Active Living Research Review 2000-2010

Transportation Policy Must Be Linked to Public Health Policy for Success in Active Living Programs

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Executive summary
Within the last three years, active living research has emphasized the following three points:

- Transportation policy must be linked to health policy.
- Collaborations within communities must include partnerships between health centers, hospitals, schools, city planners, parks and recreation, and transportation representatives.
- Funding continues for innovative programs that increase physical activity or active living not just in urban built environments, but also in rural populations, lower socio-economic areas, or for at-risk citizens.

Greenways and all their components are a chief and common way to preserve space in which communities can implement and execute active living projects. Currently, political support for these programs is very high. This country’s executive leadership recently revised transportation policy to highlight and demand bicycling and walking initiatives, in addition to creating programs such as “Let’s Move” specifically intended to increase physical activity, which reduces childhood obesity and diabetes through active living policies. The DOT, HUD, and EPA have partnered to promote livable and sustainable communities. This includes transportation, housing, and the environment all working together to achieve these goals.

One model for implementing active living is the implementation of rail-trails; projects that convert abandoned rail lines to multi-use trails. Rail-trails have become popular recreation destinations, real estate assets, are featured in desirable retirement sites, and draw new visitors to communities. Additionally, rail-trails provide general recreation opportunities off the streets. All types of recreation facility development, not just multi-use trails, require a diverse team, a champion, tremendous coordination, confidence to propose change and enact new policy, patience to accept existing policy, and community involvement for success.

There is no easy way around trail building. It’s rarely the cost that presents hurdles; it’s zoning and lack of land/space. This report will show that active living research has been conducted in urban and rural areas, is currently well-supported financially by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, has a number of case studies implementing greenways to demonstrate success, and illustrates how the Active Living by Design (ALbD) 5Ps model is a great model and that there is no better time to make progress towards livable, sustainable communities through active living goals than now.

Active Living Goals Achieved Via Greenways
Greenways are defined by Hellmund and Smith in “Designing Greenways” as bands on the landscape designated for their natural or recreational resources or other special qualities. They straddle waterways, traverse ridgelines, and sometimes cut across the landscape independent of topographic features. They range from narrow urban trail corridors to winding river flood plains, and even include very wide, wilderness-like landscape linkages. Greenways never provide just one
function, such as recreation along a bike path, but always, even if unintentionally, do many things at the same time. Common functions include nature conservation, floodwater management, and water quality protection. Greenways can be characterized by their linear shape, open space, connectivity, preservation, transit use, recreation, wildlife, etc. They are most effectively designed and managed, then, when all of these dimensions are recognized and coordinated (Hellmund).

Greenways are not standalone development scenarios; rather, they are elements of a comprehensive strategy that should be put in place as soon as possible before land becomes parceled out, or rivers contaminated, or wildlife displaced and extinct, and all natural buffers are lost. Greenways are not limited to actions that support only humans, and in fact, humans often don’t have access to parts of greenways that wildlife may. In other words, they are not solely for recreation - or urban barriers - they preserve, connect, and protect rural lands and historic, cultural, and natural features (Starnes).

Beltline, one of the largest public works projects ever attempted in the U.S., is currently underway in Atlanta. It recaptures abandoned rails and, according to a design by a Georgia Tech graduate student, creates a 22-mile ring through downtown Atlanta. Its environs offer bike trails and sidewalks alongside the path for light rail, which connects to heavy rail and crosses through 46 neighborhoods. This large greenway will relieve traffic congestion, revitalize communities, develop neighborhoods along rail lines, and incorporate art and events into the design to promote the economic, social, and environmental values of the community.

**Transportation and Public Health policy**

Although much of what you will read here emphasizes that public health policy and transportation policy must be worked on simultaneously, there are differences in how to prioritize the initiatives designed to support both; and that priority shifts depending on if the community is an urban or rural one.

RALA is a great survey tool for rural areas to measure active living due to fact that elements vary from urban areas and different measures are needed. Three data that identified opportunities/barriers are physical, program, and policy environments. Seven rural areas were piloted including TN, MI, and SC in the south. An interesting immediate observation can be summed up as: buses not bikes, i.e., the distance to locations of physical activities are so great in rural areas that distance becomes a barrier to those who cannot drive (youth or senior participation). This lack of transit needs to be solved first, rather than pushing active transport (via walking or biking). Thus, a huge focus on biking and trails, in absence of buses, is a glaring oversight in the first solution for rural areas.

Another great tool is a health impact assessment, or an HIA. HIAs are designed to support the public health initiative that is part of any policy. It is a new tool, and will be used much more in the future to increase support for incorporating active living techniques into policy, and tying transportation planning in to collaborate on complete streets. Dannenberg of the CDC refers to
three HIAs that were conducted in Georgia: Beltline, Buford Hwy, and the City of Decatur. Decatur even opened an office of active living to coordinate city efforts across all agencies afterwards. Several other HIAs offered data to support senior homes with walking trails, park access, walking, and biking to reduce childhood obesity. It appears to be a new and perfect tool since numerous HIAs have reviewed active living case studies and found the impacts of transportation and public health inseparable.

In Utah, a study on the Wasatch front echoed all the policy linking guidance, but one must keep in mind that it is new to hear this approach, and repetition may be the key to adoption. A costly retrofit to a brand new light rail system that did not include bike path access showed Utah that the policies were indeed linked, and planning expertise should be followed in the future.

**Two notes of importance on this linking of policies is that both should own the mission.** Hanson noted that in Arlington bicycling facilities were placed under the transportation umbrella versus that of city planners and park builders. Whereas Boarnet reminded planners that tying health policy to city planning did not rest solely on the shoulders of health agencies and that planners should remember to own this as well (Boarnet). Bottom line, it is a collaboration at the policy level and in the community.

**Forming partnerships in communities to support projects**

Arlington County, Virginia, experienced several natural and policy-based forms of support for bicycling related projects. Their story rivals Portland, Oregon, as the most successful model. Arlington had a vision in the 1970’s and - as a unique community using the county-managed model - included bicycling for commuters in the master plans from the beginning. The town attributes their success over the past three decades to constant collaboration, large citizen input, and ensuring their mission has a champion for the cause, a dedicated public servant, an advisory council, and allowing the greenway to be built incrementally (Hanson).

The article “Tracing the Evolution of a Biking System” documents many lessons learned for those of us pursuing collaborative models of change in large, metropolitan, congested-traffic areas like Atlanta; but there are lessons learned for rural areas too. In Hart County, Georgia, they are designing Phase 2 of a green space plan, and, are part of GMRC, a 10-county regional commission that has drafted a bicycling and pedestrian plan for the region. The neighboring counties of Elbert and Franklin do not have a green space plan as of yet, but they are zoned largely agricultural, which implies that the green space exists. Nearby Dawson County has mapped a green space showing sidewalks, trails, parks and other greenway environs.

The adjacent regional commission to Hart County is the NEGRC, which contains 12 additional counties and has a green space plan along with a key map of facilities and resources. Hart County can follow the lead of the neighbors who have made progress towards preserving green space, and likely influence Elbert and Franklin counties along the way. Several endeavors in the area, including the healthcare system, joint industrial development authority, and wellness park, already
utilize a multi-county approach. Again, collaboration and achieving connectivity are the most often cited goals in active living research, so working with neighbors within the region and adjacent ones is a good idea.

In an immigrant neighborhood in Hawaii, active living projects were designed for a community that needed help immediately, but didn’t have time for fundraising or policy setting. ALbD grant money allowed them to act quickly, but it was the ownership of the project by the local community health center that really drove the success. The health center had the best knowledge of what the community needed: help with young at-risk males. A local park acquired for historical and cultural preservation became the home of a bicycle repair and recycle center where youth learned skills, hung out with supervision, got active on bikes, and gave new life to a park they cherished culturally. The challenge reinvigorated a tired, old community health center movement, allowing it to addresses the broader social determinants of health in a community. Partnership was most important in the active living project, and an interesting observation was made due to the urgency of the situation: at times action can come first and policy second, contrary to the norm.

**Funding**

Active Living by Design (ALbD) creates community-led change by working with local and national partners to build a culture of active living and healthy eating. The Robert Wood Johnson foundation sponsors ALbD and active living research, and offers grants to fund innovative approaches to resuming activities such as walking to school, biking to the park, commuting to work, or errands less than three miles by bike, bus, or foot. Safe Routes to Schools, bike racks on busses, and Rails-to-Trails are just a few of the easily funded projects and quick to install solutions that the foundation supports. The cost for the entire East Coast Greenway from Maine to Florida is less than the construction of one bridge on Interstate 95, which travels the same corridor. Our country’s top leadership in government is behind this initiative. The U.S. DOT has a helpful list of other funds offered to communities willing to put travel by foot, bicycles, or multi-modes back on the agenda and design roads and highways that serve all of us, including trucks and cars.

“Complete Streets” is the common term for the all-encompassing idea that we can all travel the roads of America, while building them with our nation’s public health in mind.

The following are necessary factors to link federal transportation funding to local bike/pedestrian projects: must link health to transportation policy, serve rural and low SES areas, and track data better. A shift from local to state planning, and even regional planning, offers more access to funding. This research tracks federal money only, no matches or other localities. Having a master plan for bike/pedestrian facilities in general is better than nothing. Many rural areas miss out on funds from grants because they don’t have a plan (Cradock).

Naturally in rural areas, state routes, highways, railroad lines, and power lines achieve much of the connectivity. The map illustrates where future easements can be pursued. Some of what we don't see are also natural; the rivers, streams, and wildlife corridors that already exist. Denoting and
protecting this green space provides a way to follow nature’s path in hiking, biking, canoeing, and traveling through our county so as not to disturb or displace wildlife, streambeds, flood zones, and other environmental concerns that building requires. Even though a green space might not be traveled by humans, it keeps animals out on the fringe where they prefer, linear parcels of land from being chopped up, and leaves the environment less impacted. This allows connection to other parts of the county without requiring humans or wildlife to battle with cars and trucks on America’s roadways to get across town to play ball, enjoy the lake, or stroll in a garden. Preserving green space, planning the built environment, and transit within it are all policies that offer us a “if you build it they will come” approach to ultimately reducing childhood obesity, diabetes, and care for the elderly through providing a way to simply be more active in our daily lives.

ALbD has identified five strategies that address partnerships and the ecologic influences on physical activity behaviors: preparation, promotions, programs, policies and physical projects. These “5P strategies” provide the intervention framework for community partnerships. Scientific support of the effectiveness of these strategies can be found in various studies, many of which were summarized by the Federal Task Force on Community Preventive Services. These interventions included community-wide campaigns, tailored behavior change programs, point-of-decision prompts, school-based physical education and enhanced access to places for physical activity, combined with informational outreach activities (Active Living By Design).

**Conclusion**

Plenty of research already says that active living is the tool for getting agencies in the built environment and concern for the public health aligned. This report summarizes the repeated advice to collaborate, use new data, link transportation policy to health policy, and find a champion for the cause. Great success in Portland, Oregon, also indicates that when a community is at the beginning of a project that a concept planning stage prior to the actual planning stage is very useful and not as threatening. They suggest it as part of the formula in making the paradigm shift of reintegrating public health into urban planning (Adler).

This report also explores the multitude of funding currently available for active living projects. Not only is the RWJF leading the way in financing Active Living by Design 5P models, but Recovery Act, Stimulus Act, transportation dollars, and the First Lady herself all offer financial support. Arlington in the east and Portland in the west are model cities that have already achieved some of the foundational steps of having a master plan for development, including bicycling and walking. These counties exemplify having a plan other than sprawl to better design the built environment, and their successes can be showcased for the rest of us to follow. Although research on greenways in rural areas is still minimal, it does exist, and there are some commonalities.
Hart County Green space Inventory

**Background and purpose**
Today, city planning and transportation planning decisions today are fortunately becoming tied to health planning again. Perhaps you recall this approach from the 1970's - another era when all decisions about the built environment were tied to health policy - but in the last three or four decades we have gotten away from this. Obesity epidemics, increased diabetes, and other
preventable medical conditions have skyrocketed medical costs and remind us that we are inactive and unhealthy. We have lost sight of tying health policy issues to planning decisions as we sprawl our towns, cities, and green spaces. National initiatives led by this country’s leadership and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention are back in place to get America moving again and linking our policy for how to build and how to transport people to the health of our people makes perfect sense. We just needed reminding. Research in the last decade points to active living as the approach for tying this all together.

*Cateechee is "pure golf in a nature park." No houses, no street crossings, no traffic to spoil your experience of playing this Audubon Signature Course, just named a "Four-Star" destination by (Golf Digest).*

The description above from the Cateechee Golf Club website shares the feeling one gets on a greenway. Preserving them now prevents the parceling out, loss, or development of those environments in which pure active living or pure wilderness can occur. Newton County negotiated this week with mayors of neighboring towns to sign a pledge to appeal to Norfolk-Southern to move forward on completing rail line abandonment so trail building could start. Stephens County has plans for the Tallulah Gorge Rail Trail, providing miles of shady, multi-use paths in the fondly remembered path of the trains of yester year. Clarke County may be years away from ironing out the details of easements and rights of way on the 39-mile line to Union Point, but they’ve already named it the Firefly after the engine that frequently shot sparks on its regular run. Hart County has some abandoned rail line and some seldom used rail line to negotiate on, but the centerpiece is the historic turntable in the downtown area. These are perfect for historic preservation, green space protection, and trail building to provide active living in the heart of Hart County as well as leading out of downtown to other sources of healthy living.

Ballparks at 2 in town county parks, high schools, middle schools, and arts center, state of Georgia waterfront parks, gum Branch Park at the mega ramp all the way north to reed creek, fishing pier at the dam, or trails at the gateway parks. For such a small county, it’s actually an easy job to connect the dots and then carry that over to Franklin and Stephens and Elbert counties too. An existing map of rail lines is here: [http://www.hartiba.com/map-room.html](http://www.hartiba.com/map-room.html). Interns have begun a resource inventory map for the county to include all of the above and more as we learn about it. A sample of how powerful the information can be is evidenced by looking at the NEGRC map of similar design for the neighboring region to the west.

**Snapshot of Hart County**

Located approximately 90-miles northeast of Atlanta along Interstate I-85, Hart County is situated in the heart of the rapidly developing I-85 Growth Corridor between Atlanta, Greenville/Spartanburg, South Carolina, and Charlotte, North Carolina. The county is named after local Revolutionary War heroine Nancy Hart, and is the only county in Georgia named for a
woman. It includes the cities of Hartwell and Bowersville as well as over 200 miles of scenic shoreline along Lake Hartwell.

Traditionally, Hart County has had a rural economy based on textile manufacturing and agriculture. In recent years, economic trends resulted in the shift of textile manufacturing overseas, resulting in job loss within the community. A regional pro-business approach to economic development - including industrial park development, infrastructure and airport expansion, and investments in education - has attracted new industry, and is positioning Hart County for the future.

Lake Hartwell, an excellent quality of life, and the strategic location of Hart County along the I-85 corridor, have attracted an increasing number of tourists, retirees, and second-home owners to the area. The community’s priorities center on opportunities and challenges related to economic development and visioning for the future of Hart County. The efforts of the Hart County Archway Partnership focus on these areas, including: education and workforce development, tourism, long-term planning, and leadership. Local Hart County Archway partners include the City of Hartwell, Hart County Board of Commissioners, Hart County Board of Education, Hart County Chamber of Commerce, Hart County Hospital, and the Hart County Industrial Building Authority (Hart County Archway).

**Inventory of known green space with descriptions**

An inventory of resources is helpful in measuring the starting point for and success of sustainable development, and the criteria measured should match other regions so comparisons can be done, not only locally, but against neighbors in the region. The bottom line is, the decision to create a green space must begin locally and requires consideration of all three impacts (social, economic, and environmental) when implementing solutions and a focus on interconnectedness, because it can’t be done in a silo. Public input is necessary for having small rural towns with declining populations accept and support any sustainable development policy, or any visions that are set for the community. The common good must be considered in addition to individual needs or it simply will not work. "Embracing sustainable development necessitates creating a community vision composed of qualities that the community as a whole cherishes. Creating a vision and implementing that vision will require finding a balance between community rights and individual rights" (Furuseth 131-145).

Some current Hart County green space assets include:

1. Gum Branch Mega Ramp – a specially designed and landscaped boat launch area capable of handling tournaments where many boaters launch, park, and participate in lake activity ranging from the regional to international level in scope.

2. Clay Street Park – a county recreation facility in Hartwell containing ball fields, picnic pavilions, and other amenities.
3. Elberton Hwy Park (includes Hart County Botanical Garden) - a county recreation facility in Hartwell containing ball fields, picnic pavilions, and other amenities.

4. Gateway Parks I and II – industrial parks adjacent to I-85 corridor offering numerous sites for business, and surrounded by landscaped area with walking trails and green space.

5. Lake Hartwell Dam and fishing pier – beautifully boardwalked and tree-lined approach to a fishing pier at the dam.

6. Corps of Engineers Lakefront – over 220 acres or miles of lakefront shoreline on Lake Hartwell.


9. Reed Creek Park – as-yet undeveloped land available for potential park development.

10. Tri-County Wellness Park – land cleared and set aside to provide joint amenities for Franklin, Stephens, and Hart Counties.


12. Turntable – historic railcar turnaround structure at the end of a rail line in downtown Hartwell currently hosting two abandoned railcars

13. Hartwell courthouse and downtown area charrette from 2004

**Recommendations**

The main recommendation is that Hart County converts this inventory into a master plan for preserving green space and applies for funding citing active living or community livability goals. A good start would be designing a greenway that provides connectivity between all sites listed in the inventory and uses bicycling and pedestrian facilities. There are funding opportunities once a master plan is available for reference. Hart County is part of a regional commission that has developed a regional plan, included later in this binder.

This report inventories green space, recommends its preservation, offers research to urge future connectivity, suggests funding to implement these trails, park connections, and rail-bed reuse projects. Additionally, partnering with the neighboring regions is urged for federal funding as well
as tying any development in the built environment to active living objectives, the key ones of which the community benefits largely from include reducing childhood obesity and getting seniors active.

The Scuppernong River Greenway in Columbia, NC, is an example of an extremely successful greenway in a small, rural, sparsely populated, and poor county in North Carolina. Despite the county’s environment, it had an abandoned historic feature in town along a route that beach-bound tourists passed in droves. Protecting, restoring, and marketing that feature diverted tourists and revitalized the town. The community’s vision developed ecotourism around the feature and a river provided the opportunity. The small town success became a regional model drawing collaboration from US Fish & Wildlife, NCDot, ECU and others. Hart County’s railroad turntable could parallel this type of feature if it were developed into a historically preserved attraction.

**Connectivity and Livability**

Hart County is a rural community, which adds another layer of complexity for how to connect the dots. However, numerous studies in rural areas show how they are accomplishing just that. Information from other rural communities is shared in this green space plan. Although this project began as an attempt to inventory the parks, trails, fishing ramps, gardens, and recreation areas in the county, it quickly became clear that the data on green space needed to be compiled in a greenway master plan. This plan would allow the county to reference it and apply for grants for landscaping parks, tournament level fishing facilities, sidewalks, rails to trails paths, historic features like the turntable, senior walking clubs, and community or botanic gardens. Neighboring counties were also surveyed to see what their green space plans looked like for regional comparison and to see what partnerships were in place tying transportation policy to health policy.

Livability is about providing people, including seniors and those who cannot afford to drive regularly, better choices for traveling throughout their communities. It’s about encouraging growth in historic, small-town Main Streets across America as well as a high quality of life with ample green space, including biking or walking paths with shopping and easily accessible restaurants, or health care facilities located nearby. While some of these communities face formidable threats – from job losses and shrinking populations to disappearing farmland and strained resources – their leaders have forged collaborations, and created plans that are growing economies, benefiting people, and protecting the land and lifestyles treasured by residents and non-residents alike. And no matter what skeptics in Washington say, livability is a value that rings true in these communities.

Policymakers have taken significant steps to support coordination among transportation, housing, environmental and agricultural planning. Of particular importance is the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, a joint effort between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Transportation. In his 2011 budget, President Obama proposed $830 million for collaborative projects between these key
agencies to improve quality of life in our communities and increase transportation options, affordable housing, and economic opportunity – together.

Similarly, the Livable Communities Act, sponsored by Senator Chris Dodd, would build upon this concept by authorizing $4 billion in competitive grants to support communities with promising plans and projects – communities making efforts like those outlined in these case studies. Without this kind of funding assistance, many small towns and rural areas lack the financial resources, planning capacity, or authority to implement forward-looking solutions to deal with the challenges they face (Davis).

**Funding**

The Robert Wood Johnson foundation sponsors active living research and offers grants to fund innovative approaches to resuming activities such as walking to school, biking to the park, commuting to work, or errands less than three miles by bike, bus, or foot. Safe Routes to Schools, bike racks on busses, Rails-to-Trails are just a few of the easily funded projects and quick to install solutions that the foundation supports. The cost for the entire East Coast Greenway from Maine to Florida is less than the construction of one bridge on Interstate 95, which travels the same corridor. Our country’s top leadership in government is behind this initiative. The U.S. DOT has a helpful list of other funds offered to communities willing to put travel by foot, bicycles, or multi-modes back on the agenda and design roads and highways that serve all of us, including trucks and cars. Complete Streets is the common term for the all-encompassing idea that we can all travel the roads of America, while building them with our nation’s public health in mind.

Naturally in rural areas, much of the connectivity is achieved by state routes, highways, railroad lines, and power lines. The map illustrates where future easements can be pursued. Some of what we don’t see are also natural, the rivers, streams, and wildlife corridors that already exist. Denoting and protecting this green space provides a way to follow nature’s path in hiking, biking, canoeing, and traveling through our county so as not to disturb or displace wildlife, streambeds, flood zones, and other environmental concerns that building requires. Even though a green space might not be traveled by humans, it keeps animals out on the fringe where they prefer, linear parcels of land from being chopped up, and leaves the environment less impacted. This allows connection to other parts of the county without requiring humans or wildlife to battle with cars and trucks on America’s roadways to get across town to play ball, recreate at the lake, or stroll in a garden. Preserving green space, planning the built environment, and transit within it are all policies that offer us a “if you build it they will come” approach to ultimately reducing childhood obesity, diabetes, and care for the elderly through providing a way to simply be more active in our daily lives.

Other grants Hart County could pursue are the Georgia Recreation Trail grants, found here: [http://www.gastateparks.org/core/item/page.aspx?Is=18195.0.1.5#application](http://www.gastateparks.org/core/item/page.aspx?Is=18195.0.1.5#application), and here: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/). The Georgia Department of Natural Resources
administers the Georgia Recreational Trails Program (general information on this Federal "TEA-
funded" program is at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/). GDNR is accepting grant
proposals through November for its next funding cycle.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is presenting the Draft FY 2011-2014 Statewide
Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for public review and comment with several public
meetings around the state. The STIP lists Federally-funded transportation projects that are located
outside Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) boundaries. The STIP is a four-year program
that specifies federally funded transportation projects for non-urban communities in rural Georgia
for fiscal years 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. These projects include, but are not limited to, new
construction, improvements, and maintenance for interstates and state routes and bridges.
Additional projects include bicycle and pedestrian projects, transportation enhancement projects
and public transit projects. For more information, visit: http://www.georgiastip.com/.

The Livable Communities Act would provide grants for comprehensive planning to communities
looking to integrate transportation, housing, economic development and environmental issues and
set aside $3.75 billion over three years for competitive grants to fund implementation of projects
identified in these integrated regional plans (Davis).

**Marketing**

Research has found that promoting a more healthy lifestyle because of its health benefits and
Surgeon General’s suggestions only goes so far, and probably only reaches an audience likely to
already be focusing on maintaining health. Furthermore, these messages may be ignored by or
discourage others who deem exercise a chore or not their ‘cup of tea.’ Thus, the careful marketing
of the reemerging health policy as a return to daily activities from a simpler time in life is a key
approach to pitching these initiatives successfully. Some people have forgotten that if you walk to
school, bike to run errands, or start senior walking clubs, that you’ve already gotten your exercise
for the day just by going about your normal lives. You don’t have to buy special clothes, fancy
equipment or schedule in the chore of exercise, just make it part of how you travel through life
and it becomes habit. And ultimately, that is what this is all about - habits. Our grandparents had
better habits, and were therefore more fit. The love affair with the automobile and the instant
gratification of this “you can have it all” world got us off course; we began moving faster, became
less connected to others, and are focused on the wrong goals.

Hart County has recreation, parks, a fabulous lake that draws tourism, a retiree community
looking for activity, numerous annual countywide social events, a busy club of master gardeners,
bustling farmer’s holding a seasonal market, and historic preservation audio guides of the historic
county (the only one named for a woman in the entire state). These elements could be mapped out
and offered as a new way to get around and live in Hart County for those citizens who can’t get to
work or preventative health care clinics dependably.
In order to keep safety in mind and clarified for all, GEORGIA BIKES! released the Georgia Bicycle Law Enforcement Pocket Guide. This guide, the first of its kind for Georgia, provides a ready reference about traffic laws and safety standards for law enforcement officers and others who are faced with the task of enforcing traffic laws or investigating crashes that involve cyclists. (Crites).

Finally, research shows that funding for the active living initiatives should be focused or increased in rural areas where impoverished communities don't often receive such services to facilitate a more productive daily existence. Everyone needs public access to get to school, work, doctors offices, the library, city hall, parks, and recreation easily. Our map shows what Hart County has achieved and highlights areas where we can connect the dots.

A point not to be overlooked in pursuing this green space inventory is that research indicates that all towns, whether urban or rural, have achieved successful design of sidewalks, bike paths, multiuse trails, greenways, and historic scenic highways connectivity thru a collaborative effort in their towns. In every case the partnership includes local health care centers, school boards, city planners, parks and recreation facilities, and hospitals. These groups must all work together to design or redesign healthy neighborhoods, incorporating active living features in their designs: roadways with ample shoulders and fewer rumble strips, striped bike lanes, multi use paths to parks and schools, bus routes to town centers, hospital shuttles, buses with bike racks, greenways along rivers, streams, and old rail lines, and sidewalks connecting all these elements.

**Next steps**

**Georgia’s green space program**

In 2000, Governor Barnes approved a program researched and recommended by the green space advisory committee on preserving 20 percent green space in counties over 60,000 in population with over 800 population increases. Although Hartwell does not qualify for funding to do so based on its much smaller population, the DNR chart and map of all counties in Georgia identifies a goal for Hart County to preserve 30,154 of its 163,793 acres (13,024 lake + 150,769 land). Counted in green space is heritage preserve and corps of engineer’s federal land which equal 988 and 148 acres respectively. This report is available online and offers a number of guidelines regarding preservation and development that may be useful nonetheless.

**Rails-to-Trails conservancy**

In the fall 2010 issue of the Member Magazine, President Keith Laughlin surmises from chats with his teenage children that a fairly dramatic cultural shift is underway. “We are witnessing a transition from the auto-dominated American lifestyle of the post-war years to something new – something more grounded and local. At the neighborhood level, demand is growing for more livable communities that emphasize health and quality of life. And as part of that vision, people want the choice of walking, biking, driving, or public transportation...we’ve been tracking how
even small changes in transportation infrastructure can lead to huge shifts in the look and feel of a community. More bike lanes here, wider sidewalks there, a rail-trail through the heart of a neighborhood, are all fairly minor adjustments to the visual landscape. Yet these efforts can lead to vastly more active lifestyles, less road congestion and more connected and open communities” (Laughlin 2).

In April 2010, Rails-to-Trails was awarded a grant from the SRAM Cycling Fund and Bikes Belong to build the case for active transportation in rural and small-town America, walking and bicycling beyond the urban centers. This one-year project includes quantitative research, collecting stories, documenting case studies and developing a report. Contact David Levinger, dlevinger@railstotrails.org for more information.

**Bike shares**

A growing trend in Europe and even in four US cities as of this summer is to provide a supply of shared bikes with numerous return locations across a city that can be used by anyone who inserts a token or user card. Incredible success has been enjoyed and initial hurdles overcome such that more cities and municipalities are lining up to provide the service. Rockmart, Georgia, set one up based on their proximity to the 63-mile Silver Comet rail-trail that runs through their town. The DASANI Blues Bikes are brand new Trek Cruiser Classic bicycles. They are stored in 18 fully enclosed blue lockers adjacent to the Silver Comet.

The program operates on the community bicycle concept with the Rockmart Public Library dispensing key cards that open the lockers. A cyclist simply passes an assigned card through the reader, removes and rides the bike, and returns it to the locker when finished. This is all meant to encourage the community to make healthy lifestyle choices and provide them with another way to get outside, be active, and have fun.

The bicycles will be maintained by the Silver Comet Bicycle Club (they received a donation from DASANI to help in doing so). This is a local group that has also maintained a section of the Silver Comet for years.

Blue Bikes is a new, nationwide effort led by DASANI with the assistance of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Trek. It is enabled locally by the City of Rockmart, the Rockmart Public Library, the Silver Comet Bicycle Club, and the Polk County Chamber of Commerce. Among others on hand at the kickoff event were representatives of Free-Flite Bicycles (who assembled the bikes), the Silver Comet Depot bicycle shop, and GEORGIA BIKES! (Crites).

**Maps**

Peter Norris of Nitty Gritty Bike Band Club (Wright) has mapped out rides that a regular group of cyclists in the Athens-Clarke County area use to ride the roads to Hartwell and visit. Active tourism is a fast growing market as Gen-Xers are more active. Mapping the mountain biking trails and known routes to town from neighboring regions like Athens is an easy way to guide folks to your town to get refreshed after a bike ride, shop a little, enjoy the lake, or even camp out and
return the next day. Bicycling vacations are all the rage among this set and local outfitter Chan Powell operates in Watkinsville, www.bicyclingvacation.com, that Hartwell could work with to arrange frequent bike/camp outings to the lake.

There are already rides that go to or operate from Hartwell annually, including the Ride of the Centuries. Nearby communities host the Tugaloo Bike Tour, the Tugaloo triathlon, the Elberton Cup bike race weekend in late May, and the Twilight Criterium in Athens every April. These events attract experienced bicyclists who travel the state’s scenic highways or other routes when an alternate route is not available, and who would support and embrace rail trails or multi-use trails in communities. Anyone can use a trail; seniors could hold walking clubs, youth could bike from school to ball practice, and residents could run errands by walking or bicycling. One downtown parking spot could hold approximately 12 bikes if a storeowner decided to install a bike rack.

Many field books exist for the recreation crowd. For example, the Hartwell mountain biking circuit in Payne's Creek is documented. These recreation or active living options are a way for tourists to find Hartwell and to have a reason to not only come to the lake, but into town for dinner and to stroll about, visit the historic turntable, watch an outdoor movie, or enjoy the relaxation that retirees and other citizens have come to know and desire. Creating trails in outlying areas of the county, such as Gateway Industrial Park, will give the residents of those areas a destination for walking clubs, or stroller outings, or pastoral and healthy lunch breaks for employees.

**Design stage**

Hellmund offers a five-question guide to beginning the greenway design process, noting that a comprehensive map of all resources is not always the best place to start, but acknowledges that an overview or environmental scan is helpful as communities begin to answer the following design questions: (Hellmund, 217, 254, 261)

1. Identifying potential issues, stakeholders, and preliminary goals
2. Defining a broad region to study
3. Selecting nodes and swaths
4. Selecting alternative alignments and setting widths
5. Implementing and managing

**Fourteen Opportunities that building a greenway creates**

1. Greenways keep aspects of functioning nature near where people live, no matter how urban the area.
2. Give people access to nature and recreation and thereby facilitate social interaction.
3. Reclaim postindustrial and other degraded areas and thereby serve residents and accommodate natural processes while restoring the land.
4. Link diverse neighborhoods to encourage social interaction and promote environmental justice.
5. Manage for objectives upstream of metropolitan greenways to enhance water quality protection. Similarly, avoid sending exacerbated floodwaters or other problems downstream.
6. Promote objectives away from a greenway in its landscape matrix, rather than considering such areas as totally incompatible and not worthy of attention.
7. Protect linear vegetated areas wherever they occur and especially if they connect large patches of vegetation.
8. Include sustainable managed community gardens, farms, and forests that can replace distant sources of food and materials that rely on heavy inputs of chemical fertilizer, pesticides, and energy.
9. Set aside less environmentally sensitive areas within or adjacent to greenways to meet compatible community needs, such as subsidized housing.
10. Seek out situations where there is social conflict, but where a greenway might be an appropriate vehicle for bringing together diverse perspectives, thereby empowering citizens, identifying common aspirations, and potentially resolving the conflict.
11. Create many short trails that link people to schools and other practical destinations, thus reducing reliance on motorized transportation.
12. Create along appropriate community-recognized landscape lines, such as irrigation canals, trails, or abandoned railroad corridors to build on the identity they may already hold for residents.
13. Look for possible greenway alignments that already are of interest to diverse, but possibly uncoordinated (or perhaps conflicting groups) and bring these groups together to consider a greenway.
14. Seek out parties who may not think of themselves as greenway proponents, but who may have things to gain from participating or are otherwise in positions to affect the success of a greenway (Hellmund, 261).

Conclusion
The need for a meeting point between policymakers in Washington and citizens in their neighborhoods was evident in today’s roundtable on childhood obesity, titled “Keeping Kids Moving,” sponsored by Transportation for America, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity, The Convergence Partnership and PolicyLink. We’re facing an epidemic of childhood obesity and poor health, and this could very well be a generation of children who live shorter, less healthy lives than their parents if we don’t act now to change things. The shape and structure of streets, sidewalks and the ability to safely use them has an enormous impact on whether children become overweight or obese. Kids get more physical activity and lead healthier lives when they can bike or walk to school, play in local parks, and reach recreational
opportunities with ease. Among American children between the ages of 10 and 17, 32 percent are overweight or obese, and many are at risk for more serious conditions like type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Obesity rates are disproportionately high among low-income and minority children. In search of a solution, many routes invariably lead to transportation policy (Barry).

This document has revealed the most obvious places to connect in Hart County, and neighboring counties to keep in mind, as federal funding is coming in for counties that connect with each other to promote healthy living. This plan highlights landscape designs at several key county park areas and notes other areas for subsequent development and building out more detailed plans as time and assignment permits. Also included are a variety of funding options and opportunities for future green space planning.

Works Cited


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