

*MARTA response to BRN white paper*

MARTA has 50 years of experience building and operating a transit system. With that comes full understanding of FTA operational and safety requirements and opportunities for federal funding.

MARTA wholeheartedly agrees with Beltline Rail Now (BRN) that additional funding sources are necessary in order to expand the MARTA system and provide better connectivity across the city and region. Development impact fees, parking fees and value capture are all tools that MARTA believes must be brought to the funding table. Sales tax revenue is simply not enough.

That said, the BRN white paper is less a blueprint for funding and more a wish list. It glosses over steep legislative and policy hurdles at the local, regional and state level that must be addressed in order to unlock the proposed new funding sources. It would eliminate the transit projects along the Clifton Corridor and Campbellton Road in order to redirect money to the Beltline. And it conflates financing and funding, a common but serious mistake.

Contrary to BRN's assertion, no portion of the Beltline transit is "shovel ready." Atlanta Beltline Inc (ABI) has conducted very preliminary environmental assessments on some, but not all, segments of the corridor and identified technical challenges. BRN rightly acknowledges the conflicting cost estimates and calls for preliminary engineering. MARTA agrees that this is a necessary next step and will be seeking authorization from our Board in the coming months to conduct an engineering analysis risk assessment. Information from this deeper dive into the technical engineering is critical before we make a decision to change the phasing plan as BRN requests or to apply for federal funding.

MARTA appreciates BRN's passion and stands ready to work with them to advocate for additional funding sources. We also stand behind the decisions that were made in conjunction with the Mayor and Atlanta City Council that prioritize high capacity transit connecting MARTA heavy rail with the 2nd largest jobs center at Emory University along the Clifton Corridor, connecting Campbellton Road to Oakland City station and expanding Bankhead station to unlock the potential of the city's northwest quadrant. Public transit is providing the foundation for economic opportunity across the city. That work must continue.

*MARTA provided this further explanation of the TIFIA loan.*

A TIFIA loan is a financing tool, not a new source of funding. A TIFIA loan is just another way to advance capital for construction than MARTA's normal way to finance, which is to sell bonds.

The 15th Amendment to the RTCAA incorporates the COA More MARTA revenue such that MARTA can bond against it and repay it through the length of the contract (currently until 2057), so the notion that MARTA would have earlier access to capital funding with a TIFIA loan is incorrect because MARTA has bonding authority. Additionally, the report cites TIFIA loans as advantageous because of their low interest rates (2.89% compared to TAD Bond rates at 6%-7%). MARTA's September 2020 bond refinance secured an interest rate of 2.45%.