

Transitions

SUMMER/FALL 2009



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The BLE: What's been happening? How much will it cost? And, who's paying for this anyway?

The LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) project team completed the 15 percent preliminary design for the 11 mile light rail project in April 2009. Staff presented the project update, schedule, and cost estimate to City Council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC). CATS has worked to achieve coordination early in the design phase with our partners, the railroads, the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and UNC Charlotte. Focusing on early coordination has allowed CATS to make adjustments, providing the best project for the community.

The success and high demand for the LYNX Blue Line, which opened in November 2007, has influenced the BLE project design. The scope of the BLE project has expanded since the completion of the conceptual design phase. New project enhancements include additional parking at the end-of-the-line parking deck, increased right-of-way to improve sidewalks and planting strips, and designing additional grade separations into the project. These project enhancements will allow Charlotte's next light rail line to serve more people in a pleasant and safer environment.

CATS is investigating the possibility of using three-car trains, instead of two. This would require additional rail vehicles in the fleet and extending the station platforms

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The BLE light rail project will cross under N. Tryon St. to enter onto UNC Charlotte campus.

Light Rail Line onto UNC Charlotte Campus Shifts

Over the past several years, CATS has worked closely with UNC Charlotte officials in the planning and design of the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) light rail project. The BLE project will serve the UNC Charlotte campus with multiple stations, including a station at JW Clay Blvd near the Charlotte Research Institute (CRI) and future football stadium, a station directly on campus along Cameron Blvd near the new Student Union, and a station at Mallard Creek Church Rd where the university is envisioning future university-related development.

During the first phase of preliminary engineering, CATS has worked with the university to design the alignment into the university's campus to minimize the impact to the

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



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Art-in-Transit Goes Digital

CATS Art-in-Transit conducted its first online call to artists for the LYNX Blue Line Extension (BLE) in May, 2009. The digital system, called CaFÉ, is a completely online application and voting system created by the Western States Art Federation in Denver, Colorado (www.callforentry.org). Last December, CATS surveyed more than 600 artists in its slide registry. A large majority of the artists surveyed preferred a digital process. CaFÉ is free to artists and eliminates the need to produce and distribute expensive slides of previous work and mail in supplemental materials to compete for art opportunities. When the electronic call closed on June 24, more than 350 artists had applied. The art selection panel had a large pool of artists, country-wide, to choose from.

All national regions are represented with 26% from the Southeast, 25% from the Northeast, 24% from the Southwest, 15% from the Northwest, and 7% from the Midwest. The remaining 3% are artists from outside the continental United States. The applicant pool included 15% from the Carolinas, with the majority residing in Charlotte.

On June 26, a panel of five art professionals, appointed by the Art-in-Transit Advisory Committee, met to begin the selection process using the new online review and voting system. The panel members were introduced to the system and agreed on the schedule for artists' selection over the course of three rounds, utilizing the online system from their computers for the first two rounds. In the third and final round of voting, panelists reconvened in person to select and match artists to art opportunities for the BLE project.

The quality of the art represented in the applicant pool was impressive. The panelists match the artists' talent with the BLE art opportunities. Numerous art opportunities exist for teams and individual artists. Locations where patrons wait for trains provide opportunities for art that invites contemplation, while transition sites require art that can be appreciated as patrons move from one place to another. Some sites are appropriate for place makers or area landmarks.

Once the selected artists are under contract, selections will be publicly announced. The Art-in-Transit and BLE project teams are looking forward to working with the selected artists, both locally and from around the country, to incorporate art responsive to the northeast corridor community.

CATS Partners with NCDOT Rail to Improve Light Rail Station

The Blue Line Extension (BLE) serves many neighborhoods in the Northeast community including NoDa, the historical, cultural and arts district near Uptown Charlotte. NoDa is also affected by NCDOT Rail Division's high speed rail project. CATS and NCDOT Rail are working closely to locate the station to best serve the neighborhood while preserving the character of the community.

NCDOT Rail Division is planning High Speed Rail, which will travel from Charlotte to Raleigh and ultimately to Washington DC. This NCDOT project is called the Charlotte Rail Improvement and Safety Project (CRISP). The improvements include building new bridges, establishing a new rail transportation hub in Uptown, realigning rail corridors, establishing new rail connections and closing crossings.

NCDOT Rail's plans for CRISP includes high speed rail running adjacent to CATS' planned alignment for the BLE in the NoDa area. CATS and NCDOT staff are discussing the best configuration for all the railroad needs within the limited right-of-way, to accommodate the varying needs and requirements for freight rail, high speed passenger rail and light rail.

The outcome of this focused planning is to design a 36th Street light rail station which includes a grade separation between 36th Street and the railroad tracks, provides good connectivity, and offers vehicular and pedestrian safety. Another goal is to mitigate noise, safety and traffic concerns between the railroad uses and NoDa residents and visitors. The proposed 36th Street grade separation would lower 36th Street under the railroad. The 36th Street Station will be located on the structure over 36th Street and will have direct access to NoDa.

For more information about NCDOT Rail's projects visit www.bytrain.org.



Local artists and community members came out to learn about the art opportunities for the Blue Line Extension light rail project.

In the Community

Fanta Festival

CATS staff participated in the Charlotte Fanta Festival, the largest Cinco de Mayo celebration of the Carolinas, hosted by the Latin American Coalition at McAlpine Creek Park on Sunday, May 3, 2009. Representatives provided information to festival attendees about the Blue Line Extension project in both English and Spanish. Festival attendees also received bilingual printed material to share with friends and family and were able to sign-up to receive e-mail notifications and updates about the Blue Line Extension light rail project.

National Night Out

CATS representatives participated in the Hidden Valley National Night Out festival. With hundreds of area residents attending, CATS was able to share information about the Blue Line Extension light rail project and inform the community of the September 29 and 30 public meetings. Bilingual materials were available for attendees to take information home or share with friends and neighbors.



Thousands come for a day of fun and information at the annual Fanta Festival.

We will come to you.

You can request CATS staff to come speak with your group or organization about the Blue Line Extension project. Just call CATS Customer Service at 704-336-7433 or email bluelineextension@ci.charlotte.nc.us to reserve a speaker for your group today.

Did you know...

CATS will provide translating services upon request for any Blue Line Extension Meeting? CATS will also provide auxiliary aids and services under the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled persons. Anyone requiring special services should contact CATS Customer Service at 704-336-7433. Your request must be confirmed one week prior to the meeting so arrangements can be made.

¿Sabía usted que...

CATS prooverá servicios de traducción si son solicitados para cualquier reunión pública de la extensión de la línea azul? CATS también prooverá aparatos auxiliares y servicios bajo el Acta para Americanos con Incapacidades para personas incapacitadas. Cualquier persona que requiera de servicios especiales debe contactar el servicio al cliente de CATS al 704-336- 7433. Su petición deberá ser confirmada una semana antes de la reunión pública para que se puedan hacer los preparativos.

The BLE: What's been happening? cont.

to accommodate three cars. Building additional roadway and pedestrian amenities is another planned enhancement to improve access and vehicular and pedestrian safety at and around the stations.

The total project cost ranges from \$928 million to \$1.12 billion depending on the amount of system capacity included and the rate of inflation. As with the Blue Line, CATS is seeking a Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) from the Federal Transit

Administration (FTA) and from the State of North Carolina. The FFGA will define the federal participation in the project based on the cost estimate at the final design phase. Federal funding is expected to cover 50% of the total project cost. The state and CATS' local sales tax money would each contribute 25% of the cost. To date, FTA has earmarked a total of \$24,950,000 for the BLE preliminary design. These funds were approved during 2008 and 2009. CATS has received \$980,000 in matching funds from the state and has applied for another state match.

Upcoming Activities

Publish Draft Environmental Impact Statement	Spring 2010
Complete 30% Design	Fall 2010
Prepare Final Environmental Impact Statement	Winter 2011
Environmental Record of Decision	Spring 2011

BLUE LINE EXTENSION

TRANSITIONS SUMMER/FALL 2009

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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 (7433).



PUBLIC MEETINGS

September 29, 2009

Sugaw Creek Presbyterian Church
101 West Sugar Creek Road
Fellowship Hall – 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

September 30, 2009

Oasis Shiner's Center
604 Doug Mayes Place
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Light Rail Line onto UNC Charlotte Campus Shifts *cont.*

campus environment while providing a direct, efficient connection to the proposed station location along Cameron Blvd. CATS is also coordinating with the university's update to its Campus Master Plan. As a result of this coordination, the university requested that CATS shift the alignment onto campus north to maximize the developable property on the CRI campus. CATS determined that this shift is feasible and would also eliminate the grade separation at the UNCC Research Dr. Light rail is now proposed to cross this intersection at-grade, then drop below the existing street elevation and cross under the northbound travel lanes of N. Tryon St. As the project moves forward, CATS will continue to coordinate with UNC Charlotte to develop a design that is integrated with the campus and provides convenient connections for students, faculty, and visitors.

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

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