



Early Scoping Report Appendix

Attachment A-5:

Media Articles – Phase 1

Toll projects considered for wish list: Transportation issue goes to voters in 2012. Nothing is off the table for committee that will set referendum.

By Ariel Hart

If metro Atlanta voters in 2012 approve a tax to pay for transportation projects, they also may have to pay a toll to drive some of them after they're built.

The small group that will winnow down the Atlanta region's project list met for the first time Friday, and they discussed some of the rules they'll use. Among their first decisions, strongly backed by the state transportation planning director: They're not ready to rule out toll projects.

Tolls and mass transit are just two of the touchy issues the executive committee will grapple with as it builds a project list for voters to consider in a 10-county referendum in 2012. Over 10 years, the 1-cent sales tax is likely to bring in perhaps \$8 billion, according to state figures.

Next week is the deadline for counties and cities to send in their wish lists, and some are already arriving. Sandy Springs was first in the gate, with a request including a rapid transit bus system on the top end of I-285 and sorting lanes along Ga. 400.

After the meeting Friday, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed defended the group's decision to leave toll projects on the table for now.

He said that for one thing, their task at this point is to assemble an "unconstrained" wish list. Ruling out anything at all now defeats that purpose, he said.

But in general, said Reed and some other officials, if tax money will be required for toll projects anyway, why not tax money from the referendum?

"I'm comfortable with some toll projects because they're going to be implemented through referendum," Reed said. "I would never support a toll project that was not approved by the voters."

Decatur Mayor Bill Floyd, also on the committee, pointed out that mass transit projects also require a lot of tax money to build, and they still charge travelers a fee.

Metro Atlanta's current toll plans are not about making a profit: Mostly, they won't. The state will need up to \$400 million in tax money to put optional toll lanes alongside I-75 and I-575 in Cobb and Cherokee counties, according to the state Department of Transportation. The state is currently putting an electronic toll system on the HOV lane of I-85 in Gwinnett County at a cost of about \$60 million, and it hopes eventually to toll other metro Atlanta HOV lanes.

Additional possibilities include toll lanes alongside I-285 and on Ga. 400, said Todd Long, the state's transportation planning director.

Such projects may be the group's great dilemma. State officials believe optional toll lanes are among the best tools to offer regional congestion relief, serving exactly the function the regional referendum was meant to provide. By charging a toll that rises with congestion, they keep out people who can't afford it, thus creating one thing that does not currently exist in metro Atlanta: the choice of a reliably congestion-free lane, spanning a long distance.

But they also can be expensive and controversial.

Likewise, the group also will walk a fine line in suggesting mass transit. In the city of Atlanta, it may be the only thing on the wish list. In counties such as Fayette, opposition runs high.

For those who back the referendum, walking that line correctly is key.

To get the referendum passed, said Kathryn Lawler, who is staffing the effort for the Atlanta Regional Commission, "Our job is to create the most irresistible project list that people can't help themselves but go flocking to the polls to say yes."

For those who don't, the makeup of the roundtable is Exhibit 1, since it does not mirror the makeup of the region. Votes are weighted more heavily to suburban counties, since a small county such as Henry County gets the same two votes as a populous county such as DeKalb or Gwinnett County gets.

Roundtable officials say that this will not impede them from drafting a list that serves the central urban area, too, because they know the list has to win votes there.

"That's where the people are, that's where the bulk of the congestion is and that's where the money needs to be spent," Floyd said. "So I think it's a little superficial to be worried about our concerns before we need to be worried about the quality of life of the region."

Project pickers

A 21-member "roundtable" will pick metro Atlanta's project list for a 2012 transportation referendum. The roundtable's executive committee will do the heavy lifting this summer to winnow down a draft list.

Chairman Bucky Johnson (no vote on executive committee, votes on roundtable), mayor of Norcross

Kasim Reed, mayor of Atlanta

Mark Matthews, mayor of Kennesaw

Bill Floyd, mayor of Decatur

Tom Worthan, chairman of Douglas County Commission

B.J. Mathis, chairman of Henry County Commission

Coming Tuesday

What projects will the city of Atlanta and MARTA pick for their transportation wish lists?

Referendum 2012

Will unprecedented transportation funding ease your commute and reshape your region? Or would one tax too many blight metro Atlanta? As voters approach a referendum on a transportation project list and a 1 percent sales tax to fund it, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution's journalists will continue to follow this ongoing story with in-depth coverage you won't find anywhere else.

Special report Your commute: What stands out on regional wish list: Voters are approaching a historic referendum on regional transportation plans. After getting an early peek at the wish list of projects, we look at five of the most interesting --- and one surprise that didn't make the list.

By Ariel Hart

Most expensive

Drivers stuck on I-20 heading eastbound out of Atlanta might someday be sitting on a train instead. The East Corridor line would likely run along I-20 out to Rockdale County. Price tag: \$2 billion.

Most requested

Fayetteville and Decatur, along with Cherokee, Clayton and Cobb counties, all suggested a regional call center to coordinate trips for special-needs transit passengers.

Price tag: \$7 million.

Most affordable

Pedestrians trying to get from homes on one side of U.S. 278 to the MARTA station --- or to jobs on the other side --- may have an easier time with new pedestrian crossings requested by Avondale Estates. Price tag: \$60,000.

Biggest surprise

MARTA would like to see a rail line from Garnett Station to Turner Field. Could it start a larger plan to extend rail across I-20?

Price tag: \$369 million.

Biggest missing link

The city of Atlanta proposes a bicycle/pedestrian trail stretching from Centennial Olympic Park to the Silver Comet Trail's end in Cobb County.

Price tag: \$25 million.

Notable no-show

What about all of that talk of extending MARTA train service farther up Ga. 400? No one requested such a project for the referendum. (The state DOT, though, has yet to weigh in.)

Coverage only we can provide: Learn more about the referendum --- and view 100 sample projects.

Visit ajc.com: Search the entire regional wish list.

Sources: ARC, Cobb County, DOT

Gains and losses revamp wish list

By Ariel Hart and Rhonda Cook

During the past several days, we brought you a series of stories examining what's at stake for Atlanta and the 10 counties that will decide whether to impose a new tax for transportation improvements. Our unmatched coverage continues today with a deeper look at projects that were eliminated or added for the region to consider:

The Atlanta region's transportation wish list just bulked up.

State transportation officials have weighed in, adding new projects such as a MARTA line to Roswell, several interchanges on I-285, and a half-billion dollars worth of Xpress buses to potential projects that voters will consider next year.

The list shed projects deemed too local or vague to pass muster with the law and excite the voters.

But now it will all have to be cut down to size.

A group of 21 local elected officials must take those \$22.9 billion worth of projects and jettison about \$15 billion of them, because the penny tax would raise only about \$8 billion over its 10 years.

The projects they choose will be the key to swaying voters.

Todd Long, the state's transportation planning director who did the adding and deleting during the past two months, said the MARTA extension to Roswell was one of the projects that would appeal to a lot of residents.

"Yes!" said Miriam Pagan and her daughter, Mia Maldonado. Maldonado, 22, said she'd go back to school in downtown Atlanta if the line were built, and Pagan, 40, said she could stop rearranging her schedule to drive her daughter around.

But even the Ga. 400 MARTA extension doesn't sway Aubrey Brooks of Roswell.

"Extending the rail line wouldn't matter," not enough to raise taxes, said the 21-year-old manager of a men's hat store at Cumberland Mall.

Counties and cities in metro Atlanta submitted their wish lists in March. Long has added more than 150 new proposals, and he has deleted more than 140 others. Other projects, such as a \$2 billion rail line to Sigman Road, had no official sponsor and died in the process.

Long has given the new list to the 21 mayors and county commissioners who now will cut it down to an affordable size.

"We ended up giving them a list that is nearly three times the amount of available money that's going to be raised in the region," said Long. "The cuts they're going to have to make to get down to a constrained list, I do not envy."

For the moment, this is it: \$14 billion worth of transit projects; \$8.6 billion worth of road projects; \$205 million in sidewalk and bicycle projects; and \$28 million for aviation.

Long's additions include a new Amtrak station, optional toll lanes along I-75 and I-575 in Cobb and Cherokee counties, 62 specific Atlanta bridge and road rehabilitation projects, and road widenings such as Roosevelt Highway and Ga. 138.

To help reach voters, the Atlanta Regional Commission plans to invite 1 million households to participate in telephone town halls --- starting this month --- on the referendum.

Information about the list and the roundtable is available at www.atlantaregionalroundtable.com and at ajc.com.

Roundtable members will need residents' input, polling results on individual projects, and a stiff spine to make the right decisions on what to cut and what to keep, local officials said.

"It's not a halftime show here," said Norcross Mayor Bucky Johnson. "It's something that will affect generations to come."

Long didn't need polling to tell him that unspecified pots of money were a bad idea if you're trying to paint a picture of exactly how specific projects will improve voters' lives, he said.

He removed some of those from the city of Atlanta and DeKalb County, replacing them with actual projects.

That didn't sit well with Atlanta City Councilman Lamar Willis, who represents the city at the Atlanta Regional Commission.

"It does create some concern," he said. "Whatever it's replaced with, it has to be something that we can sell to our constituents so they can be supportive of this referendum."

Long deleted some projects because they were not in the region, and the tax money must be spent in the region.

He deleted others because they were too local, such as neighborhood road projects in Gwinnett County.

Some trail projects, such as a proposal to extend the Silver Comet Trail from Cobb County to downtown Atlanta, he determined were primarily recreational, not for transportation.

Just because a project made the list, that doesn't mean it would be fully funded.

For example, the project to add optional toll lanes along I-75 and I-575 in Cobb and Cherokee counties is now on the list for \$50 million --- a small fraction of the \$1 billion it would take to build. The rest could come from toll money and state gas taxes.

Projects added

As much as \$500 million to make interchange improvements on I-285 at Ga. 400 --- and tens of millions more to improve other interchanges along the interstate.

\$839 million to extend MARTA rail to Ga. 140 in Roswell.

\$46 million to replace the Courtland Street bridge in Atlanta.

\$497 million for the Xpress commuter bus system.

Projects eliminated

\$2 billion for mass transit along I-20 to Sigman Road.

\$25 million to extend the Silver Comet Trail from Cobb County to Centennial Olympic Park.

\$3.5 million to upgrade traffic signals in Cobb County.

\$125 million to widen a portion of Buford Highway.

Count on us

Because next year's vote on \$8 billion in transportation improvements could affect your commute for decades, we've committed a team of journalists to cover every angle of this ongoing story. Visit our website to read previous installments in this ongoing series. Plus, search our updated database of proposed projects. It can be found only at www.ajc.com/go/wishlist.

The road to referendum

Now that the cities, counties and towns in the 10-county Atlanta region have submitted their transportation wish lists, it was up to the state to comb through those lists. It eliminated ineligible projects --- and added others.

The cutting begins. This summer, a small group of mayors and county commissioners will pick from that pool an affordable list of projects, coming up with a draft by Aug. 15.

By Oct. 15, 21 local elected officials approve the final project list for the referendum.

July 31, 2012, the region votes on the project list and a 1 percent sales tax to pay for it.

Meet our reporter

Ariel Hart has covered transportation for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution since 2005. She has written about traffic congestion, road safety, mass transit, the turn toward toll roads and the politics of transportation, including what lobbyists and vendors spend on transportation officials.

She grew up in Arizona, attended Bryn Mawr College and served three years with the Peace Corps in the Czech Republic and Russia. Before coming to the AJC, she was a freelance reporter. She earned a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. Follow her on Twitter @ajcTransport.

Continuing coverage Regional transportationMetro: Transit projects pass state muster: A state analysis released Thursday recommended projects for the 2012 transit referendum.

By Ariel Hart

If metro Atlantans approve a sales tax for transportation next year, they could be riding MARTA trains from Lindbergh to Emory University within a decade. Four swaths of Beltline streetcars could be up and running, or you could take MARTA train lines to Turner Field, to Wesley Chapel Road or to Norcross.

Those are among the projects suggested for inclusion in a 2012 referendum that could likely be built within the 10-year term of the tax, according to a state report released Thursday. Dozens of other transit projects, such as smaller streetcars, bus lines or rehabilitation projects, were so simple they didn't need analysis.

Voters next year in the 10-county Atlanta region will decide on a list of projects --- being drawn up this summer from a pool of suggestions --- and a 1 percent sales tax to fund them. The tax might raise \$8 billion over 10 years.

The report points out a harsh truth about Georgia transportation, one that will limit which commuters can have their trains first. Whether counties outside Fulton and DeKalb counties wanted mass transit or not, some are behind on significant planning for transit projects partly because the state's funding structure has long made it difficult to pay for.

As The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported in an exclusive story before the report's release, some of the highest-profile projects did not score as well in the state's analysis. For those projects --- including far-flung suburban lines in Gwinnett and Cobb counties and across the entire top end of I-285, and extending MARTA up Ga. 400 to Holcomb Bridge Road --- the first reason is geography. But compared with the suburban projects, most projects proposed by MARTA have a head start of a couple of years.

Even if long-distance projects could not likely be finished within the first 10-year tax period, work could be done to get them rolling or near completion, officials emphasized. For others, a piece of a project could be completed and operating while the rest is in preparation. No projects scored in the "red" danger zone of unreasonable risk in the state's report, and none scored low-risk either.

Still, the current setup of transportation planning on the state and local levels may have helped the MARTA projects meet the time frame.

MARTA has a planning staff of eight, but its powers end at the borders of Fulton and DeKalb counties. The Georgia Department of Transportation also has a hefty transportation budget and staff planners and engineers, but is not allowed to spend gas

tax money on mass transit work. As interest in transit in the suburbs has grown, it's been up to individual advocates such as business districts or local governments to try to fill the gap catch as catch can.

Tim Lee, chairman of the Cobb County Commission, cautioned that for a long time, there simply wasn't an appetite for mass transit in places like Cobb.

But now that there is, he said, "Even if there's an attitude of support, without the funding source, there hasn't been a way to advance the projects" in major strides. The Community Improvement Districts in Cobb have worked hard to fund what preliminary work they could, but there is "no way" a local government can afford on its own the major steps taking bigger backing.

"There were a lot of things handcuffing us," Lee said.

Pushing a major transit expansion project takes enormous amounts of money and political focus. The Cumberland and Town Center Community Improvement Districts, self-taxing business districts in Cobb County, together spent \$4 million on a study to jump-start the idea of a mass transit line along U.S. 41 a decade ago, said Malaika Rivers, the Cumberland district's director. Then the county used that to apply for another planning grant.

But that's peanuts. "Now's when the work really starts," Rivers said.

In Gwinnett County, "We wouldn't even be talking about transit" if it weren't for the self-taxing business districts that funded early studies, said Chuck Warbington, director of the Gwinnett Village CID, which spent \$300,000 on a preliminary study and is contributing toward a \$1.2 million follow-up study.

Legally, the state DOT is allowed to spend gas tax revenue only on roads and bridges. Even when it gets money it can spend on transit, as with federal earmarks dedicated for a commuter rail line through Clayton County, the DOT's roads-and-bridges focus has sometimes thrown up roadblocks there, too. A DOT board member in an open meeting once asked of that rail line, "What do we need to do to kill it?"

There's no such restriction against transit with the proposed sales tax.

The 21 mayors and county commissioners who are drawing up the project list have decided that if the tax passes, 15 percent to 60 percent of the money should be spent on mass transit. Transit advocates and groups including the Livable Communities Coalition argue that the figure should be at least half, to serve pent-up demand resulting from the state's inability to fund transit with the gas tax. Transit opponents say roads are a better investment.

Jannine Miller, director of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, noted that there has not previously been a major source of regional transit funding, and "the sales

tax revenues, if the voters approve, would be able to give the transit buildout a shot in the arm that's not likely otherwise."

While MARTA has endured cuts that scaled back its planning ambitions, said Cheryl King, MARTA's assistant general manager for planning, that helped the agency focus on practical projects that faced fewer obstacles, she said.

Among the 15 transit projects that the state evaluated in a report released Thursday, all nine that the state declared a lower risk of busting the 10-year deadline were MARTA submissions or came from MARTA planning. Many of them had the extra advantage of a head start, having already been in preliminary phases for a couple of years.

To be sure, many factors influenced whether a project could be done in time. The major ones for suburban lines include geographical obstacles like rivers, or conflicts that require negotiation with other agencies or railroad companies. That's what stymies the western end of the I-285 line, which had a big head start thanks in part to funding from the Perimeter CIDs and a related DOT study.

Whatever the difficulties, there will "absolutely" be rail transit on the project list, said the chairman of the regional group picking the projects, Norcross Mayor Bucky Johnson. "In what form or fashion or direction I don't know. But in my opinion, there will be some rail projects."

About this report

As next year's vote on \$8 billion in transportation improvements nears, our team of journalists is committed to bringing you every angle of this ongoing story. Our unmatched coverage continues today.

Getting it done

Projects that could likely be done within the first eight years of a transportation tax, with "medium" risk, according to the state:

Four sections of the Atlanta Beltline streetcars

MARTA expansion from Doraville to Norcross

MARTA line to Turner Field

MARTA extension from Indian Creek Station to Wesley Chapel Road

MARTA extension from Holmes Station to I-285

MARTA line from Lindbergh Station to Emory University

Projects that would likely take more than 10 years, or have "medium-high" risk of a stumbling block. In some cases, a smaller section could be done:

Commuter rail south through Lovejoy*

I-285 light rail from Perimeter Center to Doraville*

Light rail along I-20 corridor to Candler Road

Light rail through Gwinnett County

MARTA extension up Ga. 400 to Holcomb Bridge Road

Light rail through Cobb County

*Project could take less than 10 years, but has a risk of a stumbling block.

Source: Georgia Regional Transportation Authority

For a complete list of

projects and related articles from our ongoing coverage,

go to ajc.com/go/transportation.

Guest Column: Expanding Transit a Necessity

By Ray Christman and Jim Stokes

Over the next nine months, metro Atlanta will engage in a debate over its transportation future. But in a larger sense this is really a debate over the region's economic future.

Last month, a regional roundtable of 21 local elected officials approved a list of transportation projects to be financed by a 1 percent sales tax. This levy must be approved in a 10-county regional referendum scheduled for July 31.

Will we invest in the necessary and appropriate infrastructure to support future growth and provide a decent quality of life for our residents? Nothing short of that is at stake in this vote.

The good news is that the project list approved by the roundtable offers a remarkable new direction for metro Atlanta --- one that would invest in transit in a balance with roads and begin to provide more mobility and choice to residents.

From a transit standpoint, here's what's on the list:

- *Three new rail lines (the Beltline, Clifton Corridor and the I-75 Corridor to Cobb County) that will serve an estimated 40,000 new riders daily and provide 22 miles of new capacity;

- *Significantly expanded regional bus service including a new high-capacity line to South DeKalb County, restoration of the Clayton County system, and expanded service in other parts of the region;

- *\$600 million in badly needed capital improvement investment in the existing MARTA system; and

- *Planning and engineering money to lay the groundwork for the "next generation" of rail transit projects, including Gwinnett rail, 400 North heavy rail extension and Atlanta-Griffin commuter rail.

Taken together, transit projects account for 52 percent --- or more than \$3.2 billion --- of the overall list. This is truly transformative, both in terms of the shift in funding emphasis to transit and in the magnitude of new investments in the region.

There is still plenty of funding for roads on this list --- nearly \$3 billion for some 125 different projects throughout the region. And this is on top of nearly \$11 billion in road money that will be available over the next 10 years from traditional gas tax and related funding sources.

But the big story in next year's referendum will be transit --- and the fact that local officials have called for bold new approaches and investments.

This is really not a choice for the region, but a necessity.

Our region is projected to continue to grow --- by some 3 million people in the next 25 years, to a total of 7 million. During this period, our region will become distinctly older, have far fewer households with kids and will be comprised of a growing number of residents interested in living where they have good access to where they work. That means they will want more transit.

Virtually every one of Atlanta's major competitor regions --- such as Charlotte, Dallas and Phoenix --- are investing in transit to create a place that employers will want to invest in because of better access for workers to jobs.

The Atlanta region has reached a "tipping point" with respect to support for transit. One can see it in various poll and survey results. And one can sense it in the growing coalition of supporters that includes urban residents and suburban commuters, environmentalists and business people.

A clear majority of our residents want more and better travel options. This referendum is, above all, a giant step in that direction through its \$3.2 billion transit commitment. We can't afford not to take advantage of this once-in-a-generation opportunity.

Ray Christman is a former executive director of the Livable Communities Coalition of Metro Atlanta. Jim Stokes, former president of the Georgia Conservancy, is the coalition's interim executive director.

CAPTION: Ray Christman is a former executive director of the Livable Communities Coalition of Metro Atlanta. Jim Stokes, former president of the Georgia Conservancy, is the coalition's interim executive director.

Friday conversation: Quality of life

Today's moderator: Tom Sabulis

A 20-year veteran of the AJC, Tom Sabulis has covered news, politics and the arts during a career that has taken him to newspapers across the country. Since 2008, he has coordinated many of the newspaper's pro/ con debates and first-person guest columns.

Join the discussion online today: Share your opinions and ideas at blogs.ajc.com/atlanta-forward.

The University of Georgia still does not offer faculty members domestic-partner benefits such as health insurance coverage, despite repeated attempts by teachers to secure them. A UGA faculty member explains that it's the right thing to do and helps competitiveness through teacher recruitment, while readers of our Atlanta Forward blog comment on the topic.

Response to recent conversation

Readers had their say on the Atlanta Forward blog earlier this week about the Ga. 400 Corridor Transit Initiative (Connect 400). Here is a sampling of their comments.

Thomas: Worthless. Another (MARTA has conducted four that I know of, one in which I participated) 18-month study to arrive at the intuitively obvious solution --- MARTA heavy rail (the only form of mass, rapid transit) to the Forsyth County line. MARTA would run in the Ga. 400 median, obviating real estate costs and necessitating rebuilding of interchanges and widening Ga. 400 to accommodate new toll lanes and personless toll booths located on entrance ramps.

JoJo: Sorry, there is only one real solution and it is so brilliant, so cost effective, and makes so much sense in every way that no one will ever subscribe to it. A huge percentage of Atlanta commuters could effectively telecommute if only companies would let them. Traffic problems would be immediately solved (the "problem" would be solved, but there would still be some traffic/commuting), our reliance on foreign oil would be reduced, etc. This is an all-around win-win solution with no losers. Corporate and government empty-headers just can't see the light.

Bernie: Our only hope going forward is to make sure we continue to expand and repair our current roads until that time arrives.

Frustrated: I live on the North Fulton/South Forsyth border. I'd pay quite a bit of money to take the rail every day instead of sitting in my car. I'm moving as soon as I can sell my house. I can't stand the commute and it ruins my quality of life. North Fulton needs

to wake up and realize that if people don't want to move to the area, the value of their house will decline. I've lost \$30,000 in my house already. If I had bought the same house in Dunwoody or Brookhaven, the situation would not be nearly as bad.

SAWB: Well, why not have businesses relocate to the North Fulton/Forsyth County area? Local governments should do what they can to persuade employers to relocate from in-town areas to where the employees are. I expect this would have a major impact on traffic and save companies money on facilities cost.

On the Fulton/Forsyth line: My real estate agent promised a MARTA train to Windward Parkway when we moved in 1990. Politicians keep trying to build MARTA out to "under-served" aka low-income and "future-growth" aka developers-make-money areas, instead of connecting the places where people are already commuting. North Fulton residents didn't want to pay another penny for what we were promised with the first penny 30 years ago. Even T-SPLOST promised more studies, not actual trains.

fly: Why a metro rail system wasn't thought about 20-plus years ago is beyond my comprehension. Atlanta is a wannabe city.

Alternative Transit: Connect 400 looks forward

By Tom Sabulis

If you think the thumping of the transportation tax referendum (T-SPLOST) on July 31 means that residents of north Fulton County are happy to stick to their cars, steadfastly uninterested in alternative transit methods, you would be mistaken --- or at least not in attendance at recent meeting about the Ga. 400 Corridor Transit Initiative (Connect 400) at the North Fulton Chamber of Commerce in Alpharetta.

Sponsored by MARTA, in partnership with local community improvement districts and the Georgia Department of Transportation, Connect 400 is conducting an 18-month study, due next spring, that will recommend alternative transit options along the 400 corridor, from the topside Perimeter north to Milton and the Forsyth County line.

The study area bulges east and west to include Dunwoody, Sandy Springs and Roswell.

All transit options are being considered --- buses, light-rail, a heavy rail extension of MARTA's North Springs line --- and likely a combination of solutions.

East-west connectivity across the corridor is also being considered, said Jason Morgan, MARTA's project manager on Connect 400. But it's still due diligence time: nothing has been decided.

The big catch, of course, is that there will be no state funding for any improvements, a point driven home by officials and staff invited to speak.

Sen. Doug Stoner, D-District 6 and a member of the transportation committee, dashed any idea that there would be another tax effort put before voters any time soon.

"The voters have made a decision," Stoner said, "that they're not going to look at a funding mechanism in the near future. I just want to dissuade anyone who thinks that we're going to deal with that issue in the Legislature in the next two years; it's not going to happen. We probably won't have this discussion until 2016 at the earliest. Between now and then, it's going to be getting whatever federal dollars you can get, and the federal government is going to be looking at communities that can build public-private partnerships."

Brandon Beach, a GDOT board member from Alpharetta, cited the proposed multimodal passenger terminal in Atlanta as the kind of project a public-private partnership can launch by leveraging private money from developers and businesses to attract federal funding. "That's going to be built with private funds," Beach said confidently about the mega-effort, still in the embryonic stage.

"There's going to be hotels, retail, office, residential, and there's going to be a transit component. When you look at the [terminal] compared to the whole 124 acres, it's a very small component, but it's the centerpiece that's going to make those private dollars flow and pay for that transit facility."

The terminal's current price tag is \$1.2 billion.

An overflow audience of about 100 people crowded into the Connect 400 meeting, a small but perhaps symbolic sign of the new urgency transportation issues are taking on in the aftermath of the T-SPLOST.

"We're disappointed T-SPLOST failed," Beach said, "but we still have a transportation problem. We still have a congestion problem. It's just we heard the voters loud and clear that they don't want to increase their taxes to pay for it. We've got to figure out ways to improve our infrastructure because when you look at our funding both on the federal level and GDOT level, we have money to maintain [the roads and bridges] we have; we just don't have money to build new capacity. And we have more people moving here and needs that need to be taken care of."

Guest Column: GDOT's options for north Fulton

When it comes to this summer's failed transportation tax vote, Brandon Beach won't even go there. "The people have spoken loud and clear," said Beach, president and CEO of the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce. He prefers to look forward, at the ways GDOT is stretching lower fuel tax revenues to improve traffic, and about long-term challenges facing north Fulton County:

New roads: "We need new capacity on Georgia 400. We've done a lot of the smaller fixes that we can do. We opened those southbound flex lanes where you can drive on the shoulders in the morning rush hour. We need to do things like diverging diamonds, roundabouts and regional traffic signalization. You can do that through innovation and technology, and do it fairly inexpensively.

"We also have to look at major improvements on 400 north from I-285. That's going to have to be done, in my opinion, through managed lanes. The existing tolls will come down next December, but for us to build new capacity, it's going to have to be part of a managed-lane system."

How that works: "We're doing it right now on 575 and 75; it's a 29-mile stretch of reversible lanes. But that's just one step of the managed lane system; you need to look at 285, and then 400."

Daytime surges: "This whole North Fulton area imports quite a bit of labor. The city of Alpharetta has a regular population of 52,000 to 55,000 people. But the daytime population is really about 235,000, counting all the people that come to work here. You look at the companies up here that employ large amounts of folks --- Verizon has 5,000 employees up here --- and we have to make sure they have options from a mobility standpoint."

Helping east-west commutes: "One of the things we really need to work on is east-west connectivity. You try to go from here to Gwinnett during peak hours, it's 12 miles and it can take you an hour and 45 minutes to get there. One of the things we're working on is McGinnis Ferry Road, continuing its four-laning to Georgia 400 and putting an interchange at McGinnis Ferry and 400."

Public transit: "I firmly believe that if transit is reliable, clean and, most of all, safe, then people will take transit. Not everyone is going to get on a bus or train, but I can tell you when I served on the GRTA [Georgia Regional Transportation Authority] board and gasoline went to \$4 a gallon the first time, those GRTA express buses were standing room only. The good thing about those buses is you got on them at point 'A' and you went all the way into downtown. You didn't make 22 stops. I think we need to look at express service.

"We're doing a study up here right now looking at transit options all the way up 400, whether that's bus rapid transit, light rail or heavy rail. In the short term, I think, we need to look at bus rapid transit from the North Springs MARTA station up through the 400 corridor.

"We could implement that quickly and relatively inexpensively. Building rail is going to take a lot of money, and it's going to have to come from federal funding."

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 3-14-13

County by county news for Friday

Roswell hosts MARTA expansion meeting

MARTA's third public meeting to address extending its north line from North Springs to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta is 6:30 p.m. Thursday at Mimosa Elementary, 1550 Warsaw Road, Roswell.

The meeting will include discussion of transit technologies and station types.

The GA 400 Corridor Transit Initiative website is www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx.

Information: MARTA Project Team, 404-524-1822, connect400@itsmarta.com.

---Michael Alpert for the AJC

Roswell Patch, 3-18-13

MARTA Wants Your Input on High-Capacity Transit in North Fulton

A public meeting in Roswell will go over potential project details and solicit input from the local community, Thursday, March 21.

Staff Reports

Hoping to get input from the community, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) will host a public meeting on Thursday, March 21, in Roswell to review the Georgia 400 Corridor Transit Initiative.

The metro Atlanta transportation system is working in coordination with regional and corridor stakeholders to consider a variety of alignment and transit technology options to improve regional mobility and accessibility in one of the region's most important and heavily congested corridors, according to information they provided. The Alternatives Analysis is assessing the need for high-capacity transit connections between the Perimeter Center area near the interchange of I-285 and GA 400 in the city of Sandy Springs and McGinnis Ferry Road in northern Fulton County, says the press release.

During the meeting, the MARTA team will review the current status of the project, discuss the potential transit technologies and offer participants an opportunity to provide input on the alternatives that have moved forward in the analysis process.

The meeting will be held March 21 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Mimosa Elementary School, located at 1550 Warsaw Road in Roswell. For more information on the project and to share your feedback, visit the website at www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx, check out the Connect 400 Facebook page, call MARTA Project Manager Jason Morgan at 404-848-4494 or e-mail the project team at Connect400@itsmarta.com.

Roswell Patch, 3-22-13

Should MARTA Expand Rail, Rapid Bus Service Up GA 400?

Another Georgia 400 Corridor Transit Initiative will be held this week, so what would you like to see come out of it?

By Christine Foster

Metro-Atlanta's transportation system is a polarizing topic for some who live north of the perimeter; which begs the question: should MARTA expand its high-capacity transit services along the GA 400 corridor?

High-capacity transit could mean anything from rapid transit bus service to light rail or heavy rail options. The type of transit being considered within the Georgia 400 Corridor Transit Initiative would most likely have fewer stops, travel at a higher speed and have more frequent service than the current bus schedules into the areas of downtown Atlanta, Cobb and Gwinnett.

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There will be another public meeting on the initiative this week in Roswell.

So, you tell us: should high-capacity transit be an option for commuters north of the perimeter? If so, what types of transit would you like to see developed?

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No Name March 30, 2013 at 04:16 PM

Charlie, If the issue is getting around, then a bus should suffice. It is more flexible than rail and much less costly. Rail has to be paid by somebody. If you can't afford to use a car, then you are insinuating that you think it is OK to steal from others hard work and

have them pay your way on rail. That is not an American idea. Please read comments by Tom Miller. Bus? OK. Rail? No.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Marc April 04, 2013 at 10:39 PM

Every 36,000 jobs in public transportation generates roughly \$3.6 billion in business sales and generate nearly \$500 million in federal, state, and local tax revenues. Ga needs to wake up and smell the money.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Kyle May 30, 2013 at 03:25 AM

YES MARTA needs to expand more than just up 400 but this needs to be done and now, not in 10 to 15 years!

Recommend

Alpharetta-Milton Patch, 3-19-13

Does MARTA Need to Provide Transit from McGinnis Ferry Road South?

The public is being asked to offer opinions on high-capacity transit that could reach the Forsyth County line in North Fulton at a meeting in Roswell on Thursday, March 21.

By Bob Pepalis

Bob Pepalis (Editor) March 18, 2013 at 04:10 PM

Answer the question on whether MARTA should expand north in the Question of the Week. <http://patch.com/A-2Qy7>

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

J. Smith March 19, 2013 at 02:43 AM

Check your history. Marta was not welcome north of I-285 for many years and those communities continue to separate themselves from Fulton county. Why do these counties continue to drain Fulton's resources? Ga 400 was meant to address the traffic issues in that area along with other improvements. The water quality down stream in South Fulton is also suffering negative effects due to the heavy population growth in the north. How about "Train Service", then we could all get involved in building or adding to our infrastructure. Things like this will happen due to over development!

Associated Press, 3-19-13

MARTA seeks feedback on GA 400 corridor initiative

ATLANTA --The Atlanta-area rapid transit system is soliciting community feedback on its Georgia 400 corridor initiative.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, or MARTA, plans to hold a public meeting Thursday at 6:30 at Mimosa Elementary School in Roswell.

MARTA says it is working with regional and corridor stakeholders to look at a number of alignment and technology options. The goal is to improve mobility and accessibility in the congested corridor.

The MARTA team plans to use the meeting to review the current status of the project, discuss the potential transit technologies and offer participants an opportunity to provide input on the alternatives that have moved forward in the analysis process.

[Story repeated on Atlanta TV station news sites, the AJC, Columbus, Ga., elsewhere in the Southeastern U.S., Midwest.]

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Flag as Inappropriate

No Name March 30, 2013 at 04:16 PM

Charlie, If the issue is getting around, then a bus should suffice. It is more flexible than rail and much less costly. Rail has to be paid by somebody. If you can't afford to use a car, then you are insinuating that you think it is OK to steal from others hard work and

have them pay your way on rail. That is not an American idea. Please read comments by Tom Miller. Bus? OK. Rail? No.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Marc April 04, 2013 at 10:39 PM

Every 36,000 jobs in public transportation generates roughly \$3.6 billion in business sales and generate nearly \$500 million in federal, state, and local tax revenues. Ga needs to wake up and smell the money.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Kyle May 30, 2013 at 03:25 AM

YES MARTA needs to expand more than just up 400 but this needs to be done and now, not in 10 to 15 years!

Recommend



2725 Holcomb Bridge Road
Across street from Holcomb Bridge Middle School
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tapestryhouseassistedliving.com

North Fulton, Georgia

Home » News » Transportation & Infrastructure

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TOP STORIES ▶

MARTA narrows options for Ga. 400 expansion: Rail could run to Windward Pkwy

by Jonathan Copsey

[write the author](#)

March 27, 2013

NORTH FULTON, Ga. – Lack of public transportation is a recognized problem in North Fulton. Officials from the Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) aim to change that by expanding bus services and, one day, extending heavy rail service possibly as far north as Windward Parkway.

At their latest meeting on the subject, March 21 at Mimosa Elementary School in Roswell, MARTA planners unveiled some preliminary sketches of what the corridor along Ga. 400 could look like.



[\(click for larger version\)](#)

Entitled "Connect 400," the study area encompasses from I-285 along Ga. 400 to the Forsyth County line, a span of about 15 miles. MARTA hopes, through the study, to identify ways to improve mobility and access to public transportation while also mixing with the established land

uses in the area.

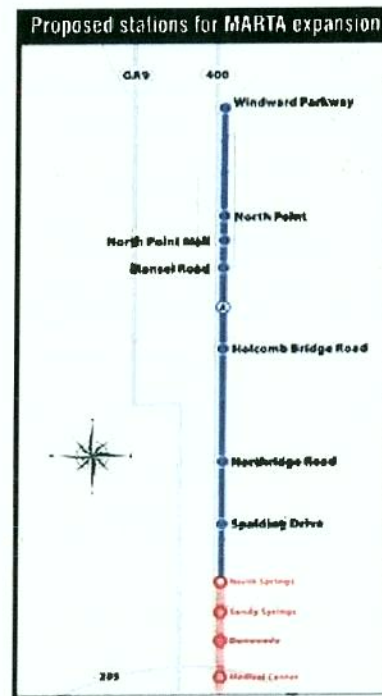
"You know how bad traffic is in this area," said Project Manager Jason Morgan. "I can only imagine what it is like to endure this every day."



Through the use of more buses moving east and west, and rail lines going north and south, planners hope to lessen the amount of traffic problems that plague North Fulton.

"There's no point in building something up here if you have to sit in a lot of traffic to get to it," Morgan said.

The primary focus of the March 21 meeting was to gauge public interest in the size of the stations along the corridor. So far, Morgan and his team are considering stations at Pitts Road, Northridge Parkway, Holcomb Bridge Road, Mansell Road, Old Milton, North Point Mall and Windward Parkway.



(click for larger version)

Not all of these stations may be built, and, depending on funding, they may be built in phases.

"If we are going to invest in this, do we have the land use patterns to make it work? How a station is designed has to coincide with the land use," Morgan said.

A large station suited for a major thoroughfare makes little sense in a residential area, for instance.

"If we have all the funding today, we're looking at least 10-15 years to finish."

It will be longer if the project is approved for federal dollars, which require more intense studies before construction. Federal funding is the ultimate goal of the study.

"This study is intended to prepare the corridor for federal and state funding," Morgan said.

Morgan's team will put together a financial plan along with an implementation plan that will be submitted to the federal government and, if they are approved, may get some funding.

The study has lasted 15 months so far. Morgan said he expects the project to be finished in the early summer.

Connect 400 is still accepting comments and suggestions. Visit <http://www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx>

or email connect400@itsmarta.com. Alternatively, go on Facebook, "Connect 400."

 [View images.](#)

Editor, Milton Herald

Print Email Link Feedback Share

Tags: Government & News & Crime

Marta

March 27, 2013 | 01:00 PM

Do NOT bring marta railways up to Alpharetta/Windward! That is a horrible idea and will only bring in more crime to the area. We don't want your trains here! STAY AWAY MARTA!

Concerned 1
Alpharetta

Rail bringing crime

March 27, 2013 | 01:25 PM

Is someone going to steal your TV and get on the train with it? I don't see what difference it makes if people already can use buses. Personally, I think the rail would be a nice way to get to the airport or to work. Sitting in traffic on 400 is no fun.

Not concerned
Alpharetta

Tired of sitting on 400.

March 27, 2013 | 09:02 PM

Bringing Marta heavy rail up this far is a huge decision if the area wants to compete for jobs and convenience. The idea that Marta brings crime is the biggest uneducated cop out known. The only people that don't want Marta rail are the ones who travel to drop off their kids at school everyday and go home right after. Get up everyday and go to a real job, take Marta everyday and then you can voice an opinion. I park at the Mansel Park/Ride, take the bus to N. Springs Marta and travel to Arts Center every single day. Not one single problem. If you took Marta everyday you would realize that its not a bunch of gang bangers. Its hard working folks that want to save money, take it for convenience and don't want to sit in traffic every morning. I read the paper, check my messages, get work done and laugh at everyone on 400 while I pass them everyday.

Finally
Alpharetta

Marta

March 28, 2013 | 06:06 AM

As a local cop I can tell you Marta does not bring crime anymore. The thugs drive now. They can't steal stuff and drag it on a train. Go back to your tennis match and stop being so head in the sand.

Tommy
Alpharetta

More delay?

March 28, 2013 | 08:20 AM

Rail stations up in 15 years? It should of happened 15 years ago!

Par
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*Nelson
Milton*

NO to MARTA in Alpharetta

March 28, 2013 | 11:31 AM

I moved away from Dekalb County to Alpharetta after the rails were put in there. They DID bring crime to the area. They WILL bring crime to our area. We do not need the rail system in Alpharetta.

*Reality
Alpharetta*

No to MARTA--Not Cost Justified

March 28, 2013 | 04:00 PM

Literally every study conducted on Mass transit shows the return on investment in heavy rail is JUST NOT COST JUSTIFIED. Atlanta is the least densely populated area with a mass transit system, and its effect on traffic congestion is virtually ZERO.

Folks, it's just not worth paying for another make-work jobs program for MARTA unions to pay for an overpriced service that will NOT HELP TRAFFIC!

Take less than 2% of the cost to build this extension and sync the traffic lights. You'd immediately feel the benefits of that for MUCH MUCH less money.

*MrKnowlAll
Johns Creek*

No, they take MARTA then STEAL a car!!

March 28, 2013 | 08:51 PM

I speak from experience on that. While cars today are a lot harder to steal than mine was 15 years ago in Buckhead where I lived (witnesses saw the perps), if you don't think bringing the rail line to Windward will increase crime, you are delusional.

And speaking of MARTA, look at the taxpayer-subsidized buses riding around Alpharetta from Old Milton Pkwy north. Up Hwy 9, over Windward, down North Point Parkway. They are practically empty! At any given time of day! So the day I see full MARTA buses in north Fulton is the day I will say that extending the rail line to Windward is validated at taxpayer expense (and personal property and safety expense).

*Jason
Milton*

Emphatic for Expansion

March 28, 2013 | 11:28 PM

I currently use MARTA Rail for transit to the airport for business trips, transit to sporting events (Falcons, Braves, & Hawks), transit to a professional training facility in Midtown, and transit to special events downtown when parking is limited/overpriced. My wife also utilizes MARTA Rail for transit to her company's training facility in Buckhead.

I think this is a forward thinking idea and support the study. My suggestion is build the Rail to Windward, with a station at Mansell, and add subsequent stations as required in the future.

How do we "fast-track" this project? How can I get involved and help?

*Supporter
Milton*

think it through

March 30, 2013 | 01:08 AM

Taxpayers subsidize more than 70% of the cost of every MARTA ride. If MARTA fares are \$2.50, the taxpayers have to pay another \$5.00 toward each ride. In addition the cost to extend MARTA heavy rail to Windward is estimated at \$3 to 4 billion. Light rail would cost half as much, but that is still pricey. MARTA or any mass transit will consume about 2/3 of out total transportation spending, but only about 5% of total trips could use MARTA.

Mass transit only accounts for 5-10% of trips in urban cities. To use mass transit, it has to go where you want to go during the time you want to go. This is tough with the low density single family homes in North Fulton. The North Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan said we would have to increase housing densities by 10x near MARTA rail lines and 3x near bus routes. Currently the apartments near Holcomb Bridge and GA 400 are one of the only areas dense enough to justify a bus route.

The question for all the rail and bus supporters is will they pay at least \$300 more per family annually in taxes to subsidize North Fulton MARTA, even if they don't use it? Also are they willing to allow 3x to 10x higher housing densities (similar to Midtown Atlanta) to generate enough riders? If yes, are you a regular MARTA rider, or do you want 'other people' to ride it so you can drive?

*suburbanite, not urbanite
Alpharetta*

NO WAY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

March 30, 2013 | 11:42 AM

The main reason I sit on 400 every day on the way to my REAL job is so I don't have hoodrats wandering through my neighborhood. YES, it will increase crime, period. We live up here so our environment is different than other areas of Atlanta, and I do not want that changed. Go walk around one of these Marta areas on a weekend. They may not be robbing you, but it is uncomfortable to say the least. I want to live in peace away from that element, so the commute is worth it.

And no, I'm not racist. People of all races are obviously welcome up here, as long as they share our values. The welfare class needs to stay where they are.

If you want public transportation, move somewhere else that already has it.

*Kim
Cumming*

Rail Attacks

March 31, 2013 | 03:38 PM

Coming soon to a rail near you.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/chi-cops-multiple-arrests-after-mag-mile-disturbances-20130330,0,2297490.story>

Earned my way here
Milton

This is getting kinda sad.

April 01, 2013 | 05:56 PM

If public transportation causes crime how do you explain Detroit, crappy public transportation but high in crime. same for New Orleans or Los Angeles. And even many places in Atlanta. And then there's this.. <http://m.theatlanticcities.com/commute/2012/01/transit-stations-may-actually-cut-down-crime/>

These false ideologies need to stop.

And to the people complaining about subsidies. ALL Transportation modes are subsidized. Roads sure don't make money. <http://dc.streetsblog.org/2013/01/23/drivers-cover-just-51-percent-of-u-s-road-spending/>

And to people complaining about density, North Fulton is much more than just single family housing. There is ALOT of commercial development along the Georgia 400 corridor that would benefit greatly by a rail extension.

Also whoever thinks that the buses in North Fulton don't get used is delusional. From personal experience the buses are standing room only during rush hour, and many-many more people would ride rail transit over bus, so the rider base is there.

And Kim, you talk about walking around "marta areas" as uncomfortable, CLEARLY you have never walked around

Decatur
Buckhead
Lindbergh
Midtown
Brookhaven
Perimeter Center
Inman Park
Candler park

just to name a few.

Atlanta is a metro area with 5 million people. You CAN NOT move 5 million people around in just private automobiles, it's just not efficient enough. If you still have a small town ideology that public transportation is crime ridden and useless, then your living in the wrong sized city. I hear Birmingham's nice.....

Joey
Roswell

Really?

April 01, 2013 | 09:02 PM

Really? So much fear...as they'd say on ESPN, "C'mon, man!"

Not Impressed
Alpharetta

@John...

April 01, 2013 | 10:25 PM

"Also whoever thinks that the buses in North Fulton don't get used is delusional."

I live and work in North Fulton. I drive daily between Windward and Old Milton north and south and east and west. I am behind, next to, and passing MARTA buses left and right at various hours throughout the day between the commute to work, from work, and during lunch hour.

Now if you do not think that the majority of the time MARTA buses are mostly empty in the routes between Old Milton and Windward in the north-south corridors of Hwy 9 and North Point Parkway, then it is YOU that is delusional, because I look at said empty buses DAILY!!!!!!!

Jason

Milton

No Northridge Station!

April 02, 2013 | 12:47 PM

I don't know what maps Marta officials are reading but the only land that is available at the Northridge Rd exit is the very slim natural barrier that shields old established neighborhoods from the 400 corridor. You will be fighting environmental groups until perdition if you even think to touch this land. Too much wildlife protection involved around the river to attempt this. If you have to run the rails down the middle of 400 that's fine but there is absolutely no need for a station here. Folks around here have to hear traffic enough from 400, we don't need to hear screeching trains as well!

Robert

Northridge Rd

Yes to the Expansion!

April 03, 2013 | 12:29 PM

I can save gas money, save miles on my car, read, get work done, get some more exercise, etc, etc, etc while watching everyone else worry about getting into an accident on 400. All for it. It would make the area more competitive and feel more like a real city. So convenient to take Marta into Atlanta, like people do in NYC, Boston, Chicago, etc.. The idea that Marta brings crime is ridiculous. You want more police on the streets, pay for it then.

Absolutely!

Alpharetta

Marta brings gangs!!

April 03, 2013 | 09:22 PM

I saw a study done that shows how many gangs ride MARTA. They spray paint things and flash weird symbols with their fingers. The study showed they ride MARTA to rob suburbanites.

NO TO MARTA because of the study's findings.

Marta Aint Smarta

Milton

I've got a better idea...

April 04, 2013 | 12:54 PM

MARTA doesn't have the funding to adequately operate and maintain the network of trains and buses that it currently has, so how in the heck is MARTA supposed to expand its North Line with wholly-inadequate revenues that are in steep decline?

Instead of waiting 10, 15, 20 or more years (or most likely, NEVER) for a death-spiraling MARTA to extend the North Line, have the North Fulton state legislative delegation make it possible for North Fulton officials to takeover the North Line and nearby connecting bus routes from MARTA and operate their own highly-functional, dependable, clean and SECURE regional transit system that is independent from MARTA.

After taking over the North Line from MARTA, North Fulton officials could extend bus and train service up the GA 400 Corridor by taking the entire North heavy rail line (from the Airport up to however as far north on GA 400 as North Fultonites want) and nearby connecting bus routes and leasing them out to a private operator for an upfront balloon payment and smaller subsequent yearly payments.

The payments from the upfront balloon payment from the private operator could be used to field a police force that was specially-trained to work on public transportation while having the train and bus lines leased out to a private operator means that the public would not have to pay to operate and maintain the train and bus lines.

ACC15_SEC14Booster
North Georgia

not cost effective

April 05, 2013 | 01:56 PM

Whoever said it would not be cost effective was correct. I remember going to a presentation 10 years ago where the cost to run the rail to Windward was \$1 billion. Now its \$4 billion and in 15 years when it is finished it will have cost \$20 billion. There will never be enough riders to justify it that expense. And agree that the crime argument is bogus.

bad idea
Alpharetta

MARTA rider

April 08, 2013 | 02:41 PM

If you've attempted to drive south on GA-400 on a weekday morning, you can clearly see that an expansion is needed. It regularly takes 50 minutes to drive to North Springs MARTA station - a normal 10-15 minute ride.

For people to think that it brings crime to the area: Just by looking at the articles on this site alone, there already is crime; car break ins, drug dealing ON SCHOOL GROUNDS, etc. Heck there was a murder of a child right in his own drive way not too long ago.

Just my opinion though...

Huh?
Alpharetta

MARTA Rail up 400

June 11, 2013 | 07:58 PM

I moved to Dawsonville 2 years ago and think it's awesome. The problem of course is the traffic to Atlanta and the expected increase over the next ten years. I agree, MARTA is poorly run and under funded. The problem is I can't stay up here when it takes me two hours on some days from

ATL. I understand many people here don't want a change, but it's pretty obvious the traffic to exit 14 is out of control. I cannot imagine in ten years. I'm voting for MARTA because it's all we have. Look at DC...it's fantastic. This will increase property values over the long run. Cobb people are fools. 10 lanes...really!. Let's have a little common sense here. I know I won't be able to enjoy the MARTA line given my age, but for the next generation, it will be great.

Gman
Dawsonville

Naysayers

June 19, 2013 | 10:53 PM

To all the naysayers who keep saying no to MARTA expansion, saying that it will bring crime: what alternatives do you guys have to in order to help with congestion? You guys just keep saying no, without any legitimate reasons or suggestions to alleviate traffic. MARTA is not filled with thugs and gangbangers; they can drive and don't need mass transit to come up to your neighborhood. That argument of crime coming when MARTA expands is so tired. MARTA can use an overhaul, especially with the way it's being funded and the management, but traffic is only gonna get worse, and you cannot move 5 million people around a metro area in just cars. Wake up, naysayers. Expansion is coming, and it should have come about 10 years ago

otis
Duluth

MARTA GA400 Expansion

July 19, 2013 | 01:34 PM

I have been riding a subway from age 11 in Philadelphia. Have ridden on public transportation in other first-tier cities, which Atlanta is not. I have been on MARTA heavy rail many times since living here in Sandy Springs and I have YET to see anyone, in all my life, carrying stolen electronics or any other stolen items on any public transportation. Thieves drive to your home, not carry stolen items to public transportation areas where there are cameras and transit police available. We are choking in our own traffic now. We cannot wait for 10 more years's worth of studies. The only reasonable way to improve this is by building and expanding a mass transit system now. We need to keep this city growing and attract more businesses, which would otherwise go elsewhere where better forms of transportation exists. YES to rail expansion on GA400 north.

Sandy Springs Resident & Project Manager

Sandy Springs Resident & Project Manager
Sandy Springs

Could be a good idea.

August 19, 2013 | 11:25 AM

The crime fear is central too Atlanta's discussion and has been for 50 years. The truth is that yes the crime might marginally go up - but the economic opportunities for both us going down and poorer folks coming up create less crime for the city as a whole. For example - we interviewed several nanny's from near Doraville and were willing to pay 10/hour but we just couldn't make it work commute wise. There are 100's of small businesses that can use skilled labor.

I like Alpharetta and trains will make it better. But having lived in Europe for a while I think the true argument is considering express tracks. When you get this far out in a subway system the trains are just too slow. Any further expansion should consider putting in express tracks between

Lindbergh-5 points-Airport. That would shave 30 minutes off downtown and airport trips and then ridership from the suburbs would really go up. Even if they can't afford 4 tracks - a 3rd one for each rush hour would do wonders to ridership.

*John
Alpharetta*

It's WAY too late

August 22, 2013 | 08:41 PM

It's way too late for any kind of expansion of MARTA, of any kind. I lived west of the Chattahoochee for most of my life and I can't tell how many times MARTA could have benefited me in commuting into the city. MARTA certainly should have expanded westward and at least terminated at Fulton Industrial (since a Six Flags terminal would have not been an option because of Cobb County's rejection on support). The minds of the ignorant cannot be changed (thugs riding the the choochoo to come steal your pearls? really?) and the metro has outgrown itself tremendously to the point that there's no real right-of-way for a MARTA train to travel. I mean, what's the point of having the line run up 400 and people have to approach the highway in their cars to park and get on the train? They might as well just jump on the highway anyway.

*Justin
Mableton, GA*

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO PLSSSSSSSSSS

September 16, 2013 | 01:31 PM

Marta to Windward increase crime!!! Please dont vote to bring Marta.

*Kris
Alpharetta*

READER COMMENTS Submission

When posting feedback please be respectful. Be nice. :

* required value

Your Name*

Town*

Email (not shown on website)*

Subject*

Neighbor Newspapers, 4-18-13

Mayors talk MARTA expansion, traffic solutions

By Nicole Dow

MARTA officials are looking at ways to increase transit services in the Ga. 400 corridor.

At last week's North Fulton Municipal Association meeting, MARTA general manager Keith Parker and Jason Morgan, MARTA project manager for the Ga. 400 Corridor Transit Initiative, updated the six mayors on the Ga. 400 study and other initiatives.

According to Morgan, bus rapid transit, light rail and heavy rail are the three options being discussed to increase transit service in the corridor. He said the goal is to select a final recommendation this spring.

Sandy Springs Mayor Eva Galambos asked why MARTA, which is operating on its depleting reserve funds, is considering the costly idea of expanding the heavy rail system.

"The thing that we have to caution with is, we don't want to walk to the table and say you can't even have this consideration," Parker said.

Morgan said they will bring the cost projections and estimations on the number of riders to the community to get input on the options.

Though Morgan said MARTA has done "a tremendous amount of community outreach," Alpharetta Mayor David Belle Isle said he and his city staff were completely unaware of a recent public meeting MARTA held in north Fulton.

He said with Alpharetta having more exits off of Ga. 400 than the other cities, there should have been better effort to involve city leaders.

Johns Creek Mayor Mike Bodker said he wants to make sure as many north Fulton residents as possible are aware of what MARTA is considering.

Parker suggested setting up future one-on-one meetings with each north Fulton mayor and the leaders of various neighborhood organizations.

Continuing the transportation discussion, a Leadership North Fulton member asked about the next step in solving traffic congestion after the T-SPLOST was rejected by voters last year.

"There is no plan B," Bodker said. "We cannot fix the problem with the current revenue."

He explained the area needs a measure like the T-SPLOST to fund a solution to traffic congestion.

Roswell Mayor Jere Wood said one solution residents can look into is living close to their jobs or places they go for recreation.

Creating walkable communities is a focus in Roswell, he said.

Milton Mayor Joe Lockwood said he is also seeing the “live, work, play” philosophy within developments in his city.

Mountain Park Mayor Jim Still said his city, with a total of about 285 homes, is in the first stages of becoming a golf cart community.

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6-17-13

County by County News

MARTA hosts rapid transit forum in Sandy Springs

MARTA is hosting a public input meeting from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. June 26 at the North Fulton Annex Service Center, 7741 Roswell Road, Sandy Springs, to evaluate transit options in the Ga. 400 Corridor, one of metro Atlanta's most congested areas. Information: Jason Morgan, MARTA Project Manager, 404-848-4494, Connect400@itsmarta.com.

Michael Alpert for the AJC

MARTA weighs expansion to North Fulton

By Andria Simmons

It's not hard to find support for expanding MARTA service in North Fulton County. What is challenging is getting the cash to build it.

That's not stopping MARTA from laying the groundwork in case future funding becomes available, though.

MARTA filed a notice to the Federal Transit Administration last week that it will hold a public meeting to get input about the potential for adding buses, light rail or heavy rail along a 12-mile stretch of Ga. 400 from Dunwoody to Alpharetta.

Currently the last stop on the MARTA red line is the North Springs station directly off Ga. 400 in Dunwoody.

The plan to expand northward is pie-in-the-sky for now because MARTA doesn't have the money and has not identified another source of local, federal or private-sector investment. Janide Sidifall, project manager for the Ga. 400 transit initiative, said the agency's latest move is neither a big step nor a baby step, but it's "planning to one day take a step" in what is at least a 10-year federal planning process.

As it's being shaped, the Ga. 400 transit expansion plan could involve adding rapid-transit bus service, with a dedicated lane where buses could bypass congestion. The current MARTA and Express bus service fights the same traffic congestion automobile drivers do.

Or, it could involve light rail (such as streetcars) from the existing North Springs MARTA station to Windward Parkway. That would include constructing as many as six stations, at Northridge, Holcomb Bridge, Mansell Road, North Point Mall, Old Milton and Windward Parkway.

A third option is to extend the existing heavy rail line, which would involve constructing all of those stations except the one at Old Milton.

Heavy rail would be the most expensive option, but it would probably attract the most passengers, Sidifall said.

Details about the cost and potential ridership of the proposed expansion were not available Thursday. However, officials said those figures would be presented at the public hearing, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Sept. 26 at Alpharetta City Hall. Written comments can also be emailed to connect400@itsmarta.com.

Yvonne Williams, president of Perimeter Community Improvement District said the four MARTA stations (Dunwoody, Medical Center, North Springs and Sandy Springs) in her 4.2-mile self-taxing business district are a big reason so many corporations have moved to the Perimeter Mall area. She fully supports an expanded transit service.

"It shows you that we have a backbone we need to build off of," Williams said. "MARTA has been very popular for years ... it's important to build off it and make it as functional as possible."

Some are still wary of a MARTA expansion, citing the agency's history of mismanagement and its declining ridership. Tom Cork, a Roswell resident who was a member of the now-defunct Tea Party of North Fulton, said he would favor bus service, but only if it was privatized. He opposes MARTA rail expansion.

"It's foolish to even think about putting down a permanent rail system," Cork said. "The ridership is low, you have to subsidize it and behind that comes repair and maintenance costs. That goes on and on indefinitely through several lifetimes."

MARTA has been studying an extension of the North Springs line since at least 2003. At that time, the area was deemed to be "not transit supportive" due to a combination of high incomes and low household and employment density.

MARTA initiated another analysis of the Ga. 400 corridor in late 2011, and that analysis is still ongoing.

MARTA is slightly farther along in the study process when it comes to two other proposed expansion lines. One is a \$1.16 billion light-rail line from the Lindbergh station to Avondale, which is 8.8 miles and would serve 10 stops. Another is a 12-mile extension of the heavy rail line along I-20 East from Indian Creek to the Mall at Stone Crest, which would involve adding five stations.

All these plans could come in handy if the federal funding tap someday reopens, however unlikely that may seem in today's fiscal climate.

It happened before, in 2010, when the Obama administration put forth a stimulus program that included \$8 billion to jump-start a high-speed intercity passenger rail service around the country.

Cities like Tampa and Charlotte benefited. However, Georgia lost out, partly because it did not have any eligible projects in the pipeline.

MARTA eyeing major expansion up Georgia 400 corridor

By Dave Williams

MARTA is planning to extend transit service along the Georgia 400 corridor in North Fulton County, with up to six new stations.

The agency is focusing on an alignment that would run heavy rail, light rail or bus rapid transit within existing right-of-way for 11.9 miles from the North Springs MARTA station in Dunwoody, Ga., north to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta, Ga., according to an "early scoping" notice of the project filed by the Federal Transit Administration.

The project would be the first expansion of the MARTA system since the Sandy Springs and North Springs stations opened in 2000, also on the Georgia 400 corridor.

"That area has been growing by leaps and bounds, particularly in terms of employment," said Janide Sidifall, project manager for MARTA. "It's a huge employment center."

Sidifall said North Fulton also is becoming a center for higher education, with Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College having established satellite campuses there and Gwinnett Technical College planning to follow suit.

MARTA plans to release cost estimates on the three alternative technologies within the next couple of weeks, in time for a Sept. 26 public meeting on the project, she said.

Estimates prepared in 2000 for extending MARTA rail service north from the Dunwoody station through Sandy Springs to North Springs came in at \$283.6 million.

The bus rapid transit option would be the least expensive, followed by light rail and heavy rail.

Sidifall said other factors besides costs will go into MARTA's analysis of the three alternatives, including ridership. Heavy rail would be expected to attract the most passengers, she said.

MARTA weighs North Fulton County extension

By Douglas John Bowen

Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is considering extending transit service roughly parallel with Georgia State Highway 400 in North Fulton County, with MARTA rapid rail, light rail, or Bus Rapid Transit options being considered.

MARTA is eyeing nearly 12 miles of existing right-of-way north of North Springs MARTA station in Dunwoody, Ga., to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta, Ga. The project, if implemented, would be the first expansion of the MARTA system since the Sandy Springs and North Springs stations opened in 2000, also on the Georgia 400 corridor, which runs north-northeast from Atlanta.

"That area has been growing by leaps and bounds, particularly in terms of employment," MARTA Project Manager Janide Sidifall said to local media. "It's a huge employment center."

MARTA cost estimates on three technology options will be available at a public meeting Sept. 26 reviewing the project, Sidifall said.

Created in 1972, MARTA began operating rapid rail transit in June 1979.

Associated Press, 8-30-13

MARTA eyes expansion in Atlanta's northern suburbs

ATLANTA (AP) - Officials with the Atlanta area's public transit system are studying the idea of expanding the service farther north into the metro area's sprawling northern suburbs.

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority will hold a public meeting about the concept on Sept. 26 at Alpharetta City Hall.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports (<http://bit.ly/17mQUkQ>) that several ideas are being explored, including adding buses, light rail or heavy rail along a 12-mile stretch of Georgia 400 from Dunwoody to Alpharetta.

Details about the cost and potential ridership of the proposed expansion were not available Thursday. However, officials said those figures would be presented at the public hearing.

Alpharetta-Milton Patch, 8-31-13

MARTA Eyes North Fulton Expansion

A public hearing for MARTA's proposal will be held at 6:30 p.m. Thursday Sept. 26 at Alpharetta City Hall.

By Kristal Dixon

MARTA is exploring the possibility of expanding its footprint in north Fulton County.

The public transit system is looking at possibly providing buses or train service on a 12-mile stretch of Georgia 400 between Dunwoody and Alpharetta, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

MARTA has filed a notice with the Federal Transportation Administration to study the probability, and a public hearing has been set for 6:30 p.m. Thursday Sept. 26 at Alpharetta City Hall.

The proposal could range from providing bus rapid transit service, extending the line from the North Springs station to Windward parkway.

That would involve adding stations at locations such as Northridge, Holcomb Bridge, Mansell Road, North Point Mall, Old Milton and Windward Parkways, according to the AJC.

Tell us: would you support extending MARTA's service in North Fulton County?

KT August 31, 2013 at 08:49 AM

Alpharetta is a city that is rapidly expanding. Extended public transport is needed and overdue. Governor Deal has brought more jobs to Fulton County and Alpharetta. We have many companies that need employees to work in Alpharetta, and we need good public transport. Does anyone want to see traffic on the GA400 get even worse, because it will without more Marta stations.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Jill Burrows Jones August 31, 2013 at 09:17 AM

Public transit in Alpharetta is sadly lacking. We need more options for public transit for our current residents as well as the many who are locating to this area every year. We also need to think about the increasing traffic problems on GA400. Time to step up and make it easier for people to get to work, school and to maybe even come and visit this area with all the new developments like Avalon and the new City Center being put up.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg August 31, 2013 at 12:14 PM

Traffic is bad on Ga. 400 and always has been...but will MARTA will change all that? Absolutely NOT a given. We may or may not need rail, but Ga. 400 will remain a consistently high traffic highway regardless. Alpharetta is expanding in only 2 ways: the Avalon development and the potential for development in and around City Center. Does this justify MARTA rail? Ideally, those new workers associated with these developments will live in and around Alpharetta - that's the win/win situation. As for customers to those retail shops....are you saying they will be taking MARTA to Avalon to shop? Seriously?

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

KT August 31, 2013 at 12:24 PM

Governor Deal has brought more jobs, such as IT to Alpharetta and wants to increase the amount of the companies here. Having large companies and jobs with such limited access is ridiculous and will stifle the growth of the city and state. Governor Deal wants the state to progress, not stay in the Dark Ages.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg August 31, 2013 at 02:04 PM

Alpharetta had large companies long before Guvna Deal. The trend in our nation is to have a smaller carbon footprint, i.e. live, work, play in or near one place. Plenty of 'access' for new workers in Alpharetta because there are plenty of living opportunities nearby. This is progress - not stifling. What is stifling is thinking you have to live 25 miles from where you work. The Governor must be living in the dark ages.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

KT August 31, 2013 at 04:12 PM

Recently, there have been several large companies move into the area and the state intends to try and continue this, making Alpharetta a top employment city. With that, it needs to keep up with its infrastructure. What is so hard to understand about that. I don't think most people want to spend 2 hours going to and from work. Marta is a good option. This whole article is simply about how the city has grown and it needs to keep up that growth with adequate transportation. I'm not interested in debating with you. If you want to reduce "carbon footprints" then a rail system would suffice. Yes, more pollution from cars is just what we need here.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg August 31, 2013 at 05:30 PM

I don't mind if you don't debate me. But, until I hear a logical rationale for bringing MARTA rail to Alpharetta, I will continue to debate it. And as a debater I am willing to be persuaded to be in favor of the other side, but so far this blog does not give any good reasons for light rail in Alpharetta. Large companies coming here? They've already been here and we haven't needed rail. Ease traffic on 400? In your dreams. Supply the needs

of a rapidly expanding Alpharetta? What rapidly expanding Alpharetta? I already addressed that above. Still waiting for a good reason for rail to come here.....

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Jill Burrows Jones August 31, 2013 at 05:36 PM

I do not believe the growth of Alpharetta is limited to the new city center or Avalon, those are just two very visible additions at this time. My daughter used to live in Chicago when she went to college and took public transit everywhere she went as she did not see the need for a car in the city. Their transit also extends to much of the suburban area which made it easy for her (and others) to visit friends and areas outside the city area without having to drive and vise versa. I'm not sure why those of you that think public transit extending further into our area will bring in a "criminal element". Look to the larger cities in the US and almost anywhere in Europe where public transit is a safe and more eco-friendly alternative than driving a gas guzzling car to and from work every day. Would that it were that we could all have jobs within a short distance of our homes, but that's not the case for many people. How about kids going to college at GSU, GA Tech and the myriad other schools outside of this area? I think making it easier and more cost effective for people to travel both into this area and out of it is a good idea.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg August 31, 2013 at 05:44 PM

Well, don't lump me in with 'those of you who think it will bring in a criminal element' because I never said that. I simply want to hear a good rationale for it. I actually do agree with one thing you said above...it would make it easier for kids to get to GSU or Ga Tech. With regard to Chicago.... it's fine to look at other places, but Atlanta is no Chicago.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa August 31, 2013 at 07:36 PM

WHEN was the last time you saw one of these choking exhaust spewing buses full? Half full? A quarter full? THIS Marta expansion stuff is BS. If anything I would REMOVE existing Marta. I drive all the streets in northern Alpharetta and these buses slow traffic, clog our streets (local, residential, etc) and there is NO ONE riding them. And heck yes there is a criminal element involved when you bring in massive mass transit. A man in Sandy Springs remarked to me that we (ALpharetta residents) deserved to get what he as a Sandy SPrings resident has gotten with all the expanded crime. If we wanted to life of the perimeter cities - WE WOULD HAVE MOVED THERE. But we did not. Don't destroy Alpharetta just yet with more Marta. It's already hard to breathe next to these buses. The road to hell is paved with good intentions. Let's not hurry with yet another. PS. Marta is so God awful to ride that I won't take my little kids on their trains even though they love trains. Every time I have been I do not feel safe, people are cussin and yelling, changing dirty diapers in front of me and the smell of urine is pervasive. Clean

up what you have MARTA before you want to move your dirt trap trains into my neighborhood.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa August 31, 2013 at 07:38 PM

KT do you use Marta trains to get to your job? (Would love to know given your viewpoint)

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg August 31, 2013 at 07:54 PM

Jill speaks of growth in Alpharetta that is not Avalon or City Center. Please name it so we can have it all out there on the table and discuss whether or not it merits MARTA rail expansion. Also, despite the fact that I sympathize with the few kids that need to get into Ga. State and Ga. Tech from Alpharetta and despite the fact that I had to take MARTA rail during my tenure at Georgia State way back when in the 1980's, I would venture to say that the majority of kids we have in Alpharetta will NOT be riding rail to Ga. State and Ga. Tech. That's a demographic fact.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Daniel McAlonan August 31, 2013 at 10:02 PM

I ride MARTA trains down to school 2 days a week every week and I live just off Windward Parkway. Currently, I drive down to North Springs MARTA station, park, and ride from there. Are the buses empty? Yep, sure are. But we aren't talking about buses here, we're talking about rail. Are the trains empty? Not close; in fact, they are often standing room only. I hear people say crime will increase, but I honestly don't worry too much. What are people gonna do? Break into my house, unmount my flat screen TV then carry it over to MARTA with them and ride down to the southside? I feel like someone might catch on during that mile walk carrying a big ole TV. Let's not fool ourselves, thieves and criminals have cars like everyone else, even if they are stolen. And those cars are 100 times faster than MARTA will ever be. MARTA is probably the worst getaway method in the history of crime. The people who worry about crime and MARTA expanding amuse me because you probably never ride MARTA or very rarely do (aka just to get to a Falcons game.) You don't like MARTA? Fine, don't ride it, but get out the way and quit blocking it for those of us who do rely on it.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa August 31, 2013 at 10:22 PM

Do you own property up here Daniel? Ever heard of "quality of life?" Well there are documents that detail how the addition of transit stations increase crime in their areas. If you love mass transit rail then move south to Northsprings. Enjoy. But don't ruin what we (still) have up here. PS. You don't know criminals very well if you think that they "need" cars. LOL. My bros house was robbed and the guy did not have a car... do

rapists need cars? thieves and thugs? Nope. All they need is an easy way to meet a new neighborhood to prey on.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 01, 2013 at 08:49 AM

I'm thrilled to read that Daniel takes MARTA rail to school. :) I do think you are in the minority and will stay in the minority when it comes to folks taking rail from Alpharetta for classes though. re: Lisa's point. I'd like to see those documents that detail links to crime and rail.. I'm not doubting it. I'd simply like to see them. Wonder if Ga. Tech does all the studies on MARTA rail since they did the Beltline studies?

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa September 01, 2013 at 09:16 AM

Julie, here is just one that I found when I googled it... but you don't have to even have all this to know it.... you just have to look at cities, neighborhoods, residents, and their property values. Alpharetta should remain Alpharetta and not transform into the next crime riddled Sandy Springs. <http://newtownline.patec.org/documents/TrainStationsCrime.pdf>

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

KT September 01, 2013 at 09:45 AM

Lisa - YES, I just recently used Marta for over a year and the buses are FULL in the early morning and early evening, as well as the trains. Many professionals that need to commute and do not wish to drive GA400 at these times of day use Marta. Yes, and sometimes the buses do smell, but this is not a regular occurrence. I know of several large companies that have recently moved into Alpharetta/Roswell and are still seeking large numbers of employees. These employees need a convenient way to get to work. Not everyone wants or can afford to live in Alpharetta. These companies bring revenue to Alpharetta. The argument that we've had large companies come to Alpharetta and not needed a rail system is short sighted at best. As I personally know of the difficulty of hiring qualified/skilled personnel in the Alpharetta/Roswell area.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

D September 01, 2013 at 09:48 AM

I come from Long Island where we have a system called the LIRR. Each morning thousands of commuters drive to the station, park their car in the station's parking lot, for which they pay the town a yearly fee, and go to work in Manhattan. In the meantime the Long Island Expressway is bumper to bumper as is Southern State Pkwy, Northern State, etc., etc. The towns along the rail line are the equal of anything here and no, it doesn't bring criminals...Escalades do. If you think a Marta train is bad, dirty or smelly, then you obviously have never ridden a New York Subway train. If you want to blame anything for ruining our bucolic way of life here in Alpharetta and Milton it's the hundreds

of homes that are being built. Tell me, how do you plan to drive down Rucker Road, Crabapple and Mayfield???? Can't do it now...you want a Library at a corner that is backed up every night, but that's ok, after all, it's MILTON! Everywhere you look they are building and now the Islamic center is going to expand...I can't get out of my subdivision before 10:00 in the morning because of traffic. This is the land of "no left turns." Remember, young families...2 cars, grown families...5 cars. Think about it.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa September 01, 2013 at 10:05 AM

D - I DO COME FROM NY! I ESCAPED IT! I did smell everything! In the city I smelled the subway and the streets, and in the oh to nearby burbs I smelled the Metro North! YUCK. It's all a union, gov't mess. Those trains are way too expensive. I refused to pay (and couldn't afford to) when I was in NY last month. If there is a demand here businesses can find a way to fill it! Let them start their own van lines, carpools, pickups, etc. Private industry will innovate when NOT given a gov't crutch in the form of a hand out. Privatize! We don't need more gov't, pseudo biz (Marta) intrusive solutions. And Atlanta is way different than NY. The configurations of the city are totally different. Our perimeter cities and biz growth is not like that NY. People should live near where they work anyway. Or live where you want to live but don't expect tax payers to find your solutions. Yes, I totally agree with you about all the OVER building on Mayfield, Rucker, etc. The zoning laws are the destruction of the area. There is NO reason the zoning, or city council should have allowed for such DENSE building in these areas you describe. I am moving exactly there and I firmly believe that a great disservice has been done to the community and historic infrastructure. Why the gov't allowed this I can not understand. Greed? More tax dollars (or REVENUE) as they like to call it? Shame on them. And I do not like paying for libraries, an unfortunate utopian and Socialist vision, chosen by some but paid for by ALL. So of course the gov't chose a ridiculous location. They will be telling us which doc to go to soon and what we can have or not have done.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa September 01, 2013 at 10:16 AM

D - As for the Islamic center, welcome to our new country of Islamic domination. Behind my childhood home NY lived a modest church.... The Muslims bought it, erected a full school, put in soda machines, basketball courts, huge parking lots, a giant lit up fluorescent green Arabic sign (facing our home), and shout the calls to prayer while keeping the neighborhood awake till all hours to fit their needs. They also put up all the largest flags you could find of every Islamic country in the world. On Fridays you find the residential streets clogged with cars parked on the lawns of private citizens. I know Islam and their intentions quite well. When they told the city of Alpharetta and its citizens that it would not expand it was using TAQIYAH, lying to benefit the furthering of ISLAM. Islam means submission, and to get there they will use whatever means possible. Residential, illegally zoned mosques are a plague across the country. On this near anniversary of 9/11, the worst attack by Islam on our soil, they are ever closer to achieving their goal, submission of our culture. I go to Kroger now and see only a

woman's eyes through her Burqa. How long or short till we become the UK? COME TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING ON SEPT 5th at 7:30pm and the ALPHARETTA CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON Sept 23rd.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa September 01, 2013 at 10:19 AM

KT, since when did the issue of biz needing labor become the taxpayer citizens issue? Stop thinking as a dependent and find solutions on your own or have your biz find those solutions. Like I said above, biz can innovate and come up with ideas if they want to be located in Alpharettta so badly. This country was NOT founded upon asking for gov't handouts. Private businesses are the great drivers of innovation and customer solutions.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 01, 2013 at 10:55 AM

KT, who exactly ARE these companies moving to Alpharetta that you speak of and that are going to need a northern expansion of the MARTA rail service in order to get employees? Fact remains that the modern day Alpharetta boomed in the 1980's precisely because of large companies coming here. We are very well acquainted with this....and we have done it quite nicely without rail service north of the North Springs station. I don't hate rail per se, but your justification is not a good one. And again to the point of comparing Atlanta to Chicago or New York....Atlanta is NO Chicago and NO New York. The differences are extreme and MARTA is extremely different from rail in both those cities. This is one reason I have been so wary of the Avalon development....I see a whole barage of issues following it, including rail. Avalon is looking to become another Atlantic Station (NAP owns both). I loathe and detest Atlantic Station.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 01, 2013 at 11:40 AM

Also, KT, what KIND of 'highly qualified personnel' have you been unable to find in the Alpharetta area? Because judging from what I know about wage earner demographics in the Alpharetta area, we have extremely qualified people in many professions. What profession do you speak of that necessitates MARTA rail?

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Lisa September 01, 2013 at 06:07 PM

Right on, Julie! Feel the same way about rail and Avalon.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Gael Antone September 01, 2013 at 07:51 PM

Love these 'educated' naysayers! Bring it on! Long time coming and allow those that are against continue to commute at 3 miles per hour.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 01, 2013 at 09:10 PM

@Gael -Actually I'm asking the pro-MARTA expansion folks to educate me. I prefer objectivity and would love to hear some objective reasons why MARTA expansion outweighs the negatives. Can you provide this? Would love to hear it.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

EV September 02, 2013 at 12:24 AM

Lisa-- Did you actually read the link you posted. I ask because the Conclusion clearly refutes your argument (copy/pasted below) "It is ironic that rail access is actually found to reduce crime in the representative white suburban neighborhood, because most of the opposition to rail transit has come from white suburban residents. This opposition, however, may only superficially have to do with concerns over crime. The real motivation may be racial bigotry (Bayor 2000)."

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 02, 2013 at 09:39 AM

@EV I read it - thoroughly. If this is the only research to support expansion of rail, then it's not enough. Several problems with the paper: 1) it uses data from 1991-1994. 2) it uses data from 31 rail stations located within city of Atlanta which spans from Fulton to Dekalb; 3) it does NOT use data in the suburban 7 stations north of the city which are most relevant to this discussion because of their similarities to Alpha/Milton; 4) it does not include specific illegal drug-related crimes; 5) and finally, the research clearly states that rail access is found to increase neighborhood crime in those neighborhoods located close to poor people.....I know this is shocking to some, but we actually have poor people out here in Alpharetta and Milton. Is an interesting study, but take it for what it's worth.

1 Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Julie Hollingsworth Hogg September 02, 2013 at 09:44 AM

2 other problems with the paper: it does not specifically state the exact parameters of the study area in terms of proximity to the MARTA rail stations (or did I miss this) and lastly - it does not give data on crime near bus stops. Just rail. Lots of holes in this study.

Recommend

Flag as Inappropriate

Steven Stewart September 05, 2013 at 05:17 PM

I think long term having a MARTA rail expand outwards is a logical solution to reducing traffic and providing easy access to the airport/sporting events. The population in this area is only going to get larger and traffic is only going to get worse. In the short term; however, until Federal Money is available for expansion, we need to seek other options. For example, why is there not a no-fee car pool lane on GA 400 during rush hour like there is on almost every other artery into Atlanta? It would seem the car pool lane would be a no brainer as a quick fix to alleviate traffic congestion.

Associated Press, 8-30-13

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MARTA weighs North Fulton County extension

By Douglas John Bowen

Atlanta's Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is considering extending transit service roughly parallel with Georgia State Highway 400 in North Fulton County, with MARTA rapid rail, light rail, or Bus Rapid Transit options being considered.

MARTA is eyeing nearly 12 miles of existing right-of-way north of North Springs MARTA station in Dunwoody, Ga., to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta, Ga. The project, if implemented, would be the first expansion of the MARTA system since the Sandy Springs and North Springs stations opened in 2000, also on the Georgia 400 corridor, which runs north-northeast from Atlanta.

"That area has been growing by leaps and bounds, particularly in terms of employment," MARTA Project Manager Janide Sidifall said to local media. "It's a huge employment center."

MARTA cost estimates on three technology options will be available at a public meeting Sept. 26 reviewing the project, Sidifall said.

Created in 1972, MARTA began operating rapid rail transit in June 1979.

A new MARTA: Good news highlighted by GM Keith Parker

By David Pendered

MARTA GM Keith Parker on Friday painted a portrait of MARTA that's dramatically improved from the doom-and-gloom image sketched in last year's management audit by KPMG.

Parker presented MARTA as a service provider that's determined to balance its budget by raising money through land leases and improving customer service so more people want to use the system. One dramatic indicator of the new approach: MARTA is hiring bus drivers, as opposed to slashing payroll expenses.

As for media reports about expanding service in the Ga. 400 corridor, Parker said the route will go into the pot for consideration with two other routes that have long been considered: I-20 east and the Clifton corridor.

"For whatever reason, 400 caught the attention of the media; but as I stressed to them, 400 is not a favorite," Parker said during a presentation to Georgia Stand-Up.

Parker compared the three routes to children: "Each has challenges and all three are very expensive."

Parker said the I-20 route will be put on the market to determine if the private sector has any interest in helping to build the route, Parker said. Though Parker didn't say when it will happen, he said MARTA intends to issue a request for qualifications for service east of Atlanta along I-20.

As Parker talks up MARTA's efforts to meet its challenges, the state Legislature continues to contemplate a sweeping reorganization of MARTA. Parker noted that the state can take over MARTA if its reserve fund falls to a certain level. That level will be reached under MARTA's current budget trajectory, Parker said.

Parker fielded more than 25 questions from an audience of perhaps 100 at the monthly meeting of Stand-Up. The organization promotes equitable development in projects including the future Falcons stadium and redevelopment of Fort McPherson.

Highlights on Parker's remarks include, in no particular order:

Station upgrades related to the new Falcons stadium – MARTA will upgrade if the stadium is built on the south site in order to attract fans headed to the stadium;
Public safety – The perception and reality of passenger security on the system is of paramount importance and MARTA expects to have security cameras on every bus and train car by January, in addition to cell phone apps to report problems;

Fare increases – Two increases totaling 35 cents over the next two years were replaced by a plan to raise each fare by a dime every two years;

Atlanta Streetcar – Atlanta likely will take over management of the system, after MARTA provides technical advice to build the system and get it operational;

Gulch redevelopment – MARTA has no direct role in the planned \$1 billion redevelopment around the Five Points station;

Street vendors around stations – They are outside MARTA's control because they work on public streets, which are beyond MARTA's jurisdiction;

Concessions inside MARTA stations – To improve customer's experience and make money, MARTA intends to lease space to fast food restaurants such as McDonalds and Dunkin Donuts.

In regards to expansion plans, both the I-20 and Clifton corridor have already been studied extensively.

Both were on the list for funding if voters had approved the proposed 1 percent sales tax for transportation that was on the ballot in July 2012. No source of money – either locally or from the federal government – has been identified to build any new rail service.

The Ga. 400 proposal has been discussed since before the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The plan now being advanced would examine the potential for using heavy rail, light rail, or bus rapid transit to extend dedicated service from just north of I-285 to almost the border of Fulton and Forsyth counties. Specifically, the plan would link the North Springs station with a new one at Windward Parkway.

MARTA Looks to Expand Public Transit Offerings to North Fulton

How many times have you used a MARTA bus or train to get to a Braves or Falcons game or maybe to make it to the airport without having to pay for parking? Each day, some 400,000-plus passengers use the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) to move around the city. However, for residents living in the city's northern suburbs, taking advantage of this affordable public transportation option hasn't been easy.

MARTA has been Atlanta's rapid-transit system since 1971. Originally started as just a bus system, MARTA expanded to include rail service beginning in 1979. Currently, the authority has the majority of its operations in Fulton and DeKalb Counties with two bus stations in Cobb County at Cumberland Mall and Six Flags, as well as a rail station in Clayton County at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The authority also operates several park and ride facilities at Windward Parkway, Mansell Road, Stone Mountain and a couple of other locations.

However, recent news from the authority reveals that it is exploring the potential to expand its bus and/or rail offerings for the first time in 13 years to include a 12-mile stretch of GA 400 from Dunwoody to Alpharetta.

The plan, which hasn't been solidified, could include bus rapid transit service or an extension of the rail line from the North Springs station to Windward Parkway with as many as six stations in between at key locations such as Mansell Road and North Point Mall.

This expansion would bring relief to the many North Fulton new home residents commuting in the often-times traffic jammed corridor. "That area has been growing by leaps and bounds, particularly in terms of employment," said Janide Sidifall, project manager for MARTA in a story on 11 Alive. "It's a huge employment center." Sidfall also mentioned that the North Fulton area has become a hub for higher education with campuses for Georgia Perimeter College, Georgia State University and a future Georgia Gwinnett College campus.

If you're interested in learning more about this expansion or have input, the authority will hold its first public hearing on the matter on September 26 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Alpharetta City Hall (2 Main Street).

ActiveRain.com, 9-5-13

MARTA Eyes Major Expansion on 400 North

By Thom Abbott

Having just been in and around Atlanta today conducting real estate business, there is that seven-letter word that comes to mind...traffic.

It's pretty hard to escape it in Atlanta. A major metropolitan area that has seen absolutely NO transit construction in some 13 years, and hardly any highway construction to help with our long standing love affair with our automobiles. Mind you, that love affair is caused by our urban sprawl and the need to get from Point A to Point B. And not any other options that the car.

But could that be about to change?

MARTA Eyes Major Expansion on 400 North

It was reported in the Atlanta Business Chronicle today that MARTA is planning to extend transit service North, up the Georgia 400 corridor, with as many as 6 additional stations. (I can hear people in Forsyth County doing the Happy Dance, and others going...there goes our quality of life!)

MARTA would look at using some 11.9 miles of existing right-of-way along GA400 from the existing end of the line North Springs station in Dunwoody all the way to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta. Options range from heavy rail(what the current MARTA system is) to light rail or bus rapid transit.

The project would be the first expansion of the MARTA system since the Sandy Springs and North Springs stations opened in 2000, also on the Georgia 400 corridor.

Can you imagine enjoying the urban, walkable life style of Midtown Atlanta and be able to take a train to work in Alpharetta? Mind you, there will be some transfer involved as I would guess the stations will not be close to ALL the office complexes that have sprung up in that area over the years.

Let's see what's announced later next month!

Atlanta Business Chronicle, 9-6-13

MARTA could boost North Fulton growth

By Dave Williams and Douglas Sams

Developers already know transit is a magnet for Fortune 500 companies expanding along Atlanta's Perimeter highway.

MARTA's plan to expand its service network well north of Interstate 285, first reported by Atlanta Business Chronicle Aug. 29, could make the Georgia 400 corridor the next hot spot for high-end office development. (See related story, Page 13A.)

"We know it would be a huge boon for North Fulton," said Jeff Bellamy with the commercial real estate brokerage firm Jones Lang LaSalle Inc. "A national real estate director whose company occupies space in a city with transportation options gives transit a lot of weight when making decisions about expansions or relocations."

MARTA will host a public meeting Sept. 26 to gather feedback on a proposal to extend transit service 11.9 miles along Georgia 400 from the North Springs station in Dunwoody to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta and build up to six new stations along the way. That public input will help MARTA officials decide whether to pursue heavy rail, light rail or bus rapid transit.

No matter which technology MARTA chooses, such an expensive undertaking is too rich for today's cash-strapped public sector. Thus, MARTA likely will look to private investors to help finance the project, possibly with profits from transit-oriented development that could be built around the new stations.

The North Line project would be MARTA's first expansion since 2000, when the Sandy Springs and North Springs stations went into service.

At the time, prospects for extending the line further north along Georgia 400 were dubious. A study by MARTA early in the 2000s concluded that population and employment density in North Fulton weren't sufficient to support transit.

But much has changed during the last decade. A market overview consultant Kimley-Horn and Associates Inc. undertook recently on behalf of the North Fulton Community Improvement District turned up the following:

The population of Fulton County north of the Chattahoochee River grew by 27.2 percent between 2000 and 2012, from 195,342 to 248,481.

The number of housing units in the area increased by 30.3 percent during those dozen years, from 74,495 in 2000 to more than 97,000 in 2012.

Of the estimated 140,438 jobs in North Fulton in 2012, 112,631 were filled by commuters coming from outside of North Fulton, while more than 81,000 North Fulton residents were commuting to jobs outside of the area.

“One of the things North Fulton does is import a lot of labor,” said Brandon Beach, executive director of the North Fulton CID, an organization of businesses headquartered in Alpharetta that tax themselves to finance transportation improvements. “Our nighttime and daytime populations are a lot different. People are coming here because of the jobs.”

For years, metro Atlanta’s largest corporations located on the region’s northwest side in office projects like the Galleria Office Park. But over time, those corporations gravitated to Dunwoody and Sandy Springs to take advantage of the transit connectivity provided by four MARTA stations.

The Perimeter area now boasts by far the metro region’s largest concentration of office buildings.

A prime example of the key role transit plays in making the Perimeter attractive is insurance giant State Farm, now considering a new Perimeter campus to be built around the Dunwoody MARTA station.

Now, the action is moving further north. Accounting giant Ernst & Young LLP moved an information technology unit this year from downtown Atlanta to a gated office development in Alpharetta, where it’s using shuttle service to transport employees from the project, known as Sanctuary Park, to the North Springs MARTA station.

Expanding MARTA’s North Line deeper into North Fulton would be a “bonanza” for developers and building owners, said Sam Holmes, a vice chairman with commercial real estate services company CBRE Inc.

Although the sprawling Atlanta region continues to depend on automobiles for the vast majority of trips to and from work, transit is “front of mind” for many corporations looking for a place to set up shop, he said.

“They almost always put it on the list of their priorities,” Holmes said.

Few North Fulton developers are better positioned to develop a transit-oriented project anchored by a Fortune 500 company than Atlanta-based Cousins Properties Inc. It has just shy of 20 acres along Westside Parkway and a 9-acre site at the corner of North Point Drive and Haynes Bridge Road in Alpharetta.

New development in North Fulton remains hindered by a gap between current rents and the steeper rental rates a new building would require. Even so, brokers are still inquiring about those sites on behalf of companies, said John McColl, executive vice president of Cousins Properties.

McColl said it's hard to speculate what a MARTA expansion would mean to Cousins' development options on those sites. But he said the company, which owns some of Atlanta's largest office towers, supports expanding MARTA service.

"We know from our own experiences in downtown and Midtown that access to transit is important for an organization when it's considering a relocation," McColl said. "It may not be at the top of the list, but for the most progressive companies, it's top five."

MARTA

Neighbor Newspapers, 9-18-13

Alpharetta council members not sold on MARTA expansion plans

By Rachel Kellogg

MARTA is looking at bringing rapid transit up Ga. 400 and into Alpharetta, but city council members aren't convinced their citizens will be on board.

At Monday's council meeting, MARTA project manager Janide Sidifall presented findings from the on-going study, Connect 400, which is looking at long-range transit options for an area extending from Perimeter Center to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta.

According to Sidifall, the project has been narrowed down to three high-capacity transit options – heavy rail transit, light rail transit and bus rapid transit.

The project team has held four public meetings on the subject to gain input from the community and stakeholders.

Sidifall said the question of funding has come up in these meetings.

“A lot of people have said, 'well, there's no transportation funding. How are we going to fund it?' That's a big question for us and something that we're working on,” she said.

Mayor David Belle Isle said since the transit authority is already operating at a deficit, “giving MARTA more responsibility isn't the best idea.”

Sidifall also said “there's very strong community support for heavy-rail transit” and said community members along the 11-mile corridor – not necessarily from Alpharetta – have expressed a desire to leave their cars at home when they go out.

But Councilman D.C. Aiken pointed out that the project team had not held any input sessions in Alpharetta before that night, even though four of the six proposed stations are in Alpharetta, at Mansell Road, North Point, Old Milton Parkway and Windward Parkway.

“You do need to get community support,” he said.

Sidifall said the team will be collecting community and stakeholder input through about Oct. 28.

"We will use all of that information to make a determination and a recommendation to the MARTA board," she said.

Council members expressed concern that they have been out of the loop on the project; Councilman Michael Cross said he didn't realize the process was so close to recommending a plan for adoption.

The next input meeting will be held at Alpharetta City Hall Sept. 26 from 6:30 until 8:30 p.m.

The purpose of the meeting will be to gather public comment on three alternative plans.

Information, including complete study documents, on MARTA's proposed north Fulton expansion can be found at www.itsmarta.com/northline-documents.aspx.

MARTA also has a Facebook page dedicated to the expansion at <http://www.facebook.com/Connect400>.

What's next?:

A public input session will be held at Alpharetta City Hall Sept. 26 from 6:30 until 8:30 p.m.

WAGA-TV, 9-19-13

MARTA meeting on expanding service along Georgia 400

ATLANTA - MARTA is looking at expanding its service along Georgia 400 at a meeting next week.

The Atlanta transit authority is considering transit improvements including light rail, heavy rail and bus service. The meeting is set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday. It's at the Alpharetta City Hall located at 2 Main Street in Alpharetta.

There's also an open house set for 6:30 p.m.

Alpharetta-Milton Patch, 9-19-13

MARTA Plans Meeting in Alpharetta on Ga. 400 Expansion

MARTA will solicit community input on the potential expansion of transit service and improved mobility along the Ga. 400 corridor.

By Kristal Dixon

MARTA, along with the Federal Transit Administration, will gather at Alpharetta City Hall next week to solicit community input on the possible expansion of transit service and improved mobility along Georgia 400.

An open house will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Thursday Sept. 26, which will be followed by an hour-long presentation.

MARTA staff will be on hand to receive feedback and take questions from residents, review the progress of the project and discuss possible next steps.

The Ga. 400 Study has set forth alternatives that can be done to improve transit along the corridor, such as light-rail, heavy-rail and bus rapid transit.

Analysis on the alternatives is needed for the agency to qualify for federal funding, and is required by the National Environmental Policies Act (NEPA).

If residents can't attend the meeting, written comments can be sent to Janide Sidifall, Office of Transit Systems Planning, MARTA, 2424 Piedmont Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30324-330 by Oct. 28.

For more information or to submit comments online, visit MARTA's website, contact Sidifall at (404) 848.5828 or e-mail the project team at Connect400@itsmarta.com.

[Note: Repeated on the Sandy Springs Patch.]

Cumming Patch, 9-20-13

MARTA to Hold Public Meeting on GA 400 Expansion

The meeting in nearby Alpharetta is to solicit community input on the potential expansion of transit service and improved mobility along GA 400.

Posted by Brande Poulnot

MARTA, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration, is holding a public meeting at Alpharetta City Hall, Thursday, Sept.26, to solicit community input on the potential expansion of transit service and improved mobility along GA. 400, one of metro Atlanta's most congested, fast-growing corridors.

An Open House will be held from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., followed by an hour-long presentation. Information about the study will be on display and MARTA staff will be available to get feedback, review the project's progress, discuss next steps and answer questions. Alpharetta City Hall is located at 2 Main St., 30009.

An announcement said the GA 400 study has identified a set of alternatives for possible transit improvements in the corridor—such as light-rail, heavy-rail and bus rapid transit—as part of an alternatives analysis that is needed to qualify for federal funding participation. MARTA is proceeding with the evaluation of these alternatives as part of an early scoping process required by the National Environmental Policies Act.

The potential transit alternatives are only being evaluated at this time, the statement said. No determination about a preferred alternative or action has been made, nor have funding sources been identified. Information about these alternatives, including costs and projected ridership, also will be available.

If you cannot attend, send written comments to Janide Sidifall, Office of Transit Systems Planning, MARTA, 2424 Piedmont Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30324, by Oct. 28.

For more information or to submit comments online, visit <http://www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx> or contact Sidifall, MARTA Project Manager, at 404-848-5828 or email the project team at Connect400@itsmarta.com.

Roswell Patch, 9-25-13

MARTA to Hold North Fulton Public Meeting on Ga. 400 Expansion

Posted by Wendy Parker, Editor

MARTA, in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration is holding a public meeting at Alpharetta City Hall, Thursday, Sept. 26, to solicit community input on the potential expansion of transit service and improved mobility along Ga. 400, one of metro Atlanta's most congested, fast-growing corridors.

An Open House will be held from 6:30-7:30 p.m., followed by an hour-long presentation. Information about the study will be on display and MARTA staff will be available to get feedback, review the project's progress, discuss next steps and answer questions. Alpharetta City Hall is located at 2 Main Street, 30009.

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The potential transit alternatives are only being evaluated at this time, the statement said. No determination about a preferred alternative or action has been made, nor have funding sources been identified. Information about these alternatives, including costs and projected ridership, will also be available.

If you cannot attend, send written comments to Ms. Janide Sidifall, Office of Transit Systems Planning, MARTA, 2424 Piedmont Road, NE, Atlanta, GA 30324-330, Oct. 28.

For more information or to submit comments online, visit:<http://www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx> or contact Ms. Janide Sidifall, MARTA Project Manager, at 404.848.5828 or e-mail the project team at Connect400@itsmarta.com.

WSB-TV, 9-26-13

MARTA reps meet with public about possible expanded northern service

MARTA representatives met with the public Thursday night in Alpharetta to explain a plan to expand service to North Fulton County along Georgia 400.

The goal is to relieve traffic that MARTA predicts will spike in the coming decades with a boom of population and new jobs in the area.

Three options include express buses, a light rail or extending the current train system north another 12 miles.

"Because it would be an extension of the existing heavy rail system, people wouldn't have to transfer to a light rail system or to a bus rapid transit system," said Janide Sidifall, MARTA's Senior Project Manager.

The plans call for new tracks running just to the east of GA-400 and up to six new MARTA stations at each exit including Northridge, Holcomb Bridge, Mansell Road and ending at Windward Parkway.

Traffic on GA-400 is just too much for some commuters.

"It's crazy. So why not take the train?" said commuter Gerald Hickman. Critics have told MARTA about concerns that the train would bring more people and crime to their communities. Others don't know if the huge price tag is worth it.

"I don't know how much it would be used and how much it would cost and if it would be would actually be cost effective," said resident Linda Rodgers.

Initial cost estimates to extend the rails and add new stations come to more than \$1.5 billion and the project would take 10 to 15 years to complete. MARTA is expected to take input from the public meeting Thursday and eventually vote on a plan by early next year.

"We're here to listen and ultimately we're going to use all of that input and help our board make a decision on how we move forward," Sidifall said.

MARTA

WAGA-TV, Good Day Atlanta at 5 a.m., 9-26-13

Georgia 400 Corridor Public Meeting [excerpted from edited broadcast transcript]

ANCHOR: "If you want to put your two cents in about a major expansion project by MARTA, now's the time to do so. The transit agency wants to extend service along the Georgia 400 corridor in north Fulton County, and add up to six new stations. There's a public information hearing you can attend. It's at Alpharetta City Hall tonight at 7:30."

MARTA

Atlanta Magazine, 9-27-13

North Fulton residents voice support for MARTA expansion

Heavy rail emerged as favorite mode at the latest public meeting

By Elizabeth Florio

Last night North Fulton residents convened at Alpharetta city hall to hear MARTA officials present the latest findings in a project to extend service from the North Springs station to Windward Parkway. Project manager Janide Sidifall emphasized that the initiative was in the "early scoping" phase—the first step in a six-to-twelve-year federal process—and nothing is set in stone, including federal funding. But so far MARTA has identified a preferred alignment along GA-400 (they don't know which side of it) and three possible modes of transit: heavy rail, light rail, or bus rapid transit. The agency has also identified six possible station locations but again cautioned that further feedback and analysis could move things around.

The larger purpose of the meeting was to hear input from the community. Miscommunication about the start time required Sidifall to give two back-to-back presentations, each followed by a Q&A session. After the second presentation, a dozen or more hands shot up—each a question or comment about project specifics. What would the stations look like? Why no station at Old Milton Parkway? Would Forsyth County residents get a free ride? (Alpharetta is located in Fulton, where the penny MARTA sales tax is in effect.) But all who voiced their opinions seemed in favor of the project.

Though one South Forsyth resident stated his support for bus rapid transit out of concern over funding, the clear favorite mode among attendees was heavy rail. "I appreciate heavy rail because it's more convenient and faster," said Judy Lyon of Alpharetta.

The GA-400 project is the least studied among three proposed MARTA expansions. The others are along the Clifton Corridor and along I-20. MARTA CEO Keith Parker told the [Saporta Report that it is not a particular favorite](#).

Neighbor Newspapers, 9-27-13

Alpharetta residents express opinions on MARTA expansion

By Nicole Dow

Alpharetta residents spoke to MARTA officials Thursday about the transit system's plans to expand along the Ga. 400 corridor north of the North Springs station.

Though residents differed on the type of transit option they preferred — whether heavy rail, light rail or bus rapid transit — many recognized the need for some solution to reduce traffic in the area and shorten commutes into Atlanta.

"I do not want to see the heavy rail all the way up," said Alpharetta resident Chuck Eberle, who commutes daily to Five Points. "I think there are a lot of alternatives and flexibility with the combination of the light rail and the bus. In addition to that, costs could be saved and it would take less time to implement if you did that combination."

Eberle said he also preferred the light rail and buses because he thought they would create better aesthetics and less noise impact.

Alpharetta resident Daniel Bryant said he preferred the heavy rail option for greater accessibility.

"I do think that it's very important to have stations that are in downtown areas like downtown Alpharetta so we could have a walkable community," Bryant said. "I could potentially walk out of my house with a suitcase, ride the train down to the airport and be in New York and never have to get in my car."

Pam Clark, an Alpharetta resident who used to drive to downtown Atlanta each day for work, told transit officials different options should be implemented in phases.

"I refuse to drive anymore," Clark said. "The commute has gotten truly unbearable. I'm looking for MARTA to come up with a solution. The hard rail [option] sounds very good because it's the quickest in transporting people to where they need to go. But in the interim, we do need more express buses."

Janide Sidifall, a member of MARTA's Ga. 400 alternatives analysis team, told residents the transit system is only in the beginning stages of planning the expansion. The project development process could take anywhere from six to 12 years, she said, and a plan to fund the expansion has yet to be determined.

"We do know one thing. We're not going to be able to fund it the way we've funded projects like this in the past," she said. "We're going to have to involve other partners and probably the private sector."

Sidifall said MARTA will continue to gather public input before moving on to the next stage in the process, which will be determining the environmental impact of expansion.

A closer look:

For more information on MARTA's Ga. 400 Transit Initiative, visit www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx. Written comments about the project can be emailed to connect400@itsmarta.com or mailed to Janide Sidifall, MARTA, Office of Transit Systems Planning, 2424 Piedmont Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30324-3330, by Oct. 28.

MARTA

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 9-28-13

MARTA sought in North Fulton

Proposed expansion of mass transit services could take years, officials say.

By Andria Simmons

Commuters in north Fulton aren't asking whether MARTA should extend service to their community. They're asking when.

"We want it now," Shubha Jangam of Alpharetta declared after a public hearing Thursday at Alpharetta City Hall to discuss options.

Joining her in the chorus were others such as Alpharetta resident Malcom Horvath, who complained, "I wonder why it's not here already," and frazzled Alpharetta dad Shashank Honovar, who asked MARTA planners, "What can be done immediately?"

"We need relief right now," Honovar said. "Our commute... affects our stress levels and quality of life. ... It would help a lot if we had public transportation."

The clamor for some form of public transit in north Fulton has taken on a renewed urgency now that MARTA is starting to plan an expansion. Of those who provided written comments to MARTA, 23 were in favor of having transit service in north Fulton, nine were opposed and two were uncertain. No one interviewed by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution at the meeting was opposed to MARTA expansion, although many had questions about the form it would take.

But MARTA officials caution that just because they're mapping out options doesn't mean a train, streetcar or even a bus rapid transit system will happen any time soon. Bringing such a huge project to fruition can take 10 years or longer. And the feasibility hinges on the agency finding up to \$1.8 billion for construction costs, and tens of millions of dollars more each year for operating and maintenance.

That funding is unlikely to come from federal and state budgets that are already severely constrained. And the 1 cent sales tax Fulton and DeKalb counties pay to keep MARTA afloat couldn't even begin to cover it.

"We're not going to be able to fund this the way we've done in the past," MARTA senior project manager Janide Sidifall told about 150 people at the public meeting. "We're going to have to involve other partners and probably private investors."

The primary expansion would likely run 12 miles northward along the spine of Ga. 400 from the existing North Springs Station to Windward Parkway. Options under consideration for that stretch include streetcars, buses with dedicated fast lanes, or trains like the ones MARTA currently operates.

East-west connecting routes could then be added for buses or streetcars at Mount Vernon Highway, Holcomb Bridge Road, Haynes Bridge Road, Old Milton Parkway and Windward Parkway.

Many area residents at the meeting expressed frustration with congestion on Ga. 400 that seems to worsen every year, sapping time and energy away from their families and other priorities. They already pay a 1 cent sales tax to fund MARTA, but don't benefit from having access to local transit service. Numerous attendees like Johns Creek resident Josh Gibbs were in favor of MARTA taking a phased approach, starting with express buses and then adding rail or streetcars as ridership builds.

"A phased approach is good," Gibbs said. "We can use the money we've got to get started and then expand over time as we get grants."

If MARTA does opt to build heavy rail, four of the six proposed rail stations would be in Alpharetta — a concept that has caused some pushback from the city's leadership.

Alpharetta City Council members Chris Owens and Jim Gilvin said they were glad to see so many people at the meeting, but MARTA needs to hold more events to get feedback from residents about what they want. Gilvin said he believes heavy rail is not economically feasible, while Owens questioned how adding trains or streetcars would impact the city's current land use plans.

If all of this talk feels like déjà vu, it's because north Fulton has been here before.

MARTA has evaluated the area several times since 2003. Each time, planners concluded that the community couldn't support transit because the population and employment density were too low.

Now that there's an increased need for transit, the money may not be there to provide it.

"The biggest challenge is the money," said Adelee LeGrand, a consultant on the project. "If we don't have the money, we'll be standing here 15 years from now saying the same thing."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

MARTA is collecting feedback and disseminating information on a Facebook

page, [www.facebook.com/ Connect400](http://www.facebook.com/Connect400), and at www.itsmarta.com . A newsletter about the project is available at [www.itsmarta.com/ uploadedFiles/ Newsletter%20No3%20 Draft_130911.pdf](http://www.itsmarta.com/uploadedFiles/Newsletter%20No3%20Draft_130911.pdf).

MARTA

Reporter Newspapers, 11-6-13

MARTA extension plan draws new attention from Dunwoody, Sandy Springs

By Joe Earle

Sandy Springs and Dunwoody officials are starting to pay close attention as MARTA takes a new look at mass transit north of the Chattahoochee River.

Don Boyken, chairman of the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce, told members of the Dunwoody Homeowners Association on Nov. 3 "it's not too early" to start lobbying the transit agency over its plans to extend the rail line north from North Springs station.

Boyken said a new MARTA study shows the rail line to the east of Ga. 400, which means neighborhoods in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody would be in the path of construction. Two decades or so ago, local officials convinced MARTA to build on the west side of Ga. 400, he said, but those plans have been set aside and are to be replaced by new ones.

"We as Dunwoody and Sandy Springs need to talk to MARTA to get them to go back to the [old] plan," Boyken said.

MARTA officials two years ago began again examining ways to provide future mass transit to Fulton County residents who live north of the river. The project is expected to take 10 to 15 years.

Janide Sidifall, project manager for MARTA, said that because of changes in the area over the years, the agency "had to start back at zero in 2011."

MARTA is examining three options: bus rapid transit, light rail and extending the current heavy rail line north from Sandy Springs. The agency is considering adding stations at Northridge Road, Holcombe Bridge Road, Mansell Road, North Point Mall, Old Milton Parkway and Windward Parkway.

Preliminary estimates show the bus option is expected to cost about \$460 million, compared to \$1.8 billion for light rail and \$1.6 billion for heavy rail, Sidifall said. The heavy rail option is cheaper than light rail, she said, because it extends the current line.

Boyken said residents of Alpharetta, Roswell and other Fulton County cities north of the river support the plan. "Folks north of the river are very much in favor of this line," Boyken told DHA board members. "They've been sitting in traffic for

years.”

The reason MARTA is looking at a rail line east of Ga. 400 is simple: cost. Sidifall said each crossing of Ga. 400 is projected to add “a few hundred thousand dollars” to the cost of the project, she said. If the train crosses to the west side of Ga. 400, it will at some point have to return to the east side, she said.

“It is still possible to go on the west side,” she said. “It is more expensive. And when you’re looking on the national scale, competing with Portland and Dallas and New York and other cities, cost is a big thing.”

MARTA officials presented the plans to Sandy Springs City Council on Oct. 1 and council members reached consensus that the proposed Northridge station should be cut from the plan, according to city spokeswoman Sharon Kraun.

“The plan shows a station being located at Northridge on the east side of Ga. 400,” Kraun said in an email. “Councilman [John] Paulson spoke against having a station on the east side, where there is a school, office and residential. He suggested extending along the west side.”

In Dunwoody, state Sen. Fran Millar (R-Dunwoody) said he and other members of the Dunwoody legislative delegation would weigh in to try to convince MARTA officials to move the line back to the west side of Ga. 400.

Sidifall said the period for public comment may soon be extended and additional public meetings could be scheduled soon. “Hopefully, we’ll get some folks out from Dunwoody this time,” she said.

Neighbor Newspapers, 12-30-13

Roswell city officials back mass transit in north Fulton

By Joan Durbin

No Roswell city council members said they were satisfied with MARTA as the lead in any script involving rail transport into north Fulton.

But all but one of the elected officials voted last week to support the extension of transit service into north Fulton, whether it is heavy rail, light rail, bus rapid transit or traditional bus service.

A resolution to that effect was brought to council by Roswell Transportation Director Steve Acenbrak, who said it was an opportunity for Roswell to go on record as supporting expanded mass transit into the area as a "viable option."

MARTA and other state and regional agencies are exploring various technologies, including a North Line extension of the heavy rail system northward from North Springs station to terminate at the Windward Parkway area.

But it could be a decade before any such project comes to fruition, Acenbrak said.

"We need to make a decision not based on what our needs are today but what Roswell needs in 10 years," Mayor Jere Wood said prior to the vote.

The lone holdout in the 5-1 affirmative vote was Councilwoman Becky Wynn. While she is a "huge proponent" of mass transport, Wynn said, she couldn't support extending it locally "until we have an official regional transportation authority come before us with a master plan, not this piecemeal approach."

Other council members agreed that they would like to see some entity other than MARTA carrying this forward, but they were reluctant to stand back on the sidelines while any plans were being developed.

"We need to be involved in the process," said Councilman Jerry Orlans.

Councilwoman Nancy Diamond agreed. "My concern is if we are not on record as supporting this, we might be bypassed for the future."

The mayor said he understood Wynn's concerns, but he didn't see the resolution as an endorsement of MARTA being the only transit system provider.

He and council members all said they favor a regional authority, and Dist. 21 State Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Alpharetta, "is taking the lead on this," Wood said.

The resolution also stated "Mayor and council of the city of Roswell encourage the study of potential placement of a transit station in the area surrounding the Holcomb Bridge Road/SR 400 interchange."