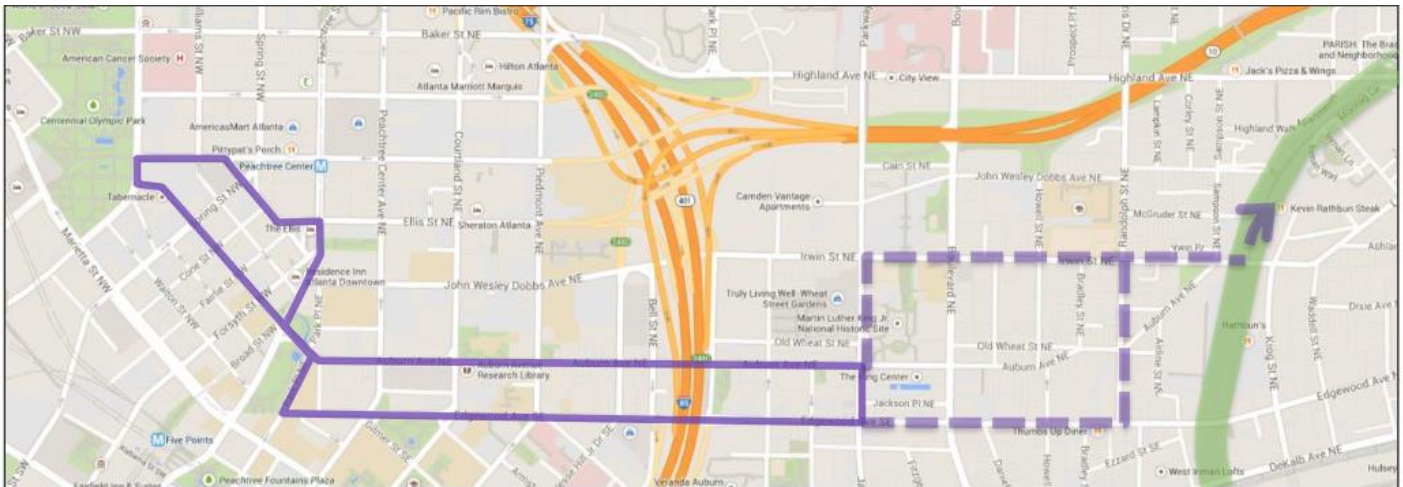


CITY SEEKS FUNDS FOR STREETCAR EXPANSION



Proposed streetcar extension (Atlanta Beltline map)

In last month's newsletter, we reported on an ambitious plan that would make Atlanta's new Auburn-Edgewood streetcar line the first part of a 63-mile rail transit system running around and through central Atlanta. This month, city officials are taking the first steps toward making that plan a reality. Atlanta Beltline, Inc. has budgeted \$3 million to design an eastward extension of the Auburn-Edgewood line, and the City of Atlanta announced it is seeking a \$29.3 million federal TIGER grant to help fund construction. The grant proposal shows the extension starting at the intersection of Edgewood and Jackson (where the streetcar currently turns back toward downtown) and

running east to the intersection of Edgewood and Randolph, then north to the intersection of Randolph and Irwin, then east to a connection with the Eastside Beltline and a Beltline transit loop that eventually will circle central Atlanta. The Auburn-Edgewood route then would be extended along the Beltline, connecting with other proposed streetcar routes. CfPT is firmly committed to seeing the Auburn-Edgewood line extended. The line already has proven itself to be a powerful development tool (it's credited with attracting more than half a billion dollars in investment in the six months since it opened), but to achieve a full and robust transit role, it needs to grow and connect with other lines. *(More on next page)*

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Atlanta Streetcar, Inc. and Atlanta Beltline, Inc. are separate organizations, and it's unclear who would be in charge if the Auburn-Edgewood line becomes part of the Beltline transit system. Neither agency has nearly as much operational experience as the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which runs the city's heavy rail and bus lines, and sometimes that inexperience shows. Media reports indicate that Atlanta Streetcar officials still haven't finalized a system for collecting fares, and WSB-TV recently reported that some operators were allowed to run the streetcars for months without the required commercial driver's license and medical certification. When those operators were suspended, it led to service interruptions. Atlanta Magazine reports that only one car was operating along the route as Memorial Day weekend got under way, leaving passengers waiting 30 to 40 minutes to board. Writer Rebecca Burns, who has been a frequent rider, said that staffing-related service delays have been commonplace, and declared, "This lack of reliability has me ready to give up on streetcar commuting." Every new enterprise is going to have growing pains, but unless the current Atlanta Streetcar management can get a handle on things, it's almost certain to come under growing pressure to turn operations over to MARTA.

ATHENS TO GET SUNDAY BUS SERVICE

Athens-Clarke County Transit is getting ready to begin a one-year trial of Sunday bus service. Following a campaign sponsored by a local citizens group, Athens for Everyone, the city-county council appropriated \$230 thousand to fund Sunday service, which could begin as early as Aug. 16. ACC Transit buses and University of Georgia buses carry nearly 14 million passengers a year, giving Athens the fourth-largest per capita ridership in the nation, according to a recent study.



MARTA FARES UNCHANGED, BUT BREEZE CARDS WILL GO UP

MARTA fares will remain unchanged for the next year, but the prices of the Breeze cards and tickets that are used to pay those fares will be going up. The MARTA Board has approved an \$880.5 million budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, with \$448.5 million of that sum earmarked for operations, \$283.1 million for capital improvements and \$148.9 million for debt service. While the base fare remains at \$2.50, the price of a plastic reloadable Breeze card will increase from \$1 to \$2, and the price of a paper Breeze ticket will go from 50 cents to \$1. MARTA says the money will be used to make both the cards and the tickets more durable.

COBB'S ROAD TO GRIDLOCK

Someday in the not too distant future, civic planning textbooks may include Cobb County as an example of what happens when communities allow urban development without building an urban infrastructure. With the Atlanta Braves scheduled to open their new Cobb County ballpark and shopping and entertainment complex in 2017, you might think county politicians would be debating whether heavy rail, light rail or possibly bus rapid transit would be the best way to handle the tens of thousands of baseball fans who will be descending on the already-congested intersection of I-75 and I-285 during the evening rush hour. You would be wrong. Instead, the debate seems to be whether any form of mass transit will be necessary anytime soon, and if so, what is the least that can be done? County Chairman Tim Lee
(continued on next page)

is said to be pushing for bus rapid transit; that is, if you define “pushing” as advocating a BRT line that would open no earlier than 2031, 14 years after the ballpark is scheduled to open. Remarkably, his approach is coming under fire not because it is considered too tepid, but because it is considered too ambitious. Georgia State Senator Lindsey Tippin (R-Cobb) told the Marietta Daily Journal that the county would be better off running regular buses down toll lanes being built (for motorists) on I-75. And writing in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Larry Savage – a former candidate for Cobb County chairman-- suggested that county money should instead be spent on bridges and roads (as if the billions already spent on bridges and roads have relieved congestion in the past). By now, transit opponents have established a pretty reliable routine: when rail service is considered, substitute bus rapid transit; when bus rapid transit is considered, substitute regular buses; and then when regular buses are proposed, substitute more roads.

GEORGIA REPUBLICANS VOTE TO SHUT DOWN AMTRAK, AGAIN

For the second time this year, Georgia Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives joined in an unsuccessful attempt to shut down Amtrak.

On June 4, all ten of Georgia’s House Republicans voted for two anti-Amtrak

resolutions. The first would have ended operating subsidies for Amtrak, forcing the immediate discontinuance of all of Amtrak’s long-distance trains, including the Crescent, which serves Atlanta, and the Silver Meteor and Silver Star, which serve Savannah. The second resolution would have cut off capital funding and debt servicing, a move that would quickly shut down Amtrak’s vital Northeast Corridor between Washington, DC and New York. The sponsor of both measures, U.S. Rep. Mo Brooks (R-Alabama), believes that Amtrak customers are freeloaders. “It’s time for



Amtrak passengers to pay their own way,” Brooks declared, “It is time for Amtrak passengers to quit riding on the backs of other taxpayers.” There are two things that Brooks, and by extension, Georgia’s House Republicans, apparently fail to grasp. First, virtually all travel is subsidized: airline passengers, bus riders and motorists all benefit from government funding. Second, cutting off funding will not make Amtrak passengers “pay their way.” It will end intercity passenger rail service in America. Moderate Republicans joined with Democrats to defeat both resolutions.

ALL STOPS

Houston has opened two new light-rail lines.... Following last month’s deadly wreck in Philadelphia, Amtrak says it will have Positive Train Control technology installed along its entire Washington-New York Northeast Corridor by 2015, and it will install cameras inside locomotive cabs to record the actions of train engineers... Chattanooga, TN Mayor Andy Berke says there does not appear to be enough political support to build a high-speed rail line between Chattanooga and Atlanta... The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority is expected to vote in August on an overhaul of GRTA Xpress bus service that would include new routes and more service to midtown Atlanta... MARTA has launched a radio ad campaign touting its service to Hartsfield-Jackson Airport... Chatham Area Transit, which provides local bus service in Savannah, is asking the county board to approve changes that would allow it to serve more of Chatham County... Both the Macon Transit Authority and the University of Georgia are considering the idea of buying buses powered by electric batteries.

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