

Submitted By: Mark Ralston
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Project Type: Greenway, Parks, Rails-to-Trails related projects - Leisure Services Department

General Program Goal: Social Well-Being

Previously Submitted and Rejected: No

Continuation Project: Yes - TSPLOST 2018, Project 06

Project Total Cost: **\$ 10,370,000**

Total Annual Operating Cost: **\$35,000**

Abbreviated - Project Description: This project provides funding for the completion of design and construction of Firefly Trail Sub-Project #3 between Hancock Road and the Winterville city limits. The project also includes design and construction of trailheads at two locations along the Firefly Trail between the 10 Loop and Winterville.

Project Location/Address: Firefly Trail Sub-Project #3 begins at the Spring Valley Road/Hancock Road intersection and terminates at the Winterville city limits a short distance northwest of the Five Points intersection. Trailhead improvements are proposed at the intersection of Ranick Road and Spring Valley Road and at the intersection of Winterville Road and Spring Valley Road.

Is the Site currently owned by the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County? Unsure

Is the Site within State Highway Rights-of-Way? No

Site Specific Information: The project site is the planned segment of the Firefly Trail along the former Georgia Railroad rail bed between Hancock Road and the Winterville city limits, known as Firefly Trail Sub-Project #3. The proposed Ranick Road trailhead is located along this segment of the trail. In addition, the proposed Winterville Road trailhead is located at an ACC-owned property at the intersection of Winterville Road and Spring Valley Road and is part of the nearly completed trail segment known as Firefly Trail Sub-Project #2. This trailhead is also envisioned as part of the future "Quarry Park" on property recently acquired by Athens-Clarke County for future use as a water supply reservoir.

Does this Project require the acquisition of any land rights, whether existing sites, new site, easements, or Rights-of-Way? Unsure

Project/Program Description: The project consists of completion of design and construction of Firefly Trail Sub-Project #3 between Hancock Road and the Winterville city limits. This is work that was originally included as Project 6 in ACC's TSPLOST 2018 program. However, Project 6 was funded at \$10 million less than what was requested. Because of the reduction in funding, cost escalations, and other factors there is a funding shortfall, such that current projections indicate that approximately two miles of trail (roughly from Ranick Road to the Winterville city limits) cannot be completed with TSPLOST 2018 funds. This proposal is for supplemental TSPLOST funds sufficient to fully complete

Sub-Project #3, as was the desire of voters who approved TSPILOT 2018 by public referendum on November 7, 2017.

The project also includes design and construction of trailheads at two locations along the Firefly Trail between the 10 Loop and Winterville. The Ranick Road trailhead will be located along the trail just southeast of the intersection of Spring Valley Road and Ranick Road. The Winterville Road trailhead will be located along the trail just south of the intersection of Winterville Road and Spring Valley Road. Both of these facilities will include approximate 25 parking spaces, public restrooms and stormwater retention areas. Other features are being considered such as skateboard street style skills areas, to appeal to area skateboard enthusiasts. (Please see attached preliminary concept plans for the Ranick Road and Winterville Road trailhead facilities.)

Project Mission Statement/Selection Criteria: The mission of Athens-Clarke County's eight-mile segment of the 39-mile Firefly Trail is to create connections between home, work, school, and play while building opportunities for healthy transportation and recreation and facilitating growth in tourism and economic development. This mission will only be accomplished after full construction of the Firefly Trail and installation of essential trail amenities, such as trailhead facilities.

The following proposal section addresses applicable Project Selection Criteria, which include the following:

- > Promotes the goal of improving equitability of capital improvements throughout the community.
- > Promotes the upgrade and continued use of alternative transportation facilities.
- > Promotes increased access to existing public facilities.
- > Maintains or improves air quality.
- > Reduces vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion.
- > Reduces time spent traveling in vehicles.
- > Promotes health and safety.
- > Continues sidewalk and multi-use trail construction.

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGov Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? The entire Firefly Trail project in Athens-Clarke County is included in the ACC Transportation Corridor Map (adopted in April 2013), extending from downtown Athens to the Oglethorpe County line. It is also included in the State Transportation Improvement Plan, the ACC Bicycle Master Plan (adopted December 2001), the ACC Greenway Network Plan (adopted March 2003 and updated June 2005 and July 2009), and in the State Bicycle/Pedestrian Network developed by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission in 2005.

How is this Project included in the Madison Athens-Clarke County Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) long-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)? The entire 39-mile Firefly Trail project is included in the MACORTS 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan, dated October 8, 2014.

Attachments:

[Attachment 1 - Ranick Road Trailhead Concept](#)

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

How will the Project meet one or more of the Selection Criteria?

Promotes the Goal of improving Equitability of capital improvements throughout the Community:

The Firefly Trail offers a range of significant benefits to individuals as well as the broader community. This includes residents of several neighborhoods that have previously felt slighted when it comes to capital improvements programming. Residents of the East Athens neighborhood, Martin Circle/Spring Valley Estates community, and Hallmark Mobile Home Park off Spring Valley Road will have direct access to the trail and its benefits for health, recreation and alternative transportation possibilities. Firefly Trail, Inc. has established two support groups, known as Local Action Committees (LACs), in East Athens and Winterville. Facilitated by FTI's Trail Development Coordinator and several members of FTI's Board of Directors, the LACs address area issues related to trail development and use and work with local people to ensure that neighborhood residents feel a sense of ownership for the Firefly Trail and take full advantage of all it offers.

Protects the community's existing Transportation Infrastructure Investments: Full construction of the Firefly Trail in Athens-Clarke County will protect transportation infrastructure investments made over the past 15 years, as this lengthy project reaches successful and highly-anticipated completion.

Promotes the Upgrade and Continued Use of Alternative Transportation Facilities: Completion of Firefly Trail Sub-Project #3 will enable residents along and near the full 8-mile corridor to finally utilize the trail as an alternative transportation facility. This means that the many Winterville residents eager to commute by bicycle to jobs in Athens will be able to do so. The same is true for residents of areas closer in, especially the large East Athens neighborhood.

Promotes increased access to existing public facilities: This project will enable completion of the planned Firefly Trail from downtown Athens all eight miles to the Oglethorpe County line east of Winterville. At long last residents from throughout Athens-Clarke County and surrounding areas will be able to utilize the trail to travel to various points along the 8-mile corridor and also access and utilize ACC's Greenway Network and system of bike lanes to reach unlimited public destinations. Destinations on or near the completed trail will include Pittard Park, Winterville Elementary School, Winterville Community Center, Athens-Clarke County Airport, ACC Streets and Drainage Facility, Hanson Aggregates/future "Quarry Park," Dudley Park, UGA Chicopee Building, downtown Athens, the Classic Center, and North Campus. An East Athens Connector (proposed separately) also would connect Firefly Trail to the Iron Triangle, Nellie B homes, and East Athens Community Center.

Maintains or Improves Air Quality: Alternative transportation facilities such as the Firefly Trail achieve a reduction in automobile use and result in correspondingly lower auto emissions, thus improving air quality. This will in turn aid ACC's efforts to address imminent and costly air quality non-attainment issues.

Reduces vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion: Fewer than one percent of American workers include biking in their commutes to work. But, a recent study published by nationwide bicycle advocacy organization, People For Bikes, indicates that 47 percent of Americans would be more likely to ride bicycles if pathways were available and physically separated from motor vehicles. Furthermore, many towns and cities that are investing in bike infrastructure are seeing double-digit increases in bike usage. It seems very likely that this trend will be seen here in Athens-Clarke County. For example, Firefly Trail, Inc. is aware that a significant number of Winterville residents plan to commute to work in downtown Athens and at UGA once the Firefly Trail has been fully completed. We expect others residing near the trail will do likewise, and that our community will benefit from fewer vehicle miles traveled and a reduction in traffic congestion at certain times of day.

Reduces time spent traveling in vehicles: More people utilizing bike and foot travel will naturally correspond to less vehicular travel time. Completion of the full 8-mile Firefly Trail project through this TSPLOST project will facilitate commuting all along, and via connections to, the Firefly Trail corridor.

Continues TSPLOST 2018 Corridor Improvements or transportation related safety improvements: This project will enable full completion of the TSPLOST 2018 project that was intended to finish construction of the Firefly Trail and enjoyed overwhelming support from the public.

Promotes Health and Safety: Biking and walking have been proven to result in a range of health benefits, including reduced risk of heart disease and stroke as well as lowered incidence of obesity in children as well as adults. Essential to achieving an increase in these activities is improved access to safe biking and walking facilities and alternative transportation connections. This project, enabling the full completion of the planned 8-mile ACC segment of the Firefly Trail, will help encourage non-motorized transportation and thus promote safety as well as improved health through exercise.

Continues Sidewalk & Multi-Use Trail construction: This project completes construction of a multi-use trail begun and partially completed under TSPLOST 2018.

Implements components of an updated Greenway Network Plan: The Firefly Trail in Athens-Clarke County is part of the Greenway Network Plan.

Triple Bottom Line Impacts

Positive Benefits for the Economic Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: A 2016 economic impact study, prepared at Georgia Tech for the Georgia Department of Transportation, estimates that the completed Firefly Trail will annually attract 1.14 million users and generate an economic impact of \$14.7 million across our region. In addition, other expected economic benefits include the establishment of new businesses in support of trail users, as has frequently been the case with other rail-trail projects across the country.

Detrimental Impacts to the Economic Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: No detrimental impacts to the economic prosperity of Athens-Clarke County are expected to result from this project.

Positive Benefits for the Social Well-Being of our Residents and visitors: The successful completion of the full 8-mile Firefly Trail project will bring a range of social and mental-health benefits to many residents of Athens-Clarke County. The trail will be a safe alternative transportation and recreation facility usable by young and old alike and will facilitate non-motorized access to many points in the eastern half of the county, and eventually to destinations further along the planned 39-mile trail all the way to Union Point. Visitors to ACC who utilize the Firefly Trail will experience the benefits of exploring new areas and meeting new people while exercising. Several neighborhoods along the planned trail in ACC are presently challenged by a lack of recreational and alternative transportation opportunities, among other disadvantages. Construction of the Firefly Trail and connecting paths through these communities, plus related amenities, will signal progress and promote improved health, livability and well-being for area residents.

Detrimental Impacts for the Social Well-Being of our Residents and visitors: No detrimental impacts for the social well-being of our residents and visitors are expected to result from this project.

Positive Impacts on the Environment: This project will positively impact the environment as completion of the 8-mile Firefly Trail will enable the facility to achieve its full promise as a recreational and alternative transportation resource. More people out walking, cycling and moving by other non-motorized means will result in fewer car trips up and down the trail corridor.

Detrimental Impacts on the Environment: Project construction may create some land disturbances, but no significant or long-term detrimental impacts on the environment are expected to result from this project.

Positive/Negative Impacts on ACCGov Departments, Agencies, or other Organizations, if not covered in one of the above questions: This project will positively impact ACC's Leisure Services and Transportation and Public Works departments and the Greenway Commission by adding diversity to our growing network of trails and bicycle/pedestrian improvements. Maintaining the trail and related facilities will require time and attention from ACC Leisure Services staff.

Project Costs

Detailed project capital budget costs (to be funded from TSPLOST 2023 only):

Project Costs (round to thousand)	Amount
1. Land Acquisition / ROW / Easement:	\$ -
2. Design Fees: (Min.12% of New Const.; 14% of reno,; 16% for LEED proj.)	\$ 828,000
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ 207,000
4. Construction:	\$ 6,894,000
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ 690,000
6. Acquisition of Capital Equipment	\$ -
7. Testing:	\$ 207,000
8. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 353,000
9. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 918,000
10. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ 69,000
11. Other 1:	\$
12. Other 2:	\$
Project Subtotal:	\$ 10,166,000
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 204,000
TSPLOST 2023 Project Total:	\$ 10,370,000

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.

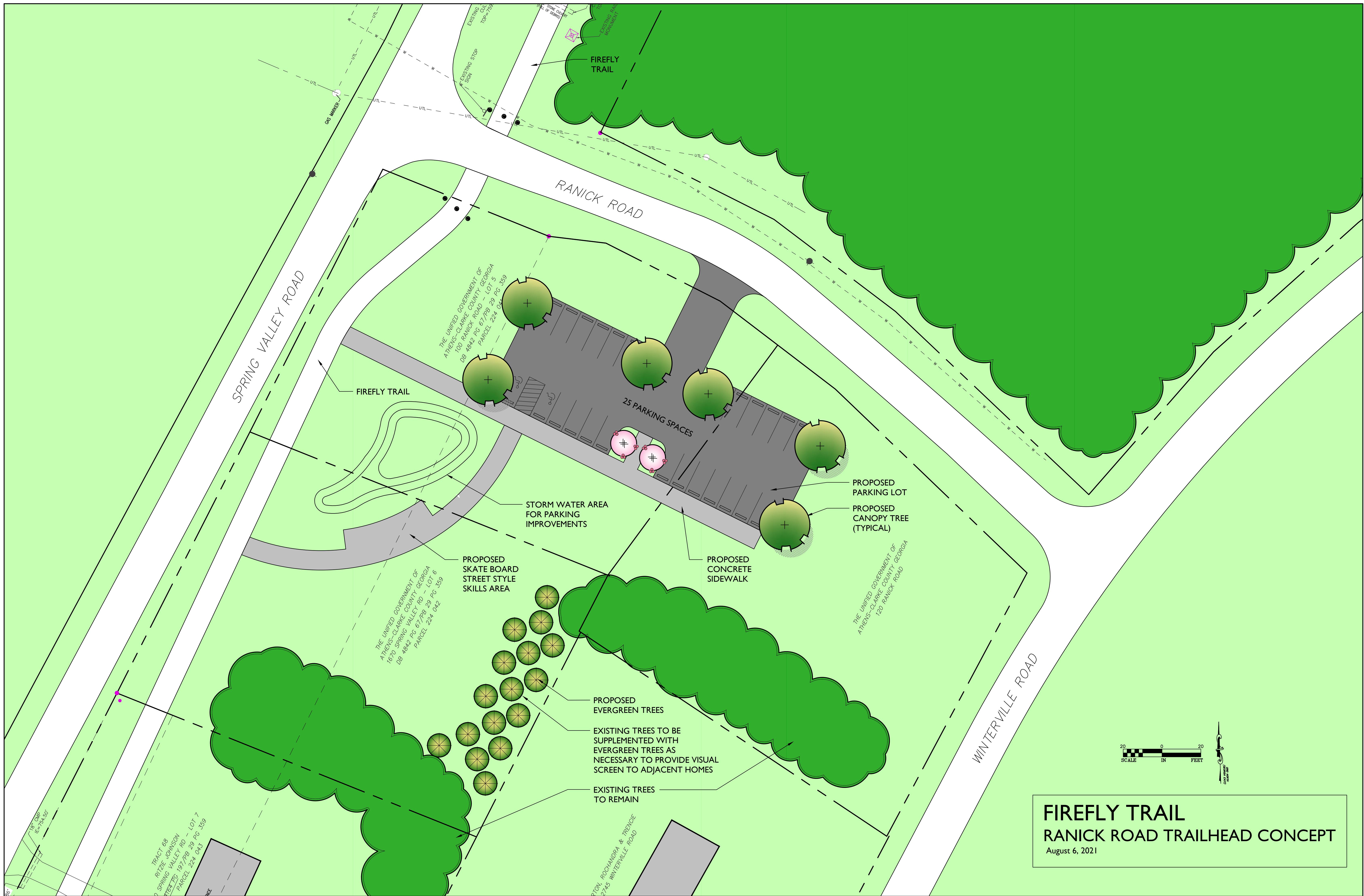
Operating Costs (round to thousand)	Estimated Impact for Annual Operating Expenditures
TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUES FROM PROJECT	
PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	
1. Personnel Costs:	15,000
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	5,000
• Water:	2,000
• Sewer:	2,000
• Phone:	1,000
• Solid Waste Collection:	2,000
• Other:	
3. Operating Supplies:	2,000
4. Equipment Maintenance:	2,000
5. Facility Maintenance:	3,000
6. Other: Public art maintenance (minimum)	1,000
7. Other:	
8. Other:	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	35,000
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	35,000

Project Financing

Is the proposed Project to receive funding from source(s) other than TSPLOST 2023? No

Other Attachments:

[Attachment 2 - Winterville Road Trailhead Concept](#)



FIREFLY TRAIL

WINTERVILLE ROAD TRAILHEAD CONCEPT

August 6, 2021

