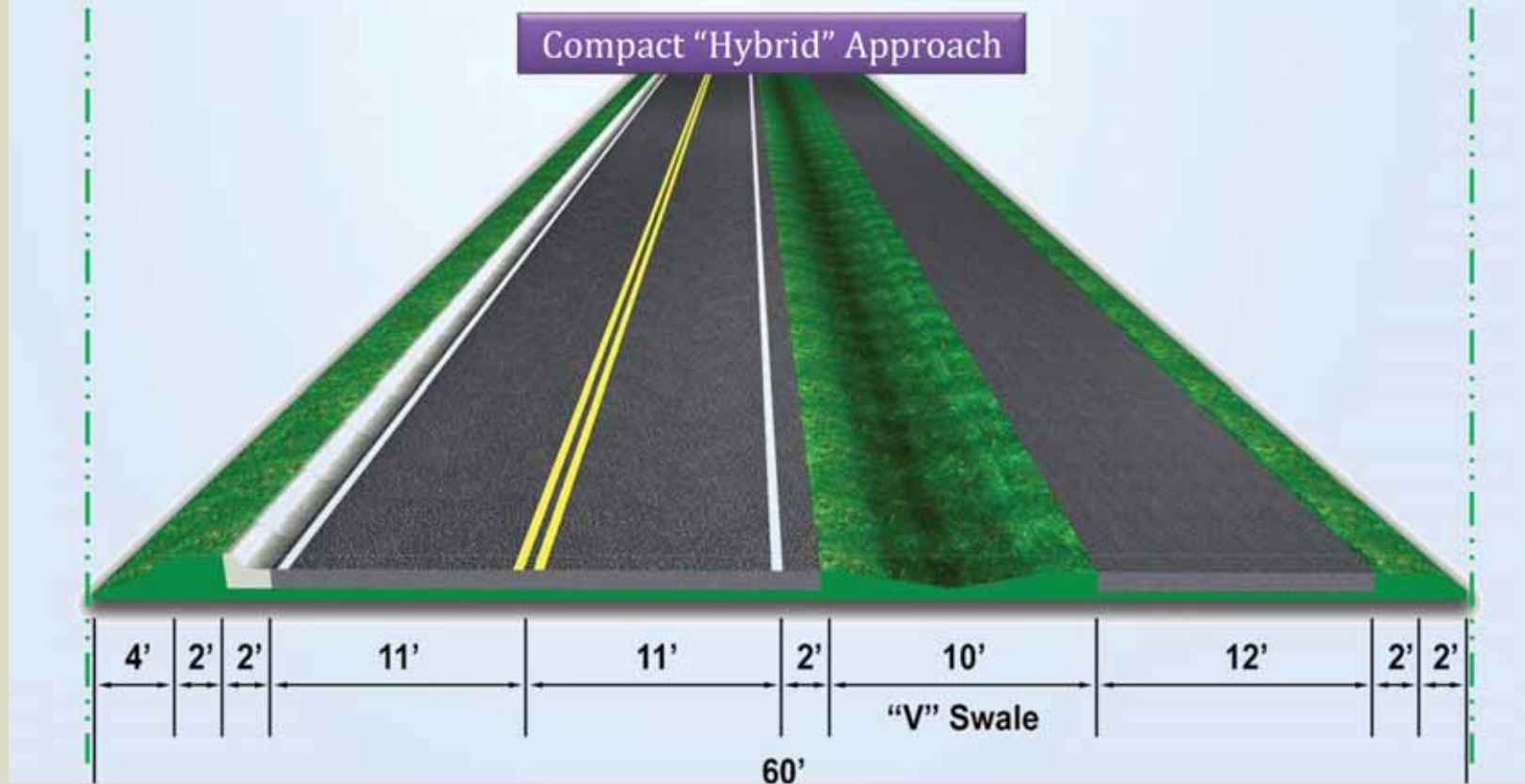


# Typical Section Considerations

Road Stays, Add Trail, Keep Swale



# Typical Section Considerations



# 8

## Design Considerations

### 8.1 Driveway and Cross Street Crossings

The implementation of the multiuse trail will impact adjacent driveways and side-street crossings depending upon which side of the street the trail is placed on. Currently, the exact location relative to the proposed route has not been determined. This decision as to which side of the street the trail will be located will be chosen with considerations to minimize driveway and side street crossings.

While trails provide segregation from motor vehicle traffic along most of their length, they inevitably intersect with roadways and driveways resulting in varying levels of conflict with motorized traffic. There are numerous access points to the trail corridor by means of public and private roads. Most of these access points are rural roads that cross the corridor while providing access to local residents. Corridor access is also obtained through numerous driveways that cross the corridor. As with the street crossings, the majority of driveways are rural and unpaved. Presented below is a summary of the major identified roadway crossings.

- US 301
- SR 50
- US 98

Preliminary analysis of each of these crossings was completed to determine the appropriate trail crossing method using FDOT's *Plans Preparation Manual Volume 1 – Design Criteria and Process*<sup>17</sup> and AASHTO's *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*.<sup>18</sup> These references present a number of considerations that take the trail users, motor vehicle users, expectations, abilities, and behaviors into account for trail design.

Generally, the right of way will be assigned to the motorists. The users of the trail have the greatest potential of harm where conflicts occur; therefore, they must be put in a position of making active decisions related to crossing a roadway or driveway. Signage and control mechanisms will be designed for the trail to ensure that the users are made aware of the conflict points in advance of, as well as at

<sup>17</sup> Florida Department of Transportation (2016). *Plans Preparation Manual Volume 1 – Design Criteria and Process*. Chapter 8: Pedestrian, Bicycle and Public Transit Facilities.  
<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/PPMManual/2016/Volume1/Chap08.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (1999). *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

the point of, conflict. At the crossing, signs and crosswalks will also warn the motorists that a crossing point exists. In addition to signs and crosswalks, the trail will be designed with passive features that will change the general character at the crossing, causing the user to become more attentive to the surroundings.

## 8.2 Major Grade Crossings

In the next phases of the project the conceptual design will address issues identified in the planning-level study. Although Alternative C became the recommended alternative, the route for crossing the railroad could assume the route of Alternatives A and B. The recommended corridor for the South Sumter Connector Trail will have one major railroad crossing at an active CSX freight-line. CSX is a Class I railroad within the study area that operates 2,800 miles (1,508 route miles) of track in Florida. Both of the major north-south lines, the A- and the S-line, terminate in Central Florida, and consist of one mainline used heavily as the route from Tampa to Jacksonville.

All of the northern alignments cross the S-line within the same area. Both alignments A and B cross the S-line and US 301 south at C-738A, while alignment C crosses the railroad tracks and US 301 farther north at C-478. Photographs taken of these two crossings are shown in Figure 29 and Figure 30. The two southern alignments cross the S-line at SR 575. This crossing is equipped with gates and flashers, as illustrated in Figure 31. It is important to note that there is no sidewalk connection across the railroad tracks. One possible solution at these conflict points would be a grade separated connection across the rail line with active warning devices for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Figure 29: US 301 / S-Line Crossing at C-478



Figure 30: US 301/ S-Line Crossing at C-738A



Figure 31: S-Line Crossing at SR 575



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## 8.3 Physical or Natural Barriers

In order to increase safety, it is desirable to provide grade separation at a few locations. Through initial field reviews and analysis, it was determined that a grade-separated crossing at the Withlacoochee River will be required in order to “close the gap” between the SLT in Sumter County and the GNT in Hernando County.

### Withlacoochee River

The Withlacoochee River originates from the Green Swamp in Central Florida. It flows through Pasco County and Hernando County, while forming part of the boundary between Hernando County and Sumter County, and the entire boundary between Citrus County and Sumter County. The river is 141 miles long and has a drainage basin of 1,170 square miles. This is one of the few rivers in the entire world that flows south to north, after which it flows west and empties into the Gulf of Mexico.

In order to cross the Withlacoochee River within the study area, a new bridge will need to be constructed. Taking into consideration existing utilities, natural barriers, private property lines and other information along the northern alignment, three separate alternatives were developed. Figure 32 illustrates three potential routes identified by the FDOT Study Team for crossing the Withlacoochee River.

The first route, which would have the least anticipated impacts to the WSF, utilizes existing paths and clearings. This route would follow the Duke Energy utility easement northeast across the Withlacoochee River, and then travel south along SW 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue to connect to C-683. The trail would have to maintain a minimum offset of 25' from any utility poles or guy wires. Figure 33 shows the location of the Withlacoochee River crossing along the Duke Energy utility easement.

The second route would travel east along the utility easement, then continue east through WSF lands, cross the Withlacoochee River where the railroad originally crossed, and then connect to C-683 using the abandoned railroad bed. The segment of the trail co-locating within the utility easement would be required to have an offset of 25' from utility poles and guy wires. Crossing the river at this location would require land clearing, contributing to impacts to the WSF. The original crossing location of the railroad is shown in Figure 34.

The third option, which would have the most anticipated impacts to the WSF, would head east through the WSF from the Croom Rital Road / Nobleton Croom Road intersection, staying south of wetlands and floodplains, before crossing the Withlacoochee River north of the previous two routes. After crossing the Withlacoochee River, the trail would cross the Duke Energy easement, heading south along SW 90<sup>th</sup> Avenue to connect to C-683.

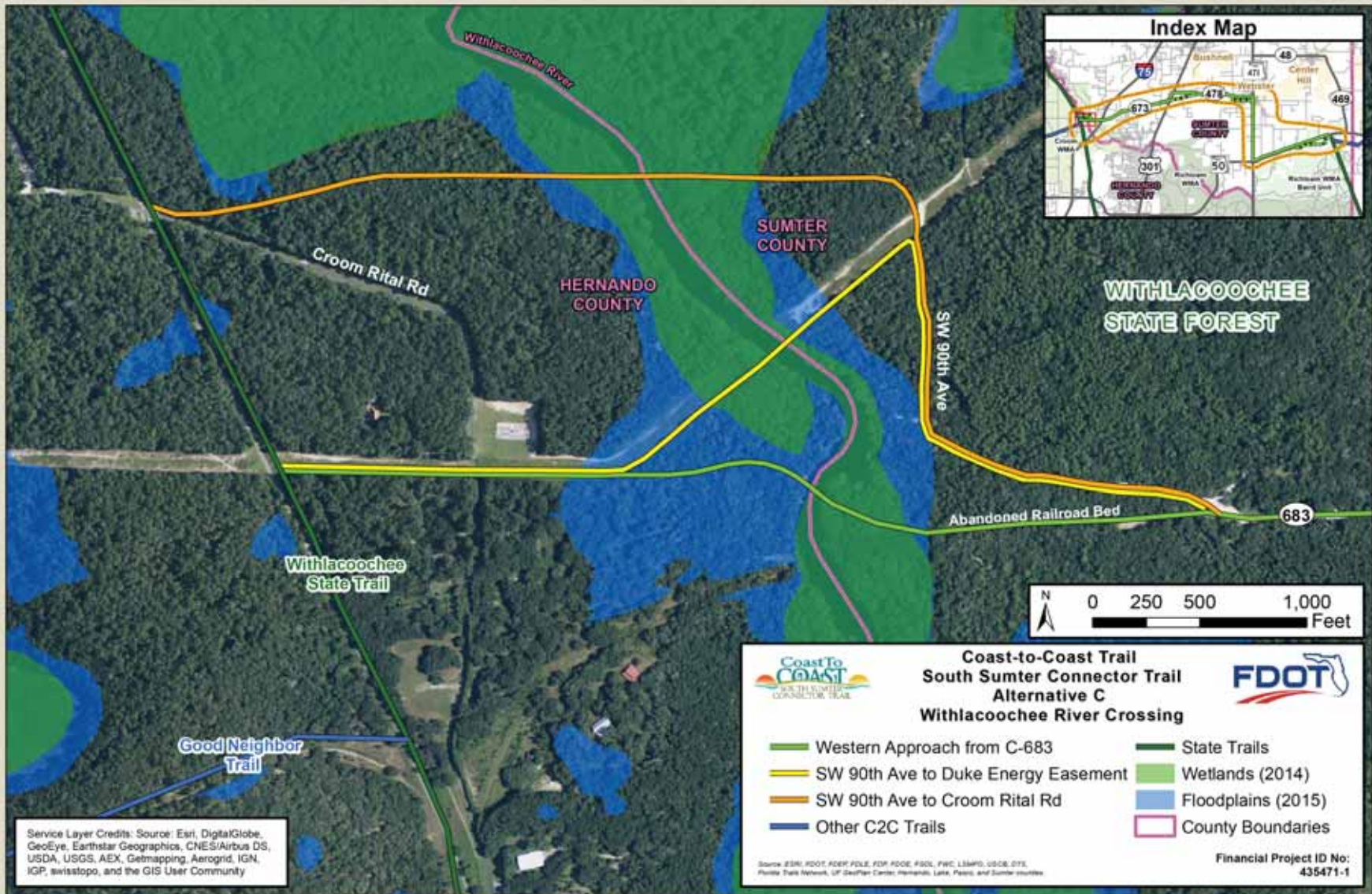




Figure 33: Withlacoochee River Crossing - Duke Energy Easement



Figure 34: Withlacoochee River Crossing - Original Railroad Bed



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## 8.4 Trailhead Opportunities

A trailhead provides access to the trail, and may include a shelter or building with or without restrooms, a paved or unpaved parking lot, trail information, and other related amenities. A trailhead may be within or outside of the trail right of way. The FDOT policy on trailheads is that they be developed by the local jurisdictions. Therefore, the development of trailheads will be a coordinated effort between Sumter and Hernando Counties, and the City of Webster. The C2C Leadership Team has recommended that the distance between trailheads should be approximately six miles.

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## 8.5 User Experience and Aesthetics

In addition to safety and trail amenities, a scenic route has the potential to attract more recreational trail users. The northern alignment is situated in a rural area, with the cities of Center Hill and Webster lending to the attractive rural aesthetic of the proposed alignment. This could provide an opportunity for both cities to share their history, culture, and beauty with trail users.

Feedback from stakeholders indicated that the route through the Withlacoochee State Forest may offer trail users a scenic view, enhancing the attractiveness of the trail for potential users. With a portion running through the Withlacoochee State Forest, the southern alignment offers a remote location away from major roadways. Bicyclists have expressed an interest in a trail that is set apart from the roadway, providing a greater sense of safety for trail users.

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## 8.6 Americans with Disability Act Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities. The Department of Transportation is tasked with enforcing the ADA regulations governing transit. All trails and proposed facilities will meet ADA standards.

# 9

## Next Steps

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### 9.1 Summary of Sumter County Gap Study Recommendations

The goal of this planning study was to identify a recommended corridor that completes the Sumter Gap, the largest missing segment within the C2C Trail system. This project was coordinated extensively with a variety of state, regional, and local stakeholders to develop a range of potential solutions that provided an appropriate balance of design elements and avoidance of constraints within a context-sensitive approach that sought to respond to the needs and desires of the surrounding communities. These efforts engaged FDOT District Seven, FDEP Office of Greenways and Trails, three MPO's, three counties, the cities of Webster and Center Hill, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway, CSX, Duke Energy, Florida Forest Service, equestrian groups, and many others.

While several alternatives were evaluated to complete the gap, five alternatives were ultimately developed and assessed under the Alternatives Evaluation process. As described in Chapters 5 and 6, three northern and two southern alternatives were considered. The southern corridor was eliminated due to the potential environmental challenges, relocation needs, and lack of maintaining agency support that represented fatal flaws for these options. Alternative A along the northern corridor was also eliminated due to the community impacts and safety / operations challenges at the intersection of C-469 and Market Street. Given the 50' minimum right of way needs for the trail it was determined that Alternative B did not have sufficient right of way to support the development of the trail.

Based on the evaluation screening conducted, it was determined that Alternative C was the only viable trail route that could be considered for advancement to the next project phase. However, this was sufficient to demonstrate project feasibility. As the project advances to the PD&E Study phase, it is important to bear in mind that federal requirements associated with the PD&E process will result in Alternative C being revisited in greater detail as part of a corridor assessment that may evaluate variations in the specific routing identified through the subject planning analysis. It is therefore the recommendation of the Sumter County Gap Study to advance a more generalized corridor surrounding Alternative C to the PD&E phase. This approach recognizes the potential for the future PD&E Study to explore and accommodate such routing variations in further detail. Within the framework of a PD&E Study, the next phase of this assessment can then continue to explore options to provide a balance between the needs and desires expressed by the surrounding communities and future trail users, and policy constraints to which the project must adhere relative to planning and design of trail facilities.



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## 9.2 Next Steps for the South Sumter Connector Trail

It is anticipated that the subsequent project phase, the PD&E Study, will begin late 2016 / early 2017. This phase of the project will further evaluate and refine the corridor area through a series of technical analyses of the corridor and its surroundings, as well as through continued public involvement. An appropriate level of public involvement activities will be conducted throughout all subsequent project phases including the PD&E Study. These public involvement activities will include continued coordination meetings with local government and environmental permitting agencies, public meetings, agency partners, and small group meetings, as directed by the FDOT to identify funding strategies, joint participation opportunities, and other elements related to the development of an implementation plan. The following meetings are anticipated for the PD&E Study:

1. Two public meetings
2. Two PAG / PVT meetings
3. Several small group meetings



# APPENDIX A

## 1) City of Webster South Sumter Trail: Economic Impact Analysis Report<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The results of this study did not influence the recommendations resulting from the Sumter County Gap Study. Any questions or comments regarding the study should be directed to the City of Webster.



## Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

#P0113 June 2015

# City of Webster

South Sumter Trail

Economic Impact Analysis Report



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- 1.0 Project Introduction**
- 2.0 Coast-to-Coast Connector Overview**
- 3.0 Data Collection and Literature Review**
- 4.0 Economic Impact Analysis and Comparison**
- 5.0 Visioning Scenarios for the South Sumter Connector**
- 6.0 Stakeholder Coordination**
- 7.0 Basis for Post Evaluation**

### Appendices

- A1. May 7, 2015 Meeting**
- A2. Trail Surveys and Results**
- A3. Webster Businesses**
- A3. May 21, 2015 Meeting**

## 1.0 Project Introduction

The City of Webster was awarded a Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Technical Assistance Grant to assist the City with understanding the potential economic impact of the two primary alignments for the South Sumter Connector trail that is part of the planned 250-mile Coast-to-Coast Connector (C2C). The South Sumter Connector Gap is the longest gap in the 250-mile long planned C2C corridor. Hoke Design, Inc. teamed with The Balmoral Group (TBG) to create a report estimating the economic impact of both alignments to the City of Webster.

This fast-paced project will be completed in June, 2015 and will provide information for the ongoing Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) South Sumter Connector Feasibility Study underway by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB).

Two potential trail alignments, a northern alignment and a southern alignment, were used to analyze the estimated economic impact of the trail to the City of Webster. The northern route extends from the Withlacoochee State Trail and follows an abandoned rail corridor through the cities of Webster and Center Hill to the intersection of the General James A. Van Fleet State Trail (Van Fleet Trail) corridor. The paved portion of the Van Fleet Trail is further south, near SR 50.

The southern alignment connects to the Withlacoochee State Trail near Trilby and heads east along Agricola Road/ Riverland Road and along the abandoned railroad until it reaches Tarrytown, where it follows SR 50 to the General James A. Van Fleet Trailhead.



Figure 1.1: Initial Alignments for South Sumter Connector, Map by VHB

The City of Webster supports the northern alignment of the C2C that will bring the trail through Webster’s historic downtown with a connection along the abandoned railroad corridor to Center Hill, FL. A comparison of the opportunities and constraints of the alignments and visioning scenarios with potential partnerships, programming and promotional ideas are included as part of this Study.

This project meets the DEO’s number one goal to “Further Florida’s economic vision by providing support that enhances the economy and develops vibrant, safe, and healthy communities.”



## 2.0 Coast-to-Coast Connector Overview

The **Coast to Coast Connector (C2C)** is the name for the 250-mile connected series of multi-use trails that will extend from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean. Over 200 miles of the corridor have been completed or funded for construction.

The C2C is part of the *Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan* developed by the **State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT)**. OGT provides status updates twice yearly ([Link to all files](#)).

OGT is supported by the **Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (FGTF)**, a 501(c)(3) organization that “supports the mission and programs of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) as it continues toward establishing a statewide system of greenways and trails for recreation, conservation and alternative transportation.” The C2C is the “keystone project” within the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation's “Close the Gaps” Campaign.



Figure 2.1: FGTF C2C Map

(Source: FGTF website <http://fatf.org/details.php> )



## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

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The C2C will link portions or entire trail systems of numerous existing multi-use trails. Some of these trails have been constructed and operational for over 20 years while other trails are under construction or design. The following existing/conceptual trails comprise the C2C:

1. Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail
2. Tri-County Trail (conceptual)
3. Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park Trail
4. Starkey Boulevard Trail
5. Suncoast Trail
6. Good Neighbor Trail
7. Withlacoochee State Trail
8. South Sumter Connector (conceptual)
9. Gen. James A. Van Fleet State Trail
10. Lake Minneola Scenic Trail
11. South Lake Trail
12. West Orange Trail
13. Clarcona-Ocoee Trail (under development)
14. Pine Hills Trail
15. Seminole-Wekiva Trail
16. Rinehart Trail (under development)
17. Cross Seminole Trail
18. Spring to Spring Trail
19. East Central Regional Rail Trail
20. Space Coast Trail (conceptual)

(Source:

[http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/FGTS\\_Plan/Long%20Distance%20Corridors/Coast to Coast Connector.htm](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gwt/FGTS_Plan/Long%20Distance%20Corridors/Coast_to_Coast_Connector.htm))

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

## Funding and Schedule

Recognizing the economic importance of the C2C, the State of Florida programmed \$41 Million to close the gaps in the C2C for the completion of this destination trail that will showcase the diverse landscapes, cultures and people of Florida. Although the construction of the trail is not fully funded, the completion of the C2C Connector is a priority for the Central Florida MPO Alliance.

According to Deborah Tyrone, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator D5, FDOT has programmed the C2C Connector project into their work program as follows:

- \$18.8M programmed in FY 14/15 (11 separate projects that collectively exceed 60 miles)
- \$20.7M funded in FDOT D5 work program (2015-2020)
- \$23.4M in additional funding needs anticipated in future years (2020+)

This funding includes projects that range from feasibility study to construction. The completion date for the C2C through Webster is unknown at this time. The following chart developed by FDOT details the C2C projects, phases and funding for this fiscal year.



### Florida Department of Transportation Coast to Coast Connector - 2014/15 Funded Phases

County	Gap Name (see map)	Trail Name	Segment Beginning to End Point (west to east)	FM Number	Estimated Miles	2014/15 Coast to Coast Funding	Phase(s) to be funded in 2014/15	Remaining Estimated Funding Need <sup>1</sup>	Feasibility Study	POBE	Design	ROW	Construction	Comments
<b>FDOT District 1</b>														
Pinellas	Webster Gap	In-County Trail	East Lake Rd/Keytown Rd intersection to the Pineda/Passaic Co. Line	403708-1	9.00	\$1,935,000	POBE/Design/Build	\$0			\$ 170,000	\$ 2,144,000		Project will be a design/build
Passaic		Out-County Trail	Pinellas/Passaic Co. Line to south of SR 54	403709-1	2.50	\$460,000	POBE/Design	\$1,600,000			\$ 660,000	\$ 1,600,000		Project will be a design/build. Due to fact Passaic County needs to show State Energy the trail design before they (State Energy) will agree to construct
Hernando	Good Neighbor Gap	Good Neighbor Trail	Dunwoody Trail to existing Good Neighbor Trail	403709-1	6.00	\$1,034,000	POBE/Design	\$4,000,000			\$ 1,234,000	\$ 4,000,000		Project will be a design/build
					District 1 Subtotal	17.50	\$3,429,000				\$ 2,064,000	\$ 6,744,000		
<b>FDOT District 5</b>														
Sumter	South Sumter Connector Gap	South Sumter Connector	Wilkeson/State Trail to East Fleet State Trail	404471-1	19.90	\$100,000	Feasibility Study	\$18,700,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 274,000	\$ 1,368,000	\$ 5,024,000	\$ 11,407,700	Phase 1 already programmed in 2014
Lake/Sumter	South Lake Gap	South Lake Trail	East Fleet State Trail to Silver City Rd	405089-1	6.00	\$1,500,000	Design	\$10,700,000			\$ 1,230,000	\$ 4,300,000	\$ 4,450,000	Note: this segment from Silver City Rd to SR 33 has been rolled into the SR 33/SR 33 roadway project. The ROW for SR33 to Silver Eagle is not in FY13
Lake			SR 33 to Silver Eagle Rd	422570-3	2.45	\$843,000	Design	\$4,870,000			\$ 843,000	\$ 5,000,000	\$ 1,870,000	
Orange	Orange Gap - Segment 1	Clarno-Close Connector Trail	Clarno-Close Road to West Orange Trail	404675-1	0.20	\$300,000	Design	\$1,841,000			\$ 300,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 3,281,000	ROW needed, "POBE" is for Threatened & Endangered Species Study and Wetland Survey
Orange	Orange Gap - Segment 2	How Hill Trail Phase 2	R Howson Road to north of SR33 on SR44	404633-1	4.30	\$200,000	POBE*	\$8,800,000		\$ 200,000	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 2,733,000	\$ 6,347,000	ROW needed, "POBE" is for Threatened & Endangered Species Study and Wetland Survey
Seminole	Seminole/Polk Gap	Spring to Spring Trail	Wynolds Park over US 1702 Bridge	404040-1	0.42	\$900,000	Design	\$1,100,000			\$ 400,000	\$ 1,300,000		Vehicle bridge crossing - construction estimate for construction of facilities TRS
Volusia	Volusia Gap	US 1702 Bridge to Lake Monroe Park	US 1702 Bridge to Lake Monroe Park	404040-1	0.11	\$0					\$ 400,000	\$ 1,300,000		
Brevard	East Central Gap	East Central Florida Regional Trail	Volusia County Line to Kingwood Road	424040-4	12.80	\$7,000,000	Construction	\$0				\$ 7,000,000	POBE complete, design/build	
Brevard	Space Coast/Deerwood Connector Gap	Space Coast Trail	Garden St (SR406) to Mir Brewster Elementary	400054-1	1.90	\$100,000	Feasibility Study	\$1,000,000	\$ 100,000			\$ 1,000,000		To be a design/build project
Brevard	Hammock Space Center Gap	Space Coast Trail	Mir Brewster Elementary to Atlantic Ocean		7.80			\$7,400,000		\$ 400,000		\$ 1,000,000*	Federal public lands, requires FWS NEPA survey and environmental mitigation; may require Federal funding due to federal lands, nothing to be done in FY13	
					District 5 Subtotal	35.30	\$11,200,000				\$ 2,764,000	\$ 27,340,000		
						<b>Total</b>	<b>62.80</b>	<b>\$19,629,000<sup>1</sup></b>			<b>\$ 2,828,000</b>	<b>\$ 34,084,000</b>		

<sup>1</sup>Remaining Estimated Funding Need<sup>1</sup> represents the total long term need to complete a given gap segment. This is based on the most recent figures provided by metropolitan planning organizations and local governments. These are preliminary estimates that are subject to change.  
<sup>2</sup>Represents the total amount to be programmed in 2014/15.  
<sup>3</sup>POBE stands for Project Development and Environment.  
<sup>4</sup>POBE stands for Right of Way.  
<sup>5</sup>This segment is for feasibility study.

Figure 2.1: FDOT C2C Gap Status and Funding

## **The South Sumter Connector**

The largest gap in the C2C system is the planned South Sumter Connector that will connect the Withlacoochee State Trail to the Van Fleet Trail. FDOT is conducting a C2C Trail Feasibility Study to close/complete the missing link for the South Sumter Connector Gap. VHB has been selected to study two primary alignments: the northern alignment through the City of Webster and the southern alignment that more closely follows SR 50. Variations to the original routes are under consideration and the final alignment selection is pending. The estimated project completion for the Feasibility Study is June 2016.

*Note: Updates on this project are available from the FDOT Project Manager, John Philip Moore (407-482-7882) or Natalie Suner with VHB (407-965-0590).*

## 3.0 Data Collection and Literature Review

### Methods of Data Identification and Collection

The consultant team reviewed online sources for literature or studies that analyzed the economic or fiscal impacts of trails within a 75-mile radius of the City of Webster, FL. The team also looked for studies that had demographic or locational characteristics similar to Webster, FL. Webster is a rural community in Central Florida with an estimated population of 989 people and 1.32 square miles of land area.

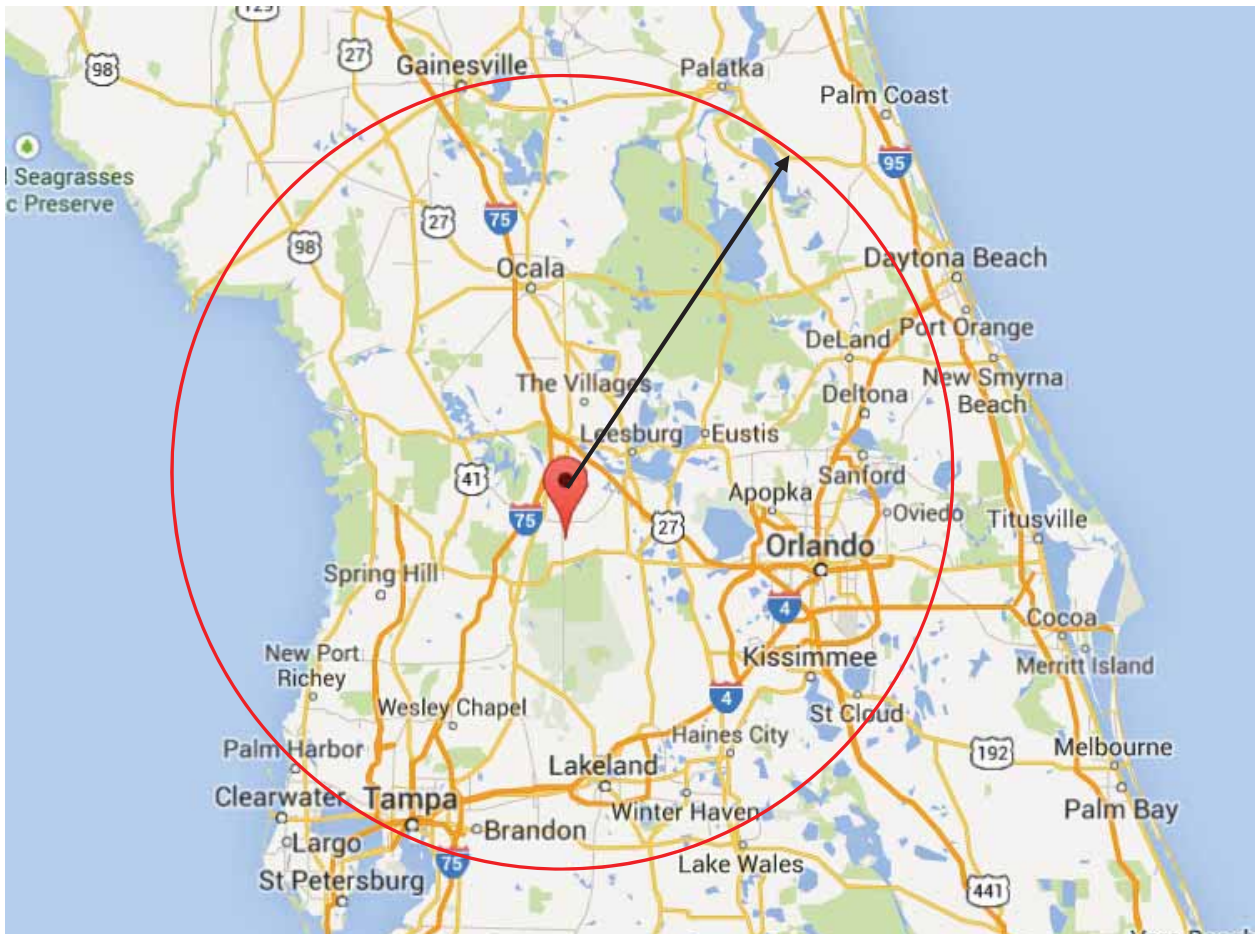


Figure 3.1: Map showing 75 - Mile Radius from Webster

The American Trails website included the most comprehensive list of economic-related studies. The following were reviewed for potential application to this project:

- [Economic Benefits of the Coldwater Mountain Bike Trail System](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Guidelines for Analysis of Investments in Bicycle Facilities: evaluating the cost, demand, and potential benefits for bicycle facilities](#) (2006)
- [Evidence of many varieties of economic benefits linked to trails](#) (American Trails Website- blog)

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

- [Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design](#) (American Trails Website review of studies)
- [Economic and Social Benefit of Trails in Minnesota](#) (no data source)
- [Economic and Social Benefits of Off-Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities](#), (1992)
- [Economic Impact of Bicycling in Wisconsin](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Benefits of Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation to Arizona](#) (2004)
- [The Economic Benefits of Trails](#) from Go for Green, Canada (outside US)
- [Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space](#), (1999)
- [How land conservation helps communities grow smart](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Benefits of Greenways: Summary of Findings](#) (1990)
- [Economic Benefits of Trails](#), from the [American Hiking Society](#) (2001)
- [Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Value of Walkability](#), Victoria Transport Policy Institute (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [How Cities Use Parks for Economic Development](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [How cities use parks for community revitalization](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Valuing Bicycling's Economic and Health Impacts in Wisconsin](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic impacts of river recreation along 73 Iowa rivers studied](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [A Contingent Trip Model for Estimating Rail-trail Demand](#), USFS, Southern Research Station (2003)
- [What's a Trail Really Worth?](#) looking at the range of economic impacts (1997)
- [Trails add value to new homes](#) and give the developer the highest investment return (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Northern Forest Canoe Trail: Economic Impacts and Implications for Sustainable Community Development](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Recreational Trails Business Plan](#); Lanark County, Ontario, Canada (dissimilar demographic and locational characteristics; outside US)
- [Trails expenditures shown to reduce health-care costs](#) (not applicable)
- [Park Trail Usage Patterns and Public Sentiment Toward Maintenance and Operation Cost of the East Bay Regional Park District Trail System](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Railtrails and special events: community and economic benefits](#) (link not found)
- [Documenting economic and community benefits of trails](#) (link not found)
- [Two approaches to valuing some bicycle facilities' presumed benefits](#) (2006)
- [Study looks at economic aspects of redevelopment in Miami Ludlam Trail corridor](#) (selected as additional reference)
- [Every Mile Counts: Economic analysis of 2008 New York Trail User Surveys](#) (2008)
- [Analysis of Economic Impacts of the Northern Central Rail Trail](#), Maryland Greenways Commission (1994)
- [Does the Prairie Spirit Rail-Trail have economic benefits? An analysis by a trail opponent](#) (2000)
- [Forest Recreation's Growing Impact](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Heritage Rail Trail County Park User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis](#) (2002)
- FL: [Economic Impacts and motivations of Off- highway Vehicle Recreationists](#) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- MN: [Economic Impact of Recreational Trail Use in Different Regions of Minnesota](#) (2009)
- NY: [Mohawk-Hudson Trail Analysis of Use, Regional Benefits, and Economic Impact](#) (1998)
- [Little Miami Scenic Trail Economic Study](#) (1999)
- [Impact of the Little Miami Scenic Trail on Single Family Residential Property Values](#) (2008)
- [Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety](#) (2000)
- [Maximizing Economic Benefits from a Rails-to-Trails Project](#), case study of the Greenbrier River Trail, WV (2001)

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

- [Economic Impact Analysis: Trans Canada Trail in Ontario](#) (outside US)
- [Nordic Ski Trail Easements and Property Values](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)
- [The Value of Open Space: Evidence from Studies of Nonmarket Benefits](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Benefits to Local Communities from National Park Visitation and Payroll](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)
- National Park Service Resource Book on [Economic Values of Greenways, Trails, and River Protection](#) (1995)
- [Off-Highway Vehicle economic impacts in New Hampshire](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic impacts of bike tourism in Colorado](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Virginia Creeper Trail Economic Impact Analysis](#) (2004)
- [Washington & Old Dominion Trail Economic Impact Analysis](#) (2004)
- [New River State Park trails Economic Impact Analysis](#) (2004)
- [Report Measures Wildlife Watching's Contribution to Nation's Economy](#) (Not specific to multi-use trails)

We have reviewed the following references regarding the economic impact of trails and greenways housed at the Florida Office of Greenways and Trail website:

- [Advocacy - Outdoor Recreation Policy and the American Economy](#), Outdoor Industry Association (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Bicycling Moving America Forward](#), Bikes Belong Coalition (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Benefits of Trails and Greenways](#), Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (review of other studies; no original data)
- [Economic Benefits of Wildlife Viewing in Florida \(2011\)](#), FL Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails](#), East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (selected)
- [Economic Impact Study of Bicycling in Arizona](#), Arizona Dept. of Transportation (ADOT) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Economic and Social Benefit of Trails](#), Hosted by AmericanTrails.org (review of other studies; no original data)
- [Evidence of Many Varieties of Economic Benefits Linked to Trails](#), Hosted by AmericanTrails.org (review of other studies; no original data)
- [Florida Coast to Coast Connector - Economic Benefits and Marketing Report \(Gulf of Mexico to Atlantic Ocean\)](#), Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (Review of other studies; no original data) (selected as additional reference)
- [Making Trails Count in Illinois \[PDF\]](#), Trails for Illinois (not specific to economic impacts)
- [NAHB Forecasts Continued Improvement in 55+ Housing Market](#), National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [OGT Florida Trails and Tourism Economic Values Flyer](#) (review of other studies; no original data)
- [Outdoor Recreation 2012 Economic Report](#), Outdoor Industry Association (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Outdoor Recreation 2012 Economic Report for Florida](#), Outdoor Industry Association (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Pathways to Prosperity: The Economic Impact of Investments in Bicycle Facilities](#), North Carolina Department of Transportation (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts](#), University of Massachusetts (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [St. Johns River Economic Study](#), University of North Florida Coastal Biology, 2015 (not specific to multi-use trails)
- [Suwannee River Wilderness Trail Economic Impacts](#), Florida Park Service, 2014 (not specific to multi-use trails)

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

- ["Trail Towns" on Great Allegheny Passage benefit from visitor spending](#), Hosted by AmericanTrails.org (review of other studies; no original data)
- [Trail User Survey and Economic Impact - A Comparison of Trail user Expenditures](#), Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (review of other studies; no original data)
- Trails-Economic Powerhouses, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (review of other studies; no original data)
- Tweetsie Trail: Economic Impact Study, Batsula et. (projection-did not analyze impact of existing trail)
- Visit Florida 2013-14 Marketing Plan, Visit Florida (not specific to multi-use trails)
- 2013 National Park Visitor Spending Effects. (not specific to multi-use trails)

Information regarding the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail was also reviewed as a reference from the Pinellas County website <http://www.pinellascounty.org/trailgd/history.htm> (selected)

Studies/literature that had the following characteristics was excluded:

- outside of the 75 mile radius from Webster, FL
- not specific to paved, multi-use trails
- did not address economic impact
- Review studies, with no original data.

A review of these 77 online sources showed that one study and one website source with literature was from within the desired 75 mile radius from Webster. Many studies were not specific to paved, multi-use trails. Some studies were projecting economic impacts for planned trails and some sources were referencing numerous studies to draw conclusions. We selected two studies that are within the state of Florida to be included as additional references.

- Florida Coast to Coast Connector - Economic Benefits and Marketing Report (Gulf of Mexico to Atlantic Ocean)
- Economic Aspects of Redevelopment in Miami Ludlam Trail Corridor

The *Florida Coast to Coast Connector –Economic Benefits and Marketing Report* uses data derived by the *ECFRPC Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails Study* and is included as an additional reference. The *Economic Aspects of Redevelopment in Miami Ludlam Trail Corridor* study is located in a very urban area and is outside the 75-mile radius and is included as an additional reference.

To determine if studies were available that were not posted online, several trail-related experts were contacted:

- Mary Hurton with American Trails Association
- Brian Ruscher, State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails
- Ken Bryan, Florida Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Director
- Carl Knoch, Manager of Trail Development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy NE Regional Office
- Mike Woods, Lake~Sumter MPO staff/Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation Board Member

Carl Knoch, RTC, recommended the use of five studies, including one that was already selected from online research. Recommended studies included:

- Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2012 User Survey and Economic Impact Study, Pennsylvania (selected as an additional reference)
- 2012 Trail Town User Survey Report, Frostburg, Maryland (The Great Allegheny Passage) (selected as an additional reference)
- Catskill Mountain Rail Trail: Economic & Fiscal Impact Analysis, Ulster County, NY (2013) (selected as an additional reference)
- The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail, Upstate New York, 2014 (selected as an additional reference)



# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

- Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails, Orange County, Florida, 2011 (selected from OGT Website)

In addition to online and expert sources, Hoke Design and TBG have previous involvement with trail-related economic studies:

- Consultant knowledge: in 2010/2011, Hoke Design, Inc. assisted with data collection for the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) *Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails* (selected from Office of Greenways and Trails website and recommended by Rails to Trails Conservancy staff)
- Sub-consultant knowledge: TBG performs economic analysis and is familiar with national studies. TBG wrote the *Predictive Economic Impact Study for the Mount Dora to Seminole Wekiva Trail* (selected as additional reference)



These nine studies were reviewed for suitability as references /data sources for the comparison of the economic benefits of the two potential alignments for the South Sumter Trail Connector. These studies included one or more performance measures outlined in the scope of work. These performance measures are:

- number of trail visitors
- amount of expenditures by local and non-local trail users
- effect on retail sales
- effect on number of businesses
- effect on job creation
- effect on property values.

The following is a synopsis for the nine selected economic trail studies/literature.

## 1. **Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails**

### **Orange County, FL**

<http://www.ecfrpc.org/Document-Library/Environment/Economic-Impact-of-Trails-in-Orange-County.aspx>

The ECFRPC analyzed data collected from businesses along the West Orange Trail and trail users in Orange County, FL. The location of West Orange Trail is within 75 miles of the Webster, FL. The length of the trail studied was 35.9 miles with an average number of 1.7 million users per year. The average expenditure per user was \$20 per visit with a total expenditure of \$35.56 million over the life of the trail.

An estimated 516 total jobs were created by this trail and the increase in business sales averaged \$42.6 million. The West Orange Trail runs through two small communities that have greatly benefited from the trail; Winter Garden (population 37,711 and land area 12.1 square miles) and Oakland (population 2,708; land area 1.63 miles). The West Orange Trail is part of the Coast-to-Coast Connector Trail. The study location has similar demographic characteristics to Webster and is located within the desired 75 mile radius.

## 2. The Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail

Pinellas County, FL

<http://www.pinellascounty.org/trailgd/history.htm>

There were no specific economic studies found for the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail (Pinellas Trail) but literature was obtained online that provides information on several impact indicators. The Pinellas Trail is one of the oldest multi-use trails in Florida with the first 6 miles constructed in 1990. The 38-mile long Pinellas Trail is located 84 miles from Webster and has an estimated 840,000 users per year. The average user expenditure, and yearly expenditure by users was not found. The estimated number of jobs created by this trail was not found, and increase in property values was not found. There was a strong impact on businesses with 35% vacancy pre-trail, and 100% occupancy post-trail.

The Pinellas Trail is in Pinellas County with a population of 921,319 and a land area of 280 square miles. The Pinellas Trail is in Florida and connects several small communities. One of these communities, the City of Dunedin, FL is within the desired 75 mile radius of Webster. The population of Dunedin is 35,690 with a land area of 10.4 square miles. Literature for this trail is included as a primary reference because the geographical location is within 75 miles of Webster and this trail is an existing segment of the Coast to Coast Connector trail.

## 3. Projected Economic Contribution of Downtown Mt. Dora Trail (Additional Reference)

Mt. Dora, FL

*No online source*

Using raw data from the *ECFRPC Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails*, TBG analyzed the potential benefits for the Mt. Dora Trail. Mt. Dora is within 75 miles of Webster, FL. The length of the proposed trail studied was 3 miles with an average projected number of 57,140 users per year. The projected average user expenditure per user was \$21.57 per visit, with a total expenditure of \$9.6 million. The number of jobs created by this trail was estimated to be 75-153, with an increase in sales for businesses averaging \$3.1-12.7 million per year. Property values in the area were projected to increase by \$4.1-6.1 million.

Mt. Dora has a population of 12,895 with a 4.92 square mile land area. Although this study is a projection for a planned trail, it was included as an additional reference because of the close location to Webster and for similar demographics.

## 4. Miami-Dade County Trail Benefits Study

Miami-Dade County, FL

<http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/Miami-Dade-Ludlam-Trail-Benefits.pdf>

This study reviews the many benefits of trails, including economic benefits. Data sources for this study include the use of other studies and research by others. Findings were projected to show an increase of \$3.19 million to \$8 million annually in retail sales with projected support for 10,500 to 26,500 square feet of additional retail. The study concluded that additional 27-68 new jobs may result from the trail and that the property values could increase by \$32,000 to \$80,000.

Miami-Dade is a very urban area with a population of 2,591,035 with a land area of 1946 square miles. This was included as an additional reference because it is located in Florida.

**5. Florida Coast to Coast Connector - Economic Benefits and Marketing Report Across Central Florida**

This study reviews the combined potential of the Coast to Coast Connector trail and uses data from the ECFRPC Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails. It is included in this study as an additional reference.

**6. 2012 Trail Town User Survey Report (The Great Allegheny Passage) (Additional Reference) Frostburg, Maryland**  
[http://www.atatrail.org/docs/Trail\\_Town\\_User\\_Survey\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.atatrail.org/docs/Trail_Town_User_Survey_Final_Report.pdf)

The 2012 Survey Report for the Great Allegheny Passage trail determined that the average user expenditure was \$17.69 per user visit, \$114 if they stayed overnight. The total expenditure and estimated number of jobs was not included in the study. The effect on the retail sales as of 2012 was \$650k-2.1 million. No data were found to show a change in property values.

Frostburg, MD has a population of 8,700 and a land area of 3.06 square miles. This study was included as an additional reference because it is a destination trail that is 150 miles long that connects several towns. The South Sumter Connector trail is planned to be part of the 250 mile long Coast-to-Coast trail. This area does not have similar demographic characteristics to Webster and is not within the desired 75 mile radius.

**7. Catskill Mountain Rail Trail: Economic & Fiscal Impact Analysis (Additional Reference) Ulster County, NY**

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/148578305/Catskill-Mountain-Rail-Trail-Economic-Fiscal-Impact-Analysis>

This recent study looks at the economic impact of a project to create a 32-38 mile trail connecting the City of Kingston with the Belleayre Ski Resort in Ulster County. The annual use of the trail in Ulster County is estimated to be 140,000 with annual sales of \$3,107,667. The total annual jobs were projected to be 44 annually with annual earnings of \$1,156,000. The annual revenue to the County was estimated to be \$111,844.

Ulster County is an urban area with a population of 181,791 and a land area of 1,126 square miles. This study was included as an additional reference. This area does not have similar demographic characteristics to Webster and is not within the desired 75 mile radius of Webster.

**8. Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2012 User Survey and Economic Impact Study (Additional Reference) York County, PA**

<http://yorkcountypa.gov/images/pdf/Parks/2012%20hrtcp%20user%20survey%20%20economic%20impact%20analysis%20final%201-30-2013.pdf>

The Heritage Rail Trail County Park Trail is 21.5 miles long and passes through eleven municipalities. It was completed in 1999 and is part of a longer trail system. There were an estimated 281,145 annual visits to the Heritage Rail Trail County Park trail with a total economic impact of over \$4.4 million in 2012. The average expenditure per person per trip was \$13.28 per user with and expenditure average of \$92.67 for

overnight stays. No data were found to show a change in property values, job creation or business creation.

York County, PA is an urban area with a population of 437,846 and a land area of 904 square miles. This study was included because of the trail segment that is part of a larger system. Although the demographics are dissimilar to Webster, there is a similarity in trail type. The user surveys and Economic Impact Analysis have been reviewed in 1999, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2012. The 2012 study includes user counts using infrared counters and provides extensive data collection results. This area does not have similar demographic characteristics to Webster and is not within the desired 75-mile radius of Webster.

## 9. **The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail (Additional Reference)**

### **Buffalo to Albany, NY**

[https://ptnyenews.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/economic\\_impact\\_of\\_the\\_erie\\_canalway\\_trail\\_exec\\_sum.pdf](https://ptnyenews.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/economic_impact_of_the_erie_canalway_trail_exec_sum.pdf)

The Erie Canalway Trail corridor connects Buffalo, NY to Albany, NY, and is 75% complete. The total length of the completed trail is 277 miles long. Overall (including direct and secondary effects), ECT visitor spending generates approximately \$253 million in sales, 3,440 jobs, \$78 million in labor income, and \$28.5 million in taxes in the Upstate economy each year. The number of trail users is 1.6 million visits per year. The average user expenditure is \$26.37 per user per visit. No information was identified for the impact on property values.

The Erie Canalway Trail run connects to Buffalo, NY (population of 258,959 million, land area 40.6 square miles) and Albany, NY. (population 98,424 , land area 21.4 square miles). This study was included as an additional reference for its detailed raw data that includes user counts and surveys of trail users for a destination trail. This area does not have similar demographic characteristics to Webster and is not within the desired 75 mile radius of Webster.

*Note: Demographic data source: Citydata: [www.city-data.com/](http://www.city-data.com/)*

With additional analysis, two of the nine studies were found to include projections for economic impact on a planned trail:

1. *The Projected Economic Contribution of Downtown Mt. Dora Trail*
2. *Catskill Mountain Rail Trail: Economic & Fiscal Impact Analysis*

*The Projected Economic Contribution of Downtown Mt. Dora Trail* study is included as an additional reference source for this study because of the geographic and demographic similarity to Webster. The Catskill Mountain Rail Trail study is included as an additional reference source because it contains impacts for non-local users, information that is not available in many studies reviewed.

Two primary studies/literature were included as references and data sources for the economic impact analysis for the South Sumter Trail proposed alignments. Due to the limited number of studies and literature within the 75 mile radius of Webster, seven additional studies/literature sources will be used to fill the gaps or supplement data from the two primary studies.

The chart on the following pages summarizes information from the nine sources of information showing the applicable impact indicators.

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

Referenced Study	Trail Studied and Trail Length	Estimated Number of Trail Visitors; Number of Trips	Estimated Total Expenditure by Local Trail Users	Estimated Total Expenditure by Non-Local Trail Users	Effect on Retail Sales	Effect on Number of Businesses	Estimated Total Number of Jobs Created	Effect on Property Values	Demographics
1. <u>Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails</u> <u>Orange County, FL</u>	West Orange Trail (22 Miles), Cady Way Trail (6.5 miles) and Little Econ Greenway (7.4 miles)	1.7 million trips	\$35.56 million	Roughly ¼ of total	\$42.6 million	Not Found	516	Not Found	Winter Garden population: 37,711 Land area: 12.1 sq. miles. Oakland population: 2708 Land area: 1.63 sq. miles
2. <u>Pinellas Trail</u> <u>Pinellas County, FL</u>	Pinellas Trail 38 miles	840,000/year	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	Yes (30% Vacant before trail opened, 100% full post trail.)	Not found	Not found	Similar geographical area is City of Dunedin, FL. Population: 35690 Land area: 10.4
3. <u>Projected Economic Contribution of Downtown Mt. Dora Trail</u> <u>Lake County, FL</u>	Proposed 3 mile trail	Projected 57,140 users; 448,275 trips	Projected \$0.2 million	Projected \$9.4 million	Projected \$3.1-12.7 million	Not Found	Projected 75-153	Projected \$4.1-6.1 million	Population: 12,895 Land Area: 4.92 sq. miles

Figure 3.2: Summary of Information Sources

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

Referenced Study	Trail Studied and Trail Length	Estimated Number of Trail Visitors; Number of Trips	Estimated Total Expenditure by Local Trail Users	Estimated Total Expenditure by Non-Local Trail Users	Effect on Retail Sales	Effect on Number of Businesses	Estimated Total Number of Jobs Created	Effect on Property Values	Demographics
4. <u>Miami-Dade County Trail Benefits Study</u> Miami-Dade County, FL	Not Found	Not Found	Uses ECFRPC study	Not Found	Projected increase of \$3.19 million to \$8 million annually	Projected to support 10,500 to 26,500 square feet of additional retail	27-68 projected	\$32,000 to \$80,000 projected	Population: 2,591,035 Land area: 1946 square miles
5. <u>Florida Coast to Coast Connector - Economic Benefits and Marketing Report (Gulf of Mexico to Atlantic Ocean)</u>	275 Miles total planned, 72 miles projected	Not Found	\$20 (uses ECFRPC study)	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	This report summarizes the potential benefits of completing the C2C trail.
6. <u>Trail Town User Survey Report Frostburg, Maryland (2012)</u>	The Great Allegheny Passage (32-38 miles)	Not Found	\$17.69/\$114 if overnight	Not Found	\$650k - \$2.1 million per establishment	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	Population: 8,700 Land Area: 3.06 Square Miles

Figure 3.2 Continued: Summary of Information Sources

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

Referenced Study	Trail Studied and Trail Length	Estimated Number of Trail Visitors; Number of Trips	Estimated Total Expenditure by Local Trail Users	Estimated Total Expenditure by Non-Local Trail Users	Effect on Retail Sales	Effect on Number of Businesses	Estimated Total Number of Jobs Created	Effect on Property Values	Demographics
7. Catskill Mountain Rail Trail: Economic & Fiscal Impact Analysis Ulster County, NY	Catskill Mountain Rail Trail 32-38 miles	Projected 140,000 users	Not Found	Projected \$1 million in direct sales, total \$3.1 million in total sales	Projected \$3.1 million	Not Found	44 Projected	Projected \$112,000 in new County tax revenue annually	Population: 181,791 Land Area: 1126 Square Miles
8. Heritage Rail Trail 2012 User Survey and Economic Impact Study York County, PA	Heritage Rail Trail (21.5 miles through 11 municipalities)	281,145	\$13.28/\$92.67 if overnight	Not Found	\$4.4 Million	Not Found	Not Found	Not Found	Population: 437,846 Land Area: 904 Square Miles
9. Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail (2014) Buffalo to Albany, NY	Erie Canalway Trail (277 miles)	1.6 million	\$26.37	Not Found	\$253 million	\$55.8 million in sales	3440	\$28.5 million in tax revenue	Buffalo / Albany Population: 258,959 / 98,424 Land Area: 40.6 / 21.4 Square Miles

Figure 3.2 Continued: Summary of Information Sources

## 4.0 Economic Impact Analysis and Comparison

The Balmoral Group (TBG) provided subconsultant services to analyze the economic impact of the two originally proposed South Sumter Connector trail alignments under consideration for completing the planned 250-mile Coast-to-Coast Connector trail from St. Petersburg to Cape Canaveral.

### Estimated Impact of the South Sumter Connector on the City of Webster, FL

The following text identifies and analyzes the estimated economic impact of the proposed South Sumter Connector Trail on the City of Webster, based on collected data regarding current trails and user surveys from similarly situated communities.

This analysis provides the estimated economic contribution of two segments (alignments) proposed to be established near the City of Webster. TBG was retained to estimate the economic contribution to the City of Webster for the North and South alignments. The analysis was completed using data obtained from the ECFRPC in its survey of three Central Florida trails, and information from other publications. The ECFRPC survey data was highly valuable in the analysis because in general, statistically valid data regarding trail use is scarce. Calibrated appropriately and applied to site-specific data for Webster, the survey results allow a reasonable estimation of expected benefits accruing to the area of interest.

This study used GIS and econometric analysis to estimate the annual number of trail users, calculate total annual trail use, estimate retail spending per trip, and identify the economic contributions to the City of Webster. The analysis relied on trail user survey data reported in “Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails,” which was provided by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, and various other national and state trail reports.<sup>1</sup> Annual estimates of economic impact were converted to ten-year estimates with use of an appropriate annuity factor to account for the time value of money and inflation.

Based on behavioral and spending information from the ECFRPC’s survey of Orange County Trail users and other studies, between 5,380 and 7,160 people can be expected to use a trail alignment in the Webster area at least one time each calendar year, depending on which alignment is chosen. In total, it is estimated that 28,727 trips would be made to the North alignment, while 32,790 trips would be made to the South alignment annually; however, higher spending is anticipated from the North alignment, due to more spending opportunities.

Local trail users are expected to travel an average of 26 to 27 miles to access the trail, with trail users overall spending \$9 (South Alignment) to over \$13 (North Alignment) per trip. Spending would be expected to exceed \$300,000 each year for either alignment (**Figure 4.1**). Spending over ten years is estimated to be roughly \$4 million for either alignment (**Figure 4.2**).

Expenditure Type	---- Alignment ----	
	North	South
Restaurants	\$184,293	\$142,383
Food and Beverage	\$120,428	\$99,288
Rental Fees	\$33,207	\$12,719
Guide Maps/books	\$13,459	\$8,802
Lodging	\$27,988	\$37,251
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$379,376</b>	<b>\$300,441</b>

*Figure 4.1: Expected Annual Spending by Category*

<sup>1</sup> East Central Florida Regional Planning Council. 2011. Economic Impact Analysis of Orange County Trails.



# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

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Expenditure Type	---- Alignment ----	
	North	South
Restaurants	\$2,076,987	\$1,604,653
Food and Beverage	\$1,357,218	\$1,118,971
Rental Fees	\$374,247	\$143,344
Guide Maps/Books	\$151,685	\$99,193
Lodging	\$315,425	\$419,814
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,275,563</b>	<b>\$3,385,976</b>

Figure 4.2: Expected Ten-Year Spending by Category

Trail user spending around Webster would support between 5 and 35 jobs, \$92,000 - \$116,000 in personal income, and from \$393,000 up to nearly \$500,000 in additional local economic output. Ranges are provided due to the variation between trail alignments, details of which can be seen below in Figure 4.3.

Impact Type	---- Alignment ----	
	North	South
Employment	35	5
Personal Income <sup>1</sup>	\$116,530	\$92,285
Output	\$496,418	\$393,132
Spending	\$379,376	\$300,441
<b>Total Income<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$992,324</b>	<b>\$785,858</b>

Figure 4.3: Annual Economic Impacts

<sup>1</sup> Total wages and income received by workers along the trail.

<sup>2</sup> The total value of all goods and services, including personal income.

## Methodology and Analysis

TBG conducted the analysis of economic impact in three steps:

1. Trip demand estimation;
2. Retail demand estimation; and
3. Economic impact quantification.

Trip Demand: Trip demand was estimated using a two-step process:

1. Estimate the regional population of trail users;
2. Estimate the user-trips to each trail alignment.

### 1. Regional Trail Users

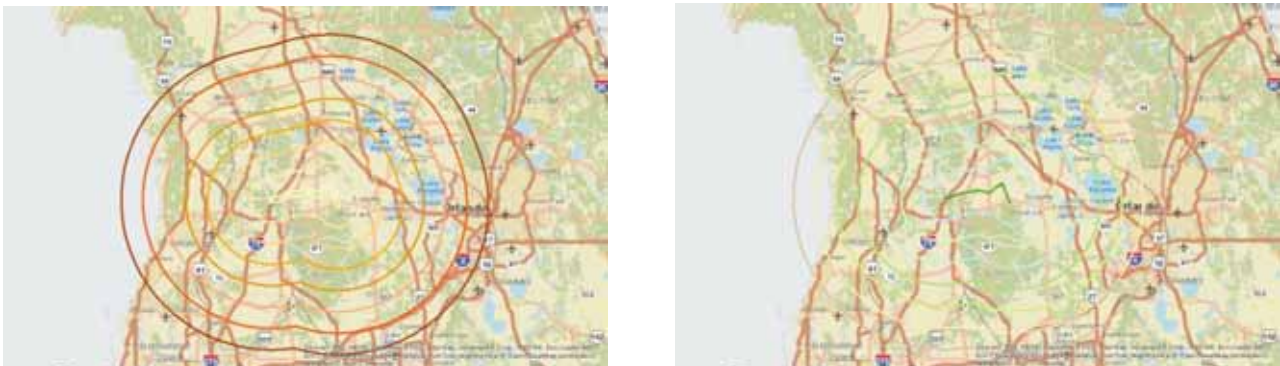
Estimates of the regional user population for Webster are based on participation rates observed from review of national, state, and local trail reports, including those within 75 miles. For context, analysis of the ECFRPC data finds that annual counts of Orange County trail users represent approximately 7.5% of the population of the Orlando Metropolitan Statistical Area's (MSA) 2010 population (Census 2010). Trail use in Orange County was comparable to reported trail use in the City of Dunedin, Florida. According to Dunedin's Director of Community Redevelopment, approximately 156,000 people travel through downtown Dunedin on the Pinellas Trail (Harnik, 1997, p. 177) each year. Comparing Dunedin trail users to the 1990 and 2000 population of the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA (Census 1990, 2000) suggests between 6.5% and 7.5% of the regional population uses

the Dunedin trail.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, Librett, Yore, and Schmidt (2006) report a national survey of trail use, finding that 11.2% of women and 14.3% of men use a walking, hiking, or biking trail at least once per month.

Together, these trail user surveys bound the estimate of trail users in Central Florida between 7.5% and 12.5% of the populations. The ECFRPC (2011) survey results indicate the distances which trail users currently travel to use the three existing trails studied. The Webster trail segments would represent new options among choices a trail user could make; however, the Webster segment is currently more remote than the other trail choices, due to lack of connectivity. It is conservatively estimated that approximately one-fourth to one-half of the regional population share could be anticipated in Webster; to account for limited connectivity and remoteness, a participation rate of 4% was used to estimate regional trail users.

## 2. Trail User-Trips

Trail user-trips were estimated using visitation rates reported in the ECFRPC (2011) study. Due to demographic differences between the population expected to use the South Sumter Trail alignments and those using the three Orange County trails, estimates needed to be calibrated appropriately. As such, the results of the survey analysis were combined with Census counts of local populations near the proposed alignments to predict trips per user to the Webster area trails. To facilitate the forecast, survey data were used to develop an ordinal logit econometric model that predicted trail visits per user based on trail attributes and the distances (in five mile increments) between the trail and the zip code in which respondents resided.



**Figure 4.4: Buffers around the North and South Alignments**

Trail attributes were represented with binary trail dummy variables for the Orange County trails (Cady Way, West Orange, and Little Econ). Output from this regression was then applied in a weighted fashion to each proposed alignment to generate expected user-trips by local population, accounting for variation in distance from the site. The North regression used equal weights for data from all three Orange County trails, while the South alignment used weights of 50%, 0%, and 50%, respectively. The weights were based on judgments of how similar each of these three existing trails are to the proposed alignments analyzed in this study. Specifically, the North alignment

<sup>2</sup> Harnik, Peter. 1997. Pinellas Trail: Pinellas County, Florida. In *Urban Parks and Open Spaces*, ed. Alexander Garvin and Gayle Berens. Washington D.C.: Urban Land Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Interactive Marketing Solutions. 2002. *Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2001 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis*

<sup>4</sup> Moore, Paul, Nicholas Kuhn, and David Barth. 2011. *Miami-Dade County Trail Benefits Study*.

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would pass through downtown Webster – just as West Orange passes through downtown Winter Garden – while the South alignment would not pass through a comparable downtown area. For this reason, the South alignment assigned a weight of zero to West Orange.

Parameter estimates from the regression allowed calculation of probabilities reflecting the likelihood of various trip frequency buckets (0, 3, 7, and 15 visits annually) to be experienced by a local population. Probabilities were then applied to the trip frequency buckets for each local population to estimate expected annual visits. The procedure allowed stratified subtotals of expected user-trips by distance. Summaries of the estimates are presented below in **Figures 4.5 and 4.6**.

NORTH	0-5 Miles	6-10 Miles	11-15 Miles	16-20 Miles	21-25 Miles	26-30 Miles	31-35 Miles
<b>Population</b>	1,926	3,608	6,846	15,071	19,443	27,154	42,081
<b>Trail users</b>	77	144	274	603	778	1,086	1,683
<b>User-trips</b>	852	1,426	2,386	4,549	5,018	5,950	7,811

*Figure 4.5: Predicted Annual Trail Users and User-Trips by Distance Traveled (North Alignment)*

SOUTH	0-5 Miles	6-10 Miles	11-15 Miles	16-20 Miles	21-25 Miles	26-30 Miles	31-35 Miles
<b>Population</b>	1,611	3,900	7,994	13,623	25,220	36,624	65,590
<b>Trail users</b>	64	156	320	545	1,009	1,465	2,624
<b>User-trips</b>	660	1,405	2,504	3,658	5,758	7,084	10,742

*Figure 4.6: Predicted Annual Trail Users and User-Trips by Distance Traveled (South Alignment)*

### Retail Demand Estimation

User-trips from ECFRPC were combined with the reported spending habits to obtain estimates of expected retail sales and economic contributions of the South Sumter Trail alignments. To estimate local spending, TBG calculated mean total spending by category reported in ECFRPC (2011) by survey respondents. Multiplied by user-trips, these provided estimates of the various types of spending that can reasonably be expected to take place from local visitors due to the proposed South Sumter Trail alignments. Maintaining consistency with the similarity weights employed in transfer of econometric parameter estimates, the influence on mean spending among the three trails from the ECFRPC study varied by alignment. The mean among all trails was used for estimating local spending accruing to the North alignment, while the South alignment only used data from Cady Way and Little Econ Trails for its local spending calculations.

Total spending consists of local spending (defined as spending from visitors coming from within 35 miles of each site) plus nonlocal spending (in this case, defined as coming from visitors residing over 35 miles away). Nonlocal spending was estimated using data from a recent study assessing the impact of the Erie Canalway trail, which runs from Buffalo to Albany, NY (Scipione 2014). The Erie Canalway study was used because it offered the most comprehensive, recent and reliable data available specifically for visitors from outside the trail region. The Erie Canalway Trail is 277 miles long, as opposed to about 20 miles in the Webster scenario; consequently, the Erie Canalway’s typical out-of-region spending was prorated on a per-mile basis and applied to Webster for a customized nonlocal estimate.

The average spending per person per visit in the Erie Canalway study was reported to be \$1,128.39 for out-of-region visitors. To calibrate this to the Webster scenario, the value was applied on a per-mile basis to the trail alignments of interest, amounting to a total of about \$81 in expected spending per nonlocal trail user per trip. That

same study broke down average nonlocal spending into categories, with reported percentages applying to each, including lodging, which was assigned accordingly in addition to the other spending categories already discussed. Total annual spending (local plus nonlocal) by category is reported in **Figure 4.1, above**.

**Comparison of Economic-Related Opportunities and Constraints for the South Sumter Connector Alignments from the City of Webster’s Point of View**

The economic contributions that the South Sumter trail proposals can be expected to impart were estimated from the total spending figures and, in the case of jobs, from changes in property values. According to ECFRPC (2011), every \$1 million in retail spending supported about 15.85 jobs, \$307,000 in personal income, and an additional \$309,000 in economic output. County-specific multipliers were applied to estimate total economic output. Based on an inflation rate of 3%, the 10-year total of economic impact would be \$4.28 million for the North Alignment and \$3.39 million for the South Alignment.

In sum, the construction of the South Sumter Trail is estimated to produce expenditures of at least \$3.4 million over ten years. From the perspective of the City of Webster, the North Alignment will produce a greater economic impact, perhaps an addition \$0.89 million over the ten-year period of analysis. The largest share of this increase (about \$0.71 million) is attributed to restaurant expenditures (\$0.47 million) and other food and beverage sales (\$0.24 million). Relative to the South alignment, the North alignment is expected to generate an additional \$0.23 million in rentals, supported by another \$0.05 million in guide materials.

**Figure 4.7** reports the total economic impact of the two alignments over ten years. For the City of Webster, the North Alignment produces about \$2.32 million more than the South Alignment. Most significantly, the North Alignment is expected to generate 35 new jobs, versus just 5 positions for the South Alignment.

Impact Type	---- Alignment ----	
	North	South
<b>Personal Income</b> <sup>1</sup>	\$1,313,295	\$1,040,047
<b>Output</b>	\$5,594,636	\$4,430,598
<b>Spending</b>	\$4,275,563	\$3,385,976
<b>Total Income</b> <sup>2</sup>	\$11,183,494	\$8,856,621

**Figure 4.7: Ten-Year Economic Impacts**

<sup>1</sup> Total wages and income received by workers along the trail.

<sup>2</sup> The total value of all goods and services, including personal income.

## 5.0 Visioning Scenarios for the South Sumter Connector

Hoke Design developed trail visioning scenarios outlining potential partnerships, programming and promotional ideas. Additionally, a section on implementation strategies was included, some that have already been accomplished during the time-frame of this Study.

### 5.1 The South Sumter Trail through the City of Webster



Figure 5.1: "Central Avenue Trail" from 2011 Lake~Sumter MPO Study

**Description:** The City of Webster owns the abandoned railroad corridor within its city limits. This corridor is part of the proposed northern alignment for the South Sumter Connector Trail, part of the 250-mile proposed Coast-to-Coast Connector. Some of the ideas for developing the trail in Webster originated before the Coast-to-Coast Connector gained momentum. In 2011, Hoke Design provided subconsultant services and developed the "Central Avenue Trail" as part of the Lake~Sumter MPO Safe Access Study for Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle Schools (Figure 5.1).

The vision to have the alignment of the C2C trail include the City of Webster has been one of the top priorities for the Mayor of Webster and other community leaders. These leaders understand the economic importance of the trail to their city and pursued DEO grant funding to assist with obtaining this goal.

**Potential Partnerships:** Property owners and tenants along the proposed trail corridor, the Florida Department of Transportation, the Office of Greenways and Trails, the Department of Economic Opportunity, Sumter County, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway and the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation. Other potential partnerships include bicycle clubs, equestrian groups, Chamber of Commerce and local businesses and associations.

#### Potential Programming:

- Organize a trail clearing event (See Implementation Strategies, below)
- Create trail-related events such as 5K fundraisers, bike races, and horse-drawn carriage rides
- Offer opportunities for walking clubs and horseback riding
- Encourage "walking school bus" programs for Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle Schools or similar activities.



Figure 5.2: Agency and Community Partners

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

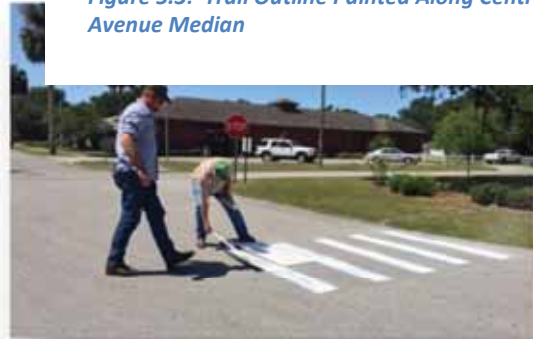
Hoke Design, Inc.

## Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Paint an outline of the trail through the Central Avenue median, with a temporary crosswalk, to help citizens and visitors visualize the trail through the heart of Webster. (Implemented April/May, 2015, see Figure 5.3 and 5.4)
- Design an image depicting the potential future trail through downtown Webster (completed, April 2015, see Figure 5.9) and actively seek developers and investors.
- Show “before” and “after” images of the trail to help the community understand the look and potential of the trail (depicted in PowerPoint presentations at public meetings April/May, 2015, see Figures 5.6 and 5.7)
- Identify community champions to encourage all residents to support the trail through Webster.



*Figure 5.3: Trail Outline Painted Along Central Avenue Median*



*Figure 5.4: City Staff Paints Temporary Crosswalk*

## Implementation Strategies:

- Verify Right-of-Way ownership
- Clear the trail bed within City limits using community service assistance to allow immediate use of the trail corridor as a linear park. Use community service, prison community service and/or volunteers to maintain the trail corridor. Consider asking residents from the Florida Grande, Webster Travel Park and The Villages for assistance.
- Clarify any insurance or liability issues involved in clearing or maintaining the trail using community service or volunteer labor.
- Continue to coordinate and stay involved with the FDOT Feasibility Study project members, the Office of Greenways and Trails staff and the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation.
- Determine community attitudes toward the proposed trail alignment through Webster. This will help Webster and others work with the community to meet their needs.
  - Develop surveys for residents and business owners to capture existing bicycle, pedestrian, and equestrian behaviors. (initiated in May, 2015 by Hoke Design)
- Work with the Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort and their residents to actively involve them in the



*Figure 5.5: Abandoned Rail Corridor near Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort*

planning, maintenance and use of the trail between the Resort and Webster.



*Figure 5.6: Abandoned Rail Corridor near Sam S. Harris Memorial Park*



*Figure 5.7: Image of a Paved Trail in Volusia County*

- Continue to work with the City of Center Hill to ensure that “A Trail of Two Cities” includes Center Hill as a destination too.



*Figure 5.8: Existing View of Downtown Webster*



*Figure 5.9: Image Showing Potential C2C Connector through downtown Webster*

## 5.2 Downtown Retail Trailhead

**Description:** The City of Webster owns and maintains the median between Central Avenue and NE 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue from east of SR471 to SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This green space has benches and trees, and functions as a park.



Figure 5.10: Central Avenue in Downtown Webster

The potential South Sumter Connector trail corridor through

Webster will be located within this median, creating a linear park and trail system through the heart of Webster. Webster is currently a walk/bike/horse friendly community.

**Potential Partnerships:** Property owners and tenants along the proposed trail corridor, the Office of Greenways and Trails, the Department of Economic Opportunity, Sumter County, the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway and the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation. Other potential partnerships include the Sumter County School District, bicycle clubs, equestrian groups, Chambers of Commerce, and local businesses and associations.

### Potential Programming:

- Create trail-related events such as 5K fundraisers, bike races, and horse-drawn carriage rides
- Offer group opportunities for walking clubs and horseback rides
- Allow for walking school buses to Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle School and similar activities.



Figure 5.11: Bicycle Rider along Central Avenue

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Designate the median between Central Avenue and NE 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue from SR 471 to the old railroad platform as a park and name it "Central Avenue Park"
- Create postcards with the historic photographs from Buddy Tompkins and sell them to raise funds for promoting the trail
- Design a brochure or flyer showing the image of the potential future trail through Webster and actively seek developers and investors
- Create events in this park such as movie night, food truck events, Christmas Parade or tree lighting, Easter Egg Hunt, and other events to draw people downtown.



Figure 5.12: Shoppers along Central Avenue



# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

## Implementation Strategies:

- Encourage private businesses and community residents to organize and run events recommended under promotional ideas, above
- Organize a bus tour of downtown Winter Garden for community leaders to see how a trail can transform a community.
- Provide parking downtown for Market visitors and provide trolley rides to the Market. Use the B. M. Hewitt Park for the trolley stop near the markets.



Figure 5.13: Shoppers from the West Orange Trail in Winter Garden, FL



Figure 5.14: West Orange Trail through Winter Garden, FL

## 5.3 SR 471 Gateway Opportunity and Improvements

**Description:** SR 471 bisects the City of Webster, and there are currently no stop conditions (traffic light or stop sign) within the vicinity or within the city limits of Webster. The potential trail alignment crosses SR 471, and trail users will need to cross safely.

### Potential Partnerships:

- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) owns and maintains SR 471.
- The Sumter County School District pays to transport students attending Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle School. The State of Florida does not assist with the transportation costs for students living within the 2-mile walk zone area of school. The two schools are located on the opposite sides of SR 471, and providing a safe crossing may allow some students to walk or ride bicycles to school, thereby reducing costs for the school district.
- The Webster Market area generates an influx of visitors on Monday and Tuesdays, and SR 471 experiences heavy traffic congestion near the markets, especially during winter months. Many people cross the street to reach the market area. Traffic congestion and the presence of pedestrians and bicyclists reduce motorist speed and increases safety for those crossing the roadway.
- Visitors coming to the Farmer's Market, Flea Market or Cattle Auction would benefit from improved pedestrian features along SR 471.



Figure 5.15: School-Related Crosswalk over SR 471



Figure 5.16: "Market Monday" Traffic along SR 471



Figure 5.17: Webster Market Shoppers Cross SR 471

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

- The Scenic Sumter Heritage Scenic Byway includes a loop through the Webster area, and SR 471 is part of that loop. A crossing over SR 471 at the trail could become a gateway for the City of Webster and the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway. If implemented, the trail through Webster would be a significant desitnation point for those traveling the scenic byway.



Figure 5.18: Existing Webster Gateway Sign at Central Avenue and SR 471



Figure 5.19: Map of the Webster Area Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway

**Potential Programming:** The community could start a “Walking School Bus” program to encourage students to walk to school and to provide adult supervision for crossing SR 471.

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Promote the concept of Walking School Bus at the local schools
- Promote the trail through Webster and the Gateway Concept on SR 471 through the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway website.
- Provide official gateways on SR 471 near the Plantation House and at Central Avenue.

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

## Implementation Strategies:

- Review the possibility of reduced posted speed limits within Webster city limits.
- Review the possibility of streetscaping to include curb bulb-outs, street trees, mid-block crossings, and wider sidewalks on both sides of SR 471 through the Webster area. Coordinate all efforts with FDOT and Sumter County.



*Figure 5.20: View looking South on SR 471 at Central Avenue*



*Figure 5.21: Image of the "Future" SR 471*

## 5.4 Connecting to a Network of Bicycle Routes/Facilities

**Description:** The potential trail alignment through Webster will increase the need for a safe, connected bicycle network to serve additional bicycle traffic and to provide safe access to the trail.



**Potential Partnerships:** Sumter County, Lake Sumter MPO, Sumter County School District, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway, Bike Florida, Visit Florida and local businesses.

### Potential Programming:

- Ask bicycle clubs and associations to hold events using the Webster area's low-traffic roadways
- Consider establishing bike-trains for students living near Webster Elementary School and South Sumter Middle School
- Hold bike rodeos at the schools
- Request that local businesses provide bike racks to encourage bicycle use.



Figure 5.22: An Image of a Long-Distance Bicycle Rider

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Promote biking through the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway website and the Sumter County website
- Use social media and apps that attract bicyclists
- Find local sponsors to plan and hold bicycle-related events
- Ask local businesses to include images that portray a bicycle-friendly town in their advertising
- Seek Bicycle-Friendly designation through the League of American Bicyclists.



Figure 5.23: Bicycle Parked at Cutrale

### Implementation Strategies:

- Develop a bicycle master plan that looks at access to the trail and nearby community assets as well as bicycle routes for transportation to work or school.
- Provide an interim bicycle route for the South Sumter Connector gap.



Figure 5.24: Bicycle Parked at Webster Farm and Hardware Supply

## 5.5 Connecting to a Network of Sidewalks

**Description:** Webster was established in 1855 and streets were laid out using a grid pattern. This type of street layout is ideal for pedestrians and provides a shorter route for most trips. Webster has some sidewalks along certain streets, and recent studies propose additional sidewalks. A connected system of sidewalks is important near a trail to provide connectivity for residents and to encourage trail users to detour from the trail to visit nearby retail businesses, restaurants and area destinations.



**Potential Partnerships:** FDOT, Lake Sumter MPO, Sumter County, Sumter County School District, Webster in Bloom, Webster Historical Society, South Sumter Chamber of Commerce, Visit Florida, and the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway.

### Potential Programming:

- Develop and prioritize a sidewalk master plan with the trail corridor as the central spine
- Consider establishing a Walking School Bus program
- Identify historic properties and develop a Walking Tour
- Review for ADA deficiencies and create a plan to increase access and mobility for all.

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Post the walking tour online using the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway, Sumter County Tourism and Chamber of Commerce websites and social media.

### Implementation Strategies:

- Start planning efforts using the sidewalk master plan (Figures 5.27 and 5.28) developed by Hoke Design for the Lake~Sumter MPO Safe Access Study for Webster Elementary and South Sumter Middle Schools. Modify the plan as needed to emphasize access and connectivity to the trail.
- To create shade and scenery for pedestrians, the existing canopy street trees should be maintained and supplemented. Determine if there is sufficient right-of-way to maintain existing canopy trees.
- Review existing roadways with no sidewalks to identify potential safety issues for pedestrians.



Figure 5.25: Sample Walking Tour Brochure



Figure 5.26: Historic Home in Webster, FL

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.



Figure 5.27: Trail and Sidewalk Master Plan from LSMPO Study (East of SR 471)



Figure 5.28: Trail and Sidewalk Master Plan from LSMPO Study (West of SR 471)

## 5.6 Connecting to a Network of Equestrian Routes/Trails

**Description:** Several residents are horseback riders and some equestrian-related facilities/shops are within the Webster area. The City of Webster desires to include and promote equestrian use along the South Sumter Connector trail. To support this vision, an equestrian master plan is needed to provide a blueprint for a series of connected horse paths that connects to the proposed trail corridor.

**Potential Partnerships:** Sumter County Horseman's Group, M&M Showhorses, Back Country Horseman of Florida, Nature Coast Back Country Horsemen of America, Florida Forever Back Country Horsemen, Sumter Equestrian Center (Bushnell, FL), Florida Ranch Horse Club, Florida Association of Mounted Patrols, and other Equestrian-related associations. Additional partners include the Sumter Chamber of Commerce, Visit Florida and Sumter County Tourism.

### Potential Programming:

- Work in conjunction with the events planned for the Sumter County Fairgrounds and Cattle Auction Market
- Provide mounted patrol along the trail
- Hold equestrian events in Webster

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Reach out to the local and regional equestrian groups to further brainstorm ideas related to equestrian functions that include the use of the potential South Sumter Connector trail.

### Implementation Strategies:

- Install hitching posts (one was added to the Plantation House)
- Ask local horse groups to clear and maintain the trail already in city ownership



Figure 5.29: Mounted Police at the Webster Market



Figure 5.30: Equestrians at the Plantation House



# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

## 5.7 Promoting Nearby Community Assets- Package “Day Trips”

**Description:** Webster has the potential to become a primary destination point along the 250-mile C2C Connector by showcasing their many existing assets and providing access to those assets. Creating a menu of activities will encourage trail visitors to stop and visit.

**Potential Partnerships:** Sumter County Tourism, Webster Markets, Sumter Chamber of Commerce, local property and business owners

### Potential Programming:

- Offer “tree canopy tours”, bike tours, horse or historic walking tours
- Create running events, such as 5k fundraisers
- Ask local farmers to provide tours by bike and/or on horseback
- Provide carriage rides along the trail and to nearby community assets
- Provide trolley rides from downtown to the markets and other Webster destinations.

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Post signs along the trail offering various tour information
- Create a flyer or brochure depicting possible tour/event sites
- Encourage cross-promotion among businesses
- Work with local farmers, merchants and the Sumter County Markets to promote off-trail destinations.

### Implementation Strategies:

- Work with local businesses to create a group to foster ideas, network and to help one-another promote Webster area businesses and services. Consider using this group to form a “Beef Up Webster” campaign.
- Consider creating a website and Facebook page showcasing Webster assets. Due to lack of city staff, this would need to be set-up and maintained by a volunteer or group of volunteers.
- Promote the trail and historic Webster with a volunteer booth at the Farmers’ Market.



Figure 5.31: Canopied Street in Webster, FL



Figure 5.32: Scenic Rural View near Webster, FL



Figure 5.33: Shopper Spending Money at the Webster Farmer's Market

## 5.8 Providing Overnight Accommodations

**Description:** There are no overnight accommodations within the City of Webster. The C2C Trail is planned as a destination trail and will draw visitors from all over the region and the nation. The trail, coupled with the vendors and visitors to the Farmer's Market, Flea Market and Cattle Auction, increase the demand for overnight facilities.

**Potential Partnerships:** Building or property owners willing to build, land owners with the ability to provide camping/"glamping" facilities, RV hook-ups, the Plantation House (upstairs lodging potential), mobile home or house owners that can provide temporary rental (Vacation Rental By Owner)

### Potential Programming:

- Work with private property owners and businesses to create events that carry into the evening. This will increase the demand for restaurants and help area businesses. The city recently purchased a movie screen for outdoor movies. Movies could be shown after a trail-related event and encourage out-of-town visitors to spend the night.

### Potential Promotional Ideas:

- Create a flyer or presentation aimed at local property owners to show how they can profit from trail users and others that need overnight accommodations.
- Reach out to the Sumter Fairgrounds promotional agency to co-promote events to entice visitors to extend their stay.

### Implementation Strategies:

- Identify facilities near the trail that may be able to be converted to provide lodging.
- Identify entrepreneurs and property owners interested in investing in Webster. Work with businesses such as the Plantation House, to assist with plans to provide overnight accommodations.



Figure 5.34: Image Showing Glamor Camping or "Glamping"



Figure 5.35: Vacation Rental By Owner Advertising Trail Proximity



Figure 5.36: Image of RV with Bicycles

## 6.0 Stakeholder Coordination

**Stakeholders:** Stakeholders were identified using City of Webster-provided lists, online searches, agency contacts for this project, and by selecting stakeholders from the list compiled by VHB (consultant) for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) South Sumter Connector Feasibility Study. Meetings were held May 7, 2015 and May 21, 2015 to provide project information and receive community input.

**Outline Comparing Existing and Planned Public and Private Projects:** Few projects along either proposed trail corridor were identified. The Northern alignment through Webster includes two funded roadway improvement projects and one conceptual roadway project. Other conceptual projects include the addition of lodging accommodations to the Plantation House and a possible private horse carriage business along the trail if it comes through Webster.

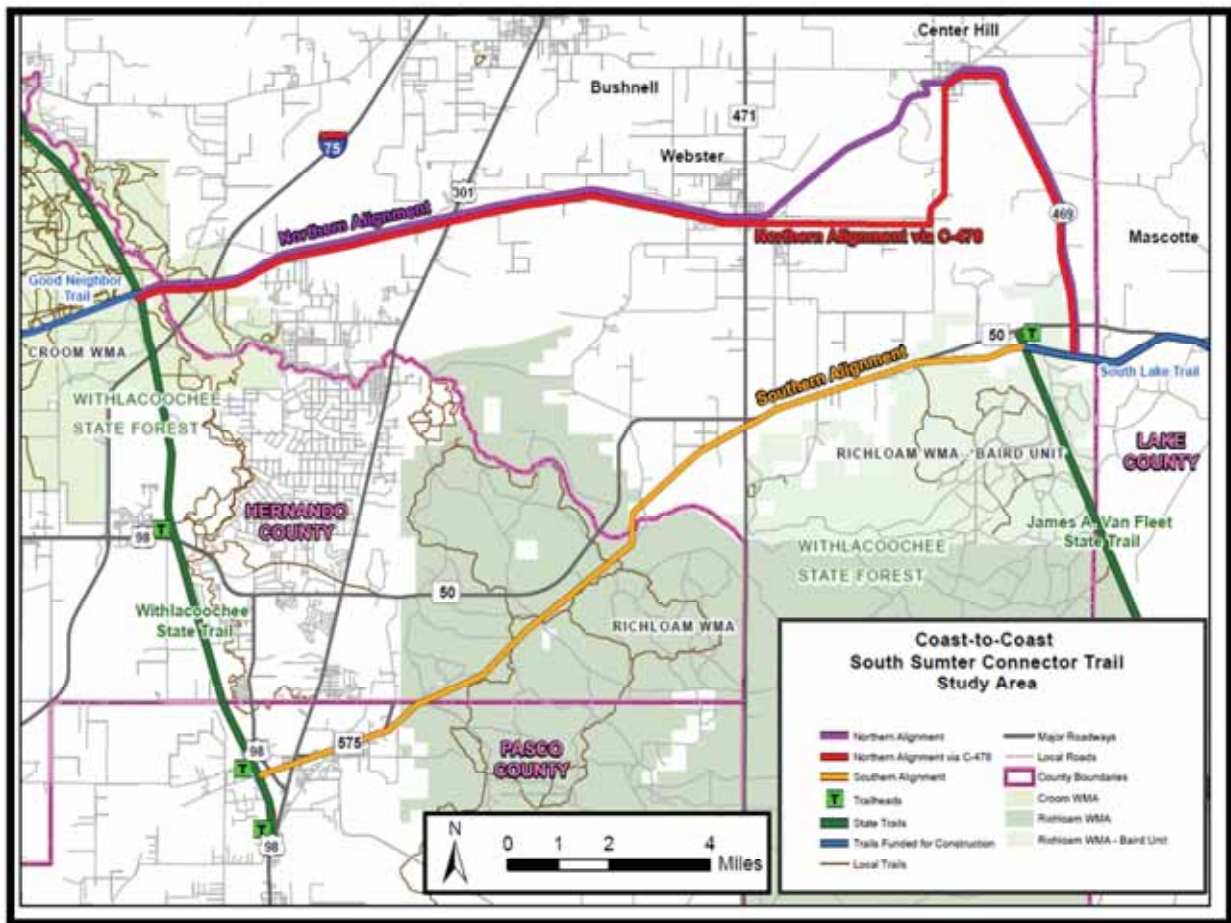


Figure 6.1: VHB Map Showing Potential Alignments as of May 7, 2015

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

The reconstruction of County Road 673 from I-75 to US 301 (SR 35) (Figure 6.2) provides an opportunity to include paved shoulders or bicycle lanes to allow for an interim connection route for the South Sumter Connector trail. The South Sumter Connector is the largest gap in the overall 250-mile C2C trail system and will likely be the final segment constructed. The CR 673 project terminates at US 301 (SR 35) and will nearly connect to the funded resurfacing project on County Road 478 from US 301 (SR 35) to SR 471 (Figure 6.3) in Webster.



Figure 6.2: Sumter County Funded Roadway Improvement CR 673 (Funded 2017)

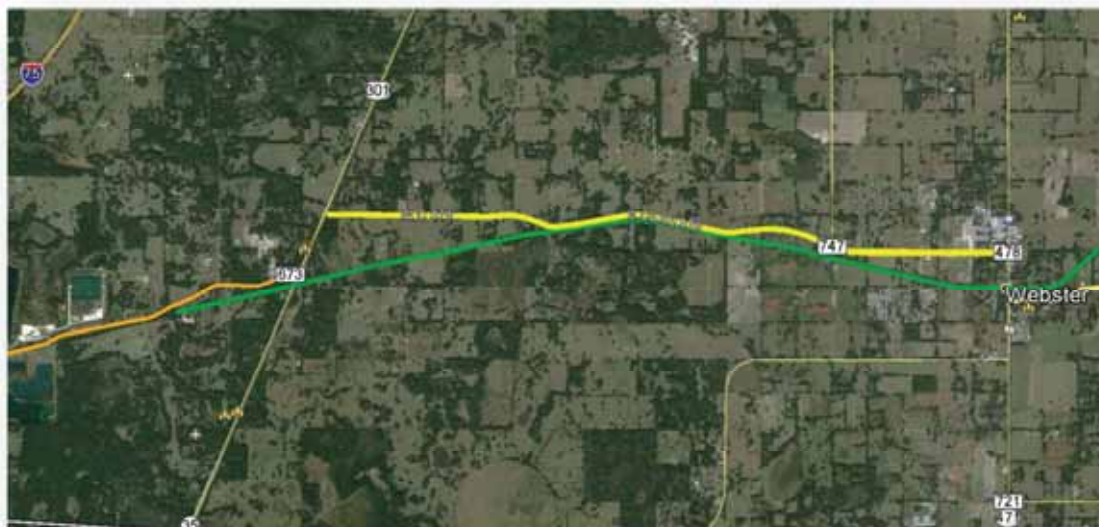


Figure 6.3: CR 478 Widening and Resurfacing (Funded 2019)

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

The gap between these two projects along US 301 (SR 35) is less than one-half mile (Figure 6.4). If possible, this gap should be reviewed to determine if this segment can be upgraded to provide sufficient continuous facilities for bicyclists. The gap section along US 301 (SR 35) currently appears to have paved shoulders. If the shoulder is widened to a bicycle lane, new guidelines require Florida State roadways to include 7' bike lanes. This additional width provides the bicyclist more comfort and safety and reduces conflict with motorists. Use of this route would also require crossing SR 301/35 at CR 673 and CR 478 to encourage bicyclists to ride in the proper direction with traffic.



Figure 6.4: US 301 (SR 35) Gap between County projects

The addition of wider paved shoulders/bicycle lanes to these segments will allow for a more immediate connection from the Withlacoochee State trail to the City of Webster. Additionally, if wide shoulders/bike lanes are included in the CR 673 and CR 478 projects and the gap along US 301 (SR 35), connectivity to the future trail will be enhanced. The C2C Connector will serve as a destination trail and trail users will need food, drinks, supplies and overnight accommodations. Higher connectivity to adjacent roadways with paved shoulders/bike lanes and sidewalks will increase interaction with local businesses.



Figure 6.5: Existing Paved Shoulders along US 301 (SR 35)

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

Sumter County has conceptual (unfunded) plans to make improvements along CR 478 east of SR 471 to the City of Center Hill. The FDOT Feasibility Team has added this route as a possible option for the South Sumter Connector trail. Additional alignments using a variation of this route are also under consideration. This project, if constructed, may reduce available right of way for the C2C Connector. Alternatively, if this roadway is improved with added paved shoulders or bicycle lanes, it could increase connectivity and route options for bicyclists if the trail runs along the abandoned rail line originally depicted as the northern alignment.

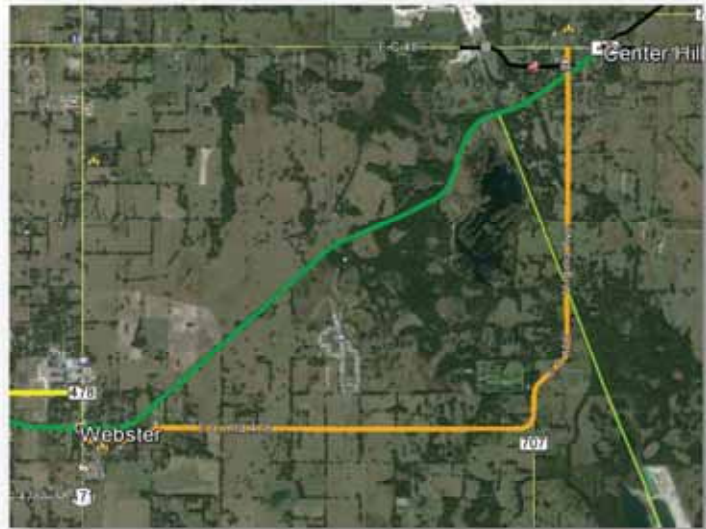


Figure 6.6: Conceptual CR 478 Improvements East of SR471

Lastly, two conceptual private projects are under consideration by Danny Walker, owner of the Plantation House Restaurant in Webster.

Mr. Walker is interested in adding lodging to the upstairs of his restaurant and providing horse carriage rides along the potential South Sumter Connector trail through Webster to the City of Center Hill. These entrepreneurial ideas are exactly what the City of Webster needs to expand their current economic base. Currently, no in-town lodging is available and Monday Market workers and visitors would likely appreciate the choice of staying in Webster on Sunday nights to get to the Markets when they open at 5 a.m.

Residents of The Villages retirement, located north of Webster, often visit the Farmers' Market, sometimes by the busload. Residents come to Webster to experience an authentic atmosphere with country-style scenery, food and great bargains. Overnight accommodations would provide options for a longer stay and for more opportunities for visitors to spend money and improve the local economy.

Lodging at the Plantation House would lure visitors off the trail and into the community. Safe bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian features are needed between the Plantation House and the potential alignment of the C2C corridor. A trail or wide sidewalk should connect the Plantation House to the existing sidewalks along the west side of SR 471. This will also enhance connectivity to the Webster Market area.

The following chart provides a summary of the known projects for the northern alignment.

Known Projects - Northern Alignment				
Project	Connectivity Potential for Webster	Partnership Potential for Webster	Economic Impact for Webster	Status
Sumter County Roadway Improvements	Will improve connectivity to the trail	Sumter County	Increases mobility	Funded and Conceptual
FDOT Sidewalks				Planned
Adding Lodging to the Plantation House	Will provide overnight accommodations for trail users/others	Private	Overnight stays increase spending	Conceptual
Establishing a horse carriage business along the trail	Will provide a draw for tourists and increase connectivity along the trail to Webster's assets	Private	Encourages trail users to stop in Webster and becomes a destination	Conceptual

Figure 6.7: Known Projects for the Northern alignment

**The Southern Alignment:** The Southern Alignment for the South Sumter Connector Trail more closely follows SR 50. The FDOT/VHB Team doing the South Sumter Feasibility Project provided two potential projects that may impact the Southern Alignment. The first project is a microbrewery located along the Withlacochee State Trail. The proposed site location is near the Walmart Distribution Center in Brooksville, FL. The owner is also looking at an alternative site in Ashville, NC.

Due to the distance from Webster, this conceptual project will not likely have an economic impact on Webster.

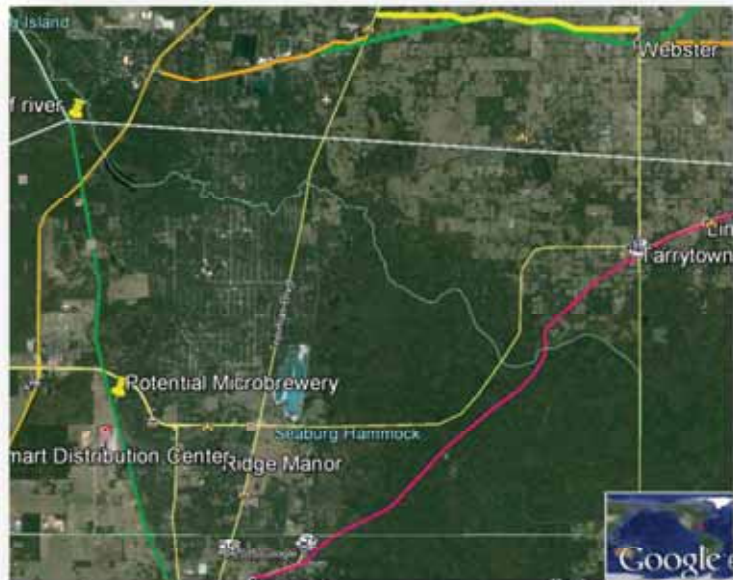


Figure 6.8: Conceptual Microbrewery Location on the Withlacochee State Trail

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

The second project is for a potential mining operation that is considering locating adjacent to the Mid-Coast Aggregates operation along SR 50 just west of the Van Fleet Trailhead in Mabel, FL (Figure 6.9). Currently, there is a 30-year lease for this property that includes the abandoned rail line that extends north from the General James A. Van Fleet Trail. It does not appear that any of the trail alignments will be co-located with the existing or potential mining operations. The opening of an additional mining operation may impact the southern alignment of the trail if company employees live nearby and are able to use the trail to access work.

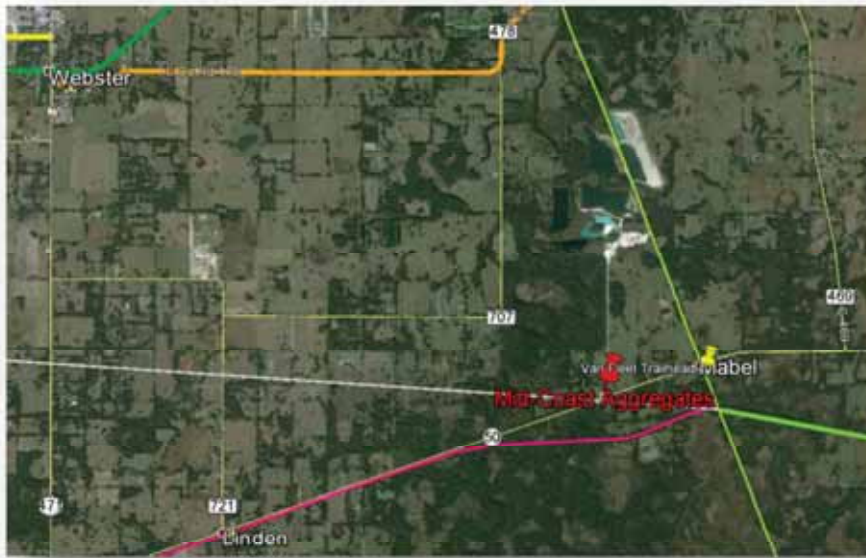


Figure 6.9: Potential Mining Operation

The following chart provides a summary of the known projects for the southern alignment.

Project	Connectivity Potential for Webster	Partnership Potential for Webster	Economic Impact for Webster	Status (Under Construction, Funded, Planned and Conceptual)
Microbrewery on the Withlacoochee Trail	No Connectivity	None	None	Conceptual
Mining Operation	No Connectivity	None	None	Conceptual

Figure 6.10: Potential Projects for the Southern alignment



## 7.0 Provide Basis for Post Evaluation

The South Sumter Connector trail is a segment of the C2C Connector Trail that will cross the State of Florida from St. Petersburg to Cape Canaveral. Two primary alignments are under consideration. The northernmost alignment runs through the City of Webster along the abandoned railroad corridor that leads to the City of Center Hill, FL.

Capturing data showing current conditions is needed to provide pre-trail information so that future studies can include base data information for post-trail comparison purposes.

**Proposed Methodology:** The methods used to evaluate the current situation and capture current property values will include assessment of existing property values, surveys and a list of existing businesses adjacent to the proposed trail corridor within the City of Webster.

**1. Assess existing property values along the trail through the City of Webster:** Parcel boundary data have been obtained from the Florida of Revenue Data Portal. Property values for each parcel are determined using the Just Values from the Sumter County Property Appraiser records (also obtained through the DOR Data Portal). Base values include the sums of Just Value (land and buildings) for all parcels within the city of Webster adjoining the proposed alignments and for all parcels within the City of Webster itself. Adjusted for inflation, and all other considerations being equal, the differences in total Just Value for the two sets of properties, pre- and post-construction, may be an indicator for the effects of the trail, particularly if the percentage increase for properties adjoining the trail were greater than that for the city in general. However, other components of property value would need to be evaluated for contributions to any net change in value.

**2. Distribute Surveys:** Surveys were created and distributed to capture data on business practices, citizen bicycling and horseback riding habits/patterns and perceptions of safety crossing SR 471.

a. A survey for business owners was distributed at the May 7, 2015 stakeholder meeting with only one participant. City staff delivered additional surveys to area businesses but no completed surveys were returned. The survey was reviewed by the Office of Greenways and Trails and the Greenways and Trails Foundation Members. The initial survey results are included in Appendix A2.



**Trail Survey for Business Owners**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. How do you currently advertise?**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper       | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email Blasts    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalk/Outdoor Display of Merchandise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face Book       | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Cards                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Twitter         | <input type="checkbox"/> Through Associations/Networking         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Radio           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV              |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Billboard       |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Website         |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade magazines |  |

**2. The Coast-to-Coast Connector is a planned paved recreational trail that will cross Florida from St. Petersburg to Cape Canaveral. There is a northern alignment that comes through the cities of Webster and Center Hill. Will any of your business actions change if this alignment is selected?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expand Business                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Create/Expand Events            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add on Trail-Related Services          | <input type="checkbox"/> Display Merchandise Differently |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Start a New Business/Service           | <input type="checkbox"/> Add Bicycle Racks               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Locate Closer to the Trail             | <input type="checkbox"/> Add Hitching Posts              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Add Signage for Viewing by Trail Users | <input type="checkbox"/> No Change Anticipated           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advertise Your Proximity to the Trail  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                     |

**3. What do you think the trip duration is for people visiting the market from out of town? (Please circle)**

1 hour   2 hours   3 hours   4 hours   5 hours   6 hours   7 hours   8 or more hours   overnight

**4. What do you think is the current overnight accommodation demand for the Webster area?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Demand               | <input type="checkbox"/> Demand on Tuesday nights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demand on Sunday nights | <input type="checkbox"/> Demand on Weekends       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demand on Monday nights | <input type="checkbox"/> Seasonal                 |

**5. What businesses will benefit from the trail location through Webster?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurants                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please List) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail/Antique             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Webster and Sumter Markets | _____  |

Survey to collect base data for the Coast-to-Coast Trail through Webster, FL May, 2015

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

b. A survey for non-business owners was distributed at the May 7, 2015 Stakeholder Meeting with eight participants. The survey was also distributed at the May 21, 2015 public meeting and no completed surveys were submitted. The survey was reviewed by the Office of Greenways and Trails and the Greenways and Trails Foundation Members. The initial results for the survey are included in Appendix A2.



## Trail Survey for Non-Business Owners

Name (Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you currently ride a bike? If yes, how often?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month

2. Where do you ride your bike or hike/walk?

- On back roads only
- On any road
- Off-road
- On paved recreational trails (if so, which trail?) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How far do you ride your bike?

- 1-3 miles
- 3-6 miles
- Over 6 miles

4. What is the primary reason that you ride your bike?

- This is my main form of transportation
- For Recreation/Exercise
- For Fun
- To save on car expenses

5. Do you ride a horse? If so, where?

- Private property
- Along the road
- Equestrian Trail (If Yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_)

6. Do you have a student that attends Webster Elementary School or South Sumter Middle School? If yes, would you permit them to walk/bike ride to school? If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you feel safe crossing SR 471 in Webster as a pedestrian? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_  
Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you own property that could provide overnight accommodations for trail users? If yes, what type?

- Camping
- Mobile Home
- RV Hook-up
- House/cottage
- other

Survey to collect base data for the Coast-to-Coast Trail through Webster, FL May, 2015

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

**3. Create a list of businesses adjacent to the trail within city limits and list a brief description of services.** This will assist with the comparison of services provided post-trail to determine the impact of the trail. The following existing businesses are located directly adjacent to the proposed trail alignment through Webster:

**Frog in the Window Antiques/Diddle-Squat Books-**  
books, antiques, tea and coffee



**Memory Lane Antiques**  
Antiques (only open on Mondays)



**Webster Farm Supply and Hardware** Farm and garden supplies, clothing, hunting gear, shoes, paint, lumber, hardware, plants, mower supplies and pet food, grain. Planning for growth.



**El Curiosities**  
Wholesale and retail imported interior and exterior decor



## **Methodology for Monitoring Post-Trail Impacts**

It may take a few years for trail-related businesses to develop near the trail after the trail is completed and operational. Ideally, a post-trail study should be performed three years after the trail has opened to determine the economic impact of the trail. The post-evaluation should include the following:

1. Assess pre-trail and post-construction property values along the trail through the City of Webster and within the City as a whole.
2. Pre-construction and post-construction area population and housing data.
3. Trail Survey for Business Owner
4. Trail Survey for Non-Business Owner
5. List of Webster businesses adjacent to the trail with types of services provided.

It is anticipated that certain existing businesses will expand their services to meet trail user needs. New trail-related businesses may take longer to develop. The types of businesses/services expected to be needed include bike/skate rental and repair, restaurants and convenience shopping, athletic shoes/gear, equestrian gear, and overnight accommodations.

The results for the Non-Business Survey will provide a way to determine if residents have experienced a shift in attitude toward the trail and will document whether the trail has influenced their walking, bicycle riding or horse riding behaviors.

## Appendices

### A1. May 7, 2015 Meeting

#### May 7, 2015 Meeting Notice:



*Join us to discuss projects along the three proposed alignments for the South Sumter Connector Trail*

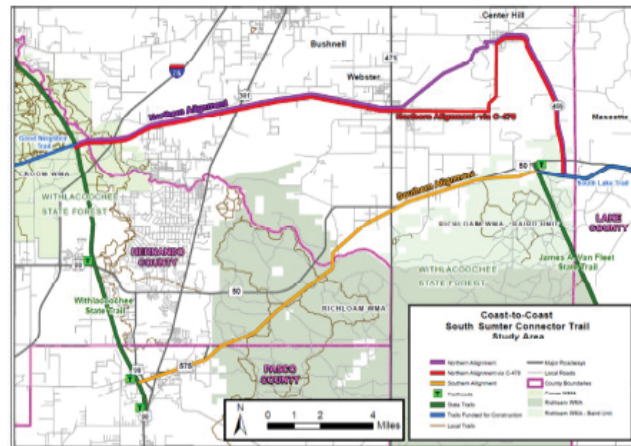
#### City of Webster Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefit Analysis Grant Project

##### Stakeholders Meeting Notice

**Date/Time:** May 7, 2015 3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

**Location:** Webster Community Building  
49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St.  
Webster, FL 33597

**Meeting Objective:** To provide an overview of the DEO grant and to discuss proposed or planned projects along the identified alignments.



Map showing two northern alignments through Webster and one southern alignment south of Webster. Map created by VHB for the FDOT South Sumter Connector Trail Feasibility Study.



May 7, 2015 Meeting Notice, Page 2

**1. Introductions**

**2. Project Overview and Status**

- Coast-to-Coast Trail
- South Sumter Connector Trail Alignment Options
- Project Status

**3. Discussion of private and/or public projects that may impact the use, connectivity, and economic value of the two trail alignments from the City of Webster's point of view.**

**4. Related Meeting Announcements**

**4:45 May 7, 2015:** FDOT Public Kick-Off for the Coast-to-Coast South Sumter Connector Trail (Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort, 9675 SE 49<sup>th</sup> Terrace –Webster, FL)

**6:00 May 21, 2015: South Sumter Trail Economic Impact and Analysis Public Workshop**  
City of Webster DEO Grant Public Workshop for the South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefits Analysis Project (49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St., Webster, FL)

*Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the City of Webster at 352-793-2073 at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting.*



May 7, 2015 Agenda:

## City of Webster

Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)

South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefit Analysis Grant Project

*Stakeholder Meeting AGENDA*

**Date/Time:** May 7, 2015 3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

**Location:** Webster Community Building  
49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St.  
Webster, FL 33597

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

### 2. Project Overview and Status

- DEO South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefit Analysis Project Overview
- Coast-to-Coast Trail Update
- South Sumter Connector Trail Alignment Options – FDOT Project Update
- Project Schedule

### 3. Discussion of private and/or public projects that may impact the use, connectivity, and economic value of the two trail alignments from the City of Webster's point of view.

- Northern alignment
- Southern Alignment

### 4. Trail Visioning and Discussion of Economic Potential

### 5. Related Meeting Announcements

**4:45 May 7, 2015:** FDOT Public Kick-Off for the Coast-to-Coast South Sumter Connector Trail (Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort, 9675 SE 49<sup>th</sup> Terrace –Webster, FL)

**6:00 May 21, 2015:** **South Sumter Trail Economic Impact and Analysis Public Workshop**  
City of Webster DEO Grant Public Workshop for the South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefits Analysis Project (49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St., Webster, FL)








# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

May 7, 2015 Sign-In Sheets

City of Webster Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefit Analysis Grant Project Stakeholder Meeting Sign-In Sheet					
Name	Affiliation	Phone Number	Email Address	Facebook Business Page	Website Address
GINGER HOKE	HOKE DESIGN	407-923-6227	ginger@hokedesign.com	Ginger Crived Hoke	www.hokedesign.com
NATALIE SUTER	VHB/FDOT	407-965-0590	nsuter@vhblm.com		
Joan Carter	FDOT	386-943-5335	joan.carter@dot.state.fl.us		
John Reddick	DEO	<del>850-517-8485</del>	john.reddick@deo.myflorida.com		
Brian Ruch	FDEP	850-245-2078	Brian.Ruch@dep.state.fl.us	Brian Ruch	
Nia Clark	DEO	850-717-8492	nia.clark@deo.myflorida.com		
Lynn Gruber-White	Ridge Manor Pops (A3002)	352-608-4018	lynngruber@tampabay.rr.com		
Ashelea Ann Swadlow	Sumter County United Persons	352-279-2545	tsunami@earthlink.net		Sumter County United Persons
Truman Prevatt	Bank County Assoc. of FL	352-650-1864	tr.prevatt@earthlink.net		www.tukfl.org
Gary Glasenbach	BCHFL	352-797-7920	gary@bchfl.com		bchfl.org
IRIS ALFONSO	Citizen of Webster	352-565-1194	irisalfonso@gmail.com		
DELL MORRIS	ELITE BROKERS	352-457-3266	dellmorris@gmail.com		
BETSY MORRIS	ELITE BROKERS	352-457-3266	betsybmorris@gmail.com		
Eileen Goodson	Webster Elem.	352-793-8888	eileen.goodson@sumter.k12.fl.us		
Loei Marable	FDOT-DI	813-975-6405	loei.marable@dot.state.fl.us		

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

May 7, 2015 Sign-In Sheets

Name	Affiliation	Phone Number	Email Address	Facebook Business Page	Website Address
BRADLEY ARNOLD	SUMTER COUNTY	6874400	bradley.arnold@sumtercountypa.gov		sumtercountypa.gov
KELLY WILLIAMS	CITY OF WEBSTER	352/303-1940	kwilliams@websterfl.com		
IRIS ALFONSO	WEBSTER CITIZEN	352 568 1194	irisalfonso@gmail.com		
DELL MORRIS	ELITE BROKERS	352 457-3006	dellemorris@gmail.com		
BETSY MORRIS	ELITE BROKERS	352 457-3006	betsy.morris@gmail.com		

Name	Affiliation	Phone Number	Email Address	Facebook Business Page	Website Address
Eliken Goodson	Webster Elem	797-2828	eliken.goodson@sumter.k12.fl.us		
Josanne Dewart	Florida Grande	592-591-1100	floridagrande.com		
KELLY WILLIAMS	CITY OF WEBSTER	352/303-1940	kwilliams@websterfl.com		
Sonia Alonzo	City of Webster	352/303-2142			
Jean Carter	FDOT	386.943.5355			

May 7, 2015 Meeting Minutes, Page 1

## **City of Webster**

### **Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO)**

#### **South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefit Analysis Grant Project**

#### ***Stakeholder Meeting Minutes***

**Date/Time:** May 7, 2015, 3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

**Location:** Webster Community Building  
49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St.  
Webster, FL 33597

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Mayor Kelly Williams welcomed meeting attendees and provided a brief overview of the project.

#### **2. Project Overview and Status**

Ginger Hoke with Hoke Design, Inc. defined trails and showed PowerPoint slides depicting trails and showed side-by-side comparisons of recommended trail widths by various guidance sources.

Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) staff provided an overview of the statewide coordination efforts for a Greenways and Trails System. Approximately 75% of the Coast-to-Coast (C2C) Connector is complete with the largest gap is through Sumter County. Trail width for the Coast-to-Coast Connector will have a preferred minimum of 12' wide.

A meeting attendee asked OGT staff about flags on Rich Farm Road in Hernando County. OGT staff stated that this was trail-related and that the completion is estimated for 2017.

Ms. Hoke showed the originally proposed alignments for the South Sumter Connector and provided brief descriptions of the connecting regional trails, including the Withlacoochee State Trail, the South Lake Trail and the General James A. Van Fleet State Trail.

VHB staff, Natalie Suner, provided an update for the South Sumter Connector Trail Alignment Options. This FDOT project started in January and will be completed by June 2016. Ms. Suner explained that the abandoned railroad lines were driving the original alignment locations but they have found that many of the alignments have changed hands. They are looking at CR 469 and they are exploring other alignments as part of the study.

Ms. Suner explained that considerations will be made to accommodate equestrian facilities along the South Sumter Connector Trail. Some segments of the C2C include equestrian facilities.

#### **3. Discussion of private and/or public projects that may impact the use, connectivity, and economic value of the two trail alignments from the City of Webster's point of view.**

- Northern alignment – Ms. Hoke discussed known projects near the northern alignment and included discussion of conceptual projects. A meeting attendee asked if horses were allowed on trails. OGT staff stated yes, horses are permitted to use the paved portion of the trail unless they are excluded by the local agency.



May 7, 2015 Meeting Minutes, Page 2

- Southern Alignment - Ms. Hoke asked meeting attendee Lynn Gruber-White, President of Ridge Manor Property Owners Association, to discuss the ~~microbrewery...~~ ~~planned~~ conceptual along the Withlacoochee River in Hernando County.

Ms. Suner recommended inclusion of a potential mining company locating adjacent to the Mazak Mine.

#### 4. Trail Visioning and Discussion of Economic Potential

Ms. Hoke continued through the PowerPoint showing historic slides of Webster with slides showing what the trail through Webster may look like. She described the types of users that may use the trail and possible destinations along the way. She clarified that trails have not been shown to increase crime and showed the benefits of the trail through Webster.

Ms. Hoke defined "trailhead" and discussed typical amenities found at a major trailhead and at a minor trailhead. She explained that the downtown area of Webster could serve as a "Retail Trailhead", similar to Winter Garden. She showed slides of the West Orange Trail through Winter Garden and discussed that it was determined that the average trail user spends approximately \$20 per trip.

Ms. Hoke also showed excerpts from the Vacation Rental By Owner (VRBO) website showing that people used the trail to advertise their homes for temporary lodging. Reviews of these homes consistently mentioned the trail as an asset.

There was discussion on how to serve future potential trail users- possibly using Pioneer Park for motorhomes, RV's, tents and consider adding water and septic. There was discussion about the success in other areas with mounted and bike patrols along the trail. There was discussion on how to prevent motorized vehicles from using the trails. Signage, patrols, cell phone users, bollards, and a trail protection ordinance were discussed.

#### 5. Related Meeting Announcements

Upcoming meetings were announced.

**4:45 May 7, 2015:** FDOT Public Kick-Off for the Coast-to-Coast South Sumter Connector Trail (Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort, 9675 SE 49<sup>th</sup> Terrace -Webster, FL)

**6:00 May 21, 2015:** ~~South Sumter Trail Economic Impact and Analysis Public Workshop.~~  
City of Webster DEO Grant Public Workshop for the South Sumter Connector Trail Economic Benefits Analysis Project (49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> St., Webster, FL)

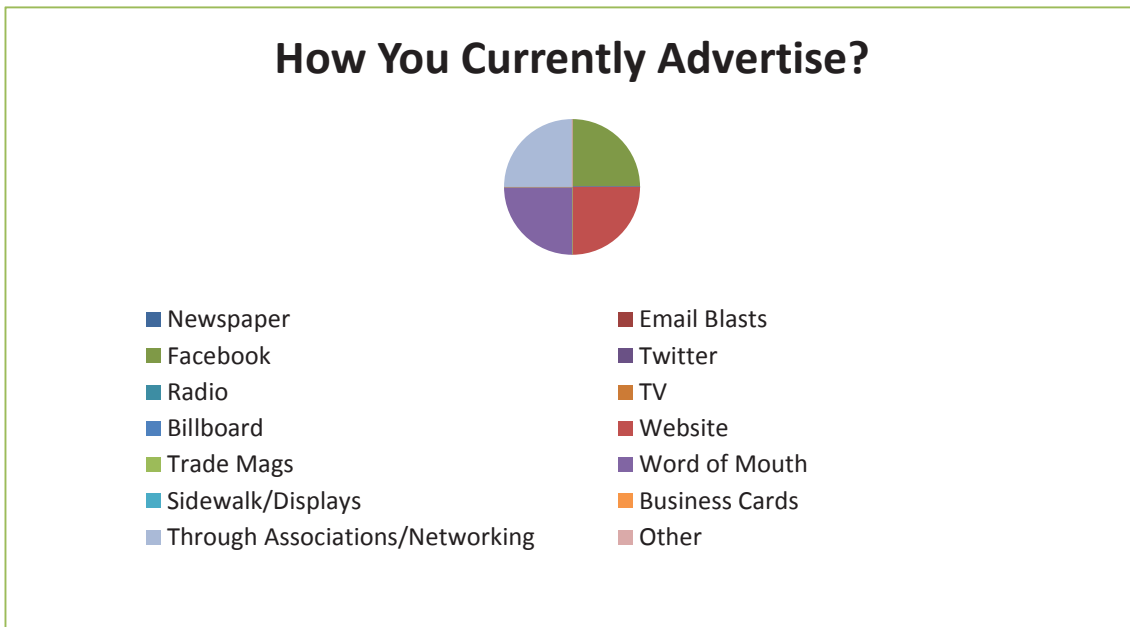


## A2. Trail Surveys and Results

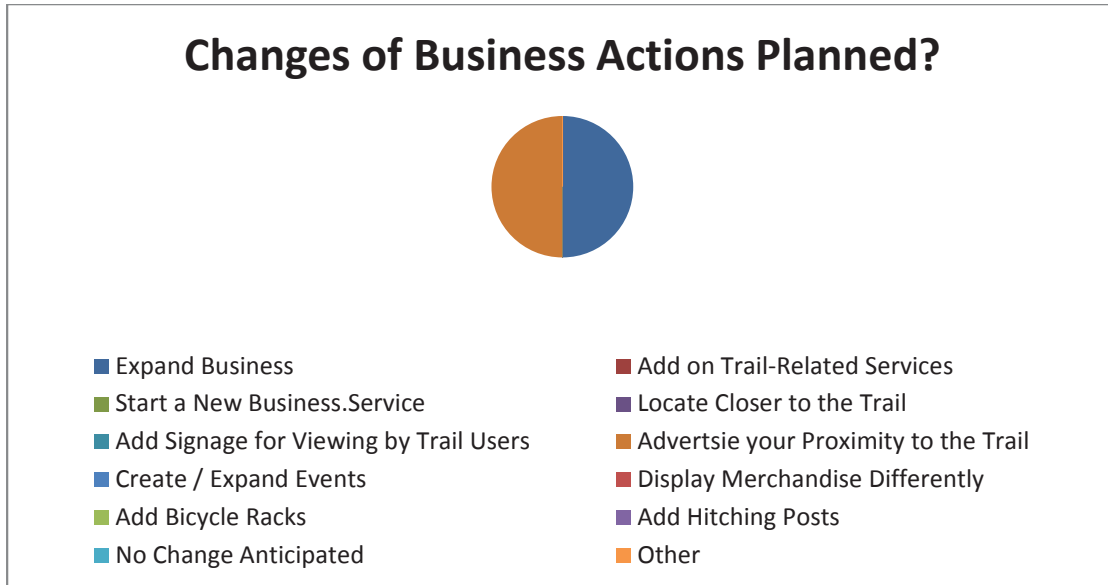
### Business Owner Survey distributed May 7, 2015 and May 21, 2015

A survey for business owners was distributed at the May 7, 2015 stakeholder meeting with only one participant. It was also distributed at the May 21<sup>st</sup> Public Meeting with no participant. The following represents the single response received.

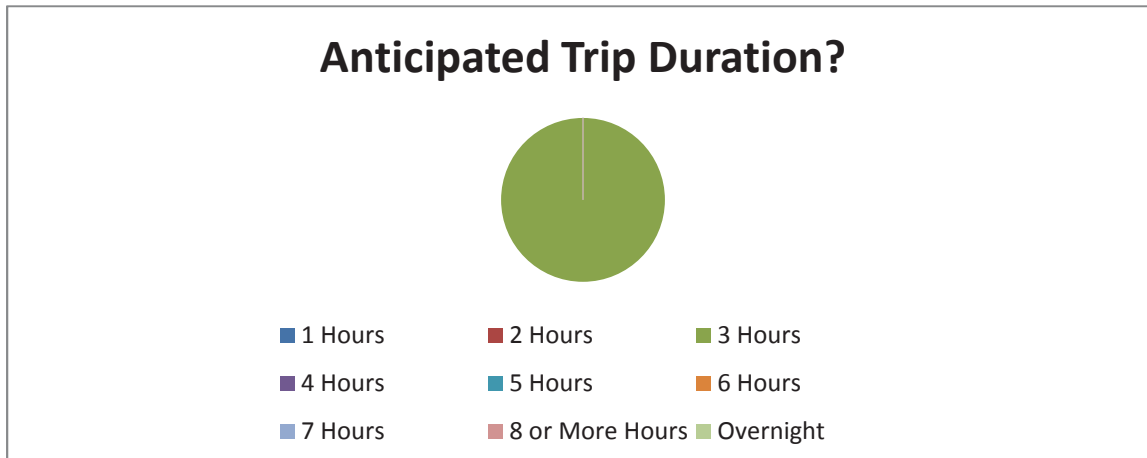
#### 1. How do you currently advertise?



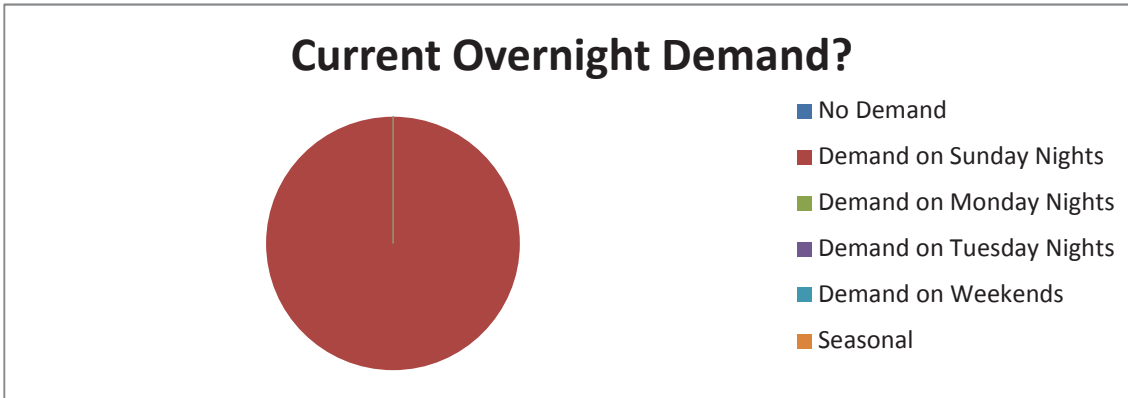
2. The Coast-to-Coast Connector is a planned paved recreational trail that will cross Florida from St. Petersburg to Cape Canaveral. There is a northern alignment that comes through the cities of Webster and Center Hill. Will any of your business actions change if this alignment is selected?



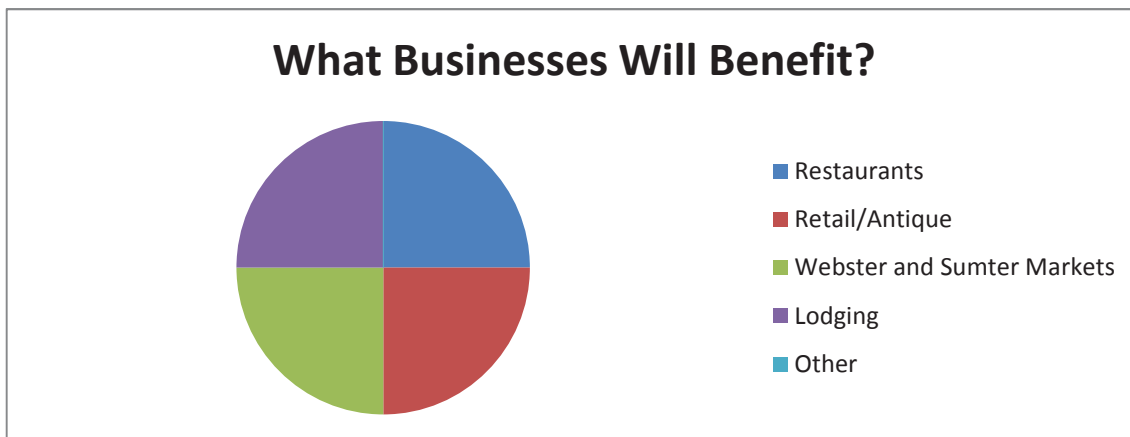
3. What do you think the trip duration is for people visiting the market from out of town? (Please circle)



## 4. What do you think is the current overnight accommodation demand for the Webster area?



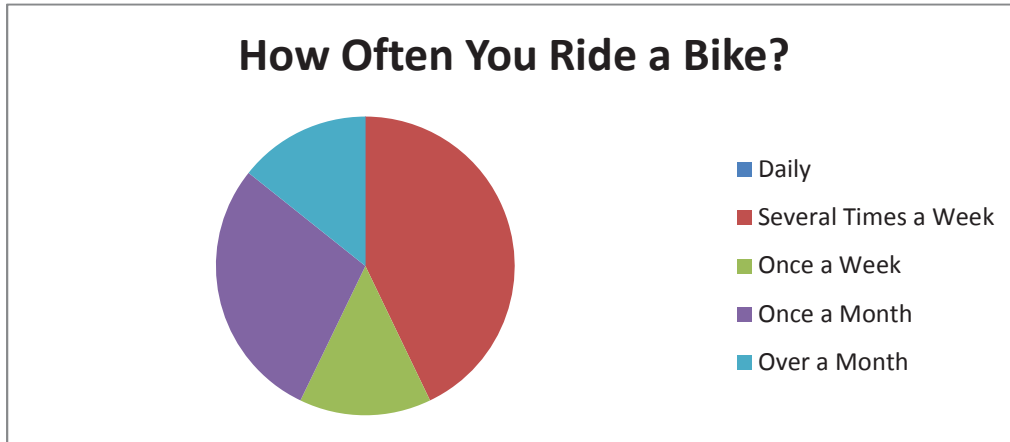
## 5. What businesses will benefit from the trail location through Webster?



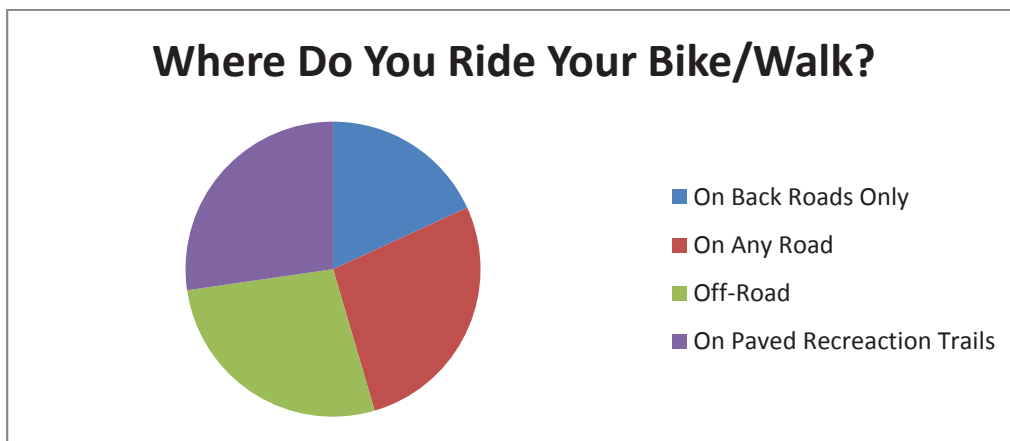
## Non-Business Owner Survey distributed May 7, 2015 and May 21, 2015

A survey for non-business owners was distributed at the May 7, 2015 Stakeholder Meeting with eight participants. The survey was also distributed at the May 21, 2015 public meeting with no participants.

### 1. Do you currently ride a bike? If yes, how often?



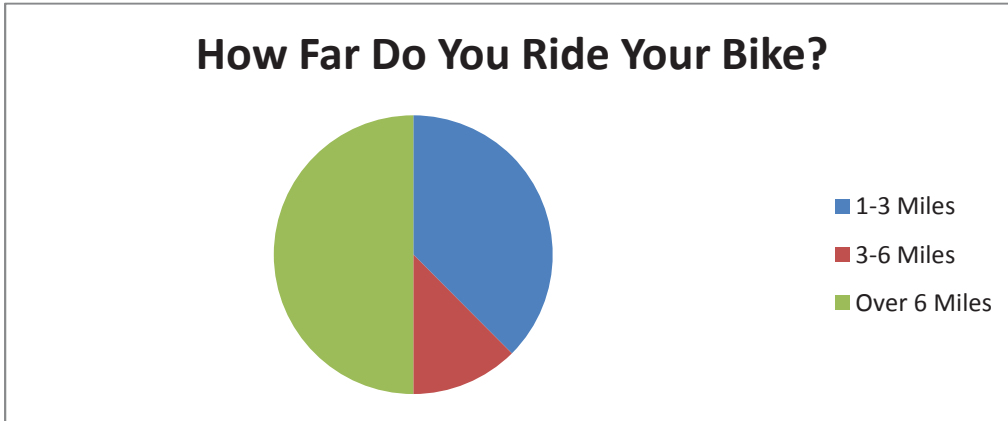
### 2. Where do you ride your bike or hike/walk?



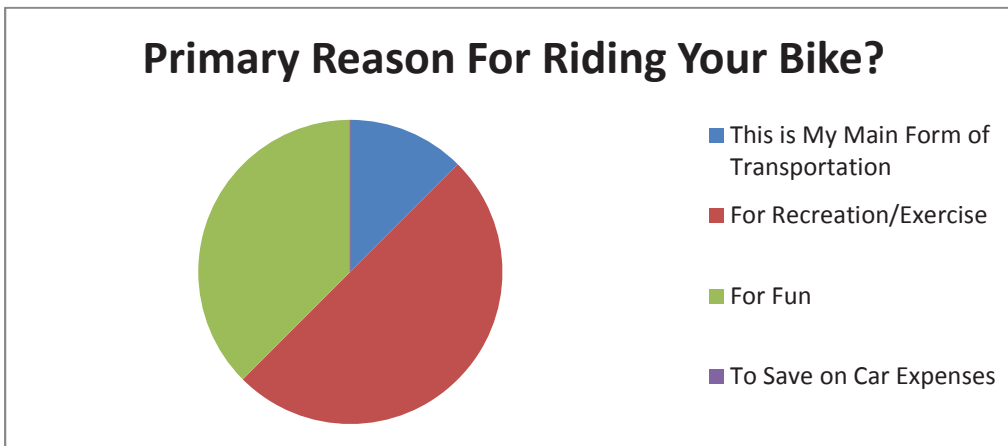
- **Comment:** "James Van Fleet State Trail."



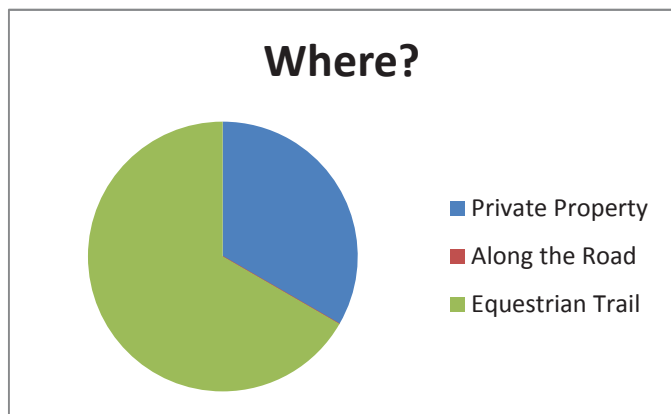
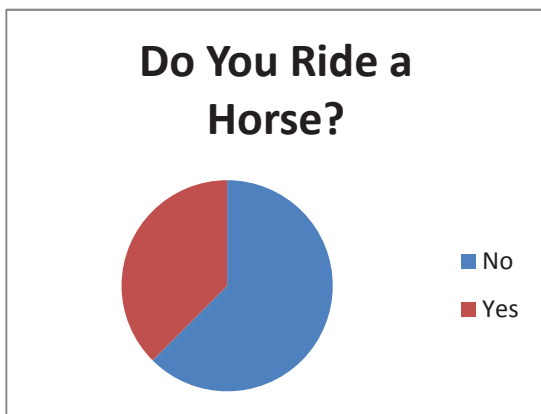
3. How far do you ride your bike?



4. What is the primary reason that you ride your bike?

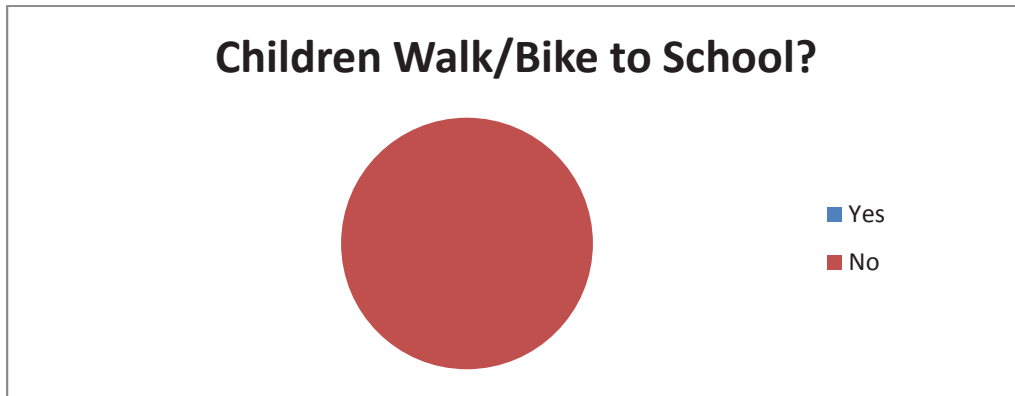


5. Do you ride a horse? If so, where?

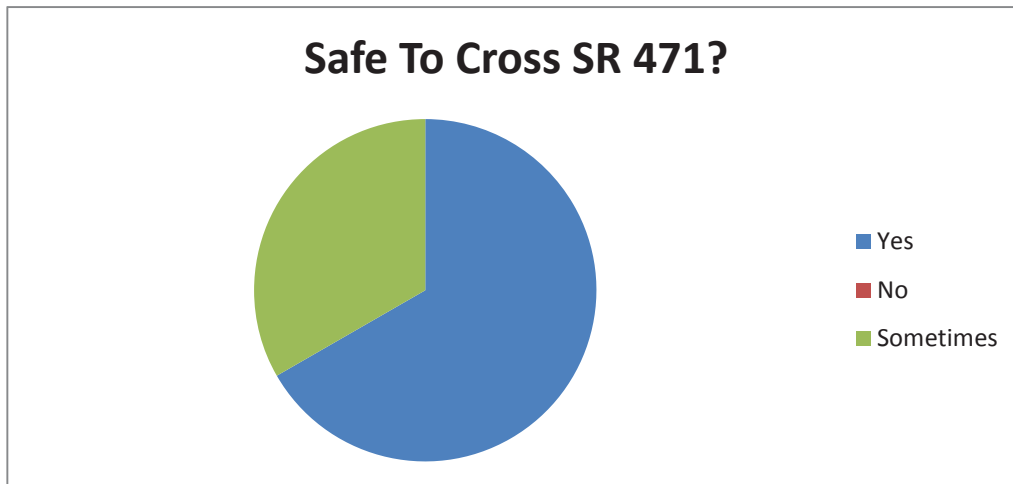


- **Comment:** "Colt Creek on South 471."
- **Comment:** "Withlacochee State Forest."

6. Do you have a student that attends Webster Elementary School or South Sumter Middle School? If yes, would you permit them to walk/bike ride to school? If no, why?

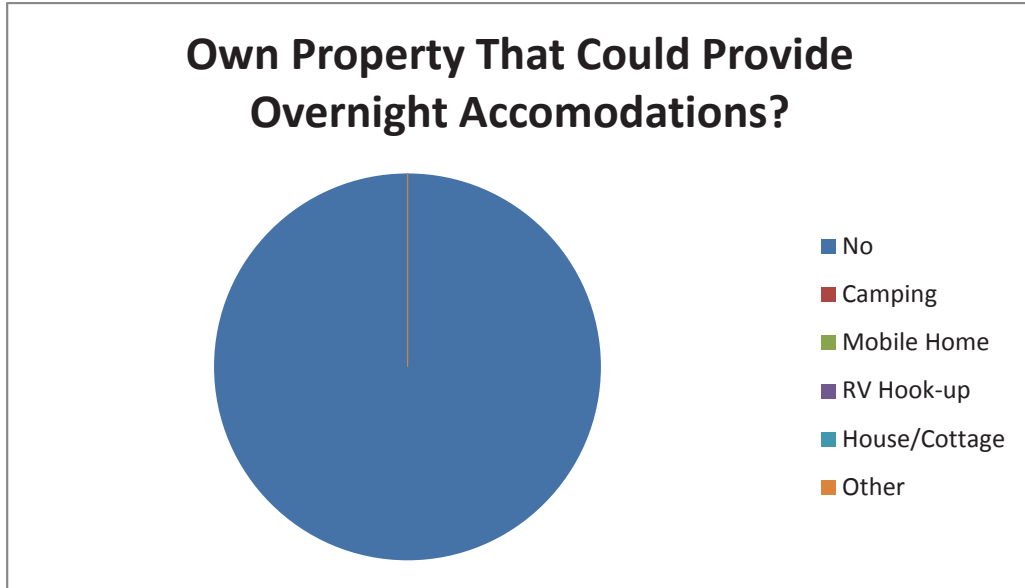


7. Do you feel safe crossing SR 471 in Webster as a pedestrian?



- **Comment:** "Depends upon day of week and time."

8. Do you own property that could provide overnight accommodations for trail users? If yes, what type?



- **Comment:** "Not now, but depends on the time frame and use. I would consider providing a horse stall and an RV."

## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

### A3. Webster Businesses

City of Webster staff provided a list of business owners within city limits as a baseline for economic analysis.

COUNT	Name	Title	Address
1	Chris Wood	Owner, Busted Knuckles	88 S Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
2		Christian Love Center	678 NW 5th St Webster, FL 33597
3		Church Of God In Christ	486 NW 9th Ave Webster, FL 33597
4	Marc Waller	Manager, Country Village Power Equipment	539 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
5	Judie & Ken Mueller	Owners, Diddle Squats Books, Frog In The Window	86 NE 1st Ave Webster, FL 33597
6	Tiffany Hoblit	Manager, Dollar General	2810 CR 478A Webster, FL 33597
7	Rhonda & Rob Mathews	Owners, El Curiosities	1256 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
8	Betsy & Dell Morris	Owners, Elite Brokers Real Estate Group	453 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
9	Brenda Rogers	Manager, Farmers' Market Restaurant	522 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
10	Traci Zeiner	Owner, Fashion Group	281 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
11	Don Grant	Pastor, First Baptist Church Of Webster	
12		Iglesia Pentecostal Church	114 NE 1st Ave Webster, FL 33597
13	Hyon Park	Owner, International Trading And Tools	7555 CR 733 Webster, FL 33597
14	Jackie & Lester Thomas	Owners, Jackie's Market/Sunoco	329 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
15	Joseph & Tammy Bray	Owners, JB Guns And Ammo	419 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
16	John Dematteo	Owner, Marketside Pawn	426 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
17		Memory Lane	15 S Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
18	Johnny Long	Owner, Merry Go Round Daycare And Pre-School	49 SE 2nd Ave Webster, FL 33597
19	Micki Blackburn	Owner, Micki Blackburn Realty	211 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
20		Mount Olive Baptist Church	133 NW 10th Ave Webster, FL 33597
21	Don Hale	Pastor, Pavilion of Grace	427 N Market Blvd


## City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

COUNT	Name	Title	Address
			Webster, FL 33597
22	Daniel Walker	Owner, Plantation House Restaurant	712 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
23	Tina Jones	Owner, Rocking Chair Bar And Grill	302 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
24	Mohamad Jaweed	Owner, Shop-N-Go Suprette / Marathon Gas Station	374 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
25		Singleness Of Heart Ministries	738 NW 3rd St Webster, FL 33597
26	George & Mariana Dominguez	Owners, Studebaker Headquarters	248 N Market Blvd. Webster, FL 33597
27	Mark Harrel	Manager, Sumter County Famers' Market	524 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
28	A. C. 'Buddy' Tompkins	Owner, Tompkins Florist	236 S Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
29		Webster Apartments	1010 E Central Ave Webster, FL 33597
30		Webster Beauty Shop	267 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
31	Allen Shirley	Principal, South Sumter Middle School	773 NW 10 <sup>th</sup> Ave Webster, FL 33597
32	Eileen Goodson	Principal, Webster Elementary School	349 S Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
33	John Graham	Owners, Webster Farm Supply And Hardware	120 N Market Blvd Webster, FL 33597
34	Marguerite Mathews	Pastor, Webster United Methodist Church	173 SE 3rd St Webster, FL 33597
35	James Sutton	President, Florida Farm Bureau	823 C- 478A Webster, FL 33597

**A4. May 21, 2015 Meeting**

**Meeting Agenda for the May 21, 2015 Meeting**

  
**AGENDA**  
**CITY OF WEBSTER**  
Regular City Council Meeting  
Webster City Hall, 85 E. Central Avenue  
May 21, 2015  
6:00 p.m.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Pledge of Allegiance  
Invocation  
Roll Call and Determination of Quorum

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes of April 16, 2015  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

**III. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Public Presentation for South Sumter Trail Economic Impact Analysis Report – Ginger Hoke with Hoke Design.

Second and Final Reading of Ordinance No. 2015-04 – Establishing Garbage Service Rates for City Garbage Services  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Consideration of Expenditure – Power Pro Tech Services, Inc. – Repair generator at master lift station  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Consideration of Maintenance Agreement – Power Pro Tech Services, Inc.  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

Consideration of Termination of Agreement with US Water Services Corp and Consideration of Entering into an Agreement with Purified Water Services, LLC for the operation of the City's Water Treatment Facilities.  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Consideration of Agreement with Florida Rural Water Association – GIS Mapping  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

Approval to Revise Signature Cards for Banking  
M \_\_\_\_\_ S \_\_\_\_\_

# City of Webster South Sumter Trail Benefits Analysis

Hoke Design, Inc.

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**Meeting Minutes for the May 21, 2015 Public Meeting** (Will be submitted following City Council approval in June)



# APPENDIX B

## 1) Use of Natural Resource Lands by Linear Facilities Policy



## POLICY

### Use of Natural Resource Lands by Linear Facilities

#### As Approved By

#### Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund

on January 23, 1996

#### **(A) Purpose and Scope.**

(1) This policy applies only to linear facilities, including electric transmission and distribution facilities, telecommunications transmission and distribution facilities, pipeline transmission and distribution facilities, public transportation corridors, and related appurtenances.

(2) While it is appropriate to discourage and prohibit most kinds of intrusions on natural resource lands, the Trustees recognize that the expanding ownership of lands by the state and the need to provide services to a growing population through linear facilities and related appurtenances will from time to time require crossings and location on such lands. The goal of this policy is to avoid and minimize conflicts between the acquisition and management of natural resource lands for conservation, recreation, and preservation and activities necessary for the construction, operation and maintenance of linear facilities and related appurtenances.

#### **(B) Definitions.**

(1) "Natural Resources" include but are not limited to wetlands, lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries and other surface and ground water resources, flora, fauna, fish and wildlife, natural communities, historical and archaeological resources, scenic vistas and aesthetic values.

(3) "Natural Resource Lands" are those lands owned by the Trustees and which: were acquired with funds from the P2000 or Save Our Coast Bond Program; or were acquired with funds from the CARL or LATF Trust Fund; or are managed for natural resources by the Division of Recreation and Parks, Division of Marine Resources, Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Division of Forestry, or Secretary of State.

(3) "Related Appurtenances" include those support facilities necessary to the operation of linear facilities. (Examples include but are not limited to substations and pump-stations.)

(4) "Trustees" means the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund.

#### **(C) Avoidance.**

Owners and operators of linear facilities must avoid location on natural resource lands unless no other practical and prudent alternative is available and all steps to minimize impacts as set forth below are implemented. The test of practicality and prudence will compare the social, economic, and environmental effects of the alternatives.

**(D) Minimizing Impacts.**

Applicants must minimize adverse impacts to natural resource lands through reasonable measures where applicable: locating the project in areas where less adverse impacts are expected, such as areas which have already been impacted and are less sensitive than other areas; avoiding significant wildlife habitats, natural aquatic areas, wetlands, or other valuable natural resources; selecting areas to minimize damage to existing aesthetically-pleasing features of the lands; employing best management practices in construction and operation activities; designing access roads and site preparation to avoid interference with hydrologic conditions that benefit natural resources and reduce impacts on other natural resources and public use and enjoyment; and; generally selecting areas that will not increase undesirable human activities on the natural resource lands; and generally, not adversely impacting the management of such lands. However, human activities may be encouraged where linear facility corridors are designated as part of a greenway or trail.

**(E) Compensation.**

(1) The applicant will pay the Trustees an amount not to exceed the fair market value of the interest acquired in the parcel on which the linear facility and related appurtenances will be located.

(2) In addition to the amount in (E) (1) above, the applicant will provide to the managing agency that measure of additional money, land, or services necessary to offset the actual adverse impacts reasonably expected to be caused by the construction, operation and maintenance of the linear facility and related appurtenances. Such impact compensation will be calculated from the land managing agency's timely presentation of documented costs which will result from the impacts of the proposed project.