

Section 3.0 Public Involvement

A public involvement plan was developed at the beginning of the study process and included a comprehensive approach for agency and public input throughout the duration of the development of the Lake County Trails Master Plan. A complete summary of the public involvement activities may be found in the *Comments and Coordination Report* prepared for this project, dated August 2008. The *Comments and Coordination Report* is included on the Project DVD. The following sections provide a brief summary of the public involvement for this project.

3.1 Lake-Sumter MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee

A Lake-Sumter MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Trails Master Plan Subcommittee was developed to ensure integration into the County, City and MPO processes. This group met six times between April 2007 and March 2008. The meetings provided project updates and opportunities to guide the process. At these meetings, information was provided to the BPAC subcommittee regarding each step in the process. BPAC subcommittee members then provided comments and suggestions for improvement to the trail evaluations, trail alignments, and the trail prioritization process.

3.2 Public Meetings

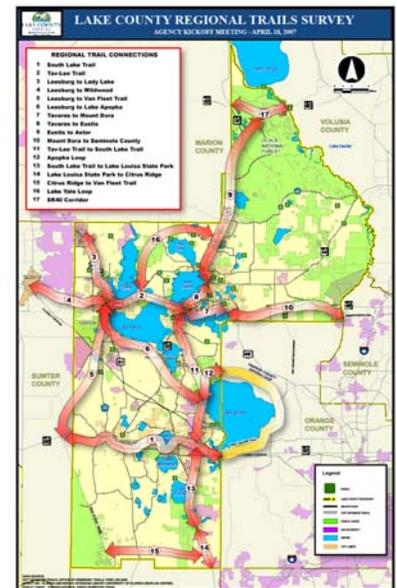
3.2.1 Agency Kickoff Meeting

The Agency Kickoff Meeting was held on April 18, 2007 at the Leesburg Community Building. A direct mail-out included cities, organizations with an active role in bicycle/pedestrian issues in Lake County, surrounding counties and MPOs, and Lake County staff.



The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the stakeholders to the project and solicit thoughts, ideas, and feedback on the range of initial trail corridors and concepts. The workshop was conducted in an open house format with a brief presentation. Maps and drawings were on display and study representatives were available to answer questions. Based on information received via sign-in sheets, 36 persons attended the workshop, including 31 agency representatives and five members of the project team. A Lake County Regional Trail Map and a survey were distributed, as well as a comment form. In total, 23 comment forms were collected at, and subsequent to, the meeting.

The survey asked the respondents to rank the regional trails in Lake County by order of importance, requested additional information regarding existing trails or trail plans from agencies, and asked the respondents to identify the most important issues with regards to the Trails Master Plan. A copy of the survey, together with the complete results, is included in the *Comments and Coordination Report* prepared for this project, dated August 2008.



The ten highest ranked trails according to respondents were:

- Tav-Lee Trail;
- South Lake Trail;
- Sugar Loaf Mountain Trail;
- Lake Apopka Loop;
- Tav-Dora Trail;
- West Lake Trail;
- Lake-Wekiva Trail;
- Central Lakes Trail;

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Agency Kickoff Meeting Continued

- North Lake Trail Phase I;
- Gardenia Trail;
- Leesburg-Wildwood Trail; and
- North Lake Trail Phase II.

The above listed trails are shown in Figure 3-1.

Respondents identified the following issues as being “most important” for development of the Trails Master Plan:

- Education and communication with elected officials and media to inform the public
- Funding
- Cooperation with Lake-Sumter MPO and the cities
- Connectivity
- Trails should provide easy access to schools, shopping centers, and parks
- Incorporate the plans of each city and coordinate with City and County projects for benefit of the overall plan
- Greater emphasis on off-road trails rather than bike lanes on major roads
- In considering feasibility, create a five-year plan to get trails fast and build excitement
- Connections that will allow for safety
- Focus on multi-use verses single use
- Possibility for expansion into a functional greenway
- FDEP-OGT would be interested in being involved as much as needed – Dave Bowman, FDEP-OGT
- Cost
- Environmental sensitivity
- Establish trails where pedestrian and bike fatalities are highest
- Maximum potential usage
- Development of old train station as trailhead in Leesburg along with Fountain Lake Trail

3.2.2 Design Charrette

A Design Charrette was held on September 23, 2007 at the Leesburg Community Building. The charrette was attended by eight staff members and 20 individuals including County staff, representatives of Cities within the county, interested stakeholders, and members of the general public. The purpose of the charrette was to collect public input on aesthetics for the new trails of Lake County. The charrette entailed a series of exercises that were designed to encourage discussion among the groups and to derive aesthetic values and priorities. Five groups of four to six members participated in the day-long charrette.

Exercise One: Design a Billboard

Each group was given the challenge of designing two unique billboards to advertise the trail system of Lake County. Each billboard could contain text, graphics, or both, chosen at the group’s discretion.

The emphasis of the billboards centered around a slower, more rural lifestyle with exposure to the natural surroundings.

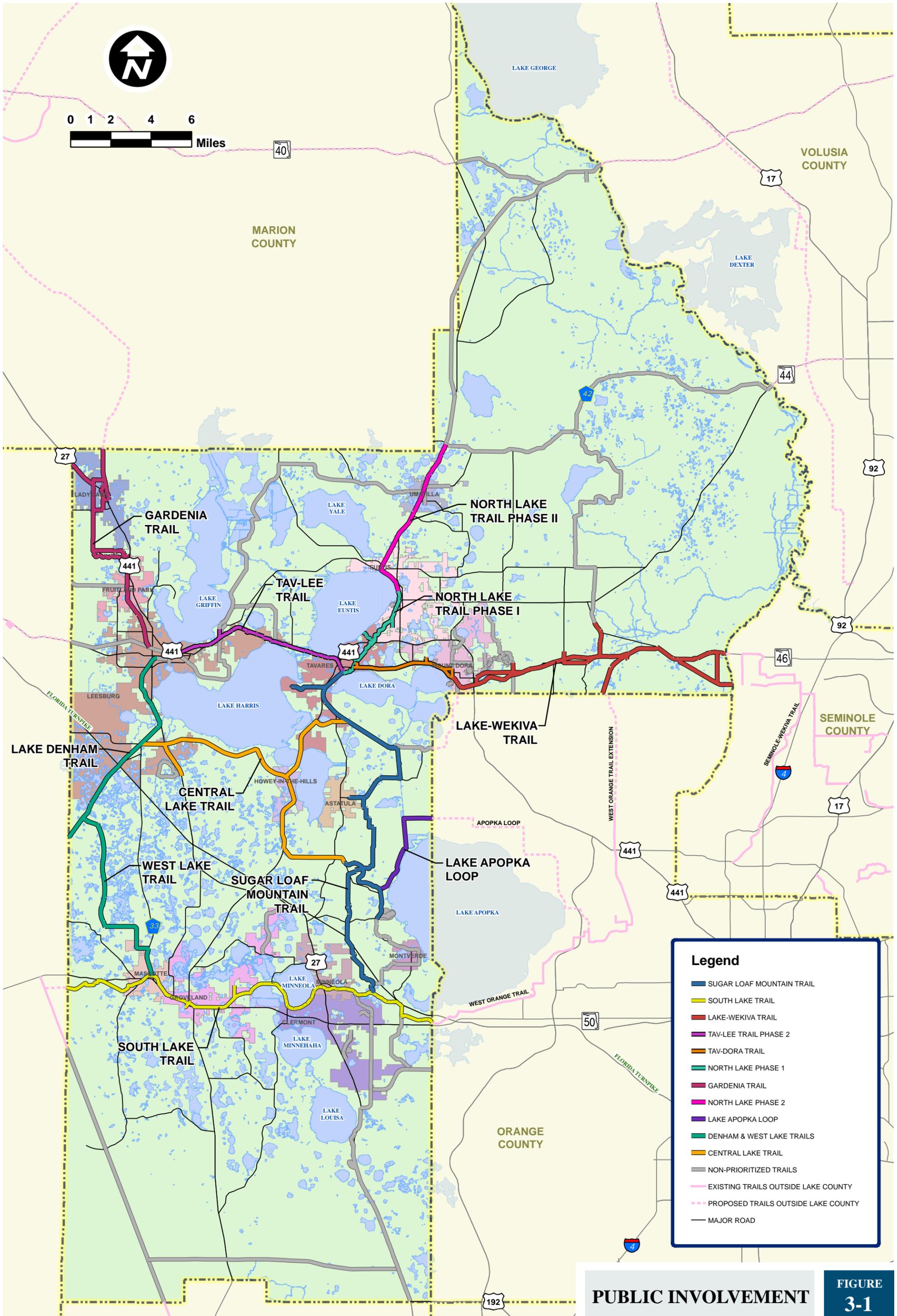


Exercise Two: A Day on the Trail

For this exercise, each group was asked to view a day on the trail from someone else’s perspective. Each group was provided a specific character for which they had to describe a typical day on a Lake County trail. The characters chosen ranged from a seven year old boy to a senior couple.

Similar concepts focused on the need to feel safe on the trails with opportunities for activity, exercise, and the ability to use the trail as an alternative mode of transportation.





Legend

- SUGAR LOAF MOUNTAIN TRAIL
- SOUTH LAKE TRAIL
- LAKE-WEKIVA TRAIL
- TAV-LEE TRAIL PHASE 2
- TAV-DORA TRAIL
- NORTH LAKE PHASE 1
- GARDENIA TRAIL
- NORTH LAKE PHASE 2
- LAKE APOPKA LOOP
- DENHAM & WEST LAKE TRAILS
- CENTRAL LAKE TRAIL
- NON-PRIORITIZED TRAILS
- EXISTING TRAILS OUTSIDE LAKE COUNTY
- ... PROPOSED TRAILS OUTSIDE LAKE COUNTY
- MAJOR ROAD

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Design Charrette Continued

Exercise Three: Character Collage

In this exercise, each group was asked to create a collage of images that depicted their ideas for trail aesthetics and character. Groups were asked to consider things such as architecture along the trail, different types of amenities, desired signage, and different users.



The outcome was a desire for an abundance of trail amenities including interpretive signing, neighborhood/community connectivity, and architecture that reflected the unique character of the communities.

Exercise Four: Trailhead Design

For this exercise, each group was asked to design two prototypical trailheads. The first site was for a major trailhead to be located in an existing park. The second site was for the minor trailhead and was located on a city-owned parcel of land. Aerial photographs of each site were provided.

It was determined that a major trailhead would include kiosks, restrooms, air stations, and opportunities for bike shops and food vendors. If possible, the trailhead would be located near local towns. Minor trailheads should include signage, bike racks, benches, and drinking fountains.

Results

The results of the Design Charrette are documented in the *Lake County Trails Master Plan – Trail Branding Charrette Summary*, dated December 13, 2007, by Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin. This summary is included in the Project DVD under *Supporting Documents*.

3.2.3 Financial Plan Meeting

A Financial Plan Meeting was held on December 20, 2007 at the Leesburg Community Building. The goal of this meeting was to provide an opportunity to collaborate with the major funding stakeholders in outlining the potential and existing funding for trails in Lake County. The meeting discussed 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year funding schedules and looked for ways to incorporate private, municipal, state, and federal funding sources. State and local agencies attended the meeting and together discussed realistic funding opportunities at the Federal, State, County, and local levels. The invitees brought their respective work programs and whatever additional information they possessed regarding developments, roadway projects, and public works projects that might be adjacent to trail alignments. The information assisted in preparing realistic funding goals for implementation of the Lake County Trails Master Plan. The information was so extensive that an additional meeting was required.

The second Financial Plan Meeting was held on February 1, 2008 at the Cultural Arts Building in Leesburg. This meeting was held to finalize discussions regarding the implementation strategies, potential funding, and funding schedules for each of the prioritized trails. The final product was a set of 5, 10 and 20-year funding goals. These funding implementation strategies are discussed in greater detail in Section 6.0 of this report.

3.2.4 Public Workshops

Public Workshops for the Lake County Trails Master Plan were held on February 26, 2008 at the Leesburg Community Building; March 5, 2008 at the Eustis City Commission Chambers; and March 6, 2008 at the Minneola City Council Chambers. Due to the large project area, three meeting locations were provided for the convenience of the public. The same information was presented at each workshop. The open-house workshops began at 5:30 p.m. and ended at 7:30 p.m.

Notification of the workshops included direct mailing of letters to officials and advertisements in the newspaper and on the Lake County web site.

As the attendees entered the workshop, they were asked to sign in and were given comment forms. Members of the project team were available to answer questions and discuss the project one-on-one with the attendees.

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Public Workshops Continued

A presentation was made at 6:00 p.m., which included an overview of the status of the project, an explanation of the goal of the Master Plan, and a discussion of the benefits, process, results, and design standards.

After the presentation, the meeting returned to an open-house format where attendees were able to have an open discussion with the project team and to complete comment forms.



The written comments were collected at the workshop and received through the mail following the workshop. Below is a summary of the written comments received. Seven written comment forms were received in total.

Four comment forms were received at Public Workshop #1 held on February 26, 2008.

- Would like to see more trails from south Leesburg to downtown. Need better safety devices at cross roads like Rt. 27 or 48. A lot of the new developments in Leesburg would make a trail feasible.
- Hope to see trail proposals map on web site soon. Send it to us electronically via e-mail.
- Send Trails Master Plan map to me.
- Send GIS data to me.

Three comment forms were received at Public Workshop #2 held on March 5, 2008.

- Consider trails that would provide the missing leg of the “golden triangle” between Eustis and Mount Dora. The cities of Eustis, Mount Dora,

and Tavares are three of the largest in the county and form a triangle with five mile legs. Those of us who live in this area spend much of our time in these downtowns and I hope you address the connectivity missing leg. There is still time to integrate right-of-way acquisition with developments while they are still in the planning stages.

- Send GIS data to me. Request edits and corrections to the maps, include name of LCWA property – Flat Island Preserve where Lake Denham is located and correct “Saw Grass Island Trails” to “Sawgrass Island Preserve Trails”.
- Request a copy of the PowerPoint Presentation, copies of the presentation boards. What is the best way to promote the Lake Wekiva Trail and keep up to date on the developments?

No comment forms were received at Public Workshop #3 held on March 6, 2008.

Data that was requested on comment forms for all three public workshops was sent by March 31, 2008.