

**MINUTES**  
**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**  
**PLANNING & EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**METROPOLITAN ATLANTA RAPID TRANSIT AUTHORITY**

**April 12, 2016**

The Board of Directors Planning & External Relations Committee met on April 12, 2016 at 11:33 a.m. in the Board Room on the 6<sup>th</sup> Floor of the MARTA Headquarters Building, 2424 Piedmont Road, Atlanta, Georgia.

**Board Members Present**

Robert F. Dallas  
Frederick L. Daniels, Jr.  
Jim Durrett, *Chair*  
Roderick E. Edmond  
Jerry Griffin  
Freda Hardage  
Barbara Babbit Kaufman

MARTA officials in attendance were: General Manager/CEO Keith T. Parker, AICP; Chief of Staff Rukiya S. Thomas; Chief Operating Officer Richard A. Krisak; Chief Financial Officer Gordon L. Hutchinson; Chief Counsel Elizabeth O'Neill; AGMs, Elayne Berry, Wanda Dunham, Robin Henry, Benjamin Limmer, Ryland McClendon and David Springstead (Interim); Senior Directors Rhonda Briggins and Donald Williams; Directors Onyinye Akujuo, John Bayalis, Johnathan Hunt and Carol Smith; Manager Janide Sidifall; Executive Manager to the Board Rebbie Ellisor-Taylor; Manager, Executive Office Administration Tyrene L. Huff; Finance Administrative Analyst Tracy Kincaid. Others in attendance Antwan Banks, Nicholas Gowens, Cedric Griffin.

Also in attendance were Pam Alexander and Winston Simmonds of LTK Engineering; Gena Major and Merryl Mandus of SRTA/GRTA; Dianne Mathiowetz of WRFG 89.3 FM; Brionle McCorkle of Sierra Club.

**Consent Agenda**

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- a) Approval of the March 3, 2016 Planning & External Relations Committee Meeting Minutes

On motion by Mr. Daniels seconded by Mrs. Hardage the Consent Agenda was unanimously approved by a vote of 7 to 0, with 7 members present.

## **Individual Agenda**

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### **Briefing – FY 2016 Mid-Year Ridership Review**

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Ms. Smith briefed the Committee on trends in MARTA Ridership for the first six months of FY 2016.

#### *Overview*

- For the first six months of FY 2016, MARTA ridership was approximately 70 million passenger boardings; 1.3 million, or 1.9%, lower than the previous fiscal year and 0.6 million, or 0.8%, above the projection
- Ridership by Mode
  - Rail ridership has been 1.3% lower than previous year
  - Bus ridership has been 2.6% lower than previous year
  - Mobility ridership has shown an 8.3% gain over previous year
  - Rail ridership has been 1.9% high, compared to FY 2016 projections
  - Bus boardings have been down 0.4%, compared to FY 2016 projections
  - Mobility trips were 5.3% higher than projected
- Ridership by Service Day/Type
  - Average weekday ridership dropped 1.8% for July-December
  - Average Saturday boardings declined 6.1%
  - Average Sunday ridership decreased 2.5%
- Ridership by Fare Payment Method
  - Time pass ridership has declined 6.0% from the previous year
  - Stored trip boardings have decreased 4.7% from the previous year
  - Stored value ridership has grown 6.0% from the previous year

#### *Root Causes for Ridership Changes – FY 2016 vs. FY 2015*

- Clayton County
  - Expanded service added 1,385,000 MARTA boardings over the 6-month period (no service last year)

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- Ridership represents a substantial increase over former C-Tran ridership levels
- Large Special Events
  - Reduced by 385,000 passenger boardings over the 6 months
  - No Jehovah's Witness or Beyonce/Jay-Z this Summer, though Alcoholics Anonymous, Primerica, and Gold Cup Soccer made up for some of the loss – no replacement for Garth Brooks (7) or Outkast (3) concert series in Fall 2014
- MARTA's Labor Day "Free Ride Day" produced 105,000 extra passenger boardings (60% Bus; 40% Rail)
- Weather and Holidays
  - July through November featured no net difference in ridership due to inclement weather and holiday effects, compared to previous year
  - December showed a net loss of 470,000 trips due to inclement weather and the holiday season
- Reduced Gas Prices
  - Gas prices were down 28% from the previous July-December period
  - Will likely lead to a loss of approximately 1,095,000 passenger boardings over six months

*Other Ridership Observations*

- Overall predicted net change from root causes for ridership changes is a loss of about 460,000 trips from FY 2015, but MARTA actually lost about 1,330,000 trips
- From November 19, 2015 to December 13, 2015, APC-recorded bus ridership was about 8% higher than breeze-recorded bus "taps", but from December 14, 2015 to January 31, 2016 the difference was about 14%
- From November 19, 2015 to December 13, 2015 Breeze-recorded rail "taps" were about 11% higher than Breeze-recorded bus "taps", but from December 14, 2015 to January 31, 2016 the difference was about 16%

Mr. Daniels asked how did staff reconcile the recorded taps to MARTA's actual ridership.

Ms. Smith said staff will provide a written summary on the reconciliation.

Mr. Durrett said the Board would appreciate that.

Mr. Daniels asked about the impact of smart phone technology referred to as “tap and go”.

Ms. Smith said MARTA will always receive cash, just less of it.

Mrs. Kaufman asked about peer agency ridership.

Ms. Smith said ridership is down across the country. Agencies that have experienced slight increases are the ones that added service. The ridership decline is most likely due to reduced gas prices.

Mrs. Kaufman asked where would MARTA stand without the Clayton County service.

Ms. Smith said Clayton County accounts for approximately 250,000 rides per month.

Mr. Parker said MARTA carries about 10-12 million per month; while Clayton County service is meaningful, it does not determine if ridership outcomes for the month.

### **Briefing – I-20 East Transit Initiative Project Update**

Ms. Sidifall briefed the Committee on the current status of the I-20 East Transit Initiative.

#### *Adopted Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)*

- Result of a two-year Detailed Corridor Analysis which evaluated a broad range of transit alternatives for the I-20 East corridor
- Two components:
  - 12 mile extension of existing MARTA heavy rail transit from Indian Creek Station to the Mall at Stonecrest in eastern DeKalb County
  - 12.8 miles of new bus rapid transit in high occupancy vehicle and general use lanes from Five Points Station Wesley Chapel Road

#### *Project Status*

- Environmental studies initiated for the two components - August
- 2012
  - Environmental Assessment for the BRT component

- Environmental Impact Statement for the HRT component
- Projects were on track to be updated and released for public comment by Fall 2015
- Federal environmental clearance was anticipated by December 2015 for bus rapid transit and late 2016 for heavy rail

#### Regional Plan Update – Managed Lanes

- Georgia DOT Managed Lanes Implementation Plan completed in July 2015
- Recommendation for new managed lanes along I-20 East as a regional priority
- Managed lanes included in the financially constrained Region's Plan
- Requires further consideration in MARTA's ongoing environmental review

#### *Planning Assumptions*

- I-20 East managed lanes not included in regional transportation plan when I-20 East Transit Initiative began in 2010
- "No Build Alternative" assumed no capacity adding projects along I-20 by 2030
  - This has been an underlying assumption for all conceptual planning, ridership forecasts and technical studies
- Change in regional priorities requires that technical analysis consider high capacity transit expansion with managed lanes as part of the "No Build Alternative"

#### *Bus Rapid Transit Planning Considerations*

- Reassess ridership forecasts
- Reevaluate traffic and parking impacts
- Modify bus rapid transit operating plans
- Revise capital, operating and maintenance cost estimates

#### Heavy Rail Planning Considerations

- Develop a new rail alignment
- Reassess ridership forecasts
- Revisit noise and vibration
- Reevaluate traffic and parking impacts

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- Reassess impacts to some resources such as floodplains, water resources, land use, parks, etc.
- Modify heavy rail operating plans
- Revise capital, operating and maintenance cost estimates

*Moving Forward*

- Conduct a performance analysis, over the next 6-9 months, to determine how high capacity transit performs in a corridor also served by managed lanes
- Focus on estimating and evaluating the cost/benefit of three alternatives:
  - Extension of heavy rail
  - Implementation of highway bus rapid transit
  - Extension of heavy rail and highway BRT operating in tandem
- Analysis will inform MARTA's next steps to advance transit improvements in the corridor, including a decision on the scope of any further environmental review
- Staff will bring a recommendation to the Board

Mr. Daniels said now a decision has to be made on which side of the expressway the alternative analysis will focus on, whether it is rail, BRT, etc., either on the north or south side of I-20.

Ms. Sidifall said that is correct.

Mr. Daniels said the project was near the environmental approval stage. Now it appears that it is going backwards in terms of the analysis, based on GDOT making a decision. MARTA was aware that there were lanes by which GDOT had access to in terms of right-of-way, so that should have been included in the analysis well before getting to the environmental approval point. He asked how does staff know that this is not going to cause a total reset.

Ms. Sidifall said it was considered in the analysis. The Authority's alignment proposed for MARTA to be on the northern end of I-20 coming out 285 and the managed lanes were planned for the southern end. At some point towards Panola Road they would switch. MARTA's planned alignment was based on GDOT's proposed concept at that time. The concept has since changed; as a result, MARTA has to take a relook at where it can fit in without causing too much impact

Mr. Daniels asked what will be accomplished during 6-9 month performance analysis.

Ms. Sidifall said MARTA will use that time to consider what is the best investment to make in that corridor. MARTA will look at whether the cost benefit merits moving forward with heavy rail or does looking at how BRT performs in managed lanes merit moving forward in the environmental review process and make adjustments as appropriate.

Mr. Daniels said the alternative that had been chosen by the MARTA Board was to move forward with heavy rail out to Stonecrest. He said the Board was under the impression that MARTA was looking at the north side of I-20 because it is the least developed side. He asked why is there such an adjustment that needs to take place, if the State is doing the managed lanes down the middle.

Ms. Sidifall said one of the primary reasons staff recommended heavy rail was, there was no presence of managed lanes at that time. Although there had been some discussions about it, they were not programmed in any way, which is why MARTA tried to accommodate GDOT's concept.

Mr. Daniels said the impact of the managed lanes is down the middle of I-20 and MARTA's analysis has been primarily of the north side of I-20. He asked why does it seem that the project is starting over.

Mr. Williams said when the managed lanes format changed to having them on both sides it pushed it out further in terms of the overall right-of-way. The envelope for transit is smaller, so MARTA has to take a look at how that impacts its proposed high capacity service.

Mr. Daniels said although the lanes are on the inside of I-20, they are going out further.

Mr. Williams said the right-of-way MARTA initially anticipated to have is not there anymore. MARTA has to reassess the envelope for high capacity service in that corridor.

Mr. Parker said if the managed lanes use two full lanes of traffic it consumes so much of the space MARTA initially had. It will have an impact, as it pushes MARTA out further into the peripheral.

Mr. Daniels said MARTA needs to schedule to meet with the DeKalb Commission and make this presentation to them. He added that MARTA needs to be very transparent in bringing this back to the community.

Ms. Sidifall said staff understands the concerns of the Board. She added that MARTA has shared the Authority's concerns with ARC and GDOT. Staff has had ongoing

discussions with those entities, as well as GRTA. One of the things staff is planning to do as a part of the performance analysis is a concerted public outreach campaign to bring all the stakeholders and general public up to speed.

Mr. Daniels said the Alternatives Analysis is not set in stone. However, it essentially gives a clear guideway towards what the investment would be and advances that to bring a project to actuality.

Ms. Sidifall said that is correct.

Mr. Daniels said it is very disconcerting to have a change of this nature. MARTA needs to be clear and make everyone aware that although an Alternatives Analysis has been conducted it can change abruptly.

Ms. Sidifall said during the analysis process issues like this can arise and cause changes or shifts and staff has to accommodate them as best as possible.

Mr. Williams added that it is not only with MARTA projects – any project across the country will face external forces that may cause an agency to take a second look at alignments or perhaps there is a new technology that needs to be considered. As MARTA goes through an analysis process and gains more information, staff has to address those externalities as part of the environmental piece.

Mr. Durrett said the important thing is how MARTA presents the process, the “rules of the game”, how conditions have changed and how those changed conditions impact previous decisions. That needs to be very clearly articulated and often. He also said that he is in DeKalb County and he completely understands Mr. Daniels’s points. It is really important to get the story honed and presented clearly.

Mr. Parker said MARTA would like to include an introduction from Mr. McMurry and/or Mr. Tomlinson when a presentation is made to the DeKalb Commission. These potential changes to the project are outside of MARTA’s control. He added that Mr. Tomlinson briefed the Operations & Safety Committee several months ago on the managed lanes concept. He also agreed with the Board that this has a significant impact on the project especially in terms of time and FTA requirement. Staff will refine the presentation and make it clearer in terms of how MARTA got to this point and what the impacts are.

Mr. Daniels said the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce and the CID also need to be in the loop. Obviously MARTA needs to take this to the Commission first. MARTA needs to

make everyone aware of this extensive change from what was understood MARTA's position to be as it relates to the expansion of I-20

Mr. Parker said the passage of the gas tax was a game-changer.

Ms. Sidifall said MARTA staff shares the Board's sentiment, in that MARTA was so close in terms of having an approved document.

### **Briefing – Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**

Mr. Bayalis briefed the Committee on the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

#### *FAST Act Overview*

- First major multi-year surface transportation bill since 2005
- 5-year fully funded bill
- \$305B for highways, transit & rail
  - 74 % Highway Programs
  - 20% Transit Programs
  - 6% Rail Programs
- \$280B from the Highway Trust Fund
- \$25B from the General Fund

#### *Transit Funding*

- \$61.1B in total transit funding, including funds from the General Fund
- Total transit funding increases by over 10% in FY 2016 and approximately 18% over five years
- \$48.9B over five years from Mass Transit Account (MTA)
  - 9% in FY 2016
  - 18% over five years
- General Fund Authorizations increase by 16% in FY 2016 and remain flat

#### *Bus & Bus Facilities Program*

- \$695M in FY 16 to \$808M in FY 2020

- Increases by 62.5% in FY2016 and 89% over five years
- Authorizes \$3.758 over 5 years
- Competitive grant program = \$1.52B over five years
  - 38.5% of total bus funding in FY 2016
  - 42.5% of total bus funding in FY 2020
  - 40.5% of total bus funding over five years

*New Starts & Small Starts Program*

- 20% increase in FY 2016
- \$2.38 over 5 years
- Federal Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) federal share now limited to 60%
- Total project cost for Small Starts increased to \$300M and Section 5309 share to \$100M
- Increases domestic content of rolling stock to 60% in FY 2016 – FY 2017, to 65% in FY 2018 – FY 2019 and 70% in FY 2020

*Other New Provisions*

- Changes to Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation (TIFIA) Act
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) projects now included
- Lowers minimum threshold to \$10M
- New pilot program to allow states to substitute their own environmental laws and regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

*Noteworthy Changes*

- Expedited project delivery for capital investment projects
- Art/Landscaping excluded from project costs when calculating cost effectiveness
- Strikes requirement to consider land use policies when in project development
- Two changes to rolling stock designed to add flexibility
  - Use of rolling stock
  - New pilot program

*FY 2016 FTA Formula Apportionments for the Atlanta Urbanized Area*

- Section 5307/5340 - Urbanized Area Formula Program: \$66,183,738
- Section 5307 - Operating Assistance Special Rule Operator Caps: Coming Soon
- Section 5309 - New Starts (Capital Investment Grants): \$2,155,230,000
- Section 5310 - Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities: \$2,931,342
- Section 5337 - State of Good Repair Program:
  - High Intensity Fixed Guideway - \$45,733,773
  - High Intensity Motorbus - \$3,802,446
- Section 5339 - Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Program: \$4,958,645
- Section 5339 - Bus and Bus Facilities Discretionary: \$2,155,230,000

**Briefing – 2016 Legislative Session**

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Mr. Bayalis briefed the Committee on the results on the 2016 Legislative Session.

*Dedicated Transit Funding – SB 369*

- MARTA section applies only to the City of Atlanta
  - MARTA creates a list of projects for city approval
  - City call for a referendum for up to .50% increase in MARTA tax
  - City Votes
  - No county involvement
  - Concurrent with MARTA ACT in length of tax
- T-SPLOST for Fulton County Outside of Atlanta (North & South)
  - Cities and County create a list of projects
  - County calls the referendum (up to .75%)
  - County votes to approve (not Atlanta)
  - Purposes from HB 170 go beyond roads and bridges
  - 5-year duration
- T-SPLOST for the City of Atlanta

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- City creates a list of projects
- County has to call the referendum
- County can veto project list with a supermajority of County Commission
- Limited to .50%

*Next Steps – SB 369*

- MARTA preliminary project list due to city: May 31, 2016
- Deadline for city to adopt resolution authorizing referendum: June 30, 2016
- MARTA submits final project list to city: July 31, 2016
- Election Day: November 8, 2016

*Other Bills of Interest*

- SB 307 – Allows for digital advertising in place of traditional print advertising to maximize impact and increase options (Out Front Media)
- SB 420 – Creates a mandate in counties across the state that any fixed guideway projects be approved by voter referendum prior to moving forward – does not impact current MARTA member jurisdictions, City of Atlanta projects or Atlanta Beltline build out
  - Cobb County BRT impact
  - CID impact
- SR 1085 – Creates a "Regional Transit Solutions Study Committee" that will examine transit governance, funding, branding and its role in congestion mitigation
  - 7 Senators appointed by Lt. Governor
  - Number/location of meetings TBD
  - Final report due to the Secretary of the Senate by December 1 , 2016
- HB 737 – Clean-up bill; to codify the creation of MARTOC

*Other legislative Agenda Items*

- Motor Fuel Tax Exemption HB 289
  - Recommitted from 2015 Session; was not reintroduced in the House Transportation Committee during this year's Session

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- As explained prior to Session, there was little appetite to reopen HB 170 this year; Government Affairs will revisit this issue next Session
- Concessions – Government Affairs will pursue these changes next Session
- Wayside Intrusion – Government Affairs will pursue these changes next Session

*Grassroots Education Efforts*

- Stakeholder Engagement – Several local stakeholders proved instrumental in MARTA’s efforts to educate the public on what MARTA expansion per SB 330/369 would mean:
  - Emory University
  - Advance Atlanta
  - Southface
  - Sierra Club
- Earned Media – Several media impressions were created through stakeholder engagement, most notably through Decaturish.com, AJC.com and The Saporta Report
- Social Media Engagement – Stakeholders received choice links for social media blasts daily that were subsequently redistributed through their individual networks
- Speaking Engagements – Select speakers were presented with high-value public speaking opportunities

**Other Matters**

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No other matters came before the Committee.

**Adjournment**

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The Planning & External Relations Committee meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.