



ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

September 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the Athens County Commissioners for supporting the Athens County Active Transportation Plan development process.

Core Team

Laura Olbers, Athens County Planners Office
Meredith Erlewine, Athens City-County Health Department

Bryan Hinkle, HAPCAP
Isla Skinner, COMCorps & Athens City-County Health Department

Partners

Katie O'Lone, Toole Design
Sally Sharow, Toole Design

Alan Craig, Ohio Department of Transportation
Eric Davis, Ohio Department of Transportation
Eric Reed, Ohio Department of Transportation

Safety Analysis

Rob Delach, City of Athens Pedestrian Accessibility & Bicycle Task Force

Mapmaking

Shelby Level, The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service at Ohio University

Ani Ruhil, The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Service at Ohio University

Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee

Chris Chmiel, Athens County Commissioner
Kate Cottrill, Athens City-County Health Department
Jayne Darling, Amesville Village Council
Brian Dearing, Athens City School District
Ruth Dudding, Athens City-County Health Department
Saleh Eldabaja, Athens City Engineer
Paige Gates, HAPCAP
Tom Gibbs, Athens City School District
Maggi Gifford, Gloucester Community Member
Tammy Hawk, Chauncey Village Council
Tia Hysell, Ohio University
Meghan Jennings, Athens City Planner
Tim Kirkendall, Village of Albany Mayor
Amy Lipka, Age-Friendly Athens County
Jeff Maiden, Athens County Engineer

Davey McNelly, Athens City Commission on Disabilities
Christa Myers, HAPCAP
Steve Patterson, City of Athens Mayor
Steve Pierson, Athens Township Trustee
Amy Pfeiffer, Athens Community Member
Jessie Powers, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia
Amy Renner, Village of Chauncey Mayor
Lisa Radford, Athens County Job and Family Services
Neal Reynolds, Albany Village Council
Eric Sholtis, Athens City School District
Sam Sikorski, Village of Gloucester Mayor
Nick Tepe, Athens County Public Libraries
Bob West, Athens Bicycle Club
Ben Ziff, HAPCAP
Melissa Zoller, Buckeye Hills Regional Council



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Steering committee members participate in a walk audit on State Route 682 near the Union Street intersection in Athens.

INTRODUCTION





Steering committee member Bryan Hinkle shows off Athens Public Transit's bicycle carrying capabilities

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

“Active Transportation” is an umbrella term for all the ways people travel without using a motorized vehicle – walking or bicycling, using mobility assistance devices (such as wheelchairs and scooters), skating or skateboarding, and more. For the purposes of Athens County’s active transportation planning process, we also have included transit because nearly every bus ride begins with a walk or roll to the bus stop, and because public transportation plays a critical role in connecting rural Athens County communities.

Active transportation is vital for many, especially people who cannot drive, including children, older adults, people with disabilities, people who do not have a valid driver’s license, and people who choose not to drive for a variety of reasons, such as reduced transportation costs, environmental benefits, and physical health. Active transportation facilities are often used as recreational routes as well. Introducing people to walking, bicycling, and rolling through recreation can lead to more people using active transportation.

Active transportation is a fundamental transportation mode for many Athens County residents to access work, school, retail stores, healthcare facilities, transit, and many other destinations. Active transportation can provide many community benefits beyond personal mobility, such as improved public health, economic development, greater quality of life, and enhanced environmental quality.

Active transportation planning involves community engagement to learn the specific needs of people who walk, bike and use public transportation. It also outlines the vision, goals, and strategies needed to support safe, convenient, and accessible active transportation options. It is important and beneficial to meet the needs of people walking and biking by planning for and directing investments in infrastructure and programs that support active transportation options.



Benefits of Active Transportation

Physical Health

Increased opportunity for recreation and destination-oriented trips using active modes of travel are key to increasing daily physical activity and reducing the risk for developing preventable, chronic diseases.

Mental Health

Physical activity reduces depression, can improve the quality of sleep, and has been shown to improve cognitive function for older adults.¹ Active transportation can also improve social conditions in communities, which contributes to positive mental well-being among residents.

Economic Development

There is broad consensus across the country, and in Ohio, that investing in active transportation produces a positive return on investment for host communities. This is especially true when it comes to trails, which serve as major regional attractions for recreational riders.

Quality of Life

Comfortable and accessible options for bicycling and walking provide a host of quality of life benefits. They increase the number of travel options for everyone and can lead to greater independence for older residents, young people, and others who cannot or choose not to drive. Providing a high-quality active transportation network is especially important for the mobility of community members who do not have reliable access to a vehicle.

Environmental Quality

Shifting to bicycling and walking trips, and concentrating development in dense walkable and bikeable communities can reduce transportation-based emissions and sprawling land use that impacts the natural environment.²

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2008 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS. Washington, DC: U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services; 2008. <http://health.gov/paguidelines/pdf/paguide.pdf>

2. Federal Highway Administration, National Bicycling and Walking Study, "Case Study No. 15 The Environmental Benefits Of Bicycling And Walking," 1993 http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/docs/case15.pdf

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Athens County Active Transportation Plan (ATP) was created under the leadership of a Steering Committee which ensured that it represented the diverse communities and individuals that reside in Athens County.

The ATP development process included discussions of connectivity gaps in the county, assessments of existing conditions, and a review of relevant plans and studies. The steering committee sought public input at community events, through an Athens County Active Transportation Survey, and during walk audits. Public input and technical analyses provided a foundation for recommendations.

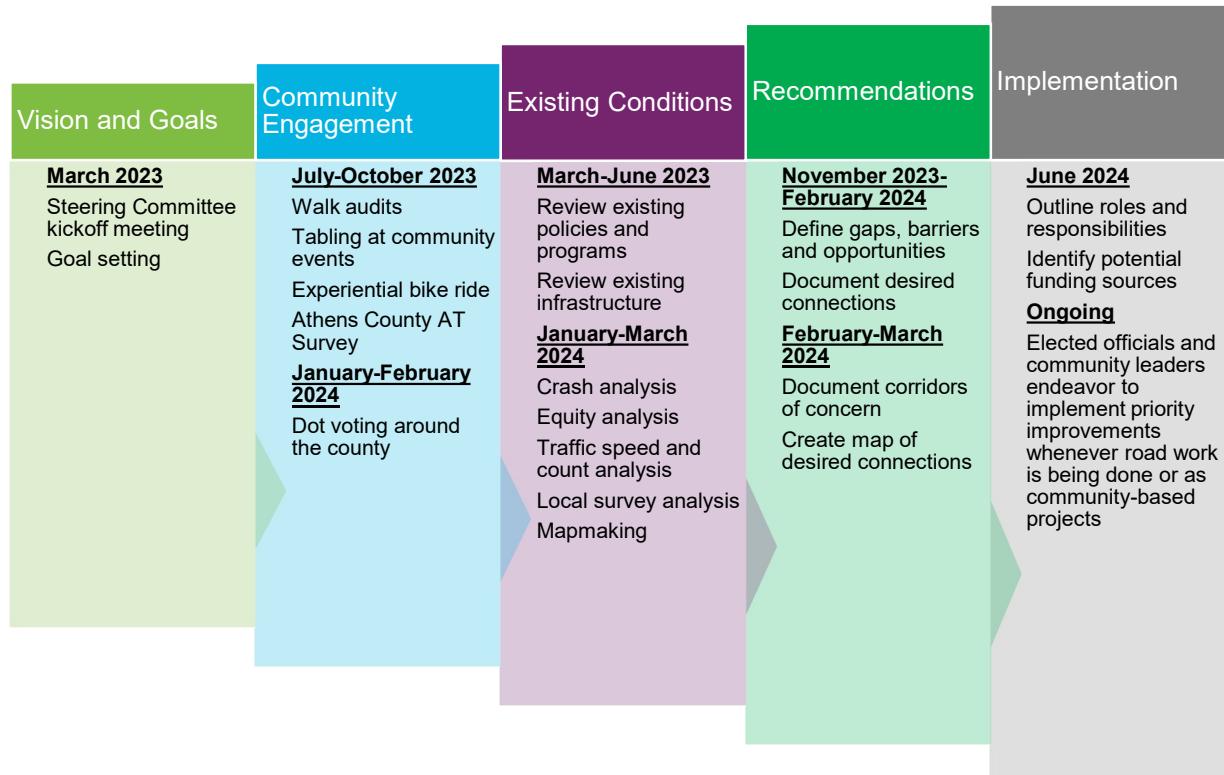


Figure 1. Project Timeline

VISION AND GOALS





Steering committee members participate in a walk audit on Route 13 near Glouster.

VISION AND GOALS

The Athens County ATP started with the goal of identifying opportunities to create better active transportation connections between Athens County communities.

The Athens County ATP Steering Committee envisions an Athens County where anyone, no matter where they live and no matter their age, can safely get where they need to go by walking, biking, or taking a bus. If a corridor is not conducive to walking, biking, or taking a bus, what can community leaders do to improve it for the people who live, work or travel there?

Because this plan looks at connectivity between communities rather than specific streets or sidewalks, the steering committee took a “look up, not down” approach, looking at broad-stroke connectivity rather than inspections of existing infrastructure.

Project goals included:

- Documenting gaps and opportunities in connectivity between Athens County communities, with a particular focus on the Route 13 corridor between Athens and Glouster
- Helping leaders and policymakers explore what could be possible
- Prioritizing key projects
- Positioning Athens County elected officials and community champions to apply for funding opportunities to address prioritized projects
- Increasing safe active transportation options for Athens County residents to access the people and places they need to thrive

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT





Steering committee members participate in a walk audit on State Route 682 near The Plains.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement was an essential tool in the plan development process. Involving the public builds trust in the plan and improves the overall quality of the findings. The project team collected community input through several strategies including hosting 10 Steering Committee meetings, an online and hard-copy survey that garnered 349 responses, tabling at nine community events, hosting three walk audits, and hosting an experiential bike ride with an active transportation consultant. Steering committee meetings identified a “hot list” of problem corridors in Athens County. That list was supplemented and prioritized by community members during six dot-voting sessions throughout the county.

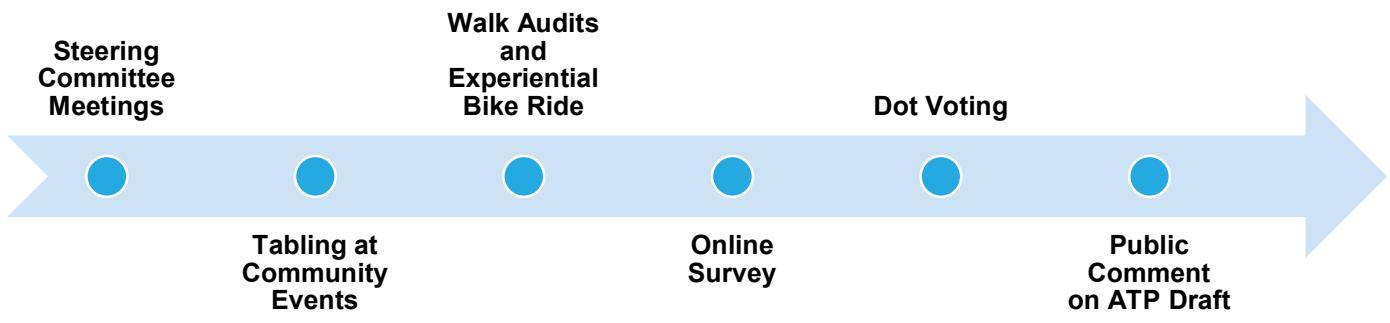


Figure 2. Engagement Timeline

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Steering Committee Meetings

The Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee was comprised of community members representing cities and villages, local government, service organizations, and others. Individuals from all areas of the county were invited to participate. Steering Committee members are listed under Acknowledgments at the beginning of this document. The Steering Committee met 10 times over the course of the plan development.

Survey

A survey was promoted to the Athens County community as follows:

- **Social Media:** Steering committee members shared announcements about the Athens County Active Transportation Survey and the project itself through social media channels relative to their respective communities.
- **Email:** Steering committee members shared information about the survey and project through organizational email lists.
- **Flyers:** Steering committee members posted hard-copy, color flyers promoting the project and survey at high-traffic destinations in their communities (gas stations, post offices, libraries, convenience stores, and government offices, for example).
- **Yard Signs:** Project leaders placed promotional yard signs in the right-of-way on roadways that steering committee members identified as places where people frequently walk or bike. The signs promoted the Active Transportation Survey and provided a QR code to take the survey.
- **Pop-Up Events:** See below.

Pop-Up Events

Pop-up events have a broader reach than conventional public meetings. By leveraging existing events at popular destinations, the project team reached a wide cross-section of Athens County residents, especially those who might not want to or be able to participate in online or traditional forms of engagement.

The project team held 15 pop-up events over the course of the project. In addition to nine pop-up tabling events to promote the survey, steering committee members hosted a series of six dot voting sessions. The purpose of the pop-up events was two-fold: to gather information about existing walking and bicycling conditions during the first half of the project, and to share preliminary recommendations with the public during the second half.

- **Tabling:** Steering committee members hosted an informational table promoting the project at the following community events and locations throughout the county, encouraging individuals to take the Active Transportation survey: Amesville Fireman's Festival, Nelsonville Parade of the Hills, Chauncey Party in the Park, Coolville Veggie Van, The Plains Indian Mound Festival, Color in the Hills (Gloster), First Friday (Gloster), Albany Fall Festival, The Plains Public Library.
- **Dot Voting Around the County:** Dot voting activities during evening basketball games in each of the county's five school districts provided an opportunity for individuals to vote on which corridors in the county are most in need of active transportation improvements. Steering committee members hosted dot voting during well-attended high school basketball games at Trimble High

School, Alexander High School, Federal-Hocking High School, Nelsonville-York High School, and Athens High School.

- **Final Dot Voting Session:** The Athens County Active Transportation Survey had included the question, “Are you interested in participating in focus groups, field studies, or other activities related to this Athens County Active Transportation Plan project?” The 102 individuals who answered “yes” to that question were invited to attend a dot voting session, to which the public was also invited via Facebook and a media alert.

Walk Audits

Walk audits are facilitated walks for an interdisciplinary group of community stakeholders. These events are educational in that people experience and assess how well an area functions for active transportation. The experience is an outstanding way for professionals and community members to collaborate on transportation planning. Our steering committee hosted three walk audits:

- State Route 682 from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway near Beaumont to the BP gas station in The Plains
- State Route 13 from the Trimble Kroger to Glouster
- State Route 682 from the intersection with State Route 56/Union Street in Athens to the new Kershaw Greene apartment complex near Armitage Road

These sites were selected by steering committee members after discussions of where people are often seen walking or biking in areas that are perceived to have high traffic. Notes from the walk audits are available in Appendices A, C and D.

Experiential Bike Ride

Athens County Creating Healthy Communities hosted a professional development bike ride offered through Ohio Department of Health, led by a consultant from Toole Design. The ride took place in Trimble Township along the Route 13 corridor near Trimble and Glouster, with the goal of exploring opportunities for public transit expansion to Trimble Township. A county commissioner and two local mayors attended and had meaningful conversations about what kind of investment would be needed from villages and the county to fund transit expansion. Local officials in attendance agreed it would be important to explore how all municipalities along the route can garner local match for transit funding dollars that would allow Athens Public Transit to expand service to Trimble Township.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Our community engagement activities and countywide survey provided information about walking, biking, and transit habits and desires in Athens County. Survey results indicate that Athens County residents have a strong interest in having safer conditions for walking and biking. Full survey results are available online: <https://aniruhil.github.io/athtransit/>. Note that our discussion of the results may reference data that is only available in the full report due to lack of space in this document.

Top barriers to walking in Athens County

Community members most often mentioned the following things as barriers to walking in Athens County:

- Lack of sidewalks, public stairs, or paths
- Destinations are too far away
- Existing sidewalks, public stairs, or paths are in poor condition
- Too many cars/motorists drive too fast

Survey results showed people are interested in walking but face several barriers to doing so. Most respondents to our county-level survey indicated that they are walking for recreation and exercise, though a moderate number of respondents are walking to get to work, school, appointments, and for errands. However, zooming out to a larger sample, U.S. Census data shows that 12% of Athens County residents listed walking as their primary means of transportation to work, compared with only 2% for Ohio and for the United States and underscoring the need for safe walking conditions.

Most respondents cited a lack of quality infrastructure as a barrier to walking, with 60% of respondents citing a lack of adequate sidewalks and paths (see Figure 3). Compounding the lack of active transportation infrastructure, 45% of respondents reported that motorists and their behavior deter individuals from walking (see Figure 3). Yet 71% of respondents agreed that they would like to walk more for daily commutes, errands, and other activities (see Figure 4), demonstrating a need and desire for more active transportation infrastructure.

Respondents left many comments about walking conditions in Athens County. All comments are available for view in the full results online: <https://aniruhil.github.io/athtransit/#open-ended-answers>. Examples include:

- Comment from Nelsonville community member: "Sidewalks are poorly maintained. Walking in places without sidewalks are very much overgrown and 'brushy' (snakes, spiders, trips and falls. Unsafe)."
- Comment from Athens community member: "The only people I see walking in the neighborhood are just exercising or walking a dog. BUT, I live right by Highway 50 and people will walk on the SHOULDER OF THE HIGHWAY to get to town (Richland Avenue) and back home. If you want to be terrified, just walk along that highway."

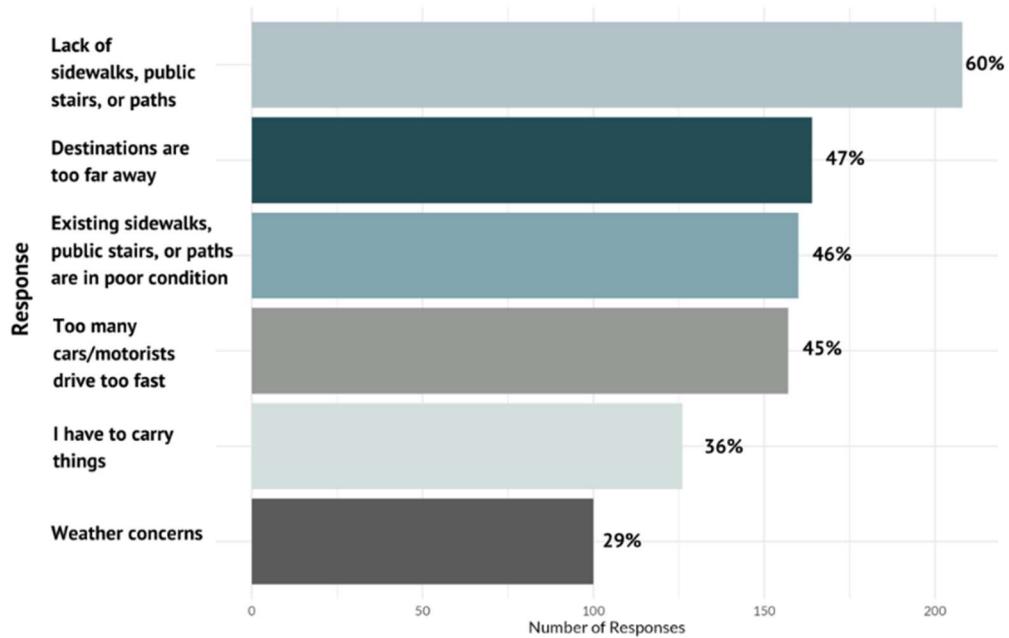


Figure 3. What challenges do you face when walking in Athens County?

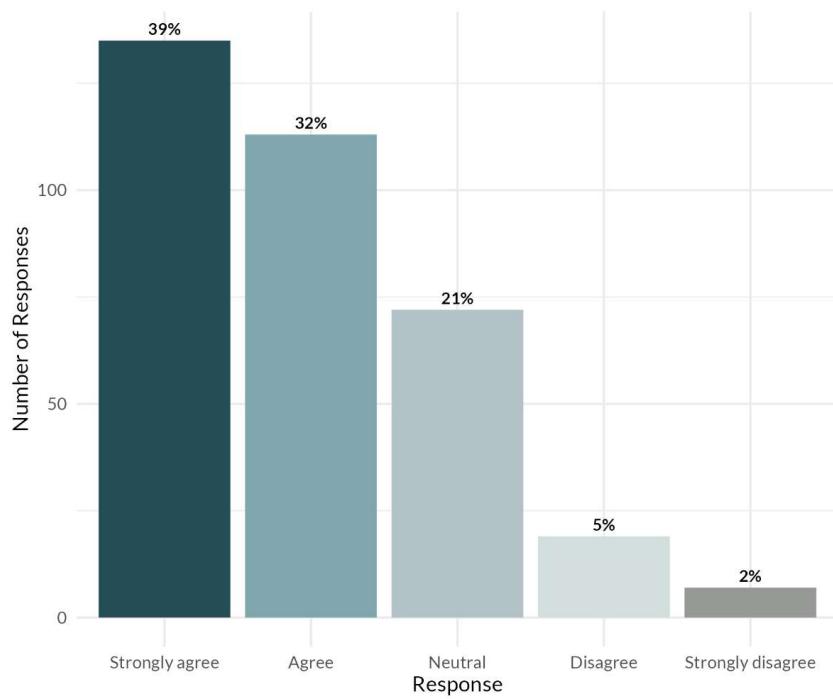


Figure 4. Do you want to walk more than you do now for your daily commute, errands, and other activities?

Top barriers to biking in Athens County

Community members frequently mentioned the following things as barriers to bicycling in Athens County:

- Too many cars/motorists drive too fast
- Lack of bike lanes or paths
- Hills
- Dogs

Survey results showed that many people in Athens County want to bike but want to do so under safer conditions. Respondents indicate a strong desire to bike more than they are currently able to or feel comfortable doing, with nearly 58% of all respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would like to bike more than they do (see Figure 5). Nearly half (46%) of respondents cite environmental and infrastructure factors, such as a lack of bike paths, as significant barriers to biking (see Figure 6). Even more respondents (49%) reported that the volume of cars and speed of motorists as the main barrier to biking. Increased active transportation infrastructure would help address the needs for accessibility and safety, allowing all members of Athens County the opportunity to live actively.

Respondents left many comments about biking infrastructure in Athens County. All comments are available for view in the full results online: <https://aniruhil.github.io/athtransit/#open-ended-answers>. Examples include:

- Comment from The Plains community member: “[The] bike path can take me from Nelsonville through to Holzer in Athens. But getting to bike path within the Plains is tricky.”
- Comment from Coolville community member: “ ... Need better sidewalks or marked bike paths.”

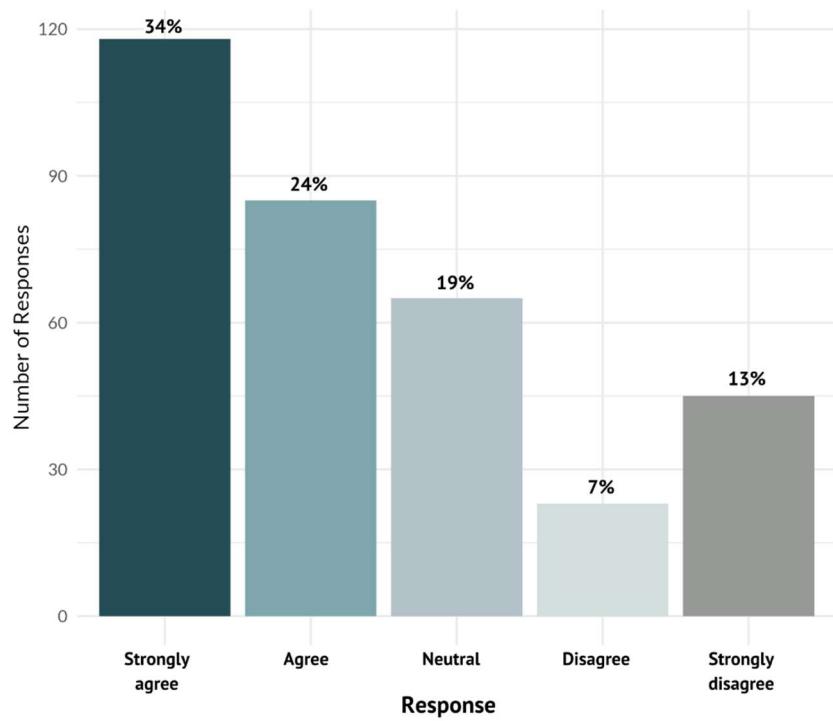


Figure 5. Do you want to bike more than you do now for your daily commute, errands, and other activities?

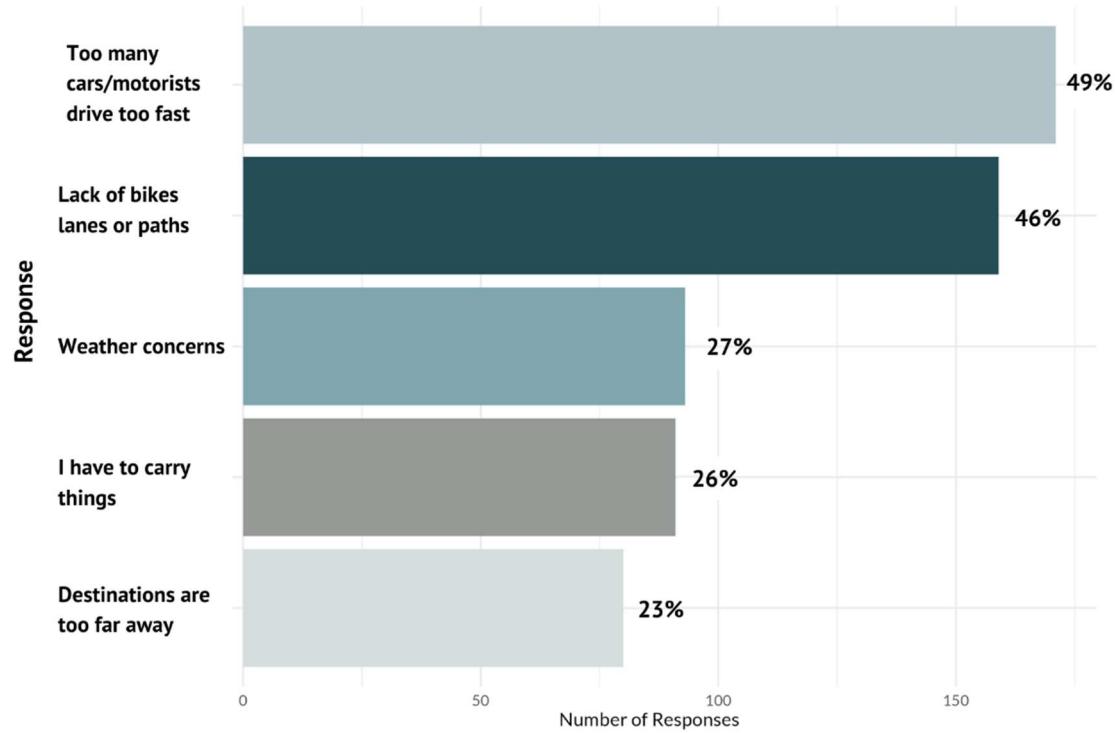


Figure 6. What challenges do you face when biking in Athens County?

Top barriers to using public transit in Athens County

The following barriers were listed as the top things keeping people from using transit in Athens County:

- Takes too long
- No bus service to many communities in Athens County
- Lack of understanding of bus routes and bus stop locations
- Bus routes are confusing

Survey results highlighted opportunities for improving access to and education around public transit in Athens County. Barriers around public transit's availability and accessibility help to explain why 59% of respondents reported never using public transit. At the level of zip codes, the survey results show that there is a need for education around the public transit system. Community members living in every part of the county reported no service to their area, including areas with service such as Athens (32%), Chauncey (38%), and Nelsonville (46%). Additionally, respondents from every part of the county reported that the routes and stops are either confusing or not known. These results suggest a need for more comprehensive communication, advertisement, and education around using the transit system throughout the county.

This project gave particular attention to active transportation needs in Trimble Township. Lack of public transit to Trimble Township is obviously the biggest barrier to using public transportation for the Athens County residents who live in Trimble Township. Of the Glouster, Jacksonville and Trimble residents who responded to our Active Transportation Plan survey, 42% went on to leave an open-ended comment about lack of transit service to their community. It is also worth noting that the top priority listed in the 2022-2026 Athens County Coordinated Transportation Plan is "Expand service routes up State Route 13 toward the Glouster/Trimble areas," based in part on results of a survey conducted for that plan.

Respondents left many comments about public transit access in Athens County. All comments are available for view in the full results online: <https://aniruhil.github.io/athtransit/#open-ended-answers>. Examples include:

- Comment from Glouster community member: "Buses need to run to/from Glouster. There is really no public transportation in Glouster at all, and we need buses to get to and from Athens and Nelsonville."
- Comment from Albany community member: "Yes, more reliable buses and buses that go places other than downtown Athens. We need more regular buses to/from Alexander township, Albany, etc that are regular and reliable. I cannot use a bus when I cannot reliably get to my destination in time."

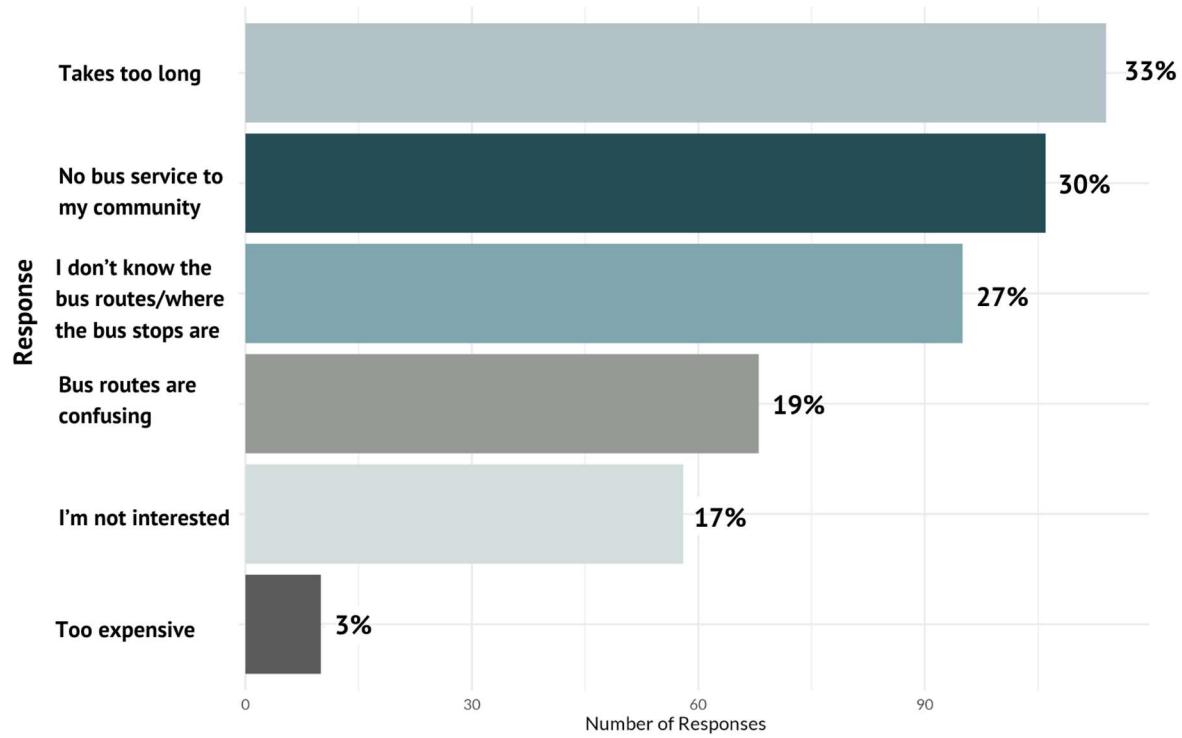


Figure 7. What barriers exist to using public transportation?

EXISTING CONDITIONS





A young bicyclist rides in the bike lane on N. Lancaster Street in Athens.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The ATP Steering Committee completed an existing conditions analysis to understand the current transportation system and where improvements are needed for people walking, biking and using public transportation. The project team reviewed existing infrastructure, plans, and policies that support active transportation, as well as census data, crash, volume and speed data, and ODOT's Demand and Needs Analyses, which identified areas with strong potential for biking and walking.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Athens County is in beautiful, rural Southeastern Ohio and once was home to a booming coal economy. The county's 508 square miles include steep hills, deep valleys, waterways, state parks, and extensive trail systems within the Wayne National Forest and Strouds Run State Park. The Hocking River flows into the Ohio River at Hockingport in southeast Athens County. The county includes two cities, Athens and Nelsonville (populations 20,820 and 4,571, respectively), as well as eight villages (Albany, Amesville, Buchtel, Chauncey, Coolville, Glouster, Jacksonville and Trimble), five census-designated places (Hockingport, Millfield, New Marshfield, Stewart and The Plains), 12 townships (Alexander, Ames, Canaan, Carthage, Dover, Lee, Lodi, Rome, Trimble, Troy, Waterloo, and York), and 26 unincorporated communities. Athens county also is home to Ohio University, founded in 1804, which welcomed approximately 20,926 residential students in 2022 ([Ohio University](#)).

As the *Athens News* noted in a 2020 report on the history of mining in Athens County, “[Once coal companies] left the area ... small communities in Athens and other southeast Ohio counties have been left to languish through no fault of their own, struggling with increasingly desperate inter-generational poverty as few economic opportunities have surfaced in the time since.”

The population of Athens County is 62,431 ([2020 U.S. Census](#)), with a median household income of \$48,750. According to the U.S. Census (2022), nearly 25% of Athens County residents below the poverty line (a threshold that is nearly double the Ohio and U.S. rates). With villages and unincorporated communities located throughout the far-flung corners of the county, lack of transportation often hinders individuals from traveling to goods and services located many miles from their homes.

Although a multitude of factors contribute to the health of Athens County residents, transportation mode surely plays a role:

- When it is not safe to walk in a neighborhood or village, people are less likely to walk for errands or recreation, impacting health
- When it is not safe to bicycle on roads between destinations, people are less likely to bicycle for errands or recreation, impacting health
- If no car is available and public transit is not an option, people are unable to access to healthcare, healthy foods, employment, and other goods and services that affect their health

This active transportation plan considers the barriers that Athens County residents face when trying to get places without a car, with a particular focus on the Route 13 corridor in Trimble Township, which is home to 4,041 residents ([U.S. Census Bureau](#)) but lacks a bus route.

	Category	Percent
<i>Race</i>	White	89
	Multiracial	3
	Black	2
	Asian	3
	Native American	0
	Hispanic	2
<i>Age</i>	< 9	7
	10 - 19	17
	20 - 29	23
	30 - 39	12
	40 - 49	10
	50 - 59	12
<i>Car Ownership by Household</i>	60 <	20
	0	7
	1	34
	2	36
	3+	23
<i>Commute Mode Share</i>	Drove alone	69
	Carpooled	7
	Walked	12
	Bicycled	1
	Transit	1
	Other	1
	Worked from home	9

Table 1. Athens County Demographics

Sources: US Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Athens County, OH <<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US39009-athens-county-oh/>>; U.S. Census Bureau (2022).

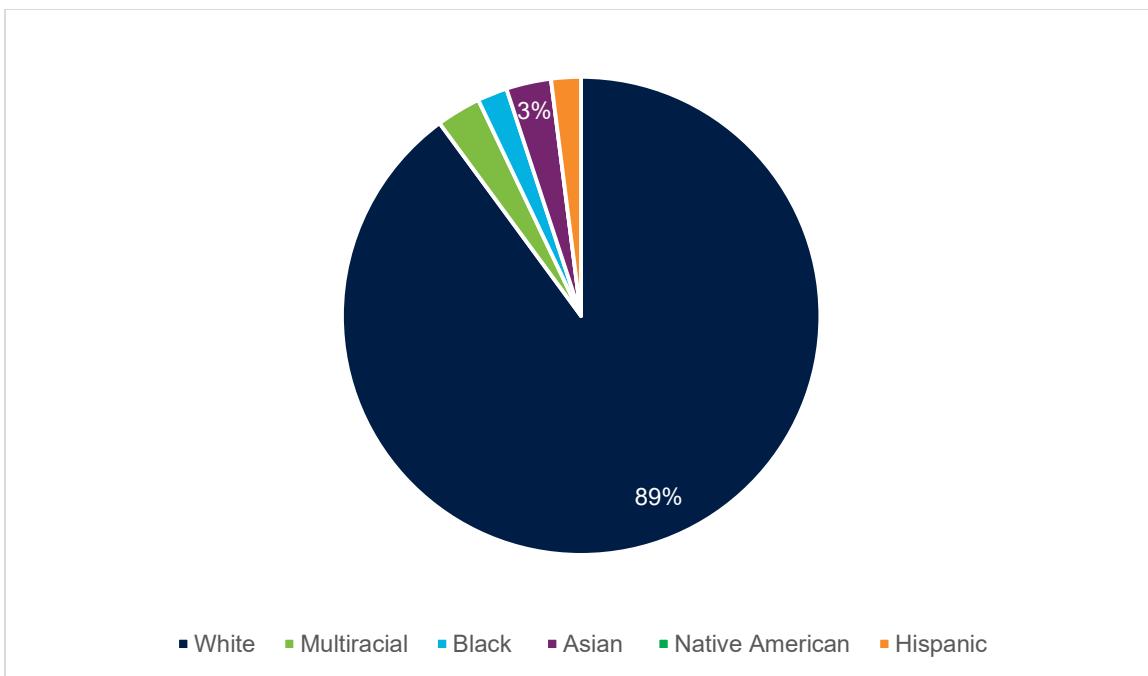


Figure 8: Athens County Race (US Census Bureau, 2022)

Sources: US Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Athens County, OH <<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US39009-athens-county-oh/>>; U.S. Census Bureau (2022).

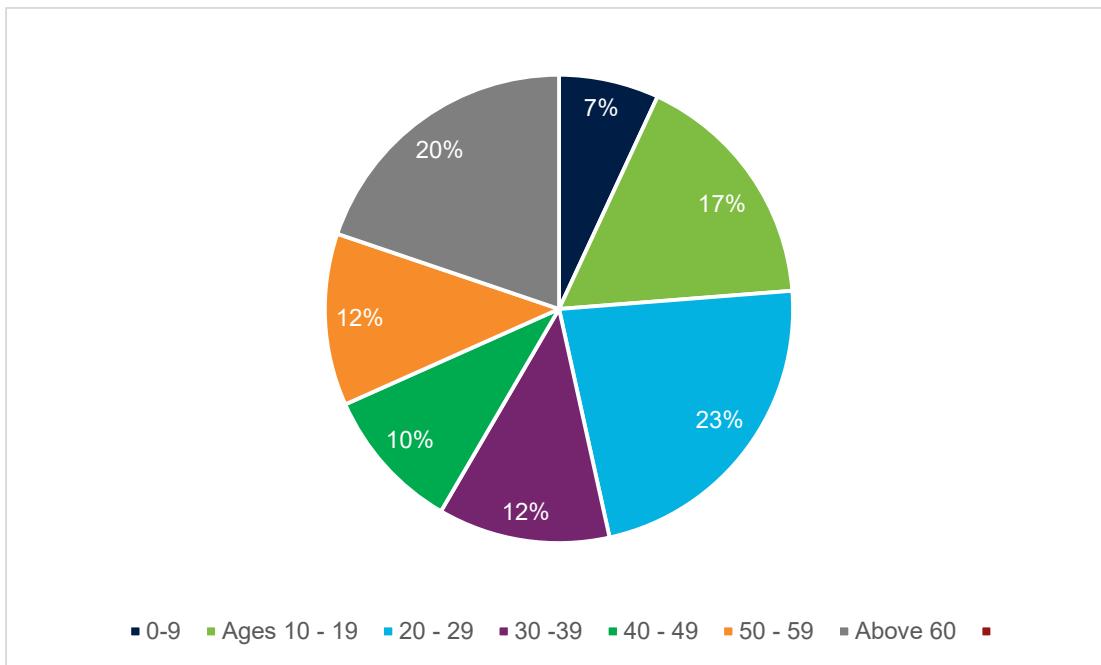


Figure 9: Athens County Age (US Census Bureau, 2022)

Sources: US Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Athens County, OH <<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US39009-athens-county-oh/>>; U.S. Census Bureau (2022).



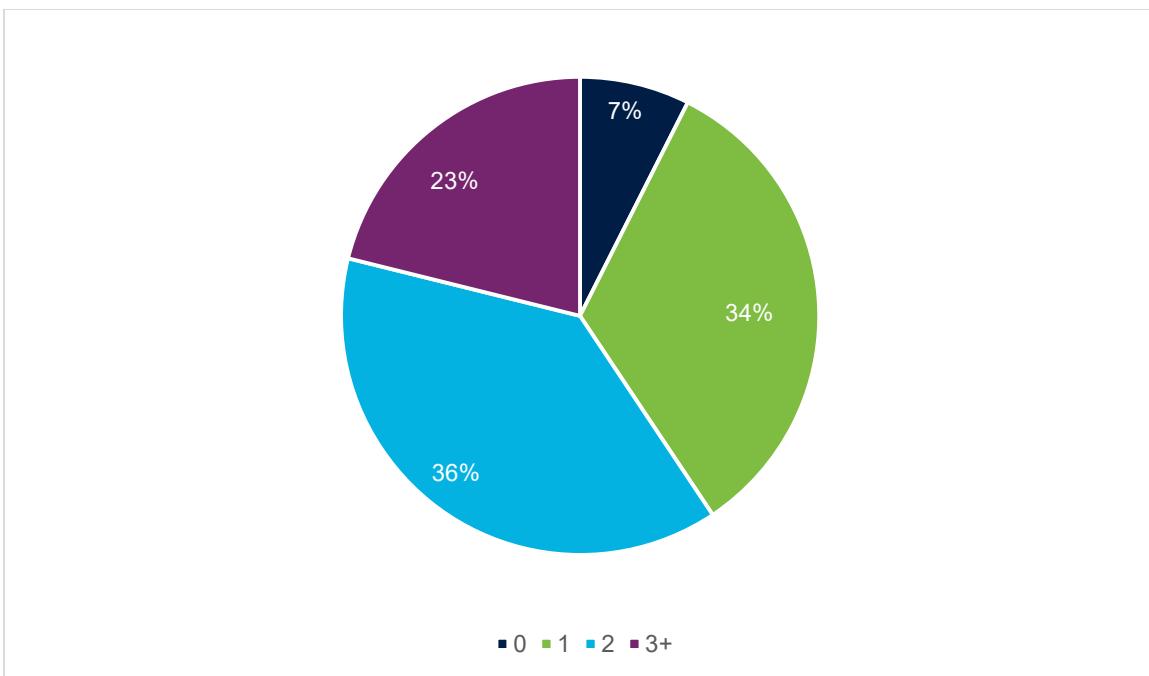


Figure 10: Athens County Vehicles Available by Household

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2022). "Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units." *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S2504*, <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S2504?q=car%20ownership%20athens%20county%20ohio>

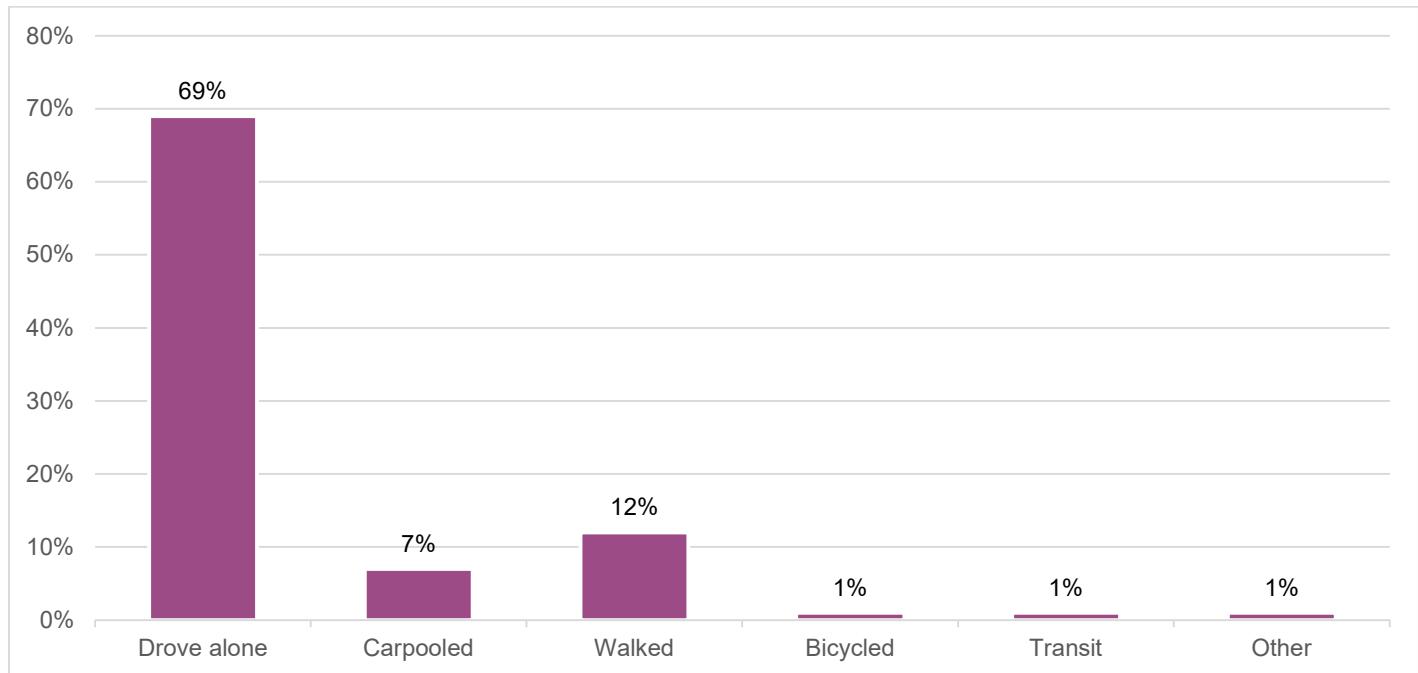


Figure 11: Athens County Means of Transportation to Work (Source: US Census Bureau, 2022)

Sources: US Census Bureau (2022). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Athens County, OH <<http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US39009-athens-county-oh/>>; U.S. Census Bureau (2022).

EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES, AND SUPPORTIVE PROGRAMS

This plan builds on prior plans and initiatives developed by entities within Athens County. It looks to these plans for existing conditions data, issue identification, and recommendation support.

Table 2. Existing Plans and Policies

Plan/ Policy / Documents	Lead Agency	Year Completed	Comments
Comprehensive Land Use Plan	Athens County	2016	Addresses transportation and other public services and infrastructure.
Complete Streets Policy	Amesville	2023	A Complete Streets Policy was adopted by the Village of Amesville in 2023.
PSE Assessment	Athens City-County Health Department	2020	The Creating Healthy Communities program, with support from Ohio Department of Health, conducted this assessment of existing policy, system, and environmental strategies that support active living and healthy eating in Athens County.
Complete Streets Policy	City of Athens	2020	A Complete Streets Policy was adopted by the City of Athens on December 7, 2020.
Active Transportation Plan	City of Athens (Uptown Only)	2018	Addresses the uptown portion of Athens City, looking at traffic flow, driving speeds, bicycle and pedestrian traffic, and engagement with storefronts.
Comprehensive Plan for the City of Athens 2040	City of Athens	2020	This comprehensive plan sought to understand existing citywide and neighborhood problems, identify goals and ambitions, and offer recommendations as a community that would inform decisions made by city council and city leaders. This plan addresses multimodal and active transportation.
Pedestrian Accessibility Plan	City of Athens	2023	This ad hoc committee recommends that the city identify additional funding methods and assume overall management of street-wide sidewalk projects, in partnership with property owners and neighborhoods, with a goal to render all city-wide sidewalks “level, smooth, wide, and continuous” and meet ADA requirements.
Coordinated Transportation Plan	Athens County Board of County Commissioners	2022	The plan identified all community transportation resources, identified and prioritized the community transportation needs, and established a clear plan for shared goals. The plan is outlined for the years 2022 through 2026.
Complete Streets Policy	Chauncey	2021	A Complete Streets Policy was adopted by the Village of Chauncey on July 8, 2021.

Plan/ Policy / Documents	Lead Agency	Year Completed	Comments
Complete Streets Policy	Glouster	2019	A Complete Streets Policy was adopted by the Village of Glouster on September 9, 2019.
Support of State Bicycle Route 65	City of Nelsonville	2017	On March 13, 2017, the City of Nelsonville adopted a resolution supporting ODOT development of State Bicycle Route 65 in the city as a connector to the US Bicycle Routes.
Complete Streets Policy	City of Nelsonville	2017	A Complete Streets Policy was adopted by the City of Nelsonville on October 23, 2017.
ARPA Proposal	Community Member	2022	A community member advocated for the use of ARPA funding to improve infrastructure on Lemaster and Polston roads in The Plains, citing the need for safe walking and biking routes, safe routes to school, connectivity to surrounding recreational and outdoor spaces, and future development projects.

Table 3. Existing Supportive Programs

Program Name	Lead Agency	Comments
City of Athens ad hoc Accessibility & Bicycle Task Force	Athens City Council	Promotes walking and biking as part of a transportation system and provides leadership and expertise to City Council and City staff.
Book a Bike	Athens County Public Libraries	The first public library bike-lending program in the state, and one of the first in the nation, created in 2013. Borrow a bike and bike equipment for free at libraries in Athens, Glouster, The Plains, Nelsonville, Chauncey, and Albany.
Athens Bicycle Club	Volunteer board and members	A cycling club that advocates for safe cycling and recreational cycling opportunities.
Hockhocking Adena Bikeway Advisory Committee	Athens County Commissioners	This committee is appointed by the Athens County Commissioners and serves to coordinate efforts between the different entities who own and maintain the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway.
Bike to Work Day	HAPCAP, Ohio University, health department	Bike to Work Day is an event in the City of Athens to support active commuting and encourage people to try biking to work or school.

ANALYSES

After mapping the existing transportation system, the project team performed several analyses to better understand existing walking and bicycling infrastructure and transit services, network connectivity, safety, and equity. The following section provides a summary of each existing conditions analysis.

SUMMARY OF FACILITY INVENTORY

Active transportation infrastructure

- **Hockhocking Adena Bikeway:** This multi-use path is the most significant active transportation infrastructure in Athens County. Connecting Nelsonville to County Road 24A (S. Canaan Road) east of Athens, the 22-mile paved path passes through the Hocking College and Tri-County Vocational School campuses near Nelsonville, connects to Athens High School in The Plains, and passes through the City of Athens and the Ohio University Campus, with many opportunities to connect to city streets and neighborhoods via “spurs” (see base map, page 32).
- **Tomcat Trail:** This multi-surface route connects Jacksonville to Glouster via Trimble, offering a way to walk between the communities without having to walk on State Route 13. Signage marks the route, which meanders through city streets, right-of-way and green space. Local officials have recently been pursuing grant funding to resurface the gravel trail, which has grown over with grass in some places, and to install lighting on the trail. It has great potential to be a more prominent recreation and active transportation resource. See Appendix A.
- **Bike lanes and sharrows:**
 - The City of Athens has added bike lanes on portions of the following streets: Mill, North Lancaster Street/Columbus Road, North Court, Richland, East State, and North Congress. Ohio University added a bike lane on Bobcat Lane in front of Baker Center on campus.
 - On Elm Street in The Plains, a new bike lane and sidewalk with lighting connect to the Athens High School driveway.
 - Sharrows in Chauncey help bicyclists find their way from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway spur at Chauncey Community Park (which doubles as the main Baileys Trail System Trailhead) through village streets to S. R. 682. In 2024, construction will begin on another bikeway spur that will connect from S.R. 682 in Chauncey, across the Hocking River, to the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway near River Road. This is a critical piece of infrastructure that will make important active transportation connections possible for residents of The Plains and Chauncey, as well as for recreational road cyclists and mountain bikers visiting the Baileys Trail System.
 - Nelsonville City Council passed a complete streets policy in October 2017, and soon after painted sharrows and installed wayfinding signage to help direct people from the terminus of the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway (behind Rocky Boots) to Nelsonville’s historic public square and the nearby Athens County Public Libraries branch. Most of the sharrows have since faded or been covered by repaving projects.
- **Sidewalks:** Because this Active Transportation Plan focuses on connectivity between Athens County communities, the Steering Committee has not conducted an audit of every sidewalk in the county. Nevertheless, the committee wants to make note of the following:

- In the City of Athens, sidewalks are prominent but not consistent throughout the city; many of the sidewalks that do exist are in disrepair or don't connect to more sidewalk after crossing a street. Uneven brick sidewalks and streets in the City of Athens are a particular hazard. In 2023, an ad hoc Pedestrian Accessibility Committee prepared a [Pedestrian Accessibility Plan](#) for Athens City Council that contains detail about sidewalk infrastructure and needs in the city.
- Sidewalks are present on some neighborhood streets in The Plains. Some community members with disabilities have noted that the slope of the sidewalk on North Plains Road makes it feel like you might spill into the road if you are rolling in a wheelchair.
- In 2023, the Athens County engineer applied for Transportation Alternatives Program funding and Systemic Safety Program funding to install a multi-use path along the Johnson Road corridor. The projects were awarded in 2024 and will complete an important connection from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway and High School Drive to S.R. 682's sidewalk system in the heart of The Plains. More information about this project is available in Appendix B. The construction timeline is not yet available.
- Villages in Athens County have some limited and disconnected sidewalks. Survey respondents throughout the county described lack of sidewalks as a challenge to walking.

Transit services

There are several different providers of public transit in Athens County. They include, but are not limited to, Athens Public Transit, Athens On Demand Transit, GoBus, Green Cab, Job and Family Services, Daybreak Ambulette, and Albert's Taxi.

While these providers are all available to the public, they each serve a specific function. Athens Public Transit (APT) is a fixed route transit system servicing the City of Athens, Nelsonville, The Plains, Albany, and Chauncey. Athens On Demand Transit (AODT) is a curb-to-curb service, which while providing a great option for people who need a ride to medical appointments, also serves as a quality of life service as well. AODT is able to provide trips up to 100 miles out of Athens County free of charge to people with a disability, as well as in-county trips for people who need a ride to the bank, the grocery, or a favorite restaurant. Both APT and AODT provide access for wheelchairs and other mobility aids.

Green Cab and Daybreak Ambulette provide specifically non-emergent medical transport for Medicaid clients, with both offering wheelchair accessible vehicles. Job and Family Services provides trips for medical appointments for Medicaid clients as well, but also provides direct transportation services to other public social service agencies within Athens County.

GoBus is a city-to-city bus service travelling from Athens to Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, and Van Wert Ohio. It connects to Greyhound and Barons lines, allowing for state-to-state travel, as well.

Athens and Hocking Counties have a shared Mobility Management program through HAPCAP, whose goal is to remove transportation barriers, increase mobility, and educate on transit for all residents. Part of their role includes creating a Coordinated Transit Plan for each county, teaching local residents how to use public transit, and advocating for mobility and transit options.

Athens County roadway network

The City of Athens is centrally located at the intersection of U.S. 33 and U.S. 50, the two major arterial highways that run through Athens County. The City of Nelsonville is located on U.S. 33 about 10 miles northwest of Athens. There are eight incorporated villages in Athens County that are connected to these two cities by state routes as follows: (1) Albany and Coolville to Athens via U.S. 50; (2) Chauncey, Jacksonville, Trimble, and Glouster to Athens via S.R. 13; (3) Amesville to Athens via SR 550; and (4) Buchtel and Glouster to Nelsonville via SR 78. The cities and villages are responsible for maintaining the streets and roads within their community's corporation limits. The roads and streets in the unincorporated communities are maintained by the state, county or respective township.

The Athens County Engineer is responsible for the maintenance of 360 miles of county roads. Fourteen townships are responsible for maintaining 519 miles of township roads, the City of Athens maintains 89 miles of roads, and the City of Nelsonville maintains 38 miles of roadway. The Norfolk Southern Railroad operates one active railroad line that runs north and south through Albany, Athens, Chauncey, Jacksonville, Trimble, and Glouster. The Hocking River is a major river that runs north and south through Nelsonville and Athens and discharges into the Ohio River at Hockingport, an unincorporated village.

The county's terrain features rolling Appalachian foothills where topography can be a barrier for people biking and can constrain space for adding sidewalks, bikeways, and other active transportation facilities along roads. The county and township roads began developing in the 1800s and the geometric alignment generally follows the rolling terrain. The design of federal and state routes, oriented toward higher volumes of high-speed travel, can be at conflict with the needs of the villages and communities they pass through, where they serve as the main street but often do not offer safe and comfortable conditions for walking, biking, and crossing.

Recreation assets

In addition to the transportation challenges that could be alleviated with better active transportation infrastructure, Athens County has an opportunity to capitalize on rich recreation assets with better connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists:

- The Baileys Trail System, when complete, will be the longest contiguous mountain bike-optimized trail system east of the Mississippi River, with a planned 88 miles that welcomes hikers, trail runners, and all human-powered use. Currently, 58 miles of the trail system and two of the three planned trailheads are complete. The trail system does not have optimal connections to nearby villages, cities, and unincorporated communities.
- The Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, a paved 22-mile multi-use path connecting Nelsonville to Canaanville, east of Athens.
- Strouds Run State Park, which features extensive hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trail systems and is only three miles from Athens.

Improved active transportation infrastructure would help Athens County leverage its recreation assets while providing improved conditions for Athens County residents who walk and bike. More connections between trail systems and communities would allow more communities to attract visitors to their businesses. Communities near trailheads are sought after destinations for outdoor enthusiasts, who subsequently spend their money at local restaurants, shops, and lodging ([Rails to Trails Conservancy](#)).

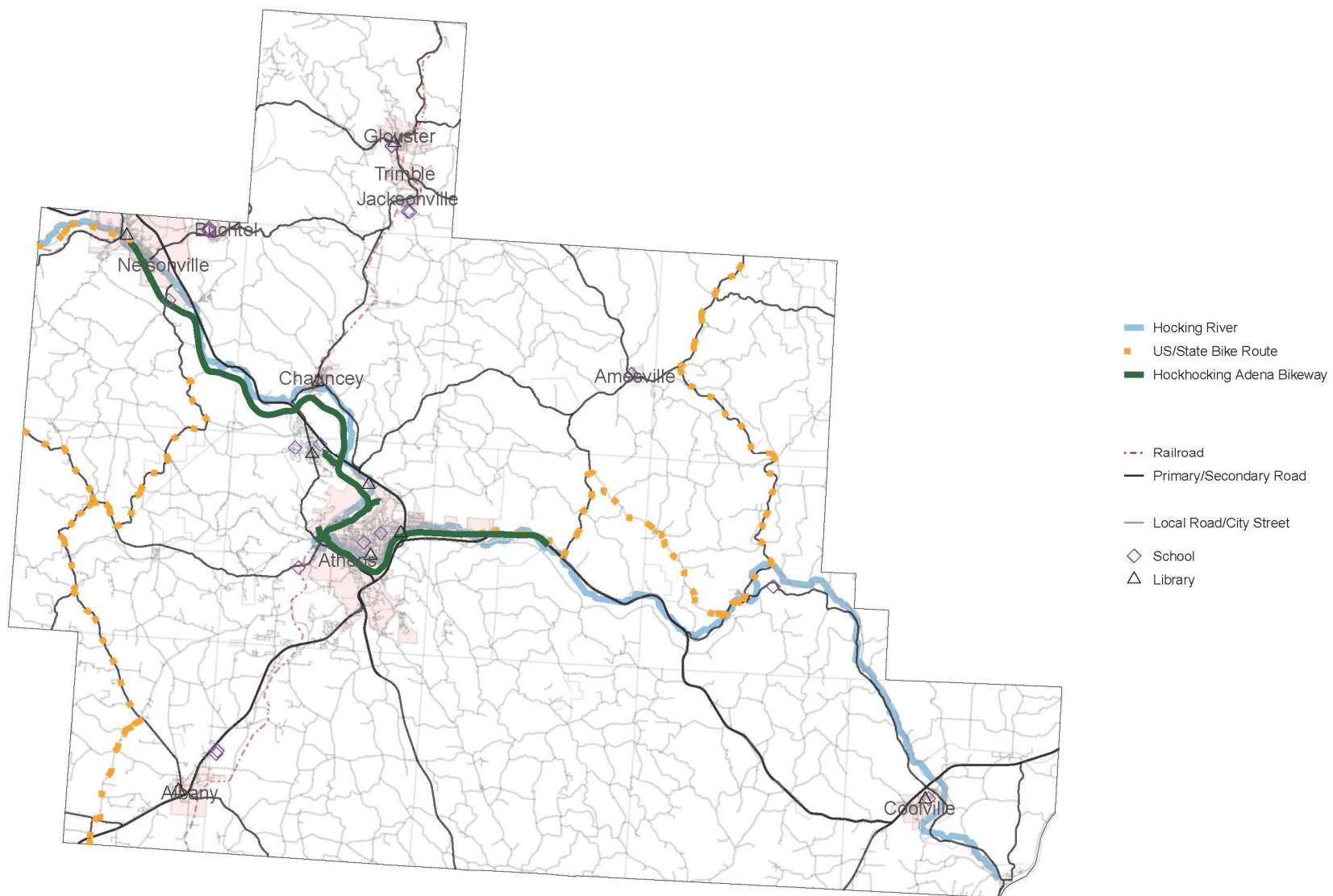


Figure 12: Athens County Base Map

NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

Completeness of active transportation system

Active transportation facilities that connect people to jobs, schools, parks, and other destinations form a complete network. Filling in missing connections expands access and mobility for people walking and bicycling and providing multiple route options accommodates people of all ages and abilities. Evaluating network connectivity provides an understanding of where gaps in the network exist and whether low comfort or high comfort walking and bicycling facilities exist.

Gaps and generators mapping

Our gap analysis examined gaps in safe on-road connections between communities (including whether transit is an option) and gaps between existing active transportation infrastructure. We also examined generators of biking and walking trips.

Throughout our ATP planning process, steering committee members and community members were asked to identify routes/destinations and challenges/barriers for walking, biking, and taking public transit throughout Athens County.

Major gaps

- » State Route 13, Athens to Glouster
- » State Route 682, Athens to The Plains and Chauncey
- » State Route 550, Athens to Amesville
- » State Route 56, Athens to New Marshfield
- » U.S. Route 50 West, Athens to Albany
- » State Route 685, Millfield to Buchtel
- » U.S. Route 50 East, Athens to Canaanville, Guysville and Coolville

Additional gaps

- » New Marshfield to Albany
- » State Route 690 from State Route 550 to Canaanville
- » Old Route 33 and Pomeroy Road from Richland Avenue to Shade
- » State Route 144 from Coolville to Hockingport
- » State Route 329 from Stewart to Guysville
- » State Route 78 from Glouster to Buchtel
- » North Plains Road (State Route 682) in The Plains: Need to study whether signage and / or a lighted crossing is needed to improve visibility of the marked crossing at Elm Street
- » Connett and Lemaster roads in The Plains: Need for walking and biking infrastructure near The Plains Elementary School, particularly during drop-off and pickup
- » State Route 13 in Chauncey: Need for a safe crossing to Chauncey Community Park

- » Chauncey and The Plains: Need for a connection between these communities people and families on bicycles.
- » Johnson Road in The Plains: Need for a sidewalk from Athens High School entrance to connect with existing sidewalks on North Plains Road (State Route 682).

Major generators

Respondents to the Athens County Active Transportation Survey described the following destinations as the main places that people currently go by foot, bike, or transit in Athens County.

Work	Healthcare services
School	Grocery stores
Exercise	East State Street in Athens
Bus stop	Baileys Trail System
Restaurants	The Ridges
Libraries	Post offices
Uptown Athens	Banks
Ohio University	Bars
Nelsonville Public Square	Parks and playgrounds
Hockhocking Adena Bikeway	Gas stations, dollar stores and convenience stores

Recreation / tourism generators noted by community members and Steering Committee members

- » Moonville Rail Trail
- » Athens-to-Belpre Rail Trail
- » Baileys Trail System
- » Strouds Run State Park
- » Lake Snowden

Roads where community members have experienced unsettling car/pedestrian or car/bike interactions

The following locations were listed by community members as places where pedestrians and bicyclists have been yelled at by motorists while walking or biking; places where motorists felt uncomfortable passing someone who was walking or biking along a road; and where community members have witnessed pedestrian/vehicle or bicycle/vehicle crashes or unsafe interactions. These are locations where community members think improved safety measures are needed.

- » State Route 682 near Armitage Road/Lavelle Road/University Estates/Kershaw Greene
- » State Route 56 near Radford Road
- » State Route 56 near Morrison-Gordon Elementary
- » Old State Route 33
- » Oakdale Road
- » Intersection of Burr Oak Boulevard and State Route 78
- » State Route 13 near Alderman Road and on the outskirts of Chauncey, Millfield, Redtown, Jacksonville, Trimble and Glouster

- » State Route 50 West near Blackburn Road
- » State Route 550 near Athens
- » Columbus Road in Athens
- » Johnson Road in The Plains
- » Intersection of Elm Street and North Plains Road in The Plains
- » Woodlane Drive in Nelsonville

Roadway corridors near schools that could benefit from improved active transportation infrastructure

- » **Armitage Road and the adjacent Hockhocking Adena Bikeway segment between State Route 682 in Athens and Athens High School in The Plains:** A two-mile section of Armitage Road connects the two large housing developments located along State Route 682 to the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway; from there, it is another 2.2 miles to the Athens High School entrance. An ATP Steering Committee member raised concerns, on behalf of the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway Committee, that Armitage Road lacks bike infrastructure (markings, signage) and the bikeway segment from Armitage Road to the high school is particularly dark due to tree cover, which discourages some people from using it.
- » **State Route 78 between Nelsonville and Buchtel:** Nelsonville-York City Schools are located on Buckeye Drive just outside of Buchtel and accessible via State Route 78 and Bessemer Road. As the Baileys Trail System continues to develop, and when a planned trailhead is added in Buchtel, it may be possible to seek funding to connect the Nelsonville-York school complex with the trail system. This would provide a safe route to school for Buchtel residents and a safe route to the trail system, which could present new recreation opportunities for school and community.
- » **Johnson Road, Connett Road, and Lemaster Road in The Plains:** All three of these roads service students attending Athens High School and The Plains Intermediate School. See Appendix B for detailed information about infrastructure needs in The Plains.
- » **State Route 32/U.S. Route 50 near the Village of Albany:** Albany residents do not have a safe way to access the Alexander Local Schools complex by foot or bike because there is not any active transportation infrastructure on SR 32/ U.S. 50, nor is there a safe way to walk or bike to the school complex via village streets.

SAFETY

Evaluating crash trends and patterns

Evaluating crash trends and patterns identifies where crashes are currently occurring and provides a better understanding of what factors may be contributing to crashes. Understanding these crashes can lead to projects that have the greatest likelihood of improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. These analyses are especially important because Ohio is not trending in the right direction for bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

Crash analysis

During the time period reviewed (2014-2023), 104 vehicle crashes with pedestrians and bicyclists in Athens County were reported to ODOT. Over this 10-year period there were 77 vehicle-pedestrian crashes and 27 vehicle crashes with bicyclists. Eight of those crashes resulted in the death of pedestrians. In 2023, there was a significant increase in pedestrian and bicyclist crashes in Athens County reported to ODOT: a total of 14, which was double the highest number of crashes reported in any previous year from 2018-2022.

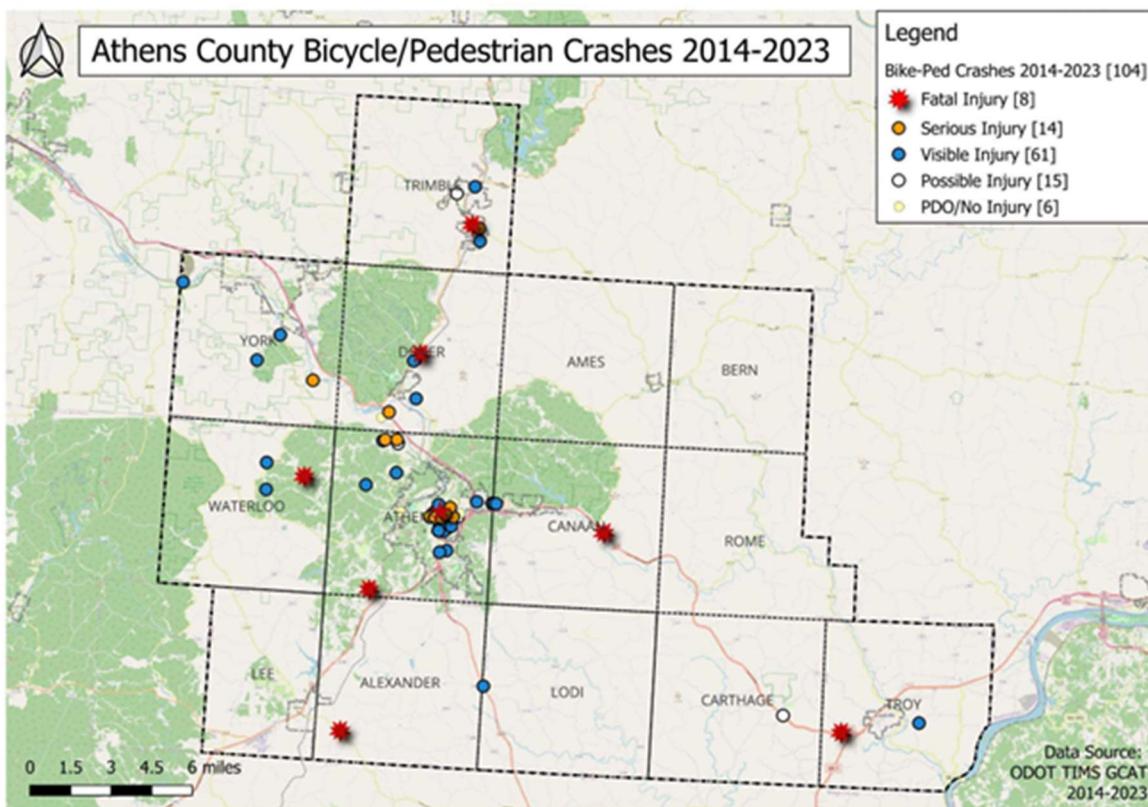


Figure 13: Bicycle and Pedestrian Vehicle Crashes in Athens County, 2014-2023

Posted Speed Limit

The posted speed limits on the corridors our Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee studied range from 35 mph in more developed areas of the county (cities and villages, with the exception of Gloucester, where the posted speed limit is 25 mph in the village), to 55 mph in the more rural sections. Over 60% of the SR 13 corridor, a specific focus of this plan due to the lack of active transportation infrastructure and lack of bus service north of Chauncey, has a posted speed limit of 55 mph.

Traffic Volume

Peak traffic volumes on the corridors our Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee studied include an average of 5,110 on S.R. 13 near the intersection of Sycamore Street in Chauncey, 7,912 on SR 682 near the North Plains Road and U.S. 33 interchange, and 7,088 on SR 56 between Hoon Drive and the intersection of SR 682.

See Table 4 on page 44 for a review of posted speed limits and peak traffic volume on the corridors featured in this plan.

EQUITY

Incorporating Equity in Active Transportation Planning

Active transportation options contribute to a more equitable transportation system by reducing barriers for people who do not use a motor vehicle. Many people do not drive because of ability, income, age, or a combination of these factors. The cost of owning and maintaining a vehicle can be a major burden, especially on low-income families. People without a vehicle need to access employment, school, grocery shopping, and a variety of other activities to fully participate in society. Transit, walking, and bicycling play a vital role in the overall transportation system by offering increased mobility, independence, and access to opportunity for people without vehicles.

National statistics point towards the need for equity in active transportation planning and design. Across the country and in Ohio, a disproportionate share of walking and bicycling fatalities occur among communities of color, older adults, and low-income populations.¹ Connected and accessible active transportation infrastructure for these groups results in better access to daily physical activity and improved quality of life.

1. *Ohio Department of Transportation. (2020), Walk.Bike.Ohio Safety Analysis Reports.*

<https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/odot/programs/walkbikeohio/existing-future-conditions-analysis/safety-analysis-reports>

Equity analysis

As part of its statewide bicycle and pedestrian plan, Walk Bike Ohio, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) performed an Active Transportation need analysis for the entire state. It created a composite need score for every census tract in the state, with scores assigned based on the presence of non-white groups, youth, older adults, poverty, low educational attainment, limited English proficiency, and low motor vehicle access. Higher scores correspond to a higher presence of underserved groups and indicate a greater need to increase equitable outcomes.

Areas of high need and high demand should be prioritized for bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well as transit options, because residents in these areas likely rely more heavily on active transportation options for getting around. High demand areas in Athens County include the Cities of Athens and Nelsonville, and the northwestern portion of the county, including Carbondale Road area and Dairy Lane/North Blackburn Road. Areas of high need in Athens County overlap the areas of high demand. ODOT specifically mentions that there are high-concentration clusters of the following needs indicators in Athens County: poverty in Athens, Nelsonville, Glouster and Chauncey; no high school diploma in the area spanning from Nelsonville to Chauncey, as well as Coolville; and a high composite need score in Athens and Glouster. Areas with overlapping high demand and high need are key areas to invest in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

ODOT's Demand Analysis identifies areas where residents are likely to rely more heavily on active transportation options for getting around. Demand indicators include employment density, population density, and number of people 200% below poverty line.

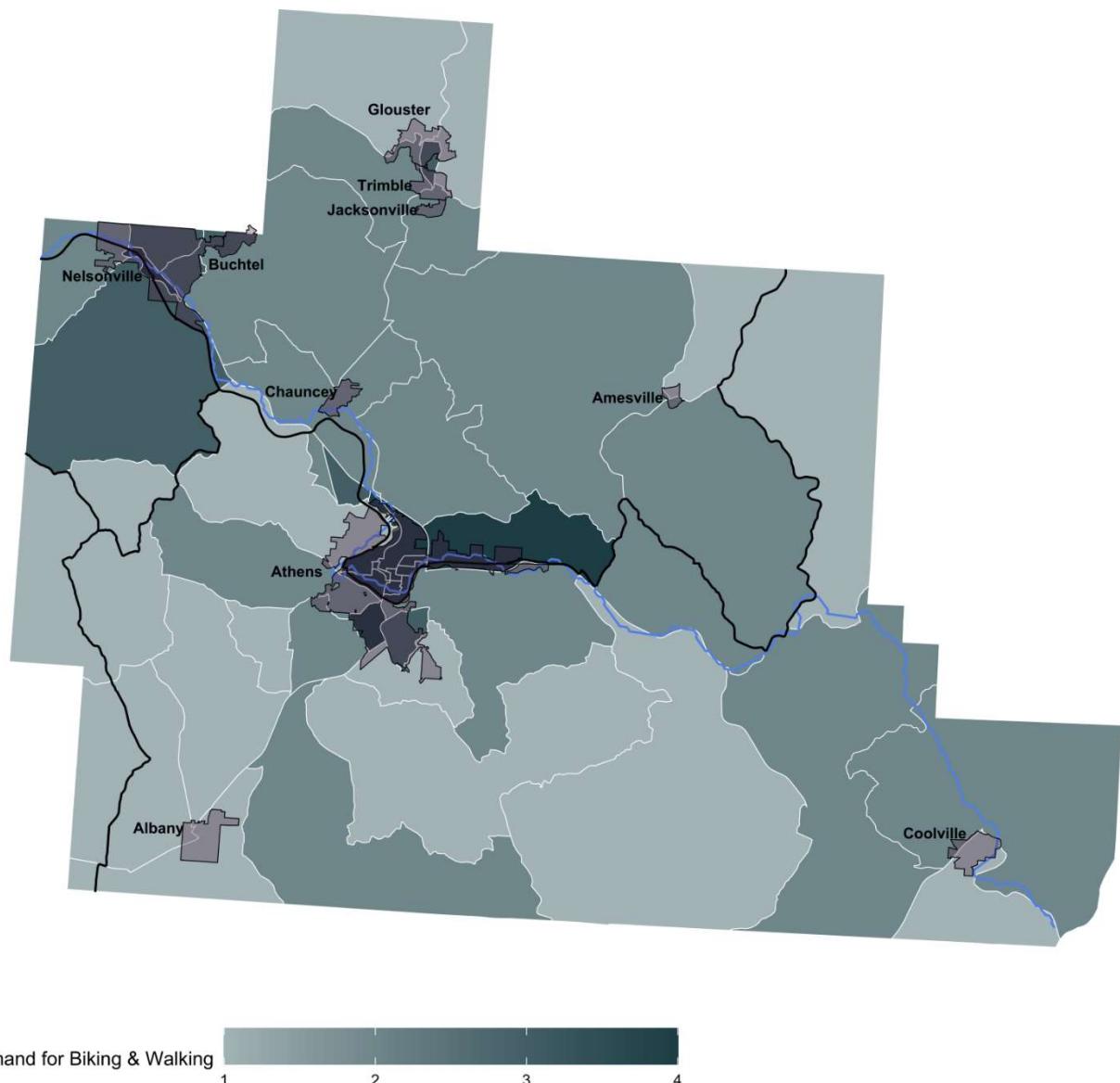


Figure 13: Athens County Active Transportation Demand

ODOT's Needs Analysis identifies where active transportation is needed based on concentrations of vulnerable populations. Needs indicators include poverty, no high school diploma, and no access to a motor vehicle. Higher scores correspond to a higher presence of underserved groups and indicate a greater need to increase equitable outcomes.

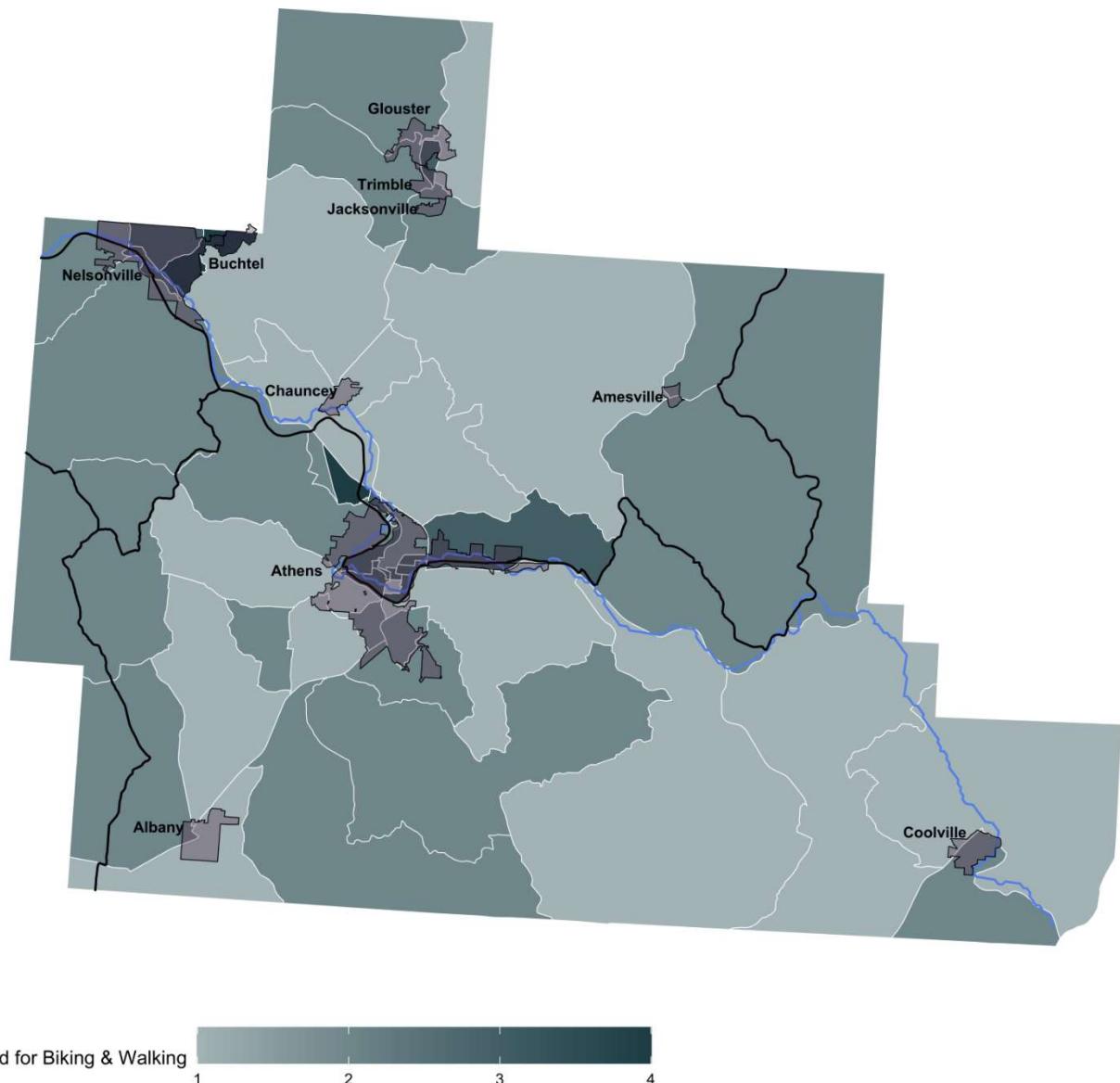


Figure 14: Athens County Active Transportation Need

Social vulnerability refers to a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Social Vulnerability Index depicts the social vulnerability of communities, at census tract level, within a specified county, based on 16 indicators. Possible scores range from 0 (lowest vulnerability) to 1 (highest vulnerability). According to 2020 Ohio Department of Health data, Athens County has an overall score of 0.80, which indicates a high level of vulnerability countywide.

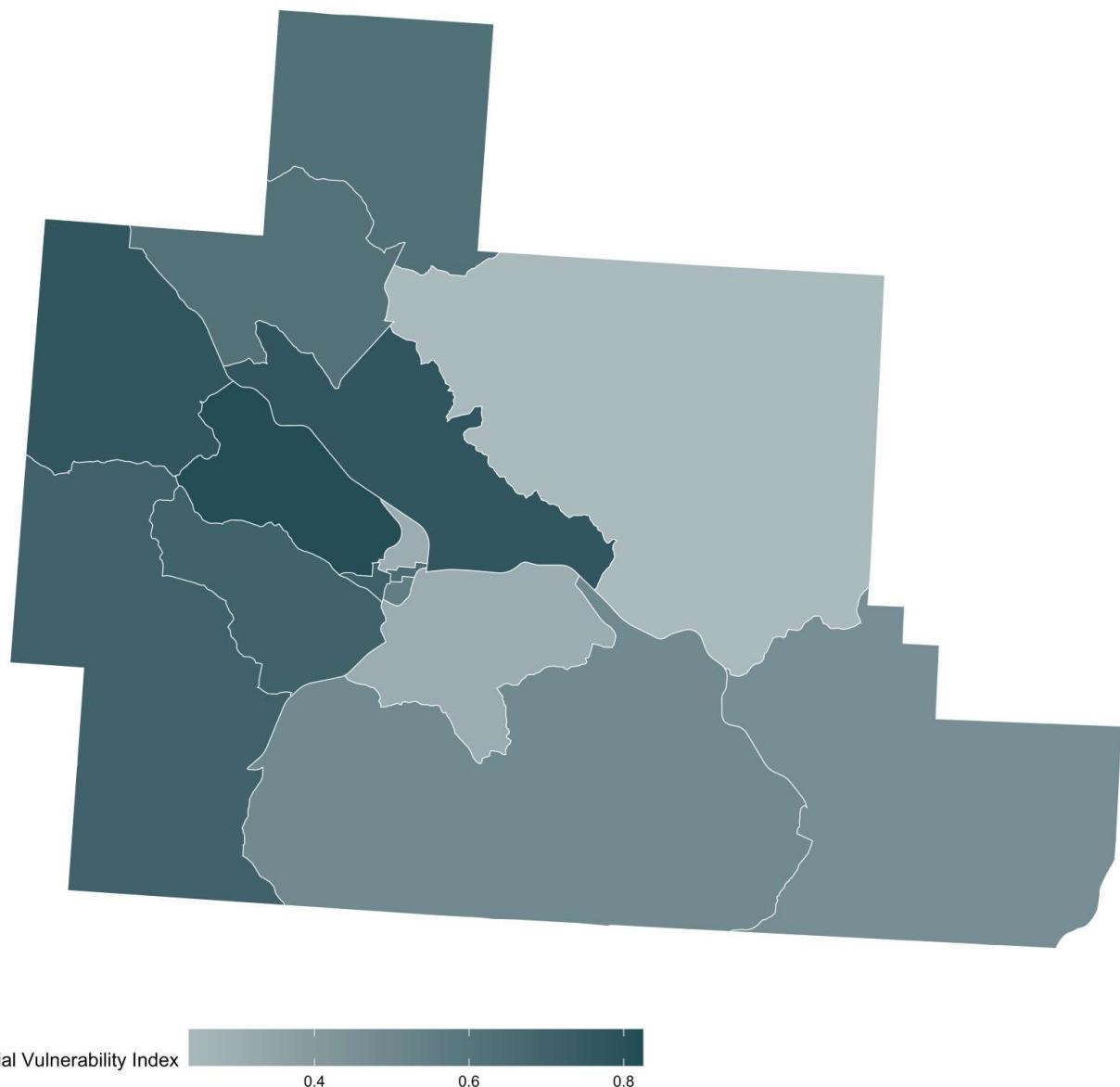


Figure 15: Athens County Social Vulnerability

Health Improvement Opportunity Zones, State of Ohio Department of Health, Office of Health Opportunity. Retrieved April 12, 2024 from <https://data.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/data/view/ohio-health-improvement-zone->

RECOMMENDATIONS





Local officials participate in a "rolling meeting" in the Village of Gouster.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing conditions analysis, public input, survey, and steering committee meetings led to the final priority list of **seven desired connections** along corridors in Athens County where walking or biking is dangerous and/or intimidating and/or where public transportation is lacking. The priority list includes two Priority Areas: the Route 13 Corridor and the Route 682 Corridor.

The seven desired connections highlight the need for better connectivity between Athens County communities. Improvements in connectivity could come in the form of active transportation infrastructure, such as trails, on-street bicycle facilities, sidewalks, or crossing improvements, or programming such as transit service or awareness campaigns. For each priority connection, the Steering Committee has identified reasons why improvements are needed, potential opportunities, and any related countermeasures that already are being pursued. A next big step toward taking these desired connections from plan to implementation will be to work with local leaders in collaboration with ODOT – which owns many of the identified corridors – to determine and finalize recommended infrastructure and pursue funding where needed.

Infrastructure recommendations refer to physical, built projects that will change how roadways are configured to provide space for all users. Policy and program recommendations aim to re-prioritize walking and bicycling and to change the culture around active transportation and help increase its use through engagement, education, encouragement, and evaluation.

DESIRED CONNECTIONS

The Steering Committee's analysis of existing conditions and various community engagement activities identified seven corridors in Athens County that are most in need of active transportation infrastructure or programming. Steering Committee members conducted dot voting sessions during evening basketball games in each of the county's five school districts to provide community members the opportunity to vote on which corridors in the county are most in need of active transportation improvements (State Routes 13 and 682 were the clear "winners"). Put simply, it is very difficult to use these corridors – which connect our Athens County communities – unless you have access to a personal vehicle.

See Figure 16 for a map of desired connections.

- State Route 13, Athens to Glouster: Priority Corridor #1
- State Route 682, Athens to The Plains and Chauncey: Priority Corridor #2
- State Route 550, Athens to Amesville
- State Route 56, Athens to New Marshfield
- U.S. Route 50 West, Athens to Albany
- State Route 685, Millfield to Buchtel
- U.S. Route 50 East, Athens to Canaanville, Guysville and Coolville

All of these desired connections meet ODOT's criteria for providing a shoulder or buffered bicycle lane (see Figure 19). However, most of these state routes have only a very narrow shoulder and no active transportation infrastructure. ODOT's Multimodal Design Guide recommends that "Where bicycle usage is expected, designers should ensure that paved shoulder widths meet" the criteria outlined in Figure 20.

Table 4. Peak Traffic Volume and Posted Speed Limit

Corridor Name	Peak Traffic Volume Location	ODOT Traffic ADT	Posted Speed Limit
SR 13, Glouster to Athens	Near intersection of Sycamore St., next to the Chauncey Public Library	5,110	25-55 *35
SR 682, Chauncey to Athens	N. Plains Rd and US 33 Interchange	7,912	35-45 *35
SR 550, Amesville to Athens	Near intersection with SR 13	2,841	35-55 *45
SR 56, New Marshfield to Athens	Between Hoon Dr. and intersection of SR 682	7,088	40-55 *40
US 50, Albany to Athens	Near intersection of Blackburn Road in Athens	14,249	55-60 *55
SR 685, Buchtel to Redtown	Between Greens Run Rd. and Truetown Rd.	1,058	35-55 *55
US 50, Canaanville to Coolville	Near Brimstone Road in Coolville	10,734	55-60 *55

*Posted speed limit at peak traffic volume location



Dot voting at Federal Hocking Local Schools.



Dot voting at Alexander Local Schools.

The Steering Committee's analysis of existing conditions and various community engagement activities identified seven corridors in Athens County that are most in need of active transportation infrastructure or programming. Steering Committee members conducted dot voting sessions during evening basketball games in each of the county's five school districts to provide community members the opportunity to vote on which corridors in the county are most in need of active transportation improvements. State Routes 13 and 682 were the clear "winners."



The final dot voting results.

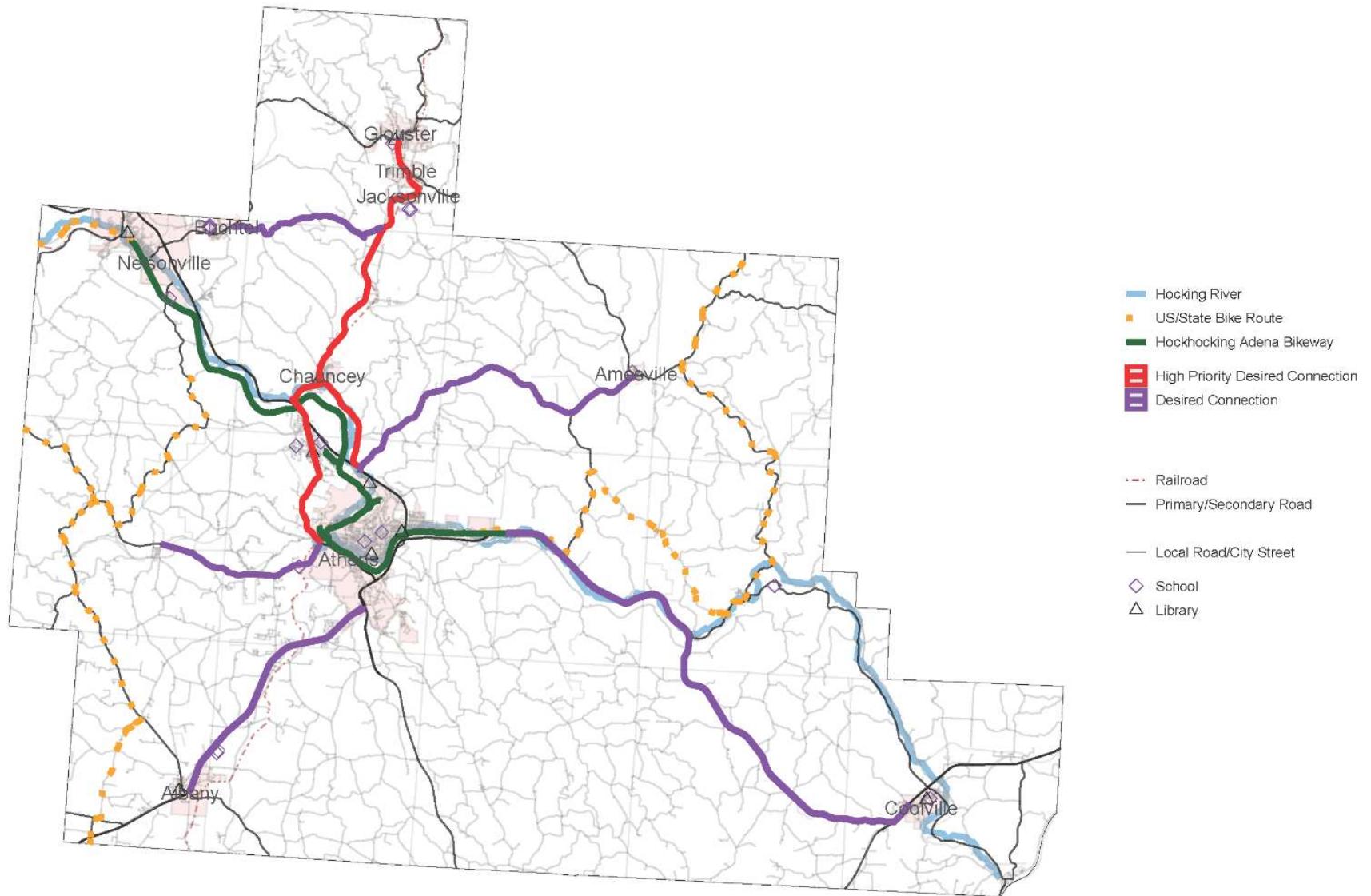


Figure 16: Athens County Desired Connections Map

PRIORITY CORRIDOR #1: ROUTE 13, ATHENS TO GLOUSTER

The Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee began this planning process with an intent to pay particular attention to the needs of the State Route 13 corridor based on repeated comments by community members and local officials regarding the lack of safe places for people to walk and bike along Route 13, as well as the fact that there is not bus service available north of the Village of Chauncey.

The SR 13 Corridor is a critical transportation backbone for residents of Athens County. The corridor spans 12.1 miles from Village of Glouster, through the villages of Trimble, Jacksonville, and Chauncey, to the S.R. 550 Intersection just north of the City of Athens. This route connects half of the villages in Athens County and at its southern end is only 1/4 mile from the City of Athens corporate limits. The speed limits in the S.R. 13 corridor vary from 25 MPH in Glouster to 35 MPH in the other villages, but the majority of the corridor has 55 MPH posted speed limits.

The corridor has pedestrian infrastructure in portions of Glouster and Trimble, and sidewalks were recently installed in the Village of Chauncey on at least one side of SR 13. The Trimble sidewalks are old, not maintained, and mostly unusable. The Tomcat Trail, an approximately two-mile pedestrian trail composed of unimproved surfaces, old sidewalks, and on-street segments, provides an active transportation option that runs parallel to the SR 13 corridor between Jacksonville and Trimble. (See Appendix A for more information on the Tomcat Trail.)

With few exceptions, the roadway shoulder on SR 13 between Chauncey and Glouster is very narrow or non-existent. There is no bicycle infrastructure on the corridor.

Between 2014 and 2023 there were 506 reported vehicle crashes along the SR 13 corridor between Athens and Glouster: 3 fatal, 17 serious injury, 72 minor injury, and 51 possible injury crashes. Over this same 10-year period there were 5 vehicle crashes involving pedestrians and none with bicyclists. Of those pedestrian crashes, 2 were fatal and the other 3 were minor injury crashes.

Why active transportation facilities are needed:

- » **Motorists feel uncomfortable sharing space with pedestrians and bicyclists:** The topic of unsafe walking and biking conditions on Route 13 often comes up at local meetings. Individuals who regularly travel along the corridor have expressed concern for pedestrians, bicyclists and individuals using mobility devices on the narrow shoulder of the highway.
- » **Lack of choice:** The fact that for those without access to a vehicle, walking or rolling is the only way to travel between Chauncey and all points north on Route 13. The mayor of Glouster, Sam Sikorski, has noted that she often stops to pick up community members who she sees walking along the side of the road because she is aware they do not have access to a vehicle. She has indicated that community members regularly comment on a need for transit services to Trimble Township, where 21% of residents live below the poverty line.
- » **Relatively high speeds and traffic volume:** This corridor features relatively high posted speed limits (the posted speed limit on more than 60% of the corridor is 55 MPH) and relatively high average daily traffic (average daily traffic of 5,110) paired with relatively narrow shoulders and many generators for walking and biking trips along the corridor. Generators include the Columbus Road business district in Athens, Athens County Job & Family Services between

Athens and Chauncey, Baileys Trail System, and the communities of Chauncey, Millfield, Redtown, Jacksonville, Trimble, and Glouster. Chauncey and Millfield are located in Dover Township (population 3,337). Redtown, Jacksonville, Trimble and Glouster are located in Trimble Township (population 4,077). Athens Public Transit does not run north of Chauncey.

- » **Safety:** [There was a pedestrian fatality](#) along Route 13, north of Chauncey, on February 27, 2018. A gentleman was struck and killed while pushing his bicycle in the shoulder.
- » **Desire for transit:** Respondents to the survey conducted as part of the 2022-2026 [Athens County Coordinated Transportation Plan \(CTP\)](#), prepared by the Athens County Board of County Commissioners, named expansion of transit service to Trimble Township as the top improvement that should be made to current transportation services in Athens County.
- » **Increased traffic:** The development of the [Baileys Trail System](#), with its flagship trailhead located at Chauncey Community Park and with additional trailheads located on West Bailey Road, Big Bailey Road, and Carr Bailey Road, means an increase not only in car traffic but also in recreational bicycle traffic. Mountain bikers know that the flattest and quickest way to connect loops that begin and end on the three “Bailey” roads is to hop onto Route 13 for part of their ride. As this destination trail system continues to draw more riders, we expect to see more vehicle and bicycle traffic on Route 13.

Opportunities include:

- » **Widening the shoulder on Route 13**, particularly in the narrowest sections (such as the section between Chauncey and Millfield, where the shoulder is immediately next to a guard rail) and near traffic generators such as all three of the “Bailey” roads and the section between Redtown and Trimble. This would provide a safer space for folks who are walking and riding between these destinations.
- » **Improving the Tomcat Trail**, which has the potential to provide a safe route for individuals to walk between Jacksonville and Glouster, as well as the deteriorating sidewalk between Trimble and Glouster (these opportunities are described in the notes from the steering committee’s walk audit of this corridor, available in Appendix A). The Hockhocking Adena Bikeway Chauncey terminus could be connected to the Tomcat Trail and the villages of Jacksonville, Trimble and Glouster (as well as Millfield along the way).
- » **Exploring the feasibility of a multi-use path** along segments of Route 13.
- » **Creating a safe crossing across State Route 13 from the Village of Chauncey to Chauncey Community Park** (including a safe railroad crossing). The mayor of Chauncey reports that the lack of a safe crossing for Chauncey residents to get to the community park across Route 13 is regularly raised as a concern at Village Council meetings and elsewhere. There is no crosswalk across the state route, and no pedestrian crossing at the railroad tracks. Additionally, the sharp, steep railroad crossing on West Bailey Road poses challenges for motorists. Community members have identified these two adjacent problem areas as needing significant improvements.
- » **The planned connection of the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway across the Hocking River from The Plains to Chauncey** will make traveling to Chauncey by bicycle much easier and more enjoyable and is likely to bring more bicycle traffic to Chauncey.

Countermeasures already being pursued along the Route 13 Corridor:

- » Chauncey has recently received awards of either planning or funding assistance to study and improve streets and active transportation infrastructure in the village.
 - First, an award from the Ohio Rail Development Commission will pay for a planner to conduct a study of the viability of a grade separation project on the West Bailey Road intersection, including identifying alternatives to addressing the needs of the community at this intersection and collecting necessary information to include in a federal grant application to fulfill a grade separation project.
 - Next, the village received \$1,964,135 through the Appalachian Community Grant Program (ACGP) for a streetscape revitalization on Converse Street (SR 13). The streetscape project will add sidewalks and other amenities, including lighting, street trees and other plantings, benches, trash cans, and signage, along Converse Street from Sycamore to Mill Streets. A mural will be painted on a historic downtown building.
 - A third award through ACGP will allow planners to look at the viability of creating a walking/biking connection from the village to Chauncey Community Park.
- » Tri Village, a local network of organizations, businesses, event sponsors, local governments, and individual leaders of the villages of Glouster, Jacksonville, and Trimble is seeking grant funding to pave the Tomcat Trail.

PRIORITY CORRIDOR #2: ROUTE 682, ATHENS TO CHAUNCEY

Throughout this planning process, community members have repeatedly mentioned the challenges of the Route 682 corridor between Athens and Chauncey.

This 5.75-mile section of SR 682 extends north from the City of Athens to the Village of Chauncey. Speed limits along the corridor vary from 35 MPH in Chauncey, The Plains, and the City of Athens, to 45 MPH speed limits in intervening sections. The corridor has pedestrian infrastructure in Chauncey and The Plains, but no bicycling infrastructure (aside from intersections with the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway). Athens Public Transit Lines 5 and 6 serve this route.

During the period from 2014 to 2023 there 386 reported vehicle crashes along this corridor: 0 fatal, 7 serious injury, 84 minor injury, and 38 possible injury crashes. Over this same 10-year period, there were 5 vehicle crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians, including 2 serious injury crashes (bicyclists), 1 minor injury crash (bicyclist), 1 possible injury crash (pedestrian), and 1 non-injury crash (bicyclist). Two of the vehicle-bicyclist crashes involved 15-year-old children near The Plains, one of which resulted in life-changing injuries.

The ATP Steering Committee conducted walk audits in two locations on this corridor: Near the intersections of Armitage and Luhrig roads and SR 56 in Athens, and near the intersection of US 33 in The Plains. Notes from these walk audits are available in Appendices C and D.

Steering Committee members and community members have noted several concerns and opportunities for this corridor. The Steering Committee recommends that county officials continue to pursue funding to make improvements along this corridor.

Why active transportation facilities are needed:

- » **Relatively high speeds and traffic volume:** This segment of State Route 682 features 45 mph speed limits along some sections and relatively high average daily traffic (approximately 8,000 cars) paired with relatively narrow shoulders and many generators for walking and biking trips. Generators include University Estates and Kershaw Greene neighborhoods, Hockhocking Adena Bikeway access in two places, restaurants and health systems.
- » **Pedestrian traffic:** People regularly walk/bike along Route 682.
- » **Safety:**
 - Dangerous walking/biking conditions between the new Kershaw Greene apartment complex and the Route 56/Union Street intersection (including dangerous conditions at Lavelle Road, Armitage Road, University Estates Boulevard and the bikeway access adjacent to the railroad tracks).
 - Lack of safe crossings from the BP in The Plains across U.S. Route 33 overpass and toward Rutland Bottle Gas on the north side of 33.
 - Lack of shoulder to walk between Rutland Bottle Gas on the north side of U.S. Route 33 and the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway intersection with Route 682. [A teenager was struck and seriously injured](#) while bicycling on this section of road in 2019.
 - Lack of shoulder to walk between the turnoff to U.S. Route 33 and the Village of Chauncey (past the “old Walt’s Bar” and Coal Run Road area).

- » **Development:** The construction of the Kershaw Greene apartment complex has brought significantly more pedestrians and bicyclists onto the corridor.
 - Plans for significant business development in The Plains, including Hopewell Health Appalachian Family Health Center, Hopewell Head Start, and a new Athens County 911/EMA building, are likely to exacerbate the transportation issues that are already present.
- » **Nearby schools:** Residents have voiced a need for more options for safe walking and bicycling to and from The Plains Intermediate School and Athens High School.

Opportunities include:

- » **Creating a shared-use path.**
- » **Widening the shoulder on State Route 682** between the State Route 56/Union Street intersection and The Plains, particularly near busy intersections such as Lavelle Road, Armitage Road, University Estates Boulevard, and Vore Ridge Road.
- » **Connecting University Estates and Kershaw Greene to the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway.**
- » **Improving pedestrian and bicycle access throughout The Plains**, possibly through Safe Routes to Schools, particularly now that SRTS includes high schools. There are two Athens City School District Schools located in this 2.3-mile census tract (see Appendix B).
- » Providing education about the availability of the bus and considering new bus stops along this route.

Countermeasures already being pursued:

- » The City of Athens will be removing the existing traffic signal and constructing a single-lane **roundabout at the intersection of Union Street/State Route 56 and State Route 682**. This project will include drainage system adjustments, new intersection lighting, and pedestrian facilities along the corridors (including a shared-use path) near the intersection. The roundabout will feature a public art installation at the center of the roundabout. Construction will impact the rights-of-way from White's Mill to Margaret Creek, and from the Union Street Bridge to the Ohio Department of Transportation's (ODOT) property. The project will be completed in 2026. The City is also looking into future right-of-way improvements which would slow vehicular traffic and create a safer pedestrian experience further north on State Route 682, near Luhrig and Armitage roads, University Estates, and Kershaw Greene apartments.
- » In 2024 ODOT District 10 will begin **intersection improvements to the S.R. 682/U.S. 33 interchange near The Plains**, converting the ramp intersections to roundabouts. While the existing bridge will not be changed, a sidewalk will be extended to Sunset Lane, curb ramps will be included, and grading will be designed for future sidewalk construction. The roundabouts will include pedestrian crossings. Because the bridge is not being rebuilt, pedestrians will continue to use the relatively wide shoulders on the bridge deck rather than on a separated sidewalk. The new pedestrian crossings at the roundabouts could be linked to sidewalks in either direction, but no plans are yet in place for such improvements aside from the sidewalk extension to Sunset Lane. The Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee conducted a walk audit of this intersection in May 2023; notes from that audit are available in Appendix D.

- » **A new bikeway spur including a bridge across the Hocking River will connect the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway at River Road to near First Street in Chauncey.** This project was fully funded by Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and the Athens County Commissioners. This will provide pedestrians and cyclists a safe connection between Chauncey and The Plains and Athens without needing to utilize a state route. The connection will also provide a safe route to the bikeway in Chauncey and connections to the Baileys Trail System.



ADDITIONAL CORRIDORS THAT NEED IMPROVED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE AND/OR PROGRAMMING

In addition to the two priority corridors identified on the preceding pages, the steering committee identified the following five corridors that connect Athens County communities yet lack active transportation infrastructure and/or public transportation service.

State Route 550, Athens to Amesville

» **Concerns**

- Steering committee members noted that there is regular pedestrian and bicycle traffic from Bean Hollow Road to Columbus Road.
- A survey respondent took the time to describe the need for ride share or public transportation between Athens and Amesville a couple of times per day. The same respondent noted that Athens would be a bicycling destination if State Route 550 were not so dangerous or if there were a bike lane, and that a safe bicycling connection is needed from Amesville to State Route 690 and the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway at County Road 24A.

» **Opportunities**

- Widening the shoulder on State Route 550 wherever possible

» **Countermeasures already being pursued**

- The Village of Amesville received an Ohio Department of Transportation Systemic Safety award totaling \$238,050 for traffic calming and crossing improvements on State Routes 550 and 690. Improvements will take place during the 2026 construction season and will include a sidewalk on SR690 between State Street (SR550) and Amesville Elementary, a crosswalk on SR 690 in front of the school, and several crosswalks on Main Street.

State Route 56, Athens to New Marshfield

» **Concerns**

- Community members noted how difficult and dangerous it is to travel by foot or bike on State Route 56 from Radford Road to Athens, and all points in between (including Morrison-Gordon Elementary School, houses and apartment complexes, businesses, a church, the Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Beacon School, and other destinations).
- The construction of Kershaw-Greene apartments on nearby State Route 682 will bring more pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the corridor in general.
- State Route 56 is a popular connector for runners and bicyclists from Union Street, SR 682, and the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway and heading to Elliottsville Road, which connects with opportunities to return to the City of Athens or head out into the county.

» **Opportunities**

- Widening the shoulder or creating a shared-use path
- Considering a Safe Routes to School application for Morrison-Gordon School and Beacon School



» **Countermeasures already being pursued:**

- See page 51 for information about an upcoming project at the intersection of SR 56 and Union Street/SR 682.

U.S. Route 50 West, Athens to Albany

» **Concerns**

- This corridor supports multiple subdivisions developed in the 1960s and 1970s. These hilly neighborhoods have no sidewalks, communal play areas, or connections to nearby amenities like gas stations and dollar stores.
- There also are multiple subdivisions off Radford Road, which connects to Route 50 and also lacks connections to bicycling or walking facilities.
- Village of Albany residents lack the proper pedestrian infrastructure to access their K-12 school complex without crossing State Route 32/U.S. Route 50.
- The closest grocery store to Albany is in Athens, nearly 12 miles away. The closest options for Albany residents to purchase food and household items are two dollar stores that are located along State Route 32/U.S. Route 50 without adequate bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure. One of the dollar stores is accessible via village streets, the other only via the highway.
- Lake Snowden is located directly across U.S. Route 50 from the Alexander K-12 school complex and has the potential to provide outdoor education and recreation opportunities, but there is no safe way to cross the highway.
- Lake Snowden is a generator of pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as well as significant vehicle traffic when events are held at the site, yet there is no active transportation infrastructure to access this recreational area.
- The Athens end of this corridor is inhospitable to walk or bike on State Route 32/U.S. Route 50 from the end of Richland Avenue to the many neighborhoods and apartment complexes that are located along Route 32/50 between Athens and Albany.
- A dangerous intersection (site of multiple vehicular crashes) with Blackburn Road exists between the end of Richland Avenue and all neighborhoods and apartments.

» **Opportunities**

- Consider opportunities to connect the Village of Albany with the major destinations just outside the village, including Lake Snowden, Alexander Schools, and nearby restaurants and shopping destinations. A multi-use path connecting Lake Snowden, the downtown area of Albany, and the Alexander Schools complex, including a bridge across U.S. Route 50 allowing access to Lake Snowden would connect all three major points of interest.
- Study the area of SR32/US50 between Athens and Wonder Hills neighborhood for potential to improve walking and bicycling infrastructure.

» **Countermeasures already being pursued**

- The village has received grant funding to rebuild sidewalks inside the village on Washington Road.

State Route 685, Millfield to Buchtel

» **Concerns**

- This approximately 7-mile stretch of windy road has narrow shoulders, poor sight lines, and steep drops on either side.
- Completion of the Baileys Trail System Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead will generate more bicycle traffic on SR 685 between Buchtel and Big Bailey Road. Two popular trails cross Big Bailey Road within sight of SR 685 and the end of Big Bailey Road near SR 685 has become an unofficial trailhead.
- The Snow Fork Events Center brings increased foot, bicycle, and vehicular traffic to SR 685 when events are held at the site.
- There is no safe walking or bicycling route to access the Nelsonville-York Schools complex, located alongside SR 682 in Buchtel.

» **Opportunities**

- As the Baileys Trail System continues to develop, and when the Buchtel Snow Fork Trailhead is complete, it may be possible to seek funding to connect the Nelsonville-York school complex with the trail system. This would provide a safe route to school for Buchtel residents and a safe route to the trail system, which could present new recreation opportunities for school and community. The Nelsonville-York school complex, which hosts approximately 1,100 K-12 students, is located roughly a mile from the planned trailhead.
- Wayfinding signage for people visiting the Baileys Trail System.
- Cautionary signage to alert cars that they could see bikes on SR 685.

U.S. Route 50 East, Athens to Canaanville, Guysville and Coolville

» **Concerns**

- There is no public transit service available from Coolville to Athens.
- The Hockhocking Adena Bikeway runs parallel to State Route 32/U.S. Route 50, passing by the Dow Lake Dam parking lot at Strouds Run State Park. This parking lot is popular with mountain bikers, anglers and hikers. There is no safe way to cross the highway to get from the bikeway to the dam parking lot.

» **Opportunities**

- Continuing to seek funding to develop the Athens to Belpre Rail Trail. This planned trail could provide both active transportation and recreation opportunities. According to The Athens Conservancy's website, the conservancy has purchased about 13 miles of the former B&O Railroad grade in Athens, Waterloo, Rome and Troy Townships, in the hope that they would contribute to an eventual connection between the Moonville Rail Trail in Athens and Vinton Counties and the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway in Athens County. "The long-term plan for the portions in Rome and Troy Township is to connect them with both the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway in Athens and the North Bend Rail-Trail in Parkersburg. From Parkersburg, it is possible to bicycle most of the way to Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. on existing trails. It is also hoped that this route will eventually be extended northwest to Columbus." (<https://www.athensconservancy.org/athens-belpre-rail-trail/>)
- There are opportunities to connect the Athens-to-Belpre Rail Trail to the Village of Coolville.

- Expanding public transit, on demand, or micro-transit service to Coolville and points in between Coolville and Athens.
- Creating a safe crossing from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway across State Route 32/U.S. Route 50 to the Dow Lake Dam parking lot at Strouds Run State Park.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK RATIONALE

A primary goal of this plan is to encourage local officials and community champions to initiate projects that will increase the safety and convenience of walking and biking and/or increase public transit options for Athens County residents. The following section provides information about the types of facilities that could be used in making improvements.

Pedestrian Facilities

The presence of sidewalks along a roadway corresponds to a 65 to 89 percent reduction in walking along road pedestrian crashes.¹ Pedestrians are also among the most vulnerable road users and 72 percent of pedestrian fatalities occur at non-intersection locations.² Additional treatments implemented along roadways and crossing improvements would improve the bicycling and walking experience, encourage more walking, and decrease the number of crashes that occur.

Bicycle Facilities

Local infrastructure and routes will help riders of varying abilities access their daily destinations such as schools, grocery stores, parks, and work. There are several important factors to consider during bicycle facility selection, such as design users and roadway conditions. This section describes the different types of bicyclists, highly confident, somewhat confident, and interested but concerned, who make up the majority of the population. It also provides an introduction to the FHWA bicycle facility selection matrix that identifies what type of facility is appropriate for the majority of bicyclists based on speed, volume, and context.

¹ FHWA (2017). Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors, FHWA-SA-08-011, Table 11. Referenced in <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/walkways/>

² FHWA (2018). Guide for Improving Pedestrian Safety at Uncontrolled Crossing Locations, Page 1. https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/step/docs/STEP_Guide_for_Improving_Ped_Safety_at_Unsig_Loc_3-2018_07_17-508compliant.pdf

Design Users

Understanding which types of bicyclists feel comfortable using a given facility is key to building a safe, convenient, and well-used network.

Design User Profiles

Highly Confident Bicyclist (~4-7%)

- Smallest group.
- Prefer direct routes and will operate in mixed traffic, even on roadways with higher motor vehicle operating speeds and volumes.
- Many also enjoy separated bikeways.
- May avoid bikeways perceived to be less safe, too crowded with slower moving users, or requiring deviation from their preferred route.

Somewhat Confident Bicyclist (~5-9%)

- Comfortable on most types of facilities.
- Lower tolerance for traffic stress, prefer striped or separated bike lanes on major streets and low-volume residential streets.
- Willing to tolerate higher levels of traffic stress for short distances.

Interested but Concerned Bicyclist (~51-56%)

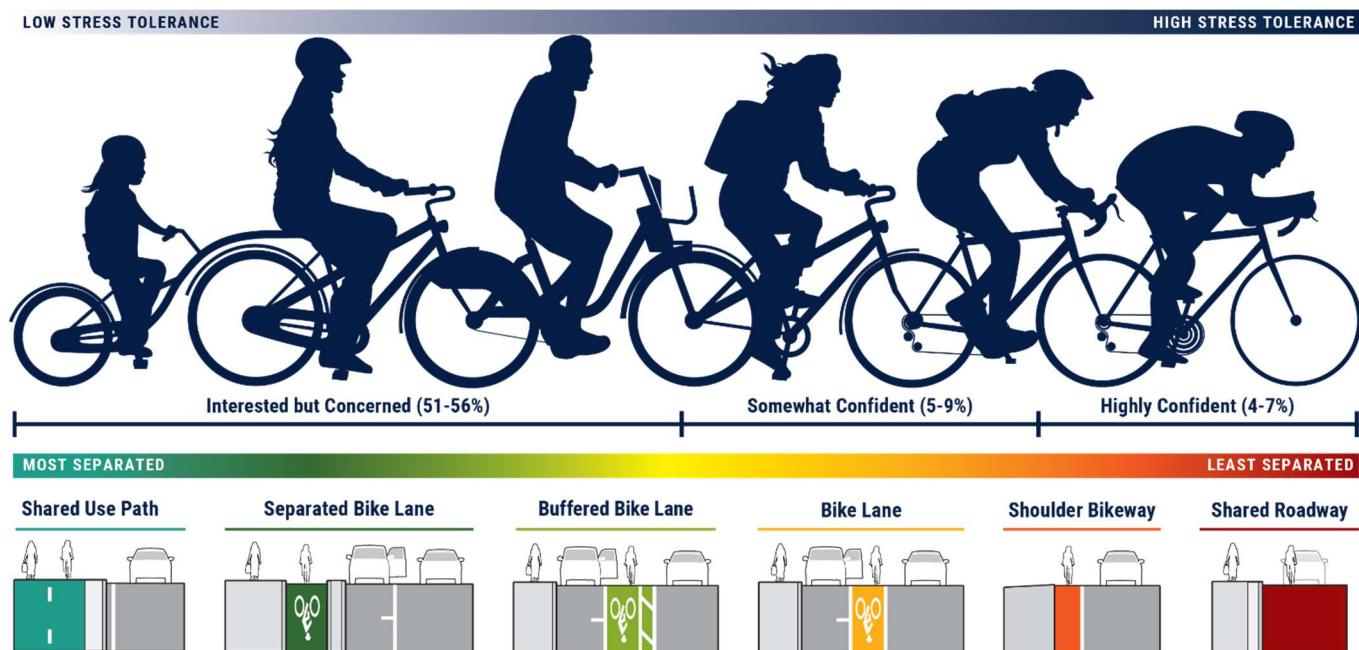
- Largest group.
- Lowest tolerance for traffic stress.
- Avoid bicycling except with access to networks of separated bikeways or very low-volume streets with safe roadway crossings.
- Tend to bicycle for recreation but not transportation.
- Generally, the recommended design user profile to maximize potential for bicycling.

Bicyclists are most commonly classified according to their comfort level, bicycling skill and experience, age, and trip purpose. These characteristics can be used to develop generalized profiles of various bicycle users and trips, also known as “design users,” which inform bicycle facility design. Comfort, skill, and age may affect bicyclist behavior and preference for different types of bicycle facilities. Selecting a design user profile is often the first step in assessing a street’s compatibility for bicycling. The design user profile should be used to select a preferred type of bikeway treatment for different contexts, urban, suburban, rural town or rural roadways (see Figure 17, Figure 18 and Figure 19). People who bicycle are influenced by their relative comfort operating with or near motor vehicle traffic. To accommodate the majority of the population, the “Interested but Concerned” rider should be the primary user type that facilities are designed for.

In some contexts, such as rural roadways where less people may be expected to be traveling by bike, the Somewhat Confident or Highly Confident rider is the most relevant design user. However, this Athens

County Active Transportation Plan specifically addresses important connections between rural villages and cities where bicycling is not always a decision based on skill but rather out of necessity. Where possible in Athens County, it is still ideal to design for the Interested but Concerned rider. Where roadway constraints and/or funding doesn't allow, implementing a facility (like a widened shoulder) that accommodates the Somewhat Confident or Highly Confident user is still desired.

Figure 17: Types of Bicyclists (Source: Toole Design)

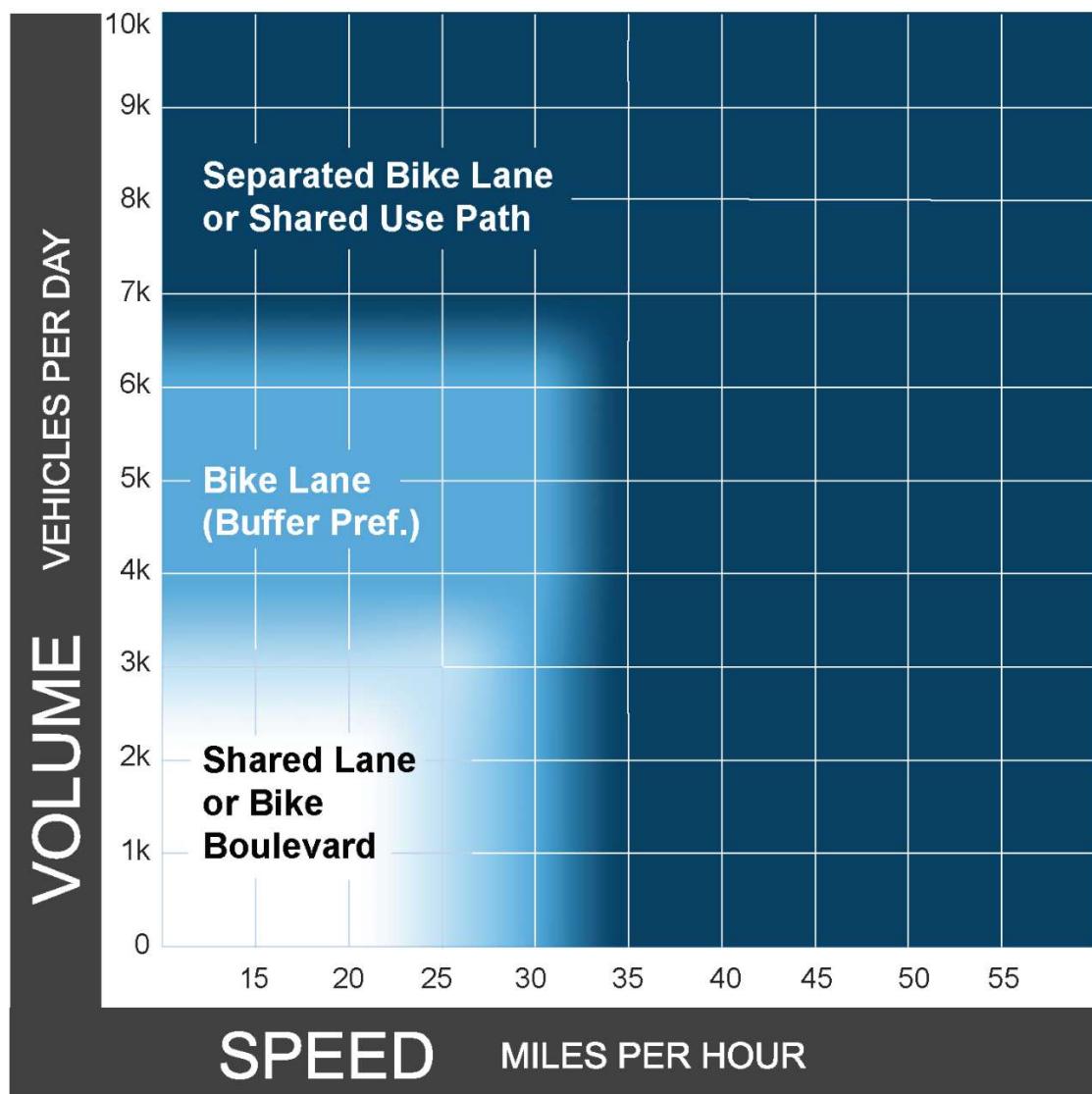


Facility Selection Methodology

Bicycle networks should be continuous, connect seamlessly across jurisdictional boundaries, and provide access to destinations. Anywhere a person would want to drive to for utilitarian purposes, such as commuting or running errands, is a potential destination for bicycling. As such, planning connected low-stress bicycle networks is not achieved by simply avoiding motor vehicle traffic. Rather, planners should identify solutions for lowering stress along higher traffic corridors so that bicycling can be a viable transportation option for the majority of the population.

Before projects can be implemented the type of on-street bicycle facility will need to be defined. The [Federal Highway Administration \(FHWA\)'s Bikeway Selection Guide](#)'s facility selection matrices (Figure 18 and Figure 19) can be used to help determine the best facility for the roadway based on context, speed, and volume as well as the relevant design user type. See the full guide for further detail on facility selection.

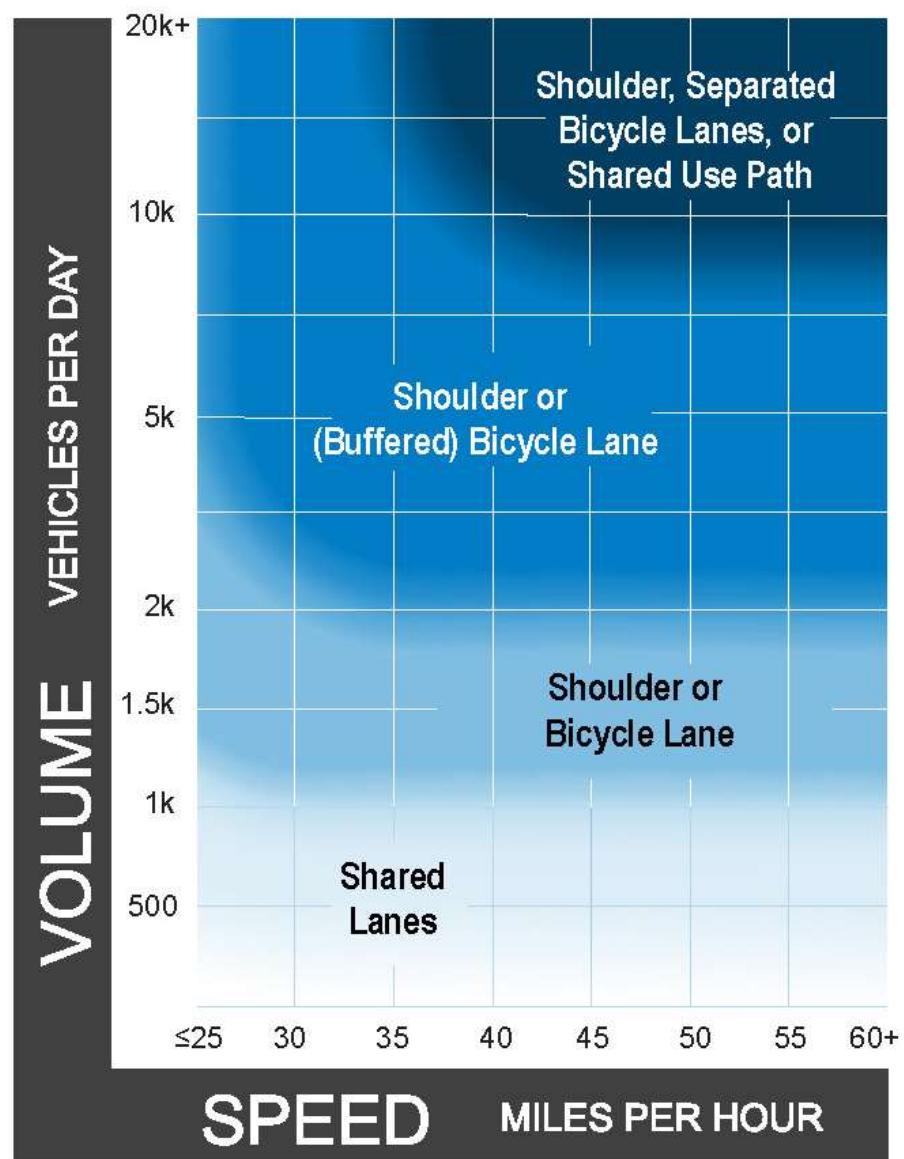
Figure 18: FHWA Bikeway Facility Matrix: Preferred Bikeway Type for Urban, Urban Core, Suburban and Rural Town Contexts (Design User: Interested but Concerned)



Notes

- 1 Chart assumes operating speeds are similar to posted speeds. If they differ, use operating speed rather than posted speed.
- 2 Advisory bike lanes may be an option where traffic volume is <3K ADT.

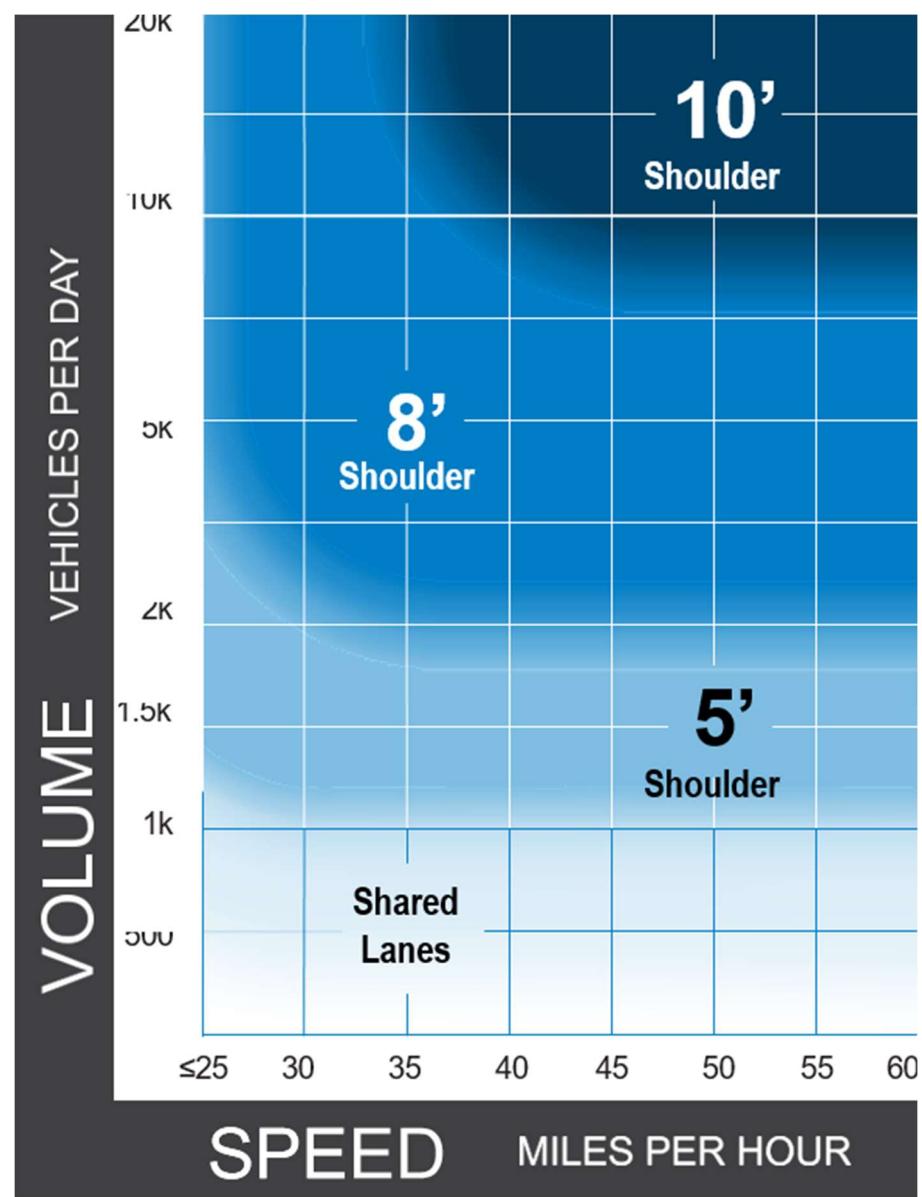
Figure 19: Preferred Bikeway for Highly Confident Bicyclists in Rural Contexts (Modified FHWA Bikeway Facility Matrix)



Notes

- 1 *Chart assumes operating speeds are similar to posted speeds. If they differ, use operating speed rather than posted speed.*
- 2 *If the percentage of heavy vehicles is greater than 10%, consider providing a wider shoulder or a separated pathway.*

Figure 20: Shoulder Widths to Accommodate Highly Confident Bicyclists on Rural Roadways



Notes

- This chart assumes the project involves reconstruction or retrofit in constrained conditions. For new construction, follow minimum shoulder widths in the ODOT L&D Manual Volume 1
- A separated shared use pathway is a suitable alternative to providing paved shoulders.
- Chart assumes operating speeds are similar to posted speeds. If they differ, use operating speed rather than posted speed.
- If the percentage of heavy vehicles is greater than 10%, consider providing a wider shoulder or a separated pathway.

Facility Toolkit

There are numerous facility types which accommodate people of varying abilities and in different environments. Research shows that the provision of low-stress, connected bicycle networks improves bicyclist safety and encourages bicycling for a broader range of user types.³ Pedestrian infrastructure is primarily provided in the form of sidewalks, though in rural areas shared use paths and paved shoulders can also provide space for pedestrians and bicyclists. The following pages include descriptions of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and links to further references. For further guidance on these facility types, refer to [ODOT's Multimodal Design Guide](#).

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are intended to be used by people walking. They are adjacent to but separated from the roadway by a curb and/or buffer, such as a tree lawn. As roadway speeds and volumes increase, more separation is needed to maintain a safe and comfortable walking environment for pedestrians. Common in urban areas, they also are important in rural areas with pedestrian generators, such as schools, downtowns and public squares.



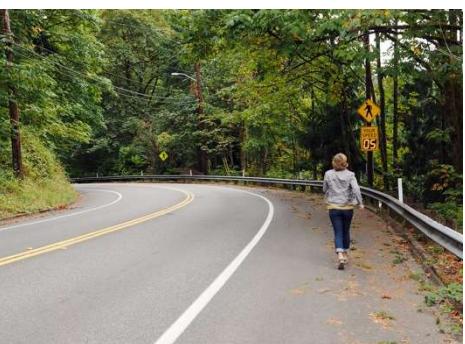
Crossing Improvements

A variety of solutions can be employed to make intersections and mid-block crossings safer and more convenient for pedestrians. Treatments range from painted facilities, such as high-visibility crosswalks, to signs, lights, and signals. Painted crosswalks delineate the safest pathway for pedestrians, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) enhance user safety and convenience at crossing points when full signalization is not warranted.



Paved shoulders

The [U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration](#) and ODOT describe the potential benefits of paved shoulders in rural areas where sidewalks and pathways are not always feasible (or as a strategy until ideal infrastructure is built). A U.S. DOT brochure, provided in Appendix E, provides examples of states that promote the inclusion of paved shoulders. ODOT's Multimodal Design Guide notes that "The preferred facility for pedestrian travel along a road is a sidewalk. Shoulders are not a substitute for well-designed pedestrian facilities, however when pedestrians are expected and the roadside space is constrained, it is preferable to accommodate pedestrians by providing a wide shoulder to reduce pedestrians walking within the roadway."



Bicycle Facilities

The following table provides descriptions of bicycle facility options.

³ AASHTO (2021). Guide to Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition, 2.2. Why Planning for Bicycling is Important.

Type of Facility	Description
Bicycle Boulevard 	<p>Where traffic volumes and speeds are low, many bicyclists can comfortably share lanes with motor vehicles. Shared lane markings and signs are added to inform people driving that bicyclists may operate in the lane and where to expect bicyclists. Wayfinding signage, traffic calming, and intersection treatments need to be incorporated into bicycle boulevards to increase user comfort and prioritize bicycle travel.</p>
Paved Shoulder 	<p>Providing additional pavement width outside of the travel lanes can reduce crashes, aid maintenance, and provide space for bicyclists and pedestrians. Additional benefits include reducing pavement edge deterioration, accommodating oversize and maintenance vehicles, and providing emergency refuge for public safety vehicles and disabled vehicles. Paved shoulders should be accompanied by signage.</p>
Bike Lane / Buffered Bike Lane 	<p>Bike lanes and buffered bike lanes are one-way facilities within the roadway demarcated with painted lane lines. Standard bike lanes provide some improvements to bicyclist safety, and can be enhanced with painted buffers, bike lane extensions through intersections, green colored pavement, and regulatory signs.</p>
Separated Bike Lane 	<p>A separated bike lane is a one- or two-way facility within the roadway and physically separated from adjacent travel lanes with vertical elements such as a curb, flex posts or on-street parking. Such facilities reduce the risk of injury and can increase bicycle ridership due to increased safety and comfort.</p>
Shared Use Paths 	<p>Typically designed as two-way facilities physically separated from motor vehicle traffic and used by bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users, shared use paths provide a low-stress and comfortable travel environment for users of all confidence levels. They are used for recreational opportunities in addition to transportation and can be located along roadways or completely separated from the road network, sometimes along rivers or old railroad corridors.</p>

NON-INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishing safe and convenient active transportation infrastructure is critical to improving walking and bicycling conditions. But without programs and policies in place to support active transportation, infrastructure projects can only go so far. A variety of non-infrastructure tools can increase pedestrians' and bicyclists' safety by establishing a culture of walking and biking and creating a friendly regulatory and political environment for active transportation.

Programs and policies can typically be implemented relatively quickly and inexpensively. Programs can be easily scaled to a wide audience, such as elementary school students, transit riders, or business owners or they can target specific groups for programming, like speeding motorists in school zones. Individual programs can increase walking and bicycling in specific circumstances and locations but should be coordinated with policy development to ensure lasting change.

The Active Transportation Steering Committee recommends the following general non-infrastructure strategies for improving active transportation options in Athens County.

- » **Increase Accessibility:** Local officials and project planners should consider accessibility in all new construction and rehabilitation projects. This includes soliciting input and advice from the Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities and/or the Athens City Commission on Disabilities. Including community members with lived experience in the planning process is the best way to achieve an outcome that is accessible for everyone.
- » **Expand Transit:** Expanding Athens Public Transit north of Chauncey, with stops in Millfield, Redtown, Jacksonville, Trimble and Glouster would create a safe option for those individuals who walk and roll on Route 13 out of necessity. Athens Public Transit is developing a Transit Development Plan in 2024 to understand the needs of and better serve the growing community. The plan will look at Athens Public Transit and Athens On Demand connections, then compare them to what the community needs today and in the future. The plan also will serve as a blueprint for future expansions and changes to transit services and help HAPCAP plan for longer-term improvements to transit services. In particular, the steering committee recommends that the county commissioners and local mayors explore how to garner local match for transit funding dollars that would allow Athens Public Transit to expand service to Trimble Township.
- » **Expand transit education and awareness:** Survey responses indicated a need for more and better information about where public transit is available and how to use it. An educational and awareness campaign could improve community understanding of transit options. The Ohio Department of Health's Public Transit and Health Implementation Guide notes that lack of information is one reason that transit services may be underused. The guide recommends promoting transit service and providing education about how to use transit by offering activities and resources including demonstration events, informational kiosks, and signage appropriate for user ages, abilities and literacy levels.
- » **Promote recreation and tourism:** Athens County has rich recreation assets that could be generators of active transportation infrastructure funding. The Baileys Trail System, Strouds Run

State Park, Burr Oak State Park (mostly in Morgan County but partly in Athens County), Lake Snowden, the Moonville Rail Trail and Lake Hope State Park in Vinton County are recreation and outdoor tourism drivers for Athens County. Looking for ways to promote and leverage these assets – and their potential for connection via active transportation infrastructure – could be a strategy for seeking funds to complete active transportation infrastructure projects. Neighboring Hocking County annually receives more than 4 million visitors due to their nationally-renowned hiking trails, caves and waterfalls. However, Hocking County lacks bicycle infrastructure (both paved and off-road), which sends visitors to neighboring Athens County for bicycle recreation.

- » **Pursue Safe Routes to School Program Funds:** Athens County communities and school districts may wish to pursue Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program funding to conduct safety studies, implement safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and launch programs to encourage walking and biking to school. Activities could include bike safety curriculum, bike rodeos, safety education, and walking school buses. Local officials from Athens County municipalities and school districts should consider these opportunities.

Active transportation programs and policies should aim to accomplish the following goals:

- » **Foster culture change:** Shift community members mindset so that walking and bicycling is normal and expected.
- » **Maintain momentum:** Help maintain momentum and excitement around active transportation while infrastructure projects are in development.
- » **Build support:** Encourage new people to try active transportation and help community partners recognize the value of increased active transportation options.
- » **Support efficient operations and maintenance:** Help institutionalize best practices in active transportation operations and maintenance.

The status of programs and policies should be assessed and updated each time the overall plan is updated. Status is defined as:

- » **New:** A program or policy that is proposed in this plan.
- » **Ongoing:** An existing program or policy that will be continued.
- » **On-hold:** A program or policy that has been stalled or deferred.
- » **Completed:** When regularly updating the plan, update the program or policy status to complete when applicable to help track progress.

Table 4 describes policies and programs that the Active Transportation Steering Committee identified for continuation or implementation in Athens County.

Table 4. Program and Policy Recommendations

Goal	Program/Policy	Responsible Party	Status
Accessibility	Sidewalk Repair and Maintenance Identify priority areas throughout the county for sidewalk improvements (new installation and repair). Identify funding sources to help low-income property owners repair sidewalks. Encourage municipalities and businesses to prioritize sidewalk accessibility, including accessible curb cuts at crosswalks.	Local officials.	New: There is not a coordinated effort to fund sidewalk installation and maintenance; responsibility lies with the municipality.
Access & Equity	Public Transit Provide affordable public transportation for everyone in Athens County. Consider on-demand and fixed-route options throughout the county.	HAPCAP, Athens Public Transit, participating municipalities.	Ongoing: Fixed-route bus service to some Athens County communities. On-demand transit is available with a relatively long lead-time and high demand. HAPCAP is conducting a Transit Development Plan in 2024 to understand the needs of and better serve the growing community.
	Bike Share Program Community members with a library card can check out bikes and accessories at local library branches.	Athens County Public Library System.	Ongoing.
	Bikes in Schools Teaching kids how to ride bikes and bicycle safety in school provides them an opportunity to learn an essential life skill, is a fun way to exercise, and teaches about active transportation.	Community organizations and school districts.	New. ORCA has expressed an interest in local school districts implementing bicycle education as a means of youth engagement and empowerment.
Encouragement	Community Bike Rides Community rides are popular methods to encourage people to get on their bikes and have fun with their friends, family, and community members.	Local bike clubs, bike shops, nonprofit organizations.	Athens Bicycle Club used to host a variety of community rides before the pandemic. Rural Action hosts occasional community rides.
	Community Walking and Biking Maps Biking and walking maps placed in convenient, busy and accessible locations can encourage people to walk and bike. Maps that show safe walking and biking routes can encourage physical activity.	Community organizations, municipalities, county.	New and Ongoing: Some biking maps are available, but there are fewer walking resources.

Encouragement, continued	<p>Public Transit Education and Encouragement</p> <p>Lack of information or knowledge about the transit system can keep people from using public transportation.</p>	<p>HAPCAP, Athens Public Transit, local organizations and businesses.</p>	Ongoing but could be increased.
	<p>Wayfinding to parks and community locations.</p> <p>Increase wayfinding signs to bring awareness to Athens County's parks, trails, and other outdoor community locations.</p>	<p>Local officials, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia, Hockhocking Adena Bikeway Committee, Athens County Convention & Visitors Bureau.</p>	Ongoing but could be increased.
Safety	<p>Helmet giveaways.</p> <p>Ideas include providing helmets through the county school districts to all kids in a certain grade level; providing educational programming and safe cycling instruction along with the giveaway (like at the former Athens Bike Rodeo); reviving the Athens Bike Rodeo; and expanding the programming to teach adults bike safety.</p>	<p>Local organizations.</p>	<p>On-hold: Has happened in the past through the former Athens Bike Rodeo. Some community members would like to see that event return.</p>
	<p>Safe Routes to School</p> <p>Communities can apply for funding through ODOT to pay for programming and/or infrastructure that encourages students to bike or walk to school</p>	<p>Local officials, community leaders, school officials.</p>	<p>New. Communities could use this active transportation plan as a starting point for SRTS applications:</p>
			<p>https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/safe-routes-srts/apply-srts-funding/01-steps-to-apply</p>
Tourism	<p>Regional Destination Development</p> <p>Work with regional partners to promote outdoor recreation destinations throughout Athens County. Strategies could include wayfinding, promotion, tourism services, development of tourism-oriented businesses, and a culture of hospitality and stewardship.</p>	<p>Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia, Athens County Convention & Visitors Bureau, local officials.</p>	Ongoing.

IMPLEMENTATION





A multi-use path at the Chauncey Community Park, which is also the Baileys Trail System trailhead.

IMPLEMENTATION

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Collaboration is the first step toward addressing challenges and pursuing opportunities identified in the Athens County Active Transportation Plan. Stakeholders involved in the planning process will be collectively responsible for the design, funding, construction, maintenance, monitoring, and/or evaluation of projects that emerge from this process.

See Table 5, Roles and Responsibilities, for a list of local, regional and statewide organizations that could potentially partner on active transportation projects in Athens County. This list was created at a facilitated workshop hosted by the Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee in July 2024.



Table 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Agency	Responsibility	Description
<i>Age-Friendly Athens County</i>	Support and advocacy for senior citizens in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support funding applications• Active transportation education and encouragement• Community engagement
<i>Athens Area Chamber of Commerce</i>	Support a strong business climate in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support funding applications• Branding and promotion
<i>Athens-Belpre Rail Trail Steering Committee</i>	Work to create a multi-use trail to eventually connect with other regional rail trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work to acquire right-of-way along the B&O corridor between Athens and Belpre• Promote trail development in cooperation with Athens and Washington county officials and the Athens Conservancy• Support funding applications• Apply for funding
<i>Athens City-County Health Department</i>	Countywide health promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active transportation education and encouragement• Support funding applications• Community engagement• Convene working groups• Conduct assessments
<i>Athens Conservancy</i>	Preservation of wild and scenic spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acquire and protect land• Obtain funding• Support funding applications
<i>Athens County Auditor's Office</i>	County financial reporting and GIS needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support funding applications
<i>Athens County Board of Developmental Disabilities</i>	Wide-ranging services including transportation for people with developmental disabilities in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility input for construction, education, and use of active transportation infrastructure• Support funding applications
<i>Athens County Commissioners</i>	Countywide policies and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek out opportunities to improve active transportation infrastructure and programming in Athens County• Apply for funding• Partner with cities, villages and townships on active transportation infrastructure improvements• Stewardship of Hockhocking Adena Bikeway segments
<i>Athens County Convention & Visitors Bureau</i>	Countywide tourism promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support funding applications• Lead and support active transportation education and encouragement programs
<i>Athens County Economic Development Council</i>	Support for economic development and community enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocate for active transportation considerations as they relate to business development in Athens County

<i>Athens County Emergency Management Agency</i>	Central point of coordination within Athens County for response to and recovery from disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insight on how active transportation infrastructure could affect emergency response plans and vehicles • Advice on access points and wayfinding for first responders • Hazard mitigation planning
<i>Athens County Engineer and Athens County Planner</i>	County-owned roadways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize active transportation when planning roadway improvements • Apply for funding • Design, construction, maintenance, and evaluation of active transportation facilities • Support cities, villages and townships with roadway projects • Monitoring and evaluation • Zoning
<i>Athens County Foundation</i>	Support community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on initiatives and partnerships • Support funding applications • Matching funds
<i>Athens County Job and Family Services</i>	Help Athens County residents with basic needs including transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Advocate for active transportation improvements • Provide transportation services to medical and social services agencies
<i>Athens County Public Libraries</i>	Respond to community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike loan program • Support funding applications • Active transportation education and encouragement
<i>Athens County Regional Planning Commission</i>	Hub for local officials to share information about development in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Planning support • Monitoring and evaluation
<i>Athens County School Districts</i>	School travel coordination, programming, and facilities maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead/support active transportation education and encouragement programs • Apply for funding or support funding applications • Monitoring and evaluation
<i>Athens County Villages, Census Designated Places and Townships</i>	Jurisdictionally owned roadways, policies, and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, construction, maintenance, and evaluation of active transportation facilities • Apply for funding or support funding applications • Prioritize active transportation when planning and managing development • Partner with Athens Public Transit
<i>Buckeye Hills Regional Council</i>	Regional Transportation Planning Organization for Southeast Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Provide match funding for active transportation projects • Planning and mapping

<i>City of Athens</i>	City-owned roadways, policies, and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, construction, maintenance, and evaluation of active transportation facilities • Apply for funding and collaborate on funding applications • Prioritize active transportation when planning and managing development • Stewardship of Hockhocking Adena Bikeway in some sections of the city • Partner with Athens Public Transit
<i>City of Athens Pedestrian Accessibility & Bicycle Task Force</i>	Promote walking and biking as part of a transportation system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership and expertise to Athens City Council and city staff • Educate and promote awareness of traffic, pedestrian, bicycle, and personal mobility device safety and accessibility
<i>City of Nelsonville</i>	City-owned roadways, policies, and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, construction, maintenance, and evaluation of active transportation facilities • Apply for funding and collaborate on funding applications • Prioritize active transportation when planning and managing development • Stewardship of parts of the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway • Partner with Athens Public Transit
<i>Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development</i>	Support and community service opportunities for senior citizens in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Active transportation education and encouragement
<i>Hockhocking Adena Bikeway Advisory Committee</i>	Coordinate efforts between the entities that own and maintain the bikeway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review bikeway maintenance, environmental management, promotion and enhancements, and overall use • Make recommendations to the owning entities • Support funding applications
<i>Hocking Athens Perry Community Action</i>	Community action agency with broad programming for Athens County residents, including Athens Public Transit and Athens County Mobility Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe, reliable, sustainable and affordable public transit and on-demand transportation • Apply for funding or support funding applications • Travel training • Public transportation education and encouragement
<i>Hocking College</i>	Advocate for transportation infrastructure and services that meet the needs of its students, faculty and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Stewardship of Hockhocking Adena Bikeway segment adjacent to campus • Advocate for active transportation infrastructure
<i>Hocking River Commission</i>	Stewardship, education, and recreational use of the Hocking River	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Active transportation education and encouragement

<i>Ohio Department of Natural Resources</i>	Management of state natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design, construction, maintenance, and evaluation of active transportation facilities on state park property • Provide technical assistance relative to how natural systems inter-relate with transportation • Reclamation of abandoned mine lands in conjunction with economic and community development and reuse goals (Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization Grant) • Support funding applications
<i>Ohio Environmental Council</i>	Advocate for clean air, land, and water in Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Advocate for active transportation infrastructure and funding • Active transportation encouragement
<i>Ohio Department of Transportation</i>	Planning, design, data, evaluation, funding, education and promotion of active transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support active transportation planning and implementation • Provide funding
<i>Ohio University</i>	Provide transportation services to the Ohio University community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Athens Public Transit • Provide campus shuttles • Support funding applications • Stewardship of Hockhocking Adena Bikeway segment adjacent to campus • Advocate for active transportation infrastructure
<i>Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia</i>	Council of governments that works to secure investments for sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for funding or support funding applications • Recreational trail planning for connectivity • Advocate for active transportation improvements
<i>Rural Action</i>	Locally-based, sustainable, and inclusive development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for funding or support funding applications • Active transportation education and encouragement
<i>United Seniors of Athens County</i>	Support and advocacy for senior citizens in Athens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transportation services for senior Athens County residents • Active transportation education and encouragement • Support funding applications
<i>Wayne National Forest</i>	Partner with Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia to manage Baileys Trial System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support funding applications • Land management • Advocate for active transportation infrastructure and programming that promotes access to outdoor recreation opportunities

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Active transportation projects comprise a fraction of overall transportation network construction and maintenance. While pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure generally does not serve as many users as highways, bridges, and other critical infrastructure, it can have a substantial positive effect on local economies. Additionally, providing opportunities for active living promotes public health and may reduce the burden on tax-payer funded healthcare systems over time. In this light, active transportation infrastructure is a critical component of a complete transportation network and results in a positive return on investment for communities that fund such projects.

Several state and federal funding sources can be used to supplement local funding sources to build out the active transportation network and fund related programming efforts. Table 6 lists the primary funding sources for active transportation projects in Ohio; click on the name of each funding source to access web pages with further information. In addition, ODOT and the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) have developed an [Active Transportation Funding Matrix](#). Communities may use this tool to search for additional potential funding sources to support infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects that advance walking and bicycling. As part of the statewide Walk.Bike.Ohio Plan, ODOT published a [Funding Overview Report](#) that provides more details on types of funding available, schedules, and eligibility requirements. For information on funding for public transit, visit the [ODOT Office of Transit's website](#).

Table 6. Primary Active Transportation Funds in Ohio

Funding Source	Distributed by	Eligible Project Examples	Eligible Project Sponsor
<u>Transportation Alternatives</u>	Metropolitan Planning Organization (if applicable), or Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) if not	Bicycle & pedestrian facilities Safe routes for non-drivers Conversion & use of abandoned railroad facilities Overlooks & viewing areas	Local governments
<u>Safe Routes to School</u>	ODOT	Infrastructure Non-Infrastructure School Travel Plan assistance	Local governments (infrastructure) Local governments, school or health district, or non-profit (non-infrastructure)
<u>Highway Safety Improvement Program</u>	ODOT (Coordinate with local ODOT District to submit a safety study)	Signalization Turn lanes Pavement markings Traffic signals Pedestrian signals/crosswalks Bike lanes Road diets	Local governments
<u>Recreational Trails Program</u>	Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)	New recreational trail construction Trail maintenance/restoration Trailside and trailhead facilities Purchase/lease of construction & maintenance equipment Acquisition of easements Educational programs	Local governments State and federal agencies Park districts Conservancy districts Soil and water conservation districts Non-profits
<u>Clean Ohio Trails Fund</u>	ODNR	New trail construction Land acquisition for a trail Trail planning/engineering and design (must include construction)	Local governments Park districts Conservancy districts Soil and water conservation districts Non-profits
<u>Clean Ohio Green Space Conservation Program</u>	Ohio Public Works Commission (OPWC)	Open space acquisition including easements Bike racks Kiosks/Signs Hiking/Biking trails Pedestrian bridges Boardwalks	Local governments Park districts Conservancy districts Soil and water conservation districts Non-profits
<u>Small City Program</u>	ODOT	Pavement Rehabilitation Roundabouts Signals Road diets	54 eligible small cities with populations of 5,000 to 24,999 that are not located within a Metropolitan Planning Organization's boundaries.

MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES

The long-term performance of bicycle and pedestrian networks depends on both the construction of new facilities and an investment in continued maintenance. Maintaining bicycle and pedestrian facilities is critical to ensuring those facilities are accessible, safe, and functional.

FREQUENCY

The first step to approaching maintenance is to understand how often maintenance should be performed. Many activities, such as signage updates or replacements, are performed as needed, while other tasks such as snow removal are seasonal (see Table 7). Creating a winter maintenance approach is important to encourage year-round travel by walking and biking. One key component of this approach should be identifying priority routes for snow removal. More information on winter maintenance such as types of equipment needed for different facility types and how to consider snow removal in the design of facilities can be found in [Toole Design's Winter Maintenance Resource Guide](#).

Table 7: Maintenance Activity Frequency

Frequency	Facility Type	Maintenance Activity
As Needed	Shared Use Paths	Tree/brush clearing and mowing
		Replace/repair trail support amenities (parking lots, benches, restrooms, etc.)
		Map/signage updates
		Trash removal/litter clean-up
		Repair flood damage: silt clean-up, culvert clean-out, etc.
		Patching/minor regrading
Seasonal	Shared Use Paths/ Separated Bike Lanes / Paved Shoulders/ Bike lanes	Sweeping
	Bicycle Boulevards	Sign replacement
	Sidewalks	Concrete panel replacement
Yearly	All	Snow and Ice control
	Shared Use Paths	Planting/pruning/beautification
		Culvert/drainage cleaning and repair
		Installation/removal of seasonal signage
5-year	Shared Use Paths/ Sidewalks	Evaluate support services to determine need for repair/replacement
		Perform walk audits to assess ADA compliance of facilities
	Separated Bike Lanes / Paved Shoulders/ Bike lanes	Surface evaluation to determine need for patching/regrading/re-striping of bicycle facilities
5-year	Shared Use Paths	Repaint or repair trash receptacles, benches, signs, and other trail amenities, if necessary
		Sealcoat asphalt shared use paths

Frequency	Facility Type	Maintenance Activity
10-year	Shared Use Paths	Resurface/regrade/re-stripe shared use paths
20-year	Shared Use Paths/ Sidewalks	Assess and replace/reconstruct shared use paths/ sidewalks

PLAN FOR MAINTENANCE

Creating a strong maintenance program begins in the design phase. The agency that will eventually own the completed project should collaborate with partners to determine the infrastructure placement, final design, and life cycle maintenance cost. Maintenance staff should help identify typical maintenance issues, such as areas with poor drainage or frequent public complaints. They may have suggestions for design elements that can mitigate these issues or facilitate maintenance activities and can provide estimates for ongoing maintenance costs for existing and proposed facilities.

COORDINATION & RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN AGENCIES

Many jurisdictions struggle with confusion around which entity – city, village, township, county, or state – is responsible for the maintenance of trails and other active transportation facilities. Frequently there is no documentation showing who is responsible for maintenance of existing facilities, which can prolong unsafe conditions for trail users. Coordination between the government agencies is key for effective maintenance programs. Intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) are used to codify the roles and responsibilities of each agency regarding ongoing maintenance. For example, a local government may agree to conduct plowing, mowing, and other maintenance activities on trails in its jurisdiction that were built by another agency. Clarifying who is responsible for maintenance costs and operations ensures that maintenance problems are resolved in a timely manner.

MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES

Different facility types require different types of strategies to be maintained. Table 8 breaks down maintenance activities and strategies for each by facility type.

Table 8: Maintenance Strategy Recommendations

Facility Type	Maintenance Activity	Strategy
Shared Use Paths/ Separated Bike Lanes	Pavement Preservation	Develop and implement a comprehensive pavement management system for the shared use path network.
	Snow and Ice Control	Design shared-use paths to accommodate existing maintenance vehicles.
	Drainage Cleaning/Repairs	Clear debris from all drainage devices to keep drainage features functioning as intended and minimize trail erosion and environmental damage.
		Check and repair any damage to trails due to drainage issues.
	Sweeping	Implement a routine sweeping schedule to clear shared-use paths of debris.
		Provide trail etiquette guidance and trash receptacles to reduce the need for sweeping.
	Vegetation Management	Implement a routine vegetation management schedule to ensure user safety.

Facility Type	Maintenance Activity	Strategy
<i>Paved Shoulders/ Bike Lanes</i>		Trim or remove diseased and hazardous trees along trails. Preserve and protect vegetation that is colorful and varied, screens adjacent land uses, provides wildlife habitats, and contains prairie, wetland and woodland remnants.
		Conduct walk and bike audits to assess accessibility of new, proposed, and existing shared-use paths. Ensure that ADA compliance is incorporated into the design process for new facilities.
	Pavement Markings	Explore approaches to routinely inspect pavement markings for bicycle infrastructure and replace as needed. Consider preformed thermoplastic or polymer tape on priority bikeways (identified in this Plan) adjacent to high-volume motor vehicle routes (preformed thermoplastic or polymer tape are more durable than paint and requires less maintenance).
	Snow and Ice Control	Clear all signed or marked shoulder bicycle facilities after snowfall on all state-owned facilities that do not have a maintenance agreement with a local governmental unit in place.
<i>Bicycle Boulevards</i>	Sweeping	Implement a routine sweeping schedule to clear high-volume routes of debris.
	Sign Replacement	Repair or replace damaged or missing signs as soon as possible.
<i>Sidewalks</i>	Pavement Preservation and Repair	Conduct routine inspections of high-volume sidewalks and apply temporary measures to maintain functionality (patching, grinding, mudjacking). Consider using public agency staff or hiring contractors for sidewalk repairs, rather than placing responsibility on property owner (property owner can still be financially responsible).
		Educate the public about sidewalk snow clearance.
	Snow and Ice Control	Require sidewalk snow clearance to a width of five feet on all sidewalks. Establish required timeframes for snow removal. Implement snow and ice clearing assistance programs for select populations.

ON-GOING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Measuring the performance of active transportation networks is essential to ongoing success. Bicycle and pedestrian counts, crash records, and other data contribute to a business case for continued improvement of and investment in multimodal infrastructure. As recommendations are implemented, local officials must be able to measure whether these investments are paying active transportation dividends (i.e. more people walking and bicycling). An affirmative answer reinforces this Plan's legitimacy and provides evidence that future investments will also yield positive results.

Tracking performance measures charts progress toward making walking, bicycling and public transit safe, connected, and comfortable. Athens County should establish baseline targets and revisit selected metrics as new plans and priorities occur. Data on these measures should be documented and published for public review annually. A robust performance measures program includes establishing baseline measurements, performance targets, data collection frequency, and data collection and analysis responsibility.

The performance measures listed below represent ideas that members of this plan's steering committee, as well as members of the Athens County Regional Planning Commission, brainstormed at an active transportation plan implementation workshop. These potential measures and others will be considered when active transportation projects are developed in Athens County, with final measures being selected based on project specifics.

Table 9: Performance Measures

Potential Performance Measure	Baseline	Target	Timeline (how often is data collected/updated)	Responsibility (who will collect the data)
<i>Active Transportation Mode Share (percent of people commuting by walk, bike, or transit)</i>	Census	% increase TBD	Annually	TBD
<i>Increase miles of pedestrian network built annually</i>	Baseline count needed	Mileage % increase TBD	Annually	TBD
<i>Increase miles of bicycle network built annually</i>	Baseline count needed	Mileage % increase TBD	Annually	TBD
<i>Increase miles of shared use path built annually</i>	Baseline count needed	Mileage % increase TBD	Annually	TBD
<i>Bicycle and pedestrian-involved crashes</i>	ODOT GIS Crash Analysis Tool	Decrease crashes with a goal of zero traffic fatalities or serious injuries	Annually	TBD
<i>Number of crossing improvements added</i>	TBD	Increase # of improved crossings	Annually	TBD
<i>Public transit access</i>	Ridership	TBD – Ideas include tracking increase in communities served, riders per day, total bus stops, total # of bus stops, employment access or bus passes sold	Annually	HAPCAP
<i>Maintenance of Facilities and Infrastructure</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pictures of before • Miles of trails that need to be replaced/repaved 	Increase in maintenance	Annually	Owners of the specific facility/infrastructure

APPENDIX



APPENDIX A: STATE ROUTE 13 WALK AUDIT

Notes from the August 14, 2023, Athens County Active Transportation Steering Committee Walk Audit of State Route 13 from the Trimble Kroger north to where the sidewalk begins across from Glouster Memorial Park in the Village of Glouster.

PARTICIPANTS

Jeff Maiden (Athens County Engineer), Nick Tepe (Athens County Public Libraries), Maggi Gifford and Rob Delach (community members), Amy Lipka and Meredith Erlewine (ACCHD), Bryan Hinkle (HAPCAP)

OVERVIEW

We wore orange safety vests and pushed one weighted stroller. We started at the Trimble Kroger and walked north on State Route 13, using sidewalks when available, grassy footpaths when sidewalk ran out, and the gravel-covered Tomcat Trail when it was available. We stopped where the Tomcat Trail met the new sidewalk across from Glouster Memorial Park, then retraced our steps. Close to Kroger, we needed to alternate which side of 13 we walked on in order to use available space that was out of the roadway.

Just two nights before our walk audit, a woman was struck and killed by a car while crossing Route 13 along the actual route we walked (a coincidence, we had already planned this route).

The corridor generally felt like it could and should have sidewalks (feels like there is space most of the way but who knows about actual ROW), but they are simply not there most of the way. Sometimes sidewalks pick up, sometimes they go away. The Tomcat Trail is a good option, but unless you know it is there, you wouldn't know how to find it. Walking through the substation or whatever it is to get on the TT is intimidating and confusing.

Amenities noted by participants along this corridor: Drive-thru/carry out, restaurant, insurance sales place, electrical substation, Village of Trimble park, Glouster park, Kroger, Dairy Queen nearby, mechanic, private residences, car wash.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS DURING THE WALK

- Hard to know what side of the road to walk on
- Sidewalk is damaged/overgrown to the point of unrecognition
- Inconsistent sidewalk to substation
- Sign to show the existence of Tomcat Trail – you wouldn't know it's there if you don't have prior knowledge
- Nice sidewalk along Land Bank area
- Felt dangerous crossing 13 in front of Kroger
- No crosswalk from Kroger to park across the street
- No shoulder on 13
- Houses right on 13 in Trimble, no pedestrian access
- Old sidewalk buried along 13
- Curb cut with detectable ramp at 329, no crosswalk or sidewalk to connect to
- No room for any facilities at turn north of 329 between creek and property

- Sidewalk only on east side leaving Trimble
- Sidewalk overgrown, muddy, uneven
- Concrete sidewalk done by Land Bank is in good shape
- Sidewalk disappears at substation, no crosswalk
- Shoulder on 13 on east side is useable
- Tomcat Trail is nice but unmarked
- Sidewalk resources at Glouster, crosswalks at park all in good shape
- The most harrowing part of this walk audit was the first block between Kroger along Lake Drive and SR 329. Nonexistent pedestrian infrastructure is far worse than old unmaintained remnants of sidewalks, which is what we walked on for the couple hundred yards once we got past the SR 329 intersection.
- The Tomcat Trail was a good option in some parts of this corridor between Kroger and Glouster Memorial Park. Improvements and signage might make it a good option for people walking and biking in this corridor.
- Observed traffic speeds seemed reasonable compared to the speed limit, but in Village 35 mph is too high, even for a state route.
- Sidewalks along SR 13 in Trimble were nonexistent or in terrible condition.
- Once we got to Glouster, new sidewalk has recently been installed along SR 13. I wonder where the funding came from for the new sidewalk? Was it ODOT installed and funded? Figuring this out might help determine what Trimble needs to do to fix its section of SR 13.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS AFTER THE WALK

Walkability

- Section of new concrete sidewalk was great. Existing concrete sidewalk was overgrown and low and new concrete sidewalk could be constructed on top of existing – TOO CLOSE TO SR 13 – existing asphalt shoulder too close to traffic
- Good walking shoes made it easier to navigate loose gravel, uneven pavement and muddy areas of path.

Safety crossing streets

- Traffic moves pretty fast – telephone poles are within 1 foot of edge of road. Just a few feet between concrete curb and sidewalk.
- Roads were busy, but there were gaps [in traffic] to allow crossing without signals
- Crossing is completely up to the pedestrian to determine a safe time to cross, and where.
- Lack of crossings (except at Glouster Park) means pedestrians have to determine a safe place and opportunity to cross.

Safety of drivers

- Traffic is too close to pedestrians along SR 13. Not safe. One distracted driver can cause a fatality.
- Drivers seemed unaware of pedestrians.
- Although traffic was moving fast, I did not feel that people were driving dangerously. Some drivers waved.

TOMCAT TRAIL WALK AUDIT

State Route 13 Walk Audit participant Maggi Gifford conducted a walk audit of the Tomcat Trail on June 21, 2023. Notes from her experience are included below.

"My 18-year-old grandson (who doesn't like to walk) and I walked the Tomcat Trail from Glouster to Jacksonville. The weather was warm and sunny, but not hot. Started on Tomcat Trail across from Glouster Park at 11:08 am. Got to the end of the trail in Jacksonville at 11:44 am. From Jacksonville back to where the wooded part of the trail comes out in Trimble 11:53 am. From the bridge on Walnut Street to Trimble Park across from Kroger 11:59 am. Reached the end of the trail in Glouster at 12:16 pm. Except for a couple of places where we stopped and looked around, we walked steadily, but not quickly.

The Glouster part of the trail is well maintained, the base is solid, and it's partly under trees, and is really pleasant to walk on. At the AEP substation in Trimble, where this section comes out, it's not clear which way to proceed. It needs some signage. We walked on the sidewalk along St Rt 13. Except for the section in front of Salina Insurance and the part that the Land Bank replaced after they demolished some houses, the sidewalk is in desperate need of repair. The sidewalk ends at St Rt 329, and again it isn't clear which way to go. We walked up 329 to the road that turns into the Trimble Park, there is a sign there. We walked around the park, crossed a foot bridge, ended up on Walnut St, where there is another directional sign. This short section is entirely on the road. The next section goes into the woods, and with a little maintenance could be a very nice trail. It's muddy in some areas, and the sides need weed-eated back. At the Jacksonville end it looks like the trail is an extension of 11th street.

Except for a tire dump at the Jacksonville end, there was very little litter, and most importantly, no evidence of illicit drug use. None. There were some ATV tracks, they used the trail for a short way then went up into the woods. This might be the right of way for property owners.

We didn't see anyone on the trail, but talked to a couple who were sitting outside, who said they have used the trail for recreational purposes.

The sidewalk in Trimble needs replaced, and extended from St Rt 329 to the park across from Kroger, and a pedestrian crossing put in from the park to Kroger. The section from Trimble to Jacksonville needs a more solid base, and weeds cut back. Maybe some solar lighting to make it more inviting in the evening. More signage would be helpful. It needs to be stroller-friendly to encourage people to use it. An enterprising person should make Tomcat Trail backpacks, that could be marketed as a way to conveniently carry groceries from Kroger.

As near as I can tell, no one is "in charge" of the trail, each village is supposed to maintain their own section.

On an interesting side note, when we crossed the bridge on Walnut St, we saw a cormorant diving into the creek."

APPENDIX B: ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN THE PLAINS

THE PLAINS BACKGROUND

In recent years, various community members have expressed interest in pursuing Safe Routes to School (SRTS) funding to improve walking and bicycling infrastructure in The Plains.

The Plains, a census designated place, is almost entirely included in census tract 9729. This census tract has an Ohio Health Improvement Zone social vulnerability index (SVI) of .82, with a Housing Type & Transportation score of .98, the second highest in Athens County. The Plains is the only unincorporated community within Athens County. With approximately 2,700 residents it is the third-largest population center in Athens County (behind the cities of Athens and Nelsonville), yet it is not a city or a village and does not have one local government but is a layered area of multiple political subdivision jurisdiction. The Plains has a grocery store, a library, two Athens City School District schools, several faith communities, social service agencies, five restaurants and several low-income housing complexes. The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that although the rest of Athens County is losing population, The Plains is increasing in population and in business and housing development.

State Route 682 (North Plains Road) is the main transportation backbone of The Plains unincorporated area, which begins south of the U.S. 33 interchange and extends about 1.28 miles, ending just south of the intersection with East 4th St. The roadway throughout this segment has a travel lane in each direction, and a third permissible turn lane throughout The Plains segment. The speed limit throughout this segment is 35 MPH. The Plains has sidewalks on both sides of S.R. 682 from just south of the U.S. 33 interchange all the way to the other end of “town.” The sidewalks were built by ODOT, as this is a State Route corridor, so they generally meet accessibility requirements including having curb cuts and tactile grids at each intersection; however, the sidewalks are built directly next to the roadway with no buffer and are in poor condition in some areas, making them unsafe for pedestrians with mobility challenges.

Marked crosswalks on this corridor in The Plains exist at four intersections (listed from north to south); Poston Rd/Walnut St. intersection, Pine St. (across from the shopping plaza), Elm St. (connecting to the high school), and Johnson Rd./Connett Rd. intersection. Around 17 crosswalks are marked on side streets along S.R. 682 in The Plains. The new marked crosswalk that crosses S.R. 682 at Elm St. connects to Athens High School (AHS), three blocks to the east, via a newly constructed sidewalk and bike lane. This Elm Street active transportation infrastructure project was financed with local match from Athens Township and ODOT TAP grant funding. During our active transportation planning process, some community members voiced a need for pedestrian signage – possibly a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon – at the Elm Street crosswalk. A Hockhocking Adena Bikeway spur connects to AHS, after which a three-block section of Johnson Road has no pedestrian infrastructure to connect to S.R. 682; after crossing S.R. 682 at the Johnson Road intersection, the road name changes to Connett and connects to The Plains Intermediate School (TPIS) with crosswalks and a sidewalk that extends about .4 of a mile down Connett Rd. to the school.

The SR 682/U.S. 33 interchange was constructed in 1958 and is the first interchange ever constructed in the nine counties of ODOT District 10. Ohio Department of Transportation plans to begin intersection improvements in 2024 to convert the ramp intersections to roundabouts. The improvements will

modernize the interchange to handle traffic now and in the future with less delays compared to the existing traffic signal and stop-sign controlled intersections. While the existing bridge will not be changed, the areas on either side will include right of way for pedestrian infrastructure. The Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee conducted a walk audit of this intersection in May 2023; notes from that audit are available in Appendix D.

Public right-of-way in The Plains crosses several jurisdictions:

- Johnson Road is now an Athens Township Road, no longer a county road.
- Connell Road is an Athens Township Road but Lemaster Road is partially in Athens Township and partially in Dover Township.
- Poston Road is a county road.
- S.R. 682 (N. and S. Plains Road) is a state route in two different townships: Athens and Dover.
- The proposed ODOT reconfiguration of the U.S. 33 / S.R. 682 intersection is in Dover Township.

According to the Athens City School District superintendent Tom Gibbs, most students who don't ride a bus to AHS or TPIS arrive by car, which contributes to traffic congestion on Connell Road near TPIS. Gibbs estimates that only about 5-8% (25-45 students) of the total student population walk or ride a bike to school. He noted several factors that likely discourage students and families from walking to school in The Plains:

- Lack of a crosswalk from the first school driveway across to The Plains Community Park
- Lack of a crosswalk with significant markings at the second school entrance, across from the new 911 center
- Lack of a sidewalk on Connell Road on the opposite side of the street as the school
- Lack of pedestrian infrastructure in the neighborhood behind the school
- The narrowness of the sidewalk along Connell Road from SR 682 to TPIS makes pedestrians feel very close to traffic
- The lack of pedestrian or bicycle infrastructure from Athens High School along Johnson Road to SR 682 across from Connell Road

JOHNSON ROAD CORRIDOR MULTI-USE PATH PROJECT

In 2023, the Athens County engineer applied for Transportation Alternatives Program funding and Systemic Safety Program funding to install a multi-use path along the Johnson Road corridor. These funds were awarded in 2024 and the construction timeline is not yet finalized. This will complete an important connection from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway and High School Drive to S.R. 682's sidewalk system in the heart of The Plains. The concrete bike path/ sidewalk will be approximately 1,725 feet long and run parallel to Johnson Road. Pedestrian Lighting is included the full length of the new multi-use path with 12' high poles adjacent to the path. Other safety enhancements include crosswalks; new pavement markings; and road signage. This includes upgrading the crosswalk at Wyngate Drive.

Currently, the "spur path" from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway to The Plains terminates at a parking lot at the entrance to Athens High School. Johnson Road is a busy collector road with Average Daily Traffic of about 1,933 near the South Plains Road (SR 682) intersection. Johnson Road is not a pedestrian friendly or bicycle friendly road, despite being home to a high school and two housing developments that serve senior

citizens. The construction of this project will allow residents access from the existing bike path to the sidewalks along North Plains Road, providing access to a grocery store, restaurants, library, post office, multiple housing developments, neighborhoods, and healthcare services. This multi-use path will provide direct pedestrian access from Athens High School to The Plains Intermediate School; children living in the neighborhoods and housing developments of The Plains would have better pedestrian access to both schools. The Athens City School District has secured funding and is preparing to build a new high school at the current site, assuring that this proposed path will remain a critical connection for the next 50 years.

PREVIOUS SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN

A School Travel Plan was created and a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) application was submitted to the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) in 2013, but The Plains did not receive SRTS funding. In 2022, an AHS teacher / Athens Township Zoning Commission member made a proposal to Athens County to use ARPA funding for pedestrian improvements in The Plains, but those recommendations remain unfunded as well. Both documents are on file at the Athens City-County Health Department. The Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee recommends that any future initiatives start with a review of those documents, as well as the information in the Athens County Active Transportation Plan.

It is important to note that when the previous SRTS application was submitted, the SRTS program did not include high schools. Projects within two miles of high schools are now eligible, which more than doubles the number of eligible students in The Plains' census tract, which encompasses 2.3 miles. Previously only the 530 students attending the elementary school would have been considered in an SRTS application. Now that high schools are considered as well, there are more than 1,200 students being served in this tract.

The Active Transportation Steering Committee requested student radius maps from ODOT. These maps show school locations and student addresses within a two-mile radius and are required for SRTS applications. The radius maps for Athens High School and The Plains Intermediate School are included in this appendix.

COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community members and local officials in The Plains have advocated for more sidewalks and safer walking conditions in the community. These advocates have included residents of Poston Road and Lemaster Road, and the neighborhoods adjacent to those busy roads; staff at The Plains Intermediate School and Athens High School (located in The Plains); the Athens City School District Superintendent; township trustees; and parents of children who attend school in The Plains.

Specifically, community members have called for improvements to walking and biking access to the two schools in The Plains: The Plains Intermediate School (TPIS) and Athens High School (AHS). Approximately 530 students attend TPIS and approximately 713 students attend AHS. These improvements also would create safer walking conditions and more opportunities for physical activity for residents of The Plains.

The following community concerns and opportunities were documented during the 2023-2024 Athens County Active Transportation Plan planning process and in a presentation made to Athens County Commissioners by a member of the Athens Township Zoning Commission.

Concerns include:

- Difficulty walking to The Plains Intermediate School (TPIS), especially during pickup and dropoff times due to traffic congestion. AHS administration noted that safety is a concern for any AHS student walking from the school to any destination on the other side of State Route 682. Some students walk home from school or to TPIS to catch the bus if they miss it at the high school. The lack of sidewalks on Johnson Road and the amount of traffic on SR 682 are the biggest safety concerns.
- Lack of a safe way to walk students from TPIS or AHS to the 29-acre school land lab, located on Lemaster Road, which has no sidewalk or crosswalks. The lab is less than a quarter mile away from TPIS and less than a mile away from AHS and is underutilized in part due to safety concerns.
- The closure of Johnson Road has encouraged more car traffic on Poston and Lemaster roads.
- Lemaster Road is popular for bicyclists and pedestrians because it connects the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway's Beaumont trailhead with The Plains. The road is narrow and sightlines are limited.
- Poston Road also is popular for bicyclists and pedestrians to connect from the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway, and serves as a connector for residents walking from neighborhoods including Adena Park and the Meadows subdivision.
- Drainage issues on Lemaster Road.
- Safety issues for anyone who wants to walk from Poston and Lemaster roads to access The Plains Elementary School and State Route 682's sidewalk system; the narrowness and lack of sight lines on Lemaster is of particular concern.
- There is a proposal to add 58 housing units on Johnson Road across from the Wolf Plains Cemetery, which will increase vehicle traffic on the road and will increase the number of people who want to walk from the housing units to amenities in The Plains.
- The Appalachian Family Health Center / Hopewell Health is under construction on S. Clinton Street, one block south of Johnson Road. This will increase vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel to The Plains. Currently, there are no crosswalks south of the Johnson Road/Connell Road/SR 682 intersection, and pedestrian traffic will likely increase with this healthcare facility. East Second Street and East Fourth Street were mentioned as potential locations to add marked crossings.
- HAPCAP has proposed constructing a HeadStart preschool across from The Plains Volunteer Fire Department on Connell Road, which will increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the number of young children in the area.
- Several homes are under construction in The Plains. Single-family home developers, including Habitat for Humanity of Southeastern Ohio, have expressed interest in additional development. These potential developments would increase population and increase the need for walking and/or bicycling infrastructure.

Opportunities include:

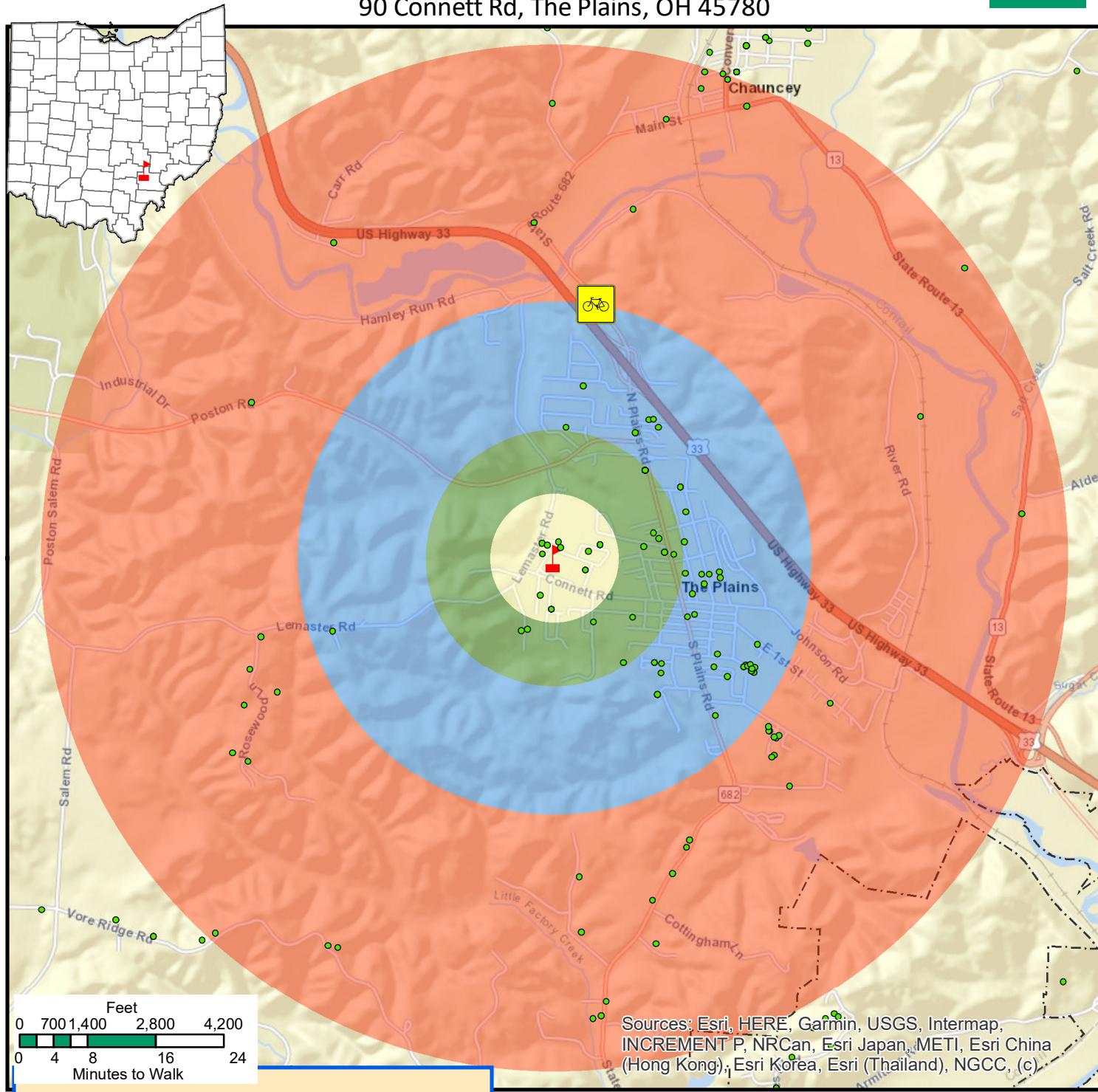
- Revitalizing the land lab for educational and athletic use
- Making it safer for students who live in The Plains, Chauncey and Athens to walk or ride to school at The Plains Intermediate School and Athens High School, particularly since these communities and schools are connected by the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway.
- Creating safe walking routes for transportation and exercise
- Creating a 1-mile trail loop in the land lab, with sidewalk access

- Creating a 2-mile sidewalk walking route in The Plains
- Making a safer connection for pedestrians and bicyclists using the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway at Beaumont

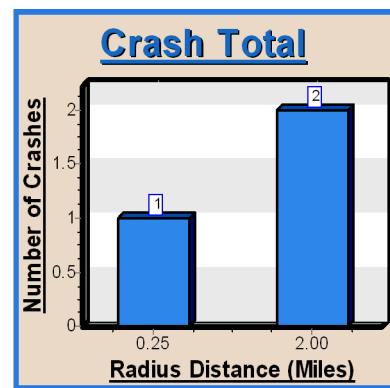
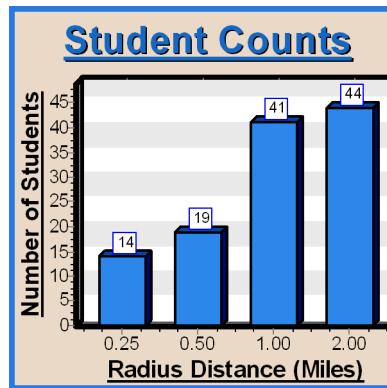
There are many opportunities to connect more pedestrian and bicycling routes from outside The Plains and from neighborhoods in The Plains to both schools and other travel destinations in The Plains.



5/1/2024

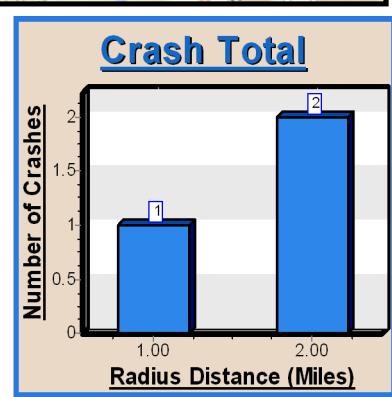
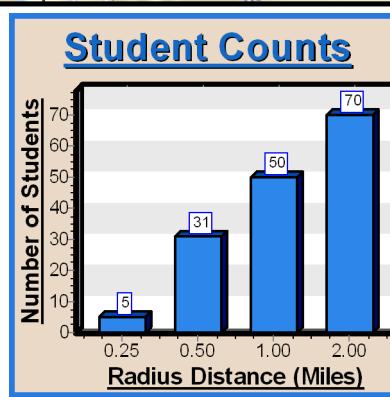
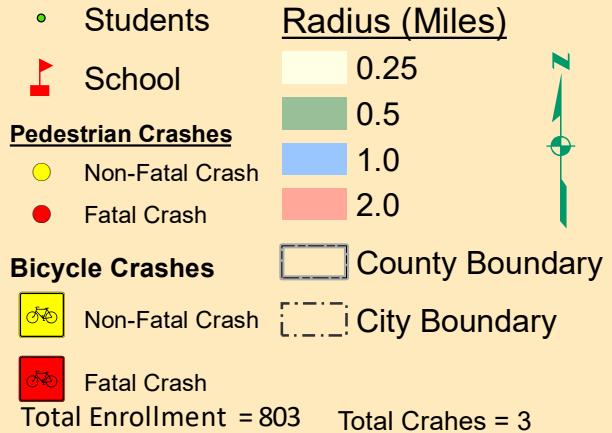
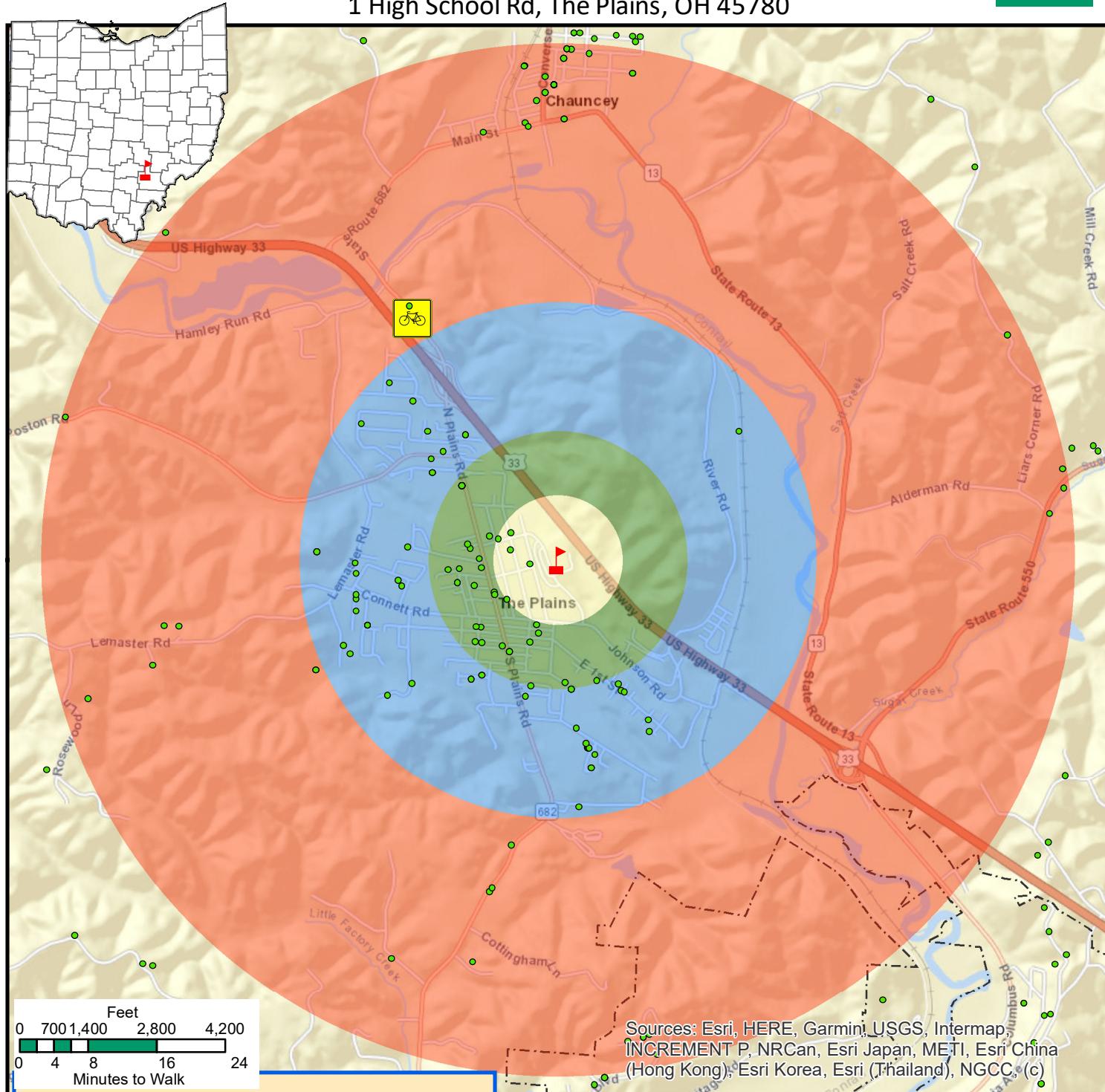


Radius (Miles)	0.25	0.5	1.0	2.0
Students	14	19	41	44
School	1	1	2	2
Pedestrian Crashes	14	19	41	44
Bicycle Crashes	1	1	2	2
Total Enrollment	693	693	693	693
Total Crashes	3	3	3	3



Athens Co

1 High School Rd, The Plains, OH 45780



APPENDIX C: STATE ROUTE 682 WALK AUDIT (ATHENS)

Notes from the August 24, 2023, Athens County Active Transportation Steering Committee Walk Audit of the University Estates / Kershaw Greene / Luhrig / Armitage / 682 / 56 (Union Street) areas in Athens.

PARTICIPANTS

Nick Tepe (Athens County Public Libraries); Meredith Erlewine and Amy Lipka (Athens City-County Health Department); Tia Hysell (Ohio University); Rob Delach and Stephanie Hunter (community members); Laura Olbers (Athens County Planners Office).

OVERVIEW

We wore orange safety vests and pushed one stroller. We started at AEP, walked out onto Luhrig Road, crossed to Kershaw Green parking lot, walked up brand-new sidewalk to just short of 682, crossed to Armitage, walked to intersection with 56, crossed Union, crossed 682 toward Go-Mart, then crossed 56 to walk back to AEP.

The overwhelming feeling was that the corridor needs significant improvements before families move into the new apartment complex – we assume people will want to walk/bike to the nearby playground, ballfields, grocery store, brewery, gas station/convenience store, Larry's Dawg House, hospital, bikeway etc.

Amenities noted by participants along this corridor: Gas station, convenience store, medical marijuana, elementary school nearby, medical offices, playground, ballfields, bikeway and two spurs, brewery/restaurants, sidewalk on Union to get to restaurants, medical offices, pharmacy, grocery store and more.

Note from Bryan Hinkle, Athens County Mobility Coordinator/HAPCAP: Athens Public Transit currently has a bus stop at the bottom of University Estates. There is no safe way to cross SR682 from Kershaw Greene to University Estates. Preliminary feedback from APT is that it is too dangerous to pull into Kershaw Greene and back out of the complex in order to add a stop there. This is a challenge to figure out along with the rest of the pedestrian challenges on this corridor.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS DURING THE WALK

Crossing 682 from Kershaw Greene sidewalk end toward Armitage Road

- New sidewalk from apartments parallel with Luhrig Road does not connect to 682. It ends in some weeds well before the road. Sidewalk is not at grade for accessibility (steep hill).
- There was nowhere to cross to when leaving the new apartment sidewalk -- the sidewalk positions you to be directly across from a grass embankment on the side of the road, which you then must walk along toward town to get to Armitage Road.
- Unclear where to cross at 682/Luhrig/Armitage.
- Luhrig to Armitage crossing is too wide: The angle is too wide, high speed, little visibility due to slope (it's hard to see traffic coming from the RR tracks up toward Armitage/Luhrig).
- At Armitage there is gravel washed into the road shoulder, making the shoulder inaccessible.

- While crossing from the sidewalk at the new apartments toward the grass embankment adjacent to Armitage Road, a passenger in a vehicle screamed “You know they make crosswalks for a reason” (as though we should be in one – but there is not one there to use).
- Best crossing is probably Luhrig then 682 on Southside of Armitage, but Luhrig corner is eased and is too high speed. Sight line is bad if you attempt crossing on north side of Luhrig.
- For someone short (under 5'2") it is a poor sightline from north side of intersection looking toward railraod tracks.
- Also difficult to see across 682 from Armitage to what is coming up Luhrig to the stop sign.
- Luhrig Road to the intersection with 682 is too wide. Intersection needs to shrink to make it feel safe to cross.
- Someone needs to be able to really hustle fast to get across 682.
- Kids from Kershaw Green and University Estates homes, condos, and apartments are likely to become friends at school and want to visit each other, which would require safely crossing 682.

Walking along Route 682

- 682 has loud, high-volume traffic (11 cars per minute, 17 cars per minute).
- Shoulder disappears when approaching intersection (56), sightlines minimal straight across.
- There is NO ROOM for a pedestrian to safely cross the railroad tracks.
- Railroad crossing – challenging – bike path ends at railroad.
- Bridge on 682 feels safest because of space (line painted creates a lot of berm).
- No lighting.



APPENDIX D: ROUTE 682 WALK AUDIT (THE PLAINS)

Notes from the May 22, 2023, Athens County Active Transportation Steering Committee Walk Audit of State Route 682 from BP Gas Station in The Plains to the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway intersection at River Road.

PARTICIPANTS

Ruth Dudding and Meredith Erlewine (Athens City-County Health Department); Tina Wilson, Amy Pfeiffer and Rob Delach (community members); Laura Olbers (Athens County Planners Office); Eric Davis (Ohio Department of Transportation); Christa Myers (HAPCAP); Sherri Oliver (Ohio University Community Health Programs).

OVERVIEW

We wore orange safety vests and pushed one stroller and one wheelchair. We started at Rutland Bottle Gas' retail store, walked to the Hockhocking Adena Bikeway intersection at River Road, then walked to the BP Gas Station in The Plains and back to Rutland.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS DURING THE WALK

- 682 to Bikeway: Almost complete lack of shoulder esp. on West side of road. State should access.
- RoW width and consider adding a wide shoulder or sidewalk on East side of 682 (possibly acquire property if necessary).
- Speed limit change near bikeway is misplaced- It should be after the crossing.
- Bridge: 3' or so on each side of the bridge to walk felt safer than expected. Ideally it might make sense to shift the lanes over to one side to make a wider pedestrian space for cross the bridge.
- The Plains Connection from bridge: Should in places just disappears (crumbles away).
- There aren't any safe crosswalks marked anywhere in this corridor aside from the bikeway.
- Northbound: pavement is good. No shoulder, light traffic.
- Better lighting would help. Most vehicles are paying attention.
- Long drop off on far-side.
- Would love to see Bailey's signs.
- The intersection crossing was confusing.
- Bridge is well maintained. Surface changes at the interchange with bridge/33/582. Roundabouts might help, perhaps painting the jersey barriers on the bridge.
- Disappearing shoulder as we approached the gas station, crumbling shoulder.
- Trying to access the sidewalk was tricky, grates on opposite side of BP clogged. Shoulder is rough.
- Bridge expansions are a little tough, now we don't know which way to go.
- Heading back to Rutland is hard to transition: how do I get to the other side?
- Some drivers were friendly, others seem aggressive because we were in the roadway. No sidewalks between Rutland and bike path.
- On 682 there is little to no shoulder; extremely dangerous for anyone in a stroller or wheelchair.

- Cars either swing into the opposite lane or drove very close to us at a fast speed.
- A cyclist crossed at upper River Road but not on the clearly marked path because he was riding on the road/not on the bikeway.
- The should drops off significantly.
- There is no good time to cross at the light.
- Traffic felt too fast and like the drivers did not know how to handle pedestrians or people wheeling on the side of the road.
- Some friendly and some unfriendly drivers.
- How difficult would it be for scooters?
- No shoulder Southbound. Narrow right of way.
- No high vis crosswalks.
- Steep sideslopes.
- Noise coming off 33 makes it difficult to hear oncoming traffic.

FINDINGS PROVIDED TO ODOT

An Ohio Department of Transportation representative attended and asked us to provide our findings to ODOT, which is preparing to completely reconfigure the SR 682 intersection at US Route 33 in The Plains. We provided an overview of our findings in a letter to ODOT, shown on the next page. Note that the date of the walk audit is incorrect in the letter – it took place on May 22, 2023.



June 27, 2023

Dear Alan, Eric, and others at ODOT,

Thank you for your interest in the observations and comments that came about during the walk audit held by the Athens County Active Transportation Plan Steering Committee on May 16, 2023, along a section of SR 682. The walk audit covered an area between the River Road Bikeway Crossing and the BP Gas Station located in The Plains. At the end of the audit, participants shared their comments in a debriefing exercise. We have compiled a list of the concerns raised by participants for you to review below:

- Bridge & Highway Entrance/Exit Ramps:
 - Participants felt that the bridge was the safest part of the walking exercise. They felt most comfortable with the approximately 3-foot shoulder on either lane. One suggestion that came from the group was to shift the traffic lanes closer to one side to create a wider pedestrian lane for crossing the bridge.
 - The crosswalk areas across the ramps were poorly marked and not well signaled. There was confusion among both pedestrians and drivers alike as to who had the right of way, when it was ideal to cross, etc.
 - While the bridge is well maintained, there are surface changes at the interchange with the bridge at US 33/ SR682. This makes it difficult for pedestrians utilizing a stroller or mobility assistive device.
- Roadway conditions:
 - Between US 33 and River Road, there is an almost complete lack of shoulder. The northbound lane of the roadway has a very steep slope that abuts the edge of the roadway.
 - Pedestrians must choose between walking on the legal side of the road, walking along the little existing shoulder, or walking with the best sight line of oncoming traffic
 - From the bridge to the Plains gas station, parts of the shoulder crumble away.

- o There is no connector from the bridge to the existing sidewalk that begins across the street from Buckley Brothers Feed Store. Trying to access the sidewalk was also difficult for individuals that were utilizing a stroller and wheelchair.
- o While the walk audit was held during daylight hours, participants noted a lack of lighting along the southern section of the SR 682 corridor.
- o Nearing the bikeway cross section, the speed limit increases from 35 MPH to 45 MPH. Participants discussed the possibility of regulating the speed to 35 MPH across the bike lane.
- o The bike lane crossing had no signals for cyclists or pedestrians to warn oncoming traffic.

These are some of the more relevant issues that participants identified during their walking exercise.

We would be more than willing to share actual comments from our feedback forms if that is something you would be interested in. Other comments included but were not limited to friendliness of drivers, signage, and noise from US 33 traffic.

Sincerely,

Meredith Erlewine, Creating Healthy Communities Coordinator, Athens City-County Health Department

Laura Olbers, Athens County Planner

Bryan Hinkle, Athens County Mobility Coordinator

Isla Skinner, COMCorps Member, Athens City-County Health Department

APPENDIX E: STATE BEST PRACTICE POLICY FOR SHOULDERS AND WALKWAYS

This resource from the Federal Highway Administration highlights three state agencies that have implemented policies and plans that promote the inclusion of paved shoulders and walkways. Although paved shoulders are not a substitute for well-designed pedestrian or bicycle facilities, they can provide a place to walk or roll where sidewalks and pathways are either not feasible or until ideal infrastructure is installed.



State Best Practice Policy for Shoulders and Walkways

FHWA Safety Program

Introduction

Safety is the number one priority for the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and it's the agency's policy to provide safe and effective pedestrian accommodation wherever possible. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) encourages the use of specific proven pedestrian safety countermeasures that can help achieve local, State and National safety goals. One of those countermeasures is the inclusion of walkways and paved shoulders. This flyer highlights three agencies: New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) that have implemented policies and plans that promote the inclusion of paved shoulders and walkways.

All State and local agencies are encouraged to consider providing and maintaining paved shoulders or walkways along both sides of streets and highways in urban areas, particularly near school zones and transit locations, and where there is frequent pedestrian activity.¹

A **walkway** is defined as a continuous way designated for pedestrians and separated from motor vehicle traffic by a space or barrier. A **shoulder** provides a gravel or paved highway area for pedestrians to walk next to the roadway, particularly in rural areas where sidewalks and pathways are not feasible.

State DOT Example

NYSDOT

In New York, pedestrians are permitted to use the shoulders of most State highways, with the exception of interstates, parkways, and other similar controlled-access highways where they are specifically prohibited. As a result, the New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) *Highway Design Manual* includes considerations that designers need to make shoulders pedestrian friendly when shoulders will be used as pedestrian facilities. The policy and its implementing design standards are intended to address the requirements of the Title 23 CFR 652.5 which requires pedestrians to be given full consideration on all Federal Aid projects. Below is an excerpt from the pedestrian facilities design chapter that defines when shoulders should be included:



Photo Credit: Sprinkle Consulting

When accommodation of pedestrian travel is warranted, then pedestrian facilities should be provided. The preferred facility for pedestrian travel along a road is a sidewalk.

Shoulders are not substitutes for a well-designed pedestrian facility. However, there may occasionally be a need to design shoulders as walkways where roadside space is constrained... When shoulders will be used as pedestrian facilities, the designer should decide whether it is practicable for pedestrians to walk facing traffic or if provisions should be made for them to walk in either direction along one side of the road. The decision should be based on safety, e.g., the ability to cross the road safely, and other considerations.²



State DOT Example

PennDOT

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has adopted design standards specifically to make shoulders accessible. Along some roadways, sidewalks are not feasible and pedestrian use is expected to be only occasional. While some transportation agencies install paved shoulders along these roadways, PennDOT goes the extra mile for pedestrians. To better provide for pedestrians who may need to walk on these shoulders, PennDOT constructs the shoulders to be compliant with the (draft) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines.³ Cross slopes are kept to a 2% maximum and detectable warning strips are installed at crosswalks.



Photo Credit: Michael Ronkin

State DOT Example

ODOT

In 1971, the State of Oregon legislature passed the "Bike Bill"⁴ ushering in a new era of non-motorized facility construction. The Bill's goal was to create safer bicycling facilities across the state but the Bill also requires the construction of sidewalks or walkways when a road is built or rebuilt. The following is an excerpt from the Oregon State Bicycle and Pedestrian plan on the different types of walkways:

Rural Walkways

In sparsely populated areas, the shoulders of rural roads usually accommodate pedestrians. There are, however, roadways outside urban areas where the urban character creates a need for sidewalks...Where sidewalks are not provided, shoulders should be wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists.

Urban Walkways

The appropriate facilities for pedestrians are sidewalks. A sidewalk provides positive separation from traffic, an all-weather surface and access for the disabled. They are readily identifiable by both pedestrians and motorists.

Arterials and Major Collectors

Sidewalks must be provided on both sides of all arterial and collector streets, unless there are physical limitations and land use characteristics that render a sidewalk unsuitable on one side.

Minor Collectors and Local Streets

Sidewalks on both sides of the street are the appropriate facility. There is a point below which sidewalks on both sides of a local street may not be critical: e.g. on short dead-end streets with few potential residences and with no access to other facilities.⁵

Overcoming Implementation Challenges

The implementation of these policies has encountered some resistance for reasons ranging from budget concerns to maintenance in the field. Each state has addressed these concerns in order to facilitate their inclusion in roadway projects.

In New York, there were two primary concerns: availability of required right-of-way and cross-slope. Resistance to implementing the policy came from the regional designers who are responsible for designing the shoulders. In some cases, where there is very limited right-of-way and significant slopes to swales adjacent to the roadway, it could be impractical to add pavement. When such a determination is made, the New York policy states the reasons should be fully documented in the Project Scoping Report/Design Report. There were also drainage concerns as the cross slope for a paved shoulder is typically six percent but when the shoulders are installed for pedestrian use, the allowed cross slope is two percent. There was concern that the minimal cross slope could impede water flow across the shoulder allowing sediment to accumulate resulting in the loss of a usable shoulder. Evaluation of paved shoulders over time has mitigated these operational concerns.

In Oregon, the resistance is primarily budgetary. When a roadway is being resurfaced, only the travel lanes may be repaved. Resurfacing or pavement preservation projects are tracked using dollars/mile. Adding or resurfacing shoulders decreases the miles of resurfacing that can be implemented within the available budget. Likewise, the policy of maintenance paving offers no incentive to add shoulders. If lane miles paved is one of an agency's performance measures, and adding shoulders does not increase miles paved, the agency is essentially penalized for paving shoulders. While these budgetary concerns are valid, they can be overcome by the wide range of benefits that paved shoulders and walkways can provide – such as reducing pedestrian crashes and reducing shoulder maintenance requirements.



Photo Credit: Michael Ronkin

Benefits of Shoulders and Walkways

FHWA encourages the inclusion of walkways and shoulders to create safer pedestrian environments. Pedestrians killed while “walking along the roadway” account for almost eight percent of all pedestrians killed in traffic crashes.⁶ Many of these tragedies are preventable. Providing walkways separated from the travel lanes could help to prevent up to 88 percent of these “walking along roadway crashes.”⁷ Widening paved shoulders also provide numerous safety benefits for motorists as well as benefits for pedestrians including:

- Reducing numerous crash types⁸
 - » Head on crashes (15%-75% reported reduction)
 - » Sideswipe crashes (15%-41%)
 - » Fixed object crashes (29%-49%)
 - » Pedestrian “walking along roadway” crashes (71%)
- Improving roadway drainage
- Increasing effective turning radii at intersections
- Reducing shoulder maintenance requirements
- Providing emergency stopping space for broken down vehicles
- Providing space for maintenance operations and snow storage
- Providing an increased level of comfort for bicyclists⁹

Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Guidance Memorandum on Consideration and Implementation of Proven Safety Countermeasures (Washington, DC: July 2008). <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/memo071008/>
- 2 New York State Department of Transportation, “Ch 18.6.2 Use of Shoulders as Pedestrian Facilities,” in Highway Design Manual, (Albany, NY: 2006) p. 18-20. https://www.nysdot.gov/divisions/engineering/design/dqab/hdm/hdm-repository/chapt_18.pdf
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For more information and resources on pedestrian and bicycle safety, please visit:

http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/