

**THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY  
COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**

**SUBJECT:** TSPLOST 2023 Project 11, East Athens MLK Parkway Oconee River Greenway Trail – Design Services Amendment for Multi-Phase Design Services Contract with Garver, LLC

**DATE:** April 20, 2026

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Approve a Design Services Amendment for Multi-Phase Design Services Contract increase the TSPLOST 2023, Project 11 – East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail Design Services Contract in the amount of \$2,000,000 to support the cost of Engineering efforts for the project for Garver, LLC.

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**BUDGET INFORMATION:**

REVENUES:

\$2,408,000	TSPLOST 2023, Project 01 – All Tiers
\$400,000	FHWA/GDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)
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\$2,808,000	Total Revenue

EXPENSES:

CAPITAL:

\$743,552	Expensed and Encumbered
\$15,000	Designated Public Art
\$163,406	Designated Misc./PM Fees/ Testing Permitting
\$1,486,042	Designated Construction & Construction Contingency
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\$400,000	Available for Design Services Amendment ACCGov Match

FUNDING SOURCE: TSPLOST 2023 Program Funds  
FHWA TAP Grant

**COMMISSION ACTION REQUESTED ON:** June 2, 2026

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**PURPOSE:**

To request that the Mayor and Commission:

- a. Approve a Design Services Amendment for Multi-Phase Design Services Contract increase in the amount of \$2,000,000 supporting required Georgia Department of Transportation Plan Development Process Deliverables and special studies reports for the TSPLOST 2023 Project 11 East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail project to Garver, LLC (Design Consultant);

- b. Authorize staff to request and accept an amendment to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP Grant) to fund the Design Services Amendment in the amount of \$2,000,000 for the TSPLOST 2023 Project 11 East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail project; and,
- c. Authorize the Mayor and appropriate staff to execute all related documents.

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**HISTORY:**

1. On March 6, 2018, Mayor and Commission (M&C) approved the Project Concept for the East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail as part of the TSPLOST 2018, Project 05, Sub-Projects #9, but funding for the concept was dependent on available TSPLOST 2018 Project funds.
2. On May 18, 2022, staff received notice that Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) had published a call for TAP projects for fiscal year 2023 with a grant deadline of June 17, 2022.
3. On May 24, 2022, the voters of Athens-Clarke County approved the TSPLOST 2023 Program Referendum, which included the Project 11 - East Athens MLK Parkway Oconee River Greenway Trail.
4. On May 31, 2022, staff recommended to the Manager's Office the East Athens MLK Parkway Oconee River Greenway Trail as an ideal candidate project to seek TAP grant funding.
5. On June 17, 2022, staff submitted the TAP grant to GDOT to meet the grant application deadline of June 17, 2022.
6. On August 2, 2022, M&C approved the TAP grant application and accepted the grant, if awarded. This action did not include adoption of a budget ordinance to permit the grant funds to be designated in the appropriate account.
7. On January 13, 2023, ACCGov received confirmation that that the grant application for East Athens MLK Parkway Oconee River Greenway Trail project was selected for award.
8. On March 12, 2024, GDOT entered into a Project Framework Agreement (PFA) with ACCGov for the East Athens MLK Parkway Oconee River Greenway Trail project to support Preliminary Engineering Services with a revenue from FHWA Funding and required Local Funding match.
9. On October 11, 2024, M&C approved a multi-phase contract with Garver, LLC, to provide Preliminary Engineering & Design Services in an amount not to exceed \$500,000 as the Most Qualified firm.

10. Between October 2024 and February 2025, multi-phase contact with Task Order #1 was finalized and executed per GDOT procurement guidelines to support the initial Concept Development Phase.
11. On March 12, 2025, staff was notified by Purchasing that, in order to process a purchase order for Garver, LLC. utilizing the grant funding, a budget ordinance would need to be adopted by the M&C for the TAP grant funds, given the previous action by M&C to accept the grant funds inadvertently did not include a budget ordinance.
12. On March 17, 2025, GDOT requested Garver to advance reports supporting the NEPA process which had previously been identified as a future effort during the ACCGov Preliminary Plan phase.
13. On May 6, 2025, M&C approved a Supplemental Design Services Contract Amendment in the amount of \$73,777.00 supporting required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies and reports as requested per History Item #12. This approval brought the Multi-phase Master Contract value to \$573,777.00 to complete the Concept Phase and NEPA Studies.
14. On September 4, 2025, ACCGov hosted a Public Information Open House at the Lyndon House Community Room and hosted a project website.
15. Between September 4, 2025 and October 5, 2025, interested parties had the opportunity to provide comments regarding the project alignment. The project's website received 53 responses in total and 36 people attended the in-person open house. A total of 63 responses were submitted with 54 in support, 4 opposed, 1 uncommitted, and 4 expressed conditional support.
16. On March 23, 2026, Georgia Department of Transportation held the Project Concept Team meeting to review associated alignments, reports and studies with recommendation to approve through the GDOT PDP process.

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**FACTS & ISSUES:**

1. The proposed trail section will connect the multi-use trail section along MLK between North Avenue and East Broad Street/First Street where no bike facilities exist. An existing sidewalk is continuous on the east side of MLK between North Avenue and East Broad Street/First Street. The Project Concept for this trail section was originally approved by M&C (History #1) as part of the TSPLOST 2018, Project 05, Sub-Projects #9 but funding for the concept was dependent on available TSPLOST 2018 Project funds. However, the TSPLOST 2018 Project funds could not support the MLK Greenway and was programmed for the TSPLOST 2023, Project 11 (History #3) as an individual project and conceptual as shown:



2. The current project alignment and concept (See Attachment #1) generally proposes to construct a 10-12 foot wide, concrete and boardwalk multi-use trail between North Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street/E. Broad Street between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and the North Oconee River connecting to the existing Oconee River greenway at both ends. Other features currently included are: trailhead parking lot expansion, overlooks at the river, spur trail to the Cook and Brother Armory Earthworks site and associated typical trail amenities.
3. By utilizing the TAP grant and the GDOT Project Development Process (PDP), ACCGov will be eligible to apply for additional design services and construction funding via the GDOT TAP grant program, hopefully securing a large portion of the overall design and construction cost with SPLOST funding as the matching source.
4. In order for ACCGov to apply for future TAP grant funding for construction, GDOT requires the project to undergo the GDOT PDP during the Engineering phase which includes Concept Development, Preliminary Plans, Right of Way acquisition, and Final Construction Plans to

ensure all required obligations are met prior to awarding a secondary grant for construction funds.

- The current GDOT value for the Concept Engineering Phase is \$573,777 with a required 20% local match:

\$400,000 – TAP Funding (80%): FHWA/GDOT  
 \$100,000 – Local Funding (20% match): TSPLOST 2023 Project 11  
\$ 73,777 – Local Funding Only: TSPLOST 2023 Project 11  
 \$573,777 – Total Current Funding (100%)

- The final local match value will be determined based on the preliminary and final Engineering Design Services contracted to achieve GDOT approval to submit for construction grant funding. Staff estimates the overall Design services contract value is approximately \$2,573,777 (an additional \$2,000,00 increase to the Master Design Services Contract value authorization). This is an hourly no to exceed value contract so any hours not used to fulfil the design process will not be invoiced by the designer. Final negotiated hours will be dependent upon final alignment, structural systems components, ancillary amenities such as parking lot expansion, and other undefined work to be identified during the preliminary and final plan phase.
- The additional request to GDOT to fund the Preliminary and Final Engineer Phases under the TAP grant will reduce ACCGov’s design services expenditure to the required 20% match.
- The table below shows the estimated project cost with the anticipated funding per organization with ACCGov’s match funded by the TSPLOST 2023 Project 11 MLK Parkway Greenway Project:

Budget Item	Estimated Cost	GDOT Funding	ACCGov Funding
Project Concept	\$500,000	\$400,000	\$100,000
NEPA Studies Supplement	\$73,777	\$0	\$73,777
Preliminary & Final Design	\$2,000,000	\$1,600,000	\$400,000
Right-of-Way*	\$0	\$0	\$0
Construction (includes 10% Cont.)	\$4,800,000	\$3,840,000	\$960,000
Public Art	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000
Fees, Testing, PM Fees	\$165,000	\$0	\$165,000
Budget Sub-total	\$7,553,777	\$5,840,000	\$1,713,777
Project Contingency	\$750,000	\$0	\$750,000
Budget Totals**	\$8,303,777	\$5,840,000	\$2,463,777

\*All construction anticipated to be on existing ACCGov owned property, ACCGov ROW, or State of GA property.

\*\*The current TSPLOST 2023 Project #11 Local Funding Revenue is \$2,408,000. The current anticipated ACCGov Budget totals of \$2,463,777 is \$55,777 greater than Local Revenue Funding. At this time, Staff's opinion that any necessary budget amendments should be addressed upon GDOT Grant funding supplements.

9. Design effort to date, has focused Concept Development and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies and reporting and upon completion of the Concept Team Meeting (History #14) provided proper guidance to develop the scope for Preliminary and Final Engineer Phases.
10. Design Services for the Preliminary and Final Engineer Phase Task Orders will support required Engineering Plans and approvals per the PDP process:
  - Global Slope Stability Analysis between Fourth Street and Odd Street
  - Retaining Wall Foundation Investigation and recommendation
  - Structural Scouring Analysis for Retaining Wall design
  - River Hydrological and Hydraulic Analysis
  - Floodway and Floodplain Study
  - MLK Parkway Lane reduction
  - Stormdrain system development
  - Shared Use Path Final Design
  - Finalize Grading Plans
  - Coordination with GDOT
  - Coordination and design review with CSX RailroadAll work shall be done in accordance with the current edition of the GDOT PDP.
11. During the concept phase, the design team identified slope stability concerns between Fourth Street and Odd Street where the stream bank along and under MLK Parkway shows potential signs of distress and lateral movement. While no immediate threat was assessed, discussion between the design team and ACCGov Transportation and Public Works Department yielded agreement that this condition should be evaluated further and appropriately addressed as part of the shared path project.
12. Addressing the slope stability issues concurrent with the shared use path provides the most economical solution by allowing ACCGov to request additional design and construction funds from GDOT to support a joint project affiliated with the shared use path since the shared path will require some level of retaining wall structure.
13. Staff's opinion that the slope stability issues will need to be addressed in the future, even if the shared use path project was not completed. And if left unaddressed, could cause slope failure along MLK Parkway adjacent to the Oconee River.
14. The current design construction concept cost estimate to support the project is \$4,800,000.

15. Future Budget Ordinance amendments will be brought to the M&C for approval based upon agreed upon supplemental funds with GDOT.

16. GDOT Process Schedule:

- GDOT Management Concept Report Approval: June 2026
- Engineering Phase Completion: June 2028
- No Right-of-way acquisition is anticipated
- Utility Relocation Phase: June 2029
- Construction Award: June 2030

17. Local funding responsibility (non-Construction/non-ROW items) for recent Projects that utilized GDOT PDP for GDOT funding support include:

- North Chase Street: \$1,758,301
- Fowler Mill Road Bridge: \$1,386,856
- West Broad Street Roundabout: \$1,705,314

18. This recommendation supports the following ACCGov Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy:

- Safely Move Around Athens Goal, Strategy A: *Improve, expand, and maintain sidewalks, shared-use paths, and bike facilities to provide greater opportunities for residents to use active transportation safely*

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**OPTIONS:**

1. Mayor and Commission:

- a. Approve a Design Services Amendment for Multi-Phase Design Services Contract increase in the amount of \$2,000,000 supporting required Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Plan Development Process (PDP) Deliverables and special studies reports for the TSPLOST 2023 Project 11 East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail project to Garver, LLC (Design Consultant);
- b. Authorize staff to request and accept an amendment to the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP Grant) to fund the Design Services Amendment in the amount of \$2,000,000 for the TSPLOST 2023 Project 11 East Athens MLK Oconee River Greenway Trail project; and,
- c. Authorize the Mayor and appropriate staff to execute all related documents.

2. Mayor and Commission deny the Design Services Supplement.

3. Mayor and Commission defined option.

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**DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Option #1 a, b, & c

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**DEPARTMENT:** Capital Projects Department

Prepared by: J. Derek Doster, SPLOST & TSPLOST Program Management



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Josh Hawkins  
Capital Projects Director

04/20/2026

Date



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Alex Bond  
Interim Leisure Services  
Director

4/28/2026

Date

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**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMENTS:**

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**ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION:** Option #1 a, b, & c



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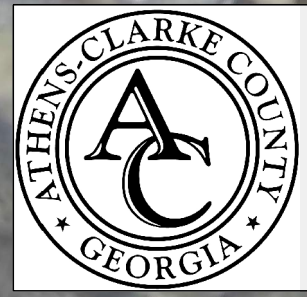
Bob Cowell, Manager

05/13/2026

Date

**Attachments:**

Attachment #1: Project Alignment and Concept

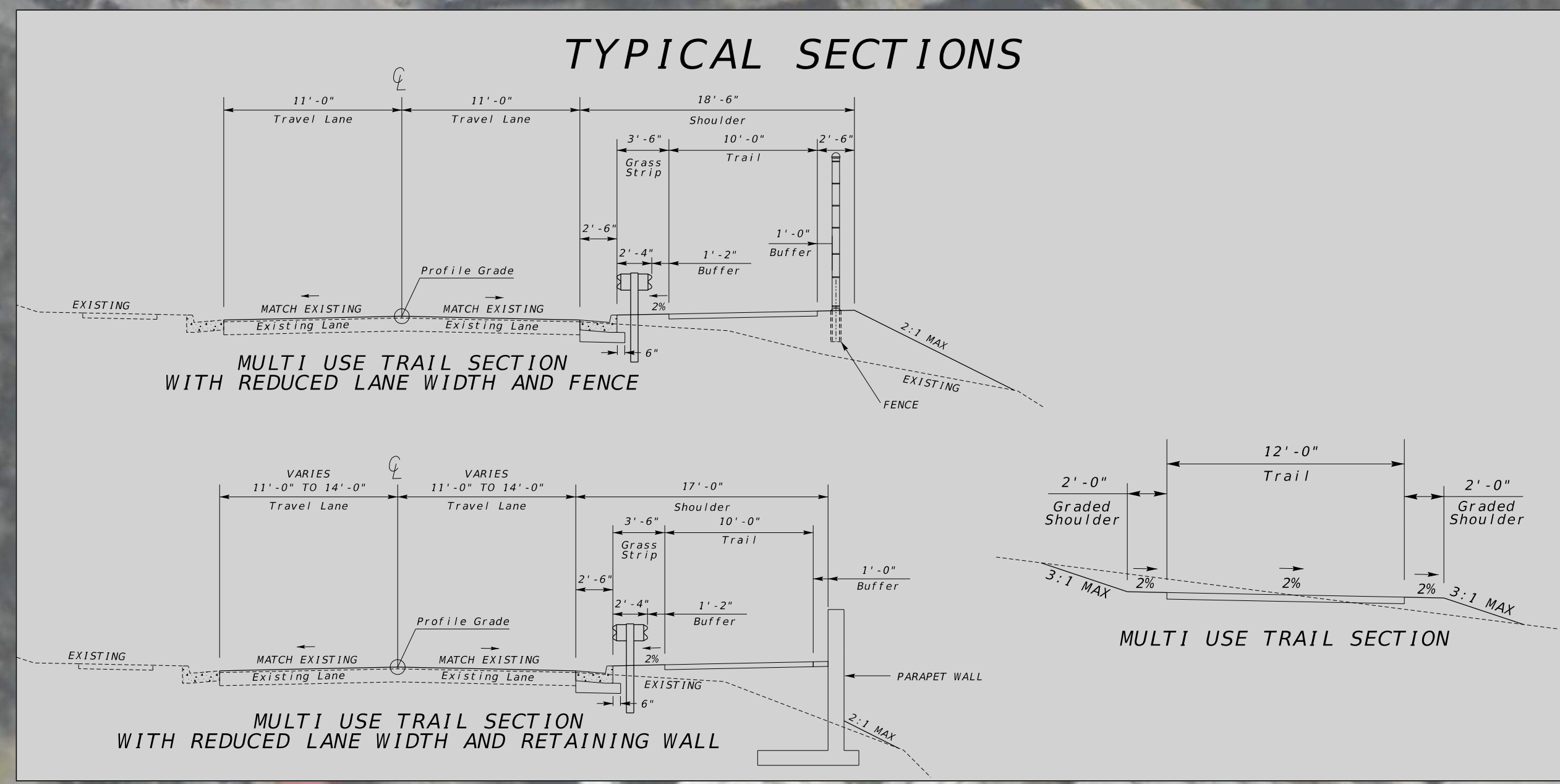
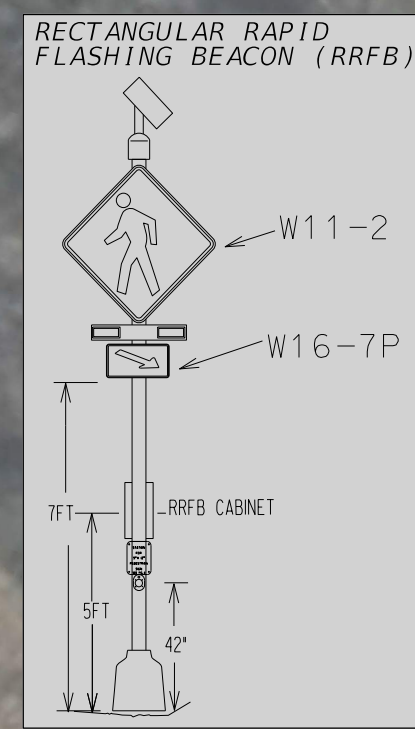
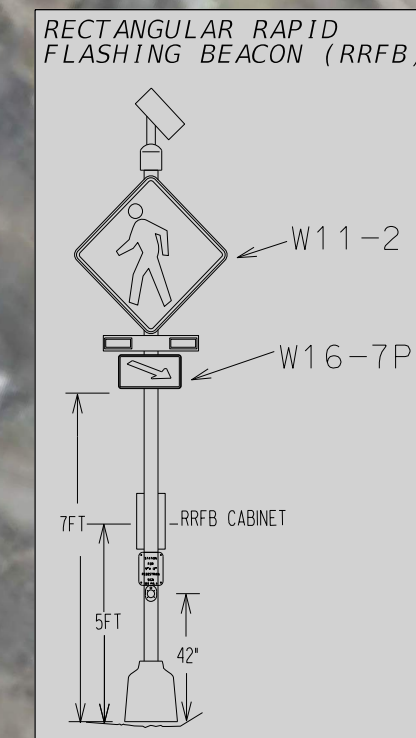
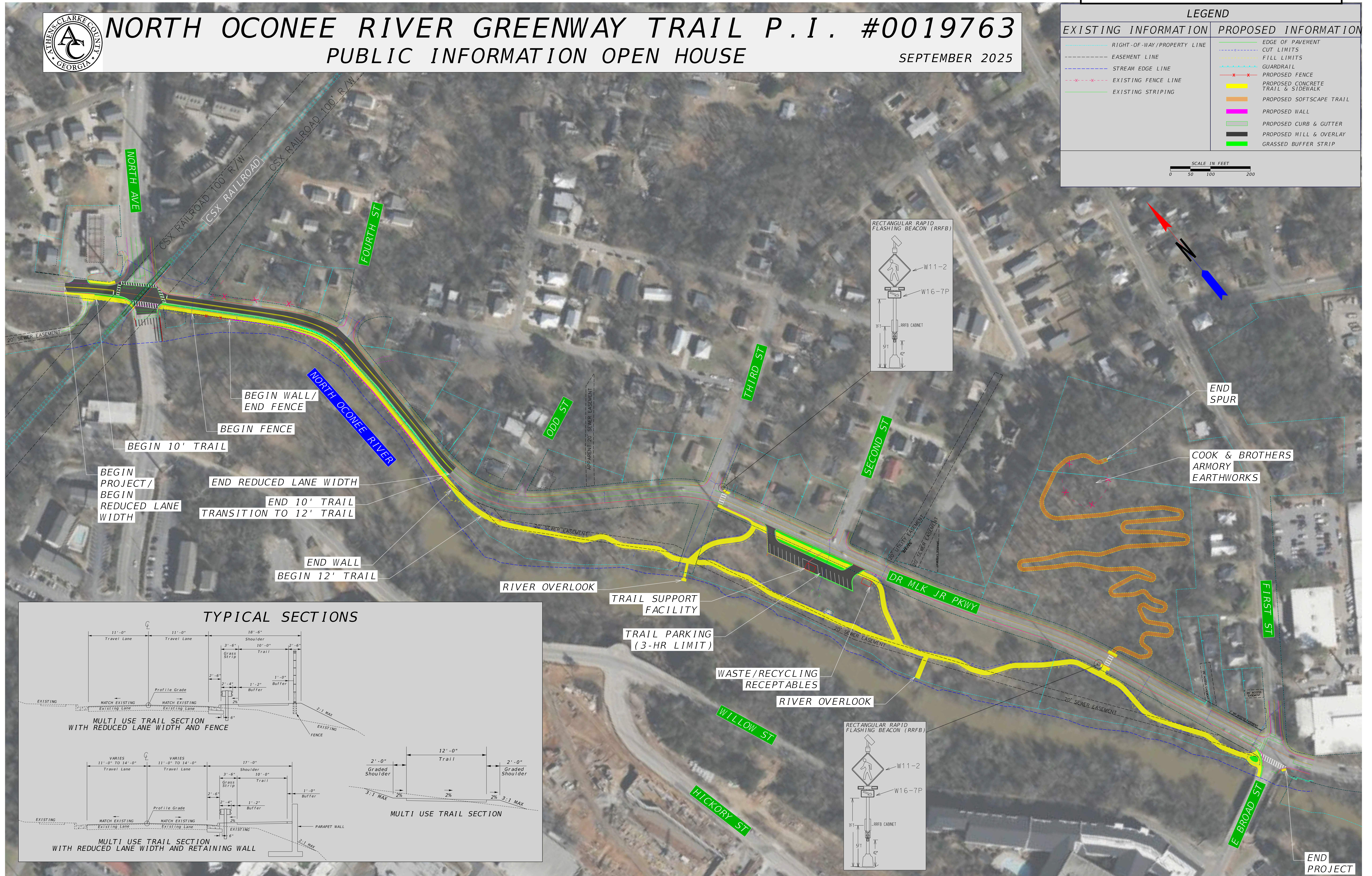
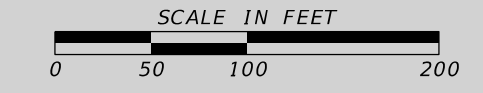


## NORTH OCONEE RIVER GREENWAY TRAIL P.I. #0019763

### PUBLIC INFORMATION OPEN HOUSE

SEPTEMBER 2025

LEGEND	
EXISTING INFORMATION	PROPOSED INFORMATION
RIGHT-OF-WAY/PROPERTY LINE	EDGE OF PAVEMENT
EASEMENT LINE	CUT LIMITS
STREAM EDGE LINE	GUARDRAIL
EXISTING FENCE LINE	PROPOSED FENCE
EXISTING STRIPING	PROPOSED CONCRETE TRAIL & SIDEWALK
	PROPOSED SOFTSCAPE TRAIL
	PROPOSED WALL
	PROPOSED CURB & GUTTER
	PROPOSED MILL & OVERLAY
	GRASSED BUFFER STRIP



END PROJECT