



RTAP and Mobility 2030 Public Discussions June/July 2003

Throughout the study area, individuals and communities benefited from the public discussions because they provided a platform to respond to the recommendations included in the RTAP Draft Concept Plan. Twelve major messages, listed below in order of importance, emerged from these meetings that were voiced repeatedly by the majority of participants in the public outreach process:

- ✦ **Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).** The general public widely supports BRT and believes it must be facilitated by special access and/or dedicated bus lanes, signal prioritization and coordinated with other transportation improvement projects. The differences between the application of the BRT concept and Express Bus Program must be clarified to enhance public understanding and acceptance. Cost effectiveness, preserving right-of-way, and speedy implementation are among the strongest characteristics for BRT. Other issues for further public dialogue include BRT success stories, fuel and vehicle design details, connectivity with existing transit systems, and additional BRT extensions beyond those recommended in the RTAP Draft Concept Plan. (45 comments)
- ✦ **MARTA.** The public is polarized on the issue of MARTA expansion opportunities, quality of service, accessibility, affordability, funding and management. MARTA supporters are generally disappointed with the lack of MARTA expansions within the existing service area and beyond. They also expressed a concern with underutilization. Tax payers within Fulton and DeKalb Counties demand shared financial responsibility for MARTA from the region. A prevailing sentiment among citizens outside the urban core indicates strong resistance to any form of MARTA “bail out.” Those opposed to MARTA also asserted that the system is not cost-effective, provides a minimal time savings, is not accessible in many parts of the service area, is poorly managed, bureaucratic, and simply does not provide service that is frequent, convenient and safe. (41 comments)
- ✦ **Express Bus.** There is generally in favor of the Express Bus System Program. Participants offered recommendations for additional Express Bus routes, bus stop and park-and-ride lot locations, and how the program may be implemented to enhance connectivity and accommodate growth in redeveloped and developing areas. More detail regarding the capital and operating costs, implementation, route schedules, origins and destinations, vehicles, and fuel is desired. There is some degree of concern regarding integration with MARTA, the role of local government in service delivery, and the Arterial Road program and other funding issues. (39 comments)
- ✦ **Funding.** The public recognizes funding as a critical element of the plan and is seriously concerned about the availability of funds from all levels of government to support transit

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projects. A gasoline tax, more equitable distribution of sales taxes, and automobile registration fees were recommended as funding sources. Continuous updates regarding the


status of the bond issue related to the Express Bus and Arterial Road programs is required. (32 comments)

- ✦ **Public Transit.** There is general consensus among citizens that public transportation is not only important but needed throughout metropolitan Atlanta. Citizens strongly believe that transit solutions must be regional, multi-modal, reliable, and cost-effective in order to successfully alleviate traffic congestion and enhance mobility. (27 comments)
- ✦ **Belt Line.** Citizens expressed overwhelming support for the Belt Line project. Benefits included reducing traffic, increasing connectivity, improving pedestrian safety, and stimulating and sustaining growth. Supporters asserted that the Belt Line compliments the existing mass transit system, creates live/work/play centers, connects neighborhoods with cultural and business destinations, and is more cost-effective than MARTA heavy rail extensions. (25 comments)
- ✦ **Commuter Rail.** A number of people express support for the implementation of commuter rail service in the Atlanta region, with particular emphasis on the Macon to Atlanta line. (20 comments)
- ✦ **Other Desired Projects.** Several additional projects were recommended as additions to the RTAP Draft Concept Plan: LRT or HRT across I-285 from Cumberland to Doraville, HRT around the entire I-285 perimeter, LRT or HRT to Stone Mountain along East Ponce de Leon Avenue, and shuttle bus service from Paulding to Cobb County for Lockheed employees. (10 comments)
- ✦ **Local Bus Service.** Citizens in Coweta County, South Fulton County, Rockdale County, and Gwinnett County desire increased local bus service and vanpool programs. (9 comments)
- ✦ **Public Involvement.** Participants offered a number of recommendations to enhance the public involvement effort including use of local media outlets for public information, more contact with elected officials on transit needs, and increased public education on transit options and choices to encourage a pro-transit sentiment. (8 comments)
- ✦ **Park and Ride Lots.** Citizens believe that high-capacity park-and-ride lots, including shopping malls, are necessary to attract Express Bus riders. (7 comments)

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 **Transit Governance.** Citizens would like definitive answers regarding the creation of one state authority responsible for regional transit planning, decision-making and management and equitable distribution of funds. (7 comments)

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