

**BCN Meeting Minutes – October 10, 2019**  
**BUCKHEAD COUNCIL OF NEIGHBORHOODS**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**October 10, 2019**

Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Room 2202  
6:45 - 8:00 PM



**BUCKHEAD COUNCIL  
OF NEIGHBORHOODS**  
[www.buckheadcouncil.org](http://www.buckheadcouncil.org)

## **Meeting Agenda**

### **I Introductions**

### **II Business Meeting**

- a. Gordon Certain, Secretary – Adoption of Minutes
- b. Jen Rose & Sean Selman – Nominating and Election of Officers
- c. Mary Norwood
  - Vote on PATH400 Request
  - Update on Transportation Resolution
  - Announcement: Oct 24: Future Places Project

### **III Buckhead CID: Jim Durrett and Tony Peters**

### **IV ATL (Atlanta-Region Transit Link): Steve Dickerson**

### **V Q&A to BCID and ATL Speakers**

### **VI Lindridge-Martin Manor**

### **VII Atlanta Public Schools**

- a. APS Superintendent Meria Carstarphen
- b. APS CFO: Lisa Bracken
- c. Q&A to APS Speakers

### **VIII Adjourn**

**2020 Meeting Schedule:** Jan 9 – Mar. 13 – May 14 – Sept. 10 – Nov. 12

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### BCN Meeting Attendees By Neighborhood

<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Neighborhood</u>	<u>Attendees</u>
Argonne Forest	Kim Nagy	Peachtree Battle	Katie Phelps
Brandon	Beth Beskin	Peachtree Battle Alliance	Kirk Roaltik
Brookwood Hills	Robert Fransen	Peachtree Heights East	Debbie Moscato
Buckhead Condo Alliance	Paul Bangley Ben Howard Anne McKillips	Peachtree Heights West	Nolan Leake San Lenaeus
Castlewood	Elenore Klingler	Peachtree Hills	Ted Fleming
Chastain	Mindy Kaplan	Peachtree Park	David Orrison Greg Zimmerman
Collier Hills	David Gylfe	Peachtree Road	James Curtis
Collier Hills North	August Moody Susan Moody	Pine Hills	Ed Archer Jean Cooper Jerry Cooper Francine Lowe Jan Weyhenmeyer Keb Wyant
Cross Creek	Debra Wathen	Riverside/Grove Park	Amber Connor
Garden Hills	deLille Anthony Bill Bozarth Charles Meriwether	South Tuxedo Park	Mary Norwood
Grant Estates	Eleanor Ringel Kim Shorter	Tuxedo Park	Jay Berkelhamer Cynthia Davison Mercy Sandberg-Wright
Kingswood	Nina Schwartz John Shepard	Underwood Hills	Beau Grant Heather Sheets
Lindbergh Morosgo	Lydia Toomer	Upper Westside CID	Adeline Collot
Lindridge Martin Manor	Kevin Kilbride	Virginia-Highland	Lynn DeWitt
Loring Heights	Jim Elgar	Wesley Battle	Maureen Becker
Margaret Mitchell	Lindsay Bellasi Earl Ferguson Carolyn McGhee Robin Morgan	West Paces Northside	Tom Tidwell
Memorial Park	Glenn Cartledge Garth Peters	West Paces/Northside	Teresa Ann Shell
Morningside	Theresa Cromeans	<u>Guest Speakers</u>	<u>Attendees</u>
Morningside-Lenox Park	Julian Bene	APS	Meria Carstarphen Lisa Bracken
Mt. Paran-Northside	Jennifer Rose	ATL	Steve Dickerson
North Buckhead	Liz Bibby Gordon Certain Shayna Flash Walda Lavroff Valerie Sellers	BCID	Jim Durrett
Paces	Ken Hoogs Laurel Lucey	BCID / BATMA / LBI	Tony Peters
		<u>Other Attendees</u>	<u>Attendees</u>
		Buckhead Reporter	John Ruch
		Platinum Group Security	Danier Poolman

## **I Introductions**

The meeting's 73 attendees introduced themselves. A quorum of 26 BCN member neighborhoods was present. The meeting was BCN's 2019 Annual Meeting.

## **II Business Meeting**

### **Gordon Certain, Secretary**

**Adoption of Minutes** - Minutes for the September meeting were approved. Minutes for the May meeting, which had not been formally adopted previously, were also approved.

### **Nominating and Election of Officers - Jen Rose & Sean Selman**

BCN's Bylaws require that officers for the upcoming year be elected at BCN's Annual meeting. No nominations were submitted for this election, so a slate of candidates was prepared by the Nominating Committee including current officers, all of whom had agreed to serve in the upcoming year. All of these candidates were elected for service in 2020.

### **2020 Officers**

<b>BCN Chair</b>	Mary Norwood	South Tuxedo Park
<b>BCN Vice Chair</b>	Debra Wathen	Cross Creek
<b>BCN Secretary</b>	Gordon Certain	North Buckhead
<b>BCN Treasurer</b>	Jeff Clark	Garden Hills

### **Mary Norwood: Vote on PATH400 Request**

Livable Buckhead and the Buckhead CID had asked for a letter of support from BCN to ARC for their request for funding of an extension of PATH400 from Loridans Drive up to the Atlanta City limits for inclusion in the ARC Transportation Improvement Plan. From the City limits, PATH400 would continue north in Sandy Springs through the new I-285/GA400 interchange. It is the top project in the regional trail plan and has already been funded by Sandy Springs. Funding for this segment will come half from Path funds and half from TSPLOST funds. No major projects in Buckhead are competing for this funding of \$3.4 million. The letter was approved unanimously by the BCN neighborhoods represented at the meeting.

### **Mary Norwood: Update on Transportation Resolution**

Mary reported that 79% of BCN neighborhoods voted regarding our Transportation Resolution. Of them, 88% voted in favor. A few voted against it for various concerns. Four neighborhoods voted for the resolution but expressed reservations. No vote is needed tonight. The BCN Transportation Task Force is planned to prepare an addendum to address their thoughtful concerns. A letter will be sent to each board member at all affected organizations and agencies, including ATL, GRTA, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Atlanta Regional Commission, MARTA, Livable Buckhead, Buckhead CID, Buckhead Coalition, and the Cobb County Department of Transportation. All of these entities were aware of our resolution and knew of our concerns. We are going to have a meeting of all of those organizations to come up with what the best strategy is for us to solve transit, traffic and housing, all at the same time.

Several participants on the Transportation Task Force expressed concern because while they had been involved in early meetings, they had not been involved in or notified about the

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last-minute efforts to create the Transportation Resolution that was circulated to be voted on. Mary assured them that they will be included in future Task Force efforts.

### **Mary Norwood: Announcement: Oct 24: Future Places Project**

The City of Atlanta adopted a plan called Atlanta City Design. Mary encouraged each BCN neighborhood to attend the meeting on October 24 at the Cathedral of St. Phillip. Mary's handout, below, was given to representatives of BCN neighborhoods to make them aware of sections in the plan's documentation which are applicable to Buckhead.

*FUTURE PLACES PROJECT: IMPORTANT: THURS, OCT 24<sup>TH</sup> – 6:30-8:30 CATHEDRAL OF ST PHILIP*

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**We have an opportunity to weigh in on our future.** It's called the **Future Places Project** and it focuses on The Atlanta City Design Book. [www.AtlCityDesign.com](http://www.AtlCityDesign.com). The applicable pages for Buckhead are as follows: 232, 234, 240, 244, 252, 260, 290, 296, 308, 344. Here are excerpts:

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Growth Areas and Conservation Areas (*most of Buckhead is shown as a Conservation Area*): (P.244)

**"Conservation Areas will be protected from overwhelming growth.** The intown neighborhoods and lush suburban territories will grow in ways that retain and improve their charm and their leafy green canopy...These Conservation Areas represent ecological value, historic character, and housing options..."

**"Conservation Areas are the more natural parts of the city that we want to protect from radical change."** "They are composed mostly of streets lined with single-family homes, but many have local commercial districts, churches, schools, apartments, and other small buildings with a neighborhood scale...Change will still come to these areas, of course, but the overarching goal of design in conservation areas is to protect them from overwhelming growth, instead, favoring goals like improved ecology, history, housing variety, and other community interests." (P.260)

"Growth will be **focused** in places that can **accommodate** growth." (P. 252)

"Growth will be **limited** in places that are **less suited** for growth." (P. 260)

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**"The Lungs of Atlanta:** Buckhead, Druid Hills, South River, Cascade." (P.344)

Design for Nature: "We're going to design the tree canopy that surrounds the core of the city so that it continues to generate fresh air, shade, and other ecological services...**we'll protect the tremendous tree canopy that blankets Atlanta's neighborhoods.** We'll defend and enlarge this amazing asset that spreads north over Buckhead, west over Cascade, east over Druid Hills to points well beyond the city limits." (P.344)

These neighborhoods..."are the lungs of Atlanta. This is the carpet of green that we see on our descent into the airport, the shade that cools us in the summer heat, and the habitat required for songbirds, squirrels and other creatures. These assets provide benefits to the city at large and significant change here will certainly spoil them." (P.234)

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**Skyline Zone:** "The City itself will become an orienting device... The value of this legibility is a better sense of place and connectedness, so we will support it by **prohibiting very tall buildings (30+ stories)** outside of this district." (P. 290)

### **III Buckhead CID: Jim Durrett and Tony Peters**

Jim Durrett outlined five areas that their presentation would address:

#### **Commuting traffic**

Most of the people who work in the Buckhead CID area don't live there. Some drive through neighborhoods to get to/from work. Many can't afford to live nearby. A variety of actions are needed to address the issue and to increase use of mass transit cut down on vehicle traffic.

#### **Roswell/Piedmont/Habersham Intersection**

The Buckhead CID hired Kimley-Horn Traffic Engineers to analyze this intersection. The adjacent neighborhood is Tuxedo Park. After much discussion with neighborhood representatives, BCID agreed that collectively the neighborhoods and the Central Business District need to work together for a comprehensive solution and not pursue an isolated change to one intersection. BCID has offered to share all of the information from Kimley-Horn with BCN. One strategy is to get commuter busses, bus rapid transit, into Buckhead.



#### **Buc 2.0 Last Mile Transportation in the Core Business area**

A new microtransit service "Via" will begin in the Buckhead Central Business District in the early part of 2020. It will be a cross between the BUC and Uber/Lfyt. This should help the "last mile" problem of commuters who use MARTA and be available for any express bus service coming into the the Buckhead central busniess district.

#### **Housing**

Livable Buckhead has commissioned a housing and commuting study showing the lack of affordable housing at the upper and lower ends of the housing spectrum. BCN and Livable Buckhead have shared research and resources and are working together to initiate Preferred Employer Programs to assist workers in living in existing Buckhead housing. Detailed information can be found on [www.livablebuckhead.com](http://www.livablebuckhead.com)

#### **Hub404 – Gathering Place over GA 400**

"The Park over 400" has been re-branded as "Hub404". BCID is beginning its fundraising drive to build this gathering place in Buckhead. Detailed information can be found on <https://hub404.org>.

### **IV ATL (Atlanta-Region Transit Link): Steve Dickerson**

Dr. Steve Dickerson, Professor Emeritus at Georgia Tech, is our Board Representative on the Atlanta-Region Transit Link. Dr. Dickerson expressed that he wants to make Buckhead the model area in the entire region to embrace and implement technology and transit to solve our traffic congestion and "Let Buckhead Breathe". Dr. Dickerson has prepared the following analysis for BCN:

## SOLVING ATL CONGESTION by Dr. Steve Dickerson

### I. Summary

Dr. Dickerson described a comprehensive higher technology system to resolve the ATL area's congestion difficulties within five years. It requires making cost-effective expenditures. The high-tech approach is largely based on very low cost of computing including memory and processing, low cost of communications largely wireless and various radio modes, and on more comfortable and productive ridesharing of all modes from MARTA trains to carpools. Much of the high-tech would be based on almost universal use of smartphones with GPS locating. All users would be subscribers much as now done for Uber and Lyft. But the application would be much broader and cause a great increase in shared and faster rides for urban travel. In due course, a smartphone app would handle all aspects of urban trips using the profile of the individual users. Keep in mind that technology changes rapidly and ATL planning is for 5 -20 years. Uber is only 9 years old and did not involve formal city planning.

The proposed steps, not necessarily in order, are:

1. Ridesharing assistance for carpools and transit in general, both financial and smartphone based. A component of this must be dynamic carsharing and Uber-like services.
2. Create a luxury vanpool service. Start with a single van. Expand to thousands in the Atlanta area.
3. Comprehensive payment service for MARTA, tolls, parking, etc. on smartphone.
4. Assist in implementing HOT lanes using smartphones as primary toll collector based on vehicle location, e.g., differential GPS.
5. Increase in MARTA train speeds to an average of 50 mph (from about 30 mph), and reduced headways to about 3 minutes from the current 10 minutes for many trips.
6. Great increase in HOT, high-occupancy toll, lanes with smartphones charging the tolls based on smartphone location of vehicles. Tolls zero or negative for high occupancy.



To the extent possible, the effort would incorporate many partners who are already in the business of supporting urban transportation. The author would prefer an all-inclusive effort to operate as a public utility with a legal monopoly to promote and assist shared-ride urban transportation.

### II. Some Details beyond Summary

1. **Ridesharing assistance for carpools and transit** in general, both financial and smartphone based. For carpools and vanpools and even bus pools, WAZE already supplies a smartphone app that includes dynamic reservations, automatic payments, and routing help. The inclusion of financial help from public entities can be added easily. It is also important to make available short-term car rental in employment areas so that ridesharing passengers have the flexibility to make needed car trips both for emergencies and things like shopping and business meetings.

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ATL has an effort underway to assist in transit trips including dynamic updating of scheduling and automatic payment of fares. A significant subsidy of transit exists. For example, a recent MARTA FY2020 Budget Highlight puts fiscal year costs at \$514 million with revenue, mostly fares, covering 27.2% or \$140 million.

For ridesharing, many folks would become part-time “Uber drivers.” Uber and Lyft and Google are already trying to support carpooling. But pool drivers would be making the trip along with passengers and might only be compensated with free rides and minimal financial incentives. Many of the cars used for carpools could also be part of dynamic short-term car rental service. Several such services are now available in other places.

2. **Create a luxury vanpool service.** Start with a single van. Expand to thousands in the Atlanta area. In this plan, luxury vanpools are a significant component with the thought that ridesharing in such a luxury van is **more enjoyable** than any other mode. Subscribers would also be significant users of short-term car rentals, scooters, bikes, Uber-like trips and local transit as they would often be at destinations without their personal car.

It is important that the riders have a more productive and enjoyable ride than driving alone. AND that the public realizes that vanpooling is a notch above driving alone. This may require a good deal of public relations. Immediate startup would be with ONE van that can be used both for commuting and promotion of the concept.

3. **Comprehensive payment service for MARTA, tolls, parking, etc. on smartphone.** This simply means that the smart apps anticipated in Item 1, be expanded to include additional automatic charges for other transportation services. The GPS capability of the phones would help arrange for parking and would automatically know the phone was in a HOT lane and charge a toll. That toll SHOULD be greatly reduced or perhaps be negative for high occupancy vehicles. As pointed out in Item 1, MARTA rides are largely paid for by the public.
5. **Increase in MARTA train** speeds to an average of 50 mph (from about 30 mph), reduced headways of about 3 minutes on all routes. Because cars will soon have “self-driving” where more than 2000 cars per hour will be automatically controlled on highways, it will be trivial to make the headways of trains 3 minutes. In addition, if the trains have automatic decoupling and recoupling of individual cars, the trains will not need to stop at each station. Rather the last car (or two) on a train stops to discharge and load passengers. It then moves out to be coupled to the train that is 3 minutes later. Naturally, such automation must keep very good track of what is going on so that adjustments can be made if something goes wrong. E.g., passengers do not load and unload properly. Where the Gold and Red line split, the train could split so that headway stays at the minimum.
6. **Great increase in HOT**, high-occupancy toll, lanes with smartphones charging the tolls. Assume that the GDOT, working with Federal authorities, would make the left lane of all freeways in the ATL area become HOT lanes. In such lanes the smartphone app, maybe called ATLapp or Peach Pass, would be required for the purposes of charging the variable toll. That toll would vary with congestion as is the current case for I-85 and I-75 toll lanes outside of I-285. However, the app would also determine the number of persons riding in a vehicle and change the toll based on occupancy. In fact, over some occupancy, e.g., 4 or more, the vehicle would be paid to use the lane. The tolls would vary to cause the lane to continue to move at least 45 mph.

## V Q&A to BCID and ATL Speakers

There were no questions to be reported.

## VI Lindridge-Martin Manor

LMNA Representatives will discuss their specific concerns with the BCN Transportation Task Force and will update BCN at a later date.

## VII Atlanta Public Schools

**Meria Carstarphen:** APS Superintendent

**Lisa Bracken:** APS CFO

**Julian Bene:** Invest Atlanta Board

**Tom Tidwell:** Fulton County Development Authority

Dr. Carstarphen made two main points in her presentation. One was about the accomplishments of the APS while she has been superintendent. The second, more complex point, was about tax mismanagement that has hurt the APS, and City of Atlanta residents, a situation that may be getting worse.

**Her accomplishments:** Dr. Carstarphen

said that she has been Superintendent for five years. There are nine school “Clusters” and within the clusters, they start as early as possible in pre-K to be ready for HS.

The number of vacancies has gone down. An APS Teacher is Georgia Teacher of the Year: first time in 40 years. They’ve fought bullying. NAHS graduation rate is 91.9%, up from 73.5%. And now they have partners so they’ve raised 72 million \$ outside their tax base.

**This is what the meat of the presentation was about: financial and tax digest problems.** Dr. Carstarphen said “What we are trying to do is reduce the pressure of incentives and abatements and tax allocation districts.”

Carstarphen argued that the needed “But for” test is not being applied: That means, for example, would this building (hotels or mixed-use, for example) be built if this tax incentive were not granted by the Fulton County Development Authority? And the answer is yes: of course, it would be built, in lucrative Buckhead. She said that there are too many TAD’s (TAD is the abbreviation for Tax Allocation District) and no sunset on them, adding “With Atlanta Public Schools, what we’re saying is when you put all of it together, a whopping \$103 million every year that gets pulled out of our collectable tax base is simply too much.”

She continued that there are two entities granting tax subsidies for new projects: Invest Atlanta and the Development Authority of Fulton County. She said that Lee Morris and Tom Tidwell have shown a light on these problems and are some of the few people who vote “No”. Commercial properties seem to be undervalued in the tax digest. For example,



**L-R:** Tom Tidwell, Julian Bene, Lisa Bracken, and Meria Carstarphen



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Atlantic Station is very healthy financially but still a TAD: time for it to sunset. But it hasn't. And once the Gulch was added, it was breaking the bank. They said just go with the Gulch, but we couldn't do that, so that's why we intervened on the bonds.

"There are very expensive developments that are going to be beautiful. I'm not saying they shouldn't be done. I'm just saying along with the CFO and everybody who's listening to us—that we don't think this meets the "but for" test.

"Jen Jorden was a good partner with us for Senate Bill 485" [which increased the APS-related homestead exemption from \$30,000 to \$50,000 – BCN Secretary].

"And if you don't know, there are only a hundred and fifty five thousand taxpayers in Atlanta....not only working but retired people. I meant it is a mix—senior, people on fixed incomes, and it's not quite balanced and they're just not enough people putting resources in the bucket."

It is legal to create TAD's but you don't have to have them. Voters don't vote on the TADs, they vote on the people who vote on the TADs."

Julian Bene commented that, "There's good news in that there are legal problems on the Gulch deal and it hasn't moved on since. Legal problems with both the Gulch TAD and the Gulch sales tax exemption and we're fighting it. It's an enormous tax exemption which is going to cost us a fortune if it passes, but at least it is smaller than it was going to be."

### **Q&A to APS Speakers**

An attendee commented, "How about we just create the City of Buckhead, and then we will no longer have taxation without representation, which is what we have now." [In actuality, the Fulton County Development Authority could continue to grant development-related tax subsidies within any part of Fulton County, including a city of Buckhead. – BCN Secretary]

### **VIII Adjourn**

**IX Next Meeting** - Thursday, January 9.

