

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Name and Location

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and the Atlanta Development Authority (ADA), via its planning and implementation agent, Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI), have prepared an Environmental Effects Report (EER) for the BeltLine Corridor Northeast Zone project in Fulton County, Georgia.

1.2 Facility Type, Termini, Length, Right-of-Way

The proposed project involves construction of a new fixed rail transit guideway and multi-use trails. No existing rail transit guideway currently exists within the BeltLine Corridor, excepting the MARTA heavy rail lines intersecting the corridor. The Northeast Zone of the BeltLine Corridor extends west via DeKalb Avenue NE from the Inman Park/Reynoldstown MARTA Station to the right-of-way (ROW) presently owned by the Atlanta Development Authority (ADA) (as described in the following paragraph), then north via ADA right-of-way to the Armour Drive industrial district and the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station at Lindbergh Drive NE. The Northeast Zone is approximately 6.5 miles long.

Existing right-of-way includes the Atlanta Development Authority property along the former Norfolk Southern railway corridor from DeKalb Avenue NE to a point approximately 0.4 miles north of Montgomery Ferry Road NE. Right-of-way will be necessary within the existing extents of DeKalb Avenue to support in-street transit operations between the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way and the Inman Park/Reynoldstown MARTA Station. Additional right-of-way acquisition will be necessary to provide a transit station immediately north of Interstate 85 (I-85) at Mayson Street NE and Plasters Avenue NE and to connect the proposed BeltLine transit and trails to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station, including portions of properties in the Armour Drive industrial district and along the northern bank of Peachtree Creek.

1.3 Study Area and Physical Extent

The general study area for the EER is a one-half mile wide band centered on the BeltLine Corridor. This document specifies the appropriate extents for resource assessments, which may vary from the half-mile study area band depending on the subject resource.

Physical effects from the BeltLine project may occur within the Limit of Disturbance (LOD). In this EER, the LOD represents the likely “footprint” of the project, or the physical extent of the proposed transit track centerlines, passenger stations, and trail configuration with trail access points.

MARTA and ABI prepared a design document, *Preliminary Conceptual Transit and Trail Alignment, Northeast Zone* (April 2009) that complements the EER and establishes the conceptual design assumptions as the basis for EER analyses. The document includes typical sections along exclusive right-of-way and in mixed traffic for transit and trail alignments, as well as plan and profile drawings. Plan sheets include Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way and LOD extents. The design document includes

preliminary layouts for station areas and the Armour Drive maintenance yard. The conceptual design document accompanies the EER on the study website and at public locations.

1.4 Alternatives Considered

1.4.1 Build Alternative

The proposed Build Alternative includes a combination of a new Light Rail/Modern Streetcar transit line and new multi-use trails. The conceptual rail transit guideway includes electrically powered vehicles, overhead wires to deliver the power to the vehicles, stations with platforms to accommodate waiting passengers, and access from the stations to adjacent streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian facilities.

Multi-use trails are pathways shared by pedestrians, pet walkers, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, bicyclists, and other users who do not rely on conventional motorized vehicles for mobility and passive or active recreation. An open space or barrier physically separates a typical pathway from motorized vehicular traffic. Multi-use trails in the Northeast Zone would create a linear park with connections to parks and recreational areas throughout the study area. In tandem with the transit service, the trail system would connect Atlanta's in-town neighborhoods and the broader pedestrian and bicycle network for the entire metropolitan area.

The alignment in the Northeast Zone would be approximately 6.5 miles long, with at least 12 new stations and stops at two existing MARTA heavy rail stations (Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Lindbergh Center). The BeltLine would connect area neighborhoods and the two existing MARTA heavy rail stations.

To promote connectivity, consolidation of segments or the trail alignment may occur with sidewalks on public rights-of-way where conditions allow and where in-street bicycle lanes are inappropriate. To preserve trail network continuity and connectivity, in-street bicycle lanes may occur where there is insufficient right-of-way for a dedicated multi-use trail.

At the southern end of the Northeast Zone, bicyclists and pedestrians would achieve connections to the Inman Park area and the Inman Park/Reynoldstown MARTA Station through the existing bicycle path along Edgewood Avenue NE and the existing sidewalk network along Decatur Street NE and Edgewood Avenue NE.

1.4.2 No Build Alternative

The EER also includes consideration of a No Build Alternative. Under this alternative, MARTA and ABI would take no action to construct the BeltLine project. The No Build Alternative includes the existing transportation system throughout the corridor study area and the Atlanta region. The No Build Alternative also includes all of the proposed projects listed in the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) (FY 2008-2013) and within the cost-constrained *Envision6 Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP) (FY 2008-2030), excepting the BeltLine transit and multi-use trails.

1.4.3 Alternatives to Avoid Significant Adverse Effect

The No Build Alternative represents the alternative for avoiding significant adverse effects.

1.5 Environmental Setting

Section 0 of the EER describes the environmental setting for the study area. Within the Northeast Zone is a highly developed urban area. Beyond the abandoned railroad right-of-way is an array of land use and land cover types, including residential, commercial, and industrial properties, transportation and utility right-of-way, and hardwood and mixed pine/hardwood forest land. Long-standing and historic neighborhoods exist throughout the corridor.

Within the Northeast Zone study area, situated in the Upper Chattahoochee River basin, are a number of surface water bodies including eight perennial streams, three intermittent streams, one ephemeral stream, and two wetlands. The corridor also crosses the 100-year floodplains of Peachtree Creek and Clear Creek.

Fourteen parks/recreational areas are within the study area, including ten existing public parks/recreation areas, two planned public parks, and two privately owned recreation areas. Seven of these resources are immediately adjacent to the Northeast Zone right-of-way.

Within the study area are 39 properties either in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Eight archaeological sites are also within a one-kilometer (0.62-mile) radius of the corridor.

Of the 214 hazardous materials sites within the study area, 61 sites and 11 potential brownfields or under-utilized sites were within 200 feet of the proposed Build Alternative alignments. There were no solid waste landfills in the study area.

There are no known energy reserves, such as crude oil or natural gas in the project corridor. The field survey revealed no federal- or state-protected flora, fauna, or appropriate habitats. No protected mountains, critical habitats, beaches, dunes, shorelines, estuaries, forested areas (as defined under GEPA), barrier islands, trout streams, or farmlands exist within the EER study area.

1.6 Environmental Effects

Consistent with Georgia Environmental Policy Act (GEPA) guidance, Table 1-1 provides the standard checklist of environmental effects. The checklist indicates potential effects and their relative severity, and is inclusive of effects resulting from all Northeast Zone alignment and technology options.

Potential effects of the Build Alternative include:

- Impacts to a maximum 414 linear feet of perennial and intermittent streams, due to the provision of new or extended culvert structures where crossed by the BeltLine right-of-way;

Table 1-1: GEPA Environmental Checklist

| GEORGIA AREA/CATEGORY | IS AREA AFFECTED? | | HOW SEVERE? | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Yes | No | N/A | Minor | Major |
| 1.Wetlands/Waters of the U.S. and State | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2.Floodplains | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3.Water Supply | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4.Water Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.Groundwater Recharge Area | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6.Storm Water | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7.Waste Water | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8.Air Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9.Solid Wastes/Solid Waste Landfills | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10.Soil Stability/Erodibility | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11.Protected Mountains | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12.Endangered Species | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13.Critical Habitats | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14.Historical | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15.Archaeological | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16.Parks/Recreation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17.Energy Supplies | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18.Beaches | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19.Dunes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20.Shoreline | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21.Estuary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22.Forest Land | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23.Barrier Island | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24.Aquatic Life/ Trout Streams | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25.Hazardous Materials | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- Encroachments of up to 9.75 acres of floodplains near Peachtree Creek and Clear Creek;
- Production of storm water runoff and waste water;
- Emissions of vehicle-borne contaminants into the air;
- Generation of hazardous and/or solid waste;
- Soil erosion due to grading of areas adjacent to existing paving;
- Adverse effect to one historic resource, due to modification of a pedestrian entrance;
- Disturbance of potential archaeological remains;
- Proximity effects (visual, aesthetic and/or vibration) to four parks/recreation resources;
- Removal of temporary venue parking area for one park resource;
- Energy expenditures for vehicles and facilities;
- Relocation of energy transmission and distribution lines; and
- Land disturbance and redevelopment near hazardous materials sites, brownfields and under-utilized industrial locations.

The EER presents more detail on the environmental consequences of the proposed action in Section 4.0.

Each alignment option is adjacent to at least one hazardous materials site and poses potential impacts to floodplains and cultural resources in this area. None of the Build Alternative alignment options would avoid adverse environmental effects in the absence of mitigation strategies.

Minimization and mitigation strategies include:

- Acquisition of 1,306 compensatory stream mitigation credits;
- Coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) during project design to minimize impacts to regulatory floodways;
- Management of storm water runoff resulting from new impervious surfaces;
- Collection and disposal of waste water in accordance with local, state and federal regulations;
- Inclusion of erosion, sedimentation and pollution control measures to prevent contamination of storm water;
- Early re-vegetation of disturbed land areas and application of best management practices during construction to avoid soil erosion and stream pollution;
- Coordination of temporary erosion control measures with permanent erosion control features to assure continuous erosion control following construction;

- Satisfaction of stream buffer variance requirements, in accordance with state erosion and sedimentation control laws;
- Application of design measures to preserve and otherwise re-use historic resources;
- Archaeological investigation and testing prior to construction;
- Coordination with the City of Atlanta and the Piedmont Park Conservancy during project design, to identify alternative venue parking options and protected areas under the Land and Water Conservation Fund;
- Coordination during project design with utility agencies, including Georgia Power, regarding utility relocation, to avoid interruption of energy supplies;
- Identification of potential spills and releases and underground storage tanks at hazardous materials sites, prior to property demolition or land disturbance; and
- Identification of strategic opportunities to assess and remediate brownfields.

The No Build Alternative avoids the generation of the above impacts, but forgoes the potential benefits and economic impacts summarized in the following section.

1.7 Benefits and Economic Impacts

Section 5.0 of the EER includes a discussion of the short-term and long-term benefits of the proposed action in the Northeast Zone. Section 6.0 of the EER identifies the values of short-term uses of the environment in relation to the maintenance and enhancement of long-term values.

Construction of transit and trails in the Northeast Zone can provide linkages between existing and planned development, recreational opportunities, and the transportation network. Environmental gains can derive from the encouragement of transit-oriented mixed-use development and the reduction of vehicle miles traveled per capita and automobile dependence. Context-sensitive design of the proposed action can help preserve and enhance cultural resources within the Northeast Zone. Other potential gains from construction of the proposed project include the removal and control of invasive species and hazardous and solid wastes.

The proposed action can support needs for transportation improvements cited in the City of Atlanta's comprehensive transportation plan, while complementing neighborhood and regional plans to enhance coordinated land use, community circulation, public health, and economic development.

Economic advantages relate to new jobs generated by construction and remediation activities in the short-term, and by the long-term enhancement of mobility, relief of congested urban thoroughfares, and access to jobs, schools, workforce housing, and activity centers in the Northeast Zone study area.

Secondary advantages relate to redevelopment after construction, including new jobs, preservation of light industrial districts, an expanded local tax base, and additional workforce housing.

Economic disadvantages relate to potential business relocation and right-of-way acquisition in Northeast Zone areas outside of the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way, and the possible loss of taxable land necessary for project development. Continued BeltLine project development and advancement of coordinated transit services, parks, and multi-use trails beyond the Northeast Zone will help to avoid potential economic disparities in the long term.

1.8 Coordination and Comments

MARTA and ABI contacted a number of federal, state, and local/regional agencies and solicited input relating to the proposed action. Additionally, MARTA, in coordination with ABI, will hold a Public Hearing during the public comment period for this EER. Section 7.0 details the coordination activities supporting the preparation of the EER and provides public hearing and contact information.

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