



Legacy Trail Extension On Track for December Acquisition to Ashton Road

If all goes according to plan, by late December 2017 Legacy Trail users gazing northward from the northern end of the trail by Culverhouse Nature Park will be seeing County property signs atop the overgrown, unused rail corridor now owned by CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSX) and its lessee Seminole Gulf Railway L.P. (SGR). Field work has been completed by the County and its partner Trust for Public Land on an environmental assessment, title review, and boundary survey of the Phase 1 portion of the corridor to Ashton Road. CSX and SGR are participating in the review. Efforts are now focused on analyzing the results, as well as completing the review of over 30 existing individual licenses, leases and agreements and deciding whether to continue, modify, or terminate each one. Despite beginning with a shortened timeline, and the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, the parties expect to complete the inspection review by November 30, 2017. Barring any unexpected findings, they will close on the property by December 20th, 2017, as provided in the sale contract.

Like the existing Legacy Trail, the Phase 1 corridor will be "railbanked" under the provisions of the National Trails System Act. According to the Rails to Trails Conservancy, "Railbanking is a method by which corridors that would otherwise be abandoned can be preserved for future rail use through interim conversion to a trail." CSX and SGR recently filed to formally abandon this section of rail corridor with the Surface Transportation Board, which has national regulatory oversight on railroads. The Sarasota County Board of County Commissioners approved on October 31st sending a "letter to the Surface Transportation Board requesting issuance of a Public Use Condition, designation of Interim Trail Use, including a Statement of Willingness to Assume Financial Responsibility in response to the CSX Transportation/Seminole Gulf Railway application for abandonment."

Efforts are also proceeding to draft language for a planned November 2018 County-wide referendum that, combined with a broad public fund raising effort and continued pursuit of grants, will finance both the Phase 2 acquisition of the corridor from CSX/SGR AND construction of both phases to extend the Legacy Trail to Payne Park in the city of Sarasota.

[The future indeed looks bright for a dramatically expanded trail network in Sarasota County.](#)

Construction to begin on the LT Laurel Road Overpass

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) held its final public hearing on October 30th at the Sandra Sims Terry Community Center in Nokomis before beginning construction of a Legacy Trail overpass at Laurel Road. Sarasota County recently completed relocation of major utility lines within the construction footprint. Construction of the overpass will begin by the FDOT contractor Denson Construction, Inc., to build a temporary, safe detour route for trail users. Right of way issues caused FDOT to move the detour route from the previously planned east side to the west side of the trail. The current plan calls for trail users to cross Laurel Road at a new traffic signal to be installed at the intersection of Laurel Road and Forest Street. FLT has expressed some safety concerns about the nearly mile long trail detour to FDOT. We will publish a map of the final detour route on the FLT web site.

The overpass will be about 90 feet long and provide a 12 foot wide multi-use bicycle and pedestrian pathway. Motorists should expect overnight lane closures or detours along Laurel Road. The existing Legacy Trail will remain open via the detour throughout the expected 225 days of construction. Once completed, trail users and motorists will both greatly appreciate the \$2 million overpass to safely expedite traffic across this increasingly heavily traveled intersection.

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