

# Transitions

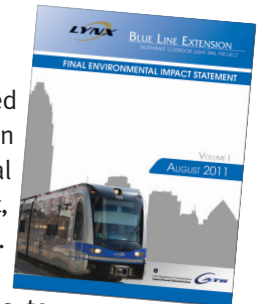
SUMMER/FALL 2011



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## The LYNX Blue Line Extension Is Right On Track!

The Blue Line Extension (BLE) light rail project has achieved another major milestone in the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) process! CATS recently published the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), which evaluates the social, economic, environmental and transportation effects associated with the BLE.



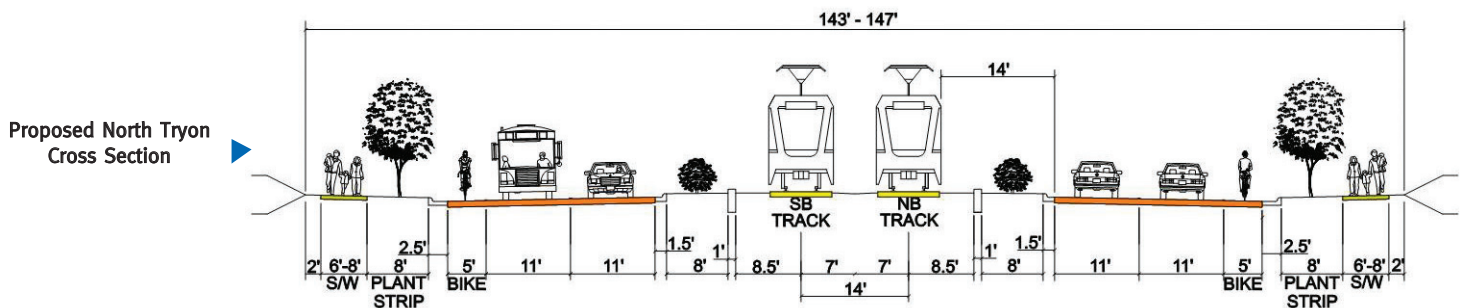
The principal components of the Final EIS include: 1) identification of a preferred alternative; 2) responses to comments made during the Draft EIS circulation period; 3) commitments to mitigate adverse impacts of the project; 4) evidence of compliance with related environmental statutes, Executive Orders and regulations; and 5) a description of changes that have been made to the project since the Draft EIS was published.

The public review period for the Final EIS will run through Thursday, October 27, 2011. The Final EIS is available electronically at [www.ridetransit.org](http://www.ridetransit.org). Hardcopies of the Final EIS are available for public review at CATS' main offices, at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center (ninth floor) and in the following libraries: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library – Main Branch, Sugar Creek Branch, and University City Regional Branch; J. Murrey Atkins Library – UNC Charlotte and the State Library of North Carolina in Raleigh, NC. For more information regarding the Final EIS or to submit written comments, contact:

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NEWS FROM THE CHARLOTTE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM  
FEATURING THE LYNX BLUE LINE EXTENSION



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## Land Use Planning A Key Component Of The Blue Line Extension

An integrated land use and transit system is vital to manage and invigorate the growth occurring in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area and existing communities into vibrant places to live and work. This requires making land use decisions that encourage residents to use transit as an alternative for their daily travel. It also requires ensuring that the areas around transit stations encourage pedestrian activity and provide for a mix of land uses in an active and safe environment.

Integrated land use planning and transit oriented development (TOD) are the cornerstones of the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan. These high-quality urban environments are carefully planned and designed to attract and retain transit ridership. TOD provides for a pedestrian-friendly environment, connected to rapid transit stations with an increased density of residential, retail and employment opportunities. These types of communities create a sense of place, allowing for a high quality of life and mobility, while simultaneously helping to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Here are some factors that make transit oriented developments so appealing:

- Transit contributes to the vitality and prosperity of quality urban communities by encouraging pedestrian activity at and around transit stations.
- Transit makes better use of existing investments in rail and road systems.
- The integration of transit and land use supports growth management while discouraging urban sprawl.
- Slowing the increase in vehicle trips means less increase in congestion and travel time, and improved air quality.

While the sluggish economy has tempered new development since 2007, the City of Charlotte has taken advantage of the decrease in day-to-day land development pressure to complete a number of broad policy initiatives. These broad policy initiatives are linked to the BLE corridor by serving as organizing elements to guide growth to areas that can best support it. The policy initiatives include:

- The **Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework (CCW)** identifies three geographic types used to categorize land in Charlotte's "sphere of influence" – Activity Centers, Growth Corridors and Wedges – and outlines the desired characteristics of each of these geographies. Along the BLE alignment, CCW identified transit station areas as subareas of Growth Corridors and areas appropriate for the most intensive future development outside of Center City.
- The **Urban Street Design Guidelines** is an implementation tool intended to create complete streets that provide capacity and mobility for motorists, while also being safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, cyclists and neighborhood residents. This guidance will be important in making stations more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.
- Refinements to the transit oriented zoning districts to allow more flexibility for development while maintaining the overall integrity of the districts.
- Adoption of three station area plans as part of the **University City Area Plan**.
- Development of the **Northeast Corridor Infrastructure Program** to make improvements intended to support and encourages future development in the Northeast Corridor.



Successful transit oriented development around existing South Corridor light rail line.

## Real Estate Open House Held For Property and Business Owners Along The Proposed Blue Line Extension Light Rail Project

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), along with City of Charlotte Engineering and Property Management Real Estate staff hosted an open house meeting on September 27 for property owners with potential property impacts due to the construction of the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE). Approximately 55 residents attended the meeting to review maps and discuss land parcels that may be impacted by temporary or permanent easements or as a potential partial or full acquisition. As the BLE project moves forward into construction, CATS will provide frequent updates to keep you informed of areas that may be impacted. If you would like to receive electronic notifications, sign up for our [Notify Me](#) subscription service.



CATS staff showing residents proposed property impacts.

### Real Estate Acquisition and Relocation Process

- Parcel is identified and certified as needed for the Construction and/or Operation of the BLE. (The different rights to be acquired are: Fee Whole Acquisitions, Fee Partial Acquisitions, Permanent Easements and Temporary Construction Easements.)
- City Real Estate Agents (or contracted agents) will notify the property owners and setup a time to meet and explain the project. This is called the Initial Contact.
- After the agent explains the impacts of the project to the property owner, the agent will then order an appraisal of the areas needed for the project.
- Agent will also meet with tenants to provide relocation advisory services if applicable.
- Once the appraisal has been reviewed and approved, the agent will set up an appointment with the property owner to make an offer for the property. This is called the Initiation of Negotiation.
- If applicable, the agent will meet with the tenant on or after the Initiation of Negotiation to certify the tenant is eligible for relocation benefits and discuss the various options available to the tenant. The tenant will be given their 90-day assurance letter at this meeting. Tenants will not be required to relocate earlier than 90 days from the date of this notice.
- The Real Estate agent will negotiate with the property owner to reach a settlement. Once a settlement is reached, the paperwork will be signed and processed for closing.
- If applicable, the agent will help the tenant relocate and process the payments.

For more detailed information on the Real Estate Acquisition and Relocation Process, please contact Kevin Hennessey at [khennessy@charlottenc.gov](mailto:khennessy@charlottenc.gov).

## BLUE LINE EXTENSION

### TRANSITIONS SUMMER/FALL 2011

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To receive project updates via e-mail, sign up for the electronic subscription service at: [www.ridetransit.org](http://www.ridetransit.org) by clicking on E-mail Updates.

For more information on rapid transit planning, visit the CATS website at: [www.ridetransit.org](http://www.ridetransit.org) or call CATS at 704-336-RIDE (7433).



## Upcoming Milestones

Record of Decision	December 2011
65% Design Complete	December 2011
Right-of-Way Acquisition Begins	December 2011
State FFGA Signed	December 2011
Request to enter Final Design	February 2012
FTA Risk Assessment Complete	March 2012
FTA Approval to enter Final Design	May 2012
Federal FFGA Signed	December 2012
Advanced Utility Relocation Begins	February 2013
Start Construction	September 2013
Right-of-Way Acquisition Complete	October 2013
Complete Final Design	January 2014
Initiate Revenue Service	Late 2016/Early 2017

\*Schedule Subject to Change

## CATS Hosts A Business Opportunity Symposium

CATS, in collaboration with the City of Charlotte's Engineering & Property Management and the Small Business Opportunity Office, conducted a Business Opportunity Symposium on September 29 at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. CATS used this opportunity to create an environment to give small and socially or economically challenged local businesses the opportunity to learn about publicly funded contracts by participating in the Small Business Enterprise (SBE) and the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) programs. A meet and greet for potential prime contractors and sub-contractors to learn about each other's abilities and to develop working relationships for future contracts was incorporated into the event. This event was a success with over 75 attendees. Information provided at the event is posted on CATS website at <http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/cats/about/Business/procurement/Pages/OpportunitiesSymposium.aspx>.



Business owners learn about business opportunities with the City.

CATS covered the following topics in detail at the event:

- Providing a business overview, listing upcoming contract opportunities
- Getting the Business: Bidding, contracting and other hoops I have to go through!
- Defining Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) and navigating federal regulations
- Am I an SBE or DBE? How do I become one? What are the purpose and advantages of being registered as a DBE?

As the major provider of public transportation to Charlotte and the surrounding region, CATS relies on the communities it serves to build and operate its services every day. For more information about becoming a registered vendor with CATS or the City of Charlotte or for information on upcoming business opportunities, please contact Arlanda Rouse, CATS, at [arouse@charlottenc.gov](mailto:arouse@charlottenc.gov).