



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

**EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021**

**ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

**via WebEx**

**MEETING MINUTES**

Committee Chair Robert Ashe called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

<b>Board Members Present</b>	<b>Staff Members Present</b>
Robert Ashe III, <b>Chair</b>	Jeffrey Parker
Stacy Blakley	Collie Greenwood
Freda Hardage	Elizabeth O'Neill
William Floyd	Luz Borrero
Al Pond	Melissa Mullinax
Rita Scott	Raj Srinath
Reginald Snyder	Rhonda Allen
Christopher Tomlinson <sup>1</sup>	

Also in attendance: Board General Counsel Justice Leah Ward Sears of Smith, Gambrell & Russell, LLP; other staff members: Kevin Hurley, Heather Alhadeff, Marsha Anderson Bomar, Jacqueline Holland, Jonathan Hunt, Colleen Kiernan, Michael Kreher, Jennifer Jinadu-Wright, Paula Nash, LaShanda Dawkins, Larry Prescott, Patricia Lucek, Kirk Talbott, Jacob Vallo, Ryan VanSickle, Richard Wallace, George Wright, Kenya Hammond and Tyrene Huff.

**Approval of the January 21, 2021. External Relations Committee Meeting Minutes**

Committee Chair Ashe called for a motion to approve the January 21, 2021 meeting minutes. Mrs. Hardage made a motion to approve, Mr. Pond seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously by a vote of 7 to 0 with 8<sup>1</sup> members present.

**Resolution Authorizing the Solicitation of Proposals for the Procurement of Transit and Digital Advertising. RFP P48265**

Senior Director of Marketing and Sales Jennifer Jinadu-Wright presented the above resolution for approval. Issuance of the Transit Advertising RFP is necessary to maintain advertising revenue for the base contract term of ten (10) years and any option years, if exercised. Proposed advertising sites include exterior and interior space on rail cars

<sup>1</sup>Christopher Tomlinson is the Executive Director of Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and is therefore, a non-voting member of the MARTA Board of Directors.

and buses, external space on Paratransit fleet and display space within rail stations. The rail station space will include the installation (by the contractor) of new digital displays as specified by this RFP.

Committee Chair Ashe opened the floor for questions and comments.

If contractually, Mr. Pond asked if it is advantageous after a number of years for MARTA to terminate this contract, and are there clauses in the contract that will allow MARTA to terminate? Ms. O'Neill responded yes; there are provisions for early termination of the contract. Mr. Pond also asked, given the long period of years of this contract, are we getting the best amount? General Manager Jeffrey Parker responded that the vendors' limitations are against the Minimum Annual Guarantee (MAG). There is a great incentive on their part since they are driving their revenue, and since this is not a fixed price contract, the MAG protects us.

Mr. Ashe asked to be briefed on the status of the Audio Visual Information System (AVIS) and how we will use this additional signage for advertising and sending out emergency messages, and how it works in combination with this advertising contract. Ms. Jinadu-Wright responded by stating, we have access to all advertising components to send out messages as well as the AVIS signage. The AVIS system allows for a small amount of space which we use mainly for MARTA self-promoting and direct messaging to our customers. Mr. Hunt stated that the AVIS contract would be wrapping up this year.

Mr. Snyder commented, MARTA will receive the MAG or commission, whichever one is higher. My question is what is the commission rate. Ms. Jinadu-Wright answered that the commission rate is 65%.

Mr. Ashe asked is it correct that only two companies offer this type of advertising and we will choose between one of these two companies. Ms. Jinadu-Wright answered, yes, you are right.

General Manager Jeffrey Parker stated that we are going through a solicitation now. Still, as Jennifer mentioned, there was a period in 2008 where the transit industry experienced a backlash with a cut in the MAG due to the market. Given this past year's market, it is fair to anticipate the vendors will consider ridership numbers when determining the MAG in this process.

Committee Chair Ashe called for a motion to approve. Mrs. Hardage made a motion to approve. Ms. Scott seconded the motion. The resolution was approved unanimously by a vote of 7 to 0 with 8<sup>1</sup> members present.

### **Briefing – Non-Standard Bus Shelter Process**

Manager of Special Projects and Analysis, Ryan VanSickle, presented a briefing outlining the non-standard bus shelter process. This process allows external parties to install bus shelters of varying types at MARTA bus stops. The request usually comes from local governments, developers, property owners, businesses, neighborhood associations, etc. The process provides options for stops that do not meet MARTA's shelter criteria primarily based on ridership and land use.

Committee Chair Ashe opened the floor for questions and comments.

Mr. Ashe – stated that this is one of the topics that he gets asked about often and he thanked the team for bringing this information to the Board and for all the work they do.

Chief of Staff Melissa Mullinax stated that MARTA is upgrading the Website to include more access to this process to include an online application process.

**Briefing – 2021 Legislative Update**

Senior Director, Government and Community Affairs, Colleen Kiernan, presented an update of the 2021 legislative session, focusing on Federal and State leadership, MARTA's alignment with the State's economic development strategy, and MARTA's transit line investment strategy. (Presentation attached)

Committee Chair Ashe opened the floor for questions and comments.

Mr. Floyd commented that it is his understanding that the Mayors of North Fulton voted not to spend any more money on transit or something along those lines. Mr. Floyd asked that given that decision should MARTA's vision or focus shift to the East/West lines and a cross-county connection from Bankhead to Tucker along that east/west wall and should the MARTA Board make a statement that our focus will change in that direction. Ms. Kiernan stated that starting with the Bankhead station, the MORE MARTA City of Atlanta funding is ready to go and that she believes the project is set to be delivered by 2025. The idea here is that we will be able to show the results of state investments soon. There are many more projects that warrant State funding in the long-term, and we want to deliver and show real improvements, so the State will continue to make those investments.

Ms. Scott stated she and Ms. Kiernan spoke at the State Legislative session regarding initiatives and proposals from DeKalb County legislators. She is working with them to put this in a State funding request to make sure some of the initiatives are realized earlier than they would without the State funding and this will support parts of DeKalb County.

Mr. Ashe commented that yes, this does merit further discussion by the MARTA Board. The decision was very disappointing and what we do next is a critical conversation that we will have to have.

Ms. Mullinax stated that the conversations with Fulton and their decision is mainly based on concerns about the TSPLOST that they knew desperately would pass with the transit component. The conversation is not dead; MARTA is continuing conversations with Mayors individually. An executive committee has been put together regarding the Top End of I-285, but that is another conversation. This presentation focused on the current projects that we have local funding; for example, you did not see projects in Clayton County presented and that does not mean that we are not working and moving them forward this was not a complete list of projects.

Mr. Floyd stated that as we consider extending MARTA, we must look at where funding might come from and that the mayors in Smyrna to Tucker, including Peachtree Corners, have talked for a long time about ways to solicit funding. It does not look like we will get much out of DeKalb County from the standpoint of more dollars, and it seems to him that MARTA should make some statement or position that if North Fulton doesn't want transit, let's take it somewhere that does want it. We miss a chance or opportunity to make them think that if we left, what does that mean for North Fulton. Ms. Mullinax stated that she believes we all agree with that premise, but she does not think we are missing anything. We are fully engaged with these conversations and there are at least two new ways of funding the top end of 285; it's just not right now.

General Manager Jeffrey Parker stated that one of the key messages and concerns that have come out of multiple conversations we have had with the Mayors in conjunction with our Fulton Board members and elected officials is that this continued focus of sales taxing a singular way of funding transit is not sufficient. It will not be as successful in moving forward / The CEO of DeKalb County points out BRT's importance along I-285 is a major benefit from his perspective to connect areas in DeKalb county to connect people to jobs and more affluent areas to live. We will continue to look into additional ways and options for funding. It will take layers of funding to connect areas of the region. Mr. Floyd stated that this committee needs to put together a plan or format to discuss this topic, and he understands that this is a long-term discuss, but we need to begin the conversation. Mr. Ashe stated that he thinks this is not an either/or choice but complimentary efforts. He also added that MARTA should have strategic conversations on how we will pursue East/West and that it is not just the Mayors along those communities that need to be in the conversation. After the 2020 election, we now have a radically different composition of the Gwinnett County Commission and Cobb County Commission and he encourages MARTA to include those stakeholders in the mix as well. Remembering one of the options we have because of the MARTA amendment that we did pursue in the City of Atlanta with the MORE MARTA project but have not used elsewhere in the region is the opportunity to use sub-county taxation districts. Mr. Floyd stated that he agrees but wants to see a plan of how we will start the conversation. Ms. Mullinax stated that in the March External Relations committee meeting we will layout where we are with the Top End and will certainly start this conversation in March with the Board.

Mr. Tomlinson stated that these are not mutual exclusive conversations, but there are multiple projects and things that we need to talk about. I look forward to the next set of discussions where this is a focal point. Also, the TSPLOST discussion is one ask and is not the only one being discussed on this matter. Mr. Floyd stated that Mr. Tomlinson's Board should be active in these conversations concerning funding for transit. Mr. Tomlinson agreed and wants to make sure this is not an either/or conversation. Mr. Floyd stated that he does understand that transit in North Fulton is important. Mr. Ashe pointed out that the City of Atlanta did step up and increased its funding and should not be punished for doing the right thing and should not be left out of funding options.

**Other Matters**

None

**Adjournment**

The Committee meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Syrene L. Huff". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Assistant Secretary to the Board