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GREENWAYS & TRAILS MASTER PLAN DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

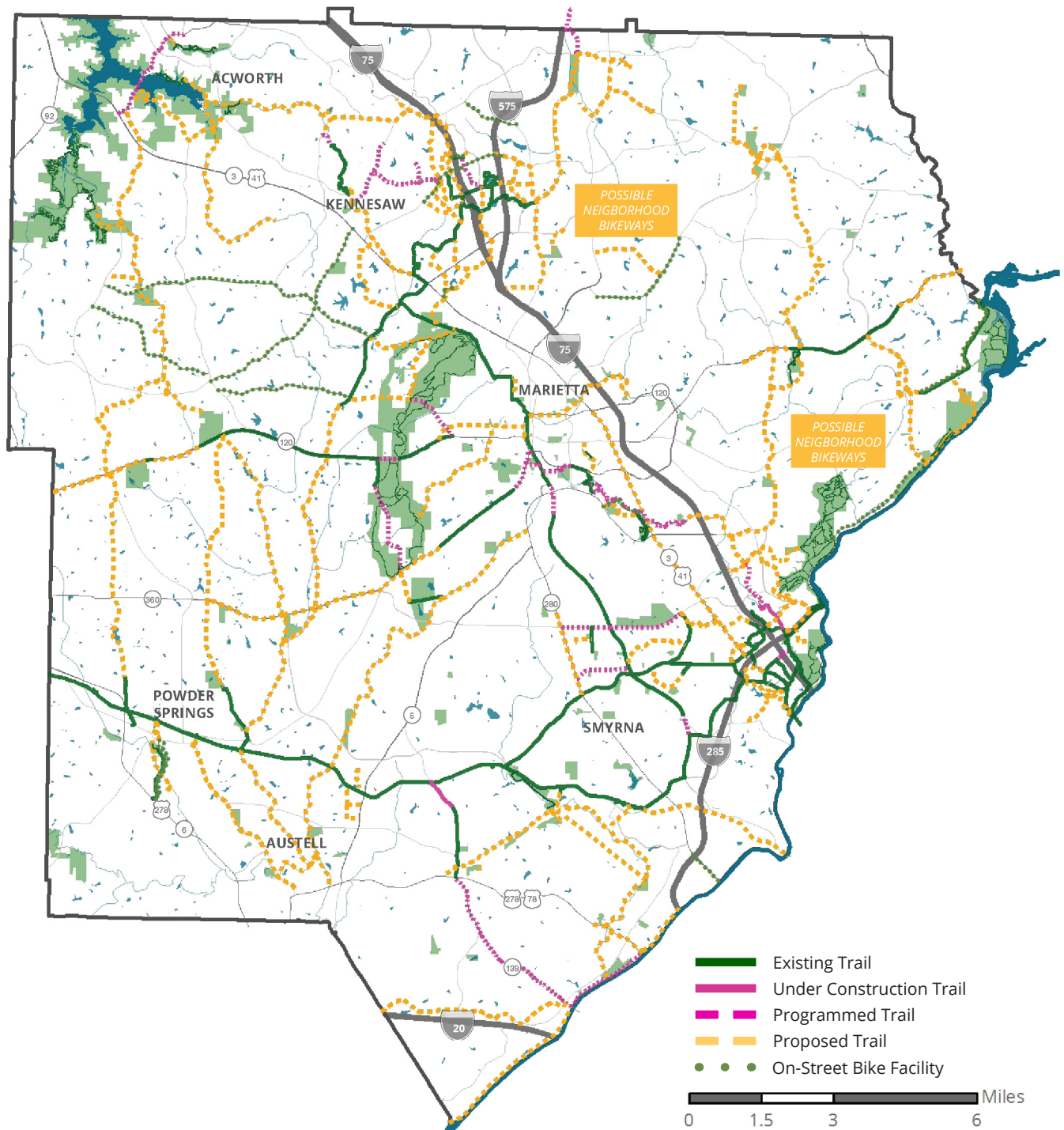
MAY 2018



"Cobb County... Expect the Best!"



A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



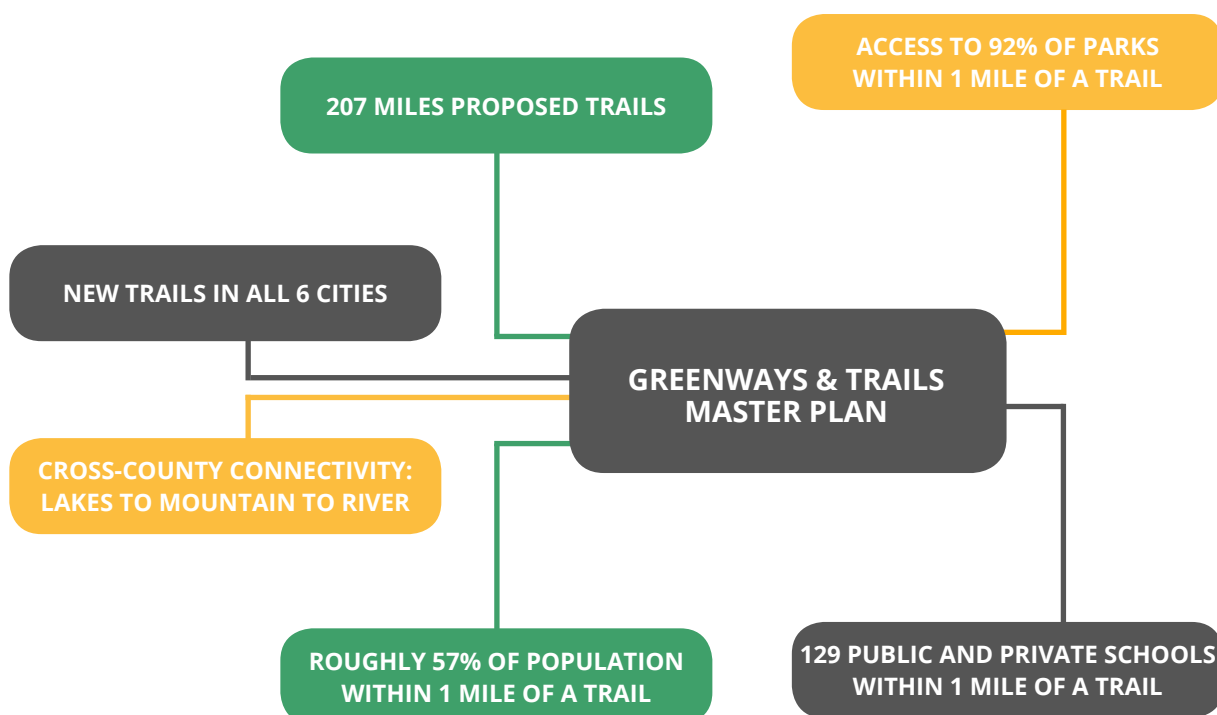
**10 YEARS FROM NOW, COBB COUNTY
WILL BE BETTER CONNECTED FROM
NORTH TO SOUTH AND EAST TO
WEST - FROM LAKE TO MOUNTAIN TO
RIVER, AND BEYOND**

The first-ever *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* for Cobb County is the result of a year-long process of research, exploration, community conversations, and documentation. It establishes a strategic approach to investment in expansion and improvement of the greenways and trails network throughout Cobb County for the next ten years by focusing on improving connectivity, mobility and accessibility, and comfort and safety.

The *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* prioritizes developing five types of safe, comfortable facilities for people of all ages and abilities and implementing eight priority projects over the next ten years. It also includes considerations to guide the County in prioritizing and implementing additional proposed trails, beyond the next ten years.

In addition to the priority projects, the plan includes **more than 205 miles of proposed trails**. These proposed trails represent the long-term aspiration of creating a vast, interconnected network across the County and beyond to bolster the regional network and enable all residents and visitors to incorporate more biking and walking into their day-to-day activities. **This network will enhance access and connectivity in all six cities within Cobb County and strengthen connections between Lakes Acworth and Allatoona, Kennesaw Mountain, and the Chattahoochee River.**

GREENWAYS & TRAILS MASTER PLAN HIGHLIGHTS





VISION AND GOALS

Cobb County has made tremendous strides in building new greenways and trails in recent years. The County's vision is to provide a safe, interconnected network of greenways and trails for active transportation and recreation that will also improve accessibility, economic competitiveness, and community health. The County is committed to serving as a leader for the expansion and enhancement of trails in Metro Atlanta.

The Cobb County *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* encourages investment in projects and initiatives that will have a significant positive impact on creating connectivity, improving mobility, and providing safe, comfortable trails for people of all ages and abilities who choose to bike or walk. By prioritizing key destinations such as parks, schools, and activity centers, it seeks to increase opportunities for recreation and exercise, as well as to enable more people to bike and walk for short daily trips. It also recognizes greenways and trails as opportunities to attract visitors, retain businesses and workers, and even spur new development.

PLAN GOALS

**IMPROVE
CONNECTIVITY**

**PROTECT AND
ENHANCE THE
NATURAL
ENVIRONMENT**

**IMPROVE
MOBILITY
AND
ACCESSIBILITY**

**FOSTER
HEALTHY
BEHAVIOR**

**ENSURE
COMFORT
AND SAFETY**

**MAINTAIN A
STATE OF
GOOD REPAIR**

**SUPPORT
AND DRIVE
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT**

**INCREASE
AWARENESS
OF
GREENWAYS
AND TRAILS**



"Cobb County is a leader among Metro Atlanta counties in providing a safe, well-connected network of greenways and trails for active transportation to improve accessibility, economic competitiveness, and health for residents and visitors."

Serving as both a roadmap and a framework, the *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* not only makes specific recommendations for new projects, but also provides guidance on facility design, project selection and future prioritization, and an overall implementation strategy. To that end, the plan lays out guiding principles to help ensure future projects and initiatives are in line with stated goals and priorities, and that they are carefully considered, and therefore more likely to succeed. Rather than imperative guidelines, which spell out how to do or implement something, these guiding principles should be thought of more philosophically - as an approach to designing greenways and trails. They may be considered as guideposts when contemplating future projects:

- Does it enhance safety and security?
- Will it improve environmental conditions?
- Is the project contributing to economic competitiveness?

Following these guiding principles and keeping in mind the goals and overarching

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



SAFETY AND SECURITY



ACCESSIBILITY



ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS



CONNECTIVITY AND ACCESS TO DESTINATIONS



COMFORT AND DESIGN FOR EVERYONE



EQUITY



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



PRIORITIZATION / OPPORTUNISTIC IMPLEMENTATION

BENEFITS OF GREENWAYS & TRAILS



Alternative to automobile transportation for day-to-day trips



Improve health and quality of life



Source for recreation and physical activity



Increase property value



Protect and preserve the natural environment

vision will result in projects that contribute positively to mobility, personal and community health, environmental health, the local economy, and the overall sense of place and community. Once implemented, the Greenways and Trails Master Plan will safely and comfortably connect residents and visitors to residential areas, downtowns, business districts and activity centers, transit service, and parks, schools, and key destinations such as Lake Acworth, Kennesaw Mountain, and the Chattahoochee River, as well as dozens of miles of greenways and trails. This kind of enhanced connectivity and access will provide multiple benefits to individuals and the Cobb County community at large, including improved health, reduced health care costs, reduced congestion, increased property values, and increased tourism and economic activity.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

TASTE OF EAST COBB

April 30, 2017

TASTE OF MARIETTA

May 6, 2017

SMOKE ON THE LAKE BBQ FESTIVAL

May 12-13, 2017

MABLETON DAY

May 13, 2017

CITIZEN STAKEHOLDER MEETING -

EAST COBB LIBRARY

July 11, 2017

CITIZEN STAKEHOLDER MEETING -

COBB COUNTY DOT

July 13, 2017

CITIZEN STAKEHOLDER MEETING - COVENANT

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

July 18, 2017

CITIES AND CIDS STAKEHOLDER WORK SESSION

July 18, 2017

STAKEHOLDER MEETING -

AUSTELL THREADMILL COMPLEX

August 16, 2017

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

April 10, 2018



As part of the *Greenways and Trails Master Plan*, the project team facilitated multiple activities to engage people from across the County and get their input about current and future greenways and trails. Phone interviews were conducted with each City and CID in the County to understand the status of greenway and trail projects at the time, as well as to understand upcoming projects and overarching priorities in terms of expanding the trail network. The process also included attending community festivals, in-person intercept surveys, and holding stakeholder meetings for City and CID staff and other community members.

4 COMMUNITY EVENTS

More than **440 people** participated in activities at **four community events**, giving input about which trails they use now and where they would like to see new trails.

5 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS 1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

In total, **115 people** attended **five stakeholder meetings and the public open house**, including citizens, representatives of Cobb County, Cities, and Community Improvement Districts, and more.

126 INTERCEPT SURVEYS

The project team conducted **in-person surveys** of **126 trail users** at seven locations throughout the County, to gather input about trail use and preferences for the future.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The **online survey** was completed by **266 people** and **1,446 individuals visited the project website** - roughly 46% of them used the interactive map feature.

In large part, the meetings and activities revealed **strong interest in new greenways and trails**, particularly for recreational and socializing purposes, along with interest in increasing access to parks, schools, and areas currently lacking trails.

In total, between the interactive map on the project website, stakeholder meetings, and community events, suggestions were made for more than **330 miles of additional greenways and trails**.

Key discussion points addressed the importance of branding and wayfinding; ideas for programming, such as workplace walking or biking challenges; activities at trailheads and along trails; the desire for more trail-oriented development; and the need for continued coordination between the County, Cities, and adjacent communities.

LOCATION & PLACEMENT

- Connect trails to parks and schools
- Use sewer and power easements
- Avoid high-traffic roadways
- More trails in natural/wooded areas
- Direct access for subdivisions and shopping centers
- Connect trails to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area and Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park
- Would like to bike/walk to restaurants, shops, grocery stores, and town centers

AMENITIES & WAYFINDING

- More restroom facilities
- Shade, vegetation, and seating
- More signage to indicate access points
- Increase awareness of existing trails

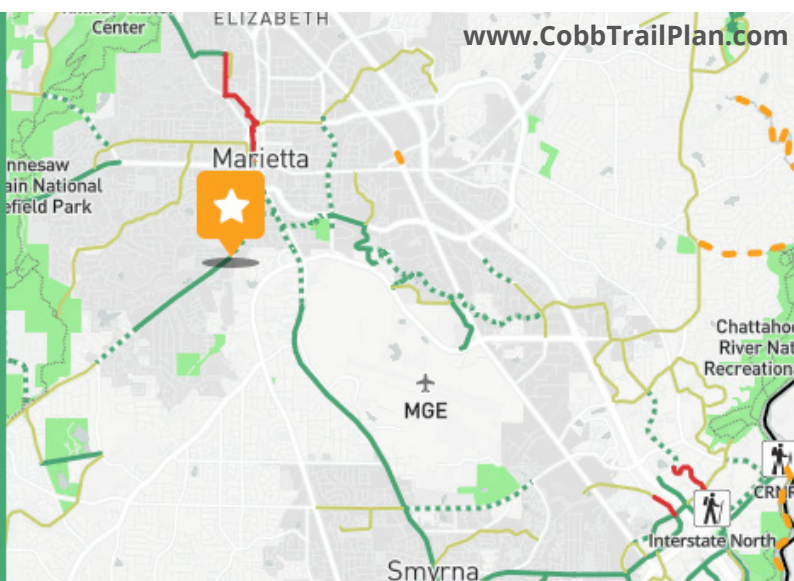
OTHER THEMES

- Would like to be able to get to trails without having to drive
- Make sure trails are safe, especially at roadway crossings

Welcome to the **Cobb County Greenways and Trails Master Plan** interactive map. Thank you for visiting! As part of this study, we want to learn more about where residents and visitors would like to see greenways and trails in Cobb County, how you would like to use those trails, and what destinations you think should be connected. Use this interactive map to submit your suggestion – just click the button below.

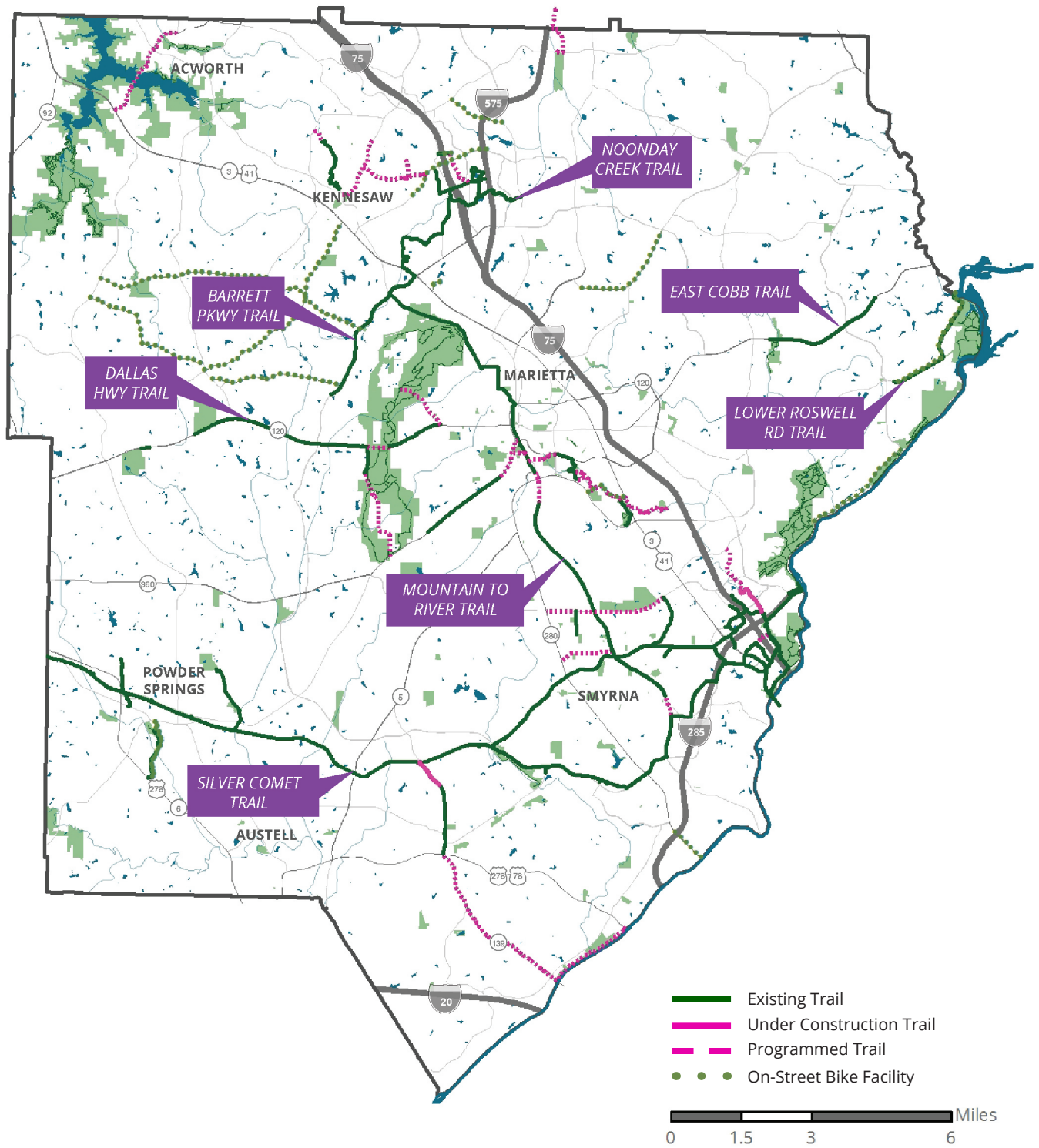
[Get Started](#)

[Visit Project Page](#)





CURRENT TRAIL NETWORK



Cobb County has good reason to be proud of its trail network: with **more than 84 miles of multi-use sidepath trails** (alongside roadways) **and greenway trails** (independent alignments, generally in more natural settings), Cobb ranks ahead of many similar counties throughout the southeast. Existing multi-use greenways and trails include well-known regional facilities like the **Silver Comet Trail** and **Noonday Creek Trail**.

In addition, Cobb County is home to some of the most popular trails in the Atlanta region - **Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park** is home to more than 22 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, and the Cobb County portion of the **Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area** has more than 35 miles of hiking and biking trails. Plus, there are 47 miles of unpaved trails and two miles of paved trails in Cobb County parks - including 25 miles of mountain biking and hiking trails in **Allatoona Creek Park**. More trails can be found in City parks.

In addition to what is already built, at the time of this writing, two segments of trail are actively under construction: one on Floyd Rd and a portion of the Bob Callan Trail. Another 29 miles of trails are “programmed” or have funding designated for design or construction.

The map on the previous page shows the current existing, under construction, and programmed greenways and trails. Many of these projects represent strategic opportunities to fill key gaps in the network and improve connectivity.

In fact, **filling just two gaps** along West Atlanta St and Atlanta Rd **will complete a key north-south corridor**, connecting Town Center to Kennesaw Mountain to the Cumberland area and the Chattahoochee River. The **Mountain to River Trail**, as it is called, will connect directly to the County’s primary east-west trail corridor, the Silver Comet Trail, creating a linked network of more than 43 miles end-to-end, joined by a loop through central Smyrna.

COBB COUNTY IS ALREADY HOME TO MORE THAN 80 MILES OF GREENWAYS AND TRAILS. TODAY, MORE THAN 30 MILES ARE IN THE DESIGN OR CONSTRUCTION PHASE. BY 2020, COBB COUNTY WILL LIKELY HAVE MORE THAN 120 MILES OF GREENWAYS AND TRAILS OUTSIDE OF PARK PROPERTIES.

84+**MILES GREENWAYS & TRAILS OUTSIDE PARKS****50+****MILES PAVED & UNPAVED TRAILS IN LOCAL PARKS****55+****MILES HIKING, BIKING, & EQUESTRIAN TRAILS IN NATIONAL PARKS****2****MILES UNDER CONSTRUCTION****29****MILES IN DESIGN OR CONCEPT PHASE**



FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUTURE

The *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* serves as a roadmap for development of new greenway and trail projects. It aims to focus on projects that are most likely to positively impact Cobb County residents and visitors by leveraging existing assets, capitalizing on previous investments, geographically targeting improvements, and improving overall connectivity. To that end, it recommends **eight priority projects**, which will be the focus of the next ten years and likely funded, in part, via the next SPLOST, with additional support from grants and other funding sources as they become available.

In addition to the priority projects and other proposed trails, the *Plan* provides a framework to guide future prioritization and decisions about longer-term greenway and trail projects, helping ensure that efforts to improve and expand the trail network are grounded in principles and practices that will improve connectivity and make it more comfortable and convenient for more people to bike and walk for day-to-day trips.

As a whole, implementing the *Plan* will provide **connectivity from Lakes Acworth and Allatoona to Kennesaw Mountain to the Chattahoochee River**. Eventually, it will connect **Town Center to Cumberland and Acworth to Austell**. It enhances access to all six cities in Cobb County, to each of the CIDs, and to business districts, downtowns, and town centers. It provides access to nature and wildlife, performing arts and sports venues, colleges, parks, and schools, and increases access to some of the most popular hiking and biking trails in the region. The principles, recommendations, future framework, and design guidance set forth in this *Plan* will result in greater mobility choices, improved community health, a healthier environment, and a more competitive economy for all of Cobb County.



GREENWAY TRAIL



SIDEPATH TRAIL



NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTOR



GREENWAY CONNECTOR



UNPAVED RECREATIONAL TRAIL

To guide greenway and trail design, the *Plan* provides guidance for multiple types of greenways and trails, based upon setting and context, including roadside trails (sidepaths), greenway trails, unpaved recreational trails, and trail connectors.

To help with implementation, the *Plan* provides suggested criteria for possible future prioritization of longer-term trail projects and strategies to help Cobb County navigate growing the network. These include filling key gaps in the network, focusing on regional connectivity, trails as destinations, increasing connections to transit, enhancing neighborhood connectivity, and consideration of travel sheds. These strategies may be complemented by targeting improvements to certain geographic areas, leveraging real estate development projects, and providing amenities that encourage trail use.

The *Plan* also summarizes planning-level costs for greenway and trail construction, potential partnerships and funding opportunities, operations and maintenance guidance, and ideas for activities and programming to increase interest in and use of greenways and trails. Finally, the *Plan* offers possible follow-up studies to further expand opportunities for biking, walking, and even other types of trails.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish advisory group/coalition
- Wayfinding, signage, and public art
- Improve sidepath crossings
- Shared-use parking agreements
- Create maps and mobile apps
- Count bicycle and pedestrian activity
- Encourage trail-oriented development
- Explore and support bike share
- Neighborhood bikeways to complement trails
- Pilot temporary dirt trails (DIRTways)
- Partner to facilitate trail programs and activities

TYPES OF GREENWAYS & TRAILS

- **Greenway Trails** - Paved trails in own right-of-way (e.g. alongside a creek)
- **Sidepath Trails** - Paved trails alongside roadways
- **Neighborhood Connectors** - Short segments between trails and neighborhoods or local destinations
- **Greenway Connectors** - On-street connections linking greenways or sidepaths (e.g. bike lanes)
- **Unpaved Recreational Trails** - Bare earth or crushed stone trails, often in park settings, for use on bike or foot

NETWORK GROWTH

- **Fill gaps in the existing network**
- **Regional connections**
- **Trails as destinations**
- **Connections to transit**
- **Neighborhood connectivity**
- **Travel sheds**
- **Countywide focus areas**
- **Trail enhancements and support**

IMPLEMENTATION

- **Wayfinding and signage**
- **Expand partnerships to help with implementation**
- **Implement policies and procedures for development review and coordination**
- **Establish partnerships for maintenance**
- **Additional studies, including paddle trails, neighborhood bikeways, and trails along utility corridors**
- **Activities and programming**

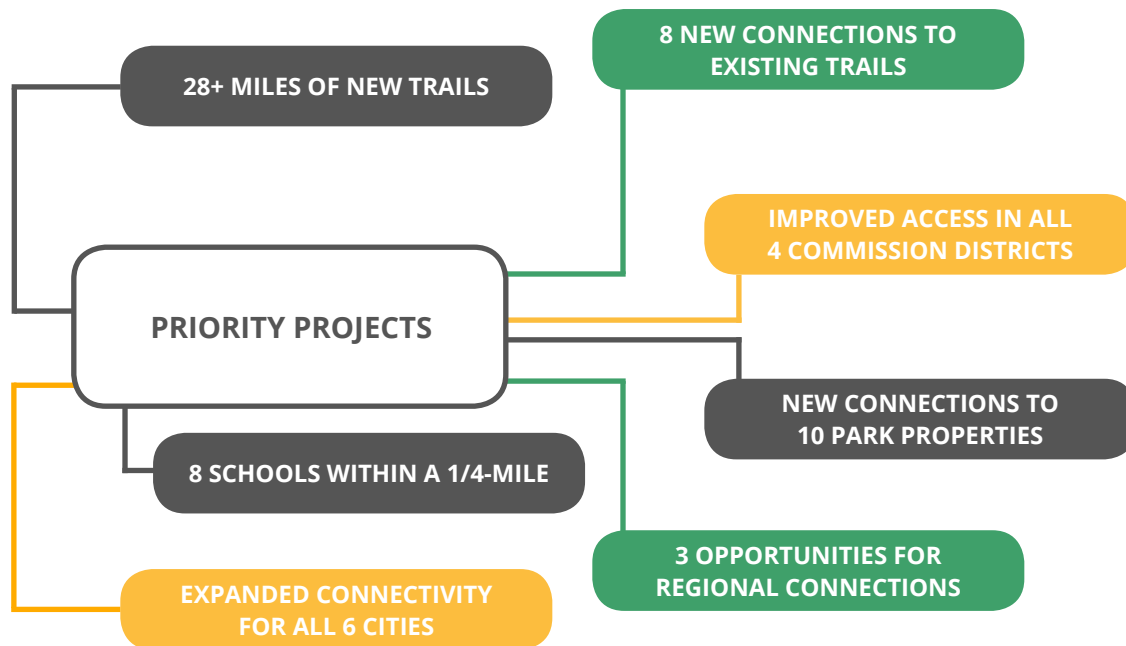


PRIORITY PROJECTS

The eight priority projects highlighted in the *Greenways and Trails Master Plan* have the potential to transform mobility and leverage existing assets, like the Chattahoochee River. They will greatly expand opportunities for active transportation and recreation. Collectively, these projects will add **more than 28 miles of new greenways and trails** to the countywide network. In so doing, they will **improve regional connectivity** and **increase access** to dozens of miles of **existing trails**, as well as to numerous

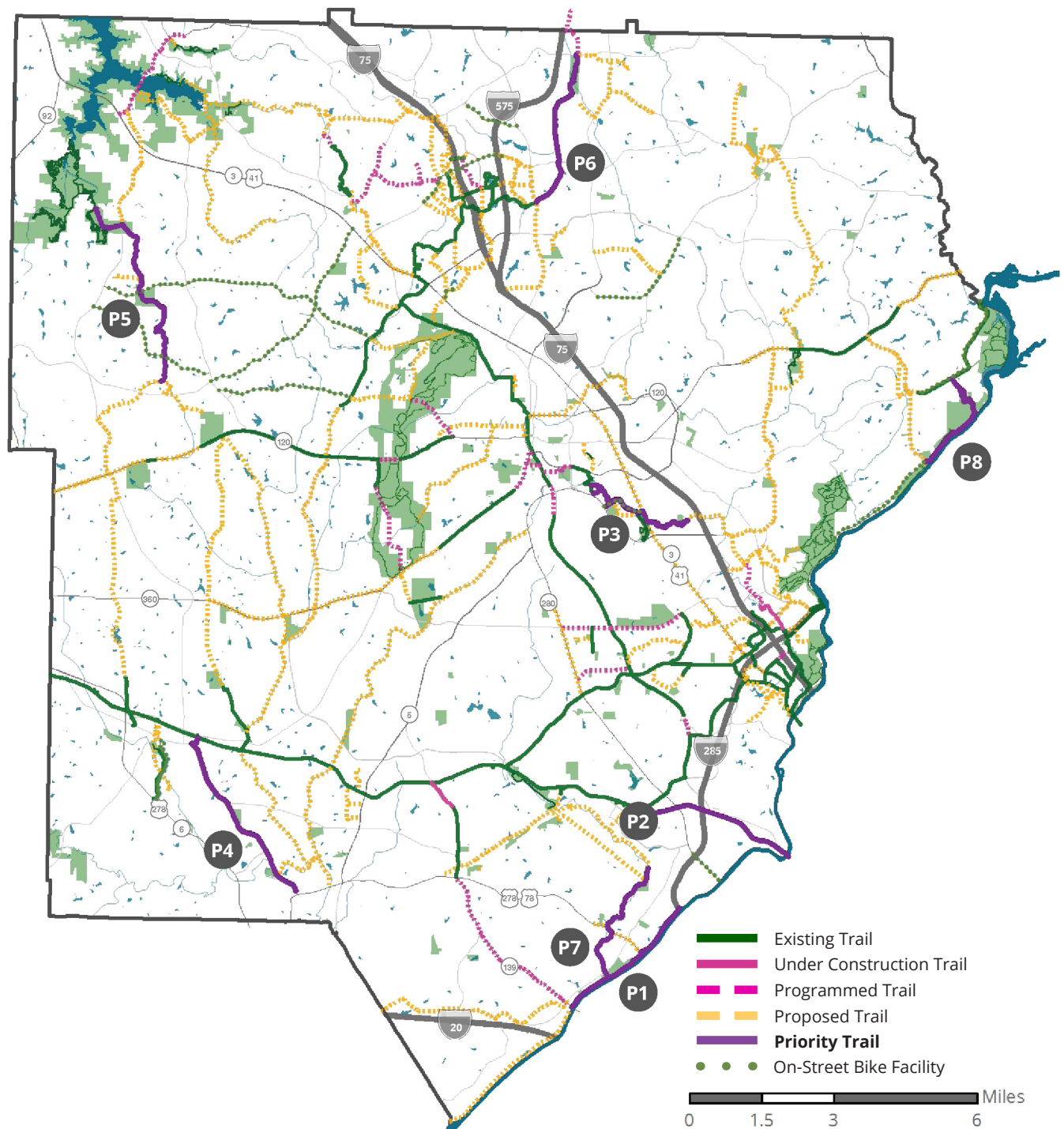
parks, schools, and historic and cultural resources.

Furthermore, these priority projects will enhance access to key destinations, including but not limited to Kennesaw State University - Marietta and Life University campuses, the Chattahoochee River, the Atlanta BeltLine, the Silver Comet Trail, Franklin Gateway Sports Complex, and more than 25 miles of hiking and biking trails in Allatoona Creek Park.



PRIORITY GREENWAY AND TRAIL PROJECTS

ID	Name	From	To	Length
P1	Chattahoochee River Trail	Mableton Pkwy	I-285	3.11 miles
P2	Silver Comet Connector	East-West Conn	Chattahoochee River	3.38 miles
P3	Rottenwood Creek Trail (Ph 1)	Alumni Dr	Franklin Gateway	3.31 miles
P4	Austell Powder Springs Rd Trail	Joe Jerkins Blvd	Silver Comet Trail	4.16 miles
P5	Allatoona Creek Greenway	Harrison H.S.	Allatoona Creek Park	5.03 miles
P6	Noonday Creek Trail	Bells Ferry Trailhead	Noonday Creek Park	3.67 miles
P7	Nickajack Creek Greenway	Chattahoochee River	Buckner Rd	3.05 miles
P8	Hyde Farm-Johnson Ferry Trail	Lower Roswell Rd	Johnson Ferry Rd	2.72 miles



**THE GREENWAYS AND TRAILS
MASTER PLAN INCLUDES EIGHT
PRIORITY PROJECTS, REACHING INTO
ALL QUADRANTS OF THE COUNTY**



PRIORITY PROJECTS

P1 - CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER TRAIL



The three-mile Chattahoochee River Trail would provide new access to the river between Mableton Pkwy and I-285, increasing opportunities to view, interact with, and experience nature. It is envisioned to cross the river near I-285 and connect with the planned Proctor Creek Greenway and an Atlanta river trail to Peachtree Creek. This project could help transform an underutilized resource and enable visitors to catch rare glimpses of the river, provide opportunities for complementary economic development, and would support the larger vision of regional trail connectivity along the river.

P2 - SILVER COMET CONNECTOR



The Silver Comet Connector Trail began as an initiative called “Connect the Comet” to connect the existing Silver Comet Trail to the Atlanta BeltLine across the Chattahoochee River. The roughly 3.4-mile segment in Cobb County would utilize a disused CSX rail corridor, establish greater regional connectivity, fill a void in an area lacking multi-use trails, and showcase valued historical and cultural resources in the area, like Trolley Line Park. It would also capitalize on the tremendous economic impact the Silver Comet Trail already has, bringing tourism and recreational dollars to the area.

P3 - ROTTENWOOD CREEK TRAIL (PH 1)



Marietta and its partners have a vision to expand the City's multi-use trail network to facilitate connections to the Bob Callan/Rottenwood Creek, Mountain to River, and Silver Comet Trails, improving access, connectivity, and greater choice in mode of transportation in the area around KSU Marietta and Life University. The first phase of the Rottenwood Creek Trail would be 3.3 miles between Marietta's Sports Complex and the Franklin Gateway Sports Complex, and it would connect to the Mountain to River Trail, creating a continuous network from Town Center to Franklin Gateway.

P4 - AUSTELL POWDER SPRINGS ROAD TRAIL



The City of Austell has long-desired improved connectivity to the surrounding communities and to the Silver Comet Trail. The roughly four-mile Austell Powder Springs Road Trail would provide that connectivity, linking downtown Austell with Powder Springs and the Silver Comet Trail via a 12-foot-wide multi-use trail. The trail would greatly increase options for non-motorized travel to and from a variety of destinations, including parks, schools, businesses, and community facilities. As with any trail project, it will require collaboration between multiple agencies, although a vast majority of the trail could likely be accommodated within the roadway right-of-way.

The Allatoona Creek Greenway is envisioned as a network of trail segments stretching from Dallas Hwy to Lake Acworth. The proposed priority segment would connect Harrison High School on Due West Rd to more than 25 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails in Allatoona Creek Park. The project would connect multiple schools, Price Park, and would provide increased access to the West Cobb Library and Northwest Family YMCA, along with other destinations. While substantial portions of the proposed greenway are within floodplain, it ranks high in terms of feasibility because more than half of the land needed is already publicly owned.



P5 - ALLATOONA CREEK GREENWAY

This segment of the Noonday Creek Trail would fill a critical gap in a long-envisioned network by connecting the existing Noonday Creek Trail to a trail in development between Shallowford Rd and SR 92, which has a trail connection into Downtown Woodstock. The three-mile priority segment lies largely in Cobb County-owned property and would follow existing sewer easements where possible. It would provide additional recreation and transportation opportunities for residents and visitors, linking neighborhoods, Noonday Creek Park, KSU, Town Center, and the City of Woodstock.



P6 - NOONDAY CREEK TRAIL

The Nickajack Creek Greenway has its origin in a 1998 Cobb County Comprehensive Plan. Since then, it has gained support and momentum from a number of groups. This proposed priority three-mile segment would begin at the Chattahoochee River and follow Nickajack Creek to Buckner Rd and Nickajack Park. More than two-thirds of the proposed alignment is within Cobb County-owned land and the trail would follow sewer easements where possible. The trail would increase access to the Chattahoochee River, several parks, schools, and historic features like Shoupades, and Civil War trenches.



P7 - NICKAJACK CREEK GREENWAY

The Hyde Farm-Johnson Ferry Trail would increase access to one of Cobb County's most treasured assets - the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. The project would construct a shared-use trail on Cobb County and NPS property between Lower Roswell Rd and Johnson Ferry Rd. It would follow utility easements and informal trails where possible, adhering to National Park Service guidelines and standards. The trail would increase access to the river through overlooks and resting areas. Opportunities also exist for direct access to neighborhoods, kayak launches, and wildlife viewing areas.



P8 - HYDE FARM-JOHNSON FERRY TRAIL



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