

The Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways and Trails Master Plan is intended not only to provide a network of routes for non-motorized travel throughout St. Lucie County but to improve the quality of life, respect and celebrate the area’s unique natural features, and forge stronger community links.

The Master Plan encompasses the entire geographic area of the County, including the incorporated municipalities of Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie Village. While these are incorporated jurisdictions with their own responsibility for public lands and recreational amenities, each municipality needed to be included in the Master Plan to ensure connectivity to a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, greenways and trails. Therefore, input and information was elicited from citizens and staff of each entity.

In addition to goals of balancing the County’s transportation system, encouraging a healthy lifestyle for County residents and expanding opportunities for recreational tourism, one of the principal intents of the Bicycle, Pedestrian, Greenways and Trails Master Plan is to connect the vast public lands that St. Lucie County has purchased through its Environmentally Significant Lands program. This program—designed to advance County policies related to habitat preservation and protection of natural resources—will be enhanced by the trails and greenways network as envisioned in this Master Plan. The network envisions primarily unpaved facilities west of Shinn Road in the rural parts of St. Lucie County, but as one moves east toward urbanized areas the trails become paved and give residents a greater variety of mode choice and mobility.

5.1 GREENWAYS AND SHARED-USE NATURE TRAILS

Nature Trails are envisioned as responsive links between the County’s environmentally-sensitive lands. Though these may not occur exclusively in the designated environmentally sensitive lands, they are designed to minimize environmental impacts and are generally intended to be unpaved (though in appropriate and necessary locations they may be constructed with a paved surface).

St. Lucie County has an existing system of nature-oriented trails that are mostly located on public lands, allowing access to park and equestrian facilities. Many of the greenway trails envisioned in this plan offer a long-range connection between those existing facilities, the municipalities, and neighboring counties.

5.2 OFF-STREET MULTI-USE TRAILS

On highways and other rural road sections where driveways are infrequent, multi-use trails allow both cyclists and pedestrians safe passage apart from the roadway. These types of trail facilities are preferable in areas where cyclists may not feel comfortable sharing parts of the roadway with moving vehicles. They are particularly well suited to roadways with heavy truck traffic.

Another benefit of multi-use trails is that they do not have to follow established roadway. In some locations these trails can provide useful connections between travel corridors where vehicular roadways do not exist. In these cases the transportation function of the trail takes primary importance. The placement of off-street trails outside of the roadway is intended to balance the overall transportation system and provide greater connectivity.



5.3 TRAILS IN SFWMD CANAL RIGHTS-OF-WAY

St. Lucie County's system of drainage canals maintained by the South Florida Water Management District offers an opportunity for longer-range trails to be constructed within the canal rights-of-way. These canals provide direct connectivity from the St. Lucie River to the areas of environmentally significant lands in the western portion of the County. These trails can be paved, though in some portions of the western County they are envisioned as unpaved trails to accommodate equestrian users.

5.4 ON-STREET BICYCLE LANES

In more urbanized parts of the County, on-street bicycle lanes serve a dual purpose: to add to the multimodal transportation network and to provide access to the County-wide trail system. These lanes are appropriate for placement over off-street trails on streets with frequent driveway access.

In addition to the connectivity and route options these trails provide to cyclists, they also offer safety and operations benefits to vehicles on the streets where they are placed.

5.5 SIDEWALKS

While construction of a sidewalk is primarily the responsibility of the municipality claiming jurisdiction over the local street, this plan recognizes that the residents of Fort Pierce, Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie Village are also residents of St. Lucie County as a whole. It is an important principle of this plan that the County must help to provide connectivity to its larger trails and greenways network through these communities.

At a minimum, this plan calls for the establishment of sidewalks on *both sides* of arterial and collector streets where they do not exist today. While it is desirable to have multi-use trails on larger streets, sidewalks provide at least connectivity in urbanized areas and provide safe passage for pedestrians along important roadways.

