

2.0 HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE & REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The present-day Clifton Corridor reflects an eclectic mix of neighborhoods, activity centers, and thoroughfares grounded in the region's historic development patterns. Portions of unincorporated DeKalb County, the City of Atlanta, and the City of Decatur are included within the study area, influencing the economic and residential growth of constituent communities. The study area, like much of the Atlanta region, has been largely shaped by transportation innovations and the land use decisions made by both public and private entities, as described in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

Until the late 19th century, the Clifton Corridor largely consisted of unincorporated, rural farmland on the outskirts of cities of Atlanta and Decatur. In the late 19th to mid 20th centuries, the area underwent suburban development, which was largely shaped by the use of the trolley car in the late 19th century and then the rise of the automobile in the mid 20th century. The neighborhoods that evolved in this area reflect their period of development, ranging from orderly blocks of densely placed Craftsman Bungalows to elaborately designed Colonial Revival estates to modest post-war American Small Houses. During this same time, several areas of the Clifton Corridor were incorporated into the City of Atlanta or the City of Decatur, as the growing economy of metropolitan Atlanta created new residential communities that the cities attempted to annex.

2.1 History of Clifton Corridor

2.1.1 Historic Development Patterns

Creek and Cherokee Indians are the first known inhabitants of the Clifton Corridor study area. The 1821 Treaty of Indian Springs removed their right to the land and led to their forced removal by the U.S. government in the early 1830s. The Fourth Land Lottery of Georgia immediately followed the signing of the Treaty, in which the lands ceded by the Native Americans were redistributed to private land owners. DeKalb County was formed from these redistributed lands in 1822, and the City of Decatur became the county seat.

The surrounding area, including the future location of the Clifton Corridor, largely consisted of agricultural property until the late 19th century. However, with the development of some local industry, such as Durand's Mill on Peavine Creek, Clifton Corridor maintained a sense of identity prior to becoming an in-town suburb for the Atlanta Durand's mill, which was built before 1835, operated as a sawmill and chair factory through the Civil War.

During the late 19th and early to mid 20th centuries, a number of small, independent suburban communities with easy access to downtown Atlanta were developed within the study area. The most prominent of these communities included the following:

- **Druid Hills**
Druid Hills was the second suburban residential development of Joel Hurt, following Inman Park. Olmstead designed the principal avenue as a picturesque, curving thoroughfare with passive parks (Ponce de Leon Avenue), a major connecting road in the southern portion of the Clifton Corridor. The emergence of Druids Hills is attributed with shifting the course of suburban residential

development in the Atlanta area from the south to the east and northeast. Druid Hills was designated as a historic district in 1975.

- Candler Park - Edgewood
The Candler Park area developed in the 1870s as the independent community of Edgewood along the Georgia Railroad. The area saw the greatest growth in the 1920s as a middle-class white neighborhood, which coincided with the initiation of two streetcar lines running through the area's grid street network and the development of Candler Park in 1922. The area directly south of present day Candler Park continues to be known as Edgewood.

Clifton Road at McClendon Avenue, Candler Park



Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University

462 Clifton Road, Candler Park



Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University

- Emory University area (including Emory Grove and University Park- Emory Highlands-Emory Estates)

Emory University was established in 1915 as an extension of Emory College at Oxford. Several nearby residential communities developed in the early to mid 20th century to provide affordable housing to Emory University staff and faculty. The developments also attracted workers with their moderate priced housing and easy commutes to downtown Atlanta and to nearby Decatur.

- East Lake

East Lake is home to the East Lake Golf Club, built in 1904, known for the legendary golfer Bobby Jones. As such, East Lake was developed as a golf community and a popular vacation sport for Atlanta's well-to-do families in the early 20th century. However, by the 1960s, the golf course and the community began to fall into despair with the building of a public housing project, East Lake Meadows. Today, aggressive redevelopment efforts are underway, with new mixed use developments as well as educational and recreational institutes.

- Clairemont-Great Lakes (including Great Lakes, Clairemont Estates, Emory Acres, and Ponce de Leon Terrace)

Clairemont-Great Lakes was established in 1913 and encompasses four unique neighborhoods that generally surround Clairemont Avenue in the City of Decatur. The Clairemont Historic District, enacted in 2001, primarily falls within this neighborhood.

In the post-World War II, returning veterans faced a great shortage of housing, which was the result of economic hardships during the Great Depression. The economies of

scale and the industrial machine that had been generated by the war effort were turned to the housing market, and thousands of homes were constructed in the Atlanta area in the mid-20th century. Much of this development occurred in the undeveloped areas along the Clifton Corridor and to the north of the corridor area, which were only accessible by car. Existing routes through this area became increasingly important transportation corridors, and new facilities, such as Interstate 85, augmented the access to these areas.

The automobile-centered neighborhoods include curvilinear street plans, and many of the neighborhoods utilize feeder street systems, creating only a few entrance and exits points into the residential areas. Commercial buildings are located along important roads, most often at intersections. Several important shopping centers, which still serve their adjacent communities, were constructed in the post-war building boom, including Suburban Plaza on North Decatur Road and the Toco Hills Shopping Center at LaVista Road and North Druid Hills Road. Most of the residential buildings consist of American Small Houses or Ranch houses, which are set on medium to large lots. Since the mid-20th century, communities have largely resisted annexation by one of the larger municipalities, and most of these neighborhoods remain in unincorporated DeKalb County. Several neighborhoods were built in the immediate post-war era such as:

- Clairemont Heights
- Medlock Park
- Woodland Hills
- Briarvista
- LaVista Park
- Lindridge/Martin Manor

Development continued through the 1960s in this area of DeKalb County, and additional neighborhoods continued to be constructed on the north side of the study area. In addition, commercial and professional activity began to increasingly move towards suburban areas, generating a series of office parks, such as Executive Park off North Druid Hills Road. Some of the new residential neighborhoods

Emory Hospital (1950)



collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University

Clairmont at North Decatur (1953)



Special Collections Department, Pullen Library, Georgia State University

Suburban Plaza at North Decatur Road and Church Street (1960)



Toco Hills Shopping Center (1961)



Special Collections Department, Georgia State University

included:

- Sagamore Hills
- Merry Hills
- Leafmore- Creek Park Hills

Since the 1980s, development along the Clifton Corridor has largely consisted of infill development or redevelopment, which has continued to shape the character of the area.

2.1.2 Historic Transportation Routes

The growth of the Atlanta area, including the Clifton Corridor, is strongly correlated with the region's leadership as a transportation center. Atlanta grew as a hub of economic activity largely due to its advanced transportation system and its connectivity to other economic centers.

Railroads

Atlanta's initial development and economic growth is closely tied to the history of the railroads. The City of Atlanta was essentially created by an economic development initiative of the State of Georgia, when the state authorized the creation of the Western and Atlantic Railroad in 1836, which quickly attracted other major railroads, including the Georgia Railroad which reached Atlanta in 1845.

Within the Clifton Corridor area, the Georgia, Carolina & Northern Railway (now the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad) connected Charlotte, North Carolina to Atlanta in 1892. As the railroad enters Atlanta, it splits railroads at Belt Junction, near Emory University. The eastern line intersects with the Georgia Railroad, near the East Lake neighborhood, and the western line meets the Western & Atlantic Railroad at the Howell Rail Yards.

Roadways

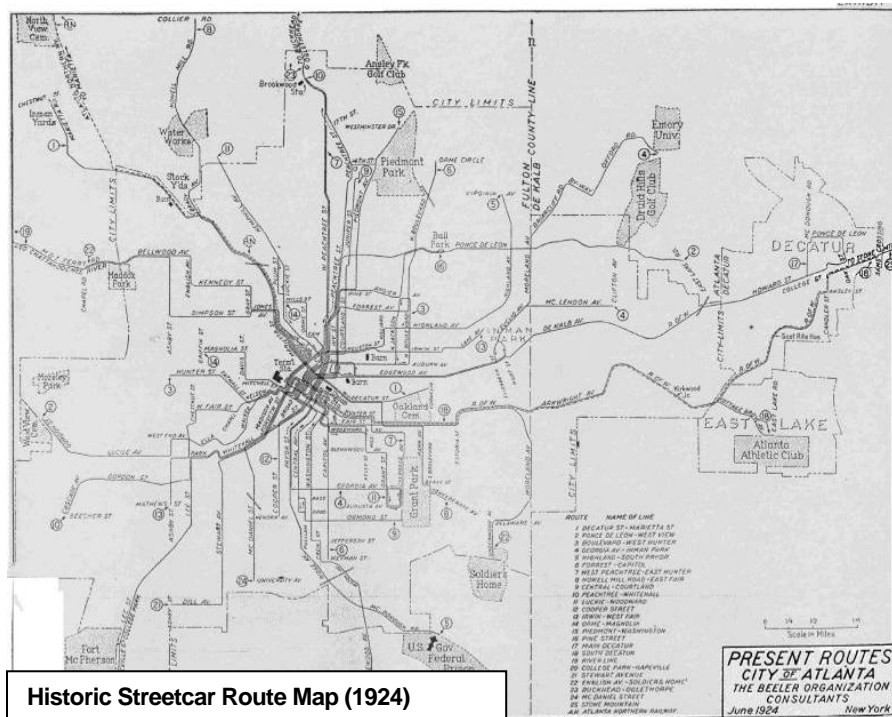
Two major roads shaped the development of the Clifton Corridor in the initial years of the area's growth. DeKalb Avenue served as a major historic wagon road between Atlanta and Decatur, connecting two vibrant economic centers. The route of North Druid Hills Road served as a local road that connected the Buckhead area, in the northwestern portion of the study area, to Decatur and all areas in between.

By the 1930s, automobile transportation began to impact the Clifton Corridor area. Buford Highway was built during this period as a major route to North Georgia, and the nearby roadways, including Cheshire Bridge Road and Piedmont Road quickly became important thoroughfares with increasingly commercial development. In the post-World War II era, much of this new housing was built in the Clifton Corridor area. The construction of Interstate 85 began through the northern section of the study area in 1951, and the new Interstate allowed rapid automobile access from these developing suburbs to downtown Atlanta. Over time, existing roads have become major transportation corridors, including Ponce de Leon Avenue (US 29/SR 8), Scott Boulevard/Lawrenceville Highway (US 78), as well as Clairmont Road, Briarcliff Road, Piedmont Road, Lindbergh/LaVista Road, and North Druid Hills Road.

Transit

Much of the Atlanta area was built in the aftermath of the Civil War, a time that was also shaped by the use of the streetcar as the primary mode of urban transportation. Streetcars had a notable effect on the Atlanta region, and most of the neighborhoods within the southwestern quadrant of the Clifton Corridor area developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a streetcar suburb. Street car service to the study area began when Joel Hurt created the Atlanta & Edgewood Street Railway, which ran down Edgewood Avenue east/west between Atlanta and Inman Park. In 1891, Atlanta & Edgewood became the Atlanta Consolidated Street Railway Company. By 1895, multiple streetcar service lines had been established through the southern portion of the study area:

- South Decatur Line - from Atlanta to Decatur
- North Decatur Line - Along McClendon Avenue to Candler Park
- Nine Mile Circle – Northward from downtown Atlanta on Highland Avenue to Virginia Avenue, then returning on Boulevard/Monroe Drive and Highland back to downtown



Historic Streetcar Route Map (1924)

By 1912, services were extended down Ponce de Leon Avenue to Druid Hills. Emory University began receiving streetcar service in 1920. These streetcar lines facilitated the growth of several of the historic residential districts located within the corridor. By the late 1940s, the streetcar system was in decline.

In the 1960s, regional planners completed the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission report which laid the groundwork for a coordinated, regional transit system. In 1965, the Georgia Legislature passed the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority Act, which provided the legal backing for the formalization of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transportation Authority (MARTA) upon approval by the voters of affected communities. The idea of connecting Emory University to MARTA heavy rail with fixed-guideway transit

was included in the 1971 referendum system plan as a heavy rail branch off the East-West line to North Decatur Road and North Druid Hills Road. However, that concept was never built and in 1979, MARTA's first rail line opened between Avondale and Georgia State, marking the start of the region's first and only combined rail and bus system. The East-West and North-South orientation of the heavy rail lines created a wedge-shaped area that did not extend rail service to the Clifton Corridor.

Although earlier planning efforts in 2000 found little support for various concepts that attempted to connect Lindbergh Center to Emory University, this has seemed to change with positive public comment regarding the C-Loop concept which was briefly studied during MARTA's 2005 Inner-Core Feasibility Study. This concept, which linked Emory University to Lindbergh Center, Atlanta University Center and the I-20 East Corridor. The resulting Clifton Corridor AA will explore connecting MARTA's Lindbergh Center Station to Decatur Station by way of Emory University, and is consistent with the Transit Planning Board (TPB) *Concept 3*. The subsequent sections will further explore the findings from the previous studies that are relevant to the Clifton Corridor AA process.

2.2 Review of Previous Studies

This section of the Existing and Future Trends report highlights the important elements of plans and studies that could impact the development of the Clifton Corridor AA. Much of the background data presented in this report has been gleaned from a number of previous studies including, regional initiatives, transit studies, locally initiated plans, and Livable Centers Initiatives (LCIs), as well as additional studies identified through public and stakeholder efforts. While this section includes a fairly comprehensive review studies and initiatives, it only represents a draft list to be used as a basis to build upon.

2.2.1 Regional Initiatives

Regional transportation planning efforts are undertaken primarily by the ARC, the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the 18-county Atlanta region. MARTA and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) are among other regional transit agencies. **Table 2.1** presents the most recent regional initiatives relevant to the Clifton Corridor.

Table 2.1: Regional Initiatives

Plan	Year	Agency
Regional Transit Action Plan	2003	GRTA
Envision6 2030 Regional Transportation Plan	2005	ARC
ARC Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan	2007	ARC
Commuter Rail Plan Updated	2007	GDOT, Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
Atlanta Regional Freight Plan	2007	ARC
Transit Planning Board Concept 3	2008	ARC, GRTA, MARTA

Regional Transit Action Plan

The goal of the *Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP)*³ completed by GRTA in 2003 was to produce a long-range transit action plan for the 13-county non-attainment area. The RTAP contains a Draft Concept Plan that lays out a proposed network of public transportation in the Atlanta region.

The recommendations in the concept plan are expansive and include improvements to operations, infrastructure, and development of new routes to fill in gaps and extend services to other areas in the region. The RTAP specifically recommends a transit solution to connect the Lindbergh and Decatur MARTA stations. Most significantly as it pertains to the Clifton Corridor, the plan recommends the implementation of regional arterial BRT to link suburban areas with existing transit facilities. A number of the plan's recommended BRT corridors would impact the Clifton Corridor study area. They include:

- Clairmont Road/C-Loop Corridor (the Decatur MARTA station to the Lindbergh Center MARTA station),
- Candler Road (City of Decatur to I-285),
- LaVista Road/Lawrenceville Highway (the Lindbergh Center MARTA station to Jimmy Carter Boulevard),
- Memorial Drive (Stone Mountain to the Garnett MARTA station),
- Moreland Avenue/Briarcliff Road (I-285 South to North Druid Hills Road),
- Piedmont Road/Roswell Road (Alpharetta to the Lindbergh Center MARTA station), and
- Scott Boulevard/Ponce de Leon Avenue (North Druid Hills Road to the North Avenue MARTA station).

Envision6 2030 Regional Transportation Plan

*Envision6*⁴ is the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the ARC, which addresses regional planning challenges such as rapid growth, financial constraints, congestion, and provision of travel options.

The goals of the RTP are to improve accessibility and mobility for all people and freight; encourage and promote safe, secure, and efficient development, management, and operation of the surface transportation system; protect and improve the environment and quality of life; and support economic growth and development. **Table 2.2** provides the list of RTP projects that are located within the Clifton Corridor. The potential impact of these projects will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. As shown in the table below, the RTP does include a fixed guideway transit in the Clifton Corridor from the Lindbergh MARTA Station to Emory University.

³ Georgia Regional Transportation Authority. *Regional Transit Action Plan*. Prepared by URS. Atlanta, GA: GRTA, 2003.

⁴ Atlanta Regional Commission. *Envision6 2030 Regional Transportation Plan*. Atlanta, GA: ARC, 2007.

Table 2.2: *Envision6* Projects in the Clifton Corridor

ARC ID	Project Types	Project Description
Programmed		
AR-910	Arterial BRT	SR 13 Buford Highway Arterial BRT from Pleasant Hill Road to MARTA Lindbergh Station
AR-450A	Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility	Beltline Corridor from Lindbergh Center to 10th Street/Monroe Drive
AR-450D	Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility	Beltline Corridor from Dellwood Drive to Garson Drive
DK-AR-234	Bicycle/Pedestrian Facility	North Decatur Road at Oxford Road/Dowman Drive
DK-219	Bridge Upgrade	Clifton Road Bridge at CSX line between Asbury Circle and Dantzler Drive
DK-250	Bridge Upgrade	SR 155 (Candler Road) at Shoal Creek
DK-348	Bridge Upgrade	US 29/78/278/SR 8/SR 10 at Lullwater Creek
M-AR-288	Fixed Guideway Transit Capital	Lindbergh MARTA Station to Emory University/CDC
AT-AR-212A	Interchange Capacity	I-85 North at SR 400 (viaduct widening)
DK-352	Multi-Use Bike / Ped Facility	South Fork Peachtree Creek Trail from Mason Mill Tennis Center to North Druid Hills Road
DK-368	Multi-Use Bike / Ped Facility	Deepdene Park Trail Along Entire from west to east parallel to the alignment of Ponce De Leon Avenue
DK-324D	Pedestrian Facility	SR 13 (Buford Highway) from Lenox Road to Shallowford Terrace Drive
DK-AR-BP055	Pedestrian Facility	US 23 (Clairmont Road) from North Druid Hills Road to Buford Highway
DK-AR-BP060	Pedestrian Facility	US 29/78/278 (Ponce De Leon Avenue) from Moreland Avenue to Eastland Drive
DK-AR-BP068	Pedestrian Facility	Briarcliff Road from Henderson Mill Road to North Druid Hills Road
DK-274	Roadway Operational Upgrades	SR 236 (LaVista Road) at AR 42 (Briarcliff Road)
Long Range		
AR-451A	Fixed Guideway Transit Capital	Beltline Fixed Guideway Northeast Quadrant
DK-014	General Purpose Roadway Capacity	Avondale Estates By-Pass from US 278 (East College Avenue) at Sam's Crossing to US 278 (Covington Highway) at Stratford Road
AT-AR-212B	Interchange Capacity	I-85 North at SR 400 (directional ramps)

Source: *Envision 6 RTP/TIP*

ARC Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan

In 2007, the ARC initiated the *Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan*⁵ under the federal legislation that requires a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan for all FTA human service transportation programs. For the 18-county Atlanta region, MARTA has been selected as the designated recipient for the FTA's 5316 (Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC)) and 5317 (New Freedom) programs. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been established between

⁵ Atlanta Regional Commission. *Human Services Transportation Plan*. Atlanta, GA: ARC, 2007.

MARTA and ARC to enable ARC to be the lead agency for HST planning as well as the competitive project selection process.

A call for projects, which resulted in six New Freedom and two JARC project proposals, was held in 2007. In early 2007, ARC was selected for the United We Ride/Mobility Services for All Americans Grant Initiative from the FTA to develop and design an enhanced HST model that utilizes intelligent transportation system (ITS) capabilities.

The HST Plan's relevance to the Clifton Corridor AA is the accessibility to the cluster of medical facilities centered on Emory University/CDC.

Commuter Rail Plan Update

The *Commuter Rail Plan Update*⁶ was completed in 2007 by the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with Transit Planning Board (TPB) and GDOT. The primary goal of this plan was to update the ridership and cost information to be used in the TPB development of *Concept 3*. In addition, a key feature in this plan was a discussion on the issues related to access to the Atlanta region's privately-owned freight railroads. This discussion is highly relevant to the Clifton Corridor AA as the Clifton Corridor is home to two of the region's most active rail corridors. The CSX Seaboard Air Line and the CSX Georgia Railroad through the Clifton Corridor are the designated corridors for the proposed Atlanta-Athens and Atlanta-Madison Commuter Rail Lines.

Relevant recommendations with respect to rail capacity improvements include the following:

- CSX Seaboard Air Line– install second main track wherever possible, connecting existing sidings.
- CSX Georgia Railroad – Install Coast to Coast (CTC) signal system and improve sidings and extend short segments of double track.

Other key elements from this Plan Update summarized the CSX perspective with respect to sharing of the freight rail right-of-way with the planned commuter rail service. This is relevant for the Clifton Corridor since a fixed guideway along the active CSX rail line is a likely alternative to be studied further. The Plan Update noted that safety and rail capacity constraints were among the major concerns voiced by CSX. It was concluded that CSX will permit commuter rail access if the following agreements can be negotiated:

- Freight railroad will be compensated for use of its property,
- Commuter rail corridor will provide sufficient capacity (track and other infrastructure improvements) so that passenger operations do not interfere with freight operations, and
- No additional safety issues, including risk or liability will be added to the freight railroad.

Refer to Section 6.5 - *Freight Rail Facilities* for greater detail on the rail corridors in the Clifton Corridor.

⁶Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Transit Planning Board, and Georgia Department of Transportation. *Commuter Rail Plan Update*. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, TPB, and GDOT, 2007.

Atlanta Regional Freight Plan

The *Atlanta Regional Freight Plan*⁷ was completed in October 2006 by the ARC. The freight plan represents the region's first comprehensive study of goods movement and freight mobility. The freight plan is relevant to the Clifton Corridor due to the major freight facilities such as I-85 and GA 400 as well as a number of active CSX freight rail lines that passes through the study area. Consistent with the RTP, the freight plan recommended the interchange improvements at I-85 and SR 400 to enhance truck mobility. Specifically, new directional ramps and viaduct widening are recommended at the interchange to reduce traffic congestion on Sidney Marcus Boulevard and Buford Highway.

With respect to rail, the freight plan noted that the Class 1 railroads⁸ in the region are facing capacity constraints for accommodating future growth. In addition, the plan recognized that there is a strong desire in the Atlanta region to promote the diversion of truck traffic to rail. At the same time, the plan also noted the increasing regional desire to develop commuter rail service and the BeltLine, all of which is likely to require public investment in the private sector rail infrastructure.

Analysis results indicated that the Atlanta region is a well-developed intermodal market with rail share above the national average, in part due to having a greater proportion of long distance, high density lanes. Moreover, the freight plan found that about one-third of the dry goods traffic currently moving by highway falls directly within the rail market segments, suggesting a strong argument for conversions from truck to rail. However, this would only be a viable option provided that excess rail capacity exists. As such, recommendations from this plan encouraged investing in rail capacity to meet the projected increase in rail freight and promote the diversion of truck traffic to rail.

Transit Planning Board Concept 3

The TPB was created in September 2006 as a partnership of ARC, MARTA, and GRTA to develop a regional transit vision for the Atlanta region. The plan, also known as *Concept 3*⁹, was adopted by the board on August 2008. In 2009, the Transit Implementation Board (TIB) was established as the successor organization to TPB to guide the implementation of *Concept 3*.

Concept 3 represents a comprehensive, multimodal approach to transit planning, which includes MARTA heavy-rail extensions, light-rail transit (LRT) and/or streetcar, commuter rail, bus rapid transit (BRT), arterial rapid transit service, express and intercity regional service, and expanded local and activity center service. Most notably, *Concept 3* includes an extensive new regional LRT system, which connects major activity centers that includes Emory University and the Centers for Disease Control. Additionally, a number of the *Concept 3* recommendations have the potential to interface with a transit solution in the Clifton Corridor. **Table 2.3** highlights those recommendations of primary relevance to the corridor.

⁷ Atlanta Regional Commission. *Atlanta Regional Freight Plan*. Atlanta, GA: ARC, 2006.

⁸ Railroad classifications are based on operating revenue. According to the Surface Transportation Board (STB), Class 1 railroads have annual carrier operating revenue of \$250 million or more.

⁹ Transit Planning Board. *Concept 3: Creating and Realizing the Regional Transit Vision, Final Technical Report*. Atlanta, GA: TPB, 2008.

Table 2.3 Concept 3 Recommendations in the Clifton Corridor

Transit Technology	Location	Included in <i>Envision6</i>
High Capacity Rail (LRT or streetcar)	Lindbergh to Emory	Yes
High Capacity Rail (LRT or streetcar)	Emory to Decatur	No
Commuter Rail	Atlanta to Athens	No
Commuter Rail	Atlanta to Madison	No
Intown Streetcar	BeltLine alignment	Portions
Intown Streetcar	Peachtree Street (including a circulator along Auburn Avenue and Edgewood Avenue)	No
Intown Streetcar	East-West Line along Marietta Boulevard, North Avenue, and Ponce de Leon Avenue	No
BRT	Buford Highway from Lindbergh to Gwinnett County	Yes

Source: TPB Concept 3

2.2.2 Corridor-Level Transit Studies

As the lead transit provider for the region, MARTA has conducted transit planning initiatives ranging from feasibility studies to alternatives analyses as required by the New Starts process. As a partner in the Clifton Corridor AA, CCTMA has recently completed the Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study, which identified and evaluated potential transit solutions in the Clifton Corridor. As discussed in greater detail in the following sections, many of the more recent transit studies were conducted as a follow-up to earlier efforts by MARTA. The transit studies reviewed in this section are listed in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Transit Studies

Plan	Year	Agency
South DeKalb-Lindbergh Major Investment Study	2000	MARTA
MARTA Inner Core Transit Feasibility Study (BeltLine/C-Loop)	2003	MARTA
Athens-Atlanta Commuter Rail Environmental Assessment (EA)	2003	GDOT, GRTA, GA Recreation and Park Assoc.
I-20 East Corridor Alternative Analysis	2004	MARTA
CCTMA Clifton Corridor Transportation Study	2005	CCTMA
BeltLine AA	2007	MARTA
MARTA Infill Station Study	2007	MARTA
Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study	2008	CCTMA

South DeKalb-Lindbergh Major Investment Study

The *South DeKalb-Lindbergh Major Investment Study (MIS)*¹⁰, completed by MARTA in 2000, assessed the potential for a transit investment between an area east/southeast of I-285 to the Lindbergh Center area. The MIS was MARTA's first transit initiative in the study area in recognition of mobility and access challenges faced by residents of south DeKalb County. This corridor has a large residential population and contains major trip attractions; however, mobility and access in this corridor are impaired by the absence of direct highway or rail transit connections, as well as the layout of the local roadway system. The corridor study area is comprised roughly of the portion of DeKalb County located between I-85, I-285, and I-20, plus the entire I-20 corridor in DeKalb County. The Emory University/CDC area, Lindbergh Center, and City of Decatur were among the major destinations considered in the MIS.

The MIS did not recommend a concept for advancement. However, two concepts appear to perform the best with respect to the performance measures:

- Exclusive guideway transit via CSX right-of-way to connect Lindbergh to Emory, and then connect to downtown Decatur by following Clairmont Road and Commerce Drive in mixed traffic. This concept passes through downtown Decatur then proceeds along North McDonough Street, Candler Road, and Panthersville Road to a destination at Flat Shoals Road at Clifton Springs Road just outside I-285. This concept serves the Clifton Corridor directly with stops at Clairmont/North Decatur, Emory/CDC, and Briarcliff Road.
- The I-20/Turner Hill concept consists of a heavy-rail transit line along I-20 from Turner Hill Road in Lithonia to Glenwood Road, then along Wilkinson Street and existing railroad right-of-way to downtown Atlanta via the Edgewood-Candler Park MARTA station. This concept is later known as the I-20 Corridor and is discussed in greater detail later in this section. Although the I-20/Turner Hill concept does not directly serve the Clifton Corridor, it has the potential to increase the transit ridership in the southern portion of the study area as well increase generally east-west mobility for the DeKalb County residents.

MARTA Inner Core Transit Feasibility Study (BeltLine/C-Loop)

The primary goal of the *MARTA Inner Core Transit Feasibility Study (BeltLine/C-Loop)*¹¹, initiated in 2003, was to determine the feasibility of two transit concepts, the BeltLine and the C-Loop, as possible solutions for the Atlanta Inner Core area. The study compared six concepts, including the BeltLine alignment, the C-Loop, a BeltLine/C-Loop hybrid, and other possible intown transit segments. The C-Loop is notable for its Clifton Corridor transit segment.

The results indicated that transit investment in the Inner Core could improve neighborhood connectivity, complement the existing MARTA rail system, support redevelopment efforts, and capture new riders in a cost-effective manner. The concepts recommended to move forward in the report are the BeltLine, C-Loop, and hybrid concepts.

¹⁰Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *South DeKalb-Lindbergh Major Investment Study*. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2000.

¹¹ Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *MARTA Inner Core Transit Feasibility Study (BeltLine/C-Loop)*. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2003.

The MARTA Inner Core Transit Feasibility Study specifically recommends a transit solution to connect Lindbergh, the Clifton Corridor, and Decatur and is therefore particularly important to the Clifton Corridor planning process. This Clifton Corridor AA is an extension of the Inner Core planning effort.

Athens-Atlanta Commuter Rail EA

In 2003, an Environmental Assessment (EA)¹² was undertaken to measure the impacts of a proposed commuter link between Athens and Atlanta. The alternatives included a commuter rail alternative and an express bus alternative on the CSX rail line from Athens to the Emory area with multiple options for using existing freight rail routes between Emory and downtown Atlanta.

Three alternative concepts encompassing seven alignment alternatives were reviewed. The LPA is the rail option from Athens to Emory, through the campus, then paralleling CSX tracks between Emory and Armour Yard and Norfolk Southern tracks between Armour Yard and downtown Atlanta. The rail option would use active freight rail tracks for its entire length but would require new or upgraded track in various locations as needed. The EA recommends nine morning trains from Athens and nine evening trains to Athens.

If the Athens-Atlanta commuter train is implemented, increased numbers of visitors would be able to access the Clifton Corridor via the Emory University train stop and potentially even transfer from the commuter train to a new MARTA facility. This could potentially reduce automobile congestion in the Clifton Corridor and increase transit users for future MARTA service. However, there is potential for its alignment or other physical characteristics to conflict with a potential Clifton Corridor MARTA transit solution. The Athens-Atlanta commuter rail should be considered carefully during the Clifton Corridor AA.

I-20 East Alternative Analysis

The *South DeKalb-Lindbergh MIS* conducted in 2000 recommended the I-20 East Corridor as one of MARTA's expansion priorities. As a result, the *I-20 East Corridor Alternative Analysis*¹³ was initiated in 2002 and completed in 2004. Although I-20 does not directly traverse the study area, the transit investment in this corridor could significantly improve the east-west mobility for the DeKalb County residents to access the Clifton Corridor.

The AA recommended a BRT alternative for further consideration because of its strong performance compared to other alternatives. The BRT alternative is comprised of BRT within exclusive right-of-way from Stonecrest Mall to roughly the Fulton County line, where buses would exit the freeway and access Five Points using Memorial Drive. Proposed station locations in the vicinity of the Clifton Corridor include the Glenwood Avenue station, which is roughly one mile south of the study area's southern border.

CCTMA Clifton Corridor Transportation Study

¹² Georgia Department of Transportation. *Athens to Atlanta Rail Line Environmental Assessment*. Atlanta, GA: GDOT, 2003.

¹³ Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *I-20 East Corridor Alternative Analysis*. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2004.

CCTMA's 2005 *Clifton Corridor Transportation Study (CCTS)* was a precursor to the *Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study* of 2008 and gives a comprehensive perspective on transportation issues in Clifton Corridor. This study provides existing and future conditions data as well as general recommendations including street and transit improvements for the Clifton Corridor area.

The CCTS identifies the following key congestion issues in the Clifton Corridor. First, the corridor is the largest Atlanta activity center that is served by neither interstate access nor rail transit. Second, pass-through traffic accounts for 33 percent to 50 percent of all traffic in the corridor. Third, residency and employment in the corridor are expected to grow by approximately 25 percent, by the year 2025. Finally, most major intersections in the CCTMA area currently experience a failing level of service (LOS) during at least one peak period. The report makes of the following recommendations for the Clifton Corridor:

- Off-street transit should be explored to link the Clifton Corridor and Atlantic Station to the west and Tucker to the northeast as well as to link the Clifton Corridor to the Lindbergh Center MARTA station.
- Streetcar service on shared right-of-way should be explored to provide connectivity between the Clifton Corridor, Emory's Briarcliff campus, the Decatur and Lindbergh Center MARTA stations, and the proposed regional intermodal station at Sage Hill.
- Short-term operational improvements such as cut-through reduction, ITS implementation, and signal coordination.
- Improvements to key intersections should be made through signal timing, reconfiguration, relocation of bus stops, construction of new medians/islands, and/or minor roadway widening (see CCTMA for specific intersections and improvements).
- Transportation demand management (TDM) programs, consideration of a bus circulator system, enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities to connect neighborhoods to the corridor, and better integration of land use and transportation investments to create more walkable communities.

BeltLine Detailed Screening Analysis

MARTA conducted an Alternatives Analysis, also known as the *BeltLine Detailed Screening Analysis*¹⁴, in 2007 to identify and evaluate transit improvements along the BeltLine corridor, a 22-mile loop of abandoned rail that encircles central Atlanta. The Northeast segment of the BeltLine alignment roughly traces the entire western boundary of the Clifton Corridor. Approximately nine proposed BeltLine station locations lie within the Clifton Corridor area.

The preferred alternative is a continuous loop that connects to existing MARTA rail at the Inman Park/Reynoldstown station. While BRT performed the best in regard to capital and operating costs and environmental impacts, stakeholders strongly supported fixed-rail technology over BRT. A preferred rail technology has not officially been selected at this time.

¹⁴ Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority. *BeltLine Detailed Screening Analysis*. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2007.

Currently, MARTA is conducting a Tier 1 NEPA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the BeltLine Corridor. The *Existing Conditions Report*¹⁵ was recently completed in April 2009. The Tier 1 analysis will assess broad impacts of the project alternatives, then perform project evaluations that will serve as a basis for project refinement. Ultimately, the intent of the Tier 1 EIS is to support future right-of-way preservation along the entire project extent. Once the Tier 1 EIS is complete, the Tier 2 EIS would focus on project design refinement and site-specific impacts to environmental conditions, if necessary. It is critical to follow the EIS process of the BeltLine Corridor because of its interface with the Clifton Corridor at Lindbergh Center Station.

MARTA Infill Station Study

The 2007 *MARTA Infill Station Study*¹⁶ examined the MARTA's existing rail system. Its purpose is to identify "ridership gaps" that present the best opportunities for new infill stations and to help MARTA prioritize those opportunities for planning, development and implementation. This study is relevant to the Clifton Corridor in that it recommends a potential infill station in the vicinity of the Armour rail yard that could serve as an interface for a Clifton transit solution and the BeltLine.

Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study

The *Clifton Corridor Transit Feasibility and Connectivity Study (CCTFCS)* completed in 2008 is an extension of the *CCTMA Clifton Corridor Transportation Study* of 2005, which is presented in the previous section. The *CCTFCS* focuses on the development of transit alternatives to as an appropriate strategy for improving mobility and regional access for the Clifton Corridor. The study assessed the best technologies available for use in various project corridors in the CCTMA area and ultimately identified a priority corridor for potential entry into the federal capital project development process.

After comparing seven project corridors, the feasibility study recommends the Clifton Corridor Circulator for advancement. The Clifton Corridor Circulator would deliver circulator service wholly within the Clifton Corridor using Clifton Road, Lowergate Drive, Andrews Circle, and Starvine Way. The Clifton Corridor Circulator was superior in regards to addressing existing transit utilization and travel patterns and providing transportation utility to the Clifton Corridor. Its relatively short length supports emerging transit-oriented development along the corridor and would have a relatively low implementation cost. However, due to the relatively small area of impact, the Clifton Corridor Circulator may have limited potential for partnering with other entities (MARTA, GDOT) for funding.

The downtown Decatur-Clifton Corridor alignment shared many of the strengths of the Clifton Corridor Circulator but scored slightly lower on a number of the evaluation criteria. Its alignment would connect the Decatur MARTA station with Houston Mill Road near the CDC via Commerce Drive, Clairemont Avenue, Clairmont Road, Starvine Way, Andrews Circle, Lowergate Road, and Clifton Road.

¹⁵ Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *Beltline Corridor Environmental Study Existing Conditions Report* prepared by AECOM/JJG Joint Venture. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2009.

¹⁶ Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *MARTA Infill Station Study* prepared by Insomnia LLC and Market + Main, Inc. Atlanta, GA: MARTA, 2007.

The CCTFCS specifically stated that alignments within the MARTA Clifton Corridor AA should connect to the downtown Decatur Corridor.

2.2.3 Local Comprehensive Plans

This section contains a review of the relevant city and county Comprehensive Plans and Comprehensive Transportation Plans. Comprehensive Plans are reviewed with an emphasis on identifying areas that may benefit from the presence of transit and/or the kinds of development/ redevelopment that are transit supportive. These plans are also reviewed for overall policy direction of the areas potentially impacted. The plans and studies reviewed in this section are listed in **Table 2.5**.

Table 2.5: Local Comprehensive Plans and Studies

Plan	Year	Agency
DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan	2006	DeKalb County
DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan	2006	
Atlanta Strategic Action Plan	2007	City of Atlanta
Connect Atlanta Plan	2008	
City of Decatur Comprehensive Land Use Plan	2005	City of Decatur
City of Decatur Community Transportation Plan	2007	

DeKalb County Initiatives

Comprehensive Plan

The *DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan*¹⁷ was adopted by the County Board of Commissioners in 2007. The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide policy directives for future land use decisions for the county. Approximately 50 percent of the Clifton Corridor lies in DeKalb County, which includes the Emory/CDC area at the heart of the study area. The land use section of the county's Comprehensive Plan described the existing land use in the Clifton Corridor as predominantly medium-density, single-family residential (0.25-acre to 2-acre lots). The second most common land use is institutional (Emory University, CDC, Emory Hospital). The primary commercial nodes in the Clifton Corridor, as identified in the plan, are the I-85/Buford Highway corridor, North Decatur Road at Clairmont Road, Toco Hills Shopping Center, Briarcliff Road at LaVista Road, the Scott Boulevard/Lawrenceville Highway corridor, downtown Decatur, and Emory Village.

The Comprehensive Plan identified the Clifton Corridor as rapid development/land use change area, which is characterized by the widespread conversion of undeveloped land and/or redevelopment at higher densities. To this end, the plan recognized that the Clifton Corridor contains several aesthetics/redevelopment corridors, which are typically characterized by strip commercial centers. Aesthetics/redevelopment corridors identified in the plan include the intersections and vicinities of Briarcliff Road at Clairmont Road, LaVista Road at North Druid Hills Road, North Decatur Road at Clairmont Road, and

¹⁷ DeKalb County Strategic Planning Division Department of Planning and Development. DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan 2005-2025 Community Agenda. Decatur, GA: DeKalb County, 2007.

North Druid Hills Road west of Lawrenceville Highway. These areas are those that are expected to redevelop at higher densities.

Future land use is described in the DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan using character areas. Almost the entire Clifton Corridor is characterized as “suburban area – built out,” meriting future retrofitting to better conform with the following traditional neighborhood development principles: creation of neighborhood focal points within walking distance of residences, improvement of walkability through traffic calming and sidewalks, and permission of infill development to increase density and income diversity.

In addition, the future land use plan identifies two other character areas that are at least partially located within the Clifton Corridor. First, there are two “town center – suburban” areas (the intersections of Briarcliff Road at LaVista Road and North Decatur Road at Clairmont Road) that are characterized as focal points for several neighborhoods with a concentration of activities. In the future, these merit retrofitting through high-density housing, pedestrian-oriented development, and pedestrian enhancements. Second, there is one “office park” area (Executive Park near North Druid Hills at I-85) characterized by campus-style development with a high degree of vehicle access and on-site parking.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan

The *DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)*¹⁸ was completed in 2006, but has not been officially adopted by the Board of Commissioners. The CTP provides an overview of existing and forecasted travel conditions in DeKalb County and a list of recommended transportation investments. As with the ARC’s *Envision6* process, the CTP incorporates land use scenario projects to predict transportation demand. Being a significant component of the land area within the corridor, the county’s land use and transportation policies have relevance affecting future transit service in the Clifton Corridor.

The Clifton Corridor roughly corresponds to the Decatur/Emory area of analysis in the DeKalb CTP. The CTP identified severe congestion as a key issue for the Clifton Corridor. There are 71 miles of roadway in the Decatur/Emory area that are forecast to operate at volumes exceeding capacity in the year 2030. Consistent with the ARC model findings, the specific roads forecasted to operate at severe congestion levels are North Druid Hills Road, Briarcliff Road, LaVista Road, Clairmont Road, Ponce de Leon Avenue, Scott Boulevard/Lawrenceville Highway, East Lake Road, and South Candler Road.

The CTP provides an extensive list of recommended transportation projects, some of which are located at least partially within the study area. The plan’s recommendations are divided into short-range (2006–2011), mid-range (2012–2020), and long-range (2012–2030).

Short-range recommendations relevant to the Clifton Corridor consist of: Three new MARTA bus routes to serve Clairmont Road, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and a roadway capacity project on Briarcliff Road between Clifton Road and North Druid Hills Road.

¹⁸ DeKalb County. DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Decatur, GA: DeKalb County, 2007.

Mid-range recommendations relevant to the Clifton Corridor consist of: Streetcar line connecting future regional transit stations and pedestrian and bicycle improvements at Avondale, Edgewood, and East Lake MARTA stations.

Long-range recommendations relevant to the Clifton Corridor consist of: Atlanta-Athens Commuter Rail, Buford Highway BRT and a widening project on LaVista Road from two lanes to four lanes between North Druid Hills Road and Hollidon Road.

City of Atlanta Initiatives

Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP)

The City of Atlanta Comprehensive Plan, also known as *Atlanta Strategic Action Plan (ASAP)*¹⁹ guides future land use decisions in the western third of the Clifton Corridor study area. The ASAP was adopted by the Atlanta City Council on April 2008.

Transit improvements, intersection improvements, and street widening are some of the transportation needs identified in the Atlanta's Comprehensive Plan. Specific to the Clifton Corridor, implementation of the BeltLine/C-Loop transit proposal is recommended. Additionally, DeKalb Avenue from Jackson Street to Moreland Avenue is recommended for widening. Other recommended transportation projects in the Clifton Corridor include bicycle and pedestrian improvements and greenways. The recommended bicycle improvements include Clifton Road from Clifton Terrace to city limits, Edgewood Avenue/McLendon Avenue from the Five Points MARTA station to city limits, Morningside Drive from Wildwood Road to Lanier Boulevard, and Saint Charles Place from Virginia Avenue to city limits.

Recommended pedestrian improvements include Brookwood Drive from East Wesley Road to Lindbergh Drive, Canter Road from Lenox Road to Roxboro Road, Drewry Street from Barnett Street to Ponce de Leon Place, McLendon Avenue from Clifton Road to Connecticut Avenue, McLendon Avenue from Clifton Road to Moreland Avenue, Shady Valley Drive from West Roxboro Road to Buford Highway, and West Roxboro Road from East Roxboro Road to Shady Valley Drive. The recommended greenway projects include Freedom Park Trail enhancements, the South Peachtree Creek Trail and Greenway, and the North Peachtree Creek Trail and Greenway.

¹⁹ City of Atlanta Planning and Community Development and Bureau of Planning. *Atlanta Strategic Action Plan*. Atlanta, GA: City of Atlanta, 2008

Connect Atlanta Plan

The western third of the Clifton Corridor lies within the City of Atlanta, and thus, its future transportation investment is guided by the *Connect Atlanta Plan*²⁰, Atlanta's first CTP adopted by the Atlanta City Council in December 2008. As such, the transportation recommendations in the CTP supersedes those from the *ASAP*. As noted in the following needs identified during the CTP process, improvements to transit and transit-oriented developments are among the top priorities in the CTP:

- Surface streets are the desired future investment because they accommodate all users and the grid system within the City of Atlanta needs improvement;
- Transit-oriented development around MARTA stations needs to be encouraged;
- Better transit connections along Peachtree Street in Buckhead are needed; and
- Pedestrian access at rail stations needs to be improved, on-time performance of bus service needs to be improved, and increased premium transit service is needed.

The recommended transit projects relevant to the Clifton Corridor included the BeltLine project and high-frequency bus service along Moreland Avenue (just outside the Clifton Corridor study area to the south). The following intersections and interchanges in the Clifton Corridor have been identified for improvement:

- Cheshire Bridge/Sheridan Road,
- Piedmont Avenue/Lindbergh Drive,
- Piedmont Avenue/Sidney Marcus Boulevard,
- Buford Highway/Sidney Marcus Boulevard,
- Buford Highway Connector interchange reconfiguration at Piedmont Avenue/Monroe Drive,
- New HOV ramps at Lindbergh Drive/I-85, and
- New Sidney Marcus Boulevard/SR 400 southbound ramp.

Three road widenings located within the Clifton Corridor were also recommended in the Connect Atlanta Plan:

- Widen Sidney Marcus Boulevard to three lanes eastbound from SR 400 to Buford Highway,
- Widen Buford Highway from Cheshire Bridge Road to Sidney Marcus Boulevard, and
- Improve multimodal operations on Piedmont Road by adding turn lanes and add bicycle lanes.

²⁰ City of Atlanta Department of Planning and Community Development. *The Connect Atlanta Plan: Atlanta's Comprehensive Transportation Plan*. Atlanta, GA: City of Atlanta, 2008.

City of Decatur Initiatives

Comprehensive Land Use Plan

The *Decatur Comprehensive Plan*²¹ was most recently updated and adopted by the City Council in October 2005. The plan is highly supportive of transit, establishing land use policies and strategies conducive of enhanced service and Transit-Oriented Development. Within the plan the city described a “strong commitment to high-density transit oriented mixed-use development close to the downtown Decatur and Avondale MARTA rail stations”.

The plan identified a major goal of the city to increase transit ridership over the 20-year planning period. To do this, the plan encouraged the co-location of mixed-use and higher density residential development within close proximity to transit facilities. With respect to land use conditions, the plan recognized the highly-developed conditions within the city, with future growth largely limited to redevelopment and infill. The land use element and Future Land Use Map directed new growth in the form of mixed-use and medium to high-density residential development to areas in close proximity to MARTA stations.

Decatur is known locally for being a progressive city supportive of smart-growth principles and transit use. The city’s guiding policies and strategies expressed in the comprehensive plan are in keeping with this and result in a policy framework welcoming to additional transit service.

Community Transportation Plan

The City of Decatur lies almost entirely within the Clifton Corridor, making up approximately 10 percent of the total land area. As such, the *Community Transportation Plan* (CTP)²², adopted by the City Council in July 2007, is a very important resource in Clifton Corridor AA process.

Transit is a key issue identified in the CTP. Overall, the City of Decatur is very well served by transit, particularly in the vicinity of its three MARTA rail stations: East Lake, Decatur, and Avondale. Thirteen bus routes serve the Decatur area and connect to Decatur’s rail stations. There is adequate pedestrian and bicycle access to each station, however, Decatur Station is the most accessible out of the three and is best supported by its surrounding land uses. The CCTMA Cliff Shuttle currently serves the Clifton Corridor free of charge and departs the Decatur MARTA Station approximately every 30 minutes between 5:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on weekdays.

The most relevant recommendation contained in the plan is collaboration between the City of Decatur and MARTA regarding bus routes and transit stations as well as, coordination with Emory University and CCTMA to facilitate shuttle enhancements. The Clairmont Corridor was specifically noted for the study of enhanced transit service,

²¹ City of Decatur. *City of Decatur Comprehensive Plan Update 2005* prepared by Sycamore Consulting, Inc. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 2005.

²² City of Decatur. *Community Transportation Plan* prepared by Sycamore Consulting, Inc., Kimley-Horn & Associates, and Georgia Tech Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 2007.

improved bus stops, and coordinated traffic signal timing. Over the long term, the plan recommended that the Clairmont Corridor be transformed to fixed-rail and/or greatly enhanced with transit stops.

Additional recommendations included complete street retrofits for the intersections of Clairmont Avenue/Commerce Drive and Church Street/Commerce Drive and intersection reconfigurations at the following three intersections confounded by at-grade freight crossings:

- S Candler Street at College Avenue/ Howard Avenue,
- McDonough Street at College Avenue/ Howard Avenue, and
- Atlanta Avenue at College Avenue/ Howard Avenue.

Lastly, the CTP recommended the following corridor improvements:

- Traffic calming on Church Street from Commerce Drive to the city limits,
- Retiming of signals to minimize the number of stops for traffic on College Avenue,
- Traffic calming on Commerce Drive and Howard Avenue,
- Sidewalk widening on Scott Boulevard, and
- Narrowing of vehicle lanes and addition of bicycle lanes on South Candler Street.

Some of the smaller-scale intersection recommendations contained in the City of Decatur CTP are not likely to have a major impact on the Clifton Corridor. However, Decatur's focus on transit connections to other destinations in the Clifton Corridor interest in linking itself to Emory University in the Clifton Corridor via shuttle is notable from a stakeholder perspective.

2.2.4 Livable Centers Initiative and Other Studies

This section presents the highlights of the LCI studies as well as smaller-scale planning efforts for local institutions and corridors. LCI is a program offered by the ARC to encourage local jurisdictions to create sustainable, livable communities through strategies that link transportation improvements with land use development. LCI studies are relevant because they promote development that is conducive to transit. Three LCIs have been completed in the Clifton Corridor study area, and a fourth is under way. Many of the studies recommend enhanced transit service in the Clifton Corridor, which inherently validates the purpose and need of the Clifton Corridor AA. The LCIs and other transportation plans reviewed in this section are listed in **Table 2.6**.

Table 2.6: Livable Centers Initiatives and Other Studies

Plan	Year	Agency
Lindbergh Center Transit Station Area Development Study	2001	MARTA, City of Atlanta
Decatur LCI	2001	City of Decatur
Avondale Station LCI	2002	City of Decatur
Emory Village LCI	2002	Alliance to Improve Emory Village
Decatur Greenway Plan	2004	City of Decatur
Emory University Campus Master Plan	2005	Emory University
CDC Master Plan	2005	CDC
Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study	2007	ARC
Piedmont Area Transportation Study	2008	Buckhead CID, BATMA
Lindbergh-LaVista Corridor Coalition Blueprints for Successful Communities	2008	Lindbergh-LaVista Corridor Coalition
Clifton Corridor Urban Design Guidelines	2008	Clifton Community Partnership
North Druid Hills LCI	2009	DeKalb County

Lindbergh Center Transit Station Area Development Study

The *Lindbergh Transit Station Area Development Study (TSADS)*²³ was developed to create a vision, concept plan and action program for the development of a transit oriented neighborhood around the Lindbergh MARTA Station. The plan was created by the City of Atlanta in cooperation with MARTA. The plan was completed and adopted by the city in 2001. It addresses the entire Lindbergh area from the Norfolk Southern rail line in the west to GA 400 in the east.

Recommendations were made pertaining to a wide variety of considerations including land use, open space, urban design, streetscapes, and relationships to surrounding neighborhoods. Recommendations were also developed pertaining to transportation issues, such as the street grid, parking management, transit ridership, bicycle and pedestrian access, and vehicular traffic. In addition to general recommendations, the plan established specific action items to be undertaken by the public and private sector to help achieve the vision for the area. Since the study was adopted redevelopment projects have been largely in keeping with the plan. Lindbergh Plaza is a prime example of this.

Lindbergh Plaza was a large auto-oriented strip shopping center constructed in 1958. It was identified in the study as not being transit oriented and a prime site for mixed-use development. In 2004, the shopping center was demolished and rebuilt as a mixed-use development featuring apartments, numerous “big-box” chain retailers and pedestrian walkways and landscaping throughout.

The Lindbergh Area has also seen significant residential redevelopment since the plan was adopted. This is evident through the demolition of multiple low-rise multi-family

²³ City of Atlanta Department of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Conservation, Bureau of Planning, and Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. *Lindbergh Transit Station Area Development Study* prepared by Pickering Firm, Inc. Atlanta, GA: City of Atlanta, 2001.

developments and their subsequent replacement with high-rise or mid-rise condominiums and apartments. The pace of this redevelopment has come to a halt in some cases with the recent economic downturn. The Skyline at Lindbergh high-rise condominium is a prime example of this. Low-rise apartments were cleared and construction began on the tower only to be halted with just the supporting structure of the first few floors built.

The Lindbergh City Center development directly adjacent to the station has also seen significant growth since the plan was adopted. This has also been in general agreement with the adopted land use plan. In recent years mid-rise apartments (2006) and condominiums (2008) have been added to compliment the significant office, retail and restaurant space within the development. The center currently contains 700 residential units, 100,000 sq. ft. of leased retail, and 900,000 sq. ft. of leased office space. The development also includes MARTA headquarters that is housed in its own 200,000 sq. ft. office building. Over the next 10-15 years MARTA development officials propose the center could add 300 residential units, 100,000 sq. ft. of retail and 150,000 sq. ft. of office. This may vary however based upon evolving market conditions.

Decatur LCI

The Decatur LCI Study was completed in 2001 and is a successor to the original *Decatur Town Center Plan of 1982*²⁴ that served as a blueprint for the redevelopment of Decatur's historic commercial business district. As presented in the *2006 LCI Evaluation and Appraisal Report*²⁵, the Decatur LCI Study recommendations were in full support of a transit solution in the Clifton Corridor and the establishment of a transportation infrastructure that encourages alternative modes of transportation.

- Completing the downtown Decatur streetscape and bicycle network,
- Strengthen the relationship with the CCTMA to expand the Cliff Shuttle between downtown Decatur and Emory, and
- Construct a number of bicycle lanes (West Trinity Place, West Ponce de Leon Avenue, and Church Street).

The success of the revitalized downtown Decatur can be attributed to the working partnership between the City Commission, the Decatur Downtown Development Authority and the Decatur Business Association. The primary accomplishments since the adoption of the plan include various private sector developments such as condominiums (e.g., Decatur Renaissance), new street level retail, and housing initiatives that amended downtown zoning ordinance to allow for a 20 percent housing density bonus for affordable housing in the downtown C-2 Commercial zoning district. Transportation projects that have been implemented since the plan include the following:

- Completed Phase II and III of the downtown streetscape project (2003)

²⁴ Atlanta Regional Commission, City of Decatur, and Decatur Square Development Team. *Development Plan, Proposal, and Policies for the Decatur Town Center* prepared by Pope & Land Enterprises, Inc.; Urban Design Associates; Uniplan; Thompson, Ventulett, Stainback and Associates; WG Conway and Company; and Wilbur Smith and Associates. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 1982.

²⁵ City of Decatur. *Decatur Town Center Plan LCI Evaluation and Appraisal Report 2001-2006*. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 2006.

- PATH Foundation completed a dedicated bicycle trail along the southern boundary of the downtown commercial district (2004)
- MARTA Plaza Redevelopment Project began construction (2005)
- Expansion of the CCTMA shuttle program in the downtown district (2006)
- Awarded two TE Grants to fund Phase V of the downtown streetscape master plan and install dedicated bicycle lanes along the W. Trinity/W. Ponce de Leon corridor. (2006)

Decatur-Avondale Station LCI

Completed in 2002, the *Decatur-Avondale Station LCI Report*²⁶ builds upon the success of the City of Decatur's ongoing revitalization efforts which included the Decatur MARTA Station as well as the old commercial core. The Avondale MARTA Station is located at the far southeastern edge of the Clifton Corridor. Improvements to the surrounding land uses and transportation infrastructures are significant since the Avondale Station has been identified as a potential terminus for a transit solution in the Clifton Corridor.

As stated in the LCI, the needs identified for the Avondale station area included a complete sidewalk network and greater roadway connectivity. As the study found that there are no major traffic flow problems in the area, the recommendations were associated with redevelopment initiatives and various streetscape improvements. For example, one of the projects recommended in the LCI include a New Main Street bisecting the MARTA parking lot from east to west to encourage higher density and mix of uses more conducive to transit.

Emory Village LCI

Emory Village is a commercial district located adjacent to the southwestern corner of the Emory University campus at the intersection of North Decatur Road, Oxford Road, and Dowman Drive. It is fully contained within the Clifton Corridor study area.

As identified in the LCI report²⁷, the key issues confronting the Emory Village area are poor intersection configuration due to a confluence of five streets, poor sidewalk conditions, high driving speeds, no dedicated bicycle facilities, and haphazard parking provisions.

The LCI recommendations include a number of transportation projects. First, the main intersection of North Decatur Road, Oxford Road and Dowman Drive will be completely realigned by reducing North Decatur Road to a single lane in each direction with a shared center turn lane between Clifton Road and Lullwater Road. North Oxford Road will be removed from the intersection to reduce the number of entry points to four, and a roundabout will be installed. Second, new and safer facilities for transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians are recommended. Finally, it is recommended that a future commuter rail station be planned.

²⁶ City of Decatur. *Decatur-Avondale MARTA Station Study Livable Centers Initiative Final Report* prepared by JJG. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 2002.

²⁷ Alliance to Improve Emory Village. *Emory Village Revitalization Plan* prepared by Peter Drey and Company. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta Regional Commission, 2002.

Construction is already well underway for the roundabout and the associated streetscape improvements.

The Decatur Greenway Plan

The *Decatur Greenway Plan*²⁸, also known as *Decatur Preservation Corridor Master Plan*, adopted by the city in December of 2004. The major goal of the plan was to establish a bicycle and pedestrian greenway corridor through the city connecting major destinations. These destinations include the Woodlands, Decatur Cemetery, Oakhurst Community Gardens, Oakhurst Business District, Dearborn Park, and Decatur Square.

The plan establishes a network of multi-use trails, unpaved trails, and dedicated or shared bicycle lanes. If fully realized the plan would improve non-motorized connectivity within the city. Improved connectivity would provide more opportunities for residents to access transit stations and utilize transit service. While the development of the proposed trail system would improve non-motorized connectivity, the City of Decatur already exhibits excellent connectivity to transit. Existing trails connect the Avondale and East Lake MARTA stations. In addition, the Downtown Decatur station is surrounded by a highly developed sidewalk network and the majority of roads in the city feature sidewalks on at least one side of the roadway.

Emory University Campus Master Plan

The main campus of Emory University is located wholly within the heart of Clifton Corridor, and is a significant trip generator. To better prepare for future growth and development, the *Emory University Campus Master Plan Update of 2005*²⁹ builds on the school's 1998 master plan.

A cornerstone of the plan is the redevelopment of Clifton Road, which will impact travel patterns and increase the number of trips to the area. The primary change on Clifton Road will be the consolidation and relocation of Emory Hospital and Emory Clinic from the western side of Clifton Road to the eastern side. As noted in the plan, the size and scale of the Clifton Road redevelopment project will require improvement and expansion of automobile access.

Other transportation items from the Master Plan include the planned roundabout at the Dowman Drive campus entrance at Emory Village (see the Emory Village LCI section in this report for details), campus shuttle revisions, and the replacement of street parking on Fraternity Row with new bicycle lanes and sidewalks. These bicycle lanes will ultimately link to the edge of campus to join proposed DeKalb County bike paths.

CDC Roybal Campus Master Plan

²⁸ City of Decatur. *Decatur Greenway Plan* prepared by Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh and Associates. Decatur, GA: City of Decatur, 2004.

²⁹ Emory University. *Emory University Campus Master Plan 2005 Update*. Atlanta, GA: Emory University, 2005.

The *Roybal Campus Master Plan Update*³⁰ was completed in December of 2005, and provides an update to the 2000 master plan. The Edward R. Roybal Campus is the main CDC campus located on Clifton Road.

Since the 2000 plan, major factors have changed resulting in some significant departures from the previous plan. The September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks and emerging threats from biological and environmental attacks/pandemics have resulted in a major increase in congressional funding to upgrade the campus facilities. The majority of laboratory buildings on campus were built in the 1960's and are in need of modernization. The 2000 plan recommended the renovation of these facilities, but due to recent regulations regarding hazard containment and blast proofing renovating these buildings would not be practical. The 2005 plan instead calls for the demolition and complete replacement of these facilities with new modern state-of-the art laboratories that meet current standards.

The plan addresses the lack of connectivity of the CDC campus, due to the CSX rail line directly to the south. It also indicates potential future light rail and/or commuter rail along this corridor. Significant traffic congestion in the area and the need to encourage transportation alternatives are also highlighted in the plan.

Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study

The *Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study (MMCS)*³¹ was completed as part of ARC's Multi-Modal Corridor Planning Program in 2007. Buford Highway is a major north-south arterial that extends from Atlanta northeast through Gwinnett and Hall counties. Approximately 3.5 miles of Buford Highway are located in the northwestern portion of the Clifton Corridor study area, where it provides six travel lanes.

The *MMCS* identified that viable alternatives and/or parallel routes are needed for I-85 to relieve the heavily congested conditions on Buford Highway. Although transit currently serves the Buford Highway Corridor, amenities such as sidewalks, shelters, benches, trash receptacles, and route information are lacking. The *MMCS* found that there is a need for more frequent transit service and better connections for pedestrian access to bus and rail stops. Additionally, the study found that the existing land use patterns and zoning are not transit supportive.

The study made recommendations that addressed the aforementioned needs identified in the study. Most notably, the study recommended the BRT service throughout the Buford Highway Corridor, which traverses through the northwestern section of the Clifton Corridor study area. An intersection improvement is also recommended where Buford Highway meets Sidney Marcus Boulevard and North Druid Hills Road.

³⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Roybal Campus Master Plan Update 2005* prepared by Jacobs Advance Planning Group. Atlanta, GA: CDC, 2005.

³¹ Atlanta Regional Commission. *Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study Final Report* prepared by URS Corporation. Atlanta, GA: ARC, 2007.

Piedmont Area Transportation Study

The *Piedmont Area Transportation Study*³² was prepared for the Buckhead Community Improvement District and the Buckhead Area Transportation Management Association (BATMA). The study was initiated in 2007 and completed in 2008. The focus of the study was to develop recommendations for improvements to Piedmont Road in the Buckhead area of Atlanta. The roadway currently exhibits significant traffic congestion during the morning and evening peak travel times. It is forecasted to worsen significantly over the next 20 years to a point where it exhibits gridlock throughout the entire day, not just during peak hours.

Recommendations of the plan include intersection improvements, road widening to eliminate “chokepoints”, enhanced “Buc” shuttle service, queue jumper lanes for busses, increased MARTA service frequencies, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Intersection improvements that would impact the study area include the reconfiguration of the intersection of Lindbergh Drive at Piedmont Road and minor improvements at East Wesley Road at Piedmont Road. The plan identifies significant traffic congestion on Cheshire Bridge Road, Buford Highway extension, and Sidney Marcus Boulevard resulting from the lack of ramp connections between I-85 and GA 400. The plan recommends ramp connections in the long-term and interim improvements to these roadways to alleviate congestion in the short-term.

If the recommendations of the plan are followed mobility will be improved on this vital transportation link and surrounding roadways within the area. Access to the Lindbergh Transit Station, which is located on Piedmont Road, would be improved likely resulting in increased transit use at this station.

Lindbergh-LaVista Corridor Coalition Blueprints for Successful Communities

The Lindbergh-LaVista Corridor Coalition (LLCC) is an alliance of three neighborhoods in the Clifton Corridor: Lindridge-Martin Manor, LaVista Park and Woodland Hills. The LLCC developed a blueprint³³ for quality growth to manage the pressures of increased development and other shared community concerns, including walkability, accessibility to greenspace, increased vehicular traffic, inefficient roadway infrastructure, and the proposed GDOT I-85/GA 400 interchange.

The study considered the improvements to the I-85/GA 400 interchange to be one of the most impactful transportation challenges facing the LLCC study area. This report outlined two high-level solutions that could potentially be less intrusive to the surrounding area than those currently proposed by GDOT. A thorough engineering study should be completed to create new alignments using the following proposals as a guide:

- Parallel Alignment would maintain the southbound I-85 to northbound GA 400 ramp with the north fork of the ‘Y’ created where GA 400 and I-85 meet. In this case the ramp would need to start far enough back on GA 400 that it could gain sufficient elevation to cross over GA 400 and southbound I-85 before dipping back down to

³² Buckhead Community Improvement District and the Buckhead Area Transportation Management Association. *Piedmont Area Transportation Study Final Report*. Atlanta, GA: Buckhead CID and BATMA, 2008.

³³ Georgia Conservancy. *Blueprints for Successful Communities* prepared by the Lindbergh-LaVista Corridor Coalition. Atlanta, GA: Georgia Conservancy, 2008.

meet up with northbound I-85 for a left-sided entry. A right side entrance requires significant right-of-way acquisition along the north edge of the study area.

- Loop Alignment that makes use of the old Home Depot site adjacent to GA 400 for a loop ramp connecting southbound GA 400 to northbound I-85. The ramp could either use the loop to gain elevation and pass over GA 400 and southbound I-85 to meet up with northbound I-85 or it could pass under GA 400 using the existing Sidney Marcus alignment and then pass under I-85 southbound to meet up with I-85 northbound.

Relevant recommendations from this study include the following:

- Redesign Cheshire Bridge Road and Lindbergh Road/LaVista Road as multimodal corridors;
- Realign and improve these intersections: Clifton Rd. at Briarcliff Rd; Johnson Rd. at Briarcliff Rd; Lenox Rd. at Cheshire Bridge Rd.; and Executive Park Dr. at Sheridan Rd;
- Develop 'complete' bus stop sign design that incorporates route numbers, descriptions, route maps and schedules;
- Modify MARTA Bus Route #33 to bolster service on the southern portion of Cheshire Bridge Road and terminate at Lindbergh Center by way of Piedmont Avenue, which currently lacks service;
- Modify MARTA Bus Route #16 to use Chantilly and Lenox Roads to add service to Buckhead and Lenox Mall by terminating at the Lenox Station;
- Remove excessive bus stops (especially along LaVista Road) to improve traffic throughout and increase bus on-time performance; and
- Develop Green Space Plan for North Fork of Peachtree Creek along the CSX track and Georgia Power transmission easement.

In recognition of recent transit planning efforts in the Clifton Corridor, this study recommended that the proposed alignment should utilize existing MARTA and CSX right-of-way for a fixed guideway investment. This study also noted that some support did exist for fixed guideway on existing street alignments, specifically Cheshire Bridge Road. This represents a break from the findings of previous studies (especially the 2000 MARTA DeKalb MIS).

Clifton Corridor Urban Design Guidelines

The Clifton Community Partnership (CCP) was created by Emory University and surrounding neighborhoods within the Clifton community as a vehicle for managing growth and consensus building. One of the Partnership's first tasks was to develop guidelines³⁴ to foster a more walkable community and promote a wider range of housing and transportation options.

³⁴ Clifton Community Partnership. *Clifton Corridor Urban Design Guidelines* prepared by Goody Clancy. Atlanta, GA: Clifton Community Partnership, 2008.

The study made the following observations related to transportation in the Clifton Corridor:

- While MARTA and Cliff shuttles provide important transit services, their reach and ridership potential could be much improved with strategies for more convenient service.
- Lack of suitable pedestrian, bike and transit infrastructure poses hazards, limits choice, and exacerbates traffic impacts.
- There is a lack of a coordinated approach among transit providers and parking policies to provide effective and efficient service.
- Conventional engineering approaches need to be changed if corridors are to accommodate all modes of transportation (context-sensitive design).

The design guidelines identified three types of land in the Clifton community that require unique and distinct treatment: Natural Environmental Restoration Areas, Neighborhood Preservation Areas, and Corridor Enhancements Areas. General design guidelines for Corridor Enhancement Areas entail creating a human-scaled setting at street level through elements such as building setbacks and heights, sidewalk widths, street amenities, on-street parking, and roadways lane widths. Additionally, the study also focused on specific sub-districts and made recommendations based on each district's opportunities and challenges. Although varies slightly from district to district, in general, the common theme include improved street network that is more walkable and a higher density mix of uses that are transit supportive.

North Druid Hills LCI

Coincident with Atlanta's growth, North Druid Hills Road has become a regional commuter corridor used to access employment in Buckhead as well as the Clifton Corridor. North Druid Hills Road is the traditional connector between Buckhead and Emory. To this end, heavy volumes coupled with lack of limited alternatives, peak hour congestion has been a major issue in this corridor. Additionally, the North Druid Hills corridor faces significant redevelopment pressure to replace aging structures and take advantage of the corridor's central location.

The North Druid Hills LCI was awarded by ARC in February 2009 and is scheduled for completion in December 2009. While not a previous study, it merits inclusion here because its recommendations may be relevant to identifying a potential transit solution in the Clifton Corridor. Therefore, the progress of the North Druid Hills LCI will be monitored, and its findings will be incorporated into the Clifton Corridor study.

2.3 Key Findings

This final section summarizes the key findings gleaned from these aforementioned studies.

- As noted in numerous previous studies, there is general support for improved transit service in the Clifton Corridor area as well as higher density, transit-supportive land uses.
- Proving improved access to one of the region's major employment centers has been recognized as a regional need. To this end, a premium transit solution is reflected in regional plans such as the *Envison6 RTP* and *Concept 3*.

- Transit in the Clifton Corridor could have numerous opportunities to interface with other proposed transit services, providing a greater network of integrated transit in the region. The BeltLine and the Buford Highway BRT would make connections to the Clifton Corridor transit at the Lindbergh Center Station. The Athens-Atlanta Commuter Rail would directly serve the Clifton Corridor and interface with the transit at a station at Emory.
- Sharing of right-of-way with the active CSX freight trains in addition to the proposed Athens-Atlanta Commuter Rail could be a potential fatal flaw. Coordination with CSX is paramount as the region moves towards implementing transit service that would likely require public investment in the private sector rail infrastructure (e.g. Atlanta Commuter Rail, BeltLine).
- Several plans illuminate the extraordinary demand on the corridor's limited transportation facilities. Many of the major roadways in Clifton Corridor are expected to incur heavy congestion in the future from lack of planned roadway improvements, coupled with the high growth expected for the corridor. This helps provide the rationale for future transit investments in the study area.
- Land use recommendations in the area generally call for higher densities, mixed-use development, and pedestrian enhancements, which all contribute to successful transit service.