

Transitions

SPRING 2008



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Record Attendance, Insightful Questions, and Tornado Warnings?

Community kick-off meetings a success!

Not even tornados could keep people away! In March, CATS' Blue Line Extension team held community kick-off meetings to provide citizens with the latest on the light rail project, including where we are, where we're going and how we're going to get there. Over 200 people participated in the two meetings, with the second night drawing a crowd of over 100 in the midst of massive thunderstorms and tornado threats!

Having received approval from the Federal Transit Administration to enter Preliminary Engineering (PE) in November 2007, there is a lot of activity going on, offering opportunities for public input. During the meetings, staff talked about the engineering process, project benefits and complexities, and why public participation is crucial as the project moves forward.



Interested citizens filled the room at the University Hilton in the midst of massive thunderstorms to hear about the LYNX Blue Line Extension light rail project.

The majority of citizen questions and concerns related to the project schedule, safety and security at stations, proposed real estate impacts, and funding. The following is a sampling of the issues raised at the meetings. A complete summary is available on the Northeast Corridor page of the CATS website at www.ridetransit.org.

What will be the impact to Tryon Street?

North Tryon Street is a state road, so CATS will coordinate project activities with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Studies during PE will determine how North Tryon will be designed, including the number of turn lanes needed, pedestrian signals, and safety features.

What is the proposed time schedule for the rail line to NoDa?

CATS plans to build the entire alignment at one time. The Blue Line Extension should be complete in 2015.

Will the buses integrate with the light rail?

As with the LYNX Blue Line, CATS will coordinate the bus and rail system for easy transfers and seamless service.

Why can't Charlotte take a more aggressive plan and build all the corridors/the full system simultaneously?

The 1/2 cent sales tax does not produce enough revenue for CATS to build all the corridors at the same time.

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



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Transitions



Students share their enthusiasm as they provide details about the history uncovered in the Northeast Corridor.

Students Explore History at Light Speed

Did you know the building that now houses Cabo Fish Taco on North Davidson Street was once Hand's Pharmacy, an important institution in this former mill village community? The pharmacy was a gathering place for mill workers. "Doc Hand" dispensed not only medicine but hospitality to help people feel a sense of belonging to the community.

This is one of the many interesting pieces of history along the LYNX Blue Line Extension uncovered by University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte public history graduate students in collaboration with CATS Art-in-Transit program. The students presented their project, entitled History at Light Speed: Discovering Charlotte's Northeast Corridor, to CATS staff and university representatives at a May 1 reception at The Art House in the NoDa arts district.

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Which Way Do We Go? City evaluates alignment alternatives

In June 2006, the Metropolitan Transit Commission adopted the North Carolina Railroad (NCR) alignment as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the Blue Line Extension light rail project, and recommended further study of both the adopted NCR alignment and the Sugar Creek/North Tryon Street design option. Each alternative will include two stations – Sugar Creek (near Sugar Creek Road) and Eastway (near North Tryon and Old Concord Road). City staff has defined a planning process to:

- Refine each alignment option and associated station locations;
- Develop two land use and transportation concept alternatives for the larger study area (which includes both alignments); the first concept will include light rail on the NCR line, and the second will include light rail on North Tryon between Sugar Creek and Old Concord Road;
- Develop a streetscape vision for North Tryon Street for each alternative, with and without light rail in the median;
- Evaluate the associated costs and benefits of each alternative.

The project team will analyze the two alternatives with respect to land use, transportation, transit, economic development, costs and public input. CATS is seeking public comments on these alternatives during meetings scheduled for July 10 and 15, 2008 (see details on back cover). This evaluation will be completed by December 2008. For more information on this process, please contact Kathy Cornett, Land-Use Planning Manager, at kcornett@ci.charlotte.nc.us.



CATS is coordinating with the North Carolina Railroad to run the Blue Line Extension in a portion of their right-of-way.



With each alignment alternative, pedestrian and vehicular connections would be considered as part of the redevelopment to provide better access between nearby neighborhoods and the station.

LYNX to the 49ers

CATS held a public forum on April 29, 2008 on the University of North Carolina (UNC) Charlotte campus to hear from students, faculty, and staff about the proposed Blue Line Extension campus alignment and station. CATS received questions and feedback from the approximately 100 attendees. Students, faculty, and staff expressed interest in the cost and benefits of a station on campus, possible routes for the Blue Line Extension, timelines for construction, and safety concerns with a station on campus.

During 2006, eight alignment alternatives were developed and evaluated based on University goals, land use, transit, environmental, cost considerations and public input. Some of the goals shared by UNC Charlotte, University City, and CATS include providing a safe and secure environment, accommodating academic growth, strengthening relationships between the University and communities of the region, maximizing development opportunities within the corridor, and serving and connecting the UNC Charlotte, University City, and Uptown areas. The alignment that was chosen reflects many of these goals that University and community leaders want to address with the light rail alternative.

While the basic alignment was chosen, there are still a number of details to be addressed. As CATS progresses through the design process, there are some challenges on the UNC Charlotte section of the line:

- Potential environmental impacts, including visual, safety/security, natural resources, and greenways
- How the rail alignment enters and exits the University's campus
- Coordination with the University's Master Plan update

In conjunction with the public forum, CATS held an online survey for UNC Charlotte students, faculty, and staff. CATS received over 3,000 responses from the survey. The following are a few of the responses received. A full summary of the survey results is available on the Northeast Corridor page of the CATS website at www.ridetransit.org, under the public meeting summaries.

Are you familiar with the LYNX Blue Line the light rail in South Charlotte?

Yes - **84.7%** No - **15.3%**

How often do you ride the LYNX Blue Line?

Once or twice - **21.2%** 2 or more times per week - **3.2%** 2-3 times per month - **4.7%**
4 or more times per month - **2.2%** I have not ridden the LYNX Blue Line - **68.7%**

Do you agree that the LYNX Blue Line Extension UNC Charlotte Station should be located near Laurel Hall (formerly Squires Hall) along Cameron Boulevard, with easy access to the future Student Union?

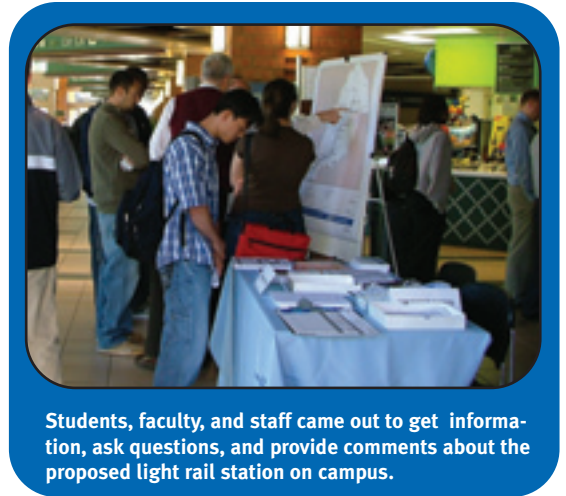
Yes - **89.7%** No - **10.3%**

To what areas of Charlotte would you take the LYNX Blue Line Extension?

NoDa (North Davidson St. area) - **50.0%** University City - **69.9%** Other - **6.7%**
Uptown Charlotte - **86.5%** South End - **51.4%** I-485 at South Boulevard - **34.0%**

In your opinion, does light rail provide a valuable service to the community?

Yes - **95.6%** No - **4.4%**



Students, faculty, and staff came out to get information, ask questions, and provide comments about the proposed light rail station on campus.

Record Attendance, Insightful Questions, and Tornado Warnings? cont.

Would it save money to build station by station or to phase the project?

It would be more costly to phase the project. Phasing would mean additional time and cost more money to go through the FTA process and receive approval for each segment. Costs would most likely increase for engineering services and construction.

With a plan that goes out to the year 2030, how do we know it will continue to meet our needs?

CATS reevaluates the plan every three to four years based on the changing needs of our community. We will look at priorities and options, review financial capacity, evaluate changes in revenue sources, and then update the plan to provide the best transit system for the region.

When will the alignment and stations be decided?

We want to allow sufficient time for citizen input and participation

in the decision-making process prior to moving forward with a final alignment and station locations. In July, citizens will have an opportunity to provide input, suggestions, and comments on the alignment alternatives and station locations. CATS expects to have more defined information by the end of the year.

Will it take longer if we go beyond I-485 into Cabarrus County?

The LYNX Blue Line Extension project, approved by FTA for PE, is defined as Center City Charlotte to I-485 at North Tryon. An extension beyond I-485 would be a separate project and would have to go through the full FTA review process. We are working with Cabarrus County to determine the feasibility of extending the line past I-485.

Station Types

The following examples are types of stations that may be used on the Blue Line Extension. Some types, such as center and side-platforms, were used on the Blue Line. The split-staggered platform design shown here is a new station design being considered for the Blue Line Extension, and was not used on the Blue Line.

Side Platform



Example on LYNX Blue Line

Center Platform

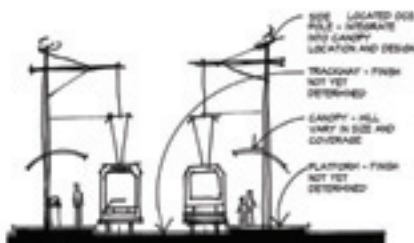


Example on LYNX Blue Line

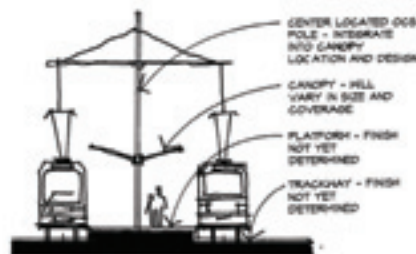
Split-Staggered Platform



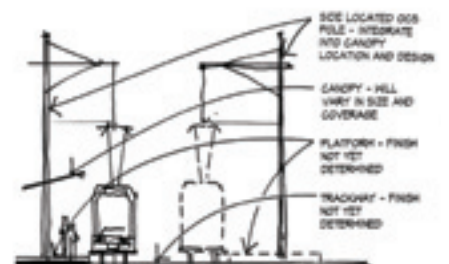
Rendering of University City Station



Typical Platform Configuration



Typical Platform Configuration



Typical Platform Configuration



Students Explore History at Light Speed cont.

“The partnership between the University and CATS is an example of service learning at its best,” said Dr. Karen Cox, Associate Professor and Director of the Public History Program. “The students learn that history has currency; at the same time, they build their professional experience and network.”

Twelve students enrolled in this past spring’s “History Museums and Historic Sites” participated in the project. In February, CATS’ staff provided students with information and a virtual tour of the proposed LYNX Blue Line Extension alignment. Students also learned how public art impacts the transit environment and the various ways artists involved with the Art-in-Transit program engage the community and its history through their work. They understood their final project would serve as a resource for the art program as well as the project team.

“Artists look at a community’s past, present, and future when approaching public art projects,” said Lyndsay Richter, CATS Art-In-Transit program administrator. “We want ways to provide artists with the cultural history of the neighborhoods along a rapid transit line.”

The students selected five neighborhoods along the Northeast Corridor: First Ward, Optimist Park, NoDa, Eastway/North Carolina Railroad, and the University. They investigated each neighborhood in terms of its history and geography, people and personalities, community institutions and watershed moments.

In doing so, they uncovered a wealth of information: the impact of urban renewal policies on the development of Earle Village in First Ward; the confederate role of the Phifer estate in present-day Optimist Park; the North Charlotte village anchored by Highland, Johnston, and Mecklenburg mills; the 1850s railroad connection and Edward Dilworth Latta’s streetcar vision; and Dr. Bonnie Cone’s influential leadership and passion for education in Charlotte.

In addition, two architecture students proposed a station model inspired by the historic mill influences and modern future of the city, incorporating brick column bases with a contemporary steel shelter design, capped with an abstracted cotton plant design to secure the canopy tension cables.

Students presented storyboards for the five neighborhoods, printed copies of the written material, and the station models at an end-of-



Dr. Karen Cox, CATS CEO Keith Parker, and Lyndsay Richter talk about the success of the “History at Light Speed” project, the challenges students faced, and the history they uncovered that will be shared with artists working on the Blue Line Extension project.

semester reception where approximately 60 attendees met each student in front of their storyboards to discuss the project.

Kristin Foster focused her research on the First Ward community. “This was one of the most rewarding projects I have undertaken in graduate school,” she said. “Discovering a city’s history really makes you feel connected to the place. At the same time, we really pushed ourselves to make the best project possible because we knew we could impact on not only our school, but our community as well.”

History at Light Speed proves that history not only inspires public artists, it inspires brilliant minds in all professions.

For more information, contact Lyndsay Richter, Art-in-Transit Program Administrator, at 704-432-3017 or log on to www.ridetransit.org.

BLUE LINE EXTENSION

TRANSITIONS SPRING 2008

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

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



We Want to Hear from You! Public Workshops Announced

Get involved in shaping your community! CATS will host public workshops next month to get input on station locations as well as the Sugar Creek Road and North Carolina Railroad light rail alignment alternatives.

Come along for the ride!

Thursday, July 10, 2008

Oasis Shriners Center

604 Doug Mayes Place

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Tuesday, July 15, 2008

Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church

101 West Sugar Creek Road

Fellowship Hall

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Please note CATS will present the same information at both meetings. For more information about the meetings or bus routes nearest the meeting locations, contact 704-336-RIDE or visit www.ridetransit.org

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