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# Regional Transit Action Plan Public Involvement Plan

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*A Concerted, Creative And Educational Approach To  
Public Involvement*

February 2002

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# Public Involvement Plan

*Actively reaching out to the public to generate dialogue, to establish consensus, and to engage all citizens throughout the process.*

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## Introduction

Our team recognizes that the public involvement and interagency coordination program for the Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP) is a critical task. As such, our approach for public involvement and interagency coordination is active, not passive. We have designed a program that reaches out to our constituents in a variety of settings: shopping malls, community meetings as well as public hearings. From the very beginning, the public, agency staff, community leaders and elected officials will be invited to participate in the process and will be kept involved throughout the project.

Innovation and effectiveness will permeate every facet of the public involvement program -- particularly in light of the broad, geographic diversity of the RTAP study area and necessity to stimulate meaningful dialogue about regional transit. Through skillful application of carefully selected public involvement techniques, this plan will meet the challenges and complexities of the metropolitan area and build consensus on a regional transit plan.

The four principal elements of the public involvement plan outlined in this document include:

1. Effective communications and coordination with affected public agencies.
2. Aggressive outreach program to stimulate public involvement.
3. Innovative educational tools to inform stakeholders of the benefits of public transit.
4. Regulatory compliance to ensure public participation is broad and inclusive.

## Project Description

The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) must develop a comprehensive Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP) that will guide the implementation of public transit facilities and services for the 13-county non-attainment area. The RTAP includes both short- and long-range elements as described in the list below:

### Phase I:

- Inventory of existing public and private transit services in Atlanta region
- Review of previous transit and transportation studies
- Inventory of currently programmed transit services and facilities from STIP
- Recommended transportation improvements that benefit transit
- Regional express bus needs assessment and operating plans
- Regional transit needs assessment to include update of travel demand model and development of sketch planning tools
- Development and evaluation of conceptual system alternatives (short and long range)
- Establishment of short and long term priorities for RTAP implementation

### Phase II:

- Short-term (2010) Transit Action Plan that describes a comprehensive and coordinated, financially feasible plan for the development of transit services and facilities in the 13-county non-attainment area.

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- Implementation support for regional express bus service; assisting GRTA in the procurement of vehicles, preparation of a facilities program plan, contracting with a service provider(s) and development of implementation and funding strategies.

## Phase III:

- Long-term (2025/2030) Transit Action Plan that describes a comprehensive and coordinated, financially feasible plan for the development of transit services and facilities in the 13-county non-attainment area.
- Provision of additional products and services including public involvement and interagency coordination, information technology resources, training, maps, databases, and website assistance.

## Regulatory Compliance

**Federal** The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration regulations provide clear guidance on metropolitan planning processes in 23 CFR 450. Specific reference to public involvement is made in section 450.322(c). It states that there must be adequate opportunity for public officials, elected officials, agency representatives, citizens and other interested parties to be involved in the development of the transportation plan. The procedures stipulate that involvement take place in the early stages of the plan development process. The procedures also require publication and availability of the plan for public review and comment. The RTAP public involvement plan will fully adhere to these federal requirements.

Executive Order 12898 defines Environmental Justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of race, ethnicity, income or education level—in transportation decision making. Environmental Justice programs promote the protection of human health and the environment, empowerment via public participation, and the dissemination of relevant information to inform and educate affected communities. The RTAP public involvement plan includes an Environmental Justice program that is designed to build and sustain meaningful participation for all stakeholders. Specifically, the technical approach will:

- Identify environmental justice populations of concern for inclusion in public outreach activities
- Include standard demographic and field analysis using most recent U.S. Census data
- Address benefits and potential adverse/disproportionate impacts on environmental justice communities

**State** The Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) outlines its commitment to public involvement in “The Public Involvement Program” section of its Title VI Program document. The plan requires GRTA to undertake a mix of traditional and innovative techniques to reach the public including: educational outreach, formal and informal meetings, legislative briefings, the Equity Advisory Committee, the Policy Council, the Citizens Academy, the Chamber of Commerce/Business Organization Partnership, website, media outreach, public comment hearings and database. The RTAP public involvement plan will leverage these techniques to ensure maximum public participation.

The Georgia Planning Act was adopted by the General Assembly in 1989 as a means to encourage better management of growth in the booming areas of the state while encouraging the less prosperous parts to avail themselves of opportunities for growth. The Act established a "bottom-up," comprehensive planning approach initially to be conducted at the local government level, then at the regional and state levels. Prior to the adoption of transportation plans, regional development centers must actively involve local governments, private sector

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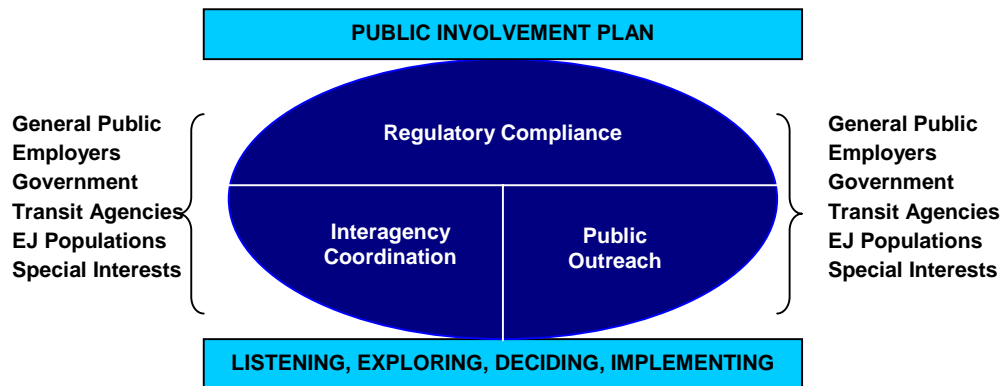
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interests, other special interest groups, and the general public throughout the region in all phases of the regional planning process. The public involvement activities identified for the RTAP project uphold the rules outlined in the Act.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Office of Planning recently adopted a Public Involvement Plan. The plan represents a conscious effort to create more proactive programs and initiatives that form additional partnerships and provide greater opportunities to involve citizens in transportation planning. The RTAP public involvement plan is consistent with many of the public involvement strategies recommended by GDOT.

## Formulating the Plan

**Multiple Strategies** One of the basic principles of public involvement for federally funded transportation projects is to proactively outreach to the public; however, we recognize multiple strategies will be necessary to motivate participation by multiple stakeholders: individuals, groups and organizations who comprise “the public.” The diagram below illustrates this point.



The diagram includes the fundamental strategies that will be used to support the planning process for the RTAP project. To explain, stakeholders may be drawn into the RTAP project for any number of reasons – agency representatives to ensure regulatory requirements are being met, special interest groups to advocate quality of life or environmental issues, or the general public to learn more about available transportation options. Whether obligatory or voluntary, participation only works when stakeholders fully appreciate the nature of the problem involved and their own self-interest in the matter. Listening, exploring, deciding and implementing are placed at the foundation because of their significant contribution to reinforcing and enhancing each of the other mechanisms for involvement. If people are positively motivated and persuaded to listen and learn that involvement is worthwhile, they are more likely to respond to a wide range of public involvement techniques. Our experience has shown that one of the most effective ways to motivate people is to develop processes that build community and agency ownership of decisions.

Therefore, public involvement must be broad. It must include *all* interested people, particularly those not traditionally well-represented in transportation planning, to ensure they are provided opportunities for meaningful input. Extra effort will be put forth in this plan to elicit involvement by those unaccustomed to participating. Equally important, this plan will serve as a platform to address the different needs and perspectives of various segments of the general population. This we be accomplished through a proven, comprehensive, 5-step process to public involvement.

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**Step 1** *Develop general strategies and set specific goals for the RTAP public involvement plan.* The following strategies and goals will guide the development and implementation of the RTAP public involvement plan:

**Strategies:**

Gain the support of local agencies and elected officials through interagency coordination activities, as these partners may be responsible for funding and/or implementing elements of the RTAP.

Set forth bold initiatives that uphold GRTA’s commitment to broad and inclusive public outreach.

**Goals:**

Define and articulate a new community consensus on both the need for a regional transit system and potential system alternatives.

Reshape the metropolitan Atlanta region’s dialogue about public transit to move beyond historical limitations.

Engage citizens, including new residents and traditionally under-represented communities, in the regional transit system discussion.

Meet the intense scrutiny for public involvement and environmental justice with thorough and systematic program monitoring, evaluation and documentation of results.

**Step 2** *Identify the people to be reached.* Environmental justice populations and community leaders concerned with increasing congestion, air pollution, traffic problems and deterioration of mobility and accessibility in the 13-county non-attainment area are obvious stakeholders for the RTAP project. Moreover, the local government agencies responsible for coordination, planning and implementation of transportation projects are valued participants in the process. The known stakeholders for the RTAP project are listed in the table below:

General Description	Name of Group	Stakeholder Category <sup>1</sup>
Government Agencies	Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) Cherokee County City of Atlanta Clayton County Cobb County Coweta County DeKalb County Douglas County Fayette County Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Forsythe County Fulton County Georgia Department of Natural Resources Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Georgia Rail Passenger Authority (GRPA) Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) Gwinnett County Henry County Paulding County Rockdale County	Very Engaged

<sup>1</sup> Defined under Step 3: Sort the stakeholders into four categories.

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General Description	Name of Group	Stakeholder Category <sup>2</sup>
Transit Operators/ Rideshares/ Vanpools	City of Canton Clayton County Transit (C-Tran) Cobb Community Transit (CCT) Douglas County Rideshare Gwinnett County Transit Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) MetroVanpool	Very Engaged
Transportation Management Associations	Buckhead Area Central Atlanta/Downtown Clifton Road/Emory Area Cumberland/Galleria Area Hartsfield International Airport Area Midtown Atlanta Perimeter Area Town Center Area	Mobilized
Elderly/ Physically Challenged	ARC Committee for the Aging Disability Connections Disability Link MARTA Elderly & Disabled Committee	Mobilized
Environmental/ Special Interest Groups	Center for Environmental Justice Environmental Defense Georgia Conservancy Georgia Sierra Club	Mobilized
Historic Preservation Groups	Georgia Historic Preservation Office	Mobilized
Community Groups	Metropolitan Atlanta Transportation Equity Coalition (MATEC)	Mobilized
Large Employers/ Business Interests	AT&T BellSouth Telecommunications Chambers of Commerce Cox Enterprises Delta Airlines General Motors Corporation Georgia-Pacific Corporation Grady Health System Home Depot Regional Business Coalition The Bank of America The Coca-Cola Company The Kroger Company The Southern Company Turner Broadcasting Systems United Parcel Service	Armchair

This list is not all-inclusive. It will be further developed during interviews with local agencies and other key stakeholders in the early phases of implementation of the public involvement plan for the RTAP project. By bringing a core participation group together, we will establish a working relationship with the community, be able to take its pulse as the project moves forward, and make course corrections, as necessary.

**Step 3** *Sort the stakeholders into four categories.* In devising a public involvement plan, we must simplify the list of known stakeholders into the following categories:

## 1. Very Engaged Group

This group is often well educated about the area and likely to have had past experience with transportation issues. Those who are very engaged are

<sup>2</sup> Defined under Step 3: Sort the stakeholders into four categories.

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usually community leaders or activists with resources (time or money) to devote to the project. This category often includes elected officials, representatives from other government agencies, the business community, and paid staff or highly motivated volunteers from special interest or advocacy groups.

## 2. Mobilized Group

This group is best characterized as people who have joined a special interest or environmental group. They may be neighbors or average citizens. They are now mobilized because they feel angry about or want to support a project or issue. Mobilized stakeholders are often very loyal to the group of which they are a part. They can often mobilize others to get involved if they perceive there is a need or the project represents a threat to their quality of life.

## 3. Armchair Group

This group is a cross-section of all constituent groups. It includes the various business interests in the region as well as general public who normally are too busy or too tired to take much interest in transportation issues unless directly impacted.

## 4. Not Interested Group

This group is also a cross-section of constituent groups. Here, it is important to be aware of appearances. Frequently the people who appear disinterested simply do not understand the process for getting involved or are too busy to participate in meetings. This does not preclude their desire to be kept informed or involved, particularly if personally impacted by the project. In some cases, a language or cultural barrier may inhibit participation.

**Step 4** *Determine the appropriate public involvement techniques.* After identifying the stakeholder categories, the next step is to determine the appropriate public involvement techniques that meet the expectations of each stakeholder group. This matching of expectations and techniques is illustrated in the table below:

Stakeholder Category	Expectations	Appropriate Techniques
1. Very Engaged	Expect to participate in project decision-making	Partnerships Interviews Advisory Groups Workshops Phone/Fax/Email Information Distribution
2. Mobilized	Expect that you will listen to their issues Expect that you will stop or modify the project to deal with their issues	Advisory Group Town Hall Meetings Public Hearings Public Information Meetings Opinion Survey And Polls Widespread Information Distribution

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Stakeholder Category	Expectations	Appropriate Techniques
		Telephone Hotline Website/Email Speaker's Bureau
3. Armchair	Expect to hear about the project through the "usual" channels	TV/News Releases Videos At Library Public Cable Channels Contact With Neighborhood Organizations Website/E-Mail Information Kiosk Newsletters
4. Not Interested	Expect easy access to information Expect you will come to them, if appropriate	Information Kiosk Website/E-Mail Newsletters TV/News Releases Speaker's Bureau

The public involvement techniques listed present a variety of approaches that target different groups in different ways *and* target the same groups in different ways. As such the approaches vary in strengths, weaknesses, costs, and abilities to reach people. The most significant distinction between the techniques is whether it is used to *inform* or *involve* the public. When strategically combined into a comprehensive plan, the result is a public involvement program that is broad and inclusive, seeks out the public and works hard to create forums for information exchange.

**Step 5** *Design and implement a public involvement plan.* Our plan will directly support the goals of the RTAP project, will include proven techniques that meet the expectations of each stakeholder group, and will be flexible enough to respond to the their requests for information and ongoing involvement. The following section provides a detailed explanation of the selected techniques and presents a schedule for the public involvement activities.

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**Interagency Coordination Strategy** The study area encompasses a number of local, regional, and state agencies responsible for formulation of policies and implementation of transportation investment projects that may result from RTAP. Coordination efforts with local municipalities and other various agencies will include reviewing technical memoranda, identifying key concerns, and soliciting information regarding community perspectives on transportation needs. The agency involvement process is also structured to provide insight and recommendations regarding public/private partnership initiatives that may potentially lead to funding or other assistance during subsequent stages of project development. Interagency coordination activities represent the nerve center of the public involvement plan as many elected officials and community leaders are wary of GRTA and its intentions. Therefore, it is imperative that the project team go "the extra mile" to gain the support of these leaders and articulate the key elements of regional consensus on transit.

The RTAP Project Public Involvement Plan will implement the following techniques to *involve* its stakeholders:



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**Project Retreat** Early face-to-face contact and two-way communication techniques are vital elements of public involvement. The Executive Director of GRTA will host a project retreat where key stakeholders, community leaders and elected officials will be informed of the purpose of RTAP and the study process. The objective of the retreat is to elicit support from the meeting attendees and ensure their future cooperation in the development and implementation of the RTAP. *Timeframe:* 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2002

**Project Advisory Committee** The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) will serve as the core group responsible for overall direction and guidance in the development of the RTAP. As an advisory group, the PAC will meet monthly to discuss project developments and participate in project decision-making, where applicable. The purpose of the PAC is multi-faceted:

First, its use allows GRTA to go out into the community to build partnerships and share information with local governments and community leaders. The PAC provides a continuing forum for direct input into the planning process and is a known opportunity for people to participate. It is a forum of education, exchange, understanding, questioning and clarification.

Second, the committee offers an opportunity for true public involvement and agency collaboration. It offers mechanisms to channel the energies of highly motivated stakeholders and affords representatives of key groups a means of building consensus about RTAP plan components. In this forum, participants will share equal status, be able to present and deliberate opposing views. By virtue of their involvement in project discussions, committee members will be partners with GRTA bringing fresh ideas and new perspectives.

Third, the PAC acts as the punctuation points of the technical planning process. By meeting key project milestones, PAC meetings will serve as a check and balance on plan development in terms of political consensus and meeting the diverse needs of a broad-based constituency.

Prior to each committee meeting a detailed agenda will be developed as part of a working facilitation plan. Meetings will emphasize consensus-building during the development of systems alternatives and evaluation phase. Examples of PAC discussion topics is described in the table below:

PAC Discussion Topics	Timeframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduce participants to each other, GRTA, and consultant team</li> <li>▪ Provide overview of project scope and schedule</li> <li>▪ Provide overview of PAC purpose, meeting schedule, subcommittee structure</li> <li>▪ Set goals for PAC and determine ground rules for consensus building process</li> </ul>	Early-Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discuss technical plan progress</li> <li>▪ Encourage participation of committee members in public outreach and community events</li> <li>▪ Elicit committee feedback on public involvement plan effectiveness</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present existing transit service inventory</li> <li>▪ Present review of previous transit and transportation studies</li> <li>▪ Present currently programmed and proposed transit services</li> <li>▪ Present other transportation improvements that may benefit</li> </ul>	Mid-Phase



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PAC Discussion Topics	Timeframe
transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present express bus needs assessment findings</li> <li>▪ Discuss potential alternatives with committee members</li> <li>▪ Encourage participation of committee members in public outreach and community events</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present overview of conceptual systems alternatives evaluation</li> <li>▪ Discuss recommended alternatives</li> <li>▪ Solicit involvement of committee members in public outreach activities</li> </ul>	Final-Phase

**PAC Subcommittees** PAC subcommittees will further facilitate project decision-making, information exchange and dissemination, and consensus-building. Either as short-term task forces or on a regular basis, PAC subcommittees will meet to review technical information, study findings and other relevant project materials. The overall purpose of subcommittee meetings will be to reach consensus on the direction of major components of the RTAP. A chair may be selected for each subcommittee to report findings and recommendations to the PAC. The six (6) subcommittees that have been identified thus far, include:

Subcommittee	Technical Focus
<b>Express Bus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Express bus needs assessment and operating plans.</li> <li>▪ Implementation support for regional express bus service, particularly organizational structure development.</li> </ul>
<b>Sketch Planning</b>	Regional transit needs assessment to include update of travel demand model and development of sketch planning tools.
<b>Public Involvement</b>	Development and implementation of Public Involvement Plan, including interagency coordination and public outreach strategies.
<b>Fare Collection</b>	Proposed fare structure.
<b>ITS</b>	ITS elements such as automated trip planning, schedule information, real-time bus arrival data, etc.
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Development of business plan to measure actual versus expected results for RTAP, including capital and operating costs, and financing, risk and fiscal capacity analysis.</li> <li>▪ Long term implementation plan to address financial model, impact statements, operating measures, costs and organizational issues.</li> </ul>

All meetings will be conducted as facilitated workshops and will include technical presentations as appropriate. On occasion, the committees will be requested to brainstorm and discuss findings and recommendations. The PAC discussion regarding potential transit system alternatives will be a facilitated group exercise involving both discussion and mapping. *Timeframe:* Ongoing

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**Stakeholder Interviews** A stakeholder interview is a one-on-one discussion with an individual recognized as a community leader, elected or appointed official, agency staff member and/or neighborhood activist from across the region. Such interviews will be conducted as part of the interagency coordination strategy. The stakeholders identified will represent various audiences and target groups expected to participate in the planning process. The main purpose of a stakeholder interview is an early exchange of information on project goals and study process. The interviews will allow our team to learn about the stakeholder's perceptions of GRTA, the planning process and the political climate in which the RTAP project will unfold. Tapping into the knowledge and insight of stakeholders may uncover additional individuals who should be contact and involved in the participation process. Moreover, the interviews will rapidly provide detail on the sensitive aspects and priorities of the project that are difficult to bring forth and address in a public meeting setting. The interviews will provide a framework for the public involvement plan and future discussions. In addition, the interviews will increase GRTA's credibility by demonstrating an interest in the community. Given the historical barrier of consensus on regional transit, the interview technique will be most effective in enhancing GRTA's understanding of opposing viewpoints and accurately documenting them for the record. Approximately 50 interviews will be conducted in the beginning of the project at locations designated by the stakeholders. Additional interviews may be scheduled at key milestones later in the program. *Timeframe:* Beginning 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2002.

**"Power" Breakfasts** A power breakfast is an informal setting for active listening and resolution of specific concerns raised by key stakeholders. On a regular basis, the GRTA/consultant team will meet with selected leaders to keep them apprised of study intent, progress and findings. This small gathering technique will make it easier for people to actively participate and offers another venue for creative, flexible interchange of ideas and meaningful dialogue. Following the breakfasts, representatives from each stakeholder group will be able to disseminate information about transit issues to their constituents. Information, ideas and opinions generated in the breakfasts will be used to refine the RTAP project and move the study process forward. Ultimately, the breakfasts will foster further interaction between GRTA and the public and lead to a heightened level of trust. The consultant team will work with GRTA to determine a method for selecting participants and will ensure they understand their role and desired outcomes from the series of breakfasts. *Timeframe:* Beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2002.

**Public Outreach Strategy** The mission of the public outreach in the RTAP is three fold: *inform, invite and communicate*. First, it is important to *inform* the public of the purpose and progress of the RTAP project – regional issues, strategies to be considered and potential outcomes. Second, *inviting* participation in the planning process is critical to building consensus for the conclusions and recommendations for the study. Third, the study participants, the general public, affected agencies and elected officials must *communicate* their perceptions, opinions and ideas throughout the entire course of the planning process.

The RTAP Public Involvement Plan will implement the following techniques to *inform, invite, and communicate* with its stakeholders:

**Public Workshops** A public workshop is a special meeting to inform people and solicit input on specific RTAP issues. Workshops will be held throughout the study process to encourage dialogue between the project team and workshop attendees. A public notice placed in the local newspapers will indicate the location, date and time of all workshops. In the early stages, workshops will be used to set the stage for formulating the RTAP project. Mid-course, workshops will showcase and refine specific aspects of the RTAP project, resolve concerns and work toward consensus. Toward the end of the planning phase, workshops will demonstrate study findings, conclusions and

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recommendations of the work effort. Workshops will allow participants to see other viewpoints and provide the project team with a snapshot of community concerns and reactions to proposals. Workshops allow for intense participation in a collaborative, informal atmosphere. Various maps and graphics depicting important project elements will be on display. Informational packets and comment cards will be distributed to receive additional input. Each workshop will be held in separate locations throughout the study area. *Timeframe:* Ongoing.

**Public Opinion Surveys** A public opinion survey is a written questionnaire administered to a sample group of people through interviews in person, by phone or electronic media. A public opinion survey will be developed for general distribution to gauge public sentiment or specific input on RTAP project alternatives. A series of informal surveys will be distributed through public workshops, newsletter mailings, information kiosks and posted on the project website. The objective of the public opinion surveys is to identify the education needs and issues related to building consensus for the RTAP. Opinion surveys not only portray public perceptions and preferences, but also can test whether public opinion is changing over time. The project team can respond to opinion survey results providing missing information or clarifying misperceptions – this level of response builds credibility and acceptance for the project. The consultant team will partner with GRTA to determine the types of questions to be asked, sample size and method of interview. *Timeframe:* 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2002.

**Focus Groups** A focus group is a tool to identify the concerns, needs, wants and expectations of the public as customers. Focus groups can inform the project team of the attitudes and values the public holds and why. The consultant team will work closely with GRTA to select participants using two methods: 1) a random selection to assure representation of all segments of society and 2) a non-random selection to elicit a particular position or point of view. A combination of selection techniques will result in a focus group of people well versed in transportation issues along with those who are solely consumers of transportation services.

A focus group has these basic features:

- carefully-crafted agenda with five or six major questions at most
- emphasis on gathering perspectives, insights, and opinions of participants through conversation and interaction
- identification of major points of agreement and divergence of opinion
- minimal presentation of material to set context and subject
- gleaning, not shaping, of opinions or perspectives
- eight to twelve participants; and
- understanding that the participants' role is to give personal insights and perspectives.

Following the initial development of a skillfully crafted RTAP message, a focus group will be arranged. Participants will be invited to meet and discuss their reactions to the RTAP message, their opinions about transit in general, their experience using public transit, and their thoughts about the project. By timing focus group exercises early in the project, public input can be used to finalize messages and fine-tune both the public involvement program and the RTAP project design. The focus groups will also provide an opportunity to reach out to specific audiences that might be identified during earlier public involvement efforts. The emphasis of the focus groups will be on gathering perspectives, insights and opinions on the various transit system concepts emerging in the planning process. The consultant team will provide the agenda, short list of probing questions and conduct and in depth exploration of participant's attitudes through follow-up questions. *Timeframe:* 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr 2002.

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**Information Kiosks** Information kiosks visually communicate project information in a powerful, eye-catching display that can be transported to a number of venues throughout the study area. These displays will be used at project milestones to convey study findings and gather input from people living or working throughout the study area, especially individuals or groups unlikely to attend traditional public meetings. Information kiosks are helpful in explaining complex project details and its implications in simple language. The displays will be strategically placed in locations where large numbers of people gather -- shopping malls, major employers, libraries and government agencies. In addition, the kiosks will be deployed at scheduled community events such as local festivals, arts and craft shows, community fairs and the like to acquaint the public with the project. Comment cards and opinion surveys will be available to collect public input and respond to specific concerns. The consultant team, as appropriate, will staff the kiosks. *Timeframe: 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr 2002.*

**Project Website** A project website provides a communication mechanism via computer. A project-specific website will be developed as a sub-site to the GRTA website. The website enables people to give and get information when they want it -- reading and commenting online at the time of their choice. People will be able to post information that includes opinions, suggestions and support for project proposals without having to attend meetings. On the other hand, people will be able to receive the latest newsletters, video clips, public survey forms, hotline numbers and other project related material from the website. Through the website, GRTA will foster education, participation and greater information sharing as well as supplement its other public outreach activities. *Timeframe: 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2002.*

**Project Hotline** Project hotlines are telephone lines where the general public can receive general information and/or leave a recorded message to provide input into the RTAP project. A brief recording will be played when a person calls the hotline that provides a brief summary of the project and upcoming public involvement activities. After the message, the caller may leave a message to provide comments or leave any other appropriate message. Hotlines are useful because they allow anyone with access to a telephone to engage in the RTAP project. The hotline is an inexpensive, easy to use method of informing a wide range of individuals about the project progress and for soliciting their opinions. Recorded messages will update callers on upcoming special events or recent project milestones and decisions. Hotlines provide an effective means of two-way communication offering both information and opinions. The hotline will allow the project team to identify recurring issues or questions that can be used to adjust the outreach program and improve general understanding of these issues. The consultant team will coordinate prompt responses to messages that require follow-up. *Timeframe: 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr 2002.*

**Speakers' Bureau** Speakers' Bureaus are groups of specially trained representatives who can speak about the RTAP project and planning process. In this case, the consultant team will meet with civic, business, community or special interest groups to provide information about the RTAP project, listen to people's concerns, answer questions, and seek continued participation and support. By involving local groups on their own terms, the speakers' bureau will expand opportunities for community participation. Also, the bureau will help GRTA establish closer relationships with various organizations and facilitate communication and involvement in its planning effort. Working with several groups such as rotary clubs, developer organizations, homeowner associations, Chambers of Commerce, historic and environmental preservation groups and other interested parties, GRTA will develop a base of support for RTAP implementation. The consultant team will develop a series of targeted

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presentations to specific groups and will act as coordinator for the speakers' bureau effort. *Timeframe: 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2002.*

**Newsletters** Newsletters are essential public information materials that will provide straightforward information to the public about the RTAP project during its planning stages. The newsletters will contain up-to-date project information allowing the reader to follow the technical steps of the study and to understand how decisions are being made. The newsletters will be written in a clear, concise, and user-friendly language and will be widely distributed to the project mailing list. The newsletters will contain information on what to do to respond, comment, get more involved, or get on the mailing list for the RTAP project. Renderings, simplified diagrams and other visual tools will be included in the newsletters to communicate information in different ways and increase understanding of technical information. The target audience of the newsletters is the broader public and goes beyond those who attend meetings. Given the scope of the RTAP project, the newsletters will expand the number and geographic distribution of those who are informed and able to participate. When appropriate, newsletters will be tailored to a specific geographic area, transit mode or evaluation criteria for system alternatives. Ultimately, the newsletters will demonstrate that GRTA understands and values communication with the public. The consultant team will produce five (5) newsletters at key project milestones. *Timeframe: Ongoing.*

**Videos** The video technique presents information to the public via recorded videotape. Two (2) easily understood videos will be prepared during the planning process. The videos will illustrate and help the public visualize the various transit services available to them as well as highlight transit options in use in other states. The first will be developed immediately following the documentation of findings from the opinion survey to help dispel misperceptions and educate the public. It will be widely used at speakers' bureau events, media outlets, local meetings of PAC members and other distribution points. The videos will help ensure a consistent message is conveyed and will reach a broad audience for participation. *Timeframe: 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr 2002 and 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr 2003.*

**Brochures** A public information brochure entitled "A Citizen's Guide to Public Transit" will be prepared to describe the types of public transit services that may be considered in the RTAP project, key terms used in the transit discussion, and photos and graphics of the various transit modes, equipment and facilities will be depicted. Other brochures and fact sheets will be prepared as necessary to support public involvement and education needs. *Timeframe: 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr 2002.*

**Media Relations** Media relations is a method that informs stakeholders about the RTAP project primarily through newspapers, radio, television and billboards. Working with the media, GRTA will take an active role in disseminating information to the general public about the intent, progress, findings and recommendations for RTAP. By proactively framing the media message, GRTA will focus the public's attention, avoid the spread of misinformation and build understanding on the need and benefits of regional transit. The media will be an important resource for people who have little time to attend meetings or participate in other public outreach events. The public will be informed and educated via articles, profiles and advertisements on television and in print. *Timeframe: Ongoing.*

**Public Hearings** A public hearing is a formal event held prior to a decision point in the planning process. The public hearing gathers community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input into decisions. A hearing will achieve a basic level of community input and exchange of information with a wide representation of community residents. If needed or desired, a hearing or series of

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hearings may be used to complete the RTAP project and obtain formal input from citizens at the end of the planning process. *Timeframe:* To Be Determined.

## Schedule of Activities

Schedule		
Task	Duration	Start Date - End Date
Public Involvement Plan	8 wks	Jan 2002 - Feb 2002
Project Retreat (1)	1 day	Mar 2002
Project Advisory Committee	Monthly	Jan 2002 - Nov 2003
Stakeholder Interviews (50)	20 wks	Mar 2002 - Jun 2002
Power Breakfasts (8)	Bi-monthly	Mar 2002 - Nov 2003
Public Workshops (2)	2 days	Mar 2002 - Apr 2002
Public Opinion Survey	12 wks	Jan 2002 - Mar 2002
Focus Groups	8 wks	Sep 2002 - Oct 2002
Information Kiosks	20 wks	Apr 2002 - Feb 2003
Project Website (start-up)	12 wks	Jan 2002 - Mar 2002
Project Hotline (start-up)	2 wks	Jan 2002 - Feb 2002
Speakers' Bureau	12 wks	Apr 2002 - Nov 2003
Newsletters (5)	Quarterly	Feb 2002 Jun 2002 Dec 2002 Jul 2003 Nov 2003
Videos (2)	Annually	Mar 2002 Nov 2003
Brochures	8 wks	May 2002 - Jun 2002
Media Relations	Ongoing	Jan 2002 - Nov 2003
Plan Evaluation	Ongoing	Jan 2002 - Nov 2003

## Evaluating the Plan

The consultant team, with input from Atlanta Regional Commission's Public Involvement Advisory Group, will systematically monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the RTAP public involvement and interagency coordination plan using the performance measures listed in the table below:

Technique	Performance Measure
Project Retreat	Number of attendees Number of comments received Number of comment responses
Project Advisory Committee (PAC)	Stakeholder feedback
PAC Subcommittees	Stakeholder feedback
Stakeholder Interviews	Number of participants Number of themes identified by group

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Technique	Performance Measure
	Number of themes addressed in plan
Power Breakfasts	Number of attendees Number of comments received Number of comment responses
Public Workshops	Number of attendees Number of comments received Number of comment responses
Public Opinion Surveys	Number of survey respondents
Focus Groups	Number of participants Number of themes identified by group Number of themes addressed in plan
Brochures/Kiosks	Number of brochures distributed Number of kiosk visitors
Project Website	Number of hits Number of comments received Number of comment responses Number of survey respondents
Project Hotline	Number of comments received Number of comment responses
Speakers' Bureau	Number of groups contacted Number of presentation requests Number of presentations delivered Number of attendees at presentations Number of comments received Number of comment responses
Newsletters	Number of newsletters distributed
Videos	Number of videos distributed Number of viewers
Media Relations	Number of messages Message penetration in target market Amount of positive media coverage
Public Hearings	Number of attendees Number of comments received Number of comment responses

Based on plan performance, existing communication and outreach techniques will be modified and new techniques added to ensure plan success.