

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Project Description

2.1.1 BeltLine Corridor

One of the most comprehensive economic development efforts ever undertaken in the City of Atlanta and the largest, most wide-ranging urban redevelopment projects currently underway in the US, the BeltLine will combine greenspace, trails, transit and new commercial, residential and mixed-use development along 22 miles of historic rail corridors that encircle the urban core.

The BeltLine concept includes a proposed new regional transit and pedestrian/bicycle trail system forming an approximately 22-mile loop encircling the Downtown, Midtown, West End/Atlanta University Center, Westside, Grant Park and other Atlanta communities. The BeltLine would tie into other transit services, existing and proposed parks, and green spaces. It would improve local and regional mobility, accessibility, and connectivity, and support the City of Atlanta's redevelopment plans by converting unused and underused railway corridors around Atlanta's central business district to a multi-use transportation corridor.

Over the past 20 years, metropolitan Atlanta's growth has occurred in widely dispersed and disconnected pockets of developments, which have strained the region's quality of life and economic growth. By attracting and organizing some of the region's future growth around parks, transit and trails, the BeltLine will help change the pattern of regional growth in the coming decades and lead to a more vibrant and livable Atlanta with an enhanced quality of life. Figure 2-1 shows the location of the BeltLine Corridor.

2.1.2 Northeast Zone

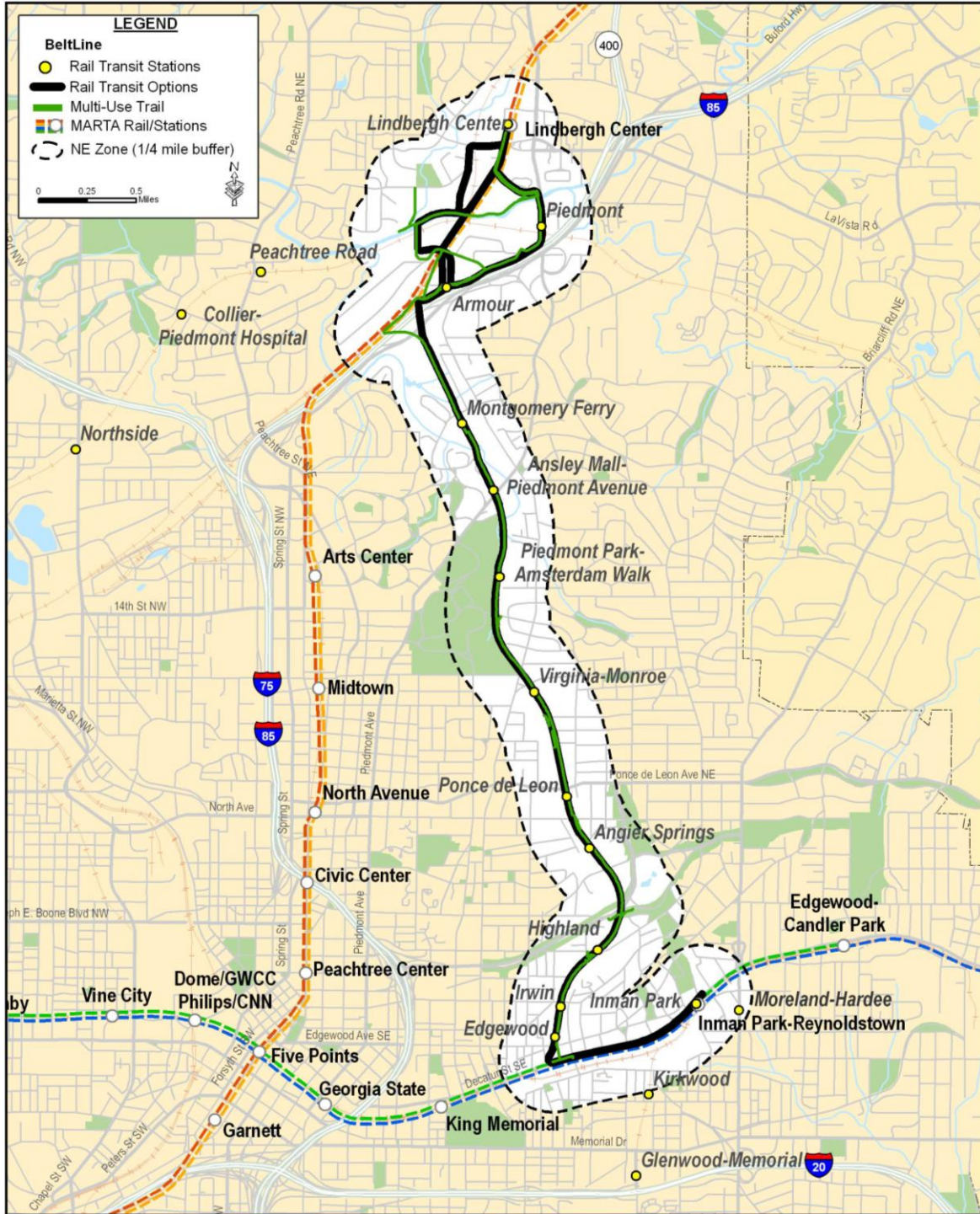
This EER identifies existing conditions and assesses the potential for BeltLine project impacts in the Northeast Zone portion of the 22-mile BeltLine Corridor. The Northeast Zone of the BeltLine Corridor extends west via DeKalb Avenue NE from the Inman Park/Reynoldstown MARTA Station to the right-of-way presently owned by the Atlanta Development Authority (ADA), then north via ADA right-of-way to the Armour Drive industrial district and the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station at Lindbergh Drive NE. The alignment generally follows an existing railroad corridor between DeKalb Avenue NE and I-85. A new rail alignment and multi-use trails will connect the railroad corridor with the Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Lindbergh Center MARTA Stations.

The general study area for the EER is a one-half mile wide band centered on the BeltLine Corridor. Figure 2-2 shows the Northeast Zone study area. This document specifies the appropriate extents for resource assessments, which may vary within the half-mile study area band depending on the subject resource.

2.2 Participating State Agencies

There are two entities participating as state agencies for purposes of GEPA-triggering actions in the BeltLine Corridor Northeast Zone.

Figure 2-2: Northeast Zone Study Area



The Georgia General Assembly established MARTA under the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Act of 1965. MARTA right-of-way in this study area includes the heavy rail and bus stations in the Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Lindbergh Center areas, as well as a heavy rail maintenance facility north of Armour Drive NE.

ADA, a public body corporate of the State of Georgia, registered annually under the state's Local Government Authorities Act (O.C.G.A 36-80-16), is the Redevelopment Agent for the BeltLine Tax Allocation District; it created Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. to implement the BeltLine Project. Northeast Zone right-of-way owned by the Atlanta Development Authority extends along the former Norfolk Southern railway from DeKalb Avenue NE to an area approximately 0.4 mile north of Montgomery Ferry Road NE. In October 2007, ABI through a joint venture purchased the property from Norfolk Southern. In October 2008, the ABI joint venture transferred property ownership to ADA, which is holding title for BeltLine purposes.

This EER presumes the Atlanta Development Authority and MARTA would conduct and coordinate the proposed Northeast Zone actions described in Section 1.4. Non-federal funding from each agency will exceed either \$250,000 or 50 percent of project costs. The *Envision6* RTP by the ARC currently programs \$5.1 million in non-Federal funds supporting right-of-way acquisition and construction for the entire BeltLine Corridor's multi-use trails and streetscape improvements through Fiscal Year 2011. In accordance with GEPA guidelines, MARTA serves as the lead agency for EER preparation, in partnership with the Atlanta Development Authority (via ABI, its implementation agent). The MARTA/ABI project work plan for the BeltLine Corridor Environmental Study defines the coordination procedures for the respective roles of MARTA and the Atlanta Development Authority (via ABI) in preparing this document.

2.3 Proposed State Action

The Proposed State Action would involve the disturbance of land within the BeltLine Corridor Northeast Zone for the construction of a fixed rail transit guideway and multi-use trails. Land disturbance is likely to include clearing, grading, or excavating of land owned by either MARTA or the Atlanta Development Authority. Possible effects of these land-disturbing activities may include, but are not limited to the following:

- alteration or movement of certain structures (for example, bridges or railbeds) on or eligible for the Georgia or National Register of Historic Places;
- alteration of waters of the US and waters of the State, or the placement of structures in the vicinity of such waters;
- significant alteration in areas of recognized scenic, recreational, archaeological or historical value;
- significant alteration of floodplains (for example, establishing impervious surfaces that increase the amount of flow in or near populated areas); and
- adversely affecting water quality in streams or water supply impoundments through runoff of sediment or other contaminants.

2.3.1 Alternatives

The EER includes an examination of Build and No Build Alternatives.

The Build Alternative includes a combination of a new Light Rail/Modern Streetcar transit line and new multi-use trails. The rail transit guideway would include electrically powered vehicles, overhead wires to deliver the power to the vehicles, stations with platforms to accommodate waiting passengers, and access from the stations to adjacent streets, sidewalks, and pedestrian facilities. The alignment in the Northeast Zone would be approximately 6.5 miles long, with at least 12 new stations and stops at the Inman Park/Reynoldstown and Lindbergh Center MARTA Stations. The line would connect area neighborhoods and the two existing MARTA heavy rail stations. The Build Alternative is the Proposed State Action.

Under the No Build Alternative scenario, MARTA and ABI would take no action to construct the project. The No Build Alternative includes the existing transportation system throughout the corridor study area and the Atlanta region. The No Build Alternative also includes all of the proposed projects currently in the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) TIP (FY 2008-2013) and within the cost-constrained *Envision6* RTP (FY 2008-2030), excepting the BeltLine transit and trails.

2.3.2 Transit Technology Options

There are two transit technology options in the Proposed State Action:

- Light Rail Transit (LRT); and
- Modern Streetcar

Construction of the rail transit alignment and stations could accommodate either LRT or Modern Streetcar vehicles. LRT is a passenger rail system operating along either a grade separated fixed rail right-of-way or in a street right-of-way adjacent to or shared with traffic. LRT systems are generally single-car or multiple-car trains with station-level or street-level boarding capabilities. Modern Streetcars are a form of rail that typically includes smaller vehicles and usually operate as single car trains. Modern Streetcars are similarly capable of operating in mixed traffic and along a fixed rail guideway.

This EER assesses worst-case impacts associated with the transit technology options (typically, LRT impacts), and identifies opportunities to avoid significant environmental effects when considering transit and multi-use trails alignment options north of I-85, as described in the following subsections.

2.3.3 Transit and Multi-Use Trail Alignments

North of I-85, there are three transit and multi-use trail alignment options connecting to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station in the Proposed State Action. Each transit option extends north of the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way and beneath I-85 to a point south of Mayson Street NE and west of Plasters Avenue NE. Each option also concludes at the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station north of Lindbergh Drive NE via Garson Drive NE. Each option includes a rail connection to an approximate 11-acre maintenance facility for the BeltLine, bounded to the south by Armour Drive NE, to the

north and west by the existing MARTA Armour Yard, and to the east by Plasters Avenue NE.

Each multi-use trail option design corresponds with the transit option of similar number. Each trail option extends north of the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way and beneath I-85 to a point along Mayson Street NE parallel to Norfolk Southern railroad, continuing north, then east along Mayson Street NE to a point east of and beneath the MARTA heavy rail bridge. Each option also includes a multi-use trail along the northern edge of Peachtree Creek, with connections to Peachtree Hills Avenue NE via the western boundary of the Garden Brook at Peachtree Hills condominiums property. Each trail option connects to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station via Piedmont Road NE and Garson Drive NE.

Figure 2-3, Figure 2-4, and Figure 2-5 illustrate transit and multi-use trail Options 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Descriptions of each option follow.

2.3.4 Alignment Option 1

- **Transit Option 1** (Figure 2-3) accesses the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station via an area west of the Norfolk Southern railroad. This alignment option:
 - extends the transit alignment east to Armour Place NE;
 - continues to the north along Armour Place NE to Armour Drive NE, with the northern part of this segment in a retained cut to bring the alignment down to the grade of Armour Drive NE;
 - continues along Armour Drive NE to the west, beneath the MARTA heavy rail and Norfolk Southern freight railroad bridges, to the southern and western boundaries of the Lafarge Building Materials, Inc. and Ready Mix USA, LLC properties;
 - elevates above CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek to the north and continues east along the north bank of Peachtree Creek;
 - continues along the southern and eastern boundaries of the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center (ADAC) property to Peachtree Hills Avenue NE;
 - continues to the north at surface level in mixed traffic along or in Peachtree Hills Avenue NE to Lindbergh Drive NE;
 - operates at surface level in mixed traffic along or in Lindbergh Drive NE, beneath the Norfolk Southern railroad bridge and Garson Drive NE to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station;
 - includes an at-grade Armour Station for BeltLine transit to the southwest of the intersection of Armour Place NE and Plasters Avenue NE, immediately north of I-85; and
 - includes consideration for one sub-option, “**Option 1A**,” which extends east of the ADAC southern boundary and continues under the Norfolk Southern railroad, then continues north to the east of the Post Lindbergh Apartments property and parallel to the MARTA heavy rail line to Garson Drive NE.
- **Multi-Use Trail Option 1** (Figure 2-3):

- extends east at-grade along Mayson Street NE and Plasters Avenue NE, near the proposed BeltLine transit station, to Armour Drive NE;
- continues west along Armour Drive NE, beneath the MARTA heavy rail and Norfolk Southern railroad bridges, and to the southern and western boundaries of the Lafarge Building Materials, Inc. and Ready Mix USA, LLC properties;
- continues north, elevating above CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek;
- continues east along the north bank of Peachtree Creek to Piedmont Road NE; and
- continues along Garson Drive NE to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station.

2.3.5 Alignment Option 2

- **Transit Option 2** (Figure 2-4) accesses the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station via Piedmont Road NE, east of the Norfolk Southern railroad. This alignment option:
 - extends the transit alignment east along Plasters Avenue NE;
 - elevates along the eastern boundary of the MARTA Armour Yard;
 - continues north parallel to Piedmont Road NE, along the eastern boundary of the Rollins, Inc. property, elevating above CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek to Garson Drive NE;
 - continues west, then north, along Garson Drive NE to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station; and
 - includes an at-grade Armour Station for BeltLine transit to the southwest of the intersection of Armour Place NE and Plasters Avenue NE, immediately north of I-85.
- **Multi-Use Trail Option 2** (Figure 2-4):
 - extends east at-grade along Mayson Street NE adjacent to the proposed BeltLine transit station;
 - continues east along Plasters Avenue NE, parallel to the BeltLine transit alignment;
 - elevates along the eastern boundary of the MARTA Armour Yard;
 - continues north parallel to Piedmont Road NE and the BeltLine transit alignment, along the eastern boundary of the Rollins, Inc. property, elevating above CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek to Garson Drive NE; and
 - continues west and north along Garson Drive NE to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station.

2.3.6 Alignment Option 3

- **Transit Option 3** (Figure 2-5) provides access that is more direct to the Lindbergh Center MARTA Station, using more elevated guideway and less in-street right-of-way. This alignment option:
 - extends the transit alignment north along Mayson Street NE;

- elevates above MARTA heavy rail to an alignment between the existing MARTA and existing Norfolk Southern line; continues north, elevating above the CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek;
 - continues north to the east of Norfolk Southern railroad and the Post Lindbergh apartments property and parallel to and west of MARTA heavy rail to Garson Drive NE; and
 - includes an at-grade Armour Station for BeltLine transit to the southwest of the intersection of Armour Place NE and Plasters Avenue NE, immediately north of I-85.
- **Multi-Use Trail Option 3** (Figure 2-5):
 - extends north, elevating east of and parallel to the MARTA heavy rail line,
 - continues north, beneath the proposed elevated BeltLine transit alignment to Armour Drive NE;
 - continues west along Armour Drive NE beneath the elevated BeltLine transit alignment and beneath the MARTA heavy rail and Norfolk Southern railroad bridges;
 - continues along the southern and western boundaries of the Lafarge Building Materials, Inc. and Ready Mix USA, LLC properties;
 - continues north, elevating above CSX railroad and Peachtree Creek; and
 - continues east along the north bank of Peachtree Creek to Piedmont Road NE, then to Garson Drive NE, and on to Lindbergh Center.

2.3.7 Limits of Disturbance

The general study area for the EER is a one-half mile wide band centered on the BeltLine Corridor. Where appropriate, the EER specifies required assessment extents within the half-mile band, as such extents may vary depending on the subject resource.

Physical effects from the BeltLine project may occur within the Limit of Disturbance (LOD). In this EER, the LOD represents the likely “footprint” of the project, or the physical extent of the proposed transit track centerlines, passenger stations, and trail configuration with trail access points.

Establishing the LOD line first involved updating a base profile of the existing terrain, matching the existing conditions as closely as possible while achieving appropriate trail and transit grades. Next steps involved updating existing cross sections, taken every 100 feet along the alignment, based upon the typical sections prepared for the project. LOD lines represent intersections of the section lines for the proposed improvements and the existing grade. Final LOD boundary adjustments reflected design assumptions for construction, including properly graded earthwork, the introduction of constraints near environmentally sensitive areas, and the introduction of retaining walls where LOD lines would otherwise extend beyond the Atlanta Development Authority right-of-way. Where proposed transit services would operate within an existing street, the street’s curb lines represent the LOD.

Figure 2-3: Transit/Trails Option 1 and Transit Option 1A

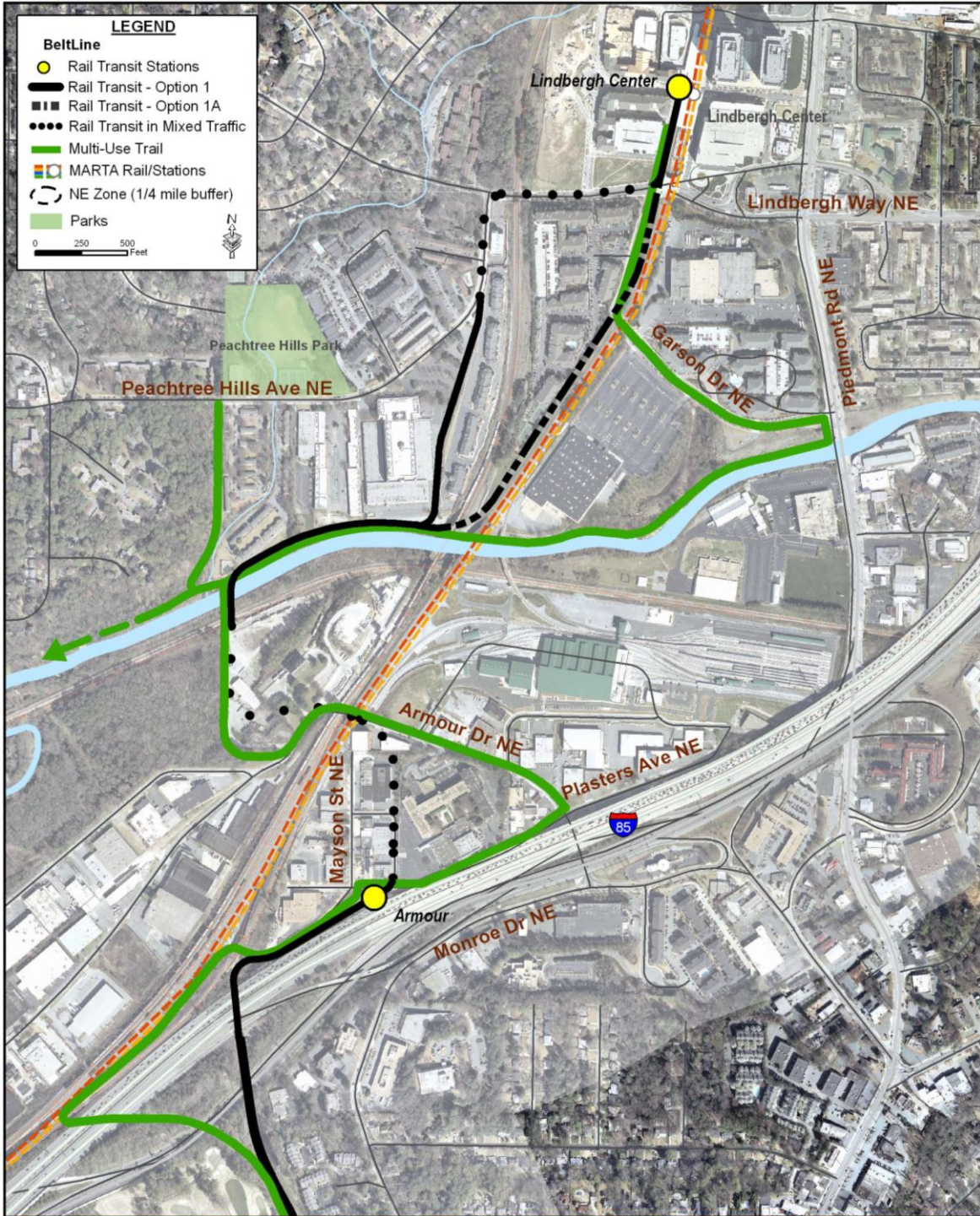


Figure 2-4: Transit/Trails Option 2

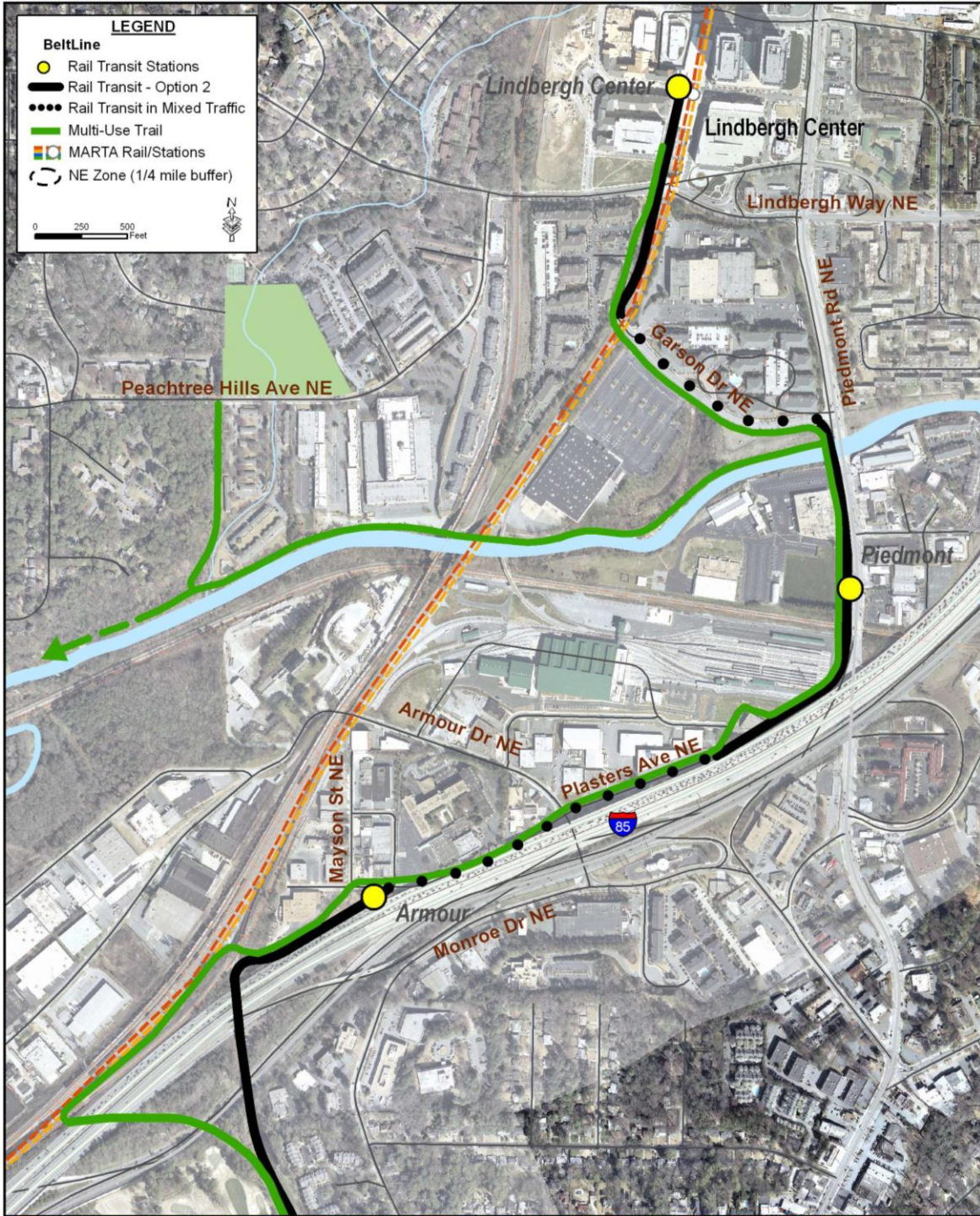
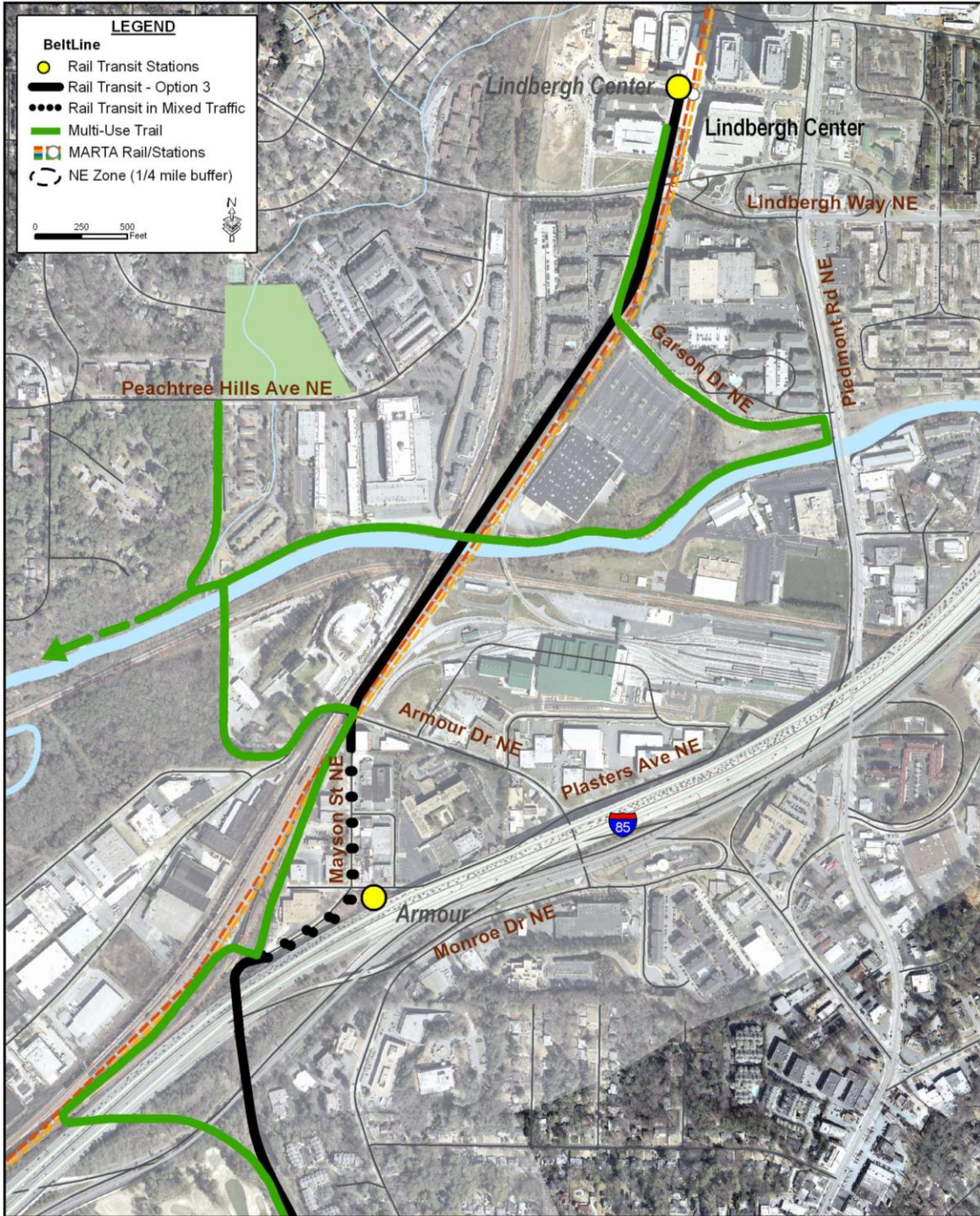


Figure 2-5: Transit/Trails Option 3



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