



Tifton Area Greenway Best Practices Report

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June 2014



www.sgrc.us/transportation

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City of Tifton, GA

Tifton Area Greenway Best Practices Report

Resolution of Acceptance

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF TIFTON, GEORGIA TO ACCEPT THE REPORT TITLED
'TIFTON AREA GREENWAY BEST PRACTICES REPORT'.**

WHEREAS, The Southern Georgia Regional Commission in partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation the City of Tifton and the Tift Area Greenway Association has prepared this 'Tifton Area Greenway Best Practices Report pursuant to its FY2014 contract with the Georgia Department of Transport for planning services; and

WHEREAS, the City of Tifton and the Tift Area Greenway Association are interested in the development of bicycle friendly infrastructure that promotes safe bicycling and walking for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists on city streets and rights-of-way; and

WHEREAS, the City of Tifton and the Tift Area Greenway Association asked the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to complete this report to provide recommendations and best practices for the Tifton community to build a bicycle and pedestrian friendly community; and

WHEREAS, this report is intended to encourage the community to support bicycle and pedestrian friendly infrastructure and safety improvements that can be implemented and maintained within the current right-of way of local City of Tifton Streets; and

WHEREAS, this report is intended to encourage community organizations to develop, identify funding for, construct and maintain off-road (not on city right-of-way) greenways and promote the overall safety of bicyclists and pedestrians throughout the community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City of Tifton City Council does hereby accept the report 'Tifton Area Greenway Best Practices Report'.

Adopted this X day of MONTH, 20XX.

J. G. "Jamie" Cater, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

Rona Martin, City Clerk

Introduction

The City of Tifton and the Tift Area Greenway Association (TAGA) asked the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) to prepare a report on the best practices and guidance for implementing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, in particular a greenway trail in the community. This report will serve to guide the Tifton community and others in Southern Georgia on ways they can safely, efficiently and affordably accommodate bicycle facilities in their communities.

This reports starts by looking at the overall connectivity of existing and proposed bicycle routes in Tifton. Tifton has been a regional leader in implementing sharrows and marked bicycle lanes, and Georgia State Bicycle Route 15 passes through the heart of the City.

The second half of the report examines some best practices and provides some practical guidance for the City of Tifton and its partners on how to implement bicycle lanes, greenway trails and other facilities throughout the community that promote an active, healthy lifestyle and provide affordable accessible transportation options to residents.

Connectivity in Tifton

Georgia State Bike Route 15 passes through Tifton as it runs from the Florida State Line near Valdosta north to Atlanta. This state designated route is proposed to become United States Bicycle Route 15 by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). This route is meant to provide regional and local connectivity along roadways that safely connect activity centers. This asset is often overlooked in many communities, as was identified in a 2012 report and analysis of Route 15 by the SGRC.¹ This

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<http://www.sgrc.us/transportation/PublicTransitPlans/FacilityAssesment/BikeRoute15Analysis.pdf>

report recommended that communities restripe the roadways to include bicycle lanes where appropriate. Another key item missing along this route was general way-finding signage, not only for the route, but also for community amenities. Communities should proactively promote this regional asset to encourage bicycling in their communities. As a part of promoting this and other regional bicycle routes, the SGRC produced a regional 'Bicycling in Southern Georgia Map'.



Figure 1 Bicycle in Southern Georgia Map

In 2011, the City of Tifton and its partners completed a Master Plan for greenways and bicycle and pedestrian facilities to be implemented throughout the City. As a part of this report the SGRC completed a review of the Master Plan, and found it to be well thought out and had the ability to meet the goals of the Tift Area Greenway Association and the City of Tifton. The next step in the development of the Master Plan is to implement the projects identified in the plan, which can be a challenging task given local funding and other challenges. This report can help to identify some ways to overcome those local challenges to help to implement the Master Plan for the Tifton area.

The proposed routes identified in the Master Plan (see TAG Master Plan map in Appendix) connects Tifton well. The Plan, once fully

implemented, will work to address transportation connectivity and accessibility issues for all of Tifton, including underserved populations (low-income, minorities, etc.).

After reviewing the Master Plan, the SGRC staff recommends that the Plan be modified to include additional roads that will provide increased connectivity throughout the City. It is recommended that sharrows or bicycle lanes be installed on the recommended roadways to make users aware of bicyclists and other modes of traffic. A map in the Appendix shows the proposed additions to the Master Plan.

While much of the Master Plan focuses on proposed routes that are on existing street rights-of-way, it does describe the development of multi-use trails, parts and/or greenways. Of particular interest to TAGA was a proposed greenway near and around the University of Georgia Tifton Campus.

Upon examining this area, it is noted that the right-of-way is likely relatively easy to acquire, only a single private landowner was identified along the proposed route. The remaining parcels are owned by the University or other aligned non-profit agencies. The first step in examining this area further would be to begin the process of discussing a trail alignment with the University and other non-profit property owners to engage their support, prior to speaking with private property owners. This proposed greenway offers an excellent recreational and transportation opportunity for this area of the community, while it also connects to the other proposed portions of the Master Plan. Proximity to the University and the YMCA offer opportunities for education and the promotion of active, healthy lifestyles in the community related to the missions of these other organizations.

Another area that the SGRC was asked to examine was the possible use of historic railroad rights-of-way, for a conceptual rails-to-trails

project. There are several historic or abandoned railroad corridors throughout the city and region that could potentially be utilized for a greenway trail. Upon examination of the ownership of the rights-of-way for the historic railroad corridors, much of the land is under private ownership. Much of the land parcels have been further divided or even developed in a way that one would not necessarily know a railroad had ever existed in the past. As described later, it can be a daunting and expensive task for a local organization or even a local government to obtain the land along an abandoned railroad corridor. There are a few slivers/areas of land that are still reminiscent of the railroad corridor that may be of interest to the community in developing in the future. However, these areas do not always provide ideal connectivity to activity centers like jobs, recreation, shopping, schools, etc.



Figure 2 Sharrows on Davis Drive in Tifton

If the Master Plan is implemented as proposed (with some small additions to consider from the SGRC in this report), a bicycle facility network in the City of Tifton will connect residents to jobs, shopping, entertainment, schools, medical offices and much more.

Ultimately, to implement the Master Plan local leaders must choose to invest local financial resources in capital to build the infrastructure identified in the Plan. The City of Tifton is already a regional leader in using sharrows and bicycle lanes to direct the flow of traffic and make people aware of alternative modes of

transportation using the same roadways as motor-vehicles. The community is encouraged to continue this effort on the roadways identified in the Master Plan. This can be a cost-effective way to introduce bicycling infrastructure into the community while continuing to plan and prepare for more permanent infrastructure like separated paths and greenway trails.

Additional Routes Suggested by SGRC		
Street	From	To
Golden Rd.	Central Ave.	Main St.
Eason Ave.	Golden Rd.	Roswell Dr.
Roswell Dr.	Central Ave.	Main St.
Magnolia Dr.	Old Omega Rd.	8 th St.
20 th St.	Emmett Dr.	Old Ocilla Rd.
8 th St.	Love Ave.	Carpenter Rd.
Tift Ave.	3 rd St.	Fulwood Dr.

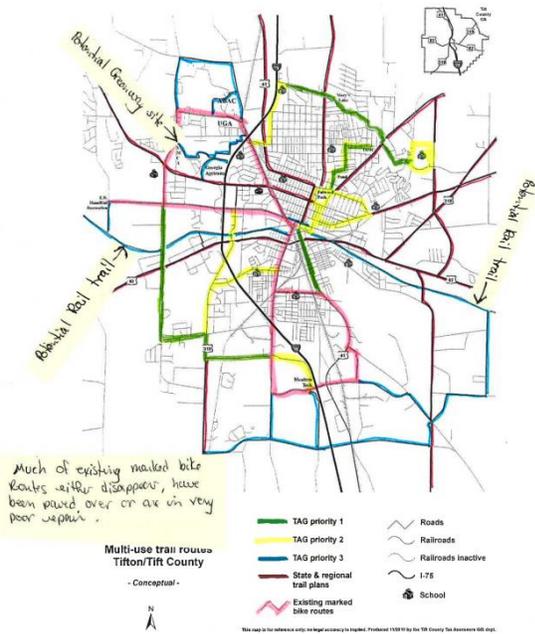


Figure 3 Tift Area Greenways (TAG) Master Plan Routes with Notes (see larger version in Appendix).

Developing a Greenway

The first thing a community needs to decide is what is the primary need and purpose that a greenway trail is being built to serve. Is the trail exclusively for recreation, or does it connect major activity centers for commuting purposes? Another question to ask is: Who are the users of the trail going to be? Will this be a multi-use trail for pedestrians, bicyclists, horses, etc.? These initial questions will help guide the development of a community trail planning effort, and will help determine overall layout, features, amenities, and the overall cost.

“Greenways are vegetated natural buffers that improve water quality, reduce the impacts of flooding, and provide wildlife habitat. Greenways may include features such as hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails, streams and rivers suitable for canoeing and boating, abandoned railroad rights-of-way, utility rights-of-way, scenic roads, and scenic easements. They connect people and places by linking neighborhoods, offices, parks, schools, transit stops, and shopping areas.”¹

The Virginia Greenways and Trails Toolbox² is a great resource for local organizations looking to support and develop trails in their communities. This resource discusses initial formation of a non-for-profit advocacy/support group, facility ownership, working with the public and landowners, marketing and publicizing, and funding a support group. In Tifton, much of this effort is already underway with the Tift Area Greenways Association, or TAGA. This group is leading the effort along with the City of Tifton to

improve bicycling and walking facilities throughout the community.

The Toolbox highlights some key areas for local greenway organizations to develop in their own communities. The first of these is general public outreach to share the vision of the organization and build community support for the concept of greenways and trails. Educating the public about the benefits of healthy, active lifestyles and the quality of life that greenways offer is important to building support from the public.

While a greenway is still under development in the community it is important for the support organizations to remain active. Some strategies for remaining active and keeping the idea of a greenway on the minds of the public is to support like causes and efforts. These efforts may include advocating for bicycle and pedestrian safety on the roadway (similar to what TAGA has already done by installing sharrows on various roadways). Partnering with other local organizations that promote an active, healthy lifestyle can be beneficial to building interest in biking and walking for recreation and commuting purposes.

The Toolbox highlights other areas in which support organizations can be involved in the community, including: roadside cleanups, have a visible presence at community events (with a booth or in a parade), assist the local government in roadside inventories, road safety audits, etc. All of these efforts help to keep the organization active, while promoting the ultimate goal of developing a greenway trail.

One of the biggest questions about building a greenway trail is how to fund its construction and ongoing maintenance. While there are many options that are available, this report will examine the most common: federal-aid grants, local funds (property and sales taxes), and private/corporate donations and sponsorships.

Federal-aid grants for greenways and trails are typically provided through the Federal Highway Administration Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) (formerly known as Transportation Enhancement, or TE) which includes Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and Recreational Trails. With the exception of the Recreational Trails program which is administered through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, all of the federal-aid grant programs are administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). All federal-aid funds typically require a match of at least twenty-percent.

While the TAP program can be used to fund a variety of projects, it's most popular uses tend to be for bicycle and pedestrian facilities in communities that improve the mobility of alternative modes of transportation. The City of Tifton has utilized these funds for multiple projects in the downtown area that have improved the aesthetics and mobility of the area. GDOT typically awards one TAP project per Congressional District annually, as funding is available.

SRTS programs are more specific, as they must be implemented at or near schools with grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The SRTS program has two components; one for capital expenditures to improve walking and biking routes to and from schools and neighborhoods where students live, the other is an educational program that aims to educate and promote healthy, active lifestyles and pedestrian and bicycling safety. Schools in the City of Tifton have utilized this program in the past to improve biking and walking to and from schools. The Regional Commission has also completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Assessment for schools on the southeast side of Tifton. GDOT typically awards one SRTS project per Congressional District annually, as funding is available.

The Georgia DNR typically awards Recreational Trails funding annually through a statewide competitive process. This source of funding is extremely limited and competitive.

The most flexible form of funding is the use of local property or sales tax revenue from local governments. This source of funding can typically be used on any project, however, it is usually harder to allocate due to strained local budgets and other projects and programs competing for this same funding.

Building a Greenway in Tifton

Best Practices

The TAG Master Plan is a great way for the Tifton community to proceed with developing a bicycle friendly community. The biggest item that needs to be discussed in the community is how these improvements should be funded. There are some state and federal options available, but the local funding option is likely the best available at this time.

American Trails and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation recommend³ that trails avoid active farmland areas, wetland and swampy areas, areas where construction might be difficult or cost prohibitive, and maintaining 100 feet of buffer from adjacent property owners. While these areas to avoid seem like common sense, one also needs to think about areas and points of interest to include along a trail that draw users and provide enjoyable usage of the facility. Points of interest might include, historic areas, activity centers (retail, recreation, universities, neighborhoods, key businesses, etc.), and cultural features, among others.

³ <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/TNpathways.pdf>

When fitting a trail into the urban context of a community like Tifton, these two areas come into conflict with one another quite quickly. The challenge becomes how to best balance the need and purpose of the greenway trail with surrounding land uses, natural features and points of interest. The proposed greenway in the Master Plan needs to provide connections to the greater community in order for it to be successful. In other words, people need a place to go to have a reason to use a road or a greenway. Thus ensuring connectivity to a community system of bicycle lanes and sharrows is important.

Historic Railroad Corridors

Best Practice Takeaway

As described earlier, the proposed greenway near the University of Georgia Tifton Campus and the YMCA is an ideal starting location for a greenway. However, Land availability, and funding for construction of a facility remain long-term challenges for Tifton and TAGA. To begin, TAGA and Tifton should work to build community support for safe bicycling, through education and the development of the Master Plan with bicycle lanes and sharrows.

Historic or abandoned railroad rights-of-way are popular as rails-to-trails projects in many parts of the nation. Tifton, like much of Southern Georgia is fortunate to have an active railroad contributing to the local economy. Tifton is home to several historical railroad properties (see map in Appendix), but, for the most part, these properties have been returned to the

previous owners, and have subsequently been sub-divided, developed, and in many cases are no longer recognizable (even on parcel maps or aerial photographs) pieces of this transportation legacy. As noted earlier, there are some short corridors in the city that may offer opportunities for future development. However, they tend not to connect major activity centers. Since much of the land is in private ownership, and has been developed; assembling long, connected corridors through the city may prove difficult, and will require additional planning to identify alternative routes around these areas.

Best Practice Takeaway

Historic railroad corridors can make great rails-to-trails and greenways in communities. However, it can be a difficult, lengthy and expensive process to acquire right-of-way. Tifton should focus on developing the TAG Master Plan, starting with bicycle lanes, sharrows, encouragement and safety education campaigns to promote cycling in the community. The historic railroad corridors in the city may be feasible for long-term trail use, as part of a larger network.

Power line/Utility Easements

“Pedestrians and bicyclists need the same sort of long, continuous right-of-way (ROW) that utilities use. Doubling up use on an existing ROW is usually easier and cheaper than creating a new pedestrian ROW from scratch, and therefore can be a wise use of scarce resources when pedestrian funding is limited.”⁴ Power line easements can be a great asset to the bicycling and pedestrian communities. These long stretches of land, typically have little obstacles

⁴ <http://www.pedestrians.org/topics/row-gallery.htm>



Figure 4 Using Trails for Delivery of Utility Services (Source: Indiana State Trails Plan)

and offer many great opportunities to connect communities.

A community needs to complete a thorough legal research on the state and local laws and regulations regarding the use of power line easements for greenway trails (see map of local power lines in Appendix). Just like other right-of-way acquisition, the community needs to determine if an easement is appropriate or if complete acquisition is required, as well as working with adjacent property owners and utility companies for usage and maintenance agreements.

Best Practice Takeaway

In Tifton, there are several electric utility easement corridors that might be of interest for the community to explore in locating a greenway trail. Other utilities that may have easement or right-of-way corridors that may be interested in providing land for a greenway trail include natural gas companies and telecommunication companies.

Complete Streets in Rural Communities

The public road right-of way is one of the most valuable assets in any community. Roads are used for the movement of people and goods by various modes of transportation (cars, trucks, bicycles, pedestrians, etc.). They are also used to drain storm water into roadside ditches or stormwater sewer systems. They are also home to numerous utility providers, both public and private (water, sanitary sewer, electric, cable, phone, etc.).

In 2012, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) adopted a Complete Streets Policy stating that “The [G]DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects.”⁵ This policy guides future GDOT projects to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities on new roads, road widening projects, and even road re-paving projects, according to a specific set of warrants and criteria. Local governments can help ensure improvements are made in their communities by adopting local and regional bicycle plans and reports (like this one) that may require GDOT to address bicycle and pedestrian facilities in local communities.



Figure 5 Best Practices Report by SGRC⁶

Tifton and other local communities are encouraged to review the *Best Practices for Complete Streets in Rural Communities* published by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission in 2013. This resource highlights best practices that local communities in Southern Georgia are already doing or can implement in a cost effective manner to promote complete streets principles in their own communities.

Best Practice Takeaway

Complete Streets Policies can help a local governments guide and plan for improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access while planning for larger road construction projects. Tifton and TAGA should review the GDOT Complete Streets Policy and SGRC Best Practices Guide, as well as consider adopting their own plan. To start the City of Tifton can adopt this report that includes recommendations for bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Greenway Trail Ownership & Liability

The Virginia Greenways and Trails Toolbox is quite helpful in laying out advice and options to consider for the perpetual ownership and maintenance of a greenway trail. In many cases trails are owned by local municipal and county governments who operate and maintain the facilities as part of a parks and recreation or public works department.

Ownership and operation by a local government is a rather straight forward and a tried and true method used across the nation. A local government with a good reputation will alleviate

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<http://www.dot.ga.gov/doingbusiness/PoliciesManuals/roads/DesignPolicy/GDOT-DPM-Chap09.pdf>

6

<http://www.sgrc.us/transportation/documents/BestPracticesforRuralComm.pdf>

doubts about maintenance and security along the corridor.⁷

In some cases non-profit organizations take on the ownership role and sometimes an operations and maintenance role. Typically non-profits have greater flexibility in responding to the public, and can bridge the gap between users, partners and local governments. In some cases a non-profit may be the owner, but an agreement is developed with a local government or other party to operate and maintain a greenway trail.



Figure 6 Trail located along Power Line Easement (Source: americantrails.org)

Another option for land ownership is to obtain easements from private landowners. These can be done through a local conservation organization, and can be formal or informal agreements, depending on the needs of the specific project. Legal advice should be sought to determine the liability of the property owners and the easement holders, however.

Regardless of which ownership method is selected for a proposed greenway trail in the City of Tifton, thoughtful consideration should be

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http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/documents/grchpt02.pdf

⁸

<http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/greenways/publications/landownersguide.pdf>

given by all parties to the circumstance at hand. Appropriate legal advice should be sought to ensure proper transfer of land from one party to another.

Support of private landowners is key to a successful trail. In addition to land purchases, the community should work with them to ensure safety and security concerns are addressed as well as their private property rights. The Community Trail Handbook for Landowners⁸ is a resource that helps trail developers and landowners work together to develop successful community greenway facilities. When working with private landowners it is important that the needs of all parties are addressed. The Handbook notes that flexibility in easements is important to allow all parties to test the waters as a greenway trail develops, allowing for more permanent ownership at a later date. When working through an open process that respects both public users and private landowners, a 'significant contribution to the community'⁹ can be made that makes everyone proud of the legacy of a greenway trail.

Best Practice Takeaway

Purchasing right-of-way for a greenway trail can be one of the most difficult tasks in the trail development process. A community needs to develop a plan for its trail, stick with it, and find an adequate funding source to pay for right-of-way access where it is

⁹

<http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/greenways/publications/landownersguide.pdf>

Overcoming Trail Myths & NIMBYs

A concern many landowners and adjacent property owners have about trails in their neighborhoods is that property values will decrease, crime will increase and local investment will stagnate due to a trail being built in their neighborhood. Each of these myths are false, and recent studies have been completed that show how much of a positive impact a trail

can have on a community, property values, crime and community investment.

The Silver Comet Trail in Northwest Georgia recently completed an economic impact study of the 61-mile long facility that found, on average, property values located within ¼-mile of the trail increased by 4%, equating to over \$40 million dollars in added property values in Northwest Georgia.¹⁰

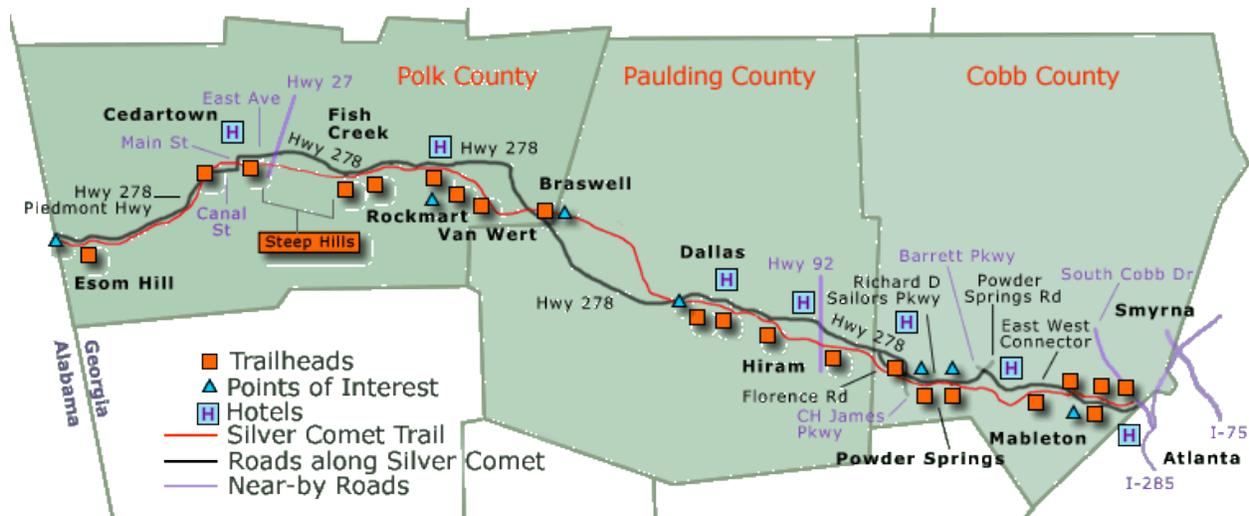


Figure 7 Silver Comet Trail in Northwest Georgia

A 2002 study by the National Association of Realtors/National Association of Homebuilders found that trail availability out ranked other housing criteria such as security, access to shopping and businesses, etc.¹¹ Homebuyers are becoming more aware of how important a healthy, active lifestyle is to their overall quality of life, and are making trails a part of their home buying decisions.

The Silver Comet study found that tourism spending in the communities from trail visitors total to \$3.5 million annually, from increased income, sales, and business tax revenues. This investment in the community came from 750 jobs and a total economic impact from tourist

spending on the Silver Comet Trail of \$98 million annually. This regional trail has had a tremendous impact on a four-county region in Northwest Georgia. So much so that a 66-mile expansion project is planned. A community that invests in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure can reap benefits from additional tax revenue, visitors, and an increased quality of life for local residents.

Crime and vandalism tend to be another concern raised by many community residents and nearby landowners of trails and greenways. There are countless studies and evidence that disprove that crime and vandalism increase when a trail is

¹⁰ http://www.bwnwga.org/wp-content/uploads/03_SCT_Economic-Impact-Summary1.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/devel/tetopathways.html>

built in a community. A fact sheet¹² prepared by the American Greenways Program, and found on the Carolina Thread Trail website, discusses many myths about trails and public safety. These include:

- Only 3% of trails have experienced major crime
- ‘better than living near unused railroad lines’
- ‘the trail brings so many people that it has actually led to a decrease in problems’
- Maximizing safety through design is encouraged with: lighting, call boxes, trail patrol programs, etc.

The first reaction many people have to a new concept is not in my back yard (NIMBY), often times before even finding out all of the facts about a proposed improvement. There are many examples of this throughout the nation regarding greenway trails.

The Handbook for Landowners, highlights the story of a developer who “views trails as an important quality of life amenity. His company highlights the proximity of [nearby trails] in marketing to prospective buyers and actively promotes it in the welcome packet new owners receive.”

The Silver Comet Trail in Northwest Georgia has documented that the 61-mile trail has increased local property values by \$182 million, and increased local property revenues to local governments by \$2 million. The Silver Comet Trail has a total regional economic impact of \$461 million dollars¹³. The Silver Comet Trail is an example of a rails-to-trails project in multiple counties that attracts thousands of users every year with recreational opportunities, and that

has greatly impacted the quality of life of the residents and local governments in the area.

The Handbook for Landowners documents several case studies that highlight the myths about greenways and how they can be safe and make good neighbors:

- Trails make good neighbors; a survey found that 88% of respondents were neutral or satisfied with a trail as a neighbor
- Safety; most trails have excellent safety records, but all trails should have emergency response strategies as part of a trail management plan. In many cases it is the users who are the eyes and ears who monitor the trail and “play a key role in maintaining a safe, enjoyable trail.”
- Privacy and Trespassing; trails should be properly sited away from residences and other intensive-use areas, typically along property boundaries. Natural buffers like landscaping should be used to increase privacy.
- Litter and vandalism; most trail users are respectful of public and private property. A proper trail management plan will include maintenance and monitoring by volunteers and local public agencies.



Figure 8 Silver Comet Trail near Rockmart, GA (Source: Google Earth)

¹²

<http://www.carolinathreadtrail.org/assets/files/Greenway%20Public%20Safety%20Study.pdf>

¹³ http://www.bwnwga.org/wp-content/uploads/Silver-Comet-Executive-Summary_all072213.pdf

Best Practice Takeaway

These myths are common as trails are developed, especially where adjacent landowners and community residents are misinformed. A well-thought out marketing campaign prior to trail development that educates the community on safe bicycling and pedestrian facilities is needed to make sure myths and rumors do not spread. Building community support for bicycling in general will help to show the community the need for dedicated facilities like a greenway trail.

Role of TAGA

Recently TAGA completed a new strategic plan that lays the groundwork for building quality bicycle and pedestrian networks for a healthy Tifton community.¹⁴ The goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan coincide with the recommendations in this report, and the TAG Master Plan. Overall the Tifton community has a great start on building a bicycle friendly city, and TAGA is in position to make that happen.

Starting off is always hard. Working to build community support is important and the Strategic Plan outlines ways in which the community will promote safe bicycling throughout the community. It is important that community partnerships be built with allied organizations like the YMCA and other organizations that promote an active, healthy lifestyle, and can cross-promote safe bicycling and walking in the community. A recent ranking¹⁵ of Georgia counties for Health Rankings found that Tift County was ranked 70th in the state for overall health. The report

identified the following areas for the community to take action on:

- 32% of adults are obese
- 31% of adults do not get any physical activity

The items which Tift County did not rank well in are contributing factors to living a high-quality, healthy lifestyles (obesity, physical activity and diabetes).

In order to better educate local leaders and elected officials on the importance of improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities, TAGA and Tifton may want to explore the possibility of conducting a Health Impact Assessment that identifies the specific deficiencies in the community related to not having these facilities and what it could mean if more safe, bicycling and walking facilities were available.

The role of TAGA needs to be one that builds community support and a strong foundation for safe bicycling and walking throughout the entire Tifton community. Implementing the TAG Master Plan and the TAGA Strategic Plan are great places to start.

Overall recommendations

Working on small projects can help make bicycling and walking more popular in the community. One concern that many casual cyclists have is that there are little or no places to store bicycles at stores or activity centers. A community effort to install low-cost bike racks can help improve the appeal of cycling and contribute to the knowledge of the community that there are cyclists around who need infrastructure as well.

¹⁴ Source: TAGA Mission Statement

¹⁵

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/georgia/>

2014/rankings/tift/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot

Tift (TI)

County Snapshot | [Additional Measures](#)

	Tift County	Trend 1	Error Margin	Top U.S. Performers*	Georgia	Rank (of 156)
Health Outcomes						70
Length of Life						55
Premature death	8,948		7,947-9,949	5,466	7,965	
Quality of Life						97
Poor or fair health	18%		14-23%	10%	16%	
Poor physical health days	4.0		3.0-4.9	2.6	3.6	
Poor mental health days	4.1		2.7-5.4	2.3	3.4	
Low birthweight	11.2%		10.3-12.1%	6.0%	9.4%	
Health Factors						77
Health Behaviors						95
Adult smoking	19%		14-27%	14%	19%	
Adult obesity	33%		28-39%	25%	28%	
Physical inactivity	29%		24-35%	21%	24%	
Excessive drinking	4%		2-9%	8%	14%	
Motor vehicle crash death rate	19		14-24	12	17	
Sexually transmitted infections	662			84	411	
Teen birth rate	78		73-84	22	54	

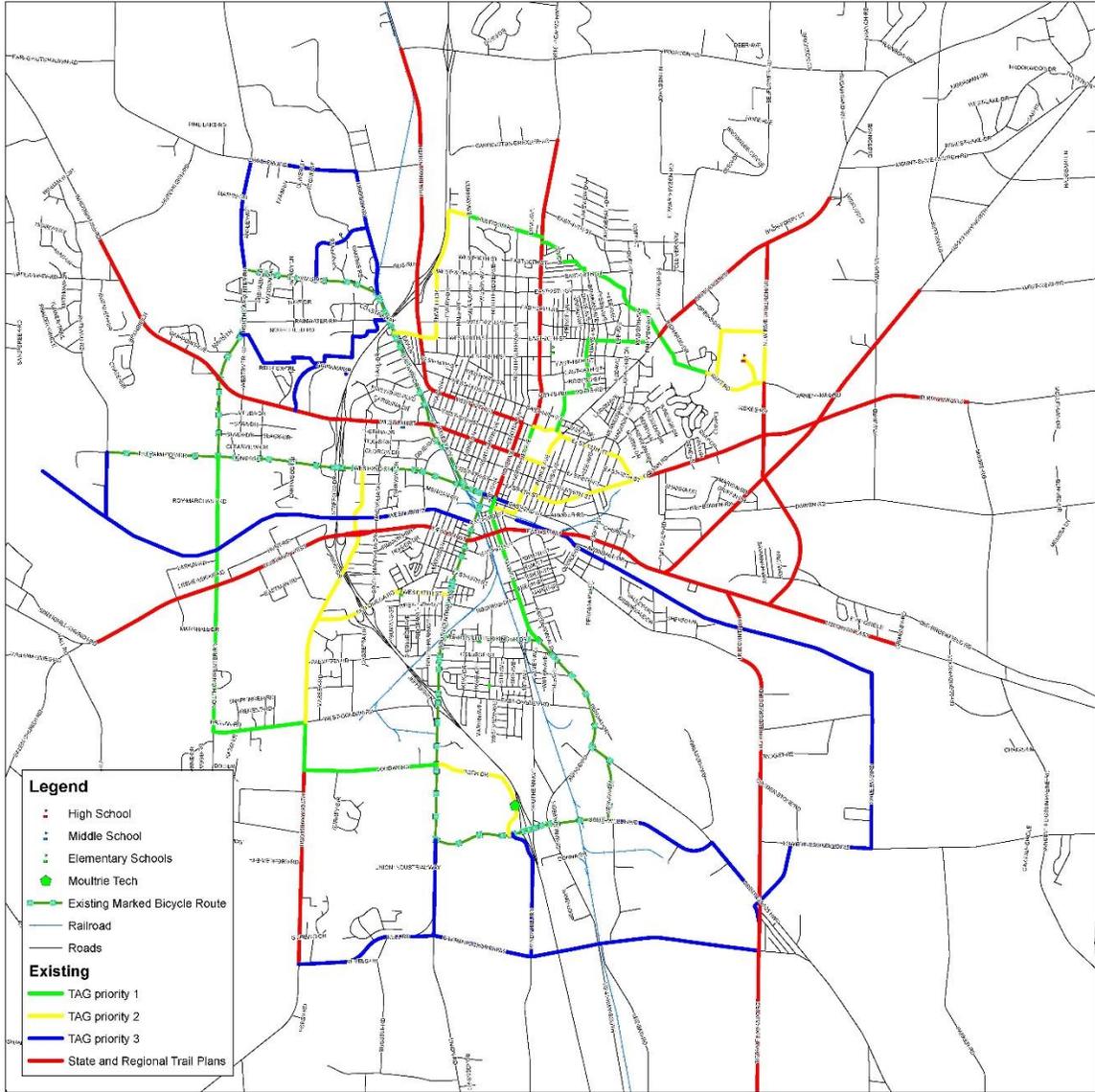
Figure 9 Data from countyhealthrankings.org for Tift County

TAGA and the Tifton community know how easy and low cost it is to add painted sharrows and bicycle lanes to roads. These efforts should be continued through the implementation of the TAG Master Plan, especially starting with bicycle lanes as low-cost alternatives to more permanent greenway trails that can be costly and time consuming to build. Efforts to increase bicycling in the community need to be borne by the citizens of the community and not just the local governments. This report encourages local groups like TAGA to get involved in developing a bicycle friendly community in Tifton.

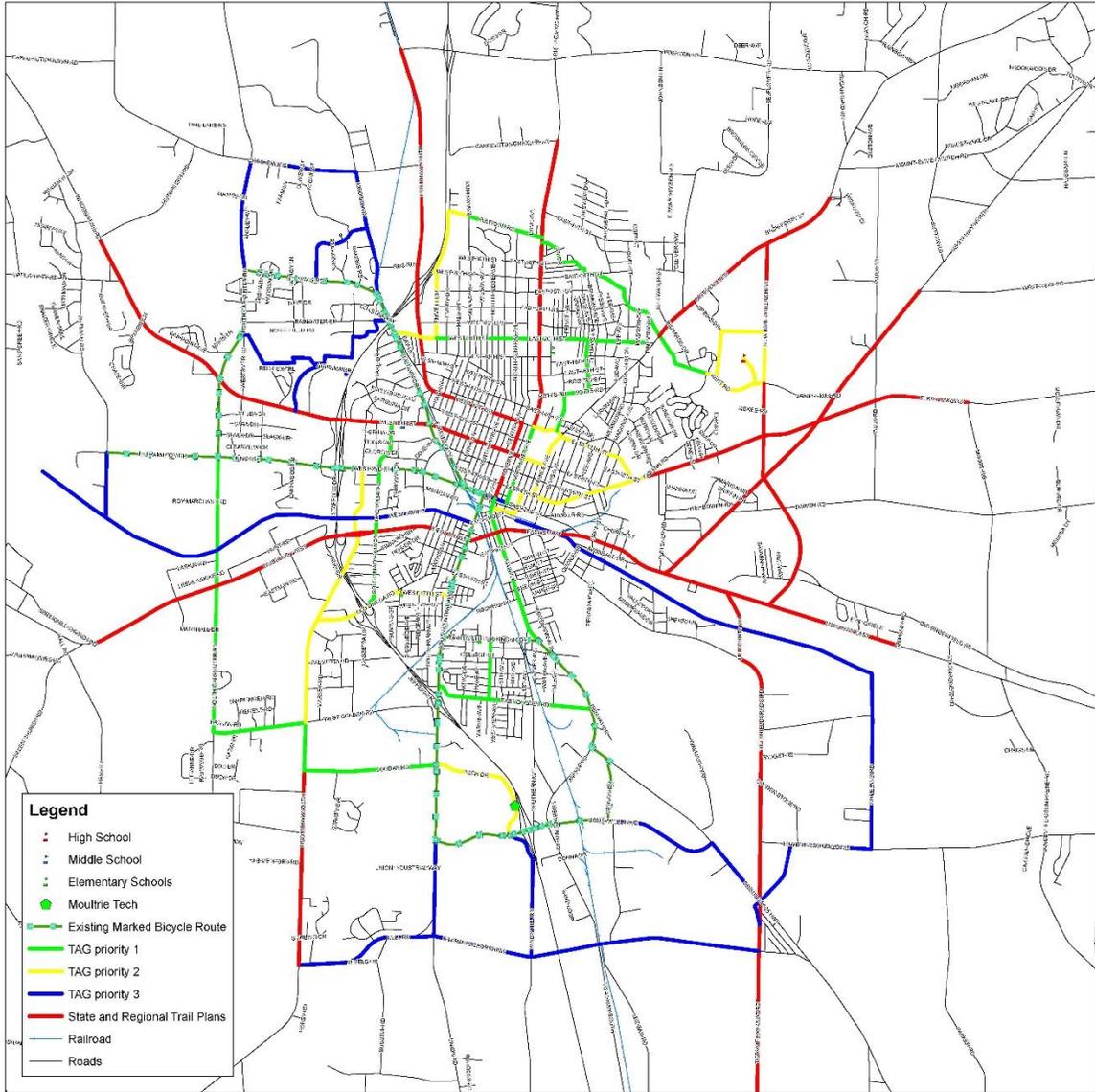
Overall the Tifton community needs to build support and educate the general public about the benefits of safe bicycling and walking, not only for their health, but for economic development and quality of life in the community. The City of Tifton and TAGA should review the resources from this report as well as others from the Southern Georgia Regional Commission including a new Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that will be released in June 2014.

Appendix

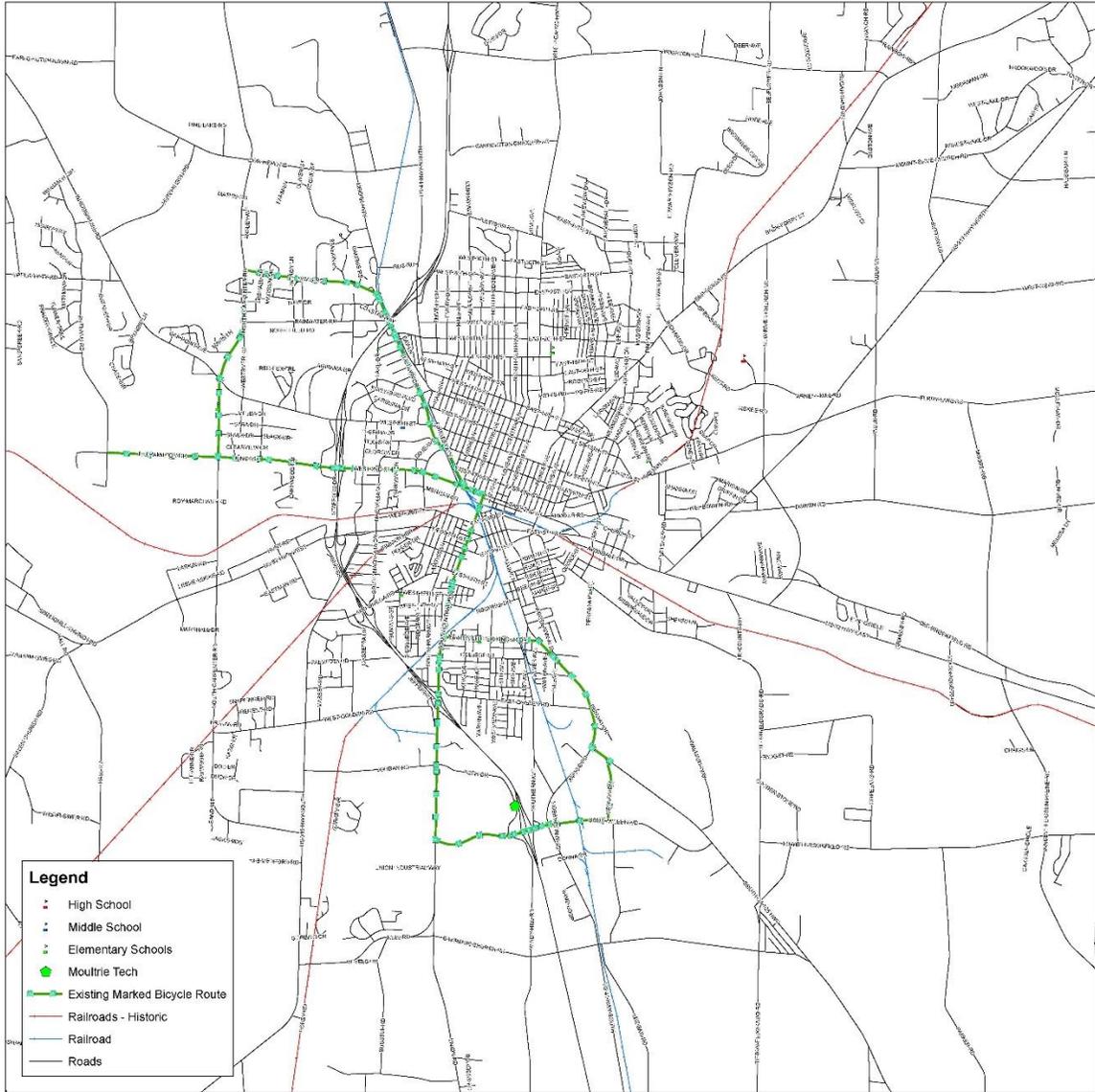
TAG Master Plan Map



TAG Master Plan Map with SGRC Recommendations



Historic/Abandoned Railroad Corridors Map



Power line Corridors in Tifton

