

**Submitted By:** Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission  
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**Project Type:** Greenway, Parks, Rails-to-Trails related projects - Leisure Services Department

**Previously submitted but not selected:** Yes - TSPLOST 2023; Project 68

**Continuation Project:** No

**Executive Summary:** The Beech Haven to Ben Burton section of the Oconee Rivers Greenway Trail would be a multi-use trail that connects the property at Beech Haven on Atlanta Highway to Ben Burton Park. Both properties are owned by Athens-Clarke County. They lay adjacent to the Middle Oconee River and are separated by approximately 1.5 miles. The Greenway trail would run along the river and provide a connection for two green/recreational spaces. (See staff comments under Project Description.)

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**Project Total Cost:** \$ 29,669,000

**Total Operating Cost:** \$ 461,000

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

**What means of land acquisition will be required?** Permanent Easement.

**Project/Program Description:** The Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission was formed by the Athens-Clarke County Commission to provide a plan for protection of the waterways and adjacent riparian zones within the county. The Greenway Network Plan is this document and has been cited within the region and state for over 2 decades. A part of that plan is the built trail system that is on the ground within the county in addition to the many miles of proposed trails that will connect all residents of the community. One of the Greenway Commission's next construction priorities is a connection between Beech Haven and Ben Burton Park.

The Beech Haven property, under SPLOST 2020, will be developed into a public park with a restored former residence and a pavilion, along with its own multi-use trails. The proposed Greenway trail will connect to Beech Haven with a bridge from an Athens-Clarke County property across the river. The trail will then run north along the west side of the river, proceed underneath Inner Loop 10 and Mitchell Bridge Road, and then cross back over the river and into Ben Burton Park. This project would serve as the first segment of trail along the Middle Oconee River. In addition to connecting these two greenspaces, this segment would provide Greenway access to several neighborhoods along Atlanta Highway, Mitchell Bridge Road and Oglethorpe Avenue.

**Staff Comments:**

- 1) *The project will require considerable land acquisition, no less than two river crossing bridges, and coordination with GDOT to build a trail under the new Loop 10 Highway Bridges and the existing Mitchell Bridge Road Bridge.*
  
- 2) *This project is shown on the attached map as connecting to section of Greenway that are not yet built. A portion of the connecting trails, within Beechhaven Park, could potentially be funded by the SPLOST 2020 Project. However, the masterplan for that park has not yet been designed or approved.*

*Potentially the project could be built in phases but either end of the project would require at least one bridge and would require connectivity to other trails not yet designed, built, or funded.*

- 3) *The northern end of this project would require cooperation from Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to provide easements within the Right of Way for the SR 10 Loop. This cooperation cannot be guaranteed and the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County has no power of eminent domain over GDOT. As such, this project is not recommended as a stand-alone project. If it is approved, it should be included with other greenway projects and the project statement should be written to be broad enough to allow funding to be used for other projects if GDOT does not want to participate.*
- 4) *Because the Project was submitted as a stand-alone project the budgets have been adjusted according to the above noted challenges, so that if selected it could be built appropriately.*
- 5) *Given the challenges and sensitive nature of the habitat along these two areas, restoration could run as high as \$100,000 per mile. This has been added to the cost estimates. An ecological restoration plan should be included from the beginning of the project and should indicate specific habitat goals and objectives that are part of an overall habitat management plan. Note: In accordance with the Mayor and Commission approved Land Conservation Acquisition (Greenspace) Policy, proposed activities on greenspace properties must be reviewed and signed off as meeting Policy goals by the Sustainability Office prior to design.*

**How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? Greenway Network Plan**

## 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:** As set forth in the Greenway Network Plan, any trail developed for the Greenway must include design elements that create respectful and welcoming spaces. The multi-use trail in this project will consist of a hard surface between 10' to 12' wide, which permits comfortable use by pedestrians, runners, bicycles and other non-motorized forms of transportation. Additionally, Greenway trails must be constructed with minimal disturbance to the natural environment.

**Goal Area 1; Section E: Support & promote healthy lifestyle: moving, eating, forming healthy relationships, physical and psychological care:** The Greenway corridor and the trails through it provide opportunities for individuals and families to recreate away from vehicles and along a main river in Athens. With this free and equitable extension of the trail system, community members have access to places to walk, run, and exercise away from vehicles and vehicle emissions. In this way, the trail will promote physical and psychological health through exercise and enjoyment of the outdoors.

**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:** This project would add approximately 1.5 miles of safe, free, multi-use trail in Athens-Clarke County for the use of all residents.

**Goal Area 5; Section B: Pursue inter-city travel options to connect Athens with other cities:** This project assists in establishing the long-term goal of the Greenway Network Plan, which aims to connect the major residential and commercial areas, schools and greenspaces within Athens-Clarke County. Several of the proposed trails in the GNP extend to the Clarke County border with the intention of connecting to potential trails in neighboring counties. The Greenway trail plan already connects with the Firefly Trail, which will eventually run through Oglethorpe and Taliaferro Counties.

**Goal Area 5; Section C: Expand multi-modal Transit access to reduce auto dependency and provide greater mobility for Athens residents:** The multi-use trail system within Athens-Clarke County complements the active (bus) transit system. When people can use either system to have options or increase access, the community wins. People can walk along a trail to access a bus stop or even the multi-modal center off of the Greenway Trail.

**Goal Area 5; Section D: Create more usable and aesthetically pleasing corridor connections between residential and commercial areas:** As noted, this segment of trail will provide several neighborhoods with Greenway access. Additionally, future Greenway trails will connect this segment with major

thoroughfares such as Mitchell Bridge Road, Atlanta Highway and Alps Road, which, in turn, will allow access to commercial areas.

**Goal Area 5; Section E: Enhance safety for all modes of transportation:** This segment, like all Greenway trails, is a multi-use trail for use by pedestrians, cyclists, runners and alternative electric vehicles. It is separated from motor vehicle traffic and is designed for safe use by all forms of non-vehicular traffic.

**Goal Area 6; Section A: Develop well-planned new infrastructure according to future land use values and framework:** This project implements a segment of the Greenway Network Plan. It has been identified as a high priority project under the GNP since at least 2016.

**Goal Area 6; Section B: Ensure equitable access to infrastructure to enhance safety and identity:** This segment, along with the existing and future Greenway trails do and will provide free, alternative means of transportation to residents in all areas of Athens. The trail plan was designed to connect schools, parks, residential and commercial areas so that all citizens will equal access to these resources.

**Goal Area 6; Section C: Provide adequate funding for maintenance of existing and newly constructed infrastructure:** The funding requested for this project will be adequate for the construction and continued maintenance of the built infrastructure.

**Goal Area 6; Section D: Follow through on commitment to 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution:** The Greenway prohibits anything powered by a combustion engine. Thus, all transportation methods used on the Greenway are either human or electric powered.

**Goal Area 6; Section E: Address ecosystem health, infrastructure sustainability, and resilience:** The Greenway offers green space in the form of a protected riparian zone along our rivers. Providing recreation and natural area protection, these spaces offer a major environmental asset to the community. Additionally, they require much less maintenance than motor-vehicle infrastructure because of less wear by heavy vehicles. Finally, they ensure resilience to our community by offering alternate modes of transportation and diversity of experiences not available with motor vehicle traffic.

## Project Costs

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

<b>Project Costs (round to thousand)</b>	<b>Amount</b>
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:	\$ 600,000
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 2,750,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 530,000
4. Construction:	\$ 19,000,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 1,900,000
6. Testing:	\$ 480,000
7. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 1,010,000
8. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 2,627,000
9. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 190,000
10. Other 1:	\$
11. Other 2:	\$
<b>Project Subtotal:</b>	<b>\$ 29,087,000</b>
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 582,000
<b>TSPLOST 2026 Project Total:</b>	<b>\$ 29,669,000</b>

Staff Comments: Design Fees increased, over average percentages, to cover the likely additional engineering expenses for larger bridges, USACOE hydraulic studies, land acquisition, and structural evaluation of GDOT bridges.

## 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	133,000
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	1,000
• Water:	1,000
• Sewer:	
• Phone:	1,000
• Solid Waste Collection:	1,000
• Other:	
3. Operating Supplies:	2,000
4. Equipment Maintenance:	
5. Facility Maintenance:	2,000
6. Other: Landscape Division Operations	45,000
7. Other: Public art maintenance (minimum)	4,000
8. Other: Hazard Tree Program and Habitat Restoration	166,000
9. Life Cycle Replacement Cost	105,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	
<b>NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:</b>	<b>\$ 461,000</b>

# 51 - Middle Oconee River Trail: Beech Haven to Ben Burton Park Appendix A

## Page 1

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### New Staffing

Position	Title	Hourly Rate	# of Hours /wk	# of Positions	Total Annual Expense
Full Time	Program Leader – Leisure Services			1	66,521
Full Time	Grounds Worker – Landscape Division			1	44,700
Part Time	Park Assistant	17	24	1	21,216

**Program Leader - Leisure Services** – Program Leader - Full-Time position responsible for trail inspection, trail work, volunteer supervision, work orders, storm clearing, programs along the trail, and community outreach. This position works for the supervisor of the trails and will supervise park assistants.

**Grounds Worker - Landscape Division** – Grounds Worker - (Landscape Division of Central Services) Responsible for general upkeep of trail corridors typically 5' off either side of the trail for regular weekly maintenance of grass, mulch, edging, etc. General upkeep extends to tree pruning and removal vertically from the ground. Removes leaves, storm blown trees, limbs, and controls invasive plants within the corridor. Informs supervisor of hazard trees outside of ability and equipment available to ensure patron safety.

**Park Assistant** – Park Assistant - Responsible for monthly trail inspections, daily trash routes, cleaning, litter pickup, and assisting with any activities Full-Time staff needs assistance with such as spotting while using a chainsaw or large trash pickups.

