



## Gwinnett aims to boost alternative transportation with planned 310-mile trail network

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Leaders have reimagined Gwinnett Place as a 'multi-modal green corridor' with apartments, trails and parks.

An Atlanta county that defined suburban sprawl for decades is planning a \$1 billion trail network stretching from the Chattahoochee River to University Parkway.

Gwinnett County would more than double its existing trail system to 310 miles, [according to its master plan](#).

The project could offer new pathways for cyclists and pedestrians, reinvigorate struggling commercial districts, run through some of the county's most scenic places and tie into ongoing, giant transportation projects.

A proposed [Loop Trail](#) would connect to [Gwinnett Place Mall](#), a sea of dying retail county officials are considering as a [future bus rapid transit hub](#). A [study of the Loop Trail](#) concluded in April and parts of the route will soon begin construction.

Farther north, the Sugarhill Greenway Trail could one day connect to [The Chattahoochee Riverlands Greenway](#) project, which plans to create 125 miles of continuous trails along the river from Buford Dam to Chattahoochee Bend State Park.

New trails may also link with multi-billion dollar transportation improvements including the Sugarloaf Parkway extension — a project dating back almost a decade to the 1-cent sales tax referendum known as TSPLOST.

[Beth Tucker](#), an Atlanta-based urban planner and designer with [Kimley-Horn](#), said, “The Sugarloaf extension is going to be a massive trail connectivity project.”

Plans for the expanded trail system come as Gwinnett is forecast to reach 1.5 million residents by 2040, surpassing Fulton as the state's most populous county.

As the area faces that growth, "our transit challenges remain insurmountable," Gwinnett County Chairwoman [Nicole Hendrickson](#) said during a [visit from U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg](#) on Friday.

Gwinnett has involved 16 cities and five community improvement districts in planning the expansive trail network. The county's community services and transportation departments are partnering on the effort.

“This is an incredibly collaborative process,” Tucker said.

## **Funding**

The core network of trails will cost an estimated \$250 million, and some of the proposed routes still need financing.

Some trails in the master plan have funding support from successful programs such as the special purpose local option sales tax, Tucker said.

Community Services and DOT are allocating about \$16 million from the 2017 SPLOST program and estimate an additional \$100 million in future SPLOST efforts through 2040.

“If we want to see this built out in my lifetime we need to find other funding sources to support SPLOST,” Tucker said.

Gwinnett has received several grants from the [Atlanta Regional Commission](#) and is looking to grants from federal sources including the National Parks and Recreation Administration.

More funding could come from hospital systems, universities and large employers in the county.

## **Progress**

There are 18 trails within the network in some phase of concept, design or construction. That accounts for about 40 miles of the proposed 310 miles.

The first official trail opening since the plan was adopted will take place later this year at Harris Greenway trail.

Funding from the ARC is supporting a study for the Piedmont Pathway, which will bisect the county and connect into Barrow, Fulton and DeKalb county trail systems.

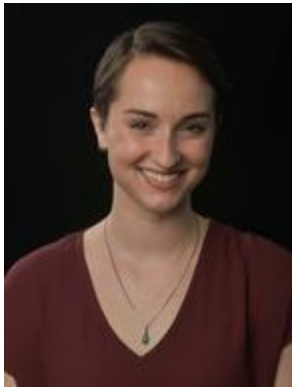
The Ivy Creek to Snellville trail is part of a DOT design project and the next phase of construction will begin later this year.

Norcross to Lilburn trail is about to begin construction and Western Gwinnett Bikeway is awaiting GDOT approval before work begins to build out that path.

Parts of the Sugarhill trail are under construction and in design.

While the ambitious project will take decades to become a reality, these routes are all part of nine "signature trails" that anchor the core network. The county is focused on building out these trails to provide residents with examples of the overall vision for pedestrian and cyclist connectivity.

"We're trying to connect the dots where we can," said [Mark Patterson](#), deputy director of Gwinnett County's community services department. I think you'll see a lot of those [signature trails] come to fruition in the next few years."



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