



DATE: February 3, 2017

ISSUE SUMMARY: Regional Trail Plan

FROM: Mike Alexander, *Director*, Center for Livable Communities

IMPORTANCE:

In May 2016, ARC adopted the active transportation component of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), named Walk. Bike. Thrive! The Plan advanced the concept of a Regional Trail System in order to help achieve the goals set forth in the plan to create walking and biking options for everyone in all communities.

In May 2016, the ARC Board also established the Regional Trails Task Force to advance the vision for a regional trail network, to assist ARC and local partners in the regional to implement the Walk. Bike. Thrive! Plan goals, and to recommend specific trails in the region for priority development in the Regional Trail System serving all parts of the region.

The Regional Trails Report documents the work of the Regional Trails Task Force in 2016, including review of existing and proposed connecting trails in the region, trail priorities and feasibility throughout the region, potential funding sources, and a proposal of major trails in the region to be linked to form a Regional Trail System to serve as a near term and future framework for implementing a complete system of trails in the region.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Adoption of the Regional Trails Report and implementation plan established.

**A RESOLUTION BY THE ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION
ADOPTING A REGIONAL TRAIL PLAN:**

WHEREAS, the active transportation component of the Regional Transportation Plan (the “RTP”) element of The Atlanta Region’s Plan was unanimously adopted in May 2016 by the Board of the Atlanta Regional Commission and was named the Walk. Bike. Thrive! plan; and

WHEREAS, the Walk. Bike. Thrive! Plan advanced the concept of a Regional Trail System in order to help achieve the goals of “creating walking and bicycling options for everyone in every community”, “ensuring safer and more accessible bicycling and walking in the region”, and “tying walking and bicycling improvements to quality of life, economic competitiveness, and health”; and

WHEREAS, The Atlanta Region’s Plan establishes the Regional Development Plan Policies for the Atlanta Region; and

WHEREAS, the ARC Board adopted a resolution in May 2016 to establish the Regional Trails Task Force to advance the vision for a regional trail network, to assist ARC and local partners in the region to implement the Walk. Bike. Thrive! Plan goals, and to recommend specific trails in the region for priority development in the Regional Trail System serving all parts of the region; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Trails Task Force has carefully studied existing and proposed connecting trails in the region, has consulted with citizens and public and private organizations concerning trail priorities and feasibility throughout the region, has studied sources of funding to establish connecting trails and the projected costs of establishing such trails, and has proposed that major trails in the region be linked to form a Regional Trail System to be implemented to provide a near-term and future framework for a complete system of trails in the Region; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Trails Task Force has documented its efforts in a Regional Trails Report entitled Envisioning a Regional Trail Network: A Feasibility Report for an Interconnected Trail Network in Metro Atlanta; and

WHEREAS, said report determined that an initial connected 225-mile Regional Trail System could be completed by adding approximately 70 additional miles of trails; and

WHEREAS, said report determined that a regional system should be developed to serve the entire region, including currently underserved areas or Equitable Target Areas; and

WHEREAS, the initial Regional Trail System and ARC’s implementation priorities are defined in the said Regional Trails Report and the attached *Guidance for a Regional Trail System Program*; and

WHEREAS, a Regional Trail System is broadly supported by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Atlanta Regional Commission adopts the Regional Trails Report and the implementation plan established therein; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ARC Board hereby approves development of a Regional Trails Program in substantial accordance with the Regional Trails Report presented on this date to the ARC Board and hereby authorizes the allocation and expenditure of the federal funding specified in said report, along with matching local and private funding, so as to target completion of the initial Regional Trail System by 2022; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the ARC Board directs staff to develop specific recommendations on RTP funding levels and schedules for implementation of the initial Regional Trail System; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Atlanta Regional Commission supports the equitable development of trails in all parts of the region to support the health, safety, mobility, and economic competitiveness of our residents and communities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Atlanta Regional Commission requests local governments, non-governmental organizations, and state and federal agencies to support implementation of the initial Regional Trail System and the overall vision of the Regional Trails Report.

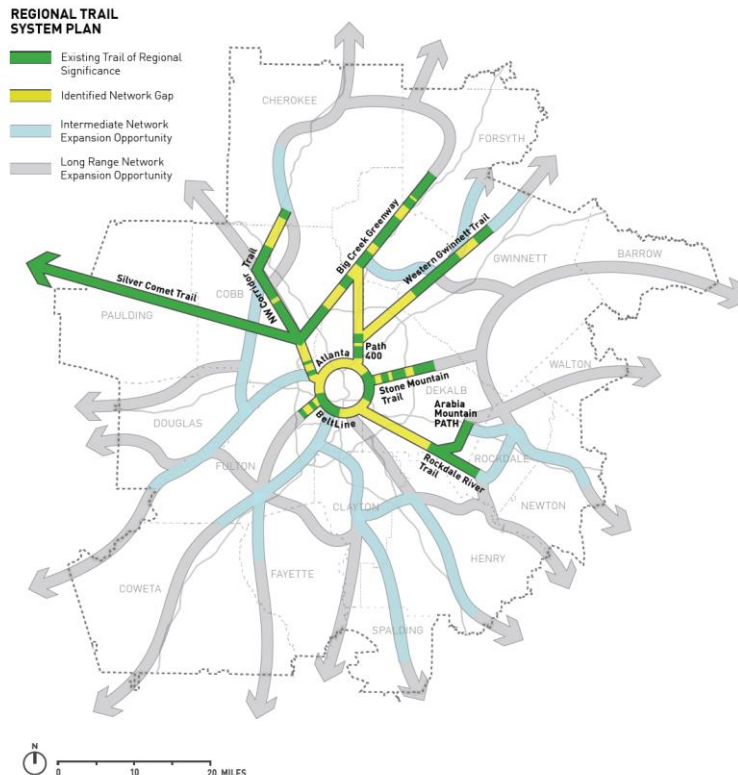
GUIDANCE FOR A REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM PROGRAM

The following is guidance to establish a Regional Trail Program to continue to support implementation of a Regional Trails System, including by providing additional study funding, connecting and expanding trails of regional significance, and providing dedicated funds for construction projects.

ARC will commit resources for planning studies and transportation infrastructure investments in specific trails that will provide a connected regional trail system to improve transportation mobility, provide opportunities for healthy activity, connect parks and communities, connect and maintain green space, and improve the air quality and health of the entire Region. The goals of this program will be to: expand transportation options; benefit air quality by seeking to reduce VMT; support development, job access, regional transit, and economic competitiveness; support the needs of disadvantaged residents and communities; and improve the quality of life in communities where the region’s citizens choose to live and work.

Implementation of the Regional Trails Report

On February 22, 2017 the ARC Board will adopt a resolution in support of the regional trails report, titled “Envisioning a Regional Trail Network: A Feasibility Report for an Interconnected Trail Network in Metro Atlanta”, to implement the vision and goals established in the regional active transportation plan, “Walk. Bike. Thrive!”, and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This Regional Trails System Program will help implement these policies adopted by the agency.



Initial Regional Trails

The initial trails which constitute the Regional Trails System are those existing, shown in green on the Regional Trail System Plan map above, and those that serve to fill gaps between existing trails of regional significance, shown in yellow.

Trails that constitute future network opportunities, shown in blue and grey, represent regional priority corridors for expanding the network strategically and equitably to the entire region.

Program Focus

- Planning and scoping studies will be directed towards segments that connect existing regional trails and corridors that assist with the equitable development of a trail system to serve the entire MPO area over time. Outreach efforts will be made to advertise the program to all local governments in the MPO.
- Immediate trail development will be directed towards the approximately 70 miles of trails needed to form the initial connected regional trail system as specified as the yellow trails on said map. Additional trails, blue and grey, will be added on a systematic basis over time, as opportunities arise, or as possible to ensure regional equity.
- Studies shall be offered for planning and scoping additional future trails of regional significance in an effort to prepare them for connection to the Regional Trail System and to ensure the equitable development of a regional trail system.

Budget, Policies, & Procedures

- ARC's federal Transportation Alternatives Program funds – not less than \$7 million per year or \$35 million over 5 years – will be dedicated to completing studies and implementing the initial Regional Trail System. Other federal funds should be utilized, whenever eligibility allows, to complete the system. Grants for studies will awarded on a regular basis beginning in 2017 and continued annually for subsequent years.
- Priority funding for future regional trail projects will be given to those trails that: connect with the regional system; connect communities, parks, and activity centers; serve Equitable Target Areas; communities that overmatch federal funds; and projects that assist in implementing community development or land use changes.
- Regional trail projects will continue to be reviewed and selected at the beginning of each TIP cycle based on the project selection criteria established in the Regional Trails Report and “Walk. Bike. Thrive!” plan.