



# Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation

Non-Profit Advocate Of Lower Property Taxes In Atlanta/Fulton County



December 2011

## The Beltline is NOW 3.667 Billion Dollars!!



# **The Beltline NOW Costs \$3.667 Billion !**

## **\*Plus \$26 Million Annual Operating & Maintenance Costs**

The Atlanta Beltline's web-site indicated the total cost of the Beltline will be \$2.8 billion. Now a new 684-page study by the Federal Transit Administration, indicates that the revised Beltline will cost \$3.667 billion with operating and maintenance costs per year of \$26 million.

The Federal Transit Administration has recently prepared a detailed Environmental Impact Statement for the Atlanta Beltline taking into account the Beltline's proposal for new transit stations at Howell Junction, Marietta Boulevard, and Atlantic Station.

This 684-page Statement is very detailed and takes hours to absorb adequately. Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D. authored it for the Regional Administrator, Region 4, Federal Transit Administration. Dr. Taylor deserves the highest commendation of the taxpayers.

### **Costs Estimated By Federal Transit Administration**

After in-depth review of the Project Needs, the Alternatives Considered, the Affected Environment, the Secondary & Cumulative Effects, the Construction Impacts, Preliminary Evaluation of Alternatives, the Statement presents in Section 7-16, a "Preliminary Cost Estimates for each Transit Build Alternatives." The three Alternatives include Howell Junction, Marietta Boulevard, and Atlantic Station. "The estimates consider typical unit costs for similar transit systems expressed in 2009 dollars". The costs of alignment specific needs associating with implementing each of the alternatives, such as bridges and tunnels were considered. These cost estimates on Table 7-13 were calculated for the entire Beltline corridor including the new stations:

Howell Junction (B) Light Rail Transit Costs	\$1.787 Billion
Howell Junction (B) Modern Streetcar Costs	\$1.571 Billion
Marietta Boulevard (D) Light Rail Transit Costs	\$1.792 Billion
Marietta Boulevard (D) Modern Streetcar Costs	\$1.611 Billion
Atlantic Station (F) Light Rail Transit Costs	\$1.760 Billion
Atlantic Station (F) Modern Streetcar Costs	\$1.578 Billion

Table 7-14 indicates the "Capital Cost Estimates, Trail Alternatives" will cost \$264 Million (\$129 Million for the Trails to include Marietta Boulevard and Howell Junction and \$135 Million for "On-Street" Trails).

In addition to these huge costs, the report indicates on Table 7-15 the Preliminary Cost Estimates for Operating & Maintenance of the Beltline Transit System with the added Howell Junction, Marietta Boulevard, and Atlantic Station will be \$26 million per year.

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## Unknown Additional Costs

The Report indicates that each of the Transit Alternatives (Howell Mill, Marietta Boulevard and Atlantic Station) “would require approximately 47 acres of Right Of Way in the northeast, southeast, and southwest zones. The Northwest Zone will require approximately 25 acres of Right Of Way while the other Transit Alternatives would require approximately 23 acres of Right Of Way. Each Trail Build Alternative would require approximately 25 acres of Right of Way in the Northeast, Southeast, and Southwest Zones.” The large Right of Ways will add multi millions of dollars to the cost of the Beltline.

## The Beltline Will NOT Provide Mobility & Access!

The Report mentions that the proposed Beltline is “frequently fragmented by major physical barriers, i.e., interstate highways and abandoned railroad lines and yards.” It is also faced with “discontinuous local roadway and superblock development patterns.” These deficiencies are particularly difficult adjacent to the proposed Atlanta Beltline railroad corridors where the continuity is broken by numerous large tracts of industrial land and the high density of railroad Right of Way that have few existing crossings. The Report also mentions that the proposed Beltline “provides service to the Central Business District rather than circulation to other activity centers in the City.” Finally, the Report states “Non-motorized access options are limited as a result of discontinuous or absent links in the City’s pedestrian and bicycle network, making walk access to activity centers and the rail and bus system challenging.”

## Proposed Funding

The Bond Market is extremely weak and the Beltline shows a \$54 million deficit as of a 6/30/10 Independent Audit would not be of interest to bond buyers. To expect federal funding when the federal debt is \$14 trillion is unrealistic. To look to the tax increment to fund the project is also unrealistic when the City’s own Feasibility Study by a committee of professional economists, chaired by the highly-respected Dr. Catherine Ross concluded “The amount of revenue to be generated from the Beltline Tax Allocation District is expected to cover only about half the funding of what will be needed.” The Beltline’s web-site indicates that “the City has already invested \$165 Million in the Beltline”, but in the November 18<sup>th</sup> AJC it is reported on page 1 of the Metro Section that “the City’s acting Chief Financial Officer projects a shortfall in the 2012 City Budget.”

## Conclusion

**The November 2011 American Bar Association Journal contains a major article titled “Municipalities Across The Country Are Running Out of Money.” In the midst of the worst recession since 1929, the Taxpayers Foundation strongly urges the Mayor and the City Council to reconsider the unaffordable \$3.66 Billion for the Beltline. The Foundation supports the lake and greenway but we feel that the \$3.66 Billion for the Light Rail and Streetcar together with the \$26 Million annual operating and maintenance costs will negatively affect the City’s financial stability and may further burden the City’s taxpayers.**

**John Sherman, President**



# *Our 2011 Accomplishments*



**MORE PROP-  
ERTY TAX  
CLASSES!**



**1ST EDCUA-  
TION FO-  
RUM WITH  
DEANS!**



**1ST TOWN  
HALL  
MEETING!**



**PROPERTY  
TAX APPEAL  
SUCCESS  
RATE 95%!**



**UNCOVERED  
BELTLINE  
COST OF  
\$3.667 BIL-  
LION!**



**APPEAL  
CASES UP  
40.66%!**



**STOPPED  
COMMER-  
CIAL ABATE-  
MENTS!**



**AWARDS TO  
THE PRESI-  
DENT AND  
EXC. DIR.!**

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