



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is undertaking the I-20 East Transit Initiative. This project seeks to identify transit investments that would increase east-west mobility and accessibility to jobs and housing, provide improved transit service, and support local land use and economic development goals within the corridor.

The intention of this report is to identify and detail the purpose and need for transit improvements in the corridor. This report will provide an overview of the stakeholder involvement, the previous studies in the corridor, the existing and planned transportation system and travel trends, as well as the demographics and land uses within the corridor.

### Purpose and Need Statement

*The purpose of the I-20 East Transit Initiative is to provide transit investments that enhance east-west mobility and improve accessibility to residential areas and employment centers within the corridor. The existing and future roadway congestion in the I-20 East corridor will have an increasingly detrimental effect on automobile and bus transit travel in the corridor. The proposed transit investments are intended to improve travel times and travel reliability by providing a rapid transit service for commuters traveling to and from central Atlanta.*

### Challenges in the Corridor

Based on the evaluation of existing and projected conditions, in conjunction with stakeholder input, the major challenges in the I-20 East Corridor that need to be addressed are:

- **Traffic congestion causes delay and slow travel times** – Over the past few decades, the I-20 East Corridor has experienced substantial growth, which is projected to continue, with a 26 percent increase in population and a 46 percent growth in employment between 2005 and 2030. This rapid growth has driven a steady increase in traffic volumes and congestion. This congestion has resulted in a continued degradation of travel within the corridor and is expected to worsen in the future. For example, the projected 64 percent increase in volumes on I-20 by 2030 is anticipated to increase travel times by 20 to 33 percent.
- **Inadequate access to downtown and other employment centers** – Due to increasing congestion of study area roadways, the transportation system within this corridor has been unable to keep pace with the high demands placed on it by the rapid growth. By 2030, the Level of Service (LOS) on most segments of I-20 is projected to be unacceptable (LOS E or F). Analysis reveals that downtown Atlanta represents the largest single destination for all trips within the corridor. By 2030, access to downtown Atlanta for much of the eastern portion of the study area will be constrained, with travel times to and from downtown Atlanta exceeding one hour.
- **Limited east-west roadways; I-20 is the only real choice** – Commuters traveling the I-20 East Corridor have few options for efficient east-west travel. I-20 is the only viable choice for travel of any distance. The lack of effective travel options continues



to burden the system, particularly those traveling to and from Downtown Atlanta and other major employment centers. Without alternative east-west travel options, increasing congestion on I-20 will serve to further limit mobility in the corridor.

- **Limited planned transportation projects in corridor to accommodate growth** – The lack of viable east-west travel options in the corridor is exacerbated by a long range transportation plan that contains very few projects to address this need. There are no planned projects to provide additional general use lanes or managed lanes to I-20 by 2030. With no planned improvements to I-20 or parallel facilities, east-west mobility in this growing study area will continue to degrade.
- **Insufficient transit service for a growing demand** – Analysis results revealed that transit trips in the corridor are expected to increase at a much higher rate (77 percent) than that of total trips (36 percent). With most of the study area served only by local and express bus service, the need exists for additional investment in transit for the study area.
- **Express buses operate in normal traffic** – The existing express bus services in the corridor are subject to the same congestion and delay as automobile commuters. Despite the lack of travel time benefit, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) *Xpress* service ridership has increased by 300 percent within the I-20 East Corridor from 2006 to 2009, further demonstrating the need for additional transit investment in the corridor.
- **Areas of the corridor are in need of revitalization** – There are many parcels, neighborhoods and communities along the I-20 East Corridor that are vacant, blighted, and underutilized. These areas provide excellent opportunities for redevelopment.
- **Limited transportation options for traditionally underserved populations** – There are a large number of low-income, minority, elderly, and transit dependent populations along the corridor. These traditionally underserved populations have limited access to premium transit.

## Needs for the I-20 East Transit Initiative

Given the challenges facing the study area, improved transit service in the I-20 East Corridor is being investigated to address the following needs:

- **Improved Mobility and Accessibility in the Corridor**
  - Traffic congestion causes delay and slow travel times
  - Inadequate access to downtown and other employment centers
- **Additional Travel Options in the Corridor**
  - Limited east-west roadways; I-20 is the only real choice that spans the entire corridor
  - Limited planned transportation projects in the corridor to accommodate growth
- **Improved Transit Service in the Corridor**
  - Insufficient transit service for a growing demand
  - Express buses operate in normal traffic



- Limited transportation options for transit dependent and elderly populations
- **Support Land Use and Development Goals within the Corridor**
  - Areas of the corridor are in need of revitalization