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An Assessment of Community Planning for Mass Transit



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PREFACE

This report on urban transportation planning in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area is one of nine case studies undertaken by the Office of Technology Assessment to provide an information base for an overall assessment of community planning for mass transit.

The findings of the overall study are reported in the summary document, *An Assessment of Community Planning* for Mass *Transit,* which forms the first volume of this series. The assessment was performed at the request of the Committee on Appropriations of the U.S. Senate, on behalf of its Transportation Subcommittee.

The study was directed by the Office of Technology Assessment's Transportation Program Staff with guidance and review provided by the OTA Urban Mass Transit Advisory Panel. The firms of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and System Design Concepts, Inc., were contractors for the study. This assessment is a joint effort, identifying different possible points of view but not necessarily reflecting the opinion of any individual.

INTRODUCTION

This report assesses how one of nine major United States metropolitan areas made its decisions about the development or modernization of rail transit.

The assessment of the nine cities attempts to identify the factors that help communities, facing critical technological choices, make wise decisions that are consistent with local and national goals for transit. The study investigates the following issues:

- Are there major barriers to communication and cooperation among governmental agencies involved in transit planning and operating ? Do these barriers interfere with making sound decisions?
- Do transit decisions reflect the combined interests of all major , public groups, including citizen organizations, trade unions, the business community, and others ?
- Does the planning process provide enough information about the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action to provide a solid basis for making decisions ?
- Does the availability or lack of financing, or the conditions under which financing has been provided, unnecessarily limit the range of options that are considered?

The ultimate purpose of the work has been to cast light on those prospective changes in national transit policy and administrative programs which might improve, in different ways and to different extents, the way communities plan mass transit systems. The nine cities were selected to represent the full range of issues that arise at different stages in the overall process of planning and developing a transit system.

San Francisco, for example, has the first regional rail system built in decades, while Denver is planning an automated system, and voters in Seattle have twice said “no” to rail transit funding proposals.

The assessment of transit planning in each of the nine metropolitan areas has been an inquiry into an evolving social process. Consequently, the study results more closely resemble historical analysis than classical technology assessment.

This study employs a set of evaluation guidelines to orient the investigation in the nine metropolitan areas and to provide the basis for comparative judgments about them. The guidelines were derived from issues identified during preliminary visits to the metropolitan areas, a review of Federal requirements for transit planning, and an investigation via the literature into the state-of-the-art in the field.

The evaluation guidelines cover major topics which were investigated during the case assessment process. They deal with the character of the institutional arrangements and the conduct of the technical planning process.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Some of the most significant influences on transit planning are exerted by the organizations responsible for conducting the planning and making the decisions. Three guidelines were used to evaluate the institutional arrangements in the nine metropolitan areas:

- Agencies responsible for various aspects of transit decisionmaking should cooperate effectively in a clearly designated “forum”.
- The participants in this forum should have properly designated decisionmaking authority, and the public should have formal channels for holding decision-makers accountable for their actions.
- Citizens should participate in the transit planning process from its beginning and should have open lines of communication with decision makers.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT: TECHNICAL PLANNING PROCESS

The technical planning process provides the information that public officials and their constituents draw upon in making plans and decisions. Four guidelines were used to assess the technical planning process in the nine metropolitan areas:

- Broad, explicit goals and objectives should guide technical planning and decision-making.
- A range of realistic alternative solutions should be developed.
- The evaluation of these alternatives should give balanced consideration to a full range of goals and objectives.
- A practical and flexible plan for financing and implementation should be developed:

During visits to each of the nine metropolitan areas, the study team interviewed the principal representative of the transportation planning institution and other main participants in the local planning process. The visits were supplemented by interviews with UMTA officials in Washington. Pertinent documents-official plans, reports, studies, and other material—were reviewed in each case.

The information thus collected was used in compiling a history of the transit planning process in each case area, organized around key decisions such as the decision to study transit, the selection of a particular transit system, and public ratification of the decision to pay for and build the system. The main political, institutional, financial and technical characteristics affecting the conduct of the planning process were then assessed in light of the evaluation guidelines.

The same set of guidelines used in assessing each case metropolitan area was employed in making a generalized evaluation of the metropolitan experience. The results of the generalized evaluation are summarized in the report, *An Assessment of Community Planning for Mass Transit: Summary Report,* issued by the Office of Technology Assessment in February 1976.

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Summary and Highlights



Artist's sketch of the **MARTA transit vehicle**

- **The original impetus behind Atlanta's rapid transit system came from downtown-oriented business interests and forward-looking regional planners. Planners believed a transit system would relieve highway congestion and help shape future growth. Businessmen saw transit as a way to reinforce Atlanta's bid to become the regional center of the Southeast.**

- **Thus, from the beginning support for transit was derived from the desire to promote Atlanta's growth. This fact led to a sophisticated appreciation of the relationship of transit to land use planning, and to a tradition of cooperation between transportation and land use planners.**

- **Atlanta's forum for transportation planning, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), institutionalizes this pattern of cooperation by bringing regional land use planning and transportation planning under a single organizational roof. The ARC structure allows the responsibilities of the various agencies to be clearly delineated while encouraging integration of land use and transportation planning.**

- **Atlanta's transit planning history reflects little overt rivalry between the region's two modal agencies, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT, the highway-planning agency). However, underlying the appearance of cooperation has been a tendency for the two modal agencies to negotiate decisions out of public view.**

- **On the other hand, the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Overview Committee, created by the Georgia State Assembly to monitor MARTA's activities, brings a degree of public accountability and visibility to the Atlanta process.**

. Although originally transit decision-making was dominated by business interests, MARTA had made significant improvements in involving citizens in the planning process by 1971, when the decisive protransit referendum was held. Since then, as the plan becomes reality, more complaints are heard from affected citizens.

. The quality of the technical work in Atlanta is generally regarded as having been excellent for its time. Yet, the information often came too early or too late to be optimally useful in guiding decisionmaking.

- In addition, political considerations influenced the information made available to the public and decisionmakers. The only rigorous evaluation of transportation alternatives in Atlanta concluded that a predominantly bus transit system would attract as much patronage as the proposed rail system—and at less cost. In the end these findings were modified due to the political inadvisability of serving only part of the community with rail while offering less desirable express bus service to other parts of the region.

. When the transit bond issue was passed in 1971, local supporters were relying on the Federal Government to finance two-thirds of the cost of the entire system. Since then, the estimated cost of constructing the system has grown from $1.3 billion to over $2 billion while the Federal share for capital assistance has risen to 80 percent. When UMTA recently pledged $800 million–10 percent of its total capital budget—to support the MARTA system, some transit advocates felt shortchanged because the sum will buy only 13.7 miles of rapid transit.

Metropolitan Settingl

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Since 1950 Atlanta has become the major economic and cultural center in the southeastern United States. During this period the city has experienced unprecedented expansion in downtown construction. Atlanta's ambitious campaign to become a city of international importance coupled with its downtown orientation helped stimulate interest in a rapid rail transit system.

Although the Atlanta metropolitan area is growing fast, it remains a city with a relatively low population density (3,775 and 560 persons per square mile in the center city and suburban ring respectively—see Figure 2). Most of the population gain over the past decade has occurred in Atlanta's suburban ring. The center city comprised 47.9 percent of the area's population in 1960; but by 1970 this percentage had dropped to 35.7 percent. Evidence of dispersal of population centers is provided by the addition of 10 counties to the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area after 1970 census data were processed. 2 The increase in the number of work trips to and within Atlanta's suburbs is another indicator of suburbanization (see Figure 3).

Although the suburbs have grown faster, Atlanta's center city has remained stable and in some ways has gained vigor. Downtown real estate values grew as middle- and high-rise offices rose on Peachtree Street. The population of the center city gained 1.8 percent between 1960 and 1970, and density also increased. Likewise, the number of work trips to center city destinations increased slightly. In comparison, in many other older U.S. metropolitan areas center city population and employment dropped during the same period.

[1] **See Figure 1, center fold.**

[2] **The 10 counties added to the AtIan ta SMSA after 1970 are Cherokee, Butts, Henry,** Forsyth, **Fayette, Douglas, Newton,** Rockdale, Paulding, and Walton. **The earlier boundaries included 5 counties**: Fulton, **De** Kalb, **Clayton,** Gwinnett, **and Cobb.**

EXISTING PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

As in many cities of relatively low density, Atlanta's highway network is more fully developed than its transit system. The circumferential loop, Interstate 285, is augmented by radial interstate highways intersecting in Atlanta's central business district. Interstate **20** crosses the region east to west. The northeast to southwest corridor is served by Interstate 85 and the northwest to southeast corridor by Interstate 75. The latter two routes merge to parallel the Peachtree Ridge through central Atlanta, Citizen action over the past few years has halted further expansion of the freeway system, but the existing network is one of the best developed of any major city on the eastern seaboard.

Until 1972 Atlanta was served by a private company, the Atlanta Transit System (ATS). Principally a bus operation, ATS had a reputation as one of the best-managed transit companies during the 1960's. Trolley coaches ran until 1963. Patronage held relatively steady during the 1960's but took a downward turn at the end of the decade (see Figure 4). During the same period the percentage of work trips carried by public transit fell 20.4 percent, while the portion using automobiles rose by 84 percent (see Figure 3). By 1971, with ridership at its lowest point ever and fares at their highest, public takeover was proposed.

In 1971 Atlanta voters authorized a three-point program of transit improvements. The program hinged on a pledge of Federal capital assistance for transferring ATS ownership to the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), for purchasing new buses, and for constructing a rapid rail system, A short-range package promised new routes and other service improvements in the bus transit system. Transit fares were lowered from **40** cents to 15 cents. A long-range 50-mile rapid rail transit system was augmented by 14 miles of exclusive busways (see Figure 5). A l-cent hike in the sales tax was authorized to provide the local share of support for the program. Final design is

LAND AREA (1970)
(square miles)

Center City	131.5
Suburban Ring	1,597.5
Entire SMSA	1,728.0

POPULATION

	Suburban Ring	Center City
1960	529,733	487,455
1970	**893,743**	**496,421**

DENSITY
(population/square mile)

	Suburban Ring	Center City
1960	332	3,707
1970	560	3,775

POPULATION
Percent Change 1960-1970

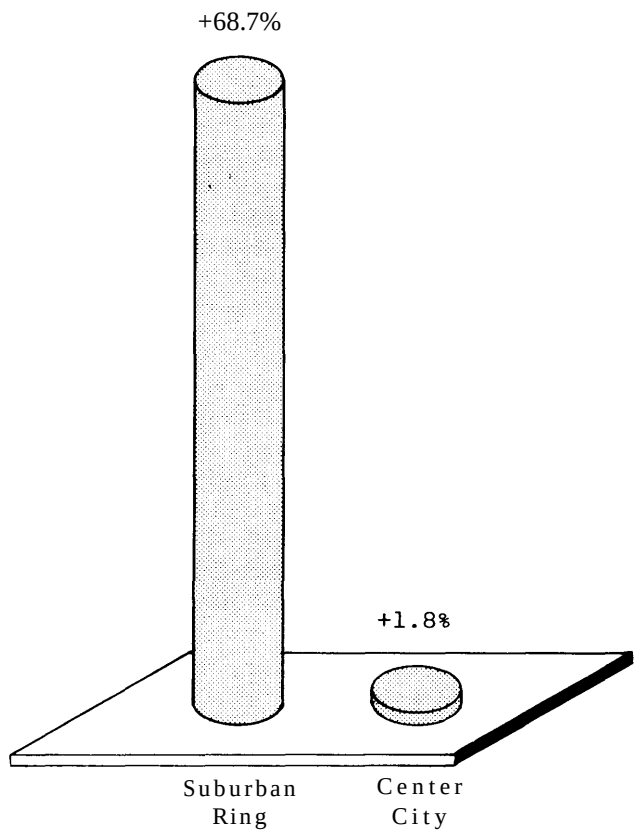


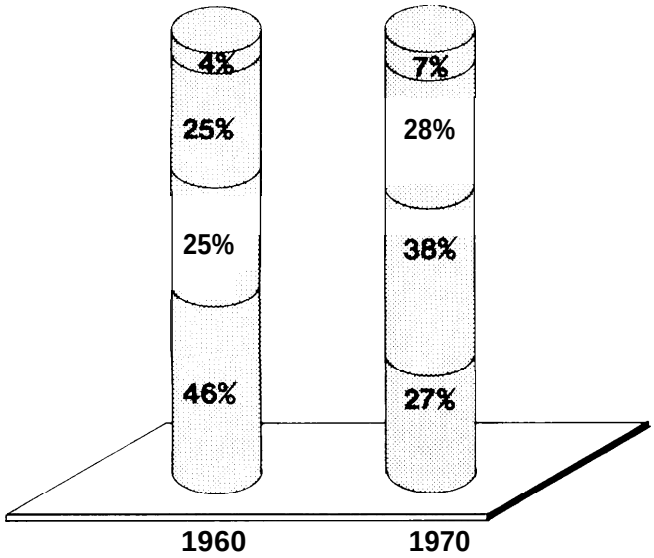
FIGURE 2: ATLANTA METROPOLITAN CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities) , usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

The ten new counties added to the Atlanta SMSA since the 1970 census are not included in these figures.

WORK TRIP DISTRIBUTION



WORK TRIP MODE

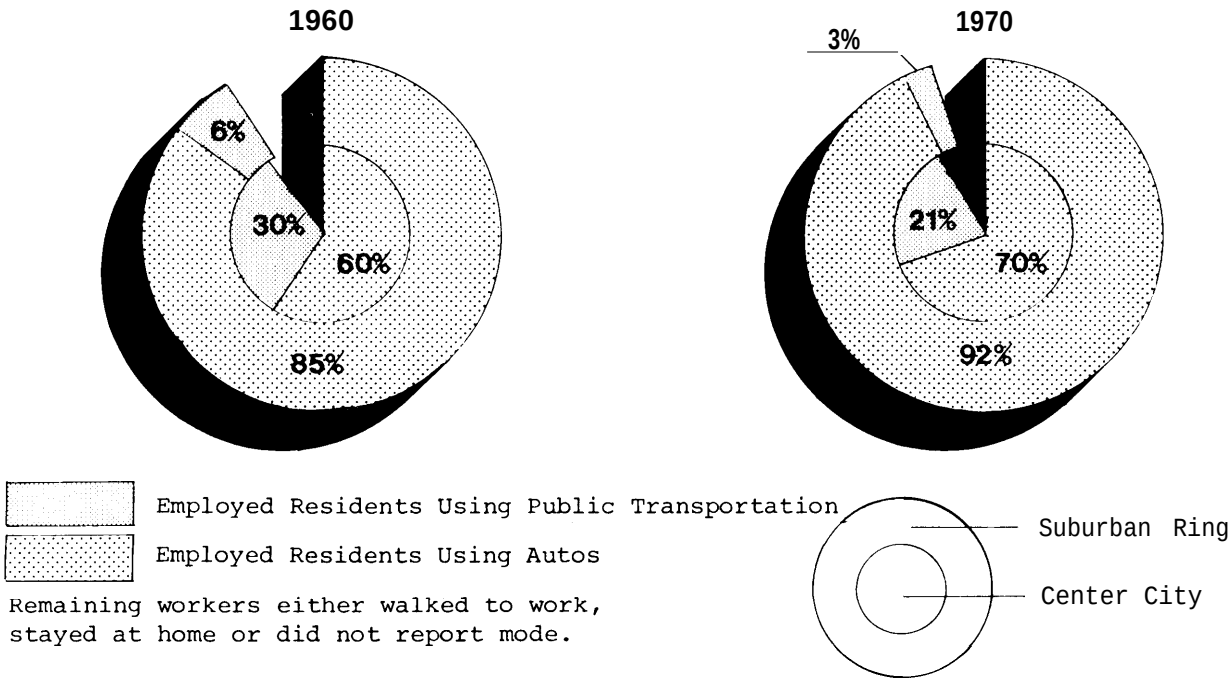


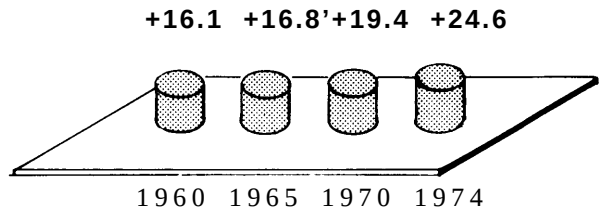
FIGURE 3: ATLANTA SMSA TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities) , usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

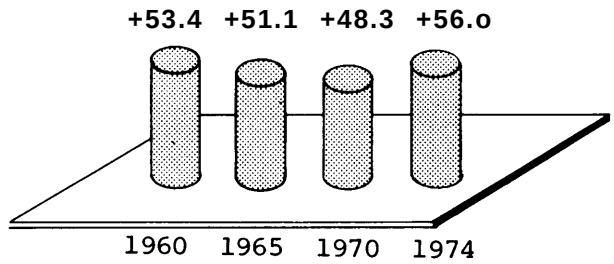
VEHICLE MILES OPERATED
(millions of miles)

peak Year= 1974 (24.6 million miles)
LOW Year= 1961 (15.9 million miles)



REVENUE PASSENGERS
(millions of Passengers)

Peak Year= **1974 (56.0** million **riders)**
Low Year= 1971 (44.4 million riders)



NET OPERATING REVENUE
(millions of dollars)

peak year= 1965 ($818,578)
LOW year= 1974 (-$17,003,983)

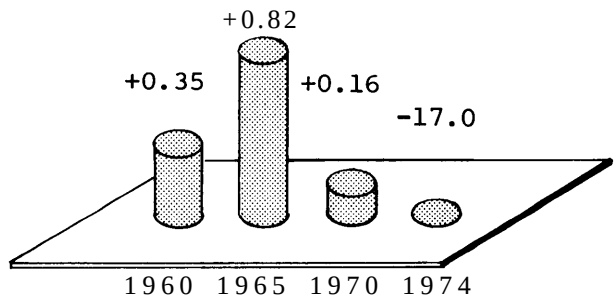


FIGURE 4: ATLANTA TRANSIT OPERATIONS 1960-1974'

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.
IAtlanta Transit System; Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority,

Data not **available** for 1972.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities) , usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

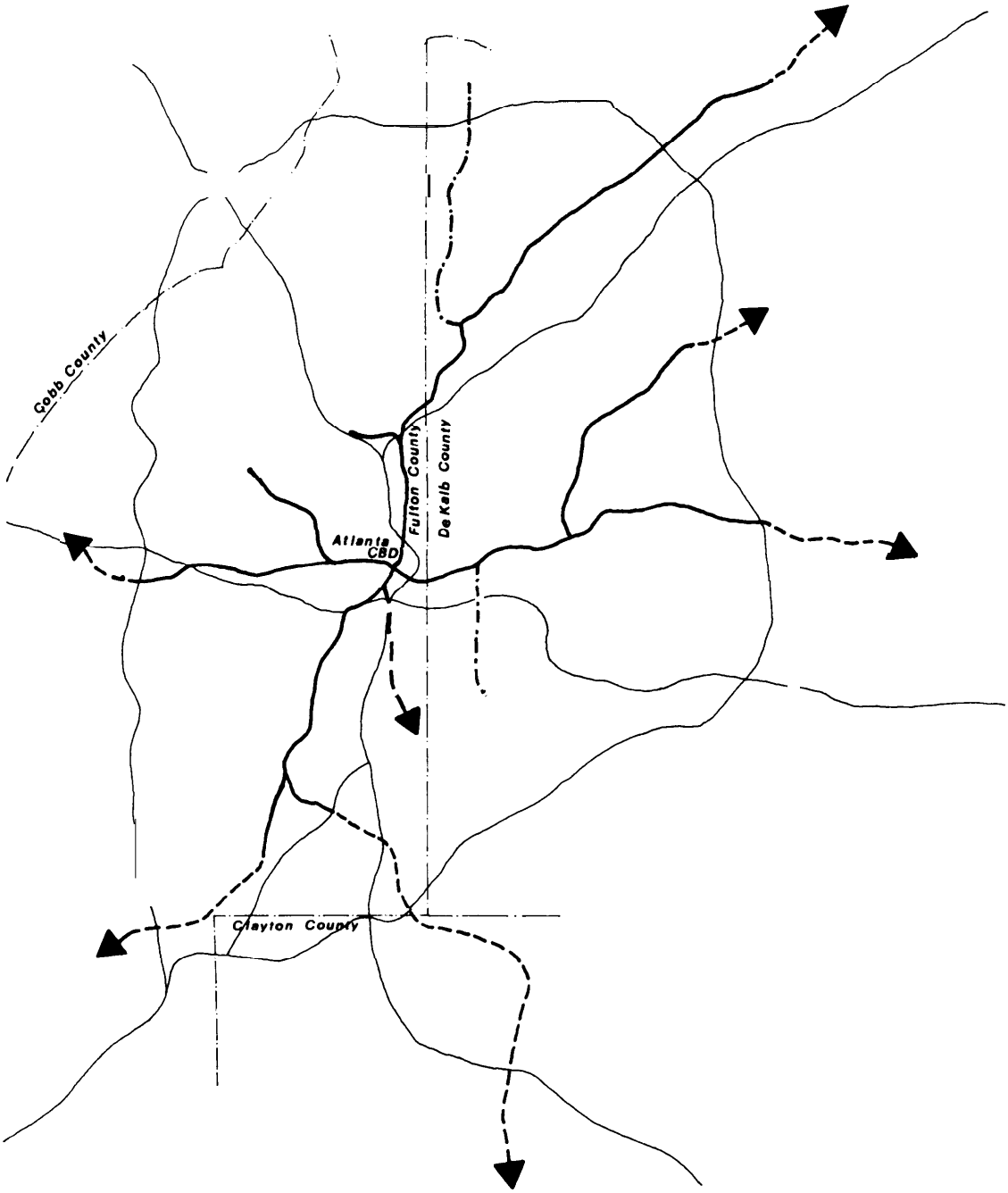


FIGURE 5 : ATLANTA - ADOPTED RAPID RAIL SYSTEM

Rapid Rail Transit Line

Busway Rapid Transit Line

County Boundary

Future Extensions of Rapid Rail Transit Line

Major Highways

Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

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underway on a portion of the rail system, and formal groundbreaking took place in February 1975.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING INSTITUTIONS

TABLE I.—Federal Assistance to Atlanta Transit Programs From F.Y. 1962 to May 31, 1975

Type of Assistance	Federal Share	Total Costs
Capital Grants	$239,809,000	$621,360,000
Technical Studies	9,066,000	14,401,000
**TOTAL ..... **	**$248,875,000**	**$635,761,000**

Source Urban Mass Transportation Administration

The institutional setting for planning rapid transit in the Atlanta metropolitan region traditionally has fostered cooperation between transportation planners and regional comprehensive planners. The relatively close relationship is reflected in the complex organizational structure that coordinates transportation planning with other regional planning functions in Atlanta.

TABLE 2.—Federally Recognized Agencies

Designation	Agency
A-95	**Atlanta Regional Commission**
MPO	**Atlanta Regional Commission**

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

The Atlanta Regional Commission was created in 1971 by an act of the State legislature. Seven of the region's counties currently participate in ARC. Modeled after the Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis-St. Paul, ARC is the Federal grant review agency from the regions and the agency charged with coordinating all transportaion planning and programming in the region. i ARC is essentially a merger of the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Area Council of Health Agencies, and the Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS), the organization originally created to coordinate transportation planning in the region.

The transportation planning relationships between the modal agencies (the transit authority MARTA and the Georgia DOT) and ARC are institutionalized in the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program (ARTPP) that was adopted in 1971. Under the ARTPP agreement, transportation policymaking is handled by an ARC subcommittee called Transportation Policy Subcommittee, which includes representatives from ARC, MARTA, GDOT, and (since 1971) each jurisdiction participating in the ARC. Technical issues are decided by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), which is made up of the chief technical staff persons from the participating bodies. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) reports to the Transportation Policy Subcommittee (TPS). TPS technically is a subcommittee of ARC's Community Development Planning Liaison Committee, which is one of ARC's three principal committees. [5]

The ARC board theoretically has final review over TPS policy decisions. In practice most disagreements are arbitrated within TPS itself. ARC's staff has been directly involved in overseeing and coordinating work the city and MARTA are doing on environmental impact analysis and station area impact studies.

[3] **Circular A-95 of the Offices of Management and Budget requires one agency in each region to be empowered to review all proposals for Federal funds from agencies in that region. Circular A-95 replaced Circular A-82, which was created to implement Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3301).**

~ The Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration require Governors to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in each area to carry out the "continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process . . . carried out cooperatively. . ." (the "3-C" process) mandated by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 and the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974. According to joint UMTA-FHWA regulations published in September 1974, MPO's must prepare or endorse (1) a long-range general transportation plan, including a separate plan for improvements in management of the existing transportation system; (2) an annually updated list of specific projects, called the transportation improvement program (TIP), to implement portions of the long-range plan; and (3) a multiyear planning prospectus supplemented by annual unified planning work programs.

[5] **ARC members are assigned to one of the three "liaison" committees: Health and Social Services Planning Liaison Committee, Governmental Services Liaison Committee, and Community Development Planning Liaison Committee. Each committee has staff support.**

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority is the principal transit operator in the region and the body charged with the design, engineering, and construction of the rapid transit system. MARTA was created by an act of the Georgia General Assembly in 1965 to perform a range of tasks:

> The authority shall exist for purposes of planning, designing, leasing (as lessee), purchasing, acquiring, holding, owning, constructing, improving, equipping, financing, maintaining and administering a rapid transit system within the metropolitan area, and operating same, or contracting therefor, or leasing (as lessor) the same for operation by private parties.

Four counties and the City of Atlanta participate in MARTA: Fulton, De Kalb, Clayton, and Gwinnett. Clayton and Gwinnett voted not to take part in MARTA's transit development program authorized in 1971.

City of Atlanta

The City of Atlanta also is a major actor on the regional scene. Formally, it participates in the process through its membership on the ARC and MARTA boards and through the ARTPP process. The city also has created a special MARTA Liaison Office to coordinate and expedite city actions on MARTA plans and construction activities, and its Department of City Planning is working on Station Area Impact Studies with ARC, MARTA, and local community organizations.

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

On the State level, the Georgia Department of Transportation plays a major role in Atlanta's transit planning activities. Formerly called the State Highway Department, GDOT was involved heavily in the AATS program before it was incorporated into ARC. GDOT maintains a special branch for planning and programing in Atlanta metropolitan area.

The Georgia Department of Transportation was established in November 1972. It is governed by the State Transportation Board. A Mass Transportation and Aeronautics Division was established to deal with questions of mass transit and gradually is taking on a more active role.

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC)

The Georgia General Assembly created the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee in June 1973. MARTOC oversees the fiscal operations of both the bus and rapid transit activities of MARTA. The overview committee, which was inspired by the example of the Office of the Legislative Analyst in California, serves as an ombudsman for the public as well as an instrument of the General Assembly.

Critical History of Transit Planning and Decisionmaking

The following history covers the decisionmaking process for Atlanta's rapid transit system from its beginnings in post-World War II highway needs studies to the present day. The discussion is organized around five major phases of the planning and decisionmaking process: (1) early interest in rapid transit, culminating in the decision of the State legislature to create the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission in 1962; (2) efforts leading to the establishment in 1965 of a regional transit planning, construction, and operating agency; (3) initial transit system planning and the defeat of the rapid rail proposal in the referendum of 1968; (4) subsequent replanning and the approval of the 61-mile rapid rail-busway system in 1971; (5) the period since 1971 of system design, neighborhood impact study, and financial decisionmaking. The historical narrative is intended to provide a framework for the discussions that follow of the institutional structure and technical process. The history is summarized in a chronological listing in the following section (see page 23).

DECISION TO STUDY TRANSIT

Early support for rapid rail transit in Atlanta grew out of a creative alliance between regional planners and downtown civic and business leaders. The first official mention of the need for rapid transit came in a series of regional planning reports in the 1950's. The idea caught on with a core group of businessmen interested in establishing downtown Atlanta as a commercial center of national and even international importance. They were able to persuade the State legislature to sponsor the first full-scale transit planning study in 1962.[6]

The Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC)[7] began to explore the idea of rapid transit in two reports it prepared in 1950 and 1954. The first, entitled Up *Ahead,* was a regional plan that envisioned a freeway system with a loop around the city. The second was an update called NOW *for Tomorrow.* Although both reports dealt primarily with freeways, they mentioned the long-range need for rapid transit.

MPC took another, closer look at the regional highway network after 1954. In two reports, *Access to Central Atlanta* and Crosstown and Bypass *Expressways,* MPC analyzed the existing and projected capacity of the highway network and concluded that increased highway construction alone would not be adequate to meet transportation needs. The reports suggested that rapid transit was needed to solve the problem and that work to plan a system should begin immediately.

MPC'S recommendations were not welcomed by the Georgia State Highway Department. The highway agency believed highways could be an adequate solution and therefore disputed the MPC conclusions. The highway planners also had a stake in protecting their highway appropriations from the possibility of encroachment by transit builders. However, the argument between the highway and transit factions never developed into a public battle in Atlanta the way it did in Washington, D. C., whose early transit planning occurred during the same years. The MPC reports instead lay the groundwork for subsequent steps in the transit planning process.

The movement behind rapid transit began to gather momentum in 1960. Three reports were published in 1960 and 1961 dealing directly with the subject of rapid transit.

[6] **A particularly valuable source of information about and** analysis of the evolution of MARTA and early transit planning **in Atlanta is provided by Julian Rodney Johnson's "MARTA: The Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority, a Brief History," History Honors Paper, Emory University, Atlanta, 1970.**

[7] **The Metropolitan Planning Commission** (MPC) was Atlanta's regional planning agency at that time. MPC had a two-**county scope. Its successor, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, was created in 1970 and had a five-county membership.**

Two of the reports were products of the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC). One of them was a general discussion called "What You Should Know About Rapid Transit" (September 1960). The other report was an element of the first Atlanta area regional comprehensive plan. This second report, *Atlanta Region comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit,* was issued in June 1961. It called for 60 miles of high-speed rapid rail transit serving five counties at a roughly estimated cost of between $200 million and $215 million.

The central assumptions in the ARMPC plan illustrate the close connection the planners drew between the regional pattern of land use and rapid transit. Transit was viewed as a means for shaping and planning the future of the region. It would foster the vitality of the central business district and Atlanta's continued health as a regional center in the southeast.

The third report during this period preceded publication of the other two and was more effective in spearheading the civic campaign for rapid transit. This document was called *Rapid Atlanta.* It was published not by a public agency but by Atlanta Transit System, the city's privately owned bus company. Prepared by Simpson and Curtin, an engineering consultant firm from Philadelphia, *Rapid Byways* proposed a $59 million first phase of a rapid transit system. The proposal called for 16 miles of rapid rail using existing rail rights-of-way and a downtown conveyor-type, second-level distribution system. The recommendations strongly influenced the Planning Commission's 1961 proposal.

The effectiveness of *Rapid Atlanta* was due in large part to its roots in the business community. With the publication of Rapid Atlanta in 1960, Atlanta's core of civic-minded businessmen took the lead in organizing support for rapid transit. The individual behind the *Rapid Atlanta* plan was Robert Somerville, president of the Atlanta Transit System. Somerville was also a member of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. In early 1961 the new president of the Chamber of Commerce, Ivan Allen, named a rapid transit steering committee to begin pushing for transit. The committee was headed by Richard Rich, a former Chamber president, and its membership included Robert Somerville. Allen himself would continue his role in transit promotion as Mayor of Atlanta, a post he held from early 1962 through the end of the decade.[8]

R new ich would later become chairman of the MA board.

The Chamber worked in close coordination w the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning C mission (ARMPC). ARMPC sent speakers to civic organizations and business groups throughout the region during 1961. A frequ speaker was Glenn Bennett, who had been na executive director of the newly reorganize Commission in 1960. Bennett was a tireless influential supporter of the transit idea and h important posts on all the pre-MARTA organi bodies. The real action, however, occurred outs the politically and financially weak regional ning agency.

Two events heralded the evolution of politi support for rapid transit in 1961. 1n July, At Mayor William Hartsfield appointed a four- member aldermanic steering committee to g rapid transit policy. This committee formed nucleus of a group of committees from the vari jurisdictions in the region which, with ARM began to lobby members of the Georgia Gen Assembly to look favorably on rapid transit. efforts solidified in November 1961 when Go mor Ernest Vandiver held a regional conferenc civic and elected leaders.

The conference participants resolved to estab a regional Rapid Transit Steering Commit comprised of the chairmen of the five coun commissions, the Mayor of Atlanta, and Atl aldermanic steering committee. The explicit pose of the organization was to promote t enactment of mutually acceptable legislation i 1962 session of the Georgia General Assemb

The lobbying bore fruit in March 1962 when legislature created the Metropolitan Atlanta T sit Study Commission to begin full-scale tech planning for a transit system. Actually, this represented a compromise from the goal of t Chamber to see legislation authorizing a reg transit authority approved in 1962. The fac behind this development are discussed in the section.

DECISION TO CREATE A REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Seeking legislative approval for a regional tr agency was a logical first step for Atlanta's t

[8] Johnson, op. cit.

advocates. Under the Georgia State Constitution, a constitutional amendment was necessary before a regional transit agency could be established. The transit supporters wanted to take a legislatively ratified blueprint for a transit agency to the polls so the region could pursue transit planning immediately. Although planning did begin on schedule in 1962, the 3-year delay in putting MARTA together meant no action could be taken to implement the first plan. By the time MARTA came into being in 1966, the technical planning essentially had to begin over again.

Before they could unite behind a transit agency plan in late 1961 and early 1962, the members of the Rapid Transit Steering Committee had to resolve the touchy question of representation—how should the positions on the agency's board be divided among the participating local governments. Atlanta, particularly lame-duck Mayor Hartsfield, wanted more control than the outlying counties were willing to part with. The referendum language that finally passed the General Assembly and went to the polls in November 1962 did not specify the composition of the agency. It merely laid out in general terms the nature of the powers—taxing, eminent domain, expenditure of public funds and the like—that the State would be permitted to delegate to a lesser jurisdiction for the purpose of transit planning and implementation.

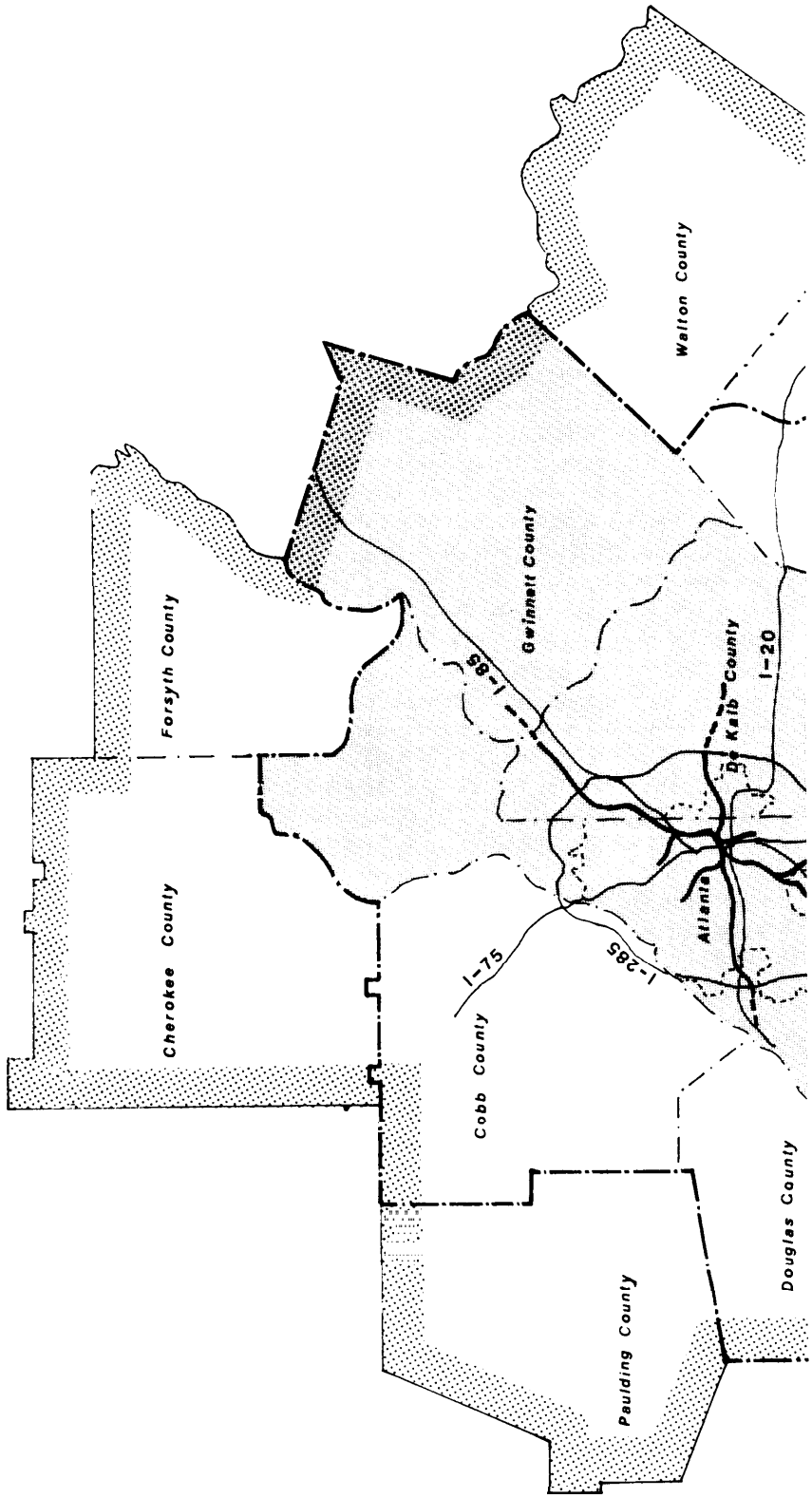
In spite of attempts to solidfy support for the enabling amendment, the measure met defeat at the polls. The referendum was put to the statewide electorate. Most analysts agree the issue failed to win the support of rural voters who mistakenly thought they were committing themselves to pay for a transit system for Atlanta. Opposition was voiced also by the trucking industry in defense of highway funds. The timing of the referendum also was an issue. State constitutional amendments could be placed before the electorate only every 2 years. Transit promoters thought a delay until 1964 would be undesirable. Furthermore, they wanted to make certain Atlanta would be qualified to receive the new Federal capital assistance for transit improvements that was being debated in the U.S. Congress in 1962. As it turned out, the UMTA bill did not pass Congress that year.

After the referendum defeat, the transit supporters in Atlanta immediately began preparing for 1964, when the transit enabling amendment next would be eligible for the ballot. Within weeks of the referendum vote the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission resolved to form the organization that came to be known as the Rapid Transit Committee of 100. The Committee's members and its 12-person executive committee were appointed from the public by city and county executives. It was conceived as a strategy for financing and publicizing the rapid transit campaign. A full-time public relations staff was hired and a consultant engaged to advise it. Local governments agreed to finance the actual referendum campaign. The committee's executive body included ex-Governor Vandiver as chairman and Planning Commission director Glenn Bennett as secretary. Atlanta Transit System president Robert Somerville also was a member. In the secretarial post Glenn Bennett helped coordinate the civic campaign for transit with the efforts of his regional planning council. The role was familiar to him. Bennett had served as secretary to the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission, and he would perform the same function for MARTA in 1966.

In March 1963 the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission was dissolved. Soon afterward a second group was created by the legislature called the Georgia State Study Commission. Its 11-person membership included eight State senators and three citizens, among whom were Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen and ex-Governor Vandiver. The Study Commission reviewed and approved its predecessor's transit plan. It also helped the Chamber of Commerce and the other Atlanta transit supporters convince the entire Georgia delegation to the U.S. Congress to support the UMTA legislation, which finally was enacted in 1964.

The extensive campaigning by regional and local groups led to approval of the second transit enabling referendum in the fall of 1964. Arguments in favor of the measure cited the need to qualify for the limited Federal funds that the new UMTA act would make available and the opportunity for each jurisdiction to withdraw before a transit program would be implemented. Instead of being presented as a statewide issue as in 1962, the proposition appeared on the ballots of only five metropolitan Atlanta counties in 1964. Approval from each county was necessary. It came, but barely. The margin was a slim 403 votes in Cobb County.

The passage of the referendum set the stage in the General Assembly for legislation to create a regional transit authority. As in 1962, the major issues were representation on the governing board


Walton County
Forsyth County
Gwinnett County
I-85
DeKalb County
I-20
Atlanta
Cherokee County
I-75
I-285
Cobb County
Douglas County
Paulding County

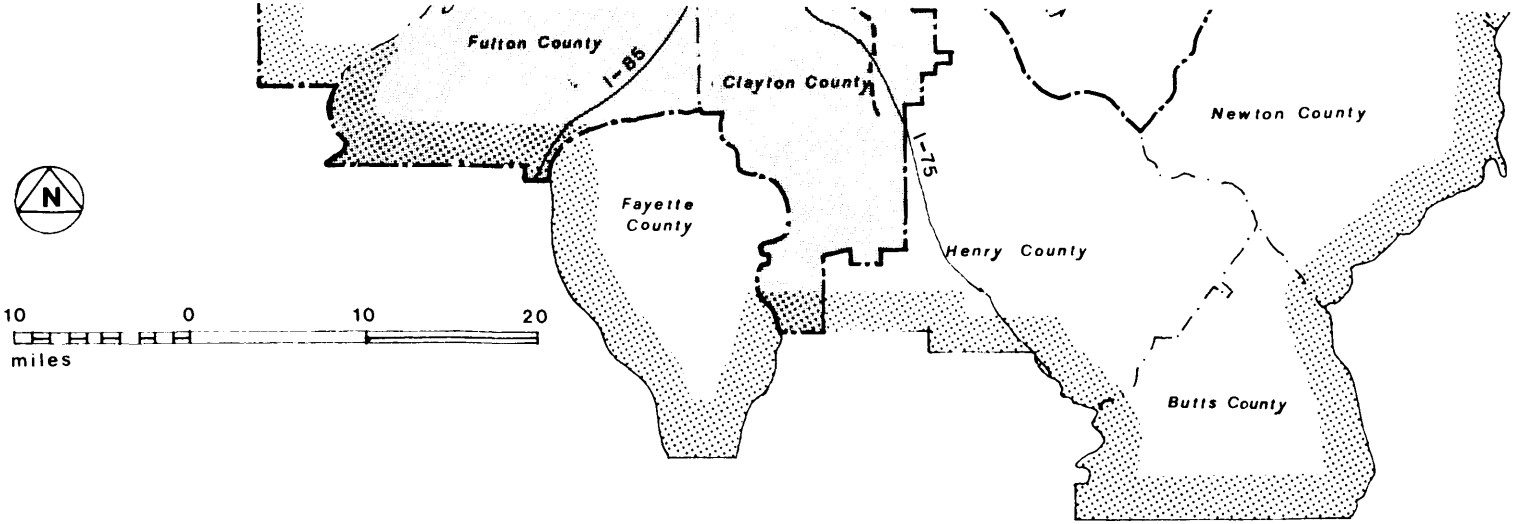


FIGURE 1: ATLANTA METROPOLITAN AREA

Atlanta Regional Commission
SMSA Boundary
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
County Boundary
Adopted Rapid Rail System
Proposed Extensions of Rapid Rail System

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes one or more center cities - each with a population of at least 50,000 within its political boundaries -- plus adjacent counties that are metropolitan in character and are economically and socially integrated with the center city.

and the powers local jursidictions would be willing to give up to the new agency of government. A compromise was reached in which the City of Atlanta relinquished some control on the board but could remain the dominating presence. The agency could sell bonds and operate a transit system but had neither taxing authority nor the power of eminent domain. Under these terms the Assembly approved the MARTA bill in March 1966.

Another referendum was required for counties to ratify participation in the new agency. The Committee of 100 was reconstituted to help the Planning Commission and the Chamber of Commerce with promotion. Voters were reassured that joining MARTA would not entail a long-term financial obligation. The MARTA charter required counties to hold public referenda before they could levy a tax to support a MARTA project. Four counties — De Kalb, Fulton, Clayton and Gwinnett–voted to participate in MARTA. Cobb County was the only jurisdiction to bow out.

The reasons for Cobb county's negative vote in this referendum, as in its 1964 predecessor, foreshadowed some of the objections that would defeat the proposed rapid rail system in 1968. Recent migrants to Cobb County from the city feared that rapid transit would hasten the movement of city blacks into the suburbs. The rural populace expressed a general unwillingness to contribute to a system they felt would not benefit them directly. In addition, there was an ideological conservative objection to what was judged to be excessive governmental spending. g

To summarize, three characteristics of the campaign to create MARTA help illuminate subsequent aspects of the transit planning process in Atlanta. First, the need for Federal aid was always in view. The availability of Federal financing is still an issue today. Second, the same nucleus of civic and political leaders shepherded the MARTA proposition from beginning to end. Their support continued to be an important factor in Atlanta's transit planning. Finally, the opposition to MARTA voiced during the mid-60's hinted at problems the transit plan would encounter at the polls in 1968.

DECISION TO REJECT THE RAIL
Rapid Transit Proposal in 1968

After MARTA was established, Atlanta could turn its attention once more to technical planning. In short order the consultants updated the 1962 plan and adopted a 40-mile system to present at the polls in 1968. However, adverse study findings in addition to shortcomings in MARTA's campaign led to defeat of the MARTA proposal. This section details the events leading up to that defeat.[10]

The first task MARTA faced after it was established was a review of the plan developed in 1962 for the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission. The Commission had hired the firm of Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade and Douglas **(PBQD) on the** basis of its work for the New York subway system and, in San Francisco, for BART. PBQD prepared a detailed engineering study proposing a 66-mile five-county rapid rail system projected to cost $292 million, The Stanford Research Institute, also involved in BART planning, followed this study with an implementation strategy.

In 1967 MARTA, working as before through the staff of the Planning Commission, hired Parsons, . Brinkerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel to update the 1962 study in light of the Planning Commission's new population and employment forecasts. The PB-T-B consortium had first joined forces as the principal engineering consultants for BART; their work for MARTA was supported by a financial analysis prepared by Hammer, Greene, Siler, Inc., Few significant changes were made in the alinement and extent of the 1962 transit plan. The most important difference between the 1962 and 1967 proposals was cost. The 1967 report proposed a 54-mile four-county system, 12 miles shorter than its predecessor but some $190 million more expensive. The addition of an Ii-mile segment in Cobb County (which was beyond MARTA's jurisdiction) would have raised the total to over half a billion dollars.

Conservative fears about the cost of the transit proposal were behind a report called *Rapid Busways* that challenged the ARMPC/MARTA plan. The report was commissioned by Robert Somerville of Atlanta Transit System (ATS) and prepared by Simpson & Curtin, the same consultants who developed the ATS 1960 plan, *Rapid Atlanta. Rapid Busways* called for a 32-mile network of exclusive busways, at a projected cost of $52 million, as an "interim" approach to Atlanta's transit needs.

[9] **Johnson, op. cit.**

[10] **Fo,a detailed analysis of these events and the 1968 bond vote, see** Transportation Politics in Atlanta: *The* Mass Transit Bond *Referendum of 1968,* **Matthew Coogan et. al., Cambridge, Mass. 1970.**

Busways were to be built on existing railroad rights-of-way in a number of MARTA corridors. Although the report did project that the busways could be converted to rapid rail, it built a case for busways as a permanent solution. Some observers speculate that ATS was guarding its own interests in two ways: by asserting the superior service characteristics of busways versus a predominantly rail system, and by arguing for action that would increase its assets in preparation for the inevitable takeover of the private bus company by MARTA.

Regardless of the motives behind the report *Rapid Busways* initiated a substantial controversy. MARTA rejected its conclusions after a hasty 3-week review. 1n December 1967 a faction of the Board of Aldermen led by conservative Everett Millikin called for a comparative study to lay the issue to rest. Soon afterward, the policy committee of the Atlanta Area Transportation Study, made up of the Georgia State Highway Department, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Agency, and MARTA, decided to study busways in the context of preparing a balanced, long-range transportation plan for the region.

Pressure from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) was another factor contributing to the decision to begin the multimodal review. One of UMTA'S guidelines for capital grant applicants required transit proposals to be part of long-range, areawide transportation planning covering both transit and highways. The Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS) theoretically was responsible for highway-transit coordination, but in fact AATS dealt primarily with highways while MARTA focused exclusively on transit.

To meet the UMTA requirement and to resolve the busway-rail controversy, the AATS policy committee hired Alan M. Voorhees & Associates in February 1968. The Voorhees recommendations were not ready in time for the 1968 referendum, although a preliminary report stated that the annual costs of a rapid rail system and a busways system were not much different. The incomplete status of the Voorhees study was a major plank in the campaign by MARTA critics to defeat the 1968 transit proposal in the referendum.

In the meantime MARTA had published another study, a major analysis of the effects on Iand use of the creation of a rapid transit system. This study, called *The impact of Rapid Transit on Metropolitan Atlanta,* analyzed the system's effects on community facilities, the low-income population, displacement of families and businesses, and the existing metropolitan circulation system. The report, the first UMTA-sponsored study of its type, was prepared by Eric Hill Associates of Atlanta and Winston-Salem, N. C., and was released in March 1968.

The transit impact report listed ways MARTA could use its power to bring about a major improvement in the environment of Atlanta. It recommended undertaking a broad analysis of the system's benefits, the preparation of development plans for each of the stations, and close coordination of the rapid transit system planning with the city's urban renewal program. The report also suggested extending the system to serve low-income neighborhoods. The impact study laid the groundwork for the station area development impact studies and plans that began after 1971.

As work progressed on the impact study and the Voorhees transportation study, MARTA took steps toward selecting a system to bring to public referendum. After the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission transmitted the 1967 64-mile system to MARTA, the transit agency chose a 44-mile portion for preliminary engineering. Subsequently, in light of public hearings, the plan was modified and a 40.3-mile system adopted.

The report outlining this 40-mile system was not published until September 1968. At that time, the decision on whether or not to go to the polls was further complicated by a last-minute revision of the financing plan, adjusting cost estimates upward according to a more conservative inflation estimate. This revision combined with disagreements between Atlanta and suburban jurisdictions over apportionment of the costs to delay the formal decision to take the transit proposal to the voters until the beginning of October—little more than a month before election day.

The defeat of the MARTA bond issue by a narrow margin in **1968** involved complex reactions of different political groups. One important element was the decision by local transit unions and labor leaders in general to campaign against MARTA's proposal because it did not cite collective bargaining provisions included in Federal law. In addition, there were other political problems with other groups. Conservatives called the plan fiscally irresponsible. Opposition to the use of the property tax was strong among lower-income as well as

suburban homeowners. Voters in outlying jurisdictions felt that the City of Atlanta would get the lion's share of the benefits from the system. Atlanta's black community complained it had not been involved in the planning and would not receive adequate service. Some analysts also argue that local officials from the metropolitan area were not adequately involved and that the publicity campaign for transit was handled poorly.

The fragmentation of support in City Hall and the Chamber of Commerce had been perhaps the most telling harbinger of the defeat to come. Robert Sommerfield had been solidly behind Atlanta's transit plans prior to commissioning *Rapid Busways.* The dispute created by this report, and the unfinished status of the Voorhees study that was designed to resolve that dispute, raised doubts among some public officials who had once been strong supporters. Alderman Everett Millikin was a member of the early Rapid Transit Steering Committee, but he vigorously opposed the transit proposal in 1968 and financed an advertising campaign against it. 11 Perhaps the most critical loss was Ivan Allen, Atlanta's mayor and one of the initiators of rapid transit planning in Atlanta. Allen did not directly oppose the referendum proposition, but his campaigning was unenthusiastic.

MARTA had fared poorly in the General Assembly during this same period. A bill containing a number of amendments to the MARTA Act was tabled in 1967 on the strength of opposition from Fulton County and Atlanta delegates. This "omnibus bill" would have granted to MARTA the power of eminent domain and a range of additional advantages. The bill's foes argued chiefly that MARTA had not included local governments in drafting the proposals.

In trying to rectify this shortcoming in 1968, MARTA found it could not gain Alderman Millikin's support for the omnibus legislation until the eminent domain clause had been withdrawn. Negotiation proved futile; in the end Governor Lester Maddox vetoed the bill on the grounds that it was fiscally irresponsible.

The fact that there was a debate at all in the General Assembly was more important than the arguments that were raised. The publicity helped reinforce the doubts that were already being heard closer to home and, indirectly, contributed to the defeat of the MARTA proposals in referendum.

DECISION TO APPROVE THE RAPID RAIL TRANSIT PROPOSAL IN 1971

Between 1968 and 1971 MARTA applied some of the lessons of the first referendum failure. Changes in the planning process and the transit program combined with changes in the political context in Atlanta to lead to victory when the transit issue was returned for a new referendum vote in November 1971.

In an important step, MARTA enlisted the support of labor by amending the MARTA legislation with collective bargaining provisions. In addition, Atlanta's Mayor Massell appointed the chairman of the central labor council to be vice chairman of the MARTA board. The conciliations to labor were an important factor in the success of the transit proposal in the 1971 election.

Another significant factor was the strong campaign MARTA mounted to draw both blacks and public officials into the planning process after 1968. A third black was appointed to MARTA's board in 1971, when the replanning program began in earnest. The black representation on the MARTA Citizen Advisory Council also was increased. MARTA conducted special meetings for officials from participating governments. A series of public meetings and hearings also were held to determine community needs and expectations. Some observers have argued that the involvement of citizens and local officials was more cosmetic than substantive, although the meetings did lead to modifications in the proposed system. The new approach achieved MARTA's goal—it helped swing black communities and suburban officials to support of the rapid rail proposal.

MARTA also agreed to improve transit service to black neighborhoods. The Voorhees study for the Atlanta Area Transportation Study concluded that service should be provided to Model Cities housing at Perry Homes via the Proctor Creek spur off the west line. (The Proctor Creek route had first been officially proposed by the impact study in 1968.) The Voorhees cost analysis showed that express bus in the east-west and Proctor Creek corridors would provide equivalent service at a total price somewhat less than rapid rail. However, bus

11 Millikin was a retired oil company executive, and critics alleged his anti MARTA campaign was financed by oil money.

service was widely regarded by the public to be second rate. In the face of charges that it would be providing second-class service for second-class citizens—the blacks and poor—MARTA made a political decision to go to rail in the east-west corridor.12 PB-T-B's preliminary engineering studies showed that express bus costs would match rail if greater right-of-way and construction standards were assumed. This language was incorporated in the final Voorhees report published in January 1971.

The best selling points in the transit package presented to voters in 1971 were not the rapid rail proposals. The plan called for short-range bus service improvements in addition to the long-range rapid rail scheme. Instead of the unpopular property tax, a sales tax was to be used for financing the local contribution toward the cost of implementing the plan. One of the key provisions in these efforts to get black support for the system despite the regressive character of the sales tax was to peg the fares of the bus system at 15 cents for 7 years. 13

The 15-cent fare illustrates better than any other part of MARTA's 1971 transit package the changing balance of power within Atlanta's political community. The election of 1969 installed the first mayor in decades who was not part of Atlanta's business-oriented power structure. Sam Massell, the new mayor, was Jewish, and his vice-mayor, Maynard Jackson, was a black. Masse{l's predecessor, Ivan Allen, had been an important figure in the transit effort since his days as chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and his subsequent election to mayor in 1961. As a businessman, Allen had strengthened the base of support for transit by building ties with the business leaders. At the same time, his position among the power elite was reflected in a transit program that alienated the blacks and inner city Atlantans. The new liberal leadership in 1971 backed a transit improvement program tailored to benefit lower-income communities as well as suburban commuters and shoppers, who were the main concerns of the businessmen. As a result, a new list of community organizations joined the traditional civic groups—the Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlanta Progress, and other business/civic organizations—in support of a rapid rail system for Atlanta.

The plan MARTA sent to the polls in November 1971 showed 56.2 miles of rapid rail routes in four counties and 14,4 miles of dual lane busway. Voters in Clayton and Gwinnett counties defeated the proposition soundly. They may have been reacting to the fact that only 9 miles of the rapid rail transit would have served these two suburban counties. Affluent De Kalb County voted in favor. In Fulton County a recount showed the margin of approval to be a bare 400 votes.14 It was a narrowly won victory. Had either Fulton or De Kalb county turned the proposition down, the rail transit plan would have been doomed.

The 1971 vote of support represented a triumph for Atlanta city interests. In fact, the way the ballots were tabulated favored the city vote. In 1968 the returns from Fulton and De Kalb counties were counted in three groups: residents of the city proper, residents of Fulton County outside the city, and residents of De Kalb County outside the city. In 1971 the tabulation followed county lines only, and the city vote was counted in the totals for Fulton and De Kalb counties. This accounting allowed yes votes from Atlanta proper, most of which is in Fulton County, to be tabulated against no votes from the suburban part of Fulton County. As it turned out, the change in the tabulation procedure may have been the key to the transit victory. Residents of the older parts of Fulton County outside the center city opposed the issue, while the strongest support came from the city itself.15

12 The Proctor "Street line remained a busway proposal until after the 1968 referendum, when public pressure succeeded in convincing MARTA to change to rail.

13 The plan permitted fares to be raised 5 cents per year to a X)-cent maximum after 7 years. In 1981 the sales tax would drop to ½ cent, and fares would be set at a rate that would cover half of the operating expenses.

14 Results of the 1971 transit referendum in Atlanta (prior to the Fulton County recount, which narrowed the margin of victory to 400 votes):

County	Yes	No	Percent Yes
Fulton	55,736	53,725	51
De Kalb	39,441	36,100	52
Clayton	3,300	11,147	23
Gwinnett	2,500	9,506	21

Source: Malcolm Getz, The Incidence of Urban Transit in Atlanta, UMTA-sponsored urban transportation and urban affairs project, Atlanta University School of Business Administration, 1973.

15 Ibid., p. 32.

PROGRESS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING THE RAPID TRANSIT PLAN

After citizens voted approval in the 1971 referendum, MARTA turned its attention to readying the transit system for construction. In the course of this period of final design, MARTA has experienced a variety of problems, most of which are related to finances and to acceptance of the system plans at the neighborhood level.

Many of the issues have been addressed by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC). MARTOC was created by the Georgia General Assembly in June 1973 to monitor MARTA's fiscal activities. The joint legislative committee has sponsored legislation considered to be in MARTA's interest and thus is an active participant in MARTA matters as well as a relatively objective observer.

The most critical issue facing MARTA involved obtaining the Federal share for construction of the rail transit system. Since the referendum, the construction cost has risen from $1.3 billion to over $2 billion as a result of delays and costly additions to the system made since the 1971 vote. The expected figure for Federal assistance has risen with the rise in the estimated cost and as the ceiling on the Federal share went from 66-2/3 percent to 80 percent.

As of now, Atlanta has received $200 million from UMTA and in May 1975 was promised an additional $600 million. Although this represents over 10 percent of the total UMTA budget for capital assistance, it is considerably less than the full Federal support Atlanta has counted on since the earliest days of planning, an assumption based on alleged promises from John Volpe while he was Secretary of Transportation. Therefore, many Atlantans have been surprised and distressed at the $800 million ceiling UMTA has now set; this is enough money to build only 13.7 miles of the proposed 54-mile system approved in referendum in 1971 (assuming an 80 percent Federal-local share ratio). An additional disappointment came on the heels of UMTA'S first announcement when the Federal agency turned down MARTA's request for an extra $200 million to add 4.7 miles to the 13,7-mile segment.

Publicly MARTA has welcomed the smaller level of Federal aid, saying that half a loaf is better than none (13.7 miles is slightly more than half the length of the 26-mile system MARTA previously had identified as a core system). MARTA figures that 10 percent of the total UMTA assistance to U.S. cities is a fairly hefty share, even if it will buy only 13.7 miles of rapid transit. However, reaction in Atlanta has been strong. One publisher whose papers strongly supported MARTA in the 1971 referendum said, "I am just discouraged by the slowness and the increased cost. I think a referendum on MARTA today would fail 2 to 1. I feel guilty because [my newspapers] supported MARTA. We would still support it, but we would not take the leading position we did."[16]

MARTA's financial woes are compounded by the weakness of its local financing. The revenues from the 1 percent sales tax in the last fiscal year rose less than 1 percent, whereas MARTA had budgeted for a 10 percent increase. And MARTA has hinted that it might be forced to raise the 15-cent bus fare. MARTA's general manager Alan Kiepper said, "If we are faced with a situation where we have to make a choice between reducing service and raising the fare, it would seem to me that the only choice would be to raise the fare. "[17]

In the meantime, MARTA has been making progress toward construction. Land has been acquired and construction has been scheduled along much of the east-west corridor between Hightower and Avondale. The plans have received a mixed welcome at the neighborhood level. After the referendum MARTA commissioned an assessment of the environmental impact of the rail transit system. Following this step MARTA, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC),[18] and the City of Atlanta began to collaborate on a procedure for making station area development plans. The station area planning process has been more successful at some sites than at others. In some areas citizens have taken MARTA to court to demand environmental impact reviews where station plans have been changed since the referendum.

MARTA hopes to have service on the east line of the rapid rail system by 1979. However, MARTA still faces severe problems ahead as it tries to match inelastic Federal funds with spiraling costs. One current dispute centers around the length of time

[16] **"Atlanta's Transit Trauma,"** Business **Week, August 18,1975.**
[17] Ibid.
[18] **In 1971 the Atlanta Regional Commission was created to replace the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission.**

that transit construction will disrupt traffic on the main business street, Peachtree Street. MARTA always has planned to use a "cut-and-cover" method of construction. There has been an uproar, however, since the business community found that some sections of Peachtree Street would not be covered for up to 2-1/2 years, and therefore would be closed to business. This issue has not been resolved. MARTA points out that its proposed method is the cheapest available, while some elements of the business community predict widespread bankruptcy of downtown businesses unless an expensive tunneling technique is used instead of cut-and-cover construction.

Chronology of the Transit Planning Process

1950 Atlanta's Metropolitan Planning Commission published *Up Ahead,* a regional plan that recognized a need for transit in the long range.

1954 An update of the **1950** Metropolitan Planning Commission plan called NOW@ Tomorrow noted the need for rapid transit "within a few years. "

1959 The Metropolitan Planning Commission published two expressway policy reports, "Access to Central Atlanta" and "Crosstown and Bypass Expressway s," recommending that transit planning start immediately.

1960 In August, Atlanta's private transit company, the Atlanta Transit System, released Rapid *Ailanta,* proposing a $59 million 16-mile rapid transit system on existing rail rights-of-way. Downtown distribution would be provided with a "carveyor" conveyor-type, second-level system. A self-supporting transit authority was proposed to build and own thes system, with Atlanta Transit System contracted as operations manager.

In September, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (a five-county agency that replaced the Metropolitan Planning Commission in **1960)** issued a discussion report, What *You Should Know About Rapid Transit.* Forty community meetings followed asking for public input in developing the forthcoming transit plan, due one year later.

1961 In June, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission published the *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan—Rapid Transit,* calling for a 60-mile, 32-station, $215 million system. The plan recommended creation of a regional transit authority.

A regional conference of civic and elected leaders hosted by Georgia Governor Ernest Vandiver in November created a regional Rapid Transit Steering Committee to pursue transit-enabling legislation in the Georgia General Assembly,

1962 In April, the legislature created the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission (MATSC) to undertake a study program to report the need, advisability, and economic feasibility of rapid mass transportation of passengers. MATSC hired Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas to plan.

In November, an amendment to the State constitution to allow the Georgia legislature to delegate transit planning and operating authority to cities and counties was defeated in a statewide referendum.

In December, MATSC published its report, *A Plan and Program of Rapid Transit for the Atlanta Metropolitan Region.* The report recommended a 66-mile, five-county rail system at a cost of **$292,000,000.**

1963 In January, Atlanta's transit leaders formed the Rapid Transit Committee of 100 to undertake a full-scale public relations campaign promoting rapid transit.

In March, the Georgia legislature created the Georgia State Study Commission on Rapid Transit to work on behalf of rapid transit for Atlanta after the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission disbanded.

1964 In November, an amendment to the State constitution enabling Atlanta to plan and operate mass transit **was** approved in referendum. Unlike the **1962** situation when a statewide referendum was held, in 1964 the issue was submitted to Atlanta region voters only.

1965 In March, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Act passed the

Georgia State legislature. The MARTA Act created a regional authority but gave no powers of taxation or eminent domain.

In June, local referenda were held to ratify participation in MARTA. Fulton, De Kalb, Clayton and Gwinnett Counties voted to participate in MARTA; only Cobb County elected to stay out.

1966 MARTA, created by Georgia legislature in March 1965, began operating in January.

1967 In May, the Atlanta Transit System under president Robert Somerville issued a report recommending a 32-mile network of exclusive busways to provide "interim" transit service until completion of rail transit construction. MARTA rejected the proposal after a hasty 3-week review.

Also that spring the General Assembly defeated a set of legislative amendments to the MARTA Act that would have eased financing of the system.

In September, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, on behalf of MARTA, published an update of the 1962 rail transit plan called *Rapid Transit for Metropolitan Atlanta. The* author was the consortium Pars ons, Brinckerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel. The plan recommended a 54-mile, four-county rail system plus an n-mile future extension into Cobb County at a total cost of $421 million.

1968 In January, the newly reconstituted Policy Committee of the Atlanta Area Transportation Study hired Alan M. Voorhees & Associates to develop a comprehensive, long-range regional transportation plan. The study was intended to resolve the busway versus rail controversy generated by the *Rapid Busways* proposal. It was also designed to comply with UMTA requirements.

In March, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission published The *Impactvzpacf of Rapid Transit on Atalnta,* The UMTA-sponsored study analyzed the effects the rapid transit proposal would have on land use.

In April, an amendment to simplify and strengthen the MARTA Act passed the Georgia General Assembly **150** to 51 and was vetoed by Governor Lester G. Maddox.

In November, MARTA presented a 40.3-mile, four-county $750 million transit proposal to Atlanta region voters, over 55 percent of whom voted no.

1969 In April, the Voorhees team submitted its recommendations to the Policy Committee of the AATS, the organization originally created to coordinate transportation planning in the region. The draft plan called for a $475 million package consisting of 10 miles of rapid rail, 54 miles of busways, new expressways, and street improvements.

1n May, the AATS Policy Committee designated the Voorhees report as the guide for all agencies to use in developing priorities and implementation plans, and requested MARTA and the State Highway Department to take the lead in initiating studies that would enable the AATS Policy Committee to reach decisions on priorities, implementation, and financing.

In August, the MARTA board adopted a 2-year work program that included further work on the Voorhees report, refinement of an adopted system in the same detail as the **1968** plan, a new financial plan, and a public information program.

In October, MARTA completed a study on the possible use of existing railroad tracks for interim commuter service. The study found that, while the concept was technically possible, the many grade crossings, side-tracks, existing train schedules, slow speeds, and high operating costs ruled out any such interim service.

1970 In January, the AATS Policy Committee rejected the Voorhees study proposal to put busways in the east-west corridor.

In October, MARTA formally declared its intention to acquire the Atlanta

Transit System as early as possible under terms to be mutually negotiated.

1971 In January, the final Voorhees report, *Development and Evaluation of a Recommended 'Transportation System for the Atalnta Region,* was published. The report said both rail and bus could provide the needed service on the east-west line; they would attract equal ridership; and fixed costs for bus would equal those for rail if three bus lanes were built in accordance with MARTA engineering standards.

In March, Governor Jimmy Carter signed three transit bills passed by the General Assembly. One bill amended the Georgia sales tax law to permit a local sales and use tax for rapid transit purposes; a second bill authorized a 1 percent local sales and use tax in metropolitan Atlanta for rapid transit purposes; and the third bill modified and clarified certain provisions in the original MARTA Act.

In August, MARTA adopted a rapid transit proposal outlined in the Parsons, Brinckerhoff-Tudor- Bechtel report called *Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Plan* published in September. The plan proposed **56** miles of rapid rail, 14 miles of busways, and 1,530 route miles of surface bus operations at a total cost of $1.3 billion.

In the November referendum, De Kalb and Fulton county voters authorized a 1-cent increase in the sales tax to implement the transit plan and to make improvements in the highway system. The key selling point was the provision to reduce bus fares from **40** cents to 15 cents.

1972 1n February, MARTA purchased the Atlanta Transit System for $12.8 million.

In March, the City of Atlanta adopted a set of goals, policies, and development objectives for MARTA station areas.

In November, MARTA released a draft Environmental Impact Statement assessing the transit system. MARTA claims the EIS process, the first for an UMTA project, delayed its schedule by 1 year.

1973 In May, the City of Atlanta Planning Department published the *Urban Framework Concept Plan,* which laid forth the process the city would follow in station area development planning.

In June, the Georgia General Assembly created the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee.

1974 MARTA continued final design on core portions of the rail system.

1975 Groundbreaking took place in February.

In May, UMTA offered $600 million contract authority to MARTA for a 6-year period, pending Congressional approval in appropriations hearings. Because this sum (plus $200 million in earlier capital grants) will build only 13.7 miles of rapid rail, MARTA requested an additional **$200** million. In June UMTA denied the request.

Assessment of the Planning and Decisionmaking Process

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Atlanta has taken important steps toward creating an effective institutional structure for regional transportation planning. 19 The tradition of control by a business elite has given way to a more responsive approach to government. A regional planning agency has been given the means to coordinate all modes of transportation planning with regional comprehensive planning. Local jurisdictions are plugged into transportation/land use planning through studies of the development impact of future transit stations. A special institution in the legislature allows Atlanta State transit planning to be monitored from a statewide perspective. The most important shortcoming in Atlanta's institutional arrangement is that the modal agencies (MARTA and GDOT) negotiate decisions primarily within the forum of the transportation subcommittee of the regional planning agency, out of the public view.

Forum for Decisionmaking

The adequacy of the decisionmaking forum has improved significantly over the 15-year period of transit planning in Atlanta. In the beginning, transit decisionmaking took place outside official channels because there were none. Since then a comparatively well-integrated regional forum has been created. Rivalry between modal agencies has diminished considerably in recent years. Perhaps most importantly, transit planning in Atlanta is still distinguished by the relatively close relationship between regional comprehensive planning and transportation planning.

In the early 1960's Georgia State law forbade any local or regional public agency to finance transit studies without an enabling amendment to the State constitution. (The transit plan produced by the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission was authorized because it was an element of the regional comprehensive plan. 20) The stage was thus set in the beginning for private sector organizations to dominate the planning process.

After local officials, their supporters from downtown Atlanta civic "groups, and the Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Planning Commission decided to pursue transit seriously, the decisionmaking forum for several years was fragmented between the State legislature, ARMPC, and the civic leaders. The Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission reported to the legislature but turned over technical responsibilities to ARMPC. A number of special organizationszl were created to bring together the public and private leaders who were taking an active interest in transit.

The establishment of MARTA was an important step toward informed regional decisionmaking. Technical planning functions were still handled by ARMPC, but MARTA's board of representatives from jurisdictions in the region had final say on policy. The agency could receive and dispense funds, although it was not empowered with taxing authority or the right of eminent domain.

MARTA provided a transit decisionmaking forum, but an effective comprehensive transportation planning institution still was lacking. The Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS) was created in **1965** to take responsibility for coordinating the transportation planning in the region, but it concentrated on highway work. Its funds came from the State Highway Department (SHD). After MARTA came on the scene, the AATS Policy Committee was reconstituted to include MARTA as well as representatives from regional jurisdictions, SHD, and ARMPC. The Policy Committee's mission to improve cooperation and coordination among the organizations responsible for transportation planning, however, was only partially successful.

19 Frank C. Colcord, Jr, and Steven M. Polan have published a careful analysis of Atlanta's institutional arrangements for transportation planning in Urban Transportation *Decisionmaking: Atlanta* Case *Study,* U.S. Department of Transportation, September 1974.

20 *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit,* Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, June 1961.

21 Joint Steering Committee, 1961; Committee of 100, 1962.

SHD and MARTA continued to make decisions outside the new forum. For example, in 1968 MARTA decided to test the transit proposal at the polls before the Policy Committee's review (the Voorhees study) of regional transportation planning was complete. ARMPC lacked the, stature to assume its logical role as arbiter in such matters. ARMPC was run by appointed businessmen, had no regional budget, and never attained credibility y as **a** power to be reckoned with,

The new regional organization created by the General Assembly in 1971 was designed to provide a truly multimodal forum for transportation policymaking. The Atlanta Regional Commission is designated the 3-C organization and the A-95 review agency in the region. 22 To date ARC has functioned fairly well as a comprehensive regional planning body with responsibility for transportation.

Nevertheless, critics have noted ARC's shortcomings. First, there is considerable competition within ARC for the power to make transportation decisions. The procedure for shaping transportation policy was established in a tripartite (MARTA, GDOT, ARC) agreement at the time the AATS was terminated and ARC established. The process, called the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program (ARTPP), was recently amended to include Atlanta's mayor and the commission chairmen of the seven ARC counties. Its embodiment is the Transportation Policy Subcommittee (TPS) of ARC. In theory all policy decisions are made in this subcommittee and subjected to review by the Community Development Planning Liaison Committee, one of the three subject area committees to which ARC board members are assigned.23 Members of the transportation subgroup of the Community Development Planning Citizen Advisory Council also review TPS recommendations. The ARC Board of Commissioners gives a final review and is designated to arbitrate when the recommendations of the subgroups disagree.

In practice the TPS, not ARC, has provided the forum for most policymaking. Disagreements are usually worked out in TPS rather than at the ARC board level. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Action Plan lends legitimacy to this practice by stating that TPS has ultimate decisionmaking authority.

ARC's board reviews the annual transportation work program and sets priorities among its elements. To date MARTA and GDOT have not strictly followed the priorities ARC had set. One reason ARC does not dominate may be that it still has not published its updated regional development guide. (The plan was due in summer 1975.) The guide is expected to provide a rationale for priority ordering and, once priorities are drawn up, a logic for enforcing them.

Another more important explanation for ARC's back-seat role is the tradition of mutual backscratching that is well established in Atlanta transportation politics. MARTA usually has supported GDOT'S (and predecessor SDH'S) highway initiatives, just as the highway organizations have stood behind transit. No dispute between the two modal agencies has surfaced as a major public issue, in spite of internal policy and technical disputes over the years. ARC usually goes along with both MARTA and GDOT, and neither of the latter agencies tends to welcome ARC suggestions for change when they do come.

In practice, the ARC-ARTPP process has operated smoothly. The ARC agency is legislatively mandated, financed by regional levy, and is generally a more credible institution than its predecessor. Although modal biases have shown up in decisionmaking from time to time, the structure offers the distinct advantage of bringing transportation decisionmaking under the same roof as land use planning. ARC has taken the lead in development planning around future rail transit stations. Theoretically, the ARC board will begin measuring transportation proposals against land use goals as soon as the regional development guide is completed. The most significant—and potentially debilitating—limit to ARC's power to control land use development is its lack of authority to review local zoning regulations.

Accountability of Decisionmakers

Over the years the individuals responsible for transit decisionmaking in Atlanta have become more directly accountable for their actions. Few of the early transit decisionmakers in Atlanta officially represented the region's citizens. The situation began to change in the 1960's, and since 1971 the institutional structure has involved decision makers whose authority to make decisions on behalf of a particular group of citizens is comparatively clearly designated,

22 See footnotes **3, 4 p. 8.**

23 The others **are** Health **and** Social **Services planning Liaison Committee and Governmental** Services Liaison Committee.

Nevertheless, two major issues involving accountability are inherent in Atlanta's institutional framework for transit decisionmaking. First, although decision making bodies are structured to encourage a regional point of view, individuals tend to represent the narrower political interests of the constituent jurisdictions. Second, because many decisions are negotiated in the Transportation Policy Subcommittee of the ARC, the process tends to be removed from the public view.

The business and civic leaders who led the drive for transit during the early 1960's were not directly accountable for their decisions. They were acting as private citizens. The Rapid Transit Steering Committee, whose members were officials of the area's political subdivisions, was the first organization to operate with clearly delegated authority and a degree of accountability. Members of the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission also bore a clearly described responsibility to the public by virtue of their appointment by local officials. Members of the ARMPC board were appointed businessmen; the ARMPC staff provided most of that agency's transit leadership.

Fair representation has been an issue in Atlanta transit planning since the beginning. Debate most often has focused on the appropriate composition of the regional transit authority. MARTA's ten board members are appointed by local officials. Office holders were ruled ineligible in order to minimize the influence of local politics on decisionmaking. Nevertheless, each member comes from and is associated with a particular county or the city of Atlanta. The State legislature, through the MARTA Overview Committee (MARTOC), is currently giving consideration to the advantages and disadvantages of a directly elected board, but no action is expected to be taken in the near term. MARTOC is behind a movement to increase the representation from De Kalb County on MARTA's board. At present six board members represent the city of Atlanta's interest—the four members appointed by the Mayor plus the two from Fulton County. De Kalb County accounts for 40 percent of MARTA's sales tax revenues but is represented by only two board members. Options that have been suggested for changing the balance include adding new De Kalb representatives to the board and replacing the existing delegates from Clayton and Gwinnett Counties with De Kalb representatives. Clayton and Gwinnett citizens voted against financing the MARTA rail system in the 1971 referendum and therefore do not participate in the transit improvement program; yet they retain voting representation on the MARTA board. The State legislature approved a compromise measure during the 1975 session to add one more De Kalb representative to the board. The bill was vetoed by the Governor on a technicality, but MARTOC expects the issue to arise again in **1976.**

MARTOC itself adds a degree of accountability to the transit planning process in Atlanta. It is a joint committee of State senators and representatives with a staff. In theory, MARTOC functions more as a watchdog for the public interest than as a body of officials directly accountable to Atlanta citizens. The enabling legislation requires only 4 of the 14 voting legislators that sit on MARTOC to be from the area of MARTA jurisdiction. However, all 11 of the appointed committee members~~ were chosen from among Atlanta area legislators due to political considerations.

MARTOC has exercised its ombudsman function in several ways. As noted, MARTOC is concerned with the accountability of the MARTA board. MARTOC also is monitoring the degree to which MARTA follows the advice of its consultants rather than its staff. MARTOC wants to keep the reins tight on PB-T-B to prevent further cost overruns and other difficulties. MARTOC'S concern has increased since the turnover in the MARTA board in November 1974. The old board tended to follow staff recommendations. The new board hopes to take a more active role in order to increase its responsiveness to the public. In early 1975 the board voted to side with PB-T-B against the MARTA staff on the critical issue of the automated train control system. The staff recommended semiautomation that could be upgraded to full automation when a large enough portion of the system was on line to justify the considerable extra cost. PB-T-B, developers of the control system, argued for full automation from the beginning. Although the board went on record in favor of the PB-T-B system, the recent decision to build a 13.7-mile trunk system instead of 26 miles inspired a change of heart. In June 1975 the board reversed itself and approved a semiautomated system for the initial rail segment.

24 The Governor appoints six members, the president of the senate appoints three, and the speaker of the house appoints two members; the remaining three members are chairmen of three committees, The lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house are ex officio members of MARTOC.

The structure of the ARC also gives rise to important accountability issues. The fact that most disagreements are worked out in the Transportation Policy Subcommittee of the ARC means that many important policy decisions take place behind the scenes. In addition, the fact that all members of the ARC's board of commissioners are either county and city officials or private citizens appointed by the elected officials jeopardizes the ARC's goal of offering a regional perspective. For in practice many of the board members bear allegiance to the jurisdictions that appoint them rather than to the regions as a whole. Therefore, to the extent that the transit policy is shaped in the ARC Transportation Policy Subcommittee, it is the product of decisionmakers with local and mode-oriented interests.

Public Involvement

The effectiveness of citizen participation has figured as a prominent issue in Atlanta transit planning since the preparations for the 1968 referendum. MARTA's failure to bring the public into the decisionmaking process except in a perfunctionary way was cited as a major reason for the defeat of the transit issue in 1968. Conversely, much of the credit for the 1971 success was attributed to MARTA's vigorous community relations campaign. Since 1971, however, a number of citizen groups have been expressing dissatisfaction with aspects of the MARTA program for public participation.

The dominating role of civic leaders in pre-1970 Atlanta transit planning does not imply involvement of the general public. To the contrary, most of the protransit interests were businessmen with a concern for upgrading Atlanta's business district. They were not transit consumers. 25

Planners waited until 1968 to initiate a formal process of citizen involvement. Even then there was no vehicle for citizen input provided by the ARMPC. MARTA had begun an informal public information and education program shortly after the agency was created in 1966. The approach used a monthly newsletter, slide shows, and speeches, but it reached an audience composed mostly of businessmen, civic leaders, and public figures—not the general public. MARTA scheduled the formal public hearings required by its enabling legislation to occur at the end of the planning process, after preliminary engineering had been done and the plans had been presented to local jurisdictions.

Twelve hearings were held in April and May of 1968. Citizen testimony at one of the hearings led to reconsideration of a route alternative and to an additional hearing on the segment in question. The opinions expressed resulted in a number of minor changes in the proposed system. However, no major changes, such as were recommended in the transit impact study, came about as a result of the hearings. Many blacks in particular were angered by being solicited for their views at such a late date.

The black community had been expressing growing dissatisfaction with the transit proposal as the 1968 election approached. Their complaints centered on their lack of involvement throughout the planning process and on the inadequate service to poor black neighborhoods. Blacks voiced disapproval as early as 1966, when the Summit Leadership Conference threatened to oppose MARTA unless service to black communities was improved. In spring 1968, after the transit impact study had been published, the Summit Leadership Conference reiterated its threat of nonsupport. Other criticisms were aimed at MARTA's minority hiring practices and the lack of representation on MARTA's board. (There was one black on the board at the time, a banker.) In October 1968 a number of black civic organizations, including the Summit Leadership Conference and the NAACP, jointed in public opposition to the transit proposal, arguing that their requests for changes had been ignored. Their constituencies agreed, and the MARTA issue was defeated in every precinct that had a black majority.

By 1971 MARTA had made significant improvements in its approach to public participation. A total of three blacks sat on the board. A minority hiring program had added blacks to the MARTA staff. The 60-person Citizens' Transportation Advisory Council mandated by law included 24 blacks, and MARTA staff periodically met with the council. As the year progressed MARTA began a wide-reaching community information campaign that included a great number of public forums and neighborhood meetings. A black public relations firm was hired to run the campaign. Overall,

25 They were in fact highway consumers. Transit was the key to strengthening downtown, but transit ranked second place below highways in the Chamber of Commerce's list of priority civic projects in 1960. Antihighway citizen activists have commented scathingly that the business community seemed to want transit service for their maids and uncontested new freeways for their own travel.

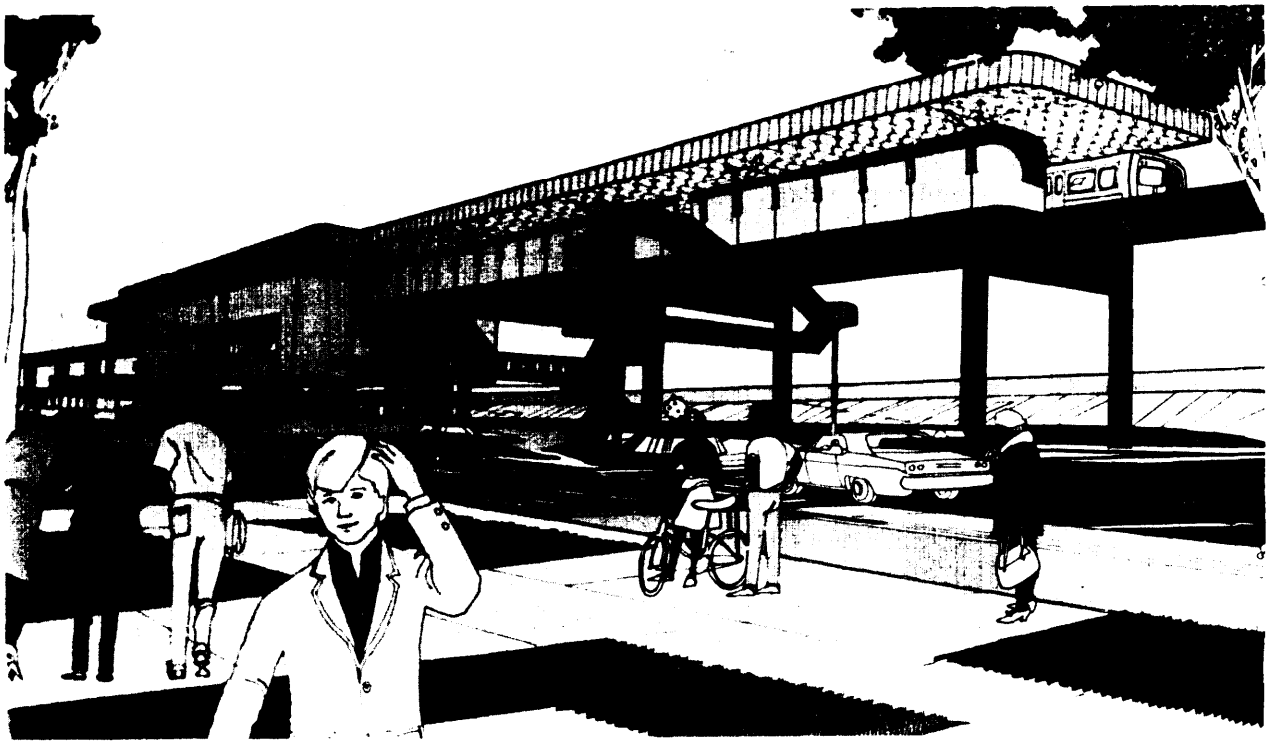
MARTA's more sensitive attitude toward blacks and the urban poor community in general—reflected in route and station changes, the short-term bus program, and the 15-cent fare as well as in progress within the citizen participation process—was an important ingredient in MARTA's success at the polls in 1971. The need to get support from this segment of the public is widely cited as the reason MARTA elected to keep rail service on the east-west corridor and to extend a link to the Perry Homes development.

Since 1971 MARTA's standing with neighborhood groups has lowered. Citizens who once gave hearty support to transit raise complaints as detailed plans are made to build in their neighborhoods. The situation is ironic, since MARTA appears to have grown increasingly responsive to local groups as the implementation process advances.

The Impact Council is one of the organized citizen groups bringing such charges. The Council, based at Atlanta University, acts as a citizens' advocate and referral service on questions of relocation. The Impact Council has been accused of being more concerned with confrontation with MARTA than with resolution of conflicts, but it acts as a forum for the low-income black community to voice its concerns.

Most of the controversy involves station area development. ARC has delegated responsibility for station area planning to local jurisdictions. In some areas the process has been well received to date, but it is being challenged in other areas. The Ashby Street Station on the west line is an example of a successful planning effort. A local politician with a grass roots constituency was the catalyst for a genuinely participatory process there. The drama that has unfolded around the Decatur Street Station illustrates a less happy situation. The Decatur "charrette"[26] of approximately 2 years ago was heralded as a successful application of a pioneering technique for melding consensus from the diverse group of individuals concerned with the fate of the Decatur Station and its neighborhood. Now the Decatur plan is tied up in three lawsuits

26 The charrette technique brings people with **a wide range of interests together in a marathon session to iron out differences.**



Artist's sketch of MARTA's Grant Street station

centering around the allegations that the city arranged for the charrette to be held in closed session and that it did not include residents and merchants whose homes and businesses will be taken.

This and other experiences have sullied MARTA's reputation for encouraging effective citizen involvement. In addition, Atlanta citizens have become concerned with the adequacy of the public liaison at ARC and other forums. ARC established a Citizen Transportation Advisory Task Force to channel public comments on transportation issues. The mechanism proved inadequate. The Task Force had been comprised of 30 citizens chosen by local officials. Some were establishment businessmen, others were neighborhood activists appointed for their interest in transportation issues; the two factions could not work well together. They were constrained by ARC from addressing some matters. The Task Force has been replaced by three advisory councils covering different " transportation-related subjects. Participants are appointed on the basis of a demonstrated interest in the issues to be addressed by each council.

TECHNICAL PLANNING WORK

The quality of the technical planning work in Atlanta is generally regarded as having been excellent for its time. Yet more often than not it came too early or too late to be optimally useful in guiding decisionmaking. The 1961 ARMPC planz~—an exception to this generalization—did help persuade policy makers decide to plan seriously for transit. The technical study that resulted, 28 however, came **6** years before the decision was made to implement a transit plan. The referendum vote in **1968** was held before the Voorhees alternatives study had reported conclusively whether rail was best. Ironically, when the technical and political processes finally coordinated in 1971, the technical information showed too little difference between the principal alternatives to be a persuasive factor in decisionmaking. In part this ambiguity was created out of political necessity.

Goals and Objectives

Atlanta began planning its transit system before formal goal-setting had become a conventional step in planning. Nevertheless, a number of goals were articulated from the beginning and were drawn upon to justify decisions if not to make them.

The fundamental goal in Atlanta transit planning has been the desire to reduce traffic overload on highways in the region. In addition, Atlanta's transit planners have embraced the objectives of channeling regional growth and enhancing the center city. The 1961 ARMPC study and its predecessors in the 1950's touched on all these points. By 1971 the summary version of the officially approved plan cites the same objectives—and adds explicit mention of the objective of improving mobility for transit dependents.

Since 1968 both MARTA and AATS have been able to direct their transportation planning efforts in light of a set of regional development goals. ARMPC adopted a list of goals in April 1968. Both MARTA and AATS have acknowledged their allegiance to several of these goals:29

- Encouragement of new growth that fits local and regional plans;
- Conservation of established areas;
- Clustering of new growth to avoid incompatible uses; and
- Encouragement of a balanced transportation system, allowing appropriate levels of accessibility y.

The AATS/Voorhees study process between **1968** and 1971 was performed in light of a series of "implicit" objectives, according to the final report. **so** The AATS work was partially supported by MARTA and undertook the most rigorous evaluation of transit proposals in the region. The AATS objectives were listed as:

- Serving the transit dependent;
- Providing a good highway system to all parts of the region within constraints of cost and community cohesion;

27 *Atlanta Region* Comprehension *Plan: Rapid* Transit, **Atlanta Region Metropolitan** Planning **Commission, June 1961.**

28 *A Plan and Program of* Rapid Transit *for* the *Atlanta Metropolitan Region,* Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission (**Parsons,** Brinkerhoff, **Quade & Douglas), December 1962.**

29 See AATS, *Development* and Evaluation *of* a *Recommended* Transportation System *for* the Atlanta Region, *1971; MARTA Draft* Respotlse—Guidelines *for* Capita/ *Grant Selection, 1972.*

30 AATS, *Development* and *Evaluation,* op. cit.

- Providing an alternative to the private automobile in order to reduce congestion and give access to the CBD; and
- Focusing highway and transit access to encourage development centers at transportation "nodes."

Neither AATS nor MARTA developed a formal procedure for using goals to assist in decision-making. The choices among alternatives were made on the basis of which alternative produced greatest patronage at least total cost rather than on whether it would achieve particular goals. Indirectly, however, the goals were incorporated in the decisionmaking process. Highest patronage would come from areas designated as growth centers, and both routes and stations were planned to serve as many of these centers as feasible.

The twin goals of reducing congestion and controlling growth also have come into play in the station area planning process. The City of Atlanta adopted a node growth/neighborhood preservation development policy in 1972. The city's policies included the following:

- Make maximum use of rapid transit to promote mobility and reduce congestion;
- Encourage multipurpose activity centers used day and night and discourage strip commercial development;
- Improve the urban environment through urban design; and
- Prohibit new industrial or commercial development near stations serving low- and medium-density residential neighborhoods.

These policies have guided the city planning department as it creates station area development plans.

Development and Evaluation of Alternatives

Until 1968 alternatives analysis in Atlanta transit planning was grounded more in public debate than in technical process. A conventional alternatives analysis was not published until 1971. That evaluation was sufficiently competent technically to compensate for the shortcomings of the past, although its findings were too ambiguous to guide decisionmaking clearly.

No formal testing of alternative transit systems was incorporated in ATS *Rapid Atlanta* or ARMPC *Rapid Transit* plans in 1961. The MATSC plan in 1962 briefly investigated improved bus service concepts and the use of commuter rail but rejected these options in favor of rapid rail. The first serious look at an alternative concept occurred when ATS commissioned its own transit study in 1967.

That study, *Rapid Busways,* called for exclusive busways along existing rail rights-of-way as an interim solution to Atlanta's transit needs. The report stated that about half of the guideways it proposed would later be converted to rail as part of the MARTA system. Yet the study also showed that express buses on exclusive rights-of-way could serve more people equally fast or faster than the proposed rail system. With this and similar statements *Rapid Busways* made a good enough case for building only busways—instead of rail—to interest several public groups in the idea. Thus the debate on alternatives began.

Support for the busways concept came from fiscal conservatives such as Alderman Millikin and a number of people in the Chamber of Commerce. An incipient rail versus highway controversy became an underlying issue, however. Robert Somerville, architect of *Rapid Busways* and head of the Atlanta Transit System bus company, had critized MARTA for opposing a balanced transportation approach. MARTA allegedly had not given thoughtful attention to feeder buses; a map in the MARTA public relations document *Rapid Transit Now* showed feeder bus routes where no streets existed. MARTA also demonstrated an apparent protransit bias by dismissing the *Rapid Busways* idea after a hasty 3-week review.

The *Busways* report was a contributing factor in the decision to commission the AATS comprehensive transportation study in 1967. consultant Alan M. Voorhees & Associates undertook a thorough evaluation of alternative system concepts that was not completed by the time of the 1968 referendum vote. This fact created the impression that MARTA was asking for public commitment to a plan that was not finished, and it thus helped bring the MARTA proposal to defeat.

The Voorhees/AATS 1971 final report called Development and Evaluation of a *Recommended Transportation System for fhe Atlanta Region* described the results of comparative evaluation of five basic transportation systems: (1) an expanded bus system using existing highways; (2) the 66-mile MARTA system presented in spring 1968; (3) a 31-mile system of

exclusive busways like the one proposed in *Rapid Busways; (4)* a 66-mile system using rail only in the north-south corridor and express bus elsewhere; (5) a **65-mile** busway system. These comprise a relatively broad range of alternatives for that time. None of the light rail or priority bus lane approaches that are popular today, however, were treated by the Voorhees study. Their absence is understandable. The streetcar era had passed too recently for light rail to be taken seriously. And at that time no precedent existed for giving buses priority over cars on the same right-of-way; the idea simply was not considered practical. 31

Political considerations did not enter the Voorhees process of selecting and evaluating alternatives, but they did influence the way MARTA used the Voorhees findings. The results of the Voorhees evaluation were first published in **1969. 32** That report recommended 54 miles of busway and 10 miles of rapid rail. The AATS Policy Committee designated the Voorhees report as the guide for all agencies to use in developing priorities and implementation plans. Meanwhile MARTA asked for further work from Voorhees before publishing the final report. Although MARTA hoped rail would look better this time, Voorhees continued to recommend busways for the east-west corridor in the draft of its final report. The draft was not widely circulated, and UMTA refers to it as the "suppressed report."

Although the draft was not in fact suppressed, its recommendations were changed allegedly under pressure from MARTA. The final text was more ambiguous on the bus-rail issue. MARTA argued busways need a third "breakdown" lane for safety reasons. The cost of the extra lane inflated the Voorhees' busway figures to more nearly approximate rail costs. The language of the Voorhees report was amended to say that both bus and rail could provide needed service on the east-west line; that buses would attract the same ridership as rail at a somewhat lower cost; but that the cost would be the same if greater construction and safety standards were adhered to for buses as shown in the MARTA/PB-T-B preliminary engineering report. Most observers agree the changes were motivated by political necessity. The black communities along the east-west line would not have supported a plan that offered them "second-class" bus service while giving whites "first-class" rail service.

MARTA drew heavily on the Voorhees alternatives evaluation when it applied for its first capital grant from UMTA.JJ In its application MARTA offered two reasons for its decision to drop its east-west busway concept. First, it pointed out that the Technical Coordinating Committee of ARC-ARTPPJQ had voted against busways and for rail in April **1970** because of restrictions to long-range service expansion and the technical problems incumbent in locating a large underground busway transfer in downtown Atlanta's narrow "gulch. " Second, MARTA explained that an all-rail trunk system (with busway feeders) was judged to be better than a mixed rail-bus concept because it (1) would require fewer transfers and hence would be "more functional and desirable'' 35; (2) would attract more patronage largely because of the transfer issue; and (3) was slightly less expensive per passenger. MARTA also presented as rejected alternatives a 1969 commuter rail study 36 and a 1971 analysis of the "no-build" alternative. 37 The alternatives package thus was relatively comprehensive and the comparative evaluation relatively convincing.

Following a November 1971 MARTA board resolution, MARTA (with ARC and representatives from local governments) undertook an environmental assessment of the already adopted system. The procedure followed requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of **1970** and therefore presented and evaluated alternatives to the proposed system at points where it was found

31 S[several] members of th[e] UMTA staff who were reviewing the technical process in Atlanta grew curious about the priority bus alternative. Using the Voorhees numbers, they adjusted the assumptions and got a rough estimate that total operating costs on the east-west corridor would have been 50 percent less if priority bus lanes had been substituted for the exclusive busway proposal.

32 *Summary of Highlights: Recommended Transportation Program,* Alan M. Voorhees & Associates, Inc., April 1969.

33 See *Draft* Response-G *uidelines for Capital Grant Selection,* Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, September 1972.

34 Th[e] Technical Coordinating Committee is comprised of technical staff representatives from ARC, MARTA, and DOT and should not be confused with its policymaking counterpart, the Transportation Policy Subcommittee.

35 MARTA *Draft* Response, op. cit., p. 96.

36 *Preliminary Study* Of *Commuter* Railroad Feasibility *for Atlanta Metropolitan* Region, MARTA, 1969.

37 *Benefits* to the Atlanta Metropolitan *Area from the Proposed Regional* Transportation Program, prepared for MARTA by Development Research Associates, December 1971.

to threaten significant environmental disruption. In fact, most alternatives discussed were recapitulations of the Voorhees alternatives analysis. The study identified few major environmental problems serious enough to call for devising new alternatives. Severe problems were found at only seven points of intrusion in areas of ecological value, and MARTA agreed to route changes at four of these points and to put lines underground in two other parks. With almost two-thirds of the system following existing railroad rights-of-way, the proposal was judged to threaten little damage to neighborhoods and community services or to historic sites. The environmental assessment did not challenge the overall plan and did not evaluate alternative route configurations or modes of transportation.

Financing and Implementation

Financing issues have influenced Atlanta's transit planning at several critical points since 1960. Chief among these issues have been (1) the difficulty of obtaining Federal capital assistance in recent years, (2) setbacks in guaranteeing the local share, and (3) escalating construction cost estimates. The net effect of these obstacles has been to scale down the first phase transit system to a skeletal 13.7 miles.

The Atlanta system will be the first major new rapid rail transit project to come on line with the aid of UMTA funds. Since the beginning of transit planning in Atlanta, the expectation of Federal money, and the difficulty in getting it, have influenced decision making.

As early as 1961 the ARMPC plan mentioned the Federal transit funding policies that were under consideration at that time. It compared the existing situation to the period shortly before enactment of the 1956 interstate highway legislation and stated that an "early policy breakthrough toward a similar Federal transit financing program is a distinct possibility." These statements were coupled with the assertion that the proposed system would require Federal and possibly State aid.

The hope of obtaining Federal aid continued to affect Atlanta's transit policy planning. One of the reasons for seeking the transit-enabling constitutional amendment in **1962** was to prepare the way for qualifying for the new Federal-aid program that was debated by Congress that year. The Urban Mass Transportation Assistance bill was defeated, and so was the State amendment. The need to qualify for Federal aid was offered again as a reason for backing the transit amendment when it came up for consideration in **1964.** This time the Federal program was a reality, enacted into law with a lobbying boost from Atlanta that converted the entire Georgia delegation on Capitol Hill to the side of transit. Voters in Atlanta were urged to support the enabling proposition so Atlanta could get in on the ground level when the limited new Federal money was parceled out.

Even without UMTA aid, Atlanta made good use of the Federal funds that could be obtained, The Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission in 1962 was supported by a HUD 701 grant—the only planning grant money at the time that was being used for transit purposes. Later, Atlanta lobbied to have a technical studies program appended to UMTA in 1965. Congress obliged, and the next year MARTA received UMTA'S first technical studies grant.

The most direct effect of Federal financing policy on the MARTA system has been and will continue to be exerted through the UMTA capital grants program. During the tenure of former DOT Secretary John Volpe, MARTA alleges it received assurances that UMTA would pay its full share of the system's cost. In early 1974 DOT began publicly backing away from its earlier position by suggesting it would not provide all the money MARTA wanted when MARTA asked for it.

The MARTA Overview Committee (MARTOC) of the Georgia State assembly launched an investigation to clarify the situation. MARTOC collected evidence of "solemn and repeated assurances from high officials in the Federal Government" 38 that MARTA could expect Federal capital assistance. Such "firm Federal commitments" guided MARTA's prereferendum promises and helped encourage local support. 39

In April 1975 UMTA put the issue to rest for the present, by committing $600 million out of its capital grant discretionary fund to the Atlanta system in the form of contract authority, pending Congressional approval of annual appropriations.

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38 *Report of the MARTA Overview Committee,* December 1974, p. 17.

39 **In, 1968, the lack of a firm Federal commitment to the MARTA system was one of the main issues raised by MARTA critics in the successful campaign to defeat the transit measure in referendum.**

The $600 million plus $200 million in capital grants already given to MARTA totaled more than 10 percent of UMTA'S discretionary capital grants program over the duration of the present legislation. 40 However, the offer falls $200 million short of the amount MARTA feels—and UMTA agrees—is necessary to build a well-functioning core system. With the 20 percent local share added, the UMTA funds will build only 13.7 miles of rapid transit. 41

In late June 1975 UMTA rejected MARTA's formal request for the additional $200 million. The agency offered "no prejudice" status to local money used for construction beyond the 13.7-mile trunk segment. If Congress were to provide new authorization, MARTA could ask for a new capital grant and, if UMTA approved the application, could credit the already-spent local funds toward the local share of the new grant. In turning down MARTA's request for a larger commitment, UMTA stressed its intention to put no more money into the 13.7-mile segment under any circumstances. MARTA will be forced to pay for any cost escalations (beyond the 8 percent inflation factor built into its estimates) with local resources.

Mustering these local resources has been MARTA's second major financing issue. Proposed money-raising mechanisms had an important impact on popular support in 1968 and 1971. Problems did not disappear after the 1971 referendum established a revenue source, however, and local financing questions are as critical today as ever.

Atlanta transit planners in the beginning aimed at a financing procedure that would assess the local contribution on a regional basis rather than depend only on contributions from jurisdictions. Early versions of MARTA legislation would have given the transit authority taxing power. Conservative politics prevailed, and MARTA got bonding authority. The local jurisdictions would participate by making a rapid transit contract to produce a given amount over a period of a year or longer. If the local contributions required a tax, they would have to hold a public referendum.

The 1968 referendum was technically a vote to approve a 35-year contract between each participating jurisdiction and MARTA. The contracts committed each jurisdiction to raise the property tax in order to pay off bonds that would be issued to finance transit construction. Several of the key factors in the failure of the referendum measure were related to financial considerations. First, the property tax increase was unpopular. Second, the nature of the referendum (authorization of a contract rather than a direct approval of a bond issue) required the total price over the 35-year period, including interest plus principal, to appear on the ballot. Usually voters are shown only the face value of the bonds, and the true cost of the system is thought to have dissuaded some of the voters. In addition, the insecurity about the Federal contribution played a role, as mentioned.

The relatively good showing of the transit issue in the 1971 referendum was aided by an important change in the financial plan. The sales tax was substituted for the property tax. Also, additional benefits—the bus improvement program and the 15-cent fare—were added to the rapid transit system to make the price more palatable.

Today MARTA is having difficulty meeting its 1971 promises with the revenue generated by the 1 percent sales tax increase approved in 1971. There are several causes for this problem. A large portion—over 40 percent—of the sales tax fund is being used to defer operating deficits. MARTA's ledgers reflect the nationwide picture of greatly increasing gaps between operating revenue and costs. As farebox returns dropped, a greater proportion of the sales tax than expected had to be diverted to pay the operating bills.

To protect the sales tax fund, the MARTA Overview Committee (MARTOC) sponsored legislation placing a ceiling of 50 percent on the amount of sales tax revenue that can be spent for operations. The measure was enacted in 1974. With operating deficits rising at an alarming rate in Atlanta as elsewhere, the 50 percent lid has created a ticklish problem. The operating expenditures are not yet bumping the ceiling; but at 40-44 percent monthly, they are claiming a growing portion of the sales tax revenues. The only alternative source of funding, if the ceiling is reached, is to increase fares. It is considered unlikely that the 50 percent limit itself would be lifted, because the legislature wants to guarantee a means for raising the local share of future project costs. The option of hiking fares,

40 Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974.

41 At 13.7 miles the north-south route can extend only as far north as the North Station; MARTA claims that extending the north route 4.7 miles to Lenox Station would improve patronage.

however, would go against MARTA's referendum promise to keep fares at 15 cents. MARTOC has reminded MARTA of its simultaneous commitment to implement both short-term and long-range transit improvements. Due to shortage of funds, portions of the short-range plan still have not been put into effect. Resolving this conflict is one of MARTA's most pressing responsibilities.

The recession also has played a role in the financial situation in Atlanta. Sales tax revenues grew only 1 percent last year, during which time MARTA had planned for a 10 percent rise. The situation is attributed to a decline in consumer purchasing, although the matter is being investigated by MARTOC.

The most important reason for MARTA's financial difficulties involves the unexpected increases in the cost of completing the long-range rapid transit system. The cost of the 60-miie system was pegged at $1.3 billion in 1971; it is now estimated to exceed $2 billion. MARTA says delays in the implementation schedule have caused the cost escalation. Federal requirements for an environmental impact assessment allegedly delayed MARTA's timetable over a year. Expensive additions to the system also contributed to the hike in cost.

Regardless of the accuracy of MARTA's allegations, delay and the consequent cost escalations comprise the third major financial issue that has affected the transit decision making. In this case, the impact has not yet fully been felt. The extra cost itself is a factor in trimming the initial system to 13.7' miles; UMTA'S $800 million would build many more miles if costs had stayed at the **1971 level.**

More importantly, the combination of delay and additional cost may force reconsideration of the remainder of the adopted system. The 1971 vote approved the 1 percent sales tax financing for a 10-year period. In order to guarantee a local share over the 6-year period of UMTA participation that will begin now, MARTA will have to either return to the polls for an extension of the sales tax, persuade the State to increase its contribution, or raise the 1.5-cent fare. UMTA says it will not come to the rescue. If UMTA policy holds, and if funds are not forthcoming on the State or local level, the Atlanta transit system will look far different from the way it was originally envisioned.

Summary Case Assessment

The purpose of this section is to summarize the transit planning and decisionmaking process in the Atlanta region in light of the guidelines listed in the Introduction to the case assessments. The summary, therefore, is divided into two parts: (1) Assessment of the Institutional Context, and (2) Assessment of the Technical Planning Work.

1. ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Ž **Forum for Decisionmaking.—The** Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program (ARTPP), both created in 1971, provide a relatively well-integrated decisionmaking forum. Under the auspices of the ARC, land use planning can be closely coordinated with transportation planning. However, the tendency of the modal agencies (MARTA and Georgia DOT) to negotiate agreements in ARC's Transportation Policy Subcommittee, below the ARC board level, creates a degree of confusion over where decisionmaking really occurs.

. **Accountability of Decisionmakers.—The** ARC and MARTA commissioners responsible for transportation planning in Atlanta in theory are directly accountable to the public through the county governments in which they serve or that appoint them. In practice, local interests at times supersede a regional perspective, although the system functions well on the whole. The decisionmaking forum is given a wider perspective by the legislative oversight committee, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC). To the extent decisions are made in the Transportation Policy Subcommittee, they tend to be removed from public view.

. **Public involvement.—In the wake of an extensive community relations campaign, Atlanta citizens felt they were provided** adequate opportunity to contribute to the transit program that was approved in public referendum in 1971. In contrast, insufficient public participation was one of the principal reasons for the defeat of the **1968** transit proposal. Since **1971,** however, as the plan becomes reality, more complaints are heard from affected citizens.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE TECHNICAL PLANNING PROCESS

• **Goals and** Objectives.—Atlanta began planning its transit system before formal goal-setting had become a conventional step in planning. Nevertheless, the objective of reducing traffic congestion and shaping future growth has guided transit planning from the beginning. In more recent years officially formulated goals have been used to guide station area development planning.

. **Development of Alternatives.-The first rigorous look at alternatives came with the AATS Voorhees study after MARTA's first transit proposal failed in** the **referendum of 1968.** While the Voorhees team identified an impressive array of alternative rail-bus combinations, it ignored options that were not considered practical at the time, such as priority bus lanes.

. **Evaluation of Alternatives.—The Voorhees evaluation appeared technically competent, but its pro-busway conclusions were modified** to respect the political need to offer rail service in all rapid transit corridors.

. **Financing and Implementation.—From** the **beginning, transit plans in Atlanta were drawn up with an assumption of Federal aid, and the lack of firm commitment from UMTA** has been a recurrent issue. Other problems have been the difficulty in obtaining the local share and escalating construction cost estimates,

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