



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?

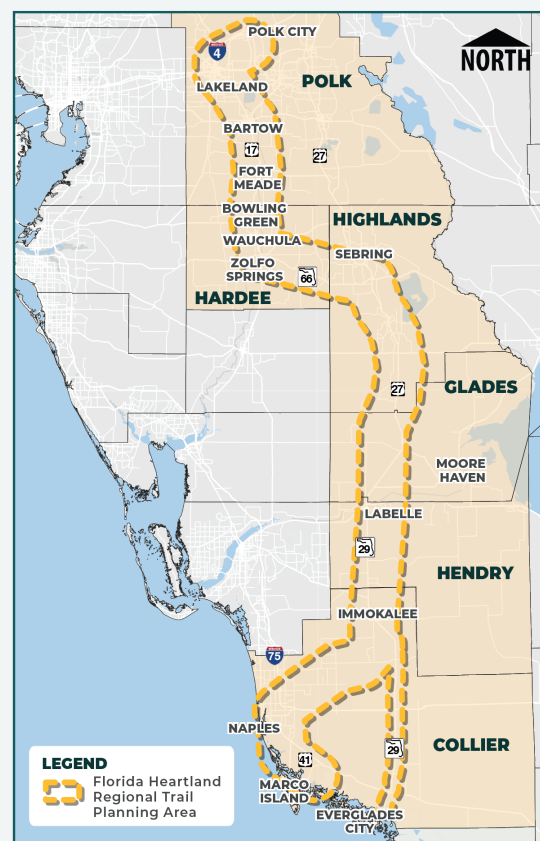
Because of the Florida Heartland Regional Trail's extensive length, separate feasibility studies are being conducted in each of the counties that are part of the trail planning area: Collier, Hendry, Glades, Highlands, Hardee, and Polk (see map). While each feasibility study will follow its own schedule,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

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

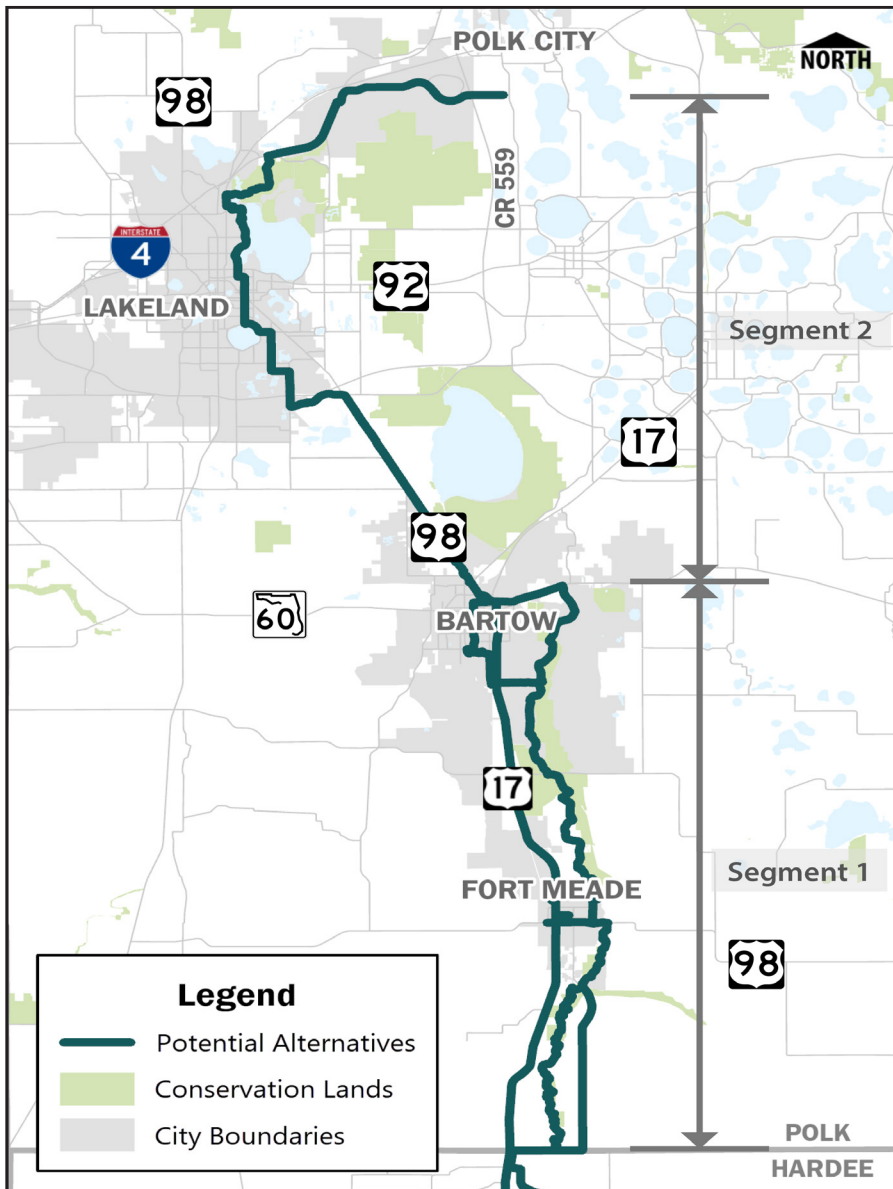
For general information, visit the project website at FloridaHeartlandRegionalTrail.com. For information about the Polk County segment feasibility study, see the project contact details on the next page.

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.



POLK COUNTY



POTENTIAL TRAIL ALTERNATIVES

The Polk County portion of the Florida Heartland Regional Trail runs from the Hardee/Polk County line to the Auburndale TECO Trail near I-4. It is divided into two segments: from County Line Road to SR 60 at the Fort Fraser Trail, and from SR 60 to the Auburndale TECO Trail.

Multiple trail locations will be studied within the first segment. These locations include segments of US 17, the Peace River, Mt. Pisgah Road, US 98, and City of Bartow local roadways. The preliminary trail alternatives are depicted on the project map.

The Defined Planning Corridor (second segment) runs from the Fort Fraser Trail at SR 60 to the Auburndale TECO Trail. This section is already in advanced planning and includes existing paths like the Fort Fraser, Lake Hollingsworth, and Lake Parker trails. It also matches state and local trail plans.

Please visit the study website at <https://www.swflroads.com/project/455299-1> for more information.

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.

CONTACT US

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PROJECT SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE)

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Study Begins August 2025	Engineering & Environmental Analysis Fall 2025 - Fall 2026	Draft Feasibility Report Winter 2026 / 2027	Public Open House Winter 2026 / 2027	Final Feasibility Report Spring 2027

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



POLK COUNTY
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