



SINGING RIVER TRAIL

ATHENS ACTION PLAN

*Connecting the past, present,
and future of North Alabama*

February 2022



Acknowledgments

SINGING RIVER TRAIL

JOHN KVACH

Executive Director

CITY OF ATHENS, AL

RONNIE MARKS

Mayor

CHRIS SEIBERT

City Council, District 1

HAROLD WALES

City Council, District 2

FRANK TRAVIS

City Council, District 3

DANA HENRY

City Council, District 4

WAYNE HARPER

City Council, District 5

AMY GOLDEN

Special Projects / One Stop Shop / Business Development

HOLLY HOLMAN

Grants Coordinator / Communications Specialist

JAMES RICH

Director, Public Works

STATE OF ALABAMA

TOM BUTLER, DANNY CRAWFORD

State of Alabama House of Representatives

Alabama Trails Foundation

MATT DAVIDSON

City Planner

LAKEISHA JOHNSON

City Planner

MICHAEL GRIFFIN

City Engineer

BERT BRADFORD

Director, Parks + Recreation

DOLPH BRADFORD

Director, Street Department

JIMMY JUNKIN

Manager, Athens Utilities, Water + Sewer Department

BLAIR DAVIS

Manager, Athens Utilities, Electric Department

STEVE CARTER

Manager, Athens Utilities, Gas Department

GINA GARTH

President, Planning Commission

ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

JOE DELAP

Vice President for Corporate and Community Relations

MIKE MCCOY

Vice President for Financial Affairs

KERRY WARREN

Facilities Director

RICHARD MARTIN TRAIL

RICHARD MARTIN

Founder

STAKEHOLDERS

TERE RICHARDSON

Athens Main Street

BETHANY SHOCKNEY, TIFFANY HAGOOD

Limestone County Economic Development Association (LCEDA)

PAMMIE JIMMAR

Greater Limestone County Chamber of Commerce

BETH PATTON

Athens City Schools

HARRY SCHMIDT, LAUREN PELTO

TVA

RICH CALDWELL, DOUG GATES, JEFF HODGES, JIMMY WOODROOF

Rotary Club of Athens

TAZ MORELL, CADY STEWART

Morell Engineering

CHRIS PAYSINGER

Athens Renaissance School

TONY JOHNSON

Friendship Church

ANNA CLEM

Julyn Inc.

ANNA DUNCAN

Athens-Limestone Hospital Foundation

GARY VANWAGNEN

Egypt Bluff Development, LLC

DERRICK YOUNG

U.G. White Mercantile

BLAKE WILLIAMS

Blake Williams Communications

CARL HUNT

Tri-Green Equipment, LLC

ALTA PLANNING + DESIGN

MATT HAYES

Principal in Charge, Vice President

JOE GILPIN

Vice President

WILL HARGROVE

Project Manager

EMILY CONDON

Project Designer

THIS ACTION PLAN WAS MADE POSSIBLE

through donations to the Singing River Trail from the City of Athens, Athens State University, Representatives Danny Crawford and Andy Whitt (Alabama House of Representatives, District 6), Richard Martin, Dana and Scott Henry, and the State of Alabama Trails Foundation.

“Connecting the proposed new Athens Recreation Center, the expanded Athens Sportsplex and the Swan Creek Greenway National Recreation Trail will be a vital asset to assist in the growth and development of the Athens Area. The Singing River Trail will connect our downtown communities and neighborhoods to the south and east!”

Mayor William “Ronnie” Marks, City of Athens



Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	04
Trail Corridor Map.....	06
Segment 1 - Richard Martin Trail to Airport Road.....	08
Segment 2 - Industrial Park.....	10
Segment 3 - Elm Street to Pryor Park.....	12
Segment 4 - Pryor Park to Swan Creek Greenway.....	14
Segment 5 - Pryor Park to Downtown.....	16
Segment 6 - Swan Creek Trailhead to Martin Lime Road.....	18
Segment 7 - Martin Lime Road to Calhoun.....	20
Implementation.....	22
Appendix A - Stakeholder Visioning Maps.....	26
Appendix B - Sample Easement Language.....	28

Introduction

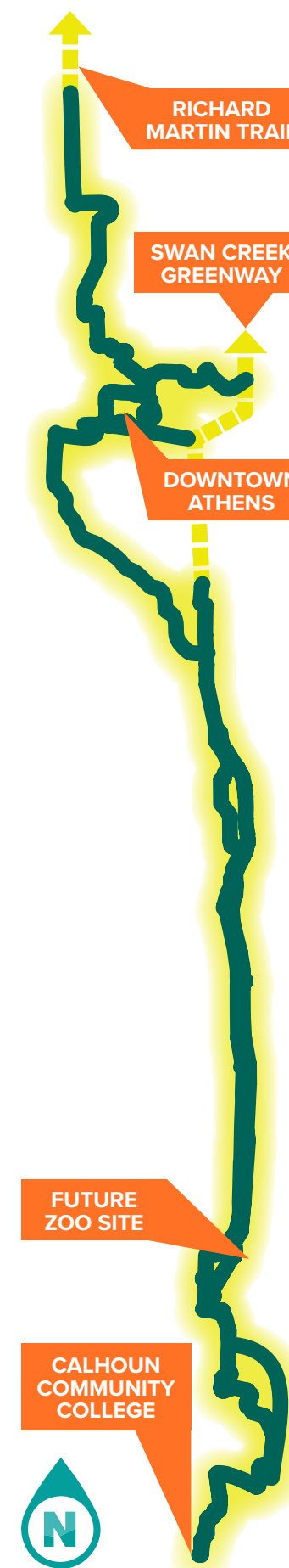
Project Background + Process



The Singing River Trail in North Alabama will connect communities in eight counties and serve as a **200-mile trail spine linking to other trail systems throughout the region.** The trail will connect our communities, provide active-living opportunities for residents, and spur further economic development for the region. It will also serve as an active transportation corridor, providing a safe means to travel between home, work, and play.

The vision for the Singing River Trail was borne out of a Launch 2035 initiative and from North Alabamians who care about the region's future. The trail vision has expanded across the length of north Alabama connecting Bridgeport to the Shoals area.

The original master plan, completed in 2018, focused on connecting Athens, Decatur, Madison, and Huntsville and one of the key segments was following the general Swan Creek corridor, connecting to the existing Swan Creek Greenway. The Master Plan spurred the development of this action plan and feasibility analysis that will move Launch 2035, the City of Athens, Athens State University, and Limestone County towards implementation. As the "Top of the Trail," **the Athens section is primed to be one of the first major completed sections of the Singing River Trail.**



Study Area

Starting from the north, this segment of the Singing River Trail would extend from the southern end of the 11-mile Richard Martin Rail Trail at Piney Chapel Road, southward through the Athens Industrial Park, and make its way to the future Pilgrims Park, Athens State University, and Downtown Athens. From there, the connection will be made to the existing Swan Creek Greenway east of US 31 and travel southward to the future zoo property and Calhoun Community College. **In total, the new trail corridor would extend approximately 17 miles, and over 4 miles of future segments. When completed and connected with the Richard Martin Trail, it would become the longest shared-use path in Alabama.**

The trail corridor will connect a number of key destinations, including:

- Richard Martin Trail
- Athens Industrial Park
- Athens State University
- Future Pryor Park
- Big Spring Park
- Downtown Athens
- Athens High School
- Athens Bible School
- Swan Creek Greenway/Park
- Athens Middle School
- Future zoo site
- Calhoun Community College
- Numerous new developments in Limestone County

Steering Committee

A committee was formed to guide this planning process and met twice through the process. The committee was made up of City staff, Athens State University, and key stakeholders who will play a role in the implementation of the project. The committee met first in the summer of 2021 to share their vision, goals, and specific ideas for project routing. The committee met again in February 2022 to react to draft recommendations and provide feedback. Committee members included the following:



Alta Vice President Joe Gilpin discusses potential trail alignments with representatives from Richard Martin Trail, U.G. White Mercantile, Julyn Inc., the City of Athens, and Morell Engineering.



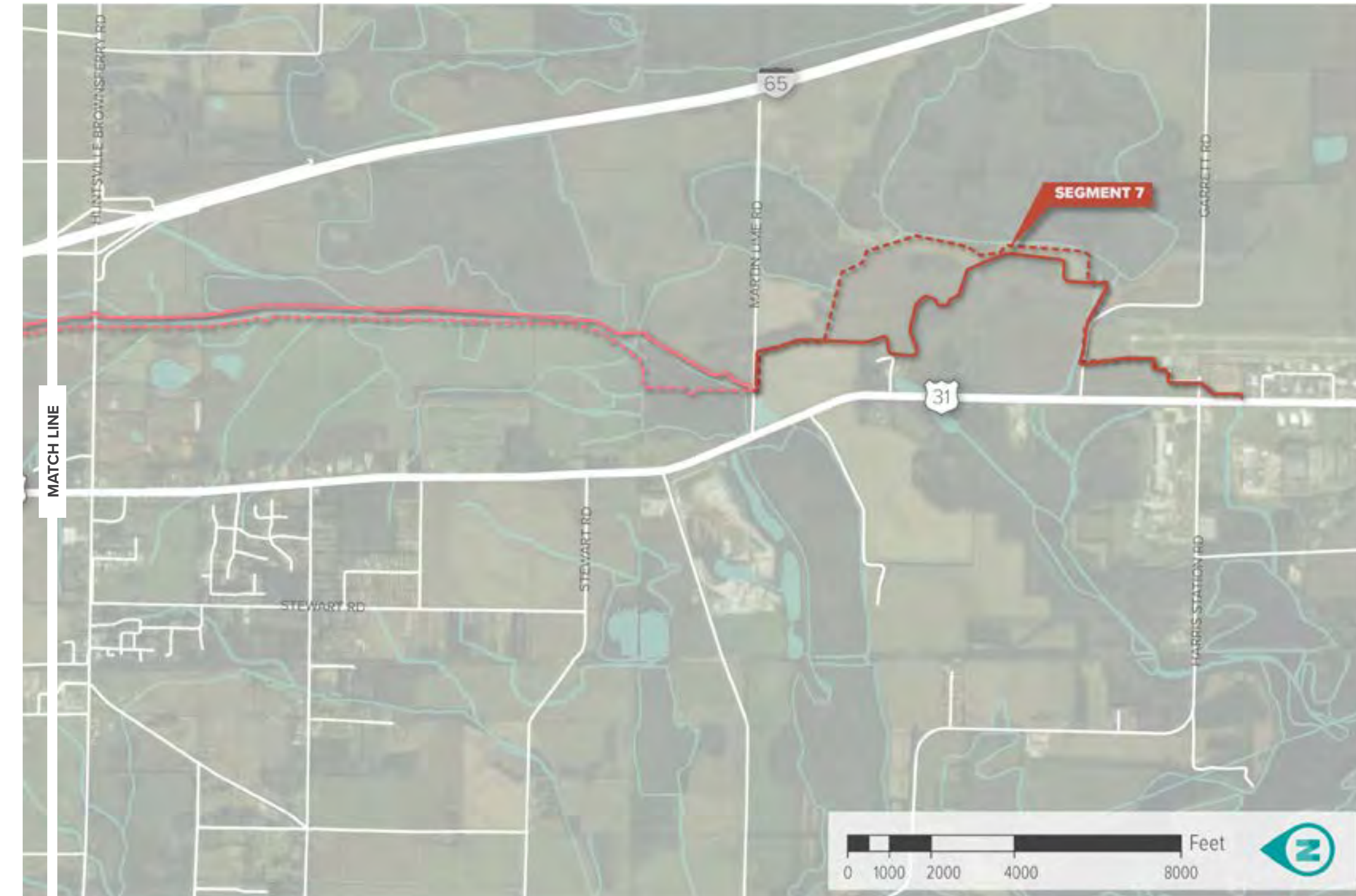
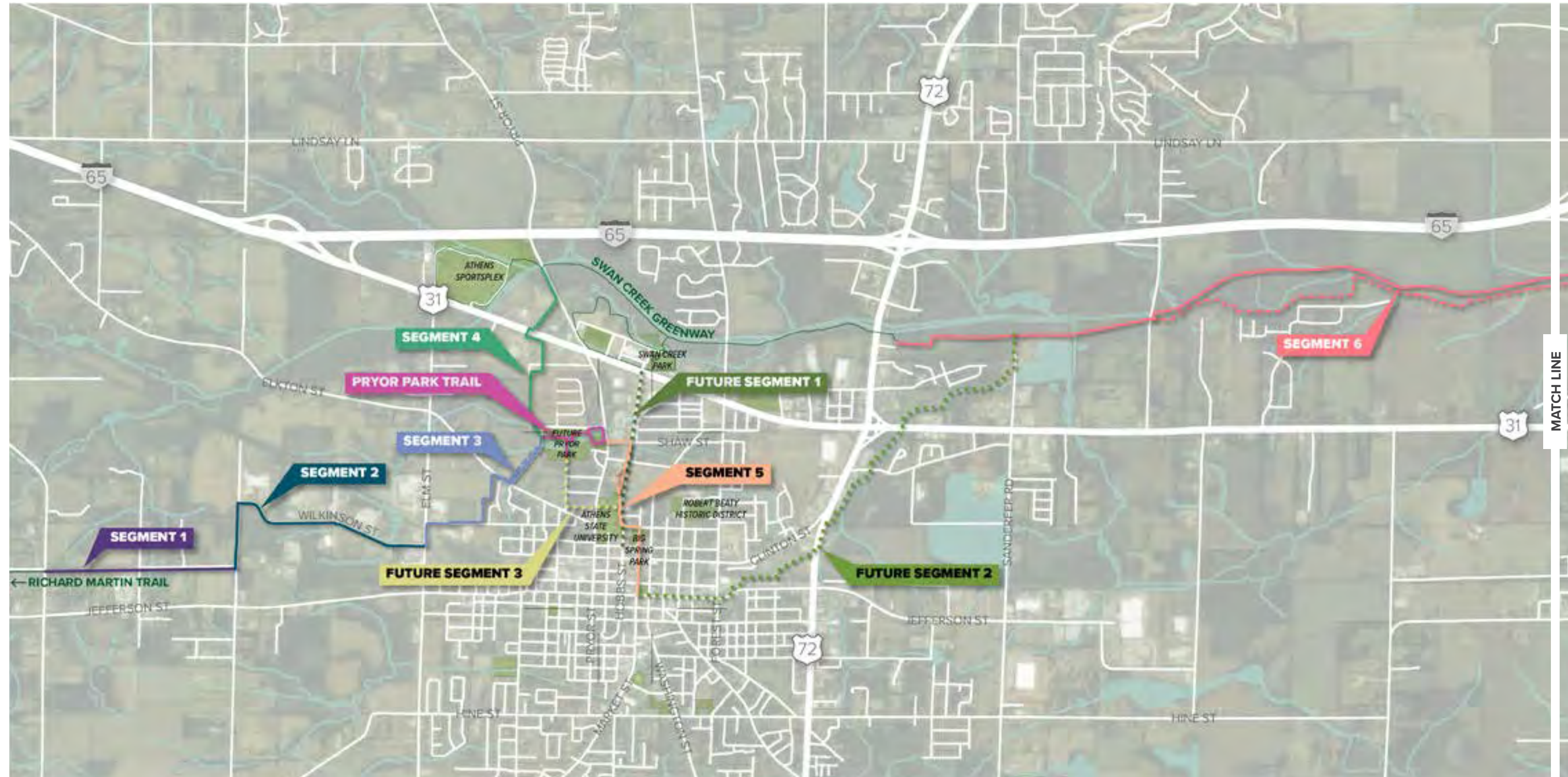
Alta Project Manager and Athens resident Will Hargrove discusses potential trail alignments with representatives from Athens State University, Athens Renaissance School and Athens Rotary Club.



Stakeholders discuss the best potential trail alignments for the Singing River Trail in Athens.

Trail Corridor Map

Singing River Trail - Athens



- Proposed Trail Alignment
- - - Alternative Trail Alignment
- SEGMENT 1:** Richard Martin Trail to Airport Road (*see page 8*)
- SEGMENT 2:** Industrial Park (*see page 10*)
- SEGMENT 3:** Elm Street to Pryor Park (*see page 12*)
- SEGMENT 4:** Pryor Park to Swan Creek Greenway (*see page 14*)
- SEGMENT 5:** Pryor Park to Downtown (*see page 16*)
- SEGMENT 6:** Swan Creek Trailhead to Martin Lime Road (*see page 18*)
- SEGMENT 7:** Martin Lime Road to Calhoun (*see page 20*)
- FUTURE SEGMENT 1: Hobbs Street Road Diet
- FUTURE SEGMENT 2: Town Creek Downtown Connector
- FUTURE SEGMENT 3: Athens State University Loop
- PRYOR PARK TRAIL
- Existing Trail
- Wetlands
- Parcel Line

Segment 1

Richard Martin Trail to Airport Road



Segment 1 Richard Martin Trail to Airport Road

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:
MILEAGE: +/- 1.0 mile
TYPOLOGIES: Greenway (unpaved), Sidepath (on existing road pavement)

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:



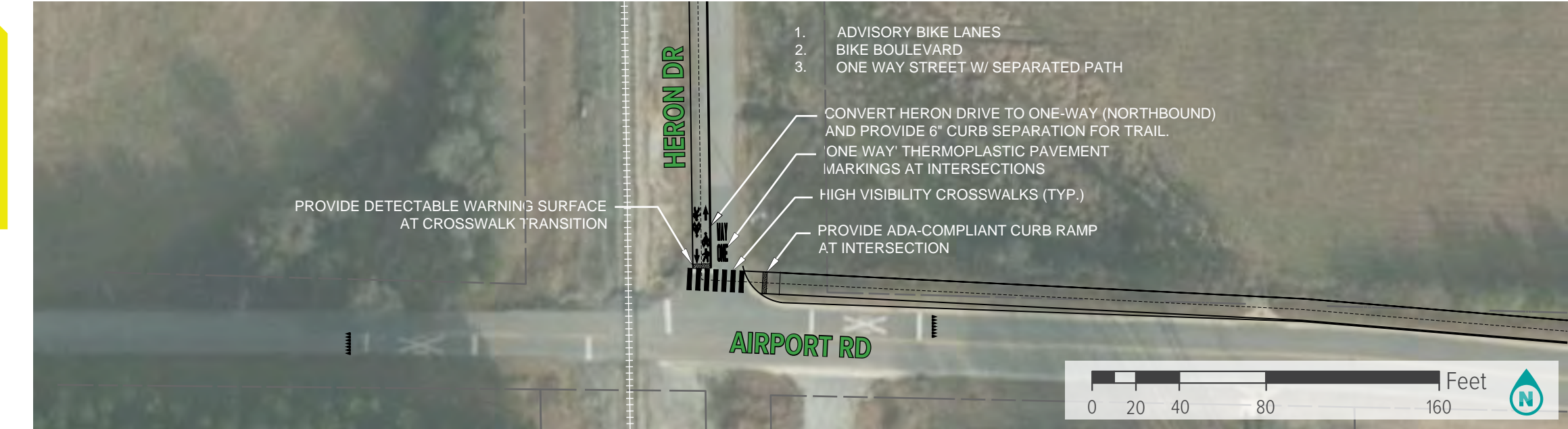
Project Description

The first segment of the proposed Singing River Trail network in Athens will begin at the current terminus of the Richard Martin Trail at the intersection of Piney Chapel Road and Delaney Road, the location of the southern trailhead for the Richard Martin Trail. Crossing improvements will be made here to include high visibility crosswalks, detectable warning surface, advance warning signs, rectangular rapid flash beacons (RRFBs), and yield pavement markings. The trail will continue due south parallel to the adjacent rail line, and will require easements from two property owners. The trail will then cross Kimzy Carr Road with crossing improvements and proceed onto Heron Drive, where the road can either be converted to one-way or can be marked and signed as a bicycle boulevard or advisory shoulder. This segment will terminate at Airport Road.

Property acquisition will be required from two property owners adjacent to the rail line between Piney Chapel Road and Kimzy Carr Road. The trail will need to be coordinated with Limestone County for the portion within Heron Drive right-of-way.

ONE-WAY CONVERSION OF HERON DR

CAD PLAN



ONE-WAY CONVERSION OF HERON DR

RENDERING



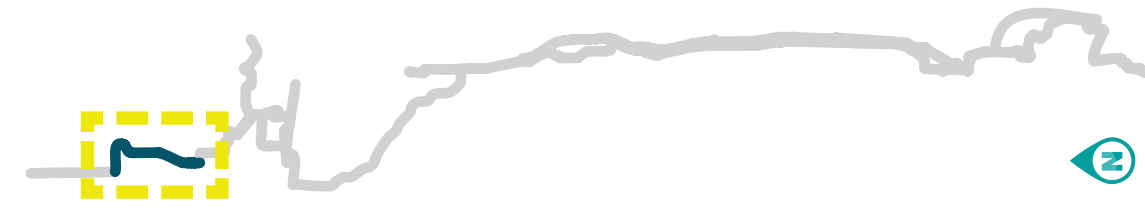
Looking South along existing private drive. The trail will continue southbound from the terminus of the Richard Martin Trail.



Looking North along Heron Drive, the rendering shows the preferred trail typology - a one-way conversion of Heron Drive (northbound) and separation of the trail from the travel lane with a raised concrete curb.

Segment 2

Industrial Park



Segment 2 Industrial Park

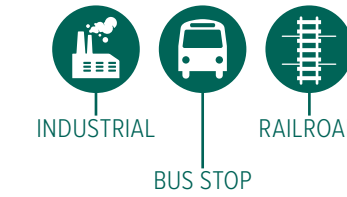
PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:

MILEAGE: +/- 1.4 miles

TYPOLOGIES: Sidepath

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:



Project Description

The second segment of the proposed trail will begin at the intersection of Airport Road and Heron Drive where the trail will follow along the northern edge of Airport Road to the East. The trail will need to be located at the back of curb to provide enough space to stay out of the drainage swale at the edge of the road ROW. Once the trail reaches Wilkinson Street, it will cross Airport Road with crossing improvements including pavement markings, signage, and a new vehicular stop sign at the eastbound corner of Airport Road. The trail will continue southbound on the west side of Wilkinson Street. Where feasible, the trail will be placed 3' from the back of the curb to provide some buffer from commercial truck traffic within the Industrial Park. This placement may require that some street lights be relocated to outside the trail alignment. This segment of the trail will require three spur rail crossings to be coordinated with CSX and industrial businesses. This segment will terminate at Elm Street, where a new traffic light is being installed at the entrance to the Industrial Park.



Looking South along Wilkinson Street from Airport Road. The trail will cross Airport Road at this location and continue as a sidepath along the west (photo right) side of Wilkinson Street crossing three rail spurs.



Existing conditions at one of the three spur rail crossings. Looking North along Wilkinson Street, where the trail will follow the west (photo left) side of the road as a sidepath.



Looking West along Airport Road. The trail will follow along the back of curb as a concrete sidepath to Heron Drive.

Segment 3

Elm Street to Pryor Park



Segment 3 Elm Street to Pryor Park

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:
MILEAGE: +/- 1.1 miles
TYPOLOGIES: Greenway (paved), Sidepath

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:

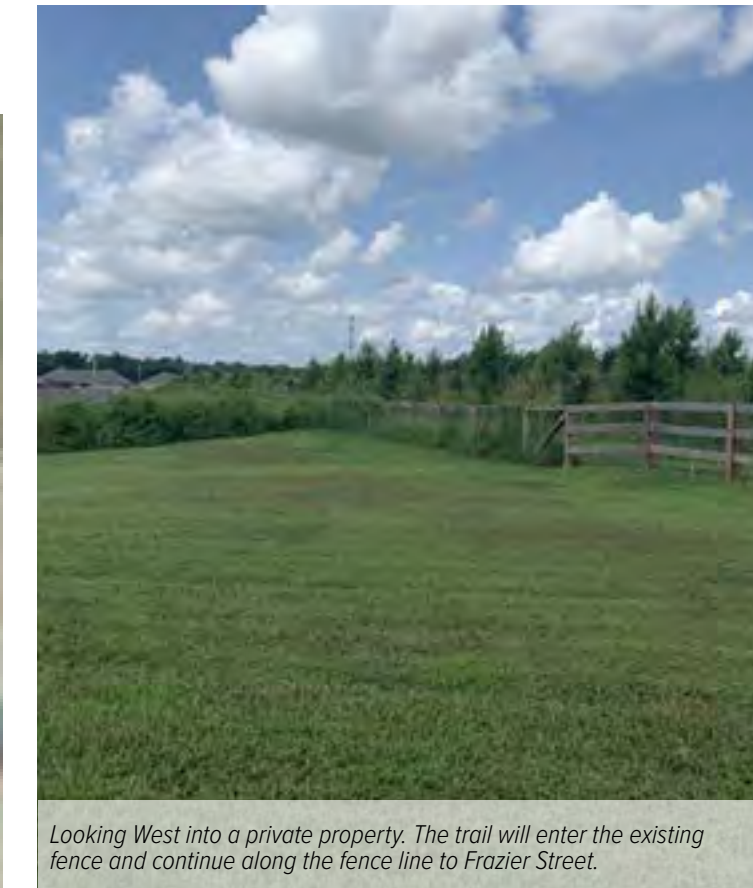
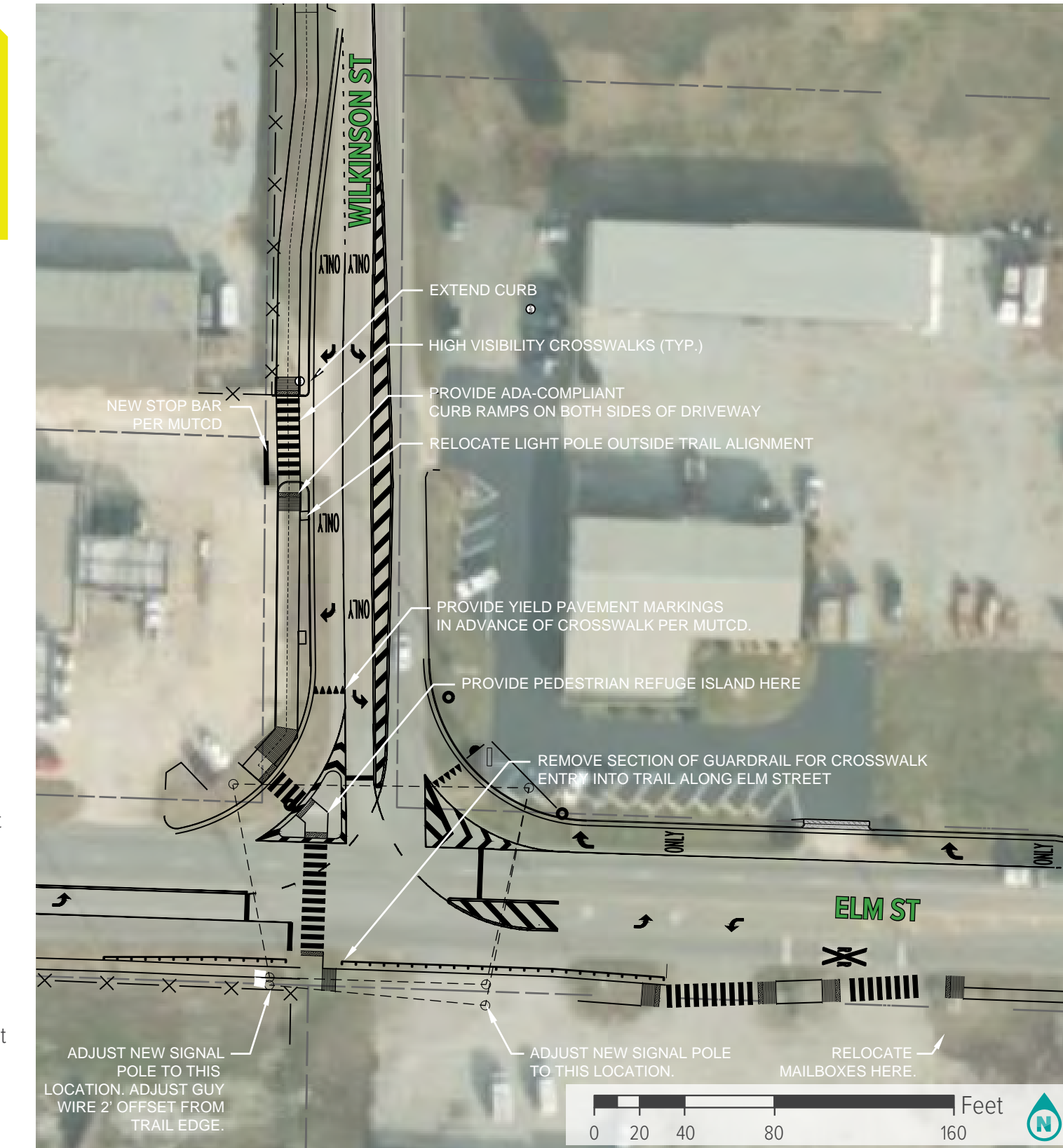


Project Description

The third segment of the proposed trail will begin at the intersection of Wilkinson Street and Elm Street, where it will cross Elm Street utilizing a new pedestrian refuge island at the new stop light. The trail will then follow along the southern edge of Elm Street adjacent to new curb and gutter eastbound across two rail lines (to be coordinated with CSX). The trail will turn southbound and follow the west side of Frazier Street separated by a 7' minimum buffer, which will require an easement from one property owner. The trail will cross Frazier Street at a midblock crossing located at the first commercial entrance and will stay within the public right-of-way until it crosses into the Johnson Property (easement required), where it will follow the newly planted treeline and fence row to Elkton Street where it will cross at a new 4-way stop at Elkton Street's intersection with Cornish Drive and Skyview Drive and proceed eastward along the northern edge of Cornish Drive. This segment will require an easement from Athens State University. This segment will terminate at the northern edge of the new park site on the former Pilgrim's Pride plant site.

ELM ST CROSSING

CAD PLAN



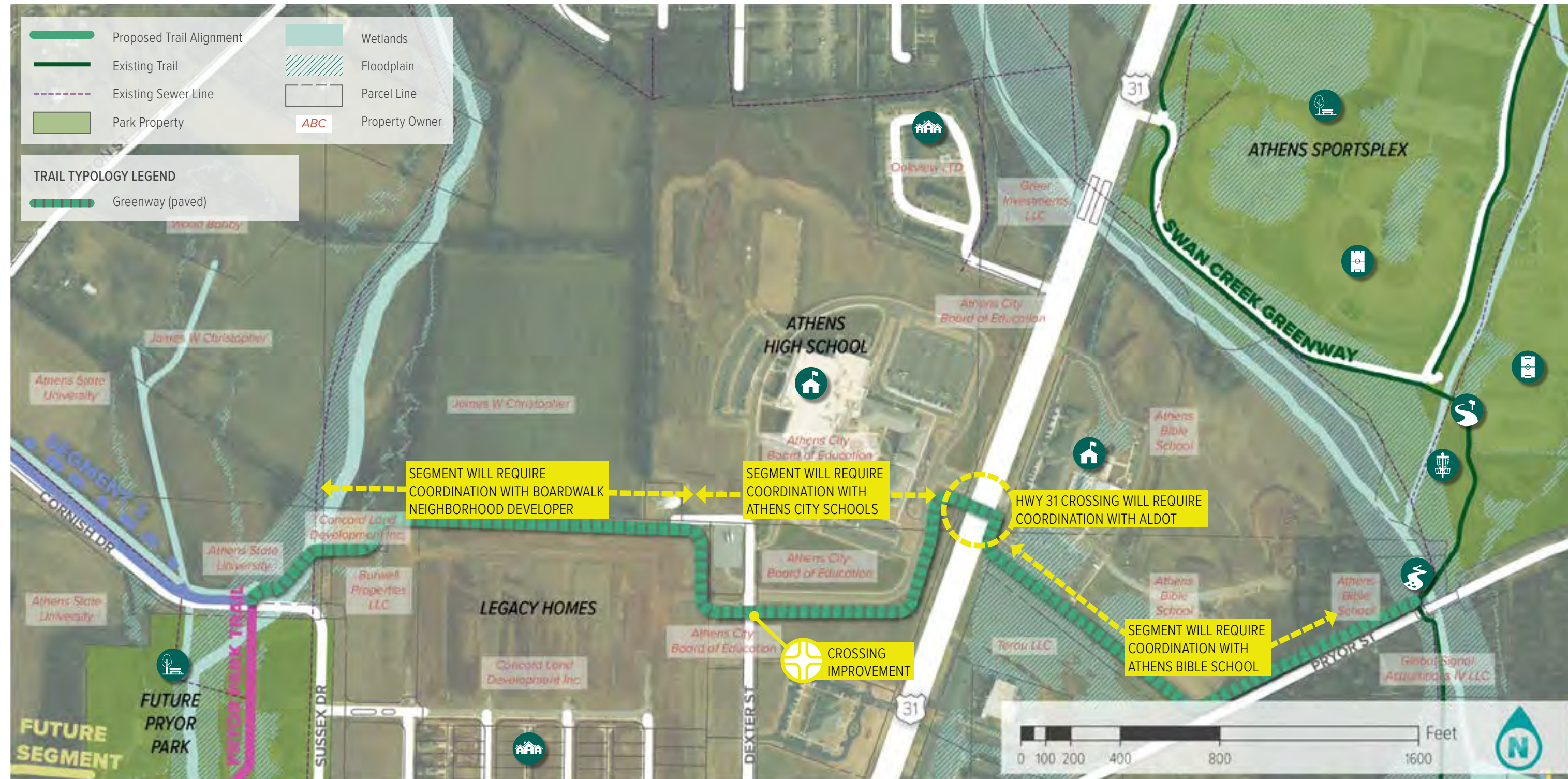
Looking West into a private property. The trail will enter the existing fence and continue along the fence line to Frazier Street.



Looking East, the trail will follow Elm Street along the edge of pavement with a new concrete curb and paved concrete sidepath.

Segment 4

Pryor Park to Swan Creek Greenway



Segment 4 Pryor Park to Swan Creek Greenway

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:

MILEAGE: +/- 1.1 miles

TYOLOGIES: Greenway (paved)

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:

- PARK
- SCHOOL
- TRAIL
- NEIGHBORHOOD
- STREAM
- SPORTS FIELD
- DISC GOLF

Project Description

The fourth segment of the proposed trail will begin at the northern edge of the new park site, where the primary Singing River Trail Trailhead for Athens is planned (see rendering, to the right), with a culvert extension and new headwall built to cross the unnamed tributary that flows through the park. The trail will continue eastward along the northern edge of the Boardwalk neighborhood. The trail will then cross Golden Eagle Drive at the intersection of the Athens High School loop and will follow the loop on the southern/eastern edge to cross Highway 31 at-grade utilizing a pedestrian refuge island, countdown signals, and leading pedestrian intervals. The trail will continue along the southwestern property line of Athens Bible School to AL-251 where the trail will parallel the roadway with 15' of separation from the road edge. This segment will terminate into the Swan Creek Greenway near the covered bridge (see image at the top right of this page).

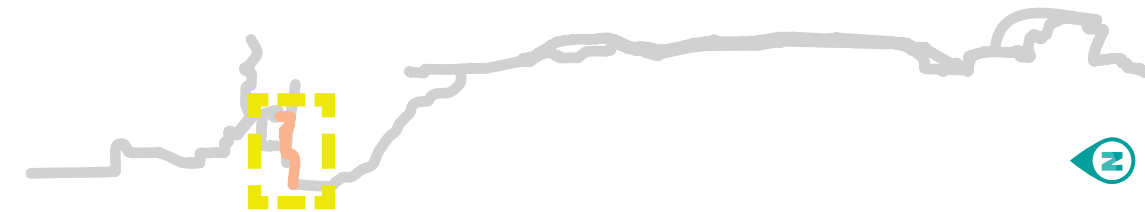


FUTURE PRYOR PARK CIRCULATION PLAN



Segment 5

Pryor Park to Downtown



Segment 5 Pryor Park to Downtown

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:
MILEAGE: +/- 1.1 miles
TYPOLOGIES: Greenway (paved), Sidewalk / Two-Way Cycle Track, Share the Road

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:



SHAW ST / HOBBS ST CONNECTION

CAD PLAN



Project Description

The fifth segment of the project will begin at the southern edge of the new park site and travel south along the eastern edge of Shaw Street. This will be accomplished through converting existing head-in parking along the Flanagan Lumber property to 30° angled parking and placing the new trail facility along the building edge. Multiple commercial entrances will be crossed with high visibility crosswalk markings and signage, and bumpouts will be provided to prioritize pedestrians and bicyclists. The trail will turn westward when it reaches Hobbs Street, where the facility type will change to sidewalks and two-way, in-road cycle tracks for the block of Hobbs Street in front of the Athens Police Department, due to right-of-way constraints caused by the open drainage system on this block. At Thomas Street, the trail will merge onto the Quad Plex property and change back to a separated greenway typology and follow the northern edge of the creek into Athens State Property where it will follow the northern edge of the tree line along Hobbs Street up to East Street. The trail will then cross East Street with crossing improvements, and will follow the east side of East Street with new curb and gutter. At Market Street East, the trail will cross East Street into Big Spring Park ("The Duck Pond"). The trail will then convert into a separated, in-road shared use path through the park's parking lot and past the Athens-Limestone Chamber of Commerce parking area, cross Beaty Street and continue as a separated on-road facility until the trail crosses Clinton Street, where the facility will change to sidewalks with high visibility share-the-road pavement markings for bicycles in the low-speed areas of downtown. This segment will terminate at the Limestone County Courthouse Square.

Segment 6

Swan Creek Trailhead to Martin Lime Road



Segment 6 Swan Creek Trailhead to Martin Lime Road

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:

MILEAGE: +/- 6.4 miles

TYPOLOGIES: Greenway (unpaved), Bike / Ped Bridge

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:



Project Description

The sixth segment of the trail will begin at the Swan Creek Trailhead south of Hwy-72 adjacent to Swan Creek. The trail will continue southward along the western edge of Swan Creek to Strain Road where it will cross Swan Creek with a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge and begin to follow the new sewer easement running southbound along the eastern edge of Swan Creek. This new sewer easement is in the process of being acquired, and the final location of the trail will be determined based on easement acquisition. The trail will continue along the proposed sewer easement to the site of the future North Alabama Zoological Society Zoo, who have agreed to be an SRT partner. This segment will terminate at Martin Lime Road.



Looking West across Swan Creek at Strain Road where the trail will cross the creek with a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge and continue south towards Calhoun Community College.



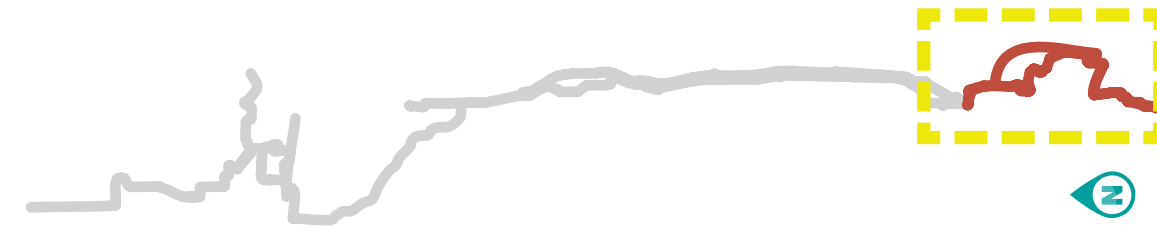
Looking South along newly constructed portion of Swan Creek Greenway at the new trailhead. The trail will tie into the Swan Creek Greenway at this location and continue south along Swan Creek.



Looking South along the future Singing River Trail corridor. The trail will follow the upcoming sewer extension easement southbound to the future zoo site.

Segment 7

Martin Lime Road to Calhoun

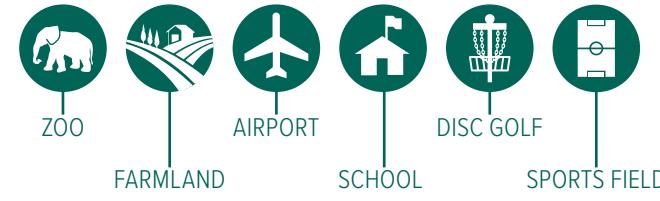


Phase 7 Martin Lime Road to Calhoun

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

COST:
MILEAGE: +/- 4.7 miles
TYPOLOGIES: Greenway (unpaved)

MAJOR DESTINATIONS:



Project Description

The seventh segment of the trail will begin at Martin Lime Road near the site of the future Zoo and continue southbound through the Pryor Family property, following existing tree lines. The trail will then turn back westward towards Hwy-31 across Garrett Road to follow the western edge of the perimeter fence of Pryor Field Regional Airport and behind the Oakland United Methodist Church to the double tree row in front of Calhoun Community College. This segment of the trail will terminate at the parking lot of the Aerospace Training Center on the Calhoun Community College campus. The trail will continue southward towards the Tennessee River where the City of Decatur and Morgan County will be connecting into the trail network across the river and westward towards the Shoals and eastward towards the Town of Mooresville and City of Madison will be connecting to the network via a new multimodal overpass over Interstate 65 at Bibb Garrett Road. This segment will complete Athens's connection to the overall SRT network, which will allow bicyclists and pedestrians a safe route from the Alabama-Tennessee state line to Scottsboro to the east and Florence to the west.



Looking South into the Warhawk Disc Golf Course at Calhoun Community College from Stearman Way near Pryor Field Regional Airport.



Looking South along the Pryor Field Regional Airport perimeter fence where the trail will follow the fence line into Calhoun Community College Campus.



Looking South along the edge of Calhoun Community College campus where the trail will split the double tree row and follow Hwy 31 South towards Decatur where it will link with the rest of the Singing River Trail.

Implementation

Overview

While the desired outcomes and anticipated benefits of trail development will not be fully realized until segments are fully connected, social and economic impacts can begin to be felt by the community as soon as construction commences. Significant cost savings can be gained by designing, permitting, and constructing trail segments as larger multi-mile projects. However, it is likely that financial constraints will require City of Athens trails to be completed in several sections as funding becomes available.

The Athens portion of the Singing River Trail extends a total of 21 miles as recommended, including future spurs. The phasing strategy proposed represents realistic goals for project implementation, assuming there is local support and cooperation. Regardless of available funds or willing parties, it is necessary to prioritize construction of the trail into functional segments for development.

Point-to-point connections were considered for all segments as is the criteria developed in the prioritization process in the previous section, as well as ongoing community development projects, feedback from staff, and public input.

The prioritization criteria and phasing plan should be

revisited and refreshed when closer to implementation for each segment, as development patterns, funding sources and population growth change over time.

As the project stands today, the “low-hanging fruit” segment of the trail is Segment 6, which connects the new trailhead for the Swan Creek Greenway with the proposed site for the NALZS Zoo near Martin Lime Road. This project has the potential to accomplish a large portion of trail construction in conjunction with an Athens Utilities’ Sewer Extension Project following the east side of Swan Creek south towards Calhoun Community College. This segment has the opportunity to reduce costs for trail implementation and leverage the new access to sewer in these areas to obtain easements for both the sewer extension and the trail in one step. The City of Athens, Athens Utilities, and Limestone County, in partnership with the Singing River Trail and Launch 2035, should continue to coordinate the efforts of the sewer extension with trail implementation to ensure this segment is completed. This will serve as a benchmark for future partnerships and collaboration between agencies within the Singing River Trail region.

NEXT STEPS

The successful implementation of trails along these corridors will follow several steps after the publication of this report. Implementation steps include:

1. Programming + policy implementation
2. Identifying potential funding sources
3. Stakeholder review + outreach
4. Environmental review and permitting requirements
5. Trail partnerships

The study recognizes the complexity of the corridor and the challenges associated with implementing paved and unpaved, separated facilities along the preferred alignment. Implementation guidance is provided in this section.

1. Programming + Policy Implementation

LEVERAGE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

As Athens continues to grow and expand its borders, the City and County can leverage this plan to build synergy with future development by requiring the dedication of right-of-way for a separated multi-use trail. However, the City cannot request more than established minimum standards. This plan suggests that City and County’s land development codes include minimum standards for pathway and other active transportation connectivity, including the requirement to build or accommodate previously planned facilities that fall within the area of interest. In instances where development applications are requesting variances, zone changes, or other requests that modify the currently entitled land use, it may be possible to require land dedicated for a future trail. This recommendation is particularly relevant to Segment 6 + 7 where residential growth along the Swan Creek corridor is currently happening.

2. Identifying Funding Sources

Having sufficient funds is necessary for implementation of the Singing River Trail. Communities that are consistently successful in implementing these types of projects leverage funds from a variety of sources and are consistent, year after year, with making investments in capital and maintenance projects. This study recognizes the challenge of funding this project, but this section outlines suitable opportunities if funding be pursued.

The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Local Governments (TARCOG) helps local governments in this region improve the quality of life for the region’s more than 649,000 residents. The Council does this by obtaining funding for local government assistance, coordinating local governments’ responses to regional issues, and providing a wide range of services to the region’s governments and residents. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), the Alabama Trails Commission, Alabama Trails Foundation, and AlaBike also serve as potential sources for guidance in funding for the implementation of these types of projects. Projects of this size may apply for multiple funding sources at the local, state, and federal level. Capital funding for city infrastructure improvements and state or federal grants could also be leveraged.

The City should work with these entities to apply for appropriate funding opportunities. Grant opportunities that may be appropriate are listed below.

FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Set-Aside – administered by ALDOT
- Recreational Trails Program (RTP) – administered by ADECA

Additional information about all federal funding opportunities can be found here: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.cfm

LOCAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- Local capital budget for roadway construction and maintenance
- Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)
- Bonds
- Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)
- Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)

3. Stakeholder Review + Outreach

Continuous communication and outreach with the public at large will be important. Relationship building and communication with impacted stakeholders, such as adjacent property owners and business operators, will be crucial for making decisions on next steps for the implementation of these projects. While efforts to minimize would-be impacted properties were made during this study, more property owner outreach needs to take place, as **the findings from this study indicate several instances of both temporary and permanent impacts on adjacent properties.**

4. Environmental Review + Permitting Requirements

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA) COMPLIANCE

While several funding sources have been identified for further consideration, dedicated funding for this project is unknown. Environmental analysis was not addressed in this study. Moving forward, it should be assumed that some federal funding and associated compliance with federal permits or approvals will be required. Compliance with NEPA may be required.



5. Trail Partnerships

Trail implementation and management can be effective and efficient with support from partnerships with a variety of public, private, non-profit, and community organizations at the local, regional, and national levels. Through the combined resources of existing staff, new funding sources, and new community partners and volunteers, the following are strategies for advancing best practices in implementation and management for the Singing River Trail system.

TOP OF ALABAMA RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)

The Top of Alabama RPO is responsible for leading regional transportation initiatives and coordinating transportation grant funding. In the event additional coordination is needed for other roles, the RPO could serve as a facilitator of meetings, especially if it involves the Mayor or City Manager of partner cities.

Other roles may include:

- Provide updates to City staff on opportunities for facility development that coincide with other capital or maintenance projects
- Work actively to ensure bicycle and pedestrian projects are funded through the State prioritization process (STIP).
- Keep City staff and leadership updated on upcoming grant funding cycles and provide grant application support.



CITY OF ATHENS ADMINISTRATION

City Administration provides leadership and funding obligations and budget items for capital improvements. City management should adopt a budget for expenditures of funding that support local trail development. City staff should be prepared to provide supporting materials to the administration for the budget process, including any bicycling, walking, and trail-related reports, user estimates, and benchmarking statistics.

Athens officials ensure that the public's health and safety are protected during the normal use of any city-owned property, including parks and trails. The City of Athens Administration would have the overall responsibility for trail construction, operations, and maintenance, with support from the Singing River Trail organization.

Other roles may include:

- Coordinate across jurisdictional boundaries to provide trail network connectivity to Athens.
- Enforce trail design standards and uniformity for all future trail construction projects.
- Lead greenway programmatic activities to encourage trail use and community pride.
- Conduct evaluation activities along trails such as user preference surveys and counts.

POLICE/SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENTS

The Limestone County Sheriff's Department patrols all public property including parks and recreation facilities in areas outside Athens City Limits. For areas within the Athens City Limits, the Athens Police Department will patrol trail portions in their jurisdiction. When segments of the Singing River Trail are constructed, police patrol should increase in the first six months to monitor use and hours of operation along the trail.

LAUNCH 2035

LAUNCH 2035 has helped promote the advancement of trails in the North Alabama region. The organization, a 501 (c)3, seeks to support enhanced regional land-use planning, including outdoor recreation, greenways, land preservation, innovative neighborhood concepts, and integrated transportation planning. LAUNCH 2035 should continue to play a role during the development of the Athens network by helping to organize promotional events, assisting with fundraising, and raising awareness for increased trail use and programming.

ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND NON-PROFITS

Private organizations can play a significant role in the development and management of trail systems; local, regional, and national organizations provide various types of help. Local organizations can make in-kind donations, volunteer labor, and construct and maintain sections of a trail. Regional and national organizations can provide similar types of support including the provisioning of grants and other funding schemes. When new businesses or subdivisions are constructed near or adjacent to a trail facility, they may agree to share responsibility in supporting operations and maintenance, as well as providing access and dedicating open space.

After a trail is constructed, other developments, adjacent to or nearby, may take place and affect trail usage. Agreements can be established for new neighborhood, subdivision, and business development in such areas to help support trail maintenance, operations, and access. This type of support may include annual fees, in-kind donations, and day-to-day operations and maintenance responsibilities.

To various degrees, partnerships between other private, public, and non-profit agencies can also be formed in creating a diversified, stable support system for the trail network. For Athens the following partners have been identified:

- Athens State University
- Calhoun Community College
- Limestone County
- Town of Elkmont
- City of Decatur
- Town of Mooresville
- Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
- Limestone County Economic Development Association (LCEDA)
- Greater Limestone County Chamber of Commerce
- Athens Utilities
- Limestone County Water and Sewer Authority
- Athens City Schools
- Athens Bible School
- Athens-Limestone Hospital
- North Alabama Zoological Society (NALZS)
- Rotary Club
- Local Developers

What's next for the Singing River Trail Action Plan?

1

PRESENT FINDINGS TO CITY COUNCIL

Before proceeding further, Athens staff should present the Singing River Trail Athens Action Plan to the City Council for review and adoption.

2

ENGAGE A PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING FIRM

Identify a consultant or consultant team to develop a complete design package for the first segment of trail.

3

ENGAGE PROPERTY OWNERS

City staff, project partners, and the consultant team should together determine the best strategy to reach out to adjacent property owners along the corridor to obtain approval of final design.

4

FINALIZE THE ROUTE

Following public input, City staff should organize a team meeting to review this document in detail, along with the results of the previous two steps, and confirm the details of the final routing and recommended improvements.

5

COMPLETE DESIGN

Once the route is finalized, the consultant team should complete a full design of the trail and produce a comprehensive set of construction documents that follow the standards required for the appropriate funding source.

6

CONSTRUCT THE TRAIL

Once construction documents are produced, the trail can then be constructed with any federal funds that have been set aside for this project and any local funds required to supplement those funds.

7

PERFORM ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND PATROLLING

Once the trail is on the ground, City staff and the Singing River Trail organization should continue to maintain and patrol the trail in accordance with the trail management and maintenance best practices.



Appendix A

Stakeholder Visioning Maps



Appendix B

Sample Easement Language

SAMPLE TRAIL EASEMENT

THIS TRAIL EASEMENT is made and entered into this _____ day of _____, 20____ by and between _____ (hereinafter referred to as "Grantor"), and CITY OF ATHENS, a political subdivision of the State of Alabama (hereinafter referred to as "Grantee"). Wherever used herein the terms "Grantor" and "Grantee" include all the parties to this instrument and their respective heirs, legal representatives, successors and assigns. Grantor is used for singular or plural, as the context requires.

W I T N E S S E T H:

Grantor, for and in consideration of TEN DOLLARS (\$10.00) and other valuable consideration paid by the Grantee, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, hereby conveys, grants, bargains and sells unto the Grantee, a perpetual, non-exclusive easement for the purpose of construction and maintenance of a public pedestrian and bicycling trail upon and across the following described lands located in Limestone County, Alabama, to wit:

See attached Exhibit "A" which is incorporated herein by reference.
Subject to easements, restrictions, and reservations of record.

The trail shall be constructed and maintained in conformance with generally accepted design standards, and may include paved and unpaved trail surfaces, at-grade shoulders, vegetative buffers (with irrigation), benches, and such improvements as necessary to comply with all lawful requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Grantor hereby declares and covenants that the general public shall have and be allowed regular access to the Trail Easement Area, for the purpose of walking, jogging, running, bicycling and like activities, but specifically excluding all motorized vehicles except as authorized by Grantee for maintenance, management, police and emergency purposes.

Grantee shall have the right to regulate public access to, and activities within, the Trail Easement Area, and shall further have the right to require Grantor to keep the Trail Easement Area free from obstructions which prevent reasonable public access to and along the Trail Easement Area, including but not limited to structures, fences and fallen trees.

The easement granted herein shall constitute an easement running with the land in perpetuity and shall burden the lands described above.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Grantor has caused these presents to be executed the date and year first above written.

Signed, sealed and delivered in our presence as witnesses: **Grantor(s)**

(1) _____ Signature	_____ Signature
_____ Printed/Typed Name:	_____ Printed/Typed Name:
(2) _____ Signature	_____ Signature
_____ Printed/Typed Name:	_____ Printed/Typed Name:

SAMPLE TRAIL EASEMENT

STATE OF ALABAMA
COUNTY OF LIMESTONE

The foregoing Easement was acknowledged before me, the undersigned authority, on this _____ day of _____, 20____, by _____ who () are personally known to me or () produced _____ as identification.

Notary Public/State of Alabama

Name: _____

My Commission expires: _____