



## CITY OF ATLANTA

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SHIRLEY FRANKLIN  
MAYOR

March 3, 2009

The Honorable John Lewis  
U.S. House of Representatives  
343 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-1005

Dear Congressman Lewis:

Thank you for your continued support of the City of Atlanta and the BeltLine, our most important transit, greenspace and economic development initiative. Your letter to Amtrak's President Joseph Boardman was greatly appreciated. I am grateful for your staff's participation in the meeting held on February 2nd between Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI), the City of Atlanta, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Amtrak, MARTA, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and others, which started the dialogue on alternatives that would enable the Abandonment of the BeltLine Northeast Corridor and advanced exploration of technical options for passenger rail service in the Atlanta region. Anna Cherry on your staff has also participated in follow-up meetings held on February 12<sup>th</sup> and February 19<sup>th</sup>.

This letter provides an update on the process we have followed during the thirty-day abeyance period granted by the Surface Transportation Board (STB) for the purpose of discussing possible alternatives for rail access to the MMPT rather than using the BeltLine Northeast Corridor, which is within the proposed abandonment. The involved parties agreed to ask the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) to refrain from taking any actions on the abandonment proceedings or other filings associated with this rail corridor for thirty days. The STB granted until March 6<sup>th</sup> for a status update, and also granted the City, ABI and Norfolk Southern an extension until March 11, 2009 to respond to Amtrak and GDOT's most recent filings against the proposed abandonment.

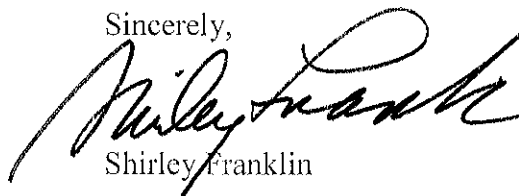
There are two teams now meeting regularly, an Executive Review Committee and a Technical Review Committee, composed of executives and staff from the City, ABI, GDOT, Amtrak, MARTA, ARC, Norfolk Southern, CSX and the Transit Implementation Board. The Technical Review Committee is expected to present its findings to the Executive Review Committee on March 3, 2009.

The Technical Review Committee has focused on identifying options for existing and expanded passenger rail service on both the Western Trunk line and the Decatur Belt into the proposed Downtown Multi Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT). In addition, the team has identified alternative locations for the AMTRAK passenger service station that meet AMTRAK's station requirements. Thus far, the technical experts have found that the Western Trunk line, which is owned by the State of Georgia, appears to have sufficient right-of-way for an additional rail line, would have manageable structural, environmental and community impacts, easier implementation, and potential to improve freight operations. The Decatur Belt approach to the MMPT would require both above and below grade components, which would involve significant stretches of expensive tunneling and the demolition and reconstruction of a CSX bridge over Interstates 75/85, in addition to several other highly-costly upgrades to the CSX and MARTA infrastructures. It would also compromise the viability of the BeltLine project by introducing FRA compliant heavy rail and endanger the sensitive public realm of a dense urban area, bisecting Piedmont Park's North Woods expansion, a project that is now under construction.

Additionally, on February 18, 2009 at the request of the Intermodal Committee of the State Transportation Board of Georgia, ABI and the City provided an update on the Decatur Belt and discussed why the coexistence of the BeltLine and heavy rail was not feasible along this corridor.

No agreement has been reached as of yet between the involved parties. I will keep you apprised of final developments from the committees and appreciate your continued support for the BeltLine and the City of Atlanta.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shirley Franklin", written in a cursive style.

Shirley Franklin

CC: Senator Johnny Isakson

Senator Saxby Chambliss