

Selecting Major Transit Projects: Making and Keeping a 10 Year Promise

*Work Session for
the Atlanta Roundtable on July 7, 2011*

UTA is ahead of schedule and under budget with its FrontLines project. FrontLines is a group of five UTA rail projects that will add 70 miles to the 64-mile rail network.

Despite initial skepticism, TRAX now enjoys widespread support. Both the University Line and its extension to the University Medical Center were completed ahead of schedule. A daily ridership of 15,000 was expected for the initial 15-mile line in 1999. By the fourth quarter of 2009, the ridership had risen to 43,400.

Today the program is estimated to cost \$6.7 billion, leaving a \$2-2.5 billion funding gap. If the program can't secure another revenue source, the agency won't finish all the projects until 2042 (25yrs behind schedule).

Initial cost estimate in 1999 for the Blue Line was \$225 million. In 2000, costs increased to \$331mil. Costs increased to \$371mil in 2002. By 2004, cost increased to \$399mil and were again revised to \$427mil in 2005. Revised estimates in 2007 called for the project to be completed at a final cost of \$463mil, more than double the original estimate of \$227mil.

The 10 Year Promise

- What the promise is:
 - Performance
 - Price
 - Delivery
- To whom the promise is made:
 - Citizens
 - Roundtable members

July Workshop Purpose

- Making the promise:
 - Simpler format for difficult choices
 - The sales tax is a 10 yr. promise
 - Voters need to know there is a long-term vision
 - The sales tax is the 10 yr. implementation program
- Keeping the promise:
 - Fit the promise to the project
 - Commitment, focus and accountability

Atlanta Region's 20 yr. Implementation Vision

- “Concept 3.1” refined (20 yr. priority pipeline):
 - Set of projects in the unconstrained list, connected to the system
- Sales tax list selected from the pipeline:
 - The 10 yr. promise

Making the Promise

(10 Year Promise Buckets)

Projects placed in buckets by promise:

1. Done and open:

- Lots of people riding
- Costs are understood (on budget)
- Project is delivered on time

2. Substantial construction:

- Ridership projections are high
- Substantial construction (on schedule)
- Costs are understood (on budget)

3. Ready in the pipeline:

- “Shovel ready” for the next available funds

Keeping the Promise

(Commitment, Focus & Accountability)

- Requires serious commitment and leadership from the project sponsor:
 - ✓ Staying within budget (construction and operations)
 - ✓ Ongoing operating funds (if not funded by the regional sales tax)
 - ✓ Making tough decisions
 - ✓ Addressing citizen concerns quickly
 - ✓ Enabling development appropriate for major investment
- Accountability of the project sponsor to the region for performance/cost schedule/performance