



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

TO: Mayor & City Council

DATE: September 10, 2014

FROM: John McDonough, City Manager

AGENDA ITEM: Resolution in Support of High Capacity Transit in the SR 400 Corridor

MEETING DATE: For Submission onto the September 16, 2014, City Council Regular Meeting Agenda

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (Attach additional pages if necessary)

See attached:

Memorandum
Proposed Letter
Connect 400 Presentation
Resolution

APPROVAL BY CITY MANAGER: BRP APPROVED

PLACED ON AGENDA FOR: 09/16/2014

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL REQUIRED: () YES () NO

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL: [Signature]



TO: John McDonough, City Manager

FROM: Garrin M. Coleman, P.E., Public Works Director

DATE: September 4, 2014 for submission onto the Council Agenda of the September 16, 2014 City Council Meeting

ITEM: Resolution in Support of High Capacity Transit in the SR 400 Corridor

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that Mayor and Council support a resolution for extension of high capacity transit northward from the North Springs MARTA station and a preference for developing the future rail alignment and future station in the vicinity of Northridge Road on the west side of SR 400 to support existing and future development and minimize impact to Protected Neighborhoods as identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Background:

The City of Sandy Springs has participated in the Connect 400 Alternatives Analysis (AA) study since it was initiated in late 2011 through the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). On October 1, 2013 and August 19, 2014, MARTA staff briefed Council on the project status. To date, MARTA has developed a range of options to winnow the alternatives to one primary alignment, Georgia 400-1(A), and consideration of three transit technology alternatives, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Light Rail Transit (LRT), and Heavy Rail Transit (HRT). For Alternative 1(A), the extension of high capacity transit is identified for the east side of SR 400 served by up to six new stations at Northridge (Sandy Springs), Holcomb Bridge, Mansell Road, North Point, Old Milton (LRT/BRT only), and Windward Parkway.

Discussion:

Prior adopted Sandy Springs transportation plans have supported extension of regional rail transit north along the SR 400 corridor including the Transportation Master Plan (adopted 2008, Resolution 2008-08-44) and the North Fulton Comprehensive Transportation Plan (adopted 2010, Resolution 2010-10-83). In addition, prior planning studies have identified a northern Sandy Springs station location in the vicinity of Northridge Road at SR 400. The City's adopted Comprehensive Plan supports future mixed use land use development at Northridge and Roswell Road as well as at Dunwoody Place. The prior MARTA North Line study, the North Line Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Study (2006) identified Northridge as a potential TOD cluster area. As indicated in the study, the Northridge cluster was associated with the highest potential generation of transit trips, possessed a higher potential for transit oriented development, and experienced a high level of congestion on the street network, indicating that transit could serve as a reasonable option to driving. In addition, Northridge Road at SR 400 is included in Atlanta Regional Commission's Plan 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) 2012

PUBLIC WORKS

Unified Growth Policy Map (UGPM) as a “Station Community.” All of this future development is planned for the west side of SR 400.

Alternatives:

The Mayor and Council can elect not to take a position on the project at this time.

Financial Impact:

There is no immediate fiscal year impact for supporting future high capacity transit extending north from the North Springs MARTA Station. In the future, the siting of an additional rail station in Sandy Springs may require local network infrastructure investment such as traffic controls, street improvements, or pedestrian connections.

Attachments:

- I. Proposed Letter to MARTA
- II. Connect400 Presentation
- III. Resolution



September 16, 2014

Mr. Keith Parker
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer
MARTA
2424 Piedmont Road, NE
Atlanta, GA 30324-3311

RE: Connect 400 Transit Initiative

Dear Mr. Parker:

The City of Sandy Springs extends a thank you to MARTA for briefing Council on October 1, 2013 and August 19, 2014 regarding the Connect 400 Transit Initiative status. The City recognizes that MARTA has continued Early Scoping through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) New Starts program and is seeking input on the proposed transit alternatives and station locations.

Sandy Springs citizens have been funding MARTA through the one-cent sales tax since the early 1970's. Although the City is well-served by the MARTA north Red line through three heavy rail stations, the current alignment does not extend to North Fulton County. Sandy Springs supports extension of the Red line to the north across the Chattahoochee River but is sensitive to the siting of the rail expansion and future rail stations. The City's adopted *2027 Comprehensive Plan* provides for mixed-used development west of GA 400 but only low-density residential uses (zero to one units per acre) designated as a "Protected Neighborhood" area east of GA 400. Sandy Springs supports a future rail alignment that minimizes impacts to Protected Neighborhoods east of SR 400 by shifting the alignment to the west side of SR 400. Should a future rail station to serve the extension be located in the vicinity of Northridge Road, this station should complement the City's existing and future land use plan and be sited on the west side of GA 400 which complements an identified redevelopment node.

Sandy Springs appreciates your consideration of its input and requests ongoing involvement and coordination for the Connect 400 Transit Initiative through active participation by staff, periodic briefings to Council as well as providing opportunities for general public input.

Sincerely,

Russell K. Paul
Mayor

Enclosure

cc: John McDonough, City Manager
Bryant Poole, Assistant City Manager
Garrin Coleman, Public Works Director
Mark Eatman, Project Manager, MARTA



Early Scoping Phase 2
Presentation to Sandy Springs City Council –
8/19/14

Agenda

Where we are

What we've heard

What's next

Project Status



- Current study effort started in 2011
- Completed Alternatives Analysis in 2013
- Initiated Early Scoping in Fall 2013
- Continued Early Scoping in Summer 2014 to:
 - Gather more feedback on preferred alignment and community desires
 - Identify preferred technology and station locations
 - Begin environmental documentation

Federal Project Development Process

Project Development: Typically 6 – 12 years



We are Here

Overview of Potential Alternatives



Georgia 400

Alignment

- 11.9 miles Long
- North Springs Station to Windward Parkway via GA 400

Transit Technology

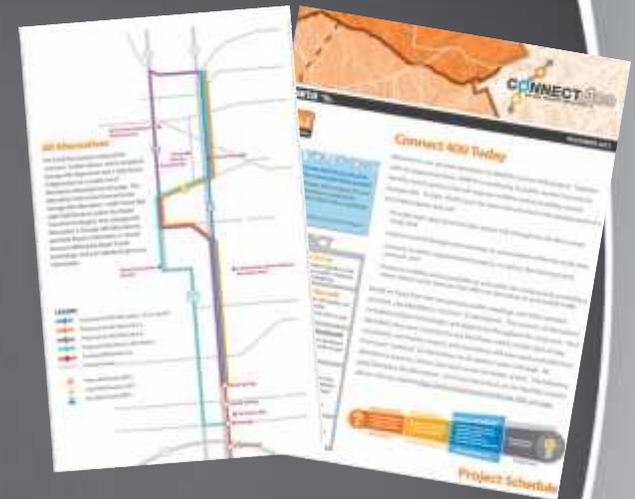
- Bus Rapid Transit
- Light Rail
- Heavy Rail

Potential Stations

- Northridge
- Holcomb Bridge
- Mansell Road
- North Point
- Old Milton
- Windward Parkway

* GDOT ROW availability on GA 400 to be determined based on Managed Lanes Study

Outreach Activities



Stakeholder Meetings

- **Stakeholders:** 30+ Meetings
- **TAC:** December 13, 2011; February 28, 2012, October 25, 2012
- **PSC:** January 18, 2012; March 22, 2012; November 14, 2012; February 26, 2013; May 9, 2013; October, 17, 2014; June 12, 2014

Public Meetings

- **2011:** December 13- Minority and Non-English Speaking Leadership Meeting
- **2012:** January 26; May 22; March 21; August 21-El Banco; August 30- North Fulton Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Forum
- **2013:** March 21; September 26
- **Fall 2013:** City Council Briefings
- **Summer 2014:** Public Meetings

Surveys

- December 12, 2012 to January 17, 2013
 - 136 Respondents
- March 2014 – Scientific Public Opinion Survey
 - 612 Residents
 - 463 Employees



Early Scoping Phase 1 Outcomes

- Established GA 400 as preferred location of project
 - Alignment detail to be refined
- Suggested heavy rail as preferred technology
 - Initial Survey (136 participants)
- Identified the need to further explore the transit desires of area residents and employees
 - Continue community discussions
 - Conduct a statistically valid survey

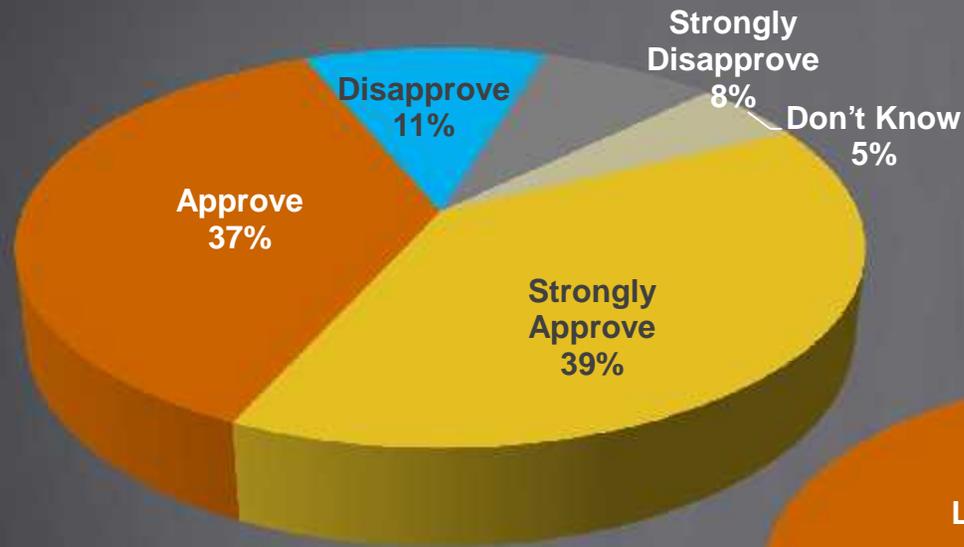


Scientific Survey Background

- Recommended as part of Early Scoping – Phase 1
- Initiated in March 2014 with KSU – A.L. Burruss Institute of Public Service and Research
- 612 North Fulton **RESIDENTS** responded via phone
 - Cellphone (200)
 - Landline (412)
- 463 North Fulton **EMPLOYEES** responded via internet
 - Online survey
 - Employees within 1-mile of GA 400 Corridor
- Resident and employee responses were very similar

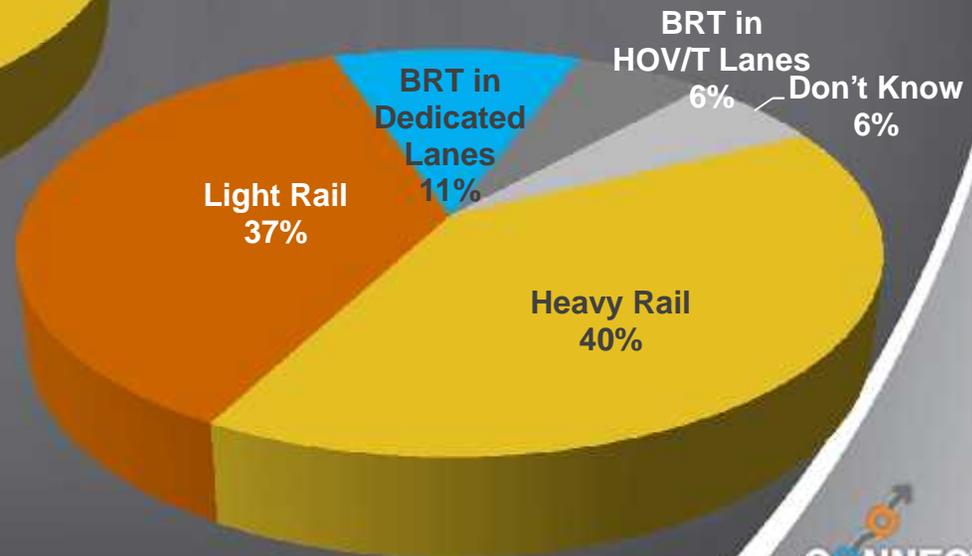
RESIDENT Survey Results Summary

Approve or Disapprove of Potential Expansion of MARTA to Forsyth County Line?



Employees: 45% Strongly Approve /
31% Approve
(Consistent 76% Approval)

How should MARTA expansion be accomplished?



Employees: 68% Heavy Rail /
25% Light Rail / 6% BRT

Federal Funding Opportunities

- FTA Capital Investment Grant Program
 - Largest federal funding program for major transit fixed guideway projects (\$2 billion per year)
- Typically funds 50% of capital costs
- Three categories of projects:
 - New Starts*
 - Small Starts
 - Core Capacity
- Discretionary program; highly competitive!



* - The GA 400 Alternatives under consideration qualify as New Starts



Preliminary New Starts Evaluation

- Analysis underway to determine project performance with respect to:
 - Mobility improvements
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Congestion relief
 - Environmental benefits
 - Land use
 - Economic development
- Will inform selection of preferred technology as well as overall project approach and timing



Preliminary Ratings of GA 400 Alternatives

| Criteria | BRT | LRT | HRT |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Mobility | Medium-Low | Medium-Low | Medium |
| Cost effectiveness | Medium-High | Medium-Low | Medium |
| Congestion relief | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Environmental benefits | Medium-Low | Medium | High |
| Land use | Medium-Low | Medium-Low | Medium |
| Economic development | Medium-Low | Medium-Low | Medium-Low |
| Project Justification Rating* | Medium | Medium-Low | Medium |

Note: Projects need *medium* or better rating on criteria to be considered for funding

*- Project ratings will be refined as the study efforts continue



ARC Economic Analysis



- Study initiated in winter 2014.
- Assesses economic impact of proposed expansion projects (I-20 East, Clifton Corridor and GA 400).
- Utilized PLAN 2040 regional planning assumptions.
- Preliminary results indicate positive influence on economy for all projects.
 - Increases in productivity, population, jobs, GDP, and other factors.
- Results finalized by late summer 2014.



Early Scoping Phase 2 Activities

- Goal is to gather additional feedback on alignment, technology, potential station locations, and phasing.
- Outreach efforts:
 - Project Steering Committee - June 12
 - Northridge Homeowners Association – June 12
 - Public Meetings - July 8th, 10th, and 17th
 - City Council Presentations
 - Northridge Community Tour – July 26th
 - Community Events – August 21st, others pending



Next Steps

- Identify and adopt a Locally Preferred Alternatives (LPA)
 - Exploring technology trade-offs
 - Gathering as much feedback as possible during Early Scoping Phase 2
- Explore funding opportunities
 - Complete FTA New Starts Analysis
 - Develop a realistic financial plan with local funding commitments / work with partners to identify opportunities
- Initiate the environmental process
 - Expected to begin in late 2014, once an LPA is adopted
 - Public outreach to follow in early 2015

Contact Info

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MARTA Project Manager
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Email: Connect400@itsmarta.com

Follow us at Connect 400 on Facebook!



STATE OF GEORGIA
COUNTY OF FULTON

**A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY (MARTA)
EXTENSION OF HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT IN THE GA 400 CORRIDOR AND SITING OF THE RAIL LINE AND
FUTURE RAIL STATION ON THE WEST SIDE OF SR 400**

WHEREAS, Sandy Springs Citizens in Fulton County, Georgia contribute one-cent of sales tax proceeds to MARTA for capital and operating funding,

WHEREAS, Sandy Springs is served by three heavy rail stations on the MARTA north Red Line, Medical Center, Sandy Springs, and North Springs that provide transit access to the Perimeter market with more than 123,000 employees, an estimated 18 million visitors per year to Perimeter mall and surrounding area retail, and thousands of patient visitors to the medical centers facilities,

WHEREAS, MARTA initiated the Connect 400 Transit Initiative in 2011 to examine alternatives and feasibility to provide high capacity transit in the Georgia 400 corridor,

WHEREAS, adopted Sandy Springs plans support regional transportation initiatives to provide cost-effective transportation alternatives through expansion of transit service to serve Sandy Springs and the Perimeter area and support continued economic development and reduce air pollutants,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA

That it supports the expansion of MARTA high capacity transit service to North Fulton.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED Sandy Springs supports continued efforts by MARTA to continue the federal project development process to be eligible for Federal Transit Administration New Starts funding,

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that Sandy Springs supports a seamless connection to continue the MARTA heavy rail line to North Fulton through the utilization of heavy rail transit which results in the highest estimated ridership, greater travel time benefits, greatest reduction in vehicle miles traveled and air pollutants, and

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that Sandy Springs supports shifting the rail alignment to the west side of SR 400 at Spalding Drive to minimize impacts to Protected Neighborhoods as identified in the Comprehensive Plan and provide access to higher intensity development on the west side of SR 400, and

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that Sandy Springs supports a future rail station in the vicinity of Northridge Drive on the west side of GA 400 that would provide access to land use Node 14: Northeast Corner of the Roswell Road and Dunwoody Place Intersection which envisions future mixed use development comprising of residential, commercial and office uses.

RESOLVED this the 16th day of September, 2014.

Approved:

Russell K. Paul, Mayor, Mayor

Attest:

Michael Casey, City Clerk

(Seal)