



## SUMMARY

### Recommended Alternative Public Meeting November 9, 2023

North Lake Trail Phase 3 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study  
Financial Project Identification (FPID) Number: 441626-2

**LOCATION** Altoona School  
42630 State Road 19  
Altoona, Florida 32702

**TIME** 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 pm.

**IN-PERSON ATTENDEES** 27 signed in participants  
George Gadiel, Lake County  
Jeff Earhart, Lake County  
Gallus Quigley, Lake County  
Beth Beam, Stantec  
John Moore, Stantec  
Alexandra Holtkamp, Stantec  
Kylie Casazza, Stantec  
Sofia Uribe, Stantec  
Laura Turner, Laura Turner Planning Services

**VIRTUAL ATTENDEES** 2 signed in participants  
Veronica Paredes, Stantec (Host)

**PREPARED BY** Laura Turner **Date:** December 19, 2023

In August 2022, Lake County began the North Lake Trail Phase 3 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study. The study limits extend from E. Altoona Road to State Road (SR) 40. This corridor is located in unincorporated Lake County, the Ocala National Forest, Altoona, and Astor Park. The project is approximately 16 miles in length.

The purpose of the PD&E Study is to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed trail alignments,, resulting in a preferred trail alignment. The study will consider engineering analysis, environmental review, and public input as these alternatives are evaluated. It is anticipated that this study will be completed by Spring 2024.

The Recommended Alternative Public Meeting was held on November 9, 2023 to share the recommended trail build alternative trail with the public and receive feedback. This summary provides highlights of the notification process, information shared at the public meeting, comments received, and the next steps.

## MEETING NOTIFICATION

Several notification techniques were used to publicize the public meeting, which are summarized here.

<b><i>Sent Out or Posted</i></b>	<b><i>Notification Activity</i></b>
October 11, 2023	Letter and Newsletter Issue 3 emailed to 5 Lake County BCC members
October 12, 2023	Letter and Newsletter Issue 3 emailed to 30 elected officials
October 13, 2023	Newsletter Issue 3 posted to project website ( <a href="http://www.NorthLakeTrail.com">www.NorthLakeTrail.com</a> ) with other website sections updated
October 13, 2023	Letter and Newsletter Issue 3 emailed to 93 agency representatives
October 13, 2023	Letter and Newsletter Issue 3 emailed to 78 stakeholders – 1 <sup>st</sup> class mail via USPS
October 16, 2023	Letter and Newsletter Issue 3 mailed to 481 property owners and 25 stakeholders – 1 <sup>st</sup> class mail for domestic and international addresses via USPS
October 26 & 27, 2023	Hand delivered 360 copies of Newsletter Issue 3 to gathering places within project corridor
October 27, 2023	Ad published in <i>Florida Administrative Register</i>
October 29, 2023	Newspaper display ad published in <i>Orlando Sentinel – Lake Sentinel</i>
November 2, 2023	Lake County PIO emailed news release to local media outlets
November 6, 2023	Recommended Alternative Public Meeting materials posted to project website ( <a href="http://www.NorthLakeTrail.com">www.NorthLakeTrail.com</a> )

## AT THE MEETING

### ***In-Person Format***

As individuals signed in, copies of the comment form and Newsletter Issue 3 were available. Individuals could share input by submitting a completed comment form at the meeting or by sending it to the study team afterwards through November 20, 2023. Throughout the evening, the following display boards were available for review.

- Welcome
- Title VI
- Lake County Trails Master Plan

- Purpose and Need
- Design Segment
- Project Development Process
- Project Alternative Segments Map
- Alternatives Evaluation Matrix
- Recommended Alternatives Map
- Individuals Segment Boards (typical sections and trail location)
  - A: SR 19 – East Altoona Road to CR 445
  - B: SR 19 – CR 445 to CR 445A
  - D: CR 445 – SR 19 to Spring Creek Bridge
  - F: CR 445A – SR 19 to SR 40
- PD&E Study Schedule
- Ways to Share Comments

Meeting materials were posted to the project website ([www.NorthLakeTrail.com](http://www.NorthLakeTrail.com)) on November 2, 2023.

***Virtual Format***

Veronica Paredes hosted the virtual format which began at 5:30 p.m. Individuals were required to register prior to joining the virtual meeting. Once signed in, the project presentation (same one at the in-person meeting) was shown and attendees had the opportunity to review project documents (via links to the project website) and to submit written comments (via Questions box in the control panel). The presentation was shown once at 5:30 p.m.

**COMMENTS RECEIVED**

This summary of comments includes those received from October 11, 2023 (beginning of the meeting notification process) through November 20, 2023 (end of the meeting comment period). During this time, 20 individuals submitted written comments with a few individuals submitting multiple written comments through separate submittals.

A summary of the submitted comments is provided, which focuses on the PD&E Study (from East Altoona Road to SR 40). Several individuals who submitted comments identified with the following advocacy groups – Friends of Lake County Trails and Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway.

The number in parenthesis indicates the number of times a comment was made. The number in parenthesis may not match the number of submitted comments as several different topics often were covered in one written submittal.

**General Support for the trail (10)**

- Glad to see trail progress being made (2)

**Add to Contact List**

- Both segments (2)
- PD&E Study only (1)
- No Segment Specified (2)

### **Supports Alternative that follows SR 19 to CR 445 to SR 40 (8)**

- Consider building the spur (Phase 2) first followed by Phase 1 (8)
- Safest - physical and environmental, widest available corridor and away from traffic (5)
  - SR 19 and CR 445A are wider and faster roads than CR 445; also have narrow/constrained right of way to the Forest with a lot of truck traffic (1)
  - CR 445A is dangerous for trail users (1)
  - Gets off SR 19 quicker (1)
  - CR 445A has large truck traffic (1)
  - CR 445A and SR 19 are designed to accommodate higher speeds, more traffic, and have emergency lanes (1)
- Most connectivity (7)
  - Alexander Springs, Spring Creek, Florida Trail, Paisley Woods Bicycle Trail, Billie Bay Wilderness (6)
  - Low Income communities (3)
- Most scenic (5)
- According to the evaluation matrix, CR 445A has fewer cultural impacts; however, these impacts are far outweighed by the additional connectivity to other bicycle trails, hiking trails, historic/cultural sites, and other recreation area (1)
- While the spur connects to Alexander Springs, Paisley Woods Bicycle Trail, and Florida Trail, it's not known as to when the spur would be built (1)
- Connecting to Alexander Springs should be top priority (1)
- The sooner a trail user can get off of SR 19, the better, especially with the traffic on SR 19 (1)
- Better riding and hiking environment (1)
- CR 445 option needs to go all the way to SR 40; spur will only double the traffic on the spur with trail users going up and back rather than all the way to SR 40 (1)
- CR 445A reduces the economic impact since there will be fewer trail users (1)
- Noted that the Recommended Phase 1 is \$4 million more than going along CR 445 to SR 40 (1)
- If build only the spur, most cyclists will continue east on CR 445 to SR 40, which is even more dangerous (1)
- If legal trail users are kept out of the Forest [by not continuing to SR 40], the illegal users will continue and degradation of the Forest will continue (1)
- Crossing and being able to access an Outstanding Florida Water is a benefit; in line with passive use and residents' appreciation aspects of that design; is not "least favorable" (1)
- Slightly higher wildlife impact of passive crossing of a wetland is another benefit allowing more potential opportunities for wildlife viewing (1)
- CR 445 has fewer road/street/driveway/access crossings - a benefit (1)
- Not creating access to Alexander Springs should not be considered (1)
- Costs go up with having one full route - Phase 1 and a spur - Phase 2 (1) rather than building just SR 19 to CR 445 to SR 40 option
- Most beneficial to users and least understood by non-users (1)

### **Supports Recommendation Phase 1 - SR 19 to CR 445A to SR 40 (1)**

- Prefers Phase 1
  - Phase 2 has high environmental and social impacts
  - Impacts of crossing Alexander Springs creek are high and would change the entire landscape of the area

### **Against the Trail (1)**

- Can't imagine anyone wanting to use a trail through the Forest
- Pine trees and palmetto obscure landscaping
- Positive tourism is a bit of a stretch
- No way to enforce motorized vehicles that may use the trail
- Trails are great but not in a remote, uninteresting section of Florida
- Concerned about path maintenance and litter pick up

### **Trail Experience**

- Build the trail just inside the Ocala National Forest (4)
  - Want a showcase trail that highlights the Forest's benefits; similar to other trails in national forests, including St. Marks Trail and the Gopher, Frog, Alligator Trail in Florida (1)
  - Provides environmental and physical protection to riders (3)
  - Needs this placement (especially of CR 445A option is selected) for user safety (1)
- When in the Forest for recreation, users likely to appreciate it and protect it; if access is closed off, likely no appreciation or care for the Forest (1)
- Traffic can be intimidating and noisy (1)
- Consider trail user experience over the fiscal and short term local impact (1)
- Added safety and user experience is worth the cost and time (1)
- Going past, and connecting to, cultural and historic resources is a plus; provides the opportunity for the Forest Service to educate trail users and gain additional support and care for the Forest (1)
- The trail should meet the Forest's Recreation and Cultural/Heritage mandates (1)

### **Economic Benefits (2)**

- Need economic impact of a well-designed, well thought out trail that people will want to use

### **SR 19 Concerns**

- Crossing SR 19 is real problem (2)
- When crossing SR 19, consider a tunnel or bridge instead of at-grade crossing, like the Florida Cross Greenway (1)
- Stay on one side of SR 19 or the other (1)

### **Trail Features**

- Needs to be well shaded (3)
- Guardrails needed on SR 19 north of Altoona School (1)
- Keep the trail setback from highway as far as possible (1)
- Concern about conflicts with trail and driveways & business parking lots (4)
- Spring Creek bridge can be easily fitted with a button and timed crossing gate for those who wish to use it; not sure why crossing the bridge is a big deal issue (1)
- Trails are being built in national forests in other parts of Florida and the U.S.; cited Capital City to Sea Trail in Tallahassee as example (1)

**Questions Asked (1)**

- What is the preferred route?
- What is the trail location?
- Is any right of way needed? If so, will owners be compensated?
- What is the width of the trail?
- What will the trail surface material be?

**Other Comments (3)**

- High speed limit on SR 19, especially between Demco Road and Boys Ranch Road; consider no passing zone

**NEXT STEPS**

This public input has been shared with the project team for consideration as the trail evaluations are completed and document. The results of this work will be presented at the public hearing anticipated to be held in early 2024 as part of a regularly scheduled meeting of the Lake County Board of County Commissioners.