



THE FLORIDA HEARTLAND REGIONAL TRAIL

Feasibility Studies

KICKOFF NEWSLETTER

January 2026

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District One is coordinating the development of feasibility studies for the Florida Heartland Regional Trail.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF THIS PROJECT?

In 2024, FDOT completed a Master Plan to evaluate a paved, multiuse trail for bicyclists and pedestrians from Collier County to Polk County. The Master Plan included preliminary routing alternatives and associated recommendations to develop the project as a regionally significant trail within the Florida Shared Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network. The Master Plan set the stage to conduct feasibility studies for what is now called the Florida Heartland Regional Trail.

WHAT IS A REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRAIL?

The Florida Heartland Regional Trail has been identified and prioritized as a regionally significant trail by the Florida Greenways and Trails Council [Section 260.0142(4)(c), FS]. That means it is recognized for its potential to:

- ✓ Cross multiple counties
- ✓ Attract national and international visitors
- ✓ Provide opportunities for economic and ecotourism development
- ✓ Showcase the value of wildlife areas, ecology, and natural resources
- ✓ Serve as a main corridor for critical links and trail connectedness

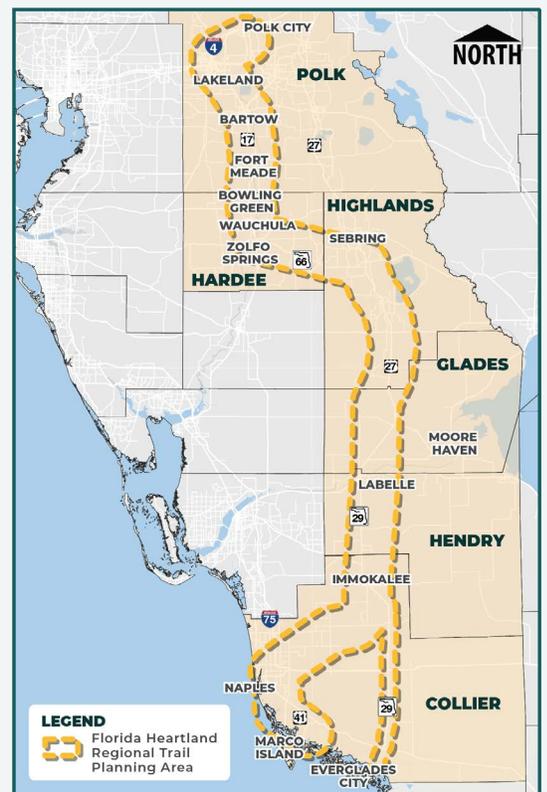
WHY ARE MULTIPLE PD&E STUDIES BEING CONDUCTED? Because of the Florida Heartland Regional Trail's extensive length, separate feasibility studies are being conducted in each of the counties that are part of the trail planning area: Collier, Hendry, Glades, Highlands, Hardee, and Polk (see map). While each feasibility study will follow its own schedule, they are all expected to be completed in Spring 2027. The next page of this newsletter provides specific information about the feasibility study being developed for the Hardee County segment of the project.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

For general information, visit the project website at FloridaHeartlandRegionalTrail.com. For information about the Hardee County segment feasibility study, see the project contact details on the next page.

WHAT IS A FEASIBILITY STUDY?

A feasibility study considers potential social, economic, and environmental effects, as well as constructability and costs, to determine project viability. The study helps FDOT determine how the project will move forward to future phases. The starting point for the Florida Heartland Regional Trail's feasibility studies will be the Collier to Polk Trail Master Plan's preliminary routing alternatives.



HARDEE COUNTY

PURPOSE AND NEED

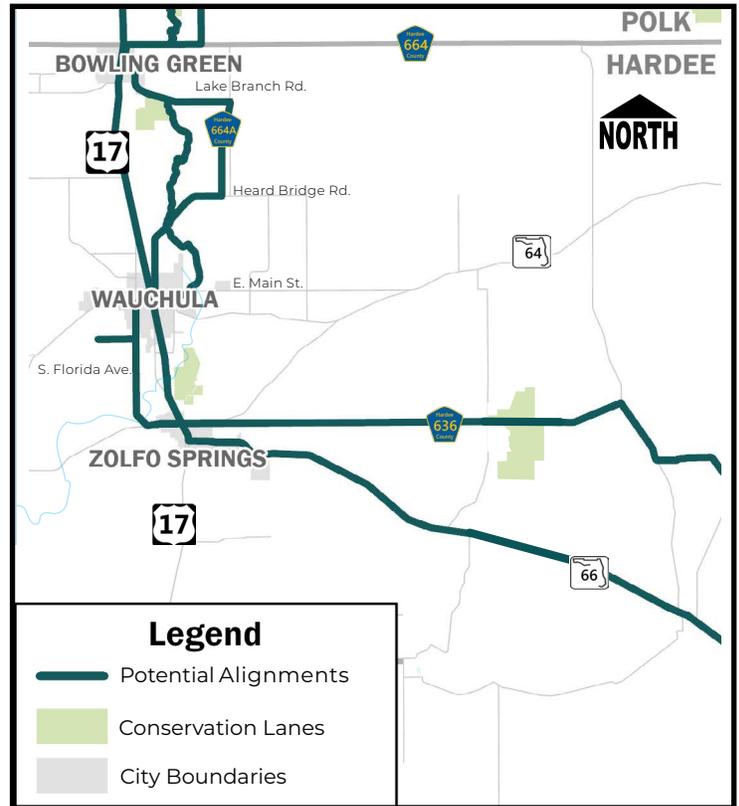
The **PURPOSE** is to provide a paved, multi-use trail that connects and provides bicycle and pedestrian access to small towns, cultural and heritage sites, parks, preserves, wildlife corridors, and working lands.

The **NEED** for the trail is based on the following:

- ✓ System linkage to provide connectivity to regional SUN Trail network
- ✓ Legislation: Florida Senate Bill 106 (2023)
- ✓ The project will improve bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improve air quality, and maximize community connections
- ✓ Social and Economic Development
- ✓ Safety: Reduce conflicts between vehicular traffic and non-motorized users

POTENTIAL TRAIL ALIGNMENTS

The Hardee County Feasibility study will develop and evaluate the trail alignments identified in the Master Plan. The map to the right shows the potential trail alignments through Hardee County, Zolfo Springs, Wauchula, and Bowling Green. A Public Information Meeting is planned for early 2027.



POTENTIAL TRAIL CONNECTIONS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Florida Wildlife Corridor
- ✓ Highlands Hammock State Park
- ✓ Pioneer Park
- ✓ Cracker Trail Museum
- ✓ Hardee County Wildlife Refuge
- ✓ Hardee County Fairgrounds
- ✓ Peace River Park
- ✓ Main Street Heritage Park
- ✓ Wauchula Veterans Memorial
- ✓ Paynes Creek Historic State Park
- ✓ City of Bowling Green Train Depot
- ✓ Peace River Paddling Trail

GET INVOLVED TODAY!

We invite you to get involved! Visit the project website at: <https://www.swflroads.com/project/455298-1>. Opportunities for you to provide input will be available throughout the study by submitting comments or attending the Public Information Meeting. You can also contact the Project Manager at the contact information shown below.

FDOT PROJECT MANAGER:

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Feasibility Study Schedule



NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status. The Florida Department of Transportation may adopt this planning product into the environmental review process, pursuant to Title 23 U.S.C. § 168 (d) or the state project development process.

ATENCIÓN: Si necesita información sobre el proyecto en español, por favor comuníquese con el gerente del proyecto Alejandro Mendez, P.E., al correo electrónico alejandromendez@dot.state.fl.us



HARDEE COUNTY

FPID #: 455298-1

Visit <https://www.swflroads.com/project/455298-1> to stay up to date on the project