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CHAPTER SIX

IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

A wide range of contributors have been involved in the planning, design, and implementation process for the Silver Comet Trail years before this study began. In order to determine the steps necessary to begin implementing additional trail connections to the Silver Comet Trail, it is important to recognize that the recommendations within this plan will require continued leadership and dedication to trail development on the part of a variety of agencies. Equally critical, and perhaps more challenging, will be meeting the need for a recurring source of revenue. Even small amounts of local funding could be very useful and beneficial when matched with outside sources. Most importantly, the local governments within the northwest Georgia region need not accomplish the recommendations of this Plan by acting alone; success will be realized through collaboration with state and federal agencies, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.

Given the present day economic challenges faced by local governments (as well as their state, federal, and private sector partners), it is difficult to know what financial resources will be available to implement this plan. However, there are still important actions to take in advance of major investments, including key organizational steps, the initiation of education and safety programs, and the development of strategic lower-cost trail projects. Following through on these priorities will allow the key stakeholders to be prepared for regional trail development over time while taking advantage of strategic opportunities, both now and as opportunities arise.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Every trail project is unique, and, therefore, it is important to develop an implementation schedule that will meet the needs of the community while also taking into account budgetary constraints. Significant streamlining occurs when various phases of construction are consolidated into larger projects, and design

Table 6.1 Estimated Project Timeline

PROCESS	DESCRIPTION	CRITICAL PATH TASKS (MOS)	CONCURRENT TASKS (MOS)
RFQ	Request for Qualifications and Consultant Selection	3	
Contracting	Contracting between the City and the Consultant	2	
Survey	Detailed survey of the project area	2	
Preliminary Design	Preliminary Design of the Project	3	
Review	Review of Preliminary Design by Regulatory Agencies	3	
Permits	Application for local, state, federal permits		18
Final Design	Final Design of the project		2
Review	Review of Final Design by Regulatory Agencies		1
CD's	Preparation of Construction Documents	2	
Bidding	Soliciting public bids for the project	2	
Contracting	Contracting between the City and the Builder	1	
Construction	Construction of the rail trail	8 - 18	
TOTAL TIME FOR ONE PHASE OF DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION: 26-36 MONTHS			

considered to be on the “critical path” are shown in the second column from the right.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Generally, greenways and trails are funded through a combination of local, state, and federal sources. Many funding programs require a minimum local match depending on the type of funding utilized. In some instances communities have successfully leveraged grant money from private foundations or state programs as a match for other funding sources. In-kind technical support is also available from

federal and state agencies, such as the National Park Service.

Greenway and trail proponents should pursue a variety of funding sources for construction. Reliance on a single funding source can lead to a boom/bust cycle of construction as funding levels shift with the political winds. “Appendix A: Funding Sources” provides comprehensive information on funding programs that are typically used in Georgia for trail development, spur trail connections, or for the implementation of associated trail features and amenities.

and permitting for the entire project can be reviewed as one project. In the event that connections are not able to be funded as a single construction project and must be phased by section, a general schedule for the implementation of a single phase or section can be seen by looking at “typical” time frames for the various processes that projects must go through. These time frames are generally consistent, regardless of the size of a particular project. The general schedule presented in Table 6.1 is based on similar greenway project schedules. Since some of these processes occur simultaneously, the times listed are not cumulative. Items

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION STEPS

The recommendations in previous sections provide the framework for the plan, while the following action steps provide a guide for the identified agencies and jurisdictions to further refine. It is important for positive, successful action to take place in order to build momentum and gain support on a regional level.

STEP 1: ADOPT THE SILVER COMET TRAIL PLANNING STUDY AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS.

Through adoption, the *Silver Comet Trail Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis* becomes an official planning document of the region. Adoption procedures vary from community to community depending on existing plans and policies. In each jurisdiction, the planning board (as applicable) should review and recommend the plan to its governing body, which in turn must consider and officially incorporate the recommended trails of this plan into its land-use plans. The following entities should adopt this plan:

- Northwest Georgia Regional Commission (NWGRC)
- Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)
- Polk County Board of Commissioners
- City of Rockmart
- City of Dallas
- Paulding County Transportation
- Chattanooga
- Cobb County



Silver Comet Trail connections will be constructed in phases.

- City of Atlanta
- Rome/Floyd County Planning Department

The plan should be reviewed and adopted by the appropriate approving body. The managing agency can then use this document to apply for funding.

STEP 2: CONTINUE ONGOING PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS FOR PROPOSED SILVER COMET TRAIL CONNECTIONS.

An important element of success in obtaining support is to involve the public in

the recommended trail connections. Before proceeding with design, it will be necessary to build grass roots support and a broad constituency for each planning effort from design through construction and operation.

Public support regarding the benefits of the trail should also be developed within the local business community, among any local environmental or recreational groups, and with any groups related to travel or tourism (see Chapter 1 for a list of project stakeholders). It may be necessary to meet with individual landowners and local business owners in addition to holding community meetings. These meetings can serve to publicize the broad benefits of trails as well as the specific local benefits of the Silver Comet Trail. They also serve as a forum to address potential concerns and issues. Additional ways to involve the public and systematically garner support for the project include:

- Encourage existing non-profit groups to support the mission of creating the project
- Seek positive media stories that illustrate the benefits of the trail project to the wider community
- Present the project at community meetings, civic group meetings, and committee meetings, similar to what is being done through Bike! Walk! Northwest Georgia!

- Organize a trail event on the Silver Comet Trail to get the public excited about what future connections will become
- Identify a high-profile local champion such as an elected official or community leader

This work has already been commenced by the many stakeholders involved since the project's inception. This is an important element of involving the public, as the Silver Comet Trail has established a group of steadfast supporters of the project who can provide invaluable assistance in supporting future connections and aspects of the project.

STEP 3: FORM A REGIONAL TRAIL MANAGEMENT AGENCY.

The Silver Comet Trail is a multi-jurisdictional project traversing three counties and multiple municipalities. Future connections will increase these numbers. One centralized authority is needed to plan, develop, and maintain facilities, as well as interface with the general public.

For successful implementation and operations, the Silver Comet Trail's expansion will require regional management. The careful creation of a Regional Parks and Trails Authority would include a cooperative effort with the NWGRC and ARC.

The proposed concept for a Regional Parks and Trails Authority is to start small, with one model project – the Silver Comet Trail

– and establish good working relationships between various jurisdictions with regard to this pilot project. The following proposal outlines the structure for a Regional Parks and Trails Authority that would handle the day-to-day operations of the Silver Comet Trail only. The proposed structure and responsibilities could be expanded over time to include other jurisdictions within the northwest GA region, Atlanta, and Chattanooga area, as well as other parks, trails, and open space projects. The proposal is modeled after the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority¹, which has successfully managed a number of parks and recreational facilities for more than 50 years.

Operations and maintenance refers to specific day-to-day tasks and programs performed to assure resources and facilities are kept in good, safe, usable condition. This begins with sound design, durable components, and a comprehensive management plan. The management plan should be embraced by the entities responsible for maintaining the trail network at the beginning of the implementation process. In addition, community groups, residents, business owners, developers, and other stakeholders should be engaged in the long-term stewardship of the resources preserved and enhanced by the Silver Comet Trail and its connections.

Figure 6.1 Silver Comet Trail Regional Management Agency





Additional trail connections will involve multiple agencies.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

For a successful trail facility to be developed, it is critical for those involved in the operations and management of the Silver Comet Trail to understand their role in supporting and managing the trail. The Silver Comet Trail and its spurs will be developed and maintained by separate jurisdictions. Figure 6.1 illustrates the organizational structure for operating and managing the existing trail and future connections. Members of the Regional Parks and Trails Authority would be responsible for making policy decisions and establishing a line of two-way communication. They would convey to other members the interests of their jurisdiction, and convey activities of the

Authority back to their localities. Members would work together on a voluntary, cooperative basis and would meet quarterly.

Meetings would be open to the public, providing local land owners and trail users a forum to address issues and concerns regarding cross-access, vegetation control, illegal corridor use, and daily operations. Individuals and organizations wishing to use the Silver Comet Trail for special events would also require the approval of the Regional Parks and Trails Authority. Listed below are the key departments and organizations that will play a role in the implementation, maintenance, and management of the Silver Comet Trail as part of the Regional Parks and Trails Authority.

NWGRC AND ARC

- Coordination for transportation grant funding. In the event additional coordination is needed for other roles, NWGRC and ARC could serve as a facilitator of meetings, especially if it involves the Mayors or City/Town Managers of each jurisdiction.

COBB, PAULDING, POLK AND FLOYD COUNTY

- Each county effected by the Silver Comet Trail and its connections would have the overall responsibility for trail development and maintenance, with a supporting role from the PATH Foundation. The counties will need to work closely with the Planning Department in the design development

of trails within each community.

- NWGRC and ARC will be the facilitator for this shared role.
- Routine and remedial maintenance along existing and future trail connections.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS

- Scheduling events, marketing, etc. Parks and Recreation Departments would work closely with Commerce and Tourism departments. NWGRC and ARC can facilitate these meetings to get things started.
- Jointly, volunteers could be coordinated for various tasks, such as guided trail walks, seasonal clean ups, etc.

ROLE OF CITY POLICE DEPARTMENTS

- The City Police Departments should assist the Parks and Recreation Departments with patrolling and law enforcement for existing and future Silver Comet Trail lands and facilities.

ROLE OF COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENTS

- Similarly, the County Sheriff's Departments should assist with patrolling of the Silver Comet Trail and associated facilities.
- For future trails, as part of the public involvement process, local officers should be part of steering committees or project task forces to provide safety and security oversight during design.

PLANNING DEPARTMENTS

- The Planning Departments should provide

support for the Silver Comet Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis and assistance with future implementation of the system. This can be accomplished by defining future phases within related planning effort, utilizing the rezoning process to encourage dedication of lands, and planning transportation improvements in coordination with trails.

NON PROFIT AGENCIES

- PATH Foundation, GRITS, and Bike! Walk! Northwest Georgia! have been instrumental during the development of the Silver Comet Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis and should continue to work closely with the NWGRC and ARC throughout design development.

ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR

The private sector throughout northwest Georgia is the primary beneficiary of the Silver Comet Trail and its future connections. As such, private organizations, businesses, and individuals can and should play an important role in the development and management of the system. Private sector groups and businesses can sponsor implementation projects for open space and trails as a partner of the cities. These groups can also help to maintain open space and trail lands through cooperative management agreements with the local agency.

ROLE OF LOCAL BUSINESSES AND CORPORATIONS

Local businesses and corporations might choose to sponsor a segment of trail for development or maintenance. Businesses and corporations can work with the Parks and Recreation Departments to give money, materials, products, and labor toward the development of a trail facility. Businesses can also consider installing facilities, such as bike racks or lockers, benches, and signage, that link their operations to the Silver Comet Trail.

ROLE OF CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Local civic groups and organizations - including the Junior League, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Women's Club, Chamber of Commerce, garden clubs, YMCA, Kiwanis, and Rotary Clubs, to name a few - can be participants in the implementation of the Silver Comet Trail. These organizations can play a vital role in building future sections of trail, maintaining and managing trail lands and facilities, and co-hosting events that raise money for the Silver Comet Trail.

There are many ways in which civic organizations can participate in the development of future Silver Comet Trail connections. The most appropriate involvement can be determined by matching the goals and objectives of each organization to the needs of the trail program.

ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS

Local residents who are interested in the development of future Silver Comet Trail connections can participate by agreeing to donate their time, labor, and expertise to the Parks and Recreation Departments.

Residents might choose to partner with a friend or form a local neighborhood group that adopts a section of trail for maintenance and management purposes. As an adopt-a-trail organization, individuals might help pick up trash, plant flowers and trees, care for newly planted vegetation, and serve as additional "eyes and ears" for safety and security on trail lands. All volunteer efforts would be recognized by the Parks and Recreation Department through a community-wide program.

ROUTINE AND REMEDIAL MAINTENANCE

Maintenance needs will depend upon many factors, including trail surface type, the use of paint or thermoplastic for markings, and traffic volumes. The Cobb, Paulding, and Polk County should make immediate repairs to any trail facilities that are damaged or have hazardous conditions. A local staff member in charge of maintenance should set up a free maintenance hotline for users to provide information about spot maintenance needs in the urban area.

A government staff member should also be designated as the main contact for the maintenance of trail facilities near any

roadway right-of-way. This staff member should coordinate with the appropriate departments to conduct maintenance activities in the field or with GDOT. Funding for an ongoing maintenance program should be included in the responsible agency's operating budget or Capital Improvements Program.

TRAIL FACILITY MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION
A memorandum of agreement (MOA) should be established between Cobb, Paulding, Polk, Floyd County, and PATH Foundation for management, operations, and maintenance of the Silver Comet Trail and its connections.

The primary purpose of this agreement is to ensure that the public's health and safety are protected during the normal use of the trail. The Silver Comet Trail should be classified under this agreement as a "linear park" and maintained in a manner that is consistent with other park and trail facilities.

STAFFING NEEDS

In addition to funding for routine and non-routine maintenance activities, it is recommended that additional staffing needs be considered during the annual budgeting process. These additional staffing needs include a Trail Coordinator who

CASE STUDY



NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (NVRPA)

The NVRPA was established in the 1950s to carry out the planning, development, and operations of regional parks and trails in Northern Virginia. Citizens and representatives of Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Falls Church, and the City of Fairfax work together

to protect and preserve Northern Virginia's natural beauty. To date, over 10,000 acres of wooded land, meadows, streams, and lakes have been preserved. The presence of a Regional Park Authority in Northern Virginia makes it possible to preserve sensitive habitats, lands, and water bodies on a large scale that would not be possible for individual cities and counties to accomplish alone. The six local governments that make up the NVRPA have

pooled their funds together with the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation, the Land & Water Conservation fund, and REI – along with contributions from other member jurisdictions, state and federal grants, and private and non-profit donations – to create a well-managed system of parks and trails that benefit the entire region.

would be responsible for implementing the trail maintenance management system and coordinating volunteers responsible for trail maintenance. It is recommended that this new position be a full-time staff person supervised by the NWGRC or ARC. It is recognized that adding additional staff may not be immediately possible, and in many small-to-medium sized communities the duties and responsibilities of the Trail Coordinator are handled by existing staff until additional staff can be hired.

STEP 4: IDENTIFY FUNDING

Achieving the vision that is defined within this plan will require, among other things, a stable and recurring source of funding. Communities across the country that have successfully engaged in trail programs have relied on multiple funding sources to achieve their goals. No single source of funding will meet the recommendations identified in this plan. Instead, stakeholders will need to work cooperatively with all the municipality, state, and federal partners to generate funds sufficient to implement the program.

A stable and recurring source of revenue is needed to generate funding that can then be used to leverage grant dollars from state, federal, and private sources. The ability of the local agencies to generate a source of funding for trails depends on a variety of factors, such as taxing capacity, budgetary resources, voter preferences, and political will. It is very important that these local

agencies explore the ability to establish a stable and recurring source of revenue for trails.

Donations from individuals or companies are another potential source of local funding. NWGRC and ARC should establish an Adopt-A-Greenway program as a mechanism to collect these donations for future connections. In addition to a formalized program, a website should be set up as an easy way for individuals to donate smaller amounts.

Federal and state grants should be pursued along with local funds to pay for trail ROW acquisition and trail design, construction, and maintenance expenses. "Shovel-ready" designed projects should be prepared in the event that future federal stimulus funds become available. Recommended funding sources may be found in Appendix A.

STEP 5: PLAN, DESIGN, CONSTRUCT, AND MAINTAIN FUTURE SILVER COMET TRAIL CONNECTIONS.

Once a trail segment is selected and land is acquired, trail design typically follows. However certain segments connecting to the Silver Comet Trail will require a more detailed planning or feasibility study prior to engaging the design process. In addition, the design of certain recommended corridors connecting to the Silver Comet Trail trunk line will require clearing and grading, and design or construction documents will vary in their complexity. It will be essential for

County, City, and Town staff to determine the intended uses of a particular segment and to design and construct with those uses in mind. Intended uses of the trail will dictate the ideal trail surface and will have a direct bearing on the construction and maintenance costs. Trail construction costs will vary, and until a project is put out for competitive bid, there is no way to accurately determine local prices. A competitive bid process should ask for the cost of trail construction using the three most common trail construction surfaces (granite screening, asphalt, and concrete) in order to fully understand the costs and potential savings when making a decision between one building material over another. Work closely with a design consultant to ensure the contract documents are being developed according to this plan's recommendations; state, local, and federal permitting issues; design specifications; and budget costs. It will be essential for the Regional Trail Management Agency to manage this very important step.

Personal safety, both real and perceived, heavily influences a trail user's decision to use a trail and a community's decision to embrace a trail system. Proper design must address both the perceived safety issues (i.e., feeling safe or fear of crime) and actual safety threats (i.e., infrastructure failure and criminal acts). Creating a safe trail environment goes beyond design and law enforcement and should involve the entire community. The most effective and most



An example of a permeable fence between a trail and residential backyards (residential properties are on the right) using CPTED principles.

visible deterrent to illegal activity on the trail and at the trailhead will be the presence of legitimate users. Getting as many “eyes on the corridor” as possible is a key deterrent to undesirable activity.

CPTED is a proactive approach to deterring undesired behavior in neighborhoods and communities. CPTED is defined as “the proper design and effective use of the built environment that can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life.” The basic premise of CPTED is that the arrangement and design of buildings and open spaces can encourage or discourage undesirable

behavior and criminal activity. A report prepared for the National Institute of Justice noted that “physical features influence behavior” and the “[offenders] prefer to commit crimes that require the least effort, provide the highest benefits and pose the lowest risks” . When all spaces have a defined use and the use is clearly legible in the landscape, it is easier to identify undesired behavior. The following are the four key CPTED principals:

- Natural Access Control, including the placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, hours of operation and lighting. Natural access control helps to clearly differentiate public and private space.
- Natural Surveillance, including the placement of physical features, activities, and people to maximize visibility. Natural surveillance increases the opportunity “to be seen” and thereby deters unwanted behavior.
- Territorial Reinforcement strategies put the spotlight on undesired behavior and activities, increasing the perception of being watched. Strategies include the use of physical attributes such as fences, paving materials, public art, signage, and “security” landscaping materials to convey ownership of the space along the corridor and buffer private properties. Pedestrian-scaled mile markers tagged with emergency IDs or “address” codes,

along with emergency phones (where cell service is not available), are key territorial reinforcement strategies. Including pedestrian-scaled mile markers, GPS coordinates and signs are also effective strategies.

- Maintenance to allow for the continued use of the space for its intended purpose. Maintenance is an expression of ownership of a property. Unmaintained facilities indicate that there is a greater tolerance of disorder and less control by the intended users.

Annual operations and maintenance costs vary, depending upon the facility to be maintained, level of use, location, and standard of maintenance. Operations and maintenance budgets should take into account routine and remedial maintenance over the life cycle of the improvements and on-going administrative costs for the operations and maintenance program.

STEP 6: BEGIN TOP PRIORITY PROJECT CONSTRUCTION.

By moving forward quickly on priority trail projects, agencies in the region will demonstrate their commitment to carrying out this plan and will better sustain enthusiasm generated during the public outreach stages of the planning process. Refer to Chapter 4: Recommendations for priority trail project ranking.

With existing available funds, award a construction contract for Phase 1 of the

Silver Comet Trail connections. Develop a predetermined timeline for construction completion. The design consultant can provide assistance by helping to facilitate the bidding process. Depending on funding sources, the contractor may need to be selected through a formal bidding process in which the project scope and parameters are publicly defined.

STEP 7: EVALUATION

Working with regional partners, establish a recurring trail usage evaluation program to determine trends over time, effectiveness of new connections, and economic impact. Train and enlist the help of volunteers similar to their work completed during the Trail Usage Evaluation.

CONCLUSION

It is necessary to make north/south connections to preserve and expand the vitality of the Silver Comet Trail as a regional attraction and recreational draw. The Silver Comet Trail is already a model public amenity that has increased adjacent property values, fulfilled a need for outdoor recreation opportunities, offered a safe route for bicycle commuting as an alternate to driving, raised recreational revenue, revitalized local communities, and improved the overall quality of life in northwest Georgia. By reaching to make additional regional connections to this invaluable economic development tool, the region is making the commitment to increase these benefits for its citizens and visitors. There are obstacles to overcome before these benefits can be realized. Using the action steps outlined above, objectives can be achieved with the patience and cooperative effort of regional jurisdictions and project partners. A foundation of local leaders, trail advocates, and citizen support will contribute to the successful planning, design, and consequent construction of the Silver Comet Trail that will be enjoyed by generations to come.

