

9/12/2018

Heather Grubert, P.E.
Project Development Engineer
State of Florida Department of Transportation – D5
719 South Woodland Blvd
DeLand, Florida 32720
Email: Heather.Grubert@dot.state.fl.us

RE: Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study; Financial Project ID: 439865-1

Dear Ms. Grubert,

I am writing this letter and asking that it be entered into the public record regarding the above PD&E study. I am not able to be at the CAG/Stakeholders meeting as I have family medical obligations out of the area.

I applaud FDOT's efforts in engaging the public in this study process and thank you for calling a meeting to discuss the alternatives for the segment of the St. Johns River To Sea Loop from U.S. 1 or Alternative Route from State Road (S.R.) 44 (Lytle Avenue) to S.R. 400 (Beville Road). The SJR2C Loop is a very important economic and recreation project to Volusia County, the Cities and importantly the residents and visitors who will use this showcase trail system when completed.

It was with some disappointment when I read the two emails from you to Maggie Ardito and others that outline why the alternative that the St. Johns River to Sea Loop Alliance recommended is not being presented or offered as alternative to the preferred/recommended alternative.

I appreciate that building a 12ft wide trail through an urban environment with the many conditions that this segment faces is not an easy task. However, it is important that every segment of this Loop be designed and built to the showcase standards that are part of the State of Florida Sun Trail system. I understand that the state allows for some reduction in width for locations that have less than optimal conditions. These options should be utilized sparingly in design of a designated SUNTrail alignment.

I would encourage you to take another look at this area and support an alignment that is safer and designed for use by not just the professional cyclist but by tourists on a bicycle touring vacation or a local family out for a Sunday bike ride with the little ones. Size, location and safety should be our guides when building a showcase system, not just fit.

If ROW acquisition is an issue, as indicated in the second of the emails sent to Maggie Ardito in response to her questions, please consider partnering with other jurisdictions to acquire it. The missing link along Maytown Road where Volusia County handled the ROW acquisition for those

few parcels not under state ownership is a perfect example of how working together we can find the “best way” not just the easy way.

As an early proponent of trails and as a former elected Volusia County Council Member, I can attest to the efforts the County staff took to insure that what we called our showcase trails system, in fact met showcase standards and provided a first class off road experience for our users.

We experienced many of the issues you raise in your email. We also went through areas that were environmentally challenging. We had acquisition issues to contend with and bridges to build. But like the SUNTrail system, we also had a dedicated funding source that gave us a bit of breathing room to get it right. As I understand it this SUNTrail funding program has no sunset date, making funding of infrastructure an easier lift.

It wasn't easy and it took a long time, however Volusia County will shortly have over 58 miles of showcase trails open when the ribbon is cut on the final miles of the Regional Rail Trail next week. I tell people that the County Showcase trail system, consisting of the Spring to Spring and The East Coast Regional Rail Trail, now segments in the SJR2C Loop and the Coast to Coast Trail, are a 25 year overnight success story. And while I am not advocating that we take another 25 years to complete the Loop, I am asking that you step back, reevaluate your analysis and put yourself in the rider, jogger or walker's seat and recognize we need to do what is best... not what is easy. Let's get it right the first time as there will be no opportunity to fix it later.

I offer my assistance in any way needed to work through these issues.

Sincerely,

Patricia Northey

Patricia Northey

CC: Chair and members of the Volusia County

Mayor and City Council Members, Port Orange

Mayor and City Commission Members, New Smyrna Beach

Mayor and City Commission Members, South Daytona

River To Sea TPO