

Submitted By: Central Services
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Project Type: Streets/Roads/Bridges related projects - Transportation & Public Works Department
General Program Goal: Social Well-Being

Previously Submitted and Rejected: No
Continuation Project: No

Project Total Cost: \$ 3,811,000 **Total Annual Operating Savings:** \$ (147,000)

Abbreviated - Project Description: This project provides funding for increased mowing frequency and street tree maintenance enhancing safety and use of Athens-Clarke County right-of-way. The provision of such infrastructure and services may include, but not be limited to, providing the equipment and related operations necessary to increase rural mowing frequency and street tree maintenance.

Project Location/Address: Rights-of-way across Athens-Clarke County.

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

Is the Site within State Highway Rights-of-Way? Yes

Site Specific Information: Staff aims to continue regular maintenance of safe and operable rights-of-way for citizens, visitors, and businesses using state and local roadways within Athens-Clarke County, while striving to improve services equitably through new installation and efficient activity cycles. The ability to provide reduced sight obstacles from vegetation overgrowth and to remove or prevent hazardous trees/limbs is vital to pedestrian and vehicular safety.

Does this Project require the acquisition of any land rights, whether existing sites, new site, easements, or Rights-of-Way? No

Project/Program Description: This project will enhance the safety and utilization of rights-of-way in Athens-Clarke County by providing the infrastructure and services necessary provide access to safe and operable rights-of-way for citizens, visitors, and businesses using state and local roadways within Athens-Clarke County. The provision of such infrastructure and services may include, but not be limited to, providing the equipment and related operations necessary to increase rural mowing frequency and street tree maintenance. These projects are identified for future funding in the Athens-Clarke County FY22 Budget. To achieve these goals, the project will provide the vehicles and equipment required to support a street tree maintenance crew while also doubling the capacity of the rural mowing operations. This will enable Athens-Clarke County to provide mowing services across approximately 750-miles of rural roadways on a four to five week cycle, rather than the current 11 to 12 week cycle. The shortened rural mowing cycle is consistent with existing service cycle in the urban service district, which will improve equity amongst all areas of the county in term of mowing.

The equipment to support a street tree maintenance crew will reduce hazards along our roads while allowing for a proactive approach to tree health and maintenance. This will limit the potential loss of life and property to the community. Combined these services will increase the aesthetic appearance and safety of rural roads and decrease the developing need for chemical control of invasive species such as Kudzu and Johnsongrass.

Project Mission Statement/Selection Criteria: The mission of this project is to provide safe, healthy, and aesthetically pleasing rights-of-way to the citizens and welcome visitors and potential businesses to Athens-Clarke County. Additional equipment funding will greatly improve equity of services throughout the county from increased efficiency. As identified by the Mayor & Commission, commitment to Transportation Mobility & Connectivity will promote the goal of improving equitable service throughout the community, while protecting the existing transportation infrastructure investments.

How is this Project recommended/included in any approved ACCGov Land Use Plan, Master Plan, Corridor Study, or Service Delivery Plan? Rights-of-Way are maintained under the formal 2018 Service Delivery Strategy for Athens-Clarke County, City of Winterville, Town of Bogart. The Transportation and Public Works Department provides traditional roadway design and construction functions, while the Central Services Department manages landscapes to applicable roadsides. In addition, the 2018 Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan identifies the following related needs, opportunities, and community work program initiatives: Neighborhoods: Needs & Opportunities (g) - Basic infrastructure (roads, utilities, sidewalks, etc.) should be the standard for all neighborhoods, and a lack thereof threatens prosperity. Environment: Needs & Opportunities (c) - Increase efforts related to greenspace management, including acquisition, which can also promote beautification. Environment: Needs & Opportunities (n) - Make greenspaces more accessible by incorporating roadway design, bringing visibility and awareness. Environment: Community Work Program - Enhanced Landscape Services for ACCUG Buildings. Environment: Community Work Program - Greenway Network Landscape Maintenance Expansion

How is this Project included in the Madison Athens-Clarke County Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) long-range Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)? N/A

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:

Adding the additional rural mowing crew will unify mowing cycles across Athens-Clarke County to a four to five week cycle, rather than the 11 to 12 week cycle currently provided in rural areas. The addition of a street tree maintenance crew will allow mowing to continue without interruption, while providing the services required to extend street tree lifespan, decrease operating costs, and limit loss of property or life. Regular maintenance crews will no longer have to perform the tasks of tree work that are currently halting routes due to responses for fallen or high-risk tree situations that the street tree crew will be utilized for. The addition of both services will serve to balance landscape management services and increase tree mitigation responsiveness evenly across the county.

Protects the community's existing Transportation Infrastructure Investments: Through proper tree management techniques, staff will be proactive to situations of clearance pruning, corrective pruning, and earlier detection of necessary hazard mitigation. Increased mowing cycles will reduce clippings and debris in the roadways, while aligning vegetation maintenance to the AASHTO maintenance standards. All of this will lead to safe, supported, and unobscured roadways that are aesthetically pleasing.

Promotes the Upgrade and Continued Use of Alternative Transportation Facilities: The street tree crew will have the skills and equipment necessary to support tree maintenance along the Greenway and Firefly trail systems. The crew will be able to provide services to promote a safe, healthy, and flourishing natural environment. The benefits of a healthy forest provide needed shade to users, while healthy root systems stabilize the ground along trails, thus preventing erosion. A healthy tree offers a reduced risk of failure that could impact trail use or user safety. In addition to providing environmental benefits, documented research shows trees promote both physical and physiological health. Finally, areas meant for enjoyment of natural resources become more pleasing aesthetically when maintained with forests and landscaping of appropriate selection, size, and pruning.

Promotes increased access to existing public facilities: Increased service frequencies of rural areas will enhance accessibility to adjacent sidewalks, commercial centers, and transit infrastructure.

Promotes increased usage of the Transit System, including improving Pedestrian access to Transit Facilities: Increased mowing cycles will allow users of the transit system to gain access to bus stops at locations that lack sidewalks. In some areas, users are discouraged from accessing bus stops due to tall vegetation. This proposal is meant to ensure all transit users, regardless of geographic location within the county, are afforded same equitable access to facilities that should be expected in comparison with more urban areas with sidewalk connectivity.

Maintains or Improves Air Quality: The street tree crew will provide the services necessary to extend tree lifespans while decreasing tree-related hazards. Trees have been demonstrated to help clean air, store CO₂, and produce oxygen.

Reduces vehicle miles traveled and traffic congestion: Preventative maintenance through structural tree pruning will have the ability to keep vegetation and trees from impeding or obscuring motorist's vision. Preventative tree mitigation will also reduce the number of tree failures causing roadway closures and rerouting of traffic. The enhanced rural mowing cycle will also decrease visual obstructions and animal-vehicle collisions, which will decrease collision-related traffic.

Continues TSPLOST 2018 Corridor Improvements or transportation related safety improvements: This project will continue the vision of the TSPLOST 2018 goals by decreasing maintenance cycles and increasing the ability to complete additional tree management services. These two tasks will provide safe and aesthetically pleasing roadways that encourage more visitors and businesses to locate throughout the county. Specifically, the Connect Athens Corridor Plans for Atlanta Highway and Lexington Road highlight opportunities for aesthetics, including attention to various greenspace strategies.

Promotes Health and Safety: Increase rural mowing frequency and hazard reduction maintenance of street trees will result in road with better sightlines, longer lived trees, and a decreasing number of vegetation-related accidents.

Implements components of an updated Greenway Network Plan: The street tree crew will have the equipment and skills necessary to support the natural area stewardship goals articulated in the Greenway Network Plan.

Triple Bottom Line Impacts

Positive Benefits for the Economic Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: This equipment will support services to provide safe and aesthetically pleasing roads throughout Athens-Clarke County. Right-of-way aesthetics have been demonstrated to increase commercial development as businesses choose to locate in communities that invest in quality-of-life initiatives. Since this equipment is identified for future funding in the Athens-Clarke County budget, any TSPLOST investment in this equipment will decrease the costs passed on to residents through property taxes and fees.

Detrimental Impacts to the Economic Prosperity of Athens-Clarke County: None. However, unsafe and unwelcoming roadways can have a detrimental impact on consumers and developers. Visitors take notice of unsightly environments, while community investors may question how the government supports economic development.

Positive Benefits for the Social Well-Being of our Residents and visitors: This project will provide all roads in Athens-Clarke County with a mowing cycle of four to five weeks. This will eliminate the current disparity between the urban and rural service districts where currently, urban mowing happens 2x more often than rural mowing. Balancing services on equal timelines will keep a consistent appearance across the county, creating a cohesive appearance. This proposal will help fulfill the 2018 Service Delivery Strategy for Athens-Clarke County, City of Winterville, and Town of Bogart, in those rural areas that often feel overlooked or an afterthought for maintenance services. By example, the local government can encourage the initiation of local beautification groups, building pride and comradery amongst citizens.

Detrimental Impacts for the Social Well-Being of our Residents and visitors: N/A.

Positive Impacts on the Environment: The street tree crew will be able to provide preventive and corrective tree maintenance that extends the life of our street trees while decreasing hazards associated with them. Additional staffing and operations will allow for best practices that encourage better growth habits affecting the health and vigor of vegetation. Through best practices for stormwater and erosion control, more substantial and viable trees and turf will support the soil and aid in the filtration of substances that might travel through the ground and into our waterways. This creates healthy and structural tree canopies for shade in the summer. It also allows radiant heat in the winter, reducing electrical needs, while purifying air.

Detrimental Impacts on the Environment: This project will temporarily increase the use of transportation fuels such as gasoline and diesel. However, the Central Services Department is aggressively pursuing the use of electric vehicles and equipment which will help to mitigate this outcome.

Positive/Negative Impacts on ACCGov Departments, Agencies, or other Organizations, if not covered in one of the above questions: The proposal will increase the services for rights-of-way and reduce mowing cycle durations. It will maintain and offer preventative care for trees, while reducing the financial risks for human life and property damages.

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.)	\$ -
3. Miscellaneous Fees: (Min. Minimum of 3% of Construction Costs – used for permitting, etc. Utilize minimum of 10% if land acquisition if necessary.)	\$ -
4. Construction:	\$ -
5. Construction Contingency: (10% of the Construction line item)	\$ -
6. Acquisition of Capital Equipment:	\$ 735,000
7. Testing:	\$ -
8. Project Management: (4% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 29,000
9. Project Contingency: (10% of the total budget line items above)	\$ 74,000
10. Public Art: Calculated at 1% of the Construction line item.	\$ -
11. Other 1: Inflation Modifier (5 Years @ 2.5%)	\$ 97,000
12. Other 2: Operational Costs (5 years)	\$ 2,801,000
Project Subtotal:	\$ 3,736,000
14. Program Management (2% of Project Subtotal):	\$ 75,000
TSPLOST 2023 Project Total:	\$ 3,811,000

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: from Appendix A	
2. Annual Utilities:	
• Natural Gas:	
• Electrical:	
• Water:	
• Sewer:	
• Phone:	
• Solid Waste Collection:	
• Other: Annual General Fund Capital Program Savings	(147,000)
3. Operating Supplies:	
4. Equipment Maintenance:	
5. Facility Maintenance:	
6. Other: Fleet/Equipment Replacement Contributions	
7. Other:	
8. Other:	
TOTAL EXPENDITURES SAVINGS	(147,000)
NET OPERATING COSTS OF PROJECT:	\$ (147,000)

Project Financing

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

New Staffing

Position	Title	Hourly Rate	# of Hours /wk	# of Positions	Total Annual Expense
Full Time	Urban Forestry Crew Leader			1	\$ 57,500
Full Time	Urban Forestry Grounds Worker			3	\$ 134,100
Full Time	Rural Mowing Crew Leader			1	\$ 52,200
Full Time	Rural Mowing Grounds Worker			3	\$ 134,100

Urban Forestry Crew Leader – The Urban Forestry Crew Leader will supervise three ground workers to accomplish various tree-related tasks, including removal, corrective, and hazard mitigation activities, as well as other-directed.

Urban Forestry Grounds Worker – Ground workers perform various tasks of mowing, two-cycle equipment operations, and other horticultural-related objectives. The grounds workers assume the duties of crew leaders in their absence.

Rural Mowing Crew Leader – The Rural Crew Leader will supervise and lead three grounds workers to provide routine maintenance to the rural areas of the county. Knowledge of tractor operations and other heavy equipment is required.

Rural Mowing Grounds Worker – Ground workers perform various tasks of mowing, two-cycle equipment operations, and other horticultural-related objectives. The grounds workers assume the duties of crew leaders in their absence.