



**Westside Study Group – Westside Trail Extension  
Design Alternatives Transcript  
Live Questions and Responses  
10.26.2020**

**Live Questions and Responses**

1. Q: Regarding the A & B option: Option B seems like a better option, simply because it adds another connection point (even though the Mobile St. connection point isn't too far away). So what are the drawbacks of option B?

***A: Please note that a letter recently sent to more than 2000 residents near the Westside trail showed Options A and B only. An additional option was included in tonight's presentation.***

***Option B would remove significantly more tree canopy and requires more grading, potential retaining walls, all of which drives up the cost. It also requires us to cross a pedestrian bridge and doesn't provide as enjoyable a user experience. Note that Option A, passing through Washington Park, is expected to provide direct access to Westmoor Drive and Ollie Cir. It does not provide a connection onto Stafford, but it does tie into other neighborhoods. From a cost and environmental perspective, as well as preserving and tying into that cultural element of Washington Park, we felt Option A was a better fit.***

2. Q: Is it an option to create a spot for a food truck to easily post-up and serve trail users? I think this would be a super EASY and cheap way to add some interest/fun for pleasure beltline users (and beltline commuters). And it could be a way to support westside businesses if preference could be given to Westside BIPOC businesses. Partnering with Portrait Coffee or Gilly Brew Bar would be awesome.

***A: Currently, the Atlanta BeltLine does not allow commercial operations within its corridors, but we do encourage these businesses to set up in any public domain next to the corridor, to serve users coming in and out of the corridor.***

3. Q: Along these lines, would it be possible to allow licensed street performers (especially musicians, but also magicians or whatever) to perform on the beltline at certain days/hours? The few times I've gotten to hear a band perform at the O4W skatepark, it's been magical. I feel this could be an easy way to add interest to the beltline (and thus more user-ship) and a way to highlight westside arts and culture, and "licensed" performers (I assume a licensing process would also have to be invented).

***A: Only performances that are selected through the Atlanta BeltLine program are approved within the corridor. Many of the performances the public does see have been approved by our Arts & Culture department and our Art on the BeltLine program.***

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4. Q: Is it possible to add some simple play things, like a few boulders that a toddler would want to climb on, or a slide on a short berm, or a tree swing (I realize a tree swing is likely at the extreme end of what would be feasible from a liability perspective). Even just an old railroad track for a person to balance-walk on would be cheap and easy to do and add a bit of character and potential for some fun.

**A: The BeltLine is classified as a transportation corridor; as such, slides, swings and other play equipment cannot be incorporated. Play structures are reserved for our park spaces. However, natural features like boulders can be considered. We appreciate the suggestion and will look further into it.**

5. Q: Will there be a workout area along the trail for community exercise classes.

**A: Again, that is more of a recreation element that could not be approved within a transportation system.**

6. Q: Will there be an expansion of the BeltLine project to East Point, to College Park, to Hapeville GA?

**A: The Atlanta BeltLine is a pre-planned program that is already outlined and doesn't necessarily include routes to other metro Atlanta cities, but we are open to partnerships. For example, we partner with the PATH Foundation, a partner committed to trail development throughout the metro Atlanta region. We're currently having a conversation with them about a trail from East Point, Main Street through Lee Street, connecting with the Westside trail around Lee Street.**

7. Q: There's a potential access point seemingly in the center of our four-house cul-de-sac. How will this be? Also, the graphic shows the trail to the east of the MARTA tracks. Is this accurate?

**A: This question refers to our preferred alignment along Washington Manor. Everyone should remember that what we're seeing here is just the first flush of ideas. We still have a ways to go – we'll need to talk to more people, work out details and get consensus, etc. What we're showing is just the results of our analysis to date. As to the four homes, the Atlanta BeltLine owns these parcels just east of Washington Manor Drive. We would not be acquiring single family homes; this is land we have already acquired. The plan is to preserve that space for future transit. Bringing the trail to the east side of MARTA, utilizing Washington Park, really opens up the experience to connect more people to the beltline's main line - there's no need to cross an active MARTA line and there are more connections to neighborhood streets. Throughout the corridor, we connect to all of the streets that bisect or dead-end into the corridor. We want to make sure we continue that strategy. At the cul-de-sac, the connection is not between existing homes; it's actually just along the edge of the northernmost home and provides a new right-of-way to connect vehicular traffic from the cul-de-sac to Washington Heights Terrace. This will really open up the space for future transit. It's also an easier, more cost-effective route – it will require less grading, we won't need to build structures (retaining walls, pedestrian bridges, etc.), and it will really open up space for a pedestrian connection that will increase the viability of that space.**

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8. Q: Plans for development to include housing for active seniors, in particular ranch houses, duplexes for seniors, so-on and so-forth?

***A: The footprint for the Tax Allocation District (TAD) that is the funding source for this development is relatively small on the Westside project, so we rely heavily on partners like Invest Atlanta, the Atlanta Housing Authority, and the City of Atlanta for development outside the TAD. We are not currently aware of any specific developments Atlanta BeltLine is supporting right now in the Washington Park area.***

9. Q: This question is about connections from the BeltLine to North Ave or the Valley of the Hawks. Will there be any kind of connection to North Ave. under or across the BeltLine?

***A: We are exploring those options; a significant grade change exists at North Avenue where it dead ends into the kudzu line. We are exploring options for lateral connections, including at Valley of the Hawks. We're meeting with the City's Department of Watershed Management, which is managing that project. We hope to leverage each other's needs, and we're still at an early stage in the conversation, but the idea is to connect in any way that is feasible.***

10. Q: For option A, will there still be a sub trail to the Stafford St. area to allow direct access to the Beltline southbound?

***A: We've looked at that option and are still weighing whether that would need to be a spur trail. Atlanta BeltLine does not own the entirety of the corridor from Lena Street to Boone on the west side of MARTA; about half of that property is MARTA owned.***

11. Q: It seems like alignment A's upside is that you won't need a bridge over the rail tracks (so that would be the eastern alignment) and you can have neighborhood connections to Washington Manor and it seems like alignment B's option (which is on the west side) is you can have a connection to Stafford but then you have to go over MARTA which might be expensive. Why can't you go with alignment A but then also connect to Stafford St.?

***A: If we were to connect to Stafford St., and we are evaluating this, we would have to build a pedestrian bridge across MARTA (if we were to do a perpendicular connection), or we would have to have a spur trail that would backtrack to get users back to the point where Options A and B diverge. We want to maintain direct connections where we can and always consider the user experience as well. We evaluate using a number of different metrics to determine the most viable and most feasible connections. MARTA property ownership is one hurdle on the west side. There are also existing conditions that make a connection to Stafford Street along the ABI-owned parcel difficult, including a 30-foot drop and a really steep slope, which creates a viability issue as far as cost and constructability. We also want to preserve as much tree canopy as we can to make this segment unique.***

12. Q: Will these alignments include provisions for LRT as the rest of the West/South Beltline already does?

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**A: We are trying to maintain provisions for light rail in every scenario we can. That is one advantage to Option A, which passes through Washington Park and goes up the east side of MARTA. It preserves the trail in its permanent location throughout that stretch. Unfortunately, when you reach Boone and the kudzu line, given the existing conditions and the timeline for future transit, it is not cost effective to put the trail in its permanent location. We have been tasked in the short term to put in and construct as much trail as we can as fast as we can. Knowing that light rail in this area is further along in the MoreMARTA schedule, throughout the kudzu line, we want to preserve existing berm, run the trail along that berm, and when transit comes, the trail gets realigned and reconstructed with light rail. Where we can do a permanent location we will, but where it's not feasible to accommodate trail and then transit, we will take the path of least resistance to get the trail built in the most feasible manner.**

13. Q: Could the presentation be posted to the "Community Meetings" section of the Atlanta BeltLine website?

**A: Yes, you will be able to find this presentation and a recording of tonight's meeting on the Atlanta BeltLine website ([beltline.org/meetings](http://beltline.org/meetings)).**

14. Q: Will the existing Westside trail lights be extended through the new extension?

**A: Where you see lights, cameras, granite veneer on walls, stainless steel rails, etc., decisions were made in 2012 to use the same package of self-maintaining materials throughout all corridors. Every segment designed and built gets the same package, to satisfy equity, maintain continuity, and provide ease of maintenance.**

15. Q: Would street performers ever be an option for the Beltline?

**A: Only through existing BeltLine programs or our Art on the BeltLine program, and in compliance with an existing City of Atlanta ordinance. Unless that changes, this will not be changed.**

16. Q: What is the different in travel length/time between the two alignment options?

**A: Since we don't have an exact alignment, we don't have a preliminary length. From a graphic standpoint they look about the same. Washington Park might add a fourth to a half mile, but since we don't have a defined route yet, we can only estimate. Around 1.3 miles is standard, but actual length will depend on the route we choose. The difference in time is negligible. The biggest hurdle will be the at-grade crossings, which will exist whether on the west or east side.**

17. Q: Will there be a connection to the Proctor Creek Trail?

**A: There will not be a direct connection, but the Westside trail extension does provide connection to Hollowell, where you can then travel west to Proctor Creek Greenway. It also ties into the Westside BeltLine connector, of which Segment 3 will be adjacent to Marietta and ultimately connect to Westside Reservoir park, which then connects to the Proctor Creek**

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**Greenway. So while there is not a direct connection, it does fit into the concept of a regional connectivity plan.**

18. Q: The sidewalks currently under construction on MLK, will the sidewalks tie into the BeltLine? If so, where will it connect.

**A: There are existing sidewalks that connect at MLK and where our trail crosses on a fairly new pedestrian bridge. They will likely connect about an eighth of a mile west of Washington High School.**

19. Q: What is an “urban” trail?

**A: The BeltLine used to call its trails “interim hiking trails,” but the designation was changed to “urban trails” because they’re different. The urban trail designation applies to trails that utilize old rail corridor or where, in other places in Atlanta, we have used Rights of Way by Georgia Power lines or DWM underground sewer lines. These are places where you can’t construct vertical buildings and that may afford opportunities to connect neighborhoods at various points with little or no interaction with automobiles or other vehicles. The difference is when you get out further out of town into a more rural setting. A good example of this would be the Silver Comet trail, which might be considered urban at its eastern terminus in Cobb County, but as it gets closer to Alabama, it becomes much more rural, with greater distance between towns and cities.**

20. Q: What types of permanent jobs will be created?

**A: This question refers back to the program elements, specifically our goal of 30,000 new permanent jobs around the Atlanta BeltLine. We are not necessarily creating jobs but rather, being the catalyst for their creation. We track labor statistics through one of our partners, and the information includes employment changes and the types of jobs being added to our beltline geography. While we do incentivize jobs in some ways (e.g., Murphy Crossing in SW Atlanta, where we can incentivize types of uses), there are other ways we see jobs being created, for example, with the construction of new office buildings. Job creation occurs naturally, and we track it as we build the program.**

21. Q: Will Beltline light poles, existing or new, be accessible as power sources for new secure e-bike charging stations like those from Parkent Cycles?

**A: Probably not, since we need to keep lights and electrical panels more secure. We tend to not leave anything low and accessible, to maintain the integrity of those lights. There are opportunities for those sorts of charging stations at apartment complexes, commercial and mixed-use buildings, places off the trail. That could feasibly change as that mode is used more and more across the City, and as the City develops standards that will dictate whether those charging stations are allowed within City right-of-way or on City property.**

22. Q: Since Equity is mentioned so often as a top priority, what specific steps have been taken to protect housing costs along the Beltline — share reference examples please. And what is

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specifically being planned to protect the cost of housing and property taxes for current residents of this portion of the trail? [Beltline.org\meetings](http://Beltline.org\meetings)

***A: Our housing goal was set by legislation to create 5,600 affordable units; that number increases the housing supply, which helps ensure housing costs don't rise too rapidly. We have almost 900 units in the pipeline for development over the next couple of years. We are also looking at ways to stabilize communities, e.g., rental assistance to ensure legacy residents can continue to live around the beltline, and piloting a resident retention tax relief fund for areas around Subareas 9, 10, 1 and 2, which include the neighborhoods around the Westside trail extension. Also, we pursue low-hanging fruit like education and making sure residents know how to value their property so they don't sell and can realize the value increase in housing for their properties. The Atlanta BeltLine Partnership manages our free home empowerment workshops (found on our website), which include information on renters' rights and homestead exemptions. A study we conducted found that about a thousand homeowners are not taking advantage of existing homestead exemptions or are not understanding the appeals process. Also recall that spending outside the TAD is limited, so we rely on partners to develop housing with us, including the Atlanta Land Trust, Legal Aid, City of Atlanta, the Housing Authority and Invest Atlanta. Other partners who assist with housing and eviction issues include the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership and the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation. There are also a number of home repair and empowerment workshops on our website. We're also always striving to make sure affordability is matched with livable incomes; we have formed partnerships with Strive Atlanta to train residents on occupational skills to increase their income, and recommended smartphone apps like Juvo Jobs, which connects users to jobs within their communities that can help them get to the affordability level desired.***

***Thank you for your participation! This conversation will be ongoing – you can always call us or go on the website to get more information and answers to your questions.***

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