



## Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC) July 2025 Council Meeting Minutes



**PUBLIC MEETING:** July 9, 2025  
**TIME:** 9:00 am  
**LOCATION:** DeBary Hall Historic Site  
198 Sunrise Blvd., DeBary, FL 32713

### **FGTC Members in Attendance:**

Paul "PJ" Marinelli – Governor-appointed Greenway User, Florida Wildlife Corridor  
Robin Birdsong – Florida Department of Transportation  
Brooks White—Florida Forest Service  
Dale Allen— President of the Senate-Appointed Greenway User  
Robert Steele – Water Management District, Northwest Florida  
Vincent "Chip" Birdsong – Florida Department of State  
Stephanie Wardein – Governor-appointed Private Landowner  
Honorable Cyndi Stevenson--Speaker of the House-Appointed Trail User  
Karl Rasmussen-- Governor-appointed Trail User  
Chris Rietow – Regional Planning Council, Apalachee  
Ken Odom – Local Government, Marion County Parks & Recreation<sup>1</sup>  
Morgan Wilbanks – Governor-appointed Greenway User  
Michael "Mike" Stephens (Chair) – Governor-appointed Trail User  
Scott Stryker – Governor-appointed Greenway User  
Rachel Penrod-- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Representative James Buchanan-- Speaker of the House-appointed Trail User

### **Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) Staff in Attendance:**

Steven Carter, Regional Coordinator  
Sam Browne, Bureau Chief

### **Other FDEP Staff in Attendance:**

Katie Slattery, Office of General Council  
Linda Reeves, Land and Recreation Grants  
Melanie Orozco, Land and Recreation Grants

### **Members of the Public and Presenters in Attendance:**

Pamela Lynch—City of Sanford  
Ned Baier--Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation  
Patty Huff-Everglades City Trail Town Committee  
Henry Stevenson—Trail User

1. Delegate for Jim Couillard

Robert Beall—City of Sanford

Rosemary Culhane-- InNovo Partners

Aishwarya "Aish" Sandineni-D5 FDOT/SUN Trail Coordinator

Tim Baylie—Volusia County

Karen Klena—Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation

Parker James—Volkert Inc.

Kathy Burke-- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

Jeremiah Thompson—Saunders Real Estate

Emily Bush—Bike, Walk Central Florida

### **Council Welcome – Tim Baylie**

### **DeBary Hall Walking Tour – Tracy Mestre**

### **Group Photo**

### **Announcements: Comment Cards, Sign In**

### **Council Introductions**

### **FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS COUNCIL BUSINESS:**

#### **Call to Order**

#### **Approve Agenda**

##### **FGTC REMARKS:**

**MOTION:** Stephanie Wardein

**SECOND:** Honorable Cyndi Stevenson

**FGTC RECOMMENDATION: APPROVED**

#### **Approve the April 2025 Meeting Summary.**

##### **FGTC REMARKS:**

**MOTION:** Dale Allen

**SECOND:** Honorable Cyndi Stevenson

**FGTC RECOMMENDATION: APPROVED**

#### **Sunshine Law Reminder**

The council was established by statute to advise the Department of Administrative Planning (DAP) in accordance with Chapter 364. As an advisory body, its duties and powers are defined by law. All council meetings must comply with Florida's Government in Sunshine Law, which requires that meetings be publicly noticed, minutes be made available for public inspection, and any discussions between two or more council members on matters that may come before the council be conducted in public. Additionally, the council must provide an opportunity for public input before taking any official action. Violations of the Sunshine Law can result in

penalties and may invalidate actions taken by the council. For further guidance, members are encouraged to consult the Florida Attorney General's website for interpretations of the Sunshine Law and to reach out to the Commission on Ethics for formal advice on ethical matters related to their roles. The speaker also casually asks Katie to oversee Sunshine Law compliance during planning, reassuring her that it won't be a repeat of previous discussions.

## **Trail Towns – Sanford**

Pamela Lynch - City of Sanford Economic Development Project Manager as well as the CRA Executive Director for the City of Sanford and Robert Bell - Operations Manager for Parks and Recreation. The speaker reflects on the process of Sanford becoming a designated trail town, emphasizing the importance of having meaningful infrastructure and community support in place before applying. They highlight the Sanford Riverwalk as a multi-use trail that attracts visitors, especially with free downtown parking and informative stamped booklets that promote the trail town identity. The Downtown Historic District adds charm and complexity, particularly when it comes to building regulations, and the speaker's office near the Information Center plays a key role in supporting local businesses through these challenges. Programs like the Sanford Sizzling Summer initiative help boost business during slower seasons by encouraging spending through promotional "Sanford Sizzling Bucks." The speaker also notes the importance of guiding visitors to the best parts of the city, helping them feel welcome and less like tourists, while showcasing the city's unique character and offerings.

## **Sanford Story Map**

<https://arcg.is/0nX5HG2>

## **OGT Updates**

Sam Browne provided the Council with some updates and plans from the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT). Trail Town Program updates included potential trail towns which included: Marco Island, Stuart, Port Salerno and Lake Wales. John Groves presented on the Resilient South Florida Series webinar series with the South Florida Regional Planning Council regarding OGT program/Trail Towns. OGT also helped plan the "From Recreation to Conservation" track for the Florida Wildlife Corridor Connect Summit in June. We continue with ongoing projects that consist of: Sanford Story map which the draft will be presented later. Unpaved Guidelines. As well as Trail Town Communities of Practice presentation on Florida's programs. Upcoming events are Preservation on Main Street 2025 in Fernandina Beach, Port Orange Library Presentation on local outdoor recreation opportunities. Trail Town Communities of Practice presentation on Florida's programs. Florida Greenways and Outdoor Recreation Expo with the Tallahassee Senior Center. The TRAIL-Go program as of July 2, 2025, of the 36 projects, 36 of them are executed and posted in fact. Eight amendments executed and posted in FACTS. Nine hundred and six thousand and fifty-six dollars and eighty-one cent reimbursements applied processed in ELFF and 14 payment requests to the DEO ELFF Payment Processing System.

## **Unpaved Trail Guidelines Discussion**

Steven Carter provided the Council with an update on the status of the Unpaved Trails Guidelines. Final draft to be presented at December council meeting.

## **FGTF Update**

Ned Baier, President of the Florida Greenways and Trails Foundation (FGTF), provided the Council with a presentation, which included background information on the Foundation and its organization. He also summarized the recent FGTC Summit in addition to providing information on a new Communications and Marketing Plan for 2025 and early plans for a future summit.

Ned also provided the Council with a brief overview of a new FGTF regional trail project, known as Lake-to-Lake (L2L), noting that it was still within the first steps of planning. He let the Council know more details about the agenda at the upcoming Florida Greenways and Trails Council meeting following the Florida Greenways and Trails Council Meeting.

## **L2L Regional Trail Project**

Dale Allen, Lead Trail Advocate, provided the Council with a presentation titled An Eco-tourism Trail from Lake Monroe to Lake Okeechobee. He also shared a story map illustrating A Journey by Trail through the Eastern Reaches of the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The Florida Eco-tourism Trail is a proposed scenic route stretching from Lake Monroe to Lake Okeechobee, designed to promote sustainable travel through Florida's eastern wildlife corridor. It aims to connect communities, historic railroad corridors, and conservation lands, offering opportunities for hiking, biking, birdwatching, and agri-tourism. As part of the broader Florida Greenways and Trails network, the trail would showcase Florida's natural beauty and cultural heritage while supporting local economies. Though still in development, it promises to serve as a gateway to parks, forests, and the Lake Okeechobee Scenic Trail, creating a rich and immersive outdoor experience.

[Story Map](#)

## **Seminole County Update**

Rick Durr, Director of Seminole County Parks & Recreation Department, provided the Council with a presentation, which included the trails plan had undergone a comprehensive update since 2022. Significant trails in the region include the coast-to-coast trail and the St. Johns River Sea Loop, intersecting in Seminole County. Key developments involve the paved trail system starting in dedicated right-of-way areas following the old rails-to-trails concept and completing vital connections, including the Cross Seminole Trail. The eastern section is defined by a rural boundary established in 2004, limiting development to maintain the area's environmental integrity. The Flagler Trail, mostly unpaved, runs through state forests, promoting active partnerships with local managers for expanded accessibility. Ongoing efforts aim to fill gaps throughout the trail systems, including proposed connections through towns like Geneva and Chuluota, coexisting regional trails within a rural landscape and promoting holistic connectivity within the Florida wildlife corridor. Existing trailheads are set to expand to enhance

recreational access. The initiative aims to enhance connectivity along County Road 4:19 in the Chulia area, featuring a well-equipped trailhead that leads to the state forest. Proposed linkages include access to Lake Catherine and the surrounding neighborhood by creating a sloping blue pathway that connects to larger recreational areas, including campsites and sports fields. The ongoing construction of the Sanford Riverwalk will facilitate this connection, improving accessibility to downtown Sanford. However, an eminent domain issue is causing delays, holding up completion. Once resolved, this stretch will contribute to a 26-mile loop, beneficial for activities such as marathons. Additionally, the project aspires to integrate with the Florida Wildlife Corridor and other trails, including links to Orange County and potential crossings of the St. Johns River. A crucial aspect is maintaining a two-lane setup on State Road 46 to manage development pressures. The focus is on completing connections within the eastern part of the county, while the master plan outlines various trail hierarchies, differentiating between multi-purpose and shared pathways. Comprehensive documentation supports the trails' designs, including connections to neighborhoods and business areas, prioritizing linking these to the main trail system. This approach aims to ensure a well-structured and accessible network across the county.

**Question:** Programming can you take me just a minute or 2 and talk about the new source of funding and how you're doing this.

**Response:** Last November, Seminole County voters approved the fourth-generation infrastructure sales tax a one-penny tax that continues a funding legacy begun in the early 1990s. While originally focused on road improvements, the tax has long supported trail development, helping establish the county's signature trail system. After being renewed for two decades, it briefly sunset during the Great Recession but was reinstated once the economy recovered. The latest renewal provides essential seed funding for trail enhancements, including improved crossings and closing major gaps. The county also plans to use these funds to secure matching grants from federal and state sources, a strategy that has historically helped expand and strengthen its trail network. This approach remains central to the county's long-term infrastructure and trail development efforts

**Question:** How much of the penny sales tax goes to trails.

**Response:** In the third generation of Seminole County's infrastructure sales tax, approximately 14% of the funds were allocated to trail development, primarily for new construction. However, no money was set aside for trail maintenance, which had to be covered by the county's general fund and other sources. Now, after several decades of trail expansion, the need for ongoing maintenance has become a more prominent part of the county's planning and budgeting efforts.

## **Grants Program Update**

Melanie Orozco, Federal Program Manager of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Land and Recreation Grants Program, provided the Council with a presentation that included background information on the Recreational Trails Program and a program

update. She also presented an overview of the FY2025–2026 RTP funding and the FY2025–2026 RTP grant applications.

### **Bike Walk Central FL Update**

Emily Bush, Executive Director of Bike Walk Central Florida, presented on the organization's recent changes and expansion. The nonprofit advocacy group focuses on pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout Central Florida and is actively broadening its reach. A new strategic plan aims to create safer environments for pedestrians and cyclists, aligning with its mission to increase safety across the region.

The Best Foot Forward program addresses pedestrian safety through a three-pronged approach: engineering, enforcement, and education. Since its inception in Orange County in 2012, the program has expanded to include Osceola, Seminole, Volusia, Brevard, Marion, Flagler, Lake, Polk, Duval, and St. Johns counties.

The organization has engaged with over 10,000 residents, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in education and enforcement strategies. By evaluating crosswalks using test pedestrians and recording driver behavior, they have observed improvements in compliance with the "driver yield law." Their initiatives have increased the percentage of drivers yielding by over 15%, supported by low-cost engineering solutions that enhance safety.

Youth education is also a priority through the Bike Walk Kids program, which promotes safe biking practices in schools. Through these efforts, Bike Walk Central Florida continues to demonstrate progress in changing driver behavior and improving pedestrian and cyclist safety throughout the community.

Additionally, the organization received funding from the West Orange Health Foundation to help reconnect communities and engage residents in the post-COVID era. The team identified existing trails and gaps across five municipalities to improve connectivity, including the Shingle Creek and West Orange trails. They plan to prioritize trail segments based on feasibility and cost estimates, with the goal of utilizing \$5 million in community grants.

All partners are actively involved in a coalition to enhance the regional trail system and align efforts across counties, addressing previous planning misalignments and fostering collaboration for successful trail development.

### **Paved Trail Best Practices Discussion**

The discussion focuses on developing a concise best practices document for trail design that prioritizes safety, user experience, and ROI. Input will be gathered from diverse sources, addressing safety features, trail placement, wildlife interaction, and user feedback. The document aims to balance construction costs and stakeholder collaboration.

### **MEETING ADJOURN:**

**PUBLIC MEETING:** July 10, 2025  
**TIME:** 9:00 am  
**LOCATION:** DeBary Hall Historic Site  
198 Sunrise Blvd., DeBary, FL 32713

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Robin Birdsong – Florida Department of Transportation  
Brooks White—Florida Forest Service  
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Ken Odom – Local Government, Marion County Parks & Recreation<sup>1</sup>  
Morgan Wilbanks – Governor-appointed Greenway User  
Michael “Mike” Stephens (Chair) – Governor-appointed Trail User  
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Rachel Penrod-- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Representative James Buchanan-- Speaker of the House-appointed Trail User

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Sam Browne, Bureau Chief

**Other FDEP Staff in Attendance:**

Katie Slattery, Office of General Council

**Members of the Public and Presenters in Attendance:**

Rosemary Culhane-- InNovo Partners  
Patty Huff-Everglades City Trail Town Committee  
Tim Baylie—Volusia County  
Kathy Burke-- Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission  
Karen Pando--Altoona Trail Riders  
John Cox—City of Deltona  
Shari Simmons—City of DeBary  
Luis Nieves-Ruiz-- East Central Florida Regional Planning Council

## **Announcements: Comment Cards, Sign In**

## **Council Introductions**

## **FLORIDA GREENWAYS AND TRAILS COUNCIL BUSINESS:**

### **Call to Order**

### **Approve Agenda**

#### **FGTC REMARKS:**

**MOTION:** Stephanie Wardein

**SECOND:** Honorable Cyndi Stevenson

#### **FGTC RECOMMENDATION: APPROVED**

### **Trail Towns – Deltona**

John Cox, Economic Development Director for the City of Deltona, attended the council meeting to deliver a presentation. Deltona is recognized as a designated Florida Trail Town due to its extensive network of trails and greenways that connect the community to nature, recreation, and local culture. The city serves as a key hub for several major multi-use trails, including the East Central Regional Rail Trail, Spring-to-Spring Trail, and portions of the Florida Coast-to-Coast Trail and St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. These trails provide access to scenic parks such as Green Springs, Blue Spring, and Gemini Springs, as well as nature preserves like Lyonia and Doris Leeper Spruce Creek. City leaders and trail advocates continue to enhance connectivity between parks and neighborhoods, making trails a vital part of everyday life in Deltona.

### **Trail Towns - DeBary**

Shari Simmons, Economic Development, Communications and Government Affairs Director for the City of DeBary, attended the council meeting to deliver a presentation. DeBary is positioning itself as a thriving eco-tourism and trail-focused community. The city boasts nine parks with 22 more in development and serves as the nexus of three major Florida trails. As a designated Florida Trail Town since 2022 and recognized by the Florida Bicycle Association in 2020, DeBary requires developers to build trails that connect to its main network. The city is constructing a new downtown area adjacent to the SUNRail station and trailhead, designed to be walkable, bike-friendly, and multimodal—including a golf cart ordinance for local travel. Key amenities include riverfront access, one of Florida's top disc golf courses, kayaking trails, hiking paths, and even primitive camping. The city's master plan highlights completed and in-progress trails, with Alexander Island currently under development through an ECHO grant. DeBary's "DeBary Naturally" campaign promotes its eco-tourism assets, aiming to create a



community where residents can step out their doors and immediately access nature and recreation.

### **Altoona Trail Riders**

Karen Pando, Board Member for Altoona Trail Riders, attended the council meeting to deliver a presentation. The Altoona Trail Riders, a community-based equestrian group located near the Ocala National Forest, presented their vision for expanding and enhancing horseback riding opportunities in Lake County. Their focus was on preserving access to existing trails, improving trail maintenance, and advocating for designated equestrian-friendly routes within the Florida Greenways and Trails System. They emphasized the importance of multi-use trail planning that includes equestrian needs, especially in rural and forested areas like Altoona. The group also highlighted the economic and recreational benefits of equestrian tourism and expressed interest in collaborating with local and state agencies to ensure long-term trail sustainability and access.

### **East Central FL RPC Update**

Luis Nieves-Ruiz, Director of Economic Development for the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, attended the Council meeting to deliver a presentation. He discussed various economic studies conducted by his regional planning council and briefly mentioned that Kim Delaney of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council intends to present the Economic Study completed for FDOT at the October Florida Greenways and Trails Council meeting.

### **Public Comment**

**Name:**

**Representing:**

### **MEETING ADJOURN:**

Meeting adjourned.