# APWA Florida Chapter Awards Program

**APWA Florida Chapter Award Submittal Forms and Instructions:**

*Please fill out this page/form legibly and submit it with your supporting documentation/narrative.*

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<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail Widening and Resurfacing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Agency</td>
<td>Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenway and Trails</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Contractor</td>
<td>Curt's Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Consultant</td>
<td>Reynolds, Smith and Hills, Inc. (RS&amp;H)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person for above Nomination (Area Code) Telephone #</td>
<td>1715 N. Westshore Blvd. Suite 500 Tampa, FL 33607</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address of Contact Person</td>
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<td>Email Address of Contact Person (Area Code) FAX #</td>
<td><a href="mailto:averie.kindelspire@rsandh.com">averie.kindelspire@rsandh.com</a></td>
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<td>Signature</td>
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For Chapter endorsement for submittal for National award consideration please contact Don Jacobovitz immediately. For more information about the National Criteria and the National application forms see: [http://www.apwa.net/About/awards.asp](http://www.apwa.net/About/awards.asp)

For additional information about the Awards Program, please contact Don Jacobovitz at 386-329-0346, fax 386-329-0340, or e-mail: don.jacobovitz@putnam-fl.com.
Revitalizing a Historic Trail

Designated as a National Recreation Trail, the 16-mile Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail has been enjoyed by countless bicyclists, runners, and outdoor enthusiasts for over 20 years. Moreover, the trail provides access to the popular Apalachicola National Forest through the Munson Hills Off-Road Trail and opportunities for horseback riding on an adjacent trail. The historic multi-use trail corridor began as a railroad, the first under construction in the state of Florida, and through the early 1900s was used to carry cotton to the coast for shipment to England and New England.

In recent years the trail, which begins just south of Tallahassee and extends south through Leon and Wakulla counties to the City of St. Marks, fell into disrepair creating safety issues for its users. In 2006, with funding from the Florida Legislature, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Office of Greenways and Trails (OGT) decided it was time to refurbish the trail to fix bumps, dips, crumbling edges, and drop offs of pavement and repair general wear and tear. Also, as Florida’s first rail-to-trail corridor, the trail was original designed at only 8-ft. wide, this is less than current state of Florida minimum of 10-ft. wide with desirable widths of 12-ft for bicycle facilities. The OGT commissioned consulting firm RS&H to complete the construction plan design and Curt’s Construction to complete the project construction. Today, trail users enjoy a wider, safer trail that was constructed without major changes to the surrounding environment and built within budget and ahead of schedule.

Good Construction Management Leads to Early Completion

Excellent construction management techniques were utilized throughout the course of the project’s construction. The team of Curt’s Construction, OGT and RS&H worked closely to efficiently resolve unforeseen site conditions, review shop drawings, and coordinate with adjacent property owners throughout construction. As a result, each phase of this important community project was completed a month ahead of schedule and within the $2.8 million budget. Specific construction management tactics included:

• The project team made timely and decisive decisions using proven information-sharing techniques and thoroughly documenting all project communication.

• The design team worked closely with the contractor throughout construction to answer questions and provide any necessary supplemental information.

• Construction issues were handled “on the ground” in order to expedite solutions.

• The project was phased to allow maximum use of the trail during construction.

• The quality of the project was maintained through consistent audits and inspections.

• Safety was given first priority through inspections, enforcement, education, and incentives.
Safety During Construction

The contractor followed a strict, project-specific safety program that included extensive jobsite training, daily pre-task planning, and safety awareness. In addition to the safety program for construction workers, the project team implemented comprehensive safety measures to protect the public.

Minimizing Impacts to the Community’s Trail

The historic Tallahassee-St. Mark’s Trail is a highly valued public amenity that ties together several communities, including Tallahassee, Wakulla, St. Marks, and Woodville. As Florida’s first Rail-to-Trail conversion, the trail has been used for generations for recreation and transportation. In order to maintain the use of the trail during construction, the team designed and instituted a carefully devised two-part phasing plan to complete the project’s construction in March of 2011. The phasing plan took into consideration key destinations and population centers along the trail. To keep the public informed of the project’s progress, regular updates about construction evolution were posted on a dedicated project website and communicated through community mail outs.

Critical to the success and timely completion of the project was permission from landowners to access their property along the trail. A pre-construction public meeting in 2009 hosted by the Florida Office of Greenways and Trails, DEP, and Wakulla and Leon County officials ensured public stakeholders were on board. Equally as important were the successful relationships built by the trail manager over the years with homeowners. Although everything was designed and built within the existing right-of-way, there were nearly 100 landowners with whom the contractor had to negotiate, including traversing driveways to access the trail. This was especially important since one segment of the trail remained in operation during construction and could not be used for construction purposes.

Community members realized specific benefits from the trail widening-project, including:

- Improved safety brought about by a smoother, wider trail surface
- Improved safety offered by updated signage and lighting
- Vastly improved drainage along the entire trail corridor, minimizing erosion and protecting soil and plant material
- Improved visibility as a result of realigning the trail to eliminate sharp corners and unsafe intersections
- Improved interconnectivity between local and regional trail networks, including bicycle and equestrian trails
Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail

Protecting the Natural Environment

One of the key features of the Tallahassee-St. Mark’s Trail is that it connects people to the beautiful natural environment of North Florida. By refurbishing the trail, the project is helping to broaden awareness of the environment by allowing trail users to experience the unique ecosystem of the region. In order to maintain the character of the trail and protect the sensitive surrounding environment, the project team crafted explicit specifications to protect important natural resources. As an example, all trees, roots, and branches were protected beyond the horizontal and vertical construction envelope. Even branches that overhung the trail were protected. The result of this meticulous approach is a newly widened trail that looks as if it has been in place for generations.

Unusual accomplishments –

A win-win for the surrounding community

Soil conditions varied greatly along the trail and flooding was a consistent problem for the owner and nearby residents. This condition was caused when the original railroad bed was constructed. The project team used the opportunity of widening and resurfacing the 16-mile trail to install a series of cross drains connecting properties on both sides of the corridor. The natural flow of water – interrupted by the railroad since the 1800s – has now been restored with the important benefit of reducing flooding in the area.

Triple Quality Control

The project was designed and constructed under the “triple” scrutiny of 1) the project team, 2) public agencies, and 3) community members. Along with the high quality and safety standards set by the project team, all aspects of the work were subject to review and inspection by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Department of Transportation, and Leon and Wakulla County. The final, and perhaps highest, level of quality control was enforced by the watching public. Because the Tallahassee-St. Mark’s Trail runs through the middle of neighborhoods and communities, the project team was constantly accountable to local residents and other observers who wished to look in on the progress.

On October 6th, 2011, Tallahassee, St. Marks, and the surrounding community gathered to celebrate the Tallahassee-St. Marks Historic Railroad Trail’s grand re-opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony. With improvements complete, the safer 20-year historic trail can be enjoyed by future generations for years to come.