

## Grant Funds

### *Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21)*

One of the primary sources of federal funding for the development of on-road and off-road trail facilities is through the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA-21), formerly the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA provided millions of dollars in funding for bicycle and pedestrian transportation projects across the country and will provide millions more as TEA-21.

Historically, Gwinnett County has worked closely with the Atlanta Regional Commission to allocate funds from the TEA-21 program to on-road and off-road bicycle and pedestrian projects, including greenway trails. Currently, several projects are in various stages of development within Gwinnett County Department of Transportation (DOT), including numerous sidewalk projects and several greenway projects.

There are several sections of TEA-21 that support the development of bicycle and pedestrian transportation corridors. Gwinnett County DOT can work with the ARC to utilize funding from any of these subsets of TEA-21. Those sections that apply to the creation of greenways, sidewalks and bikeways include:

#### *A. Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds*

These funds can be used for bicycle and pedestrian facility construction or non-construction projects such as brochures, public service announcements and route maps. The projects must be related to bicycle and pedestrian transportation and must be part of the Long Range Transportation Plan. These funds are programmed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the Transportation Improvement Program.

#### *B. Transportation Enhancements Program*

A total of \$3.6 billion is available through TEA-21 for Transportation Enhancements. Ten percent of Georgia's annual STP funds (approximately \$107 million over the next six years) are available for enhancements, which include projects such as trails, greenways, sidewalks, signage, bikeways, safety education and wildlife underpasses. There is usually a 20 percent match of local funds required (some states will accept donations of services, materials or land in lieu of cash) and there are several key requirements that projects must meet in order to receive these funds. The Georgia DOT administers TEA-21 funding and should be contacted for further details.

#### *C. Transit Enhancements Program*

Transit Enhancement Activities. This will generate approximately \$30 million annually for these activities, which will then be divided among the 125 largest

urban areas in the U. S. Activities eligible for funding include pedestrian access and walkways, bicycle access, bike storage facilities, bike-on-bus racks, and transit connections to parks within the transit service area.

#### *D. Recreational Trails Program*

A component of TEA-21, the Recreational Trails Program is a funding source to assist with the development of non-motorized and motorized trails. The Program uses funds paid into the Highway Trust Fund from fees on non-highway recreation fuel used by off-road vehicles and camping equipment. This money can be spent on the acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property, trail development, construction and maintenance. Project amounts vary by state, with most ranging from \$2,000 to \$30,000.

Through state agencies, funds are available to private and public sector organizations. Projects are 80 percent federally funded, and grant recipients must provide a 20 percent match. Federal agency project sponsors or other federal programs may provide additional federal shares up to 95 percent. Local matches can be in the form of donations of services, materials or land. Projects funded must be consistent with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

#### *Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)*

The CMAQ program was created to reduce congestion on local streets and improve air quality. Funds are available to communities designated as “non-attainment” areas for air quality, meaning the air is more polluted than federal standards allow. Funds are also available to “maintenance” areas, former non-attainment areas that are now in compliance. Funds are distributed to states based on population by County and the severity of air quality problems. A 20 percent local match is required.

#### *Community Development Block Grant Program*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) offers financial grants to communities for neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and improvements to community facilities and services, especially in low and moderate-income areas. Several communities have used HUD funds to develop greenways, including the Boulding Branch Greenway in High Point, Georgia.

#### *Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)*

This federal funding source was established in 1965 to provide park and recreation opportunities to residents throughout the United States. Money for the fund comes from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources, primarily federal offshore oil and gas leases and surplus federal land sales. LWCF funds are used by federal agencies to acquire additions to National Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges. In the past, Congress has also appropriated LWCF moneys for so-called “state-side” projects. These

“state-side” LWCF grants can be used by communities to acquire and build a variety of park and recreation facilities, including trails and greenways.

“State-side” LWCF funds are annually distributed by the National Park Service through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources ( DNR). Communities must match LWCF grants with 50 percent of the local project costs through in-kind services or cash. All projects funded by LWCF grants must be used exclusively for recreation purposes, in perpetuity. Funding for this program has not been available for several years, although funds could be allocated in the future.

#### *Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention (Small Watersheds) Grants*

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) provides funding to state and local agencies or nonprofit organizations authorized to carry out, maintain and operate watershed improvements involving less than 250,000 acres. The NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to eligible projects to improve watershed protection, flood prevention, sedimentation control, public water-based fish and wildlife enhancements, and recreation planning. The NRCS requires a 50 percent local match for public recreation, and fish and wildlife projects.

#### *Conservation Reserve Program*

The U. S. Department of Agriculture, through its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, provides payments to farm owners and operators to place highly erodible or environmentally sensitive landscapes into a 10-15 year conservation contract. The participant, in return for annual payments during this period, agrees to implement a conservation plan approved by the local conservation district for converting these sensitive lands to a less intensive use. Individuals, associations, corporations, estates, trusts, cities, counties and other entities are eligible for this program. This program can be used to fund the maintenance of open space and non-public use greenways along water bodies and ridgelines.

#### *Wetlands Reserve Program*

The Department of Agriculture also provides direct payments to private landowners that agree to place sensitive wetlands under permanent easements. This program can be used to fund the protection of open space and greenways within riparian corridors. It is administered by the NRCS in Georgia.

#### *Hazard Mitigation Grant Program*

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides grants to state and local governments for implementing long-term hazard mitigation measures following a major disaster declaration. Eligible projects include the acquisition and relocation of repetitive flood structures. Such lands, once acquired, can be converted into greenways for flood mitigation purposes. A 25 percent local match is required. All applications

must be submitted no later than 90 days following FEMA's approval of the State Hazard Mitigation plan.

#### *Flood Mitigation Assistance*

This FEMA program provides funds to states and communities to help reduce the long-term risk of flood damage to structures. Eligible projects include acquisition and relocation of insured structures. Grantees must participate in the National Flood Insurance Program and a 25 percent local match is required. The total amount of Flood Mitigation Assistance Grants provided during any 5-year period cannot exceed \$10 million to any state or \$3.3 million to any community.

#### *Conservation Contracts*

The USDA Farm Service Agency can forgive debt from Farm Loan Program loans in exchange for conservation contracts on environmentally sensitive portions of a borrower's property. Contracts can be set up for conservation, recreational and wildlife purposes on farm property, including properties adjacent to streams and rivers. Interested individual borrowers should contact their local Farm Service Agency office to apply.

#### *Local Businesses*

Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for development of greenways in Gwinnett County through:

- donations of cash to a specific greenway segment
- donations of services by corporations to reduce the cost of greenway implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a trail
- reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support greenway implementation and can supply essential products for facility development

This method of raising funds requires a great deal of staff coordination. One example of a successful endeavor of this type is the Swift Creek Recycled Greenway in Cary, North Carolina. A total of \$40,000 in donated construction materials and labor made this trail an award-winning demonstration project. (Some materials used in the "recycled trail" were considered waste materials by local industries!)

#### *Trail Sponsors*

A sponsorship program for trail amenities allows for smaller donations to be received both from individuals and businesses. The program must be well-planned and organized, with design standards and associated costs established for each amenity. Project elements which may be funded can include wayside exhibits, benches, trash receptacles, entry signage and picnic areas. Usually, plaques recognizing the individual

contributors are placed on the constructed amenities or at a prominent entry point to the trail.

### *Volunteer Work*

Community volunteers may help with trail construction, as well as with fund raising. Potential sources of volunteer labor in Gwinnett County could include local bicyclists, local historical groups, neighborhood associations, local churches, conservation groups, school groups and local civic clubs such as Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions Clubs.

A good example of a volunteer greenway program is Cheyenne, Wyoming, which generated an impressive amount of community support and volunteer work. The program has the unusual problem of having to insist that volunteers wait to begin landscaping trails until construction is completed. A manual for greenway volunteers was developed in 1994 to guide and regulate volunteer work. The manual includes a description of appropriate volunteer efforts, request forms, waiver and release forms, and a completion form (volunteers are asked to summarize their accomplishments). Written guidelines are also provided for volunteer work in 100-year floodplains.

Locally, volunteers were used on two different Saturdays to plant trees, shrubs and bulbs at Freedom Park. Park and Recreation staff, landscape architects and local nursery volunteers led workforce groups consisting of individuals, families, school groups and others in this planting effort. Local nurseries donated digging equipment, plant materials, fertilizer and other items to the effort as well.

To organize volunteer activity, Cheyenne developed an "Adopt-a-Spot" program. Participants who adopt a segment of trail are responsible for periodic trash pick-up, but can also install landscaping, prune trail-side vegetation, develop wildlife enhancement projects, and install site amenities. All improvements must be consistent with the Greenway Development Plan and must be approved by the local Greenway Coordinator. Adopt-a-Spot volunteers are allowed to display their names on a small sign along the adopted section of greenway.

### *"Buy-a-Foot" Programs*

"Buy-a-Foot" programs have been successful in raising both funds and awareness for trail and greenway projects across the country. Under local initiatives, citizens are encouraged to purchase one linear foot of the greenway by donating the cost of construction. An excellent example of a successful endeavor is the High Point Greenway "Buy-a-Foot" campaign, in which linear greenway "feet" were sold at a cost of \$25 per foot. Those who donated were given a greenway T-shirt and a certificate. This project provided an estimated \$5,000 in funds.

### *American Greenways DuPont Awards*

The Conservation Fund's American Greenways Program has teamed with the DuPont Corporation and the National Geographic Society to award small grants (\$250 to \$2,000)

to stimulate the planning, design and development of greenways. These grants can be used for activities such as mapping, conducting ecological assessments, surveying land, holding conferences, developing brochures, producing interpretive displays, incorporating land trusts, building trails, and other creative projects. Grants cannot be used for academic research, institutional support, lobbying or political activities. For more information, contact the Conservation Fund at (703) 525-6300.

#### *REI Environmental Grants*

REI (Recreational Equipment Incorporated) awards grants to organizations in protecting and enhancing natural resources for outdoor recreation. Grants of up to \$2,000 are available through this program and can be used for:

1. Preservation of wild lands and open space
2. Advocacy-oriented education for the general public on conservation issues
3. Building the membership base of a conservation organization
4. Direct citizen action (lobbying) campaigns for public land and water recreation issues
5. projects that serve to organize a trail constituency or enhance the effectiveness of a trail organization's work as an advocate

Grants cannot be used for trail construction and maintenance. For more information, call REI's grant line at (253) 395-7100.