



May, 2018

ST. JOHNS RIVER-TO-SEA LOOP STRATEGIC PLAN

St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Strategic Plan

- Executive Summary..... 4
- Background of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop..... 4
- Loop Completion..... 6
 - Brevard County..... 8
 - Volusia County..... 11
 - Flagler County..... 13
 - St. Johns County..... 15
 - Putnam County..... 17
- Operations and Management..... 19
- Loop Marketing and Promotion..... 20
 - Branding for the Loop..... 20
 - Local and Regional St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Promotion..... 22
 - Strategies for Aligning with Existing Programs..... 26
 - Measuring Success of Marketing and Promotion Efforts..... 27
- Economic Development..... 28
 - Trail Related Economic Development..... 28
 - Local Government Strategies..... 30
 - Strategic Steps..... 31
 - Comprehensive Plan Strategies and Policies..... 32
- Advocacy and Support and the SJR2C Alliance..... 33
 - Local and Regional Advocacy Opportunities and Best Practices..... 33
 - SJR2C Loop Alliance..... 34
- Appendices..... 38
 - Appendix 1 Recommended Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies..... 38
 - Appendix 2 Tri-County Agritourism Corridor Comprehensive Plan Policies..... 40

List of Exhibits

Exhibit 1 Signing of Resolution Creating River to Sea Alliance	4
Exhibit 2 SUN Trail St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. Source: FDOT 3/2018.....	5
Exhibit 3 Stakeholder Meeting in Volusia County, October 2018.....	6
Exhibit 5 Volusia County Loop Status.....	11
Exhibit 6 Spring to Spring Trail and East Central Regional Rail Trail in Volusia County	12
Exhibit 7 Flagler County Loop Status.....	13
Exhibit 8 Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Regional System Trail Status Screen Shot from FDOT	14
Exhibit 9 Flagler County Loop Segment along A1A	14
Exhibit 10 St. Johns County Loop Status	15
Exhibit 11 Planning Focus Areas in St. Johns County	16
Exhibit 12 Putnam County Loop Status.....	17
Exhibit 13 Putnam County trail Hub Vision Map.....	18
Exhibit 14 Two of Several Logo Designs Considered.....	20
Exhibit 15 "Plan Your Trip" Application.....	21
Exhibit 16 Maggie Ardito, President of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance	34
Exhibit 17 Herb Hiller, Founding Member of the Alliance	36
Exhibit 18 Pat Northey, Founding Member of the Alliance	37

Executive Summary

This strategic plan document is a product of a Florida Department of Community Affairs Technical Assistance Grant awarded to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council in conjunction with the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance and the North Florida Regional Council. The purpose of the grant is to develop a cohesive brand, marketing strategy and plan to promote and integrate the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop through the five counties of Brevard, Volusia, Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns.

In partnership with St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, counties and other stakeholders across the five county Loop, the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council has developed this strategic plan for the Loop to be implemented by the Alliance and stakeholders including County and City departments. To promote economic development and eco-tourism opportunities along the Loop and within its counties and municipalities, eco-tourism opportunity story maps with a resource directory and a Locally Resourceful Trail Oriented Development Case Study have been developed.

The potential for Florida communities to create eco-tourism opportunities is enhanced by the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. For these reasons, creating a strategic plan to include a brand for the trail, marketing and implementation strategies and identification of collaboration opportunities, especially through the Alliance, will aid stakeholders in furthering the trail itself and the economic opportunities tied to it. Combined with the story maps and resource directory the Loop will attract trail visitors to destinations along the trail and market private as well as county and municipality resources and businesses. Finally, providing a case study on the Agritourism Corridor through Putnam, Flagler and St. Johns Counties will transfer lessons learned, knowledge and implementation strategies along the trail, fueling other trail oriented economic development opportunities.

As part of this process, stakeholder input has been of utmost importance. Three stakeholder meetings/webinars have been held throughout the process including outreach to review documents, maps and data to ensure accuracy as well as support and inclusiveness of the project deliverables and the future of the Loop.

This document reflects true regionalism and partnerships between counties, non-profits and regional entities. It continues the years of work moving forward the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop which will enable visitors to travel from St. Augustine to Titusville and back, or even then to Pinellas County through the Coast to Coast Trail. Linking the Coast-to-Coast Trail to the Loop creates a truly connected Statewide Trail System, opening doors for economic development across Florida.

Background of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop

The St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop (SJR2C Loop) is a nearly 260 mile loop trail, some of which exists and some currently under development, along Florida's Atlantic Coast and the St. Johns River corridor. Portions of the Loop in Brevard and Volusia Counties are also part of the Coast to Coast Trail, which is another developing regional trail spanning central Florida that will connect the Atlantic Ocean, in Titusville (Brevard County) through nine counties to the Gulf of Mexico in St. Petersburg (Pinellas County). The base of the SJR2C Loop came to fruition when the State of Florida purchased a 51-mile rail bed in southern Volusia and northern Brevard counties and a 19-mile rail bed in west central St. Johns and northeast Putnam counties.

In September of 2008, a memorandum of agreement was signed by the five counties, Brevard, Volusia, Flagler, St. Johns and Putnam, emphasizing the commitment of these counties to complete the trail. Congressman John Mica and representatives from other state, federal and nonprofit organizations witnessed and supported the event. The first tour of the Loop also took place 2008. It was hosted by Bike Florida and sponsored by the Florida Wildflower Foundation, the Florida



Exhibit 1 Signing of Resolution Creating River to Sea Alliance

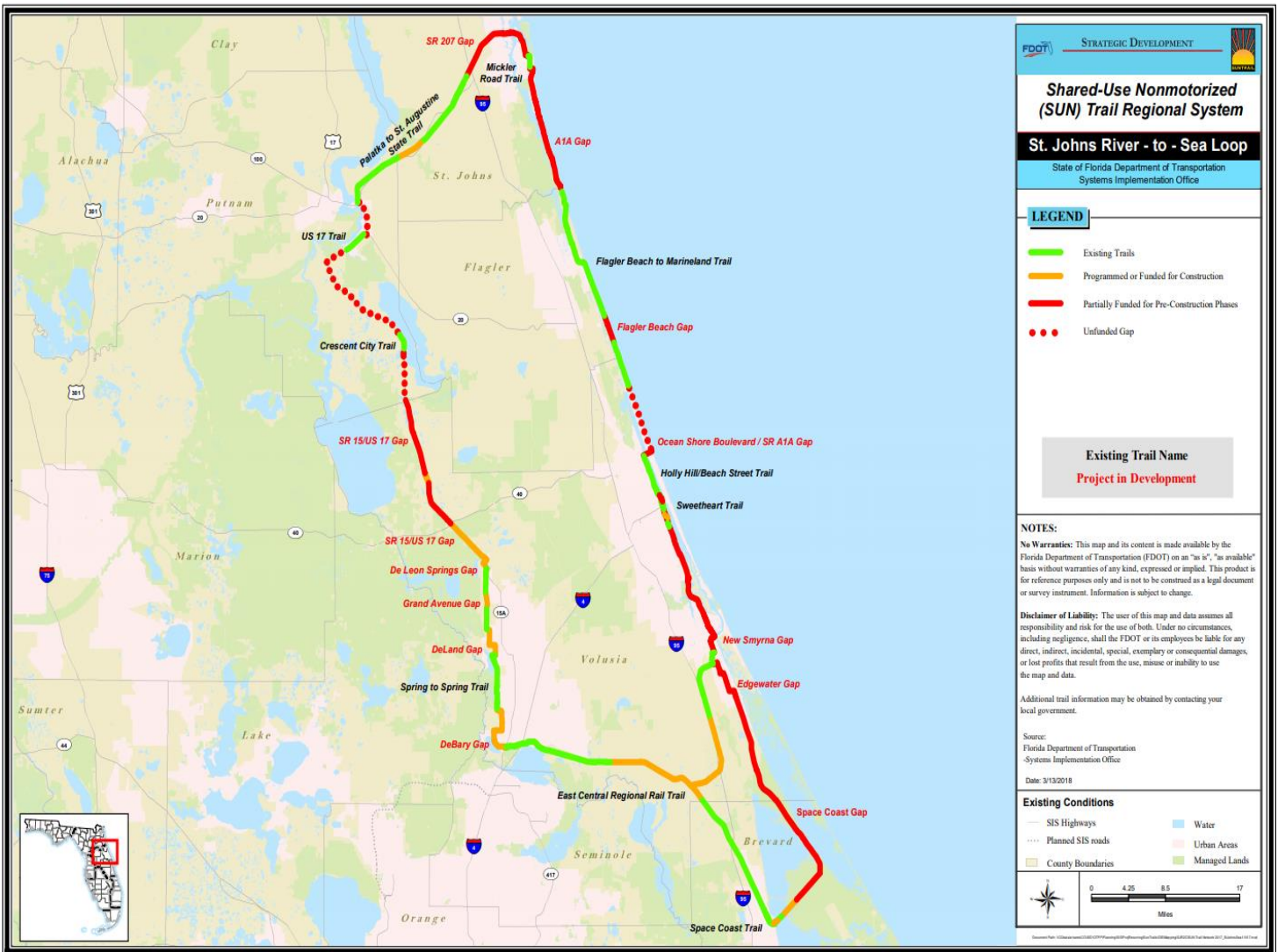
Greenways and Trail Foundation, the Trust for Public Land, the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor and Flagler County. (SJR2C Alliance, 2018)

On March 31, 2016, the Florida Greenways and Trails Council ranked the Loop as the second regional trail system for the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Shared-Use Non-motorized Trail (SUN Trail) program funding to help complete the trail.

The St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance was established as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in July of 2016 with the mission to support, advance, advocate, promote and protect the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. The Alliance is positioned to assist stakeholders in trail development, planning and prioritization; promote awareness of the Trail, nearby communities, communication and events. The Alliance also focuses on how to integrate the trail into where and how we live, including objectives of health and fitness, household economy, environmental protection, and social equity (SJR2C Alliance, 2018).

The Alliance is headed by the President, Board Chairman and Co-Founder Marguerite (Maggie) Ardito. There can be up to twelve board member positions. The board is aimed to be comprised of representatives from each of the five counties. At the time of this writing, the positions for Brevard and Flagler Counties are vacant. The Alliance also has an advisory board comprised of various stakeholders across the region as well as well-known national trail advocates.

Exhibit 2 SUN Trail St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. Source: FDOT 3/2018



The Loop begins at Titusville and proceeds, aligned with the Florida Coast to Coast Trail as far as DeBary where the C2C branches south and west while the SJR2C Loop continues north to Palatka, then heads east to St Augustine before turning south to *Close the Loop* at Titusville.

This strategic plan was developed by the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, in partnership with the Northeast Florida Regional Council and the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance. The project was funded by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity through a technical assistance grant. The project’s steering committee was comprised of the project team, along with representatives from each county as well as the Space Coast and River-to-Sea



Exhibit 3 Stakeholder Meeting in Volusia County, October 2018

Transportation Planning Organizations. The process to develop this strategic plan included collaboration with the steering committee as well as stakeholder input.

A workshop was held on October 26, 2017 at the Volusia County Administration building and was held prior to the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Summit and Trail Celebration, which was hosted by the St. Johns River-to-Sea Alliance. The goal of the workshop was to obtain recommendations and potential actions regarding the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Trail. The main topics addressed were Economic Development, Operations, Marketing/Eco-Tourism Strategies, Branding, Mapping Segments and Opportunities and Advocacy. Over 35 stakeholders from the five counties, representing trail managers to tourism development agencies across the five counties were in attendance.

A webinar was held on April 2, 2018 to review the concepts of the plan as well as the branding concept that was developed in a process that occur simultaneously during the plan development. The webinar highlighting the final report, interactive maps and story maps, associated comprehensive plan policies and agritourism corridor case study was conducted in May 2018.

Loop Completion

This section will discuss the segments of the Loop that exist within each county, and the status of the portions that are not yet complete. While working to complete the Loop, governmental agencies and the Alliance must strive to bring other segments of the trail that are deemed “substandard” up to the designated standard of 12 to 14 feet in width and usually paved with asphalt to eliminate expansion joints in concrete. Also included are the appropriate amenities such as trailheads, way finding, restrooms, etc. The SUN Trail legislation, Section 339.81, F.S., allows the allocation of program funds to all phases of project development (including preliminary and environmental planning, design, acquisition of real property/land/right-of-way (ROW), new construction, or reconstruction of trail surfaces and bridges

FDOT defines a multi-use trail

as a paved, shared-use path, which is typically 12 feet wide, but may vary from 10 feet to 14 feet wide, or larger, depending upon physical or environmental constraints, or usage. In some areas of extreme constraints, such as at bridges or in environmentally sensitive lands, a multi-use trail may be as narrow as eight feet wide. In general, development of SUN Trail funded projects will be 12-foot wide, asphalt, multi-use trails. It is possible that sections designed and constructed under other design requirements may need retrofits. FDOT may resurface or reconstruct a FDOT constructed multi-use trail that has reached the end of its pavement or bridge structure life-cycle. Trail reconstruction should be prioritized by the MPO/TPO or applicable local government/agency. Alternatively, the district, at its discretion, may reconstruct a trail in FDOT ROW in coordination with a road resurfacing project.

and maintenance), and the local governments, in conjunction with the Alliance and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and local governments, can work to identify missing or substandard sections and apply to FDOT for funding to rectify deficiencies in these areas.

In some cases, SUN Trail funding may be the appropriate source. Other funding through the State of Florida may also be available, either through FDOT or FDEP, and may be classified as safety improvements to the existing trail. Federal funding is another funding source that can be investigated. Alternatively, local governments can opt to use local funding to complete these upgrades.

In order to create a Loop that will attract users from around the world, the facility should be a showcase trail that local governments and Floridians can be proud of. FDOT has phases for the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop programmed out to 2023, and has committed to work diligently with the communities and partners along the corridor to program the remaining gaps as soon after that as possible. The SUN Trail related funding for improvements represent a colossal leap forward. The end goal needs to be kept in sight and, together, the vision will be attained.

The following descriptions for each county are based on the best available data at this time.

Brevard County

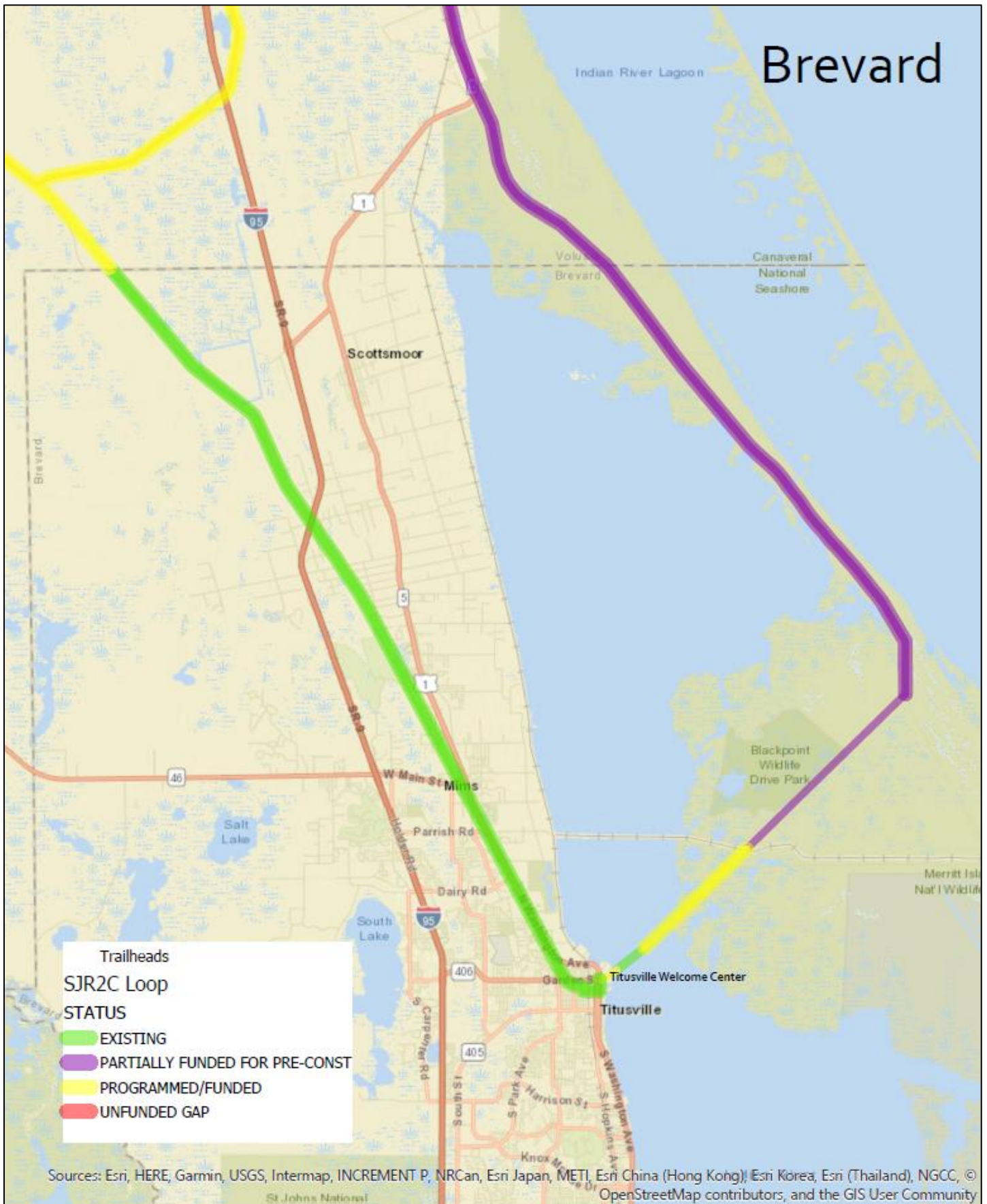


Exhibit 4 North Brevard Regional Trails Status January 2018

The City of Titusville’s downtown area is an essential connector of these regional trails. It has provided economic redevelopment opportunities, including the creation of their new welcome center, which has a bike rental shop within it. They are currently working to get an easement to cross the railroad to complete the downtown sections. The trail will move off the cycle track onto SR 406 and connect to the A. Max Brewer Bridge. This segment is



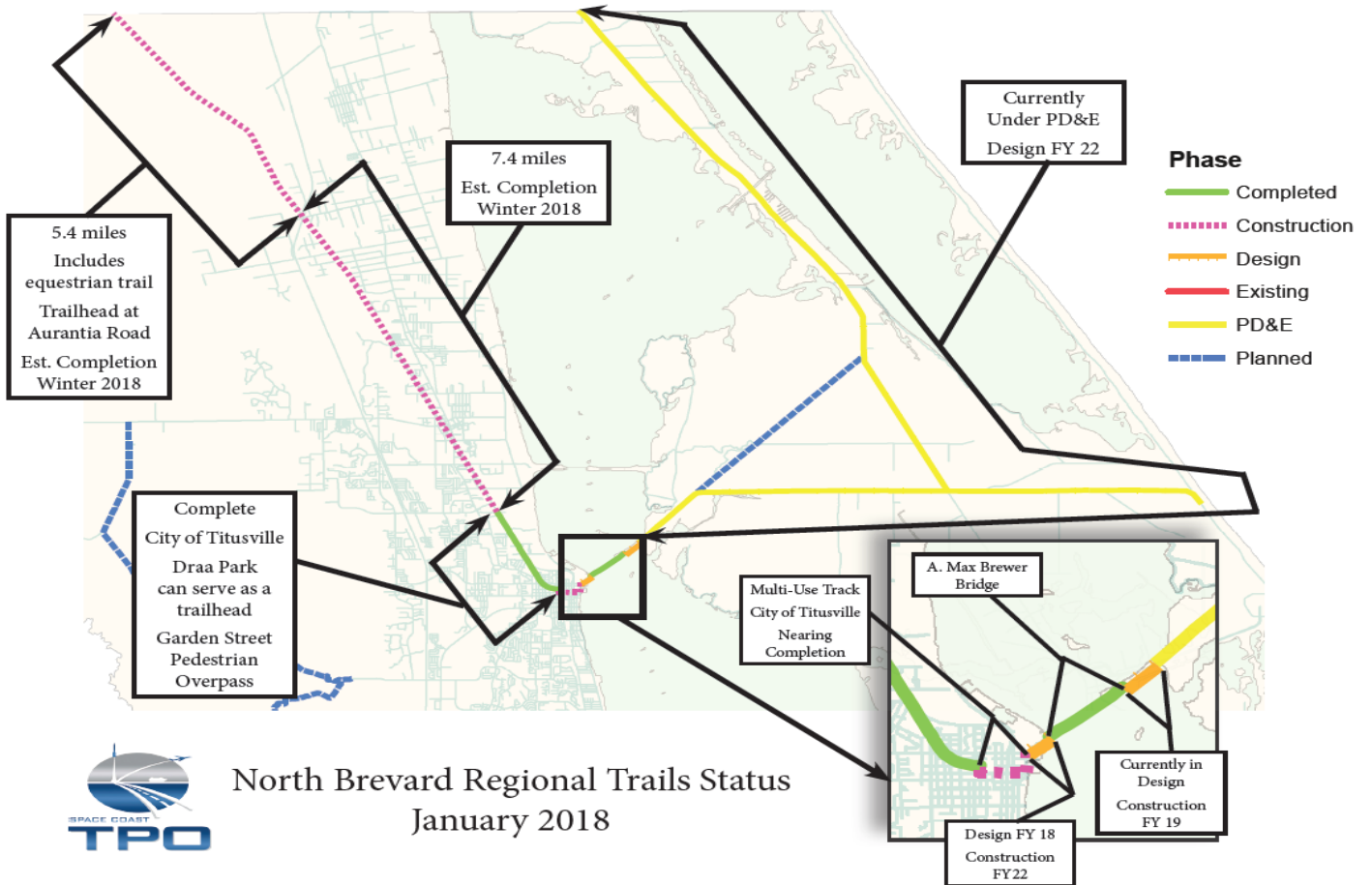
estimated for completion by Fiscal Year (FY) 25. The A. Max Brewer Bridge has bicycle/pedestrian facilities that will serve as the trail for the bridge span. Improvements to the Max Brewer Causeway for trail inclusion are programmed for FY 19 and will be implemented with a resurfacing project currently under design. It will include a 12 foot multi-use trail on the north side. Brevard County Parks and Recreation has received funding to improve the Parrish Park area along the causeway to improve access, safety, and provide a trailhead. Construction is anticipated for FY 21.

The Space Coast Trail Project runs from the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge boundary at the east end of the SR 406/Brewer Causeway to the Atlantic Ocean and up SR 3 to US1 in Volusia County. This project is located on federally owned property by NASA and is maintained by two federal agencies, the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Canaveral National Seashore. It is currently under PD&E and design is programmed for FY 22. Construction has not been programmed yet.



In 2017, approximately 13 miles of trail was constructed from Kingman Road to the Volusia County line. In February of 2018, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to open this 13 miles segment called the Florida East Central Regional Rail Trail from Titusville to Volusia. This added to the segment funded by the City of Titusville from Kingman Road to Draa Road in to Draa Park.

The Garden Street Pedestrian Bridge (image below) was completed in May of 2016 in Titusville and provides a safe crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists over SR 406.



Volusia County

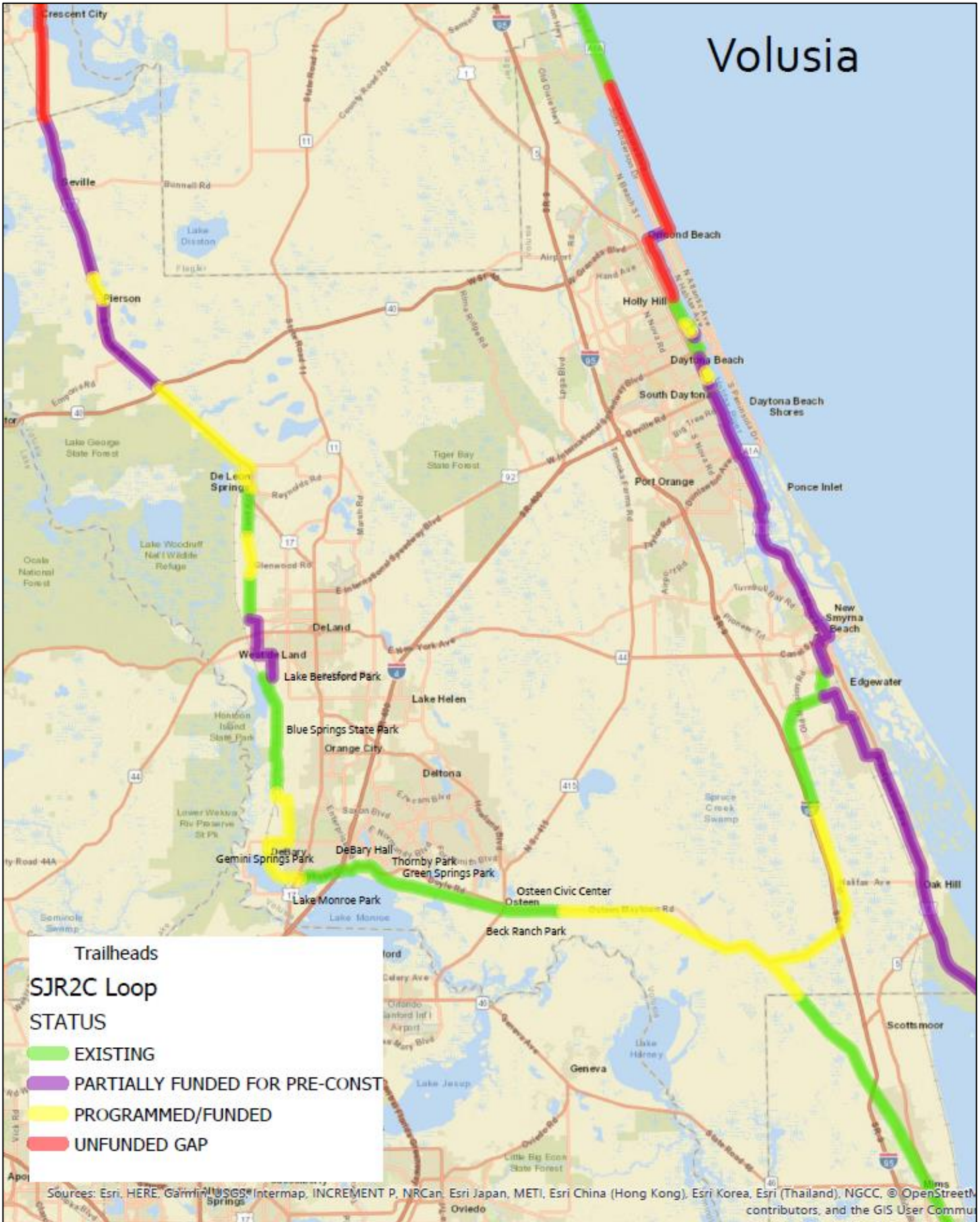


Exhibit 4 Volusia County Loop Status

In Volusia County, the southern portion from DeBary to the Brevard County line is also part of the Coast to Coast Trail, and as such, is either built or is under construction. Along the river side of the county, part of the trail is also the Spring to Spring trail, much of which is existing. In DeBary, both trails will enhance access to SunRail, which will provide service through Orlando down to Kissimmee and Poinciana. With connections to Amtrak and to the Orlando International Airport via transit links, the River-to-Sea Loop will be accessible worldwide.

Much of the coastal portion of the Loop in Volusia is in the funding pipeline except for a gap from Holly Hill to north of Ormond Beach.

Construction, funded by Volusia County's Echo program, was recently completed consisting of two five-foot wide bike lanes and two five-foot wide sidewalks connecting this missing Spring to Spring trail gap.

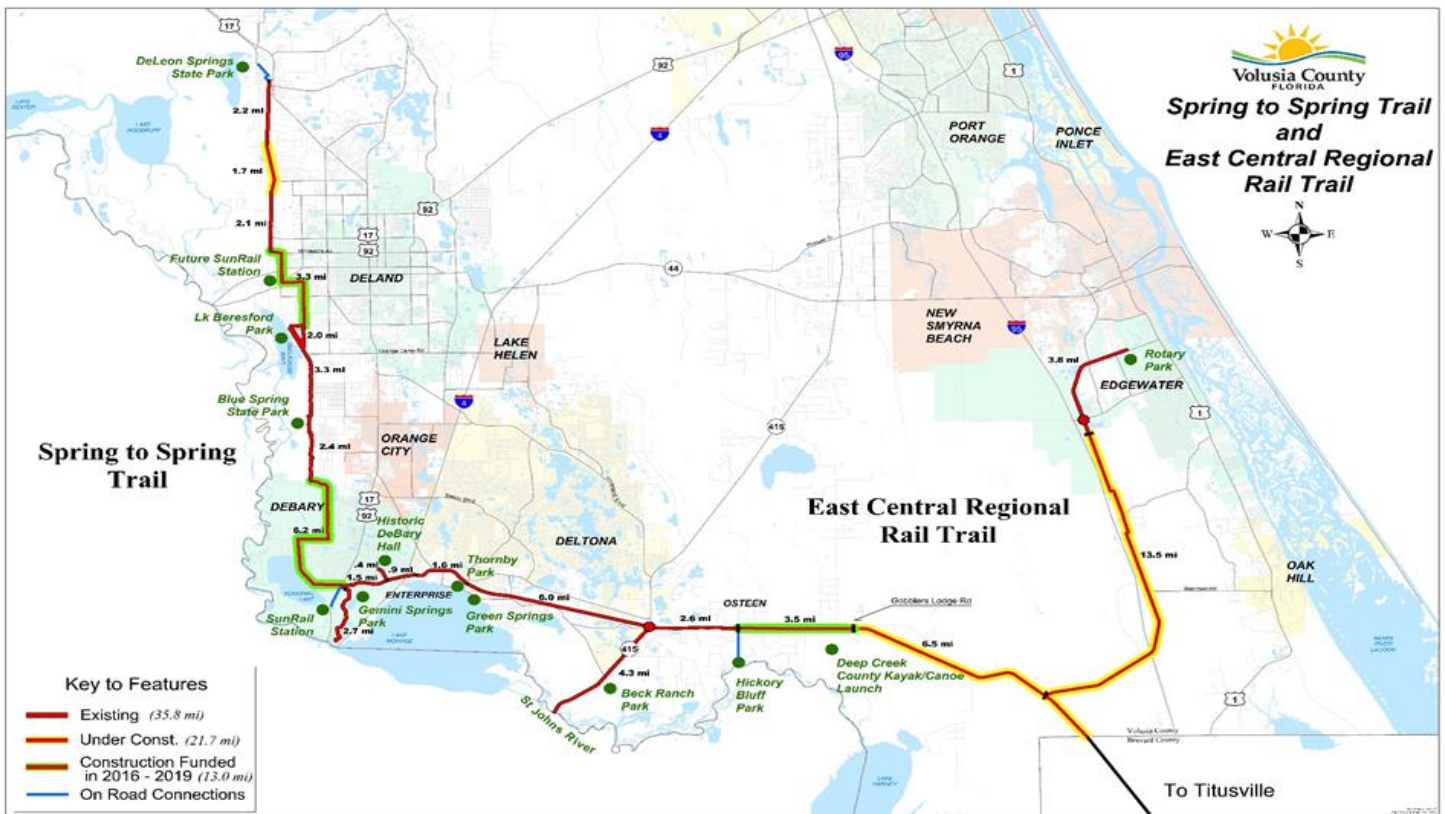


Exhibit 5 Spring to Spring Trail and East Central Regional Rail Trail in Volusia County

Flagler County

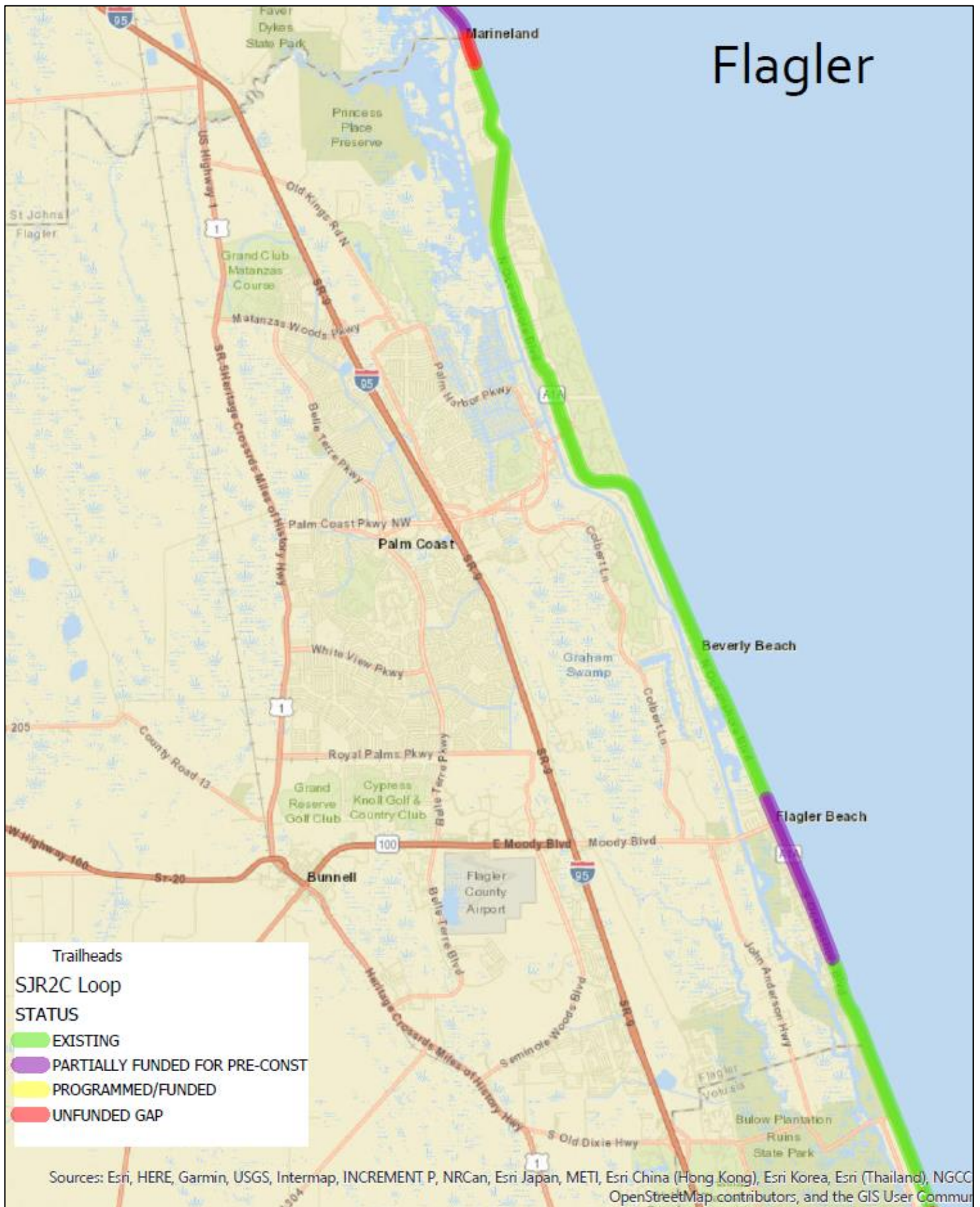


Exhibit 6 Flagler County Loop Status

In Flagler County, approximately 82% of the trail is existing, leaving 18% unconstructed. This gap along SR A1A is mostly in Southern Flagler (Flagler Beach Gap), with a small portion in the very northern portion of the county.

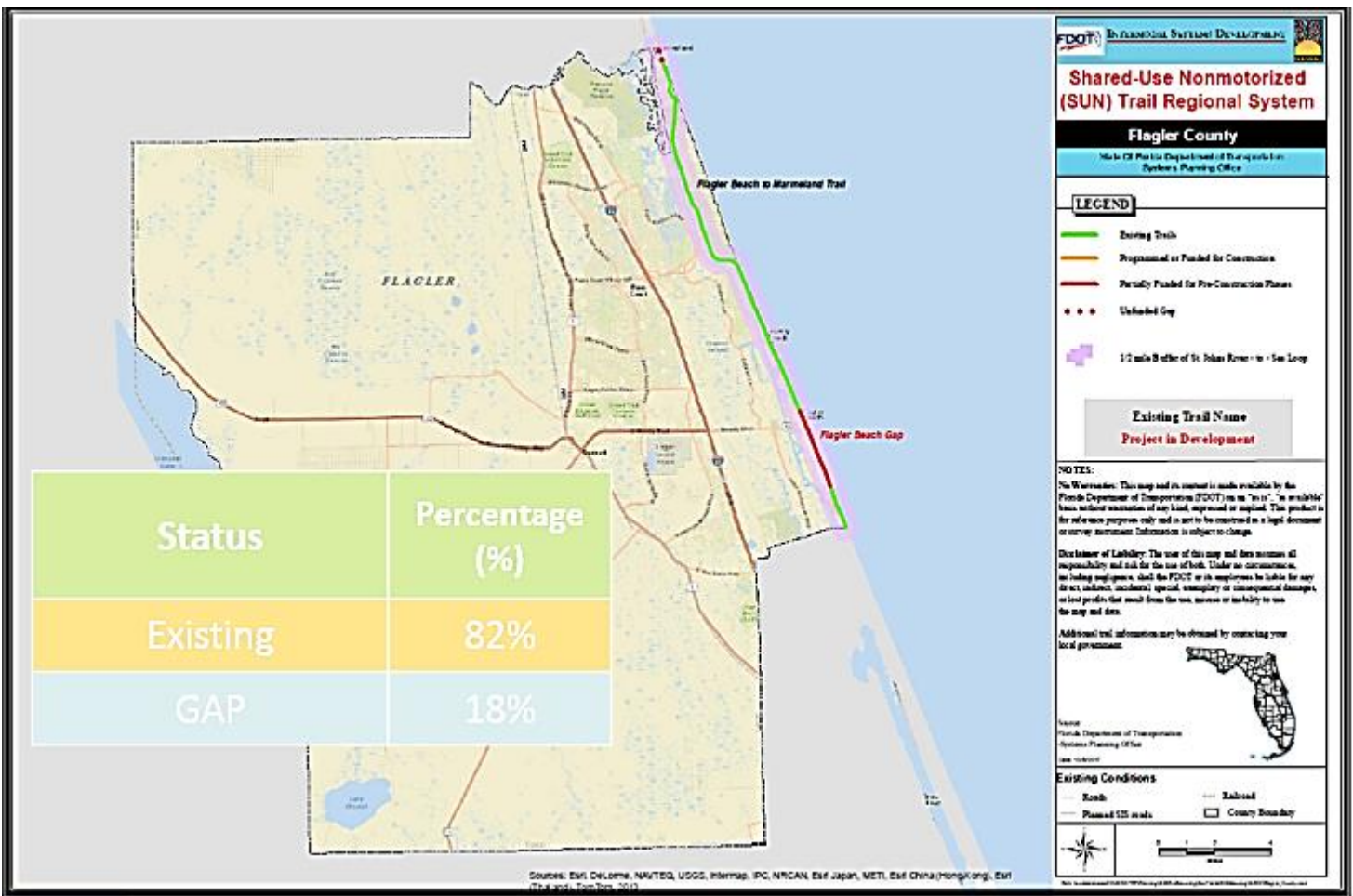


Exhibit 7 Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Regional System Trail Status Screen Shot from FDOT

The 2.89 mile gap between S. 26th Street to N. 9th Street was directly impacted by Hurricane Matthew. The PD&E is scheduled to begin in late FY 18 with design in FY 21. There is an estimated \$2.5 million of SUN Trail Funding for the design of this section. The Marineland to St. Johns County Line gap is approximately a half mile and will include future coordination with FDOT District 5 and St. Johns County. Nearly 16 miles of trail currently exists in Flagler County from the southern Flagler County line to S. 26th Street in Flagler Beach (1.5 miles) and N. 9th Street to Marineland (14 miles).



Some portions of the trail in Flagler County are only eight feet in width. This is an example of where the completion of the trail may be paramount; however, it is desirable for these facilities be widened to the standard 12 feet when possible.

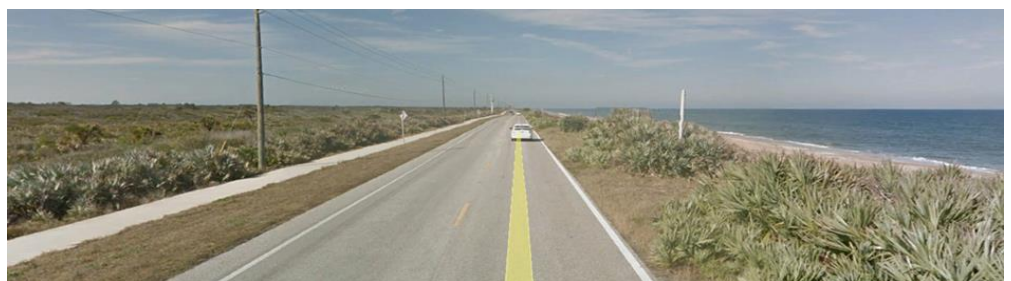


Exhibit 8 Flagler County Loop Segment along A1A

St. Johns County



Exhibit 9 St. Johns County Loop Status

St. Johns County divides their trail areas in to “Planning Focus Areas”. The first focus area is where the existing trail ends to the City of St. Augustine. Planning Focus

Area 2 is located within the City of St. Augustine. The City’s Mobility Study may be relevant in assisting with design and construction of facilities for the trail. Planning Focus Area 3 is located within the City of St. Augustine Beach. Key areas include Pope Road and Pier Park. Funding for the design and construction of the facilities in this focus area are unknown at this time.

Planning Focus area 4 includes SR A1A, which is currently maintained by St. Johns County and has existing sidewalks and bike lanes. In FY 2017 SUN Trail funding was allocated for the Feasibility Study to determine how to close this gap from the end of the existing Palatka to St. Augustine State Trail (SR207 Rail Trail) to the Flagler County Line.

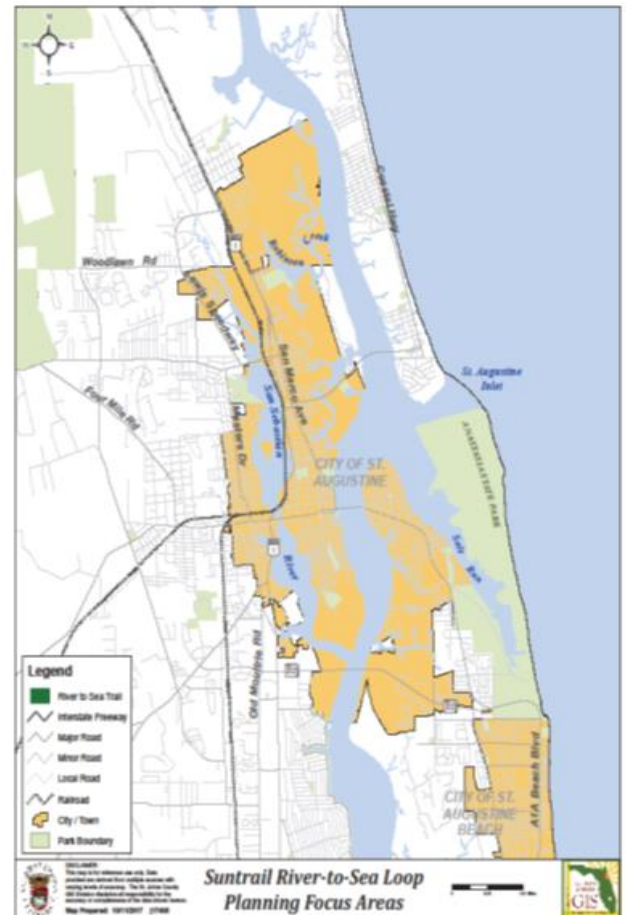
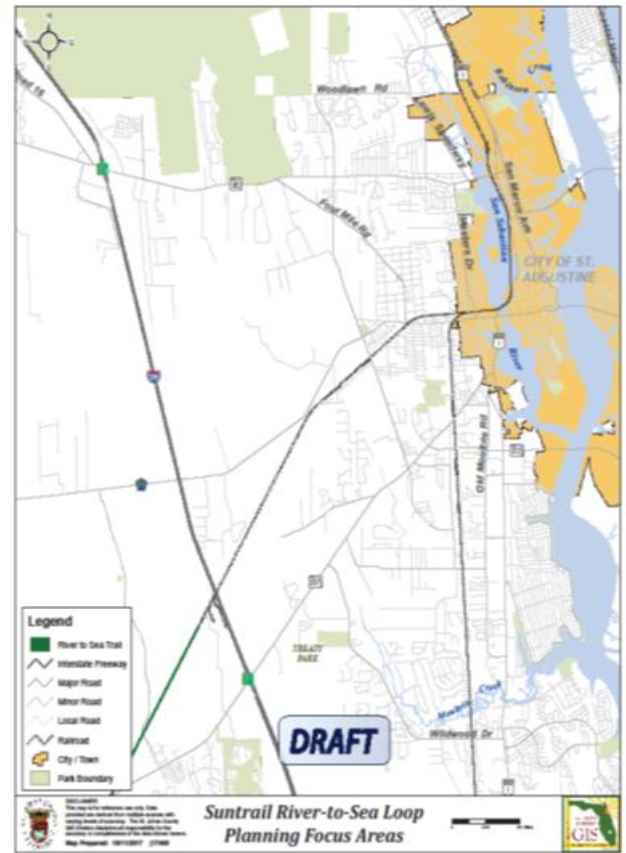


Exhibit 10 Planning Focus Areas in St. Johns County

Putnam County



Exhibit 11 Putnam County Loop Status

Putnam County has approximately thirty miles of the loop, divided into three main segments with the City of Palatka serving as the Trail Hub, where it is envisioned that numerous trails will converge. The first segment, Hastings to East Palatka, is a paved six mile trail that connects to the Palatka to St. Augustine State Trail (also known as the SR 207 Rail Trail). The second segment of the Trail (E. Palatka to San Mateo) is a four mile section that runs along the eastern side of the St. Johns River. It was recommended to align the corridor on the westside of US Hwy 17.

The San Mateo to Pomona Park, Crescent City to Volusia County Segment is approximately 25 miles, with about four miles in San Mateo paved and opened. A Feasibility Study or PDE (Project Design and Environmental study) corridor assessment is needed to address the 12-mile gap from San Mateo to N. Crescent City. In Crescent City, nearly three miles of trail are paved and with another section designed and awaiting construction. The five mile segment from Crescent City to the Volusia County line is awaiting a corridor assessment.

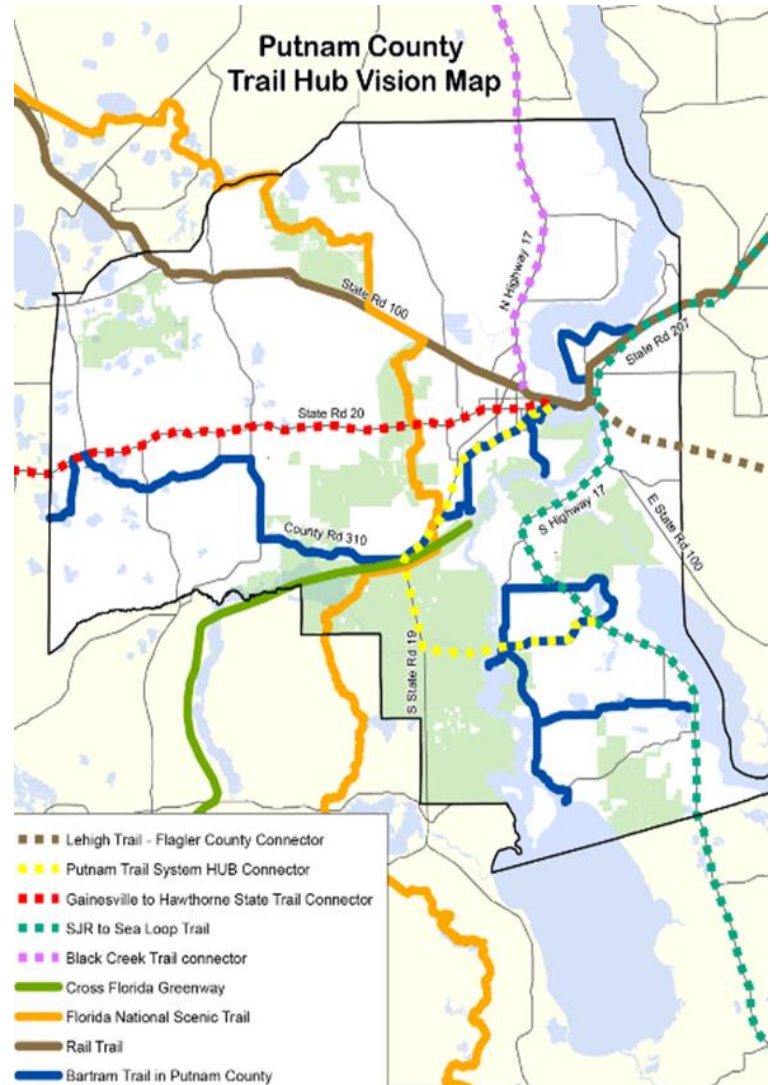


Exhibit 12 Putnam County trail Hub Vision Map

Operations and Management

Documentation that a non-FDOT governmental entity is formally committed to the operation and maintenance of the project (long-term trail manager) is one of the four Eligibility Criteria that all projects must meet to receive consideration for SUN Trail funding. Therefore, the local sponsor/agency will be identified when the initial funding proposal is made to FDOT. The appropriate maintenance agreement detailing the full maintenance requirements of that entity must be executed prior to construction. FDOT has two types of memoranda of understanding, depending on whether the trail is located within or outside of the FDOT right-of-way.

When trails are developed in the FDOT ROW, FDOT will maintain the pavement and any bridge structures for a trail, and will apply normal roadway maintenance standards such as mowing and litter control to the entire ROW inclusive of the trail. Beyond this, a local sponsor/agency will enter into a maintenance agreement with the department to undertake all other trail maintenance. The area of responsibility will be the footprint of the trail within FDOT ROW as defined by the district. The local agency/sponsor will be responsible for any mowing and litter control above FDOT roadway standards and maintenance of trail specific facilities and features such as ornamental landscaping, wayside areas, benches, litter receptacles, and restrooms.

Trails that are constructed outside of FDOT ROW shall be maintained by an entity other than FDOT. The department 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. 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 SUN Trail Network is authorized under 339.81, F.S. The FDOT is directed to make use of its expertise in efficiently providing transportation projects to develop a statewide system of paved non-motorized trails as a component of the Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS), which is planned by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Loop Marketing and Promotion

Branding for the Loop

A process was initiated by Volusia County shortly before the commencement of the strategic plan process to develop a logo for use in cohesive branding for the SJR2C Loop. Developing a unified logo for the corridor is challenging in the context that there are various existing and planned named trails along the 5-county corridor. The logo should be considered an overlay to identify the larger corridor and should be used in conjunction with existing trail names and logos as determined by the managing trail entity. Co-location of appropriate logos will be necessary to provide local context and heritage where it currently or is planned to occur.

The process of developing a logo included a stakeholder meeting to discuss the need for a cohesive logo, as well as process and attributes that needed to be considered in developing a logo. Volusia County reached out to stakeholders across the corridor and solicited contender logos. These logos were then remitted to stakeholders across the Loop to vote for the top candidates and provide input on suggested alterations to the logo options. These suggestions were provided to the logo developers. Two logos were adjusted and moved forward.

During this time, it was determined that a consensus approach was the preferred method for the final selection of the logo to be used to sign and market the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop. To accomplish this, representatives were identified in each county to lead the logo discussion within their county and with those cities who share in the responsibility in funding and /or maintaining trail segments, including federal partners in Brevard County, in an effort to determine a consensus for the logo selection. Each county's selection was forwarded to the steering committee resulting in five County "votes". This process resulted in the final logo/brand for the SJR2C Loop as identified below.



Exhibit 13 Two of Several Logo Designs Considered

This logo should be incorporated along the trail through wayfinding, trail confidence markers, and at trailheads. Below are some simple examples of how the logo can be incorporated onto existing signage.(ADD) Additionally, as with the example from the Coast To Coast Trail, this logo can be used as a thermoplastic adhesive onto the trail to provide confidence to users that they are indeed on the SJR2C Loop, especially in areas that are not well signed. It may also be advantageous for partners to develop a wayfinding and design toolkit that would provide options for incorporating the



The Coast to Coast Trail (C2C) is a significant cross-state trail in Florida's statewide network of Greenways and Trails, spanning from the **Gulf of Mexico** to the **Atlantic Ocean** and traversing nine counties. The Trail will span approximately **250 miles** when completed.

Plan your Trip, use:



Trail Managers:



Following the path:

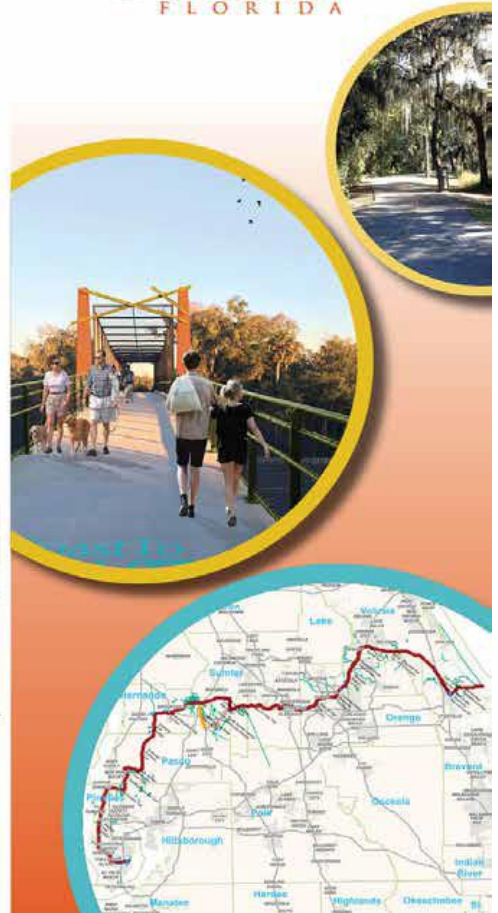


Exhibit 14 "Plan Your Trip" Application

logo into components associated with rural and urban development. This would also include how to incorporate local feel and culture in the design components of the trail. Discussion could include the use of the Coast to Coast Trail Rural-Urban Design Overlay document as a basis or even guide for the recommendations of the Loop as the trails are identical in Volusia and Brevard Counties, both trails travel through rural and urban areas, and the recommendations are versatile for incorporating the design components into local character. Finally, the logo should be utilized in "highway wayfinding" to assist in directing visitors as well as locals to trailheads or access points.

The logo should be incorporated into marketing material to provide the cohesive approach to promotion of the trail through the five counties. It is recommended that examples of marketing material be developed that can be used across jurisdictional lines.

Examples of materials developed for the Coast to Coast Trail are shown in this section and the effort could be replicated specific to the SJR2C. Local content should be included in the marketing material to highlight local character.

If a website is developed, as recommended in a later section of this plan, the templates and various forms of the logo should be hosted on the site, for all users to download and use for their signage, marketing and promotional items.

Local and Regional St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Promotion

Developing a consistent and clear marketing and promotion message across the Loop is important. The logo developed for the Loop should be utilized across the five counties for wayfinding, marketing, and promotion. While no marketing and promotional items were developed specifically for this strategic plan, it is recommended that one of the next steps be to develop a template for cities, counties, tourism agencies and other organizations along the Loop to utilize for marketing and promotional items. Examples of these would include rack cards and tri-folds, Cue Sheets (Ride Itinerary) templates, stickers, incentive programs and others. Examples of these items that were developed for the Coast to Coast Trail are available here: c2ctrail.com/ and can be modified with both logos in areas where the C2C and SJR2C Loop overlap. This information should be disseminated in visitor centers, trailheads, attractions, lodging venues, transportation hubs, and other locations, and electronic venues such as website and mobile applications, to strategically encourage visitors to come and ride on a St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop.

Entities are present throughout the five-County corridor that market counties, cities and special districts not only throughout the state but also internationally. These agencies need to collaborate internally to create not only a local but regional approach to providing information for the Trail. While the marketing logo and message should consistent across the Loop counties and local communities should highlight their unique characteristics and opportunities including Historic Downtowns and Main Street Communities, Special Place Trails such as the Bartram Trail in Putnam, Antiquities and Naturalist settings on the Trail.

Examples of county highlights include Putnam County’s convergence of trails (trail hub) and Special Place Trail - Bartram Trail. Agri-tourism opportunities can be highlighted in both St. Johns and Putnam Counties. Brevard County may focus on connecting wildlife and blueway opportunities to the space industry and local seafood. Volusia County can highlight an eastern and western county experience from spring destinations to beaches while St. Johns County may focus on, in addition to the Agritourism Corridor, connecting waterways from the Ocean to the River through historical St. Augustine. Finally, Flagler County may highlight 20 miles of serene coastal trail with local merchants and restaurants.

Cue Sheets with ride itinerary information

can be disseminated to guide riders along the route and can contain highlights to enhance their experience. Cue sheets are perfect for organized rides as well.

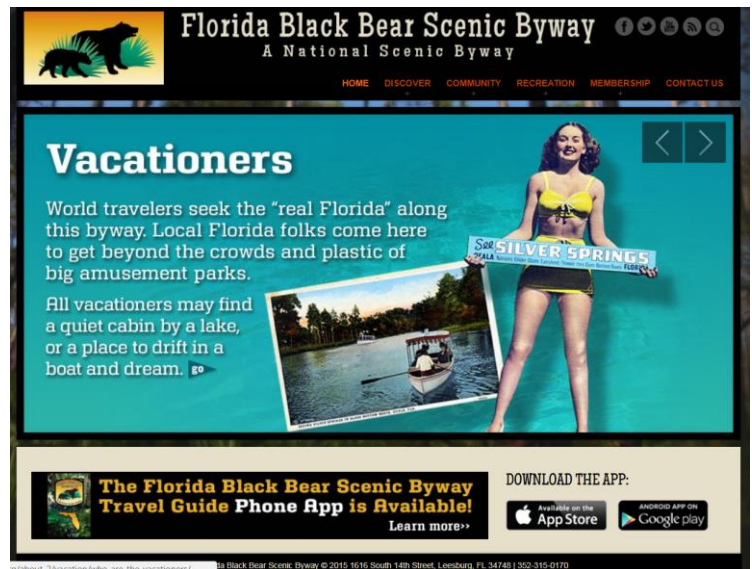


Florida Main Street Program

is administered by the Division of Historical Resources within the Florida Department of State. The network has over 1,200 communities and neighborhoods across the USA and is committed to creating high-quality places, stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. Main Street America strives to :

- Builds a positive image for the community
- Creates job opportunities
- Saves tax dollars
- Preserves the community's historic resources
- Helps to control sprawl

An interesting concept incorporated by the Black Bear Scenic Byway for marketing and promotion was to base it on the perspectives of their visitors. They market the Byway from the following perspectives: Adventurers, Vacationers, Historians, and Naturalists. They created guides for each of these groups to highlight destinations, assets and educational opportunities along the route. The website also has a “plan your trip” section with information from camping and lodging to events and tours. While it may not be advantageous to include all lodging and restaurants along the SJR2C Loop in the same manner as the Black Bear Scenic Byway, there are many attributes of the website and marketing program developed for the Byway that can be incorporated into a corridor-wide marketing website.



The St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance has established an initial website at SJR2C.ORG that currently focuses on Loop advocacy and completion of the route, marketing and events occurring along the route, and the operations and activities of the Alliance. The mapping and resource inventory task will form the basis for a complete website redesign that will highlight attractions and enable route planning around the Loop. The Alliance website already includes promotional aspects for the Loop and has begun to integrate various events, especially related to Agritourism.



The redesigned website will include a trip-planning section and a shared events calendar where corridor communities can post events and items of interest. This will serve as a gateway to other event calendars and websites that are already maintained by other entities. Many of the highlights along the Loop that are incorporated into the marketing and promotion website will be well-developed, sustainable Loop assets. Links will enable users to explore the communities they are visiting and plan trips around special events. Links to the interactive and printable maps developed by the Alliance will help to ensure that maps and routing information is kept current as the maps are updated. One model that will be considered in the redesign is

the Black Bear Scenic Byway Website described above. Due to maintenance and upkeep of a website, it is recommended that the site be developed in a manner that minimizes updates, staff time and costs.

Along these lines, stakeholders have identified the need to highlight the trail on baseline maps to depict its applicability to daily trips, health, transportation and economic development. This can showcase the Loop, connected trails, and Scenic Byways as transportation options.

The integration of trip planning, destinations and events in a website can be accommodated in the existing St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance website, or be an offshoot standalone website. The SJR2C Loop Alliance website currently focuses on the advocating for the completion of the route, marketing and events occurring along the route, and the operations and activities of the Alliance. The Alliance website includes promotional aspects for the Loop and has begun to integrate various events, especially related to Agritourism. However, a straightforward trip planning section would need to be developed to separate planning a visit to the Loop from the functions of the Alliance and blogs developed to market the Loop.

The trip planning section should be developed with links and other highlights that do not need to be constantly updated but serve as a gateway to other calendars and websites that are already maintained by entities for events. Most of the highlights along the Loop that are incorporated into the marketing and promotion website should be well developed, sustainable loop assets that will require little maintenance to keep the information or links up-to-date. Links should be used to navigate users to the communities they are visiting and their specific events, outside of annual events, which can be provided in a listing in a similar fashion as on the Black Bear Scenic Byway Website. Another option for events is a shared calendar that corridor communities can post on-going events with minimal effort on the part of the website gatekeeper. Providing links to the interactive maps developed by the Alliance will help to ensure that as the maps are updated, the information does not need to be updated in multiple locations.

Engaging the business community and creating local ownership of the trail is important to the promotion of the Loop both for the local users' aspect as well as the "tourist" aspect. Some examples of engaging the business community and helping to increase the economic yield can take many forms and may include developing incentives or discount programs. Businesses along the Loop who wish to participate could partner with their local community business organizations to develop a program such as a "Loop Friendly Business" and offer a discount for trail visitors. There are numerous ways for a program to be framed and should encourage utilization by locals as well as tourists. For example, a bike rental receipt could be brought to a participating store or restaurant for a discount, or a restaurant/merchant receipt could be redeemed at the Visitor Center or bike shop for a trail related "prize" or discount on rentals or gear. Businesses can provide bike racks, showers, lockers, and special programs to incentivize alternative commuting that takes advantage of the Loop. For local users, businesses can institute a "local trail day" where patrons would show a selfie or other evidence of using the trail to access the business to receive a discount or "frequent user" stamp for a larger incentive. Bed and breakfasts can also partner with trail oriented businesses to promote the trail and local merchants or restaurants, as well as destinations and local tours. Businesses can also participate in a "Loop Friendly Business" program marked by a sticker in their front window adding ownership to the trail. The logo should be the primary visual for stickers or other promotional programs to ensure consistency across the Loop.

The Office of Greenways and Trails Trail Towns Program is another great program that should be taken advantage of in the development of local and regional promotional material. Communities should link business for both local trail support and the regional trail creating a strong Trail Town designation. Communities along the Loop should consider becoming engaged in seeking the Trail Town designation. The Alliance actively supports the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) "Trail Towns Program" and anticipates working closely with local communities around the Loop to engage them in this program and assist them in obtaining the OGT "Trail Town" designation. More information about the Trail Town designation can be found in section G.

The City of Titusville's Community Cycle Fun Day – We're Blazing Trails

was a recent promotion to highlight cycling. To promote cycling the city website includes things for cyclists to do, such as local downtown breweries, bicycle rentals and services and recommended side trips. Stores and local eateries are included as well with a focus on sweets.

The site also includes where to bicycle in order to view launches from the space center.

SJR2C Loop Alliance Friends and Family lets supporters

show their love for the Loop! By joining the St Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, you're helping to create and support a 260-mile Loop that connects the St. Johns River and the East Coast of Florida with a trail running from Titusville to DeBary to Palatka to St Augustine and all points between. Your support helps us advocate locally and state-wide to help complete the Loop. Your contribution also helps us develop guides, maps, and cue sheets – the tools you need to travel and enjoy the Loop.

Local and regional tourism entities along the Loop can partner to discuss the potential of integrating a program across the five counties to engage multi-day users to frequent “Loop Friendly Business” merchants and businesses along the entirety of the Loop. Organizations, businesses, and various destinations may convene to create Loop wide, interactive, scavenger hunt type programs focused on the perspectives of the trail users such as those targeted for the Black Bear Scenic Byway. It is recommended that the trail perspectives include: Historians, Naturalist, Health Adventurer, Foodie, and Beach Go-er. Day visitors can also utilize this program on a local scale. These programs may include visiting unique assets along the trail, participating in local tours such as an agri-tourism tour or a tour of a local destination such as Marineland or Kennedy Space Center. It may also include finding monuments or natural features along the trail such as the Indian mounds or even wildlife. Finally, the program may include visiting a local merchant or restaurant. This program can be promoted and used as a Loop wide incentive program as well as a locally promoted event or program to showcase local culture and assets.

Business buy-in of the trail and all it has to offer should extend beyond just the bottom line. Embracing the trail from a team building opportunity to advance active, healthy lifestyles can benefit large and small businesses. Encouraging the utilization of the Loop and connected transit or trail systems to commute to work, developing a walk at work club to use the trail during lunch or as a healthy team exercise opportunity at least once a week can have positive impacts on the mental and physical health of employees. Counties and cities often use programs such as adopt- a-highway or park to help maintain the beauty of the road or park. Developing a similar program to create a sense of ownership for local businesses, in addition to schools and other civic programs, would tie into marketing and promotion as well as provide opportunities for staff/employees to take ownership and participate in beautification and maintenance opportunities as team building and health incentive activities.

The project will bring safe transportation and recreation opportunities, increasing the need to identify additional opportunities to market the health benefits associated with the trail. In addition to immediate use of the trail for health related events, local health organizations, social clubs and recreational organizations can utilize the trail and connecting park and sports facilities to enhance this opportunity. Marketing and business related agencies should work with local communities to establishment of bike share options in key locations as well bring in or combine marketing efforts of various outdoor vendors along the river, lagoon and ocean. Marketing assistance and awareness will be desired for multiple health organizations and healthy living initiatives as direct and indirect benefits from the trail are realized



Local and out of town visitors use Trip Advisor and other social media sites and platforms to not only identify great places to eat and stay, but also things to do. Other useful platforms that are trail specific include TrailLink by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, with uses Google based mapping. The SJR2C Loop is an asset that should be placed on the Trip Advisor for each community that has direct access to the trail. Partners along the trail can place links on their social media platforms to advance the use of commenting on Trip Advisor to market the trail.

The economic development section of the plan will speak more to redevelopment and the opportunities for economic growth and opportunities of older more developed urban and coastal corridor from Titusville to St Augustine including downtown areas in New Smyrna Beach through Ormond Beach, Flagler Beach up to St Augustine. Regional trails have shown to be a catalyst for redevelopment of older declining strip malls and business parks to support healthy lifestyles. There is a large opportunity to market the trail as a redevelopment catalyst as the trail enhances livability and attractiveness to the urban communities along the corridor that for both business and residential opportunities will set the trail corridor communities apart from the sprawling growth to the west. The marketing and promotion of the trial, creating ownership in the community as a whole, in addition to the business community, early on in the trail

development phases, will be the momentum that spurs redevelopment of these areas or the resurgence of downtowns, particularly in the historical downtown and riverfront corridors. Many of these areas especially along US 1 to the south and SR A1A north from Ormond Beach are experiencing underutilized downtowns due to westward growth. The Trail offers the opportunity to facilitate long desired redevelopment by encouraging an atmosphere that will embrace the historical downtown businesses (bed and breakfasts, merchants, breweries, cafes, etc.) and neighborhoods that will attract and encourage a new model of businesses, clients and customers as well as a younger active workforce who are actively seeking a new urban lifestyle.

Strategies for Aligning with Existing Programs

Aligning St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop programs, marketing and eco-tourism aspects with existing programs and facilities like the Scenic Byways, ReThink, SunRail and health programs is a win for all involved.

There are currently six FDOT Scenic Byways along the corridor of the Loop, some of which are also designated with National status, such as the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway. Scenic Byways extend along nearly the entire Loop corridor on the Atlantic side. Scenic Byways are supported by established organizations with support from FDOT, so they offer great potential for synergy and collaboration on events and campaigns. Becoming designated as a scenic byway requires numerous and detailed analysis of resources and opportunities along the corridor, the development of a management plan and creative partnership development. Aligning with these programs can position the stakeholders of the Loop and the Byways to work together on projects, programs, events, partnerships, marketing and resource development. The Scenic Byways work from a Return on Mission (ROM) concept. Joining forces with the byways to address this concept and build upon it, would increase the ROM for both programs. The Alliance has engaged with Florida's Scenic Byway Program and is planning cooperative promotion campaigns. The Alliance is already active on the River of Lakes board and has initiated plans for a promotion campaign for a nature and history cycle route with related maps and signs.



ReThink Your Commute is a regional program of FDOT District 5 that promotes various options for commuting purposes including carpooling, transit, biking/trails and others. It may be advantageous for local communities and businesses along the trail, along with the Loop Alliance, to partner with ReThink to determine the advantages of using the trail and transit to make connections between home and places of employment and track those using the trail for commuting purposes through the ReThink program. This could promote commuter benefit programs at work and would tie into the health impact concept, making workplaces and employees healthier and, potentially, lowering the cost of the health insurance. ReThink would need to work with FDOT to expand their efforts throughout the entire trail corridor or work with FDOT to create a sister program in the three northern counties. ReThink also has developed a myriad of information concerning benefits of biking and alternative transportation options. The partnership with ReThink could promote the outreach to businesses along the corridor from an economic perspective. A partnership of the Alliance and ReThink could result in the development of fact sheets and infographics to show relationship between trail, transportation, users, health, economics and society.



The synergy between SunRail and the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop began with the First Florida Rail to Trail Tour in August of 2014. SunRail and connected transit systems in Central Florida can serve as the perfect conduit to bring Central Floridians to the DeBary Station to access the trail, all without a car, as well as provide a link to the airport for out of town guests. As additional trail links are provided in Sanford, the Sanford SunRail station could also serve as a southern connection from Lake Monroe to the Spring to Spring Trail in Volusia County. Marketing aspects could include information at the airport as well as the various SunRail stations as it continues to expand into Osceola County.



Additionally, the Amtrak station in Palatka could accommodate cycling tourists, with a few Amtrak adjustments, by providing access to the Loop and beyond via the existing Palatka Urban Rail Trail that crosses the St. Johns River and intersects the Loop in E. Palatka.

As marketing brochures and trifold are designed, including SunRail and Amtrak as a transit option to the trail or from the trail to Central Florida and Palatka, should be highlighted. An effort should be made to capture visitors along the five-County Loop who are from outside Florida and looking for something different to try but may be limited in transportation options. Marketing the incorporation of SunRail and Amtrak into bike tours can add a new dimension to the trips.

Measuring Success of Marketing and Promotion Efforts

Obtaining trail counts is also a main activity in developing information for trail managers and decision makers. Due to the cost of the trail counters, communities may be limited in the number of counters they can put into operation. An alternative option is to include the purchase of these items as well as bike repair stations or emergency charging stations as part of the trail sponsorship program. Business logos or names can be placed on the facility to show sponsorship.

Tracking the events, work wellness programs that utilize trails, and trail counts are important to show return on investment and to continue to engage current participating businesses and organizations as well as to bring new partners to the table. Local Tourism Development Councils and Economic Development Boards should work together to track the number of events hosted along the trail from bike rides to farmers markets and other events, including vendor promotions, incentives, etc.

The St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance could serve as the central clearinghouse for this information. Annually, each local agency or stakeholder tracking local events, programs and incentives, can share this information with the Alliance to provide a Loop wide accounting of trail related events and programs.

Additionally, Visit Florida and various tourism councils collect a myriad of data points. Collecting this information to assist in targeting promotion for the trail will be important for local chambers and tourism councils. The Alliance and local agencies may find it advantageous to work with Visit Florida and other data collectors to determine the data points needed to assess the return on investment of the trail as well as the success of the various events and programs along the trail.

Tracking hits and reviews on different platforms can also be a method to assess the usage and success of promotion and marketing and the desirability of the trail, events and programs. The number of hits and trips planned through the “Plan a Trip” website as well as reviews on Trip Advisor for the trail or annual festivals can be evaluated.

It will be necessary to develop a standard process and database for a partner organization or university to utilize to ensure consistent and standardized tracking across multiple platforms over consecutive years. Identifying the appropriate organization to track this information and provide funding to develop the process and conduct an annual assessment will be necessary. A university may be able to provide this service as a yearly intern in a statistical class or the Alliance may be able to secure partner funding to provide resources for this task. Regardless, sustainable (at least over the next 5-10 years), consistent and methodological tracking will be important for the integrity of the information developed.



(Photos courtesy of SJR2C.org)

Economic Development

Trail Related Economic Development

Economic development along the Loop can take many different forms relative to the local and regional context as well as the various opportunities within the vicinity of the trail. The economic opportunities associated with the trail include tourism, (hotels, bed and breakfasts, eco-tourism destinations, commercial growth), transportation, events and festivals, healthy living, trail oriented development. One of the key concepts is to spur local economic development that is

sustainable and not wholly dependent on out of town tourists utilizing the trail, but interweaving the trail and it's opportunities into the fabric of the community by using the local context, destinations and culture, as well as existing tools and partnerships.



The local community will be the main contributors to the success of the trail and the economic impacts it can generate. Bringing together local destinations, day-trippers, businesses, and tourism/economic development agencies to create a marketing campaign using maps and activities to showcase the trail, and drive visitors and investment along the trail, will be

vital. If the community wishes to take advantage of trail-oriented development and grow the economic base, local plans will also need to be updated as discussed in section XYZ.

Multi-use trails will provide economic development for the area through the actual construction of the trail in the short term; however this will pale when compared to the long-term benefits, both tangible and non-tangible. Construction costs are not yet finalized. The indirect benefits in the area of construction include food purchases, hotel nights, bicycles and equipment that will be bought and maintained in the area. Beyond the construction of the Loop, there is a

preponderance of evidence that job creation from trails is 45% greater than that from roadway construction (University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute, or PERI).

Less tangible are the induced effects, which relate to the changes in the economy, and refer to the increase in buying power as a result of any changes in household income. This may be purchases in the area for trail construction from local markets that benefit residents through increased sales or additional personnel hired due to increase in purchases. The direct, indirect and induced effects make up the gross impacts from the trail. (John McDonald, University of Connecticut, 2015).

The East Central Florida Regional Planning Council conducted an analysis, "Economic Impact of Orange County Trails," that indicated that three trails totaling 36 miles added 516 jobs in Orange County and supported \$42.6 million in output or sales annually. This study from 2011 predated the upsurge in popularity of these trails, and by all indications, these numbers have increased dramatically.

OUTDOOR RECREATION & TRAILS
Connecting the dots between Trails & tourism

OUTDOOR RECREATION GENERATES BIG ECONOMIC IMPACTS FOR FLORIDA

Recreation has long served as an economic driver in Florida, as the state remains a major destination for national and international tourism.

The Big Picture

- > **\$58.6 Billion in Annual Consumer Spending**
- > **485,000 Direct Jobs**
- > **\$3.5 Billion in State & Local Taxes**
- > **\$17.9 Billion in Wages**

Outdoor Industries Association, 2017. The Florida Outdoor Recreation Economy Report

A study from the Coast to Coast Connector predicted that the \$42 million investment in the trail would result in \$120 million in economic benefits annually, which is a 285 percent return.

There are several types of development connected to the trail. Most obvious are those services that provide for the needs of trail users. This includes food and drink services, hotels, gas for travel to the loop and the purchase and maintenance types of conveyance on the trail, i.e., bicycle purchase and maintenance, sports equipment such as shoes, etc.

Destination areas such as downtown Winter Garden on the West Orange Trail have thrived due to the trail visitors and now boast numerous restaurants, hotels, markets, stores and at least one brewery. Areas along the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop can replicate this success. Various themed festivals along sections of the trail can be held that would highlight related causes or themes. A medical theme could provide services for athletes such as exams, products and services that cater to the specific clientele. Farm tours and

FLORIDA STATE PARK VISITATION GENERATES \$3 BILLION TO LOCAL ECONOMIES

With more than 1,600 miles of multi-use trails, Florida State Parks receive over 32 million visitors annually, creating 48,622 jobs.

The Cross Florida Greenway had the greatest local economic impact totaling \$277 million.

x 1,000 VISITORS = ~\$101,000 DIRECT LOCAL IMPACT

Trail Facts

- > **Every \$1 spent on walking paths and programs could save approximately \$3 in medical expenses** (American Heart Association)
- > **Every \$1 million spent on trails yields 9.6 jobs** (University of Massachusetts, 2011)

Updated 1/2018, Florida Office of Greenways and Trails

farmer's markets can provide an economic boost for small agricultural entities, and could include overnight stays on farms, niche food extravaganzas and work experiences on farms. These types of activities can be molded into multi-day and long-distance tourism opportunities.

Opportunities for longer trips such as traversing Florida or even longer cross country trips can be organized by outfitters or by individual cyclists. Information on where to stay and eat needs to be readily available either by phone app or pre-arranged through a company or organization. Tour outfitters can accommodate participants of all age groups and abilities and can help craft trips based on interests such as the history of the area, antiques, brew or wine tours, agritourism, etc.

Sales tax revenue from these economic activities will boost state and local coffers and can be used to augment more trail amenities and to help pay for the maintenance of the trail network. Additionally, housing prices along the trail experience an increase in most cases and the additional ad valorem taxes can also be used for trail maintenance.

A few examples exist along the trail showcasing how the community incorporated new business developed focused around the trail (Coast to Coast Bike Shop in Titusville) to how a community leveraged their culture to develop eco-tourism opportunities to visitors as they utilize the trail (Hastings). These are examples of both new development and harnessing existing local culture to create unique experiences within a community.

Another source for economic development guidance is the Trail Town Program that works toward transforming towns into bike-friendly destinations where people want to stay, explore and spend money. The organization helps develop partnerships, provides assessment and research tools and assists in the development of small businesses and marketing along the trail. The Trail Town Program is active in the northeast but the information and expertise they provide can be used everywhere. One of the main messages of the Trail Town movement is the need for special funding for investment in Trail Town facilities, such as nearby food and shelter establishments. Many small towns have turned their whole economy around simply by offering and effectively promoting dining and accommodations that touring cyclists recognize as welcoming and brimming with local flavor. But most lending institutions are not set up to handle this kind of investment financing. Their website provides examples and success stories that local governments along the Loop can use www.trailtowns.org.

Local Government Strategies

Just as a community would develop a plan for a downtown or redevelopment area, it will be important for communities to identify aspects associated with their economic plan of the Loop. To encourage Trail-Oriented Development, or TrOD, the community will need to identify opportunity sites, determine scales of development and adjust their comprehensive plan and land development codes to allow this development if current codes discourage this type of development. The community would need to identify the types of businesses they need and desire in the corridor to create this sustainable economic impact. Developing a marketing plan and incentives to attract investment in the area may also be needed.

The River-to-Sea Loop will be an important community amenity. Homeowners want to live near trails and trail users traversing the loop spend money, spurring economic development. Trail-Oriented Development combines the active transportation benefits of a trail with the revitalization potential associated with well-designed and well managed urban parks to create more livable communities.

Local governments and the business community along the trail are best positioned to identify and take advantage of opportunities that capitalize on the assets in their areas. In order to do this, local governments should convene local businesses and entrepreneurs to engage, learn and discuss what their assets are and how to leverage these assets. An exchange of ideas can educate both local government decision makers, business owners, planners, health officials and

others. Chambers of Commerce have a strategic role as they are already aligned with businesses and have many connections to government agencies as well. To best position a governmental entity to take advantage of the trail, a coordinated effort with all parties is the optimal way to draw trail users and entice them to utilize local services, buy local food and supplies and to stay in local hotels, inns, and bed and breakfasts.

Continuing to work with the business community during and after trail development will be important in maintaining support and ownership of the Loop and its opportunities. Even in communities that already have a well-established business community along the trail or planned trail, education and continued input and engagement is important as new prospects arise and to engage them in sponsorships, programs, incentives, and other trail oriented opportunities.

Communities should also work to engage the health community with the business community, as well as public agencies/departments, to take advantage of how the trail can be used as a health (especially preventative) benefit. In some instances, insurance companies give discounts on health plans if the company or individual participates in health programs that have positive impacts on health indicators. By utilizing the trail as part of existing or new programs, such as walking clubs and active transportation options, it may provide a large impact on the overall community health and lower insurance costs for participants.

Growth Management and transportation planners need to work with parks and recreation to create links from the trail to downtowns, parks, schools, businesses, homes and other community assets such as waterfronts or civic plazas. This provides a human scale context to the built environment through better design and access and incorporation of places and events. This is generally the process when jurisdictions develop a local trail master plan. It would be advantageous for communities to reassess local connection and planned development as growth picks up in the region and the development of the trail continues.

It should also be noted that in many instances, education is the biggest component to moving many of these strategies forward, from planning staff to elected officials as well as the overall business community, especially those new to the concept of the economics associated with trail development. Developing or collecting baseline data to use to facilitate the conversation, or obtaining literature research, may be important, especially when linking health impacts to the trail. In fact, some of that data and analysis may be new to the sector and additional research may be necessary.

Strategic Steps

Strategic steps for local governments, businesses and others to identify opportunities along the trail and to provide incentives are suggested below:

Enlist Citizen Involvement to obtain input from the public to hear about and address any concerns they may have and to solicit their ideas to make it their plan. It is easier to move forward with public buy-in. A town hall meeting with a presentation of ideas to educate the public should be followed with discussion and consensus building. A marketing strategy based on a tourism related theme can help with the identity of the community as the trail traverses the town.

Build a Community Identity through discussions with residents, business owners, farmers, chambers and other stakeholders. Determine what assets are present in the town that could be marketed along the trail. What is it that makes trail users want to visit your segment of the trail? A survey of trail users may help to hone in on their perception of your town. The results can guide marketing material and the story you are promoting. This can be followed up by developing material to distribute relating to your town and what to visit while riding through. A visitor center or kiosk is helpful as is making sure the description on web based material and phone apps are accurate and have copy available for distribution to others promoting the trail. A telephone number linked to the local chamber of commerce would also be helpful.

Develop a Marketing Plan that increases awareness about your town, and refine it as necessary to stay relevant. Be sure to convey the benefits of your town and what is has that is unique. Printed material along with web based information should be available. Publicity from an independent third party that vouches for the experience your community and trail offer is usually more effective than paid ads. Organizing events along the trail is critical for publicity, and will attract writers that promote what you have to offer. Chambers of commerce are experts at promotion, so be sure to involve them.

Determine How Economic Development will be addressed for your town. The town should involve all stakeholders in determining the best route toward economic development. The steps for each local government will be different for their unique situation. Urban areas have different assets than rural areas so the user experience will be different. Capitalize on what your town can offer. Cultural assets vary along the trail and should be included in the economic development plan as well.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies and Policies

Basic policies should strive for the completion of the plan and identify the boundaries of the trail within each jurisdiction (refer to section ___ that has suggested Goals, Objectives and Policies for jurisdictions along the Loop). Policies that promote partnerships, measures of success and economic development are common indices for all local governments. Also, for appropriate areas, policies that promote and facilitate Agritourism should be included that recognize the value of Agritourism by promoting and supporting it in their jurisdiction.

Local governments should review their comprehensive plans and regulations to ensure that development associated with the trail can be accomplished with a minimum of red tape. Special allowances and incentives that recognize the unique synergy between the trail and related development should be promoted. Tax incentives coupled with zoning changes in an area where public investments in the trail can result in thriving businesses. Allowances for festivals, parades and other promotional events along the trail should be promoted and facilitated. Barriers and restrictions should be minimized.

For Agritourism along the corridor, policies specifically addressing this unique aspect of tourism should be included. This can include policies to publicize local and regional events, partnering with farm businesses along the corridor for purchasing their goods for trail related events and a broad public outreach effort to highlight events. Policies and related regulations should promote activities such as working and staying overnight at farms as part of the trail experience.

Policies to promote data collection and surveys on a regular basis are important so the benefits of the trail can be known. Areas to be analyzed and survey subjects should include measures of cycling, farming and tourism activity, business adoption of maintenance of portions of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop near the Corridor, health outcomes and savings related to proximity to and availability of fresh food, jobs generated, job training in culinary, business or agricultural professions, property values, the number of nearby businesses that provide bike racks or showers, or any measure that indicates how the Corridor contributes to the economy or the quality of life in County/City/Town.

Other policies should support initiatives that promote the trail completion and success, and promote partnerships with aligned programs such as the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, FDOT's SUN Trail, ReThink, Safe Routes to Schools and Scenic Byways. It may also include partnerships with tourism and economic development agencies and advocates.

Please see the appendices related to model comprehensive plan policies that address how the comprehensive plan can help implement strategies to incentivize development along the Loop.

Advocacy and Support and the SJR2C Alliance

Local and Regional Advocacy Opportunities and Best Practices

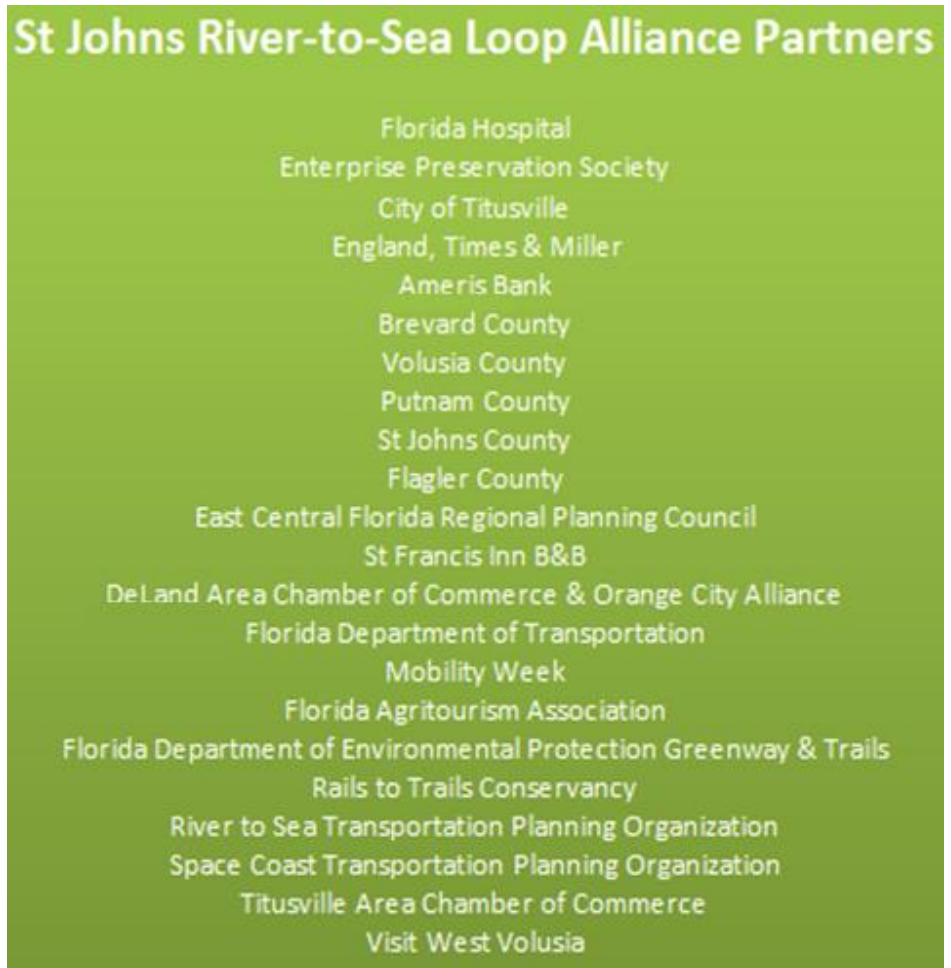
Regional advocacy components include partnerships, promotion, organizing, taking effective action and people power, all in an effort toward a common end. In this case, the common end is the successful construction of the Loop and for the recreational, economic and health benefits derived from the trail. Partnerships can be advantageous for sponsorships, funding resources and technical assistance and support. The steps to partnership success as depicted from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area contained in the text box are essential in creating partnerships, a critical step in the advocacy process.

Advocacy efforts in the region have led to the State of Florida's Department of Transportation's Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program to allocate over \$55 million toward the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop in addition to the already funded southern leg that comprises the Coast-to-Coast Trail in the past adopted work program, current adopted work program, and the tentative work program through FY 2023. It is also important to note that some segments were funded through other sources such as Echo funds from Volusia County for a new section of the Spring-to-Spring Trail.

This successful effort required years of advocacy efforts on the part of multiple groups and government entities. This did not come easily. Over the last decade, thousands of person-hours have gone into the effort and several

champions for the cause from many areas have risen to the task. All of the counties and most of the cities have passed resolutions in support of the trail and have made commitments to maintain the trail to a high standard.

All elected officials need to be educated as to the benefits. Chambers of commerce must be included to make sure the business owners in the area are aware of the benefits. Health benefits of exercise are well known and health advocates need to be brought on board. The River-to-Sea Loop Alliance has been coordinating many of the efforts and have a website that has a bounty of information and ways for everyone to get and keep involved in the trail efforts. Other important advocacy groups include Community Redevelopment Agencies, "Friends" groups and local bicycling shops and clubs.



SJR2C Loop Alliance

In July, 2016 long-time supporters established the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance to advance, advocate, promote, and protect the Loop and the surrounding five-county corridor. The founders and directors of the Alliance have been advocating for the Loop for almost a decade. One of the Alliance main goals is to “put the Loop on the map” – raise awareness and advocacy for the Loop around the region and the state. From its inception, the Alliance has maintained an active website (www.SJR2C.org) and social media presence at facebook.com/SJR2C and Twitter #SJR2C as well as a periodic newsletter. The website contains a wealth of information about the Loop, events and plans as well as forms to communicate and get involved.

The history and experience of the Alliance is evident as the advocacy group continues to organize and participate in functions that are getting the trail constructed and keeping elected officials, residents and those responsible for its creation, excited about the trail.

Principals in the Alliance include Marguerite Ardito, Co-founder and President, Herbert Hiller, Co-Founder and Economic Project Coordinator, Pat Northey, widely known as the Volusia Trail Queen, with strong boards of directors and advisors that include Kraig McLane, Jason Aufdenberg, Emery Jeffreys, Karl Soderholm, Matthew Schrage, Steve Davis, Ryan Gravel, Dan Burden, and others. The Alliance is seeking to expand its board of directors and advisors.

Alliance leaders are passionate about trails and bike-friendly places with core values of self-reliance, independence, individual responsibility, love of the outdoors, spirit of adventure and the belief that trails free us from the constraints and adverse effects of car-dependence. These values drive the passion for trails and bikeable/walkable communities and is evidenced by the effort these leaders put into accomplishing their mission. One principal lives car-free locally, and cycle-tours extensively in Europe and north American trails. Another lives totally car-free and has never owned a car. Other studies show that an active lifestyle enables independent living, regardless of age or economic condition. One credits the Loop with saving his life by rehabilitation after an accident, while another vows to leave a safer world for grandchildren.

In October, 2017 the Alliance held the three-day St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Summit and Trail Celebration in West Volusia. The Summit’s slogan was “Fulfilling the Loop’s Promise”. The Summit had over 36 speakers and panelists who demonstrated the benefits of the Loop and bikeable/walkable areas for Community, Tourism, the economy, health, safety, the environment and mobility.



Exhibit 15 Maggie Ardito, President of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance

The Alliance’s vision

The nonprofit St. Johns River-to-Sea-Loop Alliance will enable completion of the off-road paved five-county SJR2C Loop trail . The Loop will become one of the most popular touring regions of Florida, inspiring residents and attracting visitors, and will connect people and communities and stimulate locally resourceful economic development along its entire 260-mile route. The Loop will become a model for active transportation and for place-focused tourism. The Alliance will become a model for stimulating local, regional and global involvement, support and promotion of trail planning, development and use.

The Alliance’s Mission

Assist area governmental units in development, planning and prioritization; promote environmental, cultural and historical awareness of the Trail and nearby communities; and help develop additional linkages and a network of trails that connect with or are proximate to the Trail. It will advance the Loop intellectually and organizationally through communication and events. It will coordinate with governmental agencies that build the Loop and those at the county and municipal level responsible for integrating the trail into how we live where we live, including objectives of health and fitness, household economy, environmental protection, and social equity.

St Johns River-to-Sea Loop Summit
October 26-28, 2017



The Summit keynote speaker was FDOT's Chief Planner, Jim Wood who spoke about the Partnership, Process and Promise required to make the Loop a reality.



In addition to the full day Seminar at the Volusia County Building, the Summit included a Discovery Ride from Green Spring Park, a reception and Dinner at the Enterprise Heritage Center, and a children's Bike Rodeo, safety village and Halloween-themed ride. The Summit went a long way toward raising awareness of the Loop and building advocacy.

Each year the summit will be held in a different region in the Loop Corridor. The 2018 Summit is expected to be held in Putnam County.

The Alliance has established relationships with dozens of organizations and agencies, and internship programs with Stetson University and Flagler College. The Alliance works closely with TPOs, FDOT and the five counties to help close the remaining gaps. The Alliance works with towns in the Loop to achieve the Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) “Trail Town” designation. The Alliance works with Chambers of Commerce and Tourist Advertising Agencies (aka Destination Marketing Organizations or Convention and Visitors’ Bureaus) in counties and municipalities around the Loop. Partnerships with businesses such as hospitals and hospitality enterprises, and with trail advocacy groups like the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Florida Bicycle Association and the East Coast Greenway Alliance are vital to the Loops success.

The Alliance envisions a time when cyclists fly to Orlando with bikes and take a trail or the SunRail to the SJR2C for months of touring – as millions fly into Amsterdam today. Cycle-tourists are the best kind of visitors to our fragile region – affluent, low-impact, environmentally-conscious, quiet, slow-moving, and eager to discover less-visited places.

The first Trail-Oriented Development Project of the Alliance is the Tri-County Agritourism Corridor. The Agritourism concept (currently targeting St. Johns, Putnam and Flagler Counties) espouses sustainable “Farm to Table” hospitality in rural areas, bed and breakfasts and other facets to keep farming relevant and economically viable. Agritourism opens a new facet for the trail to be an overall success for everyone, including the agricultural community. More importantly for advocacy, another portion of the community is now a strong proponent of the trail and their support is being heard by politicians who advocate for the farming community.

The Agritourism focus is an idea that can be replicated in other communities and with other topics, such as historical tourism, ecotourism, architectural tourism, railroad history etc. If there is an interest for the population in general, then advocates for the trail can focus on that specialty and promote the trail as a way for people to experience that focus.

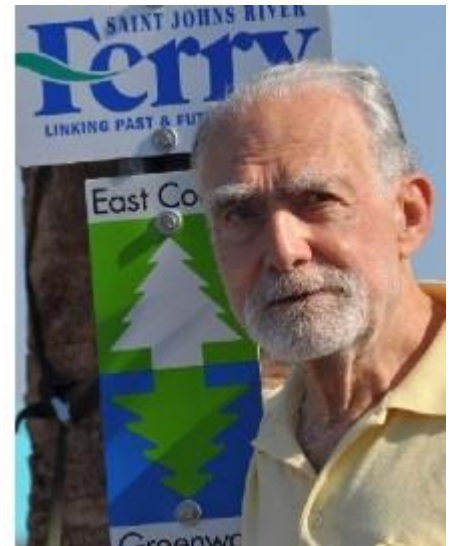


Exhibit 16 Herb Hiller, Founding Member of the Alliance

In addition to the Agritourism Corridor, the Alliance is planning a history and nature corridor that will highlight the many historic sights and natural attractions such as springs and beaches around the Loop. The Alliance is determined to “put the Loop on the map”. The maps and resource directory developed as part of this project will form the foundation for future route maps, tour guides, website upgrades, and corridor definitions with destinations targeted to varied interests and types of trail users. The Alliance has partnered with the Florida Scenic Byways program to identify interesting historic and natural destinations. Trailheads and access points have been identified for ride-ready Loop sections. One of these, DeBary Hall, a magnificent 19th century hunting estate, is already in use with parking, restrooms and picnic areas. The Alliance will work with Volusia County to expand on their phone app to have a “One-Stop Trail Information Center” targeted for completion 2019. This will become the hub of a historic and natural corridor that, like the Agritourism Corridor, will draw people out of cities and into less-traveled Florida.

Another planned program is “Anyone Can” enjoy the fun, adventure, independence and freedom of mobility of cycling and cycle touring with the proper knowledge and equipment. The program will encourage participants with challenges of advanced age, injury and other physical disadvantages to learn the techniques, equipment and safe places to cycle that will enhance mobility and improve quality of life.

One of the main activities of the Alliance is identifying and applying for grants, soliciting sponsors and pursuing fundraisers and other sources of funding. As sections of the Loop are completed, the Alliance will be sponsoring rides and excursions on completed segments. The Alliance is also planning celebrations, seminars, bike rodeos, tours, Farm to

Table events, and cook-offs. “Friends of the Loop” programs are available now with plans for more benefits and formal programs in the works.

The history and experience of the Alliance is evident as the advocacy group continues to organize and participate in functions that are getting the trail constructed and keeping elected officials, residents and those responsible for its creation, excited about the trail. The Alliance website, www.SJR2C.org, contains a wealth of information, including maps, how to help, Agritourism, links, what is near the Loop, videos and presentations and much more.

A particular focus of the Alliance is the Tri-County Agritourism Corridor. The Agritourism concept (currently targeting St. Johns, Putnam and Flagler Counties) espouses sustainable “Farm to Table” hospitality in rural areas, bed and breakfasts and other facets to keep farming relevant and economically viable. Agritourism opens up a whole new facet for the trail to be an overall success for everyone, including the agricultural community. More importantly for advocacy, another portion of the community is now a strong proponent of the trail and their support is being heard by politicians who advocate for the farming community.

The Agritourism focus is an idea that can be replicated in other communities and with other topics, such as historical tourism, ecotourism, architectural tourism, railroad history etc. If there is an interest for the population in general, then advocates for the trail can focus on that specialty and promote the trail as a way for people to experience that focus.



Exhibit 17 Pat Northey, Founding Member of the Alliance

Appendices

Appendix 1 Recommended Comprehensive Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal: Completion and Full Implementation of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop

Objective: The County/City/Town shall review and consider the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Strategic Plan as a long-range strategic plan for the portions of the Loop within Jurisdiction Name.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall add the set boundaries or approximate location of the Loop to its Future Land Use Map, as Parkland or Future Parkland (or other appropriate designation).

Policy: The County/City/Town shall consider the steps necessary for full implementation of the Loop within Jurisdiction Name. As property acquisitions, property dispositions, capital improvements, private development, economic development, maintenance of public facilities or any other proposal that may impact the Loop site is proposed, its impact on the Loop and its role in Loop completion will be considered.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall actively seek funding to construct and maintain the Loop within Jurisdiction Name, or support partnerships with this intent. Implementation funding will be considered as the Capital Improvements Plan is updated.

Policy: When planning the location of trails, bike lanes and transit, the County/City/Town shall consider access from local assets to and from the Loop.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall consider adjustments to its land development regulations to promote the frontage of complementary uses to face the Loop.

Policy: When planning maintenance and improvements to streets near the Loop, County/City/Town shall consider access to the Loop and public safety for Loop users and the community. Complete street and traffic calming approaches will be considered.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall assess substandard conditions and work with the FDOT and other jurisdictions toward improving portions of the Loop to the best appropriate standard for the area to ensure a safe and enjoyable user experience.

Objective: The County/City/Town shall support government agencies, advocacy organizations such as the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance and other jurisdictions in their efforts to complete the overall Loop and maximize its effectiveness as an economic development, recreational and quality of life resource.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall participate in initiatives that support Loop development, completion and success. This may include partnerships with other jurisdictions and other aligned programs such as St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, FDOT's SUNTrail and Scenic Byway programs. It may also include partnerships with tourism and economic development agencies and advocates.

Policy: County/City/Town marketing and public outreach efforts shall include the Loop as an asset to be highlighted.

Objective: The County/City/Town shall seek data that will demonstrate the value of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall participate in regular user and non-user surveys that help to identify the economic impacts of the Loop. This will include encouraging County/City/Town employees to take the survey, marketing the surveys to the public and publicizing the surveys at County/City/Town and local events.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall collect and consider other data measures that may help to demonstrate the value of the Loop. These may include measures of business and tourism activity, business adoption of maintenance of portions of the Loop, health outcomes and savings, property values, the number of businesses that provide bike racks or showers, or any measure that indicates how the Loop contributes to the economy or the quality of life in County/City/Town.

Appendix 2 Tri-County Agritourism Corridor Comprehensive Plan Policies

Goal: A Tri-County Agritourism Corridor that serves as a tourism destination, a local amenity and a self-sustaining part of the economies of Flagler, Putnam and St. Johns Counties. See [Map XX](#), below.

[Map XX](#).

Objective: The County/City/Town shall recognize the Tri-County Agritourism Corridor as a unique resource that, led by its chief advocacy nonprofit, the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, contributes to asset-based development and community building for jurisdiction.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall put events related to the Corridor on its community calendar and share them with residents and businesses using whatever methods are used to publicize local and regional events.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall consider proximity to the Corridor or partnership with the Corridor as one of the factors considered when making procurement decisions. This includes purchase of goods or services as well as location of County/City/Town events.

Policy: County/City/Town marketing and public outreach efforts shall include the Corridor and its chief advocacy nonprofit, the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance, as assets to be highlighted.

Objective: The County/City/Town shall seek data that will demonstrate the value of the Tri-County Agritourism Corridor and the leadership of its chief advocacy nonprofit, the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall participate in regular user and non-user surveys (or other data-gathering mechanisms) that help to identify the economic impacts of the Corridor. This will include encouraging County/City/Town employees to take surveys or otherwise share data, marketing surveys and the like to the public and publicizing such instruments at County/City/Town and local events.

Policy: The County/City/Town shall collect and consider other data measures that may help to demonstrate the value of the Corridor. These may include measures of cycling, walking, equestrian use, farming and tourism activity, business adoption of maintenance of portions of the St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop near the Corridor, health outcomes and savings related to proximity to and availability of fresh food, jobs generated, job training in culinary, business or agricultural professions, property values, the number of nearby businesses that provide bike racks or showers, or any measure that indicates how the Corridor contributes to the economy or the quality of life in County/City/Town.

We would like to thank the Steering Committee for their guidance and support in the writing of this strategic plan.

Without their technical assistance and guidance, this endeavor would not be possible.

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