



# Public Transportation 2018

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# INTRODUCTION

Atlanta's Transportation Plan is the access strategy for Atlanta City Design. The Plan is divided into a concise final report and a series of detailed technical appendices. The final report summarizes Atlanta's Transportation Plan in an easily digestible manner using infographics, maps, and images and is intended for the general public and elected officials. The technical memorandums are intended for planners, City staff, and implementation partners that require a higher level of detail.

As part of Atlanta's Transportation Plan, this technical appendix outlines current public transportation infrastructure, funding, and planning. The document reviews current projects in the pipeline, and provides recommendations for the City of Atlanta to prioritize public transportation corridors needed to support Atlanta City Design growth projections. With more people and jobs in the region, high capacity transit that is direct, frequent, and provides reasonable travel times will be critical to meeting travel demand. This technical report describes the existing public transportation services, conditions, needs and opportunities where public transportation can continue to be expanded as a critical element of achieving the City's future vision.

## BACKGROUND

Public transportation provides important access and connectivity to essential destinations throughout Atlanta and the surrounding metropolitan region. Public transportation has the potential to serve many of Atlanta's transportation needs in a way that is more compact and energy-efficient than through automobiles. This is especially true given the concentration of employment in the Atlanta region in business and industrial districts along the MARTA North-South rail corridor, the spine of the region's public transportation network.

Public transportation is expected to serve the greatest role of any single mode in reducing single occupant vehicles (SOV) use. The Multimodal Urban Growth methodology developed for Atlanta's Transportation Plan forecasted travel demand from increased population and employment growth. The results found public transportation will meet the largest share of all travel demand in excess of what the roadway network can accommodate. Currently, 10% of trips in Atlanta are taken by transit, while in peer cities like Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, 20%–38% of trips are on transit. With the additional investments in transit around the City as well as forecasted population and employment growth, this figure is expected to grow from 10% of trips to almost 24% in the future.

It is important to note that currently, and for the foreseeable future, the City of Atlanta does not serve as the primary provider of public transportation service in the City. MARTA fills this role and leads most public transportation decision-making processes that affect the City. However, Atlanta's Transportation Plan takes a fully multimodal perspective and, in so doing, will make

recommendations for public transportation intended to support MARTA's own analysis, planning, and project development efforts. The City and MARTA should continue to coordinate on how best to serve the City's travel demand through public transportation. For example, funding through the recently passed ½ percent sales tax increase dedicated to MARTA (known as MORE MARTA) can be used to expand the frequency and reliability of the transit network and a robust transportation demand management program (TDM) implemented by the City can incentivize its use.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Through conversations and interactions with over 2,000 people in Atlanta, there was widespread interest in ensuring public transportation remained a key component of the transportation system. Many people were familiar with the MARTA system and wanted to see increased services around the City to increase its use.

- 25% of the 2,608 survey participants use MARTA at least once a week, while **95% of participants have tried MARTA at least once.**
- Transit was the top transportation investment survey participants would like to see more of in Atlanta. Three quarters of survey participants from all areas of the City wanted **to expand rail transit infrastructure (77%).**
- When asked about incentives that would cause them to choose to take transit to work each day, **83% of survey participants indicated having a rail station located near home and work.** Still, 58% reported faster travel times on board rail service would induce them to use more transit and 44% if employers paid for transit passes.

This broad support for public transit, coupled with the City's financial commitment to funding this transit system was used in the development of the recommendations in Atlanta's Transportation Plan. Existing plans and projects were combined and evaluated as a component of meeting the City's expected travel demand in the future with increased population and employment.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS


This section provides an overview of existing public transportation services, infrastructure, ridership, and access. It is based on ridership information that MARTA and other public transportation agencies provided as of late 2016.

## CURRENT PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS

As the hub of the region, Atlanta is served by multiple public transportation providers with both local service and regional connections. The major provider of public transportation services in the City is the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), which is also the primary provider in Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton Counties. The City also has regional public transportation connections provided by CobbLINC in Cobb County, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). In addition, the City of Atlanta owns and MARTA operates the Atlanta Streetcar, a 2.7-mile loop (as of mid-2017) in and adjacent to Downtown Atlanta.




Most of these services are concentrated in Downtown and Midtown, particularly surrounding rail stations. All MARTA local bus routes feed into one or more rail stations to promote system connectivity, and regional services provide direct access to Downtown and Midtown. The area with the least public transportation coverage is north Atlanta between I-75 and GA-400. Southwest Atlanta has local service, but no rapid public transportation or direct access to regional services.

**TABLE 1: PRIMARY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICE PROVIDERS**

Provider	Service Area	Average System Wide Weekday Trips <sup>1</sup>
 <b>Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority</b>	Regional rail and local fixed route bus services within the City limits as well as throughout Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton Counties	415,000

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Transit Database, 2014 Reporting Year

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 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Georgia Regional Transportation Authority</b></p>	<p>Provides regional express commuter bus service (GRTA Xpress) from outlying counties into Downtown and Midtown Atlanta</p>	<p>7,000</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Atlanta Streetcar</b></p>	<p>Provides a streetcar service that circulates between Peachtree Center, Centennial Olympic Park, and the MLK Historic District</p>	<p>1,000</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CobbLinc</b></p>	<p>Provides regional services into Cobb County and local service in Cobb County</p>	<p>13,000</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gwinnett County Transit</b></p>	<p>Provides regional services into Gwinnett County and local service in Gwinnett County.</p>	<p>6,650</p>

## Public Transportation Fare Media

MARTA introduced the Breeze public transportation fare collection system in 2006. Although non-MARTA providers continue to accept cash fare payments as their primary means of fare collection, the Breeze Card has since become a regional fare medium, available for use on MARTA, GRTA, GCT, and CobbLinc services for local fares and regional transfers. Additionally, ARC and GRTA have launched ATLtransit.org to facilitate the planning of regional trips and connecting through multiple public transportation providers.

Breeze's technology allows MARTA to work with other public transportation systems in the region allowing customers to travel throughout the Metro Area using one fare card.<sup>2</sup> Every agency, except the Atlanta Streetcar, issues free transfers when a trip involves MARTA. Every Breeze Card and Ticket comes with four transfers, meaning users can change bus routes or

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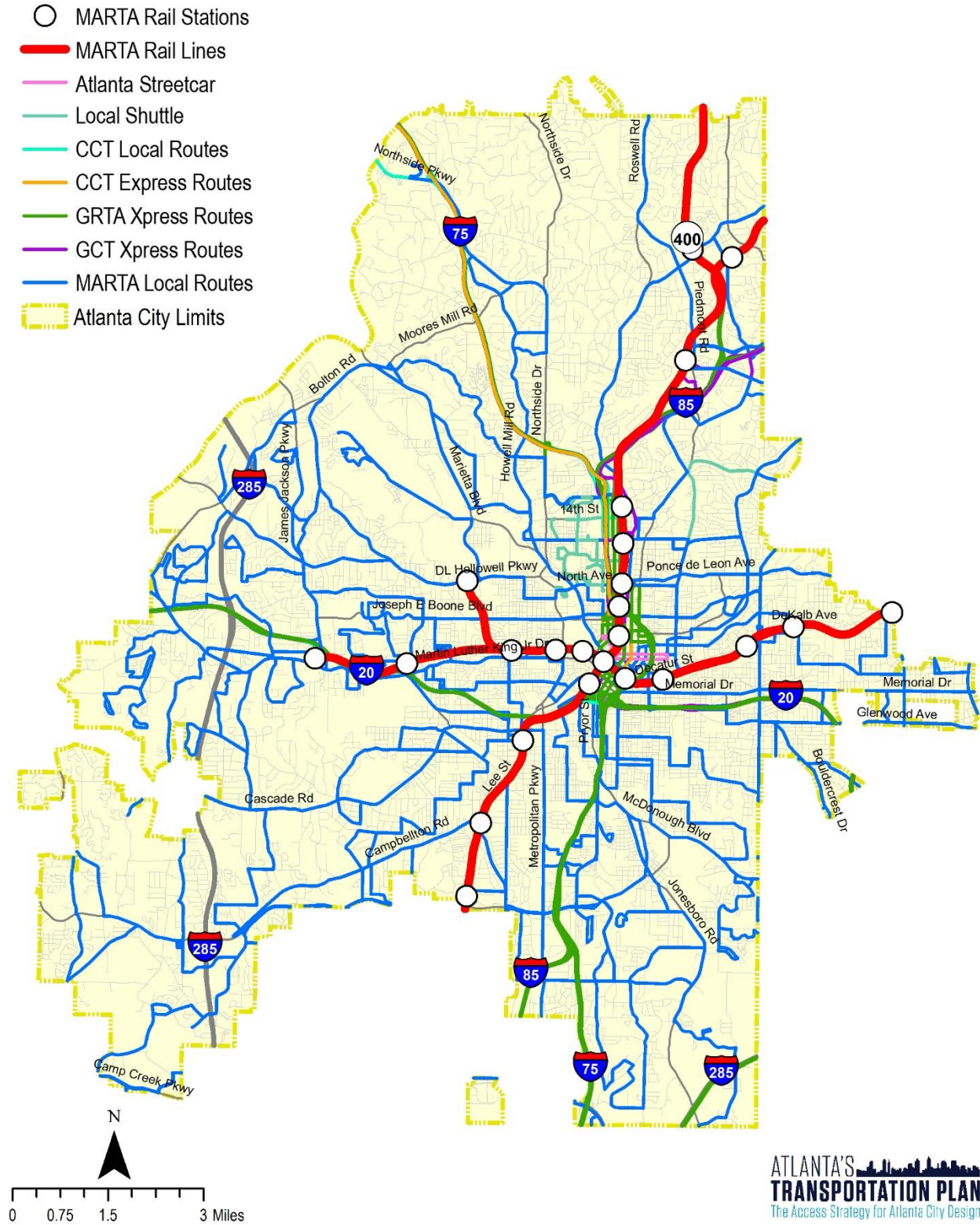
<sup>2</sup>Breeze Card Transfer Policies - [http://www.breezecard.com/terms\\_conditons.aspx#ticket](http://www.breezecard.com/terms_conditons.aspx#ticket)

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switch from bus to train (and vice versa) without using extra fare. Riders without a Breeze Card must pay the applicable fare to board and another fare when transferring.<sup>3</sup>

# ATLANTA'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**FIGURE 1 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ROUTES IN ATLANTA**





# TYPES OF SERVICE

## Rail

MARTA operates a heavy rail network consisting of two trunk corridors, each of which has a branch operated as a separately-identified 'line' (named by colors). The north-south trunk line, consisting of Red and Gold Line services, begins at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport just south of the City limits and continues north to Lindbergh Center in the City's Buckhead community; north of Lindbergh Center the Red Line north branch continues to the Perimeter Center business district and the Gold Line northeast branch continues to Doraville. After 9pm, the Red Line terminates at Lindbergh Center and a transfer to the Gold Line is required to continue south. The east-west trunk line, consisting of Blue and Green Line services, begins at Indian Creek station in DeKalb County and continues west to Hamilton E. Holmes station. Blue Line service serves the entirety of this corridor, and Green Line service operates on a northwest branch to Bankhead Station and overlaps the Blue Line from just east of Ashby station<sup>4</sup> to Edgewood-Candler Park Station in the west. Both trunk lines cross at the Five Points station in downtown Atlanta, which is also a major MARTA bus transfer center.

The rail network's service is a hybrid of local rapid public transportation and commuter rail, the latter being due to the long distances from the urban core and long spacing distances and relatively suburban settings of some of the outer stations. This system design is similar to the heavy rail systems in the Washington D.C. and San Francisco Bay areas, which were planned and constructed in the same general time period as MARTA's network. Together, these cities have public transportation systems with a much greater reach than those in older American metropolitan areas.

Rail service frequency is highest on the north-south trunk line where there is overlapping Gold and Red Line service through the Downtown-Midtown urban core. There are presently five to seven minute headways during peak times and 10- to 12-minute headways in typical off-peak times in this area.

## Local Bus

MARTA operates 97 bus routes in its system, with 61 of these entirely or partly within the City. MARTA's local bus service has historically emphasized coverage of the City, especially in neighborhoods with relatively high levels of public transportation demand. The bus network has been based on connections to rail stations, with all routes connecting to one or more stations. However, with the completion of its 2016 Comprehensive Operation Analysis and subsequent Transit Development Plan, the agency has begun implementing a greater diversity of service types, ranging from limited-stop Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) on primary thoroughfares to

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<sup>4</sup> The eastern end of Green Line service varies depending on time of day and service run: some runs extend to Candler Park station, others to King Memorial, and late-night services shuttle between Bankhead and Ashby stations.

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shorter-length neighborhood circulator routes. This implementation is ongoing and expected to be supported by additional resources related to the MORE MARTA program, described in the following section on Planned Public Transportation Services.

Current local bus service varies in frequency throughout the system as well as by time of day. During peak hours, there are multiple routes with headways of 15 minutes or less in north, west, southwest, and southeast Atlanta, though outside of peak hours some of these routes use longer headways.

Most local bus routes provide service with headways between 20 and 30 minutes throughout the system during peak hours in all parts of the City. As a rule, this service is concentrated on major corridors and into high-demand areas of the City. Routes focused more directly on service to neighborhoods tend to feature lower frequencies and more limited service spans.

### Express Bus

The three primary non-MARTA operators (CobbLinc, GCT and GRTA) provide express services into major employment districts in the City, especially Downtown and Midtown.

GRTA operates a one-of-a-kind commuter bus system throughout the Atlanta region, based on closed-door (express) service from outlying suburban park-and-ride locations to major employment centers such as Downtown, Midtown, and Perimeter Center north of the City. GRTA does not currently provide direct service to Buckhead, although past planning efforts have recommended that such service be introduced.

### Local Circulators

In addition to the fixed-routes and express services, multiple organizations including MARTA provide local circulator service, especially connecting to university campuses and major employment districts. These circulator services are generally designed to connect to a MARTA rail station or other major transportation facility, although some serve short-distance trips more generally within a limited area.

## RIDERSHIP

By ridership, MARTA is the 9<sup>th</sup> largest public transportation agency in the United States, with approximately 415,000 average weekday unlinked trips throughout the system. MARTA does not collect or report data for trips entirely within the City of Atlanta, though based on bus stop and rail station-specific data, approximately 78,000 bus boardings and 155,000 rail boardings occur on an average weekday within the City; these numbers may include transfers.

For a relatively young public transportation system, MARTA's ridership patterns are unusual in that the system sees higher rail ridership than bus ridership: of its 415,000 average weekday unlinked trips, approximately 232,000 are rail trips and 183,000 are bus trips. The American

public transportation systems that follow this kind of pattern are those in New York, Washington, and Boston – cities with higher population and employment density in their central cities, a greater number and density of rapid public transportation corridors, and higher costs of parking and driving than in Atlanta. Public transportation systems in less dense cities tend to feature much greater bus ridership than rail, typically because of the geographic extent of the bus network area compared to the corridor-specific rail service areas. Most cities rely more heavily on their bus networks to serve entire trips, where Atlanta's public transportation system features heavy use of its rail corridors to complete longer trips across the City.

The City's other public transportation providers carry a more modest ridership in the City, although they are also providing much more limited service options, typically focused on weekday peak travel hours. In spite of the size of the MARTA system, Atlanta's ridership translates to a more limited mode share than cities with major public transportation systems, especially those with heavy rail, such as Washington D.C. or Chicago.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

With public transportation expected to serve an increasingly important role in meeting Atlanta's mobility needs, it is important to understand the limitations currently in the system as well as opportunities for the system to expand and capture more of the City's travel demand. Modeling completed as a component of Atlanta's Transportation Plan found that expanded transit facilities coupled with strong incentives and information about the service, could increase transit mode share from 10% of trips to almost 24% in the future.

### Service Quality and Frequency

The high frequency of the rail network, especially the north-south trunk line, is among the best public transportation service in the United States outside of the country's legacy rail public transportation cities. Even when considering cities with more established public transportation networks, few can offer single-seat rapid public transportation service between an airport and four major employment districts (which, in the aggregate, provided over 300,000 jobs as of 2016).

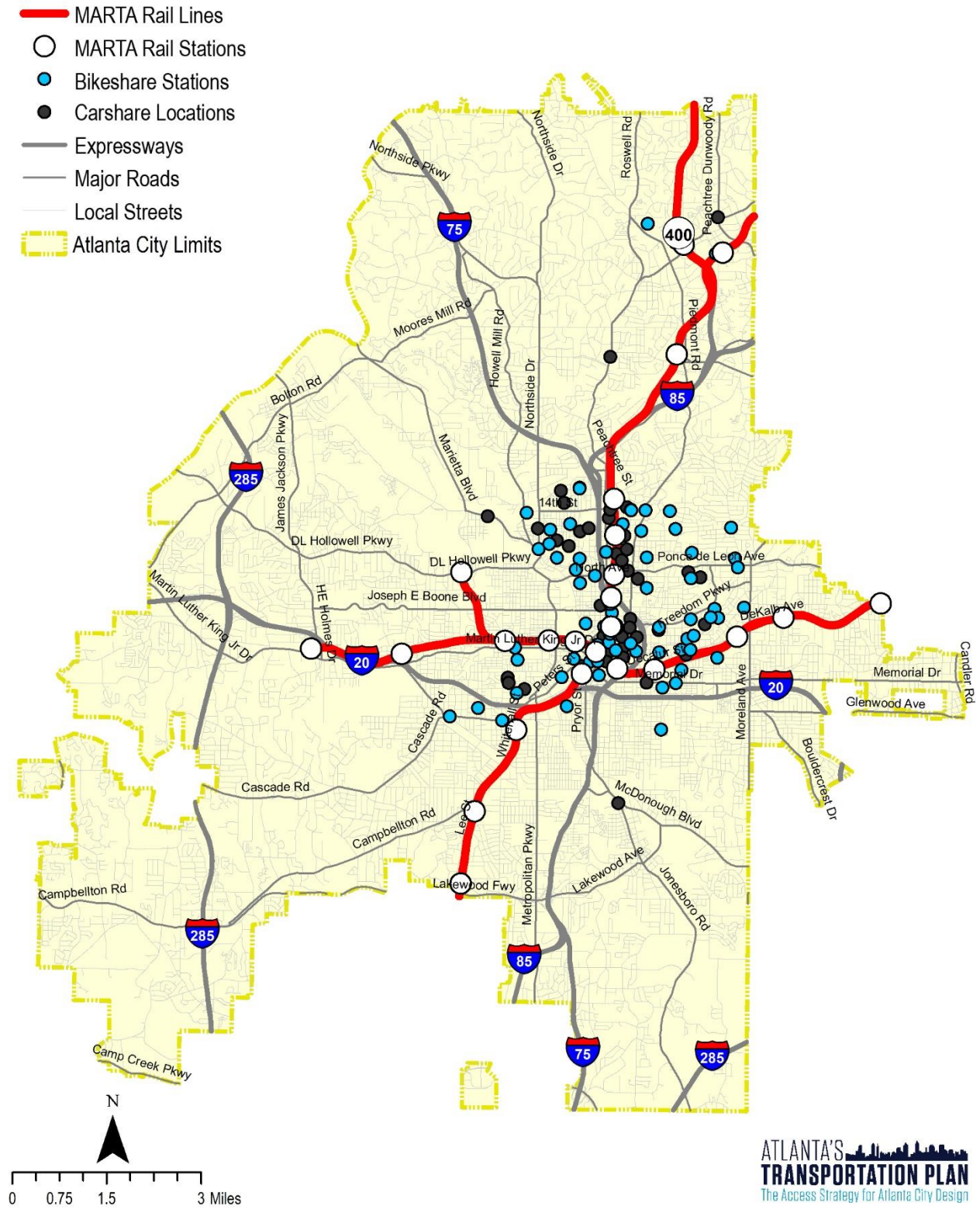
However, this frequency of service is limited to the two trunk corridors and is not reflected in the connecting bus network, which serves a much larger area of the City. This is not unusual among American public transportation systems, although it does effectively limit the reach of convenient, fast public transportation service to the rail corridors. As most bus routes in the City operate no more frequently than every 20 minutes in peak hour service, with many operating less frequently than this, the time savings of the rail network can quickly be lost if riders are reliant on connecting buses to reach a destination.

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For this reason, the More MARTA program has reserved a portion of its funding for improving frequency on existing fixed-route service, realizing the need to address this challenge. This includes upgrading service on key routes to an Arterial Rapid Transit service type, intended to combine higher public transportation frequencies with operational improvements such as stop consolidation and traffic signal timing assistance.

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**FIGURE 2 MARTA RAIL STATIONS & EXISTING BIKESHARE AND CARSHARE LOCATIONS**



## Rail Station Access and Development

Of the 38 stations in the MARTA rail system, 24 are in the City of Atlanta<sup>5</sup>. Most of these outside of the Downtown-Midtown urban core feature in-station bus transfer facilities as well as parking and kiss-and-ride facilities for automobile commuters. The stations in the immediate core are more oriented to pedestrian access; even the Five Points station, which features transfers to multiple bus routes, does not contain bus bays and uses the surrounding street network for bus staging and access. Three downtown Atlanta stations (Garnett, Peachtree Center and Civic Center) are entirely 'walk-up' stations with no formally designated connecting local bus service.

However, many rail stations within the City are designed as automobile-serving facilities, with customer parking, kiss-and-ride and bus driveways surrounding the main stations. Parking is not heavily used at many of these stations, leading to large lots between streets, sidewalks, and the public transportation facilities. The stations are generally well designed to facilitate bus-to-rail transfers and are convenient for automobile access, but these facilities separate the surrounding neighborhood environments from the stations, especially for pedestrians.

In response to this condition of many of the public transportation stations, and in an effort to capture increasing development activity within Atlanta's urban core, MARTA is pursuing multiple transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities within the City, emphasizing infill on existing surface parking lots on station properties, such as at Edgewood-Candler Park, King Memorial Station, Lindbergh and Arts Center Stations. This is intended not only to build ridership by increasing density at stations, but also to improve the overall walkability of larger surrounding station areas, thus further increasing the stations' reach to non-driving public transportation riders.

MARTA has a defined set of guidelines that provide a framework for designing and constructing successful TOD projects. These guidelines focus on creating developments that benefit MARTA and the surrounding communities and are built on four foundational principles:

- Station-area development that is compact and dense relative to its surroundings, increasing public transportation ridership through more residents and employees located conveniently relative to public transportation stations.
- A rich mix of land uses promoting shorter trips between complementary uses, and therefore less reliance on driving and a greater propensity for 'lifestyle public transportation' riders who choose to live without private vehicles.
- A high-quality public realm that supports broader patterns of access to public transportation stations from surrounding neighborhoods.
- A new approach to parking that lessens the emphasis on one-for-one replacement of parking spaces removed when surface lots are redeveloped.

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<sup>5</sup> This includes the East Lake station, which is in both the City of Atlanta and the City of Decatur.

## Last-Mile Connectivity

There are currently 65 bikeshare stations and 55 carshare locations within a quarter mile of MARTA stations within the City, and even more throughout the Downtown and Midtown areas. The Atlanta Relay bikeshare stations are concentrated in Downtown and West End with a recent expansion into Midtown. Carshare stations are concentrated in Downtown, Midtown and eastside neighborhoods in the City.

In addition, the Atlanta Streetcar features twelve stations along its existing route between Centennial Olympic Park and the Sweet Auburn historic district. One station is directly adjacent to an entrance to the Peachtree Center MARTA rail station. The streetcar stations are elevated platforms that allow for level boarding. Each station has a shelter and ticket vending machines.<sup>6</sup> In the long term, the streetcar system is envisioned as a more extensive network throughout the City. Planning is currently underway on three extension routes.

**FIGURE 3 ATLANTA STREETCAR STATION**



However, even with these connecting opportunities to public transportation, last-mile connectivity remains a challenge in Atlanta, with many bus routes featuring significantly lesser frequencies than rail (as previously described). Rail stations outside of the Downtown and Midtown urban core are generally located adjacent to connecting thoroughfare streets, although some of these feature designs that make pedestrian access difficult. This effectively limits access to the frequent service offered on the rail lines and in turn limits the appeal of public transportation to choice riders who may also have access to automobiles.

<sup>6</sup> [http://streetcar.atlantaga.gov/?page\\_id=1690](http://streetcar.atlantaga.gov/?page_id=1690)

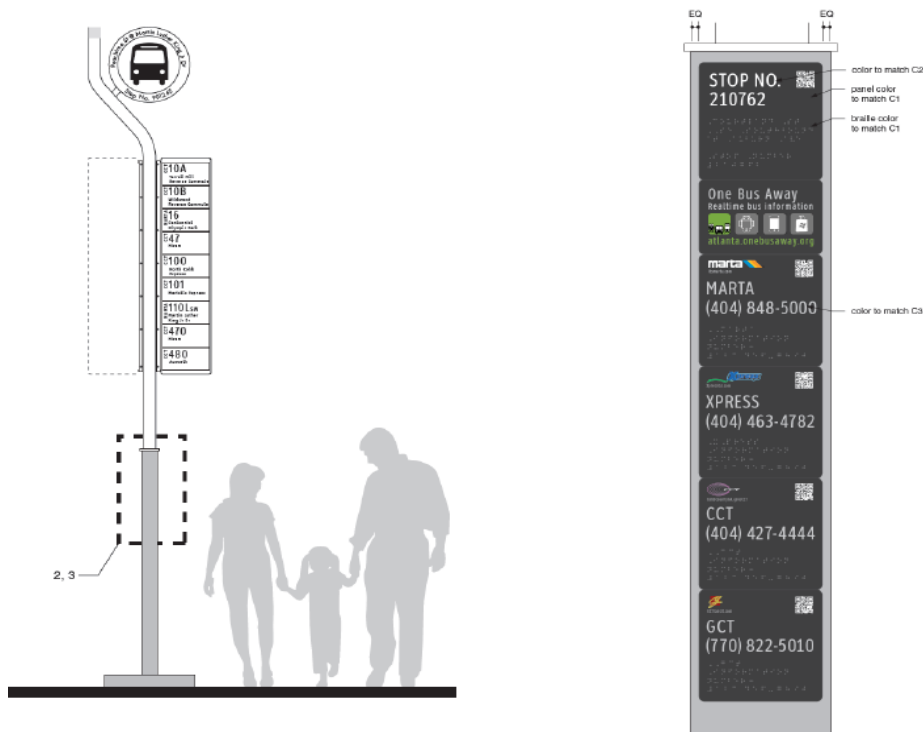
## Bus Stops

MARTA, GRТА, CCT, and GCT all have bus stops within Atlanta, although the level of comfort and amenity to riders varies substantially. Even with sustained investment in bus stop shelters, particularly by MARTA, many stops still remain marked with simple signs and lack seating, shade or other passenger amenities. This is particularly challenging to public transportation riders on lower-frequency corridors.

In addition, many local bus routes feature frequent stop spacing, with distances between stops often less than 1/8-mile. This provides convenience and choice of stops to riders, but may also slow bus travel times and reduce overall rider satisfaction with service.

Currently, ARC is working to implement uniform bus stop signs throughout the region that follow a hierarchy and provide the same amount of information in a consistent way to improve wayfinding and public transportation understanding, illustrated in Figure 4. This is particularly important in Downtown and Midtown where bus stops serve multiple public transportation agencies.

**FIGURE 4 ARC BUS STOP SIGNAGE GUIDELINES**



Source: ARC



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As with rail stations, some bus stops in Atlanta do not have good sidewalk and/or crosswalk access. This can be especially problematic for citizens with limited personal mobility, such as older adults and persons with disabilities. Lack of crosswalks, sidewalk access, and poor sidewalk condition at bus stops, prevent people from using the service and increases their use of paratransit services. Examples of a MARTA bus stop with a shelter and sidewalk access as well as one without any amenities or access are shown in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5 MARTA BUS STOP WITH SHELTER AND STOP WITHOUT AMENITIES**



## INTER-CITY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

In addition to local and regional public transportation services, there are three providers of inter-city transportation:

- **Amtrak.** The national passenger rail network of the United States, Amtrak provides service to Atlanta on its Crescent route connecting Washington D.C. and New Orleans. Amtrak serves a station located in southern Buckhead on Peachtree Road, just north of the Midtown business district. It has connecting public transportation service to MARTA's Route 110, which serves the Peachtree Street-Peachtree Road corridor and connects to the MARTA rail network at the nearby Arts Center station.
- **Greyhound.** The Greyhound Atlanta Bus Station is located adjacent to the Garnett MARTA rail station for easy access between services. Greyhound provides service nationwide from Atlanta with both direct services and transfers.
- **Megabus.** Another inter-city coach bus service, Megabus service to Atlanta calls at the Civic Center MARTA station for easy access between services.

# PLANNED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

MARTA recently completed a Comprehensive Operations Analysis (COA) and is undergoing internal planning efforts to improve existing services and provide new types of public transportation throughout its service area. Specific to Atlanta, residents recently passed a referendum that increases Atlanta's contribution to MARTA from 1% sales tax to 1.5%, branded as More MARTA. Together, these planning efforts and new funds will increase the amount of service, types of service, and customer experience on MARTA within the Atlanta city limits.

## MARTA COA

MARTA's 2016 Comprehensive Operations Analysis was completed before the Atlanta referendum passed and makes cost-neutral recommendations to add new types of service and improve efficiency. Currently, all MARTA's bus services are branded similarly, although they range in frequency. They also all serve as feeders to MARTA rail stations. One of the major changes is the focus on multiple types of bus service, including:

- **Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) Service:** ART services will operate with headways of ten minutes or less all day along a route with limited stops, and will potentially include public transportation signal priority, queue jumpers, dedicated lanes, level platform boarding, all-door boarding, and off-board fare collection in an effort to provide faster, more efficient service.
- **Express Bus Service:** Express service will provide longer distance service along limited access highways and less frequent stops.
- **Frequent Local Bus Service:** Frequent local service will have headways of 15 minutes all day.
- **Supporting Local Bus Service:** Supporting local service will generally have headways of 30 minutes, with some changes in service during peak hours and will feed into rail stations and frequent local routes.
- **Community Circulator Service:** Community circulator service will provide local mobility service in areas without density to support local bus service but will act as a feeder into the system and may be more flexible than fixed routes.

In addition to this greater diversity of service types, the Comprehensive Operations Analysis also emphasizes serving other public transportation markets and to expand MARTA's influence on the Atlanta region's mobility beyond simply providing a service to those who need it. It outlines strategies to better serve what it terms a *lifestyle* public transportation market, where Atlanta residents, regardless of socioeconomic factors that define public transportation dependency, can satisfy a more substantial amount of their daily travel needs using public transportation. This recommended concept is closely related to MARTA's ongoing efforts at promoting public transportation-oriented development (TOD) on MARTA-owned property at rail

stations, allowing housing and employment options closely tied to public transportation infrastructure.

# CITY DESIGN

The design of our transit investments must reinforce the form of the city as described in City Design, with clear, logical transit routes that traverse the city. With the Atlanta BeltLine at the core, the vision is to develop major transit corridors through the city's core to form new crosstown routes that connect the city together.

The Atlanta City Design growth framework includes a conceptual network of high capacity public transportation corridors to serve the City's future population and employment growth centers. Termed the 'hashtag network' due to its grid of intersecting crosstown corridors on relatively direct routes, the concept envisions that the City's future growth areas are connected with a system that is intuitive and easily understood, a critical element to making public transportation a greater part of the City's urban mobility framework.

The "hashtag network" featured on pages 296-299 of City Design was further refined during the discussions between the City and MARTA that led to the final More MARTA project selection. Figure 6 shows the unconstrained City Design vision for high capacity transit overlaid on the City Design growth areas to show how transit investments will align with density and development.

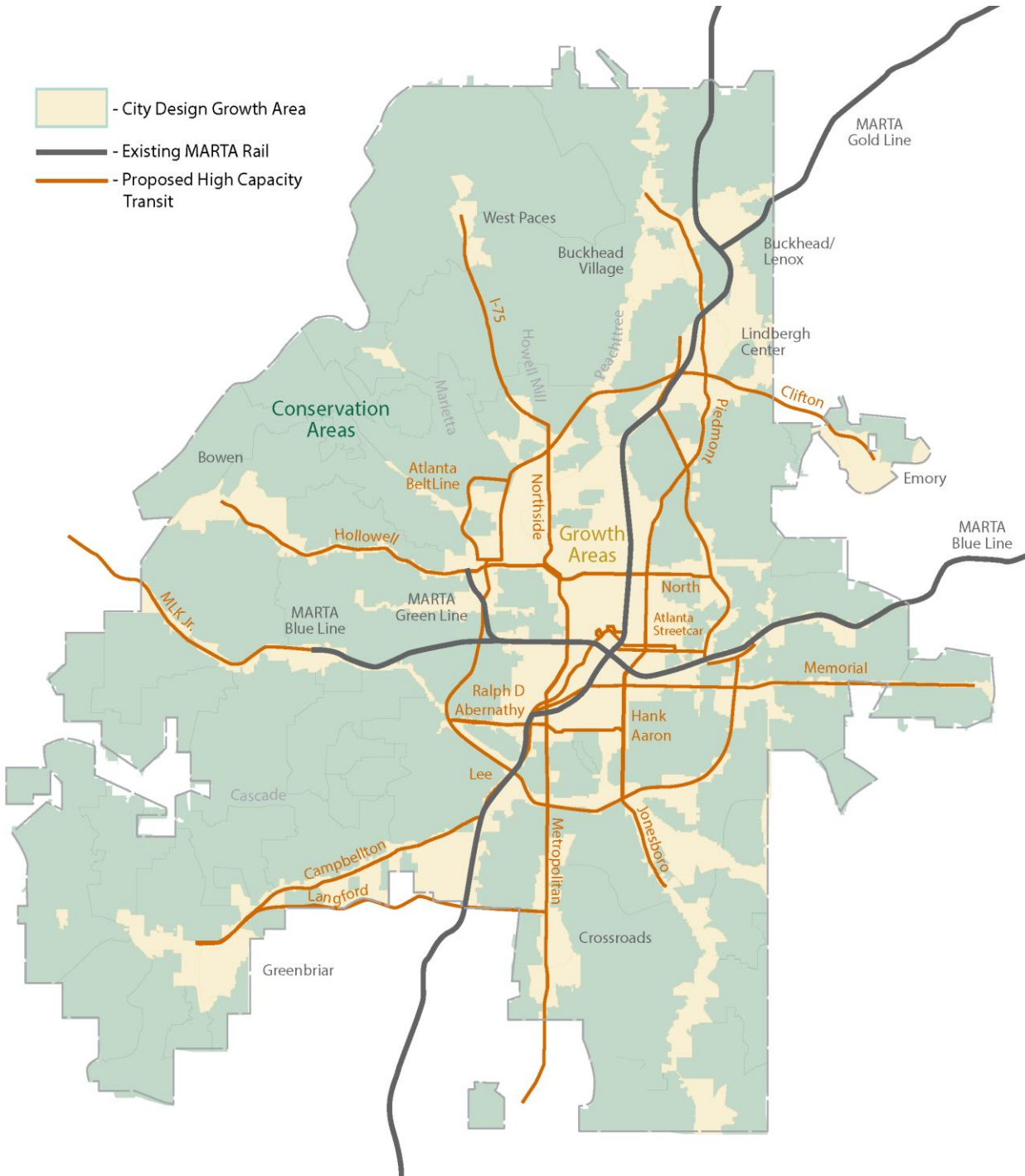
# MORE MARTA

MARTA's dedicated external funding source has historically been a 1-percent sales tax collected in Fulton and DeKalb Counties (per terms of the original 1965 MARTA legislation and supporting local referenda), with Clayton County approving this tax more recently and joining MARTA through a 2014 referendum. In 2016, City of Atlanta residents voted to increase their contribution to 1.5 percent through 2057, resulting in additional funds for expanded services within the City. MARTA has developed the More MARTA list of projects based on the approximately \$2.5 billion of revenue to be generated from the additional half-percent tax.

More MARTA will be the largest transit expansion in the city of Atlanta since the MARTA rail system was first constructed. While this program is a significant investment in realizing the city's transit vision, it is just the beginning. The More MARTA program will make great strides towards creating a cohesive transit system that shapes our city, increases access and mobility and supports growth and development, but additional funding strategies will be required to fulfill the transit vision.

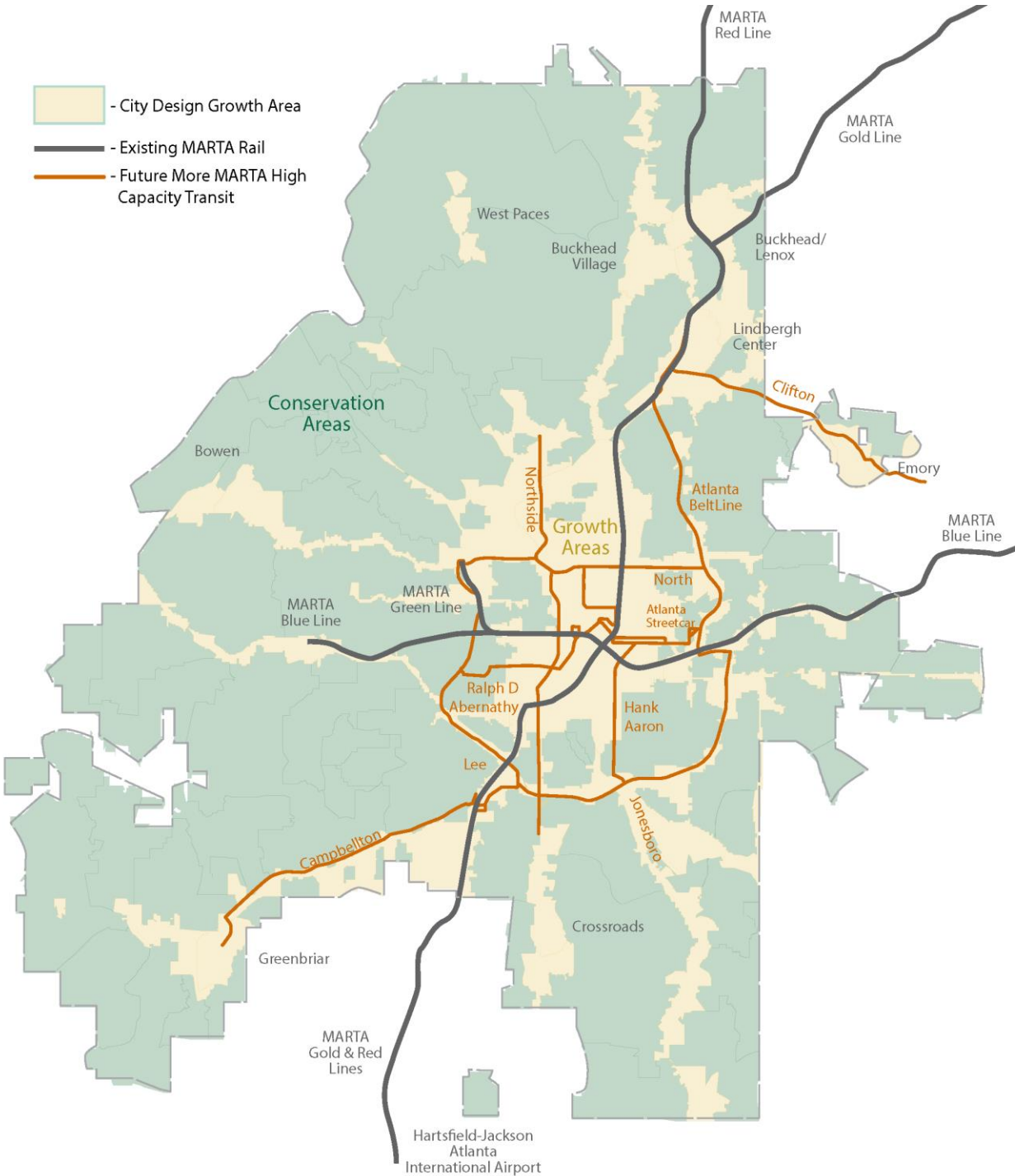
# ATLANTA'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**FIGURE 6 CITY DESIGN UNCONSTRAINED TRANSIT VISION**



# ATLANTA'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**FIGURE 7 MORE MARTA HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT**



# NEEDS ANALYSIS

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION PROPENSITY

With limited funding and resources for public transportation, identifying areas of the City with higher potential demand for public transportation can help prioritize projects and improve services in these areas. One way to assess the demand for public transportation or propensity is to examine the demographic characteristics of neighborhoods, such as population and employment densities, income levels, average age, people with disabilities, and household access to private vehicles.

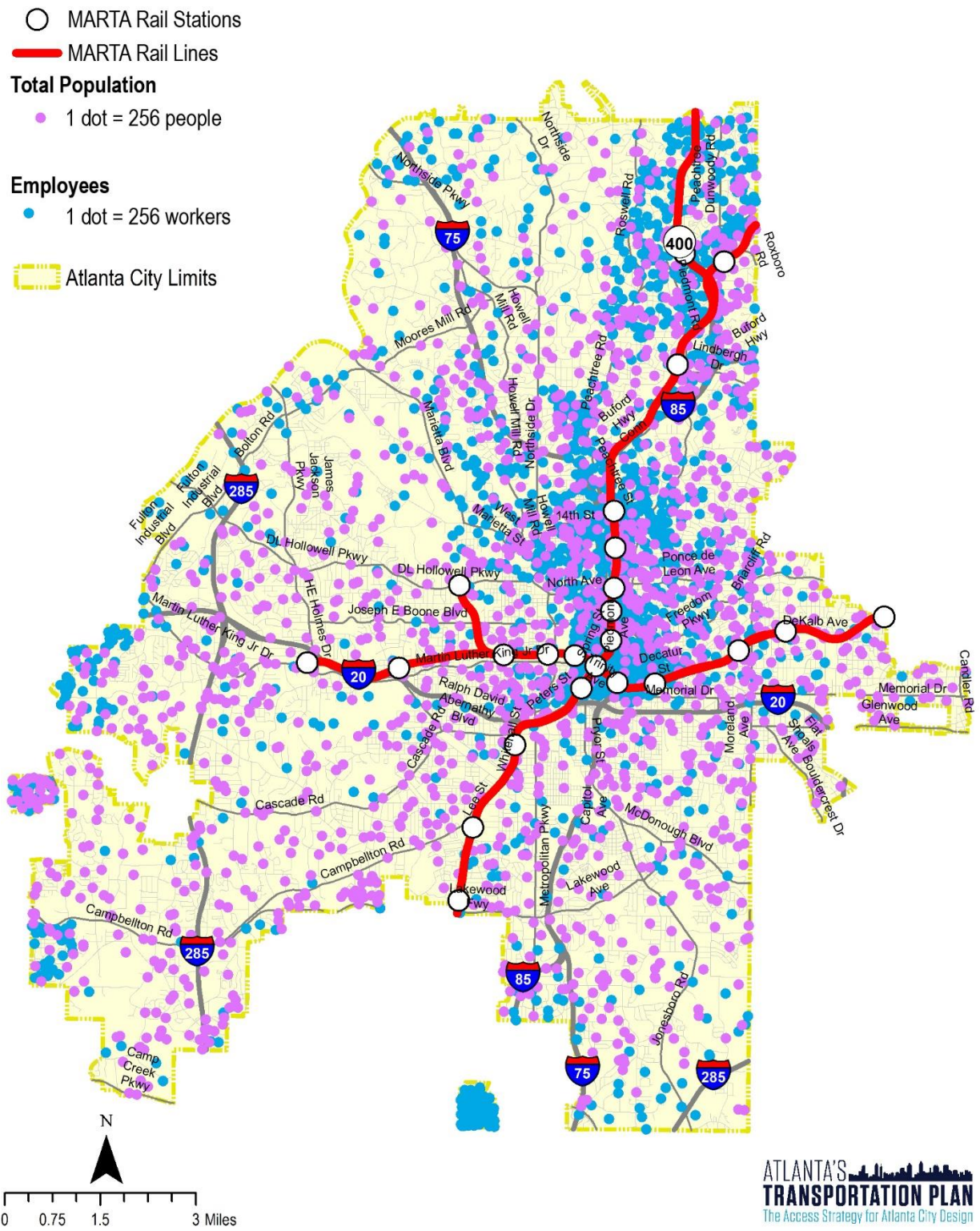
Public transportation propensity was assessed in two parts: **density** and **equity**. Where there are higher concentrations of jobs and people, public transportation provides an efficient transportation option and more people are likely to choose public transportation because it is convenient, to avoid congestion, and the often higher cost of parking. Figure shows concentrations of population and jobs within the City. The major concentrations of both are Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead. These areas are served by the Red and Gold MARTA rail lines, and Downtown is also served by the Blue and Green rail lines. Outside of those areas, there are scattered jobs within the northwest and southeast parts of the City. There is also a job concentration to the west along Fulton Industrial Boulevard; however, there is no rail service here.

On the equity side, there are areas of Atlanta where people rely on public transportation more than in other areas. Factors such as household income, access to a vehicle, and people with disabilities can indicate that there is greater need for affordable and reliable mobility options, such as public transportation. Figure 9 shows areas of the City where people may rely more on public transportation and require more service. While many of these areas are also areas with higher population densities such as in Downtown and Midtown, there is also need in areas without access to the rail system, such as west and southwest Atlanta.

This analysis provides one indicator of mobility and transportation propensity as one component of Atlanta's Transportation Plan.

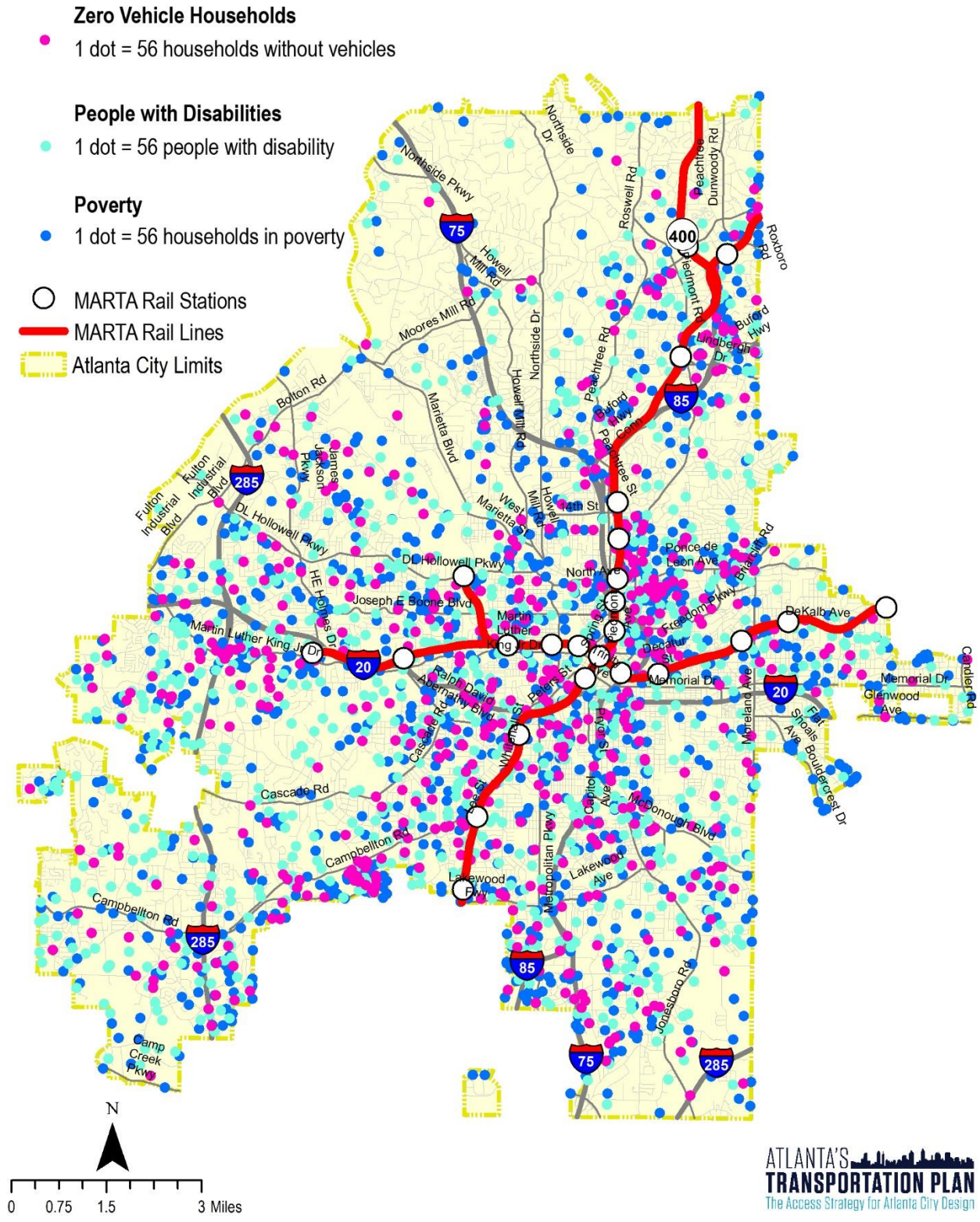
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FIGURE 8 POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITY ANALYSIS



# ATLANTA'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**FIGURE 9 TRANSIT EQUITY ANALYSIS**





# RECOMMENDATIONS

Atlanta residents have consistently demonstrated a commitment to investing in public transportation services. This analysis builds on these previous commitments, along with estimates of where future growth and demand is anticipated to develop a list of key public transportation corridors for future public transportation expansion.

Although stated previously, it is important to reiterate that the development of public transportation projects is not directly in the City's control. The recommendations of this section outline a potential path to which public transportation projects are organized into High, Medium, and Low priorities through their responsiveness to the project evaluation criteria in Atlanta's Transportation Plan. This is intended to provide the City with information on which public transportation projects provide the most critical service needed to serve more people and shift away from reliance on private vehicles to meet the City's mode share targets. This includes both ways to prepare for specific public transportation projects and long-term strategies to equip the City with resources it needs to allow expansion of public transportation infrastructure and service beyond the More MARTA program..

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND GROWTH

Atlanta City Design emphasized growth in the urban core and along key corridors extending from it. To facilitate this growth as well as to accommodate the travel demand expected to come from it, public transportation is well positioned to help serve much of the City of Atlanta's potential growth. The growth corridors are natural locations to capture higher-density growth in a short walking distance of public transportation service. The recommendations for public transportation have generally followed project ideas from past plans and the More MARTA program, although Atlanta's Transportation Plan also recommends a few new public transportation corridors for consideration.

Figure illustrates the public transportation network used in the modeling process. The modeling was completed before the More MARTA program was finalized and thus is not a precise assessment of the impact of that program. Instead, the modeled network represents a *critical network* needed to meet the demand for travel in the future without overburdening the street network with private vehicles. The modeled network presents one approach to managing future travel demand and removes some of the projects identified in past plans and the preliminary More MARTA project lists if these were not critical to achieve the mode shifts needed to support the Atlanta City Design-envisioned population levels. Transit corridors in the modeled network are:

- BeltLine East
- BeltLine West

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- Campbellton Road
- Capitol Ave/Hank Aaron Dr (Capitol Avenue Corridor)
- Cleveland Ave
- Clifton Rd/Decatur Rd/Arcadia Ave
- North Avenue (Crosstown Midtown)
- Jonesboro Rd
- Joseph E Lowery Blvd/Georgie Ave (Crosstown Crescent)
- Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway
- I-20 East and I-20 West
- Lenox Rd/Cheshire Bridge Rd
- Westview Dr/Martin Luther King Jr Dr (Irwin-AUC Line)
- Metropolitan Parkway
- Ralph David Abernathy Rd/Cascade Ave
- Northside Drive
- Peachtree Rd
- Piedmont/Roswell Road

The specific type of technology was not considered, rather, these corridors were generally assumed to represent high-quality public transportation corridors that would provide frequent service (10 minutes or less) and substantially add person-moving capacity. This network treats all projects in the preliminary More MARTA project lists as well as the previously mentioned additional projects as equal in their potential to serve public transportation riders by providing high capacity service. The network includes the following project types:

- **Heavy rail.** Most of this is existing, although the network does include an extension of the west line from H.E. Holmes to a new western terminus.
- **Light rail.** Light rail as envisioned in More MARTA and previous plans is primarily on the Clifton Corridor southeast from the Lindbergh MARTA station to Emory University and the CDC and into DeKalb County and the Campbellton Road corridor from Oakland City MARTA station west to Greenbriar Mall. This latter project is defined as a streetcar project operating in mixed traffic in the More MARTA program. However, the difference between these two types of transit technologies does not affect how the project was

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considered in the Atlanta's Transportation Plan modeling efforts, but does reflect a more feasible public transportation operations scenario for rapid public transportation serving economic development areas.

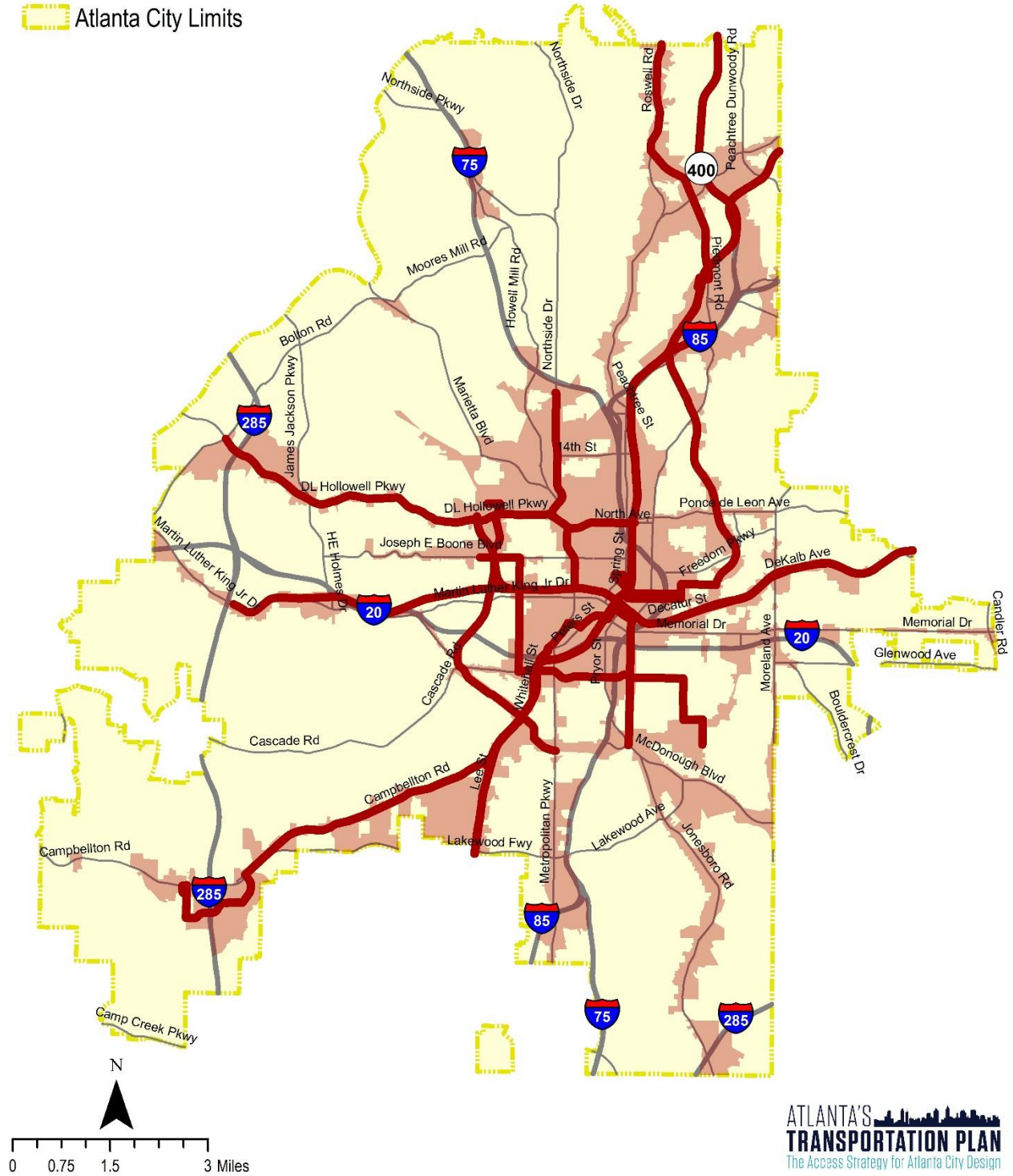
- **Bus rapid transit.** This includes both the I-20 East BRT corridor from downtown Atlanta and the Northside Drive corridor from I-75 to Atlanta Metropolitan College. The critical network does not include the I-20 West expansion, which overlaps the western heavy rail expansion in part and largely serves a portion of the City not designated as a City Design growth area.
- **Arterial rapid transit.** Most of MARTA's arterial rapid transit corridors were assumed in the high-quality network, as MARTA's objective is to reach frequent headways that would allow these bus routes to effectively serve as part of the system's rail network. The critical network did not include the Cascade Road corridor, as this is not designated as a City Design growth area and therefore not expected to concentrate population and job growth.

Atlanta's Transportation Plan includes a prioritized project list that recommends three principal implementation categories (High, Medium and Low Priorities). Public transportation projects included in this list along with other types of transportation capital projects were drawn from prior funding packages, plans, and MARTA projects. It is important to note that projects within the recommended implementation categories are based on the City's needs, and may not be fully reflected in the More MARTA transit investment . MARTA and the City of Atlanta will work together to implement the More MARTA projects and lay the groundwork for further transit expansion.

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FIGURE 10 MODELED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

- Modeled Transit Network
- Growth Areas
- Atlanta City Limits



# CONSIDERATIONS

Development of the conceptual transit network points to several important factors for the City to consider in moving forward with transit implementation.

## Sustaining Population Growth

First and foremost, the rate of population growth assumed is far greater than what the City has historically experienced—and greater than that of most major American cities. With sales tax continuing to serve as a primary funding source for public transportation in the foreseeable future, the City must grow in population in order to have greater leverage in building public transportation infrastructure. And in turn, public transportation infrastructure will be critical to achieving this growth and satisfying the City's travel demand.

The City should bring this consideration into other policy and decision-making discussions outside of transportation, acknowledging the critical importance of increased (and sustained) rates of population growth in funding public transportation expansion. These discussions may include such factors as:

- Restructuring and enhancement of the City's public school system so that families of all income levels may continue residing in the City;
- Investment in economic development and workforce training programs, especially for south and west Atlanta neighborhoods that have experienced long-term population decline; and
- Changes to zoning and land development policy to promote appropriate increases in population density throughout the City and not just in designated growth areas.

## Building Consensus

The travel modeling assessment of multimodal options relies heavily on transit in reducing vehicle travel demand. With this in mind, key transit corridors recommended in Atlanta's Transportation Plan must allow frequent and reliable service that enables transit to compete with automobile travel in terms of time and convenience. This may mean fixed guideway transit on some corridors to avoid mixing transit operations with vehicle traffic in general purpose lanes.

Prior to more detailed transit project development, the City should perform assessments of key transit corridors in order to understand potential impacts, appropriateness of land use change in and around corridors, and key locations where development should allow reservations for future transit service such as station sites, passenger waiting areas, or layover areas. The following is a series of potential steps or actions envisioned in a five-year timeframe, which is a short-term period before which any substantial new public transportation infrastructure could be expected to be implemented.

- Detailed corridor land use studies that identify neighborhood resources, areas susceptible to change and redevelopment, and areas to protect and preserve. These studies should also identify potential right-of-way deficiencies for corridors that may evolve into dedicated-guideway transit and locations where such transit facility design would limit or complicate access to land uses.
- Socioeconomic 'sensitivity tests' and strategic planning. In addition to land use and physical planning factors, the City should assess the economic conditions of transit corridors, especially land values and the susceptibility of these areas to increase in value—and therefore prompt dislocation or a loss in neighborhood affordability. In conjunction with broader City-led efforts to promote affordable housing and create affordable housing policy, the City should identify specific strategies on corridors to help stabilize neighborhoods, especially land values for long-term residents, and begin implementing these prior to delivery of transit projects.
- Consensus-building efforts to engage neighborhoods and transit corridor communities in defining their key mobility needs and desires for transit service. This is a useful foundational effort for later outreach efforts that MARTA or other agencies will undertake as part of a standard project development process and helps to establish and document expectations in advance, potentially facilitating overall planning and project efforts later.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

As discussed in the previous section on system expansion and priorities, funding generated from the More MARTA program can make substantial progress in implementing recommended transit projects. As a funding source tied to economic cycles, however, it is subject to shortfalls from projections and from long-term changes in economic patterns (especially with increasing use of subscription-based models for providing consumer goods and services). The City should continue to explore alternative funding sources to help advance transit projects and service operation. These may include the following:

- Federal funding sources such as the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts and Small Starts programs, which provide capital assistance for new project construction. It has been assumed in transit project planning that all projects would receive up to 50 percent of their costs through these funding sources, as is typical of major transit projects in the United States today.
- Coordination with other City-based funding opportunities, such as surcharges on parking or selected cordon pricing for sensitive corridors.
- Land value capture funding sources, such as tax allocation districts (TAD) that allow tax base generated from new development and investment to be directed to transit-specific sources. The Atlanta BeltLine project already uses a TAD as its primary funding source, although funding is directed to more uses than only transit.
- Parking benefit districts could be another source of funding to improve station and stop access, particularly in areas where parking fees are collected. Improvements could include sidewalk installation and repair, curb cuts, bicycle facilities and parking, and

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other amenities intended to improve the transit experience in areas with high parking demand.

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