

PROJECT READINESS

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

The City of Chattanooga and Trust for Public Land, alongside its partners, have successfully collaborated and implemented significant infrastructure projects and other initiatives. Considerable progress has been made on this project with planning and pre-engineering, and as a result, minimal risks are anticipated.

Assessment of project risks and mitigation strategies

Property Acquisition – The City of Chattanooga already owns most of the right-of-way required for the trail. There is one small private property at 1017 E. 33rd Street that will require easement acquisition to connect between Chattanooga Creek and Crabtree Farms. Communication with the property owner indicates that the acquisition will not be an issue.

Brownfield Cleanup – The trail along the railroad and in Southside Community Park has soil contaminants, including foundry sand, heavy metals, and PAH-impacted soil. A cleanup work plan has been prepared to relocate contaminated soil and on-site capping within the wide right-of-way along the trail corridor. EPA brownfields funding is in hand for cleanup, and community exposure to contaminated soil will likely be minimized by keeping the material on-site.

Landfill – The trail between Southside Community Park and Chattanooga Creek will traverse over a capped landfill owned by the City of Chattanooga. This landfill will require additional construction and geotechnical considerations, particularly in minimizing the trail cut and placement of boardwalk piers to avoid the underground landfill material, which is expected to be feasible.



East Lake Neighborhood Association and The Trust for Public Land volunteers at the East Lake neighborhood intersection improvement demonstration project.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Upon receipt of the RAISE grant obligation notice, the components will be ready to complete initial designs, with construction to begin in Q1 of 2028. See the project schedule below for a more detailed breakdown of the project readiness.

REQUIRED APPROVALS

State + Local Approval – Letters of support have been provided in the submission indicating state and local support for the overall grant application and respective local match contributions, including regulatory agencies who have been engaged through the design process. It's anticipated that permitting will require one year, including NEPA, USACE Section 404, TDEC 401 ARAP, and a no-rise/no-impact certification for construction within the floodway.

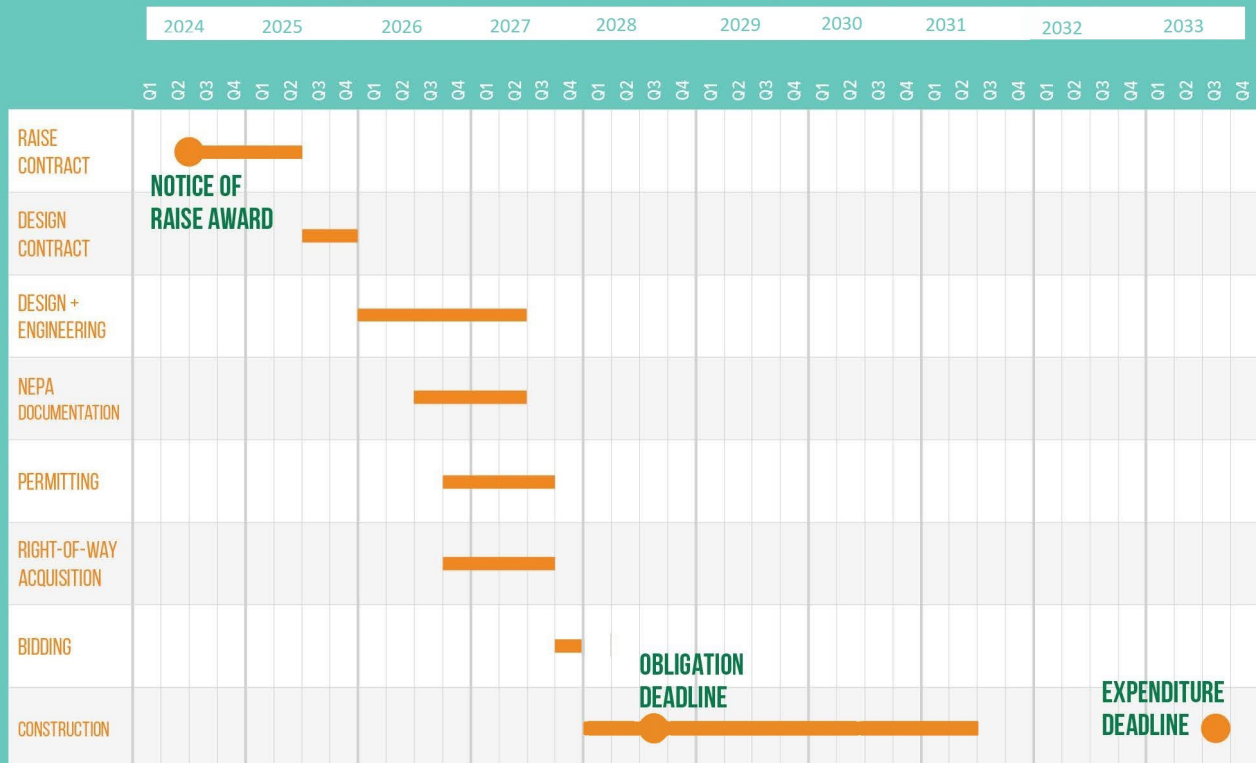
Aquatic Resource Alteration Permit (ARAP) / 401 Water Quality Certification (Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation) and Section 404 Permit (USACE) – The trail will cross Chattanooga Creek and adjacent freshwater wetlands as identified on the National Wetlands Inventory. State permits for impact to the wetland will be required, and if it is determined to be a water of the United States, a federal permit through USACE will also be required. The project plans to implement a boardwalk over the wetland area and a bridge over the creek to minimize impact. The project drainage plan includes removing fill and restoring wetlands in the floodway, which can help avoid approval delays.

As part of the 404/401 permitting process, coordination with USFWS will be required to fulfill Section 7 requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It is anticipated that the project will impact forested areas that could serve as roosting habitats for listed bat species. Mitigation for these impacts on bat habitat, such as tree clearing restriction periods or constructing artificial roosting trees, will likely be required.

Floodplain Permit – The trail will cross the regulated floodway and floodplain hazard Zone AE of Chattanooga Creek. The project plans to boardwalk and bridge over the floodway, requiring FEMA coordination for LOMR adjustment of base flood elevation and a "No-Rise / No-Impact" Certification for boardwalk piers within the floodway. Due to impacts to the regulatory floodway and 1% flood hazard zone, coordination with TDEC would be required. A Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) is expected to be required.

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit (TN Department of Environment and Conservation) – Required for trail construction disturbances greater than 1 acre of earth. In addition, the project is in a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) area.

NEPA – It is anticipated that the project merits a Categorical Exclusion (CE), which will be completed alongside the project design. Thus, compliance with NEPA is not expected to cause delays to the project schedule.



TECHNICAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The CHATT project partners have a proven track record of successfully collaborating and implementing major infrastructure projects. These established working relationships put the applicant in a favorable position to deliver the project on budget and on schedule.

As a recipient of federal and state funds and a local government with a AAA bond rating, the City of Chattanooga has the technical and financial capacity necessary to implement this grant. In FY22, the City managed approximately \$159,731,130 in federal and state grants from eight federal and six state agencies. The City of Chattanooga and its partners are highly familiar with the Federal funding process and requirements including NEPA, certification, etc. The City has utilized Federal funds regularly and delivered complete capital construction projects through these funds.

Within the last five years, project partner Trust for Public Land (TPL) has been awarded numerous federal assistance agreements and grants. Several awards are highlighted below. TPL is successfully managing each

agreement, implementing grant activities, and meeting all reporting requirements. In most agreements, quarterly or semiannual reports and final reports are required and completed. Within these, TPL details work progress, lessons learned, next steps and changes planned, and financial reports. TPL also works closely with program officers to ensure successful project completion and grantor organization mission delivery.

TABLE 2: Sample Grants Managed by TPL

NAME	GRAND TOTAL
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) FY2018 Environmental Education Grant (EPA EE Grant: "Alton Park Riverwalk Connector Environmental Education and Experiences")	\$100,000
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service FY2021 North American Wetlands Conservation Fund Grant : "Bayou Teche NWR Restoration"	\$850,000
U.S. Forest Service (USFS) FY2021 Community Forest and Open Space Program Grant : "Community Forests, Public Health, and Tribal Access"	\$200,000

TABLE 1: Sample Federal and State Grants (FY 23) currently managed by the City of Chattanooga

Grantor	Grant Name	Award Amount
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	Community Development Block Grants/ Entitlement Grants	\$14,856,615
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development	HOME Investment Partnerships Programs	\$9,027,842
U.S. Department of the Interior	National Park Service, Historic Preservation Grant	\$1,907,107
U.S. Department of Justice	American Rescue Plan Act of 2021	\$38,640,506
Tennessee Department of Transportation	TDOT - South Chickamauga Greenway Caine Lane	\$1,432,393
Tennessee Department of Transportation	TDOT - 3rd and 4th Streets, From Lindsay to Hampton, Blackford	\$7,000,000
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Low-Income Home Energy Assistance	\$8,471,432
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Community Program to Improve Minority Health-OMH	\$3,404,247
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	Community Services Block Grants	\$1,019,432

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Multiple planning efforts have occurred over the last two decades and identified this project area as a priority for safer active transportation options and improved connectivity. Community support for a “rails-to-trails” conversion of the existing railroad tracks to a trail dates back over 23 years to the 2000 Alton Park Master Plan. Trust for Public Land has worked with community-based organizations over the past five years to inform the design of the corridor, including commissioning a community history written by a lifelong resident, Maria Noel, describing how the greenway fits into the neighborhood’s narrative arc, looking back and ahead.

Construction and landscape plans directly supporting community input for the Alton Park Connector and/or the surrounding roadway are underway.



Community meeting in 1999 as part of the 2000 Alton Park Master Plan

EXISTING PLANS IN SUPPORT OF ALTON PARK CONNECTOR/ CLIFTON HILLS CONNECTOR

- 2045 Regional Transportation Plan Update: Appendix C Bicycle Gap Analysis, Appendix D Programmatic Set-Asides (Adopted 2020, Modified 2021)
- Alton Park Concept 30% Landscape Plans (2020)
- [The Alton Park Connector: Creating a Pathway to Alton Park’s History, People and Culture](#) (2021)
- Alton Park Connector Phase 1 100% construction documents (2023)
- Alton Park Master Plan (2000)
- Alton Park/Piney Woods Community Plan (Update, 2010)
- Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (2024)
- Crabtree Farms - East Lake Connectivity Feasibility Study (2020)
- The Design of The Alton Park Linear Park: Draft Vision + Concept Summary Document (2020)
- One Chattanooga: Strategic Framework (2022)
- Chattanooga Parks and Outdoors Plan (POP) (2023)
- Clifton Hills Connector 10% Schematic Design (2024)



The Alton Park Connector

Creating A Pathway to Alton Park’s History, People and Culture



Alton Park Community History written by Maria Noel