

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Public Works

TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
FROM: Isaac R. Brownman, P.E. Director
Carolyn M. Eastwood, P.E., MBA, Interim County Engineer
Paula R. Wiggins, P.E., MBA, Transportation Planning Manager
Patrick Lui, Bicycle Pedestrian Trails Coordinator
DATE: April 1, 2015
SUBJECT: **Legacy Trail Extension Feasibility Study Update**

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S) OR ACTION(S):

- A. Accept the Final Legacy Trail Extension Feasibility Study.
- B. Direct the County Administrator to obtain real estate appraisals for The Legacy Trail Extension area.

BACKGROUND:

In 2007, The Legacy Trail between the Venice Train Depot and Palmer Ranch Parkway was constructed as part of the County's first rails-to-trail corridor. Since that time, the trail has been a vital community asset that attracts over 100,000 users ever year. The existing Legacy Trail provides a variety of benefits to the county's local residents, seasonal visitors and surrounding businesses as both a recreational asset and commuting corridor.

In 2013 the Friends of the Legacy Trail petitioned the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to extend the existing trail an additional 7.5 miles from its current terminus just north of Culverhouse Park to Payne Park in downtown Sarasota.

In early 2014, Sarasota County retained the services of Cardno Inc., to develop a feasibility study for the North Legacy Trail extension. A complete report of the feasibility study was completed in March 2015 and includes recommendations for next steps, design alternatives and estimated construction costs.

RELEVANT PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

1. August 28, 2013 the Board of County Commissioners authorized the allocation of up to \$75,000 from the Trails Master Plan Capital Improvement Program Fund for a Feasibility Study regarding a proposed extension of The Legacy Trail to connect the northern terminus at Sawyer Loop Road to School Avenue, with the private sector providing financial assistance if the cost exceeds \$75,000, and with future exploration of funding sources should the Board choose to proceed with a land lease or purchase of the proposed Legacy Trail extension. Motion carried by a 5-0.

2. November 18, 2014 the Board of County Commissioners approved a Project for the 2015 TIGER Discretionary Grant Program Grant application cycle, including the North Legacy Trail Extension. Motion carried by a 5-0 vote.

ANALYSIS/NEXT STEPS:

The feasibility study proposed by Cardno Inc., provides an overview and analysis of the proposed design alternatives and projected construction costs of the North Legacy Trail extension. While the feasibility study outlines various technical recommendations such as a preferred trail alignment, necessary infrastructure improvements and pavement widths, it also clearly defines a series of next steps required for the acquisition and procurement of the existing rail corridor in the form of a Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA). Phase 2 ESA's may consist of additional environmental testing such as ground water sampling, soil testing and the identification of any environmental liability that may affect the value of a property.

The proposed North Legacy Trail Extension area is owned by CSX Transportation. CSX has leased this 7.5 mile corridor to Seminole Gulf Railway LP. The next step in exploring the feasibility of acquiring the corridor would be to obtain a real estate appraisal. CSX and the Trust for Public Lands have indicated they would share the cost of the appraisal with the County. At this point, CSX has indicated it will not allow a Phase 2 ESA to be performed on the corridor prior to the parties entering into a purchase contract. However, the results of the appraisal may provide a basis for further discussion with CSX.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION(S):

Staff recommends that the County accept the Final Legacy Trail Extension Feasibility Study and direct the County Administrator to proceed with land appraisals for the railroad corridor.

FUNDING:

Funding for this request is provided in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Project #95802 – Bicycle Plan Program through the County Road Program - Communications Services Tax Fund (\$10,000), and outside cost shares by The Trust for Public Lands (\$10,000) and the CSX Corporation (\$10,000).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Power Point Presentation – Legacy Trail Extension Feasibility Study Update
2. Legacy Trail North Extension Context Map