

# 1st Annual State of the Network Report Greater Birmingham Region

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



May 2019









# A Plan for Active Transportation

The B-Active Plan, the active transportation plan for the Birmingham region, is a regional “road-map” for local municipalities, counties, and non-profit entities to create a viable, safe and connected bike and pedestrian network for everyone. The plan establishes a vision for what walking and biking can look like in the future. In the past few years alone we’ve seen more bike facilities and trails pop-up around the region than in decades prior and the B-Active Plan hopes to build on that success.

Despite these advances, getting around by anything other than your own car remains a serious challenge for anyone but the most fearless and experienced bicyclist. How many times have you or someone you know said “I would like to bike more...but”. The B-Active plan, is a long term vision for removing the “but”. The plan aims to create a cohesive network of bike facilities aimed at those of you who are interested in biking, but concerned for your safety. The plan establishes a vision to connect what is existing today by expanding the network to viable roads for bike infrastructure throughout the entire Birmingham Metro Region.

**Active transportation:**  
**Refers to the human-powered**  
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Active transportation, also known as non-motorized transportation, refers to the human-powered modes of travel such as walking and biking, primarily. The greater Birmingham regional transportation system currently lacks sufficient non-motorized provisions along many corridors where bicycling and walking should be viable travel choices—especially for short trips. In light of rising energy costs, an aging population, public health concerns, and an increasing demand for alternatives to motor vehicle travel, there is a growing need for infrastructure and development patterns that support what has widely become known as “active transportation.”

**DURING PUBLIC OUTREACH**

**“LACK OF FACILITIES”**

**WAS THE NUMBER ONE**

**REASON RESPONDENTS**

**SAID THEY DO NOT BIKE**

**MORE.**

A photograph of two cyclists in Birmingham, Alabama, reviewing documents. The cyclist on the left wears a red helmet with the number 85 and a red and white jersey that says "MAGIC CITY BIKE". The cyclist on the right wears a black helmet and a bright green shirt. In the background, there are city buildings, including one with "REGIONS" and another with "WELLS FARGO" signs.

# PLAN STRATEGY

## MORE USERS.

A focus on improvements that encourage and attract more people to use active transportation in the Greater Birmingham Area.

## SAFE CONNECTIVITY.

Residents of all ages and abilities feel comfortable experiencing the region and all its amenities on foot or by bike through a connected network.

## IMPLEMENTATION.

Guidance is provided to enable jurisdictions to move to implementation of the active transportation network.



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## WHAT IS THE B-ACTIVE PLAN FOR?

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### Key questions of the B-ACTIVE Plan:

- Where are the major gaps and barriers in the regional bicycle and trail system today?
- What is needed to attract new users to the active transportation network (i.e. to make people feel safer commuting by bicycle)?
- How can we increase regional connectivity?
- What and where are the key projects needed for implementation?

### Why is the B-ACTIVE Plan important to the Greater Birmingham region?

Active transportation is an opportunity for everyone. All of us are pedestrians at some point during the day. Even if you are walking between your car in the parking lot to the grocery store’s entrance, you are traveling as a pedestrian. People using walking assistance devices such as wheelchairs or walkers are also pedestrians. Whether you are an avid cyclist, occasional rider, or do not ever ride a bicycle, a safe and connected active transportation network benefits for the larger community and region. These benefits include:



# Goals & Objectives

The B-ACTIVE Plan crafts a vision for the future of biking and walking in the area through strategic goal setting. It is clear that a growing population within the region hope to see an improved environment for biking and walking. The goals and objectives below are the building blocks of the

approach for creating an active transportation network in the Greater Birmingham area by the municipalities in the region.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES
<b>CONNECT</b>	The Greater Birmingham area is connected through a network of low-stress bicycle facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build connected bicycle facilities.</li> <li>- Remove gaps in the sidewalk network.</li> <li>- Provide active transportation linkages to existing transit routes and stops.</li> <li>- Provide users the choice to make trips to key destinations on a bike or walking.</li> </ul>
<b>ACCESS FOR ALL</b>	The future network of facilities improves (1) access to active transportation routes for the entire region and (2) access for more ages and abilities to use the system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide infrastructure access points all around the region.</li> <li>- Provide guidelines to designing facilities that are safe enough for any type of active transportation user.</li> <li>- Provide users the choice to make trips to key destinations on a bike or walking.</li> </ul>
<b>PROTECT USERS</b>	Implementation of the Plan decreases the number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Record and analyze yearly crash data.</li> <li>- Implement countermeasures at key intersections and streets that have high-density of bike/pedestrian crashes.</li> </ul>
<b>MORE USERS</b>	The number of people using active transportation grows as the system is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement system for measuring the number of people using the existing active transportation system.</li> <li>- Create yearly progress reports in tandem with new active transportation infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY SUPPORT</b>	The network of infrastructure is supported by policies that encourage safe travel for all road users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adoption of Complete Streets ordinances and policies by municipalities within the region.</li> <li>- Create design guidelines for facility construction.</li> <li>- Identify funding mechanisms for implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATE</b>	Residents of all types—students, families, children, etc.—have opportunities to learn about the benefits of active transportation and associated laws and safe practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Host annual safety and encouragement event supporting all modes of transportation.</li> <li>- Implement biking and walking safety training in schools within the region.</li> </ul>
<b>PRIORITIZE, IMPLEMENT, &amp; MAINTAIN</b>	Key connections in the network of facilities are strategically prioritized to create a smooth path to implementation. A variety of different funding mechanisms are identified to implement and maintain the network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identify “low-hanging fruit” projects and highly prioritized projects to implement first.</li> <li>- Provide a general timeline for implementing identified projects.</li> <li>- Encourage municipalities to include a maintenance schedule in annual budgets.</li> </ul>

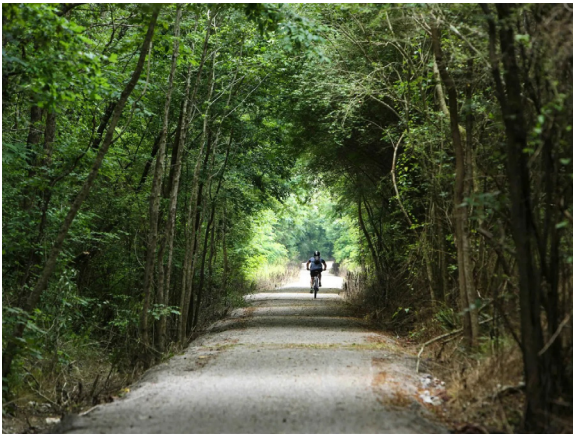




## The State of the Network - Where we stand today.

This document is the first of what will be an annual publication to tout the success of new active transportation projects in the region, as well as to update you with what's happening with the B-Active plan. The plan is a vision, and it takes the cooperation of many moving parts; municipalities, counties, non-profits, citizens, and the

RPCGB to make it a success. This "State of the Network" report is not only designed to be helpful and informational to the general public, but it is also a reminder to keep pursuing the goal of making our region friendlier and safer for pedestrians and bicyclist.



# 34

miles of the 850 miles of the B-Active Plan Network have been constructed



# 217

miles of active transportation facilities exist today

# 192

of the miles are trails or greenways



# 15

of the miles are bicycle lanes

# 10

of the miles are sharrows



# Recent success stories

## 10TH AVE S - GREEN BIKE LANES

The first “green” bike lanes in the Birmingham region, these painted bike lanes run from 10th St S to 16th St S along 10th Ave S. These lanes are painted green at “conflict points” or areas where a cyclist may be less likely to be seen such as turn lanes, across driveways, and at lights. These provide visual direction for both drivers and cyclist to make the facility user friendly to everyone.



## JONES VALLEY TRAIL - 1ST AVE S

The Jones Valley Trail, which is part of the larger Jones Valley Corridor of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Plan, runs from 25th Street to 32nd Street along 1st Ave S for 0.6 miles. Only a block from the Rotary Trail this separated bike and pedestrian trail provides a great route for cyclists to connect to downtown Birmingham from Pepper Place or Sloss Furnace. The trail was completed in 2015.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust



## KIWANIS VULCAN TRAIL EXTENSION & IMPROVEMENTS

As an expansion of the already existing Vulcan Trail that begins at 20th Street S, the Kiwanis Vulcan Trail provided trail head amenities, pedestrian connections to Vulcan Park, and now connects to Green Springs Highway via a 1.2 mile gravel extension to the original trail. These improvements were completed in 2018.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust

## HIGH ORE LINE TRAIL

A part of the Jones Valley corridor of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail Plan, the High Ore Line trail runs 1.9 miles through the cities of Birmingham and Midfield and was completed and opened in 2016. The trail offers a comfortable riding and walking experience fully separated from cars and offers beautiful views of Valley Creek from it’s elevated bridge.



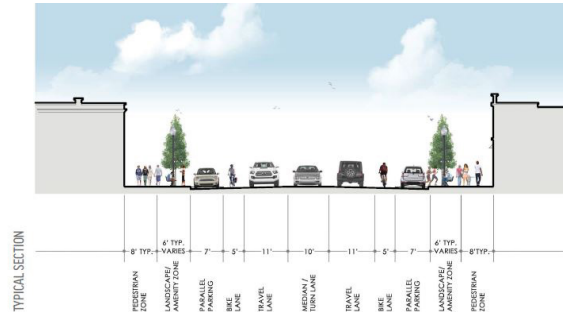


# What's coming soon

This list is intended to serve as a preview of bike and trail facilities that are expected to be constructed in the next 1 - 5 years. Unforeseen funding, development, or environmental challenges can delay projects past anticipated time lines so the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham cannot give exact dates for the projects listed below. This list is also not comprehensive but instead is a showcase of just a few exciting projects happening across the region.

## 41ST STREET COMPLETE STREETS

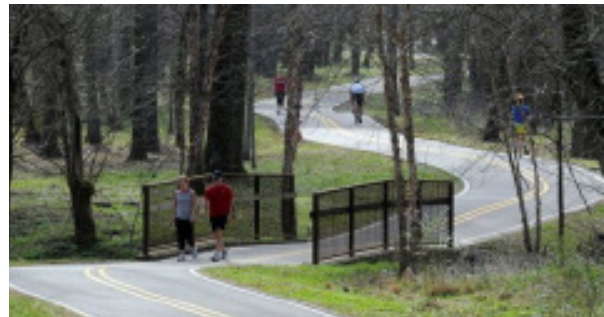
As a proposed redesign of 41st Street in Birmingham, this project would run from 2nd Ave S to 5th Ave S and focus on enhancing both the pedestrian and bicycling experience in Avondale. By reducing the number of travel lanes from 4 to 2, while preserving the center turn lane, 41st Street would gain bike lanes, on-street parking, and improved sidewalks and streetscape amenities.



Source: EDT Engineering, Macknally Land Design

## LAKESHORE TRAIL/ SHADES CREEK EXTENSION

An upcoming extension of the popular Lakeshore Trail in Homewood, this 2 mile trail project will increase the overall distance of the Lakeshore Trail from 3 miles to 5 in total. The extension will begin at the current western-end of the Lakeshore Trail at Columbiana Rd/ Greensprings Hwy and extend the trail further westward to Lakeshore Pkwy ending approximately 0.3 miles from West Oxmoor Road.



## OAK MOUNTAIN BIKE LANE EXTENSION

This project will extend the bike lanes in the popular cycling destination of Oak Mountain in Pelham further west along John Findlay III Drive to the intersection of Oak Mountain Park Rd. From there bike lanes will be added along Oak Mountain Park Rd from John Findlay III Dr north to Amphitheatre Road. These lanes will add an important connection to better allow bicyclist to safely access the State Park.





# What's coming soon - continued

## HIGH ORE LINE TRAIL EXTENSION

The High Ore Line Trail is being extended an additional mile to connect with Red Mountain Park. The extension feeds into the newly developed Red Mountain Park Western Parking Lot, which will make the park's trails accessible to residents of Birmingham's western communities for the first time. Trail opening Summer 2019.



## FIVE MILE CREEK GREENWAY- GARDENDALE

The Five Mile Creek Greenway-Gardendale is part of a planned 16.5 mile rails-to-trails project spanning North Jefferson County. The Gardendale section adds an additional 2 miles to the 3.5 mile Five Mile Creek Greenway-Black Creek Park in Fultondale. Five Mile Creek Greenway is a flat, gravel trail open to walkers, runners, bikers, and dogs on leashes. Trail opening Summer 2019.



Source: WBRC News



