

5.0 SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM BENEFITS

The BeltLine Corridor, including the Northeast Zone, offers a unique opportunity to provide integral linkages between existing and planned development, existing and planned recreational opportunities, and the existing transportation network. The project would support the sustainable and efficient use of urban land in the Atlanta region through transit-oriented, mixed-use development to help reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and decrease automobile dependence. In the Northeast Zone, the proposed action would offer more direct, multimodal alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel between the Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Lindbergh Center areas. It would also serve as a basis for:

- neighborhood preservation and revitalization;
- mixed-use development;
- job creation;
- affordable housing;
- cleaner air;
- an improved tax base;
- an improved quality of life in Atlanta’s central core; and
- improved public health by encouraging recreational and commuting activity via the multi-use trail network.

The BeltLine Corridor project in the Northeast Zone can significantly address needs cited in the comprehensive transportation plan for the City of Atlanta, the *Connect Atlanta Plan* (2008). The plan recognizes the BeltLine concept as a “forward-thinking approach to modernizing infrastructure for purposes of urban livability”. This plan expresses key challenges and needs which the BeltLine can help address. Among these needs are:

- the expansion of pedestrian and bicycle travel options in the City of Atlanta where total sidewalk distances represent only about 60 percent of city street lengths,⁴ and where limited public right-of-way is dedicated toward amenities supporting non-motorized vehicle mobility;
- the improvement of pedestrian and bicycle connections to MARTA station areas, where the availability of sidewalks, bicycle paths, and safe crossings is often limited;
- the advancement of the City of Atlanta *Commuter On-Street Bike Plan* (1995), as only 34 of the City’s planned 354 miles of bicycle routes have been constructed and are often discontinuous;
- the provision of higher-capacity, premium transit service to support projected population growth in redeveloping areas, improve mobility for transportation disadvantaged populations, and provide more reliable access to current and emerging activity centers;

⁴ City of Atlanta, December 2008. *Connect Atlanta Plan*.

- the provision of travel modes that are time-competitive for short-distance urban trips, as trips beginning in the City of Atlanta require only about 40 percent of the average VMT of trips taken in the larger Atlanta region;⁵
- the mitigation of connectivity barriers imposed on neighborhoods by existing transportation facilities (limited-access roads, railroads) and by conventional land development and street network design; and
- the promotion of connections to cultural sites and historic neighborhoods, including the provision of transportation modes similar to those once integral to the development of some historic communities, and the provision of interpretive signage and context-sensitive design throughout the BeltLine Corridor.

Various community-level planning endeavors in the Northeast Zone have revealed the need for many of these and other benefits, particularly for enhancements to community-level mobility, a more sustainable urban environment, more coordinated land use and transportation investment policies, more efficient use of existing land and infrastructure, and improved neighborhood access to regional transit options. Among other planning activities, these include the *Old Fourth Ward Master Plan* (2008), *Ponce de Leon/Moreland Avenue Corridors Study* (2005), and the *District 2 Rail Corridor Assessment* (2001) by the City of Atlanta, the City Center *Livable Centers Initiative* (LCI) plan by ARC, and the *Piedmont Heights: Blueprints for Successful Communities* (2007) plan by the Georgia Conservancy.

The *BeltLine Health Impact Assessment* (2007) by the Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development revealed the potentially positive benefits to active living and public health, including significantly enhanced access to parks and trails, greater opportunities for physical recreation activities, and greater equity in access to healthy foods and diverse housing options.

Short-term economic advantages relate to employment generated by environmental remediation and project construction. Expanded sales and use tax revenue from the construction of a mix of compatible land uses is an additional short-term advantage.

Short-term economic disadvantages relate to business relocation and right-of-way acquisition in certain Northeast Zone areas outside of the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way, along with modified access, debris, noise, and vibration for businesses during construction periods.

Long-term economic advantages of the project derive from enhanced mobility, access to jobs, schools, workforce housing and activity centers, relief of congested urban thoroughfares, redevelopment of brownfield sites, and new employment and housing generated by transit-oriented redevelopment.

The *BeltLine Redevelopment Plan* (2005) highlights several long-term economic gains within the study area, including an expanded tax base, preservation of light industrial districts, additional workforce housing units and the generation of thousands of permanent jobs in redeveloping areas. BeltLine redevelopment would assist in clustering

⁵ City of Atlanta, December 2008. *Connect Atlanta Plan*.

a significant portion of the Atlanta region's growing population in pedestrian-oriented urban areas, in support of the City's *New Century Economic Development Plan* (2005) and the Atlanta Regional Commission's *Regional Development Plan Policies* (2007). Funding derived from the City's BeltLine Tax Allocation District would help drive many of these economic changes.

Within the corridor, long-term economic disadvantages are possible in the loss of taxable land necessary for BeltLine Corridor project development. Continued BeltLine project development and advancement of coordinated transit services, parks, and multi-use trails beyond the Northeast Zone would be necessary to avoid long-term economic disparities. Construction in the Northeast Zone of the BeltLine Corridor is vital to achieving the larger strategic goal of connecting communities around Atlanta via transit and non-motorized travel.

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