

# Frequently Asked Questions

## LYNX Silver Line Project

Last Revised: 11/5/2020

### OVERVIEW

#### **❓ What is the LYNX Silver Line?**

The LYNX Silver Line is a proposed 26-mile light rail project from the City of Belmont, through Center City Charlotte and the Town of Matthews, with a potential extension into Union County.

#### **❓ How was the alignment chosen?**

This process began in 1998 when the City of Charlotte prepared the 2025 Integrated Transit / Land Use Plan. Since then, several studies have helped form the LYNX Silver Line: The West Corridor (along Wilkinson Boulevard) and the Southeast Corridor (along Independence Boulevard) were two of the identified corridors for future rapid transit to support future growth in Charlotte.

Additional studies were conducted between 2002 and 2006, and ultimately the plan was updated to the 2030 Transit System Plan. In 2016, CATS completed the Southeast Corridor Transit Study and the Metropolitan Transit Commission (MTC), CATS' governing board, adopted a light rail locally preferred alternative (LPA) for the 13-mile corridor from Center City Charlotte to the Union County border.

In 2019, CATS completed the LYNX System Update, which studied the West Corridor and Center City Charlotte. MTC adopted a light rail LPA for the West Corridor and combined it with the Southeast Corridor LPA to form one continuous 26-mile light rail corridor from Belmont to Matthews, creating what is today known as the LYNX Silver Line. Additionally, in 2019, the MTC directed CATS staff to evaluate a LYNX Silver Line extension from the Town of Matthews to the Union County Towns of Stallings and Indian Trail.

Earlier this year, CATS began the process of refining the LYNX Silver Line LPA to determine the alignment (and options) that may be carried forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental review.

#### **❓ Why are we moving forward with the proposed LYNX Silver Line?**

Rapid transit has been planned in the West and Southeast Corridors for decades. There is continued population and employment growth, congested roadway networks, reduced reliability of the transportation system, limited options for transit-dependent populations and inadequate connectivity between transit, affordable housing, employment, and community services. Investing in infrastructure like the LYNX Silver Line is a means to address and correct these issues.

#### **❓ How will light rail benefit residents?**

There are many benefits of public transit including, economic opportunities, safer than travel by automobile, saves money, reduces the carbon footprint, and can enhance

personal opportunities. Public transit options also give communities a better quality of life by creating access to mobility options and connections to employment, cultural and educational opportunities. Light rail encourages a pedestrian-friendly environment, by spurring adjacent rail trail and greenway connections.

**❓ Can the LYNX Silver Line be extended further into Gaston County or to the City of Gastonia?**

There are several different types of rapid transit technologies that work best depending on the environment and geographic area it will serve. Rapid transit solutions for Gaston County are being explored through *Connect Beyond*, a regional transit study conducted in partnership by the Centralina Regional Council and CATS. This study, in collaboration with 12 counties in North and South Carolina, will address regional mobility by creating a bi-state transit plan. Learn more about Connect Beyond at [www.connect-beyond.com](http://www.connect-beyond.com).

**❓ What is early scoping?**

Early scoping is an optional step in the public planning and environmental processes to link transportation planning and NEPA. It precedes the formal NEPA scoping that will be conducted in the next phase of study. Early scoping allows the public and regulatory agencies to learn more about a proposed project, provide their input, and it helps CATS identify possible environmental concerns so that they can be considered earlier in the design phase.

## AIRPORT

**❓ Will the light rail have a station at the airport?**

The LYNX Silver Line will have a station at the airport in conjunction with the Airport's plans to construct a multimodal center that will function like an extension of the main terminal. Per the Airport's plans, passengers would use a people-mover (automated transit system) to take passengers from the light rail station to the main terminal.

## SAFETY

**❓ How do you plan to keep people safe on their commute?**

Safety is our number one priority at CATS, and we take the well-being of every patron, employee and of our entire system seriously. CATS has numerous safety measures currently in place, including blue light emergency phones that connect directly to law enforcement installed on all LYNX platforms and in all CATS park and ride facilities and transit centers. We also have partnerships with various law enforcement agencies, and uniformed and plain-clothes law enforcement officers patrol the entire system including on all parking decks. We have well-lit train stations and platforms and thousands of cameras systemwide on buses, trains and station platforms. We also encourage every rider to download the CATS' See/Say mobile app to anonymously report any criminal or suspicious activity. The app is monitored by law enforcement 24/7.

**❓ Life after the pandemic will be different. Why do we need light rail if people will not be commuting to work every day?**

While we don't know what the future will hold, growth is happening and will continue to happen in the Charlotte region, so we need to plan for it.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**❓ Will I be displaced once light rail is built?**

We are not far enough along in our design to know what the project property impacts will be; however, we will continue to engage with the public throughout the process as the project develops.

**❓ Displacement/Gentrification/ Affordable housing: How will you prevent gentrification?**

Economic development is one of the benefits of a rapid transit infrastructure and brings an undeniable return on investment. However, making sure that neighborhoods and communities are protected, while development is encouraged, is a balance the City is working to address. CATS will work to minimize impacts to the natural and human environment through partnerships with other City departments and conducting studies related to transit-oriented development (TOD) during the LYNX Silver Line light rail study. As part of the future NEPA phase, the LYNX Silver Line light rail team will document any potential effects of the project on the communities.

## **COST**

**❓ How will the project be funded?**

CATS will develop a cost estimate through the Pre-Project Development and Project Development Phases. Once a more complete cost has been determined, funding sources will be determined. As with previous light rail projects, CATS anticipates using a combination of local, state and federal funds. As the project continues to advance and a more complete cost has been determined, CATS will continue to engage with the local community about their desires to invest in rapid transit projects.

## **SCHEDULE**

**❓ What is the schedule for the LYNX Silver Line?**

CATS' goal is to construct the project as part of its 2030 plan; however, project and funding decisions to be made between now and that time will dictate the actual timeframe.

**❓ What are the next steps after MTC adoption?**

After the MTC adopts the refined alignment, CATS will begin a more detailed environmental study of the corridor in coordination with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The

team will also move towards more detailed design work. Additionally, the transit-oriented development team will begin planning exercises to look at the vision for the land use around the LYNX Silver Line stations.

**?** **How and when will station locations be chosen?**

The team is currently in the process of refining the LYNX Silver Line, including the identification of preliminary station locations. This phase is expected to be completed in early 2021. In coordination with the light rail design project, CATS is also conducting a TOD study that will inform development planning around stations. Station locations and types will be further detailed in future design phases.

## **TRAFFIC**

**?** **Will traffic be a concern during the building of this project?**

Traffic analysis is underway. We will know more about the effects of the proposed project on traffic in the coming years.

## **RAILROAD COORDINATION**

**?** **Will there be a lot of railroad interaction with this project?**

There will be some interaction between the railroad and the LYNX Silver Line. The LPA has a couple of crossings of the CSX Railroad on the southeast side of the corridor. In Uptown near Bank of America stadium, the LYNX Silver Line would cross the Norfolk-Southern railroad. All LYNX Silver Line railroad crossings would be grade separated, meaning that the LYNX Silver Line would either build a bridge over or go under the freight railroads tracks. CATS is working closely with CSX and Norfolk Southern during this process.

## **RAIL TRAIL**

**?** **What is the rail trail project?**

In coordination with the LYNX Silver Line Design and TOD efforts, CATS is conducting a rail trail study to determine a vision for a pedestrian and bike path along the entire LYNX Silver Line project.