



## Creating Opportunities for Healthy, Family-Friendly Communities in GA

The problem: Communities throughout Georgia are eager to plan and **build safe, family-friendly streets and trails**, but their efforts are **hindered** by bureaucratic **red tape** and a **lack of dependable funding**. GDOT has often decided not to spend federal funds available for bike and pedestrian infrastructure. The agency returned over \$30 million dollars to Washington in 2010 instead of distributing these funds to support important community projects across Georgia. In FY13, GDOT opted to move \$15 million in federal funds for bicycling and walking projects to the general highway fund. As a result, for the past five years, demand for these projects has increased, but no reliable funding source exists to support existing projects much less the growing demand for family-friendly streets and trails.

Indeed, a University of Georgia survey found that 8 out of 10 Georgians would ride a bicycle more frequently if their community had better bicycle facilities such as bike lanes or multi-use paths. More than **90% of Georgians agree that encouraging bicycling is a long-term investment** in a **higher quality of life** for their community.



Georgia's communities want to be **economically competitive**, and an increasing number of them recognize that they need to position themselves as healthy destinations for **active, affluent tourists**, for employees desiring **common-sense commutes** and for young families looking for a high

quality of life. Safe neighborhood streets, walking paths, and biking trails are important **investments for building desirable communities** in every corner of our state.

The strong public demand for this infrastructure has prompted small towns and medium-sized cities to plan for vibrant, bicycle friendly business districts and tourist attractions, but these plans are often shelved due to cumbersome federal grant requirements. Ironically, many of these trail and streetscape projects are simply too **small and cost effective** to justify the hassle and expense of applying for burdensome federal funding. Even when Georgia's communities have successfully been awarded federal funds for these types of projects, from Safe Routes to School to Transportation Enhancement grants, the projects take many years of arduous follow-up to realize. The delay has been especially pronounced due to GDOT's decision to return a disproportionate share of its Transportation Enhancement funding to Washington DC in the late 2000s. To make up for the shortfall this decision created, GDOT has used its new apportionments of the Transportation Alternatives Program, which replaced TE, to pay for



projects awarded almost a decade ago. As a result, **no new projects have been awarded since 2012, despite overwhelming demand** from communities across the state.

To fast-track these community investments, small towns and cities need a **reliable, timely and streamlined process** for funding **small-scale improvements** for streets and parks.

Potential solutions:

1. Create **dedicated state funding**:
  - a. Our neighbors in Tennessee recently developed a state-funded, DOT-managed [Multimodal Access Grant](#) program to help communities pay for desired improvements for people who walk or ride a bicycle. The program represents about 1% of TDOT's budget, setting aside \$10 million annually. An equivalent program in Georgia would create ~\$20 million annually for transit stop improvements, crosswalks, sidewalks, and protected bike lanes safe for all ages and abilities.
  - b. Delaware's General Assembly included over \$13 million for bicycle and walking projects in its [FY13 capital budget](#), a \$15 per capita investment in safer streets, trails, and neighborhoods.
2. Highway **safety fees**: Implement a "highway safety fee" charged as part of the vehicle registration. The money can be separated into a fund for safety initiatives, similar to federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funds. Currently utilized in: New Jersey, Texas, Washington
3. Traffic violation **fines**: Increase traffic fines and dedicate their proceeds to transportation projects and maintenance without increasing other taxes. This strategy has the side benefit of reducing dangerous driving behavior.

