



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, multi-use 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 FEASIBILITY STUDIES BEING CONDUCTED?

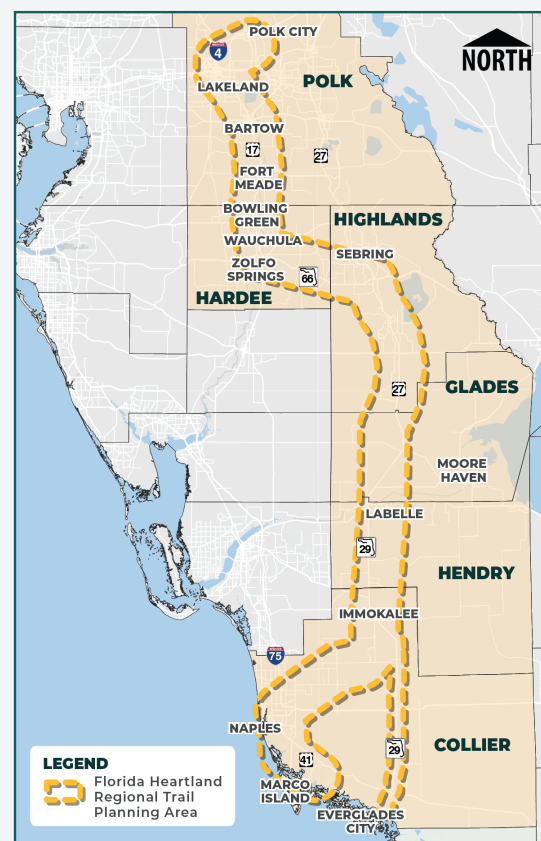
Because of the Florida Heartland Regional Trail's extensive length, separate feasibility studies are being conducted in each of the counties that are part of the trail planning area: Collier, Hendry, Glades, Highlands, Hardee, and Polk (see map). While each feasibility study will follow its own schedule, 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 Hendry 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 Hendry 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.



HENDRY COUNTY

The feasibility study for the Hendry County segment of the Florida Heartland Regional Trail will evaluate the feasibility of constructing a multi-use trail along SR 29, SR 80, Keri Road (CR 832), Sears Road, and a north-south alignment along the edge of the Spirit-of-the-Wild Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The combined length of the potential routes is approximately 37.5 miles. Currently, there are intermittent or no existing designated bicycle lanes or sidewalks along these roadways. If completed, the project would provide a 12-foot wide multi-use trail allowing bicyclists and pedestrians to travel safely along various corridors while providing regional connectivity.

The preliminary routing alternatives, or alignments, will be evaluated to determine potential social, cultural, natural, and physical environmental impacts and benefits, engineering constraints, and safety enhancements. The proposed trail passes through LaBelle providing potential connection to LaBelle Nature Park, LaBelle Heritage Museum, Barron Park, and Veterans Memorial Park. In addition, the study will evaluate more direct access to entry points for Spirit-of-the-Wild WMA, Okaloacoochee Slough WMA, Okaloacoochee Slough State Forest and Ortona Lock South Campground.

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

As part of the study kickoff, we invite you to participate and provide your input. We will use your input to refine proposed alignments and develop a better understanding of the community needs and concerns. FDOT has developed a project website which will be updated throughout the life of the project, providing project information and status. Questions and comments can be submitted through the project website at www.swflroads.com/project/455294-1 or by contacting the FDOT Project Manager:

Kimberly Warren, FDOT Project Manager

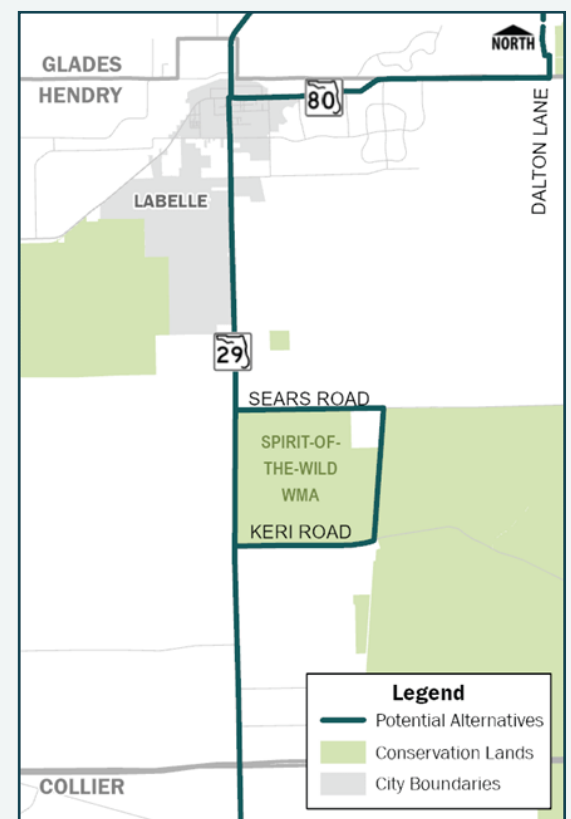
On behalf of the Environmental Management Office
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PARA INFORMACIÓN EN ESPAÑOL

Si usted necesita más información o tiene preguntas acerca de este proyecto, por favor comuníquese con la Sra. Karina Della-Sera con el Departamento de Transporte de la Florida (FDOT), por teléfono al (863) 519-2750 o enviando un correo electrónico a Karina.DellaSera@dot.state.fl.us.

También puede visitar la página web del proyecto: www.swflroads.com/project/455294-1

PROJECT LOCATION MAP



PROJECT SCHEDULE



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

FDOT solicits public participation without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or person who require translation services (free of charge) should contact Cynthia Sykes, Title VI Coordinator, at (863) 519-2287 or by e-mail at Cynthia.Sykes@dot.state.fl.us.

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.



HENDRY COUNTY
FPID: 455294-1-22-01

Scan for
Project
Website

