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INTRODUCTION

The Connect Jackson Plan provides a blueprint to county and municipal decision-makers for investing in conservation corridors and transportation choices. It is presented as a combination greenway and bicycle/pedestrian plan because these two areas are closely linked.

Funding for this planning effort is derived from contracts between the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, which prepared the plan and facilitated the associated process, and the Georgia Departments of Community Affairs and Transportation, in addition to the Jackson County government.

Jackson County is one of the fastest-growing counties in the region, and has absorbed significant residential development over the past decade. Many new residents relocated from areas in which facilities for bicycling and walking, as well as conservation spaces, are more available than they are in Jackson County at present. With this new growth, attendance at the county's schools has also increased, adding pressure to district transportation budgets. The presence of three major rivers, the Middle Oconee, the North Oconee, and the Mulberry, within the county (along its boundary with Barrow County, in the case of the Mulberry River) also presents significant opportunities for conservation, environmental education, and non-automobile transportation and recreation options.





PURPOSE OF PLAN

This document presents a concise guide to facilitate decision-making for investments in conservation and non-automobile transportation. Many greenway plans incorporate bicycling and walking facilities, and conservation goals are common to the development of shared-use paths for bicyclists and pedestrians. However, not all greenway corridors are practical for bicycling and walking; likewise, sidewalks, bike lanes, and side-paths along urban or suburban roads do not typically provide conservation benefits.

Therefore, the planning process that informed this document was designed to include on- and off-road facilities for walking and/or bicycling, as well as to identify critical corridors for habitat and water quality conservation. As a result, Jackson County and its municipalities will have one comprehensive framework to reference when considering these very closely related programs.

PLANNING PROCESS

The need for a strategy to prioritize the acquisition of conservation corridors and the construction of facilities for walking and bicycling within Jackson County has been identified in several regional and local documents.

- The Community Agenda of the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan references water quality protection, habitat conservation and planning for parks and greenways, healthy communities, bicycling and walking infrastructure and planning, and walkability around local schools.
- The Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking guides local decision-makers in developing infrastructure and policy solutions to increase the safety and prevalence of walking and bicycling and to enhance connectivity between homes and regionally important destinations throughout Northeast Georgia. It was developed by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission with oversight and input from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force, and was unanimously adopted in August 2010 by the NEGRC Council. The plan recommends policies, programs, planning tools, and infrastructure investments for communities within the twelve-county region.
- Neighboring Athens-Clarke County's Greenway Network Plan prioritizes development of greenways (with or without bicycling and walking facilities) along the North and Middle Oconee rivers, both of which flow into Athens directly from Jackson County.
- The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission is currently working on a multi-region river corridor initiative along the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers with three other RCs. The project's goal is to establish linkage and connectivity along these corridors through the use of trails, greenways, conservation areas, and recreation facilities.



Steering Committee

A leadership team of county and municipal representatives was established to provide oversight, input, and information to planners. NEGRC staff worked closely with these individuals to obtain the most current data available, seek direction on project priorities, and develop goals and objectives.

Plan Scope and Horizon

This plan is a resource for local government decision-making, and its adoption does not bind governments to any of the recommendations contained herein. It should be updated periodically to maintain effectiveness, account for changing circumstances, and feature improvements made as a result of its adoption. A five-year update schedule is an appropriate target, but this may vary depending on circumstances.

VISION

Jackson County and its municipalities envision a community in which residents and visitors can easily access natural areas and spaces for walking and bicycling to improve safety, mobility, health, and environmental quality.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Develop a connected network of trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, and other infrastructure.

- Increase safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Attract new users by offering connectivity and quality facility design.
- Improve the health of residents and visitors by encouraging active transportation and recreation.
- Work with community groups to promote walking and bicycling within the county and to other areas.
- Direct the Transportation Steering Committee to assist decision-makers with executing planning initiatives.
- Pursue external funding and dedicate local dollars for associated match and other initiatives.
- Take advantage of existing public access wherever possible.

Goal 2: Support existing Safe Routes to School efforts and encourage new activities at schools that do not currently participate.

- Concentrate infrastructure investments around schools and nearby residential neighborhoods, libraries, parks, and other facilities.
- Encourage local boards of education to situate new schools near existing residential neighborhoods and associated amenities.
- Encourage public safety protection of school zones by enforcing traffic regulations and providing crossing guards at key locations.
- Work with parent organizations, school administrators, the Georgia Department of Transportation’s Safe Routes to Schools Resource Center, Regional Commissions, and other communities to coordinate activities.
- Pursue federal Safe Routes to School funding for infrastructure improvements and seek out other sources to fund associated work.

Goal 3: Conserve natural corridors to protect habitat, water quality, and historic resources.

- Apply, enforce, and maintain environmental ordinances to protect natural areas.
- Incentivize and promote resource protection as part of new developments.
- Educate residents and visitors by interpreting environmental and historical aspects of greenway corridors.
- Work with nearby local governments (especially environmental and recreation staff), land trusts, and other potential partners.

Goal 4: Contribute to regional connectivity by taking advantage of existing and planned greenway and bicycle/pedestrian networks.

- Continue participation in the Northeast Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force.
- Reference the Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking when making decisions.
- Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and land trusts in planning, building infrastructure, and providing educational and/or promotional programs, where appropriate.
- Work with state, regional, and local transportation groups and authorities, as well as nearby local governments, to collaborate on transportation investments.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

Community Characteristics

The U.S. Census Bureau released the first-ever American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates in December 2010. These estimates are based on data collected from January 2005 to December 2009, and are not the same as Census 2010 data. The American Community Survey (ACS) is conducted every year to provide up-to-date information to communities in between decennial censuses, and replaces the “long form” from the 2000 Census.

Population

According to the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan 2010 Community Assessment, the 2008 population estimate for Jackson County was 61,620. Census 2010 figures for Georgia were released in mid-March, 2011, showing an actual increase of 18,896 persons from the year 2000, bringing the Jackson County population to 60,485.

Age

The median age in Jackson County is approximately 35.8 years, whereas it is 34.5 years for the State of Georgia. The following table shows more specifically that residents of Jackson County are currently, on average, slightly older than those across the state.

	5-14 yrs	15-17 yrs	18-24 yrs	15-44 yrs	18 yrs and over	60 yrs and over	75 yrs and over
Jackson County	14.2	4.4	7.8	41.2	73.6	16.8	4.5
Georgia	14.4	4.4	10.0	43.9	73.5	14.4	4.4

Source: Table S0101: Age and Sex, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

ACS also collects specific data on grandparents. This information is useful because it provides older adults may depend more on facilities for bicycling and walking, both for transportation and physical health. The following data were collected about grandparents in Jackson County during the survey period:

- 53.1% are in the labor force
- 27.0% are primary caregivers of grandchildren with no parent present in the household
- 71.9% live in owner-occupied housing units
- 30.9% live in mobile homes or other types of units



Commuting to Work

The majority (91.6%) of workers in Jackson County use a car, truck, or van to get to work; of these, 13.8% carpool. Approximately 1.4% of workers walk to work and 0.1% bicycle; 0.9% of workers live in households without a vehicle. Nearly half (46.3%) of Jackson County workers are employed within the county, and 8.6% work in the city or town in which they reside. While this last figure may in large part be comprised of the 6.2% of all workers who work from home, these data demonstrate that there are at gains to be had in the percentage of workers commuting by foot or on a bicycle.

Endangered/Threatened Species

The following endangered or threatened species may be found in Jackson County; no information was found on the existence of designated critical habitat.

Species	Listing Agency	Type
Altamaha shiner	State	Fish
Black spored quillwort	Federal	Ferns and Allies
Little amphianthus	Federal	Flowering Plants
Michaux’s sumac	Federal	Flowering Plants

Source: Georgia Ecological Services Field Offices, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

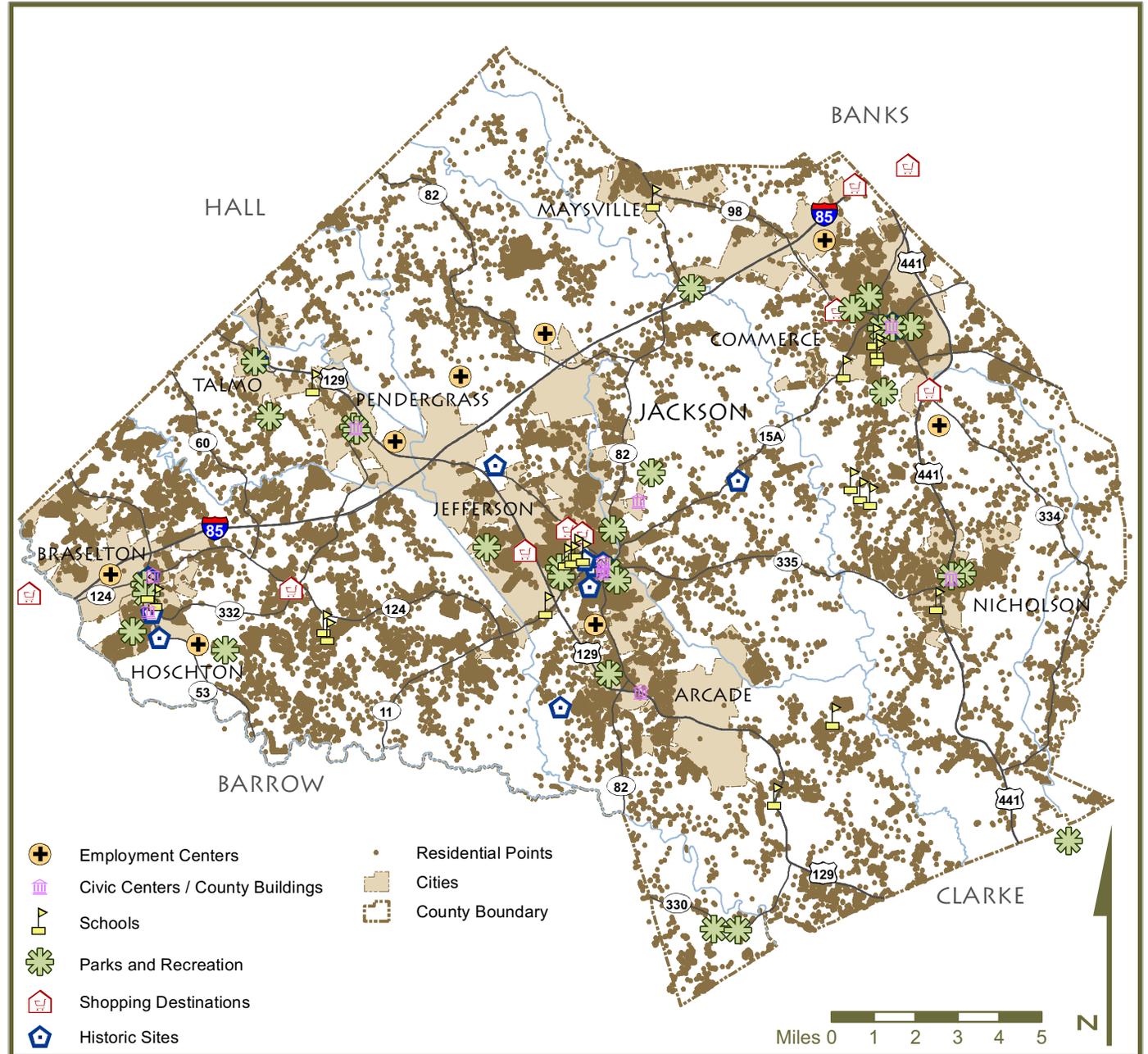


Origins and Destinations

This map shows the location of residences in Jackson County and key destinations, which are described on the following page.

NOTE:

All maps in this document are presented in a format that allows for advanced zooming-in without losing significant detail or resolution.





Civic Centers – City halls and county government buildings.

Downtown Districts – Identifiable downtown districts exist in four of the nine cities in Jackson County: Braselton, Commerce, Hoschton, and Jefferson.

Employment Centers – NEGRC staff collaborated with Jackson County staff to identify major employment centers. In Jackson County, these often take the form of industrial parks located in close proximity to I-85.

Historic Sites – Areas of historic and/or cultural significance.

Parks and Recreation – Major parks and recreation areas are identified and labeled on this map. The recently completed 2011-2017 System-Wide Recreation Master Plan identifies the need for additional parks within Jackson County; the Capital Improvements Program calls for land acquisition in support of new park development between 2013 and 2015, and then also in long-range plans post-2017. The following information was provided on the proposed new parks:

- Northwest Jackson Regional Park – Approximately 150 acres to be located near the I-85 corridor with 1,000 parking spaces. Program elements will include baseball and softball fields, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, open space and picnic areas, a 35,000 square foot recreation center and other facility buildings, a dog park, and a two-mile walking trail.
- Central Jackson Passive Park – Approximately 100 acres to be located south of the City of Jefferson with 500 parking spaces. Proposed program elements include pavilions, open space and picnic areas, a campground, horseshoe and shuffleboard courts, a dog park, an interpretive nature trail, and a two-mile walking trail.
- Northeast Jackson Park – Approximately 10 acres to be located south of the City of Commerce with 50 parking spaces. Recommendations for the site include a pavilion, open space and picnic areas, and a half-mile walking trail.
- South Jackson Community Park – Approximately 100 acres to be located near the Bear Creek Reservoir with 300 parking spaces. Program elements will include a multi-purpose field, basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts, open space and picnic areas, a playground, a campground, horseshoe and shuffleboard courts, and a 1.5-mile walking trail.

Schools – According to the comprehensive facilities plans for each of the three school districts in Jackson County, there are no new schools planned for the near future.

The following schools are listed as partners of the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center:

Gum Springs Elementary	Jefferson Elementary
West Jackson Middle	Jefferson Middle
Jefferson Academy	

Shopping Destinations – Most of the identified shopping destinations on the Key Destinations map are anchored by a major grocery store such as Kroger or Publix. The Tanger Outlet Center is one exception, offering patrons the choice of over 85 outlet stores near I-85. Also included in this map are a Wal-Mart Super Center in Banks County and a Publix in the Barrow County section of the Town of Braselton, as it is assumed that these draw customers from a significant radius.



Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure and Activity

Existing Sidewalks

Utilizing six-inch pixel resolution aerial imagery, flown in February 2009, NEGRC digitized sidewalks throughout Jackson County into a Geographic Information System (GIS).

Community	Sidewalk Miles
Jackson County (unincorporated)	13.34
Arcade	0.49
Braselton*	2.90
Commerce	3.97
Hoschton	0.73
Jefferson	11.95
Maysville*	0.04
Nicholson	1.46
Talmo	0

*Municipal boundaries extend outside Jackson County

A large number of sidewalk miles exist in the unincorporated county areas. These sidewalks are likely to be found within residential subdivision developments, and are often disconnected from areas with significant pedestrian activity such as downtown districts.



Relevant Regional Projects

2006 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (Gainesville-Hall MPO)

Short-Term Implementation (2005-2010)

- Multi-use trail – Friendship Road from I-985/Lanier Parkway to Old Winder Highway (Braselton) (8.36 miles)
[GDOT currently in ROW acquisition phase. Plans include a 12-foot multi-use path. Expected completion in 2016.]

Mid-Term Implementation (2011-2010)

- Bike lane – Old Winder Highway from Winder Highway (US 129) to Hall/Gwinnett County line (Braselton)

Long-Term Implementation: (2021+)

- Bike lane - US 129 (Athens Highway) from Gillsville Highway to the Hall/Jackson County line (4.94 miles)
- Bike lane - GA 53 (Winder Highway) from Tanners Mill Road to Hall/Jackson County line (2.64 miles)
- Bike lane – GA 52/County Line Road from Woodlin Road to Hall/Jackson County line (6.13 miles)
- Sidewalk – GA 52/County Line Road along Hall/Banks County line to Jackson County line

Mulberry Riverwalk – Braselton

Starting point at Riverbend subdivision in Hall County, ending at GA 124 (final project = 5.75 miles)

Barrow County Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027

“Preserve” Character Area— The Preserve character area is described as “land intended to remain as open space for preservation and recreation needs and...not suitable for urban or suburban development.”¹ This includes the floodplains adjacent to the Mulberry River bordering Jackson County. Primary land uses in Preserve areas included passive and active recreation. Listed implementation strategies include the preparation of a countywide greenways master plan to integrate into a regional greenway system.

2003 Athens-Clarke County Greenway Network Plan

The North and Middle Oconee rivers were identified in this plan as “potential primary corridors” for greenways in this plan, and both also traverse Jackson County. The Athens-Clarke County Greenway Network Plan describes a two-step planning process for greenways.² The first step involves the identification of zones that comprise the greenway corridor. Once a zone map is adopted by the Mayor and Commission, a buildout map is developed to identify the proposed location of transportation routes within the appropriate zones. The buildout map for the northern section (connecting to Sandy Creek Park) of the North Oconee River was approved in 2005. As of the original publication of the Connect Jackson plan, the zone map for the Middle Oconee River was posted on the Athens-Clarke County website in draft form for public comment.

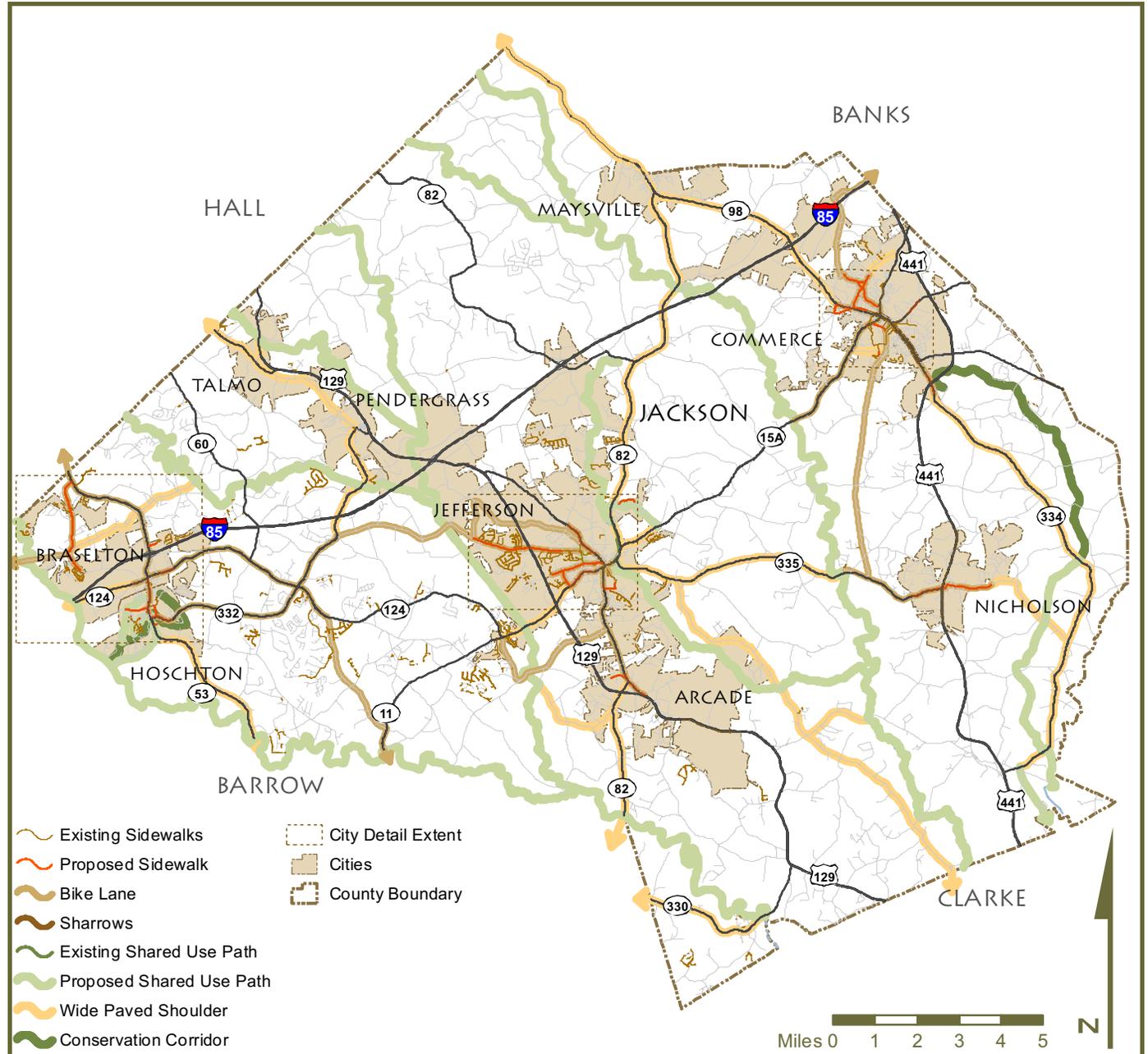
¹MACTEC, Inc. Planning & Design Group. *Barrow County Comprehensive Plan 2007-2027*. Community Agenda, p. 4-3.

²Athens-Clarke County Department of Leisure Services. *Greenway Network Plan*. Retrieved on July 13, 2011, from <http://athensclarkecounty.com/index.aspx?nid=2873>.



SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Proposed Network Map



zoom in for greater detail; focus areas are presented on the following pages



Focus Areas



zoom in for greater detail



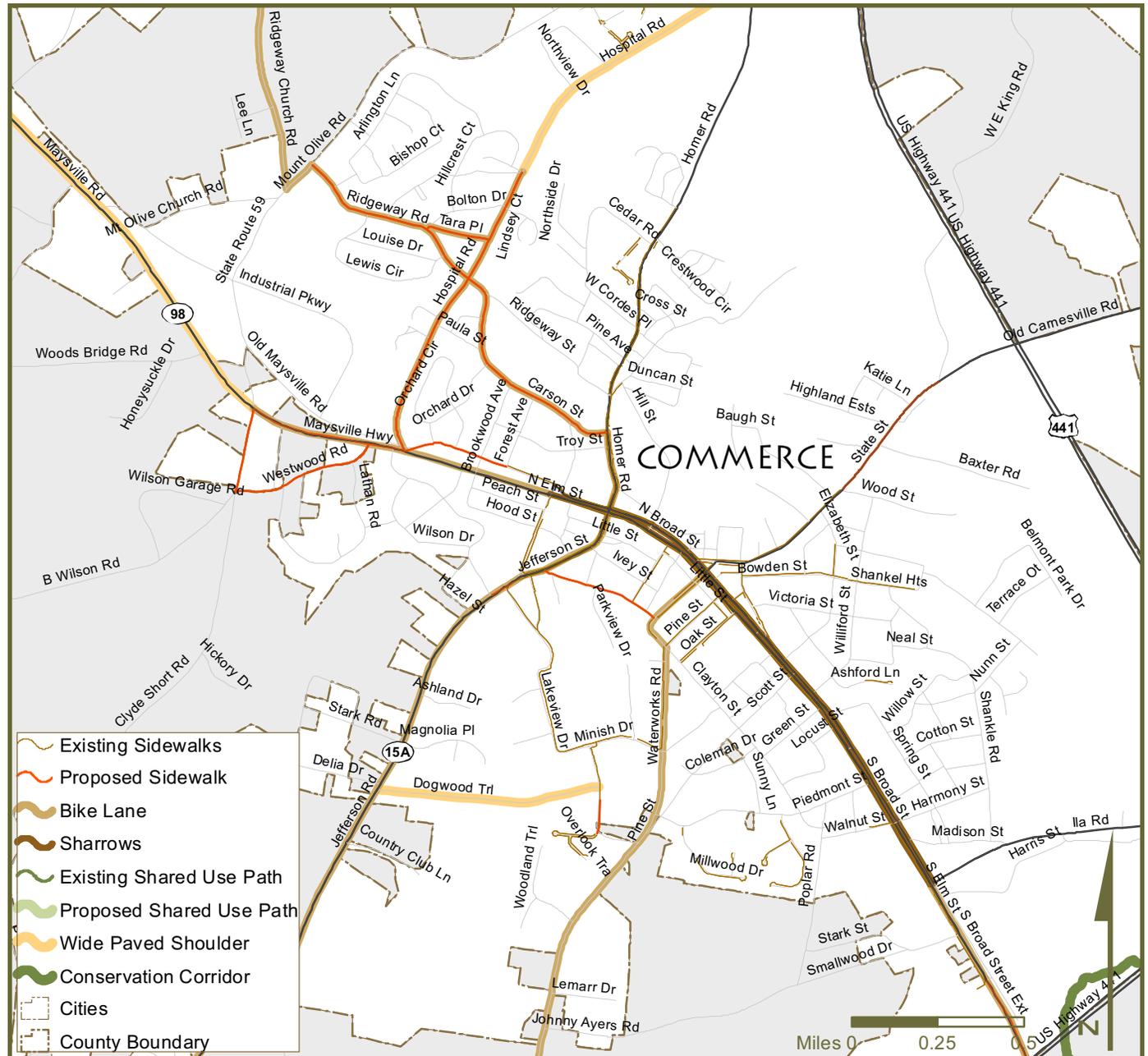
Focus Areas



zoom in for greater detail



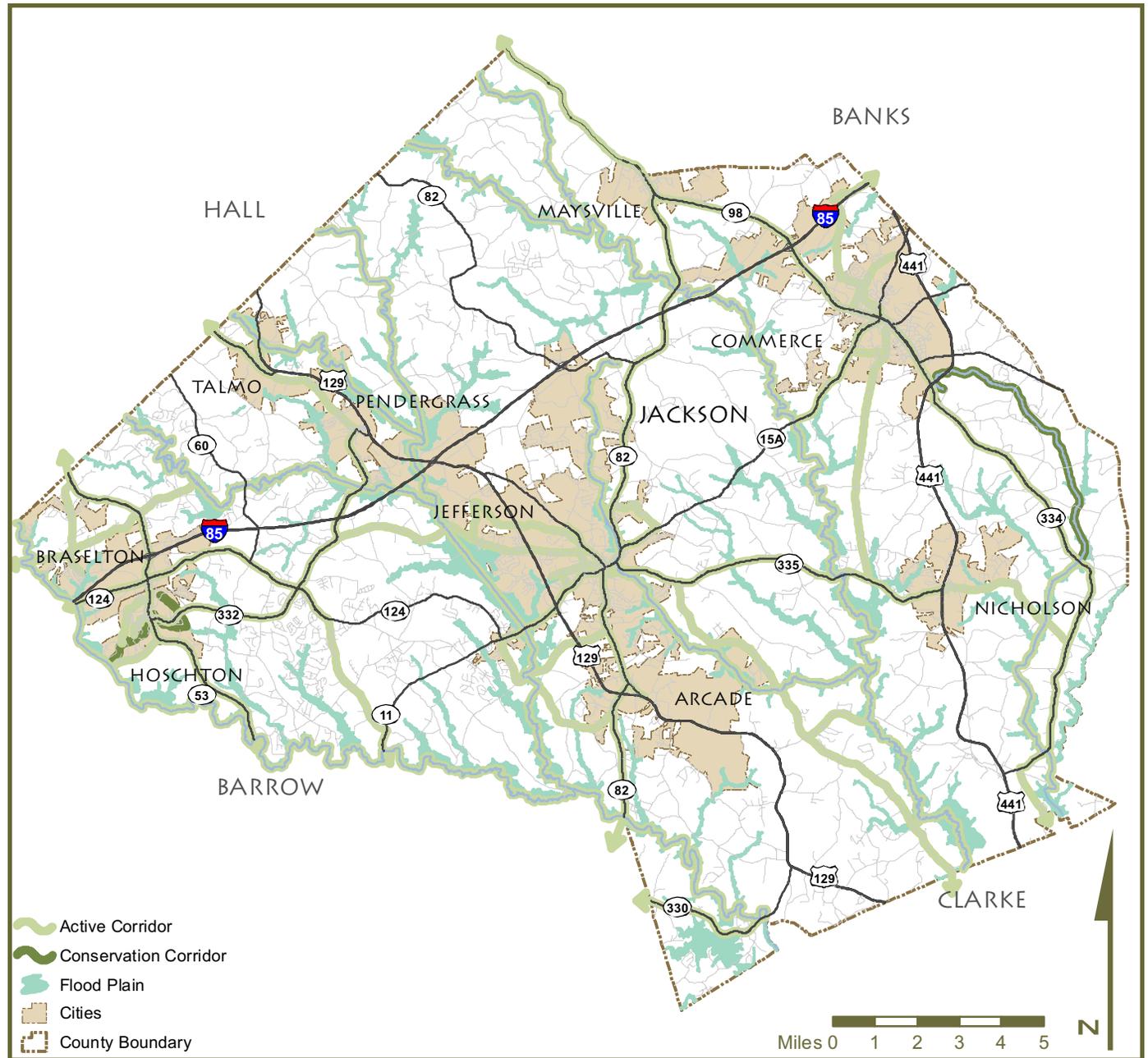
Focus Areas



zoom in for greater detail



Greenway Network
(Conservation & Active Corridors)



zoom in for greater detail

Bicycle Facility Recommendations – Design Guidance

Bike Lanes



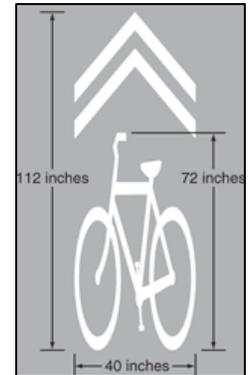
Bike lanes should be a minimum of four feet wide on roadways with no curb and gutter, with a recommended width of five feet from the curb or roadway edge to the bike lane stripe. Eleven feet is the recommended width for a shared bike lane and parking area without a curb face present, while twelve feet is recommended for a shared bike lane and parking area with a curb face. Wider bike lanes should especially be installed in

areas of high speed traffic, in order to accommodate cyclists' tendency to ride roughly three feet from the curb. In areas in which on-street parking is permitted, the bike lane should be located between the parking area and the motorized travel lane, and be at least five feet in width.

Signage should include standard pavement symbols such as the words "BIKE LANE" and a directional arrow. These symbols should be white with reflective properties, and should, at minimum, be painted on the far side of each intersection.

Sharrows

For the first time, the newest edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), released in late 2009, provides guidelines for using shared lane marking, or "sharrows." In addition to alerting motorists of the possible presence of cyclists on the road, sharrows guide cyclists to the preferred lateral position within the travel lane. This is especially true for roads with on-street parking and those that are too narrow for a motor vehicle and bicycle to travel side by side. Sharrows are not to be used on roads with speed limits above 35 miles per hour, nor on shoulders or in bike lanes. When used, they should be placed immediately after intersections and at no greater than 250-foot intervals thereafter.





Signed Routes

The following are reasons to install “Share the Road” or “Bike Route” signage:

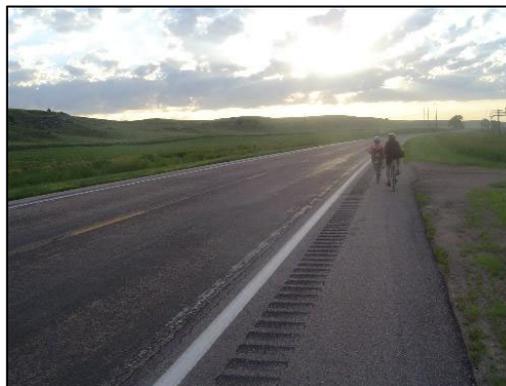
- The roadway connects separate bicycle facilities such as bike lanes and multi-use trails
- The roadway is a popular route for recreational and/or utilitarian bicyclists
- The roadway traverses a rural area with a presumably low demand for separate bicycle facilities
- The route follows neighborhood streets leading to a common public destination such as a park, school, or commercial district

These signs, especially those connecting specific destinations, should include specific information such as “To Downtown,” and should be located at major intersections and turns.

Paved Shoulders or Wide Curb Lanes

Paved shoulders also serve to accommodate bicyclists in rural areas. Recommended widths are the same as for bike lanes, with a minimum of four feet but an ideal of five feet from the curb or roadway edge. In areas with high motorized vehicle speeds, increased widths may be necessary. In areas with rumble strips, a minimum four foot width should be provided between the outer edge of the rumble strip and the edge of the paved shoulder.

Roadways without a striped shoulder should be at least twelve feet wide in order to accommodate motor vehicles and bicycles; the recommended width in these cases without a separate bike lane but which have “Share the Road” signage is fourteen feet.





Pedestrian Facility Recommendations – Design Guidance

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are typically made of concrete, though asphalt or crushed stone may be suitable in some rural areas. A minimum width of five feet allows two people to pass by one another comfortably, but sidewalks should be wider near schools, surrounding transit stops, downtown areas, and other destinations with high volumes of pedestrians such as recreation facilities.

Local guidelines for the location and installation of sidewalks should comply with The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and be based on land use, roadway functional classification, and building density. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provides the following list of sidewalk recommendations for both new construction and enhancement of existing streets. For rural roads that are not anticipated to serve development in the planning horizon, a minimum four-foot wide shoulder should be provided as a stable walking surface.

Land Use [Functional Classification]	New Streets	Existing Streets
Commercial and Industrial [All streets]	Both sides	Both sides, completing missing links
Residential [Major Arterials]	Both sides	Both sides
Residential [Collectors]	Both sides	Multifamily – both sides; Single family – at least one side
Residential, > 4 units/acre [Local Streets]	Both sides	At least one side
Residential, 1-4 units/acre [Local Streets]	At least one side	At least a four-foot shoulder on both sides
Residential, < 1 unit/acre [Local Streets]	One side preferred, at least a four-foot shoulder on both sides	One side preferred, at least a four-foot shoulder on both sides



Crosswalks

The Georgia Code defines “crosswalk” in two ways:

- That part of a roadway at an intersection included within the connections of the lateral lines of the sidewalks on opposite sides of the highway measured from the curbs or in the absence of curbs, from the edges of the traversable roadway; or
- Any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface. (§ 40-1-1. Definitions)

For marked mid-block and intersection crosswalks, ladder, or “zebra,” markings painted perpendicular to the pedestrian path are preferred for their visibility. Ideally, these lines should be 12-24 inches wide and spaced 12-24 inches apart to help reduce wear from motor vehicle tires. Raised bump strips should be installed at crosswalk entry points to aide the visually impaired in safely crossing the road.



Lighting

Sufficient roadway lighting should be provided along both sides of arterial streets at regular intervals. Pedestrian-scale lighting is most common in high-volume and commercial areas, where visibility is also enhanced by adjacent building lights. Downtown areas and in-town neighborhoods are often identified by specialty lighting in order to unify the district and provide comfort and security for pedestrians.





Greenway & Shared-Use Path Recommendations

Acquisition strategies

A variety of land acquisition methods exist for acquiring lands for greenway development. The actual method used to acquire individual parcels will depend on which option provides the most cost-effective method to attain the goals set forth.

- **Donation-** A municipality receives full title to a parcel of land at virtually no cost. In most cases, the owner who donates the land is eligible to receive federal and state tax deductions.
- **Easement Purchase-** A full title to the land is not purchased; rather, a municipality receives those rights granted in an easement agreement. For example, access to a trail may be granted on an owner’s property. Easement purchase price is less than the full title value.
- **Fee Simple Purchase-** A property is purchased from the owner outright. Fee Simple ownership results in the full title and property rights being turned over to the municipality.

Potential Regulatory Tools

Tool	Description	Utilization
Density Bonus	Allowance of additional density to developers in exchange for the preservation of identified greenways.	This would likely be most applicable where greenways are identified in in-town areas.
Impact Fees	Developers may be required to provide streets, sewers, streetlights, parks, trails, etc., based on a formula created to calculate the cost a proposed development would impose on the City. Alternatively, they may be allowed to pay a fee-in-lieu of providing identified infrastructure or amenities.	Funds collected through an impact fee program could support greenway development. This would likely be most applicable where greenways are identified in future growth areas.
Greenway Overlay	Additional development standards and criteria developed to supplement underlying zoning and other regulations.	First, identify those standards that should be applied to properties containing segments of the Network. A zoning ordinance amendment and subsequent zoning map amendment would then be made.
Greenway Compatibility Review	Process established for evaluating proposed new developments adjacent to identified greenway corridors.	This could be incorporated into the plans review process.



Funding Opportunities

There are many grants available to fund the implementation of greenways. Please see the appendix for a comprehensive list of grant sources.

Design Criteria

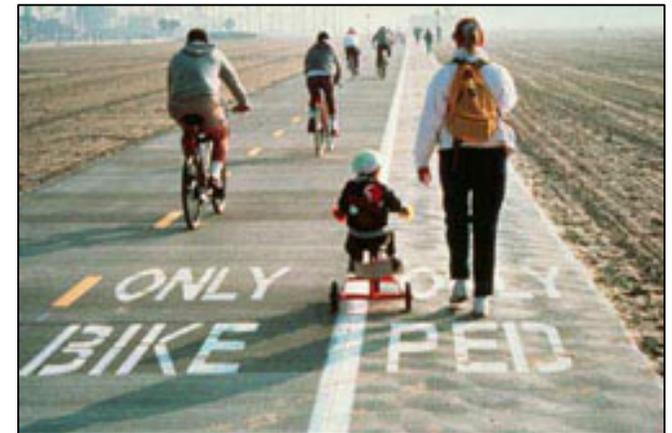
Shared-use paths should be at least ten feet wide, with a minimum of two feet of graded area on either side. For areas with high volumes of users, a width of 12-14 feet may be required. Surfacing materials may vary, depending on the target user group. Shared-use paths are usually paved with either asphalt or concrete, accommodating pedestrians and cyclists alike. Crushed aggregate may be used, though it is generally more difficult to traverse for some cyclists and those in wheelchairs, and more frequent maintenance will be necessary.

Location

Shared-use paths may be located within road right-of-way, on abandoned rail corridors, or within floodplain areas, among other locations. In all situations, these facilities and their amenities should be designed for access by people with disabilities.

Amenities

Amenities may vary depending on the community through which a shared-use path traverses. Rest areas containing picnic tables or benches are fairly common, and some communities install restrooms along these facilities. Access points, or trail heads, with parking lots might be appropriate in suburban and rural locations where the path is not connected to the community's sidewalk network. One of the more important elements for shared-use paths is adequate and detailed signage. Depending on the path location, it may be helpful to include way-finding signs to nearby destinations, signs bearing the path name and length, elevation changes, permitted users, and type of surface. In many cases, those agencies, organizations, and companies that contributed to the construction of the facility may also be recognized on signs throughout the extent of the pathway.





Maintenance strategy

Jackson County is fortunate to feature many volunteer organizations that may be willing to help with the type of maintenance work that would be required with the integration of new greenways into the community. These groups include the following:

- Keep Jackson County Clean and Beautiful Committee
- Upper Oconee Watershed Network (UOWN)
- Lions Club
- Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts
- Rotary Club
- Jefferson Home and Garden Club
- School and religious groups
- Neighborhood organizations

Tasks that may be performed by such groups may include the removal of invasive species from greenway corridors, river and trail clean-up and trash removal, and the notification of hazards or potential hazards to government officials.

In addition, Jackson County may consider the development of an Adopt-a-Greenway program, perhaps through a partnership with the Keep Jackson County Clean and Beautiful Committee. This type of program enables local businesses to utilize their human and financial resources to give back to the community through clean-up projects on a particular greenway segment.

GREENWAY RESOURCES:

Active Greenways - FHWA Shared-Use Path Design

(<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk2/sidewalks214.htm>)

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's "Trail-Building Toolbox"

(<http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/index.html>)



POLICY & PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Policies

Complete Streets

The National Complete Streets Coalition works with communities across the U.S. to “transform the look, feel, and function of the roads and streets in our community, by changing the way most roads are planned, designed, and constructed.” A street can be said to be “complete” when all pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders are able to move safely along and across the corridor.

The Coalition encourages communities to adopt policies to guide the transportation planning process at the state, regional, county, and municipal levels. An ideal complete streets policy:

- Provides a vision
- Specifies that ‘all users’ includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders as well as operators of motorized vehicles
- Encourages street connectivity
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects
- Directs the use of the latest and best design standards
- Recommends solutions to complement the context of the community
- Establishes performance standards
- Identifies implementation steps

Concurrency, or Adequate Public Facilities Controls

A concurrency or adequate public facilities plan or policy acts as a framework linking the timing of new growth to the ability for infrastructure to handle that growth. The terms *public facilities* and *infrastructure* can and should include bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Communities can require developers to pay for infrastructure costs if projects are identified in a capital improvement program, thus distributing the burden of funding across all stakeholders.

New School Siting

Situating new schools in close proximity to greenways can encourage students to bike and walk. At present, the minimum acreage requirements of the Georgia State Board of Education for new school construction are:

- Elementary School: Five acres plus one acre for each 100 children in full-time equivalent (FTE)
- Middle School: 12 acres plus one acre for each 100 children in FTE
- High School: 20 acres plus one acre for each 100 students in FTE

The State Board of Education has determined that deviations may be made from the minimum acreage requirements for new school site selection in developed areas, so long as the reduced acreage is “considered appropriate” by the site approval committee.³ The Board has also stated that the facility site “should contribute positively to the health, safety, and social aspects of a child’s life at school.”⁴ This enables local governments and school districts to work together in the development of a policy to site new schools in areas where children are able to walk and bike to school.

³Georgia Department of Education Facility Services Unit (January 2008). “A Guide to Facility Site Selection,” p. 3.

⁴Georgia Department of Education Facility Services Unit (January 2008). “A Guide to Facility Site Selection,” p. 2.



IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES
National Complete Streets Coalition
(<http://www.completestreets.org>)
Georgia Board of Education, “A Guide to Facility Site Selection”
(<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/>)

Regional Coordination

A representative should be designated from the county and municipal governments in Northeast Georgia to continue participating in the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force meetings on a quarterly basis to ensure that the projects and recommendations outlined in this plan are implemented with as much coordination as possible. In addition, regular attendance by community representatives at other relevant meetings, such as MACORTS and the NEGRC Planning and Government Services Committee will strengthen intergovernmental relationships and the region as a whole.

Summary of Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Laws

Beginning July 1, 2011, state legislation requires a three-foot passing distance between motorists and bicyclists. Laws pertaining to the operation of bicycles can be found within Title 40 of the Georgia Code, titled Motor Vehicles and Traffic, under Chapter 6, “Uniform Rules of the Road.” Bicycles are identified as vehicles in this Article, and it is noted that all traffic laws shall be applicable to bicycles. (§ 40-6-291. Traffic laws applicable to bicycles) Carrying another person on the handlebars is prohibited, and acceptable methods of transporting children are identified. (§ 40-6-292. Manner of riding bicycles; carrying more than one person) Bicycles should be driven as close to the right side of the road as possible. In addition, local governments have the authority to require cyclists to use a separate path designated solely for bicycles, provided that the path is provided adjacent to the roadway, meets AASHTO planning, design, operation, and maintenance guidelines, and provides access to the same destinations as the roadway. (§ 40-6-294. Riding on roadways and bicycle paths) Finally, the Georgia Code identifies personal safety measures that must be taken while riding bicycles. Helmets are required for persons under the age of 16, and a front-mounted light and rear reflector are required for nighttime riding. (§ 40-6-296. Lights and other equipment on bicycles) In June 2009, the law was clarified, prohibiting all persons over the age of 12 from driving a bicycle on sidewalks, and allowing those under the age of 12 to do so only when the local government resolves to allow it. (§ 40-6-144. Emerging from alley, driveway, or building)

Laws pertaining to the operation of pedestrians are found in the same Code. Pedestrians are required to obey instructions of all official traffic-control devices, unless otherwise directed by a police officer. (§ 40-6-90. Obedience to traffic-control devices and traffic regulations) Pedestrians have the right of way in crosswalks, and drivers are required to stop to allow them to cross when the pedestrian is within one lane of the half of the roadway on which the vehicle is traveling. Pedestrians are not allowed to walk or run directly into the path of a vehicle that is so close it is impracticable for the driver to yield. When a vehicle is stopped to allow a pedestrian to cross, drivers of any other vehicle are prohibited from passing the stopped vehicle. (§ 40-6-91. Right of way in crosswalks) When crossing at any point other than a marked or unmarked crosswalk at an intersection, pedestrians are required to yield the right of way to all vehicles. Pedestrians are prohibited from crossing between intersections unless on a marked “mid-block” crosswalk. (§ 40-6-92. Crossing roadway elsewhere than at crosswalk) Where a sidewalk or shoulder is provided adjacent to the roadway, pedestrians are prohibited from standing or striding along and upon the roadway itself, unless avoiding hazards on the sidewalk. Where neither a sidewalk nor a shoulder is provided, pedestrians shall stand or stride as near as possible to the edge of the roadway. On two-lane roadways, pedestrians shall stand or stride on the left side. (§ 40-6-96. Pedestrians on or along roadway)



Planning Tools

Form-Based Zoning

Instead of regulating by land use districts, form- or design-based zoning codes regulate development within a community by the building type, location, transect (with zones that range in scale and intensity, from rural to urban), or a combination of these. These codes focus on the relationship between buildings and the street, enhancing the pedestrian- and bicycle-friendliness of a community. Graphics are often used to depict building scale, proportion, location within the site, and location of parking.

Pedestrian Overlay Districts

The identification of Pedestrian Overlay Districts within incorporated areas can help to promote a mixture of elements that enhance walkability. Pedestrian-oriented design standards for buildings, streetscapes, and town squares may guide development within such districts. The reuse of existing buildings may be encouraged, contributing to residents' and visitors' interpretation of the community's history.

Incentive Zoning

This regulatory tool is a reward-based system designed to provide tradeoffs for developments in order to address a community's planning goals. This can result in the allowance of increased densities or building heights in exchange for additional pedestrian or bicycle amenities or facilities.

Street Connectivity Regulations

Many communities throughout the U.S. are adopting street connectivity regulations to be incorporated into their zoning and subdivision ordinances. These regulations focus on creating a transportation system in which multiple routes serve the same origins and destinations for maximum efficiency and the enhancement of bicycle and pedestrian travel. (See [street connectivity calculation guidance and a model ordinance](http://congestion.kytc.ky.gov/AccessManagement/Kentucky%20Connectivity%20Model%20Ordinance%20FINAL.pdf) from Kentucky. Direct Link: <http://congestion.kytc.ky.gov/AccessManagement/Kentucky%20Connectivity%20Model%20Ordinance%20FINAL.pdf>)

Public Sidewalk and Bike Lane Dedication

In order to ensure safe pedestrian travel within new residential and commercial developments, many communities are requiring that public sidewalks be provided by the developer. Required pedestrian components may differ among roads, depending on street classification and assigned character of the proposed development on the Future Development Map.

Similarly, when new roads are constructed or when existing roads are resurfaced, communities are increasingly requiring the inclusion of bike lanes, if space allows.

On-site Access, Parking and Circulation Ordinance

In order for pedestrians and bicyclists to safely access new developments, local governments are integrating bicycle and pedestrian access and circulation requirements into the site review process. This type of ordinance emphasizes providing safe access for pedestrians and cyclists from on-road facilities to the new development site.



Health Impact Assessments for New Developments

Health Impact Assessments (HIAs) are used to objectively evaluate the potential health effects of a new project or policy before it is built or enacted. According to the Center for Disease Control, the HIA process is similar in some ways to the environmental impact assessment required for federal agencies under the National Environmental Policy Act. HIA focuses on health outcomes such as obesity, physical inactivity, asthma, injuries, and social equity, and is becoming a popular tool for communities interested in enhancing the health of residents.⁵

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

1999 AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities

(<http://scote.transportation.org>)

2005 GDOT Pedestrian & Streetscape Guide

2006 Georgia Guidebook for Pedestrian Planning

(<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/travelingingeorgia/bikepedestrian>)

2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

(http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno_2009.htm)

⁵Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). Retrieved on March 16, 2010, from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm>.



Programs

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

SRTS generally refers to programs that promote walking and bicycling to school to achieve a wide range of benefits for students, families, and communities. These benefits include reduced traffic in the vicinity of schools, improved pedestrian and bicyclist access, and safety and increased physical activity among students, contributing to healthy lifestyles and greater independence. In 2005, the U.S Congress passed federal legislation that established a national Safe Routes to School program, dedicating a total of \$612 million toward the initiative from 2005-2009. Congress allocated \$17,177,280 to the State of Georgia for 2005-2009 for SRTS, and for 2010 and 2011, funding was continued at the 2009 level of \$5,631,065. This funding is administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation in two ways. Infrastructure projects are funded through a competitive process to increase the safety of children walking and bicycling to school. In addition, the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center was established to aid communities in developing educational and encouragement programs for students, faculty, and parents. NEGRC partners with the Resource Center regularly to assist local communities in the development of SRTS plans.

Bike-to-Work Day/Car Free Day

Every year during the month of May, the League of American Bicyclists promotes Bike Month; the third Friday of every May is designated as Bike to Work Day. Each year, NEGRC partners with local organizations in Athens-Clarke County to host the Athens Bike to Work Day. This is encouraged throughout Northeast Georgia, where practical. In many communities in the region, however, the concept of bicycling to work is not as feasible as it may be for Athens residents. In these cases, communities may choose to hold a “Car-Free Day,” perhaps on a weekend, and schedule various events in celebration of bicycling and walking as transportation.

Historical/cultural walking/biking tours

Many of the small towns and cities throughout Northeast Georgia contain valuable historical and cultural assets that should be celebrated. An innovative method of educating residents and visitors about the community is the organization of walking and bicycling tours. Safety should be a priority on these excursions, and cooperation between multiple organizations, agencies, and institutions is encouraged for maximum exposure and participation.

Safety Education and Law Enforcement

Police departments, community agencies and organizations, and bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups are encouraged to develop and execute community safety demonstrations surrounding walking and bicycling. In addition, NEGRC works with local police departments to conduct bicycle- and pedestrian-specific training for law enforcement officers.

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

League of American Bicyclists’ Bike Month Program

(<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/>)

Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center

(<http://www.saferoutesga.org>)

Safe Routes to School National Partnership

(<http://www.saferoutespartnership.org>)



IMPLEMENTATION

Funding Resources

Much of the public-sector funding for facilities such as bike lanes and shared-used paths is allocated through federal transportation legislation. The most recent transportation bill was the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009. Since then, SAFETEA-LU has simply been extended by Congress to continue providing funding for programs such as Transportation Enhancements, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), and Safe Routes to School. In Georgia, these funding streams are administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and calls for proposals are announced online at <http://www.dot.state.ga.us>. Changes to these programs and the addition of new programs may be included in the next full transportation bill. The following are other identified sources of funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs:

Bikes Belong Coalition (<http://www.bikesbelong.org>)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (<http://www.rwjf.org>)

Captain Planet Foundation (<http://captainplanetfoundation.org>)

In addition to seeking outside funding, communities should consider the inclusion of the recommended facility projects in Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) referenda, as well as in special district (e.g. Downtown Development Authority, Business Improvement District) plans.

Phasing

The plan will be carried out in multiple stages. Phasing will be based upon the communities' needs and prioritizing of the four goals and their associated objectives. The Transportation Steering Committee should assist decision-makers in determining the most optimal steps for executing planning initiatives.

A key first step will be pursuing external funding opportunities (for example, federal Safe Routes to School funds). A careful assessment of resources and attributes will help inform placement of greenways and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Investments in infrastructure should first be concentrated around schools and residential neighborhoods, while being mindful of future phases to create connectivity throughout Jackson County and to neighboring counties. Continual coordination between municipalities and the Transportation Steering Committee, public involvement and education, and outreach to partnering agencies will all be essential throughout the process.



APPENDIX

Potential Grant Sources for Plan Implementation

Robert W. Woodruff Foundation

<http://www.woodruff.org/index.aspx>

Conservation of natural resources and environmental education are included in this foundation's listed principal giving interests. Grants for capital projects are limited to tax-exempt public organizations and governmental agencies within the state of Georgia.

Kresge Foundation Challenge Grant

http://www.kresge.org/index.php/our_funding_methods/challenge_grant_program/

Facilities capital is awarded as a challenge grant by this foundation in six fields of interest, including the environment. The goal of the challenge grant is to strengthen the sustainability of the awarded institution and project. 501(c)(3) public organizations, government entities, and other organizations may apply.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/cig/index.html>

This program is intended to stimulate the development and adoption of innovative conservation approaches and technologies while leveraging Federal investments. Non-Federal governmental or non-governmental organizations, Tribes, and individuals are eligible to apply.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

<http://www.gastateparks.org/core/item/page.aspx?s=18194.0.1.5>

The purpose of this grant program is to help state and local governments acquire recreation lands and develop outdoor recreation facilities. In 2010, \$1 million was dispersed throughout the state of Georgia in the following proportions: 10% for disadvantaged jurisdictions, 20% for land acquisition, 30% for development projects, and 40% for rehabilitation projects. Criteria used to award grants are based on the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Recreational Trails Program (new grant cycle to be announced in Fall 2010)

<http://www.gastateparks.org/core/item/page.aspx?s=18195.0.1.5#application>

This program provides funding for trail construction, maintenance, and education on an annual basis.

Transportation Enhancements

<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/TransportationEnhancement/Pages/default.aspx>

This program was established to help enrich the travel experience of all users of the transportation system, including bicyclists and pedestrians. Calls for projects are announced by GDOT .

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program

<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/cmaq/Pages/default.aspx>

This program provides funding to areas designated as non-attainment (fails to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, or NAAQS) by the Environmental Protection Agency. Funds are spent specifically on transportation projects that decrease emissions and improve congestion.



Bikes Belong Grant Program

<http://bikesbelong.org/grants>

This program has two application categories: Facility and Advocacy. Nonprofit organizations whose missions are bicycle and/or trail specific are given priority in the facility category; however, municipal and regional governments are eligible to apply and are encouraged to align with a local bicycle advocacy group to strengthen the application. The key goal of the grants program is to support bicycling in as many places as possible.

American Canoe Association Club-Fostered Stewardship Grants (for paddling trails)

http://www.americancanoe.org/?page=LLBean_CFS_Grant

The ACA partners with L.L. Bean to sponsor this program to provide funding for local and regional paddling clubs that engage in stewardship projects. Eligible projects include cleaning up waterways, clearing in-stream hazards, maintaining access areas, establishing and maintaining paddling trails, etc.

Kodak American Greenways Program (The Conservation Fund)

http://www.conservationfund.org/kodak_awards

The Conservation Fund partners with the National Geographic Society to present this awards program. Seed grant awards are given to organizations working to grow the nation's network of greenways, blueways, trails, and natural areas. Program goals include catalyzing new greenway projects, assisting grassroots organizations, leveraging additional funding, and promoting the use and enjoyment of greenways.

Laura Jane Musser Fund – Environmental Stewardship (may be more appropriate for a land trust to apply for work in Jackson County)

http://www.musserfund.org/index.asp?page_seq=19

Under the Environmental Stewardship Program of the Musser Fund, preference is given for funding programs working to manage resources in a manner that involves a broad range of community members and stakeholders in planning and implementation. Capital projects are not eligible for funding under this program; rather, a collaborative local planning process may be.