

24 - Priority Pathways: Building a Safer, More Connected Athens (Should be renamed Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements Program)

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Submitted By: Athens in Motion Commission
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Project Type: Bicycle/Pedestrian (bicycle lanes, sidewalks, other bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure, not including Greenway or Rail-to-Trails) related projects - Transportation & Public Works

Previously submitted but not selected: No

Continuation Project: Yes - TSPLOST 2023; 25-Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

Executive Summary: The Athens in Motion Plan, accepted by Athens-Clarke County Mayor and Commission in 2018, is a strategy to build active transportation infrastructure throughout the county. Completing the active transportation network requires ongoing investments of time and money across decades to achieve our goals of safety, connectivity, and equity for all users. This project continues advancing the highest priority bike, pedestrian and micromobility projects as identified in the Athens in Motion Plan. (This would be bicycle and pedestrian improvements program (as there would be multiple sub-projects and there is no clearly defined location.))

Project Total Cost: \$ 31,863,000

Total Operating Cost: \$ 78,000

Does this Project require the acquisition of any land? Unsure

Project/Program Description: The Athens in Motion Plan identifies critical gaps in active transportation infrastructure and provides a framework for building a comprehensive network of bike, pedestrian, and micromobility facilities. These gaps disproportionately affect underserved communities, including low-income residents, seniors, and those with disabilities, making it difficult for them to access essential services safely and efficiently. This project emphasizes high-priority roads, streets, and pathways, all of which provide backbone of a safer, more equitable transportation system for all residents.

Potential Tier One projects include improvements to Gaines School Road, Cedar Shoals Drive, Oak Street (sidewalk), Cherokee Road in Winterville, and Macon Highway, or other projects in the Athens in Motion Plan. These roads are vital links between neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and commercial hubs. They serve as lifelines for residents who rely on walking, biking, or rolling as their primary modes of transportation. By addressing the infrastructure needs of these key routes, this project aims to correct long-standing disparities in mobility while creating a safer and more connected Athens-Clarke County.

Equity is the cornerstone of this initiative. Historically underserved neighborhoods often lack complete sidewalks, safe crossings, and protected bike lanes, exposing residents to higher risks of accidents and limiting their ability to move freely and confidently. Enhancing these Tier One corridors will ensure that

all residents--regardless of age, income, or physical ability--have access to safe, dignified, and reliable transportation options.

Furthermore, these improvements will promote economic inclusion by reducing transportation costs for households. Safe and efficient active transportation options enable families to save on car-related expenses, freeing up resources for other essential needs. Enhanced connectivity will also improve access to jobs, education, and community services, fostering pathways to economic mobility and resilience.

Aligned with the Athens in Motion Plan and the Mayor and Commission's Strategic Plan, this project advances key goals of equity, safety, and sustainability. With strong public support, these Tier One improvements will lay the foundation for a healthier, more inclusive, and connected community.

Staff Comments: To promote clean energy/sustainability goals, consider adding: All lighting to be dark sky compliant and, when in association with trails/woods/residences, wildlife “friendly” (2700 K or less) ; If installed, bike racks to include solar/storage charging options; if installed, bench and rest areas to include solar/storage charging rest areas; Solar/storage/canopy may be included to power needed lights and provide shade/heat mitigation in open concrete areas (ex: rest areas/open areas along path). Where plantings are needed, utilize native species, which are better adapted to the Piedmont region.

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? Athens in Motion Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan... Athens-Clarke County continues its mission to build safe infrastructure for non-automotive transportation for users of all ages and abilities. The AiM Commission works with ACC staff to recommend projects and funding levels to the Mayor and Commission. The AiM and the Greenway Network Plans connect and coordinate projects.

How is this Project included in the Madison Athens-Clarke County Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) long-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)? The following MACORTS projects include bike/pedestrian/safety improvements:

MACORTS Cost Constrained Projects:

PI# 0019264:1423 OLD MACON HWY @ MIDDLE OCONEE RIVER 3 MI S OF ATHENS: Clarke

PI# 0019833: NORTH AVE FROM WILLOW ST TO COLLINS IND BLVD/FREEMAN DR (Clarke)

PI# 0016920: SR 10 @ CR 993/WEST HANCOCK AVE (Clarke)

PI# 0019268: SR 10 LOOP SB & NB @ CR 600/NORTH AVE 1.5 MI NE OF ATHENS (Clarke)

MTP# SP-26: Five Points Intersection Safety Improvements (Clarke)

MTP# TSP-11: Hawthorne Ave and Oglethorpe Ave Intersection Safety Improvements (Clarke)

MTP# TSP-4: Beaverdam Rd and Cherokee Rd Intersection Signal Improvements (Clarke)

MTP# P-35: Jefferson River Rd. Safety Improvements (Clarke)

MTP# P-19: Lexington Road Safety and Access Management (Clarke)

MTP# P-10: SR10 / W Broad Street Safety and Access Management - Phase 1 (Clarke)

MTP# B-01: Mitchell Bridge Rd Bridge Replacement over SR Loop 10 (Clarke)

MTP# P-22: Timothy Road Corridor and Safety Improvements - Phase I (Clarke)

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MTP# P-23: SR10 / W Broad Street Safety and Access Management - Phase 2 (Clarke)
See also MACORTS 2050 Plan update, page 79, Table 12.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

How will the Project meet the stated Program Goals in the Mayor & Commission Strategic Plan to provide long-term, ongoing contributions to the Sustainable Transportation needs of the Athens-Clarke County?

Goal Area 1; Section D: Drive community transformation with a focus on creating spaces that are respectful and welcoming: Athens in Motion Projects transform communities by facilitating walking, biking, and other non-automotive forms of transportation. Neighborhoods formerly isolated by high-speed roads are brought together. Families living near schools can walk to and from them. People without cars can go places in safety and comfort.

Goal Area 1; Section E: Support & promote healthy lifestyle: moving, eating, forming healthy relationships, physical and psychological care: Safe walking and biking infrastructure is fundamental to supporting a healthy lifestyle. Athens in Motion works closely with Transportation and Public Works to ensure projects adhere to Complete Streets and Vision Zero policies, creating spaces that encourage physical activity, safe movement, and community connections. By promoting walking and biking, we foster healthier habits, improve physical and mental well-being, and facilitate social interactions, contributing to overall quality of life.

Goal Area 5; Section A: Improve, expand, and maintain sidewalks, shared-use paths, and bike facilities to provide greater opportunities for residents to use active transportation safely: Athens in Motion collaborates with Transportation & Public Works to identify and fill gaps in sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths, aiming to build a connected, safe network for active transportation. AiM also partners with the Greenway Commission to ensure seamless connectivity across networks, enhancing mobility, supporting healthy lifestyles, and providing equitable transportation options for all residents in Athens-Clarke County.

Goal Area 5; Section B: Pursue inter-city travel options to connect Athens with other cities: Athens in Motion focuses on improving local infrastructure, such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and shared-use paths, to make it safer and easier for residents to connect to regional transportation options. By enhancing active transportation infrastructure, we help people safely access inter-city travel hubs, enabling better regional connectivity and offering more travel choices, while supporting sustainable transportation options for everyone.

Goal Area 5; Section C: Expand multi-modal Transit access to reduce auto dependency and provide greater mobility for Athens residents: Many sidewalk gaps exist around Transit stops. Athens in Motion prioritizes filling these gaps for the safety, comfort, and dignity of transit users.

Goal Area 5; Section D: Create more usable and aesthetically pleasing corridor connections between residential and commercial areas: Complete Streets create more inviting, safe, and

aesthetically pleasing environments by slowing traffic and prioritizing people over vehicles. This design fosters better connections between residential and commercial areas, making them more accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, and those using micro-mobility options. When roads are improved through AiM projects, they present opportunities to add landscaping, street trees, and art installations, enhancing both functionality and the overall experience.

Goal Area 5; Section E: Enhance safety for all modes of transportation: Complete Streets are designed to be safe for all users. Pedestrians and cyclists are at greater risk of death or serious injury in crashes. Athens in Motion and TPW staff prioritize building infrastructure designed to prevent crashes and conflicts.

Goal Area 6; Section A: Develop well-planned new infrastructure according to future land use values and framework: Successful cities prioritize sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-use paths as a way to reduce traffic congestion and bring vitality to their streets. The demand for non-automotive transport options throughout the county will only increase as our population grows in the coming decades.

Goal Area 6; Section B: Ensure equitable access to infrastructure to enhance safety and identity: Equity is a central factor in determining project priority and funding for Athens in Motion. Many sidewalk gaps exist in areas with high transit use, high poverty, and a high percentage of households without vehicles. The plan prioritizes areas based on factors like bus service coverage, populations in poverty, and areas with a higher percentage of residents under 18 or over 65. Addressing these gaps improves access and safety for those most in need of reliable transportation options.

Goal Area 6; Section C: Provide adequate funding for maintenance of existing and newly constructed infrastructure: Athens in Motion depends on the Department of Transportation and Public Works to provide estimates of maintenance for all projects. Those amounts are reflected in the total funding request in this TSPIST proposal.

Goal Area 6; Section D: Follow through on commitment to 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution: People walking and riding bicycles produce no pollution. Providing residents with active transportation options for short and mid-distance travel will reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.

Staff Comment: To promote clean energy/sustainability goals, please consider adding: All lighting to be dark sky and, in association with trails/woods/residences, wildlife “friendly” (2700 K or less) compliant; If installed, bike racks to include solar/storage charging options; if installed, bench and rest areas to include solar/storage charging rest areas; Solar/storage/canopy can be included to power needed lights and provide shade/heat mitigation in open concrete areas (ex: rest areas/open areas along path

Goal Area 6; Section E: Address ecosystem health, infrastructure sustainability, and resilience: Every vehicle - gas, hybrid, or electric - generates greenhouse gasses and other toxic byproducts.

During construction of sidewalks, bike lanes, and shared-user paths, there are negative impacts on trees and other features of the natural world. Active transportation modes use the public rights-of-way for non-polluting travel, as opposed to road-widening which accommodates more cars and trucks.

Project Costs

Detailed project capital budget costs (to be funded from TSPLOST 2026 only):

Project Costs (round to thousand)		Amount
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:	\$	500,000
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$	2,496,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$	624,000
4. Construction:	\$	20,800,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$	2,080,000
6. Testing:	\$	624,000
7. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$	1,085,000
8. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$	2,821,000
9. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$	208,000
10. Other 1:	\$	
11. Other 2:	\$	
Project Subtotal:	\$	31,598,000
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$	625,000
TSPLOST 2026 Project Total:	\$	31,863,000

Operating Cost

Total Annual Net Operating Costs when Project is complete:

Only identify additional or net operating costs to be paid by ACCGov as a result of this Project. Identify the additional or net costs needed, above ACCGov's current operating budget, to operate the requested project; as well as any additional Project related revenues that would be generated. Provide budget costs for each identified category below.

Operating Costs (round to thousand)	Estimated Impact for Annual Operating Expenditures
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT	
PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	
1. Personnel Costs: from Appendix A	
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	
• Water:	
• Sewer:	
• Phone:	
• Solid Waste Collection:	
• Other:	
3. Operating Supplies:	
4. Equipment Maintenance:	
5. Facility Maintenance:	
6. Other: Annual Maintenance	37,000
7. Other: Life Cycle Replacement	37,000
8. Other: Public Art Maintenance	4,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	\$ 78,000

Project Financing

Is the proposed Project to receive funding from source(s) other than TSPLOST 2026? No