



# Early Scoping Report Appendix

## Attachment B-10:

### Media Articles - Phase 2

Reporter Newspapers, 06-11-14

## **MARTA to meet with Sandy Springs residents over expanding line north**

By Ann Marie Quill

Representatives from MARTA will discuss with Sandy Springs residents on Thursday a project that would expand service from the North Springs station to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta.

The meeting will be geared toward those who live in neighborhoods bordering Roberts Drive, Northridge Road and Ga. 400 along Spalding Drive.

The Coonect 400 Project would extend the line either by rail or rapid-bus line. Preliminary studies favor expanding the service by heavy rail.

The meeting takes place Thursday, June 12, at 7 p.m. at Dunwoody Community Church, located at 2250 Dunwoody Club Drive.

## **MARTA**

**AJC, 06-13-14**

### **North Fulton homeowners hope to steer MARTA rail west of Ga. 400**

By Andria Simmons

Opposition to a MARTA expansion to Alpharetta along the east side of Ga. 400 is getting louder and more organized.

A coalition of neighborhood associations hosted a meeting in Dunwoody Thursday evening to voice concerns about the disruption a MARTA extension might cause their suburban subdivisions.

Residents said they prefer that the extension run along the west side of Ga. 400, where they say there are more homes, apartments and businesses that could be served by the mass transit system. The city of Sandy Springs also drafted a resolution in December supporting a MARTA expansion but stating a preference for building a Northridge Road station west of the highway.

“We just want to help shape MARTA in our area, and overwhelmingly no one wants the MARTA rail to come up the east side of Northridge,” said David Centofanti, president of the Northridge Community Association.

MARTA is eyeing a service expansion northward from the current North Springs station to Woodward Parkway interchange, either with rail or a rapid-bus line. Preliminary plans call for the construction of five or six stations along that route. But the mass transit system is only in the very early stages of completing a long federal study and approval process. For that reason, much about what the expansion would look like remains unclear — including whether the line would hug the east or west side of Ga. 400.

Any expansion up Ga. 400 is at least a decade away, probably longer.

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 ongoing.



## **MARTA**

**WABE - 90.1, 06-16-14**

### **MARTA Considering Expanding Rail Service North**

By Lisa George

Link to broadcast: <http://bit.ly/1jtNNLa>

MARTA is looking at expanding its rail service farther north in Fulton County.

When MARTA was established, more than 40 years ago, it was a political battle. Many – including historians – would argue the battle was all about race: that there were suburban residents who did not want the transit system bringing people from the city to their communities. Now, as MARTA is three years into a study of whether to extend its service as far as Alpharetta, the issue isn't race -- but age.

State Senator Brandon Beach leads the North Fulton Community Improvement District. "When you look at the 400 corridor, there are 900 technology companies, and that attracts a young, smart employee," said Beach. "They want to ride their bikes; they want to take a train; they want to take transit; they want alternatives."

Beach is a big proponent of extending service, but at a public comment session last week, with approximately 100 people in attendance, MARTA project manager Janide Sidifall admits reaction to early plans was decidedly mixed. "If, overwhelmingly, the public does not want it, then there's no point in implementing it," said Sidifall.

MARTA has extended the public comment period on the project, which it calls, "Connect 400," through July. After starting with some 20 possibilities of routes and transit methods, Sidifall says the working model extends the current rail line for six more stations, saying "If you implement heavy rail from North Springs to Windward Parkway, you can stay on the same train and get to where you're going."

Beach thinks it is an idea whose time might just be now. "In 1999, when I was first elected to Alpharetta City Council, if I would have mentioned that I was supportive of transit, I would have probably been run out of office," said Beach. "Today the attitude has completely changed."

But it won't happen overnight. This planning and public comment process is just part of the effort to get federal funding. Sidifall estimates riding the rails from downtown Atlanta all the way to Alpharetta could be a decade away.



Curbed Atlanta, 06-16-14

## Where Will Atlanta Transit Go In 10 Years? Help Decide Now.

By Kimberly Turner

Link to comments: <http://bit.ly/1nhQzFU>

To suburb or not to suburb? That is the question **MARTA** is pondering these days. The agency is extending public commenting through July on its proposed new line to **Alpharetta** after receiving mixed reactions to the plan. The extended service, known as **Connect 400**, would run rail through **11.9 miles** of existing right-of-way in the 400 corridor, starting at the **North Springs station** and ending at Windward Parkway in Alpharetta. A public-private partnership would help fund as many as six new stations. Meanwhile, the **Atlanta Streetcar** and **Beltline** are focusing their attention in town. The dynamic duo are in the midst of determining the best options to connect future streetcar routes to the Beltline — something that isn't always as straightforward as it seems due to the location of obstacles such as the active **Hulsey Rail Yard** (under or around?) and **Centennial Olympic Park** (through or around?).

The **Atlanta Streetcar** and **Beltline** would like to show you more routes on larger maps, discuss technical issues and get feedback at a public [Citywide Conversation](#) meeting at **6:30 p.m. on June 17** at City Hall. How and where should it connect to MARTA? Which routes are most useful? Show up and let them know.

If **MARTA's Connect 400** plan is approved, the finished product might still be a decade away, but that doesn't mean you have long to speak your mind. Public comments will only be accepted through the end of **July**. Should the transit agency be focusing more on in town connectivity or is the jam-packed 400 corridor in dire need of more rail? [Send an email](#) to let them know.

[Atlanta Business Chronicle, 06-16-14](#)

## **MARTA now seeks public comment on adding rail to Alpharetta**

By Carla Caldwell

[MARTA](#) has extended through July a public comment period on bringing rail into Alpharetta, reports [WABE](#).

As Atlanta Business Chronicle [first reported in August 2013](#), MARTA is planning to extend transit service along the Georgia 400 corridor in North Fulton County, with up to six new stations.

WABE notes that this is the planning and public comment process, and that it is just part of the effort to get federal funding. Riding the rails from downtown Atlanta to Alpharetta still could be a decade away, the station adds. State Senator [Brandon Beach](#), who leads the North Fulton Community Improvement District, said the time to add more rail has come.

“When you look at the 400 corridor, there are 900 technology companies, and that attracts a young, smart employee,” said Beach. “They want to ride their bikes; they want to take a train; they want to take transit; they want alternatives.”

He also says people have changed their opinions about a MARTA expansion. Beach told WABE, “In 1999, when I was first elected to Alpharetta City Council, if I would have mentioned that I was supportive of transit, I would have probably been run out of office. Today the attitude has completely changed.”



**Dunwoody Crier, 06-17-14**

## **Residents want MARTA west of Ga 400**

By Taila Tirella

A meeting regarding the Connect400 plan was held Thursday at the Dunwoody Community Church to gauge public opinion of the MARTA extension within the Georgia 400 corridor. That opinion clearly favors rail or rapid bus running up the west side of the Georgia 400 corridor.

It was stated that the current plan is “not etched in stone” by MARTA manager Don Williams. The project needs input from residents and is currently in an information gathering stage, which is why public meetings are being held.

Residents are outraged by the current plan, which proposes a MARTA rail extension on the east side of GA 400. This extension would cut through neighborhoods and other properties such as schools. Both residents and MARTA representatives said that the west side of 400 would be a better alternative, but MARTA representatives cannot confirm an exact location yet.

One of the main points of contention amongst residents is a proposed station at Northridge Road, a heavily residential area. Residents strongly oppose the idea of a station in the neighborhood for fear of disturbance and increased traffic. Some residents stated that a study about potential crime rates within three miles of each station should be conducted before MARTA moves forward with any plans.

Many residents agree with the idea that MARTA should expand its route throughout the city, and many stated their opinion during the meeting that they believe in public transportation and even use MARTA regularly. However, they do not agree with the idea of placing a MARTA track with six proposed stations along the east side of GA 400.

Resident Lauren Berman said, “I would think that having an extension [of MARTA] would be great for the whole metropolitan area, but if it’s placed on the east side [of 400] it would violate a previous agreement. It would pass through the land of three schools and several neighborhoods, and the amount of cars would create a mess in terms of traffic.”

The presentation by the MARTA representatives stated that this project, located within the GA 400 corridor, is one of several proposed in the greater Atlanta area, but they feel this one in particular would better the commute for those living in the northern areas of Atlanta and help to alleviate heavy traffic, so this project will be the first one to move forward. - Inaccurate



In order to fund the project, MARTA must use funds from the federal government's New Starts funding program through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The New Starts program consists of 2 billion distributed annually throughout the United States. All possible public works projects must compete and meet certain qualifications (in MARTA's case high ridership and traffic relief) in order to gain funding.

In order to gain the New Starts funding, MARTA needs overwhelming public support in order to move forward as part of their Early Scoping phase. They must also conduct extensive studies related to environmental impacts that any new MARTA extension may have on the GA 400 corridor area. Part of their evidence for the environmental study includes all public feedback they receive at meetings. According to MARTA representatives, there is no possibility of extending MARTA service down the middle of GA 400 similar to the existing line that begins on 400 in the Buckhead area. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) stated that this alternative would not work because they are planning to widen lanes and may also create managed lanes on 400.

Because of GDOT's request that MARTA not operate in their area, the extension of MARTA must fall on either side of 400 within the 40-60 foot GDOT right of way, meaning that the new track will be built on either the west or east side of 400.

Sandy Springs City Councilman John Paulson supports the extension, but with a few conditions. He said, "The [Sandy Springs] council officially voted for an extension of MARTA, and wrote to MARTA approving a north bound extension on the west side of 400, and that we would not support having a station at Northridge [Road] without justification. One of my concerns is that traffic will not get any better. It would be beneficial to pick people up [on MARTA] north of the river and get their cars off the road."

Because MARTA would like public opinion on the extension, they are holding several more meetings as part of their information gathering process. Representatives stated several times that opinions would be taken into strong consideration when finalizing the plan for the extension in the future.

Several more meetings for the public will be held on the following days:  
July 8, 6:30-8 p.m. at Johns Creek Environmental Campus  
July 10, 6:30-8 p.m. at GSU Alpharetta Center  
July 17, 6:30-8 p.m. at Hampton Inn Atlanta/Perimeter

The MARTA representatives referred to a survey they performed when discussing what type of transportation system will exist along GA 400. Survey responses came from 612 residents and 463 employees who work in the proposed area. Their survey showed that 42 percent of participants preferred a

heavy rail system, meaning a MARTA train track extending from the existing North Springs station and terminating at a proposed station at Windward Parkway. Thirty seven percent preferred a light rail solution along with a Bus Rapid Transit system. Both plans include 11.9 miles of service along GA 400.

The main difference between the two plans, besides the different modes of transportation, is the number of stations proposed. The heavy rail system plan proposes stops at: Northridge Road, Holcomb Bridge Road, Mansell Road, North Point and Windward Parkway. The light rail plan proposes all of the same stops, with an additional station at Old Milton Parkway.



Peach Pundit

## MARTA Considers Expansion – Toward Republicans

June 17, 2014 8:00 am

by Charlie · 23 comments

MARTA is hosting public comment sessions about extending rail service up the GA-400 corridor. We've discussed this before, but note the tone of Senator Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta) in the article below from WXIA. (Then look back inside those parenthesis at that "R"):

State Senator Brandon Beach, who leads the North Fulton Community Improvement District, said the time to add more rail has come.

"When you look at the 400 corridor, there are 900 technology companies, and that attracts a young, smart employee," said Beach. "They want to ride their bikes; they want to take a train; they want to take transit; they want alternatives."

He also says people have changed their opinions about a MARTA expansion.

Beach told WABE, "In 1999, when I was first elected to Alpharetta City Council, if I would have mentioned that I was supportive of transit, I would have probably been run out of office. Today the attitude has completely changed.

There are places in Atlanta where transit will work. And frankly, as I've discussed before, it's about time we stop considering "transit" as a means to move poor people. Or more specifically, exclusively poor people. Transit only works as a solution for all of the city/region when all of the city/region feel comfortable with it. (Relax Cherokee and Fayette Counties, we're not talking about you any time soon.)

An extension of the rail line up GA-400 would not be about moving commuters downtown (though that, and rides to the airport would certainly be non-stop possible). Look at the growth going in around Perimeter Center, arguably Atlanta's new downtown (TM by Dick Williams). This is as much about being able to get workers into that land locked and gridlocked region as anywhere else. It's the next most logical expansion of MARTA rail (with the possible exception of the Emory corridor line from the last T-SPLOST.), and it will positively impact us all for generations if/when it happens. Let's get moving on this.

Moving – the opposite of GA-400 in both directions at rush hour.

{ 23 comments... read them below or add one }



John Konop June 17, 2014 at 8:04 am

Senator Beach is right....we need to invest into infrastructure ASAP to help grow our economy....We are falling behind.....

Raleigh June 17, 2014 at 8:35 am

On a very rare occurrence I agree with Senator Beach. I never drive to the airport and I would welcome an airport express from North Point. If I can easily get to where I need to go in the City I will take MARTA from North Springs rather than drive. Bringing the train to North Point from North Springs needs to happen soon. I have supported this for a long time and being from Cherokee County I would not mind the state or some other support method(s) to help make this a reality so long as it is not a blank check. I also would like to see MARTA changed to something of more a "Regional" organization. Yep there is that R word again. The problem with a Regional MARTA is Atlanta would have a hard time swallowing that one.

Charlie you didn't include Cobb or Gwinnett. Last time I looked they were not too keen on MARTA either.

bgsmlz June 17, 2014 at 11:26 am

Cobb is balking on even the most 'light' version of BRT...my question is...what is stopping a municipality from joining Marta without the county? If it is the law, some aspiring legislator needs to amend it in the name of local control.

"There are places in Atlanta where transit will work." ...like Smyrna and/or Norcross? Areas that are job centers, entertainment centers (Braves), transportation hubs and gridlock magnets? Shouldn't these cities be able to opt-in without having to negotiate with the folks in Lawrenceville or Acworth on the notion of the benefits? That's how they've expanded rail in the Dallas area...frankly, if the folks in Acworth or wherever don't want Marta, that's fine...but why should they be able to hold Smyrna and the region hostage?

Raleigh June 17, 2014 at 1:47 pm

Correct me if I'm wrong and I probably am but I believe it has more to do with municipalities collecting the penny sales tax. As far as I know cities can't directly participate in LOST without the county. That would have to change and can you imagine the disaster allowing cities to collect sales taxes at different rates?

bgsmallz June 17, 2014 at 3:08 pm

Cities can tax at different rates than the counties...City of Atlanta has a MOST (Municipal Option Sales Tax)...anyway, Marta tax isn't a LOST or a MOST...it is a Marta tax and to a certain extent you're right...it is applied at the county level.

Even if you can't implement the Marta sales tax on a city level, that doesn't preclude a municipality from joining Marta, does it?

The Marta act says "i) The power to enter into contracts with the State of Georgia and any agency, instrumentality or authority thereof and with any of the county and municipal governments within the territorial limits of the area served or to be served by the Authority, for public transportation services to be rendered by the Authority or its rapid transit system, and for any other purposes incidental to the establishment and maintenance of its rapid transit system, or any part or project thereof, including the payment of funds to subsidize the operations of such system if it should ever be necessary to do so, and the usual facilities related thereto."

What is stopping Smyrna from making a deal with Marta? (or the Cobb Recreation Authority for that matter?) Why couldn't they, for example, have a city wide vote on a bond referendum that would pay for a heavy rail station, ROW, etc. at Cumberland as part of a contract with Marta to provide operations/service there? What if Lakeside/Briarcliff/whatever existed and wanted to fund a station at Emory and contracted with Marta for Operations. There doesn't seem to be anything prohibiting that in the Marta Act.

All of this is obviously hypothetical and there are most certainly legal hurdles not being considered...but thought it is good fodder on a Tuesday when discussing 'who wants transit' and 'who doesn't'...there may be some creativity for municipalities

CJBear71 June 17, 2014 at 9:13 am

I think congestion, gas prices, and the lack of gas tax revenues are starting to convince people that we need more MARTA. Everywhere in metro Atlanta. We need it to go further up the 400. We need it to go further up 85, and relieve pressure on the hot lanes (and cold lanes). We need it to head down 75 into Clayton County (and those Commissioners better step up today!), and you can be certain the Braves fans will be screaming for it once they and Cobb County commuters sit for several hours trying to get to a game or just get home.

And yes, that is all choice riders. But the good thing is – expansion will help need riders as well. More users, more opportunities to get to jobs, better route management when you can hook into spokes of the rail system etc.

I hope this region can start to let go of some of the old fights. Worrying about “them” coming to your community with transit. Look at some of the articles on suburban poverty (Cobb County) – the poor are already in your area. Are Fulton and DeKalb being treated “equitably” with MARTA. You can waste time fighting about appointment powers and who controls a potential regional authority all you want... and people will be left behind by a system that has barely expanded since it’s creation.

I’m encouraged that GM Keith Parker is bringing MARTA back, and that after some hard, tough decisions, MARTA is expanding routes and service again. Let’s get even more. More MARTA. Everywhere.

ryanhawk June 17, 2014 at 9:23 am

“They want to ride their bikes; they want to take a train; they want to take transit; they want alternatives.”

All true, but he forgot the punch line: they want you to pay for it.

smvaughn June 17, 2014 at 9:43 am

ryanhawk

So you only drive on your own privately built and privately maintained roads?

George Dickel June 17, 2014 at 10:59 am

The lack of critical thinking that went into ryanhawk’s post is mind boggling.

ryanhawk June 17, 2014 at 1:46 pm

I tend to use the least subsidised form of transportation available to me. In practice that means I drive, fly, and take the bus.

If you are interested in discussing the extent to which various modes of transportation are subsidised rather than paid for by users through gas taxes, train fares, etc... and what we should do about it I’m happy to have a discussion.



The problem with “transit” (and especially rail) is that it is very heavily subsidised and does little to relieve congestion. Actual revenues and riders are less than projected, often far less, and cost to build and maintain is always higher, often much more.

I’d love to see a rail line extended up 400 and paid for largely by the people who ride it.

Chris Huttman June 17, 2014 at 2:06 pm

The problem with all other forms of transportation is that eventually you run out of space and rider density is important. At some point we can’t build additional lanes for traffic going from (for example) Midtown or Buckhead to Alpharetta.

But saying roads are the cheapest and we should only do roads or rail is more expensive so we should never do it is a dumb way to look at it.

Do you only eat sticks of butter because it’s got one of the highest caloric values per ounce? Should the state only run whatever public university is the cheapest and make everyone get the most cost affordable degree?

ryanhawk June 17, 2014 at 3:35 pm

The problem with roads is congestion because, um, people like using them. Unfortunately the social cost of congestion isn’t factored in to the individual cost of driving. The answer is congestion pricing. Priced correctly there will be no problem with physical space or capacity.

I also didn’t say roads were the cheapest, although in fact they are by any coherent measure (i.e. cost per passenger mile). I implied, correctly, that they are less subsidised. Much less. Users are apparently more willing to pay for road capacity than for, say, light rail. That is an important fact, no?

Dave Bearse June 17, 2014 at 9:45 am

I’ve advocated a north line extension to north of the Chattahoochee River as MARTA’s first rail extension primary for more than a decade.

Lea Thrace June 17, 2014 at 10:01 am

I work in Alpharetta. It is very difficult to recruit the workforce we need in this area due to transportation/traffic issues. A lot of the type of workers we need either do not want to deal with the

traffic you encounter getting to this area or cannot get here because of lack of car/public transit options. My company is not the only one with this issue in the area...

bgsmlz June 17, 2014 at 11:23 am

I worked in Alpharetta about 15 years ago or so...lived in Buckhead and did the commute north...I like to think I was a trendsetter for the millennials! :)

I like Keith Parker...I think he's doing an excellent job so far....and I hope they don't stop with plans to North Fulton...there is a graphic circulating that shows rail expansion to Clayton if they vote for the .01 sales tax.

Oh...and the 'Marta brings Crime' folks are already out.

[http://www.thecrier.net/news/article\\_ad48594a-f5a9-11e3-bfea-0019bb2963f4.html](http://www.thecrier.net/news/article_ad48594a-f5a9-11e3-bfea-0019bb2963f4.html)

"One of the main points of contention amongst residents is a proposed station at Northridge Road, a heavily residential area... Some residents stated that a study about potential crime rates within three miles of each station should be conducted before MARTA moves forward with any plans."

Because we all know hooligans take Marta, walk three miles to a house on a cul-de-sac, rob them, and then walk back to the station with the loot. #facepalm

Chris Huttman June 17, 2014 at 12:01 pm

It's impossible to get a seat on MARTA these days at the Dunwoody station, what with all the big screen tv's and stereo systems taking up room.

Chris Huttman June 17, 2014 at 12:03 pm

Another point – though some try to blame the T-SPLOST's failure on MARTA expansion, Clayton voters overwhelmingly voted (non-binding) to bring MARTA as a standalone, but the T-SPLOST was rejected.

In Gwinnett, T-SPLOST lost big. In 2008, a non-binding vote in the primary for MARTA expansion barely lost (got about 47%).

Everyday people sit in traffic, they internalize even more that what we've been doing isn't working. Probably the biggest problem with T-SPLOST from the start is that it was mostly more of the same and didn't have a true vision for the future. MARTA isn't perfect, but for most of these areas it is something new.

saltycracker June 17, 2014 at 12:52 pm

MARTA Considers Expansion – Toward Job Growth

The Last Democrat in Georgia June 17, 2014 at 1:11 pm

Excellent column, Charlie.

I completely agree that we need to get moving on improving, upgrading and expanding high-capacity passenger rail transit service to the places where it is most-desperately needed.

...And at this point in time, the best way to get moving on improving, upgrading and expanding high-capacity passenger rail transit service throughout the Atlanta region, both inside the current MARTA service area (to places like Emory and the I-20 East corridor) and outside the current MARTA service area (to places like Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett counties and beyond) is for the state to take control of MARTA and sell it to private investors...

...Private investors who would fund the dramatic improvement, upgrade and expansion of the current high-capacity transit network with revenues from the aggressive construction of revenue-generating real estate development along transit lines, Value Capture taxing districts targeted to commercial properties along transit lines and high-capacity transit corridors (as opposed to highly politically-contentious countywide sales tax referendums), an inflation-indexed distance-based fare structure (fares of roughly between \$0.10-0.40 per-mile in 2014 dollars instead of the current flat-rate fare of \$2.50 one-way) and the very-aggressive sale of private sponsorships both large and small.

MattMD June 17, 2014 at 3:32 pm

So why don't we just sell off the entire State government to a group of private investors?

Oh wait....

The Last Democrat in Georgia June 17, 2014 at 3:54 pm

Yeah, no need for private funding...because the current funding apparatus (a severely-underfunded system that frequently teeters on the brink of financial collapse while going around desperately-begging severely cash-strapped governments at the local, state and federal levels for bread crumb-proportioned handouts) has worked so well, hasn't it?



MattMD June 17, 2014 at 4:13 pm

I just think your idea is pie-in-the-sky or "magic math" if you will. Do you have any actual numbers? Is there any precedent to privatizing a previously public system such as MARTA?

MARTA is also a political football, even having the state take it over would probably be tied up in litigation, not to mention what people would think of selling it off to a group of 'private investors'. Let me be even more frank: you would essentially be selling off a transit system which benefits a significant number of minorities to some rich, likely white businessmen. You could see the demagoguing from a thousand miles away.

MARTA's funding would be much more stable if other close-in metro counties actually paid into it, especially from the beginning. I imagine it's never too late.

saltycracker June 17, 2014 at 4:38 pm

Moving folks around because they can't afford cars or they abhor commerce/work places cannot be a top priority in a multi-billion dollar mass transportation program. They may coincidentally benefit but it can't be from Alpharetta to the airport for \$2.50.

## **Residents: MARTA rail extension must go west of Ga. 400**

By Jenna Goff

Sandy Springs residents had a simple message for MARTA when discussing how best to extend the transit agency's trains to the north: Go west of Ga. 400.

"If the expansion were to proceed on the east side of the highway from the North Springs station, it would potentially impact two elementary schools [Woodland Forest and Dunwoody Springs Charter] and many neighborhoods that exist already," Chip Swearngan, president of the Somerset Homeowners Association in Sandy Springs, told MARTA officials during a meeting with homeowners June 12.

Other residents said a past agreement between MARTA and the community promised MARTA would expand solely on the west side. More commercial development exists on that side of the highway, and fewer neighborhoods would be affected.

"That agreement is still there, but we must consider all options," said Don Williams, senior director of transit system planning at MARTA. "Nothing is etched in stone. We want to find the best suitable option."

MARTA officials are 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, Holcomb Bridge Road, Mansell Road, North Point Mall, Old Milton Parkway and Windward Parkway.

"If we do not have strong community support, we will not do the project. It won't be funded," Williams said.

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.

The reason MARTA is looking at a rail line east of Ga. 400 is simply the cost. Sidifall said each crossing of Ga. 400 is projected to add "a few hundred thousand dollars" to the cost of the project. 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.

Sandy Springs and Dunwoody city officials have publicly expressed support for building the rail on the west side of the Ga. 400 highway, saying building on the east side would interfere with neighborhoods.

MARTA is holding a series of public discussions on plans to extend its trains north to Alpharetta. The trains now stop at the North Springs station. MARTA's plans call for a new station at Northridge Road.

MARTA officials met with residents of the Somerset Homeowners Association and the Northridge Community Association on June 12.

Three more community meetings will be held in the near future to discuss MARTA's Connect 400 Project. The first will be held on July 8 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Johns Creek Environmental Center; the next will be on July 10 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the GSU Alpharetta Center; the last will be on July 17 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Hampton Inn Atlanta/Perimeter.



## **MARTA**

**AJC, 07-01-14**

### **Atlanta Forward: MARTA up GA 400**

#### **MARTA, go west (of Ga. 400)**

By Tom Sabulis

When the enemy — in this case, big-city transit — seems intent on invading your neighborhood, you can bet the opposition will be out in force.

That's how it started, at least, when MARTA held an information session on a potential rail expansion north on Ga. 400. About 100 local residents packed the meeting room at Dunwoody Community Church. It was standing room only.

Before the transit agency made its presentation, the locals, most of them older residents, streamed past maps that showed a potential route along the east side of Ga. 400, with stations placed at Northridge Road and all the way to Windward Parkway.

Curiosity tempered by skepticism ruled the day. Concern furrowed brows. A few breathed fire. Some comments were impossible not to overhear:

"Do we need to move?"

"I want to know who to throw out of office."

"I thought we took a vote and soundly defeated tax money for this."

Before the introductions even started, it sounded like a MARTA massacre.

Then MARTA representatives took the stage. The transit agency, they explained, is looking to expand in three corridors: North on Ga. 400; on Clifton Road to Emory University; and I-20 to Stonecrest Mall. They told the audience that, while a study process was under way, the agency has no money for any of this. Nothing is etched in stone. Any expansion in these parts is at least 10 years out.

"We got a long way to go, folks," said Janide Sidifall, a MARTA senior project manager.

Some wished they would just go. They weren't buying what MARTA was saying.

"You (MARTA) are in favor of this," one fellow said as a microphone was passed around. "You are trying to pitch this to us. And we're telling you that we don't want it."

Another man: "People in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody want to live in the suburbs. People want to drive out here. So fix the roads!" (Applause).

But as the meeting wore on and more residents spoke, another picture began to emerge, one that wasn't so black and white.

It seems many residents' opposition is really opposition to a rail line running up the east side of Ga. 400, a heavy residential stretch that includes a number of schools. Nobody wants that, they said. And yet, that's what MARTA's early preliminary plans showed. Cue the pushback.

Some voiced support for MARTA expanding along Ga. 400 if it ran up the more commercial west side, thus saving their neighborhoods and providing easier transit access to businesses on Roswell Road and folks living in east Cobb County.

"I think that they need to have MARTA come north," Nancy Lesser, a consultant and Sandy Springs mom, told me later. "The congestion is terrible on 400. It does need to go out to the northern suburbs, Holcomb Bridge in particular, and the technology sector in Alpharetta. They need access. That said, going up the east side is a really bad idea."

Lesser is especially opposed to any station at Northridge Road near two elementary schools. "(A MARTA station) is easy access to the children for strangers and easy access back out. Strangers close to our schools is not what we need in the neighborhood."

John Mason, a Sandy Springs real estate agent, lives in a house "35 feet" from the Ga. 400 right-of-way where an east line expansion would run. As a real estate professional, he sees both sides to the debate.

"From a seller's perspective, if you are going to be close to a MARTA rail line, it definitely would impact your property value in a negative way," Mason said. "But there are a lot of younger people or people that come from cities like I did – Chicago, Boston or New York — who are used to using mass transit and would like to be close to a MARTA station."

"I just placed a Georgia State professor from Phoenix into a home in Dunwoody," Mason said, "where he could be within short driving distance of the MARTA station at Dunwoody. So there are advantages in property values that are close to MARTA, but negative property values if it's right along the track or next to a

station. It's a double-edged sword. But I do believe it would benefit a lot of people if (MARTA) crossed over 400 to the west side."

MARTA reps reminded residents to provide feedback, and that nothing — east side or west side — had been determined.

That didn't convince one man who said he knew neighbors who couldn't sell homes because of MARTA's too-early projected maps up the east side.

"If you haven't picked a spot, don't show a spot," he said. "Listen to us, keep up the good work, and move it to the west side."

-more-



## **Agency is committed to best routes**

By Cheryl L. King

Link to column: <http://bit.ly/1iUZyj2>

For years, the area surrounding the Ga. 400 corridor has seen exponential growth. North Fulton County has become one of the region's most significant employment centers, attracting new residents and businesses every day. The Atlanta Regional Commission projects the area will add approximately 65,000 new jobs and 19,000 new residents by 2040.

Meanwhile, automobile traffic on Ga. 400 is increasingly congested, contributes to poor air quality, and wastes valuable time and money because of chronic travel delays. In response to these challenges, in 2011, MARTA began working on the Connect 400 Transit Initiative.

Connect 400 is one of three expansion projects MARTA is studying to address transportation needs in high-growth, high-impact areas.

Also under study for future transit expansion are the I-20 East and Clifton corridors. Both need transportation alternatives to make it easier to get around and increase access to jobs and housing.

The I-20 East Corridor extends from downtown Atlanta to southeast DeKalb County. Proposals include a combination of heavy rail from the existing Indian Creek MARTA rail station to the Mall at Stonecrest, and a bus rapid transit or light-rail connection between Wesley Chapel Road and downtown Atlanta.

The Clifton Corridor is planned as an 8.8-mile, light-rail line linking the Lindbergh Center and Avondale rail stations. From Avondale, there would be a connection to the proposed I-20 East corridor rail extension.

Of the three proposals, I-20 East is the furthest along; the Federal Transit Administration is now conducting a mandatory environmental review. The Clifton project is about to begin the environmental review phase of the federal planning process.

As planning for Connect 400 also advances, MARTA welcomes the opportunity to work with the North Fulton community to identify alternative transportation solutions. Connect 400 is still in planning, and no final decisions have been made. That's why MARTA needs your help. We're seeking public feedback to identify the transit solution that best addresses the needs of residents, communities and businesses in the area.

So far, three alternatives for Connect 400 have emerged as the most viable from a community and technical standpoint: bus rapid transit, light rail, and an extension of the existing heavy-rail service from the North Springs station to the Windward Parkway area.

With input from the community, MARTA must select a “locally preferred alternative” that will later be evaluated in a detailed environmental review. With additional funding, the project could move to preliminary engineering, then construction and, ultimately, operations.

MARTA has received large amounts of feedback on Connect 400 through emails, letters, surveys, social media and stakeholder interviews. Public support for the expansion of high-capacity transit in the GA 400 corridor is tempered by concerns about increased traffic and impacts to local property values.

With so much at stake, MARTA wants to hear from you as much and as often as we can. Next month, we’ll host community meetings to provide information on the status of the project and the alternatives under consideration.

For more information about the project and upcoming meetings, visit our website at <http://www.itsmarta.com/north-line-400-corr.aspx>. To express your opinions about Connect 400, email [connect400@itsmarta.com](mailto:connect400@itsmarta.com). You can also help by sharing information about the Ga. 400 and other MARTA expansion projects with friends, neighbors, community groups and places of worship.

Metro Atlanta is our home. Today, as we celebrate our 35th Anniversary as a bus and rail system, we’re proud and committed to working with the communities we serve to ensure these exciting new transit projects are the very best they can be.

(For more information on the other MARTA expansion projects, find them on Facebook, or visit online: I-20 East Corridor Transit Initiative — [www.itsmarta.com/I20-east-corr.aspx](http://www.itsmarta.com/I20-east-corr.aspx); and Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative — [www.itsmarta.com/Clifton-Corr.aspx](http://www.itsmarta.com/Clifton-Corr.aspx).)

*Cheryl L. King is assistant general manager for planning at MARTA*



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Transportation

6:00 AM MON JUNE 16, 2014

## MARTA Considering Expanding Rail Service North

By [LISA GEORGE \(@PEOPLE/LISA-GEORGE\)](#)

MARTA (<http://www.itsmarta.com>) is looking at expanding its rail service farther north in Fulton County.

**Listen**

1:56

Broadcast Version



([http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wabe/files/201406/nsstation\\_creditMARTA.png](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wabe/files/201406/nsstation_creditMARTA.png))

North Springs Station, near Perimeter Mall, is current MARTA's northernmost station.  
Credit MARTA

When MARTA was established, more than 40 years ago, it was a political battle. Many – including historians – would argue the battle was all about race: that there were suburban residents who did not want the transit system bringing people from the city to their communities. Now, as MARTA is three years into a study of whether to extend its service as far as Alpharetta, the issue isn't race -- but age.

State Senator Brandon Beach leads the North Fulton Community Improvement District. "When you look at the 400 corridor, there are 900 technology companies, and that attracts a young, smart employee," said Beach. "They want to ride their bikes; they want to take a train; they want to take transit; they want alternatives."

Beach is a big proponent of extending service, but at a public comment session last week, with approximately 100 people in attendance, MARTA project manager Janide Sidifall admits reaction to early plans was decidedly mixed. "If, overwhelmingly, the public does not want it, then there's no point in implementing it," said Sidifall.

MARTA has extended the public comment period on the project, which it calls, "Connect 400," through July. After starting with some 20 possibilities of routes and transit methods, Sidifall says the working model extends the current rail line for six more stations, saying "If you implement heavy rail from North Springs to Windward Parkway, you can stay on the same train and get to where you're going."

Beach thinks it is an idea whose time might just be now. "In 1999, when I was first elected to Alpharetta City Council, if I would have mentioned that I was supportive of transit, I would have probably been run out of office," said Beach. "Today the attitude has completely changed."

But it won't happen overnight. This planning and public comment process is just part of the effort to get federal funding. Sidifall estimates riding the rails from downtown Atlanta all the way to Alpharetta could be a decade away.



**TAGS:** [MARTA \(/term/marta\)](#) [Fulton County \(/term/fulton-county\)](#) [Brandon Beach \(/term/brandon-beach\)](#) [Georgia 400 \(/term/georgia-400\)](#)

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This should be a no brainer. Traffic on 400 is the worst in the city going in both directions, at least in the afternoon. I would absolutely take MARTA if it extended up to Alpharetta. Due to the inadequacies of the current system, I sit in traffic up to two hours each day to go a short distance. This was needed 10 years ago rather than 10 years from now!

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You can still get on Marta at North Springs, it's 13.1 miles. The busses at Windward and Mansell also pass on the right. My experiences are that the busses are already slightly faster than 7:30-8:30 traffic.

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The buses can't pass on the right now that the shoulder has been opened up during rush hour. There is no advantage to taking MARTA any more. For me, I would have to drive to a park and ride location, wait on the bus to pick me up, take the bus to North Springs (but the bus deals with all the same traffic I would face in my own car), get off the bus at North Springs, wait for the train, take the train to either Lennox or Arts Station, wait for a bus, then take a bus to my final destination. That is even more ridiculous than insane traffic I deal with on 400.

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Please bring MARTA up to Winward!!!

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Totally for this.

Please bring MARTA rail to Alpharetta ASAP. Heavy rail is preferred. Place a station near the new Avalon development. Encourage residential and office density near each station.

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Amazing. Just reading the comments on this blog is entertaining. I grew up in Atlanta in the 80's and have lived all over the city. MARTA should be expanded in all areas of the city, not just northward to the safe haven. Every major city in the world has mass transit with multiple lines that take you throughout the city. These cities have crime and Black people (the real issue) just like Atlanta. Yet the "fear of getting robbed" has kept MARTA from expanding for 20 years, while we continue to sit in traffic. Here a newflash...if someone wanted to rob your home, why/how would they wait for a MARTA train to get home as opposed to using a car? This asinine ideology is what will keep Atlanta from becoming the gem that it could be. It permeates our leadership on both ends and across races and it's sickening to say the least. MARTA should be expanded to Alpharetta...and Conyers...and Jonesboro...and Douglassville.

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Transportation

9:20 AM MON JULY 7, 2014

## MARTA Wants Your Input on Rail Service to Alpharetta

By [LISA GEORGE \(@PEOPLE/LISA-GEORGE\)](#)

MARTA will offer three public forums this month on potential plans to expand transit services into Atlanta's northern suburbs.

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0:45

Broadcast Version

Mark Eaton, a project manager with MARTA's Connect 400 initiative, says the agency has been getting up to 20 comments a day via phone, email and Facebook as it studies the possibilities of expanding the transit system as far north as Windward Parkway.

"We're still looking at heavy rail, bus rapid transit, and light rail," says Eatman, "but the overwhelming response has been for heavy rail."

Tomorrow night, MARTA will host a comment session at the Johns Creek Environmental campus in Roswell. The complete public meeting schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, July 8, 2014, 6:30 to 8:00 PM  
Johns Creek Environmental Campus  
8100 Holcomb Bridge Road, Roswell, GA 30022

Thursday, July 10, 2014, 6:30 to 8:00 PM  
Georgia State University Alpharetta Center  
3775 Brookside Pkwy, Alpharetta, GA 30022

Thursday, July 17, 2014, 6:30 to 8:00 PM  
Hampton Inn Atlanta – Perimeter Center  
769 Hammond Dr. NE, Atlanta GA 30328

Eatman says the MARTA board could vote as early as this fall on whether to go ahead with a feasibility study, but it could be as long as a decade before full transit expansion is in place.

For more information on Connect 400, visit [itcmarta.com](http://itcmarta.com) ([www.itcmarta.com/north-line-400-con.aspx](http://www.itcmarta.com/north-line-400-con.aspx)).



([http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wabe/files/201206/marta\\_0.jpg](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wabe/files/201206/marta_0.jpg))

North Springs is currently MARTA's northernmost rail station, but it is studying extending the service as far north as Windward Parkway.  
*Credit itcmarta.com*



**WABE – 90.1, 07-07-14**

## **MARTA Wants Your Input on Rail Service to Alpharetta**

By Lisa George

MARTA will offer three public forums this month on potential plans to expand transit services into Atlanta's northern suburbs.

Mark Eaton, a project manager with MARTA's Connect 400 initiative, says the agency has been getting up to 20 comments a day via phone, email and Facebook as it studies the possibilities of expanding the transit system as far north as Windward Parkway.

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For more information on Connect 400, visit [itsmarta.com](http://itsmarta.com).

**My FoxAtlanta, 7-8-14**

## **Many oppose expansion at MARTA meeting**

By George Franco

ALPHARETTA, Ga. -

Alpharetta residents attended a meeting Tuesday night regarding a proposal from MARTA to expand up the 400 corridor.

The meeting was held to discuss relief alternatives for high-capacity transit from North Springs to Windward Parkway.

The meeting took place at the Johns Creek Environmental Campus.

A dozen-mile MARTA northward expansion sound like a good idea to some in Alpharetta, but the expansion isn't sitting well with some residents whose neighborhood would be affected.

"If the distance is further North with more stops, how will that possibly improve that experience of commuting," said Peter Radike who opposes the expansion.

MARTA tells FOX 5 they will have a few more public hearings; however, if all goes it could be a decade or longer before the expansion would be built.

## **MARTA**

**Neighbor Newspapers, 07-16-14**

### **Residents weigh in on MARTA Ga. 400 initiative at Alpharetta meeting**

By James Swift

The second of three public meetings on MARTA expansion into north Fulton was held at the Georgia State University Alpharetta Center July 10. The Ga. 400 Corridor Transit Initiative would add 12 miles to the existing line, extending from North Springs to Windward Parkway.

Proposed station spots include Northridge Road, Mansell Road and Holcomb Bridge Road.

A Connect 400 Alternatives Analysis started in 2011. After roughly two years of evaluations, "early scoping" for the initiative began last fall.

With the Federal Transportation Administration recently updating the New Starts funding program, MARTA is seeking residential input about possible "locally preferred alternatives."

The type of transportation has yet to be decided, with busses, light rail and heavy rail all being considered.

Preliminary costs for heavy rail was about \$1.6 billion, said project manager Mark Eatman. Light rail is tabbed at \$1.8 billion and bus rapid transit would cost an estimated \$470 million.

"As of right now, people tend to prefer heavy rail," Eatman said.

Early MARTA survey results indicate three-fourths of corridor residents support expansion to the Forsyth County line, with 40 percent preferring heavy rail transport. The same percentage of north Fulton employees favored expansion, with two-thirds of respondents opting for heavy rail transit.

Alpharetta resident Leigh Sanders said she supported expansion. "We never think of the future when building transportation routes," she said. "Why not invest in your infrastructure?"

Another Alpharetta resident, Susan Yarbrough, preferred the heavy rail option. "It's long overdue."



Mark Bryant, who lives in downtown Alpharetta, said he wants MARTA extended to Old Milton Parkway. "My biggest concern is that it doesn't happen fast enough ... that I'm going to die of old age before it gets here."

Johns Creek physician Salpi Adrouny said north Fulton should have had heavy rail 20 years ago. "If we're going to be an international city, we just need to have expanded MARTA rail," he said.

Another heavy rail proponent, Alpharetta's Randy Howard, said he hoped expansion would reduce GA 400 congestion. "The right combination of good high-speed rail and some good bus rapid transit," he said, "really makes for an effective transportation system."

Bill Fogarty, an Alpharetta resident living near Windward Parkway, said he prefers the heavy rail option. However, he is concerned about cost overruns. "When the government spends money," he said, "oftentimes the original viability plan cost is exceeded by a dramatic amount."

Tony Vaughn, also of Alpharetta, said he was outright opposed to expansion. "If you were to ask Buckhead and North Springs to approve it again, I don't think they would," he said. "It's a crime transport ... I think it's gone too far north already."

A decision has not been made as to whether the line would run on the east or west side of Ga. 400, although Eatman said it is possible the route could alternate between the two.

With more families on the east side, Sandy Springs resident Ben Nadler said it made more sense to place stations on the west side. "It needs to be done in such a way that it hits and impacts the people who will actually use it," he said. Project manager Janide Sidifall said MARTA is looking at the federal New Starts program to cover half the project bill.

"But then we would have to find the other 50 percent in local match," she said. "Or we would have to get local partners involved to look at some kind of property taxation or sales tax."

National Environmental Policy Act scoping will begin in November, with a request to enter into FTA project development set for May 2016.

A record of decision is expected to be signed Feb 2017. Operations are tentatively set to begin six to 12 years from now.

## **MARTA eyes North Fulton expansion**

By John Ruch

Clayton County isn't the only part of metro Atlanta that's considering an expansion of MARTA's footprint. Momentum is building for a rail expansion in North Fulton from Sandy Springs to Alpharetta along Georgia 400.

Last week, MARTA wrapped up a series of preliminary meetings about the plan at the Perimeter Center Hampton Inn, a location that highlights the clogged-artery traffic nightmare that is the I-285 and Ga. 400 interchange. At least 70 residents attended, and many appeared to favor the expansion provided that it happened on the west side of Ga. 400 through Sandy Springs. The east side of the so-called "Hospitality Highway" has more single-family homes and adjacent schools; the west side includes more apartment complexes and commercial strips.

The 12-mile extension along a dedicated path, known as "Connect 400," could feature up to six stations. While the current Red Line terminating in Sandy Springs is heavy rail, the extension could also be light rail or bus rapid transit. The current planning phase is seeking public input on that "locally preferred alternative," as MARTA planner Mark Eatman put it.

"It is what it sounds like, an alternative preferred by the people, by you," Eatman said.

The expansion is a long way from reality - 6 to 12 years away in the absolute best-case scenario. That's timeline would require competitive federal funding to fall into place. In the nearly 15 years since the local Red Line stations were built, a previous extension plan floundered due to opposition and an economic study that found potential ridership too low to support the expansion.

But times have changed, and so has North Fulton. Eatman said that the area has seen changing demographics and growing mixed-income population that needs new transit solutions.

Late last year, MARTA nearly tanked this expansion by issuing a draft plan that featured an east-side line. The backlash against the route forced officials to backpedal to say anything's on the table, though it's unlikely the line can run down the middle of 400 as it does in Buckhead thanks to GDOT road expansion plans. But planners say the line might even run on the west side for part the way, then cross the road to the east.



MARTA touted a recent scientific survey from Kennesaw State University's Burruss Institute showing that more than 75 percent of North Fulton residents and employees support MARTA expansion there, and varying majorities backing some form of rail. The Sandy Springs City Council is supporting the concept so long as it hugs the west-side of the highway. Elected officials and some residents have some reservations, however, about a possible Northridge area station that sparks traffic concerns.

David Centofanti, president of the Northridge Forest Community Association, has been organizing a coalition of various neighborhood groups about the issue for months. He tells CL his group is showing similar support for a west-side expansion. "I've talked to only two or three people who absolutely don't want it anywhere," he says.

State Sen. Fran Millar, R-Dunwoody, who serves as vice-chair of Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC), the Gold Dome's committee on MARTA oversight, voiced grudging support to constituents at the meeting.

"I don't necessarily like it, either," he said, adding that transportation needs are growing and GDOT can't keep expanding Ga. 400 forever. "We're not gonna have a choice."

Millar predicted that bus rapid transit will be the eventual choice, because it's cheaper to build at an estimated \$473 million versus \$1.6 to \$1.8 billion for rail options.

However, Millar joined a small group of residents who vocally criticized the process and the KSU survey, suggesting they were invalid or rigged. Despite the local support that CL heard at the meeting, Millar said he thinks the survey avoided talking to people in the Sandy Springs and Dunwoody areas who might oppose the line.

A few of those residents told CL that their concerns are rooted in the idea that today's well-off residents won't use MARTA, so it will essentially just enable an invasion of lower-class men and women. Ye olde MARTA-as-crime-creator raised its head, too.

"I think it's the lower-income people who are going to come up and start stealing," said one longtime Sandy Springs resident who declined to give her name. She blamed a break-in of her daughter's car on riders of existing MARTA service. She said she uses the train sometimes and would be OK with a west-side extension, but only if the transit agency first improves service and security in the existing system.



Meanwhile, as the MARTA expansion proposal gains momentum around the metro area, some of those lower-income communities might end up competing with North Fulton for expansion funds. Clayton County in November is poised to vote on joining MARTA and starting bus and eventually rail service. Depending on the many twists and turns of funding and planning, consultants and planners said, Clayton or some other project could end up in the running, too.

MARTA continues to accept public comments on Connect 400 at [connect400@itsmarta.com](mailto:connect400@itsmarta.com).

## **MARTA**

**AJC, 08-12-14**

### **Atlanta Forward: MARTA rail to North Fulton**

**Moderated by Tom Sabulis**

MARTA is having an interesting summer. Development around its rail stations looks to be gathering steam. Expansion south to Clayton County seems inevitable now that residents — most of them pro-transit — get to vote for a penny sales tax in November. And an expansion north along Georgia 400 also shows promise, as long as MARTA chooses the right route. Today, neighborhood leaders in Sandy Springs outline the best way for MARTA to win over North Fulton residents. And a MARTA executive writes that the agency is listening.

### **MARTA should choose the right direction**

**By Chip Swearngan**

I live in Sandy Springs, between Spalding Drive and the Chattahoochee River on the east side of Georgia 400, where MARTA is considering expanding its service northward from the North Springs Station.

While I am not opposed to MARTA's proposed expansion of service to north Fulton County, I am opposed to any expansion, particularly heavy rail, east of Georgia 400.

Expanding east would heavily impact multiple neighborhoods, four schools, local roads and traffic. Two public elementary school campuses (Dunwoody Springs and Woodland) back up directly to the GDOT right-of-way and would have a rail line potentially running through their playgrounds, which could force the schools to relocate.

These views are shared by many of my neighbors. On June 12, two homeowners' associations invited MARTA representatives to speak to our members at an evening event we publicized. More than 75 residents attended representing 11 different neighborhoods in north Dunwoody and Sandy Springs. We conducted a simple survey of attendees on sign-in sheets. 74 surveys were completed; not everyone responded to the survey, or to each question. Survey results, which we shared with MARTA, follow:

1. Do you support heavy-rail expansion of MARTA? 18 responded yes; 31 responded no; 18 responded maybe.



2. Do you support expansion on the east or west side of 400? None responded "East;" 68 responded "West;" and 2 responded other, including "middle" and "any."

3. Do you support a MARTA station at Northridge (Road)? 6 responded yes; 45 responded no; 16 responded maybe.

By contrast, if MARTA were to cross over GA 400 immediately before or after Spalding Drive to the west side of the highway, we believe MARTA could provide much needed public transportation to many residents who ride MARTA busses today that circulate along Dunwoody Place/Northridge Road/Roswell Road.

Additionally, expansion on the west side could promote transit-oriented-development and offer the opportunity to rebuild or upgrade older multi-family housing that currently exists between Spalding Drive and Northridge Road.

Further, we believe there are stronger positives for supporting MARTA expansion west of Georgia 400, including:

- Land use opportunities are greater, including greater options for station location and design.
- Existing transportation and access to/from a proposed Northridge station are more evolved on the west, although some of our neighbors question the need for a station given the proximity to the North Springs station.
- A greater number of current MARTA customers live west of Georgia 400. The northern panhandle of Sandy Springs is the most densely populated portion of the city. If an expanded MARTA route were not sited on the west side, these customers would need to cross the highway to use MARTA.
- There is far less National Park Service land in the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area that would be potentially impacted if a rail line were run West of Georgia 400 at the river.
- The city of Sandy Springs supports MARTA expansion and heavy rail, but also prefers a west side orientation to encourage redevelopment.
- The commercial property values on the west would likely have a greater potential for appreciation with MARTA development than would residences on the on the East side.

Most long-term residents in this area recall a 1989 resolution by the MARTA Board affirming a "west of 400, before or after Spalding Drive" future MARTA expansion, to cross back over Georgia 400 after Holcomb Bridge Road. This was done around the same time as planning for MARTA's North Springs Station. It is



the agreement upon which residents have bought and sold property and made investments in neighborhoods along the east of Georgia 400 from Dunwoody to the river over the last 25 years, and it's why neighbors are upset that MARTA officials now seem to be ignoring that previous agreement.

MARTA officials told residents that nothing has yet been decided but as the Project Connect 400 study was started it was necessary to consider all options in order to meet federal transportation guidelines.

If the MARTA board of directors would again resolve to expand MARTA from the North Springs station along the west side of Georgia 400, I believe there would be greater community support, from neighbors like me, the cities of Dunwoody and Sandy Springs, as well as the Fulton County School Board.

*Chip Swearngan is president of the Somerset Homeowners Association in Sandy Springs.*

## **Business, transit agency would benefit**

**By David Centofanti**

MARTA has been soliciting feedback from the community on its proposed North Line expansion (Connect 400). The plan relies heavily on the Atlanta Regional Commission 40-year master plan, where you can see statistics and forecasts for greater Atlanta's transportation vision, and the cost of that vision.

The feedback process is designed to help MARTA select a locally preferred alternative and is highly recommended for a project seeking federal funding under the FTA New Starts program. The Connect 400, ARC and Sandy Springs websites have some great information if you feel your life needs a serious dose of community involvement. The dozen documents, 1000-plus pages, take quite a bit of focus to unravel.

The North Springs area (north of Spalding Drive and Roswell Road) is the most densely populated portion of Sandy Springs. The area west of Georgia 400 is primarily multi-family residence, commercial, and retail businesses; the area east of Georgia 400, well into Dunwoody, is entirely single family homes and schools.

The west side of Georgia 400 has a better existing network of roads, sidewalks, and facilities to support a transit station. Cisco, the top employer in Sandy Springs, is one of the businesses, located at Northridge Road. My employer and others, with whom I have spoken, would gain many advantages if a MARTA station was located on the west side of Georgia 400 in the Northridge area. The benefits include greater access to the Atlanta employee pool; reduced commute times to and from the airport; significant improvement in commercial property



values, rental rates, and tax revenue; reduced through traffic on Roswell Road; and more options for private investment, station design and location. Most important, a west side station holds the potential for revitalization of the most northern part of the North Springs. If you look at MARTA stations around Atlanta, it is clear that commercial and high-density residential get a considerable benefit from these stations.

I believe a revitalization of the Northridge area cannot be done with MARTA alone. Sandy Springs, Fulton County and commercial developers must make a focused investment in the area. The City of Sandy Springs Comprehensive Plan supports future mixed-use land use development at the interchange of Northridge and Roswell Roads, as well as along Dunwoody Place, which are all west of Georgia 400. The support from Sandy Springs should be defined in conjunction with this project, and in the form of property owner and developer incentives; consistent zoning requirements; a simple and effective permit process; green space requirements; tax breaks; and most important, funding of a core project that will represent and complement the community in the area.

All this must happen west of Georgia 400 as the land use opportunities on the east side are virtually non-existent and a greater portion of the ridership is west of Georgia 400. The city of Sandy Springs should develop a revitalization plan that includes a MARTA station on the west side of Georgia 400 in the Northridge area.

The location of the station is critical due to the traffic bottleneck in this area. The Northridge Road bridge and Pitts Road bridge over Georgia 400 are the only arteries between North Springs and Dunwoody. The Dunwoody community currently has easy access to the North Springs station via Peachtree Dunwoody Road and Mt. Vernon. A station anywhere on the east side between North Springs and the river will seriously congest these two roadways due to the majority of the ridership and benefactors being located west of Georgia 400. MARTA says the reason for the east side proposal is due to the cost of crossing over Georgia 400. The additional benefits of being west of Georgia 400 — and the community preference — should justify the minor additional cost of the crossing.

I ask that MARTA place the expansion technology and stations on the west side of Georgia 400 in the greater Northridge Road area. It's SMARTA.

*David Centofanti, a Sandy Springs resident, is president of the Northridge Community Association.*

## **MARTA is listening**

**By Mark Eatman**

MARTA began reaching out to local communities this summer to get public feedback about Connect 400, a project that would extend high-capacity transit farther north in Fulton County. It's no secret that the thriving GA 400 corridor is experiencing a boom in population, job growth and traffic gridlock. Those who live and work in the area have a lot to say about finding transportation options, and we've been listening.

So far, MARTA has had three very well-attended meetings to discuss the project and we're continuing to work closely with local community groups requesting information. Every day, we receive scores of emails, letters, phone calls and social media posts about this project. We've heard from residents, office workers, the media, elected officials, business leaders, local schools and universities. Since Connect 400 initiative is still in the early stages of planning and no firm decisions have been made, we want to ensure it has a broad base of support from people who would be most affected by it.

As the lead planner for Connect 400, one of the most gratifying experiences I've had is the recent invitation from residents in the Northridge Road area of GA 400 north of MARTA's North Springs Station. This association of neighborhoods organized a tour of several subdivisions on a sunny Saturday afternoon in July and, as a result, they gave us a deeper understanding of the project from their unique perspective.

We had driven the corridor numerous times since the beginning of our study. This time, residents graciously took my colleague and I into their backyards, beside their pools, around their flower gardens and inside their screened porches. We also visited nearby community centers and schools that are likely to be impacted by their proximity to the corridor.

As transit planners at MARTA, this type of firsthand experience is invaluable, and it underscores our mission: Working closely with communities to develop technically sound, cost-effective and locally supported projects that address your needs.

Although the formal public comment period for this phase of the project ended on August 8, we still want to hear from you. The MARTA Community Bus – a rolling public outreach center – will be coming to shopping centers along the corridor to share information and gather feedback. MARTA will also visit major employment centers in northern Fulton County during lunchtime to hear from the area's fast-growing workforce.



MARTA is open to scheduling more community events. If there is an upcoming meeting or event that you would like our planners to attend to discuss the project, just let us know.

To share your thoughts about the Connect 400 transit initiative, send us an email at [connect400@itsmarta.com](mailto:connect400@itsmarta.com). Also for more information please visit our website at : <http://bit.ly/Connect400>.

*Mark Eatman is lead planner for MARTA's Connect 400 project.*

[Home](#)



## Let's Get Heavy Rail Up GA400 Corridor Moving

Posted on August 18, 2014 by [admin](#)

**Like** Be the first of your friends to like this

By Phil Downing

I support heavy rail up the GA400 corridor to at least Windward Parkway. I live in Alpharetta and must commute every day to my office in a building literally across the street from the Sandy Springs MARTA station. I would definitely use MARTA for my every day commute as well as my frequent trips to the airport.

Extension of MARTA heavy rail north of North Springs is long overdue. I'm disappointed that the process is taking so long. I can only hope that somehow we can accelerate the analysis and community input process – as well as the lengthy environmental studies – to get this project moving.

One would think this is a win for many interest groups:

- Environmentalists would see reduced emissions and pollution from all the cars on GA400
- Commuters would have options to reduce their drive and get to locations in Atlanta quicker without having to sit in traffic – not to mention reduced gas use, fewer accidents, lower insurance rates, lower stress, more productive time, etc.
- Employers would gain improved productivity, fewer problems with missed time due to traffic issues
- Traffic through mid-town would be cut by removing some of the cars from the road ( or at least reducing the rate of growth of the number of cars), positively impacting other citizens in the community
- The surrounding GA400 corridor communities can further promote quality of life and the positive impact reduced traffic will have on secondary roads
- It will be easier to get convention attendees from the airport to North Fulton locations driving utilization of convention facilities and local hotels which in turn drives greater economic growth and higher tax receipts for Roswell, Alpharetta, and Johns Creek.
- Higher tax receipts takes the pressure off having to increase millage rates and that benefits all the homeowners in the area

Atlanta is no longer a sleepy, southern town. It is a modern, international city with millions of citizens and it should have the transportation infrastructure commensurate with a global city of our size.

I can only encourage MARTA to please do everything you can to accelerate the process and move this forward as quickly as possible. At some point in time – and I believe we have surpassed that time by years – we need to move past analysis and take action. Time to get this project started!



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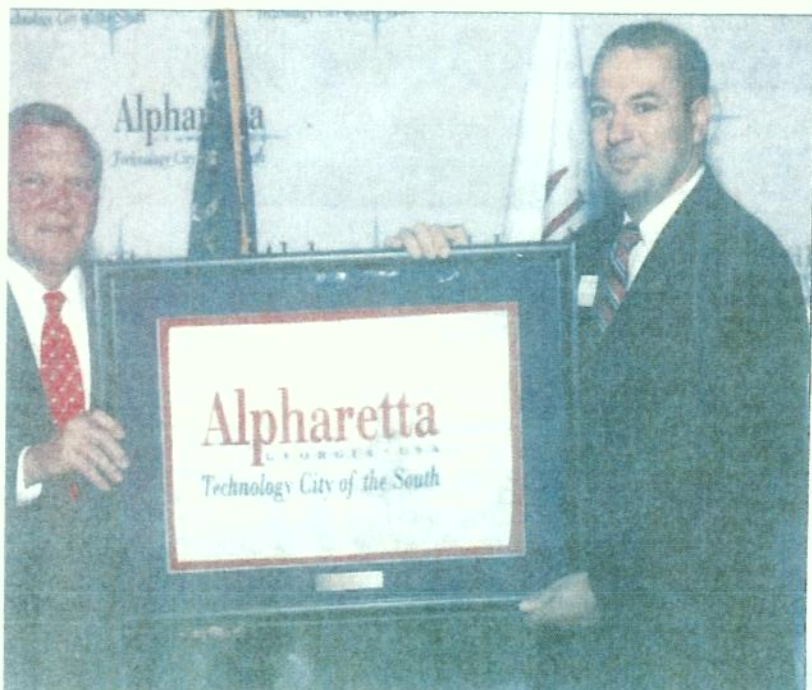
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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2012

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## PHARETTA 2.0

Unveils new branding as Technology City of the South



Special Photo

Nathan Deal helps Alpharetta Mayor David Belle Isle welcome all the members of Alpharetta Technology Commission.

tellogg

spapers.com

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal was in Alpharetta Monday night unveiling the city's new branding and introducing its Technology Commission.

Deal, in his role as mayor of Alpharetta, said he wanted to welcome the city's new branding and also wanted the city to be known as the Technology City of the South.

Deal, a keynote speaker at the commission's first meeting, said the commission is a "significant step forward in the city's designation as a technology hub." He said, "I'm much along with the progress of the city, and I commend the city's Technology

Commission, a group that will identify and pursue investment opportunities and policy decisions for the city's technology companies and its burgeoning technology industry, consists of senior executives from 10 major tech companies in Alpharetta, along with representative from several smaller, emerging companies.

The major companies, called legacy members, are Amdocs, Hewlett-Packard, Infor, McKesson, Microsoft, Red Prairie, Siemens, ThyssenKrupp, Verint and Verizon. The emerging companies are Edge Solutions, Jackson Healthcare, Lancor, Pyramid Consulting and Priority Payment Systems.

The four strategic partner organizations on the commission are Georgia Tech's Advanced Technology Development Center, Georgia Power Company, the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce and the Technology Association

of Georgia.

It is the first organization of its kind in Georgia.

According to Mayor Belle Isle, the commission will focus on branding, incubation and infrastructure.

The commission will develop and maintain a 15-year strategic infrastructure and incentive plan for the attraction and retention of technology companies in Alpharetta.

It will also work to set up funding opportunities for Alpharetta's technology start-up companies.

Belle Isle said Alpharetta has a great opportunity to become the destination city for these start-ups and to "help pioneers as they begin their careers."

As a city with more than 900 technology companies in its borders, Belle Isle said he wants to make sure technology leaders are being engaged so the city can retain these businesses and bring in more like them.

## Forum will shed light on north Fulton rail study

By Joan Durbin

jdurbin@neighbornewspapers.com

With the resounding failure of the recent Transportation Initiative Referendum, the attention of local business leaders could be shifting to new transit options along the Ga. 400 corridor.

The Connect 400 Transit Initiative is the subject of an Aug. 30 public meeting for community and business leaders at the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce.

The breakfast meeting from 9 to 10:30 a.m. is being co-hosted by the Chamber and the North Fulton Community Improvement District in partnership with the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority.

The project study area includes a mile-wide area on either side of Ga. 400 expressway from the interchange with Interstate 285 in northern DeKalb County to McGinnis Ferry Road in northern Fulton County.

In addition to giving attendees an overview of the study, it will give them a chance to identify what they think are the transportation needs and solutions for the corridor region.

The Connect 400 project's purpose is to provide cost-effective, high capacity transit in the corridor and improve mobility, transit linkage and coverage. Transit modes would be linked to land use and the level of travel demand in the study area.

"I support the extension of the rail line across the river. I think ultimately it should go to Avalon," said Roswell Mayor Jere Wood, referencing the newly approved multi-use project in Alpharetta near Ga. 400.

Holcomb Bridge and Ga. 400 is "a natural place" for a MARTA station, he said. "It needs to be there if Roswell wants to see redevelopment of all those old apartment buildings in the area. If Roswell still wants to be business friendly and promote redevelopment, that's the place for a transit project."

In 2003, MARTA began evaluating alternatives for an extension of the existing MARTA rail line that ends at North Springs.

But it was determined that the study area was not transit supportive at that time due to a combination of high incomes and low household and employment densities.

Focus shifted to a land use and market analysis for transit expansion feasibility based on possible development patterns. In the ensuing years, the Ga. 400 corridor has become one of the fastest growing regions in metro Atlanta, with the accompanying road congestion.

According to the Connect 400 alternatives schedule on MARTA's web site, selection of a preferred alternative and development of a financial and implementation plan for that alternative should be taking place during the summer and into the fall. A final report would be done by spring of next year.

As part of a federal project development, the ensuing design and construction process could take up to nine years.

The Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce is at 11605 Haynes Bridge Road, Alpharetta. To confirm attendance, contact Kristin Rome with the North Fulton Community Improvement District by email. KRome@gnfcc.com.



AJC, 08-25-14

## **How Atlanta can boost roads and transit at the same time**

By Kyle Wingfield

Too often, the transportation debate comes down to a question of roads versus transit. It doesn't have to be that way -- and not because I know where tens of billions of dollars are hiding.

Roads with transit on them, in the form of buses, offer a combination of flexibility, versatility and cost-efficiency that rail transit, with few exceptions, can't offer in most of metro Atlanta, let alone the rest of Georgia. That's the kind of infrastructure we should have top of mind as legislators mull various ways to step up transportation spending.

A prime example are the managed lanes Georgia has already built on I-85 through Gwinnett, and which will soon begin construction on I-75 both through Henry on the south side and through Cobb and Cherokee (including I-575) to the northwest.

Waiting on deck is a project that could be truly transformative: up to four express lanes across the top end of I-285. And, from there, Ga. 400 and eventually a broader network spreading outside and inside the perimeter.

Like the HOT lanes on I-85, these lanes will be tolled with variable pricing to ensure a traffic flow of at least 45 mph. Unlike those HOT lanes, they will bring new capacity that supplements, not supplants, the lanes already there.

Because these tolled lanes are envisioned along the existing interstate system, they will go through the same (relatively) dense corridors also pegged for transit: not just Ga. 400, but I-20 east through DeKalb. They would easily accommodate express-bus service.

Think about the top end of I-285. A link from Cumberland, including the new Braves stadium, across to Dunwoody and Doraville would not just help motorists traveling east-west. It would provide a connection for existing transit service: MARTA's red and gold rail lines and Cobb and Gwinnett's bus systems. All four services could expect more use with that piece in place.

As I follow discussions about MARTA's planned extension of transit north on Ga. 400, I can't help but think the debate about whether the line ought to go on the west or east side of the highway is rather moot. With both a MARTA line and managed lanes planned for that corridor, there will be encroachment on both sides -- unless the transit extension takes the form of managed lanes that keep buses and cars alike flowing freely.

The Ga. 400 example is instructive precisely because it speaks to the difficulty, not to mention the expense, of trying to address roads and transit separately. Right-of-way is



at a premium in the parts of metro Atlanta in most need of additional infrastructure. We should take every chance we have to get two solutions for roughly the price of one.

It's already working on I-85. A quarter of the people who travel in those HOT lanes during the morning rush hour are on buses. And while you'll see fewer vehicles in those lanes than in a regular lane, they are accommodating 44 percent more people than each regular lane, thanks not only to buses but van pools and carpools.

That's a far cry from the "Lexus lanes" epithet commonly used against them. This is a truly broad-based answer to one of our most urgent problems.

## Reporter Newspapers, 08-25-14

### **Residents: Go west, MARTA**

By Ann Marie Quill

Facing a possible 12-mile expansion of MARTA service north along the Ga. 400 corridor from the North Springs station, residents at an Aug. 19 Sandy Springs City Council meeting continued their push for the extension to run up the west side of the highway.

Northridge area resident Nancy Lesser said she supports MARTA efforts as long as it stays on the west side. She said she's concerned Dunwoody Springs Elementary, located on the east side near the highway, would be destroyed if MARTA expanded in that location. "Can you imagine a bunch of elementary school kids watching MARTA be built and the destruction to the school?" she asked

Opponents of a east side expansion had packed City Hall wearing red shirts and carrying small signs saying "MARTA Go West."

Resident David Centofanti said that residents and businesses on the west side would benefit more from MARTA. "The area west of Ga. 400 is primarily multifamily residences, commercial and retail businesses," he said. "The area east of 400 is primarily single-family homes and schools. The west side of Ga. 400 is better, has a better existing network of sidewalks, roads and facilities to support a transit station."

But it will be a while before that decision is made. "We haven't decided which side of Ga. 400 we want to be on," said Mark Eatman, project manager at MARTA, giving a presentation on the proposal the Aug. 19 meeting.

Eatman said a preliminary engineering and environmental study would be conducted before the agency can determine where the expansion might be located. That study would examine the impact on the rail extending on the west or east side, or even up the center of the highway.

MARTA is examining three options for the project: bus rapid transit, light rail and extending the current heavy rail line. The transit agency is also considering adding stations in Sandy Springs, Roswell and Alpharetta at Northridge Road, Holcomb Bridge Road, Mansell Road, North Point Mall, Old Milton Parkway and Windward Parkway.



City councilman John Paulson thanked MARTA officials for reaching out to the community. In July, MARTA officials took a tour of the area with Northridge residents.

"I appreciate you meeting with our folks and looking in their backyards and seeing what's going on," Paulson said. "I think you have seen that the vast majority think an extension is a good idea. The impact on the east and west side obviously has consequences because there's so many residences that run up the east side."

Councilman Gabriel Sterling echoed Paulson's sentiments. "The vast majority of the people in this city would like to see this move from the east side . . . to the west side. You see all those people in red outfits – I know they aren't all Bulldog fans."

He also expressed concern about where a new station might be located in Sandy Springs.

"I'm not sold on the concept that Northridge is the right place to put it because Northridge Road essentially dead ends into the Northridge neighborhood." Sterling said going further north closer to the river might be more beneficial because the city's future land use plan calls for "live, work, regional" developments along the north Roswell Road corridor.

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. The heavy rail option is cheaper than light rail because it extends the current line. The 11.9 mile line would extend from the North Springs station. MARTA consultant Claudia Bilotto said the agency is eyeing funds from the Federal Transit Administration, which grants money for projects based on factors such as mobility improvements, cost effectiveness, congestion relief, environmental benefits, land use and economic development.

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Posted by [Ann Marie Quill](#) on August 25, 2014.

## Residents: Go west, MARTA



ann marie quill

Residents Joan Rush, left, and Nancy Lesser attended the Aug. 19 meeting regarding MARTA's expansion up Ga. 400.

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### About Ann Marie Quill

Ann Marie Quill is Associate Editor at Reporter Newspapers.

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