



Lake-Sumter MPO • Polk TPO • MetroPlan Orlando • Ocala-Marion TPO • Space Coast TPO • Volusia TPO

May 1, 2013

The Honorable Rick Scott
Governor
State of Florida, The Capitol
400 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Dear Governor Scott:

Re: Close the Gaps Legislation

The Central Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Alliance (CFMPOA) strongly supports proposed legislation that invests \$50 million in transportation funds into the Coast-to-Coast Connector as part of the “Close the Gaps” initiative.

The Coast to Coast Connector is a coordinated regional effort to develop a safe and continuous multi-use trail from the Atlantic Coast across Central Florida to the Gulf of Mexico. When completed, the trail will span roughly 275 miles. With approximately 75 percent (over 200 miles) of the corridor already developed or funded for completion, the Close the Gaps funding will provide an exciting opportunity to complete the project and promote the Sunshine State as a global destination for cycling enthusiasts as well as serving existing residents.

Linking regional trails across Florida is, potentially, one of the most important efforts for Florida in terms of recreation, utility and tourism, providing an opportunity for cyclists and hikers to enjoy the nature and the communities of Central Florida for days on end without seeing the place twice.

In addition, Regional multi – use trails provide important community connections, serve as alternative modes of transportation, increase property values and promote economic development and ecotourism (The most frequently requested information by visitors at the State of Florida’s Official Welcome Centers is trail information). The impacts of a statewide connected system of trails will not only entail direct economic impacts through consumer spending but create a more robust ecotourism business sector, creating new local jobs and promoting redevelopment of areas such as a downtown.

Studies completed by East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and numerous other organizations across the nation report that trails have a positive economic impact on local economies. As an example:

- The impact of the West Orange Trail on Downtown Winter Garden was shown vital in the revitalization of the downtown and that in 2010, trail users contributed to 25% of sales (\$3.6 million) in the downtown resulting in a direct and indirect estimated economic impact of \$5 million and supported 61 jobs.

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- The West Orange Trail, Little Econ Greenway, and the Cady Way Trail combined had a direct and indirect economic impact of \$42 million and supported 516 jobs in 2010.
- Events such as the Bike Florida's "Forgotten Coast Tour" in 2012 had an economic impact of \$533,883.73 between travel, food & beverage, lodging, merchandise, equipment/repairs, fees, and more from visitors across Florida and the nation with 2/3's of the participants living outside the state.
- Trails are the number one community amenity sought by American homebuyers (National Association of Homebuilders, 2008).

The CFMPOA is an organization comprised of six MPOs representing 10 counties in two districts of the Florida Department of Transportation. Through our coordination, we recognize that there are numerous counties and cities that stand ready to move swiftly to see to reality the investment into the coast-to-coast network. The following counties have Close the Gaps projects pending to accomplish the coast-to-coast concept: Brevard, Volusia, Seminole, Orange, Lake, Sumter, Hernando, Pasco and Pinellas. We believe strongly that the investment in this destination trail will catalyze economic development and enhance property values across the heart of Florida.

Your support of this legislation is most appreciated.

Sincerely,



Leigh Matusick

CFMPOA Chairperson

Mayor Pro Tem, City of DeLand

- c. Central Florida Legislative Delegation
CFMPOA Members