SUN Trail Funding Fact Sheet

Suwannee River Greenway at Branford

In 1992 the Town of Branford and Suwannee County applied to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to acquire a rail corridor, operated by Henry B. Plant in the 1880s, for future trail use. It was added to the 1993-94 Preservation 2000 acquisition list, the precursor to Florida Forever. In 1995 the rail corridor was purchased by DEP Division of State Lands on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Governor and Cabinet) and subleased to local government for management (2015 direct lease to County).

"A Greenway Vision for the Suwannee River Valley" was prepared for the Suwannee River Water Management District in 1995 establishing primary linkages of natural resources and people. Among other things, it provided a foundation of partnerships for improving environmental, recreational, historical, transportation, and ecotourism conditions. In 1996 with "Vision" in hand, the tourism task force-initiated development of the state acquired rail-trail and trail within the road right-of-way by applying for funding by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991, now known as Transportation Alternatives. The federal funds to construct the 10-foot-wide trail were programmed in 2001 and benefit a County designated, by Executive Order, a Rural Economic Development Initiative community within the North Central Rural Area of Opportunity and within a Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern.

Established in 2015 with enacted changes in 2023 under Section 339.81, Florida Statutes, the Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail program receives an annual allocation from the redistribution of new vehicle tag revenues deposited in the State Transportation Trust Fund for administration by the Florida Department of Transportation's (FDOT) Systems Implementation Office. The competitively awarded funding is one source for expanding a safe statewide system of interconnected, high priority, strategic paved multi-use trails (SUN Trail network) for bicyclists and pedestrians and improving connectivity for lands of the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act. In 2016 FDOT received a request for SUN Trail funding to reconstruct the nearly 12-mile Suwannee River Greenway at Branford because of the aging infrastructure – with shoulder erosion, potholes, and pavement cracking throughout the entire trail. $3.6 million was programmed by the SUN Trail funding for trail reconstruction in 2021. In 2024, the project that meets strategies and objectives of the five-year Suwannee County Community Health Improvement Plan is complete. Parking is provided at Ivey Memorial Park located on US Highway 27 and at the Branford Trailhead located at Trail Street and Owens Avenue. The trail is a contributing resource to the following networks:

- Florida Wildlife Corridor, Priority 2 of the Florida Ecological Greenways Network's "Critical Linkages". See: floridawildlifecorridor.org
- Designation as part of the Florida Greenways and Trails System in 2010. See: floridadep.gov/parks/ogt/content/designations
- Suwannee River Wilderness Trail, a system of hubs and river camps within a day's travel apart. See: www.floridastateparks.org/parks-and-trails/suwannee-river-wilderness-trail

To visit the trail or for more information, contact

Suwannee County Parks & Recreation • 386-362-3004

suwanneeparks.com/suwannee-river-greenway/

visitsuwannee.com/branford/florida-bike-trails-suwannee-river-greenway

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

TRAIL

FDOT DISTRICT NUMBER: 2

CITIES: Branford, Fort White

COUNTIES: Columbia, Suwannee

WIDTH: 10 feet

LENGTH: 11.7 miles

SURFACE TYPE: Asphalt

PROJECT

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT NUMBERS: 442872-1

LIMITS: Suwannee River Greenway from CR248 to SW Riverside Ave in Columbia County

CONSTRUCTION START: February 2024

CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION: December 2024

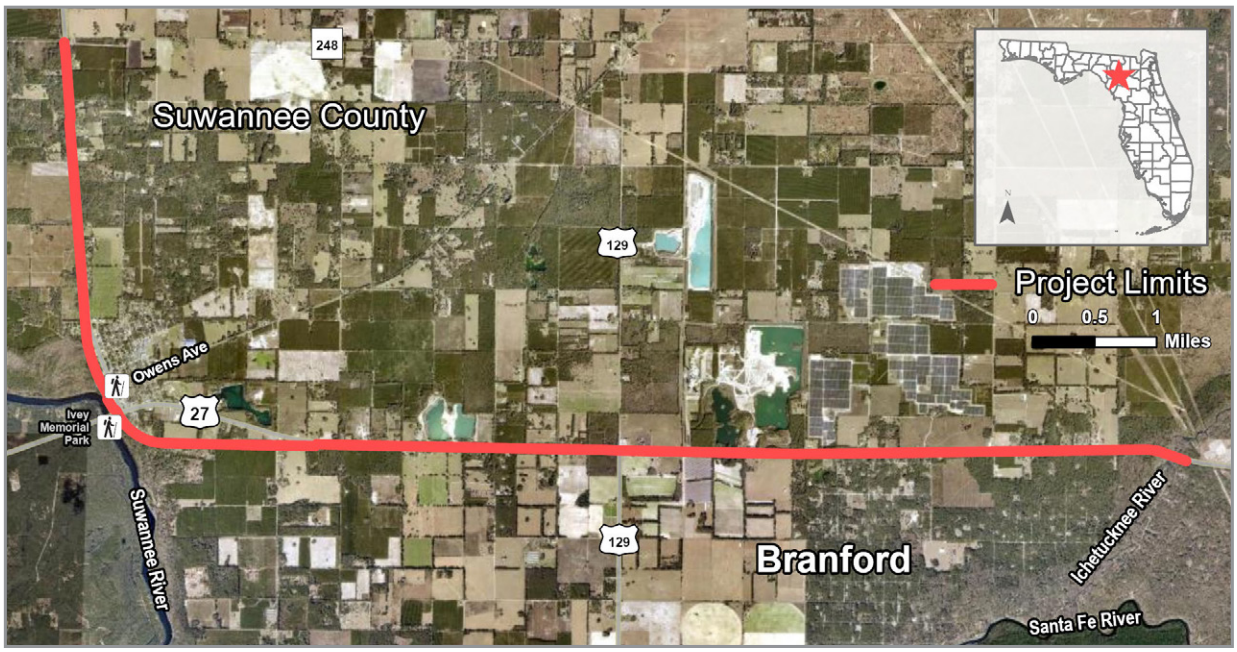
PHASES: Construction

Improving aging infrastructure while providing economic diversification through ecotourism

FUNDING

FISCAL YEAR: 2021

AMOUNT: $3,600,000 was awarded by the SUN Trail program. Within the project boundary an additional $810 by other FDOT state sources



Florida Department of Transportation
Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Program

Systems Implementation Office
605 Suwannee Street, MS 19
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0450

FloridaSunTrail.com

12/2024