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ST. MARKS TRAIL RESURFACING PROJECT

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As the managing agency for the Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad State Trail, the Office of Greenways & Trails (OGT) within the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for the trail repair and improvement project that is currently underway. In response to community interest in this activity, we offer some key points concerning the background and objective of the project and OGT's approach to managing it.

WHY THE RESURFACING?

The St. Marks State Trail currently has an 8-foot wide paved surface and was the first rail-trail in the state trail system to be paved. After twenty years of service, it's necessary to address wear and tear, as well as safety issues such as bumps, dips, crumbling edges and drop-offs at the edge of the pavement--in order to make the trail safer for recreational users, especially those on thin tire bicycles and in-line skates. While resurfacing is the primary objective, the trail will also be widened to 12 feet during the process. All other State Trails are paved at a 12-foot width, which is a nationally accepted standard for multi-use trails. A minimum 3-foot grassy shoulder will remain on each side of the trail for runners/walkers and the equestrian trail will remain in its present location.

WHAT ABOUT THE CANOPY?

We are taking extreme measures to protect the canopy and there will be minimal impact to the vegetation. The contractor has been directed, and agrees, that protection of the canopy is paramount. OGT staff is closely monitoring compliance with this directive throughout the project. The construction zone has been flanked with silt fencing as an additional safeguard for protecting the trailside vegetation and trees.

FUNDING

Funding for these safety improvements was allocated in July, 2006 in the Fixed Capital Outlay category for state owned land improvements, which means that the funds are not available for transfer to land acquisition or other types of projects. Since that time, we've been following standard procedures for state expenditures, receiving public input, working through the multiple permitting issues involved and carefully addressing the design issues that are

important to all concerned. Due to the quality standard of this resurfacing, the repaving should last another 20 years or more, making it good fiscal sense to include the extra safety measure of widening the trail as it is being repaved.

As to the cost aspect of widening the pavement, the difference between the 8' and the 12' trail is minimal in comparison to the overall project cost. For example, widening the 10.79-mile Wakulla County portion of the trail adds approximately \$117,000, which is primarily for additional asphalt material. Most elements of the repair work are required for either width.

TIMELINE FOR TRAIL SEGMENT CLOSURES

While closure of construction areas is required for public safety, we have divided the 16-mile trail project into two phases so that a portion of the trail will remain open at all times.

Phase One: Active construction began on the first phase, from the City of St. Marks north to the Wakulla Station Trailhead (8.9 mile marker), on May 26, 2010 and is contracted to take up to eight months.

Phase Two: Construction from the Wakulla Station Trailhead north to the Tallahassee Trailhead will not begin until Phase One is completed.

CONCLUSION

The St. Marks State Trail is enjoyed by over 280,000 users each year. It is the scene of many special events, is a vital part of the St. Marks downtown redevelopment, and it helps support the local economy. We look forward to an improved trail surface and we will, to the greatest extent possible, expedite the completion and re-opening of the trail. It is our goal and our pleasure to create a sustainable, safe and enjoyable trail that will serve the community for years to come.

Many thanks to those who support the trail, provide input, and help us manage this significant asset to Leon and Wakulla counties.

A project status report is available on our website and will be updated as needed. Please continue to visit FloridaGreenwaysAndTrails.Com for more information.