



DAWSON COUNTY

GREENWAY AND TRAIL MASTER PLAN

MAY 17, 2021
Prepared for: The Development Authority
of Dawson County
Prepared by: Thomas & Hutton
Funded by: Georgia's Rural Center

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Dawson County Greenway and Trail Master Plan

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Prepared For:



Prepared By:



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Unlike many communities, Dawson County is planning for trails and greenways ahead of/during booming development and growth, not after the majority of the land is developed. There are easily identified places where trails need to connect and now is the time to start the process of connecting the dots with planned routes. Existing topography and proximity to water adds challenges to the process, but they also create interest and beauty in the system.

Many of the greenways proposed in this plan rely on the acquisition of right-of-ways and easements through privately owned lands. The routes shown in the proposed master plan utilize existing and planned utility easements and/or roadway right-of-ways to the greatest extent practical. For portions shown through undeveloped properties, the route should be refined with detailed design to accommodate future development plans for the property.

This plan identifies approximately 19.6 miles of trails in southern Dawson County, connecting schools, parks, Lake Lanier, Dawson Forest, neighborhoods, employment areas and the Highway 400 retail and service destinations. Future expansion of the trail system should include connections to Russell Creek Reservoir, Downtown Dawsonville, Amicalola Falls State Park and other greenspaces and protected areas.

To be successful, the 19.6 miles of new trails will require significant time and monetary investment. But upon doing so, the County will reap benefits that will be enjoyed for generations to come. These projects should not be looked at as simply addressing a recreational need. Instead, the well connected trail system will address transportation infrastructure, economic growth investment and many other community needs.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

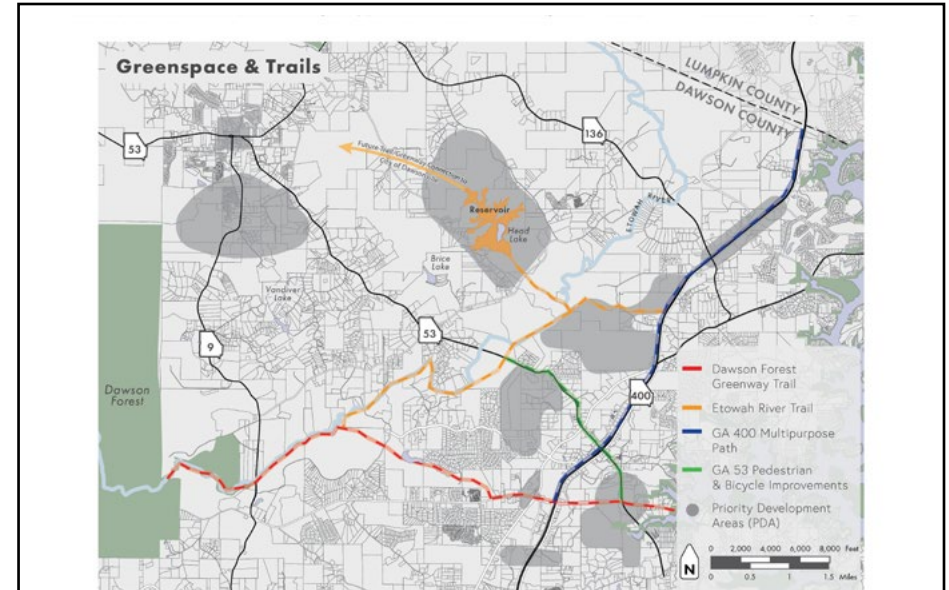
1.1 BACKGROUND

In early 2020, the Development Authority of Dawson County initiated a study for the development of a comprehensive economic development plan. The plan identified five specific vision/goals for the County, which were:

- Build a Resilient Community
- Focus Development Efforts
- Generate Opportunity for Business
- Support Community Residents
- Protect and Conserve Natural and Cultural Resources

The plan further identified the need for specific planning and long term funding for the development of greenspaces and greenways. These two community assets would connect areas of existing and planned growth to the large amount of open spaces and natural resources that are within the County.

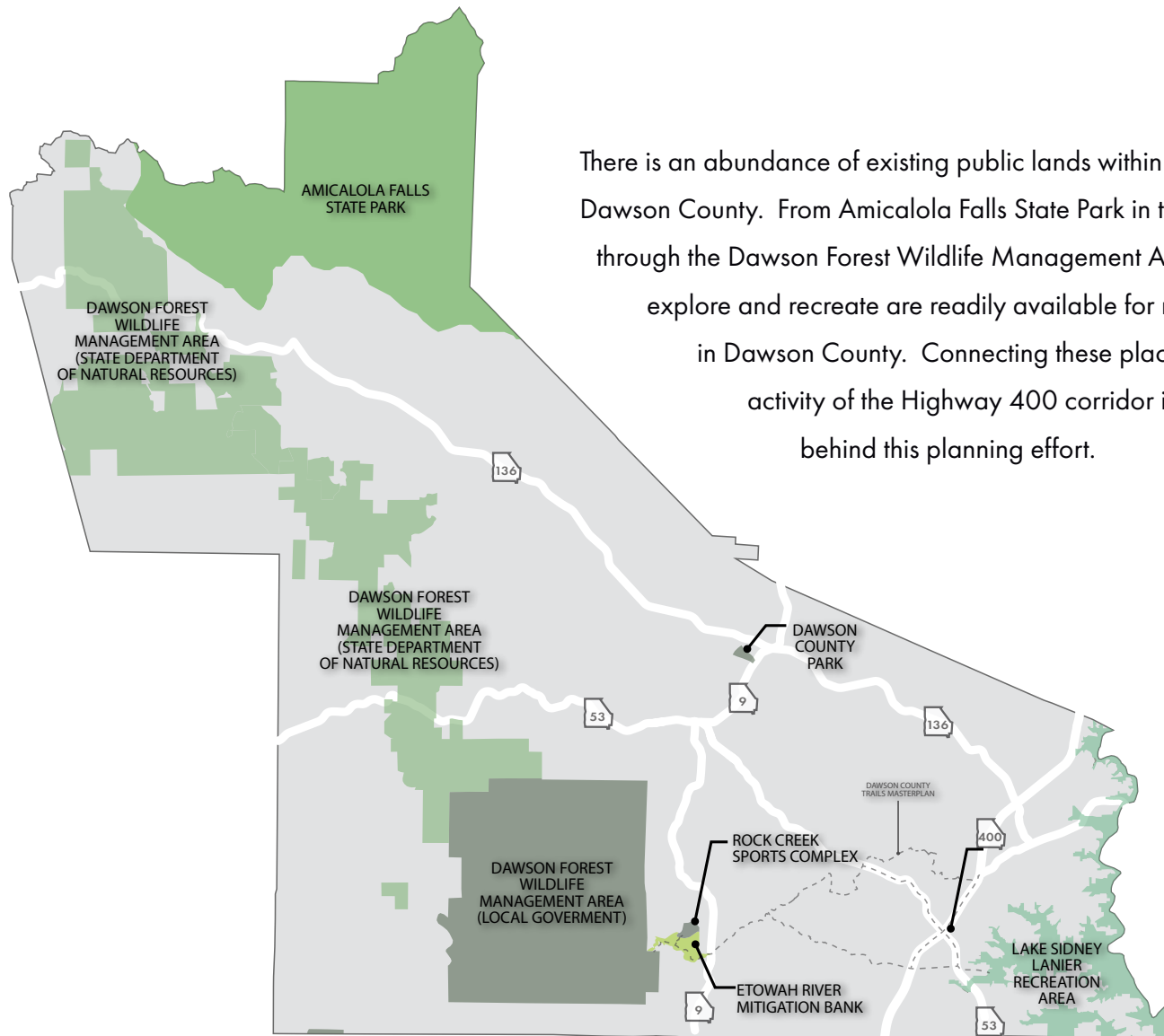
The trail and greenway system would increase “Opportunities for coordination and collaboration between the tourism and retail sectors” with a “Focus on Outdoor Experiences partnering with retailers” to facilitate recruitment of outdoor retailers/manufacturers and allow opportunities for entrepreneurship in nature, cultural and retail tourism.



Greenspace and Trails Map from 2020 Economic Development Plan



Etowah River at Etowah River Water Trail at River Park - Hwy. 9



There is an abundance of existing public lands within northern and western Dawson County. From Amicalola Falls State Park in the north down through the Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area, opportunities to explore and recreate are readily available for residents and visitors in Dawson County. Connecting these places with the economic activity of the Highway 400 corridor is the driving vision behind this planning effort.

Dawson County Greenspace and Protected Areas Map

1.2 OBJECTIVES

Dawson County is blessed with an abundance of natural resources and open spaces while also having a commercial/retail economic sector that is dramatically higher than is typical for counties of similar demographics and populations within Georgia. Given these factors and its geographic location within the State, there has been a “boom” in residential and mixed use development pressures. With growth comes the need for expansion of infrastructure and public recreation opportunities. Trails and greenways fall into both categories.

OBJECTIVE A

LEVERAGE THE EXISTING ENERGY THAT IS CREATED BY THE RETAIL/COMMERCIAL GROWTH ON HIGHWAY 400.

OBJECTIVE B

CREATE A TRAIL SYSTEM THAT CONNECTS EXISTING AND BOOMING NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH THE EXISTING AND PLANNED PARKS, GREENSPACES AND SCHOOLS.

OBJECTIVE C

CONNECT LAKE LANIER, ETOWAH RIVER, AND THE DAWSON FOREST WILD LIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA) WITH A LONG TERM VISION TO FURTHER CONNECT TO OTHER PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN THE COUNTY.

The Dawson County Greenway and Trails Master Plan is intended to be a tool for planning and implementation principles to guide short and long term policies, practices, and budget decisions within the County in order to facilitate the creation of a network of trails connecting key points of interest within Dawson County that will “Protect and Connect” the County.

02

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

2 PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 PLANNING PROCESS

As discussed earlier, this master plan has been in the works on a local level prior to the commissioning of this plan. The efforts of these stakeholders made the initiation of the study a quick start because the typical time consuming process of determining critical points of interest and areas of planned growth were already identified and mapped. The remainder of this section is a brief summary of the planning process from the initial kick off meeting in November of 2020 to final plan adoption in May of 2021.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER PARTNERS

Initial in the approach to the development of the master plan was to establish a group of community stakeholder partners that could provide insight and feedback throughout the process. This group met multiple times throughout the duration of planning and provided invaluable insight on community strengths and needs.

A special thanks to the members of the stakeholder committee.

Jameson Kinley, Dawson County Planning Director
Dustin Heard, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce Tourism Director
Tony Passarello, Chairman, Development Authority of Dawson County
Janet Cochran, Project Manager, Georgia's Rural Center
Robbie Irvin, Planner, Dawson County Planning & Development
Mandy Power, Chairman, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce
Brooke Anderson, General Manager, Etowah Water & Sewer Authority
Eric Graves, Executive Director, Len Foote Hike Inn
Betsy McGriff, Director of Economic Development, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce

2.3 DATA COLLECTION

Thomas and Hutton prepared mapping and performed data collection while reviewing other available information provided by the stakeholders. This information was then organized into an analysis study and was reviewed with the stakeholder partners. The process involved on-site inventory and analysis by use of traditional hand notes, GIS data, aerial photography, planning grade topographic information and other readily available information.

As appropriate for this high level master planning effort; no field surveys for boundaries, topography wetlands, streams, cultural resources, threaten and endangered species studies, etc. have been performed. Such studies will be performed during future phased implementation of the plan.



Dawson Forest Trailhead

2.4 MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Upon developing the base information that was used for study and plan creation, the team of stakeholder partners met to review and define the critical components of the master plan to start identifying them on the maps.

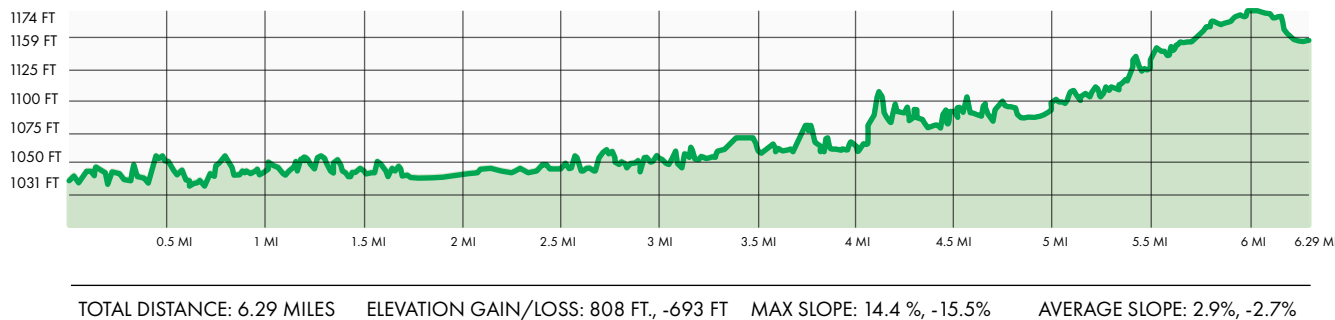
Opportunities and constraints were discussed and the project program was defined. A major constraint that was identified was the lack of off-road cycling opportunities that exist in the County. The chart below represents industry accepted percentages of the feelings of the population towards cycling and is based on a paper released by ¹Roger Geller, the Bicycle Coordinator for Portland, Oregon in 2006 and additional research by Jennifer Dill and Nathan McNeil in the 2010s. Put simply, a majority of our population is interested in cycling, but very concerned to do so without safe and well designed opportunities to do so.

Four types of cyclist	Geller Estimate(2006)	Dill/Mcneil (2015)
Strong and Fearless	<1%	7%
Enthusied and Confident	7%	5%
Interested but Concerned	60%	51%
No Way, No How	33%	37%

Specific desired minimum trail connections were identified as:

- Connecting GA-400 commercial corridor to Dawson Forest (City of Atlanta Tract) and Rock Creek Park.
- Connecting existing and new/planned residential development areas to GA-400, Dawson Forest (City of Atlanta Tract) and Rock Creek Park.
- Connecting Rock Creek Park along a route that follows the Etowah River to Russel Creek Reservoir

Natural constraints and the challenges they pose were also discussed. Specifically the challenge that topography will present during the implementation of some of the trail routes. For this reason, a line graphic is provided for each of the trail segments to show approximate change in existing elevation along the proposed routes. The total distance, elevation gain/loss, max slopes and average slopes are also provided for each. See example below.



Example Trail Segment Summary

¹"Types of Cyclists." Jennifer Dill, Ph.D., 6 July 2020, jenniferdill.net/types-of-cyclists/.

2.5 POINTS OF INTEREST

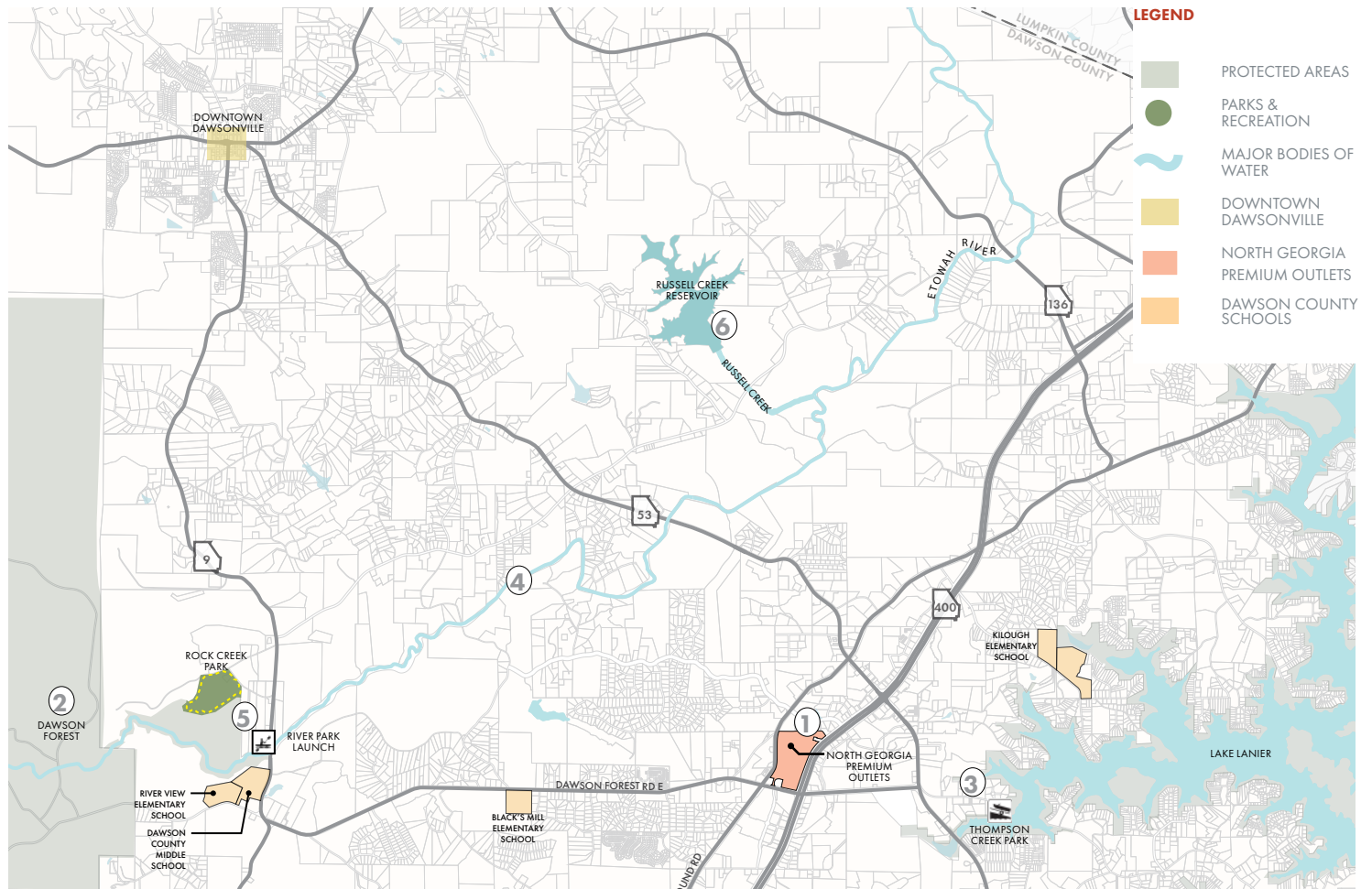
Overview

As discussed previously, Dawson County has many unique points of interest within its borders. From publicly controlled forests and Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) in the north and west, to Lake Lanier in the east, and the retail/commerce in the central and southern portions, options for things to do and places to go are bountiful in the County. Unfortunately, in order to travel between them currently one must have access to a vehicle. Upon implementation of this master plan this will no longer be the case. There will now be bicycle and pedestrian connections between the majority.

1 NORTH GEORGIA PREMIUM OUTLETS Based on the 2020 economic development plan data, the North Georgia Premium has an “estimated 3.2 million annual visits, most coming from less than 50 miles.”



2 DAWSON FOREST The Dawson Forest, City of Atlanta Tract, is a 10,000 acre property that contains existing trails, hunting, fishing and picnic sites. This property makes up the southern portion of the 25,500 acre Dawson Forest Wildlife Management Area (WMA) which is managed by GA DNR.



3 **THOMPSON CREEK PARK & BOAT LANDING AT LAKE LANIER** Thompson Creek Park is an existing facility that is on the northwest side of Lake Sidney Lanier which is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The park includes parking, restrooms, picnicking and boat ramps. Lake Lanier is visited by approximately 11.8 million people each year.



4 **ETOWAH RIVER** The Etowah River is a 163 mile waterway of which approximately 24 miles runs within Dawson County. The river has an established water trail system known as the Etowah River Water Trail. The water trail system is broken up into 16 segments running from east to west. Dawson County is included in all or portions of four segments. These are Tunneling for Gold, Big Savannah, Dawson Forest and Eagles Beak.



5 **ROCK CREEK PARK** Rock Creek Park Sports Complex is a Dawson County operated facility that is home to the Parks and Recreation Administrative Complex. The facilities provided at the park include baseball/softball/t-ball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, gymnasiums, indoor meeting rooms, a paved walking trail, outdoor basketball courts, outdoor covered pavilions and the Rotary Island Splash Pad.



6 **RUSSEL CREEK RESERVOIR** The Russell Creek Reservoir will be a 137 acre drinking water supply reservoir operated by the Etowah Water & Sewer Authority. The current plans for the facility are to include boating and fishing opportunities.



03

GREENWAY AND TRAIL MASTER

3 DAWSON COUNTY GREENWAY AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN

3.1 MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

From the planning considerations in Chapter 2, the planning partners have identified approximately 20 miles of multi-use trail routes, which upon construction, will link key points of interest within Southern Dawson County. This trail system will connect existing regional shopping destinations, existing and planned residential neighborhoods to schools, parks, lakes, rivers, forests and other “wild” areas in the County.

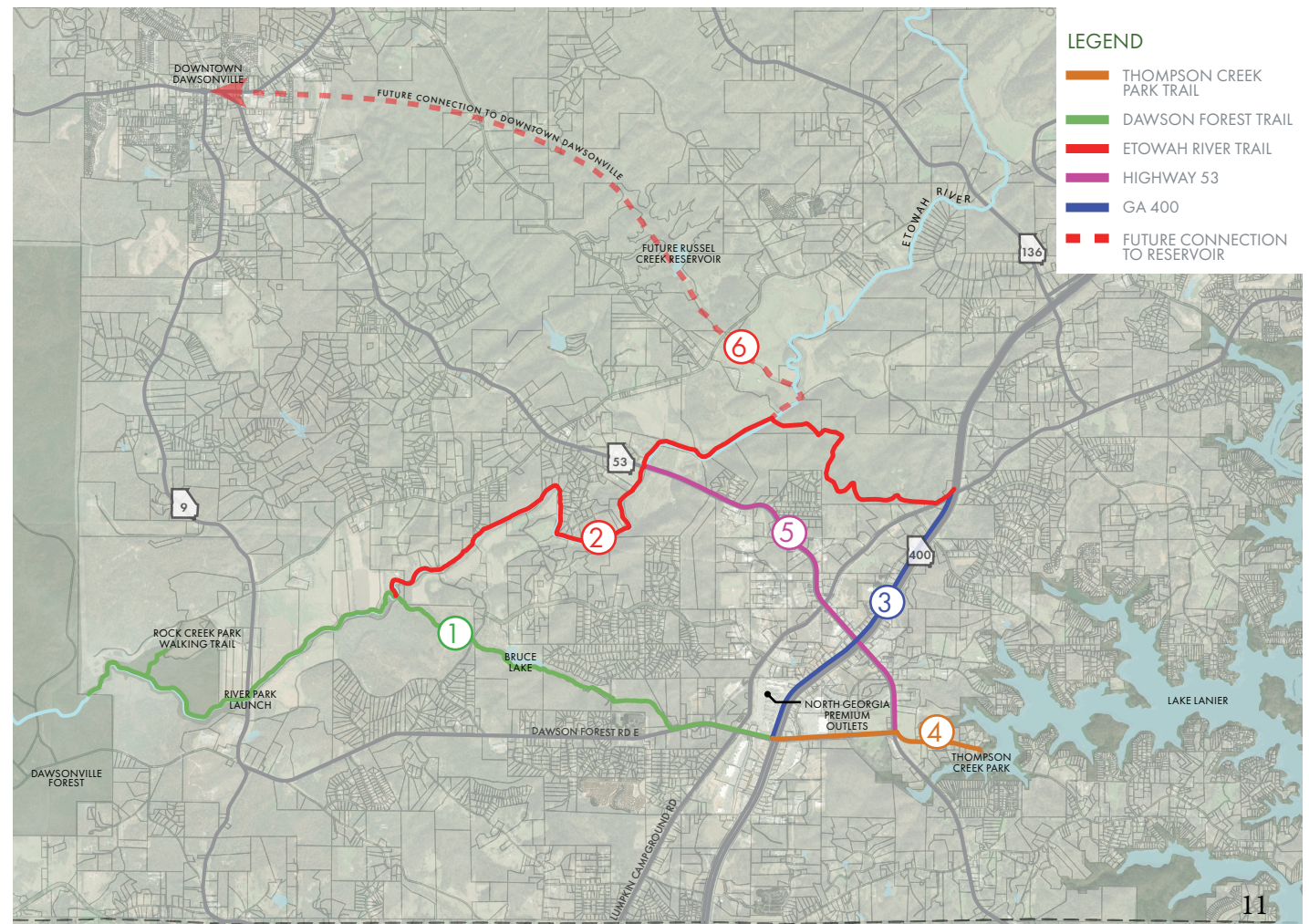
Cost Estimates on a per mile basis are provide within each sub-segment. It should be acknowledged that these estimates are very preliminary and are provided simply as a basis to start future budgeting exercises. More detailed cost estimation will be done upon initiation of any detailed design or construction budgeting.

The overall plan is broken in six trail segments that connect to the different points of interest within the County discussed in the previous chapter.

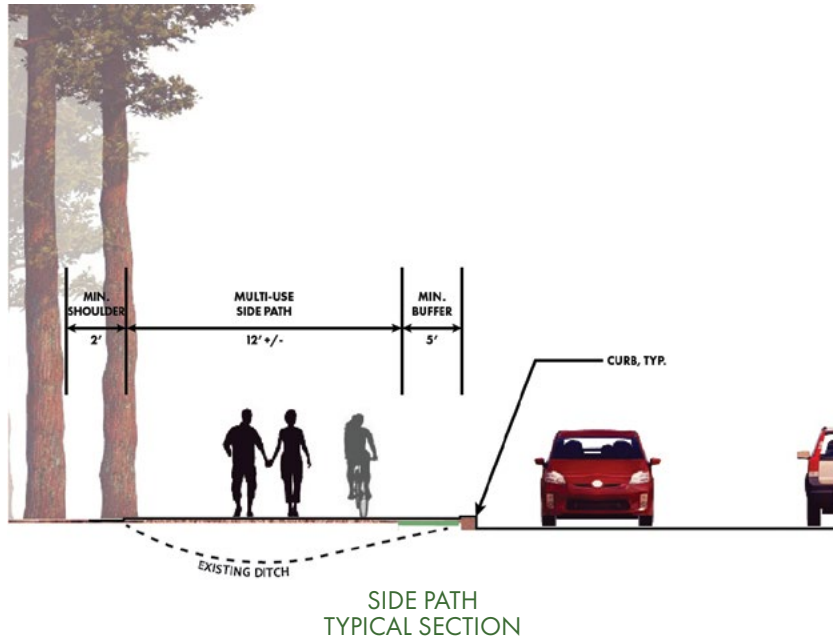
Dawson County Trail Segments:

- 1 | Dawson Forest Trail
- 2 | Etowah River Trail
- 3 | GA 400
- 4 | Thompson Creek Park Trail
- 5 | Highway 53
- 6 | Future Connection to Russel Creek Reservoir and the City of Dawsonville (Route to be determined.)

The remaining pages within this Chapter provide a general description of the typical trail types proposed as well as a break down of the trail segments into further study segments based on the specific type of trail within that sub-segment.



3.2 TRAIL TYPES

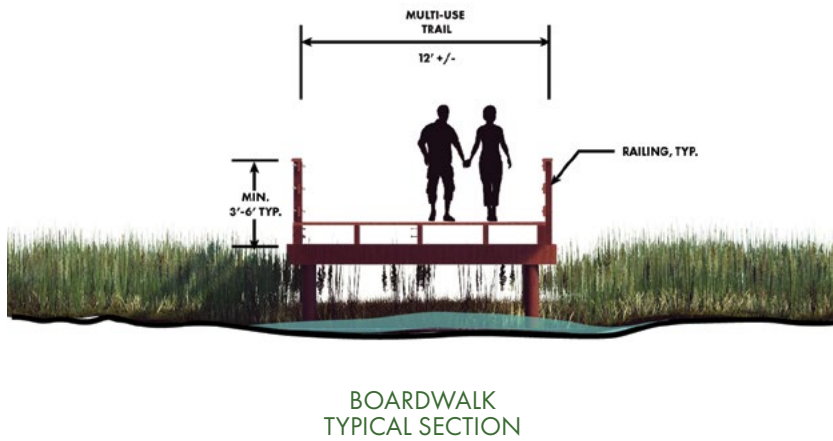


SIDE PATHS:

As defined by ¹Small Town and Rural Design Guide, a side path is “a bidirectional shared use path located immediately adjacent and parallel to a roadway. Side paths can offer a high-quality experience for users of all ages and abilities as compared to on-roadway facilities in heavy traffic environments, allow for reduced roadway crossing distances, and maintain rural and small town community character.”

For the purposes of cost estimation, all side paths are assumed to have either an existing or constructed adjacent curb and to include necessary roadway drainage to accommodate such. The path material is assumed to be 6 inch thick concrete on a graded aggregate base. The buffer area between the path and adjacent vehicular travel ways should be as wide as practical in order to create physical distance and separation from the user and adjacent traffic.

BOARDWALK SECTION:



A boardwalk section is necessary in areas of wetlands, streams, floodplains and where typical earth grading practices may not be feasible. Simply put, it is a pathway constructed out of “boards”.

Conventional construction often utilizes pressure treated lumber. However, due to the life cycle cost and ongoing maintenance associated with wood construction, many communities are now utilizing precast concrete boardwalk systems.

For purposes of cost estimation, a precast concrete boardwalk system has been considered for all boardwalks and bridges.

OFF ROAD GREENWAY:

Off road greenways are trails that are constructed exclusive of an adjacent roadway. They are also known as shared use paths, which, as defined by ¹Small Town and Rural Design Guide, are used to provide “a travel area separate from motorized traffic for bicyclists, pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, and other users. Shared use paths can provide a low-stress experience for a variety of users using the network for transportation or recreation.”

To the greatest extent practical, the trail will be constructed by balancing the cut and fill that is needed. In areas of extremely steep grade, creek or wetland crossings; boardwalks, retaining walls and bridges will be needed.

For the purposes of cost estimation, all on grade path material is assumed to be 6 inch thick concrete on a graded aggregate base and boardwalks and bridges as described above.

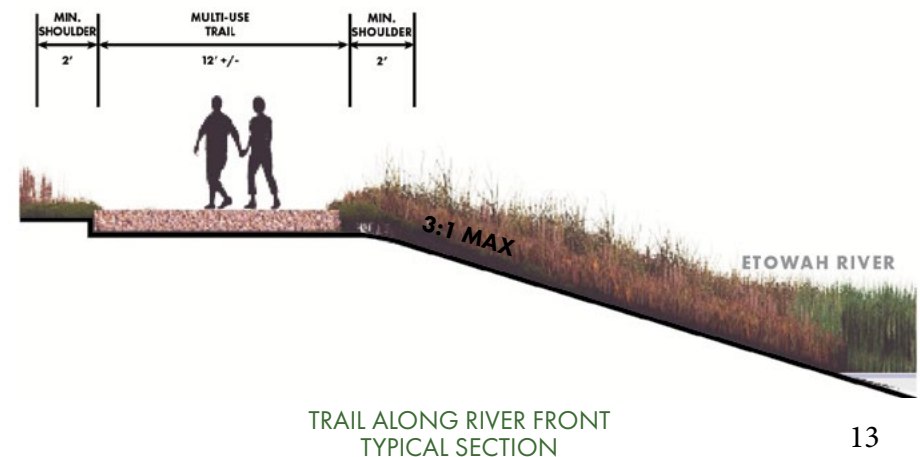


RIVER TRAIL:

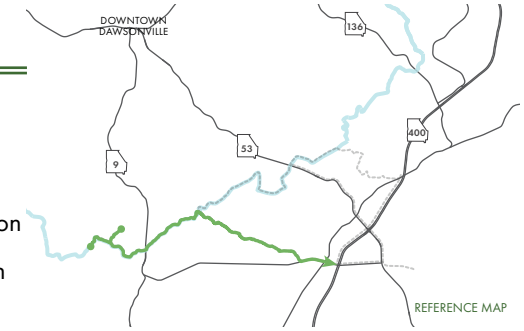
The River Trail type is a version of the greenway trail type with just a few additional considerations needed because of the sensitivity of the natural river system that is adjacent.

Materials within the floodplain will need to be closely studied and may require higher interval of regular maintenance due to natural river flooding events. A higher ratio of boardwalk to on-grade trail will be needed when compared to a typical off road greenway trail. A minimum of one pedestrian bridge crossing will be needed. Water quality protections may require special permitting or buffers to the river.

For the purposes of cost estimation, all on grade path material is assumed to be 6 inch thick concrete on a graded aggregate base and boardwalks and bridges as described above.



SEGMENT 1 DAWSON FOREST



Overview:

Connecting points of interest: North Georgia Premium Outlets, Etowah River, Dawson Forest, Rock Creek Park
Begins/Ends: GA 400/Dawson Forest
Distance: +/- 6.4 miles

Benefits:

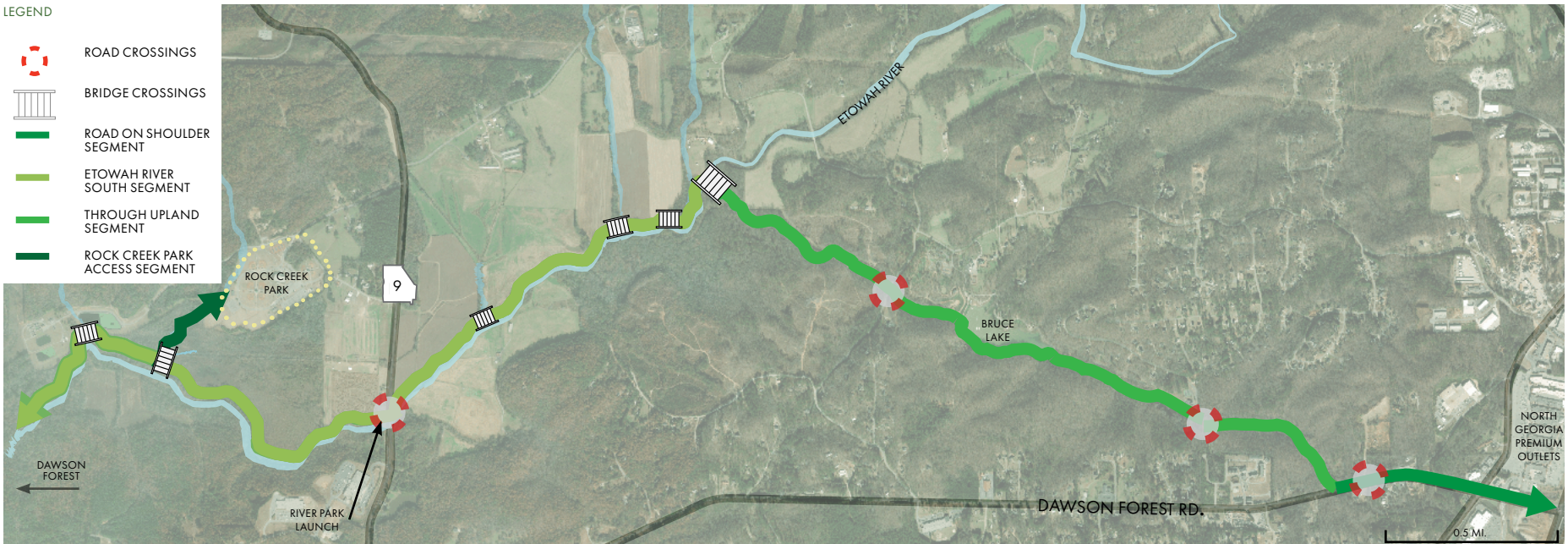
- Connects commercial hub to existing natural areas, river, and parks
- Adjacent to existing and planned residential
- Connects existing trail heads

Challenges:

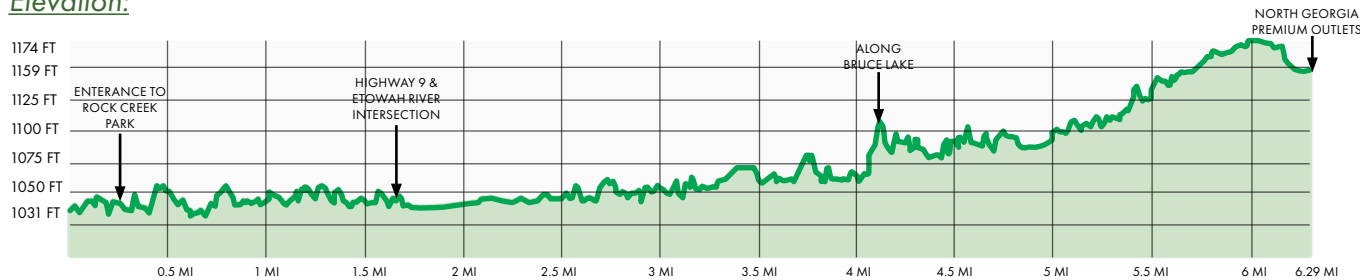
- Requires drainage improvements on Dawson Forest Road
- Right-of-way acquisition through upland areas

LEGEND

- ROAD CROSSINGS
- BRIDGE CROSSINGS
- ROAD ON SHOULDER SEGMENT
- ETOWAH RIVER SOUTH SEGMENT
- THROUGH UPLAND SEGMENT
- ROCK CREEK PARK ACCESS SEGMENT



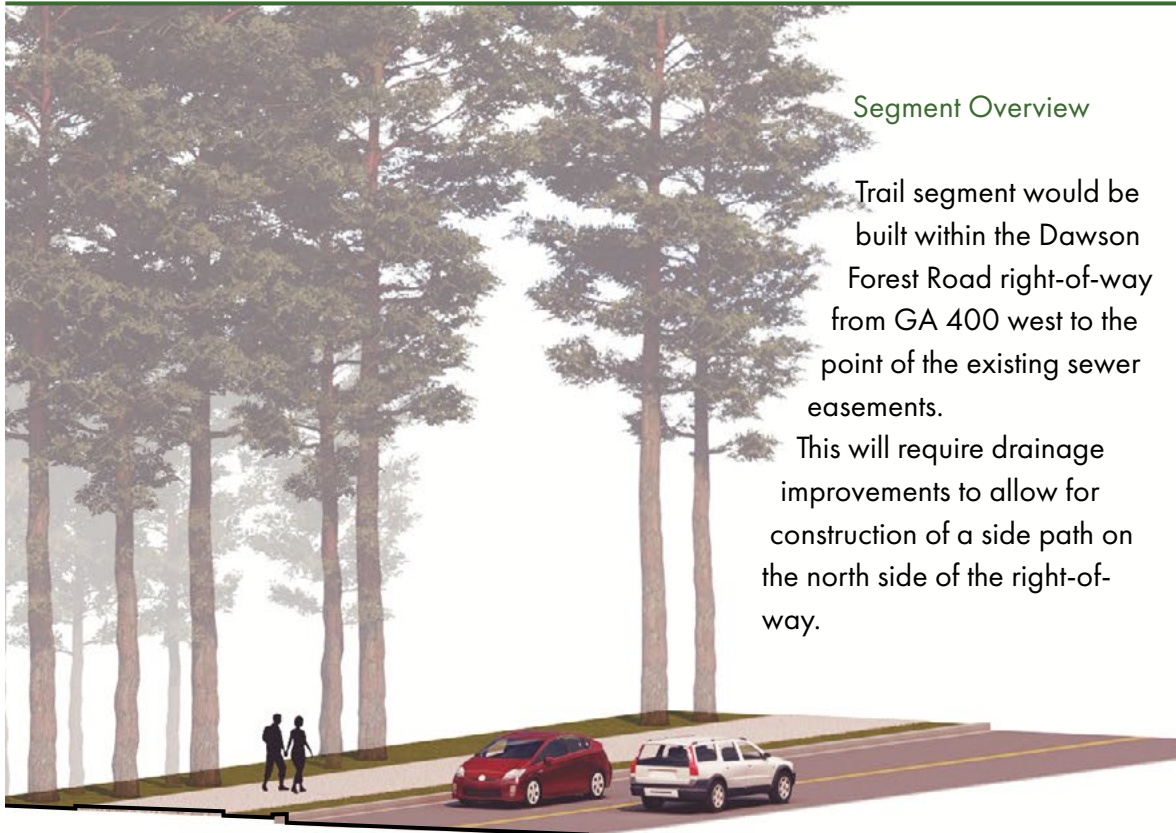
Elevation:



MINIMUM ELEVATION | 1031 FT
AVERAGE ELEVATION | 1074 FT
MAX ELEVATION | 1174 FT

TOTAL DISTANCE: 6.29 MILES ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS: 808 FT., -693 FT MAX SLOPE: 14.4 %, -15.5% AVERAGE SLOPE: 2.9%, -2.7%

SEGMENT 1-A DAWSON FOREST ROAD

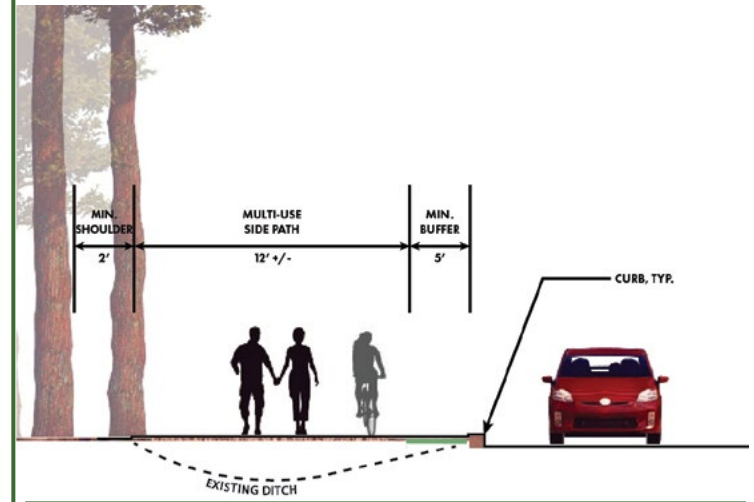


Segment Overview

Trail segment would be built within the Dawson Forest Road right-of-way from GA 400 west to the point of the existing sewer easements.

This will require drainage improvements to allow for construction of a side path on the north side of the right-of-way.

TRAIL TYPE: SIDE PATH



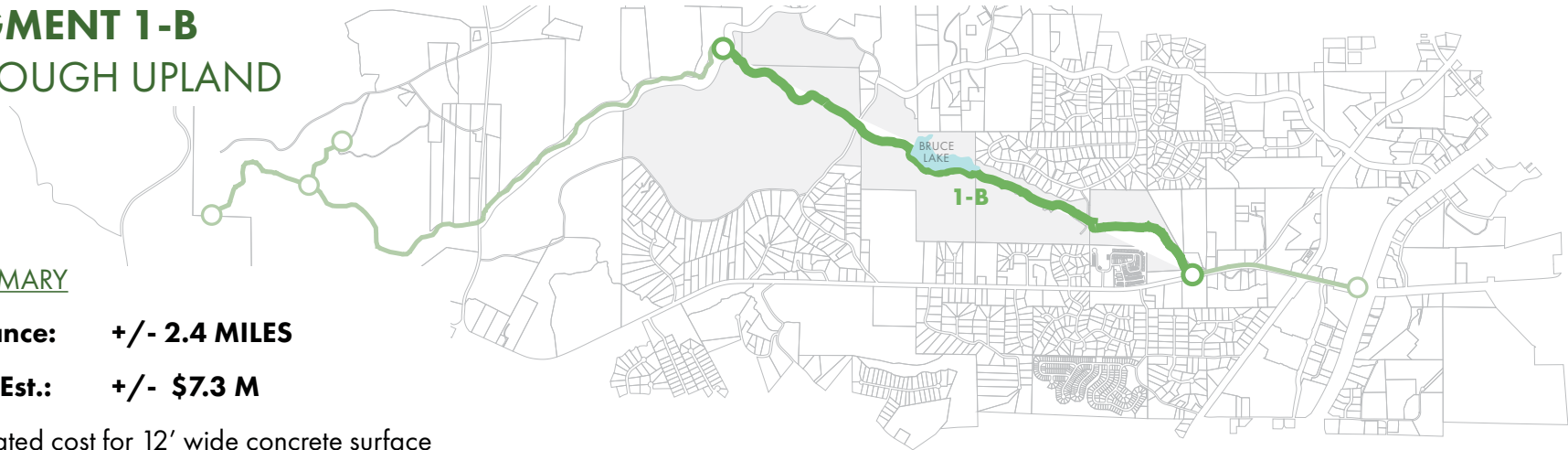
SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 0.7 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$1.7 M

Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete trail with conversion of ditch to curb and gutter (no R/W acquisition cost included)

SEGMENT 1-B THROUGH UPLAND



SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 2.4 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$7.3 M

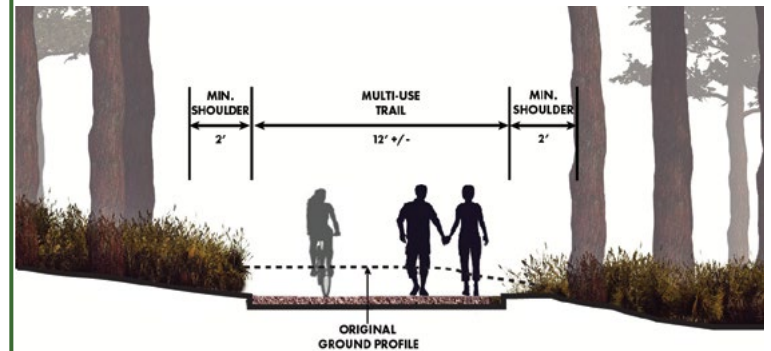
Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete surface
(no R/W acquisition cost included)



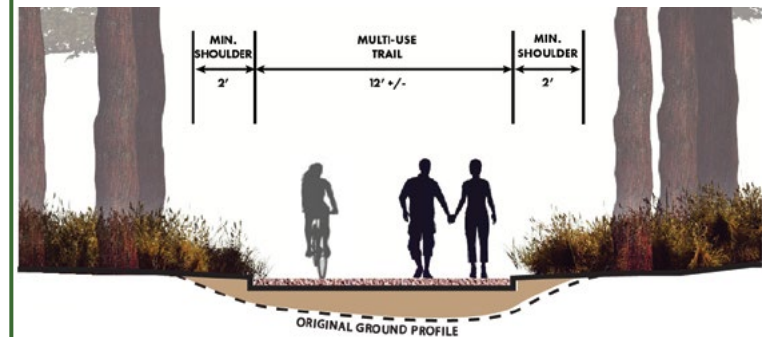
Segment Overview

Trail segment would follow the route of the existing sanitary sewer easement to the greatest extent practical. Key challenges to address during design will be grade changes, property acquisitions, and road crossings.

TRAIL TYPE: OFF ROAD GREENWAY

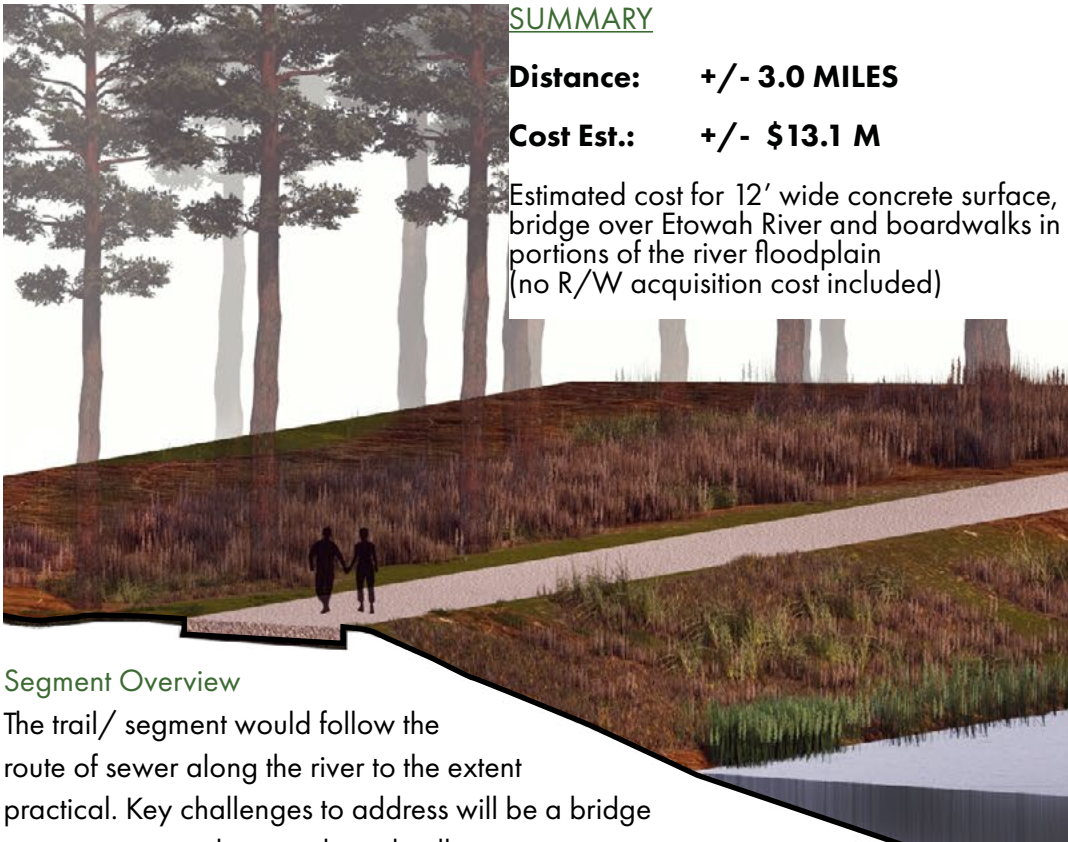
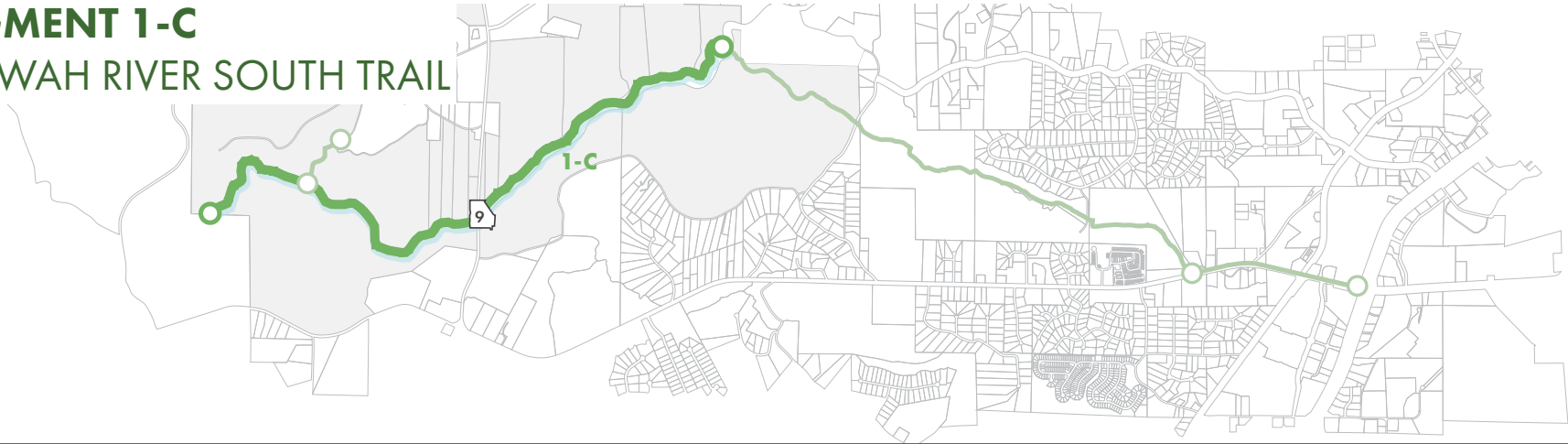


CUT SECTION, TYP.



FILL SECTION, TYP.

SEGMENT 1-C ETOWAH RIVER SOUTH TRAIL



SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 3.0 MILES

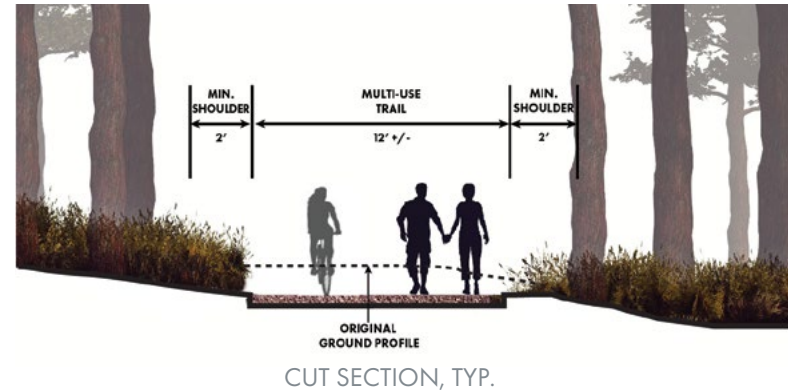
Cost Est.: +/- \$13.1 M

Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete surface, bridge over Etowah River and boardwalks in portions of the river floodplain (no R/W acquisition cost included)

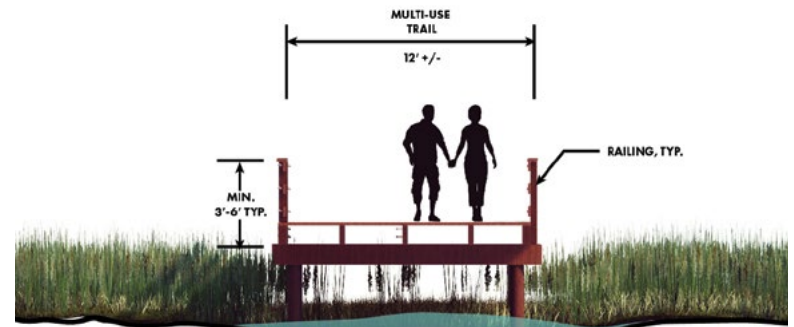
Segment Overview

The trail/ segment would follow the route of sewer along the river to the extent practical. Key challenges to address will be a bridge connection over the river, boardwalks, property acquisitions, and road crossings.

TRAIL TYPE: OFF ROAD GREENWAY



TRAIL TYPE: BOARDWALK



SEGMENT 1-D ROCK CREEK PARK ACCESS



EXISTING TRAIL AT
ROCK CREEK PARK

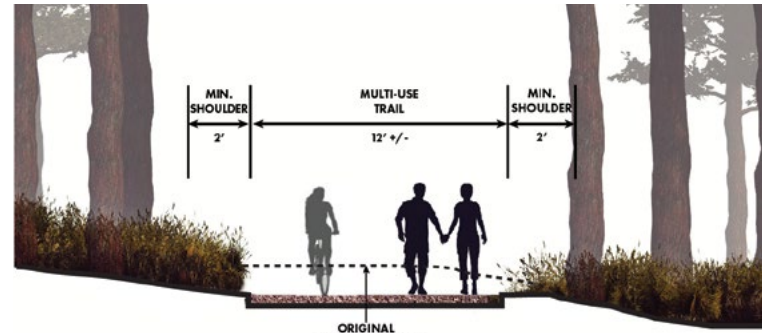
SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 0.3 MILES

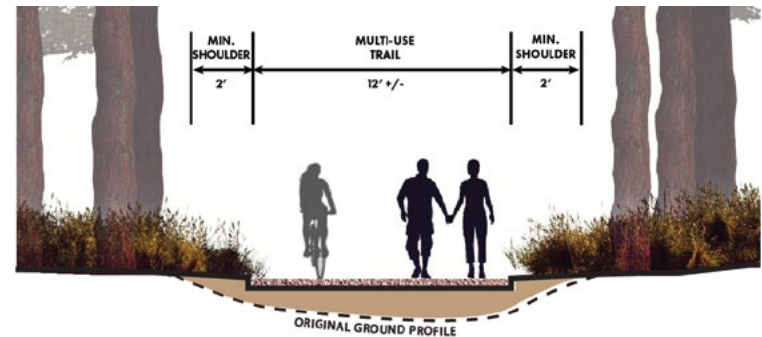
Cost Est.: +/- \$1.0 M

Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete surface and boardwalks in portions (no R/W acquisition cost included)

TRAIL TYPE: OFF ROAD GREENWAY



CUT SECTION, TYP.



FILL SECTION, TYP.



Segment Overview

Trail segment would connect the existing Rock Creek Park trails and other amenities to Etowah River. The use of boardwalks will be crucial in connecting Rock Creek Park due to the surrounding creeks and wetlands.

SEGMENT 2 ETOWAH RIVER TRAIL

Overview:

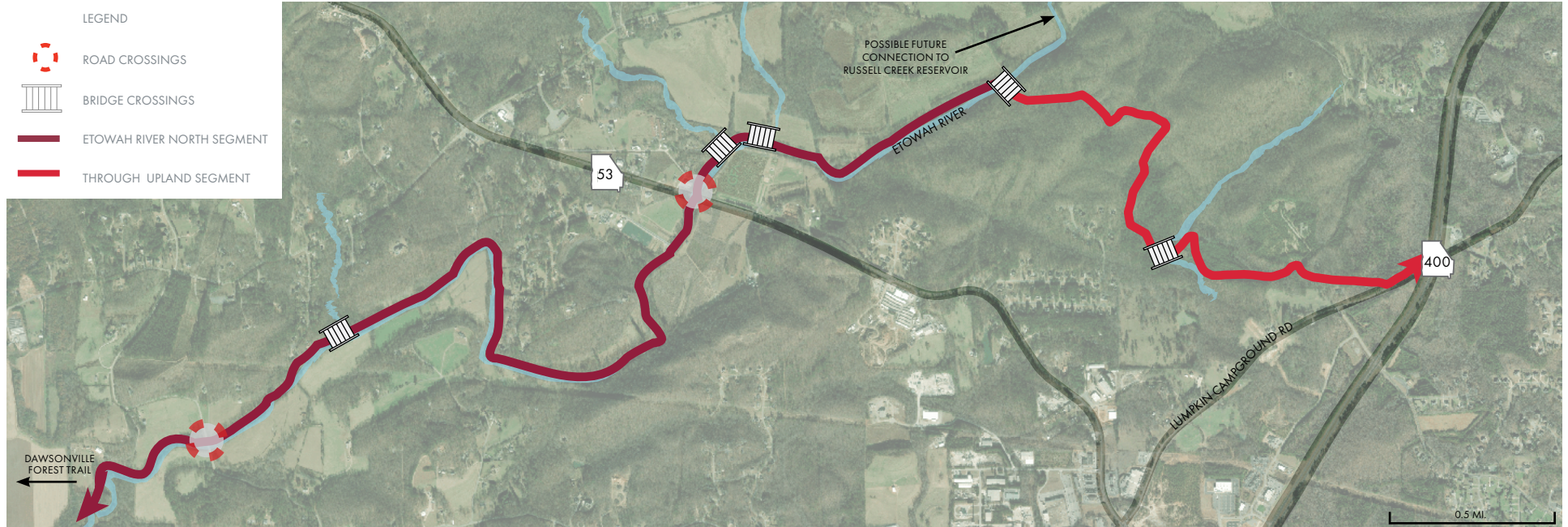
Connecting points of interest: Highway 53, future connection to Head Lake reservoir, GA 400
Begins/Ends: Etowah River/GA 400
Distance: +/- 6.6 miles

Benefits:

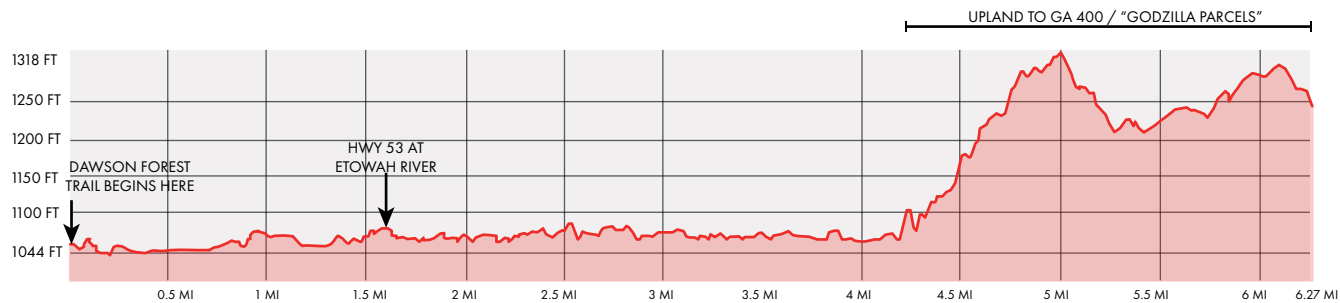
- Continues trail along Etowah River to connect Hwy 53 and Hwy 9
- Connects areas of planned growth in the County

Challenges:

- Expense of bridges and boardwalks
- Requires a large amount of property acquisition for a proper right-of-way

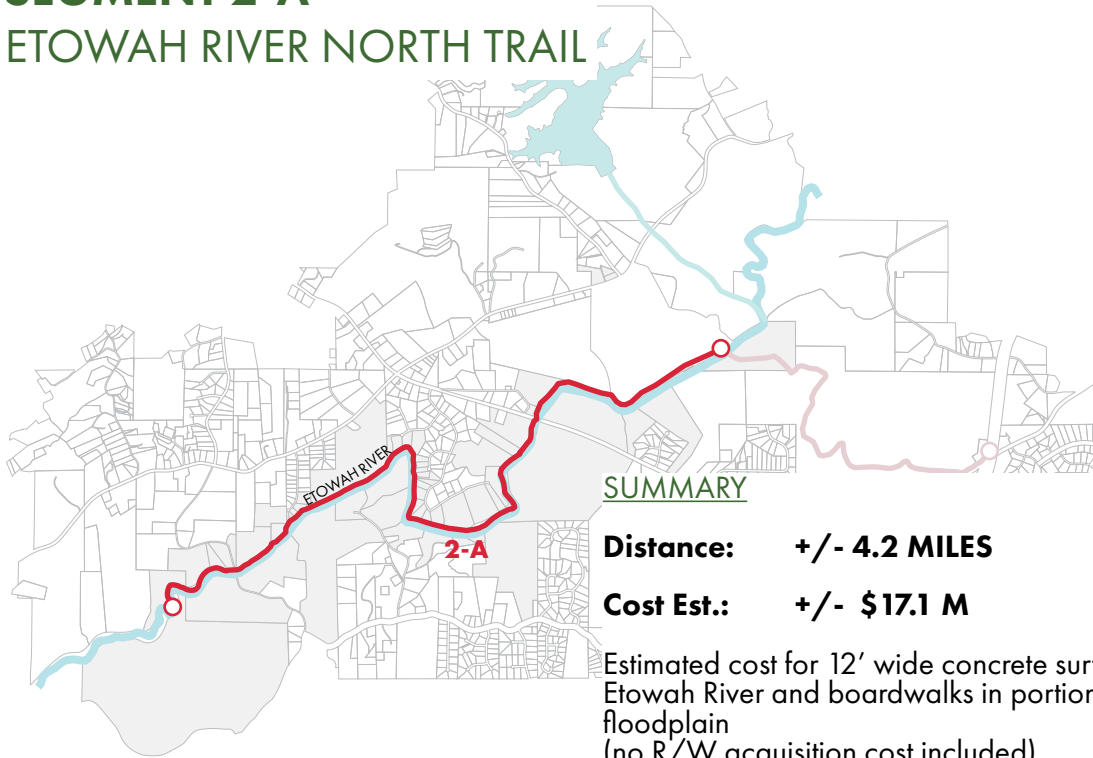


Elevation:



MINIMUM ELEVATION | 1044 FT
AVERAGE ELEVATION | 1121 FT
MAX ELEVATION | 1318 FT

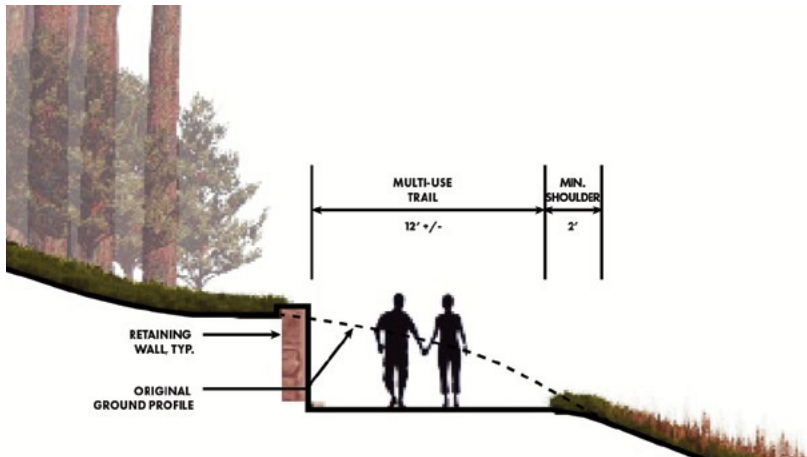
SEGMENT 2-A ETOWAH RIVER NORTH TRAIL



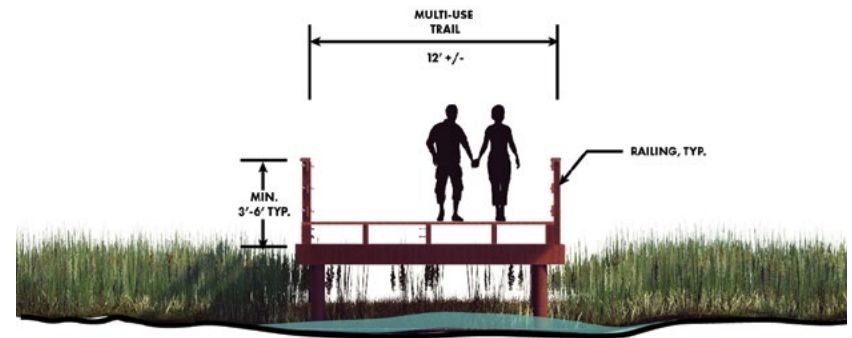
Segment Overview

The trail/ segment would follow the planned route of sewer along the river to the extent practical. Key challenges to address will be a bridge connection over the river, boardwalks, property acquisitions, and road crossings.

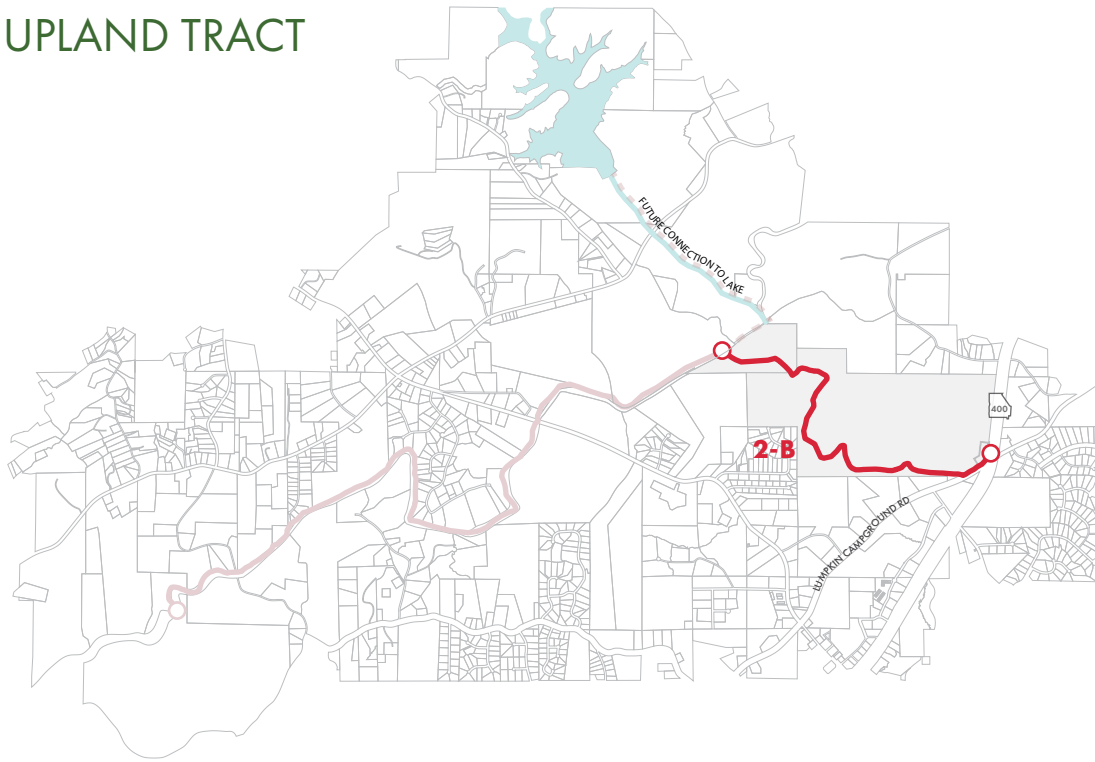
TRAIL TYPE: OFF ROAD GREENWAY



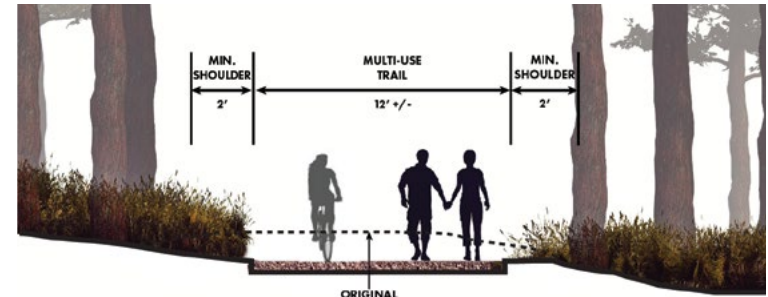
TRAIL TYPE: BOARDWALK



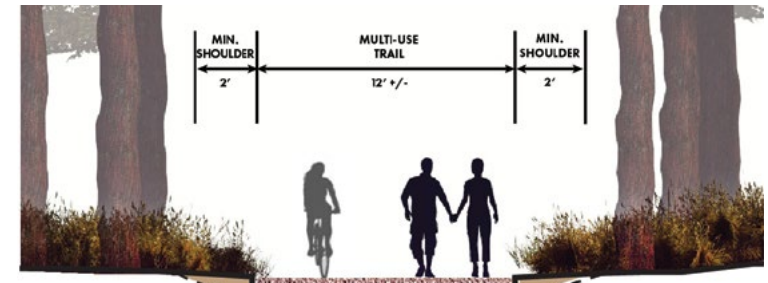
SEGMENT 2-B UPLAND TRACT



TRAIL TYPE: OFF ROAD GREENWAY



ORIGINAL GROUND PROFILE
CUT SECTION, TYP.



ORIGINAL GROUND PROFILE
FILL SECTION, TYP.



Segment
Overview

Trail segment would follow the route of the future sanitary sewer easement and planned developments to the greatest extent practical. Key challenges to address during design will be grade changes, property acquisitions, and road crossings.

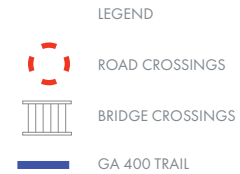
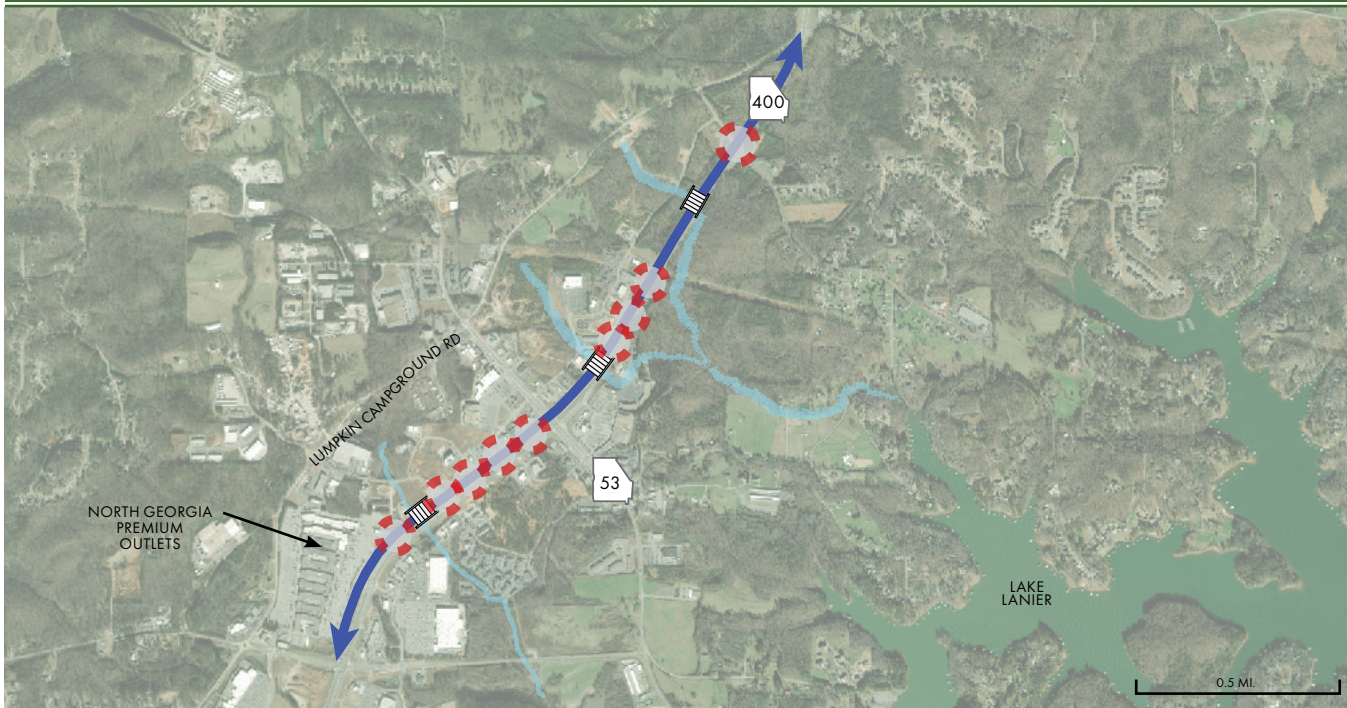
SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 2.4 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$6.3 M

Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete surface
(no R/W acquisition cost included)

SEGMENT 3 GA 400



Overview:

Connecting points of interest: Commercial and business areas along GA 400

Begins/Ends: Lumpkin Campground Rd North/ Dawson Forest Rd.

Distance: 2.2 miles

Trail section will provide connectivity along GA 400 from Lumpkin Campground Road to the north to Dawson Forest Rd to the south. Provides an opportunity for alternative to vehicular only transportation that currently exists.

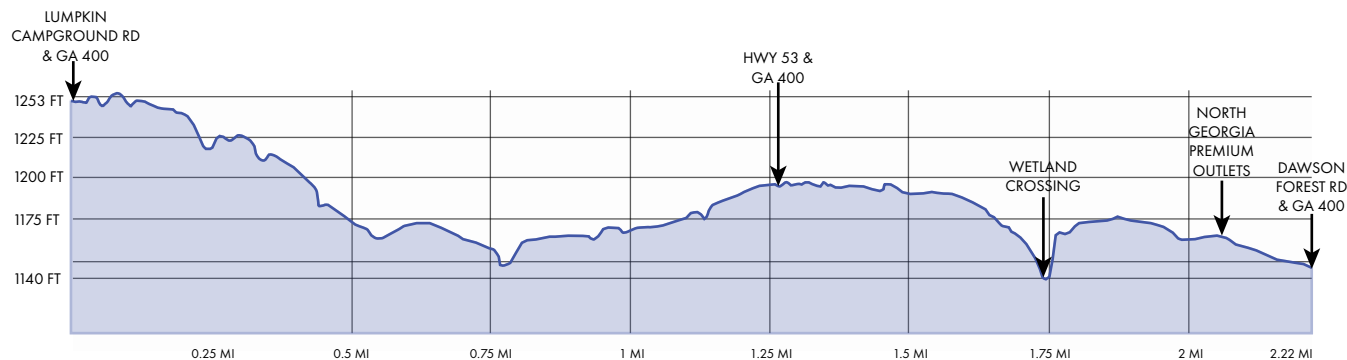
Benefits:

- Increased alternative transportation to businesses along 400
- Follows existing GA 400 right-of-way

Challenges:

- Existing open drainage
- Many points of road/driveway crossings
- Crossing 400 (future pedestrian bridge)

Elevation:



MINIMUM ELEVATION | 1140 FT
AVERAGE ELEVATION | 1185 FT
MAX ELEVATION | 1253 FT

SEGMENT 3-A GA 400



BOSCHERT GREENWAY TRAIL (EXAMPLE STUDY)

The Boschert Greenway Trail is 4.25 miles long and connects to the overall Missouri Greenway. Portions of the trail run along major Highway 370.

Like GA 400, the topography dramatically changes along the roadside, therefore the path is benched into the hillside. This trail typology relates to the proposed side path along 400.



SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 2.2 MILES

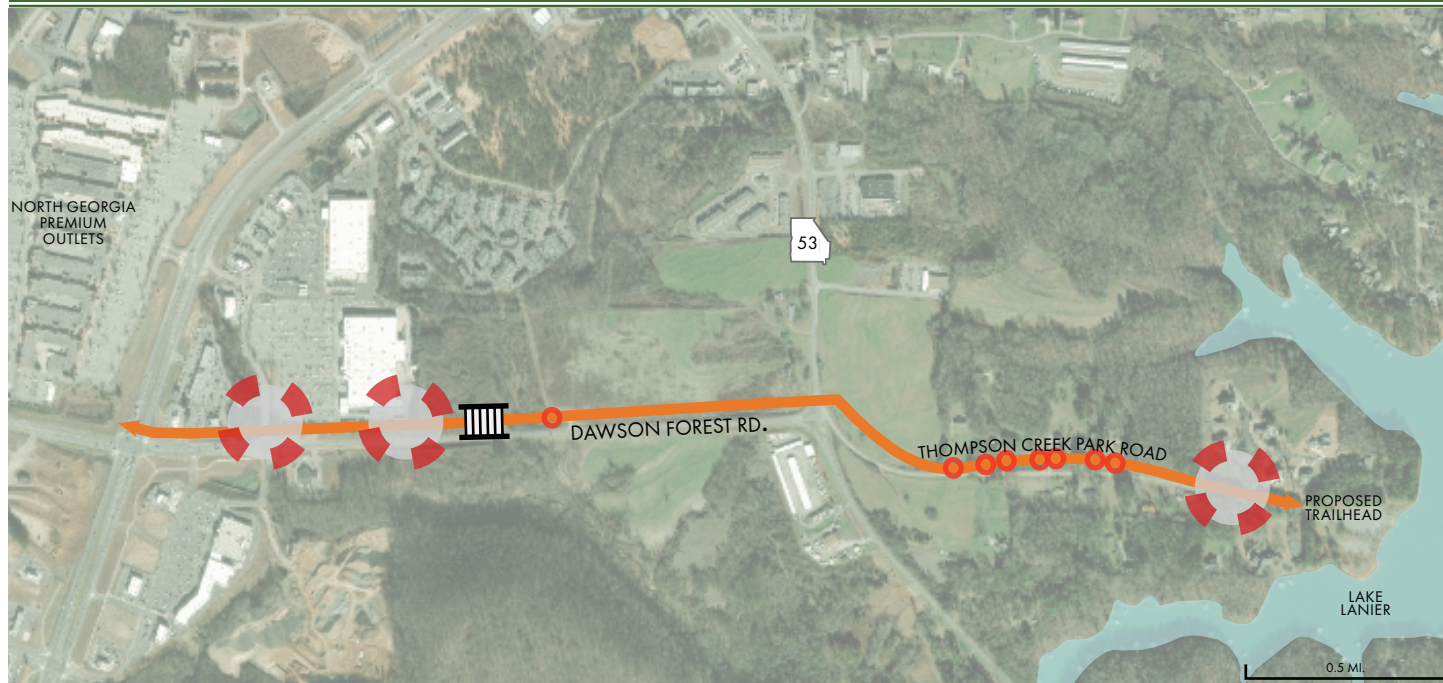
Cost Est.: +/- \$6.6 M

Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete surface, crossing improvements
(No R/W acquisition cost included)

Trail segment would be along one side of the GA 400 right of way. Key challenges to address will be road/driveway crossings, crossing of GA 400, steep slopes of existing grade, and utility and drainage conflicts.



SEGMENT 4 THOMPSON CREEK



LEGEND

- NEIGHBORHOOD CROSSING
- RESIDENTIAL DRIVEWAY CROSSINGS
- THOMPSON CREEK TRAIL

Overview:

Connecting points of interest: Thompson Creek Park to Commercial/Business areas and the network of trails.

Begins/Ends: Thompson Creek Park/GA 400

Distance: 1.5 miles

Trail segment will provide connecting from GA 400 to the existing park and boat landing at Thompson Creek Park to become a trail-head.

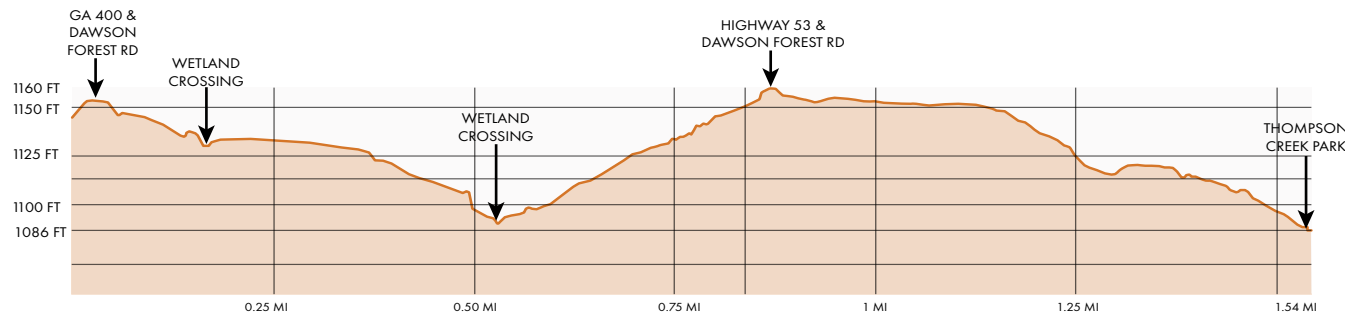
Benefits:

- Utilize existing park as trail-head access
- Directly accessible by the growth occurring in the area

Challenges:

- Lack of right-of-way width from Highway 53 to Thompson Creek Park
- Intersection crossing at Highway 53 and Dawson Forest Rd. (Planned roundabout)

Elevation:

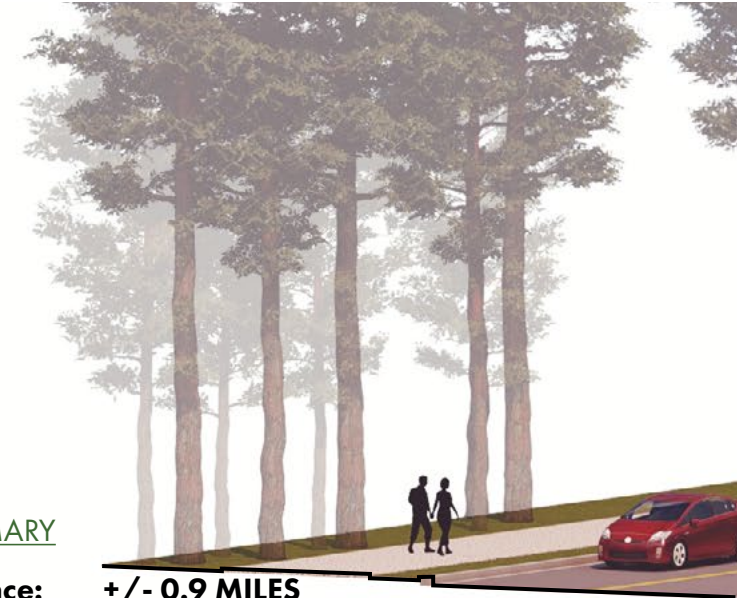


MINIMUM ELEVATION | 1086 FT
AVERAGE ELEVATION | 1129 FT
MAX ELEVATION | 1160 FT

TOTAL DISTANCE: 1.54 MILES ELEVATION GAIN/LOSS: 187 FT., -126 FT MAX SLOPE: 26.7 %, -14.8% AVERAGE SLOPE: 3.1%, -3.3%

SEGMENT 4-A

THOMPSON CREEK PARK WEST



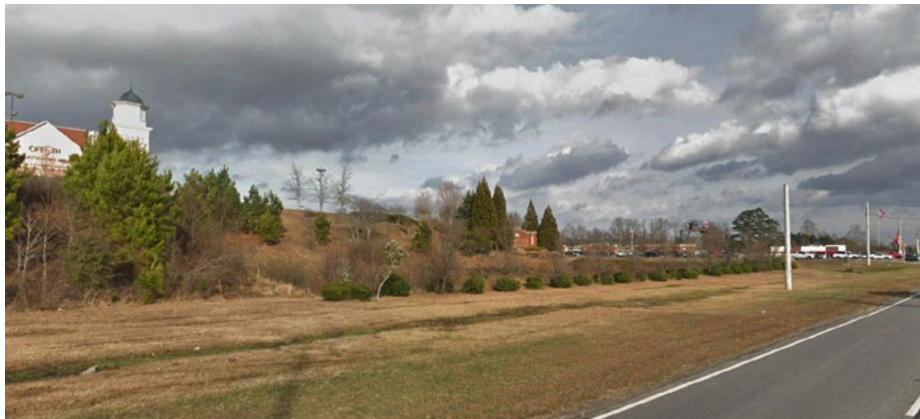
SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 0.9 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$2.2 M

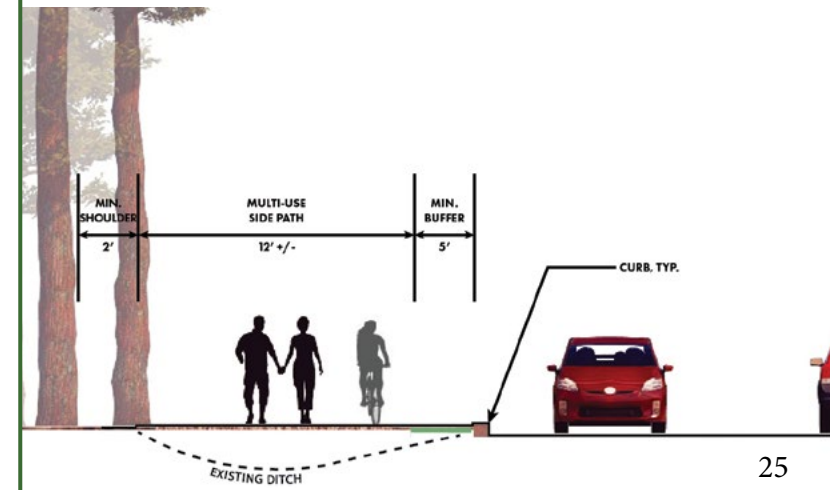
Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete trail with conversion of ditch to curb and gutter (no R/W acquisition cost included)

Trail segment would follow along one side of Dawson Forest Rd. from GA 400 to the east side of Highway 53.



Existing right-of-way along Dawson Forest Rd. Adjacent to North Georgia Premium Outlets

TRAIL TYPE: SIDE PATH



SEGMENT 4-B

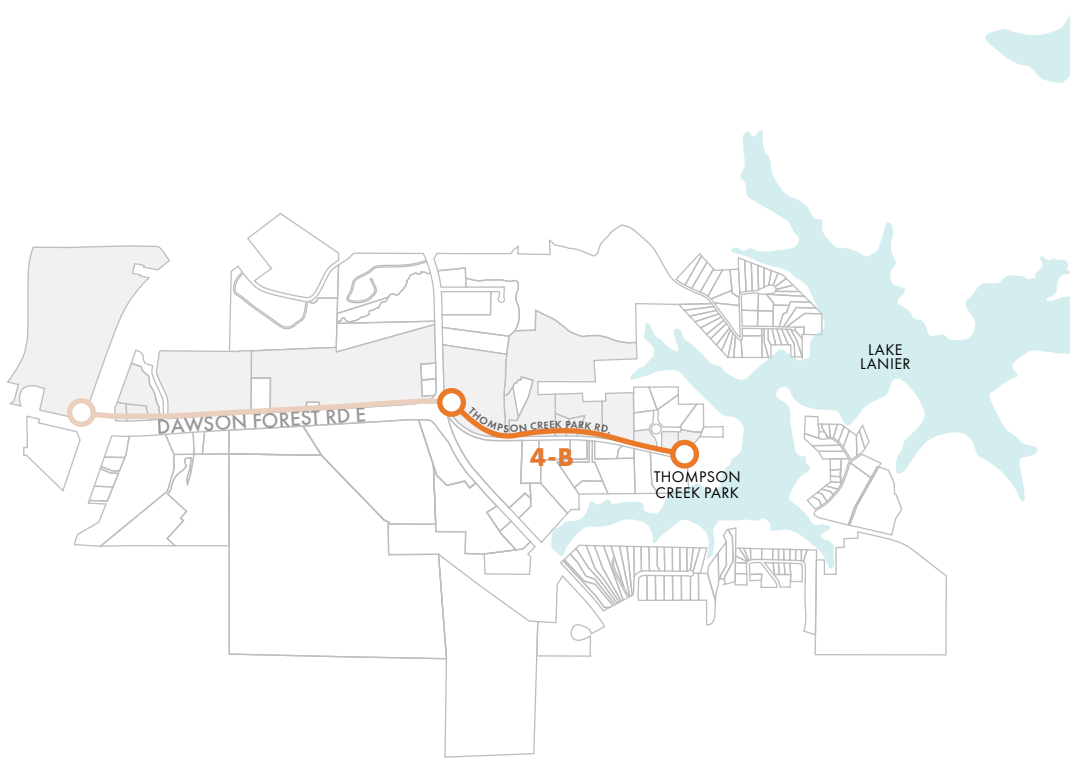
THOMPSON CREEK PARK EAST

SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 0.6 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$1.1 M

Estimated cost for share lane striping and a 6' wide concrete sidewalk
(no R/W acquisition cost included)



TRAIL TYPE: SHARED USE LANE WITH ADJACENT SIDEWALK



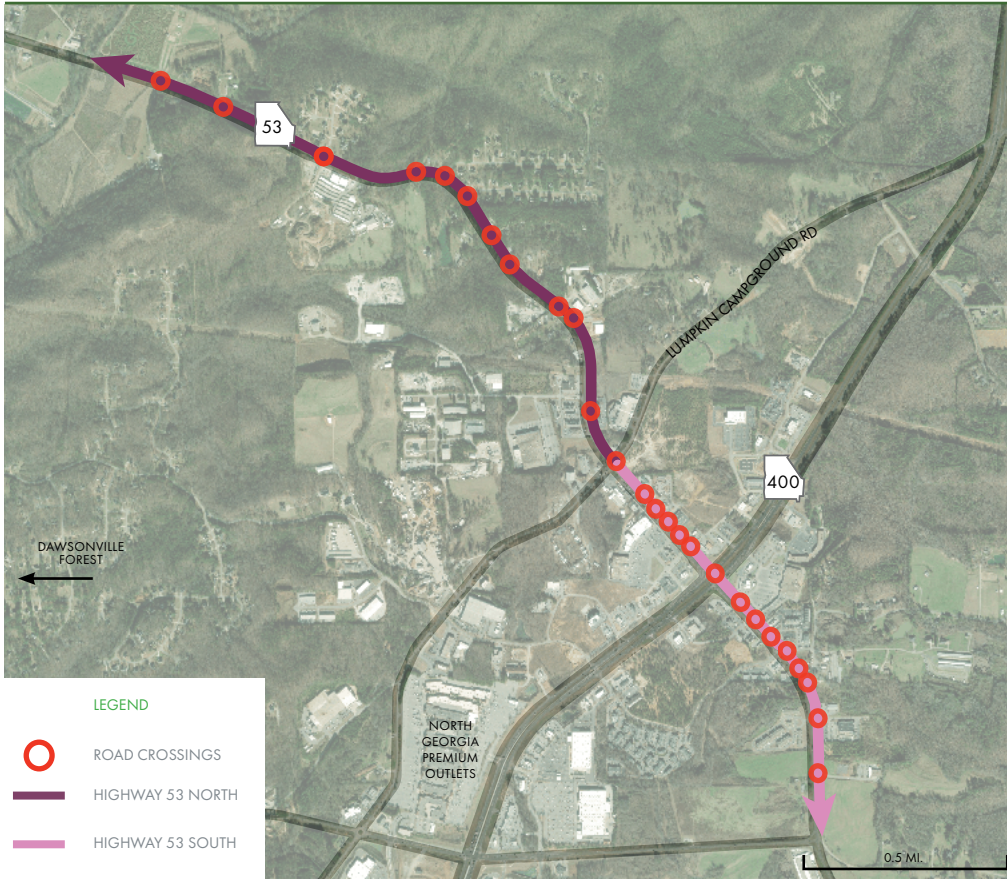
Shared Use Lanes in Sisters, OR






Existing Thompson Creek Park Rd.

Thompson Creek Road may lack the vehicular traffic volume to justify the cost of a separate 12' paved side path scenario. Due to the low volume street, new striping would allow bikers and vehicles to share the existing road and a smaller pedestrian only sidewalk could be built on one side.

SEGMENT 5 HIGHWAY 53

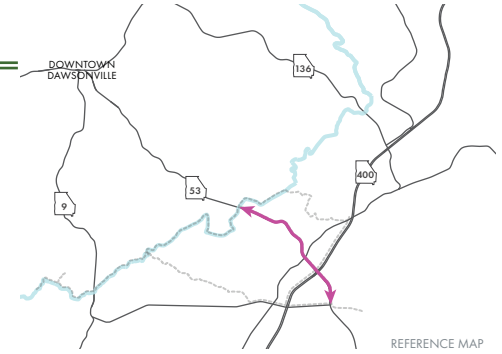


LEGEND

-  ROAD CROSSINGS
-  HIGHWAY 53 NORTH
-  HIGHWAY 53 SOUTH

Overview:

Connecting points of interest:
Thompson Creek Park/GA 400/
Etowah River
Begins/Ends: Etowah River/
Dawson Forest Road
Distance: +/- 2.9 miles



REFERENCE MAP

Trail segment will provide a connecting/alternate route option from Thompson Creek Park/trail-head to Etowah River.

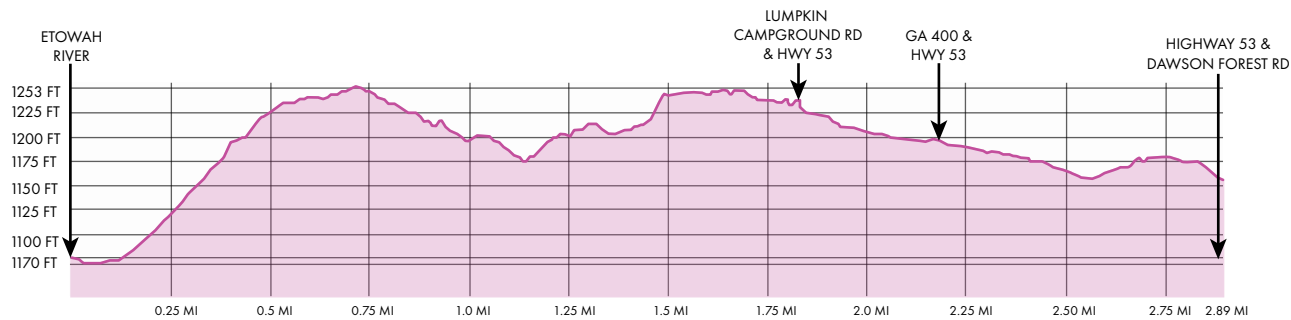
Challenges:

- Existing driveways and utilities along southern portion
- Lack of right-of-way width available for northern section
- Grade changes along route

Benefits:

- Provides an alternate transportation option to new/existing developments between Lumpkin Campground Rd. and Dawson Forest Road
- Loop connection to the north end of Etowah River Trail

Elevation:



MINIMUM ELEVATION | 1070 FT
AVERAGE ELEVATION | 1193 FT
MAX ELEVATION | 1153 FT

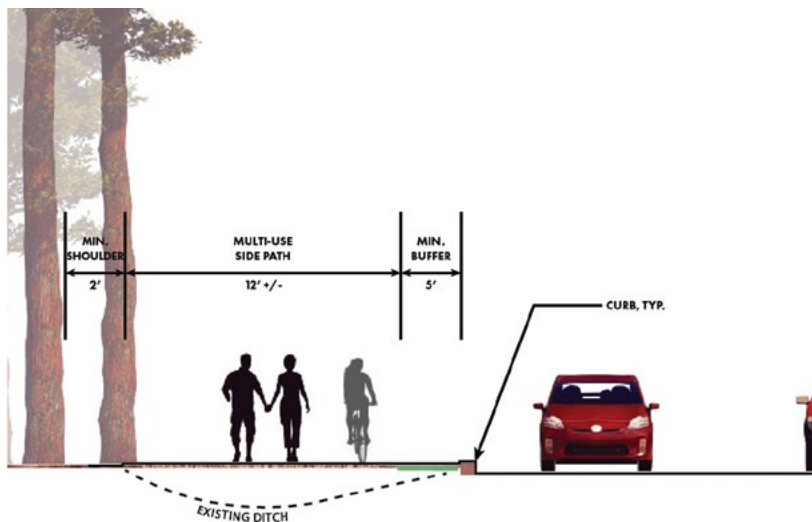
SEGMENT 5-A HIGHWAY 53 NORTH



EXISTING HIGHWAY 53 NORTH



TRAIL TYPE: SIDE PATH



SUMMARY

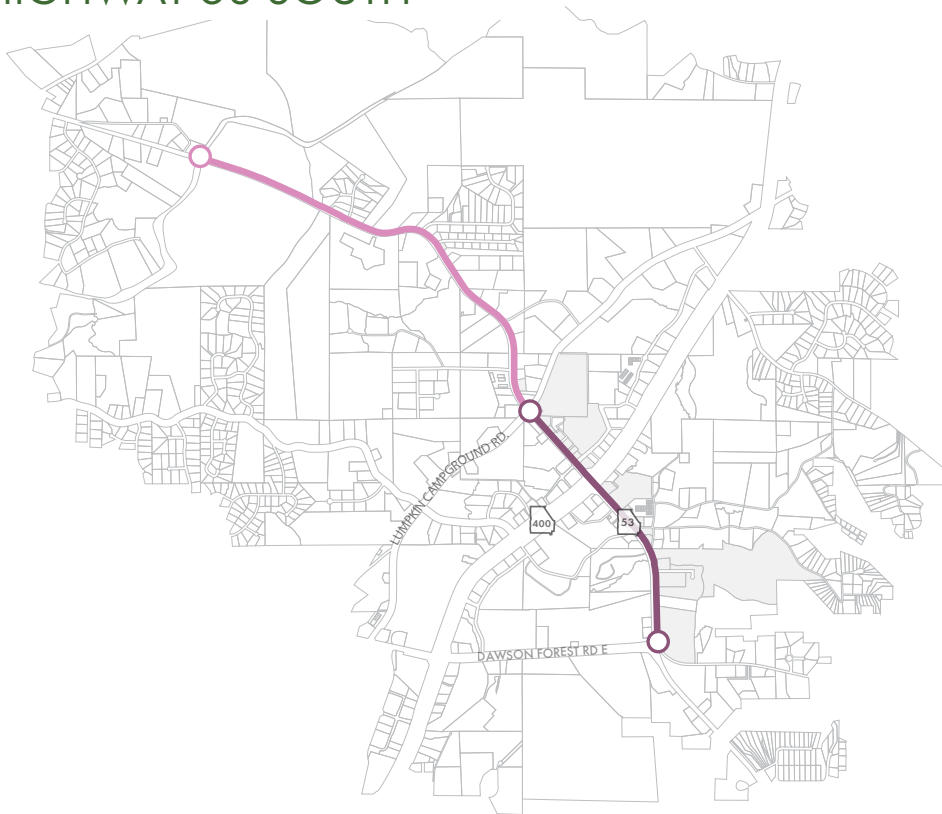
Distance: +/- 1.8 MILES

Cost Est.: +/- \$4.4 M

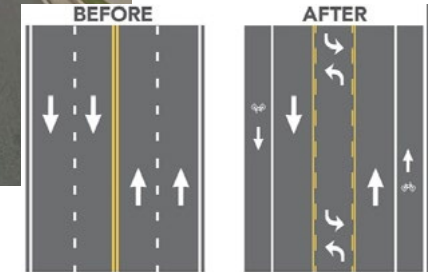
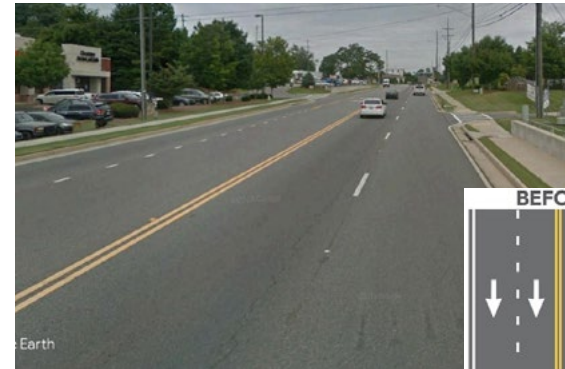
Estimated cost for 12' wide concrete trail with conversion of ditch to curb and gutter (no R/W acquisition cost included)

This trail segment will follow along the existing Highway 53 right-of-way. Long term, a buffered roadside trail section is preferred, but a short term solution may include an improved shoulder to accommodate confident bicyclist.

SEGMENT 5-B HIGHWAY 53 SOUTH



EXISTING HIGHWAY 53 SOUTH

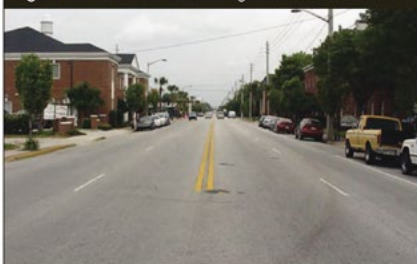


This segment will be within the Highway 53 corridor where there a large amount existing development. Coordination with utilities and drainage will be crucial. Due to the presence of sidewalks on the majority of this segment, the best solution may be consideration of lane reductions, re-striping, etc. in order to allow for at a minimum shared bike lanes and preferably dedicated bike lanes in each direction.

Image from Road Diet: Common Questions and Answers, US

EXAMPLE "ROAD DIET" - 4 LANE TO 3 LANE

Figure 1. Photo. Four-lane configuration before road diet.



Source: Pedestrian Bike Information Center, "Road Diets" training module, 2009.

Figure 2. Photo. Three-lane configuration after road diet.



Source: Pedestrian Bike Information Center, "Road Diets" training module, 2009.

SUMMARY

Distance: +/- 1.1 MILES

Cost Est.: TBD

Cost will depend on the striping solution and could be done next time the road is repaved at no additional cost.

04

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

4 IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter will summarize a recommended approach to encourage a timely implementation of this plan and will include a discussion of trail funding, route/segment summary and next steps.

4.1 FUNDING

While the cost projected in this plan may seem daunting, public support of such projects has grown exponentially in the past decades. The amount, quality and cohesiveness of a communities trails systems are one the highest priorities for people when considering moving into an area.

Trails also should be considered an investment with a definite return on investment. The benefits listed below represent a huge economic return on the money invested into trail projects. The economic benefits generated by trails dwarf the cost of land acquisition, construction and maintenance. ¹key economic benefits of trails are:

- Increase the value of nearby properties.
- Boost spending at local businesses.
- Trails make communities more attractive places to live.
- Trails influence business location and relocation decisions.
- Trails reduce medical costs by encouraging exercise and other healthy outdoor activities.
- Trails revitalize depressed areas, creating a demand for space in what were once vacant buildings.
- Trails provide transportation options and cut fuel expenses.
- Trails provide low or no-cost recreation to families
- Trails increase tax revenues in the communities in which they are located.

All sources of funding should be considered. These range from local level funding sources and community projects (to include private development inclusion of trails into new projects) to large state and federal funding opportunities.

A brief summary of funding sources to consider are:

Local

- General fund allocations
- SPLOST
- Required incorporation of trails within new construction projects
- Payment in lieu of options to build a fund
- Community foundations
- Non-profit collaborators
- Corporate foundations: grants and volunteers
- Small businesses or business partnerships: co-branding, events and sponsorship

State

- GDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
- GADNR Recreational Trails Program

Federal

- USDOT Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants
- FHWA Federal Recreational Trails Program Grants
- PeopleForBikes Community Grants <https://www.peopleforbikes.org/>
- The Conservation Alliance Grants
- American Hiking Society's National Trails Fund
- Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund

¹"Economic Benefits of Trails." ConservationTools, conservationtools.org/guides/97-economic-benefits-of-trails.

4.2 ROUTE/SEGMENT SUMMARY

Dawson County should utilize this study to identify priority routes/segments and bite of the construction one segment or sub-segment at a time. Consider elements such as existing areas that could act as short term temporary trailheads or logical temporary termini when funding is not available for the entire route/segment. The chart to the right provides a summary of the length (total, on road and off road) and estimated cost.

ROUTE/ SEGMENT NAME	TOTAL DISTANCE (IN MILES)	ON ROAD (IN MILES)	OFF ROAD (IN MILES)	ESTIMATED COST	ESTIMATED COST PER MILE
DAWSON FOREST	6.4	0.7	5.7	\$23.1 MIL	\$3.6 MIL
ETOWAH RIVER	6.6	0.0	6.6	\$23.4 MIL	\$3.5 MIL
GA 400	2.2	2.2	0.0	\$6.6 MIL	\$3.0 MIL
THOMPSON CREEK	1.5	1.5	0.0	\$3.3 MIL	\$2.2 MIL
HIGHWAY 53	2.9	2.9	0.0	\$4.4 MIL	\$1.5 MIL
TOTAL	19.6	7.3	12.3	\$60.8 MIL	\$3.1 MIL

4.3 NEXT STEPS AND RESOURCES

Next Steps

- Acceptance of the Master Plan by the Development Authority of Dawson County
- Adoption by the County Commission
- Establish an Implementation Committee
- Advance local ordinances (require trail construction or payment in lieu and land uses adjacent to trail.
- Identify funding for acquisition of key parcels in plan.
- Acquire key parcels.
- Apply for grants and pursue inclusion of funding into local project incentives

Web Resources

Existing Trail Maps and Route information

- www.georgiawildlife.com/dawson-forest-wma
- www.alltrails.com/trail/us/georgia/dawson-forest-wildlife-management-area-trails

Trail Funding Sources

- www.gadnrle.org/RTP
- www.headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/Trails_Funding_Resources_2018.pdf
- www.permatrak.com/news-events/bid/99853/6-grants-for-trails-and-greenway-funding

Trail Planning and Design

- www.ruraldesignguide.com
- www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Accessibility-Guide-Book.pdf
- www.access-board.gov/aba/guides/chapter-10-outdoor
- www.adainfo.org/sites/default/files/Accessible-Trail-Resources.pdf
- www.conservationtools.org/guides/97-economic-benefits-of-trails

Trail Plans in neighboring counties

- www.ghmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/South-Hall-Trail-Study.pdf
- <https://parks.forsythco.com/Parks-and-Facilities/Big-Creek-Greenway>
- <http://path400greenway.org/about-us>