

2021 Annual State of the Network Report Greater Birmingham Region



REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



May 2021



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

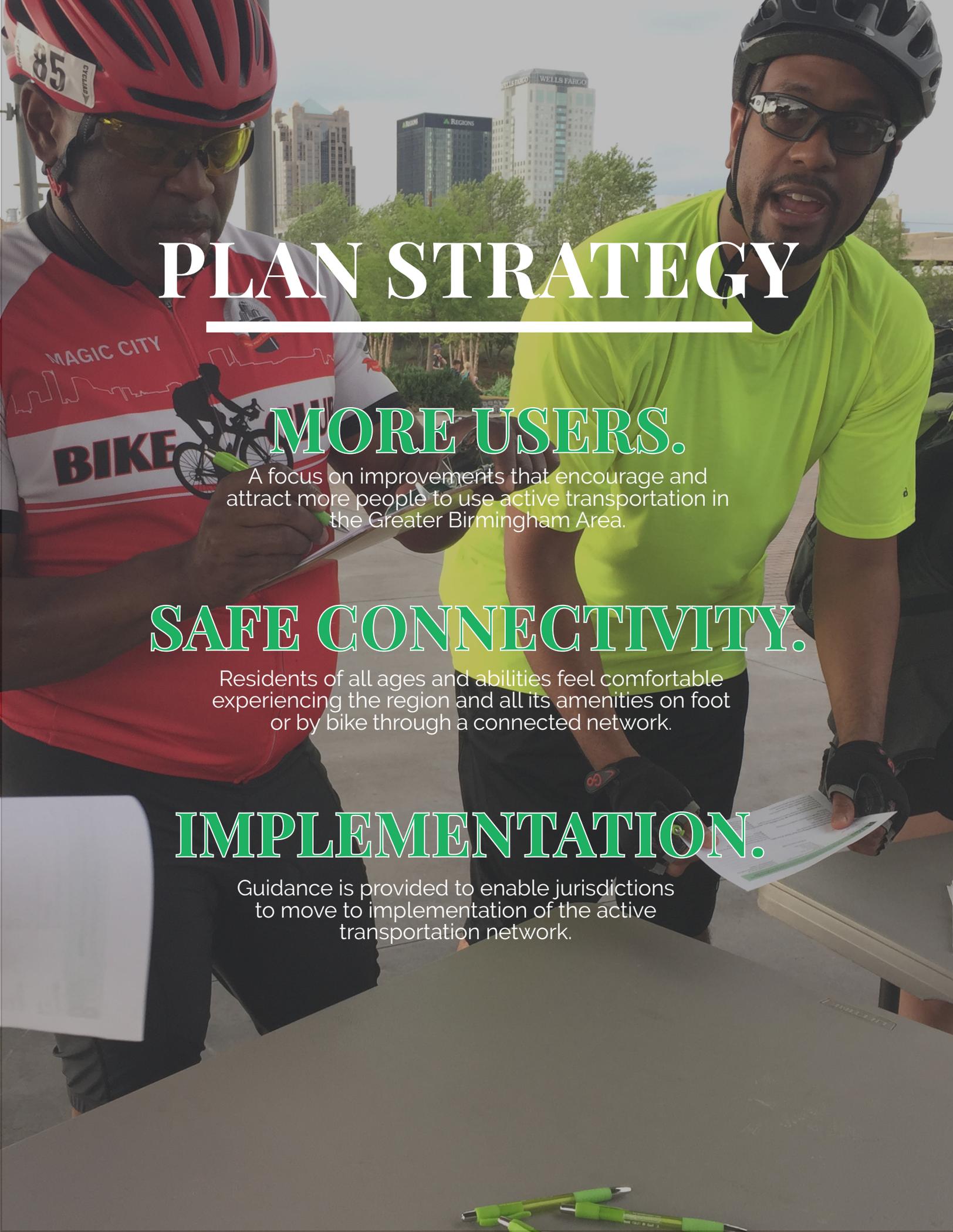
“LACK OF FACILITIES”

WAS THE NUMBER ONE

REASON RESPONDENTS

SAID THEY DO NOT BIKE

MORE.

A photograph of two cyclists in an urban setting. 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 yellow-green shirt. They are both looking at documents on a table. In the background, there are city buildings, including one with 'WELLS FARGO' and another with 'REGIONS' 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:



ECONOMIC BENEFIT



EQUITY



HEALTH



SAFETY

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

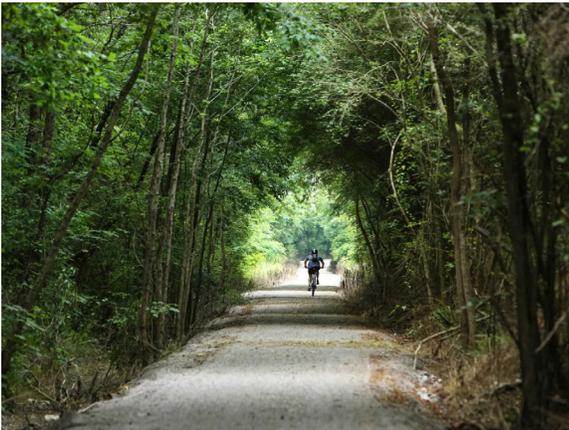
of the approach for creating an active transportation network in the Greater Birmingham area by the municipalities in the region.

	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.

2021 State of the Network - Where we stand today

This document is our third 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 last May 2020, several new bike facilities have been added to the region. As is previewed later in

the the Report, 2021 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.



34

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



264

miles of active transportation facilities exist today

232

of the miles are trails or greenways



22

of the miles are bicycle lanes

10

of the miles are sharrows

COVID-19 brought more people to trails and bikes than ever!

The Spring of 2020 increased the number of users more than ever on trails, sidewalks, and roadways in the Birmingham Metro region. This Spring (in 2021) we wanted to see if the trend had continued. Therefore we conducted a two-day pedestrian count along the Jemison Trail in Mountain Brook, one of our region’s most popular pedestrian paths. The result of that 2021 two-day total counts as compared to the total counts from 2016 can be found below.

**May 8 - 9,
2021**

1367 total trail users were active on the Jemison Trail compared to 911 total trail users in 2016



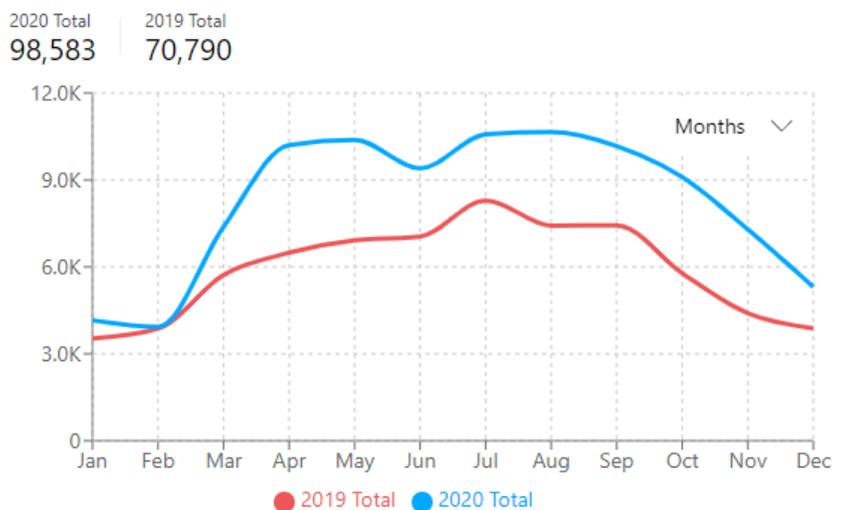
Miovision pedestrian counter camera on the Jemison Trail

How did biking increase in Birmingham during COVID-19?

According to STRAVA, a popular ride tracking app for cyclist, bicycling trips increased by an incredible 39% from 2019-2020 with a total annual increase of 27,793 trips in the Birmingham Metro Area. The figure to the right illustrates the monthly ride statistics for 2019 (red) and 2020 (blue).

39% Increase in bicycle trips

2020-2019 Bicycling Trip Comparison



Source: www.STRAVA.com

Recent success stories

GROUNDBREAKING ON THE JONES VALLEY TRAIL EXTENSION

In April 2021, the Freshwater Land Trust broke ground on the Jones Valley Trail extension. The extension will connect the existing Jones Valley Trail, which terminates at 32nd Street South, to Avondale’s 41st Street. The trail will provide a safe, off-road trail for commuters, recreational users, and visitors. The Freshwater Land Trust expects the trail to be complete by the end of this year in preparation for the city to host the 2022 World Games.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust



BIRMINGHAM 20TH STREET FLEX LANE ROAD DIET

This was a project initiated by REV Birmingham in partnership with the City of Birmingham and it included both a flex lane and painted bike lane that were added to 20th Street South from 1st Ave N to 7th Ave N. The project, initially done as a temporary pop-up demonstration, was largely completed by volunteers and is now a permanent fixture of 20th Street.



Source: REV Birmingham

MICRO-MOBILITY OPTIONS IN BIRMINGHAM

In early 2020, the City of Birmingham adopted a new micro-mobility ordinance to allow for scooter and bike share companies to provide services to the Birmingham community. Micromobility companies Gotcha and Veo are now providing scooter and bikeshare options within the City. For more info visit: <https://www.birminghamal.gov/transportation/shared-micromobility/>



Source: BHAMNow

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.

OAK MOUNTAIN - STATE PARK ROAD BIKE LANES

Shelby County and the City of Pelham are constructing bike lanes along State Park Road to make a connection to Oak Mountain State Park. As one of the most popular bicycling destinations in the State, Oak Mountain will now have a safer on-road entrance for visitors who wish to cycle into the state park.



Oak Mountain State Park Road Source: Alabama Birding Trail

CONTINENTAL GIN PROPERTY JONES VALLEY TRAIL EXTENSION

As the second phase of the Jones Valley Trail extension, the Freshwater Land Trust aims to connect the soon to be constructed Phase 1 extension terminating at 41st Street South in Avondale to the Continental Gin property. This project will retrofit existing alleyways to become bike and pedestrian trails and help to establish an uninterrupted bike and pedestrian trail from the Crestwood neighborhood to Downtown Birmingham and Railroad Park. Fundraising is underway and the Freshwater Land Trust aims for completion before the 2022 World Games.

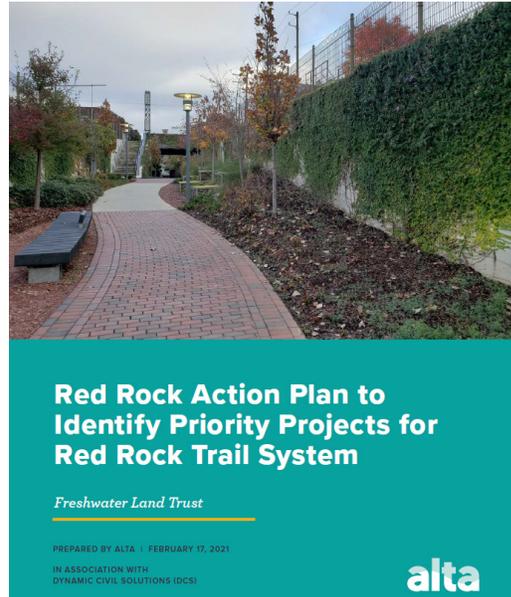


Source: Freshwater Land Trust

What's coming soon? - continued

RED ROCK RIDGE AND VALLEY TRAIL SYSTEM ACTION PLAN

To help better determine the feasibility, estimated cost, and priority of priority off-road trail connections needed throughout the region, the Freshwater Land Trust has recently hired the consulting company Alta Planning + Design for the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System Action Plan. This plan will help identify key projects that need to be constructed to connect existing segments of the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System. Implementation efforts will further construction of proposed on-road routes shown in the in the B-ACTIVE plan. To learn more visit <https://freshwaterlandtrust.org/>.



Source: Freshwater Land Trust

BIRMINGHAM BIKE LANES

The City of Birmingham has laid out an aggressive plan to construct active transportation facilities along many of the proposed routes in the B-ACTIVE Plan. In addition, the City is focused on constructing complimentary active transportation facilities that will provide local neighborhood connections. Over the next 3 years, the City of Birmingham aims to add over 55 miles of bike lanes and greenway facilities throughout the city limits.



B Active

The Active Transportation Plan for the Greater Birmingham Region

