TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Jonathan R. Lewis, County Administrator
FROM: Carolyn Brown, Director, Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources
DATE: August 28, 2018
SUBJECT: Legacy Trail Connectivity with City of North Port

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S) OR ACTION(S):
To adopt a resolution pertaining to the Legacy Trail Extension general obligation bond referendum committing the County to expend $2,000,000 on trail improvements in or connecting to the City of North Port.

BACKGROUND:
In December 2004, Sarasota County acquired its first rails-to-trails corridor commencing at Culverhouse Nature Park in Sarasota and extending south to Center Road in Venice for a total of 10.6 miles. The trail was constructed in 2007 and named The Legacy Trail. It has proven to be a vital community asset attracting over 200,000 users annually.

In February of 2017, the Board directed the County Administrator to negotiate with The Trust for Public Land for an extension of The Legacy Trail and to pursue funding options, including a public referendum for acquisition of the land and improvements.

On March 14, 2018, the County Commission adopted Resolution No. 2018-046 (Attachment 2) calling a bond referendum election to finance the acquisition and improvement of the Legacy Trail Extension and additional improvements, including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility.

The City of North Port has requested continued involvement in planning, design and implementation of the Legacy Trail Extension, especially as related to connections from the City of North Port to the Legacy Trail. An aerial showing proposed future connections is included as Attachment 3.

RELEVANT PRIOR BOARD ACTION:
1. February 15, 2017 – The Board authorized the County Administrator to negotiate with the Trust for Public Land for the acquisition of the necessary rail corridor for the Legacy Trail north extension and to pursue funding options, including a public referendum (5-0 vote).
2. August 29, 2017 – The Board adopted a resolution and authorized the execution of a Contract for Sale and Purchase with The Trust for Public Land for the purchase of the railroad corridor from its current terminus at Culverhouse Park, north to the intersection of Ashton Road, Sarasota, in the amount of $7,900,000.00 (5-0 vote).
3. August 29, 2017 – The Board adopted a resolution and authorized execution of a Contract for Sale and Purchase with The Trust for Public Land for the purchase of the railroad corridor from the intersection of Ashton Road to Fruitville Road, in the amount of $30,100,000.00, subject to the availability of lawfully appropriated funds and passage of the bond referendum (5-0 vote).

5. March 14, 2018 – Board adopted Resolution No. 2018-046 calling a bond referendum election to finance the acquisition and improvement of the Legacy Trail Extension and additional improvements (5-0 vote).

6. July 10, 2018 – Board authorized the County Administrator to bring to them a resolution stating that if the Legacy Trail Extension Referendum is passed by the voters on November 6, 2018, Sarasota County commits to expending $2,000,000 on trail improvements in or connecting to the City of North Port (5-0 vote).

OUTREACH:
Public outreach for the extension of The Legacy Trail has been extensive. Representatives from the City of North Port have fully participated in the planning for the extension, especially related to the connections that will provide enhanced accessibility from the City of North Port. Following a letter from the North Port City Manager to the County Administrator (Attachment 4), the Board asked for a resolution to be brought forth stating that if the Legacy Trail Extension Referendum is passed by the voters on November 6, 2018, Sarasota County commits to trail improvements in or connecting to the City of North Port.

PROCUREMENT ACTION:
N/A

ANALYSIS/NEXT STEPS:
With Board adoption of the proposed resolution, and if the voters approve the issuance of general obligation bonds for the Legacy Trail Extension project, the County will expend $2,000,000 of the bond proceeds, or grant funds available to the project, on trail improvements in or connecting to the City of North Port to enhance connectivity to the Legacy Trail.

FUNDING:
Debt service on the bonds would be paid from an increased debt millage on taxpayers’ property tax bills.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION(S):
Staff recommends adoption of the proposed resolution.

ATTACHMENTS:
1. Proposed Resolution
2. Resolution No. 2018-046
3. Aerial map showing proposed connections for City of North Port
RESOLUTION NO. 2018-________

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND REFERENDUM COMMITTING THE COUNTY COMMISSION TO EXPEND $2,000,000 ON TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS IN OR CONNECTING TO THE CITY OF NORTH PORT TO ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY TO THE LEGACY TRAIL.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

A. On March 14, 2018, the County Commission adopted Resolution No. 2018-046 calling a bond referendum election to finance the acquisition and improvement of the Legacy Trail Extension and additional improvements, including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility with enhanced connectivity from North Port.

B. On November 6, 2018, a bond referendum question will be on the ballot seeking authorization for the issuance of not exceeding Sixty-Five Million Dollars ($65,000,000), in one or more series, of general obligation bonds to partially fund the Legacy Trail Extension project.

C. The City of North Port City Commission has requested that the County Commission commit to expend funds on connections from the City of North Port to the Legacy Trail.

SECTION 2. EXPENDITURES ON TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS IN OR CONNECTING TO THE CITY OF NORTH PORT. In the event the voters approve the issuance of general obligation bonds for the Legacy Trail Extension project, the County Commission commits to expend Two Million Dollars ($2,000,000) of the bond proceeds, or grant funds available to the project, on trail improvements in or connecting to the City of North Port to enhance connectivity to the Legacy Trail.

PASSED AND DULY ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA, this ______ day of ______________, 2018.

ATTEST:

KAREN E. RUSHING, Clerk of Circuit Court and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners of Sarasota County, Florida

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: ____________________________
Chair

By: ____________________________
Deputy Clerk
RESOLUTION NO. 2018-044

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNTY OF SARASOTA, FLORIDA, CALLING FOR A BOND REFERENDUM ELECTION RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS IN AN AGGREGATE PRINCIPAL AMOUNT NOT-TO-EXCEED $65,000,000, PAYABLE FROM AD VALOREM TAX REVENUES TO FINANCE THE ACQUISITION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION AND ADDITIONAL IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING SAFE CROSSINGS, OVERPASSES, AMENITIES, AND INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY WITH ENHANCED CONNECTIVITY FROM NORTH PORT; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY; PROVIDING FOR BOND REFERENDUM; CALLING FOR A BOND REFERENDUM ELECTION; PROVIDING FOR POLLING PLACES; PROVIDING FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS; PROVIDING FOR DATES AND HOURS FOR VOTING; PROVIDING FOR THE BALLOT QUESTION; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE OF ELECTION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR NOTIFICATION BY CLERK; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

A. Sarasota County purchased approximately 10.6 miles of railroad corridor in 2004. The railroad corridor has been converted to recreational use serving nearly 200,000 users on an annual basis. The recreation trail is known as the Legacy Trail.

B. Sarasota County desires to extend the Legacy Trail northward. Sarasota County entered into two contracts with the Trust for Public Land for the acquisition of additional railroad corridor. One contract concerned the purchase of approximately 2.6 miles of railroad corridor and spur lying north of the existing Legacy Trail. The other contract concerns the purchase of 6 miles of railroad corridor and spurs lying from just north of Clark Road to downtown Sarasota.

C. Sarasota County desires to convert the additional railroad corridor to a safe trail for walking, running, and cycling with additional improvements, including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility with enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota.

D. The Board of County Commissioners desires to submit to a voter referendum the question of whether to authorize the issuance of General Obligation bonds in an amount not to exceed
$65 million at rates not exceeding the maximum lawful rate, maturing within 20 years, payable from ad valorem taxes on taxable property located within Sarasota County, Florida.

E. Proceeds of the issuance of one or more series of General Obligation bonds will be used to acquire the segment of railroad lying from Ashton Road to Fruitville Road of approximately 6 miles in length and to pay the costs of converting the Legacy Trail Extension to the recreational use described in paragraph C. above.

F. Proceeds of the issuance of one or more series of General Obligation bonds may also be issued to pay costs of safe crossings, overpasses, amenities and increased accessibility providing enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota.

SECTION 2. **AUTHORITY.** This Resolution is enacted pursuant to the Sarasota County Charter; Article VII, Section 12 of the Florida Constitution; Section 125.013, Florida Statutes; Chapter 100, Florida Statutes; and other applicable provisions of law.

SECTION 3. **BOND REFERENDUM.** A bond referendum election of the qualified electors residing in Sarasota County is hereby called to be held on November 6, 2018, to determine whether Sarasota County shall be authorized to issue General Obligation bonds in an aggregate principal amount of not exceeding Sixty-Five Million Dollars ($65,000,000), in one or more series, each such series to have a maximum maturity of 20 years from the date of issuance payable from the levy of ad valorem taxes imposed to pay the debt service on any such general obligation bonds for the purpose of acquiring and improving the Legacy Trail Extension with additional improvements including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility providing enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota.

SECTION 4. **BOND REFERENDUM ELECTION CALLED.** A bond referendum election is called to be held on November 6, 2018, for the purpose of submitting to the qualified electors of Sarasota County the question of whether General Obligation bonds may be issued to finance the cost of the acquisition and improvement of the Legacy Trail Extension and additional improvements described in Section 3 hereof.

SECTION 5. **POLLLING PLACES.** The election shall be held at the polling places designated by the Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections (the “Supervisor of Elections”).

SECTION 6. **ELECTION OFFICIALS.** The election officials to conduct the election shall be appointed and certified by the Supervisor of Elections pursuant to applicable general law.

SECTION 7. **DATES AND HOURS FOR VOTING.** All qualified electors residing within Sarasota County may vote in the bond referendum election. Absentee voting shall be permitted upon compliance with applicable provisions of general law.

A. Early Voting: Designated early voting sites shall be open in accordance with Section 101.657, Florida Statutes.
B. **Election Day** (November 6, 2018): The polls shall be open on the date of the bond referendum election from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**SECTION 8. BALLOT QUESTION.** The ballot question to be voted upon in the election shall be in substantially the following form:

**SARASOTA COUNTY GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS FOR LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION WITH ENHANCED SAFETY AND CONNECTIONS**

To acquire and improve the Legacy Trail Extension railroad corridor as a safe trail for walking, running, and cycling with enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota, with additional improvements including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility, shall Sarasota County issue General Obligation bonds, not exceeding the maximum lawful interest rates, maturing within 20 years from each issuance, not exceeding $65 million payable from ad valorem taxes restricted to these purposes?

_____ YES, FOR BONDS

_____ NO, AGAINST BONDS

**SECTION 9. NOTICE OF ELECTION.** The Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners shall publish a notice of the referendum election in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, a newspaper of general circulation published in Sarasota County, Florida, said notice shall be published once in the fifth week prior to the week of the election and once in the third week prior to the week of the election with the first publication to be at least thirty (30) days before the date of the election. The notice shall be in substantially the following form:

**NOTICE OF REFERENDUM ELECTION**

**SARASOTA COUNTY GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS FOR LEGACY TRAIL EXTENSION WITH ENHANCED SAFETY AND CONNECTIONS**

To acquire and improve the Legacy Trail Extension railroad corridor as a safe trail for walking, running, and cycling with enhanced connectivity from North Port through Venice to downtown Sarasota, with additional improvements including safe crossings, overpasses, amenities, and increased accessibility, shall Sarasota County issue General Obligation bonds, not exceeding the maximum lawful interest rates, maturing within 20 years from each issuance, not exceeding $65 million payable from ad valorem taxes restricted to these purposes?

_____ YES, FOR BONDS

_____ NO, AGAINST BONDS
The polls will be open at the voting places on the date of such election from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. All qualified voters residing within Sarasota County may vote in the election. Early voting and vote-by-mail voting will be permitted upon compliance with the applicable provisions of general law.

Karen E. Rushing, Clerk of the Circuit Court and the Ex-Officio Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners of Sarasota County, Florida.

SECTION 10. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this Resolution or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the Resolution which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Resolution are declared severable.

SECTION 11. NOTIFICATION BY CLERK. The Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners shall immediately notify the Supervisor of Elections of the adoption of this Resolution and transmit a certified copy of this Resolution to the Supervisor of Elections.

SECTION 12. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Resolution shall become effective upon its adoption.

PASSED AND DULY ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA, this 14th day of March, 2018.

ATTEST:

KAREN E. RUSHING, Clerk of Circuit Court and Ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners of Sarasota County, Florida

By: [Signature]
Deputy Clerk

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SARASOTA COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: [Signature]
Chair
PROPOSED NORTH PORT CONNECTION TO LEGACY TRAIL

Current on Road Connection to Legacy Trail (10.7 miles)
- PUF Spur (0.7 miles)
- South Powerline Trail (9.0 miles)
- Deer Prairie Slough
- Paved Trail
- Proposed Bridges

Potential Route (3.4 miles)
- Potential Route (3.5 miles)
- Potential Connection to Warm Mineral Springs (1.1 miles)
- Property Boundary

Item 13.