



Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative

In-Person Open House Q&A

Date: July 14, 2022

Location: Emory Rollins School of Public Health Auditorium

Alternative Impacts

“What is the feasibility of having both a Decatur and Avondale alternative? Has MARTA considered creating a loop to connect these stations?”

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is studying this option. It may be possible to connect from Lindbergh Center to both Avondale and Decatur stations. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) may allow a direct service connection to both stations, with the possibility of a closed loop connecting to each station to be explored. Light Rapid Transit (LRT) would provide a bus transfer to one of the stations. There are examples across the country of a high-performance trunk line with service branches. This may be a possibility for Clifton, with the CSX right-of-way acting as a trunk that branches off to both Avondale and Decatur stations; this is under evaluation for BRT only. For both LRT and BRT, one of the eastern branches would be selected for exclusive transit lanes.

“What is the plan for areas that will be affected by the BRT/LRT transition from the CSX ROW?”

There are several options for these areas. For some alternatives, there would be an aerial or bridge structure to transition from CSX up to North Decatur Road. In other areas, there could be an aerial structure through the YMCA parking lot. Some of these options will no longer be considered when the project alternatives are reduced this fall.

“Will all existing property next to CSX line be affected? If not, which areas will primarily be affected?”

MARTA is not anticipating the need to acquire additional property along the CSX right-of-way, though needs at station areas and complex design locations will be explored in the coming months. Temporary construction impacts to nearby properties and other potential impacts will be evaluated as part of the project's environmental review process.

“Neither end point stations have parking. Will that reduce traffic redirection?”



Lindbergh Center and Avondale stations have station parking facilities owned by MARTA. Decatur station does not. Parking at all stations and resulting traffic impacts are being considered by the project team.

“Would the option of selecting LRT down Clairemont and the Avondale terminus, and considering Decatur as the terminus later be viable?”

MARTA is studying this option. It may be possible to connect from Lindbergh Center to both Avondale and Decatur stations. BRT may allow a direct service connection to both stations; LRT would provide a bus transfer to one of the stations. There are examples across the country of a high-performance trunk line with service branches. This may be a possibility for Clifton, with the CSX right-of-way acting as a trunk that branches off to both Avondale and Decatur stations; this is under evaluation for BRT only. For both LRT and BRT, one of the eastern branches would be selected for exclusive transit lanes.

“What are the differences between the ten alternatives?”

Please visit <https://connectclifton.com/alternatives-analysis/> to view alternative maps and a PDF that highlights the differences between each alternative.

“Is the LRT 3 alternative more expensive than LRT 1?”

Yes. LRT-3 has an estimated capital cost of about \$3.09 billion, while LRT-1 has an estimated capital cost of about \$2.2 billion. LRT-3 has a long cut-and-cover tunnel section, which increases the cost. All capital cost estimates are provided in 2031 dollars.

Capital Costs

“What is the difference in building, maintenance, and line estimate costs?”

The difference of capital costs across alternatives is due to the varying alignment length, structures such as bridges and tunnels, infrastructure needs, impacts to existing structures, and right-of-way (ROW)/property impacts. The difference of operations and maintenance costs across alternatives is due to the cost to operate, as well as the maintenance of the line. Maintenance includes control center staff, vehicle maintenance, and facility maintenance like rails, signals, communications, overhead lines, and stations.



“What are the capital and annual costs for the stations for Buford LRT?”

Buford Highway LRT is not in the scope of this project. Station maintenance will be factored into the revised operating and maintenance (O&M) costs to be developed for the smaller set of alternatives this fall.

“What is the cost of heavy rail?”

The cost of building new heavy rail is extremely high and would not be financially viable or justifiable for this project from the federal government's perspective.

“If BRT is selected, what percentage of funding has already [been] secured?”

The Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative has secured \$250 million in local funding through the More MARTA Atlanta program. The City of Atlanta has agreed to contribute another \$100 million contingent on the addition of another local funding source. This funding would be available regardless of mode and would only apply within Atlanta city limits.

Competitiveness & Federal Funding

“How does the Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative fit within MARTA's 2040 vision for future development of public transit in Metro Atlanta?”

Clifton Corridor is a key element of the MARTA 2040 program because of the opportunity it offers to connect an important regional employment center.

“Which mode option is most likely to receive funding?” / “Does BRT have a higher chance of receiving funding?”

Both modes are candidates for federal funding; an evaluation of competitiveness for funding will be conducted this fall for a reduced set of alternatives.

“Are there any other LRT route projects being considered by MARTA that could eventually create a cohesive citywide system?”

MARTA is currently designing an extension of the existing Atlanta Streetcar onto the BeltLine Eastside Trail. LRT is being considered on other segments of the BeltLine and other corridors, pending further study.



Environmental Considerations

“Could MARTA explain and provide examples the adverse effects environmental impacts could cause?”

Some examples of environmental considerations that are being studied are parks and recreational areas, historic resources, and water resources. There are many resources in the corridor that could be impacted by the project, and MARTA would have to mitigate these impacts per requirements from the federal government.

“How will land be acquired? I live along the CSX right of way, will it need to be expanded?”

MARTA is not anticipating the need to acquire additional property along the CSX right-of-way, though needs at station areas and complex design locations will be explored in the coming months. Temporary construction impacts to nearby properties and other potential impacts will be evaluated as part of the project's environmental review process.

“What is long-term most energy-efficient option?”

All alternatives would be powered by electric or battery-electric vehicles, which are more energy efficient and output less emissions than fossil fuel-powered vehicles. MARTA will study the differences in energy consumption between individual alternatives in future evaluation.

Implementation Timeline

“Is there an estimated timeline of MARTA's contract with CSX?”

Discussions between CSX and MARTA are ongoing and will progress once MARTA identifies a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) through this engagement process. We can not offer a specific timeline yet.

Mode

“Campbellton corridor was just approved for BRT and seemingly based primarily on cost. Is BRT the primary focus for the Clifton corridor?”

MARTA has not yet determined a mode for Clifton Corridor. The mode will be chosen after the Alternatives Analysis process concludes and a Locally Preferred Alternative is adopted by the MARTA Board in 2023.



“Has MARTA started operating BRT buses? Public acceptance will be easier with all new vehicles. Is this commitment to all the stations outside of the proposed Emory station?”

MARTA has not started operating BRT service at this time. MARTA is in the process of procuring BRT vehicles for other projects. If BRT is chosen as the mode for Clifton, all vehicles would be new and would be 100% battery-electric vehicles.

“Is the future of Atlanta transit rail or bus?”

Both rail and bus transit play important roles in Atlanta's transit network and will continue to do so in the future. MARTA and the region will implement the best alternative and transit mode for the corridor. Cost and competitiveness for federal funding are important considerations which lead to localized decisions.

“Why would MARTA not consider heavy rail for this project?”

The cost of building new heavy rail is extremely high and would not be financially viable or justifiable for this project from the federal government's perspective.

Operating Costs

“Has MARTA considered making BRT free for a year?”

MARTA is not currently considering fare-free options for BRT or other forms of MARTA service.

“Is LRT realistic considering the cost of ridership?”

Some of the LRT alternatives under consideration may be cost prohibitive. MARTA will advance an optimally cost-effective LRT alternative for the Screen 2 analysis.

“While there would be a higher startup cost to begin LRT in the area, would future developments of LRT help reduce the overall costs?”

The overall LRT cost, including capital, operation and maintenance, is higher than the cost for BRT. Should metro Atlanta have an extensive LRT network, the incremental cost for implementing a discrete project such as Clifton Corridor would decrease.

“What is the variety of cost in choosing between alternatives?”

The capital cost estimate for BRT alternatives ranges from \$670 million to \$870 million dollars. The cost of LRT alternatives ranges from \$2.1 billion to \$3.1 billion dollars. All capital cost estimates are provided in 2031 dollars.



“How many costs are shared across the other LRT routes, specifically the NE Beltline corridor?”

BeltLine LRT is outside the scope of the Clifton Corridor project.

Operations

“In relation to BRT, what are dedicated running ways? Are the lanes only designated for BRT?”

In relation to BRT, "dedicated running ways" is another term for a reserved transitway in exclusive right-of-way (such as parallel to railroad tracks in the corridor) and dedicated operating lanes in a roadway. These lanes would be for the exclusive use of public transportation and emergency vehicles.

“Will the CTMA Bus still run from Emory to Decatur?”

MARTA is coordinating closely with Emory University. The CCTMA is operated and funded by Emory University; they will evaluate the feasibility of that line in the future.

“Will the areas in CSX ROW be dedicated to LRT/BRT? If not, why?”

If MARTA can come to an agreement with CSX, part of the CSX railroad right-of-way would be dedicated for the exclusive use of public transportation and emergency vehicles.

“How will the Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative promote multi modal and car alternative transit?”

MARTA considers multimodal facilities in all projects. There may be opportunities to incorporate these facilities in the Clifton project.

“Are there estimated rider figures for each mode? If not, when will they be made available to the public?”

Ridership was estimated for similar alternatives in recent years (Draft Environmental Impact Statement 2018) and will be estimated again for a smaller set of alternatives in the coming months. MARTA expects to present these results in the fall.

“What does expansion of the systems look like?”

The Clifton Corridor will be designed for expandability either along connecting roadway corridors or additional secured transit rights-of-way (such as existing railroad corridors). Clifton Corridor would also make bus network transferring more attractive throughout the corridor.



“Could MARTA describe what Clairmont Road between Scott Blvd and Old Courthouse would look like via both alternatives?”

BRT would operate at-grade in exclusive guideway along Clairemont Avenue between Scott Blvd and the Christian Science Church, then ramp down entering an underground segment under Clairemont Avenue to the north of the Old Courthouse. Between there and Decatur Station, BRT would either operate at-grade in an exclusive guideway or in mixed traffic along Commerce Dr. west of Clairemont Avenue to the existing bus terminus at Swanton Way, or along Commerce Dr. east of Clairemont Avenue to Church street and stop at the east plaza of the Decatur MARTA station.

A few alternatives are still under consideration for LRT. It would either operate at-grade in a median exclusive guideway along Clairemont Avenue between the CSX right-of-way and Decatur Station, or in an underground alignment that is still under consideration.

“What does the BRT and CSX ROW look like?”

It would be similar to LRT. CSX will impose certain requirements that MARTA has to adhere to, regardless of the transit mode.

“Will MARTA extend the Green line to Avondale?”

The current limitation of extending the Green Line is that Bankhead Station only accommodates two train cars. MARTA is currently working to renovate and extend the platform at Bankhead to accommodate full trainsets. We expect that project to be complete by 2025. That will allow MARTA to extend the Green Line further east if demand warrants it.

“Could MARTA describe or show an example of the elevated options considered for grade changes from CSX rail to North Decatur/ Clairmont Road?”

Design concepts and examples, including typical elevated configurations, will be advanced in the coming months. Both modes would be on elevated structures at Belt Junction (south of the Emory Clairmont campus) at about 25 feet above CSX track. Between CSX and the North Decatur/Clairmont intersection area several options are under consideration. In one option, an elevated structure would further ramp up to about 25' above N. Decatur/Clairmont Road intersection before ramping down to the median of either North Decatur Road or Clairemont Avenue. At the July 16 open house, the project team discussed the idea of a design workshop for this area.

“What safety measures will MARTA put in place for both BRT and LRT?”

Safety and security play an important role in customers' experience of transit service. Regardless of mode, stations would be well-lit with direct sidewalk connections, CCTV security cameras, and emergency phones. Both BRT and LRT vehicles would be equipped with CCTV cameras as well. Fares would be paid before boarding and fare checkers are an additional security measure on the system.



“Does MARTA plan to widen any roads? If dedicated lane on North Decatur, where will traffic be rerouted?”

Both modes would require right-of-way (ROW) modifications to North Decatur Road. The ROW width of N Decatur Road varies, but may result in property impacts in some areas. MARTA is coordinating with DeKalb County Transportation on the future of this corridor. MARTA would like to widen in some areas to ensure dedicated transit lanes, but may look at a road diet (road narrowing) depending on traffic studies and stakeholder coordination. MARTA would like to minimize travel times but the needs of all roadway users must be considered.

“Is MARTA making plans to install more parking lots to accommodate residents and neighborhoods that are within walking distance of the corridor?”

MARTA owns parking structures at the Lindbergh Center and Avondale stations. The remaining stations are intended to be walk-up stations that serve the surrounding communities.

“How will the existing CSX railroad be utilized?”

MARTA is negotiating with CSX to use part of the railroad right-of-way for transit operations. The existing railroad would be moved within the right-of-way and CSX would continue freight rail operations in the corridor.

“Will GDOT allow MARTA to turn existing lanes to transit/emergency lanes?”

Traffic studies will be carried out at areas of concern to evaluate the traffic impact. This will support coordination with roadway owners regarding the provision of transit lanes. Coordination with GDOT will be required to determine opportunities to convert existing general traffic lanes to transit lanes.

“Will there be BRT transit on the Beltline?”

Streetcar or Light Rail Transit is the City of Atlanta's preferred technology for the BeltLine. Some peer cities operate both LRT and BRT in the same dedicated transitway.

“Will the BRT vehicles be fuel driven or electric?”

If BRT is chosen as the mode for Clifton, all vehicles would be 100% battery-electric vehicles.

“Will MARTA prioritize a walking/biking on route?”

MARTA will work with stakeholders to consider bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the corridor. It is MARTA's priority to include safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to its transit stations.



“In the event of an emergency or natural disaster, how will BRT be redirected?”

The BRT alternatives are designed for the transit vehicles to divert to local roadways in the case of unforeseen emergency events.

“Will the ROW be self-guided or exclusive?”

If self-guided means automated vehicles, such technology has been deployed for rail transit and is in development for BRT. Automated vehicles are not being considered for the Clifton Corridor at this time. MARTA's goal is to have at least 75% of the whole project length operating in exclusive ROW for BRT; the current alternatives exceed that percentage. The LRT alternatives under consideration would be entirely in exclusive ROW.

“Is there any way to improve access to the VA either now or in the future?”

Walking connections to the VA Medical Center are challenging. For BRT, one option MARTA intends to explore is a mixed-traffic extension from the CSX transitway to the VA Medical Center via Clairmont Road. For LRT, a local transit transfer would be available at the N. Decatur/Clairmont station.

“Will the Emory CCTMA be suspended if MARTA plans a route down Claremont?”

MARTA is coordinating closely with Emory University. The CCTMA is operated and funded by Emory University; they will evaluate the feasibility of that line in the future.

“What considerations are being given to alternative modes of transportation located within the BRT and LRT corridors?”

MARTA will work with stakeholders to consider bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in the corridor. It is MARTA's priority to include safe pedestrian and bicycle connections to its transit stations.

“Could MARTA elaborate on the plans or inclusion of Ponce?”

East Ponce de Leon Avenue (Ponce) is an east-west connection through the City of Decatur. Several alternatives would cross Ponce to access the east terminal stations. BRT-1 is the only alternative that would operate on Ponce, approximately between N Arcadia Avenue and Sycamore Drive. The alternative would travel in mixed traffic in this segment.

“With BRT there is a lot of discussion around bike lanes, is MARTA considering taking lanes away from traffic and dedicate them to the bus?”

Design concepts and examples, including accommodation of existing and new bicycle infrastructure, will be advanced in the coming months. In general, all current MARTA projects are considered from a multimodal standpoint. Multimodal infrastructure will be maintained and enhanced when possible.



Stakeholder Engagement

“Will MARTA coordinate with development companies that operate North Dekalb Mall?”

There is a possibility that MARTA will coordinate with the owners of North DeKalb Mall. MARTA would like to narrow down the alternatives before coordinating with the new owners so we can have a more informed and detailed conversation.

“Will MARTA coordinate with GCT and the lanes closing on Stone Mountain Freeway?”

MARTA would like to coordinate with Gwinnett County Transit after the alternatives are narrowed. This will allow for a more informed and detailed conversation.

“Will GDOT allow projects for BRT down Clairmont?”

The BRT alternatives were shared with GDOT during several meetings in Spring 2022. If BRT along Clairmont Avenue is selected for the Screen 2 analysis, extensive coordination with GDOT would be required to detail this alternative.

“Has CSX decided to allow use of their ROW?” / “Has MARTA confirmed use [of] the CSX ROW? If not, what are the chances to get it? (especially since Norfolk Southern refused MARTA permission to use its right of way in Clayton county).”

MARTA's conversations with CSX are ongoing and have been positive, but no decisions have been made as of yet. Conversations are centered around MARTA using the CSX right-of-way.

“Are these plans dependent upon DeKalb County passing an additional sales tax?”

The project is not necessarily dependent on an additional sales tax from DeKalb County, but it would be helpful. MARTA encourages partnerships from any supportive local jurisdictions and organizations to help implement this project.

“Why was the public not notified until now?”

MARTA has consistently conducted extensive engagement through the long life of this project. For this most recent Alternatives Analysis, MARTA began with a series of stakeholder meetings with elected officials, local government staff, and major employers. Those meetings helped MARTA develop the strategy for public outreach that included four public meetings (two in-person, two virtual), emails, social media, a website, a survey, and multiple pop-up events in the study area. Additional public engagement will be conducted when we narrow down the current set of alternatives.

“How can the public help with CSX interface?”



MARTA will keep the public and stakeholders informed with progress regarding CSX negotiations. As always, we encourage citizens to share their preferences and opinions with our project team and their local elected officials.

“What is MARTA's relationship with CSX?”

MARTA has a positive relationship with CSX. Conversations are ongoing but no decisions have been made as of yet. Conversations are centered around MARTA using the CSX right-of-way.

“What does "CSX" stand for?”

CSX is a reference to CSX Transportation, a Class 1 freight railroad that owns and operates a railroad corridor in the Clifton Corridor area.

“Who are the partners MARTA is working with to fund this project?”

The City of Atlanta has dedicated funding for the project through the More MARTA Atlanta program. MARTA is currently working with other local jurisdictions and organizations to determine potential future funding sources.

“Will remote work and CHOA's move change plans for entire corridor?”

Recent developments will influence ridership projections to some extent, though Clifton is still anticipated to be a high-demand transit corridor.

Travel Time

“How much does travel time interfere with ridership?”

Short travel times attract the most riders, given that stations are well located, convenient and attractive.

“How much of the travel time is differential to shared ROW with car traffic?”

The BRT alternatives include some mixed traffic operations. This would adversely impact travel times. Travel time is a performance measure that will be used to compare alternatives against one another and determine a Locally Preferred Alternative.