

New stretch of PATH400 to open soon, linking north and south segments



PATH400 runs along Ga. 400 and, once complete, will provide a 5.2-mile greenway through Buckhead. A new section of PATH400 through Buckhead is expected to open in October. BOB ANDRES / BANDRES@AJC.COM

A new mile-long ribbon of concrete running alongside Ga. 400 will open to the public in the fall, establishing a car-free route between Lindbergh and Buckhead.

PATH400 has been under construction for several years, with segments already open north and south of the Buckhead commercial district. But those bits don't link up.

They are mostly used by people who live nearby — the occasional jogger or dog walker out for a quick stroll. The new segment will connect the orphaned stretches into several miles of pathway bisecting north Atlanta. Though smaller in scale than the Beltline, [PATH400](#) builds on the same idea of putting idle land to use, connecting areas that seem distant by car and opening up locations for restaurants, stores and other commercial development.

"I think it's a cool project with a big impact," said Giles Stevens, a bike commuter who works in commercial real estate.



The middle section of the new segment of PATH400 passes under MARTA rail lines and above Ga. 400. It was a dirt right of way on Feb. 3 (left), and was paved by May 30 (right). It is expected to open to the public in October, linking segments running into Buckhead neighborhoods to the north and to Lindbergh in the south. TY TAGAMI / AJC

The new link connects a path segment near Miami Circle to the Peachtree Park neighborhood near the center of Buckhead. Sidewalks and roads through the Buckhead commercial district tie in to a path that goes north toward Sandy Springs, ending at Wieuca Road. PATH400 will be 5.2 miles long when Livable Buckhead Inc. and the PATH Foundation add a final stretch to Loidans Drive in coming years.

>> RELATED: [PATH400 to receive city, federal funding](#)

The whole project is expected to cost \$28 million, paid for with a mix of private and public money. Sandy Springs is planning to add 2.1 miles from Loidans Drive to the Glenridge Connector where Ga. 400 meets I-285. The Georgia Department of Transportation is expected to add a link to Dunwoody, at Peachtree Dunwoody Road.

PATH400

One more segment of PATH400 is scheduled to open later this year. Portions of the Beltline also are still under construction.



**Future link
to Beltline**

Beltline

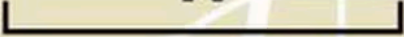
78

75

85

Atlanta

20



2 miles

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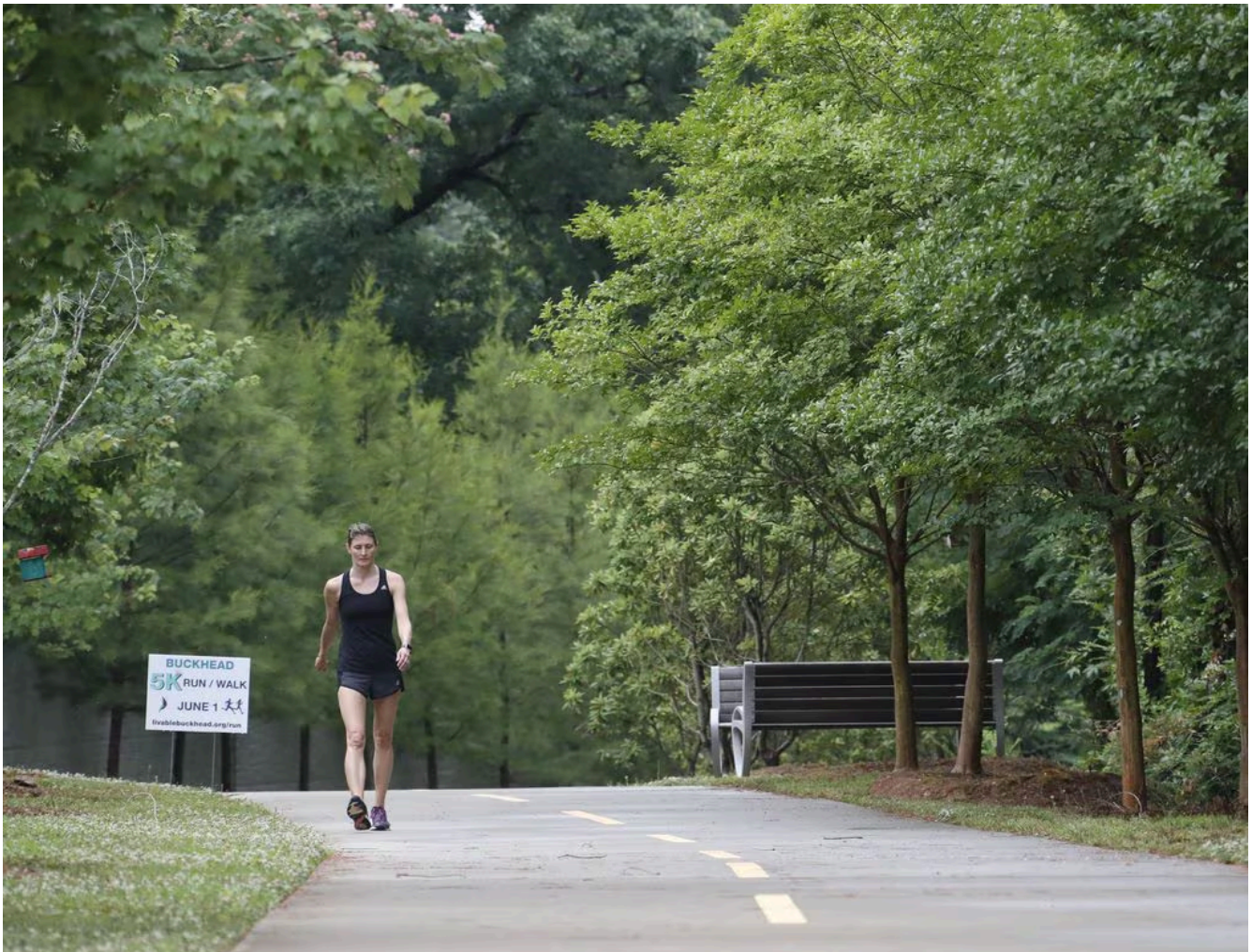
STAFF

PATH400 map

When those segments are complete, people will be able to ride or run from Lindbergh to Dunwoody on routes that are mostly free of cars. Denise Starling, Livable Buckhead's executive director, predicts it will shrink the metro area's north side in the same way that the Beltline has made Piedmont Park surprisingly close to the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood, by carving a straight line between the two.

"The thing that's really cool is it goes from inside the Perimeter to outside the Perimeter," she said. "It's crazy how close all this stuff is."

She thinks developers will build restaurants and retail for path users at Miami Circle and at Lenox Square, which connects via the Gordon Bynum Pedestrian Bridge over Ga. 400. The new link parallels Ga. 400, crossing under MARTA tracks and an active Norfolk Southern rail line. The scenery varies from graffiti-tagged concrete support columns and vistas of the multilane highway to wooded wetlands that are home to a colony of ducks.

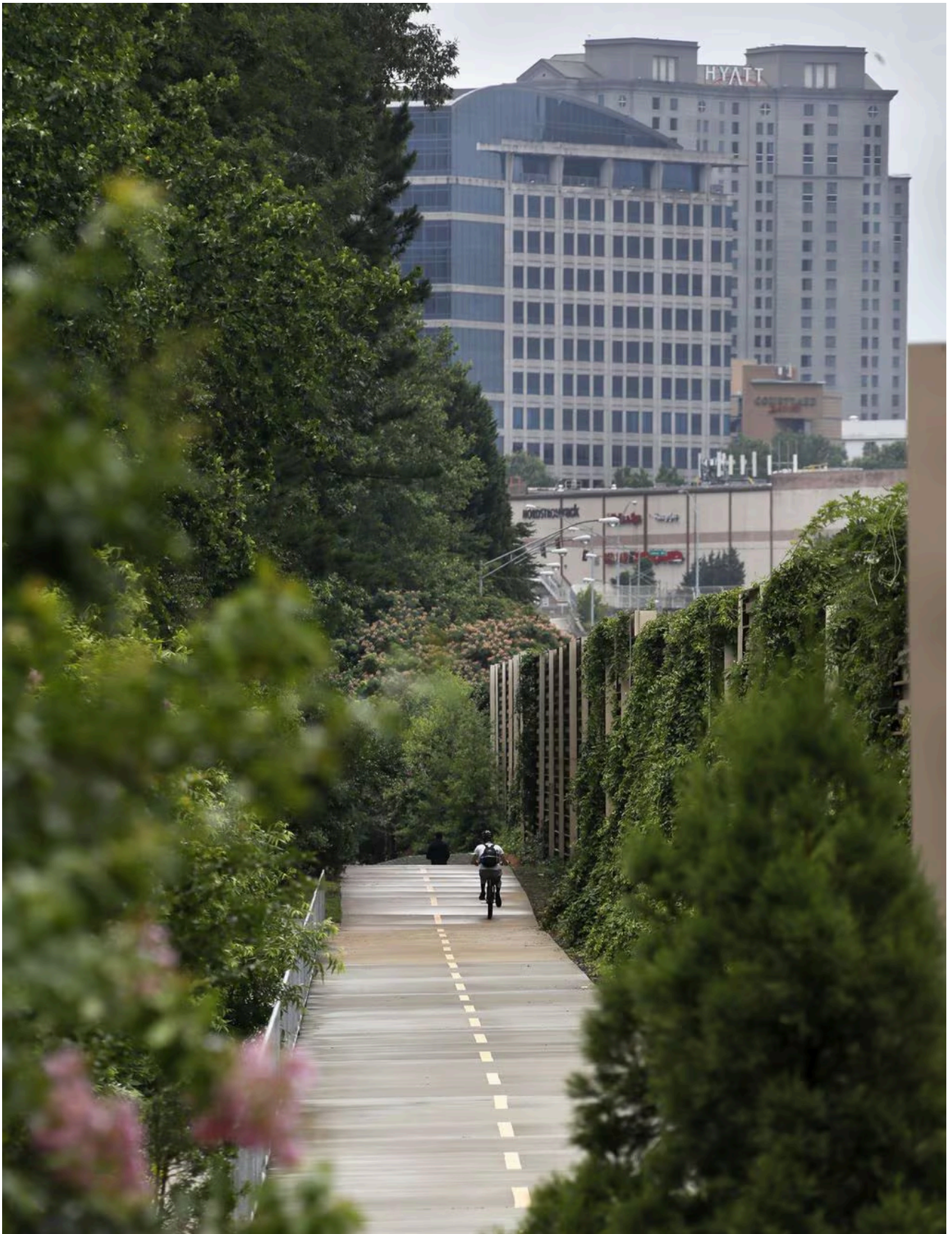


Sondra Cheney of Buckhead walks along a northern section of PATH400, which runs along Ga. 400. A new segment will open this fall, linking this stretch to another in south Buckhead. BOB ANDRES / BANDRES@AJC.COM

“The fact that it can look like you’re walking through a forest and you’re literally 10 feet away from an interstate is impressive,” said John Gonzalez, a visitor from Miami. He was staying at a nearby hotel, and jogged the path on the recommendation of hotel staff. He started on the already-open Lindbergh portion and strayed onto the fenced-off section. It remains unsafe because there are steep embankments and side rails have not yet been attached. Starling expects it to open by Halloween.

Even with the new link, the overall PATH400 will still be limited. With traffic and road conditions, it’s difficult to get anywhere by bike or by foot from the south terminus in Lindbergh. And the northern part ends in a neighborhood, far from restaurants, shops, offices or mass transit.

That will change. In addition to the pending link to Dunwoody, the plan is to tie PATH400 to the Beltline. The Beltline formally ends at Piedmont Park but informally extends north as a dirt path along the east edge of the park, passing the Ansley Golf Club and crossing under I-85 to end at the rail lines by Armour Drive. Atlanta Beltline is [studying how to](#) get past the maze of rail lines and tie in to PATH400 at Lindbergh.



This section of PATH400 is on the north side of Buckhead. PATH400 runs along Ga. 400 and, once complete, will provide a 5.2-mile greenway through Buckhead. A new section is almost finished. When it opens this fall, it will provide the missing link between this segment and another just south of the commercial center. BOB ANDRES / BANDRES@AJC.COM

Stevens, the bike commuter, sold his car a few years ago. He admits to borrowing his wife's car on occasion, but said he mostly gets to his office in Buckhead by pedaling the 3 miles from his home in Brookhaven. He imagines someday being able to ride from his office to a restaurant or a pub on the Beltline, currently a risky trip.

“My southbound commute options right now are Lenox Road, which is really scary on a bike,” Stevens said, “or Piedmont Road, which is also really scary.”

So PATH400 is likely to be limited to recreational use by nearby residents until it is connected to Dunwoody and to the Beltline several years from now. Then, said Starling, it will become a transportation link through the heart of north Atlanta, as city streets thicken with cars: “I think it's going to be a tremendous intown commute option.”

IN OTHER NEWS:

There are new plans for express lanes on one of the busiest stretches of road in all of metro Atlanta.