

Pinellas Trail Loop Project Narrative

OVERVIEW

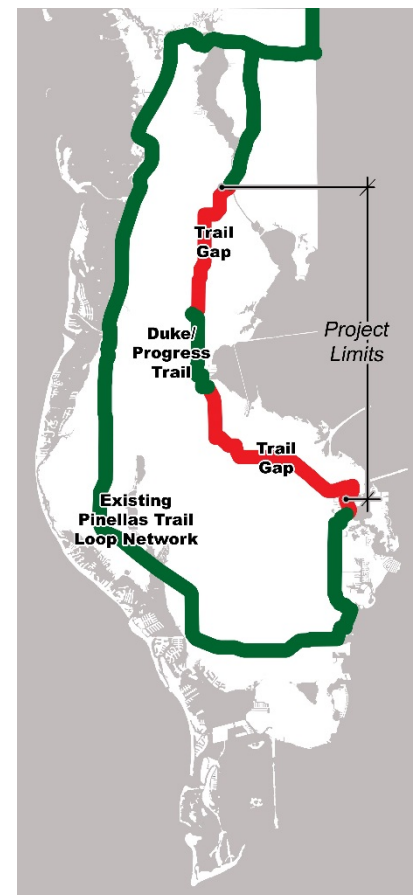
The Pinellas Trail Loop project includes the construction of a 21.35-mile segment gap to create a continuous, designated trail network around the Pinellas County peninsula. The Pinellas Trail Loop is planned as a complete 75-mile regional trail network that connects residents and visitors to recreation, education, employment, services, and transit across the metropolitan region. The completed project improves safety and access for non-motorized travel. The ultimate vision is to create a continuous, designated Pinellas Trail loop that circles the county, interconnects other networks, and serves as the primary spine facility for pedestrian/bicycle infrastructure. The Pinellas Trail Loop has a significant gap between John Chesnut Sr. Park and the northern terminus of the St. Petersburg North Bay Trail.

Complete County Connections - The current, incomplete Loop stretches from the northernmost to the southernmost areas of Pinellas County however, the increased mobility provided by the current trail is limited largely to the western portion of the County. The gap is located on the eastern side of the Loop and the residents of unincorporated Pinellas County and the Cities of Oldsmar, Clearwater, Largo, Pinellas Park, and St. Petersburg, as well as the County as a whole, would greatly benefit from the increased connectivity to major employers, institutions of higher education and vocational training, public schools and many other community resources and services.

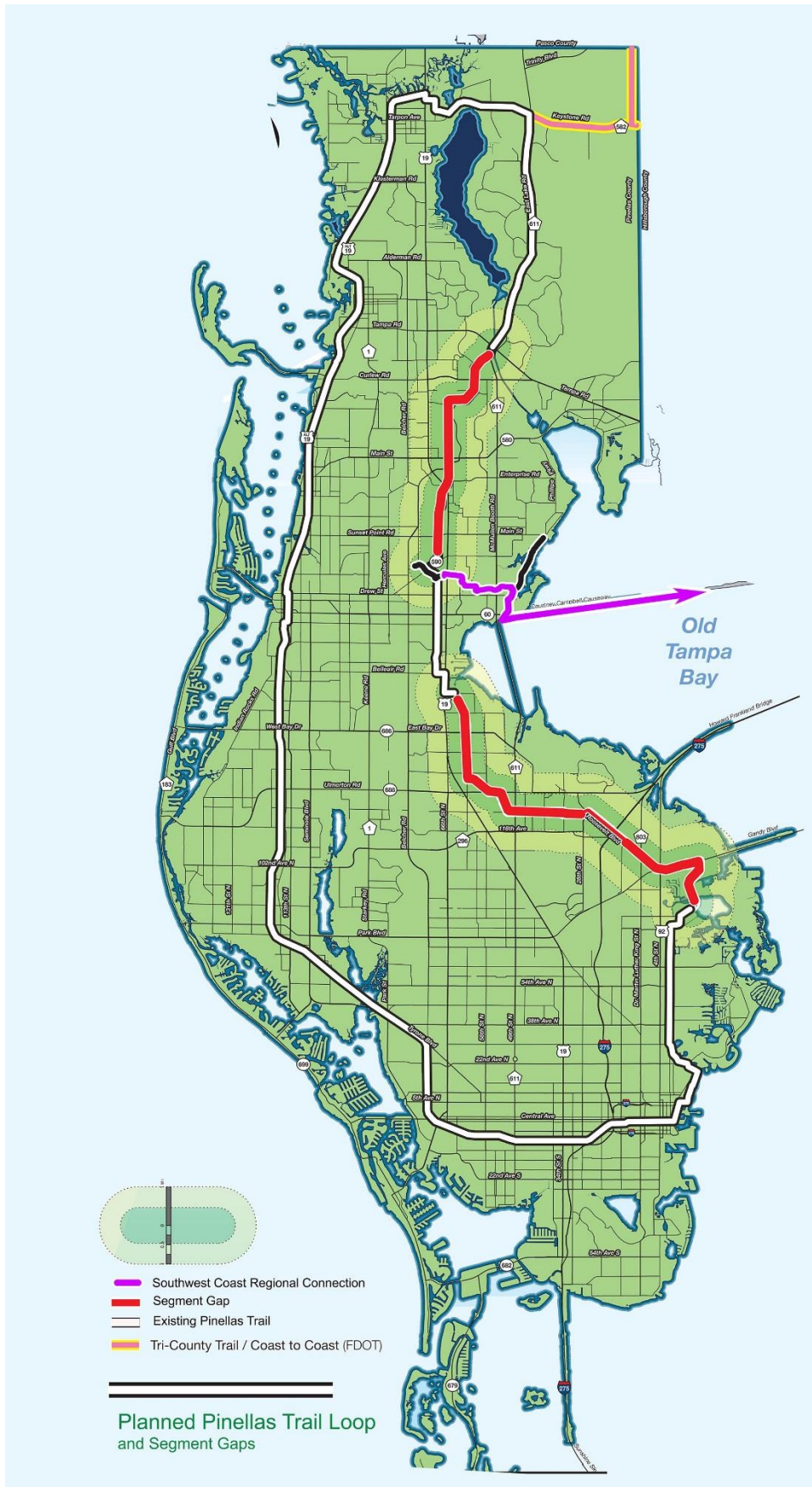
The Pinellas Trail Loop connects community assets including local governments, educational institutions, major employers, and the residents of Pinellas County. In addition, over 100 letters of support have been submitted for the project, representing a remarkably diverse group of legislators, businesses, educational institutions, community groups, and citizens.

Value Added Design - The project is planned almost entirely within existing easements and rights-of-way to lessen the cost of property acquisition. The project connects into existing and committed trail segments/infrastructure to create a complete trail loop within the County. The project will explore reuse materials for its base to lessen construction cost.

Implementation Strategy - Together with over \$37 million in state and federal funding, Pinellas County has invested nearly \$29 million to complete the existing trail sections since 1991. This amount doesn't include millions of dollars of connecting trails, trailheads, and other amenities by municipalities along the corridor. By using County funding to construct the backbone of the Pinellas trail system, municipalities can focus limited available funding on trails that have a local focus but connect to the Pinellas Trail to provide regional connectivity.



The Proposed Pinellas Trail Loop with missing gap locations (shown in Red)



PROJECT THEMES

The project design is rooted in the following public benefit and implementation themes:

- > **Creates a reliable multi-modal network** – improving the efficiency of the road network, while providing an option for movement of non-motorized travelers. This includes expanded access to transit connections through bikes on buses programs. PSTA has over 400,000 bikes on buses users per year. This allows transit users to utilize multimodal options for further destinations and origin locations.
- > **Improves economic mobility** – bringing an estimated 380,000 residents and 260,000 jobs within one-half mile of the 75-mile, uninterrupted, non-motorized transportation facility. More than half of the county’s population will live within one-mile of the completed Loop.
- > **Provides economic opportunities** – enhancing economic competitiveness by connecting residents with employment, commercial and recreational destinations, drawing tourists to the area, and attracting new businesses along and near the corridor.
- > **Increases community transportation choices** – benefiting low-income and minority neighborhoods with direct access to this multi-modal transportation facility and enhanced connections to transit, schools, commercial centers, employment and recreational facilities.
- > **Avoids adverse environmental impacts on air quality** – providing bicyclists and pedestrians with a reliable transportation alternative.
- > **Fosters a safe, connected and accessible transportation system** – through a 75-mile uninterrupted multi-modal transportation facility that connects to over 84 schools and 169 major employers (within one half mile).



ACCESS TO SAFE TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

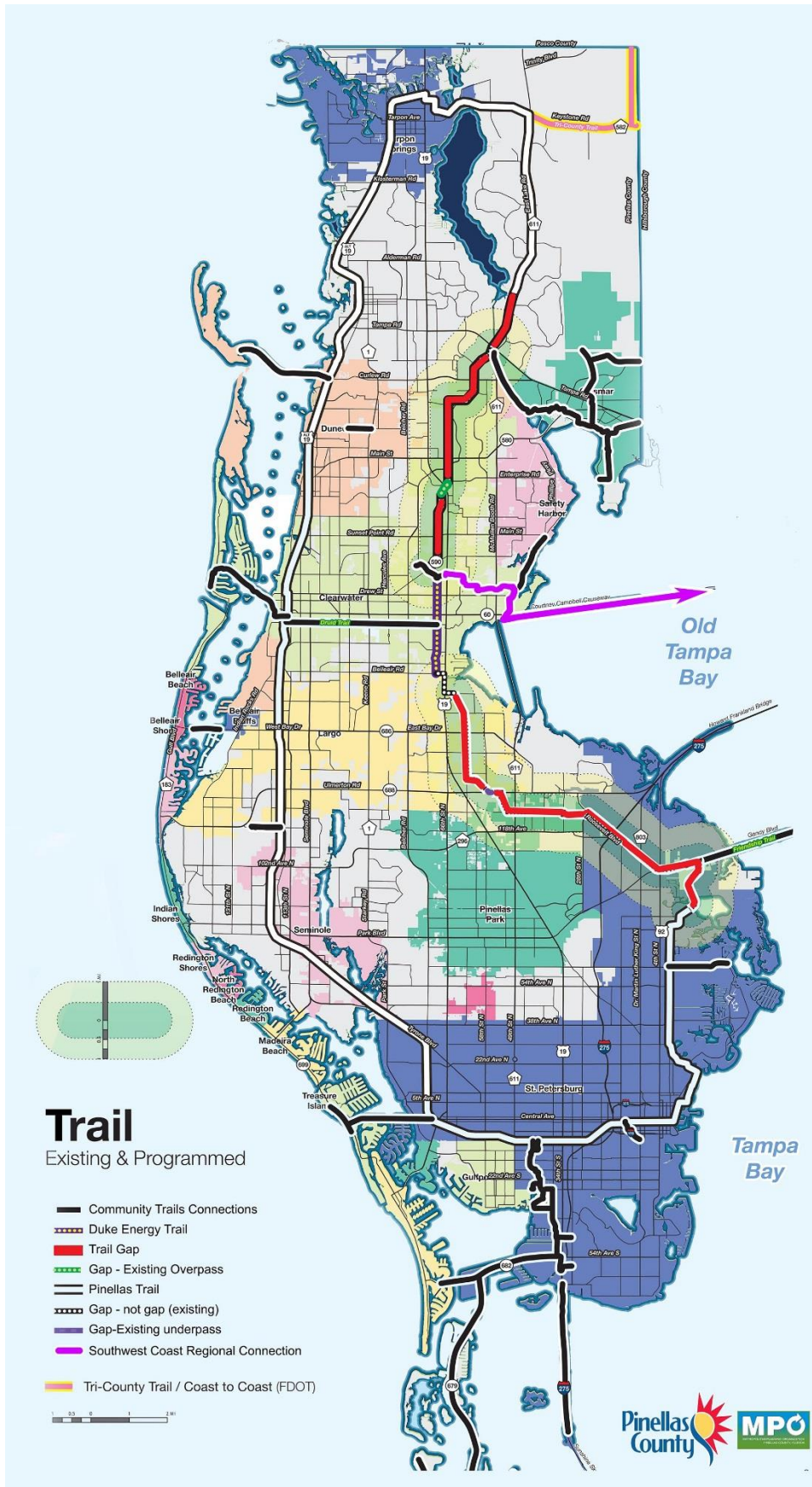
Pinellas County is unique in the State of Florida. It is one of the smallest counties in the State and, at 3,309 persons per square mile, has densities unlike any other county in Florida (Broward, having 1,445 persons per square mile is the next most dense). Pinellas County experiences high levels of pedestrian and bicycle crashes, due largely to the current transportation network's reliance on the personal automobile to access nearby land uses. In 2015 alone, Pinellas County experienced 995 pedestrian and bicycle crashes. 35 of these were fatal (Pinellas County MPO Crash Data Management System, 2015). Pinellas County has a legacy of roadways that fail to account for the safety of people on foot and on bicycle. The urgent need to act is compounded by projected demographic changes as well. The County's older population will grow rapidly as the "Baby-Boom" generation ages and the number of racial and ethnic minorities rises. These groups, along with children, are disproportionately represented in pedestrian deaths. The completion of the Pinellas Trail Loop will help drive down these statistics by taking automobiles off the road and providing a safe haven for pedestrian and bicycle travel.

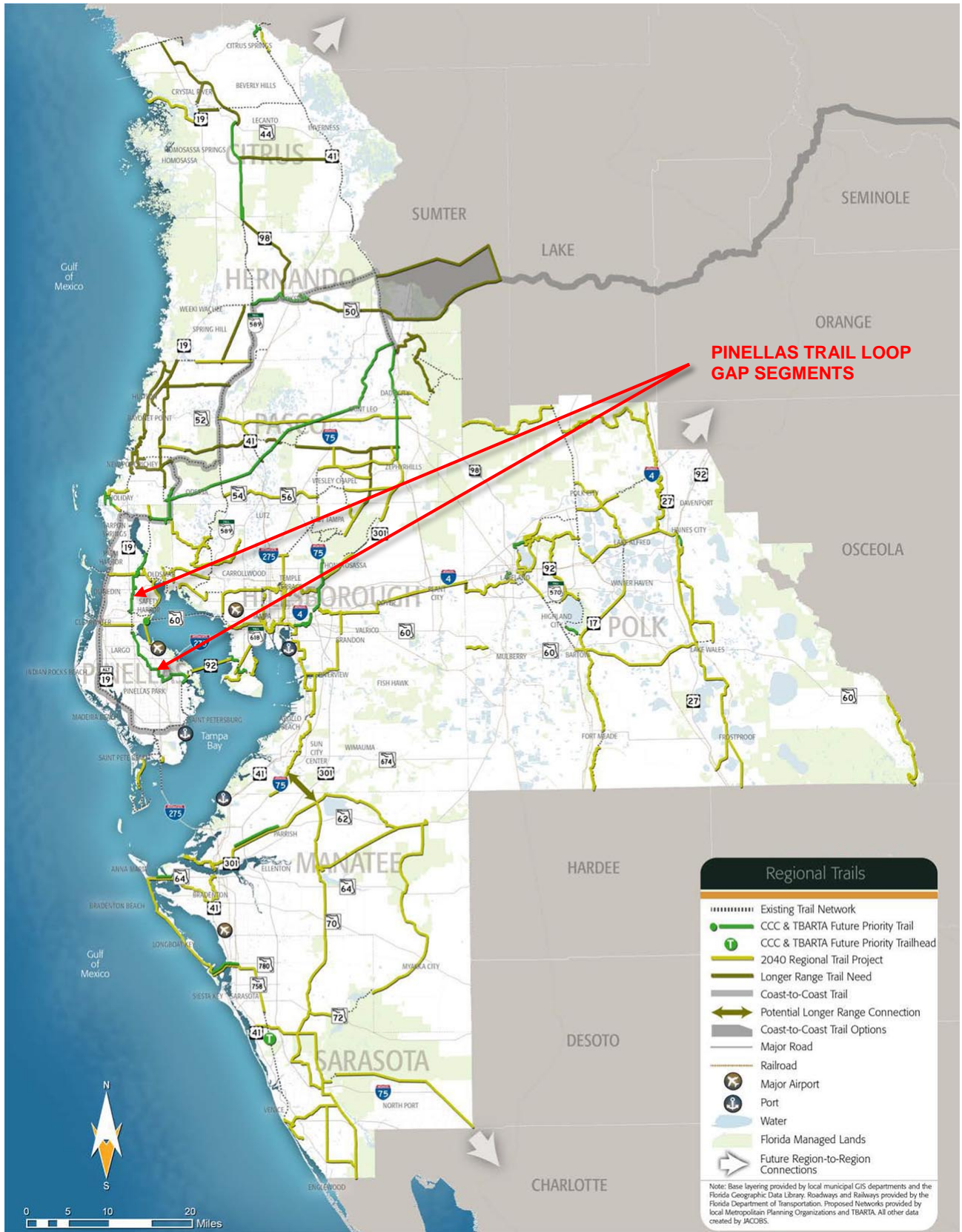


REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM CONNECTIVITY

Completing the loop would provide uninterrupted trail connections to a non-motorized bicycle and pedestrian facility that crosses Tampa Bay, connecting to the Tampa and Hillsborough County trail networks. This includes access to regional transit via connections to park and ride lots for PSTA and HART. In addition, the Pinellas Trail Loop will connect to the proposed Florida Coast to Coast Connector Trail, an uninterrupted trail facility that will traverse the entire width of the State of Florida and link St. Petersburg to Titusville, in Brevard County on the east coast of Florida.

The Pinellas Trail Loop is adopted as part of the TBARTA – 2040 and Longer Range Regional Multi-Use Trail Projects map. The project is a part of regional trail links that interconnect the Tampa Bay Region through designated non-motorized networks. The Trail Loop is coordinated with other public facilities in the metropolitan region to create a comprehensive, coordinated system.





TBARTA – 2040 and Longer Range Regional Multi-Use Trail Projects

COMPLETE STREETS

It is the goal of the Department of Transportation to implement a policy that promotes safety, quality of life, and economic development in Florida. The FDOT Complete Streets Policy is designed to ensure that Florida's transportation network supports safe and convenient travel for all transportation users. To implement this policy, the Department will routinely plan, design, construct, reconstruct and operate a context sensitive system of "Complete Streets." While maintaining safety and mobility, Complete Streets shall serve the transportation needs of transportation system users of all ages and abilities.

The Pinellas Trail Loop is planned and designed as the primary bicycle and pedestrian facility by which all other routes are connected. Small, local connections stem from the Trail Loop as multi-modal roadways with complementary pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The Pinellas Trail Loop will accommodate safe, convenient non-motorized mobility to major nodes, activity centers, and transportation hubs.

An estimated 380,000 people live and 260,000 jobs are within one-half (1/2) mile of the Pinellas Trail Loop. The Loop connects major employers, technical schools, institutions of higher education, and commercial facilities with many residential neighborhoods, including those that currently lack easy access to grocery stores and those with significant low-income and minority populations. The current gap in the trail system presents significant barriers to current and potential trail users by preventing direct access to the trail from high density residential and intense commercial areas. Completing the Pinellas Trail Loop will provide a solution to the high demand for safe connections to economic advancement opportunities, providing the opportunity for healthier lifestyles while reducing roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

The Pinellas Trail Loop will provide a solution to the high demand for safe connections to economic advancement opportunities, providing the opportunity for healthier lifestyles while reducing roadway congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Completing the Pinellas Trail Loop will finish a 75-mile multi-modal transportation facility that will safely accommodate alternative travel modes and enhance access to and from employment, retail services, and residential areas. This project is not only prudent, it is a much-needed regional transportation connection.

A significant portion of this project will add trail connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists along existing roadway corridors where trails and sidewalks do not currently exist. These roadways include city, county, and FDOT facilities.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

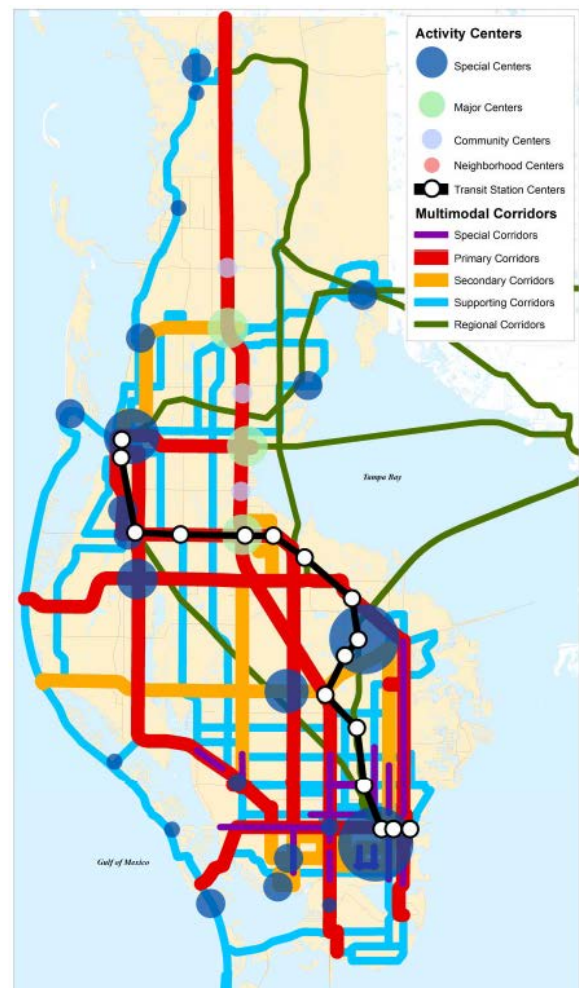
Safe Routes to School is the public policy initiative to increase the number of children who walk or bicycle to school by funding projects that remove the barriers currently preventing them from doing so. Those barriers include lack of infrastructure, unsafe infrastructure, and a lack of programs that promote walking and bicycling through education/encouragement programs aimed at children, parents, and the community.

The Pinellas Trail Loop project will provide a designated, non-motorized route for school children to access schools across Pinellas. The trail is within one-half mile of 84 schools. While the trail serves as a regional connection, local routes provide for direct access to school and other higher educational institutions. For many school-age children, the project will open the opportunity to safely bike or walk to school.

REGIONAL MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY

The Pinellas Trail also provides vital connectivity to Pinellas County designated Activity Centers, Multimodal Corridors and neighborhoods. The regional has planned for mixed-use Activity Centers to serve as long-term focus for employment, housing, and civic amenities, the Trail connects each Center and expands transportation choices to a variety of users.

The Trail Loop passes along planned premium transit routes, planned light-rail route, and connects to the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority government offices/transit hub. Additionally, the Pinellas Trail provides connection to the Suncoast Beach Trolley that extends from Clearwater to St. Petersburg with stops along the unique beach communities. The Pinellas Trail Loop also connects to the existing Clearwater Beach Ferry and the St. Petersburg/Tampa Ferry Pilot Program.

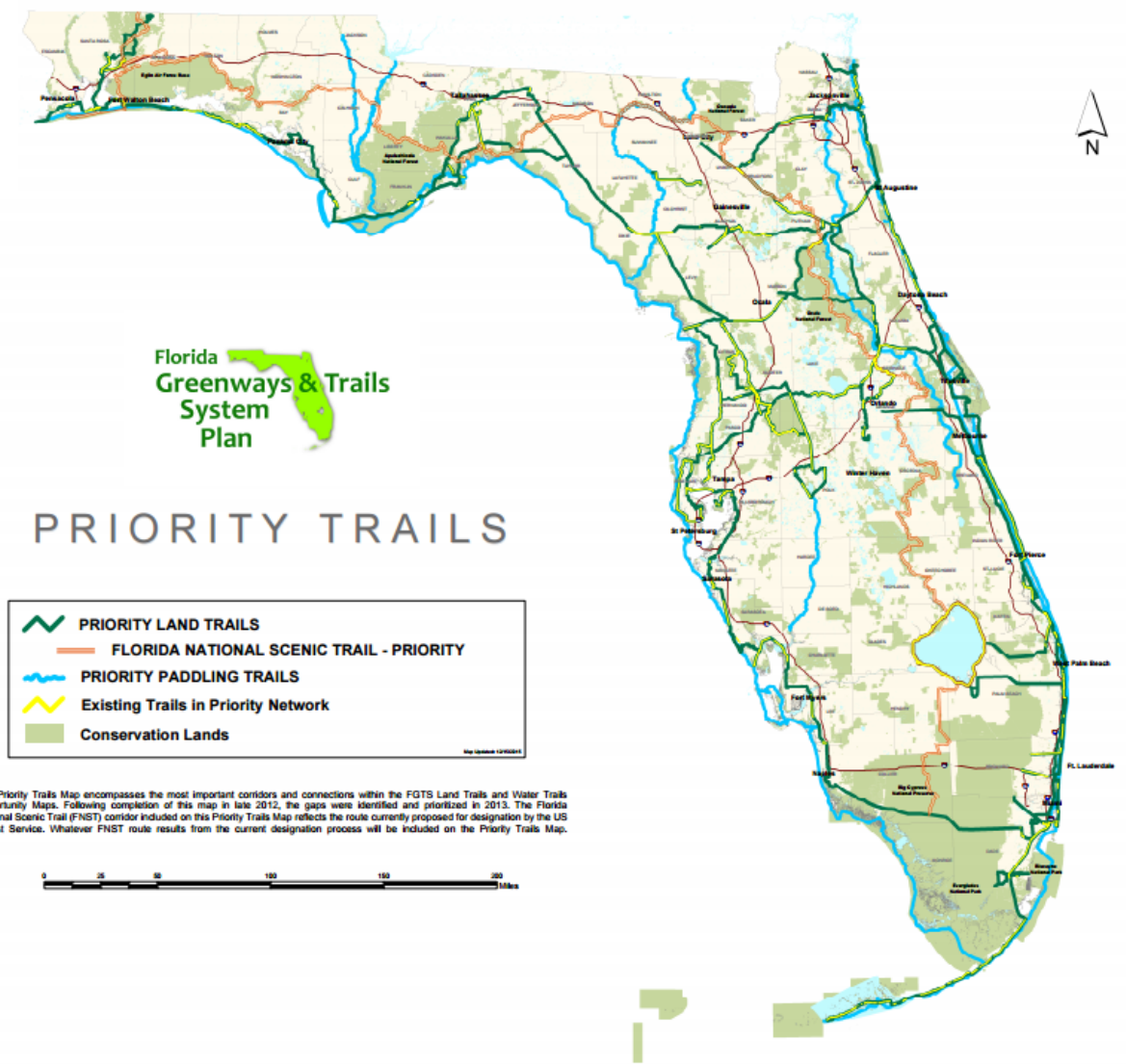


Forward Pinellas (formally Pinellas Planning Council) – Countywide Strategies Transit Orient Development Map

FLORIDA GREENWAYS & TRAILS SYSTEM

The Florida Greenways and Trails System (FGTS) is made up of existing, planned, and conceptual trails and ecological greenways that form an interconnected statewide network. The FGTS serves as a green infrastructure plan for Florida, tying together the greenways and trail plans and planning activities of communities, agencies, and non-profits throughout Florida.

The Pinellas Trail was first listed on the FGTS in 2003 and is a Priority Trail in the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan. This Pinellas Trail Loop completion project would connect the other Pinellas County trails in the FGTS including Bayshore Linear Greenway, Upper Tampa Bay Trail, and McKay Bay Trail. The Tampa Bay connections contribute to a larger trail network that extends down the Gulf Coast and also across the state to the Atlantic. The Pinellas Trail Loop requires a 21.35 mile connection to complete the Pinellas link.



The Priority Trails Map encompasses the most important corridors and connections within the FGTS Land Trails and Water Trails Opportunity Maps. Following completion of this map in late 2012, the gaps were identified and prioritized in 2013. The Florida National Scenic Trail (FNST) corridor included on this Priority Trails Map reflects the route currently proposed for designation by the US Forest Service. Whatever FNST route results from the current designation process will be included on the Priority Trails Map.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

The project has secure public, private, and community support. The Pinellas Trail Loop provides direct connections to trails within the county and extending into other counties in the region. The County and Forward Pinellas (formally Pinellas Planning Council and MPO) have been collaborating with other agencies in the region to support the Pinellas Trail Loop as a regional facility and it continues to remain a high priority across the region.

Pinellas County and Forward Pinellas are partnering with Duke Energy to use their property and utility easements for a significant portion of this project. This partnership allows for the utilization of the existing utility corridor, providing a unique and functional trail corridor that not only provides a recreational opportunity, but serves as a safe alternative transportation facility for employment, school traffic, and other non-recreational trips.

In anticipation of completing the Loop, the Florida Department of Transportation has already constructed an overpass at U.S. Highway 19 and an underpass at SR 688/Ulmerton Road for the future Pinellas Trail Loop. Another overpass segment was recently constructed at Allen’s Creek and US 19 which provides for the trail crossing. In addition, FDOT has committed to constructing the trail segment along Roosevelt Boulevard (SR 686) at a value of \$1.5 million for 2.3 miles of trail. The project capitalizes on other FDOT investments in the region.

PROJECT SUPPORT ENTITIES (2015 LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR PROJECT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES)

State and Federal Elected Officials

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson
David W. Jolly, U.S. Representative,
Florida District 13
Kathy Castor, U.S. Representative, Florida
District 14
Gus M. Bilirakis, U.S. Representative,
Florida District 12

Private Businesses

AliveTek
BayCare
Bayfront Health
Duke Energy
Derby Lane
Empath Health
HSN
Jabil
My Marketing Department, Inc.
Plasma-Therm
PowerDesign
Renker Eich Parks Architects
Raymond James & Associates

Chambers and Community Organizations

Chambers of Commerce and Economic
Development
Central Pinellas Chamber of Commerce
Clearwater Regional Chamber of
Commerce
Pinellas Park/Gateway Chamber of
Commerce
St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce
Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater
Trail and Community Organizations
Council of North County Neighborhoods
Florida Bicycle Association
Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation,
Inc.
Joy Hancock, Assist. Dir. Florida Bike
Spring Tour (dir. Bike Florida Boutique
Tours)
Pinellas Trails, Inc.
57 Letters from Citizens

Educational Institutions

Clearwater Central Catholic High School
Pinellas County Schools, Career, Technical
and Adult
Education
Pinellas County Schools, Superintendent
St. Petersburg College
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Local Governments

City of Belleair Bluffs
City of Clearwater
City of Dunedin
City of Gulfport
City of Largo
City of Oldsmar
City of Pinellas Park
City of Safety Harbor
City of Seminole
City of South Pasadena
City of St. Petersburg
City of Tarpon Springs
Town of Belleair
Town of Kenneth City

Other Governmental Entities

Barrier Islands Governmental Council
(BIG-C)
Florida Department of Health
Forward Pinellas (MPO)
Pinellas Board of County Commissioners
Pinellas County Economic Development
Pinellas County Veterans Services
Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority
(PSTA)
Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, Pinellas County
Sheriff ’s Office
Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation
Authority (TBARTA)
Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council