

****The Willow-Ellenton Trail will be placed within an existing rail corridor to run parallel to the Parrish and Palmetto rail Corridor. A portion of this corridor is currently used by the Florida Gulf Coast Rail Museum for the purpose of rail line tours from the Manatee/Hillsborough County Line to Ellenton/Palmetto.**

Trail Design

The existing rail line includes a 100-foot width, which provides an easement of approximately 40 feet. The Willow-Ellenton Trail will consist of a paved 10-foot path, which will run adjacent to the operating rail line. A 5-foot equestrian trail will be developed and run parallel to the bicycle/pedestrian path. A two to four foot vegetation buffer will separate the paths.

The Willow-Ellenton trail is made up of three distinct segments of varying access opportunities and public ownership:

- Downtown Palmetto to I-75 Overpass
- I-75 Overpass to downtown Parrish
- Downtown Parrish to Hillsborough County

The Willow-Ellenton Trail is adjacent to publicly -held lands - Manatee County's Buffalo Creek Recreation Park and Ola Mae Sims Park. Off-Trail recreational opportunities are not available in these areas.

The Florida Gulf Coast Railroad's future plans include relaying track at the southern end of its track into the property of the Gamble Mansion; an antebellum home located on US 301 in Palmetto. At the northern end of the track, the rails still cross the little Manatee River on a through-truss bridge that is still there but needs repairs to allow trains to cross the river. When this is accomplished, the trains could run 16 miles one way and connect with a trail to run northward into Hillsborough County on the former SAL right-of-way.

The Hillsborough County Parks Department is acquiring land along the river to create a wilderness trail along the river. The museum trains will serve the river park as the well as the trail and will carry hikers and bicyclists between the river and Gamble Mansion. At the same time, the property at Parrish where the trains now load will be developed in to an exhibit area with hiker facilities. Also the group hopes that the museum will acquire and operate steam locomotives on some of the trains. Future phases will include linking downtown Parrish to the Hillsborough County Trail System to the northeast and linking the buffalo Creek Recreation Park to Downtown Palmetto.

****Copied from the Manatee Master Trails Plan dated 2002. The County does plan on updating this trail plan.**