

Moving Ahead

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Regional Transit Forum Calls for Seamless Transportation System

The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and MARTA came together on May 30 to host a Regional Transit Forum. Forum participants “tapped into transit” and called on metropolitan Atlanta leaders to implement a seamless regional public transportation system.

Three hundred state and local officials, community activists, business leaders, representatives of various advocacy groups and private citizens attended the forum held at the Georgia Freight Depot. Governor Roy E. Barnes was on hand to welcome participants and kick-off the event.

“There has to be better planned, more integrated solutions for traffic congestion,” said Barnes. “As the Atlanta region continues to grow, we must be able to provide more transit choices for more people. Mass transit has been overlooked for years, and it is a major part of the solution.”

Dr. Catherine L. Ross, executive director of GRTA, praised Barnes’ commitment to transit and his willingness to tackle the tough issues surrounding the development of a regional transportation system. Ross later noted the high level of participation and accord at the forum.

“I was deeply impressed not only with the breadth of ideas we heard but with the amount of consensus we reached,” said Ross.

A panel discussion featured regional



PHOTO COURTESY KELLY MILLS, MARTA

“We must be able to provide more transit choices for more people,” Governor Barnes told forum participants as GRTA Vice Chair Sharon Gay and MARTA Board Chairman Bill Moseley look on.

transportation and business leaders and Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin. Participants were later divided into groups to share ideas on what an award-winning transit system in the region would be.

Among the major points, participants said they want to see:

- A network of easily accessible transit services connecting the metropolitan region;
- Transit that uses the latest technology in a safe, convenient and reliable manner and that is time competitive with automobiles;
- A link between transit services and land use; and
- More financial support for transit.

“I was deeply impressed ... with the amount of consensus we reached.”

—GRTA Executive Director Catherine L. Ross

Recent reports cited metro Atlanta’s increased commute times, dangerous air quality levels and overall decline in the quality of life as it pertains to transportation issues. A seamless transportation system across all 13 counties is viewed as a critical component to reversing those trends.

The Regional Transit Forum was part of the Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP), a two-year study by GRTA on how to improve, expand and set priorities for public transportation in the 13-county region. ■



*Dr. Catherine L. Ross
Executive Director*

The Good, The Bad and The Future

June was one of those good news/bad news kinds of months for Atlanta commuters.

The bad news? An analysis of Census Bureau figures by the Road Information Program shows the average metro Atlanta commute grew by more than five minutes in the 1990s. We now spend an average of 31 minutes each way going to and from work—that's longer than commuters spend on the road in either Houston or Los Angeles.

The good news? By the next Census in 2010, our commute times will be significantly shorter and our air will be cleaner, for a number of reasons:

Money. The state of Georgia will invest more than \$8 billion in transportation projects over the next 10 years, including commuter rail, buses, additional HOV lanes and innovative transportation technology.

Cooperation. Our regional approach was demonstrated at the recent "Tap into Transit" forum attended by transportation experts, special-interest groups and representatives from a range of governmental agencies. We're all working together on transportation issues, and that teamwork will result in reducing gridlock on the highways. More importantly, 11 counties in the nonattainment area have joined GRTA's regional express bus program. The buses start running in 2003. Work on the arterial road projects associated with the program will begin this year.

Economy. Improving our region's mobility and air quality is directly related to a thriving, business community. Also good for our economy: Transportation projects that create hundreds of jobs, and homes worth 25% more if they are located near a public transit line.

Cause-and-Effect. Fewer cars on the road mean fewer noxious emissions. Fewer emissions mean cleaner air. And cleaner air means better health and a better quality of life for all of us.

A majority of us believe traffic is our city's biggest



Regional cooperation was the theme of RTAP panelists, including (from right) Metropolitan Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President Sam Williams, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, Atlanta Regional Commission Director Chick Krautler, MARTA General Manager Nathaniel Ford, Cobb County Commissioner Sam Olens and Arthur Guzzetti, director of policy development and member mobilization for the American Public Transportation Commission.



MARTA General Manager Nathaniel Ford (on left) and GRTA Executive Director Catherine Ross ask Metro Atlanta to "Tap into Transit."

problem. We've got the solutions, they're going into place now, and we won't have to wait for the next census to see the results. ■

Dr. Catherine L. Ross is executive director of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority.



GRTA staff discuss Northwest Connectivity Study and express bus facilities recently with Kennesaw city officials. From left, Councilman Bob Baker, Mayor Leonard Church, GRTA Passenger Rail Manager Crew Heimer, GRTA Deputy Director Jim Ritchey and City Attorney Fred Bentley.

Studies Move Forward

Before you can build it, you must study it. That's a simple truth that GRTA and other transportation agencies must live with. GRTA currently has three major studies under way and a fourth just beginning.

The Georgia 400 Corridor Analysis/ Northern Sub-Area Study involves a comprehensive sub-area examination of transportation, land use, and air quality issues in northern metropolitan Atlanta. Work has already begun on a number of intersection improvements recommended by the study and on preliminary engineering for improvements to Georgia 400. Scenarios for possible

transportation and land use in the sub-area are being refined from seven to three in preparation for extensive analysis for use in the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP) held a series of public open-house meetings in May and is currently working to finalize a comprehensive plan for the 11-county regional express bus service. Additional work will focus on developing a sketch-planning tool to help evaluate and prioritize transportation improvements throughout the region. This and other information developed in the study will be shared with the Atlanta Regional Commission and

other planning partners, and will also be used in the development of 2030 RTP.

The Northwest Connectivity Study team finished its second round of public open house meetings in early June. The goals of the study are to develop a locally preferred alternative (LPA) for a transit service connecting midtown Atlanta with Cumberland/Galleria and Kennesaw in Cobb County and to conduct an environmental impact study for such a service. Participants at the open houses were presented with a homework assignment to help prepare for follow-up meetings in late August. They were asked first to ride public

transit and to evaluate that experience and secondly, to visit Decatur around the Decatur Square MARTA Station and complete a "scavenger hunt" to familiarize themselves with the characteristics of a successful transit-oriented development.

Finally, the **Activity Center Circulator Shuttle System (ACCESS)** study is getting under way. The ACCESS Study will research implementing circulator shuttle services in activity centers including Perimeter, Midtown and Downtown, Cumberland/Galleria, Town Center and Atlanta Hartsfield International Airport. ■



Your chance to be heard...

Citizens are encouraged to attend the monthly GRTA Board of Directors and committee meetings. The Board is happy to hear from citizens and sets aside time at the beginning of their monthly meetings for citizen comments (limited to three minutes per person or group).

Upcoming Public Meetings

The next round of meetings for the Northwest Connectivity Study have been scheduled, and Northern Sub Area Study and Regional Transit Action Plan meeting dates are being determined now. Add your voice and opinions to the process by joining your friends and neighbors at any of the following public meetings. Information about these and other future meetings is available on the GRTA web site at www.grta.org. ■

Northwest Connectivity Study

August 26, 2002

11:00 AM
Smyrna Community Center
200 Village Green Circle
Smyrna, Georgia 30081
770-431-2842

August 26, 2002

6:30 PM
R.M. Clayton WWTP
2440 Bolton Road, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
404-351-6120

August 27, 2002

6:30 PM
Cobb County Central Library
266 Roswell Street
Marietta, Georgia 30060
770-528-2320

There's Something In The Air...

Wedding bells have been ringing at GRTA this summer. Three members of the staff were married between late May and early July. Beth Simpkins, legal assistant, was the first, marrying Bill Stanfield at the end of May. Crew Heimer, manager of passenger rail, was next, marrying Roumi Boneva on the first of June. William Mecke, manager of communications, finished out GRTA's wedding season, marrying Kathy Bauer on July 6. Our best wishes and congratulations to all three couples. ■

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245 Peachtree Center Avenue, Suite 900
Atlanta, GA 30303

GRTA Board of Directors meetings

Third Quarter of 2002

August 1

GRPP/PMT 1:30 p.m.

August 8

DRI Committee 9:30 a.m.

Planning & Projects Committee 10:30 a.m.

Operations & Finance Committee 11:30 a.m.

Board Meeting 1:00 p.m.

September 5

GRPP/PMT 1:30 p.m.

September 12

DRI Committee 9:30 a.m.

Planning & Projects Committee 10:30 a.m.

Operations & Finance Committee 11:30 a.m.

Board Meeting 1:00 p.m.

GRTA Board meetings are webcast live at the GRTA website—www.grta.org

Contact Us!

Phone: (404) 463-3000

Fax: (404) 463-3060

E-mail:

comments@grta.org

Internet:

www.grta.org

It is the mission of GRTA to provide the citizens of Georgia with transportation choices, improved air quality, and better land use in order to enhance their quality of life and promote growth that can be sustained by future generations.