11

FINDINGS

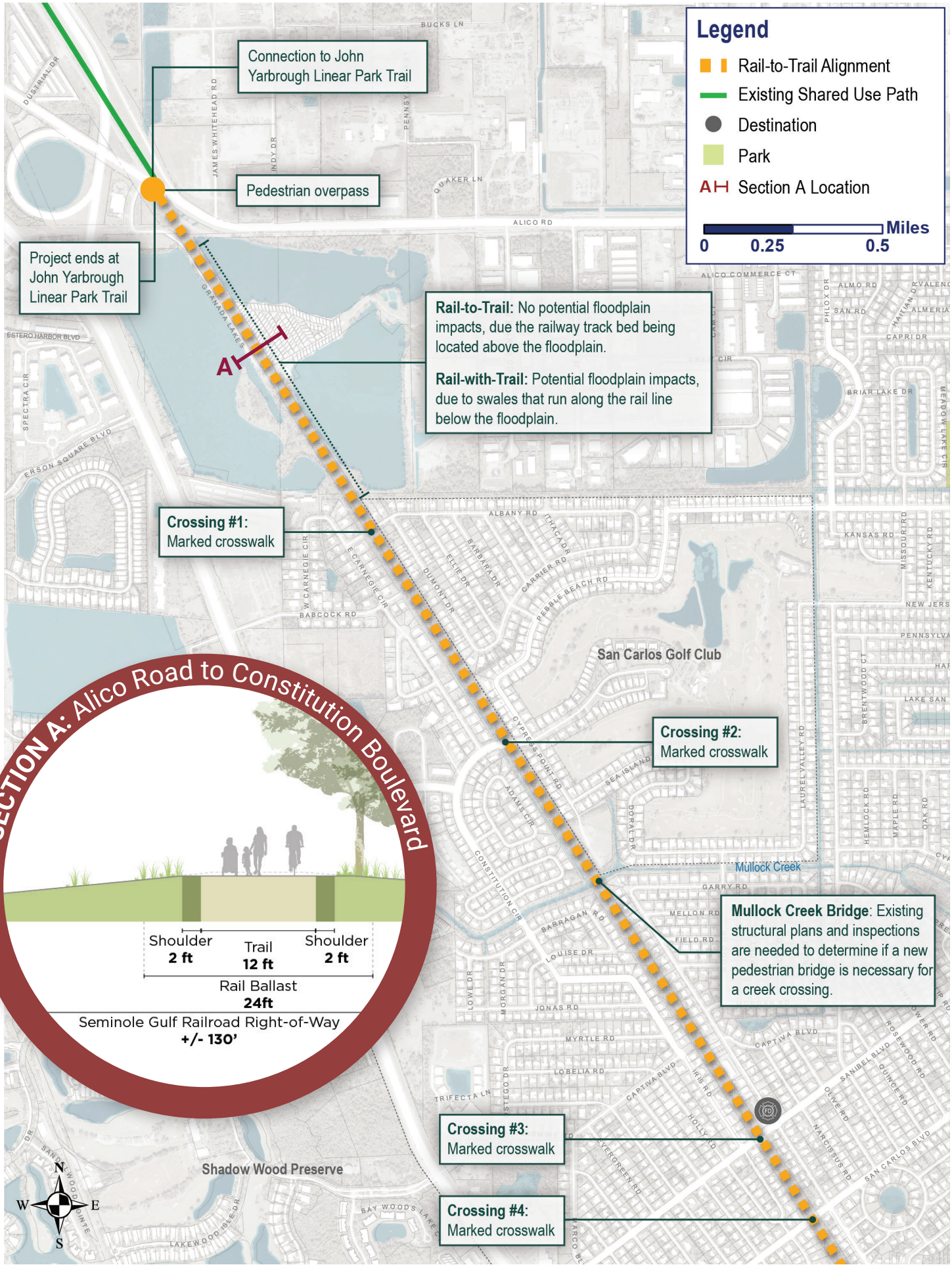
OVERVIEW

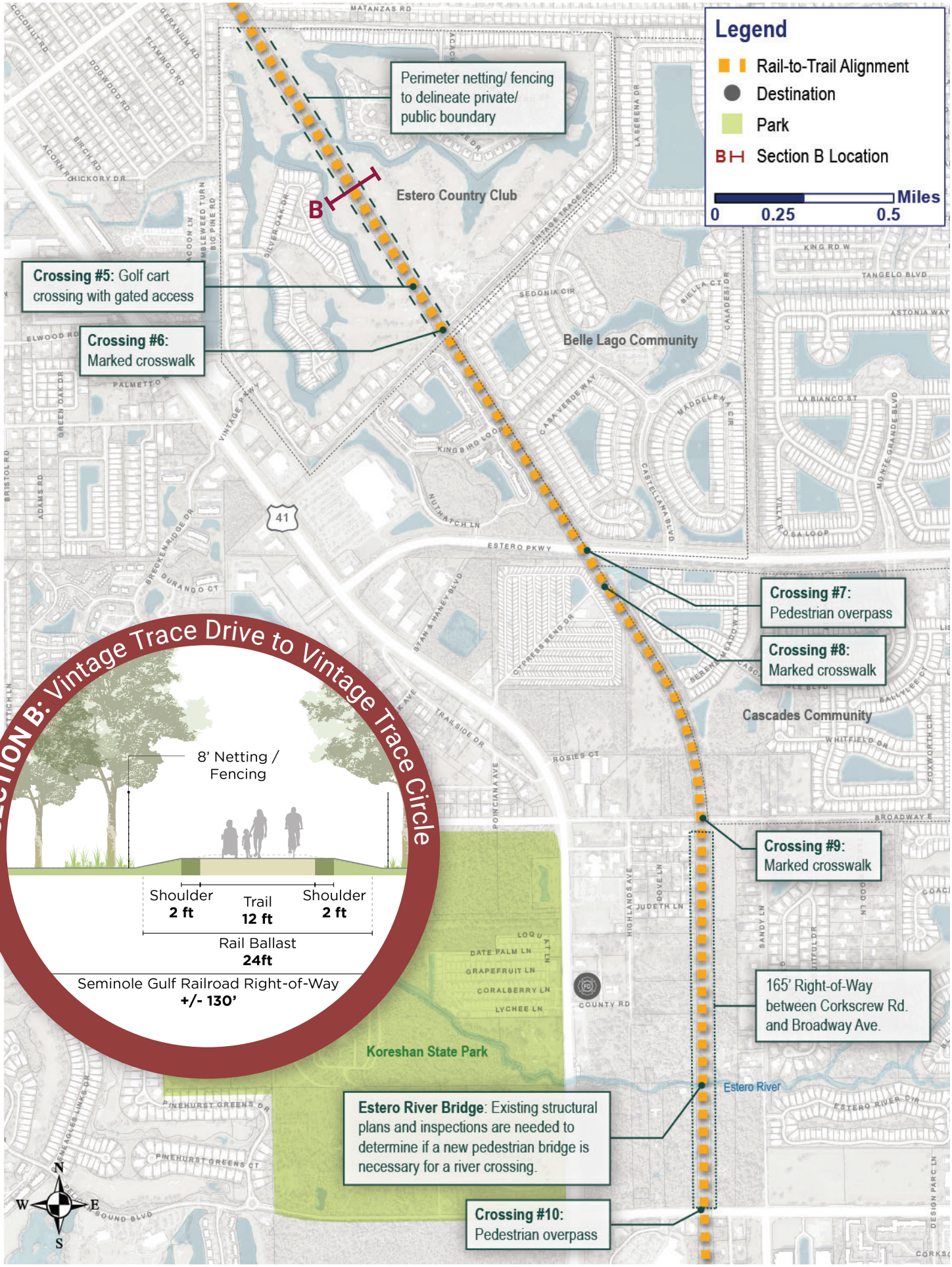
The feasibility study found that three trail alternatives are feasible for implementation. While each alternative has its share of constraints, the rail-to-trail alternative scored favorably in service, connectivity, user experience, and project readiness. However, further evaluation will be needed through the PD&E process to determine the preferred alternative to proceed with design.

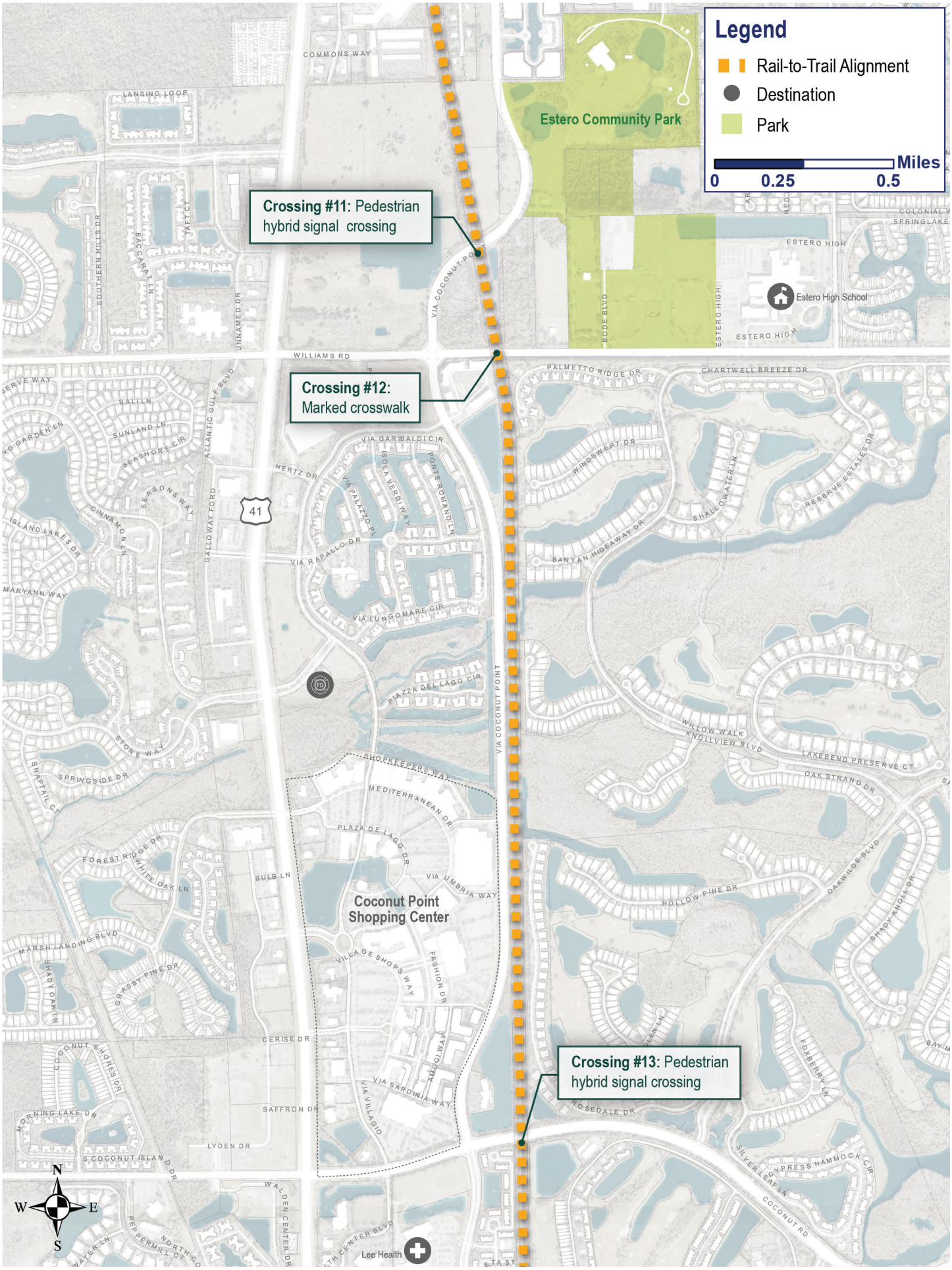
RAIL-TO-TRAIL ALTERNATIVE

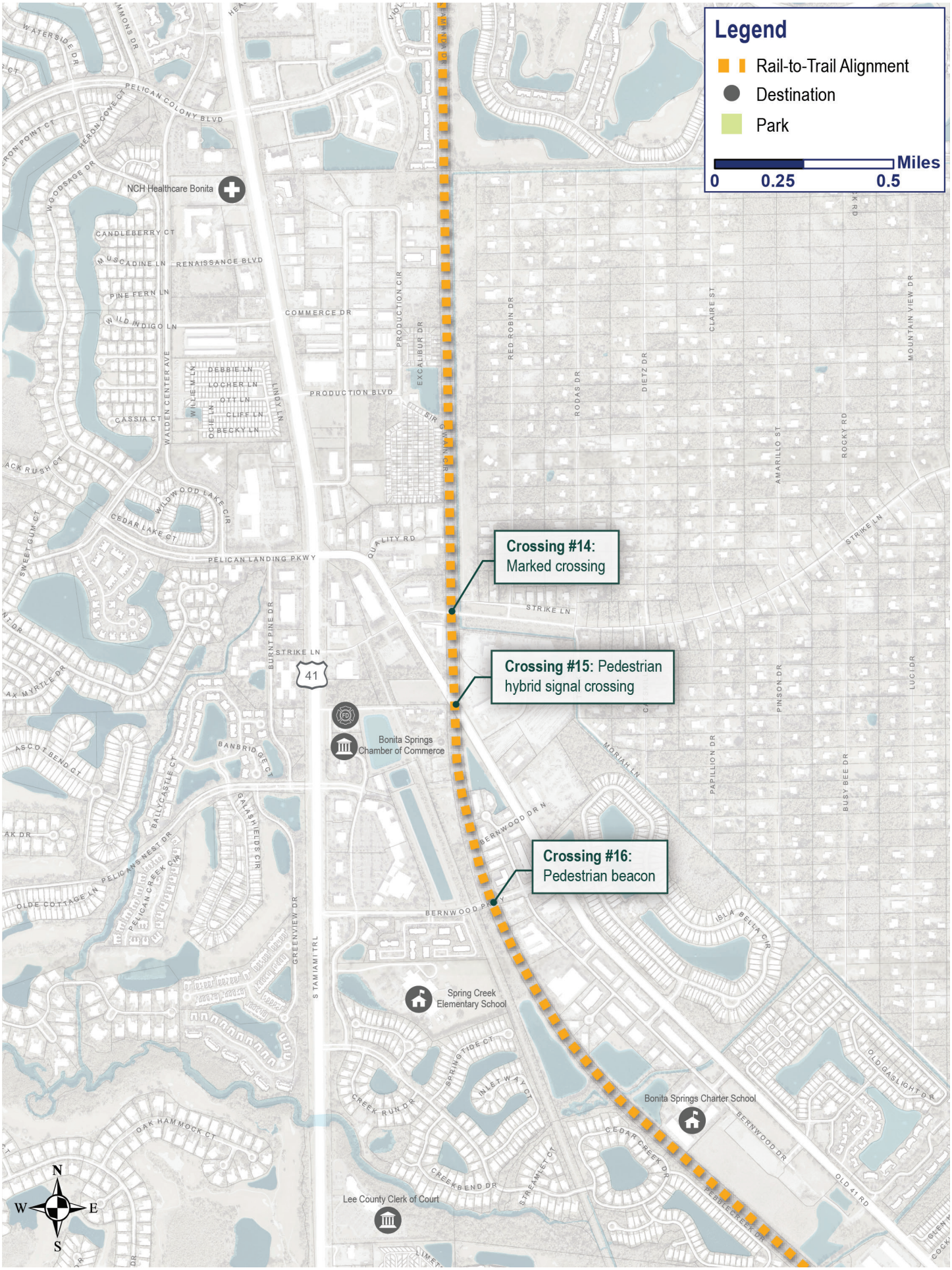
This alternative's use of the Seminole Gulf Rail corridor has the potential to provide low levels of stress and ease of navigation for all users. The alignment limits pedestrian exposure to vehicle traffic and road crossings. The dedicated right-of-way (ROW) also reduces the need for land and utility easement acquisitions. The rail-to-trail alternative would be a 12-foot wide shared use path constructed on top of the Seminole Gulf's inactive rail line track bed. The alignment starts at Bonita Beach Road and ends north at Alico Road.

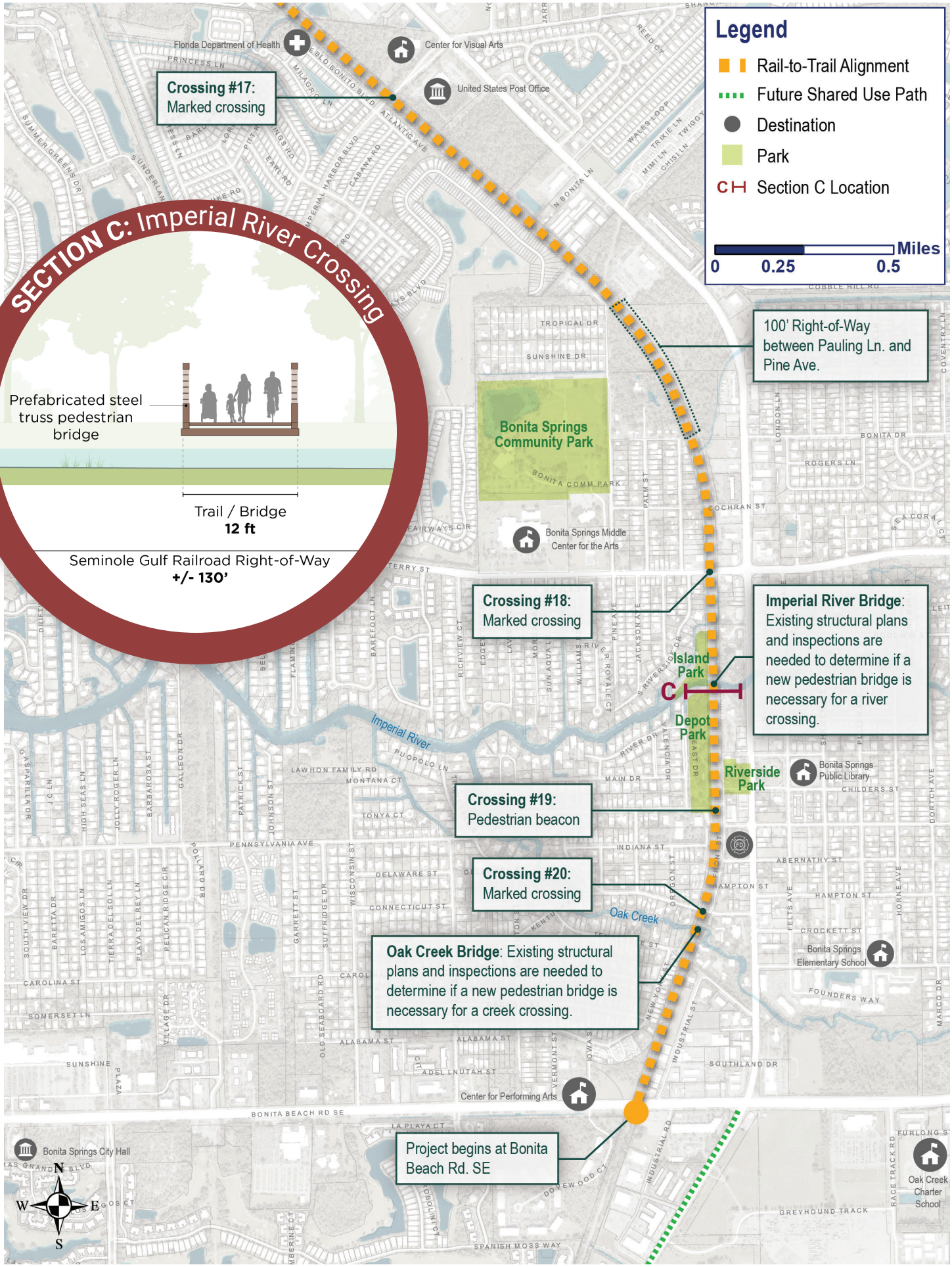
The maps on the following pages highlight the existing conditions and proposed design solutions needed to implement the rail-to-trail alternative.


Legend
Rail-to-Trail Alignment
Existing Shared Use Path
Destination
Park
A Section A Location
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
Connection to John Yarbrough Linear Park Trail
Pedestrian overpass
Project ends at John Yarbrough Linear Park Trail
Rail-to-Trail: No potential floodplain impacts, due the railway track bed being located above the floodplain.
Rail-with-Trail: Potential floodplain impacts, due to swales that run along the rail line below the floodplain.
Crossing #1: Marked crosswalk
Crossing #2: Marked crosswalk
Crossing #3: Marked crosswalk
Crossing #4: Marked crosswalk
Mullock Creek Bridge: Existing structural plans and inspections are needed to determine if a new pedestrian bridge is necessary for a creek crossing.
San Carlos Golf Club
Shadow Wood Preserve
Mullock Creek
SECTION A: Alico Road to Constitution Boulevard
Shoulder 2 ft
Trail 12 ft
Shoulder 2 ft
Rail Ballast 24ft
Seminole Gulf Railroad Right-of-Way +/- 130'
N
W
E
S


Legend
Rail-to-Trail Alignment
Destination
Park
Section B Location
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
Perimeter netting/ fencing to delineate private/ public boundary
Estero Country Club
B
Crossing #5: Golf cart crossing with gated access
Crossing #6: Marked crosswalk
Belle Lago Community
Crossing #7: Pedestrian overpass
Crossing #8: Marked crosswalk
Cascades Community
Crossing #9: Marked crosswalk
165' Right-of-Way between Corkscrew Rd. and Broadway Ave.
Estero River
Estero River Bridge: Existing structural plans and inspections are needed to determine if a new pedestrian bridge is necessary for a river crossing.
Crossing #10: Pedestrian overpass
Koreshan State Park
SECTION B: Vintage Trace Drive to Vintage Trace Circle
8' Netting / Fencing
Shoulder 2 ft
Trail 12 ft
Shoulder 2 ft
Rail Ballast 24ft
Seminole Gulf Railroad Right-of-Way +/- 130'
MATANZAS RD
ESTERO PKWY
BROADWAY E
COUNTY RD
41
N
S
E
W


Legend
Rail-to-Trail Alignment
Destination
Park
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
Crossing #11: Pedestrian hybrid signal crossing
Crossing #12: Marked crosswalk
Crossing #13: Pedestrian hybrid signal crossing
Estero Community Park
Estero High School
Coconut Point Shopping Center
Lee Health
COMMONS WAY
LANSING LOOP
SOUTHERN HILLS DR
BACCARAT LN
YATT CT
UNNAMED DR
VIA COCONUT POINT
BODE BLVD
ESTERO HIGH
WILLIAMS RD
PALMETTO RIDGE DR
CHARTWELL BREEZE DR
BALI LN
SUNLAND LN
SEASHORE CIR
ATLANTIC GULF BLVD
GALLOWAY FORD
HERTZ DR
VIA GARIBALDI CIR
ISOLA VERDE WAY
PONTE ROMANO LN
VIA PALAZZO PL
VIA RAPALLO DR
VIA LUNGOMARE CIR
41
SEASONS WAY
CINNAMON LN
ISLAND LAKES DR
MARYANN WAY
WINDSWEPT DR
SHALLOWATER LN
RESERVE ESTATES DR
BANYAN HIDEAWAY DR
PIAZZA DEL LAGO CIR
STONE WAY
SPRINGSIDE DR
SNAPTAIL CT
SHOPKEEPERS WAY
MEDITERRANEAN DR
PLAZA DE LAGO DR
VIA UMBRIA WAY
WILLOW WALK
KNOLLVIEW BLVD
LAKEBEND PRESERVE CT
OAK STRAND DR
FOREST RIDGE DR
WHITE OAK LN
BULB LN
MARSH LANDING BLVD
SHADY OAK LN
GRASSY PINE DR
VILLAGE SHOPS WAY
FASHION DR
HOLLOW PINE DR
OAKWILDE BLVD
SHADY KNOLL DR
CERISE DR
COCONUT SHORES DR
MORNING LAKE DR
SAFFRON DR
AMICI WAY
VIA VILLAGIO
VIA SARDINIA WAY
ROSEDALE DR
FOXBERRY LN
LYDEN DR
S COCONUT ISLAND DR
SILVERLEAF LN
CYPRESS HAMMOCK CIR
COCONUT RD
WALDEN CENTER DR
PEPPERMILL CT
NORTH CO
WATER LN
TH CENTER BLVD
E TA ST
N
W
E
S


Legend
Rail-to-Trail Alignment
Destination
Park
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
Crossing #14: Marked crossing
Crossing #15: Pedestrian hybrid signal crossing
Crossing #16: Pedestrian beacon
NCH Healthcare Bonita
Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce
Spring Creek Elementary School
Bonita Springs Charter School
Lee County Clerk of Court
PELICAN COLONY BLVD
COMMERCE DR
PRODUCTION BLVD
PELICAN LANDING PKWY
STRIKE LN
BERNWOOD DR N
BERNWOOD PKWY
OLD 41 RD
S TAMIAMI TRL
41
N
S
E
W


SECTION C: Imperial River Crossing
Prefabricated steel truss pedestrian bridge
Trail / Bridge
12 ft
Seminole Gulf Railroad Right-of-Way
+/- 130'
Legend
Rail-to-Trail Alignment
Future Shared Use Path
Destination
Park
Section C Location
Miles
0
0.25
0.5
Crossing #17: Marked crossing
Crossing #18: Marked crossing
Crossing #19: Pedestrian beacon
Crossing #20: Marked crossing
100' Right-of-Way between Pauling Ln. and Pine Ave.
Imperial River Bridge: Existing structural plans and inspections are needed to determine if a new pedestrian bridge is necessary for a river crossing.
Oak Creek Bridge: Existing structural plans and inspections are needed to determine if a new pedestrian bridge is necessary for a creek crossing.
Project begins at Bonita Beach Rd. SE
Florida Department of Health
Center for Visual Arts
United States Post Office
Bonita Springs Community Park
Bonita Springs Middle Center for the Arts
Island Park
Depot Park
Riverside Park
Bonita Springs Public Library
Bonita Springs Elementary School
Center for Performing Arts
Bonita Springs City Hall
Oak Creek Charter School
Imperial River
Oak Creek
BONITA BEACH RD SE
TROPICAL DR
SUNSHINE DR
BONITA DR
ROGERS LN
COCHRAN ST
TERRY ST
MAIN DR
INDIANA ST
HAMPTON ST
ABERNATHY ST
CROCKETT ST
FOUNDERS WAY
SOUTHLAND DR
PENNSYLVANIA AVE
DELAWARE ST
CONNECTICUT ST
CAROLINA ST
SOMERSET LN
ALABAMA ST
SUNSHINE
SPANISH MOSS WAY
GREYHOUND TRACK
CHILDERS ST
LAWHON FAMILY RD
MONTANA CT
TONYA CT
N BONITA LN
COBBLE HILL RD
N
S
W
E

UTILITY AND ROW IMPACTS

LAND USE

The rail-to-trail alternative is located in the Seminole Gulf Rail corridor. The inactive rail corridor consists of forested and non-forested natural areas, surface waters, and developed areas. The surface waters include the Estero River, Imperial River, ponds and ditches. The developed areas include the rail corridor, residential and commercial areas, bridge crossings, parking lots, and sidewalks. Because this entire alternative is located within the railroad's right-of-way (ROW), only one transaction is required to acquire property to build the trail (See **Chapter 4**).

CROSSINGS

Alternatives within the rail corridor cross a total of 19 roadways and one golf cart path. Based on roadway volumes, speeds, and geometry, multiple traffic control devices can be implemented at trail crossings to accommodate safe road crossings. Sixty-five percent of the crossing locations include marked crosswalks at a minimum in order to improve pedestrian safety. The marked crosswalk improvements would include ADA curb ramps, roadway and trail signage, and crosswalk striping. Pedestrian hybrid signal crossings are recommended on four lane divided roadways. Crossing recommendations for all locations can be found in **Chapter 7**.

Stream crossings include Oak Creek, Imperial River, Estero River, and Mullock Creek. The existing bridges in the rail corridor may need to be replaced, due their age and current condition. Prefabricated steel truss pedestrian bridges are recommended for all river and creek crossings (See **Chapter 8**).

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Twelve different utility agencies claim ownership of the utilities within the various corridors in the study area. Most of the utilities (i.e. water, sewer, gas, buried and overhead electric, drainage, transportation, communications, etc.) within the rail corridor are also located at the road right-of-way (ROW) at rail crossings. Fiber optic cable is located 10 feet from the edge of the rail track along the west side of the rail corridor.

The trail can be placed over buried utilities, provided that the utilities are adequately marked, and allowance is made in the trail design for maintenance and repair. An encroachment permit, agreement, or other form of approval is necessary from the property owners holding the overlying rights. Often some form of agreement is also necessary from the utility and railroad owners. Occasionally a utility will share in the costs of relocation (See **Chapter 6**).

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

The stormwater drainage system consists of open ditches/swales along segments of the rail-to-trail and off-rail alternatives. The stormwater collected

by the ditches/swales are conveyed to stormwater management facilities and creeks. The rail-to-trail alternative will cross Oak Creek, Imperial River, Estero River, and Mullock Creek. The trail will need to be designed so water from rain storms and other weather events will drain into the creeks and rivers. The rail-to trail alternative is located above the floodplain except for one acre of impervious area between Alico Road and Constitution Circle (See **Chapter 5**). Based on this information, floodplain mitigation may be required for implementation. Mitigation could potentially include:

- Elevating structures above the floodplain (i.e; boardwalks and bridges)
- Providing and enhancing green infrastructure
- Reinforcing riparian zones

SCHEDULE AND PERMITTING

CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE

The construction timeline for the proposed alternatives will follow the FDOT's Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) process. This process involves the examination of multiple design options and their social and environmental effects. The PD&E process complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated federal and state laws and regulations. The PD&E planning process is divided into four primary subsections: Planning, Pre-PD&E Activities, PD&E Study, and Final Design.
Further study is needed to identify the most feasible alternative before advancing to the final design phase.

The final design phase consists of 60%, 90%, and 100% plan submissions, while identifying the necessary right-of-way (ROW) acquisitions to implement the project. After the final plans have been reviewed and approved by FDOT, the trail project will be clear for construction. (See **FDOT's Project Development and Environment Manual** for more information).

PERMITTING

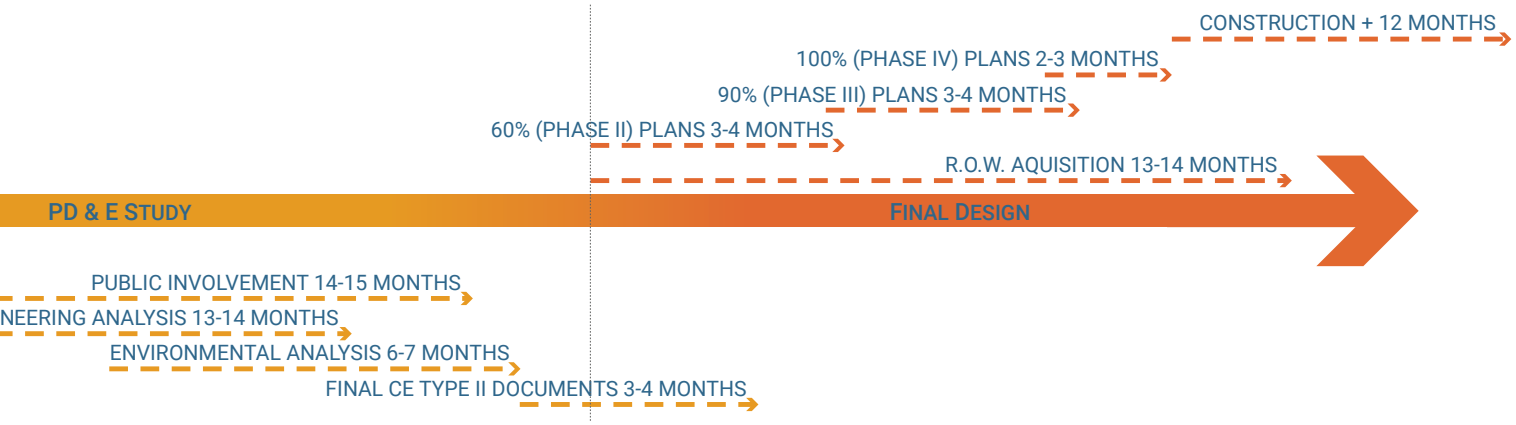
Permitting will be required for Lee County, The Village of Estero, and Bonita Springs. Potential permits required before construction are as follows:

Lee County

- Commercial ROW Permit: Gives developer/ contractor legal access from the county to work within ROW or easements in commercial areas

- Commercial Fence or Wall Permit: Gives developer/contractor permission to erect fences and walls. An Easement and Encumbrances Disclosure and Acknowledgment document will be required in addition to the permit.

ID DESIGN TIMELINE



- Development Order: A development order application is an administrative review process involving other divisions and departments within the County. Projects will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

    1. Manage impacts on ecological systems.
    2. Evaluate and address traffic impacts.
    3. Provide for adequate streets, potable water and sewerage systems, drainage and overall stormwater management systems, fire protection, landscaping, and site buffering.
    4. Preserve and protect wetlands, protected species and historical resources.
    5. Comply with applicable zoning regulations, densities and intensity of allowable uses.

Bonita Springs

- Right-of-Way Construction Permit: Gives developer/contractor legal access from the City to work within ROW or easements

Estero

- Clean Water Act/ Village of Estero's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit: A notice of intent form must be completed and approved by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan must be submitted and approved by the City of Estero

FEMA Compliance

The rail-to-trail alternative runs through designated flood hazard areas or areas subject to inundation by the 1% annual chance flood. These areas are generally located near the river and creek crossings. They are classified as AE or AH zones. The AH zones are predicted to have flood depths of 1-3 feet. Due to the rail-to-trail alternative's alignment, a FEMA Elevation Certificate will be required to prove that the proposed structures meet the required Base Flood Elevation. FEMA Evaluation Certificates are a requirement of the building permit process. They will be required during construction before the first horizontal structure is placed.

In addition to the elevation certificates, any changes in water surface elevation greater than 0.00 feet, floodway width or location, or floodway water surface elevations will require FEMA approval through the Conditional Letters of Map Revision (CLOMR) / Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) process. A "No-Rise" can be obtained and approved at the local level by the City's Floodplain Administrator, if the trail can be kept outside of the floodway and impacts in the floodplain can be minimized. A CLOMR/ LOMR may be needed for the trail segment between Constitution Boulevard and Alico Road.

PLANNING LEVEL COST ESTIMATE

Cost estimates for the construction of the rail-to-trail alternative are provided based on the FDOT shared use path 12-foot wide rails-to-trails cost per mile model and regional bid tabs for comparable projects. **Table 11.1** provides a cost summary of the 13-mile long alternative. The grand total is estimated to be around $55 Million, excluding amenities. SunTrail funds do not pay for amenities. A separate breakdown of the amenities costs are provided in **Table 11.2**.

Table 11.1. Cost Estimate for the Rail-to-Trail Alternative

Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Cost	Item Total
1 - Trail				
	65,472	LF	$150.00	$9,820,800.00
Trail Total				**$9,820,800.00**
2 - Structures				
Bridge 1 - Mullock Creek	40	LF	$ 8,800.00	$ 352,000.00
Bridge 2 - Estero Country Club	52	LF	$ 8,800.00	$457,600.00
Bridge 3 - Estero River	72	LF	$ 8,800.00	$633,600.00
Bridge 4 - Oak Creek	80	LF	$ 8,800.00	$704,000.00
Bridge 5 - Imperial River	73	LF	$ 8,800.00	$642,400.00
Structures Total				**$2,789,600.00**
3 - Fencing				
Slope protection fencing - 48" wood 3 rail	8,500	LF	$50.00	$425,000.00
Fencing Total				**$425,000.00**
4 - Roadway Crossings				
Marked Crosswalks	13	EA	$5,000.00	$65,000.00

Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)	2	EA	$50,000.00	$100,000.00
Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB)	3	EA	$175,000.00	$525,000.00
Pedestrian Overpass (2 @ 50' EA)	2	EA	$10,000,000.00	$20,000,000.00
Roadway Crossings Total				**$20,690,000.00**
Total Rail-to-Trail Cost				**$33,725,400.00**
5 - Misc. Construction Costs				
Minor items			10%	1,518,700.00
Work zone traffic control			3%	$455,600.00
Field change order			5%	$759,400.00
Mobilization			6%	$2,023,600.00
Total Misc. Construction Costs				**$4,757,300.00**
Construction Total				**$38,483,000.00**
General Contingency			30%	$11,545,000.00
Construction Grand Total				**$50,028,000.00**
Engineering and Survey			15%	$5,773,000.00
Project Grand Total				**$55,801,000.00**

Table 11.2. Cost Estimate for the Rail-to-Trail Alternative Amenities

Trail Amenities Cost Estimate*				
Item	**Quantity**	**Unit**	**Unit Cost**	**Item Total**
Wayfinding/Signage allowance (Estimated cost for directional and warning signage)	12.40	LM	$ 1,600.00	$19,840.00
Site furniture allowance (Estimated cost for trash receptacles, seating, bike racks etc...)	12.40	LM	$ 5,000.00	$62,000.00
Amenities Total				**$81,840.00**

* The amenities costs will be covered by separate funding sources, since they are not classified as infrastructure items

APPRAISAL OF RAIL CORRIDOR

In July 2020, the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) retained the real estate firm of Maxwell-Hendry-Simmons to appraise the real property of the SGLR line between Alico Road in South Lee County and the end of the line in North Naples, a distance of about 14.9 miles encompassing 235.40± acres. Lee County, Collier County, the Village of Estero, and the City of Bonita Springs support the appraisal of the rail corridor. As of September 2020, the market value was appraised at $70,465,000. In a letter to TPL, dated February 8, 2021, SGLR rejected the appraisal valuation citing that it was at least 30% under fair market value. SGLR also verbally asked TPL to pause purchase negotiation, and evaluate market conditions in a year and resume the negotiations.

Beginning January of this year the Trust for Public Lands and Seminole Gulf Rail have resumed negotiations to purchase all segments of the 14.0 miles rail line. Local governments would have to ultimately pay for the acquisition of the rail line for this to be successful. The timeline for the various milestones of this appraisal is as follows:

- Trust for Public Land (TPL) retained Services of Maxwell Hendry Simmons in July 2020 to appraise Real Property of Seminole Gulf Railway (SGLR) Rail Line between Alico Road in South Lee County and End of Line in North Naples.
- Rail Line 14.9 miles long with Subject Property (Rail Corridor) covering 235.40± Acres.
- Intended Appraisal Users - TPL, SGLR, Lee County BOCC, Collier County BOCC, City of Bonita Springs, Village of Estero.
- Property Valuation conducted on September 9, 2020. Preliminary Appraisal Report completed January 15, 2021.
- **MARKET VALUE* OF CORRIDOR APPRAISED AT $70,465,000**. Market Value by Local Government Corridor Segments are as follows:

Table 11.3. Municipality market values

Municipality	Market Value
Unincorporated Lee County	**$8,080,000**
Village of Estero	**$27,385,000**
City of Bonita Springs	**$28,430,000**
Unincorporated Collier County	**$6,570,000**

* Market value calculated by multiplying Across the Fence (ATF) value by a 1.5 Corridor Factor

- TPL presented Findings of Preliminary Appraisal Report to SGLR. Findings Separately presented to Executive Management of four Local Governments.
- Gordon Fey, Chairman of SGLR, sent February 8, 2021, letter to TPL rejecting Appraisal Valuation citing Valuation was at least 30% under Fair Market Value.
- SGLR Letter shared with Executive Management of all four Local Governments.
- SGLR asked TPL to Pause and Pursue Renegotiations after one year after New Market
- Beginning January of this year TPL and SGLR has resumed negotiations to reach an agreement on a fair market price for acquisition of the railroad corridor.