

**Submitted By:** Ovita Thornton, District 9  
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**Project Type:** Public Transit related projects - Athens Transit System

**Previously submitted but not selected:** No

**Continuation Project:** No

**Executive Summary:** The Commerce Road and Newton Bridge Road Loop Bus Route proposes an approximate 11-mile loop beginning at the Multi-Modal Center and looping along Commerce Road and Newton Bridge Road providing free transit to public parks, essential public services, growing attainable housing market, and access to vital small businesses.

**Project Total Cost: \$ 3,896,000**

**Total Operating Cost: \$ 540,000**

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**Does this Project require the acquisition of any land?** Yes

**What means of land acquisition will be required?** Easements

**Project/Program Description:** The Commerce Road and Newton Bridge Road Loop Bus Route proposes an approximate 11-mile loop beginning at the Multi-Modal Center and looping along Commerce Road and Newton Bridge Road providing free transit to public parks, essential public services, growing attainable housing market, and access to vital small businesses. The project would include the purchase of one transit bus, the construction of approximately ten bus stops, and the construction of approximately five crosswalks.

**Staff Comments:**

1. *Staff is not recommending for or against the project. However, if it moves forward staff recommends against approving projects with a specific routing proposals. Approving such projects may violate Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements for disparity analysis and equity concerns.*  
*Conversely, if this project is solely funded by local dollars, ACCGov may be able to operate the route using locally funded equipment and employee compensation from local funding sources but may not be allowable for FTA funding.*
2. *Project cost has been adjusted assuming the project would go forward as completely funded with local funds.*
3. *This project is very similar to the transit portion of submitted Project 62. The submitted Project 44 is a different type of service, micro-route smaller versus a fixed full-time route but they serve some common areas. Project 44 also includes less fixed stop improvements and multi-use trail connectivity to the route. Because of the type of vehicle, number of stop improvements, and fixed route versus micro-route, Project 44 is approximately \$1.6 million more than the transit portion of Project 62.*

## 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 E: Support & promote healthy lifestyle: moving, eating, forming healthy relationships, physical and psychological care:** The proposed project would provide free transit to three existing public parks, the Sandy Creek Nature Center, Sandy Creek Park, and the Holland Youth Sports Center. Furthermore, the route would provide free transit to The Athens Clinic, a facility that provides vital mental and physical health services to Athens and surrounding areas residents affected by the nation's mental health and addiction crisis and other public health services.

**Goal Area 5; Section C: Expand multi-modal Transit access to reduce auto dependency and provide greater mobility for Athens residents:** The proposed project would provide free transit to residents along Commerce Road, US Hwy 441, and Newton Bridge Road. The residential neighborhoods along these corridors are primarily low to middle income residents. The future land use plan projects that these two corridors will see more opportunities for residential development, specifically housing that is more attainable. Multiple attainable housing developments are currently proposed along these corridors.

**Goal Area 5; Section D: Create more usable and aesthetically pleasing corridor connections between residential and commercial areas:** The proposed project would provide free transit to residents along Commerce Road, US Hwy 441, and Newton Bridge Road and three existing public parks, the Sandy Creek Nature Center, Sandy Creek Park, and the Holland Youth Sports Center and existing and proposed residential neighborhoods that are primarily low to middle income residents. Public transit also provides accessible ridership to those with limited abilities that may otherwise not have access to transportation.

**Goal Area 6; Section A: Develop well-planned new infrastructure according to future land use values and framework:** The proposed project would provide free transit to residents along Commerce Road, US Hwy 441, and Newton Bridge Road. The residential neighborhoods along these corridors are primarily low to middle income residents. The future land use plan projects that these two corridors will see more opportunities for residential development, specifically housing that is more attainable. Multiple attainable housing developments are currently proposed along these corridors.

**Goal Area 6; Section B: Ensure equitable access to infrastructure to enhance safety and identity:** The residential neighborhoods along these corridors are primarily low to middle income residents. Public transit also provides accessible ridership to those with limited abilities that may otherwise not have access to transportation. Residents of low to moderate income often have limitations to safe transportation, by providing free transit opportunities to this sector of the community the project would provide equitable access to our local schools, colleges, jobs, shopping, and other key comm

**Goal Area 6; Section D: Follow through on commitment to 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution:**  
The proposed project would reduce dependency on single trip vehicular travel and encourages the use of electric vehicle travel via The Bus fleet.

**Goal Area 6; Section E: Address ecosystem health, infrastructure sustainability, and resilience:** The proposed project would reduce dependency on single trip vehicular travel and encourages the use of electric vehicle travel via The Bus fleet thereby reducing impacts on air quality.

## 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:	\$ 150,000
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 140,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 30,000
4. Construction:	\$ 1,000,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 100,000
6. Acquisition of Capital Equipment:	\$ 1,800,000
7. Testing:	\$ 38,000
8. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 134,000
9. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 347,000
10. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 10,000
11. Other 1:	\$
12. Other 2:	\$
<b>Project Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$ 3,819,000</b>
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 77,000
<b>TSPLOST 2026 Project Total:</b>	<b>\$ 3,896,000</b>

## Project Financing

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

## 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
<b>TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT</b>	
<b>PROJECTED EXPENDITURES</b>	
1. Personnel Costs: from Appendix A	260,000
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	
• Water:	
• Sewer:	
• Phone:	
• Solid Waste Collection:	
• Other:	
3. Operating Supplies:	100,000
4. Equipment Maintenance:	100,000
5. Facility Maintenance:	80,000
6. Other:	
7. Other:	
8. Other:	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	
<b>NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:</b>	<b>\$ 540,000</b>

**New Staffing**

Position	Title	Hourly Rate	# of Hours /wk	# of Positions	Total Annual Expense
Full Time	Transit Vehicle Operator (including Benefits)	25	40	4	208,000
Part-time	Transit Vehicle Operator	20	25	2	52,000
Total					260,000

**City Bus Operator** – Bus operator