

# Northern Concourse is coming, but more is needed

By Gordon Certain, NBCA President

In our October 2008 newsletter, we said “We understand that construction of the Northern Concourse will start later this year.” Well, it didn’t happen. The Northern Concourse is that pedestrian bridge planned to connect the Buckhead MARTA station to Stratford Road on the east and to Tower Place on the west.

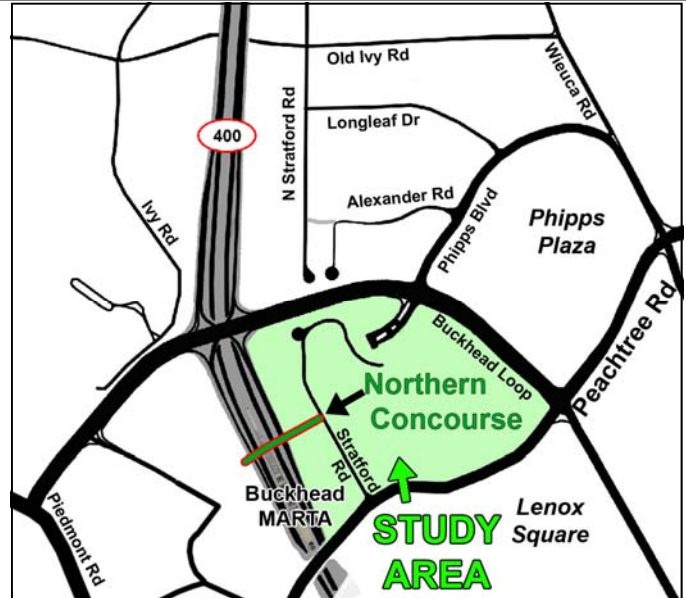
After more than ten years of waiting, we will have to wait longer, but at least the Northern Concourse is now fully funded, being designed and set to happen... eventually. The current estimate is that construction will start in 2011.

What does it mean to North Buckhead residents? Among other things, it means a potentially shorter walk to the Buckhead MARTA Station, should you want to do that.

However, there are still additional problems to be overcome before it will help. Currently, there’s no way to walk from Phipps Boulevard or Phipps Plaza to the location of the Northern Concourse without creating your own path through private property over sometimes rugged terrain or through parking decks and alleys. Even then, you may need to find an unlocked chain-link gate. Or, you could walk down to Peachtree Road on public sidewalks (the current path to MARTA) and skip the Northern Concourse entirely. This lack of connectivity affects more than MARTA passengers; it reduces the usefulness and safety of a large, valuable hunk of North Buckhead.

So, what’s the plan? As far as we can tell, there isn’t one. That prompted a late-June research mission by four NBCA board members: Walda Lavroff, Andrea Bennett, and myself, guided by Dieter Franz. Dieter, an environmental engineer, had amazing insights into how one might get from “here” to “there”. We walked through alleys and parking decks for several hours to establish to our satisfaction that with sufficient planning and the cooperation of key private landowners, new pedestrian footpaths and maybe new roads may be feasible in this area. Indeed, a limited street grid might be created with new roads to interconnect Stratford Road to Buckhead Loop and Phipps Boulevard, and possibly these latter roads to Peachtree Road. Many inter-parcel connections could also result.

Having satisfied ourselves that various connectivity routes are plausible (with sufficient planning and engineering), we will be asking the Buckhead Community Improvement District (BCID), our Buckhead urban area’s quasi-governmental improvement coordination entity,



Proposed Stratford Road vicinity pedestrian, vehicle and inter-parcel connectivity study area

to conduct a thorough study of connectivity in that area, involving all stakeholders. With this current quiet period in the development cycle, this may be the best (and last) opportunity to take on these connectivity issues.

We will keep you apprised of any progress made on these opportunities.

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