



BeltLine

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**ATLANTA BELTLINE
Agency Coordination Plan**

Prepared for:

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Coordination Plan

To provide for more efficient environmental reviews and project decision-making, Section 6002 of Public Law 104-59 “Safe, Accountable Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” (SAFETEA-LU), enacted on August 10, 2005, mandated the development of a coordination plan for all projects for which an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA).

The purpose of the Atlanta BeltLine Public Involvement and Agency Coordination Plan is to organize public and agency participation and to assure the opportunity for comment on the environmental review process for the Tier 1 NEPA EIS.

1.2 Project History

The Atlanta BeltLine would provide a new transit and trails system, forming a 22-mile loop around the central business district of the City of Atlanta. In January 2007, MARTA completed an Alternatives Analysis for the Atlanta BeltLine.¹ The analysis examined a full range of alternatives including a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative and ten Build Alternatives involving variations of alignments, station locations, mode and equipment and operating plans. Each alternative was evaluated according to its potential performance in four categories: mobility and accessibility, land use and redevelopment, environmental effects, and cost effectiveness.

Extensive public outreach and input was sought to inform the Alternatives Analysis evaluations. Key themes that shaped the outcome of the Alternatives Analysis included a mode preference for streetcar or light rail, opposition to bus rapid transit, alignment preferences, desire for compatibility with land use and multi-modal connectivity, and overall public support for the project.

The Purpose and Need of the Atlanta BeltLine is to improve local and regional mobility, address accessibility and connectivity, and support the City of Atlanta’s redevelopment plans. Alternatives were examined using a wide range of criteria including potential ridership, effect on existing transit facilities, travel time savings, transit dependent service, transit supportive land use, development incentives, noise and air quality, community impacts and disruptions, effects on cultural and natural resources, traffic congestion effects, capital costs, operating and maintenance costs, cost effectiveness, and other factors.

At the conclusion of the Alternatives Analysis, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Board of Directors selected the B3 Alternative (Lindbergh-to-Lindbergh Loop via Inman Park/Reynoldstown) as its Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). This decision was based on B3 being the best performing alternative and

¹ Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, January 2007. *Inner Core BeltLine Alternatives Analysis: Detailed Screening Results and Selection of Locally Preferred Alternative*. Prepared for MARTA by URS Corporation.

preferred by the public and major stakeholders. The advantages of the PA compared to the other alternatives are that it would:

- Provide a continuous transit and trails loop as prescribed in the original Atlanta BeltLine concept;
- Generate the highest ridership;
- Indicate a transit permanence (via rail technology) which is desired by developers of transit-oriented development;
- Increase transit accessibility and connectivity to and within 45 neighborhoods;
- Be predominantly contained within the approved Tax Allocation District;
- Be supported by the City of Atlanta and the BeltLine Partners;
- Be strongly supported by the community and businesses

1.3 Key Resource Concerns

As part of the NEPA process, affected environment, impacts and mitigation will be evaluated for transportation, and natural and built environment elements within the project study area. The Tier 1 EIS will contain discussion on the following topics: transportation; land and water resources; geology and soils; visual; air quality; noise and vibration; energy; hazardous materials; historical and archaeological resources; parklands; land use and zoning; displacements and relocations; environmental justice; utilities and public services; construction impacts; secondary and cumulative impacts; and other considerations.

2.0 AGENCY COORDINATION

During Public Involvement for the BeltLine Project, federal, state and local agencies that may have jurisdiction by law, special expertise or other interest in the environmental review process and its outcomes will be identified. Actions that will be taken to involve these agencies in the environmental study process will also be identified.

2.1 List of Agencies, Roles and Responsibilities

SAFETEA-LU requires the identification of Lead, Cooperating, and Participating agencies in the development of an EIS. A description of the roles and responsibilities of each is provided in the following sections.

2.1.1 Lead Agencies

For the Atlanta BeltLine, the Lead Agencies include the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) with MARTA. Under SAFETEA-LU, Lead Agencies must perform the functions that they have traditionally performed in preparing an EIS in accord with 23 CFR 771 and 40 CFR parts 1500-1508. In addition, the Lead Agencies must do the following:

- Identify and determine which federal, state, and local agencies will serve as joint Lead Agencies, Project Sponsors, Cooperating Agencies, and Participating Agencies. Agencies have 30 days to accept and identify a contact person or decline in writing.
- Develop a Coordination Plan.
- Provide opportunities for public and Cooperating and Participating Agency involvement in defining the Purpose and Need and determining the range of alternatives.
- Collaborate with Cooperating and Participating Agencies in determining methodologies and the level of detail for the analysis of EIS alternatives.
- Provide increased oversight in managing the process and resolving issues.

2.1.2 Cooperating Agencies

According to CEQ regulations, 40 CFR 1508.5), a Cooperating Agency is any federal agency, other than a Lead Agency, that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise with respect to any environmental impact involved in a proposed project or project alternative. A state or local agency of similar qualifications or, when the effects are on lands of tribal interest, a Native American tribe may, by agreement with the Lead Agencies, also become a Cooperating Agency.

A distinguishing feature of a Cooperating Agency is that the CEQ regulations, 40 CFR 1501.6, permit a Cooperating agency to “assume on request of the Lead Agency responsibility for developing information and preparing environmental analyses including portions of the EIS concerning which the Cooperating agency has special expertise.” An additional distinction is that, pursuant to 40 CFR 1506.3, “a Cooperating Agency may adopt, without re-circulating, the EIS of a Lead Agency when, after an independent

review of the EIS, the Cooperating Agency concludes that its comments and suggestions have been satisfied.” This provision is particularly important to permitting agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who, as a Cooperating agency, routinely adopts U.S. Department of Transportation environmental documents.

Table 2-1 lists the lead, Cooperating Agencies in the environmental review process for the Atlanta BeltLine along with their associated roles and responsibilities.

Table 2-1: Cooperating Agencies

Agency	Responsibilities
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Provide comments on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purpose and Need ▪ Range of Alternatives ▪ The PAIC ▪ Methodologies ▪ Level of detail for analysis of alternatives ▪ Identification of issues that could substantially delay or prevent granting of permit/approval. ▪ Opportunities for collaboration ▪ Mitigation
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Region 3	Same as FHWA
National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office Planning and Compliance Division	Same as FHWA
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of the Army	Same as FHWA. Potential to adopt the Tier 1 EIS and coordinate public outreach when possible.
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4	Same as FHWA. Responsible for the approval of construction within Sole Source Aquifers. Responsible for the federal review of the Section 404/10 Corps Permit Process.
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Same as FHWA. Responsible for the determination of potential project effects on federally listed threatened and endangered species.

2.1.3 Participating Agencies

Participating Agencies are those with an interest in the project. The standard for Participating Agency status is more encompassing than the standard for Cooperating Agency status described above. Therefore, Cooperating Agencies are, by definition, Participating agencies, but not all Participating Agencies are Cooperating Agencies. The Lead Agencies should consider the distinctions noted below in deciding whether to invite an agency to serve as a Cooperating Agency or only as a Participating Agency.

The roles and responsibilities of Cooperating and Participating agencies are similar, but Cooperating Agencies have a higher degree of authority, responsibility and involvement in the environmental review process. In general, Participating Agencies are responsible

for commenting on the environmental documentation produced as part of the project. This includes:

- Purpose and Need;
- Range of Alternatives;
- The PAIC;
- Methodologies;
- Level of detail for analysis of alternatives;
- Identification of issues that could substantially delay or prevent granting of permit/approval;
- Opportunities for collaboration; and
- Mitigation.

The Participating Agencies identified for the BeltLine Project are as follows:

Federal

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - Regional Office of Environment
- National Center for Environmental Health (CDC)
- U.S. Department of the Interior- Office of Environmental Policy & Compliance
- U.S. Geological Survey, Environmental Affairs Program
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (If Regulatory Floodways)

State

- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Office of the Commissioner
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Environmental Protection Division
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Historic Preservation Division
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Wildlife Resources Division
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Natural Heritage Program
- Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Floodplain Management Office (If Regulatory Floodways)
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)
- Georgia Forestry Commission
- Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA)
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA)

Fulton County

- Fulton County Department of Environment & Community Development
- Fulton County Parks and Recreation

- Fulton County Public Works (if transportation included)
- Atlanta Fulton County Emergency Management Agency

DeKalb County

- DeKalb County Planning & Development Department

Regional

- Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)
- Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA)

City of Atlanta

- Atlanta BeltLine Inc.
- City of Atlanta Department of Planning and Community Development
- Atlanta Development Authority (ADA)
- Atlanta Housing Authority (AHA)
- City of Atlanta Department of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs
- City of Atlanta Public Works

The following public agencies have been identified as Section 106 Consulting Parties and will be consulted throughout the project: Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, National Park Service, and Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division. These agencies have jurisdiction on historic architectural and archaeological resources. Other consulting parties, including private entities, may be identified and engaged throughout the project as the need arises.

3.0 COORDINATION POINTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PROJECT SCHEDULE

SAFETEA-LU establishes milestones within the environmental review process for involvement and review opportunities. Table 3-1 summarizes the key coordination points between the Lead Agencies, Cooperating Agencies, Participating Agencies and the public including which agency is responsible for activities during that coordination point. Estimated dates are included for informational and resource planning purposes. Time frames and review periods are established in accordance with SAFETEA-LU.

Table 3-1: NEPA Coordination Action Plan

Coordination Point	Initiation Date	Originating Agency	Receiving Agency	Task	Anticipated Completion
Notice of Initiation Letter	July 2008	MARTA	FTA	Letter sent to FTA; FTA acknowledges receipt in writing	July 2008
Notice of Intent to Prepare Tier 1 EIS	July 2008	MARTA	FTA	NOI to be drafted by MARTA, reviewed and accepted by FTA; published in Federal Register	July 2008
Identification of Participating and Cooperating Agencies	July 2008	MARTA	Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Invitation letter sent by MARTA, agencies have 30 days to accept and identify a contact person or decline in writing	Ongoing
Coordination Plan Including Schedule	July 2008	MARTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Coordination Plan issued by MARTA, subject to up-date during Scoping based on comments	September 2008
NEPA Scoping Meetings	August 2008	MARTA/FTA	Public	Scoping meetings will be held; comments will be taken on the Scoping Booklet including Purpose and Need, Range of Alternatives, and Coordination Plan. A Scoping Summary Report will be drafted	September 2008
Purpose and Need	July 2008	MARTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Comments will be accepted as part of the Scoping process	October 2008
Range of Alternatives	July 2008	MARTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Comments will be accepted as part of the Scoping process	October 2008
Assessment Methodologies	July 2008	MARTA	Permitting Agencies, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Develop methodologies in cooperation with permitting agencies and agencies with federally recognized guidance or jurisdiction. Additional methodologies will be developed or refined as a result of tiering on an as needed basis with comment from Cooperating and Participating agencies	October 2008
Identify Preferred Alternative	TBD	MARTA	FTA/ Cooperating Agencies	Cooperating agencies to comment on Preferred Alternative	October 2009

Coordination Point	Initiation Date	Originating Agency	Receiving Agency	Task	Anticipated Completion
Administrative Tier 1 DEIS	TBD	MARTA/FTA	Cooperating Agencies	Working draft issued for high level review and comment; may be issued on a chapter by chapter basis	November 2009
Tier 1 DEIS Circulation	TBD	MARTA/FTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Public hearing and comment period	December 2009
Administrative Tier 1 FEIS	TBD	MARTA/FTA	Cooperating Agencies	Working draft issued for high level review and comment; may be issued on a chapter by chapter basis	February 2010
Tier 1 FEIS Circulation	TBD	MARTA/FTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	Review period	February 2010
Tier 1 Record of Decision	TBD	MARTA/FTA	Public, Participating and Cooperating Agencies	FTA publishes Notice in Federal Register; starts 180 day clock for legal challenges	April 2010

3.1 Project Schedule

The project schedule includes milestones for the Tier 1 EIS and GEPA Environmental Effects Report (EER) for the Northeast Quadrant. Key milestones include:

- GEPA Process (Northeast Quadrant)
 - Publication of the GEPA EER and beginning of public comment period is anticipated in January 2009
 - 45-Day public comment period for the GEPA EER is anticipated to end in March 2009
 - Public Hearing for the GEPA EER is anticipated in March 2009
 - Selection of the Preferred Alternative is anticipated in April 2009
 - Publication of the GEPA Notice of Decision is anticipated in April 2009
- Tier 1 NEPA Process
 - Announcement of the Tier 1 Preferred Alternative is anticipated in October 2009
 - Publication of the Tier 1 DEIS and beginning of public comment period is anticipated in December 2009
 - Public Hearing for the Tier 1 DEIS is anticipated in November/December 2009
 - 45-day public comment period is anticipated to end in January 2010
 - Publication of the Tier 1 FEIS is anticipated in April 2010
 - Publication of the Record of Decision is anticipated in April 2010

Figure 3-1: Atlanta BeltLine Milestone Schedule

