



Northside Study Group – Special Service District Building The Beltline For All Transcript

Live Questions and Responses

3.1.2021

Presenters made every effort to answer as many questions from attendees as possible live during this virtual meeting. The questions and answer portion of this meeting can be replayed [here starting at time stamp 46:45](#). All questions that were not answered before the meeting ended are reflected and answered below.

Live Questions and Responses

SSD

1. **How much does "prepping the corridor for transit" cost?**
 - A. Quantifying a total costs is difficult, as it is not broken out. To date, trail projects have designed stormwater management systems to accommodate the imperviousness of the transit corridor. In addition, trail design has been set so as to minimize future trail conflicts with transit. Finally, land acquisitions for trail corridor construction have been set to also accommodate future transit.

2. **SW Atlanta has more industrial land lots that other parts of the city. Nowhere has industrial properties been talked about. What about them? They are NOT commercial properties. Are those properties included? If so that language must be included in the legislation.**
 - A. Industrial properties are considered commercial land use and, therefore; industrial property owners are included.

3. **Can a SSD be extended? Can a TAD be extended?**
 - A. City Council would have to pass additional legislation to extend the SSD. In order to extend the TAD, the funding partners (APS, Fulton County, City) would have to agree to keep forgoing tax revenue. The extension may also be impacted by the cap on the amount of the city tax digest allowed in a TAD.

4. **How does the SSD enable the TAD to throw \$50 million at affordable housing?**
 - A. \$100 million from the SSD also unlocks \$100 million of philanthropy and makes us more competitive for federal funding -- all of which will be used for trail completion. Without this funding, the trail would not be completed before 2030. Finishing the trail corridor will stimulate development within the TAD, which generates more TAD revenue. Between growing the TAD pie and bringing in outside funding, there will be more TAD funding available for affordable funding.

5. **Why are we only focused on using the SSD for the PATH? Transit is important to achieving the vision of the Beltline. It is critical to achieve the environmental, affordable housing, and**



economic benefits of the Beltline. Should we not be trying to include transit funding in the SSD request?

- A. The SSD is active and transit is not a project-type that can be funded.
- 6. What is your position on transit funding?**
 - A. ABI supports MARTA and its management of the MoreMARTA 1% sales tax within the city. However, because that funding stream is not sufficient to complete the BeltLine transit loop, we also support identifying additional funding that could be allocated for transit projects.
 - 7. MARTA is pushing the S concept rather than the Beltline loop and will suck up any federal grant dollars for that. How is the loop a viable option over the next 10, 20, or 30 years?**
 - A. Additional funds would be needed to realize the BeltLine transit loop.
 - 8. Why 350 M are needed for 14 extra miles when (I understood) each mile of the 8 previous miles built cost 15M per mile?**
 - A. The segments of trail that have been built to-date have been the “easiest” segments. The topography of the southside and the northwest will require significantly more walls and structures. Also, there is no abandoned railroad corridor in the northwest and portions of the northeast quadrants, so finding a corridor will require avoiding existing infrastructure already in place.
 - 9. How many business owners and commercial property owners have you reached out to about the proposed SSD? What percentage of affected owners does this account for of the approx. 5000 parcels?**
 - A. We have the e-mails and phone numbers for 4,000+ businesses with business licenses in the BeltLine Planning area. We sent numerous e-mails with information about the SSD, a survey on how they would like to see the support dollars prioritized, and how to provide feedback and voice concerns. We also did a RoboCall to these business owners sharing information about the SSD. A mailing was sent out to affected property owners in the SSD.
 - 10. Can you explain precisely when the extra \$50M for affordable housing and \$7M for small businesses will be available and how this money will be available from the SSD when there is a \$50M shortfall?**
 - A. The SSD generates money that is then bonded and leveraged for additional philanthropic and public dollars estimated at \$350M, which will complete the entire BeltLine trail loop. This then frees up TAD dollars through 2030 that can be dedicated to BeltLine programmatic objectives, hence the now \$12M for small business support dollars and \$45M for additional housing dollars.
 - 11. Will there be a commitment that the additional tax raised will be earmarked for the area that contributes the funds?**



- A. No. The tax raised by the SSD will be used to complete the 22-mile loop of trails, support economic development, affordable housing and a community retention fund.

12. What bad things (other than a 1-year delay) would happen if we delayed action on this by one year?

- A. If we do not move forward with the SSD now, construction will not be complete prior to 2030 when ABI is set to sunset.

Design & Review

13. Where have you purchased land in Blandtown for BeltLine construction?

- A. One parcel on the north side of Culpepper.

Transit

14. When the TAD was instituted, Blandtown was to receive transit stations. Is that still likely? Without a plan about where the Beltline will be in subarea 8 and what it will include how do you anticipate the cost? And what property has been acquired in Blandtown?

- A. The transit alignment for the NW quadrant of the BeltLine has not yet been nailed down, so transit stop locations are uncertain. Cost planning is based on per-mile expectations based on other streetcar/light-rail projects around the country.

15. Do you have any concrete plans for transit or transit-sized trails on the NW side?

- A. Unfortunately, not yet. We are underway with PATH Foundation to determine a NW Trail alignment. The NW transit corridor feasibility study will most likely start early 2022.

16. Do y'all have a study that would indicate how much density is required for beltline transit to be fiscally viable? It makes sense to build the trail that would attract residents and businesses. Then build transit to meet that need. Is there any data to support timing of such a rollout (trail then development and transit)?

- A. ABI commissioned a study entitled "Transit Supportive Land Use Implementation Plan" in 2018. The BeltLine Trail Loop should be complete before 2030. The BeltLine Transit Loop is only partially funded via the MoreMARTA sales tax and will be implemented over 40 years.

Housing

17. How many years out is the affordable housing if you are using the \$50M only to purchase land. You'll need to find a developer, get permits, build...? The TAD will sunset before there are any new affordable units if the plan is using the \$50M incrementally accrued to purchase land.

- A. ABI has a goal to assist in the development and/or preservation of 5,600 units of affordable housing by 2030. We are currently 45% of the way toward our goal, having



assisted in the development of 2,500 affordable units. Land acquisition is one of ABI's strategic moves toward the development of housing with long term affordability. As part of this strategy, ABI has already moved forward with a land acquisition strategy, having purchased several properties within the BeltLine TAD, including a property along Chappell Road, a property on Garson Drive, Murphy Crossing, and the Avon site, also off Murphy Avenue. These acquisition opportunities are part of ABI's strategy to ensure thoughtful development that spurs long term affordable housing, job creation, and business growth through control of land within the BeltLine TAD, which will last long after the sunset of the TAD.

Economics

18. What new businesses are moving into Westside Connector Beltline? Also, would a list of new business owners be made public?

- A. We work very closely with the Business Associations and CIDs around the BeltLine. We are working to create an online map of all the districts on our website that would then point to their listing of businesses in their areas. This area in particular is served by the West Atlanta Business Association.

19. How does a business get on the email list for the survey?

- A. Please e-mail us at business@atlbeltline.org.

Other

20. What percent of the Beltline's staff and leadership are people of color?

- A. Our Executive Leadership is 100% people of color and our total staff (including leadership) is 53%.

21. What is the timing for the replacement of the Marietta Blvd bridge and how will it be funded? If the first extension of the beltline into Blandtown is to be completed in a year, and requires a fully functioning bridge, how will this work?

- A. The Marietta Blvd Beltline (Westside Trail Section 3) project is under construction and will cross the bridge over Inman and Tilford freight yards via a 10' wide sidewalk on the west side of the bridge. ATLDOT hopes to get federal funding for a full bridge replacement within the next couple years, and/or it will be included in the next TSPLOST project list. It is currently the #2 priority citywide as far as bridge projects (current #1, a repair, is in the middle of being addressed. That is the Spring St bridge, which has ASR ("concrete cancer").

22. Will 80% of the TAD funding is going to things other than building the path / BeltLine?

- A. TAD funding is used for operations, paying back existing bond debts and paying for other aspects of the BeltLine portfolio of projects such as affordable housing, parks, economic development, asset management, etc.

23. How much have you received in TAD funds in the past 15 years?



A. The TAD has generated \$277M through FY19.

24. I thought TAD also supports infrastructure which we sorely need - is that correct?

A. The TAD does support infrastructure within the purview of ABI's portfolio of projects.

25. Why does this show "study in progress" in the RFQ hasn't gone out yet for the Blandtown area beltline section? Is this a typo?

A. ABI and PATH Foundation have started moving forward with planning efforts for the NW Trail.

26. Why would you put out a deficit for completion of the BeltLine if you don't have the land acquired to know what construction/remediation may be required?

A. We have construction, engineering, and real estate cost data on the approximate cost to construct the BeltLine in a variety of different conditions (rail corridor, repurposing a street, etc.). We have used that information to develop the SSD budget. Part of the SSD funds will go toward real estate primarily in the NW corridor. The design and real estate transactions work hand in hand, in an interactive process. For an area such as the NW corridor, that is particularly true because there is not an existing rail corridor to purchase. As we design, and confirm an alignment, we will purchase the land. Having the funding available to move the design and real estate transactions will move this process forward more quickly.

27. How much (total) federal dollars have been granted to the BeltLine this far?

A. The Atlanta BeltLine has received more than \$50 million in federal funds to date.

28. Why is BeltLine not dedicating more money from the TAD than \$100 million? Why leave a funding gap that is unconfirmed?

A. TAD funding is used for operations, paying back existing bond debts and paying for other aspects of the BeltLine portfolio of projects such as affordable housing, parks, economic development, asset management, etc.