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ROBERTS BAY BRIDGE. PHOTO BY MELODY TIMOTHEE

Florida Gulf Coast Trail



A next-century regional destination in the making, the Florida Gulf Coast Trail is designed to meet the challenges

of rapid growth and deliver life-changing results, for generations. From Tampa to Naples, this game-changing 420-mile greenway will catalyze a vibrant hike-bike-run trail community distinctive to Southwest Florida, and create a healthier, safer, and connected region.

Realizing a Regional Destination

When it is fully realized, the **Florida Gulf Coast Trail** will be one of the longest continuous trails in Florida, traversing seven counties—Hillsborough, Pinellas, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier. Drawing hikers, cyclists, and runners of all ages and abilities, the **FGCT** will catalyze a vibrant new trail community eager to embark on outdoor adventures and experiences. The trail will spotlight the region, weaving users through nature preserves, historic train depots, small-town main streets, rural lands and farmstands, family-friendly parks, urban cores, and sweeping coastal landscapes.

Balancing Rapid Growth

The FGCT is **Trust for Public Land's top priority** in Florida. Here is why—hundreds of thousands move to Florida each year, and Southwest Florida is experiencing some of the highest population growth, receiving nearly 900 new residents each day. Rapid development to keep pace with a booming population is erasing the region's connection to coastal lands.

Access to beaches, bays, urban green spaces, and rural communities is being squeezed out by massive shopping centers and waterfront condos, mushrooming on once open lands; with them, roads and parking lots are paving over landscapes. These conditions lead to isolation, disconnection, and poor health. Rapid development, paired with bigger crowds and more cars on the roads, are replacing expansive views with visual clutter and diminishing the outdoor lifestyles people move here to enjoy.

Harnessing the Power of the Outdoors

A next-century regional destination meets today's challenges, while delivering life-changing results to millions of people, for generations. The FGCT will do just this.

The signature trail will touch **52 rural, urban, and suburban communities** and benefit the region's more than 4 million residents, including **2.2 million living in direct proximity** to the trail and **at least 9,000 low-income households**, along with **more than 50 million annual visitors**—simply by harnessing the power of a single shared connection to the outdoors. FGCT will bring transformative outcomes:

- **Improved physical and mental health:** Trails provide low-cost, high-yield wellness opportunities. Easy access to walking, cycling, running, and inline skating for all ages and abilities reduces risks associated with obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stress.
- **Access to destinations & transportation alternatives:** Great trail systems bring people to community gathering places and change transportation habits. The FGCT will connect millions to parks, schools, grocery shops, bus stops, medical centers, shopping districts, and leisure activities, all within a 10-minute walk of the trail, and without the need for a car.



RINGLING BRIDGE, CAUSEWAY PARK.
PHOTO BY MELODY TIMOTHEE

- **Safe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists:** Three of the 10 deadliest places for pedestrians in the country are within Southwest Florida. The region is also ranked as one of the deadliest in the US for cyclists. As a dedicated non-vehicular corridor, the FGCT will save lives.
- **A cleaner region:** The FGCT will alleviate road congestion, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality, reducing surface temperatures, and making the region more inviting for everyone to experience the outdoors.
- **Stronger local and regional economies:** With a quality trail system and thriving trail community comes demand for new outdoor recreation and tourism-based businesses. These businesses bolster local economies, while strengthening the regional economy.
- **Land conservation:** An inherent outcome of any long-distance trail is land conservation. While the FGCT is being developed in segments, an inevitable end result will be the protection of beaches, bays, marshes, and farmlands. A regional destination trail ensures that people gain and retain access to iconic lands that are a valued part of the trail experience.



SHAMROCK PARK & NATURE CENTER.
PHOTO BY MELODY TIMOTHEE

Pathways to Completion

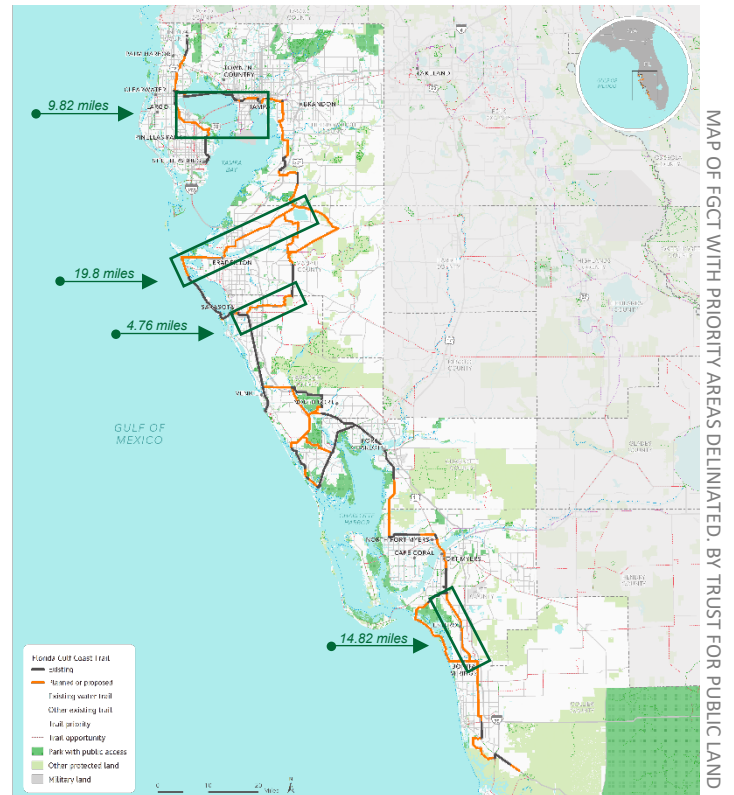
Nearly half of the FGCT exists in some form. But existing segments limit users to “out-and-back” trips, where the origin and destination are the same. A continuous trail will ensure that people can access gathering places and anchors in their communities and the region. TPL is working with local partners to transform isolated segments into a connected network:

- **9.82-mile Howard Frankland Bridge:** Links Tampa to St. Petersburg. (Hillsborough, Pinellas)
- **19.8-mile Manatee Hillsborough Connector:** Links from the Manatee River northeast to Hillsborough County. (Manatee, Hillsborough)
- **4.76-mile Legacy Trail Connector:** Extends the Legacy Trail to Nathan Benderson Park. (Sarasota)
- **14.82-mile Bonita Estero Rail Trail:** Transforms abandoned rail into a scenic greenway from downtown Estero south to Bonita Springs, John Yarbrough Trail, and Paradise Coast Trail. (Lee, Collier)

TPL Achieves Bold Visions

TPL is a proven national leader with a 50-year track record of local impact. Since 1972, we have created more than 5,000 outdoor spaces, protected more than 4 million acres of public land, and connected more than 9 million people to the outdoors. Our unmatched expertise helps realize bold visions.

- **Signature Trail Planning:** With decades of experience visioning and achieving long-distance trails, TPL is the premier organization for creating ambitious trails. We have amassed the country’s second-most prolific rails-to-trails portfolio. And we protected the Appalachian and Pacific Crest trails by protecting viewsheds, securing routes, and creating a conservation corridor.
- **Regional Coordination:** Achieving a shared regional trail necessitates a highly skilled coordinating organization. In Southwest Florida, TPL is convening and leading a multijurisdictional coalition of partners motivated to meet mutual goals for the public good. Our leadership is ensuring that the unifying intent and qualities of the broad vision guide the development of discrete phases in individual communities.



- **Conservation Financing:** Across party lines, TPL knows how to win voter approval for public funding. Our Conservation Finance team is a trusted advisor to state and local governments and community leaders on how to design, pass, and implement legislative *and* ballot measures to fund parks and conservation. With nearly 30 years of conservation finance work, TPL has a remarkable 83 percent success rate for winning ballot measures we helped bring to voters. In Florida alone, voters have said yes to 30 ballot measures TPL helped pass, resulting in assistance to 35 cities and counties for land conservation and park creation.
- **Land Acquisition:** Our Land Protection team bridges the gap between landowners and public agencies. Landowners who are often frustrated dealing at the pace of the federal and state governments are relieved to engage with TPL. We work directly with landowners to acquire properties that are vulnerable to development, crafting agreements for the specific needs of the property and its larger conservation goals. After acquiring land, TPL quickly and cost-effectively conveys the property to partner organizations for long-term stewardship.

Join Us in Realizing the Next Phases!

TPL is seeking philanthropic investments totaling **\$2.5 million—\$500,000 annually over five years.** Your support will help us grow our key efforts:

- **Partnering across 7 counties** to strengthen the multijurisdictional coalition and its shared vision.
- **Passing state and local ballot measures** to unlock \$500 million in public funding for land conservation and trail construction—for every dollar donated, TPL unlocks \$2 in public funding.
- **Working with landowners** to acquire property to fill in critical trail gaps.
- **Developing and completing** the 4 priority segments, spanning 6 counties.

The philanthropic community is instrumental in realizing the **Florida Gulf Coast Trail—a next-century regional destination.** Working together, we will connect millions of people to the benefits and joys of the outdoors—for generations to come.



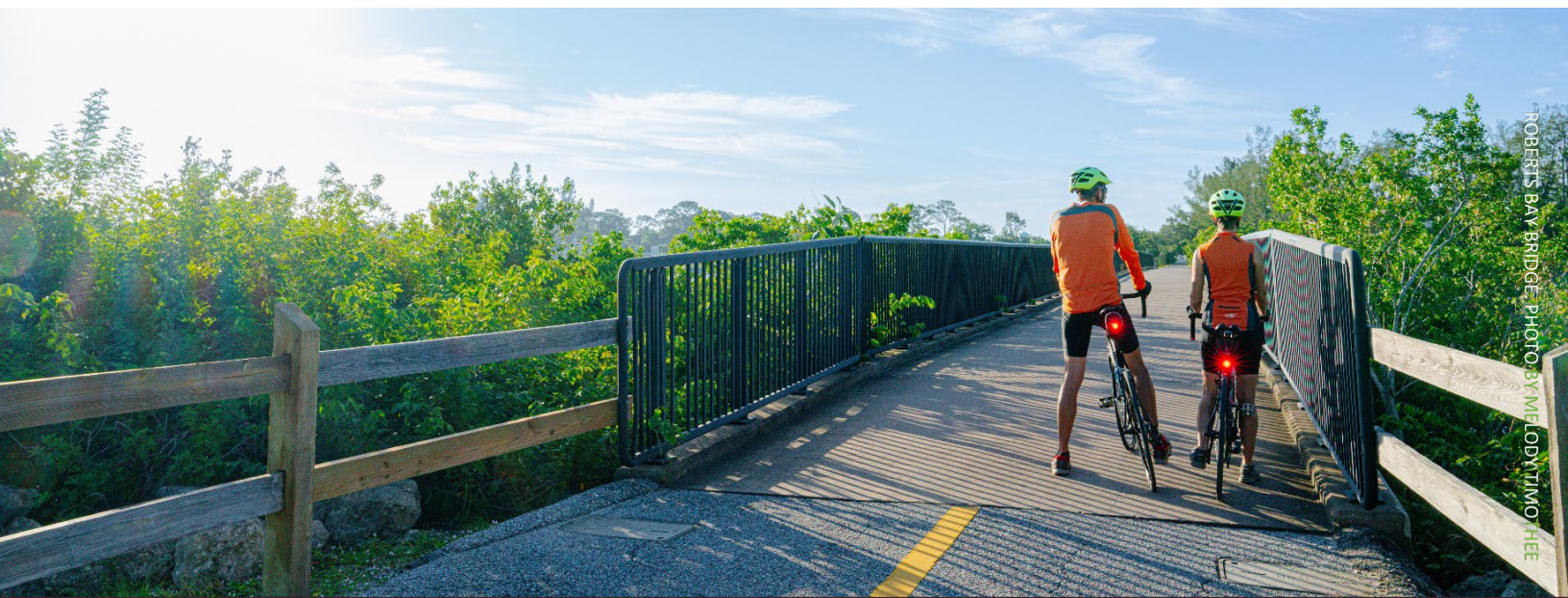
LYNN HAVEN BAYOU PARK & PRESERVE. PHOTO BY

The Florida Gulf Coast Trail is a generational vision for Southwest Florida. Bringing people to the trail will promote community stewardship, increase connectivity, and build on the region's legacy of conservation. As the trail is a significant regional project, Trust for Public Land has become a vital leader in advancing this vision.

—JON THAXTON
Senior VP, Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Your gift unleashes the transformative power of the outdoors.

Thank you for your generosity!



ROBERTS BAY BRIDGE. PHOTO BY MELODYTIMON.HEE



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Connecting everyone to the outdoors

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