

Dec. 20, 2017

Land acquired for Legacy Trail extension

SARASOTA COUNTY - The Trust for Public Land and Sarasota County today announced the purchase of 2.7 miles of former railroad right of way to extend the popular Legacy Trail toward downtown Sarasota. The railroad corridor was acquired by Sarasota County from The Trust for Public Land, which had purchased the corridor last week from CSX Transportation and Seminole Gulf Railway.

Extending from the Legacy Trail's current northern terminus at Culverhouse Nature Park to Ashton Road, the corridor was purchased using \$7.9 million of county funds, mostly from the County's Neighborhood Parkland Acquisition Program.

The purchase marks the completion of the first of a two-phase effort to extend the 11-mile Legacy Trail by 9 miles into downtown Sarasota. TPL is currently working with the Sarasota County Commission to consider a ballot measure for November, 2018 that would ask County voters to approve funding to acquire the final 6.3 miles and its construction that would include two overpasses and improvements to trail connections.



Sarasota County and The Trust for Public Land also collaborated on the acquisition of the right of way for the existing Legacy Trail from CSX Transportation and Seminole Gulf Railway in 2004. Since its construction, the trail has been popular with residents and tourists alike, with use expected to top 200,000 this year.

"The Sarasota County Commissioners are to be commended for investing in this popular community resource. This quality-of-life amenity is also a competitive advantage in attracting business investment and employers. Sarasota County will now be an even better place to live, work and play." Said Doug Hattaway, project manager for The Trust for Public Land. "We also applaud the partnership support of the Friends of the Legacy Trail, the Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast and financial support from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation in furthering the connection of north and south county residents."

The extension of the Legacy Trail has been a top priority of the Sarasota County Commission for several years, and this acquisition represents a major milestone in achieving our goal," said interim Sarasota County Administrator Jonathan Lewis. "The county has made a significant investment while collaborating with the Trust for Public Land and other community groups to leverage funding opportunities."

According to Sarasota County Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Director Carolyn Brown, the Legacy Trail represents many of Sarasota County's organizational goals.

"We strive to promote quality of life, enhance existing infrastructure and provide excellent service in Sarasota County," Brown said, adding, "The Legacy Trail is an example of why we are the premier community in which to live, work and play."

"This is another major milestone for our dream to see a bicycle and pedestrian trail that provides safe transportation between Sarasota County's largest communities," said John League, Friends of The Legacy Trail president. "It's a great day for those of us who love the trail. We thank the Sarasota County Commissioners for their support of this project."

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