

Historical Overview of The Legacy Trail



The Legacy Trail is a community treasure that provides a recreational trail for walking, bicycling and running and serves as a travel corridor to other places in the County. Trail users can experience nature and discover local history along The Legacy Trail.

Looking back on the history of the railroad corridor that now contains this popular recreational trail, the first passenger coach ran on the new Seaboard Air Line Railway Sarasota to Venice extension on November 12, 1911. The Venice Train Depot, built by the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, was opened March 27, 1927. The railroad helped Venice survive during the Florida real estate bust and the Great Depression.

The cadets and faculty of the Kentucky Military Institute traveled by rail to winter classes in Venice from 1933 to 1970. The railroad also transported patients to Dr. Albee's Florida Medical Center from 1932 to 1942. Many servicemen and goods were transported over the rails to Venice and the Army Air Base during WWII (1942-45).

On April 30, 1971, the last passenger train arrived in Venice. Limited freight service continued until January 1992. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus used the Seaboard Air Line to reach its winter quarters in Venice from 1960 to 1992.

Sarasota County purchased and restored the historic Venice Train Depot and the restored depot was dedicated October 24, 2003. The Venice Area Historical Society offers regular tours of the historic Venice Train Depot. In addition to serving as a trailhead for The Legacy Trail, the depot also functions as a regional transportation hub for Sarasota County Area Transit.



In 2004 after more than a decade of planning, the county's \$11.75 million purchase of the scenic railroad corridor was accomplished in partnership with The Trust for Public Land and celebrated on April 4, 2005. At nearly 12.5 miles long, the 100-foot-wide CSX corridor stretches from Culverhouse Nature Park, just south of Clark Road in Sarasota to Center Road in Venice.

In December 2017, Sarasota County and The Trust for Public Land partnered again to purchase a segment of the railroad corridor which represents the first of a two-phase effort to extend The Legacy Trail an additional nine miles into downtown Sarasota. The 2.7-mile segment extends from the current terminus of The Legacy Trail at Culverhouse Nature Park north to Ashton Road. A bond referendum is planned for November 6, 2018. The funds would allow for acquisition of land and construction of the extension in downtown Sarasota and enhancing other connecting trails.

The Legacy Trail links to the Venetian Waterway Park (VWP) at the historic Venice Train Depot at the Venice Avenue bridge. The VWP is a concrete multi-use trail that follows along both sides of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). The VWP east (3.8 miles long) connects The Legacy Trail near the historic Venice Train Depot and travels south to Shamrock Park. Cross the ICW and the VWP west (5 miles long) takes you south to Caspersen Beach Park. The Trail provides great water views and wildlife sighting opportunities.

The Venice Area Historical Society is a great source for information about the Venice Train Depot and The Legacy Trail corridor.