APPENDIX G:
TRAILS ADDENDUM

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February 2016
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

The purpose of this trails plan is to identify feasible connections between popular destinations and promote regional connectivity between existing and proposed trail segments. This appendix provides an overview of the methodology used to assess the County’s current needs for trails and also discusses how input from the CTP public meetings and the Trails Stakeholder Committee was used to assist in the identification of the trail needs. This trail planning effort is meant to identify long-range needs for non-motorized connections within the County. This plan will serve as the basis for a more detailed study of trails that will be undertaken by the Cherokee County Recreation and Parks Agency (CRPA) as part of its upcoming Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, Green Space and Trails Master Plan. The CRPA effort will solicit further public input regarding trails, develop a prioritized list of projects, and estimate the capital cost associated with each of the highest priority trail segments.

1.2 Purpose

The development of a future trails network is intended to provide exclusive transportation facilities for non-motorized users, thereby enhancing safety and promoting physical activity. Unlike bicycle-pedestrian projects, which tend to focus on providing short to medium range connections between different neighborhoods or municipalities, trail projects are meant to provide connectivity between popular recreational and leisure destinations located throughout the County. While bicycle-pedestrian projects are oriented towards serving non-recreational trips (i.e., work commute, running errands, etc.), trails projects are focused primarily on connecting recreational and leisure destinations to each other and can also be used to serve non-recreational trips by tying together different bicycle-pedestrian routes.

Although bicycle-pedestrian projects afford travelers an opportunity to engage in physical activity, these projects, typically place non-motorized users within the same facility as vehicular traffic or directly adjacent to it. By not separating the modes, a variety of potential safety conflicts between motorists and non-motorists are introduced. Through the development of exclusive trails facilities that are neither shared with nor adjacent to vehicular traffic, safety for non-drivers will increase which, in turn, will only serve to further promote physical activity within the County.

2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Cherokee County is currently home to over 75 miles of trails. Expansive networks of recreational trails currently exist at Garland Mountain Park in the northwestern corner of the County, along Noonday Creek and around Woodstock, along Little River at Old Rope Mill Park and Blankets Creek near Woodstock and Holly Springs, and along the Etowah River connecting Boling Park and other government-owned land west of Canton. These large networks all provide users with an opportunity to recreate near some of the County’s most beautiful natural features.
In addition to these large interconnected networks, smaller stand-alone trail segments are present at Lewis Park near Bells Ferry Road and Allatoona Lake, Hickory Trails Park south of Hickory Road, and along Noonday Creek and Main Street. Aside from the significant trails at Garland Mountain Park and along the Etowah River, all existing trail segments are located in the southern half of the County and are concentrated along the western portion of Little River or within the City of Woodstock.

3 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

3.1 What Should be Connected?

Parks, recreation facilities, and other County-controlled greenspace currently occupy over six square miles (approximately 4200 acres) in Cherokee County, which accounts for around 1.5 percent of its total land area. It should be noted that these figures do not account for a variety of other greenspace areas, such as municipally-owned parks, Federal Wildlife Management Areas, and property held by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The CRPA operates 22 parks within the County that span a total of 2235 acres, including 34 miles of trails. Public parks and recreation facilities should serve as the primary drivers behind developing the future trail network. Aside from publicly-owned recreational amenities, the trail network should also provide new connections between other types of popular destinations and existing facilities which are listed below.

- Activity centers (i.e., downtown districts)
- Cultural sites (e.g., County offices, mills, cemeteries, etc.)
- Natural features not contained within public parks (e.g., Pine Log Mountain)
- Natural features not currently served by existing trails (e.g., the northern portion of Allatoona Lake, eastern portion of Little River, etc.)
- Nature-oriented facilities (e.g., Gibbs Botanical Gardens)
- Areas that could potentially be used as parks (i.e., estates with open easements)
- Institutions of higher learning (e.g., Reinhardt University, Chattahoochee Technical College, etc.)

3.2 Initial Screening of Needs

To identify potential destinations and facilities that should be connected through a future trail network, this study initially used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to plot the locations of the site and facility types discussed in the previous section. A map of the existing and proposed trails, as well as the locations of all potential destinations as discussed in the section above, is provided in Figure 1 on page 8. The existing or proposed trails data was collected from the plans and data sources below.

- Cherokee County Greenspace Plan (2001)
- City of Woodstock’s Greenprints Plan (2008)
- GDOT’s Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (1998)
3.3 Input from CTP Public Meetings
To supplement the initial desktop screening, local input regarding a future trail network was solicited during the two CTP public meetings held in June 2015. The trails input received during the CTP public meetings is depicted as blue (public support) and red (public opposition) buffered areas within Figure 2 on page 9. A transcript of comments is available in APPENDIX E: PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT. Citizen input from the public meetings identified the following major connections and concerns that should be addressed by a future trail network.

- Support shown for developing a dense network of connections in the southern half of the County to serve the following destinations: Bells Ferry, Woodstock, Holly Springs, Fields Landing Park, Kenny Askew Park, Badger Creek Park, J.J. Biello Park, Blankets Creek Park, Old Rope Mill Park, and Hobgood Park
- Support shown for segments connecting into Cobb County from the southwestern portion of the County/west Woodstock and also along Noonday Creek
- Support shown for segments connecting into the City of Roswell from the southeastern portion of the County via multiple routes
- Support shown for a segment connecting into a planned trail near Pickens County via the central tributary of Conns Creek
- Support shown for segments surrounding the Little River Mill and Gresham Mill areas
- Opposition voiced against a segment surrounding the Brick Mill Falls area
- Support shown for a segment adjacent to SR 20 that would connect two planned trails and would serve both Cherokee Veterans Park and the Vaughn’s Mill area
- Support shown for a segment adjacent to the eastern portion of a Little River tributary that would connect a planned trail to SR 20

3.4 Input from Trails Stakeholder Committee
To augment the public input, a Trails Stakeholder Committee was created to solicit further input regarding additional connections that could serve to bridge the gap between existing and planned trails in the County and the recommendations put forth at the CTP public meetings. The committee consisted of parks and recreation staff from Cherokee County, the City of Woodstock, the City of Holly Springs, and the City of Canton, as well as interested citizens. The committee met on August 31, 2015 at the County Administrative Offices.

Prior to the committee meeting, an updated map of destinations and trail facilities was produced. This stakeholder map incorporated all of the public input discussed above and also overlaid the locations of other areas, such as Federal Wildlife Management Areas, US Army Corps of Engineers properties, and other government-owned land, that could potentially be leveraged for trail use.
Major improvements identified by the Trail Stakeholder Committee are listed below. The committee’s recommendations are depicted as numbered red lines in Figure 2 on page 9.

1. Develop a segment adjacent to Old Hwy 5/Holly Springs Parkway that connects suggested segments surrounding J.J. Biello Park with the suggested segment running from Blankets Creek Park, around Holly Springs to Old Rope Mill Park
2. Develop a segment adjacent to Hickory Road that connects a suggested segment along Holly Springs Parkway with the proposed Mill Creek Trail
3. Develop a segment adjacent to Bells Ferry Road that connects Butterworth Road near SR 20, the planned trail on the south side of Allatoona Lake near Cherokee Mills Park, and the Cobb County line
4. Develop a segment adjacent to SR 20 that connects a planned trail on the east side of the Etowah River to the suggested segment along Butterworth Road/Bells Ferry Road
5. Develop a segment adjacent to Towne Lake Parkway/Eagle Drive that connects the suggested trail near Bells Ferry Road and Hobgood Park to the suggested trail extending south along Noonday Creek to the Cobb County line
6. Develop segments to connect the suggested Noonday Creek segment with historic Downtown Woodstock at the intersection of SR 92 at Main Street
7. Develop a segment adjacent to Ridge Road/Sixes Road/Old Hwy 5 that connects the suggested segment along Bells Ferry Road near Ridge Road to the planned trails surrounding J.J. Biello Park
8. Develop segments to connect planned trails south of Fincher Road with other planned trails near the V.A. Cemetery, other government-owned land west of Canton, the existing Etowah River Trail System, and the northwestern portion of the City of Canton
9. Develop a segment that connects Garland Mountain Park and County-owned land with a planned trail segment adjacent to SR 140 on the eastern edge of Bartow County
10. Develop a short network on the southern side of the Hickory Log Reservoir on the grounds of the First Baptist Church
11. Develop a segment adjacent to Vaughn Road that connects the suggested segments along Hickory Road near the Hickory Flat area with Sequoyah Park and a planned trail segment along Mill Creek
12. Develop a segment adjacent to Rope Mill Road that connects the existing trail along Woodstock Parkway with a planned trail that would pass Woodstock Elementary School en route to historic downtown Woodstock at SR 92 and Main Street
13. Develop a segment adjacent to Woodstock Road that connects the suggested segments near along Bells Ferry Road near Woodstock Road with the western portion of SR 92
14. Provide mile markers every quarter-mile to assist first responders in locating persons along the trails in the event of an emergency or injury.
4 PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

4.1 Goals
In considering which trails projects to advance and when, the County should utilize two different sets of goals over the short- and long-term. Initial improvements should focus on developing connectivity to trail systems within neighboring counties; tying together popular destinations which are not currently served by the existing trail network; and building short segments that serve to form a comprehensive network of connections between existing trail networks. Leveraging other counties’ existing trail networks is likely to yield a substantial gain from a relatively modest level of investment. Connecting recreational areas and sites not currently served by trails should promote additional use of the County’s trail system by increasing the number of potential accessible destinations. Additionally, developing short extensions to connect existing trail networks serves as another low-cost approach because most of the capital investment has already been made in the corridor.

Once the trail network’s coverage has been sufficiently expanded to serve the majority of the popular destinations, then the County should transition to emphasizing the development of long-distance, capital-intensive trails (e.g., a continuous path around Allatoona Lake or complete coverage along the Etowah River) that serve as links within a larger regional or multi-state trail system like the Goldbelt Trail. Aside from constructing extensive trails around significant natural features, the County should also focus on enhancing accessibility to destinations already served by a future trail network by developing more robust connectivity between trail segments.

4.2 Objectives
The list below contains objectives that can be used to assess the degree to which a given trails project meets either of these goals.

- Constructs an extension of an existing trail
- Serves a popular destination that is not currently accessible by trail
- Provides an interface into an adjacent county’s trail system
- Develops a connection to an existing trail or bicycle-pedestrian route
- Anticipates a connection to a proposed trail or bicycle-pedestrian route

4.3 Short-Term Recommendations
In the near-term the County should focus on rapidly expanding the coverage of its trail network by developing segments that support inter-county trail connectivity; realize new connections between the County’s recreational destinations which are not served by the existing trail network; and providing short extensions to form a larger network of existing trails. The list below provides recommendations for short-term projects that will help address these goals in a cost-effective manner while forming a network of trails between Old Rope Mill, J.J. Biello Park, historic downtown Woodstock, Noonday Creek, and Cobb County.
• Noonday Creek Trails Connector - Connect into Cobb County trails via new extension of existing trail along Noonday Creek southward from SR 92
• Bethany Creek Connector - Connect southern half of the Old Rope Mill trails (Trestle Rock Trail) with existing trails along Ridgewalk Parkway and Woodstock Parkway via new extension southward from Old Rope Mill along Bethany Creek
• J.J. Biello - Ridgewalk Parkway Connector - Connect unserved J.J. Biello Park with existing trail along Ridgewalk Parkway via a new trail adjacent to Main Street running from the Recreation Center to the Brooke Boulevard entrance of J.J. Biello Park
• Woodstock Parkway - Elementary - Historic Downtown Connector - Connect existing trail near Woodstock Parkway and I-575 with existing trails near historic downtown Woodstock via a new extension of Woodstock Parkway trail southward to Rope Mill Road, passing Woodstock Elementary School and terminating at the Main Street intersection in Historic Downtown Woodstock

Other major connections that should initially be considered are listed below.

• Connect into Fulton County trails via GDOT State Bicycle Route 70 (Wylie Bridge Road & Cox Road), SR 140 and Little River trails
• Connect into Pickens County via a tributary of Conns Creek
• Connect into Bartow County via an extension of Garland Mountain Park trails
• Connect proposed pedestrian-bicycle routes along Bells Ferry Road and Woodstock Road with the existing Red Top Mountain Trail System in Bartow County
• Connect the unserved V.A. Cemetery with other government-owned land west of Canton, the Old Foundry area, and the existing Etowah River Trail System which extends eastward to Boling Park
• Connect the Southwest Cherokee area with SR 92 and the proposed pedestrian-bicycle route along Woodstock Road

A map of the short-term recommended segments is provided in Figure 3 on page 10. Within the figure, the connections depicted in green represent segments for which a single connecting path between major destinations was identified. The segments displayed in purple reflect connections for which at least one alternative, adjacent connection was also identified. It is recommended that the CRPA further study the segments outlined in purple within its upcoming Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, Green Space and Trails Master Plan.

4.4 Classifying Connections
In developing a final map of recommended non-motorized connections for the County’s future trail network, identified segments that were located in close proximity to, or which generally followed the alignment of, an existing roadway were classified as bicycle-pedestrian routes. Connections between destinations that did not neatly follow an existing roadway alignment or which traversed through undeveloped areas were classified as trail routes. A classification map defining each recommended connection as either a trail or a bicycle-pedestrian route is provided in Figure 4 on page 11.
5 THE TRAIL(S) AHEAD

A map depicting the potential universe of proposed trails and bicycle-pedestrian routes is provided in Figure 5 on page 12. The goals and objectives identified in the previous section and the potential routes identified in Figure 5 will be used as a launching point for a more robust and dynamic trails planning process that will be undertaken by the CRPA in 2016. Funding for future trails projects identified within the upcoming CRPA study would be provided via allocations from the Pedestrian, Bicycle & Trails improvement category of this CTP update which accounts for 15 percent of the available local transportation funding through 2040 ($83 M). As mentioned previously, the exact priority, alignment and cost of a given trails project will be identified as part of the CRPA’s master planning effort.
Figure 1 Existing and Planned Trails and Potential Destinations in Cherokee County
Figure 2 Summary of Public Input from CTP Public Meetings and Trails Stakeholder Committee
Figure 3 Recommended Trails and Connections for Further Study

Legend
- Airport
- Major Destinations
- Short-Term Recommendations
- Further Study Recommended
- Existing Trails
- Lakes
- River
- Parks or Greenspace
- Wildlife Management Area
- US Corps of Engineers
- Government Owned
- Activity Centers and LCI Areas
- Cities
- Counties

Cherokee County
Comprehensive Transportation Plan
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Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Figure 4 Classification of Recommended Trails and Bicycle-Pedestrian Routes

Recommended Trails in Cherokee County
Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Legend
- Airport
- Major Destinations
- Multi-Use Trails
- Bike-Ped Routes
- Existing Trails
- Lakes
- River
- Parks or Greenspace
- Wildlife Management Area
- US Corps of Engineers
- Government Owned
- Activity Centers and LCI Areas
- Cities
- Counties

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Figure 5 Proposed Trails and Bicycle-Pedestrian Routes

Proposed Trails in Cherokee County

Cherokee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan

Legend
- Airport
- Potential Destinations
- Proposed Trails
- Proposed Bike-Ped Routes
- Existing Trails
- Lakes
- River
- Parks or Greenspace
- Wildlife Management Area
- US Corps of Engineers
- Government Owned
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