



City of Shelby, NC
Regional Access Improvement Line (RAIL) Trail
RAISE Grant Request

Request: \$24,998,438 for the Shelby RAIL Trail project to construct a 9.3-mile bicycle and pedestrian corridor with 3.9 miles of connecting spurs for a total of 13.2 miles of alternate transportation infrastructure.

Summary: The Shelby RAIL Trail project will create a safe off-street 9.3-mile bicycle and pedestrian path with 3.9 miles of connecting spurs for cyclists and pedestrians of all socio-economic backgrounds to utilize for equitable alternative rural transportation from Shelby to the North Carolina-South Carolina state line. The RAIL Trail will complement ongoing and future community and economic development efforts throughout Cleveland County. It will create much needed physical and economic connections between the City of Shelby, the Town of Patterson Springs, and the Town of Earl, all of which are home to low-and-moderate income (LMI) neighborhoods, **areas of persistent poverty and historically disadvantaged communities**. Many of these residents do not own vehicles. According to census data, 15.9% of the total population in Shelby does not have access to a vehicle. That is nearly double the national rate. In other areas along the RAIL Trail corridor this rate reaches as high as 22%.

In addition to zero-vehicle households, census data shows that these neighborhoods have high minority populations, with higher levels of poverty, unemployment, and educational attainment. The RAIL Trail will facilitate **safe** non-vehicular access to employment opportunities, parks, commercial and retail centers, cultural and educational resources, medical facilities, and residential districts near the corridor. Once complete, the RAIL Trail network will connect the impacted rural communities as never before.

The Shelby RAIL Trail project will transform an abandoned and deteriorating railway into a safe, efficient, regional asset. It will also provide alternative transportation options for pedestrians and bicyclists, increased health and wellness in the community, and opportunities for recreational tourism in this rural area. If the RAIL Trail project is not completed, the abandoned railway corridor will become a safety threat as trestles, bridges and crossings will continue to deteriorate into more dangerous obstacles for citizens to navigate. The project includes improvements to an old rail bridge as well as 25 road crossings and 8 trailheads or access points.

Justification: The City of Shelby is growing rapidly, further isolating many underserved communities, and making alternate transportation options increasingly hazardous. In an area where many residents do not have vehicles, alternate transportation routes are critical for providing transportation equality. The RAIL Trail will serve many low-income and high-minority population neighborhoods and provide safe routes to and from local schools, community services and economic opportunities. Additionally, the RAIL Trail will link to other multi-modal trail efforts, including the Carolina Thread Trail, expanding connectivity beyond the Shelby area.

Without the infrastructure improvements to be provided by the RAIL Trail, the underserved residents of these historically disadvantaged neighborhoods, particularly those without automobile transportation, will remain isolated with few safe transportation options and limited access to vital community services.

Contact: Leslie Mzingo, Strategics Consulting, leslie@strategics.consulting, (202) 255-5760 or Rick Howell, City Manager, Rick.Howell@cityofshelby.com, (704) 484-6801.

<https://www.cityofshelby.com/visitors/shelby-greenway-system/shelby-r-a-i-l-trail#!/>

Shelby Regional Access Improvement Line (R.A.I.L.)

