

City Council Chooses Good Neighbor Trail Preferred Route



KATHRYN DENTATO

Photograph by Gpavic

Bob Wallace, representing Tindale Oliver and the MPO, came to the Brooksville City Council meeting on 06/07/16 with two alternative routes which would connect the Suncoast Trail from Cobb Road to the Good Neighbor Trail (GNT) on Russell Street.

Since his last presentation to the Council in February, Wallace states there have been meetings with the public, stakeholders, and workshops to narrow the four original designs to two. Safety of cyclists and hikers was very important, and so was creating a path through Brooksville that would highlight its beauty and history. Other considerations included construction issues and the potential impact to the city's economy.

One of the original ideas was to have the 12-foot wide, multi-use trail wind through Tom Varn Park, and on to Daniel Avenue, where it would cross Broad Street, and continuing on Daniel Avenue, turning down Hale Avenue, and connecting at Russell Street. Another option would take the same proposed path through the park, but would head north along Fridy Place to Benton Avenue, crossing over Ponce de Leon Boulevard and through the historic area along Broad Street, where it would cross over Mildred Street, continuing on Broad Street, then down Main Street to the existing trailhead at Russell Street. A public workshop on 05/26/16 resulted in 73% of participants in support of the Park/Broad Street route, as opposed to only 18% support for the Park/Daniel Avenue route. Nine percent of respondents were in favor of either one.

In a side by side comparison of the two routes, the Park/Broad Street hybrid option received a higher rating, though they were both good options. A safety concern of the Park/Daniel Avenue option was having pedestrians and cyclists crossing six lanes of traffic, unless a pedestrian bridge across US 41 was built. That would also add several million dollars to the project. The Park/Broad Street route has an added benefit of encouraging support to local businesses downtown.

Brooksville Mayor Natalie Kahler asked for an explanation of how a multi-use trail, with cyclists going in both directions, would be impacted by utilizing the one-way streets in downtown Brooksville. Project Manager Jennifer Bartlett explained that the bike trail would have striping painted for cyclists, similar to markings on trails already in use in metropolitan areas like Tampa. Additionally, Bartlett stated the plans call for a concrete barrier that would separate the bicycle track from the road.

Vice Mayor Robert Battista asked Wallace about right of way acquisitions and parking issues, especially downtown. Wallace stated that parking will be addressed as part of the Project Development and Environmental (PDE) study. Tindale Oliver may also recommend solutions for additional parking needs, as Wallace recognized that parking is limited and the firm is sensitive to that.

Wallace advised that approving the Park/Broad Street route with the resolution would show the FDOT that the City of Brooksville is supportive of the GNT. A roll call vote was taken, with all members voting to approve the resolution.

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