



A photograph of a suburban street intersection. In the foreground, a red triangular yield sign with the word 'YIELD' in white is mounted on a silver pole. Above it is a green rectangular street name sign that reads 'LOWERLINE ST' and '400'. The street is paved with asphalt and lined with large, leafy trees. In the background, a white house with a grey roof is visible. A red fire hydrant stands on the grassy shoulder. Two cars are driving away on the street in the distance. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

CHAPTER 5 TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation plays a central role in building a socially and economically vibrant La Grange. A strong and adaptable system ensures people and goods can move efficiently while supporting community safety and long-term sustainability.

This chapter looks at La Grange's current and future transportation needs, focusing on ways to improve local and regional connections, increase mobility options and maintain a system that is both safe and cost-effective. Just as important, it recognizes that La Grange's location along the Colorado River makes resilience a key part of transportation planning. Roads, bridges and supporting infrastructure must be built not only for today's conditions, but also to withstand flooding, extreme weather and the pressures of growth.

This chapter includes:

- Transportation & Resilience
- Existing Transportation Conditions
- Traffic Safety
- Active Transportation
- Master Thoroughfare Plan

What We've Heard

Top Three Priorities for Transportation:



Comments:



"There are no speed limit signs posted in the neighborhoods and cars drive dangerously fast, especially on South Main. 18-wheelers frequently cut through avoiding downtown lights."

"There's been significant positive changes to transportation thanks to CARTS."

"La Grange needs bike lanes and sidewalks on major roads."

"La Grange is missing trails for biking and walking that are longer than .5 mile loops at White Rock Park."



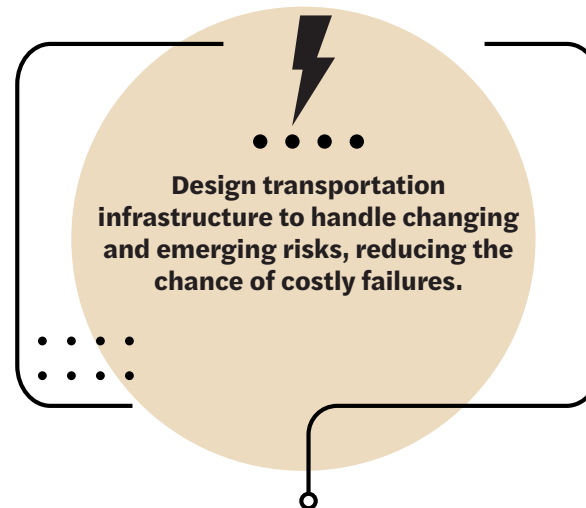
Transportation & Resilience Policies

La Grange's transportation system must be able to keep people moving safely, even when conditions are challenging. By anticipating risks and planning smarter, the City can protect vital connections, reduce disruption during floods or storms, and extend the life of its infrastructure.

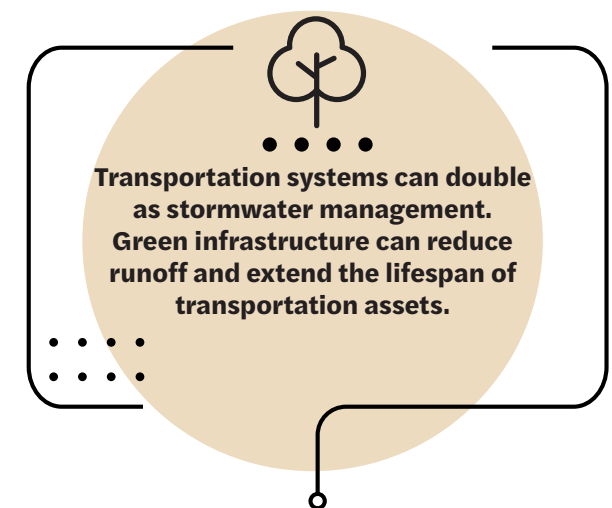
Protect Transportation Routes



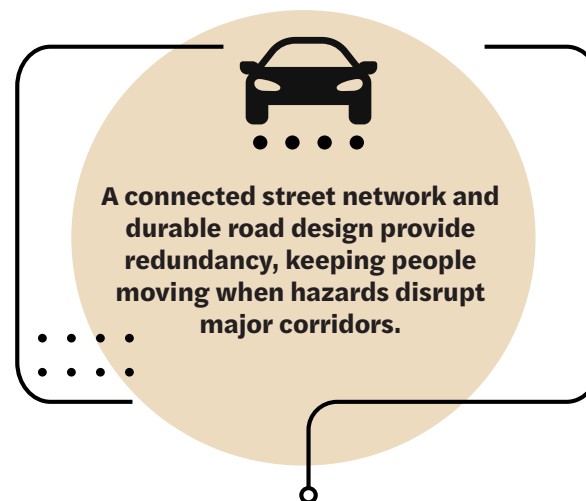
Plan for Future Conditions



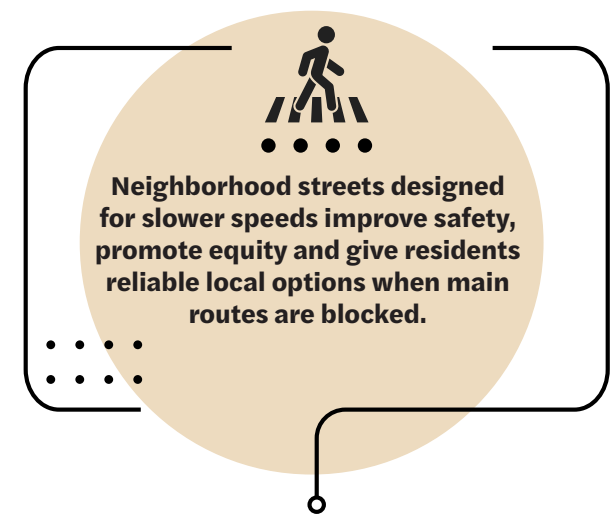
Design with Green Infrastructure



Strengthen Network Connections



Support Safer Streets



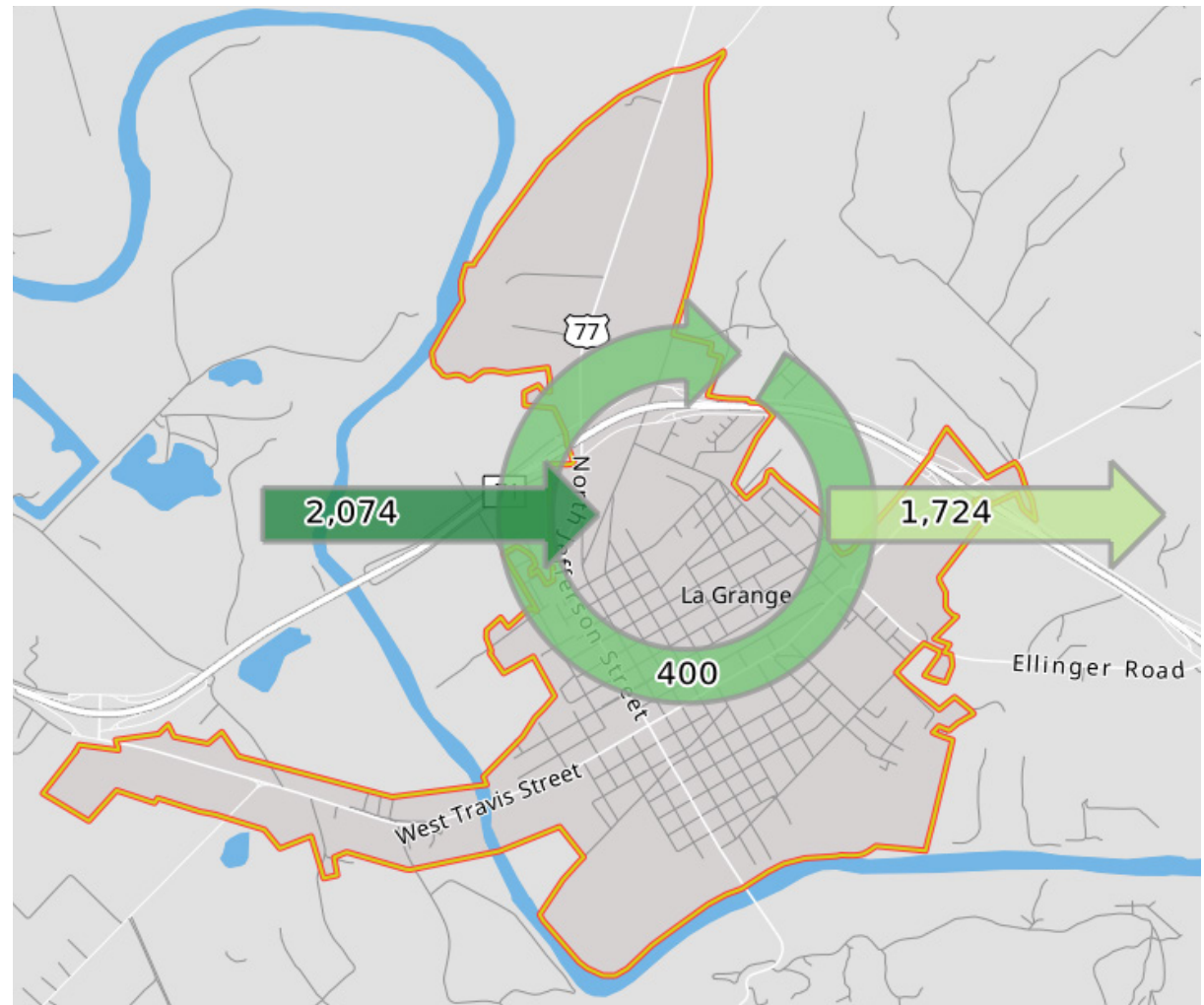
Existing Transportation Conditions

Transportation is an important part of daily life in La Grange. Street rights-of-way, like in many small cities, make up a significant portion of land use, and the City has historically grown around its access to the Colorado River and regional highways. Today, La Grange residents, visitors, and industries are connected through local and regional roadway systems, transit services and growing opportunities for walking and biking.

La Grange benefits from a Walk Score of 76, meaning it is considered very walkable, with many errands able to be completed on foot. The City is also somewhat bikeable, providing options for short trips and recreational cycling, though opportunities exist to expand safe routes and facilities. However, as development expands outwards and into the ETJ, it may become harder to access jobs, goods and services by walking or biking.

Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns also highlight La Grange's role as both a jobs center and a residential community. Based on recent U.S. Census data, approximately 2,006 people commute into La Grange for work, while 1,724 residents commute out of the City to jobs elsewhere. Around 400 people both live and work within the city limits of La Grange, underscoring the importance of maintaining efficient transportation options both within the City and along regional connections. Additionally, this highlights the opportunity to align jobs with talent and keep more people both working and living in La Grange.



Map 14. La Grange Commute Inflow/Outflow Analysis

Source: U.S. Census Bureau "On the Map", ACS 2022

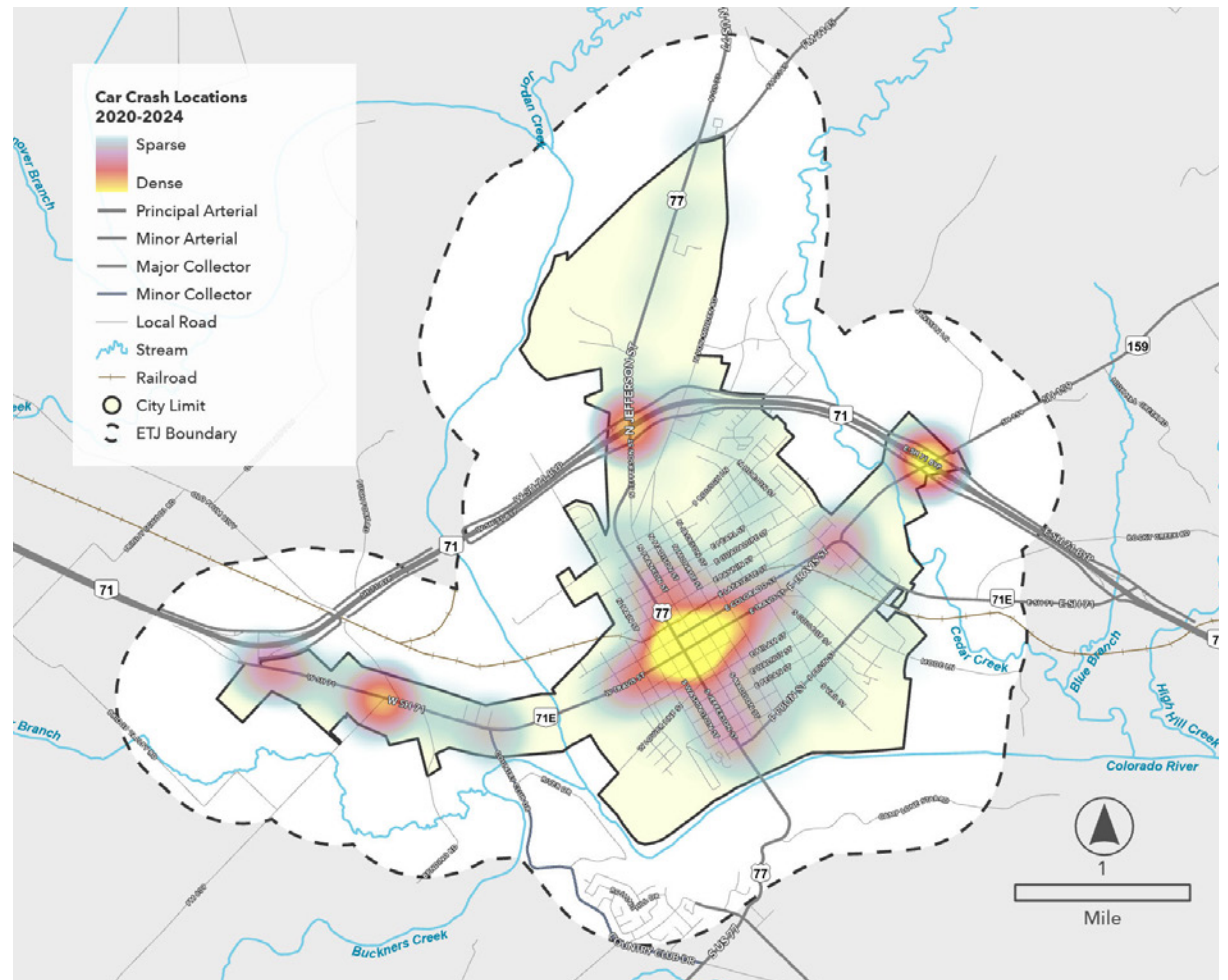
Traffic Safety

Crash analysis is an important tool in transportation planning because it highlights how well the roadway network is functioning from a safety standpoint. Understanding where, when and why crashes occur helps the City identify high-risk areas and prioritize improvements that can have the greatest impact on safety. For a smaller community like La Grange, this targeted approach allows limited resources to be directed where they are most needed.

Analyzing the spatial distribution and severity of crashes also supports data-driven decision making, helping the City evaluate the effectiveness of existing safety measures and identify priorities for future improvements or discussions with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), which controls many of the major roadways.

The crash data used in this analysis were obtained from the TxDOT Crash Records Information System (CRIS) and include reported incidents within the city limits of La Grange and its ETJ.

As illustrated in Map 15 crash hotspots are concentrated within the downtown area and along major corridors, particularly near the intersection of State Highway (SH) 71 and E Travis Street. These areas of higher crash density indicate locations where targeted safety improvements, such as signal timing adjustments, access management strategies or roadway design modifications, may help reduce crash frequency and severity.



Local Hazards & Transportation

The presence of local hazards increasingly disrupts transportation access and reliability in La Grange, underscoring the need for a more resilient transportation system that maintains connectivity during and after hazardous events. The primary hazards affecting the La Grange community are flooding, severe storms, extreme winter weather and heat. These hazards produce costly and recurring challenges to La Grange's roadway reliability, safety and accessibility.

La Grange's transportation network is highly dependent on a modest number of corridors to maintain the flow of people, goods and services. This, coupled with geographic constraints like the Colorado River, makes the relationship between La Grange's transportation network and the effects of local hazards deeply interconnected, as interruptions could pose critical challenges to local and regional mobility. SH 71 serves as one of La Grange's most important roadways and a chief chokepoint in the event of local hazards like flooding. The SH 71 Bridge crosses the Colorado River and presents a critical transportation connection point, as flooding here can sever east-west travel entirely, a kind of shutdown that would greatly impact emergency response, evacuations and regional travel.

Flooding

For the City of La Grange, flooding is the primary hazard that planners and residents must account for, especially near the river, at low water crossings and in older drainage infrastructure. As a Central Texas river community, La Grange is situated within several floodplains and faces recurring flooding as its most frequent natural hazard. FEMA lists significant portions of the City and its nearby developments as Special Flood Hazard Areas. When the Texas Hill Country has heavy rains, the water feeds into rapid river rises. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, there are an average of 6-10 flash flooding events per year. A map of the floodplains and critical facilities in La Grange can be found in Chapter 4: Infrastructure.

A key driver of resilience planning is mobility, and flooding can affect mobility by disrupting emergency response and evacuation routes and restricting access to neighborhoods and critical facilities. With a limited number of corridors, roadway closures pose greater mobility issues for La Grange by providing fewer detour options. This highlights the need for route redundancy, which provides viable alternate routes in case of road closures. Evacuations and emergency vehicle response times are especially important for communities like La Grange that have a predominantly aging population.

There have been 21 historical flooding events in La Grange, with Hurricane Harvey being the most recent in 2017. In August of 2017, the Colorado River crested at 54.1 feet (third highest on record), forcing evacuations, flooding homes and closing SH 71. As recently as January 2024, storms caused widespread road flooding and closures across Fayette County.

Ensuring transportation infrastructure is well-maintained is a critical factor that can be affected by multiple local hazards, such as flooding, as well as by heat and drought. The proper function of traffic systems depends on regular, preventative maintenance prescribed by a clear maintenance plan.

Responses to the online survey for La Grange residents highlight that one of the greatest strengths of La Grange is its safety and low crime rate. Yet, when asked to finish the statement "In the future I want La Grange to..", the second most answered response was "be a safe community." Throughout the survey, addressing flooding and flooding infrastructure was mentioned as a top concern. Residents clearly feel safe regarding crime, but not in the face of predominant local hazards like flooding, indicating a need for greater resilience planning.

Extreme Temperature & Drought

A 2022 NOAA climate report shows that Texas experienced extreme and prolonged heat, especially during the spring and summer months. Central Texas counties, including Fayette County, were part of these statewide heatwaves. During prolonged times of excessive heat or drought, asphalt on roadways can expand and soften, leading to buckling, rutting and premature deterioration. Thermal expansion stress can damage joint and surface layers, shorten their lifecycles and require costly repairs.

Drought also has the ability to weaken roadways by weakening the support for roads, bridges, and rail embankments through soil shrinkage. The NOAA Storm Event Database reports that La Grange experiences excessive heat at least 3-5 times per year, coupled with a 6-10 average yearly drought period. La Grange can enhance resilience against heat and drought with small changes, such as using heat-resistant asphalt, or through higher-level systemic coordination among transportation, energy and water management sectors to preempt cross-sector disruptions.

In the face of extreme cold during winter storms, like Winter Storm Uri in 2021, the freezing temperatures create icy roads, closures, and signal outages from freezing power lines. Even worse, hazardous icy conditions that are prolonged for multiple days interfere with the proper function of major thoroughfares like SH 71 and U.S. Highway (US) 77. The Fayette County Road and Bridge Crew reported having limited access to equipment to create safer conditions for driving during winter storms.

Severe Thunderstorms

According to the National Weather Service, in 2025 alone, the City experienced around 22 severe thunderstorm warnings. Severe thunderstorms pose mobility issues by creating debris in roadways, making them impassable and dangerous to traverse, downing power lines leading to signal outages, and even feeding into flash flooding. These consequences impede redundancy and free-flowing traffic movement.

By maintaining and further connecting roadways, providing route redundancy, and planning for the future by utilizing green infrastructure to extend the lifespan of transportation assets, La Grange can address mobility issues caused by local hazards.



Transportation Analysis

Existing Road Network

The dominant mode of transportation in La Grange is personal automobiles, consistent with other small cities in the region. La Grange is well-connected to the regional highway network by US 77, SH 71, and SH 159, which provide access to Austin, Houston, San Antonio and surrounding communities. These corridors support both daily commuting and the movement of freight, with SH 71 in particular serving as a major east–west route across Central Texas. Within the City, local streets and collectors form the backbone of neighborhood connectivity, complemented by distinctive features such as residential streets where mature trees remain within the paved roadway, with travel lanes configured around them. This well-known characteristic reflects La Grange’s history and charm while also shaping traffic flow.

The existing roadway network in La Grange forms the foundation of the City’s mobility system, supporting daily travel, regional access, and economic activity. The Existing Road Network Map on the following page identifies roadway classifications within the city limits and its ETJ, illustrating how each corridor functions as part of an integrated system.



La Grange’s major corridors, US 77 and SH 71, are maintained by TxDOT and serve as the community’s primary transportation thoroughfares. As a minor arterial, SH 71 provides important east and west connectivity between Austin and Interstate 10, while US 77, a principal arterial, connects La Grange north to Giddings and south to Schulenburg. These TxDOT-maintained routes support regional commerce, heavy freight and through traffic while also accommodating local travel between neighborhoods, schools and businesses.

Supporting these arterial routes is a network of collector and local roads that distribute traffic throughout the City. Major and minor collectors, such as Travis Street and Faison Street, provide north and south as well as east and west connections between residential areas, downtown La Grange, and community facilities. Local roads such as La Fayette Street and Vail Street further enhance internal circulation and provide access to key destinations.

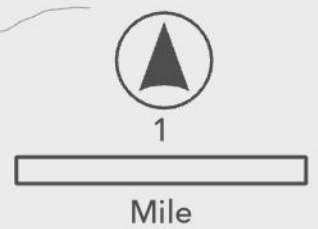
Overall, the existing roadway system supports La Grange’s current travel needs while maintaining its small-town character. As the City grows, opportunities exist to improve roadway connectivity, manage congestion along TxDOT routes, and enhance multimodal access and safety. These considerations will guide the 2026 Master Thoroughfare Plan to ensure that the City’s transportation network remains efficient, resilient and well coordinated with regional mobility initiatives.





- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Minor Collector
- Local Road
- Stream
- Railroad
- City Limit
- ETJ Boundary

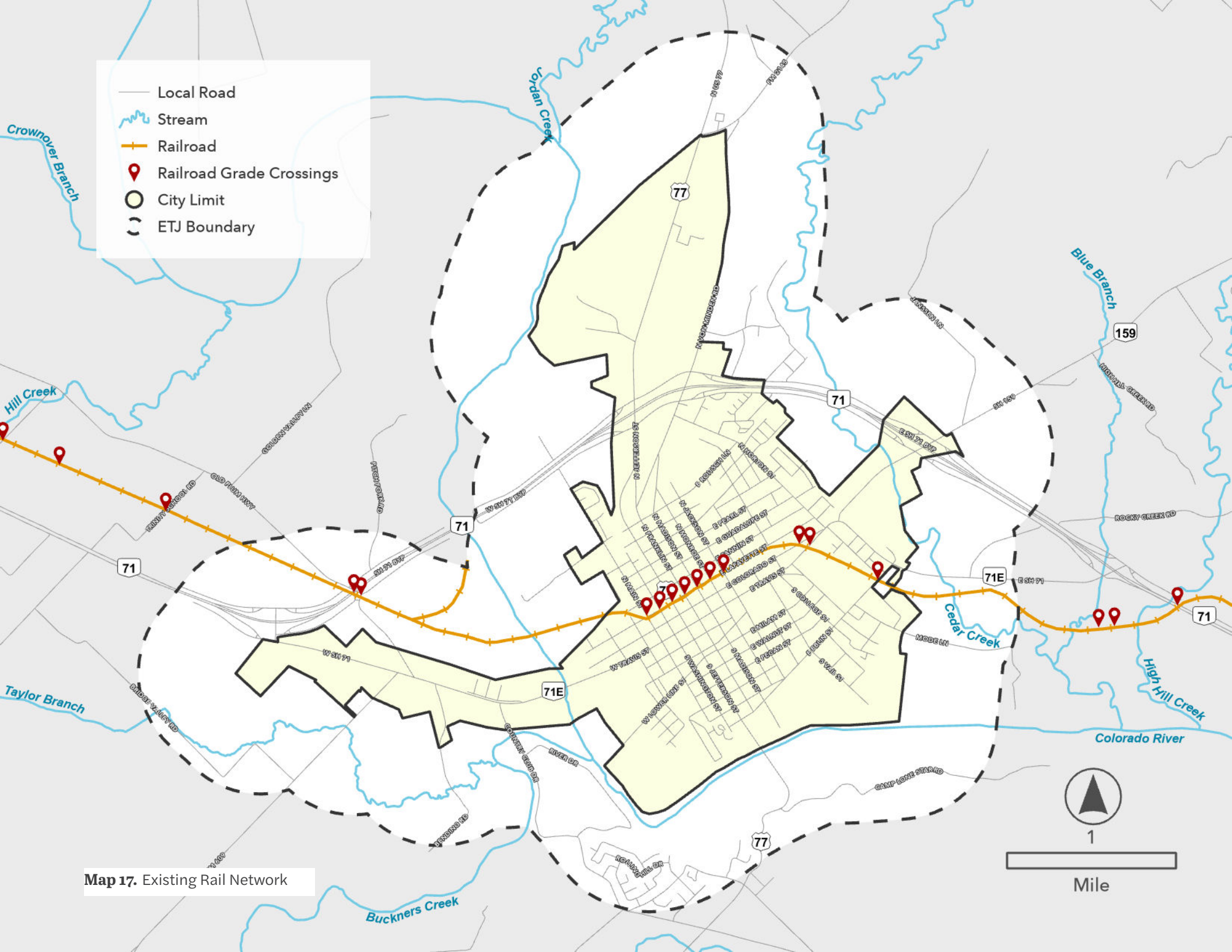
Map 16. Existing Road Network



Existing Rail Network

Another mode of transportation prevalent in La Grange is the railroad, which plays a significant role in the movement of goods and the organization of land uses within the community. The Union Pacific Railroad runs parallel to SH 71 through the southern portion of the City, providing regional freight service and influencing adjacent land use patterns. Several at-grade rail crossings within La Grange affect traffic flow and emergency response, making coordination between roadway and rail infrastructure an important consideration in transportation planning. These at-grade rail crossings primarily occur along East La Fayette Street, affecting north-south traffic flow near the Downtown and several of the City's legacy residential neighborhoods. While the rail line primarily supports freight movement, it also represents an asset for industrial users and future development opportunities. There are no known rail stops in La Grange, which helps limit congestion caused by trains stopping and blocking roads.





Existing Active Transportation Facilities

Active transportation refers to any mode of transportation that involves physical activity as the primary means of travel. It emphasizes human-powered mobility over motorized vehicles like cars or buses. Walking, cycling, rollerblading and skateboarding are all examples of active transportation.

Public feedback highlights the need for more sidewalks, safer crossings and trail connections to expand mobility choices and support community health. To address and accommodate these concerns, the Active Transportation Plan includes an existing and proposed trail network that supports the community's vision of a safer and more connected transportation system.

Map 18 illustrates the existing active transportation network in La Grange, highlighting where sidewalks, trails and walkable connections currently support active mobility. The map shows that most pedestrian infrastructure is concentrated within the historic street grid, creating a walkable core that provides access to destinations in and around downtown. Outside the central area, trail segments and informal walking routes are more limited and dispersed, revealing gaps in connectivity, particularly in neighborhoods along the City's edges and within the ETJ. Understanding the existing active transportation map helps identify opportunities to expand safe walking and biking options and improve community connectivity.



Recommended 2026 Master Thoroughfare Plan

The purpose of the Master Thoroughfare Plan is to identify the locations of existing and future thoroughfares along with their functional classifications. The functional classification system defines the design standards and performance expectations for each roadway type to ensure efficient operation and support the community's transportation goals.

The 2026 Master Thoroughfare Plan, shown on the following page, was developed by updating the 2018 Thoroughfare Plan, with a focus on increasing route options and connectivity. This update included a review of ongoing and planned projects from partner agencies, including the Texas Department of Transportation, such as the widening of US 77, which is now designated as a Principal Arterial to reflect its function as the major north-south thoroughfare in the area.

The 2018 Thoroughfare Plan was also evaluated to identify roadways as candidates for adjustment based on surrounding land uses and proposed designations in the Future Land Use Plan, which can be viewed in Chapter 2. Several corridors in the center of town were upgraded from Local to Minor Collector, which involves the addition of bike lanes and 7-foot sidewalks. These roadways are key corridors that connect schools, parks and future commercial corridors that would benefit from enhanced active transportation facilities.

High recorded traffic volumes informed upgrades to Jackson Street, Main Street, and Live Oak Street to better reflect their roles in the network as major carriers. Areas with anticipated growth are also opportunities to plan for appropriately sized facilities, including the northern section of the City near the Fayette County Fairgrounds and Austin Heart Hospital. Having a redundant network of route choices with sufficient capacity to handle some roads being shut down or having limited access in emergency situations allows for continued traffic flow, even in the event of a flood or similar hazard.

Known and projected hazard areas were avoided; no new or upgraded routes are planned within floodplains to discourage new development in these areas. Future transportation infrastructure additions and improvements within floodplains should minimize impervious cover and use appropriate drainage designs to accommodate flooding events.





Map 19. 2026 Major Thoroughfare Plan

Recommended 2026 Active Transportation Plan

La Grange seeks to improve walkability, connectivity, and safety by creating a cohesive network that connects neighborhoods, schools, parks, mixed-use developments, downtown, and the Colorado River through the proposed Active Transportation Plan, shown in Map 20. Proposed connections were made based on La Grange's Future Land Use Map, Thoroughfare Plan, and public and stakeholder engagement.

Existing and proposed facilities are classified by type, either sidewalk, shared-use path (SUP), or trail. SUPs are found along roadways behind the curbline and are designed for non-motorized travel, including cyclists and pedestrians. Sidewalks are pedestrian-only facilities found along roadways, and trails are recreational paths typically located in parks or natural areas that serve both cyclists and pedestrians.

Currently, La Grange has around 5 miles of sidewalks and trails in its network and no SUPs. This proposed plan includes approximately 11 miles of proposed trails and shared-use paths, and just under a half mile of proposed sidewalks. The total network of proposed and existing ATP facilities will include around 40 miles of network connectivity for La Grange.

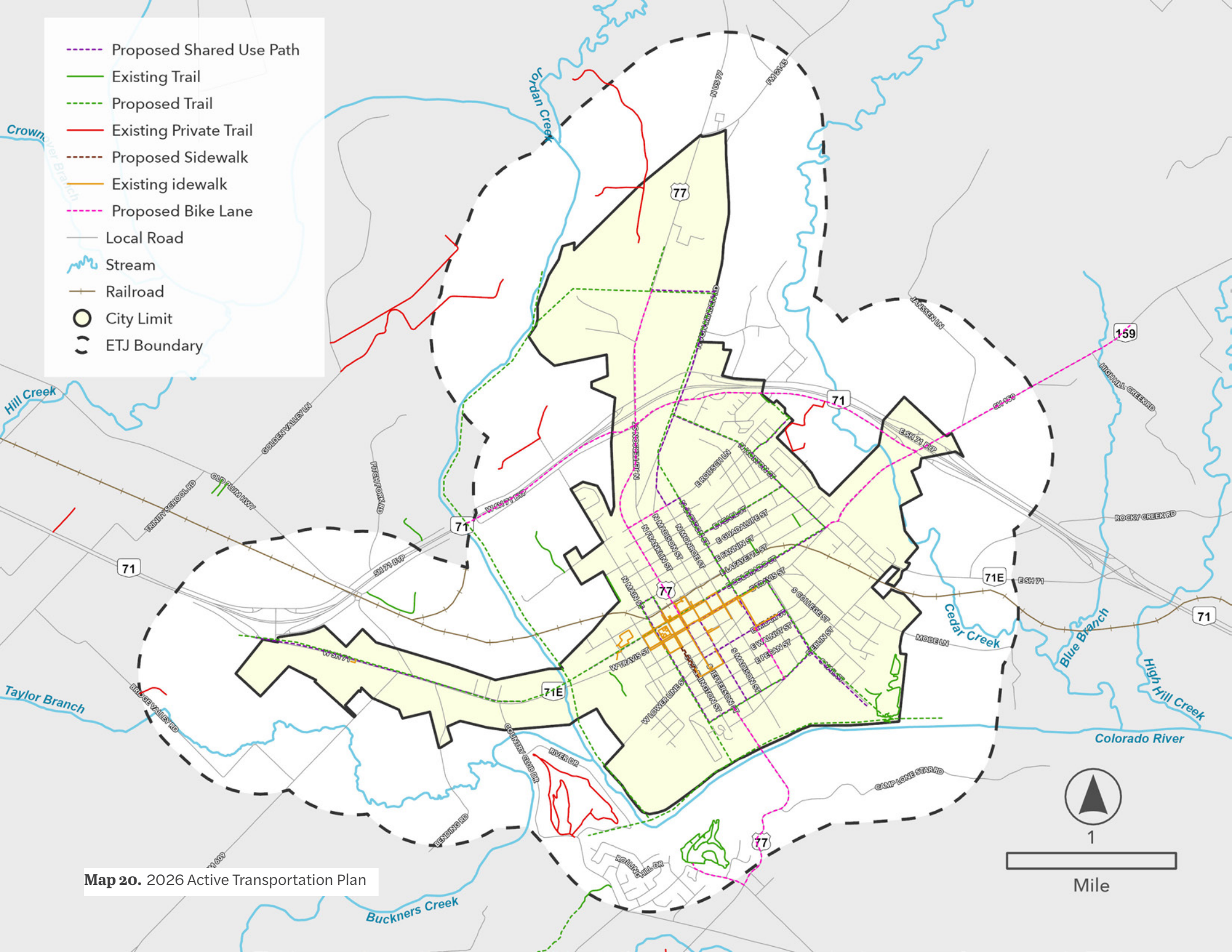
The foundation of the Active Transportation Plan is La Grange's existing transportation facilities. As mentioned previously, understanding the existing active transportation network helps bridge gaps in connections, efficiently identifying areas of needed improvement and opportunities to expand and better connect the community.



Example of a Shared-Use Path

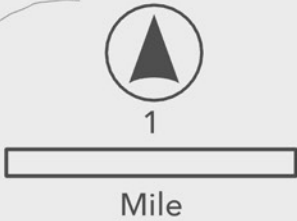


Example of a Trail



- Proposed Shared Use Path
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Existing Private Trail
- Proposed Sidewalk
- Existing idewalk
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Local Road
- Stream
- Railroad
- City Limit
- ETJ Boundary

Map 20. 2026 Active Transportation Plan



Public Transportation

La Grange is served by the Capital Area Rural Transportation System (CARTS), which provides public transportation to communities with fewer than 50,000 residents in its 11-county service area around Austin.

Regional transit services like CARTS serve a critical role in the overall transportation system in rural or semi-rural towns like La Grange. They provide access to healthcare, employment, education, and other essential services to those who do not want to or cannot drive a private vehicle.

Current Services

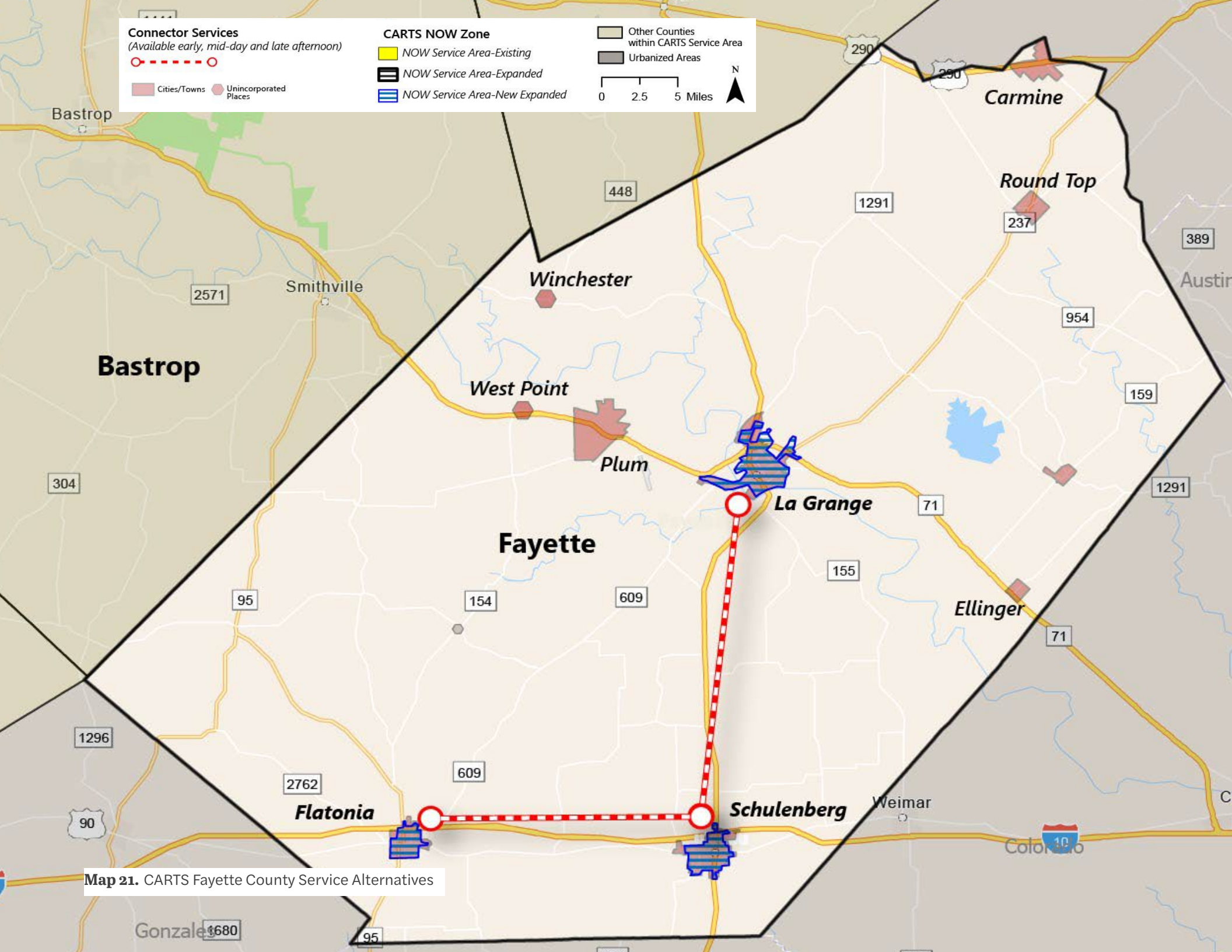
In La Grange, CARTS operates CARTS NOW, an on-demand transit service that provides curb-to-curb trips within the City. The service offers residents a flexible, affordable way to reach their desired destinations. Additionally, CARTS offers its Country Bus service, which takes users to destinations outside of La Grange on-demand every weekday. Riders can also take the Country Bus from La Grange to Bastrop or Smithville and continue their journey on connected routes, like the express commuter route from Smithville to Austin.

Future Services

When developing its Transit Development Plan (TDP) in 2023, CARTS worked with community partners and planning agencies to understand current and future needs, creating a vision for services and stations to be developed by the year 2045. The TDP process helped reassess and update long-term goals, prioritize specific improvements, and develop service strategies to help CARTS fulfill this vision.

The plan indicates that the fixed schedule service used by the Country Bus is no longer efficient, with some routes serving just a handful of riders. At the same time, the on-demand service, CARTS NOW has proven to be a very attractive and successful service. Therefore, the plan recommends reduced fixed-route services in favor of CARTS NOW services at most major cities in the service area. Since the TDP was completed, CARTS NOW has expanded to La Grange.

In Fayette County specifically, future Connector Services are recommended to take riders from Flatonia to Schulenberg, from Schulenberg to La Grange, and back. The plan suggests that the fixed-route service should allow users to stay in La Grange for 3 hours before return service in order to access medical services, shopping, or other needs in La Grange.



Connector Services
(Available early, mid-day and late afternoon)

- Connector Service
- Cities/Towns
- Unincorporated Places

CARTS NOW Zone

- NOW Service Area-Existing
- NOW Service Area-Expanded
- NOW Service Area-New Expanded

- Other Counties within CARTS Service Area
 - Urbanized Areas
- 0 2.5 5 Miles
- N

Map 21. CARTS Fayette County Service Alternatives