

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Overview of Study

1.1.1 Study Context

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association (CCTMA) are undertaking the Clifton Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA) study to analyze solutions to address a lack of connectivity and mobility within the Clifton Corridor area of metropolitan Atlanta (**Figure 1.1**). The study will consider a variety of alignment and transit technology options to improve regional mobility and accessibility.

In 2007, the MARTA Board of Directors approved the 12th Amendment to the Rapid Transit Contract and Assistance Agreement identifying the Clifton Corridor from Emory to Lindbergh as one of several expansion priorities for MARTA. The approval of 13th Amendment ensued a year later, which included the second segment of the Corridor from Emory to Decatur. Additionally, the CCTMA has been engaged in investigating transit options in the Clifton Corridor with completion of two previous planning efforts, the 2008 *Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study*¹ and the 2004 *Clifton Corridor Transportation Study*². To capitalize on the momentum from previous efforts, and provide information on benefits, costs, and impacts of alternatives, completion of the Clifton Corridor AA will ultimately lead to the selection of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) that can be advanced further into the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5309 New Starts Funding Program.

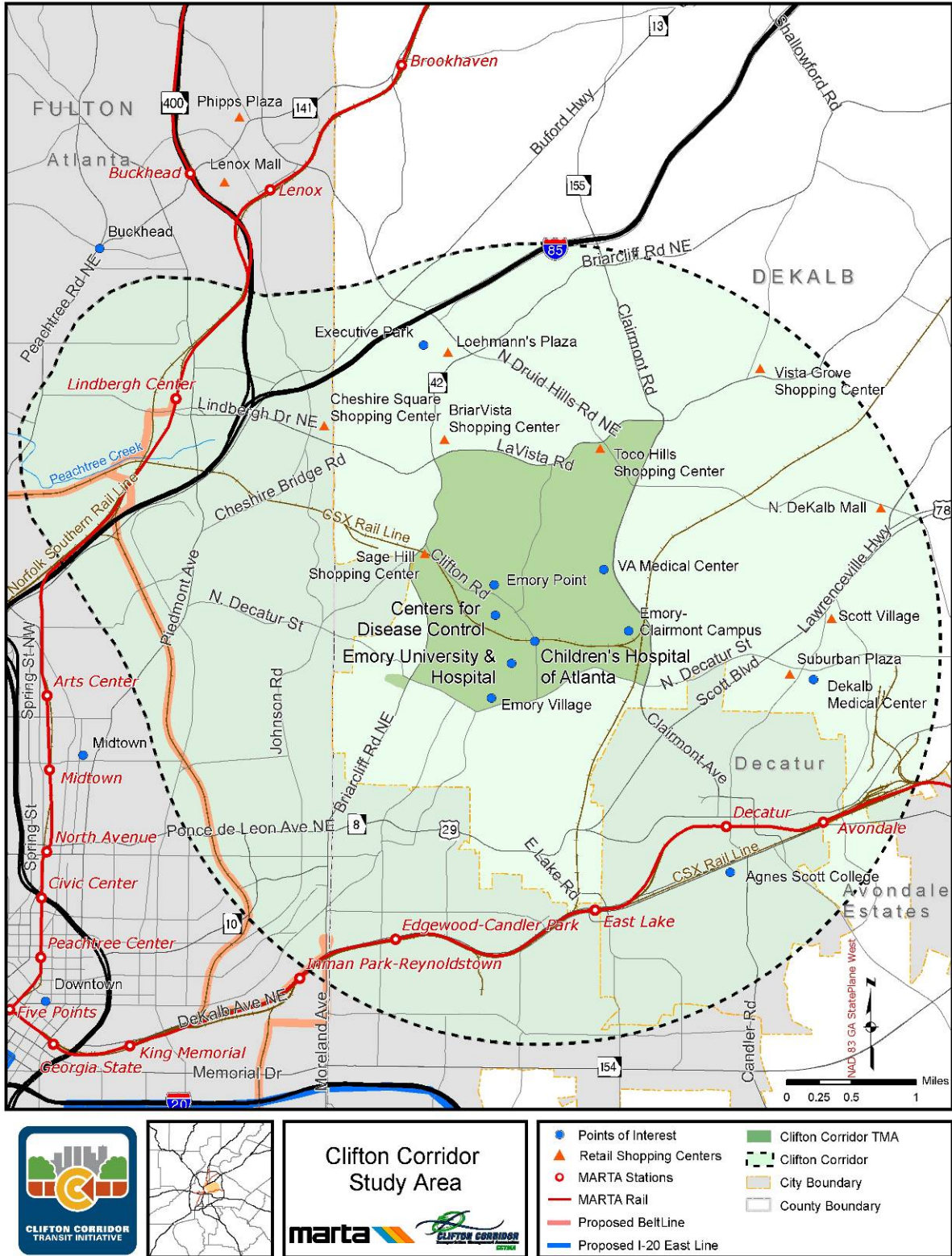
1.2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the Clifton Corridor AA Existing and Future Trends report is to provide a comprehensive inventory on the factors that can influence and are inherently connected to the transportation system in the Clifton Corridor. These factors include the demographics, community facilities, environmental system, land uses and development patterns in the Clifton Corridor. The major findings from this report are intended to serve as the basis to develop the problem statements, goals and objectives, as well as the preliminary purpose and need that will guide later phases of the study.

¹ Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association. *Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study* prepared by Earth Tech, Inc. Atlanta, GA: CCTMA, 2008.

² Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association. *Clifton Corridor Transportation Study*. Atlanta, GA: CCTMA, 2004.

Figure 1.1: Clifton Corridor Study Area



1.3 Clifton Corridor AA Process

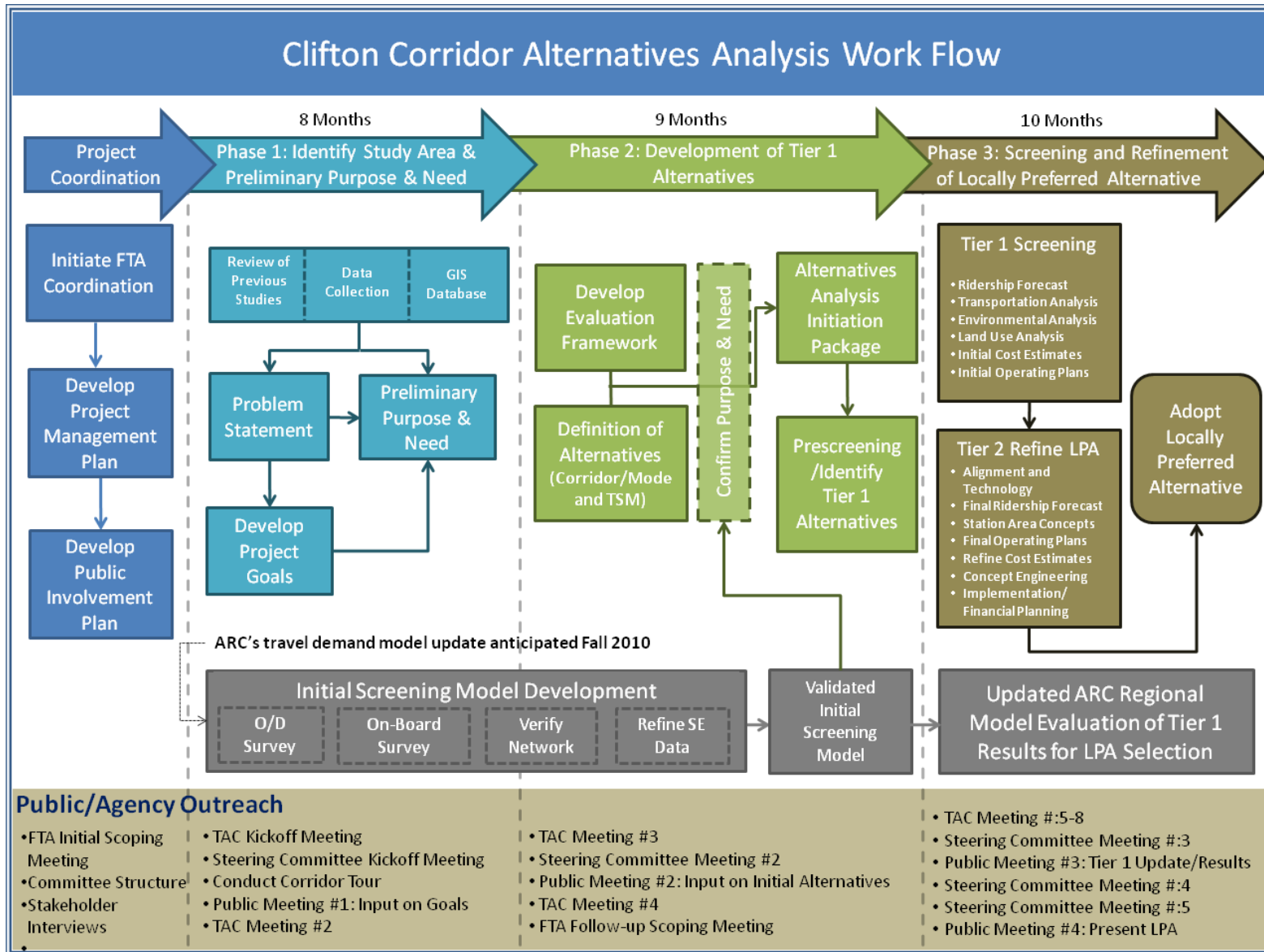
The Clifton Corridor AA tasks and deliverables have been organized to take advantage of recent improvements to the regional travel demand model while additional model refinements are planned for 2009 and 2010. Thus, the initial technical work will focus on developing an initial screening model for the AA study area, which will be integrated into the regional travel demand model per guidance from the FTA and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).

As shown in the work flow diagram provided in **Figure 1.2**, the AA is organized into the following phases:

- Phase 1 includes the existing and future conditions analysis that will result in the preliminary purpose and need. At the same time, an initial screening model will be developed which includes conducting the Origin-Destination Survey and coordination with the Regional On-Board Survey.
- Phase 2 engages in the initial scoping of project alternatives and developing the evaluation framework. The initial screening model will be used to validate the results of the existing and future conditions analysis and confirm the overall purpose of the study.
- Phase 3 involves the screening and refinement of project alternatives leading to selection of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) and official adoption of the LPA into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The overall regional model developed by the ARC will be utilized during the definition and evaluation of alternatives in order to identify and refine the LPA.

Note the on-going public involvement and community outreach program throughout the study process, starting with the FTA initiation as well as follow-up, stakeholder engagement through interviews, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings.

Figure 1.2: Clifton Corridor Alternatives Analysis Work Flow



1.4 Report Organization

Given the purpose of the report documented above, the remainder of the document is organized as follows:

- **Chapter 2.0: Historical Perspective & Review of Previous Studies** - This chapter provides a historical background of the Clifton Corridor and a review of relevant previous studies.
- **Chapter 3.0: Demographics & Forecasts** – This chapter is an overview of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the Clifton Corridor based on the data from 2000 Census Bureau.
- **Chapter 4.0: Community Resources & Natural Systems** – This chapter provides an inventory of the community resources and natural systems, including major activity centers, historic properties, rivers and soil characteristics.
- **Chapter 5.0: Land Use & Development Characteristics** – This chapter provides the land use and development context that the transportation system serves. Additionally, this chapter includes a review of the land use plans and policies specifically in relation to transit support to develop a policy framework.
- **Chapter 6.0: Transportation System** – This chapter provides an analysis on the existing and future conditions of the transportation system. Included are a comprehensive inventory of roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, freight, bridges and parking elements.
- **Chapter 7.0: Next Steps** – This chapter outlines the action items in the next phases of the Clifton Corridor AA process to include development of problem statements, goals & objectives, and purpose & need. It also summarizes the on-going public involvement and community outreach efforts with respect to the existing and future conditions analysis.

1.5 Summary of Terms

This section identifies and provides definitions for some of the commonly used terms in this report.

Alternatives Analysis (AA) – The key planning component of the Federal Transit Administration process for advancing fixed guideway transit projects, in which local agencies evaluate various transit technologies and alignment options for addressing mobility needs in a given corridor and select a locally preferred alternative (LPA) to implement. Federal regulations require that projects seeking New Starts funding be based upon the results of an alternatives analysis.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – Innovative bus transit service that mimics rail service. BRT is generally thought of as a fixed guideway transit concept that operates in an exclusive right-of-way and loads passengers at stations similar to rail stations.

Environmental Justice – The principle that environmental costs and benefits should not be distributed disproportionately with regard to race, ethnicity, income, or other social, economic or cultural characteristics; a required consideration in federally-funded projects.

Facility – The means by which a transportation mode is provided. For example, sidewalks are a facility serving the walking mode, a roadway is a facility serving the driving mode, and a heavy rail line is a facility serving the transit mode.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) – The division of the US Department of Transportation that provides financial support to public transportation systems, including buses, subways, light rail, commuter rail, and streetcars.

Fixed Guideway – Refers to any transit service that uses exclusive or controlled rights-of-way or rails. For example, all forms of rail transit operate on a fixed guideway. A fixed guideway transit service is meant to transport people efficiently and quickly from one area of the region to another and generally operates at a uniform, relatively high speed.

Heavy Rail Transit (HRT) – High capacity rail transit technology which utilizes an electrified third rail, and separate right-of-way either below or above ground, such as the MARTA rail system.

Historic Preservation – A comprehensive and inclusive planning tool dedicated to recognizing, protecting, using and appreciating our nation's diverse cultural resources. The preservation of those resources helps maintain the character and sense of place that define an area.

Infill Development – The reuse or change of use of a previously developed parcel or group of parcels, or the intensification of use or change of use by remodeling or renovating an entire structure.

Level of Service (LOS) – A qualitative rating of the effectiveness of a highway facility in serving traffic, in terms of operating conditions such as traffic flow, using an alphabetical scale from A to F with A being the best (free flow) and F being the worst (stopped traffic).

Multimodal – Interconnectivity between various types of transportation modes.

Light Rail Transit (LRT) – A form of urban rail public transportation that generally has a lower capacity and lower speed than heavy rail transit. Because of their design, light rail systems typically operate mostly in private rights-of-way separated from other traffic but sometimes, if necessary, mixed with other traffic in city streets.

Mixed-Use Development – A single building or development containing more than one type of land use, where the different types of land uses are in proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – A federally required planning body responsible for transportation planning and project selection in its region. The governor designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more people. The MPO is responsible for developing the RTP and TIP in its jurisdiction.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) – An environmental law enacted in 1969. It applies only to projects and programs that are federally funded. The law requires that agencies must consider the environmental impacts of proposed projects or actions prior to taking any significant steps leading to project implementation. The fundamentals of the NEPA decision making process include: consideration of alternatives, examination of potential environmental impacts and mitigation, interagency coordination, public involvement and documentation.

New Starts Funding Program – The FTA grant funding process that provides financial resources for implementation of major capital transit investments. The program provides funds for construction of new fixed guideway systems or extensions to existing fixed guideway systems. These investments can include light rail, heavy rail, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit projects. Projects seeking New Starts funding, like all federally-funded transportation investments, must emerge from a locally-driven, multimodal transportation planning process and follow FTA's New Starts Planning and Project Development Process.

Preliminary Engineering (PE) – The portion of the project development process where project costs, benefits, and impacts are refined; federal environmental studies are completed; and local funding commitments are secured.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) – A multimodal set of transportation projects and initiatives developed by an MPO for its urbanized area. It is required by the federal government and must cover a minimum of 20 years and be updated at least every third year in air quality nonattainment area (five years for attainment areas), be fiscally constrained and must also demonstrate conformity with applicable federal air quality standards

Right-of-Way (ROW) – The land (usually a strip) acquired for or devoted to highway or rail transportation purposes.

Smart Growth – Economically viable and environmentally sustainable development that stresses balanced, inclusive community planning.

Clifton Corridor Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) – A group comprised of civic associations, neighborhood associations, residents and business owners in the corridor to provide a high level assessment of study recommendations for consistency with

community goals and perspectives. Committee members are responsible for gathering input from their respective constituencies and representing constituencies' views

Clifton Corridor Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – A group comprised planners and technical staff from local jurisdictions as well as regional and state agencies to exchange technical data and resources and ensure consistency with respective agency policies and initiatives.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) – A strategy of planning land use and organizing development to allow people to easily use public transit or other alternative means of transportation (bicycles, etc.) to get to places where they live, work and play. This generally involves concentrating a higher density mix of residential and commercial development in areas near transit stops or routes.

Transit Circulator – A transit circulator is a bus or other vehicle on a route designed to move people within an activity center. A transit circulator can take any number of forms, such as a shuttle bus, van, monorail, trolley or other mode of transportation. The transit circulator is meant to eliminate the need for the use of a car within an activity center.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) – The first three to five years of a Regional Transportation Plan. Must include specific funding for the projects as well as the project schedule from preliminary engineering to construction.

Transportation Management Association (TMA) – An organization that addresses the transportation needs of a particular service area (e.g., Clifton Corridor TMA). TMAs are often started as public-private partnerships in response to business concerns with mobility or accessibility. TMAs may provide vanpool or carpool formation, transit discounts, bicycle and pedestrian programs or shuttle services.