



## Jonesboro connectivity projects could impact international students, accessibility

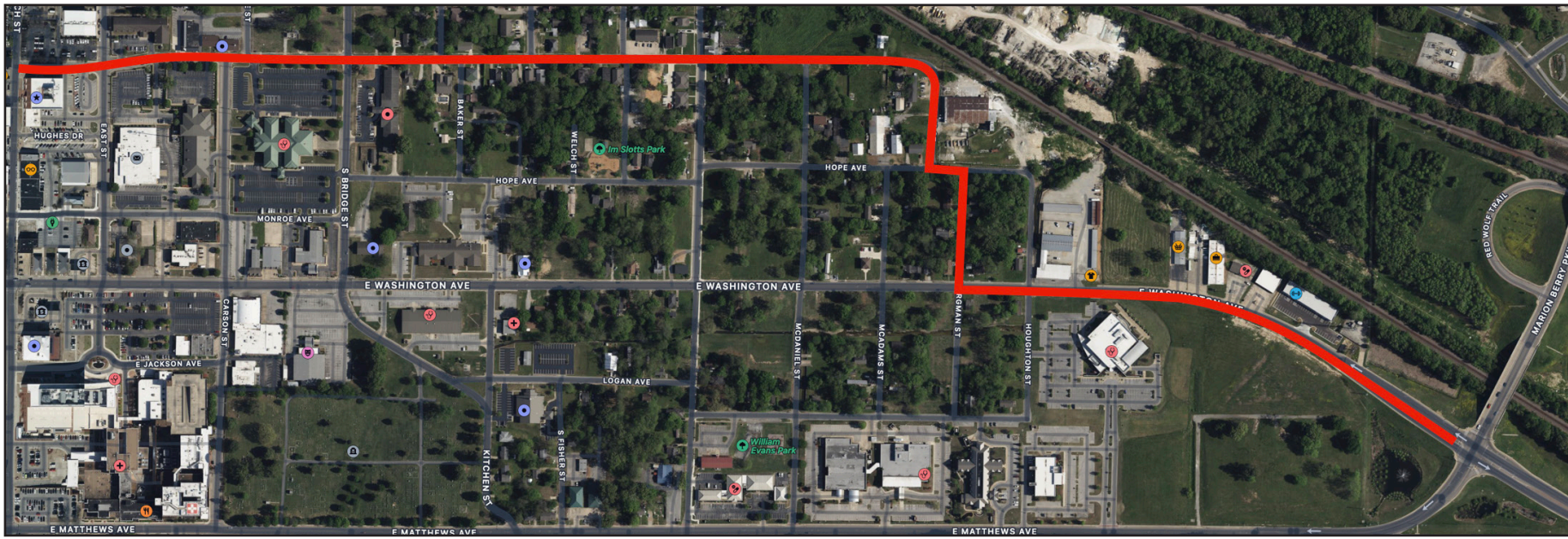


PHOTO COURTESY OF APPLE MAPS

Satellite map depicting the A-State to downtown Jonesboro sidewalk project. The red line tracks the path that the sidewalk will take.

### JERRY DON BURTON

#### NEWS EDITOR

International students and the accessibility of campus could be impacted by a plan to construct sidewalk paths around Jonesboro.

Andy Shatley, a member of the connectivity advisory committee, presented connectivity projects in a Jonesboro city council meeting April 2. Several projects discussed would create sidewalks and paths from Arkansas State University to other areas in Jonesboro.

One of these projects is a plan to connect A-State to downtown Jonesboro. "It connects eight or nine thousand students to our downtown, so that's a big deal," Shatley said.

This path is fully funded, currently under construction and expected

to be completed this year. Blake Walker, associate director of Access and Accommodation Services, said a sidewalk connecting A-State to downtown Jonesboro would greatly benefit students and accessibility. "Sidewalks are the backbone of physical accessibility," Walker said. "There is a significant portion of the population that, for one reason or another, do not have access to personal transportation."

Walker said there is currently no convenient, safe and accessible way to get from A-State to downtown Jonesboro via sidewalks. "Downtown is primarily where a lot of things happen, even the city council meetings are downtown, so you should be able to participate in your community and civil events," Walker said.

Another proposed project on East Johnson Avenue would add a sidewalk connecting Caraway Road to the Catholic Newman Center, a path where Shatley said the grass is already beaten down from heavy pedestrian traffic. Walker said building infrastructure over "desired paths" pedestrians already use is important for accessibility and safety. For wheelchair users, Walker said concrete sidewalks are much more accessible than dirt paths.

The associate director said investing in pedestrian infrastructure can also benefit the international student population on campus. Sheik Md Nihal Rahman, a junior computer science major from Bangladesh, said he supports the plan to build new sidewalks. "As someone who tends to walk every day to campus from off-campus housing, I do prefer having sidewalks that

are more direct and more easily accessible," Rahman said. "It is a pretty good plan given the fact that a lot of international students tend to walk around to get around Jonesboro." The computer science major said constructing and maintaining accessible sidewalks in areas that are traveled often would encourage international students to be more comfortable walking on and off campus.

Walker said he thinks another area that needs attention is the northern part of Johnson Avenue near McDonald's. While there are crosswalks and sidewalks in this area, Walker said they are poorly maintained. He said the McDonald's attracts a lot of pedestrian traffic across the street, so infrastructure in that area should be maintained.

Walker said sidewalk accessibility is a worthy investment even from an economic standpoint, as pedestrian infrastructure, "in the grand scheme of things," is much cheaper to maintain than a road and requires minimal maintenance. "Why would you not want to create as many avenues to access businesses, resources, campus and the community in general when it is a very minimal investment?" Walker said. Additionally, the associate director said improved sidewalks can bring a sense of belonging. "Being able to access, participate and see your community helps to foster that sense of belonging," Walker said. "By nature, people seek out places where they feel like they belong, where they can see people like them, interact with people, feel welcomed and feel like they have something to contribute."

Benjamin McDowell, staff writer, contributed to this report.

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### Create@State to be held this week

The Create@State Student Research Symposium will be held on Thursday, April 18. There will be more than 150 student research presentations. A full schedule of planned events is available online. For more information, visit the Create@State webpage or contact Kari Harris.

### Women's leadership intern applications available

The Women's Leadership Collaborative and Women's Business Leadership Center are accepting applications for the 2024-2025 school year. Those interested must apply by 5 p.m. on April 23. They accept students at all levels and in all majors. For any questions, email the center.

### Cybersecurity Club meeting

The Cybersecurity Club will hold a meeting noon on Friday, April 19 in room 103 of the Delta Center. Mac McMillin, a retired lieutenant colonel from the U.S. Marine Corps, will be the guest speaker. McMillin is the former CEO of CynergisTek, Inc., a company specializing in cybersecurity for the healthcare industry.

### BRIEFS COURTESY OF A-STATE DAILY DIGEST

### THIS WEEK IN THE HERALD:

#### OPINION, 2A

- It is fine to be undecided
- You should lower your screen time

#### NEWS, 3A

- Debate celebrates 100th anniversary
- New dean of College of Liberal Arts and Communication announced
- Nepalese students ring in new year
- Campus Crime

#### SPORTS, 1B

- Pack Day addition: A-State to hold a free football clinic
- Patchell to be in Hall of Honor
- Golf goes up in SBC Championship
- Next generation of players can revive the WNBA

#### ARTS & E, 2B

- A revolutionary review of "The Revolutionists"
- This week's Pop Pick: "Ripley"
- Bradbury Art Museum celebrates Slow Art Day

#### LIFE, 3B

- Arab heritage at A-State

## Black maternal health panel held at A-State

### BENJAMIN MCDOWELL

#### STAFF WRITER

A panel discussion was held at Arkansas State to discuss Black Maternal health and steps to prevent the maternal death of Black mothers April 11.

The panel featured speakers Dr. Brook Laurent, Dr. William Greenfield, Amber Ray and Dr. Adrienne Loftis. The purpose of Black Maternal Health Week is to bring awareness, activism, and community-building to improve the health of Black mothers.

The event's sponsors were the Division of Diversity, Mu Omicron Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Kappa Nu Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.; the Jonesboro Alumnae chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and Sigma Gamma Eta chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority.

In Arkansas, 92% of maternal deaths are preventable with African American mothers being more likely to die than any other race.

"I hope the impact is that Black women specifically, and those who support them, are empowered to advocate for themselves when they are in the process of giving birth before, during, and after," said Evette Allen, Ph.D., assistant dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The panelists highlighted factors contributing to negative experiences in maternal healthcare, including bias in healthcare professionals and inadequate support for patients. Amber Ray, a family nurse practitioner and childbirth educator at NEA Baptist, said health professionals can be biased in their work.

"When we look at healthcare, we have bias a lot of times towards different cultures, races, nationality, language barriers," Ray said. "We see that with Black maternal health, it does become about race. A lot of times, if we stratify even the different types of mothers that are Black from education level, all the way to insurance, they're all falling

mostly in the same pot of they're not getting the maternal health care that they need." The panelists also emphasized the importance



PHOTO COURTESY OF NYIT COLLEGE OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE AT ARKANSAS STATE FACEBOOK

Members of the Black Maternal Health panel. The panel discussed factors contributing to negative experiences in maternal healthcare and the importance of recognizing the needs of marginalized communities.

of recognizing and addressing health disparities, the needs of marginalized communities and acceptable options to improve maternal health.

The panelists also emphasized the importance

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HEALTH PANEL, 4A