

2021 Atlanta Candidate Full Survey Responses



ANDRE DICKENS GRADE: A SCORE: 98

ATLANTA MAYOR

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1. Do you mention BeltLine rail or other mass transit on your website?

"Yes"

2. I have a transit-transportation advisor on my campaign staff.

"Yes"

3. I consider light rail along the BeltLine.....(check as many as apply.)

"long overdue., a vital part of Atlanta's transit plans., a solution to traffic and air pollution., the way we can increase density and affordable housing., a way to focus density and new development in areas designed for density and transit., part of the solution to reducing parking around the BeltLine., crucial to bringing transit equity to historically under-served communities."

4. Atlanta's Streetcar Plan (including the BeltLine light rail loop) is seen as the start of a comprehensive light rail network. Is building that network -- including the BeltLine -- a top transportation/transit priority for you? How high on your list of priorities is it?

"Among my Top 5"

5. The Streetcar East Extension currently in engineering evaluation by MARTA will result in the first build of rail on the BeltLine. What are the most important fixes to the streetcar that you would urge MARTA to make as it is extended and travels 1.4 miles of Beltline to Ponce City Market?

"Dedicate lanes to the streetcar while in the street., Improve and create access to MARTA rail stations in both directions., Install priority signalization technology so that the streetcar is prioritized over other traffic."

6. MARTA's current timetable calls for completing the 2.25 mile streetcar extension to Ponce City Market in 6-7 years. What best describes your position?

"I'd like to see this happen in 3-5 years."



7. The 2019 More MARTA Program names both the transit projects and their type (light rail, bus rapid transit, rail station improvements, etc.) Do you support implementing the More MARTA Program?

“Yes”

8. Do you agree with MARTA’s timeline of sometime in the 2045-2050 range to complete More MARTA?

“No”

9. When should light rail on the city-owned parts of the BeltLine, often referred to as the “J”, be completed? These are sections A, G, D, B, and C in the More MARTA map.

“2030-2035”

10. The right of way for the 6.5 mile remainder of the 22-mile loop on the NW side of the BeltLine is not yet acquired by the city. What best states your thoughts on closing the loop? Check all that apply.

“We need to reach agreement to secure the right of way with the railroads as soon as possible., The Mayor needs to lead on this., Without this northwest section, the BeltLine won’t reach its full potential.”

11. Please feel free to elaborate on your answers above to more fully reflect your thoughts and your vision for transit in Atlanta and specifically for BeltLine rail.

“Atlanta’s transit journey started more than half a century ago. Because the city’s infrastructure is crumbling, we cannot afford to wait for a 15-month procurement process mired in delays and hampered by corruption. If elected, I vow to finish what we started by overcoming corruption in contracting left from the previous administration, delivering on the promises made in the 2016 T-SPLIST (a necessity if we want T-SPLIST 2) and creating an easy-to-follow dashboard for federally and locally-funded projects. I’ll also work to resolve the project backlog by providing the resources for a full-strength ATL DOT, a department I created which is now in its second year of operation.”

12. The BeltLine rail project gained international attention because of its potential benefits while connecting communities, delivering a world-class transit system and reduce car dependency. Critics say The City of Atlanta and MARTA deliver too little, too late. Can you paint us a picture of the vital role BeltLine rail will play in helping Atlanta deal with its anticipated growth and other significant challenges?

“Need an answerThe BeltLine is the most transformative infrastructure investment Atlanta has seen since the expansion of our international airport. Its robust and responsible expansion is the key to solving decades of transportation challenges and achieving the density that will help usher Atlanta into an international city and regional capital. My vision includes the BeltLine helping to create balanced growth across the city, not just on the north and east sides of town. BeltLine critics will have to cheer when we ensure that Atlanta’s southside communities gain access to jobs across the city. Fulfilling the promise of the BeltLine is one of the surest ways to increase economic output and cement our long-awaited goal of being recognized as a truly international city.

As Mayor, I’ll insist that projects seeking funding are aligned against priorities from federal, state and other local authorities and budgets. City Hall makes it much harder



than it should to overlay those projects, impacted areas, and funding sources, and fixing that inefficiency will be one of my first priorities as mayor to begin to address the infrastructure backlog. I drafted the legislation to create the Atlanta Department of Transportation for this very reason.”

13. In your view, how does reliable transit, and specifically BeltLine rail, improve quality of life?

“I’m a Georgia-Tech trained engineer finishing my fourth consecutive year as Chairman of City Council’s Transportation Committee. The issue of transportation is top of mind for most Atlantans, and I am committed to improving the city’s infrastructure and connectivity. BeltLine rail isn’t just about getting people to a destination today, it’s actually about getting them to greater opportunities in life. Giving southside communities access to jobs across the city. Addressing the scourge of food deserts. The Atlanta BeltLine also has the power to transform Atlanta’s health outcomes, something we continue to see during the pandemic, as residents use it for exercise and outdoor activities. The Atlanta BeltLine is a transformative tool for income equality, health outcomes, transportation solutions and more -- and I will be intentional about ensuring that we all realize those benefits as Atlanta’s next mayor.”

14. Wherever the BeltLine trail is completed, property values rise dramatically, causing displacement of long-time residents at an alarming rate. BeltLine rail was imagined to be built simultaneously to the trail, and envisioned to help residents stay where they are. On the east side it is too late, but most of the rest of the trail is not yet built. We can still accelerate transit construction, particularly on the south and west sides. Do you see yourself as leading on this issue?

“Yes”

15. In addition to transit, what zoning and housing policies are needed to reduce the rate of displacement?

“I’ve spent two terms as a Councilmember focused on affordable housing and have championed the BeltLine Inclusionary Zoning ordinance that requires new rental developments to provide affordable housing, launched the BeltLine senior housing rehab program, and have beaten the drum for more cohesion between development community, policy makers, and rapidly displaced communities. I believe the next Mayor needs to make a priority of protecting legacy residents, expanding inclusionary zoning beyond the BeltLine (overcoming opposition from the General Assembly) and addressing blight to reclaim intown communities.

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16. More MARTA is the largest transit expansion program in the city's history. Will you press for re-examination of ridership estimates using industry-standard best practices that include a variety of ridership models?

“Yes”

17. If not, why not?

“”



18. What have you done to champion BeltLine rail? When? What will you do next?

“My leadership of Atlanta City Council's Transportation Committee acquainted me with Atlanta's myriad of unmet and unfunded needs, but the experience also illuminated a path forward. In 2015, I supported the Streetcar System Plan, which includes five crosstown routes in addition to 22 miles of streetcar service along the Beltline. Earlier this year, I was a signer on the bill for the 2021 Special Services District, resulting in a \$300 million infusion that will help complete the BeltLine faster and with more certainty. If elected, I'll be the biggest advocate in City Hall for BeltLine rail now. I will also chart a path to offer free transit for all, including BeltLine rail.”

19. Adding four Infill MARTA stations to the existing rail network would maximize efficiency and connectivity and spark transit-oriented development. Though MARTA studied them in 2007 and ABI includes 3 of the 4 in its 2018 BeltLine sub-area master plans, they are not in the More MARTA plan. These proposed stations are at Boone Blvd. (W), Hulsey Yard (E), Murphy Crossing(S), and Amour (N). Should funding be prioritized to study them again?

“Yes”

20. How does Transit Equity figure into your candidacy? Will you urge MARTA to demonstrate a commitment to it by conducting the engineering study required to build rail on the south and west Beltline segments as soon as possible?

“I have supported transit equity in my four years as Transportation Chair and indeed my eight years on Council.”

21. How will you ensure the entire BeltLine vision -- which features light rail transit, trail, and green railbed set in a greenway of trees and plants -- remains intact? What steps will you take so Atlanta's residents -- not just developers-- get the maximum benefits?

“I've spent my time as a Councilmember focused on affordable housing and have championed the BeltLine Inclusionary Zoning ordinance that requires new rental developments to provide affordable housing, launched the BeltLine senior housing rehab program, and have beaten the drum for more cohesion between development community, policy makers, and rapidly displaced communities. I'll ensure that President Biden's infrastructure plan and accompanying dollars are deployed in ways that encourage and ensure equity.”

22. How will you ensure that Atlanta Beltline Inc., which understands the entire BeltLine vision, has both enough decision-making authority and accountability to achieve it?

“I believe that the challenge has not been simply authority, but having both the resources and accountability, especially with regard to affordable housing.”

23. How can the city council Transportation and Community Development committees do a better job advancing BeltLine rail? Do you hope to serve on one of these committees? Please elaborate.



"I have served on the Transportation Committee for 4 years, served on the board of Atlanta BeltLine Inc., and engaged with many supporters of the project over my eight years on city council. As Mayor, I will continue that open door policy and also continue to work closely with the committee and its members on their priorities, including the BeltLine."

24. In 2016, voters overwhelmingly approved the More MARTA tax to complete BeltLine rail and other transit projects by a historic margin of 71%. More than \$250 million has been collected in More MARTA sales tax so far. In addition to no progress on actual transit construction, the public hasn't seen leadership, accountability or transparency from the City Council and the Mayor's office. What do you think the reasons are for this? (Check all that apply)

"Accelerating displacement caused the city council to focus on affordable housing instead., The Council needed strong mayoral leadership to advance BeltLine Rail and didn't get it., There was not enough cooperation among the council, Mayor, ABI, and MARTA."

25. Is an accelerated delivery of transit under More MARTA primarily a leadership issue or a money issue?

"Some of both, but more a leadership issue."

26. Please explain what you would do to resolve this?

"I plan to tie affordability and last-mile connectivity together through dedicated funding sources such as a tax on Atlanta's parking. Atlanta is one of the last remaining major cities that collects no taxes on parking, and applying a reasonable tax would discourage driving, encourage other modes of transportation, while generating the money to support last-mile infrastructure and affordable housing."

27. What additional sources of local funding would you support?

"Renew the TSPLOST with specific funds designated for BeltLine rail., Change state law to allow Impact Fees paid in the City of Atlanta to be used for transit., Lobby the ARC, State Legislators & others for (flexing) of federal highway funds., Seek parking revenue from public parking/parking taxes."

28. The Biden Administration has made funding transit a priority. Atlanta could see hundreds of millions in federal transit funding. Do you agree that building light rail on the south and west sides should be the next BeltLine build priority? (The yellow highlighted areas on the map) Why or why not?

"I agree that building light rail on the south and west sides should be the next BeltLine priority. As mayor, I will work to make it so. I've stated this publicly numerous times. The impending infrastructure bill being negotiated by Congress and the Biden administration present an opportunity to begin to bridge that gap. But in order to realize that opportunity, we must eradicate graft and waste from government, while applying federal, state and local resources toward a shared vision for our city. As a city, we are constantly competing for the resources to improve quality of life. We must also be more intentional about spreading those resources equitably around Atlanta while building and maintaining adequate



infrastructure, even as the cost of investing quickly outpaces federal and local governments' ability to fund it.

Our roads, sidewalks, transit, sewers, recreation centers, vehicle fleet, and our technical infrastructure are all in need of investment. Efforts have been made to make some improvements by using temporary solutions but now it's time for us to commit to a massive infrastructure campaign, with the Atlanta BeltLine as the centerpiece.

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29. Why do you think Atlanta and MARTA are not in line to receive billions in federal funding from the Biden Administration that cities like Phoenix, Los Angeles, St. Paul, Washington DC, San Jose, will in the 2022 budget? How would your leadership ensure Atlanta doesn't miss these opportunities?

“While Atlanta has a demonstrably solid relationship with the Biden Administration, there is more we can do to strengthen our relationship with Transportation Secretary Buttigieg and better understand his goals for US DOT. We also need to more actively promote Atlanta's long standing commitment to mass transit and the projects deserving of investment, such as the BeltLine.

As mayor, I will work with Atlanta City Council to designate more 'complete streets', implement more bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks, fulfill promises of More MARTA and BeltLine Rail. I'll ensure that infrastructure projects include the expansion and preservation of arts and culture within the city. Maybe most important, I will ensure that federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan and forthcoming Infrastructure Plan are used efficiently and without waste or graft. The last thing we need when billions of dollars are eligible to come to Atlanta is leadership that is proven to be corrupt or leadership that isn't visionary.

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30. Do you believe the More MARTA-Atlanta IGA should be amended to require approval by the City Council?

“Yes”

31. If yes, please outline legislation that you would introduce if elected. If no, please explain your position.

“As Mayor, I'll appoint new members to the MARTA Board of Directors that have relevant experience to contribute to Atlanta's mass transit ecosystem. They will need to bring strong qualifications, the willingness to work together, and keep Atlanta at the forefront of the still-expanding transit system in order to earn my support for the board. Another meaningful change would be to require that appointees follow the same course as other city board appointments and receive a final vote from the city council.

I would also support the passage of a new Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between MARTA, the City of Atlanta and Atlanta BeltLine, Inc. (ABI) that expressly calls for board members who are transit riders and transit responsive.

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32. Is BeltLine rail the City's Project or MARTA's? Who should determine the priorities, timeline and sequencing? Check all that apply.

"Atlanta BeltLine Inc. (ABI), The City Council, The Mayor, The City DOT"

33. Please explain your response.

"I agree that a single entity needs to take ownership of BeltLine in order for it to blossom and reach its true potential. The idea came to life via legislation drafted at City Council and championed by Council President Cathy Woolard and Mayor Shirley Franklin. For those and other reasons, I believe the City of Atlanta and its cadre of elected leaders should be firmly in control of the priorities, timeline and sequencing. As Chairman of the City Council's Transportation Committee, I have worked with my colleagues to hold MARTA and all of the city's transportation stakeholders accountable via the legislative process. I've witnessed 'More MARTA' develop a robust presence at community events to engage residents across the city. As mayor, I will direct my administration to be more focused on organizing forums for citizens to engage with each other and More MARTA simultaneously, because directing the resources to improve transportation infrastructure is one of the most important tasks of city government.

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34. Since others have failed, what would be your approach to make those negotiations successful? And who needs to be at the table?

"I'm not ready to say that others have failed, but rather that we have not placed a sufficient level of urgency on securing the right of way for the BeltLine. ABI is set to begin a Federal Transit Administration feasibility study for the northwest quadrant of the BeltLine. The next mayor should preside over completion of the BeltLine, and will likely have to fight as hard as Mayor Franklin and Council President Woolard did to launch the project more than 15 years ago. That requires a singular focus on finishing the job. I'll be a consistent and enthusiastic champion for the project, work collaboratively for its completion and minimize the arguments made by detractors by insisting that housing affordability and equity are central tenets of the BeltLine's completion."

35. What will convince the freight railroads to grant rights of way for BeltLine Rail, the Emory Clifton Corridor, and MARTA infill stations so that they can connect to existing transit?

"The freight railroads need a partner at City Hall who understands transportation and who will work with them for a successful transfer of those rights of way. I'll be that partner, and won't get up from the negotiating table until we reach an agreement."

