



Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan



January 2010

Prepared by



Chapter 1
Executive Summary

in partnership with
RS&H, PEQ, & PEDS



Table of Contents

This plan is published across seven bound volumes. The chapters of this plan are grouped within these volumes as shown in the list below.

- **CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**
- **CHAPTER 2: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**
CHAPTER 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS
CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS
CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES
- **CHAPTER 6: DESIGN GUIDELINES**
- **CHAPTER 7A: SILVER COMET TRAIL EXTENSION ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS**
CHAPTER 7B: NOONDAY CREEK TRAIL EXTENSION ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS
- **CHAPTER 8: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**
- **CHAPTER 9: FAMILY FRIENDLY ROUTES**
- **APPENDICES A-F**

Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan



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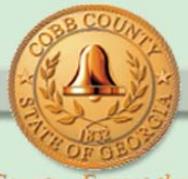


Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction and Benefits of this Plan	1-3
1.2 Project Process Review	1-7
1.3 Public Involvement	1-8
1.3.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS.....	1-8
1.3.2 STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE.....	1-9
1.3.3 WEB SITE POSTINGS AND OTHER PUBLIC FEEDBACK CHANNELS	1-12
1.4 Chapter Summaries	1-12
1.4.1 INTRODUCTION	1-12
1.4.2 CHAPTER 2: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	1-13
1.4.3 CHAPTER 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS	1-13
1.4.4 CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS.....	1-15
1.4.5 CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES.....	1-16
1.4.6 CHAPTER 6: DESIGN GUIDELINES	1-17
1.4.7 CHAPTER 7: TRAIL ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVE ANALYSES	1-18
Silver Comet Trail Extension	1-18
Noonday Creek Trail, Phase 3	1-20
1.4.8 CHAPTER 8: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN.....	1-22
1.4.9 CHAPTER 9: FAMILY FRIENDLY ROUTE STUDIES.....	1-23
1.4.10 Appendices.....	1-24

Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan



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Chapter 1: Executive Summary

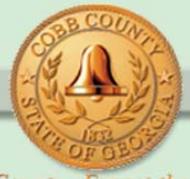
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BENEFITS OF THIS PLAN

This *Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan* is a direct descendent of several initiatives undertaken by Cobb County over the last two decades. It is an update and expansion of a document published in 1993, the *Cobb County Bicycle/Transportation Plan*, the County's first and only prior countywide plan for non-motorized transportation. It also builds upon the *1997 Cobb County Rail Trail Master Plan*. This 1997 plan laid the groundwork for the transformation of an abandoned CSX railway corridor into the Silver Comet Trail, the County's most recognizable biking and walking facility. The Silver Comet Trail has made a narrow corridor of the County something of a destination for metro Atlanta bicyclists and families seeking recreational opportunities. The County has developed additional trail facilities over the years and has developed a *County Trail Map*. This map is periodically updated to show both existing trails and proposed future trails that have been identified by studies specific to local areas within the County. County staff, and elected officials have expressed aspirations for improved bicycling and walking, and

many corridor specific studies have been developed to identify needs on particular roadways and potential trail corridors throughout the county. The County's *2030 Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)* (published in February 2008) performed a "macro" level analysis of bicycling and pedestrian needs, identifying needs with regard to connectivity, safety, and infrastructure suitability.

This project, The Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan, was initiated on the heels of the CTP, and began in August 2008. The intent of this project was to ascertain community needs with respect to bicycling and walking at a more "micro" level by gathering and analyzing data to describe bicycling and walking conditions on all of the County's major thoroughfares. Additionally, it is to make recommendations for improvements where needed, and to provide further guidance on a variety of topics including policy, facility design and specific trail alignments. With this plan the county can continue the momentum that has been established for improved bicycling and walking opportunities that has been building since 1993.

The desired results of this study—increasing the viability of biking and walking as transportation and recreation options for residents of and visitors to Cobb County—will benefit the County in numerous ways (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). In addition to being enjoyable activities in and of



Air Quality

- Biking and walking create no vehicle emissions.
- Enhanced opportunities for local walking and biking, as well as easy access to transit, allow individuals to reduce their contribution to the problem of air pollution.
- Vehicles burn fuel less efficiently before their engines have warmed up, increasing harmful emissions. Biking and walking can replace short trips that pollute at a disproportionately high level.



Healthy Living and Quality of Life

- 30 minutes of moderate exercise, five days a week, can significantly reduce risks for many illnesses including heart disease, high blood pressure, arthritis, depression and obesity.
- Biking and walking on short errands can provide the sort of moderate exercise needed to reduce these risks.
- Improved biking and walking conditions provide transportation benefits while also providing opportunities for physical activity.
- Improved biking and walking conditions add to the vitality and quality of life of community centers across Cobb County.



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Figure 1.1: Poster describing the benefits of non-motorized modes, prepared for plan workshops



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themselves, bicycling and walking fulfill important functions in the overall transportation network and in people's everyday lives. Bicycling and walking can provide transportation options for those people who would prefer not to travel by automobile on all trips; these modes also provide basic mobility—therefore access to work, school, and necessary personal appointments—for people who cannot afford a car or who are unable to drive or are prohibited from driving. Bicycling and walking are important as the final connections of transit trips, allowing riders to get between home and their boarding stop and between their disembarking stop and their final destination. In addition to these direct benefits to the mobility of bicyclists and pedestrians, increased bicycling and walking benefit the overall transportation network by providing cost-effective options for short trips and increasing the viability of transit for longer trips, both of which can provide alternatives to car trips and reduce the problem of roadway congestion. Bicycling and walking produce no emissions, and so provide travel options that do not contribute to air pollution. They can replace many short automobile trips, which contribute disproportionately to emissions levels. Finally, biking and walking have personal and social benefits as well, as they provide opportunities to incorporate physical activity into the daily routines of Cobb County residents, leading to better public health and a greater quality of life. Communities across the country have embraced non-motorized transportation as a popular and beneficial option that residents

increasingly expect and visitors actively seek when making choices about where to locate their families and spend their vacation dollars. With this plan, Cobb County is making important steps towards a future in which biking and walking are experienced as viable options for trips of all purposes.

In addition to the broader benefits to be realized by improved conditions for bicycling and walking, this plan has provided the County with a variety of helpful recommendations that will assist the County in identifying opportunities for improving bicycling and walking conditions. The existing conditions report and public input helped establish community expectations according to specific performance measures, allowing for a clear identification of roadways needing improvement. Within this list of needs, this plan identifies numerous strategies for making improvement, each requiring different levels of investment. These range from relatively inexpensive provision of bike lanes on roadways with sufficient width, to provision of basic sidewalk and shoulder facilities, to more challenging corridors which will require more detailed investigation and possible construction of more costly shared use path facilities. Now that these needs have been identified, they can be met in a variety of ways. Many may be able to be coordinated with other roadway and development projects, while some may still need to be constructed independently as stand-alone projects explicitly intended



Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan Personal and Community Benefits of Biking and Walking



Transportation Options

- Improved biking and walking conditions provide options for people who would prefer not to drive.
- Improved biking and walking conditions provide basic mobility for people who don't have personal automobiles.
- Improved biking and walking conditions provide access to mass transit for longer trips.
- Improved biking and walking conditions provide opportunities for drivers to save money on gas and car maintenance.



Congestion Mitigation

- Improved biking and walking conditions allow commuting options for people who live relatively close to work.
- Improved biking and walking provide access to mass transit for longer trips.
- Improved biking and walking conditions are cost effective ways to accommodate more trips through our existing transportation rights-of-way.

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Figure 1.2: Poster describing further benefits of non-motorized modes, prepared for plan workshops





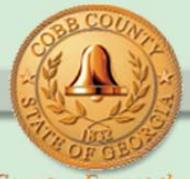
to benefit bicycling or walking. Data were also gathered and analyzed to help the County prioritize these investment decisions, based on the intensity of the need for improvement (as indicated by the performance measures), the probability of a given project to serve bicycle and pedestrian scale trips based on surrounding land use, the requests of local residents, and the relative costs of the necessary improvements. The two trail alignment studies and Family Friendly Route studies provide the county with detailed information to make decisions on the next phases of these important projects intended, while the design guidelines, policy recommendations, Family Friendly Route Studies, and Safe Routes to School Plan provide frameworks for a broad variety of initiatives and projects that will help the county become a place where biking and walking are increasingly common mode choices for utilitarian and recreational purposes alike.

1.2 PROJECT PROCESS REVIEW

This project was prepared for the Cobb County Department of Transportation by a team of consultants from Sprinkle Consulting, Inc., Reynolds, Smith, and Hills (RS&H), Planners for Environmental Quality (PEQ), and PEDS Inc. The consultant team met numerous times with a Project Management Team comprised of County Staff from the various departments, including

Transportation, Community Development, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. The consultant team and County project manager met with each of the County Commissioners at the beginning of the project to review the project scope and gain insight into their perspective and priorities, and briefed each of the commissioners again towards the end of the project to review preliminary findings and recommendations. Public Involvement was an important aspect of this plan's development and is discussed in more detail in the next section.

The chapters of this plan were developed by the consultant team using a variety of methods. Extensive field work was conducted to gather data on existing bicycling and walking conditions (Chapter 3) on all the County's major thoroughfares, as well as to make detailed assessments of conditions and opportunities for the more specific corridor studies for the trail alignment studies (Chapter 7), the Safe Routes to School Pilot Studies (Chapter 8), and the Family Friendly Route studies (Chapter 9). All of this field work was augmented, when necessary, by careful review of aerial imagery—both commercial and County maintained—and County-provided mapping data of parcel boundaries, roadway characteristics and other items. Design guidelines and facility recommendations were developed in light of thorough review of applicable technical guidance and standards including the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* and



the AASHTO¹ documents, *Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Bicycle Facilities*, *Guide for the Development of Pedestrian Facilities*, and *A Policy on the Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*. The consultants also reviewed cutting edge research on bicycle and pedestrian safety and operational needs as well as best practices from local transportation agencies across the United States. The consultants also reviewed existing County, regional, and state planning documents, ordinances, and policies to provide context for existing conditions and a baseline from which to make recommendations that will improve conditions for bicycling and walking in the Cobb County. The consultant team submitted draft reports of all of the plan's major sections for review and comment by the County. Throughout the entire process, the consultant team, county staff, county leadership, community stakeholders and the general public worked together to develop an ambitious plan for Cobb County's future which was nevertheless grounded in verifiable data, established research, and a thorough concern for the safety of all those who walk or bike in Cobb County- whether to get to work, to get to school, to conduct business, for exercise, or just for fun.

¹ AASHTO: American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials

1.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The plan incorporated public involvement in a number of ways, including public open house workshops (Figures 1.3 & 1.4), a stakeholder committee, and a project page on the County Department of Transportation web site.



Figure 1.3: Participants review existing conditions data at a Plan workshop

1.3.1 PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE WORKSHOPS

Six public open house events were held as part of this plan. These were organized in two rounds of three meetings each, with the three events of each round held in different parts of the County to maximize convenient access for those who wished to participate. The first round of meetings was held in January 2009, at the Central Library in Marietta, the East Cobb Government Center, and the South Cobb Community Center. The



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intent of these meetings was to inform the public of the general scope of the plan, share the results of the existing conditions analysis, gain input with respect to public expectations for bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, and to identify specific roadway segments for which local residents desired improved conditions for biking and walking. A second round of meetings was held in September 2009, at the Central Library, the East Cobb Government Center, and the South Cobb Regional Library. The intent of these meetings was to review preliminary recommendations for facility improvement, show data inputs and results for the project prioritization process, and to provide overviews of the other plan elements including the design guidelines, Family Friendly Route study, trail alignment studies, and Safe Routes to School Plan. Total attendance for all six events was over 300.



Figure 1.4: Participants complete response forms at a Plan workshop

1.3.2 STAKEHOLDER COMMITTEE

A committee of key stakeholders was convened to provide input on this project at several key stages. Invited participants included representatives of various Cobb County departments including the Sheriff's Office, Police Department, Community Development, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, Cobb County Schools, the Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Transportation, Cobb County's municipalities, the National Park Service, and representatives of bicycling advocacy and environmental organizations, as well as neighborhood associations from around the county. This group was convened five times: in October 2008 and in January, May, June and August 2009. At these meetings stakeholders were updated on the plan's progress, briefed on next steps and solicited for input on pending decisions, such as assigning weight for factors in the prioritization process. Stakeholder participation provided the consultants and project management team with valuable feedback, additional eyes for quality control, and important community connections to maximize public participation. Invitees and participants are listed in Table 1.1.

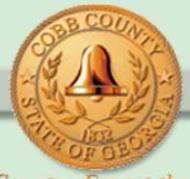


Table 1.1 Invitees and Participants in Stakeholder Meetings

Cobb County Departments	
Cobb Community Transit	Tami McKenzie
Cobb County Parks	Rusty Simpson
Cobb County Planning Division	Marc Dixon
Cobb County Police Department	Chief G.B.Hatfield, Jr., Glenn Davis
Cobb County School District:	James Arrowood
Cobb County School District:	Rick Grisham
Cobb County Senior Services	Pam Breeden
Cobb County Sheriff's Office	Milton Beck, Neil Warren
Cobb Municipalities and Districts	
City of Acworth	Tiffany Hughes
City of Austell	Duane Demeritt
City of Kennesaw	Darryl Simmons
City of Marietta	Brian Binzer, Michael Cullen, Kyethea Kirk, Rusty Roth
City of Powder Springs	Jesus Davila, Mark Moore
City of Smyrna	Rusty Martin
Cumberland CID	Tom Boland
Other Public Agencies	
Atlanta Regional Commission	Regan Hammond, Talya Trudell
City of Sandy Springs	Garrin Coleman
City of Woodstock	Brian Stockton
Georgia DOT	Byron Rushing, Lisa Safstrom
National Park Service	Dan Brown (Chattahoochee River Nat'l Recreation Area), Lloyd Morris (Kennesaw Mountain Nat'l Battlefield)
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority	David Cassell, Roger Henze



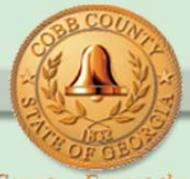
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Table 1.1 (continued): Invitees and Participants in Stakeholder Meetings

Community Partners	
Boys/Girls Club	David Carikker
Chattahoochee Technical College	Brady James
Kennesaw State University	John Anderson,
Life University	Gerald T. Anderson
Wellstar Hospital	Brooke Schembri
Advocacy	
Atlanta Bicycle Campaign	Amy Goodwin, Pam Jacobson, Rebecca Serna
Bike Cobb	Joe Seconder, Dan Thorton
Sierra Club	Tom Neff, Jean Ann Wheelock
Neighborhood Groups	
Bells Ferry Civic Association	Pat Wegener
Canton Road Neighbors	Carol Brown
Mableton Improvement Coalition Riverline Committee	Roberta Cook Steve Reents
Northeast Cobb Coalition	Lee Berg
Northeast Cobb Homeowners Group	Norm DeWalt
People Looking After Neighborhoods (PLAN)	Kelli Gambrill
Southwest Austell Neighbors (SWAN)	Clarice Barber-Page
Vinings Home Owners Association	Shane Coldren, Melissa Kime David Hong
Other Participants	
	Gabriella Coroneos, Lisa Garner, Frank Jewell Karen O'Riordan, Eric Wiggins





1.3.3 WEB SITE POSTINGS AND OTHER PUBLIC FEEDBACK CHANNELS

Draft work products were posted on a project page of the Cobb DOT web site for public review and comment, as shown in Figure 1.5. All workshop presentations were adapted for posting to the web site as well, allowing parallel participation by those who could not attend the open house events in person. Additionally email, fax, and written requests for facility improvements that had been submitted to the County over the past several years were compiled and integrated into workshop response data to assist in measuring public interest in improvements to particular segments of the plan's study network.

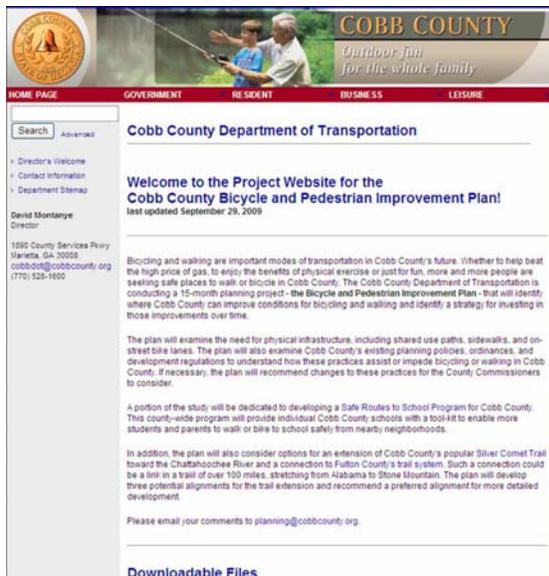


Figure 1.5: A screen view of the DOT web page for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan

1.4 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Cobb County *Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan* is organized into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is this executive summary. Chapter 2 describes goals and objectives that, if achieved, will result in better overall conditions for bicycling and walking in Cobb County and contribute to the benefits described in Section 1.1 above. Chapter 2 also includes policy recommendations that will assist in the attainment of those objectives. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 deal with infrastructure needs related to bicycling and walking in Cobb County: Chapter 3 describes the existing conditions, Chapter 4 describes the process by which needs for improvement were identified, and Chapter 5 provides options for implementing improvements to meet those needs. Chapter 6 is a set of guidelines for County staff to consult when designing facilities for use by bicyclists and pedestrians. Chapter 7 consists of alignment alternative studies for the extension of two shared use paths: the Silver Comet Trail in the southeast portion of the county, and the Noonday Creek Trail in the northeast portion of the county. Chapter 8 establishes a framework for the County to assist local schools with increasing the viability of walking and biking as transportation options for students and for applying for assistance through Georgia's Safe Routes to School Program. Chapter 9



describes two corridor studies for “Family Friendly Routes” which seek to find better connections for bicycle and pedestrian access between residences and popular neighborhood destinations.

Additionally, appendices include explanations of methodologies, detailed data results of analyses and more detailed overview of the public involvement process.

1.4.2 CHAPTER 2: GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

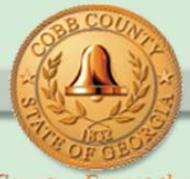
This plan identifies Goals and Objectives that will help make biking and walking important modes in Cobb County’s transportation system, in accordance with the vision described in the County’s adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The vision of the CTP is for an “efficient network providing multimodal service to coordinated land uses throughout the county, including to green space and “live-work-shop-play” communities.” The CTP outlined goals and objectives that will contribute to that vision, and this plan outlines further goals and objectives that are more specifically tailored to ways in which the non-motorized modes can contribute to achieving the vision. The goals and objectives address various aspects of developing the envisioned network including system performance, safety, multimodal connectivity, land use, and financial management. The objectives outlined in this plan will help County staff and leadership track progress of various

improvements and initiatives over time and report back to County residents about the milestones reached and changes realized.

The plan also includes numerous policy recommendations which outline ways in which the County can make a comprehensive effort to improve conditions for bicycling and walking beyond the construction and improvement of infrastructure. Policy recommendations includes planning procedures for the ongoing periodic review of this plan and other efforts to improve bicycling and walking, assessments of changing needs over time, and evaluation of initiatives and improvements to ensure that they are achieving the desired results. Recommendations also include the formal incorporation of the plan’s recommendations and guidelines into County Technical Standards and development review procedures. Other recommendations include the encouragement of bicycle parking spaces, shower and locker facilities for bicycle commuters, better integration of bicycling and walking needs with land use patterns, as well as education, encouragement, and enforcement programs to increase public awareness of the options presented by bicycling and walking in Cobb County.

1.4.3 CHAPTER 3: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions report examines a number of factors that contribute to the existing state of non-motorized transportation in Cobb



County, including a survey of past studies and plans relating to biking and walking, a review of codes and ordinances that affect biking and walking, a technical analysis of roadway conditions derived from roadway geometry and traffic conditions, and an assessment of the relative potential for biking and walking activity along roads and trails in the county based on the surrounding land use.

pedestrian related content to provide a legal context for bicycling and walking and identify any regulations or prohibitions that may impact potential recommendations or initiatives, such as operation of bicycles and other vehicles on sidewalks.

The roadways of the County's Major Thoroughfare Network (arterials, major collectors, and minor collectors) were evaluated for how well they currently accommodate bicycling and waking. The methods used were the Bicycle Level of Service and Pedestrian Level of Service Models. These methods assign a grade to a given roadway segment on a pseudo-academic scale (A-F) reflecting how well they accommodate users' perception of safety and comfort. These methods have been accepted as standard measures of facility performance for the national *Highway Capacity Manual*, were the measures used by



Figure 1.6: Several of the existing studies reviewed in the course of this plan

The review of existing plans and studies examined over twenty documents including regional plans produced by the Atlanta Regional Commission, countywide studies, and specific corridor studies (Figure 1-6). Each of these documents was reviewed for its content pertaining to bicycling or walking (or lack thereof). The reviews provide a history of thinking and planning with respect to non-motorized modes in and around the county and also provide a context from which future efforts can proceed. State and local codes and ordinances were also reviewed for bicycle and



Figure 1.7: High traffic volumes and lack of shoulders can degrade bicyclist's perception of safety and comfort



the Atlanta Regional Commission for its *Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*, and have been used by state and local agencies across the country for well over a decade. The inputs which are used to calculate a roadway's grade include traffic volume, traffic speed, percentage of heavy vehicles in the traffic flow, pavement condition, width of the outside lane, presence of a shoulder or bike lane, presence and width of a sidewalk, horizontal separation of a sidewalk from the roadway, and buffering effects of vegetation or parked cars (Figures 1.7 & 1.8). The results of the system-wide analysis describe a very challenging condition for both bicycling and walking. The distance weighted Bicycle Level of Service Score for the County's major thoroughfares is 4.13, equal to a grade of "D", and the distance weighted Pedestrian Level of Service score is 4.20, also equal to a "D".



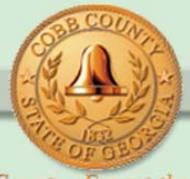
Figure 1.8: Very wide shoulders can improve bicycle accommodation on higher speed roadways

The method for estimating a given roadway's potential for bicycling or

walking is the Latent Demand Method. This method uses GIS software to conduct spatial queries to measure the proximity of network segments to trip origins (residences and workplaces) and trip destinations (other homes, workplaces, commercial centers, parks, trails, transit routes, schools, colleges and universities). Areas with a relatively even mix of origins and destinations within distances amenable to walking or biking are noted for having high potential for these modes if conditions were sufficiently accommodating. This analysis can help predict areas in which investments to improve infrastructure will result in greater frequency of biking and walking. These results are mapped in Chapter 3, and detailed data are published in Appendix C. The results are an important input in the project prioritization process discussed in Chapter 5.

1.4.4 CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Chapter 4 builds on the existing conditions report (Chapter 3) and uses the results to establish where better accommodation bicycling and walking is needed in Cobb County. First, the Major Thoroughfare Network was reviewed to focus on a core network of roadways for bicycling and walking (the "study network"), a distinction which would become the first cut in the ultimate project prioritization process described in Chapter 5. Roadways were selected for the study network for a variety of factors including their inclusion in the "skeletal" network



identified in the County’s original 1993 Bicycle/Transportation Plan, their achieving a high score in the Latent Demand Analysis, their being identified as having need for improvement by multiple participants in the public involvement processes, and their position to fill gaps between segments identified by the other criteria. The resulting study network includes approximately 565 miles of roadway, and approximately 110 miles of proposed trails, out of a total network of Major Thoroughfares and proposed trails that exceeded 900 miles.

Based on the responses from the Open House Workshops, stakeholder input, and consultation with County staff, a performance expectation equal to Level of Service “C” or better was established for both biking and walking along roadways of the study network; a less stringent performance threshold of Level of Service “D” was established for the remaining thoroughfares. Roadways that did not meet either of these thresholds were determined to have need for improvement (Figure 1.9).

A variety of bicycle facility improvement types were developed to move these roadways towards meeting the appropriate performance thresholds, including re-striping existing pavement for bike lanes, widening existing pavement to include paved shoulders, or more detailed study to consider more intensive improvements such as constructing shared use paths adjacent to the roadways.

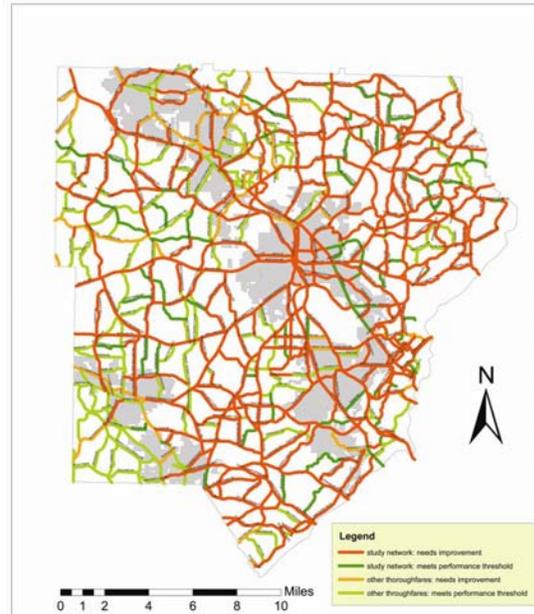


Figure 1.9: Roadways in red and orange have need for improvement (fuller detail in Chapter 4).

Pedestrian improvements considered include sidewalk construction and design modifications to increase buffering between the roadway and the sidewalk. Recommendations were assigned based on the existing cross section of a given segment, the degree of earthwork required to construct along the recommended facility along the roadway, and the likely level of accommodation that would be provided by the improved facility.

1.4.5 CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION OPPORTUNITIES

With facility recommendations identified that can improve segments’ performance to meet the designated thresholds, the next question is how to choose which potential projects should



be addressed first. Chapter 6 addresses several strategies for project implementation. These strategies include “routine accommodation” of bicycling and walking in all projects—in essence piggybacking non-motorized improvements onto larger projects that are being implemented for other reasons, such as roadway reconstruction, new roadway construction, or projects associated with new developments. Such strategies should have significant traction if the policy recommendations outlined in Chapter 2, the design guidelines in Chapter 6, and the county’s recently adopted “Complete Streets Policy” are put into practice. Another implementation strategy is to begin retrofitting existing facilities based on the facility recommendations developed in response to the needs identified in Chapter 4. Several approaches to prioritizing projects are outlined. First, roadways are listed for which relatively low cost facility improvements have been identified. These projects include treatments such as re-striping for bike lanes within the existing pavement and widening roadsides to accommodate new shoulders that can fit designated bike lanes. Projects can be compared for prioritization by weighing their relative benefit to the County. Terms for evaluating project benefits include the degree of improvement to be realized by a project (measured as difference of between the performance measure values that represent the existing condition and the desired performance threshold), the amount of public interest in the projects (measured as

“votes” received by the given segment through the public involvement processes), and potential for bicycling and walking activity on an improved segment (measured by the segment’s score in the Latent Demand Analysis). Further comparison can be made by comparing the return on investment that a project may yield by weighing the benefits described above against estimated construction costs for the projects. Tables comparing both the benefit and benefit/cost comparisons are published in Appendix F.

1.4.6 CHAPTER 6: DESIGN GUIDELINES

Chapter 6 is a collection of guidelines for the design of bicycle and pedestrian facilities (Figure 1.10). The guidance was developed after review of numerous existing local, state, and federal documents that pertain to best practices of facility design. Guidance is included for all aspects of design for in-street bike facilities and shared use pathways, including cross section requirements, horizontal alignment requirements, considerations for intersections, signing and marking, and other topics. Bicycle facility guidelines also address designating bike routes, and special design considerations such as railroad crossings and amenities. Pedestrian

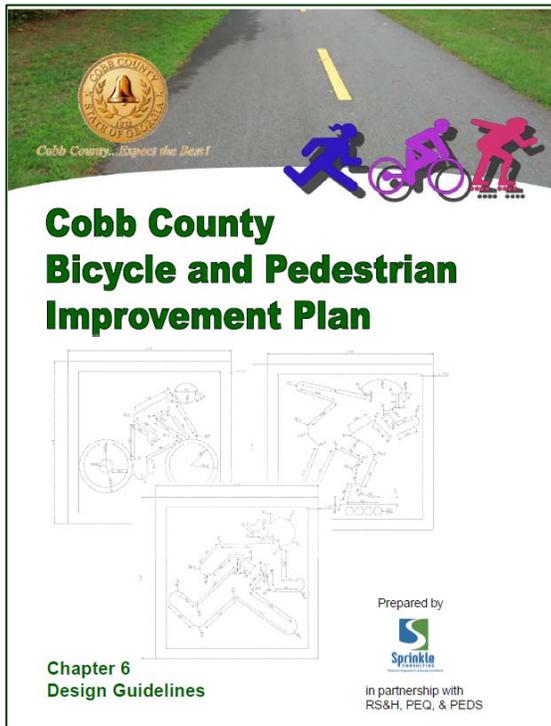
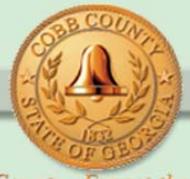


Figure 1.10: Cover of the design guidelines

facility guidelines include sidewalk design (including requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act) and crossing treatment selection and design, including newly approved treatments for crossings at mid-block locations such as the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon, and the Pedestrian Hybrid Signal. These guidelines will provide Cobb County design staff with state-of-the-art guidance on pedestrian and bicycle facility design that embraces innovation while being thoroughly grounded in safety.

1.4.7 CHAPTER 7: TRAIL ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVE ANALYSES

Chapter 7 includes alternatives analyses for two proposed trail

projects: the Silver Comet Trail Extension and Phase 3 of the Noonday Creek Trail.

Silver Comet Trail Extension

An alternatives analysis was conducted to recommend an extension to the Silver Comet Trail to the City of Atlanta’s Strategic Bicycle Network. The Silver Comet Trail currently begins near the Alabama/Georgia line, and extends eastward to Cobb County, where it terminates.

The alternatives analysis began with a discussion with Cobb County staff to determine their goals for the trail, as well as any routes or conflicts already identified. The preferred method of crossing the Chattahoochee River into the City of Atlanta is at Atlanta Road, utilizing a roadway bridge that includes a twelve-foot trail facility. Additionally, as the proposed City of Atlanta Strategic Bicycle Network was examined further, potential connections to this region of Cobb County were identified at Atlanta Road (a Core Bike Route) and Paces Ferry Road (a Secondary Bike Route).

A study area was identified to include the preferred Chattahoochee River crossing and the proposed City of Atlanta bike routes, so that the best possible alignment for the Silver Comet Trail Extension could be identified.

As the study area was identified, potential methods of crossing I-285 and the Chattahoochee River were explored. This information enabled





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the study team to identify four potential alignments for the Silver Comet Trail

Chattahoochee River into Atlanta.

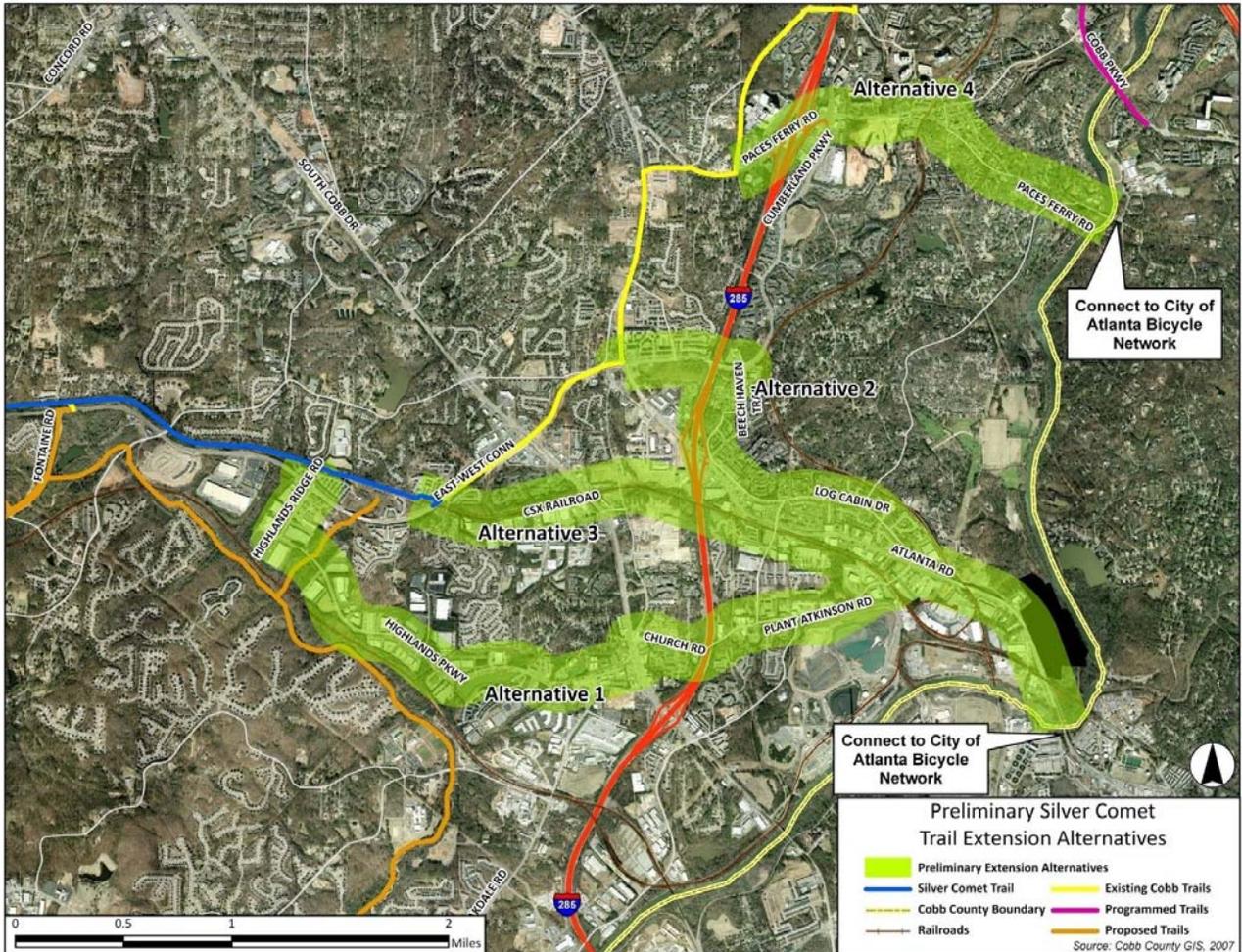
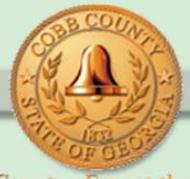


Figure 1.11: Alternatives considered for Silver Comet Trail extension

Extension. These four alternatives were developed through aerial and in-field review and further discussions with County staff. These are shown in Figure 1.11, and they consist of:

- Alternative 1: Follows Highlands Ridge Road to Highlands Parkway, to Church Road/Plant Atkinson Road, to Atlanta Road, crossing the
- Alternative 2: Follows Cumberland Parkway to I-285 right of way, to Log Cabin Drive, to Atlanta Road, crossing the Chattahoochee River into Atlanta.
- Alternative 3: Follows the existing CSX Railroad corridor from the East-West Connector to Plant Atkinson Road to Atlanta Road, crossing the Chattahoochee River into Atlanta.





- Alternative 4: Follows the Silver Comet Trail Cumberland Connector to Paces Ferry Road, to New Paces Ferry Road, to Paces Ferry Road, crossing the Chattahoochee River on Hermi's Bridge into Atlanta.

Each of these alternatives was analyzed in depth, taking into account the varied terrain of each, land use, accessibility, available connections, safety, property ownership, and adjacent roadway characteristics. Public involvement data, a prioritization scheme and cost estimates are included in Chapter 7.

Noonday Creek Trail, Phase 3

An alternatives analysis was also conducted to recommend an alignment for an extension to the programmed Noonday Creek Trail, which is divided into three (3) phases. Phase 1 begins at the intersection of US 41/Cobb Parkway and Greers Chapel Road and ends at the intersection of US 41/Cobb Parkway and Roberts Road. Phase 2 begins at the intersection of US 41/Cobb Parkway and Roberts Road and ends at Bells Ferry Road. The Noonday Creek Trail Extension is designated as Phase 3 of the overall Noonday Creek Trail, and is planned to extend from the termination of Phase 2 at Bells Ferry Road north to the Cherokee County line.

There is an existing Cobb County Water System sewer easement that travels along Noonday Creek for its entire length between Bells Ferry

Road and just south of the Cherokee County line. Ideally, the Cobb County Department of Transportation would like to locate a ten- to twelve-foot trail along all or portions of this easement. Additionally, a significant amount of Cobb County-owned property is located in this area. A study area was identified to include this sewer easement and the surrounding area, so that the best possible alignment for this final phase of the Noonday Creek Trail could be identified.

Once the study area was identified, five preliminary alternatives were developed through aerial and in-field review as well as discussions with County staff. These preliminary alternatives are shown in Figure 1.12, and they consist of:

- Alternative 1: Completely follows Noonday Creek corridor from Bells Ferry Road north to the Cherokee County line.
- Alternative 2: Begins at Bells Ferry Road, follows Noonday Creek corridor north to New Chastain Road, to Chastain Corners, to Canton Road, north to Hawkins Store Road, west to Noonday Creek corridor, north to Cherokee County line.
- Alternative 3: Follows Bells Ferry Road north to New Chastain Road, east to Noonday Creek corridor, north to Hawkins Store Road and the Cherokee County line.
- Alternative 4: Follows Bells Ferry Road to south of Parkwood Drive, east along Cobb County property to Noonday Creek corridor, north to Hawkins Store Road and the Cherokee County line.

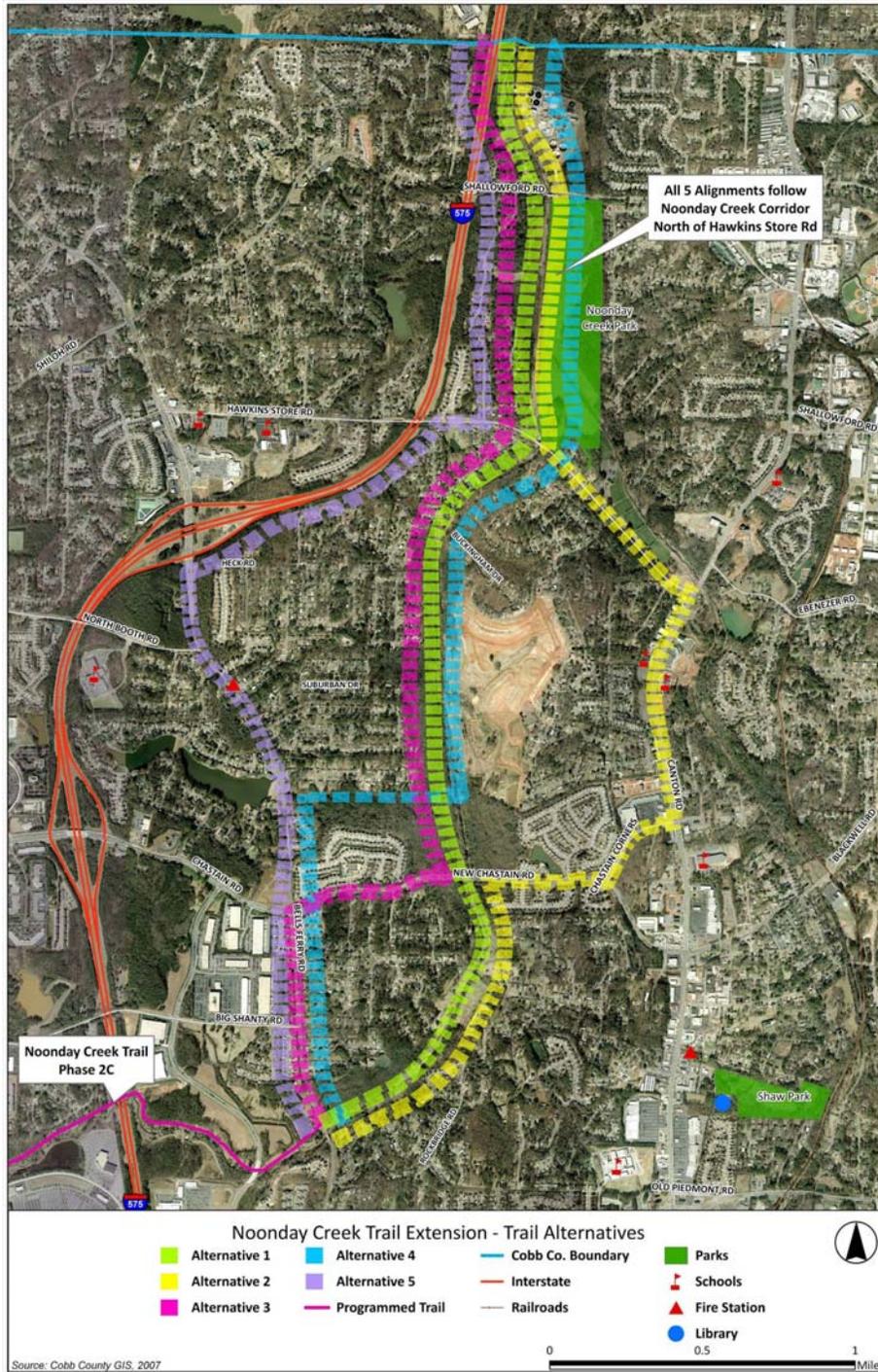


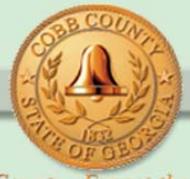
Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan

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- Alternative 5: Follows Bells Ferry Road north to I-575 right of way, follows I-575 north to Hawkins

Figure 1.12: Alternatives considered for Noonday Creek Trail extension





- Store Road, east to Noonday Creek corridor, north to the Cherokee County line.

After further in-depth discussions with County staff, these five alternatives were narrowed down to three (3), for more detailed analysis. Each of these alternatives was analyzed in depth, taking into account the varied terrain of each, land use, accessibility, available connections, safety, property ownership, and adjacent roadway characteristics. Public involvement data, a prioritization scheme and cost estimates are included in the full report, published as Chapter 7.

1.4.8 CHAPTER 8: SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN

Chapter 8 is a Safe Routes to School Plan for the County that will allow the Cobb County Department of Transportation and Cobb County Schools to coordinate their efforts to make walking and biking realistic options for school children in the county. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a federally funded program administered by Georgia DOT and the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center. The program aims to make walking and biking to school safer and more attractive to children through an approach that utilizes what are referred to as the “Five E’s”: Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Evaluation, and Engineering. The plan described in Chapter 8 outlines both an interim plan and an ongoing program to establish and continue an effective Safe Routes to School plan in Cobb County, so that

more students can make the choice to walk or ride their bikes to school.

In addition to outlining the organizational steps for both interim and continuing plans, the SRTS plan provides case studies of two schools—Mountain View Elementary and Burrell Elementary Schools, which had undertaken Safe Routes Initiatives prior to the development of this plan. The Plan also provides examples of other local schools with challenges typical to schools in suburban environments. The plan discusses some “quick-fix” solutions to several common problems, gives guidance on developing local leadership and identifying “champions” to support and follow through on planned initiatives. Recommendations and advice on a variety of topics included: promotional events; considerations for schools for children with disabilities; considerations for schools in low income areas; and evaluating, sustaining, and funding SRTS programs.

Finally, the SRTS plan includes pilot school studies for five Cobb County Schools (Floyd Middle School and Garrison, Cheatham Hill, Addison, and Sope Creek Elementary Schools). The pilot studies include specific recommendations for infrastructure improvements in the areas around the schools, and more general recommendations for non-infrastructure needs.



1.4.9 CHAPTER 9: FAMILY FRIENDLY ROUTE STUDIES

Chapter 9 consists of two pilot studies for the identification of “Family Friendly Routes,” which are local scale connections between residences and important local destinations that will be comfortable for a broad variety of bicyclists and pedestrians, including parents walking or riding with their children. The consultants worked to identify routes that made use of local streets, pathway connections across County owned property, undeveloped rights-of-way, and short runs alongside major thoroughfares to connect neighborhoods with schools, parks, commercial centers and other local destinations.

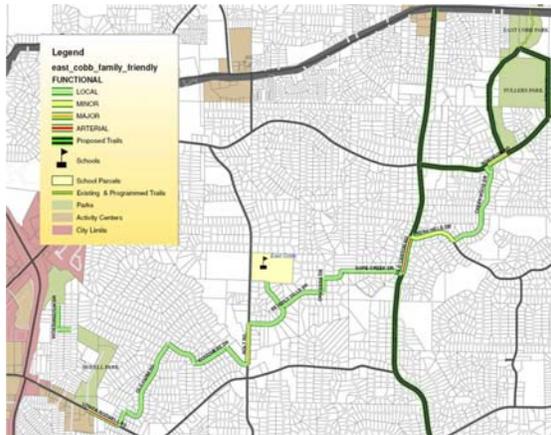


Figure 1.13: East Marietta Family Friendly Route study area

The first route studied is just east of Downtown Marietta, passing through an area roughly bounded by East Marietta Parkway, Roswell Road, Old Canton Road, and Lower Roswell Road (mapped in Figure 1.13). The route links Rowell Road commercial

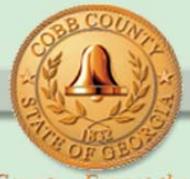


Figure 1.14: A Cobb County Family enjoying a quiet local street, as captured on Google Earth Street View

areas, the East Marietta Library, Fullers Park, East Cobb Middle School, Sewell Park and surrounding neighborhoods and recreational facilities. The second route study is in the Mableton area, roughly Bounded by Mableton Parkway, Dodgen Road, South Gordon Road, Dillon Road and James Road. The routes identified link the South Cobb Community Center, Lions Park, Lindley Middle School, Harmony Leland Elementary School, Lucius Clay Elementary, and Wallace Park.

The routes identified in the study could be realized with relatively inexpensive marking and signing of local streets, construction of pathway connections on public land, and a few negotiated easements with local property owners. Connections alongside major thoroughfares were kept to a minimum, as they will require more expensive improvements and are generally perceived as less desirable areas for family walks and bicycle outings. Areas for improved crossing treatments at Major Thoroughfares were also discussed in some detail.





1.4.10 APPENDICES

Separately bound appendices provide more detailed explanation of the technical evaluations used in the course of this study, detailed printouts of the data inputs and results used in those analyses, as well as more information regarding the public involvement processes employed in the course of this plan.