

May 27, 2025

Acquisition and Restoration Council
% Hank Vinson
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Office of Environmental Services
3900 Commonwealth Blvd, MS 140
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

Via Email only: hank.vinson@floridadep.gov

Dear Acquisition and Restoration Council members:

I write to express support for including the Bonita Estero Rail Trail (BERT) project in the Florida Forever Program's Strategic Managed Area Lands List. Bert is an 11.4-mile underutilized rail corridor in Lee and Collier Counties intended to be converted into a public trail as part of the statewide trails and greenway network. The corridor is a designated priority trail segment of the 2024-2028 Florida Greenways and Trails System Plan. The acquisition and management of the corridor as a public trail further Florida's statutory and programmatic goals of enhancing the coordination and completion of land acquisition projects, contributing to the enhancement of essential natural resources, ecosystem service parcels, and connecting linkage corridors.

The Bonita Springs Assistance Office, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting our community, strongly endorses the BERT project. Located within the developed areas of Collier and Lee Counties, this trail will establish a crucial, secure, and cost-effective transportation option. In Bonita Springs, many lower-income residents rely on bicycles for transportation, making the BERT project vital for providing a safer route for children traveling to school and adults commuting to work. Furthermore, it will enhance community access to outdoor recreation and stimulate local economic growth.

We hope the Acquisition and Restoration Council will look favorable upon and include the Bonita Estero Rail Trail Project in the SMALL category of the Florida Forever Program.

Sincerely,



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