

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How will CATS fund the BLE?

A: CATS is seeking a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and from the State of North Carolina, as we did with the existing LYNX Blue Line. The success of the Blue Line will be beneficial when CATS requests federal funding for the BLE. CATS will ask FTA to fund at least 50 percent of the project, with the State of NC and CATS funding the remaining share of the BLE project cost.

Q: What is the difference between Preliminary Engineering and Final Design?

A: Preliminary Engineering is a phase of project development during which detailed project design is developed and the project costs, benefits and impacts are defined. Final Design results in complete plans from which the project can be built.

Q: What is the current timetable for construction?

A: CATS anticipates that the BLE will open in 2017, with construction starting in late 2013. However this schedule is dependent on available funding.

Q: With the elimination of the I-485/N. Tryon Street station and parking deck, how will CATS accommodate commuters?

A: CATS added approximately 800 parking spaces to the University City Blvd Station design. This addition provides a total of 1,500 parking spaces at this location. A parking deck is also now included at the JW Clay Blvd Station, providing an additional 600 parking spaces. Parking will also be available at the Old Concord Rd and Sugar Creek Stations.

Q: How does the property acquisition process work?

A: CATS will work with the City of Charlotte's Real Estate Division for property acquisitions needed to construct the BLE. The City's Real Estate Division will acquire property as outlined in the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Policies Act of 1970, as amended. The Uniform Act promotes uniformity and fairness in property acquisition. The owner will have sufficient time to consider the offer or make counter offers.

Q: How will bus service be integrated into the line?

A: The BLE project will include bus drop-off/pick-up locations at all park and ride transit stations and several of the walkup stations. Bus service along the alignment will be evaluated prior to the line's opening to find opportunities to optimize bus service and provide a seamless connection for our transit customers.

Q: If you are planning three-car trains for the BLE how will that work with the current two-car train system?

A: When the BLE opens initially, two-car trains will provide enough capacity to meet demand. In order to make the system seamless from one end to the other, eventually CATS will need to extend the platforms and add electrical power substations to accommodate three-car trains along the existing Blue Line.

Q: Will the BLE also include Art in Transit?

A: CATS will follow the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC) policy recommending one percent of the project's construction cost be applied to the art program. FTA has also encouraged art in transit for more than 30 years. Good design and art improves the appearance and safety of the facility, gives vibrancy to its public spaces, and makes patrons feel welcome while potentially increasing ridership.

Q: What is the anticipated time to ride the BLE from the end of the line in the University City area to Center City and how much will it cost to ride?

A: Riding from the end of the line at UNC Charlotte to Center City will take approximately 22 minutes. Riding the entire length of the LYNX Blue Line one-way will take approximately 48 minutes. The cost to ride the BLE will be the same as local bus fare when the line opens. Customers will be able to buy their passes from ticket vending machines located near the station platform.

Q: How will the BLE affect traffic on North Tryon Street?

A: North Tryon Street will always be heavily traveled. Light rail will provide an alternative traveling option to commuters. Streetscape improvements such as lighting, open spaces, sidewalks and signage will improve safety for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists in the area. The grade crossings incorporated into the project will add to connectivity to adjacent street networks, and the light rail line will bridge over major intersections such as University City Boulevard (NC 49) and W.T. Harris Boulevard.

Q: Why does the BLE cost so much more than the Blue Line on the South Corridor?

A: There are several factors influencing the cost of the BLE. This extension is a more complex project than the Blue Line, involving coordination with four railroads versus one, four miles of North Tryon reconstruction versus one-half mile on South Boulevard, and twice as many grade crossings. The success of Charlotte's Blue Line has also influenced the project design. Public demand for riding the light rail has led to more grade separations to allow for increased frequency, platforms designed for three-car trains, additional vehicles to accommodate ridership expectations, additional vehicle storage needs and increased parking.

Q: Can the Blue Line be extended to I-485 or into Cabarrus County in the future?

A: The line will be designed and constructed in a way that will not preclude future expansion.