



Calhoun Area MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update

Interim Memo #1—Summary of Baseline Conditions

PURPOSE OF INTERIM MEMO #1

This Interim Memo is a working draft document that is intended to compile available data on demographics, existing facilities, previous planning efforts, and policy initiatives that are relevant and important to the development of an effective bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Calhoun Area MPO. This base information will serve to inform the consultant team, EARPDC staff, and community stakeholders about key factors that influence the development of the plan and provide a good basis for engagement of and discussion with the community.

Stakeholder comments should be emailed to CalhounBikePed@gmail.com. Comments, suggested changes and other ideas will be collected and compiled for inclusion in the final plan, but once posted on the project website this Interim Memo will not be revised.

Most of the maps created for this document have been produced by the GIS staff at East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, and we are deeply grateful for their excellent work and assistance. Maps are included in this document, but due to the size of the study area, some of the maps are difficult to read in this document. For that reason, most of the maps are available in full size on the project website at <http://www.earpdc.org/pages/?pageID=27> along with this Interim Memo.

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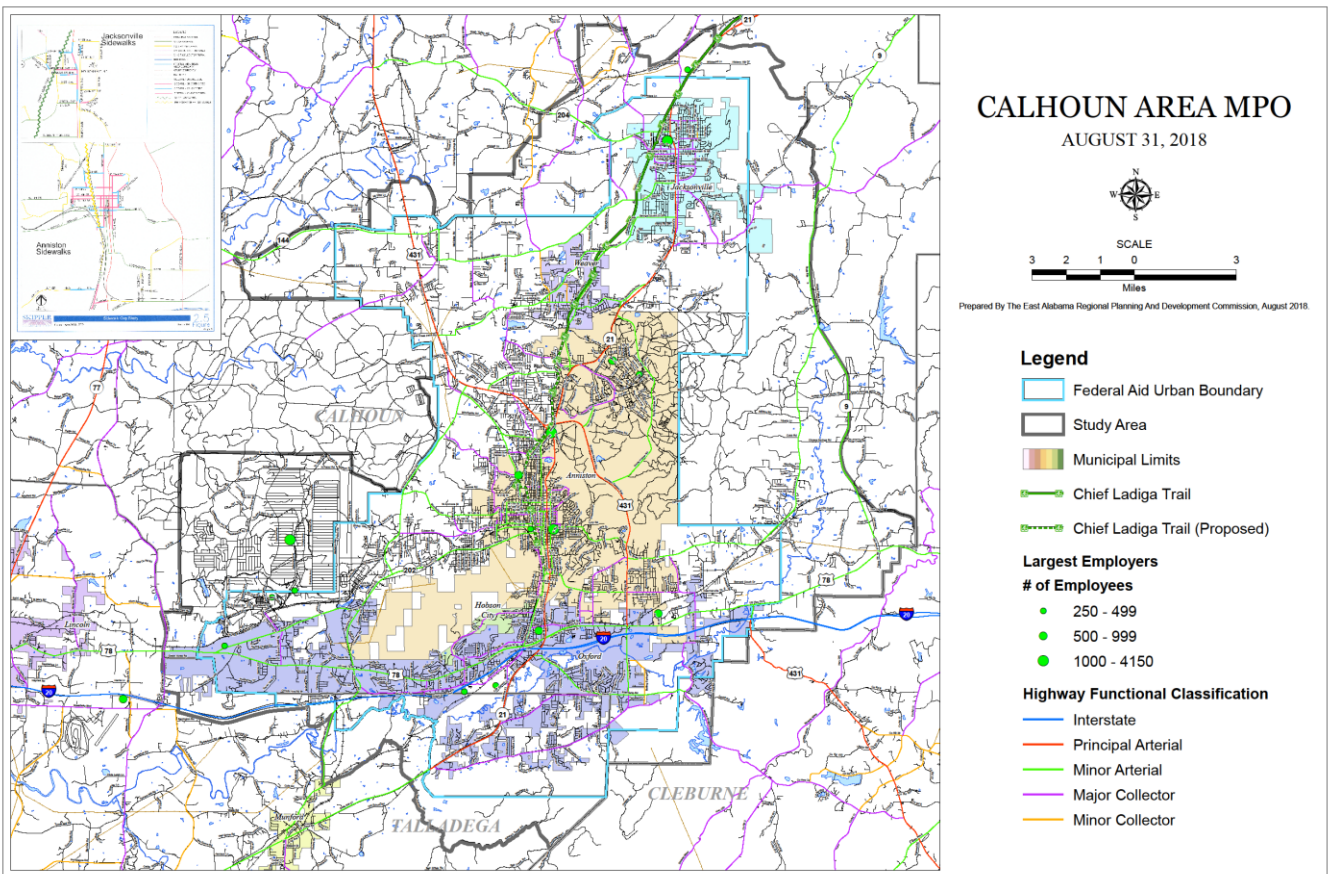
1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Plan Purpose

The Calhoun Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is updating its 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (BPP) to refine the vision and goals for the plan and to craft a strategy for more successful implementation of the key elements of the plan. As a long-term, planning level document, the BPP lays out the future vision for the region’s bicycle and pedestrian network, including facility locations and types. The BPP also lists projects to be implemented in coming years to realize the future vision and provides planning level cost estimates for the projects.

Calhoun MPO

The Calhoun Area MPO area is responsible for coordinating all federally-funded transportation projects within the urbanized area of Calhoun County, as well as the area that is expected to become urbanized in the next 20 to 30 years, as illustrated in Map 1 below. The MPO is housed at and staffed by East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission (EARPDC).



Map 1: Study area boundaries and municipalities



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The MPO study area includes the cities of Oxford, Anniston, Hobson City, Weaver, and Jacksonville. The MPO is comprised of three committees:

- A Policy Committee -- composed of local elected officials from Calhoun County and the five cities, as well as EARPDC Executive Director, ALDOT Division Engineer, and non-voting members from FHWA and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) -- which sets policy and approves the planning documents that determine which transportation improvement projects will be implemented;
- A Technical Advisory Committee, composed of planners and engineers representing local governments and ALDOT, which directs technical studies and plans, reviews project priorities and funding, and makes recommendations to the policy committee; and
- A Citizens' Advisory Committee, composed of local citizens with an interest in transportation, which provides an important source of public input regarding needs and priorities for the community.

In addition, the MPO has an ad-hoc Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), a special committee which is convened as needed to provide input for this plan update; and a standing Transit Advisory Board that serves the ACTS transit system.

In coordination with ALDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the MPO produces and periodically updates three key planning documents:

- the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), a 20-plus year plan which forecasts growth, identifies transportation improvements, and estimates available funding to implement projects;
- the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the short-term plan implementation plan that lists projects that will be funded and implemented during the coming four-year period; and
- the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which defines the activities that will be undertaken by MPO planning staff each year and the funding assigned to each activity or plan.
- the MPOs Public Participation Plan is also updated every 4-5 years. Its purpose is to be consistent with the intent of the FAST Act final rules to provide for an open process with free exchange of information and opportunity for public input at all stages of the transportation planning process, as well as at scheduled meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and the MPO Policy Board.

Planning Partners, Stakeholder Engagement, and Public Outreach

- Planning partners: ALDOT and FHWA
- Key Stakeholder Groups: Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), City of Jacksonville Bicycle Advisory Committee (JBAC), Main Street Anniston, Coldwater Mountain venue, Fort McClellan.



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- Standing Committees: The MPO Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and Policy Committee;
- ACTS Transit Advisory Board;
- Community Stakeholders: business groups, bicycle organizations, Jacksonville State, Gadsden State, K-12 schools, community organizations.

All residents of the area are invited to E-mail us with comments or to be added to the study contact list at CalhounBikePed@gmail.com.

Previous Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning Efforts

The Calhoun MPO area is fortunate to already have significant bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in place. The area is home to several popular bicycle facilities, most notably the Chief Ladiga Trail and Coldwater Mountain Bike Trail venues, as well as an active bicycling community spearheaded by the Northeast Alabama Bicycle Association (NEABA). The City of Anniston has been at the forefront of efforts to transform the area into the Southeast’s preeminent bicycle-friendly community. In addition, localized sidewalk networks exist throughout the MPO area, such as within Downtown Anniston, the Jacksonville State University area, and many residential areas. However, these bicycle and pedestrian facilities are often localized, have gaps that limit their usability, and/or lack sufficient overall interconnectivity to form a truly linked regional, or even subarea, network.

Central to the BPP update process will be the review and appropriate incorporation of project and policy recommendations from the numerous related studies and plans that have been prepared for the MPO and its subareas over the past 15 years. Several of the area’s 18 bicycle projects and 22 pedestrian projects recommended in the MPO’s 2012 BPP have been completed or are underway. The JBAC recently prepared a list of projects and policy recommendations to address bicycle and pedestrian needs within Jacksonville. These planning documents provide an important basis for later implementation efforts. With regard to pedestrian facilities, the study’s pedestrian assessments will not be conducted to the degree required for the preparation of detailed sidewalk plans for the MPO or its jurisdictions. Instead, the study activities will focus on identifying any particular linkages needed to provide pedestrian connectivity to the area’s bicycle facilities and key destinations, as well as facility needs to support ongoing ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance, as documented in recent ADA Transition Plans for the area.

2. VISION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Building community consensus around a future vision for the region’s bicycle and pedestrian network is a critical element of creating a plan that can be implemented rapidly. Key to this vision is completion of the Chief Ladiga Trail (CLT) and connectivity to the adjacent cities and communities. Community needs and desires for improved economic opportunities, affordable and effective mobility options, and better access to active recreation and parks are well served by the vision. Realization of the vision will create



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vibrant communities with growing local businesses that thrive on the activity generated by trail patrons and tourists.

The region's history is a compelling story of industrialization, early new town planning, and the challenges of social and economic change in the 1960s and 1970s. Elements of this history can and should be highlighted in the development of the trail. Historic tourism opportunities add another element to the bicycle tourism attraction of the region, which will be further enhanced by the extension of the CLT to Anniston.

Further exploration and discussion of the needs and aspirations of the region in consultation with the BPAC will lead to a developing vision and goals statement.

The vision, goals and objectives of this plan update are guided by policies of the Calhoun Area MPO: bicycle and pedestrian facilities will be included in all road improvement projects unless extraordinary conditions preclude, and the decision not to accommodate them will be the exception and not the rule. In addition, goals contained in the current MPO Long Range Transportation Plan to reduce vehicle emissions and to address the mobility and active recreation needs of low-income and otherwise disadvantaged groups also provide support and guidance for the vision, goals and objectives of the plan update.

Identification of appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facility types in each community along the CLT will be an important outcome of the BPP update. Developing this vision involves identifying the appropriate facilities and connections within and between the primary activity centers to form a linked regional network, with the CLT serving as the spine. The first step is to review and incorporate project and policy recommendations from the numerous related studies and plans that have been prepared for the MPO and its subareas over the past 15 years.

The existing bicycle and pedestrian plan includes the following vision statement:

In order to reduce auto trips, improve public health, reduce pollution, increase transportation choices and promote tourism, we are working to increase bicycle and pedestrian access and facilities in the Calhoun urban area so that bicycle and pedestrian trips are encouraged, practical and safe.

The 2012 plan included the following goals:

- To increase bicycle and pedestrian safety;
- To improve bicycle and pedestrian access;
- To include bicycle and pedestrian needs in the planning and development of the community; and
- To increase local support for bicycle and pedestrian activities.

Through consultation with the BPAC and other stakeholders, this plan update will refine the vision statement and goals for the updated plan. The planning documents developed previously by the MPO will provide an important basis for later implementation efforts. Other activities will focus on identifying the specific linkages needed to provide connectivity to the area's bicycle and pedestrian facilities and key destinations.



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3. STUDY AREA CHARACTERISTICS

Demographics

Cities in the Calhoun Area MPO have had relatively stable population since 2010, although population estimates suggest a continuing loss of population in Anniston. Table 1 shows that from 2000 to 2010, population change was mixed, with Anniston and Hobson City losing population, Weaver showing little change, and Oxford and Jacksonville each gaining nearly 50 percent in population. Overall, the cities gained 20 percent in population from 2000 to 2010, while the unincorporated part of the MPO area lost six percent in population from 2000 to 2010. City residents accounted for 54 percent of the MPO population in 2000, rising to 60 percent in 2010.

The population of the study area is 71 percent white, 24 percent black, and five percent other races or persons of more than one race. Persons of Hispanic ethnicity, regardless of race, make up four percent of the population.

Anniston has 55 percent minority population, and Hobson City has 87 percent minority population. Jacksonville has 31 percent minority population, while Oxford and Weaver are 19 percent minority. Hispanic persons are three percent or less of all cities except Oxford, which has a seven percent Hispanic population.

Table 1

Calhoun Area MPO										
Study Area Population Characteristics										
	2000	2010					2017	Pct Change	Pct Change	
	Total	Total	2010	2010	2010	2010	Population	2000 to	2010 to	
Jurisdiction	Population	Population	White	Black	Other	Hispanic	Estimate	2010	2010 to	2017
Anniston	24,276	23,106	10,327	11,903	876	613	21,770	-5%	-6%	
Hobson City	878	771	97	662	3	10	764	-12%	1%	
Jacksonville	8,404	12,548	8,618	3,362	80	284	12,612	49%	1%	
Oxford	14,592	21,348	17,187	2,682	837	1,408	21,180	46%	-1%	
Weaver	2,619	3,038	2,474	412	76	91	3,064	16%	1%	
Total Population in Cities	50,769	60,811	38,703	19,021	1,872	2,406	59,390	20%	-2%	
Percent of 2010 population	83%	100%	64%	31%	3%	4%	98%			
Total MPO Area Population	94,397	101,711	72,563	24,172	4,976	3,777		8%		
Percent of 2010 Population	93%	100%	71%	24%	5%	4%				
Population in Unincorporated MPO area	43,628	40,900	33,860	5,151	3,104	1,371		-6%		
Percent of 2010 Population	107%	100%	83%	13%	8%	3%				
Percent of Total MPO Population	46%	40%								
<i>Sources:</i>	<i>2000 and 2010 Census</i>									
	<i>2017 Population Estimates, American Fact Finder</i>									



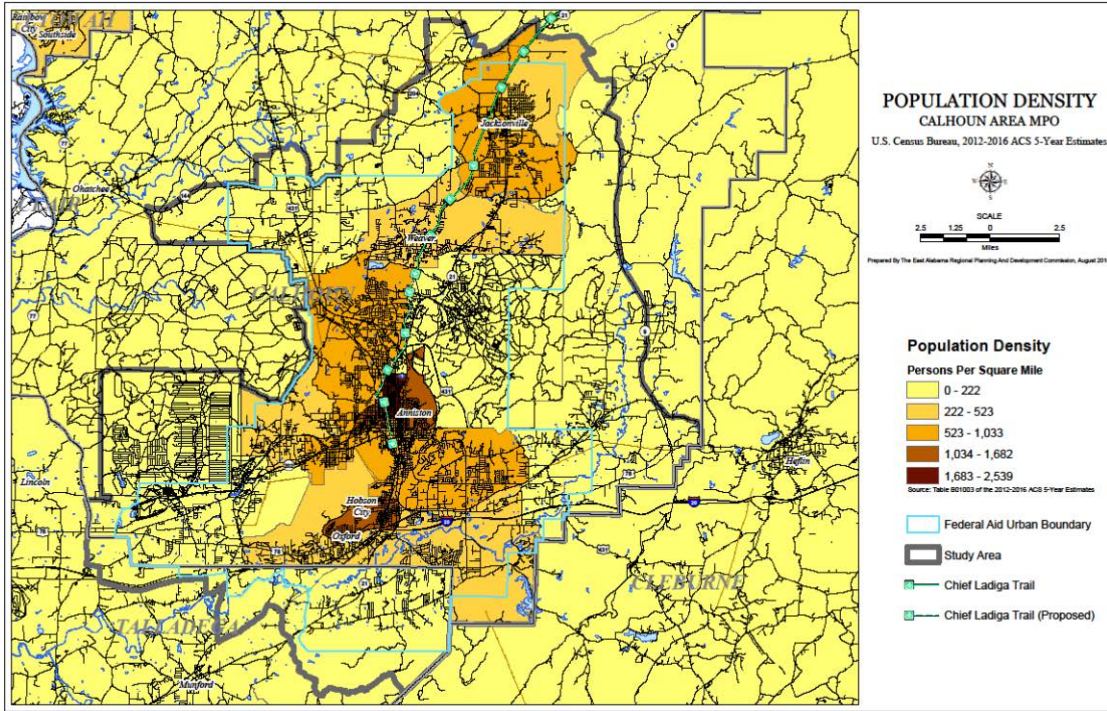
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Table 2

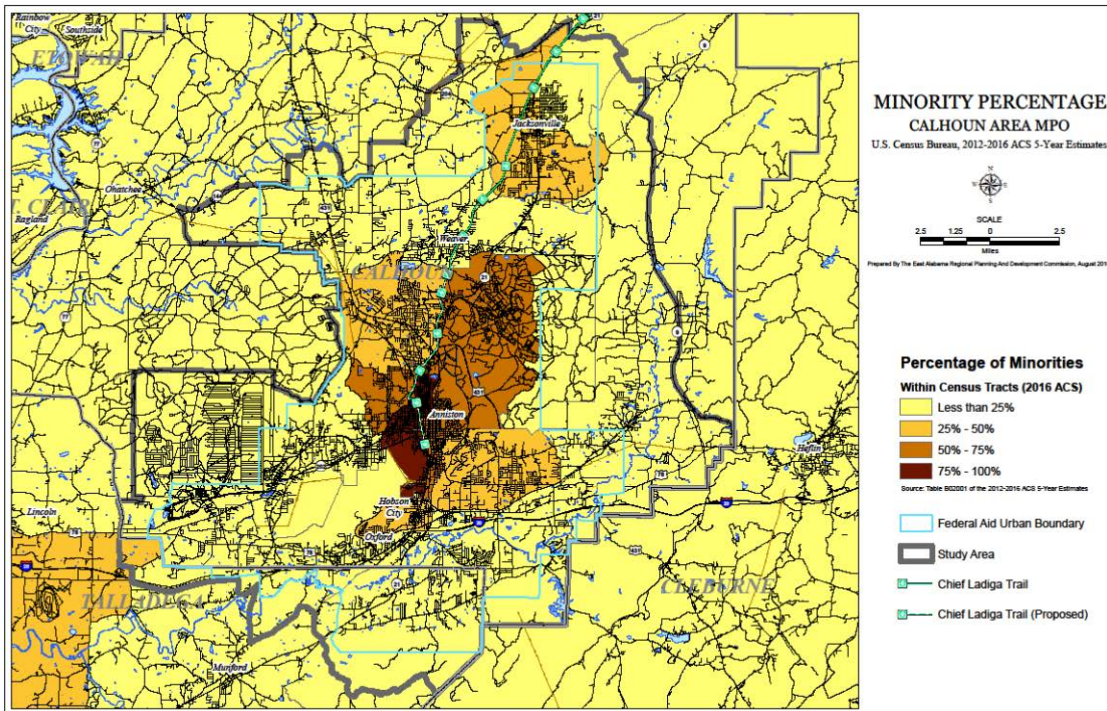
Calhoun Area MPO								
Study Area Income Characteristics								
	2010	2016	2010 to 2016	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000 to 2010
Jurisdiction	Median Household Income	Median Household Income	Pct Change in Median HH Income	Persons Below Poverty Line	Persons Below Poverty Line	Percent Below Poverty Line	Percent Below Poverty Line	Pct Change in Persons Below Poverty Line
Anniston	31,135	30,539	-1.9%	5,381	6,928	22%	30%	29%
Hobson City	20,660	28,125	36.1%	295	382	34%	50%	29%
Jacksonville	33,987	39,216	15.4%	1,802	2,956	21%	24%	64%
Oxford	47,928	51,928	8.3%	1,370	2,380	9%	11%	74%
Weaver	40,791	47,778	17.1%	247	277	9%	9%	12%
Total				9,095	12,923	18%	21%	42%
Sources:	2010 Census							
	2016 and 2016 American Community Survey							

Table 2 presents some key economic indicators for the population of the area. Overall, median income has improved from 2010 to 2016, although median income has shown a slight decline in Anniston. Oxford and Weaver have the highest median household incomes, while Hobson City and Anniston are lowest. Overall, persons living below the poverty line increased from 2000 to 2016 from 18 percent to 21 percent.

Map 2 illustrates that population is concentrated in the cities, as one would expect, but the federal lands and topography of the region have focused development in a relatively linear form. Anniston and Hobson City show the highest population density and, in general, population is concentrated along the Chief Ladiga Trail corridor. Generally, the densest population in the region is focused within about 2.5 miles of the CLT. Minority population is highest in central Anniston and northeast, as shown in Map 3.



Map 2: Population Density

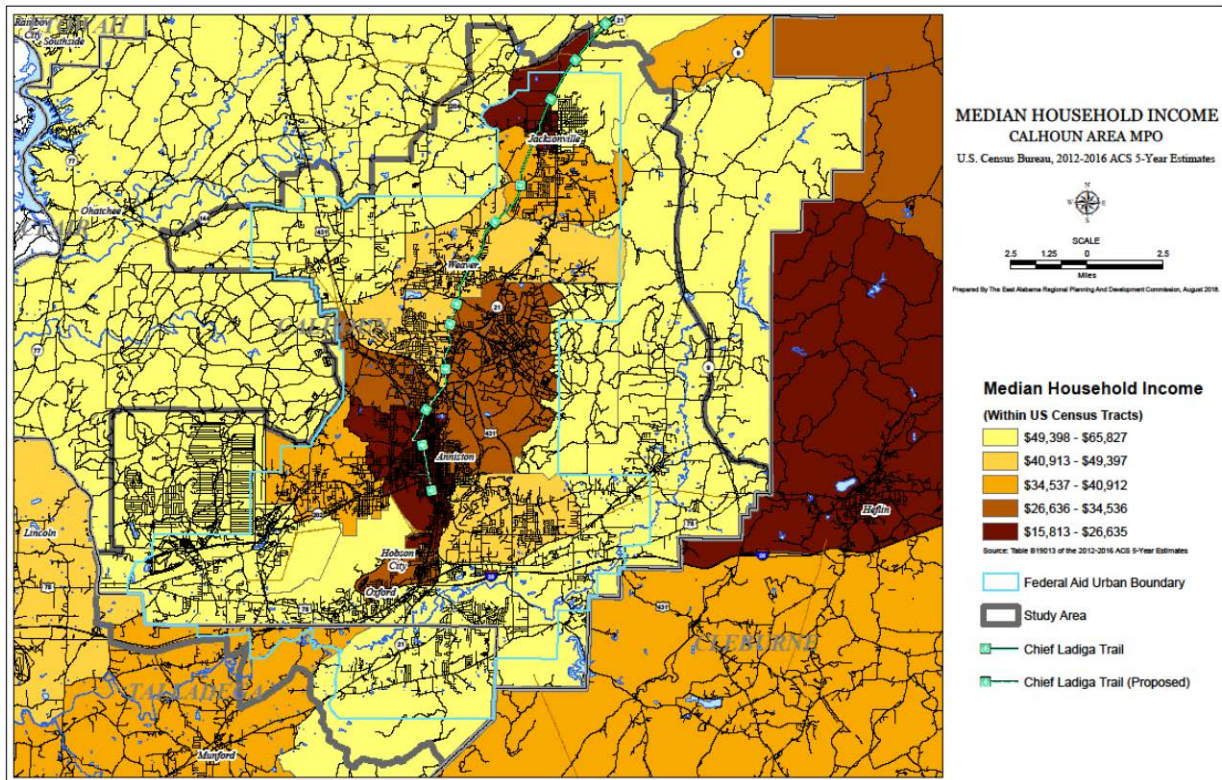


Map 3: Minority Population

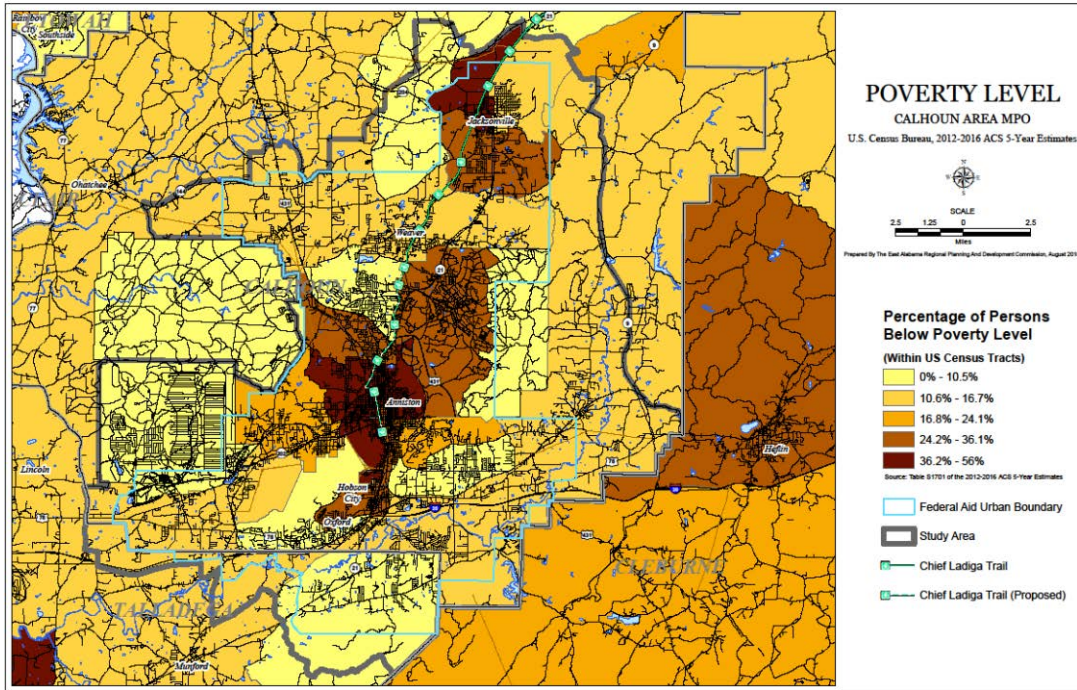
Maps 4 through 7 illustrate the geographic distribution of low income and transportation disadvantaged persons in the region.

Median Household income is lowest in tracts northwest of Jacksonville, in Central Anniston and northeast of Anniston. The percentage of persons living below the poverty level is highest in the census tracts adjacent to the CLT. Central Anniston and northwest Jacksonville have the highest percentages of poverty. Households with no vehicles are most prevalent in central Anniston.

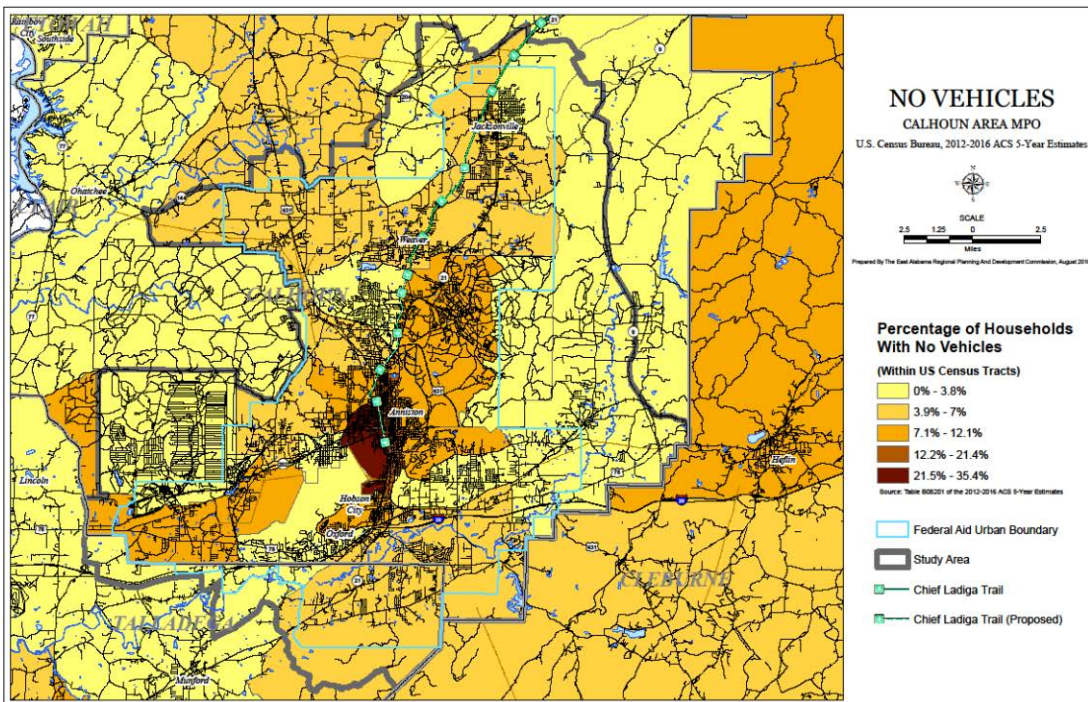
This geographic distribution of persons with income and mobility disadvantages suggests that extension of the CLT to Anniston can provide significant mobility benefits for transportation-disadvantaged persons in the region and better connections in all the communities along the trail could provide affordable travel options for those with the greatest need.



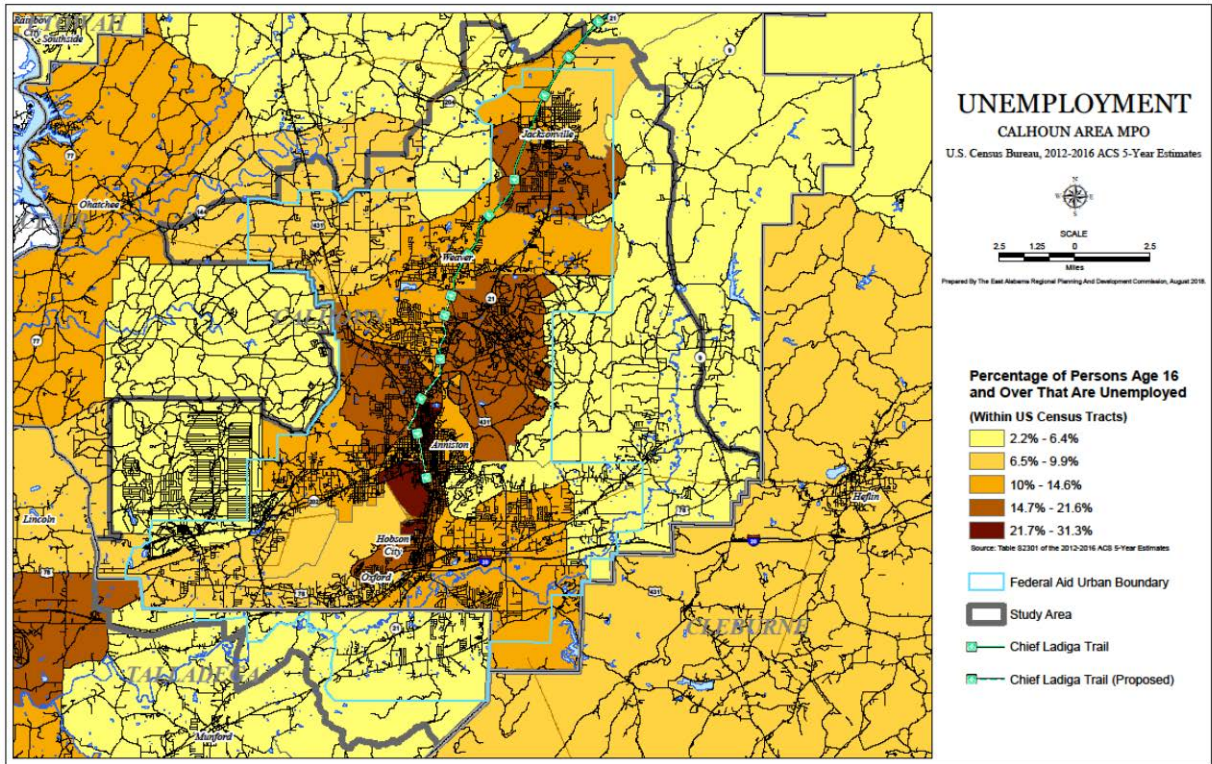
MAP 4: Median Household Income



MAP 5: Poverty Level



Map 6: Households with No Vehicles

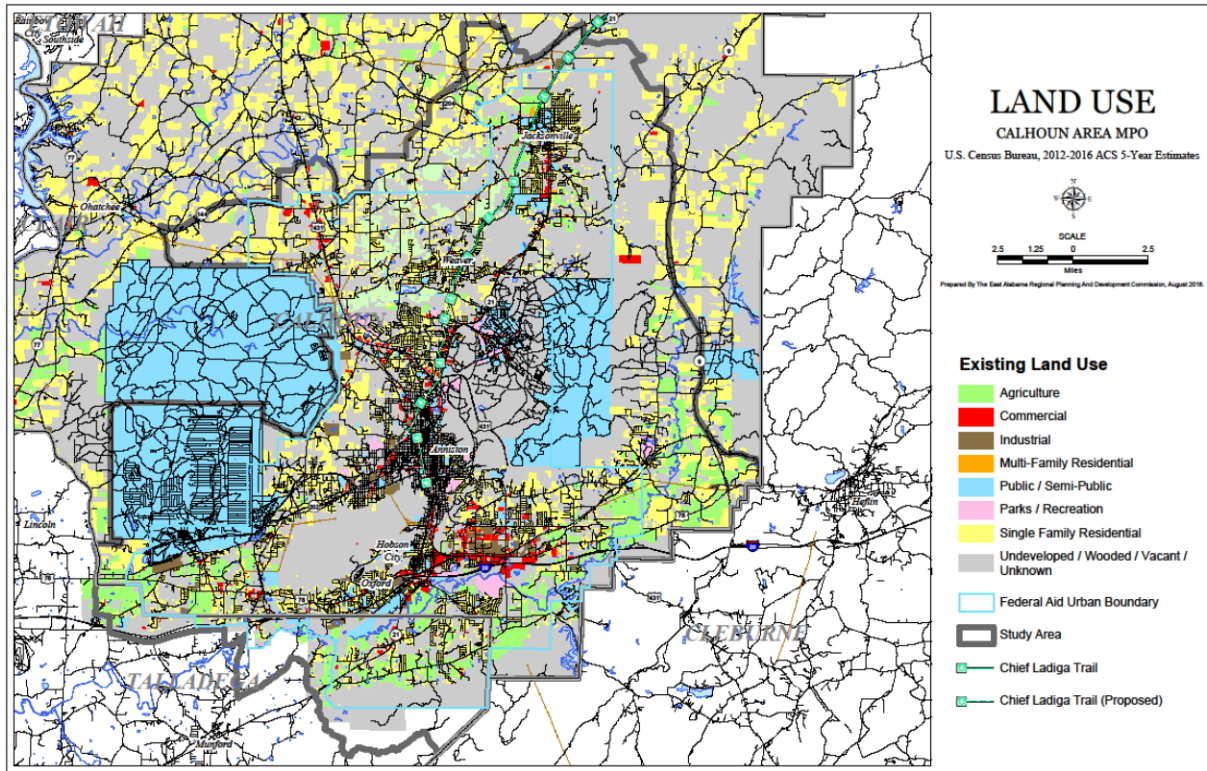


Map 7: Unemployment

Land Use and Development Trends

Map 8 presents existing land uses in the Calhoun Area MPO region. General features of the area include:

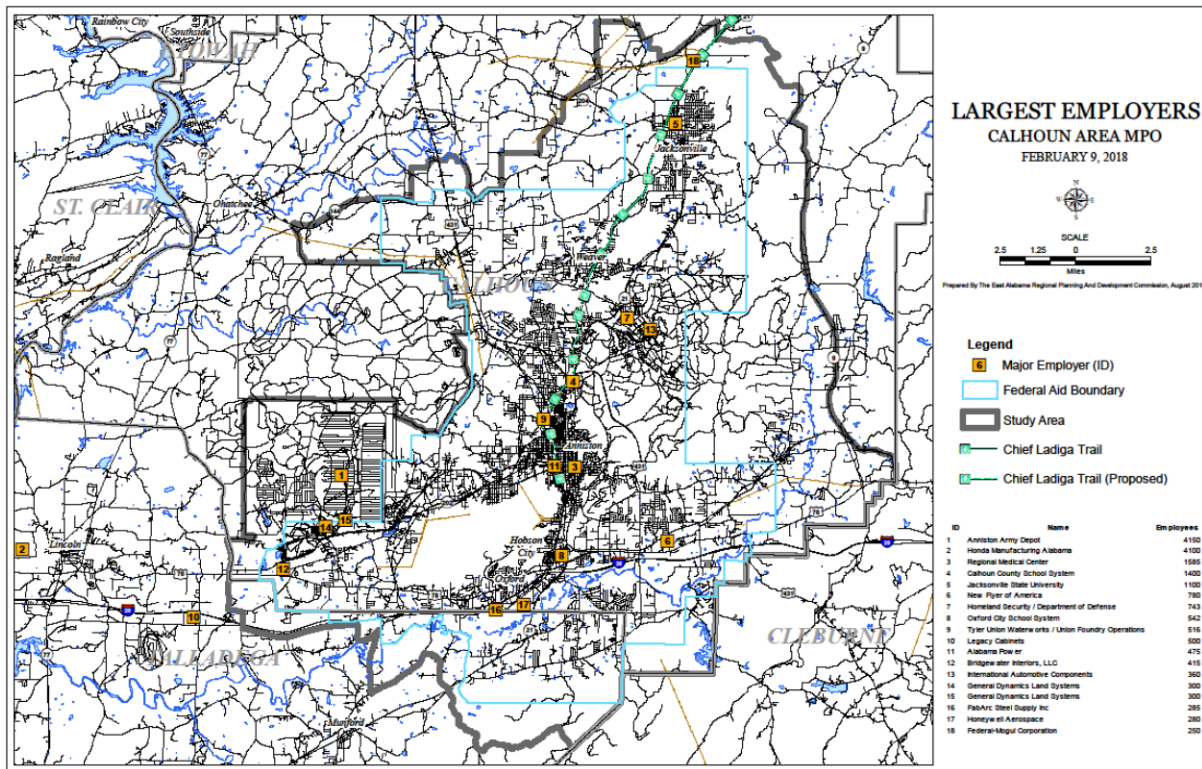
- large areas of public lands to the east, southeast, southwest and west of the developed core of the region:
 - To the west is the Anniston Army Depot, a production and testing ground for combat vehicles and a major munitions storage facility;
 - East of Anniston and Weaver is the Mountain Longleaf National Wildlife Refuge, which provides 9,000 acres of protected lands;
 - Talladega National Forest lies along the southeast border of the MPO region;
 - Coldwater Mountain area, much of which is protected by Forever Wild, lies north of Oxford and southwest of Anniston;
- Industrial areas are focused along the I-20 corridor in Oxford and south Anniston, as well as southwest of Anniston;
- Commercial areas are focused along I-20 and US 78 in Oxford, and along State Route 21 and US 431;
- Forested hills along East Anniston Bypass (US 431) are largely undeveloped.



MAP 8: Land Use

Key Origins and Destinations: Largest Employers

Map 9 reveals that six of the region’s largest employers are located within five minutes riding distance of the CLT: Federal Mogul Corporation, Jacksonville State University, Calhoun Regional Medical Center, Alabama Power, Tyler Union Waterworks, and Calhoun County School System. Two others – Department of Defense Homeland Security and International Automotive Components -- are within a 15 minute bike ride of the CLT.



Map 9: Largest Employers

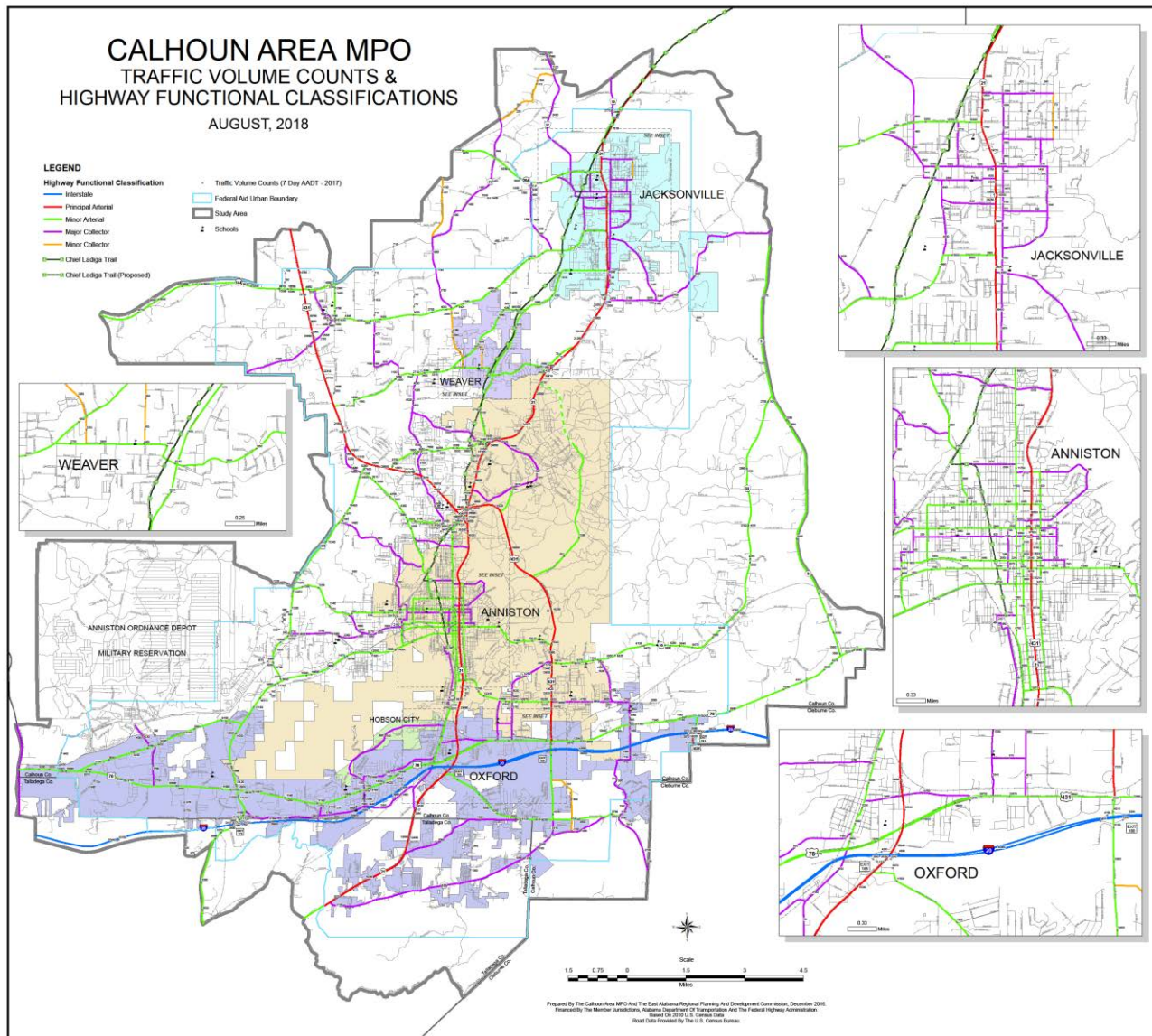
4. INVENTORY OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS

Roadway Network

Even in cities with extensive bicycle networks, nearly every bicycle trip involves riding on a street without a separate bike lane or path; this may be simply a subdivision street or private drive serving a retail parking lot. The reality of modern development patterns is that many major destinations are on major arterial roads, where existing parking lots and buildings make retrofitting bicycle lanes or separate paths very difficult. In many cases, the high density of driveways creates conditions that increase the risk to bicycles and pedestrians along major arterial routes.

One way to identify the most suitable roads for cyclists is to conduct a bicycle suitability review, where speed limits, traffic volumes, truck percentages, density of driveways, lane width for shared lanes or presence of bicycle lanes, and other factors are comprehensively inventoried to develop an “index” or score for each street. Typically, a color coded map is produced and used to identify the safest routes for bicyclists. While a bicycle suitability study is beyond the scope of this plan update, the concepts will be applied in the field to identify suitable on-street routes and connectors.

One low cost approach to begin developing a network of bicycle lanes or desirable shared-use routes is to identify streets that have existing wide travel lanes (14 feet or more), moderate speed limits (40 mph or less, preferably 35 mph or lower) and moderate traffic volumes. A 14-foot wide lane provides adequate space for a car safely to pass a cyclist riding a comfortable distance from the curb. In some cases, conditions will allow a striped bicycle lane to be created simply by reducing the vehicle lane width; many cities now routinely reduce vehicle lane widths to 10 feet to enable installation of bike lanes within the existing street.



Map 10: Traffic Volume Counts and Highway Functional Classification



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Traffic counts and federal Highway Functional Classification are shown in Map 10. In general, truck traffic will be highest on the Principal Arterials and Minor Arterials in the network. However, trucks will also be present in significant numbers on many of the Collector routes in the federal functionally classified network of streets and highways. ALDOT traffic count data includes estimates of percent trucks at each traffic count location, and this data will be used to guide selection of routes for bicycle improvements so that heavy truck traffic is avoided in general. Where bicycle routes cannot avoid major truck routes, physically separated bicycle facilities will be preferred over on-street bike lanes.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks

Existing bicycle routes are limited to the CLT, some connecting spur trails in Jacksonville, and a “sharrow” project on several streets in Jacksonville. Several arterial roads such as AL 202 and AL 21 have wide paved shoulders, but the high speeds and number of trucks on the routes make bicycling relatively unpleasant. Generally, such routes are used only by very skilled cyclists and by those who have no other option.

While the CLT has the potential to be a highly functional bicycle route for commuting and other purposeful trips, lack of connectivity to adjacent communities limits the utility of the trail for non-recreational riding. Many users drive to trailheads currently. Lateral connectivity to the CLT is an important step toward building a more effective network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

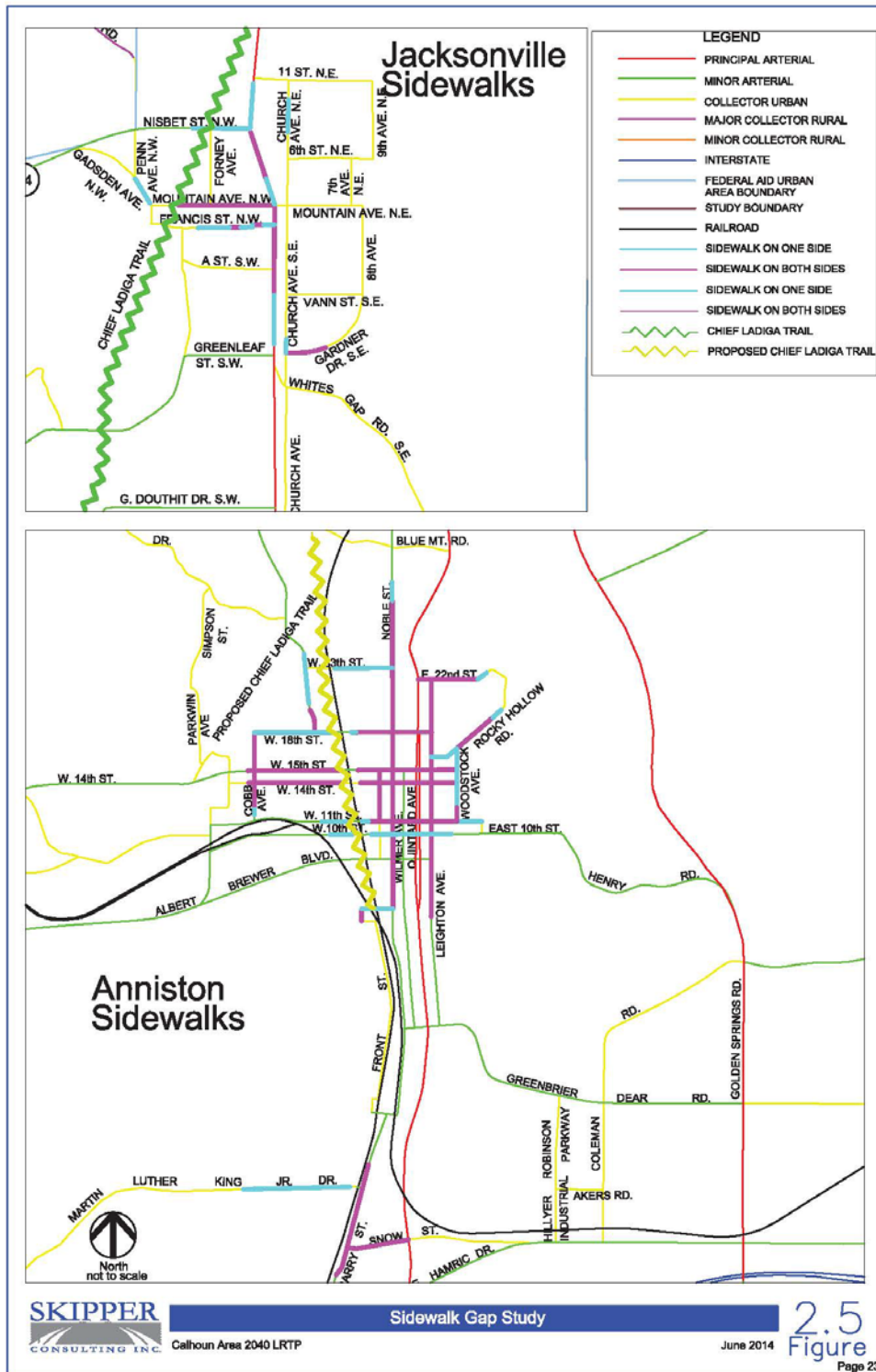
Amenities are an important part of bicycle and pedestrian network development. Bike racks should be provided at key destinations such as parks, restaurants, tourist sites, and retail establishments. While lateral connections will reduce the need to “drive to ride” and “drive to walk,” trailhead parking will remain important to provide good regional access to the CLT, and should be designed to minimize maintenance and emphasize safety and security in the design. Adequate lighting at trailheads is important for early morning and late evening trail use, although lighting along the trail should be limited to sections within urban parks and activity centers.

Existing sidewalks are shown in Map 11 below, from the current MPO Long Range Transportation Plan. Existing bicycle facilities are limited and, have not been mapped. JRWA will coordinate with EARPCD to develop a map of existing bicycle facilities for the next Interim Memo on this project.



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Map 11: Existing Sidewalks



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Multimodal Network Considerations

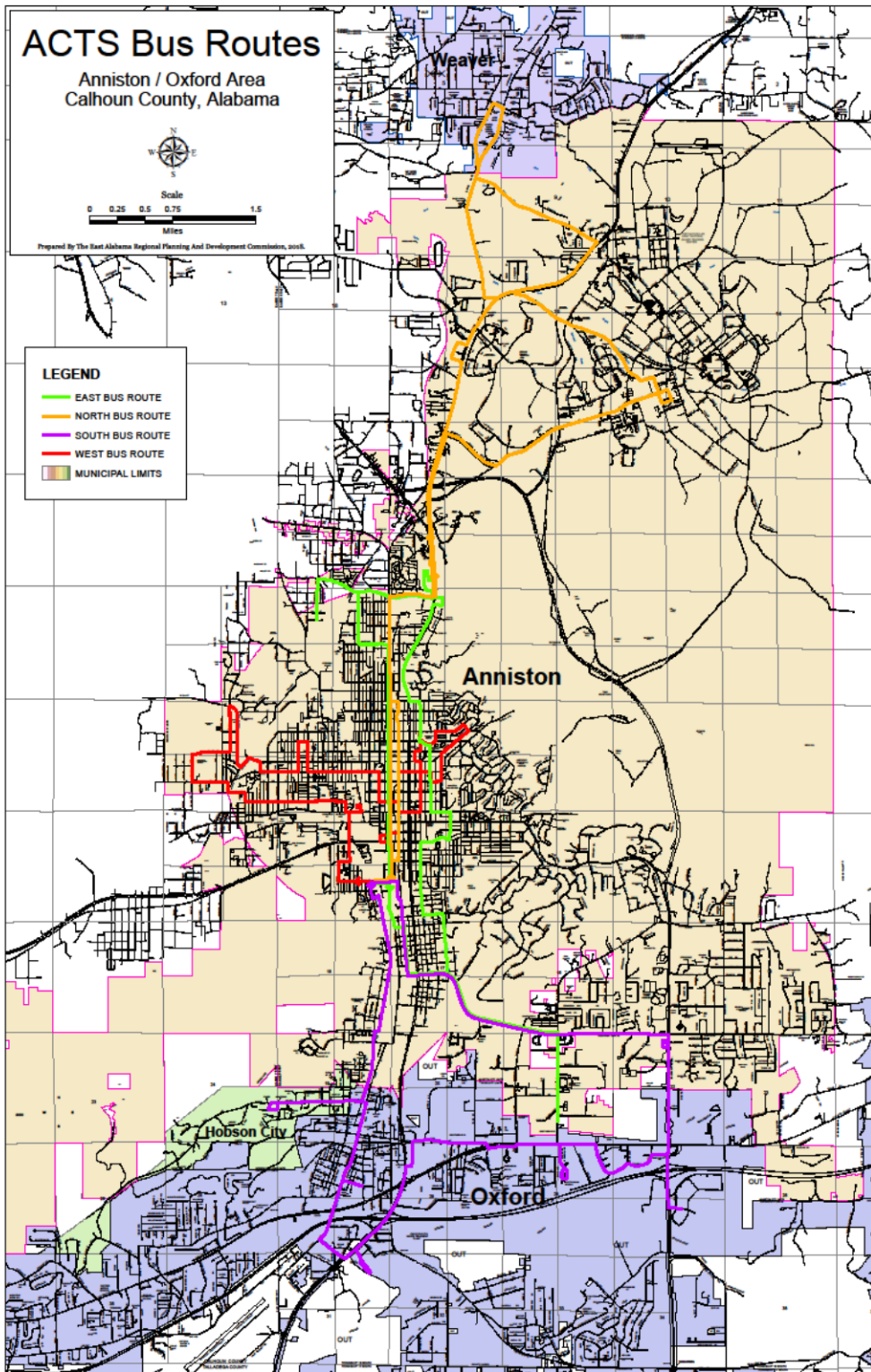
- Connectivity of the bicycle and pedestrian network to other modes (roads, trailheads and parking areas; transit stops; bike racks on buses; Amtrak and Greyhound stations)
- Safety deficiencies can be identified by bicycle and pedestrian crash data analysis. Bicycle and pedestrian facility maintenance needs, personal security issues, street lighting or pathway lighting, and other safety factors are important considerations in route identification and design. Bicycle and pedestrian crash data has been requested from ALDOT and from police departments in the study area and will be used to identify crash hot spots in the next phase of the study.

Transit Routes and facilities – ACTS provides fixed route bus service on the routes shown in Map 12 below. Persons with disabilities are able to utilize the paratransit service offered throughout most of the county if they are not to use fixed route or rural demand responsive services. In addition, Jacksonville State University provides campus shuttle services via the Gamecock Express.



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Map 12: ACTS Bus Routes



5. EXISTING BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan called for policy initiatives that would:

- Urge local ordinances requiring a “3 foot passing rule”;
- Include bicycle and pedestrian facilities in all new road improvement projects;
- Require new development to provide sidewalk connections to existing streets and sidewalks, and provide internal bicycle and pedestrian facilities in exchange for density bonuses;
- Strictly limit variances from sidewalk requirements to cases where construction is prevented by site conditions;
- Require bicycle racks for all new commercial, retail, and public development projects;
- Encourage infill development at higher density and discourage low-density sprawl;
- Reduce the required minimum parking spaces in new development.

Of these, the most significant change that has occurred is that the Calhoun Area MPO has adopted a policy to include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in all new road improvement projects. Status of the other policy recommendations has not been documented.

A description of currently active bicycle and pedestrian programs related to encouragement enforcement of cycling and walking will be developed based on and further input from stakeholder meetings.

6. BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

Best practices for this Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update were developed from a review of literature published by Federal Highway Administration, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), League of American Bicyclists, Victoria Transportation Policy Institute, Washington State Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Transportation, Alabama Department of Transportation, and Bike/Walk

This section of the plan summarizes best practices from those sources in a concise and easy to navigate format, with guidance provided in the following broad categories:

- Planning Process
- How to Develop Effective Projects and Plans
- Education, Safety, and Skills Development
- Design
- Policy
- Funding and Implementation



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- Other Considerations

Each section will highlight key information that seems most relevant to the Calhoun Area MPO given the early stage of bicycle and pedestrian network development that characterizes most of the region. For a more comprehensive review of best practices, references are provided at the end of this section for documents summarized here.

Planning Process

The planning process for bicycle and pedestrian planning follows the process for most planning projects, with initial efforts focused on data collection to characterize the demographics and environmental conditions of the community; an inventory of facilities and identification of problems and needs; development of alternative solutions; and selection or recommendation of the best package of alternatives to address the vision, goals and objectives of the plan.

All sources emphasize the importance of engaging community stakeholders in the identification of bicycle and pedestrian network gaps, needs and problems. Stakeholder input is critical in this phase because some of the key issues are difficult to measure and track, such as presence of hazards and obstacles along routes such as potholes, “wheel-catcher” catch basin grates, tree root heaving of sidewalks and pavements, and similar hazards that may not be captured in routine agency inventories.

How to Develop Effective Projects and Plans

Communities that have had the greatest success improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities tend to have common strategies that help ensure implementation.

First, plans should not only identify a wide range of improvements but those that are low-cost and can accommodate bicycles and pedestrians while implemented as a component of routine maintenance activities by public works and transportation agencies. This “low hanging fruit” produces early success and helps build enthusiasm for implementation of the plan. These low-cost improvements should typically include identification the following: existing streets that can be re-striped as part of routine resurfacing projects to provide wide outside lanes or striped bicycle lanes within the existing paved cross section; opportunities to include additional minor bicycle improvements in planned safety and maintenance projects, such as addition of paved shoulders to routes where a four-foot paved shoulder rather than a two-foot paved shoulder may be constructed for little additional cost and provide important bicycle connectivity. Policy changes also may be an important element of achieving low-cost improvements. Policies requiring sidewalks and bicycle racks in new development add little cost to initial site development expenses.

Second, larger projects must be prioritized in a way that balances needs and desires with likely funding availability during the plan horizon. Clear strategies for phasing large projects will often be necessary. Where multiple jurisdictions are involved in the planning process, the process for setting



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priorities for regional funding should be transparent and should yield an implementation plan that addresses concerns for regional equity in project implementation.

Third, it is important to match the type of facilities to be provided with the skill level of the expected users of the facility. On-street bicycle lanes or wide outside lanes serve skilled urban cyclists and long-distance recreation riders well, but may provide little benefit for elementary school children and novice riders. Conversely, shared-use paths where pedestrian traffic is high may frustrate skilled long-distance riders due to conflicts and need to reduce speed. In some areas where usage by both groups is high, it will be appropriate to identify on-street routes and facilities for the higher skilled group, while physically-separated facilities are provided to serve less experienced riders.

Education, Safety, and Skills Development

A variety of programs can be implemented to support and encourage bicycle and pedestrian travel. The Calhoun Area MPO has funded or participated in several programs in prior years, including a bicycle safety education program for 4th grade classes and free helmet programs.

Education and safety programs may include:

- providing maps of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and routes;
- brochures and/or web pages that explain the proposed projects, implementation schedule, costs and sources of funding;
- brochures or web pages with safe riding guidelines and practices, from simple “ride on the right” and “always obey stop signs” instructions for on-street riding, appropriate clothing for riding or walking at night (light colors and reflective materials), appropriate seat height, safety equipment recommended (or required in some communities) including helmets, lights and reflectors, warning bells to alert pedestrians of approaching bicycles;
- basic bicycle maintenance workshops are often sponsored by bicycle shops or bicycle clubs, and may focus on basics such as proper tire inflation, chain and cable lubrication, how to change a tire and tube, and proper repair supplies and equipment that should be available in case of breakdown while riding (patch kit and/or spare tube, pump or CO2 inflation cartridge, tire tools, allen wrenches, other wrenches and tools); and
- bicycle helmet discounts or free helmet programs, which may be sponsored by bicycle shops or community organizations such as hospitals or non-profit advocacy groups, and may be partially funded through grant programs.

Skills development programs often include:

- Bicycle Rodeos targeted at youth riders, where (depending on age group) riders may navigate slalom courses, learn to dodge obstacles, and practice braking, starting and acceleration; these may be organized by bicycle advocacy groups, public agency bicycle



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coordinators, and/or public safety or police departments. Cornell University Cooperative Extension Program has published An Organizer’s Guide to Bicycle Rodeos that is available at the following link: http://www.bike.cornell.edu/pdfs/Bike_Rodeo_404.2.pdf

- Community Rides geared toward families and novice riders may be organized around the League of American Bicyclists Bike to Work Week, or may be organized in conjunction with community festivals. Such events provide an opportunity to provide bicycle safety information, distribute brochures on existing and planned bicycle facilities, and build membership for bicycle advocacy groups, as well as to educate the community about the mobility, health and environmental benefits of improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Design Issues

Regional multi-use trails like the CLT are most effective when they are well-connected to a larger network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Lateral connections from the CLT to adjacent activity centers will enable and encourage more trail use for recreational and purposeful trips.

Pathway width for the extension of the CLT also is an important consideration. As the trail enters the more urbanized part of the region, higher pedestrian use will occur. Best practices suggest a minimum desirable trail width of 12 feet where pedestrian traffic is common, with 14 feet being ideal in high pedestrian traffic areas.

In general, connections to the CLT and other bicycle accommodations should be made using the most feasible and appropriate of the following facility types, listed generally from lowest to highest type of facility:

- Shared use local streets – where speed limits and traffic volume are low, these routes can be signed with “share the road” signs and/or marked with “sharrows” and no other improvement may be necessary;
- Bicycle Boulevards – these are typically neighborhood through streets with low traffic volume and no intersecting arterial streets, that typically run parallel to an arterial road where bicycle facilities can’t be retrofitted or are precluded by safety concerns; diverters often are used at some intersections to allow through movement of bicycles but force right-in/right-out movement by cars, and stop signs are placed on the streets intersecting the bike boulevard.
- Wide Outside Lanes – 14 foot wide outside lanes may be provided as an accommodation for bicycles, with the additional lane width allowing room for motor vehicles safely to pass a cyclist without crowding.
- Bike lanes – depending on conditions, bike lanes will be a minimum of 5 feet measured from the face of curb, or where no curb exists will be a minimum of 4 feet of pavement; additional width should be provided where posted speed limits are higher; some jurisdictions will create bike lanes on existing multi-lane streets by narrowing travel lane



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widths and paved median width from typical 12 feet to 10 or 11 feet (paved median widths generally are not reduced below 12 feet).

- **Road diets** – a method of creating bicycle lanes by removing one lane from a four lane street with no center turning lanes; in most cases, traffic capacity is not reduced because the inside lanes of the four lane street often act as “de facto” left turn lanes, and crash rates are lowered as a result as well.
- **Cycle tracks** – these facilities are created by establishing a physical barrier between vehicle lanes and a two-way bicycle facility on one side of a street; cycle tracks have limited applicability due to driveway access issues on most streets, and have not been generally accepted by many traffic engineers; most installations are in downtown areas where no driveway cuts exist, and a parallel parking lane is removed from the curb area.
- **Side Paths** – side paths are two-way bicycle and pedestrian paths separated from the adjacent roadway by a grass verge; they provide a more comfortable riding experience and are likely to be more accepted and used by novice riders; width is typically 8 to 10 feet; careful design of intersections is necessary to improve visibility of cyclists for motorists.

Policy

The single most important policy practice that will lead to better bicycle and pedestrian facilities is the policy of including accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians in all Federal Highway Administration funded projects. Including bicycle accommodations and sidewalks in highway construction projects adds relatively little to the cost of highway construction projects compared to the cost of retrofitting facilities on roads that already have been improved. This policy was advocated in the 2012 BPP, and the policy has since been adopted by the Calhoun Area MPO.

Other policy initiatives that should be considered by the jurisdictions within the Calhoun Area MPO include:

- Use investments in the CLT and community connector trails to support and leverage economic development and revitalize historic areas and downtowns;
- Incorporate bicycle and pedestrian plan goals in other local plans;
- Provide new pocket parks along the trail, connect to existing parks wherever possible, and invest in improvements in existing parks to further improve the experience that tourists and residents enjoy while riding and walking the CLT and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and
- Build a regional branding campaign around bicycle and historic tourism.

Funding and Implementation

Sources and options for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and improvements include:



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- TIP Projects, either stand alone bicycle/pedestrian projects or inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in new road construction or rehabilitation projects;
- ALDOT Transportation Alternatives Program;
- Recreational Trails Program;
- Federal Transit Administration funds can be used for sidewalk connectivity in limited instances;
- Corporate Sponsorship of CLT facilities or segments; and
- Private Foundations and grants for active living and healthy communities.

Other Considerations

To maximize the benefits of the region's investment in bicycle facilities, connectivity among facilities and destinations is critical. Ideally, connections will be established among the Cold Water Mountain venue, the CLT, the redeveloped army base, downtown areas, key suburban activity centers, employment centers and tourism destinations in the region. The next phase of the plan will determine the best facility types and routes for each connector.

Restroom facilities often are problematic for long distance trails. Capital and maintenance costs typically preclude providing stand alone public facilities. Best practices include providing directions to facilities at public parks and other public buildings adjacent to the trail. An innovative approach used by some trail managers is to establish agreements with adjacent commercial businesses, typically convenience stores or fast food restaurants, to allow trail maps to indicate where private business will allow trail users access to restroom facilities. Most such businesses realize benefits from such agreements, as trail users frequently purchase food or beverages when they visit.

7. NEXT STEPS

Gaining a thorough understanding of baseline conditions begins with data review, field surveys, and inventories of facilities and conditions. Needs, constraints and opportunities can then be identified and explored. As of this writing, baseline conditions, facilities inventory, and limited field surveys have been completed.

Immediate next steps are:

- Further coordination with MPO Staff to schedule a stakeholder meeting to review this Interim Memo #1 and obtain input on needs, opportunities and constraints.
- Post this Interim Memo #1 on the website and compile email comments.
- JRWA staff will conduct further field reviews and study area analysis to identify potential new bicycle and pedestrian facilities, with a focus on connectivity to the existing and future extension of the CLT, and begin to determine the best facility types for each route identified for improvement.