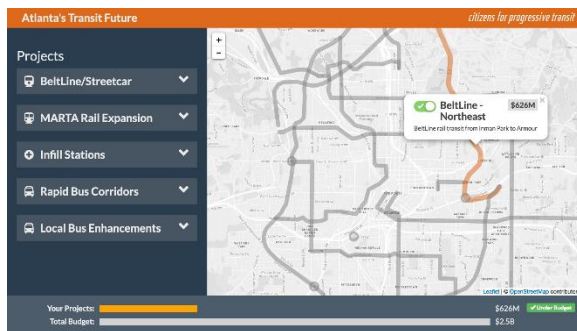


ATLANTA SAYS "YES" BY A LANDSLIDE!

An exciting new era is beginning in Atlanta. On Nov. 8, city voters gave their enthusiastic approval to a half-cent sales tax expected to raise \$2.5 billion for transit projects over the next 40 years. Nearly 72 percent said “yes” to an initiative that passed in every precinct in the city, and the result will be the biggest step forward for Atlanta transit since the referendum that established MARTA back in 1971. Although tax collections won't begin until March, Atlantans could start seeing the benefits very soon. MARTA Chairman Robbie Ashe told the Journal-Constitution his agency will be able to begin expanding bus service "very, very quickly, because the planning on that has already been done." Longer-range proposals include – but are not limited to -- new transit centers and rail stations, a westward extension of the Blue heavy rail line, and the extension of the Edgewood-Auburn streetcar line to hook up with a light-rail route along the Atlanta Beltline trail. In a separate vote, Atlanta voters approved a four-tenths-of-a-cent public works sales tax that -- among other things -- will pay for the remaining right-of-way needed to complete the full Beltline loop.



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FIGURING OUT PRIORITIES

Even though \$2.5 billion is a lot of money, it's not enough to pay for every transit project being considered. Federal matching funds may help, but it will be up to city officials and MARTA to review the various proposals to determine which projects should have priority. MARTA is expected to hold a series of public hearings. You can prepare by comparing the various proposals on an interactive website we've set up, martamenu.com.

WHERE TO NOW?

Since the new sales tax will be collected only in the City of Atlanta, it will pay only for transit expansion inside the city limits. But there's already speculation that the success of the Atlanta referendum will encourage other jurisdictions to follow suit. Fulton County Chairman John Eaves told WABE Radio that there could be a transit referendum for the portions of Fulton outside Atlanta as early as next year. There's also speculation about the possibility of a similar referendum in DeKalb County. Clayton County -- which got MARTA bus service just last year -- has started hosting hearings to discuss plans for faster, higher capacity service, using either trains or buses running in their own dedicated lanes. And Gwinnett County will discuss transit expansion options as part of a long-range transportation plan scheduled to be completed next year. Cobb County continues to be a holdout, even though the Atlanta Braves are getting ready to open their new ballpark in an already-very-congested part of the county next April. Outgoing
(Continued on next page)

County Chairman Tim Lee recently conceded that Cobb needs more transit, but said voters “don't have the appetite” for it. That last assessment appears to be at odds with the results of a newly released Atlanta Regional Commission survey, showing 92.5% of Cobb residents think improving public transit is "very important" or "somewhat important" to the region's future.



Architect's rendering of the transit-oriented development next to Avondale station. It will be connected by a pedestrian overpass to the station, shown in the lower left-hand corner of the picture. (MARTA illustration)

GROUNDBREAKING FOR AVONDALE TOD

Ground will be broken Nov. 28 for the new transit-oriented development at MARTA's Avondale station, with construction to begin in December. The project will replace the station's south parking lot with 440 apartments, 22-thousand square feet of retail/restaurant space, offices and a parking deck. The station's north lot will remain open. The Avondale project comes on the heels of a similar TOD already under construction at MARTA's Edgewood-Candler Park station, and city officials in Decatur have asked the Livable Centers Initiative to study the possibility of a transit-oriented development at the East Lake station. Unfortunately, a proposed development at the Brookhaven station continues to run into obstacles. Some members of the Brookhaven City Council are challenging a plan to offer tax-abatements to the developers.

Citizens for Progressive Transit

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AMTRAK BREAKS RECORDS, BUT NOT HERE

2016 has been a banner year for America's national rail passenger service. Amtrak carried a record 31.3 million riders during the fiscal year that ended Oct. 1. And it earned a record \$2.1 billion in ticket revenue, covering 94% of its operating costs, also a record. The ridership growth included a 3.7% gain on long-distance trains, but the long-distance Amtrak train that serves Atlanta, the New York-New Orleans Crescent, continues to suffer declines. The Crescent carried 268-thousand passengers, down 4.8% from fiscal 2015. Several years ago, an internal Amtrak study proposed several steps to boost Crescent patronage, including the establishment of connecting bus routes that would run from Atlanta to destinations in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Mississippi, but those plans were never carried out. Another challenge for the Crescent is the century-old Atlanta station, which lacks adequate parking and is several blocks away from MARTA rail service. Although state and local officials have considered numerous proposals to replace the station, there's never been any funding.

ALL STOPS

Now that he's been elected president, Donald Trump tells the New York Times that infrastructure spending will be “important,” but not be a “core” part of his agenda... Atlanta wasn't the only U.S. city to pass a major transit initiative in November: transit initiatives also passed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, suburban Washington DC, Indianapolis, Toledo and Charleston SC; transit initiatives failed in Kansas City MO and Virginia Beach VA... Dallas Area Rapid Transit has opened two more stations on its Blue light-rail line in south Dallas... After a decade of study, the Federal Railroad Administration has proposed safety standards for future high-speed trains running up to 220 mph... Governing magazine has selected MARTA General Manager and CEO Keith Parker as one of America's top nine public officials of 2016... The Athens-Clarke County Commission has called for a November, 2017 referendum on a 1% transportation sales tax... Savannah's Chatham County Transit Authority is thinking about adding electric buses to its fleet.