

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

Previously submitted but not selected: No

Continuation Project: No

Executive Summary: This three-phase complete streets redevelopment project will make Eastside Athens safer and better connected by creating separated multi-use paths from Barnett Shoals HS to Gaines School Rd and eventually south to College Station Rd and north to Lexington Rd. The project, which will improve intersections, roads and stormwater infrastructure, will better connect neighborhoods, 3 schools, businesses and the future Eastside Town Center, adding to an Eastside sense of place. Project Cost listed below ONLY covers Phase 1A and 1B. Future phases would be funded by other sources or future programs.

Project Total Cost: \$ 27,423,000

Total Operating Cost: \$ 156,000

Does this Project require the acquisition of any land? Yes

What means of land acquisition will be required? Rights of Way

Project/Program Description: Phase I of the project will provide complete street improvements along Barnett Shoals Rd, Gaines School Rd and Cedar Shoals Dr. Improvements include multi-use paths along both sides of the roads—separated from the road by 2-foot buffers and 4-foot landscape strips—intersection upgrades, landscaping, lighting and signal coordination.

Phase IA on Cedar Shoals Drive can quickly and easily be implemented within the existing right of way and would be the first project constructed. The project includes replacing the existing sidewalks, on both sides of the street, with separated multi-use paths on both sides of the road from Gaines School Rd to Cedar Shoals High School. It provides curb and gutter, longitudinal drainage systems, pedestrian lighting and landscaping.

Phase IB includes narrowing the lanes to 11 feet along Gaines School Rd from Barnett Shoals to Hilsman Middle School, adding multi-use paths on both sides of the road, intersection improvements at Barnett Shoals Rd/Gaines School Rd and Gaines School Rd/Cedar Shoals Dr, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, and coordination of the three signals within this segment. Phase IA and IB would be constructed as soon as possible to jump start and guide the redevelopment of this community.

Phase II will be a future (and next) phase and includes narrowing the lanes along Barnett Shoals Rd from College Station Rd to Gaines School Rd to 11 feet, adding separated multi-use paths on both sides of the road, pedestrian lighting, landscaping, intersection improvements at College Station Rd/Barnett Shoals Rd, and coordination of the four signals within this segment and the three signals within Phase I.

Phase III will be constructed last and in future years from Hilsman Middle School to US78/Lexington Rd. Phase III will include a road diet along Gaines School Rd from 4 lanes (2 in each direction) to 3 lanes (1 lane in each direction and a center turn lane). Separated multi-use paths, lighting and landscaping will be constructed on both sides of the road. Intersection improvements will be included at Gaines School Rd/Lexington Rd. See benefits, layouts and typicals in document appended to budget.

[Cedar Shoals Drive - Google Map](#)

[Gaines School Road – Google Map](#)

Staff Comments:

1. *To promote clean energy/sustainability goals, consider adding: All lighting to be dark sky compliant and, when in association with trails/woods/residences, wildlife “friendly” (2700 K or less); If installed, bike racks to include solar/storage charging options; if installed, bench and rest areas to include solar/storage charging rest areas; Solar/storage/canopy may be included to power needed lights and provide shade/heat mitigation in open concrete areas (ex: rest areas/open areas along path). Where plantings are needed, utilize native species, which are better adapted to the Piedmont region.*
2. *Phase 1A will have minimal impacted Utilities. Those will predominately be water and stormwater. Some potential for underground communications but appears minimal.*
3. *Phase 1B will have significant impact utilities above and below ground. Project as described will require a significant about of relocation and/or Upgrading as a result of this work.*
4. *Phase 1A will have minimal Right of Way and or easement acquisitions required. If any, they will most likely be at intersection with Gaines School Road.*
5. *Phase 1B will have significant right of way and or easement acquisitions required.*
6. *Emergency responders are not in favor of reducing lane widths or eliminating the number of travel lanes in areas where it could impact service delivery.*
7. *There are approximately 33 parcels, approximately 4-5 acres, along both sides of this section of Gaines School Road and at the intersection with Cedar Shoals Road; which would likely be impacted in some fashion.*

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGOV Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? In the Athens in Motion bike/pedestrian master plan list of near and long term projects, the corridor along Gaines School Rd from Lexington Rd to the intersection with Barnett Shoals Dr is identified as Tier 1 project #63. This project impacts 1.7 miles of sidewalk (.85 mi per side) with proposed funding of \$1M - \$1.25M. The proposed bicycle infrastructure would connect the shared use path on Lexington Rd to the bike lane and sidewalks along N Barnett Shoals Rd and to the Carriage Ln trail head of the North Oconee River Greenway and the site of the planned East Athens Library.

How is this Project included in the Madison Athens-Clarke County Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) long-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)? The 2050 MTP Draft identifies an access management project for Gaines School Road - MTP# P-29: Gaines School Road Safety and Access Management (Clarke). The MPT#P-29 project objective is to facilitate access management between signalized intersections and includes safety improvements at key intersections. Facilitation for bicycles and pedestrian use is included. This project is PE MTP Funded (2028 - 2050); ROW, UTL, and CST Unfunded / Long-Range

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: The separated multi-use paths and other improvements serve the goals of Eastside leaders meeting monthly for a year to create a safer, more welcoming and respectful Eastside. The paths are essential to transform unsafe auto-centric corridors into safe, welcoming multi-modal roads, allowing residents and students to connect with confidence to neighborhoods, schools, businesses and the amenities in the proposed town center. Future redevelopment will attract new residents and businesses.

Goal Area 1; Section E: Support & promote healthy lifestyle: moving, eating, forming healthy relationships, physical and psychological care: The proposed improvements when complete (Phases I thru III) will create a healthy community that is able to walk, bike, drive or bus from residences, schools and businesses to restaurants, the library, the Greenway, the Vet School and the town center. The Clarke County School District has said it would like to reduce the dependence of 85 percent of its students on automobile and bus transport. Citizens will be encouraged to visit welcoming spaces on calmer roads and separated multi-use paths.

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: A major goal of this project is to create greater opportunities for residents—particularly students at the three schools—to walk and bike safely on separated, multi-use paths. There are now no bike lanes on the Gaines School-Barnett Shoals Rd corridor. Sidewalks, inches from speeding cars, are uneven and often crowded after school, tripping joggers and barring the disabled. The separated paths will fill sidewalk gaps and connect to a Kroger interior road and other existing paths and lanes.

Goal Area 5; Section B: Pursue inter-city travel options to connect Athens with other cities: The proposed project will connect Eastside cyclists to Clarke County's extensive network of paths, extending to Sandy Creek Nature Center and—soon—to the City of Winterville. Eventually, trails will extend unbroken to Union Point. New Eastside paths add to the allure of Athens as a bicycle town, host to the annual Athens Twilight Criterium and home of the Oconee Rivers Greenway Trails System.

Goal Area 5; Section C: Expand multi-modal Transit access to reduce auto dependency and provide greater mobility for Athens residents: The proposed projects will enhance multi-modal transit by connecting residents and students safely and seamlessly to Athens-Clarke County Transit whose buses not only carry passengers but also transport bicycles. The safety of separated multi-use paths will raise confidence levels sufficiently that walkers and bikers will want to use aesthetically pleasing, safe alternative transportation to get to area schools, the UGA Vet School or shops and restaurants in the proposed town center.

Goal Area 5; Section D: Create more usable and aesthetically pleasing corridor connections between residential and commercial areas: Residents will have a safer, more enjoyable, healthier and aesthetically pleasing Eastside Athens with the proposed multi-use paths, street and path lighting and landscaping. The envisioned Eastside Town Center, with its smaller residences and denser configurations,

requires creating safe and easy access by foot and bike to nearby jobs, classrooms, shopping, restaurants and amenities.

Goal Area 5; Section E: Enhance safety for all modes of transportation: Multi-use paths, intersection and road upgrades will improve safety for all modes of transportation, benefiting residents and students at the 3 area schools. Students will no longer have to cross three streets to cross Gaines School Rd. Multi-use paths, lighting, landscaping, 11-foot traffic lanes and connected traffic signals will increase safety for all. ACC traffic engineers will coordinate signal timing, thereby improving traffic flow, reducing congestion and easing driver frustration.

Goal Area 6; Section A: Develop well-planned new infrastructure according to future land use values and framework: The ACC Planning Department proposes to the Future Land Use Steering Committee that an auto-oriented general business district– such as the Barnett Shoals corridor– become over the next 20 years a town center where "multi-modal transit should be prioritized" and open space, street trees, and pedestrian access are provided. This project addresses the planning department's identified needs to "redevelop corridors and nodes that are ripe for development" and "reduce travel distances".

Goal Area 6; Section B: Ensure equitable access to infrastructure to enhance safety and identity: The proposed multi-use paths will be accessible to everyone regardless of race, religion, sex, social status or income. Low-income residents who live along Cedar Shoals Drive and sections of Gaines School Rd can connect to the multi-use paths and bus system to get to work or school or to shop. The town center should house some lower income residents in projected smaller, denser housing. Landscaping and lighting will provide equal safety and aesthetic improvements for all.

Goal Area 6; Section C: Provide adequate funding for maintenance of existing and newly constructed infrastructure: Our understanding is that maintenance upgrades to the roadway for Cedar Shoals Dr and Gaines School Rd and associated intersection improvements are already being discussed by ACC engineers. The proposed infrastructure upgrades add no atypical maintenance tasks or costs. Maintenance and annual costs could be reduced if landscaping plants, and solar lighting were installed. Added curb and stormwater improvements protect road and path infrastructure investments.

Goal Area 6; Section D: Follow through on commitment to 100% Clean and Renewable Energy resolution: In 2019, Athens-Clarke County committed to obtaining 100% of its energy needs from clean and renewable sources by 2035. In 2022 transportation was responsible for 29% of energy consumed in Athens-Clarke County. The addition of multi-use paths and convenient access to bus stops will reduce vehicle miles and increase bus ridership. Coordinating signals in the corridor will reduce delays and automobile emissions. Solar lighting will also reduce energy needs.

Goal Area 6; Section E: Address ecosystem health, infrastructure sustainability, and resilience: The stormwater drainage systems throughout the proposed corridor will be upgraded, facilitating future residential and commercial growth and an Eastside Town Center. Proposed upgrades will implement Municipal Separated Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements, improving the water quality of the stormwater entering the local streams and aquatic ecosystems while potentially reducing runoff. Rain gardens with retention basins might further reduce flows into streams (see item F in Budget Appendix).

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:	\$ 2,000,000
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno.; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 2,560,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 1,227,000
4. Construction:	\$ 15,553,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 1,556,000
6. Testing:	\$ 467,000
7. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 935,000
8. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 2,431,000
9. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 156,000
10. Other 1:	\$
11. Other 2:	\$
Project Subtotal:	\$ 26,885,000
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 538,000
TSPLOST 2026 Project Total:	\$ 27,423,000

Staff Comments:

1. *Pedestrian lighting and electrical service has been included in the cost at approximately \$1 million/mile or \$190/linear foot for the fixtures and infrastructure.*
2. *The total estimate for Phase 1A is \$7,069,000.*
3. *The total estimate for Phase 1A is \$20,354,000.*
4. *Estimates do not include any type of regional stormwater water quality or quantity reductions.*

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
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT	
PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	
1. Personnel Costs: from Appendix A	
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	10,000
• Water:	
• Sewer:	
• Phone:	
• Solid Waste Collection:	
• Other:	
3. Operating Supplies:	
4. Equipment Maintenance:	
5. Facility Maintenance:	
6. Other: Public Art Maintenance	4,000
7. Other: Annual Maintenance	45,000
8. Other: Life Cycle Replacement	97,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	\$ 156,000