



14 July, 2023

The Honorable Andre Dickens
Mayor of Atlanta
55 Trinity Ave SW
#2500
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Mayor Dickens:

From its inception, the Atlanta BeltLine has been envisioned as a rail transit corridor providing rapid, high-capacity, grade-separated service along a route unreplicable by street-level alternatives. With the progression of the Streetcar East expansion project, we are enthusiastic about seeing the first part of that vision come to fruition.

That being said, we had hoped that the current Downtown Atlanta Streetcar, itself built to facilitate expansions, and with the intent to anchor a wider system, would be better prepared for its important role as the launchpad of BeltLine transit by now. Currently, streetcars are continually slowed by street-traffic, including outright discontinuation of service during major events when transit would be most important. A lack of transit priority, and the clear resulting impacts on existing service, do not encourage hope for the full success of future expansions, most immediately including onto the BeltLine.

To that end, we formally request that both the City of Atlanta, and MARTA take the following actions on the existing route in preparation of expanded service:

- Verify the functionality of any existing transit-signal-priority systems already implemented in the corridor, and evaluate potential changes to further prioritize transit in the space.
- Suspend the current streetcar fare collection until such time that both the expansion is complete, and the fare system is fully integrated with the rest of the MARTA fare structure and Breeze Card / MARTA app system, including allowing the use of MARTA trips, and transfers.
- Develop a service pattern that allows for the continuation of service during major Downtown events, potentially including the creation of event-specific transit lanes, or else short-turning streetcars at the Woodruff Park stop.
- Extend operating hours to coordinate with MARTA rail service at Peachtree Center Station.
- Increase peak-service frequencies to 10-minutes.
- Move forward with Phase Two of the Peachtree Shared Space project, incorporating dedicated transit space between Luckie St. and Ellis St.
- Dedicate the existing lane of streetcar line along Park Place (Woodruff Park southeast side) fully to transit.
- Pilot a closure of the block of Park Place along Woodruff Park to cars, prioritizing the space for transit, cyclists / micro-mobility, and pedestrians.

- Pilot the dedication of the streetcar lanes along both Edgewood and Auburn, in parts and in whole, to transit. Existing parking spaces between the Streetcar lines and curb should be trialed for conversion to outdoor seating / activated space for local businesses.
- Harden the bike lanes along Edgewood and Auburn to eliminate the constant obstruction by cars parking in them.
- Adjust the Jackson St. lane markings to eliminate street parking, and shift lanes over to allow for transit & cycling only lanes in the space. Harden the bike lane to prevent cars parking in the lane.
- Evaluate the costs and potential benefits of moving the Luckie At Cone stop to the intersection of Luckie and Forsyth St, with a specific measure of the change on transfer times to the Peachtree Center MARTA rail station for eastbound streetcar travelers.

As pilot programs are carried out, we should evaluate all new and trial transit facilities for their effects on travel times from their use by transit, emergency response, and government vehicles. This should include all overlapping bus routes; not only MARTA services. Such facilities are an investment not only in the streetcar, but all public-service vehicles.

We call on you to use the period before construction on Streetcar East begins to plan and test these ideas, so that as new services open east in Old Fourth Ward, and north along the BeltLine, the entire project works as a viable transit alternative. We strongly believe that such ideas will contribute to creating a far more successful surface rail system for generations of Atlantans to come.

Sincerely,



Matthew Rao
Chair
BeltLine Rail Now



Jason Lathbury
Transportation Committee Chair
Sierra Club Georgia Chapter

Cc: Mr. Kwadwo Atta, Ms. Liliانا Bakhtiari, Commissioner Solomon Caviness, Councilmember Jason Dozier, Councilmember Amir Farokhi, Ms. Lisa Y. Gordon, Mr. Shaun Green, Mr. Collie Greenwood, Mr. Clyde Higgs, Mr. J. Bryan Hobbs, Ms. Shelley Peart, Mr. A.J. Robinson, Ms. Carrie Rocha, Mr. John Saxton, City Council President Doug Shipman, Councilmember Matt Westmoreland