“SETTING ATLANTA IN MOTION”:


By

ICHIRO MIYATA

(Under the Direction of Bryant Simon)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the ways in which the making of a public transit system in Atlanta ended up not resolving, but instead perpetuating, and even accelerating, the city’s uneven development among the suburbs, center city, and affluent intown neighborhoods. It examines how the different actors, commercial civic elites, suburban county residents, and intown neighborhood residents produced and deployed their own configurations of the concept of “public,” and how these varied and frequently incompatible ideas conceived of, and affected, the public transportation system. Early planning demonstrated that the major beneficiaries of the transit plan would be the white middle class and downtown businesses. Advocates argued that public transit would perform its role as a “public” service by easing or eliminating the traffic congestion which threatened to deteriorate economic growth, while at the same time it would contribute to the convenience of suburban commuters. This concept of “public,” however, was fundamentally at odds with the notion held by African-Americans and suburban county residents. Each of these groups held a substantial stake in public transit and its impact on their neighborhoods. Failure to reconcile the conflicting understandings of “public” resulted
in Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) losing in 1968 two county referendums to begin construction. Conversely, the victory of the public transit referendum in 1971 was a direct result of MARTA’s new plan, which included a 15-cent flat rate fare, a rail route to the poor African American neighborhoods in Northwestern Atlanta, and incorporation of the existing Atlanta Transit System’s bus network. An even more important factor in the victory was the efforts of intown neighborhood residents. These residents had engaged in campaigning against expressway or toll-way proposals, and strongly supported the idea of public transit. They stressed the important role that public transit would play in protecting the environment, private property, historic buildings, and public institutions.

The potential that these conceptions of “public” held, however, was undone in the actual implementation of the plans. The making of public transit as a result of the victory led only to the unmaking of public space, and ultimately of the transit itself. The construction of downtown stations terminated the contingent rise of a diverse, multiracial downtown enclave, which had previously shown signs of emerging as a public sphere in which the underprivileged could raise their voices. The death of this incipient public space foreshadowed the eventual abandonment of poor African-Americans’ demands for a flat fare and a route to poor communities. Despite its popular image as African-American transit, MARTA succeeded only in preserving the affluent white intown neighborhoods. More importantly, however, it also failed to meet its original goals of eliminating the auto-dominated urban infrastructure and uneven development among the suburbs, city centers and existing old affluent communities.

INDEX WORDS: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Public Space, Public Transit, Suburbanization, Anti-Expressway Campaign, Urban Renewal, Gentrification, Tourism, S. Ernest Vandiver, Charles L. Weltner, Sam Massell, Underground Atlanta, Urban History
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Introduction

Setting Atlanta in Motion is MARTA’s philosophy. This is indeed the public need.1 (MARTA Theme song, 1973)

Atlanta’s postwar planning literature was filled with the language of growth. The commercial civic elites, who had long dominated both the business and political worlds of the city, emphasized that the rapid increase in population and number of businesses represented none other than Atlanta’s elevation to the circle of “national cities,” a category which already included such major urban centers as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago.2 In 1961, Atlanta’s Chamber of Commerce, “the Shadow Government” in the regime of growth liberalism, postulated that the sixties would herald Atlanta’s “coming of age.” Rather than continuing to be “the town which movies and books have long portrayed as the hub of Southern hospitality and the Fried Chicken of the World,” the city would take its place as the “booming nerve center of the South,” showcasing “a broad beamed face of fancy new skyscrapers, fast moving expressways, great wealth, and plenty of hustle.”3

However, this excitement on the part of the commercial civic elites was not entirely genuine. Their enthusiasm for growth in fact masked serious anxieties about their role and status in the changing city, because that growth accompanied a series of conflicts which threatened to destabilize the status quo. In particular, these powerful white businessmen could not overlook the fact that the source of their power, downtown, was in decline.4 Clearly,

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1 “Setting Atlanta in Motion, attached to a letter from J.H. Cone to Allan Kiepper, February 20, 1973, RCB 51870, 3-83-9-2, Unit 1, Folder “MARTA [Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority] Theme Song,” Georgia Archives, Morrow, Georgia.
2 I employ the term “commercial civic elites” to refer to, in Blaine Brownell’s words, the members of “chambers of commerce, merchants’ associations, businessmen’s clubs and other major civic organizations” who played a leading role in the field of urban planning since the early twentieth century. See Blaine Brownell, “The Commercial Civic Elite and City Planning in Atlanta, Memphis, and New Orleans in the 1920s,” *Journal of Southern History* 41 (August 1975): 340.
4 On the decline of downtown, see Robert Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950* (New Haven:
metropolitan Atlanta had been showing unprecedented growth. Nevertheless, at the same time it was painfully evident that only the peripheries, outside the city limits of Atlanta, were displaying the signs of prosperity, while the central city, which had comprised the very heart of Atlanta’s commercial and social activities, was losing its major constituents, particularly white homeowners and business owners, who were leaving for the surrounding counties or other areas.5

Consequently, commercial civic elites, including city planners and policymakers, sought solutions that would restore the prestige of the center by resolving this “unfair” distribution of postwar prosperity. It is important to note that they did not reject suburbanization outright, but instead attacked the haphazard nature of its expansion, which threatened the continuation of the downtown core as the center of commercial, political, and social activity. In particular, they asserted that traffic congestion was a product of this uncontrolled sprawl. They held that such congestion was indicative of a lack of sufficient expressway planning, and thus a failure to deal with suburbanization as people bought more cars and built their houses outside the city limits. Cars clogged streets and necessitated parking spaces, preventing efficient circulation of goods and people. The demand for more highways and parking lots to ease traffic led in turn to the destruction of commercial and residential buildings. Ultimately, this could have a devastating effect on city finances, crippling the city’s capability to obtain sufficient tax revenue. To make

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matters worse, these developments were taking place precisely at a time when further expansion of public services was sorely needed due to the deterioration of the city.

The major countermeasure proposed by commercial civic elites was the rearrangement of the transportation network. First, they would continue to build expressways, following the 1946 Lochner plan, which went on to serve as the foundation of expressway planning for the second half of the twentieth century. Second, they would seek an alternative method of circulating people in the form of a publicly-constructed, publicly-operated rapid-transit rail system. The installation of public transit systems was already being considered in several other cities at the time, including Washington D.C., Los Angeles, and Seattle; simultaneously, the federal government was in the process of producing an act that would provide matching grants to local governments for the construction of rail transit. Obtaining this federal grant was of paramount concern to Atlanta’s commercial civic elites. City-builders in all metropolitan areas believed they were in a fierce competition for financial resources and they saw it as “a zero-sum game” in which failure “to recruit new industrial plants, shopping malls, freeways, rapid transit lines, and the like was to lose them to another city.”

For the commercial civic elites in Atlanta, this public rail transit represented a bright future that would resolve the tensions with which they were preoccupied by enabling them to effectively “re-plug” peripheral communities into the downtown area. Moreover, by utilizing existing railway tracks, rapid rail transit would not disrupt de facto geographical distribution.

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The strength of mass transit lay in “its ability to attract and keep riders, and at the same time enhance and not disrupt the residential, commercial, and industrial pattern of the metropolitan area.” However, justifying a development project of such enormous scale was no easy task, because it was necessary to convince the citizenry to support their taxes being used for this purpose. In short, the commercial civic elites needed to bring about a citizens’ consensus as to how and why mass transit was a public project worthy of the expenditure of billions of dollars of tax money.

The city-builders’ dream came true within about twenty years after the idea was introduced. In November 1971, DeKalb and Fulton Countians endorsed the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Agency’s plan for a 52.1 mile rapid rail system with 40 stations, along with the purchase of the Atlanta Transit System bus network and 17.6 miles of busways. Attaining this victory, however, required that they travel their own long, tough road. Their public transit proposal had to go through three statewide general elections in 1962, 1964, and 1966 and three local referendums in 1965 (Cobb, Gwinnett, Clayton, DeKalb and Fulton), 1968 (DeKalb and Fulton) and 1971 (DeKalb, Fulton, Gwinnett, and Clayton). It failed to pass in the 1962 statewide election, which sought a constitutional amendment to make public transit a State of Georgia’s responsibility, and in the 1968 local referendum, which would have created a 32 station, 40.3-mile rail system in DeKalb and Fulton Counties. The 1968 proposal planned to finance the transit system by ad-valorem taxes, although there was an expectation that MARTA could get approximately 50 percent of the cost in federal matching grants through the Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMTA) of 1964. The other initiatives, while ultimately successful, were nevertheless very close contests. For instance, the 1965 local referendum,

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which called for each county to ratify its participation in the public transit network, saw booming Cobb County refuse to contribute to the system. Even in the 1971 metropolitan referendum, the MARTA plan suffered overwhelming defeat suburban Gwinnett and Clayton counties.

This dissertation investigates how this downtown business establishment’s idea of public transit was realized in Metropolitan Atlanta and the manner in which their vision reflected the transformations of the landscape of power in the Sunbelt city. Analyzing the ways in which Atlantans determined to build this gigantic development project enables us to take a fresh look at the changes in race, class, and gender relationships in post-war Metropolitan Atlanta. In the remainder of this introduction, I locate this study of Atlanta’s public transportation within the historiographical map of urban/suburban history, public transportation history, and Atlanta’s history. I then introduce the methods and theories that I apply in this study of Atlanta’s public transit, thereby enabling one to see this system as a public sphere through which to research the change and continuity of racial, class, and gender relationships in post-civil rights Atlanta.

I. Historiography

In the 1980s, a new generation of suburban/urban historians has revealed how residents in booming suburbs played a major role in shaping the course of post-war American history. In particular, they began to unravel how suburbanites gained their social and political consciousness in relations to other places or people in metropolitan area. Earlier suburban historians revealed how lifestyles and ideas developed inside the homogeneous, white middle-class “bourgeois utopias,” and traced the historical origins of these phenomena.10

Kenneth Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier* is a watershed achievement in the field, because it successfully placed the suburbs in the context of larger socio-economic patterns. Post-war growth materialized in urban peripheries as subdivisions with detached houses: The prime promoter of the construction of those massive single-family residential areas was federal government. Highways, Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA) mortgages and a series of tax exemptions for homeowners triggered many white middle class and working class white families to move into urban peripheries and make their American Dream, which was to own a single detached home, come true.\(^\text{11}\) Since the late 1990s, a younger generation of historians has discovered how the suburbs served as a stage for the “grass-roots” rise of the Right, particularly after the seventies. These scholars located this development in the residents’ relationships with the federal government and with other parts of their metropolitan regions, with particularly old, inner city area, which housed civil rights activism, coercive integrations, expansion of governmental power.\(^\text{12}\)

Among this group, Matthew D. Lassiter successfully sheds light on the ways in which civil rights legislation produced a situation in which racial divisions were further complicated by...

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\(^\text{11}\) *Kenneth Jackson, Crabgrass Frontier. See also David M. P. Freund, “Marketing the Free Market: State Intervention and the Politics of Prosperity in Metropolitan America,” in Kruse and Sugrue eds., The New Suburban History, 11-32.*

class differences. His study of Sunbelt cities, including Charlotte, Atlanta, and Richmond, demonstrates how upper-class whites in affluent “island suburbs” succeeded in freeing themselves from desegregation. Moreover, he shows the manner in which their clever use of the “color-blind” discourse homeownership rights enabled them to avoid busing to integrate the public schools. Taken together, Lassiter’s work is significant because he uncovers how affluent white suburbanites played a decisive role in limiting the achievements won in the fights for the civil rights of the underprivileged. Even more importantly, Lassiter reveals how wealthy whites succeeded in inventing a powerful tool to preserve their privileges (good schools, safe environment, and high property values) and to mask the continuation of prejudice and inequality based upon racial and class differences. Learning from Lassiter’s work, this dissertation illustrates how the rhetoric of “color blind” and the neutral notion of “public” played a major role in preserving “island suburbs” in Atlanta’s metropolitan region, particularly inside the city limits, by advocating the construction of public transportation despite the fact that it was seldom used by affluent whites.13

Recent scholarship also does a keen job in uncovering the relationships between the suburban “grass roots” campaign and the presence of the federal government. People who lived in affluent areas with single detached homes obtained a substantial amount of protection and financial help by their national government, but they took it for granted. Once their property value or neighborhood racial or sexual orientations’ homogeneity was threatened in the progress of the civil rights legislation, for instance, they fiercely blamed the federal government

for its expansion of power, portraying it as socialistic and advocating smaller, “neo-liberal,”
government. As Robert O. Self shows in his study of metropolitan Oakland, California,
suburban residents brought about a tax revolt, successfully obtaining a tax deduction, and
preserving their accumulated wealth—despite the fact that they were the very ones who had
been helped by federal government. This dissertation, too, reveals the preservation of power
by residents of suburban Atlanta. Because MARTA threatened to connect downtown Atlanta to
island suburbs and peripheral counties, the residents of these areas were motivated to consult
with each other and seriously commit to the issue of downtown Atlanta’s future. In doing so,
they sought to establish their political and social consciousness in relation to that of the
multicultural urbanites. By shedding light on this reality, this dissertation joins in the challenge
posed by new suburban scholarship that endeavors to “take a broader metropolitan perspective,
paying attention to the place of suburbs in political and economic relationship with central cities,
competing suburbs and their region as a whole.”

Moreover, this dissertation demonstrates that liberals, moderates, and environmentalists
often contributed to the perpetuating this landscape of power. In doing so, it draws on the
model provided by Lassiter in Silent Majority, which reveals how moderates that capitalized on
the “color-blind” meritocracy. Likewise, this study benefits from sociologist Sharon Zukin’s
pioneering demonstration of the ways in which the notion of “lifestyle,” which had originally
emerged in the New Left movement as a symbol of resistance to the dominant market culture,
changed with the rise of corporate mass consumerism, emerging as a weapon for middle class
consumers to brand and distinguish themselves from the economically weak. Zukin also
portrays how historic preservation efforts motivated the wealthy to save their residential areas

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14 Self, American Babylon, 6; also see Robert O. Self, “Prelude to the Tax Revolt: The Politics of ‘Tax
Dollar’ in Postwar California,” in Kruse and Sugrue eds., The New Suburban History, 144-160.
and resulted in new residences for “Yuppies,” or young, upwardly-mobile professionals, near the city center. Those places that were unable to meet the standards of historic value, which were of course relative, got bulldozed for the upscale festive/market street that, it was hoped, would draw more “desirable” customers. Moreover, Bryant Simon’s recent examination of Starbucks uncovers how their “liberal” or “environmentalist” outlook was a product of the growth of corporate culture and how its rise in turn diminished government’s role, and hence, spurred the growth of the neo-liberal regime. This dissertation reveals the ways in which the support of highway rebels and environmentalists for public transportation not only failed to solve fundamental traffic or environmental problems, but ultimately ended up contributing to the preservation of exclusive neighborhoods and high property values.

This dissertation also aims to enrich the history of public transportation. Zachary Schrag’s The Great Society Subway: A History of Washington Metro marked a new generation of urban public transit historians. A student of Kenneth Jackson, Schrag urges scholars take a historical approach to analyze the roles that public transportation has played in shaping the postwar metropolis. He cautions against relying too much on the quantitative data (i.e. number of passengers, costs, and revenues) in discussing the history of the public transit, because this approach tends to focus on whether or not it’s the service is successful while blinding scholars to, for instance, the process by which public transit saved neighborhoods by obviating the necessity

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to build more expressways.\textsuperscript{16} Schrag further argues that the establishment of the Washington Metro was a product of a series of negotiations among by planners, federal officials, engineers, homeowners, architects, developers, and users. Finally, Schrag uncovers how the federal government got involved in rapid transit policy, how its various agencies created the route, employment, and station plans, and how the Washington Metro functioned well as a public space.

Schrag’s in depth cultural and political analysis of the Washington Metro is a role model for historians of public transit and urbanization, and it has influenced the current study. Nevertheless, this dissertation does attempt to merely apply Schrag’s approach to Atlanta. First of all, this project is not a comprehensive biography of MARTA.\textsuperscript{17} Rather, this dissertation uses MARTA as a lens to look at how the transport systems creation reflected change and continuity in the relationships between different social groups. A further decisive difference lays on the fact that Schrag’s story starts with an assumption that public transportation is essentially good and mine does not. He pays attention to the grass-roots resistances against the construction, but attributes their discontent with Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) to misunderstandings and miscommunications.\textsuperscript{18} Additionally Schrag argues, “Washingtonians and visitors remark on the stunning beauty of Metro stations and the

\textsuperscript{18} See, for instance, Schrag, \textit{The Great Society Subway}, 153-161.
cleanliness of its trains, but they are less likely to think of the neighborhoods preserved from expressway construction, the growth of regional corporation or the addition of an important public space to the metropolitan region.” He also explains that his ultimate aim is “to bring attention to some of Metro’s achievements,” which is “largely taken for granted.” He concludes as follows:

The word “republic” is derived from the Latin term *res publica*, literally, a “public thing.” Metro is a public thing. It is public transportation, public works, public policy, public investment, and, since its opening, public space… As a symbol of urbanity, a preserver of neighborhoods, a work of beauty, a political unifier, a sharper of space, and a meeting ground for all Washingtonians, Metro makes Washington that much more the great city dreamed of by visionaries from Peter L’Enfant forward, and it makes America that much more the Great Society envisioned by Lyndon Johnson and the liberals of the 1960s. The visionaries have not and never will achieve perfection, but Metro shows that even in pragmatic matters of planning, idealism has a place.

I do not disagree with his contention. My stance, however, is that the “public thing” cannot essentially be neutral, which means that it often works as an agent of the powerful. As Neil Smith and Setha Low have pointed out, “[i]nsofar as the so-called public sector, represented by the state, often acts as the cutting edge of efforts to deny public access to places, media..., and other institutions, the contest to render spaces truly public is not always simply a contest against private interests.” This dissertation likewise is interested in power relationships and the manner in which the notion of “public” was appropriated by a certain group of people for a certain purpose. In other words, this dissertation seeks to shed light on “the landscape of power” embedded in the building of a massive physical structure in the metropolis of Atlanta. My goal is to illustrate how citizens encountered the rapid transit plan and how they attempted

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19 Ibid., 10
20 Ibid. 5.
21 Ibid., 282-3.
to capitalize on it. In support of this objective, each of the dissertation’s seven chapters constitutes a snapshot focusing on different places and materials.

This dissertation also contributes to the field of Atlanta history. As a center of the New South and a Mecca for the black middle class, Atlanta has drawn a tremendous amount of attention from historians. 23 Many of these scholars refer to MARTA; their account says that MARTA represents a failed public transit, for it does not reach to the towns in the booming suburban counties. The loser image stemmed from the opposition of suburbanites to joining the system, because of their fear of African Americans from the inner city. As Richard Hubert classic analysis shows in detail, this is not untrue at all, but this dissertation reveals clearly that many affluent whites inside the city limits supported the public transportation system. 24 This try is worthwhile because this research requires a metropolitan scope, which means that this dissertation observes the neighborhoods inside and outside the city limits all together. Analysis


based upon the simple binary of suburban/inner city or black/white does not fully explain why the rich whites living in a classic suburb vehemently supported public transit along with many inner city African Americans, including their black domestic workers. Finally, this dissertation does not view MARTA as a mark of liberal idealism, as Schrag does WMATA, because it often worked to preserve the power of the privileged.  

Anyone researching the making of MARTA needs to examine the agency of African Americans, particularly the activism of poor African Americans. Indeed, many scholars have dealt well with the role of African Americans in city politics. Winston A. Grady-Willis deserves particular mention for his *Challenging U.S. Apartheid*, because it succeeded in uncovering the grass roots level of the African American civil rights movement. This dissertation likewise intends to make a contribution to the understanding of poor African Americans’ activism by showing how they spoke up in the 68 and 71 MARTA public hearings for referendums.  

In addition, I try to shed light on the ways in which Atlanta’s commercial civic elites tried to obtain the federal grants, and how the matching grant and attendant regulations and rules played a big role in shaping metropolitan Atlanta’s urban landscape.  

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25 For instance, the political scientist Clarence Stone in *Regime Politics* demonstrates that endorsements of a certain policy always require the formation of coalitions between several political blocs, and that these often formed according to racial and class differences. He contends that the 1971 MARTA proposal gained support because of a coalition comprised of commercial civic elites, in-town neighborhoods, and African Americans. See Stone, Part II, “Postwar Events, 1946-1988,” in Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 23-178. The public transit system was far from solving the racial and economic divide of the metropolitan Atlanta. See, for instance, Douglass Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); also see Bullard, Johnson, and Torres eds., *Sprawl City*.  


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historiography of Atlanta’s history has often over-emphasized the role of business leaders; this dissertation breaks with this approach by paying more attention to ordinary citizens and attempting to show how they played a decisive role in shaping their future destiny —life amidst urban sprawl and the rise of conservatism at the end of the 20th century. There is no doubt that these ordinary citizens played a crucial role in shaping Atlanta’s political and physical landscape, and this dissertation demonstrates this truth by looking closely at the role of neighborhood organizations in bringing this gigantic public development project to Atlanta.28

To do so, I draw on Kevin Kruse and Matthew Lassiter’s vital unraveling of how the rise of the conservative South, which urges us to study the political culture of suburbanization in the Sunbelt region. Kruse’s White Flight reveals why and how “white flight” occurred and how it led to the rise of an anti-federal and neo-confederate style of conservatism. The strength of his book, like that of Lassiter's, lies in his use of public/private dichotomies as an analytical tool for discovering the origins of the rising power of conservatives in the metropolitan. According to Kruse, the key to revealing the emergence of the New Right lies in how white Atlantans inside the city limits responded to the desegregation (or preservation of de facto segregation) of the city’s public and private space and institutions. His narrative shows convincingly that the white lower middle class and working class’ surrender of public spaces (e.g., golf courses, swimming pools, public schools, and Atlanta Transit System buses) instilled in them a sense of loss, as if they had lost their basic civil rights. On the other hand, white middle class shopkeepers saw their restaurants, grocery stores, and hotels eventually desegregated, a development they viewed as the loss of their individual property rights to the agitations of black student activists. One such businessman was Lester Maddox, the owner of Pickrick Restaurant.

Maddox, a staunch defender of the “Southern Way of Life” and later governor of the State of Georgia from 1967 to 1971, was successful in articulating their anger and in helping them articulate the same in their resistance against the African Americans’ pursuit of freedom. Those who were defeated left the city for suburban counties and planted the seeds for the rise of the conservative Right in adjacent counties like Cobb and Gwinnett. Severing their connections to the city, they embraced anti-statism, anti-city, and anti-taxation, and excessive privatism. This so-called suburban secessionism helped trigger the rise of the Republican Party since the late sixties.

The works of Schrag and Kruse are particularly insightful. Schrag successfully placed federally funded rapid transit systems in the center of analyses of American democracy and culture. Kruse, on the other hand, explained the political changes of the Sunbelt South by using the public/private space and institutions as a center of investigation. Using public transportation as a lens, this dissertation aims at discovering how and why various social groups gathered around the public transit idea and built new relationships or maintained past bonds while bringing to fruition a public works project with an economic impact as big as the Tennessee Valley Authority. The making often reflects the change of power relationships, and the notion “public” itself changes its meanings and role according to who and when use the term. In this sense, the fluid boundaries between public and private become a significant subject for historians to examine.

**II. Methodology**

MARTA was essentially a publicly owned and publicly operated railway and bus system. Its construction and operation was backed by tax money and fare revenue. Unlike private transit
services, MARTA necessitated the voters’ endorsement of its route, fare, budget plan, and employment structures. The resulting statewide general elections and local referendums created situations in which members of many social groups who usually lived in separate worlds came together, collided, compromised, and united over the public transit idea. Accordingly, public transportation worked as the creator of a true public arena, since the referendums, public hearings, and even radio programs provided Atlantans with a venue to discover what rapid transit was all about, leaving them to ponder the situation and to express their opinions. These opinions, meanwhile, were firmly enmeshed in his or her social and economic standpoint. In short, the public transit debate itself formed one big public arena.

1) The Rise of a “Strong” Public Sphere and the Making of Public Transit

This dissertation relies on the interpretation of public sphere provided by Nancy Frazer, who elaborated on Jurgen Habermas’ theory of public sphere and applied it to the contemporary world. According to Habermas, the public sphere, which was located between state and civil society, was the vehicle of the modernization. In the sphere, people could raise their voices and transform the same into one united force. For the German sociologist, this heyday did not last long because the public sphere was absorbed into the state in the process of industrialization. In addition, it came to be regarded basically as the territory of the male bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Nancy Fraser argues that the capability of public sphere should be revived in the post industrial and multicultural society. She finds public spheres to be multiple and multi-layered. For example, racial minorities, feminists, gays, and working class people, create
their own “subaltern counter publics (emphasis in original)” in competing with a larger, dominant public.\textsuperscript{29}

This dissertation uses Fraser’s elaboration of Habermas’ theory to historical analysis. According to Fraser, the task of scholars is not to explain the decline of the public sphere or to celebrate minority’s challenges, but to discover “the contestory interaction of different publics and identif[y] the mechanisms that render some of them subordinate to others.”\textsuperscript{30} The advantage of Fraser’s conception is that it allows researchers to investigate how different publics emerged and how they interacted with one another. More importantly, Fraser also updates Habermas’ assumption of a sharp separation of the state and the public.\textsuperscript{31} The public sphere, Fraser argues, plays a vital role in the state’s decision making process. By introducing two publics—strong publics and weak publics—Fraser blurs the distinction between the state and civil society. Whereas weak publics signify a “public whose deliberative practice consists exclusively in opinion formation,” which is similar to Habermas’ original definition of public sphere in its quality, strong publics are forged around broad systems like a “sovereign parliament” where publics could play a role in “encompass[ing] both opinion formation and decision making.”\textsuperscript{32} Fraser further argues that the scale of strong publics vary from neighborhood organizations to a super public, which includes elections or referenda, and which constitute an arena where different publics contest over the manufacturing of state “public” policies that would affect citizen’s lives.\textsuperscript{33} Atlanta’s public transit, which accompanied

\textsuperscript{29} Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” in Craig Calhoun, ed., Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 123.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 128.
\textsuperscript{31} The expansion of the welfare state incorporated the public sphere into its body; thus, public sphere could no longer be a source of political power. According to Habermas, public opinion formed in the public sphere constituted to a major force in resisting the state’s prerogatives.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 132-33.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 136.
referendums and general elections, represented these strong publics. Drawing on Fraser’s insights, this dissertation focuses on the rise of these publics, from weak to super, and how the interplay of “public opinions” led to the completion of the Atlanta’s public transit system.

2) Public Sphere/ Public Space/ Public Transit

The historical study of the birth of public transit requires more complicated analysis by locating the notion of “public” at the center of its discussion. The meaning largely varied according to who used the word, where, and when. Thus, this dissertation will investigate the differences in the appropriation, answering how and why the dissimilarities emerged. In other words, this dissertation contextualizes the discursive appropriations of the notion of “public,” which was vital in the post civil rights era, when Americans, and not only Southerners, sought desirable racial, gender, or class relationships in their daily life in public arenas by using public power. It is thus necessary to dismantle how the notion of “public” plays out in public spheres, because assuming that referendums or general elections form authentic, essential public spheres only produces celebratory narratives. Such accounts an impression that, regardless of the results, they should be viewed as a product of a satisfactory democratic process.

However, the content of the debate, opposing voices, and the process of the formation of public opinions, should deserve more attention. Legal scholar Gerald E. Frug contends that initiatives and referenda often only foster “privatization” of public services and spaces. In the contemporary world, there is no longer “the primary example of ‘public’ decision making—of direct democracy in action.”34 “Private prejudice” easily takes over the processes of direct democracy, because of “the private nature of the vote in a referendum or initiative—the absence

of public discussion and accountability.”35 Frug’s insight urges historians to closely investigate how public opinion is created and how, during debate, the notion of “public” developed. This dissertation constitutes a modest effort to do so.

To do so, of course, requires defining the term public. I believe that MARTA is a fine topic for research because it contains the two major ingredients necessary to define the term public: first, the existence of space/sphere and, second, the belief in an entitlement.

Habermas and other thinkers, such as Hannah Arendt, saw public as a space/sphere where people encounter the stranger and obtain his/her worldview, with the results of this encounter constituting a major ingredient in the forming of political voices. According to Arendt, the term public represents the “space of appearance” where “everything that appears… can be seen and heard by everybody.” She continues, “[t]he presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves.”36 Others agree with Arendt. For instance, geographer Don Mitchell asserts that public space epitomizes “a site of interaction, encounter, and the support of strangers for each other.”37 Furthermore, many scholars, including Mike Davis, Michael Sorkin and others have demonstrated that such spaces are in decline due to the growing influence of a market oriented culture and neo-liberal urban policies.38 Through its required elections and final construction, public transportation has played a central role in shaping these public spaces, including public hearings, forums, and

35 Ibid.
elections, buses and train cars, parks and festive places. The questions this dissertation poses are how Atlantans made or unmade these public spaces in the creation of their public transpiration system and what and whose understandings of the term “public” were active.  

The spatial understanding of the public sphere does not fully display what the notion designates. Arendt and Habermas’ assumption was that people already had obtained their economic, social, and cultural resources, which then worked as a precondition to turn them to be a political being. But the term public also means the society (state)’s role in granting the resource to the people, even to the strangers. As point out by Michael Ignatieff, to fulfill “the needs of strangers” is a fundamental function of the state. Public transit is an entitlement for all citizens to enjoy a public life. For the auto-less poor, public transportation provides the fundamental means to get to the workplace, schools and cultural institutions. Therefore, the state should present this service in such a way that it fulfills the needs of strangers in the expense of other citizens.

That said, the primal objective is not to present how differently public actors in Atlanta imagined public transit according to their race, class, and gender. Rather, this dissertation will uncover how perspectives on “public transit” varied and conflicted, and how the systems creation marked the making of new relationships amongst the various public actors. In other words, the objective is to reveal how the notion of “public” was elastically appropriated to cement existing social relationships and often to empower the underprivileged.

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39 Many scholars point out that public transportation represents the model public space. According to Frug, like “walkable street,” public transportation (or mass transit) constitutes “two of the major sources of public space in America.” Frug argues that “driving” is “private affair” because it “fosters focusing on oneself (daydreaming, putting on makeup), interaction with people one knows (dayphones),… listening the radio.” Frug, “The Legal Technology of Exclusion,” 210.; Eric Avila, Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
III. Chapter Distributions

This dissertation is chronologically comprised of three parts. Part I shows who the early public transit advocates thought be the public in their efforts to draft a public transit plan and to pass the Urban Mass Transportation Act. Chapter 1 looks at planners’ literature, and demonstrates how the vision of “public” therein emerged in the context of “growth liberalism” and presented mass rail transit as contributing to the welfare of middle class homeowners by increasing their financial assets and providing smooth auto-traffic by reducing cars in expressways. Chapter 2 reveals the ways in which politicians, including Ernest Vandiver, William Hartsfield, Ivan Allen, Jr., Gerald Horton, Charles Weltner, joined a national endeavor to persuade the federal government to provide a matching-grants for the planning (and later the construction) of public transit system. This chapter’s aim is to uncover who they imagined would be the major beneficiaries of the public transit and to show how in fact conflictive with those were in need of its help.

While Part I analyzes the ways in which commercial civil elites and politicians created their notion of public, Part II sheds light on how business elites tried to “educate the public” to support their particular vision of a mass transit system and they failed to do so. Chapter 3 illustrates how the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100 tried to enlighten Georgians in order to create a better public transportation system. Despite opposition, these advocates were successful in making Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority to receive federal grant and start an actual planning. Chapter 4 demonstrates how MARTA encountered grass-roots resistance in Buckhead and African Americans, how MARTRA’s responded to these voice of protest, and how their response led to their failure to build a consensus for the 1968 DeKalb and Fulton County referendum.
Part III traces how citizens participated in the campaign for public transit, and managed to achieve changes in the transit plan when Atlanta's public transit failed to meet its objective of providing satisfactory services, particularly for the underprivileged. This part also uncovers how the construction of the public transit system led to the destruction of a burgeoning downtown public space. Chapter 5 investigates how MARTA supporters succeeded in their 1971 metropolitan referendum to initiate rapid railway construction and purchase of existing Atlanta Transit System bus network. This chapter particularly focuses on the successful, grass-roots efforts of poor African Americans to challenge the MARTA plan and its premise of enhancing the growth liberalism. This chapter thereby sheds light on how African Americans redefined the meaning of “public” in supporting for the new proposal. The poll results, however, show that white neighborhoods in white island suburbs residents caste more “yes votes in the referendum, when Clayton and Gwinnett, two white suburban counties, refused the plan with a large margin. Chapter 6 uncovers how these white “island suburbs” near the city center became strong supporters of the public transportation, and discusses the deep relationships between anti-highway campaign and environmental movements. Moreover, this chapter portrays the emergence of a new liberal interpretation of “public” transit, but, simultaneously, explores the conservative ending, which was to save the existing classic suburban landscape in their communities. This was at odds with the heavy development of the urban core to prevent urban sprawl and constituted a critical blow to the destructive nature of the growth liberalism, but it failed to get fully along with African Americans’ requests to create more livable places inside city limits and make more busways. The chapter 7 shows how public transit construction killed the public space that had been contingently emerging in Underground Atlanta area. MARTA portrayed their transit system as a symbol of Atlanta’s history (a.k.a.
Public History), but the construction contributed to the demise of the public space by bulldozing streets and historic buildings inside the designated festive place and helped to turn it into a sanitized tourist enclave. The epilogue points out how MARTA helped Atlanta maintain its existing spatial and social landscape by keeping affluent neighborhoods “suburbanized” both inside and outside of the city limits, as well as reinforcing downtown commercial space, and how this situation constituted an unexpected and ironic result of the efforts to tame urban sprawl.
PART I  The Rise of the Public Transit Idea, 1952-1964

This part tries to uncover how the idea of public transit emerged in Atlanta in the early fifties. Particularly, I will demonstrate the ways in which the downtown business establishment, urban planners, and engineers produced their own version of public transportation plan in their planning literature, a series of testimonies to gain federal funding, and speeches to amend the state constitution to make a public transit agency. This part’s goal is to shed a light on the process that the origins of super public, which means an arena where social groups with different racial and economic backgrounds gather, negotiate, and build new relationships was produced and who the maker of the public transit thought its public transit’s major beneficiaries. This part is comprised of two chapters. First chapter uncovers how planners, engineers, and downtown business leaders, voiced public transit’s crucial role of public transit. This chapter especially pays special attention to what they meant when they claimed the role of “public” transit. In the subsequent chapter attempts to shed a light on the ways in which the change of federal government policies on urban mass transit made Atlanta’s public transit idea no longer be a dream. The grand aim of this chapter is to show how public transit advocates elaborated their notion of public transit in such a way that they could gain the federal matching grant, and again, how they changed who the public transportation’s beneficiaries were supposed to be.
Chapter 1

“What You Should Know about Rapid Transit”: The Emergence of the Public Transit Idea in Atlanta’s Early Planning Literature, 1952-1961

Introduction

This chapter seeks to uncover how incipient ideas about public transit in Atlanta emerged in the early fifties. To explain why Atlanta was in need of public transit, planners, engineers and downtown business leaders constructed their own notion of “public” transit. This original notion of public transit constituted a foundation for subsequent debate, in which many social groups contested the legitimacy of the initial conception and offered their own articulations, which will be examined in later chapters.

I. Envisioning a “New Type of City in the Future”: Up Ahead and NOW-For Tomorrow

The idea of rapid transit naturally emerged in city planning literature. The documents and pamphlets authored by the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) served as clear manifestations of the future that commercial civic elites envisioned and projected for Atlanta. The MPC, metropolitan Atlanta’s planning body, itself represented Atlanta’s power structure. In 1947, the State of Georgia’s General Assembly tabled an act to establish the Metropolitan Planning Commission for the Metropolitan Planning District, which covered the regions comprised of Fulton and DeKalb counties. The MPC was composed of fourteen affluent whites, including the mayors of Atlanta and Decatur, and the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Roads and Revenues of Fulton and DeKalb County. The MPC’s mission was “to make... a master plan for the orderly growth and development of the district,” but MPC did not itself possess the power to implement its plan and proposals. Rather, “The commission’s
actions [are to be] advisory only… [it is incumbent on the commission] that it submit its planning proposals… in the form of a recommendation only.”

Supported by “both the city and downtown business leaders,” however, the commission played a vital role in articulating commercial civic elites’ vision for the future development of Atlanta. After their seminal survey, Metropolitan Atlanta: Factual Inventory (1951), the commission produced a report on the present state of their metropolis, in Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use for Metropolitan Atlanta (1952), followed by NOW- For Tomorrow (1954). The idea of rapid transit was initially introduced and developed in these key documents.

Up Ahead (UA) and NOW- For Tomorrow (NOW) acknowledged Atlanta’s current progress and attendant hopes for its continuation, but the MPC was far from being optimistic. It stressed that the volume of Metropolitan Atlanta’s population, trade, industry and commerce would continue to grow for at least the next two or three decades. Yet at the same time, it cautioned that this progress would produce not only wealth, but also confusion. Revealing that the Metropolitan Atlanta – DeKalb, Fulton, Cobb, and Clayton—would gain another half million in population – to embrace “1 1/4 MILLION PEOPLE,” NOW urged its readers to follow the MPC plan and prepare for this drastic population increase, which would ultimately bring “thousands of new homes, twice as many children in schools, three times as many cars on the streets, more riders on the buses, hundreds of new stores and industries, and comparable increases in every phase of life and economy.”

For the MPC, Atlanta’s growth was unavoidable so long as it remained the “center of transportation, communications, commerce,

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2 Ibid., 5.
and culture for the entire [Southeast] region,” roughly containing such booming Sunbelt states as Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina.\(^3\) As the “center” of the Sunbelt southeast, \textit{NOW-for Tomorrow} contended, Atlanta would continue to “feel [the] maximum impact [of economic progress].”\(^4\)

The troublemaker in this situation was not the development \textit{per se}, but outward expansion, because the continuous trends toward suburbanization were sapping away the heretofore unchallenged superiority of downtown. Metropolitan Atlanta “has been growing faster 'outside' than 'inside'” for the last two decades.\(^5\) Atlanta gained approximately 30,000 people in the 1940s and 50s, while the metropolitan area outside the City of Atlanta obtained approximately 100,000. During these two decades, “the trend of decentralization moved faster than ever.”\(^6\) Far from seeing this as a problem, the MPC saw in outward expansion an opportunity to provide metropolitan Atlanta with “great comfort, beauty, and efficiency.”\(^7\) According to \textit{NOW}, Atlanta in the early fifties had “a real opportunity to develop patterns of living, working and playing that were not possible in the late Nineteenth Century when most of

\(^3\) MPC, \textit{Up Ahead}, 2.
\(^4\) MPC, \textit{NOW-for Tomorrow}, 6. Charles Rutheiser rightly points out in his \textit{Imagineering Atlanta} that the MPC “greatly underestimated the scale and intensity of suburbanization that was to come.” \textit{Up Ahead} and \textit{NOW for Tomorrow} reveal that planners at that time noticed that suburbs were growing and ruining the advantages that downtown enjoyed, but they did not view it as an eminent threat. Rather, they believed that it was tamable. See, Charles Rutheiser, \textit{Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams} (New York: Verso, 1996), 152.
\(^5\) MPC, \textit{Up Ahead}, 11.
\(^6\) In 1952, the City of Atlanta annexed a part of Fulton County’s unincorporated area, which extended approximately 83 square miles, in order to offset the population rise in the suburbs. This so-called “Plan of Improvement” enabled the City of Atlanta to add 100,000 to its population, which was the same number of people the unincorporated area in Metropolitan Atlanta gained. Yet, it was obvious that this was not enough to reverse the decentralization. On this “Plan of Improvement,” see Ronald H. Bayor, \textit{Race and the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 85-7.
\(^7\) MPC, \textit{Up Ahead}, 3.
America’s larger cities grew into bigness.”\(^8\) Indeed, they may have thought that it was high
time to realize Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City ideal:

There is no need to crowd hundreds of thousands of people into a congested central area. Rather, we can find ample living space out in the green countryside, thus combining the social advantages of living in a small town with the economic and social advantages of big city.\(^9\)

It was also evident for MPC members that outward expansion, which was an obvious national trend, would continue. “American genius will make better and better highways”; thus, “suburbs will then push farther and farther out…. Most of the new growth will have to take place in the lateral dimension.”\(^10\)

Nevertheless, this did not mean that these planners favored *unregulated* expansion. In particular, they denounced the dispersal of commercial, residential, and industrial functions when this was understood to harm the interests of the downtown area. The MPC staunchly maintained that a strong downtown was the foundation for Atlanta’s future progress. From their point of view, the problem lay in the fact that the prosperity ushered in by the rapid growth appeared to only be benefitting the outlying areas. For instance, *UA* expressed concern at the fact that “new construction outside the City of Atlanta has been phenomenal.”\(^11\) Fulton County, outside the city limits, had already been through a period of rapid growth, while dwelling construction in DeKalb’s suburban, unincorporated area tripled from 1940 to 1950.\(^12\) In contrast, in central Atlanta slums were growing. According to *NOW*, “slum housing encircles the central business district, depreciating property values and choking commercial expansion,”

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\(^8\) *NOW*-for *Tomorrow*, 6.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) *Up Ahead*, 6.

\(^11\) Ibid., 3.

\(^12\) Ibid., 36.
while, again, “the areas of superior housing are scattered around the outside in all directions.”

The fact that “most of the new structures in the outside areas have been single family houses,” meaning that they comprised a lucrative source of tax revenue now denied downtown, also bothered downtown business elites.

It was this uncontrolled, “metropolitan explosion” for the MPC cast a “long shadow of emerging problems.” The list of evils contained “TRAFFIC JAMS, PROPERTY BLIGHT, UNWISE LAND USE, [and] DEMAND FOR PUBLIC FACILITIES.” Through such detrimental effects, suburbanization would sap Atlanta’s vitality. The planners emphasized that such dangers could be averted through the introduction of “balanced” growth, which aimed at maintaining de facto landscape (and thereby, the status quo) by preserving downtown as the heart of commercial and cultural activities in the expanding metropolis. For example, UA insisted, “from an economic point of view, the downtown business district is the single most important area in Metropolitan Atlanta,” stressing that it represented “the highest real estate valuations which make up a large part of the local tax base.” NOW reassured constituents that the CBD (Central Business District) would regain its vibe soon, stating that “The 1980 prospects for Central Atlanta are bright,” because by then Atlanta would have seen office space grow by 62%, retail space by 41%, more hotels, and the construction of “convention and entertainment facilities, a University-Culture Center, a Government Center, and a Grady Medical Center.”

In short, Atlanta should welcome outward expansion, but only when it would not threaten downtown commercial activities and depress property values. The MPC argued that dispersal

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13 Ibid.
14 NOW-for Tomorrow, 6.
15 Up Ahead, 42.
16 NOW-for Tomorrow, 10. Charles Rutheiser summarizes their strategy, which was to develop the railroad gulch between Five Points and the Whitehall-Broad Shopping District and to zone the area around the State Capitol as an area for governmental institutions. Rutheiser, Imagineering Atlanta, 150-1
would be beneficial only so long as planners and policymakers understood two facts—first, “decay in downtown business activities and property values could be a blow to the local economy,” and second, the unplanned dispersal of commercial areas would produce “a serious blight of [suburban] residential properties and an increase in traffic along non-arterial neighborhood streets.” ¹⁷

That the planners’ goal was to tame expansion in order to retain a strong urban core was also evident in their reluctance to accept the federal defense policies, which in fact demanded the scattering of industrial and administrative functions in major cities. In the midst of the Cold War, UA could not ignore national requests, and conceded that defense should be afforded prime consideration. “The U.S. city—our city or metropolitan area—can become a TARGET,” it wrote, noting that therefore the central government recommended the “dispersal of critical sites” so as to diminish “our target value to a potential enemy.” ¹⁸ In sum, Atlanta’s “chances of survival” would “depend on how well we [Atlantans] scatter our plants and facilities.” However, the MPC clearly did not fully concur with this national trend, observing that while “Defense policy and urban trends point in the same direction—outward,” at the same time the “haphazard dispersal” of industry, commerce, and governmental establishments, was “worse than no dispersal at all.” ¹⁹ Once again, “To be effective, dispersal must be according to a plan,” UA asserted, “Defense is not all a matter of targets. It is also a matter of production.” ²⁰

In other words, the MPC was in favor of outward expansion and the benefits it brought, but only so long as such expansion was carefully regulated in order to prevent the established system – based around a productive and vibrant city center – from being destabilized. On a

¹⁷ Up Ahead, 43.
¹⁸ Ibid., 7.
¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Ibid.
host of issues – social, economic, and even military – time and time again the MPC asserted that a strong city center was vital to Atlanta’s future.

II. To Save the Urban Core: Getting Rid of Slums and Traffic Congestion

Accordingly, through “planning,” civic and commercial elites tried to keep downtown economically vibrant and socially viable in such a way that they could retain the source of their power. Consequently, the proposal for future planning articulated in *Up Ahead* and *NOW-for Tomorrow* saw a great many pages spent on covering methods for restoring the urban core. For the MPC, slums and traffic congestion constituted twin evils that were together accelerating the central city’s decay; therefore, full restoration of central Atlanta would necessitate first the eradication of these two evils.

The MPC thus proposed conducting slum clearance and improving traffic circulation. It also attempted to explain the origins of these two problems in terms of unbalanced growth between the center and the periphery, thereby implicitly exonerating the elites themselves from blame. Neither was the connection between the expanding suburbs and the declining center drawn subtly; rather, the MPC argued that there was a direct correlation, with “the big population growth outside” having triggered the downtown area’s loss of population from 1910 to 1940.21 People with moderate means were leaving the city for the suburbs, the MPC contended, and the poor occupied the old mansions where the affluent once resided. These buildings gradually degraded into apartment or boarding houses. According to the 1950 census, “about 18 percent, or nearly one out of five, of the dwelling units in the city limits of Atlanta … were rated substandard.”22 These became Atlanta’s “high-cost, low-revenue-producing areas,”

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21 Ibid., 39.
22 Ibid., 67.
necessitating an immediate cure, for here was to be “found most of Atlanta’s crime, juvenile delinquency, broken families and welfare cases.”

The prosperity, or lack thereof, of certain areas was held to be due in no small part to accessibility and traffic issues. Failure to provide decent circulation would simply kill the entire city, NOW claimed: “Circulation—or the lack of it—can make or break a city.” Moreover, it continued, “Ease of circulation throughout the community determines in large measure the growth and prosperity of our business and industries, the continued soundness of our tax base, and the convenience and safety of our citizens.”

According to NOW, Atlantans “were losing the traffic battle.” They “face[ed] mounting congestion that daily takes its toll in money, time, and trouble.” Moreover, planners argued that the increase in traffic played a major role in the city’s decay. The steep increase in auto-ownership in the postwar period had led to the construction of more highways and parking spaces, and the bulldozing of decent commercial and residential sections of the City of Atlanta. Planners emphasized moreover that

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23 Ibid., 36. The MPC did not overlook the role that race played with regard to the downtown’s deterioration. They acknowledged that “the suburban growth to date is largely a white phenomenon.” According to UA, “one of Metropolitan Atlanta’s pressing problems is that of housing the colored population.” NOW lamented, “Negroes, lacking open space for expansion, continue to concentrate at high densities in the old neighborhoods surrounding the downtown business district.” MPC, NOW-for Tomorrow, 12. For MPC planners, the “Negro housing problem… stems from this group’s inability to find either enough available second hand housing or enough open development land to meet its growing needs.” America had a large second hand housing market, which enabled the “average American family” to access “better housing and automotive transportation.” Nevertheless, a “large number of colored people” were so underpaid that “a serious concentration of Negroes in unhealthy and inadequate downtown neighborhoods” occurred. Evidently, blacks’ “inability to find” decent housing stemmed from the Jim Crow system, which prevented blacks from finding decent jobs and accumulating wealth. However, the MPC did not attribute blacks’ plights to perpetual, structural discrimination, but instead stressed the dangers of blacks’ frustration over the difficulties of finding decent accommodation. “The pressure to expand has pushed this group into white neighborhoods and tensions have resulted.” According to the MPC, this had a detrimental effect because the social unrest over the housing market “hurts property values due to the uncertainty of future.” MPC, Up Ahead, 39.

24 MPC, NOW-for Tomorrow, 41.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.
the deterioration of the central city was a result of these “negative factors” stemming from traffic problems, “such as congestion, inadequate parking, and traffic jams.”

Furthermore, planners saw heavy traffic itself as a “mark” of decay, a decay which often grew slowly and imperceptibly. Indeed, as NOW acknowledged, it was not easy to predict which neighborhoods were in decline if the rot was in the early stages, although already in Atlanta many lived in “neighborhoods which are beginning to feel the effects of blighting influences, influences which creep in so gradually as to be almost imperceptible until they have gained a strong hold.”

The consequences of failing to diagnose and remedy the disease, however, were dire: “Many are beginning to feel the blighting effects of heavy traffic on residential streets, conversion of single family homes into apartments, and encroachments on business and industry. If something isn’t done to reverse present trends, these will be ‘day after tomorrow’s slums.’”

The ongoing outward expansion, which would then lead to a sharp increase in the number of commuters, would only worsen this encroachment of automobile traffic.

However, addressing the traffic congestion problems and improving circulation posed a difficult challenge for planners. Fulfilling the demands of street and expressway construction was not easy, even if the City of Atlanta and the State of Georgia undertook great efforts to ease the circulation. After all, to “tie together the 300-square mile ‘urbanized’ metropolitan area of the future,” the MPC asserted, would demand vast quantities of “wide ribbons of asphalt and concrete in all directions.”

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27 MPC, *Up Ahead*, 42.
29 Ibid, 8.
III. Public Transit as “A Special Case”

In the meantime, the MPC insisted that in Atlanta expressway construction conducted under the Lochner plan would produce an efficient circulation of people and goods. Expressway construction was held out as preferable to developing other transportation methods, or to alternative methods of easing circulation. The MPC contended that, “Other U.S. cities built miles of subways at huge expense. Atlanta would not need it. Highways, not rapid transit, were explained to be the key for decent local transportation in the future.”31

On the other hand, however, Up Ahead referred to the eventual necessity of a new mode of transportation – mass transit. As it currently stood, transit was facing significant difficulties, again related to the cluster of factors identified above. Up Ahead pointed out that “local transit service is getting more difficult to provide” due to the ongoing suburbanization. Urban and suburban dwellers were becoming scattered in “fringe areas,” which made it increasingly difficult for them to reach, for instance, bus or trolley stations, producing as a result “less bus and trolley patronage per operating time.”32 This would produce a situation where “operating costs rise and revenue drops; on the other [hand], the need for more and better service in the thinly populated suburbs continues to increase.”33 For the MPC, in 1954 “the big problem—the $64 question—is how to make the transit pay for itself in the fringe areas.”34 In the age of sprawl, it would be difficult for mass transit companies to provide “good service” in “suburban areas.”35 At the same time, Up Ahead suggested that mass transportation eventually be made indispensable in the future, when outlying areas themselves became densely populated (not, of course, at the expense of the downtown core). “It is possible that, after the [peripheral]
area reaches 900,000 people and is connected with fast highways, the transit operation will be profitable as a whole—and provide adequate service in all sections.”

Thus, for all its recognition of the long-term value and need of public transit, UA did not see it as an urgent necessity. According to UA, it was just up to “the public,” which “has a right to demand and get good service from its transit system.”

In its 1954 report, NOW likewise contended that public transit would be needed “within a few years,” but, as sociologist Larry Keating argues, NOW still “remained vague as to exactly when such a transportation [system] should be built.”

Both UA and NOW thus acknowledged the need for public transit, but denied this being a cause for immediate concern, and declined to commit to a schedule for its implementation. Compared to UA, however, NOW’s plan was more detailed and practical with regards to clarifying how public policies could solve traffic congestion, although what type of public transit they wanted was ultimately left undetermined.

The particulars that the MPC set forth concerning eventual transit plans deserve attention. According to the MPC, expressways were to have “30- to 40-foot center malls to provide right-of-way for rubber tired or transit vehicles.” After constructing a “center mall [exclusively] for express bus use,” the MPC argued, it would be possible to “later turn the trunk into a railway to install rail rapid transit or monorail.” For NOW, transit “had a huge advantage” in making “the most efficient use of streets.” In fact, the MPC proposed there that “Downtown Transit” would have its “own right-of-way free of automobiles” in the downtown area, which would significantly ease traffic flow. Moreover, the Commission came up with

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
39 MPC, NOW-for Tomorrow, 54.
40 Ibid.
“Downtown Fringe Parking,” which entailed the construction of “large parking lots along the southeastern and southern edges of the central business districts,” with the aim of making commuting to the downtown core less stressful for suburbanites. After parking his or her private automobile in one of these parking lots, a commuter would hop aboard a shuttle bus to get to their CBD destination. Accordingly, this “expressway transit plan” was primarily designed for suburbanites commuting to downtown to work and shop, which from the perspective of the MPC would enable Atlanta to “restore… the essential close relationship between living and working areas … that existed in pre-automobile days.”\(^{41}\) That is to say, behind the plan lurked the hope of preventing downtown decline through enabling, and more firmly securing, suburbanites’ ties with the city center.

\(^{41}\) Ibid.

NOW spent considerable space explaining why “expressway transit” deserved to be constructed and operated \textit{publicly}. “Why,” NOW asked, “should the community worry about transit going the way of the horse and buggy?”\(^{42}\) First of all, the private bus company, the Atlanta Transit System (ATS), was not able to provide the above-mentioned services, claiming that “for the most part, the recommendations of the Commission are not within the power of the Atlanta Transit Service to achieve.”\(^{43}\) Clearly, drastic change of the role of local government and financial resources was necessary, the MPC insisted in NOW. It also contended that building a “new express transit plan” would \textit{involve public policy decisions which must be made by local and state governments supported by public understanding of the problem.}” Because its lines extended from the City of Atlanta deep into suburban counties, the MPC called for the

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 52.

\(^{43}\) Ibid.
establishment of a larger governmental agency which would provide appropriate service, for
“service should not be confined political boundary lines.”

The second reason given for Atlanta needing truly public transportation was that transit “is
important to everybody—to the transit rider, to the automobile rider, and especially to the
taxpayer.” According to NOW, the State of Georgia’s Transit Study Committee discovered in
its survey A Plan for Transit Improvement in the Metropolitan Area of Atlanta, Georgia (Nov.
1953) that “55 percent of the people in the downtown shipping and office district came by [ATS]
bus.” Public transportation was important not only for “the transit rider,” however. In
addition to transit riders, it was expected that automobile drivers, whose number was rapidly
increasing, would appreciate public transit, for it would play a vital part in eliminating traffic
congestion. For NOW, public transit was particularly effective for a city with an old downtown
like Atlanta, where “the street system was developed to accommodate the horse-drawn vehicle
rather than the automobile.” Reflecting its historical development, spatial usage in
downtown Atlanta was not conducive to the construction of numerous more streets and parking
lots to accommodate large numbers of private car commuters. The MPC pointed out that “The
intensive development of the land,” in the CBD produced “high property values and many
physical obstacles,” which simply made it impossible to construct more streets and parking lots
in the area. On the other hand, “one trolley bus” that could transport “as many people during
peak hours as twenty automobiles” would enable Atlanta to retain more taxable land, since cars
would take “ten to fifteen times as much street space to move people as by transit.”

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44 Ibid., 54.
45 Ibid., 52.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Italics mine. Ibid.
MPC concluded, therefore, that public transit would produce an environment where “those who use their automobiles can move smoothly, swiftly, and safely.”

Business elites and policymakers unanimously agreed that keeping downtown commercially viable would perpetuate Atlanta’s further progress. Public projects including urban renewal, slum clearance, and expressway construction, were consequently introduced to fulfill this twofold mission—first, deleting slums to recover an attractive downtown core, and second, constructing expressways to promote suburbanites returning to the central city to work and shop. Within this context of revitalizing and maintaining the city center, the MPC offered public transit as a tool to alleviate traffic congestion and aid downtown renewal. However, this plan was not taken seriously, and what was pursued instead was the construction of more expressways under the Lochner plan.

IV. Rapid Transit as an “Essential Part of Long Range Transportation Requirements”:

Access to Central Atlanta

After their publication of *Up Ahead* and *NOW-for Tomorrow*, the MPC’s interest in rapid transit persisted. William Hartsfield, who served as Atlanta’s mayor from 1937 to 1941, and again from 1942-1961, was a strong advocate of downtown revival, urging the carrying out of “more urban renewals, to solve the problems of city center’s blight.” Hartsfield proposed various ways to refurbish the urban core, including the construction of auditoriums, parks, and stadiums, recreational facilities, and, of course, rapid transit that could make use of existing railways inside and around Atlanta. In 1959, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce president Ivan

50 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 16, 144.
Allen decided to run for mayor, seeking to take over Hartsfield’s mission with his endorsement. His political plank was called the “Six Points Program,” in which he promised the immediate construction of a civic auditorium, more expressways, and PR programs, along with the construction of a rapid transit system.53

In was in 1959 that the MPC began a series of four transportation policy studies, and published Access to Central Atlanta: Expressway Policy Study, the purpose of which was to update their freeway planning. It is significant, therefore, that public transit occupied an important part in its report.54 The overarching goal of the MPC, however, had not changed notably from that articulated in the previous reports, Up Ahead and NOW-for Tomorrow. The MPC contended that Atlanta’s city center would remain the center of metropolitan Atlanta’s commercial and business activities, “because the Atlanta Central Business District is squeezed into less than one percent of the city’s land area, it provides nearly 20 per cent of Atlanta tax digest, 25 percent of Atlanta’s employment, and nearly 20 percent of all employment in the six-county metropolitan area.”55 Traffic congestion would “restrict” the progress of the center (and hence in the MPC’s conception, that of metropolitan Atlanta as a whole) by making it more difficult for citizens to access downtown. Investigation revealed that constructing more expressways would not constitute a solution. Planners had to provide better ways for automobile drivers, the number of which was increasing at an unprecedented pace, to get on (or off) and enter (or exit from) downtown. Access to Central Atlanta explained:

Even if a hundred expressway lanes were to converge on downtown, even if there were unlimited room inside the core area for additional buildings, and even if problems of circulation inside the core were solved for all time, future downtown growth would still depend on the capacity of these “gateway” surface and ramp streets. The exit demand on

54 Metropolitan Planning Commission, Access to Central Atlanta: Expressway Policy Study (1959), i.
55 Ibid.
These streets during the evening rush hour has already reached 40,000 persons per hour, but the net capacity available is less than 36,000 persons per hour under present conditions of street use. In other words, our projections indicate that the physical improvements NOW programmed will not bring capacity above the rising demand curve, much less keep it there. If future capacity is not maintained above demand, the resulting congestion will not only discourage future downtown development, but it will also discourage full unitization of the downtown buildings already built or programmed.56

MPC’s “policy recommendations” indicated that they would demand more “operational & physical improvements,” including the construction of “downtown expressway connectors…, ramps…, a minimum system of one-way streets…, improved signalization, more viaducts.” Even if all of these recommendations were acted upon, the MPC strongly argued that the provisions would work only until 1975.57

Moreover, physical and operational improvements would cost so much that it would be more reasonable to make use of vehicles that could carry more passengers than could private automobiles. For the MPC, it was evident that “buses represent a much more efficient use of street space than an equivalent number of private autos.” According to the survey, approximately “49 percent of all persons” leaving downtown during the rush hour period used buses (“ride transit”). If the ridership increased to 54 percent by 1970, it would “provide an available exit capacity of some 55,000 persons, even with no pass-through traffic eliminated.” On the other hand, the decline of bus ridership to 46.5 percent would result in a drop in exit capacity to 39,000 persons, which would fall far below the total 1980 exit projection of 57,200 persons.58 As was noted, “This illustration points strongly to the fact that, in terms of moving people rather than vehicles, any slight change in the proportion of persons carried by transit produces a substantial change in the available capacity for getting people in and out of

56 Ibid., ii. Italics mine.
57 Ibid., 30.
58 Ibid., 21.
downtown."59 In short, it was now crystal clear that Atlanta needed a public transportation system, which would “be an essential part of our [their] long-range transportation requirements.”60 While the MPC was still orientated towards preserving the vitality of downtown, in the face of the situation it could no longer postpone plans to implement rapid transit. The rapid transit plan that emerged was revealed in the MPC’s next document in this transportation series – *What You Should KNOW about Rapid Transit (What)* – which was presented as “a discussion report” for the MPC’s future comprehensive plan. The MPC proceeded to change its name to the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC), and as part of a multi-component response to the traffic challenges faced by the city, continued its efforts to bring rapid transit to Atlanta.

V. “You” as Automobile and Property Owners: *What You Should KNOW about Rapid Transit*

Readers expecting a clear idea of what form rapid transit would take, and what this would mean, would be disappointed by *What*. The conception of rapid transit set out in *What* remained, as in the previous reports, vague. The report stated, “Rapid Transit may be defined as the movement of a large number of people by means of fast-moving, self-propelled vehicles operated individually or in trains over an exclusive right-of-way without interference from other traffic.”61 According to the report, rapid transit could take the form of “subways, elevated railways, conventional two-rail rapid transit (surface), air-cushion vehicles, classical monorails,

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
supported monorails, and suspend monorails.” The ARMPC also considered “Lavacar, Carveyor, Unibus, buses on expressways, and commuter railroads.”

As a booklet for education, the significance of What stemmed from its attempts to explain articulately how and why rapid transit should be public transit. As with the previous reports, What stresses the disastrous economic and social outcomes of traffic congestion, and how by helping to save downtown, public transit constituted a contribution to general welfare. What asserted that without public transit, Atlanta would need “120 EXPRESSWAY LANES RADIATING TO AND FROM CENTRAL ATLANTA, AND A 28 LANE DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR,” which would literally flatten out most taxable properties in the urban core. To solve this pressing problem, Atlanta would need “the proper combination of buses, automobiles, expressways, and something new for this region – RAPID TRANSIT.”

Furthermore, What argued that public transit would work for Atlantans’ general welfare, by making it easy for commercial civic elites to conduct regional planning. Laying out rail or bus routes beforehand in undeveloped peripheries would enable planners and policymakers to anticipate where to build public institutions, including schools, fire stations, and roads. This would prevent the misuses of tax money, promising “maximum services for each tax dollar spent.” To drive the message home, What raised the specter of what Atlanta would look like if this approach was not followed: “random sprawl” without sufficient planning would lead to “added public expense, waste land, and general ugliness.” Moreover, the report continued, rapid transit would promote the efficient use of land between the urban core and the suburbs: public transit

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 9.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 10.
will be necessary to serve the existing highly concentrated population and employment centers. However, these centers in Atlanta are not contiguous, but instead they exist in small clusters in a scattered pattern throughout the region. If these clusters are connected by a rapid transit system, the area between the existing centers will develop at higher concentration.\(^{66}\)

Another reason for embracing rapid transit was simply to boost Atlanta’s reputation. According to *What*, “major cities,” including New York, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York, were all planning to construct their own rapid transit systems. Rapid transit was therefore indispensable to join the ranks of the “national cities.”\(^{67}\)

As the demand for public transit grew, the advocates became more articulate in formulating just who comprised the “public” to which they addressed their arguments, drawing upon the language of public duty to convey to the readership what was to be done. The stated objective of *What* was to “present the citizens of Greater Atlanta with facts and figures about rapid transit” and to help the “ARMPC develop a rapid transit plan for this urban region,” urging the readers to turn in “your reactions—either by mail, by telephone, by visiting the office, or at a series of planned meetings.”\(^{68}\)

However, in practice their target was rather more limited than this language would seem to suggest. According to *What*, public transit was introduced to help all those who were suffering from traffic congestion, including “the businessman, the taxpayer, the bus driver, the housewife, and the government official.” This apparent inclusiveness was explained in terms of professions, gender roles, and civic duties, but noticeably racial and class differences were entirely absent. *What* further urged “the public,” particularly property and automobile owners, to acknowledge that construction and operation of rapid transit would be a very costly enterprise,

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 13.  
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 22.  
\(^{68}\) Ibid.
but that “the cost of not having it will be even greater.” To stress how rapid transit would benefit all, *What*, paradoxically, emphasized how rapid transit would help private auto-owners “re-claim” expressways, revealing perhaps more than the authors had intended about the subtle racial undertones to the project:

Expressways are indispensable for some during “rush” hours and for everybody during off-peak hours. Rapid Transit, on the other hand, will not only carry the load that expressway can’t handle, but it will also facilitate and “re-claim” expressways for normal use. Rapid transit will free expressways of burdensome overloads they were never intended to carry.70

*What* also contended that public transit would boost property value.71 While referring to Toronto, Canada, where “property values within two blocks of the rapid transit lines have jumped three to seven times their former value,” *What* also remarked upon the fact that “assessments in subdivisions of the city adjacent to the lines have gone up 31 percent.”72 These examples, *What* contended, would guarantee that “The property owners of this metropolitan area have much to gain from rapid transit and much to lose without it.”73 Furthermore, *WHAT* demonstrated how cities like Cleveland succeeded in increasing their tax revenue by building a rapid transit system.74

Yet another argument that the ARMPC made in this report was that Atlanta’s rapid transit would not cost much due to the fact that Atlanta already had a railway network available for the new rapid transit. *What* introduced three “right of ways” as possibilities for line locations: 1)
expressway right-of-way, 2) railroad right-of-way, 3) major street right-of-way, and 4) new exclusive rapid transit right-of-way. The most favorable of these options in Atlanta was a “Railroad Right of Way,” What asserted. In addition to being a reasonable option, it would also effectively meet the ARMP’s objective, which was to enable the smooth flow of traffic between peripheral communities and downtown. Old towns, including Marietta and Decatur, had developed along railways, and so utilizing existing railroads for rapid transit thus provided the most efficient set up. What argued that,

Although there are historical reasons for this, it is interesting—as well as fortunate—to note that the railroads are laid out along the major corridors of urban growth radiating from the central city. This means that they are well located from the standpoint of ‘tapping’—or serving—a rapid transit market.

Because of this advantage, What stressed, the amount that drivers of private automobiles were paying for the construction and maintenance of expressways would not exceed the cost that transit users would have to pay. In the words of the report, “Insomuch as the general public is ‘subsidizing’ private automobile use to such an extent, it would seem appropriate to investigate the desirability of similarly ‘subsidizing’ rapid transit, which is clearly a more efficient and more ‘available’ mode of travel for the use of the general public.”75 In subtly drawing upon the imagery of fairness and public duty, this functioned as an effective appeal to automobile drivers to understand supporting rapid transit as a rational and fair extension to the existing system.

With all of these reasons, What stressed that this rapid transit proposal was both beneficial and realistic. Moreover, What was well aware of the future need for federal assistance, introducing “a bill for aid to urban transportation,” which would “make federal money available for rapid transit planning and construction.” Although it did not provide the details, the

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75 Ibid., 28.
ARMPC predicted that this was “almost certain to become national policy within the next few years.”\(^{76}\) The net result of the report was thus an argument for public transit that was based on a foundation not substantially different from what had come before, but that demonstrated a far greater grasp of the issues and an ability to articulate these to the intended readership.

VI. Public Transit for the White Middle Class Public: *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit*

Based upon *Up Ahead, NOW, and What*, the ARMPC produced a comprehensive plan, featuring a major role for public transit. It then published this plan as *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit*.\(^{77}\) In this first detailed study of the rapid transit proposal, the ARMPC became still more articulate in demonstrating why Atlanta needed its own public transportation system, and in conveying that message in such a way as to dovetail with the values of the middle class audience. The ARMPC’s future projections showed that metropolitan Atlanta’s population growth and economic progress would not cease anytime soon. *Rapid Transit* emphasized that “within the next decade there will be a strong need and market for a high quality regional rapid transit system to relieve the expressway network *NOW* under construction.”\(^{78}\) More importantly, *RT* argued that federal assistance was highly expected in the near future. The ARMPC’s high hopes for assistance from the federal government was made overt by the reference on the cover page to President John F. Kennedy’s special message to Congress, which stressed the need for early planning for “mass transportation.”\(^{79}\)

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{77}\) Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit* (June 1961).

\(^{78}\) Ibid., ii.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., i.
The ARMP’s image of public transit also emerged in far greater clarity. According to *Rapid Transit*, the proposed system was to consist of “60 miles of high-speed trunk line serving all five counties, with through service connecting” downtown with communities in outlying areas. Furthermore, the rapid transit cars were to showcase America’s state-of-the-art technology, “consisting of lightweight, electrically powered, automated vehicles, with steel or rubber tired wheels operating on double rails of steel or concrete steel generally paralleling railroad right of way, and under central electric control.”

The 33-page document was filled with visual images stressing rapid transit’s state-of-the-art technology and its progressive character, no doubt making a striking and inspiring impression on readers who would then be prepared for the coming referendums.

Behind the visuals and progressive language, though, remained the same basis as those of the previous reports: the assumption of a strong, vibrant downtown, the continued progress and success of which was seen as persevering well into the foreseeable future. “Downtown employment has grown from 46,000 employees in 1941 to 64,400 in 1958,” announced the report confidently. Even “conservative estimates… place [downtown employment] at 79,000 in 1970 and 92,000 in 1980.” Dividing the metropolitan area into seven categories (“Downtown,” “Uptown,” “Close-in Industrial Belts,” “Close-in Neighborhoods,” “Outlying industry and commerce,” “Suburban Neighborhoods,” and “Rural Fringe”), the ARPMC stressed the continuing, axial significance of the city center:

The very presence of a big-city downtown with big-city skyscrapers, financial houses, and ideas, makes the Atlanta region an international city with international opportunities, and enhances the outlook for nearby industrial and commercial development in all adjoining counties. Once lost, a good downtown is hard to replace, and the only serious threat to its continued health and economic destiny is peak-hour congestion.

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80 Ibid., iii.  
81 Ibid., 2.  
82 Ibid., ii.
Building rapid transit was therefore a matter of public urgency, for it would contribute to the even distribution of wealth and opportunities that were accumulated in the urban core. It would serve the region because it would help “[tie the] region together” and “[make] a whole out of many parts,” preventing a fragmentation of metropolitan Atlanta into a collection of independent residential and industrial areas.

Simultaneously, rapid transit would have “far-reaching effects” in “shaping” the region by promoting development around the transit stations, while it would also drastically improve the downtown environment through encouraging the abolishment of the numerous parking lots established for all the incoming traffic. By so doing, the ARMPC argued, Atlanta would not repeat Los Angeles’ mistake, where “approximately two-thirds of downtown is devoted to expressways, streets, and parking facilities.”

As it had done in What, the ARMPC also emphasized that rapid transit would stimulate Atlanta’s economic expansion by boosting the property values, “particularly in the general vicinity of the line locations and in the areas beyond the ends of the lines.” It could also be expected to contribute to the city’s revenues.

The ARMPC further explained how public transit’s advantage lay in its ability to enhance “a balanced transportation system.” Public and private transportation should “be in balance,” a balance that Atlanta had thus far been successful in keeping. However, “the continued improvement of expressway facilities” over the poor development of public transportation had produced a situation where downtown no longer had the necessary “automobile reception capacity.” Consequently, more than half of the land in the downtown core had become parking lots and streets. Street congestion had worsened still further. The alleviation of traffic

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83 Ibid., 7-8.
84 Ibid., 8.
85 Ibid.
congestion and protection of downtown from further bulldozing, explained the ARMPC, necessitated fixed railway, rapid transit.

By introducing the concept of “balanced transportation,” based on similar notions underlying the previous MPC reports, the ARMPC argued that rapid transit would contribute to all, including the affluent and others who had no need to use public transportation. The notion of “balanced transportation system” also applied to Atlanta’s demographic variety, creating the impression that progressive planners and commercial civic elites were attempting to respond to the demands of an inclusive, urban public:

The need for a balanced system also grows out of the fact that people are different. Some people must drive to work. Some want and can afford to drive to work. Others are wholly dependent on public transportation. Many others will respond either way, depending on the availability of a reasonable choice. Even now, 49 percent of the people leaving downtown during the evening rush hour travel by public transit, despite the fact that it is mired in street congestion.86

However, this language of inclusion masked underlying tensions and biases that carried over from the previous system and reflected middle class white values. While claiming rapid transit for all, the ARMPC did not do away with the class and racial biases attached to public transportation. This was evident in their attempt to banish the image of public transportation as a cheap and dirty mode of transportation. They tried to attract middle and upper class whites, who owned private automobiles, to use public transit, or at least support the system even if they did not actually use it. This was a consistent thread in the reports, but perhaps most obvious in their introduction of rapid transit features in Rapid Transit:

Appeals to conscience or civic-mindedness will not switch people to more efficient forms of transportation. Only better service will do this. Rapid transit must therefore offer complete “portal to portal” service, it must have social prestige, a pleasing appearance, complete grade separation, and a high-volume capacity. Its fares must be economically

86 Ibid.
competitive, and it must be fast, safe, flexible, dependable, comfortable, convenient, and quiet.\textsuperscript{87}

Furthermore, the ARMPC described rapid transit as a more prestigious and luxurious mode of transportation, which was by extension respectable enough for middle and upper class whites to use:

PRESTIGE: Buses sometimes suffer from a lack of social status. Rapid transit should be designed to appeal to large numbers of people, including the middle and upper-income people who now crowd the streets and expressways. Recent experience elsewhere shows this to be entirely possible. Rapid transit which is second rate in any sense of the word will not do the job.\textsuperscript{88}

PLEASING APPEARANCE: An important factor in passenger appeal is the attractive appearance of a modern vehicle stopping at stations and passing through a nicely landscaped right-of-way. Cleanliness of vehicles and stations is equally important.\textsuperscript{89}

The ARMPC’s targeting of a certain class was more evident in their route plan. According to their “portal to portal service,” “home to work” commuters were regarded as their major customers.\textsuperscript{90} The four categories of route identified—1) suburban residence to downtown, 2) suburban residence to suburban industry, 3) close-in residence to suburban industry, and 4) suburban residence to close-in industry—seem sufficient to meet the traffic demands of all metro Atlantans; however, the ARMPC’s route map revealed that this public transit layout in fact targeted middle and upper class residents, mostly white.\textsuperscript{91} Affluent, predominantly white northeast Atlanta had the Avondale Line, the Norcross Line, and the Sandy Spring Line with the North Druid Hills spur and Clarkston extension, while western Atlanta, which was a predominantly black area, was to received only the Ben Hill Line. Moreover,

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 11.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, 10, 15.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 14.
there were no plans to construct a railway in the area between Marietta and the Benn Hill Line, while the East and South Line penetrated both black and white residential areas (See Figure 1.1). It was obvious looking at the plan that it would “provide less service to the African American areas of the city than to the white areas. The predominantly black Southside was to be served by one line.”92

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92 Keating, Atlanta, 116.
VII. Selling a “Steel Spiderweb”: Atlanta Magazine and the Public Transit Idea

Part of commercial civic elites endeavors to disseminate information on Rapid Transit could be discovered in Atlanta Magazine, which was the first ‘city magazine’ in the nation. Officially sponsored by Atlanta’s Chamber of Commerce, the monthly magazine worked as a vital component of “Forward Atlanta” program, which was proposed by and started under Ivan Allen’s mayorship, as a “multimillion dollar, multiyear” advertisement campaign,” which turned out to be very successful, capitalized on media, stressing how his city was good for investment and business. Furthermore, Atlanta Magazine played a vital role in Atlanta commercial civic elites’ efforts in inspiring local residents -- “informing average man on street,” in their words -- how they could contribute to Atlanta’s development and progress.

In its inaugural issue, Opie L. Shelton, Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President in 1961 and Atlanta Magazine publisher, explained why they needed the publication, saying “there are so much to tell about this dynamic, bustling, growing metropolitan area of ours,” and “all our existing communications media combined can’t possibly tell the whole story.” Atlanta Magazine’s role was to inform “the whole story,” particularly about the problems Atlanta would face in the course of further economic development. For example, the editorial board explained its objective by using a metaphor of a female human body. “Atlanta’s muscles are young and wiry, her ability to absorb and assimilate has never been better, her mental condition shows her to be sharp and alert, blood pressure is normal in spite of agitations [civil rights movements] which have killed off many another city.” However, Atlanta was never completely healthy: Atlanta needed a “thorough [medical] checkups,” which was done by

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“taking Atlanta apart, piece by piece, searching for defects that need correcting.” For them, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s “Forward Atlanta campaign” would suffice this role. Atlanta Magazine aimed at demonstrating what these “defects” were and how it would be cured, presenting the “bitter” medicine to eradicate those problems. These “defects” mostly represented economic problems. Atlanta Magazine presented them as if these were the problems their city were facing.

Atlanta Magazine worked as a pivotal source to “educate” Atlanta dwellers by using everyday language. Although declaring Atlanta Magazine was a “truly representative of Atlanta and her people,” Shelton seemed to set a limit who they wanted read the magazine; Its expected readers corresponded to the targets of previous rapid transit reports—middle class whites. Shelton wrote who were supposed to be the magazine’s major aim; along with Atlanta Chamber of Commerce members, they were “business leaders from all over the world,” and “governmental leaders…, teachers, preachers, and location seekers.”

In Atlanta Magazine’s first year, the rapid transit was the topic in the spotlight. The “defects” frequently appeared in the magazine was a traffic problem. Atlanta Magazine often run articles and editorials about the problem, and introduced ARMPC’s plan as a solution. Atlanta Magazine mentioned to the 1946 Lochner plan, which shaped Atlanta’s current highway plan, saying that the plan ended up to be “inadequate” to dealt with the rapid increase of

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95 Ibid.  
96 Ibid.  
97 For instance, in the magazine, racial problems appeared by the mid sixties; African Americans, who counted approximately thirty eight percent of total population remained to be invisible in the magazine. According to Charles Rutheiser, Atlanta Magazine worked as a “house organ of Chamber of Commerce,” engaging in “advertisement for the vision of Atlanta’s white structure.” Its “tone” was “always been more celebratory than investigatory…, which favors ‘lifestyle reporting’ over hard news and controversial stories,” depicting Atlanta as “bright, alive, vital, striving, and predominantly white. Charles Rutheiser, Imagineering Atlanta, 49-50.  
98 Shelton, “Only the Best,” 8  
99 Ibid.  

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Atlanta’s automobile traffic. In addition, Atlanta Magazine suggested that metropolitan population skyrocketed much faster than the Lochner’s estimate during the fifties. Expressway constructions would not be a desirable countermeasure to alleviate the increase of auto-drivers. Introducing then public transit as “the groundwork… for the next big step,” Atlanta Magazine tried to unveil in detail what Rapid Transit was and why Atlanta needed it, because no one had a clear idea what rapid transit was in an article titled, “The Next Big Step.”

Atlanta Magazine major aim in the article was to introduce what rapid transit idea was and to show why it would deserve “public ownership and control,” financed by “public money, borrowed on public credit,” and once build, it would be “publicly owned and… publicly controlled.”

This was not a nice story for Atlanta Magazine readers in Atlanta. Indeed, one of the reasons that they stressed its “public” necessity was that federal government was pushing for a legislation to make it possible for cities to establish public transportation system. John F. Kennedy Administration just passed the Housing Act of 1961 and was preparing for a new legislation, which intended to “provide for larger participation in urban mass transportation systems,” and many cities were eager to apply. However, this did not mean that federal government would finance the system, although it appeared to be “the most promising [financial] source right now.” The article suggested that federal assistance was going to be a matching grant in “tri-cornered approach involving Federal, state, and local governments.” This meant that the construction and operation of rapid transit should also be paid locally. Accordingly it contended “the most logical source is [was] taxes,” including “real property tax, retail sales tax, gasoline tax, income tax, and payroll tax.”

Moreover, the construction of rapid transit was so publicly necessary, as well as previous planning literatures, that it would

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100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 68.
102 Ibid., 68-69.
deserve the increase of taxation. Simultaneously, the establishment of bigger, “regional,” political institution was also vital, the magazine contended. Public transit agencies should be a regional one, and have “inter-governmental” structure to serve all five counties. Additionally, it should be financed by taxation from these suburban counties, though the agency would hold independence from state, county and city government.

To justify these burdens, *Atlanta Magazine*, of course, emphasized, restoring the healthy relationship between downtown and other places still worked as Rapid Transit advocates’ major explanation. The article quoted from ARMPC’s *Atlanta Regional Comprehensive Planning*: Rapid Transit,

… many of the business and retail firms located in the downtown section could just as well be located in other wide—separated, parts of urban area, widely-separated, parts of urban area. The [Atlanta Regional Metropolitan] Planning Commission vigorously opposes the view: “The heart of the metropolitan area is also the heart of the City of Atlanta and, to a great extent, the heart of Southeastern United States”103

More importantly, *Atlanta Magazine* stressed this was professionals’ idea. According to the author (an *Atlanta Magazine* staff writer), the “men and women whose job to plan the future of the city”—the professionals-- were warning that “the region cannot afford to do otherwise.” They were saying, “An inadequate, unbalanced [private] transportation system” would only lead Atlanta to “economic stagnation.” According to them, “cities are like machines.” Made up of many “parts,” every city demanded “the smooth functioning of each part… to be effective.” Good transportation would play a pivotal role to produce “smooth” functioning, for it was to “make a whole city out of all parts.” “In a large, complex city, the entire economy of the urban area begins to break down when efficient transportation becomes impossible.” Atlanta’s rapid

103 Ibid., 23.
increase of population also was threatening orderly and efficient growth. Nonetheless, the article emphasized that Atlanta was reaching at “the pivotal point” that the cities could no longer progress healthily without mass transit, judging from examinations of other cities. “If a region grows much larger without rapid transit, it begins to take on a dubious form—one which is more scattered and more difficult to live in, work in, and provide with urban services.” By introducing professionals’ voice, *Atlanta Magazine* justified to protect downtown’s interest, as well as their reference to ARMPC’s strong conviction as to the continued growth of downtown and their research on other cities’ plan to have their own rapid transit system. It argued that rapid transit again was “an absolute necessity” because it would revive Atlanta’s heart—downtown.

The news on Rapid Transit continued to appear in *Atlanta Magazine* after the Hartly’s article. It tried to sell it in various ways. All emphasized how rapid transit contribute to Atlanta’s living environment through improving economy and promoting developments. Publisher Opie L. Shelton refereed to it often in his column. “Atlanta” like to boast “a long and admirable history of putting first things first, placing more emphasis on the cake than on the frosting.” Nowadays Atlantans were smart enough to take both, and thus they will love rapid transit. Atlantans were “aware of the millions of dollars that Atlanta is losing each year” because of the lack of rapid transit. Simultaneously, Atlantans recognized that building rapid transit would be much more reasonable than transporting people than expressways. In addition to these, Shelton asserted that rapid transit came “high on our [Chamber of Commerce] list of priorities had “the appearance of being luxuries.”

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104 Ibid., 22.
105 Ibid.
March issue of *Atlanta Magazine* contained a modern, black and white, image of rapid transit with a title “Atlanta looks forward: A Steel Spiderweb.” (Figure 1.2) Rich’s owner, Richard

![Image of a steel spiderweb]


Rich, a chairman of Chamber of Commerce rapid transit steering committee, used space for his department store’s advertisement in order for readers to learn about rapid transit. Only a brief
introduction with a few words as “Atlanta born Atlanta owned Atlanta managed” referred to his business. For downtown business and financial elites, showing their cooperation to boosterism worked as an adequate advertisement.

Community development plans also stressed rapid transit’s effectiveness. For instance, the article on Atlanta’s uptown area development, which proposed to create shopping area, cultural center and roads to bring “stronger and consequently more productive to the public and private economy,” asserted, “underlying all the planning is the necessity for Rapid Transit.”

Another article stressed the construction of rapid transit would help not only urban planning but also the increase of job opportunities. Atlanta’s unprecedented prosperity after the WWII was triggered by building boom. Not only single family homes to contain returning GI families but skyscrapers in downtown, suburban shopping malls, factories and plants for heavy industries, and interstate highway brought 1 billion and 250 million dollars to Metropolitan Atlanta citizens. The problem was how Atlanta could keep this trend. The paper optimistically argued that “there are not inhibiting factors to Atlanta’s growth and development in all directions.” It could argue so because of the possible increase of public construction, which would come from public constructions -- Urban Renewals and Rapid Transit. In particular, the construction of a rapid transit system would “enhance Atlanta’s future building, both downtown and in the outlying regions.” Sara Pacher’s paper “Expressways: Status Report” applauded the successful progress of Atlanta’s expressway construction. This paper, which was published one year after the appearance of an article pointing out Lochner plan’s insufficiency to alleviate the increase of traffic, applauded rapid progress of interstate highway construction, particularly East Expressway (I-20) and downtown connector. However, the paper still predicted expressways

107 Atlanta Magazine, March 1962, 12
109 “Atlanta’s Building Boom: A Look Ahead,” Atlanta Magazine April 1962, 31
would not be enough to meet the demand eventually, and stressed Atlanta’s inevitable reliance
on public, mass transit system, saying “it has been predicted that the freeways will have reached
their design-capacity (by 1970). The author affirmed what Atlanta would need was “More
highway projects, of course, and – hopefully – Rapid Transit.”

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter revealed the postwar history of rapid transit planning in Atlanta reveals
a disconnect between the progressive language of inclusion – open to all residents and linking
together all communities – and the persistence of class and racial biases manifested in the actual
plans – which clearly favored white middle class interests. Similarly, while the reports differed
in terms of tone and image, other consistent threads, most notably the emphasis on maintaining
a strong downtown core, continued. Here again, the interests of the white downtown business
elite which were served by a strong downtown were transformed into a universal good for the
public, with emphasis placed on the continuing economic and social centrality of downtown, the
preservation of which was discussed in terms befitting a moral imperative. The study of rapid
transit planning in Atlanta thus sheds light on how behind the imagery and language of
progressive change serving the public good persisted old biases and tensions.

Atlanta Magazine (May 1962): 74
Chapter 2


Introduction

A long-distance call from the capital convinced Ivan Allen, one of the vocal rapid transit advocates, that the construction of mass transit was no longer just a dream. Charles Weltner, who was at the time a congressman from Georgia’s 5th district (part of Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton County) and who is currently a member of the House of Representative’s Committee on Banking and Currency, surprised him with the news that the Housing Act of 1961, which was to authorize loans and grants for the planning and demonstration of a project for urban mass transportation services, was going to pass. Weltner told the mayor in his hometown that Washington would provide in the near future “a measure in it [the Housing Act of 1961] to provide for design money [for rapid transit],” and that Atlanta had “better do something for it.” Allen replied, “My God, is that thing really going to pass?” His comment was hardly eccentric. According to Weltner’s recollection, “Nobody [in Atlanta] much thought about it [rapid transit]” at the time, and “never believed it [the bill] would pass down here,” in spite of the ardent activities of PR boosters discussed in the previous chapter.

In order to install a rapid transit system, Atlanta needed money. Advocates had insisted on this repeatedly in their previous plans, namely What You Should Know about Rapid Transit,

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1 The 1961 bill was H.R. 7787, which was explained as a bill intended “to provide increased Federal assistance to State and local government in planning new or improved transportation facilities and services as a part of comprehensive planning for metropolitan and other urban areas, and for other purposes.” House Subcommittee, No. 3 of the Committee on Banking and Currency, Urban Mass Transportation—1961: Hearings on H.R. 7787, 88th Cong., 1st sess., June 27 and 28, 1961 (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 1.
2 Charles Weltner, interview by Cliff Kuhn, July 17, 1986, transcript, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Special Collection & Archives, Georgia State University Library, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA.
and Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit. The federal government was the major sponsor, but like Allen, few believed that Uncle Sam would actually get his hands to work on the construction or operation of local mass transit. In the era of Kennedy’s “New Frontier,” however, this notion was no longer merely a dream. Pivotal opportunities suddenly came from the North. In 1959, rapid transit supporters in the Northeast, led by Philadelphia’s Richardson Dilworth and James Symes, the Chairperson of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, began their lobbying campaign to get federal investment. Their original bill, the Urban Mass Transportation Act, was introduced in 1960 to the House of Representatives.³ The bill was killed, but the advocates’ efforts nevertheless successfully built a national campaign for rapid transit. As David W. Jones observes, “By the spring of 1961, the federal mass transportation coalition bore a close resemblance to the urban alliance of downtown stores, real estate interests, concerned with central city property values, commuter railways, central city banks, central city politicians and others concerned with the implications of the worsening of the central tax base.”⁴ As an urban Democrat in power since FDR, John Kennedy was willing to hear their voices, promising to provide national assistance for cities to restore or create their own mass transit systems.

At this point, Atlanta’s public transit advocates gained a new mission. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, these supporters tried to sell the idea of rapid transit – almost unknown of at the time – to their citizens, politicians, and even fellow colleagues. —They attempted to

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drum up support for the concept irrespective of what form it might eventually take, be it monorail, helicopter, or even human conveyor. Despite their optimistic and progressive language, however, their efforts were driven by an ulterior motive, namely the restoration of a prosperous downtown core, where the rapid transit advocates, comprised mainly of commercial civic elites, held strong and deeply-rooted interests. More importantly, despite their repeated emphasis on an “inclusive” approach, which suggested that rapid transit would benefit all classes of people, an analysis of planning documents and pamphlets reveals that their efforts in fact primarily targeted white middle class Atlantans. This limited scope was particularly evident in their actual design and route plans. They stressed how new rapid rail cars and stations would be characterized by cleanliness, a “pleasing appearance,” and luxury interiors and exteriors, all of which represented middle class values. Moreover, the 1961 Metropolitan Atlanta Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit, which presented a route plan including access to only a few African American and poor white neighborhoods, confirmed that the planners did not deem the underprivileged to be the major consumers of their public transit.

This chapter attempts to unveil the ways in which public transit advocates in Atlanta, including commercial civic elites, and particularly planners and politicians, contributed to the making of rapid transit legislature, particularly Omnibus Housing Act (HA) of 1961, which was to provide national assistance to local governments for planning mass transit, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMTA) of 1964, which enabled local government to receive a matching grant to install public mass transit (bus or rail) services. Moreover, this chapter seeks to shed light on the ways in which rapid transit advocates succeeded in gaining federal assistance, which ultimately played a decisive role in the implementation of Atlanta’s rapid transit system. Moreover, I will attempt to demonstrate how a series of negotiations with
federal officials gave Atlanta boosters opportunities to elaborate their argument as to why they needed “public” transit. This elaboration ultimately proved highly effective in their attempts to persuade their own constituents in Atlanta and Georgia of the necessity of mass transit.

As evidenced by Allen’s response to Weltner’s phone call from Washington D.C., by the early sixties, it was no longer absurd to demand assistance from Washington. Efforts to seek such assistance and work to bring about its implementation multiplied, and in the case of the Urban Mass Transportation Act, played a significant role in getting the bill passed. When the Act was introduced, Atlanta’s rapid transit advocates joined the pilgrimages to push through the enactment of the bill. Atlanta thus represented a special case among the advocates, most of which came from large, old cities in the North and Midwest. Moreover, Atlanta, a mere medium-sized city in the South, far from taking a merely supportive or supplementary position, played an active role in passing the mass transportation bills. In the second round of hearings in the Senate Subcommittee of the Committee of Banking and Currency in 1961, which was held just before the publication of ARMPC’s *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan: Rapid Transit*, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce president Ivan Allen and ARMPC (Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission) Executive Director Glenn Bennett sent a letter in for the record. Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield appeared as a witness in both the House and Senate hearings.  

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5 The original bill (H.R. 11563) was introduced in 1960. See House Subcommittee, No. 1 of the Committee on Banking and Currency, *Metropolitan Mass Transportation Legislation: Hearings on HR 11563, 86th Cong., 2nd sess., June 29 and 30, 1960* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960). A Congresswoman, Florence P. Dwyer from New Jersey, and congressman Hugh J. Addonizio, also from the Garden State, cosponsored the bill. The idea was that H.R. 11330, which enabled federal government to appropriate grants for local and state government to plan mass transit under section 701 of the National Housing Act of 1954, was not enough to alleviate traffic congestion. David M. Walker, the Urban Renewal Commissioner, and who supported the bill, contended that, “When transportation planning is integrated with these other objectives (i.e. preventing the growth of the blighted areas), we may find that we can reduce the cost of providing the necessary transportation facilities.” All they needed then was “the specific mandate that would be provided H.R. 11330,” which intended to “give a desirable urgency to… investigate the possibility of controlling the effects of mass transportation facilities, in addition to planning for the needs that are projected from historical patterns and trends.” Ibid., 6-7 Thus, they proposed the bill, which was more comprehensive.
hearings for the Subcommittee of Banking and Currency, in his capacity as both Atlanta’s mayor and a representative of the American Municipal Association (AMA) in which approximately 13,000 municipalities participated, to offer testimony for this so-called “Williams Bill” (due to the name of its sponsor), and went through a long Q&A session. Furthermore, in 1962 Ivan Allen, now the mayor of Atlanta, and Atlanta Transit System (ATS) President Robert Summerville participated in the Senate Hearings of the Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking and Currency, and provided a long speech as well as opinions during the discussion session. In 1963, the Chamber of Commerce Rapid Transit Committee sent Gerald Horton and ARMPC’s Glenn Bennett to the last round of hearings before the Committee on Currency.

Throughout this process, Atlanta’s rapid transit advocates engaged in persuading local congressmen and women in charge of the federal budget and related matters. This was not their only task: they also had to struggle to convince congressmen from Georgia, both in the House and the Senate, to contribute to enact the bills. It was during this phase that the “power-holders”

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in Atlanta further elaborated on their arguments as to why Atlanta necessitated its own public transit. To obtain federal assistance, they had to demonstrate mass transit was so vital to the improvement of the city’s welfare that their efforts warranted assistance from the national government. In short, they were forced to make rapid transit more public and shape their appeals with this in mind. To do so, boosters endeavored to interpret Atlanta’s downtown deterioration as not a local issue, but a national problem, connecting it to housing and economic problems.

This chapter will also attempt to demonstrate how Atlanta boosters used rapid transit legislation to nudge the power of rural interests, which had long dominated Georgia’s political sphere. Obtaining federal assistance was a difficult task, for most of the Senators and Congressmen from Georgia in fact had a rural background and were hostile towards policies that would contribute to urban welfare. The advocates’ early failure in the 1962 state referendum, which attempted to use state funds to initiate the installation of rapid transit in Atlanta, convinced them of the urgent necessity of defeating rural dominance, and moreover that obtaining federal assistance would be vital in achieving this goal. Rapid transit advocates worked hard to persuade members of congress to help their campaigns. In addition to the other issues in play, the enactment of the 1964 UMTA itself evidenced the rise of urban interests, for the advocates had succeeded in obtaining the help of Georgia’s congressmen.

The components of this chapter logically chart the development of advocates’ efforts to obtain federal assistance for rapid transit. First, I discuss how Atlanta’s boosters became involved in the national rapid transit campaign. Specifically, this section seeks to reveal how William Hartsfield, Ivan Allen, and Glenn Bennett elaborated their pro-rapid transit arguments

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in speeches and letters for the Senate and House subcommittees in 1961, and how their efforts were temporarily derailed by their failure in the 1962 constitutional amendment in Georgia, which was to produce a public transit authority to obtain federal money. Second, I attempt to uncover the ways in which Atlanta’s rapid transit advocates continued their efforts by forming such organizations as the Committee of Rapid Transit of 100. I then proceed to examine how the boosters chose Georgia’s ex-governor Earnest Vandiver as the chairman of the PR organization, and how their choice proved successful in pushing the Georgia congressmen to enact the UMTA. Finally, I will discuss the ways in which boosters continued to pressure federal government, and eventually saw the enactment of the UMTA in 1964.

I. William Hartsfield and the 1961 National Housing Act

It was a New Jersey senator, Harrison A. Williams, who sponsored the original bill to provide federal assistance to “all forms of mass transportation, including rail, bus, highway, helicopter, and probably others we have not even thought about yet.”9 The 1960 proposal aimed at creating a low-interest revolving loan fund of $250 million for facilities and equipment, $15 million in matching grants for state or local government demonstration projects, and $25 million for regional planning of mass transportation. Williams argued that transportation problems should be administered by the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), which would eventually constitute the Housing and Urban Affairs Department (HUAD) that Kennedy was trying to create in his cabinet. He also proposed the formation of a new federal agency to administer the development of mass transit systems. For the Kennedy Administration, however, the establishment of the HUAD was much more urgent than promoting the

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establishment of mass transportation networks; according to the *New York Times*, “a lack of administration fever for immediate action on urban transit” was obvious. Although the Kennedy administration did not kill the bill, they instead incorporated “the matching grants part for regional planning and demonstration” into the Omnibus National Housing Act of 1961, which was a revision of the 1954 National Housing Act, enabling local governments to obtain a matching grant for planning and designing mass transit.\(^{10}\)

In revising the 1954 act, William Hartsfield, who was a lawyer of humble origins, made a valuable contribution, making a long speech and responding to many questions.\(^{11}\) Moreover, Allen and Bennett sent a letter for the record, which were the only items of mail that the subcommittee received from the South at all. Allen emphasized that the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce had organized “a blue chip committee” for the installment of rapid transit, and that moreover Atlanta was “in the process to make an enabling legislation and an authority.”\(^{12}\) Hartsfield in particularly performed notably well; senators in the subcommittee extolled his performance as a “characteristically able and imaginative statement,”\(^{13}\) while one of them called him “one of the great city executives in the 20\(^{th}\) century.”\(^{14}\) The significance of Hartsfield’s contribution was twofold. First, it was vital in that he presented a new definition

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\(^{12}\) From Ivan Allen, Jr., President of Atlanta Chamber of Commerce to Harrison A. Williams, Jr., in Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Banking and Currency, *Urban Mass Transportation—1961: Hearings on S.345*, 51-2.; From Glenn E. Bennett, Executive Director, Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission to Harrison A. Williams, Jr., in Ibid., 52.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 116. Hartsfield suggested that more land in downtown Atlanta was being flattened out due to the necessity of constructing more highways. This, in fact, was an argument repeated among the mass transit advocates, but it may be this testimony that had the real impact. When Hartsfield suggested the expansion of parking lots and streets, Senator Paul Douglass from Illinois pointed out that he was impressed, and said “we have begun to wonder how much land space is going to be taken up…. We are beginning to wonder about the social and economic impact on that vast area. We are quite certain that mass transportation will move more people in less space.” Ibid., 117.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 120.
of public and private interaction in rationalizing the value of mass transit. Second, he offered a way for the central city to restore its predominance over suburban communities, through the installation of a rail transit linking downtown with the peripheral communities. In negotiating with federal officials, Hartsfield and other rapid transit advocates elaborated their discourse to emphasize the necessity of public transit, a tactic which they adapted and used to convince their own local citizens to buy into the idea.

1) The Automobile as a “Crucial Instrument of Private Torture”

Hartsfield’s argument was straightforward in the assignment of blame. For him, rapid suburbanization in metropolitan areas created traffic congestion, and this in turn became the source of all urban troubles, particularly the deterioration of the downtown core. So many people had moved outside city limits that “expressways cannot alone solve this transportation problem.” As it stood, he argued, the situation only stood to get worse. “If people are unable to reach the downtown area, the core of the revenue-producing abilities of the metropolitan area, the entire region—indeed, the entire Nation—will suffer.” The deterioration of the central city, he stressed, was a common plague shared by every metropolis in America. The problem was not to be “confined to the heavily populated areas of the northwestern section” of the States, but rather “plagues the city-suburban areas of this Nation in the north, south, east, and west—in fact everywhere.” Therefore, it was imperative that those who made the laws in Washington open their minds to “link downtown Washington with downtown Atlanta, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, Birmingham, and all the other big cities” and thereby solve the problem.

\[^{15}\text{Ibid., 112.}\]
\[^{16}\text{Ibid., 113.}\]
Atlanta began the fight against depending on expressways as a solution to traffic congestion and urban decay. They had already conducted such surveys as “Access to Central Atlanta” or “Crosstown and Bypass Expressways,” and had learned found the startling fact that to soothe the traffic jam, they would “need 120 expressway lanes radiating to and from central Atlanta, and 28 lanes.” They also discovered that to construct these expressways it would be necessary to bulldoze most of the downtown area.\(^\text{17}\) In order to avoid this catastrophe, Hartsfield introduced the idea of a balanced transportation system. Under this system, automobiles were no longer the only mean of transportation; instead, railway transit, bus, and/or monorail lines would join the list. Local or state governments had a duty to set up an environment where such balanced transportation was possible. However, financial scarcity meant that even developing the planning for such a scheme was difficult.\(^\text{18}\)

In explaining why rapid transit deserved federal investment, Hartsfield introduced the discourse of a desirable “public” and “private” relationship. He urged the federal government to help “the traveling public.”\(^\text{19}\) Auto-drivers constituted the majority of this group; they were the very heart of America’s democracy. For the mayor, driving an automobile was a product of a “free choice,” a private decision; many chose to own a car, and thereby refused to use mass transit. This “free choice” was then indirectly the cause of all the trouble (i.e. traffic congestion), for it blinded automobile users to “the fact” that “there are far-reaching and formidable problems

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) According to Hartsfield, Atlanta was now conducting “a comprehensive origin and destination study and survey” but it “fell short of being all inclusive” enough to find out the complete “travel pattern of people within Atlanta,” since they were not able to make use of “the employment of transit consultants” due to “the limited budget.” Of course, Hartsfield appreciated the long-term and long interest loans, suggested by the bill. Ibid., 113.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 112
created by this choice."\textsuperscript{20} Overlooking the collective outcome of these private decisions, Hartsfield asserted, would paradoxically ruin citizens’ right to choose. He argued,

If we are forced to abandon mass transportation and force all of those now using it to rely solely on the private automobile for moving around, the congestion on our streets and highways and lack of storage space for our private cars will become so unmanageable that the private automobile will cease to be a convenient and flexible mode of transportation. Instead, it will become a cruel instrument of private torture. In fact, there are those of us who have had to fight city traffic during the rush hours and we are becoming convinced that it has become so already. The plain fact of the matter is that we just cannot build enough lanes of highway to move all of our people by private automobile and create enough parking space to store the cars without completely paving over our cities and removing all of the business establishments, office buildings, factories, restaurants, hotels, theaters, libraries, museums, hospitals, and other economic, social and cultural establishments that the people are trying to reach in the first place. And even if we could do it physically, the costs would be so enormous as to bankrupt the combined resources of city, State, and Federal governments.\textsuperscript{21}

Hartsfield was not so radical as to call for compelling drivers to discard their cars, or to demand a stop to the building of new expressways. Again, for him, the blame was to be laid not at the feet of auto-drivers, but rather than rapid expansion of urban areas which made so much driving necessary. The expansion itself was the origin of the disaster, and drivers were the victims. The urban landscape of post-war affluence had resulted in a state of affairs where more than two thirds of the population lived in “metropolitan areas.” Indeed, many of them chose to live in outlying areas. The irony was that this crisis which threatened to turn transportation into a form of torture had actually basically resulted from higher standards of living. “[T]he American people are living better, using more land area, and it is becoming harder to collect them and transport them by public transportation.”\textsuperscript{22} This forced these suburban dwellers into a situation where they needed to commute by car, and end up stuck in traffic jams.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 114.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 114-5.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 153.
For Hartsfield, the lack of choices led to an increasingly undemocratic landscape. As had been asserted in the previous planning documents, Hartsfield asserted that a balanced transportation system that “put each [means of transportation] in its proper place” was the only way to stop the mess that sprawl produced; therefore, setting up a balanced transportation system was a crucial task which needed to be included among the duties of government.  

Federal assistance to establish a mass transit system or subsidize private rapid transit companies was also necessary, because leaving traffic congestion as it was would ruin the enormous amount of federal investment in highways under the Federal Interstate Highway Act of 1956. In light of these reasons, it was clearly absurd to say that “This [traffic congestion] is a local problem which should be solved at the local level.” Hartsfield stressed that the elimination of the plague was a concern so “public” in nature that it needed to be carried out under Federal responsibility.

2) Staging the Reversal of Flight

In answering a series of subcommittee members’ queries, it became clear that “the traveling public” Hartsfield imagined consisted of the suburban, lower middle class. Senators in the subcommittee suggested that mass transit would not perform well simply because “people don’t want to use mass transportation.” Hartsfield disagreed. According to him, the “traveling public” would eventually “move… into mass transportation through the force of economics.”

He asserted,

It will begin to occur to the average man who is on a budget with his salary that his automobile is costing too much, in some places in toll charges, in other places in parking.

23 Ibid., 154.
24 Ibid., 115.
25 Ibid., 117.
If he does not use parking he loses money on the streets in fines and meter charges, and he sometimes loses his automobile in addition. Sooner or later it will occur to him that he saves money by using mass transportation, and I think that is the time when they will use it.²⁶

It should be noted that even though this was a discussion of suburbanization taking place in the late fifties and early sixties, the conversation did not refer to race, despite the ongoing phenomenon of so-called “white flight.” Yet at the same time, committee members were keenly aware of the fact that the issue was closely related to the changes wrought in the urban landscape by the rise of the civil rights movement, although they nevertheless discussed the issues in color-blind fashion.²⁷ The sponsor of the bill, Senator Williams in the Garden State, asked if Hartsfield acknowledged in “the thrust of the bill here an effort to reverse the trend and stimulate the suburbanite back to mass transportation.” The subcommittee members concurred with this, but they knew it would be an intensely difficult task to complete. A senator from Illinois contended that recent suburbanization fragmented urban community beyond repair. People who once lived closer to downtown and inside the city limits were now dispersed, and “live in a wide variety of [suburban] local governments,” which also constituted “a whole series of separate taxing units.” Economic activities, particularly retail businesses, followed their exodus from the city core. Hartsfield commented that the increase of shopping malls in peripheries “had effects on taxation in that it withdrew trade from the central area. And these shopping centers for the middle class people will increase [outside city limits] if cities do not do

²⁶ Ibid.
something about their central core.”\textsuperscript{28} There was thus a consensus here too that the expansion of metropolitan areas constituted a danger, a sharpening of the “social cleavages.” The Illinois senator contended,

The suburbs do not want to permit themselves to be annexed to the central city. The migration from the central city is more and more on the part of those in the upper income brackets, leaving the central city composed more and more of low-income people, and certainly with a diminished relative taxable capacity.\textsuperscript{29}

Those present understood that mass transit aimed at bridging this split, but they also no doubt recognized that setting up a mass transit system required considerable regional cooperation beforehand. In other words, without suburban cooperation, the implementation of a mass transit plan was impossible. For subcommittee members, therefore, Atlanta’s success in the annexation of affluent suburbs in 1952 to the city was an important precedent. The 1952 annexation increased the City of Atlanta’s size three times over (from 37 to 118 square miles), enabling the city to maintain numerical dominance of whites over blacks, raising the level of its average income, and setting aside (containable) vacant areas for black residential expansion. Hartsfield himself played a major role in this annexation. According to the Illinois senator, “mayors all over the country” would want to “share your recipe,” because, in Chicago and St. Louis for example, “the suburbs insist on maintaining themselves independent, demanding that the central city help to provide them with the highways but refusing to come under the central city politically.”\textsuperscript{30} The members were basically searching for a way to persuade the (white) suburban dwellers to help the very city they had left. Race was a key issue at stake here, because on the one hand it played a major role in the acceleration of the urban divide, but on the other

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
hand business elites wanted a way to restore the urban situation without provoking racial animosities in the process.\textsuperscript{31} Hartsfield suggested it was a matter of selling the city to suburbanites, relating how during the annexation this tactic had proven effective. He explained,

\begin{quote}
It was more than an annexation program. It was a readjustment of functions. And we sold it to the people. Some genius gave it a name which nobody could fight. It was named the “Plan of Improvement.” Nobody could be against improvement, so it was accepted in a public referendum.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

Likewise, suburbanites could be sold on transit through cleverly emphasizing the central role of the city. Hartsfield stressed that the city promised better rates of taxation, being responsible for services like the police, sanitation, and fire services.\textsuperscript{33} He continued that to persuade suburbanites, one needed to awaken their “civic pride.” He argued that to implement a regional plan or regional authority, it was first necessary to give suburbanites a clear vision of how they would stand to benefit, while evoking their emotional bond to the city.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, he introduced a strategy he likened to Theodore Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” policy. In the 1952 annexation, he explained, he had

\begin{quote}
made a lot of speeches. I went out and asked them one question: “What would you do out in this village if we could move Atlanta away from you? ’ You moved away from us. Stop and think about it”
And they thought about it and voted for it.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{31} Hartsfield himself explained to his colleague in 1943 why Atlanta needed annexation. He said, “the most important thing to remember, cannot be publicized in the press or made the subject of public speeches. Our Negro population is growing by leaps and bounds. They stay right in the city limits and grow by taking more white territory inside Atlanta. Out-migration is good white, home owning citizens.…. With the Federal government insisting on political recognition of Negroes in local affairs, the time is not far distant when they will become a potent political force in Atlanta if our white citizens are just going to move out and give it to them.” Citied in Ronald Bayor, \textit{Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 58.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 85-87.


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
With a strong belief in the city’s role as the heart of a metropolitan area, Hartsfield believed that if he were to “walk and speak softly but carry a big stick,” suburban communities would eventually would surrender. In terms of paying for the development, Hartsfield emphasized that an increase in taxation was possible. For him, the problem had emerged due to suburbanization. Without room for municipalities to subsidize the entire cost, he agreed with a senator from Indiana who referred to the necessity for “a new kind of taxation system in the United States.”

Hartsfield asserted, “the great problem of all cities, particularly big metropolitan areas, is to in some way to get the suburbs to share in conveniences which the central city furnishes.” Moreover,

All cities, big cities, are concerned—that is, mine particularly—, with trying to get the suburbs to assume a greater part of the cost of government. They come in and use the city and go back out and pay very little. My city has no sales tax, no form of tax that reaches the suburbanites.

Hartsfield’s arguments, building upon his experience with the annexation, revealed his firm belief in the city’s predominance. For him, building mass transit was therefore possible as long as people were reminded of their emotional bond to the city. Given such bonds, it would then become apparent to them how beneficial it would be to connect the central city to their communities in outlying areas.

The enactment of the 1961 Housing Act did not end the UMTA advocates’ quest for federal money. The 1961 Housing Act had promised to give them a matching grant for planning and demonstration, but the 1962 UMTA bill had instead provided a matching grant or loan only to help existing railway companies or the construction of new local transit services. Clearly, new tactics would be required to continue the quest for public transit in Atlanta. In the

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36 Ibid., 155.  
37 Ibid., 156.  
38 Ibid., 56.
1962 hearings, new mayor Ivan Allen, himself previously involved in the campaigns as indicated above, took over Hartsfield’s role in advocating for Atlanta’s public transit system.

3) Ivan Allen Jr.: Choosing Railways over the Bus System

Ivan Allen Jr., like Hartsfield, developed his arguments by attempting to reveal how public transit would contribute to the general welfare. He argued that congestion was not just an inconvenience, but a public menace. The congestion was caused by the dependance of suburbanites, living in “the less densely populated suburban areas,” on commuting to the city center by car, due to the lack of alternatives, because “private operators (of rail or bus transit) find it unprofitable to expand their services into less densely populated suburban areas.”

Thus, like Hartsfield, Allen asserted that federal government should intervene when private transit companies could not extend their services deep into the outlying areas, by providing vehicles which would move the maximum number of passengers as long as commuters would come from peripheries. Again there was an emphasis that the “mass transportation problem” constituted not a “local” problem, but rather a “metropolitan” one. Therefore, “the core city can handle part of the problem, but the states and federal government must handle other parts of it.”

Furthermore, Allen repeated word-for-word what Hartsfield contended in his 1961 House statement, saying “Transit and commuter services have left the category of private convenience and are obviously public necessities facing a crisis.”

It has been contended by some that it is useless to try to save mass transportation because the people have already, through their exercise of free choice, abandoned it in favor of the private automobile. If the choice were really this simple, this proposition would be true in

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40 Ibid., 287.
large measure. However, there are far reaching and formidable problems created by this choice, the full implications of which we are just beginning to face up to nationally.\textsuperscript{41} His argument to the subcommittee was that reforming an automobile-dominated society was a venture deserving of public help, because traffic congestion would require more highways, which would in turn compel state and federal governments to spend more on constructing expressways. Moreover, this, ironically, would kill the valuable tax sources for local government, for highway construction was known to ruin taxable properties in the downtown core, “draining the financial resources of local government.” Atlanta’s mayor further asserted that “the collapse of the mass transportation system will bring about staggering increases in Federal Highway expenditures.”\textsuperscript{42} Like Hartsfield, Allen, therefore, asserted that public transit was “a vital public necessity…. just as water, police, and fire protection, and other public conveniences are necessities.”\textsuperscript{43} The use of the term “public” here sounded inclusive, in that rapid transit would promote an increase in the value of taxable properties, but evidently it was still automobile drivers who were going to be viewed as the victims were a public transit system not constructed.

The definition of “public” was then reexamined at the hearings, where Allen adamantly contended Atlanta’s public transit should be rapid right-of-way transit, which meant a rail transit system. Although the Atlanta Transit System (ATS) was doing relatively well with their bus business, the problems faced by Atlanta apparently warranted a brand new transportation system.


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 286.
For the mayor, buses were not convenient due to the fact that they too also relied on the clogged freeways, and would therefore only end up worsening the congestion. He cited ARMPC’s comment to the effect that busses, as “an auto-dominated transportation system will never be able to carry radial loads adequately during rush hours, even with maximum use of expressway busses.”

This comment proved to be particularly important when Allen, along with Hartsfield, urged the members of congress to invest to their mass transit system because it represented a public necessity. Criticism of Allen’s statement, however, promptly came from the inside. Robert Summerville, the ATS president, made a brief comment and joined the discussion. Summerville, who had expanded his bus business by purchasing outmoded trackless trolleys—which had played a central role in Atlanta’s transportation system before WWII — accompanied Allen. In the fifties and early sixties, ATS still did good business, but the constitution of the patrons had significantly altered from their heyday. Specifically, more and more blacks had started to use buses.

When one third of Atlanta’s population was comprised of African Americans in 1960, about sixty percent of ATS bus riders were blacks. They had to rely on public transit due to the fact that no major employment areas were located near their residential areas. Maids relied on ATS to get to their workplaces, located in affluent Northern suburbs. Summerville’s claims revealed that he, as president of the only surviving bus company in Atlanta, agreed with Allen in demanding federal money to help public transit, but at the same time disagreed over how Atlanta should establish and operate a public transit system. He was not in favor of a gigantic development project; rather, he argued for the necessity to make lifestyle changes in order to

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44 Ibid.
solve the problem. Summerville argued that congestion occurred during so-called “rush hours,” which came at a certain time in the morning and evening. This phenomenon occurred because “hours of work have shortened, as the five-day week has become general.” Even “maids who used to go to work before breakfast now arrive by our … buses at 9 o’clock or a little later.”

Traffic jams would not be eliminated by a continuation of the trend, because “if hours of work shorten we will simply have a different set of rush hours, morning and night.” As an alternative, he published his own plan, ATS Rapid Atlanta in 1960. This action did not mesh with the position taken by Allen and ARMPC, because Summerville’s proposal demanded a system that would consist of both railway and bus (and trackless trolley) networks, which would then incorporate most of their company’s bus network. Moreover, he proposed “linking Atlanta’s east and west side concentration of the black population’s unemployed, underemployed, and domestic workers with the north side’s white affluent employers of domestics and the outlying north-side industrial employment centers.”

The poor reception offered Summerville’s proposal foreshadowed the exclusion of the existing bus system in commercial civic elites’ future proposal for a so-called public transportation system, which meant abandoning Atlanta Transit Systems. Allen tried to clearly show in the Q&A session that he did not concur with Summerville’s plan, which had emphasized the importance of the ATS bus system. The ATS president took a more conciliatory approach, claiming that he appreciated the bill because it would allow private

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45 Ibid., 295.
46 The report “Rapid Atlanta” was attached to the hearings’ document. Basically, the ATS plan proposed to pave the unused railroad tracks for exclusive bus use, and eventually turn a part of the road into railroad tracks. Richard Hebert, Highways to Nowhere: The Politics of City Transportation (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1972), 120.
47 Allen cited the ARMPC report and said, “Transit innovations, such as exclusive right of way rapid transit, will be absolutely essential and should be investigated as an immediate follow up of this expressway study.” Ibid., 286.
48 Hubert, Highways to Nowhere, 120.
companies to work “in partnership with the public bodies.” For him, without the initiative of existing private companies,’ any public transit plans would be doomed to fail. He even openly stated that the bus system would play the major role in Atlanta’s public transit plan, despite his own scheme’s disagreement with the ARMPC plan. Allen, while Summerville’s co-witness, soon made clear his disagreement with Summerville’s statement. He argued that Summerville’s plan (“Rapid Atlanta”) was “prepared several years ago… more or less from the viewpoint of a private utility company.” From his perspective, the ARMPC’s new proposal, which proposed to offer “all surface [rail transit], utilizing present railroad and rail-bed facilities, which radiate out from the center of town in almost every direction” was far better than Summerville’s proposal, which offered a “limited rapid transit system, [for] approximately $50 million.” The Rapid Atlanta’s proposal was much cheaper than ARMPC’s ambitious plan (in the $200-$300 million range) because it would build on the existing ATS bus system. For Allen, of course, the difference in cost did not necessarily mean a superior system, and so there was tension between him and Summerville.

In order to receive a federal grant, municipalities or state governments were required to make a public authority for mass transit. In addition, municipal or state governments needed to guarantee that they would share the financial burden. If these conditions were not met, the federal government would be unable to provide a matching grant. Therefore, the sponsor of the bill, Senator Williams, specifically inquired as to whether Georgia’s “state legislature has been friendly to the development of rapid transit means.” Allen answered in the affirmative, suggesting that their governor, Ernest Vandiver, who eventually played a major role in bringing

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50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
Atlanta mass transit, “recognized the need and supported it heartily.” The mayor also mentioned proudly that Georgia was waiting for the state constitutional amendment, which would determine if the State of Georgia was going to “provide facilities for counties going into transit systems.” Allen pointed out that the Georgia legislature was in “extraordinary session” to abolish the notorious County Unit System, which will itself be discussed later in this chapter. Once the system was eliminated, Allen argued, “rural domination” would be ended, and rural Georgians, who had long dominated Georgia’s political landscape, would “end up having considerably more respect for city problems than they have had in the past.” In other words, Allen implied that Atlanta was more than ready for the federal mass transit project. His comment pleased the sponsor of the bill, prompting him to say, “That is encouraging.”

Allen himself had every reason to feel encouraged. He had taken Hartsfield’s efforts one step further, increased awareness of the need for rapid transit in Atlanta, and after even having to overcome opposition from within Atlanta itself he finally appeared to be on the cusp of receiving the support necessary to make the system a reality.

II. Rural Rebellion against Public Transit

It would not take long for Allen to realize that he was sadly mistaken, however. There remained many obstacles to be overcome. Georgia attempted to implement its own public transit system before the bills for federal matching grants were even enacted, but this early effort ended in failure. This loss urged rapid transit supporters to undertake still further efforts to gain federal help. While pressuring Washington, mass transit supporters, including Hartsfield and Allen, lobbied in the Georgia General Assembly for the use of the State of Georgia’s power and financial resources to install rapid transit in the Atlanta region. Their effort led to the Georgia
legislatures’ resolution to create the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Study Commission (MATSC), led by ARMPC’s Glenn Bennett, in April 1962. Soon after its foundation, MATSC proposed a state constitutional amendment (No. 9) to “allow [the State of Georgia] General Assembly to give counties [in Atlanta and its surrounding counties] the rights to build and operate systems of public transportation, and to participate with other counties and municipalities in such systems.” It also proposed to empower the counties to levy new tax funds to construct and operate mass transit systems. Civic commercial elites promptly endeavored to see the law passed. Atlanta Magazine’s editorial “potpourri,” for instance, reported that in the general election on November 12, Atlantans should make “important choices,” which would “involve amendments to the state Constitution.” Since the amendments would enable the provision of state assistance to mass public transportation and urban renewal projects, the support of elites for these was to be expected, given how both items were closely linked to urban interests.

The rapid transit advocates enjoyed particular success in their campaign among the business and commercial elites. They received numerous pledges of support for the proposed amendment No. 9. However, the November 12 referendum nevertheless ended in a sound defeat for the advocates. It won the support of the majority of voters only in urban DeKalb and Fulton County, and crumbled before the people in the rest of the state. It became evident that

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52 The state governor, S. Ernest Vandiver, was one of them. In the referendum month, the pro-business governor held a dinner party, and invited county commissioners, Chamber of Commercial officials, state legislators, and others, whereupon they urged the participants to endorse the amendment. Vandiver’s speech was a repetition of civic ARMPC’s argument. He announced that establishing a mass transit system in the Atlanta region would “require a high degree of cooperation, great ingenuity and much long range thinking,” asserting, “early legislative action will be needed,” because of the “demand of the times,”-- “the ever growing problems of traffic congestion and the end for better mass transportation facilities.” Along with Vandiver and his lieutenant governor, organizations like the Georgia Municipal Association, Associations of County Commissioners of Georgia, State Chamber of Commerce, and the State Junior Chamber of Commerce stood up to urge its citizens to cast a aye vote for the amendment.

53 Atlanta Journal’s leak in fact might have foreshadowed the amendment’s fate. It revealed that MATSC’s PBQ&D report, which was supposed to come out in December 1962, predicted that the rapid transit system in Atlanta was going to be "ultimately costing between $600 and $700 million.” The calculation was much
it would be difficult to implement a rapid transit plan without federal money as long as Georgia did not bridge the divide of interests between rural Georgia and Atlanta. The voters outside of Fulton and DeKalb County viewed the amendment merely as a tax increase which would produce benefits only to the Atlantans, whose interests were seen as having nothing to do with their own: the rural voters likewise declined urban renewal measures for the same reason.

Even though the amendment could technically be applicable to any area, that was not how it was understood by the vast majority of voters outside of Atlanta: “to, PRACTICALLY, everybody [in those rural counties] this [amendment] means ‘rapid transit’ on the Atlanta metropolitan area, although no firm decision has ever been made on just what sort of shape such as system would be.”

Old counties in rural areas, including Chatham (Savannah), Richmond (Augusta), Muscogee (Columbus), Cobb (Marietta), and Floyd (Rome), and Dougherty County (Albany) offered especially staunch opposition. For instance, Chatham County, containing Georgia’s former capital Savannah, voted “most heavily against the amendment, 8,632 to 2,264.” Simultaneously, Augusta’s Richmond County refused it by 4,181 to 1,664.

Savannah Morning News applauded the decision of Chatham residents, stating that the amendment more expensive than the ARMPC’s original estimate, which calculated the cost would be between $200 and $215 million: in the PBQ&D proposal, the commuter railway was initially planned to go underground in the downtown area, while ARMPC recommended using only existing rail beds. Moreover, Atlanta Journal reported that railroad companies were “basically opposed to the idea” of rapid transit.

November, 11. Many railroad interests also did not seem to favor the PBQ&D plan. Using existing railroad would prevent an increase of the federal government’s power. For instance, a letter to Vandiver claimed that the new plan did not capitalize on railroads as the previous one had done. “Atlanta’s railroads spiderweb out in all directions, providing a unique base for gradual development of a rapid transit that would have the old-fashioned virtue of being private enterprise.” The author of the letter insisted on the remaking of Georgia as “the Railroad State.” “I pose this grand idea: That Georgia, in reaching for new industry, pause to help what is latently one of its biggest and most productive - the railroad. I can envision light commuter trains, carrying passengers’ cars piggy-back, linking all the hamlets and cities at high speed; neither planes nor cars can do it as smoothly. I envision a new Georgia nickname nicknamed? “the Railroad State.”

From Edward Rogers to Ernest Vandiver, February 24, 1963, folder 3, box 6, Legal Office Files, S. Ernest Vandiver Papers, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Science, University of Georgia Libraries, University of Georgia, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as SEVP).

“should have been turned down,” along with another proposal which would seem to be of benefit only to Atlanta, namely “carrying out slum clearance and redevelopment work.”

According to the newspaper, not enough explanation was offered with regard to why residents were expected to pay taxes for Atlanta’s public transportation. The paper asserted that “voters were wise in rejecting” those amendments that “would have authorized sweeping changes in the tax laws,” for it had “never been fully explained to the public” as to why Georgia needed these measures.

The amendment setback hit rapid transit advocates hard. They refused, however, to give up the project, and continued to insist on the indispensableness of a healthy downtown and of a publicly-operated mass transit system to make it possible. For example, an Atlanta Journal editorial praised prescience of San Franciscans in endorsing a rapid transit proposal, while lamenting the backwardness of Georgians. According to the pro-business paper, San Francisco’s 75-mile commuter rail network, implemented to connect its downtown core with the outlying areas, cost $792 million, which was to be likewise paid through increasing property taxes, but which in spite of being three times more than the projected cost of Atlanta’s proposed plan, was nevertheless approved. The implication was that Georgians were simply not intelligent enough to see how a healthy relationship between their capital city’s suburbs and the downtown core had a serious effect on the city’s economy (see also Figure 2.1). The rapid transit advocates now had to confront the painful reality that their plan for the future of the city depended largely upon the support of people outside of it, who, apparently unable to comprehend the significant social and economic issues at stake, had demonstrated no interest whatsoever in the matter.

III. Redefining the Public: MATSC, the PBQ&D Plan and the Rapid Transit Committee of 100

The advocates did not have time to despair. In December 1962, MATSC published their two year study, *A Plan and Program of Rapid Transit*, which was authored by PBQ&D, an engineering firm experienced in building mass transit systems, including San Francisco’s Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). Paid partially by a $140,000 grant under Section 701 of the

Figure 2.1. “What Fire?” *Atlanta Journal*, November 12, 1962. This *Atlanta Journal* cartoon came out after the defeat of the 1962 rapid transit amendment. The *Journal* portrays “public apathy” as the reason for the “Rapid Transit Set Back.” It eventually urged mass transit advocates to create a “public education” campaign
National Housing Act of 1954, Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas (PBQ&D)’s Program “called for a 66 mile, 42 station rapid rail transit system with feeder buses and park-and ride facilities across 5 counties centered upon downtown Atlanta,” and would cost no less than $292 million. This was quite a reasonable price, when compared to San Francisco’s 75-mile rail rapid transit system, which would cost approximately $792 million. According to PBQ&D, the rapid increase of the metropolitan population at an unprecedented pace could simply not be stopped, and such growth was expected to “place more traffic on the regional transportation network as thousands upon thousands of people travel to and from work, go shopping, seek recreation, and make many trips for other purposes.” The growth would be accompanied by a significant increase in the number of privately-owned cars, which was soon going to be “growing faster than the number of people.” PBQ&D cautioned that Atlanta would suffer from “more and larger traffic jams, longer delays on the expressways and streets, and more frustrated commuters.” Fortunately, this worrying scenario need not come to pass: rapid transit would be a panacea, asserted the PBQ&D engineers. Simply put, mass transit would transport more car owners, and thus lead to a drastic decrease in traffic volume because people would no longer drive private cars. On this point the advocates would surely have been in agreement, but experience had proven further developments were difficult to pursue.

Having made their predictions, the PBQ&D engineers proceeded to demonstrate how rapid transit would solve traffic congestion. These comprised the major part of the document. PBQ&D asserted that all cities needed a strong, culturally and economically vibrant city center to keep making steady progress. They contended that “the greatest single question for the citizens to consider is whether the region is to grow with a strong, conveniently accessible

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58 Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglass, A Plan and Program of Rapid Transit (Atlanta: Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade & Douglass,1962), folder 4, box 6, legal office files, 1963-66, SEVP.
central city, linked to outlying centers that will grow in importance around rapid transit stations and to residential areas by uncongested streets and highways or whether it is to grow in expanding rings of solid urbanization with… congestion in each new ring frustrating accessibility to the old.” Furthermore, based upon the idea of this “accessible central city,” PBQ&D redrew ARMPC’s railway map. Whereas the previous plan laid its railway over an old one in such a way that the planners could capitalize on the rights of way, the PBQ&D plan set the railways emerging out of the city center like the spokes of a wheel. The 1962 plan argued that to simply make use of existing railroad beds and trucks, as the previous plan had stipulated, would not be sufficient to link the suburban (predominantly white) communities to downtown.

This was not the only innovation in the document. Another important aspect of the Program lay in its attempts to demonstrate how metropolitan Atlanta could afford to finance the construction and operation of rapid transit. PBQ&D claimed that rapid transit would boost property values, and that this would in turn offset the cost. According to their calculations, fares alone would be “more than adequate to pay all operating cost and to purchase and equip the rapid transit cars.” Perhaps considering how previous efforts had turned out, the PBQ&D consultants also considered the role of property taxes in funding the implementation of the system. Reimbursing funds and interests for the construction and purchase of the rights of way should be done by levying property tax, but this should not be a burden, they consultants stressed. “It should be kept in mind that the cost of constructing the entire system will amount to less than five percent of the present value of the property in the five county region—the values the system is designed to enhance and protect. (Italics Mine)” In short, they were arguing that the predicted rise in real estate value brought about by the installation of rapid transit would

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59 Ibid.
offset the increase in property tax. Conversely, PBQ&D simultaneously warned that failure to construct rapid transit would lead to a decline in real estate value, thereby producing even more tax burden. By rejecting a small increase in tax burden now, in other words, Georgians would only be bringing upon themselves a larger tax burden later. Neither was this the only problem that would result from a failure to implement rapid transit. Without the system, Metropolitan Atlanta would have to “seek a solution through the construction of many additional expressways and parking facilities not programmed or possible under current sources of financing… Eventually, the people of the region would pay the cost of a rapid transit system even though they had not chosen to build one.”\(^\text{60}\) PBQ&D, which had proposed financing San Francisco’s BART with an increase in property tax and received approval from the area’s residents, were thus using a variation on the same argument for Atlanta. The plan certainly seemed sound. Why, the Sunshine City even claimed that they would not need federal assistance.

1) The Rapid Transit Committee of 100: The Establishment of a PR Organization

Glenn Bennett, the head of ARMPC and MATSC, however, was not very impressed by the report. From his perspective, the PBQ&D plan was far from sufficient to persuade voters, and looked to be impractical. Later recalling it as “a big plan,” he stated,

> In the first place, a lot of people didn’t ever think it could be implemented and even planners—the first report was written in 1961, which was followed by this Parsons/Brinkerhoff study—the chief head planner wrote in the back that this plan will [be implemented]…. it was a complimentary thing about the plan, but there was no conceivable way of implementing the plan….and I changed the language and made it a little more flexible. But the answer was both political and financial and a whole lot of people did not understand what rapid transit was. We published one report that says what you should know about Rapid Transit [sic]. Secondly, the politicians didn’t believe it was real; although they supported it they … you know… and how to pay for it… nobody knew that… that didn’t know how to pay for it.\(^\text{61}\)

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Interview transcript with Glenn Bennett by Jean Martin, May 2, 1977, Mule to MARTA Papers, Kennan
He had a valid point. The federal budget was not available, for the Urban Mass Transportation Act had not yet been passed. Therefore, the first step was logically for advocates to endeavor to pressure the federal government to enact the transit bill. Simultaneously, they had to work on advertising the idea of rapid transit, in order to drum up much-needed support. Fortunately, they now found much-needed allies among politicians with power, including Governor Earnest Vandiver, and the 1962 Governor Elect Carl E. Sanders, who pledged his help. For Sanders, the defeat of the 1962 state-wide referendum was not really a matter for concern. “The incoming governor said there is hope because the amendment would have passed as a local bill,” Sanders, meaning, that rather than a state-wide referendum, one limited only to the Metropolitan Atlanta area would suffice. Still, even this prospect did not represent an easy task. It was all-too-apparent that Georgians, including residents in metropolitan Atlanta, did not care for the notion of rapid transit. The concern of commercial civic elites with this state of affairs was manifested in a political cartoon in the Atlanta Journal, entitled “What Fire?” (See Figure 2.1)\(^{62}\) “More work must be done to build attitudes favorable to rapid transit,” observed Glenn C. Bennett of MATSC and ARMPC, expressing the necessity for the “Atlanta community to develop a better climate of public opinion.” Once the federal transit bill passed, Atlanta would not be able to receive the federal assistance money without a rapid transit authority. To create such an organization, the approval of Georgian voters in a series of referendums was mandatory. The public had to be sold a more positive image of public transit, and as quickly as possible.

Atlanta business leaders promptly went to work. Their efforts resulted in the formation of two organizations — the Rapid Transit Interim Committee and the Rapid Transit

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Committee of 100. The creation of these itself required considerable efforts on the part of rapid transit advocates. First, their lobbying efforts succeeded in getting a resolution through the Georgia Senate to “provide for a two-year rapid transit study committee with a broad scope.”* \textit{Atlanta Journal} proudly reported that the proposal, which was to establish the Interim Committee on Rapid Transit, had “flown through the Senate without a voice of dissent.” The lobbying activities on the part of business leaders had also earned the full support of the new governor, Carl Sanders.

However, the primary reason for this turnaround in the fortunes of the advocates was that they stopped stressing Atlanta as the beneficiary of the legislation.\textsuperscript{63} The proposal’s sponsor, Peter Zack Geer, a Lieutenant Governor from Miller County, confirmed that the Rapid Transit Interim Committee would “look into the problems of rapid transit as it applies in the Atlanta area especially (See also Figure 2.2).” However, the resolution itself stated that it would apply to any metropolitan area. For Geer, the reason why Georgia was in need of the committee was that “one of the most pressing problems confronting the State of Georgia and in particular the rapidly expanding urban area… is the growing and complex subject of traffic.” The resolution emphasized that unless action was taken, “a definite possibility exists that certain areas of cities will deteriorate because of the inability of persons to travel freely to such areas.”\textsuperscript{64} On top of that, he claimed that the installation of rapid transit “w[ould] determine to a large extent, the future growth and development of the capital city of this state, as well as other metropolitan areas, and this is of vital concern to the people of Georgia.”\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{63} “C of C Hears Sanders Boost Rapid Transits for Atlanta,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, 5 December, 1962.
\textsuperscript{64} “Senate Gives Nod to Transit Panel,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, March 14, 1963.
Following this turn of events, in 1963 MATSC formed “a committee which came to be known as the Rapid Transit Committee of 100,” when MATSC was replaced with the (Georgia State) Senate Rapid Transit Study Committee. The 100 endeavored to gain a victory in state legislation through engaging in PR activities. Comprised of “representatives of Atlanta and the five counties and financially backed by them,” the objective of the 100 was to “carry out an extensive informational and promotional program to expedite the installation of some form of
rapid transit to serve our metropolitan area.”

In other words, it was to “press for public support” for a rapid transit system. It was this committee that was to play a decisive role in producing rapid transit’s familiar and “public” image. As much as rapid transit advocates endeavored to listen to the public’s voice to find out what residents really wanted, they also sought to shape public opinion (through education and advertisement) into supporting the implementation of a rapid transit system. In this way, the advocates attempted to understand the needs and concerns of residents not necessarily to address these, but rather to enable them to shape their message in such a way that the public would do what they were “supposed” to do, which was to approve an investment of millions of dollars to change the very spatial arrangements of their life in order to save the downtown they had once deserted.

2) Blending the Old and the New: Earnest Vandiver

Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, former president of Atlanta’s Chamber of Commerce, needed to appoint the 100’s personnel, and give particular consideration to who would serve as the leader. Allen had two candidates in mind. One is Robert L. Summerville, the aforementioned president of the Atlanta Transit System. Obviously intimately familiar with how mass transit functioned in Atlanta, Summerville’s leadership was critical. Even his sometime-rival Allen acknowledged that Summerville’s “comprehensive understanding of transit problems and their solutions” resulting from his experience in “his leadership in making our [Atlanta’s] transit system outstanding in the nation” was indispensable.

That being said, however, another candidate no doubt appeared more appealing to the mayor, particularly in light of the 100’s mission to shape public opinion. This was none other

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66 “Senate Gives Nod.”
than Ernest Vandiver, who had only just been released from his governorship of the state of Georgia. Vandiver appealed to rapid transit advocates because of his wide constituency and pro-business stance. More importantly, however, was the fact that he had maintained his conservative outlook, an inheritance no doubt rooted in his background. Born and raised in Franklin County in north Georgia, he attended UGA and obtained a law degree. After serving in the US Army Air Force during WWII, he joined Georgia’s Democratic Party, and married Sybil E. Russell, a niece of Senator Richard Russell Jr. His political career began early, ca when he became the mayor of Lavonia in Franklin County at the age of only twenty-seven. The rise of Eugene Talmadge, “one of the South’s most notorious demagogues and race-baiters,” whom Vandiver backed enthusiastically, enabled him to rise in Georgian politics. During the son of “the wild man from Sugar Creek,” Harman Talmadge’s governorship, Vandiver served as state adjutant general (the youngest in the nation), and was elected lieutenant governor under the Marvin Griffin administration from 1954-1959. When he ran for the state governor’s seat in 1958, he had earned enough of a reputation to be elected.

Under Vandiver’s governorship from 1959 to 1963, Georgia underwent two fundamental changes — the end of Georgia's de jure segregation and the abandonment of the notorious county unit system. Opposition to segregation did not come about from Vandiver’s abhorrence of racism; on the contrary, he initially promised to oppose desegregation, as indicated by his infamous “no not one” speech, which promised that no black students would be admitted to publicly-funded schools under his governorship. When the federal court ordered the opening of public schools to black students in 1959, however, Vandiver chose not to close the schools, as previous governors had pledged to do, but instead followed the federal government’s command.

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68 Allen, Atlanta Rising, 3.
He formed the Sibley commission to carry out desegregation peacefully, and let two African American students attend the University of Georgia when the federal government instructed the university to do so.

Likewise, when the 1962 Supreme Court’s *Gray v. Sanders* decision delegitimatized Georgia’s county unit system, which had long enabled rural counties to dominate the state’s political landscape, Vandiver accepted this and agreed to drastically change the course of Georgia politics. Under the county unit system, rural counties could send as many representatives as could counties in urban areas, irrespective of population differences. The upshot was that the less populated counties in rural areas could easily maintain a louder voice in Georgia’s General Assembly, while people living in the cities could not, despite the rapid increase of the populations and economic might of urban areas. According to Fredrick Allen, “In the view of the state’s most sophisticated segregationists, the key to maintaining white supremacy in Georgia was not the white-only primary, but rather the state’s unique county-unit system.” As long as this system persisted, blacks, who tended to live in the cities, were systematically prevented from gaining much political power. After receiving a federal district order in 1962, Vandiver reformed the election system into one built on a popular vote basis. Needless to say, this had a devastating effect on those who were eager to keep white supremacy in force.

Clearly Vandiver did not accept these changes out of personal conviction. Rather, his motivation in permitting them to go through was that Atlanta’s business community had desired

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it. From the point of view of the business community, to close schools in order to resist the federal order to desegregate was simply unacceptable; they believed that “such action would be disastrous for their city’s economic future.” Similarly, they found the county unit system to be unreasonable because cities, particularly Atlanta, could not have their voices heard in the General Assembly under the existing voting arrangement. According to historian James C. Cobb, the end of segregation under Vandiver’s administration “reflected a long reach and deep pockets of the Atlanta business and financial community,” while the end of the county unit system “symbolized the ascendance of the state’s and especially Atlanta’s urban business elite, and the court’s ruling ensured that this ascendance would be more than symbolic.”

His affinity with the business and financial community in Atlanta made Vandiver the best candidate for leading the rapid transit PR campaign. However, this alone was not the only reason for the decision. Despite his urban, progressive image, Vandiver still represented the voices of the rural South that demanded to the preservation of the so-called “Southern Way of Life,” through a blending of “the Old and the New.” Indeed, he was opposed to overt racism, but for largely practical reasons: it threatened to ruin Atlanta’s reputation, disrupt the economy, and make it difficult to receive federal assistance. Nevertheless, even if done wholly out of pragmatism, his shift represented a significant break with his past political behavior and associated affiliates. In addition to the fact that he had worked with segregationists Richard Russell and Eugene and Harman Talmadge, he had himself initially promised that he would continue to maintain the policies set by the previous governor Marvin Griffin, who had pledged to save “Georgia’s two greatest traditions—segregation and the county unit system” and to fight against “meddling demagogues, race-baiters, and Communists,” who were “determined to

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71 Cobb, “Georgia Odyssey,” 50, 51.
destroy every vestige of state’s rights.” Vandiver may have betrayed Griffin in letting those “great traditions” go, but he could argue that he did so contrary to his own intentions because he had been forced. In short, he was in a position where he could claim to be an urbane progressive with a faith in the Dixie tradition. This ambiguity was helpful for the rapid transit advocates because it meant he enjoyed a wide constituency, and in fact he was very popular. He was had been elected governor “by one of the largest margins in the state’s history” in the 1958 race, and he was a leading candidate for gubernatorial election in 1966, although he withdrew from the race due to health reasons.

In light of all the above, Vandiver’s appointment did not come as a surprise to public transit advocates at all. In fact, asking Vandiver to be the chairperson was itself somewhat exceptional, because of the fact that he was not actually himself a resident of Metropolitan Atlanta; however, his popularity turned this concern into a minor issue. One of the members said that it was “the feeling of the gathering (the 100) that the matter of your prestige and competence outweighs any minor matter of residence.” One rapid transit supporter was so excited and pleased by the fact that Vandiver accepted the offer that he could not stop smiling, and said “the committee’s success would be assured if Mr. Vandiver were chairman.”

Vandiver himself well understood his new role, which was to inform the public by taking advantage of his experience and reputation. When accepting the nomination, he wrote to Allen that he had “done all” within [his] power in the past” to help citizens, and would continue to work to “bring this very important matter to the attention of the public.” Atlanta Journal soon ran an article on the former governor taking the chairmanship of a group advertising Rapid Transit. Vandiver did not forget to sell the image of an Atlanta equipped with rapid transit,

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72 Quoted in Ibid., 50.
73 “Senate Gives Nod.”
74 S. Ernest Vandiver to Ivan Allen Jr., March 5, 1963, folder 3 box 6, legal office files, SEVP.
telling the interviewer that he was very excited to work for public transportation, a decision which, in his words, was “monumental,” even in his long political career. When he was asked why Atlanta was in need of rapid transit, he responded jokingly, “I think any driver who comes in or out of Atlanta on Monday and Friday afternoon know this.” He then concluded that traffic congestion was hampering “the city’s orderly growth.”

Already his experience and candor looked to have made him the perfect salesman for rapid transit in Atlanta.

One of his first pressing tasks was to fill out the 100’s name list. It was particularly important for Vandiver to choose the membership in such a way that the organization would be seen as representing “the public.” Each political jurisdiction in Metropolitan Atlanta – City of Atlanta, Cobb, Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Clayton— presented candidates. Vandiver basically accepted the names – most of them were businessmen— presented to him by Allen and the business leaders. To strike a balance, however, this was not enough. William Hawland, who was working as executive director of the Citizens’ Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal office under the Allen administration, recommended twenty five candidates for the 100, including two African American men—C.A. Scott, an editor of Atlanta Daily World, and Robert A. Thompson of the Atlanta Urban League— as well as “four women.” Vandiver appreciated the suggestions and agreed to accept them, stating that his members were “of the highest caliber.” He immediately asked R.A. Thomson for African American informants, who would be “willing to help the 100 and giving them the voice of the African American community.” When Thomson introduced to him three faculty members from Atlanta University, Vandiver promised he would “give every consideration to using these three gentlemen as a valuable source of

75 “Vandiver Heads Rapid Transit Unit,” Atlanta Journal, March 14, 1963. Atlanta Journal ran a cartoon to support the 100 activities (See Figure 2.2).
information.” Aside from the conviction on the part of Vandiver and the other business leaders that two African American men (and three informants) and four (white) women would somehow complete the representation of Atlanta’s public, Vandiver’s comments on Hawland’s choice, indicating that he “would indeed look forward to working with these gentlemen,” attested to who the white business and commercial leaders understood as representing the public.\(^77\)

The rapid transit advocates, consisting of Atlanta’s white business and financial leaders, expected Vandiver’s nomination would enable them to complete another pressing task. Not only could he shape public opinion favorably, but he could also no doubt persuade Southern Democrats to support the Urban Mass Transportation Act, which they viewed as merely representing the interests of urban liberals. The advocates knew that they could capitalize on Vandiver’s close relationships in Georgia’s Democratic Party—particularly, his close relationship to the Georgia senators, Richard Russell and Herman Talmadge. As the Kennedy Administration worked on producing the Act, which was to provide federal grants to compensate for two-thirds of the cost of urban rapid transit systems, Atlanta’s business and financial elites observed the process very carefully. They understood that vast amounts of federal money stood to be accessible, and also that obtaining federal help played a decisive in their plans. Clearly, they needed to ensure the bill went through. For instance, Glenn Bennett, the executive director of the AMRPC, clearly recognized the significance of this. For him, it was mandatory for Vandiver and the Committee of 100 to work immediately to persuade Georgia’s congressmen to support the bill. Only “with federal help, it [RT in Atlanta] will become

\(^{76}\) Ernest Vandiver to R. A. Thompson, executive director, the Atlanta Urban League, May 22, 1963, folder 3 box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.

\(^{77}\) William Hawland to S. E. Vandiver, March 14, 1963, folder 3 box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
reality,” Bennett contended. Vandiver also contributed, urging his colleagues in the House to push the proposal through. In Vandiver, therefore, the advocates had found a spokesman who could unite political and business interests to make a strong case to the public for rapid transit. Whether this would succeed was another matter.

3) Bringing the Liberal Turn: Charles Weltner

Commercial civic elites, however, were not the only ones who were pleased by Vandiver’s participation in the rapid transit campaign. Georgia’s Congressman Charles Weltner, who himself was a liberal Democrat, was also working for the act. Unlike Vandiver, Weltner could be expected to have felt like a bit of a stranger in Georgia’s Democratic Party. He lacked Earnest Vandiver’s rural background, and graduated from Atlanta’s Oglethorpe University, whereupon he went to Columbia University to earn a law degree. Returning to Atlanta after two years of service in the US Army, he started to practice law. In 1963, Weltner ran for congress from Georgia’s fifth district (Atlanta), defeated Goldwater Republican Jim O’Callaghan, and went to Washington. During the next four years in the House of Representatives, he consciously worked on behalf of the rights and welfare of racial minorities, a position made evident in his strong support for the 1964 Civil Rights Act. His determination to challenge racism was so firm that he attempted to use the Committee of Un-American Activities to investigate the Ku Klux Klan’s terrorist activities. Later, however, his opposition to racial segregation led him to give up his seat in Congress, for he refused to endorse Lester Maddox, a “rabid segregationist” who loudly denounced the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 the Voting Rights Act. He proceeded to pursue Georgia’s governorship in the 1966 gubernatorial race. For Weltner, it

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was morally abhorrent to stay on the Democratic ticket and keep his loyalty oath to a party headed by a racist. The *New York Times* applauded his decision, and celebrated his rather exceptional character in the Southern Democratic party as “a candidate of conscience.”

Weltner’s strong convictions meant that his reasoning on rapid transit was motivated more by ideals than business concerns. Unlike the white business elites, Weltner saw publicly-funded rapid transit not so much as a way to solve traffic congestion and boost Atlanta’s economy, but as a means to help the poor. As a congressman, his goal had been to work towards the elimination of the poverty that had prevailed in the South. In his words, rapid transit represented an opportunity to “close the ‘Southern gap,’ – to eliminate all disparities in education, income, public services, health standards, and economic opportunity.”

To do so, the assistance of the federal government was indispensable. “The Federal Government offers a major opportunity for closing the Southern gap,” he asserted. “Realistic Southerners will acknowledge this.” He particularly admired New Deal programs and stressed their great legacy in the South. “The nation was then in the depths of the Depression, and the South, being poorest, was most hard hit of all.” Then Franklin Roosevelt and his New Deal came along. Its programs, including REA, TVA, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, and school lunches, managed to rescue the South from its misery. Weltner therefore saw rapid transit as a step in an ongoing process to eliminate Southern poverty, a process of progress that had begun with the New Deal and which required further federal intervention to proceed. He felt that “Southern need is unchanged” and “the same economics [(in the thirties)] that applies to the South of the

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82 Ibid., 166.
83 Ibid., 165.
1960s,” while at the same time Southerners’ “support of programs to fill southern needs is pitifully small.”

This did not, however, necessitate recreating the New Deal. Welter stressed that the New Deal itself was no longer needed, because those particular programs were structured to assist agricultural interests which were now no longer as important as they had been in the thirties. Indeed, in the sixties, “less than 6 per cent of personal income is derived from agriculture,” and yet rural interests remained the ones who dominated Georgian politics. Farmers in rural regions could even be said to be “bootleg[ing]” Georgian politics. In particular, the county unit system had enabled them to keep their power intact. On the other hand, politicians in the South had not paid much attention to the plight in the cities. According to Weltner, poverty was readily apparent there, but Southern states had “no department of urban affairs. They had no slum-clearance programs. They had no housing programs. Southern states have little protective legislation for the industrial worker. They have little activity looking for the future of the growing regional cities of the South.” Southern Democrats from rural regions, who had ardently supported the New Deal program in the past, did not validate federal intervention in urban areas, leading to the situation which Weltner described as Southerners’ “pitifully small” support for (federal) programs aimed at meeting Southern needs. White rural interests, in other words, used their dominance of the political sphere to serve their own interests, while hurting the interests of both other Southerners and the South as a whole. It was a deplorable situation.

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84 Ibid., 165-66.  
85 Ibid., 159.  
86 Ibid.  
87 Ibid., 166.
Weltner therefore emphasized the urgent need for federal intervention to save “the other Southerner…, the one whose skin is black,” living in the cities. As a Johnson Democrat, he urged, that “realistic” whites’ “thinking about ‘the South’ must expand to include the whole South, specifically the one-fifth which is Negro.”

According to Weltner, “The South is poor because the Negro is poor… The entire economy of the South will continue to suffer because of Negro unemployment, Negro poverty, and Negro dependency.” This pervasive poverty in turn factored into “the whole range of human misery,” including “illegitimacy, disease, malnutrition, alcoholism, broken homes, delinquency, crime, slums, drug addiction.” Erasing the “Southern gap” required no less than the elimination of racism and the empowering of blacks both economically and politically. In addition to providing civil rights and voting rights, Weltner asserted that the poor “must be raised to the highest level compatible with their own ability and industry.”

It was necessary for the future progress of Georgia to empower blacks to “prepare for full participation in Southern life and the Southern economy” and to “reach maximum efficiency as [] producer[s] and contributor[s].”

For Weltner, the implementation of public transportation constituted a way to achieve this grand objective. To close “the Southern gap” would necessitate “the elimination of those practices and attitudes which have produced and preserved the wide disparities between whites and Negroes.” This had to entail an end to white dominance, where white Southerners preserved the region “ripe for full development” and dominated “the opportunity to be an important part of the economic and industrial expansion of his region, to [their] immediate

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88 Ibid., 168.
89 Ibid. 171.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid. 168.
92 Ibid., 172.
personal benefit and the lasting benefit of [their] children.” For Weltner, “the prospects” at stake included improvements across the board: “better schools, better housing, better health services, better jobs,” and “better transportation.” “Southern Negroes,” he reasoned, shared “aspirations” that were “not vastly different from” those of whites, making it mandatory for Georgia Democrats to “equip them to make their own way in a complex and competitive society.” Publicly built and operated rapid transportation would play a central role in giving blacks economic power. Moreover, it would produce other benefits, for with “the Negro’s increased stability and independence will come lower public expenditures for all kinds of public service.”

As a result, when the news of Vandiver’s nomination reached his office, the congressman promptly mailed a letter to Vandiver offering him his help. He said that he was “pleased” to hear that Vandiver had accepted the appointment. Weltner told the new chairman that he had just completed “a series of interesting committee meetings on the Urban Mass Transportation Act.” One of them had seen ARMPC’s Glenn Bennett and Gerald Horton from Atlanta testify, and Weltner applauded how “impressive” it was that Atlanta was playing a leading role in passing the bill. Atlanta’s advocates may have had radically different motivations than the ambitious congressman, but they had nevertheless gained a significant backer who recognized their efforts to bring rapid transit to Atlanta.

93 Ibid., 185.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Charles Weltner to S. Ernest Vandiver, March 20, 1963, folder 3 box 6, legal office files, 1963-66, SEVP.
IV. Soliciting the Federal Grant: ARMPC’s Glenn Bennett and Gerald Horton of the Chamber of Commerce

The advocates knew that funding the transit system would be their biggest challenge, and that in order to finance the $296 million the project was projected to cost, federal assistance would be vitally important. The Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1963, which proposed to “provide additional assistance for the development of comprehensive and coordinated mass transportation systems in Metropolitan and other urban areas,” was under review in the House of Representatives’ Committee on Banking and Currency, and Atlanta was the only city from the Southeast that made testimonies to stress its importance in the committee hearings. Weltner claimed “while we have been hearing much of the East and something of the Midwest and Far West, there has been little definite testimony concerning my region, the Southeast.” The congressman also stressed that Atlanta represented a special case, for while other cities making testimonies were claiming the decline of existing mass transit systems (rail transit lines and motorbus carriers), Atlanta was attempting “to build a new system that will serve present and future populations for the decades in the future.”

To impress this upon the committee, Weltner introduced two representatives — Gerald Horton, who led the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Rapid Transit Committee, and Glenn Bennett, who was an executive director of the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission. Both tried to explain how rapid railway transit deserved federal grants, in other words, why it was a public necessity. Horton repeated the commercial civic elites’ argument

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98 Ibid., 392.  
99 Ibid.
that the continuous growth of Atlanta’s central city was of paramount importance not only to regional, but also to national economic prosperity:

Atlanta is the capital city of the State of Georgia and is recognized as the Southeastern centre of banking and finance, communications, insurance, education, government, distribution and manufacturing. Whether or not its central city continues its present growth; whether or not its central city is accessible to the people of the metropolitan region is important not only to the future of Atlanta, but also the future of the great and growing Southeastern region of the United States.100

Along with the theme of economic growth, Horton also presented a new line of reasoning. He argued that installing a rapid transit system would complete the urban renewal and development funded thus far by the federal and state governments. This was a significant remark, because many believed that rapid rail transit would be useless in Atlanta, for the city had emerged during the rise of automobile-dominated society, and the city’s modern infrastructure was originally structured for the auto-drivers. When Ivan Allen had given his testimony in the previous year, he had in fact stressed that rapid railway transit was vital in smoothing automobile circulation by offering multiple methods of transportation. From his perspective, more circulation would restore the economic vitality of the city. Of course, Horton did not forget to mention how public transit would contribute to the auto-drivers, but his emphasis was that the proposed developments were part of a larger plan much broader in scope:

Atlanta is also one of the national centers of the Interstate Highway System with six legs of that system stretching in every direction from the heart of the city. People throughout the Southeast and the region have reason now to come to downtown Atlanta for business and entertainment. But if the capital city is to die, choked on its own traffic, then there will be nothing at the crossroads of these great highways. Local, State, and Federal governments will have expended great sums of money, more than $300 million in Atlanta to get nowhere. And the total bill will be over $1 billion, and that money will be spent to get nowhere.

100 Ibid., 393.
Federal assistance for mass transit is the final element needed to insure that our present investment in urban renewal, public housing, highways, and a number of projects are sound and pay off. Without this further investment, we may have an urban renewal land that won’t sell, expressways that lead to nowhere, and housing units of unemployed.101

Furthermore, Horton introduced another new approach in explaining the public value of rapid rail transit. Acknowledging that the Housing and Home Finance Agency would sponsor the money, Horton insisted that, without public transit, previous federal investments in urban renewals and highway construction would have been in vain. For him, urban renewal projects had succeeded in “the clearance and rehabilitation of some of our [Atlanta’s] blight.”102 The federal money had produced “new and vital centers for commercial growth.”103 However, he argued, this recovery of the downtown core would quickly come to a halt if the government failed to provide suburban dwellers with ways to commute. He stated “Without some means of moving people to these office buildings and business establishments…, on urban renewal land, …. our great expectations for this urban growth are doomed to disappointment.”104 Moreover, “The land where we had hoped for high-rise office centers will simply go begging—a loss not only to Atlantans but to the Nation which has, through taxes, invested in this urban program.”105 Here again was an attempt to make Atlanta’s issues a matter of federal concern, by stressing how progress achieved thus far stood to be wasted were the government to leave Atlanta to its woes.

To emphasize the public value of mass transit, Horton also asserted that it would contribute to the welfare of the poor. He stressed the fact that many Atlantans were already

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101 Ibid., 394.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
users of public transportation. “Approximately 69,000 workers,” comprising “better than 17 percent of the total work force of the metropolitan area,” made impressive usage figures that showed that Atlanta would provide a good “market for mass transportation.” According to Horton, Atlanta was also planning to build more public housing, and public transit would be vital for those who would live in public accommodations, since they tended not to possess their own automobiles. This by itself was in fact a peculiar remark reflecting the shift in approach, because Horton and his colleagues in the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce were acknowledging that public transit would essentially be set up for the underprivileged. It should be noted as well that Horton here did not refer specifically to race, but rather just implied that public transit would contribute best to the blacks who were dispossessed in federally-funded urban renewal projects and who needed to be accommodated in public housing, as *Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use for Metro Atlanta* had proposed back in 1952. He had just claimed that without public transit, the majority of them would not be able to go to work, leading to a situation where federal investments aimed at helping ease racial injustice would be wasted. It represented a continuation of the tactic of reminding the federal government that their prior investments in Atlanta were at stake, while the issue of social justice, earlier skirted around, was now coming increasingly to the forefront.

Atlanta has approximately 7,500 units of public housing today and another 1500 units for which building permits have been written. The majority of the occupants of these units travel to and from work by public transportation. If this system is not sufficient to meet the demands of the future, then the expenditure for public housing will give people homes that are virtually isolated from their work.  

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106 Ibid., 393.
107 Ibid.
After Horton stressed how public transit would be necessary in “future great cities of America,” including Atlanta, Dallas, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Denver, Glenn Bennett, spoke, emphasizing how rapid transit would complete their regional planning. Bennett attempted to guarantee the continuing growth of the urban core, and articulate the vital role of rapid transit in sustaining this growth.

According to him, “several indicators,” mostly consisting of future projections presented in ARMPC reports, promised the city had a brilliant future in terms of office construction, employment, and capital investments. Bennett also emphasized how rapid transit would complete their regional planning. He stated that “future metropolitan growth” would depend on “a far-sighted, long-range plan for the balanced transportation.” Although interstate highway plans were in the implementation stage, these represented “private express facilities,” and Atlanta still lacked “public express facilities in the form of rapid transit.” His major argument was that without federal money there was no way for public transit to be implemented in the city. He again stressed that Atlanta’s population growth was unprecedentedly rapid, but also that the increase in automobiles exceeded its pace. Taxable lands were “devoted to streets and parking,” presenting “the obvious necessity for alternatives… The only one which offers promise is the development of a rail rapid transit system.” Moreover, he did not neglect to refer to the previous defeat in the 1962 referendum. He put a positive spin on the event, explaining that city dwellers had very much desired rapid transit,

108 Ibid.

109 According to Bennett, “several indicators point up dramatically the vitality of the core city area. For instance, Atlanta ranked fifth in the Nation for a 7 year period ending in 1961, in par capital volume of office construction—much of it downtown. Projecting employment and travel demand to 1970, it is obvious that more expressways and streets cannot possibly solve the problem.”


111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid., 397.
but the referendum fell through because it was statewide. However, he continued, they were going to hold a new referendum, which would more accurately reflect the position of the city residents: “another opportunity to give the counties the necessary legal powers will undoubtedly come in 1964 when voting on the issue can confined to the urban counties around Atlanta.”

In Horton’s optimistic portrayal of the city’s future, the only thing Atlanta needed to keep its growth going was rapid transit. To install the system, which would constitute “66 miles of double track, grade separated, electrified and 42 stations,” federal aid was indispensable. It was, he explained, a relatively reasonable system. Fare boxes would finance the operational costs, and they thus would require federal aid only for the “acquiring of the capital equipment.” The fact that Atlanta could take advantage of existing railway lines, and that they had no existing services they needed to rehabilitate in the process, made the proposal it even more reasonable. To receive federal aid would enable them to begin construction in 1964, ultimately enabling the system to begin its initial line operation in 1971. Therefore, he repeatedly stressed,

It is clear that the magnitude of the initial public expenditures necessary for rapid transit will make it very difficult for the local government. Without Federal aid, rapid transit will be realized only in the distant future. With a reasonable amount of Federal aid, it will be possible to implement our carefully worked out plans somewhere near on schedule.

Ultimately, the Urban Mass Transportation Act passed in 1964. The commercial civic elites had undertaken a long and arduous campaign in support of the legislation, and their efforts had borne fruit at last. However, all of their endeavors seeking federal assistance for their plan would end up being futile if they were unable to get the plan approved in metropolitan Atlanta.

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114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., 399.
116 Ibid., 398.
Thus, public transit advocates recognized that it was necessary to undertake two major tasks at once. The first was to set up state laws in order to start the construction of the project. The second was to produce a public opinion favorable to public transit. This was the more urgent of the tasks, because starting public transit required the enactment of a series of state laws. Planning literature, booster magazines like *Atlanta Magazine*, and speeches in the Banking Committee were all techniques they employed to help forge ahead with their elaborate civic commercial vision. The elites had come a long way, but a great challenge still lay ahead.

V. Triumph of the Boosters: The Enactment of the 1964 UMTA Bill

As soon as he accepted the chairmanship, Vandiver started to work towards the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act. It was not an easy task. Vandiver telegraphed his father-in-law Richard Russell, and Herman Tallmadge, son of the notorious segregationist Eugene Talmage, and urged them to “support… rapid transit as a must for Atlanta’s future.” Vandiver contended that Atlanta’s acquirement of Rapid Transit would be good for Georgia’s economy and welfare as a whole. The traffic congestion “chokes our city, postpones the time when workers in the eighteen county area depending on the central city are denied easy access to the jobs and convenience markers on which they depend.”

Vandiver’s efforts notwithstanding, the congressmen’s reply to his telegram was not what he would have expected. Richard Russell replied, confessing that he had not “determined if he will vote for the upcoming transit bill.” He said that it would be difficult “embarking on this program when the national budget is from twelve to fifteen billion dollars out of balance.” The former New Deal supporter further pointed out that he would oppose any policies that might lead to tax increases.

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117 From Hamilton Douglass Jr. and Ernest Vandiver to Herman Talmadge and Richard Russell, telegram, n.d. ca. 1963, folder 3 box 6, legal office files, SEVP.
Russell said that he would not back the bill “unless my study convinces me that Georgia will receive a percentage of the total amount expended that will equal the percentage of contributions made by Georgia tax payers into the fund.” Such an outlook did not bode well for the passage of the bill.

Despite Vandiver’s concerns, however, the Urban Mass Transit Transportation bill passed the Senate on April 4 by a vote of 52 to 41. Vandiver played a decisive role in the bill’s enactment in the House. In particular, Senator Russell admitted his eventual support for the bill was because of the strong push from Ernest Vandiver and Atlanta mayor Ivan Allen Jr. He indicated that while he had initially abhorred the bill because it would lead to more governmental spending, Vandiver and Allen, who “have presented it [the bill] forcefully to me this time,” led him to think that the traffic problem “was probably practically incapable of solution without some federal assistance.” This was a significant development. Talmadge and Russell were not expected to have been in favor of the bill, given that it required more governmental spending and hence an increase of federal control in Georgia. Neither of these requirements was desirable, especially the latter, for the Kennedy administration was preparing for the Civil Rights Act. The Georgian senators feared and fervently opposed federal intervention with regard to the issue of racial segregation in the South; only 1 of 22 senators from the South endorsed the Civil Rights Act. Nevertheless, 10 out of 22 senators from the 11 Southern States voted for the Mass Transportation Act, “authorizing $375 million in matching grant and loans over three years to help and local government improve transit facilities.” This still meant that the majority of Southern states were not in favor of the bill, considering the fact

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118 From Richard Russell to Hamilton Douglass Jr., telegram, n.d. ca 1963, folder 3 box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
that only 16 Democratic senators opposed the bill, and more than half of them were from the South.  

Of course, Georgia House representative Charles Welter, who was sent to Washington DC thanks to the votes of Fulton County blacks, did not share this perspective, despite his common affiliation with the Georgia Democratic Party. Weltner was careful when making a speech on behalf of the bill. Before the vote, he had to be clear that the federal government was not trying to expand its control over Atlanta’s or Georgian politics, since he had “a feeling that the transit bill was going to run into serious trouble in the Senate.” Weltner emphasized that the bill was not intended to “usurp the function of local authorities.” Although paid by Uncle Sam, “all planning and development” should be “left up to the location involved.” Even “whether or not people want a rapid transit system was up to the people.”

As a result of all these circumstances, the two Georgian senators’ unexpected assistance for the bill prompted considerable surprise. Russell himself confessed that he knew that he “possibly could have blocked it [the bill] if he had gone all out against it,” but he chose not to do so. The Washington Post found an expansion of urban interests at work in their vote, saying: “In a development of more than ordinary political interest, Senator Russell, chairman of the Senate’s Southern Caucus, and Senator Talmadge his Georgia colleague voted for the legislation. The City of Atlanta favored the bill. The Russell and Talmadge votes appeared to reflect the Georgia capital’s growing influence in state politics since the Supreme Court outlawed the rural weighted Georgia unit rule.”

\[^{119}\text{In the House, 212 (Democrats 173, Republicans 39) congressmen approved the bill, while 189 (Democrats 61, Republicans 128) opposed it. “Voting Record on Seven Major Issues in Congress,” New York Times, October 5, 1964.}\]

\[^{120}\text{“Won’t Usurp Powers, Weltner Says on Transits,” Atlanta Journal, January 31, 1963.}\]

only reason for the bill’s endorsement. First, the amount of the actual budget was diminished in the Senate session. It was originally $500 million, but the Senate “trimmed the amount ($375 million) to make the bill more attractive the economy-minded.” Secondly, an Oregon Democrat’s amendment to the bill contributed to boosting its constituency (except for Talmadge and Russell), in order to secure laborers bargaining rights when their private transit company was purchased by a public agency.122

Although Weltner expected Talmadge’s and Russell’s votes would affect the House vote, the rapid transit bill actually encountered difficulties in the House. This would have been a surprise for Vandiver as well, who at this point firmly believed that the votes of Russell and Talmadge were encouraging news and that Southern Democrats would follow the lead set by these two men. The bill had to gain approval from the House Banking Committee and Rules Committee in order to go to the floor, but the Rules Committee delayed its action on the bill for over a month. The delay was due to the committee demanding a hearing on the pros and cons, but the delay was not a good sign for the rapid transit advocates. Rapid transit supporters had long hesitated to submit the proposal, for they had feared that they were still not able to obtain a majority vote, and a second failure would risk discrediting their project. Ultimately, Weltner and the transit advocates had to wait for over a year to witness the transit bill finally being passed.

1) Demonstration Project: Maintaining Local Autonomy

The bill getting stalled did not stop rapid transit advocates from continuing with their campaigns. However, Charles Weltner and Earnest Vandiver began to show disagreements over the issue of a federal demonstration project. Weltner, who had found it difficult to pass

the bill, introduced Vandiver and Atlanta’s rapid transit advocates to a federal grant for holding a mass transit demonstration. Weltner wrote to Vandiver and told that he had a “profitable” meeting with John Kohl of the Transportation Division of Housing and Home Finance. Kohl, who had long played a major role in making urban mass transportation act under the John F. Kennedy administration, told Weltner that “there was approximately $5 million available for demonstration projects for mass transit and they would certainly like to see such a project undertaken in Atlanta.” Weltner believed that this demonstration would help the future referendum to establish a “taxing authority for rapid transit.” This letter was forwarded to Glen Bennett, Jack Etheridge, and Bob Summerville.123

Many concurred with Weltner’s idea, and the federal government also wanted Atlanta’s involvement. Ivan Allen contacted Weltner, saying in a letter that “we would love to have a demonstration project in Atlanta and will cooperate in every possible way.”124 Glenn Bennett from the Metropolitan Planning Commission soon began to work with PBQ&D to formulate a project plan in order to meet the federal requirements to apply for the money. Advocates also invited John Kohl to Atlanta. “Mr. urban transportation” accepted the offer cordially, because, according to Bennett, he was “extremely friendly to the idea of having an urban mass transportation project in Atlanta.”125 Kohl lectured about the federal government’s role in fostering urban mass transit in front of sixty-nine participants, including ex-mayor William Hartsfield, stressing that he had “approximately five million dollars available for such project.”126

123 Charles Weltner to Robert Summerville, August 19, 1963, folder 2 box 6, legal office files, SEVP.
124 Ivan Allen Jr. to Charles Weltner, August 15, 1963, folder 2 box 6, legal office files, SEVP.
125 Glen Bennet to Ernest Vondiver, August 23, 1963, folder 2 box 6, August 19, 1963, v. legal office files, SEVP.
126 Bill Corly, “Minutes of the Second Meeting of the 100,” September 12, 1963, folder 2 box 6, August 19, 1963, v. legal office files, SEVP.
The advocates, however, right on the cusp of this opportunity, encountered fierce opposition from inside. Robert Summerville (of Atlanta Transit Systems), who had been left out of the advocates’ campaigns as discussed earlier, mailed an angry letter to the congressman. According to him, ATS was already doing a good job, and therefore there was no need for any federal money. His argument was that Atlantans “can get involved in some quite unnecessary little project for the sake of grabbing off Federal Money,” but they will “in the process lose sight of our main objective which is our obligation to provide the area with as good transit service as possible.”

Summerville was likely motivated out of the need to protect ATS’ assets were a new mass transit system, excluding the existing ATS system, established, and he was also likely still sore over being left out of the discussions following the disagreement over plans. He was unable, however, to derail the project.

This was not the only challenge faced at this stage, however. Weltner had revealed a demonstration project plan, using “the Budd car, which would carry 80 passengers” with “only a few cars, running only a few miles” on existing rails, when rapid transit supporters, four members of the State Senate Rapid Transit Committee and ten representatives of the Metropolitan Planning Commission visited his office in Atlanta. He faced skepticism and even opposition, for the majority of the visitors were there to know how long they had to wait for endorsement of the urban mass transportation bill; they did not want to hear about the demonstration project. For instance, Richard Rich, who then chaired the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s rapid transit committee, contended that the demo would end up being cheesy due to the impossibility of providing “the most modern expensive equipments” given the financial limitations, and that it would therefore disappoint people and cause them to stay away from

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mass transit. Even the Committee of 100 members insisted that were the project to fail, the damage to their long-range plans would be severe. Cobb County’s Senator Ed. Kendrick captured well what thoughts rapid transit supporters had on the demonstration project. He observed that the loss of the state referendum in 1963 brought about a state of affairs where “the public has lost interest in mass transit,” so that it was true that rapid transit advocates needed “a shot in the arm”; however, this, they asserted, would only be “a partial answer.” “For the long term,” Atlanta would be better off to “stick by” the original plan the MPC had developed.128

It was in late November in 1963 Vandiver made it clear that he would not support the demonstration project, although this must have been frustrating because by then, he knew that it was actually feasible. Vandiver received a report from the Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Commission, which was also forwarded to “members of local rapid transit committees and others interested in the proposal to run diesel cars on existing rails as a demonstration project.” The memorandum was attached to a report from the Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas engineers (Oct. 24).129 The document stated that the "utilization of Budd Rail Diesel Car operation over existing railroad tracks to stimulate rapid transit in Atlanta" should be a feasible demonstration. It also included route plans like Union Station and East Point to the South, Union Station terminal and Avondale Estates to the east, and so forth.130 Nonetheless, Vandiver repeated the Chamber of Commerce’s argument that the interim system’s inability to provide “adequate service” would “sour residents of the metropolitan area on a rapid transit system.” Along with Vandiver’s comment, Atlanta Journal reported that “General Electric experts” criticized the demonstration attempt. The GE professionals argued that “no commuter

128 Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Commission to Vandiver, folder 2 box 6, October 29, 1963, v. legal office files, SEVP.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
programs be started that will not be part of the ultimate rapid transit system” and pointed out that no cities had ever been successful in having an interim program. GE’s comments probably derived from the assumption that having an interim system with diesel cars would eventually lead Atlanta to move away from building a state of the art electric railway system that GE was selling. The demonstration project was thus scuttled because of conflicting interests, and the fear of rapid transit advocates that a poor demonstration would sour the public on the idea of rapid transit itself.

2) The Making of the 1964 Urban Mass Transportation Act and the Victory of the Booster

Vandiver did not, however, give up on the urban mass transportation bill. He urged Georgia’s House members to vote for it, when the voting was announced. In his letter to five congressmen, he urged them to “consider [the bill] in light of the benefit it would offer not only Atlanta but the entire State of Georgia.” The bill was deemed to be of vital importance now, especially after Georgia’s Assembly had just made a resolution to hold a five county referendum in order to enable the legislature to “establish the Rapid Transit Authority.” Knowing that three of the congressmen were from outside the metropolitan Atlanta area, he emphasized Atlanta’s role in the development of state of Georgia’s welfare, arguing, “People from 29 counties in Georgia come to work in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The population of these 29 counties represents 43 percent of the state’s population, so you can see how much good this would bring to the State of Georgia.”

Along with Vandiver, Lieutenant Governor Peter Geer (of Senate Rapid Transit Committee) urged congress members to support the bill. In his speech at the Atlanta Rotary Club, titled “Where We Stand on Rapid Transit,” he repeated advocates’

131 Ernest Vandiver to Charles Weltner, John Flynt, Eliot Hagen, and Phillip M. Landrum, April 7, 1964, folder 2 box 6, legal office files, SEVP.
arguments, saying that without mass transit Atlanta’s economy would end up stalled. Geer asserted that “without this bill and the financial assistance it will authorize, construction of a rapid transit system is economically impossible for Atlanta in the near future.” Reminding the audience that “Richard B. Russell and Herman Talmadge supported this bill when it passed the Senate and was sent to the House,” Geer demanded their votes. 132

Not all responses were favorable. For instance, Phil Mandrum, a congressman from rural Georgia (9th district), did not hesitate to show his doubts about the bill. “Not sure what is going to be done,” he said, although he admitted that he would “give very careful thorough consideration.” Likewise, John Flint from 4th District Georgia confessed that he could not “fully agree” with Vandiver’s statement. For him, the value of the project should be judged on “whether a sufficient number of people will use it [mass transit] if it is installed.” Flint felt that “it is very questionable whether it will be used to a feasible extent in a geographical area as large as metropolitan Atlanta.” 133

To make matters worse, the area redevelopment bill was defeated in the House. This was not a good sign for the rapid transit bill. Weltner lamented that “the defeat of the area redevelopment bill in the House… could be a warning of trouble ahead for the transit bill.” The Area Redevelopment Act (H.R. 4996), despite Kennedy having favored the bill so strongly, was defeated in the House by a margin of only five votes (209 to 205). The bill had been prepared to help solve urban poverty, an issue which resurrected an old political alliance: “The old coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats bloomed again, and even the small town rural flavor of the bill did not save it.” Both factions had united against an expansion of federal power. Furthermore, this had been the first proposal introduced by the House Banking

132 Speech Draft, April 20, 1964, folder 3 box 6, August 19, 1963, v. legal office files, SEVP.
133 John Flint to Ernest Vandiver, April 16, 1964, folder 2, box 1, general correspondence, SEVP.
Committee to be defeated, and the rapid transit bill was also introduced by the Banking Committee.\textsuperscript{134} This too suggested that the rapid transit bill was in danger. When the bill’s vote was finally scheduled for floor action on June 24, advocates urged Vandiver to come over to Washington D.C. and join in last-minute lobbying activities.\textsuperscript{135}

The long-stalled bill was finally approved by a close vote of 212 to 189 on June 26, 1964.\textsuperscript{136} Charles Weltner thanked Vandiver's interest and work in support of the Mass Transit Bill. “Our 'win' and that Georgia delegation’s vote are certainly the result of your leadership of the Committee of 100 and your personal concern,” he wrote. This letter was accompanied by another letter which had been “mailed to approximately 200 interested persons yesterday.” The letter reported that the Urban Mass Transportation Bill passed the House on Thursday, June 26. President Lyndon Johnson signed the bill, contending that big cities should “no longer be a stepchild…. neglected by their government in Washington.” He had his own stake in the issue. According to the \textit{Washington Post}, he was preparing for his coming presidential campaign, and therefore was motivated to get the bill through as fast as he could, because advocates of the bill, many of them mayors of big cities, were “influential Democrats expected to play important roles” in the election.\textsuperscript{137}

At last, the bill had been passed and one major hurdle to Atlanta’s rapid transit had been cleared. It was now necessary for Atlanta to have a legal authority to operate rapid transit, in order to apply for the federal assistance funding. Weltner urged Atlantans to hurry to obtain the federal funds, pointing out that “A number of cities will file applications as soon as funds are appropriated. If we wait too long, the money will vanish and the efforts of the Committee of

\textsuperscript{134} “Weltner Sees Woe over Transit Bill,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, June 14, 1964
\textsuperscript{135} Tom Pickett to Ernest Vandiver, telegram, June 18, 1964 folder 2 box 1, legal office files, SEVP.
100..., in passing this important legislation will have been only to benefit cities other than Atlanta.”

138 Weltner urged Vandiver to hold “meetings... in the neighborhoods of metropolitan Atlanta to explain to the people the many advantages of a rapid transit system. Such meetings could be held almost simultaneously to prevent a time delay.”

139 Of course, Vandiver was expected to lead the campaign to urge metropolitan Atlantans to apply for the federal grant. Despite the successful enactment of the UMTA, which had required such extensive efforts and the confrontation of opposition from both within and without, civic commercial elites still faced difficulties on the road ahead.

Conclusion

In order to implement their rapid transit idea, advocates needed to obtain federal assistance funding. Thus, they undertook a concerted effort to pass the two bills—the 1961 Housing Act and the UMTA of 1964. Their participation in the national campaign provided them with opportunities to develop their ideas as to why Atlanta was in need of public rail transit. “The traveling public,” was originally conceived of as lower middle class, and the proposal was made with their values in mind. However, this conception changed as circumstances – particularly the failure of the state-wide referendum and political transformation at the federal level – necessitated a more inclusive approach, with poverty and social issues becoming more important than the cleanliness and luxury appearances that had originally been considered important selling points. Before long, the lower middle class was no longer the major group the rapid transit advocates proposed to help. By the time of the enactment of the 1964 UMTA, they had begun to include the poor in their list of beneficiaries.

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138 Charles Weltner to Ernest Vandiver, July 2, 1964, folder 10 box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
139 Charles Weltner to Ernest Vandiver, July 13, 1964, folder 10 box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
This change occurred largely because the commercial civic elites sought to take advantage of the liberalization of the federal government under the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. Moreover, the enactment of the two bills was pleasant news for boosters, because it would ultimately not only give them the financial muscle they craved, but also marked a boost in Atlanta business elites’ power over the rural politicians of Atlanta. S. Ernest Vandiver, the chairperson of the Rapid Transit Committee of 100, played a particularly major role in promoting state-wide support. Of course, the public transit supporters were not fully co-opted to Johnson’s attempt to expand the power of the federal government, and they resisted what they feared would constitute excessive intervention on the part of the federal government. Atlanta’s refusal to carry out the demonstration project, which would have been financed by the federal government, attested not only to their desire to protect their efforts up to that point from being soured by a poor image, but also, more importantly, to their will to maintain their local independence.

Expansion of the list of the beneficiaries, however, soon encountered further challenges, particularly from suburban counties. Supporters’ optimistic, color-blind language was also challenged by Atlanta’s African American communities, who constituted a large political bloc by then. These troubles became evident when the advocates began establishing a public authority that required an endorsement from the citizens of metropolitan Atlanta. They needed to make the majority of residents believe that public transit was a necessary, which was no easy task. This again encouraged them to explain who constituted the “public” and why Atlanta needed public transit. Their discourse of a united public, upon which their arguments for rapid transit depended, faced a real danger of fragmentation, particularly by race and class.
PART II  The People’s Rejection of the Public Transit Plan, 1964-1968

The previous part examined how civic commercial elites framed the idea of rapid transit, and how they contributed to the 1964 Urban Mass Transportation Act. Their role was significant for they gained considerable traction for the Act through a series of speeches, presentations, and publications which clarified their position, and in particular elaborated on the reasons why Atlanta was devastatingly in need of public railway transit. The advocates made considerable progress in their efforts. Nevertheless, to win the federal assistance they sought, Vandiver and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100 (MARTC100) still had a long to-do list to gain the voters’ support.

Again this section covers the years between 1964 and 1968. The enactment of the Urban Mass Transportation Act in 1964, which started federal involvement in providing a local public transit system, marked the starting point in the Atlanta and the jumping off point for local boosters who wanted to advantage of the bill and begin to build a mass transit system in their city. Before they could, they needed to amend the state constitution in order to enable metropolitan counties to establish their own public transit agency. In November 1964, a statewide referendum necessitating ratification in the five metropolitan counties passed, which enabled the State of Georgia to finally start to implement its own rapid transit legislation. But this was just the first in a string of crucial vote. Despite the 1964 vote, the state’s General Assembly tabled a bill that would have created the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Authority Act, which created a public transit authority, MARTA; however, it was still up to metropolitan citizens to decide whether their own counties would participate in the system (and consequently pay additional taxes for it) or not. This in turn necessitated another five-county metropolitan
referendum, in which MARTA managed to barely creep to victory in four counties, but failed in booming Cobb County where it won only 43% of the votes.

The victory turned MARTA into an operational agency and it promptly started to make plans for the four counties in January, 1966. In the same year, yet another state-wide referendum was held, this time seeking to enable MARTA to gain funding from the state of Georgia for up to 10 percent of the total project expenses. MARTA won that referendum as well, and successfully obtained a federal matching grant for its technical and engineering studies. In 1967, MARTA, with the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC), set out its first comprehensive plan, entitled “The Impact of Rapid Transit on Atlanta.” Following a series of public hearings, there was another referendum; this one, held in 1968, was a two-county referendum to “enable MARTA to move into capital programs.” But the measure resulted in a solid defeat, prompting MARTA to change the whole plan and its attendant financial programs. Focusing on this series of votes (referendums), this part of the story shows how MARTA officials attempted to create a strong unified public in favor of modernization and civic improvements. Instead these votes show a multiplicity of publics, who sometimes voted the same, but clearly had different interests and investments in public transportation. Indeed, the formation of Atlanta’s public transit largely depended on a fragile alliance between African Americans and the affluent residents of in-town suburbs.

As a whole, this part attempts to clarify how the boosters’ attempt to construct a business-orientated “public” failed, in the face of rising opposition from those who deployed their own notions of “public” and “democracy.” The road to the crucial 1968 referendum saw the gradual emergence of divergent voices and positions against the plans of the commercial civic elites.
Chapter 3

“Take the Story… Directly to the People”: The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100 and the Amendment 16, 1964-1966

Introduction

In 1964, the rapid transit advocates had a long way to go if they wished to see ground broken on a new public transit construction in Atlanta. First they had to amend the Georgia State Constitution. The Senate Rapid Transit Study Committee, which was mainly formed by state politicians from the Metropolitan area, urged the Constitution Revision Commission to produce a new constitutional amendment, Amendment 16, to set up “the Authority for local governments, individually and in co-operation with other local governments, to construct, maintain and operate a public transportation system, and to empower such local governments to finance the same by taxation.” To enact the amendment would require a majority vote in the next general election. This would be no easy task. This chapter tries to examine the public transit advocates, particularly Rapid Transit Committee of 100’s “public education” and discover its limits.

The advocates had not forgotten their bitter experience in 1962, when a statewide referendum failed to pass. This would have established public transit service as a function of the state government and was a necessary pre-condition to any massive building or financing campaign. They attributed this previous defeat to “public apathy,” and did not intend to repeat their mistake. (Figure 2.1) The objective of the advocates, therefore, particularly Ernest Vandiver and the MARTC100, was to “educate” Atlanta citizens and citizens around the state, and secure their vote for the amendment.

The advocates portrayed public transit—meaning a rapid railway transportation system—in terms of business values, emphasizing its efficiency, profitability, modernity, and publicity. The fact that federal help was available added increasing significance and urgency to their campaign. According to a Congressman Charles Weltner, “Federal Aid on development the [public transit] system is available as a result of legislation recently passed by Congress,” but Atlanta should be “equipped to apply for such aid until its individual governments are empowered under the state constitution to engage in the rapid transit activities.”

To “equip” Atlanta in order to obtain federal funding entailed the establishment of a public transit agency. The language employed in this crusade for public transit was inclined to be heavily business-oriented. They believed in the growth liberalism—e.g. the idea that government action will grow the pie and benefit everyone—and therefore, federal project as the public transit was the major ingredient of Atlanta’s economic progress and prosperity.

Needless to say, this was not just a reflection of the advocates’ perspective, but also a specific tactic they employed: MARTC100 could not apply for state funds because it was not a public agency. They therefore had no choice but to ask private corporations and enterprises for donations to MARTC100’s public transit campaign, and deployed the gospel of business values to this end. A significant amount of money needed to be gathered, and quickly. In letters to various business leaders, S. Ernest Vandiver asserted that MARTC100’s “assignment is a most vital one,” but that they were “under extreme difficulties” because of their “quasi-official status.”

By the end of 1963, “all of the funds… have now been exhausted.” Thus, they determined to ask large corporations, including Georgia Power, Southern Bell, and Lockheed for

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4 Ibid.
$2000 each, while requesting $1000 from any “intermediate-sized firm,” and $500 from any “retail establishments.”

In a document sent these business corporations, MARTC100 reminded them of the evils of traffic congestions and the impact they had on Metropolitan Atlanta’s economy. “Atlanta may become a victim of its own booming growth,” they warned with “[e]ver-threatening traffic noose…, threat[ong] to strangle metropolitan Atlanta.” Not surprisingly, MARTC100 argued that mass public transit was the best remedy to these problems.

Eventually, they were able to gather $10,000 from big businesses in the Atlanta area. In addition, they received $6000 each from the Fulton and DeKalb County governments, and a further $6000 contribution from the City of Atlanta. This funding, totaling $28,000 was to be spent to “educate voters in the five metropolitan counties.”

Having learned from their previous mistakes, MARTC100 were not going to take any chances. Consequently, despite their limited budget, they hired a public relations/consulting firm, Infoplan. Infoplan set up an education program; helped to prepare speeches, and produced a documentary film. In all these efforts, their immediate objective was to win support for the passage of Amendment 16, which would according to the Atlanta Journal Constitution “authorize the General Assembly to create a ‘public corporation or authority’ to administer the business of building and eventually operating a rapid transit commuter system for the metropolitan area.” Making their takes a little easier, they only had to win a majority in Atlanta’s five metropolitan counties.

Infoplan undertook market research in order to formulate a basic strategy. Knowing the fact that the next referendum would just be a five-county local

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6 Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100 to business leaders, December 13, 1963, folder 4, box 6, v. legal office files 1963-1966, SEVP.
vote, and that even in the 1962 referendum, two counties, DeKalb and Fulton, had back the measure two years earlier, the advocates anticipated that the 1964 fight for Amendment 16 would be a relatively easy one.

I. MARTC100’s Use of Audio-Visual Material and the Rhetoric of International Competition

Nevertheless, Infoplan was not optimistic. They compelled MARTC100 members to work diligently to “take the story and recommended plan for Rapid Transit directly to the people.”9 Infoplan’s anxiety was due to what they had learned from their 1963 “opinion survey” on rapid transit.’ Setting up interview sites in “eight sections of the city,” Infoplan learned first hand what a tough battle lay ahead. Those “sections” consisted of “the Bank of America Building in downtown Atlanta, Belvedere Shopping area, Auburn Avenue, Lenox Shopping Plaza, the State Capitol, Rich’s, Stewart Lakewood Shopping Plaza, and West End Shopping Plaza.”10 Middle class communities, including two African-American ones (Auburn Avenue and the West End Shopping Plaza), were chosen to be the sites to survey what people thought about a publicly-owned, public transportation system. The interracial investigation informed Infoplan that suburban housewives in particular were not interested in mass transit. “Housewives and shoppers in outlying shopping areas were found to be poorly informed if at all

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9 “Part I: Background” in “A Public Relations and Publicity Recommendation Developed for Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100,” developed by Infoplan, August 14, 1963, folder 5, box 6, v. legal office files, 1963-1966, SEVP. Moreover, the outcome of the opinion survey revealed that most Atlantans (black or white) did in fact want rapid transit in their home city. Taxation, however, was a different issue altogether. Only thirty-seven percent replied “yes” to rapid transit when they were asked if they would be “willing to pay an additional $20 a year taxes if they were necessary in order to finance construction of a Rapid Transit System for this area.”

10 Ibid.
on the subject.”" This represented a problematic situation, because these two groups, housewives and shoppers, constituted a major political bloc. Infoplan’s research suggested that “a far more basic approach,” rather than “sophisticated and informed direction,” were called for, and “the public education” would be most effectively carried out more “in speech before garden clubs, P.T.A., and other strictly women’s day-time groups.”

Along with community efforts of all sizes, Infoplan also sought to take advantage of the power of “press, radio, television” in its campaign of rapid transit public education. Infoplan listed radio stations to which the MARTC100 could send lecturers to air favorable talks. Simultaneously, MARTC100 also printed “50,000 sets” of What You Should Know about Rapid Transit (discussed in Chapter 1), recognizing that the pamphlets were valuable because they were written for ordinary people who did not possess a deep knowledge of public transportation. According to Infoplan, the pamphlet’s strengths lay in its containing “concise answers to the many questions people have about Rapid Transit,” while it was desirable because the booklet included features like “interesting art” that would “tempt [one] to pick up and discuss [it].”

In addition, Infoplan proposed the production of a documentary film, accompanied by an “information booth” equipped with “telephones service” and “printed information” that visitors could pick up at their leisure, along with “handbills, bumper stickers, and billboards.” The scenario proposed for the film clearly demonstrated the ways in which MARTC100 and Infoplan attempted to reach “directly to the people.” The footage was to constitute three components: 1) traffic is beginning to strangle us; 2) traffic will indeed have strangled us by

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
1980 unless something is done; and 3) Rapid transit is that something. They also indicated that the footage should contain “art work and animation, depicting how much worse the situation will be in 1980, unless something is done about it.” Moreover, the audio-visual presentation was to be effectively used to make a powerful impression, featuring “graphs, charts, and animation which projects the future traffic jams that will occur unless rapid transit is implemented.”

For Infoplan and the MARTC100 leaders, it was urgently necessary to discover some way of transforming ordinary people into rapid transit supporters, and they leaped on a fancy AV presentation as the answer to this quandary. It was their opinion that this would be the most effective way to educate citizens, as it would enable them to “[see] the need’ as opposed to simply hearing someone talk about it.” The visual information would be supplemented by “a voice-over.” This was important, because a voice over, asserted Infoplan, would provide credibility and encourage people to listen, because of “The authority that comes from an unseen, unknown professional narrator.” Another advantage of documentary film over, say, a series of speeches, was that it would not be limited by time and place, but rather could be played in numerous locations at any time. The film was “ready to roll anytime” at “scores of civic and professional organizations,” including the American Legion, Civitan Club, and Rotary Club. Infoplan’s William Corley and Richard Goss, who was in charge of rapid transit, even went to meet WSB television officials. They urged WSB television’s news director to help, ensuring him that Infoplan would be happy to help the television station obtain “necessary out of town film” and “photograph some of the Metropolitan Atlanta scenes.” Infoplan also called on WSB to run the film on their news program while Georgia State’s General Assembly was in session.

\[15\] Ibid.
\[16\] Ibid.
as this would be indispensable to “putting public opinion behind this project.” With WSB on board, plans steamed ahead as work continued on the short film.

In terms of content, the MARTC100 documentary portrayed traffic jams as a problem that directly affected people on the street. The final version exploited this angle for maximum effect. Getting this point out from the start, it began with “scenes of story book Atlanta… all peaceful and picturesque.” All of a sudden, the city morphed into a gloomy and grotesque “scenes of traffic jam… carbon monoxide atmosphere.” Then, a census bureau worker discussed Atlanta’s rapid population growth. In the next interview a highway department official stated that Atlanta would need “more expressways.” “Man-on-the-Street interviews” underscored the views of the professions – can you give an example of two. Everything lead to the conclusion: “‘Yes, we need rapid transit.’” WSB finalized their “final shooting script” for the 30-minute documentary in January, 1964. (See also Figure 3.1)

Infoplan and MARTC100 had little difficulty obtaining the materials for their campaigns. All kinds groups, from all over the country send materials pushing for mass transit growth. In fact, the easy access to information and resources serves to showcase how national corporations and their networks played an active role in enabling Atlanta’s commercial-civic elites to build their local public transit system. MARTC100 chairman S. Ernst Vandiver kept receiving pamphlets, magazine and newspaper articles, and professional reports from organizations like the Institute for Rapid Transit. Funded by national corporations like General Electronics, the Institute worked to support local rapid transit campaigns. For instance, David

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18 “Infoplan Contact Report, Lunch Conference, WSB-Television news,” January 15 and 16, 1964, folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
19 “Infoplan Contact Report,” Copies to Vandiver, Hughes, Bennett, Corley, Goss and Matthews,” January 22, 1964 in folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
Gaul, executive secretary of the Institute of Rapid Transit, enthusiastically let WSB cite for its documentary his comments that “the potential for approximately 5,000 rapid transit cars in the next ten years will virtually [be necessary, and this amount] equal[s] the acquisition of this type of transit equipment during all years since World War II.”

Figure 3.1. “We’d Like Your Opinion on the Need for Rapid Transit… Never Mind,” Atlanta Journal, March 14, 1964. This cartoon appeared before the 1964 general election. It caricatured suburban white-collar commuters, who did not understand the importance of rapid transit even as they suffered horrendous traffic jams.

20 Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100, “Rapid-Transit-Gram,” February 10, 1964, folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
Gaul added for the cameras that L.A., Pittsburg, and Washington D.C. were also on building rapid transit systems.\textsuperscript{21} Moreover, the nationally famous planning consultants, Brinkerhoff, Quade, and Douglass (PBQD) voluntary helped provide “some supplementary film.” It was also obvious, in PBQD’s words, that the rapid transit advocates thought the film represented none other than the critical weapon in the fight to pass the constitutional amendment. They observed, “The documentary will be half an hour in length and a kinescope could be used by the Committee of 100 for showing to civic, professional, and labor groups prior to the referendum on a local constitutional amendment next fall.”\textsuperscript{22}

Despite their faith in the documentary film, rapid transit advocates incorporated other “educational” strategies. In speeches, lectures, and pamphlets, Vandiver and others from the MARTC100, with assistance from Infoplan, worked tirelessly to demonstrate why Atlanta needed rapid transit and a balanced transportation system. MARTC100 in particular urged its audience to acknowledge the fact that Atlanta was involved in a tough competition with other big cities like San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles over federal money and perhaps more

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} “Infoplan Contact Report, Copies to Vandiver, Hughes, Bennett, Corley, Goss and Matthews,” January 22, 1964, folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP. Regarding the documentary film, national corporations, particularly GE, offered their help. GE already had a sample film to provide as well. Their film, “which is suitable for both TV and audience use, will have the part rail transit plays in a balanced transportation system. Obviously, it is not product oriented or commercial in nature because the objective is simply one of public education.” From Robert M. Caultas, Washington Representative, Metropolitan Transportation, General Electric Company to S. Ernest Vandiver, August 17, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.

Other media proved more of a challenge. Vandiver and the MARTC100 had difficulties making effective use of billboards, for example. Vandiver urged the Chamber of Commerce members to let him to use the billboards from their businesses. Businesses he asked included First National Bank, WAGA, Atlanta Coca Cola Bottling Company, and Dr. Pepper Bottling Company of Atlanta. Vandiver emphasized in his letter how federal money would accelerate Atlanta’s economic progress. “37 million dollars out of [the total available] 375 million dollars could come to Atlanta,” while failure to grab the money would lead to “the embarrassing position of having no organization set up to file the necessary application for this money.” Making use of billboards for public education, therefore, was vital, the ex-governor asserted. With few exceptions, however, most businesses refused to grant Vandiver’s request. See letters from S. Ernest Vandiver to Franking Wright (Pepsi Cola Bottling Company), August 27, 1964, from Arthur Montgomery to S. Ernest Vandiver, August 17, 1964; and from S. Ernest Vandiver to company leaders, August 4, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
important reputation. 23 This discourse of urban competition persisted in the advocates’ major argument. In her Cold War Orientalism, Christina Klein shows how governmental officials, moviemakers, and newsreels mapped out cities in a sort of hierarchical order, in which foreign cities out of Communist hands were depicted as modernized and civilized, while those which were not were presented as backwards and evil. 24 There was a hierarchy of cities – and massive transit added to a city’s luster; big cities, important cities had mass transit.

The degree of urban development also became a measure employed in judging a city’s modernity and progress. For instance, mass transit advocates tried to argue that cities in other countries were far more developed in terms of technological application. Atlanta, even though it was in the United States, was the one that had to catch up with foreign cities. MARTC100 and Infoplan, for instance, cleverly deployed praise of Soviet rail transit plans. In their monthly newsletter Rapid Transit Gram, for instance, mass transit systems in non-US cities frequently appeared, implicitly serving as rebukes for supposedly-modern US cities which lacked such systems. “It has been reported,” Rapid Transit Gram analyzed, “that Soviet engineers are working on several schemes to build monorail in Russia.” 25 They referred to

23 This yearn for national city entitlement was evident in two speech drafts prepared for Vandiver by Infoplan, for delivery upon the success or failure of the US Senate to ratify the Urban Mass Transportation Act. Both drafts emphasized Atlanta’s progressiveness among American cities, and its superiority in taking on the challenge to build a modern rapid transit system. If passed, the ex-governor planned to state that the bill “will help us build our rapid transit system. Much has already been done,… [the] Atlanta area… will surely have a head start over other areas of the nation… Atlanta is now in the position to be one of the first cities to benefit from the new legislation.” In the event of failure, Vandiver was to argue that “this is not to say… that we are discouraged.” He would then go on to say that “San Francisco didn’t wait for the congress to act…. [The] San Francisco voter knew he could no longer rely on the automobile and bus alone for his transportation,” and “The Atlanta area is not far behind San Francisco in many respects. We, too have a steady population growth, vast business and industrial potential, and assuredly, we too, have the ability to solve the problems” “Vandiver Rapid Transit Statement if Bill Does Not Pass” and “Vandiver Rapid Transit Statement if Bill Passes the House,” n.d. ca. 1964, folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.


25 Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority of 100, “Rapid Transit Gram,” February 10, 1964, folder 1, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
rapid transit planning in the Kamchatka Peninsula, Magnitogorsk, and Moscow. Closer to home, the public transit systems in Toronto and Montreal also appeared frequently. Vandiver and the MARTC100 then used these reports for their speeches. Here again, the information sources primarily came from documents published by industries that had a vested interest in selling rapid transit systems. General Electric’s pamphlet Going Places, which was sent periodically to MARTC100’s office, was one of the sources of information that MARTC100 relied on in constructing their rapid transit discourses. In particular, the vaunting of foreign experimentations was used to give the impression that rapid transit was a mark of progress, representing a victory of global competition over development.26 By employing the metaphor of global competition, US cities like Atlanta sought to rationalize their own development.27

II. “Speed US on to Utopia via Rapid Transit!” The Limits of the Progress Discourse

Promises of broad-based economic gains, victory in a global, Cold War-tinged competition, and the prospect of endless traffic jams were not the only arguments made by rapid transit advocates. Supporters of rapid transit also emphasized that a loss in the competition over federal grants would haunt Atlanta forever. At one of the meetings of the MARTC100 with both the General Assembly Study Committee on Rapid Transit and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Committee on Rapid Transit in attendance, Vandiver urged his audience to inform the voter of

26 For General Electronics’ Going Places, see From Robert M. Caulttas, Washington Representative, Metropolitan Transportation General Electric Company, to S. Ernest Vandiver, August 17, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
27 Rapid transit advocates like GE evaluated cities in terms of their degree of development. One of their arguments was that development would not lead America to statism, communism, or an auto-less society. Going Places’ articles applauded cities with a mass transit system regardless of where those cities were located; however, at the same time it also stressed that there would be no change in “public attitude” to the effect that “the American public is guided strictly by ‘status’ symbols, or by the notion of free choice which adversely affects the community” Those materials were contained in folder 6, box 6, v. legal office files, SEVP.
“the decisive effect this amendment can have on the future development and growth of this metropolitan region.” Passing this amendment was vital, he stressed, because the “federal government had just made a bill to help metropolitan regions develop their own transportation systems.”

Preempting anticipated objections that Rapid Transit would benefit only a few at the expense of the many, Vandiver claimed, “It isn't merely the downtown area which will benefit. The Rapid Transit system will be a major asset to the further corners of the five-county metropolitan region because people can live wherever they like and still get quickly and conveniently to any ports of the region.” He continued, “This kind of mobility and flexibility will be very attractive to business interests in establishing and expanding operations here.”

Failure to pass the amendment, on the other hand, would mean defeat in an easy game. “Missing to get Amendment 16,” Vandiver argued, would allow “other cities to apply for, and probably get, money, that is rightfully ours.” Consequently, “To fail in developing rapid transit is to fail in developing our region to the maximum.”

“Those would be our tax dollars going to Cleveland and San Francisco and elsewhere to pay for major improvement to their cities and counties. I certainly don’t want to see that happen, and I don't think the voters do either.”

Atlanta had grown fast, and become the 24th largest

28 “Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100, for Immediate Release,” October 6, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP; “Vandiver Supports Transit Proposal,” Atlanta Journal, October 7, 1964. MPC’s Glenn Bennett repeatedly asserted that because downtown Atlanta was the “‘unquestioned’ economic capital of the Southeast,” the establishment of a public transit system was indispensable to “maintain a ‘good lively downtown area.’” See, “Bennett Says Rapid Transit Vital to Economic Health,” Atlanta Journal, October 9, 1964.

29 “ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMITTEE OF 100,” November 30, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
metropolitan region in America. Failure in the rapid transit struggle, he argued, would halt this progress.30

All the arguments and all the strategizing seemed to work. On November 3, 1964, voters approved Amendment 133,333 by to 68242 margin (See Table 3-1). Not long after, the Committee of 100 reflected in an internal memo on its accomplishments:

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF COMMITTEE OF 100
Phase I, Objective A: Have provisions making Rapid Transit a governmental function with right to use tax funds written into new State Constitution
Result: Successful
Objective B: Get approval of the General Assembly for stand-by Constitutional Amendment in case new Constitution is not enacted.
Result: Successful
Phase II, Objective: Obtain support of Georgia delegation in US House of Representatives for Mass Transportation Bill.
Result: Successful.
Phase III, Objective: Obtain approval of voters in five county metropolitan area for Constitutional Amendment authorizing the General Assembly to create a Rapid Transit Authority with necessary powers to plan, build and operate a Rapid Transit system.
Result: Successful.31

The impressive string of achievements culminating in victory showed that Atlanta’s MARTC100, meaning the commercial civic elites, still held power sufficient to spread their notion of public good.

30 “Vandiver Supports Transit Proposal,” Atlanta Journal, October 7, 1964. He also made a speech at Peachtree Christian Church, for the meeting of Active Voters. See speech draft at Peachtree Christian Church on October 22, 1964.
31 “Minutes of Final Meeting Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Committee of 100,” November 9, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
Vandiver and MARTC100 had reaped the rewards of engaging in “public education” as a way to shape a “public opinion” conducive to their goals. In doing so, they had elaborated significantly upon the rhetoric that commercial civic elites, planners, and public officials had crafted to save their old city structure. The purposes and benefits attributed to a rapid railway transit owned and operated by a public agency had become grander and grander; not only would it keep the downtown core healthy, but it would mean victory in the race for federal money, and ongoing progress that would make the city a winner in the global competition for modernization. (Figure 3.1)

S. Ernest Vandiver received many letters congratulating him on the victory. However, on closer inspection those same documents revealed that the result was far from satisfactory.

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32 From Rawson Haverty, Haverty Furniture Companies, Inc., to S. Earnest Vandiver, November 5, 1964; From John Dean, the Department of Law, State of Georgia, November 4, 1964; From Wilson Brooks, Fulton

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Table 3.1: Voting Results by County, Local Constitutional Amendment for Rapid Transit, 1964

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>% For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>7779</td>
<td>4558</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb</td>
<td>14439</td>
<td>14036</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb (outside Atlanta)</td>
<td>44435</td>
<td>17483</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton (outside Atlanta)</td>
<td>19636</td>
<td>17483</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwinnett</td>
<td>5464</td>
<td>3744</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta (city only)</td>
<td>41580</td>
<td>18013</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MARTA, Voting Record on Rapid Transit Legislation Atlanta, GA, folder 8, box 45, MMP.
Richard Rich, owner the Rich’s department store chain and MARTA’s first chairman, lauded Vandiver’s “outstanding contribution,” but also

Figure 3.2. “Rapid Transit, Amendment 16 and Atlanta Commuters,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 21, 1964.

This cartoon appeared after the 1964 general election, alongside an article celebrating “an overwhelming victory” for the rapid transit plan. It portrays which areas (Marietta, Hightower Road, Avondale Estates, North Druid Hills, and Norcross) would be connected to downtown via rapid transit. It also shows how the advocates saw suburban commuters as the major beneficiaries.

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County Representative, November 5, 1964; From William G. Prichard Jr., Insurance Management, November 5, 1964; From Joseph Loggins, Senate Rapid Transit Committee, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
indicated that he was relieved precisely that the race had been such a “tight squeeze.”

One thank-you letter foresaw future difficulties: Paul Webb was pleased with the victory because the referendum had been held in the midst of a vicious presidential campaign, in which GOP Barry Goldwater, who was fiercely opposed to the expansion of governmental power under the Democratic presidency, won the State of Georgia. Fierce opposition forces, armed with anti-big government rhetoric, had gradually begun to rally in suburban counties — particularly booming Cobb County – and represented a significant threat to the rapid transit plans. Indeed, before the election, Rich had discovered that “it was perfectly evident from the start that Cobb County was going to be our problem.”

Vandiver agreed with him, confessing that he “had a few nervous moments before the results of Cobb County” in the November referendum.

The heart of the rising anti-government impulse came from the growing suburban counties. The origins of this antagonism in suburban counties towards rapid transit stemmed from fear, and in fact a very specific fear — the fear of subjugation by Atlanta. Far from being inspired by the powerful rhetoric of rapid transit advocates, Cobb Countians saw an incursion on their local autonomy. Many would have certainly found the comments of Glenn Bennett, the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission chairperson, particularly frightening.

Bennett saw the victory as a watershed change, and one that was entirely laudable. He wrote,

The vote was a great victory for intergovernmental cooperation. It was a general approval of a regional plan; it recognized the interdependence which exists and the five counties and forty five municipalities which make up our metropolitan region…. It was the first time a regional plan had been presented to all the people of the region for implementation. The habit of thinking and acting as a region will soon become common, for in this urban age metropolitan areas such as ours are definite large economic and social units, regardless of

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33 From Richard Rich to S. Ernest Vandiver, November 6, 1964, in folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
34 From Paul Webb Jr., to Ernest Vandiver, Jr., November 6, 1964, folder 6, box 1, v. legal office files, SEVP; From Earnest Vandiver to Paul Webb, November 25, 1964, folder 6, box 1, v. legal office files, SEVP.
35 Richard Rich to S. Ernest Vandiver, November 6, 1964, folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
the number of political jurisdictions involved. Our programs are regional; their solutions
require regional action. Undoubtedly more referendums by voters. But we are on our way.36

His excitement with the endorsement of Amendment 16 ignited the wrath of Cobb countians. On
the surface, the 1964 Amendment itself was not the subject of fierce attack. Rather,
MARTC100, embracing Cobb Countians among its members, appeared to have gained solid
support. For instance, the Cobb County Chamber of Commerce (CCCC) strongly supported the
amendment, predicting in the local newspaper that public transit would bring prosperity to Cobb
County. Group members were quickly to add that the amendment was essentially harmless
because it “simply PERMITS Atlanta and the Five Counties to Have ‘Rapid Transit’ (emphasis
in original).” In other words, Cobb County would have other chances, if it needed them, to
determine if they would themselves participate in the public transit system.37

Support from CCCC did not, however, placate all fears in the suburbs. One Decatur
resident in DeKalb County expressed concern that the formation of a rapid transit agency would
give tremendous power to Atlanta’s government, and called for “a resounding defeat” of the
amendment. She saw it as opening the door to a major expansion of governmental power,
because the rapid transit authority would be “exempt from regulation by any agency or
commission of the state,” which “makes it more powerful than the state.” Moreover, it would
have the power to “condemn and take (with remuneration) any private property it chooses
without limit.” For the author, this was simply not “what you want written into the
Constitution.”38 Another letter appeared to ridicule the high-minded rhetoric of the advocates,
commenting “so the government plans to speed us on to Utopia via Rapid Transit!” The author

36 Glenn Bennett, “Thoughts After Vote for Rapid Transit,” to be released Saturday, November 21, 1964, in
folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
asserted that obtaining federal money would not contribute to Cobb County’s progress anyway, for it would make “no difference whether local, state, or federal taxes are raised to pay for these luxuries, the taxpayer still is indebted.”\textsuperscript{39} Another letter went even further, arguing that “voting for rapid transit” would constitute “taking the initial step toward nationalization of all transportation in the Met Area.” Like the first letter-writer, she expressed great concern with the expansion of government power into what were seen as local prerogatives. For her, the rapid transit plans were all just part of a big scheme of “federal control.”\textsuperscript{40} The \textit{Marietta Daily Journal} even carried a big anti-rapid transit advertisement, which proclaimed starkly “A publicly owned transportation system is a socialistic fraud.”\textsuperscript{41}

Not surprisingly, along with his letters of congratulation Vandiver received some unwanted correspondence concerned with the expansion of governmental power transition. Citizens and Southern National Bank’s banker Mills B. Lane contended that “Rapid Transit in Atlanta was certainly thought-provoking, however, I do think that private enterprise can play a direct role in the construction of a rapid transit system in Atlanta.” In other words, government had too much power already, and this latest venture would sap the vitality of private enterprise.\textsuperscript{42} E. G. Morris’ letter, titled “Politicians in Five County Atlanta Area vs. Rapid Transportation Owned and Operated by those in Transportation Now,” asserted that the establishment of public transit was just a luxury, and one which would haunt Atlanta’s taxpayers forever. “If there is any merit to the subject matter,” he argued, “they might get a long term Federal Loan to set up a Rapid Transit System, but certainly No Home-Owning Tax Payer ought to be at all interested in voting for it.” He further contended “[with] shopping centers, branch banks, lawyers, doctors, dentists,

\textsuperscript{40} Letter to the Editor, \textit{Marietta Daily Journal}, November. 12, 1964.
\textsuperscript{42} “Memorandum to: Mills B. Lane, Jr. President Platform,” November 6, 1964 in folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.
and every other kind of services needed, why should anyone think Rapid Transit ought to be added to all people’s taxes?” It was obvious that “all owning property in the present outlying municipalities, as well as the Federal Saving & Loan Assn’s along with all the Banks and Branch’s” would find the plan objectionable because it would increase property taxes. More importantly, he suggested that this effort represented none other than a conspiracy by commercial civic elites to take advantage of the people. “All this talk and effort over Five Counties Voting for rapid transit and Federal Government Aid along with the rise in Local Taxes is in error and most likely done to save the extremely High Price of Down Town Realty from sustaining great losses by People staying out.” He argues that it was particularly strange when “each representative of the 159 Counties has not already wanted to move the Capitol where there is a City Government to conform to the Georgia People’s way. I think we may find that happening.” Instead, he stressed the ongoing importance of “private business.” He suggested that the better route to take would be to “Leave Private Business to own, Manage, and operate all Services possible for the People, but keep them controlled to protect the people’s interest as it is supposed to have been in the past with all Public Services.43

III. “Federal Control” vs. “Defeatist Attitudes”?: The 1965 MARTA Referendum

The notion of public transit represented a threat to private enterprise and leading to increasing government dominance of everyday economic and social activities gradually gained strength over 1964. The fear of Trojan horse of rapid transit caught on the fastest in suburban

43 E.G. Morris, “Politicians in Five County Atlanta Area vs. Rapid Transportation Owned and Operated by Those in Transportation Business Now,” folder 10, box 5, v. legal office files, SEVP.

There were other sources of opposition. One was William F. Buchannan, leader of the Georgia Taxpayers Relief Association and an Atlanta anti-tax group, who urged rejection of the plan. He said, “We are all aware of the opposition to the amendment, but it has passed. The job now is to implement it as far as we are able to, and I think it is mandatory that we do so.” “Call Vote on Transit A Mandate,” Atlanta Journal, November 25, 1964.
counties, where anything emerging from Atlanta was suspicion and talk of unwanted incursion into local autonomy. In other words, not only was opposition from the suburban counties to be expected, but it would also likely increase in intensity with each step Atlanta took towards implementing its rapid transit system.

The endorsement of Amendment 16 of the State Constitution enabled the State of Georgia to enact the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Act, which passed the Georgia General Assembly fairly easily, by a vote of 205 to 12 in March, 1965. Unsurprisingly, rapid transit advocates had to face down voices of protest before they could celebrate. While the way was clear for the new agency to be established, actually doing so required a local five counties referendum in which each county was to determine whether or not it would join the new agency. This referendum in 1965 was the stage where the rapid transit plans would finally move from the theoretical to the practical implementation stage, and so this referendum represented the first true challenge for the commercial civic elites in their fight to defend downtown and all the privileges it afford them. Victory or defeat here would determine whether they could keep downtown the heart of their Sunbelt City, and maintain their dominance over the rapidly expanding suburbs.

In their attempt to drum up support for passing Amendment 16, Vandiver and the MARTC100 had focused on explaining the necessity of public transit in terms of urban competition and perpetual economic progress. Vandiver, along with the other MARTC100 members, continued the task of “educating” metropolitan citizens, but their emphasis now shifted significantly. Advocates now invested more time in showing how public transit would benefit the downtown core, and by doing so, the wider metropolitan area. The Atlanta Journal

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44 He had agreed to be head of a revived Rapid Transit Committee of 100. “Vandiver: Fight for Transit Okay,” Atlanta Journal, May 26, 1965.
and *Atlanta Constitution* were strong supporters. Jack Spalding, the *Journal*’s editor, asserted that suburban residents were employed in the city, and that therefore “the prosperity of suburbs is dependent on the central city.” Not only did suburban counties depend on the downtown for their growth, but moreover, they would not be able to sustain this growth without rapid transit. “The future of their [suburban] counties [is] at stake, for this future is tied to Atlanta.” If the situation were not corrected, then traffic jams would lead to the decline of suburban communities, resulting in “empty stores in shopping centers for more ‘For Sale’ than ‘Sold’ signs all over the place.”

While the advocates renewed their efforts, simultaneously the voices of protest began to take clearer shape in Cobb County. Rather than reflecting sustained critique of rapid transit per se, the opposition was fed by hostility to the center and fear of government encroachment. County citizens were driven by an “Anti-Atlanta feeling,” while “many Cobb citizens tend to distrust authority-type of financing.” Tellingly, in addition to the “fear of encroachment by Atlanta into Cobb’s political affairs,” there was also “fear that Negroes will settle along rapid transit routes.”

Given the extent to which fear played into the county’s hostility to rapid transit, supporters there, including county seat Marietta’s Mayor Howard Atherton and the CCC, found that a lack of information was largely to blame.

Simultaneously, however, it was also evident that grass roots Young Republicans had played a major role in the rise of opposition forces. They made a resolution not to join the public transit system, due to the fact that “Atlanta will have control of the authority” and that

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45 Spalding also repeated that Atlanta should win the competition with other cities over development. “Other progressive cities are getting ready for it. These cities are competitive with us. Like it or not, we cannot afford to be left behind on this one.” Jack Spalding, “Rapid Rail Transit Will Stimulate Growth,” *Atlanta Journal*, May 30, 1965; “Key Facts in Voting on Rapid Transit, Atlanta Journal*, June 3, 1965.
Cobb County, moreover, had many more things to do before paying for “an uncertain public venture.”

Tellingly, they also argued that the car “is a logical extension of the American’s search for freedom…. the physical manifestation of his freedom,” implying that rapid transit represented not just financial risks or the danger of “big government,” but also a fundamental assault on American liberty. This constituted a powerful rhetorical ploy, and in turn invited criticism. The Atlanta Journal refused to accept the argument, and pointed out the fact that “people in about 25 cities [are] now moving toward rapid transit, to say nothing of those in cities all over the world that already have it,” before confirming that “Everybody knows expressways [don’t] work.” Critics were advised to get over their “defeatist attitude.”

While this was going on, the rapid transit advocates, aware of this line of critique, were already stressing that rapid transit would be good for anybody. They rejected the opinion that rapid transit would only benefit the existing downtown power structure by giving the civic

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49 “Our Position on the Auto.” To support their argument, the Journal ran a new article, “Transit Argument: Traffic to Double,” Atlanta Journal, June 9, 1965. Cobb County’s rapid transit advocates, however, did not give up participating in the rapid transit system. MARTA also continued to assist their efforts, particularly those of Cobb County’s Chamber of Commerce. See “Cobb County Chamber of Commerce Poll Rapid Transit Portion,” folder 3, box 45, Mule to MARTA Papers, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as MMP); “Minutes Rapid Transit Committee,” April 26, 1967, folder 1, box 45, Mule to MARTA Papers, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as MMP). Daug Howard formed “Young Republican Transit Truth Committee” with twenty other members. The Committee’s objective was “to do research on the rapid transit and to public a report to reveal its real intent. Rapid Transit Truth Committee changed its name Young Republican Truth Committee and kept their challenges in such events like the county bond referendum. See, “GOP Sets War on Transit,” Marietta Daily Journal, June 3, 1965; “Cobb Young Republicans Names Truth Committee” and “Republican Says Cobb’s Cities Shorted in Big Bond Program,” Marietta Daily Journal, July 13, 1965. On the rural roots of Cobb’s Young Republicans, see Dorsey Dodgen and Carolyn Meadows, interviewed by Thomas A. Scott, n.d., transcript, Cobb County Oral History Series, Oral History Project, Kennesaw University, Kennesaw, GA. The interviewees remembered that the anti-public transit campaign triggered the growth of their party in Cobb County, but denied that it was triggered by racial fear of African Americans. They also pointed out that the influx of Lockheed engineers from Southern California contributed to the rapid rise of the GOP.
The refusal of Cobb County’s Young Republicans to support the public transit system meant they could not take part in “progress.”

commercial elites a way to preserve and reinforce their economic and social dominance, although as discussed above, this was not an unfair criticism. Advocates also stressed that public transportation would not lead to metropolitan Atlanta being placed under “federal control.”

Efforts were made to portray the project in an inclusive, practical manner which benefitted all white and black residents at a modest cost because it took advantage of federal largess.
At an Atlanta Kiwanis Club conference in 1965, for example, Vandiver took pains to convince the local Chamber of Commerce that the plan was not created by “rose colored glasses” types of people “with only one conclusion in sight.” Rather, he claimed, the plan had been “professionally-done by impartial citizens in determining Metropolitan Atlanta’s basic transportation needs.”

At the North DeKalb Chamber of Commerce in another affluent suburb, Vandiver explained that MARTA’s project would not generate a conflict “between the construction of a rapid transit with federal aid, and free enterprise. Private business men regard a mass transit systems of the size needed to serve Metropolitan Atlanta as beyond the means of private capital.” In other words, government support would reinforce the private enterprise with resources private enterprise could not muster. MARTA, Vandiver argued, could therefore be nothing but a democratic project: “so this is one of those instances where government resources must be called upon-- because the problem is beyond the resources of local government and private capital. It follows the Jeffersonian principle of government doing only things which the people cannot do so well, or do at all, for themselves.”

In the June 15 referendum to determine which metropolitan county would join MARTA, Gwinnett, Clayton, Fulton and DeKalb all voted in favor of participating in MARTA. Cobb did not. (Table 3.2) The advocates had learned a bitter lesson: forming a regional consensus was no easy task. They had tried to create a new sense of “public and use it to drive notions of new rapid transit. They had argued that mass transit would fuel local economic prosperity because it would eliminate traffic jams and bring in federal money, and that more importantly, it would revitalize the downtown core at the heart of an expanding metropolis, thereby reinvigorating the economy of the entire metropolitan area.

50 “Draft of the Speech to the Membership of the Kiwanis Club of Atlanta,” n.d., ca. 1965, folder 6, box 3, IV. Speech and Press, SEVP.
51 “For Release at 7:30am,” January 25, 1965, folder 2, box 4, iv. speech and press, SEVP.
Table 3.2 Voting Results by County in the Local Referenda to Participate in MARTA in 1965

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>% For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>3049</td>
<td>2135</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobb</td>
<td>5276</td>
<td>6869</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb (outside Atlanta)</td>
<td>15285</td>
<td>6321</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton (outside Atlanta)</td>
<td>31167</td>
<td>11452</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gwinnett</td>
<td>1421</td>
<td>1284</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta (city only)</td>
<td>22373</td>
<td>8015</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MARTA, Voting Record on Rapid Transit Legislation Atlanta, GA, folder 8, box 45, MMP.

They had even gone global, claiming that rapid transit would mark Atlanta as a modern city, and reward it with substantially higher status among the major cities of the world. However, in spite of powerful rhetoric and an impressive campaign, this consensus was ruined by conflicts over the understanding of the relationship between urban development and democracy.

While the 1965 MARTA referendum appeared to have revealed the advocates’ failure to construct a consensus for its public transit plans, this did not immediately affect their rhetorical strategies. Public transit advocates, including MARTC100, the Chamber of Commerce, and City Officials, continued to stick to their classic arguments. For instance, Ernest Vandiver lectured before the Buckhead Exchange Club on how without rapid transit, more freeways would become necessary, and Atlanta would miss the opportunity “to join the other great cities of the world with a balanced transportation system.”

52 He added that without rapid railway transit, the “north leg of the freeway” in the Buckhead area would demand 16 lanes, instead of the current six lanes. (“Atlanta Cited As Leader in Transit,” Atlanta Journal, July 29, 1965). As for Buckhead area’s economic, racial, and housing characteristics, see Appendix Table A. 1.5.,
Atlanta to “advance into the area with the other great cities of the world by building her own mass transportation systems.” He once again pointed to the examples of San Francisco and Washington, D.C., which had decided on their own rapid transit networks. They the only ones, continued the ex-Georgia governor: “Most of the great cities of the world -- Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, Moscow, Boston, and Chicago -- turned to mass transportation systems years ago.” Through statements like “Moscow had its Underground subway since 1934... Tokyo opened a monorail last year,” Vandiver cleverly invoked the specters of the past (with Atlanta falling behind other cities which had long had mass transit systems) and the present (with Atlanta engaged in an ongoing struggle for status with other major world cities).

This did not mean that the advocates failed to append new tactics to their approach. While continuing with their established arguments, they also began to stress the strong links between the deterioration of the central city and that of the suburbs. The rise of dissenting voices from the periphery prompted them to lay out how the welfare of the center city and that of the suburbs were inextricably linked. This would substantially undermine the opposition by drawing out the necessity of ensuring a strong downtown not only for its own sake, but for that of the suburbs as well. At the same time, growth of the suburbs at the expense of the central downtown was portrayed as short-sighted and problematic. One example of this tactic was Vandiver’s talk entitled “Emphasis – The City,” given at a Young Atlanta discussion meeting held at Holy Innocents’ Episcopal Church –in Atlanta. In this speech, Vandiver traced the origins of the urban problems to ongoing flight to the suburbs, saying “with such shifts in population and the accompanying trade districts, many of our once flourishing and prosperous city districts become outmoded and obsolete.” He continued, “The ‘flight to the suburbs and the economic distortion

and A. 3.5.

53 “Text of an Address by Former Gov. S. Earnest Vandiver to the Buckhead Exchange Club of Atlanta,” July 27, 1965, folder 1, box 3, SEVP.
of the remaining population groups left in the central city are all familiar to require further amplification.” He then urged his audience to address about the plight of the central city, arguing that “the people remaining in the old central city require welfare programs, job training, low rent housing and other social services.” Vandiver was also clear that the city should remain the center of economic development, and the hub of Atlantans’ lifestyles. “... the City is still the market place for ideas as well as goods and services. It is the area of decision. Today, as in the past, the city is a functioning entity which is most determinant to our way of life.” He then shifted to the political, asserting that “Many people believe that the effort put into keeping our cities truly livable are basic to national security -- and to our competition for men's minds and allegiance.” Here again the mission to preserve the central city was taking on elements of a global struggle, although here the issue was not the status among world cities that rapid transit could bring to Atlanta, but rather Cold War rhetoric suggesting that failure to preserve the downtown core would undermine national security and play into the hands of the Soviets. His statement that the business community in particular “recognizes the need to preserve and enhance our central cities,” then not only sought to diffuse claims that his plans had been antithetical to free enterprise, but also conjured up images of patriotic businessmen fighting to preserve the American way of life.\(^{54}\)

\textbf{IV. “Public Transportation IS Public Business”: The 1966 Statewide Referendum for Amendment 14}

Following the 1965 referendum, MARTA was officially created in 1966 by the endorsement of Fulton, DeKalb, Gwnineett and Clayton Counties. Richard H. Rich became

\footnote{\textsuperscript{54} “Vandiver to a Young People’s Discussion Meeting on ‘Emphasis,’” n.a. folder 3, box 3, iv. speech and press, SEVP.}
the director of the MARTA board, which was composed of ten board members. All of these were businessmen, including one African-American L.D. Milton, president of Citizens Trust Company. Vandiver continued to assist them; his help was made particularly necessary as Georgia prepared in 1966 to hold another state-wide referendum, this time on enabling the public transit agency to use state funds to cover up to ten percent of rapid transit construction. This was a vital step in the advocates’ long-term plans, which would strongly depend upon the accessibility of state funds. “Approval of the amendment would simply allow the State to spend money on public transportation, including Rapid Transit, in the same way it does on education, mental health and so on.” Gearing up to generate support for this amendment, Amendment 14, MARTA hired King Elliot, the former news director of WSB radio, in order to bolster their publicity campaign. Because Amendment 14 was a statewide affair, once again MARTA and its advocates needed to prepare a thorough and impressive campaign.

Advocates would again stress rapid transit’s economic value as the primary reason for it being owned and operated publically. The MARTC100 was “reactivated,” setting up a “to do list,” including finding “a good girl for secretary,” while Vandiver, together with M.C.Bishop from College Park took the executive director position Vandiver, urged “each man” to “cooperate, publicize” the public transit proposal. The MARTC100 organized a “Amendment 14th PR Tour,” sending its delegates to cities and towns, including Macon, Augusta, Valdosta, Albany, Columbus, Language, Griffin, Athens, Gainesville, Cartersville, Rome, Canton, and

56 Press Release, MARTC100, n.d. ca. 1965, folder 5, box 10, v. legal files, SEVP.  
57 “Elliott Takes Transit Post,” Atlanta Journal, July 20, 1966; MARTA, Rapid Transit Progress 1 (November 1966). One of his major accomplishments in MARTA publication activities was to publish a monthly journal, Rapid Transit Progress.
Consequently, MARTC100 representatives attended 13 luncheon, dinner and breakfast meetings all over Georgia. MARTC100’s argument was presented clearly in their press release. The document (of which 230 copies were passed around by MARTC100) presented a rose-colored image of Atlanta’s future rapid transit, emphasizing how it would wipe out traffic jams and how the smooth traffic it would generate would benefit the state economy. Furthermore, they particularly stressed that it would not “encroach upon private enterprise in any way.” This emphasis was not just the result of the county opposition to rapid transit the advocates had encountered last time around. Rather, they had to stress this due to the fact that Cobb County Republican Wayne Gossett had filed a suit against MARTA, saying that the amendment was apparently unconstitutional because “it will be voted on statewide when it would be of local benefit only.” MARTA and the advocates, including MARTC100 and Ernest Vandiver, promptly offered a counterargument, which basically amounted to “All Georgia cities face acute transportation problems” and that the amendment would help all cities and towns, including Atlanta, in setting up their own public transit systems. They also pointed out that the amendment would only empower the General Assembly to make the law.

In showing why railway rapid transit should be publicly owned and operated, the advocates’ arguments became more refined. WAGA TV’s Channel 5 editorial was an ardent supporter of Amendment 14, taking a role to “keep public interest burning.” Channel 5 believed that Amendment 14 was vital because “the progress and prosperity of the Atlanta area is a

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59 “Rapid Transit is a Must,” *Rapid Transit Progress* 1 (November 1966).
substantial factor in the revenue and health of the whole state.” In the actual program, they argued that Georgians should understand “the economic health of the Atlanta area as a big marketplace and commercial crossroad,” which was critical to “towns and counties up and down the state.” Therefore, a “bogged down Atlanta can only hurt Georgia.” In addition to that, there was also a “moral factor.” This basically meant that “a great amount of State revenues COMES FROM the metropolitan area,” and so “don't overlook the hard political fact that the State MUST become active about the needs of its cities -- or turn those cities toward Washington.” In other words, by virtue of their tax contributions cites were owed a moral debt by the state, and if the state chose to ignore the plight of cities and renege on its moral obligations, then cities would turn to Washington for help instead. For all of these reasons, the editorial concluded, “public transportation IS public business.” The growth and prosperity of the State of Georgia depended on the progress of metropolitan Atlanta. Therefore, keeping Atlanta healthy was everyone’s duty, and consequently, Amendment 14 was a public matter. Good use and return the word and idea of the public.

The Atlanta Journal concurred with Channel 5. In their editorial entitled “Public Transportation,” its editors asserted that “TRAFFIC is a major problem in Georgia’s urban areas. It will get worse and worse as Georgia’s urbanization advanced.” The paper recycled the global competition theme in order to persuade its readership of the significance of the issue. It emphasized that major cities around the world, including the cities in developing countries, were embracing “a trend toward public ownership,” and insisted that Atlanta should jump on the bandwagon. An editorial in the Atlanta Constitution also explained the need for rapid transit in terms of public significance. “GEORGIA IS a growing state” it wrote, stressing that the city was

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62 “Channel 5 Editorial,” September 19, 1966, folder 12, box 51, MMP.
the engine of this progress. Transportation was vital to the maintenance of “civic health” and, therefore, “the providing of means by which people may move around rapidly and cheaply is becoming a civic obligation.” The Atlanta Journal also raised the possibility of the city being swamped with expressways, urging its readers to cast a “yes” vote for the amendment lest they “concrete the whole of Atlanta.”

MARTC100 was optimistic about the results of the amendment. First of all, the amendment was merely permissive “enabling” legislation, and would not therefore require the State of Georgia to actually spend any money. Moreover, Bishop, the Executive Director, felt that MARTC100 received a good response wherever he and his colleagues visited. “To date,” he said before the tally, “I don’t know the results in all the counties visited, but I do feel the efforts we put forth brought about a more favorable reception of the Amendment than we would have experienced had this type of publicity not been given.” His lectures at Augusta, Savannah, Brunswick, Waycross, Albany and Valdosta were all well accepted. This was particularly good news in light of the fact that these counties had turned down the 1962 Rapid Transit Constitutional Amendment. Bishop particularly emphasized how the Augusta visit had gone well; the meeting hall had been almost packed, with two local radio recordings and one television appearance produced simultaneously, and afterwards he even received a phone call from a member of the audience, relating how he had “enjoyed a good and favorable reception.”

Other MARTC100 members visited Carrolton, Rome and Athens, receiving satisfactory attendance everywhere except Carrolton due to severe weather. Local newspapers and radio

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65 From B.C. Bishop, Executive Director, MARTC100, to King Elliot, n.d., ca., 1966, folder 1, box 51, MMP.
66 Ibid.
stations gave them favorable coverage as well. MARTC100 members worked tirelessly to recruit votes for the amendment. One member reported that he had gone to Gainesville and had lunch at the Elks Club, serving beef steak, because “people up here won’t come out for chicken.”

Neither did Rapid Transit advocates overlook trade associations. This required a delicate hand. Robert Sibley had undertaken a survey beforehand and discovered that they “might be working against us.” In particular, Georgia Motor Trucking Association, Inc. had announced that the “trucking industry has some reservations” about the public transit program, because it would presumably deplete the “highway money” needed to build more expressways. On the other hand, other major trade associations promised to support for Amendment 14.

No doubt due in large part to the MARTC100’s efforts, Amendment 14 was endorsed, enabling MARTA to make use of the State of Georgia’s money. However, once again MARTC100 and rapid transit advocates failed to achieve a total victory. As before, many people commended Vandiver’s role. Bishop commented that it had became apparent “in his travels” during the promotion tour that the former governor’s “popularity and state-wide influence have not diminished although you [Vandiver] are no longer active in public office.”

The MARTC100 immediately issued a press release, complementing “Georgia voters’ determination to solve problems facing urban areas, and their concern for it.” However, a final poll revealed that the victory margin was extremely narrow — 241,654 for the amendment and 196,501 against. Atlanta Journal’s poll research revealed that, in fact, Amendment 14 passed “only because Fulton and DeKalb counties voted for it so overwhelmingly.” Specifically,

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68 The associations included the Georgia Railway Association, the Georgia Restaurant Association, and the Georgia Saving & Loan Association.
69 From M.C. Bishop to S. Ernest Vandiver, November 22, 1966, folder 1, box 51, MMP.
“Since the amendment racked up a margin of 51,824 votes in Fulton and DeKalb combined, final figures show it would have lost in Georgia’s other 157 counties.”  

Ultimately, more than half of Georgia’s counties had not, in fact, endorsed the Amendment. However, the significant difference with the 1962 Amendment was that more residents in those counties including big cities (except Cobb, but including Bibb) had voted favorably for Amendment 14, in the hope that their metropolitan areas would be able to apply for state money.  

(Tables 3.3) Overall, it was certainly a win for the advocates and MARTA in the fight for urban votes, but hardly the glorious victory for which they had been fighting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Courthouse</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>For (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appling</td>
<td>Baxley</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>648</td>
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<td>Atkinson</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
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<td>Bacon</td>
<td>Alma</td>
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<td>207</td>
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<td>Newton</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>53.49%</td>
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<td>Baldwin (4)</td>
<td>Milledgeville</td>
<td>1533</td>
<td>1534</td>
<td>49.98%</td>
<td>3067</td>
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<td>Banks</td>
<td>Homer</td>
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<td>243</td>
<td>41.73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
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<td>1132</td>
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<td>Bartow</td>
<td>Catersville</td>
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<td>1552</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Hill</td>
<td>Fitzgerald</td>
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<td>774</td>
<td>34.96%</td>
<td>1190</td>
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<td>Nashville</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>39.54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibb (6)</td>
<td>Macon</td>
<td>8257</td>
<td>9755</td>
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<td>Cochran</td>
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<td>777</td>
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<td>Nahunta</td>
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<td>Brooks</td>
<td>Quitman</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>528</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bryan</td>
<td>Pembroke</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>41.03%</td>
<td>407</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bulloch (4)</td>
<td>Statesboro</td>
<td>1000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke (4)</td>
<td>Waynesboro</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>49.09%</td>
<td>1377</td>
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<tr>
<td>Butts</td>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>59.74%</td>
<td>847</td>
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<td>Calhoun</td>
<td>Morgan</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>53.28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>Woodbine</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>786</td>
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<td>Metter</td>
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<tr>
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<td>565</td>
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<td>Summerville</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>671</td>
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<td>Canton</td>
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<td>53.36%</td>
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<td>Athens</td>
<td>4849</td>
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<td>66.76%</td>
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<td>Clay</td>
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<td>Homerville</td>
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<td>Marietta</td>
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<td>39.61%</td>
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<td>Douglass</td>
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<td>781</td>
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<td>Moultrie</td>
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<td>Appling</td>
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<td>479</td>
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<td>Cook</td>
<td>Adel</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Trenton</td>
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<td>Decatur</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early</td>
<td>Blakely</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1187</td>
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<td>552</td>
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<tr>
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Wayne Jesup 735 1478 33.21% 2213
Webster Preston 101 141 41.74% 242
Wheeler Alamo 78 163 32.37% 241
White Cleveland 414 454 47.70% 868
Whitefield (4) Dalton 1914 1356 58.53% 3270
Wilcox Abbeville 215 316 40.49% 531
Wilkes Washington 481 470 50.58% 951
Wilkinson Irwinton 290 532 35.28% 822
Worth Sylvester 468 718 39.46% 1186

Source: Rapid Transit Committee of 100, Amendment 14, notes, November 8, 1966, folder 10, box 51, MMP.

V. Failing to become a “Social and Economic Force in Metropolitan Area Growth”: Rapid Busway (February 1967), “the 701 Report” (September 1967) and “Corridor Impact Study” (March 1968)

After MARTA’s plan was made public, it launched its own media campaign, trying to sell mass transit as a broadly based public good. In September 1967, ARMPC published “Special Report: Rapid Transit for Metropolitan Atlanta,” which was funded in accordance with Section 701 of the 1954 Housing Act to announce the federal assistance for the research for the implementation of public transit system. The MARTA plan recommended starting a “letter-to-the-editor” campaign by “responsible and respected persons to the Journal and Constitution.” The campaign also hit the national and even global stage, as MARTA, eager to show off their global debut in the race on urban development, sent the 701 report to not only public officials and major businesspersons in the Atlanta and Georgia area, but also to transit agencies and companies all over the US and the world. Destinations included Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Buenos Aires, Glasgow, Kiev, Leningrad, Milan, Nagoya, Osaka, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Tokyo.
King Elliot, MARTA's Public Information Director, sent a letter to Henry L. Stuart, regarding “Presentation of 701 report.” Elliot claimed that the 701 report would be released in the next sixty days, and because it was the first comprehensive report on Atlanta's rapid transit, the report should be released in such a way that it could generate “the greatest and most favorable impact on the leadership of the area.” He wrote that he had met with “representatives of several PR firms,” including Robert Sibley, Robert Blair, and George Goodwin of Bell and Stanton, who had wide experience in the Atlanta area as well as “excellent contacts with government leaders and mass media.”

Back in Atlanta itself, MARTA carefully planned the “public introduction” of their plan, revealing the scheme in Sunday newspapers on November 19th, and in radio-television news for that weekend. MARTA chairman Richard Rich met with news media executives, and put them on the alert regarding the forthcoming announcement of the rapid transit plan. King Elliot, and the Chamber of Commerce’s media consultants Bell & Stanton, had contacted local papers, including Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution, Daily World, Marietta Daily Journal, and Gwinnett Daily News, and radio stations. They also sent MARTA spokespersons to “TV women’s shows (Ruth Kent, Don Barber, Elaine Belk)” in order to “develop points of particular interest to housewives for discussion,” such as “how Rapid Transit will solve Christmas rush traffic or how rapid transit will make it easier for residents in North DeKalb County to shop at Greenbrier, etc.”

During all of the campaigning, the actual rapid transit plans had been undergoing their own trajectory of development. There were several key differences between the 1962 plan, and the

73 “Memorandum, King Elliot, Public Information Director, to Henry L. Stuart, ‘Presentation of 701 report,’” September 5, 1967, folder 3, box 51, MMP.

701 plan in 1967, the most important being that while the previous one had a sort of loop encircling CBD with four routes diverging from it, the 1967 plan called for each route to run straight into the CBD and intersect at the Transit Center Station. Figure 3.3 depicts this MARTA rapid railway route plan, which consisted of 65 miles of railway track and 44 stations. The system was comprised of six major routes — Central Line, West Line, East Line, South Line, Northeast Line, Northwest Line and East Branch. \(^{75}\) (Figure 3.3) Rather than unify people, however, the actual presentation of the plan shattered the individual expectations that various groups had come to associate with rapid transit, and caused dissenters to rise within the city. The various particulars of station locations, costs, and the length of the construction period gradually ruined the public discourse commercial civic elites had so carefully assembled, thoroughly debunking their attempt to construct a supra-public in their metropolis, and, instead, engendered a multiplicity of counter-publics.

Figure 3.4. “Proposed Rapid Transit System” in Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Rapid Transit for Metropolitan Atlanta: A Special Summary Report* (November, 1967), 10: MARTA did not provide any routes between the Northwest and West lines, where majority of residences consisted of poor blacks. Perry Homes was located in this area.\(^\text{76}\)

\(^{76}\) As for Perry Homes area’s economic, racial, and housing characteristics, see Appendix Table A. 1.8., and A. 3. 6.
Conclusion

The critical problem in winning support was to delete the tensions between different visions of mass transit. The advocates -- including MARTC100, Vandiver and Rich, and MARTA Board members -- had failed to demonstrate the ways in which mass transit could actually assist those who were in serious need of cheap transportation. When Atlanta Chamber of Commerce Rapid Transit Committee Chairman Gerald Horton made his speech before the Committee on Banking and Currency to solicit federal help for Atlanta’s public transit system, he asserted that constructing a mass transit system was a federal responsibility, and argued that mass transit would help the dispossessed in a series of urban renewal projects to commute to downtown, and making jobs more accessible. Moreover, in an Atlanta Constitution editorial entitled “Public Transportation,” found the beauty of “public” transit in its role to provide “means by which people may move around rapidly and cheaply.” Nonetheless, Cobb County residents, especially Young Republicans and others, understood this “publicness” in terms of its expansive quality off the governmental power. Consequently, they understood it as fundamentally both foreign and undemocratic.

Commercial civic elites, including MARTA officials, then had to respond to this discourse by insisting how a public transit system would be neither politically intrusive nor financially expansive in character, and emphasized how Atlanta and Georgia stood to cripple their economic progress through lacking public transit. In other words, commercial civic elites did not choose to sufficiently focus on this essential inclusiveness of their “public” transit. Yet, for many people, particularly blacks, in the post-Civil Rights Sun Belt city, the “public” in public transit meant something which they could all claim to share. One needs to be especially

cautious analyzing these conflicting understandings of “public” as these groups clashed, because the dissenting voices which attacked rapid transit were not necessarily from the people who were actually in need of the public transit to begin with. In Atlanta’s case, both Atlanta Transit Systems, Inc. and the City of Atlanta’s Planning Department Commission (CAPDC), represented the white power structure, and so their claims for the inclusiveness of public transit need to be understood within this context.
Chapter 4

“For Everyone in the Whole Region”? : Paving the Road to Defeat in the 1968 Public Transit Bond Referendum, 1966-1968

Introduction

This chapter mainly deals with the 1968 referendum and seeks to uncover how public transit advocates failed to gain the support of African Americans and middle class homeowners. One of the reasons that they were not successful was that the advocates’ notion of the public was essentially exclusive. The MARTA plan stressed how rail transit would help property owners by boosting land values, but it failed to rationalize financing this plan through a property tax. More importantly, the concept of “public” formulated by the advocates was limited to just upper- and middle-class whites. The services offered for the poor, mainly African Americans, were evidently insufficient. This chapter also tries, however, to show that blacks were not without their own voices – their views were heard, but just not taken seriously, by planners. MARTA ignored African Americans’ voices of protest, while immediately changing their plans when Buckhead residents protested the decision to build a station in the heart of their neighborhood. The implementation of public transportation was justified only when it was presented on behalf of the welfare of (white) homeowners, but this rationalization was unacceptable in post-Civil Rights Atlanta.

I. Voices of Protest from Inside Out

1) The Atlanta Transit System’s Rapid Busway Plan

Remarks about the limited inclusiveness of rapid transit issued from an unexpected source – Atlanta’s only remaining bus company, Atlanta Transit Systems, Inc.’s Rapid Busways
plan. Robert Summerville, who was the president of ATS and himself an early member of MARPC100, emphasized in the preface that the busway operation would be interim so as not to harm MARTA’s rapid railway plan. According to the *Atlanta Journal*, Summerville “made it clear… that he does not view a busway system as the ‘ultimate answer’ to Atlanta’s mass transportation needs.”\(^1\) However, it was also clear that the ATS viewed a bus system as better in terms of both accessibility and convenience.

The plan called for buses to use existing railway routes, “the corridor,” would be gated and exclusive. The service would pick up “passengers at the bus station on local streets destined for downtown” and then head to the corridor. The corridor itself would have gates, which would not open without “a radio signal from the bus,” and lead the bus to the downtown area in a nonstop loop. As the bus circled around the downtown loop, it would drop the passengers at the stations nearest their destinations. ATS also claimed that via the bus, simultaneously, “certain destinations other than downtown” would also be served.\(^2\) One of ATS’ arguments that implied their rapid bus plan was better than MARTA’s railway plan was its reasonable cost. The building and operation of their busway would be much cheaper than MARTA. According to their estimation, it would only need $22 million, whereas MARTA saw the cost of construction totaling no less than $291 million.\(^3\) The cheaper ATS plan would contribute to larger public.

Moreover, the importance of the ATS plan lay in the arrangement of the lines, because it was clear that the busway would intentionally go through poor black residential areas. Comparing the two MARTA route plans we discussed in previous chapter reveals how this was designed to distinguish the ATS plan from that of MARTA. The ATS route plan followed the

\(^1\) *Atlanta Journal*, April 19, 1967.
\(^3\) Ibid.
MARTA scheme in every respect except for the Northwest Line, which in the MARTA plan began in Pershing Point and ran to Marietta in Cobb County. The ATS’ North Line (which covered the same basic area as the Northwest in the MARTA scheme), however, started in downtown, then followed the corridor to pass by Emory, Buckhead, North Atlanta-Brookhaven, Morningside, Peachtree Industrial (IRS Center), and Chamblee. The ATS plan also had another line, which was (confusingly) called the Northwest Line. This route, which did not exist in the MARTA plan, would stop by Georgia Tech, Huff Road, and Hill Avenue. This Northwest Line would therefore provide services to the poor black residential areas, providing them with a degree of mobility that the MARTA plan did not. (See Figure 4.1 and 4.2)

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4 Ibid, 16.
Figure 4.1. “Proposed Atlanta Rapid Busway System,” Atlanta Transit Systems, Inc., *Rapid Busways* (1967). Both this and the next map (Figure 4.2) show that ATS tried to provide services to black residential areas, which had high population density.

Bus-spokesperson Robert Summerville highlighted this route. In his words, the ATS was preparing the Northwest Line because the Westside was “an area with a large pool of unemployed, under-employed and poor people for whom better access to employment opportunities is declared to be a prime concern in all forms of urban planning and particularly
transportation planning.” In addition, he added, “the suggested ‘hook-up’ of the North and West BUSWAYS would provide a direct link between the closely associated Negro areas of West and East Atlanta. There are at present bus services between the two but these areas all, of necessity, routed through the congested heart of the downtown business district.” Summerville hinted, then, at a more inclusive understanding of “public” than that offered by MARTA, acknowledging the fact that the majority of the passengers consisted of blacks, and that he was trying to provide them with services, while MARTA was not. Yet this was not exactly as it seemed. ATS plan were far from inclusive. African Americans might be serviced by the buses, but there was no place for them in the creation of the plan, despite it ostensibly being for their benefit. Not surprisingly, moreover, the MARTA Board quickly dismissed the ATS plan. They “unanimously agreed” that busways would be “much too costly.” They recommended that “the implementation of this concept not be attempted.”

2) **Eric Hills Associates and “Corridor Impact Study”**

Black leaders, however, continued to push for a voice in the planning of public transit. City of Atlanta alderman Rodney Cook said in the *Atlanta Journal* that MARTA would fail to gain a Urban Mass Transit Act federal grant if it did not cooperate with the urban renewal projects in which Cook was involved. He pointed out that there were no stations to be found in low-income black areas. This appeared to create a contradiction, because for him, the transit stations should be located to solve “problems faced by [poor] residents in terms of access to library, health, and employment facilities, and to recommend feasible alternatives for resolving

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5 Ibid, iv. The building cost of the Northeast Line was the cheapest.
6 Ibid.
the situation.” In other words, the MARTA plan was to skip over those people it was theoretically supposed to help most.

Cook’s comments, however, were not taken seriously. MARTA’s H. L. Stuart and Richard Rich were infuriated by his words, and took steps to nip the problem in the bud. Striking a few paternalistic notes, Rich wrote to Cook and others, urging them not to create controversy. He warned that “many comments you might have a significant influence on the project,” creating “antagonisms and fears at this stage,” which would then put the advocates in a very tight spot in the coming bond election which was needed to begin actual construction. MARTA could not afford to have dissension from within the fold at this point in the game. Rich assured Cook that 1) experts decided the locations of stations and 2) citizens would have chances to talk about the plan in public hearings. While his concerns were quickly brushed aside, Rodney Cook’s sudden attack from inside revealed the extent to which public transit’s “public” was in fact a contested term, and was far from inclusive.

The exposure of the limited character of “public” nevertheless suggested a weakness in the advocates’ view, which could become a significant threat to MARTA in light of the planned two-county (DeKalb & Fulton) bond referendum needed to start construction of the railways. However, before it could face that test, MARTA had to meet another deadline and publish another report. The “Corridor Impact Study” came out in March, 1968. Conducted by the local consulting firm Eric Hills Associates and paid for with HUD funding, the CIS was a

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7 From Robert Dobbs to Dan E. Sweat, August 21, 1967, file 1, series II, Rodney M. Cook Papers, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, the University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA (Hereafter cited as RMCP).
8 From Richard Rich (MARTA Chairman) to Rodney Cook, Board of Alderman, City of Atlanta, May 26, 1967, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
9 Ibid.; Rodney Cook urged U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to take advantage of MARTA planning so as to use it for the redevelopment of Atlanta’s Central City.
revision of the so-called 701 report, and investigated “the influence of transit on certain physical and social conditions along the system.”

The CIS, however, set about trying to debunk MARTA’s rosy, inclusive image of public transit. While the objectives of the CIS were multifold, two deserve particular mention. The first was to use public transit to save Atlanta’s in-town neighborhoods, and to shed light on how public transit would serve the lives of “the poor and socially disadvantaged groups.” In particular, Eric Hills Associates, the local consulting firm authored the CIS, was famous for dealing with neighborhood preservation strategies, and they played a major role in the anti-expressway campaigns of the in-town neighborhoods, particularly the fight against I-485 (discussed in Chapter 6). For the CIS, MARTA should have been contributing to the efforts to preserve existing neighborhoods and trying to enhance their value; they held that “by placing stations along the fringe of neighborhoods, it was found that many types of neighborhood facilities -- shopping, health centers, libraries, fire stations, and the like -- could be placed around the stations on boundaries dividing two or more neighborhoods.” In providing good access to such “Community Facilities,” however, MARTA had not been doing enough. For example, the existing plan would provide access to only three of the five major universities in the Atlanta area. Moreover, it could not provide any access to auditoriums or stadiums, and this clearly needed to be changed. On the topic of Urban Development, the study explained that it had “begun to involve several housing authorities,” and claimed that urban renewal programs should be capitalized on in constructing the stations. EHA also worked with the City of

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.
Atlanta to carry out “parallel redevelopment (renewal of housing and the new transportation system.”\textsuperscript{13}

For the CIS, most of the issues with the system were due to one overreaching problem: namely, the scarcity of stations. On “Rapid Transit and the Poor,” the study demonstrated how existing lines did not help the poor's work commutes, observing that “the number of people who are poor or socially disadvantaged who are also living along the system is not overly impressive.” This was something that the CIS indicated required MARTA’s immediate attention: “As a result, the CIS has recommended that a higher priority be placed on the creation of new lines to reach these groups more easily and to open new areas for housing and employment. In addition, the study further recommended that housing authorities be placed near their public and low cost housing in regard to these new lines.”\textsuperscript{14} EHA especially urged MARTA to cooperate with Atlanta’s urban renewal and urban redevelopment efforts. As for a West Line that would go through black residential areas, the EHA consultants proposed to stimulate the “construction of garden style of apartments and some commercial facilities.” More importantly, the planners were urged to lay a new route, occupying “a northwest corridor along Proctor Creek.”

According to EHA planning consultant Collier Gladin, this line was vital for Atlanta’s progress, because “this corridor contains very high density, low income families who are prime users of mass transit.”\textsuperscript{15} In addition, he explained, this route could be constructed with a limited budget due to the low property value in the area, and it would eventually extend right into Marietta in Cobb County.\textsuperscript{16} In other words, the CIS not only refused to play along with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{14} From Collier B. Gladin to John Coli, PBTB, March 11, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid. Collier B. Gladin also requested the change of Oakland Station on South Line in such a way that it could serve John Hope Homes, Spelman College, and public housing projects in the area. From Collier B. Gladin to John Coli, April 8, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
\end{itemize}
MARTA’s plan, but challenged its underlying assumptions about the public to be served and the role rapid transit was to play in assisting the poor and disadvantaged. Consequently, the study called for not just adjustments, but major overhauls to the MARTA plan.

3) CAPDC, Model Cities, and Buckhead Alternate

In the CIS, EHA requested one more major change, which would also bring about controversy. EHA’s Collier Gladin pushed for what he called Buckhead Alternate, instead of the Northeast Line, which he was concerned, would have a “serious effect on the future of this [Peachtree Hills] neighborhood.” The City of Atlanta’s Aldermanic Planning and Development Committee (CAPDC) chairman, Rodney Cook, agreed with Gladin, and favored killing the Northeast Line in favor of adding two routes: the Northwest Line, and Buckhead Alternate. GOP alderman Cook’s motives may have been less than selfless. He wrote that, while many suggestions had been incorporated into the plan, “several proposals remain, however, about which we are most concerned,” by which he meant the Northeast Line – which just so happened to cut through his neighborhood. Cook wrote to MARTA chairman Richard Rich, claiming that “the Northeast Line, as proposed, does not adequately serve the City of Atlanta.” In addition, the alderman asserted that there were too many stations inside the city limits, and that “these stations will bring a flock of people [ride-in patrons from areas outside the city]” who would be barely of any “service to Atlanta citizens,” and who would moreover disrupt the quiet northeastern neighborhoods. Rather, Cook suggested, it would “benefit your [MARTA] system by placing a station in the heart of Buckhead.” This plan would also, he argued

17 Collier B. Gladin to Department of Planning, City of Atlanta, March 11, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
18 Rodney Cook to Richard Rich, April 25, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
“develop a branch line to the north within the right of way of the North Fulton Expressway.”\textsuperscript{19} Along with the CIS report, Rodney Cook further contended that urban renewal projects in Model Cities were in need of transportation: “We feel that a rapid transit line serving this neighborhood would increase the mobility of the people and open up new job opportunities.”\textsuperscript{20}

The response of MARTA officials was quick. MARTA chairman Richard Rich mailed to Cook, writing that he basically concurred with his suggestion that MARTA should help the poor and support urban renewal efforts, but turning down Cook’s route proposals. Rich said that MARTA had “an application pending at HUD to bring our work on the Model Cities Line up to the same standard as on the rest of the system.” He went on to say, “[I] completely concur with you that if the system is to serve one of its primary proposes; i.e., to transport people who cannot afford private transportation to and from their jobs, then Model Cities line should be an essential part of it.” The chairman “[felt] certain” that Cook’s ideas would be incorporated into MARTA’s plan, but it was far too late to set up a “Procter Line,” an idea which would have to be “examined in detail” with regards to “its level of patronage and cost and its engineering feasibility.” Moreover, their current “knowledge of it is too meager.”\textsuperscript{21}

The CAPDC’s objective was primarily to save island neighborhoods, upper or middle class white residential area inside the city limits. Helping poor blacks came next in their list of priorities, and they would do so only when it dovetailed their primary purpose. For instance, when EHA reviewed the MARTA proposal, they recommended moving a Greyhound bus station in front of the City Auditorium in such a way that the bus passengers could switch to the MARTA railway. However, CAPDC, despite their strong support for the Procter Creek line, refused to change the location of the bus station site due to traffic reasons. Similarly, CAPDC

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.; Rodney Cook to Richard Rich, April 26, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} From Richard Rich to Rodney Cook, May 3, 1968, file 1, Series II, RMCP.
strongly pushed for the Northwest Line, but, simultaneously, tried to eliminate the Northeast Line, which cut through old, classic neighborhoods, including Morningside, Peachtree Hills, Ansley Park and Druid Hills. In other words, as with their unwillingness to arrange a train stop accessible to the Greyhound station, these individuals’ perspective was predicated on seeing rapid transit as pertaining to someone else. They had no intention of riding the transit themselves, and were on board with other, particularly northeastern, neighborhoods’ efforts to avoid bringing public transit – and public transit riders – into their communities.

II. Contacting the Public: MARTA and Public Hearings

After having considered the ARMPC’s plan and EHA’s CIS, MARTA needed to directly encounter the voices of the public in order to finalize their route and financial plan. MARTA officials viewed public hearings as an opportunity to understand “public opinion.” Nevertheless, as seen in the efforts of rapid transit advocates to “shape” this opinion, officials viewed public hearings as an opportunity to “educate” the citizens, and turn them into ardent supporters for the cause and their particular vision of public transportation. The public transit officials believed that “the public hearings have to be the first round of any successful referenda campaign” because they provided an “excellent opportunity to educate not only individual neighborhoods but the general public as well.” In order to do so, MARTA officials formed a (supporting) team in every neighborhood where they planned a hearing, in order to prepare in advance a welcoming mood for the rapid transit proposal. In their own words, “Part of the objective of this mopping up process is to create the nucleus of a very large campaign organization to be used in advance of MARTA.”

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22 “Preliminary Communications Program for MARTA Public Hearings,” n.d., ca. 1968, folder 3, box 50, 178
Before the hearings, MARTA officials tried to identify who constituted the “public” and what impression they had on public transit. Surveys suggested that “higher income groups” (over $15,000) tended to support the rapid transit proposal. “Lower income groups,” however, tended to be against it or aloof; blacks in particular were badly in need of persuading information. Post-survey analysis on the reasons for this concluded that “it is in the lower income groups, probably the lesser informed about the issue...[that the] highest percentage of ‘don't know’ responses are found.” Younger people tended to be more interested and supportive, most likely because “the younger respondent is probably more receptive to progress and change, while the older person may be retired and not concerned with commuting.” The survey also questioned whether the respondent would go to vote for a bond issue for rapid transit (based on property taxes). “A slight majority of 51.6% stated they would vote for it and 23.3 % would vote against. The remaining respondents said they either would not vote (6.1%) or they did not know what they would do (19.0%).” Most respondents, both black and white, favored rapid transit but not the bond issue needed to fund it. “The Negro, both lower and middle economic groups, represented the largest percentage stating they did not know if they would vote on a bond issue.” When the survey asked what tax would be preferred (real estate, gasoline, sales, or some other method), “sales tax was the preferred method (32.5%) while real estate was the least favored.”

Public hearings, therefore, were seen as a great opportunity to win the support of those who were initially against or indifferent about rapid transit. However, MARTA officials soon discovered that their survey work had depended on perhaps too narrow of a sample. A series of hearings provided the self-claimed, Chamber of Commerce type of “the public spirited

MMP.

businessmen” with the chance to reconsider their plans, which placed priority emphasis on the higher income groups in classic in-town neighborhoods, while underestimating or marginalizing the voices of poor blacks and whites. Buckhead Alternate further complicated this picture, for Buckhead was in fact a wealthy residential area, and they did not want MARTA line coming through their community. However, the small shopkeepers in old downtown Buckhead requested construction of a train stop in their area in order to restore a lively shopping street. This actually fit with MARTA’s survey results, which had shown that affluent whites generally favored their public transit idea.

MARTA officials quickly found that their plans engendered genuine hostility in some parts of the city. In poor and working-class African-American neighborhoods, residents demanded a new line and train stations in the Perry Homes and Model Cities area. The other was, perhaps ironically, Buckhead. Whatever the shopkeepers may have thought, the people in the special meeting set up by MARTA strongly insisted on the deletion of Buckhead Alternate from the plan, favoring the initial Northeast Line instead. In other words, the first community, consisting largely of poor blacks, was upset that their needs would not be sufficiently met by the rapid transit plan, and demanded additional service; whereas, the second community, consisting largely of affluent whites, was opposed to the expansion of rapid transit service into their area, and requested it be halted. As urban suburbanites, they did not want to be part of a public that took anything away from their private advantages.

A series of meetings were held in various sites in April and May in 1968, across the four metropolitan counties. It was these hearings, in fact, that convinced MARTA officials they would win the referendum. According to their “thumb-nail sketch of each public hearing held during late April and May,” while some meetings gave them “insights into our problems,”
overall they were proud of their “exercise in democracy.” Their report concluded that “the public expects more rapid transit than we have been showing, and they want it quicker.” Needless to say, this appeared to reflect only part of the story, but they pushed onwards. The author of the report stressed that winning required not measures to help the auto-less population, but rather an ambitious, “big plan”: “I am absolutely convinced that we must present the public a big plan. A small plan is going to disappoint many people and create an air of indifference.”

MARTA’s memo for the hearings reported that their talks with the public largely went well. The tri-cities public hearing (April 29) was attended by eighty people, while the Downtown Public Hearing at Atlanta’s Civic Center Auditorium (May 2) had an audience of sixty. Many business organizations made a showing there, and MARTA “received strong endorsement from all the business groups such as the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Central Atlanta Progress, Inc., and Jaycees.” The West End Public Hearing (May 6) was attended by thirty people. This number was “less than” MARTA had expected, but nevertheless, “business, civic, and church groups gave us a strong endorsement.” At the Clayton County meeting (May 9), MARTA received “100 percent support from the Clayton County Commissioners and gratifying support from business and other political leaders,” although there was in fact an opponent in the audience who criticized MARTA’s cost estimate and “continuing Clayton County vacancy on the MARTA board.” At the Decatur public hearing (May 13), MARTA gained strong support from commercial civic elites in the area. They “made it clear that more lines to serve DeKalb County [are] a must.”

24 “H. L. Stuart to Board of Directors, MARTA,” folder 3, box 50, MMP.
25 Ibid.
26 As for DeKalb County residents’ responses, see “Meeting Held on February 9, 1968, DeKalb County Commission Board,” folder 3, box 45, MMP. MARTA’s meetings with the DeKalb County Commission
people, who complained about traffic congestion and said that they badly wanted Public Transit.
The Sandy Springs public hearing (May 27) had forty people in attendance, who indicated that
they were aware that their community was not MARTA's first priority, but also “expressed quite
clearly that they expect to be part of our project some day.”

There were two exceptions to the general trend; one was in the Buckhead area. At the
Lenox public Hearings held in the R.L. Hope School Auditorium, sixty people came out, and
people there “spoke strongly for our project.” Furthermore, “The Buckhead Alternate cited no
interest among them, but since that time we have detected strong feelings on the subject.”
There were some in attendance who clearly disliked the project, but “they did not register to
speak, and... declined to speak.” Another was in the black residential area mentioned above.
For MARTA, public hearings in predominantly African-American areas received “very special
attention.” The numbers of registered voters (black and white) attached showed that the rise of
blacks power as a political bloc in the metropolitan politics.

Board reveal some of these responses. The meeting included DeKalb Planning Commission members,
County Commissioners, and Decatur City Commissioners. They stated that it was a good development
because of its positive effect on real estate value, as proven in Toronto and Montreal. They were also
impressed by how quickly Montreal decided to install its rapid transit system. The speed and capacity also
impressed them – “We are impressed with the speech at which you can move 350,000 people around a city
like Montreal and move them in quiet and in comfort and efficiently.” Others pointed out that the City of
Decatur needed rapid transit, and that it would be “an exciting and meaningful development for the entire
citizenry.” High-rise development around rapid transit stations was also seen as being desirable for its future
development because the town was so popular. Toronto and Montreal had already seen this through, and
Decatur needed to follow suit. Another said that rapid transit was “fantastic,” because “all sorts of people
with no effort” could get on board the transit. It is interesting to note that the expression “all sorts of people”
meant “old people on crutches, and people who are handicapped.”

27 H.L. Stuart to MARTA Board of Directors.”
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
III. “It Must Come by … Low Income Areas”: African-American Demands and MARTA

Blacks were generally hostile to MARTA’s plans, but MARTA officials were unable to definitively pin down if this was due to a lack of interest, or simply a history of long being ignored. At the Downtown Public Hearing on May 2, whites were also present, and it went well. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) “was present but only to get a preview of our proceedings before the hearing scheduled for the Westside YMCA.” At the Westside Branch YMCA public hearing (the second largest of the 1968 hearings) on May 16, more than 200 people were in attendance. A MARTA document reported that they were very pleased by the hearing, which had been “very productive” because they “established communications with a substantial part of the Negro citizenry.” MARTA obtained “a list of requests” from the ASLC, and they believed that they could “respond to them positively…by action and continued exercise of the communication channels.”

The Candler Park Public Hearing on May 20 did not have many participants, and provided no valuable responses “except for repeated requests as to assurances about no job discrimination.” However, the AME Zion Church public hearing on May 22 had approximately fifty participants, who did not hesitate to show their anger. The MARTA memo on the event relates that the audience did not like “our arrangement for the West Lake station.” Apparently, “They place more importance of our sense vacant land than we do, and they do not place as much importance on street access as we do.” “They” here were used as if they were not really part of the community. Furthermore, “most speakers” in the meeting were in fact anti-MARTA, because of “the absence of Negroes on the staff and the limited Negro
representation on the Board. We explained this as best we could, but I am unimpressed by our progress.”

This series of public hearings only introduced MARTA officials to the tip of the iceberg concerning blacks’ strong demand for public transit, but African-Americans had plenty of reasons to oppose MARTA’s version of “public” transit. One of the things that infuriated them was the fact that their voices had just been neglected for so long. Current black leaders, particularly black clergy, were finding it increasingly difficult to contain the frustrations of ordinary blacks on the street level any longer. The rise of young radicals, including the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who had accumulated their power in the Civil Rights Movement, pressured the black clergy to fight against the “power structure.” Therefore, moderate members of the clergy, who were closer to the white commercial civic elites, realized that they could no longer afford to be docile and gentle in asking for “the power structure’s” favor in building roads, schools, and shopping centers. In particular, the Summerhill Riot in 1966 showed that they could no longer tame the outburst of young blacks’ fury.

A history of having their needs neglected, resulting in understandable anger, would not, however, by itself explain black antipathy to the MARTA’s rapid transit project. Blacks, in fact, did not welcome the public transit proposal because for them, development also meant destruction. For instance, in 1964, Georgia state senator Leroy Johnson led a black group to persuade Fulton County Commissioners to “change the proposed location of a highway connector on the West Side which will bulldoze a “beautiful section we developed because we had to have living space.” Black voices went unheard in the determination of such plans. Rodney Cook may have made an effort to construct an urban design which would help blacks,

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30 Ibid.
31 “Negroes Ask Fulton to Relocate Road,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 21, 1964.
and ATS’ Robert Summerville worked hard to preserve his bus system because it was the only mode of transportation available for many blacks, and especially black domestic workers. Nevertheless, for many African-Americans, such efforts were but stopgap measures and not fundamental solutions to the major issues with which they struggled in their daily lives. The 1967 ATS “Rapid Busways” plan did not receive much attention. The plan certainly showed that ATS was more concerned about blacks, but this did not mean that ATS enjoyed a good reputation among the African-American community. Indeed, ASLC continued to attack ATS’ hiring practices: they had a negative attitude toward hiring blacks for administrative jobs, even though so many of their passengers were African-Americans. In fact, they wanted Robert Summerville to leave his position as the chairman of the Citizen’s Advisory Committee on Urban Renewal, and replace him with a black appointee instead. What blacks needed more than anything was representation in the planning and decision-making processes. This alone would enable them to ensure that their needs were accurately understood and addressed. Preserving the existing system, which structurally excluded African-Americans from its decision-making processes, would only enable the white elites to continue to design urban space for their own advantage.

It was no surprise that blacks viewed public transit as a white endeavor aimed at employing federal funding to regain, and expand, their power in the downtown area. Already in 1964, one could see evidence of black ambivalence in an Atlanta Inquirer editorial that insisted that they would not be able to determine their standpoint in the 1964 referendum, despite urging readers to participate in the election anyway. The editor said that one could see that traffic in metropolitan Atlanta was “certainly hectic.” Nevertheless, for the author, this was not sufficient to justify voting for the referendum. The author confessed that the “Negro
population is likely to be slighted when the actual plans are drawn up for the Rapid Transit System.” In other words, “If the past is any index to the future,” the public transit agency would not consider the convenience of blacks at all. The editorial suggested that suburban whites would be able to commute on a paved highway, while blacks left in the central city would have to use only unpaved or rough roads.\footnote{32} The creation of MARTA in 1965 and their first PBTB plan (1967) once again neglected to guarantee service in Westside Atlanta — particularly between the Northwest Line and the West Line, a region which contained the booming Perry Homes area with a lot of apartment houses. As a result, the ASLC rejected the plan, because “it does not extend far enough westward.” Along with Equal Opportunity Atlanta (EOA)’s substantial budget cut in 1966, which ruined black plans to increase their school budget, the MARTA route plan represented yet one more project which still ignored the interest of black folks.\footnote{33}

Because of the continuing neglect of the black community, the ASLC played a leading role in urging MARTA officials, those “public spirited businessmen,” to listen to their voices. The ASLC, led by established black leaders like Jesse Hill Jr., and Rev. Samuel M. Williams, sent a letter to Richard H. Rich, urging MARTA to promise “non-discrimination in employment,” and to give them information regarding how many staff MARTA would eventually need and how many jobs could be expected to be offered to blacks. Moreover, the black leaders demanded “training institutions” and an equal share of “employment opportunities” for African-Americans. Furthermore, they requested that MARTA hire “experienced Negro citizens in New York,

\footnote{32} “Vote Yes, But Don’t Forget Negroes in Rapid Transit,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, October 24, 1964. Indeed, traffic was an even bigger problem in poor African American communities. For instance, traffic fatalities were frequent occurrences, but the City of Atlanta did not deal with the matter seriously. Some of the grassroots leaders, including Mrs. Irene Martin and Rev. C. A. Samples, once “threatened to disrupt evening rush hour traffic [with] ‘lie-ins’ if the traffic lights were not installed.” See “A Light for Perry Homes,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, July 20, 1968, and “Ministers Urged to Preach Traffic Safety,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, August 25, 1968.\footnote{33} “Negro Unit Voices Transit Condition,” \textit{Atlanta Journal Constitution}, December 11, 1966.
Philadelphia, Chicago, and other cities” for administrative and operational positions. Finally, the ASLC also urged MARTA to hold a meeting for the purpose of “discussing methods of route and sub-station selections.”

In light of the challenges faced by the black community, public hearings represented an important opportunity to make their voices heard. If nothing else, participating in public hearings enabled ordinary blacks to share discussion space with representatives of the existing power structure. The Atlanta Journal reported favorably on the Westside Branch YMCA public hearing, where 200 people showed up and the ALSC submitted a list of requests, including the erection of a Perry Homes station. MARTA promised to work on it. The discussion went well, and the ASLC said they were “highly pleased.” Leader Jesse Hill stated that the audience was about “98 percent favorable” toward MARTA’s responses at the hearing. MARTA promised to study immediately how they could serve the Perry Homes area, and revealed their plans to “employ Negroes in the recruiting, training and administrative phases of its internal personnel program.”

The Journal’s coverage of the event, however, did not overlook dissenting voices.

“During the hearing,” the reporter observed, “Negro spokesmen Sen. Leroy R. Johnson, Rep. Ben Brown and others cautioned that MARTA must bring Negroes into policy-making decisions.” Dr. Williams asserted that “MARTA must no longer make plans for Negroes…. You don't know where we hurt because you are too far removed from the problem.” Senator Johnson complained, “Too often our friends, many of whom are white, forget about placing

34 “Request Rapid Transit Authority Non-Discriminatory Commitments or Face Firm Negro Opposition, Atlanta Inquirer, January 7, 1967.
35 “To Board of Directors, MARTA.”
Negroes in policy-making jobs.” According to the Journal, the ASLC was adamant in setting up stations and routes into poor black areas, arguing that “it must come by, not pass over, around or miss completely low-income areas.” They also repeated that MARTA should hire more blacks. MARTA chairman Richard Rich, who was present at the hearing, said, “WE WILL INSIST that Negroes be employed in recruiting, training and administrative work of the personnel department (emphasis in original).” According to the Atlanta Journal, “In general, Mr. Rich offered Negroes full access to MARTA planning for a rapid transit system and quick answers to more detailed requests.”

Still Mrs. Mary Sanford, president of the Perry Homes Tenant Association (PHTA), found fault in Marta’s plans for other reasons. Apparently, she and her follow tenant association presidents criticized transit system neglect of tenants. The Inquirer reported how at the hearing, “several tenant association presidents” in attendance announced their disapproval of the transit system, because it neglected booming apartment areas where “People spend more than an hour getting to town.” The Inquirer applauded Sanford, writing that she made “one of the strongest statements in support of the requests.” The PHTA president insisted that “the growing concentration of apartments in [the] Perry Homes Area” led to “[a] great need [for] improved transportation” Their lack of mobility prevented the low-income apartment tenants from getting decent jobs. This sort of concern meshed with ASLC claims that concern for the poor

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37 “MARTA Plans,” Atlanta Journal, 1968, May 17. This promise by Rich, in fact, soon became dubious, because Kirkwood Elementary School, in another black area, saw “the presence of 15 people” at the meeting. A leader in the Kirkwood area, Maynard H. Jackson, Jr., who was a chairman of the DeKalb County Voters’ League, criticized MARTA for failing to publicize the hearing beforehand. For Rich, this was just Kirkwood’s fault, because the Westside hearing had gathered more than two hundred attendees. Besides, no one was opposed to public transit. One man, however, revealed a complicated attitude, saying that urban renewal projects had forced him to move “seven times,” but “If this won’t, I’m for it.” “MARTA Ads Scored At Space Turnout,” Atlanta Journal, May 21, 1968.
was invisible in the MARTA plan. One of the Summit members said to the paper, “People in Perry Homes, Thomasville, the Model Cities Area, Poole Creek and Hapeville want to get to and from town as quickly as anyone else.”

Job opportunity and accessibility were not the only concerns voiced at the public hearings. Residents were also concerned about dislocation. They wanted to make sure that they would be able to attain “assurances from MARTA... for relocating families displaced by the new line.”

History gave them good reason to believe that MARTA would displace homes in ways that were less than fair. According to the 701 report, the Peachtree Street area would not be significantly disturbed, because the engineering firm PBTB had formulated a plan to construct an underground railway in the area. Naturally, this prompted ASLC members to wonder why MARTA was not considering constructing underground railways in Western Atlanta to avoid ruining neighborhoods and businesses there. PBTB tactfully answered that this was due to “special problems with hilly terrain” in the black residential area, but this was met by the quick objection that “the area was no more hilly than Peachtree Street.” In short, despite rhetoric of inclusiveness and the promise that rapid transit would aid blacks and the poor, in practice many struggled to be heard. Even though they had longer looked for better public transit options, they were beginning to see that they system would serve the needs of affluent whites ahead of their needs.

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41 “Rapid Transit Must Include Low Income Areas, Negro Jobs—ASLC.”
Figure 4.3. The 1968 MARTA Route Plan, “Rapid Transit How Fast?” *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, May 20, 1968. This shows that African American residential areas, particularly on the westside, did not gain sufficient service.
IV. Strange Bedfellows: The Ultra-Right and Blacks

During the public hearings, the ASLC and other organizations, including Perry Homes Tenant Association, did not hesitate to criticize the public transit plan. The hearing at the Temple AME Zion Church, with a turnout of fifty people, proved to be a particularly rough ride for MARTA. The audience was openly hostile; one MARTA official commented that he was “unimpressed by our progress” after the long session. During the meeting, MARTA attorney W. Stell Huie cautioned that “there are people who believe government does not have the right to provide public transportation.” He called them “the ultra-right,” and warned blacks that their anti-public transit campaign would them in the same camp as these extreme conservatives. This would have been an unbearable comment for racial minorities to hear, because those “ultra rights” were the same individuals who advocated segregation through categorically rejecting any governmental intervention.

The faction Huie had referred to as “the ultra-right” were certainly opposed to MARTA, and fiercely so. For instance, they organized a campaign specifically to eliminate S.B. 353, which would empower MARTA to purchase ATS before the implementation of its plan. Then there was the “Citizens for Good Government” document entitled “What’s at the Bottom of MARTA,” which was mailed to the senators in the General Assembly before the vote, and which also clearly represented “the ultra right” argument. Echoing, and transcending, the voices of opposition raised against rapid transit as somehow un-American, the author claimed that MARTA was merely “the brainchild of a clique of internationalists.” Furthermore, the MARTA board members consisted of “stooges,” who apparently represented a fifth column in the Cold War, for they were attempting to help the Kremlin take over America. For the author George Keller, MARTA had several objectives, all of which were nefarious: 1) create “a new
crop of millionaires in Atlanta,” 2) “squander taxpayers’ money in the cause of public
bankruptcy,” and 3) put Atlanta under the control of the federal government. The document
also revealed that Howard K. Menhinick, who was appointed as chairman of the 1962 Rapid
Transit Committee, had experience working for the United Nations and had joined the
Tennessee Valley Authority, which was “the showplace of socialism in America.” 42 From the
author’s viewpoint, this constituted proof that rapid transit advocates represented some sort of
internationalist, socialist plot to destroy American values.

Evidently, the author’s objective in opposing governmental intervention was to save the
“Southern Way of Life.” In the document, his defamation of MARTA builds into ultimately
portraying it as an attack on the Southern Conference for Human Welfare and the Special
Committee on Un-American Activities, both of which tried to subdue violent activities in order
to preserve white supremacy in the South. The document also referred to ATS’ Robert
Summerville, because he was originally from England and, more importantly, attacked Ralph
McGill, the Atlanta Constitution editor who had worked on behalf of desegregation, and who
had acted as Summerville’s sponsor in the latter’s application for US citizenship. For all of
these reasons, the author argued, “the transit juggernaut” had to be “stopped.” 43 Although the
House passed S.B. 353, Governor Lester Maddox took Keller’s critique seriously, and killed
MARTA bill S.B. 353 in April (then likewise vetoed a similar bill in 1969) by employing his
governor’s veto, thereby serving the ends of the “ultra rights.” 44 Maddox’s own belief that

43 Ibid.
expressways were more effective and efficient in solving traffic congestion also contributed to his decision to oppose the rapid transit proposal.\textsuperscript{45}

This was the context, therefore, in which Huie urged his black audience to not unintentionally jump on the conservatives’ bandwagon by opposing the MARTA plan. Nonetheless, Huie’s attempt to conflate opposition to the plan with support for segregationists failed to persuade African-Americans. One of the ASLC members said they would not object to being viewed as “allies of Lester Maddox.” Huie’s attempt to reassert that “MARTA still intends to build a rapid transit system, one that will accommodate low-income Negroes with service and employment” ultimately ended in vain, merely resulting in a comment that the ASLC could not trust MARTA because “MARTA is already discriminatory against the poor and against Negroes.” One clergy, who challenged the MARTA attorney, demanded that rapid transit “run to Perry Homes in the northwest and Thomasville in Southeast Atlanta.” But African Americans aren’t opposed to mass transit, just to the version being put forth here. He also requested that MARTA take black grassroots activists on a short trip to Montreal and Toronto in order to observe the rapid transit systems there.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} DeKalb County’s Senator Ben Johnson, an Emory Law Professor and the prime author of Amendment 16 to create MARTA, in WAGA TV5’s “Public Dialogue between Gov. Maddox and the Rapid Transit Authority” cautioned the governor that he was being “led to make a tempest in a teapot of Senate Bill. 353.” Maddox just “got mad” at what he said. An editorial in the \textit{Atlanta Constitution} urged Maddox not to kill the bill when he “doesn't understand complicated bonding procedures.” Maddox contended that the personal survey he conducted on “public response to television forums (WAGA)” revealed a ratio of “3 to 1 against the bill to amend the 1965 MARTA Act.” For him, the problem was “an organized move by proponents of rapid transit” that had “student bodies and other groups sign prepared postcards favoring the amendment” which were then sent to his governor’s mansion. See “Maddox Prefers West Side Inner Loop to Transit,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 1, 1968; “Rapid transit Report, A Public Dialogue between Gov. Maddox and the Rapid Transit Authority,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 2, 1968; The bill was to simplify and strengthen the 1965 MARTA Act. “Maddox’ Flare-up Surprises Senator,” April 2, 11968; “Transit Plan Opposed 3-1, Maddox Says,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 3, 1968; “Governor vs. MARTA,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 3, 1964; “Transit Polls Against Signing by Governor” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, April 4, 1968; Not only major newspapers, but local ones as well blamed Lester Maddox for his veto. See, editorial news, “We Are Dismayed,” the \textit{DeKalb New Era}, April 18, 1968.

\textsuperscript{46} Summit Group Challenges MARTA on Discrimination, \textit{Atlanta Journal}, May 23, 1968.
MARTA proved itself accommodating by accepting Boone’s request, and took Mrs. Mary Sanford, the PHTA president, on the trip. The trip to Canada, which occurred in June, consisted of 86 Atlantans, including Ivan Allen and Richard Rich, was dubbed the “MARTA Charta,” and succeeded in winning the support of the black participants.\footnote{The black members listed were John Calhoun (Equal Opportunity Atlanta, Inc.), Mortimer Cox (Atlanta Urban League), Carey Howard (Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Congress), State Senator Leroy Johnson, L.D. Milton (MARTA Director), Lithangia Robinson (Valhache Community Club, Alderman Q. W. Williamson, and an Atlanta Inquirer reporter. “Let’s Vote for It: Grass Roots Leaders Gush Following Canadian Tour,” Atlanta Inquirer, June 22, 1968.} According to the Atlanta Inquirer, the participants were “tremendously impressed” with “the speedy transportation of people into town, the jobs they viewed that could be available for Negroes with rapid transit here, the explosion of land values along transit routes and the cleanliness of the two cities.” The trip thus proved a “rousing success!” for MARTA in increasing the number of influential advocates for rapid transit among the black community.\footnote{“MARTA Charta” Rousing Success!” Rapid Transit Progress 3 (June 1968).} Mary Sanford argued in the Atlanta Inquirer article that “Out here, I’m saying to everybody, Let’s vote for it.” Lewes Peters of the Model City area neighborhood organization agreed with Mrs. Sanford, saying, “Definitely, let’s vote for it.”\footnote{“Let’s Vote for It: ‘Grass Roots Leaders Gush Following Canadian Tour,’ Atlanta Inquirer, June 22, 1968.}

Ultimately, however, this would not prove sufficient, and MARTA’s attempts to convert the black community leaders as a whole failed. At a conference of the ASLC and other organizations held at Friendship Baptist Church in July, they voted “unanimously to press requests on the Metropolitan Rapid Transit Association [sic].”\footnote{“Cross Section of Negro Leader Votes to Press Summit Demands,” Atlanta Inquirer, July 20, 1968.} In other words, they would continue to make demands on MARTA, but would not endorse the plan as it stood. They argued that blacks should not cast their ballots unless MARTA met their requests, including “transit service stations, routes, and employment opportunities for Negroes.” An Atlanta Inquirer
editorial cautioned blacks against being fooled by MARTA officials, who had to acknowledge “community review of demand” before proceeding, and to regard them the document as “a basis for the Negro community’s support” of the coming referendum in November. They demanded routes for Perry Homes, Thomasville Poole Creek, and Model Cities, as well as “an extension of the Westside line to Fulton Industrial Boulevard.” They also requested “a training component for low-income Negroes to be employed with MARTA, a request that came from the Kirkwood area.” MARTA officials referred to the possibility of changing the route in order to “carry a line to Perry Homes at the expense of cutting off six miles of the Westside line.” Thus, the black community was dissatisfied with the MARTA plan not, as MARTA officials had presupposed, because of a lack of knowledge, but rather because the plan failed to take their needs into consideration, and they were clear about what steps MARTA would need to take in order to meet those needs.

V. Met Demand: “Buckhead Alternate” and the Uprising of Inland Suburbs

The problem was that with regard to route planning, black and white neighborhoods were often seeking mutually exclusive goals. Blacks demanded a new route, but the whites in northside Atlanta were opposed to it. As before, the future of rapid transit was being strongly shaped by those who had no need for it in the first place, namely affluent whites (As for the income, housing type, and racial composition in Buckhead neighborhood, see Appendix Tables).

As for the construction of the West Line, in the end MARTA did not meet the request made by the ASLC (Atlanta Summit Leadership Committee) and MASLC (Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Committee). The CAPDC’s chair, Rodney Cook, remained fiercely

opposed to the building of the Northeast Branch, which was to start at Pershing Point, stop by Lindbergh Drive, Lenox Square, and Brookhaven, and then merge into the Northwest Line. EHA’s CIS introduced an alternate route instead, which would go to the Buckhead area, instead of the one following the Southern Railway. This was the aforementioned Buckhead Alternate. According to the CIS, the routes and stations should be located in “areas which need rejuvenation and where new growth should be sought.” Their experience in Toronto had shown them that “two-thirds of all new developments have been constructed around their key stations.”\(^{52}\) MARTA explained Buckhead Alternate’s necessity by the fact that the area was booming with “many long established businesses of considerable value.” In the original plan, no station was located in the area, and thus it would, according to the CIS, be “destined to decline, in much the same fashion that businesses have relocated along the expressway system.”\(^{53}\)

Instead, the accessibility a station would provide would mean that the area “will begin to see 15- and 20-story structures.” In addition, Buckhead was expected to absorb the population growth by concentrating “multi-story buildings, which use airspace rather than ground space.”\(^{54}\) The CIS argued that “If the citizens of the in-town neighborhoods want to take the pressure of change off their areas, they must agree to place rapid transit stations in areas to absorb the coming growth.” In other words, MARTA’s contention was that the preservation of single-residential areas would necessitate having a multi-story apartment area to contain the population growth. Here, CIS consultants were not directly concerned with Atlanta’s environment, but it is important to note that they presented the establishment of a high rise apartment zone as a tactic to avoid urban sprawl. Finally, Buckhead, with Lenox Square and


\(^{53}\) Ibid. 2.

\(^{54}\) Ibid. 3.
Phipps Plaza, was “a place where people want to go, and where they should go.” The stations on the original route, on the other hand, were “located in places difficult to reach, difficult to move around, and where people had no other reason to travel to.” The sum total produced a reasonably coherent argument for the shift in line planning, which managed to obscure other reasons, informed by personal and racial preferences of the elites, for the decision.

Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Buckhead businessmen came out in ardent support of the Buckhead Alternate, which would run through the very heart of their downtown. For small shopkeepers, the new line would enable them to regain the crowds that the gigantic shopping malls, including the Lenox Square and the Phipps, had taken away. They might have believed this, but it was surely not true. According to the local newspaper *Northside News*, CAPDC chairman Cook had a meeting with these Buckhead downtown businessmen before the CAPDC’s endorsement of the Buckhead Alternate proposal. The author of the new line proposal, EHA’s Leon Eplan, stressed that it would be the only way to restore a thriving downtown to Buckhead. Moreover, it would also engender a new era of progress, since MARTA rail transit would enable Buckhead to “absorb the growth caused by rapid transit, feed on it and grow.” Eplan maintained that “most of the growth from now to the turn of the century will be along the transit system.” For the consultant, it was clear that “Buckhead hasn’t even begun to grow,” whereas “with rapid transit you will see 10, 20, and 30 buildings.” Part of the appeal of the alternate line, then, was the ability to stress the economic impact it would have upon Buckhead, in terms which to some extent echoed those used by the commercial civic elites concerning the regenerative effects of rapid transit on downtown Atlanta.

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55 Ibid. 4.
However, the residents around Buckhead were furious with the proposed Buckhead Alternate plan. For one thing, they found it intolerable that the CAPDC had approved the Buckhead Alternate in the midst of August, because “many of [the Buckhead] residents with children will be out of town on vacation.”\textsuperscript{57} They could not respond to the proposal because they weren’t there. After one radio station aired the news about Buckhead Alternate, there was an immediate backlash, and the MARTA telephone “rang off the hook.”\textsuperscript{58} Protest letters postmarked from the Buckhead area flowed into Rich’s mailbox. Cook also received many petitions, including one stating that many residents in the author’s neighborhood had reached a consensus that rapid transit would only contribute to “allow the residents of Sandy Springs and DeKalb County outside Atlanta to have good access to the downtown area.”\textsuperscript{59} Another letter (with 600 signatures) reached Cook, Rich and others, and boldly asserted that the MARTA plan would never clear the November referendum, because for “every possible vote that it can attract that many negative votes, including mine, will be cast if the proposed Buckhead alternate route is substituted in place of the originally planned northeast route.” The original route was better, the author continued, in “serve[ing] more people in all of the metropolitan areas surrounding the northeast spur.” For the author of the letter, the objective of rapid transit was none other than the preservation of the splendid residential neighborhoods, which constituted “an important asset in enhancing the character of Atlanta.”\textsuperscript{60} The needs of transit riders themselves appeared to be of much less interest. She wrote,

\textsuperscript{57} From J.R. Montgomery, Edgar C. Gentry, G.R. Highsmith, and Joseph L. Hammond, Jr. to Richard H. Rich, August 1, 1968, folder 4, box 69, MMP.
\textsuperscript{58} “Buckhead Transit Public Hearing Set.”
\textsuperscript{59} From Anne Bacon Travis to George Costakis, Richard Rich, Ron Cook and others, August 18, 1968, folder 4, box 69, MMP.
\textsuperscript{60} On the topic of destruction, Buckhead Alternate would require bulldozing more. According to MARTA, the Piedmont Route (to North Druid) would bulldoze 25 business facilities and 94 houses, while BA would need the destruction of 26 businesses and 129 houses. “Memo,” n.d., ca., 1968, p.1 in folder 4, box 69, MMP.
I firmly believe that the trend of location policies of national companies is toward small cities with attractive living conditions for company personnel. A city that is a mass of high-rise commercial development, innumerable criss-crossing through-ways, and ghettos is not considered an attractive community by many people. That great number of people expected to be drawn to the Atlanta area may choose to go elsewhere.\textsuperscript{61}

In other words, this letter demonstrated how the author, a Buckhead resident, understood rapid transit’s importance as more than just a method of transportation. For such residents, it was indispensable not in terms of providing a basic service or meeting the high-flying rhetoric that had been deployed by advocates, but rather because it enabled residents to exclude from their towns downtown features, such as “high-rise commercial developments, massive interchanges, and ghettos.”\textsuperscript{62} In other words, rapid transit was to serve as a bulwark to protect the classical residential areas against a corrupting downtown influence.

Public hearings played an indispensable role in changing the approach employed by MARTA officials, who were careful to state beforehand that they had “no intention, and are making no effort to ramrod anything down anyone’s throat… We cannot decide anything the local governments are opposed to do so.”\textsuperscript{63} The increasingly prominent opposition campaign in North Atlanta compelled MARTA to hold a special public hearing.\textsuperscript{64} They had initially planned to hold it at the Garden Hills Elementary School, which could contain only 250 people, but “an overflow of crowd” of more than one thousand was expected to attend, prompting them to change the location to the Gymnasium of North Fulton High school.\textsuperscript{65} About forty-five persons, other than MARTA consultants, spoke out at the hearing. The middle class confidence that their voice should and would be heard in public was obvious. Two of these spoke in favor

\textsuperscript{61} From Anne Bacon Travis to George Costakis, Richard Rich, Ron Cook and others.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} “Hearing Set on the Buckhead Transit,” Northside Neighbor, August 15, 1968.
\textsuperscript{64} “MARTAAction,” Rapid Transit Progress 3 (August, 1968).
of the alternative, but the other thirty-eight were against it. According to the *Northside Neighbor*, “there was little doubt as to the reaction of the vast majority attending the meeting. They expressed their opposition in no uncertain terms, booring and shouting down the two lone men to speak in favor of the proposal.”66 When another participant “asked for those in favor of the Alternate to stand up,” only three did, who later MARTA officials could only say to the *Northside News* reporter that people did not understand that “it’s not going to hurt real estate value and it will keep life in the Buckhead area.” The participant then asked “those opposed to the new route to stand up, which most of the audience did to prolonged shouting and cheering.”67

The small shopkeepers in downtown Buckhead had previously been only loosely united, but the Buckhead Alternate deal gave them an opportunity to gather and talk about measures to restore their once lively shopping area, which had flourished before the gigantic shopping malls were built. The proposed line would come right in the old Buckhead downtown. The local paper was in fact favorable to those small businessmen, stating in its editorial that readers should acknowledge their “mixed feeling about the new route,” and that the entrepreneurs “could not help but think of all those people who would be bypassing their shops and stores. With the defeat of the Alternate that is what will happen for the route will follow the Southern Tracks and completely miss downtown Buckhead.”68

Most residents were less than sympathetic, being focused primarily on defending what they saw as the fundamental character of their town. The rebels loudly criticized the evils of

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67 Ibid.
68 The *Northside Neighbor* then urged Buckhead small businessmen to keep on planning new transportation measures, including building a large parking lot with a playground, childcare, and restaurant. *Northside Neighbor*, September 19, 1968. As for Decatur, the Decatur City Commission welcomed MARTA stations in downtown Decatur. “Decatur To Request MARTA Station Be On Trinity Place,” *DeKalb New Area*, April 4, 1968.
neighborhood destruction which would result from a line passing through. One asserted that the destruction of Alexander Park could not be forgiven, because they had long cherished “the woodland.” Another emotionally-charged comment said that Buckhead residents could kill the MARTA bond bill at any time because they had already collected 1,000 signatures. One resident of Pinetree Drive made a telling remark in terms of the relationship between central Atlanta and Buckhead. He claimed that public transit would turn his neighborhood into “a good subject for a ghetto area,” and that those who supported the Buckhead Alternate wanted “to line their [City of Atlanta]’s miserly pocket with gold,” covertly blaming CAPDC’s attempts to connect suburbs to downtown “ghetto areas,” including the Model Cities and Perry Homes areas.69

Facing such massive grassroots opposition, MARTA soon determined to drop the Buckhead Alternate plan altogether. The voices of white homeowners were easily heard. On September 3, MARTA issued a press release announcing that MARTA’s Engineering and Design Review Committee had decided to stick to the original Northeast Line instead of the BA plan, and moreover that along with the change of West End and Decatur, the final construction cost for the 44-mile system would amount to more than $800 million.70 It is important to note that the MARTA record of the public hearing, however, reported that while the audience did not support the Buckhead Alternate, they were in fact in favor of public transit; “it should be mentioned there that when the audience was given the opportunity on four occasions to express their opinion of rapid transit generally, they showed just as great enthusiasm for rapid transit as originally proposed as they showed their opposition to the proposed alternative.”71 MARTA explained their reasoning in dropping the Buckhead Alternate, indicating that along with the

70 “For Press Release 4:30p.m.” Sept. 3, 1968, folder 4, box 69, MMP.
71 Report of the Engineering and Design Committee, MARTA, September 3, 1968, folder 2, box 69, MMP; News from MARTA, September 3, 1968, folder 3, box 51, MMP.
outspoken opposition, the Buckhead Alternate would have been much more costly and
disruptive in comparison to the original line, because of the fact that the Buckhead Alternate
needed more stations, parking spaces, and lines, including an additional subway line which was
unnecessary in the original route plan. Moreover, the Buckhead Alternate would have
necessitated bulldozing 124 homes as opposed to 94, and would have taken out part of Peachtree
Hills Park, Alexander Park, and Wieuca Baptist Church. As a result, it would have required
$50 million more than the original Southern Railway alignment.  

VI. “For Everyone in the Whole Region”: Met Demand, Unmet Demand, and the Seeds of
Failure of the 1968 MARTA Referendum

Despite the above turmoil, the advocates continued to insist that public transit was
everyone’s transportation; they hung on to their view of “public” service. The detailed pamphlet
Rapid Transit NOW was published in October 1968, a month before the referendum. (Figure 11)
“RAPID TRANSIT is almost here!” proclaimed the Chamber of Commerce-led Citizen
Committee for Rapid Transit Now. Stressing that they had won four consecutive referenda,
NOW contended that this upcoming one was nevertheless special: “[On] November 5, 1968,
you the voter, can actually vote to start construction, and this is something you have never had a
chance to vote on before. In five years, you can be riding on the first leg of the RAPID
TRANSIT system. (emphasis in original)”

The booklet employed the by now familiar rhetoric of the inclusive nature of rapid transit.
Nevertheless, like the previous booklet What You Should Know about Rapid Transit, it zeroed in
on middle class auto-drivers and property owners. In a corner appropriately titled

72 “MARTA Rejects “Buckhead Alternate,“” Rapid Transit Progress 3 (September, 1968); “Buckhead
“QUESTIONS… QUESTIONS!” the pamphlet carried a question, “WHY DO WE HAVE TO HAVE A RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM?” It offered the answer that the traffic problem would become worse so quickly that expressway construction would not be able to catch up. Moreover, it emphasized that if Atlanta failed to establish a public transit system, “the whole area could go into a decline which would affect everyone living or working in Metropolitan area.” The booklet also posed the questions “WILL RAPID TRANSIT BENEFIT EVERYBODY?”, the answer to which was naturally “yes,” and “HOW WILL RAPID TRANSIT HELP EVERYBODY?” (emphasis in original) The booklet explained,

The lines are designed so that almost everyone will be within a short bus or car trip of a RAPID TRANSIT station. Studies show that at least 150,000 to 200,000 people a day will ride RAPID TRANSIT. Most of these people would otherwise have to drive to work. This means that a large number of cars would not use the streets and expressways and this would make driving much easier for those who have to drive their cars to work. The actual construction of RAPID TRANSIT will create thousands of new jobs paying millions of dollars in salaries, which will be spent on new homes, new refrigerators and other household appliances, college education, baseball and football tickets, and all the other things that money will buy, instead of the Metropolitan Atlanta Area strangled to death on its own traffic, it will mean new and greater property for everyone in the whole region.73

MARTA, of course, also acknowledged that they were facing opposition. Collier Gladin wrote to Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. to confess that progress in their campaign for the November referendum was developing “more slowly than I [Gladin had] hoped.” He urged the mayor to provide them with more assistance, especially in fulfilling “the growing need to guide [people’s] decisions that must be made related to the movement of people in and out” of the city.”74

MARTA also acknowledged that taking a few black grass-roots activists along on their trip to Canada was not enough to convert most of the black community leaders into rapid transit

73 MARTA, Rapid Transit NOW (October, 1968).
74 From Collier Gladin to Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., November 1, 1968, folder A, box 5, Series II, RMCP.
advocates. Richard Rich prompted surprise when he announced that MARTA had hired two African-Americans and given them administrative positions.75

On the other hand, MARTA continued to sidestep the main demands of the African-Americans community. The ASLC and many affiliated organizations gathered and determined that they had to “1) to hold a mass meeting on rapid transit, 2) to call upon MARTA for a written summary of all requests of MARTA”76 According to the Atlanta Inquirer, “the purpose of the meeting is to inform all citizens about the rapid transit so they will be knowledgeable about the issues raised by the Summit before the Nov. bond.” Again, blacks requested job training center, employments, (particularly administrative ones) and rail lines to apartment areas including Perry Homes, Model Cities, and Thomasville.77

African-American residents wanted MARTA to offer service in Perry Homes and Model Cities; simultaneously, they wanted the involvement of blacks in planning, implementing, and running the system. MARTA had taken some ASCL members to Canada to observe the rapid transit systems in Toronto and Montreal, which, as mentioned previously, was to some extent successful in that it turning Mrs. Sanford (at least temporarily) into a strong advocate of public transit. They had also recruited two blacks for administration positions. That, however, appeared to be the extent of MARTA’s efforts to address the needs of the black community. The Great Speckled Bird, the city’s liberal progressive newspaper, rightly pointed out that MARTA had held “hearings and they got the messages clearly in every hearing, but they did not respond other than to create the false impression that they were going to establish a Perry Homes –

75 “Negroes Hold Key to Bond Issues,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 26, 1968.
76 Other measures included “3) to ‘give full support to Fulton County employee Robert Askew and Atlanta policeman J.E. McKinney in their civil right fights and 4) to take a large delegation to the next meeting of the Fulton County Commissioners to protest job discrimination in Fulton County Government,“ and “Mass Meet on Rapid Transit Slated for Next Thursday,” Atlanta Inquirer, August 17, 1968.
77 “Mass Meet on Rapid Transit Slated for Next Thursday,” Atlanta Inquirer, August 17, 1968.
It also pointed out that MARTA would have to displace Johnson town, part of an African-American residential area, in order to make room for the Northeastern Line. This was painfully ironic because the resistance against Buckhead Alternate, which had ultimately succeeded in derailing the proposal, had based their argument on that grounds that it would “disrupt their neighborhood,” but there was no reference whatsoever to this African-American neighborhood near Lenox Square. The implication appeared to be that whites had the ability to decide how their towns were to be developed, whereas blacks had no say in the matter. For the *Great Speckled Bird*, the MARTA plan was nothing but a repeat of “urban renewal,” which was dubbed “black removal.”

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79 Ibid.

That MARTA’s conception of “public” did not include blacks was made clear in the advertisements MARTA ran in newspapers. MARTA saw black papers as an effective venue to invigorate the pro-public transit camp. However, these ads, which aside from the public hearings most likely represented the only venue for MARTA to share their idea with blacks, contained not a word about the ASCL’s demands for MARTA. For instance, the MARTA advertisements just repeated how public transit would be a cure for traffic congestion: “If traffic
gives you a pain today — wait until next year.”

It must have been an intensely frustrating experience for black residents, and appeared to justify their suspicion of MARTA’s plans.

Blacks were not the only ones who gave MARTA a tough time. 70-year-old G. Everett Millican, who had experience serving on the City of Atlanta’s aldermanic board, led a fierce opposition movement on the grounds that MARTA’s plan would lead to a tax increase. He was not representative of the “ultra-right,” despite his folksy outlook as “the head of a South Georgia farm boy who’s come to Hot-lanta for the first time.” As a former “regional vice president of auto-conscious Gulf Oil Corp,” he asserted that public transit would just not work in the age of the automobile, even though it would bring about heavier taxation and an unfair situation where the city would continue to tax other public utility companies aside from MARTA. Many local papers mentioned his arguments, and Millican himself ran an advertisement against public transit. Meanwhile, suburban papers reported criticism of Richard Rich, and how he represented the “power structure.” Property taxes would be used for repaying the MARTA bond, but many believed that it was unclear how much they were to pay in the future. Contiguos inflation would keep construction costs increasing, but MARTA had not really discussed what measures it would take to deal with the rising costs. It would no doubt require the municipalities to issue more bonds, which would augment their deficit, leading to a sharp rise in property taxes. One letter to DeKalb New Era, which was generally very favorable to

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the MARTA bill, urged readers to be cautious, because MARTA’s modus operandi was to “keep voter[s] uninformed, sell a bill of goods and hope [the] public gives them carte blanche.”

Conclusion

The result was a solid defeat for MARTA (Table 4.1) Resistance also came from other quarters. In 1968, a majority of African-Americans inside the city limits voted against MARTA’s plans.

Table 4.1. Voting Results by County in the 1968 MARTA Referendum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>% For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeKalb (outside ATL)</td>
<td>38050</td>
<td>39764</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton (outside ATL)</td>
<td>16658</td>
<td>27315</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta (city only)</td>
<td>43716</td>
<td>56521</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MARTA, Voting Record on Rapid Transit Legislation Atlanta, GA, folder 8, box 45, MMP.

By this time, many viewed public transit as a plot by white boosters to restore their power through staging the return of the white middle class to downtown. African Americans remembered that the federally-funded urban renewal and highway construction projects had razed many poor African-American neighborhoods. They were therefore understandably suspicious of plans that appeared to merely serve white middle class interests, and notions of a “public” which did not appear to include themselves. For African Americans, public transit was supposed to play a role in improving the welfare of black citizens and solving problems of

uneven development. So long as these concerns were unaddressed, they would not support MARTA’s rapid transit project. On the other hand, majority of whites, especially middle class homeowners, were also opposed, but for an entirely different reason: the project would cost far too much merely for the sake of maintaining growth liberalism. Poor whites also dissented, following Lester Maddox, who consistently objected to the public transit proposal as a luxury. Thus, MARTA faced sustained objections from several groups motivated by very different reasons, but in each case, MARTA’s public appeared to be somehow not “public” enough. African Americans also objected to the actual plan – where the routes would go and what it would do the bus system. However, these two groups changed their positions in the 1971 MARTA referendum. The subsequent chapters will try to shed light on how this change occurred and how this brought about the change over the interpretations of the concept of “public” transit in only three years.
Between 1968 and 1971, supporters of mass transit in Atlanta slowly but surely cleared all of the hurdles and accomplished all of the steps required to install rapid transit in the city. By the end of this three-year period, Fulton and DeKalb Country voters approved a referendum providing funding for MARTA to construct rapid railways and purchase of the Atlanta Transit System. This victory represented an important moment of unity in the face of the racial differences which had so strongly influenced the campaign for public transit before 1971. This resulted in overall victory, but defeat suburban Clayton and Gwinnett Counties. However, at the same time rapid transit advocates also witnessed the emergence of unexpected allies, in the form of anti-highway rebels from in-town neighborhoods, and blacks who came to see value in public transit legislation. The 1971 referendum saw these two groups constitute a united front pushing for public transit in Atlanta, despite the deep gaps between their causes and their understanding of the values at stake. Only when MARTA began construction downtown, however, were these gaps actually made visible spatially.
Chapter 5


Introduction

This chapter demonstrates how MARTA recovered from their defeat in the 1968 referendum and achieved success in the subsequent 1971 referendum. The incorporation of the ATS bus system in the rail transit network, a guaranteed 15-cent fare for ten years, and the formation of the Perry Homes Line, represented the core of African American demands. MARTA, on the other hand, proposed financing the system through levying a one-percent sales tax, which would pave the way for them to gain the support of homeowners. African Americans remained adamant that MARTA needed to provide a 15-cent fare and the Perry Homes Line if MARTA was to gain their support. This chapter examines the argument of African Americans, particularly those of the National Domestic Workers Union, that public transit could not be authentically “public” if it did not meet the needs of the auto-less poor. Moreover, it shows how a “progressive” mayor, Sam Massell, who did not come from a traditional “power structure” background, heard their voices and engaged in the construction of a more inclusive public. Simultaneously, this chapter investigates how white suburbanites in suburban counties responded to this inclusive understanding of public transit. It contends that the MARTA referendum played the role of a public sphere in that it incorporated African Americans voice into the mainstream. It developed a color-blind rhetoric that held that helping the poor could go along with the promotion of white homeowners’ interests under the growth liberalism, although this color blind logic deteriorated in practice in the face of the racial fissures in metropolitan Atlanta.
I. “Which Public?”

It did not take long for MARTA to learn that it had made a fatal mistake in 1968. The results of the polls in DeKalb and Fulton counties were dismal: only 44.5 percent of voters had voted in favor of public transit. The vague financial plan outlined by MARTA (especially the uncertainty surrounding whether it would receive a federal grant) and the ad valorem taxes levied by it kept the affluent whites from endorsing the proposal, which became a decisive factor in the ballot results. However, further analysis reveals that MARTA’s conflation of the concept of “the public” acted as the death blow to the system, because it continued to exclude many of the underprivileged, namely blacks, from the public sphere. In the process of the African Americans’ rejection of the public transit proposal, therefore, we can see the rise of a counter-public that was strong enough to reject the leadership of “the power structure.” It must have been evident to the African Americans that MARTA was destined to lose in the election because MARTA ignored their demands. On November 2, 1968, the Atlanta Inquirer carried two advertisements on the very same page: one was a notice issued by Rapid Transit Now, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s rapid transit support group, strongly urging readers to vote in favor of the plan “to go ahead and build a 40.3-mile Rapid Transit system [sic],” while the other’s catch-phrase was “Vote ‘No’ on Rapid Transit”; jointly sponsored by the Atlanta Summit Leadership Committee (ASLC), the NAACP’s Atlanta Branch, and Operation Breakfast, this advertisement strongly urged readers to cast their votes to oppose the bill. ASLC claimed to

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1 See MARTA, Chronology, exhibit “A,” Page 1, folder 39, box 1625, National Domestic Workers Union Records, 1965-1979, Special Collections, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections & Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as NDWUR).

2 “Rapid Transit Now,” advertisement, Atlanta Inquirer, November 2, 1968. Rapid Transit Now published yet another advertisement emphasizing the evils of traffic congestion. Both these advertisements, however, did not mention how the rapid transit system would improve the life of the poor blacks living in Atlanta.
represent the voice of the black community, asserting that the blacks would be “additionally penalized” if they endorsed the rapid transit proposal.

Black citizens will pay for a transit system that will help white citizens most—who ran from the city merely to avoid integration. But they expect us to pay to get them in and out of the city and to their jobs faster. White people do not want to ride through the black community which is a possible reason lines now drawn avoid black communities. Black citizens will pay for rapid transit that will benefit business and industry and those who live outside Atlanta and come inside mainly to work.³

The concept of the public was at stake. In MARTA’s 1968 referendum, Atlanta’s black population discovered how the existing power structure used conventional tactics and adopted public policies to restore the traditional power-relationships. For African Americans, the real definition of public transit’s public, therefore, became a vital issue, for the commercial civic elites interpreted it in their own favor, bulldozing black homes to build stadiums, auditoriums, and expressways. The debate over the concept of what constituted the public was already raging over the Atlanta Transit System’s (ATS) constant fare hikes. The ATS, as seen in a previous chapter, claimed to be a champion of the poor, providing ample services for the inner-city blacks through its 1967 Rapid Busway Plan. African Americans, however, disagreed. The advertisement criticized the ATS for claiming to be “a tax-free enterprise” even though it continuously failed to give African Americans good service and job opportunities. For instance, “Atlanta Transit Company [sic] that will operate the system discriminates against black people in many of their jobs, especially the Administration Department.”⁴

The ATS’s attempt to hike the fare before the bond referendum also deepened the African American community’s distrust of the company’s claims to contribute to the welfare of the poor. A month before the referendum, ATS president William Maynard announced the possibility of a

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³ “Vote ‘No’ on Rapid Transit,” Atlanta Inquirer, November 4, 1968
⁴ “Vote ‘No’ on Rapid Transit,” advertisement, Atlanta Inquirer, November 2, 1968.
fare hike ranging from a quarter to 30 cents. Despite the deep impact such a hike would have on the everyday lives of the poor, major newspapers, including the Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution, did not cover the story probably because it was not regarded as a big issue. At the public hearing, moreover, the ATS professionals and experts, “armed with reports, exhibits, tables, and maps,” tried to rationalize the fare increase, saying it was inevitable due to “higher labor costs, higher taxes, and the cost of expanding and improving services.” The ATS representatives further justified the hike by asserting that other large cities had almost the same price scale; however, many black leaders did not trust them. Robert Dobbs of ASLC and the Northwest Coordinating Council pointed out that the ATS sought to prove that the fare in Atlanta was, in fact, low by comparing it with fares in cities with much higher per-capita income levels; hence, it would not be a fair comparison. Furthermore, Mrs. Mary Sanford, president of the Perry Homes Tenants Association (PHTA), suggested that the increase fall on adults rather than school children, so that not more than two persons per family would be affected. The difference could be considerable for large families with low incomes,” she claimed.5

Here, there seemed to be a conflict of interpretations as far as the concept of the “public” was concerned. The countercultural Great Speckled Bird uncovered this contest of ideas. The State of Georgia’s Georgia Service Commission (GGSC) was entrusted with the authority to determine the new fares. Great Speckled Bird argued that to establish a real public transit system, the bus system should be owned by a public agency solely financed by “a genuinely progressive income tax, which would put the greatest burden on those with the greatest ability to pay.” Public transit should serve as “the equitable way” for anyone to move around. However, a fare hike would indicate that “exactly the opposite is now true,” because “bus

passengers are often those who are too poor to operate private cars.” In addition, the fact that the hearing was held in the middle of the day evidenced that the ATS did not have any regard for “the working people who would find it difficult to attend a mid-morning hearing.” The Great Speckled Bird then exhorted the GGSC to reject the fare hike if it was really concerned about the true interests of the public:

The only question is: Which public? The respectably affluent public, with its two cars per family, to which the ATS bigwigs and commissioners … obviously belong? Or the black and white poor, for whom the buses are vital for both employment and mobility?6

This question raised by Great Speckled Bird was noteworthy, since it articulated the essential confusion among people in the understanding/application of the concept of “the public.” This confusion over the meaning of the public occurred often in MARTA fiasco. In the 1968 election, those who advocated the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s rapid transit plans claimed to represent a “public” transit agency, thus distinguishing themselves from the private transit companies. However, according to this group, the agency was a public one because of the role it played in alleviating bumper-to-bumper traffic congestion and restoring the allure of downtown Atlanta; they did not pay much attention to the actual passengers who predominantly used buses for their daily commute. In short, they did not view the underprivileged as a part of the public they were talking about. In particular, MARTA’s appeal to garner support from everyone overlooked the fact that certain communities formed a political bloc. The blacks, especially, were well organized; their collective refusal of the proposal would potentially bury MARTA’s plan. The following section seeks to uncover the ways in which African Americans formulated their understanding of the idea of public transit through a series of MARTA public hearings and meal meetings and how their new definition eventually coincided with

6 Ibid.
MARTA’s—a mutual agreement that turned African Americans, who had ardently opposed MARTA’s public transit plans in 1968, into supporters of public transit.

II. Defeat and the Search for Its Cause

MARTA’s dismal defeat confused its strongest advocates. They could not immediately figure out why they lost.⁷ MARTA official Mortimer A. Cox then met with the “Methodist ministers’ alliance” of Collier Heights to discuss “the overall necessity of transportation” with black leaders and find out why African Americans had rejected the proposal.⁸ As a result of his inquiries, “significant concerns (of the blacks) and problems were revealed.” Cox maintained that African Americans “had not fully grasped the immense problem of traffic or its problems as they can and will affect the city.” Cox also discovered that the blacks tended to “believe that low-income areas [i.e., where the Negroes resided] were not being effectively planned for now and in the future.” To get the support of the black community, Cox asserted that the “mis-information, distrust, and myths of this group [the blacks] must be effectively dealt with as soon as possible.”⁹ In particular, Dr. Prince Wilson, the executive director of Atlanta Center Corp. and a member of the Northwest Council of Clubs, suggested to Cox that the (1) “citizens be allowed to express their desires prior to a final plan for a system, (2) increased service be given to the low-income area of the city, especially the Perry Homes Area, [and] (3) service in the area be extended to Fulton Industrial Boulevard to serve the growing [number of] apartment

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⁷ King Eliot, MARTA’s information director, argued that the rapid transit system should thereafter use only the existing railroads in order to cheapen the construction cost, because “People are still looking for a quick and cheap solution” (communication from Eliot to J. W. Simpson, December 5, 1968, folder 2, box 45, MMP). One member suggested that MARTA’s board should be doubled in size. At that time, the board had only ten members, and those who held public offices were not allowed to join. These restrictions meant that the board lacked sufficient representations from a variety of social groups. Rapid Transit Now, December 17, 1968.

⁸ Moritmer A. Cox, Cox’s Activities Report, December 27, 1968, MARTA, folder 1, box 75, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as MMP).

⁹ Ibid.
dwellers.” In short, the 1968 MARTA plan had neglected the issues of working-class blacks and their representation. For the blacks, however, there was an urgent need to change the plan, because the ATS bus fares were continuously increasing, with GGSC’s permission. WSB News interviewed black women at the ATS bus station, asking them how the fare hike had propelled them into a tighter financial environment. One woman said that she “just started running because I didn’t make enough money; I mean, I didn’t get a raise when the first fare went up.” When the WSB interviewer inquired if she had to “stop buying other things now” in order to travel by bus, the lady responded, “Yes, sometimes.” A man who accompanied the lady answered, “Yeah, no, I might buy me a car; I might run or walk.”

MARTA officials increasingly realized that their lack of contact with the blacks, particularly the working class African Americans, had resulted in this defeat. In order to solve this dilemma, the Action Forum, a bi-racial group consisting of white and black business elites, was created in 1969. The forum provided a platform for the black business elite to negotiate with the power structure and acquaint the white commercial civic elite with their demands. Needless to say, MARTA became an important topic in the forum’s conferences. ASLC’s Jesse Hill, a former Atlanta Life and Insurance officer who had orchestrated the black rebellion against MARTA’s public transit in 1968, now joined the Action Forum. Furthermore, Mayor

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10 Ibid.  
11 Wsbn56505, July 5, 1969, Extent: Clip 1, 2 min, 1 sec, reel 1551, time in 10 min, 26 sec, WSB Newsfilm Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Awards Collection, the University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Georgia (hereafter cited as WSBNC).  
12 For more information on the Action Forum, see, for example, Bayor, Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-century Atlanta (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 194.  
Ivan Allen Jr. appointed him as a member of MARTA’s board. MARTA officials went even further to reach out to the black community; they tried to communicate with various black organizations, including some groups that worked at the grassroots level. For example, MARTA’s chairman of the Engineering Design and Review Committee asked for “feedbacks” in a series of meetings with the mayor, county commissioners, women’s clubs, and black organizations, including the Economic Opportunity Atlanta Inc. (EOA), Georgia State Employment Office (GSEO), Southwest Atlanta Association, Atlanta Urban League, Atlanta University, and the National Domestic Workers’ Union. MARTA officials argued that appreciating “the high value of citizen participation in planning” would be their major focus in the future, which would help them win the next referendum.

III. “It’s Everybody’s Fight”

There was another reason for MARTA’s announcement of this change in its top–down approach: Sam Massell, a Jewish from Buckhead who embarked on his career as Atlanta’s mayor in 1970. A staunch MARTA supporter, Massell was firmly of the opinion that MARTA could bring Atlanta a gigantic amount of federal money, which would help boost Atlanta’s economy. At the same time, the successful completion of the public transit would gain him “a reputation for action and accomplishment.” As a Jew and Buckhead native, Massell did not share “the power structure” background with the previous mayor, Ivan Allen, and his counterpart G. O. P. alderman, Chamber of Commerce, supported Rodney Cook in the 1969 mayoral race. In that race, Cook received 73 percent of the white votes, while 93 percent of

14 Stone, Regime Politics, 99.
15 “Proposed Report by Mr. Hardin, Chairman, Engineering and Design Review Committee,” folder 75, box 75, MMP.
16 Richard Hebert, Highways to Nowhere: The Politics of City Transportation (New York: The Bobbs- Merrill
black voters cast their ballot in favor of Massell. This signaled the end of the long-lasting old-guard coalition between black clergymen and the white commercial elite groups. A new regime had begun to take shape, and black votes were steadily gaining an independent, articulate voice. The publications catering to the working-class blacks strongly opposed the candidacy of Ron Cook, claiming, “THEY SAY THE SO-CALLED ‘POWER STRUCTRE’ REGULARLY PICKS THE MAYOR OF ATLANTA. NOT THIS TIME. YOU WILL” (emphasis in original). In this way, the Jewish mayor was a product of the electoral change and therefore could not afford to disappoint his black constituents; he could not disregard their power. Massell picked Maynard Jackson, an African American, as his vice mayor. During his term, the number of black aldermen increased from 1 to 5 out of 18. Dr. Horace Tale was elected to be the chairman of the city of Atlanta’s Board of Education.

For Massell, MARTA signified “what could be done with the resources and allies at hand” and therefore used to gain fame. His first action, as part of his mission to bring public transit to Atlanta, was to make a speech in its favor at Capitol Hill. He was invited to testify in the hearings for the new Urban Mass Transportation Act (UMTA), an amendment to the 1964 UMTA that would increase the amount of federal assistance. The Atlanta mayor’s contribution to this mass transit legislation was quite significant. Hartsfield and Allen spoke to Massell (as discussed in the previous chapter) and stressed the importance of the mass transit system in

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17 Ibid.; for information on the black support for Sam Massell, see, for instance, Editorial, “It’s Sam Massell for Mayor,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 18, 1969; Editorial, “Protest Dirty Politics: Vote for Sam Massell,” “Ministers for Massell,” “Black Elected Officials Backing SAM MASSELL” (emphasis in original), Atlanta Inquirer, October 29, 1969.
18 “It’s Sam Massell for Mayor.”
21 Ibid.
22 One of the senators in charge of the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs praised the
restoring the central city’s prosperity. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s chairman of the Rapid Transit Committee, Gerald Horton, was another Atlantan who testified in its favor, insisting that public transit was a necessity, especially for those who would live in the federally funded public housing projects. Massell elaborated on all these aspects, but he took the bolder step of presenting his view of rapid transit as a solution for racial and class divides. Like his predecessors, the mayor, by seizing this opportunity to present his ideas on the rapid transit system, was able not only to formulate and elaborate on his version of the definition of the public but also to disclose his “radical” views on race relationships to the people in metropolitan Atlanta.  

Massell in his statement argued that since the enactment of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, the US had promoted the building of an urban environment where only private means of transportation could thrive. Atlanta had “spent relatively little to provide mass transportation,” and its people, therefore, had no choice but to own an automobile to move around. Yet, this in turn led to a nightmarish situation: “more than 50 percent” of CBD’s land was bulldozed to construct parking lots and streets. Massell lamented the dominance of this “private transportation” not only because of the destruction it entailed but also because it led to the impoverishment of the central city, which simultaneously resulted in a rapid increase in the black population in the area. According to Massell,

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24 Ibid.
Atlanta … has experienced the immigration of a vast number of unskilled and untrained people, while many better-educated people have left the central city for the suburban bedroom communities. As a result, a white suburban noose enircles a black central core. On the other hand, the less fortunate of those residents of the central city are locked into an environment which prevents them from sharing the social, economic, and cultural assets of their own region. […] Many of the residents in the central city do not have the means for private transportation.  

In order to resolve this polarization, Massell argued that the government should help those who had “no wheels.” Since there was some urgency for the government to “provide these wheels,” mass transit was the panacea. In Massell’s view, it would “unlock the central city ghetto and provide access to jobs and adequate housing.” Following this, Massell introduced other tactics to help those who did not own automobiles, including the Atlanta Board of Aldermen’s resolution to urge “the transfer to public ownership our privately owned bus company.” He also referred to the low-fare shuttle service to the Model City area, which already enabled the poor to “get to jobs, shopping facilities, recreation areas, and health and education services within or near their neighborhoods without a long trip downtown and back.” All of these were vital, he believed, because “a mass transit system can protect urban America by preserving the city as a unit of the whole, as contrasted to the impending danger of fragmentation.”  

On his return to Atlanta, Massell endeavored to fulfill his objectives. He knew what his constituents wanted him to do, and announced that a one-percent increase in sales tax may make it possible to provide “free transportation to the citizens of metropolitan Atlanta.” At this point of time, some were of the opinion that “an income tax would be more acceptable to city residents.” One of the aldermen complained that “an increase in sales tax would have the greatest impact on the lower-income families, and that these families would pay a much higher

25 Ibid.  
26 Ibid.  
27 Ibid., 253.  
28 Ibid., 254.
proportion of their income through an increase in sales tax than they would pay if the increase were to be in the income tax.” One African American alderman favored a combination of taxes, but Massell explained that “by increasing the proposed one-half percent sales tax for transit to one percent, and charging no fare to ride, the poorer people would, in effect, get their sales tax back since they are the largest users of public transit.” Massell had a definite reason for proposing an increase in sales tax. He had already witnessed how the populace opposed the unpopular ad valorem tax increases, which had triggered off mass opposition against MARTA’s 1968 proposal. Hence, he had decided to raise funds through other financial sources. Further, introducing mass transit became an urgent mission for Massell “because the 1970 federal UMTA had made provisions for a corresponding grant, which guaranteed up to two-thirds the total cost of construction and allowed the U.S. Department of Transportation to sign contracts committing that amount in advance.” Therefore, he needed to secure the remaining one-third of the cost, no matter what.29

Massell’s proposal of fare reduction was exactly what the underprivileged wanted from Atlanta’s public transit. Along with the creation of the Action Forum, another big change was ushered in by the formation of the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), which was originally organized as an advisory committee for the Atlanta Regional Commission; however, its major objective now was to review the MARTA plan.30 CTAC played a central

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29 “Proposal for Free Transit Fares Generated Widespread Discussion,” Atlanta Inquirer, January 16, 1971. Massell proposed to make bus travel free because he was under pressure from the blacks to improve their financial environment. Grassroots and labor organizations, including Ethel Mathew’s National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) and the AFL-CIO affiliate, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), organized a strike among the city of Atlanta employees to demand a hike in their salaries, which were among the lowest in the nation. Many other organizations joined this strike. The strike lasted for about a month, during which the Atlantans “had to live without garbage collection, street and sewage repairs, and access to the Grant Park Zoo.” Winston A. Grady-Willis, Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960–1977 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 170–2.

30 CTAC’s responsibility was “to examine, evaluate, and respond to proposals for changes in the
role in the struggle over bus fare. On November 24, 1970, CTAC held its first meeting to discuss the interim version of the Voorhees Report, which was finalized and publicized in January 1971. The list of attendants clearly showed that the members did not share the background of the commercial civic elites; it included women, community workers, students, labor union representatives, and civil rights workers from five metropolitan counties. Hence, the attendants represented “all economic classes to carry the campaign for rapid transit.”

Their home addresses also demonstrated that some of them were not homeowners. MARTA regarded it as a mark of citizens’ involvement. MARTA’s deputy general manager, Terrell W. Hill, sent out a note thanking the committee members, saying that “your committee will provide transportation system within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area in terms of their impact on the citizens of the Atlanta metropolitan community.”

The State of Georgia’s Highway Department hired the Virginian consultant firm Voorhees and Associates in 1967 to “conduct a broad overview of regional transportation needs.” Their interim report, which came out in 1969, shocked MARTA officials because of its contention that buses, too, should play a crucial role in building a balanced transportation system in Atlanta. According to the Virginians, Atlanta was so spread out and had such a low-density population that it would not desirable to depend on an exclusive, fixed railway system. Voorhees recommended “a combination of bus system and railway routes,” which would include only one railway line connecting downtown and the northern parts of Atlanta.

Abraham Davis, An Analysis of the November 9, 1971, Referendum Vote on Rapid Transit in Fulton County, Urban Transportation, Project Report No. UMTA-GA-11-0003-71-6, Atlanta University, School of Business Admin., Atlanta, GA, March 1973, 38. It is a federal requirement to obtain citizens’ involvement in all federally granted development projects; see, ibid., 4. When the membership increased to sixty, upon adding the heads of government of each jurisdiction in metropolitan Atlanta, CTAC announced that its “unique and possible aspects” included the fact that its “members come from all walks of life. Among them are blacks, whites, union officials, businessmen, civic and religious leaders, educators, professional people, and others.” Thereafter, there were reports of some discord between the committee members. “No Friction Over Wheels?: Transit Advisors Deny Dissension,” Atlanta Journal, May 3, 1971.

Name List, [first meeting], n.d. ca., 1970, folder 5, box 1625, NDWUR. The list included the following persons: “President, Atlanta Taxicab Assoc.; President, Domestic Workers Union; civic community workers, EOA Transportation Subcommittee; Director, Dept. of Urban Transportation, Atlanta University; Director, National Parking Association; civic community worker, business manager, and President, DeKalb NAACP; the staff of the Center for Disease Control; Professor of Economics in Transportation Research, Atlanta University; other civic community workers assistant professors of the university, members of the Real Estate and Urban Line; Georgia legislative representative; members of the S.E. Taxi Local Union; Organizer, Teamsters Local Union #528; President, Georgia Tech Student Body; President, Ga. State Univ. Night Senior Class; Vice President of Women’s Activities, Greater Atlanta Traffic & Safety Council; a representative of the Amalgamated Transit Union; President, Perry Homes Tenant Association; and Division Vice President, Georgia Motor Trucking Assn., among others.” President, Atlanta Jaycees, Vice President, Atlanta Car for Hire Association.”
much valuable assistance to MARTA and to the other agencies working to improve transportation in the Greater Atlanta Area.”  

CTAC’s second meeting on December 17, 1970, was livelier; it discussed the second ATS bus fare increase.  ATS president William P. Maynard was present at the meeting, and he announced that the bus company had no choice but to increase the fare.  According to him, the ATS had “no governmental assistance” and was paying “the highest tax paid by any bus company in the country.”  The company, in order “to stay in business,” needed to “reduce its costs of operation.”  Otherwise, it would have to implement further fare hikes.  The president said that although he had worked for the company for twenty-five years, he felt that it was high time to sell it because “the tax laws operate against private ownership.”  He contended that “public ownership had advantages private ownership lacked, such as the ability to secure federal grant funds and the advantage of operating and paying no taxes.”

This meeting provided an opportunity for the underprivileged to confront the commercial civic elite groups, face to face.  Dorothy Bolden, chairwoman of the National Domestic Workers of America (NDWA), stood up and proclaimed that “Atlanta can’t afford to have the bus fare go up.  It puts the burden on the very poor—those that can least afford to pay.”  The discussion concluded with the general consensus that it was absurd to differentiate between “public ownership and private ownership.”  At the end of the conference, MARTA’s chairman Rawson Haverty acknowledged the difficulties ATS encountered and announced that “MARTA

34 Communication from Terrell W. Hill to members of the Citizens’ Transportation Advisory Committee, November 25, 1970, folder 1784, box 1633, NDWUR.  
35 Minutes of the Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Transportation of the Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS), Thursday, December 17, 1970, 7: 30 p.m., DeKalb County Courthouse, folder 1784, box 1633, NDWUR.  
36 Ibid., 2.  
37 Ibid., 4.  
38 Ibid., 3.
was willing to acquire ATS … if that was what the governments wanted.” For him, the “economic facts of life,” arising from the high labor costs of the early seventies, necessitated “a definite limit on the fare box,” and the economic downturn entailed that “many people simply couldn’t pay more.” In short, he opined that the government should finance the deficit in both cases. Moreover, he suggested that the government make up for the tax loss if it was going to allow ATS to keep its business. MARTA, which was financed by federal grants and local taxes, could incorporate ATS into a public agency. Haverty argued that “MARTA will do as the government’s request,” and urged the committee members, “you should see your governments.”

To this, Mrs. Bolden retorted, “It is everybody’s fight,” urging MARTA to buy up the bus company. She claimed that it would be impossible for her to pay a higher bus fare because she could not expect a raise in her salary. In conclusion, she emphasized, “The salaries of maids who make $6, $7, [or] $8 per day are not going up. We are on our knees now.”

IV. Maids and the Public Transit Idea

Dorothy Bolden’s loud voice, as it echoed in the DeKalb County Courthouse, heralded a drastic change in MARTA’s policies with regard to the supra-public sphere, where the ignored in the past joined the policy-making. Bolden was not the kind of person whom the commercial civic elite would have taken seriously. Born in Atlanta in 1920, Bolden had long worked as a domestic worker not only in Atlanta but also in various other cities in America. As the mother of seven children, she was deeply embedded in the everyday life of inner-city blacks in the Vine City area. At the same time, however, she was in a position to observe how the other half of

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39 Ibid., 6.
40 Minutes of the Citizens’ Transportation Advisory Committee, December 17, 1970, folder 9, box 75, MMP.
the population lived in affluent North Atlanta. Bolden’s curriculum vitae shows that she was a natural born activist. She was the founder of the Vine City Foundation Inc. and also worked as the director of the Homemaking Skills Program (a program for welfare mothers). In addition, she played an important role in building the John F. Kennedy Community School in 1964.\footnote{“Dorothy Bolden Thompson,” Biography, folder 31, box 1624, NDWUR.  For more information on Bolden, see Grady-Willis, \textit{Challenging U.S. Apartheid}, 198–200.}

Despite her accomplishments, Dorothy Bolden represented the other public. She owned neither a car nor a house in an affluent suburb. She was not one of those who would appreciate a fixed rail transit for reducing the number of cars in the freeway. As a member of the working class, she represented those who could not make a living without mass transit. Dorothy Bolden founded the NDWA in 1968; its objective was to establish a training program and serve as a qualified employment agency for handling the counseling, placement, and recruitment of workers.\footnote{Ibid.} Hence, the non-profit organization was born in the same year that the DeKalb and Fulton counties rejected the 1968 MARTA referendum. In its manifesto, the NDWA explained how maids represented the bottom rungs of society, suffering from discrimination and unfair working conditions. NDWA pamphlet said,

\begin{quote}
Hard work and no pay was stripping us all [of the majority of] principles we upheld in life. No one made a commitment to these women. We were trapped in a system of neglect … We were highly discriminated against. We’re thought to be ignorant and irresponsible, but little do they know that we are well educated in household chores, for it is a skill taught to us and imposed on us.\footnote{“Founder and President, Ms. Dorothy Bolden,” in “National Domestic Workers of America,” folder 102, box 1628, NDWUR.}
\end{quote}

She also stressed the fact that \textit{“maids are human.”}\footnote{\textit{National Domestic Workers of America}, n.d., folder 102, box 1628, NDWUR.} However, some employers tended to “look down” upon their domestic workers and regard them as “illiterate and unclassed [\textit{sic}]” because of their inability to “pronounce big words or speak ‘good’ English.” According to the
manifesto, domestic workers deserved to be treated with “the same respect and given the same consideration as any other human being.”45

Domestic workers had to invest a considerable amount of time and money in transportation, and access to work. Typically, they left home at 6:00 a.m. in the morning in order to reach the workplace by 8:00 a.m. They would leave the workplace at 4:00 p.m. and return home by 6:00 p.m., after which they would have to take care of their own family.

According to the NDWA papers, it “usually takes the employee as much as 2–4 hours in travel time per day to get to work.”46 Bolden recollected that if maids usually “stayed out till 8 o’clock or 8:30 [p.m.], then it would be 9:00 or 9:45 [p.m.]” before they reached home. If they were lucky, their employers would allow them to take the food home and feed the leftovers to their children, so they would not have to cook.47 However, many employers apparently refused to pay their maids’ bus fares, even though NDWA urged its members to ask their employers to pay for the time they spent in travel. The advent of electric appliances would not save “American homemakers,” because electric machines could not “clear the table, change the bed, hem a dress, go to the grocery store, water the plants, or take care of the elderly.” At the same time, the NDWA urged the domestic workers to acquire “modern work methods” and a “modern

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 8.
47 Buses had long been unsafe places, even though black maids regularly commuted by bus. Dorothy Bolden recollected that when she saw Rosa Parks trying to remain seated in a seat reserved for whites on television, “I was telling her to sit there. I know she couldn’t hear me but I said, ‘Sit on down honey, don’t move. You tired, I know you is.’ ‘Cause I knew how it was. I have rid the bus here; Georgia Tech Students, Emory students would stand up over you and take their elbow and hit you in the head. You would get up and move and then, he got the seat ‘cause you didn’t want him bopping your head. There was cruelty, a lot of cruelty with teenagers in them days. You couldn’t pay a black child to do that, but white men did it to us. You would just get up and move and get on farther back. You would be packed back there, but you’d squeeze in there some kinda way. We took all of that. That was rough, but we took it. There had been some hard days with us women riding the buses trying to get to the houses to clean them up, work. If you bring a pan home sometimes, it would knock you down, knock the pan out of your hand with food in it.” The NDWU demanded that MARTA make its buses and rail cars safe means of transport. Transcript, Interview with Dorothy Bolden by Chris Lutz, 08/31/95, 95–12, Special Collections Department, Georgia State University Library, Southern Labor Archives, August 31, 1995., 22.
work attitude.” This included reporting to work on time, which also necessitated a good transit system.\(^48\)

The ATS’s attempts to increase bus fares upset many citizens, including NDWA members. Numerous Atlantans pointed out that the fares were already expensive. For example, the black organization Citizens Central Advisory Council in its meetings criticized the fact that ATS charged school children 40 cents for their trip to school, despite ATS’s previous claim that children with “school books and a school card” would be charged only a dime. However, one of the participants, Mrs. Williams, reported that even “between nine and three o’clock nobody can ride for a dime with books and card.” Furthermore, one attendant suggested that kids who needed to transfer were paying twice the regular fare and that the “drivers have nothing to say about it.”\(^49\) In addition, one claimed that because of the expensive bus fare, school kids had no choice but stay longer in school and in the downtown areas, and they loitered around in the downtown areas, were eventually arrested for committing crimes—crimes so petty that they would soon be released.\(^50\) The lack of good public transit, they contended, was the source of the problems, often racially charged.

V. “Stop Milking the Little Man”

The bus fare, therefore, was an important issue in the everyday life of Atlanta’s poor black population. In this scenario, CTAC provided a platform where the voices of the underprivileged could be heard, describing every struggle that they faced in the urban space. CTAC produced a statement for the Public Service Commission of the city of Atlanta, which would help determine the price of the public services provided by private companies.

\(^{48}\) National Domestic Workers of America, 3–9.
\(^{49}\) Minutes of the Citizens Central Advisory Council, February 17, 1971, folder 174, box 1633, NDWUR.
\(^{50}\) Ibid., 2.
Apparently, Bolden’s remarks had left a deep impact on the commission’s statement, presenting a new interpretation of the concept of the public, which essentially manifested the empowerment of the underprivileged. The CTAC statement acknowledged that for retaining the current level of services, ATS’s demand for a fare hike was understandable. At the same time, however, the CTAC asserted that the fare hike would “have a significant and unfavorable impact on the economic welfare of the transit rider, especially those low-income, captive riders whose economic interest we must also protect.” The statement elaborated that bus riders were not “the sole beneficiaries” of any improvement in the transit system; non-bus users could also benefit. For example, ATS employees and freeway users (because mass transit reduces traffic congestions) would obtain some benefit from the ATS bus system. In addition, the document emphasized that it had become “increasingly evident that adequate public transportation is a necessity if the city is to maintain economic viability and a reasonable standard of environmental quality.” Given these reasons, in fact, CTAC made a much bolder demand—that the fares be reduced.52

In view of current efforts to obtain new revenue sources for improved public transportation service now pending in the state legislature, and the prospects of public ownership of ATS, it is extremely important that fares not increase. Transit is a public responsibility. The city of Atlanta should take immediate steps to assist the Atlanta Transit System through the elimination of the local gross receipt tax. In the event the request for a fare increase is denied, the Atlanta Transit System should be required to maintain its current level of service for a period of 90 days to enable the city of Atlanta to take action on the request for repeal of the gross receipts tax.53

51 Communication from William Walton to the Public Service Commission, representing the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee for Atlanta Area Transportation Study, January 2, 1971, folder 1, box 65, MMP.
52 Statement of the Public Service Commission, State of Georgia, January 27, 1971, folder 40, box 1625, NDWUR.
53 Ibid.
One of the black clergies asserted, “The facts are clear that there is only one answer to the bus dilemma in Atlanta town. The Atlanta Transit Company must become a city-owned and operated system as have six hundred other companies … If MARTA takes over, fares will decrease rather than increase and bus employees will escape being the lowest paid transit workers in this country as they are now.” On the other hand, ATS’s fare hike would only contribute more money to the shareholders’ pocket.54

Several events accelerated the implementation of the public transit system. This was good news for ATS, because these events occurred in the midst of the fare hike controversy, when the Voorhees report was finalized in January 1971. Voorhees’ emphasis on the centrality of busways further invigorated Bolden and CTAC’s argument; it was as if they had obtained another tailwind. In March, the new governor Jimmy Carter signed three transit bills—House Bill 219, House Bill 220, and House Bill 223. The previous governor Lester Maddox had rejected MARTA’s plan and vetoed all MARTA-related bills, but Carter did not. House Bill 219 sought to amend the Georgia Sales Tax Law (the Georgia Retailers’ and Consumers’ Sales and Use Tax Act of 1951) and endorse the local governments’ levying of sales tax for MARTA, while House Bill 220 sought to permit all the counties of metropolitan Atlanta except Cobb to levy the sales tax. House Bill 223 was the bill that had previously been rejected in 1968 and 1969 by Lester Maddox; it was intended to “amend the MARTA Act (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Act of 1965).” For Maddox, public transit was nothing but a luxury and a real estate industry’s plot.55

The strongest tailwind, however, was Georgia Public Service Commission’s (GPSC) endorsement of the ATS fair hike from 30 to 40 cents. This raise triggered more demands for MARTA’s purchase of the ATS bus network. However, Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson fiercely opposed this proposal, urging ATS to stop exploiting the underprivileged in its attempt to keep its business. Jackson again emphasized that he had met and heard the furious anger of “two very large groups of people,” comprising “domestic workers and elderly citizens.” According to the Atlanta Inquirer, these “working poor” had turned in many petitions requesting the authorities not to increase the fare, but GPSC had taken “no action.” Jackson urged GPSC to “remember the little man” and “stop milking the little man of his pitifully small financial resources.”

VI. “A Rapid Transit System that the Public Wants”: Public Hearings in Black Central Atlanta

Following this, MARTA held nineteen meetings to “listen to the wants, needs, and desires of the general public.” The director announced in the flyer, “We want to develop the type of

box 45, MMP; Editorial, “Atlanta’s Future,” Atlanta Constitution, October 26, 1971. Lester Maddox continued to oppose the one-percent sales tax for the public transit. He acknowledged the need for a public transit system, but saw it as a big waste of tax money. For him, the sales tax levy would amount to $25.8 billion dollars in the first fifty years. According to him, no southern state had ever spent this much money on highway construction. In his view, MARTA’s cost would be “enough to buy everybody a free ride for 50 years, breakfast going in and chicken dinner coming back, and still not spend all this money. This is worse than Watergate—that was politicians stealing from politicians. This is stealing from the people!” For Maddox, MARTA was nothing but a conspiracy planned by “the media, governor, city hall” for their profit. See Notes, July 17, 1974, and the Summary of Lester Maddox and MARTA in the folder titled “MARTA, 1967–1968,” in Clifford Hodges Breton Collection of Lester Maddox Speech/Press Records, 1864–1976, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA; Lester Garfield Maddox, Speaking Out: The Autobiography of Lester Garfield Maddox (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1975), 149–53.

56 “Vice Mayor Hits Bus Fare Hike,” Atlanta Inquirer, March 13, 1971.
rapid transit system that the public wants,” but “we need to hear the wishes of the people and these forums are designed to accomplish that purpose.”

“The general public” did not welcome this move. MARTA faced much opposition from the black residential areas in central Atlanta; it also encountered criticism from white suburban counties. It is important to note the differences between the reasons for which the people—black or white, residing downtown or in the suburbs, poor or prosperous—were opposed to the public transit system. While each group had multiple reasons for voicing its opposition, there were clear differences in terms of who made the dissenting comments and why they did so. In the black areas, women were more likely to vocally oppose MARTA, and their reasons were related to their everyday life. On the other hand, men tended to speak out in white suburbia, and their remarks were more concerned with problems pertaining to technology, urban planning, and federal interventions.

African Americans got their say on MARTA at meetings at the Archer High Gymnasium in the Perry Homes area. “We feel that somehow we have got to reach the people, to involve the people,” said MARTA’s community relations director Morris Dillard, a black, explaining the reason for selecting the place. Despite this gesture of goodwill, MARTA’s board members encountered harsh opposition. For example, one dissenter commented that MARTA had not shown the audience where it planned to construct the station within the Perry Homes area. Another lady questioned whether MARTA would really execute the rapid transit line plan this time, after its failure in 1968. “Assuming that we have a line,” she asked, “where will the station be located?” “We have not yet reached that point,” Dillard replied. “That (where the station will be located) is what I’m worrying about,” she retorted. The African American lady

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57 “News from MARTA,” April 15, 1971, folder 2, box 50, MMP; or see flyer, rapid transit forum, folder 2, box 50, MMP.
even fixed on the location where MARTA should construct a station—"over by the railroad tracks that pass Perry Homes would be good enough," she said. Another lady, who was a domestic worker, inquired whether the officials were prepared to deal with the issue of "cross town" (transfer). She declared that her workplace was located in Buckhead, and after the implementation—since she would have to come to town by bus from the northwest sector of the city and then transfer to another bus in order to reach Buckhead—she would end up commuting for two hours. More importantly, she would have to pay another 40 cents for the transfer.

Another woman pointed out the geographical peculiarity of the Perry Homes area and urged MARTA to consider the problems of women and sick persons before executing its plans.

I have been told that the northwest section is an isolated section and cannot [have better transportation]. Can MARTA come in and do what Atlanta Transit System cannot do? We have lots of hills and valleys out here and it will cost lots of money to build the system. We will raise a lot of sand if you come out and promise us something, and then don’t do it. Will there be many homes uprooted by the system coming in here? Think of helping the ladies as well as the men … [Those] who need medical attention and [those who] need to do shopping [now] have to go all the way downtown and transfer.58

At the Adamsville public hearing, MARTA official again got earful of complaint. One gentleman declared, “You ask us where we want it to be, but we know we will not get it (the depot) where we want it. We know we need better transportation, but we know we won’t have it—we are not fools.” Others followed in this vein. Another man asked, “If all expressways are leading out from Atlanta, where are all the people coming from?” “If you are concerned about us now, why haven’t you been concerned before and done something about it? … Who will benefit from this?” “Thinks the man who lives [inside the city limits] … should pay the most.” Many viewed MARTA as a transit system for the suburbanites and disapproved of it, inquiring “Who will benefit from this?” Others wondered, “How many people are on the staff

58 Northwest Perry Holmes—Archer High School, Public Hearing, Tuesday, April 6, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP.
in MARTA? How many are black?” One lady asked whether the fare of the future rapid transit system would be low enough to compensate for the sales tax levied on the people.59

The Westside public hearings were just contentious as well. One participant (an unidentified lady) inquired about the compensation that MARTA would provide to the citizens for destroying their eminent domains. For some people, the memories of destruction in the name of urban development were still fresh. “What will you pay us for our homes? Commercial prices or residential prices?” she asked. J. D. Yonder of Atlanta’s Housing and Development (HUD) branch was present at this meeting. For him, the African Americans were “engaging in a struggle.” On the one hand, they needed MARTA. “We want to see people from the inner city go into the suburban areas”; however, he confessed, “We’ve not been able to get the establishment to provide and make land available for low income and moderate housing.” In this situation, with the whites relocating to the suburbs, it became necessary to have smooth transit from the intercity areas to the suburbs. On the other hand, rapid transit would ease the suburbanites’ entry “into the city to work.” Yonder knew that this was “causing the problem.” He admitted that suburban whites also “want[ed] to support transportation for people in DeKalb County, in Cobb County, for people who have run away from you, who do not want you in their neighborhoods.” Yonder said he knew this since he was a professional “investigator” who was familiar with the intentions of the whites. “They come back into the city and use our services, [but] don’t pay anything for it—our police protection, streets, etc. they use free.” “When white people [relocated to the] suburbs, they took the shopping centers with them: Davidson’s, Rich’s, and Sears. They shop in their own neighborhoods. Think it over—do you want to support rapid transit for someone else, who doesn’t want you?”60 An Adamsville man wondered if

59 Adamsville, Public Hearing, Thursday, April 15, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP.
60 Westside Atlanta, Public Hearing, Thursday, April 29, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP.

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rapid transit would help “minimize the number of automobiles in the neighborhood,” while another asked if MARTA would give jobs not only to middle-class people but also to the inner-city residents. Nevertheless, the suburbanites’ conspiracy theory was persistent. Many believed that MARTA would only end up exploiting the poor inner-city citizens. One man asked MARTA officials if they were sure that they would not make only the poor pay for it. He questioned if they would get any equivalent returns from the federal government. “What you are saying is, ‘Ram it down the poor people’s throat and make them pay for it!’” he alleged. Another skeptical gentleman opined that “Cobb Country is not concerned about the people coming out to work at Lockheed. They want to keep employment out there.”

The public hearing at Vine City was heated and lively. Again, women provided the dominant voice, and the loudest voice was that of NDWA’s Dorothy Bolden, arguing that since the poor blacks had never been shown the plan, they were unable to discuss it. She asked, “What is MARTA?” … We do need better together from every crack and every corner to see the plan.” Another participant wondered how MARTA would “help the poor people.” He worried about land confiscation because he knew that “you need rapid transit and you need land.” Dispossession was a hot topic in this hearing. At one point, Bolden grabbed the microphone and said, “We don’t have anything to relocate to. We never have had any houses … Build us houses first. The poor will carry the heaviest load. All the citizens talk about is city beautification.” Another urged MARTA to show them the plan again: “I would like to know if you have a plan—would your movement be aimable on encroaching on the poor?” Bolden announced, “I am having a dinner on May 5 at 8:00 p.m. to honor women (maids) who walk to and from work62 (emphasis mine).

61 Ibid.
VII. “Why Isn’t Private Industry Doing This?”: Public Hearings in the Suburbs

From here, MARTA’s forum proceeded to the white suburbia, where MARTA encountered oppositions couched in an entirely different rhetoric. The public hearing was held in Clayton County’s Forest Park, and not all of its participants welcomed the rapid transit proposal. One argued that since the cost of purchasing land downtown was sure to be staggering, it would be absurd not to use the right-of-way railway. Moreover, he professed his anger regarding the fact that the proposed railway did not extend up to the Forest Park area, contending that “it needs to come far out beyond 285 to be practical [sic].” One lady opined that Clayton County was “just a step-child.” She observed, “We are always asked to support everything, yet get very little good out of [it] … If you do not reach far enough out in Clayton County, there will be no need for us to vote on it.” Many pointed out that Clayton County did not have many stations. However, some residents did, in fact, speak in favor of the plan. One participant remarked that Atlanta had “too many accidents” and that the city authorities would be able to “cut down on accidents by having rapid transit.” Another supporter contended that people in Clayton County “do not even have a bus from Morrow to Atlanta,” where his wife, for example, did most of her shopping. Hence, he declared, “I feel something needs to be done.”

The public hearing held in Sandy Springs in North Fulton was, likewise, full of contention. One “automobile dealer and one-time political candidate” argued that a loop of eight rail transit lines was more desirable. According to him, such a system would be better because the loop circumventing downtown would eliminate the need for people to come through the poor areas of downtown. He proposed a loop railway system surrounding the poor areas, running down to

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63 Forest Park, Clayton, Public Hearing, Thursday, April 15, folder 11, box 65, MMP.
the Boulevard, which was undergoing urban renewal, across and through the stadium on the south, up along Northside Drive in the western side of town, and proceeding across to the Tenth Street area on the northern side of town. Moreover, the man emphasized that the loop system would be much cheaper because it would not require the construction of a tunnel under Peachtree Street. He asserted, “We do NOT [want a] tunnel. Let’s stay ABOVE the ground.”

Another participant expressed his doubts regarding the financial capacity of the transit authority; he opined that if such a system was financially viable, a private company should be allowed to run the mass transit business. One man opposed the proposal because it appeared to be another example of welfare, wherein the rich would have to bear the burden of the poor. He inquired, “Will it be those people in the middle- or higher-income bracket, who will pay [for the] majority of the bill, or will it be those people in the lower-income bracket, and if so, will [it not be] another example of one segment of the population [having to] carry the load for another?”

One participant suggested that MARTA was not putting in enough efforts to publicize the rapid transit proposal. Another opposed the idea of using citizens’ tax money to pay for the rapid transit because it would only help the residents of Cobb County to commute to Atlanta via the highways, which were hardly used by the residents of four other counties, although these residents would also have to shell out the sales tax for financing MARTA. Yet another participant protested against the rapid transit idea, calling it outmoded.64 Such comments did not stem from everyday-life experiences.

Although they were a minority, Sandy Springs did have some MARTA supporters. One person who held a Ph.D. degree explained the importance of public service, since private companies could not satisfy all of the public’s needs. He declared,

Why isn’t private industry in here buying the right of way, building the system, and getting ready to operate it? Why don’t we have a private post office; why don’t we have a private water system, etc.? There [are some things] that are not profitable, but we have to have them. We have to pay for [them] out of our tax revenues… In answer to the gentlemen [who do not want to pay for the rides of people from the lower-income bracket], I hope they can ride, so they can come out here and take jobs.\textsuperscript{65}

Many volunteered to speak out in Chamblee High School in DeKalb County.\textsuperscript{66} The Buckhead public hearing was as heated as any of the others, but not all participants were supportive of MARTA. One man claimed that MARTA was nothing but a “white elephant.” He asked, “Shouldn’t it pay its own way?” Another man wondered why MARTA had not held a public hearing in the Morningside area. An unidentified participant asked why MARTA’s railway planned to adopt a 66-inch rail “when no other transit in the world carries a 66-inch rail … Why are you going to build this when all the other companies of this sort are empty of riders and going broke?” he demanded to know. Two more dissenters followed this line of attack, making negative remarks about MARTA’s plan. Against these negative remarks, however, one (probably black) school teacher spoke up in defense of MARTA. One student from Georgia State University located downtown commented that she sometimes found herself downtown after dark and had to wait around for a bus to take her back home. “Is MARTA going to provide a service free from this sort of thing?” she asked.\textsuperscript{67} In Roswell, one man posed a

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} One man questioned why MARTA was considering the San Francisco 22-inch track gauge. Another said that he liked MARTA’s idea and urged the MARTA officials to disclose their plans as fast as possible, while suggesting that MARTA hire more people from Atlanta. He observed, “Really, we do have a lot of talent in this city and we should utilize it.” “We’re going to make it like the spokes of a wheel using the outer perimeter of 285 shooting from the inner city outward—and here [are] the major courses; of course, here’s where we’ll have the station.” One lady asked about compensation, and Ed Daniel expressed skepticism regarding the financial practicality of the plan: “The government cannot finance everyone. Can you take ten dollars out of your household money each month to pay for this?” Chamblee, Public Hearing, April 20, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP; “Chamblee Asks Clear Transit Plan,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, April 21, 1971.

\textsuperscript{67} Buckhead, Public Hearing, April 27, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP. There was black attendance at these hearings as well. The “teacher” introduced him/herself as originating “from a low-income black area,” which was probably Johnson Town in Buckhead. Another participant, probably a black lady, told the
question regarding the marketability of the plan. It made more sense for him to get “1,000 buses” instead of the expensive “rail system.” He expressed fears that the system “will cause the older people to have to move into an apartment or mobile homes.” He also wondered whether the rail system would benefit the people living on the outskirts of Atlanta.68

VIII. MARTA’s Understanding of the “Target Group”

After the hearings, MARTA tried to find who were in support of the MARTA plan. MARTA’s rapid transit special report summarized the comments collected from the series of public hearings. Many participants wanted a “solution to the traffic congestion and mobility problems”; at the same time, the meetings convinced the officials that the African American community desired “low fares” and wanted to know if MARTA would hire “black workers during the construction of the rapid transit system.” Participants had also expressed their concerns about the potential “social problems” and their solution, such as the need to establish training programs and the development of assistance programs for relocating the families displaced by rail construction.69

MARTA’s response to these issues, however, was equivocal. In particular, State Senator Leroy Johnson became angry when MARTA officials informed him that they could not “guarantee” a fare of 15 cents (with a one-percent increase in sales tax). He had been unofficially informed that with a one-percent increase in sales tax, MARTA would freeze the fare at 15 cents for 10 years, including buses. It was on this basis that he had voted for the legislation enabling the opening of a referendum for a one-percent sales tax increase for the

68 Roswell, Public Hearing, April 26, 1971, folder 11, box 65, MMP.
construction of rapid transit. However, during a breakfast session held at the Marriott Motor Hotel restaurant with fifty elected public officials of metropolitan Atlanta on July 2, 1971, MARTA officials suddenly announced that they could not guarantee a 15-cent fare. Hearing this, Johnson rose from his seat, “pointed at MARTA attorney Stell Huie,” and proclaimed, “I personally was misled.” Since the one-percent sales tax was regressive, without the guarantee of fare reduction, it would not be of much benefit to the poor. Johnson declared, “Now you say you can’t guarantee it … You must have known then you couldn’t. I suggest if you want to deal fairly with the people you do everything possible to keep your promise.” At this meeting, Johnson deplored MARTA’s “double-talk.” MARTA officials, however, responded that the 15-cent fare was a story “picked up by the press.” The press, namely, the Atlanta Constitution, had advocated a 15-cent fare in its editorial on the necessity of rapid transit. “If it is fast, convenient, and cheap enough a lot of people will ride public transit” it said, while admitting that ATS was “not always fast and convenient” and no longer cheap. Another editorial of the Atlanta Constitution urged MARTA to announce that they would fix the fare at 15 cents for the next ten years. The editorial again urged MARTA to stop its practice of “double standards.” The answer from MARTA officials “was in pure governmental gobbledygook. It amounted to saying no guarantee, friend, we never said anything about 10 years.” The paper said that they surely “listened to earlier MARTA talk about a 15-cent fare and took it seriously.” For the Atlanta Constitution, it was crystal clear that “the 15-cent fare is, quite simply, one significant reason why some voters are inclined to support the referendum.

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70 “Deceived on Transit Fare, Says Johnson,” Atlanta Constitution, May 18, 1971.
We think MARTA’s approach to this specific issue, 10-year guarantee or not, ought to be clarified as soon as possible.”

African Americans united to voice their common concerns. On June 26, former Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activist Julian Bond hosted a meeting of the Atlanta Coalition of Current Community Affairs (ACCCA) at his house. The place was packed with more than one hundred participants. The gathering was generally held every three weeks, but the meeting on the 26th was characterized by particularly heated discussions because of its topic—MARTA. More than one hundred blacks showed up for this meeting. All of the black opinion makers at this meeting, including grassroots leaders and elected officials, said that “they preferred to withhold comment until the Coalition meets.” Some grassroots leaders like Dorothy Bolden claimed, “sure to God I back this coalition,” while a black elected official quipped, “I’ll take my cue from the coalition.” The participants unanimously concurred on issuing the “26 demands.” These demands included, first of all, the acceptance of a “15-cent rapid transit fare for 10 years as a ‘must.’” In addition, they demanded 35 percent black employment, prohibition of discrimination in all contracts, and an increase in black membership on the MARTA board. Moreover, there was a demand for rail lines serving Northwest Perry, Fulton Industrial Park, Kirkwood in East Atlanta, Carver Homes in South Atlanta, and Cascade Ben Hill. Sen. Leroy Johnson officially demanded the extension of the rail line to the Perry Homes area and a 10-year guarantee of a 15-cent MARTA fare, as MARTA officials had once promised him. Johnson also alleged that the “blacks are getting the ‘short end of the stick’” when he learned that Perry Homes, “the most concentrated black community in Atlanta,” was to be denied a rail line. Johnson contended that the black community would not support rapid

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transit if the commitment on the guarantee was not kept and if a Perry Homes rail line was not included in the plan.73

Twenty-six members of ACCCA met with MARTA officials on July 2, 1971, where the black political and civil leaders submitted their 26 demands. MARTA’s response was discouraging; it said it could not guarantee the 15-cent fare because “some lines might prove to be economically unfeasible.” However, the black ACCCA members continued to urge MARTA to consider their viewpoint that many “blacks see rapid transit plans as ‘a white road to riches—or Rich’s.’” (Figure 5-1) Mrs. Dorothy Bolden concluded the meeting with a word of advice to MARTA board member Bill Schwarts: “Don’t look so mean, darling, ‘cause I’ve got love all around. I’m spelling out true human justice.”74

In response, MARTA approved a $1.4 billion rapid transit and surface transportation plan spread out over 70 miles—56 miles of rapid rail and 14 miles of rapid busways. More importantly, MARTA made a compromise with regard to its earlier plans and submitted to the blacks’ demands. “On the 15-cent fare, MARTA set a fare at that level for the first 7 years on both buses and rapid transit. The fare would increase in 5-cent annual steps to a level of 30 cents by the 10th year.”75 Some 500 miles of new bus routes were proposed in a series of immediate surface transportation improvements that would follow the acquisition of ATS by MARTA if the voters in Fulton, DeKalb, and Gwinnett counties approve of the plan in an election scheduled on the 9th of November that year. This plan was again to be discussed in public forums before being endorsed by MARTA in early August.

IX. Public Hearings Again: 15-cent Fare for 10 Years

The first hearing for the new plan was held at Five Points on July 22, 1971. After making a few changes to its plans, MARTA officials disclosed them at the public hearing, which was attended by about fifty people. The plans indicated that the system would “include 52.09 miles of high-speed rail transit running east and west and north and south, with the southern end forking into terminals at College Park and Forest Park. The northern terminus would be at Norcross; the eastern, at Indian Creek; and the western, at Fulton County Airport.” Moreover, “four rapid busways utilizing their exclusive rights-of-way would spur off the rail lines and serve Northwest Perry Homes, Moreland Ave, Sandy Springs, and Scott Boulevard. The busways would total 17.6 miles,” along with the existing ATS bus routes.76

Race and class, again, sharply divided the neighborhoods with regard to their residents’ attitude toward public transit. Soon after MARTA made its new plan public, for instance, fifteen legislators from Atlanta publicly announced that they did not support the 15-cent fare and urged MARTA to stick to the Voorhees plan, which had not recommended a railway line to the Northwest Perry Homes area. All these legislators were white and shared a common “concern over what have been characterized as concessions to the black leaders.”77 The 15-cent fare and Perry Homes spur ignited a heated discussion in many forums.

77 Massell soon announced his disagreement with them. “Rapid Transit Plans Caught in Crossfire,” Atlanta Constitution, July 24, 1971; “MARTA Hearings to Resume amid Controversy over Fare,” Atlanta Constitution, July 26, 1971. An Atlanta Journal editorial announced its support for the public transit plan and urged its readers not to let the color of their skin determine whether or not they supported the plan. “Race has become involved in it and there will be those not above using MARTA’s plans for their own political advantage … These factors … rapidly are becoming the arguing points … This is too bad. The Atlanta area needs rapid transit, but it is going to take a big revival of local pride and patriotism to overcome the petty rivalries and jealousies which have been developing.” Editorial, “MARTA Moves Along,” Atlanta Journal, July 26, 1971.
Figure 5.1. MARTA Route Plan in July, 1971, Atlanta Journal, July 23, 1971. The Perry Homes Line was initially planned to be a busway, but was later changed to a rail line.

It was clear that the new plan was drawn on behalf of the poor residing in the inner-city area, and in this regard, it differed from MARTA’s 1968 plan. It gradually became very difficult to explain, in color-blind fashion, why anyone should agree or disagree with the public transit, because the African Americans were very vocal in trying to take an initiative in establishing MARTA’s route and fare. Differences in why people wanted (or did not want) public transit again varied according to the color of their skin. Participants of the public
hearings, particularly in the inner city, discussed how public transit would improve the living and working conditions of the poor.

MARTA officials were pleased with the response from the suburbs, where the plan was largely accepted. A MARTA document records that DeKalb’s public hearing on the 23rd was positive. Eight speakers presented their views, “most of which [were] favorable.” Forty-five people turned up for the Clayton County hearing held at Jonesboro, and some demanded a railway route to their county seat.78 Thirty-five people came to attend the Gwinnett County hearing, and four of them commented on the new plans. Prior to the meeting, MARTA had received a letter from one of the county’s residents, who wrote that he was tired of the two-hour-long commute to downtown Atlanta. He volunteered to testify in the hearing as one of the four speakers.79 Gwinnet’s EOA office announced that “Rapid Transit will enable those people in rural Gwinnett who cannot afford rides to work a cheap means of transportation to and from their jobs.” Furthermore, a Norcross AFL-CIO leader also commended the public transit system.80

However, the public hearings within the city limits were held in a tense atmosphere. At the biggest public hearing was held at the City Hall hearing: 217 people showed up and the meeting lasted three hours. The Atlanta Journal Constitution noted, “Fifty people signed up to testify but a few of them left before their turn came.” A MARTA report summarized that the meeting was characterized by the “general support of the MARTA proposal,” but there was much more to the meeting than this. Sam Massell, Maynard Jackson, and Leroy Johnson attended this meeting as a gesture of support. Millican opposed the proposal because it marked

78 Communication from Mrs. J. B. Jenkins to MARTA, Gwinnett County Hearings, July 27, 1971, folder 2, box 50, MMP; “Summary of Five Public Hearings on Routes and Station Locations,” July 30, 1971, folder 2, box 50, MMP.
79 Ibid.
the beginning of the super-government, while the Progressive Labor Party campaigned against it because it found “the sales tax oppressing to working people.” Nonetheless race remained the central issues even as Massell commented, “the issue isn’t between blacks and whites…, but between those owing cars and those who don’t,” and Maynard Jackson’s remark that he was “awfully disturbed about the talk of polarizing allegedly occurring.” However, women’s voices were markedly vehement in this meeting as well. Mrs. Mary Sanford, president of the PHTA, spoke up in support of the 15-cent fare concept. She urged MARTA to keep its promise, seeking “assurances that it will meet the needs” of the poor blacks, along with “assurances that jobs would be provided to the black and poor citizens and women.”

The whites were a minority at this hearing. According to the Atlanta Journal, “Negros turned out heavily for the City Hall Session.” They presented a united front, despite a few dissenters. It became obvious that the rift between the whites and the blacks, especially at the level of the grassroots leaders, was too wide to bridge. The black ACCCA members, including Leroy Johnson and Maynard Jackson, requested a 15-cent fare for a duration of at least 10 years. Some vehemently opposed the “10 years” part of the demand. For instance, DeKalb senator James Tysinger opined that a “15-cent guaranteed fare could spell doom to the rapid transit vote in his area.” Tysinger, an engineer, declared that it was “economically naïve” and “an example of ‘political expediency’ to guarantee a 15-cent fare over the next 10 years, as is being considered by MARTA.” If endorsed, he offered his belief that “DeKalb voters are going to defeat … the referendum if the MARTA board gives in to the demands of a few black political leaders.” Jessie Hill Jr. (black) and John Wright (black) spoke in support of the 10-year duration. “I think that if we’re going to tax low-income people with a sales tax, then we owe it

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81 “MARTA Low Fare Is Pressed,” Atlanta Constitution, July 29, 1971.
82 “35 From Gwinnett at MARTA Talks: Summary of Five Public Hearings and Station Locations,” July 30, 1971, folder 2, box 50, MMP.
to them to guarantee a low transit fare along with it for as long as possible,” opined labor leader Wright.83

The blacks’ demands became increasingly articulate. Malcolm Getz, a “youthful, Atlanta University Professor,” who himself a white, discovered that “the relatively low number of stations currently planned leaves MARTA open to the charge that it has designed a commuter railroad, not a public transit system.” He asserted that public transit should be installed to provide “mobility for the immobile.” According to his analysis, the “rapid and continuing suburbanization of residences and employment in the Atlanta area, as in other cities, has the effect of abandoning the immobile in close-in neighborhoods. The old, the young, the poor, and the black depend on public transit for access to work, to personal services, for shopping, and for socializing. Improved public transit ought to have the effect of improving mobility, and thereby ameliorating, to some extent, the effects of abandonment.” He also argued that a larger number of stations would better serve those residents of the inner city who were dependent upon public transportation and suggested that the proposed “flat fare” would benefit commuters who ride longer distances, as opposed to the inner city users. Getz, according to the Atlanta Inquirer, commended the 15-cent fare but simultaneously pointed out that a combination of flat and zone-based fares would better enable MARTA to obtain revenue for building more stations and starting more bus routes.84

The divide between the black and white positions was obvious. The Atlanta Constitution as well as the Atlanta Journal insistently urged both camps to make an effort to reach a compromise.85 Both called on African Americans to accept a shorter duration for the

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83 “MARTA Low Fare is Pressed,” Atlanta Journal, July 29, 1971.
85 “Arguments against Rapid Transit,” summer of 1971, folder 2, box 45, MMP.
15-cent fare. “I believe that both of these groups are absolutely wrong in their flat assertions as to what they will or will not take. What they are doing is trying to establish a polarization of the rapid transit question and divide the races into two separate camps,” stated one Atlanta Journal editorial; the editorial lamented the fact that “this polarization has been obvious for some time. It is needless and it will be fatal to rapid transit.”

X. “Blacks Back Transit Plan”

Three months before the election, MARTA’s board was the first to present a concession with the announcement that “rapid transit officials, meeting in secret into the morning hours of Thursday (unannounced meeting), agreed to a 15-cent fare for 7 years and a rail line for the Northwest Perry Homes area.” MARTA proposed that after the 7th year, the fare would rise up to 40 cents, with the one-percent sales tax originally paying MARTA enough revenue to make the 15-cent fare possible.87 SNCC activist Julian Bond appeared on WSB News and urged MARTA to start a rail line to Perry Homes, instead of a busway.88 Leroy Johnson and Maynard Jackson announced that while they were basically satisfied with fixing the fare at 15 cents, they still wanted to “confer with leaders of the coalition” because the duration of the fixed fare was shortened by three years.89 Atlanta Constitution celebrated MARTA’s decision on this “7-year guarantee for the 15-cent fare.” The paper argued, “Some people, including some legislators, urged a 10-year guarantee of the 15-cent fare.” MARTA officials eventually realized “that they (the African Americans) would like as long a guarantee as possible … After all, nobody knows what the price of a soft drink or a cup of coffee will be, five years from now,” along with the

87 “Bus Fare Plan Would Begin at 15c, Go to 40,” Atlanta Journal-Constitution, August 6, 1971.
88 Wsbn63654, August 6, Clip 1, 1 min, 11 sec, reel 1752, time in 24 min, 7 sec, WSBNC.
89 Banker L. D. Milton, one of the two black representatives of the coalition, resigned at this point; however, he had long been inactive in this campaign. “Adequate Transit,” Atlanta Journal, August 6, 1971.
anticipation it will inevitably “cost more.” As regards their decision, Leroy Johnson promised that he would try to persuade black leaders to accept this concession. Although they had succeeded in getting a railroad line to the Perry Homes area and a 15-cent fare for 7 years, many blacks were dissatisfied with the compromise. ACCCA called for MARTA to make “a stronger statement on insuring equal job opportunities, additional stations in the black communities, and more information on relocation of families displaced.” In addition, the *Atlanta Inquirer* published a letter strongly urging MARTA to assure blacks that it would provide employment to “un-skilled or semi-skilled blacks.” In this way, the 15-cent fare became official, even though it still had some more hurdles to overcome; for instance, MARTA’s publication of a pamphlet for each line could not assure fare reduction for the underprivileged.

MARTA’s purchase of ATS was scheduled to be endorsed in the November 9 referendum. ATS president Maynard Jackson made a speech at Atlanta Rotarians, supporting MARTA’s buy out of ATS. Since ATS was a privately owned company, he observed, it had to make profit. “To do that, they have had to consistently raise fares. And the present fare of 40 cents for a bus ride is ridiculous on the face of it. But it is an economic fact of life.” The *Atlanta Journal* asserted, “If MARTA is not authorized to purchase the system by the voters on Nov. 9, the result will be higher fares and a decline in service because of affected economics.”

Except for a few dissenters like Alderman Cecil Turner, the blacks continued to support MARTA. In the article “Blacks Back Transit Plan,” Andrew Young spoke for the ACCCA, while Leroy Johnson asserted that the “whites must recognize that what’s good for blacks is

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good for them” and that he would not be “afraid to talk about MARTA” for fear of losing support among the white suburbanites. MARTA also received strong support from labor unions. The president of the Atlanta Labor Council joined MARTA’s board, declaring that “organized labor is giving rapid transit solid support.” For the blacks, MARTA now represented the improvement of their living environment. An Atlanta Inquirer editorial claimed that the increase in employment would solve the drug problem. “Jobs … stem crime and the construction of MARTA must continue to produce jobs for our area regardless of federal inability to half unemployment and inflation elsewhere.” It had become a racial and class issue. The black radio station WAOK opposed the application of the 15-cent fare to the ATS shuttle services to the Atlanta Braves’ stadium, saying, “Let’s not tax the poor man, so the rich sport fan can ride a 15-cent shuttle bus to ride to the stadium for 15 cents.”

A month before the referendum, MARTA published a four-page advertisement entitled “Black Atlantans Want to Know: Important Questions about Rapid Transit.” The emphasis was on the bus system, in contrast to the advertisement in the white newspapers, which highlighted the rapid railways. The former advertisement admitted, “The black community will be a major force in passing or not passing the bill, and it is more evident than ever that rapid transit will benefit community residents.” The document had a Q&A style and stressed how MARTA would contribute to the life of the poor blacks by reducing fares and generating a massive amount of employment. The document contended that the construction of the rapid

97 “Massell Calls Transit a Must,” Atlanta Constitution, September 25, 1971.
99 WAOK editorial, “The Shuttle Fare,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 9, 1971. As regards WAOK’s history of contribution to the black community, see “‘18’ Dominant in WAOK Anniversary,” Atlanta Inquirer, March 20, 1972.
railway transit in 1973 would produce an “almost immediate need for close to 30 major contractors and 150 sub-contractors.”

Figure 5.2. MARTA Route Plan, Parsons Brinckerhoff-Tudor-Bechtel, Engineering Report Summarizing the Comprehensive Transit Plan for Atlanta Metropolitan Area, Including the Short-Range Transit Improvement Program, September 1971, Prepared for MARTA, p. 8. The MARTA system plan. The Perry Homes Line was changed from a busway to a railway, but conservative whites strongly opposed the change. The handwritten note on this particular copy of the map, which was found in George State University’s Main Library, represents their anger. It says, “Not Needed. Please the mayor.”

According to MARTA, this meant the construction would produce jobs for “over 3,000 construction workers, including 820 carpenters, 530 iron workers, 450 laborers, 350 electricians, pipe fitters, and hundreds more.” Moreover, MARTA buses would provide central city
residents with “opportunities to find employment in suburban areas” and greater opportunities to reach “medical, health, and welfare facilities.” Along with this, housewives would be able to save more money due to the availability of access to “the larger chain supermarkets, department stores, and discount stores.” In short, MARTA would be a champion of the weak: “Elderly residents dependent upon welfare, social security, pension, or other [types of] fixed income will benefit from the lower fare, the closeness of the stations to [their] homes, and the all-day service of most of the rails and bus routes which most areas will have.” MARTA planned to accomplish this particular objective by starting a “Special Neighborhood Bus Service” in such poor communities as Dixie Hills, Northwest Perry, and Model Cities.¹⁰⁰

XI. “Think White”: Enforcing Color-Blind Politics and Its Limits

However, the public transit advocates, particularly the blacks, soon encountered another difficulty. Sam Massell addressed black and white audiences in the initial meeting of the Hungry Club (1971–1972) at the Butler Street YMCA; in this meeting, he presented his ideal where blacks and whites could “work together for a great city, without considering color.” Massell criticized the fact that the blacks now had considerable political power but only tried to use it for the benefit of their own racial group. In Massell’s view, this was not a sign of progress but that of danger, because it would accelerate the white exodus from the city. He mentioned that there were rumors blaming white liberals, including him, for helping the blacks to take over Atlanta. He remarked, “The word around town is that you and I … the black and white liberal leadership of Atlanta … are committed to Atlanta becoming an all-black city.”

Massell was in part reflected a demographic reality. According to an article published in *The Great Speckled Bird*, statistics showed that 60,000 white people had left the city when

70,000 blacks had moved in. The white home-owners earned approximately $13,400 a year, while an all-black renter could only hope to earn about $5,600. *Great Speckled Bird* summarized Massell’s fear that “the influx of blacks [would] reduce rentals, hence property values, hence property tax income, hence city services.” Therefore, Massell argued that the blacks “should reduce their demands to what the whites would accept.” This should be feasible because they had “reached the point in our history where it is time black leaders tell black audiences that for their own good, they must be able to ‘think white.’”101

As expected, Massell faced a storm of criticism for this speech. The *Atlanta Inquirer* editorial was quick to declare its grave disappointment with Massell’s comments in the midst of the MARTA controversy. “Many of us believe you [Massell] were sincere,” it said, while reminding the *Atlanta Inquirer* readers that “the grassroots people aren’t saying too much; keeping bread and a roof over their heads hasn’t afforded them much time to react.” Nevertheless, they felt betrayed and hurt by these comments, because it was apparent that “a fear of an all-black Atlanta,” as described by Massell, ran through “a fear that anything all black is worthless.” “To think black” by no means was a negative thing; it represented “taking care of democratic business and building great cities and a great nation.”102 Andrew Young opined that he did not think that “there’s much blacks can do to keep whites from running from the city … It’s a white problem.” The *Great Speckled Bird* concurred with Young, saying that the blacks were concentrated in the central areas because the Fulton County commissioners did not want to build public housing for the impoverished in the suburbs. Moreover, the large local corporations, including Delta Airlines and Frito-Lay, did not hire black personnel in their administrative positions. The paper concluded that Massell was “one white who ought to be

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moved out—of City Hall,”\textsuperscript{103} while the radio station WAOK asked, “What the hell does he think we have been forced to do for 300 years?”\textsuperscript{104}

Massell’s slogan of “think white” also put MARTA in a tight spot among the blacks, because he had urged the blacks to support MARTA as one way to alleviate the whites’ fear. The \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}’s “Open Letter” contended that despite Massell’s verbal lapse, he was still “going to help pass MARTA, simply and purely because the good of MARTA for the blacks and Atlanta outweigh the bad.”\textsuperscript{105} John Hood, a state representative and member of the Model Cities’ board, for instance, opposed MARTA because it only would make the rich richer; he joked that the conspiracy became clear if he attempted to “think white.”\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}’s “Opinion Panorama,” meanwhile, asserted that Massell’s words smacked of “racism.”\textsuperscript{107}

However, there were some who supported Massell. A WIGO radio editorial openly criticized the black media, saying it they were always ready to “climb the bandwagon with hysterical and irresponsible attacks” on the whites. According to WIGO, Massell was right in saying that “it’s time for all groups,” including “black, white, red, or yellow” Americans, to stop thinking only in terms of self-interest and self-power and start thinking in terms of the general welfare.” However, WIGO admitted that what Massell had said in this regard did not accord with his subsequent remarks. The editorial reported,

This is what the mayor is trying to say, but his biggest mistake is that he equates this with racial differences. In effect, this implies that since most blacks always have been poor … they always will be poor. Since they have usually lived in deteriorating areas … they cause deterioration.

\textsuperscript{103} “Think White,” \textit{Great Speckled Bird}, October 18, 1971.
\textsuperscript{104} WAOK editorial, “Mayor Tells Us How,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, October 23, 1971.
\textsuperscript{106} “Model Cities Unit Splits on MARTA,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, October 12, 1971.
WIGO expressed disbelief that “Atlanta’s future will be served by dilution of the black population.” Rather, it would be served by “crash programs to advance black citizens to true economic participation.”108 This explained why blacks wanted MARTA. Promoting public transit as a color-blind tool to help everybody often led to a situation where the blacks became increasingly poor due to their structural exclusion from the market. Therefore, for the blacks, Atlanta’s rapid transit should be a public transit that would enable them to rise out of poverty, which was the local, historical product of the past.

The ACCCA, which by now was six months old, played a major role in representing the interests of the black community. An Atlanta Inquirer editorial appreciated the role played by the organization, admitting that ACCCA did “a beautiful job” of presenting the “black picture,” thus making “the power structure” aware of the black people’s “demands of MARTA concerning what was acceptable in the case.”109 Despite Massell’s “think white” remark, ACCCA again announced its support for MARTA. Urban League’s Lyndon Wade claimed that although they understood why many people had reservations regarding MARTA, the blacks should understand that MARTA would bring prosperity to their community and that it was difficult for the government to “offer anything better” to help the blacks. Perhaps the most important remark in this regard was ACCCA’s acceptance of a 7-year duration for the 15-cent fare as long as MARTA increased its black employment, implemented a fair relocation policy, and made immediate improvements in its bus system. ACCCA also argued that public transit would give their city international acclaim, because “Only Paris, Moscow, and Tokyo can boast of a transit system to match the one proposed by MARTA.” However, ACCCA stressed that its endorsement was not a free guarantee of its votes, while claiming that it will be “looking at

MARTA.” However, like the Chamber of Commerce, ACCCA also tried to convince the blacks that public transit was a must for Atlanta “to remain a viable and complete city.” On the same day, MARTA disclosed that “a single low fare [would be applicable to] all parts of the system with no charge for transfers,” which was a really good provision for those who worked in the suburbs because they did not have to pay more for a transfer downtown. The Atlanta Inquirer commended this move: “at least we will have a balanced system that will give people a choice” and will “assure the most efficient use of public transit as well as public highways,” it claimed.

XII. The “White Suburban Noose” and Its Rebellion

The blacks tried to present a unified front in 1971, while a few suburbanites in Clayton and Gwinnett Counties welcomed the rapid transit system. One man replied as follows in response to the WSB News interviewer’s question regarding his opinion of the rapid transit plan.

Well, I think the idea is that rapid transit is going to enable people to get together quicker and easier and cheaper. This means that the people who live in Sandy Springs and Forest Parks and Hapeville can worship and serve in downtown inner-city churches, and they need it as we’ve been talking about this for years—that we need folks to be concerned and work in the poverty ghetto [ph]. On the other side of the coin, I think that it would really help the life of the churches in our suburban areas if we could have folks who do live in the downtown ghetto to be able to get on the rapid transit rail and whip [ph] out to Sandy Springs or Hapeville in 5 or 6 minutes and be a part of a combination in those areas and help become a part of the life of the congregation.

However, MARTA encountered strong opposition from some sectors, especially in the suburban counties. In Clayton County, commercial civic elites supported the MARTA plan, including Myron Maxey, the mayor of Morrow. However, the dissenting voices were strong

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111 “‘Best Transportation System in County,’ MARTA asserts,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 16, 1971.
112 Wsbn64018, September 9, 1971, Clip 1, 56 sec, reel 1762, time in 45 min, 12 sec, WSBNC.
enough to appear on the local newspapers. For instance, state representative Lamar Northcutt argued that it would be absurd for the residents of Clayton County to pay a one-percent sales tax for a public transit that would only benefit the city of Atlanta. Instead, he urged Clayton County residents to vote against MARTA, so that businesses-like “auto-dealerships” would move into their county and make the county more prosperous.113

According to the Clayton News/Daily’s analysis, MARTA failed to garner sufficient support in Clayton County because its railway was not extended till Jonesboro. The editorial stressed that many people would take umbrage against the fact that Perry Homes got the station its residents demanded, while the Clayton County seat did not get a train stop; this situation naturally generated “strong negative sentiment.” Moreover, Clayton News/Daily expressed intense concern regarding Massell’s view of public transit as a way to “unlock the central city’s ghetto” and “provide access to new employment.” (See Figure 5-3)114 County residents were also anxious about the possibility that MARTA, complying with HUD’s “social planning” in its public transit construction, would also gain the power “to relocate displaced families as it wished in places like Clayton County, no matter what our government may say.” Citing these reasons, the Clayton News/Daily editorial concluded that “MARTA should be defeated … and required to submit new plans for rapid transit.”115

WSB News interviewed some white residents in Sandy Springs, the affluent section of North Atlanta. The black radio station WAOK had argued that there was no need to provide public transit services to the Atlanta Stadium, but a Sandy Spring man, who demanded a protected access to downtown entertainment places, contended,
I think the rapid transit system is wrong; it doesn’t serve the Civic Center. It doesn’t go within a mile of the Atlanta Stadium. I think it’s wrong because it had a 15-cent fare and I don’t believe that people should be riding the expressway at other people’s cost.

The WSB interviewer asked the man if he was trying to be “a maverick going against the tide of public opinion.” He retorted, “You go and find a public opinion to be against MARTA when you go to vote for it.”\(^{116}\) WSB evening news did an interview at Sandy Spring’s Meal Talk, where MARTA officials were given an opportunity to sell MARTA in the last few minutes. Two middle-aged women replied to questions asked by WSB: one said that she could not “see what advantage it is to the people who live in the suburban areas of the north side, Sandy Springs, Roswell, and Alpharetta,” and despite “trying to find out” the advantage, she was not “able to find one so far.” Another old lady was more articulate, emphasizing that she was “against it beforehand.” Her staunch opposition to MARTA stemmed from the fact that the 15-cent fare was “just ridiculous” because it was “not realistic.”\(^{117}\)

There was some opposition from inside the city limits as well. Everett Millican remained one of the most vehement dissenters. In an Atlanta Constitution interview, he referred to the possibility that rapid transit might be used for “social change … to push programs such as public housing or to alter neighborhoods.”\(^{118}\) For the ex-alderman, MARTA would own its buses and train cars and this meant that they could do anything on them, including “busing school children from one end of Atlanta to the other.” Furthermore, he agreed that the 15-cent fare was nothing but “a political gimmick.” It was evident for him that it was a ploy

\(^{116}\) Wsbn64351, October 11, 1971, Clip 1, 2 sec, reel 1771, time in 47 min, 21 sec, WSBNC.
\(^{117}\) Wsbn64429, October 20, Clip 1, 1 min, 32 sec, reel 1773, time in 48 min, 35 sec, WSBNC.
\(^{118}\) “Millican Sees MARTA,” Atlanta Constitution, November 8, 1971; MARTA officials opposed Millican, saying that every public utility company, including the Georgia Power Company, had eminent domain; hence, it was wrong to contend that MARTA “can take private properties for public purposes and … this is bad.” Wsbn66478, October 25, 1971, Clip 1, 2 min, 17 sec, reel 1775, time in 9 min, 23 sec, WSBNC.
“to attract some voters.” Since the fare was “twice as cheap as [that of] many other North American rapid transit systems,” it would easily generate an operating deficit. Moreover, he asserted that the 1971 plan was nothing but “a re-run of the 1968 system” with an addition of “16 miles of rail and [some] small busways.” He contended that railway transit was not necessary; only busways could fulfill the traffic needs.119 The implication was that in his opinion, the Perry Homes line was unnecessary.

MARTA’s board members made efforts to dispel the “untruth and misinformation” spread about MARTA by “a civic group in the Buckhead area,” while simultaneously endeavoring to clear the misunderstandings among the whites. According to MARTA officials, those who disliked MARTA were spreading misinformation, inaccuracies, and half-truths about MARTA’s plan. Although Blount did not volunteer names in his speech, he later admitted that the rapid transit plan received criticism from Lt. Gov. Lester Maddox, Atlanta aldermen Cecil Turner and Henry Dodgson, former alderman Everett Millican, and the attorney Moreton Roleston. MARTA officials deplored the fact that “a few self-seeking or misguided obstructionists” were claiming that, someday, the local governments “shall close and modify streets” at MARTA’s request, which was untrue. MARTA’s attorney argued, “[MARTA has] no power to build public housing, does not enjoy immunity as do governments, cannot make major route changes without the approval of the majority of the local governments, and is paying below the apprised price for the bus company.”120 Furthermore, he sought to dispel the rumor that MARTA had the power to “relocate public housing” and would lead to the spread of

120 “Half Truth, Outright Lies Arouse Ire of MARTA Officials,” Atlanta Inquirer, October 30, 1971; “MARTA Denounces ‘Hate Sheets,’” Atlanta Constitution, October 26, 1971. The group mentioned above, the Cross City Committee to Stop MARTA, ran an advertisement before the referendum. This advertisement asked readers, “Do You Want a 5-cent Sales Tax?” and tried to caution them that “Marta will have more authority than the Atlanta Housing Authority.” “VOTE ‘NO’ NEXT TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9” (emphasis in original), Atlanta Inquirer, November 6, 1971.
prostitution. He also stressed the fact that MARTA’s plan did not necessitate the widespread destruction of private property, clarifying that “70 percent of the right-of-way is within the existing railroad right-of-way and most of the remainder is in outlying suburban areas.” He admitted that the Peachtree Street subway was “costly, but less so than the alternatives.”

Henry Dodgson, a black alderman, was against MARTA because of the increase in sales tax. He observed, “I feel it’s a trick because it’s going to tax the poor people: the people who don’t have jobs … I feel that anybody who has a job and is working is not poor.” He continued, “I don’t think we should ask poor people to pay a one-percent sales tax, to reduce fares of people to come to town everyday to work … I cannot, in good conscience, ask the very people who elected me to ask their children for the next fifty years to subsidize the fares … No city in the United States has a 15-cent fare, and I will join with the mayor, who says it can’t be guaranteed. MARTA says it can … I wonder who’s running the city, MARTA or the mayor?”

The progressives also disagreed among themselves when it came to supporting MARTA. Some asserted that MARTA would only contribute to the rich; members of organizations such as Central Atlanta Progress or the Downtown Development Commission expressed their distrust for “MARTA and the other fat cats who stand to grab … from the little people of this great area.” They also pointed out that MARTA was “financed by an inequitable 33 percent increase in sales taxes, burdening future generations of taxpayers who will have no say in the taxes they will have to pay, which will destroy homes and neighborhoods (but not in the well-to-do areas!), which will run its only ‘rapid’ routes conveniently near the domain of its former board chairman, and to which there is reported to be planned a Gimbel’s Macy’s-like tunnel so folks get to the

121 “MARTA Denounces ‘Hate Sheets.’”
122 Ibid.
‘sales’ and a plan to pay 67 percent more for the raggedy Atlanta Transit System that ATS has publicly testified their company is worth (ripoff?!!).”(See Figure 5-4)¹²³

Nevertheless, The Great Speckled Bird also acknowledged MARTA’s positives. Mass transit would contribute to alleviating environmental pollution etc., but the paper also informed its readers, “If you doubt that they can be stopped at this late date, then there are probably plenty of grounds on which to oppose the presently constituted MARTA plan. Its financing plan hits hardest those who can least afford it, its cost is very high, it serves the downtown interests more than [the interests of] those who would ride it, [and] the people of the area have had little direct say in its planning and will have less say in its operation.” In addition, MARTA would “aggravate further Atlanta’s housing shortage by tearing down homes to clear a portion of its right-of-way (though this is minimal compared to what those new freeways will require).

On the other hand, the State Highway folks are itching to get on with all those new freeways through Atlanta (one of them is projected to go right smack through the Westside black community). Opposition to those highways was mounting and would probably be given a shot in the arm by the passage of MARTA. The beginning of rapid transit in the metro area would constitute the first concrete step in breaking the chains which bind us to the private automobile.

Some *Great Speckled Bird* writers continue to portray MARTA as a plot by downtown elites to maximise their wealth by sacrificing the living conditions of the poor.

With MARTA, the anti-highway forces can answer those who want more highways by pointing to a ‘real’ alternative. They could say, ‘We don’t need this highway because we will
have adequate public transportation by the time it built.’ If you feel that the new freeways can and must be stopped, then you might decide to vote for MARTA, even though knowing that MARTA has been planned around all the new freeways. As to how to vote on Nov. 9, the Great Speckled Bird staff is divided. Most are opposed, with the others in very qualified support.”

XIII. “Super City with a Future” or “Confused Urban Jungles”? The fact that MARTA successfully continued to receive federal assistance gave a boost to the public transit advocates. Atlanta University, for instance, was awarded a supplementary grant of $115,000 for research and training in the area of urban mass transportation. “Research under the grant has dealt with experiments in providing direct transportation subsidies to low-income families, analyzing the decision-making process in the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), and examining the legal effects of rapid transit, enabling legislation on the property rights of poor people living in the inner city.” MARTA also gained funds of $30 million, a timely boost, from the US Dept of Transportation for the first phase of the program.

The blacks continued in their support of the public transit proposal. “Almost all black leaders have expressed their support for the plan. Among the groups calling on voters to vote ‘YES’ in Tuesday’s MARTA referendum are the Atlanta Business League, Atlanta Associated Contractors and Trade Council, AME Minister’s Union, Baptist Minister Union, Empire Real Estate Board, Directors of EOA and the Black Silent Majority Committee—just everyday bus

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Alderman Henry Dodson has expressed his opposition to the MARTA plan."126 However, the majority seriously believed MARTA’s styling of its new proposal as a “citizen’s plan.” According to the black conservative paper Atlanta Daily World, “the board worked out a plan in accordance with the wishes of the people; then we have attempted to inform every citizen in the four-county area about it.” Atlanta Daily World expressed its belief that “the [MARTA] board has done a fair and good job in working out the plan and informing the public about it,” while blaming those who made “false and misleading charges against MARTA,” including those among their own people. “Some Negroes are saying it will help white persons who have moved to the suburbs get back into the city at a low fare. Some white opponents to the plan are arguing it will help mostly those who use the public transportation system and those persons reportedly are about 75 percent Negroes … We will state MARTA is needed if this city is to progress and continue to grow with a sound economy.”127

However, blacks continued with their efforts on the grassroots level. For instance, when the Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) of South West High school held its meeting on October 18, rapid transit and the November referendum became a hot topic along with the parents’ appraisal of school policies and regulations. There was much informal dialogue on this issue between the parents and teachers.128 MARTA officials had been invited to deliver a talk at this meeting. When the MARTA spokesman finished his talk, someone stood up and said that MARTA’s plan was “designed to get whites who have fled from the city back to it faster.”

Former Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) activist Andrew Young was there for his daughter; he stood up and urged everyone not to think of MARTA as an exclusively white

project. He said that the “suburban whites think they would be helping the blacks and blacks think they would be helping the whites and both are right, but downtown may die if people don’t get together.”

Black grassroots leaders simultaneously “took the lead in campaigning for a strong, united black ‘yes’ vote for MARTA.” The Atlanta Inquirer admitted, “the need for a publicly owned and operated system is clear, and if Atlanta is to be progressive, [so should] its citizens”

Political leaders such as Vice Mayor Jackson, Q. V. Williamson, and State Senator Leroy Johnson were not the only ones mentioned in the article as showing their support for the public transportation. Members of the clergy, a vital ingredient of the classic power structure among the blacks along with the politicians—as represented by Andrew Young, J. C. Ward, Bishop H. L. Hickman and others—also joined in the campaign. However, the major constituents of the campaign were women and the poor sections of the community. The MARTA supporters’ list, titled “the Community Grassroots and Area Community Leaders,” contained the names of many married women, such as Mrs. Rosa Griffin, Mrs. Beatrice Garland, Mrs. Ethel Mathews, Mrs. Dorothy Bolden, and Mrs. Lillian Shepherd, National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO).

ACCCA, EOA, and the Citizens Central Advisory Council and National Domestic Workers’ Union added the names of their organizations to the list. ACCCA, an umbrella organization comprising sixty groups, issued the following statement:

We recognize as individuals and as a groups that there is a need for a regional transportation system in the Atlanta area, and that this system should be administered by a public agency. For Atlanta to remain a viable and complete city it must have a transportation system that is responsible to the needs of all its citizens … Transit systems should concentrate on service as opposed to profit, and the MARTA plan does this.

For ACCCA, MARTA did a good job of building a public forum that did not have a top–down structure. The MARTA board had also proposed a fair employment plan that was “not like others that we have heard and seen in operation.” Furthermore, it had been successful in formulating a relocation policy that was much fairer than that of Urban Renewal. Most importantly, ACCCA admitted that “the black community needs a 15-cent fare, we need increased service, we need new and expanded routes, we need a strong employment program, and we need the impact of 1.4 billion dollars.”\(^\text{132}\) The Atlanta Inquirer followed in support of “this very powerful statement,” predicting that the African Americans’ everyday lives would be changed by MARTA’s implementation. The availability of mobility priced at merely 15 cents would enable the poor to go to “job centers like a Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Fulton Industrial Park, Atlanta Airport, or J. C. Penney’s Distribution Center, along with shopping centers, churches, and hospitals.”\(^\text{133}\)

In the referendum week, the Atlanta Inquirer again emphasized how the MARTA board had made an effort to listen to the black community’s voice in their public forums. The paper referred to the 26 demands of the ACCCA and claimed that MARTA had heeded them. ACCCA was not like the old black leadership, the paper argued. “It is often suggested that black leaders often get behind big desks in plush offices and forget. Forget the people that are behind them and the people that they are still very much a part of.” ACCCA’s activities established that “black Atlanta [has not been] forgotten, and [its leaders] are making themselves heard on behalf of their community.”\(^\text{134}\) The Atlanta Inquirer stressed that MARTA used the EOA plan in such a way that its busways would contribute to the betterment of “the inner-city

\(^{132}\) Ibid.  
\(^{133}\) Ibid.  
residents.” The new schedule showed that those areas would get “direct service to downtown Atlanta,” so that the residents would not have to “transfer numerous times, as is now the case.”

Figure 5.5. MARTA Route Map in “Rapid Transit: What Does It Mean?” Atlanta Inquirer (and other papers), October 9, 1971. This map features the rapid bus and railway routes along with the interstate highways.
The advocates of MARTA put emphasis on class, not race. SCLC’s Andrew Young exhorted in the paper that Atlanta was on the crossroads: it could be morphed into “the dream city of this nation” or “fall back into the rank and file of a frustrated and confused urban jungle.” For him, the public meant the weak, the city meant the inner city, and progress represented empowerment. More importantly, he stressed that Atlantans could put their city on the national map only if they could build good race relationships. MARTA would be nothing but the very beginning of reconciliation.

A vote of confidence in this city by her citizens will say that Atlanta is going to make it, city and suburb together, black and white together, rich and poor together … MARTA won’t solve all our problems but it will give us a new spirit, a new confidence with which to work. Having passed this hurdle, we can begin the fight for the new jobs which will be created. We can start seriously to realize that Atlanta has got to set new patters of public education, public health, and housing for the nation. […] I am for MARTA because I have a vision of a city of the not-too-distant future, where men live together and work together and play together as brothers and where none need go hungry or lack adequate living space.135

The former SCLC activist’s speech emphasized how MARTA would benefit everybody; however, it was more inclusive in tone—it was more concerned with helping the poor inside the city limits than with racial matters. Newspapers also published various letters urging the populace to endorse the proposal. One of them entitled “A Yes Vote—Yes!” argued that a “No”-vote was nothing but “a most blatant racist attempt to keep over 50 percent of Atlanta citizens from sharing in their city’s growth.” For instance, it was an attempt to “dis-enfranchise [sic]” the blacks and would “surely keep jobs closed to many.” The letter contended that in order to achieve “a free and open society,” MARTA and its 15-cent fare was necessary.136 The Atlanta Inquirer’s editorial was more articulate in criticizing those who were

publicly against the proposal because of the notion that it would only benefit suburban whites; the editorial stressed how MARTA could substantially help the inner city residents as well.

The area can achieve better transportation which will be good for all, though the narrow-minded only see why it is good for somebody else. Race should not go into the polls on Thursday. What should go in is a positive belief in this area as a democratic doer. Our transportation problems threaten not only the economic future of the area but also the well-being of all who live here and around here. We hope the voters have done their homework as well as the MARTA officials.

Moreover, MARTA continued to represent the gospel of growth liberalism. Atlanta Constitution’s editor Hal Gulliver asserted that Atlanta was a growing city and by now had become a major center of America’s southeast region. It was inevitable that an increasing number of Atlantans would drive in the future, so it was imperative for the transport authorities to do something about this anyway. If this referendum failed, other options would have to be explored, which inevitably would result in the return of the property tax, which would be more expensive, because property value would keep rising. Since the sales tax increase was good for homeowners, vote now, advised the Atlanta Constitution, adding that the “defeat of the referendum would not only delay the construction of any rapid transit system [but also] make the ultimate cost higher and the pinch on the individual homeowner greater.”

As the day of referendum approached, People often heard Massell’s speech from the sky. Intending it to be symbolic, Massell tried to do some last-minute PR from the sky as he looked down from a helicopter on the packed highways, because he himself agreed with the Constitution’s editor. In fact, Massell had realized that his target was not the poor blacks but the white suburbanites, who were offended by his strong support of the Perry Homes line and 15-cent fare. Massell listed out the “target groups” for the MARTA referendum and tried to

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share his classification with MARTA officials; he had classified the target groups into three
types:

(1) The poor and others who do not have cars. The majority of these people are the
present ATS bus riders. (2) Those who own vehicles but whose trip to work each day is so
congested and lengthy that rapid transit can offer them a substantially more convenient
method. So far, I think that the number in this group has been greatly overestimated.
People complain like mad about the traffic, but the truth is that most will put up with much
greater congestion and time delays that we presently have before they will consider the use
of rapid transit instead of their private vehicle. (3) Those that are not affected [by
MARTA]. This includes the vast numbers who work in the rapidly growing suburban
market and, in general, all of those people who now have to drive into and out of the central
city each day. This third group is by far the largest, and since groups one and two are a
definite minority, the rapid transit referendum needs substantial help from group three.

For Massell, it was clear that in order to attract Group 1, the low fare had to be
emphasized. For Group 2, it was important to “acknowledge that the vast majority of these
people have no intention, at present, of using transit. Think up some tactful way to say ‘Vote
for Rapid Transit … It will get some clowns off the freeway so that you can get to work quicker
in your own car.’ This approach might rub the MARTA people the wrong way but they will be
ignoring the facts if they don’t recognize that this attitude is held by a vast number of people.
As for Group 3, who form the great majority, they are going to have to be sold on the ‘Keep
Atlanta Moving’ or ‘Let’s Build a Great City’ theme. They cannot put their finger on a direct
or immediate benefit from rapid transit.” He also observed, “There is a substantial group of
people that are retired, have independent means, or otherwise are simply not required to involve
themselves in daily home-to-work traffic.” Massell attempted to obtain the votes of this
group as well, which he called the “silent majority.”

Massell believed that he need not worry too much about Group 1, despite his “think
white” remark. African Americans were almost unanimously in support of MARTA. The old

139 Communication from Sam Massell to Roz Thomas, August 27, 1971, folder 3, box 65, MMP.
guard of church organizations and the conservative paper Atlanta Daily World had both joined the grassroots groups and fight, along with the progressive newspaper Atlanta Inquirer. Accordingly, Massell’s target became the affluent whites. He therefore boarded a helicopter topped by a big balloon in an attempt to convert the white suburban commuters. In order to persuade white middle-class voters, the mayor had already appeared in many radio and television programs. Massell was probably aware of the fact that commuters were ardent listeners of the radio, while their wives and kids were watching television. There was a long list of his appearances—on Tuesday, he appeared on WAGA-TV’s “Xernona Clayton Show”; on Friday, on WRNG Radio’s “Ben Baldwin Show” and WQXI-TV’s “Atlanta Show”; Massell also appeared on WSB Radio’s “Sound Off,” WYZE Radio’s “Interview by Debbie Scott,” WERD Radio’s “Let’s Rap,” and WAOK’s “People’s Voice.” In the morning paper, Atlantans found an advertisement written and paid for by Massell himself: “LET’S BE FARE!” (emphasis in original), it said.

The opposition is getting ugly and is obviously trying to “divide and conquer.” They have worded their ads to turn blacks and whites against each other, suburbanites and in-city dwellers against each other, white-collar workers and the poor against each other … for they seem to want to defeat the region’s transportation program no matter how badly it tears us apart. […] The opposition to MARTA is made up of the same people who are constantly opposed to every change—every progressive move—the people of this area try to make. […] LET’S PULL TOGETHER IN ONE DIRECTION.¹⁴¹

No side was certain of victory, despite the federal government’s announcement that it would offer Atlanta funds amounting to $22.6 million under the UMTA.¹⁴² The Atlanta Constitution calculated that approximately one-third of those eligible to vote would do so.

¹⁴¹ Advertisement, Atlanta Constitution, November 9, 1971.
¹⁴² “MARTA Offered 22 Million,” Atlanta Constitution, November 6, 1971.
However, many predicted that the MARTA referendum would have an even higher turnout due to the raging controversies surrounding the issue, which made it more difficult to estimate the voter turnout.\textsuperscript{143} WSB News chose not to make any such prediction, only reporting that both, “MARTA officials and those who were against it,” were preparing for their “victory statement.”\textsuperscript{144}

Despite everyone’s concern, MARTA was victorious. Massell made a speech on the “tremendous victory” after a chorus sang out “Happy birthday to MARTA! Happy birthday to you!” “This will provide us a greater trust than anything [else] in my political life,” he asserted. At the same time, this was great news because improved public transportation would give Atlantans a “dramatic new mobility.”\textsuperscript{145} However, the results showed that in no way did the people in metropolitan Atlanta “pull together.” First of all, two suburban counties followed the example of Cobb County in refusing to join the public transit network. Their dislike of the plan was clear. Finally, results from Gwinnett County showed that 2,500 had voted in favor of the proposal, while 9,506 had voted against it. Forty percent of the registered voters had come to the election. The numbers were even worse in Clayton County, which rejected the proposal 11,147 to 3,300—with a 45 percent turnout. None of the precincts in both counties endorsed the MARTA proposal. One reason for this was that they were not sure if MARTA would provide them good service; however, at the same time, many regarded MARTA as “their”

\textsuperscript{143} “Forecasters Are Uncertain as MARTA Verdict Nears,” \textit{Atlanta Journal and Constitution}, November 7, 1971.
\textsuperscript{144} Wsbn64622, November 9, 1971, Clip 1, 32 sec, reel 1778, time in 48 min, 12 sec, WSBNC.
transportation. According to Maynard Jackson, the defeat in those two counties stemmed from “an insidious racist campaign on an issue that should not have involved race.”\textsuperscript{146}

The dissenters explained their reasons in a color-blind fashion in public, but it was obvious that many had rejected MARTA based on their view of it, particularly the 15-cent fare, as a black thing. A white man responded as follows to the WSB interviewer’s question as to why Clayton County had rejected the mass transit proposal.

\begin{quote}
The primary reason that MARTA did not offer Clayton County a full transportation program … I think this factor that we only have one station in the very north[ernmost] end of the county is the primary reason that the citizens just felt [unclear words] being serviced.
The secondary reason is that—the one reason that I have heard, the most common one—people felt that the 15-cent fare is not proper. “[Some] people will use the systems in greater [proportion] and the cost of operation [will be borne by other people]” [emphasis mine].
\end{quote}

Fulton and DeKalb counties that constituted the city of Atlanta voted in favor of the MARTA proposal, but the public transit agency won by a very slim margin. The final returns showed that in Fulton County, the proposal won by a little over 2,000 votes—55,736 for to 53,725 against; 43 percent of the people had come out to cast their ballot. DeKalb County passed the proposal with only a slightly higher margin—39,441 for to 36,100 against.\textsuperscript{147} The surprising thing was that many blacks, “who were expected to be delighted with the 15-cent fares,” divided their votes rather evenly. One indication of this divide was apparent in former SCLC activist Ralph Abernathy’s remarks in the “black meeting” on MARTA, held four days before the referendum. Like black alderman Henry Dodson, Abernathy had said,

\begin{quote}
It is a gimmick to fool the poor people. It is also clearly understood that … the 10-man committee of MARTA has unlimited power. MARTA does nothing to the single, grassroots, poor black or white bus ride. They can tax … a property including automobile at home, as was true [in] the case of [unclear], stadiums, Model Cities, and many others.\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{146} “Blacks Claim Credit for MARTA Win,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, November 11, 1971.\\
\textsuperscript{147} “MARTA Vote Sets Milestone,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, November 10, 1971.\\
\textsuperscript{148} Wsbn64588, November 15, 1971, Clip 1, 1 min, 17 sec, reel 1777, time in 55 min, 25 sec, WSBNC.
\end{flushright}
However, the African American leaders continued to regard MARTA as a product of their effort, attempting to turn it into a source of economic prosperity. Thus, they did not have much time to celebrate the MARTA victory, because their experience told them that the power structure had manipulated their public policies in order to protect its own political and economic interests.

The Atlanta Inquirer quickly responded to the Constitution’s argument that the affluent white areas played a major role in MARTA’s victory. The paper called it a distortion of the truth, asserting “the assumption of the [Atlanta Constitution’s] Editor would have us believe that the blacks, for the most part, were not at all influential in the referendum’s passage.” However, the Inquirer pointed out that its own analysis clearly demonstrated that the blacks played a crucial role in the poll. “Statistical analysis of the election returns indicate that [55.3 percent of the blacks] in fact voted … in favor of the referendum, while [54.7 percent of the white community] voted … for the referendum. The margin of victory in Fulton County was 2,011 votes, which clearly indicates this 55.3 percent.”149 “Our vigilance has just begun,” ACCCA declared, because the white power structure had already begun making attempts to take over the public agency. Black political leaders agreed to this undertaking. Therefore, Maynard Jackson contended that black representatives should “monitor all MARTA meetings and contracts,” referring to himself and to other black leaders, including Jonny Johnson (Model Cities Director), Lyndon Wade (Urban League and MARTA Board Secretary), John Cox (Butler Street YMCA Director), John Calhoun (Economic Opportunity Atlanta, Inc.), and others. The black leadership demanded that MARTA keep jobs, particularly administrative positions, ready for the African Americans.150 Moreover, they pressurized MARTA officials into “advance

financing the acquisition” and to reduce fares.\textsuperscript{151} They also talked to businesses like Sears and learnt that there would be an increasing number of job opportunities for “minorities” around the train and bus stations.\textsuperscript{152} The poor black women, among others, strongly urged MARTA to provide the services it had promised. NWRO’s Ethel Mathews repeatedly asserted after MARTA’s victory that “all of it [the program] is good if they do what they are going to do.” In particular, she pushed for the 15-cent fare, declaring “I’d rather pay one percent more sales tax than 45 cents to ride the bus. We poor are already paying the taxes.” In addition, the black leadership continued to press for the immediate planning and construction of the Perry Homes line, because many Perry Homes residents still spent “three hours a day in travel time to and from their jobs.”\textsuperscript{153}

According to the \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, however, “the major surprise was that more affluent sections went heavily for the system.”\textsuperscript{154} The success of the public transit campaign, in fact, would have been impossible without the ardent support of the rich white folks living in the single detached houses of quiet neighborhoods such as Morningside and Druid Hills (See Appendix). They had supported the 15-cent fare, $70-million railways, and the one-percent sales tax increase, even though most of them owned a car and had no need to rely on public transit. Their rhetoric as to why Atlanta needed public transportation was critical in building a new urban public, which enabled the rich whites to preserve their neighborhoods and political powers in the changing Atlanta.

\textsuperscript{151} “MARTA’s Two Giant Steps Praised in Bus Fare Cut,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, November 13, 1971.
\textsuperscript{152} “NAMD Hears Sears Official,” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, December 4, 1971.
\textsuperscript{153} “Voters Should ‘Lay Tracks for Super City,’” \textit{Atlanta Inquirer}, December 4, 1971.
\textsuperscript{154} “Upper, Middle Income Whites Put it Over,” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, November 10, 1971.
Conclusion

Despite his victory, Sam Massell’s attempt to deploy color-blind rhetoric in the 1971 MARTA referendum was not a complete success. The Jewish mayor argued that public transit would benefit anybody, no matter what his or her race or class, in Metropolitan Atlanta. However, African American demands for accessible flat fare and railway lines to the poor neighborhoods angered many conservative whites. As a MARTA official told a writer for the Atlanta Constitution, the 15-cent flat fare that had been strongly pushed for by the NDWU had come to function as a code word for the “N-word.”155 Conservative whites, including Lester Maddox, attacked the public transit plan by using color-blind language. In this sort of formulation, “public” transit would not actually contribute to the public, but would instead only lead to a tax increase for “other people’s cost.” Massell, then, turned to African Americans and urged them to make a concession by persuading them to “think white.” Although they accepted a shorter duration for the 15-cent fare, African Americans found Massell’s remarks completely unacceptable because their mobility was so limited in the urban landscape, built as it was on a long history of de jure segregation. They argued instead that public transit should release the socially and economically underprivileged from such limitations. A series of public hearings and forums before the 1971 referendum worked for African Americans as a venue through which they, particularly the economically underprivileged among them, could have their voices heard. At the same time, however, there was substantial opposition. Along with the white homeowners in suburban Clayton and Gwinnett counties, some poor blacks did not favor MARTA, because from their perspective, a one-percent sales tax would only hurt the poor while benefiting white property owners.

The results of the 1971 MARTA referendum showed that African Americans in the Perry Homes area voted in favor of the public transit plan, in spite of the strong opposition they had offered in the 1968 vote.\textsuperscript{156} However, they were not the ones who played the most vital role in MARTA’s success. The strongest endorsement, in fact, came from affluent island suburban areas, which the next chapter will examine. In supporting and elaborating the idea of public transit, the affluent island suburban dwellers, or transit advocates also developed a color-blind rhetoric that would only accelerate uneven development between the privileged and the underprivileged.

\textsuperscript{156} As for the voting results, see Table 2.1., 2.2., 2.3., 2.4., and 2.5 in Appendix.
Chapter 6

Saving a “Hanging Garden in Babylon”: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority and the Anti-Highway Rebels of Morningside and Druid Hills, 1965-1973

Introduction: An Angry Letter

The letter must have made Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen sigh. Now Georgia’s mid-July heat in 1965 was not the only trouble he had. Mrs. A.L. Williams, the author of the letter, was furious. No wonder. She wanted to know why her house, which was in Morningside – one of Atlanta’s classic automobile suburbs – was to be bulldozed. \(^1\) “We are native Atlantans, like yourself, and love our city” she wrote, “We have paid city tax all our lives, and now live in the shadow of ‘eviction’ from our home in favor of the concrete monster.” State of Georgia’s Department of Transportation had issued a route plan for Interstate 485 – the “concrete monster” according to Mrs. Williams -- which was to alleviate the drastic increase of commuters from Northern suburban counties. No one, including Mrs. Williams, would deny the necessity of the expressway. Yet, why her neighborhood? Why was Morningside, once labeled the “realm of natural beauty,” to be torn down?

We must note that Mrs. Williams’ enemy was neither a Department of Transportation engineer nor a city politician. She directed her anger at “them” – the residents of rapidly growing suburban counties like Gwinnett, Cobb and north Fulton. Residents of in-town neighborhoods claimed that those new suburbanites were only concerned with their private interests, leaving Atlanta for cozy subdivisions in adjacent counties. On the other hand, those who stayed in the city, like Mrs. Williams, were paying taxes and taking care of their decaying city. The construction of an expressway would put them in a much tighter spot. “Do you…

\(^1\) For further information as to the making of Atlanta’s automobile suburbia, see Chapter 4, “Suburbanizing a ‘Jim Crow’ City,” in Howard Preston, Automobile Age Atlanta: The Making of a Southern Metropolis, 1900-1935 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1979), 74-112.
think it’s fair for the ones who have supported the city all these years to be up-rooted to make way for those to come into the city to earn a better living? Do you?” For her, it was unbearable to “forfeit our homes … to provide a place for them to ride, work, and earn, tax free.” The furious letter ended with the last thing that Allen wanted to hear: “What will happen to Atlanta when the homes are destroyed and the citizens have to move out in the rural areas… -- who will pay the tax cost?”² Of course, Mrs. Williams was not alone in voicing her anger. The letters from Morningside fattened the mailboxes of political and business leaders, including Allen, the city’s aldermen, and Chamber of Commerce members.³ And angry letters were not the only weapons that Morningside’s residents used. To save their neighborhood, they incorporated the Morningside Lenox-Park Civic Association (MLPCA). Like many neighborhoods in other cities, they declared war on freeway construction.⁴

People like Mrs. Williams played a vital role in enabling MARTA’s victory in the 1971 referendum. The previous chapter shed light on the ways in which African Americans, particularly poor blacks, attempted to formulate their own definition of public transit, and how they then further elaborated this conception in a series of conflicts with other social groups. For them, a 15 cent fare and railway service to the Perry Homes area constituted the two

² Mrs. A.L. Williams to Ivan Allen Jr., July 12, 1965, folder 2, box 5, Rodney M. Cook Papers, Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as RMCP)
³ For instance, Chamber of Commerce News Release, March 2, 1965, folder 4, box 4, RMCP.
indispensable components of the public transit. Despite the one percent sales tax, which was hard on the poor because it was in fact regressive, black organizations almost unanimously supported MARTA’s plan. Nevertheless, their particular definition of public transit in turn engendered numerous opposing forces. Some thought that the public transit plan would only enhance Atlanta’s domination over the suburban counties. Others saw it as a way to bring “ghetto” residents – i.e., poor blacks-- into the inner city. Many also had the impression that MARTA would set a bad precedent and enable governments to plan and remake the city’s infrastructure as they wanted. In short, small property owners would have no voice in this gigantic metropolitan development project which was to change the landscape of their city so significantly. This generated fear in the hearts of suburbanites, leading to their abhorrence of public transit. Simultaneously, the relative lack of services offered to suburban counties (especially Gwinnett and Clayton Counties) contributed to the growth of opposition forces.

White middle and upper class expressway rebels, including Mrs. Williams, did not belong to this model. In fact, racial divide did not completely apply to the result of who voted for MARTA and who did not. Many blacks went against it, while the dissenters were not big enough to defeat the bill at all. It should also be noted that many propertied white advocated the rapid transit plan. In understanding the rise of public transit in the Sunbelt City, white homeowners’ support played a critical role. They found MARTA not as an enemy of property owners, rather their protector. The rebels against expressway construction stood up and became vehement rapid transit advocates. They argued that public transit was a public necessity because it would save small property owners, nature, historic architecture, dying neighborhoods, and the city’s prestige from the ceaseless intrusion of asphalt and concrete.
Ultimately, the highway rebels in the inland suburbs won their battle. In 1973, GADOT announced the abandonment of the expressway project. Morningside triumphed in its battle against the “concrete monster,” which had in the past devoured many poor African American and poor white neighborhoods. This chapter’s aim is to show how those island suburbs near central city contributed to the making of new idea of urban public, which eventually led to the victory of public transit supporters in the 1971 referendum. By investigating how Morningside and another classic residential enclave Druid Hills residents obtained their happy ending, and to analyze why and how MARTA played a decisive role in their campaign and their relationships to other social groups, namely, blacks. This chapter’s goal is not to present the victorious story of a grass roots uprising that brought down an asphalt tyrant. Rather, it was to examine by looking at the highway revolt is the conservative origins of the anti-sprawl movement, and to show how public transit helped the conservation of suburban landscape and, ultimately, urban sprawl.

In fighting against the expressway construction, Morningside and Druid Hills residents, who were the dwellers of a classic suburb, portrayed themselves as an urban, culturally diverse, environmentally conscious, socially sensible public-minded group of people. Suburbanites in adjacent counties were the opposite: They were private-oriented, individualistic, and unconcerned with the city’s public welfare. Morningside and Druid Hills residents invented this consciousness to protect the middle class, suburban lifestyle (private home ownership, economic and racial homogeneity, reliance on their own automobiles, and architectural uniformity) that, ironically, the dwellers of adjacent counties embraced as well.\footnote{Neighborhood groups constituted a strong political bloc during the 70s. During the decade, the City of Atlanta saw the decline of the political power of downtown business elites. Sam Massell, who won the seat of Atlanta mayor in 1969, was from the Buckhead area and received a support from labor unions. Moreover, he was Jewish. The winner of the 1973 mayoral election was Maynard Jackson. He was the first African-}
The objective of this chapter is to complicate suburban history. Kenneth Jackson’s *Crabgrass Frontier*, which signaled the rise of suburban history, demonstrates how suburbanization represents a larger trend of U.S. history. Many historians followed his lead, demonstrating how suburbanization has determined the course of U.S. politics. Especially, they uncovered the ways in which a suburban landscape aided the growth of grassroots conservatism. Yet, these works do not fully elaborate the diversity of suburbanites in terms of their class and political ideologies and affiliations. They tend to explain political rifts in the binary of suburbs and city—suburbanites are conservatives; urbanites are liberals. This chapter is an attempt to complicate this dichotomy. Island suburbs, including Druid Hills and Morningside existed inside the city limits or even near downtown. Their perception of the freeways as a product of the reckless expansion of urban peripheries turned their anti-

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Footnotes:

6 The proliferation of suburbs was a product of a white middle class centered society. Their Anglo culture, love of the private automobile, and racial and economic prejudice played a major role in creating the American landscape. Not only that, Federal policies like the Federal Housing Administration’s assistance and Federal Highway Act, contributed to the making of a suburban nation. Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).


expressway rally into a battle between in-town, classic suburbanites and suburbanites in adjacent counties. This battle produced a story that does not fit the narrative of suburban conservatives; Morningsidians and Druid Hills dwellers became liberal, advocating the construction of public transit system, to save their suburban lifestyle. Here, Matthew Lassiter’s work on the rise of the Silent Majority in the South was vitally important in shedding light on the ways in which upper-middle-class whites in the classic, “island suburbs” like Buckhead stood up against the attempts to close public schools in favor of “the Southern Way of Life,” but developed their own color-blind rhetoric to preserve the character of their neighborhoods — racial composition and property value.  

Another goal is to contribute to the understanding of the role that homeowners as a collective group, played in urban politics. Earlier works showed that the purpose of these associations was to exclude “undesirable elements” that would erode value of their neighborhood’s property. In most cases, members of these associations viewed racial minorities as undesirables. Morningside and Druid Hills’s case, again, does not fully fit this picture. The MLPCA, or Druid Hills Civic Association (DHCA), was incorporated to resist highway construction; racial fear did not constitute the major cause of its creation. Anger against the dwellers living in suburban counties who were demanding an increase in freeway construction led to the creation of the organization. This chapter will begin with the story of the rebellion of urban suburbanites and their emergence as “champions” of the public, which eventually led to their ardent support of MARTA. First, the chapter tries to uncover how the expressway plans (I-485 and Stone

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Mountain Expressway) developed, and in what ways the residents molded their voices of protest against the construction. It also uncovers how Atlanta’s downtown establishments, and even some residents of the island suburbs, voiced their staunch support for the expressway construction. Of course, MARTA gained the anti-expressway forces as staunch supporters of its public transit plan. The anti-freeway camp’s major contribution to the transit campaign was ideological. Their contestation of the conceptions concerning the desirable role of government over transportation policies provided the affluent in-town whites with a tactic to preserve their neighborhoods in the name of the public necessity.

I. The Coming of the Concrete Monster and the Rise of Rebels in Morningside

The construction of expressways symbolized growth for the boosters who had long dominated Atlanta’s politics. The downtown business elite asked a Chicago-based planning consultant to produce the expressway plan. The 1946 Lochner plan (Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta) was the result. The plan represented their vision of the future Atlanta, with freeways geared toward maintaining the prosperity of the central city. Assuming the central city to be a regional core of employment and consumption, planning institutions and GADOT envisioned freeways linking suburbia and downtown Atlanta to mid-size cities such as Macon, Chattanooga, Spartanburg, and Birmingham.¹¹

For the city of Atlanta, the construction of expressways reaching all over the state of Georgia and the South East Region symbolized the city’s growth and prosperity. Yet, for some citizens, it meant its peril. When two multi-lane freeway plans – Interstate 485 and the Stone

Mountain Freeway – came out in the early ‘60s, Atlanta residents responded to them with massive resistance. In particular, there was fierce resistance among the in-town affluent neighborhoods that the proposed highways were to rip through. Interstate 485 was to run through the middle of Morningside to ease traffic from northern counties. The Stone Mountain Freeway, which would attempt to connect downtown Atlanta to eastern DeKalb County, which was rapidly developing as a new residential and industrial center, was to flatten a portion of Druid Hills, and the homeowners in that pleasant area were understandably furious.

These two neighborhoods, Morningside and Druid Hills, were products of the thriving New South. Druid Hills, originally developed as a streetcar suburb, was older than Morningside. Planned by Frederick L. Olmsted for New South elites in the 1890s, the neighborhood was “famed for its natural beauty.”12 The area also contained prestigious educational institutions like Emory University, the Fernbank Science Center, and the Center for Disease Control, which brought a dense population of professionals and intellectuals into the area. Morningside, on the other hand, had been developed in the late twenties as an early automobile suburbia in Atlanta, and the subdivision was very popular. The homes, with “every advantage of a city and a country,” were exactly what the bourgeoning middle classes in the booming New South aspired to own.13 Despite their proximity to the city center, both neighborhoods were blessed with

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12 Druid Hills was so beautiful that a “national magazine” selected it as one of “the most desirable residential areas in the US from the standpoint of natural beauty.” Anti-SMF-Letters-1968, Druid Hills Civic Association, Box 11, folder 4, series VII, Stone Mountain Tollway: Public Hearing, part 4 of 6,” Druid Hills Civic Association Records, Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as DHCAR). Druid Hills was so beautiful that a “national magazine” selected it as one of “the most desirable residential areas in the US from the standpoint of natural beauty.”

13 Atlanta Constitution, December 3, 1923; “‘Morningside,’ Splendid New Residence Section,” Atlanta Constitution, April 29, 1923; “Many Handsome Houses Erected in ‘Morningside,’ Atlanta Constitution, Nov. 18, 1923. Morningside worked to preserve its quality, with one resident proudly proclaiming “no other section of Atlanta offers a richer life.” Claude Grizzard to Rodney M. Cook, February 19, 1965, folder 2, box 5, RMCP.
“untouched” natural scenery: trees, streams, and creeks accented their tree-shaded neighborhoods.

1) Into “a Third Rate Community Overnight”: Interstate 485 and Morningside

1965 saw the development of two expressway proposals from the Lochner report-- the controversial I-485 and Stone Mountain Freeway plan.14 As for I-485, which slashed the Morningside area, comprised of four potential routes (A to D), GADOT would choose one after holding a public hearing. For GADOT, route B was the most reasonable and the easiest to construct, they explained, for the route was planned along the Georgia Power Company’s power lines. They should have anticipated resistance, however; because route B cut through the middle of the Morningside neighborhood.15

The Morningside homeowners responded instantaneously. Claude Grizzard, a resident and retired alderman, sent a plea to Rodney Cook, Chairman of the Planning & Development Committee to tell him he was furious.16 He had been a Morningside resident “since 1925,” but

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14 Another one was Stone Mountain Freeway, which would link downtown and western suburbs.
15 The City of Atlanta promoted expressway construction, but I-485, and especially its route B, was an exception. Ivan Allen Jr., Atlanta’s mayor at the time, represented downtown business and political elites who favored freeway construction, which would bring Uncle Sam’s money and keep downtown’s property value stable. Nonetheless, Allen and other city politicians could not advocate the I-485 plan, for the route would hurt one of their finest white residential neighborhoods. Allen officially complained to the GADOT. While expressing “our support” of the plan and “our hope that its construction will be given a high priority,” Allen was concerned that the I-485 plan did not consider the “best interest of the area,” ruining “our best residential neighborhoods.” Similar inquiries complaining about the proposal would have reached GADOT. The GADOT responded that the route was originally drawn by Atlanta’s Metropolitan Planning Commission (later Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Planning Commission, ARMPC). Glenn Bennett, a chairperson of the ARMPC, claimed that their plan published ten years ago had just tried to demonstrate a “general location,” which should not to be “interpreted as a precise alignment.” Thus no one took responsibility for determining I-485’s route. Ivan Allen Jr. to Jim L. Gillis, Sr., 1965, Georgia State Highway Department, folder 4, box 4, ser. I, RMCP; From Glenn Bennett to Richard Freeman, February 25, 1965, folder 4, box 4, ser. I, RMCP.
16 Cook went to Morningside, Tenth Street and O’Keefe Junior High School. Bio, Rodney Cook, n.d., folder 2, box 5, ser. II, b RMCP; For instance, Claude Grizzard, a resident and retired alderman, sent a plea to Rodney Cook, Chairman of the Planning & Development Committee. Cook, a Republican alderman from Sandy Springs in North Fulton, was an alumnus of Morningside’s local junior high school. Cook, responding to their plea, pledged to stand for Morningside. Along with Richard Freeman, a Republican alderman from
he had “never seen the people as upset as they are.” Grizzard knew that “something must be done to alleviate traffic congestion.” Yet, razing a good portion of Morningside, including his house, was out of the question. The reason for this was obvious: Morningside was “Atlanta’s most attractive residential area,” and moreover was a “good and solid middle class area,” which was disappearing due to the ongoing so-called white flight. Furthermore, the neighborhood still represented a true gemeinschaft. The residents were “interested in their homes and in their community, its churches, and so far as people, no other section of Atlanta offers a richer life.” Grizzard urged Cook “not to ruin” the community by adopting route B.17

Grizzard’s comments about Morningside were largely accurate. Morningside was in fact one of the best subdivisions when young Grizzard settled there in 1925. To respond to the massive demand of housing during the twenties, Atlanta developer J.R. Smith & M.S. Rankin started selling homes in a Morningside area. The first advertisement appeared in the springtime of 1923. The homes, with “every advantage of a city and a county,” were exactly what the burgeoning middle class aspired to own. The Atlanta Constitution admired the subdivision’s “modern” appliances, such as electrical devices installed in the houses. The property was so popular that Smith & Rankin needed to hire “75 [more] live Agents” to sell all of the “300 home sites.”18

Given the fact that Morningside had originally been developed as one of the first automobile suburbs of Atlanta, it was an irony that now expressway construction was threatening to bulldoze the neighborhood. In the 20s, Morningside’s “modern” appeal included its accessibility to downtown Atlanta. A “comfortable bus” would come “every ten minutes to

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17 From Claude Grizzard to Rodney Cook, February 19, 1965, folder 2, box 5, ser. II, b, RMCP.
pick up businessmen, housewives, and other shoppers to... the heart of the city,” the Atlanta Constitution reported. However, their dominant mode of transportation was a privately owned automobile. Morningside Drive, built with “solid concrete – 72 feet in width – for two miles,” attracted auto commuters to this subdivision.\(^1^9\) As a part of affluent north-side Atlanta, Morningside maintained its prestige. De-facto segregation kept the area a solid, white community.\(^2^0\) Therefore, the I-485 plan was the first threat to this idyllic community.

Morningsidians attempted to emphasize their “middle class character” to justify their anti highway stance. The reason was that they knew that expressway construction had already razed many poor African Americans’ neighborhoods. In fact, the construction of I-75, I-85, I-20, and the downtown connector were widely regarded as “Negro Removal.” Building the downtown connector in the southern part of downtown Atlanta, for example, led to the eviction of African Americans who had resided on Auburn Avenue, in the Old Fourth Ward, and in the Bedford Pine neighborhood. Highway construction along with other urban renewal projects, such as the erection of the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, flattened approximately 21,000 housing units and evicted approximately 67,000 people. Most of the victims were poor African Americans, but a few poor white neighborhoods were affected as well.\(^2^1\) Morningsidians had not offered any protest against these expressway projects which had disrupted so many African American families.


\(^2^0\) See Table A 1.3 in Appendix.

\(^2^1\) Furthermore, the highway route was determined in such a way that it could block the expansion of black residential areas. I-20 West was built as a de-facto “wall” between black and white residential areas. The downtown connector was expected to be a “Chinese Wall” to keep poor blacks from coming into downtown. See Rutheiser, Imagineering Atlanta, 152-61; Bayor, Race, 53-92; Stone, Regime Politics, 51-76; and Chapter 5, “Redevelopment, Atlanta Style,” in Keating, Atlanta, 88-95.
Stressing their “class,” “health” or “stable” status therefore enabled the residents to argue for the importance of their neighborhood over those of blacks’ in a racially-neutral way. The argument was not that razing neighborhoods for highway construction was wrong, only that Morningside was too nice and important to deserve such a fate. The anti-highway camp insisted that Morningside was not a “slum,” and that it was vital for Atlanta’s future progress to conserve such a decent area near the city center. Grizzard’s experience on the City of Atlanta’s Planning Commission convinced him that expressway construction would turn the area around it into “a third rate community overnight.” “To be cleaning up slums on the one hand and ruining good residential sections on the other just doesn’t make sense,” he asserted. Furthermore, Richard Freeman, a Republican alderman from Morningside, contended that what the GADOT should do was to make an “effort to come up with a plan which would provide both easy access… and, at the same time, perhaps eliminate some areas of the City which are blighted or which are apt to become blighted. (emphasis mine)” Expressways, Freeman argued, would accelerate a “rapid deterioration” of the site.22

The Civil Rights movement put the Morningsidians’ uprising in an awkward position. They now needed to provide an explanation as to why their neighborhood must be saved while blacks’ neighborhoods were being bulldozed. Race should no longer be the reason so that, their scheme (dichotomy) they developed --“slums” to be razed and “good residential sections” to be protected-- represented their conservative end to keep a racial power balance by covering it with professional jargon.23 At the same time, they described their battle as a fight by small property owners against the expansive power of the government. Simultaneously, the Civil Rights

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22 From Richard Freeman to Glenn E. Bennett, Feb. 3, 1965, folder 2, box 5, ser. II, RMCP.
23 The Atlanta Constitution’s editorial also supported the Morningside rebels. They also emphasized that Morningside should not be rated as a “blighted area.” It said, “All along, the important question has been the integrity of a fine residential neighborhood. Morningside is one of the better sections of Atlanta. It needs no slum clearance program – which Line B in effect would represent.” Atlanta Constitution, June 30, 1965.

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Movement worked well for their challenge to keep their neighborhood intact. They could portray their uprising as the war by small property owners/taxpayers against the expansive power of the riches and the government. Moreover, the voices of protest came from the grassroots. It rose from the bottom up. Petition letters from housewives, for instance, played an important role in shaping politicians’ words. They were careful observers of GADOT and local politicians who worked for/against I-485, when Rodney Cook appeared on local television news programs to show his concern about the I-485 plan. He soon received from Mrs. Pauline Parker a letter of appreciation, asking how she could help. These mails showed how in-town neighbors shaped their campaign against freeways. Beatha Jones’ plea probably represented the opinion of the aged in neighborhoods like Morningside. She was a devastated widow. For her, the issue was “mighty important.” She urged Cook to consider single women who “depend on renting our home in order to obtain income for our existence.” She lamented the rumor of possible evacuation that would make their tenants “move out fast from the premises.” Mrs. Charles O. Morris did not hesitate to show her “disillusionment.” She claimed that the aldermen and the mayor displayed only “apathetic attitudes” regarding the expressway issue. By saying so, she urged Cook to work for the citizens.

2) “To Survive Indefinitely”: The Formation of MLCPA

The formation of the Morningside Lenox-Park Civic Association (MLCPA) enabled the residents to craft a unified voice. Incorporated in June 1965, the MLCPA became a commander in the battle against I-485. By 1971, 125 families in Morningside had joined the group. Grizzard played a vital role in forming the association, and housewives were its primary

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24 From Mrs. Pauline Baker to Rodney M. Cook, February 9, 1965, folder 2, box 5, ser. II, RMCP.
26 From Charles O. Morris to Rodney Cook, February 24, 1966, folder 2, box 5, ser. II, RMCP.
members. The MLP CA frequently held a meeting, hired planning consultants, and prepared for legal action against the DOT. They hired the planning consultant firm Eric Hills Associates (EHA) to prove that route B, which would bulldoze the middle of Morningside, was not desirable. EHA’s role was also vital because they knew how to take advantage of federal highway policies. Particularly, the consultant’s role was important because their use of professional knowledge enabled Morningsidians to press the legitimacy of their claims.

EHA’s report, “Impact of Interstate 485,” which surveyed how I-485 would affect the Morningside, became a bible for anti-I-485 advocates. It also introduced federal policies that the anti-highway campaign could use to stop the project, or to urge the GADOT to adopt route E, which did not make heavy damages, instead of B. To justify their point, they referred to the Williamsburg Conference and the Sagamore Conference -- the 1958 Conference on Highways and Urban Development—and the 1962 Federal Highway Act and did not care much about the existing environment. The conference and act represented a transformation of planning philosophy for federal expressway projects. In the past, planners and engineers designed the

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27 Historian Raymond Mohl argues that the change of federal freeway policies played an important role in determining the course of highway revolts. Zachary M. Schrag concurs with his argument that “although each city’s freeway revolt was in some senses unique, each took place within the confines of shifting federal policy.” He continues, “In many cases, the outcome of an individual city’s revolt depended as much on current thinking within the federal government as it did on local events.” See Zachary M. Schrag, “The Freeway Fight in Washington D.C.”. Schrag cautions readers about the romanticization of anti-highway movements. The investigation of the grass roots protests produces only a story of dramatic, “colorful protests” which appeal to a romantic, Capra-ensue view of democracy.” Historians, simultaneously, have to look at the “concurrent freeway revolt by Washington elites with in structures, particularly within three presidential administrations.” I agree with the author’s argument concerning the danger inherent in romanticizing the highway revolts. However, my focus is markedly different, because I seek to demonstrate the conservative origin of the highway revolts. Schrag’s quote appears on page 668, of Raymond A. Mohl, “Freeway Revolts in American Cities,” Journal of Urban History 30 (July 2004): 674-706. See also Zachary M. Schrag, The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

routes in terms of efficiency. However, this idea changed during the late fifties. They were now more concerned with how expressways worked in “already existing” urban landscapes. EHA summarized the trend: “It is apparent that federal and state authorities in their placement of new roads are beginning to place greater emphasis on the future of urban development, particularly in the preservation of neighborhoods.” The Federal Highway Act of 1962 urged, the EHA explained, planners and engineers to “exercise… care” so that “neighborhoods were not disrupted.” The report continued, “cutting through school districts, ethnic groups, fire station districts, etc., should be avoided.”

To apply the 1962 Federal Highway Act to their client’s case, first of all, EHA had to show Morningside would deserve the “preservation of neighborhoods.” To do so, EHA emphasized that the neighborhood still maintained a suburban landscape and lifestyle. According to the consultants, the classic suburb succeeded in maintaining “certain fundamental features” (emphasis mine) which “were missing in the now-blighted neighborhoods elsewhere.” The “features” were “unity,” “important public facilities,” and “the integrity of the neighborhood.” The 1966 research paper argued that Morningside had “a great sense of neighborhood” because the area had “the trees, the hills, and bending roads, the parks and the tradition for handsome lawns and flowers.” The “beauty and charm” attested to Morningside’s “great sense of neighborhood pride.” Moreover, the fact that “few houses have been converted to duplexes” was desirable. An increase of apartments would suggest a “dangerous sign,” but Morningside did not have that symptom; it succeeded in conserving a “single family, home

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29 In terms of how much it could “carry heavy traffic volumes at rapid speeds from one point to a series of other points,” according the consultant’s explanation, a highway route was planned.  
31 Ibid., 17.
ownership character.” The EHA concluded, “as long as these characteristics are retained, your neighborhood should be able to survive indefinitely.” Morningside must be conserved because of its suburban character. As discussed in previous chapters, the Perry Homes area contained many multiple-family buildings, but the neighborhood also demonstrated a strong sense of unity.

MLPCA and EHA demanded a postponement of the construction to allow enough time for negotiation and to seek a way not to ruin a good neighborhood, and as an alternative, the firm “recommend[ed] line ‘E,’ which would not go through the middle of Morningside area.”

To bolster the proposal, EHA presented the possibility of an alternative urban life, one which would not require expressways. According to them, the lack of “conservation” would only accelerate the increase in white flight. Atlanta’s indifference to preserving their natural environment produced urban decay and “triggered the flight to the suburbs.” The mushrooming suburban subdivisions in adjacent counties due to this flight produced the demand for expressways. This led to the creation of “sprawling dormitory areas requiring that every morning and evening waves of cars travel long distances to and from in-city jobs.” Those who had left the city “continued to work in the central city,” even if they “moved further and further out,” thus creating the demand for expressways.

The consulting firm devised a measure to “establish an alternative to suburban living.” Conservation constituted a major ingredient of this vision; simultaneously, they endorsed the expansion of urban renewal. The report stated, “We must rebuild the decayed areas into new, highly dense neighborhoods suitable for the best type of living, including the

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 26.
34 Ibid., 11.
35 Ibid., 12.
36 Ibid., 13.
raising of children.” At the same time, the report recommended preserving “the sound close-in neighborhoods, like Morningside, which we now possess.” This was because “[r]ebuilding and protecting these areas” would enable Atlantans to “cut once and for all the lengthening work trip and the total dependence upon the automobile.” This was a manifestation of the notion that Atlanta could preserve middle class neighborhoods like Morningside intact while tearing up “slums” or “decayed” areas. This concept of an “alternative to suburban living” that they developed provided Morningside homeowners with not only a way to legitimize their opposition to the expressway, but also a way to endorse urban renewal and gentrification projects. Again, despite the underlying assumptions, race was ostensibly invisible. The EHA report, for example, did not present any analysis of school integration, despite this being the major factor in white flight. The document provided ways to conserve the neighborhood, described in progressive language. The “alternative to suburban living” was proposed to protect in-town, white suburban life, while at the same time razing the “decayed” areas where blacks resided. Morningside was not the only residential area suffering from what was described as an “identity crisis.” Druid Hills was also struggling to dodge GADOT’s SMF plan.

II. Preserving “a Hanging Garden in Babylon”: The Stone Mountain Freeway and Druid Hills

A concerned Druid Hills man told this story to a WSB interviewer in 1969, when GADOT finally began construction of the Stone Mountain Freeway (SMF):

About 10 years ago, rumors began to go through - the Stone Mountain Expressway. And people began to think, well, why should we fix up our houses and do the things we want to do, build little [ph] houses [Unclear] as the expressway is going to come through. And this

37 Ibid., 15. Emphasis mine.
38 Ibid.
was the beginning of the end for this neighborhood. People just allowed themselves to sort of sit around and wait for the people from the highway department to come out and make offers and so forth and in many cases they did that. And then they got tired of waiting and some of them sold their houses or rented them out and moved off to other areas and the neighborhood experienced a tremendous change in the people that lived out here. And it seems as if one starts, a lot of people will follow.\(^{39}\)

Despite his obvious disappointment, this resident, like the citizens of Morningside, fought not as a lone voice, but rather alongside other residents against the SMF plan. The Druid Hills uprising began around the time when the EHA published their report on behalf of the Anti I-485 campaign in 1968. The Druid Hills residents had a tougher battle than their Morningside counterparts, however, because the SMF plan also had many supporters. Mayor Ivan Allen, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce, and the Stone Mountain Memorial Commission all strongly pushed for the extension of the SMF, which would run “from the Chandler Park area south of Fairview Road, then along the south side of Ponce De Leon Ave., a few hundred feet before Lakeshore and Barton Woods. Then, it will go through the middle of Deep Dane Park to end temporarily near East Leak, spilling traffic into Ponce De Leon and Scott Boulevard.”\(^{40}\)

In Druid Hills, the voices of protest also came from the grass roots. The DHCA, which was founded in 1938 and had long been active, especially in dealing with zoning issues, began serious efforts to halt the SMF in 1968. One such effort started when they attempted to ensure a large turnout for the October 3rd public hearing, after their meager meeting with GADOT and the DeKalb Planning Commission convinced DHCA members that their neighborhood was in real danger. The DHCA sent Druid Hills residents invitations for the hearing, urging them to

\(^{39}\) Wsbn55891, n.d. ca. 1968, reel 1534, 7:17/8:06, 0, b-roll, 8:08, 0, WSB News Collection, Walter J. Brown Media Archives and Peabody Award Collection, the University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA (hereafter cited as WSBNC).

\(^{40}\) Druid Hills Civic Association, Invitation to a Public Hearing at the Courthouse Auditorium, Decatur, October 3, 1968, folder 4, box 4, DHCAR.
show up at the DeKalb County Courthouse because “the best way, perhaps the only way” to kill the SMF plan was “for residents of this area to show up in protest at the hearing in very large numbers, literally hundreds.”

1) Like “Leaving Cancer”: Saving Non-urban, Public Assets

At the hearing and in its letters to GADOT, like its Morningside conterpart the DHCA endeavored to prove that Druid Hills was a prestigious community worthy of protection. This was due to the neighborhood’s long-cherished “public assets,” which made it possible for residents to enjoy a non-urban (i.e., suburban) living environment in the central city. For instance, the DHCA contended that the SMF was undesirable because it would flatten out “a great deal of the very small amount of public land left…, including a greatly used ball field,” and “a natural forest area,” along with “much of the [natural] beauty of Ponce De Leon.” In addition, the SMF would bulldoze “a number of beautifully-kept large homes, homes that are among those which caused a national magazine to include Druid Hills in the ten best residential areas in the nation.” Moreover, the loss of these celebrated assets would lead to “a big detraction from one of the few remaining fine residential areas close to the core of the city.”

As the president of “an association which represents over 3000 homes,” P.M. Prescott fiercely attacked the SMF. She asserted that the SMF would not help to ease the traffic problem, and would serve only to turn Atlanta into a giant asphalt pad. She clearly acknowledged that there was real demand for “the relief of traffic congestion between the inner city” and peripheral areas, including Tucker and Stone Mountain, which were “mushrooming with new homes.” However, while the project itself was not necessarily flawed, the proposed route was entirely

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41 Ibid. Emphasis in original.
42 Ibid.
unacceptable. For Prescott and other DHCA members, the route could instead go through “such an area just south of Decatur,” which was undergoing a rapid racial transition from white to black. In other words, as neighborhoods became increasingly black in racial character, they became increasingly suspect, as well as acceptable targets for destruction in the wake of highways.

These were contrasted to the image of decent, middle-class neighborhoods which were supposedly more deserving of preservation. For Prescott, “Druid Hills is one of the few remaining fine, single family residential areas close to the core of the city.” She and the other DHCA members were also upset by the GADOT plan to build “this nearly one mile long interchange,” which would definitely “affect the character of the neighborhood completely.” The SMF and its interchange would irrevocably change the landscape. Prescott drew on an analogy to the human body. For her, GADOT’s SMF proposal could be “likened to a surgeon's knife that is cutting out the living tissue and leaving cancer.”

DHCA members presented multiple reasons to oppose the SMF, but, like their Morningside counterparts, most of them depended on trying to prove that Druid Hills was fundamentally different from other inner city neighborhoods, despite its proximity. GADOT’s mailbox was packed with letters postmarked from the Druid Hills area; the contents of these writings represented the rise of a certain consciousness in the historical process of the conflicts with boosters, based upon an anti-urban (suburban) landscape. The past DHCA president wrote,

The proposed expressway as presently planned would cut through and ruin one of the few remaining well-kept sections in close proximity to the city proper, a portion of which is located within the city limits. There is more than expediency involved in planning for the future. Before too many years the City of Atlanta will be nothing but concrete and slums. There will be no neighborhoods the city can be proud of because they will have been enveloped by expressways, commercial complexes and ghettos.

43 Ibid.
Not everybody is interested in driving 25 miles or more a day to get to their employment, nor do all of us care to live in apartments just to be close to the city. If our few remaining neighborhoods that are above the average are allowed to be swallowed up by highways, [they will be] closely followed (by necessity) with service stations, motels, and apartment, etc.

Garden clubs in the Druid Hills area, which had a vested interest in the natural beauty of their neighborhood, also sent GADOT a letter, carrying the signatures of 12 housewives, each of whom represented a club. Their letter attempted to take readers on an imaginary trip from downtown to Druid Hills, to show how Druid Hills differed from the decaying city core. The small excursion described how one would begin at “downtown and proceed Eastward, past commercial establishments, service stations, and apartments, some of which are badly deteriorating. The air is polluted, the noise is deafening, and the heat from the concrete is oppressive.” Then the author introduced the reader to Druid Hills along Ponce de Leon Ave., “surrounded by a vista of tall trees, parks, beautiful churches, and lovely homes, both new and old. We can smell the air cleaning, hear the noise diminishing, and feel the coolness of the drop in temperature.”44 As with the other arguments, this imaginary excursion portrayed Druid Hills as a desirable, prestigious, and indispensable residential area by emphasizing its non-urban features.

Among the non-urban/suburban icons deployed in the account, trees and flowers feature as the major ingredients of Druid Hills’ prestige. The imaginary trip continued along until Clifton Road, where readers could “see on our right a strip of parkland on which one of our own garden clubs maintains flowers the year round; on our left, the Druid Hills Gold Club, the landmark which keeps vital and augments a beautiful section of Druid Hills homes.... Cerebral Palsy School..., in the spring are abloom with snowy dogwood and splashed with bright azaleas.”

44 Statement of Mrs. L. L. Richter, n.d., ca., October, 1968, folder 2, box 11, DHCAR.
Then the reader was taken to Deep Dane Park, beautiful gardens, and a “virgin forest…containing redbud, dogwood and hundreds of other kinds of trees, some of which are not found in nearby Fernbank Forest.” In another letter to GADOT, the same woman emphasized the critical importance of Fernbank Forest, where “The extensive woodland…worked [as] sound absorption” between the city and the Druid Hills community. According to the letter-writer, the value of nature there was universal: “tourists, newcomers, and residents come to this section to gaze at and revel in the natural beauty which has been an outstanding asset in the preservation of this high quality residential area.” However, just a few years prior, Fernbank forest was fenced off due to the SMF plan, prompting casternation on the part of the letter-writer: “[T]here is an eight to ten foot fence surrounding it. No longer can one take a leisurely Sunday afternoon stroll down natural paths….”

According to her, the SMF would “deprive Druid Hills, metropolitan Atlanta, the state of Georgia and the country of an irreplaceable economic, social and cultural asset.” For the DHCA, this “asset” consisted of 1) Deep Dane Park, 2) the Fernbank Science Center and Fernbank Forest, and 3) Fernbank Elementary School and Druid Hills High School. At the public hearing, the highway dissenters stressed that these three components worked interdependently to shape a prestigious living environment within the declining urban area. For instance, the former DHCA president commented that Fernbank Forest, “together with a fine residential development could be expected to be mutually supporting in preserving a beautiful area and resisting the intrusion of further development…” Moreover, many attacked the SMF for the danger it would pose to the family environment, particularly, “the safety of our children.”

45 Ibid.
46 Public Hearing, Comments by Dale Hogan and others, n.d., 1968, folder 4, box 4, DHCAR.
47 Ibid.
48 From Mrs. Richter to Lewis Parker, October 3, 1968, folder 4, box 4, DHCAR.
who were studying at Fernbank Elementary School. Mrs. Richter urged the GADOT members to “picture, if you can, teachers in that non-air-conditioned school trying to combat exhaust and the sound of rumbling trucks and speeding cars in order to educate our children. Visualize small children playing within yards of these same vehicles. Do you not find this appalling?” For her, the loss of these assets would mean that “the few remaining private property owners in the city will be forced to suburbia whether we like it or not,” whereupon “the commuting problems and tax structure for the city will become more critical than it is at present.”

The voices of protest got louder and louder. Highway rebels kept up the fight even after the October hearing. With local institutions like Emory University or Fernbank Science Center, V.A. Hospital, and the Center for Disease Control, to draw upon, the DHCA enjoyed the presence of many professionals and intellectuals (“the educators, scientists, and civic minded citizens,”) among its members, and had no difficulty producing a professional voice. Along with Emory and Science Center professors and medical doctors, organizations like Parkwood Garden Club and the League of Women Voters also sent petitions to GADOT’s mailbox. They too saw Fernbank Forest and Deep Dane Park as constituting “a living laboratory for students from far and near, a retreat for all, and one of the glories of Atlanta.”

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49 From Guy Moore to Lewis Parker, October 3, 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR.
50 From Mrs. Richter to Lewis Parker, October 3, 1968.
51 Ibid. Indeed, GADOT’s Lewis Parker acknowledged what made Druid Hills residents furious. He summarized the negotiations between GADOT, the City of Atlanta and other civic associations. Although GADOT had “numerous meetings… held in preparation for the public hearing,” GADOT stated that they could not reach a consensus, and the October 3rd public hearing was devastating because “there was strong objection to the recommended line and its possible future extension.” Particularly, protest “centered around taking Deep Dane Park” was fierce that they had stopped work on the park section altogether and demanded an additional report. See, A History of the Proposed “Stone Mountain Freeway,” n.d., ca., 1968, State Highway Department of Georgia, Division of Urban Projects, folder 4, box 4, DHCAR.
52 From H.L. Kennon to Jim Gilles, Chairman, State Highway Board, October 31, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR.
53 Honor Cobbs to Parker, Nov. 11, 1968.
Agnes Scott College asked Parker why he planned to “place an expressway so as to destroy” the residential area of Druid Hills, which was “unique with its natural beauty.”

DeKalb County Planning Commission’s endorsement of SMF did not lead the rebels to surrender to GADOT. The rebels made use of the rhetoric of Civil Rights and ownership. One resident reproached GADOT for effectively forcing in-town neighborhood residents to live in apartment buildings. He argued that the City of Atlanta clearly wanted “the tax-paying hard working citizens to live in high-rise apartments” and it was “mighty heart breaking to see the destruction of home parks, etc. just to cold concrete.” Likewise, one old lady could not contain her fury, because she had planned to turn her small house into a duplex for young professionals in order to finance her entering a retirement home, a plan that the SMF had totally ruined. She promised to “make a vociferous protest” against the SMF, which she claimed she had a right to do because she had worked for “67 years” and “paid taxes to the City of Atlanta and DeKalb County.” She did not even trust the DHCA, because in her view they had yet to truly work for the people.

Even politically conservatives mailed to support the anti-SMF campaign. One man, a big fan of Lester Maddox, purchased a portion of land where the SMF was supposed to be connected to the I-485. His was a tragic example, because the situation he faced was not the

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54 From Walter B. Posey to Lewis Parker, November 3, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR.
55 As for DeKalb County Planning Commission’s decision, see from William Janigan, DeKalb County Planning Commission to Lewis Parker, October 16, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR. The DeKalb County Planning Commission said in the document that they “examined the report presented by the DeKalb County traffic engineer who recommended this specific route and feels that the plan presently submitted provides the optimum traffic service and the least disruption of the communities of DeKalb County. This proposed route facilitates the movement of people to and from the Stone Mountain Park, the educational complexes located in central DeKalb County and the movement of a large number of citizens employed in the City of Atlanta. Some relief of current traffic congestion on I-85 North would be realized by this immediate construction. The DeKalb County Planning Commission is aware of the disadvantages outlined by these citizens. We feel that these objections are sincere; however, none of the advantages and/or fears are of such magnitude that they cannot be resolved.”
56 From Mrs. Thomas Wheels to Lester Maddox, n.d., ca., October 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR
57 From Maudelle P. Hinton to Lewis Parker, Oct. 29, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR.
first time that he had needed to give up his land to GADOT. He had on a prior occasion purchased a piece of land only to see it bulldozed because of its proximity to the I-285 freeway. The angry resident exclaimed that the highway route had been determined at the “demand of certain people.” He further asserted that “This will no doubt put a damper on the plans of people who have bought up property along the expressway for business, etc…” He concluded his letter by writing, “Apparently the small taxpayer is stepped over in making way for progress.”\(^{58}\) Another individual wrote to Lester Maddox urging him to help kill SMF by using the rhetoric of Civil Rights, arguing that “there must be a better way to get traffic in as far as I am concerned the civil rights of all of these residents are being belated by the state of Georgia!”\(^{59}\)

2) “Change Is Better Than Possible Deterioration”: The Rise of the Pro-Highway Force and Their Counter-Argument

At the same time, however, the DHCA also faced a considerably strong opposition. As mentioned above, Atlanta’s power structure was almost uniformly behind the SMF, and vehemently so. Mayor Ivan Allen, for instance, wrote to GADOT urging “that construction begin on the unfinished portion [of the SMF] at the earliest date possible.”\(^{60}\) Moreover, DeKalb’s commercial civic elite and the planning commission backed the freeway expansion as well. GADOT officials in particular had a pressing reason to push work on the SMF strongly, because any delay meant losing the opportunity to receive a federal grant. They therefore flatly

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58 From Jimmie Bowling to Lewis Parker and Lester Maddox, n.d., 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR.  
59 From Jernigan, Dept of Planning, DeKalb County, to Lewis Parker, Oct. 16, 1968, folder 2, box 11, DHCAR.  
60 From Allen to James L. Gilles, Chairman, State Highway Dept., November 14, 1968, folder 2, box 11, DHCAR.
asserted that to stop construction would “hamper progress” because the SMF was of “vital importance to the continued economic growth of DeKalb County.”

Among business leaders, those who owned businesses in the Stone Mountain Industrial Park (SMIP) formed the engine of the pro-SMF campaign. They saw the SMF as a trigger which would bring prosperity to DeKalb but more importantly would also restore a commercially strong and vibrant city core as in the past. Moreover, the Stone Mountain Memorial Association, and businesses related to the historic enclave Stone Mountain Memorial Park, announced their firm support for the SMF. SPMA mailed a letter to Parker, claiming that Stone Mountain Memorial Park (SMMP) “represents a capitol investment of some 23-1/2 million dollars by the state and private investors.” This park, embracing gigantic carvings of three “Southern Heroes” – Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson, and Jefferson Davis – was due to open in 1971. It was expected to become a major tourist resort, which would “attract approximately 1-1/2 million visitors per year” and would become “the largest single tourist attraction in this area of the state.” To make the project successful, an “additional connection to the freeway system” was paramount. Other letters contended that the State of Georgia had already spent 16.5 million dollars on the historic theme park, while private businesses had contributed another 2.5 million. To be successful, it was paramount to enable “easy access by motor vehicles.” Further, the SMF would also benefit Georgian taxpayers because “the

61 From John S. Fletcher, Jr. to Lewis Parker, October 7, 1968, folder 3, box 11, ser. vii, DHCAR.
62 From S. S. Furse to Lewis Parker, State Highway Engineer, October 7, 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR.
63 On Stone Mountain Memorial Park, see the special issue on the park in DeKalb New Era, May 7, 1970.
64 From George Hunt III, Stone Mountain Memorial Association to Lewis Parker, n.d., ca., October 1968, folder 5, box 11, ser. vii, DHCAR.
completion of this freeway will increase the park’s income from Georgians and out of state visitors to a point where state funds are no longer required.”

These dissenting voices, in fact, revealed how highway rebels’ concept of “the public” or “natural beauty” was highly contested. From the perspective of boosters, the SMF would contribute to the public good because it would help the weak. They also prevented critics from monopolizing the safety issues, arguing that the expressway would actually enable children to avoid the danger of car accidents. DeKalb boosters were not the only ones who stood by highway construction. Many in-town residents also upheld the proposals. For example, a Druid Hills resident wrote to inform GADOT of his support, confessing “surprise” upon seeing “such an intense opposition” at the public hearing held by the Druid Hills Civic Association in 1968. His letter is particularly significant for his comments on the natural environment in Druid Hills. The area, he wrote, simply was not as beautiful and irreplaceable as the DHCA and environmental organizations were asserting. In fact, people had not really cared much about preserving their supposedly beloved environment at all. He insisted that he could not “recall a single expenditure by either the “Druid Hills Corporation” or DeKalb County in the period of over 26 years…in the interest of maintaining the wooded area.” The portion of land affected by the SMF was far from the “handiwork of God.” For him, the place was “somewhat snake infected.” Moreover, the DHCA and the environmental organizations had been suggesting that highway construction would ruin a rare grove of oak-hickory forest, but the author observed that the forest in question contained “seven or eight different species… some not too common but nothing rare.” In short, the forest was just mediocre -- he concluded that “I would not ask

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65 Ben Foreston and Phil Campbell, Stone Mountain Memorial Park, Nov. 13, 1968, folder 5, box 11, DHCAR; Julius A. McCurdy, Decatur Federal and a member of Stone Mountain Memorial Association to Lewis Parker, Nov. 13, 1968, folder 5, box 11, DHCAR.
66 From James M. Shaper to Lewis Parker, November 13, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR.
anyone to traverse it [the woods] from end to end” because, simply put, it was devoid of any distinguishing qualities. In his eyes, the park represented something closer to an environmental hazard. The natural environment was thus a contested terrain — many residents who opposed the highways stressed its authenticity, but even they could not always establish a consensus.

Many supporters believed in the growth of liberalism, and argued from this vantage point. One resident in the Druid Hill area supported the SMF because “changes are occurring everywhere and a beneficial change is better than possible deterioration.” Another resident reproached the dissenters, because without more highways, neighborhood roads would be packed, which would endanger the lives of Atlanta’s citizens. Some supporters even argued that the SMF was vital for the welfare of the poor in central Atlanta. An owner of a Construction Company asserted that the SMF was essential for improving “the welfare of working class people living in [the] inner city.” He argued, “The Stone Mountain Freeway is needed to transport workers and material.” The president of the Trust Company of Georgia also urged the immediate construction of the SMF, because he believed that “mobility is a serious problem for the hard-core unemployed.” He had discovered the fact that “many job opportunities exist in outlying areas which the hard-core unemployed living in the central part of the city were simply unable to reach for practical reasons.” In his view, the SMF would bring with it a greater circulation of the workforce, where demand could better meet supply.

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67 Charles J. Muller to State Highway Dept., Druid Hills Civic Association, box 11, folder 3, DHCAR. 
68 From Morrow to Lewis Parker, October 11, 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR. 
69 From Fortenberry to Lewis Parker, October 24, 1968, folder 3, box 11, DHCAR. 
70 From H.G. Pattillo to Lewis Parker, October 29, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR. 
71 Augustus H. Sterne to Highway Department, November 15, 1968, folder 6, box 11, DHCAR.
3) **On Behalf of the “Public Interest”: Deep Dane Park, Fernbank Science Center, and Fernbank Elementary School**

Both advocates and critics of the SMF plan framed their arguments in terms of what was best for the public. The Pro-highway group argued that the SMF would contribute more to the welfare of the people, and thus it represented a public good. The anti-SMF camp similarly developed a contention that the SMF would go against the “public interest.” They referred to Fernbank Science Center and Deep Dane Forest, and claimed that these represented “the public interest.” It should be noted that Prescott and the DHCA heavily relied on the environment issue to save their neighborhood. Prescott argued that it had been reasonable to bulldoze open spaces and woods for highway construction in the past, but that this was no longer the case. She exclaimed that “changing conditions in Atlanta and indeed in America as observed by one another recently, have created an urgent need for the preservation of open spaces in their natural state.... conservation.” Further, she criticized those who “propose to destroy natural forest and park area and to substitute presently developed residential areas which will supposedly be returned to park use for planting of trees and other foliage.”

Following the hearings, the contents of the many letters became increasingly concerned with nature. One stressed the importance of preserving the Deep Dane Park. The Fernbank Parent and Teachers Association, in a letter endorsed with 25 signatures, asserted that the SMF would “destroy the virgin forest of the DDP and our only community playground.” It continued, “The DDP is also a virgin and primeval forest in that it is a 150 years old forest and has been 'untouched' by man and is a very mature state” and moreover represented a rare “oak-

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73 From Harold Thompson and the Executive Committee of Fernbank Elementary School PTA to Lewis Parker, November 14, 1968, folder 6, box 11, DHCAR.
hickory climax forest” in the Atlanta area. Another letter contended that the SMF “would rob our citizens of the valuable green area we need and desire.” The emphasis on preserving the Deep Dane Park’s natural environment was also supported by the Georgia Conservancy (GC), which in a letter “express[ed] the deep concern of the GC with regard to the routing of the freeway.” In their understanding, the importance of “a green belt area” was becoming increasingly evident “in these days of concrete jungles. Now you propose to take this necessity from our community. This is not progress; it is robbery in my estimation.”

The loud voices of protest, backed by the language of environmental analysis, was not sufficient to change the SMF’s fate. The City of Decatur remained resolute in its approval of the plan, and even “urge[d] its early construction,” because it was “vitally related to the future growth of Decatur and areas to the east.” Neither did GADOT change the main plan, although it did include “beautification projects,” including planting trees along the expressway. They continued to enjoy strong support. Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), an organization of Atlanta’s downtown boosters, was one firm backer, with their pamphlets offering consistent support for the SMF. Robert Bivens attached a statement to some and mailed them to Emory Parrish of GADOT, saying that these documents demonstrated “continuous and strong endorsement of the Stone Mountain Freeway concepts extend[ing] back from many years as evidenced in the newsletters, reports and plans, and Central Atlanta Progress organization.” Basically, CAP and the Uptown Association (UA) claimed that “the growth pattern of Atlanta has been one of a very

74 From Robert Henie, Georgia Council for the Preservation of Natural Areas, to Lewis Parker, November 14, 1968, folder 6, box 11, DHCAR.
75 From Mrs. J. Woodward Perry to Lewis Parker, November 15, 1968, folder 6, box 11, DHCAR.
76 Ibid.
77 From Jack Hamilton, Mayor of Decatur, to Lewis Parker, November 15, 1968, folder 2, box 11, ser. vii, DHCAR.
78 From Glenn S. Hinshaw to Lewis Parker, November 15, 1968, folder 2, box 11, DHCAR.
strong, viable central core, with satellite development radiating out in all directions.”\textsuperscript{79} They saw
the SMF as fitting nicely into this scheme of development.

Along with CAP, business organizations, including UA, made their support for the SMF plan clear. CAP and UA also offered “some observation about neighborhood opposition.” They argued that generally the “integrity” of Druid Hills and “other older, and fine, neighborhoods” should be “preserved.” However, the business associations claimed that at the same time, the interest of Atlanta's downtown was more important and should therefore take priority, because “the future of such neighborhoods depends not only on internal rehabilitation and improvement by the residents but also external forces frequently beyond the control of [the] neighborhood itself.” They also saw the SMF as greatly contributing to the welfare of the central city, while increased accessibility would benefit the “value of older residential sections.” Proper planning, furthermore, would prevent the destruction of the natural environment. They also argued that they knew what the DHCA really feared was the commercialization of the area, claiming that “although not brought out publicly, neighborhood fear frequently comes from the threat of commercialization through poor and ineffective planning and zoning controls.” Proper city planning, on the other hand, would “preserve neighborhood integrity.” They concluded that metropolitan Atlanta was more like the “Metro Atlanta complex.”\textsuperscript{80} Highway constructions will hurt some neighborhoods, but they were necessary sacrifices.\textsuperscript{81} Atlanta’s power structure was in fact quite harsh towards the resistance offered on the part of the old neighborhoods. A real estate and insurance company owner mailed GADOT urging immediate construction of the SMF, and writing that in his view “a number of the opposition [to SMF were] acting in

\textsuperscript{79} From Bivens to Parrish.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
ignorance.” He called on GADOT to consider the interests of “hundreds who will benefit from this [SMF] extension” instead of “some of the residents.”

Simultaneously, the DHCA’s argument became more professional and sophisticated. Jim Cherry, Superintendent of the DeKalb Board of Education, wrote to GADOT, saying that “in locating the Stone Mountain Freeway, the public interest in Fernbank Science Center, Fernbank Elementary School, and Druid Hills School must be protected.” Cherry asserted that protecting Druid Hills against the asphalt invasion would contribute to the welfare of the general public, even people living outside the Druid Hills area. He discussed the October 3rd public hearing, where many school officials “emphasized numerous problems that would be associated with the route.” For example, the route would engender a significant “noise factor and air pollution factor,” while students in Fernbank School and Druid Hills High School would encounter problems with transportation. Cherry also pointed out dramatically that “It is possible to relocate a road; it is possible to replan a road, but it is not possible to grow in our time a primeval forest area such as Fernbank Forest.”

Protecting Fernbank Science Center, Cherry contended, was nothing but an attempt to save the public interest, for “the public interest, which finally is the local, state, and national interest is represented by... the Fernbank Science Center.” Specific issues related to scientific matters were also raised, such as how the increased illumination would harm telescope operations. Indeed, Fernberk Science Center officials appeared on WSB news, insisting that the SMF would ruin their work, for “We anticipate that this would destroy a large number of stars in our sky as far as the observation from the observatory is concerned and very likely render the observatory

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82 From J. T. Morgan to Lewis Parker, December 31, 1968, folder 4, box 11, DHCAR.
useless." Cherry also pointed out that “the forest and the prospered botanical gardens, the birds and other forms of small animal life, and the future development of Fernbank Science Center should be considered.” Jim Cherry continued his letter, again emphasizing that the FSC, represented a “public interest.” He argued that the engineers and planners of the state highway board accepted Druid Hills institutions (schools and science centers etc) as part of the public interest as well. If so, “reconsider the route.”

Fernbank Science Center also undertook research on the likely effects of the SMF. The study revealed that the SMF would be highly detrimental, because the lighting projected from the intersection would blind the telescope. A large complex intersection over 900 feet across was to be situated to the southwest of the observatory at a distance of a mere 2000 feet. The Science Center made its position clear. It urged the route change. Cherry also wrote to Harry Shark (regional federal highway administrator), saying that he knew that the State and Federal Highway engineers would have a meeting to discuss the “location of the Stone Mountain Freeway in proximity to Fernbank forest, Fernbank Science Center, Fernbank Elementary School, and Druid Hills High School.” Cherry urged him to reconsider the route, because “our statement of position represents in the largest sphere a local, state, and national public interest.”

83 Wsbn56187, May 16, 1969, reel 1541, 58:55/1:00:25, 0, WSBNC.
84 Jim Cherry, “Stone Mountain in Freeway in Relationship to Fernbank Science Center, Fernbank Elementary School and Druid Hills School,” May 13, 1969, folder “Stone Mountain Tollway-2,” box 7, Panke M. Bradley Papers, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as PMBP).
85 From Jim Cherry to Lewis Parker, May 21, 1969, folder “Stone Mountain Tollway-2,” box 7, PMBP.
87 From Jim Cherry to Lewis Parker, May 21, 1969.
III. To “Escape the Asphalt Jungle”: Highway Rebels and the MARTA Proposal

However, the DHCA and the MLCPA could not find a breakthrough. The help it had gained from professionals did not make the MLPCA invincible. Route E, which the MLPCA had favored, worked out to be more expensive than any other route.\(^{88}\) In May 1966, the Georgia DOT declared that they would not change their route plan.\(^{89}\) The mayor, aldermen, and the Chamber of Commerce had pressured Morningside residents to sacrifice their property for metro Atlanta’s future.\(^{90}\) To make matters worse, the legal fight against GADOT ended in 1968 with a defeat for the MLPCA. The Supreme Court of Georgia declared that the 1962 Federal Highway Act was not applicable to the Morningside case.\(^{91}\) However, the classic suburbanites were not ready to surrender. They turned to a new tactic, the new public transit proposal – the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. This development, along with the enforcement of the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act in 1970, turned the tide.

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\(^{88}\) For instance, see Supplemental Report on Location Study of I-485, Between Ponce de Leon Avenue and I-85. Feb. 23, 1966, folder 4, box 4, ser. II, RMCP; Project I-485, Fulton County Comparison of Lines in folder 4, box 4, ser. II, RMCP. Some members of MLPCA left the group to organize the Morningside Monroe Civic Association, which was comprised of residents who would be affected by the route E plan (which the MLPCA favored). The MMCA started a fight with the MLPCA. After the DOT set the route, the association was disbanded, and the members then joined the fight against the expressway. Morningside Monroe Civic Association to M.J. Maguire and J.G. Jackson, n.d., 1965, folder 4, box 4, ser. II, RMCP; M.J. Maguire, Morningside-Monroe Civic Association to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, June 14, folder 4, box 4, ser. II, RMCP; “Morningside Group Splits in I-485 Flight,” Atlanta Constitution, June 9, 1965.


\(^{90}\) Thank you note, from Pauline Baker to Cook, July 9, 1966, folder 4, box 4, ser. II, RMCP.

\(^{91}\) In their state Supreme Court case, the MLPCA contended that route B was “contrary to a portion” of the 1962 Federal Highway Act because their plan did not consider local interests. The Supreme Court of Georgia responded that the act would work effectively only between the DOT and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads. The FBPR could refuse to provide federal appropriation for state projects that did not abide by the regulation. In the case of the I-485’s case, however, they could not apply the rule because the FBPR had already given the money to GADOT. In short, it was too late. The MLPCA also claimed that GADOT had “coerced” Allen and the aldermen into supporting route B. The court declined, saying that the claim was “unsupported by any facts.” Morningside-Lenox Park Civic Association, Inc. at el vs. State Highway Department, 224 Ga. 344 (Supreme Court of Georgia, 1968).
As discussed in previous chapters, the making of MARTA required a metro-wide political mobilization. The outcome of those referenda, though successful, showed the metro-wide mobilization was far from a success. In particular, white suburban counties—Cobb, Gwinnett, and Clayton—all refused to participate in the experiment. Despite the suburban counties’ rebellion against public transit, North and Northeastern Atlanta’s white neighborhoods, including Morningside, Buckhead, and Ansley Park, continued to support public transit. Larry Keating contended that they voted for public transit because those areas were “dominated by the city’s white business elites.” This was not the only reason. Morningsidians advocated MARTA because it would help their battle against I-485. Backing the public transit proposal enabled them to argue that they no longer needed the expressway. The establishment of the public transit network did not require massive destruction of neighborhoods, for it could use existing railroad tracks and highways. In addition, supporting public transit enabled them to claim that they were fighting for the general welfare of Atlanta. According to the advocates, their support of public transit itself proved their civic engagement, which enabled them to argue that they represented Atlanta’s public.

The anti-expressway forces were aware of the power of the MARTA plan from the early stages of their battle. In fact, it is easy to discover claims demanding rapid transit as an alternative to the I-485. However, Morningside home owners support of MARTA became

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92 See “Rapid Transit Falling Behind,” Atlanta Constitution, November 6, 1968. The article confirmed, “Heavy votes for the transit proposal among upper-income whites in northern sectors of Atlanta did not appear strong enough to overcome negative votes in almost every other city area.” In Atlanta, 58 percent of the votes were against MARTA. “Rapid Transit Fails By Heavy Margin” Atlanta Journal, November 6, 1968.

93 Keating, Atlanta, 122.

94 For example, the first president of the MLPCA, Al Kuettner, issued a manifesto entitled “Regarding the Proposed Construction of Interstate I-485,” which referred to New York’s subway system as “the real solving” of the war against expressways. It would be easy for Atlanta, for it was located at a “1000 feet altitude.” There was not even a “water problem” like that in NYC. Why not have public transit, then? The City of Atlanta also looked at public transit as an alternate to freeways. Rodney Cook kept a 1965 statement from the Public Works Committee of Atlanta’s Board of Aldermen stressing the urgent necessity of public transit in
evident after they lost the 1968 legal fight. Eric Hills Associates, also as a client of MARTA, published a 1968 *Corridor Impact Study* (with the Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Commission) as we discussed in previous chapter. In the report, EHA stressed how rapid transit would contribute to the conservation of neighborhoods. “The dilemma of transit” was, according to the EHA report, that “it must serve people where they live but still not destroy their local residential environment.” A commuter railway, according to the consultant, could solve the problem. The study boasted, “in most cases … it was found… rapid transit could avoid damaging identifiable neighborhoods.”95 This advice from the very same professionals they had hired was obviously what Morningside and Druid Hills residents wanted to hear.

While attacking GADOT for its lack of environmental consideration, the MLPCA zeroed in on the 1971 MARTA referendum to be held in November. The DHCA, which had already pushed the rapid transit idea in 1968, also joined the pro-rapid transit campaign. At the October 3rd public hearing, the DHCA’s Prescott asked GADOT about “the considerations of mass-transit coordination.” She urged them to “coordinate its plan with Metropolitan Area

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95 “The Corridor Impact Study,” folder 4, box 45, MMC, MSS 619. However, Eric Hills also made a suggestion to use the construction as a renewal project. The most controversial one was a plan called Buckhead Alternate, which proposed creating a station in the business district in the midst of a wealthy white neighborhood in North Atlanta. The Buckhead business district was not close to the existing railway line; thus, the plan proposed bulldozing houses and parks in the neighborhood to make room for the route and station. Facing massive opposition, MARTA gave up the Buckhead Alternate immediately. This, however, did not weaken the northern neighborhoods’ support for the rapid transit. Simultaneously, the report urged MARTA to “establish a strong tie with urban renewal programs.” It proposed that the construction of the East and West line would have to contribute to the renewal of the eastern part of Atlanta. Voices against the destruction of the blacks’ neighborhood were ignored in this process. In this sense, the report was obviously conservative. For further information on the Buckhead Alternative, see News from MARTA, folder: “Public Hearings- Buckhead Alternate – August 15, 1968,” box 69, MMC.
Transportation Authority [sic].‖ However, their effort did not take the idea of public transit seriously enough to be effective. The news that MARTA was defeated in 1968 pleased the pro-SMF businessmen. Moreover, the 1968 MARTA defeat helped Central Atlanta Progress to argue that the SMF was necessary, because it could assert that “the recent defeat of rapid transit further postpones the solution and compounds the problem, thereby making it more urgent than ever that the already planned arterials be expedited as quickly as possible.”

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce’s president concurred, saying that “there is no other rational answer since the Atlanta area had temporarily rejected Rapid Transit.” Facing these remarks, the DHCA was not in a position to respond effectively. Lacking rhetorical ammunition, they were forced to fall back on statements like “it would seem wise… to encourage property owners to live close into Atlanta in areas that are pretty and well-kept like Druid Hills.”

1) Not “To Be Controlled by Freeway”: The 1971 MARTA Referendum and I-485

However, the 1971 referendum totally changed the climate, along with the rise of Bass Organization for Neighborhood Development (BOND) as a strong grass-roots political force. The organization was born in 1968. Three years of their serious effort succeeded in reviving the decaying neighborhoods, including Inman Park, Candler Park and East Lake. The 60s style activism brought many affluent whites into the area as well. BOND played a critical role in unifying the neighborhoods that were facing the highway construction in. They did so by vehemently demanding mass transit, portraying themselves as the progressive urban public, who

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97 From Robert W. Bivens to Emory Parish, November 15, 1968.
98 From W. Warren to Lois Parker, November 18, 1968, folder 6, box 11, ser. VII, DHCAR.
99 From Betty Robinson to Lewis Parker, November 11, 1968, folder 4, box 11, ser. VII, DHCAR.
100 As for Inman Park’s economic, racial, and housing characteristics, see Table A.1.2. in Appendix.
101 Stone, Regime Politics, 82-83.
respected nature, diversity, and mutual aid. Their language, obviously gave a huge impact on MLPCA and DHCA’s grass-roots campaign.

The neighborhoods cooperation became apparent in the Summer of 1971, when families in Atlanta received a flyer taking about the danger of “Atlanta’s problems with freeways.” BOND, Morningside, Druid Hills, and Virginia Highland’s organizations united and sent out this flyer to every home in the area. Morningside and Druid Hills started to work together against the GADOT. They portrayed themselves as a champion of the public by viewing the DOT as a destroyer of American way of life and the riches’ tool to expand their power. The document tried to sell the idea of “a total comprehensive transportation system,” which would “downgrade dependence on the freeway system.” Along with the topics like “pollution” and “community disruption,” the author also expanded the subject to the class issue, arguing that highways and tollways help widen the gap between car-owners and auto-less people. It said, tollways and expressways would only provide, “One-sided service: Only car owners can use freeways. The poor, sick and elderly as well as the many who don't want to drive, need alternatives to freeways.” BOND also emphasized that anti-highway campaign was a national movement, which was occurring in Toronto, New Orleans, Boston and San Francisco. The paper asked, “WANT TO CHANGE ALL THIS? PEOPLE HAVE THE WILL AND ABILITY TO ACT RATHER THAN BE CONTROLLED BY THE FREEWAY.” (emphasis in original)102

Thanks to the help of other grass-roots organizations, the MLPCA’s 1971 manifesto ensured their support for the MARTA proposal, and explained the pressing need for public transit. According to the document, Atlanta now could boast that it had “one of the world’s busiest

102 Stranglehold on Metro Atlanta, Proposed Atlanta Freeway System as Adopted by the Atlanta Area Transportation Study Committee, folder “I-485,” box 7, Panke M. Bradley Papers, MSS 566, Emory University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as PMBP).
airports and a rail network,” but the horrible state of auto traffic was ruining its reputation.\textsuperscript{103} Atlanta “inexorably moves toward repeating the environmental and demographic mistakes of older cities.” “Tacky development” was bringing an uncontrolled urban sprawl.\textsuperscript{104} The construction of Interstate 485 would be a “grave mistake,” representing Atlanta’s reckless sprawl. It would be a disaster “not only for our neighborhood, but for the City of Atlanta itself.”\textsuperscript{105} Morningside homeowners contended that Atlanta left its sprawl uncontrolled and unleashed its concrete monster because the planning process lacked the input of citizens. Atlanta’s neighborhoods were the victims of “A LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND A LACK OF CITIZEN-GENERATED GOALS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT.” “OUR CONCERN,” MLPCA continued, “IS TO MAKE SURE THAT CITIZENS HAVE A REAL VOICE IN MAKING THE PUBLIC DECISIONS AFFECTING OUR LIVES.” Expressways had “determined the shape of our city” because there had been no “public mandate.”\textsuperscript{106}

The city was only benefiting the suburban countians, because they were not hearing the voices of Atlanta’s public. Furthermore, the MLPCA argued that expressway construction that was not supervised by the citizens brought “white flight,” which was now “Atlanta’s most pressing problem.” The construction of freeways enabled citizens to enjoy a “wider choice in their home location.” No wonder, then, many decided to choose “low density living in suburbs.” The increase of “urban costs” like “crime, poverty, pollution, and blight” and the idea of “economic and racial discrimination” accelerated the number of refugees leaving the city.\textsuperscript{107}

Those urban refugees eventually would feed the concrete monsters; they would demand more

\textsuperscript{103} Morningside Lenox Park Civic Association, n.d., 1971, series II, b, box 5, folder 2, RMCP.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
Eric Hills Associates’ 1966 report found the origin of white flight in the failure of city government to conserve in-town middle-class neighborhoods. MLPCA, here, stressed suburbanites’ autonomy in determining where to live. It was their private decision; the construction of the expressway unleashed their desire to be released from a public duty facing “urban cost. Whereas suburban countians chose to leave city, Morningsidians did not. They were the ones who chose to stay in the city, determined to tackle urban problems.

The solution was, according to the MLPCA, to enable the public to participate in the planning process. They defined the public as urbane and culturally diverse. According to Morningside homeowners, they were the ones who represented the public. The MLPCA argued that Morningside was a “vital and energetic ‘melting pot’ neighborhood with an economic, age level, and ethnic mix important to this city.”108 Thus, in-town residents differed from the racially and economically homogeneous residents of suburban counties. The MLPCA also rebuked suburban countians, because their demand for I-485 represented their indifference to urban affairs because the construction would lead to the “loss” of an authentic “urban neighborhood” that embraced cultural and ethnic diversity.

The MLPCA portrayed automobiles as a symbol of private interest while describing MARTA as a representation of the urban public. “What happened to public transportation?” the report asked. “More people drove cars because of its convenience. The demand for public transit declined, leading to the cut of the services.” MLPCA argued that this contributed to the spread of social conflicts. The “interests” of the “citizens who can’t afford autos” would be

108 Ibid. Morningside has a Greek Orthodox Church, Synagogue, and Roman Catholic Churches. The 1960 Census Tract shows that the Morningside area actually contained so-called “new immigrants.” 27% of the residents were categorized as “foreign stock.” People from Germany (36), Poland (309), Czechoslovakia (29), Austria (52), Hungary (26) and U.S.S.R (543), and Italy (36) accounted for 73% of the “foreign stock.” Only 3.1% of SMSA’s population was counted as foreign stock. U.S. Census Bureau, “General Characteristics of the Population By Census Tract, Table P-1” in Census Tract. Atlanta GA, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, 1960, Census of Population & Housing (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963).
“lost in the shuffle: reduced service at higher prices.” This would result in “more frustration, more alienation, more social inequality.” As a part of an urban public, Morningside residents should not tolerate increasing social inequality. Rapid transit, on the other hand, represented their community-- public, diverse, tolerant, and environmentally conscious.

MLPCA scolded the selfishness of suburban countians and urged them to “return to the city.” They argued, “WE ENVISION A RETURN TO THE CITY” where people “use CBD (central business district)” and “rejuvenate the core city.” Public transit, not expressways, would make this possible. “With a high level of mass transit services, accessibility to the CBD can be improved.” Morningside, once claiming to be a luxurious white suburbia, now identified themselves as urbanites. They were the ones who represented the public and the city. They urged the immediate construction of public transit. “WE ASK WHO DECIDES AT WHAT POINT TO STOP CONGESTION AND OFFER MASS TRANSIT… WHY NOT NOW??????” Their statement ended with a plea. “WE SAY AGAIN, WE HAVE CHOSEN ATLANTA. WE HAVE VOTED FOR YOU, PAY OUR TAXES, SUPPORT, AND LOVE THIS CITY. WE EXPECT ATLANTA TO SUPPORT US. WE HOPE TO SAVE THIS CITY.”

MLPCA raised their voices of protest in public spaces. Newspapers, radio, and courthouse were not the only venue for them. Freeways and public roads also constituted an important space for getting their voice heard. In 1971, drivers would have witnessed the protest of highway rebels while cruising highways. MLPCA distributed a bumper sticker, saying “ATLANTA, YES, I-485, NO.” This slogan showed that the advocates of the Morningside rebellion epitomized those who loved the city, respected diversity, and engaged in improving the public good. I-485, on the other hand, implied something un-Atlanta, something private,

110 Ibid.
destructive, an anti-urban force. One would also come across MARTA bumper stickers that said, “Escape the Asphalt Jungle!” “Traffic Kills Cities too!” MARTA supporters sold themselves as an anti-highway agent.

While attacking GADOT for its lack of environmental consideration, neighborhood organizations zeroed in on the MARTA referendum, which was held in November, 1971. In their pamphlets, public hearings and festivals, wealthy in-town whites argued that MARTA was the panacea for the social and environmental problem. Those who opposed MARTA in adjacent counties regarded MARTA as Atlanta’s attempt to complete racial integration by dispersing African Americans all over the Metro area. The public transit, therefore, would threaten their private life. Thus, they attacked MARTA as un-democratic and un-American. On the other hand, for Morningsidians and Druid Hills residents, suburban countyians were un-democratic because of their apathy for public matters. As Adam Rome discovers, they were

112 MARTA Bumper Stickers, Wood and Associates Collection [unsorted], Richard B. Russell Library for Political and Studies Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.
113 Karpel to Gov. Cater, Oct 1968, Director Lance, Hasher, folder “Tollway Gov. Commission,” box 7, PMBP. MLCPA’s request for donations for the legal fight accompanied a nine-page brochure of cartoons and captions about how the rest of the nation, and even the world, was battling against highway construction. In the pamphlet, they stressed rapid transit’s role as an environmentally friendly means of transportation. MLCPA argued that un-supervised expressway construction encouraged “white flight,” which was now “Atlanta’s most pressing problem.” The construction of freeways enabled citizens to enjoy a “wider choice in their home location.” No wonder, then, many decided to choose “low density living in suburbs” over urban living. The increase of “urban costs” like “crime, poverty, pollution, and blight” and the idea of “economic and racial discrimination” accelerated the increase of refugees leaving the city. Morningsidians were the opposite. They were the ones who chose to stay in the city, determined to tackle urban problems as a sign of Morningsidians civic engagement. DHCA made the same argument. They urged people not to consider DHCA as a radical, “anti-group.” They always “backed proposal for improvements… not only for Druid Hills but all of DeKalb County.” MARTA was nothing but such a radical measure. MLCPA portrayed automobiles as a symbol of private interest and viewed MARTA as a representation of the urban public. “What happened to public transportation?” the report asked. “More people drove cars because of its convenience. The demand for public transit declined, leading to the cut of the services.” MLCPA argued that this contributed to the spread of social conflicts. The “interests” of the “citizens who can’t afford autos” would be “lost in the shuffle: reduced service at higher prices.” This would result in “more frustration, more alienation, more social inequality.” As champions of an urban public, Morningside residents would not tolerate increasing social inequality. That way, they supported the MARTA proposal. Rapid transit represented their community – diverse, tolerant, and environmentally conscious. They urged the immediate construction of public transit in order to reform their society.
talking about “the imbalance between private wealth and public poverty” and demanded a reform, demanding a bigger government.\textsuperscript{114} In the rise of the suburban conservatism, Morningside and Druid Hills’ white middle class were determined to play the role of champion of the public, and Atlanta.

The same thing happened in Druid Hills due to cooperation between the neighborhoods. After MARTA’s victory in the 1971 referendum, highway rebels continued to argue that expressways were unnecessary because of MARTA. The MLPCA was luckier than the DHCA in this regard, because the I-485 was a federal project. By then, to construct an expressway with federal money had become increasingly difficult due to the environmental legislations passed in the late 1960s. In particular, Richard Nixon’s Republican administration had enacted the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in 1969, the so-called “environmental full disclosure law.” This act, which required a “‘detailed [environmental] statement’ to accompany… major [federally funded] actions,” enabled MLPCA to sue GADOT for not conducting any research concerning the I-485’s impact on the neighborhoods’ environment.\textsuperscript{115}

In its complaint, the MLPCA (plaintiff) argued that it was obvious that the I-485 would ruin environmental assets, such as “parks, natural streams,” and “various trees” from “beech” to “rare flowers as toad trillium, wild hydrangea, climbing hydrangea, wild geranium, mayapple, flame azalea, wild ginger and sweet shrub,” in the area. Moreover, the expressway would also produce “extremely hazardous conditions,” while “Litter, noise pollution, air pollution, water pollution” that accompanied the construction and the management of the expressway would lead...\textsuperscript{114} Adam Rome, \textit{Bulldozing the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{115} Regarding the vital role of the suburban middle class in the making of NEPA, see Adam Rome, \textit{The Bulldozer in the Countryside}; Middle-class orientation of the environmental movement is also discussed by Samuel Hays. See, Samuel Hays, “Three Decades of Environmental Politics: The Historical Context,” in Samuel Hays, \textit{Explorations in Environmental History} (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 334-78).
to “the complete destruction of the natural ecological balance.” Supporting MARTA fortified the appeal of the MLPCA, because the commuter railway would not ruin the environment and the operation would not produce any pollution. The MLPCA was also able to blame GADOT for adamantly keeping to their plan in spite of possessing an “alternative,” which was more environmentally friendly.  

In fact, 1971 was a good year for the MLPCA overall. They won the MARTA referendum as well as a legal fight. The Federal Circuit Court’s decision favored the plaintiff, and ordered GADOT to adhere to the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act. Consequently, GADOT could not begin construction until they turned in their environmental impact study. The Georgia DOT submitted an Environmental/Section 4(f) Statement to the Department of Federal Highway Administration in July 1972, which still recommended the I-485’s construction. However, the Federal DOT did not accept the study – their determination to refuse the report stemmed from the interracial cooperation among the neighborhoods, which was a great news for the neighborhood groups.

According to intown neighborhood groups, this success represented a victory of their interracial cooperation under the ACTC. When GADOT asked the Greiner Environmental Systems to conduct an environmental research assessment for the I-485, anti-expressway forces knew that the company would do it as a favor for GADOT. Consequently, the ACTC, including BOND, the Virginia Highland Civic Association, the MLCPA, and Inman Park Group all sent

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116 Complaint, Morningside vs. John A. Volpe, Secretary of the DOT and Bert K Lance, Director of the Georgia State Highway Department, folder 2, box 5, ser. II, RMCP.
117 Ibid., 3.
119 Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, prepared by State of Georgia, Dept., of Transportation, Highway Division, Environment/Section 4(f) Statement Georgia Project, I-485-1 (43) PE, I-485-1(46) R/W, Atlanta, Fulton County, July 1971, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.
their representatives to Washington to meet with Federal Department of Transportation officials. Thinking ahead, they took former SCLA activist Andrew Young (congressman) with them, and he enabled the neighborhood groups to meet General B. Davis, who had been the first black Air Force general. Luckily, Davis was quite sympathetic to the anti-highway forces. On the other hand, pro-highway camps dispatched GADOT officials, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and Atlanta Regional Commission representatives, and planners from Greiner Environmental Systems, but they apparently failed to make as strong an impression as the anti-highway forces. Moreover, the fact that GADOT already spent $20,000,000 federal grant helped the opposition, because GADOT would not be able to turn it the highway into a state tollway. Greiner Environmental Systems, then recommended that the I-485’s route be changed in order to reduce the amount of damage to the area’s natural environment. Additionally, given the fact that the confiscation of property had already begun based upon the existing route plan, an abrupt change in route was impossible; thus, the statement marked none other than Georgia DOT’s failure to implement the I-485 plan. The anti-highway rebels appeared to have scored a major victory in their long campaign.

2) Saving Nature and Community: The Stone Mountain Tollway and MARTA

Thus, the I-485 plan was stalled, and the MLPCA was left in a strong position. On the other hand, the DHCA went through a tougher time. GADOT changed the Stone Mountain Freeway into a tollroad in 1972. This totally changed the game, because converting the federally assisted freeway into state-financed tollroad would enable GADOT to sidestep the

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120 Ibid.
121 The change was proposed in 1970. GADOT explained them that a tollroad would enable GADOT to obtain more revenue and carry out quicker planning. Furthermore, it could slightly change the route in such a way that it would not go through Deep Dane Park after all, but the opposition continued nonetheless. (“Stone Mountain Freeway Being Planning As Toll Road,” DeKalb New Era, March 26, 1970).
environmental standards altogether, and the highway could be built without any regard for the surrounding social and economic structures. However, the difficult prospects facing their grass-roots fight provided in-town neighborhoods with a chance to develop their rhetoric and emphasize the conservation of their non-urban/suburban lifestyle in which the landscape played such a vital role. While the MLPCA had been able to sue and defeat GADOT for their lack of compliance with NEPA, this strategy would not work for the SMT. Instead, MARTA played a much more important role in empowering the DHCA and other rebels in their struggle.

Many saw their fight against the SMT as none other than a battle for democracy. Seeking to establish a solid alliance in the pursuit of this goal, BOND, the DHCA, the Decatur Civic Association, the MLPCA, and the Virginia Highland Civic Association, with help from environmental groups like Save America’s Vital Environment (SAVE) and the Georgia Conservancy (GC), formed a Stone Mountain Freeway Action Group. They then cooperated to attack the toll road plan more effectively. SAVE asserted that the Tollroad Authority was not a democratic institution. According to them, the Tollroad Authority was not “accountable to the people” because of the fact that the citizens did not have the right to elect the members. More importantly, tollroad plans were not required to go through public hearings, since they were in no need of federal assistance.

Of course, the major contention was that the Stone Mountain Tollway would conflict with MARTA over passengers. BOND asserted in their own report,

122 “Proposed Toll Road Legislation, Jan. 12, 1972, folder “Expressways,” box 7, PMBP; “Tollroad Bitterly Attacked,” DeKalb New Era, January 13, 1872; GADOT carried out an environmental impact study on the SMF, which “showed clearly that building the SMF would be highly detrimental to the environment[1],” which prompted GADOT to reject it and instead request another environmental survey from a planning consultant, J.E. Greiner Co, which was pro-highway construction. ACTC, “Toll Road Fact Sheets,” folder 9, box 4, ser. II., DHCAR.

123 See for instance, Mrs. Chales Yam, Jr., Save America’s Vital Environment, Legislative Scope and Weakness of Proposed Toll Bridge Authority, January 6, 1972.
In the Atlanta area, some of the toll roads proposed, such as the Stone Mountain Tollway, will closely parallel a major radical rapid transit line. This would result in competition between the transit line and the toll road for available patronage and could damage the financial returns of both. Rapid transit is the clear choice of DeKalb and Fulton County voters. Where is proof of popular demand of tollroads? Or indeed any evidence that they are needed in areas to be served by rapid transit? The Board of MARTA has acknowledged that its own requirements -- use of lanes for rapid bus lines, for example -- are not dependent of freeway construction.\(^{124}\)

Simultaneously, the Chattahoochee Chapter of the Sierra Club emphasized that “rapid transit offers the valid alternative to more highways, chosen by the voters,” along with the fact that rapid transit would solve the problem of air pollution caused by expressways. According to them, automobiles would cause more “diseases such as asthma, emphysema, lung cancer, and respiratory ailments,” and moreover, “worsen already existing diseases and over an extended period…affect… even those of us who are healthy.” Referring to the cases in Southern California, the Sierra Club repeatedly contended that mass transit was the only way to avoid these environmental menaces and create an environment conducive to healthy urban living.

They argued that “The citizens don’t want these highways and ensuing problems forced upon them by ‘the pavers.’ State and Federal monies allocated for these highways could be far better utilized for rapid transit.” The Sierra Club also emphasized that MARTA would just end up being “a large, expensive white elephant,” if GADOT kept constructing roads.

Meanwhile, the Georgia Conservancy, particularly their Stone Mountain Freeway Action Group, called for GADOT to conduct thorough research on “the impact of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which will reduce the need for expressways.”\(^{125}\) Fernbank Science Center officials, mentioned above as concerned about their telescope, also asserted that the expressway would make the area brighter because it would erase “large amount of natural


\(^{125}\) Chattahoochee Chapter, Sierra Club, Statement, January 6, 1972, folder “Expressways,” box 7, PMBP.
vegetation and tree cover in the Druid Hills Community.” Moreover, the asphalt would “heat” the air, which would “cause turbulence, dust and pollution to the airways around the Observatory.” This would have the effect of further deteriorating the institution’s research environment.

The support of BOND, Morningside residents, and Druid Hills residents for MARTA galvanized the white middle class homeowners in metro Atlanta. Most suburban county residents, on the other hand, did not favor the idea of public transit. For them the MARTA proposal symbolized the expansion of governmental power and an increasing tax burden. They viewed it as the first stage of the rise of a sort of metro Atlanta “super government.” In other words, suburban county residents overwhelmingly viewed MARTA as a sort of conspiracy by Atlanta to expand its political power at their expense.126 As discussed in the previous chapter, race also provoked suburban counties’ hostility towards public transit. Conservatives in adjacent counties regarded MARTA as an attempt by Atlanta to complete racial integration by dispersing African Americans all over the metropolitan area.127 Public transit, therefore, would substantially threaten their private life. Therefore, they attacked MARTA as fundamentally both un-democratic and un-American. On the other hand, for Morningside residents, Druid Hill residents, and BOND members, it was not MARTA, but the suburban county residents who were un-democratic, because of their blatant apathy for public matters. In the rise of the suburban conservatives, Morningside’s white middle class were determined to play the role of

126 See Rutheiser, Imagineering Atlanta, 156-58; Bayor, Race, 194; Keating, Atlanta, 123-28. The conservatism in suburban counties must be distinguished from that of the Morningside residents. That of the suburban county residents was explicitly political in character, while that of the Morningside residents was not. Suburban county residents refused to pay taxes for the welfare of the city, and expressed this position by embracing the ideas of the Republican Right. On the other hand, Morningside residents were politically liberal, and willing to contribute to the city’s welfare. However, it is important to recognize that they had to be so in order to preserve their neighborhood as a middle class, white community. Their support of MARTA clearly reflects this.
champion of the public, and of Atlanta – ironically, to save their suburban life inside the city limits.

Young white activists in groups like BOND and settled in decaying neighborhoods like Virginia Highland and Inman Park joined the MLPCA and the DHCA in their anti-freeway campaign, creating the Coalition of Community Organization, which in turn became the Atlanta Coalition of Transportation Crisis in 1972. The ACTC worked as an umbrella organization of neighborhood organizations, raising money for legal fights, carrying out environmental research, and organizing fund-raising talks. Then consistently worked towards a more democratic transportation system.\textsuperscript{128} It was therefore not surprising that they staunchly supported MARTA. The ACTC asserted that Atlanta had no need for both a tollroad and public transportation, pointing out that “[Georgia] citizens are already paying for highways through federal and state highway taxes. DeKalb and Fulton citizens will be paying an additional tax for rapid transit. A further tax in the form of tolls creates an inequitable tax burden on these citizens.”\textsuperscript{129} Moreover, according to them, “ACTC seeks to ensure MARTA’s success as an alternative to urban deterioration for which it blames the intrusion of freeways and proliferation of the automobile.”\textsuperscript{130}

MARTA was increasingly presented as a more effective solution than the SMT. MARTA would “move more people in less time, freeing exiting road ways for most efficient transportation of goods and services.”\textsuperscript{131} BOND member Panke M. Bradley, who became an alderperson of the City of Atlanta, succeeded in tabling a resolution to condemn the SMT,

\textsuperscript{128} Press Release, February 21, 1972, folder 10, box 4, ser. II, DHCAR.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
emphasizing how heavy reliance on automobiles would ruin the health of society.\textsuperscript{132} According to the resolution, the “private auto” gave people “great mobility.” However, its “uncontrolled use,” particularly in “dense urban areas,” would turn the machine into a menace: not only would it promote “pollution,” but moreover, the resolution emphasized, it would lead to “community fragmentation,” and the “increased isolation of the transit dependent — the poor, the sick, and the elderly” as well as “class and racial isolation.” The resolution therefore urged “no further acquisition and destruction of property along the proposed route of I-485 and the Stone Mountain Freeway, “particularly when Metropolitan Atlanta was embarking on a new experiment to build “M.A.R.T.A… a massive public transit system which can provide a viable alternative to the auto.”\textsuperscript{133}

Broadly speaking, their objective was to revive their community, and many local residents of the non-urban lifestyle around BOND joined the revolt precisely because they believed it would empower them to protect their lifestyle within the city limits. The DHCA, with ACTC assistance, persuaded state governor Jimmy Carter, who had been supportive of GADOT, to change his mind and form the Stone Mountain Tollway Commission (SMTC) to reconsider the tollway project. The commission held several meetings and a public hearing in Stone Mountain on Nov. 27, and in Decatur on Dec. 6th, 1972. Anti-SMT people, supported by BOND, SAVE, and the ACTC, packed Stone Mountain High School in Stone Mountain and Carl G. Renfroe Middle School in Decatur.\textsuperscript{134} The latter meeting was particularly lively, because the Decatur City Commission, which had supported the initial SMF plan, was officially opposed to the SMT. In advance of the hearing, the chairman of the SMTC, Robin Harris,

\textsuperscript{132} Proposed Resolution, Atlanta Board of Alderman, n.d., 1972, folder “Expressways,” box 7, PMBP.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
received numerous letters from the affected area. Most of them insisted that Atlantans no longer needed a tollway because they were going to have a public transit. As far as they were concerned, rapid transit would contribute more to the public, and it had already passed the 1971 referendum, which would start construction. This was the prevailing argument, and it clearly reflected the standard anti-SMT rhetoric as outlined above. Druid Hills’ urban planner Frederick Kerpel reiterated that the SMT was unnecessary because its planning had commenced when “a MARTA system was just barely in sight.”

However, the anti-SMT forces continued to develop their argument in terms of the non-urban or suburban advantages inherent in their inland community. Kerpel, the ex-DHCA president, argued that it was completely misguided to build “a highway that serves primarily the outlying suburban area and an assortment of shopping centers.” It was further detrimental when the tollway in question required bulldozing the prestigious and classic in-town neighborhoods — including Druid Hills. According to the urban planner, developments in Druid Hills constituted an exceptional case; “Druid Hills was “one of the few close in neighborhoods that has felt, but countered, the adverse effect of urbanization.” For instance, he presented as an evidence the fact that many multiple-residence buildings in the area had been converted into single-residence use. This occurred because of a sharp increase in the number of young professionals – employed or studying at the Center for Disease Control, Emory University, Veterans Administrations Hospital, and the Fernbank Science Center – who demanded homes in the Druid Hills area due to its amenity. Moreover, the neighborhood had the DHCA functioning as the heart of the community, making the area more socially cohesive. Kerpel emphasized that this cohesiveness did not, however, turn the community into a radical “anti-group.”

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135 Emphasis mine.
to him, Druid Hills “consistently backed proposals for improvement along with bond elections” – and in particular, MARTA.

Many Decatur citizens joined the anti-SMT forces. Pro-tem mayor Mrs. C. Howard Leveritt claimed that public transportation was vital for solving the rift between the haves and have-nots, framing the issue in terms of necessary social justice. “Good transportation is necessary for the improvement of many urban areas,” continued the mayor, “It is vital to persons for whom private transportation is unavailable and uneconomical.” Her reasoning for supporting MARTA, however, was fundamentally grounded in socially conservative values. MARTA was deemed necessary because it would stop the construction of the SMF which was slated to raze one of the white neighborhoods. According to Mayor Leveritt, her classic city was suffering from “problems as a transitional area, moving from 20% black students to 65% within the past eight years.” In order to maintain the current racial balance, which was responsible for the “great degree of peace and harmony” enjoyed by the community, Decatur was making tremendous efforts for “redevelopment and new construction,” which were so successful that “white citizens with small children were now moving back to Decatur.” However, she cautioned, the proposed tollway would force out approximately 100 white residents, “thus destroying” their endeavors “at regaining racial balance in our schools.”

WSB recorded many perspectives on the issue. Many saw it as a historical turning point, because “for the first time in Atlanta’s history, citizens without the support of downtown business, without the support of large organizations, have mounted an effective, learned, responsible campaign, the change in major policies suggested by the downtown power

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136 Decatur Mayor Wiley Ansley declared that he would not seek another term and named Vice Mayor Mrs. C. Howard Leveritt as the pro-tem mayor. See “Decatur, Stone Mountain Voters Make Choices Today,” Decatur-DeKalb News, December, 6, 1972.
structure.”\textsuperscript{137} The emphasis on “change,” and particularly the rhetoric of citizens’ triumph over “absentee landlords, absentee businessmen, the Chamber of Commerce [Atlanta] downtown,” could not conceal the fact that their objective was ultimately to conserve their neighborhood intact in terms of its environment, and its social and economic character.\textsuperscript{138}

However, some locals did not favor the anti-SMT movement. One man answered the WSB news interviewer by saying that the idea of balanced transportation would not be a big help in solving traffic problems:

> When we have a comprehensive plan for the movement of large masses of people, and let's be realistic, let's not be naive about it, MARTA is not going to do the job completely; it's going to be necessary to have adjuncts to MARTA and that's what has been proposed and this is what has been done in part so far.
> I am particularly interested in the completion of the Stone Mountain leg because I think the completion of the I-485 leg is contingent; each of those is interdependent upon the other. I have been in a position for the last 2 years to see that decadence [ph] has set in, in north-east Atlanta. \textit{I have seen the decay of a once proud and beautiful neighborhood going into complete decay because of a lawsuit which stopped the completion of I-485. People have left there. More people are going to be leaving Atlanta for that and various other reasons, if you read the papers.}\textsuperscript{139}

Apparently, this local man did not favor BOND. Another lady told the interviewer that she felt the SMT was more democratic, in that it gave people the power to move freely. “I may go Gwinnett County part of one day, I may go to Forest Park that same day, I may go to College Park the same day; I want to be able to go. I don’t want to be locked into a community.” In other words, she did not think that rapid transit would be a panacea for traffic congestion. On the one hand, she said that although she would not use rapid transit, “it’s fine to have it for those

\textsuperscript{137} Wsbn69069, reel 1890, 14:08/14:38, 0, December 14, 1972, WSBNC.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{139} Emphasis mine.
who have to use it,” but on the other hand she then confessed that, in fact, she did not “want any of it” because “cars are going to stay… and we’re going to keep having cars.”

**IV. MARTA and Conserving the Old “Crabgrass Frontier”**

Furthermore, the rift between BOND and the locals became evident when the young white professionals came up with a plan for the once-confiscated land. One resident sent an angry letter to the SMC. This piece of mail was, again, important because it pointed out the limits of the rhetoric that viewed the environment and public transportation as universal goods. Anti-SMT groups, including BOND, the ACTC, and others, portrayed their battle as a conflict between “the power structure,” or the faceless suburban county residents, and the city-loving people (the public) living in in-town, non-urban, surroundings. Naturally, many opposed this perspective by interpreting terms like “the public” in their own ways. For instance, one Druid Hills area resident mailed the SMRC to argue that it was the through traffic that disturbed their neighborhood. They suggested that the SMT would be the best way to recover a quiet neighborhood. The author of the letter, who introduced himself as “a property owner and a taxpayer,” was harsh on the highway dissenters, offering many reasons for his position, including that it took “more than 30 minutes” to take his son to hospital when he was injured. He believed that “the Druid Hills Civic Association is not representative of every single member of resident in the so-called Druid Hills area,” and asserted,

> The vocal opponents of the Stone Mountain Tollway are a mixture of long haired and short haired pseudo-intellectuals who are supposedly for ecology, the environment, etc; many of this these folks drive, bicycle, or walk to Emory University or the Fernbank Science Center to work—or are retired—or otherwise have little or no need to get across the city. Without considering the needs of the business community, commerce, and industry, however, and without considering the needs of the working man — who by the way, are also for ecology,

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140 Wsbn68789, reel 1885, 00:48/1:35, 0, Nov. 27, 1972, WSBNC.
and the environment, we could not support an Emory University or a Fernbank Science Center if their selfishness prevailed, in every area. We need relief! Please do not be influenced by the people who live and work in their own little world in Druid Hills and Decatur, and don’t want to give an inch regardless of the price to all the rest of us. These people do not live in a vacuum. Rather, we are a part of the total community and all factors must be considered. The public interest demands that the SMT be constructed promptly. We need relief!141

Despite the efforts of opposition forces, the Anti-SMT camp’s voice was the louder and was ultimately heeded. The Stone Mountain Tollway Commission gathered together the voices of those opposed to the project, and issued a resolution to urge the immediate termination of the plan, in order to “preserve our environment and heritage, protect our neighborhoods and prevent increased waste of precious space.”142 Furthermore, the anti-SMT camp gained new supporters — namely Andrew Young and Maynard Jackson. Young was the first black southerner to serve in Congress since Reconstruction, and Jackson served as the first black mayor of Atlanta in 1973. Both supported the in-town whites’ anti-highway campaign primarily because it provided them with white constituents. Young’s effort to persuade federal officials to reconsider the proposals contributed to the eventual termination of the I-485 and the Stone Mountain Tollway in 1973.143

The major objective of the MLPCA, the DHCA, and other in-town neighborhood groups was to save their own neighborhoods, which were overwhelmingly single-family residence, mostly middle-class and upper class white areas. Their fight against the I-485 and the

141 From E.F. Tamas to Stone Mountain Tollway Commission, Oct. 3, 1972, folder “Stone Mtn. Tollway-2,” box 7, PMBP. This remark was not incorrect. Many walked to work in Druid Hills. See Appendix Table A. 3.4.
142 The letter continued to state that losing the neighborhood would be “damaging both to the city as a whole and to our school system.” Other letters also emphasized that the proposed tollway would reduce DeKalb County and the City of Atlanta’s tax revenue so considerably that it would be bad for the public.
143 As for the SMT, this termination was temporary. GADOT tried to revive the plan and Andrew Young and Jimmy Carter supported it. After a long battle, GADOT constructed Freedom Parkway and Cater Center in the confiscated area.
SMF/SMT had rarely even referred to the plight of African Americans (and poor whites) dispossessed by previous or ongoing expressway construction. Rather, razing those communities was tolerable as long as they were deemed “slums” and “decayed areas.” The construction of public transit, ironically, ultimately served to preserve relatively homogeneous areas with regard to race and class. The residents saw themselves as possessing the right to save their surroundings, and believed that public power should be used to fulfill their demands. The push to conserve the single residence, fundamentally non-urban landscape in an age of massive and rapid suburbanization represented a major challenge for locals, and urbanites in particular. MARTA, at this point still an imaginary transit system, played a critical role in making their argument manifestly real. The locals came to affix their hopes on MARTA as a solution to their problems which would nevertheless preserve the characteristics of their beloved community. Public transit should work in late twentieth-century America because it would meet their ends. Public transit would kill all those horrible highway plans that sought to bulldoze their cherished homes, and thus it was publicly good. Suburbanization was private because it endorsed individual freedoms that would ensure protection of property rights. Within this patchwork of ideals and hopes, governmental public intervention was understood as justifiable, but only in terms of preserving the locals’ property.

The inland suburbanites’ aims in fact conflicted with those of BOND, despite their common highway foe. The land that had already been confiscated became available after the demise of the I-485 and SMT plans. BOND triggered the “young professionals” return to center city, but it also generated a new problem. The progressive newspaper The Great Speckled Bird reported that they would change the whole structure of the city’s power relationships:

They were young professionals and not low income people. In other words they were people to be dealt with and not ignored. Even given their status, it took some time in
getting the city to their status, it took some time in getting the city to recognize them. To the city, the deterioration in the neighborhood was part of the normal process in inner city neighborhoods. They had never had to deal with the revitalization of a neighborhood. The city’s planners were just waiting for the neighborhood to further deteriorate so they could turn the land into highways and use the remaining remainder for commercial purposes…. Then, what happens to the old people, the low income blacks and whites and the students who still live there? Right now, this is the number one topic of conversation in BOND.144

Basically, BOND stood up to advocate a plan to for creating a multiple residence area for lower-income people, but the in-town residents were fiercely opposed to it. The Bird found out that “Most community people I spoke to wanted to see the area used for park space and were opposed to the building of low-income high-rises or a housing project.” The reason for their steadfast rejection denial of the plan was simple: “They feel that putting that many more units into the neighborhoods would help turn the area into a slum.”145 Apparently, the conservative non-urban force claimed a victory in this brief struggle. 1980 census tract data shows that Morningside and Druid Hills were rich, predominantly white (in a predominantly black city), and single-family residential areas.146

MARTA planned to build the Tucker-North DeKalb Busway, which would link East Sake Station to North Decatur. This was one of the reasons why DeKalb County residents, and residents of Druid Hills, claimed that they did not need the SMT. Yet in actual practice, the busway plan was itself rejected by the residents. This was not a one-time event. Already in 1971, MARTA had proposed the widening of one of the streets in the Morningside and Druid Hills area to secure bus-only lanes. Intown neighborhoods supported it for a while when fighting with GADOT, but they did not actually want it. A letter declared that Morningside residents “favor maximum use of present expressways.” They thought that having “express bus

145 Ibid.
146 As for Morningside and Druid Hills economic, racial, and housing characteristics, see Appendix Table A.1.1., A. 1.3., A. 1.4., A. 3.3, and A. 3.4.
lanes” would be a good idea, yet at the same time they should not accompany street expansion. It would “defeat the purpose of MARTA,” they claimed, for it would “cost the city the loss of many trees and will deface the legacy of Atlanta.” Thus, the MLPCA supported public projects only as long as they would not disrupt their neighborhood.147

The MLPCA held a public meeting immediately to discuss the busway issue. The secretary, Ms. Virginia W. Gaddis, sent a report of the meeting to MARTA. However, their fierce attack on the busway started only after MARTA won the referendum. The busway plan was changed into a rail route since this could capitalize on the existing railroad — meaning no destruction would be necessary — but the plan was soon killed off altogether because the neighborhood groups argued that it would nevertheless harm the environmental health of the area. In short, the same intown neighborhood groups that had once supported the project because it would save the single residence character of their community were quick to dump it once they feared it would ruin the non-urban landscape of the inland suburbs. The cancellation of the Tucker-North DeKalb Busway/railway, therefore, showcased the victory of non-urban/suburban middle class home-owning ideology, which itself represented the affluence of Sunbelt Atlanta.

Conclusion

The success of the 1971 MARTA referendum was the result of the strong support of intown neighborhoods, which had contended that public transit would make the highway construction plans unnecessary, particularly the controversial Interstate 485 and the Stone Mountain Freeway/Tollway. They argued that MARTA could only play a role as public transit

147 From Virginia Gaddis, Morningside Lenox Park Civic Association to MARTA, July 22, 1971, folder 2, box 50, MMC.
when it contributed to saving the environment, public institutions like parks and schools, and historic architecture. Moreover, the rise of the young professional liberals, active in organizations like BOND, along with neighborhood associations in the area, created those contentions. The grass roots endorsement of this notion of “public,” along with the growth of liberal interpretations of the social function of public transit, enabled the rapid transit advocates to implement their plan. Georgia DOT, on the other hand, failed to persuade the federal government to fund the expressways due to the lack of research on how rapid transit would actually affect traffic volume in the area. With the help of Maynard Jackson and State governor Jimmy Carter, the expressway plan was finally killed in 1972. This marked a significant turning point, and represented the triumph of a neighborhood movement. The participants, particularly old residents in intown neighborhoods, had invented a way to preserve their suburban landscape, best symbolized by a detached house with a lot, as a foundational element of their basic rights. For them, public transit needed to play a crucial role in the protection of those rights.
Chapter 7

Public Transit and the Demise of Public Space: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority and the Life of Underground Atlanta, 1968-1981

Introduction

The previous parts sought to examine how MARTA played the role of a super public, to which groups with their own publics (of varying strength) brought their own notions of the public, struggled with one another, and finally made compromises in order to build a public transportation system. It also attempted to reveal how the very process of constructing a public transit contained within it the contradictions and issues which imposed limits upon its own potential to provide open, inclusive, and accessible transit. In this chapter, I will examine how the public transit’s construction led to the death of public space, which was contingently emerged in downtown Atlanta. In other words, this section tries to shed a light on the very contradiction inherent in MARTA’s establishment, meaning that the public transit planted a seed of the destruction of the space, where citizens with different social and economic background could see each other and build new relationships.

MARTA’s massive, complex structure of aerial, ground, and underground data and systems that constituted the rapid transit project was established on, and mirrored by, a diverse, multi-layered, and contested socio-economic and ideological foundation. MARTA’s success rested on a loose coalition of downtown business establishments, white inner city neighborhood residents, poor African-American domestic works, and others, each with their own views on public transportation. MARTA allowed these competing perspectives to co-exist with its own, at least for a while. After 1971, however, MARTA tried to publicize its image as if they fulfilled these various notions of public transportation, and thereby increase its ridership. After
MARTA’s purchase of Atlanta Transit System (ATS), MARTA ridership in fact rose considerably. A 1973 survey revealed that June 30 in 1973 saw 30 percent more ridership than did the same day in 1962. The document contended that about 90 percent of the rise consisted of “new” riders, who had never previously used buses for their daily commute.1 According to the 1980 Census, the users of public transportation (bus and rail transit) actually increased. Particularly, affluent white area saw the rise of passengers, although the usage was much heavier in African American neighborhoods.2 In short, MARTA fulfilled its role as “everyone’s” transit.

I. MARTA: Public Transit for the Public

As a public transit, MARTA made an effort to build an image that they responded all of these expectations that people project to their view of public transit. According to MARTA’s PR, the agency represented Atlanta’s public because the construction of rapid transit marked the dawn of a new stage of Atlanta’s history. “Rail transportation has,” one flier maintained, “had increasing importance in the history of this community.” The 1971 referendum victory, it continued, “was a moment when “once again, a Phoenix rose from its ashes.”3 MARTA also claimed that it would help out with historical preservation efforts.4 But mostly MARTA

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1 For MARTA, this meant that “over 200,000 automobile trips have been removed from the streets entirely.” More importantly, according to MARTA, their public transit was also successful in increasing the number of riders. The racial makeup of the ridership was also transformed. The old ratio of “72.1 Black and 27.9 White” turned into “60.8 Black and 39.2 White.” Women were heavier users of the ATS bus, but the difference in the ratio improved substantially. It was encouraging news for MARTA that more affluent, white males were increasingly using the transit. MARTA began to truly perform its role as a public transit serving all kinds of people, although the ridership concentrated on the auto-less poor, making its ridership “far from representative of the income distribution of the entire service area.” Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, The Effect of Fare Reduction on Transit Ridership in the Atlanta Region: Summary Report Number 1, Analysis of Transport Passenger Data (MARTA: Atlanta, 1973).

2 As for the voting results, see table A. 2.1, A. 2.2, A. 2.3, A. 2.4, and A. 2.5 in appendix.

3 “MARTA Celebrating 7 Years of Progress,” ViaMARTA, November 1978.

4 On MARTA’s historical preservation projects, see “Atlanta’s Future Takes a Ride Through the Past,” MARTA Third Friday, July 18, 1975; “Take a Ride Through Colonial Georgia… On Our Bicentennial Bus,” MARTA Third Friday, June 20, 1975; “Archeological Digs Underway,” MARTA Third Friday, March 19, 1976;
boosters claimed that public transit because it would revive downtown and the city itself.

“Only a few years ago,” a newsletter pronounced, doomsayers had labeled Atlanta the dethroned queen city of the South.” Atlanta was about to be “written off as just another rotten core of another major city… a victim of urban blight and white flight.” However, MARTA contended, “Now time has changed!” MARTA would bring new development projects, and revive the urban core. This was not merely hyperbole. Like TVA dams, rapid transit brought with it an enormous amount of working opportunities, construction jobs in particular, which had become more and more difficult to find inside the city limits. The first African American president of Atlanta’s Chamber of Commerce concurred, stating that when “Atlanta’s boom was little more than a fizzle, MARTA provided construction jobs for Atlantans and hundreds of millions of dollars were pumped into Atlanta’s economy.” As a result, public transportation put Atlanta “at a distinct advantage over other cities.”

They also responded to the rise of environmental movement. The claim that public transit was good for the natural environment provided another reason for it to be considered public, and here they placed particular stress on the contribution to reducing gas emissions. In addition to environmental consciousness, public transit was presented as progressive technologically as

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“MARTA’s Aid in a Star’s Comeback,” MARTA Third Friday, June 20, 1975; and Roy S. Dickens, Jr. and William R. Bowen, “Problems and Promises in Urban Historical Archaeology: The MARTA Project,” Historical Archeology, vol. 14 (1980): 45-27. There was no reference at all to Underground Atlanta’s own historical preservation project. See “Five Points Station,” MARTA Third Friday, June 18, 1976; “Underground to Connect with Five Points Station,” MARTA Third Friday, December 7, 1976; “MARTA Celebrating 7 Years of Progress,” ViaMARTA, September 1978; See, for example, “The Authority Announces Selection of 20 Design Firms,” MARTA Third Friday, August 16, 1974. MARTA also frequently reported how they were helping the elderly and handicapped. Moreover, public transit would contribute to racial equality and the welfare of the elderly and handicapped persons through affirmative action programs. See, for example, “Elderly and Handicapped Bus Service,” MARTA Third Friday, October 15, 1976; “MARTA To Begin Special Service,” MARTA Third Friday, December 7, 1976; “Patronage Increases on Elderly Service,” MARTA Third Friday, April 11, 1977; “L Bus Service Set for May 16,” MARTA Third Friday, April 11, 1977; “MARTA to Institute Program for the Elderly and Handicapped,” MARTA Third Friday, May 16, 1975; “Elderly and Handicapped Bus Service,” “E-Bus Service Begins,” MARTA Third Friday, October 15, 1976.
well. Public transportation could act as a medium that would bring technological innovation into the center of daily life.⁶ Along with the bus cars, which had big smoked-glass windows, bodies comprised of aluminum, fiberglass and steel, and two-way radio communication systems, the state-of-the-art, stainless, electrically-powered, steel-wheeled, aluminum MARTA train cars represented top-notch railway technology.⁷

MARTA even framed its technology in terms of international innovation, stressing that the cars were a product of global cooperation among MARTA, Sundgerg-Ferar Industrial Designers in Michigan, and the Societe Franco-Belge in France.⁸ The $800 million Urban Mass Transportation Administration grant for MARTA also attracted many international visitors.⁹ By 1978, approximately 200 new bus cars and 116 bus shelters had been added to the system. These were expected to further familiarize ordinary people with new technologies.

By far the biggest achievement of the MARTA campaign, however, was that it helped triggered the development of citizens’ involvement and neighborhood movements. When MARTA proposal was defeated in 1968, five Harvard Law School students published a report to survey why majority rejected the plan. Their HUD funded document concluded that because of the voters’ prejudice on the public agencies like MARTA, seeing it “as self-seeking, anxious to expand their public empires,” trying to monopolize “an unplanned benefit arising from the strict enforcement of the federal government’s requirement.” In addition, “American cultural

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⁶ See, for instance, “Computers to Aid Train Operation,” MARTA Third Friday, June 1977.
⁷ “Bus of the Future… Serving Atlanta Now,” ViaMARTA, September 1978; “MARTA Received First ‘Bending’ Buses,” ViaMARTA, March 1979; “Life Beneath Peachtree Street,” ViaMARTA, February 1979. This was important because many casted doubt on the railway technology. For instance, Lester Maddox ridiculed railway’s technological obsolescence, saying “the rail system will be obsolete by the year of 2000,” because until then “men fly around with wings on their back.” Quoted in Coogan, Landon, Roe, Rubin, and Schaffer, Transportation Politics in Atlanta, 32.
⁸ MARTA Third Friday, September 20, 1974; “Two Hundred Years of Friendship,” MARTA Third Friday, May 21, 1976; “Mule II on Bookshelves,” MARTA Third Friday, April 11, 1977.
⁹ See, for instance, “UN Economic Commission of Europe Visited MARTA,” MARTA Third Friday, May 16, 1976.
tradition,” which was overt “reliance on private automobiles,” made MARTA to “remain a
difficult public issue to ‘sell.’”\textsuperscript{10} MARTA failed “to provide effective community participation
in the ongoing planning process,” which would get rid of MARTA’s popular image as
“super-government.”\textsuperscript{11} To overcome these obstacles, the Harvard researchers contended
MARTA should promote “community participation,” saying:

the most important factor seems to be careful cultivation of citizen support, especially
during the planning process, with a stress on need and the showing that the proposed transit
plan is the best alternative among a number considered, his should be done through an
educational campaign which focuses on the various considerations which may concern
subgroups the voting public rather than a short campaign with one main thrust largely on
propaganda value. Efforts should be made to build support at all levels and among all
groups. And in the campaign itself, it should be obvious that an effort should be made to
meet, or forestall, opposition arguments.\textsuperscript{12}

After the victory of the 1971 referendum Clark Atlanta University’s Abraham Davis also
made a federally funded survey. He stressed how MARTA was successful in solving the
trouble that the 1968 Harvard research discovered.\textsuperscript{13} MARTA revealed its ideas in plain
language through various venues, particularly TV, radio, and papers, held public forum and
hearings that enabled “the people to tell MARTA what they want and need in a rapid transit
system.”\textsuperscript{14} Indeed, Davis stressed that one-percent sales tax in fact brought confusions and often
led to the situation where the working class whites and blacks should pay more for the rapid
transit; however, MARTA did a good job in deleting the problems embedded in Atlanta’s
politics—the dominance of white commercial civic elites. According to him, “The MARTA
intentionally went on record strongly favoring citizen involvement in rapid transit decision of

\textsuperscript{10} Coogan, Landon, Roe, Rubin, and Schaffer, \textit{Transportation Politics in Atlanta}, 42.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 42, 62.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 146-7.
\textsuperscript{13} Abraham Davis, \textit{An Analysis of the November 9, 1971, Referendum Vote on Rapid Transit in Fulton County, Urban Transportation}, Project Report No. UMTA-GA-11-0003-71-6 (Atlanta: School of Business Administration, Atlanta University, 1973).
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 6.
Metropolitan Atlanta area.” The victory of MARTA in 1971 marked the fact that the
government, which had been dominated by downtown business elites, heard the voice of the
ordinary citizens. This, the critics believed, evidenced the MARTA’s role as a public transit.

The voice was particularly loud in island suburbs, or intown neighborhoods. Druid Hills,
Morningside, the Bass area, and other neighborhoods formed a coalition against the State of
Georgia’s Department of Transportation. This alliance then transformed into the Atlanta
Coalition on the Transportation Crisis, and then the Citywide League of Neighborhoods.
MARTA’s victory was their victory. Those citizens in island suburbs or gentrified areas
adopted the original notion of public transportation and developed it further to serve their
empowerment. This led to significant changes in how urban planning was understood and
conducted. Sam Massell and Maynard Jackson, the city’s first minority mayors, experienced
their political rise in this context, and through making their voices heard, tried to reform
business-oriented, top-down urban planning. In 1967, comprehensive planning, for instance,
was defined as “a process of applying intelligent forethought [by professional planners and
engineers] to the development of a community.” In 1973, however, the Atlanta Department
of City Planning published a booklet entitled The Value of Neighborhood Planning which
redefined the notion of comprehensive planning, and suggested how much things had changed
in recent years. The booklet claimed to introduce “the true of meaning of the term
‘comprehensive planning.’” Development and economic progress did not come first; rather,
the goal was to “find out how all the parts of a neighborhood relate to each other,” the
constituent parts being humans, natural environment, land, transportation, public facilities &
recreation, and economy. More importantly, the document displayed a critical transformation

15 Ibid., 7, 30.
16 City of Atlanta, Department of Planning, A Look at Planning... Atlanta Georgia (Atlanta: Department of
in who was in charge of planning: “the citizens of the neighborhood should prepare the neighborhood’s Comprehensive Plan,” and in particular this was to be developed by “the most able and civic-minded persons in your neighborhoods.” This represented a major change in city politics. This transformation of the notion of planning triggered Maynard Jackson’s Neighborhood Planning Units (NPUs), which enabled the citizens to participate in the planning of their unit and, hence, in the overall citywide planning process. According to Clarence N. Stone, Jackson, who played a crucial role in stopping the I-485 plan, was “the linchpin for a new urban regime, bringing together independent-minded blacks and politically conscious and organized neighborhood activists, predominantly (though not exclusively) white.” Thus, MARTA’s plan and the struggles that had been required to enable it had long-term effects both in terms of how the public was understood, and in terms of the involvement of the public in issues ranging from the environment to city planning. MARTA’s contribution to the public, however, also ruined the space where the strangers would meet and make new relationships, that is the public space that was the major ingredient of the citizenship in urban area. This was evident in MARTA’s role in the death of downtown public space, Underground Atlanta.

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17 The orientation towards grass root, neighborhood politics was realized in the City of Atlanta’s change of its charter in 1974, which abolished the Board of Aldermen system elected citywide. The City of Atlanta instead began the council system, which was comprised of a dozen members, six of them elected from individual districts and the other six at-large posts.
18 See Bureau of Planning, City of Atlanta, Interaction: A Summary of Citizen Opinions and Neighborhood Plans (Atlanta: City of Atlanta Bureau of Planning, 1974).

1) The Birth of Underground Atlanta

In 1969, a $4-million project restored 280,000 square feet of decayed downtown area in central Atlanta, creating a time capsule that would recapture the mood of gas-lit, turn-of-the-century Atlanta. A section of the central business district that had been sealed over by a viaduct more than 30 years before was thereby turned into a festive place. The Cleveland Plain Dealer reported that the four-block enclave was “new, rising like Lazarus from the dead [to become] an area of enchantment.” Lazarus, or Underground Atlanta (hereafter UA), was designed and promoted as the perfect tourist and entertainment destination. The cobblestone streets and courtyards contained restaurants, lounges, boutiques, shops and historical attractions. During the day, children watched monkeys do tricks and swarmed around the ice cream parlor, while guides dressed in antebellum costume pleased history buffs. After sunset, upscale cabarets and nightclubs entertained downtown businessmen and women, and (mostly male) conventioneers. The warm glow of gaslight must have enabled the visitors to imagine Main Street in the “good old days.” UA, however, did not turn out to be Lazarus, and its resurrection came to an end around 1980. In the words of historian David Goldfield, the project to create a downtown festive place did little more than “transform an old deteriorating area into a new deteriorating area.”

UA’s brief life represents another story of the failure to breathe new life into a downtown area. There are many reasons for the death of UA: security concerns, rival suburban entertainment, suburbanites’ fear of downtown crime such as mugging and vandalism, and the closure of popular businesses as a result of the construction of Metropolitan Atlanta.

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20 Cleveland Plain Dealer, n.d., Forward Atlanta Newspaper Clippings, Jan. 1969, folder 2, box 4, Bell and Stanton Papers, MSS 596, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as BSP).
Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)’s downtown Five Points station. Because of the laissez-faire approach of its planners and managers, UA was unable to survive these challenges.\textsuperscript{22}

The following section examines the birth and death of UA within a context of post-war urban transformation characterized by suburbanization and urban decline, writing its “biography” in relation to the post-war transformation of urban landscapes. Post-war affluence was visible in the rapidly growing suburbs, wherein sprang up shiny office buildings, gigantic shopping malls and detached homes with large backyards. While prosperous whites left cities for these crabgrass frontiers, the impoverished city dwellers, mostly racial and ethnic minorities, could not follow them due to financial expense, discriminatory mortgage lending and land use regulations such as restricted covenants. The Civil Rights Movement did not enable racial minorities to move to affluent suburban communities. Moreover, desegregation accelerated “white flight” to the urban fringes. Declining tax revenues meant that cities could no longer provide their citizens with sufficient public services. The absence of good public schools, public housing, public transportation and job opportunities resulted in deteriorating living conditions for the underprivileged. The decline of the city thus became obvious in the increase of homelessness, boarded up grocery stores, and the growth of crime rates.\textsuperscript{23} Atlanta was no exception. Massive suburbanization in “the Capitol of New South” during the sixties and


seventies resulted in many whites leaving for newly built suburban subdivisions, while the black urban population rose rapidly, reaching approximately seventy percent by the end of the seventies.\textsuperscript{24} Despite the increasing numbers of affluent African Americans, “Central City Atlanta became increasingly black and poor.”\textsuperscript{25}

Many individuals tried to grapple with and reverse the deterioration of downtown Atlanta, and UA was one of their attempts to revive Main Street. Real estate developers, bankers, department store owners, and city officials wanted the thriving downtown back. Capitalizing on white suburbanites’ nostalgia, the promoters tried to create a space in which middle-class whites could return and stay. The planners and developers claimed those who left the city did not want completely to desert the Main Street they once had strolled and cherished. The rise of tourism during the 1970s and 1980s enabled business persons and city officials to pursue the return of white middle-class suburbanites to the center of the city; historic preservation in particular played a major role in this as urban renewal and gentrification programs revitalized the historical landscape, refurbishing run-down, dust-covered old buildings and transforming them into historic structures.\textsuperscript{26} The following section explains how these developers, city officials, and promoters created this space and how their efforts met with both temporary success and eventual failure. Although using a “living organism” metaphor (i.e., “birth,” “death,” and “life”), I do not try to convince readers to view UA as going through “a process whose

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 11.
trajectory has been out of the control of human hands.”

In the United States, the lamentation of downtown’s “decline” appears so frequently in newspapers, television reports, business magazines, and even history accounts that people tend to understand it as a universal and maybe an ahistorical process. Applying a “free-market” model (i.e., “rise and fall”) to interpret the cause of downtown’s decline also assumes that market conditions determine a city’s fate, ignoring the role of human actors in urban decay. However, UA’s death epitomizes neither a “decline” nor a “climax” that all downtowns will universally or automatically experience. Rather, its passing was an inevitable result of a change that Atlanta had undergone after the Civil Rights movement. In other words, the following section is to show how different actors clashed over the fate of Main Street, who came to dominate the site, and how suburbanization and the city’s impoverishment affected the transformation of these power relationships.

By investigating its rise and fall, this paper argues that UA was destined to fail because of its endeavor to fulfill two conflicting desires, although both stemmed from a common objective—to recreate downtown in its “good old days.” One desire was to revive the “lively” downtown of the past, which required not only restoring historic structures but also making the space open in order to contain a variety of businesses and visitors. Unlike Disneyland or Sea World, with their gates and fences, its openness could work for an ideal of public space that geographer Don Mitchell seeks, in which the space should work as “a site of interaction, encounter and the support of strangers for each other” and as a “a communicator of information and interchange.”

However, another desire collided with this pursuit of openness, which was to return downtown to the white middle class. It was this collision between inclusion and

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27 Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 2, 6-7. Isenberg’s analysis on the role of “nostalgia” in downtown redevelopment was also insightful in making this perspective. See, ibid., 255-311.

exclusion that determined UA’s fate. By investigating newspaper accounts, UA pamphlets, downtown business organization reports, and television shows, the following part reveals how these two desires clashed and led to UA’s early death. First, the following section will demonstrate how UA was successful in recreating a vibrant Main Street and how its “inclusiveness” was admired as the mark of a good revitalization project. Then, I will uncover how the reputation of UA declined because of the appearance of “undesirable” elements and how this, and more importantly MARTA’s construction, brought about the erection of iron gates and fences, thereby enclosing the property, killing downtown inclusiveness, and eventually terminating the life of UA.

2) “Great Awakening of the Historic Spa”

The history of UA began with the discovery of a treasure, the dark, subterranean area of downtown. A series of city-sponsored development projects in the early 20th century, in an effort to relieve traffic congestion and reduce accidents, had built viaducts and bridges over downtown’s Central, Pryor, Peachtree, Broad and Forsyth Streets. While downtown businessmen built a new street on the bridges and viaducts, which became a major segment of downtown Atlanta, underneath remained the “old buildings of a former day, in their original turn-of-the-century styles.”

Sealed by the viaduct, the site was completely deserted, becoming a “sheltered place for bums . . . , derelicts and broken men” and the “city’s trashiest


When Atlanta’s Civic Design Commission (CDC) rediscovered the place in 1966, however, it was looked upon as an island of treasure. The viaduct had frozen a landscape of buildings dating from the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. The area also contained the Zero Mile Post, which marked the birthplace of the City of Atlanta as Terminus, a railroad station. The CDC could not overlook such a golden opportunity for restoration, pointing out that “nothing else physically remains of Atlanta’s history.” According to the preservationists, the dark, dusty space under the viaduct would provide “an area rich in historical significance [in] contrast to the high-rise modern building.” By declaring the area a “historic zone,” the commission attempted to protect the area “against changes that would hurt its other era character.” Moreover, the City of Atlanta’s GOP alderman Rodney Cook’s resolution proposal to turn “those properties on grade level of viaduct, known as Underground Atlanta” into a “Historic Atlanta District” was adopted on December 16, 1968. Historical significance, however, was not the only selling point; it was believed that restoration would turn the downtown wasteland into a gold mine, a major tourist attraction that would generate “a sound margin of profit.” When Atlanta historian Franklin M. Garrett pressured mayor Sam Massell Jr. to name Underground Atlanta as a Historic District, he emphasized that it would contribute to downtown’s revival, arguing “the

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32 From Franklin Garrett to Steven Fuller Jr., 2 January 1969, file “Underground Atlanta,” Georgia Historical Commission Administration Papers, RG/SG/Series 061-01-001, 10, RCB-20279, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA.


34 *Atlanta Journal*, October 11, 1968.

35 “Favorable- December 16, 1968,” Minutes of Board of Alderman, City of Atlanta, No. 12, 1968, Read and Referred by Board of Alderman, City of Atlanta, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA., 147.

36 Joseph. S. Perrin to Merry G. Jewett, 7 March 1968, file “Underground Atlanta,” Georgia Historical Commission Administration Papers, RG/SG/Series 061-01-001, 10, RCB-20279, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA.
The designation of this [subterranean] area as a Historic District will do much further the possibility of this ultimate development as a major tourist attraction in the central city.”

The idea of UA as a tourist attraction grew out of this CDC’s vision. In 1968, two Georgia Institute of Technology alumni established a development and management company called Underground Atlanta, Inc. (UAI), which purchased and refurbished the subterranean area as a historic park and leased space to individual businesses. The corporation also managed the security and cleaning of the area and provided various forms of entertainment. Commercial civic elites were the ones who really wanted to create the historic area. Central Atlanta Progress, the downtown boosters’ organization, adopted following “principles” to “build a strong central city.” To do so, CAP urged to “make it [the central city] efficient, exciting, inviting (clean, inoffensive, safe and attractive), and expandable.” Furthermore, it urged central city to "attract strong middle class income segment." Consequently, the support of the City of Atlanta, the Chamber of Commerce, and the State of Georgia's Tourism Committee enabled the young company to borrow $4 million to purchase the area and create a historic and festive place. The objective in implementing the plan was to sanitize the area, and sandblasting in 1968 marked the beginning of Underground Atlanta’s construction. The CDC had already proposed to clean up the site and bring in desirable tenants. To make downtown

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37 Joseph Perrin, Atlanta to Mary G. Jewett, February 23, 1968, Georgia Historical Commission Admin, RG/SG/Series 061-01-001, 10, RCB-20279, Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA.
38 Rutheiser, Imagineering Atlanta, 166; Harvey, Southern Hospitality, 177; Martin, Atlanta and Environs, vol. III., 460-61, 553-55.
39 The brief biography appeared in Atlanta Phoenix, 1, January 22, 1970.
commercially feasible, CDC planners also proposed to provide “needed controls over [the]
character of [UA’s] development,” an approach that included removing homeless people. 43

In addition to sanitizing history, the UAI dramatized and molded the theme of UA to make
the center of the city a place for middle-class families, who were to be the area’s major
constituents. Underground Atlanta’s debut was scheduled in Dogwood Festival in 1968 before
the official opening of the tourist enclave in 1969. Started in 1936, Dogwood Festival had
been one of the important seasonal events of Atlanta. Facing the decline of popularity, in 1968,
the Women’s Chamber of Commerce of Atlanta (WCCA) started officially coordinating the
Festival. 44 They stressed dogwoods’ beauty would attract tourists, contending that the trees
would enable Atlanta to win a “beauty contest hands-down against the other metropolitan areas
of the country.” 45 Those trees would provide “recognition” with Atlanta “as a city concerned
not only economic growth but esthetic values…” Accordingly, Dogwood Festival would
enable Atlanta “attract large number of visitors from throughout the nation to this special
celebration” and “bring international prominence to the city of Atlanta.” 46 The festivity was “a
concept which offers almost limitless potential to this community – business wise and cultural…
1968 looks like the forerunner of many great years to come.” 47

1968 Dogwood Festival represented a product of business elite’s will to trigger middle
class return to Atlanta’s downtown. The Dogwood Festival, according to the WCCA’s account,

43 From Franklin Garrett to Sam Massell Jr., May 19, 1968, file “Underground Atlanta,” Georgia Historical
Commission Administration Papers, RG/SG/Series 06-01-001, 10, RCB-20279, Georgia Archives, Morrow,
GA; City of Atlanta, Civic Design Commission, “Resolution,” 1966, Atlanta Urban Design Commission file,
quoted in Newman, Southern Hospitality, 177.
44 Women’s Chamber of Commerce of Atlanta, “Atlanta Dogwood Festival” Compiled in 1968, folder 1, box
1, Atlanta Dogwood Festival Papers, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Georgia (hereafter
ADFP).
46 Atlanta Dogwood Festival, “Statement of Purpose,” n.d., ca., 1968, folder 1, box 1, ADFP.
47 From J.C. Haynes, a president of Atlanta DeKalb Dogwood Festival Association to Glyde Greenway, Sears,
and Roebuck & Company, February 16, 1968, folder 1, box 2, ADFP.
had “terrific potential for city,” because it targeted families. Although Atlanta “has blossomed into one ‘magic’ cities of America” during the sixties, she lacked “events” that could attract kids and the parents. WCAA argued, “Lesser cities with ‘plain-Jane’ looks have, through effective promotion, created events of national significance, such as the Cherry Blossom Festival [San Francisco], Mardi Gras [New Orleans] and the Azalea Festival [Mobile].”

Furthermore, Atlanta Dogwood Festival Association, a fund raising organization urged business leaders and politicians to join tourists’ hunt, describing the miserable condition of “tourism in Atlanta.”

Only within the past few years has civic leadership in Atlanta made efforts to stimulate tourists traffic in the City after arrival of major league sports, Six Flags Over Georgia, Robert Show and other “big city” attractions. Until this time, the main push has been to draw convention business rather than Uncle Dick and Aunt Suzie on a weekend outing.

The 1968 Dogwood Festival’s was held from April 15 to 21. After Mayor Ivan Allen’s welcome speech, visitors enjoyed a series of events such as a short trip of the the city’s most beautiful dogwood area, a parade, and music concert, and beauty pageant. By spreading the location of events, the WCCA’s program turned whole Atlanta into a tourist place. However, the “Festival of Old City” – a tour of “Underground Atlanta” was one of the most important events. The WCCA emphasized historic authenticity of the area. The pamphlet stated, “a tour of “Underground Atlanta” was a “must on your itinerary…. The oldest section of the City will

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48 WCCA, “Atlanta Dogwood Festival.”
49 Atlanta Dogwood Festival, The WCCA, “1968 Dogwood Festival,” folder 1, box 2, ADFP.
51 ADFA’s official pamphlet recommended visitors to go to places like Braves’ game, Cyclorama, Stone Mountain Memorial Park, and Six Flags Over Georgia. Atlanta Dogwood Festival Association, “The 1968 Dogwood Festival: Beauty, Excitement, Nostalgia….,” Pamphlet, folder 1, box 2, ADFP.
be on display, feathering historical exhibits and lovely guides dressed in ante-bellum gowns.”

The press release of Bell & Stanton Inc, New York based public relations firm hired by Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, to publicize “Forward Atlanta” campaign, described, “Special photographic exhibits, antique collections, entertainment, pretty girls in ante-bellum dress and refreshments will commemorate Atlanta historic origins.” In an area UAI was planning to build an turist enclave, Atlanta’s Parks and Recreation Department exhibited the Confederates’ and New South legacies. Confederate stamps were sold. Local telegraph club demonstrated “an old fashioned telegraph stand.” Local railroad model club exhibited “a model four car open platform train.” Georgia State College’s students worked as “ante-bellum” hosts.

Atlanta Gas Company installed the gaslights.

The first task of the UAI was to construct a historical enclave. The UAI’s development concept was to “restore” and “preserve” the physical setting of the subterranean area. UAI officials perceived the area as an “a time capsule.” The architects’ objective was “trying not to do too much design, to try to restore where possible”

Atlanta Constitution admired the development, because Underground’s historical demonstration was not artificial, but a “natural” one. UAI attempted to dramatize Underground in such a way that visitors could experience “a historic adventure” To do so, they installed gaslights, a trolley car [Information center], and restored the cobblestone alleyways and storefronts. The dramatization of history was throught. A magazine article described UAI’s performance,

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52 Ibid.
53 Bell & Stanton Inc., “For Immediate Release” Forward Atlanta Press Releases 1968, folder 5, box 5, BSP.
54 Atlanta Journal Constitution, April 7, 1968
55 Minutes of the Board of Directors of Greater Atlanta-DeKalb Dogwood Festival, February 8, 1968, folder 1, box 2, ADFP.
56 Atlanta Journal, April 10, 1969.
57 Around Atlanta 35 (August 1972).
Uncovering many antiques and hunting up relies reminiscent of the Gay 80’s and 90’s, the owners in Underground have recreated the good ol’ days in many ways including the costumes worn by waiters and waitresses, the music played and sung, the food and beverages served, and the décor and antique decorations in their businesses. There’s also The Atlanta Story, a 35-minute film journey through 140 years of Atlanta history.58

When the UAI attempted to establish a “historic adventure,” they well understood what middle-class families wanted in a downtown public space.59 Consequently, they tried to turn the property into a theater in which visitors could experience the aura of a 19th-century Atlanta street by strolling among classic buildings and newly installed gaslights, and being served dinner by waitresses in antebellum dress. The exhibition of an old streetcar dramatized Atlanta’s origin as a train station. Visitors would even be able to sense Atlanta’s past through such “long-forgotten smells” as “the aroma of fresh bread baked in a 60-year-old gas oven” and via the sounds of old wooden flute replicas played by children in the alley.60 UA even had a printing shop which published the Atlanta Phoenix, “Georgia’s Newest Old News Paper.” Advertisements and historical information helped visitors “reorient themselves to the past,” while the smell of ink and the feel of old, brown paper added to the experience.61 This theatrical, family-oriented atmosphere reflected UAI officials’ strategy to attract the suburban middle class, who secluded themselves in single-family detached houses. Post-war amusement had a good command of it; according to Susan Davis, for instance, “family entertainment” was a major attraction of the postwar theme park, entertainment that was “not just entertainment that can be enjoyed across generational boundaries, but the assertion of

58 Ibid.
parental control. . . , entertainment for children and youth under the supervision of parent.”62

Historic adventure was one such form of family entertainment, and one which provided parents with a controlled opportunity to teach their children about the city’s history. Perhaps more important, the bread, the flutes, the Confederate flag stamps, and the newspapers were consumable commodities the purchase of which helped parents to demonstrate their authority to their children. UA, then, was an attempt to suburbanize downtown for white middle-class families.

History projected in the subterranean area was highly selective as well. Aiming at “refreshing interest in our history, at a time when some of these are waning in popular esteem.” the paper lectured in plain words about the making of Zero Mile Post, the destruction during the Civil War, and the resurgence after it.63 The Civil War was its focus. Close to the Zero Mile Post, the Confederate States of America’s Supply and Hospital Headquarters, they argued, Underground Atlanta represented the tragic memory of the War. It was “the main marshalling area for thousands of wounded of both armies.” On the other hand, Phoenix stressed that Underground Atlanta was a place signifying the recovery from the War’s wreckage.64 According to the paper, “Her near-total destruction of Atlanta in 1864 was followed by physical recuperation and spiritual rejuvenation of incredible proportions -- prophetic of city greatness to come.”65 In other words, UAI’s attempt to “purify” the site was not only physical but cultural. This was evident in the UAI’s historical exhibition, the theme of which centered on the Civil War and the city’s recovery from Sherman’s destruction but did not include the experiences of

63 “Underground Atlanta,” Atlanta Phoenix, vol. 1 no. 2, in The Vertical File in Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Collection, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, GA.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
African Americans, who comprised more than half the city’s population in 1970. According to anthropologist Charles Rutheiser, the UAI presented only a “highly sanitized representation of Atlanta’s past,” especially as it regarded race.\textsuperscript{66} However, UAI officials envisioned a different face for UA at night. As a place for downtown festivities, it needed to fulfill the demands of those visiting the central business districts on business (especially male conventioneers) and of party-craving students from Georgia State College. UAI officials, aware of both the need and the opportunity, did not want UA to be only a historic district, which entailed rigid regulations in the look of its buildings and nature of its businesses. Indeed, they stated a preference for an upscale nightclub over “an antique doll shop…, which at the onset won’t be profitable.”\textsuperscript{67} Simultaneously, they did not want to bear such “undue hardship” that they were obliged to “restore the façade” whenever it did not “fit its environment.”\textsuperscript{68}

UAI attempted to make a profitable tourist enclave with historic and family theme. This was not an easy task. The controversy over “the liquor bill” revealed UA’s struggle in reconciling family value with nightlife. Before its opening, UAI endeavored to get a permission to serve liquor in their tourist enclave. However, the state law prohibited them from doing so, because it prohibited to sell alcoholic beverages “within 200 feet of any church or within 600 feet of any school”; the campus of Georgia State University and the Catholic Church of Immaculate Conception were located close to Underground Atlanta, which prohibited

\textsuperscript{66} Rutheiser, \textit{Imagineering Atlanta}, 166. The Georgia Historical Commission in their 1970 report titled “historical summation” showed how that after the Civil War, Atlanta citizens began their city’s reconstruction “around the Zero Mile Post.” Underground Area became a new entertainment center, which was called “Humbug Square, a Mecca for carnivals, medical shows, and circus. People called the northern part of the area as “Packing House Row” due to the presence of meat packing business. Prior to the construction of viaduct, the old Terminus area contained diverse businesses, including “merchants, hotels, stables, saloons, banks, grain wholesalers, and even a whiskey distillery.

\textsuperscript{67} “Sub-City Atlanta Opens Soon,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, November 9, 1969.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Atlanta Journal}, October 11, 1968.
eateries and lounges in the area from serving liquor and mixed drinks. The State of Georgia, especially the Tourism Committee, attempted to issue a new “liquor bill” in order to “help” Underground Atlanta. The bill proposed to give the authority to the local government to determine “whether mixed drink establishments will be exempted from these distance requirement.” The bill passed the congress, but State Governor Lester Maddox submitted veto. Maddox did so because “an Atlanta man appealed to him to do so.” The man claimed that “Dope peddlers in the Underground Atlanta area had enticed his child.” Later, Maddox nominated Payton Howes as State Revenue Commissioner. Ironically, Howes reinterpreted the distance regulation, changing the word “in a straight line” to “the same to be measured by way of the nearest traveled road, street or highway.” Then Underground Atlanta could serve alcoholic beverages.

Despite the quick resolution, the controversy over the liquor bill represents the idea of who would be an appropriate visitor to Underground Atlanta. For Maddox, Underground Atlanta was a threat especially for teenagers if it served alcohol which would attract criminals, who would accelerate the decline of downtown. Facing the charge, therefore, an official of the UAI tried to convince in WSB news that liquor sales would not ruin UA's “safety,” for they had Wells Fargo Security Force... policemen down here all the time even though officially we're not open yet.” For him, the only problem that the UAI encountered so far was “hippies” attracted by the performance of a “psychedelic band” in the Dogwood festival, which cerebrated the beginning of Underground Atlanta's construction project. The business establishments in the area were diverse, including everything from a banjo bar, an ice-cream parlor and a jazz lounge.

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to a cabaret theatre. UAI tried to attract adults as well as families. “Discovery,” UAI’s pamphlet stressed, was UA’s selling point, saying

Underground Atlanta Awaits Your Discovery.
Each shop is a treasure-trove of surprises.
Each meal is a delectable adventure.
Each nook is a page out of Atlanta’s History.
There are places you’ll want to stomp your feet.
There are things you’ll want to buy.
There are places you’ll want to whisper.
Getting there and back is easy.72

Conventionneers constituted UAI’s major targets. Containing major hotels and convention center, downtown Atlanta needed places to satisfy businesspersons. The UAI tried to invite “shops that will serve both a daytime crowd of people from nearby office buildings as well as nighttime tourist.”73 Unlike local Atlantans who saw Underground Atlanta as family and historic place, other cities valued UA as an area for nightlife. For instance, Chicago Tribune’s travelogue described Underground Atlanta as a conventioneer’s destination,

After you’ve checked into your hotel in this bustling southern metropolis with the northern type hustle, and had your shower and changed into something less comfortable, you probably want to enjoy the after dark scene. So you ask the head porter or your cab driver. And he grins, “How about Underground Atlanta?” Don’t get beefed the man with it. There IS a place called Underground Atlanta, and it’s a lot of fun. So go along with it.74

Company magazines also perceived Underground Atlanta as a place of nightlife. For instance, the Sohioan, the magazine of the Standard Oil Company, introduced Underground Atlanta, saying “a young stockbroker relaxes with friends in the gaslight nineteenth century atmosphere

74 Chicago Daily News, November 14, 1970, in Forward Atlanta Newspaper Clippings, BSP.
of an Underground Atlanta nightclub.”

When holding conference in the Peachtree Center Complex, the American Society of Clinical Pathologists introduced Underground Atlanta as “point of interest” in their magazine *Laboratory Medicine*. Along with its historical attractions, *Laboratory Medicine* emphasized that Underground Atlanta “contains colorful restaurants and bars and number of boutiques offering unusual and exotic merchandise.”

At the same time, nightclubs had to abide by the UAI’s rules to maintain overall respectability and to guarantee the “safety and cleanliness” of the area, exemplifying an attempt to strike a balance between nightlife and family entertainment. Likewise, security guards in Victorian costume were on duty around the clock, as promoters emphasized that UA was not going to be “a Gaslight Square [St. Louis], an Old Town [Chicago], or a French Quarter [New Orleans],” all of which were historic districts famous for their adult entertainment. One episode showed how Underground Atlanta’s restaurants and nightclubs made an effort to keep respectability in the tourist attraction. A high school student attempted to start a business to rent coats and ties he got at a thrift house nearby to the tourists, who wanted to enter upscale restaurants and night clubs. A. T. Timberlake, the president of Underground Atlanta Merchant Association refused him to do his business in the tourist entertainment area. Along with the fact his business was conflictive with men's clothing shops in the area, the young entrepreneur's try was troublesome because UA should continue to make “an effort… to upgrade the appearance and behavior” and provide an environment where “lessened degree of rowdiness now apparent would prevail in secondhand, rented finery.”

They also promised that they would not welcome “the hippie crowd,” which was often regarded in the late 1960s as a source

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76 The American Society of Clinical Pathologists *Laboratory Medicine*, vol. 1-6 (June 1970) in Ibid.
of disorder.\textsuperscript{78} Places near downtown, including “the Strip (10th Street)” and Piedmont Park, and later Little Five Points were known to be those “flower children” areas.

Nevertheless, the merger of family entertainment and nightlife produced a space that was less controllable than Disneyland or Sea World because UA did not have a physical boundary in the form of a gate and walls. Despite its appeal to the suburban middle class, UA’s lack of an admission fee allowed anyone to hang out in the area. Ironically, it was this very inclusiveness that the newspapers of other cities admired. \textit{The Memphis Commercial Appeal}, for example, wrote that UA was “very different and exciting,” since “everybody goes there, the young and old alike, in evening gowns, in hippy dress.”\textsuperscript{79} \textit{The Cleveland Plain Dealer} observed that “while UA was a magnet for young swingers---it’s also great for children and for older folks.”\textsuperscript{80} A tourists’ guide book introduced the site by advising readers that “there are plenty of places to suit everyone, so don’t hesitate to bring the kids, the clergy, or the grandparents.”\textsuperscript{81} Suburban papers also applauded UAI entrepreneur’s success. For instance, Carrol Dadisman, Cobb County’s \textit{Marietta Daily Journal} editorial, wrote a long article about the enclave’s history, arguing, “Now its popularity has zoomed to the point that ‘underground’ has grown back to the viaduct level,” and would ultimately have to build “‘Underground Atlanta’ skyscraper.”\textsuperscript{82}


\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Memphis Commercial Appeal}, October 25, 1970, in folder 2, box 4, BSP.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Cleveland Plain Dealer}, n.d., ca., 1969, in folder 2, box 4, BSP.


3) The “Belly Dancer in a Hoopskirt?”

By 1972, UA had reached “its glorious zenith.” Amiable crowds—teenagers enjoying ice cream, old couples dancing to banjo music, and children cheering the performance of a clown—filled the subterranean area every weekend. The number of business establishments exceeded eighty, which was twice as many as there had been in 1970, and more than 4.5 million people visited the area. In the same year, the Society of American Travel Writers awarded UA for “outstanding contributions to a quality travel environment through conservation and preservation.” The UAI celebrated that Underground was surviving the toughest recession after the World War II. According to UAI, the business volume was better than that of rivals such as Larimer Square in Denver and Ghredelli Square in San Francisco. Even Lester Maddox, who had staunchly opposed to make the downtown tourist enclave, now opened a souvenir shop called “Lester’s U.S.A,” selling Lester Maddox alarm clock, “Phooey” T-shirts and “Pickrick Drumstick” ax handles. Envying rival city’s success, furthermore, Birmingham Post-Herald urged the readers to construct a tourist enclave, asking “Why not old Morris-av in Birmingham?”

Its reputation as a “family place” persisted. In 1973, New York Times admired UA’s effort to contain bars and “family fluffs” together safely, offering a “downtown alternative to the

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84 Harold Martin, Atlanta and Environs vol. III, 559.
87 Ibid.
topless joints and X-rated movie houses.” Nevertheless, UA was on the verge of collapse, largely because the balance between family and other forms of entertainment was more fragile than it appeared. In 1972, a nightclub named New Year’s Eve located close to—but not in—UA, began to feature “go-go girls.” Because the club was not on their property, the UAI could not regulate the show, but this did not prevent it from disrupting UA’s image of middle-class respectability. UAI official knew well that it would completely spoil Underground Atlanta concept. For the officials of the UAI, a girlie show would “annihilate the entire Underground Atlanta.” According to an official of the UAI, “Families have been the mainstay of the complex which has become one of the best known downtown attraction in Atlanta.” Yet, UAI official claimed, the “Family entertainment district was degraded when the quick-buck people moved in with go-gos and strip shows… Some guy grabs you trying to pull you into a place to see a naked woman. After the family oriented places folded, the strip show lasted a few more years, then folded also.”

The City of Atlanta, especially Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson, who later became the city’s first African American mayor, loudly denounced the “girlie show” that was so close to UA, “a place where a man can take his wife and children for entertainment without running the risk of encountering lascivious entertainers.” The owner of the New Year’s Eve club stressed that the dancers were “not strippers” and were “going to be clothed.”

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92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
They were, he explained, just “waitresses who dance in high-neck evening gowns and a hot pants suit.” Furthermore, the owner believed that girlie shows were “the most asked-for thing down here” and that the show would “draw people to UA.” In an effort to stop the performances, Vice Mayor Jackson and UAI officials discovered that the club did not have a required city permit for entertainment and, claiming that “families and girlie shows do not mix,” urged the City of Atlanta’s Aldermanic Committee to deny New Year’s Eve’s such a permit. Despite their efforts, however, the committee granted the go-go bar’s request based upon the promise of the club’s attorney that they would not have “striptease dancing” and that the women

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would be attired in “appropriate clothes.” On May 15, 1972, the City of Atlanta issued the permit.

In fact, the New Year’s Eve had many influential advocates in Atlanta politics, including Mayor Sam Massell, whose brother was a close friend of the owner. The mayor argued that UA was not Six Flags Over Georgia and that the controversy was like trying to “make some mountains out of some molehills.” However, the Aldermanic Police Committee approved the show, permitting the NYE to present “live entertainment.” According to Ira Jackson, the leader of the committee, the police committee was able to find “no reason legally why we could not approve it.” The NYE’s attorney promised that they would not have “striptease dancing,” stressing that those girls “will be clothed in appropriate clothes.” As a result, the UAI could not stop the collapse of the family-oriented setting that the middle class favored for UA. During this invasion of adult entertainment, some joked that UA’s major attraction was “antebellum belly dancers”; whereas people had once viewed the area as a place to learn Atlanta’s history with children, they increasingly began to see it as a place for nightlife entertainment. The Atlanta Constitution’s editorial cartoonist Clifford Baldowski captured this changing perception in a drawing of a family throwing an anxious look at a member of Atlanta’s aldermanic board, who was striking a pose with a girl from “girlie shows” (Fig. 7.1). In 1974, an editorial in the Atlanta Journal insisted on dumping x-rated businesses into UA because “a marriage” between UA and the adult industry “might solve two problems [by keeping] UA viable and [getting] the

98 Board of Alderman, May 15, Read and Adopted, Minutes and Board of Alderman, City of Atlanta, no. 12, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia. Jackson soon came up with a new zoning ordinance to force businesses in UA to “keep with the cultural and historic association of the place or district” and “iron out… the kinks.” However, the ordinance could not get enough supporters. “Antebellum Belly Dancers for Atlanta?” Atlanta Journal, 16 May 1972.
99 “Jackson Declares War on Underground Dancers.”
sex business off the main thoroughfares.” This shift symbolized UA’s inability to maintain its reputation as a family place.

4) MARTA’s Invasion and Manufacturing Segregation

In addition to the deterioration of its family-oriented environment, UA was also losing its claim to historical authenticity, which actually was the major ingredient of the tourist enclave’s appeal to the middle class. In 1973, MARTA announced a construction plan for its railway system that bore serious consequences for the future of UA. In order to build the east-west line and the central Five Points Station, MARTA was going to bulldoze a third of UAI’s property, an area that contained fifteen establishments, including popular clubs, bars, and eateries, even though MARTA continued to contend that one of the important roles the public transit would play was to “make educational, educational, and social facilities” in Atlanta region “more accessible to greater numbers of people.” For them, Underground Atlanta was one of the major “cultural and recreational sites” MARTA would enable people to get access to.

For UA, the impending demise of these businesses was critical, but the real mortal damage would be to the Underground’s reputation as a historic festive place. Under the National Environment Policy Act of 1969, as the recipient of a federal grant, MARTA had to conduct an environmental impact study to “evaluate the effects the bus and rail rapid transit

102 Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, MARTA: Rapid Transit for Metropolitan Atlanta, 1971, 34. When MARTA, which had been organized just a year before, found out the plan of the building of historic entertainment area in 1966, MARTA’s president showed his interest in constructing MARTA’s central station in Underground Atlanta. MARTA’s General Manager H. L. Stuart sent a letter to Atlanta Journal, contending the historic tourist area should also be developed as “the downtown Transit Center.” This attempt would “achieve the best combination of historical restoration, entertainment, tourist and efficient transportation.” H.L. Stuart, General Manager, MARTA, to Editor, in “Letter to Editor,” Atlanta Journal, September 27, 1966.
system will have on the environment,” including the impact on Atlanta’s historic sites. MARTA’s final report revealed that the building of the MARTA station would have only “relatively minor impact on existing historical sites,” stating that downtown Atlanta contained only “few historical structures remaining” due to “Sherman’s capture of the City” and “indiscriminate removal during major highway construction and urban renewal programs.”

UA was no exception to this judgment, as the report emphasized that “the Five Point Station will take out some old commercial structures, but none of prime historical importance [italics mine].” With this statement MARTA largely minimized UA’s value as a site for history buffs. Indeed, according to the document, the construction would need only a “temporary relocation of Zero Mile Post,” which commemorated the birth of the City of Atlanta as a railway station, and that was it.104

After losing its middle-class appeal, UA encountered further financial obstacles and, by the mid-1970s, could no longer conceal its dire financial straits. The Atlanta Journal had already reported in 1972 the rumor that some shops and nightclubs in UA were “in trouble,” but the UAI had responded quickly that business volume was still better than other cities’ tourist enclaves, like Larimer Square in Denver and Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco.”105 By the mid-seventies, however, it was obvious that UA needed help. The Atlanta Journal reported that the area was becoming a “honky-tonk tourist trap,” and the UAI disclosed that the company had failed to rent many of the spaces on the property and had an increasing number of unpaid

103 MARTA, “News from MARTA,” February 7, 1972, folder 1, box 57, Mule to MARTA Papers, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter MMP).
104 The Urban Mass Transportation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System Project GA-03-0008, Final Environmental Statement, March 13, 1972, folder 3, box 63, MMP.
105 “A Proposal for Underground.”
debts. The New York Times discovered that restaurants, saloons, and shops in Underground Atlanta were in a bad shape; there was “not enough business during the slow winter month” in 1975 and “business is off 15 per cent overall and far worse in some establishments.”

Financially devastated, the company solicited compensation from MARTA. Because some restaurants and bars decided to leave UA, partly because their 1973 construction plan had shown that fifteen establishments, including popular bars and kids places like Ruby Red’s, Mine Shaft, Ice Cream Emporium, the Life of Christ Art Gallery, and Grandma’s Biscuits, would have to leave eventually anyway, the developers insisted that MARTA take responsibility for UA’s financial hardships and complete land appraisal for the land they would demolish and make their payment well before the beginning its construction. Not surprisingly, MARTA declined the UAI’s request.

The UAI then submitted a proposal to the City of Atlanta to turn UA into a “public park,” a designation that would allow the UAI to build a fence around the area and charge an entrance fee to visitors.

Maynard Jackson, by then the city’s mayor, agreed with the UAI and responded quickly by establishing an ordinance to create “an Underground Historic Park” to enable UAI to charge admission.” Advocates of the ordinance argued that, while the fencing was to enable collection of the admission fee, it would also make it possible for UA to attract middle-class visitors again, thereby bringing “Underground Atlanta back to Atlanta.” However, the

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108 “15 Nightspots in Underground Fall to MARTA,” Atlanta Constitution, October 8, 1974.
110 City Council, 3 March 1975, Read and Referred, 535, City Range A, A-5, City Council Minutes and Indexes, vol. 1, January 7, 1974 – August 18, 1975, minutes and index, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA.
“public park” proposal also encountered some opposition. For instance, one councilman disapproved of the proposal, reiterating MARTA’s argument that UA did not contain anything historically authentic other than “a few gas lamps” and was “the honkiest, tonkiest-looking place I have ever seen.” He argued further that establishing a “historical zoning code” would be more effective because it would eliminate a “shooting gallery” and undesirable “storefront signs,” and help the place develop more historical features.\footnote{112} The restoration of historical assets, rather than a fence and a gate, he claimed, would bring middle-class visitors back.

Nonetheless, the fencing advocates had a compelling case, contending that the best way to restore the space was to exclude “undesirable elements,” particularly homeless people, who were thought not to fit to UA’s middle-class environment. Many, including UAI officials, believed that UA’s lack of a sense of security was contributing to its decline and that a fence would help ameliorate this concern for it would keep out those likely to disturb public safety. UAI officials claimed, UA was “crisscrossed with city streets and have no control.” “The word control scares some people, but what we’re talking about is no winos, panhandlers, or shabby peddlers. Our biggest problems is the streets.”\footnote{113} A nightclub owner who favored the ordinance contended that fencing should work because it would “screen out the small number of undesirables.” A fence and gate would quell safety concerns because people know that “nobody’s going to commit a crime when they have to pass through a turnstile on the way out.”\footnote{114} He was articulate in showing who the undesirables were. They were comprised of “five elements,” which contained “the beggars, the winos, the pimps, the panhandlers and...
imposing religious fanatics.” On March 17, 1975, the city council approved the fencing ordinance, which enabled the UAI to use the City of Atlanta’s budget to build a physical boundary around the property. However, legal complexities delayed construction as some tenants opposed the fencing because it would divert the pedestrian traffic that normally passed by their businesses. The city also had difficulties finding a construction company that satisfied its bid standards for minority employment and price.

To make matters worse, MARTA’s construction began, which disturbed UA’s business since the beginning. Many, particularly, Urban Design Commission (UDC, former Atlanta Civic Design Commission) attacked MARTA for their attempt to demolish the Atlanta National Bank Building’s “the historic façade” which survived since the late nineteenth century along Old Alabama Street. UDC claimed that MARTA got building permit to “raze all but the facades of about 30 percent of the structure in Underground” along with the agreement to restore “whatever damage” made to the Bank’s exterior. To make any changes, MARTA, as a recipient of federal grant, should attain “permission from the Urban Mass Transit Authority’s President Advisory Council) and local “state and city’s)” prior to bulldozing any historical structures. After removing one façade, UDC stepped up and blamed harshly that MARTA showed “reprehensible behavior” and committed “foul activities.” In response, MARTA official promised not to “restore it [façade] it in accordance with” UDC, but they also argued some should be razed for building pillars to support the viaduct for rail transit. Clearance manager even said, “If they [UDC members] had an ounce of sense, they would know you can’t demolish a building without doing some damage” to the façade. The City Council basically

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supported MARTA, making a resolution urging UDC to “allow demolition.” As a result, UDC permitted MARTA bulldozed “all but the lower two floors of the structure,” giving up the parts above the viaduct.117

By the time the fence’s construction finally began in 1977, the UAI was almost gone, with potentially mortal consequences for UA.118 New York Times “What’s Doing in Atlanta” in 1977 reported that UA “slipped back upon shoddy times and is in bad need of another restoration.”119 That year a flamboyant, two-page advertisement of the company disappeared from the City Directory, the company failed to provide garbage collection or security services to the area, and, in 1978, the UAI declared bankruptcy.120 Without the management company, vendors dealing in cheap t-shirts, cheesy novelty goods, and low-quality paintings filled the alleys of the subterranean area. UA was becoming a “dive.”121

5) The Coming of a “Downtown Fighter” and the Demise of “Public” Park

By the time construction of the fence was finished, the Underground Atlanta Merchants Association (UAMA), an organization for business owners in UA, had replaced the UAI as managers of the property.122 Dante Stephensen, the UAMA president and the owner of Dante’s Down the Hatch, a popular nightclub and fondue restaurant, became a de facto leader of UA. To provide security and maintenance services, Stephensen collected fees from bars and restaurants on the property. His opinions appeared frequently in newspaper articles and were aired on

117 “MARTA to Again Ask Demolition of Old Bank,”
122 “Merchants in Underground Abandoned by Parent Firm.”
local television programs. “The people in the Underground Office,” Stephensen argued, “once they got into hot water, didn’t know what to do,” but he differed in that he had a “fighting spirit.” As if to demonstrate this spirit, he began to collect a 25-cent admission fee even before the completion of the fence; even though the City of Atlanta had not authorized UAMA to collect the fee, Stephensen just ignored the city. His fearless attitude as a “downtown fighter” made Atlantans believe that “the hordes once again will return to Underground Atlanta.” Stephensen was an ardent supporter of the fencing project, believing strongly in its ability to prevent “undesirables” from coming in. The fee also required all visitors to pass through a gate, where the gatekeepers stared “the grunge element” down, often telling them, “You don’t belong here.” At the same time, Stephensen emphasized the safety of UA, pointing out that Underground had “the lowest crime rate in the city since 1973” and that it was “safer than any college campus, any shopping mall, any neighborhood in metro Atlanta.” One conventioneer commented that she was surprised that UA was not “dirtier and scarier,” and even the Atlanta Police Department admitted that “there was not a significant crime problem” in the area.

Indeed, Stephensen understood that the real problem was suburbanites’ fear of downtown crime, particularly muggings and vandalism, and the primary goal of manufacturing segregation was to convince suburbanites that UA would provide a sanctuary for them downtown. On a sunny day in July 1978, Stephensen and Maynard Jackson celebrated the one-year anniversary of the fencing project, the first official celebration for the rebirth of UA as a “public park.”

123 “Underground Atlanta.”
124 The turnstile enabled UAMA to earn 12,000 dollars in the first month, which was more than enough to provide a maintenance and security service for the month. Atlanta Journal, July 15, 1977.
127 Ibid.
While the city of Atlanta could not announce and celebrate the completion of the fence and gate the year before, when UAMA started to collect admission fees without the city’s permission, there was another reason to celebrate: With the entrance fee and financial help from an Oklahoma investment firm, UA had already begun showing signs of revival.\textsuperscript{128} The income sources enabled UAMA to deploy “stewardesses selling balloons, a band and a popcorn vender in the streets,” all of which contributed to a feeling of security.\textsuperscript{129} When Jackson and Stephensen appeared on the podium surrounded by colorful balloons and microphones, the audience—blacks and whites, men and women, businesspeople with ties and suits and children with ice cream and candy—welcomed them, clapping and cheering. After the mayor’s speech assured them that “Underground Atlanta’s one of the safest spots in the entire five-county tier,” the “downtown fighter,” Stephensen, stood up and said,

Six Flags is fenced. Disney World is fenced. Stone Mountain is fenced. People feel safer inside a fence. . . . We can’t find religious fanatics now to come in here and debate with us, whereas before it used to be a problem. The problem of the winos and the beggars and the panhandlers—that’s all but disappeared. The fence has an amazing constructive effect on bringing in the people you want and keeping out the people we don’t want, because if you’re a shoplifter and you see a fence, you know you are gonna get caught so why bother to shoplift? So they go elsewhere.\textsuperscript{130}

As a showcase for Atlanta’s history, UA’s fence and admission fee allowed it to choose who would belong to Atlanta’s tradition and who would not. “Undesirable elements”—homeless people, political radicals, and street preachers—were being kept out while more middle-class people were coming back. WSB News underscored the purpose of the fence, commenting that “throughout history, men have built barricades to keep people out, but this fence here at

\textsuperscript{128} Ib id; “Can Underground Stage a Came back?” \textit{Atlanta Constitution}, August 2, 1977.
\textsuperscript{129} “So Much for Obituaries—Underground is Rallying,” \textit{Atlanta Journal}, August 31, 1978.
Underground built a year ago has actually served to keep people in.” Building a fence was would keep these homeless people out, but would not have stopped the depreciation of Underground Atlanta’s historic value. In fact, despite its promising beginning, the construction of the fence did not save UA. MARTA’s construction project, at its most intrusive in the late seventies, harmed UA’s business, which brought in only 1.2 million visitors in 1978—barely a fourth of the number of visitors four years earlier.  

MARTA’s railway construction, which flattened out a third of the subterranean property, severely harmed UA’s business. Particularly, MARTA’s sudden close of Central Avenue made it impossible for its visitors to use nearest parking lot. Dante Stephensen’s UAMA contended that MARTA’s construction harmed their businesses, and filed a suit to Fulton County Superior Court. Stephensen argued that “the majority of Underground businesses have had a drastic loss of business… Some shops and restaurants report as much as 90 percent loss.” UAMA requested for immediate stop of construction work on Central Avenue and provide $2 million compensation. They further demanded MARTA to make a new ramp to enable visitors to get easy access to a parking lot, instead of going through, according to Stephensen, “tortuous and unacceptable” detour. In response, MARTA argued that they had been “fair” and UAMA should understand that MARTA “cannot completely offset all the inconveniences to merchants and residents affected by our construction.” Supreme Court Judge Charles Weltner, a former congressman who contributed to the making of Federal Urban Mass Transit Act of 1964,

131 Ibid.
134 “MARTA Vs. Underground.”
did not order MARTA to halt construction work or ordered to pay for the damages the construction incurred. Weltner showed understandings Underground merchants’ plight but did not order MARTA to halt their construction on the ground that “it would drastically upset the timetable for completion of the east line of the rapid rail system.” Weltner appointed a lawyer to settle the dispute to determine how much actually MARTA damaged UA shops and restaurants and the amount of compensation. He also recommended MARTA to build a better “detour signs” and inform taxi drivers as for route changes.

UA’s decline might even have been caused by the fence and the MARTA construction, since the debates over it highlighted the danger inherent in coming downtown. When an Atlanta Constitution staff writer visited UA in 1979, ladies with antebellum garments did not welcome him as they had ten years before; instead, as he was about to enter, a “drug-addled nut” approached him, introduced himself as “Dr. Clinton,” and attempted to escort him toward a bar for glass of “Jupiter Juice.” Still, once inside the gate, the writer discovered a familiar place where there was “no cause for fear,” even in “the most desolate alleyways.” Discovering that “the spirit of place resided in the place as well as in its gas lamps, cobbled lanes and brick archways,” the writer concluded that “Dr. Clinton” was “the exception rather than norm.” For middle-class readers in suburbia, however, the article would add to their concerns, as it seemed to portray UA as little more than a small fort in a downtown battlefield. The rupture between suburbia and downtown was complete.

About three months after the appearance of the above article, the Atlanta Journal ran an essay describing UA as “a tomb,” and “dark, dirty, depressing, and deserted,” and reporting that

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137 “MARTA Vs. Underground.” Later, Atlanta Journal-Constitution lamented, “Many historic structures have return to dust…. A strip of stores in Underground Atlanta was destroyed in 1976 to make way for the east west MARTA rapid rail line.” “Atlanta’s Preservation Blues,” Atlanta Constitution, September 8, 1980
nine out of ten tourists would be “disappointed in what they saw.” Stephensen still appeared in local newspapers and television programs working to save UA, but it was only a matter of time before the inevitable, final collapse. By 1979, he acknowledged that suburbanites would not return to downtown. Even though he was an advocate of the “public street,” Stephensen recognized that he was not a “public institution” but a “capitalistic person.” To protect his fondue restaurant, he had to give up UA and move to a “location where locals are willing to come and hotels will send visitors by cab.” WSB News interviewed him just before he pulled his restaurant out of UA and asked why he had tried to be a “downtown fighter.” Stephensen explained that it was an obligation of successful people to give something back, and that downtown should be “important to all of us regardless where we live.” Obviously, the importance of downtown had faded for the suburban middle-class. By 1981, Dante Stephensen had moved his business to the Lenox Mall area in the upscale Buckhead section of Atlanta. By then, the gaslights—the symbol of the UA historic district—were turned off for good.

By building UA, politicians, developers, UAI officials, and private business entrepreneurs like Stephensen attempted to recreate a lively central city street modeled on the early twentieth century and thereby bring middle-class suburbanites back to downtown Atlanta. The gas lights, cobblestone streets, marble facades, classic ice cream parlors, and monkey shows represented efforts to create the ambiance of an inclusive place where hippies, middle-class families, rich and poor, and young and old could all gather together. Many local papers from other cities looked on and extolled the openness of the festive enclave. However, it was this very inclusiveness that gradually undermined UA’s appeal to middle-class families. The expansion of convention business demanded nightlife entertainment, which led to the opening of “girlie

140 WSB News, n.d., rec. no. 38272, reel 0050, time in 37:50, WSBNC.
shows” near UA. When the papers filed in the run-up to construction of a MARTA station in the Underground area undermined its image as a historical place, the combination decimated UA’s two primary characteristics as a historic park and family entertainment. A fence around the project was erected to exclude people whose behavior did not fit into middle-class norms and expectations, but ultimately the fence and gate did little more than symbolize UA’s failure to turn Atlanta’s downtown into a safe and wholesome place for middle-class families. Indeed, its existence represented a denial of the urban inclusiveness that UA had once treasured.

Many people lamented UA’s death and one could read this as another story of downtown’s “decline,” but documenting the biography of UA requires neither glorifying the efforts of promoters and planners nor mourning the early death of downtown Atlanta. As historians Alison Isenberg and Bryant Simon recently have cautioned, we would do well not to rely on so-called declension narrative in chronicling downtown’s history.141 Those who lament the recent “death” of downtown tend to romanticize the past, assuming that downtown streets, movie theaters, and department stores, especially in the pre-war period, constituted urbane, diverse, and democratic space. This perspective overlooks the fact that downtown space, particularly before the Civil Rights movement, was mostly segregated; it might have been vibrant and open, but it was only for whites. Seen in this light, UA presents an important case not only because it was one of the first efforts to create a public space in a post-Jim Crow Atlanta, but because UA promoters and developers endeavored to recreate a downtown that originally existed during a period of rigid white rule. Of course, this does not mean that UA attempted to preserve racial segregation; after all, Mayor Maynard Jackson was an African American who worked diligently to revive UA and restaurants and bars in the festive place

141 See Simon, Boardwalk of Dreams; Isenberg, Downtown America.
cherished black entertainers and welcomed black customers. Manufacturing segregation in this context refers primarily to the exclusion of those who engaged in “inappropriate” behavior, including “go-go girls” and street preachers. Particularly, these promoters were compelled to exclude the “winos” and “panhandlers,” since they disturbed the visitors from the suburbs, upon whose satisfaction downtown’s survival depended.

Nonetheless, race remained important to the brief life of UA, for the primary target of physical exclusion was homeless people and one should not overlook the large numbers of African Americans among the homeless population of Atlanta.\textsuperscript{142} UA was destined to collapse, because it pretended to be open to any race and culture despite the fact that it targeted mainly middle-class folks. When the central city was being occupied increasingly with the poor and racial minorities, it was just impossible. They sought their final cure in gates and fences, but the remedy did not work; ironically, people saw it as evidence that UA (and downtown) itself had become an “inappropriate” space, strengthening their determination to stay away from downtown. Erecting gates and fences not only turned the homelessness and blackness into proof of urban decay; the tactic also convinced suburbanites to shut the door on UA and, in so doing, prevented them from witnessing and learning the true character and origins of urban crisis.\textsuperscript{143} In short, UA was no longer alive as a public space; it failed to be a “site of interaction, encounter and the support of strangers.”\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Furthermore, one should note that the decline of Underground Atlanta occurred when African American began to enjoy more economic and political power. Successful blacks began to purchase single detached houses in Cascade Heights, playing tennis at a private tennis club like Washington Park Tennis Center near Hunter Street. Simultaneously, their nightlife changed. Underground Atlanta attracted them. \textit{New York Times} discovered, for instance, black middle-class “couples favored the informal elegance of the jazz room at [Dante Stephensen’] Down the Hatch.” “Capital of Blacks-is-Bountiful,” \textit{New York Times}, April 7, 1974.

\textsuperscript{143} The City of Atlanta sponsorship enabled Underground Atlanta to be resurrected once again in 1989. Managed by Rouse Corporation, the $142 million project again has engaged in a new effort at revitalizing Atlanta’s downtown, but, as with its predecessor, the new Underground Atlanta is still struggling to attract middle class visitors from the metropolitan Atlanta area.

\textsuperscript{144} Mitchell, \textit{The Right to the City}, 3-4.
III. The Rise of Citizen’s Movement and Public Transit

Despite MARTA’s appeal as a symbol of public-ness, it also damaged the public sphere. The MARTA construction begun in the mid-1970s, however, struck a death blow to the crumbling Underground Atlanta, which had marked the brief rise of an urban public. MARTA construction certainly ended up changing downtown, but not in the way optimists had envisioned. Before the tumultuous transition, the Five Points area had contained a space which embraced diversity alongside the original Underground Atlanta. For instance, a Newsweek reporter sent a telegraph to their New York headquarters, portraying a common story of a vibrant and diverse downtown:

Smack at five points in the heart of downtown Atlanta... there’s a park where last year were ugly, tacky buildings: a large block of spacious, gracious rolling green slopes, walkways and shallow steps which can make a great natural amphitheater. Everyday at noon in these warm/cool clean blue days the park becomes an un-self-conscious metaphor of an open society. A symbolic ballast of the hope for the soul of the city. Hundreds of people materialize at noon to sit on the grass, munch sandwich lunches, and see what’s what: bankers, secretaries, college students, hips and straights, blacks and whites, dudes and gray goods idle and chat meet, snooze, gossip (a touch of Italian piazza) leaflet or chat with leaf letters or pickets or religious freaks. Sometimes a black one man band will set up and pound out amplified rock and roll, set the crowd dancing until the police on houses.... Hare Krishna’s do their cymbal chant dance and Easter week expect the Salvation Army band will do its traditional lunch hour concert. Nothing earth shaking happens, which is the point. ...of course same flakey slips in but is absorbed by the larger atmosphere of non hassle. Like last month when fat mayor Maynard Jackson in pen strip suit played tennis on a half sized court with world champ Stan Smith to promote tennis tournament. but mostly, for these few mild days, the park central is of people without a cause. Let celebrate this moment of victory of human being over institutional manipulation (sell, a minor triumph) before urbanologists weight it down with label...  

This flourishing and energetic culture, particularly in Underground Atlanta area, did not survive MARTA construction. Remembering the downtown’s urban energy, Dante Stephensen, owner

145 “New Beat in the Heart of ATL; Nation Story Suggestions,” March 15, 1974, folder 74, box 1, Newsweek Inc., Atlanta Office Records, Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.
of Underground Atlanta’s Dante’s Down the Hatch, disagreed that fear in downtown killed the
entertainment district. Instead, for him, “that exodus of business [due to MARTA construction]
made people think it was an unsafe place.” Atlanta Journal Constitution reported that
“officials and businessmen say its demise… had less to do with security than it did with
construction of MARTA.” Moreover, MARTA dispossessed many people and even
disturbed the construction plans of public housing developments. Furthermore, the public
transit failed to recreate the city in such a way that people could build their lives around the
commuter railway. Opposition on the part of the real estate industry prevented new
developments around the station, which in turn limited increased usership of the rail transit.

Simultaneously, the rise of the citizen’s movement did not work only for the making of
an accessible system of public transportation. Intown neighborhood organizations, which had
successfully reinterpreted the notion of “public” as a tool for preserving their environment,
continue even now to situate themselves deep inside the “Ocean of Trees.” The Druid
Hills Civic Association rejected outright putting stations in their “historic neighborhood”;
therefore, they still lack a Tucker-North DeKalb Line. MARTA often became a target of
criticism for its racism, despite its carefully-cultivated image as a symbol of racial harmony.
The Great Speckled Bird, for instance, reported that its bus service was far from satisfactory, that
it did not provide fair employment, and that its rail line construction displaced many poor
African-American families. As Larry Keating’s angry account shows, MARTA and the

147 “Poor Rooked [sic] Again in Marta Study,” Great Speckled Bird, December 25, 1973;
148 See, Keating, Atlanta, 129.
151 See, for instance, “MARTA,” Great Speckled Bird, Nov. 13, 1972; “BART & MARTA,” Great Speckled
neighborhood groups also failed to complete the Perry Homes Line. For African-American domestic workers, it remained but “a broken promise.” Although they were the ones who could most be expected to rely upon trains and buses, they were denied this service, and clearly felt that from their perspective, MARTA was no longer “public” transit.

True, neighborhood organizations in island suburbs played a decisive role in the birth of Atlanta’s public transit, but their notion of the public did not apply to other groups. They were successful in transforming the image of public transit into that of a preserver of Atlanta’s environments, public institutions (i.e. parks and schools), and, overall, its historical identity. Taken together, their efforts were successful and moreover offered a new way to promote neighborhood cooperation. Their endeavors killed highway construction, at least in the short term, and thereby they held off the intrusion of urban elements, including commercial areas, and the erection of affordable apartments; however, their effort may have contributed to promote exclusion and accelerate urban sprawl.

When Jimmy Carter terminated the Stone Mountain Tollway project in 1972, the Georgia DOT had already cleared about 500 houses and created a cross-shaped parcel of land amounting to about 220 acres. Debate erupted over how this land was to be used. The progressive BOND plan consisted of expanding local Mary Lin School and building a mixed residential area, which would include space for multiple housing units for the poor. However, BOND members suddenly faced an angry reaction from the older residents of Morningside and Druid Hills, despite the fact that they had welcomed the young activists with a smile when they had

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152 See, Keating, Atlanta, 131-141.
campaigned against the Stone Mountain Freeway/Tollway. The residents demanded that “the area be used for park space,” and rejected the “building of low income high-rise or a housing project. They feel that putting that many more units into the neighborhoods would help turn the area into a slum.”\footnote{\textit{Stone Mountain Tollway—The Land Use Question,} \textit{Great Speckled Bird}, January 29, 1973. Relocation for the I-485 and Stone Mountain Tollway relocated many people who had long lived in the area. Many individual accounts of what people went through survive. One of the residents of Moreland Avenue said that “the worst aspect of the whole deal was that many older, retired people had been forced off their property (where they had lived for long years and had worked to pay for their homes) and only been offered very inadequate payment for their homes (sometimes just enough to make a down payment on another house.),” \textit{Ibid.}} It seemed that even when united in opposing freeway construction, BOND and the local residents had been working at cross purposes.

BOND’s fight for social justice often dovetailed, ironically, with the attempts of the affluent classes to preserve or increase their wealth. The future vision of an “economically integrated community,” which BOND was trying to realize, was popular among the Yuppies. One of the reasons why Yuppies favored the BOND community was that: “it was an economically integrated neighborhood and not stale like suburbs, its big old houses were attractive, and the personal tastes of this generation of young professional were different.” However, the influx of young professionals changed the character of the area, because the white professionals were “not low income people. In other words they were people to be dealt with and not ignored.” Simultaneously, however, the influx of the affluent did not mean a complete solution for uneven development, because it pushed out a “large number of … old and low-income people,” and and turned the area into what Yuppies considered a “‘desirable’ place to live.” Needless to say, “desirable” contained strong racial and class preferences: no longer would the residents have to worry about “deterioration, black in-migration, poor whites, or highways through neighborhoods.”\footnote{\textit{Recycling a Neighborhood,} \textit{Great Speckled Bird}, June 11, 1973. The land was left intact, although}
BOND now had to deal with the competing voices of old residents, surrounding neighborhoods, and new young professionals. Their rejection of highway construction and support for public transportation had enabled them to form a united front in the anti-highway campaign. However, once the initial battle had been won, this loose coalition had broken down, and BOND could not overcome the fragmentation. The editor of the *Bird* received a letter which strongly criticized BOND, stating:

BOND, like similar organizations, got its popular base of support by finding an issue, the expressways, which the people will support it in other matters. As a result, politicians listened to BOND speak for the “people,” when the people had no earthly idea what was going on.

The sad thing about what happened is that it is pretty easy to find an issue that people will support you on. It is sometimes called “telling the people what they want to hear.” Theoretically, anyone who is opposed to the increase in the price of anything will be supported by the consumers of that item, even if that person knows the price increase is inevitable.

In other words, BOND try to solve uneven development was gradually pulled into the opposite direction; their cry for public transit and green open space had been co-opted by the homeowners, who then swallowed them up and cast them aside.

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156 Moreover, there were dissenting voices against their radicalism. Many BOND supporters blended radicalism into a force to conserve their suburban landscape, and were more concerned with the former. Moreover, African-Americans did not fully welcome their efforts, and in fact many viewed BOND with suspicion. A letter from a Druid Hills resident to Sam Massell in 1973 showed how fleeting and fragile the unity had been. The letter-writer expressed opposition to Massell’s appointment of BOND members for alderman posts. BOND members were, they asserted, just “White Trash elements,” only concerned with “Bass High, Highland, and Moreland ST.” The writer contend that BOND members did not care about the second ward, which had a population consisting of 65 percent blacks. Supporting BOND would lead to
Conclusion

MARTA emerged as a super public, in which various social groups came together to negotiate the construction of the future landscape of their city. The advocates contended that the bus and railway transportation systems contributed to the environment, the technological advancement of everyday life, and an increase in job opportunities through its construction and operation. This, however, did not mean that its benefits would fall equally on all social groups. Crucially, MARTA construction deteriorated the public space in downtown, which had performed a vital role as an actual site where many people of various backgrounds could encounter one another. The social exposure this engendered had begun to ignite an increased understanding of the needs of strangers, which enabled people to form a broader sense of community and raise their voices. Despite its accomplishments, the short life of the first Underground Atlanta illustrates how the making of public transit worked in opposition to its ideals. The making of MARTA indeed enabled many to raise their voices, and this testified to MARTA’s role as a “public” transit, but it did not meant that it always worked on behalf of the empowerment of those voices. The limits of the Bass Organization of Neighborhood Development made clear how the rise of liberal voices would be merged with, and subjugated to, the demands of the home-owning privileged, and weakened as a result.

Massell losing support from “downtown business, Druid Hill taxpayers, cultural segment, and many Black educated citizens as well as EOA [Economic Opportunities Atlanta, Inc] participants,” the anonymous author of the letter cautioned. Sender Unknown, July 7, 1972, folder n.d. box n.d., Sam Massell Papers, Kennan Research Center, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, Georgia.
Epilogue: Public Transit as a City Shaper?

The auto owning majority has a good chance of carrying the day at the polls in an area where there is no “bill of rights” to protect the transit-riding minority. Yet the paradox is that it is the very preferences of the majority which make the difficulties of the minority in traveling in a metropolitan area so great, and so deserving of concerted public attention. This is the fundamental dilemma facing transit proposals, and it might as well be faced.¹

MARTA’s victory in the 1971 referendum did not translate into the rise of a public. Again this where I think you should start. By introducing regional, inter-neighborhood public transit, the downtown business establishment had created a stage upon which many social groups formed their own public spheres and raised their voices. Social groups brought their own notions of public transit into play and clashed over the meanings. The creation of a public transit system thus neither reflected an underlying unity nor created one. Rather, a temporary agreement between two publics — the anti-freeway campaign supporters and African-Americans – enabled residents of DeKalb and Fulton Counties to establish a federally-funded public transportation system. However, as we have seen, their notion of “public” remained hotly contested, despite the publicity efforts of MARTA which aimed at creating a good image of the agency as representing true public transit. In particular, its objective was to shape a city space around its bus and rail transit system, but the rail lines failed to reach into suburban counties and the hearts of inland suburbs. To make matters worse, MARTA’s ideal of its rapid transit offering a solution to Atlanta’s uneven development between suburbia and the inner city only exacerbated the problem: its efforts just accelerated the existing disparities by shutting down the downtown public space and black neighborhoods. Rather, in

practice MARTA played a major role in keeping the suburban landscape — those single detached homes with a parking lot — secure, whether inside or outside city limits. Many advocates, particularly affluent whites, did not spend much time demonstrating how rapid transit would improve their mobility. For them, rapid transit was necessary as a broader social tool, which would preserve the pre-Sunbelt suburban lifestyle and shape it into a space where they could safely maintain their racial, financial, and cultural homogeneity.

Fifty years have passed since the idea of building public transportation in Atlanta first began to take root. The shiny, clean trains and deep tunnels of contemporary Atlanta's transit system enjoy a good reputation, particularly among visitors to the city. According to an AJC report in 1985, visitors loved it. After riding a MARTA train in 1985, a New Yorker asked, mocking his own city somewhat, “Where’s the graffiti? Where’s the urine stains?” Another visitor from Connecticut, while on a train heading to North Avenue Station, compared the experience to a theme park, saying “I keep wanting to hear, ‘Next stop: Pluto, Mickey and Goofy Parking.’ This isn’t a subway. This is Disney World.”

Despite the praise, MARTA failed to achieve its original goals. In 1986, six years after the original projected completion date, MARTA still had only 25 miles of train railway built. It carried approximately 185,000 passengers everyday far fewer than 385,000 fewer originally expected to use the system. Still, fares had been steadily increasing. Despite its obvious limits, MARTA continued to try and form positive public opinion of its operations, spending $1.2 million for their PR activities. These PR efforts were carefully planned. MARTA officials, for instance, did not refer to MARTA as a subway as people would do in New York, because

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“that word conjures up certain negative images,” including crime and graffiti. Instead they continued to advertise it as “everyone’s transit.”

Their lack of progress, however, did not go unnoticed. In 1993, the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce’s manager of transportation programs commented, “For the past 20 years, MARTA had been a construction company.” He saw this as a fundamentally wrong-headed approach. “The biggest potential for growth now isn’t through building but by orienting the community towards mass transportation. We just can’t tell people to ride the trains and then design and build everything around the automobile.”

Clearly MARTA had failed to transform the landscape of Atlanta around public transportation. Maybe talk for a few minutes about average commuters and the general suburban nightmare that is Atlanta. 2003 statistics revealed that only 3 percent of the working population in Metropolitan Atlanta used public transportation to get to their workplace. People saw no need to ride, asking “why public transit?”, and the state-of-the-art rail line and system was deeply unpopular. However much they may have spent on PR to present rapid transit as a cure-all for the city’s woes, MARTA had ultimately failed to convince the broader public of the value and meaning of public transit.

In 2003, Mara Shalhoup, a writer for the liberal weekly newspaper Creative Loafing, tried to tackle the question. “Like most Atlantans,” she explained, she “seldom” used MARTA. But she decided to give up her car for a week and use MARTA to go to work at Peachtree Center, shop in Lenox Mall, learn Yoga at Decatur and dine at Virginia Highlands. Much to her

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6 Ibid.
surprise, she liked it. Shalhoup discovered that MARTA was not scary and dirty as many rich white Atlantans were claiming. More importantly, it was economical. By her calculations, she saved more than eighty dollars taking the train everywhere. But despite this successful experiment, Shalhoup would not surrender her Toyota. A she summed up after her experiment, “The real cost” was “time,” because she spent “four hours riding buses or trains, six hours waiting for them and almost five hours for walking.” If she had driven, she would have needed only a “fraction of that time.” The writer still recommended MARTA to readers who were not in “a terrible hurry,” but she confessed that she did not use the service after her experiment. “After picking up driving again, my self-righteous brush with MARTA seemed but a distant fling, intoxicating in its newness — but altogether too much trouble to pursue.”

It is important here to consider the issue of choice. True, the Shalhoup middle class lifestyle was not a good fit for public transit. Shalhoup, however, had the financial resources available to elect to prioritize her time over her expenditure, and choose to drive. However, it is also true that many people simply had no choice but to build their lives around MARTA. These are the poor in the car-based cities of America. While many of them may also have wished to drive everyday, they did not have the financial means to make this a viable option. For instance, already in 1987, MARTA trains for the north in the morning tended to be packed with the African Americans heading to booming North Fulton. The ridership was twice as big as the lines for stations in the west, east, and south on a daily basis. Latinos and Asian-Americans were also heavy users of the public transit. Unsurprisingly, therefore, they were enraged at MARTA’s naming of the rail line to Doraville the “Yellow Line.”

MARTA, while seemingly oblivious to the racist connotations in its naming policies, remained an

7 Ibid.
important part of the lives of Latinos and Asian-Americans. MARTA had a major role to play in serving these two different publics as Atlanta’s only public transportation system. The inside of a train may be invisible, or remain outside the concern of many people, but it constitutes an authentic public space/sphere. The most important issue to reflect upon, however, is the ways in which public transportation has shaped, and has been shaped, by the changing relationships among the people in the Sunbelt Metropolis and how this showed, in the end, that suburban thinking ruled the day. “The public” was good as long it did not cost too much or get in the way of the right to private space and individual comfort. Those ideas, however, do not sustain urban spaces or democracy.
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Decatur DeKalb News
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Lawrenceville Weekly Herald
Mableton Mail
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### Table A.1.1. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in the City of Atlanta (1970 and 1980)

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**Note:**
(a) The 1970 Atlanta SMSA had Clayton, Cobb, Gwinnett, DeKalb and Fulton Counties.

### Table A.1.2. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in Inman Park Area (1970 and 1980)

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## Table A.1.3. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in Morningside Area (1970 and 1980)

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<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$12,657</td>
<td>$12,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated individuals</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$2,740</td>
<td>$3,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$3,829</td>
<td>$4,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over (%)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Table A.1.7. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in Decatur South (1970 and 1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census tracts</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7127</td>
<td>5650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1624</td>
<td>761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5484</td>
<td>4840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Blacks</td>
<td>76.90%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.70%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>1257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$8,525</td>
<td>$12,626</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$8,992</td>
<td>$15,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated individuals</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$3,363</td>
<td>$6,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$3,524</td>
<td>$7,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over (%)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table A.1.8. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in Perry Homes Area (1970)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tracts</th>
<th>83.01</th>
<th>83.02</th>
<th>84</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>86.01</th>
<th>86.2</th>
<th>87.01</th>
<th>87.02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>5391</td>
<td>6032</td>
<td>7289</td>
<td>8675</td>
<td>7335</td>
<td>5895</td>
<td>6666</td>
<td>4788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5372</td>
<td>6025</td>
<td>7228</td>
<td>8446</td>
<td>6833</td>
<td>5527</td>
<td>6654</td>
<td>4456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>99.6%</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>93.2%</td>
<td>93.8%</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>93.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>1405</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1609</td>
<td>1110</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>1026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>$7,371</td>
<td>$7,126</td>
<td>$7,566</td>
<td>$8,233</td>
<td>$7,433</td>
<td>$3,634</td>
<td>$3,566</td>
<td>$6,505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$7,967</td>
<td>$7,865</td>
<td>$8,032</td>
<td>$8,349</td>
<td>$7,837</td>
<td>$4,795</td>
<td>$4,512</td>
<td>$7,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>$3,656</td>
<td>$2,968</td>
<td>$3,170</td>
<td>$3,648</td>
<td>$3,054</td>
<td>$1,467</td>
<td>$1,735</td>
<td>$1,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$3,820</td>
<td>$3,364</td>
<td>$3,147</td>
<td>$3,740</td>
<td>$3,622</td>
<td>$2,236</td>
<td>$2,456</td>
<td>$2,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over</td>
<td>9.02%</td>
<td>11.21%</td>
<td>8.36%</td>
<td>6.58%</td>
<td>8.56%</td>
<td>4.27%</td>
<td>3.15%</td>
<td>5.45%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table A.1.9. Income, Racial, Housing, and Age Characteristics in Perry Homes Area (1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tracts</th>
<th>83.01</th>
<th>83.02</th>
<th>84</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>86.01</th>
<th>86.2</th>
<th>87.01</th>
<th>87.02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All persons</td>
<td>4215</td>
<td>3917</td>
<td>5748</td>
<td>6080</td>
<td>6845</td>
<td>4061</td>
<td>3821</td>
<td>4888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4186</td>
<td>3888</td>
<td>5701</td>
<td>5977</td>
<td>6740</td>
<td>3076</td>
<td>3814</td>
<td>4792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Black</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>99.2%</td>
<td>98.3%</td>
<td>98.5%</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>99.8%</td>
<td>98.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>1159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$9,439</td>
<td>$10,821</td>
<td>$10,944</td>
<td>$10,905</td>
<td>$10,110</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$4,375</td>
<td>$7,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$14,028</td>
<td>$13,909</td>
<td>$12,614</td>
<td>$13,759</td>
<td>$13,057</td>
<td>$7,300</td>
<td>$5,987</td>
<td>$10,221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated individuals</td>
<td>612</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>1137</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median income</td>
<td>$5,600</td>
<td>$5,063</td>
<td>$2,988</td>
<td>$3,896</td>
<td>$5,431</td>
<td>$2,896</td>
<td>$2,990</td>
<td>$3,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean income</td>
<td>$6,706</td>
<td>$6,115</td>
<td>$5,029</td>
<td>$5,395</td>
<td>$6,516</td>
<td>$3,743</td>
<td>$3,953</td>
<td>$4,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 and over (%)</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A.2.1. Transit Vote Results in Morningside, Virginia
Highland and Inman Park Area, Atlanta in 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precincts</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highland Branch Library</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>55.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland School</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>51.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenic Center</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>64.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreland Avenue School</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>47.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inman School</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>50.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morningside School</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>58.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard High School</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>65.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forrest School</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>59.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butler School</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>70.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Elementary School</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>72.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill School</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>70.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station No. 19</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>49.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Station No. 29</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>64.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4296       3050       58.48%

Source: "Transit Vote Listed by Precincts," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 10, 1971
### Table A.2.2. Transit Vote Results in Perry Homes Area, Atlanta in 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precincts</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grove Park School</td>
<td>$297</td>
<td>$303</td>
<td>49.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cater School</td>
<td>$374</td>
<td>$307</td>
<td>54.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Fulton High School</td>
<td>$182</td>
<td>$209</td>
<td>46.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egan Homes</td>
<td>$307</td>
<td>$224</td>
<td>57.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris Brown College</td>
<td>$163</td>
<td>$136</td>
<td>54.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White School</td>
<td>$261</td>
<td>$230</td>
<td>53.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finch Elementary</td>
<td>$166</td>
<td>$107</td>
<td>60.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey School</td>
<td>$103</td>
<td>$112</td>
<td>47.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams School</td>
<td>$132</td>
<td>$133</td>
<td>49.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harper High School</td>
<td>$704</td>
<td>$582</td>
<td>54.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood Court</td>
<td>$106</td>
<td>$115</td>
<td>47.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center Hill School</td>
<td>$249</td>
<td>$272</td>
<td>47.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archer High School</td>
<td>$142</td>
<td>$136</td>
<td>51.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$3,186 $2,866 52.64%

Source: "Transit Vote Listed by Precincts," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 10, 1971

### Table A.2.3. Transit Vote Results in Druid Hills area, DeKalb in 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precincts</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Briarcliff</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>54.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briar Vista</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>59.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kittredge</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>76.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coralwood</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>55.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>72.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatewood</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>84.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>66.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret Harris</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>73.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Mill</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>64.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>54.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sagamore</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>57.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>60.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.D. Thompson</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>67.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6789 3673 64.89%

Source: "Transit Vote Listed by Precincts," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 10, 1971
**Table A.2.4. Transit Vote Results in Stone Mountain Area, DeKalb in 1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precincts</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brockett</td>
<td>$123</td>
<td>$291</td>
<td>29.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$308</td>
<td>39.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pine Lake</td>
<td>$462</td>
<td>$547</td>
<td>45.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke Rise</td>
<td>$455</td>
<td>$608</td>
<td>42.80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** "Transit Vote Listed by Precincts," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 10, 1971

---

**Table A.2.5. Transit Vote Results in Southern and Western DeKalb, DeKalb in 1971**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precincts</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atherton</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>56.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canby</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>47.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa Linda</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>36.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cedar Grove</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>26.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Hill</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>34.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarkston</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>50.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastland</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>34.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastwyck</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>44.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gresham Park</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>28.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithonia</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>37.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McAfee</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>31.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClendon</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>45.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McWilliams</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>24.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkview</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyheaven</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>36.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Mill</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>43.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tilson</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>41.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toney</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>35.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadsworth</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>32.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindmore</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>47.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5139  7860  39.53%

**Source:** "Transit Vote Listed by Precincts," *Atlanta Constitution*, November 10, 1971
### Table A.3.1. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in the City of Atlanta and SMSA (1970 and 1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers 16 Years and over</td>
<td>DeKalb Part</td>
<td>Fulton Part</td>
<td>Total SMSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Vehicle:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive Alone</td>
<td>10974</td>
<td>109608</td>
<td>420807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
<td>3024</td>
<td>22470</td>
<td>70511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
<td>4060</td>
<td>38116</td>
<td>51961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus or Streetcar</td>
<td>4060</td>
<td>38036</td>
<td>51805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway, elevated train, or railroad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked only</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>9704</td>
<td>16860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation (%)</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families with own children under 18 years</td>
<td>$10,958</td>
<td>$107,350</td>
<td>$352,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$5,940</td>
<td>$55,700</td>
<td>$208,808</td>
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### Table A.3.3. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in Morningside Area (1970 and 1980)

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### Table A.3.4. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in Druid Hills Area (1970 and 1980)

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### Table A.3.5. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in Buckhead Area (1970 and 1980)

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<td>Bus or Streetcar</td>
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<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway, elevated train, or railroad</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked only</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families with own children under 18 years</td>
<td>$1,417</td>
<td>$1,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>471</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING TYPES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All year-round housing units</td>
<td>2695</td>
<td>2257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner occupied</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter occupied</td>
<td>1591</td>
<td>1748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1581</td>
<td>1736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons, median all</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons, owner occupied unit, median</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons, renter occupied units,</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value, median</td>
<td>$21,300</td>
<td>$31,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract rent, median</td>
<td>$134</td>
<td>$126</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Table A.3.6. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in the Perry Homes Area (1970)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tracts</th>
<th>83.01</th>
<th>83.02</th>
<th>84</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>86.01</th>
<th>86.02</th>
<th>87.01</th>
<th>87.02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workers 16 Years and over</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Vehicle</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>1453</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1568</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus or Streetcar</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway, elevated train, or railroad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked only</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Public transportation (%)**

|                       | 33.8% | 34.1% | 38.4% | 30.6% | 27.1% | 50.7% | 61.2% | 33.5% |

**All families with own children under 18 years**

|                       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|                       | $733  | $735  | $993  | $1,177| $994  | $985  | $1,160| $743  |

**HOUSING**

|                       | 1644  | 1804  | 2293  | 2365  | 1967  | 1365  | 1531  | 1226  |
| Owner                  | 821   | 669   | 659   | 1095  | 1078  | 235   | 44    | 692   |
| White                  | 3     | 3     | 48    | 114   | 65    | 65    | 53    |       |
| Black                  | 818   | 669   | 655   | 1045  | 964   | 170   | 44    | 636   |
| Renter                 | 776   | 1076  | 1560  | 1178  | 813   | 1057  | 1455  | 479   |
| White                  | 3     | 26    | 56    | 45    | 3     | 4     |       |       |
| Black                  | 771   | 1076  | 1558  | 1149  | 755   | 1012  | 1451  | 433   |
| Persons, median        | 3.1   | 3.5   | 2.8   | 3.3   | 3.3   | 4.4   | 4.1   | 3.8   |
| Persons, owner occupied unit, median | 3.3   | 3.6   | 2.9   | 3.9   | 3.6   | 3.4   | 3.8   | 4     |
| Persons, renter occupied units, median | 2.9   | 3.4   | 2.8   | 2.9   | 3     | 4.7   | 4.1   | 3.5   |

| Value, median | $14,500 | $14,200 | $14,700 | $19,600 | $12,600 | $12,600 | $13,200 | $12,300 |
| Contract rent, median | $80 | $98 | $80 | $84 | $83 | $52 | $56 | $64 |

Table A.3.7. The Means of Transportation, Housing Types and Home Ownership Ratio in the Perry Homes Area (1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census tracts</th>
<th>83.01</th>
<th>83.02</th>
<th>84</th>
<th>85</th>
<th>86.01</th>
<th>86.02</th>
<th>87.01</th>
<th>87.02</th>
</tr>
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<td><strong>THE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers 16 Years and over</td>
<td>1645</td>
<td>1341</td>
<td>2128</td>
<td>2102</td>
<td>2273</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>1353</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Drive Alone</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>627</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carpool</td>
<td>281</td>
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<td>490</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>119</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Transportation</td>
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<td>491</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus or Streetcar</td>
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<td>442</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>749</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subway, elevated train, or railroad</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked only</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transportation</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All families with own children under 18 years</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>1381</td>
<td>1398</td>
<td>1659</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>1159</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HOUSING TYPES</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All year-round housing units</td>
<td>1681</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>2368</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>2322</td>
<td>1106</td>
<td>1293</td>
<td>1612</td>
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<tr>
<td>Owner occupied</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>630</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>988</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>193</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Renter occupied</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>1424</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>825</td>
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<td>White</td>
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<td>666</td>
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<td>875</td>
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<td>805</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
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<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<td>3.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Persons, median all Persons, owner occupied unit, median</td>
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<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.07</td>
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<td>3.08</td>
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<td>Persons, renter occupied units, median</td>
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<td>2.69</td>
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<td>$21,500</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
<td>$18,600</td>
<td>$21,500</td>
<td>$19,800</td>
<td>$18,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract rent, median</td>
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<td>$119</td>
<td>$134</td>
<td>$138</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$58</td>
<td>$89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>