

Lee MPO Rail-Trail Feasibility Study



Alico Road

Bonita Springs Road



STUDY PURPOSE

Purpose

- To study the feasibility of a rail-trail within or near the Seminole Gulf Railway (SGL) corridor
- To meet the requirements of the Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized (SUN) Trail Network Program
- To maintain eligibility for SUN Trail funding
- Recommend a Preferred Alternative(s) using:
 - Technical analysis
 - Public and stakeholder input

Key Study Terms

- Rail-to-Trail: Rail corridor converted to a multi-use trail
- Alignment: The location and type of project within a corridor
- Alternative: The corridor and alignment under study

STUDY TEAM

Consultant Team



Government Partners



ABOUT RAIL-TO-TRAILS



U.S.



1965

Elroy-Sparta State Trail opened,
the first in the U.S.

2,270

Number of completed
rail-to-trail projects in the U.S.

FLORIDA



1988

Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad
State Trail opened, the first in Florida

65

Number of completed
rail-to-trail projects in Florida





LEGACY TRAIL, FLORIDA

Trail Timeline:

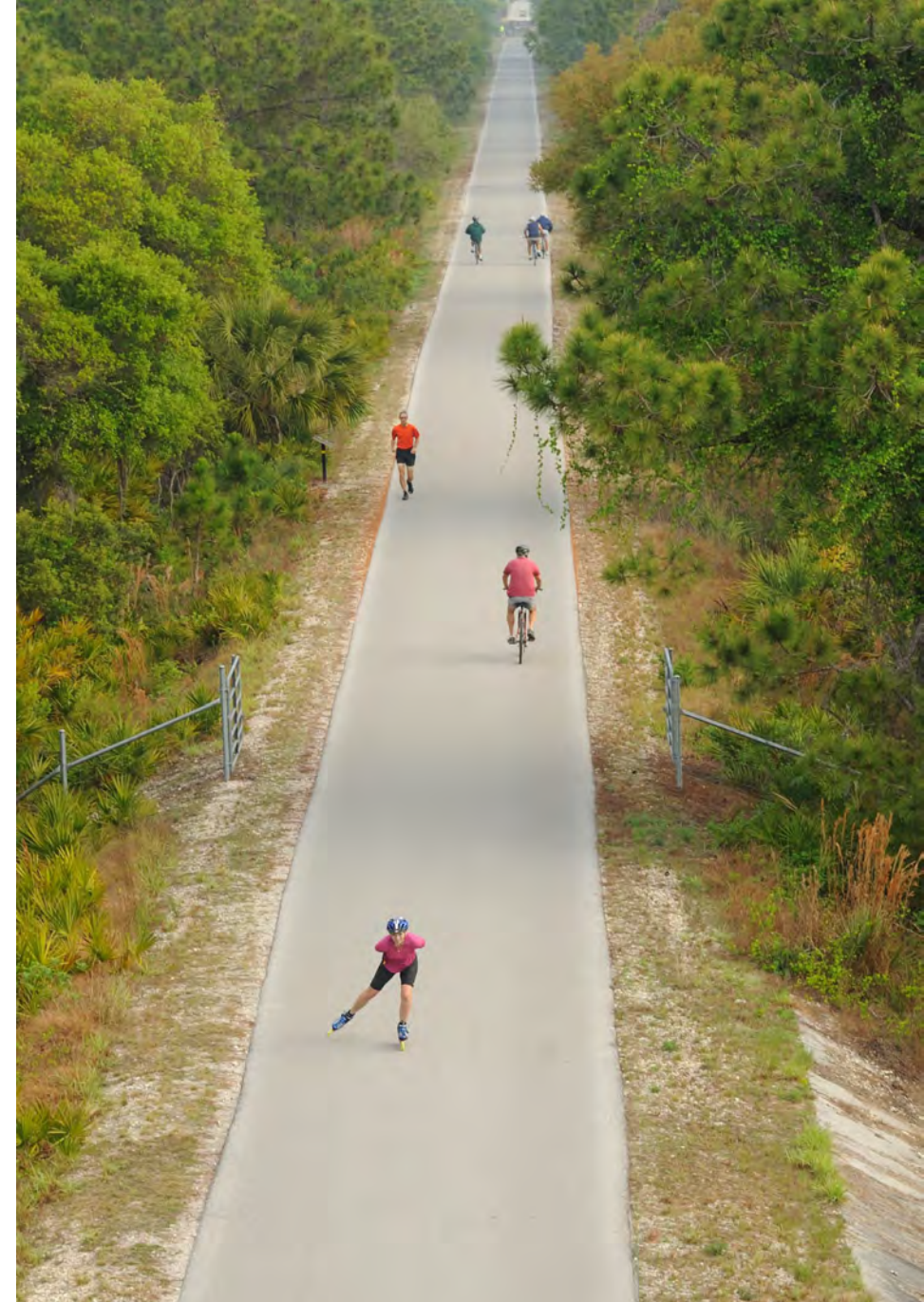
- 1971: Passenger rail service ends
- 1992: Freight rail service ends
- 2004: Sarasota County purchases corridor
- 2008: Trail opens
- 2017: Voters approve funding for extension

Trail Length:

- ~18.5 miles
 - Fruitville Road (north)
 - Venice Train Depot (south)
- Connects to a wider trail network

Trail Demand:

- ~475K people used the trail in 2021
- ~305K as of April 2022



Legacy Trail, Florida

STUDY AREA

Boundaries:

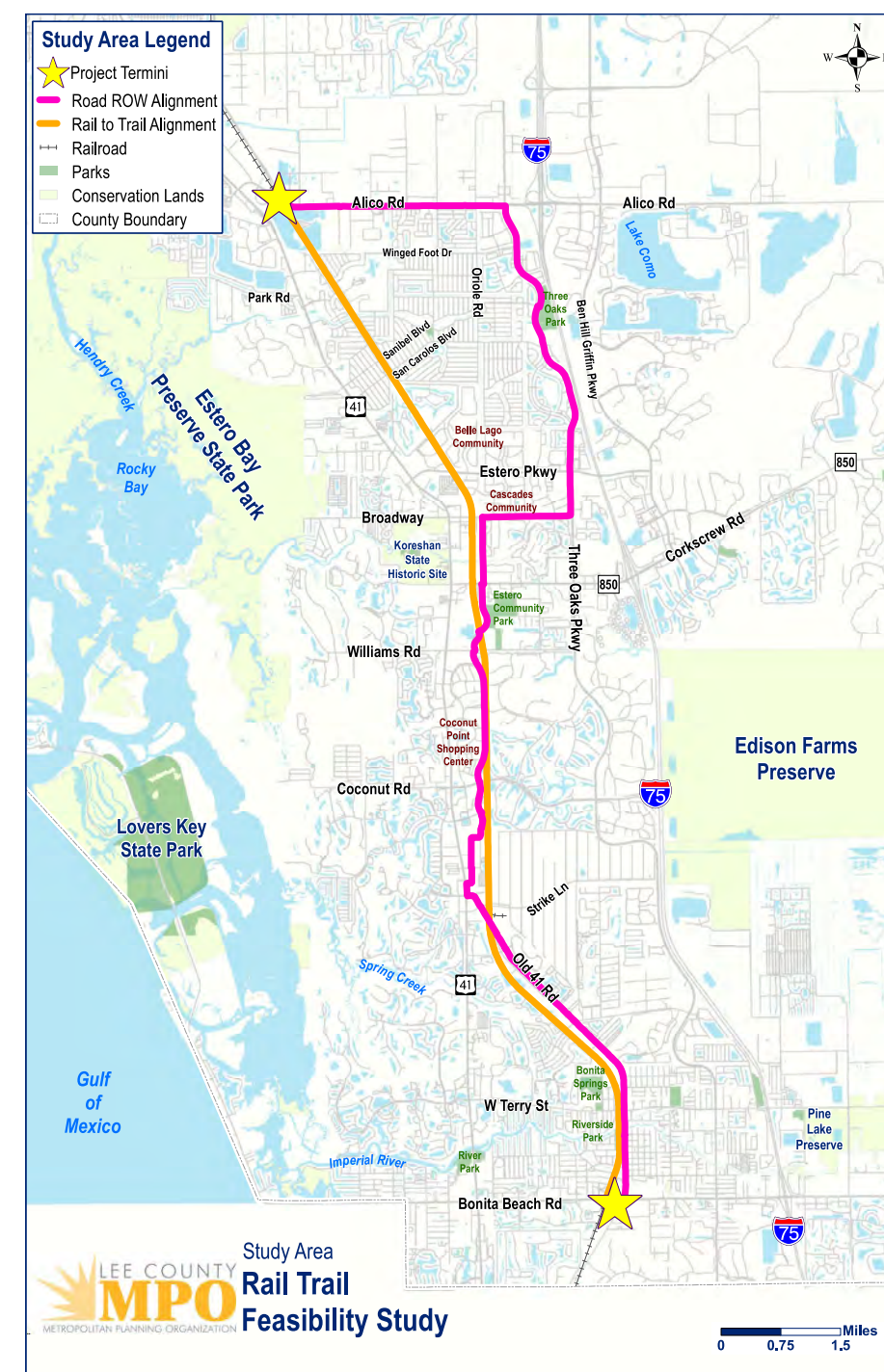
- Alico Road (north) and Bonita Beach Road (south)
- I-75 (east) and US 41 (west)

Collier County Segment:

- Extends 1.5-miles into Collier County
- Not evaluated for this study

Future Study:

- Explore connection to:
 - Paradise Coast Trail
 - ✓ Via Old US 41: Widening includes shared-use path on west side of the road and bike lanes
 - SUN Trail Network
 - ✓ Via Rail Corridor and Veterans Memorial Boulevard Extension
 - ✓ Via Imperial Boulevard/Livingston
 - ✓ Via Old 41 as part of 4-lane widening





STUDY METHODOLOGY

SCREEN 1 ANALYSIS

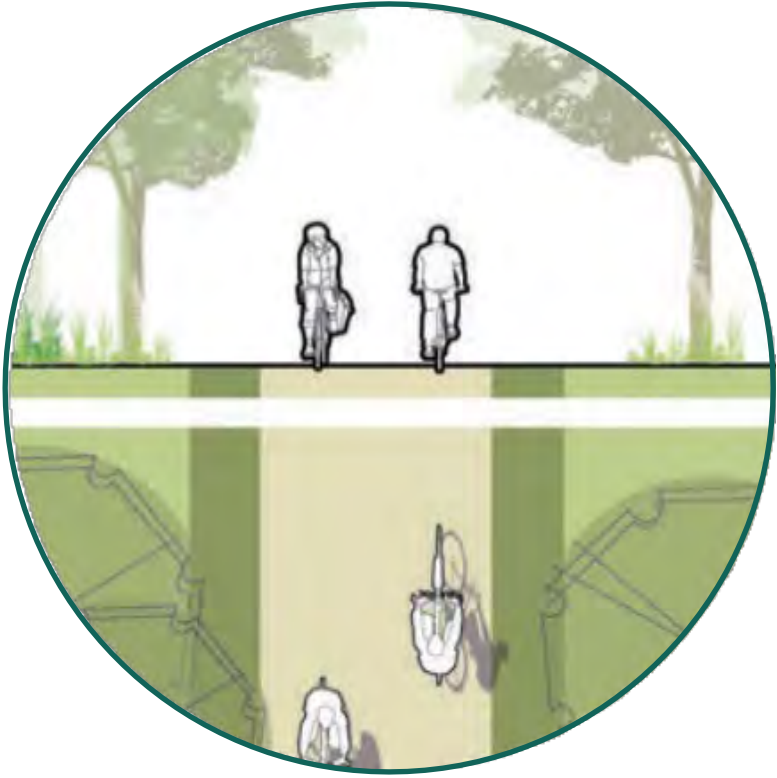
- Evaluated 7 alternatives
- Used the following evaluation criteria:
 1. SUN Trail Funding Eligibility
 2. Available ROW
 3. User Experience
 4. Development Challenges



SCREEN 2 ANALYSIS

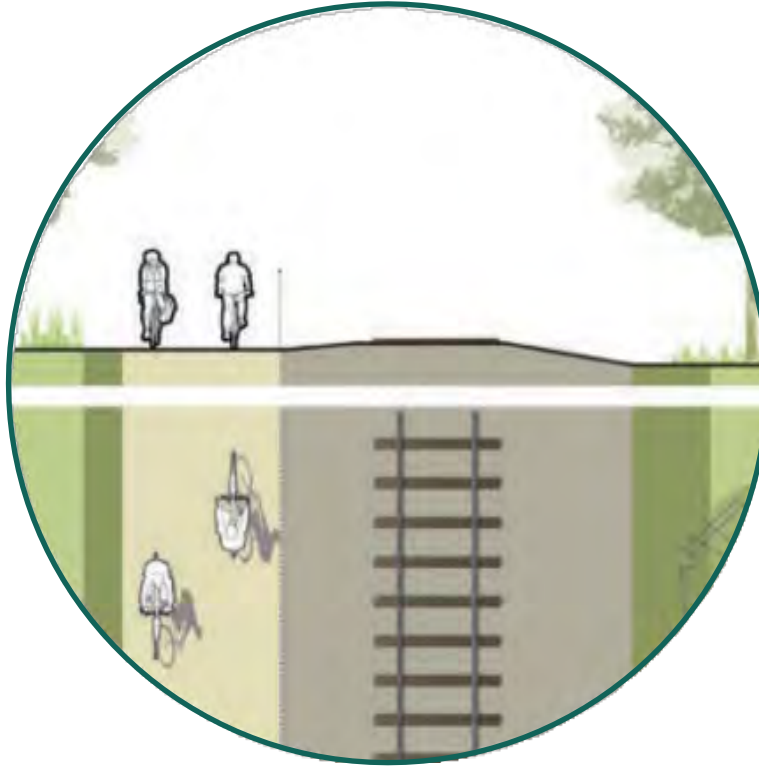
- Evaluated 3 alternatives
- Used the following evaluation criteria:
 1. Connectivity
 2. Project Readiness
 3. Service
 4. User Experience

ALTERNATIVES



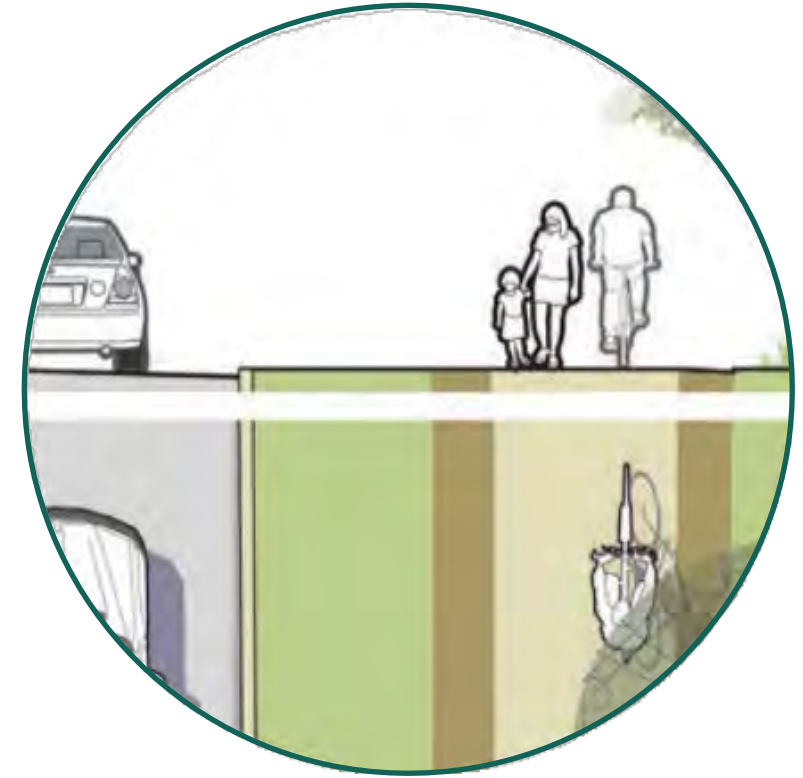
Alternative 1

Rail-to-trail alignment
within the SGL corridor



Alternative 2

A rail-with-trail alignment
within the SGL corridor



Alternative 3

A trail alignment within the
road right-of-way (ROW)

FEASIBILITY STUDY PROGRESS



The Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Trail in Lehigh, Pennsylvania

Tasks that are In Progress:

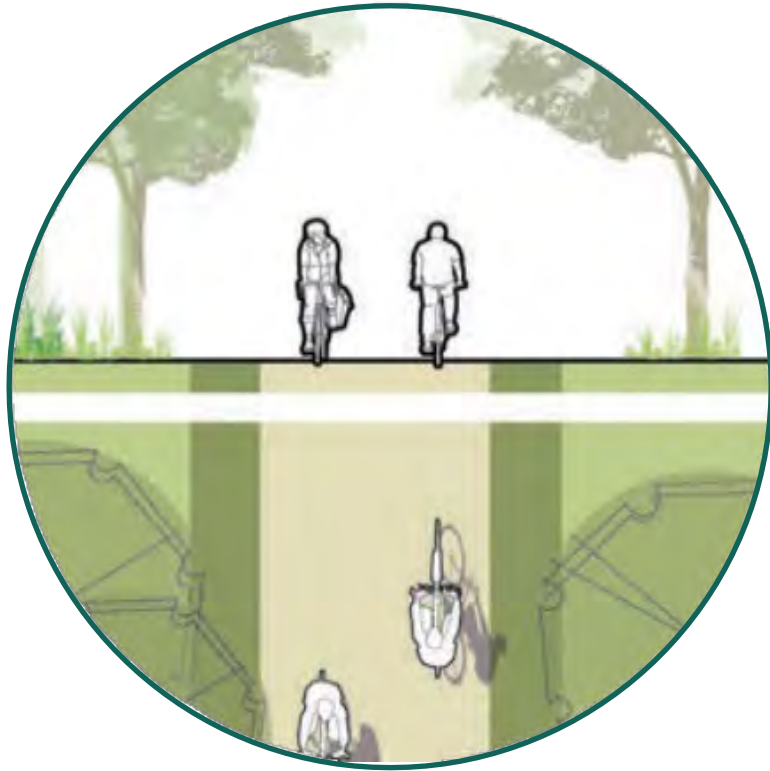
- Documentation/Tech Memos
- Public Presentations
- Monthly Progress Meetings
 - MPO and Municipal Staff

Completed Tasks:

- Bridge Inventory Analysis
- Environmental Assessment
- Kickoff meeting (April 6)
- Data collection and Mapping
- Utilities Inventory
- Roadway Crossing Inventory
- Alternatives Evaluated
- Briefing Report



ALTERNATIVE #1: RAIL-TO-TRAIL



A Rail-to-Trail is a multiuse path that is converted to a trail from an inactive rail line.



The Michigan Airline Trail in Wixom, Michigan

ALTERNATIVE #1: RAIL-TO-TRAIL

Planning Level Construction Costs:

- \$4-6 Million per mile

Right-of-way:

- Requires agreement with railroad for fee simple purchase

Road-Trail Crossings:

- 20

Utility Providers:

- Florida Power & Light, TECO Gas, Lee County Utility, Bonita Springs Utility (predominantly at road crossings)



ALTERNATIVE #1: RAIL-TO-TRAIL



Connectivity



Project Readiness



Service



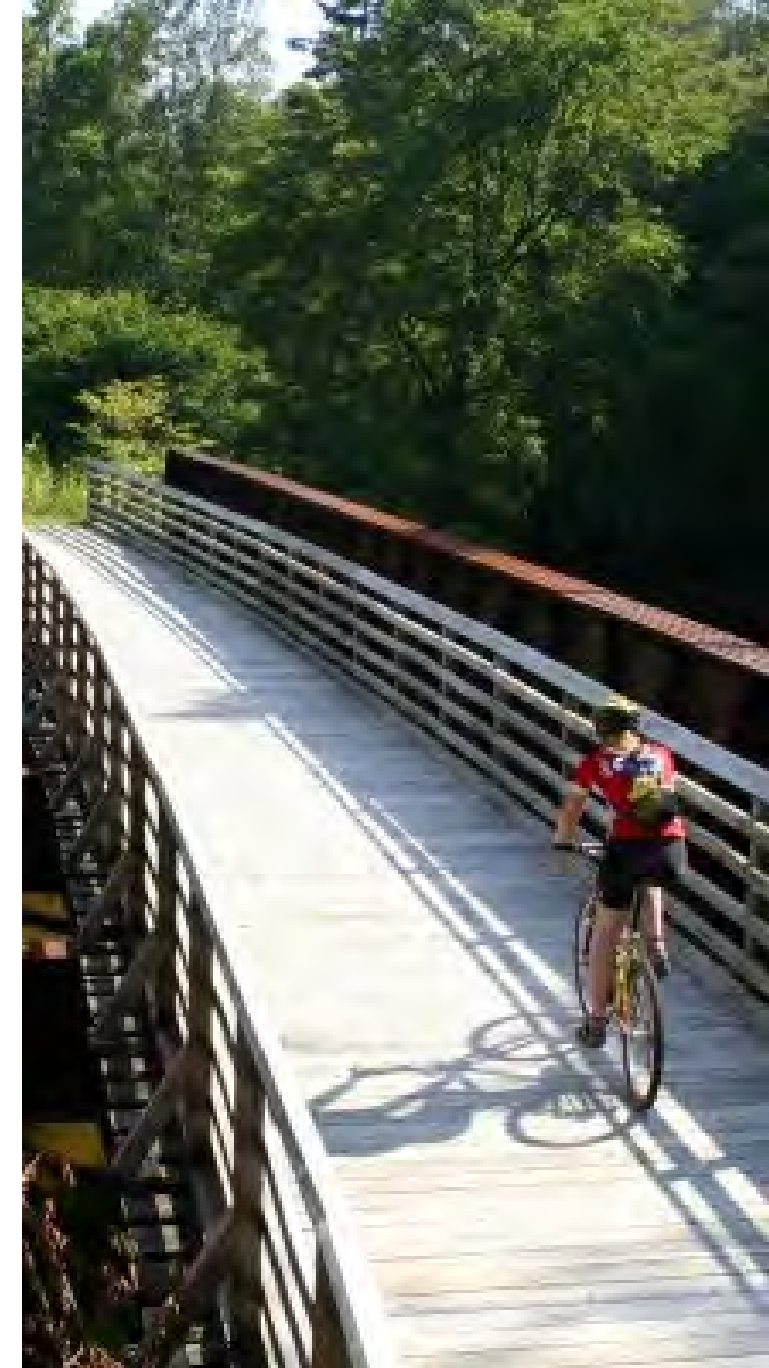
User Experience

OPPORTUNITIES

- Creates connections to local businesses, parks, schools, and other civic spaces
- Could use existing bridges
- Provides equal access opportunities to residents from both the east and west side of the corridor
- Creates more of a linear park opportunity and is a low-stress facility completely separate from the roadway

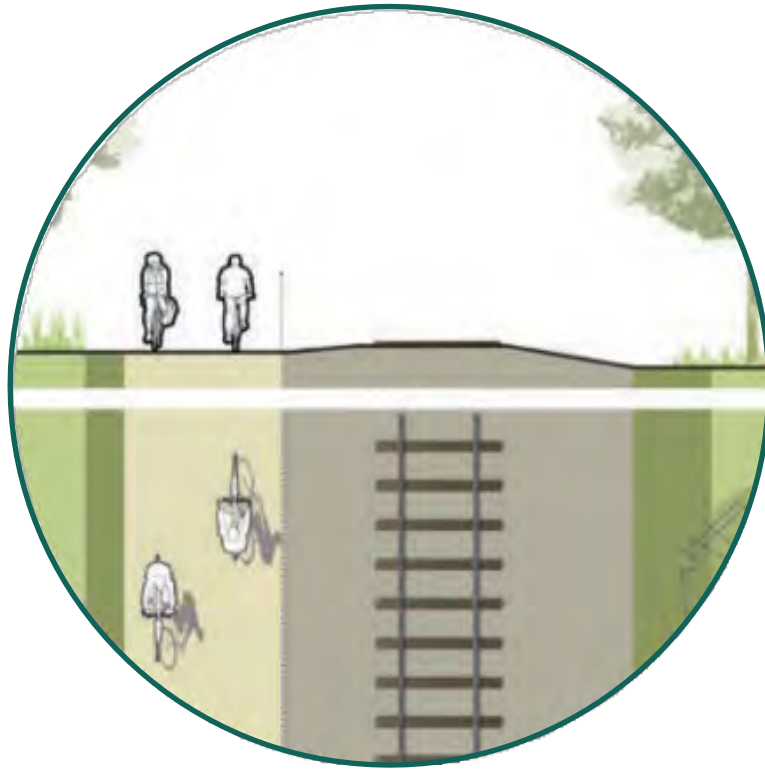
CHALLENGES

- May require relocation of utilities and retrofit of existing bridges.
- Will require agreement with railroad for fee simple purchase of right-of-way
- Estero Parkway, Corkscrew Road, and Coconut Road are potential locations for overpass crossings

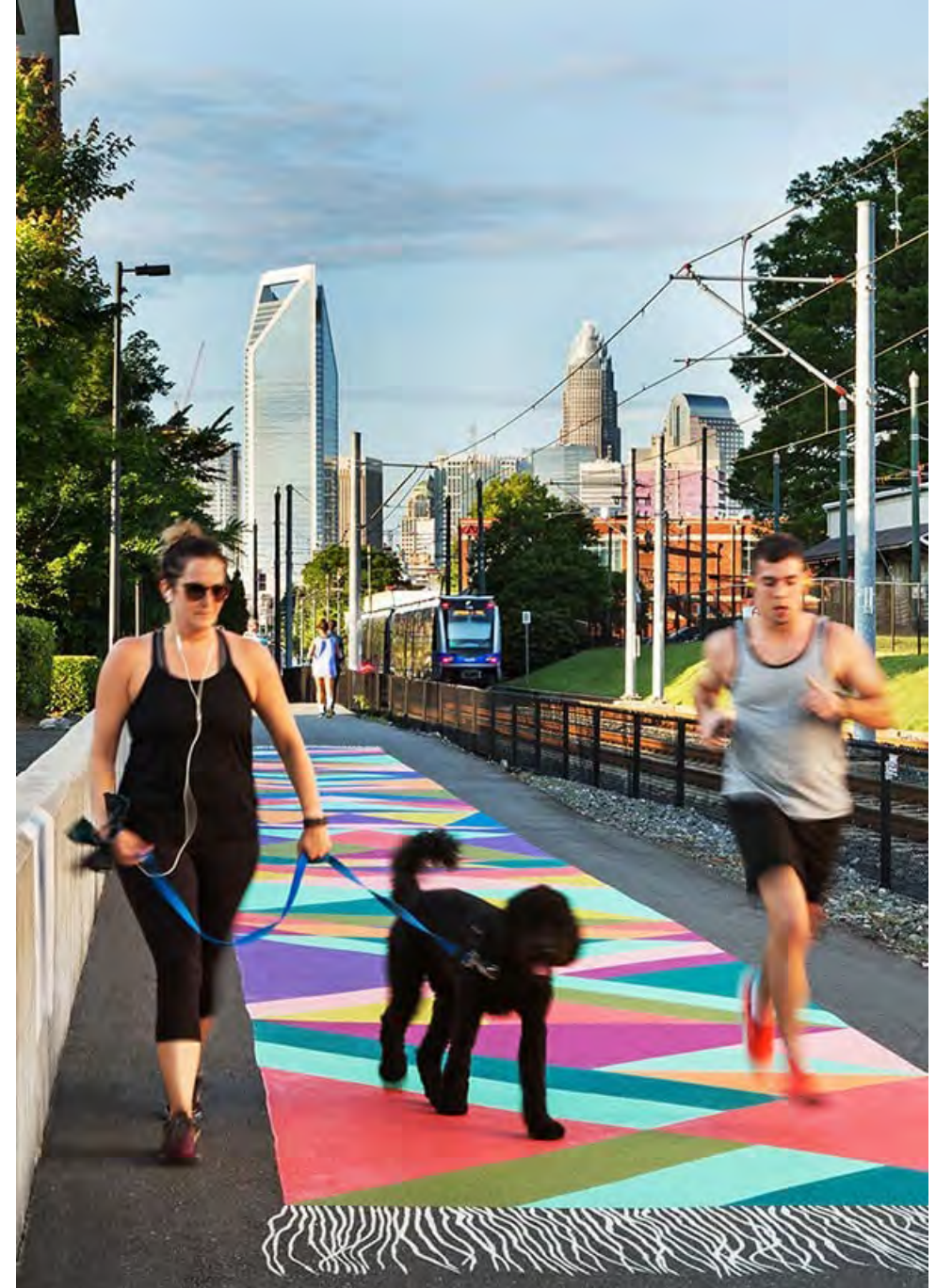


West Fork Trail in West Virginia

ALTERNATIVE #2: RAIL-WITH-TRAIL



A Rail-with-Trail alignment is parallel to the rail line. The path would be built within the railroad right-of-way on one side of the rail line. This allows the rail to continue to be operational.



A Rail-with-Trail in Charlotte, NC

ALTERNATIVE #2: RAIL-WITH-TRAIL

Planning Level Construction Costs:

- \$7-10 Million per mile

Right-of-way:

- Requires agreement with railroad for fee simple purchase or lease* with SGLR for partial corridor

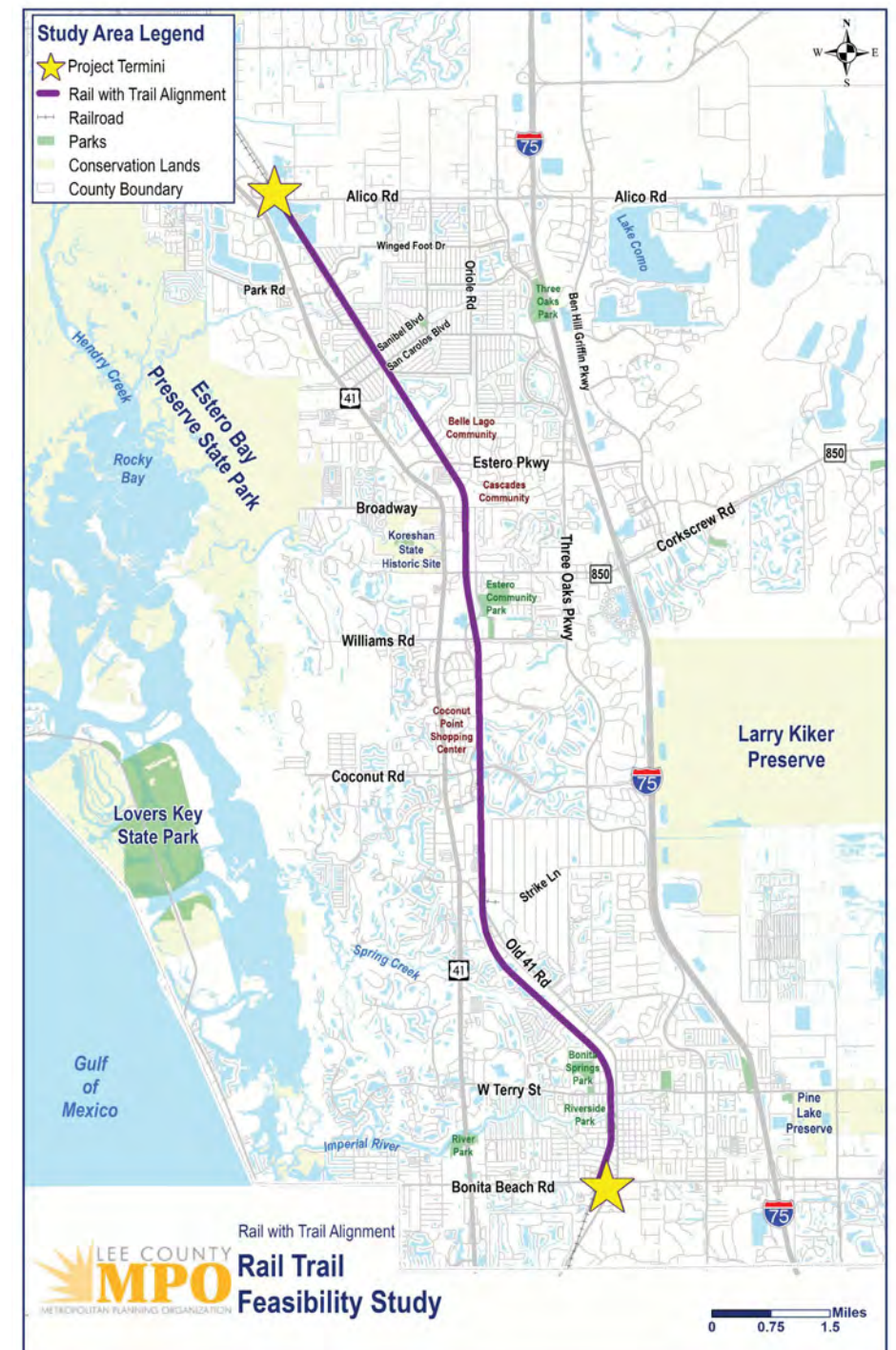
Road-Trail Crossings:

- 20

Utility Providers:

- Florida Power & Light, TECO Gas, Lee County Utility, Bonita Springs Utility (predominantly at road crossings)

*With lease option, Alternative #2 capital improvements will not be eligible for SUN Trail funding



ALTERNATIVE #2: RAIL-WITH-TRAIL



Connectivity



Project Readiness



Service



User Experience

OPPORTUNITIES

- Is a low-stress facility because it would be separate from the road

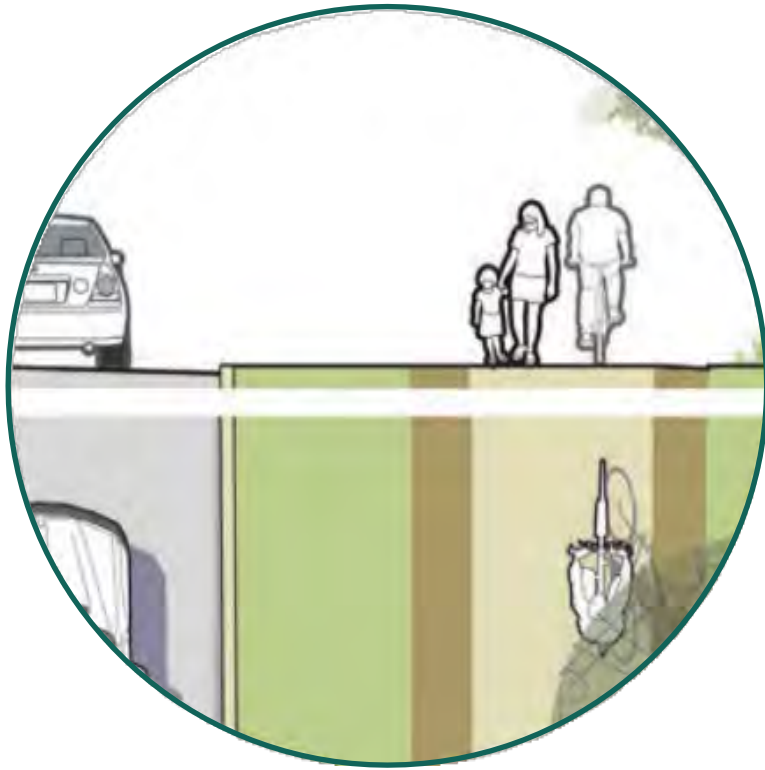
CHALLENGES

- Requires selection of east or west side of the rail, which will limit connectivity to secondary access points
- May require utility relocation, new bridges, and modification to stormwater features.
- May require pedestrian overpasses at Estero Parkway, Corkscrew Road, and Coconut Road.
- May require purchase of partial rail corridor or a lease with Seminole Gulf Rair
- Because of the rail line, it will not be accessible from all directions



A rail-with-trail in Cambridge, MA

ALTERNATIVE #3: TRAIL ALIGNMENT ADJACENT TO ROAD



A trail alignment that runs parallel to the road within the road's ROW. Also named sidepath, they require ample space between the road and path for people to comfortably and safely use it.



A trail adjacent to the roadway in Fort Myers Beach, FL

ALTERNATIVE #3: TRAIL ALIGNMENT ADJACENT TO ROAD

Planning Level Construction Costs:

- \$13-18 Million per mile

Right-of-way:

- Cannot be built entirely within existing roadway ROW
- Will require acquisition of property

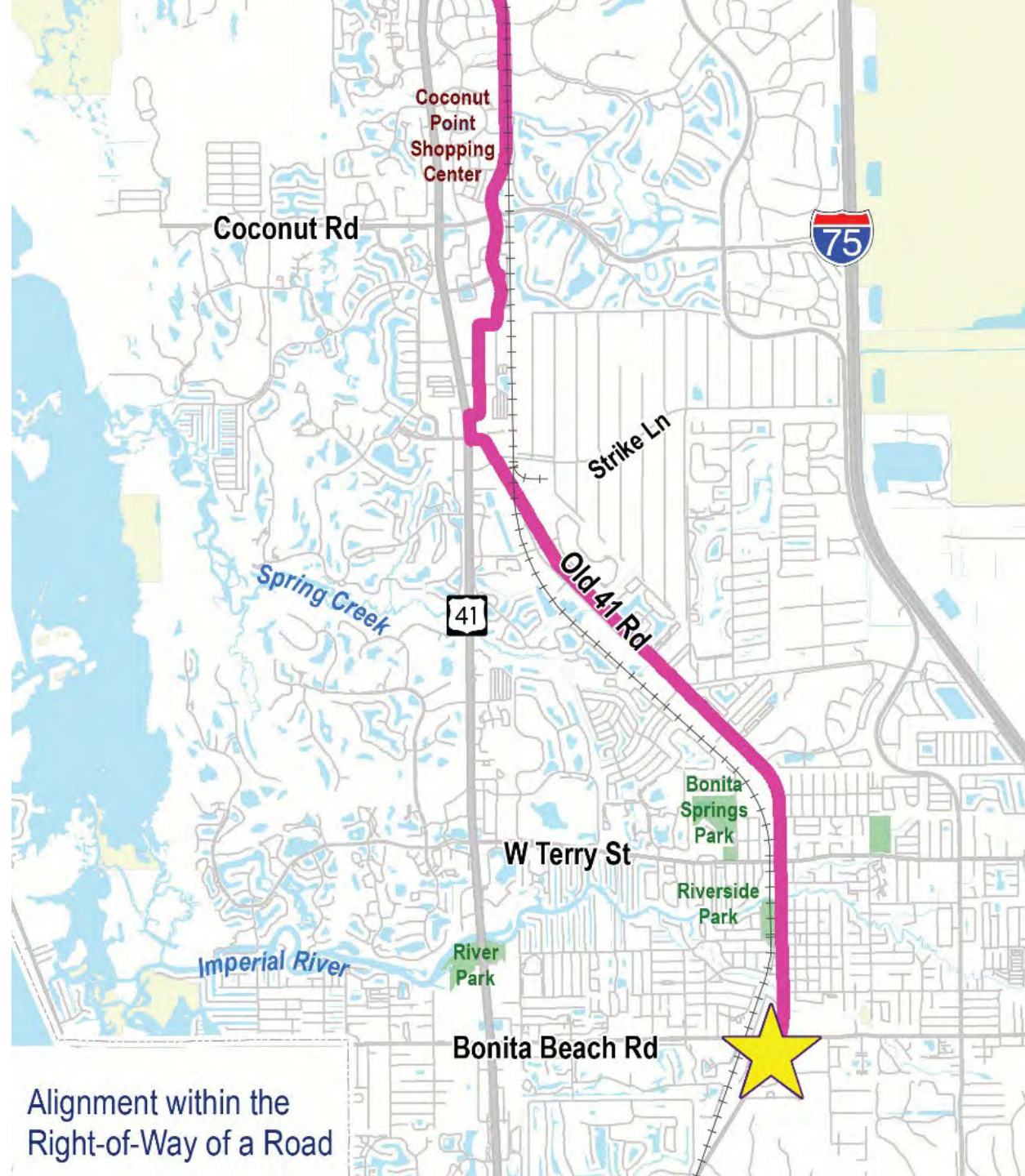
Road-Trail Crossings:

- 96 (includes roadway/ driveway crossings)

Utility Providers:

- Florida Power & Light, TECO Gas, Lee County Utility, Bonita Springs Utility throughout the corridor





Alignment within the Right-of-Way of a Road

ALTERNATIVE #3: TRAIL ALIGNMENT ADJACENT TO ROAD



Connectivity



Project Readiness



Service



User Experience

OPPORTUNITIES

- Portions ready for construction (e.g., Sandy Lane shared-use path; Broadway East to Three Oaks and/or Broadway North to Estero Parkway)
- This alignment is a low-stress facility separate from the roadway

CHALLENGES

- Does not directly connect to the existing SUN Trail Network because it is farther from US 41 and closer to I-75
- Requires purchase of ROW
- Requires new bicycle and pedestrian bridges, and upgrades to 96 crossings.
- Does not provide as much accessibility
- Is a high stress facility next to high-volume multi-lane road, with many driveway and roadway crossings



A trail adjacent to the road in Austin, TX

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- Project Stakeholder Meetings
- Lee MPO Rail Trail Feasibility Study Coordinating Meeting
- Project Website
 - <http://leecollierrailtrail.com/>
 - About the study – 3 Alternatives and Schedule
 - Public Meeting Materials
 - Comment Form
 - Contact Us
- Public Meeting
- Lee MPO Rail Trail Feasibility Study Coordination Meeting

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public Meeting

The Lee County MPO held a public meeting on June 2, 2022, at the Estero Recreation Center for the Rail Trail Feasibility Study. The project representatives were in attendance to answer questions and discuss the study. There was a Presentation about the study, followed by a Q&A session.

Public Meeting Summary

- The public, elected officials, local agencies, stakeholders and interested parties were invited by a **Newsletter** via email.
- Meeting **Advertised** in the News-Press and **Media Release** sent out to local media.
- A total of **117 attendees** including members of the public, elected officials, City of Bonita Springs, The Village of Estero, Lee MPO, Collier MPO, and the project team.
- A **meeting handout** and **comment form** was provided upon arrival.
- **Displays of the Study** were available for review and comment.
- Received over **60 comments** during the meeting.
- Article by BikeWalkLee displayed in The News-Press Go Coastal Section.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public Comment

The public was asked to provide input on three alternatives for a north/south public multi-use trail through south Lee County and into north Collier County. The study team will use public input to help select a Preferred Alternative(s) to advance to the next project phase.

Comment Summary

As of September 21, there has been a total of **731 comments** received. The comment period ends October 31, 2022.

- **69 comments** received at the June 2, public meeting or mailed in
- **23 comments** received by email
- **67 comments** received through the website
- **572 comments** received through the survey form

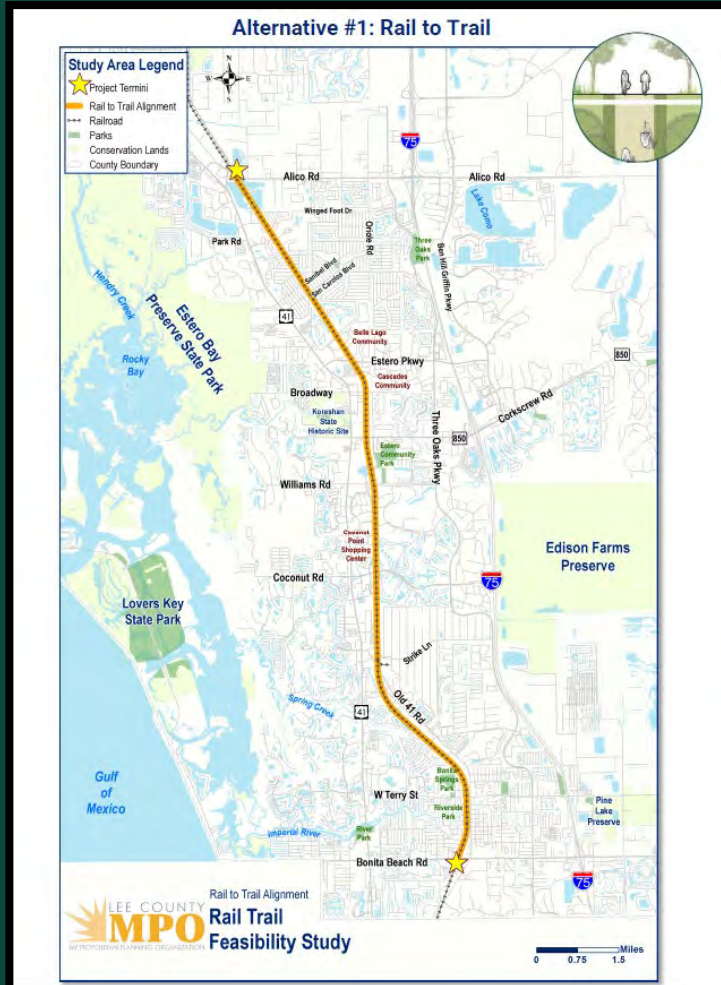
Alternative #3 – Trail Alignment Adjacent to Road: A trail alignment that runs parallel to the road within the existing ROW. This alignment, sometimes called a side-path, requires ample space between the road the path for people to comfortably and safely use it.

Alternative Chosen	
Alternative #1 – Rail to Trail	180
Alternative #2 – Rail with Trail	26
Alternative #3 – Trail Alignment Adjacent to Road	427
Alternative #1 or #2	20
N/A	78

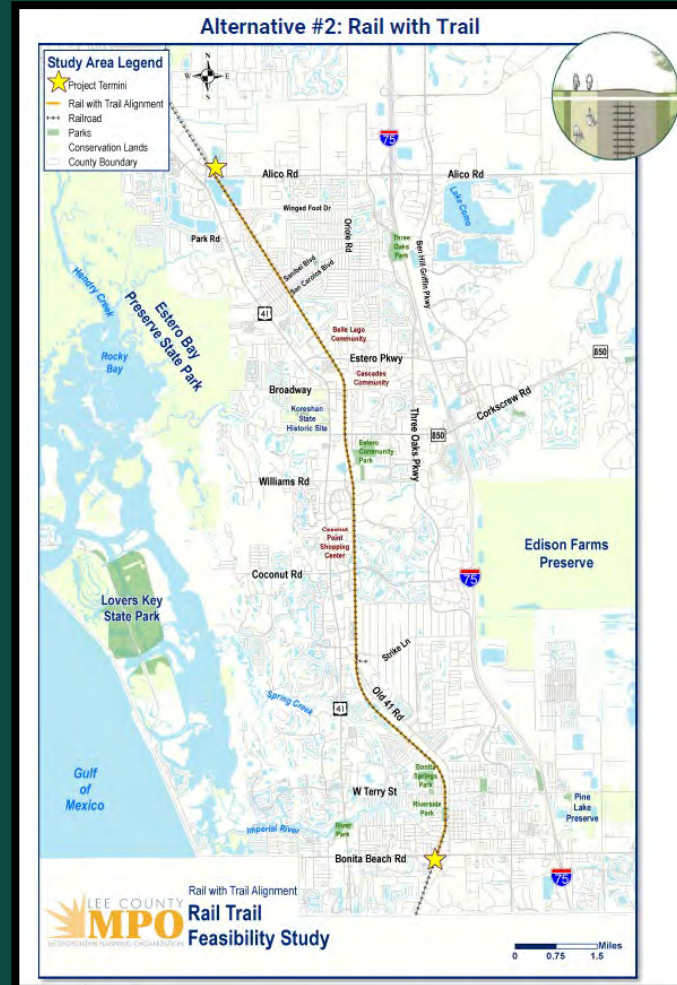
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Rankings of the Alternatives

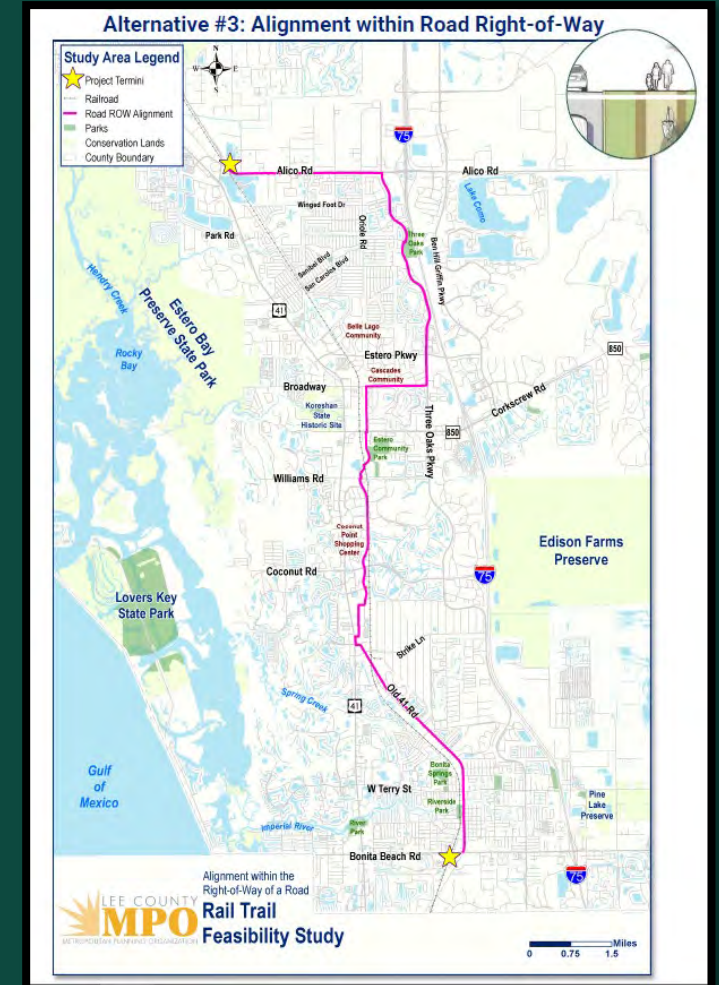
74%



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Public Meeting Photos



Public Meeting Photos



Public Meeting Photos





Next Steps and Questions