

Woodpecker Extension Overview

In 2004 the Woodpecker Trail was completed in Big Shoals Public Lands. It is a 3.6 mile paved trail from the Little Shoals entrance to the Big Shoals State Park. It is a 10 foot wide paved path with Trex boardwalks over wetland areas. There is a parking lot at the Little Shoals entrance. The trail is currently used by both walkers and cyclists.

The 2005 Big Shoals Public Lands Comprehensive Plan identified the Woodpecker Trail Extension as important to the viability of the existing trail (**bold added**).

Woodpecker Trail. The Woodpecker Trail will be a multi-purpose paved recreational trail that is envisioned to connect BSPL with Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park and the Town of White Springs. The first phase of the Trail was completed in 2004 with funding from the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) program and connects the Little Shoals and Godwin Bridge entrances within BSPL. The meandering trail is separated from existing service roads by a vegetative buffer, except where limited by environmental conditions. The 10-foot wide asphalt trail will serve pedestrians, skaters and bicyclists.

Several options exist to extend the Woodpecker Trail into White Springs. One option is for the trail to be aligned along the State Road 135 corridor and local roads in White Springs. Trail connections beyond the BSPL boundary will require the support and initiative of other government agencies to secure funding and ensure operational and public safety issues are adequately addressed. **A second option is to route the trail west from the Little Shoals Entrance and then south through the Barnett Tract of the Swift Creek Conservation Area (SCCA), across US 41 and then west through other tracts of the SCCA towards Stephen Foster Folk Culture State Park.** Existing jeep trails on these public lands provide a logical trail corridor. Advantages of the latter option include less potential conflicts with vehicular traffic and the reduced need for ROW acquisition. However, environmental constraints on the SCCA may prove challenging to constructing a paved shared use trail. Whatever routing is pursued, completing the vision of the Woodpecker Trail is considered important to its viability as a recreational trail. It is recommended that representatives from the Division, SRWMD, Hamilton County, White Springs, DOT and the bicycling community discuss the merits of these two routings and develop a plan to complete the Woodpecker Trail. Both alternative routings are included on the BSPL Conceptual Land Use Plan.¹

Twenty years later, and the Woodpecker Extension is in the Big Shoals Unit Management Plan, and on page 49 its expansion is identified as an objective, but no funding has been designated for its design or construction.

Woodpecker Trail

Objective: Expand trail connectivity between state parks through inter-agency collaboration.

The woodpecker trail is a multi-use paved recreational trail that travels throughout the BSPL. A multipurpose paved recreational trail is envisioned to connect BSPL with Stephen Foster Folk Culture Center State Park and the Town of White Springs. The first phase of the Trail was completed in 2004 with funding from the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) program and connects the Little Shoals and Godwin entrances within BSPL.

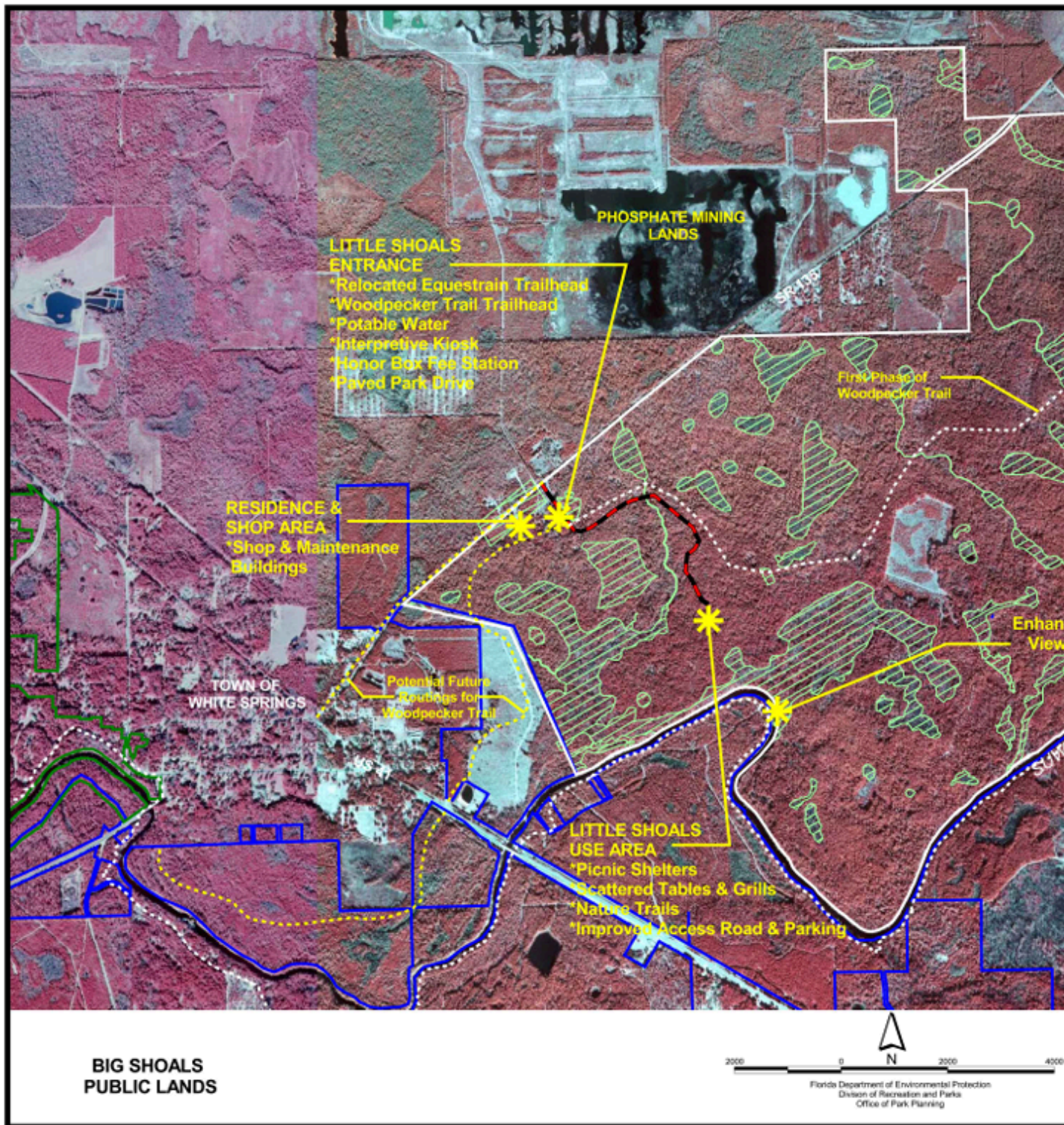
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Trail connections beyond the BSPL boundary will require coordination and implementation efforts with other government agencies and landowners to secure funding and ensure operational and public safety. Specifically, representatives from DRP, SRWMD, Hamilton County, White Springs, DOT, and cycling community members will have to develop a plan.²

The Barnett Tract is now owned by the Town of White Springs, as is the right of way of Wesson St, and the rest of the land is owned by Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD). There is one point where SRWMD owns two corners of a point of the trail, with private property of the other two corners.

Route Options

In 2005, the route for the Woodpecker Extension was a yellow dashed line from the Little Shoals Entrance end of the Woodpecker Trail to US 41 and then on to the end of Wesson Street in White Springs. (For clarity, only the left side of the map is shown.)



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nrKEGNonpU5uzAzkbzoX5pVsnxc8QqB2/view?usp=drive_link

Hwy 135 Route

The 2005 plan suggested that one option to extend the Woodpecker Trail would be to follow FL 135 into town. The problem with this route is that there are drainage ditches on both sides of the highway, and more than a dozen property owners that would be impacted. Also, a ten foot path might not be feasible, and a sidewalk would be significantly more expensive to install. This option has been rejected for these reasons.

Public Lands to Barnett Tract

This portion of the Woodpecker Extension can be looked at in two parts, separated by US 41. Part 1 is 1.5 miles that starts at the Little Shoals end of the original trail, and heads SW through Big Shoals Public Lands to property now owned by the Town of White Springs (the Barnett Tract). There is a small stream that will require a bridge, but otherwise there shouldn't be any issues putting in a paved path.

Woodpecker Extension, Part 1

Cycling Route

★ Saved

Edit



Details

📍 1.16 mi

📏 0 ft

🕒 4:40

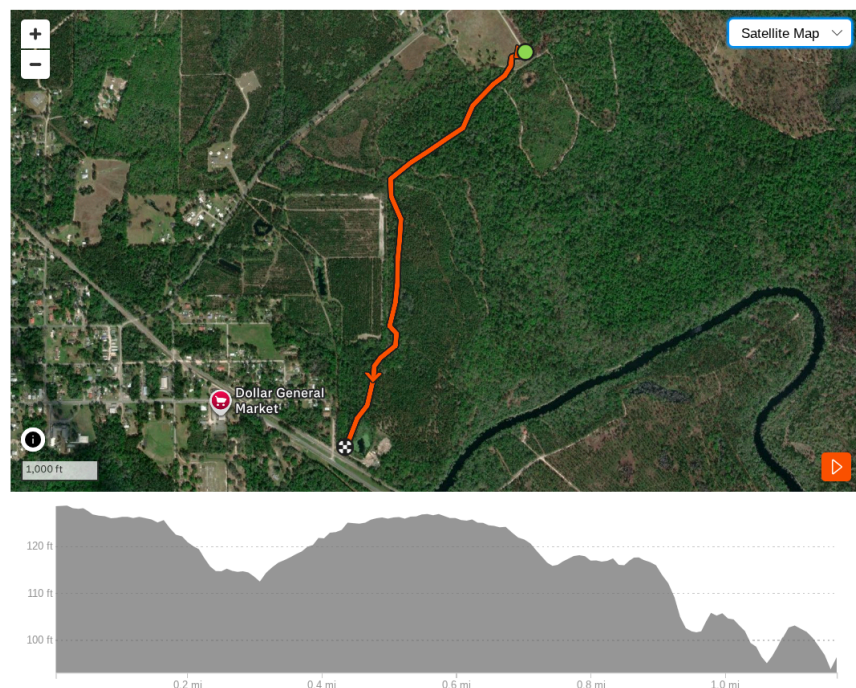
from Woodpecker Trail, Little Shoals parking lot, to US 41. This route is entirely on Big Shoals Public Lands and White Springs property.

CREATED BY

Mick Shea
October 19, 2025 · Public



Route and Elevation



<https://www.strava.com/routes/3415057665867290374>

The paved trail will end by Sunrise Drive and the train tracks. The area is unpaved, and is currently an impromptu parking lot. It would be nice to turn it into a nicer parking lot but this project hasn't looked into the costs associated with such an upgrade.

Between the tracks and US 41 is a short distance, it would be nice if a sidewalk was installed to a crosswalk to get to the sidewalk on the other side of US 41. It would help to highlight the trail, and all of the options for the trail below rely on getting across the highway. At a minimum a crosswalk is needed. Signs alerting drivers would also be nice, as would a sidewalk from US 41 up to the train tracks.

US 41 to Stephen Foster via Spring St.

This is not part of the 2005 plan, but it's an attractive option. Sidewalks are already in place, so there is no construction cost for this route. It will require a crosswalk on US 41 at Sunrise Drive, when the paved path ends. Pedestrian crossing signs like the ones at the Wesson St. crosswalk would be useful.

It would be nice if the missing sections of sidewalk were installed, but there are crosswalks at Adams Memorial and Wesson Streets that are adequate to walk and avoid the missing sections. The missing section on the South side of Spring St is between Third St and Adams Memorial. The North side of the highway is missing a sidewalk between the two ends of Sunrise Drive.

It is 1.2 miles from Sunrise Drive to the Stephen Foster entrance via this path.

Woodpecker Extension US 41 sidewalk

Cycling Route

★ Saved

Edit

Details

📍 1.2 mi

🏔️ 32 ft

🕒 4:49

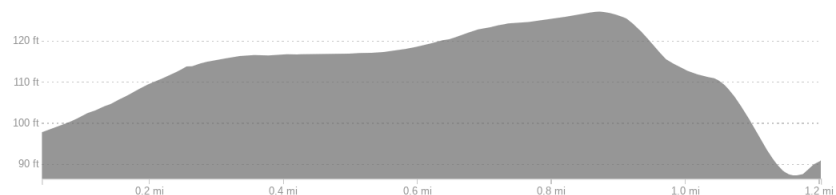
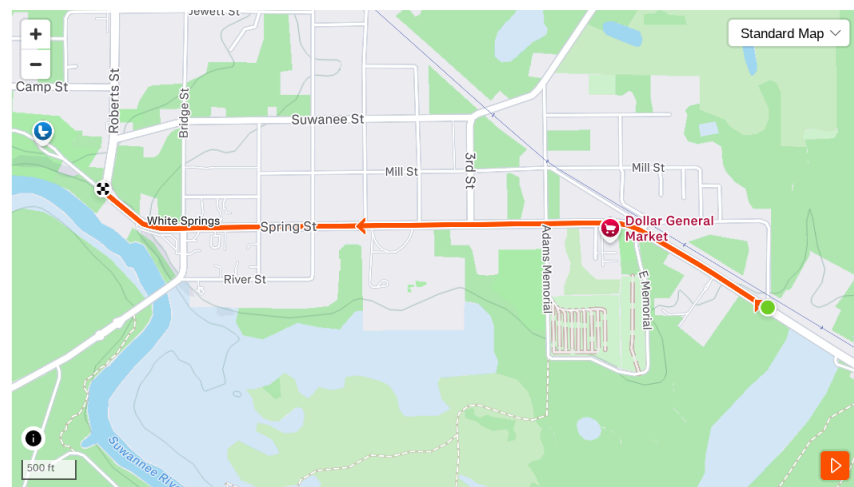
The Woodpecker Extension can use the sidewalks through town for less cost than boardwalk through Water District land.

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Mick Shea
November 6, 2025 · Public



Route and Elevation



US 41 to Adams Memorial Drive via the Florida Trail

Another “free” option is to give hikers the option to add an extra 2.6 miles to their journey, and hike along a section of the Florida Trail. The White Springs Tract section starts at Wayside Park and is an unpaved trail that roughly follows the Suwannee River on Water District land before returning to US 41 / Spring St at Adams Memorial Drive. This route then continues on Spring St in the same way as the sidewalk option above.

It would be nice if there were a sign on the sidewalk by Sunrise Drive indicating the Florida Trail 100 feet to the Left, and Stephen Foster 1.2 miles to the right.

Florida Trail Woodpecker Extension Option

Cycling Route

★ Saved

Edit

Details

📍 3.81 mi

🏔️ 88 ft

🕒 15:15

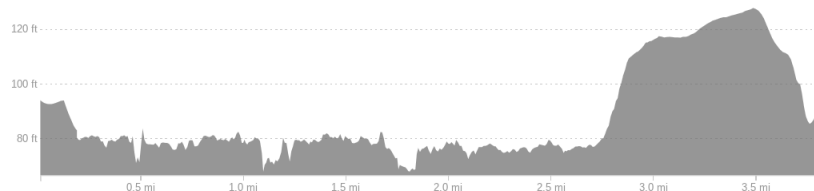
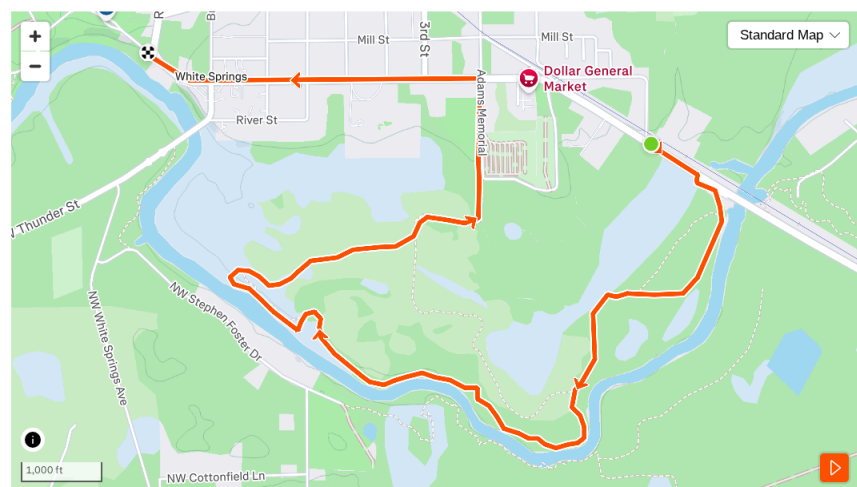
Intrepid hikers will enjoy a few miles of the Florida Trail as an alternative to the sidewalks of White Springs. This route along the Suwannee River is unpaved.

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Route and Elevation



US 41 to Wesson Street

The second half of the Woodpecker Extension suggested in 2005 is from US 41 to Wesson Street. At 1.4 miles this would be the most challenging to implement, since it will require a boardwalk over wetlands, and stairs up to the town and either a ramp or stairs down from US 41. The hill up to the end of Wesson St. is about a 55' elevation difference, so the stairway will be significant, precluding bicycles. The town end is a Town of White Springs easement between two properties, the extension of Wesson St., and it connects to Suwannee River Water Management District land for the rest of the route, with one exception.

Woodpecker Extension, Park 2

Cycling Route



Details

📍 1.4 mi 🏔️ 50 ft

🕒 5:36

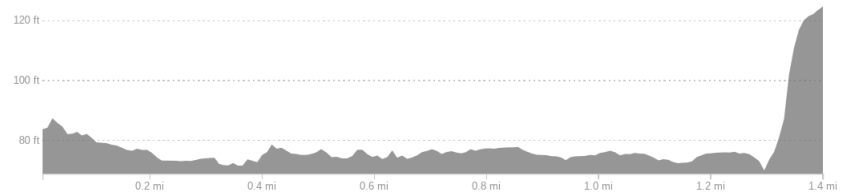
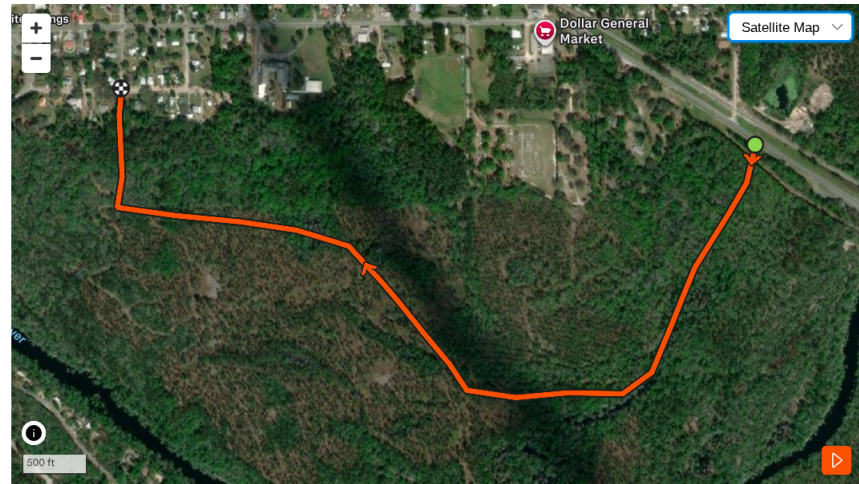
This trail starts at US 41 and is a boardwalk over wetlands and a paved trail over higher ground, and then stairs out of the floodplain to Wesson Street and River Road in White Springs. The land is a Town of White Springs right-of-way at Wesson St., to Suwannee River Water Management District land, with one point requiring either an easement or land purchase from one of two private land owners.

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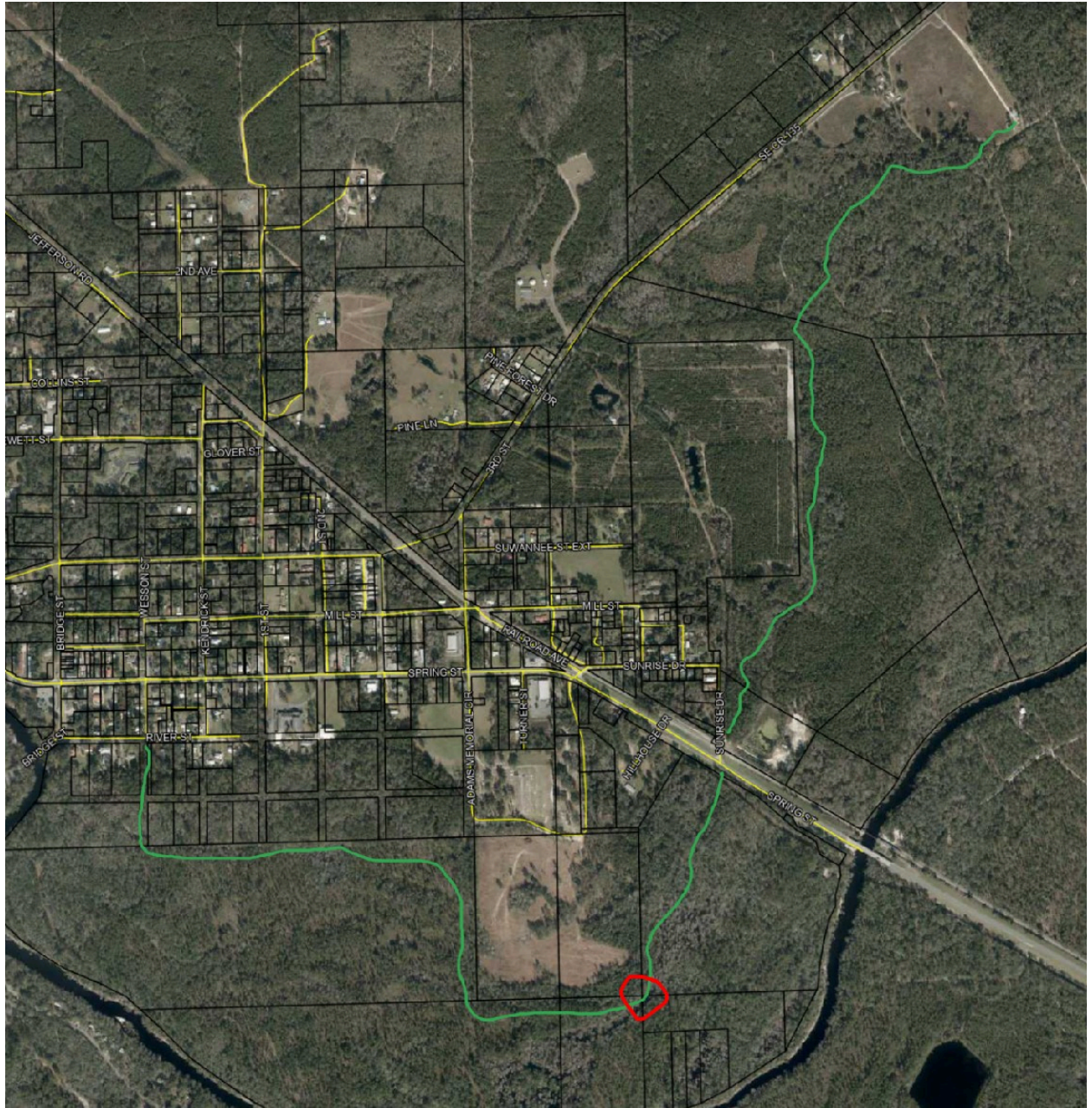


Route and Elevation



<https://www.strava.com/routes/3415061255510749102>

Below is a Hamilton County Property Appraisal view of the entire extension route. The black lines denote parcel boundaries. All of the parcels that the green line of the proposed trail is on are owned by either Big Shoals Public Lands, the Town of White Springs, or SRWMD. But there is one spot (circled in red) where there are two private holdings adjacent to the route. The NW 20 acre parcel is owned by Frances and Martha Dees of White Springs, and the SE 11.47 acre parcel is owned by M.A. Hunt Properties LLC of Jacksonville. Ideally one of these property owners will be amenable to granting the town the right-of-way for the Woodpecker Extension, or sell 100 square feet of their land for a nominal sum.



Costs

(This cost analysis was generated by Gemini AI.)

This will be an ambitious project! Building a 10-foot wide asphalt path with significant structures like boardwalks and stairs is a major undertaking for a public trail. The cost will be driven overwhelmingly by the **0.7 miles of elevated boardwalk**, which is a highly specialized and expensive type of construction.

Here is a planning-level breakdown of the potential construction costs for your 2.66-mile path, broken down by segment.

Estimated Construction Costs (10' Wide Asphalt Path)

The total length of the asphalt path should be about 1.5 miles. A boardwalk and stairs are only needed with the route through the wetlands and up the hill to Wesson St.

- **Boardwalk:** \$0.7 miles (approx. \$3,696 linear feet)
- **Steep Hill/Stairs:** \$0.02 - 0.05 miles (The structure itself will be shorter than the path length)
- **Asphalt Path:** approx 1.5 miles

1. Main Path: Asphalt in the Woods (Approx. 1.5 Miles)

The primary cost here is for grading, preparing a stable base, drainage/culverts, and the final asphalt paving.

Component	Cost Range Per Mile (Installed)	Total Estimated Cost (1.5 Miles)
10' Wide Asphalt Trail	\$120,000 - \$350,000	\$180,000 - \$525,000

- **Notes:** This range reflects a typical well-designed path in a wooded area, accounting for clearing, grading, a gravel base, and the asphalt surface. Costs will trend toward the higher end if the wooded terrain is rough, requires significant drainage work, or involves rock removal.

2. Elevated Boardwalk (0.7 Miles / 3,696 Linear Feet)

This is the most expensive section. Boardwalk costs are typically calculated per square foot (SF) and depend on foundation depth, materials (wood/composite), and installation difficulty in wet, sensitive areas.³

Unit of Measure	Cost Range Per Square Foot (Installed)	Total Square Feet (10' wide × 3,696 LF = 36,960 SF)	Total Estimated Cost
Boardwalk Structure	\$70 - \$250+ per SF	36,960 SF	\$2,587,200 - \$9,240,000+

- Rationale:** The high end reflects remote locations, challenging soil (requiring deep driven piles), and higher-end composite decking with strong railing systems. This 0.7-mile section could easily represent **over 90% of your total construction budget**.

3. Steep Hill Stairs (50' Rise)

A 50-foot vertical rise requires a substantial, engineered public stair system with landings for rest and safety.

Component	Estimated Cost Range
Public Stair System	\$75,000 - \$250,000+

- Rationale:** To climb 50 feet safely, the system will need multiple flights, concrete or deep-pile foundations for stability on a slope, guardrails, and ADA-compliant landings. This is a complex engineering structure, not a simple deck staircase.



Preliminary Project Cost Summary

Path Segment	Lowest Estimated Cost	Highest Estimated Cost
1. Main Asphalt Path (1.91 mi)	\$180,000	\$525,000
2. Elevated Boardwalk (0.7 mi)	\$2,587,200	\$9,240,000

3. Steep Hill Stairs (50' Rise)	\$75,000	\$250,000
Subtotal: Construction Only	\$2,891,400	\$10,158,500

Critical Additional Project Costs

The numbers above are just for construction. You must also budget for the "soft costs" and contingencies, especially with sensitive wetland and hillside work.

- **Design & Engineering (20-30% of Construction):** This includes surveying, geotechnical studies, path design, and the mandatory **wetland permitting and environmental review**, which is extensive and costly for boardwalks.
 - **Est. Range:** approx \$578,000 - \$3,047,000
- **Contingency (15-20%):** Essential for covering unexpected site conditions (like poor soil or encountering rock).
 - **Est. Range:** approx \$433,000 - \$2,031,000

Rough Total Project Budget	\$3,902,400 (Conservative Low End)	\$15,236,500+ (High End with Complex Boardwalk)
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The key takeaway is that the **0.7 miles of boardwalk** will dictate the final price tag. Unless a generous source of funding is found, the boardwalk has become prohibitively expensive in recent years. It seems reasonable to look at completing the paved path from the Little Shoals end of the Woodpecker Trail to US 41 at Sunrise Drive, and see its impact on visitors and residents.