

Metro Atlanta Adopts Concept 3 – Regional Transit Vision Plan

The 19-member **Transit Planning Board** (TPB) serving the Metro Atlanta region is made up of County Commission Chairs, the Mayor of Atlanta, the Chairpersons of the Boards of MARTA, the Georgia Department of Transportation and GRTA, the MARTA General Manager/CEO, and appointees of the Governor of Georgia. The TPB was jointly created by the transportation leadership of the region to develop a vision for an integrated transit system. On August 28, 2008 after over two years of effort the Board of Directors passed a resolution to adopt a regional concept vision transit plan, called “Concept 3.” The other major transportation entities in the region are also moving to adopt this concept as the guide for future investment in regional transit infrastructure.

The Vision is a big picture, comprehensive multi modal plan that builds upon 30 years of previous transit planning. It is based solidly upon making the maximum use of the existing transit infrastructure, expanding on that investment and bringing the existing network up to and maintaining it in a state of good repair.

Concept 3 builds on over eight months of public comments and stakeholder input. It begins with the existing MARTA heavy rail system at its core, and extends this system in north east, south east and west. For longer distance trips, Concept 3 proposes commuter rail. All of the proposed commuter rail lines provide service directly to Downtown Atlanta and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Three of the five proposed commuter lines would operate during the peak commute time periods and a fourth would have all-day rail service from Athens to Griffin through Emory, Downtown Atlanta, and the Airport. Commuter rail lines include: the East line from Madison through central DeKalb County and Downtown Atlanta; the West line from Bremen to Airport through Douglasville and Downtown Atlanta; the Southwest line from Senoia to Downtown Atlanta through Peachtree City and Union City; a north east line from Athens to Griffin through Emory, Downtown Atlanta, and the Airport; and a final fifth line would operate from Gainesville to the Airport through Gwinnett County, Buckhead and Downtown Atlanta. The next component of the system is high capacity regional rail system – potentially light rail transit. This system is proposed because of its great flexibility and ability to serve trips to and within activity centers. Six light rail lines are proposed in Concept 3: the Northwest Corridor; I-285 top end East; Lindberg-Emory-Decatur; GA 400 from Perimeter Center to Windward Parkway via North Point; I-20 East from Downtown Atlanta to Sigman Road via South DeKalb; and I-575 from the KSU and Town Center areas to Canton.

Additionally, an inner core streetcar network is proposed. These new lines could provide connectivity between Marietta to Emory via the Beltline and Lindbergh or North Point from Gwinnett Place via Norcross and Perimeter Center or open up South DeKalb residential areas to the Cumberland employment center.

Concept 3 also includes several levels of bus service; freeway Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems-serving high-demand corridors with variable capacity that can respond to increasing demand. In addition, for those BRT lines that use exclusive lanes, there is the bonus of preserving the option for potential future conversion to a higher capacity rail mode. Concept 3 proposes four exclusive bus or shared HOV lanes of BRT: I-20 West; I-75 South; I-285 East; and I-285 West.

Expansion of current express bus service is also included in Concept 3. Express bus serves long distance trips with relatively high levels of customer amenities. Express bus will be used both as a permanent element of the transit system in some areas, and to help phase in transit service in other areas where higher capacity rail will be required in the future.

The final elements of Concept 3 propose creating a support bus network which includes arterial rapid bus and cross-county bus services, activity center circulators and expanded local bus service. The Arterial Rapid Bus service consists of two primary types of corridors: New Cross Regional Corridors and existing successful high ridership local bus corridors that carry approximately 4,000 or more passengers per day. The cross-county bus services are designed to reach those areas such as hospitals with emergency services, government centers, and regional recreational areas and are primarily cross-county routes in outer areas of the region.

Estimated Project Capital and System Operating Costs:

The current transit systems in Cobb, Gwinnet and Clayton Counties and MARTA are estimated to cost \$26 billion to operate through 2030. Concept 3 will add another \$26.8 billion in new capital costs for including \$20.7 billion for expansion of the

regional transit system and \$6.1 billion to bring the existing system into a state of good repair – approximately \$1.3 billion annually. To operate the full regional system, both existing and new expansion is estimated to be \$1.2 billion annually. This estimates the region needs approximately \$2.5 billion annually to fund the existing regional transit system and pay for needed expansion of the regional transit system. Assuming a population of 6 million people living in the Atlanta region in 2030, funding transit will cost each metro resident about \$1.15 a day, or less than a cup of coffee in most places. Now a funding strategy and mechanism must be identified and put in place.

Map of Concept 3: Regional Transit Vision