



# Georgia Department of Transportation

## 2006 Fact Sheet

### Athens to Atlanta Rail Line

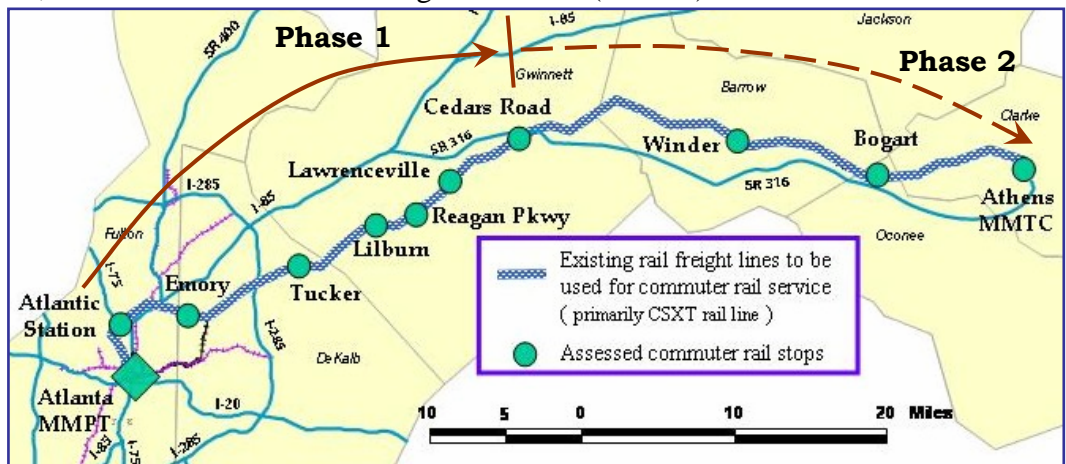
Athens – Winder – Lawrenceville – Emory – Atlanta Commuter Rail Service  
 visit the website at [www.garail.com](http://www.garail.com)

#### Overview

The 72-mile Athens – Atlanta rail line is estimated to carry the highest ridership of all commuter rail lines in the Georgia Rail Passenger Program. A total of 8,000 trips a day, all of them during peak periods, are projected for 2015, increasing to over 10,600 by 2030. Studies indicate that over 80 percent of the forecast passengers will board at Gwinnett and DeKalb County stops destined for Emory / Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlantic Station, and the Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT) in downtown Atlanta.

#### Service Description

For fully implemented service, six round trip trains a day will be offered five days a week. Two trains will originate at the Athens Multi-Modal Transportation Center; four additional trains will operate to the downtown Atlanta MMPT in the morning peak period from Cedars Road. In the



afternoon peak period, trains would return commuters to their originating stations. A guaranteed-ride-home for midday and emergencies is an integral part of the program. See a sample schedule at the bottom of this page and a table of sample fares on the next page.

The service will run within existing railroad right-of-way using existing and new tracks. Except for short stretches of rail line in downtown Athens and Atlanta that are owned by Norfolk Southern Corporation, CSXT owns the remainder of the rail corridor slated to be used.

#### Rail Improvement Packages

Capital costs to provide capacity for start up and intermediate ridership growth are estimated at \$383 million in year 2005 dollars. **Phase 1** with four trains from Cedars Road (36 mile segment) will cost some \$311 million and can be open within two years of availability of funding. **Phase 2** will add Winder, Bogart, and Athens for some \$72 million. Phases 2 could open two years after funding. A further \$36 million will be needed to handle growth in riders to 2030. The major cost categories are shown in the table on the next page, including all costs of design, construction management and contingency.

Sample AM peak period schedule							
<u>Station</u>	<u>Time</u>						
Athens	5:40      6:20						
Bogart	5:52      6:32						
Winder	6:04      6:44						
Ced.Rd	5:44	6:04	6:24	6:44	7:04	7:24	
L'ville	5:53	6:13	6:33	6:53	7:13	7:33	
Rgn Pky	6:00	6:20	6:40	7:00	7:20	7:40	
Lilburn	6:06	6:26	6:46	7:06	7:26	7:46	
Tucker	6:14	6:34	6:54	7:14	7:34	7:54	
Emory	6:27	6:47	7:07	7:27	7:47	8:07	
Atl Sta	6:37	6:57	7:17	7:37	7:57	8:17	
MMPT	6:45	7:05	7:25	7:45	8:05	8:25	

## **Benefits of Athens Commuter Rail**

- Removes 5,300 auto trips in each peak period
- Provides peak period capacity of an I-85 lane in each direction
- Avoids the demand for \$748 million in scarce road construction funds
- Enhances mobility, helps improve air quality, and saves energy
- Creates \$65 million annually in time savings for remaining road users
- Reliable operation in a controlled traffic environment less subject to breakdown and delay
- Prevents two traffic accident deaths every three years and 33 fewer injuries per year

## **Current Status**

Athens – Atlanta commuter rail service on the CSXT rail line was selected as the Locally Preferred Alternative by the State in December 2001. After an Alternatives Analysis of seven alternatives using various rail lines, construction of new alignment, co-location with I-85 and SR 316, and express bus to downtown and midtown Atlanta; a rail alignment on CSXT through Emory and the Norfolk Southern railroad through Atlantic Station was selected to reach the downtown Atlanta MMPT.

A six-volume draft Environmental Assessment (EA) of the extent of impacts from the rail service and a bus alternative was completed and made available for public review and comment in June 2003. Three public hearings on the project were conducted in the corridor in July 2003. The comments received were reviewed and addressed as appropriate in the final EA, which was forwarded to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in December 2003 for review and approval. On February 4, 2004 the FTA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact for the project, allowing the project to go forward with Federal support.

The commuter rail line has been included in the regional and state long-range transportation plans, and is partially funded in the current Atlanta Regional Commission Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Current funding in the TIP for the Athens – Atlanta line includes \$7.5 million in corridor funds and \$6 million in CMAQ funds for the four Gwinnett County stations.

## **Related Corridor Planning**

Negotiations with CSXT for access to their right of way must be completed before passenger service can begin on this line. CSXT is conducting an operations assessment of the Atlanta freight rail lines to determine what specific investments will be needed to ensure on-time commuter rail service and accommodate future freight traffic growth in the greater Atlanta area. The study is expected to be complete by late 2006.

As an opportunity for expansion, Emory University in cooperation with the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association has initiated a study of alternatives to improve access to the area. Their alternatives include implementation of passenger rail shuttle service on the Athens Line between Atlantic Station and Tucker. Their study should be released before the end of 2006.

### **Sample Athens line fares to Atlanta:**

<u>Station</u>	One-way fare to MMPT (2005\$\$) <u>(single / monthly)</u>
Athens MMTC	\$10.40 / \$8.30
Bogart	\$ 9.40 / \$7.50
Winder	\$ 8.50 / \$6.80
Cedars Road	\$ 7.50 / \$6.00
Lawrenceville	\$ 6.60 / \$5.40
Reagan Pkwy	\$ 5.70 / \$4.50
Lilburn	\$ 4.70 / \$3.80
Tucker	\$ 3.80 / \$3.10
Emory	\$ 3.10 / \$2.50

Note: Commuter rail riders get a free transfer on MARTA

### **Athens Line capital costs**

(Year 2005\$\$, Millions)

Trackwork & signals	\$ 177
Rolling stock	\$ 124
Stations and parking	\$ 48
Maintenance facilities	<u>\$ 34</u>
Total	\$ 383

## **Next Steps**

The next steps include developing a detailed service and implementation plan, preparing a detailed financing plan (using Federal funds earmarked for this project and flexible highway funds for capital), and identifying funding sources for operating assistance. Specific station area planning and site preservation would be undertaken with the communities along the line, to cover the details of location, size, arrangement of parking facilities, provisions for feeder and distribution bus service, and the development of transit-oriented land uses. A specific grade crossing improvement plan will also be developed in conjunction with transportation agencies, communities, and the railroads to enhance the safety warnings, consider road closings/consolidations, and establish priorities for funding grade separations.

In addition to available funding in the current TIP, approximately \$311 million in capital improvements will need to be appropriated from Federal transportation funds and \$5.4 million yearly in operating support in 2005 is required for Phase 1 service implementation to Cedars Road.