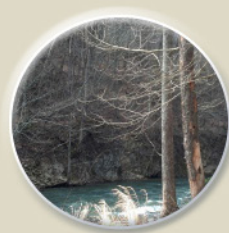




MARYVILLE-TO-TOWNSEND GREENWAY

MASTER PLAN



This Master Plan was endorsed by
Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks & Recreation Commission in January 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I. Executive Summary.....	1	SECTION V.	46
SECTION II. Introduction.....	3	Public Process.....	46
Overview & Study Area.....	3	SECTION VI.....	52
Background.....	3	Economic, Health and Social Impacts Analysis	52
Project Purpose & Goals.....	3	SECTION VII.....	58
SECTION III. Opportunities and Challenges	5	Overall Recommendations.....	58
Opportunities and Challenges–Map 1.....	5	SECTION VIII. APPENDIX.....	56
Opportunities and Challenges–Map 2.....	6	APPENDIX A: Results of Public Process.....	60
Opportunities and Challenges–Map 3.....	7	APPENDIX B: Economic Impact Methodology.....	64
Opportunities and Challenges.....	8	APPENDIX C: Cost Estimates.....	68
SECTION IV. Corridor Designs.....	14	APPENDIX D: Knoxville TPO Greenway Signage Guidelines.....	72
Overview:			
• Master Plan.....	14		
• Overview of Corridor Typologies.....	16		
• Pedestrian Safety and Crossings.....	17		
• Future Land Use.....	21		
• Sustainability.....	21		
Corridor Area 1: The Town	22		
• Map.....	22		
• Typology Overview	24		
• Corridor Prescriptions.....	24		
Focus Area 2: Suburban Corridor (U.S. 321).....	28		
• Map.....	28		
• Typology Overview	30		
• Corridor Prescriptions.....	30		
Focus Area 3: Rural/ Steep Wooded Corridor.....	34		
• Map.....	34		
• Typology Overview	36		
• Corridor Prescriptions.....	36		
Focus Area 4: Mountain Village Corridor	42		
• Map.....	42		
• Typology Overview	44		
• Corridor Prescriptions.....	44		

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The proposed Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway consists of over 13.7 miles of trail that will connect the City of Maryville, pass through portions of a pastoral Blount County, and link to Townsend, a gateway community to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This is part of a larger effort to link pedestrians and bicyclists from Knoxville to the National Park. The greenway would parallel existing transportation infrastructure for most of its route. The Master Plan provides suitable alignments for the greenway and possible spurs to connect the greenway to nearby communities, parks, schools, and other destinations. The Master Plan includes design recommendations to guide implementation, locates a feasible route along U.S. Highway 321, identifies key opportunities, and provides design solutions for challenges within the corridor.

Some of the significant challenges include navigating through steep topography, property ownership issues, and creating a desirable greenway experience along U.S. Highway 321. There are also some unique and exceptional opportunities in addition to connecting to the National Park, including scenic views, the Little River, and enhancements that could make the greenway a tourist destination.

Benefits of the Proposed Greenway

The Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway will have economic, social, and health and wellness benefits for the residents of Blount County and the region. The greenway will have an estimated economic impact of approximately \$65 million over a 10-year period. For every \$1 spent on greenway construction and maintenance there will be a return on the investment of \$2.66. With an estimated 109,500 greenway users anticipated, the construction of the greenway will improve the health of children, adults and senior citizens of Blount County and surrounding areas. Blount County has physical activity rates higher than

The proposed
13.7-mile
Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway
will connect
Knoxville, Maryville, and Alcoa
to a gateway community of the
**Great Smoky Mountains
National Park**

The greenway would have an estimated
109,500
users per year

Over the first ten years
of the project, its anticipated
economic impact is

**\$65
million**

the state average, but access to recreational facilities is 25% lower than the Tennessee average and less than half of the national benchmark. This is a contributing factor to Blount County's Physical Environment ranking in the 60th percentile. An estimated increase of just 5% in physical activity could save the community an estimated \$13 million annually by reducing costs for medical care, workers' compensation, and lost productivity.

Corridor Design

The Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway has been divided in four (4) "typologies" based on land use and visual character with each typology having a set of specific design prescriptions. The "Town Corridor" describes the section within Maryville, the "Suburban Corridor" is the main section of the greenway that runs along U.S. Highway 321 and connects to the Heritage High School area, the "Rural/Steep Wooded Corridor" is the section of greenway through Walland Gap, and the "Mountain Village Corridor" is the section of greenway that connects to Townsend's existing greenway system. The majority of the alignment is located within the Tennessee Department of Transportation right-of-way as a result of past and current property right issues and concerns. The Little River is a major asset to the greenway system and should be considered an alternative route for the greenway trail in the future as public sentiment of landowners in Blount County changes. Design concepts illustrate how physical separation from the highway can mitigate noise, traffic, pollution, and safety issues. The section of the greenway through Walland Gap will require a cantilevered greenway system or an elevated post and beam system to navigate the steep terrain in the approach to Townsend. If built well, this section of the greenway will serve as a landmark feature and a destination for recreational users, attracting both locals and tourists to experience this unique stretch of greenway. Locations for intersection improvements to provide safe greenways crossings have been identified as well as proposed locations for shelters, trailheads, signage, pedestrian bridges, bike routes, places of interest, pocket parks, and other design features.

An increase of just
5%
in physical activity could
save the community
annually an estimated

\$13
million

If built right,
the Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway
could become a
landmark destination
for locals and tourists alike.

INTRODUCTION

Overview and Study Area

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) contracted Equinox Environmental Consultation and Design, Inc., to conduct a greenway Master Plan connecting the Cities of Maryville and Townsend. This planning process is part of a larger effort to link Knoxville to Townsend via greenway trails for both pedestrian and bicyclists making the region more attractive for locals, for employers, and for tourists. The Knoxville Regional TPO and the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Greenway Council partnered with local governments in Blount County to create this master plan. Other project partners include the City of Alcoa, Blount County, the City of Maryville, the City of Townsend, the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks & Recreation Commission, the Blount Partnership, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). The study area begins near U.S. Highway 321 at Maryville College and continues to the existing greenway trail in Townsend. This Master Plan is a guiding document to help move this more than 13.7 mile greenway corridor toward implementation.

Background

Blount County serves as the gateway to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in east Tennessee, lying between Knoxville and North Carolina. Past planning studies have been conducted for greenways within Blount and Knox Counties. In July of 2009 the Knox/Blount Regional Greenway Master Plan for Maryville, Alcoa, and Blount County was developed to provide a proposed greenway network to connect the Knox County greenways to the extensive greenway networks in Alcoa and Maryville, as well as the Heritage High School area. In 2011 the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Greenway Council crafted a Vision Map illustrating the goal of connecting Knoxville to Townsend and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Based on these and other municipal greenways, bicycle and pedestrian plans, the Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway Master Plan builds upon the work developed for these past studies.



Figure 1—Existing Greenway in Alcoa, Tennessee

Project Purpose & Goals

The purpose of the Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway Master Plan is to investigate the possible locations for a greenway and possible alternative alignments from the Heritage High School area to the existing greenway system in Townsend and to expand on the past planning efforts from Heritage High School to Maryville's greenway and trail system. This study considers physical issues such as land terrain, floodplains, steep slopes, and rights-of way. The goal of the study is to determine the most suitable and feasible alignment for having over 13.7 miles of greenways and trails for bicyclists and pedestrians to utilize for non-motorized transportation and enjoyment within the Maryville-to-Townsend corridor. As part of the larger vision of a regional corridor, this greenway will help provide positive impacts for recreation, the environment, local economy and business, and transportation alternatives.



Figure 2—Existing Greenway in Maryville, Tennessee



Figure 3—Heritage High School and its frontage to U.S. 321

The goals of the Maryville-to-Townsend Greenway Master Plan are as follows:

- Provide a viable connection between the existing greenway systems in Maryville/Alcoa and Townsend;
- Develop design guidelines to catalog design treatments for the greenway corridor in a variety of contexts such as urban/town, suburban, rural, and commercial while promoting consistency throughout the larger greenway system;
- Work with TDOT to address requirements and the feasibility for locating a greenway along U.S. Highway 321;
- Identify opportunities and challenges within the greenway corridor and develop a greenway alignment that addresses each;
- Connect communities, destinations and people;
- Promote the idea that a successful greenway corridor relies on a common vision, partnerships, collaboration, and consistent implementation and maintenance.

This Master Plan includes trail alignments and design prescriptions to guide the development of a greenway that helps foster a sense of place and identifies with the character of the surrounding community which the greenway will serve. As well, the study includes a detailed economic, social and health impact analysis to document the potential benefit of this greenway system along with potential costs for construction to help future funding of this important project. The document is the first step in the planning process and should be used to guide future phases as the project moves closer to implementation.