Tech's thesis project to alleviate Atlanta's traffic woes
By Derek Haynes
Managing Editor

It started with a map of At-
lanta, a collection of abandoned railways and a student looking for a master's thesis project.
It might finish as a major solution to Atlanta's transportation night-
mares.

In 1999, former Georgia Tech student Ryan Gravel, who graduated from the College of Architecture and entered the City Plan-n ing master's program in 1998, began work on his BeltLine thesis project. The BeltLine, a collection of railroads 22 miles in cir-
cuit, runs through some of the most aban-doned areas with a roughly six-mile loop. The rail-
road was used during Atlanta's industrial age but is mostly aban-doned today with the advent of truck freight.
Gravel's idea was to use these existing rights-of-
ways for a light-rail transit sys-
tem to link Atlanta's diverse neighborhoods and promote development on vacated indus-
trial land.

What makes this idea stand out is the simplicity of the sys-
tem. One of the major problems in creating a rail system is pur-
chasing land for the railway. That won't be a problem; the state of Georgia shouldn't have to compete with businesses to purchase parts of the track it doesn't own. Another obstacle is political opposition. Gravel's BeltLine thesis has seen any-
thing but.

"We've seen a lot of support from in-town residents," said At-
lanta City Council President Cathy Woolard. "These are the people more likely to get out of their cars."

A light-rail system is also cheaper to build than a heavy rail sys-
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posed line would hit major points and link big cities. For ex-
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mount Hospital and as far south as Zoo Atlanta. However, the key to this system isn't what it connects now, but what it can connect in the future.

"Mostly it [the BeltLine] serves future popu-
lations," said Gravel.

It follows the indus-
trial land; you can see at Little Five Points and Inman Park a lot of that property is being developed at certain densities. Those den-
sities support mass transit.

The tracks would wind through 4,000 acres of redevelop-
ment sites with over half of the land suitable for residential and mixed-use development. 100,000 residents could be add-
ed to the development land.

With such a large portion of the project based on land that isn't developed, Gravel acknowled-

es that much of the Belt line hinges on the likelihood of these areas being rebuilt.

"I don't know if it would be feasible without the develop-
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However, Gravel sees the mi-

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"I lose two hours every day," said Mian, who drove from Lawrenceville into Atlanta dur-
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The comforts of suburbia are not worth that much time.

Atlanta, highly criticized for the traffic that people like Mian experience, has also been rid-

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Gravel's Belt Line thesis helps tackle this problem too; he pro-

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ident Cathy Woolard, herself an in-transit resident. Woolard, along with Councilmember Lamas, Willis, introduced a proposal last February in support of a MAR-

TATRA project.

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By Narendhra Seshadri
Managing Editor

Georgia Tech student Ryan Gravel, who graduated from the College of Architecture and entered the City Planning master’s program in 1998, began work on his BeltLine thesis project. The BeltLine, a collection of railroad corridors 22 miles in circuit, runs through some of the most abandoned areas with a roughly six-mile loop. The railroad was used during Atlanta’s industrial age but is mostly abandoned today with the advent of truck freight. Gravel’s idea was to use these existing rights-of-ways for a light-rail transit system to link Atlanta’s diverse neighborhoods and promote development on vacated industrial land.

What makes this idea stand out is the simplicity of the system. One of the major problems in creating a rail system is purchasing land for the railway. That won’t be a problem; the state of Georgia shouldn’t have to compete with businesses to purchase parts of the track it doesn’t own. Another obstacle is political opposition. Gravel’s BeltLine thesis has seen anything but.

“We’ve seen a lot of support from in-town residents,” said Atlanta City Council President Cathy Woolard. “These are the people more likely to get out of their cars.”

A light-rail system is also cheaper to build than a heavy rail system like MARTA and less expensive to run than a bus system once implemented. The proposed line would hit major points and link big cities. For example, stops would be at Piedmont, Grant, Maddox, Perkins and Freedom parks. The train would go as far north as Piedmont Hospital and as far south as Zoo Atlanta. However, the key to this system isn’t what it connects now, but what it can connect in the future.

“Mostly it [the Belt Line] serves future populations,” said Gravel.

It follows the industrial land; you can see at Little Five Points and Inman Park a lot of that property is being developed at certain densities. Those densities support mass transit.

The tracks would wind through 4,000 acres of redevelopment sites with over half of the land suitable for residential and mixed-use development. 100,000 residents could be added to the development land.

With such a large portion of the project based on land that isn’t developed, Gravel acknowledges that much of the Belt Line hinges on the likelihood of these areas being rebuilt.

“I don’t know if it would be feasible without the development,” said Gravel.

However, Gravel sees the migration of people back to the city as a likely scenario.

“Traffic in the suburbs is getting horrendous, so people are starting to move into town. As more people move into town, traffic in the city is getting worse, so as the traffic in the city gets worse people are more likely to ride [mass] transit.”

Georgia Tech Industrial Engineering major Salman Mian, like many in the Tech community, has experienced the suburban traffic first hand.

“I lose two hours every day,” said Mian, who drove from Lawrenceville into Atlanta during an internship this summer.

The comforts of suburbia are not worth that much time.

Atlanta, highly criticized for the traffic that people like Mian experience, has also been ridiculed for its lack of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly pathways. Gravel’s Belt Line thesis helps tackle this problem too; he proposes that bicycle and pedestrian paths be implemented alongside the tracks. Gravel theorizes that riding a bike alongside the tracks would be just as fast as driving a car inside Atlanta.

“What does this that is separates transit from street traffic, and for that matter, bicycles. It slices through the city,” explains Gravel. “A lot of cities try to build the transit along highways, but it doesn’t work because you can drive faster than you can get out and get in the station.”

One of the most important instrumental in getting the project to take off is City Council President Cathy Woolard, herself an in-transit resident. Woolard, along with Councilmember Lamas, Willis, introduced a proposal last February in support of a MARTA project.

See Belt Line, page 14
the advantage of a flex trolley system is a flex trolley system. The prime shuttle system at Hartsfield Airport den on one and not known it: the Many Atlanta residents have ridden the flex trolley is a train on rubber tires. said Gravel. While a timeline for the project is difficult to set as the feasibility study has yet to begin, the transportation consulting firm URS estimates construction could begin 12 years from now. However, Gravel is optimistic that it could begin before then based on how quickly the plan has moved from a collection of railways on a map to an important part of the city’s transit solution. Solving Atlanta’s transportation woes requires more than one point of attack, and strengthening the transit system is only part of the solution. MARTA has been conducting research on a northwest line and there have been many discussions regarding a rail system along major Atlanta highways. However, Gravel’s unique Belt Line plan could be remembered as the most innovative of the ideas.

“"A lot of cities try to build the transit along highways, but it doesn’t work because you can drive faster than you can get out and get in the station”

Ryan Gravel
GT grad, on his Belt Line thesis

Belt Line

Gravel’s thesis includes 40 miles of light rail stations, spaced about a half-mile apart. The system would connect five MARTA stations—Lindbergh, Inman Park/Reynoldstown, West End, Ashby and Bankhead. The closest station to the Tech campus would be at Northside Drive.

“The idea is that these are stations that you walk to, so you live within a quarter to a half-mile walk,” said Gravel.

Wooldred also emphasized a relatively new option: flex trolley. A flex trolley is a train on rubber tires. Many Atlanta residents have ridden on one and not known it: the shuttle system at Hartsfield Airport is a flex trolley system. The prime advantage of a flex trolley system is its ability to move from city streets to dedicated paths. A flex trolley system would also be cheaper to build than the light-rail Belt Line, which has an estimated cost of $600 million to one billion dollars. Gravel sees no problem implementing a flex trolley on the Belt Line, although he’d like to see a more permanent light-rail system.

“This would work well with a flex trolley. The cost and the speed of implementation of a flex trolley is a lot faster,” said Gravel.

While the light-rail system is only part of the city’s transit solution, the Belt Line is a more permanent, permanent part of Atlanta’s transit network, which is already strong.

Management Junior Theodos Tarver does laundry in one of the on-campus facilities. There are over 440 washers and dryers on the Tech campus.

Laundry locations, prices with a purpose

By Eric Vogel
Contributing Writer

To Georgia Tech residents, laundry is simple: put your clothes in the washer, swipe your BuzzCard, hit start and chill out for the next 30 minutes or so. There’s actually quite a bit more to it than that.

Administration of the campus laundromats is handled, interestingly enough, by the Student Center department, which also handles vending, bathrooms and many other smaller services that keep our Institute functioning properly. While as a whole these services come at a cost, the laundromats themselves do produce a slight profit.

In 2002, the Student Center received a commission of $74,858 from Mac-Gray Services, the industrial contractor that owns the some 450 Maytag washers and dryers on campus. Of that, about $72,000 will be used to cover costs (water, electricity, BuzzCard machines, etc.), leaving about $3,000 to be added to the Auxiliary Services general funds. The contract with Mac-Gray Services began in July of 1998 for a period of one year with five planned renewals. The washing machines provided by Mac-Gray have a seven-to-ten-year life expectancy; however, Mac-Gray is responsible for any maintenance they may require beyond what campus personnel can provide.

The locations of the laundromats for newer buildings (such as the GLC) were determined by the Department of Housing. As for older communities like East Campus, Ann Watkins, Business Manager for the Student Center, said, only half-jokingly, “I’m sure no thought was put into the idea.”

With more than fifteen laundry locations, one has to wonder who decides which residents have access to which laundry facilities. The only reason all of the laundromats aren’t open to all residents is security. Accordingly to Ms. Waters, Brittain was previously open so that all students would have access to the recreation and vending areas, but the administration had to lock it because they “had street people literally sleeping and living there.”

In collaboration with the Student Center, the Housing Department keyed the laundromat locks so that the ratio of washers to beds (meaning residents) was somewhat balanced, though the capacity of the laundry facilities isn’t typically a problem. Student Center Director Rich Steele admitted it “might be easier if [Folk/Caldwell residents] went to the ULC” to do their laundry.

Some do laundry weekly, others biweekly, but, more often, the laundry is done “when I run out of clothes,” as freshman Justin Jack-son put it. When asked his opinion on laundry at Tech, Justin responded, “It seems necessary sometimes.”

Many local students have a luxury not available to non-local’s: home. “I just take it home and let my mom do it whenever possible,” explained freshman David Kenny. “I didn’t even learn how to do laundry until my freshman year.”

David is not the only one for whom laundry is a new experience altogether. West Campus resident Brian Patterson has it even worse.

To me, laundry is not an option. I haven’t seen the laundry facilities yet, and I still don’t know how to do laundry.”

Off-campus residents have a plethora of options available to them as well. Most apartments in and
Housing from page 13

buildings. This system allows occupants to switch between heating and air conditioning at their discretion. Our older residence halls and apartments that have the two-pipe system will be transitioned or started based upon outside air temperature. When the outside air temperature rises above 65 degrees, the production of heated water is reduced. Likewise, when the air temperature falls below 65 degrees, chilled water for air conditioning is reduced. The Metasys program installed allows the two-pipe system to mimic the new four-pipe systems and provides greater creature comfort. Cloudman and Harrison are the only two-pipe systems that require manual conversion from A/C to Heating.

While there are water shortages on rare occasions, Housing will usually provide adequate notice to residents. The warnings, in the form of flyers and email, are usually given three to five days in advance so that students can make alternative arrangements. Sometimes the problem is not just a shortage of water, but repairs with the system, upgrades or general maintenance. The major upgrades are usually saved until "after students move out or right after exams," said Morrison.

Some students complain about the efficiency of Housing’s service, but this is primarily due to a massive overload of maintenance requests sent in by students. The highest overload occurs during the initial move-in, when housing receives a lot of complaints.

Morrison said that “although there are only a few complaints every once in a while, students can help themselves by not filtering out Housing emails, and observing for notices in their dorms.” Unfortunately, flyers are ripped down and other students do not get to see the notices that were meant to stay in their dorm. If students take a more positive approach “there would be a lot less complaints and they would be helping out each other as well as Housing,” said Morrison.

Laundry from page 15

around Atlanta have nearby laundromats available which are equal in cost to on-campus facilities. Ryan Vogel, who lives in the Georgian Hills apartment complex, said “there’s a laundromat by the pool, but I’ve never actually used it,” since his apartment has its own machines.

Laundry users can report problems or make suggestions about laundromats by calling (404) 895-2788 Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by dialing (404) 894-HELP during off-hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Laundry room</th>
<th>Washers</th>
<th>Dryers</th>
<th>Service area</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Area II Housing: 652 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Britton</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>East Campus FE dorms: 1,853 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Burge</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>64 apartments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fitten</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Freeman, Montag, Fitten: 740 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commons</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Folk, Hefner, Cauldwell, Armstrong: 576 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodruff</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>560 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calloway</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>156 families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healy</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Eighth Street</td>
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<td>650 beds</td>
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<td>UGC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>427 beds</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>344 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamphill</td>
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<td>328 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fourth Street</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sixth Street</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>580 beds</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>224</td>
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Security from page 13

many as 4 ports and keeps them open until a computer connects to it, making the computer vulnerable. The difference between the web page and the file-share program are the exposed, open ports of the file-share; they are prime targets for viral probes.

Hale recommends the following to Georgia Tech students to protect their systems from crackers: Do not run a server/file-share program on your computer; run antivirus software and update it with patches; and install a firewall on your computer and use it to protect your files from unknown persons.

Hale said, “Servers leave you vulnerable. Period.”

Tech students can download antivirus and firewall software free of charge off of the OIT website: www.oit.gatech.edu. More information about information security at Georgia Tech can be found on www.security.gatech.edu.
Over the summer, MTV added another show to the reality genre—Sorority Life. Sorority Life chronicled the lives of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi Sorority at University of California-Davis and their members during rush in Spring 2002. MTV chose SAEPi because the sorority is relatively new (it’s only four years old) and had less than forty members. MTV was unable to get permission from any National Catholic Conference Sorority to film the lives of any NPC sorority. NPC is the organization to which all six national sororities on Georgia Tech’s campus belong to.

“I think that it is extremely unlikely that Panhel, our campus chapters or the Institute itself, would approve any tech’s sororities, or fraternities for the matter, having their lifestyle taped, especially after seeing this show. The view shown on TV, good or bad, would not just reflect on the Greek community but also on the Georgia Tech community, something that this chapter at UC-Davis may have not considered. MTV is for entertainment; they’re going to show the scenes that will keep ratings high,” said Christina Lee, Panhel’s Execuctive Vice President.

In return for permission to film their sorority, Sigma AEPi was given some benefits. The sorority received the use of a new “Pledge House,” national exposure and financial contributions.

So what’s the difference between a typical sorority at Georgia Tech and SAEPi? We asked Lee and Andrea Pesonen, Panhel’s President, for their input.

Lee: Typically, sororities have buses that run back and forth to and from their functions, sisters are usually allowed to come and go as they please as long as this is the case. If a bus only runs one time, then arrangements with the Chapter President or the Social Chair can be made.

TQ: On the show, the pledges lived in a house together before they were initiated as sisters. Is that a typical scenario?

Lee: Usually potential new members do not live in the house with sisters before initiation.

TQ: In several shows, the sisters consumed alcohol in the pledge house. Is alcohol permitted on NPC house grounds?

Lee: All NPC sororities have national rules that do not allow alcohol permitted on the grounds at all.

TQ: During formal in San Francisco, two pledges and their dates left the formal early and went to a strip club. Afterwards, the pledges received harsh criticism from their sisters. So are there any consequences for leaving formal early?

Lee: Typically, sororities have bus tickets that run back and forth to and from their functions, sisters are usually allowed to come and go as they please as long as this is the case. If a bus only runs one time, then arrangements with the Chapter President or the Social Chair can be made.

TQ: The show featured wild parties with alcohol and recreational use of a swimming pool and hot tub. What types of parties do Tech sororities host?

Lee: The general rule for a function held in the sorority house is that it may not include alcohol. Most houses on our campus have Alumnae luncheons, Alumnae dinners and homecoming, sister events, Parent weekends and other events along those lines in the house.

TQ: Can a sorority really have more than three letters?

Lee: A Greek organization can have as many letters as they want—as long as another greek-letter organization doesn’t already have the combination, including honor and professional societies. Most generally have either two or three, though.

TQ: On the show a sister slapped another sister but there were no consequences for the action. What would happen at Tech in the same situation?

Lee: Each chapter has their own way to deal with judicial matters through a Judicial Board or Disciplinary Committee. If the problem was very harmful to the person, an individual case could be sent to Tech’s UJC. The Panhel’s Judicial Board only hears cases relating to the entire chapter.

In its mission statement, the sisters said their goal was to have people “understand that, contrary to the images that bombard our society, there is more to sorority life than pillow fights and ‘girls gone wild.’ Conquering such stereotypes is critical to the growth of the Greek community and we were blessed with an amazing opportunity to do so.”

The sisters may not have proved their point.

“I’m still baffled that the local sorority, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Pi, agreed to do the show. The view shown is not a proper representation of sorority life, or Greek life, whether be a local or National chapter,” said Pesonen.
Winner of the Tech Up Close contest receives a *Technique* T-shirt and a coupon for a free student combo at Li’l Dino’s.

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
Chandelier in the library rotunda

Last week’s winner:
Rajiv Ratnam