

Staying on Board:

Atlanta Neighborhood Planning Units (NPIUs) Continue to Support BeltLine Rail



Dedication

This report is dedicated to former BRN Board member Dr. J. Lawrence Miller, who left Atlanta earlier this year for a new home in Richmond, VA. Lawrence brought both inspiration and insight into this effort and was one of the “boots on the ground” volunteers behind this petition drive.

To learn more about BeltLine Rail Now, please visit www.beltlinerailnow.com.



Acknowledgments

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Purpose

BeltLine Rail Now decided in spring of 2022 to see if broad support for rail on the BeltLine still exists. It does, with 12 Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs) along the BeltLine corridor voting in favor of continued support for BeltLine rail. This result shows that the viewpoint of Atlantans has not changed. BeltLine Rail Now (BRN) conducted an earlier effort in 2018 to gauge support, with 13 NPUs voting in favor and over 10,000 individuals signing our petition that was hand-delivered to Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms.

Atlanta's NPU system was established by former Mayor Maynard Jackson in an effort to provide citizens with a more direct avenue to voice support or opposition to City initiatives. Each of the 25 NPUs is made up of multiple neighborhood associations. The approval or rejection of the NPUs on so many issues, such as zoning changes, liquor license requests, and major development proposals, represents a real and democratic voice that counts. Many consider the votes that NPUs take on major issues to be THE only votes of the citizenry that matter between election cycles, expressed in a formal, open, transparent process in which any resident, business, or interest group can participate. We went back to the same NPUs who had supported the BRN petition previously to see if they would do so again. Our petition drive is a statement to Mayor Andre Dickens, the City Council, MARTA, ABI, and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) that the citizens of this city do want BeltLine rail and want it now. They want the equity and environmental benefits it is designed to provide.

The citizenry is indeed still passionate about BeltLine rail, and they expect the agencies charged with delivering it to get on with it and start building. The process of approaching the NPUs meant that we had to gain the support of each NPU's constituent neighborhood associations. This was a time consuming undertaking, but this democratic process allows neighborhood input on a variety of issues and is the way the "will of the people" is carried to Atlanta City Hall between elections. The NPU system gives each neighborhood a voice that it exercises through volunteer leadership on the unique issues that face it.

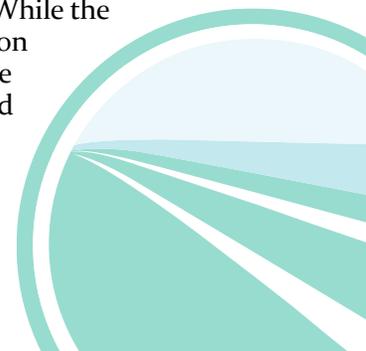
Results

This report showcases the approval of 12 out of the 16 NPUs we approached and renews each one's support in the form of individual letters that many wrote in support of BeltLine rail and the urgency with which they feel the City and MARTA should deliver it. This includes every NPU along the southside of the BeltLine, some of the most transit-dependent communities in Atlanta. The explosion of density, and with it the spreading of parking structures and traffic throughout the BeltLine corridor, are but a few of the many negative consequences that building the trail without the rail has created. These 12 NPUs had a resident population of 255,000 in 2018¹. Another 32,000 residents belong to 5 neighborhoods that supported the petition in NPU-E, which did not approve the petition as a whole². This indicates a sustained and overwhelming support for BeltLine rail.

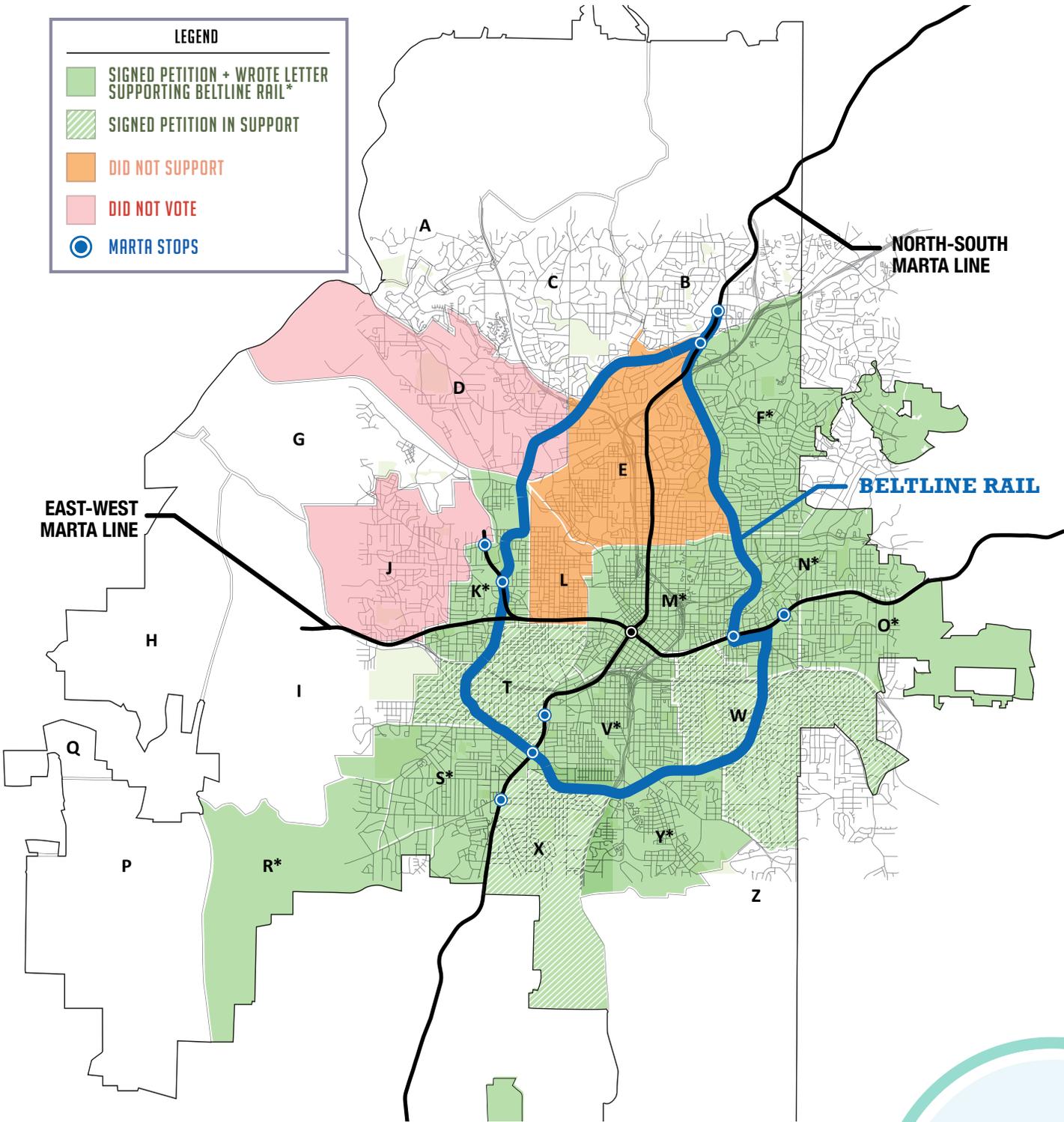
But the biggest promise of the BeltLine endeavor is to join together and provide access among its 45 neighborhoods along the loop, to spread equity and opportunity to underserved sections of the city, and to create car-free, sustainable growth. This desired outcome remains elusive as the population of the city grows while the timeline for the transit is pushed further and further toward mid-century.

Broad-based support for BeltLine rail - Now!

A wide-range of NPUs and neighborhoods across the City reaffirmed their support for BeltLine rail, representing wealthy communities, communities experiencing poverty, transit dependent communities, and communities with high rates of car ownership. These represent the northside, eastside, southside, and westside. While the communities vary, there are common themes in their support for BeltLine rail. Here are the most common and compelling reasons we heard.



2022 BRN NPU Petition Results



RESULTS OF 2022-2023 BRN NPU PETITION EFFORT



• They have long desired connectivity to each other, as well as to jobs, grocery stores, health care and education that can only be provided by frequent rapid transit.

As aptly stated by NPU-S: “Without transit, however, the BeltLine will only ever be considered an elongated park – a very nice amenity for the communities that it adjoins, but that’s all. The BeltLine goes right past Washington Park, where kids can learn swimming and tennis at Camp Best Friends – but a working mom in Pittsburgh couldn’t use it to get her kids there. Restaurants along the BeltLine in Inman Park are hiring – but a waiter in Westview couldn’t use it to get to and from a job there. The connection is lost; the opportunities are squandered; and Atlanta remains disjointed.”

• They recognize the need to change from our car culture and embrace alternative modes to get around Atlanta as the only way to support our development in a sustainable way.

NPU-W in their letter of support makes the connection: “Atlanta residents have demonstrated their desire and willingness to break their dependence on cars, however, the absence of a comprehensive, reliable mass-transit system, safe sidewalks, and protected lanes for alternatives such as bicycles and scooters is hindering progress.”

• They want to ensure our overall transit system functions as well as possible and connects large portions of the City to frequent rapid transit.

NPU-X (one of the most transit-dependent NPUs) recognizes the need to build connections across MARTA’s system in their letter of support: “Rail on the beltline would represent a strategic system connection for our community - eventually connecting to the proposed Campbellton Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Line, the Oakland City MARTA station, and the proposed Metropolitan Parkway Arterial Rapid Transit Line. Implementing rail on the beltline would connect these existing and future modes of transit in a coherent way - failing to complete rail on the beltline would leave all three lines separated and disjointed.”

• The time to move forward is now.

As noted by the Inman Park Neighborhood Association “MARTA....should apply for the funding now available through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. Other cities are applying for these grants, which Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg declared during his visit to Atlanta are designed to fund projects exactly like BeltLine Rail.”

As NPU-N, home to Inman Park, one of the neighborhoods where the first operating segment of BeltLine rail will be located, so clearly points out in their letter of support, “the longer it takes, the more the equity and sustainability benefits of BeltLine rail are diminished. Displacement, traffic, and massive parking structures are the consequences we didn’t want for our beautiful transit greenway.”

NPU-Y in southeast Atlanta is so eager for both rail and trail that they put special conditions on their signature calling for expedited and prioritized construction of both in Subareas 2 and 3.

New Challenges

The path to completing the City’s plans to fulfill the entire dream of the Atlanta BeltLine, a 22-mile greenway loop featuring a multi-use trail and parallel streetcar rail transit, has recently met new challenges. Some, including many of the new Atlanta residents drawn to the urban core of Atlanta and its beautiful neighborhoods, do not know that the founding idea for the Beltline is the transit. The pairing of the transit with trail and public art, arboretum, and new parks makes it one of the most important urban design ideas in the country. Experts have said successful implementation would represent one of the greatest development wins and biggest draw for any city on record.



Even as the MARTA Board approved the award of the Streetcar East Extension (SCE) final design contract to nationally recognized and respected HDR, it expressed its concern about fixing the existing downtown streetcar as it is extended to and on the BeltLine to Ponce City Market, the first 1.4 miles of BeltLine rail. MARTA's delays in getting started since the 2016 referendum passed have meant increased costs, and several More MARTA projects have been pushed back into later years. <see Appendix>. Further delay will only make things worse, and will prevent Atlanta from cashing in on the 2021 Biden Infrastructure Act extra grant dollars for extensions to the SCE. Other cities have been awarded the first 39 billion dollars of extra federal funding. The SCE is funded locally, but the rest of BeltLine rail and all of the other high capacity transit projects in More MARTA need federal matching funds to be built.

The 12 NPUs who have called on Mayor Dickens and MARTA to deliver BeltLine rail are the big story in this report - they speak at length and with passion about why they want BeltLine rail through their neighborhoods. But the reasons why 4 NPUs that supported before didn't this time are worth noting and understanding. In some cases they indicated their support for the idea of transit on the BeltLine with their signatures on the petition and letters of support in 2018, but during the years that we've delayed getting started, a new set of problems has arisen. Some related to the success of the BeltLine trail in rapidly gentrifying the city's inner neighborhoods, and others that every other American city faces, like crime and a loss of faith in government to solve problems and keep promises to the voters.

Outliers

Following are details about two of the NPUs that voted no, L and E. Two others, D and J, did not vote. In the case of D, which is on the NW side of the BeltLine, they wanted to know the exact route the train would take before considering supporting the petition and bringing it to a vote, though they considered it in committee. And in the case

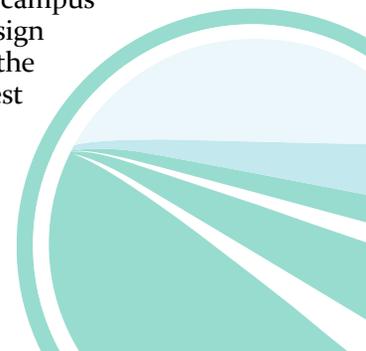
of J, they declined to hear the petition. Of the 16 NPU's surveyed, 83% of their populations was represented by a "Yes" vote.

The Tale of Two Cities - NPU-E

Five neighborhood associations that represent more than 32,000 of NPU-E's 49,000+ population supported the petition³. Yet the petition failed to get a majority of the neighborhoods in favor even though approximately 2/3 of the population of the NPU is represented by these five neighborhoods. In a way similar to a small state deciding a presidential election, the support from roughly 32,000 of NPU-E's 49,000 residents was not represented in the city as a whole, but if one adds these citizens to the 255,000 represented by the 12 NPUs who voted in favor, roughly 287,000 of the city's 487,000 residents are represented, or approximately 60%.⁴

NPU-E was one of the early and strong supporters of the BeltLine Rail Now petition in 2018⁵. It has the largest frontage on the BeltLine of any NPU. NPU-E has more neighborhood associations than nearly any other NPU, numbering 11. And with more than 50,000 residents today, it is also one of the densest and most populous. The diversity of neighborhoods, from dense Midtown with its high rises and 3 MARTA stations to the very quiet Sherwood Forest and Brookwood Hills, which exist as enclaves in the trees and are almost entirely single-family residential homes, is one of the most appealing of its many charms. Midtown shoulders Piedmont Park and the Armour-Ottley Industrial area, both of which are in its geography, and neither of which is officially represented by any of the 11 neighborhood associations. Similarly, the multi-family and commercial areas of Brookwood Hills on the BeltLine and east of Peachtree Road are not part of a neighborhood association.

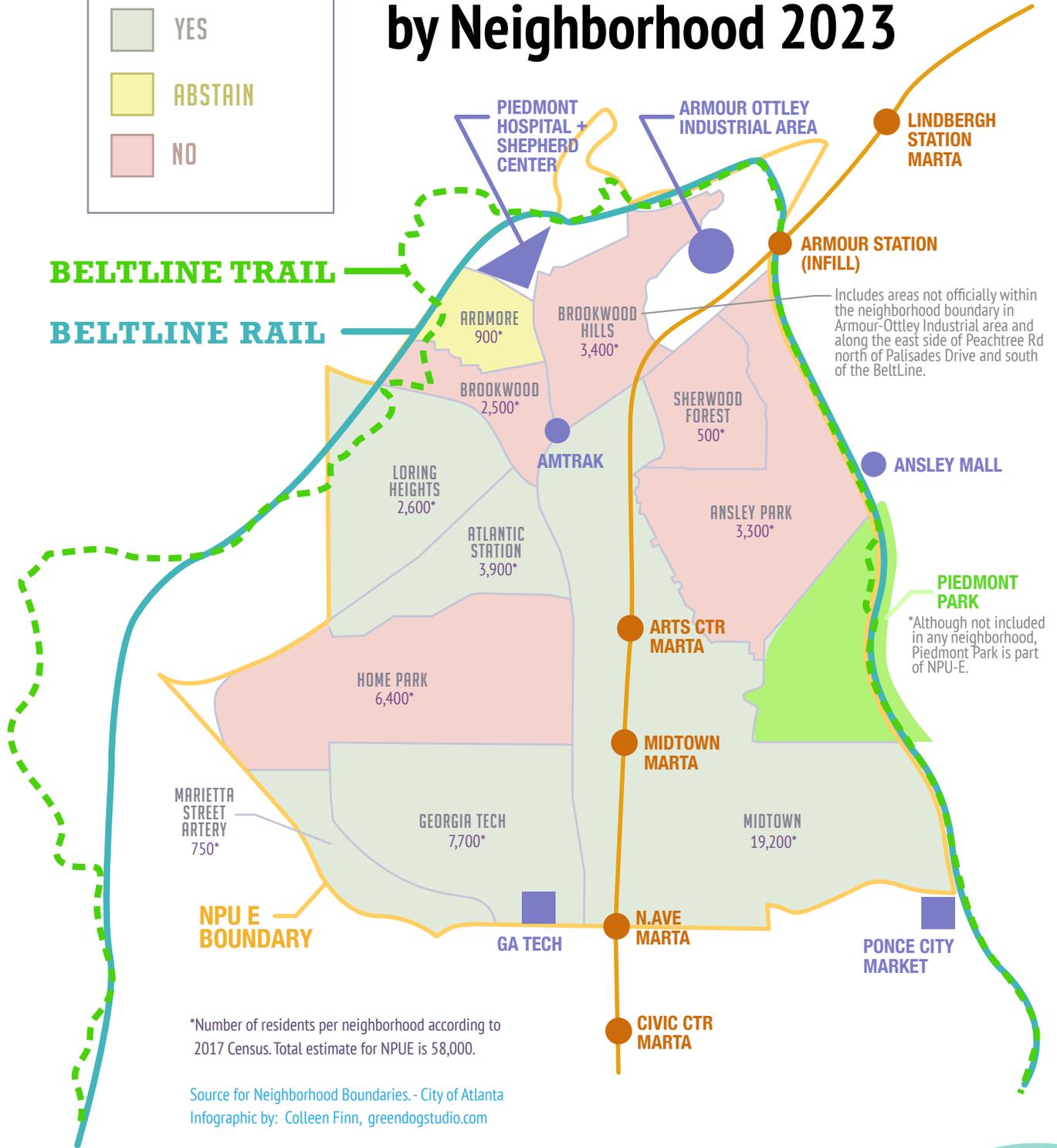
Midtown is home to The High Museum, our Amtrak station, and to the Atlanta campus of Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). By population it is one of the 2 the largest NPUs and is the densest and most urban. It includes some



BRN Petition NPU-E Vote by Neighborhood 2023

LEGEND BY VOTE

- YES
- ABSTAIN
- NO



of the city's most visible cultural landmarks and cherished green spaces like Piedmont Park, and it has overtaken downtown Atlanta as the city's financial heart.

As before, Midtown Neighbors Association (MNA) voted to support the petition early in the process, and under the leadership of its then President Courtney Smith, brought the first “yes” vote back to the NPU. Smith reminded her colleagues when delivering that vote in the fall of 2022 that BeltLine rail is a transit solution that helps Midtown with some of its biggest problems: traffic, air quality, the struggle for parking, and connectivity. In 2023, after several months of consideration by the other neighborhood associations, the move to support the petition ended in deadlock, with 5 of the neighborhood associations for passage and 5 against. Ardmore Park, with a population of roughly 900, cast the 11th vote and abstained; this meant defeat of the motion, with no majority in favor. Smith had at that point become the Chair of NPU-E, and to her credit marshaled a full turnout both in consideration of the petition and to be present for the vote. That was no easy feat. Before the vote, Courtney re-stated her thoughts about why the NPU should vote yes while understanding that each must come to its own conclusion.

A closer look at the voting geography reveals within NPU-E a larger phenomenon happening all over the city and in cities all over America. The American city, with its cultural, leisure, and civic opportunities and its many options for enjoying life, is more attractive than ever as a place to live. That is certainly the case for Atlanta. Many of the newest residents of NPU-E's leafier, low-density neighborhoods lived in suburbs before and moved for convenience, but some have not fully embraced the nature of urban life with its diversity. The denser, more populous, more urban neighborhoods like Midtown, Georgia Tech, Atlantic Station, and Marietta St. Artery, along with Loring Heights, all cast votes in favor. Some, like the reps from Loring Heights and Marietta St. Artery, were quite passionate in their comments about solving mobility, parking, and congestion issues and providing green connections as the city grows.

The nature of the debate in NPU-E reveals the pro-urban vision and anti-urban fears of some who held sway with their neighborhood associations. One neighborhood NPU rep acting in his official capacity stated publicly that he believed that the streetcar on the BeltLine would mean more arrivals by transit riders bent on taking BeltLine rail to commit crimes in his neighborhood. That neighborhood ultimately voted against the petition. These comments are reminiscent of many made 50 years ago when MARTA lost the membership of Cobb and Gwinnett counties. In Sherwood Forest, there were fears of rezoning and being forced to accept ADUs (accessory dwelling units) as a consequence of having BeltLine rail travel at the edge of the neighborhood. Ansley Park's letter expressed fears over loss of a historical buffer between single family and commercial areas if BeltLine rail arrives and brings about a “tension” between “incompatible” land uses. All of this points to a lack of sustained engagement between the city, ABI, MARTA, and the neighborhoods. To be fair, neither Ansley Park nor Sherwood Forest expressed outright opposition to the idea of BeltLine rail, but both seem to be holding out for design solutions and assurances from ABI, the city, and MARTA about the issues they raised in our meetings.^{6,7,8}

Making the case for unity and solutions that benefit all is something that ABI, the City, and MARTA must do again if we hope to reclaim support from NPU-E. The solution that the transit is for some of the problems that are most vexing to the neighborhoods must be presented and all questions addressed, and where the solution can be tailored to adjust to them without compromising the functionality of the transit, that will go a long way toward rebuilding lost support.

It is up to leaders to remind all citizens what is in it for them if we connect the city with the Atlanta Beltline and its streetcar transit. What is the alternative as the city doubles in population? The lesson BRN took from this engagement with NPU-E's individual neighborhoods is that only with public engagement that includes real listening and hearing of concerns on the part of the City, ABI, and MARTA will we push the needle toward the



realization of the Beltline dream. But the longer we wait, the more expensive everything becomes, the more misunderstanding there is, and the more likely that a solution we needed 10 years ago takes 30 more to build.

Broken Promises and Displacement - NPU-L

NPU-L is the only NPU inside the BeltLine that doesn't actually front it. Until the arrival of the Beltline trail plans and the boom on the entire west side, it was mostly a middle and working class community, largely of color. But now it is hugely influenced by the gentrification and re-development such as that on English Ave. A "no" vote reflected the consequences of gentrification - the leadership expressed its anger that so

many long-time residents were displaced and can no longer afford to live in the neighborhood. They also lamented the feeling that many promises to avoid that displacement made to them by others have been broken, and that it is the BeltLine idea itself that is responsible for that.

The longer we wait to deliver the transit - one of the mitigators to displacement - the more neighborhoods will experience the same fate as NPU-L. BeltLine rail provides and preserves access, and connects people of all ages, abilities, and income levels to people, places, and services affordably, even as those amenities become further flung than before. Transit alone isn't enough. Public policy on taxes and zoning both have a role in keeping people in their homes for their lifetimes as their neighborhoods increase in value.

Conclusions

As the quotes and actual letters in the appendices show, support for BeltLine rail is broad-based and sustained. Despite the recent coverage of a quite vocal set of opponents, what we note here is the broader voice that represents both numbers and diversity. And Leaders can be sure residents still want BeltLine rail - which is and has been the City's plan - and they said so loudly and passionately and are waiting for leadership at the City and MARTA to deliver it. It is our contention that these petitions to Mayor Dickens and MARTA show that the groundswell that gave rise to the BeltLine idea is still there, and awaiting the swift action by leaders to bring it about. It is important to remember, as we hear from those who have newly organized to voice opposition to long-standing plans for BeltLine rail and who wish to overturn the vision of the BeltLine, and as many express legitimate concerns that need to be addressed by better public engagement and education on the part of those responsible to deliver the project, that a large and consistent group of supporters, whose voices are expressed through the collective and democratic process of their NPUs remains strongly committed to seeing BeltLine rail become a reality - and as quickly as leaders can deliver it.





Greenway trail and tram in grass tracks- Paris T3 line. Paris, France.

“We have been paying the tax to build this rail ever since voters approved the More MARTA plan. We need immediate implementation of More MARTA to provide the connectivity that our city deserves. In addition, BeltLine rail will fight displacement and promote affordable housing by connecting all our city’s residents to valuable resources like jobs, education, and recreation and, more importantly, to each other.”

W. Forest Coley, Chair NPU-M



BeltLine History

The Atlanta BeltLine as we know it is a creation of the City of Atlanta. The BeltLine Redevelopment plan adopted in 2005 embraced Ryan Gravel's vision for a transit greenway linking 45 neighborhoods and established a Tax Allocation District (TAD) to help fund it. In 2016 city voters overwhelmingly approved both an additional half penny sales tax to fund a More MARTA expansion program with BeltLine rail as the centerpiece and another T-SPLOST that helped complete acquisition of most of a J-shaped alignment including the SW, SE and NE quadrants.

Historically, the 22-mile loop of slightly disconnected freight rail lines encircling the city center defined the outer boundaries of Atlanta. In the late 19th century, industries located here for the direct access to rail transport in all directions that the beltline provided, without going to the center of the city first. Goods not destined for Atlanta but passing through it could travel on trains around the city center and flow more directly from their origin to their destinations. In the early 20th Century, these areas of the city not only grew with industry but also with rapidly expanding neighborhoods, reached by streetcar. By 1910 the city's growing population and the neighborhoods necessary to house all of these new businesses and residents stretched well beyond the Beltline.

As the plan to build the rail and trail simultaneously fell apart in the Great Recession of 2008-2010, the decision was made to build the trail with available funds and get to the rail later. The Eastside Trail was built first, and with the design and its engineering, the provision and preparation for eventual rail transit was built-in to the corridor and later to every other section of the BeltLine where the trail would be built. Today, it's possible to see the completion of the entire trail by this decade's end, but we are just beginning with the transit, and although it has been part of every decision and every plan since Atlanta BeltLine Inc. (ABI) was created as the City's agency to fulfill the dream and will of the citizens of the City, the start

date for construction is now somewhere in 2025, and the completion of the first 1.5 miles of track to Ponce City Market, the nucleus of the explosive and innovative re-development of the corridor, will be in 2028, more than 20 years after ABI was created.

Along the way, the City, which had planned to build BeltLine rail itself via ABI, handed over the operation and future planning of its streetcar system, which includes BeltLine rail, to our regional transit agency, MARTA. And, after a watershed vote in 2016 for the More MARTA program, a significant expansion of all forms of transit within the city of Atlanta, MARTA received both the mandate and revenue to plan, design, engineer, build, and operate these new high-capacity transit projects, including 16 of the 22 miles of BeltLine rail. These plans for BeltLine rail were front and center in the presentation of More MARTA to the public and figured significantly in the 71% margin of approval for the referendum.

Two years after the referendum passed and more than a year after MARTA started receiving the revenue from the half-penny sales tax paid for More MARTA within the City of Atlanta, much of BeltLine rail was removed by MARTA from the More MARTA plan. BeltLine Rail Now (BRN) was formed by BeltLine progenitor Ryan Gravel and former City Council President Cathy Woolard, who was its legislative architect and cheerleader from the onset. BRN urged MARTA to restore the cut segments and deliver the entire project as advertised within More MARTA and started an online petition that eventually drew more than ten thousand signatures in support of that goal. In late 2018, the MARTA Board approved the final draft of the More MARTA plan, with those amputated segments of BeltLine rail restored as part of 4 rail projects in the plan. Everyone knew that the first segment of BeltLine rail would start, as the trail did, on the Eastside, and the remaining 14 miles or so of the portion in More MARTA would follow in sections. BRN delivered the 10,000 + signatures to Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms on February 4, 2020, symbolically choosing Transit Equity Day as the most meaningful time to bring them to City Hall.



But during the Bottoms administration, the energy around transit receded at City Hall, and leadership from the Mayor's office to prioritize and advance the critical More MARTA projects failed to materialize. Meanwhile, even before the pandemic, MARTA spent the majority of the initial revenue from the More MARTA tax on the bus service side of the program. This now controversial heavy frontloading of bus service improvements meant that MARTA was not ready to enter project development on the high-capacity projects like BeltLine rail, Streetcar East and West, or the BRT projects in More MARTA in time to be ready to apply for the 2021 Biden Infrastructure Act bonanza of transit funding dollars. Critical time was lost. Then, more than three years in, projected project costs began to mount, and by this year MARTA declared a lack of funding to complete the more expensive rail and bus projects in More MARTA. Most of those projects are now in a Tier II status, pushing their delivery to the 2040s and beyond, since the revenue stream will not stretch to cover the projects which are now uniformly more expensive. Others saw their modes changed to lower-capacity BRT, which is less expensive to build but more expensive to operate and maintain in the long run.

As the delays from approval of the referendum to getting going with the design of these projects mounted, many forgot the reason for the BeltLine and its tax allocation district, and doubt appeared within both MARTA and the City about when it would move forward. This hesitation at the top spread to some citizens too and gave air to long-time opponents who never wanted BeltLine rail to begin with.

Why is rail construction possible and continuing in other cities but not here? Why is the value of rail transit so universally used as the best and greenest and least costly to maintain over the long run, not as well understood here? We have waited long enough. The issue has been studied again and again. We have a habit in Atlanta of re-visiting and re-thinking good ideas, and we are pressured to cut them back because they become more expensive. The BeltLine is one of the best ideas Atlanta or any city has ever had. The voters have spoken.

See the appendix at the end of this report for the complete letters excerpted above and for letters from other NPUs and neighborhoods.

NPU System & Process

What makes the NPU system in Atlanta so significant and why did we target it for support for BeltLine rail? Since its creation in the 1970s by Mayor Maynard Jackson, the NPU system has acted as the chief grassroots citizen body that represents the interests of the neighborhood associations of the city.⁹ The 25 NPUs carry the consensus of local neighborhoods to city council reps and to City staff and the executive branch about a wide range of issues, from rezonings and liquor licenses to delivery of city services and fighting crime. While not a perfect system, it truly invests power in the people, and the leaders of each NPU are resident-activists in whom the local community has invested their confidence to represent them at City Hall.

To bring a petition like ours to the NPU for a vote, we had to follow the process that everyone does, and which is similar for each NPU. First we had to apply to be on the agenda, and then present our petition to the NPU at the next available meeting. Then the petition went to the neighborhood associations that make up that NPU, and each had its own process of coming to a decision, some with a direct simple vote, others by having a relevant committee study it and bring a recommendation. Then, the NPU representative, whose sole function is to carry information back and forth between the neighborhood associations and their NPU, brings the vote back to the NPU. And then once that is done, there is a vote, requiring members to be present, and the petition is either adopted or rejected.

All in all, it took an average of 3 months for each NPU to reach a decision. It is a truly democratic and transparent process (at the meeting level) and one we were prepared for at the onset. We believed that some NPUs would want to elaborate on their signature with a letter of support, but we were impressed that 9 of the 12 who signed the petition also wrote letters.



Footnotes

- ¹ City of Atlanta Population by NPU neighborhoods 2018 City of Atlanta Neighborhood Change Report, February 2021 <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-housing-community-development/neighborhood-change-report>
- ² City of Atlanta Population by neighborhood 2018 same as footnote 1
- ³ 2018 Population Figures estimate
- ⁴ Same as Footnote 1
- ⁵ <https://www.change.org/p/support-atlanta-beltline-rail-now> 2018 BRN Petition
- ⁶ ABI reports that there are no new zoning changes proposed as a result of bringing BeltLine rail to the Eastside Trail, including the length of ROW that abuts Sherwood Forest and Ansley Park. The BeltLine Overlay determines zoning and land use within the Overlay area, which includes the BeltLine TAD and additional areas.
- ⁷ There are no BeltLine stops planned along the corridor that serve Sherwood Forest.
- ⁸ There is no public access to the neighborhood planned from the Ansley BeltLine streetcar stop.
- ⁹ <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/office-of-zoning-development/neighborhood-planning-unit-npu>



Appendices

Maps

2016 More MARTA Potential Projects and Estimated Costs

2018 BRN NPU Petition Results

2018 More MARTA Atlanta Program Map

2019 Proposed Major Transit Expansion Projects (2050)

2023 Proposed Sequencing Planned Revision

NPU Petitions and Support Letters

Neighborhood Opposition Letter

Neighborhood Petitions and Support Letters



Maps

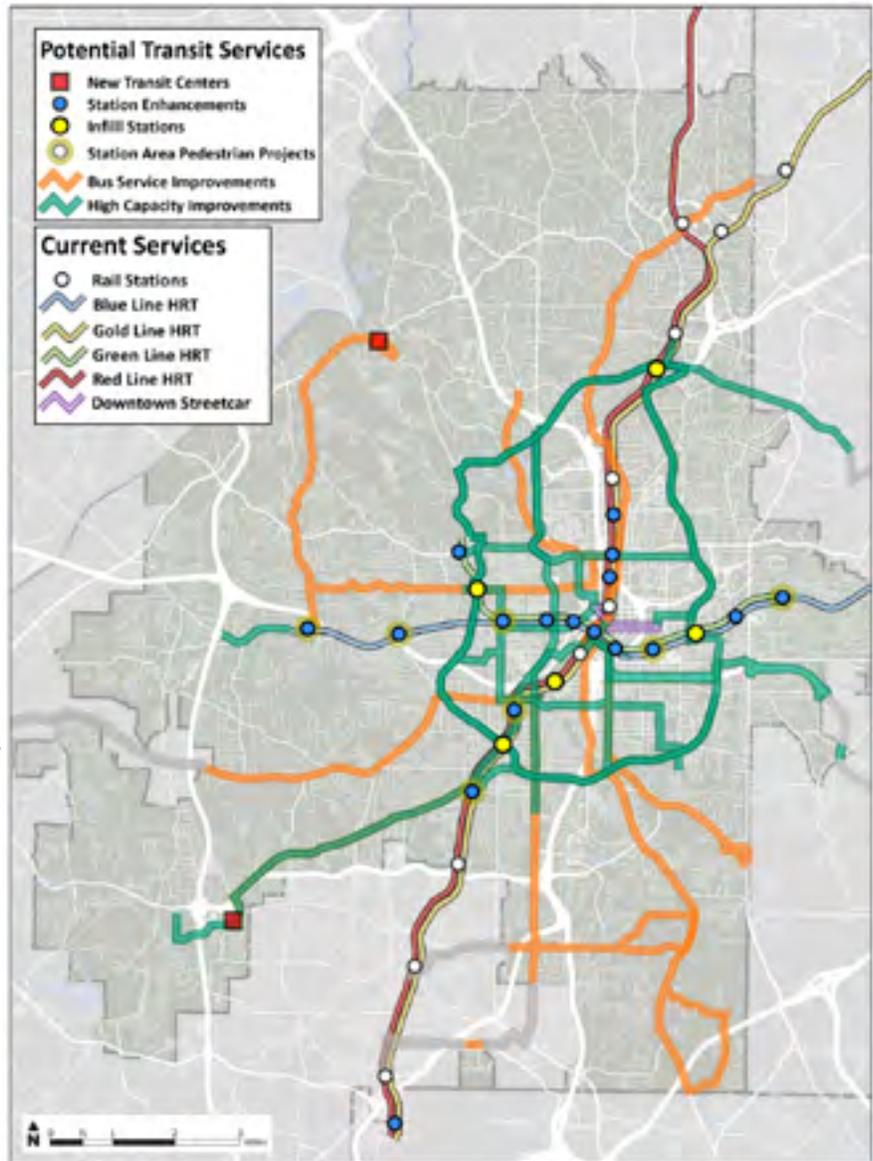


POTENTIAL PROJECTS HIGH CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS

- 7 Light Rail Transit Routes (BeltLine Loop and Crosstown Connectors)
- I-20 West Heavy Rail Transit
- Northside Drive Bus Rapid Transit
- Clifton Corridor Light Rail Transit
- I-20 East Bus Rapid Transit
- 5 Infill Stations
- Rail Station Enhancements (17 Stations)
- Additional Rail Cars

BUS IMPROVEMENTS

- 5 Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) Routes
- 2 Transit Centers – Greenbriar and Moore’s Mill
- Service Frequency Improvements
- Service Span improvements
- Community Circulator Service
- Pedestrian/ADA/Bicycle Improvements along ART Corridors and at Stations



ESTIMATED COSTS

Potential Program	Estimated Capital Cost (2016\$ in Millions)			Estimated O&M Cost (2016\$ in Millions)	
	Local Share	Federal Share	Total	Annual O&M Cost	O&M Cost Over 20 Years
High Capacity Improvements	\$3,237	\$2,993	\$6,230	\$134	\$3,211
Bus Service Improvements	\$65	N/A	\$65	\$35	\$833
Pedestrian Improvements	\$12	N/A	\$12	N/A	N/A
Total Estimated Cost	\$3,314	\$2,993	\$6,307	\$169	\$4,044

SOURCE: MORE MARTA FACT SHEET BY MARTA 12/18/2017

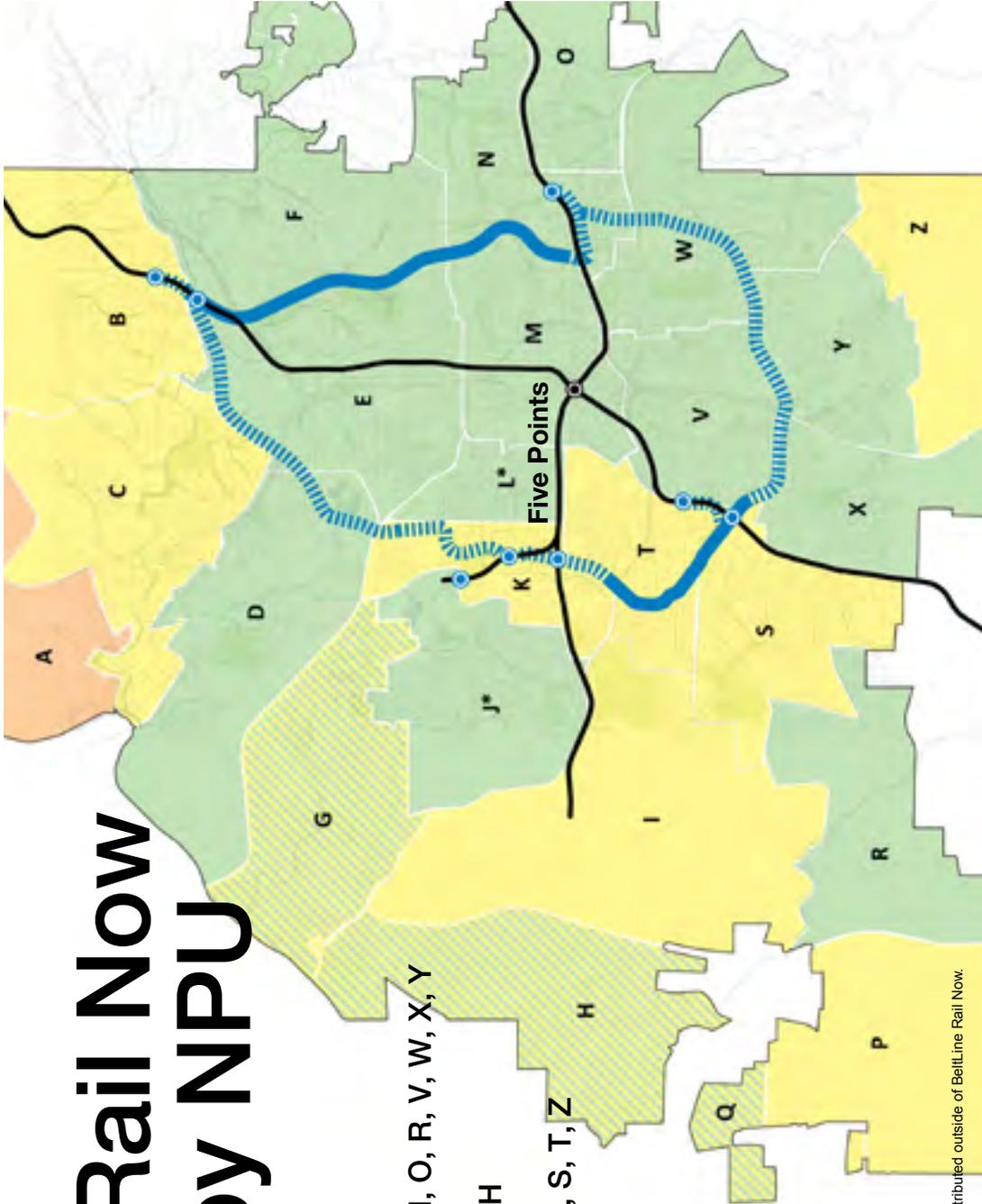
BeltLine Rail Now Petition by NPU

September 11, 2018

- Signed** D, E, F, J*, L*, M, N, O, R, V, W, X, Y
- Declined to Vote** G, Q, H
- Presented** B, C, D, I, K, P, S, T, Z
- Covered** A

***Voted to support with condition**

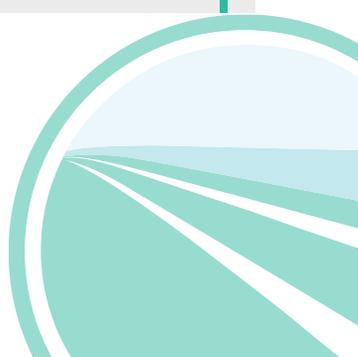
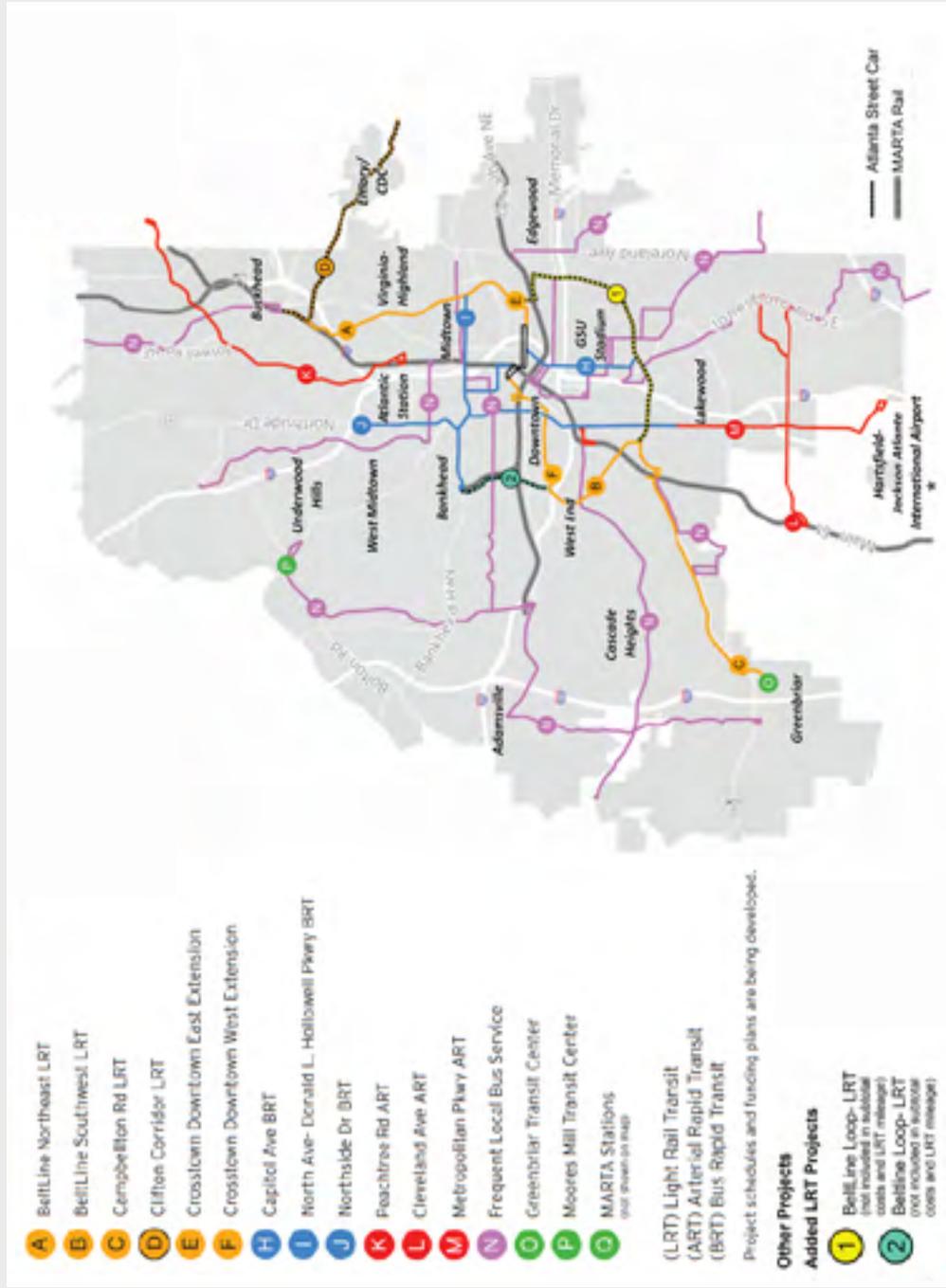
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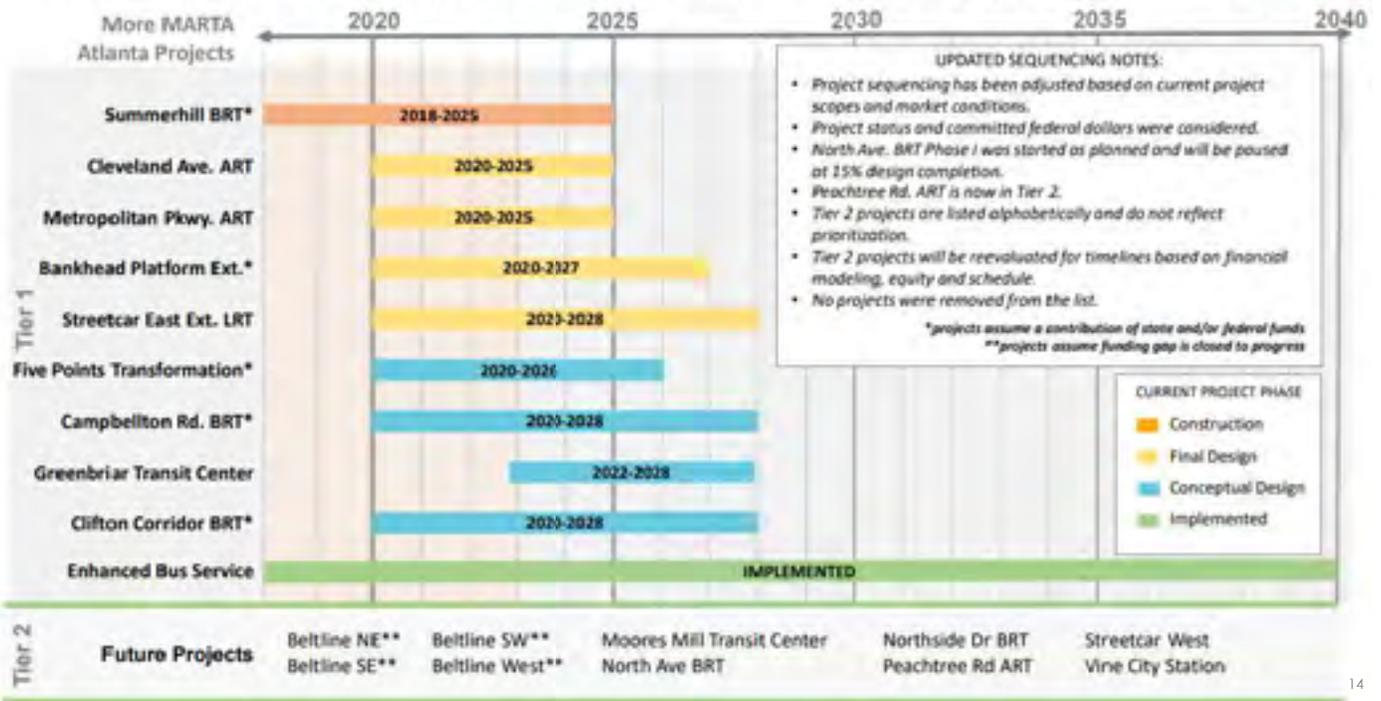
RESULTS OF BRN'S 2018 PETITION DRIVE



MoreMARTA Atlanta Program



PROPOSED SEQUENCING PLAN REVISION – Version 5 (2/22/23)



Tier 1

- A** Streetcar East Extension
- B** Clifton Corridor BRT
- C** Campbellton Rd BRT
- D** Summerhill BRT
- E** Cleveland Ave ART
- F** Metropolitan Pkwy ART
- G** Greenbriar Transit Center
- H** Five Points Transformation
- I** Bankhead Platform Ext.
- J** Enhanced Bus Service

Enhanced Bus Service is included on printed display map.



SOURCE: MARTA, MARCH 2023

NPU Petitions and Support Letters





Transit is a vital component of the City of Atlanta's plan to drive equitable growth, boost mobility, and generate affordable housing while protecting the environment.

Record-breaking federal funding is available, but only for a short time.

Therefore, Mayor Andre Dickens, MARTA and Atlanta City Council must ALL commit to immediate actions necessary to accelerate delivery of light rail along the BeltLine. The project's circular design, which utilizes electric-powered streetcars running on tracks embedded in grass, also represents Atlanta's most cost-effective opportunity to sustainably connect 45 neighborhoods to Atlanta's entire rail and bus transit network.

Print Name of Organization: Neighborhood Planning Unit - F

Print Name of Representative: Debbie Skopczynski, Chair

Signature:  Date 5/18/2022

Neighborhood Planning Unit F

Neighborhood Planning Unit F

Edmund Park, Lindridge Martin Manor, Morningside Lenox Park, Piedmont Heights,
Virginia-Highland, Druid Hills (North) and Emory/CDC Area

May 16, 2022

Mayor Dickens, Council President Shipman and Atlanta City Councilmembers,

BeltLine transit continues to be a key component of the city's plan to increase affordable housing and boost mobility and equitable growth. However, after 20 years not a single mile of track has been laid. Paths for pedestrians and cyclists are a fair-weather transportation option for the able-bodied. To achieve the real promise of the BeltLine, we must build transit that serves all members of our city – especially those who do not have options to reach jobs, schools, healthcare and other amenities in a reasonable commute time from their home. In addition, As the city grows, we must provide alternatives to more and more cars on our streets.

In 2018, NPU-F voted to support BeltLine Rail Now's petition urging Mayor Bottoms, MARTA and city council to prioritize light rail on the Beltline when selecting among high-capacity MARTA transit projects voters had backed in 2016. With support from the public and city leadership, MARTA agreed to restore westside and southside BeltLine rail to its 2019 More MARTA priorities.

Now, with the passage of the Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) by Congress, for the first time in a long time there is designated money available for transit projects just like the Atlanta BeltLine. During Secretary Buttigieg's visit to Atlanta last year, he expressed strong support for the project and indicated that funds were intended for transit projects just like this. Despite this unique and short-lived opportunity, we see no evidence that MARTA has applied for the transit funds that could accelerate the project.

Therefore, the members of NPU-F, respectfully request that Mayor Andre Dickens, Atlanta City Council, and MARTA commit to aggressively seek available funding to accelerate delivery of light rail on the Atlanta BeltLine. Specifically, we request that MARTA and/or BeltLine, Inc. apply for funding for transit on the Atlanta BeltLine from the IIJA, which governs all Federal transit spending through 2026. We respectfully request that this application be submitted no later than the end of 2022. Atlanta needs real transit now, not in another 15 or 20 years.

Respectfully,



Debbie Skopczynski, Chair NPU-F





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Print Name of Organization: NPU - K

Print Name of Representative: Mohamed Sillah

Signature:  Date 05/18/22





Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern,

This Letter of Support was made as of 5/18/2022 by and between Beltline Rail Now and the Chair of NPU-K, Mohamed Sillah on behalf of the NPU-K members.

Partner Name: Beltline RailNow!
Representative: Beverly Miller
Address: 905 Juniper St, NE Suite CU-B Atlanta, GA 30309
Telephone: 404-354-5280
Email: beverly.miller@yahoo.com

Organization Name: NPU K
Representative: Moahmed Sillah
Position: NPU K Chair
Telephone: 240-604-4812
Email: npukatlanta@gmail.com

Purpose: This Letter of Support is to the Beltline Rail Now petition for the Mayor, MARTA, and the Atlanta City Council to prioritize and accelerate delivery of BeltLine rail, which had fallen 10 years behind.

Reasons to prioritize the Beltline Rail Project:

1. The Beltline Rail project has the full support of members of NPU-K.
2. BL Rail is Atlanta's ONLY transit plan that's able to supercharge MARTA's effectiveness. Only 3.5% of Atlanta's jobs are accessible today by a 45-minute ride on transit. We cannot afford to wait decades more for Atlanta to deliver a comprehensive transit network. The city's density will increase, traffic will only continue to get worse, and the cost of building it will only go up.
3. Atlanta's been talking about BL Rail for 20 years; yet, not a single mile has been delivered.
4. BeltLine Light Rail/streetcar is, and has been, the City's plan to help drive equitable growth, boost mobility and affordable housing while protecting the environment. BeltLine rail has been the City's plan since 2003 and was reaffirmed in 2020 with inclusion in the regional transportation plan.



As Chair, on behalf of members of NPU K, I support this petition and sincerely hope to see an approval for the Beltline Rail within our community. I am willing to support the BeltLine Rail Now initiative as necessary to help push the project forward in the local community.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Sillah

(Organization Representative Signature)

Mohamed Sillah-NPU K
(Organization)

05/18/2022
(Date)





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Print Name of Organization: NPU-M

Print Name of Representative: W. Forrest Coley, Jr. - CHAIR NPU-M

Signature:  Date 7/25/22



NPU-M – the heart of the city

July 25, 2022

Dear Mayor Dickens, City Council President Shipman, and Councilmember Farokhi:

NPU-M has voted unanimously to support BeltLine Rail Now's mission of immediate construction of light rail along the Atlanta BeltLine.

We have been paying the tax to build this rail ever since voters approved the More MARTA plan. We need immediate implementation of More MARTA to provide the connectivity that our city deserves. In addition, BeltLine rail will fight displacement and promote affordable housing by connecting all our city's residents to valuable resources like jobs, education, and recreation and, more importantly, to each other.

MARTA should carry out this mandate by prioritizing construction of BeltLine rail. It is imperative that we apply for the funding now available through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. Why is it that we sit idly by while other cities are already benefitting from the money available through these grants, which Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg declared during his visit to Atlanta are designed to fund projects exactly like BeltLine Rail? Why is rail construction possible in other cities but not here? We have waited long enough.

The issue has been studied again and again. Please do everything in your power to see to it that MARTA actually breaks ground right away and begins to carry out the More MARTA plan. If they begin soon, the segment from Downtown to Ponce City Market can be completed in time for the World Cup in 2026.

Please act right away to take advantage of this opportunity and to give Atlanta's citizens the connectivity we deserve.

Sincerely,



W. Forrest Coley, Jr.
Chair, NPU-M





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Record-breaking federal funding is available, but only for a short time.

Therefore, Mayor Andre Dickens, MARTA and Atlanta City Council must ALL commit to immediate actions necessary to accelerate delivery of light rail along the BeltLine. The project's circular design, which utilizes electric-powered streetcars running on tracks embedded in grass, also represents Atlanta's most cost-effective opportunity to sustainably connect 45 neighborhoods to Atlanta's entire rail and bus transit network.

Print Name of Organization: NPU-N

Print Name of Representative: Catherine Woodling

Signature: *Catherine H. Woodling* Date 5/27/2022

BELTLINE RAIL NOW | 905 JUNIPER ST, NE | SUITE CU-B | ATLANTA, GA 30309 | 404.354.5280 |
INFO@BELTLINERAILNOW.ORG





June 6, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

On Thursday, May 26, 2022, NPU-N voted unanimously to support BeltLine Rail Now's campaign to prioritize and accelerate delivery of BeltLine rail along the Atlanta BeltLine.

Transit has long been a vital component of the City of Atlanta's plan to drive equitable growth, boost mobility, and generate affordable housing while protecting the environment. We know that record-breaking federal funding is available, but only for a short time. The longer it takes, the more the equity and sustainability benefits of BeltLine rail are diminished. Displacement, traffic, and massive parking structures are the consequences we didn't want for our beautiful transit greenway. That's exactly what the sidewalk-first approach is delivering.

NPU-N believes now is the time to take advantage of historic opportunities to change the trajectory of this groundbreaking project for all Atlantans.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Catherine Woodling

NPU-N Chair

404-550-7271

npunchair@gmail.com





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Print Name of Organization: NPU-O

Print Name of Representative: Jeanne Tropper, NPU-O Chair

Signature:  Date May 5, 2022



May 3, 2022

Dear BeltLine Rail Now,

Residents credit reliable transit access as a prime reason for deciding to make NPU-O their home. Atlanta's rapid growth means city planners must prioritize and follow through with implementation of its plan to add electric-powered light rail to the BeltLine. This significant enhancement to existing MARTA rail would also enhance its overall environmental footprint like no other alternative. But BeltLine rail is so much more; transit-oriented development can tamp down skyrocketing home prices and offer desperately needed missing-middle housing.

When impartial experts compare the options, rail keeps coming out on top, according to several studies and a 2018 task force. Beltline rail has garnered record community engagement and support for over 20 years.

The MARTA sales tax, overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2016 and led by former mayor Shirley Franklin, former city council president Cathy Woolard and original Beltline visionary Ryan Gravel, will have collected over \$365 million by year's end.

Currently 10 years behind schedule, it's clear: Our mayor, city council and MARTA must take a more assertive leadership role. MARTA should aggressively pursue the record federal transit funding now available for rail. Since the first 1.4-mile segment of BeltLine rail doesn't rely on federal funds, it makes sense to push for delivery within three years.

There's been no indication that's happening. We're concerned.

It's up to Atlanta's current leadership, particularly Mayor Andre Dickens, to follow through. We call on them to do just that. Accelerate delivery. Divert potential detrimental impacts to quality of life throughout our city.

Please forward to Mayor Andre Dickens, Transportation Committee Chair Amir Farokhi, Finance Committee Chair Alex Wan, City Council President Doug Shipman and NPU-O's district representatives on the Atlanta City Council.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Tropper
Chairman, Atlanta Neighborhood Planning Unit O





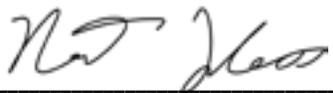
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Print Name of Organization: Neighborhood Planning Unit S

Print Name of Representative: Nicholas Hess, Chair

Signature:  Date 04/26/2022



Neighborhood Planning Unit S

Imagine - Engage - Thrive

Saturday, June 18, 2022



To The Board of Directors, BeltLine Rail Now!

This letter is to express the support of Neighborhood Planning Unit S for the BeltLine Rail Now! organization and its stated mission of accelerating the delivery of light rail along the BeltLine.

The BeltLine is, by its own words, “Where Atlanta Comes Together.” It’s supposed to be a vital artery that will help Atlanta transform from a disparate collection of neighborhoods into a true city – a city of connection and opportunity, not of blockade and barrier. And given a chance to make this vital connection, Atlantans have responded with enthusiasm. Joggers and cyclists use it every day; families and revelers crowd it on the weekends; festivals and parades have been held along its length. Developers have noticed, building in formerly abandoned and underresourced communities to create new engines of economic growth and opportunity.

Without transit, however, the BeltLine will only ever be considered an elongated park – a very nice amenity for the communities that it adjoins, but that’s all. The BeltLine goes right past Washington Park, where kids can learn swimming and tennis at Camp Best Friends – but a working mom in Pittsburgh couldn’t use it to get her kids there. Restaurants along the BeltLine in Inman Park are hiring – but a waiter in Westview couldn’t use it to get to a job there. The connection is lost; the opportunities are squandered; and Atlanta remains disjointed.

Transit has been central to the vision of the Beltline, but currently, it remains that – a vision. Neighborhood Planning Unit S joins BeltLine Rail Now! in encouraging the City, MARTA, and Atlanta BeltLine Inc deliver on its promise.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Hess,
Chair, NPU-S





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Print Name of Organization: NPU-T

Print Name of Representative: Angela Clyde

Signature:  Date: 06/13/2022





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Print Name of Organization: Neighborhood Planning Unit V

Print Name of Representative: Stephanie Flowers

Signature: Stephanie Flowers Date: 5-26-2022



NPU-V

May 25, 2022

Beltline Rail Now our NPU V voted on April 11, 2022 to support Beltline Rail Now ask to the City of Atlanta which is sign and attached with this letter. In addition to you all request our NPU would like to see more handicap accessibilities for disable citizens of the City of Atlanta such wheelchair, scooters and other assistant walking mechanisms and visual impaired supports. Please let me know if you need any additional information.



Stephanie Flowers
2022 NPU V Chair





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Print Name of Organization: Neighborhood Planning Unit - W

Print Name of Representative: Ronald A. Lall, Chair

Signature: *Ronald A. Lall* Date June 2, 2022





Ronald A. Lall

chair@npu-w.org

June 2nd, 2022

To whom it may concern

Beltline Rail Now
905 Juniper St, NE
Suite CU-B
Atlanta, GA 30309

Dear Sir/Madam,

Atlanta residents have demonstrated their desire and willingness to break their dependence on cars, however, the absence of a comprehensive, reliable mass-transit system, safe sidewalks and protected lanes for alternatives such as bicycles and scooters is hindering progress.

Beltline light rail is and has been the City's plan to drive equitable growth, boost mobility and reduce auto-dependency for thousands of residents. Beltline rail has been the plan since 2003 and is included in the 2020 regional transportation plan.

The plan for Beltline rail is decades behind what was initially promised to Atlanta residents. This means that transit oriented development has not materialized around the 22 mile Beltline corridor and opportunities for this kind of development continue to be lost with each passing year.

NPU-W, in support of Beltline Rail Now, asks Atlanta Mayor Dickens, the Atlanta City Council and MARTA to take the actions necessary to quickly move forward and make this plan for light rail a reality for the residents of Atlanta. Federal funds are available, but only for a short time, and so we urge the City and all relevant partners to act now, to secure Atlanta's mobility future.

Sincerely,

Ronald Lall

NPU-W, Chair





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Print Name of Organization: NPU-X

Print Name of Representative: Zachary Adrianssens

Signature:  Date 9/9/22



NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING UNIT – X

September 9, 2022



Matthew D. Rao
Chair – Beltline Rail Now
905 Juniper Street NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30309

Dear Mr. Rao,

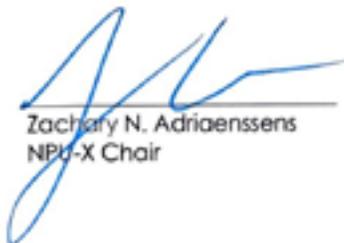
Since its inception, the Beltline has marked a pivotal resource within the NPU-X community – a promise of a more equitable and connected future. However, while the community appreciates the benefits that the completed trail network has provided, the lack of follow-through by the City of Atlanta and Atlanta Beltline Inc. in providing a rail line next to the trail has left the residents of NPU-X waiting for the equity and connectivity we were promised.

NPU-X is one of the most transit-dependent NPU's within the City of Atlanta – having one of the lowest rates of automobile ownership citywide. Rail on the beltline would represent a strategic system connection for our community – eventually connecting to the proposed Campbellton Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Line, the Oakland City MARTA station, and the proposed Metropolitan Parkway Arterial Rapid Transit Line. Implementing rail on the beltline would connect these existing and future modes of transit in a coherent way – failing to complete rail on the beltline would leave all three lines separated and disjointed.

Simply put – it is time. For twenty years the NPU-X community – again, one of the most dependent on transit in the city – has seen its tax dollars used for the construction of a multi-use trail that – while greatly appreciated – does not actually address the transit needs and concerns of its residents.

For these reasons, NPU-X has voted to support Beltline Rail Now's campaign to ensure the completion of rail on the beltline as soon as possible. The body of NPU-X also voted to urge Mayor Dickens and City Council to take any/all immediate actions to begin construction of rail on the Beltline without further delay.

Respectfully,



Zachary N. Adriaenssens
NPU-X Chair





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CONDITIONAL SUPPORT:

NPU-Y and its Members, agree to support the BeltLine Rail System development, provided that initial resource allocation is directed towards completing the BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3 trail paths. Along with the prioritization to develop the Rail System in BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3 prior to other BeltLine Subareas that have traditionally been prioritized throughout the BeltLine's development process.

Print Name of Organization: Neighborhood Planning Unit Y (NPU-Y)

Print Name of Representative: Nichole Weiswasser (NPU-Y Chairperson)

Signature:  Date Oct 7, 2023





Nichole Weiswasser
Chairperson
Neighborhood Planning Unit Y (NPU-Y)
Atlanta, GA
Oct 6, 2023

Subject: Conditional Support for BeltLine Rail Now

To Whom It May Concern:

Neighborhood Planning Unit Y (NPU-Y) extends tentative support to BeltLine Rail Now's initiative to build a rail system along the BeltLine, contingent upon prioritizing the completion of trail paths in BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3 before commencing the Rail System project with additional prioritization to the Southside Trails. We envision both developed trails and a robust rail system enhancing the connectivity and accessibility in our community, thereby fostering area development and progress.

Our conditional support stems from safeguarding the interests of residents in NPU-Y and along the BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3. During our General Body Meeting in May 2022, members unanimously agreed to back the rail system development, provided that initial resource allocation is directed towards completing the BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3 trail paths, with the prioritization of developing and installing the Rail System in BeltLine Subarea 2 & 3 prior to other BeltLine Subareas' that have traditionally been prioritized throughout the BeltLine's development.

NPU-Y offers support to Beltline Rail Now under these stipulated conditions and is open to collaborative discussions to facilitate comprehensive and sustainable community development. For clarifications or additional information, you may contact me at Nichole.MayDayAxel@gmail.com.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "NW", is placed above the typed name.

Sincerely,
Nichole Weiswasser
Chairperson
Neighborhood Planning Unit Y (NPU-Y)



Neighborhood Opposition Letter





September 14, 2022

To All Interested Parties,

The Ansley Park Civic Association (“APCA”) has been asked by both the Atlanta Beltline, Inc. and the Beltline Rail Now! organization to support putting light-rail on the Beltline. Ansley Park offers a unique location where a predominantly single-family housing neighborhood sits juxtaposed to a commercial district on the Beltline. Heretofore, the former abandoned railroad right-of-way provided a buffer, albeit tenuous at times, between the two locations. The advent of the Beltline will create additional tension between these two incompatible land uses if not thoughtfully designed. Currently, such accommodations have not been adequately addressed by the City of Atlanta through its zoning code or by the Atlanta Beltline through its real estate practices.

Ansley Park has been recognized as a historic neighborhood and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. As such, it is afforded the protection of an environmental study under the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 when Federal funding is involved in transportation projects. Until actual detailed design plans are available and the requisite environmental studies are completed, the Ansley Park Civic Association respectfully withholds its support for Federal funding for light rail on the Beltline at this time. APCA will continue to be engaged in constructive conversations with City of Atlanta officials and the Atlanta Beltline staff on this and related topics. Our neighborhood is excited by the prospects for living alongside a vibrant Beltline.

Paul H. Dimmick
APCA President



Neighborhood Petitions & Support Letters





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Print Name of Organization: Candler Park Neighborhood Organization

Print Name of Representative: Emily Taff, President

Signature: Emily Taff Date 5/20/2022

BELTLINE RAIL NOW | 905 JUNIPER ST, NE | SUITE CU-B | ATLANTA, GA 30309 | 404.354.5280 |
INFO@BELTLINERAILNOW.ORG





May 24, 2022

Office of the Mayor, City of Atlanta
55 Trinity Avenue SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Mayor Dickens,

I am writing on behalf of the Candler Park Neighborhood Organization (CPNO) Membership which voted this past month to support BeltLine Rail Now and to urge the City to pursue available federal funding for transportation with all haste.

Candler Park residents support improved and expanded public transit and believe that our city has no time to waste when it comes to serving residents with the best transit options, especially as the city grows increasingly less affordable. Expanded public transit can drive affordable transit oriented development where we need it most and will connect more people with more jobs.

We understand that there is more than \$8 billion in federal funding set aside for new fixed guideway transit projects in the Infrastructure and Jobs Act and Atlanta has just such a project ready to go in the BeltLine rail. BeltLine rail has been the City's plan since 2003, reaffirmed in 2020 with inclusion in the regional transportation plan, and it is time we get started building it. The longer it takes to get started, the more diminished the equity and sustainability benefits become. The time to start is now.

We do not want to see this opportunity for federal funding lost. It's high time Atlanta moves forward on these projects. We look forward to connecting more of our city by transit.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Taff". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Emily Taff, President
Candler Park Neighborhood Organization

cc: via email to Transportation Committee Chair Amir Farokhi, Finance Committee Chair Alex Wan, and City Council President Doug Shipman

PO Box 5418 Atlanta, GA 31107-0418
candlerpark.org | president@candlerpark.org





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Print Name of Organization:

Inman Park Neighborhood Association

Print Name of Representative:

Cristy Lenz

Signature:

Cristy Lenz

Date 06/06/22

BELTLINE RAIL NOW
| 905 JUNIPER ST, NE | SUITE CU-B | ATLANTA, GA 30309 | 404.354.5280 |
INFO@BELTLINERAILNOW.ORG





June 29, 2022

Dear Mayor Dickens, City Council President Shipman, and Councilmember Faroki:

The Inman Park Neighborhood Association has voted to support BeltLine Rail Now's mission of expediting the construction of light rail along the Atlanta BeltLine.

The time to build rail on the BeltLine is NOW. Everyone in Atlanta deserves the connectivity that rail transit on the BeltLine will bring. We need an immediate roll-out of the More MARTA plan in order to fight displacement, promote affordable housing, and connect all of our city's residents to resources and to each other.

Constructing rail in South and West Atlanta in particular will provide needed access to jobs and to important resources such as education, health care, and recreation in areas of Atlanta where car ownership is lowest.

Citizens of Atlanta voted in favor of the More MARTA half-penny sales tax in 2016 and have been paying ever since to fund implementation of the plan. MARTA should fulfill their mandate prioritizing construction of rail and should also apply for the funding now available through the Infrastructure and Jobs Act. Other cities are applying for these grants, which Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg declared during his visit to Atlanta are designed to fund projects exactly like BeltLine Rail.

Why is rail construction possible in other cities but not here? We have waited long enough. The issue has been studied again and again. The voters have spoken.

Please do everything in your power to see that MARTA actually breaks ground right away and begins to carry out the More MARTA. If they begin soon, the segment from Downtown to Ponce City Market can be completed in time for the World Cup in 2026.

Please give us the connectivity that we chose, that we deserve, and that we have been paying for!

Sincerely,

Cristy Lenz, President
Inman Park Neighborhood Association





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Print Name of Organization: Midtown Neighbors' Association

Print Name of Representative: Courtney R. Smith, President

Signature:  Date 09/02/22

