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Grant to Give Voice to Birds and Habitat in BeltLine Transformation

Atlanta Audubon and Trees Atlanta Plan Neighborhoods for Birds, Wildlife and People

One of 41 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable Atlanta Audubon and Trees Atlanta to make healthy birds and other wildlife a key part of the transformation associated with the ongoing BeltLine Corridor project. Impending expansion and restoration of the city's urban forest through creation of the project's BeltLine arboretum brings a unique opportunity to halt the decline of species such as the Brown Thrasher, Common Grackle and Northern Flicker that make up the rich avian heritage of Atlanta's residents.

A \$42,000 one-year grant will allow the two groups to begin working together and with the community to conserve a bird and wildlife-rich canopy over five square miles in seven of the Arboretum's "natural neighborhoods." Work will focus on the ecologically and culturally diverse West Connection, Warehouse Row, Southern Way, the Confluence, New South, Piedmont Park and Entrenchment Creek neighborhoods. Broad initial efforts will include:

- Assembling a science-based field analysis of the bird and wildlife species in each neighborhood, with a plan for addressing their needs;
- Recommending bird-friendly tree selections appropriate for target species in each neighborhood and participating in efforts to restore them;
- Developing seven educational booklets for each "natural neighborhood" focusing on the unique habitat and wildlife of the area;

Information and funds stemming from the grant will also directly aid two specific initiatives: the Warehouse Row/Triangle Brown Middle School effort to clear out privet and plant trees with the needs of wildlife in mind, and the West Connection project involving site preparation, grading and planting.

"The BeltLine project is so huge that it's important to provide a voice for the birds and the wildlife and an opportunity for people to get involved in seeing that their needs are met," said Catharine Kuchar, Executive Director of the Atlanta Audubon Society. "This effort will connect all kinds of Atlantans to our shared natural heritage and to the actions that can protect it."

"The BeltLine Arboretum is an outdoor, living 'tree museum' that will eventually encompass the 22-miles of the Atlanta BeltLine," said Marcia Bansley, Executive Director of Trees Atlanta. "We are excited about the addition of a 'wildlife component' to this work and collaborating with Atlanta Audubon Society on this important project."

The Atlanta BeltLine grant is part of the first \$1.4 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative, a National Audubon Society project with funding from Toyota. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“There’s a real opportunity to enhance this BeltLine project for the good of birds, wildlife and people, and we’re happy to be giving these groups the help they need to meet it,” said *TogetherGreen* Project Manager Judy Braus.

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About *TogetherGreen*

TogetherGreen will invest in both promising environmental projects and outstanding leaders that can shape a brighter tomorrow. Along with Innovation Grants to be awarded each year, *TogetherGreen* funds and promotes conservation leadership training and volunteer programs designed to equip and engage diverse groups and individuals to take action today to shape a healthier tomorrow. Information on other grantees, along with opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts, showcase successful initiatives, and honor those who are making a difference, can be found at www.TogetherGreen.org.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world.

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants, with another under construction in Mississippi. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Through its corporate initiatives, manufacturing operations and philanthropy, Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. In 2007, Toyota contributed more than \$56 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit <http://www.toyota.com/community>.