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1. Introduction

1.1. *Background*

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Office of Planning, in conjunction with Oconee County, initiated the development of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to guide transportation planning decisions in Oconee County through 2045. The development of the *Oconee County LRTP* includes an in-depth look at transportation and economic conditions in order to identify potential projects that address existing and future transportation needs.

This study will evaluate many modes including roadway, public transit, bicycle and pedestrian, rail, and freight, and the transportation infrastructure serving each mode. The Transportation Plan is built upon existing work efforts to date and provides a mechanism for guiding future transportation decision-making.

The purpose of this technical memorandum is to evaluate existing conditions of the multimodal transportation system within Oconee County. Ultimately, the LRTP will identify potential transportation improvements throughout Oconee County. As part of this effort, Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study (MACORTS) Area's travel demand model was updated and validated for Oconee County to represent the transportation network of the study area and to assist with analysis of future operating conditions.

1.2. *Study Area*

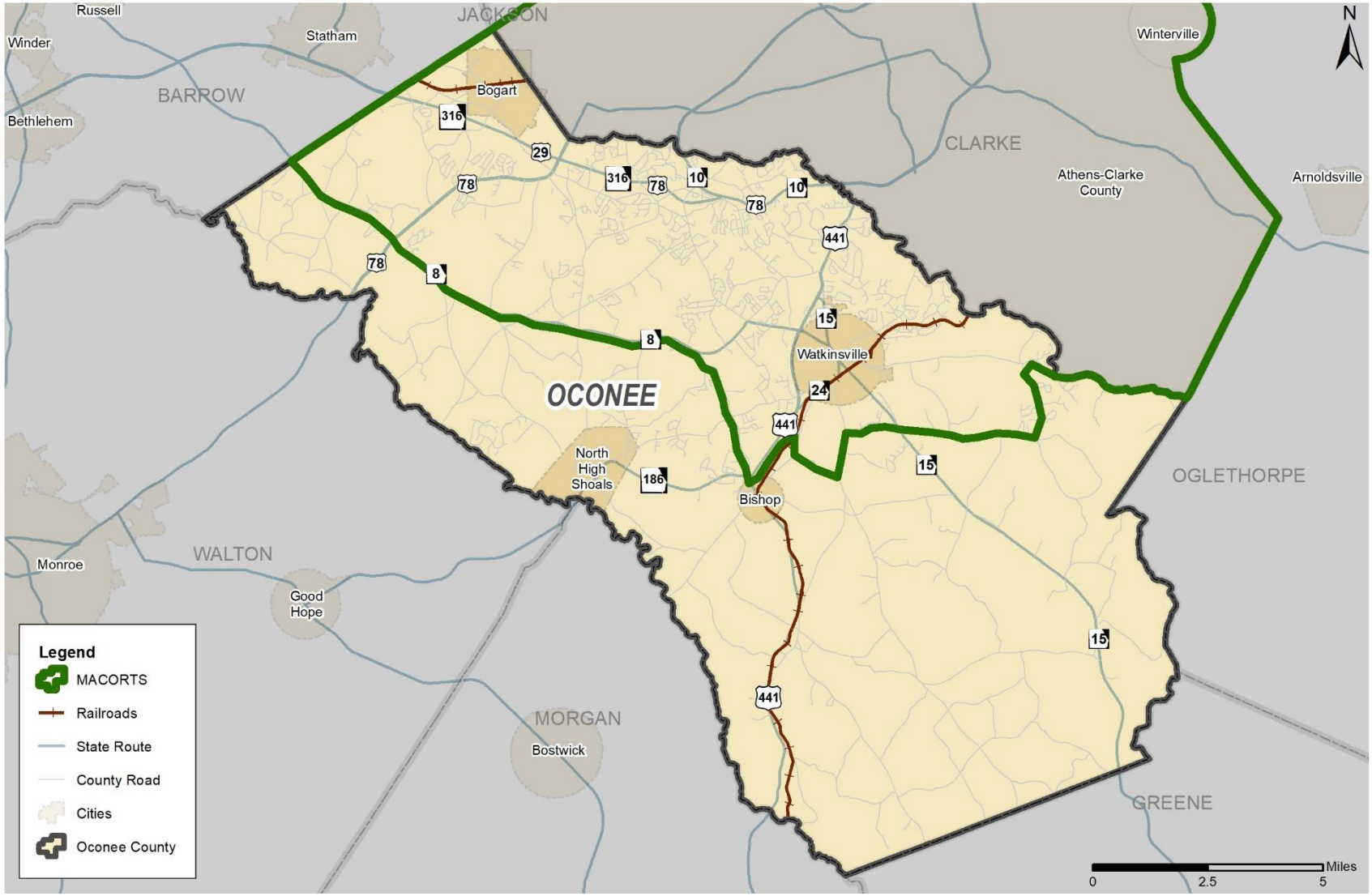
Oconee County is situated approximately 53 miles east of Atlanta and six miles south of Athens, GA. Oconee County is part of the Athens-Clarke Metropolitan Statistical Area, along with Clarke, Oglethorpe, Jackson, and Madison Counties. Oconee County's borders are contiguous with Athens-Clarke, Barrow, Morgan, Greene, Oglethorpe, and Walton Counties. The county seat is located in the city of Watkinsville. The other three incorporated cities are Bishop, Bogart, and North High Shoals. Figure 1.1 illustrates the study area.

1.3. *Study Process*

To identify the needs and develop recommendations for Oconee County, a process was employed combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis, guided by input from key stakeholders and the public. This Existing Conditions Report documents the development of goals and objectives, purpose and need, the review of previous studies, existing and future travel demand, and the technical analysis of existing population, employment, land use, environmental resources, crash data, and various traffic data.

The northern half of Oconee County is within the MACORTS area, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving Athens-Clarke County, and portions of Madison, Oglethorpe, and Jackson Counties. The transportation plan development process followed the guidelines established for the MPO. This process established a strong framework for transportation planning and decision-making. The format of the LRTP, and the process by which it was developed, is prescribed by federal legislation known as Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21).

Figure 1.1: Study Area



An LRTP is required to have a planning horizon of 20 or more years. This time frame provides a basic structure and overall goal for meeting the long-term transportation needs for the community. Since many factors influencing the development of the LRTP, such as demographics, forecast revenue, and project costs change over time, long range transportation plans should be updated at least every five years.

The Existing Conditions Report forms the foundation for the technical analyses completed as part of the LRTP development process. Evaluation factors were established to assess the existing and future transportation network. Deficiencies and operating conditions were then documented and ultimately used to develop the recommended improvements for the *Oconee County Long-Range Transportation Plan*.

1.3.1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Oconee County LRTP* is to build upon previous transportation planning efforts in Oconee County and the region. The updated LRTP will build upon previous plans that have identified long-range transportation needs. The plan will propose a new program of projects and strategies to meet the county's future transportation needs and will provide guidance in making decisions regarding resources to meet those needs.

1.3.2. Goals and Objectives

The goal of this plan is to ensure that the county's current and future transportation needs are identified and solutions are developed to address future transportation needs. The goals of this study were developed by evaluating transportation related goals outlined in previous studies in the county including the Madison Athens-Clarke Oconee Regional Transportation Study 2040 LRTP, the MACORTS Public Transportation Study, the 2030 Oconee County Joint Comprehensive Plan, and the 2010 Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking. Then those goals were aligned with the governor's 2012 strategic goals and the national transportation planning goals outlined in MAP-21. The study goals for the *Oconee County LRTP* are outlined in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Transportation Plan Goals

Draft Study Goals	Local	State	National
Improve safety, accessibility, and mobility options for people and goods movement.	✓	✓	✓
Promote and protect quality of life by integrating local planned growth, land use patterns, and economic development patterns with transportation analysis and planning.	✓	✓	
Emphasize the efficient, operation, and preservation of the existing transportation system while promoting environmental sustainability.	✓	✓	✓
Accommodate users without access to automobiles and promote health and quality of life by providing a range of mobility options.	✓	✓	

2. Review of Previous Studies

It is critical to understand the issues, opportunities, and recommendations that resulted from previous studies. Therefore, a review of previous studies that were relevant to the development of this plan was conducted throughout the study area. The *Oconee County LRTP* will build upon previous planning efforts to develop a comprehensive transportation solution for Oconee County.

2.1. *Land Use, Socioeconomic, and Development Plans*

The *Oconee Community Agenda*[1] was adopted in March of 2008. It established development strategies to implement Oconee County's vision through the year 2030. The future expressed in the plan reflected local community values, ideals, and aspirations developed through stakeholder outreach conducted throughout the county. In general, the plan established a vision for the county and each incorporated city and laid out seven guiding principles and strategies for future development.

The plan developed seven guiding principles to be considered for implementation over the plan's 20-year horizon:

1. Expand and diversify the economic base of Oconee County in order to achieve a balanced tax base that offers diverse economic opportunities;
2. Accommodate growth while creating a sustainable community that implements the community's vision;
3. Protect our rural character and agricultural heritage;
4. Preserve our sense of place;
5. Create land use patterns that promote connectivity and mobility;
6. Provide for services, facilities, and housing that will allow aging in place; and
7. Design with the environment.

In addition to the guiding principles, the Community Agenda also laid out a unique vision for each of Oconee County's four incorporated areas. For each guiding principle, the Community Agenda examined major issues associated with the principle, and policies for the county and the incorporated areas to address the issues and succeed in fulfilling the principles. A common thread among the guiding principles is the need to prepare for the expected population growth. Oconee County is positioned between Athens-Clark County and Atlanta metropolitan areas. Both urban areas are expanding geographically and in effect, the urban sprawl is spilling over into Oconee County.

[1] https://www.oconeecounty.com/375/2008-Comprehensive-Plan-Future-Developme

2.2. *Transit and Roadway Plans*[2]

Oconee County relies heavily on its highway system for shipment of goods, commuting to work, and public transportation. In 2010, Oconee County accounted for 21.1 percent of all roadways in the MACORTS area (492.9 miles). Of those MACORTS area miles in Oconee County, 69.6 miles are state routes, 423.3 are local routes, and 42.88 miles are unpaved. Compared to the statewide average of 24.1 percent for unpaved roads, Oconee County comes in well below that at 8.7 percent of roads being unpaved.

Public transit in Oconee County is limited to the Athens Transit System (ATS), which only enters a small part of the county, and the Georgia Department of Human Resources Coordinated Transportation System, which offers limited transportation services for underprivileged residents. This system assists county residents in reaching services of the Division of Aging Services, Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation, Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Addictive Diseases, and Family and Children Services.

2.3. *Rail Plans*

The Georgia State Rail Plan (2015) outlines existing conditions and future plans for Georgia's railroad system. Two rail lines pass through Oconee County. The Athens Branch Line runs north/south from the Athens-Clarke County Line, through Watkinsville and Bishop, to the Morgan County Line. The section from the Morgan County Line to Bishop is currently designated as inactive and the section from Bishop north to the Athens-Clarke County Line is active. The Athens Branch Line is being used predominantly for rail car storage and is not actively transporting freight at this time. In the northern section of the county, the CSX railroad runs through north Oconee County and Bogart for approximately two miles with two active railroad crossings experiencing an average of 14 trips per day.

2.4. *Bike and Pedestrian Plans*

Oconee County's Unified Development Code (UDC) requires sidewalks within all new subdivisions except for large lot projects in the more rural areas. A number of new sidewalks and dedicated bike lanes have been added to the Oconee County road networks in recent years due to the growth spurt occurring in the northern half of the county along the Athens-Clarke County line. The Oconee Connector Interchange at SR 316 is a good example of the recent initiative to expand the bike and pedestrian routes. According to the American Community Survey, more than 150 residents of Oconee County now use bicycling as their means of travel to work. This number is expected to grow as the population of the county increases.

The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan (2008) outlines a vision for the bicycle and transportation framework in Oconee County. The document calls for amendments to the UDC to help the county develop a network of interconnected greenspace, off-street trails, sidewalks and other non-automobile oriented modes of transportation. A system of trails to connect parks and other destinations is called for. Other recommended bicycle and pedestrian improvements include closing gaps in the sidewalk network and improvements to rural and

[2] http://www.macorts.org/files/Final2040LRTP-10-8-14.pdf

urban roads to safely accommodate cyclists. Pedestrian improvements are considered high priority at key locations near schools, parks, civic facilities, and recreational destinations.

The Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking (2010) was developed in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Transportation and a Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force. The study included compiling, creating, mapping, and analyzing data to develop regional vision, goals, and objectives. This study established a foundation for an implementation program including a network of facilities, planning tools, policies, and programs to make Northeast Georgia more conducive to safe walking and bicycling as well as strategies for funding recommended plan elements.

A Bikeability and Walkability Audit for the city of Watkinsville was completed by the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center in 2007. The audit addressed obstacles to safe and convenient cycling and walking in Watkinsville. Recommendations for improving biking and walking conditions were outlined in the document.

Finally, the Phase I Rails-to-Trails Plan for the Athens Line Rail Corridor (2010) outlines a proposal to implement a multi-use trail along the Athens Line Corridor stretching from Athens-Clarke County into Morgan County. The plan addresses existing conditions along the line including trail alignment, hydrology, engineering concerns, existing land use, and an assessment, by segment, of the proposed trail facility.

Findings and recommendations from the review of previous studies are documented in Section 5. Transportation Network.

2.5. *Freight Transportation Plans*

The *Georgia Statewide Freight and Logistics Plan* evaluated the state's freight transportation network and the opportunity for Georgia to develop additional freight capacity to improve the movement of goods across the state. The study also considered the development of public-private partnerships in Georgia and neighboring states to ensure future freight growth not only in Georgia, but also across the entire Southeast US region. Oconee County's geographic location between I-85 and I-20, and proximity to both Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport and the Port of Savannah, provides the county with freight shipping connections throughout Georgia.

It is expected that container traffic will increase significantly, and that if the Port of Savannah could capture just 10 percent of the projected container traffic increases, the port could double its size over a 10-year period. State freight planners gave the port specific consideration because of the potential impacts it could have on other freight modes. Positioning the port with sufficient portside, landside, and inland road and railroad infrastructure will ensure that Savannah can attract freight growth that may be transported through the Panama Canal. The study estimated that the potential economic growth from an improved freight transportation system could be $16 billion over the next 30 years. However, it will require timely and significant investments in freight transportation to become a reality.

2.6. *Planned and Programmed Improvements*

Oconee County has several planned and programmed improvements currently listed in the 2018-2021 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The general types of planned and programmed improvements for the county include bridge rehabilitation/replacement, road resurfacing, and planning studies by Oconee's MPO, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission.

The STIP was reviewed for specific projects impacting Oconee County and its municipalities through 2021. These projects, along with other proposed long-range projects without secured funding, are displayed in Table 2.1. Additionally, the STIP projects are mapped in Figure 2.1.[3]

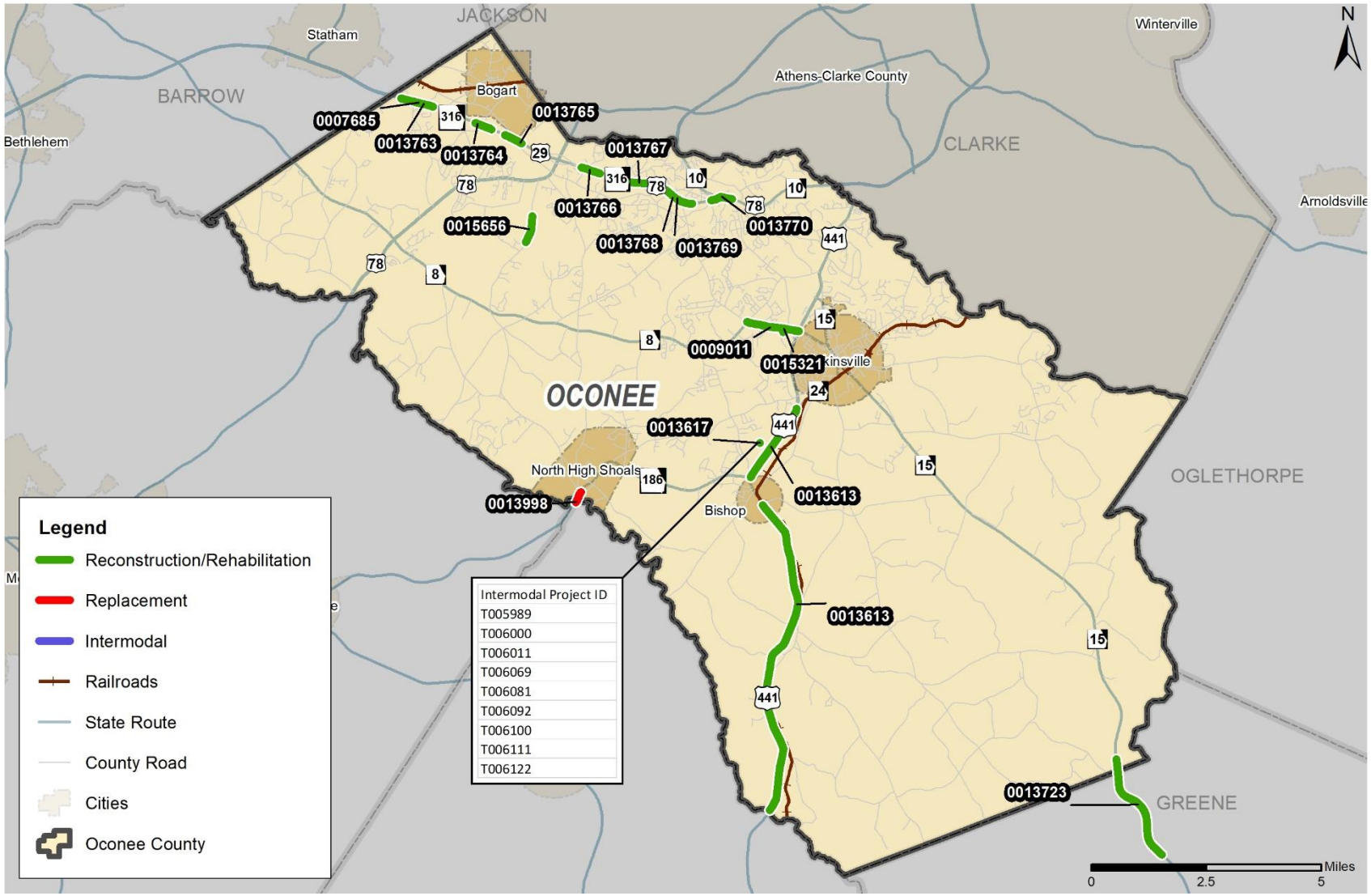
Table 2.1: 2018-2021 STIP and Long-Range Projects

PI Number	Type	Description
0013998	Bridge	SR 186 at Apalachee River
M005715	Resurface & Maintenance	SR 316 from SR 8/Gwinnett to SR 10 Loop/Oconee
T006056	MPO/Region Transit	FY 2018-Northeast Georgia RC-Sec.5304-Planning
T006069	MPO/Region Transit	FY 2019-Northeast Georgia RC-Sec.5304-Planning
T006081	MPO/Region Transit	FY 2020-Northeast Georgia RC-Sec.5304-Planning
T006092	MPO/Region Transit	FY 2021-Northeast Georgia RC-Sec.5304-Planning
0007354	Signals	SR 15 at 3 Locations and SR 24 at One Location
0009119	Bike/Pedestrian Facility	Watkinsville Pedestrian System Improvements – Phase II
0013873	Signing	Off-System Safety Improvements at 29 Locations in Oconee County
142060	Widening	Mars Hill Rd from CR 274/Hog Mountain Rd to SR 8/SR 316 – Phase I
0007685	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 58/Dials Mill Extension
0007942	Intersection Improvement	SR 15/US 129 at SR 24/US 441 Bypass
0007944	Roadway Project	SR 15/US 441 Connector from SR 24 to CR 258/Colham Ferry Rd
0008006	Widening	SR 15 from CR 146/Antioch Church Rd to SR 24BU/US 129
0009011	Widening	SR 53 from SR 24/US 441 to CR 274/Hog Mountain Rd – Phase II

[3] http://www.dot.ga.gov/InvestSmart/Documents/STIP/FY18-21/FinalSTIP-FY18-21.pdf

PI Number	Type	Description
0009012	Widening	SR 53 from SR 15 to SR 24/US 441 – Phase III
0013613	Widening	SR 24 from Apalachee River to CS 7 and from SR 186 to Watkinsville Bypass
0013763	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 60/Dials Mill Rd
0013764	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 64/McNutt Creek Rd
0013765	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 263/Mars Hill Rd
0013766	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 20/Julian Dr
0013767	Interchange	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 55/Jimmy Daniel Rd
0013768	Grade Separation	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 440/CR 662/Virgil Langford Rd
0013769	Interchange	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at CR 929/Oconee Connector
0013770	Interchange	SR 8/SR 316/US 29 at SR 10 Loop
0015656	Bridge	CR 592/Clotfelter Rd at Barber Creek 3 mi S of Bogart
0015925	Widening	SR 24/US 441 from SR 186 to CS 7/Astondale Rd
0016081	Roadway Project	CR 828/Bishop Farms Pkwy Extension to New High Shoals Rd

Figure 2.1: FY 2018-2021 STIP Projects



Source: Georgia Department of Transportation. PI 0015925 (Bishop Bypass) not shown.

2.7. *Public Participation*

Building on the experience of previous public outreach efforts, this LRTP developed a process consistent with public involvement efforts at the state and regional levels. In order to educate, inform and involve the public on the purpose and status of the study, and to collect relevant information from stakeholders and the public, the study included stakeholder meetings and published a month long public web survey using GDOT's consultant team. Techniques were developed to maximize opportunities for participation for individuals throughout the study area.

2.7.1. Public Survey

The *Oconee County Long-Range Transportation Plan* survey was developed as a primary tool for gathering public input regarding travel conditions and needed transportation improvements in the study area. The intent of the survey was to gather data and input throughout the County. The survey effort sought to reach not only the decision-makers and community leaders, but also to reach citizens who live, work, and travel in the study area. Efforts were made to gather input from those individuals who might not otherwise attend a public meeting or community forum by promoting the survey through non-traditional mediums, via distribution through the local school district, the project website and email distribution lists of the Stakeholder Advisory Group. As a result, 545 responses were received across the county.

2.7.2. Stakeholder Advisory Group

In addition to the public survey, a Stakeholder Advisory Group was formed to guide the development of the plan and help gather input at key points throughout the study process. This group was composed of representatives from the county, GDOT, regional planning organizations, local jurisdictions, major employers, and other interest groups. A list of participants is included in Table 2.2. The Stakeholder Advisory Group was asked to provide local input on several topics that provide the framework for the overall study process. This group helped to establish the LRTP goals and objectives and to define the intended outcomes of the plan.

Table 2.2: Stakeholder Advisory Group Members

Participant Name	Title	Organization
Matthew Risher	Project Manager	GDOT Planning
Ted Hicks	Deputy Project Manager	GDOT Planning
Radney Simpson	Assistant State Planning Administrator	GDOT Planning
Tom Caiafa	Branch Chief	GDOT Planning
Brent Cook	District Engineer	GDOT District 1
Kim Coley	District Planning & Programming Engineer	GDOT District 1
John Daniell	Chairman	Oconee County Commissioner
Justin Kirouac	County Administrator	Oconee County
Emil Beshara	Director of Public Works	Oconee County
Jim Dove	Executive Director	Northeast Georgia Regional Commission
David Shearon	Mayor	City of Watkinsville
Johnny Pritchett	Mayor	Town of Bishop
Toby P. Bradberry	Mayor	City of North High Shoals
Terri Glenn	Mayor	City of Bogart
Jason Branch	Superintendent	Oconee County School System
Courtney Bernardi	President	Chamber of Commerce
Brad Griffin	Director of MACORTS	MACORTS
Sherry McDuffie	Transportation Planner	MACORTS
James Hale	Captain	Oconee County Sheriff's Office

3. Land Use Assessment

3.1. *Existing Land Use*

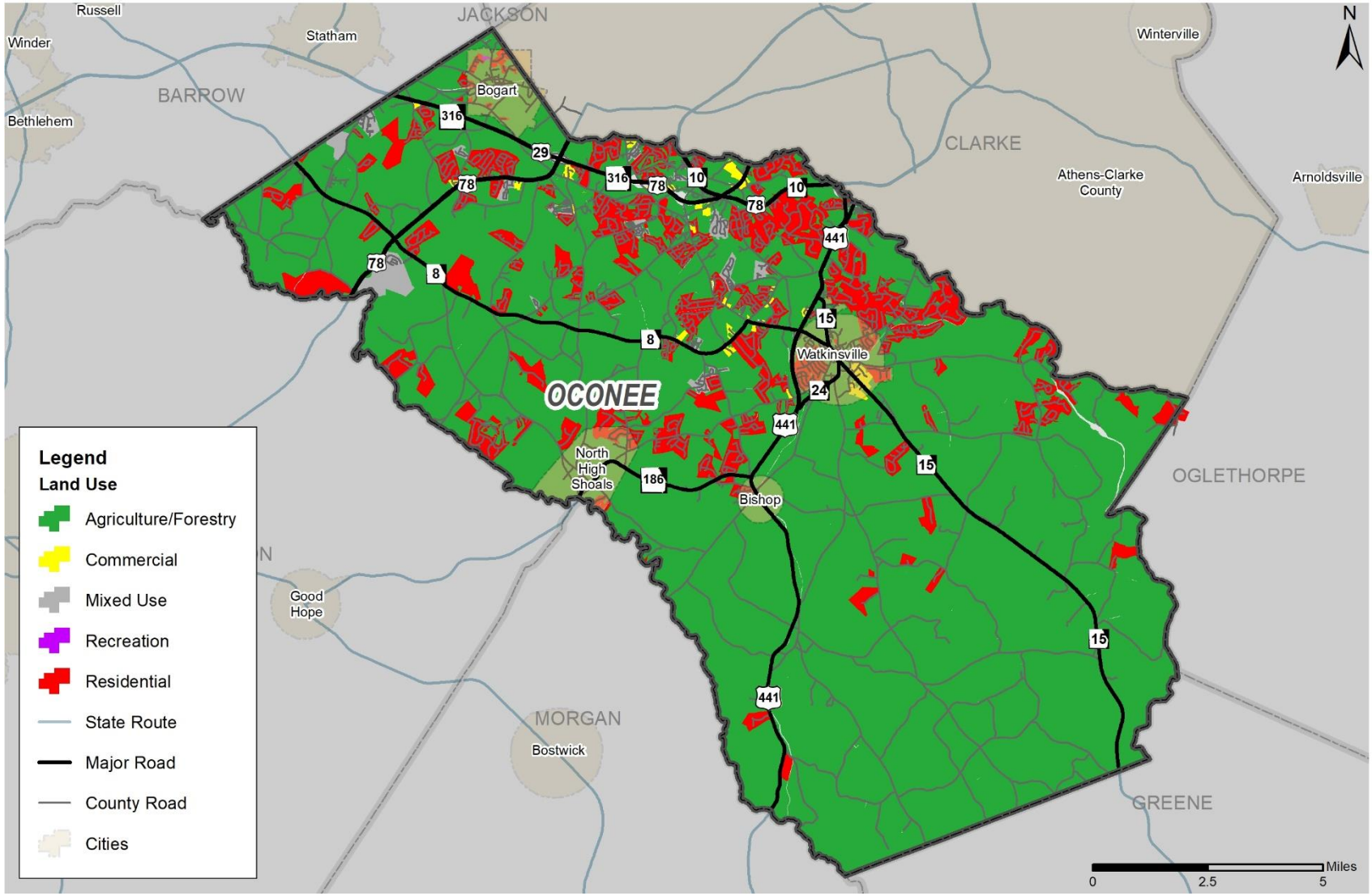
Forest and agricultural lands cover much of the landscape in the southern parts of Oconee County, along with some residential uses to the north. Overall, agriculture and forestry lands cover approximately 86 percent of the county while residential uses cover approximately 12 percent. Commercial land uses only account for a 0.5 percent of land. Residential uses are concentrated in the northern half of the county, mostly along the Athens-Clarke County line and in Watkinsville. Typical lot sizes in the southern, more rural area of the county are, on average, about 25 acres in size, while lots in incorporated areas range from 2-4 acres. The existing land use patterns for Oconee County are shown in Figure 3.1. Table 3.1 shows the number of acres for each land use type in the county and the total percentage of the county's land use.

Table 3.1: Existing Land Uses

Land Use	Acres	Total %
Agriculture/Forestry	98,183	86%
Residential	14,031	12.3%
Mixed Use	1,392	1.2%
Commercial	564	0.49%
Recreation	11	0.01%
Total	**114,181**	**100%**

Infrastructure investments in the county have had major influences on the County's development patterns. Major transportation routes including SR 316, US 78, SR 15, and US 441, have attracted a mix of commercial and residential development adjacent to their corridors. The northern part of the county has a large majority of the population as well as the commercial properties mostly due to the proximity to Athens which is a major employment destination in the region.

Figure 3.1: Existing Land Uses



Source: Oconee County GIS.

3.2. *Parcel Data/Zoning*

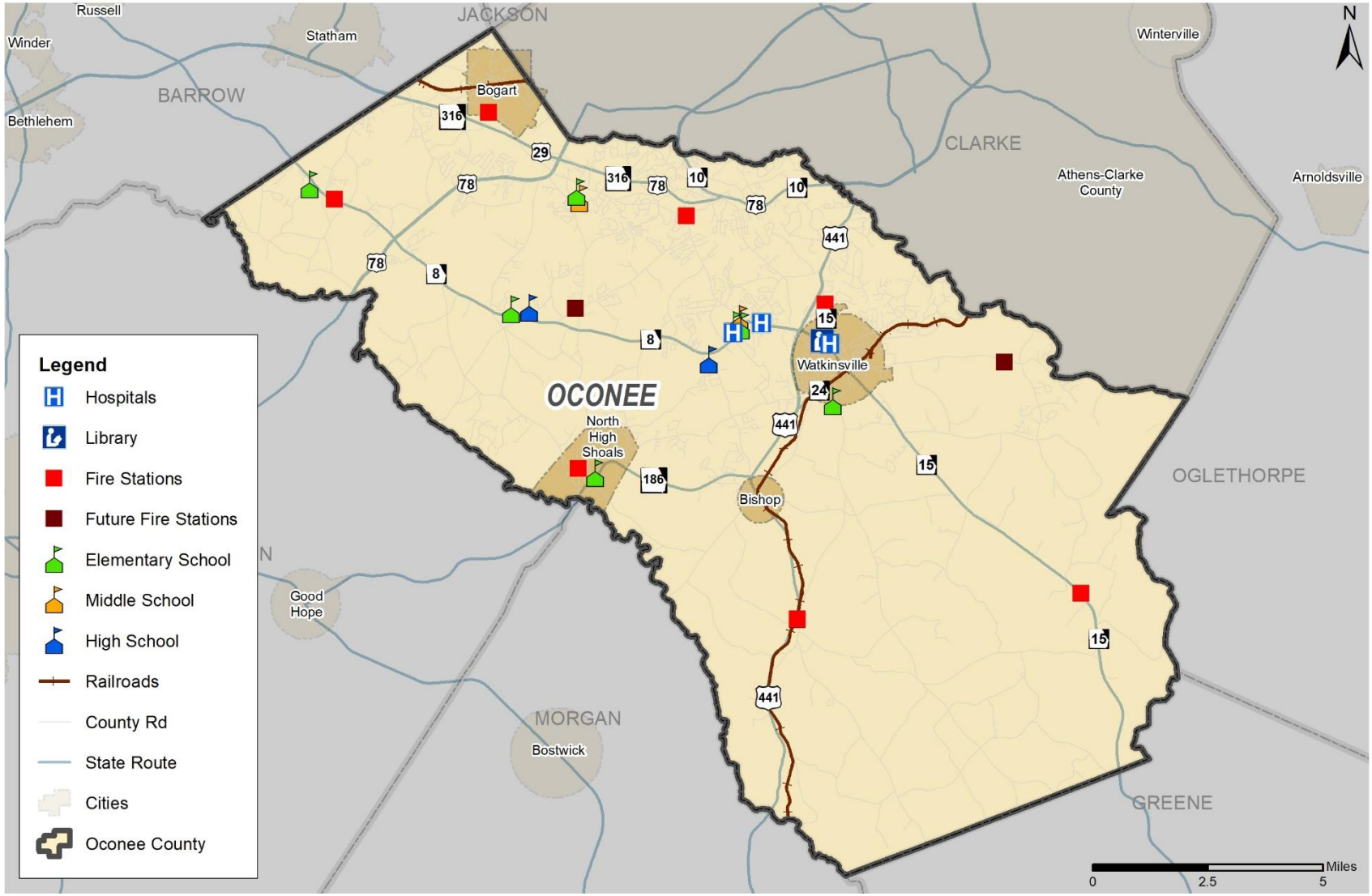
Oconee County controls zoning and land use development through several regulations. The Planning Commission reviews all rezoning and special use requests for the county and passes recommendations to the Board of Commissioners meetings which are held on the third Monday of each month. In 2015 alone, Oconee County approved 359 new single-family housing units and 44 multi-family housing units.[4]

3.3. *Community Facilities*

It is important to provide efficient connections between key community facilities. Therefore, one component of the *Oconee County LRTP* is to understand where these resources are located and to evaluate access to these vital facilities. Oconee County has many community facilities dispersed throughout the study area, as shown in Figure 3.2. These include seven elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, three hospitals, six city halls, seven fire stations, two future fire station locations, and one library.

[4] *University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth*

Figure 3.2: Community Facilities



Source: Oconee County GIS.

3.4. *Environment*

Environmental conservation of natural and historic resources in Oconee County is essential to improving the community's quality of life. The county's long-term economic and cultural stability is dependent on these resources, and it is important to preserve them for future residents and visitors. The following section describes the County's environmental resources.

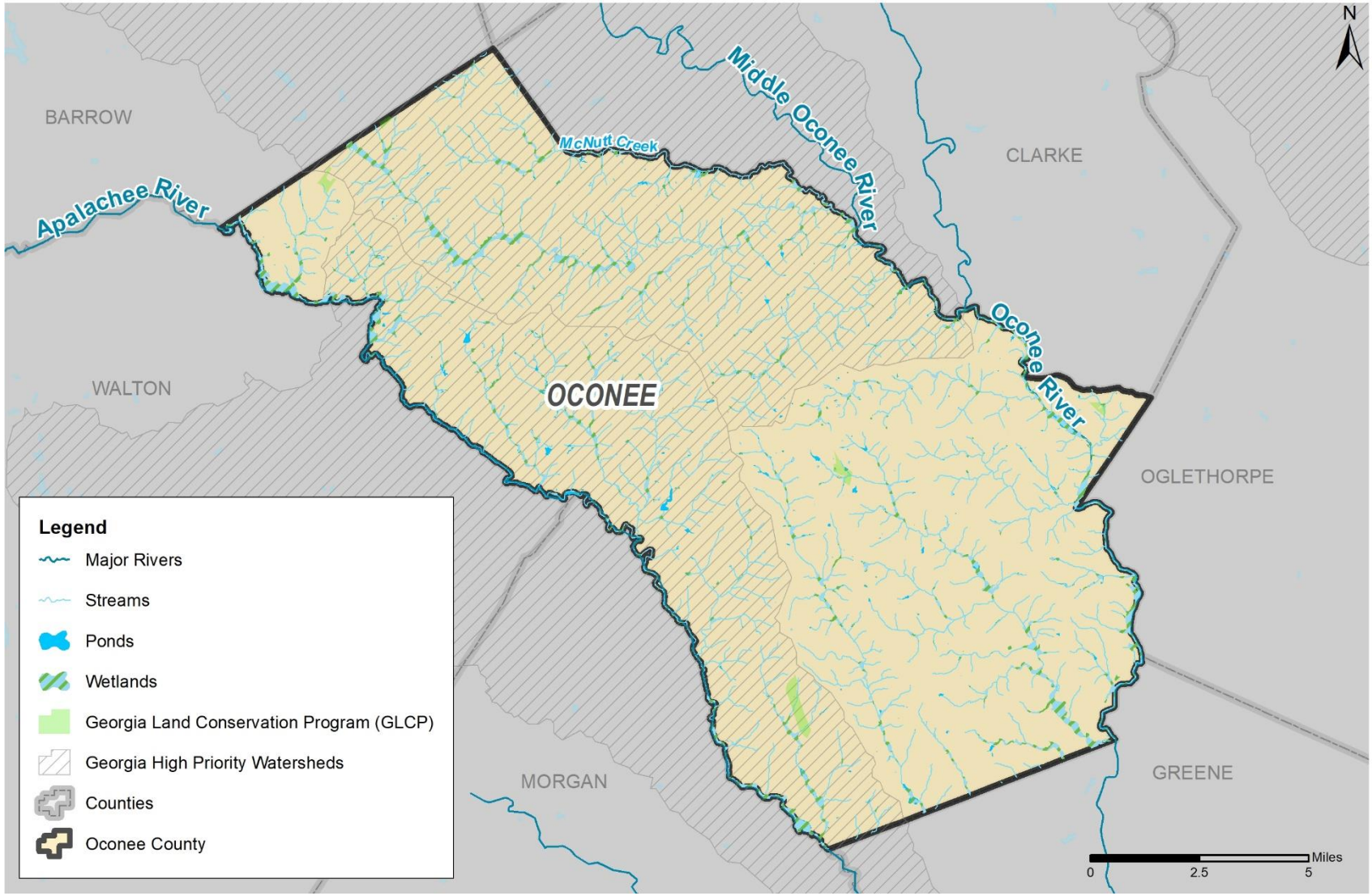
3.4.1. Natural Resources

Many natural resources exist in Oconee County including prime agricultural soils, forest land, rivers, wetlands, and green spaces. Figure 3.3 illustrates the natural resources in the county. Oconee County is wedged between two rivers – Apalachee River to the west and Middle Oconee River/Oconee River to the east. Related to each of these rivers are two high priority watersheds as designated by the Georgia State Wildlife Action Plan, published by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Resources Division.[5] These watersheds were labeled high priority based on the number of species in that watershed and the global rarity of each species.

The southern boundary of Oconee County borders the Scull Shoals Experimental Forest. The Scull Shoals Experimental Forest is a 4,500-acre site of silvicultural research, specifically for the regeneration of hardwood ecosystems of the southern Piedmont. Within the county, the Georgia Land Conservation Program (GLCP) actively protects nearly 18 square miles of land. In addition to the protected lands, Oconee County currently has about seven square miles of wetlands. Oconee County also includes nearly 600 acres of park land including walking trails and recreation facilities.

[5] https://georgiawildlife.com/WildlifeActionPlan#high-priority-watershed

Figure 3.3: Natural Resources



Source: Georgia Land Conservation Program, Georgia DNR, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

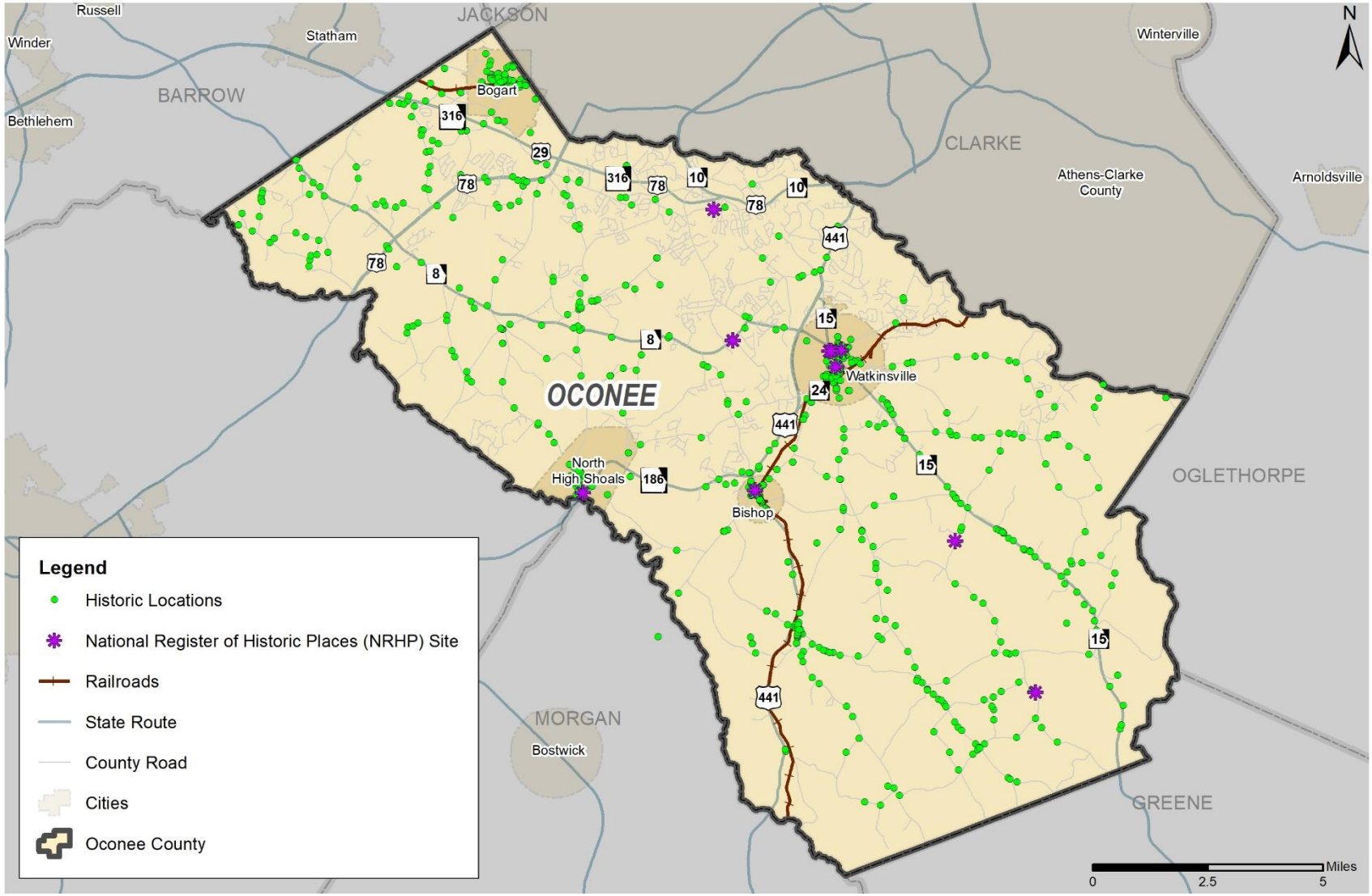
3.4.2. Historic Resources/Structures

Oconee County has numerous protected historical resources on the National Register of Historic Places. The county does not have any historic resource protective ordinances at this time. Table 3.2 lists the sites on the National Historical Register in Oconee County as of 2018. Figure 3.4 illustrates the location of historic resources.

Table 3.2: Sites on the National Register of Historic Places

Name	Location	City	Listed
Bishop Historic District	Price Mill, Old Bishop Rd, and US 441	Bishop	1996
Daniell-Kinne House	Epps Bridge Rd	Watkinsville	1995
Durham Homeplace	1561 Watson Springs Rd	Watkinsville	2000
Eagle Tavern	US 129	Watkinsville	1970
Elder's Mill Covered Bridge and Elder Mill	Elder Mill Rd	Watkinsville	1994
Farmers and Citizens Supply Company Block	US 129	Watkinsville	1987
High Shoals Historic District	SR 186 and banks the Apalachee River	N High Shoals	2006
Jones, Abe, House	2411 Hog Mountain Rd	Watkinsville	1994
Oconee County Courthouse	Main St	Watkinsville	1984
South Main St Historic District	S Main St and Harden Hill Rd	Watkinsville	1979

Figure 3.4: Historic Places

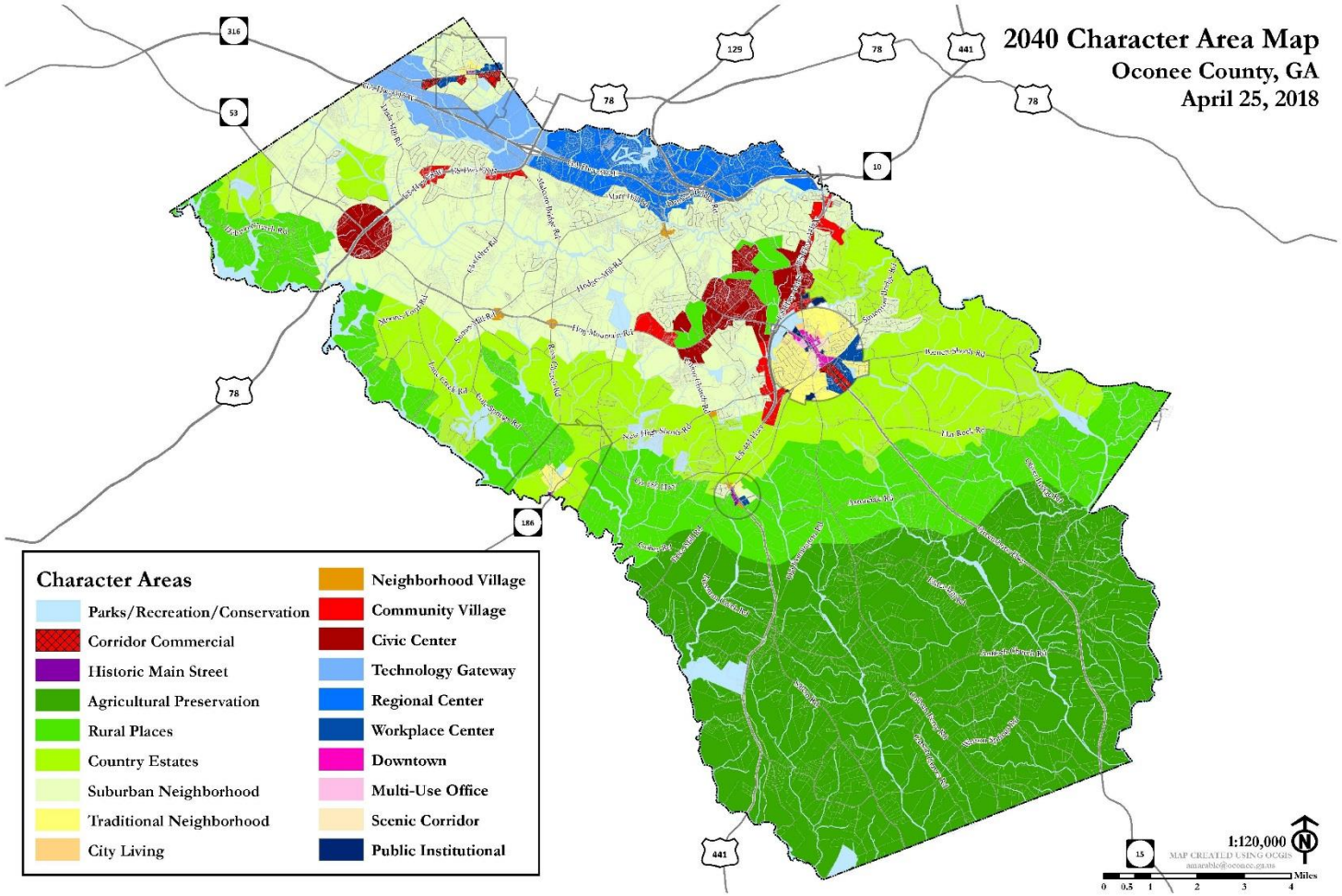


Source: Oconee County GIS.

3.5. *Future Land Use*

As part of the Oconee County Comprehensive Plan, a 2040 Character Area map was developed based on existing land use, lot patterns, future growth needs, and existing infrastructure. As shown in Figure 3.5, the plan aims to keep much of the southeastern part of the county as agricultural and rural land. The Athens Perimeter area is targeted as a hub of job growth. Much of the northern part of the county would remain oriented toward suburban development, with Watkinsville, Bogart, and Bishop focused on preserving and enhancing their downtown areas.

Figure 3.5: Future Land Use



Source: Oconee County Joint Comprehensive Plan Update 2018.

4. Demographics

Many different factors can influence transportation needs of an area. Population, employment, mix land use, and location of major travel destinations helps to define travel patterns and can impact mode choices throughout the county. Therefore, a thorough analysis of existing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics within Oconee County was performed and the results are documented in the following sections.

4.1. *Existing Population*

Understanding the distribution and characteristics of Oconee County's population will have profound impacts on transportation planning in the county. A reliable transportation network is essential to provide mobility to residents throughout the study area. Population growth should be considered in all future planning efforts, as increases in population can cause capacity constraints on public infrastructure, including the transportation network.

The population data evaluated for the *Oconee County LRTP* came from the U.S. Census. In 2015, the total population for Oconee County was 35,965 or 0.01 percent of the total state's population.[6] Figure 4.1 illustrates the existing population density. As shown, the highest population density occurs within the cities of Watkinsville and Bogart as well as along SR 316 between these two areas. The Census Block Group north of Watkinsville, bordering Athens-Clarke County presents the highest population density, with more than 580 persons per square mile.

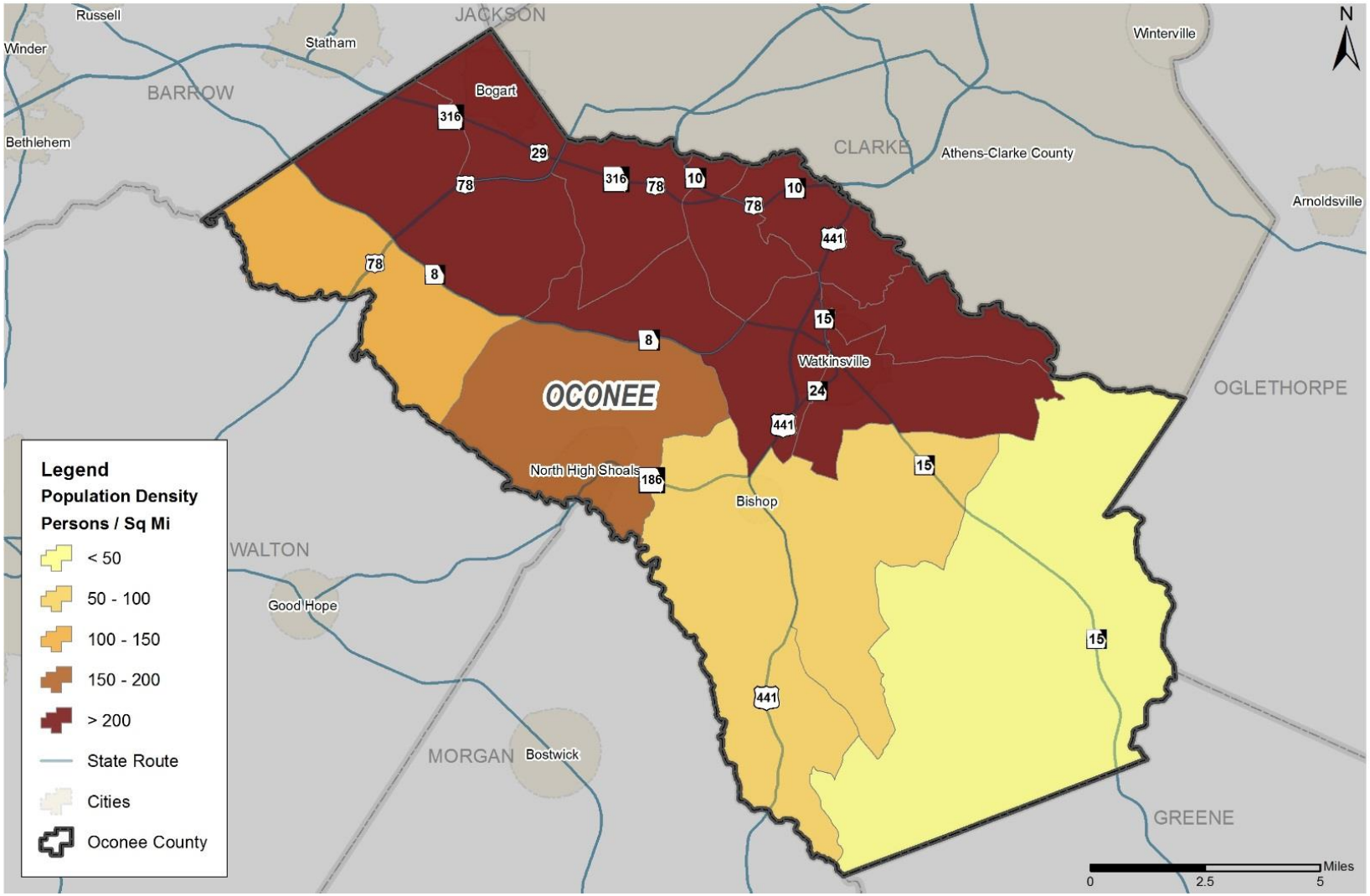
4.2. *Historic Population Growth (1970-2015)*

Table 4.1 illustrates the historic population growth trends for Oconee County from 1970 to 2015, which have averaged 4.2 percent annually. The table shows that the area has had consistent growth over the last 40 years. During the 20-year period from 1970 to 1990 the county showed strong population growth of 124 percent. During the 25-year period between 1990 and 2015 the county population grew a total of 102 percent.

Oconee County experienced the largest population growth (by percentage) of all other counties in the MACORTS region from 1980 to 2010. In that time, Oconee County added over 20,000 residents, an increase of 165 percent. Additionally, the growth rate in Oconee County is historically far ahead of that for the entire state. For example, between 2000 and 2010, Oconee County grew at a rate of 25 percent compared to the state figure of 18 percent.

[6] U.S. Census 2010 Data

*Figure 4.1: Total Population Density (2012-2016 Average)**



Source: 2016 ACS 5-Year Estimates; *average of 5-year data collection period.

Table 4.1: Population Growth[7]

Year	Population	Percentage Change
1970	7,966	-
1980	12,427	56%
1990	17,820	43%
2000	26,368	48%
2010	32,929	25%
2015	35,965	9%

[7] U.S. Census 2010 Data

4.3. *Future Population*

The population growth for Oconee County will continue to increase over the next three decades and will have a major impact on the county's transportation and land use outlook for the future. It will be essential for county decision-makers to plan for continued population growth through investing in transportation infrastructure projects and enforcing smart growth policies. To guide transportation recommendations that best foster smart growth and serve the future population of Oconee County, it is necessary to consider the magnitude and character of this population growth.

The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) is responsible (as denoted by state law – OCGA 45-12-171) for developing state and county population projections for the purpose of planning for statewide infrastructure including transportation, public buildings and water. The most recent projections (shown in Table 4.2), which use 2015 Census information as a baseline, provide annual population projections for the years 2017 through 2020, in five-year increments for 2020 through 2030, and in 10-year increments for 2030 through 2050.

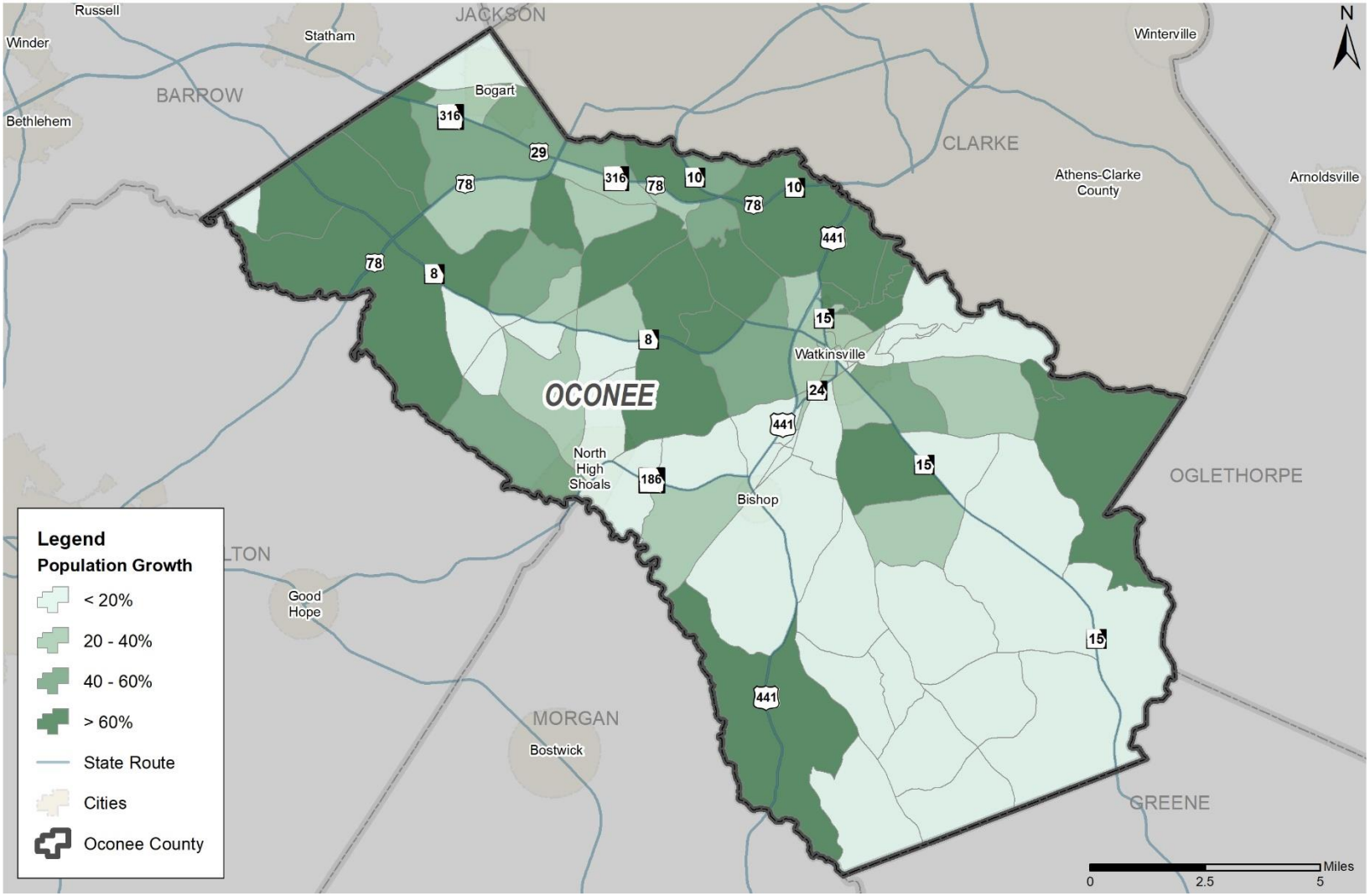
Table 4.2: Population Projections (2017-2050)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025	2030	2040	2050
Population	36,495	37,110	37,796	38,483	42,056	45,904	53,795	62,289
Annual Growth Rate (compared to 2017)	--	1.69%	1.85%	1.78%	1.79%	1.78%	1.7%	1.63%

As shown in Table 4.2, the annual growth rate during this timeframe has averaged 1.7 percent. Additional sources were also considered in the development of future population projections.

Another data source used to understand the population growth in Oconee County is the MACORTS MPO's socioeconomic estimates for the travel demand model. The socioeconomic estimates included population and employment for base year 2015 and forecast year 2045. The socioeconomic estimates provided by MPO at the traffic analysis zones (TAZs) level, which were developed based on 2015 census blocks. The resulting projected growth is shown by TAZ in Figure 4.2. As shown, the majority of population growth is projected to occur in the northern part of the county which borders Athens-Clarke County primarily located along the SR 316, US 78, and US 441 corridors.

Figure 4.2: Projected Population Growth by TAZ (2015 to 2045)



4.4. *Current Employment*

The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) collects, analyzes, and documents a variety of data related to the state's economy and labor market. Existing (2018) GDOL employment for Oconee County was calculated, based on an average of quarterly counts, to be 11,669, with 10,127 being in the private sector. This data also includes information on the distribution of jobs by sector, as shown in Table 4.3. The industry sector with the highest employment was Retail Trade, with almost 1,500 employees (15 percent of total jobs). The Accommodation and Food Services industry as well as the Health Care and Social Assistance industry represent major employment industry sectors in Oconee County.

Table 4.3: Industry Employment[8]

Industry	Employees
Retail Trade	1,476
Accommodation and Food Services	1,413
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,297
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	830
Management of Companies and Enterprises	709
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	639
Manufacturing	635
Construction	572
Educational Services	538
Other Services (except Public Administration)	503
Finance and Insurance	365
Wholesale Trade	359
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	235
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	216
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	149
Information	86
Unclassified – Industry not assigned	26
N/A – Confidential data relating to individual employers	79
Total	***10,127***

Table 4.4 illustrates Oconee County's top 10 employers. The county's largest employer is Caterpillar, with more than 1,000 employees. This employer manufactures construction and mining equipment, diesel and natural gas engines, industrial turbines, and diesel-electric locomotives. Other large employers include the Oconee County School System and Oconee County Government.

[8] Georgia Department of Labor.

Table 4.4: Top 10 Employers[9]

Employer	Employees
Caterpillar	1,550
Oconee County School System	908
Oconee County Government	357
Wal-Mart	300
Benson's Bakery	270
St. Mary's Health Care	260
Zaxby's Inc.	220
UGA Information Tech Services	200
Lowe's	185
Industrial Mechanical Inc.	180

4.5. *Future Employment*

As noted in the existing conditions section, the GDOL collects and distributes detailed employment data by county for the entire state. Table 4.5 presents the historical employment for Oconee County from 2005 to 2017. As shown, employment growth has not followed a consistent trend in recent years. The average annual growth rate over this period of time is 0.8 percent.

[9] Georgia Department of Labor.

Table 4.5: Department of Labor [10]

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total Employment	16,513	16,843	17,496	18,122	17,429	15,635	15,727	15,992	16,137	16,389	16,814	17,740	18,550
Annual Growth Rate	--	1.96%	3.73%	3.45%	-3.98%	-11.5%	0.58%	1.66%	0.9%	1.54%	2.53%	5.22%	4.37%

Oconee County's unemployment rate of 3.8 percent is the lowest in Georgia, which has an overall rate of 5.5 percent (US Census 2015). Oconee also has the lowest poverty rate in the area covered by the Northeast Georgia Regional Planning Commission (NEGRC). While these low percentages could be attributed to Oconee having the second lowest population of the NEGRC counties, Fortune 500 companies moving into the county such as Caterpillar is an outstanding positive trait for the county.

Employment projections were also developed as inputs into MPO's travel demand model. The resulting projected growth is shown by TAZ in Figure 4.3. As shown from the model, the majority of employment growth is projected to occur in the northern part of the county which borders Athens-Clarke County primarily located along the SR 316, US 78, and SR 15 corridors.

4.6. *Environmental Justice*

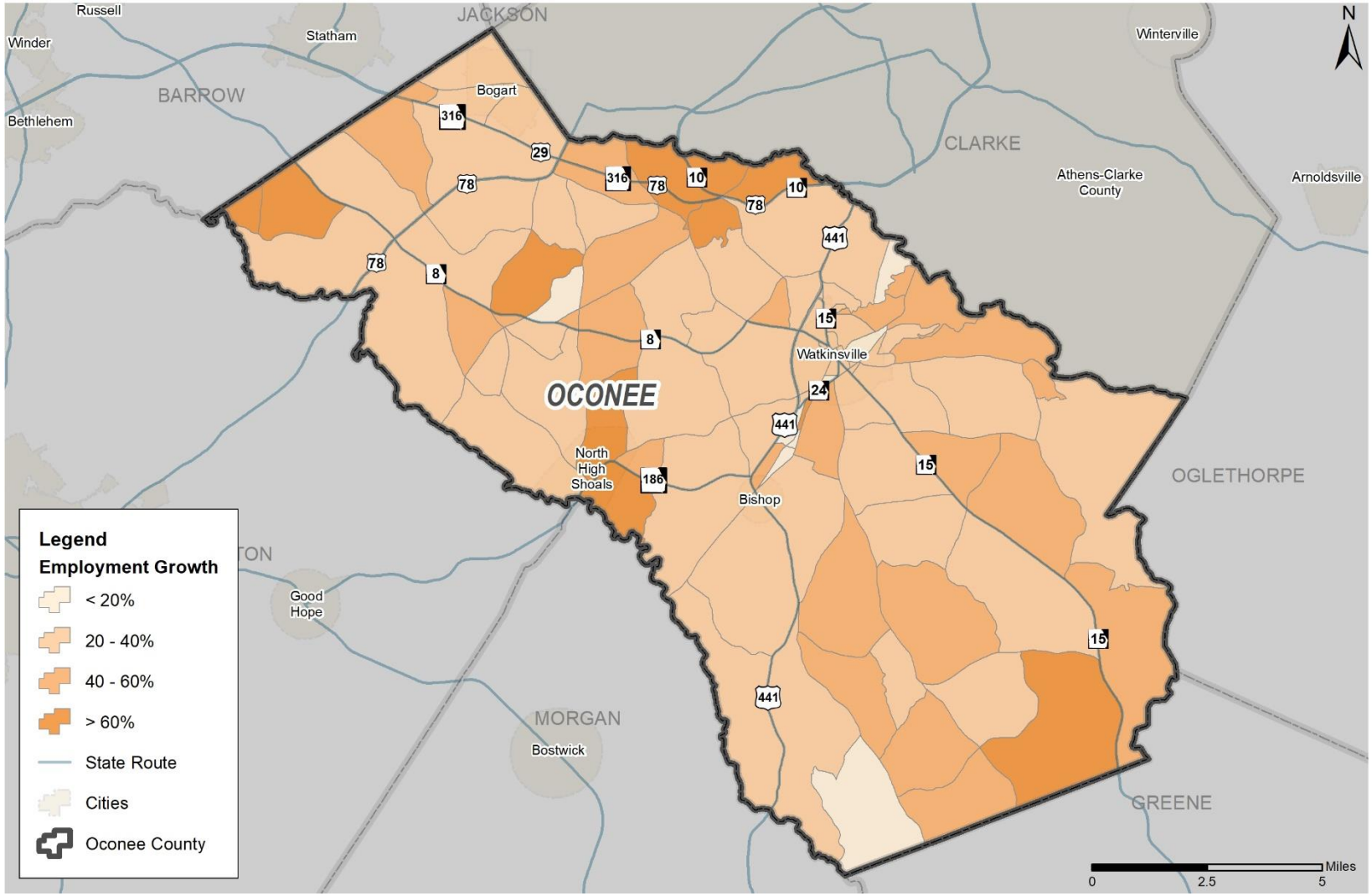
The population diversity in Oconee County has shown small changes between 1990 and now, with the percentage of the population comprised of minority residents increasing with every decennial census and with 2015's American Community Survey (ACS). Table 4.6 shows the racial composition of the county over 25 years, from 1990 to 2015.

[10] 2008 Oconee County Comprehensive Plan, U.S. Census.

Table 4.6: Racial Composition

Year	Total Population	Race														Hispanic or Latino Heritage		% Minority
		One Race Alone												Two or More Races				
		White	% White	Black or African American	% Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	% American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	% Asian	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Some Other Race Alone	% Some Other Race Alone	Two or More Races	% Two or More Races	Hispanic or Latino	% Hispanic or Latino	
1990	17,618	16,154	91.7%	1,315	7.5%	33	0.2%	87	0.5%	1	0%	28	0.2%	-	-	178	1%	8.3%
2000	26,225	23,492	89.6%	1,683	6.4%	46	0.2%	376	1.4%	12	0%	387	1.5%	229	0.9%	833	3.2%	10.4%
2010	32,808	29,004	88.4%	1,635	5.0%	49	0.1%	1,022	3.1%	5	0%	641	2%	452	1.4%	1,436	4.4%	11.6%
2015	34,400	29,323	85.2%	1,811	5.3%	18	0.1%	1,341	3.9%	0	0%	5	0%	297	0.9%	1,605	4.7%	14.8%

Figure 4.3: Projected Employment Growth by TAZ (2015 to 2045)



5. Transportation Network

The multimodal transportation network in Oconee County is essential for the efficient movement of people, commodities, goods and services within and through the county. This section summarizes Oconee County's existing transportation network and its condition. Existing conditions data was analyzed to prepare and calibrate the associated travel demand model discussed in the following section. By utilizing data from GDOT's roadway characteristics (RC) database, existing deficiencies in Oconee County's transportation network can be identified.

5.1. *Functional Classification and Characteristics*

Roadways are grouped into functional classes according to the character of traffic they are intended to serve. They may also be further classified as rural or urban based on the population surrounding a particular roadway. There are four highway functional classifications: expressway/freeway, arterial, collector, and local roads. These can be defined as:

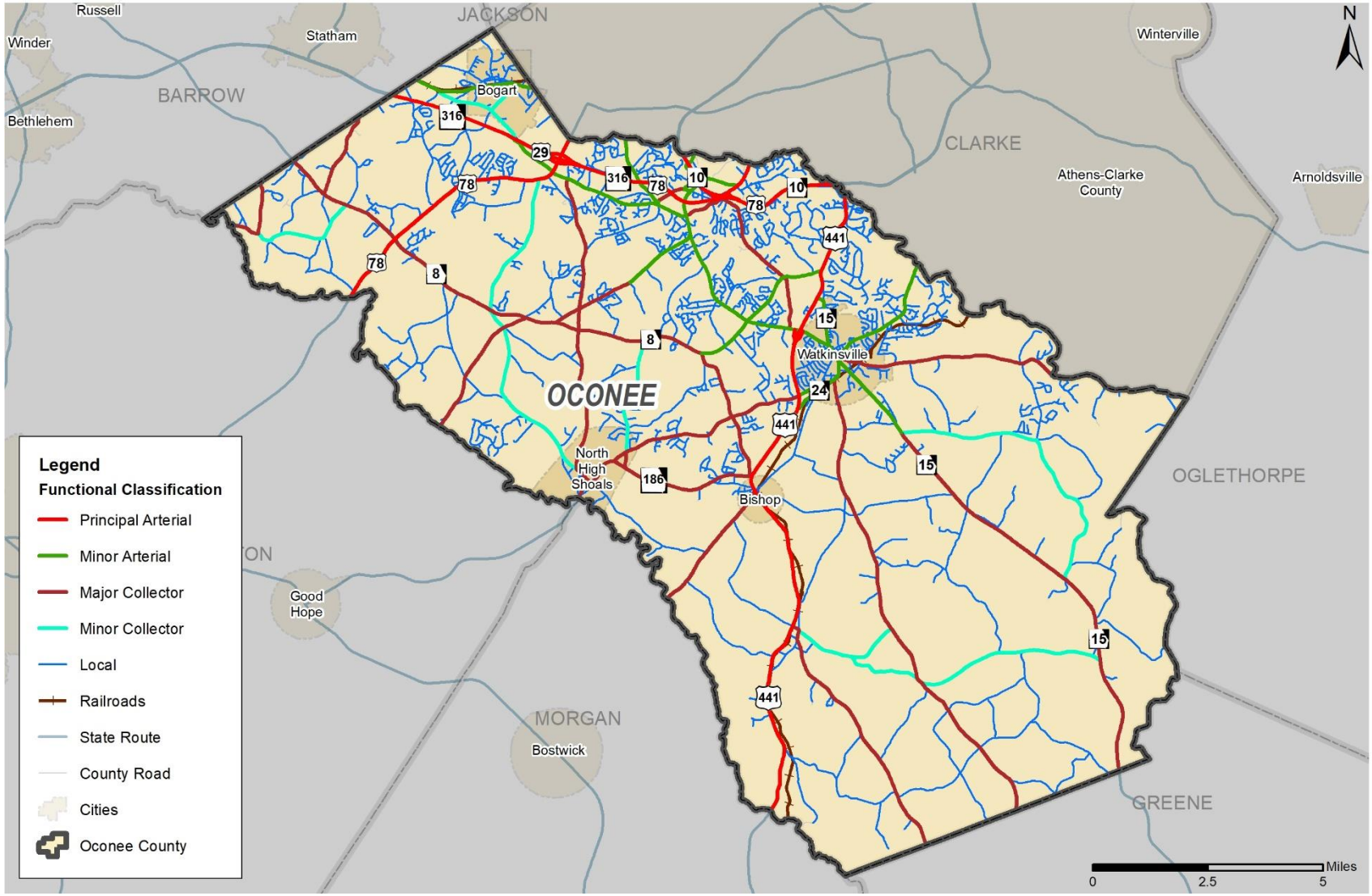
1. **Interstate** – Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control.
2. **Arterial** – Provides the next highest level of service at moderate to high speeds, with some degree of access control. Arterials are typically classified as major arterial and minor arterial.
3. **Collector** – Provides a lower level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials. Collectors are also classified as major and minor collectors.
4. **Local** – Consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily provides access to land with little or minimal "through" movement.

As noted in Table 5.1, the study area has 129 miles of principal arterials (19.6 percent of total highway miles), consisting of US 441, US 29, and US 78. There are also approximately 39 miles of arterial routes in the county and 124 miles of collectors. Local roads account for a majority (55.5 percent) of the lane miles within the county. Oconee County does not have any interstate routes. Figure 5.1 displays the functional class of roadways in the study area.

Table 5.1: Roadway Functional Classifications

Classification	Centerline Miles	% of Total Miles
Principal Arterial	129	19.7%
Minor Arterial	39	5.9%
Major Collector	90	13.7%
Minor Collector	34	5.2%
Local Roads	364	55.5%
Total	***656***	100%

Figure 5.1: Roadway Functional Classification



Source: 2017 GDOT Roadway Characteristics Database.

5.2. *Road Lanes*

Another important attribute reviewed from the GDOT RC database is the number of lanes provided on each road. The roads in the study area predominately serve traffic in both directions. Also based on the capacity needs, a majority of the roads are 2-lanes total. There are some 4-lane facilities in the county as well. Figure 5.2 displays the number of lanes on the roads in the study area.

5.3. *Roadway Shoulders*

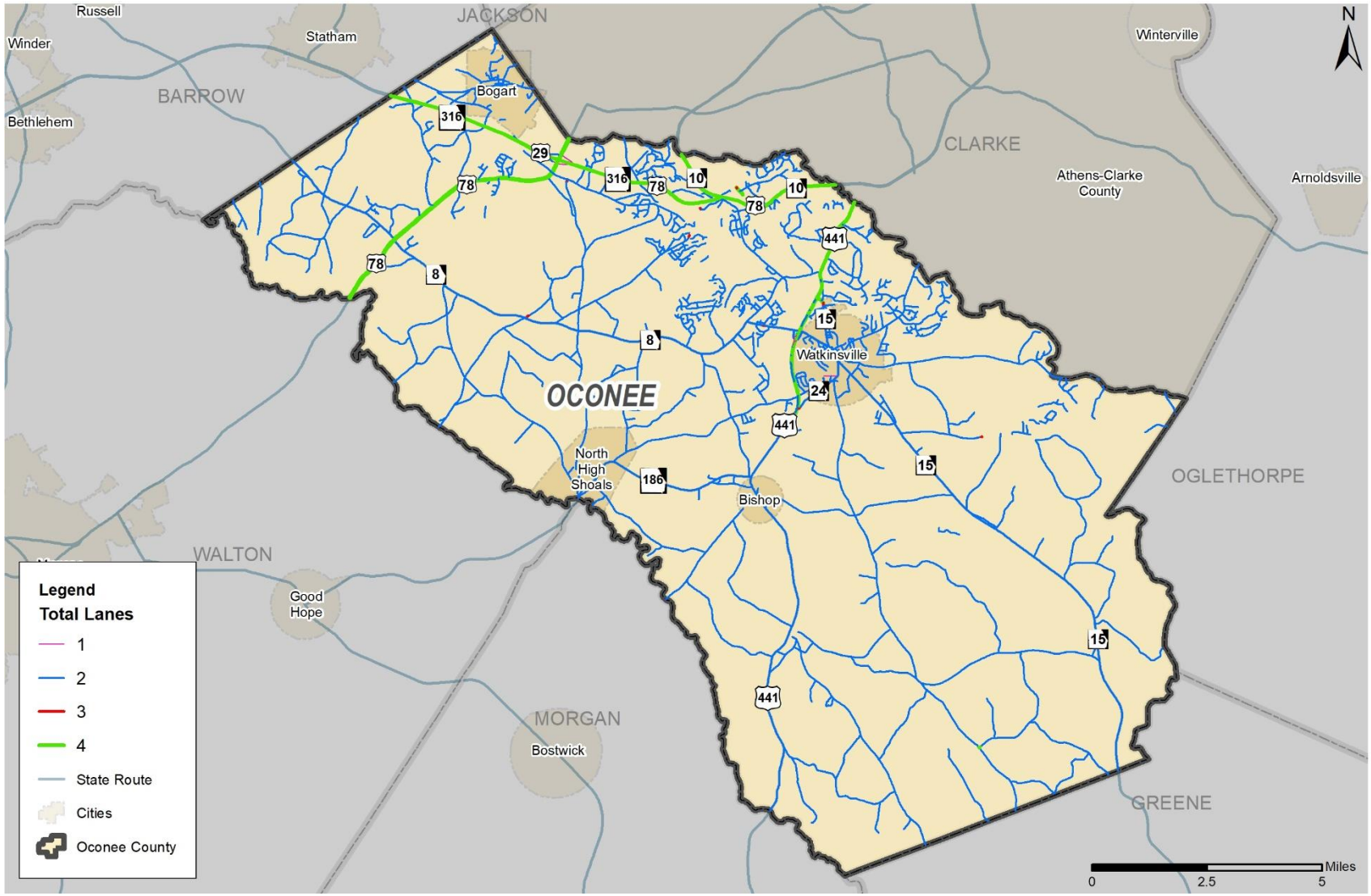
GDOT's RC database also provides information on roadway shoulders. For this analysis, both the shoulder type and shoulder width were reviewed to determine segments of roadways in need of potential shoulder upgrades or operational widening. A wide variety of shoulder widths and types are present throughout Oconee County. Insufficient shoulder width can contribute to travel speed reductions, potentially impact safety, and influence bicycle and pedestrian usage of facilities.

The following guidelines are used to determine potential shoulder deficiencies:

- No shoulder or an unidentifiable shoulder
- Grass shoulder less than 4 feet
- Paved shoulder less than 2 feet

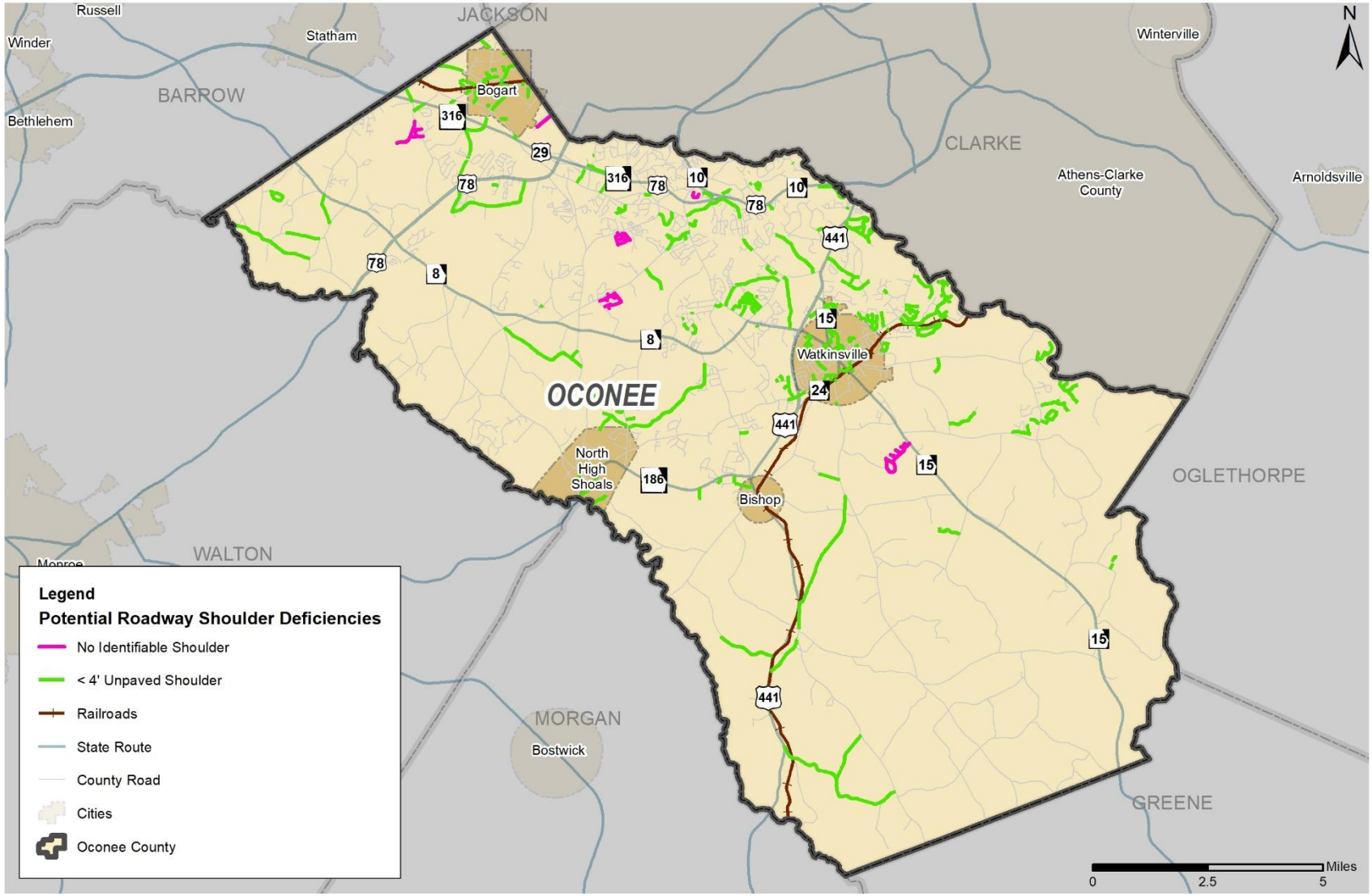
Figure 5.3 displays the roadways with potential shoulder deficiencies according to GDOT's RC Database for Oconee County. Roadway segments with potential deficient shoulders may become candidates for recommended upgrades when evaluated with other metrics such as safety and connectivity.

Figure 5.2: Road Lanes



Source: 2017 GDOT Roadway Characteristics Database.

Figure 5.3: Potential Roadway Shoulder Deficiencies



Source: 2017 GDOT Roadway Characteristics Database.

5.4. *Bridges*

Another critical transportation area of emphasis in Oconee County is bridge conditions. Bridges were evaluated to determine the need for potential improvement. Deficient bridges can pose an obstacle to a fully functional road network due to load limits or other restrictions. The study area was reviewed to identify all bridges and assess the need for potential improvements.

Sufficiency rating is the general measure of the condition of each bridge. The sufficiency rating is used to determine the structural and geometric condition of the bridge, and represents the structural safety, adequacy, serviceability, and necessity of public use. This measure is used to identify need for maintenance, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of a bridge structure. Bridges are rated on a point system from 1 to 100 (the maximum rating). Bridges with a sufficiency rating of less than 80 are candidates for federal rehabilitation funds. Bridges with ratings below 50 are still able to safely accommodate traffic; however, upgrading these bridges to modern design and load standards will improve the operation and safety of the bridge as well as the capacity of the roadway. All bridges with a sufficiency rating of 50 or lower were identified as deficient for purposes of the study. Additionally, these bridges are candidates for federal bridge replacement funds.

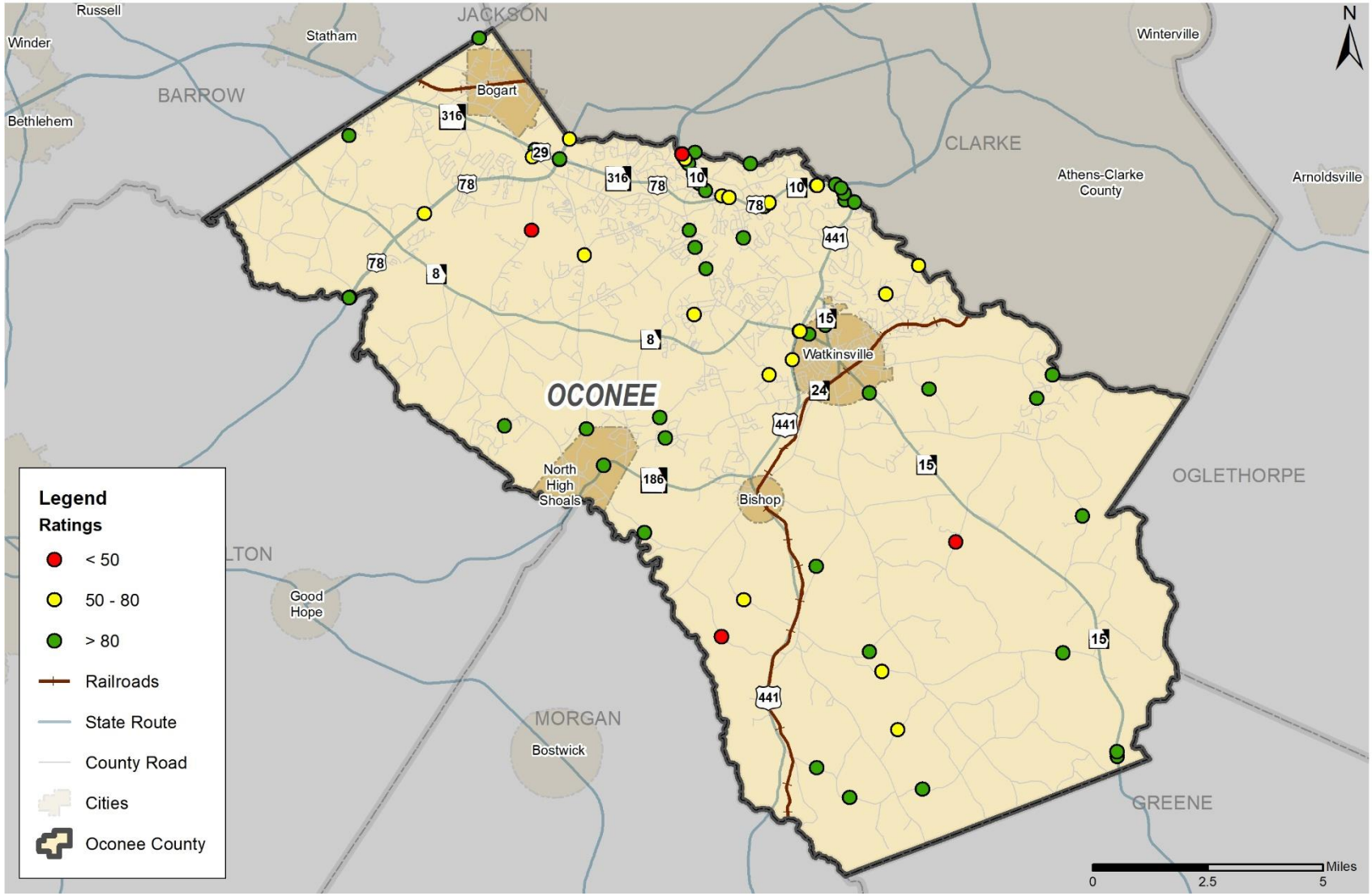
Based on the sufficiency rating, the majority of the 100 bridges in Oconee County are in good condition and not in need of any major maintenance or upgrade activities. There are five bridges that have a sufficiency rating below 50 and are potentially in need of maintenance and rehabilitation in the next 10-15 years. Additionally, there are 35 bridges that have a sufficiency rating between 50 and 80 and should be considered candidates for maintenance and rehabilitation within the horizon year of the plan (2045). Figure 5.4 below displays the bridges with a sufficiency rating.

Below are the locations of the bridges with a sufficiency rating below 50:

- Elders Mill Road over Rose Creek
- Branch Road over Freeman Creek
- US 129/SR 10/SR 15 (Westbound Lane) over SR 8/US 29/W.F. Trail
- US 129/SR 10/SR 15 (Eastbound Lane) over SR 8/US 29/W.F. Trail
- Clotfelter Road over Barber Creek

While this study reviewed bridge condition reports and identified bridges eligible for federal rehabilitation and replacement funds, GDOT's Bridge Group continuously monitor all bridges throughout the state for maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacements needs.

Figure 5.4: Bridge Ratings



Source: National Bridge Inventory.

5.5. *Roadway Operations*

5.5.1. Traffic Volumes

Existing traffic information was collected from GDOT's Annual Count Program. In addition to GDOT's count program, 74 count locations were placed throughout Oconee County to collect volume, classification, and turning movement counts. Figure 5.5 shows these traffic count locations. Figure 5.6 and Table 5.2 illustrate 2015 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes in the study area. As shown in this figure, routes through much of the study area experience traffic volumes of less than 5,000 vehicles per day. Traffic volumes increase between major study area cities, exceeding 20,000 vehicles per day along US 78/US 29 between near the Athens-Clarke County line. Tables 5.3 and 5.4 show turning movement counts.

Table 5.2: 2015 Average Annual Daily Traffic

Count Location	Road	Direction	Volume Total	Truck Total	Truck %
1	Jefferson Ave at the Oconee/Barrow County Line	E	562	24	4.27
1	Jefferson Ave at the Oconee/Barrow County Line	W	558	14	2.51
2	Atlanta Hwy at the Oconee/Barrow County Line	E	8,199	667	8.14
2	Atlanta Hwy at the Oconee/Barrow County Line	W	8,286	693	8.36
3	SR 316 at Oconee/Barrow County Line	E	28,417	2,963	10.43
4	Barber Creek at Oconee County Line	N	1,930	152	7.88
4	Barber Creek at Oconee County Line	S	1,801	145	8.05
5	Atlanta Hwy between Landrum Dr and Westwood Ave	E	10,902	-	-
5	Atlanta Hwy between Landrum Dr and Westwood Ave	W	10,724	-	-
6	US 78 at Oconee/Clarke County Line	E	18,925	2,435	12.87
6	US 78 at Oconee/Clarke County Line	W	19,452	2,766	14.22
7	Mars Hill Rd West of Baker Dr	W	5,688	-	-
7	Mars Hill Rd West of Baker Dr	E	5,980	-	-
8	US 78 West of Keeneland Dr	E	23,936	-	3.9
8	US 78 West of Keeneland Dr	W	24,022	-	3.92
9	Hog Mountain Rd at Oconee/Barrow County Line	E	5,347	933	17.45
9	Hog Mountain Rd at Oconee/Barrow County Line	W	5,263	942	17.9
10	Dove Creek Rd at the Oconee County Line	N	343	37	10.79
10	Dove Creek Rd at the Oconee County Line	S	339	37	10.91
11	Hog Mtn Rd East of Lane Creek Rd	E	7,718	-	-
11	Hog Mtn Rd East of Lane Creek Rd	W	7,424	-	-
12	US 78 at Oconee County Line	E	21,478	-	-
12	US 78 at Oconee County Line	W	21,557	-	-
13	Hebron Church Rd at the Oconee County Line	E	721	49	6.8

Count Location	Road	Direction	Volume Total	Truck Total	Truck %
13	Hebron Church Rd at the Oconee County Line	W	723	57	7.88
14	Moores Ford Rd at Oconee County Line	E	204	42	20.59
14	Moores Ford Rd at Oconee County Line	W	210	37	17.62
15	Snows Mill Rd at Oconee/Walton County Line	E	1,283	174	13.56
15	Snows Mill Rd at Oconee/Walton County Line	W	1,277	113	8.85
16	Hopping Rd at Oconee County Line	N	2,790	364	13.05
16	Hopping Rd at Oconee County Line	S	2,794	325	11.63
17	Price Mill Rd at Oconee County Line	N	1,757	217	12.35
17	Price Mill Rd at Oconee County Line	S	1,903	190	9.98
18	Macon Hwy US 441 at Oconee County Line	N	7,769	2,517	32.4
18	Macon Hwy US 441 at Oconee County Line	S	7,634	1,500	19.65
19	Salem Rd at Oconee County Line	N	1,018	191	18.76
19	Salem Rd at Oconee County Line	S	1,031	57	5.53
20	Carson Graves Rd at Oconee County Line	N	81	27	33.33
20	Carson Graves Rd at Oconee County Line	S	78	18	23.08
21	Colham Ferry Rd at Oconee County Line	N	309	20	6.47
21	Colham Ferry Rd at Oconee County Line	S	595	46	7.73
22	Greensboro Hwy at Oconee County Line	N	2,981	442	14.83
22	Greensboro Hwy at Oconee County Line	S	4,311	1,347	31.25
23	Bob Godfrey Rd at Oconee County Line	E	1,260	120	9.52
23	Bob Godfrey Rd at Oconee County Line	W	1,294	119	9.2
24	Barnett Shoals Rd West of Twin Oaks Trail	E	3,012	-	-
24	Barnett Shoals Rd West of Twin Oaks Trail	W	3,051	-	-
25	Simonton Bridge Rd South of Brittian Estates Dr	N	6,662	-	-
25	Simonton Bridge Rd South of Brittian Estates Dr	S	7,048	-	-
26	US 129 North of Puritan Rd	N	30,643	-	-
26	US 129 North of Puritan Rd	S	29,185	-	-
27	Macon Hwy north of White Oak Dr	N	9,648	-	-
27	Macon Hwy north of White Oak Dr	S	9,917	-	-
28	Epps Bridge Pkwy North of Pine Ridge Ct	S	22,676	-	-
28	Epps Bridge Pkwy North of Pine Ridge Ct	N	46,438	-	-
29	Jimmy Daniel Rd North of Wall St	N	5,974	-	-
29	Jimmy Daniel Rd North of Wall St	S	5,337	-	-
30	Athens Perimeter Hwy at Oconee/Clarke County Line	N	28,894	1,391	4.81
30	Athens Perimeter Hwy at Oconee/Clarke County Line	S	29,698	2,982	10.04

Count Location	Road	Direction	Volume Total	Truck Total	Truck %
31	Jennings Mill Rd at Oconee/Clarke County Line	N	5,633	257	4.56
31	Jennings Mill Rd at Oconee/Clarke County Line	S	4,984	216	4.33
32	Oconee Conn North of Vigil Langford Rd	N	15,554	-	-
32	Oconee Conn North of Vigil Langford Rd	S	20,286	-	-
33	Daniells Bridge Rd north of Hog Mtn Rd	N	5,091	-	-
33	Daniells Bridge Rd north of Hog Mtn Rd	S	3,879	-	-
34	Hog Mtn Rd South of Tuxedo Ln	N	9,124	-	-
34	Hog Mtn Rd South of Tuxedo Ln	S	9,169	-	-
35	US 129 North of S Main St	N	13,040	-	-
35	US 129 North of S Main St	S	12,990	-	-
36	Greensboro Hwy North of Old Greensboro Rd	S	6,909	-	-
36	Greensboro Hwy North of Old Greensboro Rd	N	6,563	-	-
37	S Main St West of Harden Hill Rd	E	1,410	-	-
37	S Main St West of Harden Hill Rd	W	1,758	-	-
38	Hopping Rd North of Hillsboro Rd	N	3,137	-	-
38	Hopping Rd North of Hillsboro Rd	S	3,390	-	-
39	Macon Hwy South of Branch Rd	N	8,173	1,793	21.94
39	Macon Hwy South of Branch Rd	S	8,661	1,936	22.35
40	Astondale Rd East of Railroad St	N	5,757	-	-
40	Astondale Rd East of Railroad St	S	6,005	-	-
41	Antioch Church Rd East of Elder Mill Rd	E	267	-	-
41	Antioch Church Rd East of Elder Mill Rd	W	290	-	-
42	Mars Hill Rd West of Virgil Langford Rd	E	5,066	-	-
42	Mars Hill Rd West of Virgil Langford Rd	W	3,901	-	-
43	Malcom Bridge Rd North of Rocky Branch Rd	N	5,438	-	-
43	Malcom Bridge Rd North of Rocky Branch Rd	S	5,274	-	-
44	Hog Mtn Rd West of Elder Rd	E	10,984	-	-
44	Hog Mtn Rd West of Elder Rd	W	10,872	-	-
45	Hodges Mill Rd West of Old Hodges Mill Rd	E	4,012	-	-
45	Hodges Mill Rd West of Old Hodges Mill Rd	W	4,011	-	-
46	Macon Hwy/US 129 North of Hog Mtn Rd	N	33,126	-	-
46	Macon Hwy/US 129 North of Hog Mtn Rd	S	33,524	-	-
47	Athens Perimeter Hwy South of Southbound Ramps	E	45,019	-	-
47	Athens Perimeter Hwy South of Southbound Ramps	W	42,804	-	-
48	North Bursons Ave. Just North of Elder St.	N	918	-	-

Count Location	Road	Direction	Volume Total	Truck Total	Truck %
48	North Bursons Ave. Just North of Elder St.	S	891	-	-
49	Gear St. North of Osceola Ave	E	434	-	-
49	Gear St. North of Osceola Ave	W	452	-	-
50	Aiken Rd East of Whitehead Rd	E	485	-	-
50	Aiken Rd East of Whitehead Rd	W	609	-	-
51	Hillsboro Rd West of Rays Church Rd	W	1,250	-	-
51	Hillsboro Rd West of Rays Church Rd	E	1,028	-	-
52	New High Shoals Rd West of Union Church Rd	E	2,917	-	-
52	New High Shoals Rd West of Union Church Rd	W	3,179	-	-
53	Union Church Rd North of High Shoals Rd	N	2,671	-	-
53	Union Church Rd North of High Shoals Rd	S	2,404	-	-
54	Mayne Mill Rd East of Old Farmington Rd	E	474	-	-
54	Mayne Mill Rd East of Old Farmington Rd	W	461	-	-
55	Treadwell Bridge Rd at Oconee County Line	E	39	13	33.33
55	Treadwell Bridge Rd at Oconee County Line	W	44	12	27.27
56	Cohan Ferry Rd between Old Farmingotn Rd and Astondale Rd	N	1,514	-	-
56	Cohan Ferry Rd between Old Farmingotn Rd and Astondale Rd	S	1,501	-	-
57	Old Farmington Rd South of Astondale Rd	N	120	-	-
57	Old Farmington Rd South of Astondale Rd	S	128	-	-
58	Experiment Station Rd West of Harris Shoals Park Rd	E	13,994	-	-
58	Experiment Station Rd West of Harris Shoals Park Rd	W	14,382	-	-
59	N Main St South of Charity Ln	N	7,488	-	-
59	N Main St South of Charity Ln	S	8,065	-	-
60	Barnett Shoals Rd East of Industrial Blvd	E	4,083	-	-
60	Barnett Shoals Rd East of Industrial Blvd	W	4,110	-	-
61	Vigil Langford Rd North of Langford Dr	N	2,071	-	-
61	Vigil Langford Rd North of Langford Dr	S	5,363	-	-
62	Malcom Bridge Rd South of Mars Hill Rd	N	4,620	-	-
62	Malcom Bridge Rd South of Mars Hill Rd	S	4,963	-	-
63	Dooley Blvd North of Amenity Cir	-	-	-	-
63	Dooley Blvd North of Amenity Cir	-	-	-	-
64	Salem Rd South of Burger Rd	N	596	-	-
64	Salem Rd South of Burger Rd	S	365	-	-
65	Whippoorwill Rd South of Union Church Rd	N	1,473	-	-
65	Whippoorwill Rd South of Union Church Rd	S	1,555	-	-

Figure 5.5: Traffic Count Locations

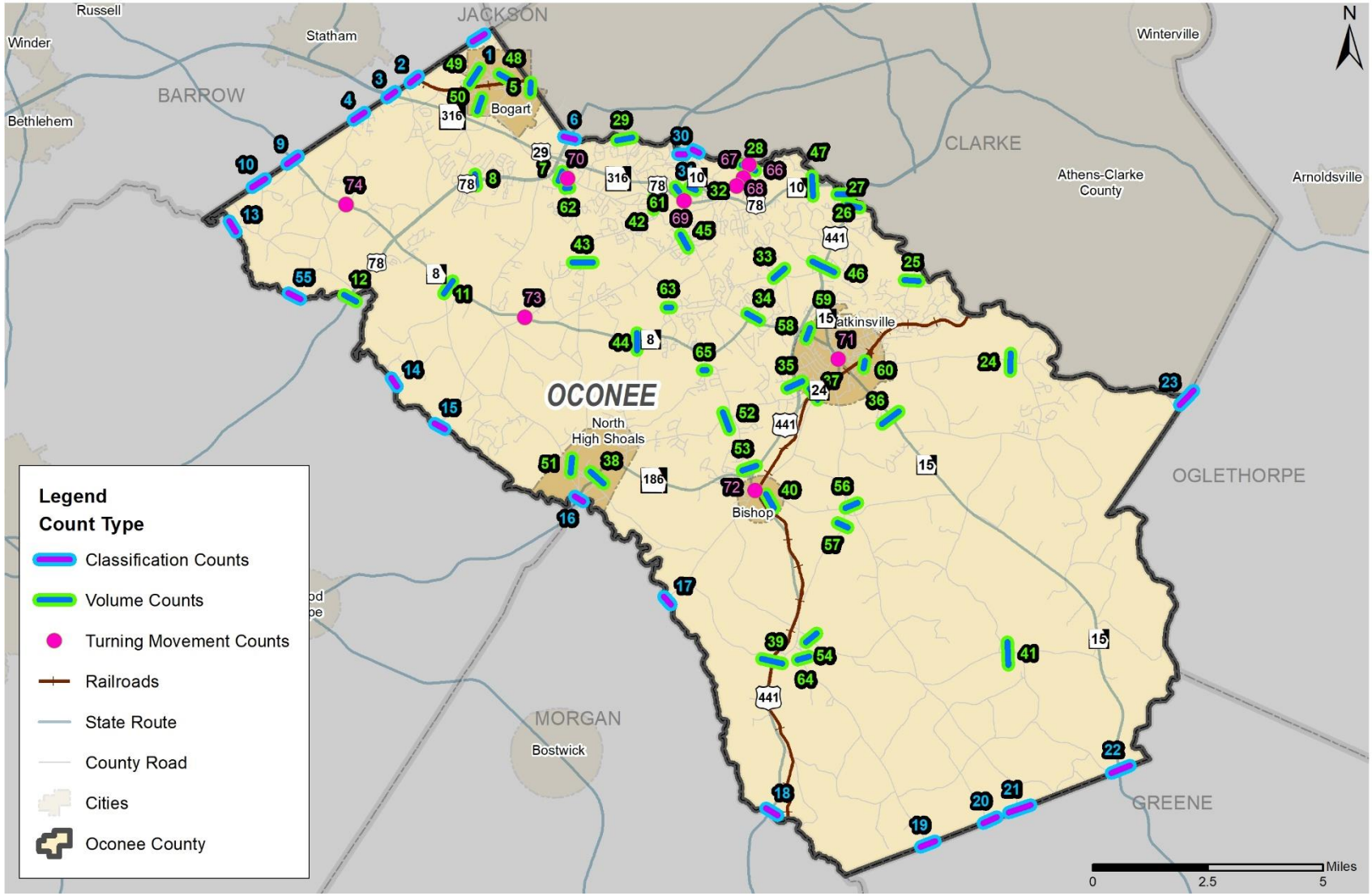
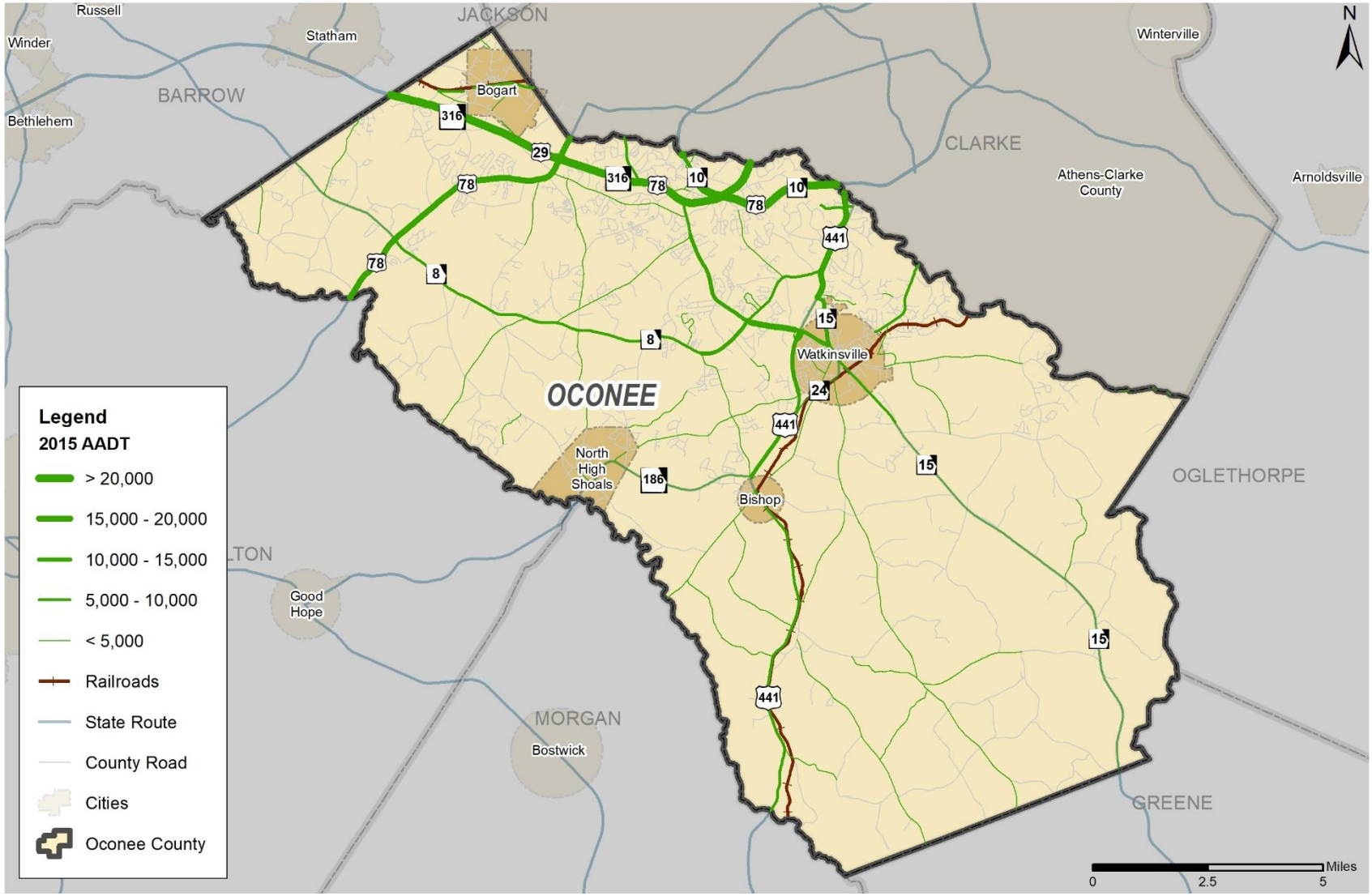


Figure 5.6: 2015 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)



Source: Georgia Department of Transportation.

Table 5.3: AM 3-Hour Turning Movement Counts

Count Location	SB Right	SB Thru	SB Left	WB Right	WB Thru	WB Left	NB Right	NB Thru	NB Left	EB Right	EB Thru	EB Left
66	550	4,487	94	244	93	83	122	5,745	110	77	19	281
67	649	3,028	1,004	360	119	554	351	4,961	1,081	984	205	777
68	840	3,116	612	483	673	1,294	872	5,165	1,359	241	642	958
69	1,139	2,612	562	564	6,771	2,241	3,006	3,825	1,587	1,194	12,092	2,378
70	87	8	30	84	954	1,233	945	6	1,522	1,155	1,552	101
71	500	3,231	590	1,064	545	194	102	3,330	41	251	459	1,221
72	345	3,640	182	145	59	90	129	4,019	44	40	89	850
73	468	238	660	719	2,034	364	990	399	88	43	2,484	600
74	21	43	343	211	1,726	205	375	37	5	5	1,996	7

SB – Southbound; WB – Westbound; NB – Northbound; EB – Eastbound

Table 5.4: PM 3-Hour Turning Movement Counts

Count Location	SB Right	SB Thru	SB Left	WB Right	WB Thru	WB Left	NB Right	NB Thru	NB Left	EB Right	EB Thru	EB Left
66	1,324	9,132	163	105	53	94	140	8,432	357	309	62	1,232
67	1,178	6,510	1,573	1,025	245	979	616	6,729	2,216	2,885	451	1,919
68	2,530	6,708	1,236	1,075	1,714	3,005	1,294	6,945	2,251	1,051	1445	2,338
69	2,932	4,558	846	394	12,066	4,315	3,015	3,080	1,584	1,133	10,766	2,546
70	128	17	94	72	1,765	1,166	1,017	12	934	1,022	1,067	55
71	834	3,386	1,257	918	513	261	146	3,419	38	139	525	1,004
72	978	5,300	125	163	71	57	181	4,685	83	71	79	655
73	475	373	755	353	2,712	911	701	274	41	65	3,023	213
74	21	62	223	356	1,992	444	288	59	27	38	2,368	30

SB – Southbound; WB – Westbound; NB – Northbound; EB – Eastbound

5.5.2. Level of Service

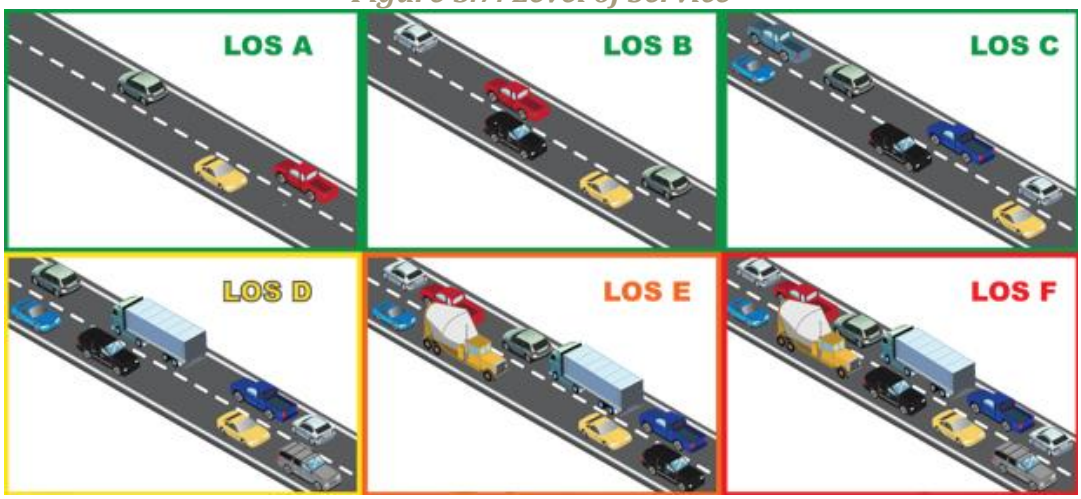
MACORT's calibrated travel demand model was used to supplement the evaluation of existing travel conditions and forecast future travel conditions throughout the study area. The development process was performed following the *GDOT General Summary of Recommended Travel Demand Model Development Procedures for Consultants, MPOs, and Modelers ("GDOT Procedures")* that was prepared in May 2013.

Prior to documenting operating conditions, it is useful to summarize level of service. Level of service (LOS) is a qualitative measure of traffic flow describing operating conditions. Six levels of service are defined by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in the Highway Capacity Manual for use in evaluating roadway operating conditions. They are given letter designations from A to F, with LOS A representing the best operating conditions and F the worst. A facility may operate at a range of levels of service depending upon time of day, day of week, or period of the year. A qualitative description of the different levels of service is provided below.

LOS A – Drivers perceive little or no delay and easily progress along a corridor.
LOS B – Drivers experience some delay but generally driving conditions are favorable.
LOS C – Travel speeds are slightly lower than the posted speed with noticeable delay in intersection areas.
LOS D – Travel speeds are well below the posted speed with few opportunities to pass and considerable intersection delay.
LOS E – The facility is operating at capacity and there are virtually no useable gaps in the traffic.
LOS F – More traffic desires to use a particular facility than it is designed to handle resulting in extreme delays.

The recommended approach used to identify deficient segments was to analyze the volume of traffic on the roadway segments compared to the capacity of those segments, also known as the volume to capacity (V/C) ratio. For daily operating conditions, any segment identified as LOS D or worse was considered deficient. Figure 5.7 below illustrates LOS characteristics.

Figure 5.7: Level of Service



The following thresholds were used to assign a level of service to the V/C ratios, based on the general resulting operations described in Figure 5.7.

V/C < 0.70: LOS C or better;
V/C = 0.70 - 0.85: LOS D;
V/C = 0.85 - 1.00: LOS E; and,
V/C > 1.00: LOS F.

Figure 5.8 displays the existing 2015 LOS for roadways within Oconee County. As shown in the figure, many of the segments operate at LOS C or better, which is an acceptable level. These results are consistent with knowledge of current operating conditions.

The 2015 analysis shows that 24 segments can be expected to operate at or below LOS E under daily conditions. Table 5.5 displays the existing roadway segments operating at an unacceptable LOS.

Table 5.5: Existing Deficient Segments

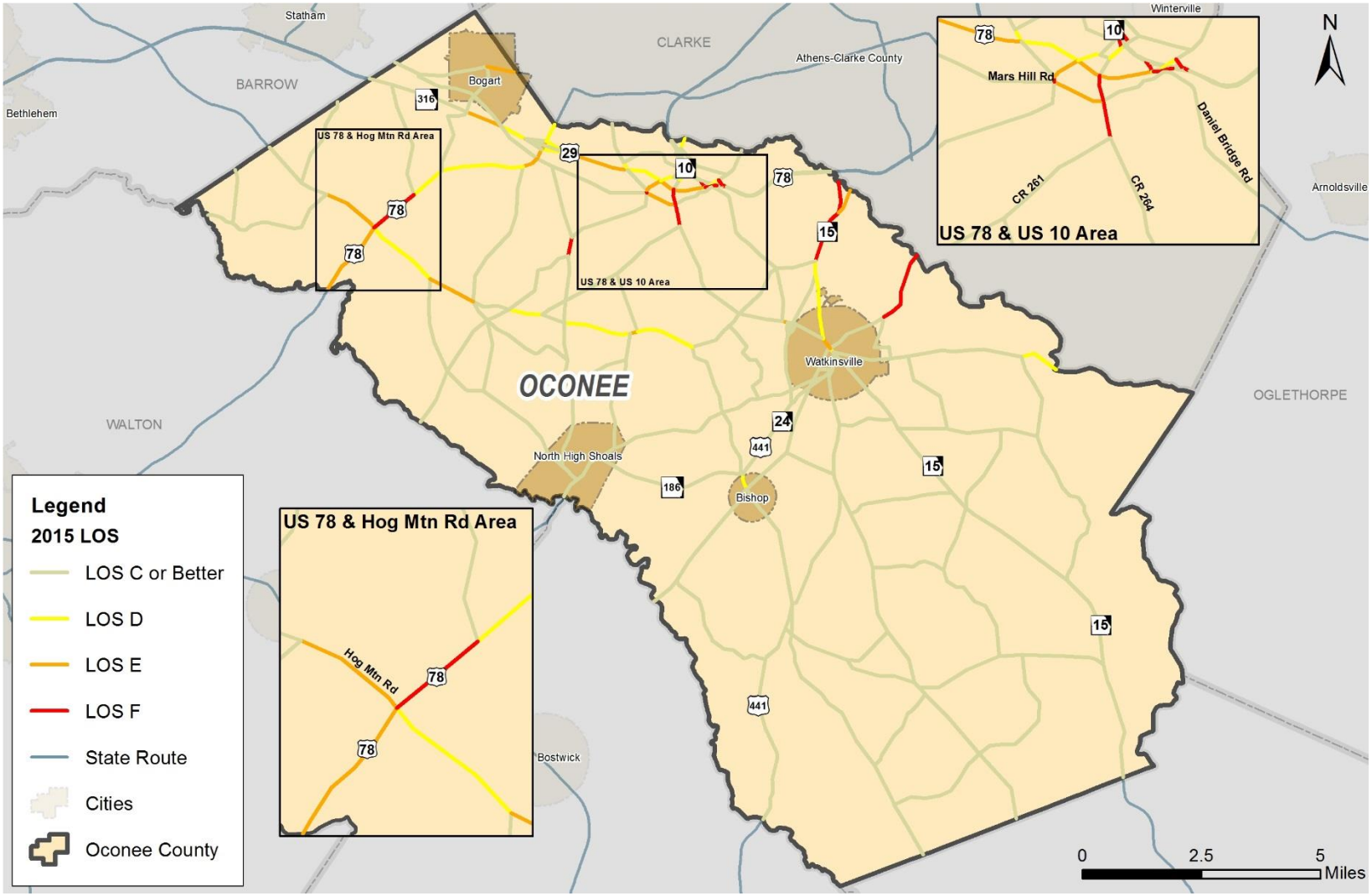
Roadway	From	To	LOS
US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Hwy 53	Dials Mill Rd	F
Malcom Bridge Rd	Rocky Branch Rd (West)	Rocky Branch Rd (East)	F
Mars Mill Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Hodges Mill Rd	F
US 441/ Macon Hwy	the Oconee/Clarke County line	Hog Mountain Rd	F
Simontone Bridge Rd	the Oconee/Clarke County line	Norton Rd	F
Athens Perimeter SB Off Ramp	US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB	Oconee Connector	F
Athens Perimeter NB On Ramp	Oconee Connector	US 10/ Athens Perimeter NB	F
Athens Perimeter SB Off Ramp	US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB	US 78/ Epps Bridge Pkwy	F
Virgil Langford Rd	Jimmy Daniel Rd	Mars Mill Rd	F
US 29 EB Off Ramp	US 29 EB	US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB	F
US 78/ Epps Bridge Pkwy EB On Ramp	US 10/ Athens Perimeter NB	US 78/ Epps Bridge Pkwy EB	F
3rd Ave/ Atlanta Hwy	S Burson Ave	the Oconee/Clarke County line	E
US 29	MacNutt Creek Rd	Mars Mill Rd	E
US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB	Clotfelter Rd	US 29 WB On Ramp	E
US 29/ US 78	US 29 EB On Ramp	Jimmy Daniel Rd	E
US 29/ US 78	Virgil Langford Rd	US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB Off Ramp	E
Virgil Langford Rd	Jimmy Daniel Rd	US 29/ US 78	E

Roadway	From	To	LOS
Mars Mill Rd	Rocky Branch Rd	Daniells Bridge Rd	E
Macon Hwy	Rockinwood Dr	the Oconee/Clarke County line	E
Hwy 53	Hebron Church Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	E
US 78/ Monroe Hwy	the Oconee/Walton County line	Hwy 53	E
Hwy 53	Lane Creek Rd	Clotfelter Rd	E
N Main St	Hwy 53	Simontone Bridge Rd	E
Hwy 53	Government Station Rd	US 441/ Macon Hwy	E

Additionally, the following locations are LOS D:

- US 78/ Monroe Hwy from Dials Hill Rd to Clotfelter Rd;
- Hwy 53 from US 78/ Monroe Hwy to Lane Creek Rd;
- Hwy 53 from Snows Mill Rd to Hodges Mill Rd;
- Hwy 53 from Rays Church Rd to Union Church Rd;
- US 441/ Macon Hwy from High Shoals Rd to Price Mill Rd;
- N Main St from US 441/ Macon Hwy to Hwy 53;
- S Barnett Shoals Rd from McRee's Mill Rd to Old Barnett Shoals Rd
- US 29 from Mars Hill Rd to US 29 off ramp to US 78;
- US 78/ Monroe Hwy from US 29 on ramp to US 78 to the Oconee/Clarke County line;
- US 29 off ramp to US 78/ Monroe Hwy;
- US 78/ Monroe Hwy off ramp to US 29;
- Jimmy Daniel Rd from Meriweather Dr to US 29/ US 78;
- US 29/ US 78 from Jimmy Daniel Rd to Virgil Langford Rd;
- Oconee Connector from Virgil Langford Rd to US 10 off ramp to Oconee Connector;
- Virgil Langford Rd from Jennings Mill Rd to US 29/ US 78;
- US 78/ Epps Bridge Pkwy from US 78 off ramp to US 78/ Epps Bridge Pkwy off ramp
- Jennings Mill Rd from Highland Hills Blvd to the Oconee/Clarke County line

Figure 5.8: Existing (2015) Level of Service



5.5.3. Future Level of Service

Figure 5.9 displays the 2045 No-Build (without improvements) LOS for roadways within Oconee County. As shown in the figure, more than half of the segments operate at LOS C or better, which is an acceptable level. Most of the segments with LOS D or worse are in northern Oconee County. These results are consistent with knowledge of current operating conditions.

The 2045 analysis shows that 32 segments can be expected to operate at or below LOS E under daily conditions. Table 5.6 displays the roadway segments operating at an unacceptable LOS that need future improvements.

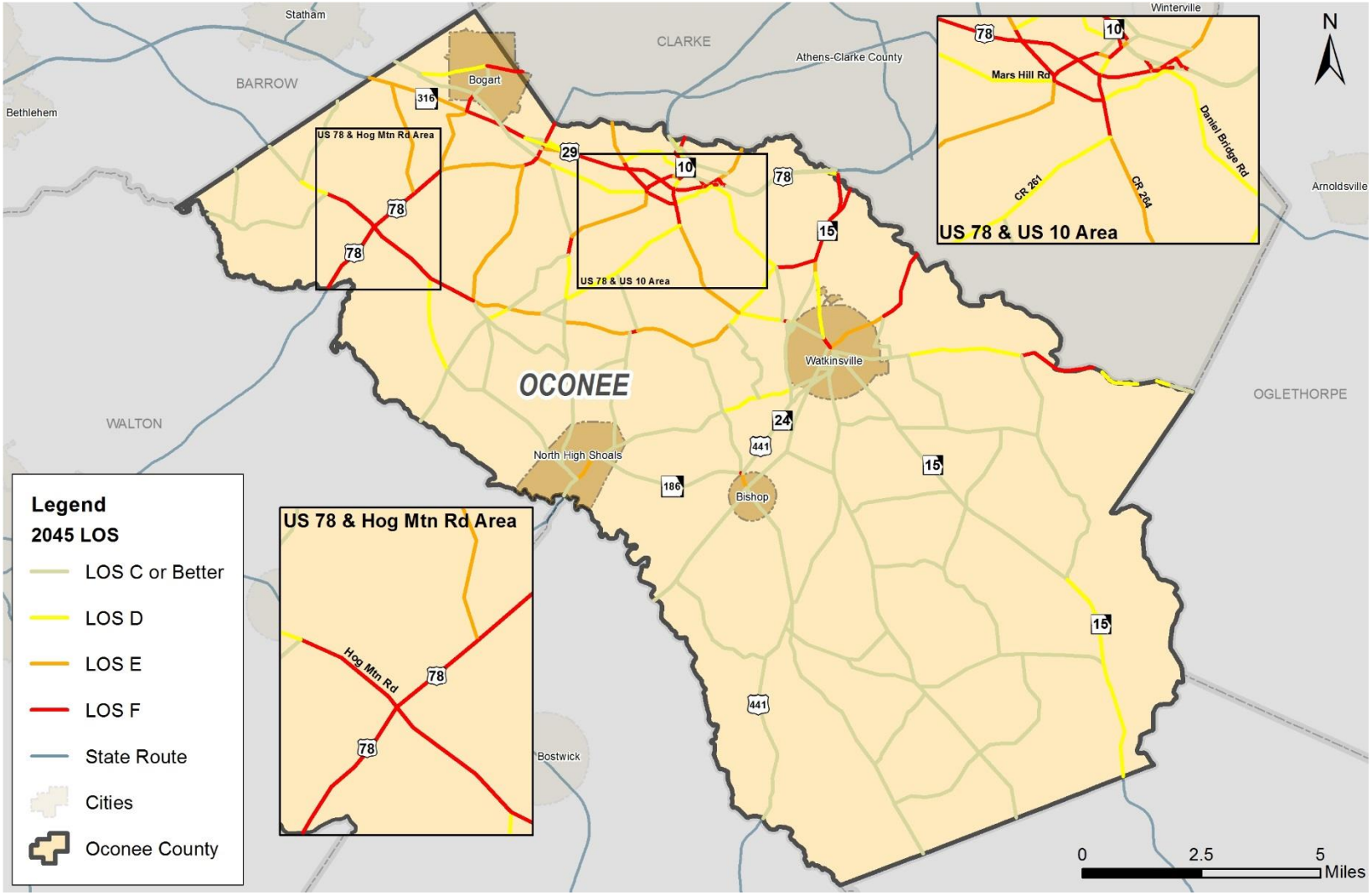
Table 5.6: Future Deficient Segments

Roadway	From	To	LOS
Malcom Bridge Rd	Rocky Branch Rd (West)	Rocky Branch Rd (East)	F
Mars Mill Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Hodges Mill Rd	F
US 441/ Macon Hwy	the Oconee/Clarke County line	Hog Mountain Rd	F
Simontone Bridge Rd	the Oconee/Clarke County line	Norton Rd	F
Virgil Langford Rd	Jennings Mill Rd	Mars Hill Rd	F
Hwy 53	Hebron Church Rd	Clotfelter Rd	F
US 78/ Monroe Hwy	the Oconee/Walton County line	Clotfelter Rd	F
3rd Ave/ Atlanta Hwy	S Burson Ave	the Oconee/Clarke County line	F
US 29	McNutt Creek Rd	Mars Hill Rd	F
S Burson Ave	US 29	3rd Ave	F
US 10/ Athens Perimeter SB	Clotfelter Rd	Oconee/Clarke County line	F
US 29/ US 78	US 29 EB On Ramp	US 10/ Athens Perimeter NB	F
Hog Mountain Rd	US 441/ Macon Hwy	Government Station Rd	F
Mars Mill Rd	Rocky Branch Rd	Daniells Bridge Rd	F
S Barnett Shoals Rd	McRee's Mill Rd	Old Barnett Shoals Rd	F
N Main St	Hwy 53	Simontone Bridge Rd	F
Macon Hwy	Rokinwood Dr	the Oconee/Clarke County line	F
US 24/ Macon Hwy	High Shoals Rd	Price Mill Rd	E
Dials Mill Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	US 29	E
US 29	the Oconee/Barrow County line	Pete Dickens Rd	E
Pete Dickens Rd	US 29	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	E
Clotfelter Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Hwy 53	E
Hwy 53	Rays Church Rd	Mars Mill Rd	E
Mars Hill Rd	US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Malcom Bridge Rd	E
Jimmy Daniel Rd	US 78	Oconee/Clarke County line	E
Mars Hill Rd	Hodges Mill Rd	Hwy 53	E
Epps Bridge Pkwy	Oconee Connector	Oconee/Clarke County line	E
Simonton Bridge Rd	N Main St	Norton Rd	E
Rocky Branch Rd	Malcom Bridge Rd	Mars Hill Rd	E
US 78/ Monroe Hwy	Mars Hill Rd	Pete Dickens Rd	E
Hwy 53	Clotfelter Rd	Hodges Mill Rd	E

Additionally, the following locations are LOS D:

- Hwy 53 from Barber Creek Rd to Hebron Church Rd;
- Lane Creek Rd from Hwy 53 to Snow Mills Rd;
- Snow Mills Rd from Cole Springs Rd to Hwy 53;
- Malcom Bridge Rd from Rocky Branch Rd to Hodges Mill Rd;
- Hodges Mill Rd from Malcom Bridge Rd to Mars Hill Rd;
- New High Shoals Rd from US 441/ Macon Hwy to Union Church Rd;
- US 15/ Greensboro Hwy from Oliver Bridge Rd to Oconee/Greene County line;
- Bob Godfrey Rd from Old Barnett Shoals Rd to Belmont Rd;
- S Barnett Shoals Rd from McRee's Mill Rd to McRee Gin Rd;
- N Main St from Hwy 53 to US 441/ Macon Hwy;
- Hwy 53 from Hog Mountain Rd to Government Station Rd;
- Hog Mountain Rd from Windsor Dr to Daniells Bridge Rd;
- Daniells Bridge Rd from Hog Mountain Rd to Mars Hill Rd;
- Mars Hill Rd from Malcom Bridge Rd to Rocky Branch Rd;
- Meriweather Dr from Jimmy Daniel Rd to US 10/ Athens Perimeter;
- 3rd Ave from Dials Mill Rd from S Burson Ave;
- US 29/ US 78 from US 78 to US 10/ Athens Perimeter NB

Figure 5.9: Future (2045) Level of Service



5.5.4. Crash Analysis

The most recent vehicular crash data from GDOT (2013-2017) was collected and analyzed for state roads in the county. The crash data was analyzed using the GDOT's Georgia Electronic Accident Reporting System (GEARS). Crash data was used to determine roadway locations with potential safety deficiencies throughout the study area. The study area experienced a total of 5,958 crashes, less than one percent of which were fatal crashes and 23 percent were non-fatal injury crashes. During the same analysis period, the state of Georgia experienced a total of 2,127,511 crashes, less than one half a percent of which involved fatalities and 22 percent were non-fatal crashes involving injury.

Table 5.7 and Figure 5.10 illustrate the top 10 crash locations (which represent intersections having an average of 15 or more crashes per year) in Oconee County. The highest crash location in the study area is at the intersection of Epps Bridge Parkway and Jennings Mill Parkway, with 740 crashes between 2013 and 2017, 183 of them with injuries reported. The next highest crash location in the study area is at the intersection of SR 316/University Parkway and Oconee Connector, with 326 crashes, 115 with injuries. No fatalities occurred at these intersections from 2013 to 2017.

Table 5.7: Top 10 Crash Locations

Intersection	Injury	Total Crashes
Epps Bridge Pkwy at Jennings Mill Pkwy	183	740
SR 316 (University Pkwy) at Oconee Conn	115	326
US 441 (S Main St) at Barnett Shoals Rd	32	184
US 441 (N Main St) at Experiment Station Rd	31	163
SR 316 (University Pkwy) at SR 10	38	129
Hog Mountain Rd at Experiment Station Rd	49	129
US 78 (Monroe Hwy) at Mars Hill Rd	73	127
SR 316 (University Pkwy) at J. Daniel Rd	41	83
Oconee Conn at Plaza Pkwy	37	66
US 78 (Monroe Hwy) at Hog Mountain Rd	37	59

Tables 5.8 and 5.9 illustrate pedestrian and bicycle crashes between 2013 and 2017. During this period, there were 13 pedestrian incidents resulting in 11 injuries and three fatalities and five bicycle incidents resulting in three injuries and no fatalities.

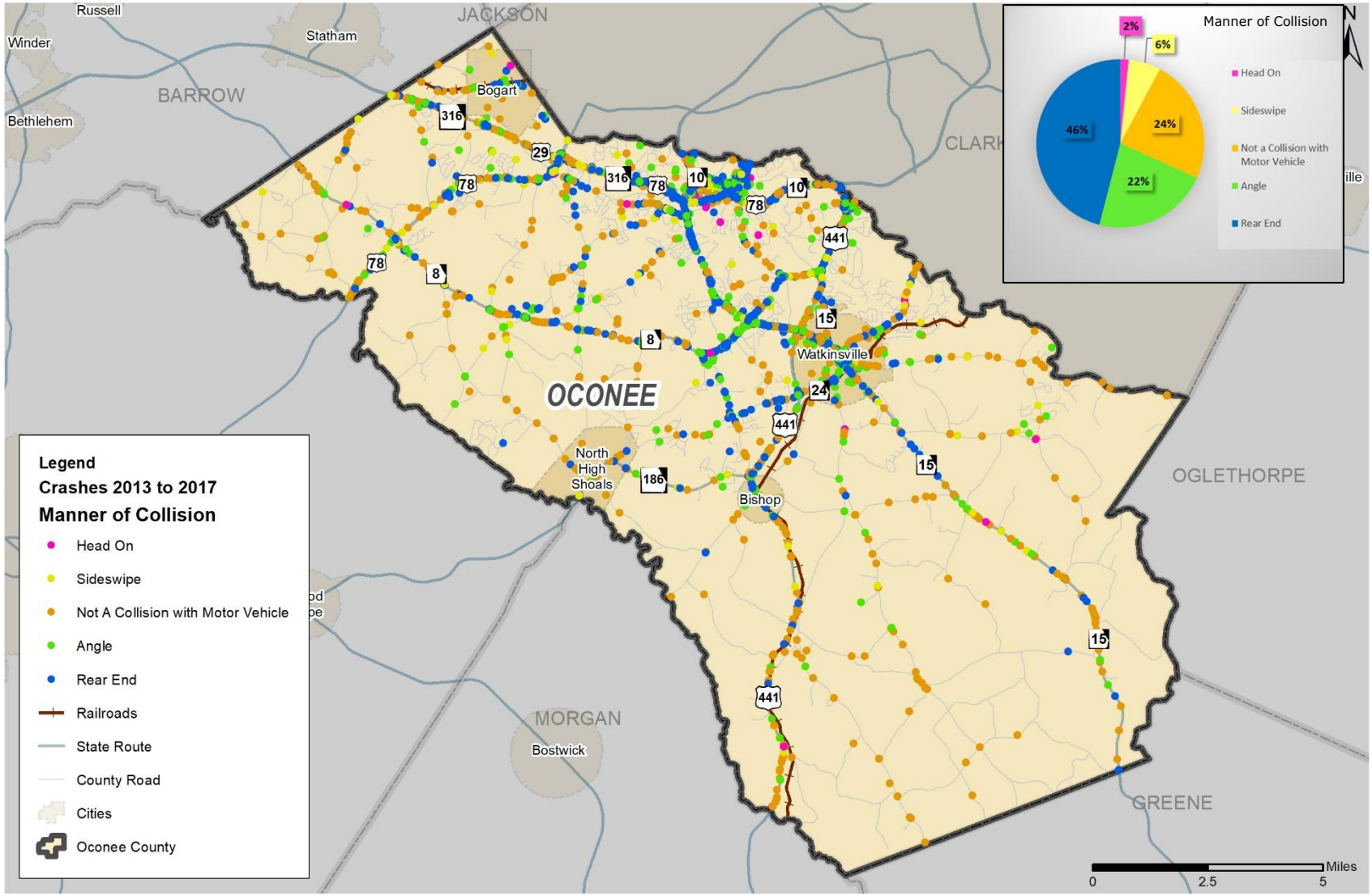
Table 5.8: Pedestrian Crashes 2013-2017

Date	Route	Intersection	Injuries	Fatalities
03/24/13	2061 Hog Mountain Road, Publix Grocery	Private property	1	0
11/13/13	2016 Experiment Station	Publix Private Parking Lot	0	0
04/01/14	SR 15 N	1 Mile North of Rockwood Drive	1	0
07/23/14	Simonton Drive	Simonton Way	2	0
08/25/14	Atlanta SR 8 Highway	Approx. 1 Mile West of McLeroy Place	0	1
09/16/14	Quicktrip	Oconee Connector	2	0
05/09/15	Oliver Bridge Road	Wildcat Ridge	1	0
08/13/16	1851 Epps Bridge Parkway	Parking Lot of Lowes Improvement Center	1	0
03/15/17	15 US441 SR 24	--	1	0
05/05/17	Outer SR 10 Loop	MM3	0	1
09/29/17	Inner SR 10 Loop	Oconee Connector	1	0
10/17/17	SR 53	Veterans Memorial Park 3500A	1	0
10/21/17	SR 53	100 Feet West of N. Bishop Farm	0	1

Table 5.9: Bicycle Crashes 2013-2017

Date	Location	Injuries	Fatalities
08/07/13	Union Church Road	1	0
03/11/14	SR 15 and Spartan Lane	1	0
05/20/14	191 VFW Drive, Watkinsville	0	0
12/09/15	Simonton Bridge Rd 100 feet E of Great Oaks Lane	1	0
10/10/17	Elder Road at SR 53	0	0

Figure 5.10: Crash Analysis



Source: GDOT's GEARS Portal.

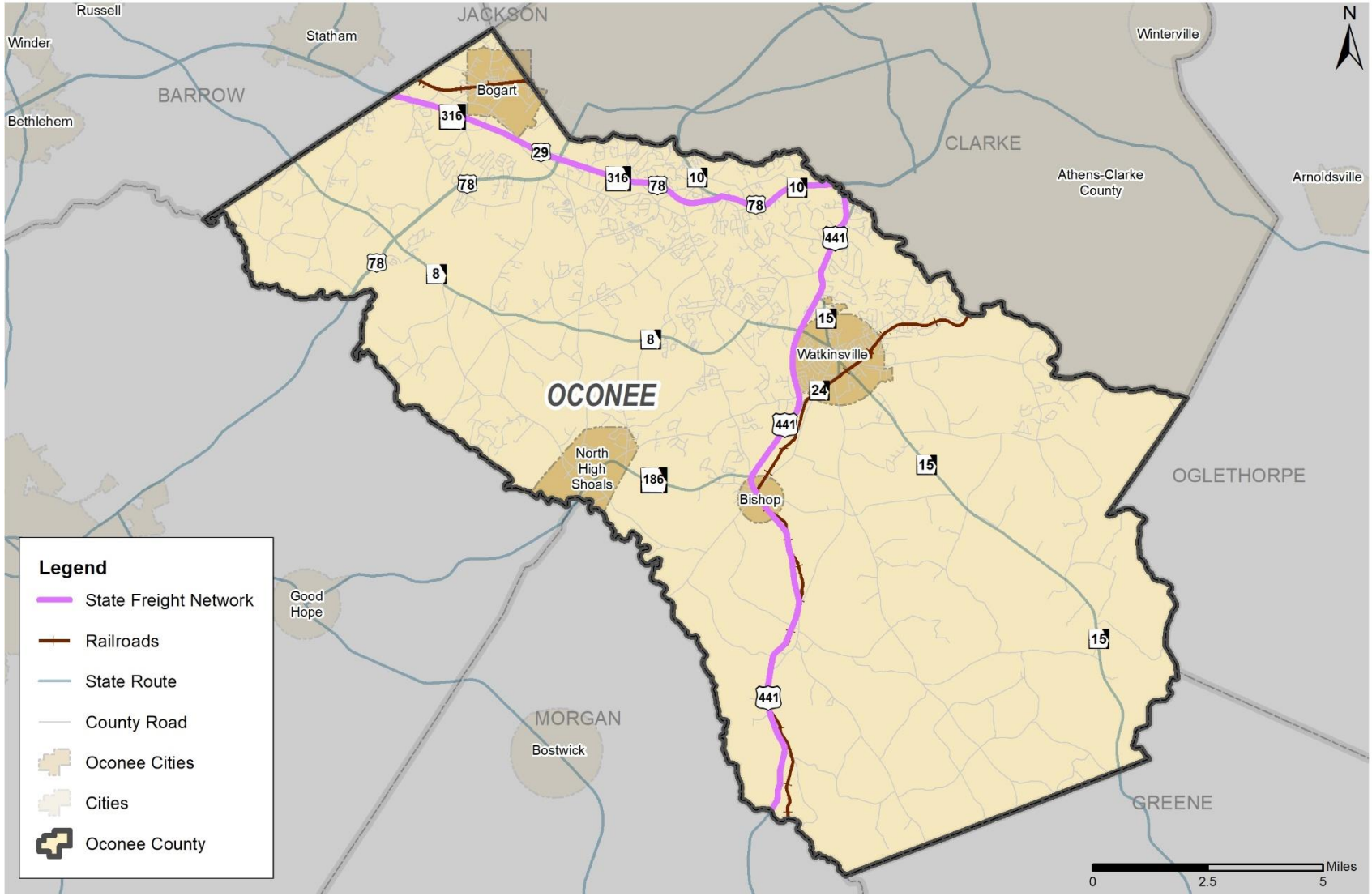
5.5.5. Truck Traffic

The preservation of freight mobility is a key component of the Oconee County Transportation Study. Figure 5.11 shows the freight network in Oconee County as denoted by National Highway System routes and GDOT's Oversize Truck Routes. Trucks are the primary mode for goods movement in Oconee County with a small portion being moved by rail.

There are two designated truck routes illustrated in Figure 5.11 – SR 316 and US 441. GDOT's Statewide Freight and Logistics Plan identified US 441 between Athens and just south of I-20 as a critical corridor to widen for freight use. MACORTS included a project to widen US 441 South in the 2040 LRTP.

The stakeholder advisory committee identified several locations with heavy freight traffic. A bypass around Watkinsville and a North-South freight connector through Bishop were the two major areas highlighted.

Figure 5.11: Freight Network



Source: Georgia Department of Transportation.

5.6. *Rail*

Two rail lines pass through Oconee County, CSX Transportation (CSXT) and Athens Line, LLC (ABR). The CSXT Abbeville Subdivision rail line totals 199 miles in length entering Oconee County from Barrow County and operates through Bogart over a 2-mile stretch that continues into Athens-Clarke County, ultimately terminating in Abbeville, SC. The CSXT rail line is a Class 4 track with one main track with sidings. The maximum speed of the line traffic is 50 mph with a maximum allowable gross weight of 286,000 pounds. This line transports intermodal, automotive, and general freight merchandise with an average number of 14 trains per day using the line.

The Athens Branch Line runs north/south from the Athens-Clarke County Line, through Watkinsville and Bishop, to the Morgan County Line. The section from the Morgan County Line to Bishop is currently designated as inactive and the section from Bishop north to the Athens-Clarke County Line is active. The Athens Branch Line is being used predominantly for rail car storage and is not actively transporting freight at this time. The Athens Branch Line carries an annual average of 600 carloads of chemicals, paper, and oil commodities; however, the Oconee County portion of the line is currently being used to store rail cars. Future plans include the potential transporting of commodities for any new industries that may elect to establish on the rail line, and to possibly accommodate passenger rail into Athens for University of Georgia athletic events.

Amtrak does not operate passenger service in Oconee County. There are no abandoned rail lines in Oconee County. However, there are multiple rail lines that have heavy vegetation growing on them.

5.6.1. Rail Crossings

Oconee County has 17 public rail crossings. There are an additional 12 private crossings. All crossings are at grade. Table 5.10 presents the top six Oconee County rail crossings with the highest AADT.

Table 5.10: Rail Crossings with Highest AADT[11]

Rail Crossing	Location	AADT
733092P	Greensboro Hwy. Watkinsville	23,240
733091H	Barnett Shoals Watkinsville	3,880
733093W	Colham Ferry Rd. Watkinsville	2,230
639925F	Burson St. Bogart	1,470
733090B	Norton Rd. Watkinsville	1,400
639926M	Osceola St. Bogart	1,180

[11] Federal Railroad Administration, 2013.

5.6.2. Rail Crash Data

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Office of Safety Analysis, reports zero accidents on public road crossing which involved trains and vehicles according to a review of data from 2009 to 2018.

5.6.3. Accident Prediction

The Federal Railroad Administration Web Accident Prediction System (WBAPS) is a computer model which predicts rail crossing collision rates, based on basic data about a crossing's physical and operating characteristics and on its five-year accident history. The system computes a predicted collision value for each crossing which is the probability that a collision between a train and a highway vehicle will occur at that particular crossing in a year. Crossings are then ranked according to their predicted collision value, with a ranking of "1" corresponding to the crossing with highest probability of a collision. While none of the 17 public rail crossings in Oconee County present a significant predicted collision rate, those with the highest rates are shown in Table 5.11.

Table 5.11: Top Collision Locations[12]

Crossing ID	Location	City or Community	Rank	Predicted Collision Value	AADT
639925F	Burson St	Bogart	1	0.012	1,470
639926M	Osceola St	Bogart	2	0.011	1,180
733093W	Colham Ferry	Watkinsville	3	0.0003	2,230

5.6.4. Planned Railroad Transportation Improvements

Oconee County does not have any planned railroad transportation improvements.

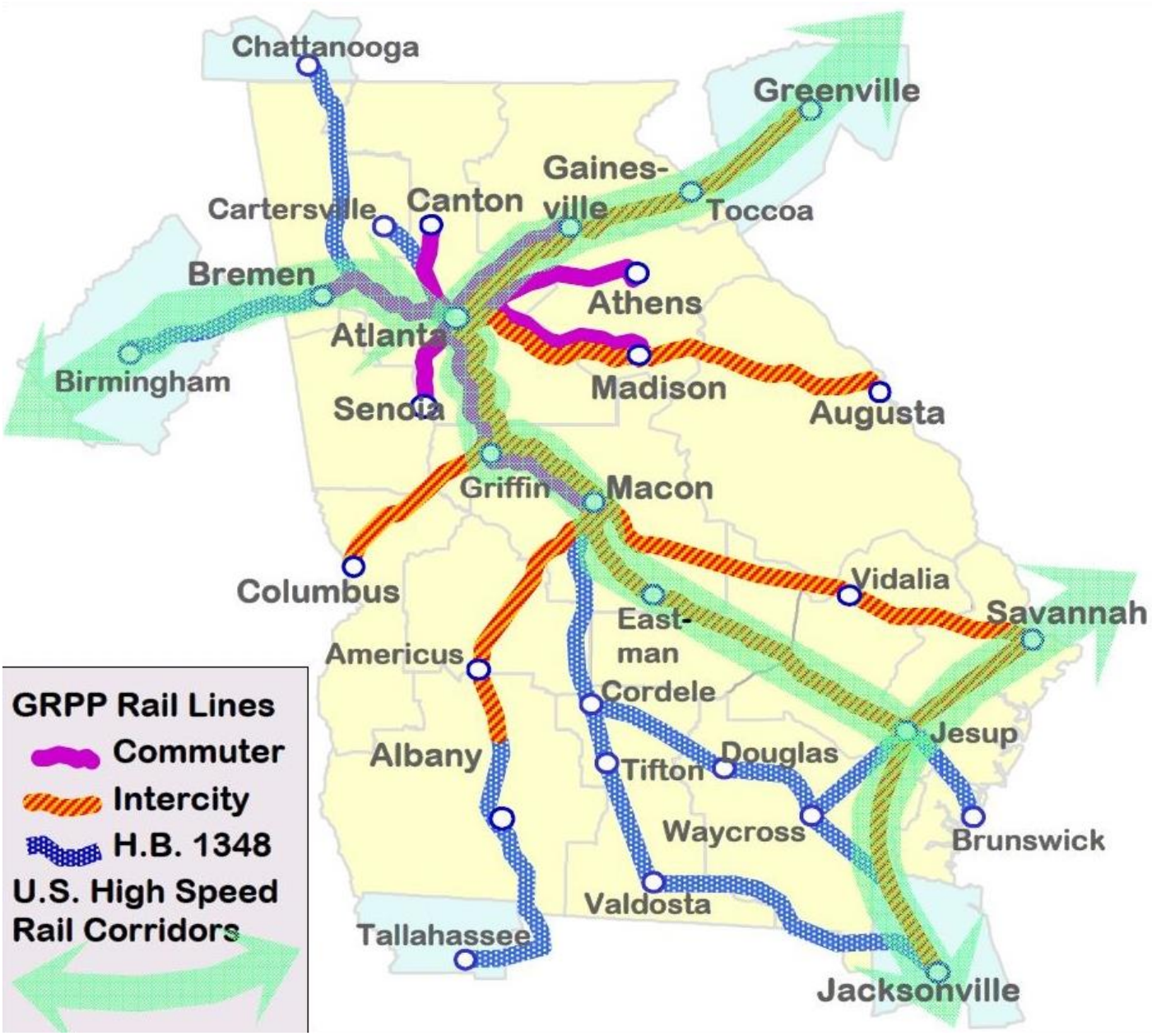
5.6.5. Passenger Rail

The Georgia Rail Passenger Program (GRPP) proposes seven commuter rail lines, seven lines of intercity rail service as well as the Multimodal Passenger Terminal (MPT). The state's seven commuter lines will serve 55 communities. The intercity lines will (potentially) link nine of Georgia's largest cities and towns with the metro Atlanta/Macon area. Figure 5.12 illustrates the proposed commuter rail network.

Once the 425-mile system is complete, commuter trains will transport more than 40,000 people to and from work every day. Intercity trains will run on over a thousand miles of Georgia's railroads, connecting communities all over the state. While funding sources and a timetable are currently uncertain, one proposed route (the "Brain Train") would connect Athens to the metro Atlanta area. The proposed route would operate along CSX tracks and right-of-way between Athens and downtown Atlanta. The line would pass through the northern corner of Oconee County with one of its 12 stop locations proposed in the city of Bogart.

[12] Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Safety Analysis. Web Accident Prediction System. 2013.

Figure 5.12: Georgia Rail Passenger Program Rail Lines



Source: GDOT, Georgia Rail Passenger Program Fact Sheet

5.7. *Bicycle and Pedestrian*

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are an important component of the roadway network, providing a healthy and environmentally-friendly means of transportation to many residents, especially for those too young or too old to drive, or those without financial means to own a car. Walkable communities not only provide additional transportation alternatives, but they also promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles, provide recreational opportunities, and can enhance economic development. Likewise, an on-street bicycle route system or trail network can spur tourism, provide recreation and fitness opportunities for residents, while also creating the backbone of an alternative transportation network.

This section provides a description of the existing bicycle and pedestrian conditions in the county, with a focus on the primary bike and pedestrian trip generators: town and activity centers, schools, and parks. It also provides a summary of policies, plans, and crash data that relate to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

While there is an existing sidewalk network within the county, the Oconee County Joint Comprehensive Plan 2018 Update acknowledges that there are gaps in coverage. The plan also calls for the creation of an extensive multi-use trail or network of trails in the future.

5.7.1. Existing and Planned Facilities

Oconee County Comprehensive Transportation Plan – The Oconee County Comprehensive Plan (2008) outlines several bicycle and pedestrian recommendations. New and existing parks and greenspace are recommended to be linked with trails, sidewalks, and off-street facilities. A recommendation was made to amend the UDC to encourage the build out of a network of interconnected sidewalks, trails, and other means to support non-motorized transportation. Safety improvements on rural and urban roads were recommended to accommodate cyclists. Also, a recommendation was made to prioritize pedestrian infrastructure at key locations such as schools, parks, civic facilities, and recreational destinations.

The following character areas were recommended for connectivity and access by bicycles and pedestrians: Suburban Neighborhood, Traditional Neighborhood, City Living, Neighborhood Village Center, Community Village Center, Historic Main Street, Downtown, Mixed-Use Office, Commercial Corridor, Civic Center, Technology Gateway, Regional Center, and Public Institutional.

Athens Link State Bicycle Route – The Athens Link state bicycle route begins in Gwinnett County and ends in Elbert County, passing through Oconee County. Approximately 16.4 miles of the route are located within Oconee County from the Barrow County Line through Eastville and Watkinsville following SR 53, US 12/US 144 Business, and Simonton/Whitehall Road (CR 266) to the Athens-Clarke County Line.

Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking – In 2010, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission completed a regional bicycle and pedestrian plan that includes Oconee County, as well as 11 other surrounding counties. The plan outlines a vision, goals and

objectives, existing conditions, project recommendations, and implementation strategies for expanding the multimodal transportation network. Figure 5.13 illustrates the proposed regional bicycle and pedestrian network.

Bikeability and Walkability Audit for the city of Watkinsville – In 2007, the Northeast Georgia Regional Development Center conducted an audit addressing obstacles to safe and convenient cycling and walking in Watkinsville. Recommendations for improving biking and walking conditions on six key roadways for cycling and four key roadways for walking were outlined in the document. The six routes evaluated for cycling resulted in the following findings.

Route A: GA 15 and Main Street
- Identified as the least bikeable portion of the network
- Potholes, broken pavement, debris, and uneven surfaces were identified
- Long waits at intersections with confusion on proper location for bicycle travel

Route B: Simonton Bridge Road and Harden Hill Road
- Heavy traffic volumes and speeds with a narrow bridge crossing
- Potholes, broken pavement, debris, and uneven surfaces were identified

Route C: Macon Highway and New High Shoals Road and Colham Ferry Road
- New High Shoals is bicycle-friendly with adequate space for cycling
- Macon Highway and New High Shoals Road have heavy, fast-moving traffic
- Potholes, broken pavement, and a challenging railroad crossing were identified

Route D: GA 53
- Heavy and fast traffic with inadequate space for cycling
- Long waits at intersections with confusion on proper location for bicycle travel

Route E: Barnett Shoals Road
- Wide, bicycle-friendly right-of-way with little traffic
- Potholes, broken pavement, debris, and uneven surfaces were identified
- Bumpy/angled broken pavement

Route F: VFW Drive
- Low traffic and good lighting
- No dedicated cycling space
- Cracked and broken pavement

The four routes evaluated for walkability resulted in the following findings.

Route A: Christian Drive, Northwest to Harris Shoals, Experiment Station/SR 15 and Main Street
- Uneven terrain
- Not aesthetically pleasing
- Trucks entering highway
- Narrow shoulders

- No designated space for walking
- Crossings too far between curbs
- No crosswalks
- Blind curves
- Fast traffic

Route B: Harden Hill Road, Jacobs Drive, Jackson Drive, Christian Drive, VFW Drive and Hight Drive

- No sidewalks
- No traffic signals
- No pedestrian signage
- Speeding on Harden Hill Road
- Too much fast traffic

Route C: Taylor's Drive, Taylor's Drive Court, Katie Lane, Wilson Road, Third Street, Barnett Shoals Road and Main Street to Simonton Road

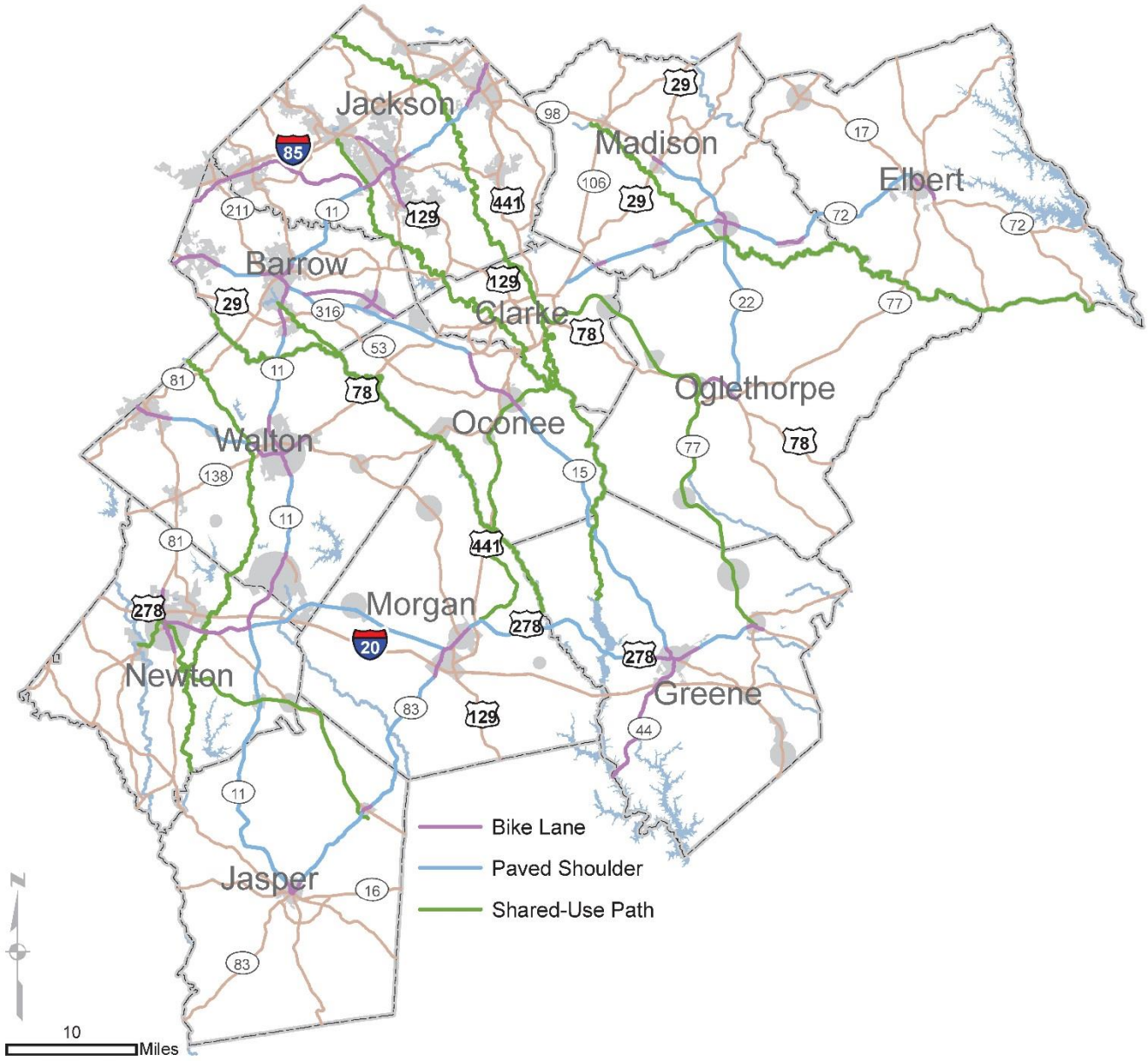
- Few sidewalks
- Cracked sidewalks
- No crosswalks
- High traffic

Route D: Simonton Bridge Road from city limits to Main Street

- Narrow bridge
- Speeding traffic
- Blocked shoulders

An investment in infrastructure, education, and enforcement was recommended. The following roadways were recommended for construction of bicycle lanes: GA 15 and Main Street, Simonton Bridge Road, Harden Hill Road, Colham Ferry Road, Macon Highway, and GA 53. Barnett Shoals and New Falls Road are wide enough for immediate striping of bicycle lanes. Ideal candidates for sidewalks include New High Shoals Road, Harden Hill Road, VFW Road, Experiment Station Road, State Route 15, Simonton Bridge Road, Barnett Shoals Road, and Macon Highway. Crosswalks were recommended at several key intersections as well.

Figure 5.13: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network



Source: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC), Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking.

Phase I Rails-to-Trails Plan for the Athens Line Rail Corridor – This 2010 study analyzed data to evaluate the feasibility of utilizing approximately 32 miles of the Athens Branch Line railroad as a shared-use bicycle and pedestrian path. This project would create a link between downtown Athens and the City of Madison, providing safe recreation and healthy transportation options. Approximately 14 miles of the corridor is located within Oconee County. Elements of the corridor, including trail alignment, points of interest, and engineering concerns are outlined.

5.7.2. Programmed Improvements

As noted previously, there are bicycle and pedestrian improvements identified in the Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking. These improvements are outlined in Table 5.12.

Table 5.12: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Network[13]

Corridor Name	Location	Facility Type
SR 15	1.31 miles SR 53 to Watkinsville City Limit	Bike Lane
SR 15	Watkinsville City Limit to Greene County	Paved Shoulder
SC 53/Local	SR 316 to SR 15	Bike Lane
SR 8	Barrow County Line to SR/53 Local project (above)	Paved Shoulder
Apalachee River	Oconee County length of County	Greenway
Athens Line	Oconee County length of County	Rail Trail
Middle Oconee River	Oconee County length of County	Greenway
Oconee River	Oconee County Length of County	Greenway

5.8. *Public Transportation*

Oconee County does not currently have a public transportation system that serves the general public. Public transportation is limited to selective non-profit services within the larger communities of the county. The Georgia Department of Human Resources provides limited transportation services through its Coordinated Transportation System. This system assists county residents in reaching services of the Division of Aging Services (DAS), Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Addictive Diseases (MHDDAD), and Division of Family and Children's Services (DFCS).

Under the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) Coordinated Transportation program, door-to-door transportation is provided to consumers of Aging Services, the Division of Family and Children Services, the Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities, and the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. Services are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, but most services are performed during the hours of 6 a.m. and 6

[13] Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking, NEGRC 2010.

p.m. Monday through Friday. Services are provided through a contract with Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, the agency that manages a regional system of transportation services for DHS and GDOT. There are no plans to expand DHS transit services at this time.

5.8.1. Athens Transit

Nearby Athens offers both Athens Transit ("The Bus") and the University of Georgia (UGA) Campus Transit system.

Athens Transit is the public bus system operating within Athens. The Bus offers 18 routes throughout the city with a standard fee of $1.75 for riders not affiliated with the university. A majority of the routes offer hourly pick-ups at each stop. The UGA Campus Transit system operates on the university's campus and surrounding vicinity.

Tables 5.13 and 5.14 show ridership details for Athens Transit and UGA Transit, respectively.[14]

Table 5.13: Athens Transit Ridership (2013-2016)

Operating Year	Service Area Population	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips
2013	116,714	5,446,329	1,733,589
2014	116,714	5,112,305	1,649,473
2015	119,980	4,843,897	1,562,471
2016	119,980	4,700,296	1,515,424

Table 5.14: University of Georgia Transit Ridership (2013-2016)

Operating Year	Service Area Population	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips
2013	44,000	4,206,807	11,070,545
2014	44,000	7,268,242	10,653,512
2015	119,648	7,777,478	11,426,965
2016	119,648	5,540,596	8,137,520

[14] Federal Transit Administration, National Transit Database (NTD) Transit Agency Profiles.

5.9. *Aviation*

There are no airports located within Oconee County. Nearby airports include the Apalachee Bluff Airpark in Walton County and the Athens-Ben Epps Airport in Clarke County.

Apalachee Bluff Airpark is a private landing facility located off Smith Cemetery Road, eight miles northeast of Monroe.

Athens-Ben Epps Airport (AHN) is located three miles east of Athens. The existing facility accommodates:

- Charter flights
- Air freight
- Aerial agricultural operations
- Flight instruction
- Aircraft rental
- Aircraft sales