



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Transit
Administration**

REGION IV
Alabama, Florida, Georgia,
Kentucky, Mississippi,
North Carolina, Puerto
Rico, South Carolina,
Tennessee, Virgin Islands

230 Peachtree St., N.W.,
Suite 800
Atlanta, GA 30303
404-865-5600
404-865-5605 (fax)

February 26, 2010

Mr. Jim Ritchey
Deputy Director
Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
245 Peachtree Center Avenue, NE
Suite 900
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Ritchey,

Thank you for your written proposal on February 4 and subsequent documentation provided on February 16, in which you request Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program funds to implement three new *Xpress* routes into Clayton County. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is unable to grant the request as outlined in your letter.

The service you have proposed does not fully comport with prevailing CMAQ guidance. FTA acknowledges that the routes, as described in your letter and proposal, are such that GRTA is providing a new type of transit service, which is consistent with the CMAQ program intent. The proposed service has demonstrated air quality benefits. When considered in light of the totality of circumstances (discontinuance of the broader C-TRAN service, only a portion of which is being “replaced” by your new type of service), the air quality benefits of your new type of service do not appear to be as substantial. Of somewhat greater concern is the fact that GRTA has not provided a sufficient financial plan to demonstrate the likely long-term viability of the new type of service. GRTA has indicated that it intends to leverage against a future sales tax referendum that has yet to be submitted to the voters; this possible funding source alone cannot be relied upon to confirm that the new type of service, for the purposes of the CMAQ program, is feasible for the long-term.

The principal “focus of the CMAQ program is to provide new or expanded transportation resources that provide an air quality benefit, not the long-term continuation and support of existing services,” as cited in the Federal Highway Administration’s Publication of Final Guidance on the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program, 73 Federal Register at page 62364 (2008). The Guidance also states that “Operating assistance may be provided for a limited term to introduce new transit service or expand existing service...It may be a new type of service, service to a new geographic area, or an expansion of existing service providing additional hours of service or reduced headways.” Please also see page 62372 of that Notice, which states that “The intent is to support the demonstration of new services that may prove successful enough to sustain other funding sources, and to free up CMAQ funds to generate new air quality benefits.”

Your proposal does appear to contemplate a new type of service, consistent with some requirements of the CMAQ program, but the consideration of weakened air quality benefits and the lack of a reliable funding source beyond the initial three year demonstration period do not appear to meet the intent of the CMAQ program.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at (404) 865-5600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "for George F. Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Yvette G. Taylor, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

Cc: Jane Hayse, Transportation Planning Division Chief, Atlanta Regional Commission
Dr. Beverly Scott, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, MARTA