



# Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation

## Five-Year Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Revised/Approved October 2023

The Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation (FGTF) was established as a 501(c)(3) organization at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to advocate for a statewide system of greenways and trails, which includes Florida's wildlife and ecological corridors. FGTF serves as a strategic partner to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and others to advance the state's greenways and trails system.

To guide its work, the Board of the FGTF adopted its first Strategic Plan in 2014 to champion the development of long-distance multi-use trails and support the proposed SUN Trails legislation and regional paved trail efforts. That Plan has been updated to set forth a framework for the FGTF's continued participation and commitment as a champion of a statewide connected paved trail system that includes trails within the Florida Wildlife Corridor. The comprehensive greenways and trails network includes both paved trails as defined by the SUN Trails system that are accessible to all levels of ability and mobility as well as natural (unpaved) trails that all provide wildlife corridor and ecological connectivity.

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## Mission, Vision, and Purpose

### Mission

The mission of the Florida Greenways & Trails Foundation is to advocate for and help advance a complete statewide system of connected trails and greenways.

### Vision

The FGTF, together with its partners and supporters, envisions a statewide connected system of greenways and trails for Florida's residents and visitors. These greenways and trails will provide public access to Florida's unique natural environment and promote transportation, recreation, economic development, wildlife, tourism, and health.

We imagine a day when this dynamic system of complete greenways and trails for people and wildlife will link our communities and provide connections to nature preserves, wildlife corridors, parks, beaches, rivers and springs, and other unique destinations via walking, biking, paddling and equestrian trails. The system we envision will be multi-faceted, with access for people of all ages and abilities, complementing efforts towards mobility and connectivity.

The FGTF is particularly committed to the completion of Florida's long-distance paved SUN Trails network. This network will connect Florida's major cities to state, regional, and national parks and recreational areas via separated greenways and trails corridors. These greenways and trails will provide citizens and visitors a scenic and healthy transportation choice that will create business opportunities and revitalize communities along these planned corridors spanning the state.

### Purpose

The FGTF will inform the citizens and elected officials of Florida about the public importance of our existing trails and greenways and raise awareness of the opportunities to connect these trails and greenways into a unique statewide system that will benefit citizens, visitors, and wildlife.

To foster this connected system, the FGTF will serve as a catalyst for sound ideas, develop strategic alliances with other not-for-profit organizations in Florida and nationwide as well as public-private partnerships and collaborations with state and local government agencies and for-profit private businesses. The FGTF will also offer assistance to the FDOT, FDEP, and other state agencies to include: the Florida Greenways and Trails Council (FGTC); Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, Florida Tourism Industry Marketing Corporation, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional planning councils (RPCs), local governments, and other related organizations. The FGTF is committed to working with FDOT and other partners to achieve Florida's safety vision of eliminating all transportation-related fatalities and serious injuries for all modes of travel.

The FGTF will raise funds and Invest resources to promote our mission to advance the statewide system of connected greenways and trails , with a focus on those facilities that generate economic benefits, offer a less stressful transportation alternative, and enhance healthy recreational opportunities for our citizens and visitors.

## Five-Year Goals and Objectives

***GOAL ONE: Inform the people of Florida and their elected officials about the public importance of our existing trails and greenways and raise awareness of the opportunities to connect these trails and greenways into a unique statewide system.***

The Board of the FGTF recognizes that improved public awareness of the recreational, economic, ecological, transportation and health benefits of greenways and trails for people and wildlife is critical to our ability to reach its other strategic goals. An expanded public awareness effort directed to Florida citizens, elected officials, tourist development councils, business leaders, environmental organizations and public agencies of government will continue to be essential not only to support the SUN Trails program administered by FDOT, but also to champion the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and Florida Wildlife Corridor administered by the FDEP.

- Objective #1 Collaborate with partners to develop a a public awareness effort, particularly at the regional and local levels, on the multiple values of regionally significant greenways and trails and the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- Objective #2 Maintain an updated FGTF website that includes critical maps and effective links to other statewide greenway and trail organizations.
- Objective #3 Continue to develop and promote video and podcasts about different trails and trail experiences in Florida and the value of greenways and trail connections.
- Objective #4 Partner with complementary organizations such as the Florida Bicycle Association, Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation, and others to promote greenways and trails experiences through multimedia avenues.
- Objective #5 Advance educational efforts regarding the economic contributions of greenways and trails and the complementary land development activities such as Trail Towns.
- Objective #6 Host periodic greenways and trails summits to showcase greenways and trail successes and “best trail practices” in Florida and the United States.

***GOAL TWO: Protect and expand the SUN Trails Program.***

The Board of the FGTF acknowledges the extraordinary value of the SUN Trails program being administered by the State of Florida through FDOT and pledges to work to protect this program and to expand the funding available for paved multi-use trails statewide.

Objective #1 Work collaboratively with FDOT at the state and district levels to strengthen the SUN Trails program.

Objective #2 Encourage the involvement of RPCs and local governments in cooperation with FDOT Districts and MPOs to improve design, operation, and priority for regionally significant trails.

Objective #3 Inform state legislators and other elected officials as to the multiple benefits of greenways and trails for residents and visitors.

***GOAL THREE: Support the Florida Ecological Greenways Network and Florida Wildlife Corridor as Core Components of the SUN Trails Network.***

The Board of the FGTF acknowledges that the future of wildlife in Florida is dependent on the completion of the statewide adopted “Florida Ecological Greenways Network,” inclusive of the “Florida Wildlife Corridor” plan. We propose to accomplish this goal by highlighting the wildlife corridors and the critical gaps that need to be closed as part of the continuously connected greenways and trails system.

- Objective #1** Support the development of a series of statewide and regional Ecological Greenway Network and Florida Wildlife Corridor maps, with noted corridor gaps, as part of the statewide greenways and trails system.
- Objective #2** Develop a presentation series to RPCs, the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council, and others regarding these Ecological Greenway Network maps and the importance of the statewide greenways and trails system inclusive of the Florida Wildlife Corridor.
- Objective #3** Participate in the multi-year update process of the Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan by collaboratively working with FDEP and the FGTC during the statewide public workshops and evaluation process.

***GOAL FOUR: Expand the Foundation's Statewide Strategic Alliances and Collaborations.***

The task of advocating for and helping to advance a statewide system of connected trails and greenways requires a broad coalition of statewide, regional, and local organizations working cooperatively together. To synthesize these interests, we intend to expand our efforts by recruiting the leadership of complementary groups and organizations to join our Board and Honorary Board and support our efforts.

**Objective #1** Recruit state greenway and trail groups and organizations to serve on the FGTF Board and Honorary Board.

**Objective #2** Recruit private business and philanthropic organizational involvement in the long-term mission of the FGTF.

**Objective #3** Support the development of a broad stakeholder group to advance knowledge and support for the statewide greenways and trails system with membership comprised of the organizations shown on the Appendix to this Five-Year Strategic Plan.

## APPENDIX

### Noted Stakeholder Organizations

#### Bikeable Cities

Florida Bicycle Association and local/regional chapters

Florida-based Special Interest Clubs, such as:

- Biking Clubs
- Hiking Clubs
- Mountain Bike Clubs
- Running Clubs
- Triathlon Training Clubs
- Walking Clubs

Florida Trail Association and local/regional chapters

League of American Bicyclists

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Regional Trail Advocacy Groups including but not limited to:

- Coast-to-Coast (C2C) Alliance
- East Coast Greenway Alliance
- Friends of the Legacy Trail
- Friends of the Underline
- St. Johns River-to-Sea Loop Alliance

Sierra Club

The Nature Conservancy