In 2018, the GA and SC Departments of Transportation will replace the Interstate 20 Bridges crossing the Augusta Canal and Savannah River. The project is estimated to cost $80M and will include 3 Eastbound and 3 Westbound lanes for vehicular traffic, as well as 2 lanes to be used as shoulders.

The I-20 Bridges can easily serve as a vital link not only for vehicular traffic, but for bicyclists and pedestrians as well. The I-20 Bridges connect two halves of a major public greenway and trail system in Augusta-Richmond and Columbia Counties, GA and Aiken County, SC. By adding a buffered 9th lane for bicyclists/pedestrians, the Departments of Transportation could effectively connect over 150 miles of trails, two State Welcome Centers, over 1,000 acres of Public Greenspace, a major retail and residential area and create an iconic tourist destination for both states.
Project Feasibility

This project is surprisingly feasible. The new bridge must be built one-lane wider, and will connect directly to several established points of entry and existing trails, including the GA Welcome Center, Village at Riverwatch and Augusta Canal Authority properties, SC Welcome Center, and Augusta Canal Trail. The North Augusta Greeneway will also soon connect via the SC Welcome Center. Beyond the bridge itself, short (<1/4 mile) trails are all that is required to connect the bridges to these existing recreational, tourism, retail, commercial, and residential facilities. No new ROW acquisition is required and no major infrastructure, save for the bridge itself, is needed to support this trail connection.

Beyond being practical, adding bicycle and pedestrian access to these bridges directly supports USDOT’s most recent guidelines which encourage “integrating bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on new, rehabilitated, and limited-access bridges”, such as this one – especially “on limited-access bridges with connections to streets or paths.” This replacement project is a perfect opportunity to satisfy these guidelines.

Funding Needs & Progress

The GA Department of Transportation has agreed to include bike and pedestrian access in their design for the new bridges, provided that funding can be secured before the design phase of the project is completed. Realistically, this means securing funding commitments by the Summer of 2017, which will not need to be fulfilled until 2018-2020. This is doable, especially considering the impact this project will have on the region for the next 40-50 years.

The project budget for the extra lane is estimated at $6M. Local LMIG funding from multiple participating municipalities can be matched with Federal dollars to cover this expense. If local municipalities will each agree to commit a portion of their future LMIG funding -- a discretionary funding source granted by the DOT -- to this project, then the DOT will make an application to the Federal Highway Administration for the balance of the funds.

Connecting the bridge itself to established trails and parking areas is estimated to cost less than $50,000. Applications for this funding are currently being submitted by the Central Savannah River Land Trust and its partners. It is anticipated that this funding will be secured before the completion of the design phase of the bridge project in early 2018.
Replacing the I-20 Bridges

A Major Opportunity for Intermodal Transportation and Connectivity in Augusta’s River Region

Partners and Supporting Organizations

The inclusion of bike and pedestrian access on the new I-20 Bridges has garnered widespread support in the Region. Partners and organizations supporting this project include, but are not limited to:

Augusta Canal Authority
Central Savannah River Land Trust
Georgia Bikes
North Augusta--Friends of the Greeneway
Local Bike Shops, Running Groups and other orgs.

Augusta-Richmond County
Columbia County
Georgia Trails Alliance
Palmetto Cycling Coalition

LEGEND

Solid Line = Completed Trail
Dashed Line = Proposed/In Process

Bike/Ped Connections
Around I-20 Bridges at the Savannah River
GDOT Project #210327

Above: Close-up of the connections provided by adding bicycle/pedestrian access to the I-20 Bridges