

2021 Atlanta Candidate Full Survey Responses



BRANDON CORY GOLDBERG **GRADE: A SCORE: 95**

ATLANTA CITY COUNCIL AT-LARGE POST 1

WWW.BRANDONCORYGOLDBERG.COM

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., 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 3"

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?

"Increase frequency of service (15 minute intervals are current service headway), 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., Close portions of streets to cars downtown and in O4W so that pedestrians and cyclists are safer in the shared right of way."

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'm going to work to push MARTA for a faster timetable."

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.

"By 2030"

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., The City Council 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.

"I did not select the items above regarding displacement and affordable housing because those challenges must be specifically addressed with the plan for Beltline rail. Rail will increase the desire to live near the Beltline even more, regardless of where along the Beltline a piece of property is. This will lead to increased rents and property values. We will need to dedicate ourselves to finding and implementing housing solutions to ensure that people from all economic statuses can find affordable housing near the Beltline."

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?

"Sustainability in Atlanta is going to rise or fall on how we address transportation, and that's why I have an advisory committee dedicated to transportation. Compared to issues such as public safety and housing equity, solving those other issues won't matter as much if people cannot actually navigate the city in an effective way. Having a home you can afford and be proud of isn't sustainable if you can't get to work. Having major businesses relocate to Atlanta isn't sustainable if they can't move their staff and products around the city effectively. Atlanta won't be a desirable place to live if you need to spend hours in traffic to get around, with only minimal transit options and unsafe roads for biking. More MARTA is one component of addressing this problem, but we also need to focus on building roads that can be shared with bikes and scooters, and we also need to focus on expanding access routes such as the Beltline. Other cities are decades ahead of Atlanta in this regard, and we need to

make easy transit an assumption for those getting around, not a struggle to be planned and concerned about. If we fail in this regard, then Atlanta will not be an economic destination or a place for people to move to. We are a city on the rise, and we need to make sure we build an infrastructure to support our future.”

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

“I commuted on MARTA for 6 years before the pandemic. It just makes life easier. It's more convenient to get around. You don't have to worry about finding parking. You can take a mental break without fighting traffic. It's quicker and more affordable. And quite frankly, it's something that other major cities have already sorted out. It is hard for us to compare ourselves to other major cities when we are missing such an obvious key component. Transit brings people together, and we need to get to work on it.”

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?

“My campaign's Housing Equity Committee has been working hard on this problem. I support much of the city's Planning Report released in March. Rezoning single family homes, particular ones near transit options, can help alleviate this issue. We can maintain the feel of a neighborhood while still allowing for more carriage houses, basement units, and similar options. Additionally, the city should explore opportunities to build microhomes on currently unused city property. These homes will provide those currently homeless with a safe place to live and alleviate other issues in our city related to homelessness. Additionally, studies have shown that once a homeless person is given a home, they can devote more of their mental energy to finding and holding a job to then pay their expenses. Of course, we also need to ensure that developers meet affordable housing standards and that there are no fees or other alternatives for developers to avoid these standards. The biggest obstacle to all of our housing issues will be to recognize that different neighborhoods will require different solutions. What works in one area may work in another, but it may not. We need to develop a plan that is both comprehensive and nuanced, addressing each part of our city appropriately.”

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?

“I have long been a vocal supporter of it and have made it a key part of my campaign's transportation program. When I'm elected, we'll stop talking about Beltline rail and start laying it down.”

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?

“Yes. Beltline rail must be along as much of the Beltline as possible. This must not become another situation where parts of the city are left behind. I will not merely urge MARTA though. It is time for City Council to start making demands for these kinds of steps. Council should regularly call before its committees the officials overseeing efforts that are falling short. Explanations should be provided by those officials, and corrective action should be presented as well.”

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?

“This process needs to be open, transparent, and collaborative. That's how I've structured my campaign, and it's how I will operate my office. People will come to this issue with different ideas and plans. We need to sit down, understand the endgame, and determine how we can arrive there with steps that have broad buy-in.”

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?

“There should be regular meetings with City Council to ensure that Council is doing its part to support the Beltline and empower the Beltline. At the same time, like any other project, the Council should expect projects to be accomplished on time and in the manner prescribed for any organization that works with the city. Just as with government agencies, Council should call before it those who can explain why projects that are behind schedule are lagging and what will be done to correct the situation.”



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.

"These are priority committees for me. As I've described above, they need to hold far more investigatory sessions questions officials and partners about projects that are falling behind or not being implemented as expected. These public hearings will ensure residents learn about these delays, and it will ensure those responsible for fixing the problems present concrete steps to do so."

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)

"Atlanta BeltLine Inc. did not advocate for the transit part of the BeltLine., Gentrification caused many to think the BeltLine was the problem, which eroded support for rail., MARTA did not understand the project's urgency and put it on the back burner., MARTA did not apply for grant money to begin construction as soon as they could., The Council needed strong mayoral leadership to advance BeltLine Rail and didn't get it., There were not enough champions for BeltLine rail in the City Council., 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 identify this as more of a leadership issue because we can begin the project as we continue to secure more funding. Additionally, it's still only hypothetical now. A project actually underway will help in making the case for more funds going forward. I would ensure the project gets underway through effective advocacy and engagement."

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

"Amend the BeltLine SSD to use funds for BeltLine rail construction., 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., Create new special assessment districts around future infill MARTA stations."

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'm not sure. Multiple components of the Beltline should be moving forward simultaneously. I'm not prepared to say which of those simultaneous components are more of a priority, as that doesn't seem to matter so long as all those items are moving forward."

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?

"As the loss of Atlanta's WorkSource Development grant reminds us, Atlanta is great at mismanaging and losing grant money. We need to shore up Atlanta's reputation in that regard through better auditing and control of how grants and funding are handled, and we need to seek out and secure as many opportunities as possible. The use of auditing and an Inspector General needs to be vastly expanded. Mismanagement of funds and programming, such as with the aforementioned WorkSource grant and HOPWA, are unfortunately perfect examples of Atlanta falling short in areas where we should be excelling. This kind of mismanagement is totally unacceptable, and only through closer auditing and review can City Council and the Mayor work together to ensure effective governance. Council should regularly call before its committees the city officials overseeing efforts that are falling short. Explanations should be provided by those officials, and corrective action should be presented as well. The Inspector General's office should provide day-to-day oversight, ensuring ethical and legal management of our funds."

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.

"I would introduce legislation doing just this. It's quite straightforward. City Council on any number of areas has taken a backseat to the Mayor and Executive Branch. It's time for that to end. Council should take leadership roles in approving projects and questioning officials about progress (or lack thereof). I favor a strong Council and will ensure legislation is passed to make the people's representatives actual players in moving the city forward. Council should have expanded confirmation powers over Mayoral appointments as well."

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

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

33. Please explain your response.

"Everyone has their share of responsibility and is falling short. The Council, however, is what binds all of these together, and it therefore falls on Council to pursue investigations into what is holding us back. Once a plan is established, Council should be the entity which keeps everyone on track."

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

"Well first, all stakeholders should be at the table. Backroom deals will not be how we get across the finish line. We do a lot of work with these companies, and just as we will do with affordable housing and developers, we need to draw lines in the sand. Yes, we will negotiate outcomes that work for everyone. However, we need to stop pretending that these kinds of points are optional. We should negotiate from a position of strength, because the city comes from a position of strength."

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 answer to that will depend on what they ask for. We should look to negotiate an outcome that everyone can live with. But all parties should understand that this ends with Beltline rail, and the city should be prepared to use every tool it has to accomplish that."

