

# Case Statement for Active Transportation for Volusia County

## Introduction

Volusia County is located in east central Florida and is bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by the St. Johns River, on the north by Flagler and Putnam Counties, and on the south by Brevard and Seminole Counties. Volusia County is 1,207 square miles with a population of 517,851 people (2007). Statistically this would equate to 429 people per square mile; however, the majority of the county's population is concentrated in the county's 16 cities situated along the eastern coast (i.e.: Ormond Beach, Daytona Beach, Port Orange, New Smyrna Beach, Edgewater) and the St. John's River corridor (i.e.: DeLand, Orange City, DeBary, Deltona). The central portion of the county is sparsely populated with much of the land in public ownership designated as conservation lands.

Alternative active transportation modes have become a priority in light of overcrowded roads, rising fuel costs, increased unemployment, problems with obesity, the need for more equitable recreational outlets, and most of all the perceived degradation of our citizen's quality of life. Accelerated trail development, both stand-alone and on-road facilities, will enable Volusia County to address these priorities in the next few decades. Therefore, this case statement establishes the need for additional funding to realize our goal of improving the quality of life for our citizens and visitors.

To this end, the remaining sections demonstrate why Volusia County can effectively utilize a \$50 million federal investment in bicycling and walking. We begin with a look at how our local trails have a positive regional impact. Next is an overview of the history of our county-wide Trails Program which illustrates how Volusia County leadership has solidly backed trails development for the past 10 years followed by our Trails Program goals and then a proposed schedule of development. The final sections outline the many benefits to be realized through the infusion of this \$50 million federal investment such as transportation improvements, economic revitalization, health benefits, and most of all the enrichment of our quality of life.

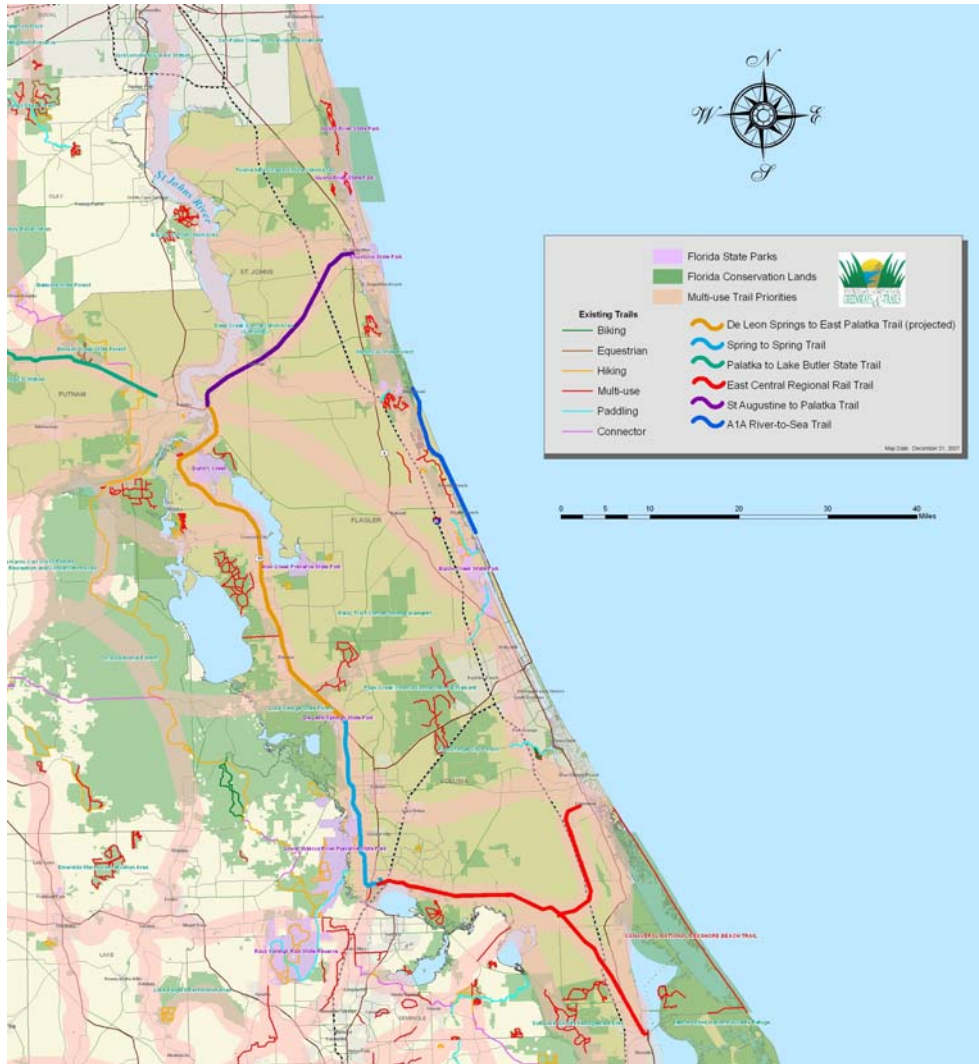
## Regional Impact of Volusia County Trails

Several of the proposed trails in Volusia County form an integral part of the proposed five-county, 230-mile St. John's River to the Sea Loop Trail that is anticipated to be completed by 2013 to commemorate the 500 year anniversary of Ponce de Leon in Florida (see Figure 1). In Volusia County, the route follows the East Coast Greenway south through the coastal municipalities to tie into the recently purchased East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor which crosses the southern portion of the county and then connects to the semi-completed Spring-to-Spring Trail which, in turn, travels north again up into Putnam County. Being the nation's first "long-distance *urban* trail system", the East Coast Greenway will eventually travel from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida as a "city-to-city transportation corridor for cyclists, hikers, and other non-motorized users" (East Coast Greenway Alliance). The planned multi-use trails in Volusia County are significant to east central Florida for several reasons. First is their ability to connect the western population centers in Volusia County to the eastern population centers in Volusia and Brevard Counties. This path will travel through what is commonly referred to as the "palmetto curtain" which is assumed to separate the western and eastern sides of Volusia County. Secondly, these

trails link Volusia County to Brevard County mirroring a historic path of commerce and travel. Thirdly, these trails also link to the trails in Seminole County via a short distance along SR 415. Once complete, the East Central Regional Rail Trail and Spring-to-Spring Trail projects will become the longest stand-alone multi-use trail segment along the historic St. John’s River to the Sea Loop Trail and will create a focal point for regional connectivity in central Florida.

**Figure 1**

**St. John’s River to the Sea Loop Trail**



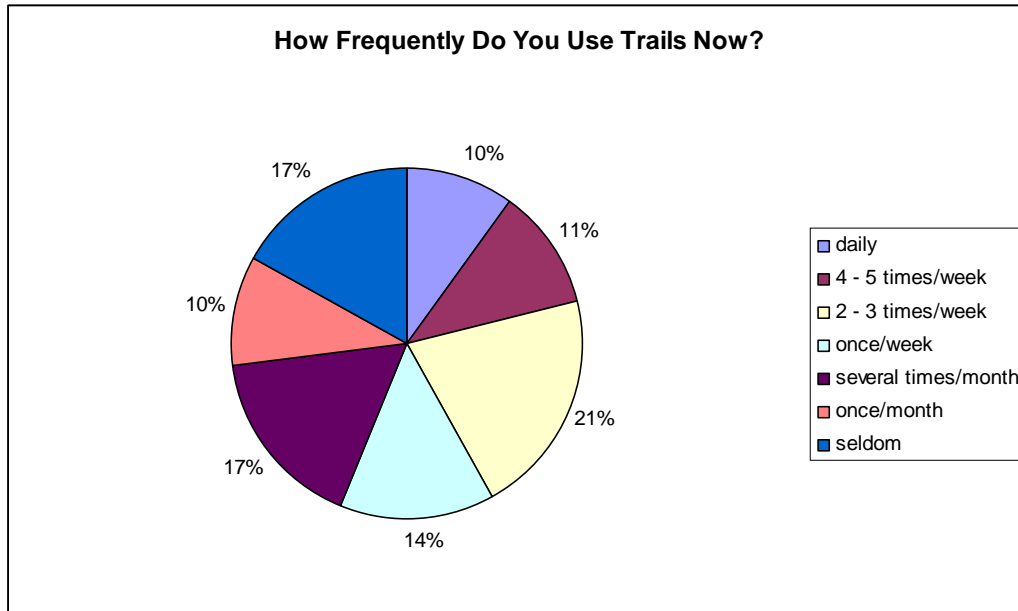
**Trails Program History**

Trail development in Volusia County has grown out of a collaborative process since the late 1990s. In November 1999, the Volusia County Council approved the first Trails Plan and the official Trails Plan map. Since then, two county-wide summits have been held to update the plan and add or delete segments. These summits attracted representatives from most cities as well as many interested citizens. The most recent Council-approved Trails Plan (Figure 2) shows the vision for



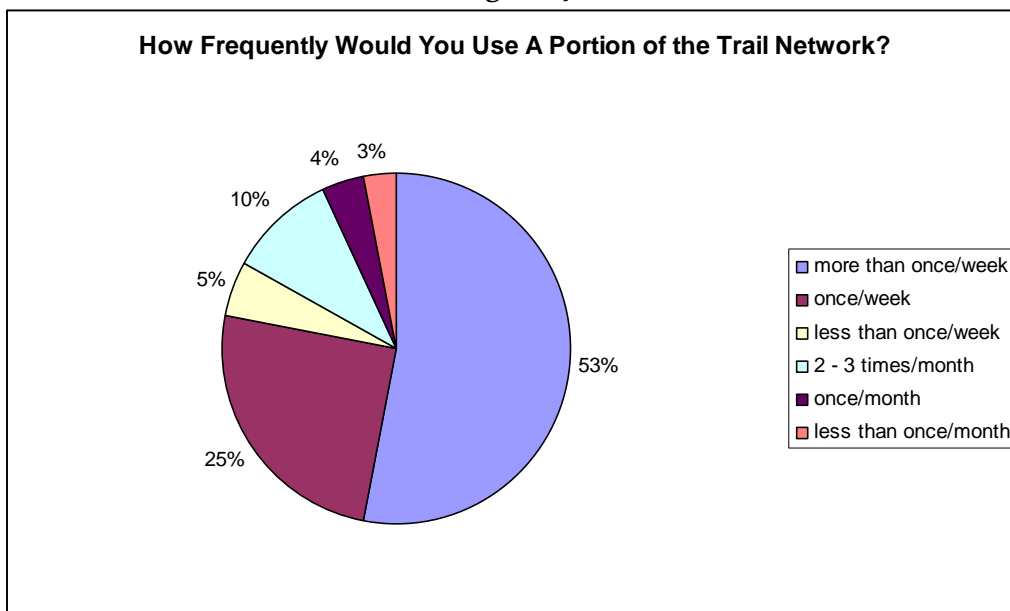
During the creation of the original Trails Plan, a series of workshops were held to gauge public interest in trails. The participants overwhelmingly voted to accelerate trail creation so that more people could use them. According to the surveys taken at the public workshops, hiking and bicycling were the most requested activities. Figure 3 indicates how frequently the participants said they used trails at that time.

**Figure 3**



In comparison, Figure 4 shows how frequently the same participants would use a portion of the trail network if it were completed. As this chart indicates, trail usage is directly dependant on the provision of adequate facilities geographically spaced throughout the county.

**Figure 4**



Volusia County leadership has consistently supported trail construction for the past 10 years by setting aside one million dollars per year from our local ECHO initiative. However, this local funding source does not come close to realizing our goal of a connected trails network. With the infusion of this proposed \$50 million Campaign for Active Transportation federal investment, Volusia County would be in a position to accelerate the development of many more miles of trails in the 2009-2011 fiscal timeframe.

### **Trails Plan Goals**

In order to develop and manage the Volusia Trails Program in the most efficient and expeditious manner, the following goals have been established.

- Create a holistic trail planning and management approach.
- Establish successful partnerships and encourage regional coordination.
- Comply with state and local government requirements.
- Plan uses and assess their impacts.
- Develop and publish trail construction priorities.
- Manage natural resources to preserve them for future generations.
- Reduce dependence on automobiles/reduce carbon footprint.
- Operate and maintain the trails for their highest and best use.
- Provide equitable trail access for all members of the public.
- Pursue state designation.
- Research and monitor trails to continually improve this resource.

Holistic trail planning will provide residents and visitors with over 70 miles of multi-use, paved trails that are 12 feet wide, attractively landscaped, and accessible from several waysides and trailheads along the way. Benches and rest areas will be included as well as interpretive signage where significant features are located. This holistic approach will be utilized to bring the most important qualities to bear in the development of our trails. Attention and respect is given to public sentiment and the user's needs and desires are taken into consideration during the planning of the trail segments. By cultivating public buy-in, community support for the trail program will continue and citizens will be willing to fund trail development.

Both the East Central Regional Rail Trail and the Spring-to-Spring Trail are examples of the best in agency cooperation. The Board of Trustees purchased the Rail Trail corridor on recommendation from the state Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT). OGT continues to hold an overall management interest in the future trail as well as the ability to eventually designate the trail as a state recreation and transportation resource. Since the trail corridor travels through two central Florida counties (Brevard and Volusia) and these two county governments have combined their resources to construct this trail project for public enjoyment. In the past, many other regional agencies have contributed to the realization of this project and will continue to play a role as future development progresses. These agencies include the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council, St. John's River Water Management District, Florida Department of Transportation, Brevard and Volusia/Flagler Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, and Canaveral National Seashore. For example, portions of the right-of-way for the Spring-to-Spring Trail were granted to Volusia County through an easement from the Department of Environmental Protection's Park Service (i.e.: Blue Spring State Park land).

Providing access to such an extensive trail system is a challenge for all agencies in light of the high cost of land. It is expected that people living near the trail will access it through their neighborhoods; however, our plans do include formal trailheads for parking access for users that live further away from the trail. Fortunately, there are several parcels adjacent to the East Central Regional Rail Trail and Spring-to-Spring Trail corridors that are well suited to trailhead development. Volusia County has just finished construction of Green Springs Park in Enterprise. This resource-based park is adjacent to the eastern terminus of the Rail Trail corridor and only a few miles from the Spring-to-Spring Trail corridor.

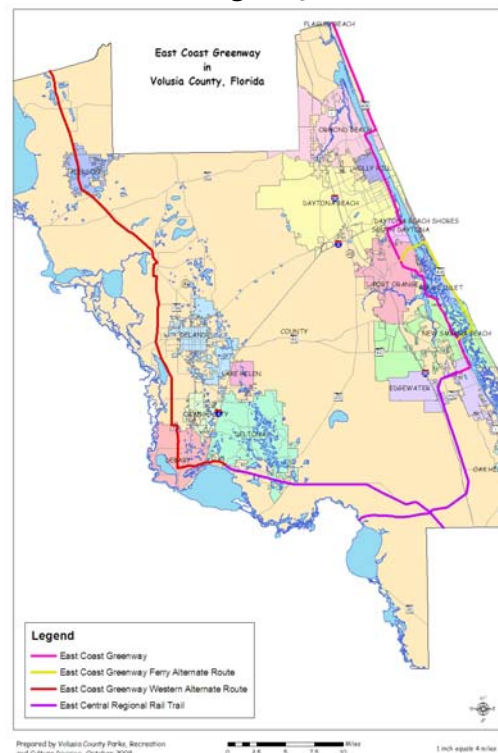
“Share the Trail” brochures have been developed to encourage respect and politeness among trail users. Suggestions include: be courteous, be predictable, don’t block the trail, obey traffic and trail signs, control your bicycle/horse, keep pets on a leash and children by your side, respect private property, and keep your trail clean. The general rule is “wheels yield to heels”. Safe and courteous multi-use can be accomplished on trails through education and a positive presence on the trail.

### Trails Program Schedule

To facilitate development of the St. John’s River to the Sea Loop project in Volusia County, our Trails Program is currently concentrating on three main trail corridors: the East Coast Greenway, the East Central Regional Rail Trail, and the Spring-to-Spring Trail. With portions of the East Coast Greenway and the Spring-to-Spring Trail already in place, and the next three planned segments of the Spring-to-Spring Trail corridor as well as the entire 50.8 mile East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor right-of-way in public ownership, Volusia County is poised to move forward without delay.

As shown in Figure 5, the St. John’s River to the Sea Loop mostly follows the designated East Coast Greenway. Since the eastern portion is mainly located within the jurisdictional limits of the coastal cities, they will continue pursuing the development of these segments. However, Volusia County has already built nearly 10 miles of separated eight-foot wide concrete trails along State Road A1A from the Flagler County line to Spanish Waters Drive (6 miles) and from Major Street to Lighthouse Point Park (3.5 miles in Ponce Inlet). Other connections, including sidewalks and on-road bicycle paths, exist in several cities. Due to lack of right-of-way, multi-use trail development will primarily be on the East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor and the Spring-to-Spring Trail corridor further described below.

**Figure 5**



Since the entire 50.8 mile East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor was purchased by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) on December 31, 2007 and subsequently subleased on September 8, 2008 to Brevard and Volusia Counties to develop and maintain, this multi-use trail corridor right-of-way represents the perfect opportunity to quickly expand the multi-use trail miles in Volusia County. Once the state-mandated Management Plan currently being competed is approved by OGT (March 2009), Volusia County will be in a position to proceed with the development of their 35.9 miles of this extensive east-west trail. Likewise, Brevard County will also begin development of their 14.9 miles of trail. Being the longest rail-trail conversion in the state of Florida, the East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor has been separated into manageable segments to facilitate development (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

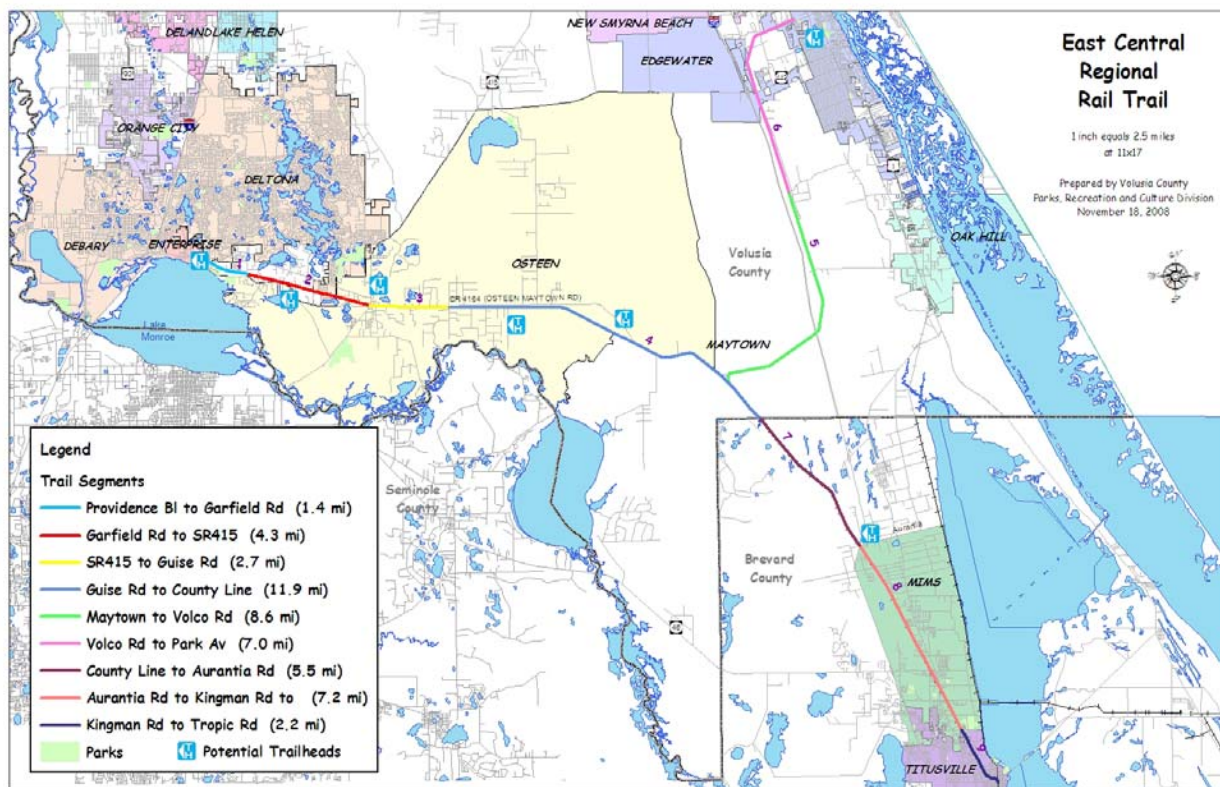


Figure 7 below presents a proposed schedule of completion for design and construction of the entire East Central Regional Rail Trail (both in Volusia and Brevard Counties) including bridges necessary to connectivity. The trail segments that fall within Volusia County will be developed with county funds leveraged with grant funding where possible; however, based on the length of this corridor, additional funding is crucial to remaining on schedule. Due to the fact that the entire corridor is owned fee simple, it is obvious that the only issue in the way of rapid development is a lack of adequate funding. With the infusion of this \$50 million federal investment for Active Transportation, Volusia County will be in a position to rapidly accelerate the design and construction of its 35.9 miles of the East Central Regional Rail Trail.

Figure 7

**East Central Regional Rail Trail - Proposed Construction Schedule**

Map Seg.	Trail Extent/Facility	Miles	Cost Estimate	Completion Date
1	Providence Bl to Garfield Rd	1.4	\$634,542	December-2009
1A	Green Springs Park		Complete	September-2008
2	Garfield Rd to SR 415	4.3	\$1,948,949	December-2009
2A	Deltona Park		\$300,000	In Negotiation
2B	Bridge over SR 415		\$5,000,000	September-2010
3	SR415 to Guise Rd	2.7	\$1,223,759	September-2010
3A	Osteen Civic Center		\$270,000	September-2010
4	Guise Rd to Gobblers Lodge Rd	3.5	\$1,744,988	September-2011
4A	Bridge (1)		\$505,980	September-2011
4B	Gobblers Lodge Rd Wayside		\$300,000	September-2011
5	Gobblers Lodge Rd to Maytown Spur	6.8	\$3,390,262	September-2012
5B	Bridges (3)		\$1,517,940	September-2012
6	Maytown Spur to County Line	1.6	\$797,709	December-2012
7	Maytown Spur to Volco Rd	8.6	\$4,287,685	September-2011
8	Volco Rd to Park Av	7.0	\$3,172,708	July-2010
9	County Line to Aurantia Rd	5.5	\$2,742,124	December-2012
10	Aurantia Rd to Kingman Rd	7.2	\$3,589,690	December-2011
10A	Aurantia Wayside		\$300,000	December-2011
11	Kingman Rd to Tropic Rd	2.2	\$997,137	December-2010
<b>Totals</b>		<b>50.8</b>	<b>\$32,723,472</b>	

On the other hand, the Spring-to-Spring Trail has been a work-in-progress for the past 10 years. As of December 31, 2008, nearly half of the 28.7 mile Spring-to-Spring Trail has been completed as presented in Figure 8. Segments have been built connecting DeBary Hall Historic Site with Gemini Springs Park and Lake Monroe Park, as well as a segment connecting Blue Spring State Park with Lake Beresford Park. Other open segments include a portion in DeBary Golf and Country Club and two miles in the community of Glenwood. In fact, the community of Glenwood was initially opposed to trail development but through meetings and education, this small community now embraces the trail concept and looks forward to completion.

The next table (Figure 9) outlines the schedule of completion for design and construction of the remaining Spring-to-Spring segments as well as the additional 13 mile CR 3 extension into Putnam County (creating a total of 41.7 miles of trails). The main impediment to completion at this time is adequate funding for the purchase of right-of-way for segments 5 and 6. These costs have not been calculated due to the volatile nature of land prices; however, in our current economic climate this corridor has potential for future access.

Figure 8

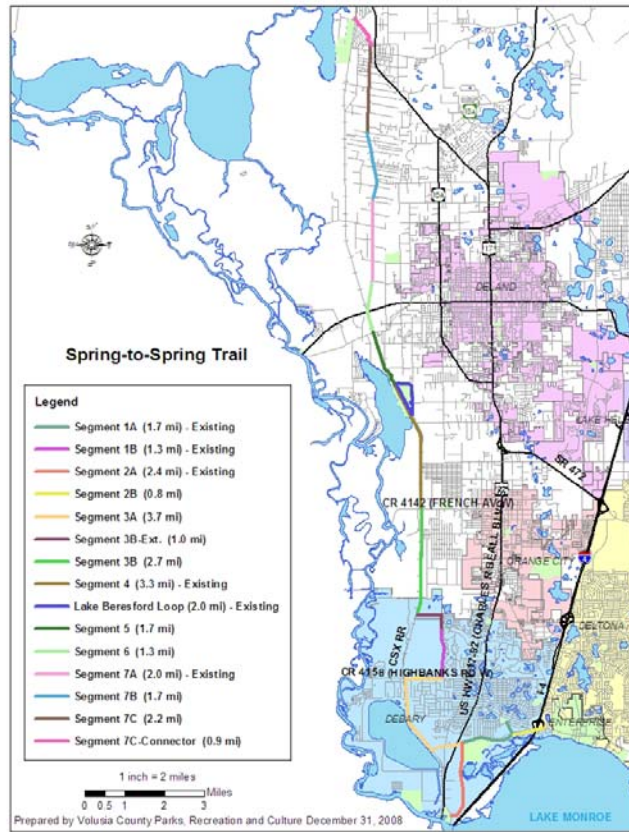


Figure 9

**Spring-to-Spring Trail - Proposed Construction Schedule**

Map Seg.	Trail Extent	Miles	Cost Estimate	Completion Date
1A	DeBary Hall to Gemini Springs Park	1.7	Complete	Aug-1999
1B	DeBary Golf & Country Club	1.3	Complete	Jun-2004
2A	Lake Monroe Park to Gemini Springs Park	2.4	Complete	May-2006
2B	DeBary Bypass to Mansion Bl	0.8	\$388,400	Jun-2014
3A	Gemini Springs Park to DeBary G&CC	3.7	\$1,796,350	Jun-2012
3Bext	DeBary G&CC to Saxon Blvd Ext.	1.0	\$485,500	Jun-2012
3B	Saxon Blvd Ext. to French Av	2.7	\$1,310,850	Dec-2010
4	French Av to Lake Beresford Park	3.3	Complete	Jun-2008
4A	Lake Beresford Loop	2.0	Complete	Apr-2007
5	Lake Beresford Park to Old New York Av	1.7	\$825,350	Dec-2013
6	Old New York Av to Minnesota Av	1.3	\$631,150	Dec-2013
7A	Minnesota Av to King St	2.0	Complete	Jan-2009
7B	King St to Lemon St (on road)	1.7	\$850,000	Sep-2013

7C	Lemon St to Baxter St	2.2	\$1,068,100	Jun-2009
7Cext	Baxter St to DeLeon Springs Park	0.9	\$436,950	Dec-2009
7D	Plymouth Ave Trailhead		\$475,000	Jan-2010
8A	CR 3 - DeLeon Springs State Park to SR 40	5.5	\$2,670,250	Dec-2012
8B	CR 3 - SR 40 to US 17 (+ Bridges)	7.5	\$4,999,995	Dec-2012
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>\$15,937,895</b>	

Figures 7 and 9 are presented here in an effort to illustrate the extensive scope of trail projects ready to be developed in Volusia County and, therefore, demonstrate Volusia County's readiness to quickly implement trail construction programs. Conservative estimated design and construction costs for the East Central Regional Rail Trail will cost approximately \$32,723,472, the remaining segments of the Spring-to-Spring Trail will cost \$8,267,650, and the CR 3 extension will cost \$7,670,245 for a total of \$48,661,367. The additional \$1,338,633 could be used to offset the purchase of right-of-way to connect the missing portions of the Spring-to-Spring Trail. Although Volusia County already has limited trail funding in place (\$1 million per year), it will take many years to leverage this internal funding to bring about the development opportunities that are needed today. Our dedicated funding source, in conjunction with the preceding data, clearly demonstrates that Volusia County is prepared to rapidly begin trail construction and make the most of the proposed \$50 million federal investment.

The following sections establish the myriad of benefits that will accrue from this investment in the multi-modal, non-motorized transportation infrastructure of Volusia County. Transportation improvements are the first category explored followed by economic revitalization, health benefits, and quality of life enhancements.

### Transportation Improvements

Development of Volusia County's 128-mile portion of the above described St. John's River to the Sea Loop will impart several critical multi-modal transportation benefits: namely the provision of alternative routes for non-motorized transportation to connect population centers to the proposed Central Florida Commuter Rail project, Amtrak lines, Votran bus service, the Park & Ride lot at I-4 in Orange City, employment centers, schools, and parks. Volusia County residents and visitors would then have several alternatives to using the traditional road network for their active transportation needs. Offering commuters viable multi-modal alternatives to highway travel is vital to reducing traffic on I-4. By linking bicycle travel on trails to buses with bike racks and, in turn, to active rail lines, commuters will have these practical options.

The current effort in central Florida to develop the 61.5 mile Central Florida Commuter Rail project will include service in Volusia County along the US 17 corridor with stations in DeBary and DeLand. The first phase of the project is reaching the final stages of approval by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The service, named "Sun Rail", is projected to be operating in 2011 with a station in DeBary. The system will provide links from Volusia County to Orlando and from other trail networks along the rail line to Volusia's trail network. Furthermore, the historic DeLand Train Station, which was just recently restored to its former glory at a cost of \$530,000, also serves Amtrak lines. Both of these proposed stations are served by Votran buses and all

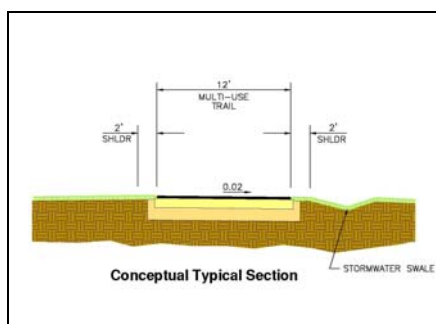
Votran buses include bike racks which have seen a tremendous increase in utilization in recent years.

The addition of a non-motorized component parallel to US 17 (Spring-to-Spring Trail) for the entire length of the Commuter Rail system could enhance the overall functionality of the system by providing additional mode options for those living near the facility. The proposed non-motorized corridor would separate from the US 17 alignment just south of DeBary and head east on the East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor which begins in the historic community of Enterprise and passes through the City of Deltona (Volusia’s largest city in terms of population). When passing through rapidly growing communities such as Deltona, special attention will be made to incorporate transit connections, rest areas and trailheads, signage and co-location of parking areas. The trail corridor then continues east through rural Osteen and the former settlement of Maytown and then splits off north to the coastal population centers of Edgewater/New Smyrna Beach and south to urbanized Titusville. Fortunately, this corridor passes underneath I-95 utilizing an existing overpass built when the former rail line was still active. From Edgewater, the trail system easily connects to the East Coast Greenway’s main spine that travels north along the east coast to the county line.

Due to the nature of the destinations along the proposed St. John’s River to the Sea Loop, the potential for alternative non-motorized transportation uses are very exciting. Active bicyclists, for example, could use the trail as a means to travel to work. The above described system will be comprised of separated multi-use trails combined with on-road facilities. The separated alignments will create an approximately 70-mile non-motorized trail traveling throughout Volusia County from the St. John’s River to the Atlantic coast. The east-west connection provided by the East Central Regional Rail Trail corridor is especially critical in Volusia County as there are only a few routes that cross the county.

The overall trail system would weave together two transit systems with nearby neighborhoods, schools, parks and other points of interest forming an interconnected regional system. When rights-of-way allow, it is proposed that the asphalt surface be 12’ in width and built to ADA standards (Figure 10 below shows a typical section drawing). The overriding purpose is to provide residents and visitors with a convenient, non-motorized trail system that maximizes safety and enjoyment by separating users from existing roadways by using the attractive, naturally landscaped paths resplendent with frequent comfort amenities. Figure 11 illustrates the beauty and functionality of our most recent Spring-to-Spring Trail segment that opened in June 2008.

**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**



## Economic Revitalization

Trails are increasingly being seen as bastions of economic revitalization in many communities. Stories abound of towns that were losing jobs with economic prosperity being brought back to life by the development of a trail. In our own backyard, the Cross Seminole Trail largely contributed to the revitalization of Winter Springs and Oviedo. According to the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, trails are “community gems” that “have become the central focus of tourist activities in some communities and the impetus for kick-starting a stagnating economy”. Studies go on to show how trails have a positive impact on property values with properties adjacent to trails selling faster and for higher prices than comparable homes in the neighborhood. Furthermore, the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders have now ranked trail access as the most important community amenity when selecting a home. What a better time to build trails than in our current economic climate?

By funding Volusia County’s Trails Program as outlined above, several immediate economic benefits become apparent. First, the impact of \$50 million in construction jobs will markedly improve the current unemployment situation among local trade workers. Second, once the trails are completed, additional staff will have to be hired to maintain the trails. Third, trails are proven to attract visitors from outside the county bringing in additional income each year. The most instant and studied economic impacts of trails can be traced to the effects of this visitor spending on the regional economy. According to a rigorous assessment of The Washington & Old Dominion Trail (W&OD) in Virginia prepared by the USDA Forest Service, the University of Georgia, and the National Park Service (2004), “the direct effects of visitor expenditure create a ‘ripple’ effect within the local economy”. This study goes on to assert that these nonlocal expenditures in turn “stimulate local industries and businesses that supply the recreation and tourism sectors” and thereby “increase total wealth in the economy resulting in economic growth”.

Determining the number of users is difficult since no tickets are collected and no fees are charged. We do know that the 40 parking spaces at Lake Beresford Park Trailhead (adjacent to the most recently opened trail segment) are full nearly every morning with some people actually waiting at the gate to get in at sunrise. In speaking with several patrons recently, we were informed that they walk the trail every day to stay in shape and enjoy the outdoors. Orange County, which has had a trail system for much longer, has usage statistics however. The following exercise in interpolation is meant to generally indicate the number of users our trails may attract. In 2006, Orange County had a population of 1,043,500. That year, the 19-mile West Orange Trail attracted 811,470 users which equates to 77.8% of the population. Granted many of these users are the same ones day after day, but we will use this number to estimate our usage. Pending receipt of this Active Transportation funding, Volusia County plans to construct over 70 miles of trails; thus, with 517,851 people residing in Volusia County, 388,388 people would use our trails annually if only 75% of these people use the trails at one time or another.

In an effort to quantify the annual economic impact of this “new” money brought into Volusia County, the following assumptions have been made based on previous local studies (percent of nonlocal visitors) and the W&OD Trail Assessment (per person per visit trail-related expenditures):

$$388,388 \text{ annual users} \times 50\% \text{ nonlocal} = 194,194 \times \$15/\text{visit} = \$2,912,910 \text{ annual impact}$$

Of course, local users also contribute to the economy through the purchase of trail-related equipment and supplies such as bicycles, helmets, gear, shoes, and food. This input into the economy is more difficult to measure; however, the W&OD Trail Assessment attributes a “conservative total approaching \$7 million annually” from combined local and nonlocal spending from their 45-mile long trail. Since Volusia County’s multi-use trails will be over 70 miles once completed and we can also draw upon the visitors who normally come for the “World’s Most Famous Beach”, it seems to reason that an infusion of \$50 million for trail funding will serve to revitalize our stagnant economy.

Furthermore, the St. John’s River to the Sea Loop project’s western Volusia portion roughly parallels the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor. According to Executive Director Renee Tallevast, “The River of Lakes Heritage Corridor was created to preserve, protect and promote the intrinsic resources of the region through its programs and partnerships. An example is the Florida Scenic Highway Designation that our many community volunteers have worked on over the past three and a half years. We will be officially designated in mid-February which will provide the opportunity to obtain funding for numerous community projects. The U.S. Travel Data Center estimates that every mile of a Scenic Highway annually creates between \$30,000 and \$35,000 in economic benefits. Our scenic highway is 120 miles long which equates to approximately \$3.6 billion of annual economic stimulus. Other programs of the heritage corridor include River Quest, a place based educational program designed to tell the stories of our cultural heritage. We also created the Florida Wildflower Festival that provides education on the use and benefits of native plants and growing wildflowers as alternative crops.”

As shown above, trails are an integral part of heritage tourism opportunities since they connect various historic and cultural resources via the first mode of transportation: walking. In addition, bicycling has been a traditional mode of transportation since the 1860s. A book on the history of Volusia’s West Side notes that by 1880, “bicycles were in constant use”. Via the development of the East Central Regional Rail Trail along a historic rail line and Spring-to-Spring Trail traveling through the historic towns of Seville and DeLand, we can encourage a long-standing tradition of traveling along historic routes of early settlements and commercial transport by means of human power. In addition, the East Central Regional Rail Trail connects two communities with a significant past in Volusia County. Enterprise, the oldest community in west Volusia dating to the early 1840s, was the county seat for Volusia until it was moved to DeLand in 1888. At a time when Miami wasn’t listed on most maps, adventurous travelers from as far away as England were boarding steamships in Jacksonville for a new and wild destination on the St. Johns called “Enterprise”. Hotels dotted the shores of Lake Monroe and catered to the wealthy northern visitors. The community of Osteen likewise has a historical past with the United Methodist Church and Saul’s Marker available for the enjoyment of heritage tourists. As you can see, Volusia County trails can then be used to promote heritage tourism opportunities for the residents and visitors of Volusia County thereby bringing economic prosperity in their wake.

### **Health Benefits**

With a crisis of obesity among Americans (20.9 % in 2003), especially children, what better recreational opportunity could a government provide than a trail? One does not go from a lifetime of sedentary behavior and start working out in a gym. One starts slow, and one of the best exercises is walking and bicycle riding. According to *Walking for Health*, people “won’t find a better way to lose weight than walking.” Trails have been proven to have a positive effect on the



health of their users which results in lower medical costs during their lifetime. Exercise on a trail can help prevent heart disease, decrease high blood pressure, improve mental health, lower stress levels, and slow the aging process. Furthermore, studies have shown that “every \$1 investment in trails resulted in a greater return in direct medical benefits” (Librett, 2005). *Trails for Health*, a publication by the Center for Disease Control, strongly advocates the use of trails to promote health and wellbeing, especially for seniors. This scientifically backed pamphlet

stresses the need for modest activity such as walking and offers encouragement that it is never too late to start. Even a small increase in physical activity can bring positive results; therefore, doctors recommend a simple 35-minute walk each day to stay strong and agile (Smith, *Partnership for a Walkable America*). It is our responsibility as a government organization to provide avenues for our citizens to seek daily exercise; as Stuart MacDonald stated in *American Trails Magazine*: “trails are not just civic decoration, but an essential community investment in public health”.

Keith Laughlin, the President of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, one of the largest advocacy groups in the nation, sums up the need for increased trail development in their new slogan: “Burn Calories, Not Carbon”. This simple yet effective statement shows how more walking and bicycling plus less driving equals healthier people and a healthier planet. It is a “win-win proposition” that demonstrates the absolute need for more trail miles and clearly validates that our government will be remiss if we do not take the initiative and build trails now and not wait until costs of land and materials increase even more tomorrow. As our trail system grows larger, more people will have the opportunity to replace automobile trips with bicycle or walking trips.

### **An Enhanced Quality of Life**

As established above, trails offer many benefits for residents and visitors of Volusia County including the ultimate in equitable recreation, the health benefits of regular exercise, the reduction of automobile trips, an improvement in air quality, increased property values, the spurring of tourism revenue, the promotion of economic growth, crime reduction, and a boost to community pride and appeal. The W&OD study specifically states that: “A sense of community is the most important benefit visitors get”. Trails present the perfect outdoor recreational opportunities due to their attraction for all types of people who can have fun alone or with family and friends. Active people can jog, bicycle, and skate while seniors and family groups can enjoy a more leisurely stroll. Trails are open to all. Being designed in conformance with ADA guidelines, individuals with disabilities are able to participate in this outdoor pursuit when they are often denied so many other recreational activities. One of our more active advocates of access who is confined to a wheelchair imparted the following viewpoint after her first visit to our Spring-to-Spring Trail: “The area is beautiful and so very accessible. I could have handled the trail in my manual wheelchair without the assistance of my friend”. Our paved, smooth, continuous trail surface is amenable to walkers, joggers, hikers, bicyclists, inline skaters, strollers, and wheelchairs while the planned parallel cleared area offers horseback riders a trail experience, too. Walking, riding a bike, skating, and jogging are excellent family-oriented recreational opportunities that require little equipment and can be pursued by people of all abilities.

The trail corridors proposed in this Active Transportation Statement act as natural links to thousands of acres of public conservation lands. Beginning in the northeast corner of the county, users can access Bulow Creek State Park, Tomoka State Park, Spruce Creek Preserve, Rotary Park (Edgewater), Mosquito Lagoon (part of the Indian River Lagoon, a “national treasure” which is considered “the most biologically diverse estuary in North America”), Canaveral National Seashore, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Turnbull Bay Conservation Area, Hickory Bluff Preserve, Wiregrass Prairie Preserve, Lake Monroe Conservation Area, Beck Ranch Park, Deltona Festival Grounds and Lake Butler Recreation Complex, Green Springs Park, Mariner’s Cove Park, Deltona Community Center, DeBary Hall Historic Site, Lake Monroe (which is fed by the St. Johns River, one of the first of only 14 federally designated American Heritage Rivers), Blue Spring State Park, Lake Beresford Park, Lake Woodruff National Wildlife Refuge, and Lake George State Forest. Protected native species along our trails include gopher tortoises, sandhill cranes, scrub jays, bald eagles, black bears, and indigo snakes.

The scenic resources of the St. John’s River to the Sea Loop are its most impressive assets. Traveling through the historic towns of Seville, DeLand, Enterprise and Mims, users are introduced to the sights and sounds of an earlier time. Entering the urbanized areas of Deltona, Edgewater, New Smyrna Beach, and Titusville users will have access to parks and commercial centers making these segments amenable to alternative transportation trips. The middle area of the Rail Trail component which passes through Osteen and historic Maytown is heavily forested with limited rural development. This area of the corridor allows users a glimpse into the natural central Florida landscape and provides a superior recreational experience.

The East Central Regional Rail Trail takes its users on a trip through history and enhances ones sense of place. From the historic town of Enterprise (once the county seat of Volusia) to Maytown (which no longer exists) through Mims and down to Titusville where the original train lines picked up famous Indian River Fruit, the trail abounds in opportunities to provide interpretive displays. Development of this corridor will include an interpretive component to complete the trail and attract both daily local users as well as heritage tourists visiting the area. Green Springs Park, the first western trailhead, already has a wonderful interpretive component that educates while instilling an appreciation for the history of the area and the natural environment.

With such tremendous assets, Volusia County is poised to become a distinctive heritage tourism destination. Herb Hiller, a well-respected expert and the initiator of Florida’s late-20<sup>th</sup>-century bicycling and bed-and-breakfast movements, offers these comments in support of this project’s connection to heritage tourism: “Trail-tourism opportunities have never been more advantageous for Volusia. Recent acquisition by the state of the 50+ mile East Central Regional Rail-Trail corridor greatly advances plans for the 5-county, 230-mile, St. John’s River to Sea Loop. These trails will link virtually all of Volusia’s ECHO resources. It’s one thing to access these sights and sites by car. Access by bicycle – increasing access by bicycle that combines popular recreation with tourism – can significantly affect how we already live here and those we hope to attract for high quality of life with its concomitant economic values”.

Trails are valuable assets that contribute greatly to the livability of our communities. They help mitigate sprawl, connect communities and recreational assets, preserve the natural environment that citizen’s value, and revitalize urban areas. “Trails and greenways provide tools for all Americans to shape their communities and retain the level of quality that they desire” (*Trails and Greenways for Livable Communities*). Livability brings people to an area and keeps them there. It

also makes one's life pleasant and adds the ingredient of satisfaction that cannot be bought. Moving society back to walkable communities helps to heal the rift caused by an automobile-dominated mindset and brings neighborhoods together on the trail where people of all abilities and economic backgrounds come together to recreate and enjoy the environment. As Dan Burden, the guru of walkability asserts: "If societies in all places of the world are to remain stable and healthy for centuries to come, we must learn to move more on our own ... shorter distances and with less impact on resources of the planet."



### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our well thought-out and politically-supported Trails Plan and dedicated local funding speaks to Volusia County's readiness to build trail miles to alleviate our modern transportation woes, enhance our sagging economy, improve the health of all citizens, and bring families and communities together. The indisputable need for increased transportation funding, including the provision of separated multi-use trails, is fully documented and is one of the most responsible and ethical uses of public funds meant to provide multi-modal transportation opportunities; economic stimulus through construction, on-going maintenance, and increased heritage tourism; and the preservation of a the precious non-quantifiable aspects that determine quality life for the citizens of Volusia County and beyond.