

7.0 MOVING FORWARD: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPLEMENTING THE LPA

After adoption of the LPA by the MARTA Board, the I-20 East Transit Initiative will enter into the environmental studies phase of the project. The study will complete an EA and a DEIS in order to satisfy NEPA, which requires the full consideration of environmental effects for any project that receives federal funding. The following challenges and opportunities will face MARTA once the LPA is adopted and the project moves forward through the project development process.

Refinement of Station Locations: Although all stations areas have been presented to the public, it is anticipated that refinement of the station location, size, access points, parking facilities, and layout will be required. This will likely involve outreach efforts to business owners, residents, jurisdictional staff, and elected officials.

Continued Public Involvement: Public, stakeholder, and agency outreach must continue throughout the life of this project in order to educate the public, identify local issues, and build support. One key issue that arose during public engagement in the fall of 2011 was concern regarding BRT service inside the I-285 Perimeter. While there was overwhelming support for HRT3 from residents outside Perimeter, residents within the Perimeter voiced concern that they would not be served by rail transit. The specific routing and integration of the BRT portion of HRT3 will be continuously refined through future work.

Refinement of Project Costs: It is anticipated that capital, right-of-way, and O&M costs will be adjusted as more detail regarding the transit alignments, operations, and station locations is prepared.

Coordination with GDOT: Since much of the LPA alignment is proposed within or partially within GDOT right-of-way, close coordination is necessary. MARTA has engaged GDOT throughout the study process to ensure the protection of a transit corridor within GDOT right-of-way where possible. As a result of these coordination efforts, the GDOT Board recently adopted a resolution that guides cooperation between the two agencies with regard to implementation of transit initiatives in corridors designated for managed lane projects. The intent of the resolution is to foster thoughtful utilization of existing and planned assets for both highway and transit modes. An MOU will be developed to outline specific commitments for the I-20 East Corridor.

Identification of Project Funding: The identification of possible funding sources is essential to the implementation of the I-20 East project. One possible funding source is the FTA New Starts program. The New Starts program is the federal government's primary financial resource for supporting major transit investments. This highly competitive program evaluates potential New Starts projects based on mobility improvements, cost effectiveness, transit supportive land uses and policies, local financial commitments, as well as other criteria. MARTA is looking at alternative funding mechanisms for project delivery and implementation.