



# **NOXUBEE COUNTY**

## **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**



**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™**  
FRED CARL, JR. SMALL TOWN CENTER



Fred Carl Jr.  
**SMALL TOWN CENTER**



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Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center—2022

Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak, Mississippi

Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center

[smalltowncenter.msstate.edu](http://smalltowncenter.msstate.edu)

Mississippi State University

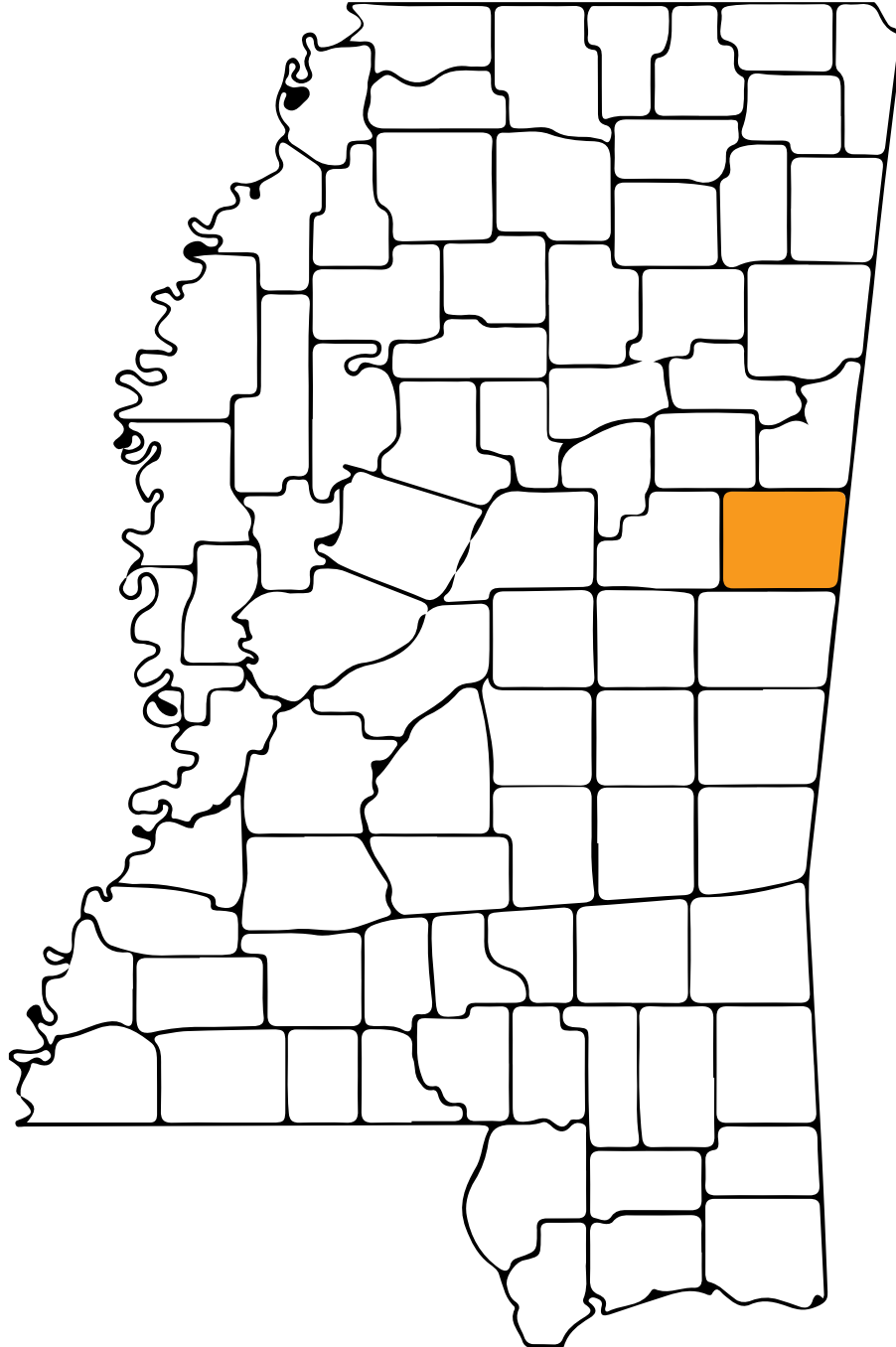
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **Project Overview**

In November of 2019, the Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center (STC) at Mississippi State University kicked off a planning process which resulted in an active transportation plan for Noxubee County, Mississippi. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and AIM for CHangE, this plan sets short- and long- term goals for Noxubee County and its three major towns -- Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak. It provides a toolkit of possible projects and a detailed "catalyst project," all meant to improve safety, comfort, and accessibility of active transportation throughout the county.

During the initial phase, the STC conducted background research, collected and analyzed demographic and economic data, engaged the local community, discovered the county's assets and opportunities, and developed significant findings that informed the next phase of the project.

The findings discovered in the first phase were then used to develop a toolkit of possible improvements the county could make to its active transportation landscape. From a combination of community feedback, background research, and toolkit assembly, a catalyst project was determined to encourage further active transportation development.

The next phase included the further development and implementation of the catalyst project -- a county-wide bike share and bike advocacy program -- for the county and its three target communities. Infrastructure for the bike share was installed, including bikes, bike racks, and street stenciling, and a management plan was shared with the three hub communities.

Finally, the plan concludes with detailed visioning for the future of the bike program. In addition to the initial active transportation action items, these bike-specific recommendations lay out a reasonable progression of development for Noxubee County's active transportation landscape.



## ***Planning Team***

The Noxubee County Active Transportation Plan is the product of the people of Noxubee County, Mississippi State University Extension, the Small Town Center, and its partnering organizations who worked together to create a vision for active transportation in Noxubee County. Technical assistance was provided by the Small Town Center, but the vision set forth in the plan belongs to the Noxubee County community itself. The STC team acknowledges the following people and entities for their contributions to the Noxubee County Active Transportation Plan:

### **Fred Carl Jr. Small Town Center Planning Team**

*Leah Kemp, AIA - Project Director*

*Fran Pharis, AIA - Project Architect*

*Mary Lee Hyer - Intern*

### **MSU Extension's AIM for CHangE**

*Yolanda Pruitt - Program Manager*

*Keltra Chandler - Extension Agent II*

### **Mr. Charles Brown of Equitable Cities**

# BACKGROUND + ANALYSIS

## County Overview

Noxubee County is characterized, much like the majority of northeast Mississippi, by a history of agriculture, including the production of food and textile crops as well as pine lumber. As these industries have evolved and changed, the communities in the county have begun to face a transportation challenge as their populations, economies, and landscapes have changed along with them.

The communities of Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak -- the county's main town centers -- are linked by Highway 45 along a roughly 20 mile stretch. Despite their proximities, the communities vary in terms of demographics, amenities, and tourism. All of the communities have a rich history and an opportunity for taking advantage of their prairie landscapes and rural context.

## County Landmarks



*Noxubee County Courthouse*



*Old Noxubee County Jail (now the Noxubee County Library)*



*Historic homes (pictured here: Flora House, Shuqualak, MS)*



*Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge*



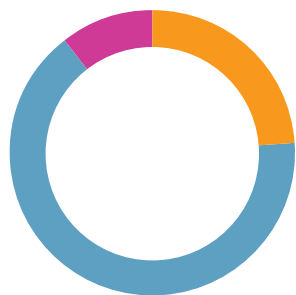
# DEMOGRAPHICS

BROOKSVILLE, MACON, SHUQUALAK



## POPULATION

Noxubee County Total: 10,285



**1,123**  
**3,069**  
**491**



VETERANS:

**2.6%**  
**7.1%**  
**1.5%**

MEDIAN AGE **35.4**  
**32.3**  
**39.2**



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

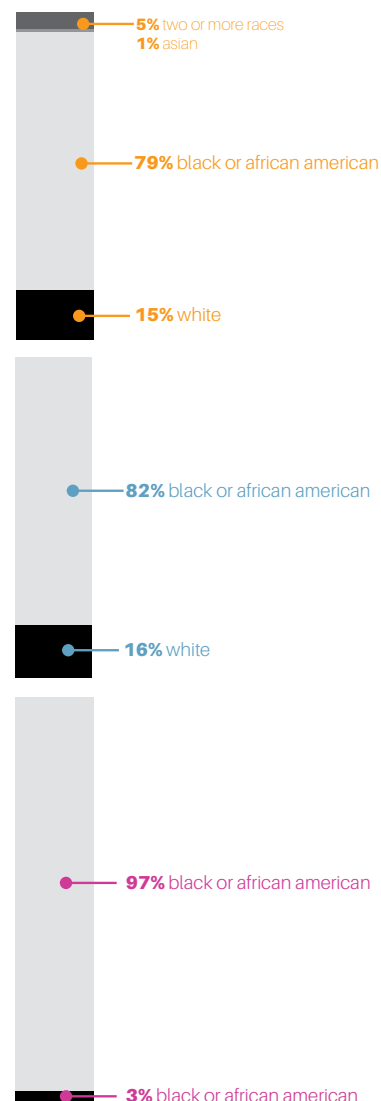
**\$27,045**  
**\$25,901**  
**\$21,094**



POVERTY RATE

**34.9%**  
**34.4%**  
**41.3%**

## RACE



AVERAGE COMMUTE (in minutes)



**28.9**  
**25.5**  
**20.0**

EDUCATION LEVEL  
(Bachelors or Higher)

**14.7%**  
**14.5%**  
**8.00%**

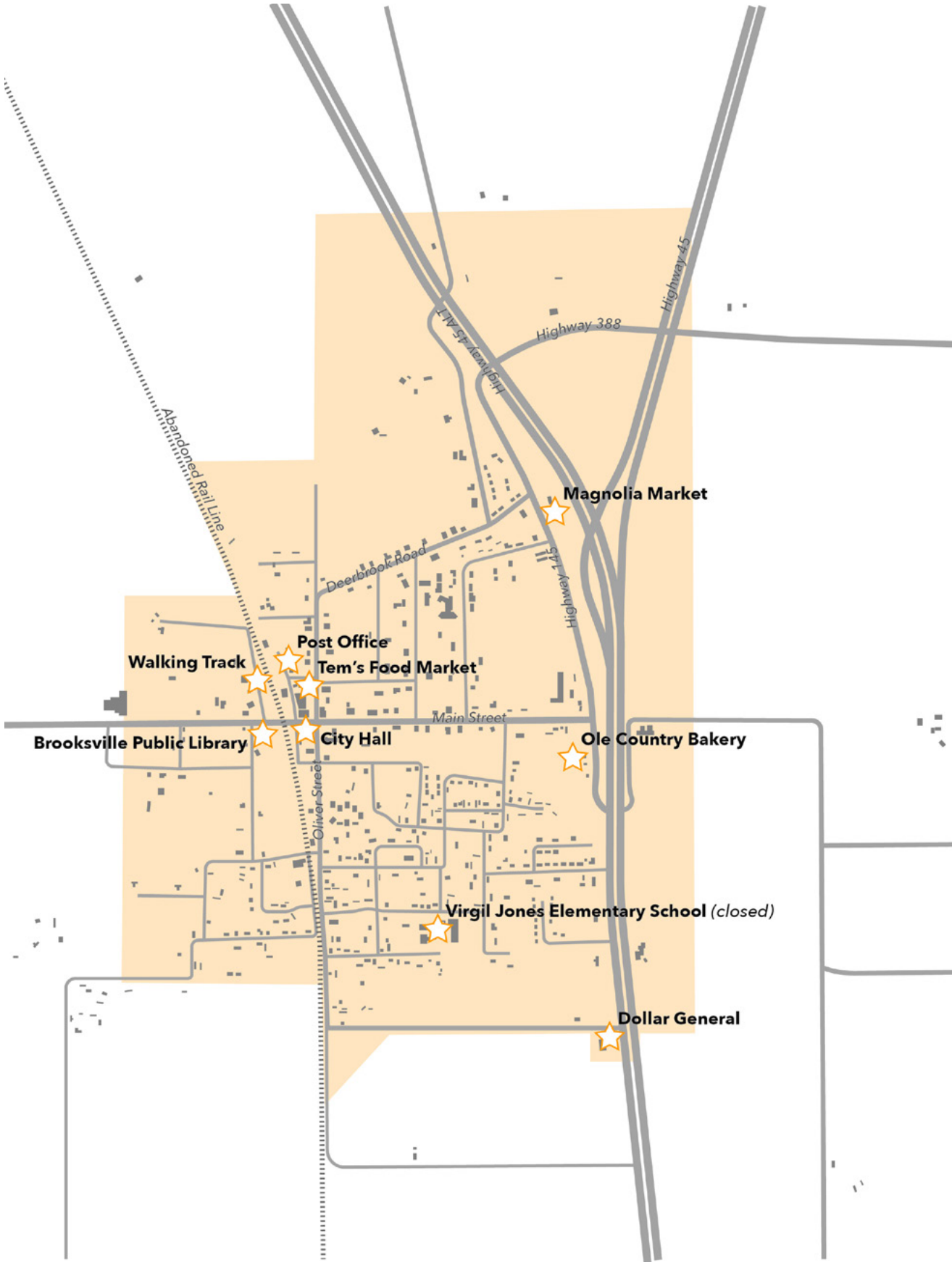
EDUCATION LEVEL  
(High school or higher)

**72.4%**  
**75.7%**  
**75.3%**

## Tri-City Overview

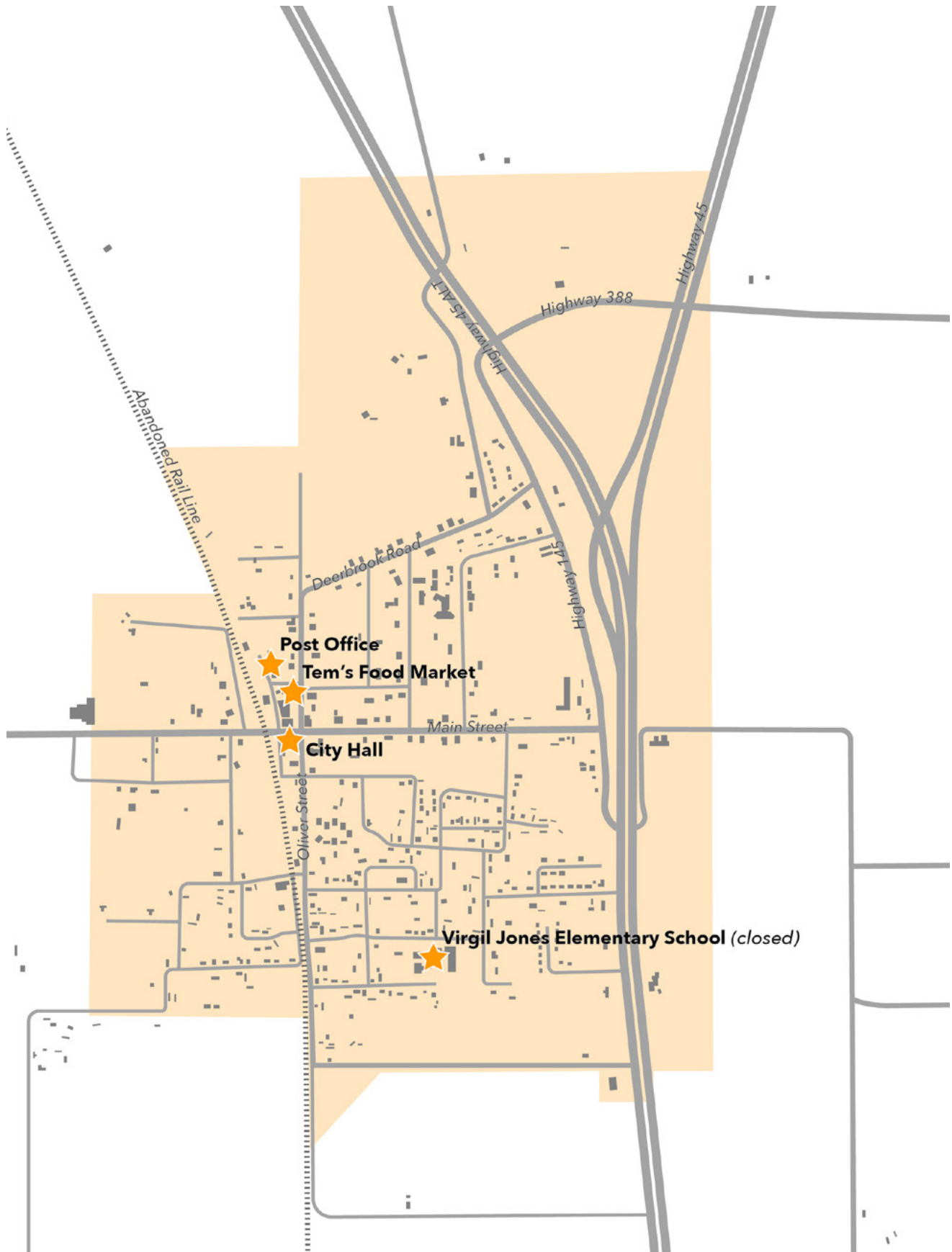


Brooksville Points of Interest Map

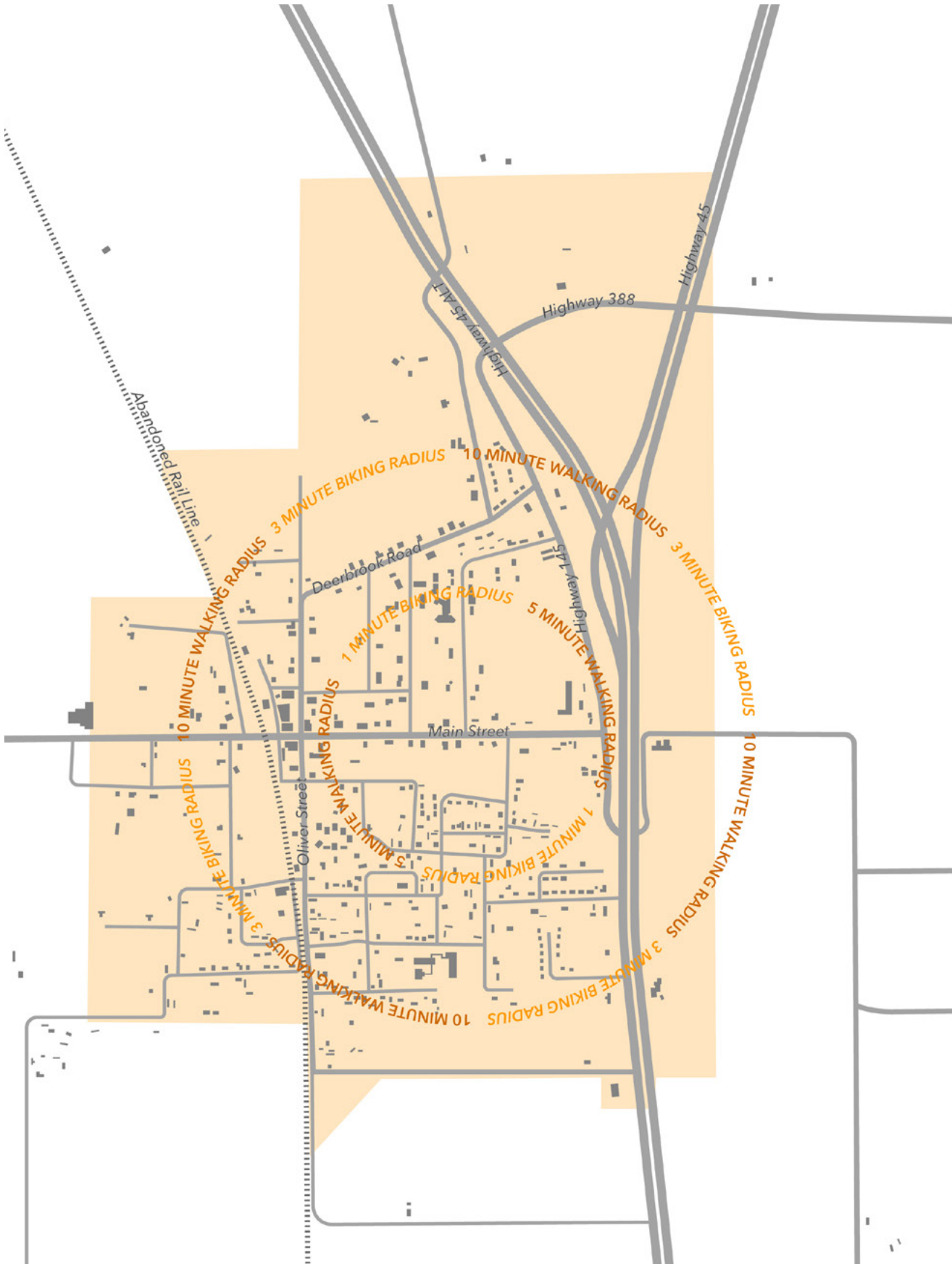




## Brooksville Everyday Destinations Map



Brooksville Walking and Biking Distance Map



## Brooksville



*The first street in Brooksville off of Highway 45 is MS-145. There is a welcome sign (pictured here) as well as signs directing visitors toward the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.*



*Brooksville's stretch of MS-145 is comprised of a popular bakery, a B&B Food Mart corner store (pictured here), and several underused or abandoned commercial buildings.*



*Just across the train tracks from downtown Brooksville is a large green space with a quarter-mile walking track. The track is fairly deteriorated, with grass overtaking much of the edges and large cracks in the pavement. The large grassy area in the middle of the track is well-kept and the grass is healthy.*



*Pictured here is a typical residential street in Brooksville. The streets are narrow with faded striping (if any at all). The edges typically feature drainage swales adjacent the road in between driveway entries.*



**Brooksville**

*Downtown Brooksville encompasses one main block created by Main Street, Oliver Street, Depot Street, and Postoffice Street. Pictured here is the view looking west down Main Street at its intersection with Oliver Street.*



*The Brooksville Market (Tem's Food Market #2) is Brooksville's main in-town source for groceries and everyday essentials.*

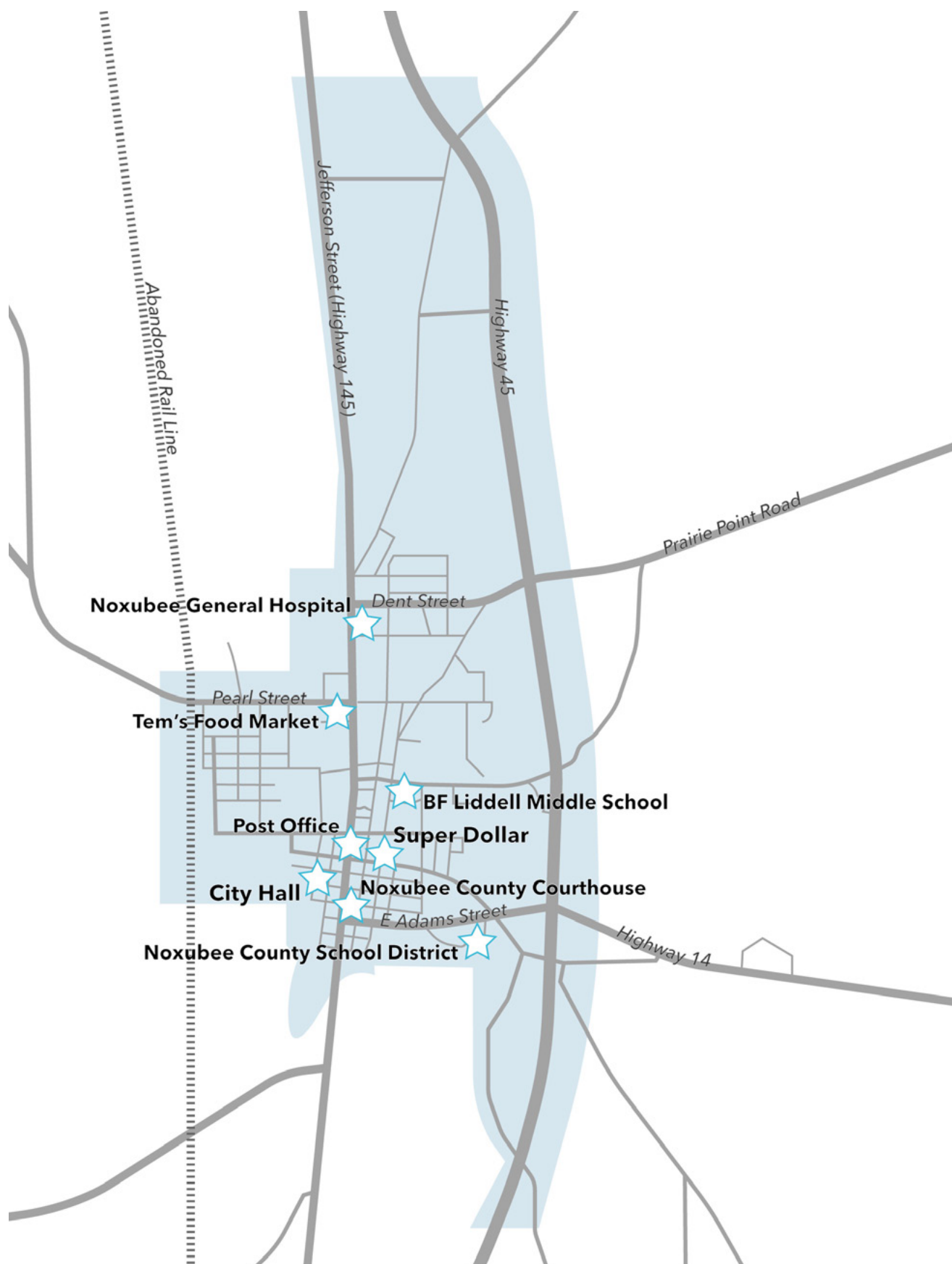


*While downtown Brooksville has some existing sidewalks, other areas (such as this stretch of Oliver Street) rely on large shoulders to serve as a pedestrian lane.*



*Downtown Brooksville houses the town's City Hall, police station, post office, and major grocery store. However, it also has many empty storefronts along its existing sidewalks.*

## Macon Points of Interest Map

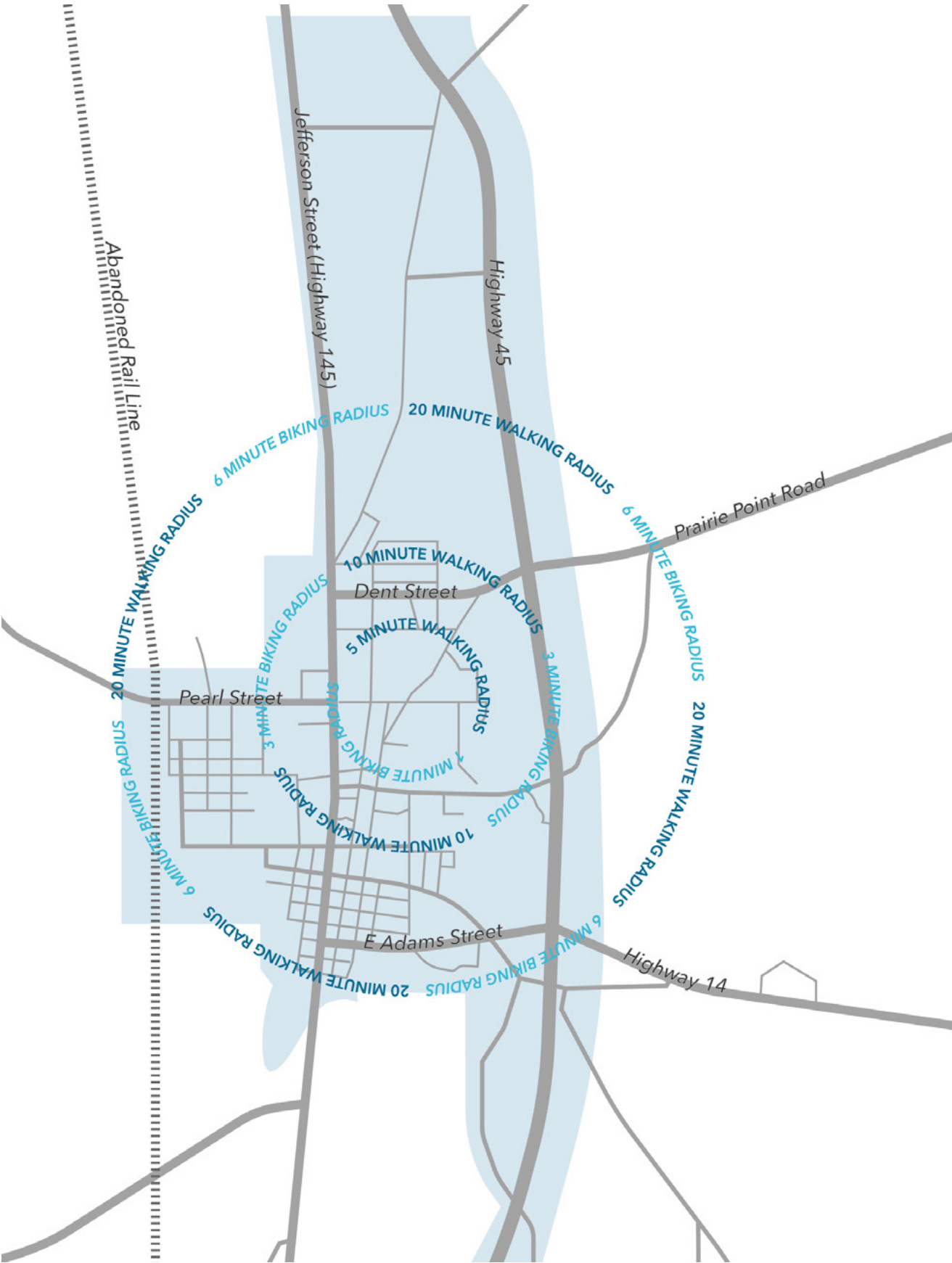




Macon Everyday Destinations Map



Macon Walking and Biking Distance Map



## Macon



*The southern terminus of downtown Macon can be found at the Noxubee County Courthouse and the junction of Jefferson Street (MS-145) and Highway 14.*



*Macon boasts several historical sites and buildings. The pictured Blues Trail marker highlights the region's association with the Black Prairie Blues.*



*The residential streets adjacent to downtown Macon tend to feature sidewalks at least on one side of each street. This ensures at least some safe walking connections for residents in these areas.*



*Residential streets farther away from downtown Macon lack sidewalks or a significant shoulder for use by pedestrians or cyclists.*



## Macon



*While there are north/south crosswalks at the intersections of Jefferson Street, there is no designated area where pedestrians can safely cross the highway.*



*Downtown Macon has large existing sidewalks, some landscaping in planters, accessible curb ramps, and north/south crosswalks. While downtown is quite active, many of the storefronts are empty.*



*Tem's Food Market is Macon's major grocery store. There are sidewalks that connect Tem's to downtown, but to the north of Tem's the sidewalks along Jefferson Street end, cutting off a safe walking connection for any residents north of this point.*



*The Noxubee Medical Complex features a very well-maintained public walking track and fenced-in playground. This track is located near what is essentially the northern terminus of Macon's residential areas.*

## Shuqualak Points of Interest Map

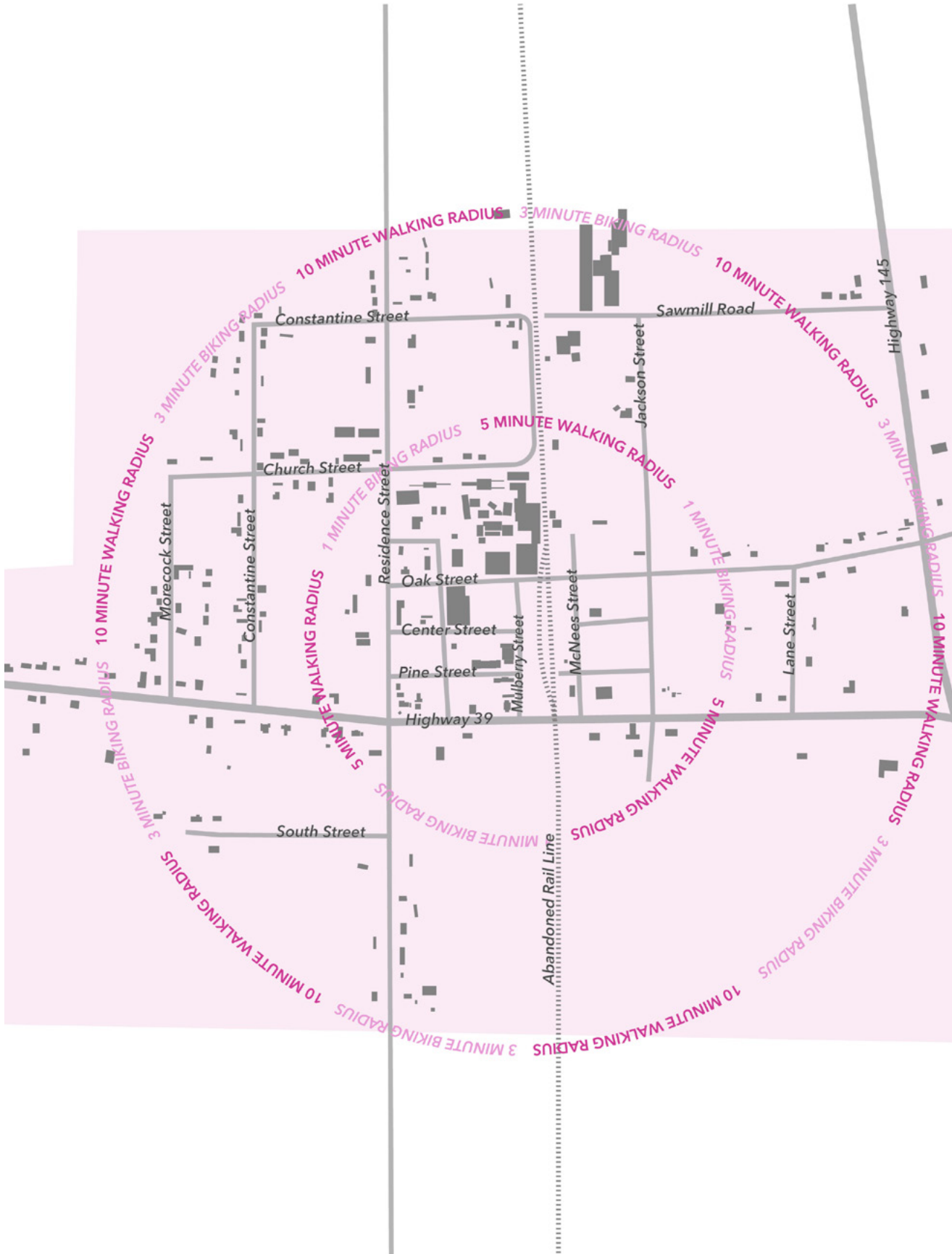




## Shuqualak Everyday Destinations Map



Shuqualak Walking and Biking Distance Map



## Shuqualak



Entering Shuqualak, the two main landmarks that jump out are the town water tower and the sign for Dollar General. Dollar General is Shuqualak's main in-town source of groceries and everyday essentials.



The highlight of downtown Shuqualak is Pine Street, which is home to Shuqualak's police station, post office, and Town Hall. Downtown is also directly adjacent to the Shuqualak Lumber Company, which adds a unique character to the small town.



Pictured here is a typical residential street in Shuqualak. Streets are narrow with no existing sidewalks, and typically run directly adjacent to a swale.



Residence Street (pictured here) connects the residential areas of Shuqualak to downtown and to each other. It is a long, straight road, so the city has taken measures such as the speed bumps pictured above to slow traffic.



## Shuqualak



*Shuqualak's police station, post office, and Town Hall are all housed on Pine Street. The civic complex has a well-maintained sidewalk with ramp access and landscaping in small planters.*



*Pine Street (pictured here) runs west toward Residence Street, a main thoroughfare. Outside of the main civic complex of downtown, neither Pine Street nor any other street has existing sidewalks.*



*On the eastern side of the train tracks downtown, Shuqualak maintains a park with a quarter-mile walking track, play equipment, a basketball court, restrooms, and benches.*



*On narrow residential streets, the city has employed simple measures such as rumble strips and signage (pictured above) to encourage drivers to slow down.*

## Significant Findings

The Small Town Center (STC) at Mississippi State University held a community feedback session for Noxubee County - specifically seeking feedback from residents of the towns of Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak - on July 29, 2022, from 11am to 1pm at the Noxubee Civic Center. This meeting involved the presentation of photovoice exercise submissions contributed by several community members in attendance, with discussion of the photo submissions facilitated by the STC. After this presentation, meeting attendees were able to mingle with STC designers and contribute written and verbal feedback on their towns' walking and biking landscape.

The event, which was publicized via flyers, social media, and word of mouth, was attended by approximately 15 to 20 participants with each of the three communities proportionally represented - around 10 participants from Macon, the county's largest town, were in attendance, while Brooksville and Shuqualak drew approximately 5 participants each. Most of the participants were Black and represented an older age group; however, several white community members and some younger participants were also in attendance to provide feedback - this population is in proportion with Noxubee County's average demographics.

The following pages reflect the significant findings of the community feedback collected via posters, surveys, and photovoice exercise. They also present the significant findings from the STC's own research and observation of the communities.





## Assets, Opportunities + Challenges

Recognizing existing assets throughout the county is essential to the active transportation planning process. Identifying the county's existing strengths in the area of active transportation not only highlights what is already working for the community but also brings to light areas of opportunity. Through community outreach and individual observation, the Small Town Center identified the following significant assets in each of the three Noxubee County focus communities.

### Brooksville



#### Public Walking Track

*Brooksville's walking track is located downtown by the defunct train tracks and includes a paved quarter-mile loop and open lawn area open for public use. The track is in an excellent central location and provides a safe environment for active recreation for the residents of Brooksville and its surrounding communities. The track could be improved by some updates to its cracking pavement to increase user safety and accessibility and the addition of amenities such as bathrooms with water fountains, shade structures such as a pavilion, and other active items such as play structures or exercise equipment.*



#### Downtown Core

*Brooksville's downtown core includes the town's only grocery store as well as its post office, police station, library, walking track, and city hall, all of which are major everyday destinations and/or points of interest. This cluster of important destinations makes Brooksville's downtown a major active transportation priority. The main downtown loop is mostly equipped with existing sidewalks, making active transportation in this area already safe and accessible, but this system should be expanded and connected to the town's residential areas to increase pedestrian and cyclist access.*



#### Popular Businesses

*Brooksville has a section of Highway 145 that fronts Highway 45, making it a prime destination for businesses to attract non-resident visitors. These businesses encourage visitors to stop in Brooksville, but active transportation amenities such as signage and street art should be strategically placed around these attractions to draw people into downtown Brooksville. Additionally, some active transportation access to these businesses should be provided connecting nearby residential areas to encourage residents to visit their own local attractions.*

## Macon



### Public Parks

*Macon boasts several public green spaces distributed throughout town. These parks include a public walking track and playground at the Noxubee Medical Complex, Rev. William Rice Park (baseball fields, basketball courts, and open lawn), and Macon City Park (baseball fields, a basketball court, and a multipurpose sports field). These parks encourage physical activity on their grounds as well as provide a destination for pedestrians and cyclists. Additional amenities could be provided and beautification efforts enacted to encourage even further use of the parks.*



### Existing Sidewalk System

*Downtown Macon and its surrounding residential areas already have a sidewalk system. This is a major asset in enacting an active transportation plan, as the existing system sets up a framework for extending additional sidewalks into the town. The existing sidewalks could also be improved by weeding, mending cracks, widening, and repaving where needed to increase user safety and sidewalk accessibility for individuals who use mobility aids such as walkers.*



### Historic Landmarks

*Macon has several historic landmarks that serve as everyday destinations and unique attractions for pedestrians and cyclists. Among these are the Noxubee County Courthouse, several historic markers and a Mississippi Blues Trail marker, and several historic homes and other historic buildings. In planning for active transportation, these landmarks are significant for easing navigation, providing a pedestrian destination, and serving as hubs for bicycle amenities such as bike parking and repair stations.*



## Shuqualak



### Public Park + Walking Track

*Shuqualak's walking track provides a paved quarter-mile loop inside a park that has public bathrooms, a basketball court, play equipment, and benches. This major asset is located directly adjacent to downtown Shuqualak, but it is cut off from pedestrian access to downtown by the defunct railroad. Providing a pedestrian connection from downtown Shuqualak's existing sidewalks is essential to encouraging active transportation to and from the park.*



### Relatively Dense Layout

*Shuqualak's footprint is relatively compact - theoretically, it should take around twenty minutes to walk and six minutes to bike from one edge of town to the other. This is advantageous to implementing an active transportation plan, as residents are already within a very feasible walking distance of any everyday destination in town. All that is needed to make active transportation even more feasible is to provide a safe lane for pedestrians and cyclists.*



### Town Character

*Shuqualak is home to a very active lumber processing yard located directly adjacent to downtown. While this could present some safety concerns to pedestrians and cyclists, it also gives the small town a unique character and interesting vistas. Embracing Shuqualak's industry by highlighting unique views of the lumber yard could encourage increased physical activity and community identity. However, safety must be kept in mind - direct proximity to industrial machinery should be avoided and extra precautions should be taken to protect pedestrians from large trucks on the road.*

## Countywide Challenges

Despite the strengths of Noxubee County's major towns, some challenges to active transportation exist in the county. Both the individual communities as well as the county as a whole face the same major challenges when it comes to increasing active transportation.



### Rural Context

*Despite the relative theoretical walkability of Noxubee County's major towns, the majority of the county is rural. This means that for many residents living in the small, unincorporated communities throughout the county, walking to everyday destinations is not feasible due to long distances. Cycling, however, could be a possible alternative for these county residents as an option for active transportation.*



### Inflexible Street Conditions

*Many of the streets in and around Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak provide limited options for implementing active transportation infrastructure. On the one hand, most of the residential streets (without sidewalks) in the towns are narrow and have no shoulder to work with. On the other hand, several of the major streets through each town are also classified as state highways, making installing new infrastructure along these routes complicated.*



### Safety Concerns

*Many Noxubee County residents expressed concerns for their safety when engaging in active transportation. Fast traffic is currently a major factor in deterring residents from walking or biking on the roads. Additionally, residents expressed that they fear becoming the victim of a crime if they are out walking or biking alone. It is critical to address these concerns when planning for active transportation in Noxubee County.*

# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ACTION ITEMS



## ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ACTION ITEMS

There are many different ways for a community to support active transportation. The following list of active transportation “action items” is a brief summary of methods and options for improving and encouraging walking and biking within a community. Each of these action items can improve pedestrian safety, make walking and biking more comfortable and enjoyable, and encourage people to develop a long-term active lifestyle through everyday active transportation. These ideas and recommendations can be mixed and matched depending on available funding and community need.

## 1. Sidewalk Installation + Improvements

Sidewalks are critical for a safe pedestrian environment. Having these protected lanes encourages pedestrian commuting by providing a safe and comfortable space in which to walk. Where there are existing sidewalks, there are many improvements that can be made to further promote walking and biking. Some of these possible improvements include creating level surfaces, clearing debris, and installing appropriately sloped ramps at crosswalks. These improvements will not only make existing sidewalks more comfortable for all users, but also increase their accessibility for children, elderly adults, and individuals who use mobility aids.



*Sidewalk improvements could be as simple as replacing a slab or two of concrete, as shown here - these updates make sidewalks safer, more accessible, and overall easier to use.*

## 2. Crosswalks + Mid-block Crossings

Crosswalks are a simple solution to promote pedestrian safety when crossing at busy intersections. Mid-block crossings are crosswalks not located at intersections, allowing pedestrians to have safe crossings far away from intersections as well. Crosswalks and mid-block crossings can be simple painted lines or include upgrades such as stamped paving patterns, bump outs, elevated walking surface, signage, or painted artwork.

Crosswalks - even if they consist only of simple painted lines - serve as a visual cue for drivers to pay attention, slow down, and watch for pedestrians crossing the street. This increases pedestrian safety and promotes walking by providing a comfortable avenue by which pedestrians may navigate street crossings both at intersections and at mid-block crossing points.



*Adding bumpouts, slightly elevating the crosswalk, and providing clear markings all help to make crossings safer for pedestrians.*



*Mid-block crossings should be well marked with both street markings and signage to ensure maximum visibility for drivers, who usually wouldn't expect pedestrians to cross the road outside of an intersection.*



### 3. Public Art Installations

Public works of art throughout a town - which can include wall murals, street murals, sculptures, and other works of art - can serve multiple health-promoting roles. Firstly, public art adds character to everyday destinations and can enliven otherwise dull spaces within a town. These additional points of interest encourage active exploration. Art can also establish and reinforce the town's identity.

Additionally, especially in the case of painted murals at intersections, mid-block crossings, or other areas along a street, public art can function as a method of traffic calming. Much like simple crosswalks, street murals alert drivers of shared roadway spaces and encourage slower traffic, making roadways safer for pedestrians and cyclists.



*Street art can make crosswalks more visible to drivers, encouraging them to pay attention and slow down sooner. This makes crossings safer for pedestrians and cyclists.*



*Public art can be done at many scales, from small sculptures to painted crosswalks to full-street murals (as seen here). Art adds character and life to a space, encouraging people to visit on foot.*



## 4. Traffic Calming

There are many options for slowing fast traffic in order to make walking and cycling a safer transportation option. Some common traffic calming methods and tools include bump outs, speed humps, medians, planters, and street art (as mentioned previously). Often, these traffic calming solutions work best when multiple are paired together. Traffic calming interventions not only slow traffic but also make the street more comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists.



*Drivers navigate more slowly and carefully on narrower streets -- alternating bumpouts can both narrow a street and force drivers to pay attention as they navigate around them. Additionally, they can provide a space for attractive landscaping!*



*Speed tables (or “speed humps”) are a safer and more attractive alternative to speed bumps. They are easier on cars’ machinery, and they encourage drivers to slow down sooner and for a longer interval. They can also be made more attractive if they are decorated with public art.*

## 5. Street Furniture

Street furniture encourages pedestrian traffic in active areas of town. Amenities such as benches offer pedestrians the opportunity to rest, observe the scenery and activity, and interact with others. Seating and other street furniture is ideal for active downtown areas where you want to promote pedestrian activity and encourage visitors to linger and shop, eat, or otherwise engage with local establishments.



*Benches don't have to be boring! As shown here, well-designed street furniture can serve multiple functions at once and provide visual interest on the street.*



*Street furniture such as benches and planters can also serve as an extra barrier between pedestrians and the road, creating an extra layer of safety.*



## 6. Lighting

Lighting is an essential component to creating a safe pedestrian environment and facilitating use of pedestrian spaces after dark. Towns may add lighting in many ways and in multiple forms. Options for powering a lighting system include tying lights into the existing power grid or incorporating solar-powered lighting where possible. Lighting can also take multiple forms, including classic lamp poles, string lights hung between buildings, ground-level lights, and many more. Streets with proper lighting promote safe travel by increasing pedestrian and cyclist visibility and reducing the opportunities for crime to occur. As an added bonus, unique lighting can add visual interest at nighttime in active downtown areas.



*Ground lighting is a visually interesting alternative to typical street lamps that can very effectively illuminate the edges of a walking or biking path at night.*



*Overhead lighting, especially in denser downtown settings, can create a fun and artistic display. Not only does this type of lighting make streets safer, but it also attracts more visitors to these areas at night.*



## 7. Signs + Wayfinding

Signs, directional arrows, maps, and other wayfinding amenities can help pedestrians navigate town more easily. This is especially true when the signage is specifically geared toward pedestrians and cyclists to encourage physical activity. While residents may already be able to navigate confidently via cars, safe walking and biking routes may be different from the typical vehicular routes. Wayfinding signage created with pedestrians and cyclists in mind will make navigating on foot safer and more accessible. Additionally, signage can be used to add character and create cohesive branding throughout town.



Relaying the distance to a destination in minutes can reframe someone's perspective on how far away something actually may be -- this encourages individuals to walk or bike somewhere that they originally believed was too far away to reach by active transportation.



Wayfinding signage can be as temporary or as permanent as a budget allows. More temporary options for signage can be attached to existing poles and easily reprinted to reflect updates and additions to a town's existing points of interest.

## 8. Street Beautification

Enhancing the visual appearance of a destination or pedestrian route can increase foot traffic in that area. Some examples of beautification projects include cleaning up garbage and debris, planting trees and flowers, installing decorative lighting and signage, creating public art, and other such improvements that can make a street more attractive. People prefer to walk around and spend time in places that are visually appealing and feel safe and welcoming, so street beautification can be a relatively simple way to increase physical activity within a town.



*Street beautification - or "streetscaping" - can add energy and life to previously neglected areas of a town. It can also make pedestrians safer by providing attractive and visible crosswalks, bumpouts, bike lanes, and other street amenities.*



*Simple streetscaping can encourage walking and biking by providing a more attractive and enjoyable route to pedestrians and cyclists.*



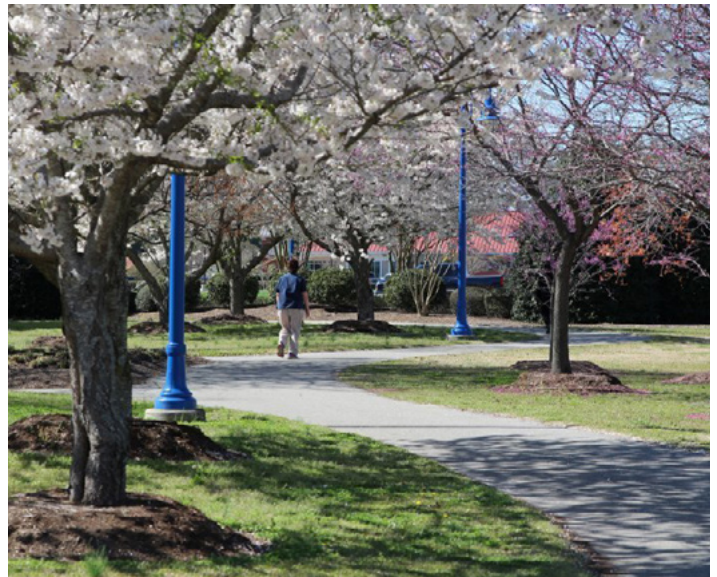
## 9. Park Improvements

Parks and other public green spaces are instrumental in encouraging outdoor physical activity. Parks provide a welcoming public space for town residents to freely gather, both acting as a location for physical activity and a destination to which people might walk or ride a bike. Updating and enhancing park amenities that support physical activity - such as walking tracks, outdoor exercise equipment, basketball courts, playgrounds, etc. - will promote increased physical health. These updates may include repaving and leveling out existing walking tracks, repairing existing recreational sports and play equipment, and cleaning up debris and refuse.

Where parks have limited amenities, adding new recreational equipment (basketball goals, frisbee golf cages, etc.), benches and/or picnic tables, and updated landscaping will create more incentives for residents to visit and be physically active in these public spaces.



*With some basic additions such as shade structures, seating, and landscaping, a simple walking track can be elevated into a vibrant multi-use park. This encourages people to visit the park and be physically active outdoors.*



*Simple upgrades - such as adding unique lighting and landscaping - can be made to existing parks and public walking tracks to make them even more attractive destinations.*



## Why Have a Bike Program?

Based on the feedback from the STC's community engagement, the residents of Noxubee County expressed an overwhelming shared interest in biking. To increasing access to cycling and catalyze future development to support biking in the county, the STC proposed the establishment of the BIKE Noxubee Program.

BIKE Noxubee is a county-wide program meant to encourage active transportation and expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure throughout the county. In order to kick off this movement, the STC worked with the county community to create a county bike share. A bike share is a community program that makes bikes available for shared public use, usually either for free or a low cost. Bike shares have been found to promote physical activity

and lower public health costs in addition to providing a transportation alternative to cars. Featuring three main hubs - one in Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak - the public bikes will be available to town residents, county residents who live in nearby communities, and visitors to the county.

In addition to establishing the bike share program, a county-wide cycling education program is proposed to increase user safety and awareness of cycling. This project is meant to serve as a catalyst for Noxubee County's active transportation landscape, encouraging future development of cycling infrastructure and other active transportation amenities.

## Why Implement a Bike Share?

Bike share programs have been found to have multiple benefits for the communities in which they are implemented. These benefits include positive impacts on public health, local economies, and the natural environment. Bike shares promote physical activity, which contributes to improved health of community members and thus lowered public health costs.

Additionally, bike shares can stimulate local economies in a myriad of ways. Depending on the method chosen for lending bikes, bike shares can produce a small amount of profit for a city on their own if bikes are loaned out for a small fee. Bike shares have also been associated with increased activity in commercial downtown areas, both from residents and visitors using the bikes to explore the town.

Bike shares also provide an alternative to cars, which reduces the volume of local vehicular emissions. Additionally, providing an alternate form of transportation to residents allows those without a car access to longer commutes across town that they may not have been able to achieve as easily otherwise.



## How to BIKE Noxubee

### STEP 1: Get a library card.

Residents with a library card can borrow a bike for free. Visitors may borrow by presenting a valid ID and paying a small security deposit.

### STEP 2: Check out a bike.

Head to your local library and check out a bike exactly how you would check out a book. The bike will be linked to your library account, where any damages or late fees can be tracked.

### STEP 3: Bike safely and have fun!

Be sure to wear a helmet, follow all posted traffic signs, and stick to designated routes (*shown on the map below*) where possible. See back for additional safety tips.

## Managing & Maintaining a Bike Share

A bike share provides increased access to bikes for the public, but it requires the proper oversight to maintain. For the small town context found in Noxubee County, management of the bike share can be easily integrated into existing public services. Implementing a bike “check out” system in conjunction with the county library system would be an efficient and easy management strategy for the bike share.

This system would allow library card holders to easily secure a bike by simply “checking it out” from their local library. This would also allow the public employees managing the system to easily and officially keep track of the bikes in the system, holding each borrower accountable. It is up to the bike share management team to determine if any fees should be charged either for borrowing a bike or for “late fees” if a bike is kept past its due date, just like when borrowing a book from the library.

Concerning bike maintenance, individual bicycles require regular tune ups every 6 to 8 months. This could be performed by a designated city employee or outsourced to a local bike shop as a way of further connecting the bike share to the community.

## Safely BIKE Noxubee

### Wear a Helmet

A helmet must be worn on every ride to protect the head in the event of an accident, whether that involves a car, another bike, or an environmental hazard.

### Wear Bright Clothing

Wear bright, highly visible clothing (or even reflective tape or patches) while cycling to ensure you are visible to drivers.

### Obey Traffic Rules

Stop at stop signs and traffic lights. Signal with an arm when preparing for a turn. Pass other cyclists on the left. Obey all posted traffic signs.

### Ride With Traffic

Always ride with the flow of traffic, not against it - cycle on the right side of the road, just as you would if you were driving.

### Stay Alert & Controlled

Maintain control of your bicycle, ride at a safe speed, and do not use headphones or look at your phone while cycling. Be prepared to react quickly to unexpected circumstances.

### Yield to Pedestrians & Cars

Always yield to pedestrians and vehicles to minimize the risk of collision. Pause at intersections and walk your bike through a crosswalk if necessary in heavy or fast traffic.

### Use Lights in the Dark

Do not bike in low light or dark conditions without front and rear lights and reflectors. Even with lights, remain on well-lit routes at night for maximum safety.

### Lock Your Bike

Always lock your bike securely to avoid theft. Do not leave keys in your bike lock. Lock your bike in highly visible areas to discourage theft or tampering.

## What Do You Need for a Bike Program?

Initially, the Noxubee County Bike Share will consist of three stations located in the county's town hubs of Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak. These locations strategically situate the stations at town centers, creating easy access for both town citizens and county residents. The initial roll out will provide the county with twenty

bikes - five stationed in Brooksville, ten in Macon, and five in Shuqualak. Implementing the bike share will also include the designation of specific bike routes, made identifiable by logos painted on the street to alert both drivers and cyclists of the shared roads.

### Bike Share Equipment

#### Bikes

The initial bike share includes twenty bikes meant for public use. The bike share stations in Brooksville and Shuqualak will each host five designated bikes, while Macon will host ten.

#### Bike Racks

The bike share stations in Brooksville and Shuqualak will each have one bike rack to accommodate their five bikes, while the station in Macon will have two bike racks to accommodate their ten bikes.

#### Signage

Signage will be placed at each bike share station with pertinent information such as how to use the bike share system, bike share rules and safety information, and a map of the designated bike routes in each town.

#### Stencils + Paint

Stencils and paint will be used to mark the bike share stations and designated bikes routes throughout each town. The logos used for this street art will also be featured on the bikes, emphasizing the bike share program branding.



*The bikes selected for the bike share feature an easily-accessible frame, standard road-suitable tires, rear baskets, and a built-in locking mechanism. The bikes are also printed with the Noxubee County Bike Share logo to differentiate them as part of the bike share fleet.*



### Already Own a Bike?

If you already have your own bike, the following equipment is essential for safety and responsible bike ownership:

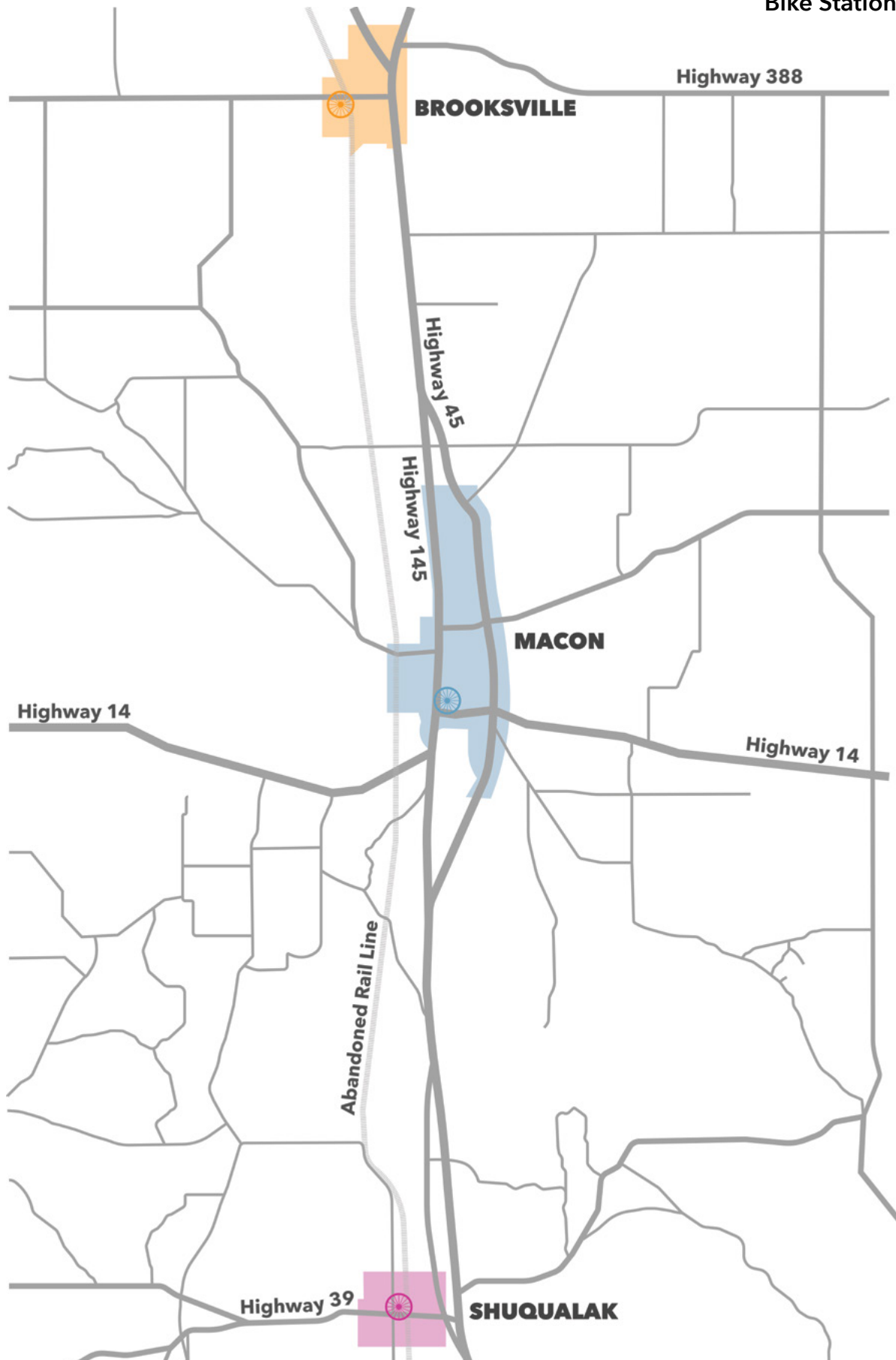
- Bike lock & key or code
- Cycling helmet
- Bike repair kit
- Tire pump

### Branding

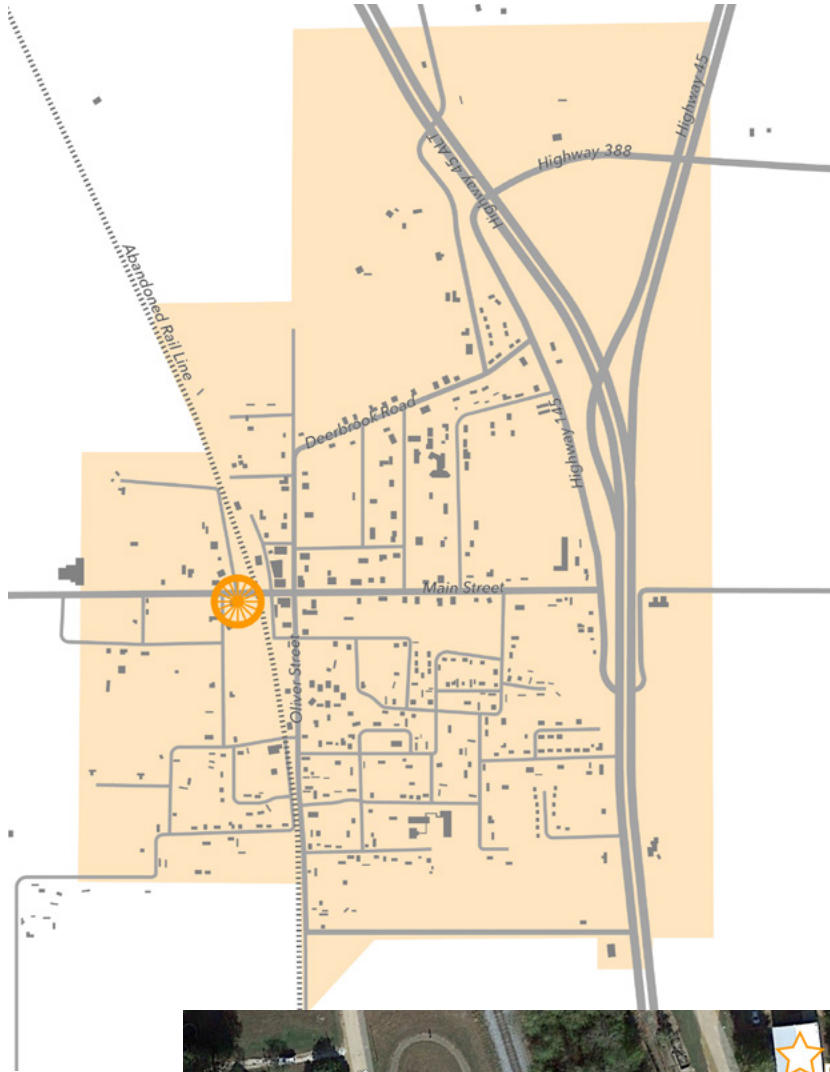
The seemingly small detail of branding can in reality have a large impact on the success of any community program. Branding identifies bike share equipment and stations, informing community members and visitors of its existence and where to access it. Additionally, branding the bike share increases its perceived legitimacy as a community program, thus increasing public trust and interest in using it. The logo shown here will serve as the identifying mark for the bike share bikes, bike stations, and designated bike routes.



## Bike Station Locations

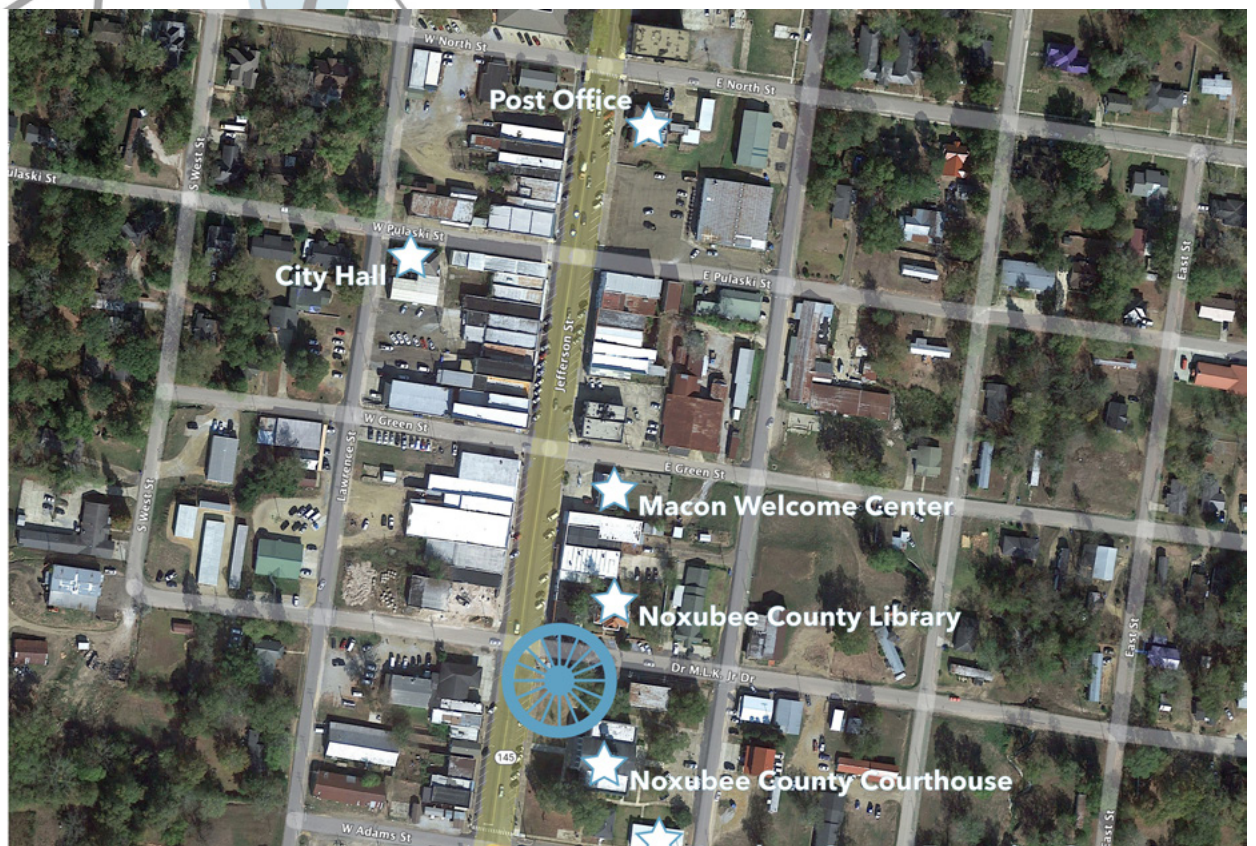


## Brooksville Bike Station Location



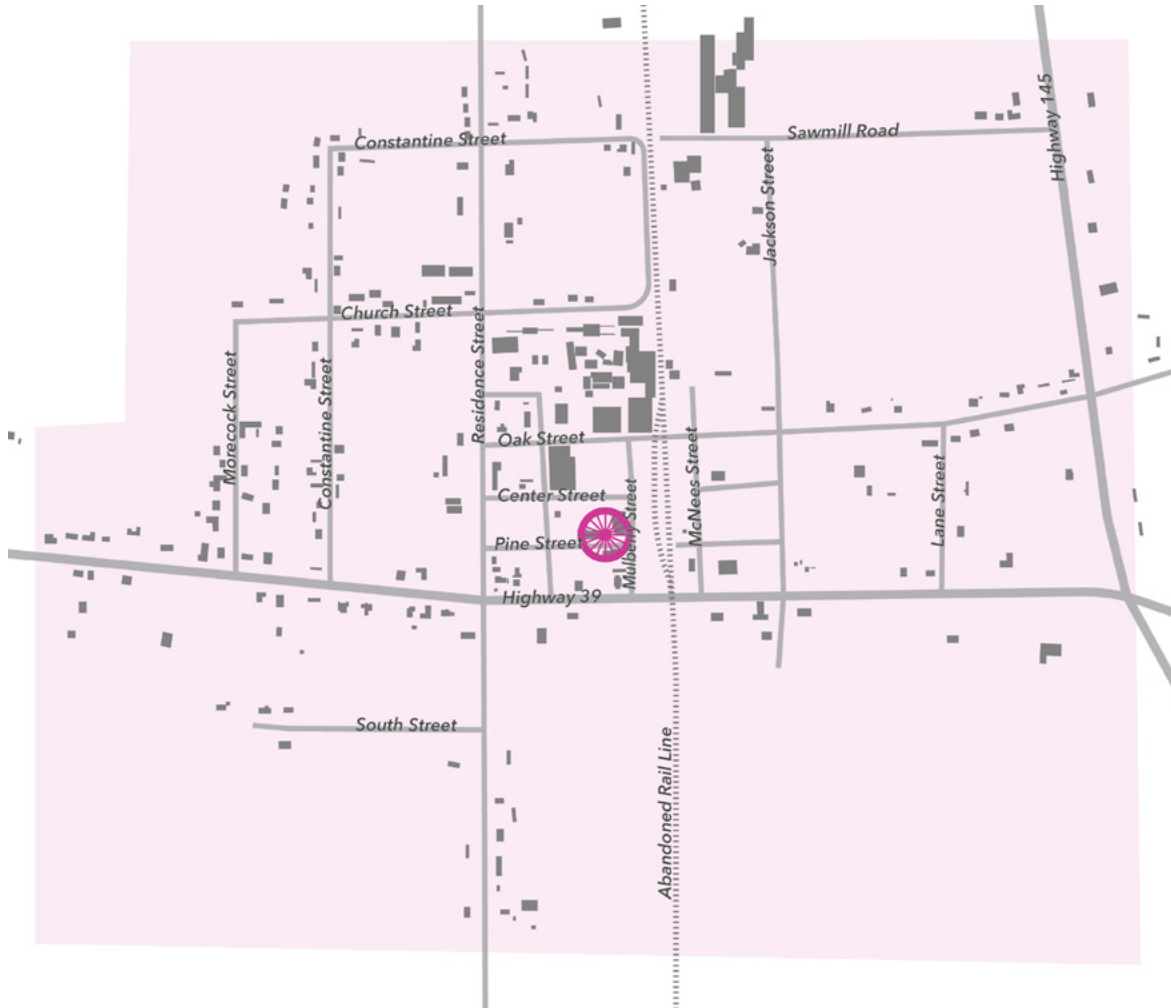


## Macon Bike Station Location





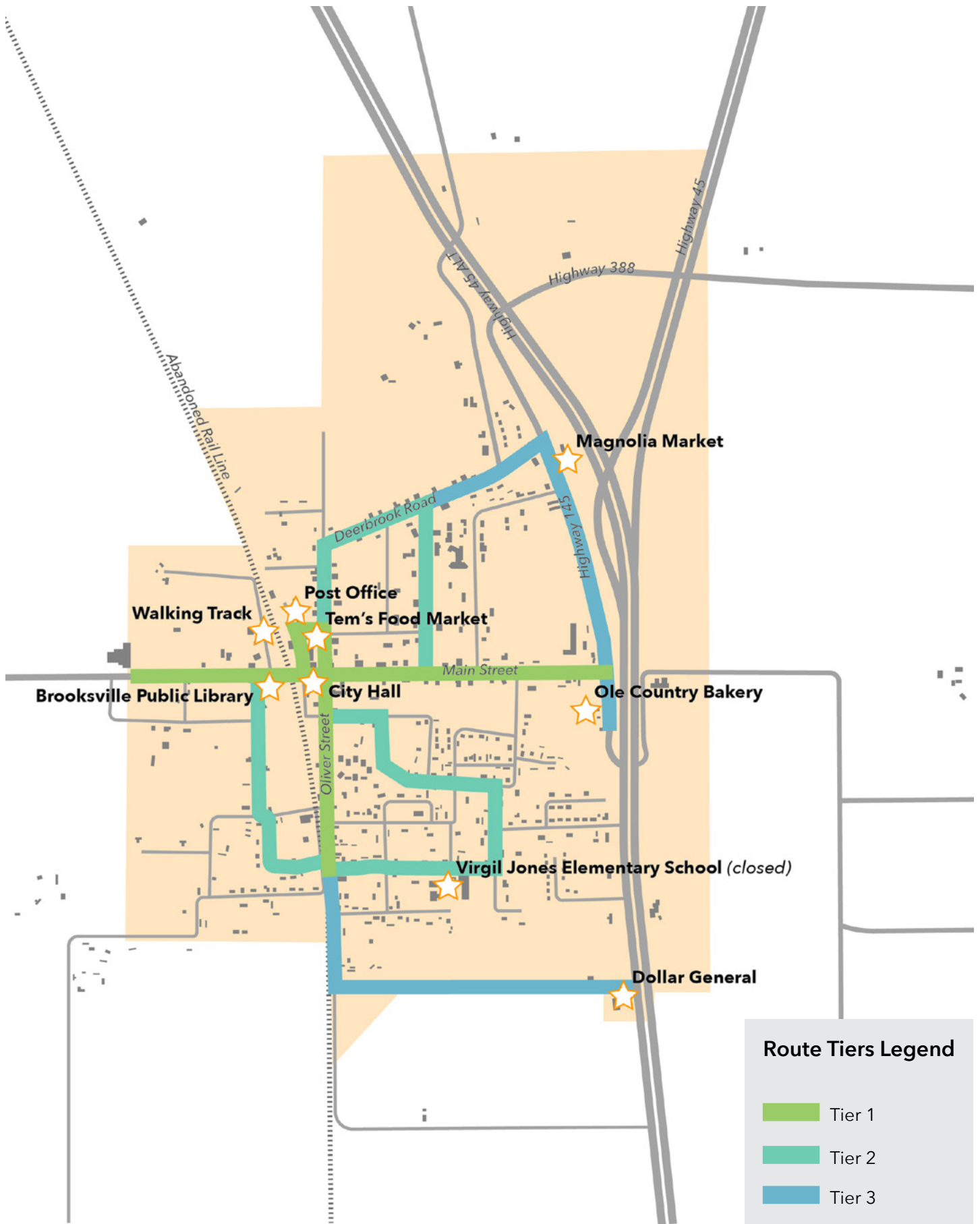
## Shuqualak Bike Station Location



## ***Where to Bike***

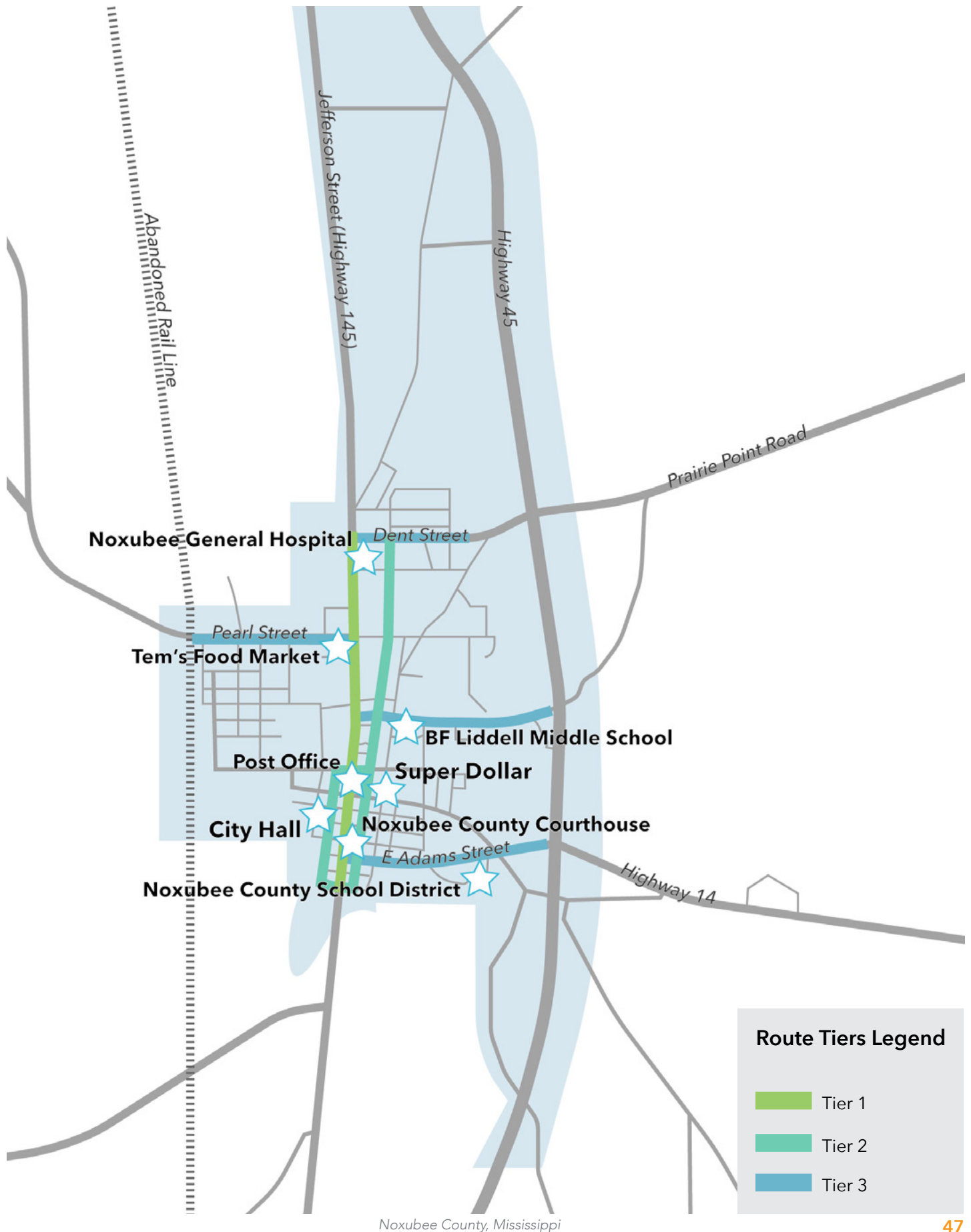
While bike share users may be able to find and borrow a bike, they need somewhere safe to cycle. The Small Town Center has identified critical routes that connect everyday destinations and other points of interest in each community. These routes are those that should be prioritized as each community works toward implementing street art, bike lanes, and other bicycle-supporting infrastructure. The following maps illustrate these critical routes and rank them in order of priority, with Tier 1 routes being the highest priority and Tier 3 being the lowest. This is to assist communities in choosing which routes to improve first, before moving on to the next tier.

## Brooksville Recommended Routes

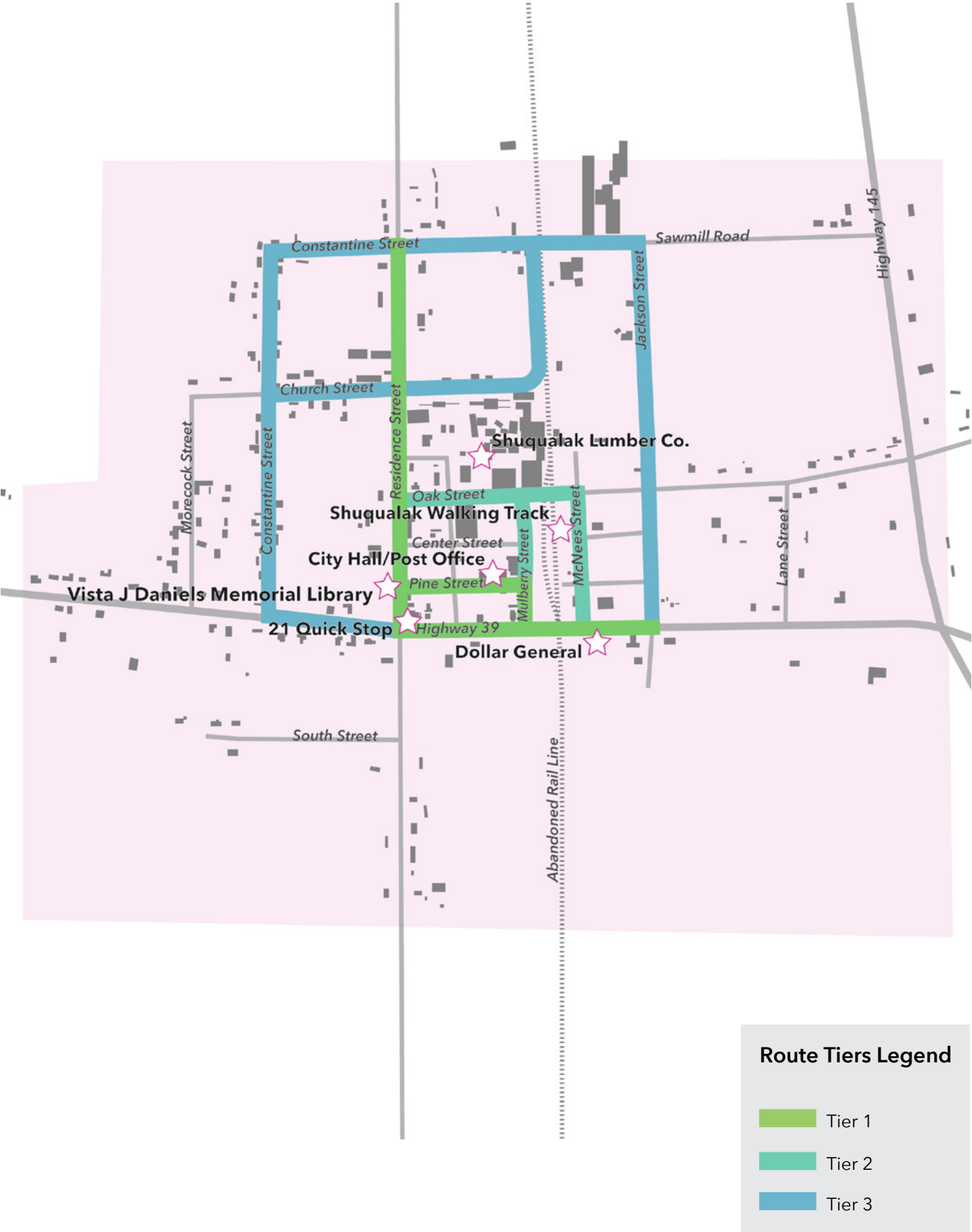




## Macon Recommended Routes



Shuqualak Recommended Routes



## How Do You Make Bicycling Popular?

While providing bicycles to the public is a good start to introducing a county-wide biking program, simply making bikes available is not enough to get people interested in or comfortable with cycling. The most critical part of the implementation is to spread the word. This could include advertising the bike share via social media and around town via signs and flyers, but in order to truly strive for the success of a bike program, actually taking to the streets and championing bicycling as a form of recreation and transportation is essential.

During engagement conducted by the Small Town Center and with the help of Charles Brown, community members expressed several major reasons why Noxubee County residents do not bike even though they would like to:

- Lack of knowledge on how to safely bicycle on a road shared with cars
- Fear of becoming the victim of a crime
- Lack of representation of cyclists in their communities (i.e. no one else bikes, so they feel awkward/do not want to stick out)

In order to make a bike program successful in Noxubee County, these concerns must be addressed. While some infrastructural interventions may be taken to address some of these concerns (lighting for safety at night, installing separated bike lanes, etc.), spreading awareness of the cycling program on an interpersonal level through safety classes and social events is the best first step to popularizing cycling and catalyzing interest in these infrastructural investments. Some ideas for these events include the following:



### Bike Share Launch Event

*Hosting a community event to commemorate the launch of the bike share program is a great way to get the word out. This event could include food, music, games, and, of course, streets blocked off for an inaugural bike ride throughout each town. A launch event would spread the news of the bike share, get the community interested, connect cyclists to a group of interested people, and build some initial confidence in biking throughout each town.*



### Bike Safety Training Classes

*Discussions with the community revealed that many Noxubee County residents have never been introduced to the proper safety procedures for cycling on a road shared with cars. As such, bike safety classes are crucial to ensuring a successful and safe bike program in the county. These classes could be presented at schools, community centers, libraries, and other community gathering places in order to reach every age group throughout the county.*





### Bike to School/Work Days

A bike-to-school/work day is a community event in which residents collectively ride bikes to school or work on a designated day. This kind of event reduces the number of cars on the road on the day of as some of those who would normally drive will be cycling instead, thus making the roads safer for cyclists. It also instills a sense of community on the day of the event, making residents who might not normally bike to work or school more comfortable. This kind of event can become a regular occurrence, with a monthly or bi-monthly bike to school/work day encouraging cycling over the long term.



### Highway 45 Bicycle Classic

Putting on a county-wide community bike race along the Highway 45 corridor is great way to engage the entire populace and build the cycling community throughout Noxubee County. This kind of event would also encourage visitors to travel from outside of the county to participate. In addition to encouraging cycling, a bike race that attracts outside visitors would also catalyze economic activity in the county.



### Recurring Group Bike Rides

Establishing some recognizable groups of cyclists who meet regularly to ride their bikes together is a great way to encourage physical activity through cycling over the long term. These groups would not only create a community of bike hobbyists who could champion the bike program as a whole, but they would also provide a safe and approachable outlet for those who may have been nervous to try cycling alone.



### Story Bike Event

In conjunction with the installation of StoryWalk projects in Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak, a story bike event could be put on to advertise both the three StoryWalk projects and the BIKE Noxubee Program. Instead of walking the StoryWalk route, event attendees could use their own bikes or borrow bike share bikes from the library to ride along the StoryWalk route and beyond. This event not only gets people active for the day but also encourages them to return to the StoryWalk on future visits.



## Future Expansion

While the BIKE Noxubee bike share has many benefits on its own, the overall project is intended to catalyze future development projects to support the bike share itself, expand the BIKE Noxubee program, and to holistically improve the active transportation landscape of the county. Future expansion of the bike program should keep all of these goals in mind. Bike share-specific expansion includes buying more equipment and adding additional bike stations. Other options for expansion that could benefit both the bike program and active transportation as a whole include street improvements, a rails-to-trails conversion, and installing other off-road trails. The following pages detail each of these expansion options.

## Street Improvements

Improving existing streets conditions should be the first step in improving any active transportation system. In the interest of improving the county-wide biking landscape, there are several key improvements that could be easily implemented. Some of these include the street improvement methods listed previously as active transportation action items, such as traffic calming, street art, and street furniture/lighting. However, there are also bike-specific street improvements that should be made to support the BIKE Noxubee program.

### Protected Bike Lanes

While cars and bikes may use a shared lane, having separated bike lanes is safer and more comfortable for cyclists. There are multiple levels of separated bikes lanes that require increasing degrees of construction:



**1.** A painted bike lane, separated from vehicular lanes only by a painted, visual barrier. **2.** A painted bike lane that is also separated from vehicular lanes by small barriers such as cones or bollards placed at regular intervals. **3.** A painted bike lane separated from vehicular lanes by larger barriers such as planters or fencing placed at regular intervals -- this option could also include large barriers alternating with small barriers. **4.** A bike lane separated from vehicular lanes by a continuous barrier such as a continuous curb or planting strip.



## Street Improvements

### Bike Facilities

Providing street furniture specifically intended for bicycle users is essential to supporting a safe and functional bike system. One of these facilities should be public bike parking at or near all everyday destinations. Bike parking can come in many forms, from simple bike racks to fully covered bike shelters. The other essential bike facility to include is bicycle repair stations, which include a tire pump and the essential tools needed to make minor repairs to your bike.



*Bicycle repair station*



*Basic bike parking rack*



*Bike parking with overhead covering*

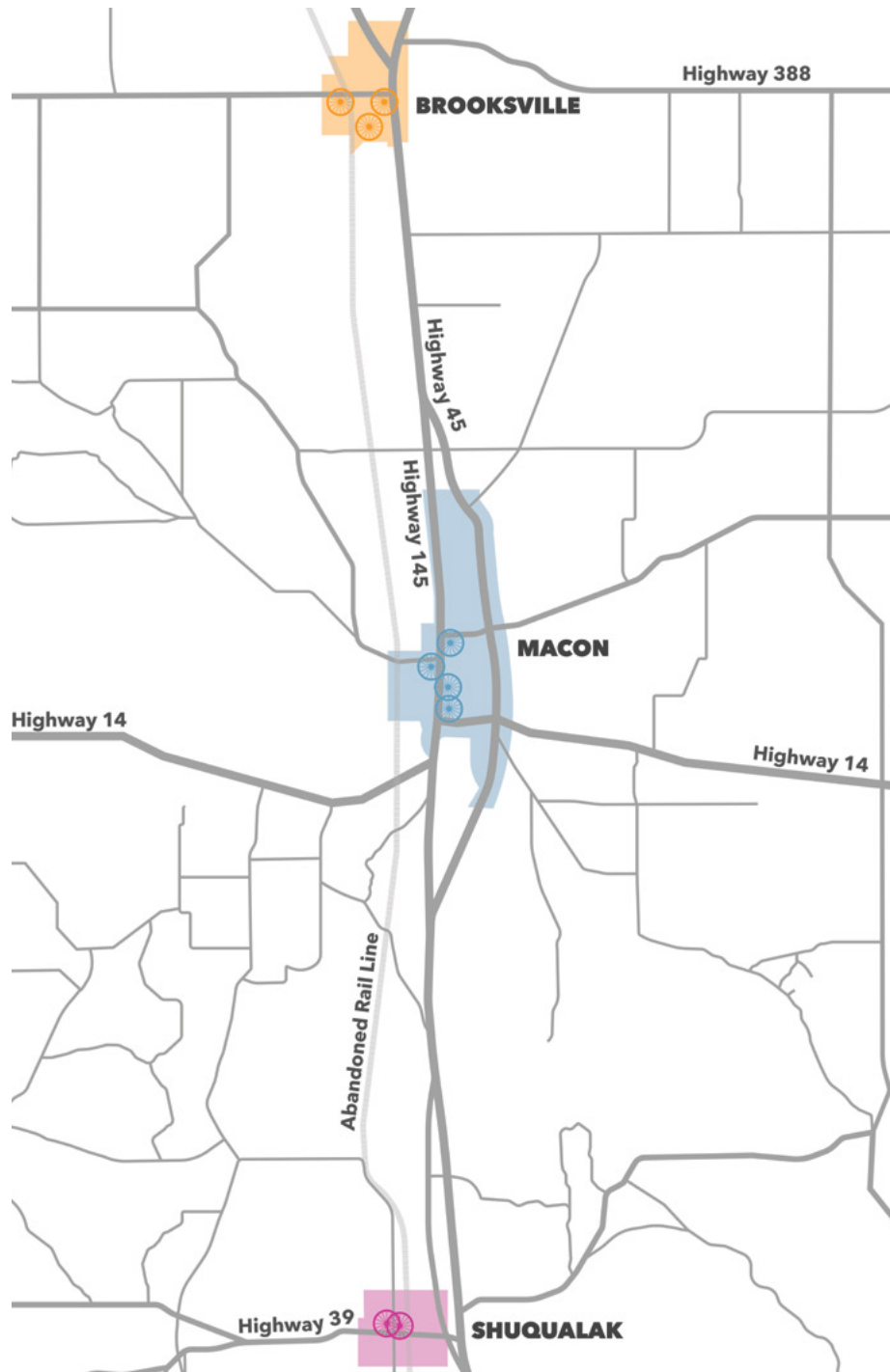


*Fully covered bike shelter*

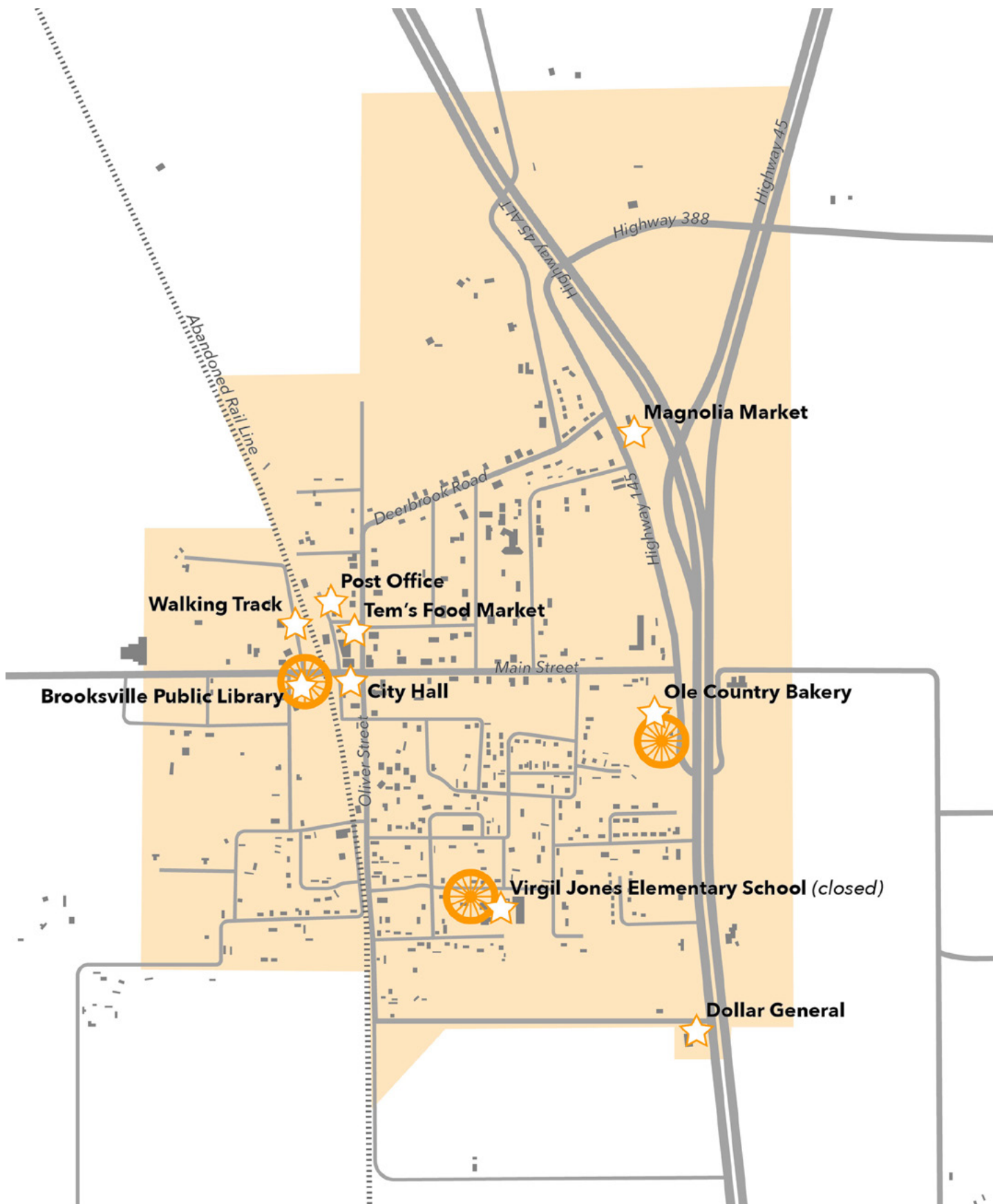


## Additional Bike Stations

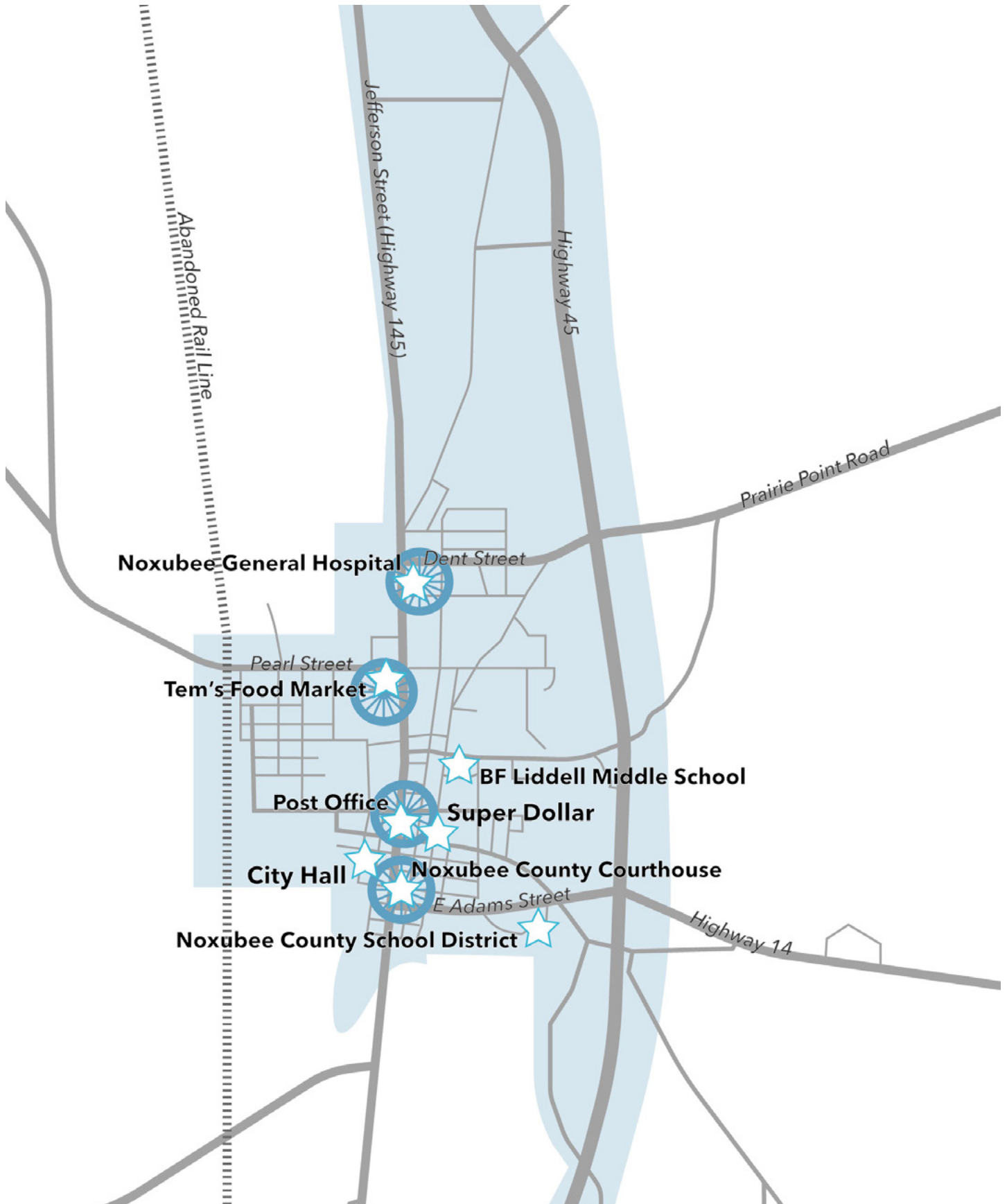
Adding bicycle stations for both bike share drop-off and personal bikes would help encourage cycling by expanding the range of locations to which individuals could safely cycle and park their bikes. In terms of the bike share, having additional bike stations would eliminate the need for bike share users to return the bike to its original station - if a secure drop-box was provided at each station, bike share borrowers could simply drop the bike lock key into the box in order to return the bike. This would make the bike share system far more convenient for everyday use. Additionally, having these added bike racks throughout each town at everyday destinations would give bike owners more safe places to park and lock their own bikes, encouraging increased cycling for everyday travel. The following maps show proposed locations for additional bike stations.



## Brooksville Proposed Additional Bike Stations

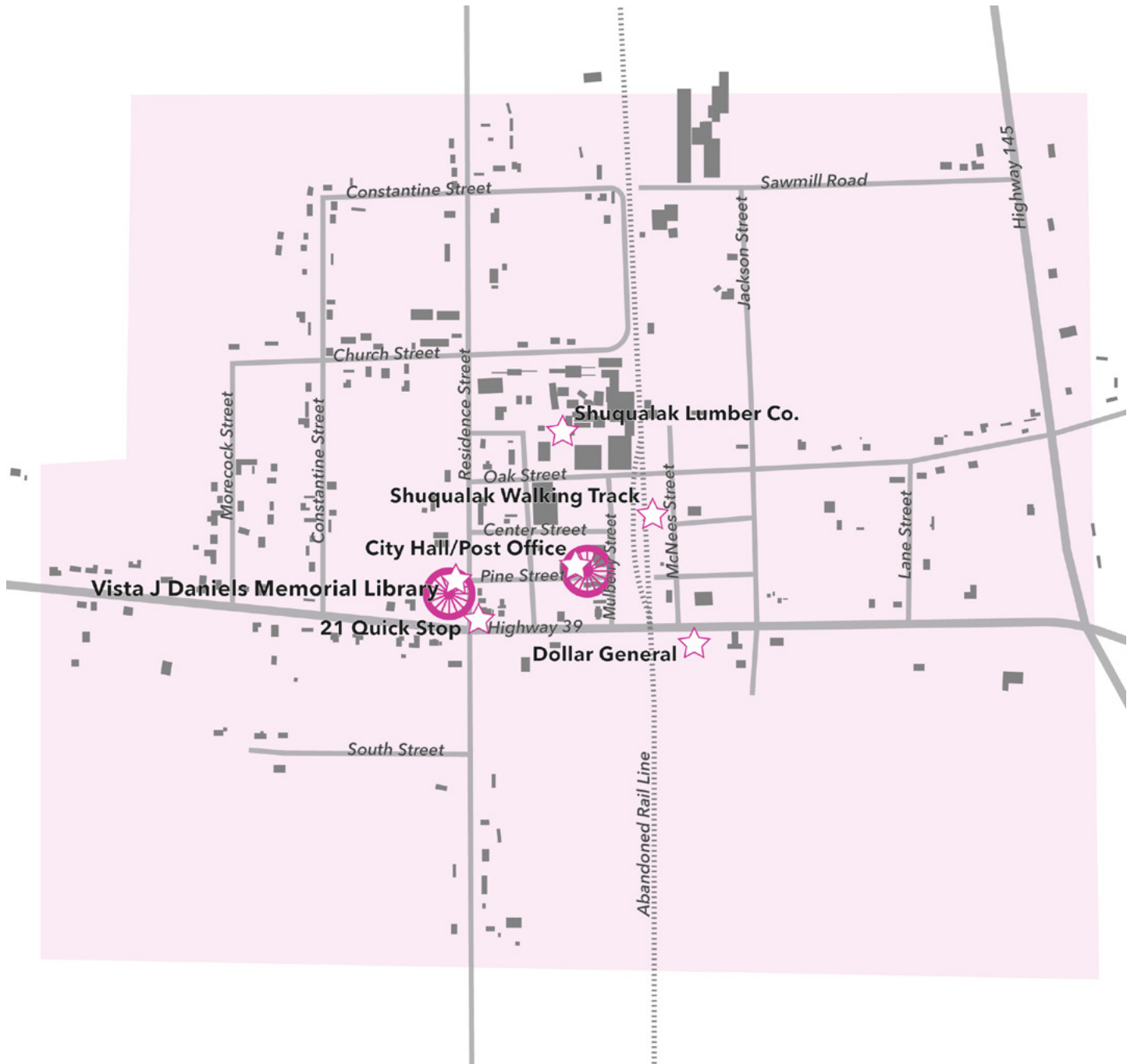


## Macon Proposed Additional Bike Stations





## Shuqualak Proposed Additional Bike Stations



## Additional Bike Share Bikes

If the popularity of the bike share booms, additional bikes could be added for public use. One option for adding bikes is to order them from the company that provided the existing bikes, Dynamic Bicycles ([www.onbikeshare.com](http://www.onbikeshare.com)). Purchasing additional bikes from Dynamic Bicycles would ensure that they match the existing bikes in style and branding. Additionally, if the budget allows, ordering from this company would allow for the purchase of additional technology to run the bike share, such as Bluetooth locking stations.

Bikes could also be added via individual purchase or from bike donations. Acquiring bikes this way would allow for diversification of the bike share system, as different types and sizes of bicycles could be added. This could include children's bikes, elderly bikes, mountain bikes, E-bikes, and even bike accessories such as trailer attachments, child seats, and more. Examples of the types of bikes and accessories that could be added to the bike share program are shown below.



*Children's bikes*



*E-bikes (bikes with electronic motors)*



*Mountain/off-road bikes*



*Elderly/disability-accessible bikes*



*Child/pet wagon*



*Cargo trailer*



## Off-Road Bike Trails

Noxubee County community members expressed interest in cycling, but they also made it clear that many in the community would be more comfortable cycling on designated bike trails. While improvements can be made to existing streets to make them safer and more comfortable for cyclists, off-road trails are also an option for future expansion of the BIKE Noxubee program. Off-road bike trails can fall into different categories of...

### LOCATION

- **Alongside existing roads** – can either be separate from sidewalks or designed to be shared with pedestrians
- **Separate from existing roads** – can be placed in underutilized space such as alleys, utility corridors, and in “wilderness” areas

### and CONSTRUCTION

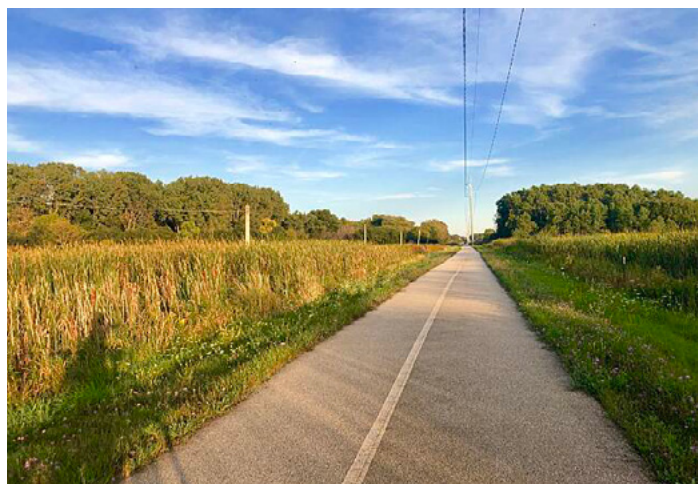
- **Concrete/asphalt** – best choice for heavily travelled routes
- **Gravel/woodchips** – appropriate for routes with less traffic, but require maintenance
- **Dirt** – could be appropriate on small, infrequently travelled “wilderness” trails; would probably be best used in areas intended for recreational cycling; these trails could also be used with other recreational vehicles, such as ATVs



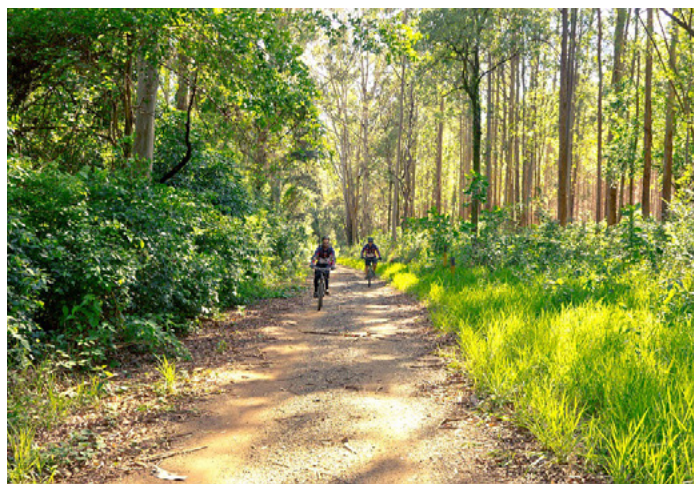
*Paved bike trail alongside road*



*Paved neighborhood bike trail*



*Paved bike trail through field/public utility right-of-way*



*Gravel bike trail through woods*



## Rails-to-Trails

A rails-to-trails project could be the perfect choice for Noxubee County to start a network of off-road trails. Rails-to-trails projects have been implemented throughout the United States as a way to turn underutilized linear corridors of land into space for pedestrian and bicycle transit and recreation. A rails-to-trails project could potentially become part of Noxubee County's active transportation network by utilizing the defunct GM&O railroad corridor. This trail would serve as a pedestrian and bicycle corridor connecting Brooksville, Macon, and Shuqualak, thus further expanding the communities' opportunities to use walking and cycling as active transportation within the region.

## Benefits

Rails-to-trail projects have been found to have several benefits to the communities and regions through which they pass. Rails-to-trails projects have a positive impact on:

### Health

Rails-to-trails projects encourage physical activity by providing a safe and attractive environment in which to walk, bike, and engage in other kinds of outdoor physical activity. Providing users with a connection to nature during their daily bicycle commute or evening walk also has positive effects on mental health.

### Transportation/Livability

Rails-to-trails projects provide a safe corridor for non-vehicular travel, connecting communities to everyday destinations via walking and biking as their mode of transportation. Additionally, these trails can connect people to transit stops, allowing them to walk or bike to access public transit to get to their final destination.

### Conservation/Environment

Linear greenways such as rails-to-trails projects inevitably result in the preservation of the natural environment around them. These green corridors then, as a result, link together fragmented habitats.

### Economy/Revitalization

Rails-to-trails projects attract a significant amount of daily visitors, be those visitors locals or tourists to the trail. This influx of foot traffic catalyzes new businesses to pop up along the trail. Also, as mentioned, rails-to-trails projects promote recreational tourism, attracting visitors not only to the trail but to the communities located along it.

### Historic Preservation/Community Identity

Rails-to-trails projects help to preserve communities' histories by highlighting the history of the railroad and thus the history of the community through which it ran. Additionally, these trails give communities a landmark in which to gather and take pride.

Rails-to-Trails Map



## Rural Rails-to-Trails Case Studies

The following case studies highlight existing rails-to-trails projects in rural areas. These cases exemplify how rural rails-to-trails projects can utilize the natural and built environments of the regions in which they are developed.

### Longleaf Trace | Forrest, Jefferson Davis, and Lamar Counties | Mississippi

The Longleaf Trace is a 44-mile rails-to-trails conversion located in Mississippi's Pine Belt region and completed in 2000. The asphalt trail was converted from an abandoned section of the Mississippi Central Railroad. It runs through Forrest, Jefferson Davis, and Lamar Counties, passing through five communities: Hattiesburg, Sumrall, Bassfield, Prentiss, and Carson. The trail is open to pedestrians and cyclists, and it has a separate dirt equestrian trail that runs parallel to the asphalt trail for 24 miles.

The Longleaf Trace provides several essential amenities in addition to the trail itself. These amenities include eight trails stops (called "stations") with parking and restrooms, three campsites, two canteens, and mile markers and other wayfinding signage.

The majority of the Longleaf Trace winds through the region's quintessential piney woods, wetlands, and alongside small lakes. Where the trail passes through towns, travelers can find "spurs" that easily lead them to lodging, dining, and shopping. These spurs encourage visitors to contribute to local economies, and as a result they facilitate the opening of new businesses along and close to the trail.

The Longleaf Trace project was completed with the help of funding from the Mississippi Department of Transportation and private donations.





## Tanglefoot Trail | Chickasaw, Pontotoc, and Union Counties | Mississippi

The Tanglefoot Trail is a 43.6-mile rails-to-trails conversion located in the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area and completed in 2013. The concrete trail was constructed in the right-of-way of a section of the defunct Gulf & Ship Island Railroad. It runs through Chickasaw, Pontotoc and Union Counties, passing through seven communities: Houston, New Houlka, Algoma, Pontotoc, Ecu, Ingomar, and New Albany. The trail is open to pedestrians and cyclists.

In addition to the trail surface itself, the Tanglefoot Trail has several essential amenities. These amenities include seven parking areas with restroom facilities, consistent mile markers and other wayfinding signage, and four “whistle stops” (visitor’s centers) along the trail.

Where the trail passes through one of the towns, visitors may find plazas with shade, seating, and even public art. Outside of the towns, the trail winds through farm fields, forests, meadows, and wetlands, highlighting both the history of the region and the natural environments that can be found locally.

While lodging, campsites, and other establishments are not actually part of the trail itself, there are many options for places to stay, eat, and shop along the Tanglefoot Trail. The trail management board provides maps and other resources to guide trail users to hotels, campsites, restaurants, and stores, encouraging visitors to the trail to put money into the region’s local economies.

The Tanglefoot Trail project was completed with the help of funding from the Mississippi Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Mississippi Development Authority, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundations, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks, and private donations.



## Additional Resources

As Noxubee County looks to expand its active transportation infrastructure, additional funding and other resources will likely be needed. The following list of organizations and websites are excellent sources of information when it comes to creating a more walkable and bikable town. These organizations each provide links to further resources such as grant programs, safety informational resources, and active transportation toolkits.

### Bike Walk Mississippi

[bikewalkmississippi.org](http://bikewalkmississippi.org)

Bike Walk Mississippi advocates for pedestrians and cyclists all across the state. They support programs, infrastructure, and policies that increase access to active transportation. Their website provides access to many resources and toolkits specific to walking and biking in Mississippi. They also host trainings, workshops, and other events to educate communities on expanding access to safe walking and biking.

### League of American Bicyclists

[bikeleague.org](http://bikeleague.org)

The League of American Bicyclists advocates for a “bicycle friendly America.” Their website provides access to resources and information on bicycle safety and how to advertise and advocate for cycling in your community.

### Safe Routes to School

[saferoutespartnership.org](http://saferoutespartnership.org)

According to their website, Safe Routes to School is “a movement that aims to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bike to school.” There are many resources on the website with information on how to create a system of safe pedestrian routes in a town.

### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

[railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org)

The Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the “national voice for the rail-trail movement.” They provide many resources on how to build and maintain trails and links to many different funding resources, among other things.

### GirlTrek

[girltrek.org](http://girltrek.org)

GirlTrek is a national organization established to improve the health and wellness of African American women. GirlTrek operates as a network of walking groups across the country. Creating a GirlTrek walking group can connect a town to nationwide network of passionate walkers and become a launching point for walking events throughout the Noxubee County.

### North American Bikeshare & Scootershare Association (NABSA)

[nabsa.net](http://nabsa.net)

NABSA is an organization that provides resources related to bikeshares and scootershares. Membership is required to view the majority of their shared resources, but their website has several useful toolkits available publicly.

### Mississippi Bicycle & Pedestrian Program

[mdot.ms.gov/portal/bikeped](http://mdot.ms.gov/portal/bikeped)

The Mississippi Bicycle & Pedestrian Program is MDOT’s resource for walking and biking in Mississippi. Their webpage provides access to Mississippi bike and pedestrian laws, safety guides, toolkits, and grant information.

### America Walks

[americawalks.org](http://americawalks.org)

America Walks provides support for those who want to make their communities more walkable. Their website provides links to different programs and resources on walking benefits, pedestrian policy, and street design.







# APPENDIX

## Photovoice Findings

Prior to meeting with community members, the STC asked the communities to participate in a photovoice exercise. Photovoice is a community engagement method which allows participants to use photography to “identify, represent, and enhance their community.” Participants were asked to submit photographs of the walking and biking conditions in their communities along with a brief description of the photos. Attendants

at the July 29th community meeting then discussed these photos and how they reflected Noxubee County’s current walking and biking conditions. Four participants contributed photovoice submissions – these four submissions highlighted the walking tracks in each community as well as the lack of sidewalks and bike lanes throughout each town.



*“This picture is an entrance to one of many communities in our area. It takes 5 plus miles to get from this road (Hwy entrance ONLY) to HOPE community center and the District 1 Community Center.”*



*“This picture is an entrance to one of many communities in our area. It takes 5 plus miles to get from this road (Hwy entrance ONLY) to HOPE community center and the District 1 Community Center.”*



*“Sandyland Rd is 7 miles long (one way). The District 1 Community Center is 5 miles from the entrance (Hwy 388) of the Sandyland Rd. There are an additional 2 plus miles from the District 1 Community Center to the exit (Prairie Point Rd) of Sandyland Rd.”*



*"This picture is an entrance to one of many communities in our area. It is located on Sandyland Rd. It takes 5 plus miles to get from this road to HOPE community center and 3 plus miles to the District 1 Community Center."*



*"While taking the pictures, one of the citizens was walking from the store to exercise. When I shared why I was taking the pictures, he mentioned a need for a walking/ biking route as many citizens in our area lack transportation. I tried to get a video but he declined. However, he allowed me to take his picture and share his desires for our community."*



*"HOPE Family Enrichment Center is several miles from citizens from communities 1, 2, 3, Tenn-Tome Store, and the District 1 Community Center located on Sandyland Road. There are several other communities in the area in which pictures were not taken."*



*"Tenn-Tom 1 Stop is the only store in the area for citizens to gather goods. If additional resources are needed, citizens must travel to the city of Brooksville, Macon, or the closest state-Pickensville, AL where a Dollar General is located."*





*"These pictures are of the track at Hunter Walking Track. This is a highly used track in Macon. Over the years the construction of this track has deteriorated. It is a beautiful place for family to exercise but it need some work to make it safe. The water stations does not work and the concrete is broken making it a safety concern."*





*"This set of pictures is our forgotten park in the Cedar Creek community. It once had a swimming pool, which you can see in the pictures where the pile of concrete and grass. The bathrooms need to be redone, as well as the concession stands, basketball court and much, much, more. With all the things that need fixing in the county, just look at the beautiful gift that God has given us, the green grass and trees for us to admire."*





*"The pictures attached show the assessment need and visual imagined future for an added transportation component at our ground facility. Components include food distribution, physical activity, smoke-free community, and healthy eating choices."*





*"These pictures are Shuqualak Walking Track. It is Family and Senior Citizen friendly. The pavilion has two restrooms. There are four colorful benches for rest stations placed on the outside parameter of the track. Each bench is beneath a shaded tree. One set of bleachers is available for parents/visitors to watch tee ball games on the outside north end parameter of the track. A basketball court, swing set, stretching stand, and monkey bars are available for use. The walking tract is well-lit. There is also a park that has a pavilion, permanent-standing barbecue grills, and picnic tables. A small go-cart trail could be placed in the park. All of the streets are paved. The right shoulder of each street can be converted into a bicycle lane. Highways 145 and 21/39 run through the town. Therefore, I would suggest walking and bicycling lanes to the Post Office, Town Hall, Library, and or store be placed on the streets which lead to those areas, not the highways."*

## Focus Group Findings

Charles Brown, a Shuqualak native and now community advocate through the organization Equitable Cities, assisted the STC in community outreach by conducting a focus group via Zoom with youth in Noxubee County. The following section provides a record of the transcript and summarizes the findings from this meeting. The moderator's ground rules and guidance are in plain type, while the participant responses are in bold, italicized blue.

### Opening

#### *Welcome and introduction of moderator*

My name is [name of moderator]. I would like to welcome you to today's in-person listening session to discuss your experiences and public perceptions of walking and bicycling or being active in your respective towns and Noxubee County as a whole. We would like to hear what barriers and challenges there are to walking, biking, and being more physical active in your communities, as well as potential opportunities or creative ideas you may have to overcome these challenges.

#### *You were invited to participated in this listening in-person or virtual listening session because you...*

...are age 14-18 years old and currently residing in Noxubee County.

#### *Ground rules*

I would like to highlight the following:

- We are recording both via audio and video. This way, we can make sure to capture everything being said. The recording will be kept safe until word-for-word transcription is complete, at which point it will be deleted.
- Your participation is confidential. The transcribed notes and final report will not include any identifiable information such as your name, voice, or photo.
- There are no right or wrong answers, so please be honest and speak only for yourself. We would like to have an open discussion about your experiences and expectations.
- It is okay if we disagree with each other; however, please be respectful.
- There may be temptation to jump in when someone else is talking, but please wait until they have finished.
- When you do have something to say, please do so. It is important that we obtain all views and perspectives.
- If you have questions, please use the chat box in Zoom. Someone will moderate that at all times (if virtual).
- Be present. Unless it is an emergency, no cell phones, tables, or other electronic devices during the session.

Is there anything missing from the ground rules that you would like to add? *[Moderator to request additional ground rules from the group.]*

Lastly, as a reminder, we will talk for about 1.5 hours today. As the moderator, I will help guide the conversation and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. We look forward to a full, rich discussion.

Before we begin, are there any questions? *[Moderator to pause to answer questions.]*

### Participant Introductions

Please share your name, high school, and what you'd like to be when you grow up or which college you'd like to attend.

***There was a total of 8 participants in the focus group. Of those present, four identified as female and four as male. All participants will remain anonymous.***

### Active Transportation Questions

With a show of hands, how many of you know how to ride a bicycle? How many of you have ridden a bicycle in the past twelve months?

- a. For what purpose(s)/activities?
- b. How was that experience?
- c. Was it your own bike? Bikeshare? Rental bike?

***Half of the participants know how to ride a bicycles and had ridden a bicycle in the past twelve months, whereas half do not know how to ride a bicycle. For those that know how to ride, they ride solely for recreational reasons and owned their bicycles.***

With a show of hands, how many of you have walked for recreation or travel purposes in the past twelve months?

- a. For what purpose(s)/activities?
- b. How was that experience?
- c. Where did you walk?

***All participants enjoy walking for recreational purposes and do not suffer from a physical disability or ailment. When they choose to walk, it is usually done during the day and within very close proximity of their homes or in a nearby park. They expressed feeling safe, calm, free, and a therapeutic connection to outdoors/nature.***

## Focus Group Findings

Think about/visualize the “typical cyclist.” When you think of the typical cyclist, what image(s) do you see? Do you relate to or identify with this visualization of the “typical cyclist?”

- How do you perceive those who are on bicycles in your community?
- Can you imagine riding a bicycle in work clothes/casual wear/dress clothes? Why/why not?
- How common is it to see women, children, or families on bikes in your community? If not often, why do you think that is?
- If you told your family/friends that you were going to start riding a bicycle to work or to social events, what would they think/how would they react?
- How do you think that men perceive women on bikes? How do you think women perceive men on bikes?
- Is bicycling cool? (Does it depend on who you are? Where you are?)
- What do you think when you see a bicycle club/group of bicyclists riding in the city?

*Each participant revealed that they’d visualized seeing a white male with a helmet on and in cycling gear when asked to visualize a “typical cyclist.” They shared that they usually see White people riding bicycles, save for the children that receive bicycles for Christmas in their community. Overwhelming fear, particularly of violence and to a lesser degree policing, was mentioned in response to how they perceive those who are on bicycles in their communities.*

*They couldn’t imagine riding a bicycle in work-related clothes/casual wear/dress clothes due to hygiene-related concerns such as “smelling like outside,” hair, and body odor.*

*They mentioned that it wasn’t common to see people, particularly Black and Brown people on bikes in their community. While they felt it had a lot to do with the population size, demographic make-up, and rural context of the community, they also felt that more people were into ATVs given the rise in their popularity locally—along with the fact that ATVs closely resemble cars given their ability to go fast, etc.*

*Many felt that their family and friends would be very supportive of them riding bicycles for health reasons but would admittedly judge (i.e., see them as being “broke”) someone who depended solely on a bicycle for transportation purposes.*

What are the major factors that you consider in deciding how to travel?

- Household/child or eldercare responsibilities that

require trips be taken on the way to/from work or school?

- Convenience to place of work (or lack thereof)?
- Is cost a factor?
- Other factors, such as ability to repair/maintain bicycle? Show of hands, who can fix a flat tire?
- Personal hygiene - arriving sweaty?
- What about your person safety/security on streets and in public spaces?

*Given the fact that they’re heavily dependent on their parents to get around, personal safety concerns - traffic and crime - were listed as major factors or concerns.*

Do you view bicycling primarily as a recreational activity? Do you view walking as primarily a recreational activity? If so, explain why.

*The viewed both bicycling and walking as primarily recreational activities given the rural nature of their communities and thus how far destinations are from their homes.* Do you have concerns about not knowing how to safely ride with/in traffic? Please explain.

- Does that affect your decision to use a bicycle?
- How important is traffic safety in your decision to bicycle or use other modes?

*Yes. Everyone expressed concerns and fear of not knowing how to safely ride with/in traffic. In fact, most expressed not even imagining the possibility of doing so given how fast people drive and the perceived danger associated with biking alongside cars as cyclists do in more urbanized areas.*

Have you ever taken a bicycle safety or skills training class?

- Would such a class be effective in encouraging you to consider bicycling for some trips?
- How about a group bicycle ride with more experienced riders?

*No one had ever taken a bicycle safety or skills training class. However, everyone expressed interest and believe that such a class would be effective in encouraging people to ride their bicycles.*

Where are you comfortable bicycling?

- A path or trail not shared with cars?
- Sidewalks?
- A bicycle lane?
- A protected bicycle lane?
- For those with children, where would you feel comfortable having them bicycle?



## Focus Group Findings

*Paths or trails not shared with cars and sidewalks are where most feel comfortable, if they are to ride bicycles. Parks, too.*

Do you view **local bike shops** as a potentially effective partner to engage communities on issues related to bicycle safety and bicycle education (helmet use, safe riding skills, etc.)? Do you view **your local government** as a potentially effective partner to engage communities on issues related to bicycle safety and bicycle education (helmet use, safe riding skills, etc.)?

*Yes. They do view local police as a potentially effective partner given the fact that they know them, and they treat them extremely well. Many in local government also have children and grandchildren in the community, which means that they'd be vested in their safety—according to participants.*

What prevents you from bicycling or using trails more frequently, that hasn't come up yet? *Let discussion flow and probe the following:*

- a. Logistics in terms of getting bikes on/off transit? Or of getting to trails?
- b. Availability of secure bicycle parking?
- c. Other issues?

*The fact that there aren't any trails or real reasons to store or secure your bicycles, given that no one rides other than for recreational reasons. Most expressed a desire for a trail network, especially given the popularity of trails among ATV riders. They also expressed a fear of snakes and [future] overcrowdedness of the trail as a concern.*

What is the best way to engage with YOUR community? Are there any strategies you'd like to share? Are there local or regional partners we should engage with?

*They shared that events with food, music, and events for kids their age is the best way to engage community, along with collaborated with trusted members of the community, such as 4-H.*

Test creative ideas:

- a. Mountain biking
- b. Road cycling
- c. Bike-Ped advocacy group
- d. Cross-county rides

*They each expressed tremendous support and enthusiasm for the ideas stated above, particularly the opportunity to explore mountain biking, bike safety classes, inside or outside of the school system, and a campaign to market biking as a suitable way to become more physically fit and active.*

*Given the feedback I'd like to propose a mountain biking/off-road biking program and countywide bicycle trail system to compliment people's interest in ATVs. Enhancements to local parks is also a great opportunity to increase safe biking and walking as parks in each town are ideal for either.*

*A youth bicycle and walking group or advocacy group could be a major boost to increasing the health and wellbeing of children and adults in the county.*

*It may also be helpful to demonstrate how easy it could be for people in each town to safely get to/from key destinations either by walking or biking.*

## Community Survey Findings

### What are the major everyday destinations in your community?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virgil Jones Elementary School (<i>closed</i>)</li> <li>• Tem's Food Market #2</li> <li>• Lottie Smith Center</li> <li>• U.S. Post Office</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noxubee General Hospital</li> <li>• U.S. Post Office</li> <li>• Supermarkets (<i>Tem's Food Market &amp; Super Dollar</i>)</li> <li>• Noxubee County Courthouse</li> <li>• Banks</li> <li>• Downtown stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S. Post Office</li> <li>• Town Hall</li> <li>• Dollar General</li> <li>• Library</li> </ul>

### What are the major routes to these destinations?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main Street</li> <li>• Oliver Street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jefferson Street (<i>Highway 145</i>)</li> <li>• Highway 14</li> <li>• Pearl Street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residence Street</li> <li>• Pine Street</li> <li>• Line Street (<i>Highway 39</i>)</li> </ul>

### What are the major modes of travel to get to these destinations?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Biking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving</li> </ul>

### Do you desire to walk/bike for recreation or everyday commuting?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YES</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YES (<i>mostly bike</i>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YES</li> </ul>

### What prevents you from walking/biking?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dangerous intersections</li> <li>• Fast traffic</li> <li>• Uncomfortable walking conditions</li> <li>• Unattractive scenery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dangerous intersection crossing the bypass</li> <li>• Dangerous intersections getting from residential area to downtown</li> <li>• Fast traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No safe route to everyday destinations</li> </ul>

### What are the key points in need of improvement to promote walking/biking?

Brooksville	Macon	Shuqualak
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oliver Street</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown from Courthouse Square to Tem's Food Market</li> <li>• Highway 45 intersection/hospital</li> <li>• Routes from county residences to city area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No safe route to everyday destinations</li> </ul>





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FRED CARL, JR.  
SMALL TOWN CENTER

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