

## MINUTES

### PLANNING & EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

### METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY

October 31, 2019

The Board of Directors Planning & External Relations Committee met on October 31, 2019 at 9:35 a.m. in the Board Room on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the MARTA Headquarters Building, 2424 Piedmont Road, Atlanta, Georgia.

#### **Board Members Present**

Jim Durrett  
Roderick E. Edmond  
William F. Floyd  
Roderick A. Frierson  
Jerry Griffin  
Freda B. Hardage  
Alicia M. Ivey  
Russell McMurry, P.E.\*  
Rita A. Scott  
Christopher S. Tomlinson\*

MARTA officials in attendance were: General Manager/ CEO Jeffrey A. Parker; C-Suite Team Members Chief Administrative Officer Luz Borrero, Chief of System Safety, Security & Emergency Management/Police Wanda Dunham; Chief of Bus Collie Greenwood, Chief Counsel Jonathan Hunt (Acting), Chief Financial Officer Kevin Hurley (Interim), Chief of Staff Melissa Mullinax and Chief of Capital Programs, Expansion & Innovation Franklin Rucker; AGMs Heather Alhadeff, Marsha Anderson Bomar, LaShanda Dawkins, Virgil Fludd, Kirk Talbott, Emil Tzanov and Tom Young (Interim); Chief Information Security Officer Dean Mallis; Executive Director Paula Nash; Senior Directors Pia Forbes, Jennifer Jinadu-Wright, Colleen Kiernan, Erica Pines, Jacob Vallo, Don Williams and George Wright; Directors Rhonda Allen, Donna DeJesus, David Emory and Adam Shumaker; Manager Stephany Fisher; Manager MARTA Board of Directors Rebbie Ellisor-Taylor; Sr. Executive Administrator Kenya Hammond and Department Administrator Demeka Wallace. Others in attendance Hunter Abel, Sheila Brunson-Jackson, Adrian Carter, Jolando Crane, Greg Floyd, Abebe Girmay, Gena Major, Courtne Middlebrooks And Derrick Thornton.

Also in attendance Peter Bruno of HNTB; Claudia Bilotto of WSP; Shane Blatt of Arcadis; John Crocker of FTA Region 4; Dannelle Crowe of Alliance Strategies; Scott Haggard of ATL; BJ Martin of POND; Saba Long; Helen McSwain of Rohadfox; Keith Parker of

\* Russell R. McMurry, P.E. is Commissioner of Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT); Christopher S. Tomlinson is Executive Director of Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and therefore, are non-voting members of the MARTA Board of Directors

Clayton County CAG; Shayna Poll of CAP/ADID; Emily Ritzler of WSP; Soji Tinubu of WR&J; Jacob Tzegaegba; Cara Vojdani of Arcadis; Cain Williamson of City of Atlanta and Andre Young of Clever Devices.

**Approval of the September 26, 2019 Planning & External Relations Committee Meeting Minutes**

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On motion by Mr. Durrett seconded by Ms. Ivey, the minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 6 to 0, with 8\* members present.

**Briefing – ATL Regional Transit Plan Update**

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Mr. Tomlinson presented an overview on the ATL's Regional Transit Plan.

Types of Projects (3 Buckets)

- State of Good Repair – maintenance projects (\$4.1B)
- Enhancement Projects – Additional changes, adding benefits revisions to transit services (\$4.2B)
- Expansion Projects – expand the current footprint of transit in the region; bringing new service where it doesn't exist (\$18.9B)

Primary Purpose of the ARTP

- The ATL Regional Transit Plan (the "ARTP") is the primary source for transit projects that will be considered by the Atlanta Regional Commission for adoption & inclusion in metro Atlanta's federally required short-term (TIP) and long range (The RTP) and long range (The RTP) transportation plans
- Serve as a source of transit projects from which the ATL Board may recommend potential state bond investment
- The ARTP is the source of transit projects for local county-based sales tax referenda for up to 1% and up to 30 years

Governing Principles for the Regional Transit Plan

- Economic Development and Land Use
- Environmental Sustainability
- Equity
- Innovation
- Mobility and Access
- Return on Investment

**ARTP Evaluation Process**

- Quadrant Mythology
- Financial Overview
- Next Steps

**Projects Seeking Discretionary Funding**

- Project Level Evaluation Criteria
  - Market Potential
  - Performance Impacts
  - Deliverability

**Projects Placed in Quadrants**

- Quad 1 – High impact (lower cost); score and perform well
- Quad 2 – High impact (high cost); performs well but the cost is significantly higher
- Quad 3 – Low impact (high costs); no projects that were submitted and scored into this category

**Projects Funded – Total Project Costs (By Fund Source)**

- \$27B
  - \$20.6B (Capital)
  - \$6.4B (O&M)

**Projects Funded – Total Costs of All Projects Submitted (By Project Type)**

- \$27B
  - \$4.1B (SGR)
  - \$4.2B (Enhancement)
  - \$18.9B (Expansion)

**Quadrant Projects**

- 79 Projects - \$16.4B
  - 41% by count
  - 60% by dollar amount
- Any project identifying federal or state discretionary funding assumptions was evaluated and placed into 1 of 3 project quadrants
- Project quadrants support project development discussions for the ARTP and RTP/TIP

**Non-Quadrant Projects**

- 113 Projects
  - Projects still under development; funding assumptions still unconfirmed
  - Project financial plan feasibility yet to be completed
  - Projects to be completed exclusively with local and or formula funds and do not meet the definition of regionally significant

**MARTA Projects**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100 Projects MARTA Presumed-Operator</li><li>• 61 Projects MARTA Projects</li><li>• 20 Tiered MARTA Projects</li><li>• 21 SGR Projects</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 21 Enhancement Projects</li><li>• 19 Expansion Projects</li><li>• 6 Quad 1 HI/LC Projects</li><li>• 13 Quad 2 HI/ HC Projects</li><li>• 1Quad 2 LI/HC Projects</li></ul> |
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**MARTA Project Notes**

- 33% (20) MARTA-Submitted projects were evaluated and put into Tiers
- 39 projects submitted by other project sponsors with MARTA as the assumed operator
- Other project sponsors include GCT, DeKalb County, Fulton County, City of Chamblee and City of Brookhaven
- All MARTA-submitted projects that were evaluated for quadrant-tiering placed in the high impact half of the quadrants, except for the Connector Reliever Park & Ride Parking Deck project.

**ARTP Schedule**

- Board Meeting – January 24<sup>th</sup>
- Board Meeting – March 7<sup>th</sup>
- RTP Committee – May 10<sup>th</sup>
- Board Meeting – May 23<sup>rd</sup>

**Results of Public Hearings on Proposed Service Modifications for December 2019**

Ms. Pines provided an update on the outreach and results of the public hearing for service modifications December 2019.

**DeKalb County Current**

- Routes 19, 123 and 823
  - Proposed route changes are guided by service evaluation and public input

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- Staff meets with community stakeholder to review proposed route changes as required

Service Modifications are designed to address

- Overcrowding
- Schedule Reliability
- Service Frequency
- On-time Performance
- Customer Demand

Public Hearing Location

- Monday, September 16, 2019  
215 Sycamore Street  
Decatur, GA 30030  
Community Exchange: 6 p.m.  
Public Hearing: 7 p.m.

Community Outreach

- Signage
  - Launched new signage display and color system pilot program
  - Placed signs at various locations on the routes
  - Signs designed to better alert and inform MARTA customers and stakeholders of key events
- Stakeholder Briefing – 2
  - Presentation to the AARP Age-Friendly Metro Atlanta Advisory Council
  - Presentation to MARTA Accessibility Committee (MAC)
- Digital Outreach – 500+emails distributed to
  - Personal emails and phones called to elected officials representing the impacted areas
  - Homeowner associations (HOAs) located in areas of impact
  - Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) located in areas of impact
  - Partnered with government access televisions stations
  - DeKalb County Public Information Officers
  - Public Libraries

- Station Outreach
  - Conducted canvassing at Decatur MARTA Station (300 flyers distributed)
  
- New Public Meeting Signs
  - Route Changes – Orange
  - Proposed Route Changes – Yellow
  - Budget Hearing – Blue
  
- In The News Media Outlets
  - Atlanta Journal Constitution
  - ACE III/ Champion
  - Clayton Daily News
  - Crossroads & On Common Ground
  - Neighbor Newspapers
  - Mundo Hispanico/Various multicultural media outlets
  - Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Dr. Edmond asked if flyers were distributed among stakeholders to share via Facebook.

Ms. Pines said yes, the Authority sent emails and Facebook ads with stakeholders.

#### Digital Communications – MARTA Website

- Produced and posted an informational YouTube video on the MARTA website
- The video outlined public hearing information and details on the proposed service modifications
- The video received 1,483 views across various social media channels including Facebook and Twitter

#### Public Hearing Attendance – Decatur Library Auditorium

- September 16, 2019
  - 70 Attendees
  - 25 Speakers
  - 0 Media

#### Summary of Public Comments

- Route 19
  - Several speakers indicated to keep Route 19 as is
  - Several speakers were in favor of extending the route with added service
  - Most concerns – related to extended travel time as result of proposed route extension

- Route 123
  - Several speakers spoke in opposition of proposed modifications for Route 123
  - A number of seniors and individuals with disabilities use Route 123 for vital connections
  - Route 123 is an important link to downtown Decatur, North Decatur Mall and DeKalb Medical
  - Concerns related to lack of shelters, lighting and crosswalks for seniors on the new route
  - Changes would make it necessary to pay additional transfer fees on other connecting routes
  
- Route 823
  - Route 823 needs more service
  - The current route schedule causes those transferring to the route from Route 19 to miss the bus
  - Route 823 is rarely used between Midway and Memorial Drive
  - The bus can be a hazard in areas where there are no sidewalks
  - Street parking is a challenge on the route
  - Consider alternating Route 823, instead of eliminating the segments

Mr. Griffin acknowledged MARTA staff for addressing concerns with Route 123 and implementing new signage.

Ms. Scott said as one of MARTA's new Board members, I had the opportunity to conduct the Public Hearing which was very robust. The DeKalb Commissioners representatives provided information from concerned senior citizens. I committed to ride all three routes and in doing so, I met some seniors who attended the meetings. It is appreciated that MARTA staff considered the needs of the seniors in DeKalb County.

Ms. Ivey said often when I chair Public Hearings, it is difficult to understand when MARTA will be hosting a Public Hearing because of lack of communication to the public. This is a wonderful step in the right direction and I hope you all keep the momentum. She thanked Ms. Pines and the Planning Department for bringing back the material and results from the Public Hearings.

Dr. Edmond acknowledged MARTA staff for a turnout of seventy attendees.

**Resolution Authorizing the Approval of Service Modification for December 2019 on Routes 19, 123 and 823**

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Mr. Williams presented a resolution authorizing the approval of service modification for December 2019.

The MARTA Act and the MARTA Service Standards require public input and consideration before bus and rail modifications are approved by the Board implementation.

The route modifications were developed based on input and feedback from passengers' operators and communities as well as MARTA's ongoing service monitoring and evaluation to identify and pursue opportunities to enhance service.

The modifications has been designed to expand service, improve service reliability (On Time Performance); enhance safety; minimize perceived adverse impacts on communities; improve operational efficiency; and better tailor service to demand.

Mr. Durrett asked would patrons be required to pay additional transfer fees.

Mr. Williams said no, there are no additional transfer fees from one MARTA route to the next.

On motion by Mr. Durrett seconded by Mr. Griffin, the resolution was approved by a vote of 7 to 1, with 10\* members present.

Dr. Edmond voted no.

**Briefing – Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Recommended Locally Preferred Alternative**

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Mrs. Alhadeff provided an overview on Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit.

**Relevant Past Plans**

- Transit Planning Board Concept 3 (2008)
- Connect Atlanta (2008)
- Livable Centers Initiative Stadium Neighborhoods (LCI)
- Atlanta's Transportation Plan (2018)



#### Project Funding History

- City of Atlanta voters pass MARTA referendum (2016)
- Project included in Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (2017)
- MARTA receives \$12.6 million TIGER Grant (March 2018); Application (2017)
- MARTA Board adopts More MARTA Atlanta program which includes funding for Summerhill BRT (Oct 2018)
- MARTA Board adopts sequencing plan for (June 2019)

#### Project History – 2017 Grant Application

- BRT from GSU Stadium to Arts Center MARTA Station
- Juniper/Courtland Streets and Piedmont Avenue
- Connecting Summerhill/GSU to Downtown & Midtown
- 9.4 Miles – Exclusive lanes, transit signal priority and mixed traffic

#### Stakeholder Feedback

- Significant development changes since 2017 TIGER application
- Stakeholder feedback (City of Atlanta, Carter/GSU, Grady, Midtown Alliance, CAP)
  - Severe constructability issues north of MLK Jr. Drive
  - Mixed traffic north of Memorial Drive

#### Outreach – Confirm Route

- Coordination with City of Atlanta (Mayor's office, Planning Councilmember Smith, Atlanta Housing)
- Public meetings held throughout October (signs at bus stops)
  - 2 Public Meetings
  - 2 Neighborhood/NPU Meetings
  - 6 Stakeholder Meetings
  - 3 Advocacy Groups
- Survey online and paper distribution via outlets above and on Route 55
- Results
  - 125+ Attendees
  - 346 Completed Surveys

#### Feedback Results

- Direct connection to MARTA Rail (avoid redundancy)
  - 59% N/S Line, 2% E/W Line
  - 86% funding for frequent transit to areas NOT currently served by rail

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- **Faster Service. Shorter Route**
  - 68% prefer faster service, fewer destinations
  - 70% invest in highest quality, but shorter route
- **Serve major activity centers or Local neighborhood trips (61% vs 36%)**
- **Willing to Transfer or One Seat Ride (61% vs 34%)**
- **Connect to BeltLine**

**Locally Preferred Alternative**

- **From Beltline North to the Georgia State Station**
- **Preferred turn – Loop around closer to Five Points Station**

**Next Steps**

- **Route Refinement & Outreach, Selection of LPA ( October / November 2019)**
- **Approval of White Paper from Office of Secretary ( December 2019)**
- **Environmental Document (May 2020)**
- **Obligate Funds ( September 2020)**
- **Operational ( September 2024)**

Mr. Floyd asked did Georgia State University have emphasis in the Summerhill discussion.

Mrs. Alhadeff said Georgia State made sure that their Panther Shuttle was acknowledged to operate from the Georgia State Stadium.

Mr. McMurry asked what is the cost comparison associate with the TIGER Grant and LPA.

Mrs. Alhadeff said the cost comparison can be provided during a future date. However, there was a route difference of 9.4 miles.

Ms. Scott asked for an update regarding concerns from making a left-hand turn from the DeKalb Emory Hospital.

Mr. Williams said as part of the service modifications, the DeKalb Emory Hospital is currently being revised to alleviate the left hand turn.

Ms. Scott said once the bus exits the hospital, how would the bus travel back to downtown Decatur.

Mr. Williams said the bus will exit the hospital, continue to North Decatur, turn around and travel back to Decatur which eliminates the left turn.

### **Briefing – Quarterly Media Impressions**

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Ms. Forbes presented an overview of media coverage for the period covering July 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019.

#### **Cheers for Big News**

- iVillage Grand Opening
- PARK (ing) Day at Lenox
- Zero Emissions Electric Buses
- COMTO Agency of the Year
- National Voter Registration Day
- Nine (9) Press Releases and Media Alerts

#### **Talking Numbers**

- Reached a global audience of nearly \$2.3B
- Media coverage had an advertising value equivalent of approximately \$21.59 million

#### **MARTA in the News**

- Positive News Coverage – 5%
- Neutral News Coverage – 86%
- Negative News Coverage – 9%

### **Briefing – Digital Media Strategy**

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Mr. Shumaker presented the current Digital Media Strategy.

#### **Content Creation**

- Create photo and video storytelling content that supports the MARTA brand

#### **Social Media**

- Improve social media communication to improve customer satisfaction

#### **Generate Support for Transit**

- Aim to increase ridership by sharing human stories that show MARTA as part of the community
- Reinforce positive images of transit to generate public support
- Press the case for transit expansion

**Social Media Goals**

- Find synergies between existing departments and identify where additional resources are required
  - Customer Service
  - Operations Communications
  - Digital Media
- Consistent, real-time social media response requires a dedicated team
- Drive the initiative to be responsive to customers
- Provide perspective for customer-focused communications

**Customer Service**

- Customer Service Staff are best skilled to handle customer service issues
- Collaborating with Customer Service to send daily reports to escalate serious customer issues from social media
- Sending all employee commendations from social media to Customer Service

**Growing Our Audience**

- Multiple MARTA-owned social media accounts
- EMT training for social media
- Creating more content to share

**Resolution Directing MARTA's Legal Department to Work With Local Jurisdictions to Conform the Rapid Transit Contract and Assistance Agreement**

Mr. Hunt presented a resolution authorizing MARTA's Legal Department to work with local jurisdictions to conform the Rapid Transit Contract and Assistance Agreement.

While the MARTA Board and staff have engaged the jurisdictions in discussion of the Fifteenth Amendment, concerns regarding the provisions of prior Contract Amendments, as well as the initial engineering report incorporated into the Contract have arisen.

The MARTA's Legal Department is directed to engage with designated staff of the local jurisdictions to review the contents of the Engineering Report and the subsequent amendment made, as well as the other provisions of the Fourteen Amendments to the Contract so that it will accurately reflect the system as it currently contemplated and edit those provisions which no longer are contemplated by the Authority and its jurisdictions.

On motion by Mr. Durrett seconded by Mr. Griffin, the resolution was approved by a vote of 7 to 0, with 10\* members present.

Ms. Scott abstained.

**Adjournment**

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The meeting of the Planning & External Relations Committee adjourned at 10:18 a.m.