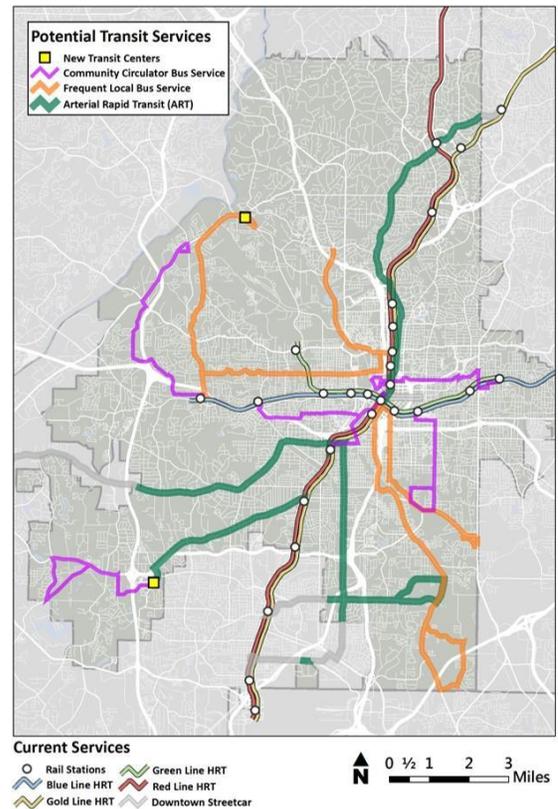
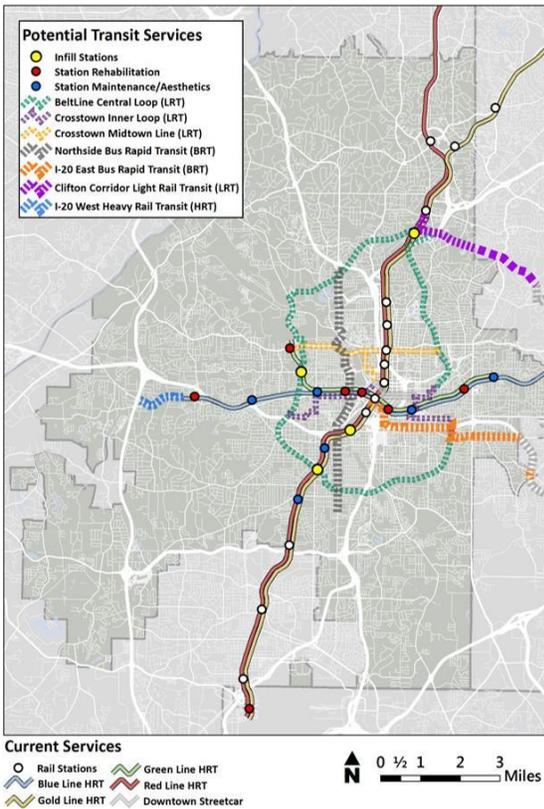


CfPT: TURN STREETCAR LINE OVER TO MARTA, ESTABLISH FREE DOWNTOWN FARE ZONE



As the Atlanta City Council considers scheduling a major transit funding referendum, Atlanta Streetcar management problems are becoming a serious distraction, and a talking point for transit opponents. In a scathing letter last month, the Georgia Department of Transportation warned that it will order a suspension of streetcar operations unless city officials correct a long list of problems, including poor maintenance procedures, questionable accident investigations and staffing deficiencies. GDOT is now reviewing a city plan promising to correct those problems, but CfPT believes that bolder action is needed. Many of Atlanta Streetcar's problems stem from the fact it is not part of the MARTA system. Ever since the streetcars began rolling last year, the line has been run under an awkward "shared management" agreement that basically created a separate city bureaucracy to run the 2.7-mile line, relegating MARTA to a supporting role. This is a mistake. MARTA has a half-century of transit experience and an excellent safety record. Eliminating the redundant bureaucracy and turning the streetcar over to MARTA would improve management and increase efficiency. It also would help with another problem: a recent downturn in streetcar ridership. The line drew large crowds during its first year, but that changed when it started charging a \$1 fare in January. The reason is obvious: \$1 is too much to charge for such a short trip. The streetcar could be valuable "last mile" transportation for riders getting off MARTA buses and trains downtown, but it's seldom used for that because it's not part of the MARTA system, and thus requires an additional fare. Citizens for Progressive Transit believes that after MARTA takes over the streetcar, it should follow the lead of many other cities, and establish a free downtown fare zone covering both streetcars and buses. MARTA currently carries very few downtown-to-downtown riders, so it's not likely that the move would result in any significant reduction in revenue. And riders would still pay the full fare to travel beyond the free zone. *(More on next page)*



MARTA recently released a pair of maps showing projects that potentially could be included in a transit referendum project list. The map on the left shows possible rail and bus rapid transit projects; the map on the right shows potential expansions of the bus system. “Arterial Rapid Transit” is generally defined as enhanced bus service on improved roadways that take advantage of transit signal priority, queue jump lanes and satellite-based communications technology.

ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL MULLS OPTIONS FOR TRANSIT REFERENDUM PROJECT LIST

Under the terms of legislation approved by the Georgia General Assembly this past spring, the City of Atlanta has up to two years to schedule a transit funding referendum. But if the city wants to get that referendum on the ballot this November, it has to agree on a project list by the end of this month. MARTA recently released a summary of potential system expansions including light-rail lines along the Atlanta Beltline and on the Atlanta portion of the Clifton Corridor, new stations on MARTA’s existing heavy-rail lines, a westward expansion of MARTA’s east-west heavy-rail line, and establishing bus rapid transit lines along Northside Drive and I-20 east. The final decision on which projects to include in the \$2.5 billion referendum project list is up to the city council. What would your priorities be? CfPT’s David Emory has prepared an interactive map of projects along with cost estimates so that you can

decide on your own “wish list. You can find it at martamenu.com. *(More on next page)*



The Adamsville Recreation Center was the site of one of several presentations on options for inclusion on a transit referendum project list (Photo by Bob Krone).

TRANSIT BEYOND ATLANTA

If the City of Atlanta passes a transit referendum in November, MARTA Chairman Robbie Ashe says his agency will follow up by proposing similar votes in the portions of Fulton and DeKalb counties outside Atlanta's city limits. There's also a move to expand transit outside Fulton and DeKalb. Georgia House Speaker David Ralston recently appointed a House Study Committee on Regional Transit Solutions. Republicans Christian Coomer of Cartersville and Chuck Martin of Alpharetta are the chair and vice-chair, respectively. Other committee members are Republicans John Carson of Marietta, Chuck Efstrotation of Dacula, Tom Taylor of Dunwoody, and Democrats Mike Glanton of Jonesboro and Calvin Smyre of Columbus. The State Senate is expected to form a similar committee. Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle, who presides over the Senate, has suggested that state funding is a possibility if MARTA is overhauled.



NEW "TWIST" FOR MARTA BUSES

From the everything-old-is new-again department, accordion-style buses will soon return to the streets of Atlanta. MARTA is buying 18 New Flyer Xcelsior articulated buses to increase capacity on heavily traveled routes like 39-Buford Highway and 196-Church-Upper Riverdale-Mt. Zion starting next year. The buses are 20 feet longer than standard buses, with seats for 53 passengers and room for up to 50 standees, but they bend in the middle, so they can make turns in tight city intersections like regular buses. MARTA had a similar fleet of articulated buses back in the 1980s, but these new buses have Wi-Fi, and are powered by compressed natural gas. MARTA has recently been taking an articulated bus on test drives, to work out any operational concerns before the new fleet begins revenue service.

ATHENS TRANSIT SURVEYS ITS RIDERS

Athens Transit riders want to see more frequent buses and additional routes. That's the conclusion of a survey conducted by the Reynolds, Smith and Hills consulting firm. Among the recommendations of a draft study presented to the Athens-Clarke County Commission: hire a full-time marketing and public outreach staff, provide free onboard Wi-Fi service, adopt less circuitous routing on some lines, and add a new line to the Columbia Brookside mixed-income community. Athens Transit – which carries 1.7 million riders a year -- was recently honored as the Urban Community Transit System of the Year by the Community Transit Association of America.

ALL STOPS

MARTA is promising no fare increase during the fiscal year that begins July first, but an Atlanta Regional Commission study declares that MARTA is still one of the nation's least affordable transit systems, based on its finding that a minimum wage employee has to work 41 minutes a day to pay MARTA fares to and from the job... A MARTA bus driver has been charged with driving too fast for conditions after his bus went off I-285 near the Buford Highway exit earlier this month; no passengers were on board... Construction of a new transit-oriented development on the south side of MARTA's Avondale station has been delayed until at least late summer... The Atlanta Bicycle Coalition estimates that 98 thousand people turned out for the Atlanta Streets Alive festival... Georgia State Sen. Brandon Beach of Alpharetta, who pushed for MARTA expansion, successfully fended off a challenge from an anti-transit primary opponent, leading AJC "Political Insider" Jim Galloway to conclude, "One can be a Republican and think large thoughts, including thoughts about MARTA and rail, without being turned out of office."

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