Preliminary Trail Network Assessment

The first task of the Orlando Primary Bicycle Routes Study was to complete a preliminary assessment of the existing and planned City of Orlando trail network in terms of the general coverage of the trail network and connectivity both within the City’s boundaries and connections to neighboring municipalities. The intent of the assessment is to ensure, on a regional and “big picture” level, that the proposed trail network adequately connects key facilities, activity centers, and community destinations, allowing bicyclists of all ages and abilities to make trips for recreation or transportation purposes. This initial network review provides a foundation for discussions and coordination with stakeholders and agencies as we begin to focus on specific corridors and trail feasibility details. It also will identify any significant network gaps or additional areas or corridors for further evaluation.

Summary of Findings

The City of Orlando is successfully planning a trails network to serve recreational trail user needs. The “Primary Routes” outlined in the City-Wide Trail Plan serve as the core network for a family-friendly, paved, multi-use trail network. The City has worked (and is continuing to work) with Orange County, the City of Winter Park, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), LYNX, MetroPlan Orlando, Orlando Utility Commission, Florida Power and Light, Duke Energy, SunRail, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (GOAA) and private developers to develop a master trail plan to serve area residents and visitors. The following findings describe the coverage and connectivity of the proposed City trail network, both within the City boundaries and with adjacent municipalities and other nearby proposed projects:

- The planned Coast to Coast Connector Trail (C2C) has gained momentum over the last year and existing trail gaps along its proposed route will be closed as funding becomes available. FDOT has committed to funding the completion of this trail, and has allocated funds in its work program beginning in fiscal year 2015. When complete, this proposed 275-mile long trail will link the Gulf Coast to the Atlantic Ocean through Central Florida will attract Florida residents and visitors from around the world, presenting a significant economic impact through increased tourism and new development opportunities. While the proposed Coast to Coast Connector does not pass directly through Orlando, it is important that the City’s network provide linkages that allow users of this statewide trail to connect to Orlando as a trail destination to take advantage of all the City Beautiful has to offer. The closest regional trail segment that is part of the Coast to Coast Connector is the West Orange Trail. The City’s network is proposed to be indirectly connected to the West Orange Trail via Orange County’s Pine Hills Trail (which includes a short section within the City) and the Clarcona-Ocoee Trail.
- Many C2C trail users from outside the Metro-Orlando area may enter the region via Orlando International Airport (OIA). OIA is currently working to complete a bicycle master plan that will provide enhanced bicycle facilities and amenities for both employees and travelers. The City’s network is planned to provide connections to OIA.
- Orange County recently updated their Trails Master Plan and many of the planned trails connect to the City of Orlando. The City of Orlando plan reflects Orange County’s Trail Master Plan and the Primary Trails are planned for connection to the Orange County network.
- The City’s network is well connected to the neighboring City of Winter Park, providing two primary connections: the Orlando Urban Trail (OUT) to Mead Garden, and the Lake Baldwin Trail and adjacent connection to the Cady Way Trail.
- The City has worked with SunRail and LYNX to incorporate the trail system into the existing and planned transit systems. The OUT plan exemplifies this coordination and connectivity as it provides direct connections or spurs to all four SunRail stations within the City.
- The City has identified the most critical trail corridors needed to serve existing and future trail users. Trail alignments generally take advantage of “low hanging fruit” such existing easements along canals, within utility corridors, and along roadways with sufficient right-of-way. Trail alignments generally connect to community destinations to the extent possible along the alignments shown on the City Trail Plan, however, direct connections are not provided to all schools, parks, and other nearby destinations.
- Some areas south of the City core and west of the Orlando International Airport appear to have few primary trail connections. The majority of this area is within unincorporated Orange County.

Preliminary Assessment Recommendations

Figure 1 illustrates existing gaps in the overall City trail network. It also shows how the area was split into four quadrants for completing the corridor assessments.

Based on the preliminary trail network assessment, the following general recommendations are offered to help guide the continued trail network development in the City:

- The City should continue efforts to connect the Orlando Trail system to the Coast to Coast Connector. Multiple primary route connections to the Pine Hills Trail will allow more choices for trail users. Establishing a primary route between the Orlando Urban Trail and the Lake Lawne Trail would also help provide this additional connectivity to...
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The statewide trail (see #1 on Figure 1) via the Pine Hills Trail and the Clarcona-Ocoee Connector Trail.

- Continue to work with partnering agencies and private developers to develop and connect the primary trail system to the surrounding neighborhoods, schools, parks, SunRail stations and the many landmarks that form Orlando’s identity. Work with MetroPlan Orlando to appropriately prioritize key connections within the City trail network, including raising the priority for segments that most effectively close gaps to regional and statewide connections.

- Continue to establish connections to SunRail stations and major transit hubs. Connections to locations such as park and ride lots, LYNX superstops, and/or SunRail shuttle locations should be developed as primary routes, if feasible, to enhance connectivity to and encourage use of the trail network by transit users and vice-versa.

- Continue to plan and develop trails that connect with adjacent municipalities such as Orange County, Winter Park, Edgewood, and Belle Isle.

- Coordinate with Orange County and review potential for new east-west and a north-south connectors west of OIA and south of downtown (see #2 and #3 on Figure 1). Coordinate on potential for north-south spur connector from Meadow Woods Trail to Meadow Woods SunRail station (see #5 on Figure 1).

- Review the areas within one-quarter mile of all trail corridors to assess connections to community destinations within that range.

New trail connectors, where needed to provide indirect connections to primary routes, should be included in trail assessments, recommendations, and cost estimates.

- Coordinate with GOAA to ensure maximum connectivity of trails within OIA and Orlando Executive Airport (OEA), including a potential trail connecting the Meadow Woods Trail/Boggy Creek Trail to the proposed Intermodal Terminal Complex (and future South Terminal) at OIA (see #4 on Figure 1).

- Assess whether sufficient enhancements can be made to allow the proposed connections between the OUT and the Orlando Health/Amtrak SunRail Station to be included as a primary route. Similarly, assess whether the proposed east-west crosstown connector south of downtown between the County’s Avalon Trail and the City’s Shingle Creek Trail can be enhanced as a primary route.

- Create GIS locations for the proposed City Bike Share program for inclusion in future planning efforts.

Appendix A contains the full preliminary trail network assessment memo.

Figure 1 Corridor Assessment Quadrants and Existing Trail Network Gaps