



2023 Annual State of the Network Report Greater Birmingham Region

REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

May 2023



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 metropolitan region.

Active transportation:
Refers to the human-powered
modes of travel such as walking
and biking, primarily.

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 "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.

WHAT IS THE B-ACTIVE PLAN FOR?

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

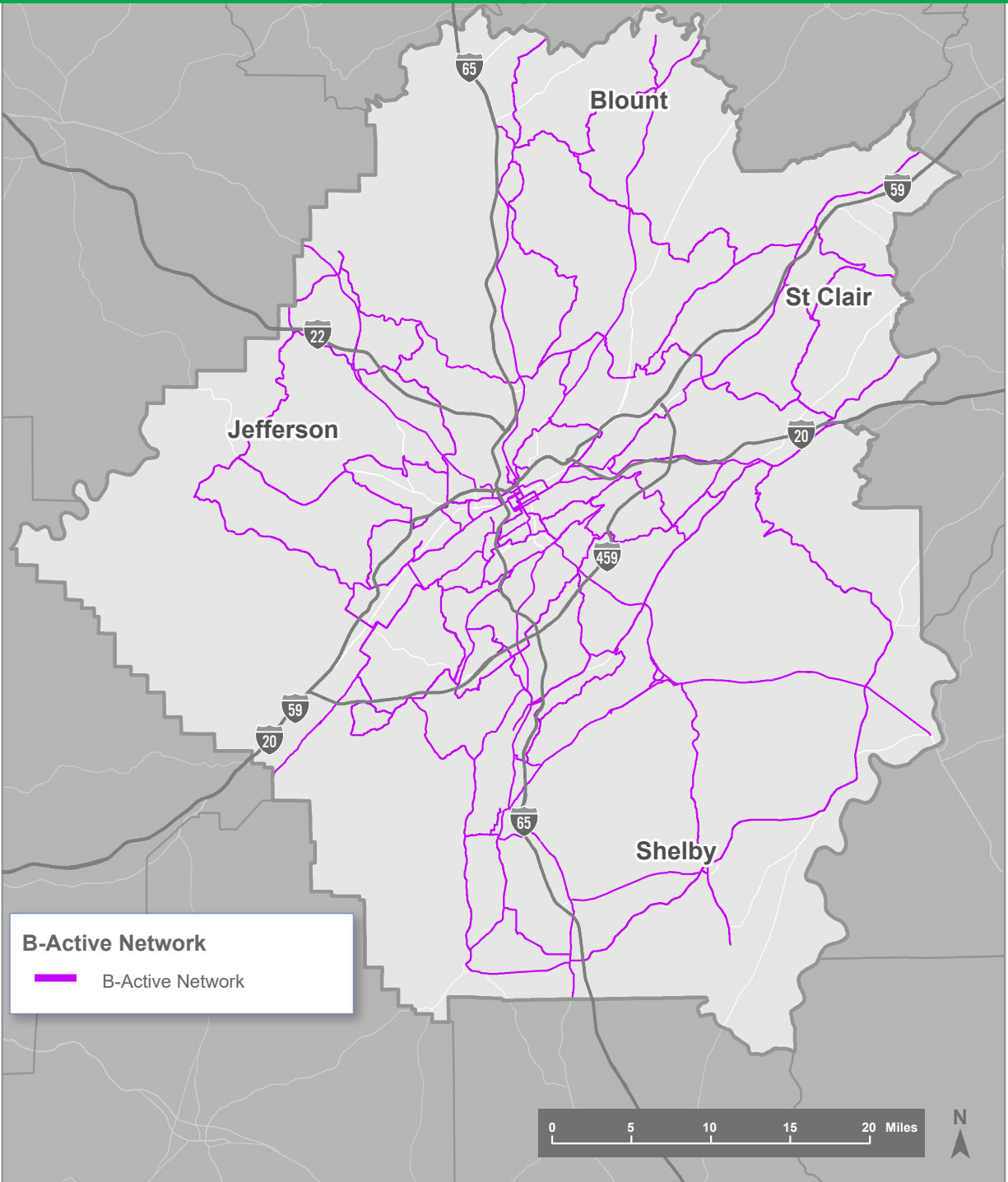
The B-ACTIVE Plan crafts a vision for the future of biking and walking in the area through strategic goal setting. It is clear that a growing population within the region hope to see an improved environment for biking and walking . The goals and objectives below

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
CONNECT	The Greater Birmingham area is connected through a network of low-stress bicycle facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build connected bicycle facilities. - Remove gaps in the sidewalk network. - Provide active transportation linkages to existing transit routes and stops. - Provide users the choice to make trips to key destinations on a bike or walking.
ACCESS FOR ALL	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"> - Provide infrastructure access points all around the region. - Provide guidelines to designing facilities that are safe enough for any type of active transportation user. - Provide users the choice to make trips to key destinations on a bike or walking.
PROTECT USERS	Implementation of the Plan decreases the number of bicycle and pedestrian crashes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Record and analyze yearly crash data. - Implement countermeasures at key intersections and streets that have high-density of bike/pedestrian crashes.
MORE USERS	The number of people using active transportation grows as the system is implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement system for measuring the number of people using the existing active transportation system. - Create yearly progress reports in tandem with new active transportation infrastructure.
POLICY SUPPORT	The network of infrastructure is supported by policies that encourage safe travel for all road users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of Complete Streets ordinances and policies by municipalities within the region. - Create design guidelines for facility construction. - Identify funding mechanisms for implementation.
EDUCATE	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"> - Host annual safety and encouragement event supporting all modes of transportation. - Implement biking and walking safety training in schools within the region.
PRIORITIZE, IMPLEMENT, & MAINTAIN	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"> - Identify “low-hanging fruit” projects and highly prioritized projects to implement first. - Provide a general timeline for implementing identified projects. - Encourage municipalities to include a maintenance schedule in annual budgets.

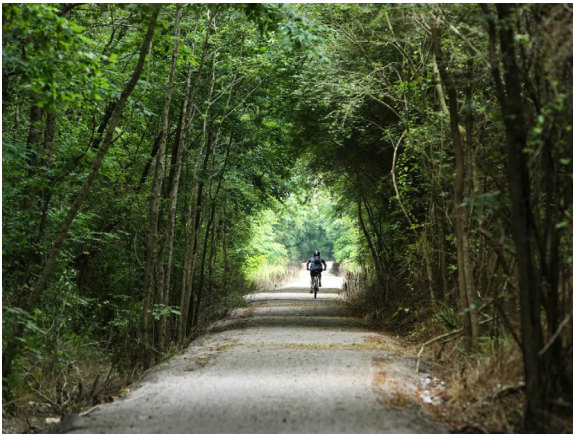
The B-ACTIVE Plan Network

The B-ACTIVE Plan network is the result of detailed analysis of existing conditions, public and stakeholder input, and iterative vetting. The network consists of 850 miles of proposed on-road and off-road facilities across four counties that connect communities and destinations throughout the region.



2023 State of the Network - Where we stand today

This document is our fifth edition of an Annual State of the Network Report. Its purpose is to tout the successes of recently constructed bicycle and trail facilities and to update you with what's happening with the implementation of the B-ACTIVE Plan. We are happy to report that since May of 2022, several new bike facilities have been added to the region. As previewed on the following pages of this report, 2023 is shaping up to be an exciting year with a number of regionally significant projects breaking ground. It is an exciting time to be a walker, runner, or cyclist in the Birmingham Metro region and we look forward to seeing more trails and bike lanes in the near future.



62

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



378

miles of active transportation facilities exist today
(see map on the right)

325

of the miles are trails or greenways



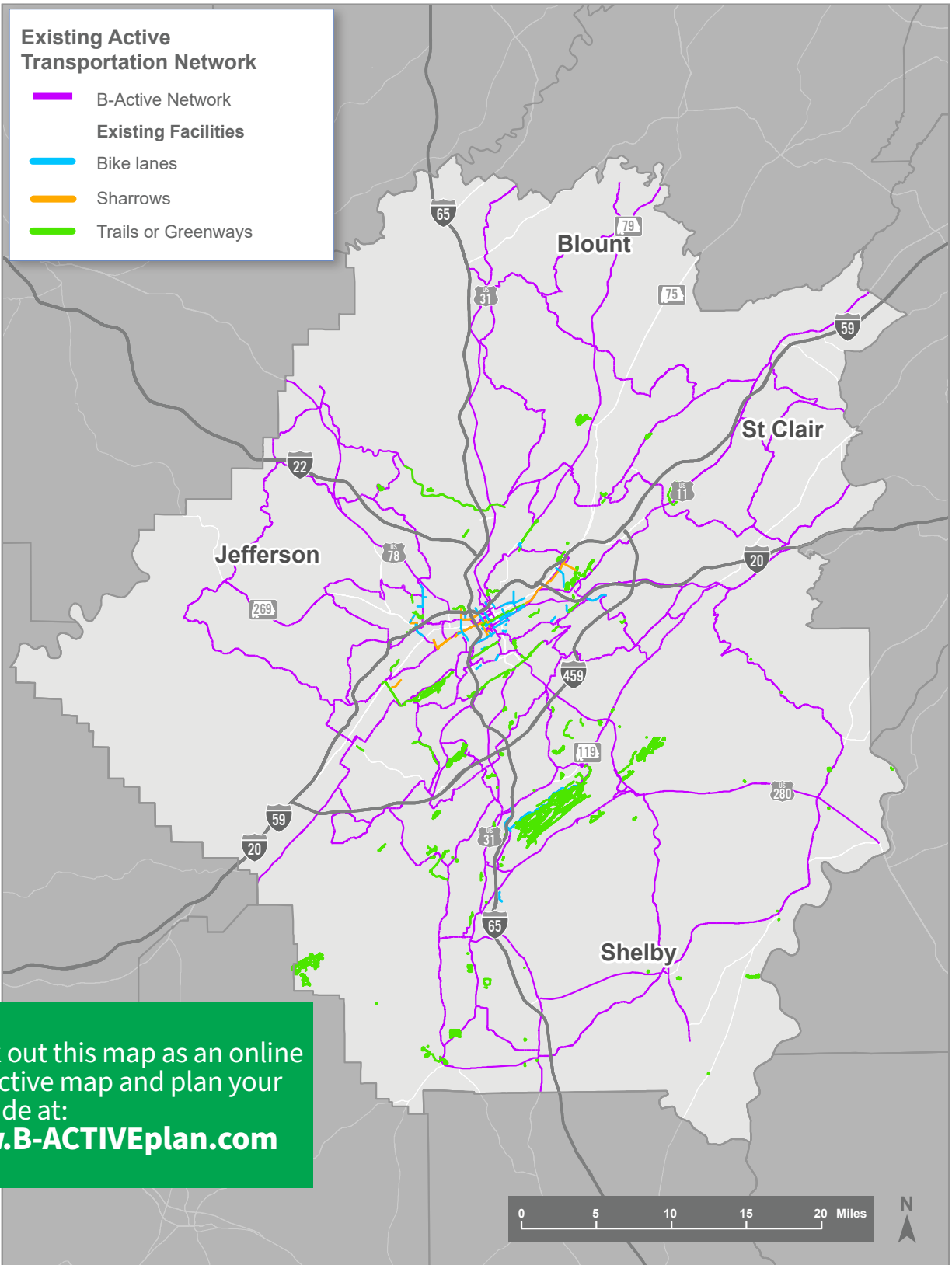
33

of the miles are bicycle lanes

21

of the miles are sharrows

So where can I find the existing facilities?



Check out this map as an online interactive map and plan your next ride at:
www.B-ACTIVEplan.com

Recent success stories

THE INVERNESS GREENWAY LOOP

This 1.7-mile trail opened in 2022 and extends from the Inverness Fire Station to Hoover's Nature Park. The trail consists of 1.1 miles of an 8-to-10-foot-wide concrete path that runs along Inverness Parkway, with the remaining 0.6 miles having a 10-to-12-foot-wide asphalt path that runs along an existing sanitary sewer easement through the woods of Hoover's Nature Park. This section features a 250-foot-long timber treetop pedestrian bridge. The trail was a collaborative effort between the City of Hoover and Shelby County and served a dual purpose – to provide an alternative mode of transportation to connect the surrounding neighborhoods along Inverness Parkway and Valleydale Road and to provide new sanitary sewer infrastructure that increased capacity to 1,200 gallons per day. The Birmingham MPO programmed \$2 million toward the construction of the project.



Source: Gresham Smith

SHADES CREEK GREENWAY EXTENSION

The City of Homewood recently celebrated the launch of “Phase Two,” an extension of the beloved Shades Creek Greenway. This new project will add 1.4 miles of multi-use trail along Lakeshore Parkway, creating a connection between Columbiana Road and the Wildwood Center shops and restaurants. The flat and accessible trail is designed to accommodate walkers, runners, and cyclists of all ages and abilities. With this expansion, the Shades Creek Greenway will span approximately 4.4 miles, or 8.8 miles round trip, solidifying its position as the second-longest trail segment within the Red Rock network.



Source: Pat Byington/Bham Now

As part of Jefferson County's expanding Red Rock Trail System®, the Shades Creek Greenway contributes to a network of trails and alternative transportation routes that connect residents to their living, working, and recreational areas. The project is facilitated by Freshwater Land Trust.

LUNKER LAKE TRAIL AT OAK MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

Oak Mountain State Park celebrated the opening of its latest multi-use trail, called the Lunker Lake Trail, on April 21, 2023. Officials from Alabama State Parks, along with local officials, gathered for a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the occasion. This new trail encircles Double Oak Lake and offers captivating views of the water, winding along the shoreline and through the surrounding forest. The trail’s construction was made possible through a collaborative effort between the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), the Shelby County Commission, and the Shelby County Parks and Recreation Authority (SCPARA).



Source: *Shelby County Reporter*



Source: *Yellowhammer News*

DOUBLE OAK PARK

Shelby County continues to focus on parks and outdoor recreation. In November of 2022, the County celebrated the opening of Double Oak Park, a new 750- acre park between Dunnivant Valley Road and Bear Creek Road. The park features horseback riding trails, a picnic pavilion, restrooms, 8.9 miles of single-track trails, and 8 miles of double track trails for hikers and mountain bikers.



Source: *Freshwater Land Trust*



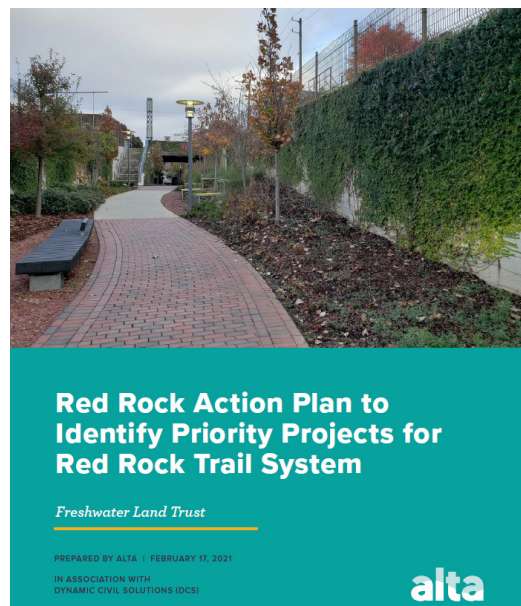
Source: *Freshwater Land Trust*

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. Because unforeseen funding, development, or environmental challenges can delay projects past anticipated timelines, 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.

RED ROCK ACTION PLAN

The Freshwater Land Trust is developing a Red Rock Trail System Action Plan that focuses on connecting nearby neighborhoods and suburbs to downtown Birmingham. The Red Rock Trail System®, located in Jefferson County, is a network of existing and proposed greenways and bike lanes connecting residents to greenspace and alternative transportation routes. Since the creation of the 750-mile Red Rock Trail System Plan in 2012, the Birmingham area has experienced significant development, thus creating new opportunities for greenways, trails and bike lanes that were unavailable just a decade ago. To create the backbone of the trail network, the plan is expected to identify seven priority greenways for the Freshwater Land Trust to aggressively pursue over the next decade. The Plan is expected to be completed in the summer of 2023. For more information, visit www.freshwaterlandtrust.org/.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust

FIVE MILE CREEK GREENWAY EXPANDS TO BROOKSIDE

Comprised of 16.5 miles of trails that follow the Cane Creek Branch rail corridor, the Five Mile Creek Greenway connects the cities of Center Point, Tarrant, Fultondale, Gardendale, Brookside and Graysville. Early this year, preparations were made for a two-mile addition to the Five Mile Creek Greenway in Brookside, and the unveiling is anticipated on June 2, 2023. Once opened, the Five Mile Creek Greenway will be the longest in the Red Rock Trail System® at 8.5 miles in length.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust

JEMISON TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Major improvements to Jemison Trail in the City of Mountain Brook have recently started in Spring 2023. Currently, a new scenic woodland trail made of crushed stone is being constructed on the other side of Shades Creek, which will eventually tie back into Jemison Trail via a new pedestrian bridge. The old concrete trail is in dire need of replacement so the City is partnering with the Friends of Jemison Park for this \$3 million renovation to not only replace the trail, but make it better! The trail segment along Mountain Brook Parkway will be rerouted in places to take advantage of more scenic views of the creek and be on higher ground to avoid the frequent flooding events. The trail will be widened from its current 5 feet to 9 feet and be made of asphalt to make it more accessible and user friendly. The parking areas will be enhanced and a few ADA accessible spots will be added. The picnic area will also be improved with more defined gathering areas and overlook native pollinator gardens.



Source: Lindsay Puckett

VALLEY CREEK TRAIL EXTENSION

The City of Birmingham, along with the Freshwater Land Trust are working to build the Valley Creek Trail, which will extend from the High Ore Line to the Birmingham Crossplex. Estimated at 4.5 miles, the proposed Valley Creek Rails-To-Trails project will connect the cities of Birmingham, Midfield, Fairfield, Brighton, and Lipscomb.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust

CIVIL RIGHTS DISTRICT TRAIL EXPANSION

Two brand new segments in the Civil Rights District are in the works. In February of this year, the City of Birmingham partnered with the Freshwater Land Trust to apply for a large federal grant for the proposed trails in the Civil Rights District, which will link City Walk BHAM to Morris Avenue and 20th Street to Legion Field.



Source: Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau



B Active

The Active Transportation Office for the Greater Birmingham Region

Source: Freshwater Land Trust