

East Coast Greenway  
Camden County Meeting  
St. Marys Town Hall  
Tuesday, July 17, 2007 1-3 pm

## Meeting summary

60 were in attendance

Herb Hiller provided an overview of the East Coast Greenway and developments in Florida, noting the proposed Ancient Cities trail connecting St. Augustine and Pensacola, and Green Necklace through central Florida.

Jo Hickson gave a presentation on the development of the Coastal Georgia Greenway plan, followed by a discussion of the East-West abandoned rail corridor, which would connect St. Marys to the sub base and ultimately to US-17. Land could be acquired by the Georgia Land Conservation Program, and grant application has been started. Roger Weaver also discussed this possible project. Anne Orr has reviewed the St. Marys section of this corridor, which she notes is held by 3 private land owners, and she estimates that this section is appraised at approximately \$100,000.

Kevin McCarthy gave an update on the status of the water taxi between St. Marys and Fernandina Beach. His company, Amelia River Cruises, has purchased a 99 passenger, 59 foot boat from an operation in the Everglades, which needs some maintenance and local Coast Guard certification. Details on docking, parking, taxes, and concessions still need to be resolved, but Kevin anticipates starting within a month or so. He plans starting a limited schedule, Thursday-Saturday, maybe 3 round trips a day, with a probable cost of \$13-\$15 round trip. The boat is handicapped accessible, as are probable docking facilities in St. Marys. He plans bike racks on the boat, as well as trolley connection to the beach in Fernandina and taxi access in Fernandina as well.

Janet Brinko discussed the excellent cooperation of the St. Marys and Fernandina Chambers of Commerce.

Jo Hickson then summarized the last workshop and introduced the goals of the current workshop: The East-West abandoned rail corridor, organizing as a group, and starting the water taxi.

## Workshop summaries:

Participants gather to share experiences and discuss strategies for raising local support, (public and private sector) through regional collaboration.

### **Group 1: East-West Abandoned Rail Corridor acquisition and trail construction**

During the Status portion of the meeting, Anne Orr reported that considering an 110 – foot wide trail corridor through ab. Rail corridor in St. Marys, the assessed value of the land is under \$100,000.

The following participants discussed this issue:

Beth (and Elise) Gowan, Lee Bernasek, Anne Orr, Royal Weaver, PJ Jordan, Darren Harper, Herb Hiller

The following topics were discussed –

## Identify short term tasks

1. Define the trail corridor, overall project and benefits
2. Contact property owners
3. Create a plan to purchase property

## Challenges

1. Acquiring property for trails
2. Property owners already have a plan for their property

## Opportunities for Collaboration

1. Cooperate with Camden Co. PSA to apply for grants

## Collaborative Projects for Group Implementation

The group discussed the ideas presented above and identified 3 priority areas for collaborative projects for the group to work on and the developed the following for each of the three priority areas:

- SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action oriented, Realistic and Time related) objective
- Next Steps, including specific actions, by whom and when

### Priority 1

SMART Objective: Define trail, overall project and benefits to current landowners

Next steps: E-W rail trail group meets with local leadership team to prepare the document described above.

### Priority 2

SMART Objective: Contact property owners

Next steps: Presentation (to landowners) by Jo Hickson also with supporters from local leadership team and a local supportive developer.

### Priority 3

SMART Objective: Create a plan to purchase the property

Next steps: Identify agency to coordinate and accept property acquisitions or donations – Camden Co. PSA or new land bank authority through Signature Community Program Acquire property through donations, grants or other means.

## **Group 2: How to organize locally**

The following participants discussed this issue:

Roger Weaver, Walt Natzic, Darlene Roellig, Marianne Feller, Roger Rillo and Drew Wade

The following topics were discussed –

Identify short term tasks

1. Develop an organizational structure to coordinate trail efforts

### Challenges

1. Identifying interested parties outside of St. Marys
2. Coordinating with existing 501c3 (Coastal Georgia RC&D Council) or develop a new one for Camden County

## Opportunities for Collaboration

1. Cooperate with Camden Co. PSA
2. Scouting or school groups

## Collaborative Projects for Group Implementation

### Priority 1

SMART Objective: Develop an organizational structure to coordinate trail efforts

Next steps:

\* Exploratory committee to meet to discuss organization, comprised of 2 members from each of the local municipalities (St. Marys, Woodbine, Kingsland, and Camden County) and one member from the East Coast Greenway

\* Members identified: Walt Natzic and Roger Rillo of St. Marys, Darlene Roellig and Janet Heath for Camden County, Sandy ? and Beth Gowen for Woodbine, Darren Harper and Clarence Knight for Kingsland, and Drew Wade for the East Coast Greenway.

\* Develop an organizational structure to include subcommittees, suggested include Technical, Users/Government liason, Funding, PR, Events, and Florida liason

\* Develop proposal for adoption at city councils to appoint a steering committee for the group

### **Group 3: Water Taxi**

The following topics were discussed:

Identify short term tasks

1. Christening ceremony
2. Begin water taxi operation
3. Exclusive "premier" run

Challenges

1. Parking
2. Handicapped access
3. Regulatory compliance
4. Franchise or no
5. Economics
6. Office space/ticketing
7. Onboard concessions

Opportunities for Collaboration

1. Chamber to chamber meetings
2. Kings Bay
3. City councils (Fernandina/St Marys)
4. Lodging/Transportation
5. Merchant associations
6. Local event coordination (festival committees, etc)

Collaborative Projects for Group Implementation

Priority 1

SMART Objective: Begin Water Taxi operation

Next steps:

Get city commissions' blessing and perspectives

Begin local information briefs

Develop tentative schedules

No date was set for the next meeting, though the proposed exploratory meeting for organization will set a time to meet in the coming weeks.

Drew Wade

Co-Chair, Coastal Georgia Greenway

drewwade ( a t ) coastalgeorgiagreenway ( d o t ) org

Herb Hiller

Southeast Regional Program Coordinator

East Coast Greenway Alliance

hiller ( a t ) funport ( d o t ) net

Jo Hickson

Co-Chair, Coastal Georgia Greenway

johickson ( a t ) comcast ( d o t ) net