



Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative

Virtual Public Meeting #1 Q&A

Date: July 20, 2022

Location: Zoom

Alternative Impacts

“Will the CSX rail need to be widened to be used for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or Light Rail Transit (LRT), and what impacts would residential areas along the existing rail line see?”

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is not anticipating the need to acquire additional property along the CSX right-of-way. However, there may be temporary construction impacts to nearby properties. Potential impacts will be studied in the environmental review process.

“If CSX rails are widened, can it be done on the side away from the residential communities?”

MARTA is not anticipating the need to acquire additional property along the CSX right-of-way. However, there may be temporary construction impacts to nearby properties. Potential impacts will be studied in the environmental review process.

“Why is BRT being considered when MARTA has an existing bus system that serves the Emory area and connects to MARTA rail?”

The current local bus service has significantly lower frequency and longer travel times than what is being proposed for the corridor whether BRT or LRT is selected. The improved service would help accommodate the large travel demand in the corridor now and in the future.

“Were ridership projections considered under the LRT vs BRT study?”

Ridership for both BRT and LRT technologies will be estimated in the fall of 2022. Mode conversion from automobile to BRT and LRT is part of this analysis.

“Were the conversion rates of car commuters to LRT or BRT considered or studied?”

Ridership for both BRT and LRT technologies will be estimated in the fall of 2022. Mode conversion from automobile to BRT and LRT is part of this analysis.



“Which of the alternatives will require use of ‘eminent domain’ (or similar approach) to take private property in order to accomplish? And if that is the case, what would be the process and how would those property owners be compensated?”

MARTA will do everything it can to reduce the impacts to neighborhoods including requiring the use of eminent domain. If required for the implementation of the project, the eminent domain process, which is highly regulated, will follow all requirements of the FTA and Georgia laws.

“As a resident in Woodland Hills with CSX running behind my home, I’m highly concerned about the noise and frequency of this new MARTA corridor. What is the noise and frequency expected for BRT and LRT?”

The influence zone for noise sensitive receptors, according to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), is 100 feet for BRT and 175 feet for LRT. The zone for vibration sensitive receptors is 50 feet for BRT and 150 feet for LRT. Therefore, both noise and vibration impacts for BRT are less than for LRT. MARTA will develop a detailed noise impact analysis in further planning stages. Typical frequency for both modes would be every 10-15 minutes.

“Will any sound barriers be considered for the locations where the new BRT and the existing CSX tracks will run parallel?”

At this point MARTA has not determined where, or if, sound barriers are needed. Both BRT and LRT technology will be electric powered vehicles which will lower the systems noise level. A noise and vibration analysis will be completed as part of the federal environmental review process. This will help MARTA determine any sound barrier considerations.

“Is MARTA considering building sound barriers to help reduce the sound of the trains that will be traveling through residential areas?”

At this point MARTA has not determined where or if sound barriers are needed. Both BRT and LRT technology will be electric powered vehicles which will lower the systems noise level. A noise and vibration analysis will be completed as part of the federal environmental review process. This will help MARTA determine any sound barrier considerations.

“If BRT is selected, MARTA should make sure to create a barriers for the dedicated lanes so that motorists don't misuse them.”

Thank you for your comments. We look forward to your continued engagement with the Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative.



Capital Costs

“Does the term ‘premium,’ that MARTA uses, imply expensive?”

MARTA is using the term "premium" to describe the frequency that the vehicles will arrive, the quality of the stations and speed of the service. To achieve these goals, the system will cost more than a standard local bus service.

Competitiveness & Federal Funding

“Considering that LRT would use the same vehicles/track/etc. as the Atlanta Streetcar, what are the differences of the proposed LRT option that make it much more expensive than the BRT option?”

Additional aerial structures and underground cut-and-cover sections would need to be constructed for the LRT alternatives. LRT vehicles and trackway are more expensive than BRT vehicles and roadway. Additionally, new or modified maintenance facilities would be needed for the LRT options.

“What are the existing factors of LRT being selected if BRT is intended to be built and operated as a rail-like service?”

LRT would provide a few advantages over BRT in the corridor. Travel times would be slightly lower and the vehicles would not have any mixed traffic operations. LRT vehicles can also be linked together to handle periods of high demand.

“Are there other high-capacity transit route projects being considered by MARTA that eventually could create a cohesive city-wide system?”

Yes. Numerous high-capacity corridors are being studied by MARTA. BRT, LRT and ART (Arterial Rapid Transit) are all under consideration in a variety of corridors in the region. A cohesive system is the primary goal, but selecting the appropriate technology for the corridor or route will increase the project’s competitiveness for additional funding sources.

“In comparison to the San Francisco BRT project that was over budget and lengthy in timing to complete, what will Atlanta do differently to manage costs and time to complete the project?”

Project costs for construction projects worldwide are being challenged by escalating costs for materials, labor, and unknown challenges that come up in every urban setting. The San Francisco project had unique challenges being in a very dense urban setting that is different from working in an existing freight rail corridor and suburban arterial roadways. MARTA and its partners are committed to following best



practices for procurement, construction management, and budgeting to ensure we are delivering the best value for taxpayers and customers.

“Of the cities nationwide that have implemented BRT, which cities is Atlanta studying the closest?”

MARTA is conducting a wide-ranging review of other cities and regions that have successfully implemented BRT. Some projects of particular interest are the Cleveland Healthline BRT, Fort Collins MAX, MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority) Silver Line, and Pittsburgh Regional Transit MLK Jr. East Busway.

“Keeping in mind that Atlanta is projected to grow by 3 million people in the next three decades, what is the overall capacity of LRT and BRT?”

The overall capacity of BRT is approximately 2,000 passengers per hour per direction (PPHPD). The overall capacity of LRT is approximately 9,000 PPHPD. MARTA is aware of future population and demographics forecasts. These forecasts will be taken into account when conducting a ridership analysis in the fall of 2022.

“What tools is MARTA using out of the infrastructure law and the program that can help propel the Clifton Corridor Transit Initiative forward?”

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) passed in 2021 increased federal funding levels for transit capital projects. MARTA intends to pursue FTA Capital Investment Grant (CIG) funding for Clifton Corridor, using local match funding. We are committed to pursuing any and all alternative funding sources as they become available.

Design

“What is the size of the battery on BRT and LRT?”

The size of the battery for BRT and LRT has not been defined at this stage but will be determined once the type of mode is determined. Upcoming ridership analysis will also help determine the vehicle type, size and specifications.

Environmental Considerations

“When comparing environmental impacts of operational emissions, does the comparison between BRT and LRT include operation impact (with regards to carbon emissions) or just the



cost for building the initial infrastructure? If not, is it known how they compare in that respect?”

Emissions between BRT and LRT are similar. LRT, in general, produces less regional or urban emission than BRT (when equal technology levels are compared). However, emissions of both modes have improved over time. A detailed air quality analysis will be performed during the environmental phase of the project which will provide clarification of emissions between the two modes of transportation in relation to the greater Atlanta area.

Which option is most energy-efficient?

Emissions between BRT and LRT are similar. LRT, in general, produces less regional or urban emission than BRT (when equal technology levels are compared). However, emissions of both modes have improved over time. A detailed air quality analysis will be performed during the environmental phase of the project which will provide clarification of emissions between the two modes of transportation in relation to the greater Atlanta area.

Implementation Timeline

“Are all projects going through the same phase of a 30% design threshold?”

Not all alternatives will be taken to the 30% design level. The locally preferred alternative will be selected prior to, or approximately at the 15% design level.

“Do the timelines provided only include the start of building, or does it also include selecting a preferred alternative and applying for/receiving funding?”

The timelines provided include planning, design, right-of-way acquisition and construction of the system.

Operations

“Will BRT alternatives follow the CSX lines?”

Yes. Both technology alternatives will make use of dedicated lanes in the CSX corridor.

“Is additional ROW required beyond the existing CSX ROW for the BRT option?”

Yes. MARTA's definition of BRT includes a minimum of 75% dedicated lanes and this will require a combination of ROW acquisition and/or repurposing of existing vehicle lanes to dedicated BRT lanes.

“Will there be a physical barrier considered for BRT on the road segments?”



Yes. If the preferred technology is BRT, MARTA will consider a physical barrier(s) separating bus lanes from other travel lanes. These decisions will be made further into the design process.

“Do the proposed routes include N Decatur Rd?”

Yes, four of the proposed alternatives include transit operations on North Decatur Road, approximately between Clairemont Avenue and DeKalb Industrial Way.

“Would the existing North Decatur bridge over the CSX tracks have to be rebuilt for BRT alternatives 3 and 4?”

The proposed BRT elevated guideway would cross over the existing North Decatur Road bridge for BRT alternatives 3 and 4. Therefore the existing North Decatur Road bridge would not be rebuilt as part of this project.

“Are there more transit riders traveling to Atlanta from Decatur or Avondale stations?”

The Decatur station has slightly more overall trips and stronger connections to other MARTA rail stations compared to Avondale. Avondale has slightly more trips within the Clifton Corridor.

“Could MARTA elaborate on the capacity of BRT and LRT vehicles?”

MARTA has not determined the specific BRT or LRT vehicles that would be purchased for the corridor. According to the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, BRT vehicles range in capacity from 90 to 220 passengers, while LRT train cars range from 224 to 632 passengers.

“How would local residents in neighborhoods reach the line that is being utilized by CSX without having to commute to the station?”

MARTA will work with stakeholders to ensure that local residents have access to stations along the CSX right-of-way. More details on station access will be developed after the range of alternatives is narrowed.

“Will non-terminus stations be accessible to users traveling by foot?”

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.

“Are there plans to connect a station to Beltline transit?”

There are conceptual plans to connect the Clifton Corridor and BeltLine transit either through the Lindbergh Center Station or nearby connection.



“Would Emory Grove neighborhood residents have access to the proposed Emory Clairmont stop, or is it only designated for the Emory Clairmont campus?”

MARTA will work with stakeholders to ensure that local residents have access to stations along the CSX right-of-way. More details on station access will be developed after the range of alternatives is narrowed.

“Will CSX still operate in the ROW with MARTA owning the routes?”

CSX would continue to operate in the corridor adjacent to the proposed MARTA transitway.

“Can the proposed route between the Emory Grove neighborhood and the Emory Clairmont campus, can the ROW be put on the Emory campus side of the existing CSX easement?”

Currently, the transitway is proposed on the north side of the CSX right-of-way. However, MARTA may consider locating the transitway at the south side of CSX.

“Will Emory Grove residents that walk to the Emory Clairmont campus be able to cross the proposed route by foot?”

MARTA will look at bridging and other legal crossing solutions where needed.

“Will adequate parking be built for car commuters traveling through Downtown Decatur that want to access the proposed stations?”

Parking solutions will be studied and implemented at the chosen east terminus. The Lindbergh Center Station has sufficient parking supply.

Stakeholder Engagement

“How will MARTA ensure that [the] community's expectations are followed?”

MARTA will conduct regular outreach to the public and stakeholders to gather and incorporate opinions and recommendations into the system plan. The NEPA environmental process will generate a list of conditions and mitigations that federal law requires MARTA to follow.

“News articles earlier this spring say the residents along the corridor have reached a preliminary consensus that, it does not matter which mode (LRT vs BRT) they get, as long as they get something. How can you ensure that the businesses, residents, and hospitals are at the forefront of the discussion?”



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.

“How is MARTA doing stakeholder engagement to ensure the community is at the forefront of the discussion/project?”

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