



NCA Meeting: January 21, 2015

Guest Speaker: Paul Morris, CEO, Atlanta BeltLine Inc.

- This is more of your project than mine, you've seen it since its inception as an idea of Ryans in 1999.
- This is a very busy time for us, we're going over meeting materials from the last two quarterly briefings held in August and November.
- The policy decision that was adopted by the Board is to
 - 1) Work (and be engaged) in all parts of BeltLine all the time, to continue the conversation, and work to bring physical attributes to fruition.
 - 2) Work on all components all the time. (*Note: In this context, 'components' refers to parks, streetscapes, brownfields, historical designation, public art, etc.*)
- This isn't a lab. We make different decisions when we think in a collegial and collaborative way. We realized that all interactive and integrated components are funded through their own means, i.e. transit-related projects with the State and City elevates the BeltLine by understanding the impact of the streetcar, TOD, and addressing neighborhood concerns.
- Mayor Reed has given lots of capital to advance the BeltLine.
- It is arguably the largest urban revitalization project in the nation. It touches so many parts of the city, drawing so many new residents and touches 20% of the city landscape, not just 22 miles of the loop.
- One of the biggest accomplishments was the completion of the \$18 million TIGER grant.
 - 500 people attended the groundbreaking of Westside Trail.
 - It was the moment we fulfilled a promise that was made 15 years ago.
 - First time in history that SW Atlanta saw a promise fulfilled.
 - Largest surface infrastructure in that area.
 - Brings a whole new quality of life and reinvestment to that community.
 - It presents an opportunity for them economically and civically.
 - Typically it would have taken twice as long, but our consultants and supporters (locally and nationally) put the BeltLine at the top of everyone's list.
 - More importantly, we made sure we didn't offend anyone that was party to the project.
 - We acquired almost 50 right-of-way parcels which is unheard of in 6 months, it normally 18-24 months according to Federal Department of Transportation (FDOT) standards.

- The Historic Fourth Ward Park was chosen as EPA's Overall Excellence Award for Smart Growth in 2013 due to its humanitarian nature in its effect on stormwater among other things.
- Over a million people visited the Eastside Trail last year.
- The BeltLine is now a destination, not a throughway. BeltLine isn't a line, it's a connector to neighborhoods and a place we come together.
- January saw the groundbreaking for gateway of Eastside Trail. August saw its dedication.
- Now, we are installing soft side shoulders and preparing for transit to come in in the future. The cost to do it all at once is more expensive now, but saves money in the long run. The completed final design for extension of Eastside Trail that will add another mile getting it through Krog Street Tunnel.



- The Office of Zoning is working on getting the subarea zoning up to par. We're using surgical moves rather than wholesale zoning changes to ensure the integrity of the master plan.
- "If we built a great facility, but no one uses it, did we succeed?" We have to make sure people want to live there.
- There are plans for economic development and affordable housing that will create houses and jobs. We should be at 2,000 units of affordable housing per unit. Because of a decline in market, we didn't have as much as we should, but we are building enough housing in general.
- We will be doing certain projects to show best practices. While we are slow to create permanent jobs, construction jobs have exploded and we're ahead on that total.
- Housing leads, jobs follow, in terms of large-scale urban revitalization. In an established city, jobs don't necessarily go first.
- We need to bring people back into the city and rehabilitate housing and make opportunities for residents to have nice, open spaces and a good education.
- The advent of Ponce City Market and the fact that its office component is leasing up first is a good sign. It is bringing a whole new way of life to Atlanta.
- We're breaking some classic models of where jobs go.
- To see 800 Glenwood get redesigned as residential to an 11-story office tower, is different. In our current economy, employers are determining where they want to be and developers are following.
- Our job as the BeltLine is to draw employers and meet their needs or be the matchmaker between employers and developers.
- Some small but significant items:
 - We created the first public/private plaza on BeltLine with Jamestown developers at Ponce City Market to create a festival space.
 - We got a grant with GDOT to improve Ponce DeLeon up the BeltLine. Paying for access from North Ave to BeltLine
 - Breaking ground on improvements at Langford Park
 - We're working with developers to redesign their projects to fit in with the BeltLine concept via a Design Review Committee. It's a taskforce that gives advice to developers prior to going through the city review process to ensure that plans raise the bar on design excellence. It is similar to Midtown Alliance's structure, we get to see projects being built better. The eye on design needs to happen early on before the money gets spent. The idea is before City Council to adopt, but it has been happening ad hoc for about a year
 - Last year was the 5th year celebration of Art on the BeltLine, and was the largest exhibition to date. Over 23,000 people attended the lantern parade.

AUDIENCE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the timeline for first transit implementation?

- a. We're working on getting cleared environmentally for the streetcar to determine if we go east/west or north/south. Option 1: connecting at Irwin and figuring out how far along the BeltLine it would go. Option 2: How do we get from Centennial (eastside) to Westside? It is looking like using Luckie St to connect to Northside would be that route. Option 3: Have it on its own at North Ave to provide connectivity across the city. There has been more housing being built in the mid-rise category on North Ave than anywhere else in the area. By the end of June, we will announce clearance from federal government to proceed with RFQ (Request for Qualifications).
- b. Environmental and streetcar assessments documents are the backbone to any funding grants.
- c. As soon as the end of 2015, we could identify local funding source, could delay when we go to request (most likely spring of 2016), then request authorization to go into final design. We could be eligible for grants in 2017 (just a possibility) and money will flow according to the federal category. It's important to remain a top candidate for eligibility.

2. What is going on with CSX?

- a. They are the largest remaining owner of segments besides ABI. It goes from Waterworks to Lindbergh on the Northside. It wouldn't be a formal purchase, but an easement along their active corridor outside the operative corridor. The Tanyard Creek leg is indicative of the way the trail will go through this part of town, longer and more circuitous through natural areas. We are in conversation with CSX, it began informally last fall, and formal negotiations will take place next month. It could take 6-18 months to reach an agreement.

3. What is happening with the CSX right-of-way south of waterworks along Marietta Blvd.?

- a. One option of the environmental assessment takes us up North Ave. Do we go into Maddox Park or through the kudzu line? We are currently studying it. Depending which route we choose affects accessibility because of height difference between streets and rail corridor. It will affect the route for the trolley. If we elect to not use that route, we don't have to purchase anything from CSX.

4. What is going on with zoning references?

- a. Will not affect single family detached housing.

5. Will the new committee formed for Westside Park have a seat at the table?

- a. The strategic implementation plan expected it to get built over 17 years, starting construction in about a year or two. Mayor Reed's decision to build the new water pipe to fill the quarry for the city's water needs is accelerating that process. The Department of Parks and Recreation demanded that we move up the schedule for both the quarry and the Westside Park. They are going through an accelerated design process to do so. They/we are waiting on Department of Watershed Management to come out with designs. City Council worried it would go too fast



and not include enough citizen input. Councilmember Bond created the Redevelopment Review Committee. They haven't met yet, they've only had one technical meeting thusfar. The goal is to have a briefing within the next month, after data collection is complete. The end product should be a refined master plan for Westside Park, which will be the city's new largest park. It is intended to be a nature park rather than a manicured park but with likeminded elements (think: open space, trails, equestrian routes). It would be schematic designs, not for construction. We will work with Watershed Management, to see what will come of all of that, it will happen simultaneously but not in the same conversations. BeltLine has one seat on the committee. It is listed on City Council's website. (Ellie: I have asked Councilmember Ivory Young but have not gotten an answer.)

b. There is a different process for Waterworks.

6. What are plans for affordable housing, what are the tools?

a. I will ask my Housing Department. In two months, they will lay out there technical plan. Their ideas are not yet gelled.

7. What influence do you have over developers to influence affordable housing?

a. We can require any new units to be in an affordable range. The traditional approach isn't working, we can directly partner with them to do the affordable component. If we acquire properties ahead of them, then we control it. We have plenty of quality affordable housing developers in the region but it is difficult to do in the city (due to: access, egress, utilities, cost of construction, environmental issues, etc.)

8. How are you viewing economic development? Just in terms of jobs around the BeltLine? Do jobs in the corridor exist separately from jobs outside the corridor?

a. I'll hold off on that question. Our best partner is Invest Atlanta on the economic development side. We try to develop what the market wants. They support us in our efforts. The kinds of businesses that want to be on the BeltLine do not want to be in traditional sections (i.e. the Perimeter and Downtown). These new business types include: small businesses, startups, and employers seeking millenials.

9. Will you ever see a factory on BeltLine?

a. Traditional manufacturing isn't holding up in any city, they need access to freeways and railways in places with cheap land. We're seeing a real transformation to smaller-scale manufacturing for higher-quality products and its coming to Atlanta. It's a whole different technology and approach; it's decoupled and moving from site to site.

10. In 2013, we talked about the streetcar. It now sounds like you're going for the completion of the 22 miles. You are going back on your promise to prioritize the loop over the interiors. What is the tax digest for the BeltLine? I believe there has been an increment. What bonds might you be able to issue? You're doing this the way the city always has. I don't see any citizens in this review process.



- a. The decision to prioritize the 22 miles has never changed. But the request from City Council and the Mayor has – they want to get funding from FDOT. We just now put cross-town connections under our purview together. The cardinal direction (i.e. east/west or north/south) right now is under study. Ultimately, this is not our decision, we are an agent of the City, beholden to City of Atlanta. We make recommendations based on technical analyses and input of the community. As far as Tax-Increment Financing (TIF), it is accruing each year for our bond debt, operations, and capital improvements for match grants. That is public information that is available on our website.

11. Lost MARTA station, how will it be involved in trail?

- a. For the loop, our goal is to connect it to most nearby MARTA stations (i.e. Lindbergh, Inman/MLK, Bankhead, West End/Oakland City). For the streetcar, we are looking for multiple connections, i.e. Peachtree Center and Five Points.
- b. The shift will be at North Ave and Donald Lee Hollowell.

12. Regarding transit and trail connections, the BeltLine is a wheel, the interior is the spokes, and the radius has spokes going out. Will you connect to the Comet group or with PATH Foundation's project?

- a. It has been designed slightly different, with lower volume and more nature. Ultimately, it is aspirational to connect it to BeltLine, same with Path 400. Stone Mountain already exists, a longer-term goal is Arabia Mountain. Lionel Hampton Trail is already kind of connected.
- b. BeltLine is not involved with the "connectivity" conversation of fixed rail up I-75.

13. How do you anticipate economic redevelopment to occur along Westside Trail?

- a. There is a lot of developer interest in the area. To the west, we anticipate lots of low density to remain. To the northeast, density and we're unclear as to what will happen in the south.

*Next NCA Meeting: March 18, 2015 Guest speaker TBD

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