



RG 2013-05

May 6, 2013

The Office of Governor Rick Scott
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Close the Gaps Legislation

Dear Governor Scott:

The Volusia Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) supports the commitment of \$50 million in transportation funds included in the appropriations bill approved by the Legislature for the Coast-to-Coast Connector as part of the "Close the Gaps" initiative.

The Coast-to-Coast Connector is being developed as part of a regional effort to develop a safe and continuous multi-use trail from the Atlantic Coast through 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 supports efforts in Volusia County to develop a world-class trails system which promotes ecotourism (the most frequently requested information by visitors at the State of Florida's Official Welcome Centers is trail information) and expands opportunities to attract cycling enthusiasts as well as serving existing residents.

A roughly 10-mile gap is required to complete the East Central Florida Regional Rail Trail (ECFRRT) within Volusia County. Once complete, the trail segment will serve as a component of the Coast-to-Coast Connector as well as the proposed St. John's River to the Sea Loop Trail. Stakeholders in the Volusia TPO planning area are strongly committed to completing these important projects and this commitment is reflected in the local funding from general revenue and grants that have been used to complement federal and state funds in efforts to develop the trails.

Linking regional trails across Florida is, potentially, one of the most important efforts for Florida in terms of recreation, utility and tourism. The impacts of a statewide connected system of trails will not only entail direct economic benefits through consumer spending but create a more robust ecotourism business sector, creating new local jobs and promoting

Beverly Beach
Daytona Beach
Daytona Beach Shores
DeBary

DeLand
Deltona
Edgewater
Flagler Beach

Holly Hill
Lake Helen
New Smyrna Beach
Oak Hill

Orange City
Ormond Beach
Pierson
Ponce Inlet

Port Orange
South Daytona
Volusia County

redevelopment. Studies completed by East Central Florida Regional Planning Council and 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 in downtown Winter Garden was shown as 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.
- 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 and beverage, lodging, merchandise, equipment/repairs, fees and more from visitors across Florida and the nation with two-thirds of the participants living outside the state.
- Trails are the number one community amenity sought by American homebuyers (National Association of Homebuilders, 2008).

The Volusia TPO has ranked the ECFRRT as the #1 project on the Volusia TPO's List of Prioritized Transportation Enhancement/Alternatives Projects. We believe strongly in the completion of this project and respectfully request your support.

Sincerely,



Robert Gilliland
Chairman, Volusia TPO Board

cc: Volusia TPO Board
Central Florida MPO Alliance
Florida Legislative Delegation