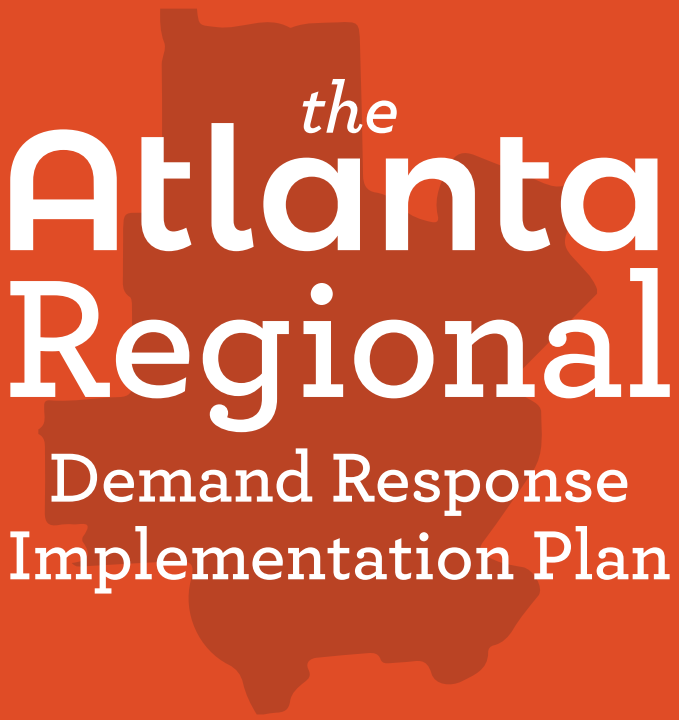

the Atlanta Regional

Demand Response Implementation Plan

NOVEMBER 2020

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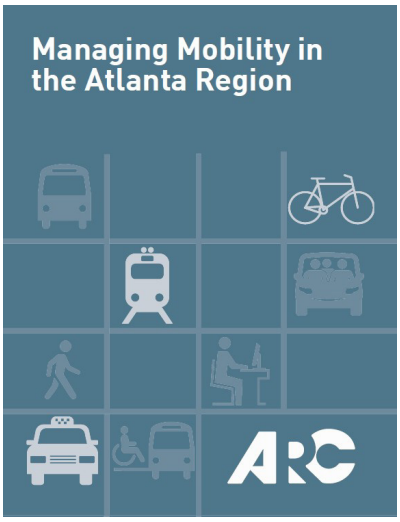
CHAPTER one

Introduction



The Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan is an effort to operationalize recommendations from the Atlanta Regional Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017. That plan included as a key goal a menu of local and regional coordination tactics to improve mobility in the Atlanta region.

This plan , prepared by Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates with Civic Sphere and RLS Associates, is intended to focus on complementary paratransit (ADA) and county-run demand response transportation and inform future models of regional coordination, particularly new mobility paradigms to improve efficiency and the enhance the user experience.

This report summarizes the work undertaken for this year-long project, including interviews and meetings with those directly and indirectly involved in HST and Demand Response Transportation (DRT), demographic and HST DRT profiles of the ten counties that comprise the ARC planning region, research into applicable best practices, and most importantly, recommendations for implementing strategies to improve HST DRT collaboration and coordination.

Report Organization

Chapter 2 summarizes what the project team learned through research, interviews, and meetings of the study's technical advisory committee (TAC). Chapter 3 summarizes the key findings of that research and data compiled for county profiles, including needs and key themes related to HST DRT. Chapter 4 summarizes the best practices research effort. Chapter 5 presents the key recommendations deriving from the project. Chapter 6 presents a series of primers on additional areas of potential regional HST DRT implementation. Materials that supplement the individual recommendations are included in an appendix. This is followed by a complete set of materials prepared and shared with the TAC over the course of the project.

This report is being published during the COVID-19 pandemic and its recommendations presume that HST DRT services will operate at pre-pandemic levels in the not-too-distant future.

CHAPTER two

Stakeholder Engagement

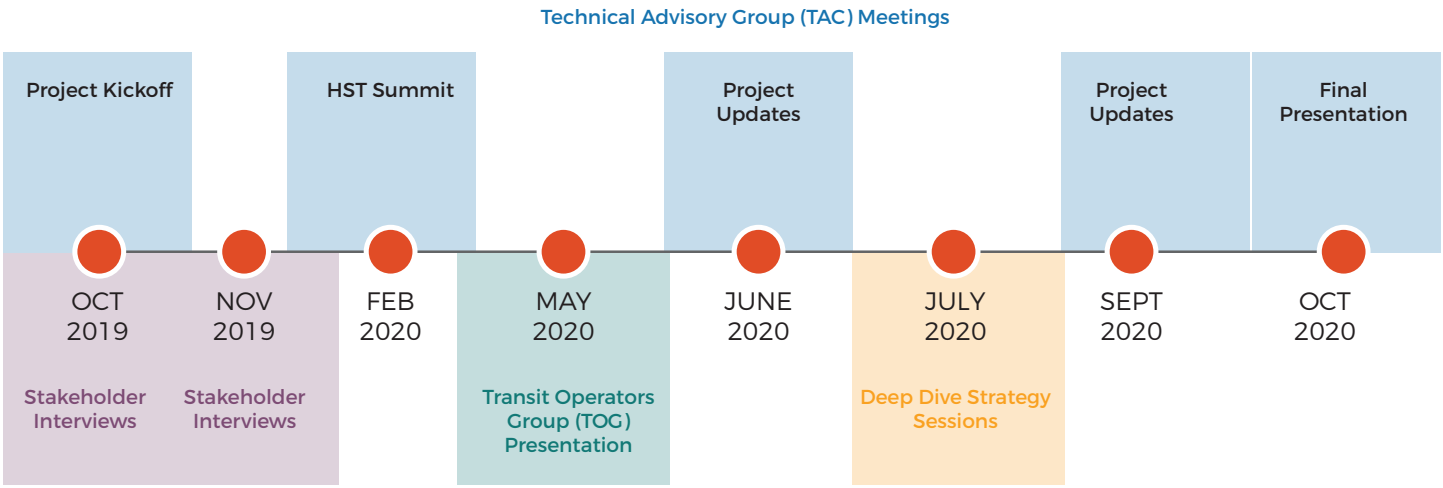
This chapter summarizes what the project team learned through research, interviews, and meetings of the technical advisory committee (TAC). Meeting summaries, attendee lists, and presentation materials from TAC meetings and deep dive sessions were distributed to the TAC throughout the course of the study and are included at the end of this document.

Successful HST planning efforts are collaborative and participatory. Collaboration is an essential element of improved coordination, particularly those that consider potential changes to service delivery models, regional cooperation, and funding. The best chance for success involves engaging stakeholders in meaningful discussions, establishing and adhering to outcome-driven goals, sharing our data and analysis with them, and ensuring that working group meetings reflect a diversity of viewpoints. Throughout the course of this study, several engagement activities took place to support the development of the study recommendations that benefit regional stakeholders.

Engagement Activities

The project team led several engagement activities to support project tasks, such as developing a baseline understanding and providing input to guide the development of effective recommendations.

Figure 1 - Timeline of Engagement Activities



Summary of Activities

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

To guide the project team throughout the study, a TAC was formed and convened regularly to provide input to the project team in the progress and development of the project. The TAC is comprised of stakeholders involved with HST activities across the region, including county senior services and transit agency staff, nonprofit organizations, staff from ARC and the ATL, and state-level program leads, representing a range of interests to ensure broad-based participation in the planning process.

The TAC's involvement in this study was critical to develop meaningful recommendations that reflect shared priorities. Their engagement included:

- Providing information about local transportation programs and unmet transportation needs
- Sharing results of previous planning efforts
- Providing comments and input at major project milestones
- Participating in a four-hour HST Summit in March 2020 that focused on areas of greatest need and included a separate session for the region's five complementary paratransit operators

Stakeholder Interviews

To learn more about existing transportation services and to understand the state of transportation throughout the region, including a better understanding of unmet needs, the project team conducted interviews with state, county, and transit agency staff. The interviews discussed available data, identified characteristics, and articulated topics to cover at the HST Summit in February. The feedback from these interviews helped inform identification of needs included in County Profiles, which also summarized trends throughout the region.

Transit Operators Group (TOG) Meeting

Following the focused paratransit discussion at the HST Summit, the study team was invited to give a presentation on paratransit coordination to the TOG in May 2020. Feedback was positive and has led to the development of additional recommendations on this topic.

Deep Dive Strategy Sessions

Following the June 2020 meeting, the project team facilitated five deep dive strategy sessions, each focusing on a strategy that would support HST planning and services in the Atlanta region, and help prioritize strategy recommendations. TAC members provided input that helped specify and tailor the study's recommendations to ensure effective implementation of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region.

CHAPTER three

County Profiles

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the team's research, which include data, needs, and key themes related to HST DRT for the 10-county ARC planning region. The County Profiles report is included at the end of this document and is summarized below.

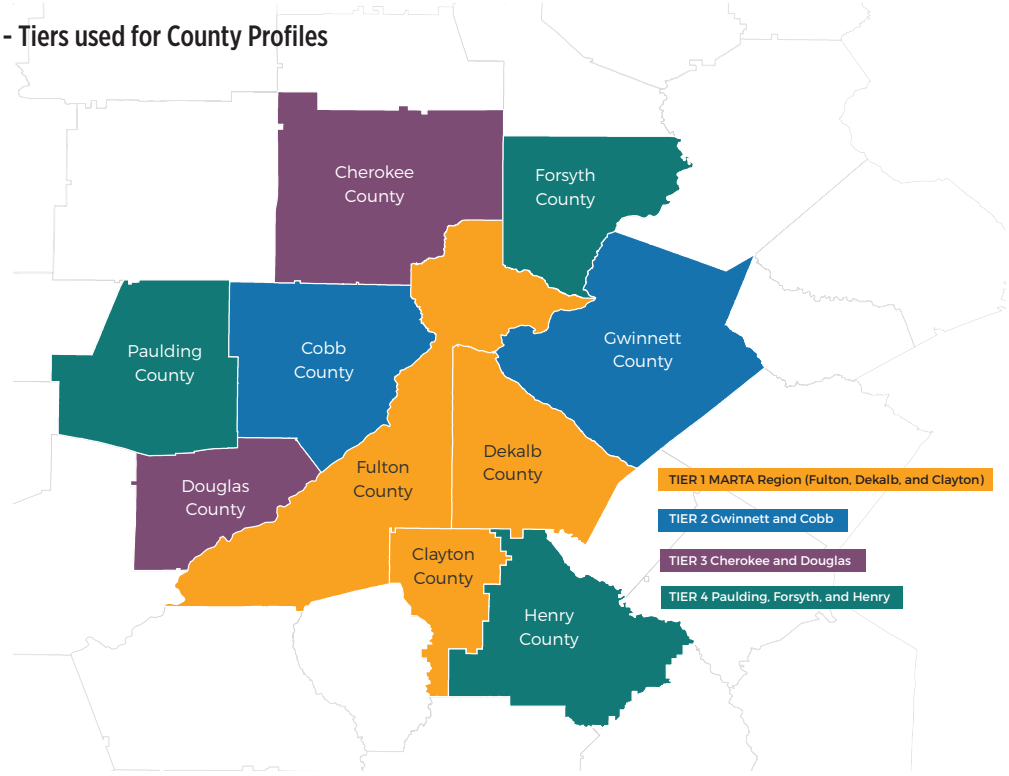
The County Profiles highlight the organization and usage of existing services, illustrate needs and trends, support future coordination, and identify opportunities for service enhancements. The inputs include data compiled from a variety of sources and qualitative input collected during stakeholder interviews and project meetings.

The County Profiles identify the commonalities among different counties based on their local context and geography and contextualize these themes regionally. Counties are organized into four tiers:

- Tier 1 – MARTA region (Fulton, DeKalb, and Clayton)
- Tier 2 – Gwinnett and Cobb
- Tier 3 – Cherokee and Douglas
- Tier 4 – Paulding, Forsyth, and Henry

Available population, funding, and travel data are presented along with an analysis of transit propensity. Observations are included summarizing the common challenges and opportunities within each county and tier related to HST DRT services.

Figure 2 - Tiers used for County Profiles



CHAPTER four

Best Practices Research

Based on input from ARC staff and the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the consultant team researched applicable examples of effective coordination strategies in other regions and used this information to develop initial strategy recommendations for consideration.

The research included more than 10 topic areas. For some of the topic areas, examples of effective practices could not be easily identified. In other instances, examples of effective practices were identified but may not be directly applicable to the Atlanta region. The Best Practices report summarized nine areas for which the consultant team undertook research. The table below lists each researched practice and notes whether and how these evolved into recommendations for implementation.

Topic Area	Recommendation Status
Consistent ADA eligibility processes and rider policies	Key recommendation
Procedures for efficiently coordinating ADA trips between adjacent service providers	Key recommendation
Co-mingling riders	Primer – advance through current mobility on demand (MOD) grant
Supporting the Section 5310 funding application process	Primer – advance additional training on improving 5310 program coordination locally
Regional fare payment options, including demand response transportation	Primer, which also discusses the regional fare study
Trip planning resources that incorporate demand response transportation	Key recommendation
Trip scheduling technology	Not advanced – see co-mingling riders
Same-day demand response transportation	Key recommendation
Sustainable regional coordination and collaboration	Key recommendation

The full Best Practices and Strategies Report is included at the end of this document.

CHAPTER five

Key Recommendations

This chapter presents the main recommendations deriving from the project, organized into key recommendations for immediate implementation. See Chapter 6 for a series of primers on topics of interest that remain important to regional HST DRT.

Introduction

The key recommendations identified for this project initially derive primarily from the work of the TAC, consultant interviews, and best practices research. The strategies also reflect changes since the adoption of the HST plan as well as ongoing activities both at ARC and the ATL. The main areas of focus include:

- Establishing consistent policies and procedures among complementary paratransit providers to improve the rider experience
- Ensure DRT is part of regional trip planning activities
- Support same-day DRT (microtransit)
- Support sustainable HST DRT collaboration throughout the Atlanta region

Establish Consistent Regional ADA Policies

In regions with more than one complementary paratransit system, coordinating and standardizing policies and practices helps to ensure consistent delivery of paratransit, improve efficiencies, and most importantly, enhance the rider experience. This often includes establishing consistent ADA paratransit eligibility processes (applications, policies, documents, assessment procedures, and appeal policies) and consistent public-facing rider policies and definitions on topics such as no-shows and cancellations, rider assistance, personal care attendants, service animals, etc.). This was a recommended strategy in the HST Plan.

In the ARC region, five transit agencies provide complementary paratransit service as required by ADA (MARTA Mobility, CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit, Connect Douglas, and CATS Paratransit (Cherokee County). Within the exception of CATS, the four other providers' service areas either directly overlap or are adjacent. Having consistent policies, procedures, and rider materials helps to simplify matters for agencies and for riders and fosters further collaboration among agencies.

ADA paratransit is a complicated program with service-specific terms and definitions. When more than one entity is operating in a region, defining similar functions differently is confusing for riders and caregivers.

During TAC meetings, the lack of consistency was identified as a concern for those who use the service. Further, during a focused discussion among paratransit providers attending the HST Summit in February 2020, participants expressed support for improving consistency. Accordingly, the following recommendations are geared to establishing consistent policies throughout the Atlanta region.

Valley Metro ADA Policy Coordination

Beginning in 2008, Valley Metro and its partners began to establish a regional paratransit program, including coordinating and standardizing key policy areas. Over the past 12 years, Valley Metro and its partners have fully coordinated about half of the key policy areas that had been recommended for coordination (eligibility, trip purposes and number of trips, pickup windows and vehicle wait times, no-shows and cancellations, personal care attendants/companions, service animals, service refusal). All providers operate during the same core period (5 am–8 pm). Fares are the same throughout the region. The reservations process is streamlined. In 2008 there were nine call centers, today there are four.

Implementation Steps

Establish Consistent ADA Application Forms and Letters

The current ARC HST Plan suggested establishing a regional paratransit application process that utilizes a common application, common eligibility determination process, and common eligibility identification card to ease the administrative burden of providing specialized services. Given the differences in service delivery models among the regions' providers, moving from what exists today to a regional process will take time. In the meantime, however, this plan recommends making the application process uniform, applying consistent practices for verification from treating professionals, and using consistent letters of determination.

By creating consistent base-level application forms, verification procedures, and rider policies, this will offer flexibility for establishing in-person assessments. It will simplify information for riders traveling throughout the region.

Appendix A-1 catalogs the existing requirements in place among the region's five complementary paratransit programs. The forms include 2-3 sections and have between 10 and 38 questions. Three require a medical release and the other two require applicants to obtain verification information from treating professionals. While establishing a consistent set of forms and process will require changes among providers, the FTA ADA Circular1 offers recommendations on streamlining this process. Among the best practices cited, it is suggested to limit the number of questions to those required to register the applicant and screen for initial eligibility and to tailor question to the type of disability. It is also suggested to include the medical release with the application and then follow up with the applicant and if needed, the treating professional with specific questions to determine functional ability to use fixed route transit.

Many transit agencies administering the ADA paratransit eligibility process rely upon FTA-sponsored or produced guidance documents. In addition to the ADA Circular, many refer to Determining ADA Paratransit Eligibility: An Approach, Recommendations and Training Materials.2 This guidance provides a range of sample application forms and discusses the merits of in-person assessments.

The ADA Circular includes sample letters (following Chapter 9) that providers can use for communicating with applicants, including letters for unconditional, conditional, and temporary

1 https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/americans-disabilities-act-guidance-pdf
2 https://www.nadtc.org/resources-publications/determining-ada-paratransit-eligibility-an-approach-recommendations-and-training-materials

eligibility as well as denial of eligibility. Copies of these sample letters are included in Appendix A-3.

Establish Consistent Eligibility Determination Procedures

The process for determining ADA paratransit eligibility is complex and requires considerable training, experience, and resources. As noted in the FTA ADA Circular,

Transit agencies generally use any or a combination of the following three basic sources of information to determine eligibility:

- Information provided by applicants in the form of paper applications, responses to interview questions, or both.
- Information provided by qualified professionals familiar with the applicants. Transit agencies can provide applicants with forms for collecting the information or can accept information that the individuals may already have received from professionals. Alternatively, agencies can obtain the information by directly contacting professionals whom the applicants identify.
- Assessments of functional abilities. Transit agencies may ask applicants to participate in assessments designed to determine their functional abilities specific to the use of fixed route transit services.

All five providers work to apply conditions to eligibility for applicants who might be able to use fixed route transit for some travel. While determining conditional eligibility appears straightforward, applying it at the trip level is more complex. To both strictly limit eligibility and to apply trip-by-trip eligibility, most agencies use in-person interviews and functional assessments.

In-person interviews and functional assessments help determine whether a particular individual can perform the functional tasks needed to use fixed route service independently. Interviews, whether in person or by phone, allow those making eligibility determinations to solicit additional information from applicants as needed. Properly designed and administered assessments can provide independent and objective measures of specific functions related to fixed route transit use. These can be important in determining the abilities of applicants who have never used fixed route transit and who may not be sure of their abilities to use these services.

While in-person assessments are a valuable tool in the determination process, they add cost to the determination process. This includes the need for:

- Properly trained certification specialists to oversee the assessment; these are typically occupational therapists
- A facility to conduct interviews and perform the assessment with “props” to simulate travel by fixed route transit, often with mock-ups of buses or an actual bus available
- Free transportation to/from the interview/assessment facility for those that request it and a place for vehicles to load/unload applicants
- Waiting areas, private interview spaces, and parking for those who arrive by car
- Documentation of the interviewer/assessor findings to support any appeals
- Contractor oversight (if applicable) to confirm regulatory compliance

At present, MARTA Mobility conducts in-person interviews and functional assessments and Connect Douglas conducts in-person interviews. In addition to MARTA Mobility, it is suggested

that the other providers move to in-person interviews initially and consider functional assessments as a future strategy, following the same procedures throughout the region.

Establish Consistent Eligibility Appeal Policies and Procedures

Appendix A-2 catalogs the procedures the five paratransit providers use for those wishing to appeal eligibility determinations. The DOT ADA regulations require transit agencies to offer appellants the right to an in-person hearing and permit agencies to require appeal requests to be in writing. At present, the five providers communicate this differently and it is not clear if all offer in-person hearings. It is suggested that before scheduling hearings, agencies review applications and determinations to confirm that the decision was made properly, and if not, reissuing the determination. This can save on the cost of undertaking in-person hearings. The ADA Circular includes sample letters (following Chapter 9) that providers can use for communicating with applicants, including the Eligibility Determination Appeal Request Form, a copy of which is included in Appendix A-3.

Establish Regional Eligibility Database

As noted in Section 9.11.2 of the ADA Circular, FTA encourages transit agencies with contiguous service areas or serving a defined region to coordinate eligibility determinations to facilitate regional travel. An example of such coordination is in the San Francisco Bay area, which has a Regional Eligibility Database (RED). Approximately 20 area transit providers record eligibility data for their riders into the RED and then access this data to verify eligibility for riders approved by another provider.

Establish Consistent No-Show Suspension Policies and Procedures

Having consistent and clear policies regarding what constitutes a no-show or a late cancellation is essential to maintaining efficient paratransit operations. It also helps to address rider behavior where a pattern or practice of excessive no-shows or late cancellations occurs. At the same time, FTA has established clear guidance that protects both a rider's right to receive service and clarifies what constitutes a pattern or practice of excessive no-shows. Appendix A-2 shows the different policies among the five providers with respect to what constitutes a no-show or late cancellation and the threshold for suspending riders from service. FTA guidance advocates policies that designate no-shows when a rider fails to board within 5 minutes of vehicle arrival after the driver has confirmed the address with dispatch *and* after an attempt has been made to reach the rider. Late cancellations within 2 hours of the scheduled trip are also considered the equivalent of no-shows. In addition, it is essential to have a policy that excuses no-shows beyond a rider's control and of course, does not count provider missed trips. This is discussed in detail in Section 9.12 of the ADA Circular, which also includes a sample no-show policy at the end of that chapter. It is suggested that the five providers consider and adopt a consistent no-show policy after consultation with riders.

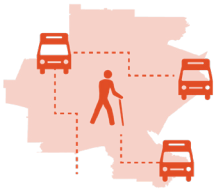
Pursue Additional Rider Guide and Policy Consistencies

As with no-shows and rider suspensions, there are other policies that both address regulatory requirements and simplify operations and rider experience. Once adopted with local public input, such policies should be incorporated into rider guides. This includes travel with a personal care attendant (PCA) and discounted or free fixed route fares. Appendix A-2 compares the five providers in these two areas. Policies toward PCAs should consistently reflect that a rider can travel with a PCA at no additional fare, and agencies can define what is/is not a PCA. Agencies are encouraged to ask riders if they use a PCA and to include this information in a rider file.

Establish Paratransit Working Group within Transit Operators Group (TOG)

During the HST Summit in March 2020, a special session was held with representatives of the five paratransit providers to discuss the needs and opportunities for further collaboration. Notes from this meeting are included in the appendix. There was general support for a range of strategies to improve consistency and coordination, and the suggestion was made to use the Transit Operators Group (TOG) as the forum for this effort. A subsequent presentation to the TOG in May 2020 confirmed this idea. Accordingly, it is suggested that a paratransit operators subcommittee or working group be formed in conjunction with the TOG and that the TOG establish a mechanism for regular reporting on progress. Since both the ATL and ARC are involved with setting the agenda for TOG meetings, staff from both agencies should continue to collaborate on these recommendations.

Coordinate Interjurisdictional Paratransit



To improve the rider experience and to address potential inefficiencies, all providers whose service overlaps is adjacent to another provider should formally coordinate transfers. The genesis of such coordination is the DOT ADA regulations (49 CFR § 37.139(g), which initially required transit operators required to address efforts to coordinate service with other fixed route operators with overlapping or contiguous service areas or jurisdictions when developing their complementary paratransit plans.

But such coordination is an ongoing process, and FTA expects transit agencies to have mechanisms in place to ensure that complementary paratransit riders can make interjurisdictional trips on a comparable basis to individuals using the fixed route system. Further, Section 8.4.4 of the FTA Circular discusses the ¾-mile service area requirements of 49 CFR § 37.131(a)(3) stating, "The service areas encompass all points within the 3/4-mile range; where service areas extend beyond political boundaries of a transit agency's jurisdiction, this requirement obligates the agency to provide service to and from such points, except when legal prohibitions prevent service…"

In the Atlanta region, coordination takes place through the establishment of transfer points as follows:

Provider	Provider	Transfer Point
MARTA Mobility	CobbLinc Paratransit	Five Points Station
MARTA Mobility	CobbLinc Paratransit	Cumberland Mall
MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	Doraville Station
CobbLinc Paratransit	Connect Douglas	Six Flags

At present, no formal coordination exists between MARTA and Connect Douglas, even though their bus routes operate within ¾ mile of each other in Southwest Atlanta/Southeast Douglas County. This service overlap is shown with others on Figure 3.

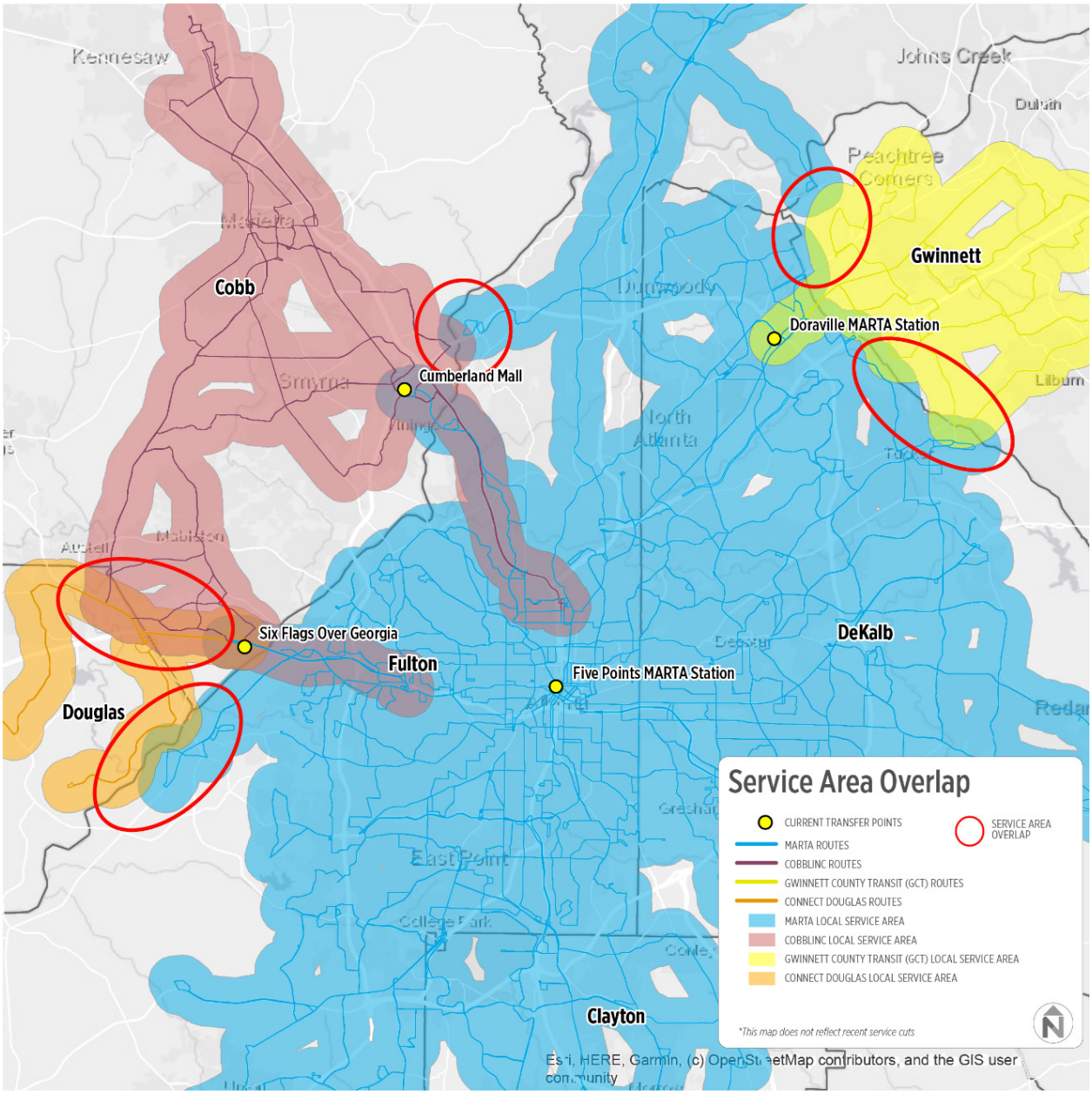


Figure 3 - Atlanta Fixed Route Service Overlaps and Paratransit Transfer Points

Establish Additional Practices to Promote Coordination

Given the extent of service area overlap, it is suggested that the proposed paratransit working group of the TOG compare routes and hours of service to identify areas whether additional transfer points are needed. In some instances, policies may be established that designate the responsible provider for trips between certain overlapping origins and destinations. Another option is to establish operating agreements for riders traveling round trip for each provider to provide one of the two trips. This can consider time of day, peak traffic flows, and run structures to reduce the amount of time a vehicle is in non-revenue service.

As with the recommendations under policies, since both the ATL and ARC are involved with setting the agenda for TOG meetings, staff from both agencies should continue to collaborate on this recommendation.

Integrate DRT Into Regional Trip Planning

Trip planning efforts support long-term and sustainable tools providing a central, single point of contact, generally through a website/app and possibility supplemented with a call center, where people can learn about available transportation resources. Trip planners ideally include all transportation options, including HST DRT. People in search of transportation services often do not know where to begin or what services are available to them, or in some cases need to coordinate and plan their trips through several providers, platforms, and services. Trip planning can help address such challenges experienced by users. HST DRT options are often not included in such solutions, representing a significant informational gap.

For further details and project examples, refer to the deep dive presentation from July 2020 and the Best Practices and Strategies document from August 2020. (Separate document).

See Appendix B: Key Details for Regional Trip Planning, which provides an additional overview and implementation steps.

VTrans Open Trip Planner

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has a multimodal trip planner developed with Open Trip Planner (OTP), an open source trip planning software, which originally included fixed route, walking, and biking options only. VTrans added 'flexible transit' options to OTP in 2019. The flexible transit feature (e.g., demand response) leverages GTFS-Flex, an extension of the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). Using the GTFS- Flex data standard supports future innovations such as potential incorporation into the Google Maps trip planner. A key advantage of this approach is that agencies can leverage the open source software, adding to its code and sharing updates with others.

The VTrans effort did not include key HST features, such as eligibility factors and available accommodations. Such features could potentially be added to enable matching users with appropriate options or, at a minimum, could be shown to users as service details.

Implementation Steps

Provide Regional GTFS-Flex Data for the ATL RIDES Project

The ATL RIDES effort could include HST DRT options if a new regional set of GTFS-Flex data were provided. This would address some HST DRT regional information gaps in the event SimplyGetThere.org and ATLTransit.org are not maintained.

For background information on this topic, refer to Appendix B: Key Details for Regional Trip Planning, the sections "Status of Regional Resources" and "Additional Functionality Needed for Open Trip Planner" as well as "Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data" and "Options for Creating GTFS-Flex" in particular.

This could initially involve confirming the first phase of services for GTFS-Flex and pinpointing funding. Refer to Key Details for Regional Trip Planning (Section 2: Additional Functionality Needed for Open Trip Planner, and Section 4: Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data).

These recommendations assume continued coordination among staff of ARC and the ATL as appropriate, except for maintaining the Empowerline resource, which is the purview of ARC's Aging Services.

Continue Providing GTFS Data to Display on Google Maps and other Common Private Trip Planners

This is an existing effort with skilled staff around the region supporting it, requiring maintenance only. The public will still rely upon Google Maps due to familiarity, even after ATL RIDES is released. See Appendix B: Key Details for Regional Trip Planning Status of Regional Resources discussion.

Decide on the Future of www.SimplyGetThere.org and www.ATLTransit.org

The costs and benefits of maintaining these resources should be discussed. For example, if ATL RIDES includes HST DRT options and a regional provider directory is created, it is possible these two websites are no longer needed. Further, it can be confusing for the public to navigate multiple resources that seemingly overlap in purpose.

Maintain Phone-based Information Through Empowerline

This is a valuable and reliable resource with skilled staff supporting it. For those who lack internet access or skills, phone options remain an important communication tool.

Ensure Regional Trip Information and Planning Resources Leverage and Reference One Another

Since web and phone resources are complementary, it is important that the public understands how to use them together. For example, an Empowerline reference could be included in the ATL RIDES trip planner (and vice versa), and Empowerline staff could be familiarized with how to use ATL RIDES to answer trip planning questions over the phone.

Implement Awareness and Usage Marketing Campaign

Once it is clear which regional trip information and planning resources will be available and maintained for the next five years, make the public aware of all the resources and how they can be used together.

Publish an Online Provider Directory

An information gap exists between trip planners that produce itineraries and phone-based information. Provider directories, such as the directory published in the Phoenix metro area, support users learning about transportation options in general as opposed to the time/day specifics of trip planning—serving as a useful complementary resource. A new webpage could be added to the existing Area Agency on Aging/ARC website. Staff time could be used to convert the database used for Empowerline calls into a user-friendly format in terms of both copy and online presentation.

Participate in Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Integration Activities

Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) is a service concept that integrates public transport with other mobility services, such as car sharing, ride sourcing, and bicycle sharing. The core idea is that intermediary digital services make it easier for users to plan, book, and pay for complementary mobility services, thereby facilitating less car-centric lifestyles.

The Atlanta region will take on and continue various activities in the trip planning, trip booking/scheduling, and trip payment realms that include HST DRT options. Additional effort should be put into how these will work together to simplify the user experience.

Regionally Coordinate Microtransit Services

Microtransit (i.e., same-day DRT) is on-demand transportation service that supports spontaneous travel vs. traditional advance-reservation DRT. Microtransit is typically supported with newer software and public-facing apps. This service can be directly provided by a transit agency or through a third party operating a turnkey service. Microtransit is becoming increasingly common across the U.S. to address service gaps in areas where the market for fixed route service is not well supported. In addition, the new technology enables real-time communication to fulfill trip requests, making microtransit easier to provide.

For further details and project examples, refer to the deep dive presentation from July 2020 and the Best Practices and Strategies document from August 2020. (Separate document).

See Appendix C-1: Microtransit Basics, Appendix C-2: Regional Microtransit Status, and Appendix C-3: Microtransit Platform Considerations to supplement this overview and implementation st eps.

Denver RTD FlexRide

RTD's FlexRide began as RTD Call-n-Ride in 2008. Over time, RTD has upgraded the technology, enabling same-day trips (minimum 10 minutes notice) and the ability to book online/via an app. In 2019, it was rebranded FlexRide. This service represents an example of upgrading technology on an existing call-n-ride (advance reservation) program to provide same-day service. It also supports stand-alone trips as well as feeder service to bus stops and rail stations.

Implementation Steps

Regularly Share Microtransit Information

It is suggested that ARC provide regional support for entities considering microtransit service in the future, such as transit agencies and counties by helping to determine where microtransit will work best and how to implement it. This could initially involve regularly sharing microtransit project examples, white papers, and other information. See contact list in Appendix x (Microtransit Basics).

Engage in Peer-to-peer Experience and Lesson Sharing

Three organizations in the Atlanta region already have hands-on experience with beginning a microtransit service. Professionals who are new to microtransit can learn from their more experienced peers on topics such as starting a pilot, contracting, and troubleshooting. This could begin with peer updates/agenda items at existing forums such as ARC's Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) and joint ARC & ATL Transit Operator Group (TOG) as well as through peer-to-peer calls/emails.

Integrate Microtransit Projects with Regional Funding Allocation Processes

Funding microtransit is a challenge in the Atlanta region. By reviewing funding options in connection with the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and others, and communicating microtransit-applicable funding options, local organizations could have more clarity. This would involve ongoing discussions between ARC and the ATL. See funding options in Appendix x (Microtransit Basics).

Coordinate Current and Future Microtransit Activities

As local organizations advance existing or new microtransit services, it is suggested that ARC help coordinate activities by:

- Pursuing grants regionally (e.g., avoid competing regional applications for national grants)
- Setting regional policies (e.g., cross-boundary transfers) for geographically adjacent areas
- Ensuring a seamless user experience by including microtransit in regional trip planning, and
- Furthering a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) ecosystem that includes microtransit and links regional trip planning, booking, and payment when possible

Support Ongoing Regional HST Collaboration

To effectively implement and achieve the goals of the proposed HST DRT strategies, sustaining coordination and collaboration among regional stakeholders will be critical. Regional coordination and collaboration includes programs, resources, and activities to sustain planning and maintain working relationships for HST DRT, and helps build long-lasting relationships among stakeholders who might not regularly interact with one other. Sustained collaboration helps with the exchange of ideas and lessons learned and can help build a collective voice of support for HST DRT in the Atlanta region.

Coordinated planning is required to fulfill FTA funding requirements. Since Atlanta's HST plan must be updated every four years due to its air quality nonattainment status, some collaboration takes place every few years. But this is not sufficient to sustain any form of ongoing collaboration.

Further, there is no unified voice advocating for HST DRT. Many staff with expertise in HST DRT are responsible for numerous programs that support transit and support older adults and people with disabilities. People who are new to HST DRT and the myriad funding programs often face steep learning curves to become experts. Finally, past coordination activities typically involved in-person meetings. Given the size of the region and its traffic congestion, getting together for meetings was sometimes seen as too high a barrier to participate.

Sustaining regional coordination and collaboration would:

- Improve information sharing and sharing lessons learned
- Identify a clear leader and go-to resource for HST in the Atlanta region
- Establish a potential unified voice for increased HST DRT funding

DRMAC Regional Coordination & Collaboration

The Denver Regional Mobility & Access Council (DRMAC) was initially formed to coordinate services among regional stakeholders. The scope of DRMAC's services in coordinating collaboration among stakeholders has grown from first developing a one-page resource to outline services in the region to now facilitating a large coordinating council, which covers the MPO area. DRMAC first received funding from a few human services agencies, and eventually identified and applied for federal funding, and has grown to be a team of five staff members. Once a month, DRMAC hosts a meeting with all of the providers in the region to discuss various topics, and hosts an in-person regional coordinating meeting every quarter where they invite representatives from different agencies and departments to ensure that several perspectives are represented in the coordination and collaboration of HST services.

For further details on this topic, refer to the deep dive presentation from July 2020 and the Best Practices and Strategies document from August 2020. (Separate document).

Implementation Steps

Ongoing collaboration is needed, particularly after this current project effort concludes. The following implementation steps will help achieve sustainable regional collaboration needed and coordination.

Formalize TAC as Atlanta Region's Coordinating Committee

It is suggested that ARC maintain its role coordinating HST DRT for the region and formally establish the TAC as the Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC). Key next steps include:

- Confirm a champion and determine the organizational format of the RCC
- Once established, invite stakeholders to opt-in and join the RCC
- Host a kick-off meeting with committee members to establish goals & key activities
  - Identify needs to be addressed through the committee
  - Map out a plan for the year

To support this recommendation, ARC will need to identify and assign staff resources to lead the RCC. The responsibilities of leading the committee could be worked into existing roles.

There are many opportunities for HST providers and partners to connect with one another. Given the transition from in-person to online meetings over the course of this project, and given the high level of online participation, it is suggested that online meetings continue.

Establish and Maintain RCC Communications

A key part of maintaining coordination and collaboration relies on clear and consistent communication. Once the coordinating committee is formed, it should adopt a plan to maintain regular communications. Key activities include:

- Compile and transmit a periodic (monthly or bi-monthly) e-newsletter
  - Facilitate content and updates from participating stakeholders
- Establish a discussion platform (listserv or other platform such as LinkedIn group) so committee members can share updates or pose questions for input in supporting their efforts

The ARC staff member responsible for the RCC could lead the development of the communication plan with internal communications staff, and work with committee members to facilitate content development and submission.

Work with Key Partners to Enhance and Support Committee Activities

The RCC should work with partners who host quarterly or annual meetings and conferences to provide time for the committee to in-person. Committee members would benefit from having focused discussion in person and having time outside of the meeting to continue conversations with regional colleagues.

Key activities include:

- Schedule and host quarterly meetings to be held independently or simultaneous with other related meetings such as the bimonthly Transit Operators Group (TOG) meetings or the annual Georgia Transit Association (GTA) conference
- Establish a DRT track on the GTA annual conference in coordination with other transit providers throughout Georgia.

Compile and Track Relevant Performance Data

As part of the development of the County Profiles, and supported by some of the stakeholder interviews, the consultant team identified the absence of data as an issue. It is challenging to track the expenditure of Section 5310 funding in the region, particularly supported by any performance data such as passengers or vehicle miles. It is also challenging to compile

other funding and performance data. Nevertheless, a recurring theme is the number of people in need is growing, particularly the number of older adults in the region. Although a comprehensive review[3] of Georgia DHS was prepared by Georgia State University that the team cited in the County Profiles, this report represents a snapshot. Accordingly, it is suggested that the RCC develop a set of common data points and seek committee member inputs to update information each year. Some of the important data to consider includes:

- Funding received, divided into FTA funding, Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) funds, other federal funds used for transportation, and Medicaid NEMT funds
- Trips provided under different fund categories
- Annual population data by age cohort (to be determined), particularly older adults, and for people with disabilities
- Annual senior services budgets, and if known, senior transportation budgets

While all the data listed above may not be readily available, for HST DRT funding to grow in step with demand, compiling and reporting trend data will be essential to making the case. It is also suggested that whatever data are compiled should be incorporated into annual reporting undertaken by the ATL such as the annual report and audit.

3 https://ghpc.gsu.edu/download/at-a-crossroads-exploring-transportation-for-older-georgians-in-a-rapidly-changing-landscape/

CHAPTER SIX

Additional Strategy Primers

This chapter presents a series of primers on topics of interest that remain important to regional HST DRT.

Primer: FTA 5310 Funding

Introduction

Federal funding for public transit comes primarily through the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT). Funding for the U.S. DOT is authorized by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the first federal transportation authorization in over a decade to fund federal surface transportation programs through 2020. The FAST Act was signed into law in December 2015 and provides $305 billion in funding over Fiscal Years 2016 through 2020 including programs of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The following discussion of funding for public transit is based on the provisions of the FAST Act effective through September 2020. The FTA allocates funding for transit systems in urbanized and rural areas and for programs for older adults and individuals with disabilities. FTA allocates funds based on formulas or discretionary awards. Ten FTA funding programs that apportioned to urbanized areas or states by specific formula. Eight FTA programs are based on discretionary funding. In addition to FTA grant programs, the FHWA administers programs that provide the flexibility to transfer funds to FTA for transit projects.

FTA Formula Funds

Of the ten FTA funding programs that are allocated by formula, FTA allocates funds to nine programs based on formulas that include population and land area as criteria.[4] FTA allocated formula funds according to classification of an area as rural or urbanized.

All areas are defined as either urbanized or non-urbanized based on population and population density. The Census Bureau designates urbanized areas based on the most recent decennial census. While the

U.S. DOT has no direct role in the designation of these areas, they are critical to the administration of FTA and FHWA transportation programs. Urbanized Areas (UZAs) are important to the designation of a metropolitan planning organization and application of metropolitan planning requirements, designation of transportation management areas, application of air quality conformity requirements, and allocation of funding.

4 The formula program that does not use population or land area as criteria is Section 5309 Fixed Guideway Modernization. Funds are allocated by a statutory formula to UZAs with fixed guideway systems that have been in operation for at least seven years. The formula for allocating funds for this program contains seven tiers. The apportionment of funding for certain areas is specified in law. For other urbanized areas, funding is apportioned based on the latest available data on route miles and revenue vehicle miles on fixed guideway segments at least seven years old.

Under current definitions, the Census Bureau delineates UZAs according to population densities of census blocks and block groups and their proximity to an urban core – with the sum of the population for these geographic units equaling 50,000 people or more. Similarly, urban areas of less than 50,000 people are designated as urban clusters (UCs). For the purposes of transit funding, all UZAs are considered "urbanized" while all areas outside of UZAs (including UCs) are considered "non-urbanized." For FTA funding allocations, FTA designates UZAs further in three groups according to population: small urban areas with a population size of 50,000 to 199,999, large urban areas with a population of 200,000 to 999,9999, and very large urban areas with a population of 1 million people and over. Funding formula allocation and restrictions on the use of funds differ by the size of the UZA according to these three groups.

Section 5310 Special Needs of Elderly Individuals and People with Disabilities Program

Section 5310 provides formula funding to states for the purpose of meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and people with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. FTA apportions $125,000 to each state and then apportions the balance based on each state's share of population for these groups of people.

Capital projects are eligible for funding. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles or provide preventive maintenance for transit fleets, but acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease or other arrangements, and state program administration are also eligible expenses. The maximum federal share is 80 percent. State or local funding sources may provide local share.

Current Activities/Programs

In Georgia, the Department of Human Services (DHS) administers the Section 5310 Program, employing federal and state funding authorized for the implementation of public transportation programs. These programs must be part of a coordinated public transportation plan, typically led with oversight from a Regional Transportation Coordination Committee (RTCC), one in each of the 12 state regions. The committees are typically made of human service representatives and other stakeholders vested in regional transportation and establishes policies and procedures for the coming year. Regionally, ARC's Department of Aging and Independence Services supports the administration of 5310 funding.

Primer: Fare Payment

Introduction

A regional fare payment system that includes HST DRT has the potential to simplify travel for passengers with mobility limitations. Since fare payment is a key part of the trip process, fare media (e.g., card, mobile tickets), fare products (e.g., monthly passes), and fare policies (e.g., children ride free) should ideally be aligned for regional fare payment systems to work. The topics below cover only fare media as a first step. The ATL Regional Fare Policy Study is currently in process with a planned completion date of April 2021. For details on the scope and objectives of that project, refer to the presentation from the ATL's Board of Directors meeting held on July 9, 2020.[5]

For HST DRT trips, such as county-based DRT and ADA paratransit, there are multiple fare media options. Payments can be handled in person with cash, with paper-based multi-trip passes, or by leveraging technology. Technology supports media such as RFID cards (e.g., Breeze card), often tied to online accounts, as well as mobile ticketing systems and others. Providers throughout the region can move fare payment options forward in ways that work best for their needs while ideally supporting an "as-seamless-as-possible" user experience for passengers who travel across the region using HST DRT services.

Further details and project examples are included in the Deep Dive presentation and the Best Practices and Strategies report, presented in a separate report.

Current Fare Media Systems

Fare Media System	Description	Provider/Tier Details
Cash and Paper-based Systems	Some HST DRT service providers do not currently leverage technology-driven fare media such as RFID cards and mobile ticketing systems.	Tier 3 providers currently have cash-based payment and paper-based multi-trip passes. Cherokee County also allows payment with debit/credit card by phone at the time of booking. For tier 4, Forsyth and Henry Counties appear to allow cash-based payment only. Paulding County does not charge for its service, and therefore does not need a fare medium.
Breeze RFID Card System	The Breeze system, first implemented around 2005, involves radio-frequency identification (RFID) card tags and online accounts to support user activity (e.g., loading value to Breeze card).6 More details are available at ATLtransit.org.7	All transit agencies in tiers 1 and 2 are currently on the Breeze system.8 Tier 3 and 4 counties are not currently included in the Breeze system.

5 https://atltransit.ga.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Combined-PPT-07.09.20.pdf
6 https://breezecard.com
7 https://www.atltransit.org/fares/passes/
8 https://breezecard.com/regional_partners.aspx

Fare Media System	Description	Provider/Tier Details
Breeze Mobile Ticketing Pilot	Breeze mobile ticketing is planned to be released in 2020 for the first time. It will initially depend on QR code scanning, but later planned upgrades should enable near-field communication9 (i.e., mobile devices can be turned off during scan, less error typically than with QR).	Only MARTA (in tier 1) will have Breeze mobile ticketing, at least in the earliest phase.
Token Transit Mobile Ticketing Pilot	As a response to Covid-19, the Token Transit app was made available in the Atlanta region for the first time on 9/18/2020. The pilot will run for one year and includes 1) a mobile app and 2) electronic validators installed on buses to enable smart phones tapping for payment.	Xpress, which serves portions of tiers 1-4 with fixed-route commuter service,10 is the first regional provider offering this option.11 For tier 2, Gwinnett County plans to launch soon, and Cobb Linc is considering joining as well.

Implementation Considerations

Tier 1 and Tier 2 providers (see Chapter 2) may consider:

- Using the same mobile ticketing platform, either Breeze or Token Transit, to have a common regional mobile ticketing platform. Having two mobile ticketing platforms in the region results in two mobile apps, which is not ideal from a regional transit user experience point-of-view. At the same time, it can be difficult to fully align needs and expectations for mobile apps among multiple organizations to support a common platform.

Tier 3 providers may consider:

- Joining the Breeze RFID Card System. In general, these organizations fit within the current Breeze model (i.e., transit agencies with fixed route and paratransit options). Cherokee County also has a county-based DRT service that could also be included if the Breeze model were changed to include county-based DRT service. MARTA's CIO reported that additional agencies could possibly be added to the Breeze RFID Card System (with or without the mobile ticketing platform).
- Joining either the Breeze or the Token Transit mobile ticketing platform in addition to, or instead of, the Breeze RFID Card System. MARTA's CIO reported that additional agencies could possibly be added to the mobile part alone (i.e., Douglas County passes could be added as a fare product, received funds would be transferred to Douglas County).
- Exploring their own mobile ticketing options. This could lead to more mobile ticketing apps in the region but may end up being the best fit for the individual providers.

Tier 4 providers may consider:

- Joining the Breeze RFID Card System. However, county-based DRT service providers would not fit easily into the current Breeze model (i.e., transit agencies with fixed route and paratransit options). If they were to join, the Breeze model would need to change to include county-based DRT service. MARTA's CIO reports this is not necessarily a barrier and could be considered.

9 https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/near-field-communication-nfc.asp
10 https://www.xpressga.com/commutertools/#maps
11 https://www.xpressga.com/passes/

- Joining either the Breeze or the Token Transit mobile ticketing platform in addition to, or instead of, the Breeze RFID Card System. MARTA's CIO reported that additional agencies could possibly be added to the mobile part alone.
- Exploring their own mobile ticketing options. This could lead to more mobile ticketing apps in the region but may end up being the best fit for the individual providers. Tiers 3 and 4 could potentially have a joint purchase/usage agreement.

Discussions could be facilitated through existing forums such as:

- MARTA's Regional Technology Group (RTG), which focuses on technology issues including the Breeze system and regional fare payments. Cherokee County is already included in RTG and other counties are welcome to join.
- ATL's Regional Technology Committee. To serve as an illustration, the 9/18/2020 meeting agenda included the following topics: Token Transit Pilot Overview, Regional GTFS Draft Policy Recommendations, and ATL RIDES (i.e., regional trip planner) project kick-off.[12]

12 https://atltransit.ga.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Technology-Committee-Agenda-09.18.20.pdf, https://atltransit.ga.gov/the-atl-board/

Primer: Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Brokerage Models

Introduction

Transportation brokerages connect people with the most appropriate transportation provider from a pool of local transportation services. Brokerages can involve public, private, and nonprofit transportation providers. These may or may not include Medicaid Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT).

Consideration may be given to developing a transportation brokerage in the Atlanta region that will ultimately manage trips funded by multiple federal, state, and local programs. The purpose of the brokerage is to realize efficiencies in vehicle utilization and program administration while expanding the transportation options available to the community.

NEMT services are funded by different agencies and organizations, but Medicaid NEMT is the largest source of federal revenue for HST. Medicaid is jointly funded by the federal and state governments. Each state administers its own Medicaid program, and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), within the Department of Health and Human Services oversees the Medicaid program for the federal government. In Georgia, the Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees the Medicaid program. DHS currently holds a contract with Southeastrans and Logisticare to handle NEMT trips in the Atlanta Region.

Current Activities/Programs

Public transit agencies in Georgia and nationwide have attempted to establish brokerages that efficiently schedule NEMT-funded passenger trips with public transit riders on a single vehicle to various degrees of success. Such a model enhances customer access to a variety of transportation modes and ensure efficient use of resources. However, the issues surrounding coordination of Medicaid NEMT with transportation funded by other federal funding programs are complex. Due to the complexities, many states have separated Medicaid NEMT brokerages and public/human service agency brokerages. This is currently the situation in the Atlanta region.

The ability to share passenger trips funded by different federal funding programs has been a significant barrier to success for brokerages. However, recent changes at the federal level may help to remove those barriers. On October 1, 2020, the Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility (CCAM) released the Report to the President[13] that identified challenges that, if addressed, would promote local transportation coordination, including NEMT. The report recognizes both federal fund braiding and vehicle-and ridesharing elements of cost sharing. CCAM noted during the development process that state Medicaid agencies may benefit from technical assistance regarding CMS policies around cost sharing. Section 3.4 of the CCAM report addresses cost-allocation technology specifically for Non-emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT).

Furthermore, U.S. DOT recently began efforts to develop the cost-allocation technology for NEMT that would "enable states, public transit authorities, nonprofit agencies, and private, for-profit NEMT providers to determine the fully allocated cost of individual and shared NEMT trips." This cost model is different from existing models in that it fully incorporates for-profit operators and addresses issued such as depreciation and profit. The cost model also incorporates validity testing so that financial entities that are not performing with in the normal NEMT performance

13 https://www.transit.dot.gov/access/ccam/coordinating-council-access-and-mobility-ccam-report-president

range are flagged. The cost allocation technology will be an open-source program and will allow local communities to customize it even further. The technology is anticipated to be available on the CCAM website in 2021. Interested parties in the Atlanta region may consider utilizing the technology to develop brokerage services in the region that successfully coordinate NEMT with public, non-profit, and/ or privately funded trips.

In 2018, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) explored but did not implement coordinated transportation models for paratransit services that involved aspects of brokerage, including:

- Trip Sharing. The trip-sharing model for GCT would have combined passenger trips that would otherwise be provided by separate operators into a single vehicle. This option was particularly useful as some of the typical trip generators for human services transportation are within or near the GCT service area, such as the Norcross One Stop Human Services & Senior Center and the Lawrence Senior Center.
- Centralized Human Services and ADA Paratransit Trip Planning and Scheduling Model. Under this model, all types of transportation in Gwinnett County would have been centralized in one location/source. Users would be able to identify all potential options with one call or through a consolidated website.

Ideas for Implementation

Because Georgia competitively bids a brokerage contract for Medicaid NEMT, an opportunity exists for a local or regional entity in the Atlanta region to establish a NEMT brokerage. That entity would need to become part of the Georgia DHS's competitive selection process when the next contract is bid. The DHS will select a broker based on its evaluation of the broker's experience, performance, references, resources, qualifications, and costs.

Were this option pursued, an important preliminary step is to establish a brokerage that manages non-Medicaid trips. By successfully operating and implementing a brokerage, the non-Medicaid broker is developing a strong competitive resume and can compete for Medicaid NEMT broker services when DHS opens competitive bidding.

The success of the brokerage depends to a significant degree on the management and skills of the lead organization. Local stakeholders should seek to begin the brokerage with a trusted organization and recognized leader in the local/regional transportation community.

Prior to competing to become a Medicaid-NEMT broker, the provider would need to establish a foundation of consolidated transportation by scheduling and managing transportation for the public, older adults, and passengers from one or more local agencies. If possible, the new brokerage would incorporate transportation for federally funded programs such as veterans and senior services into its network of offerings. That local brokerage could also include private transportation options, including taxis, to ensure a meaningful impact on the community's transportation needs.

Once a lead agency for the brokerage is identified, it will be important for that agency to invest in technology to manage the brokerage. Selecting the best dispatching, scheduling, and billing software for the brokerage is a critical point. First, evaluate the type of software used by NEMT providers in the region as well as the software used by local human service agencies and public transit. Ideally, the technology will be proven and in use elsewhere or an open solution that can integrate with other platforms. The technology must track passenger eligibility, trip requests, routes, allow for trip scheduling, and offer billing/back office programs.

With technology in place, the new broker will establish its contractual agreements with local transportation providers and agree upon service standards and a rate structure. The rate structure often includes an administrative fee for the shared administrative costs incurred by

the broker. In most cases, the administrative fee is less than the administrative costs of the individual providers before they join the brokerage. Thus, creating operating efficiencies for individual programs. The pending technology from the DOT (which is expected in 2021) that will allow States and providers to calculate the fully allocated cost of individual and shared trips (including shared NEMT trips), will remove one of the biggest remaining challenges identifying the cost of individual and shared trips.

After demonstrating success, the new broker may choose to expand its operation by competing for the DHS Medicaid NEMT transportation when the contract is open for bid. With the incorporation of Medicaid-NEMT trips, the brokerage can become more cost efficient and will also offer more options for riders.

Primer: Volunteer Driver Programs

Introduction

Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) defines volunteer driver programs as a "network of volunteers that provide one-way, round-trip, and multi-stop rides. These programs are provided free of charge, on a donation basis, through membership dues, or at a minimal cost, and typically have an eligibility process and advance reservation requirements." The National Volunteer Transportation Center provides the following list of common characteristics of volunteer driver programs that illustrate the different ways volunteer driver programs can be operated:

- Drivers (paid and/or volunteer)
- Vehicles (owned by organization and/or volunteer)
- Staff (paid and/or volunteer)
- Ride scheduling (staff and/or driver)
- Organization (menu or free standing)
- Data management (high tech, low tech, no tech)
- Insurance (full, some, no coverage)
- Service area (defined or flexible)

Many volunteer driver programs feature drivers using use their own vehicle. One model provides funding to the rider who then chooses and reimburses their driver. Some programs will provide a vehicle, ask the volunteer to work certain days, or schedule specific trips with the volunteer. Other programs ask the volunteer to select and schedule their trips from a list or to provide their own volunteer driver. Funding for volunteer driver programs can be from federal, local, or charitable sources and most have specific eligibility requirements.

ARC could help to organize existing volunteer programs regionally to compare policies and geographic coverage, and to determine how the programs might work together. Program leaders could share information on recruitment strategies, insurance and liability risk, and volunteer screening and training.

Performance of volunteer driver program typically include number and type of trips provided, people served, passenger and driver satisfaction, and operational costs. Other measures could include improvements in service provision, stability or growth of screened and trained volunteer driver pool, and volunteer hours of service (in-kind match).

Current Activities/Programs

The Atlanta region has several volunteer driver programs, not all of which were operating during COVID-19, including:

- Cherokee County Senior Services - Volunteer Driver Program[14]
- Interfaith Companion and Ride Express (ICARE), Decatur[15]
- LIFESPAN Medical Escort Transportation (MET), Regional[16]

14 https://www.cherokeega.com/Senior-Services/volunteering/
15 www.icareseniors.org
16 www.lifespanatlanta.org

Ideas for Implementation

Using shared technology, program administrators may consider using a common platform for sharing trip needs and coordinating volunteers. United Way's Volunteer Match program is one example.

Volunteer organizations and other driver programs should meet and network regularly, comparing and consolidating information about the network of options, the various policies and practices. The group can conduct (through the mobility managers, local universities, or for hire) rural route studies, studies of travel to recurring health appointments (dialysis/oncology), evaluation and selection of common scheduling technology, coordinating or consolidating services to cover gaps in geography and fill gaps in evening and weekend hours.

Resources

- National Center for Mobility Management: Many mobility managers work directly with volunteers or work with local volunteer driver programs.[17]
- Community Transportation Association of America National Volunteer Transportation Center: CTAA has courses and guides for use with volunteer transportation programs, as well as a map of programs across the country.[18]
- National Aging and Disability Transportation Center: NADTC has a number of best practice examples and articles; search for volunteer.[19]
- Energize,[20] a program of Adisa Group: Private consulting firm specializing in volunteerism, with a wealth of articles and newsletters
- Nonprofitrisk.org, provides resources covering managing liability.[21]

17 https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/by-topic/by-topic-volunteer-driver-programs/
18 https://ctaa.org/national-volunteer-transportation-center/ The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)
19 https://www.nadtc.org
20 https://www.energizeinc.com
21 https://nonprofitrisk.org/resource-library/

Primer: Post-2020 Census Planning

Federal transportation funding is based on the most recent decennial census, and the FTA formula apportionments are allocated according to population. FTA urbanized area (UZA) formula grants (Section 5307) allocate funding either directly to areas with 200,000 population or more (large urban) or indirectly to areas with areas between 50,000 and 200,000 population (small urban); Georgia DOT oversees small urban funding. Non-urbanized areas with a population less than 50,000, commonly known as rural, receive funds under Section 5311, also administered by GDOT.

Future UZA designations will be determined from 2020 Census data. This can be influenced by how for census blocks, block groups, and tracts are defined. It is important to note that the Census does not reference jurisdictional boundaries or incorporated status, such as city limits in the determination of urbanized areas. In addition, urbanized areas are based on analytical measures of size and density. The Census determines UZA using computer analysis with a uniform application of rules. While the FTA uses UZA determinations for funding purposes, the Census defines urban areas solely for statistical purposes and does not control other agency use of the concept and designations.

There are several building blocks that go into the determination of urban areas, including census blocks, block groups, and tracts. Census blocks are the smallest statistical areas, a unit representing population from zero to hundreds. They are bounded by visible features, such as streets, roads, streams, and railroad tracks, as well as nonvisible boundaries, such as city, town, township, and county limits. Block groups are essentially multiple census blocks together with a population generally ranging from 600 to 3,000. Census tracts generally have a population ranging from 1,200 to 8,000 with an optimal population of 4,000. Tracts are finally defined after the census data collection.

Within the 10-county ARC region, Henry and Cherokee counties can expect to see their designation change to large urban. Coweta, Paulding, Forsyth counties are part of the larger 20-county ARC MPO boundary. Among these Forsyth County has a population over 200,000 and can thus see its designation change to large urban. Both Forsyth and Henry counties are currently undertaking transit master plans to prepare for this change in designation.

Primer: TNC Trip Booking/Concierge Assistance

Discussion

The growth of app-based transportation network companies (e.g. Uber/Lyft) throughout the U.S. has enabled riders to easily request and pay for trips, thus helping to fill existing gaps in the transportation system. At the same time, certain users, particularly those without smartphones and some older adults and people with disabilities who are unable to use smartphone apps, have been unable to capitalize on these new resources. While it is possible for an individual to book and even monitor a trip for another individual such as an elderly parent, the experience can prove challenging if communications are not seamless.

There are several ride-hail concierge products now available, which include:

- Lyft Concierge
- Uber Central
- GoGoGrandparent
- Arrive Rides

Lyft Concierge is a Lyft product and relies on the Lyft network of drivers to provide curb-to-curb service. Like Lyft Concierge, Uber Central relies on the Uber network of drivers. GoGoGrandparent and Arrive Rides are third party services that arrange rides through providers like Uber and Lyft.

For organizations, the platforms enable a staff person to request on-demand or pre-scheduled rides on behalf of their clients, which can be billed to one central account or to customers directly.

Neither Uber nor Lyft drivers provide door-to-door service, except those specially trained through the UberAssist[22] program (available in limited markets). While Uber and Lyft drivers are expected to accommodate folding wheelchairs, scooters, canes, walkers, and other small assistive devices, they only offer motorized wheelchair-accessible rides in limited markets. Further, they cannot assist riders in physically getting into or out of the vehicle.

Both Arrive Rides and GoGoGrandparent pass on the responsibility of liability to the ride-hailing companies, which provide different levels of coverage for drivers and riders depending on the status of a ride.[23] Funding partners may want to consider an indemnity provision in their agreement with the service provider.

Transit agencies face stringent expectations from FTA regarding equity when using ride-hailing concierge platforms. They are supposed to ensure equitable service for people using mobility devices, who have difficulty with smart phones, or cannot use the current payment options. Many transit agencies also have strong liability concerns. For these reasons, many pilot programs are overseen by a city or non-profit organization instead.

Cost depends on the platform and the level of subsidy for rides. Demand and cost can be managed by limiting trip purpose (e.g. medical trips) or the number of available trips per person in a certain timeframe. A pilot or phased roll-out would be advisable to determine demand.

Lyft Concierge and Uber Central charge no fee beyond the ride fares, which vary by product and market and are based on a combination of trip distance and time. As third-party platforms, both GoGoGrandparent and Arrive Rides charge a service fee on top of the ride fare.

22 https://www.uber.com/toronto-drivers/services/uberassist-faq/
23 See https://help.lyft.com/hc/en-us/articles/115013080548 and https://www.uber.com/drive/insurance/

Primer: Co-Mingling Riders

Discussion

One of the key challenges in advancing HST DRT is to coordinate travel among different overlapping providers. Throughout the region, HST trips are serving common origins and destinations, yet because services are funded differently and provided by different agencies, service inefficiencies are common. Human service agencies support co-mingling public transit and HST client trips because it increases service options for riders. Public funding support is sometimes tied to potential cost savings gained through reducing duplication of services and maximizing available capacity.

the lack of reliable information on vehicle sharing opportunities is a key impediment but new developments in DRT software is offering the potential to address the lack of reliable information. Whether tied to a reservations system or using an on-demand platform, there remains a need for schedulers and dispatchers to have broader access to one another's trip data to co-mingle riders.

Inclusive Mobility on Demand Grant

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), with financial support from the U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL) and in collaboration with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and national partners, has awarded a grant to ARC to test the organization and implementation of a community-led Mobility on Demand (MOD) system and transactional data exchange in Clarkston.

The grant will fund planning and implementation of DRT across the Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) and Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) through a transactional data exchange. The project will work to address the challenges of transfers between the two service providers owning in part to incompatible software and the lack of Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD)/Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) technology on CPACS vehicles. The project aims to implement a transactional data standard.

This project will prove very important to the Atlanta region. In conjunction with efforts to incorporate DRT into regional trip planning, improved collaboration among complementary paratransit providers, the ability to advance a transactional data standard can significantly advance efforts to co-mingle more riders in the future.

the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

Appendices

Appendix A-1: Comparison of Existing ADA Practices and Policies for ADA Paratransit Eligibility, Appeals, and Visitors

Service Name	MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	CobbLinc Para-transit	Connect Douglas	CATS Para-transit	Best Practices
ADA Application Form and Process						
No. of sections	2	3	3	3	3	
No. of disability and mobility self-assessment ques-tions	10	38 Same as CATS	14	24	38 Same as GCT	Limit number of questions to those required to register applicant and determine initial eligibil-ity; tailor to type of disability
Medical release	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Include
Responsibility for obtaining verifica-tion from treating professional	Applicant	Provider	Provider	Applicant	Provider	Use medical release and then verify w/treating professional w/specific questions after interview and assessment (if done) or after applica-tion review

Service Name	MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	CobbLinc Para-transit	Connect Douglas	CATS Para-transit	Best Practices
Information requested from treating professional	Medical diagnosis of disability Description of the impact the disability has on the applicant's ability to function Length/ permanence of disability or condition	Medical diagnosis of disability or medical condition including: Length/permanence of disability or condition Medications taken for the condition Description of the impact the disability has on the applicant's ability to use fixed-route service		Medical diagnosis of disability or medical condition including length/ permanence of disability or condition Description of the impact the disability has on the applicant's mobility and ability to use fixed-route service		Focus on the applicant's functional ability to use fixed route transit and tailor questions to specific type of disability
In-person interview and/or functional assessment	Comprehensive	None	None	In-person interview	None	In-person interviews and assessments by OTs or others w/specific training;
Period of recertification	3 years	2 years	4 years	Unknown	3 years	For those w/clear permanent disabilities, don't require, or at least don't require in-person
Appeal initial Review	Can call or submit a form	Written appeal offered	Written appeal offered	Form included with determination letter	Mail or email	Allow applicant to call or write and conduct initial review to confirm proper decision Ensure appeal panel has expertise in different disabilities
Appeal hearing	Offered	Offered	Offered	Offered after completion of initial request form	Not offered	DOT ADA regulations require offer of an in-person hearing

Service Name	MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	CobbLinc Paratransit	Connect Douglas	CATS Paratransit	Best Practices
Visitor Policy						
Visitors	Required proof for 21-day visitor status	Granted if certified with another paratransit or similar service; Must provide verification of eligibility; If disability is apparent, no documentation required	Granted if "functionally disabled" Must provide proof of disability when boarding the vehicle by presenting an ADA identification card from another transit system.	Granted if "functionally disabled" Must provide proof of disability when boarding the vehicle by presenting an ADA identification card from another transit system; may require documentation if disability is not apparent	Granted to visitors who are "functionally disabled" Must supply documentation of their place of residence, and if it is not apparent, of their disability. Documentation from home jurisdiction is accepted.	If eligible in one ATL area system, offer reciprocity

Appendix A-2: Comparison of Existing Selected ADA Rider Policies

Service Name	MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	CobbLinc	Connect Douglas	CATS Paratransit	Best Practices
No-Shows and Late Cancellations						
Definition	Fail to board within 5 minutes of arrival or cancel within 2 hours	Fail to board of vehicle arrival or cancel late	Fail to board on vehicle arrival or cancel within 1 hour	Fail to board on arrival or cancel within 2 hours	Fail to board within 5 minutes or cancel within 2 hours	Fail to board within 5 minutes of vehicle arrival after confirmation with dispatch and attempt to reach rider or cancel within 2 hours
Excuse policy	Provider missed trip Circumstances beyond rider control	No language included	No language included	No language included	No language included	Verify before charging; Notify by email or automated calls when no-shows or late cancels happen not after many accumulated Use FTA ADA Circular Policy
Suspension threshold	3 times system average per month	Exceeds threshold (not specified) in a rolling 30-day period	4 per month and >10% of total trips per month	20% of total trips per 3-month period	10% of trips minimum 10 trips	Must establish a pattern or practice exists. See sample policy in FTA Circular
Other Policies						
Travel with personal care attendant (PCA)	Inform reservation agent when traveling with PCA	Indicate if travel with PCA during eligibility application process	PCA travel must be approved during eligibility application process or when a change requires travel with a PCA	Inform reservation agent when traveling with PCA	Inform reservation agent when traveling with PCA	Indicate if travel with PCA during eligibility application process
Fixed route fares if ADA eligible	$1	Half fare	Free	No incentive	No incentive	Encourage use of fixed route whenever possible

Appendix A-3: Sample Letters and Policies from FTA ADA Circular[24]

The FTA ADA Circular Chapter 9 (ADA Paratransit Eligibility) contains a series of sample letters and policies that can serve as the starting point for providers in the Atlanta region, including:

- Attachment 9-2A: Sample Unconditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Attachment 9-2B: Sample Conditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Attachment 9-2D: Sample Denial of ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Attachment 9-3: Sample ADA Paratransit Eligibility Determination Appeal Request Form
- Attachment 9-4: Sample No-Show Policy

24 https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/fta-circulars/americans-disabilities-act-guidance-pdf

Attachment 9-2A
Sample Unconditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter

[On Transit Agency Letterhead]

[Date]

[Name]
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Applicant Name]:

We have completed our review of your recent request for [name of complementary paratransit service], [transit agency's] ADA paratransit service. Based on the information provided, we have determined that you are UNCONDITIONALLY ELIGIBLE for [name of complementary paratransit service] service. This means that you can use [name of complementary paratransit service] for any trips you need to make.

We have noted in your rider file that you sometimes travel with a personal care attendant (PCA). A PCA is someone designated or employed specifically to help you meet your personal needs, and is different from a guest or a companion. Your PCA may accompany you at no additional charge.

Your eligibility for [name of complementary paratransit service] is valid through [EXPIRATION DATE], after which you will need to request a continuation of your eligibility. We will notify you in advance of this expiration date to remind you to reapply and will send you a recertification request form at that time.

Enclosed is a copy of [insert name of a rider's guide], which explains the [name of complementary paratransit service] service and how to use it. The rider's guide includes helpful tips for using the service, so please be sure to read it. If you have any questions about the service, please call our Customer Service office at [phone number].

In addition to using [name of complementary paratransit service], this letter of eligibility also entitles you to use similar ADA paratransit services at other transit systems across the country as a visitor for up to 21 days per year. Simply provide the transit agency in the city you plan to visit with a copy of this letter to obtain approval to travel as a visitor.

If you have any questions about this determination of eligibility, please call our ADA Paratransit Eligibility office at [phone number].

Sincerely,

[ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manager]

Attachment: Rider's Guide

Attachment 9-2B
Sample Conditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter

[On Transit Agency Letterhead]

[Date]
[Name]
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Applicant Name]:

We have completed our review of your recent request for [name of complementary paratransit service], the ADA paratransit service provided by the [transit agency's]. Based on the information provided, we have determined that you are CONDITIONALLY ELIGIBLE for [name of complementary paratransit service] service. This means we determined that you are able to use fixed route bus [and rail] service(s) under certain conditions and are eligible to use [name of complementary paratransit service] service when you are not able to use fixed route buses [and trains]. Please review the attached pages, which describe the conditions under which you can use the [name of complementary paratransit service] service as well as the basis for our determination.

We have noted in your rider file that you sometimes travel with a personal care attendant (PCA). A PCA is someone designated or employed specifically to help you meet your personal needs and is different from a guest or a companion. Your PCA may accompany you at no additional charge.

Your eligibility for [name of complementary paratransit service] is valid through [EXPIRATION DATE], after which you will need to request a continuation of your eligibility. We will notify you in advance of this expiration date to remind you to reapply, and will send you a copy of a recertification request form at that time.

Enclosed is a Rider's Guide that explains the [name of complementary paratransit service] service and how to use it. The Rider's Guide includes helpful tips for using the service, so please be sure to read it. If you have any questions about the service, please call our Customer Service Office at [phone number].

In addition to using [name of complementary paratransit service], this letter of eligibility also entitles you to use similar ADA paratransit services at other transit agencies across the country for up to 21 days of visitor service per year. Simply provide a copy of this letter to receive approval to travel as a visitor.

If you have any questions about this determination of eligibility, please call the [transit agency's] ADA Paratransit Eligibility Office at [phone number]. If you do not agree with the eligibility you have been granted, you have the right to appeal this determination. Requests for appeals must be submitted in writing. Copies of the Appeal Policy, as well as an Appeal Request Form, are attached.

Sincerely,

[ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manager]

Attachments:

Rider's Guide
Conditions of eligibility
Basis for the determination
Appeal policy and Appeal request form

Conditions of Eligibility (Sample)

Example A

The following might be appropriate for an applicant who uses a manual wheelchair:

We determined that, because of your disability, you are not able to use the fixed route bus [and rail] service(s) under the following conditions. When these conditions exist, you are therefore eligible for [name of complementary paratransit service] service.

You must travel more than 4 blocks to get to a bus stop [or train station], or from a bus stop [or train station] to your destination

Sidewalks do not exist or are inaccessible (absence of curb ramps, broken pavement, or steep cross-slopes), which prevents you from getting to or from bus stops [or train stations]

[Train stations that have stairs but no elevators prevent you from entering or exiting these stations]

Steep hills prevent you from getting to or from bus stops [or train stations]

The presence of snow or ice prevents you from getting to or from bus stops [or train stations]

Conditions at bus stops you wish to use prevent bus drivers from deploying lifts or ramps at these stops

Example B

The following might be appropriate for an applicant with an intellectual disability who has completed travel training to make one trip on the fixed route bus system:

You successfully completed travel training to use the fixed route bus service for some trips. Therefore, you are not eligible to use [name of complementary paratransit service] service for:

Your trips from 50 Elm Street to 10 Main Street, or returning from 10 Main Street to 50 Elm Street (your trips to and from work)

Please continue to ride the fixed route bus for the above trips. For other trips, which you have not learned how to make by fixed route bus, you are eligible to use the [name of complementary paratransit service].

Basis for the Determination (Sample)

Example A

The following language might be appropriate for a rider granted conditional eligibility:

You indicated in your application (and interview) that you are able to travel up to 4 blocks to get to and from bus stops [or train stations]. You also indicated that you are able to get to and from bus stops [and train stations] as long as the route features level, accessible sidewalks and curb ramps. You also indicated that when there is an accumulation of snow you are not able to get to or from bus stops [or train stations].

During your in-person assessment, you were able to travel along the outdoor route at the Transportation Assessment Center for the first 3 blocks at a steady pace and completed these 3 blocks in 10 minutes. Your pace slowed during the 4th block along the route and this fourth block took 4 minutes to complete. We also contacted [name of professional contacted to verify disability and functional abilities], who also indicated that you could go 4 blocks to get to or from bus stops and [train stations].

Example B

The following language might be appropriate for a rider granted conditional eligibility: You indicated in your application (and interview) that you had successfully completed travel training provided by the Center for Independent Living (CIL) and learned to take the bus from your home at 50 Elm Street to and from work at 10 Main Street. You said that you are currently using fixed route buses to make these trips to and from work. With your permission, we contacted the CIL and they confirmed that you completed travel training for these trips and that you are currently making these trips independently using fixed route buses.

Your score on the FACTS (Functional Assessment of Cognitive Transit Skills) test (115 out of 146 points), which you took at the Transportation Assessment Center, also confirmed that you are able to learn to make some trips by fixed route buses with instruction.

Attachment 9-2C
Sample Temporary ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter

[On Transit Agency Letterhead]

Date
Name
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Applicant Name]:

We have completed our review of your recent request for [name of complementary paratransit service], [transit agency's] ADA paratransit service. Based on the information provided, we have determined that you are eligible for [name of complementary paratransit service] service on a TEMPORARY basis.

Your eligibility for [name of complementary paratransit service] is valid for [xx] months, through [EXPIRATION DATE]. Should you need [name of complementary paratransit service] service beyond this date, you will need to request a continuation of your eligibility.

We are granting you temporary eligibility because [indicate reasons for temporary eligibility, such as:] "this was the period of time you indicated your current condition would prevent you from using the fixed route transit service"; or "the information provided by you and [professional contacted] indicated that there could be a change in your ability to use the fixed route service after [xx] months as a result of treatment you are receiving"; or "your application materials indicated that you have the ability to use fixed route transit when provided instruction to use the service. Attached is information about our free travel training service. We recommend that you contact [contact person] to enroll in the service. We will determine your ongoing eligibility for [name of complementary paratransit service] after you have participated in the travel training program."

We have noted in your rider file that you sometimes travel with a personal care attendant (PCA). A PCA is someone designated or employed specifically to help you meet your personal needs and is different from a guest or a companion. Your PCA may accompany you at no additional charge.

Enclosed is a Rider's Guide that explains the [name of complementary paratransit service] service and how to use it. The Rider's Guide includes helpful tips for using the service, so please be sure to read it. If you have any questions about the service, please call our Customer Service office at [phone number].

In addition to using [name of complementary paratransit service], this letter of eligibility also entitles you to use similar ADA paratransit services at other transit systems across the country as a visitor for up to 21 days per year. Simply provide the transit agency in the city you plan to visit with a copy of this letter to obtain approval to travel as a visitor.

If you have any questions about this determination of eligibility, please call the [transit agency's] ADA Paratransit Eligibility office at [phone number]. If you do not agree with this eligibility determination, you have the right to appeal this decision. We require that you request an appeal in writing. Copies of our appeal policy, as well as an appeal request form, are attached.

Sincerely,

[ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manager]

Attachments:

Rider's Guide
Appeal policy and Appeal request form

Attachment 9-2D
Sample Denial of ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter

[On Transit Agency Letterhead]

Date

Name
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Applicant Name]:

We have completed our review of your recent request for [name of complementary paratransit service], [transit agency's] ADA paratransit service. Based on the information provided, we have determined that you are able to use fixed route buses [and trains] and are not prevented by a disability from using the regular fixed route transit service. You are therefore NOT ELIGIBLE for [name of complementary paratransit service] service.

The basis for our decision is explained on the attached page, Basis for the Determination. If you do not agree with this eligibility determination, you have the right to appeal this decision. We require that you request an appeal in writing. Copies of our appeal policy, as well as an appeal request form, are attached.

Attached is information about [transit agency's] fixed route bus [and train] service(s). Also attached is information about our free Travel Training program, which is designed to assist people with using buses and trains. Please contact us if we can assist you with using our bus [or train] service. For information about bus and train schedules, or for assistance planning trips by bus or train, call our Customer Service office at [phone number].

If you have any questions about this eligibility determination, please call the [transit agency] ADA Paratransit Eligibility office at [phone number].

Sincerely,

[ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manager]

Attachments:

Basis for the Determination
Fixed route bus [and train] information
Travel training program information
Appeal policy and Appeal request form

Basis for the Determination (Sample)

You did not indicate in your application (or interview) that you are prevented by a disability from using fixed route buses and trains. You indicated you could obtain, use and remember bus schedule information, find your way to and from bus stops and train stations, walk up to 12 blocks, and cross streets and intersections. You also indicated that you sometimes don't travel when it is too hot or cold, or when it is snowing. While these weather conditions make travel outside more difficult and uncomfortable, they do not prevent you from traveling outside. You indicated that your main problem was that buses and trains do not go to all the places you need to travel and that sometimes you would need to take several buses to get where you need to go.

With your permission, we contacted [name of professional who provided information], who confirmed that you have high blood pressure and hypertension and that you were taking medications for these health conditions, which were not serious enough to prevent you from using fixed route buses and trains.

You participated in the outdoor walk at the Transportation Assessment Center and were able to complete the 1/2-mile route in 16 minutes with no difficulty.

While using fixed route public transit may be less convenient than [name of complementary paratransit service] service, ADA paratransit eligibility is limited to people whose disabilities prevent them from using fixed route buses and trains.

Attachment 9-3 Sample ADA Paratransit Eligibility Determination Appeal Request Form

Please complete this form if you would like to appeal our determination regarding your eligibility for the [name of complementary paratransit service]. Once completed, please return it to the address listed below. Completed forms must be postmarked within 60 days of the date of your eligibility determination letter.

Name: _____

Street address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number with area code: (_____) - _____

Select one of the following:

____ I choose to submit additional information for the Appeal Panel to consider, but do not want to appeal in person. (If you choose this option, please send all additional information you would like the Appeal Panel to consider along with this form. Please consider the information on the page attached to your letter of determination titled "Basis for the Determination" when preparing additional information.)

____ I choose to appeal in person. (If you choose this option, we will contact you to schedule a mutually agreeable day and time for the appeal hearing. You may bring additional information to the hearing and can attend with others who are able to provide information on your behalf.)

Applicant signature: _____

Date: _____

Return completed form to:

[Office]
[Transit agency]
[Address]

Attachment 9-4
Sample No-Show Policy

[Transit Agency Instructions]

FTA recommends that a transit agency's no-show policy include, at a minimum:[25]

General policy statement

Definition of no-shows

Description of minimum driver wait times within pickup windows

Definition of late cancellations and how to cancel trips (optional)

Examples of no-shows (and late cancellations) beyond a rider's control and how riders should communicate such instances

Statement that no-shows due to transit agency errors do not count

Statement that subsequent trips after a no-show will not be automatically cancelled, and that passengers need to cancel any trips they do not intend to take

The transit agency's process to notify riders of recorded no-shows (or late cancellations)

What constitutes a pattern and practice of excessive no-shows

Time periods of potential service suspensions

Instructions for appealing proposed suspensions

25 FTA recommends that transit agencies develop their no-show policies with input from complementary paratransit riders and other people with disabilities. (See Circular Section 9-12 for a discussion of the regulatory requirements related to § 37.125(h).)

General Policy Statement on No-Shows (Sample)

[Transit agency][26] understands that because [name if complementary paratransit service] requires trips to be scheduled in advance, riders may sometimes miss scheduled rides or forget to cancel rides they no longer need. [Transit agency] also understands that riders may sometimes miss scheduled trips or be unable to cancel trips in a timely way for reasons that are beyond their control. However, repeatedly missing scheduled trips [or failing to cancel trips in a timely way] can lead to suspension of service. The following information explains [transit agency's] no-show policy.

Definitions: No-Show, Pickup Window, and Late Cancellation (Sample)

No-show

A no-show occurs when a rider fails to appear to board the vehicle for a scheduled trip. This presumes the vehicle arrives at the scheduled pickup location within the pickup window and the driver waits at least [5] minutes.

Pickup Window

The pickup window is defined as [from 15 minutes before the scheduled pickup time to 15 minutes after the scheduled pickup time]. Riders must be ready to board a vehicle that arrives within the pickup window. The driver will wait for a maximum of [5] minutes within the pickup window for the rider to appear.

Late Cancellation[27]

A late cancellation is defined as either: a cancellation made less than [1 hour][28] before the scheduled pickup time or as a cancellation made at the door or a refusal to board a vehicle that has arrived within the pickup window.

Definition: No-Shows Due to Operator Error or to Circumstances Beyond a Rider's Control (Sample)[29]

[Transit agency] does not count as no-shows [or late cancellations] any missed trips due to our error, such as:

Trips placed on the schedule in error

Pickups scheduled at the wrong pickup location

Drivers arriving and departing before the pickup window begins

Drivers arriving late (after the end of the pickup window)

Drivers arriving within the pickup window, but departing without waiting the required [5] minutes

[Transit agency] does not count as no-shows [or late cancellations] situations beyond a rider's control that prevent the rider from notifying us that the trip cannot be taken, such as:

Medical emergency

Family emergency

Sudden illness or change in condition

Appointment that runs unexpectedly late without sufficient notice

26 Information in brackets is subject to local agency input.
27 For transit agencies that choose to count late cancellations as well as no-shows.
28 FTA permits transit agencies to consider late cancellations as no-shows for trips cancelled less than 1 or 2 hours before the pickup time provided to the passenger at the time the trip was reserved, and only under the same circumstances (i.e., not due to circumstances beyond the rider's control).
29 Agencies using this sample as a template for their own no-show suspension policies are advised to first familiarize themselves with the content of Circular Section **Error! Reference source not found.**, consult with the disability community to develop the variables, and ensure that the variables actually represent a pattern or practice of missing scheduled trips and a reasonable period of suspension.

Riders should contact the [complementary paratransit service name] operations center when experiencing no-shows [or late cancellations] due to circumstances beyond their control.

Policy for Handling Subsequent Trips Following No-shows (Sample)

When a rider is a no-show for one trip, all subsequent trips on that day remain on the schedule unless the rider specifically cancels the trips. To avoid multiple no-shows on the same day, riders are strongly encouraged to cancel any subsequent trips they no longer need that day.

Suspension Policies for a Pattern or Practice of Excessive No-shows and Late Cancellations (Sample)

[Transit agency] reviews all recorded no-shows [and late cancellations] to ensure accuracy before recording them in a rider's account.

Each verified no-show [or late cancellation] consistent with the above definitions counts as [1] penalty point. Riders will be subject to suspension after the meet all of the following conditions:

Accumulate [x] penalty points in one calendar month

Have booked at least [y] trips that month

Have "no-showed" or "late cancelled" at least [xx] percent of those trips

A rider will be subject to suspension only if both the minimum number of trips booked and the minimum number of penalty points are reached during the calendar month. [Transit agency] will notify riders by telephone after they have accumulated [x] penalty points and would be subject to suspension should they accumulate [y] additional penalty point[s] that month consistent with the criteria listed in this section of the policy above.

All suspension notices include a copy of this policy, information on disputing no-shows [or late cancellations], and how to appeal suspensions.

Suspensions begin on [Mondays]. The [first violation in a calendar year triggers a warning letter but no suspension]. Subsequent violations result in the following suspensions:

Second violation: [w-day] suspension

Third violation: [x-day] suspension

Fourth violation: [y-day] suspension

Fifth and subsequent violations: [z-day] suspension

Policy for Disputing Specific No-Shows or Late Cancellations (Sample)

Riders wishing to dispute specific no-shows [or late cancellations] must do so within [x] business days of receiving suspension letters. Riders should contact the [name of complementary paratransit service] operations center at [telephone number], [day] through [day] from [time] a.m. to [time] p.m. to explain the circumstance, and request the removal of the no-show or late cancellation.

Policy for Appealing Proposed Suspensions (Sample)

Riders wishing to appeal suspensions under this policy have the right to file an appeal request, which must be in writing by letter or via email. Riders must submit written appeal requests within [x] business days of receiving suspension letters. Riders who miss the appeal request deadline will be suspended from [name of complementary paratransit service] on the date listed on the suspension notice.

All suspension appeals follow [transit agency's] appeal policy.

Appendix B: Key Details for Regional Trip Planning

This resource is aimed primarily at organizations in the Atlanta region that have leadership and managerial roles for regional trip planning, including both ARC and the ATL. It provides information on the status of multiple regional resources in the Atlanta region that directly or indirectly contribute to HST DRT trip planning and information. Since recent developments in the Atlanta region indicate that Open Trip Planner (OTP) will be leveraged to create an Atlanta region instance of OTP for trip planning, the focus of the resource is on additional functionality needed for OTP to incorporate HST DRT trip planning results. Since such results are provided based on the GTFS-Flex data specification, details are also provided on options for creating this type of dataset. The resource is organized as follows:

- Status of Regional Resources
- Additional Functionality Needed for Open Trip Planner
- Trip Planning Platform Alternatives
- Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data
- Options for Creating GTFS-Flex
- Trip Planning within Broader MaaS Efforts

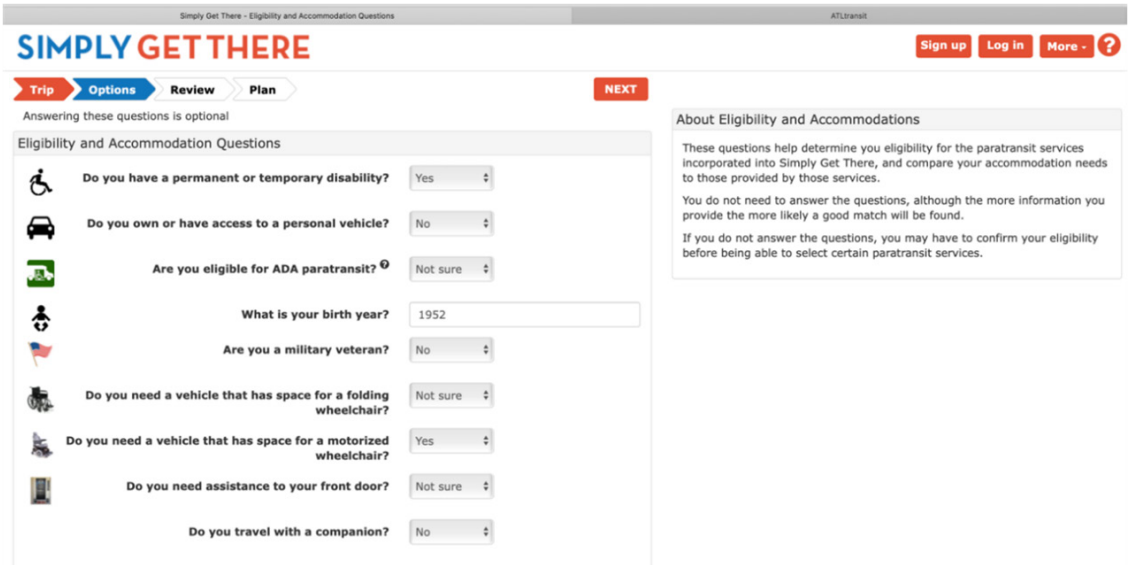


Figure 4: Eligibility and accommodation questions on SimplyGetThere.org

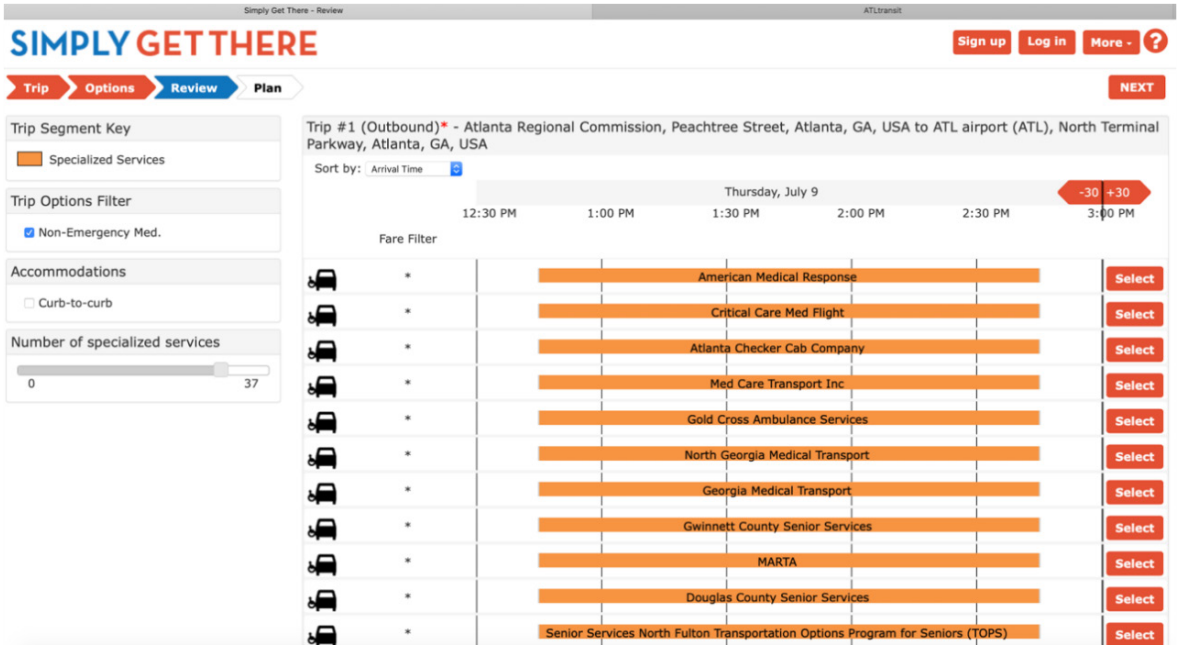


Figure 5: Trip options on SimplyGetThere.org

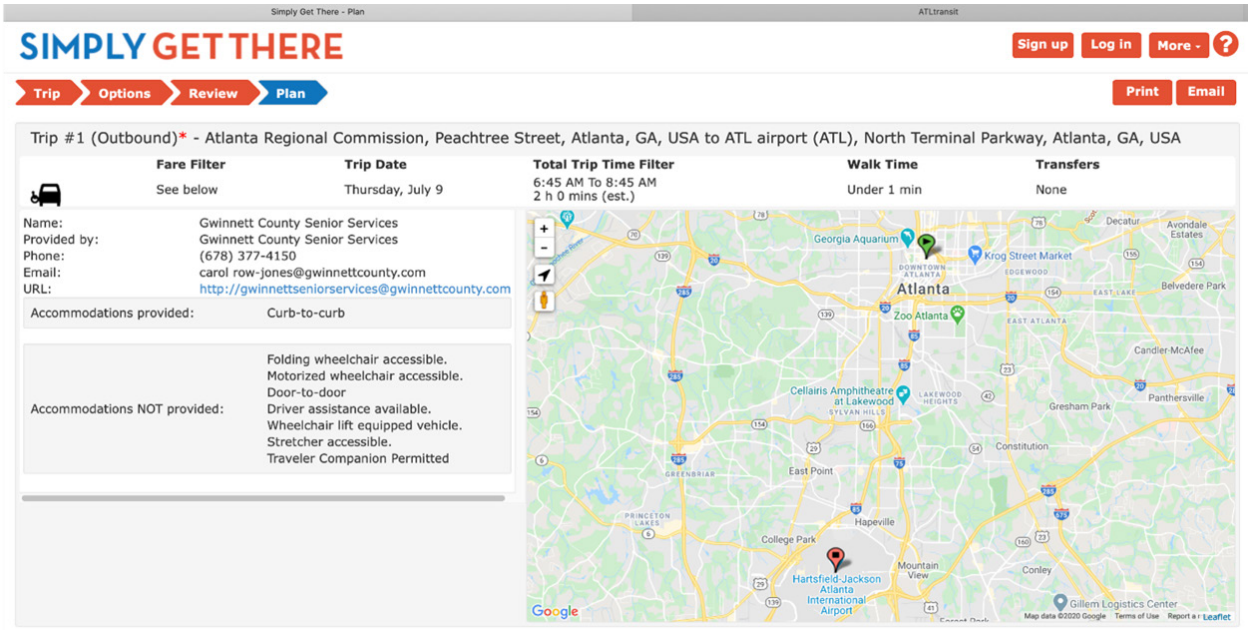


Figure 6: Trip plan from SimplyGetThere.org

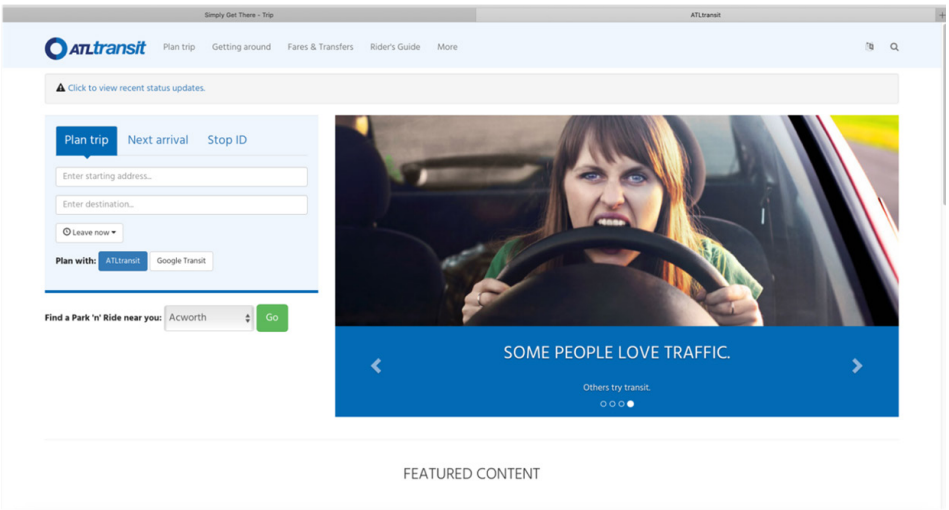


Figure 7: Landing page of ATLTransit.org

Status of Regional Resources

The table below lists current regional resources that assist with integrating HST DRT into regional trip planning along with key information. For further details, refer to the "Deep Dive" presentation from July 2020.

Resource + Lead Organization	Role	Current condition	Recommended Future Efforts
SimplyGetThere.org, ARC	Web-based trip planning, includes HST DRT	Potentially lacking support/ funding for upgrades/maintenance, concerns of low usage rates	See implementation step 3
Empowerline, Area Agency on Aging/ARC	Phone-based trip options, includes HST DRT	Maintained by skilled staff	See implementation step 4
ATLTransit.org, ARC	Web-based trip planning, does not include HST DRT	Potentially lacking support/ funding for upgrades/maintenance, concerns of low usage rates	See implementation step 3
Google Transit, Google	Web-based trip planning, does not include HST DRT	Internationally and externally maintained, requires regional input of GTFS feeds	See implementation step 2

Additional Functionality Needed for Open Trip Planner

The ATL received an Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) grant in 2020 to fund the Atlanta-Region Rider Information and Data Evaluation System (ATL RIDES). "ATL RIDES is a proposed IMI project that will develop a multi-modal journey planning application that also supports integrated mobility payment options and a connected data environment. This project builds upon previous and concurrent OpenTripPlanner (OTP) efforts, adding a multi-agency context, multilingual capabilities, fare payment integration, and a native iOS/Android application that has live-tracking capabilities."[30] Having information on the functionality needed for HST DRT will help its inclusion within the ATL RIDES effort.

30 Text from the ATL's Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) Demonstration Program Statement of Work Framework for Project Award document

GTFS-Flex is a data specification for flexible transit services, such as demand-response transportation (DRT). As mentioned on OTP's GTFS-Flex routing page,[31] GTFS-Flex was first implemented as part of the US DOT's Mobility-on-Demand Sandbox Grant through the Vermont Department of Transportation (VTrans) project. This project is covered in detail on the National Center for Mobility Management's One-Call/One-Click Resource Center.[32] As explained on OTP's GTFS-Flex routing page, OTP supports three mode types:

1. Flag stops, in which a passenger can flag down a vehicle along its route to board, or alight in between stops
2. Deviated-route service, in which a vehicle can deviate from its route within an area or radius to do a drop-off or pick-up
3. Call-and-ride, which is an entirely deviated, point-to-point segment

The latter two are of the most interest to the Atlanta region. For the service types shown in the table below, ADA paratransit, demand-response service, and microtransit best match with what OTP refers to as "call-and-ride" while deviated fixed-route service matches with what OTP refers to as "deviated-route service." Details about the GTFS-Flex data specification are available on the GTFS-Flex GitHub page.[33] The National Center for Applied Transit Technology (N-CATT) provides helpful information on GTFS-Flex,[34] including a fact sheet.[35] An additional California DOT resource also provides helpful information.[36]

The current version of GTFS-Flex addresses the general needs of flexible transit service and is able to communicate to users if the trip they'd like to take is possible by comparing the trip origin and trip destination to the available service area, along with other details. However, the current version of GTFS-Flex does not explicitly address eligibility restrictions. As a consequence, services that are only available to older adults, for example, may incorrectly be shown to OTP users as a service available to the general public. It may be possible to add options onto the GTFS-Flex standard and the OTP project that address eligibility restrictions. As a back-up option, it may be possible to add notes to service data in GTFS-Flex that could refer to eligibility restrictions as well as available accommodations such as space for mobility devices and ability to travel with a companion. See Figure 4 for an example of how eligibility restrictions and accommodations are handled on SimplyGetThere.org.

Trip Planning Platform Alternatives

As explained above, the ATL plans to deploy a regional instance of Open Trip Planner (OTP) as related to the IMI grant. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that there are other trip planning options to consider. The list below is not exhaustive but offers two options that also include HST DRT through the GTFS-Flex specification.

Kyyti Trip Planning App/Software

Kyyti, a company based in Helsinki, Finland, has a proprietary trip planning app that incorporates GTFS-Flex.[37]

Cambridge Systematics 1-Click App/Software

31 http://docs.opentripplanner.org/en/latest/Flex/
32 https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/resources/oc-oc-state-of-vermont/
33 https://github.com/MobilityData/gtfs-flex
34 https://n-catt.org/tech-university/webinar-gtfs-flex/
35 https://n-catt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GTFS-Flex.pdf
36 https://dot.ca.gov/programs/rail-and-mass-transportation/california-minimum-general-transit-feed-specification-gtfs-guidelines
37 https://www.kyyti.com/kyyti-trip-planner/

Cambridge Systematics, a company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has an open source trip planning app that incorporates GTFS-Flex.[38]

Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex

The table below lists services that may benefit from having new GTFS-Flex feeds shown in the regional instance of Open Trip Planner. Generally, agencies require riders to be residents of the county for the services listed below. This list is for preliminary reference only. In addition to the services listed below, there may be other services to consider, such as those listed in the Empowerline database and on SimplyGetThere.org.

Service	Organization	Service Type	Eligibility Restrictions
CATS paratransit	Cherokee County[39]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
CobbLinc Paratransit	Cobb County[40]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
Connect Douglas Paratransit	Douglas County[41]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
GCT Paratransit	Gwinnett County42	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
MARTA Mobility	MARTA43	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
CobbLinc "Flex"	Cobb County44	Deviated fixed-route service	No
Connect Douglas deviated-fixed route service	Douglas County45	Deviated fixed-route service	No
CATS demand-response service	Cherokee County46	Demand-response service	No
Forsyth County demand-response service	Forsyth County47	Demand-response service	No
Henry County demand-response service	Henry County48	Demand-response service	No
Paulding County demand-response service	Paulding County49	Demand-response service	No
Forsyth County "Ride Share"	Forsyth County50	Microtransit	Yes, disability and older age
Fulton County microtransit	Fulton County Senior Services51	Microtransit	Yes, older age
GCT microtransit	Gwinnett County52	Microtransit	No

Options for Creating GTFS-Flex Data

Initially, the mobility industry was only able to create new feeds for the GTFS standard manually. This was for GTFS only, not the GTFS-Flex extension. However, over time, user-friendly

38 http://camsys.software/products/1-click
39 https://www.cherokeega.com/Transportation/Complementary-Paratransit-FixedRoute/
40 https://www.cobbcounty.org/transportation/transit/paratransit
41 https://www.celebratedouglascounty.com/234/Douglas-County-Fixed-Route-Bus-Service
42 https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/web/gwinnett/Departments/Transportation/GwinnettCountyTransit/ParatransitInformation#paratransit
43 https://www.itsmarta.com/marta-mobility.aspx
44 https://www.cobbcounty.org/transportation/cobblinc/routes-and-schedules/flex
45 https://www.celebratedouglascounty.com/234/Douglas-County-Fixed-Route-Bus-Service
46 https://www.cherokeega.com/Transportation/countywidedemandresponseservice/
47 www.forsythco.com › Departments-Offices › Fleet-Services › Dial-A-Ride
48 http://www.co.henry.ga.us/Departments/S-Z/Transit-Department
49 https://www.paulding.gov/809/Paulding-Transit
50 https://patch.com/georgia/cumming/ride-share-now-available-seniors-needing-transportation
51 https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/services/senior-services/transportation
52 https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/web/gwinnett/home/stories/viewstory?story=Testprogramformicrotransitbusserv

data creation tools were made available. The manual approach requires a more advanced skill set for data creation, while the tool-assisted approach can be handled with more general skill sets (e.g., GIS knowledge). The latter is generally more efficient in terms of time and cost. Some user-friendly data creation tools that are on the market for GTFS include Trillium Transit's GTFS Manager,[53] TransLoc's Architect,[54] and the National Rural Transit Assistance Program's (RTAP) GTFS Builder.[55]

As a result of online research and discussions with specialized professionals, it appears that no user-friendly data creation tools currently exist that help create GTFS-Flex feeds. Trillium Transit, based in Portland, Oregon, reports that they have a beta version that can be used along with consultant support, but it is not ready to be released as a stand-alone product. Thomas Craig, CEO of Trillium Transit,[56] was able to provide an estimate for the creation of a new GTFS-Flex dataset with 10-15 services, which is approximately $10,000 for the initial creation of the dataset. If more services were added, the cost would rise proportionally. The annual maintenance cost would be around 25% of the initial creation cost.

Trip Planning within Broader MaaS Efforts

Trip planning is one part of a broader vision to support regional one-call/one-click (OC/OC) systems and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) efforts.[57] As explained on the National Center for Mobility Management's (NCMM) One-Call/One-Click Resource Center,[58] trip information[59] (which includes itinerary/trip planning) is one of three core OC/OC functions—trip booking and trip payment are the other two. Though MaaS and OC/OC system concepts are not exactly the same, they are very similar—MaaS, too, includes a focus on trip planning, booking, and payment functions integrated through connected platforms.

While these focus on the user experience side, or front end, of the mobility system, there is a complementary back end. The user's trip planning activities are supported through software and data that display trip results, while booking activities are supported through trip scheduling software used by providers to ensure the booked trip is possible at the scheduled/booked time. In addition, the user's trip payment activities are supported through software that structures fares and policies.

While GTFS and GTFS-flex are key specifications for trip planning, a gap exists for similar specifications for both trip booking and trip payment. A 2016 Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) report, *Standardizing Data for Mobility Management*,[60] differentiates between 'trip discovery' data (i.e., data needed to identify appropriate trip options as with trip planning) and 'trip transaction' data (i.e., data needed to book and schedule demand-response services specifically and pay for all mobility services generally). In short, GTFS and GTFS-flex support 'trip discovery' but not 'trip transaction.' A 2019 TCRP report, *Development of Transactional Data Specifications for Demand-Responsive Transportation*, provides potential data specifications for 'trip transaction' purposes.[61]

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), in being awarded an Inclusive Mobility on Demand Grant in August 2020, has the opportunity to make inroads on regional trip transactions for demand-response transportation. Part of this grant funds a pilot project that will establish processes and tools for data exchange and trip-sharing between the Center for Pan Asian Services (CPACS) and Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), two DRT service providers in Clarkston,

53 https://trilliumtransit.com/gtfs/gtfs-manager/
54 https://transloc.com/gtfs-builder/
55 https://www.nationalrtap.org/Web-Apps/GTFS-Builder
56 https://trilliumtransit.com/author/thomas/
57 https://maas-alliance.eu/homepage/what-is-maas/
58 https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/one-call-one-click-resource-center/
59 https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/oc-oc-trip-information/
60 http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/170080.aspx
61 http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/180593.aspx

Georgia as well as in DeKalb County and Gwinnett County. In essence, the grant will support new ways of co-mingling passengers that are clients of both CPACS and Gwinnett County Transit, as well as facilitating transfers between the two organizations.

Co-mingling passengers, from a technology standpoint, involves some level of interoperability among trip booking apps for the user and trip scheduling software for the provider. A related product and project, the Trip Exchange software platform, will be piloted for the first time in the Denver metro area from October through December 2020. The Trip Exchange software platform is explained in detail on NCMM's One-Call/One-Click Resource Center as an example project.[62] It is worth taking into account that the current Denver metro area instance of the Trip Exchange does *not* leverage the data specifications laid out in the 2019 TCRP report on the topic. The Trip Exchange, originally custom-designed for the Denver metro area, began as a project as early as 2015 and is structured around datasets from this earlier project phase.

As ARC, the ATL, and regional partners make progress in regional trip planning, they are also making progress in other MaaS focus areas such as regional trip booking/scheduling (explained above) and regional trip payment (see the *Fare Payment Primer* for more information). Over the years, it is possible that these complementary efforts become increasingly interoperable and interconnected—fulfilling a more complete MaaS vision for the Atlanta region that keeps human services transportation and demand-response services at its core.

62 https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/resources/oc-oc-denver-metro-area/

Appendix C-1: Microtransit Basics

This resource is intended for agencies, organizations, and counties in the Atlanta region that are considering the applicability of microtransit to their current situation. It provides information on the fundamentals of microtransit and can be used as a tool to aid in the early stages of planning for microtransit—an important precursor to implementation. Ideally, this resource should be reviewed prior to related resources, Regional Microtransit Status and Microtransit Platform Considerations, since they both contain content first introduced in this resource. The resource is organized as follows:

1. **Background Information**
    a. Definition and related terms
    b. Place in the transit services spectrum
    c. Connection with human services transportation
2. **Decision Factors**
    a. Service models
    b. Technology for agency-provided microtransit operations
    c. Service opportunities
    d. Funding options
    e. Marketing and communication
3. **Future Regional Considerations**
    a. Geographically adjacent service
    b. Trip planning, booking, and payment
4. **Additional Materials**
    a. Regional contacts
    b. Reference documents

Background Information

Definition and Related Terms

Microtransit is technology-enabled demand-response transit service. Microtransit software includes algorithms that leverage real-time locations of vehicles and passengers in order to find the most efficient match considering operational aspects and passenger expectations. Requests for trips are often accepted from a passenger minutes before the trip is to take place, but requests can take place any time on the day of the trip, or even prior to that in some cases.

Microtransit may also be called on-demand transit or same-day demand-response service. In fact, since microtransit involves demand-response service, the concept can be applied to existing demand-response service that lacks the technology described above, often booked the day prior to the trip or before. Such demand-response services can add the technology aspect to their current operations and, in effect, have microtransit service in operation.

Microtransit as a term and concept has evolved over the years. In 2016, for example, the types of projects typically labelled as "microtransit" were associated with companies such as Bridj that provided turnkey microtransit service only.[63] Now in 2020, the transportation field has applied a broader definition that encompasses turnkey and non-turnkey service models, explained further below.[64]

Place in the Transit Services Spectrum

Microtransit, since it is demand-response service, is a fundamentally different type of service as compared with fixed-route and fixed-guideway transit service. Passengers tend to be picked up at their chosen origin and dropped off at their chosen destination. In the middle of these two is deviated fixed-route service in which some fixed routes exist, but service deviates from these routes in selected areas, operating more like demand-response service from time to time in order to capture additional ridership. The Cobb County Flex service is an example of this service type.[65] Some microtransit operations software allows for scheduling both deviated fixed-route service and microtransit on a single platform, referenced in Microtransit Platform Considerations.

Microtransit can be considered as a service option that helps expand the reach of fixed-route and fixed-guideway transit service. Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) in Dallas, Texas, for example, has been adding on microtransit areas over the past few years to a program called GoLink in part to connect passengers with fixed routes.[66] More information on using microtransit as a way to expand the reach of fixed-route and fixed-guideway transit service is provided below.

Connection with Human Services Transportation (HST)

Although microtransit is often available to the general public without eligibility restrictions, it can be an attractive option to those with mobility challenges since it is often provided curb-to-curb. In addition, some organizations use microtransit as a way to fill gaps in service for specific passengers, such as older adults and individuals with disabilities.

While piloting microtransit service September 2018 through April 2019 in Snellville, Gwinnett County Transit found anecdotal evidence through an interview with multiple bus operators that many of the passengers reported having disabilities. In some cases, passengers mentioned that

63 https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-02-17/is-the-kansas-city-bridj-partnership-the-future-of-low-density-public-transit
64 https://learn.sharedusemobilitycenter.org/learning_module/microtransit/
65 https://www.cobbcounty.org/transportation/cobblinc/routes-and-schedules/flex
66 https://www.dart.org/riding/golink.asp

the microtransit service enabled them to get out more often to places not only out of necessity, but also for enjoyment. Though it may be possible to ask personal questions in microtransit apps, agencies may be reluctant to ask questions regarding topics such as age, disability, and income level due to passenger privacy concerns. Therefore, it can be difficult to capture reliable data on the personal characteristics of microtransit passengers.

Fulton County Senior Services is leveraging microtransit to serve the older adult population, while Forsyth County is focusing microtransit on individuals with disabilities and older adults. *Regional Microtransit Status* provides more details.

Decision Factors

Service Models

One of the first decision factors an organization faces when considering microtransit is pinpointing the right service model. One option is the 'agency-provided model.' In this model, the agency provides the majority of resources needed to operate microtransit service such as vehicles and staff. In addition, the agency will likely need to procure microtransit operations software. Another option is the 'turnkey model.' In this model, the organization works with a third party that provides all the elements of microtransit service—the vehicles, staff, and all related technology.

The turnkey model may be the best fit for agencies that are not currently transportation service providers, such as Fulton County Senior Services. Fulton County has contracted with Lyft and Uber to support its microtransit program.[67] Gwinnett County Transit, on the other hand, has applied the agency-provided model. The main benefit of the agency-provided model is that it offers more control over the details of the operations through a more hands-on approach. The main benefit of the turnkey model is that it requires less direct staff time to operate and can begin without having a vehicle fleet or operational staff such as bus operators.

Another emerging option is combining the agency-provided and turnkey models within a single microtransit program. For example, DART's GoLink program in Dallas, Texas allows users to interact with a central system and indicate a preference for DART-operated microtransit or a Transportation Network Company (TNC).[68] Presumably, this hybrid model may have been pursued due to a mismatch in demand (for trips) and supply (of vehicles) when DART operated through the agency-provided model alone. If enough demand is generated that the availability of agency-provided vehicles is surpassed, perhaps the best way forward is to supplement with third party service either temporarily or indefinitely while an agency tracks data over several months to better understand the demand.

Companies such as American Logistics are providing alternative approaches that combine access to multiple providers within a single app, which could be considered as an option akin to the turnkey model. Explained regarding the company's approach, "The American Logistics transportation approach allows customers to access any available provider at any time of day, by phone or online with our accessible, intuitive mobile app. We ensure safe, timely, and equitable service for all riders, regardless of whether they're able to use TNC/rideshare, taxi providers, or require a wheelchair-accessible vehicle." [69]

67 https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/services/senior-services/transportation
68 https://www.dart.org/riding/golinkwesterncarrollton.asp
69 https://americanlogistics.com/transit/

Technology for Agency-provided Microtransit Operations

While the turnkey model leverages the technology of a third-party service provider, the agency-provided model often requires the procurement or acquisition of software to support microtransit operations. This software tends to be offered as a platform with multiple parts. See Figure 8.

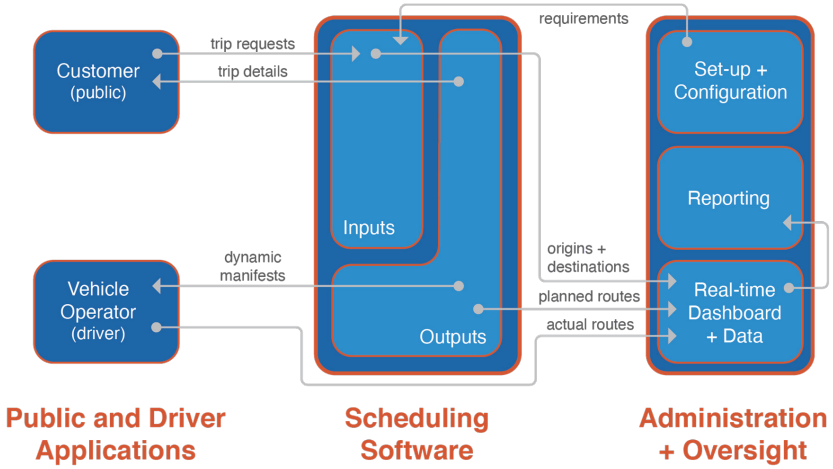


Figure 8 - Microtransit Software Platform Elements

Some platforms that are called demand-response operations platforms or on-demand transit platforms may suit microtransit operations also; it is important to understand the general functionality of the platform since there are a range of terms in the field. More details for organizations considering technology options for the agency-provided model are available in Microtransit Platform Considerations.

In addition to software, there are minimum hardware requirements for microtransit service. Each vehicle in the fleet must have automatic vehicle location (AVL) equipment. This will enable real-time data to be made available on the locations of the vehicles for fleet tracking purposes. Typically, each vehicle also will have a tablet or similar device that the bus operator will use for directions.

Service Opportunities

Many organizations pursue microtransit for specific reasons, believing that microtransit can help fill gaps in transit service or address issues. Understanding these factors can help pinpoint where microtransit can or should operate. It can also help elucidate how to measure the impact of microtransit service.

Areas where fixed routes are not viable – Such an area could have no transit service at all currently, or have an underperforming fixed-route service. Due to low population/destination density and other factors, some areas are not viable for fixed-route service. In such cases, agencies have found microtransit can be used to replace underperforming routes or to start new service entirely. Gwinnett County Transit, for example, started transit service for the first time ever in the Snellville area with microtransit.

Additional ridership for fixed routes – In some cases, a microtransit area connects to a station or stop associated with a fixed route. The service area, in essence, extends the potential reach of the fixed route. This can also be referred to as first or last mile connectivity. DART, for example, uses this reasoning for their microtransit service.

Areas where service is missing or lacking – In other cases, an organization has found that trips of a certain type and/or for certain groups of people are not adequately met through the

current services offered, if there are any. This is the case for Fulton County Senior Services and its microtransit service focused on older adults as well as Forsyth County and its microtransit service focused on individuals with disabilities and older adults.

Technology upgrades to existing demand-response – Some agencies have already been offering demand-response service for years, but their technology was not on par with microtransit. The Regional Transportation District (RTD) in Denver, Colorado, for example, embarked on a technology upgrade for its demand-response service, "Call-n-Ride," which began operations in 2008. Once the service became on-demand a few years ago, the service was renamed FlexRide.[70]

The items above are not mutually exclusive and can be combined to clarify the purpose of microtransit service for organizations. Further, there are regional differences to consider depending on the amount of density, fixed-route transit access, and other factors that could lead an organization to explore various opportunities.

Funding Options

Microtransit can be funded from a number of sources, and the sources that fund a pilot may change as a microtransit program grows over time. Via, one of the software companies mentioned in *Microtransit Platform Considerations*, has provided a thorough resource that covers a wide range of funding options.[71] The financial sustainability of microtransit pilots and their sustained growth over the life of the service should be generally understood from the pilot outset. The organization should look out at least 3-5 years to make sure it can be maintained.

Marketing and Communication

Marketing and communication have the potential to make or break a microtransit project. An explanation of the importance of marketing, as well as project examples, is provided in the Eno Center for Transportation's *UpRouted: Exploring Microtransit in the United States*.[72] The local population could remain completely unaware of the new service unless the organization makes sure to build awareness and understanding of how it works.

Future Regional Considerations

Geographically Adjacent Service

There are currently only minor geographic microtransit adjacencies, as shown in Regional Microtransit Status (i.e., a portion of Fulton and Forsyth counties), so there is little to regionally coordinate currently in terms of cross-jurisdictional microtransit trips. However, one day there may be multiple geographically adjacent microtransit service areas in the Atlanta region. When that happens, the region may want to consider transfer policies and other needs for cross-jurisdictional microtransit trips. It may also be worth considering implementing a regional microtransit system that is centrally managed at some point in the future.

Trip Planning, Booking, and Payment

Stakeholders have expressed a clear desire to have regionally centralized public-facing apps to improve the regional user experience for trip planning, trip booking, and trip payment. It is important that all microtransit services come up as options in regional trip planning apps.

- **Trip planning** – To that end, the three microtransit services shown in Regional Microtransit Status are also listed in the "Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data" section of Key Details for Regional Trip Planning.

70 https://www.rtd-denver.com/services/flexride
71 https://ridewithvia.com/resources/articles/creative-ways-to-fund-on-demand-public-transportation-and-microtransit/
72 https://www.enotrans.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/UpRouted-18.pdf

- **Trip booking and payment** – To go a step further into trip booking and scheduling, see the "Trip Planning within Broader MaaS Efforts" section of Key Details for Regional Trip Planning. In addition, the Fare Payment Primer explains the status of regional fare media, taking into account technology-driven options for county-based DRT and ADA paratransit. Neither resource explicitly includes microtransit, because as explained in Microtransit Platform Considerations, public-facing user apps with booking and payment tend to be an integral part of microtransit platforms. Nonetheless, as the popularity of microtransit grows over the years, the Atlanta region may consider apps that provide interoperability across multiple microtransit platform companies and services, and even interoperate with other demand-response options that are not microtransit. Such options may be available in the future, and in fact companies such as American Logistics mentioned above are moving in that direction.

Additional Materials

Regional Contacts

Category	Organization	Staff Member(s)
Regional POC	ARC (information sharing role)	Joseph Yawn
Organizations with past/current microtransit programs	Forsyth County Fulton County Senior Services Gwinnett County Transit	Roy Rickert Andre Danzy Karen Winger
Interested in microtransit	Douglas County Henry County MARTA Paulding	Jemal Sheppard Taleim Salters Heather Alhadeff and Santiago Sosorio Betty Roach

Reference Documents

- Gwinnett County Transit's draft RFP/procurement documents for a microtransit platform

Appendix C-2: Regional Microtransit Status

Past and current microtransit services in the Atlanta region are described in the table and shown in the map below. Ideally, this resource should be reviewed after Microtransit Basics, which explains some of the terms below.

Organization	Service Area	Service Model	Tech Provider	Service Opportunities	Eligibility Requirements	Status
Forsyth County	Any location within the county	Turnkey	Included in third party services (Common Courtesy, 73 Lyft, and Uber)	a and c	Forsyth County residents 18 years old and above with a disability, older adults	Pilot program called 'Ride Share' launched in November 2019,74 partnership with Common Courtesy
Fulton County Senior Services	Various locations within the county	Turnkey	Included in third party services (Common Courtesy, Lyft, and Uber)	c	Fulton County residents 60 years old and above	Pilot program began in 2018,75 partnership with Common Courtesy
Gwinnett County Transit (GCT)	Snellville (Buford also for future service)	Agency-provided	Transloc (pilot program only)	a, b, and c	none	Pilot program ran September 2018 through April 2019,76 microtransit service not currently listed on GCT's website77

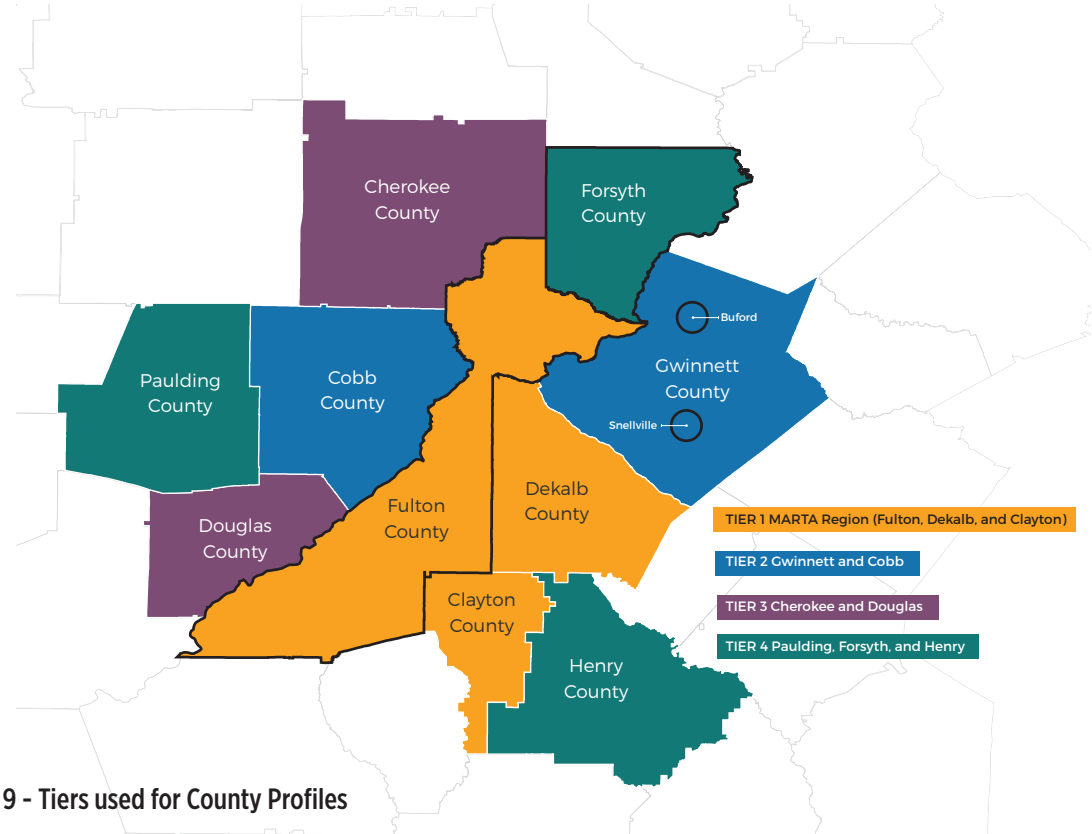


Figure 9 - Tiers used for County Profiles

73 https://www.commoncourtesyrides.org
74 https://patch.com/georgia/cumming/ride-share-now-available-seniors-needing-transportation, Note: The Forsyth County website was down at time of resource creation.
75 https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/services/senior-services/transportation, https://patch.com/georgia/sandysprings/ride-sharing-services-available-fulton-senior-facilities, https://whatsnextatl.org/news-releases/ride-sharing-services-continue-for-fulton-county-seniors/
76 https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/web/gwinnett/home/stories/viewstory?story=Testprogramformicrotransitbusserv
77 https://www.gwinnettcounty.com/web/gwinnett/Departments/Transportation/GwinnettCountyTransit

Appendix C-3: Microtransit Platform Considerations

This resource is aimed at agencies, organizations, and counties in the Atlanta region that are considering selecting a microtransit software platform. It provides information on a general selection process and can be used as a tool to aid in the early stages of planning for the procurement or attainment of a microtransit software platform—an important precursor to implementation for organizations that are pursuing the 'agency-provided model' of microtransit service. Ideally, this resource should be reviewed after Microtransit Basics, which explains key concepts and terms. The resource is organized as follows:

1. Typical Platform Components
    a. Public and driver applications
    b. Scheduling software
    c. Administration and oversight
    d. Complementary hardware
2. General Selection Process
    a. Requirement gathering
    b. Cost considerations
    c. Potential platform short listing
    d. User trial period
3. Companies with Microtransit Platforms

Typical Platform Components

Microtransit operations software tends to be offered as a platform with multiple components. See Figure 8 above. Each component is explained in further detail.

Public and Driver Applications

Microtransit platforms typically have two components that are front-end facing. The first is the user app for members of the public to schedule, track, and take rides, also often enabling customer feedback. The second is the vehicle operator app, which provides the driver with real-time trip details.

Scheduling Software

The core of a microtransit platform is the scheduling software, which is run with algorithms that dictate how trip origins, trip destinations, and other inputs are taken into account to produce the dynamic manifests that vehicle operators receive in the form of real-time trip details. Comparing the performance and efficiency of the scheduling software between companies would be ideal, but it is difficult due to a lack of transparency regarding how the algorithms work, perhaps due to intellectual property reasons.[78]

Administration and Oversight

The microtransit program administrator completes a number of tasks ranging from set-up and configuration to reporting for various purposes. In addition, the administrator would have access to data dashboards that visualize combinations of data in ways that inform microtransit operations. Typically, a microtransit platform will include a set of predefined reports and dashboards based on federal norms and past customer requests. In addition, some may have a way to produce customized reports and dashboards without the involvement of the software company.

For example, an organization may want to compare estimated arrival times with actual arrival times for passengers to understand the deviation and perhaps reduce it. Some organizations would like to have raw data to manipulate it themselves, instead of viewing it only in a dashboard. In such cases, it is important to make sure the selection process along with negotiation and contracting takes this into account. Contracts should explicitly state who owns the raw data, who has access to the raw data, and who has raw data sharing permissions, at a minimum.

Complementary Hardware

As mentioned in Microtransit Basics, in addition to software, there are minimum hardware requirements for microtransit service. Each vehicle in the fleet must have automatic vehicle location (AVL) equipment. This will enable real-time data to be made available on the locations of the vehicles for fleet tracking purposes. Typically, each vehicle also will have a tablet or similar device that the bus operator will use for directions. Some procurements involve both the microtransit software platform and associated hardware. In other cases, the organization already has, or procures separately, the associated hardware.

78 An online search did not turn up any public documentation regarding the algorithms used by the companies mentioned in the 'Companies with Microtransit Platforms' section.

General Selection Process

Requirement Gathering

The organization should draft a list of needed platform components as well as required and optional features and functions for each component. "Features are the 'tools' you use within a system to complete a set of tasks or actions. Functionality is how those features actually work to provide you with a desired outcome."[79] As mentioned in *Microtransit Basics*, some platforms that are called demand-response operations platforms or on-demand transit platforms may suit microtransit operations also; it is important to understand the general functionality of the platform since there are a range of applicable terms in the field.

One way of breaking down the requirement gathering process is to begin by listing all the components first (common components explained above) and then listing the required and optional features and functions for each component for a first draft. There can be an additional interoperability section, if the organization finds it is needed, to specify how the components should work together or with neighboring technology (i.e., outside of the immediate scope of microtransit). This can help the organization ensure that the microtransit platform will work with other technology the organization already has or plans to procure or acquire, potentially increasing automated functions and reducing staff time on manual processes.

In order to prepare for their microtransit platform procurement, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) staff hired a consulting team to create such a list of requirements. At the time, GCT was operating a pilot phase with a particular software, which it was not necessarily going to continue using once the post-pilot period began. The consulting team interviewed operational staff including bus operators, supervisors, and microtransit program administrators to learn about their experience approximately two months into the pilot. This information helped build a draft list of required and optional features and functions that GCT could include in a request for proposals (RFP) document, whereby proposers would respond with 'yes, no, or maybe with explanation' regarding each item. Such a structure can help organizations compare companies, products, and proposals more easily to each other. This is an example of one requirement gathering and procurement approach.

Cost Considerations

Cost considerations should be understood for all the components of the platform. Some companies offer a pilot period at reduced rates, but the organization will need to understand the estimated ongoing costs for as long as it plans to provide the service. Once staff becomes accustomed to using a certain platform, it can be difficult to change later—one of the reasons why understanding financial sustainability is key.

Potential Platform Short-listing

Verifying that a platform meets the needs of an organization is more challenging than it may seem at first glance. It is not uncommon for a software company to say that a feature or function is available during the sales process, while actually the feature is only in development or under consideration—not currently live in the platform.

Technical documentation available online for microtransit platforms is limited. Given this situation, two tactics are suggested. First, an organization should do its own internal work to thoroughly understand its own requirements, as explained above. Even if the help of a consultant is needed, addressing this first will pay off later in the process. Second, an organization should verify that a platform meets its requirements.

79 https://blog.boardingware.com/features-vs-functionality/

If technical documentation is available, that is a great first step. However, there is no substitute for seeing how the features and functions work during a live demonstration. Videos can certainly be helpful,[80] but live demos cannot easily hide processing time and other factors that could be misrepresented in pre-recorded videos.

In addition, the organization should find out how the software company approaches the contracting process. How long will the organization need to commit to the platform, and is it offered as a subscription service? If it decides to change platforms, what steps would be involved? Thinking at least three to five years out can help reduce the need for changes later. At any stage in the process, the organization can ask the software company for a draft contract to review and/or the subscription terms and conditions. This may also become a comparison factor between the products.

Finally, the organization should do some research into past and current customers of the platform. Hearing about first-hand experience from peers can be very helpful, particularly from organizations that have tried multiple platforms such as Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) in the Los Angeles, California metro area. OCTA has had its Flex service for more than two years, and as an example, has worked with Lyft, TransLoc, and Via in the course of refining their technology approach.[81] Agencies like OCTA are able to compare and contrast the platforms and provide unique insights.

User Trial Period

After the shortlist is verified, asking for a user trial period (e.g., two weeks) is suggested for the top two or three choices on the short list. There are three primary user groups for microtransit platforms to involve in the trial period. Bus operators will use the part of the platform that provides real-time information on their routes. The public will use the app to enter origins and destinations, receive real-time location and timing updates, and provide feedback. The microtransit program administrator will handle a range of tasks to set-up the system, make adjustments over time, and review data—to name a few.

The trial period could even be used to run simulations with a group of 'public' users entering in trips on their mobile devices and a group of bus operators reviewing what comes up on their screens/tablets as dynamic routes are created. Prior to that, the microtransit program administrator would enter in the basics to set-up the system and create scenarios for the types of adjustments they may make. They would also review the data and visualization options that come standard or can be customized, including how National Transit Database (NTD) data is collected and transferred to NTD, considering ease of use and automation. This is one way to test the multi-faceted nature of the platform components and user groups.

Since microtransit depends on user experience, the most important part of the selection process is verifying which platform meets the requirements and usage expectations of the three user types the best. If that can be ascertained, and the platform works within the budget, the top choice may become clear.

Companies with Microtransit Platforms

Four companies that provide microtransit software platforms are listed and compared below. This list is not exhaustive, and the intent is to provide a basic comparison based on publicly available online information from the respective companies. Comparison factors include:

80 An online search did not turn up any publicly-available videos on YouTube for the companies mentioned in the 'Companies with Microtransit Operations Platforms' section.
81 http://octa.net/ocflex/overview/

- **Components** – As explained above, microtransit platforms have typical set of components. If the company or product has less or more than what has been explained, this will be noted. Otherwise, the area will read 'typical.'
- **Scope of Transit Service Types** – Microtransit platforms are sometimes designed to support microtransit alone. However, some platforms enable other types of transit service such as deviated fixed-route service to be supported as well.
- **MaaS Integrations** – Microtransit platforms are designed to support microtransit operations, including passenger booking and scheduling. To support the vision of Mobility as a Service (MaaS),[82] some products are also able to connect with other MaaS elements such as trip planning or trip payment. Some also have application programming interfaces (API) to facilitate interoperability.

Company	Components	Scope of Transit Service Types	MaaS Integrations
DemandTrans Solutions	Typical	Supports "fully on-demand…to more structured services such as flex routes… and quasi-fixed routes"83	Unclear, none mentioned on website
Spare Labs	Typical	Unclear, appears to support fully on-demand operations only	Mentions "Spare Open API" which could be applicable84
TransLoc	Typical plus "dispatchers can …schedule call-in rides"85	Unclear, appears to support fully on-demand operations only	Unclear, none mentioned on website
Via	Typical	Unclear, appears to support fully on-demand operations only	Mentions MaaS and "payment integration including local fare collection systems" but without specifics86

82 https://maas-alliance.eu/homepage/what-is-maas/
83 http://demandtrans.com/dynamicmobilityservice/, It should be noted that Civic Sphere LLC, part of the consulting team on this project, and DemandTrans Solutions Inc., are strategic partners. Every effort has been made to present each platform neutrally.
84 https://sparelabs.com/en/solutions/microtransit/, https://sparelabs.com/en/developers/
85 https://transloc.com/microtransit-ondemand-software/
86 https://ridewithvia.com/solutions/

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

TAC Meeting Summaries

Deep Dive Sessions

Regional County Profiles

Best Practices and Strategies

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- **TAC Meeting Summaries**
  - October 2019 Kickoff Meeting
  - February 2020 HST Summit
  - June 2020 Progress Meeting
  - July 2020 Deep Dive Sessions
  - September 2020 Progress Meeting
  - October 2020 Final Presentation
- Deep Dive Sessions
- Regional County Profiles
- Best Practices and Strategies

Regional HST Demand Response Coordination

Kick-off Meeting

Atlanta Regional Commission

Presented by Meredith Greene

October 10, 2019

NELSON NYGAARD

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Project Overview & Purpose
- Goals & Goal-Setting
- Group Activities
- Timeline & Next Steps

INTRODUCTIONS

OUR TEAM

Meredith Greene

Nelson\Nygaard

Project Manager

Bill Scwartz

Nelson\Nygaard

Deputy Project Manager

Janae Futrell

Civic Sphere

Outreach & Technology Strategy

Laura Brown

RLS

Data Collection & Analysis

PROJECT OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

PROJECT PURPOSE

- Advance concepts from Management Mobility in the Atlanta Region
- Capitalize on the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL)
- Forge new partnerships
- Reflect new technologies
- Improve efficiencies
- Enhanced customer experience

PROJECT TASKS

- Project management & engagement strategy
- Stakeholder engagement
- Service inventory
- Existing conditions assessment
- Best Practices
- Recommendations
- Documentation

PROJECT GOALS

PROJECT GOALS

- Goals from 2016 Human Service Transportation Plan:
  - Establish a decision-making framework based on the personal process HST populations use to evaluate mobility options
  - Develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region

BRANDING PROCESS

OVERVIEW OF THE BRANDING PROCESS

DECIDE

WHICH SERVICES ARE RIGHT FOR YOU?

CONCEPTS

INITIAL CONCEPTS CREATED IN LINE WITH STRATEGY & OBJECTIVES.

DISCUSS

DISCUSS THE PROJECT, YOUR BUSINESS, YOUR CLIENTS / CUSTOMERS & GOALS.

STRATEGY

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH ARE PRESENTED IN A STRATEGY PROPOSAL.

DEVELOPMENT

WE DEVELOP JUST ONE OR TWO OF THE MOST PROMISING CONCEPTS UNTIL WE REFINE THE STRONGEST ONE TO PERFECTION.

RESEARCH

I'LL PERFORM RESEARCH ON YOUR INDUSTRY & COMPETITORS WHICH WILL INFORM DESIGN DECISIONS.

DELIVER

ONCE YOU SIGN OFF ON THE PROJECT, DESIGN FILES ARE PROVIDED IN ALL THE FORMATS YOU WILL EVER NEED.

PROJECT BRANDING

PROJECT BRANDING

Sample style guide

- Project Logo
- Consistent Branding
  - Documents
  - Presentations
  - Outreach

Regional HST Demand Response Coordination

ARC Regional HST Demand Response Coordination

STYLE GUIDE

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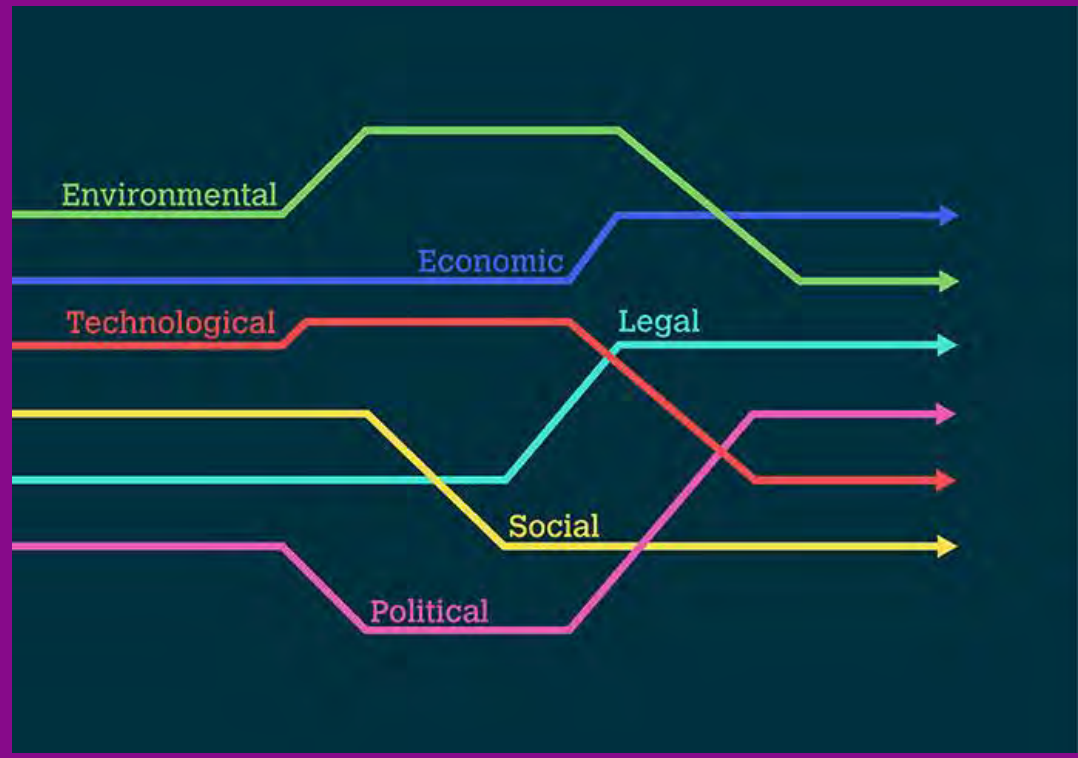
GROUP EXERCISE

Put your thinking caps on!

ACTIVITY!

What are the trends that concern you?

The things that hold you (your organization) back from offering demand-response type service? (i.e. funding, policies, legislation, boundaries, eligibility, etc.)



ACTIVITY!

What aspects of demand response transportation and mobility for older adults, low-income individuals, and individuals with disabilities in the region work well today? The general population?

What needs to be maintained and strengthened?

ACTIVITY!

What Challenges and Barriers do the following groups experience when using the current specialized transportation system (demand response, paratransit, NEMT, other services in the region)?

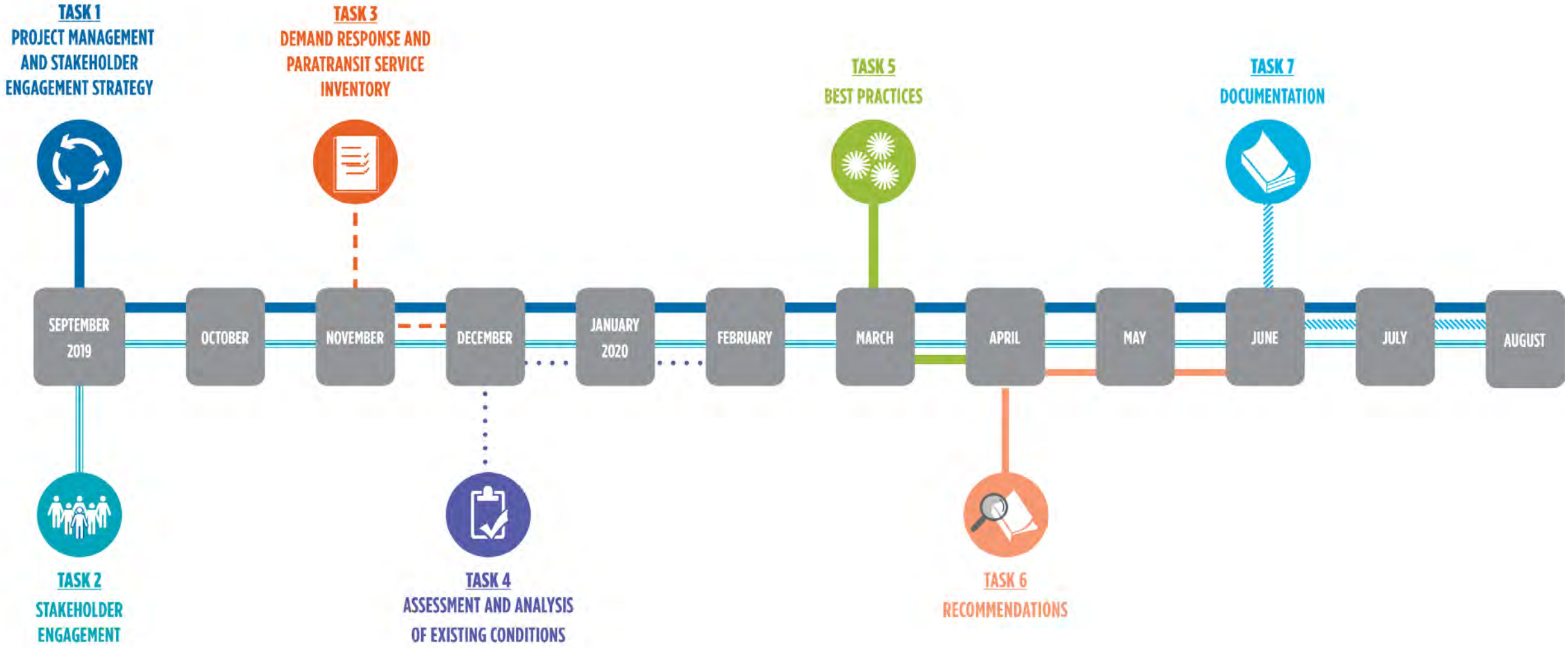
- People 65 years and older
- People with disabilities
- People with low incomes

"Will this take me where I want to go, no questions asked?"

ACTIVITY!

What current or upcoming opportunities are there for improving regional demand response transportation?

PROJECT TIMELINE

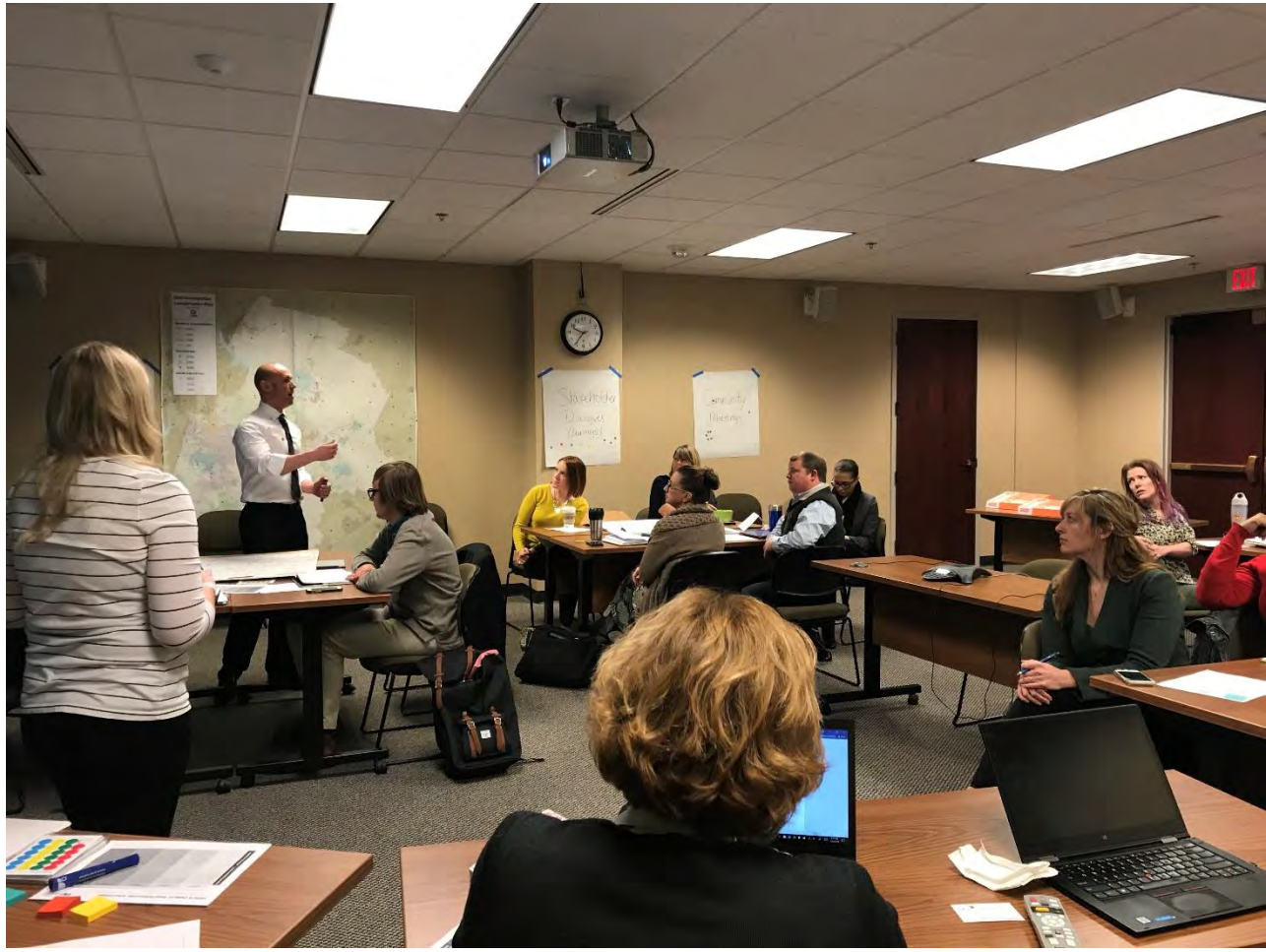


NEXT STEPS

- Continued Stakeholder Outreach
- Services Inventory
- Existing Conditions Assessment
- Finalize Goals

Next Meeting:

- Spring 2020



QUESTIONS

“THE ATLANTA REGION WILL PROVIDE INTEGRATED, MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS, OLDER ADULTS, VETERANS, LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY POPULATIONS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. LOCAL AND REGIONAL ACTORS WILL COORDINATE TO DELIVER COMPREHENSIVE AND MUTUALLY SUPPORTIVE SERVICE.

-VISION STATEMENT
FROM ARC 2016 PLAN

THANK YOU!

Meredith Greene

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mgreene@nelsonnygaard.com

the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

HST SUMMIT MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

February 12, 2020 10:30-2:30 at ARC Offices

Attendee list and presentation attached

Work Session 1 – Main Takeaways

Data and Performance Tracking

- Formal tracking of applicants, trip data, trip denials, is inconsistent
  - For some, information is anecdotal
  - Others use ARC's WellSky
- Pilot programs are not working as intended with higher demand than anticipated, which is now being tracked
- If fare payment technology advances, the cards can be a data source
- Service providers at times have limited capacity to meet demands
- County-only services can limit mobility for those who need to travel outside a county

Funding

- Grant application training is a key need as knowledge is mixed and staff availability is limited
- The timing of grant funding availability does not always align with budget cycles
- Raising matching funds is challenging and specialized knowledge is needed to identify funding sources for local match
- NTD reporting is time consuming and more training is needed
- A web portal that facilitates the process and includes training materials could be helpful

Trip Planning

- Region needs a single software/app for trip planning (and eventually booking) that includes all modes with demand-response options
  - Should have real time data connected and include key data for fixed route such as elevator outages, etc.
  - Should be fully accessible with audio for visually impaired
  - Should include not only point A to B but also what could be encountered on the way (sidewalk access, etc., see "i-access" Atlanta-based app)
  - Apps such as "hop stop" (New York, 2012-14) and "in transit" (Florida, 2012-14) did a good job of showing all the options
- Demand-response real time data has a gap currently, part of region has Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) but some counties/providers such as CPACS, Paulding, and Cherokee do not

- Single software/app would require management and funding/political will
  - Management could be by ARC, the ATL, GDOT, or a combination
  - Funding/political will could potentially be supported through House Bill 511 (by including a requirement that the "mobility group" provide the software/app)

Work Session 2 – Main Takeaways

Trip Sharing/Coordination

- Because scheduling and dispatching is separate among overlapping providers, it is not possible to efficiently share or coordinate trips
- There is interest in what other providers in other regions have done to integrate trips funded through different programs; reimbursements are critical to sort out
- Having software (or data feeds) that enable trip data sharing is a must; incorporating data sharing requirements into future procurements would be helpful
- Requiring integration of data sharing into future funding requests could advance this effort
- The non-emergency medical transportation Medicaid model uses many small providers, making trip sharing and related reimbursements challenging

Fares

- With many fare payment options and systems, transfers among providers is difficult both to administer an to explain to riders; knowing whom to call is a challenge
- There is a strong interest in a regional fare system and The ATL as seen as the leader in advancing this
- Regional fare payment should include demand response services, and the development of any ATL-led programs should include local providers
- Changes in technology are difficult to monitor, and providers would benefit from regional consistency

Microtransit / TNC Partnerships

- There are several pilots growing into new programs in the region. It is important to think of these now as a regional system especially when they are geographically adjacent (people will want to travel freely without a transfer)
- These types of "on-demand transit" could end up being similar to other demand-response options with transfers at the county line OR be truly reimagined without assumed constraints
- Perhaps there could be a regional on-demand system that operates across county lines
- TNCs already operate this way, so this works with the existing model
  - For microtransit, the counties/providers would have to agree to travel move in adjacent geographic areas (i.e., one handling the outbound trip and the

other handling the inbound trip OR the region could have a single fleet/service in on-demand areas

- On the back end, cost allocation could connect the passenger trip cost with the correct funding source
- There could be a regional on-demand booking app that brings together the various on-demand options, and there could be a regional marketing program to get the word out on the services/app

Paratransit Session

Participants:

Lori Sand (ATL Authority), Krissy Johnson (Cherokee County), Greg Powell (Cherokee County), (Roderick Cockerham (Cobb County), Lawanda Jones (Douglas County), Gary Watson (Douglas County), Tom Kimbrell (Forsyth County), Calisha Davis (MARTA), Erick Knowles (MARTA), Jordan Hall (Statewide Independent Living Council)

ARC: Tamika Brown, Sidney Douse, Amy Goodwin, Kofi Wakhisi

Consultant Team: Meredith Greene, Kevin Lucas, Bill Schwartz (Nelson\Nygaard), Janae Futrell (Civic Sphere)

Discussion Topics

- Role of the Group
- Review of Prior Strategies
- Areas of Collaboration
- Regional Paratransit

Notes

Regional Application Process/Eligibility

- Roderick (Cobb) – would not want to hold Cobb to MARTA's eligibility standards, since they do not meet MARTA's standards, mismatch between various eligibility requirements
- Jordan (SILC) – forced to submit multiple applications to multiple agencies as part of eligibility process, mentioned that knowing the medical diagnosis provides clarification for paratransit needs (lack of depth perception, cannot distinguish between sidewalks and curb cuts, etc.), added that MARTA often has elevators out of service
- Calisha (MARTA) – would prefer to ease recertification process for those with permanent/increasing disability-related conditions
- Reciprocity might be helpful to avoid duplication for those who need to travel between service areas.

Transfers Among Providers

- Cobb/MARTA – some take place at designated stations while come Cobb trips extend into MARTA's service area
- Gwinnett/MARTA – take place at Doraville Station
- Douglas/Cobb – common meeting point is Six Flags, but no formal arrangements are in place

Procurement and Regional Coordination

- Lori (ATL) – ARC has done regional procurements, such as with Remix, ATL will kick-off regional fare policy soon

- Roderick (Cobb) – there are examples from other regions (e.g., Winston-Salem and Greensboro, NC) where a combined procurement of paratransit software proved more cost effective. This requires one entity to take the lead and for others to join.
- With an integrated fare payment system, would it be possible to make a payment to non-transit service provider?
- Because regional coordination is always on the table, but progress is minimal, we should start small (five core counties)

Next Steps

- The group agreed that meeting and collaborating on paratransit is desirable, particularly knowing requirements better
- The next Transit Operators Group meeting, scheduled for March 27,2020, would presents a good opportunity to collaborate. ARC and The ATL jointly plan each TOG agenda.
- Nelson\Nygaard to provide ARC with a suggested plan for the TOG meeting for consideration

ATTENDEES

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Tom	Kimbrell	Forsyth County	
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HST SUMMIT

FEBRUARY 12, 2020

HST SUMMIT MEETING AGENDA

Introductions, Background, and Workshop Goals

Progress to Date

Strategies Workshop

Lunch

Strategies Report-out

Break

ADA Paratransit Subgroup Meeting

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Demand Response Implementation Plan

HUMAN SERVICES DEMAND RESPONSE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

- Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)
  - Required by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive funding under Section 5310
  - Atlanta Regional HST Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017
- Key Goal
  - Develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region

Managing Mobility in the Atlanta Region

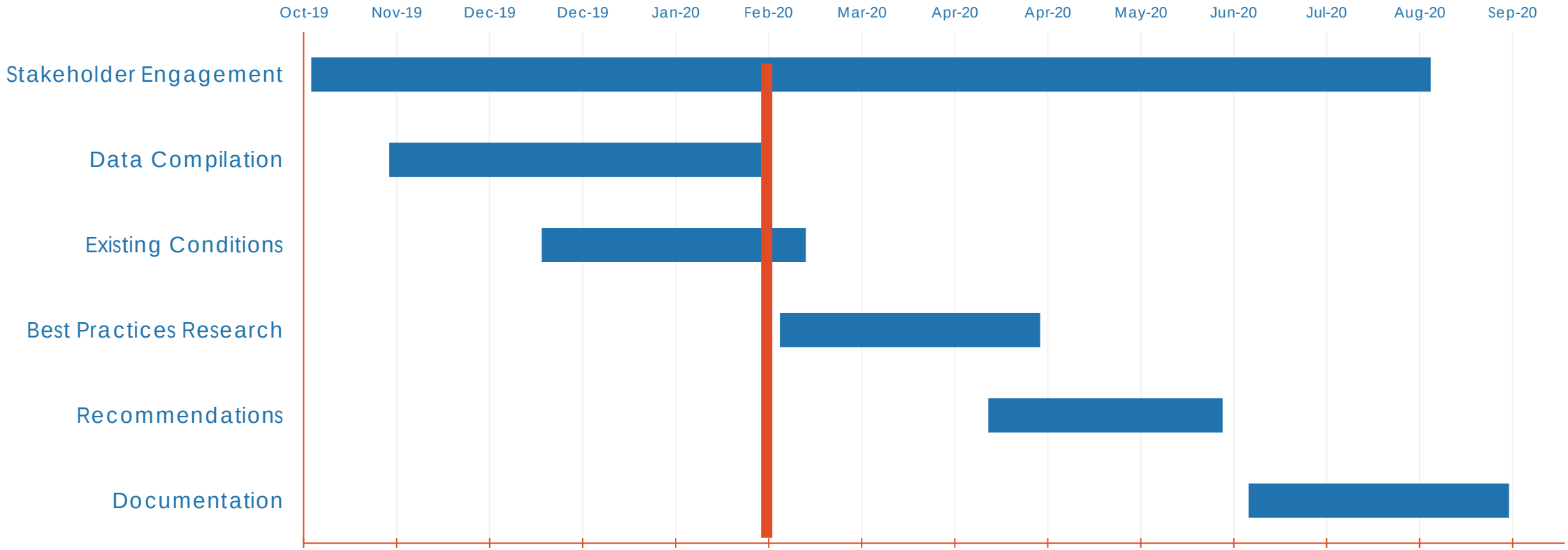
Targeted Improvements

- Enhance education and awareness of HST options
- Improve the ADA application process
- Implement a common fare structure and procurement protocol
- Develop service agreements to assist with streamlined service provision
- Develop common legal frameworks and reporting mechanisms
- Embrace regional technology applications
- Evaluate and monitor

Task Overview

- Building on HST plan, focus on complementary paratransit (ADA) and county-run demand response transportation
- Inform future models of regional coordination, particularly new mobility paradigms to improve efficiency and the enhance the user experience
- Compile data and review current policies
- Undertake best practices research to recommend implementation strategies

SCHEDULE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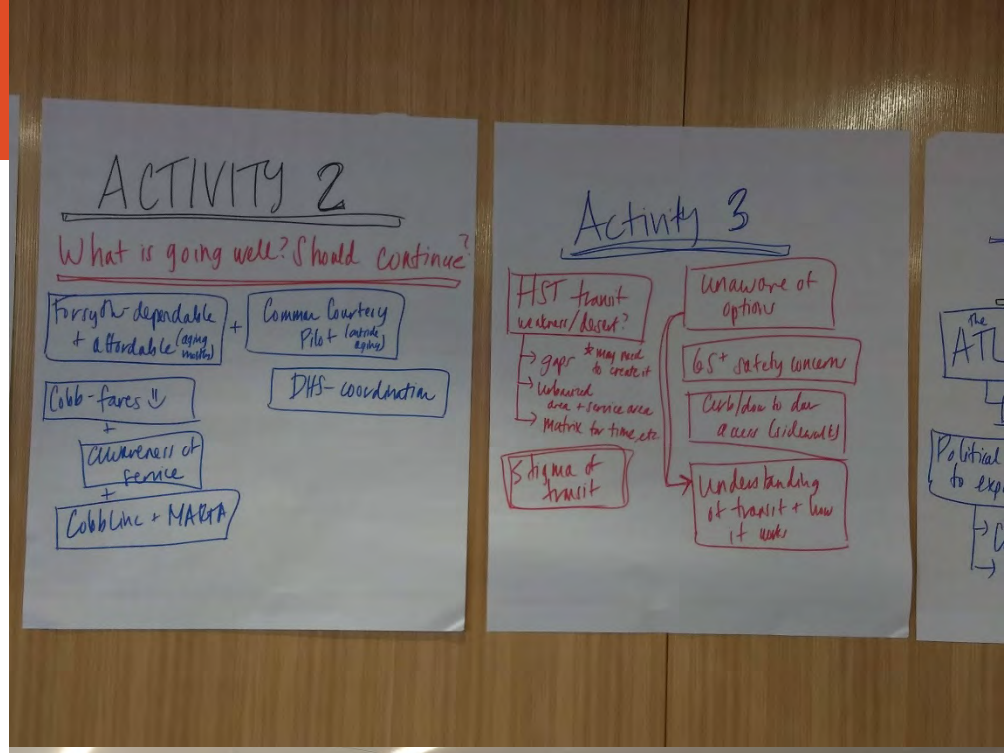
Jul-20
Aug-20
Sep-20
Stakeholder Engagement
Data Compilation
Existing Conditions
Best Practices Research
Recommendations
Documentation

TAC MEETING 1

- First TAC meeting held on October 10, 2019
- Group exercises
  - Trends of concern
  - Barriers to implementation
  - What's working
  - What needs help
  - Needs for specific groups
    - Older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes

TAC MEETING 1 – KEY THEMES

- Demand is growing but funding is not; state funding is inadequate
- Service outside fixed route transit is limited
- Interest in TNCs is growing throughout the region
- Accessibility of sidewalks and some vehicles is limiting
- No regional approach to accommodating travel needs
- Limited integration of on-demand with fixed route services



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Demand Response Implementation Plan

PROGRESS TO DATE

Tasks Underway/Completed

- Interviews
- Data gathering – demand response providers
- Transit needs analysis
- Inventory of ADA policies

Interviews

- Fixed route providers

  (MARTA, Gwinnett, Cobb, Cherokee, Douglas)

- County services and senior services staff

  (Cobb, Coweta, Douglas, Gwinnett, Hall, Paulding)

- Others

  (CPACS, Georgia DOT, The ATL, Central Atlanta Progress, ARC staff)

Demand Response Service Provider Inventory

- Emphasis is on inner counties (Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, and Gwinnett)
- Confirming services available and identifying additional needs
  - Service characteristics
  - Eligibility requirements
  - Trends in demand
  - Funding

Key Themes Identified to Date

- Demand is growing – capacity and funding not keeping pace and requests for service cannot be fully accommodated
- Data to support these trends not readily available regionally but needed
- Strong interest in microtransit and TNC partnerships to fill gaps
- Regional solutions around fares, technology, peer exchanges, and funding are of interest

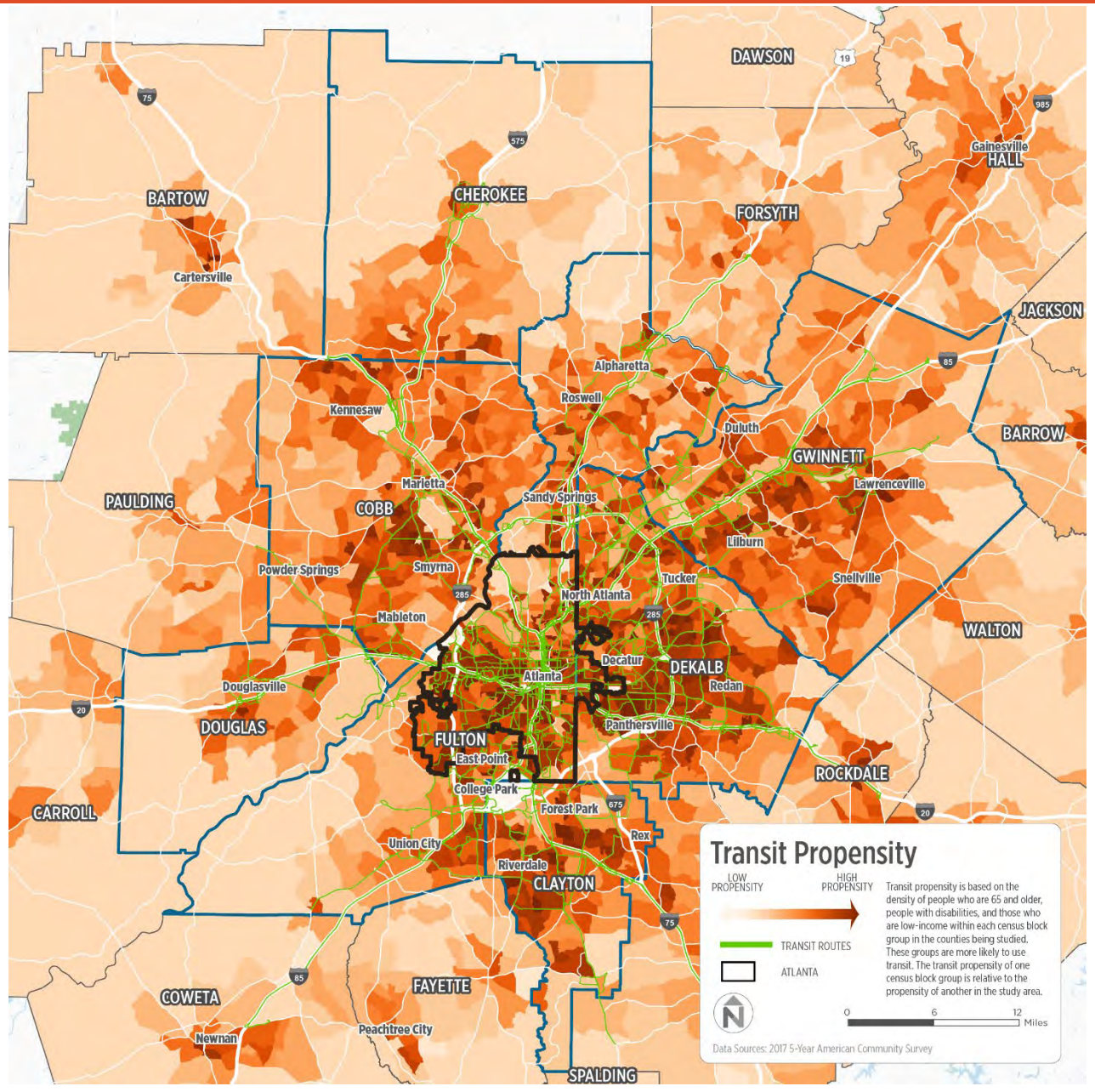
ADA Paratransit Policies

- Eligibility requirements and processes
  - Applications, releases, in-person vs. paper
  - Recertification process and visitor policies
  - Appeal policies
- No show/late cancel and suspensions
- Integration with fixed route
- Coordination where service overlaps
- Focus of subgroup discussion

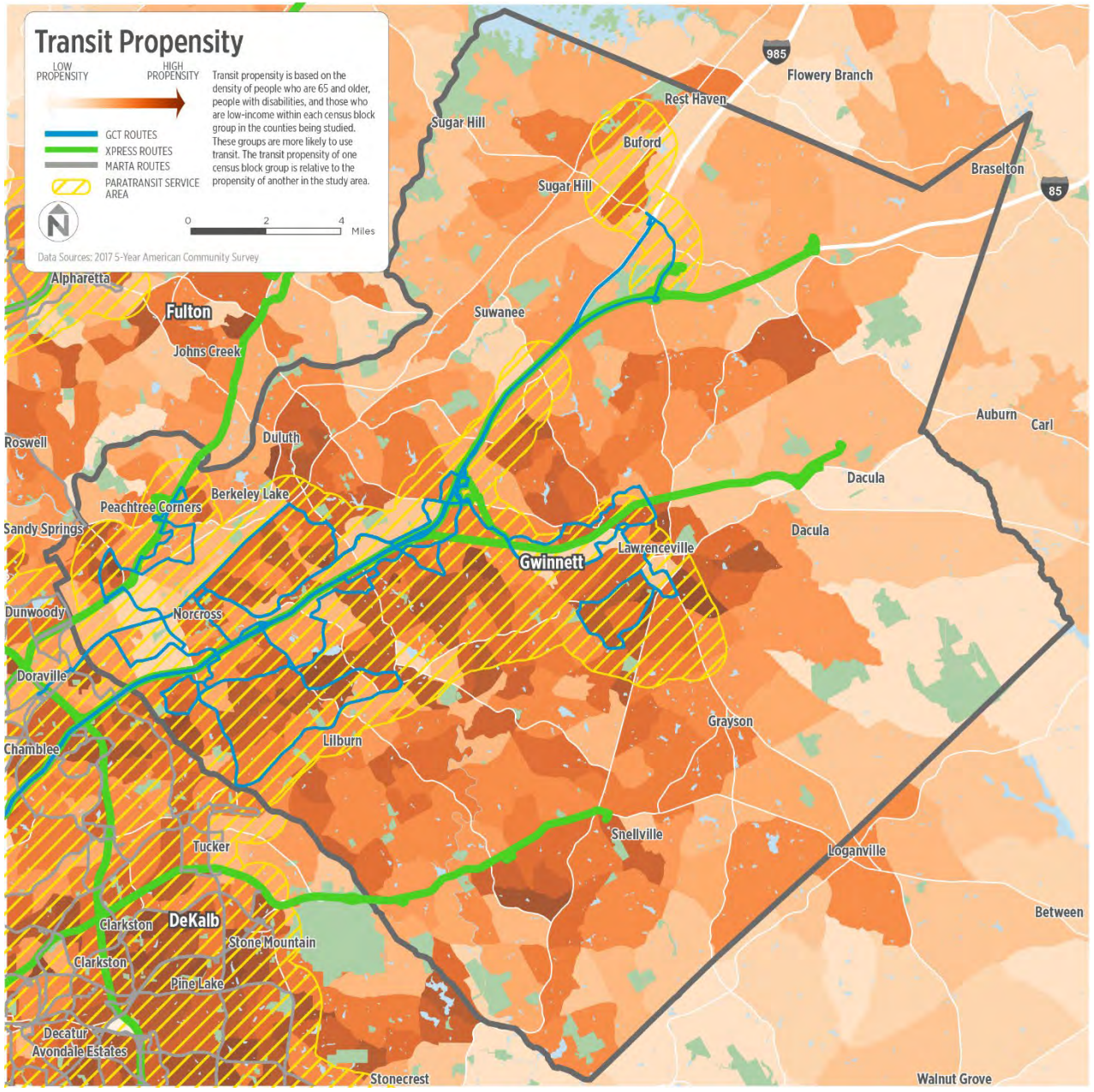
Transit Propensity Index

- Based on U.S. Census American Community Survey
- Maps population densities (older adults, people with disabilities, people with low incomes)
- Categorizes block groups into areas of highest need
- Adds scores together to map likelihood of transit

REGIONAL TRANSIT NEEDS

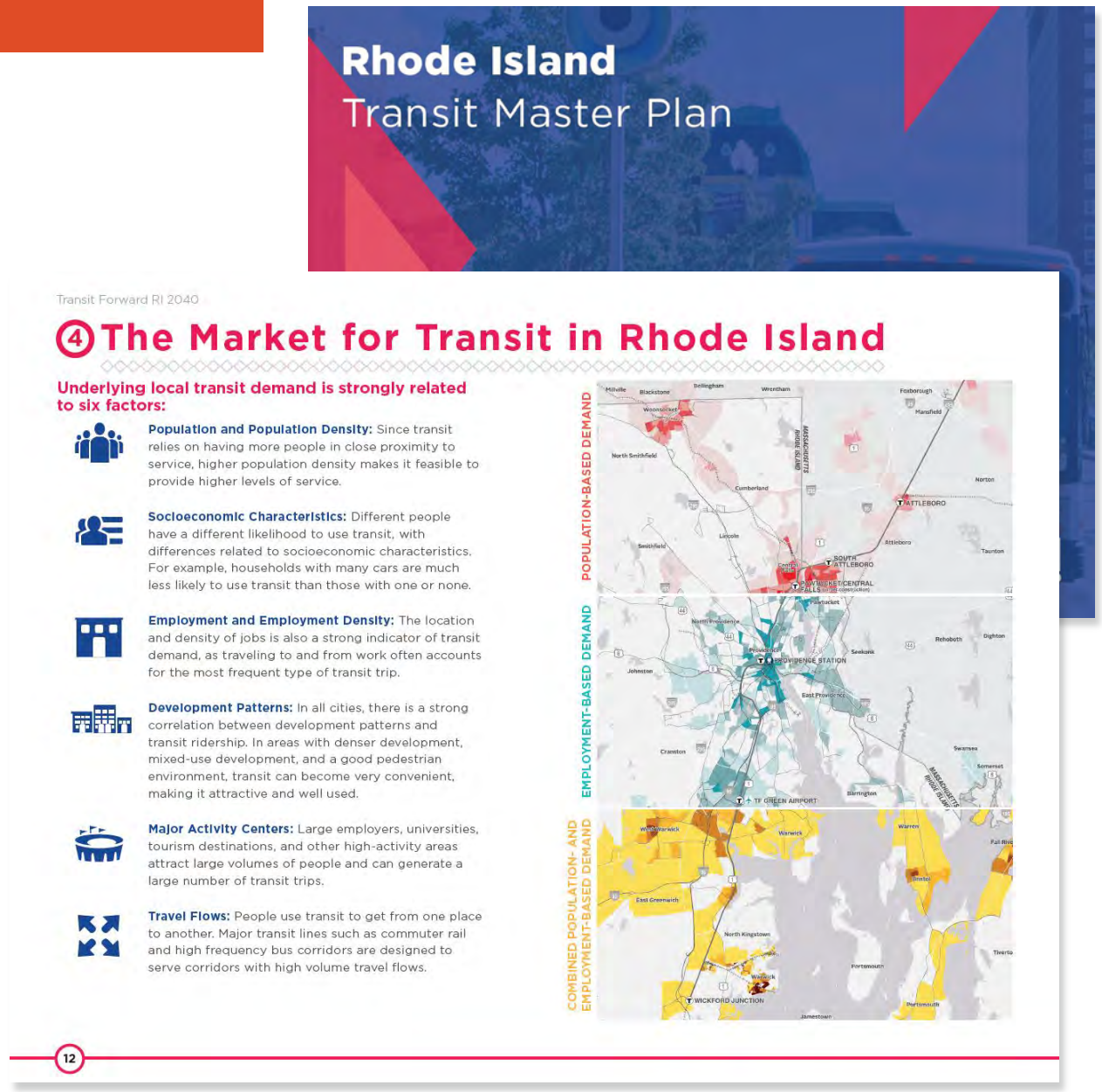


COUNTY-LEVEL TRANSIT NEEDS: GWINNETT EXAMPLE



COUNTY PROFILES

- Develop for each ARC county
- Transit propensity index
- Available services
- Documented needs
- Potential applicable strategies



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STRATEGIES WORKSHOP

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Overview

Two 30-minute sessions

1

Session 1

- Technology's role in trip planning
- Funding
- Performance tracking and reporting

2

Session 2

- Trip sharing/trip coordination
- Fare payment
- Microtransit and TNC partnerships

Questions

Technology's role in trip planning

- Regional approach for travel options
- Different trip planning tools available (ATL, Simplygetthere, other options)
- What should regional trip planning and real time data look like in 2 years?

Funding

- What are biggest funding challenges?
- Areas becoming urbanized – navigating FTA process
- Grant writing challenges (e.g. call for Section 5310 projects)

Performance tracking and reporting

- What data are readily available
- What can be shared
- What information is needed

Questions

Trip sharing/trip coordination

- Taking advantage of overlapping
- Opportunities and challenges
- Possible models of coordination (brokerage)

Fare Payment

- Current policies
- Areas of interest
- Breeze card
- ATL as an opportunity

Microtransit and TNC Partnerships

Janae

- On-demand/microtransit to address needs in less dense areas
- Interest in applying to existing demand response services and engaging turnkey operations
- What would a regional approach involve?

THANK YOU!

NELSON NYGAARD

Bill Schwartz

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TAC MEETING SUMMARY

June 22, 2020 10:30-11:30 via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation attached

Introductions & Icebreakers

Meeting participants were asked to describe the changes their organizations have made during the pandemic and identified which changes have worked well and what they would like to see continue moving forward. Responses included:

- Peter Bruno with MARTA indicated that they have implemented new health and safety measures, such as transporting up to two passengers per van for safe distancing. They've suspended the travel training program and eligibility assessments and have granted people 6-months of presumptive eligibility. They initiated a new partnership with Delta Airlines, who have provided electrostatic sprayers to help clean the vehicles, and they would like to continue using the sprayers, especially as they serve a high-risk population.
- Andre Danzy with Fulton County noted that their provider, Transdev, has increased cleaning and began delivering meals and groceries to seniors. Fulton County is also reaching out to another provider to help with groceries. They received some Cares Act funding, but most of the funding is provided through Fulton County. They are also putting together a plan on how to reopen senior centers and are developing a plan with Transdev to use 15-passenger vehicles at half capacity. Fulton County is still providing service for customers who need to travel to medical appointments. Once they open the centers, they will need to adjust to making more trips. Currently planning for several different types of scenarios.
- In Douglas County, they are opening up their office to the public for the first time since March 23rd, and will continue practicing social distancing, following CDC cleaning guidelines, and anticipate that they'll be following the guidelines for some time. The county still has some staff working from home and are getting used to participating in virtual meetings.
- Paulding County has limited service to medical trips only since March and have been cleaning vehicles more frequently.
- The Georgia Department of Community Health noted that NEMT brokers are still running transports for eligible members during the pandemic.

Draft County Profiles Feedback

The project team provided a high-level overview of the Draft County Profiles booklet, and asked meeting participants for feedback. A few participants had questions, including:

- Can the background data be provided for Tier 2 to verify that it is correct? - The source data will be shared for review.

- Will additional slides or details be provided for specific areas/counties? Fulton County would like to see this, especially as the Commissioner has an interest in this. The project team will follow up on this request.

Additional feedback for the County Profiles booklet may still be shared with Sidney Douse.

Implementation Strategy Session Preferences

The project team briefly summarized and introduced the potential implementation strategies and indicated that individual sessions would be scheduled and coordinated for a deeper dive discussion. Meeting participants indicated which topics/session they are most interested in participating in. The project team will coordinate and schedule up to six sessions, and some topics may be combined.

Implementation Strategy Session Topics	Number of Interested Participants
1. Funding & grants	6
2. Fare payment systems	8
3. Trip planning & trip scheduling/ booking	11
4. Microtransit & TNC partnerships	5
5. Ongoing collaboration & coordination	8
6. Performance tracking & reporting	6
7. Joint purchasing	4
8. Cross-country travel	4
9. Mobility management	5
10. Covid-19 strategies	7

Other Feedback/Discussion

- Funding concerns were raised about the impacts of COVID-19 on service. For instance, in Fulton County, ridership has decreased, which has been really evident with the impacts on the TNC program, which especially with the success of the TNC program dropping from 500 trips/day down to 100 trips/day. Suggestions were shared to request that funders repurpose or extend funding was shared.

ATTENDEES

First	Last	Organization	Email
Krissy	Johnson	Cherokee County	kjohnson@cherokeega.com
Greg	Powell	Cherokee County	mgpowell@cherokeega.com
Melissa	Myers Bristol	Clayton County	Melissa.Myers-Bristol@claytoncountyga.gov
Roderick	Cockerham	Cobb County	Roderick.Cockerham@cobbcounty.org
Bernadette	Townsend	Cobb County	bernadette.townsend@cobbcounty.org
Victoria	Huynh	CPACS	Victoria.huynh@cpacs.org
Jeffrey	Shanks	CPACS	Jeffrey.shanks@cpacs.org
Erica	Walker	DBHDD	Erica.walker@dbhdd.ga.gov
Jamal	Sheppard	Douglas County	jsheppard@co.douglas.org
Gary	Watson	Douglas County	gwatson@co.douglas.ga.us
Andre	Danzy	Fulton County	Andre.danzy@fultoncountyga.gov
Kimberly	McKnight	GA. Dept. of Community Health	kmcknight@dch.state.ga
Leigh Ann	Trainer	GA. DOT	LTrainer@dot.ga.gov
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Peter	Bruno	MARTA	Pbruno@itsmarta.com
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Santiago	Osorio	MARTA	sosorio@itsmarta.com
Richard	Wallace	MARTA	rwallace@itsmarta.com
Betty	Roach	Paulding County	Betty.roach@paulding.gov
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Aileen	Daney	The ATL	adaney@srta.ga.gov
Daniel	Walls	The ATL	dwalls@srta.ga.gov
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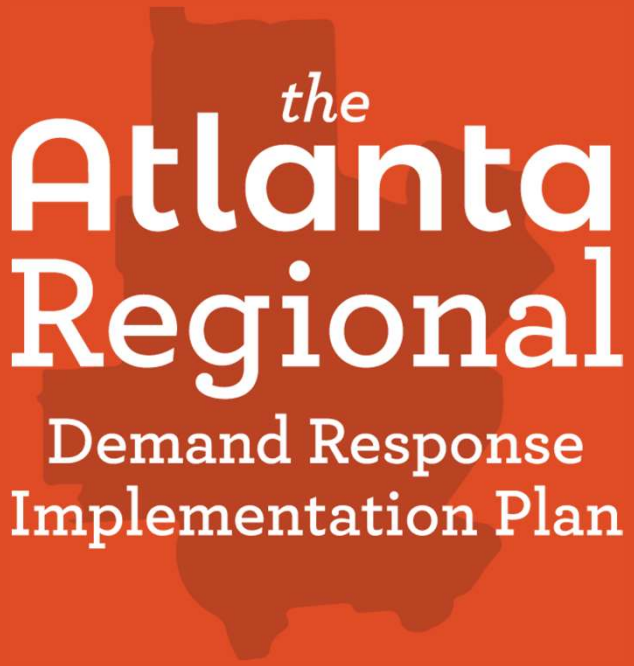
Meredith	Greene	Nelson\Nygaard	mgreene@nelsonnygaard.com
Laura	Brown	RLS & Associates	lbrown@rlsandassoc.com



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VIRTUAL TAC MEETING

JUNE 22, 2020

HST SUMMIT MEETING AGENDA

Introductions

Icebreakers

Project Overview and Agenda

What We've Learned

Regional County Profiles and Discussion

Implementation Strategies/Next Steps

Discussion

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ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY

ICEBREAKER

COVID-19

- What changes have you made during the pandemic?
- What is working well?
- What would you like to see continue?

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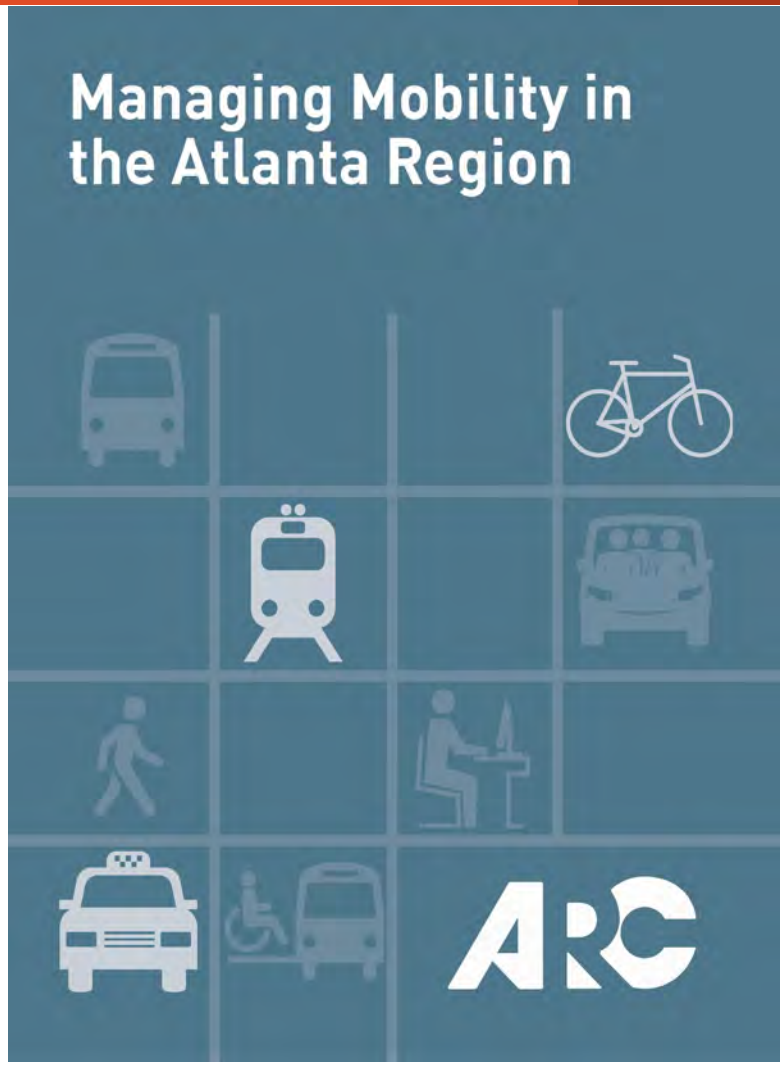
HUMAN SERVICES DEMAND RESPONSE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

- Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)
  - Required by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive funding under Section 5310
  - Atlanta Regional HST Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017
- Key Goal
  - Develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region



CURRENT HST DEMAND RESPONSE STUDY

Task Overview

- Building on HST plan, focus on complementary paratransit (ADA) and county-run demand response transportation
- Inform future models of regional coordination, particularly new mobility paradigms to improve efficiency and the enhance the user experience
- Compile data and review current policies
- Undertake best practices research to recommend implementation strategies

PROJECT PROGRESS

Task	Status	Completion
Stakeholder Engagement	Ongoing	End of project
Data Compilation	Complete	May
Existing Conditions/Regional County Profiles	Drafted	June
Best Practices/Strategies	In process	July-August
Recommendations	Pending	September
Documentation	Pending	October

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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Populations in need increasing

Lack of financial resources

Lack of qualified drivers

Lack of opportunities to learn and gain assistance

FEBRUARY WORKSHOP

Trip Planning

Regional approach needed for travel options, including HST demand-response, that is maintained and widely used

Funding

Grant applications are a major challenge considering timing, staff, and matching funds

Performance Tracking & Reporting

Regional data tracking is inconsistent but important for trip/applicant denials and other purposes

FEBRUARY WORKSHOP

Trip Sharing & Coordination

Handling trip scheduling separately among overlapping providers is inefficient and challenging for riders

Fare Payment

Regional fare payment, without HST demand-response, fosters confusion among riders and makes transfers challenging

Microtransit and TNC Partnerships

To fill gaps and provide targeted services, these are becoming more popular regionally

ADA Paratransit Coordination

- Collective agreement this should be a major focus
- Regional application process & eligibility
- Transfers among providers
- Coordinated procurement potential
- Presented to TOG in May

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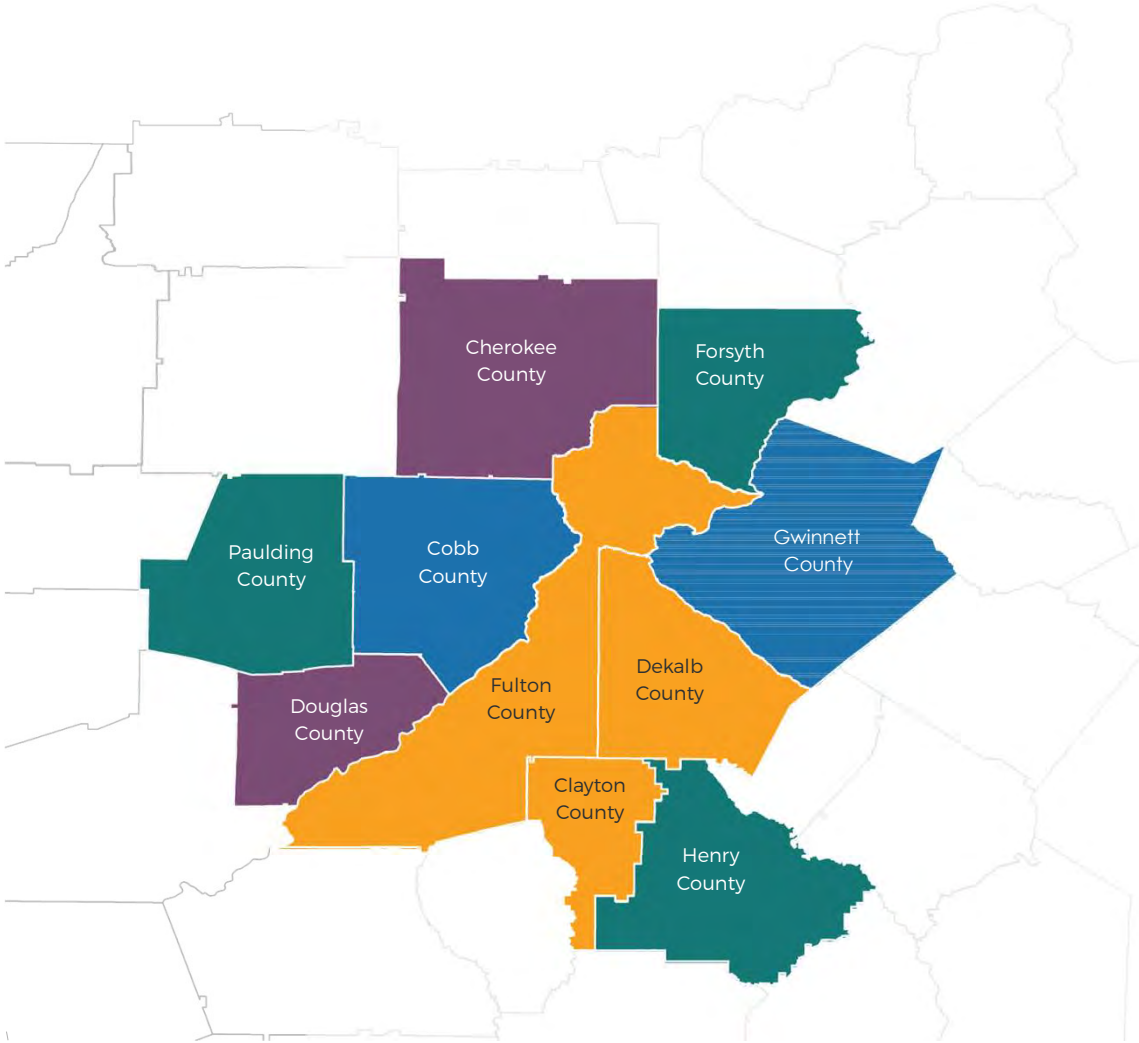
REGIONAL COUNTY PROFILES

ORGANIZATION OF COUNTIES



TIER 1: FULTON, DEKALB, AND CLAYTON COUNTIES

- Substantial fixed route transit options including heavy rail, light rail, and bus with connections to many key destinations

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and feeder trips to connect with fixed route, including connections to Tier 2 and potentially others

TIER 2: GWINNETT AND COBB COUNTIES

- Local and commuter bus services including routes connecting to densest areas in each county and to

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips generally within the county and provide feeder trips to connect with local bus, some trips continuing to fixed route options in Tier 1

TIER 3 : CHEROKEE AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES

- Limited fixed route services; a few routes around local and downtown areas

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and limited feeder trips that connect with Tiers 1 and 2

TIER 4: FORSYTH, HENRY, AND PAULDING COUNTIES

- No fixed route services, only DRT

-HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips with few exceptions

POPULATIONS IN NEED INCREASING

Those interviewed and/or participating in project meetings have collectively described growing demand among those with lower income (including a growing homeless population) and among older adults, which is expected to continue substantial growth in the Atlanta region. Nearly all the agencies providing paratransit reported an uptick in applications in recent years.

LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Study participants have generally described insufficient financial resources to keep pace with this need. Some agencies report being forced to prioritize certain types of trips over others, which results in providing medical purpose trips, for example, but less trips for errand-running and other needs. This has the potential to reduce morale for the staff, since they are forced to turn away people in need. Further, counties that may see their FTA funding status change following the 2020 census (from 5311 to 5307 funding) which will reduce support federal operating funds.

LACK OF QUALIFIED DRIVERS

It is challenging to sustain a roster of qualified drivers to operate vehicles. Agencies report instances of investing in training drivers to help them obtain the appropriate license, then losing them to private firms who pay a higher wage.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND GAIN ASSISTANCE

Study participants reporting they are innovating and experimenting separately with their service models, technology, and funding. However, they noted there are few structured opportunities for professionals to share lessons learned, so that others may learn from successes as well as mistakes. Further, for major shared challenges such as the FTA funding shift from 5311 to 5307 funding, impacted agencies report a need for more guidance.

TIER 1: FULTON, DEKALB, AND CLAYTON COUNTIES

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2018 Population Characteristics

29% people with low income

78% household smartphone access

4% zero car households

35 median age

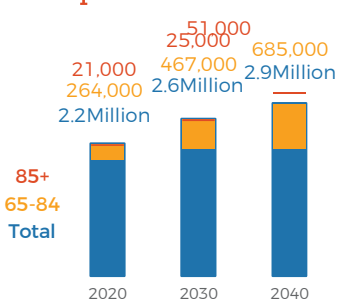
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

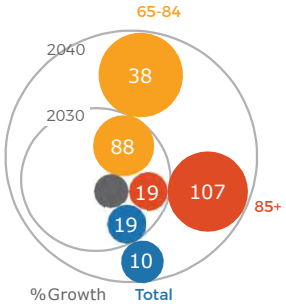
Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
$32.6 million	$3.2 million
721,000+ trips	411,000+ trips

*Clayton county funding combined with Fayette and Henry Counties
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

Projected Population Growth





Source: State of Georga population forcasts

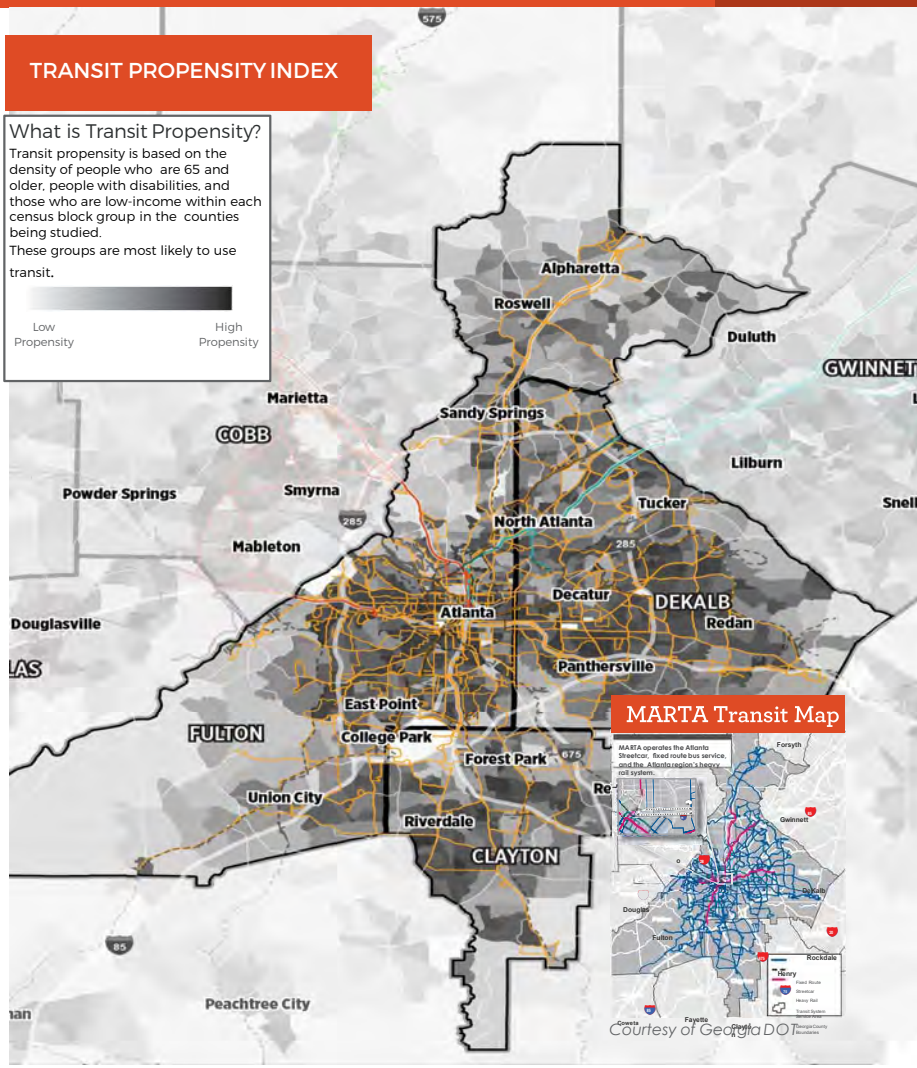
TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX

What is Transit Propensity?

Transit propensity is based on the density of people who are 65 and older, people with disabilities, and those who are low-income within each census block group in the counties being studied.

These groups are most likely to use transit.

Low Propensity — High Propensity



Courtesy of Georgia DOT

TIER 1: FULTON, DEKALB, AND CLAYTON COUNTIES

the Atlanta Regional

Fulton

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

40% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Considered the central hub of the Atlanta metropolitan region and as an urbanized county, Fulton County features several transit options to support various mobility needs. This includes the MARTA system (rapid rail, streetcar, and bus, and MARTA Mobility (complementary paratransit). Other non-ADA programs and services are available and connect to MARTA. Services are available throughout the county with a higher concentration of options in more urbanized areas.

DeKalb

16% people with low income

9% zero car households

13% population above 65

DeKalb County if comprised of several suburban communities, with some urbanized areas that are generally closer to Fulton County.

With varying levels of density, transit service is mixed. There are significant fixed route options (MARTA rail, MARTA Mobility, and bus) closer Fulton County and along major corridors. There are transit gaps in the rural areas.

Non-ADA service options are facilitated and funded by county and local governments, and several non-profit organizations.

Clayton

19% people with low income

7% zero car households

9% population above 65

Located in the southern portion of the urban core, Clayton County is primarily suburban and rural and is home to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

The county has some fixed route transit service provided by MARTA, including bus services and MARTA Mobility, and limited rail access in the north.There are transit deserts in the more rural areas. Limited non-ADA DRT services are available.

Source: American Community Survey

TIER 2: GWINNETT AND COBB COUNTIES

the Atlanta Regional

2018 Population Characteristics

10% people with low income

83% household smartphone access

1% zero car households

36 median age

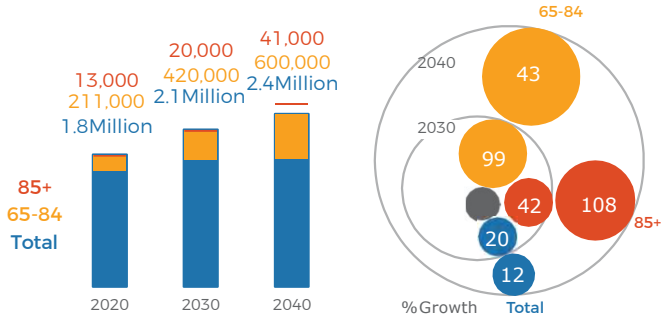
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
$6.5 million	$1.8 million
104,000+ trips	207,000+ trips

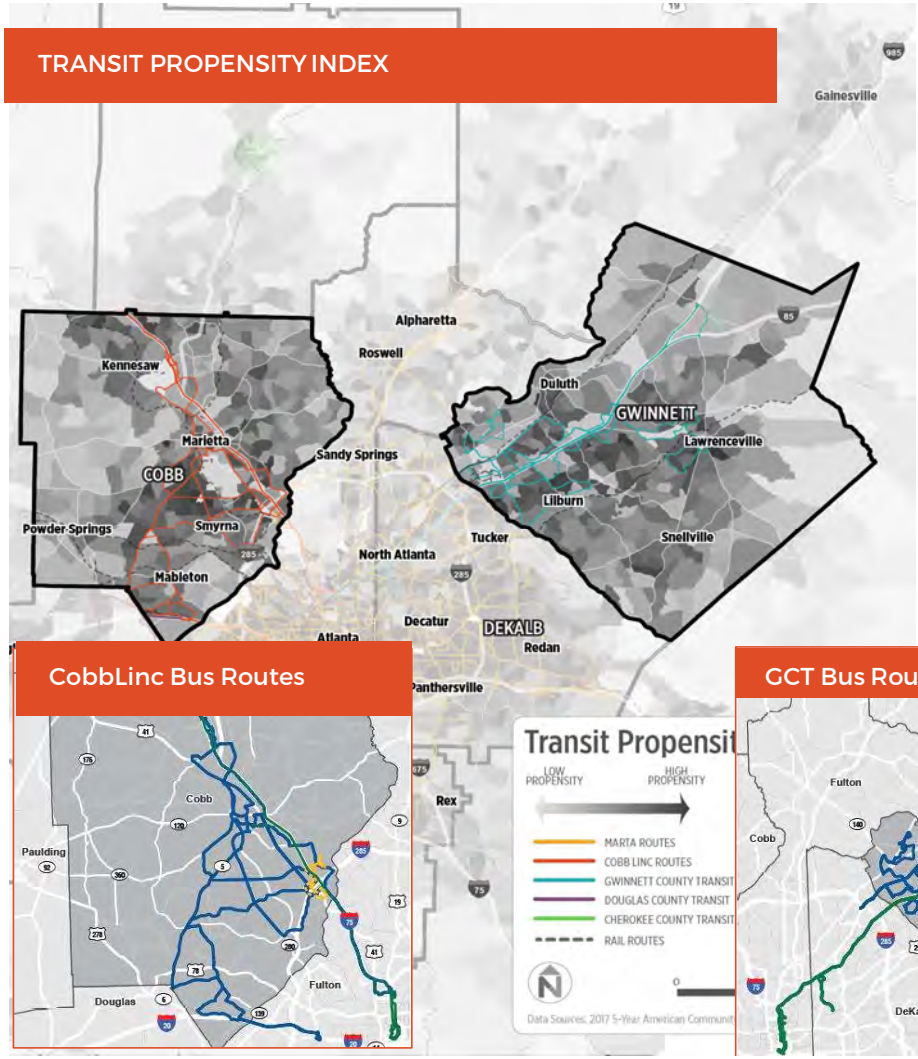
*Cobb County Non-ADA transit funding is paired with Cherokee County in Tier 3
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

Projected Population Growth



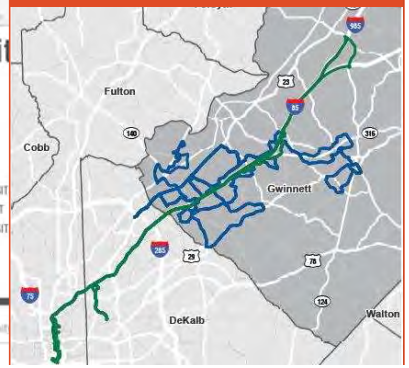
Source: State of Georga population forcasts

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



CobbLinc Bus Routes

GCT Bus Routes



TIER 2: GWINNETT AND COBB COUNTIES

the Atlanta Regional

Gwinnett

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

11% people with low income

4% zero car households

10% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Gwinnett County is home to a mix of suburban and rural communities. The county is the second most populous county in Georgia and is one of the most diverse counties in the region.

Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) offers fixed bus service and complementary paratransit. Gwinnett County provides DRT services, to which GCT and the county try to coordinate. Additional non-ADA programs are available in the county, with the majority offered or coordinated by the county.

Cobb

10% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

Cobb County is primarily comprised of suburban and rural communities.

There is a mix of transit services, including fixed route bus services provided by CobbLinc, which provide a mix of express, local and circulator routes and connections to MARTA bus services. CobbLinc also provides ADA complementary paratransit services are also provided by CobbLinc, and many non-ADA transit services are provided by the county, with a concentration of transit services along main corridors and serving popular destinations. Many of the routes also feed towards Fulton County, with some gaps in the rural areas.

TIER 3: CHEROKEE AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES

2018 Population Characteristics*

10% people with low income

78% household smartphone access

1% zero car households

36 median age

*Data not available for Cherokee County

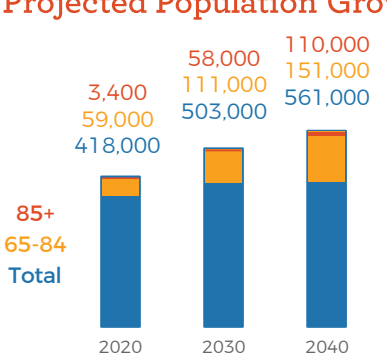
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

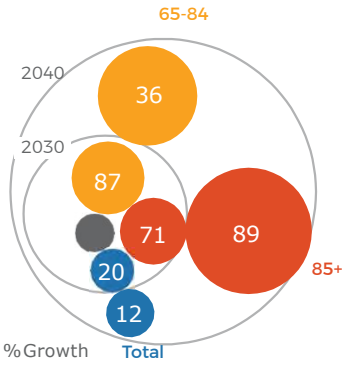
Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
$1.2 million	$468,000
74,000+ trips	59,000+ trips

*Cherokee and Douglass County Non-ADA transit funding is paired with Cobb County in Tier 2
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

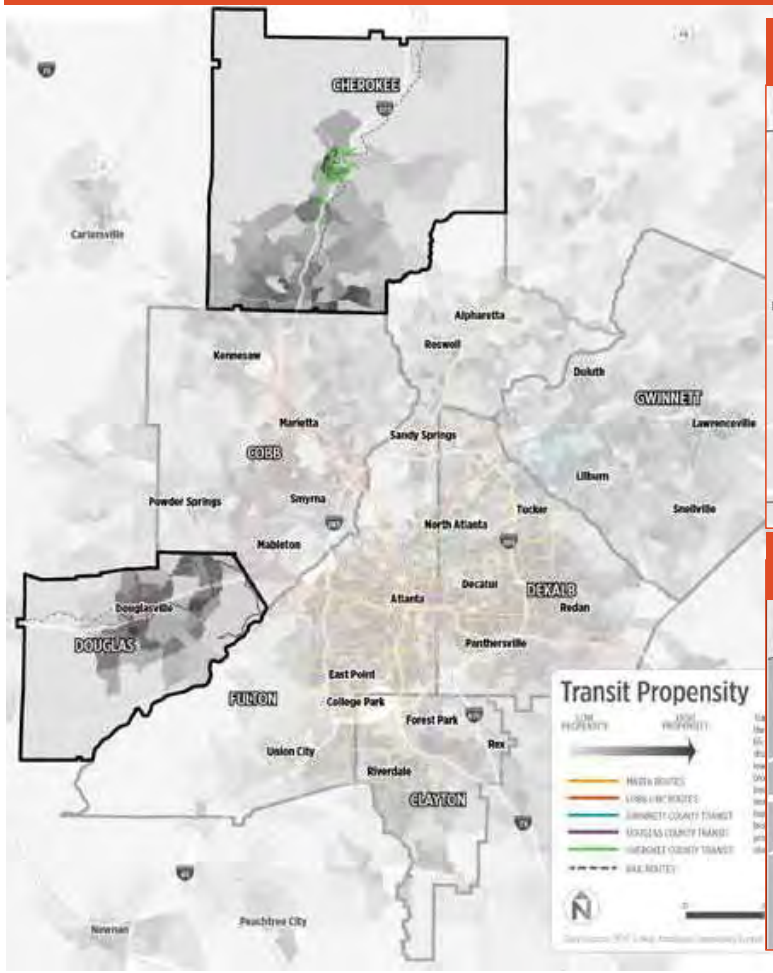
Projected Population Growth



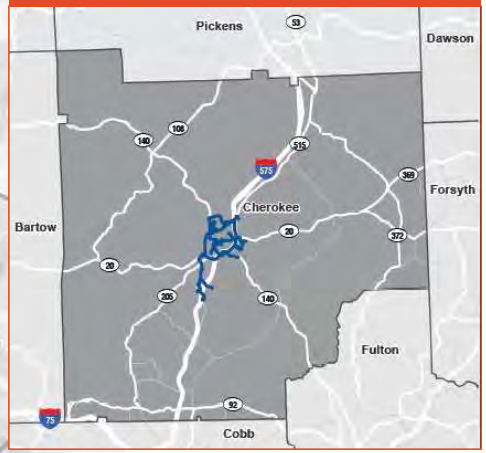


Source: State of Georga population forcasts

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



CATS Bus Routes



Douglas County Transit Bus Routes

TIER 3: CHEROKEE AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES

the Atlanta Regional

Cherokee

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

8% people with low income

3% zero car households

14% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

As a rural county north of Atlanta, some local transit is available. Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS) provides a local fixed route bus service in Canton with ADA complementary paratransit.

Services are generally meeting local needs but there are opportunities to increase services and connections among communities in the county and with adjacent counties.

HST DRT SERVICES

CATS provides ADA paratransit as a complement to its fixed route service.

CATS provides countywide demand response service (not exclusive to HST populations), with limited service for trips within the county. Common trips purposes include training/work, medical, senior centers, and shopping. The county also provides a transportation voucher program.

In addition to the demand-response service, the County also provides a Volunteer Driver Program, where 16 volunteers provide rides for seniors to the grocery store, bank, post office, hairdresser, and regular doctor appointments.

Douglas

13% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

Douglas County is located west of Atlanta and is considered a rural county. Connect Douglas provides a new fixed route bus service in Douglasville, which extends east toward Cobb County and to communities on the Fulton County line. Connect Douglas also provides ADA complementary paratransit.

Connect Douglas provides ADA paratransit as a complement to its fixed route service.

Douglas County provides non-ADA HST DRT service, including Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) and a transportation voucher program (both exclusively for seniors and individuals with disabilities). The fixed route service also deviates for up to 1 mile if booked in advance, so it provides some level of deviated fixed route

TIER 4: FORSYTH, HENRY, PAULDING COUNTIES

2018 Population Characteristics

10% people with low income*

81% household smartphone access †

1% zero car households*

37 median age †

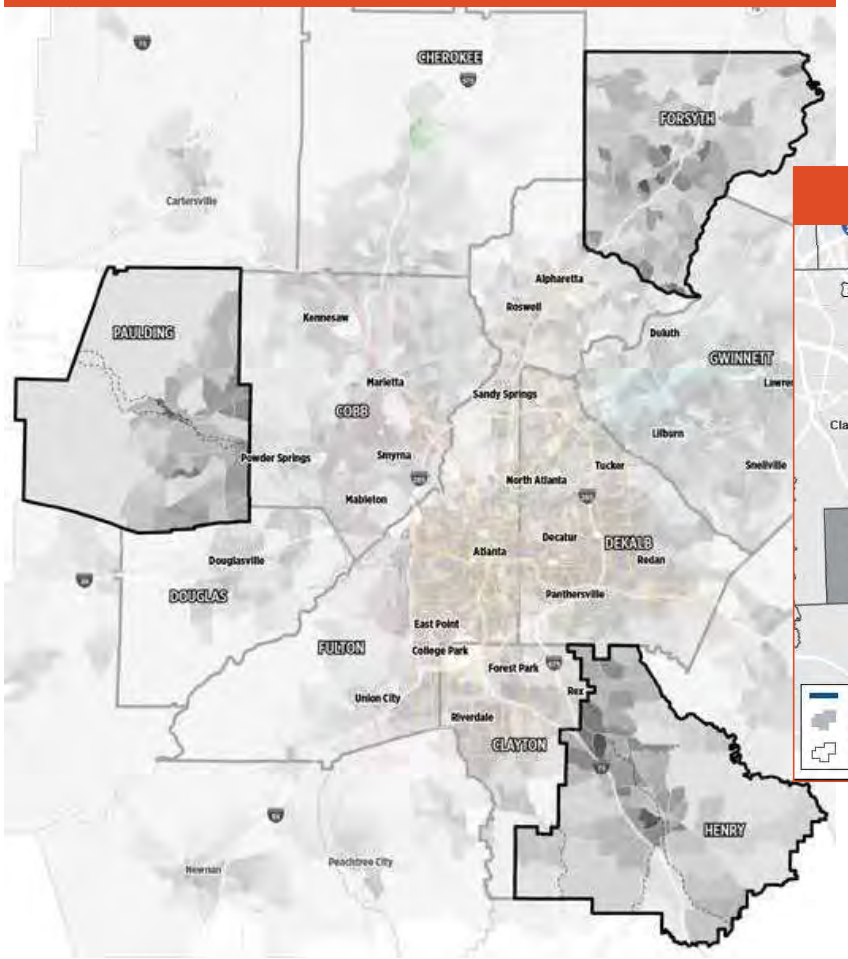
* Data not available for Forsyth and Paulding Counties
† Data not available for Forsyth Counties
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
N/A	$2.7 million
N/A	234,000+ trips

*Forsyth, Henry, and Paulding Non-ADA funding is shared with 28 other rural counties.
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



Henry County Transit

TIER 4: FORSYTH, HENRY, PAULDING COUNTIES

the Atlanta Regional

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Forsyth

N/A people with low income

N/A zero car households

N/A population above 65

Henry

10% people with low income

2% zero car households

12% population above 65

Paulding

10% people with low income

3% zero car households

N/A population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Located in the northern portion of the Atlanta region, Forsyth County is rural. The county currently has no fixed route services bus is undergoing a transit master plan study. At present, Dial-a-Ride service is available.

Henry County is located southeast of the core of the Atlanta region and is primarily comprised of rural communities. There is a fixed bus route in North Henry, and both DRT and HST services are available.

Paulding County is located northwest of the core of the Atlanta region, and is primarily rural. There are no fixed route services in the county, though DRT services are available.

HST DRT SERVICES

Forsyth County runs a county-based DRT service (not exclusive to HST populations), and reports the current situation with 8 vans is not enough to meet demand.

Henry County Transit runs a county-based DRT curb-to-curb service (not exclusive to HST popu- lations).

Henry County Transit also provides HST services for individuals to use services offered by the Georgia Department of Human Services.

Paulding Transit runs a county-based DRT service (not exclusive to HST populations), and the trip purposes include education and social/recre- ational, though medical is the main purpose.

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DISCUSSION OF REGIONAL COUNTY PROFILES

Feedback

- Have we captured the right information?
- Is there anything missing you'd like us to discuss?
- Send comments and corrections to Sidney at: **sdouse@atlantaregional.org**

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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – NEXT STEPS

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY SESSIONS

the Atlanta Regional

Which deep-dive sessions would you like to participate in?

Finance/ Funding	Technology	Data and Coordination	Other
1. Funding & grants 2. Fare payment systems	3. Trip planning & trip scheduling/booking 4. Microtransit & TNC partnerships	5. Ongoing collaboration and coordination 6. Performance tracking & reporting	7. Joint purchasing (software, equipment) 8. Cross-county travel 9. Mobility management

Please select your top two strategies and enter with your email in the chat box: e.g. name@agency.gov 4, 8

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DISCUSSION

THANK YOU!

NELSON NYGAARD

Bill Schwartz

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

TAC MEETING SUMMARY

September 14, 2020 10:30-11:30 via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation attached

Project Overview, Progress, and Highlights

The project team began the meeting with an overview of the project's progress following the previous TAC meeting held on June 22. Efforts completed include:

- July deep dive sessions
- Best practice strategy research
- Initial drafting of recommendations

Using the research and engagement findings, the project team prepared a summary of best practices and identified potential implementation strategies, which were documented in the Best Practice Report and summarized during the TAC meeting.

The draft Best Practice report was disseminated prior to the meeting. To request a copy, contact Sidney Douse (sdouse@atlantareginal.org).

Best Practices and Implementation Strategies

The project team provided a high-level summary of the implementation strategies, related best practices, and applicability to the Atlanta region and sought feedback on the implementation considerations.

The following summarizes the strategies discussed during the meeting, and the feedback from meeting participants.

Establish consistent ADA eligibility and rider policies

By creating consistent base-level application forms, verification procedures, and rider policies, this will offer flexibility for establishing in-person assessments. It will simplify information for riders traveling throughout the region. This strategy will take time to implement and should be facilitated through the appropriate forum, such as the TOG, either through a dedicated subcommittee and/or including the topic as a recurring (quarterly?) agenda item.

Andre Danzy noted that in Fulton County, they were working to improve coordination with MARTA Mobility before COVID.

Better coordinate ADA transfers

Work with ADA paratransit providers to closely coordinate transfers through the refinement of protocols, expansion of locations for transfers, and publishing consistent public-facing policies. This would be most applicable to MARTA, CobbLinc, GCT, and Connect Douglas. This would improve the user experience for trip reservations and address potential service challenges. Potential efforts include supporting the development of web portals and phone-based aps to facilitate this process.

Co-mingle riders

By coordinating and facilitating the co-mingling of riders, this can improve productivity and help accommodate growing demand among providers serving common origins and destinations. This can benefit from:

- Integrating DRT intro trip planning tools, which will better identify needs
- Advances in scheduling and trip exchange capabilities

Support 5310 funding application process

To further support newcomers to the 5310 funding application process, developing supportive resources would benefit agencies applying for 5310 funding by simplifying the process. Potential efforts include:

- Developing guidebooks and technical assistance through state-level offices, such as DHS
- Ensuring that this topic is included as a regular conference session topic at GTA

Karen Winger suggested that there may be an opportunity to expand sessions during GTA meetings to cover this topic and review the 5310 funding application process, which may be very beneficial to those who may be new to this process altogether.

Sustain regional collaboration & coordination

By sustaining the current project efforts, this would continue regional planning progress among all HST DRT providers and advocate. Potential efforts include:

- Forming an ongoing advisory committee
- Continuing online collaboration
- Hoisting annual HST DRT gatherings through GTA

This strategy would require a regional champion.

Regionalize fare payments for DRT

The benefits of leveraging technology for contactless/mobile DRT fare payments would include improving the user experience, facilitating cross-jurisdictional travel, and improve data collection and cost sharing. Potential efforts include:

- Considering newcomers for the Breeze system
- Coordinating through MARTA's Regional Transit Group and other forums
- Separate 'white label' mobile ticketing

Karen Winger noted that ATL, GCT, and Cobb have a mobile ticketing pilot. GCT is still interested in the MARTA pilot, but are looking at Token Transit's validator since it doesn't require power. The initial pilot is going live this month, and GCT is waiting for the second generation since they want to place validators on the rear doors. There is a lot to learn from this pilot before making permanent changes with Breeze.

Cain Williamson noted that the ATL is in the process of rolling out the pilot now. It's a 6-week enrollment for express system, and it should be active by the end of the month. He is happy to talk about their experience with this pilot.

Karen mentioned that Gwinnett County is benefiting from the ATL rolling this out first, and that they are learning lessons about quick deployment. This also begins to accelerate the conversation about regional products.

Daniel Walls also described how the ATL will use the IMI grant in the development of a regional trip planning app and expect that it will include integrated fare payment. It will be an open source app and free to use for HST and other entities, but it would be great to add on to the scope to add on the GTFS Flex, which would require additional funding.

Kofi Wakhisi also identified other opportunities for piloting fare payments for DRT through the CTAA grant, which they were awarded. This could be an opportunity to link the regional process, such as the ATL/GC/MARTA/Cobb pilot and taking that framework and contemplate how it may be applied to the real time demand response service.

Improve and integrate trip planning

The goal of improved and integrated trip planning is to ensure that DRT is included in future trip planners. A key goal is to improve the user experience across agencies and leverage existing technology to connect riders and vehicles, while potentially connecting with trip planning tools in the future. Potential efforts include:

- Identifying viable opportunities for new service
- Assisting agencies with service model planning
- Ensuring all efforts are regionally coordinated

Broaden scheduling use for DRT

This strategy aims to improve scheduling capacity for different providers who don't have software and to enable those who do to potentially share trip information without being on the same platform. Potential efforts include:

- Obtaining new scheduling tools for agencies in need
- Applying technology to support the co-mingling of riders
- Achieved through the same platform or intermediary software

Implement same-day DRT (microtransit)

This goal is to expand and coordinate microtransit pilots and rollouts. Potential efforts include:

- Identifying viable opportunities for new services
- Assisting agencies with service model planning
- Supporting regional coordination

Taleim Salters mentioned that Henry County was looking into microtransit but put this on hold since they are now undertaking a transit master plan.

Taleim mentioned that GTA is considering hosting its annual meeting virtually and will notify the project team about that meeting.

Both Santiago Osorio and Jamal Sheppard expressed an interest in discussing same-day service/microtransit as they are both assessing these options.

Other feedback

Meeting participants were asked to provide feedback about the project and Best Practices Report.

Andre Danzy noted that the document is great, but that we need to consider contingency plans, such as identifying ways to use awarded grant funding. Fulton County was able to negotiate how they use the DHS grant during COVID-19 to deliver meals, rather than providing trips to passengers. As they move forward, this will be factoring into their planning, and it would be helpful to have a playbook for this.

Bill Schwartz noted that a section regarding the COVID-19 Deep Dive session would be included in the report, and touch on this topic.

Next Steps

Project next steps include:

- Finalizing the Best Practices and Strategies report
- Preparing a draft study report summarizing TAC input, interviews, compiled data, and best practices research
- Hosting a final TAC meeting on October 26th at 10:30am, with the intent to complete the project in early November.

ATTENDEES

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VIRTUAL TAC MEETING

SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

HST SUMMIT MEETING AGENDA

Introductions

Project Overview, Progress, and Highlights

Best Practices and Implementation Strategies

Next Steps and Discussion

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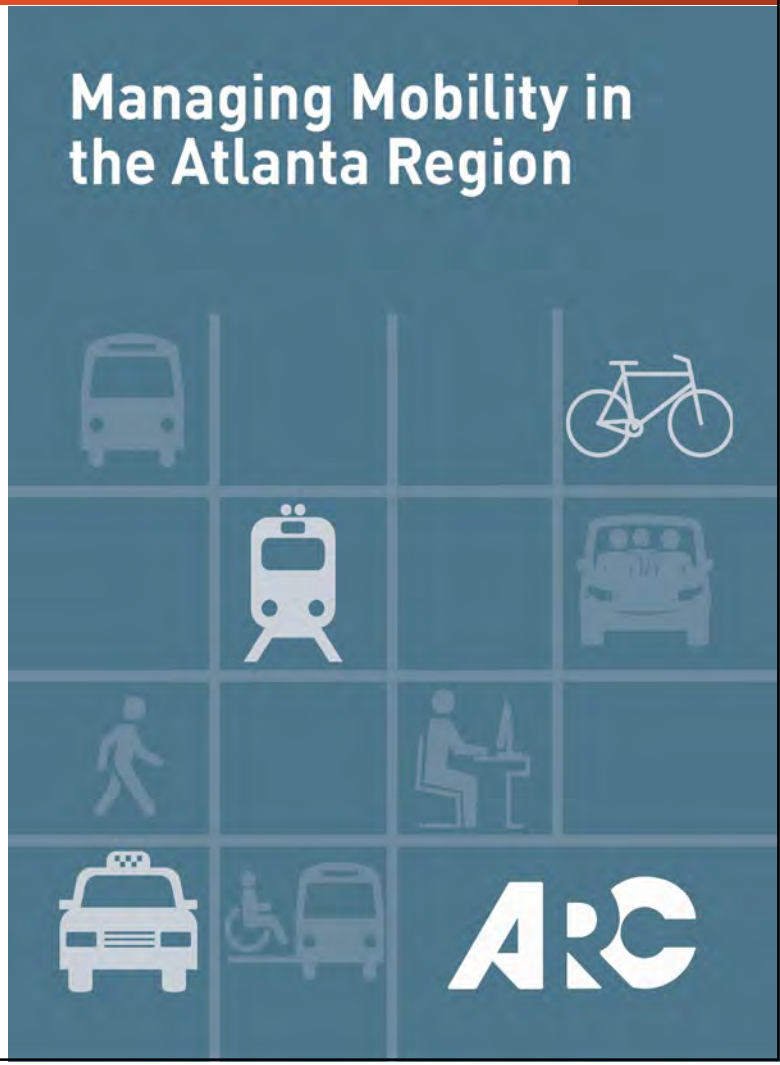
HUMAN SERVICES DEMAND RESPONSE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

- Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)
  - Required by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive funding under Section 5310
  - Atlanta Regional HST Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017
- Key Goal
  - Develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region



CURRENT HST DEMAND RESPONSE STUDY

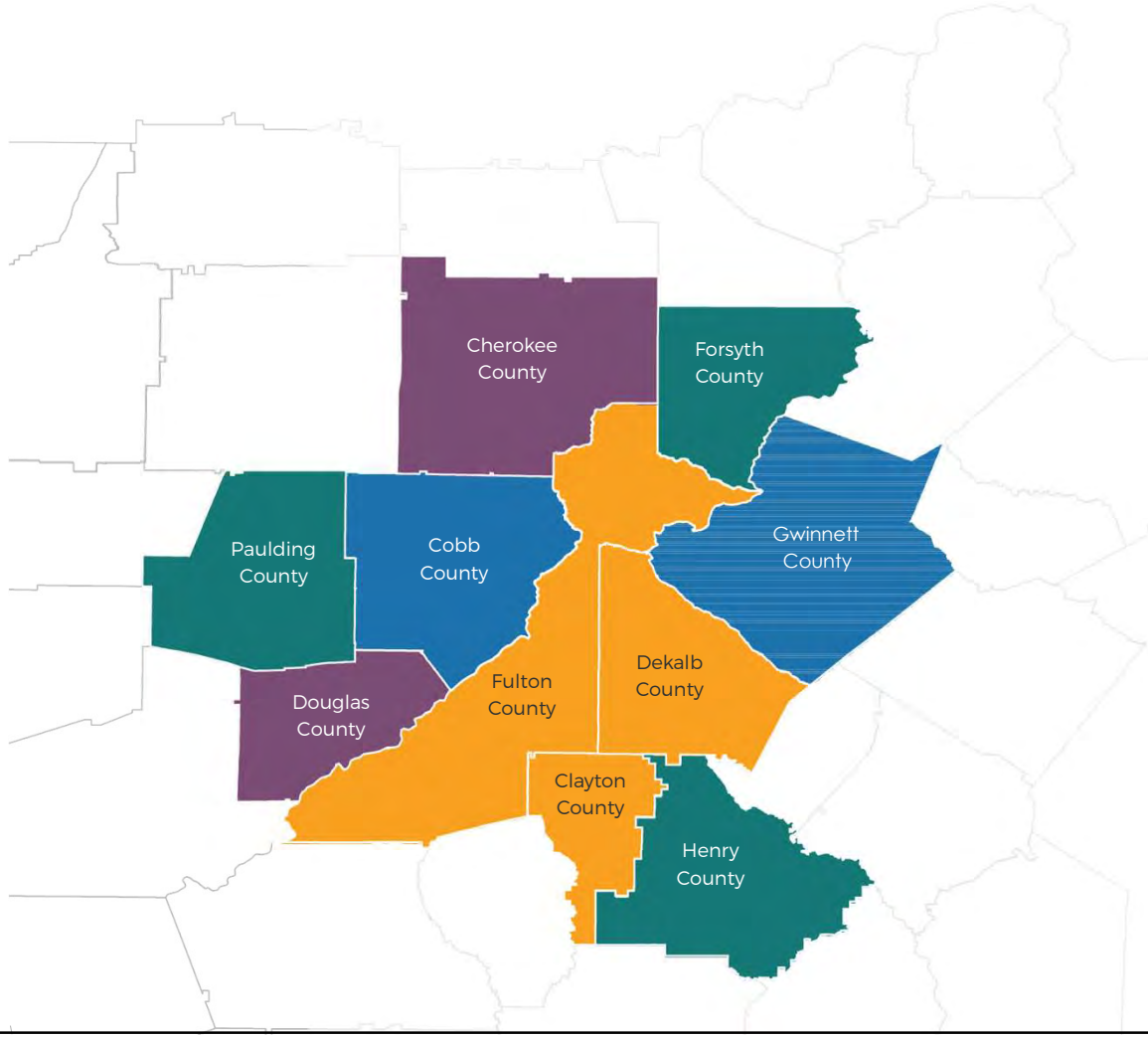
Task Overview

- Building on HST plan, focus on complementary paratransit (ADA) and county-run demand response transportation
- Inform future models of regional coordination, particularly new mobility paradigms to improve efficiency and the enhance the user experience
- Compile data and review current policies
- Undertake best practices research to recommend implementation strategies

PROJECT PROGRESS

Task	Status	Completion
Stakeholder Engagement	Ongoing	End of project
Data Compilation	Complete	May
Existing Conditions/Regional County Profiles	Complete	June
Best Practices/Strategies	Drafted	September
Recommendations	Pending	October
Documentation	Pending	Early November

ORGANIZATION OF COUNTIES



TIER 1: FULTON, DEKALB, AND CLAYTON COUNTIES

- Substantial fixed route transit options including heavy rail, light rail, and bus with connections to many key destinations

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and feeder trips to connect with fixed route, including connections to Tier 2 and potentially others

TIER 2: GWINNETT AND COBB COUNTIES

- Local and commuter bus services including routes connecting to densest areas in each county and to

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips generally within the county and provide feeder trips to connect with local bus, some trips continuing to fixed route options in Tier 1

TIER 3 : CHEROKEE AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES

- Limited fixed route services; a few routes around local and downtown areas

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and limited feeder trips that connect with Tiers 1 and 2

TIER 4: FORSYTH, HENRY, AND PAULDING COUNTIES

- No fixed route services, only DRT

-HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips with few exceptions

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Populations in need increasing

Lack of financial resources

Lack of qualified drivers

Lack of opportunities to learn and gain assistance

JULY DEEP DIVE SESSIONS

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Trip Planning

Post-COVID Adaptation

Funding & Fare Payment

Ongoing HST Collaboration & Coordination

Microtransit

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BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT ADA ELIGIBILITY AND RIDER POLICIES

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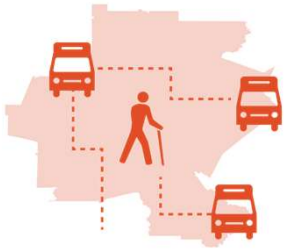
- Recommended HST Plan strategy
- Applies to MARTA, CobbLinc, GCT, Connect Douglas, and CATS
- Creates consistent base-level application forms, verification procedures, rider policies, etc.
- Offers flexibility for establishing in-person assessments
- Simplifies information for riders traveling throughout region
- Will take time to implement
- TOG is the ideal forum
  - Subcommittee?
  - Quarterly check-ins?

BETTER COORDINATE ADA TRANSFERS



- ADA paratransit providers work more closely to coordinate transfers through refinement of protocols, expansion of locations for transfers, and publishing consistent public-facing policies
- Applies to MARTA, CobbLinc, GCT, and Connect Douglas
- Improves the user experience for trip reservations and during rides
- Addresses potential service challenges
- Some providers are developing web portals and phone-based apps to facilitate this process

CO-MINGLE RIDERS

- Applies to providers serving common origins and destinations
- Can improve productivity and help accommodate growing demand
- Reimbursement policies often a sticking point
- Identifying cost savings opportunities critical to gaining buy-in
- As trip planning tools better integrate DRT, needs can be better identified
- Advances in scheduling and trip exchange capabilities can support this strategy

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Establish consistent ADA eligibility and rider policies

Better coordinate ADA transfers

Co-mingle riders

SUPPORT 5310 FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS

- Goal is to enable those new to the process to easily access funds
- Applies to agencies who apply for 5310 funding
- Helps to simplify the process
- Best practice examples include guidebooks and state-level offices of technical assistance
- Recommended as a regular conference session topic at GTA
- Since state-level program is managed by DHS, further discussions are needed

SUSTAIN REGIONAL COLLABORATION & COORDINATION

- Applies to all HST DRT providers and advocates
- Keeps this process going after completion of project
- Requires regional champion
- Move to online collaboration for this project has addressed prior challenges of in-person meeting travel
- There is support for an ongoing advisory committee
- Deep dive session participants supported annual HST DRT gatherings through GTA
- Transit Operators Group seen as a good model

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Support 5310 funding application Process

Sustain regional collaboration & coordination

REGIONALIZE FARE PAYMENTS FOR DRT

- **Aim:** Leverage technology for DRT fare payments (contactless/mobile)
- **Potential efforts**
  - Considering newcomers for the Breeze system/regional mobile payment
  - Coordinating through MARTA's Regional Transit Group and other forums
  - Separate "white label" mobile ticketing
- **Benefits**
  - Improves the user experience, benefits personal health
  - Facilitates cross-jurisdictional travel (along with policy)
  - Improves data collection and cost sharing

IMPROVE AND INTEGRATE DRT TRIP PLANNING

- **Aim:** Include DRT in regional trip planning
- **Current/potential efforts**
  - Ongoing ATL-led project for a new regional trip planner
  - Incorporating GTFS-flex data standard, next gen SimplyGetThere
  - Supporting advancements such as automatic vehicle location (AVL)
- **Benefits**
  - Fosters usage by a greater % of regional population
  - Makes "trip chaining" with DRT and fixed route possible
  - Increases visibility of all regional providers

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Regionalize fare payments for DRT

Improve and integrate trip planning

BROADEN SCHEDULING USE FOR COORDINATING TRIPS

- **Aim:** Improve scheduling capacity within/across providers
- **Potential efforts**
  - Obtaining new scheduling tools for agencies in need
  - Applying technology to support the co-mingling of riders
  - Achieved through the same platform or intermediary software
- **Benefits**
  - Increases productivity locally
  - Maximizes resources regionally

IMPLEMENT SAME-DAY DRT (MICROTRANSIT)

- **Aim:** Expand and coordinate microtransit
- **Potential efforts**
  - Identifying viable opportunities for new service
  - Assisting agencies with service model planning
  - Ensuring all efforts are regionally coordinated
- **Benefits**
  - Leverages current technology to connect riders and vehicles
  - Improves user experience across agencies
  - Connects with trip planning tools in the future (possibly)

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Broaden scheduling use for DRT

Implement same-day DRT (microtransit)

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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES – NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

- Finalize Best Practices and Strategies report
- Prepare draft study report summarizing TAC input, interviews, compiled data, and best practices research
- Will include detailed implementation strategy
- After ARC approval, disseminate to TAC
- Meet in late October to discuss and seek input
- Complete project in early November

THANK YOU!

NELSON NYGAARD

Bill Schwartz

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

TAC MEETING SUMMARY

October 26, 2020 10:30-12:00 via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation attached

Project Review

The project team began the meeting with an overview of the project's progress following the previous TAC meeting held on September 14.

Recommended Implementation Strategies

The project team provided overview of the 5 key recommendations that are described in detail in the final report. The implementation strategies include:

- Establishing consistent ADA eligibility and rider policies
- Better Coordinating ADA transfers
- Integrating DRT into regional trip planning
- Regionally coordinating microtransit services
- Sustaining regional coordination and collaboration

Following the overview of the 5 key implementation recommendations, the project team requested feedback and questions about the recommendations.

Additional Strategy Primers

As many topics and strategies were explored during the project's duration, several Strategy Primers were drafted and included in the final report, with the intent to be short and help resources with details about best practices, and can be further advanced through a Regional Coordinating Committee. The strategy primers in the final report include:

- FTA Section 5310 program
- Fare payment
- Volunteer driver programs
- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) brokerage
- Post-2020 Census planning
- TNC trip booking assistance
- Co-mingling riders

Next Steps

The project team outlined the next steps to finalize the report and the project, which include:

- Draft report is being prepared for dissemination as a PDF document, with the opportunity TAC members to review and comment within 1 week, using Acrobat comment feature for comments.

- The report will be finalized by mid-November and redistributed once finalized.
- Following the finalization of the report, it's up to the collective group to formally begin coordinating and collaborating as a Regional Coordinating Committee.

Discussion

Meeting participants provided final comments for feedback to conclude the meeting. Comments included:

- The final recommendations look good so far.
- The key is to have everyone collaborate making sure that everyone's on the same page. The result of collaboration is a seamless process and experience for customers.
- Customers will expect the same level of service and care for every agency that they use

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TAC RECOMMENDATIONS MEETING

OCTOBER 26, 2020

MEETING AGENDA

Introductions

Project Review

Recommended Implementation Strategies

Additional Strategy Primers

Discussion

the Atlanta Regional

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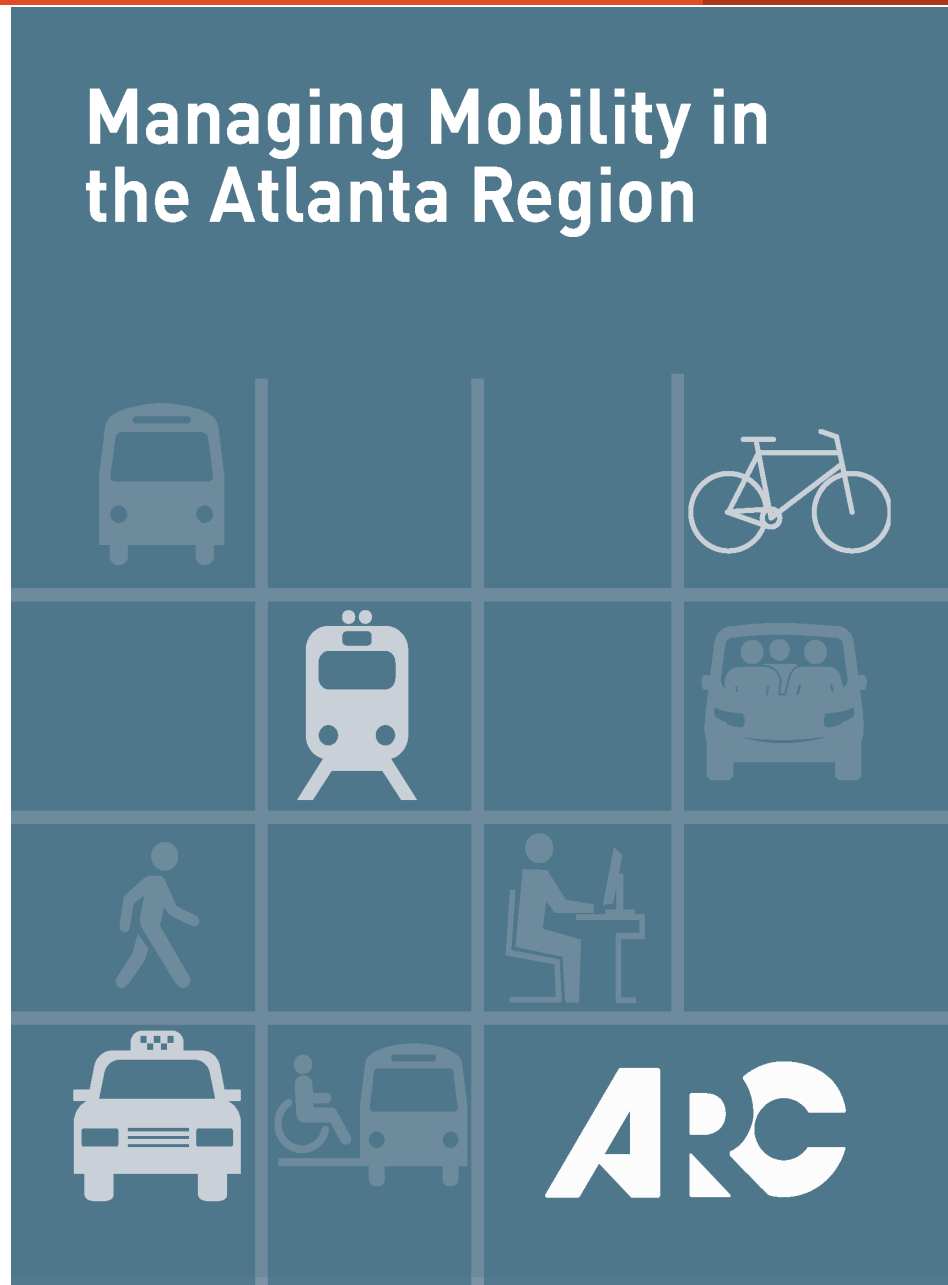
HUMAN SERVICES DEMAND RESPONSE IMPLEMENTATION STUDY SCOPE

BACKGROUND

- Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan (CHSTP)
  - Required by Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to receive funding under Section 5310
  - Atlanta Regional HST Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017
- Key Goal
  - Develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region



Main Goals

- Building on prior plan, focus on complementary paratransit (ADA) and county-run demand response transportation
- Inform future models of regional coordination, particularly new mobility paradigms to improve efficiency and the enhance the user experience
- Compile data and review current policies
- Undertake best practices research to recommend implementation strategies

PROJECT PROGRESS

Task	Status	Completion
Stakeholder Engagement	Wrapping	End of project
Data Compilation	Complete	May
Existing Conditions/Regional County Profiles	Complete	June
Best Practices/Strategies	Complete	September
Recommendations	Complete	October
Documentation	In Review	Early November

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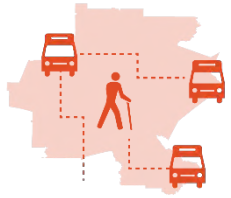
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Establish consistent ADA eligibility and rider policies



Better Coordinate ADA transfers

Integrate DRT into regional trip planning

Regionally coordinate microtransit services

Sustain regional coordination and collaboration

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT ADA ELIGIBILITY AND RIDER POLICIES

- Recommended HST Plan strategy
- Applies to MARTA, CobbLinc, GCT, Connect Douglas, and CATS
- Simplifies information for riders traveling throughout region
- Will take time to implement
- Suggest using existing Transit Operators Group (TOG) and establishing paratransit working group

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT ADA ELIGIBILITY AND RIDER POLICIES

Implementation Steps

- Establish consistent:
  - Application forms and letters
  - Eligibility appeals policies
  - Eligibility determination procedures
  - No-show suspension policies and procedures
- Pursue additional rider guide and policy consistencies
- Establish regional eligibility database
- Appendix tables comparing existing policies
- Appendix includes sample letters and policies from FTA ADA Circular

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT ADA ELIGIBILITY AND RIDER POLICIES

Appendices A1 & A2 – policy comparisons

- ADA application form and process
- Visitor policy
- No-shows and late cancellations
- Other policies

Service Name	MARTA Mobility	GCT Paratransit	CobbLinc Paratransit	Connect Douglas	CATS Paratransit	Best Practices
ADA Application Form and Process						
No. of disability and mobility self-assessment questions	10	38 Same as CATS	14	24	38 Same as GCT	Limit number of questions to those required to register applicant and determine initial eligibility; tailor to type of disability

ESTABLISH CONSISTENT ADA ELIGIBILITY AND RIDER POLICIES

the Atlanta Regional

Appendix A3 – sample documents from FTA ADA Circular

- Sample Unconditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Sample Conditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Sample Denial of ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter
- Sample ADA Paratransit Eligibility Determination Appeal Request Form
- Sample No-Show Policy

FTA C 4710.1
Chapter 9 – ADA Paratransit Eligibility Attachments Page 9A-3

Attachment 9-2A
Sample Unconditional ADA Paratransit Eligibility Letter

[On Transit Agency Letterhead]

[Date]

[Name]
[Mailing Address]

Dear [Applicant Name]:

We have completed our review of your recent request for [name of complementary paratransit service], [transit agency's] ADA paratransit service. Based on the information provided, we have determined that you are UNCONDITIONALLY ELIGIBLE for [name of complementary paratransit service] service. This means that you can use [name of complementary paratransit service] for any trips you need to make.

We have noted in your rider file that you sometimes travel with a personal care attendant (PCA). A PCA is someone designated or employed specifically to help you meet your personal needs, and is different from a guest or a companion. Your PCA may accompany you at no additional charge.

Your eligibility for [name of complementary paratransit service] is valid through [EXPIRATION DATE], after which you will need to request a continuation of your eligibility. We will notify you in advance of this expiration date to remind you to reapply and will send you a recertification request form at that time.

Enclosed is a copy of [insert name of a rider's guide], which explains the [name of complementary paratransit service] service and how to use it. The rider's guide includes helpful tips for using the service, so please be sure to read it. If you have any questions about the service, please call our Customer Service office at [phone number].

In addition to using [name of complementary paratransit service], this letter of eligibility also entitles you to use similar ADA paratransit services at other transit systems across the country as a visitor for up to 21 days per year. Simply provide the transit agency in the city you plan to visit with a copy of this letter to obtain approval to travel as a visitor.

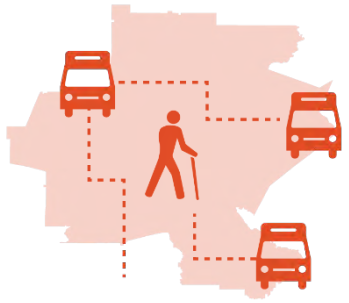
If you have any questions about this determination of eligibility, please call our ADA Paratransit Eligibility office at [phone number].

Sincerely,

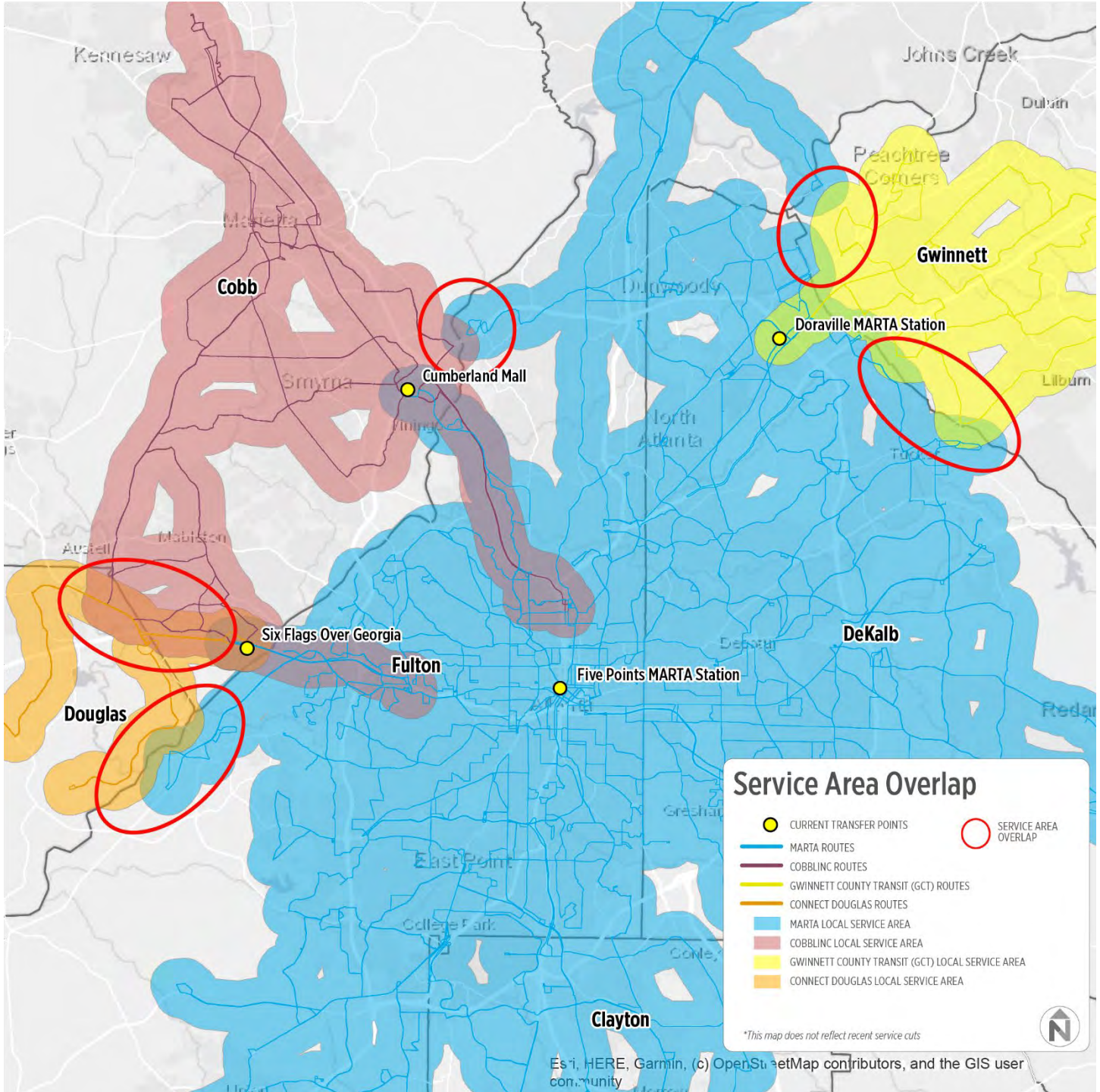
[ADA Paratransit Eligibility Manager]

Attachment: Rider's Guide

BETTER COORDINATE ADA TRANSFERS



- ADA paratransit providers work more closely to coordinate transfers through refinement of protocols, expansion of locations for transfers, and publishing consistent public-facing policies
- Applies to MARTA, CobbLinc, GCT, and Connect Douglas
- Improves the user experience for trip reservations and during rides
- Addresses potential service challenges
- Some providers are developing web portals and phone-based apps to facilitate this process


Kennesaw
Johns Creek
Dunwoody
Peachtree Corners
Marietta
Cobb
Gwinnett
Doraville MARTA Station
Cumberland Mall
Smyrna
Lilburn
North Atlanta
Austell
Mableton
Six Flags Over Georgia
Fulton
DeKalb
Five Points MARTA Station
Douglas
East Point
College Park
Clayton
Service Area Overlap
CURRENT TRANSFER POINTS
SERVICE AREA OVERLAP
MARTA ROUTES
COBBLINC ROUTES
GWINNETT COUNTY TRANSIT (GCT) ROUTES
CONNECT DOUGLAS ROUTES
MARTA LOCAL SERVICE AREA
COBBLINC LOCAL SERVICE AREA
GWINNETT COUNTY TRANSIT (GCT) LOCAL SERVICE AREA
CONNECT DOUGLAS LOCAL SERVICE AREA
*This map does not reflect recent service cuts
Esri, HERE, Garmin, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

INTEGRATE DRT INTO REGIONAL TRIP PLANNING

Aim: Include DRT in regional trip planning

Current/potential efforts

- Ongoing ATL-led project for a new regional trip planner
- Incorporating GTFS-flex data standard, next gen Simplygetthere
- Supporting advancements such as automatic vehicle location (AVL)

Benefits

- Fosters usage by a greater % of regional population
- Makes "trip chaining" with DRT and fixed route possible
- Increases visibility of all regional providers

INTEGRATE DRT INTO REGIONAL TRIP PLANNING

Implementation Steps

1. Provide regional GTFS-Flex data for the ATL RIDES project
2. Continue providing GTFS data to display on Google Maps and other common private trip planners
3. Decide on the future of www.SimplyGetThere.org and www.ATLTransit.org
4. Maintain phone-based information through Empowerline

INTEGRATE DRT INTO REGIONAL TRIP PLANNING

Implementation Steps

5. Ensure regional trip information and planning resources leverage and reference one another

6. Implement awareness and usage marketing campaign

7. Publish an online provider directory

8. Participate in mobility as a service (MaaS) integration activities

Appendix: Key Details for Regional Trip Planning

1. Status of Regional Resources
2. Additional Functionality Needed for Open Trip Planner
3. Trip Planning Platform Alternatives
4. Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data
5. Options for Creating GTFS-Flex
6. Trip Planning within Broader MaaS Efforts

INTEGRATE DRT INTO REGIONAL TRIP PLANNING

Services that May Benefit from GTFS-Flex Data

Service	Organization	Service Type	Eligibility Restrictions
CATS paratransit	Cherokee County[40]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
CobbLinc Paratransit	Cobb County[41]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
Connect Douglas Paratransit	Douglas County[42]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
GCT Paratransit	Gwinnett County[43]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
MARTA Mobility	MARTA[44]	ADA Paratransit	Yes, disability
CobbLinc "Flex"	Cobb County[45]	Deviated fixed-route service	No
Connect Douglas deviated-fixed route service	Douglas County[46]	Deviated fixed-route service	No
CATS demand-response service	Cherokee County[47]	Demand-response service	No
Forsyth County demand-response service	Forsyth County[48]	Demand-response service	No
Henry County demand-response service	Henry County[49]	Demand-response service	No
Paulding County demand-response service	Paulding County[50]	Demand-response service	No
Forsyth County "Ride Share"	Forsyth County[51]	Microtransit	Yes, disability and older age
Fulton County microtransit	Fulton County Senior Services[52]	Microtransit	Yes, older age
GCT microtransit	Gwinnett County[53]	Microtransit	No

REGIONALLY COORDINATE MICROTRANSIT SERVICES

Aim: Expand and coordinate microtransit

Potential efforts

- Identifying viable opportunities for new service
- Assisting agencies with service model planning
- Ensuring all efforts are regionally coordinated

Benefits

- Leverages current technology to connect riders and vehicles
- Improves user experience across agencies
- Connects with trip planning tools in the future (possibly)

REGIONALLY COORDINATE MICROTRANSIT SERVICES

Implementation Steps

1. Regularly share microtransit information
2. Engage in peer-to-peer experience and lesson sharing
3. Integrate microtransit projects with regional funding allocation processes
4. Coordinate current and future microtransit activities

REGIONALLY COORDINATE MICROTRANSIT SERVICES

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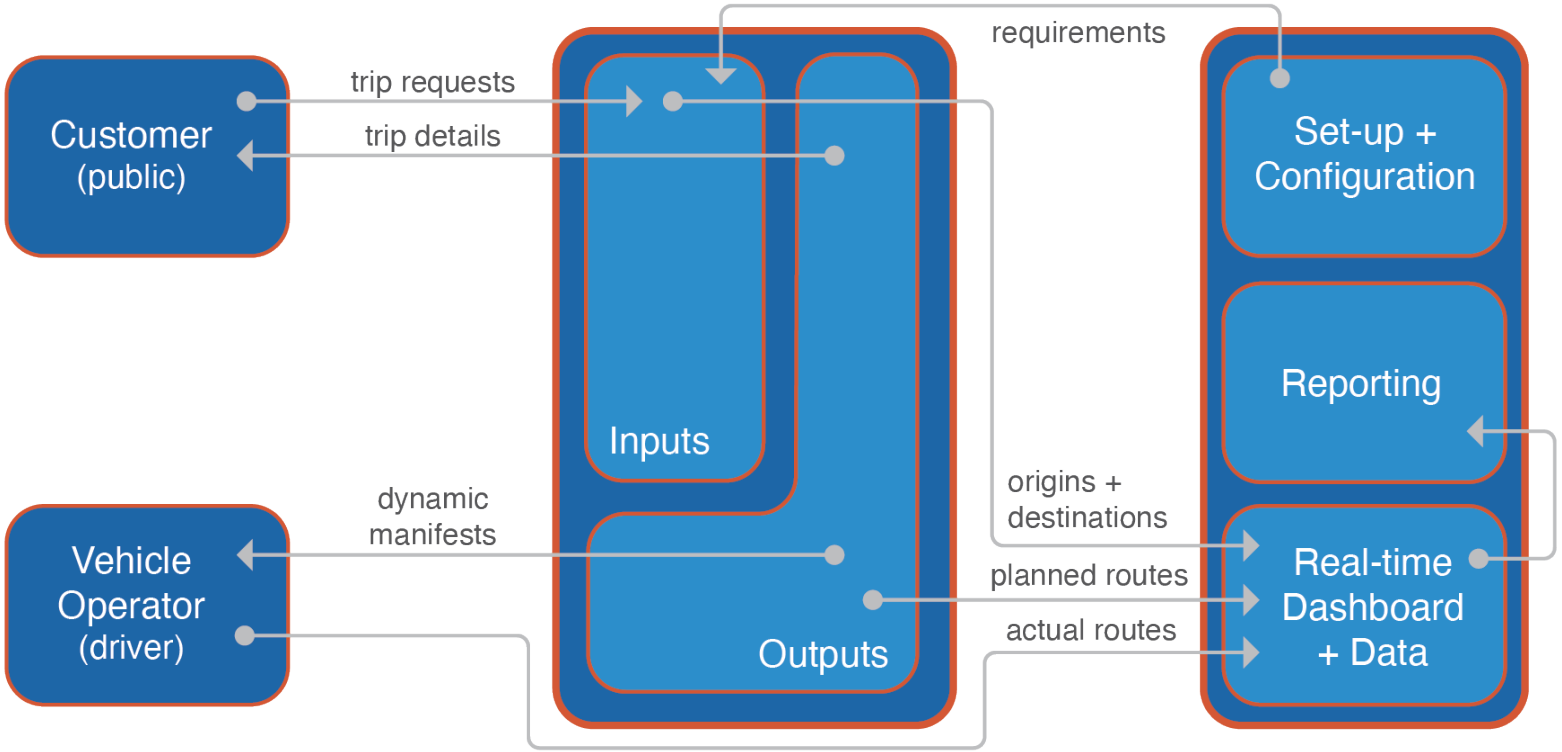
Appendixes: microtransit basics & microtransit platform considerations



Public and Driver Applications

Scheduling Software

Administration + Oversight

REGIONALLY COORDINATE MICROTRANSIT SERVICES

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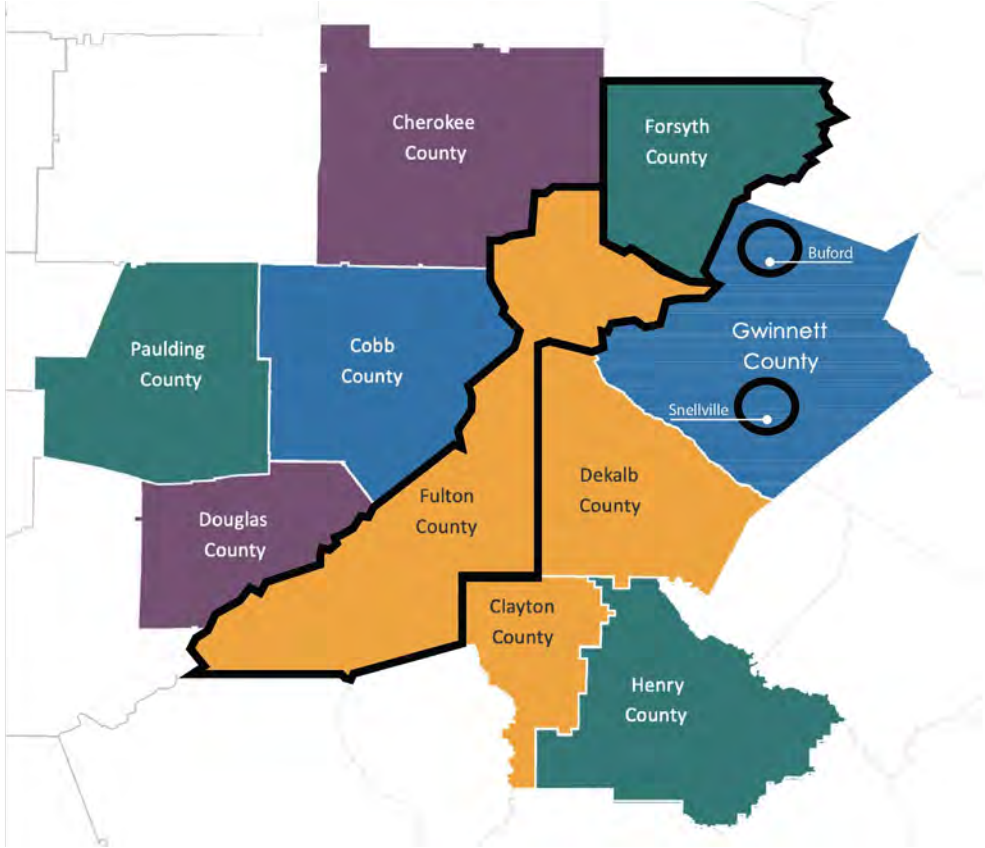
Appendix: Regional microtransit status

Organization	Service Area	Service Model	Tech Provider	Service Opportunities	Eligibility Requirements	Status
Forsyth County	Any location within the county	Turnkey	Included in third party services (Common Courtesy,[76] Lyft, and Uber)	a and c	Forsyth County residents 18 years old and above with a disability, older adults	Pilot program called 'Ride Share' launched in November 2019,[77] partnership with Common Courtesy
Fulton County Senior Services	Various locations within the county	Turnkey	Included in third party services (Common Courtesy, Lyft, and Uber)	c	Fulton County residents 60 years old and above	Pilot program began in 2018,[7][8] partnership with Common Courtesy
Gwinnett County Transit (GCT)	Snellville (Buford also for future service)	Agency-provided	Transloc (pilot program only)	a, b, and c	none	Pilot program ran September 2018 through April 2019,[79] microtransit service not currently listed on GCT's website[80]



SUSTAIN REGIONAL COLLABORATION & COORDINATION

- Applies to all HST DRT providers and advocates
- Sustains this process after completion of project
- The move to online collaboration for this project has addressed prior challenges of in-person meeting travel
- Support for an ongoing advisory committee
- Deep dive session participants supported annual HST DRT gatherings through GTA
- Transit Operators Group seen as a good model

SUSTAIN REGIONAL COLLABORATION & COORDINATION

Implementation Steps

- Formalize TAC as Atlanta's regional coordinating committee (RCC)
- Establish and maintain RCC communications
- Work with key partners to enhance and support committee activities
- Compile and track relevant performance data
- **Coordinate and collaborate!**

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FEEDBACK

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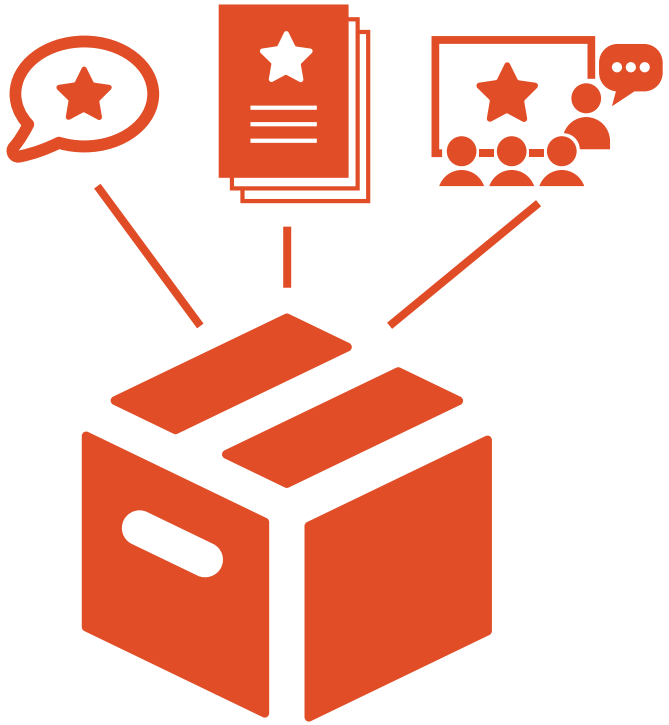
ADDITIONAL STRATEGY PRIMERS

STRATEGY PRIMERS



- Information and ideas discussed throughout the study
- From best practices work or HST Plan
- Can be advanced through RCC
- Resource documents

PRIMERS

FTA Section 5310 program

Fare payment

Volunteer driver programs

Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) brokerage

PRIMERS

Post-2020 Census planning

TNC trip booking assistance

Co-mingling riders

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FEEDBACK

NEXT STEPS

- Draft report dissemination as PDF
- Opportunity for TAC members to review and comment (1-week)
  - Ideally using Acrobat comment feature
- Finalization of report and report completion – mid November
- **Coordinate and collaborate!**

THANK YOU!

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- TAC Meeting Summaries
- Deep Dive Sessions
  - Coordination/Collaboration
  - Funding and Fare Payment
  - Post-COVID Adaptation
  - Microtransit
  - Trip Planning
- Regional County Profiles
- Best Practices and Strategies

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ONGOING HST COLLABORATION & COORDINATION DEEP DIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 21, 2020 1:00-2:00pm via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation attached

Session Goals

During the TAC meeting held on June 22, meeting participants were asked to share their interest in participating in several deep dive strategy sessions, including a session on fostering ongoing HST collaboration and coordination. Those who indicated an interest in the session were invited to participate in the following discussion.

After introductions, Bill Schwartz explained the primary goal the session, which is to help identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements, programs, and investments. This was further supported by the goal of answering a few specific questions to help inform specific actions, including:

- How can we best advance this strategy?
- Is having a statewide organization valuable?
- who are the key partners and champions?
- What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?
- What next steps should be taken?

Ongoing HST Collaboration & Coordination Overview

Bill provided an overview and summary of the topic and some of the key considerations. Bill also provided a high-level summary of four examples of regional coordinating committees, to get the group thinking about how to enhance ongoing HST collaboration and coordination in the Atlanta region.

Discussion Feedback

Bill facilitated the discussion around several questions below to help identify potential opportunities to support this strategy.

How can we best advance this strategy?

- Understanding what works and does not is great because it gives an opportunity for agencies to work together simultaneously, to deliver a seamless and similar program.
- This group is a good example, which could support regular conversation and unity in striving for some direction and progress, making things actionable and to use the group to determine how to proceed with service strategies in the area.
- There's a need to share this information with those working directly the field, to help everyone work together.
- The previous study determined that there was a need for coordination but follow up was limited. The topic must be top of mind.

- An ongoing advisory committee could be beneficial, and funding may be available, albeit with some limitations that could be a barrier.
- For counties that have small DRT programs, they cannot serve everyone; learning how others have met these needs will be helpful.
- The Massachusetts coordination model is nice because partners can opt in or out. We need more information on how hard it is to replicate.

Is having a statewide organization valuable?

- The Georgia Transit Association (GTA) has always held a conference which is seen as beneficial due to the quality of the sessions and networking, including being able to speak with contractors.
- There may be an opportunity for collaborating with GTA to include DRT. Most of the agencies attending GTA are smaller and wear many hats, but it may not be something that they need to do. If DRT can be covered through a subgroup via an organization such as GTA, it may be a better opportunity.
- ARC has an upcoming meeting with GTA and will share these ideas with the executive director.

Who are the key partners and champions?

- It can be confusing with the two organizations, GTA and ARC, and trying to figure out which organization can best support that.
- Many people are passionate about these topics, but it's not clear if the champion should come from a large organization or someone like Jordan Hall who has lots of energy for this.
- The Transit Operators Group (TOG) is a good model because many members wear multiple hats.
- Meeting regularly allows in-person or virtual participation, which has been helpful for the region and helpful for folks to volunteer and share what they're working on. A similar example exists with regional technology group, where specific topics are presented at the meeting present on a topic, and then those who are interested in discussing in further detail would participate in a follow-up session.
- One option is to add a focused discussion of DRT to the end of a TOG meeting. One of the changes that happened when TOG got bigger, but it ended up blending grants and planning. The more you get the case for people to understand your challenges, the better they can understand what your challenges are.

What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

- Sometimes collaboration and coordination are great, but then there are too many cooks in the kitchen, and you end up with analysis paralysis.

What next steps should be taken?

- Find time on the next TOG agenda to incorporate DRT check-ins via that forum. Anybody can join the TOG, there is no policy limit on who can join.

- It would be great to collaborate with large organizations like MARTA because the services seamlessly connect with each other, and large organizations can help identify how they can work together.
- If a champion is identified for this work, it should be someone or an organization that is not just focused on transit. Many feel they may be cut out of the conversation. This could be supported by a smaller subgroup among a large group, where smaller partners could be brought in and have a focused discussion.

Next Steps

The study team will review the session notes and draft potential next steps, which will be shared at the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

ATTENDEES

First	Last	Organization	Email
Karen	Winger	Gwinnett County	Karen.winger@gwinnettcounty.com
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Daniel	Walls	The ATL	dwalls@srta.ga.gov
Peggy	Hackett	Georgia Dept. of Human Services	Peggy.Hackett@dhs.ga.gov
Sidney	Douse	Atlanta Regional Commission	sdouse@atlantaregional.org
Bill	Schwartz	Nelson\Nygaard	bschwartz@nelsonnygaard.com
Krista	Eichenbaum	Nelson\Nygaard	keichenbaum@nelsonnygaard.com
Meredith	Greene	Nelson\Nygaard	mgreene@nelsonnygaard.com

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DEEP DIVE SESSION – COORDINATION/COLLABORATION

JULY 21, 2020

SESSION AGENDA

Introductions

Overview & Background

Implementation Ideas & Discussion

Next Steps Drafting

Session Goal

- To identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements/programs/investments

Ongoing Collaboration/Collaboration

- What is it? Programs, resources and activities to sustain planning and maintain working relationships for HST DRT
- Why do it? To build long-lasting relationships, exchange ideas, and serve as a voice of advocacy

OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

Populations in need increasing

Lack of financial resources

Lack of qualified drivers

Lack of opportunities to learn and gain assistance

Current Situation

- Expertise in navigating the HST/DRT space varies
- Staff turnover presents ongoing challenges – steep learning curve
- Coordinated planning is undertaken to fulfil FTA funding requirement but not regularly
- No unified voice advocating for HST/DRT
- In-person meeting attendance can be a challenge/deterrent

Considerations

- Authority and direction typically provided by a regional authority such as ARC or ATL
- Tend to be comprised of representatives from human services, transit, employers, and healthcare providers
- Technical Advisory Committee could be established as a formal committee to consider regional HST needs.
- To be sustainable, coordinating councils need a champion and staff resources
- To be effective, coordinating councils work best with clear direction, responsibility and ideally, funding
- Participants need to feel their time is well spent

Different Models of Coordination

- Independent: New York Mobility Managers Network
  - Voluntary group to further the practice of mobility management in New York
  - Activities included information sharing, events, discussion groups
  - Requires ongoing effort to sustain – may no longer be active
- State DOT/Human Services Agencies: Mass Mobility
  - State initiative in MA to "increase mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, veterans, low-income commuters, and others who lack transportation access"
  - Newsletter and annual conference

Different Models of Coordination

- Regional Planning Agency: DRMAC
  - Affiliated with DRCOG – region's MPO
  - Serves as the region's coordinating council and works with local councils
  - Involved with Vision Zero, transit passes, fares, Commission for People with Disabilities, ADA Paratransit Advisory Council, veterans, and others
- Association: Community Transportation Association Northwest
  - Membership-based organization founded in 1978
  - Includes both nonprofit, for-profit and public transportation providers, as well as Medicaid brokers, planning organizations, service agencies (such as senior centers), and others, including WashDOT
  - Covers Pacific Northwest

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS & DISCUSSION

1

How can we best advance this strategy?

2

Who are the key partners and champions? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

3

What next steps should be taken?

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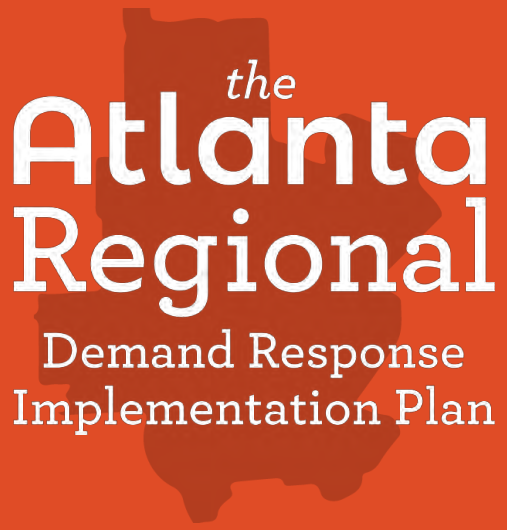
How can we best advance this strategy?



Who are the key partners and champions?

What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

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What next steps should be taken?

THANK YOU!

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FUNDING & FARE PAYMENT DEEP DIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 22, 2020 11:00-12:00pm via Zoom conference call

The session attendee list and the session presentation are provided following the meeting summary.

Session Goals

During the TAC meeting held on June 22, meeting participants were asked to share their interest in participating in several deep dive strategy sessions, including a session on funding and fare payment. Those who indicated an interest in the session were invited to participate in the following discussion.

Funding & Fare Payment Overview

Meredith provided an overview and summary of the topic and some of the key considerations, including funding and grant challenges, fare payment systems, and other challenges and opportunities.

Discussion Feedback

Meredith facilitated the discussion around several questions below to help identify potential opportunities to support this strategy.

Funding/Grant Challenges

- Grant application training and resources would be helpful. When competitive grants are released, the short timeline is challenging, especially when trying to collect and organize data. The training and resources would provide assistance in being able to respond quickly.
- One of the biggest challenges for DHS is that many of their providers operate with 5311 funding, and to use other federal funds sometimes poses a challenge, because of the accounting and tracking of the funds and the difficulty acquiring local match to tap into additional federal funding streams. As such, many 5311 programs do not want the 5310 funds.
- Navigating the CARES Act funding is challenging, especially when looking to secure funding for sanitization and PPE supplies. It would be helpful to determine what they can allocate towards the CARES Act.
- Paulding County has recently started working with DHS on human services transportation. They don't currently charge for services, but hope that they can eventually charge.
- The ATL mentioned that they are taking a closer look at supporting 5311 and 5307 transition programs, and specifically helping existing operators make the transition from rural to urbanized with the new census information. The ATL is just starting to reach out to operators to talk to them.

Most Helpful Funding Support

- Better understanding of relationships.
- Local match, which is critical to support ongoing transit operations.
- Human service funding for the coordinating system.
- Training.
- Funding for operations.
- In urbanized areas, could benefit from a better understanding of the difference between 5311 and the other grants.

Fare Payment Systems

- MARTA is looking at mobile ticketing (even thinking about it pre-COVID), and trying to roll it out by the end of the year.
- Cobb County is also looking at mobile ticketing, but also looking at other ways of collecting fares without cash, like the MARTA breeze cards or using the mobile phone payments. But this would be a long-term solution, but they haven't worked out how to do that yet, but they'll have to go back to front-door service when it comes to payment.

Most Important Focus Moving Forward

- Determining how to start collecting fares again, and in a safe manner.
- Open source systems could take multiple sources of payment, but have concerns about how the elderly population adapts to using the technology.
- Regional fare payment system. And as the regional body, the ATL is interested in coordinating this and providing a better customer experience across the region.
- Integration of fare collection systems with data collection and reporting.

Regional Fare Study

- Cherokee County brought up the regional fare payment study, and questioned if they would be able to bring that to the board, or do they need to do their own study? This is important because they've had the same fare for 15 years, the County was looking at the study to help raise their fares or to get similar fares to the County around them.
  - The ATL is still in Phase 1 of the study process, and haven't calculated the price sensitivity around fares, but it is a part of the scope in Phase 2 of the study, and will share the results of the analysis once they have them.

Next Steps

The study team will review the session notes and draft potential next steps, which will be shared at the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

ATTENDEES

First	Last	Organization	Email
Aileen	Daney	The ATL	adaney@ATLtransit.ga.gov
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Peggy	Hackett	Georgia DHS	peggy.hackett@dhs.ga.gov
Greg	Powell	Cherokee County	mgpowell@cherokeega.com
Betty	Roach	Paulding County	betty.roach@paulding.gov
Jeffrey	Shanks	CPACS	jeffrey.shanks@cpacs.org
Taleim	Salters	Henry County	tsalters@co.henry.ga.us
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FUNDING AND FARE PAYMENT SESSION

JULY 22, 2020

MEREDITH GREENE, NELSON\NYGAARD CONSULTING ASSOCIATES

Who's Here?

- Transit Agencies
- Health and Human Service
- Others

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FUNDING: LET'S TALK

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST FUNDING/GRANT CHALLENGES?

- Short timelines on grants
- Timelines don't line up with other processes
- Training needed on how to apply/navigate the system
- Lack of staff support
- Local issues getting involved
- Local match

OTHER ISSUES?

- Challenge to get insurance, esp for private providers
- Shortage of drivers
- Employee turnover
- Training needs and costs
- Areas becoming urbanized

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LET'S DISCUSS:

WHAT IS MOST HELPFUL TO YOU?

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FARE PAYMENT SYSTEMS: LET'S TALK

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- Regional fare payment systems
- Need for improved tracking
- Reimbursement systems
- During and Post-COVID fare payments/fare rollouts

THANK YOU!

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Meredith Greene

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POST-COVID DEEP DIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 22, 2020 10:00-11:00am via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation are provided following the meeting summary.

Session Goals

During the TAC meeting held on June 22, meeting participants were asked to share their interest in participating in several deep dive strategy sessions, including a session on post-COVID activities. Those who indicated an interest in the session were invited to participate in the following discussion.

After introductions, Meredith Greene explained the primary goal the session, which is to help identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements, programs, and investments.

Post-COVID Overview

Meredith provided an overview and summary of the topic and some of the key considerations. Meredith also provided a high-level summary of what some other agencies in the United States in how they are responding and adapting to change due to COVID, prior to learning more about the responses taking place in the Atlanta region.

Discussion Feedback

COVID Responses

- As a result of COVID, MARTA reduced or eliminated some routes due to ridership decline, however, added complimentary service in other areas in areas where routes were removed. Paratransit naturally declined, but kept service going. When boarding vehicles, passengers would enter via the rear doors. MARTA is constantly monitoring service and ridership to assess performance. Mobility vehicles were initially provided at some of the stations where routes were reduced to provide options to passengers who had been stranded because they weren't aware that routes had been eliminated or reduced. MARTA is offering hand sanitizer, gloves, masks, and then other PPE equipment, and using sprayers in vehicles. MARTA has mandated masks while on property and driving a bus.
- CPACS has shifted completely from a demand response service to meal delivery in some communities. ARC has been helping them navigate through the CARES Act funding. CPACS has been considering expanding meal delivery to Clayton county and other areas of DeKalb, and they are using this as an inroad to expand their service, which was a goal before COVID.
- Paulding County has continued their service, primarily providing dialysis and medical trips. The Meals on Wheels service was able to continue to homebound folks and people who were visiting the senior center. About 60% of the trips they provided before COVID were to the senior center, but they aren't making those trips at the moment, as the senior center is not open. The County reached out to local food banks to notify them about services and coordinate support.

- Henry County scaled down service for dialysis trips only until June, and then added medical trips. The County is preparing to provide and pick up services, but find that people are afraid to come out and hesitant about making trips (including drivers). The County is providing drivers with PPE, and are using a decontamination spraying machine manufactured by Aeroclean. The County is also looking to install shields for the back of seats on vehicles. They are also using CARES Act funding for the cleaning equipment, and will start collecting fares.
- Cobb County is doing the same thing in response to COVID as the other services. Went cashless or free fare in March, and the paratransit ridership increased due to the free fare, but they lost ridership on fixed routes, especially on commuter routes. As a result, the County eliminated one route on a commuter route. There are talks about collecting fares again in August, especially to keep up with other systems when passengers transfer, but this could be a challenge for drivers. Drivers are also handing out masks to people who don't have them, and in the case that passengers don't want to wear them, they just make sure they are distanced. The County hopes to ramp back things up by the end of the year, but have cancelled all of their charter requests for the time being, and are looking to scale back or decrease services on some of the underperforming routes.
- Cherokee County is doing the same as the other services. On fixed routes, drivers are only driving for half the shift to reduce their footprint and increase their safety. The County has opened up the Empower program, and they are operating a staggered schedule throughout the week and taking temperatures before passengers get on the bus. For money bags, the County has been using ziplock bags, and they sanitize them.

Post-COVID roll-out opportunities (longer-term)

- Some entities are using the time to put together marketing and messaging campaigns like a passenger bill of rights.
- Plan to build out different scenarios, timetables and service plans.
- As service providers, there's a need for a slow and sustainable roll out of plans, and to provide more training.
- This is an opportunity for a return to service that better meets customer needs - this is a time for service transformation.

Needs for immediate support

- Enhanced sanitizing methods, such as fumigating the bus, which is key to the safety of drivers and passengers.
- Creating a safe environment for the public and the operators who are front line.
- Getting a consistent information and messages would be helpful.

Next Steps

The study team will review the session notes and draft potential next steps, which will be shared at the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

ATTENDEES

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POST-COVID ADAPTATION SESSION

JULY 22, 2020

MEREDITH GREENE, NELSON\NYGAARD CONSULTING ASSOCIATES

Who's Here?

- Transit Agencies
- Health and Human Service
- Others

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WHAT ARE AGENCIES DOING DURING COVID?

LITTLE DIXIE
TRANSIT
16597
BraunAbility

OWNED BY:
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION OF
SOUTHERN NEVADA
OPERATED BY:
FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

PARK and RIDE
TEHACHAPI
CALIFORNIA
PUBLIC PARKING

EVOCHARGE
mío car
Google Play
App Store
miocar

MY HOUSE

"Way to go!" -Elli Overstreet

GRANTS

FEDERAL - Q
STATE - BHAP
PRIVATE -
FOUNDATION -
- RASMUSON
- MSHF
- United way
- Bishops attic
- CIHA: Housing

FUNDRAISING

Partnerships : ROTARY SETTLERS BAY
Sponsors
Awareness

501-C2

DONORS

PRIVATE
CORPORATE
SMALL BUSINESS

CASE MGMT.

- FOOD, CLOTHING, LAUNDRY
- SHOWERS
- TRANSPORTATION
- REFERRALS
- VEHICLES
- Volunteer Mgmt
- DATA MGMT
- SUPPER CLUB

=NINE STAR= EMPLOYMENT GED INTERNSHIPS
= Public HEALTH =
=M.A.S.T=
=SET FREE ALASKA= GROUPS ASSESSMENTS

Please Don't Do Drugs!

Hueby | CASE MGR. | Powell

- Drivers Licenses
- SS cards
- TRANSPORTATION
- SECURITY

GATHERING GROUNDS

- TRAINING
- MENTORSHIP
- INCOME
- Community Connection

STEAMDRIVEN

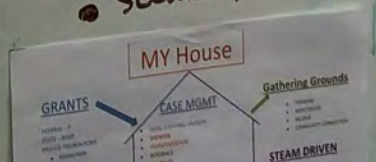
- TRAINING
- MENTORSHIP
- Community Connection
- INCOME
- CLOTHING/FURNITURE

TRAINING

Northern Industrial
MSBSD

PRISONER Reentry / Juvenile Justice

CROSSWIRED • AA/NA • EIGHTH of HOPE
HOUSING
9 Star Employment
NIGHT COURTS
YPR



WHAT ARE YOU DOING DURING COVID?

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Trying to survive…

- The majority of transit agencies saw their service levels slashed more than half, for an average of a **70% drop** in ridership/usership
- But the populations we serve are the most vulnerable, and those who need our service most.
- ***How do we continue to offer safe service?***
- ***How do we offer sustainable service?***

Items to Consider

- Marketing and Messaging Campaigns
- Slow roll-out and build up of service
- Additional Trainings
- Return to service that better meets customer needs?

  (i.e. Door through door, etc.)

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LET'S DISCUSS:

WHAT IS MOST HELPFUL TO YOU?

THANK YOU!

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Meredith Greene

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

MICROTRANSIT DEEP DIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 27, 2020 11:00-Noon via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation are provided following the meeting summary.

Session Goals

During the TAC meeting held on June 22, meeting participants were asked to share their interest in participating in several deep dive strategy sessions, including a session on microtransit. Those who indicated an interest in the session were invited to participate in the following discussion.

After introductions, Janae Futrell explained the primary goal the session, which is to help identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements, programs, and investments. This was further supported by the goal of answering a few questions to help inform specific actions, including:

- How can we best advance microtransit implementation? For new services and to coordinate across counties?
- Who are the key partners and champions? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?
- What next steps should be taken?

Microtransit Overview

Janae provided an overview of the topic and shared a high-level summary of three national examples to get the group thinking about the potential to advance microtransit in the Atlanta region.

Discussion Feedback

Janae facilitated the discussion around several questions to help identify potential opportunities to support this strategy. The discussion is summarized below.

Funding

- It seems there is no federal funding type that is sustainable for microtransit.
- Gwinnett County staff report using local funds for their microtransit pilot, related to the general fund and sales tax-related funds.
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) can help with initial funding but is unlikely to support microtransit continually over time.
- The region's transit agencies sometimes find themselves competing against each other for federal funding.
- Even if/when federal funding is available, the local match could still be a challenge for some agencies.
- It was mentioned that 5311 funding (and even 5310) could potentially apply to microtransit.

Turnkey Model Concerns

- When transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Lyft and Uber provide microtransit through the "turnkey model" there is always the concern that the majority/all of the vehicles are not mobility device accessible.
- Some programs seek to address this issue such as the MBTA in Boston, by incentivizing an increase in the local number of wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAV) in connection with its on-demand paratransit pilot program. The pilot program is provided in addition to "traditional" ADA paratransit, and eligible users can keep using the traditional option as user preferences dictate.

Current Services and Local Activities

- Gwinnett County is taking part in a Georgia Tech research project on the on-demand transit topic.
- American Logistics provides a brokerage function/service connecting TNCs with HST trips.
    - Trips with 1-2-hour prior notice are guaranteed.
    - American Logistics is not a direct service provider.
- Hall County was discussed; 1-2 years ago, they considered the option of having their fixed route system operated by TNCs—effectively becoming a large microtransit area. There are some concerns with this, including having a fleet that is unused before reaching its useful life.
    - Hall County is using microtransit technology with their own fleet and drivers and is keeping fixed routes intact. The fixed route buses were smaller already, and so the entire system uses similar sized vehicles.
    - Hall County has also encouraged dialysis appointments to be scheduled in geographically beneficial ways to support more efficient transit service. They accomplish this by having appointments in certain areas on the same day to avoid travelling around the entire service area.

Additional Opportunities to Provide Beyond 'Needs' and Eligibility Requirements

- Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) staff explained that microtransit represents a "crucial and revolutionary" opportunity for those with disabilities or advanced age to take trips spontaneously, and expand the focus beyond "needs" to also include "wants" such as recreational and social activities.
- SILC is a policy-driven organization, and it was referenced that it could be interesting for Centers for Independent Living (CIL) to experiment with microtransit pilots, as they support transportation services more directly.
- Microtransit is an example of a transportation service for the general public that also happens to be helpful for individuals with disabilities. There is a benefit for individuals with disabilities to have new options that are not based on eligibility or their personal circumstance.
- It is important to note that the concept of disability is extremely diverse. What works for a speech or hearing impairment is very different from non-ambulatory needs, and this is not always addressed.
- California passed legislation for a "vehicle cap" on TNCs, so that a limited number of vehicles are in operation but allowed an exception if additional vehicles are wheelchair accessible. This helps serve as an incentive.

Filling in Service Gaps

- DHS staff mentioned that since they are unable to meet all the needs in the region, supporting the advancement of alternatives helps ensure there are other options for their clients. They want to be able to get the information on such options to their clients.
- DHS also mentioned that some counties are not a part of the DHS system (Cobb, etc.) and that they work with service providers directly for trips. Some of the service providers (for DHS, Medicaid NEMT, etc.) are out on the road and have periods of downtime that could potentially be leveraged in a future on-demand transit system. However, it should be approached carefully since during other times they are dedicated to a primary group (such as Medicaid).

Next Steps & Key Implementation Considerations

- MARTA staff mentioned internal interest in microtransit, particularly for routes that are not viable. Staff are working to find out what is legally feasible as a first step.
- It is possible MARTA tests some areas in the future as a pilot. However, there is concern with the "turnkey model" with TNCs and other providers that the agency could be inadvertently fueling a system that pays workers poorly, if they went the turnkey route. It could be possible to pursue the "agency-provided model" instead (using MARTA's own fleet and drivers with microtransit technology).
- ARC staff explained that it is important to be inclusive of limited English proficiency (LEP) populations within such platforms, and that ARC is pursuing more initiatives to support similar objectives.
- ARC staff mentioned being interested in playing a role helping to identify microtransit pilots.

Next Steps

The study team will review the session notes and draft potential next steps, which will be shared at the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

ATTENDEES

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DEEP DIVE SESSION – MICROTRANSIT

JULY 27, 2020

SESSION AGENDA

Introductions

Overview & Background

Implementation Ideas & Discussion

Next Steps Drafting

Session Goal

- To identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements/programs/investments

Microtransit (on-demand transit)

- A transportation option that is on-demand, enables ‘spontaneous’ trips
- For the general public and/or target populations, typically supported with advanced software and public-facing apps
- May be supported with an agency’s drivers, vehicles, etc. (i.e., agency-provided model) or through a turnkey service via a third party (i.e., turnkey model)

What We've Heard

- Even when these services are for the general population, HST populations are often strong users
- Multiple agencies in the region provide these services already
- Other agencies are interested in providing these services, eager to learn from their regional peers

How Microtransit Helps

- Addresses geographic service gaps and connects with fixed-route service, contributing to overall system functionality
- Potential to tailor service for target populations who need curb-to-curb service

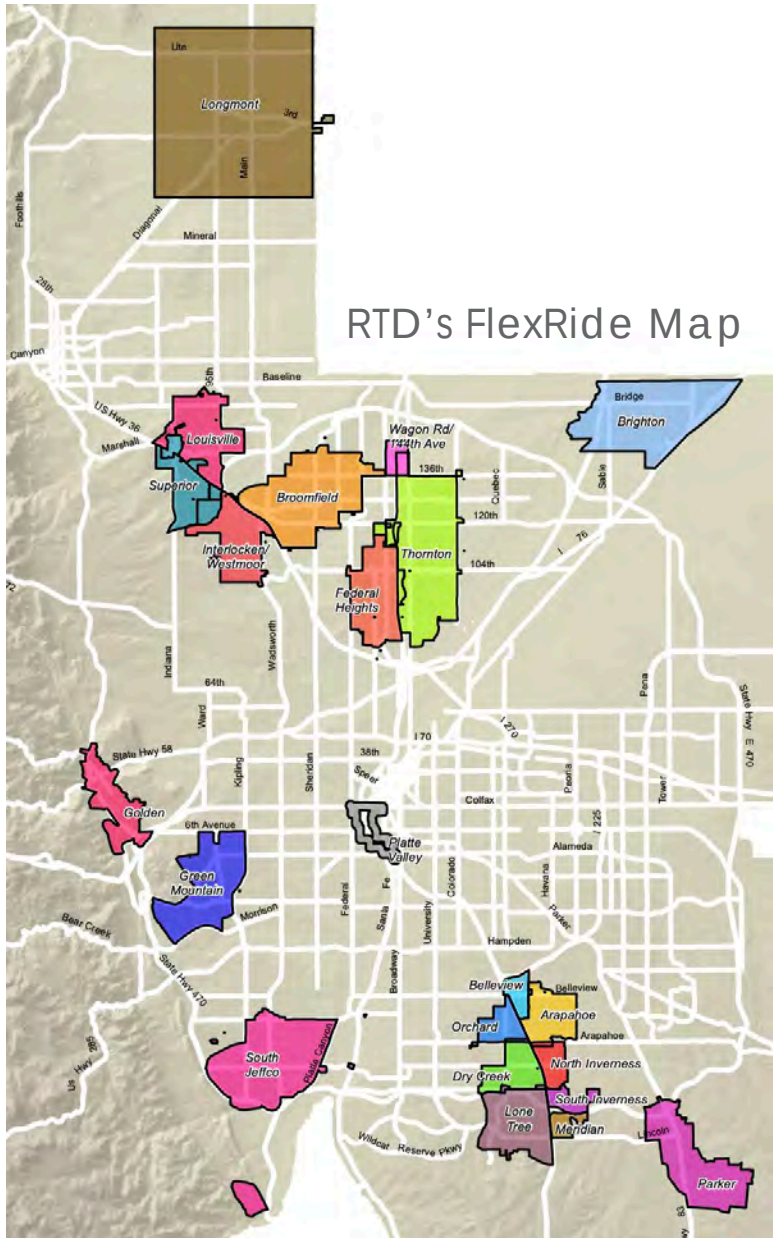
Current Situation

- Transit agencies (e.g., GCT) and county-based agencies (e.g., Fulton County Senior Services, Forsyth County) with microtransit are moving from pilots to established programs.
- County-based agencies lean toward the turnkey model, while transit agencies lean toward the agency-provided model.
- County-based transit agencies (e.g., Henry) are potentially interested in pilots.
- Any agency may want to upgrade technology on existing programs.

Regional Future Considerations

- A regional system may emerge with adjacent geographic service areas one day.
- In order to ensure users can cross jurisdictions easily, the region may consider a single app connecting to multiple programs and transportation providers.
- This system could include a regional user tracking system through unique identifiers.
- This would provide useful usage data and also help decrease region-wide program abuse that could not be seen otherwise.

NATIONAL EXAMPLE – DENVER METRO AREA

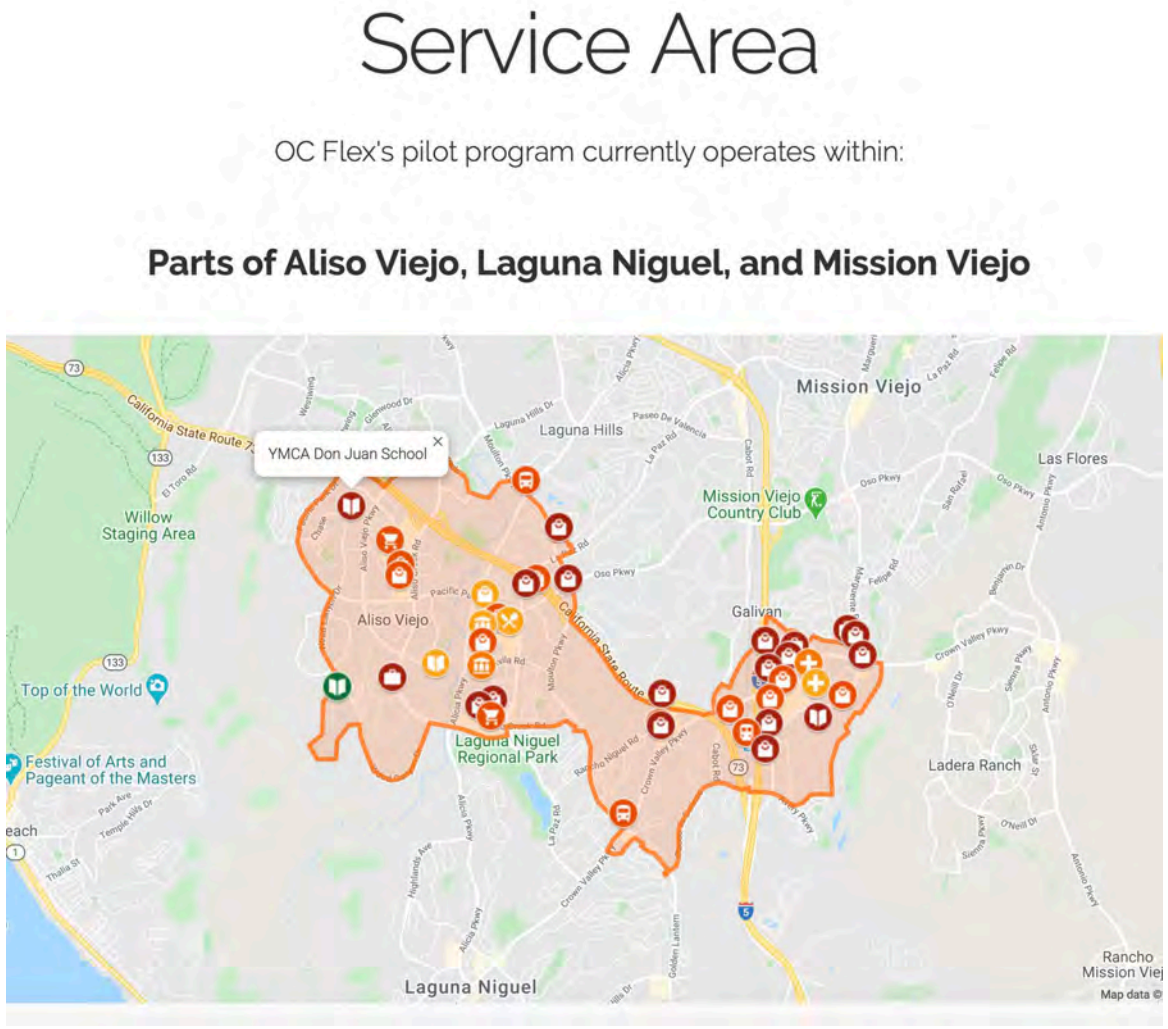


RTD's FlexRide Map

- Regional Transportation District (RTD) began a demand-response transit service for the general public in 2008, originally called the 'RTD Call-n-Ride system.'
- Over time, RTD has upgraded the technology, enabling same day trips (minimum 10 minutes notice) and the ability to book online/via an app.
- In 2019, it was rebranded 'FlexRide.'

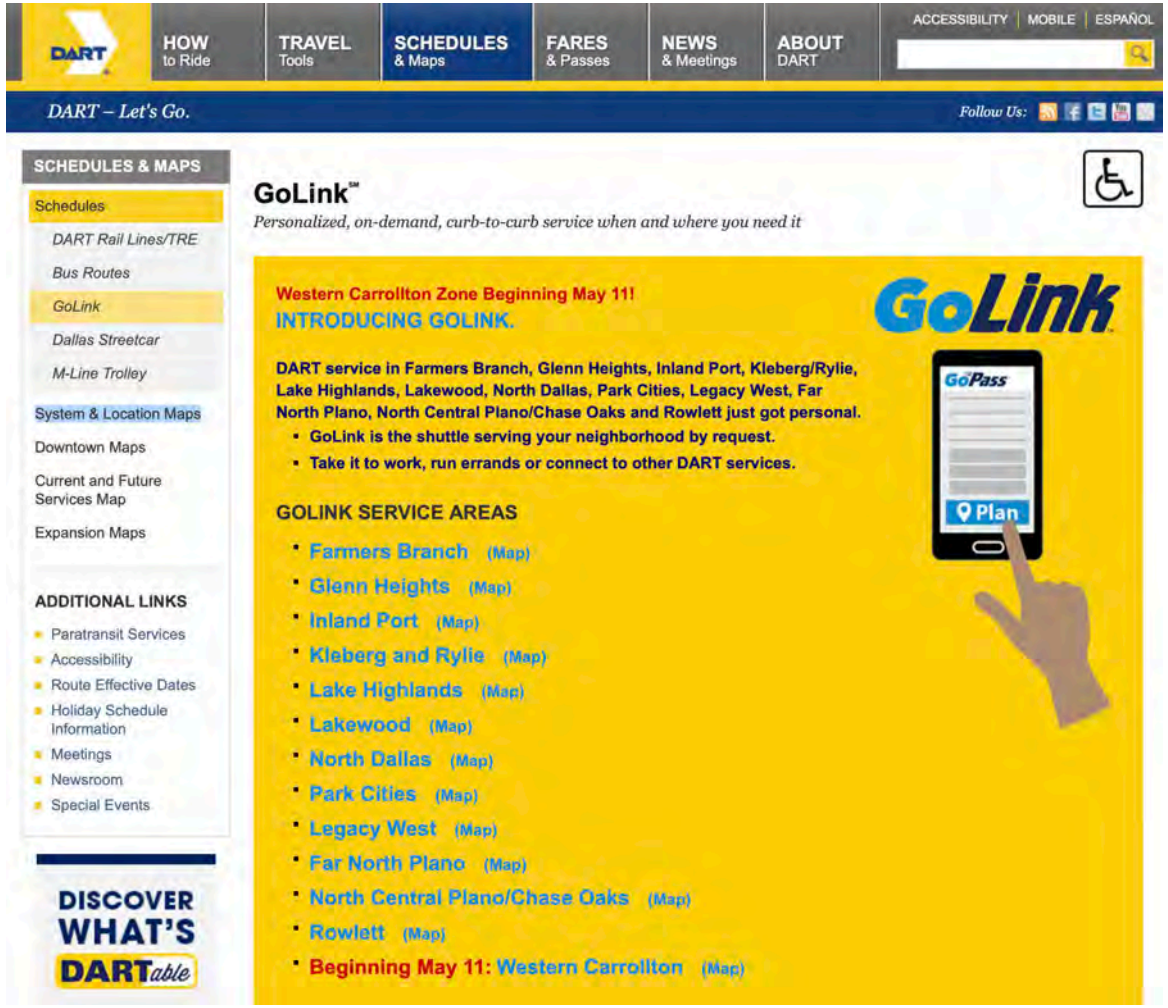
NATIONAL EXAMPLE – LOS ANGELES METRO AREA

- Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) began an on-demand service for the general public in early 2018.
- ‘OC Flex’ has had 3 iterations, first turnkey and then 2 different technology providers for the agency-provided model.



OCTA’s OCFlex Map

NATIONAL EXAMPLE – DALLAS METRO AREA



DART's Website

- DART has an on-demand service for the general public, currently serving 12 areas.
- It is a hybrid of the agency-provided and turnkey models.
- At the time of booking, the user picks if they want UberPool or DART to provide the trip.

IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS & DISCUSSION

1

How can we best advance microtransit implementation? For new services and to coordinate across counties?

2

Who are the key partners and champions? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

3

What next steps should be taken?

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How can we best advance microtransit implementation?

For new services and to coordinate across counties?

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Demand Response Implementation Plan

Who are the key partners and champions?

What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

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Demand Response Implementation Plan

What next steps should be taken?

Thank you!

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

TRIP PLANNING DEEP DIVE SESSION SUMMARY

July 28, 2020 11:00am-Noon via Zoom conference call

Attendee list and presentation are provided following the meeting summary.

Session Goals

During the TAC meeting held on June 22, meeting participants were asked to share their interest in participating in several deep dive strategy sessions, including a session on trip planning. Those who indicated an interest in the session were invited to participate in the following discussion.

After introductions, Janae Futrell explained the primary goal the session, which is to help identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements, programs, and investments. This was further supported by the goal of answering a few questions to help inform specific actions, including:

- How can we best advance trip planning implementation?
- Who are the key partners and champions? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?
- What next steps should be taken?

Trip Planning Overview

Janae provided an overview and summary of the topic and current trip planning activities in the region and shared a high-level summary of two national examples to get the group thinking about the potential to advance trip planning in the Atlanta region.

Discussion Feedback

Janae facilitated the discussion around several questions to help identify potential opportunities to support this strategy. The discussion is summarized below.

Opportunities

- The Integrated Mobility Innovation/IMI grant (see summary for details), will fund a regional multi-modal trip planner, which is being led by The ATL. This could potentially include demand-response options.
    - The ATL plans for the trip planner to leverage Open Trip Planner (OTP) open source software. It is possible that the features added to the project by the Vermont DOT (VTrans) in 2019 could be leveraged as well.
    - The platform may include/connect to fare payment in addition to trip planning, but fare payment would be primarily for fixed route transit. The ATL also plans for the platform to include multiple languages. The trip planner may also include GTFS-pathways.
- The ATL considers creating GTFS-flex data the primary need in order add demand-response options to the trip planner. The grant does not necessarily include funding for creating GTFS-flex data for regional agencies.
- ARC staff mentioned that connecting trip planners directly to scheduling software to enable real time booking is a goal to keep in mind for the future. This would

provide information about real time availability of demand-response providers, and help move the region toward a more robust mobility as a service (MaaS) offering—facilitating more convenient "last minute" trips.

Current Services and Local Activities

- Gwinnett County staff shared their experience of using travel training and free passes and noted that Gwinnett County makes travel training available to anyone for free—not only Gwinnett County residents.
- Paulding County staff explained that their trip planning is handled through their GDOT connection and noted that they would not be ready to maintain their own GTFS-flex feed at this time. They noted this is something to consider in the future.
- DCH staff mentioned that trip planning does not currently play a strong role in their efforts, since users call in to schedule appointments. DCH brokers, including Southeast Trans, work with MARTA to facilitate trips on MARTA.
- Gwinnett County staff explained that showing demand-response options in a trip planner could benefit from complementary efforts, such as enhanced land use planning and infrastructure improvements.
- ATL staff mentioned that providers operating in counties with coordinated DHS service and 5311 funded county-based demand-response services run into challenges scheduling trips across the 2 platforms. DHS uses their own system called TRIP$, while GDOT has a contract with QRyde for 5311 recipients, and the systems do not interoperate.

Key Considerations

- Gwinnett County staff mentioned that keeping all types of trip planning resources current, including provider guides/directories, itinerary/trip planners, etc., requires the resources to be often and continually updated.
- Gwinnett County staff referenced the importance of considering trip planning efforts within a wider frame of users adopting new behaviors, such as taking transit for the first time and maintaining the practice.
- Considerations were made about how financial incentives, such as offering free transit passes (in general or to the ADA paratransit eligible for fixed route), can help influence the adoption of new behaviors.
- ARC staff mentioned that limited English proficiency (LEP) is important to consider within HST as a user group with nuanced needs.

Next Steps

The study team will review the session notes and draft potential next steps, which will be shared at the next TAC meeting on September 14th.

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

DEEP DIVE SESSION – TRIP PLANNING

JULY 28, 2020

SESSION AGENDA

Introductions

Overview & Background

Implementation Ideas & Discussion

Next Steps Drafting

OVERVIEW

Session Goal

- To identify specific implementation steps for HST DRT improvements/programs/investments

Trip Planning

- A long-term and sustainable tool providing a central, single point of contact (website, call center, etc.) where people can learn about available transportation resources
- Ideally includes all transportation options, including HST DRT such as ADA paratransit, county-based DRT, and others

What We've Heard

- Regional partners would like to include HST DRT options in regional trip planning

What the Region Has Now

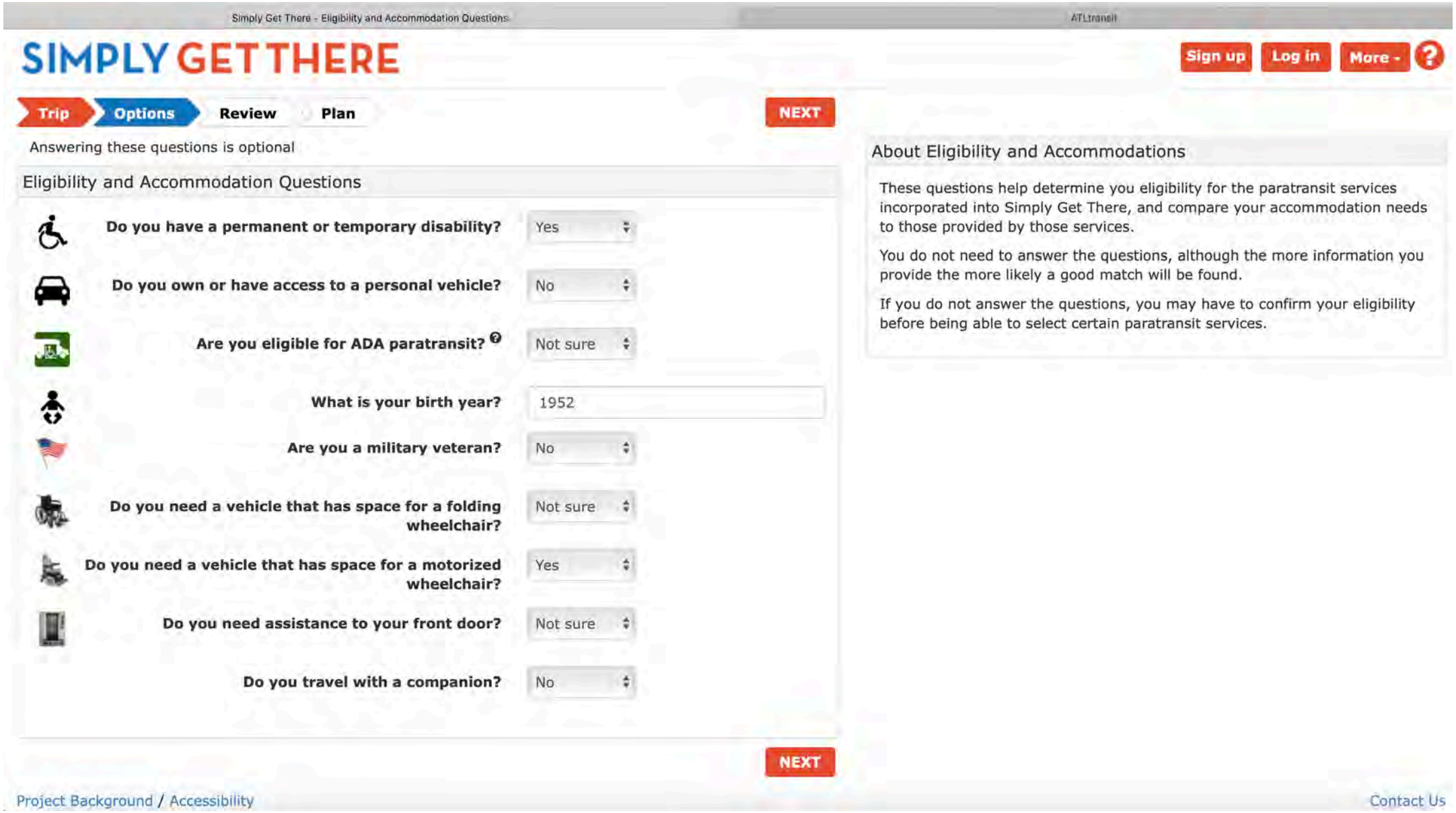
Including HST DRT

- www.SimplyGetThere.org
- Empowerline at 404-463-3333 (Area Agency on Aging/ARC)
- United Way 211

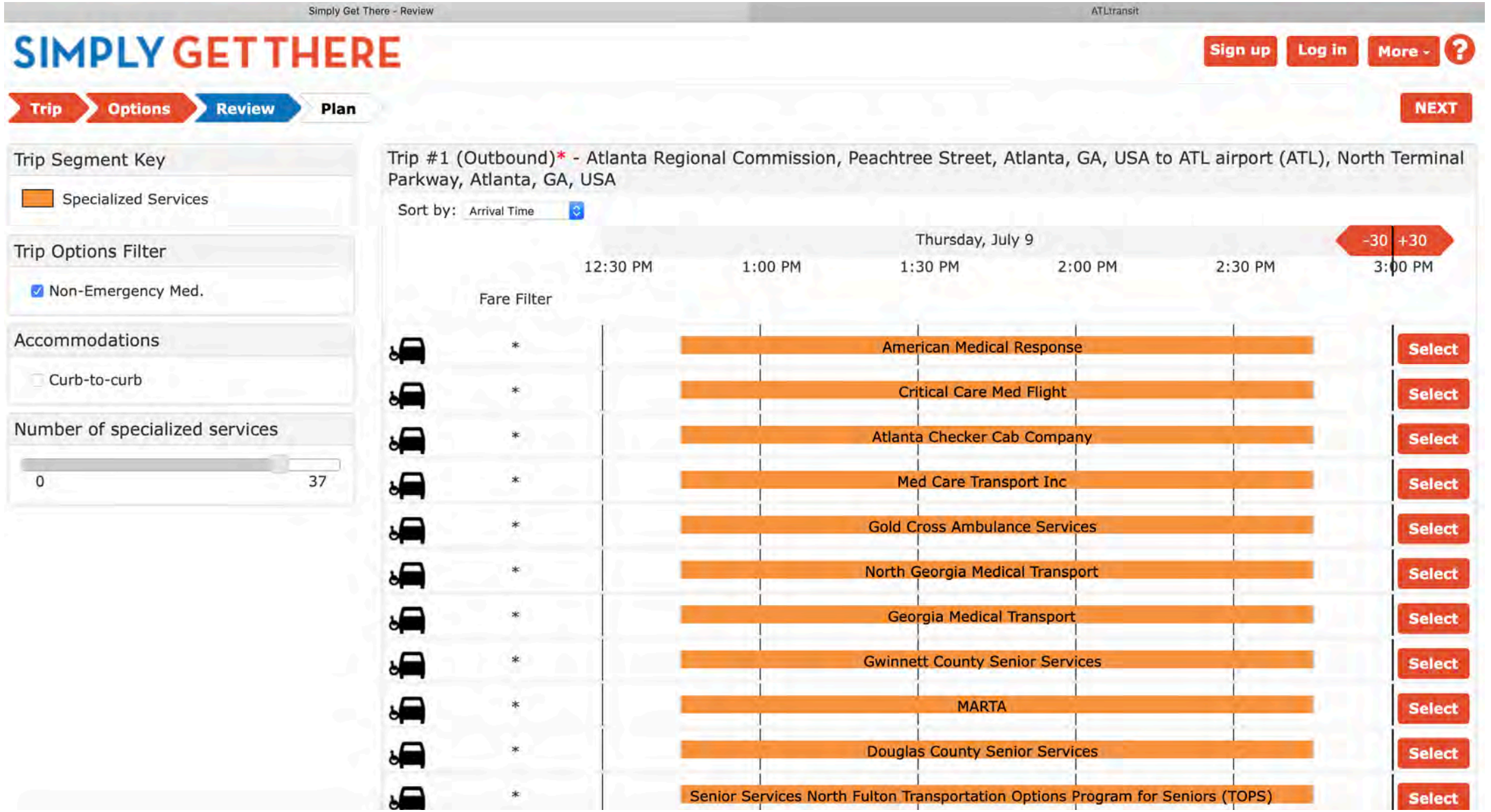
Not including HST DRT

- www.ATLTransit.org
- Google Transit

SIMPLY GET THERE



SIMPLY GET THERE



SIMPLY GET THERE

the Atlanta Regional

Simply Get There - Plan | ATLtransit

SIMPLY GET THERE

Sign up | Log in | More | ?

Trip | Options | Review | Plan

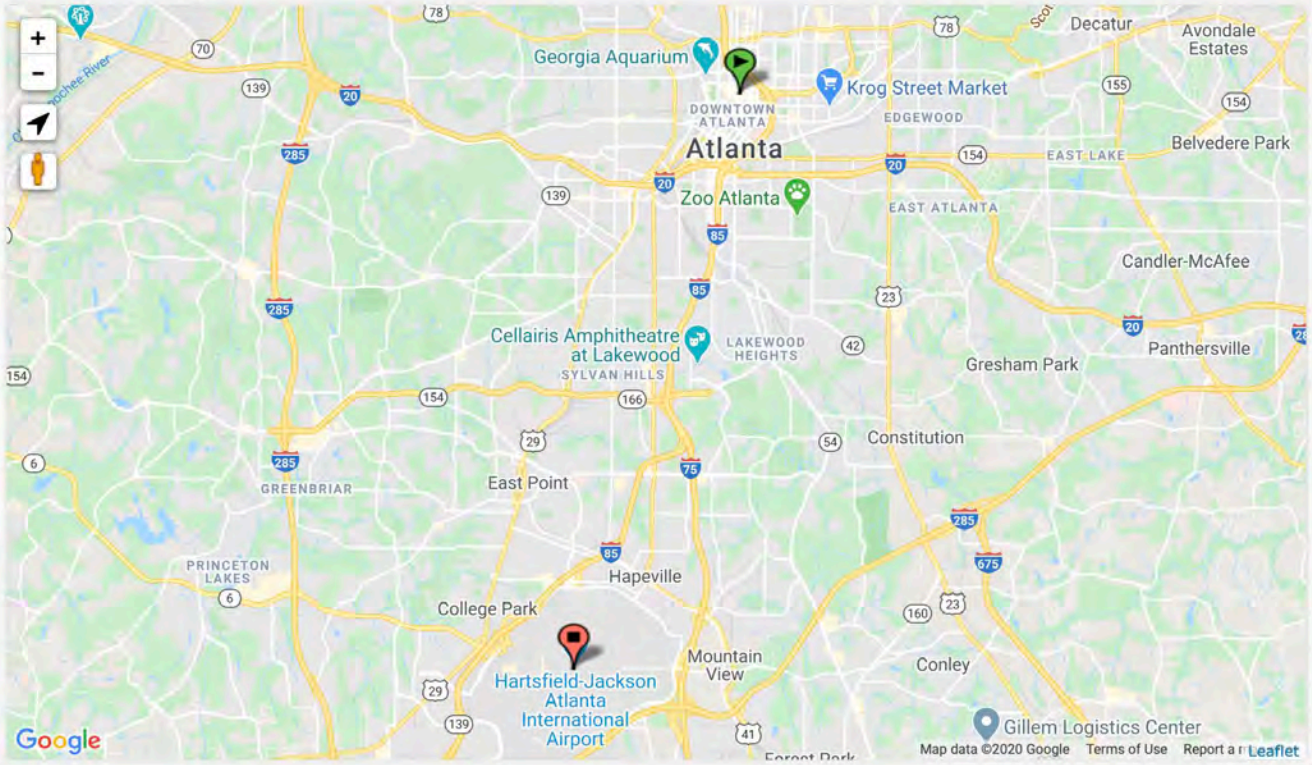
Print | Email

Trip #1 (Outbound)* - Atlanta Regional Commission, Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA, USA to ATL airport (ATL), North Terminal Parkway, Atlanta, GA, USA

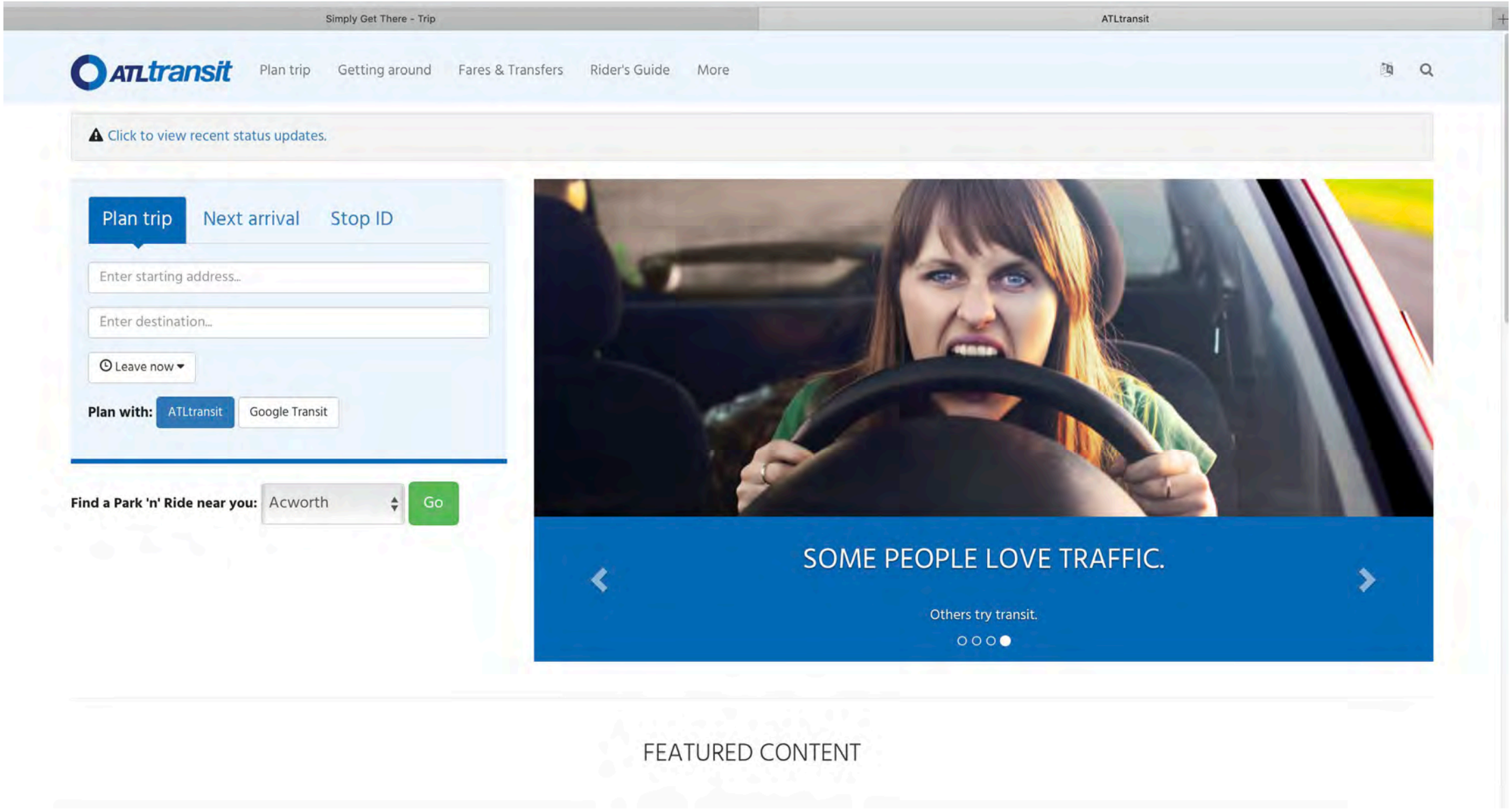
Fare Filter	Trip Date	Total Trip Time Filter	Walk Time	Transfers
See below	Thursday, July 9	6:45 AM To 8:45 AM 2 h 0 mins (est.)	Under 1 min	None

Name:	Gwinnett County Senior Services
Provided by:	Gwinnett County Senior Services
Phone:	(678) 377-4150
Email:	carol row-jones@gwinnettcounty.com
URL:	http://gwinnettseniorservices@gwinnettcounty.com

Accommodations provided:	Curb-to-curb
Accommodations NOT provided:	Folding wheelchair accessible. Motorized wheelchair accessible. Door-to-door Driver assistance available. Wheelchair lift equipped vehicle. Stretcher accessible. Traveler Companion Permitted



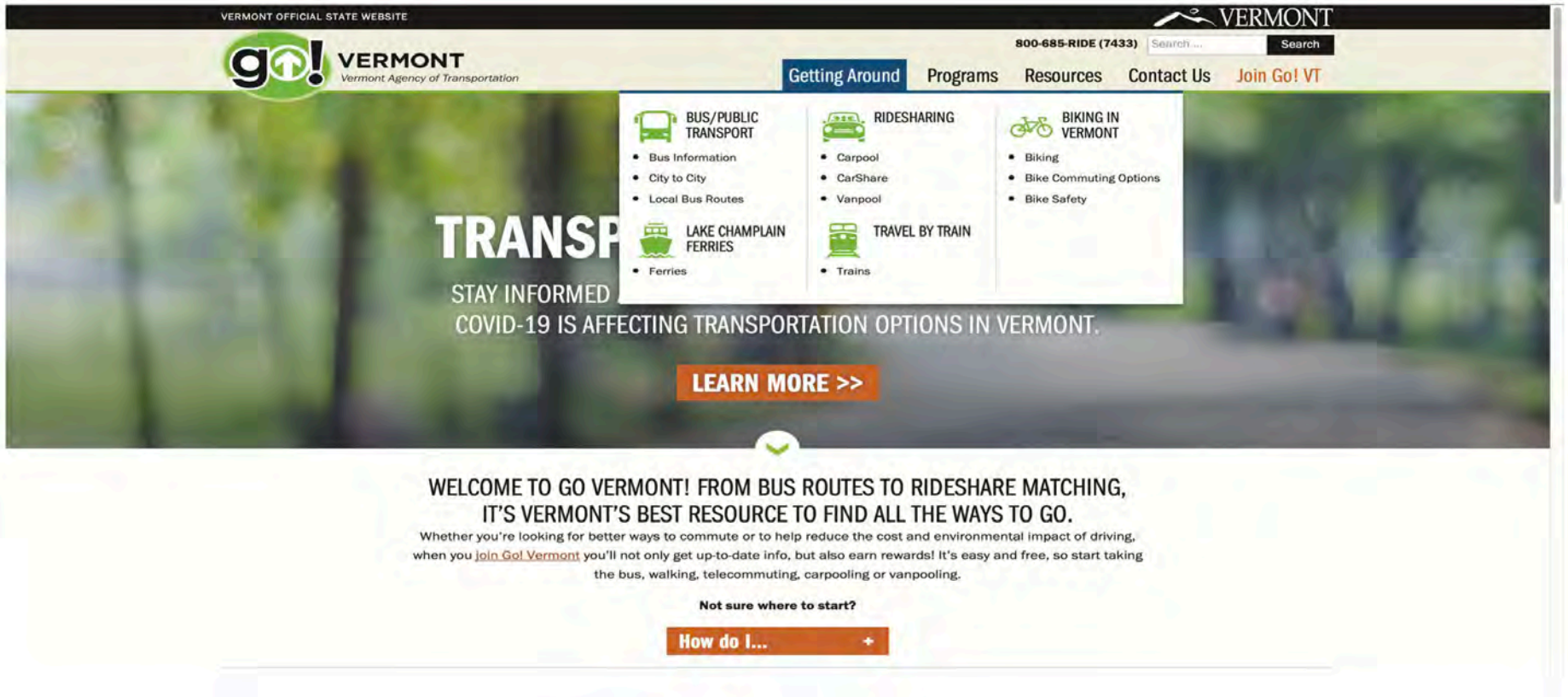
ATL TRANSIT


Simply Get There - Trip
ATLtransit
ATLtransit
Plan trip
Getting around
Fares & Transfers
Rider's Guide
More
Click to view recent status updates.
Plan trip
Next arrival
Stop ID
Enter starting address...
Enter destination...
Leave now
Plan with:
ATLtransit
Google Transit
Find a Park 'n' Ride near you:
Acworth
Go
SOME PEOPLE LOVE TRAFFIC.
Others try transit.
FEATURED CONTENT

Where the Region is Headed Next

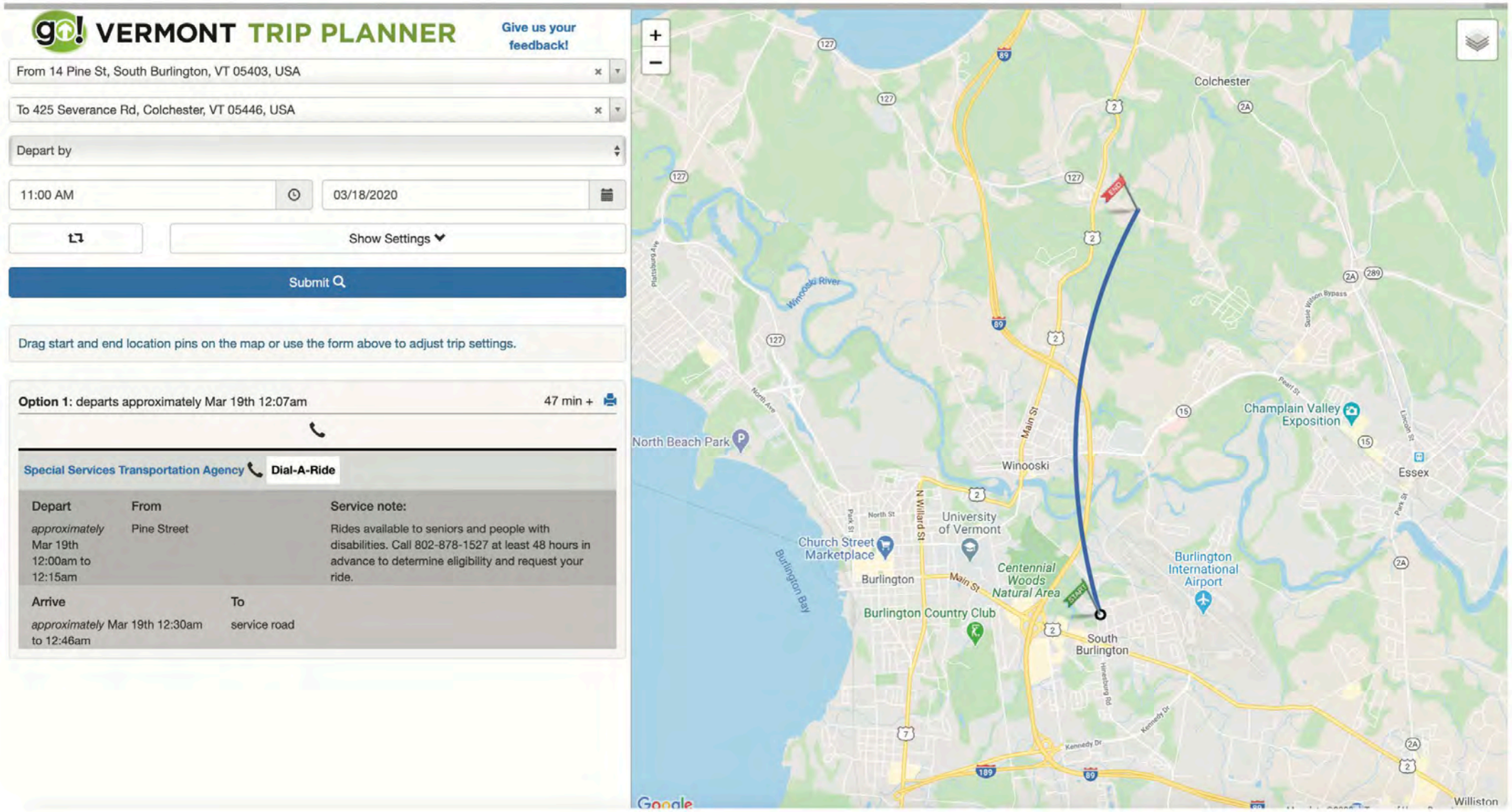
- Maintaining Empowerline at 404-463-3333 (Area Agency on Aging/ARC) + United Way 211
- Maintaining Google Transit
- Possibly maintaining www.SimplyGetThere.org and www.ATLTransit.org
- Creating a new trip planning resource, led by the Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority (ATL)
  - FTA Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) Demonstration Grant
  - The ATL works on integrating transit across a 13-county region: Cherokee, Clayton, Coweta, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Rockdale
  - $430,400 grant amount + $307,600 match = $738,000 project cost
  - “The Atlanta region’s proposed IMI project, ATL RIDES (Atlanta-Region Rider Information and Data Evaluation System), will be a multi-modal journey planning application for both desktop and mobile devices.”

NATIONAL EXAMPLE – VERMONT DOT (VTRANS)



- VTrans added 'flexible transit' options to Open Trip Planner (OTP) in 2019.
- Flexible transit (e.g., demand response) leverages GTFS-Flex, an extension of GTFS.
- Using the GTFS-Flex data standard supports future innovations such as potential incorporation into the Google Maps trip planner.

NATIONAL EXAMPLE – VERMONT DOT (VTRANS)

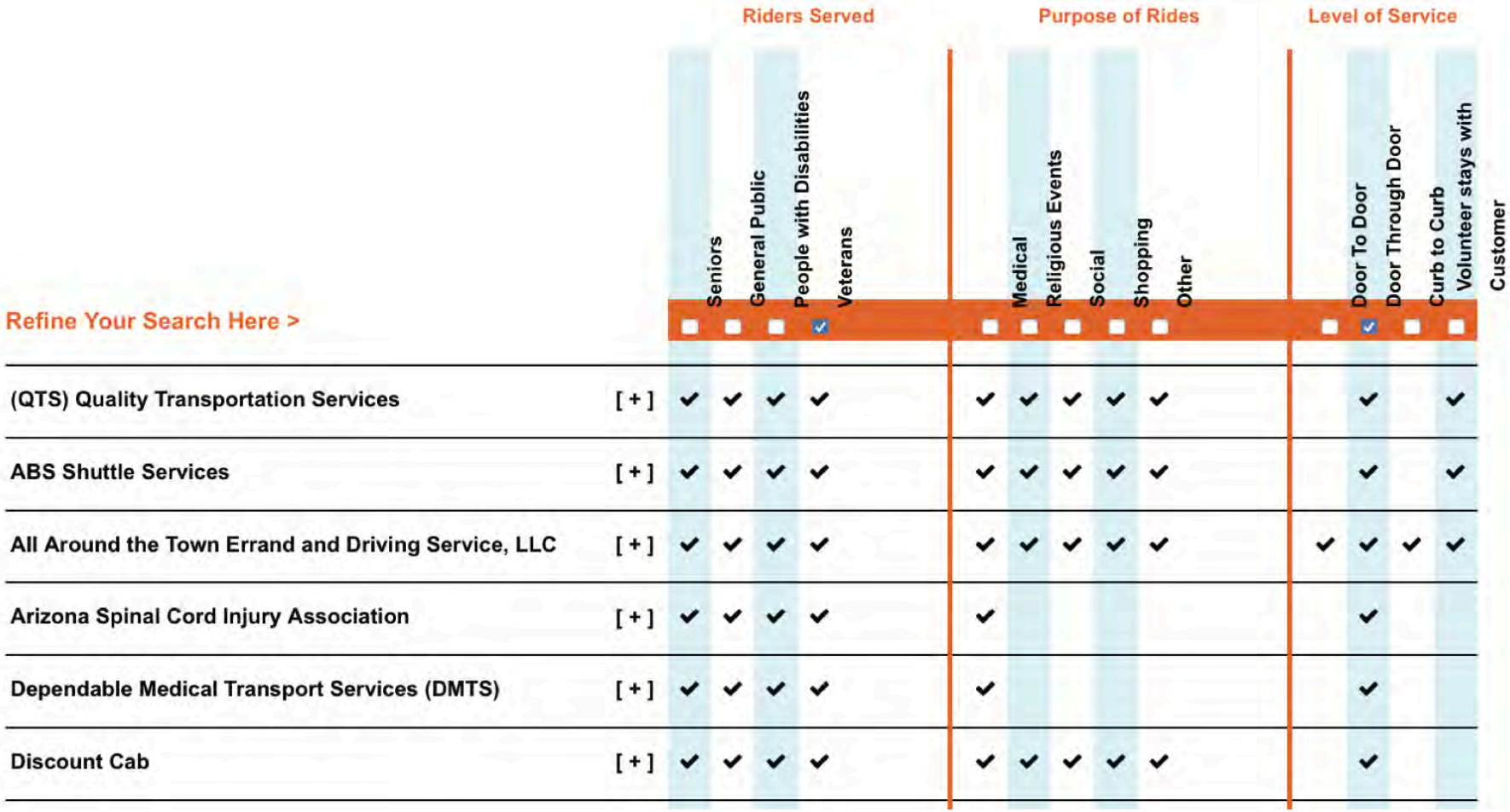


Screenshot of the Go! Vermont Itinerary Planner

NATIONAL EXAMPLE – PHOENIX METRO AREA

"I have been riding with the volunteer program since my husband got sick – more than five years. They were really here for us. I'd be lost without them. What would I do without them? I couldn't go anywhere. I can't drive."

– Jane Cotter – senior who travels to the dentist

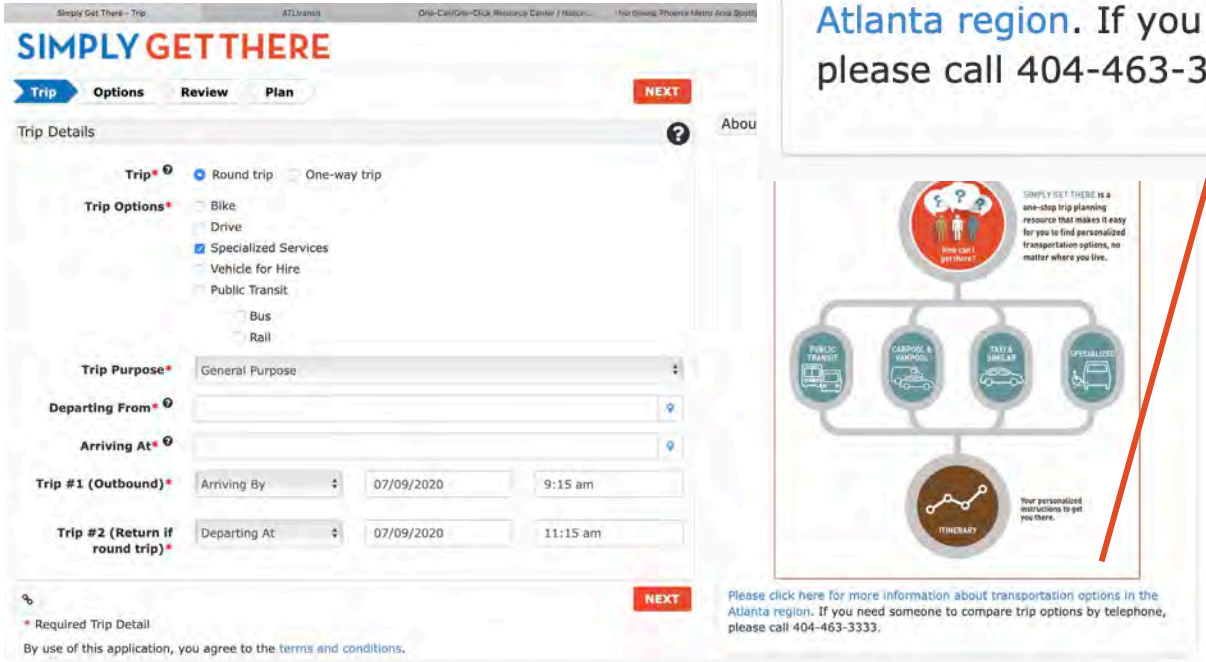


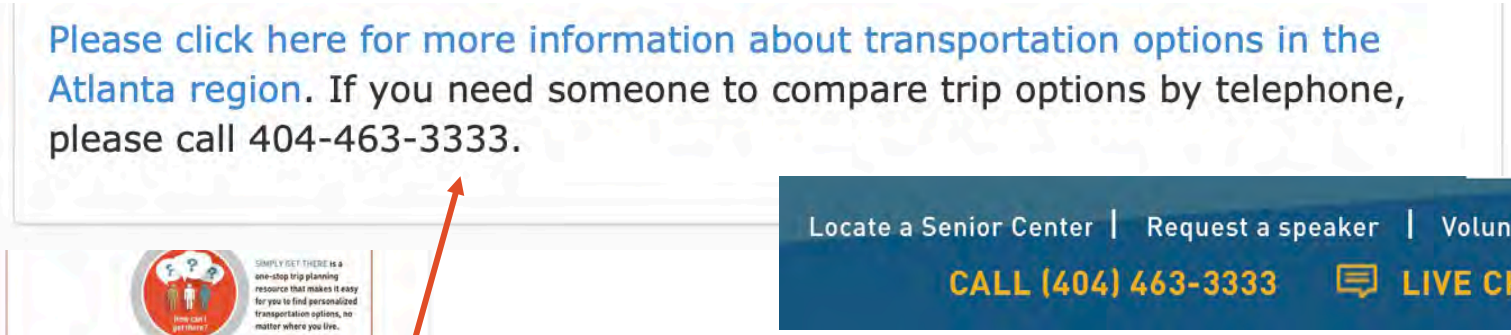
Refine Your Search Here >		Riders Served: Seniors	General Public	People with Disabilities	Veterans	Purpose of Rides: Medical	Religious Events	Social	Shopping	Other	Level of Service: Door To Door	Door Through Door	Curb to Curb	Volunteer stays with Customer
		☐	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐
(QTS) Quality Transportation Services	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		✔
ABS Shuttle Services	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		✔
All Around the Town Errand and Driving Service, LLC	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
Arizona Spinal Cord Injury Association	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔						✔		
Dependable Medical Transport Services (DMTS)	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔						✔		
Discount Cab	[+]	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔		

Northwest Valley Connect's Provider Directory

Communicating Complementary Resources

- Maximizes communication/marketing efforts
- Strengthens complementary resources (user comes to one, finds another, and gets what they need)





IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS & DISCUSSION

1

How can we best advance trip planning implementation?

2

Who are the key partners and champions? What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

3

What next steps should be taken?

the Atlanta Regional

Demand Response Implementation Plan

How can we best advance trip planning implementation?

the Atlanta Regional

Demand Response Implementation Plan

Who are the key partners and champions?

What are the potential pitfalls to avoid?

the Atlanta Regional

Demand Response Implementation Plan

What next steps should be taken?

Thank you!

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the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- TAC Meeting Summaries
- Deep Dive Sessions
- **Regional County Profiles**
- Best Practices and Strategies

the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

Regional County Profiles

April 2020

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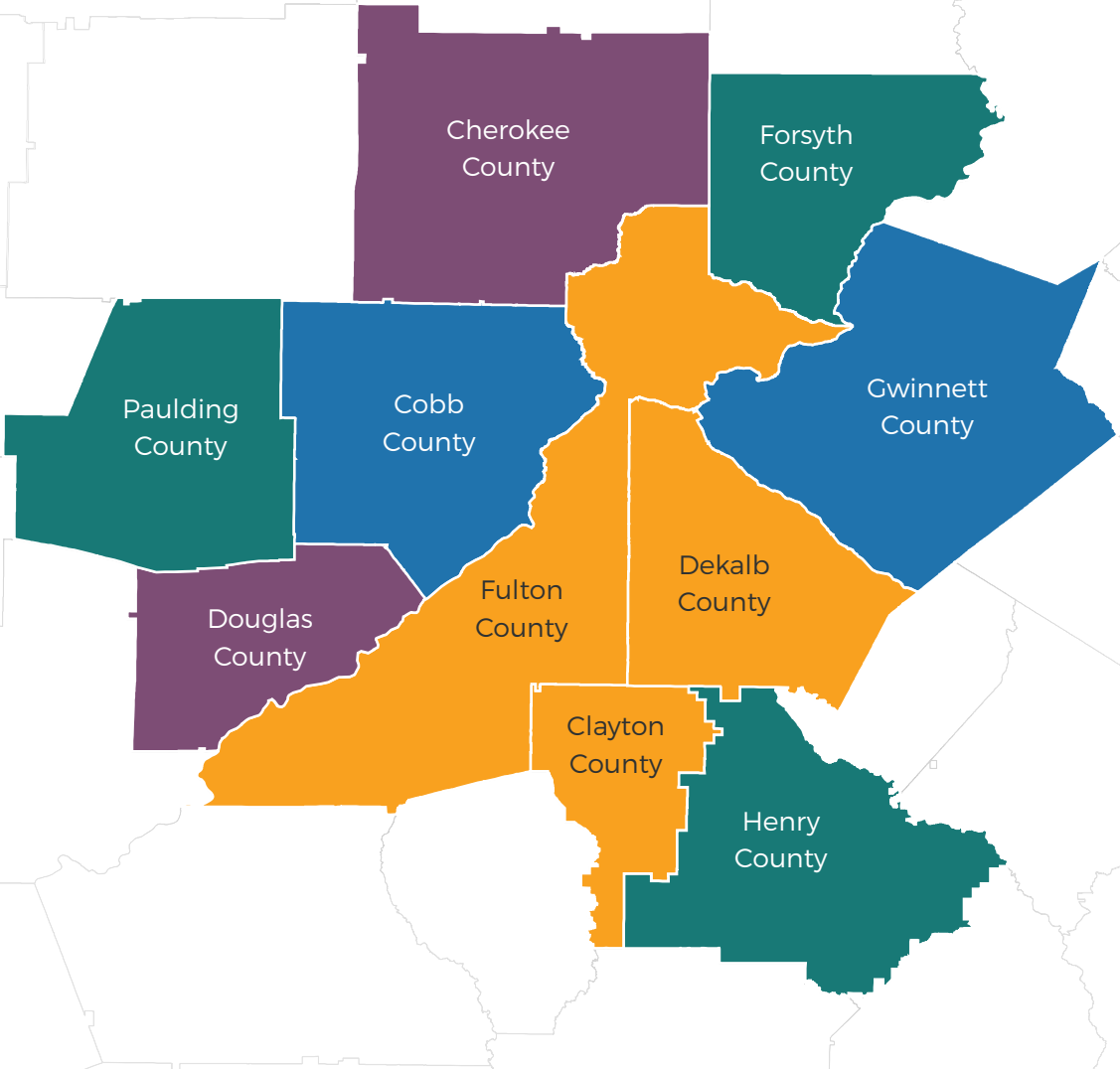
INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta Region Human Services Transportation (HST) Demand Response Transportation (DRT) Implementation Study is an outgrowth of *Managing Mobility in the Atlanta Region*, the Atlanta Region's Human Services Transportation Plan. Its focus is on advancing strategies to improve coordination among DRT services and providers. This document summarizes information compiled as part of the study with a focus on the region's counties. It highlights the organization and usage of existing services, and illustrates future needs and trends – to help inform future models of coordination and opportunities for service enhancements.

The inputs for this analysis include data compiled from a variety of sources and qualitative input collected during stakeholder interviews and project meetings.

METHODOLOGY

This booklet organizes the 10-county ARC planning area into four "tiers." This is to highlight themes among similar geographies and contexts, and to contextualize these themes regionally. See map and legend.



TIER 1 MARTA REGION (Fulton, Dekalb, and Clayton)

- Substantial fixed route transit options including heavy rail, light rail, and bus with connections to many key destinations

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and feeder trips to connect with fixed route, including connections to Tier 2 and potentially others

TIER 2 GWINNETT AND COBB

- Local and commuter bus services including routes connecting to densest areas in each county and to Atlanta

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips generally within the county and provide feeder trips to connect with local bus, some trips continuing to fixed route options in Tier 1

TIER 3 CHEROKEE AND DOUGLAS

- Limited fixed route services; a few routes around local downtown areas

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips and limited feeder trips that connect with Tiers 1 and 2

TIER 4 PAULDING, FOSYTH, AND HENRY

- No fixed route services, only DRT

- HST DRT services provide stand-alone trips with few exceptions

REGIONAL PROFILE & TOPICS / THEMES

In the context of human services transportation, improving coordination is an essential goal.

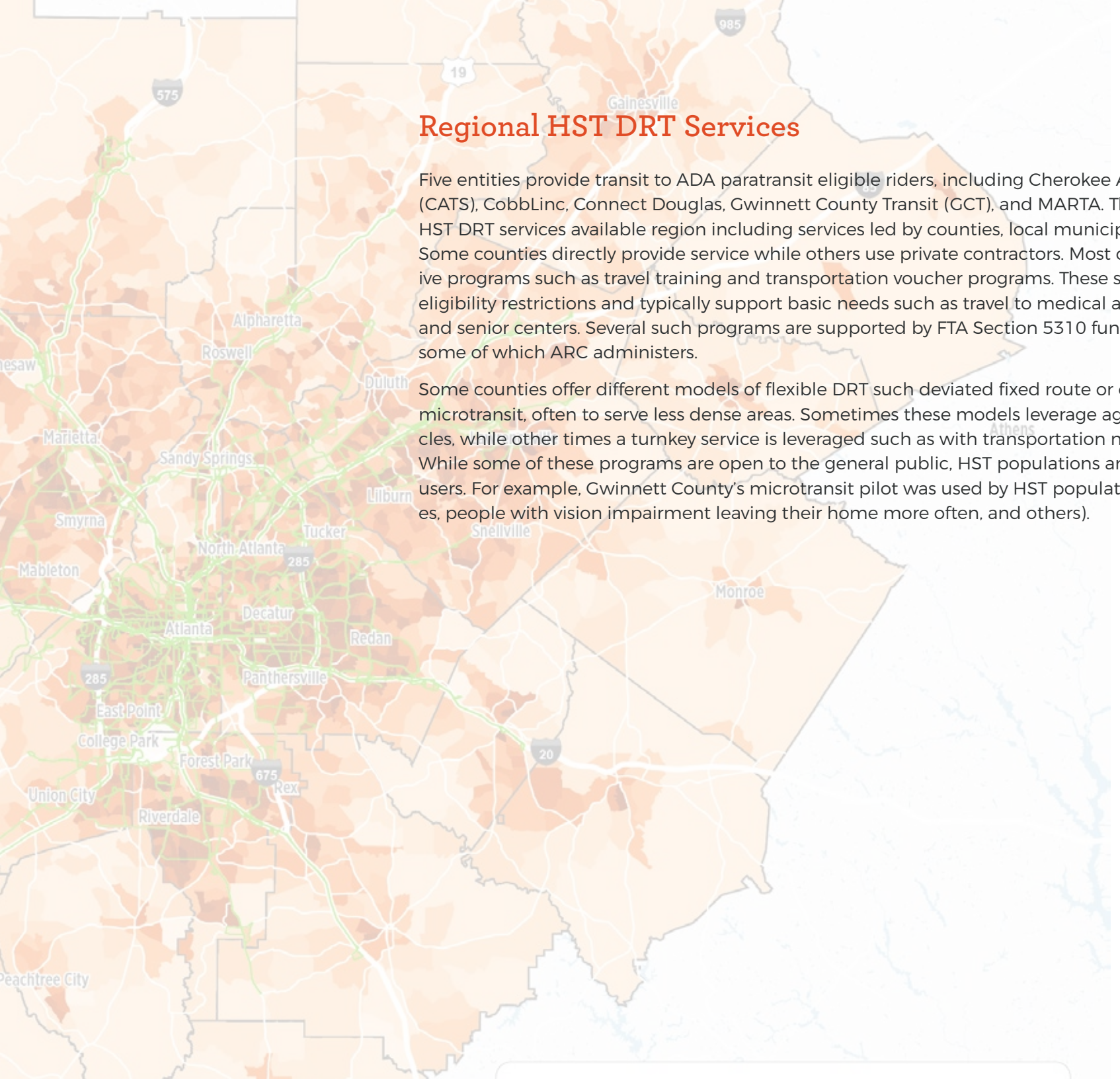
Throughout the region, improving coordination can take different forms, and the goal of this study is to identify opportunities to increase and improve coordination, to ensure efficiencies, and to provide the basis for obtaining the funding necessary to serve a growing population. While there are unique needs and commonalities among different geographies and contexts throughout the Atlanta region, an understanding of the shared challenges and needs on a regional scale is necessary to understand how to coordinate investments and improvements throughout the region.

The Atlanta region has Human Service Transportation (HST) Demand Response Transportation (DRT) programs throughout the region but it is not an integrated system. As more people use DRT, whether for HST-related reasons or in general, technology that improves the user experience and improves cost effectiveness shows some potential. Individual counties and agencies are thinking innovatively about HST DRT, but doing so separately, keeping the system fragmented and less efficient. A regional HST DRT system that is integrated with the overall regional transportation should focus on increased connectivity – between HST DRT services within each jurisdiction, between HST DRT services across jurisdictions, and between HST DRT and fixed route services (i.e., feeder trips).

General Context

The region is centered around the urban core of the City of Atlanta and Fulton County. The region's land use and development can be described in a traditional sense, with many urbanized centers in the core and in major focal points in surrounding counties. The region is growing with a significant growth in the population of older adults.

The region is served by a mix of fixed route, complementary paratransit, and other demand response services (non-ADA) both provided by MARTA, and by county and local governments and non-profit organizations. Generally, the services reflect the urban fabric of the region, with a focus on serving urban, suburban and rural focal points. There's a mix of regional rail and bus and local bus systems throughout the region with many of the services feeding into Fulton County and into the City of Atlanta. Some of the region's more rural counties and areas have service gaps and fewer or limited services.



Regional HST DRT Services

Five entities provide transit to ADA paratransit eligible riders, including Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS), CobbLinc, Connect Douglas, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), and MARTA. Throughout the region, other HST DRT services available region including services led by counties, local municipalities, and non-profits. Some counties directly provide service while others use private contractors. Most counties offer some supportive programs such as travel training and transportation voucher programs. These services and programs have eligibility restrictions and typically support basic needs such as travel to medical appointments, supermarkets, and senior centers. Several such programs are supported by FTA Section 5310 funds or other grant programs, some of which ARC administers.

Some counties offer different models of flexible DRT such deviated fixed route or on-demand transit, including microtransit, often to serve less dense areas. Sometimes these models leverage agency/county staff and vehicles, while other times a turnkey service is leveraged such as with transportation network TNCs (e.g., Lyft, Uber). While some of these programs are open to the general public, HST populations are among the most prevalent users. For example, Gwinnett County's microtransit pilot was used by HST populations (e.g., dialysis trip purposes, people with vision impairment leaving their home more often, and others).

Regional Challenges

POPULATIONS IN NEED INCREASING

Those interviewed and/or participating in project meetings have collectively described growing demand among those with lower income (including a growing homeless population) and among older adults, which is expected to continue substantial growth in the Atlanta region. Nearly all the agencies providing paratransit reported an uptick in applications in recent years.

LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Study participants have generally described insufficient financial resources to keep pace with this need. Some agencies report being forced to prioritize certain types of trips over others, which results in providing medical purpose trips, for example, but less trips for errand-running and other needs. This has the potential to reduce morale for the staff, since they are forced to turn away people in need. Further, counties that may see their FTA funding status change following the 2020 census (from 5311 to 5307 funding) which will reduce support federal operating funds.

LACK OF QUALIFIED DRIVERS

It is challenging to sustain a roster of qualified drivers to operate vehicles. Agencies report instances of investing in training drivers to help them obtain the appropriate license, then losing them to private firms who pay a higher wage.

LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND GAIN ASSISTANCE

Study participants reporting they are innovating and experimenting separately with their service models, technology, and funding. However, they noted there are few structured opportunities for professionals to share lessons learned, so that others may learn from successes as well as mistakes. Further, for major shared challenges such as the FTA funding shift from 5311 to 5307 funding, impacted agencies report a need for more guidance.

Prominent Themes

ARC hosted an HST Summit with the study's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in February 2020. This event featured focused discussions on seven prominent topics, most of which were identified as part of the Atlanta HST Plan or during the first TAC meeting in October 2019.

FARE PAYMENT

Current policies

Areas of interest

Breeze card

ATL as an opportunity

PARATRANSIT

Regional application process/eligibility

Transfers among providers

Procurement and regional coordination

TRIP SHARING/TRIP COORDINATION

Taking advantage of overlapping

Opportunities and challenges

Possible models of coordination (brokerage)

PERFORMANCE TRACKING & REPORTING

What data are readily available

What can be shared

What information is needed

MICROTRANSIT & TNC PARTNERSHIPS

On-demand/microtransit to address needs in less dense areas

Interest in applying to existing demand response services and engaging turnkey operations

What would a regional approach involve?

TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN TRIP PLANNING

Regional approach for travel options

Different trip planning tools available (ATL, Simplyget-there, other options)

What should regional trip planning and real time data look like in 2 years

FUNDING

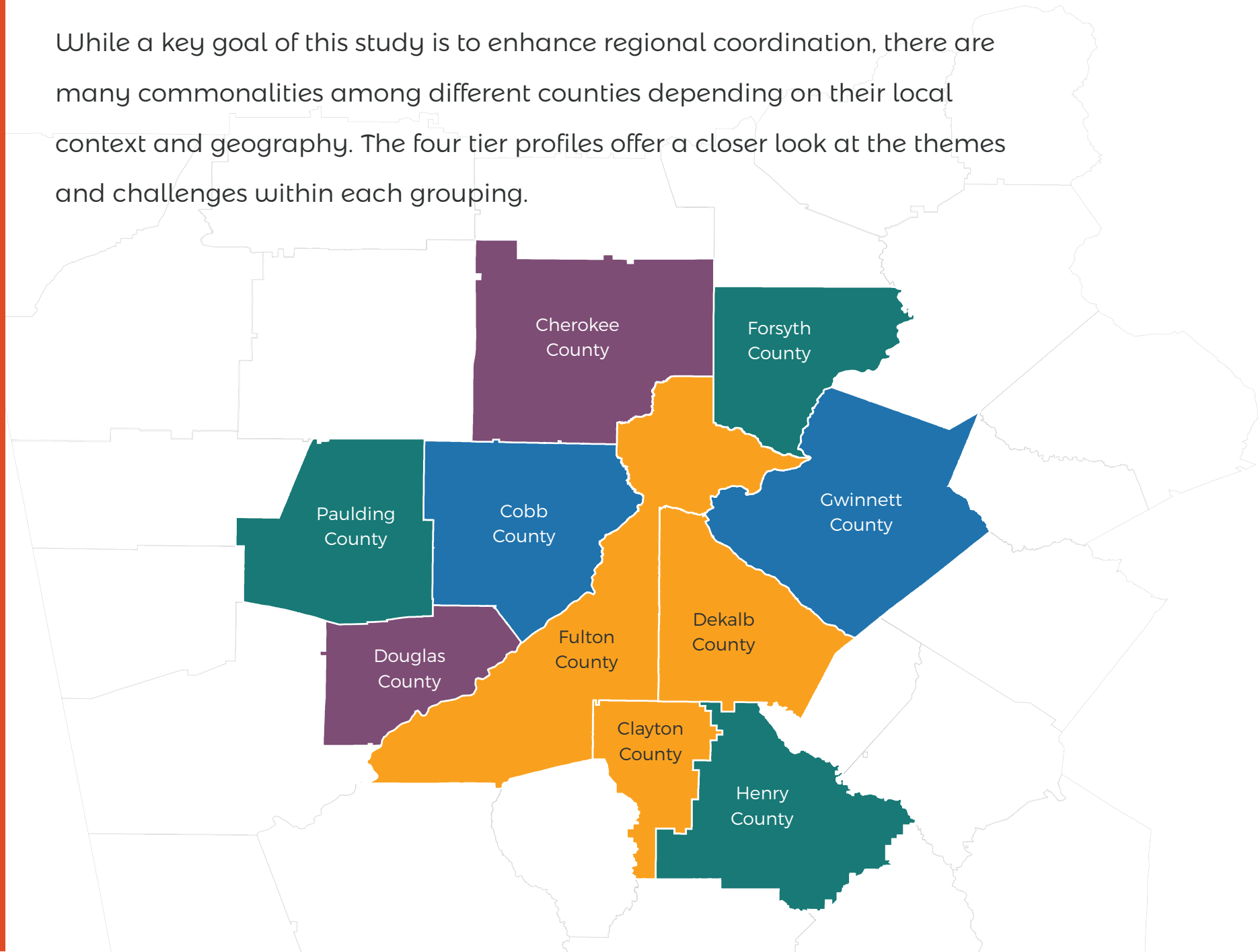
What are biggest funding challenges?

Areas becoming urbanized – navigating FTA process

Grant writing challenges (e.g. call for Section 5310 projects)

TIER PROFILES

While a key goal of this study is to enhance regional coordination, there are many commonalities among different counties depending on their local context and geography. The four tier profiles offer a closer look at the themes and challenges within each grouping.



TIER 1: MARTA REGION

Fulton, Dekalb, & Clayton Counties

2018 Population Characteristics

29% people with low income

78% household smartphone access

4% zero car households

35 median age

Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

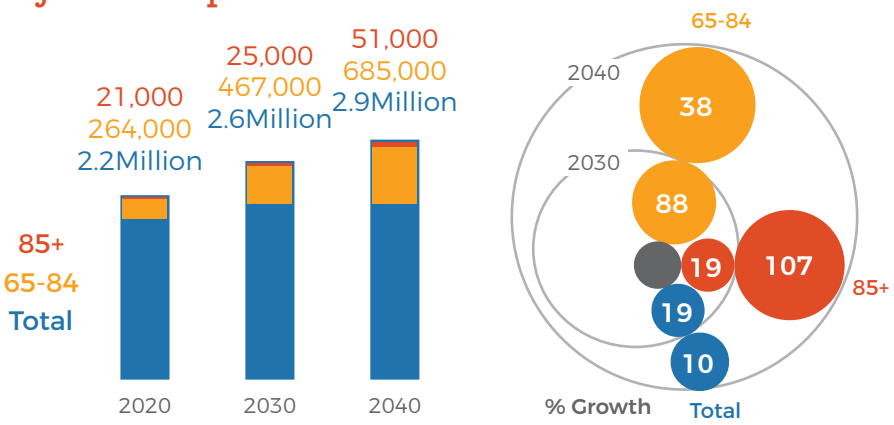
Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
$32.6 million	$3.2 million
721,000+ trips	411,000+ trips

*Clayton county funding combined with Fayette and Henry Counties

source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

Projected Population Growth



Source: State of Georga population forcasts

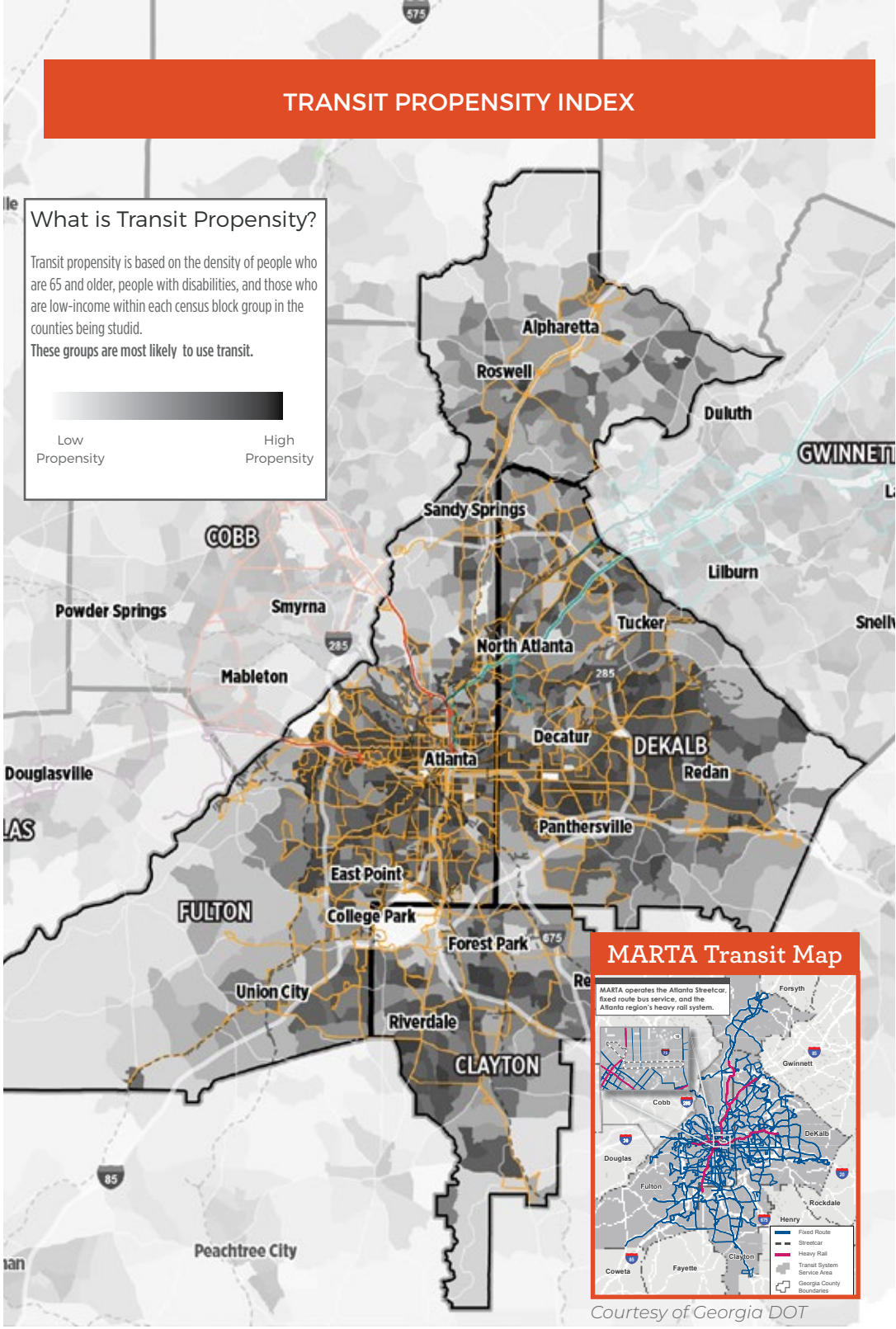
TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX

What is Transit Propensity?

Transit propensity is based on the density of people who are 65 and older, people with disabilities, and those who are low-income within each census block group in the counties being studid.

These groups are most likely to use transit.

Low Propensity — High Propensity



Courtesy of Georgia DOT

TIER 1 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

Fulton

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

40% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Considered the central hub of the Atlanta metropolitan region and as an urbanized county, Fulton County features several transit options to support various mobility needs. This includes the MARTA system (rapid rail, streetcar, and bus, and MARTA Mobility (complementary paratransit). Other non-ADA programs and services are available and connect to MARTA. Services are available throughout the county with a higher concentration of options in more urbanized areas.

DeKalb

16% people with low income

9% zero car households

13% population above 65

DeKalb County if comprised of several suburban communities, with some urbanized areas that are generally closer to Fulton County.

With varying levels of density, transit service is mixed. There are significant fixed route options (MARTA rail, MARTA Mobility, and bus) closer Fulton County and along major corridors. There are transit gaps in the rural areas.

Non-ADA service options are facilitated and funded by county and local governments, and several non-profit organizations.

Clayton

19% people with low income

7% zero car households

9% population above 65

Located in the southern portion of the urban core, Clayton County is primarily suburban and rural and is home to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

The county has some fixed route transit service provided by MARTA, including bus services and MARTA Mobility, and limited rail access in the north.There are transit deserts in the more rural areas. Limited non-ADA DRT services are available.

Source: American Community Survey

TIER 1 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

HST DRT SERVICES

Fulton

In addition to MARTA Mobility service that complements fixed route service, Fulton County has a mix of county-led and county-coordinated services. Some of the services are provided directly through the county (senior shuttles, and non-emergency medical transportation), including Fulton County Office of Aging DRT and Senior Services North Fulton's Transportation Options Program for Seniors (TOPS), whereas some of the other services are facilitated through county contracts, including the Transdev shared-ride transportation program. Fulton County is currently operating a very popular pilot program to provide subsidized Uber/Lyft rides to residents over the age of 60.

DeKalb

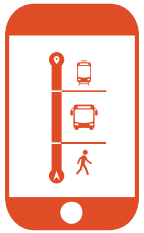
In addition to MARTA Mobility service that complements fixed route service, DeKalb County has several service offerings. DeKalb County Senior Services operates DRT, shuttles and NEMT. The non-profit Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) provides several shuttles (these also operate in Gwinnett County). At least one of the CPACS shuttles provides feeder trips, connecting to the MARTA Doraville station. Several volunteer organizations provide volunteer driver services.

The county also provides the DisABILITY Travel Training program and the DeKalb County Travel Voucher Program for people with disabilities.

Clayton

In addition to MARTA Mobility, Clayton County Senior Services provides DRT and subscription services for those not eligible for MARTA Mobility. The service includes taking them to a MARTA train station as a feeder trip to connect to other transit services.

Observations

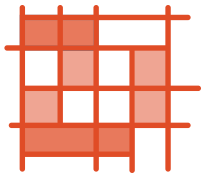


TECHNOLOGY

There is strong interest in the potential for technology to improve HST DRT services and enable new types of service models. Staff participating in the February 2020 HST Summit took an active role in "technology's role in trip planning and booking" and "microtransit/TNC partnerships" sessions.

UNIFYING AGENCY

This is the only tier with one transit agency connecting the three counties, which presents an opportunity for increased connectivity among DRT services across jurisdictions.



FEEDER TRIPS

Non-ADA services are often designed to connect to MARTA's fixed route services at rail stations. Maximizing feeder trips should be explored in the densest urban area of the region.

TIER 2: GWINNETT & COBB

2018 Population Characteristics

10% people with low income

83% household smartphone access

1% zero car households

36 median age

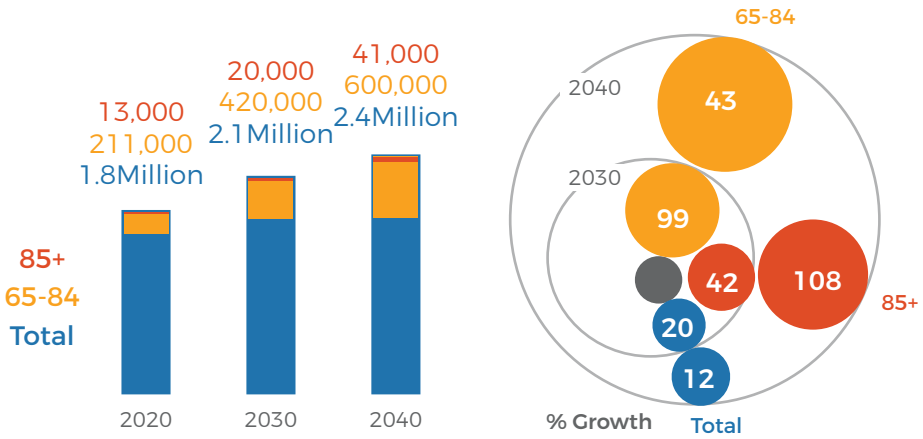
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
$6.5 million	**$1.8** million
104,000+ trips	**207,000+** trips

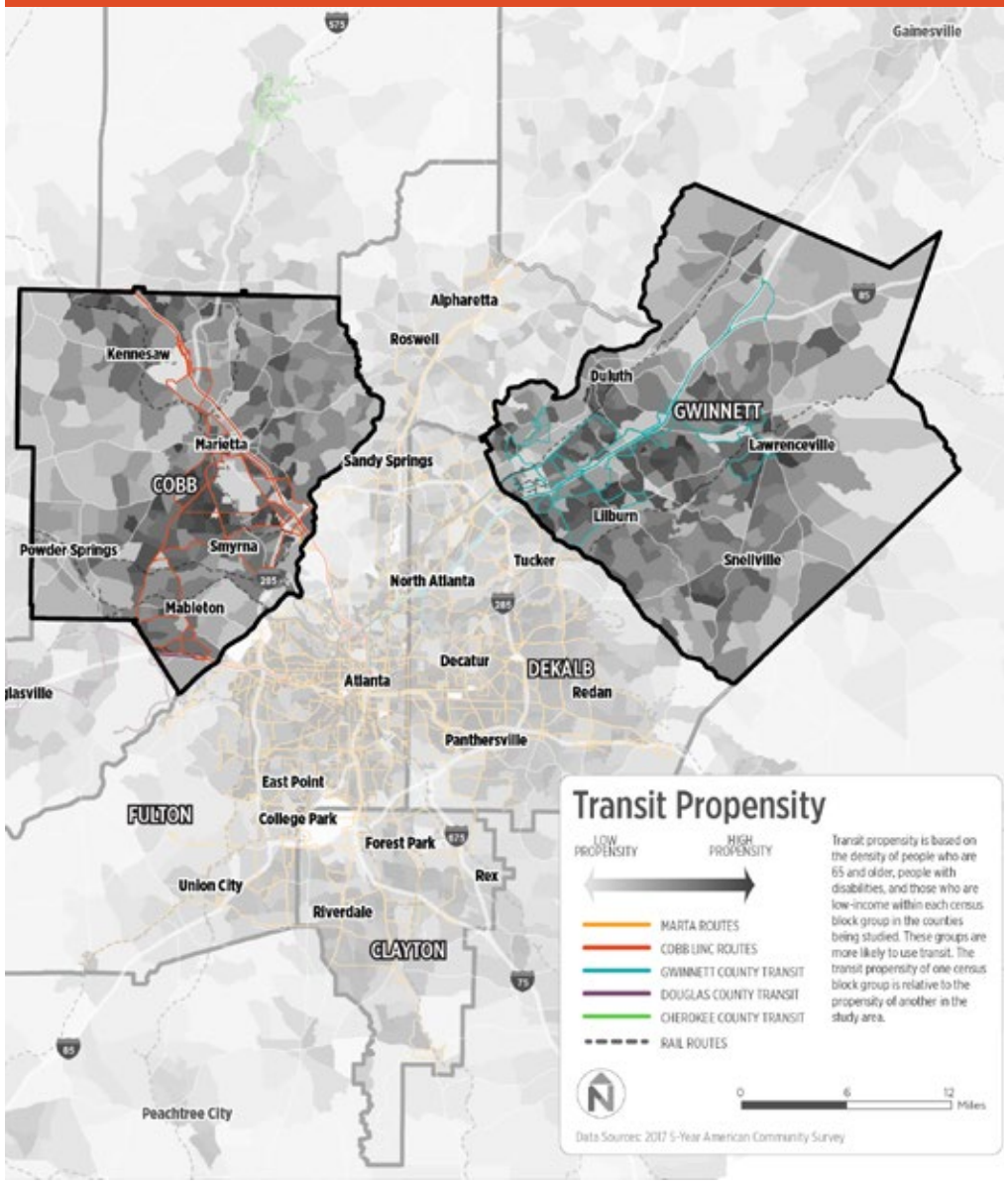
*Cobb County Non-ADA transit funding is paired with Cherokee County in Tier 3
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

Projected Population Growth



Source: State of Georga population forcasts

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



TIER 2 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

Gwinnett

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

11% people with low income

4% zero car households

10% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Gwinnett County is home to a mix of suburban and rural communities. The county is the second most populous county in Georgia and is one of the most diverse counties in the region.

Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) offers fixed bus service and complementary paratransit. Gwinnett County provides DRT services, to which GCT and the county try to coordinate. Additional non-ADA programs are available in the county, with the majority offered or coordinated by the county.

Cobb

10% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

Cobb County is primarily comprised of suburban and rural communities.

There is a mix of transit services, including fixed route bus services provided by CobbLinc, which provide a mix of express, local and circulator routes and connections to MARTA bus services. CobbLinc also provides ADA complementary paratransit services are also provided by CobbLinc, and many non-ADA transit services are provided by the county, with a concentration of transit services along main corridors and serving popular destinations. Many of the routes also feed towards Fulton County, with some gaps in the rural areas.

TIER 2 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

HST DRT SERVICES

Gwinnett

Gwinnett County Transit (GCT) provides ADA paratransit as a complement to its non-commuter fixed route service.

Gwinnett County's Senior Services Division provides and coordinates services, including DRT for seniors, the 'Door through Door' volunteer driver program, and provides the 'Get in Gear' voucher program.

In 2018-19, GCT piloted the first transit agency/county-operated, technology-driven microtransit service in the Atlanta region. GCT is looking to scale up the pilot in 2020.

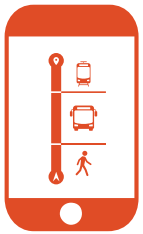
DeKalb County-based Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) also serves Gwinnett County through its CPACS-Mobility service. At least one of the CPACS shuttles provides feeder trips, connecting to the MARTA Doraville station. A TNC and vanpool service called "First Step" is also operated by a local nonprofit. View Point Health is a non-profit that also provides fixed route and DRT services.

Cobb

CobbLinc provides paratransit service as a complement to its non-commuter fixed route service. This includes some service that overlaps with MARTA's service area.

Cobb Senior Services offers limited county-wide service as well as limited-eligibility shuttles to its congregate centers. The County offers a Transportation Voucher Program funded through an ARC-managed grant to subsidize travel for ADA paratransit eligible residents who live outside the CobbLinc service area.

Observations

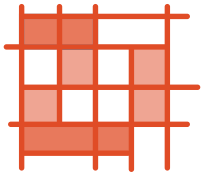


TECHNOLOGY

Tier 2 has been leading the way in the region for deviated fixed route /flex transit and microtransit. Staff participating in the February 2020 HST Summit took an active role in "technology's role in trip planning and booking" and "microtransit/TNC partnerships" sessions and can learn from/share with Tier 1.

LARGE UNDERSERVED AREAS

Tier 2 has large areas with lower density on the urban fringe and agencies struggle to provide viable service in these underserved areas.



FEEDER/STAND-ALONE TRIPS

There is potential to provide new/additional HST DRT services in the underserved areas to support both feeder and stand-alone trips (e.g., both are addressed in GCT's micro-transit in Snellville and Cobb Linc's "flex" service).

Source: American Community Survey

TIER 3: CHEROKEE & DOUGLAS

2018 Population Characteristics*

10% people with low income

78% household smartphone access

1% zero car households

36 median age

*Data not available for Cherokee County

Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

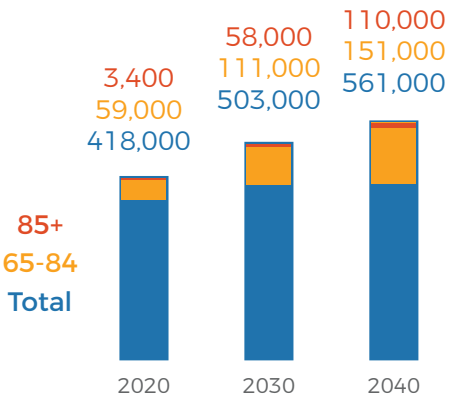
Demand Response Transportation Funding

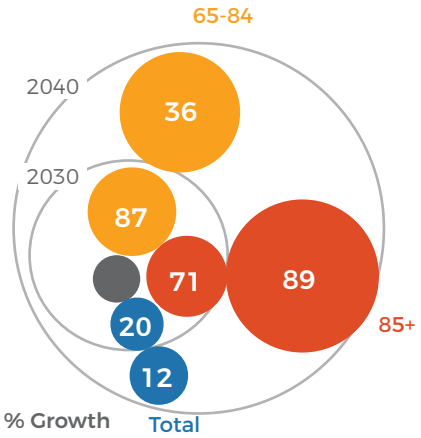
ADA	Non-ADA*
$1.2 million	$468,000
74,000+ trips	59,000+ trips

*Cherokee and Douglass County Non-ADA transit funding is paired with Cobb County in Tier 2

source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

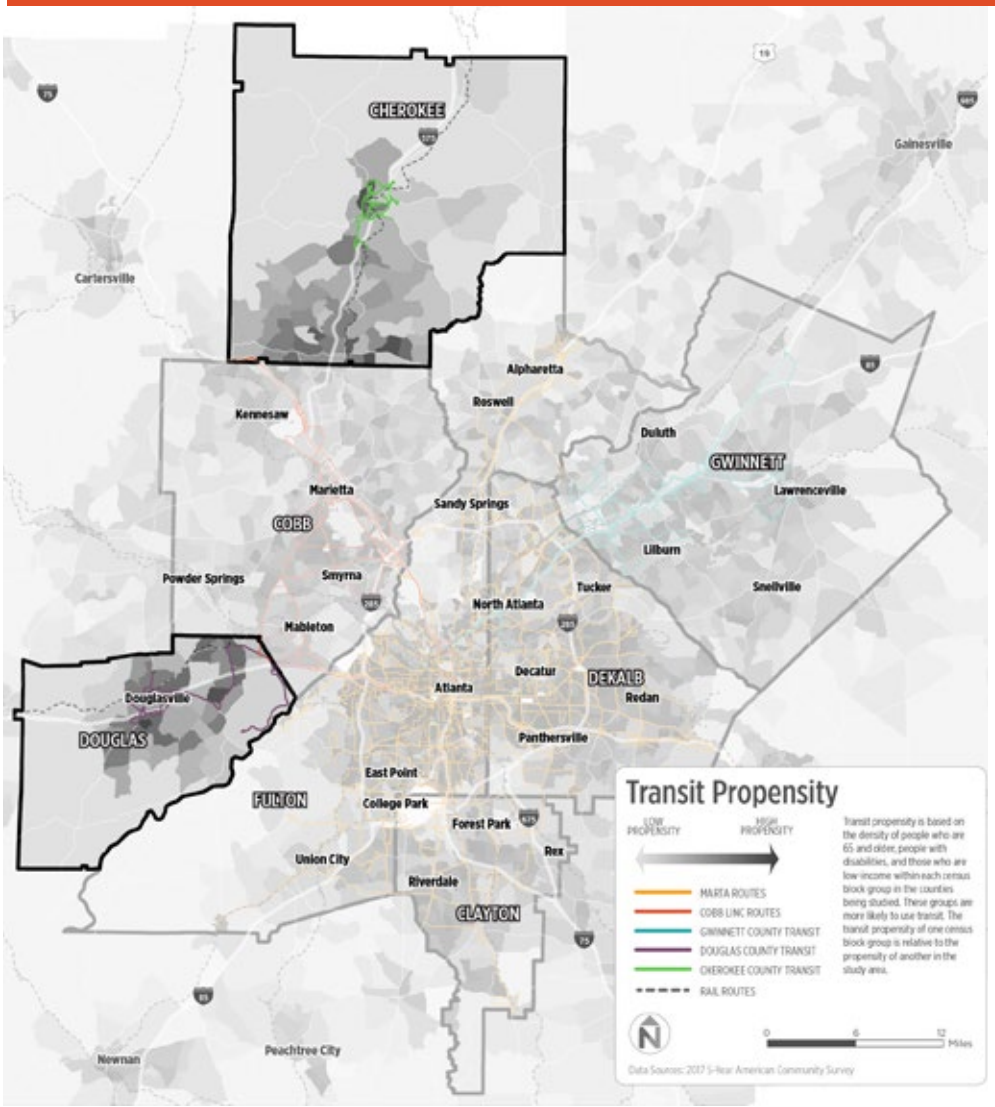
Projected Population Growth





Source: State of Georga population forcasts

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



TIER 3 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

Cherokee

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

8% people with low income

3% zero car households

14% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

As a rural county north of Atlanta, some local transit is available. Cherokee Area Transportation System (CATS) provides a local fixed route bus service in Canton with ADA complementary paratransit.

Services are generally meeting local needs but there are opportunities to increase services and connections among communities in the county and with adjacent counties.

HST DRT SERVICES

CATS provides ADA paratransit as a complement to its fixed route service.

CATS provides countywide demand response service (not exclusive to HST populations), with limited service for trips within the county. Common trips purposes include training/work, medical, senior centers, and shopping. The county also provides a transportation voucher program.

In addition to the demand-response service, the County also provides a Volunteer Driver Program, where 16 volunteers provide rides for seniors to the grocery store, bank, post office, hairdresser, and regular doctor appointments.

Douglas

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

13% people with low income

4% zero car households

12% population above 65

GENERAL CONTEXT

Douglas County is located west of Atlanta and is considered a rural county. Connect Douglas provides a new fixed route bus service in Douglasville, which extends east toward Cobb County and to communities on the Fulton County line. Connect Douglas also provides ADA complementary paratransit.

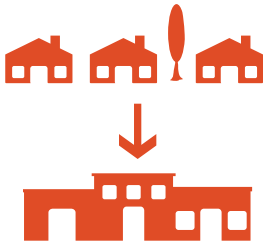
HST DRT SERVICES

Connect Douglas provides ADA paratransit as a complement to its fixed route service.

Douglas County provides non-ADA HST DRT service, including Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) and a transportation voucher program (both exclusively for seniors and individuals with disabilities). The fixed route service also deviates for up to 1 mile if booked in advance, so it provides some level of deviated fixed route

TIER 3

Observations

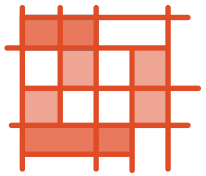


TRANSITIONING TO 5307 STATUS

Tier 3 includes counties that have transitioned from providing DRT service only to providing some fixed route service as a new service offering. After the 2020 Census, these counties may be designated as small urban areas, a change from their current status as rural. Having a diversity of services can help with the transition from 5311 to 5307 funding, though Tier 3 still reports having challenges with 5307.

OVERLAPPING SERVICE

At the same time, the range of service types that may overlap may appear as unclear to users as to which service is most appropriate for a given trip. Douglas, for instance, has plans to reorganize its services over the next several years.



FEEDER/STAND-ALONE TRIPS

There is potential to provide new/additional DRT services that support primarily stand-alone trips as well as feeder trips. This would improve connectivity between Douglas and Cobb and between Douglas and MARTA bus. CATS is also considering high-capacity bus service to Cobb County.

TIER 4: FORSYTH, HENRY AND PAULDING

2018 Population Characteristics

10% people with low income*

81% household smartphone access †

1% zero car households*

37 median age †

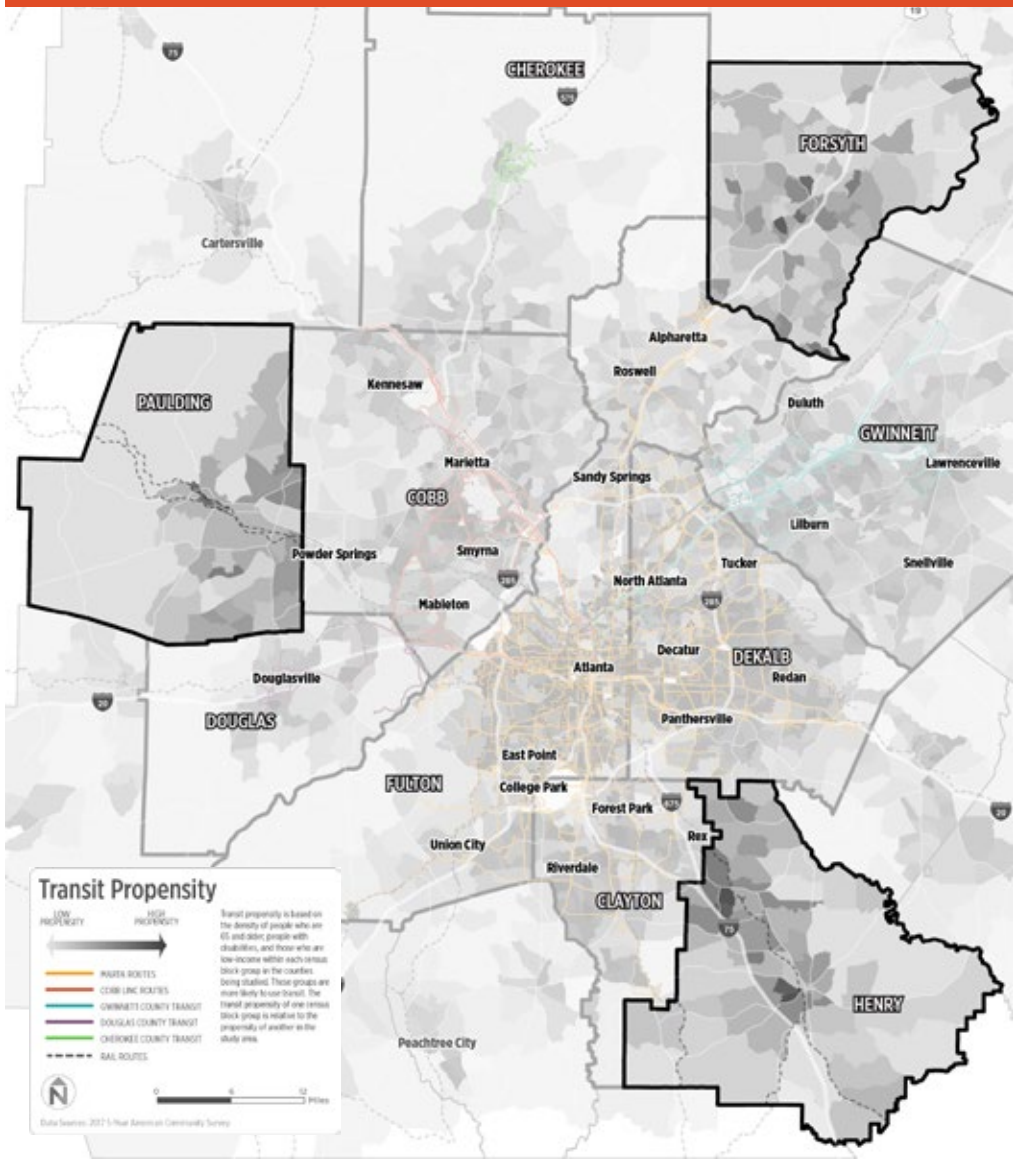
* Data not available for Forsyth and Paulding Counties
† Data not available for Forsyth Counties
Source: Georgia state transit plan, US Census

Demand Response Transportation Funding

ADA	Non-ADA*
N/A	$2.7 million
N/A	234,000+ trips

*Forsyth, Henry, and Paulding Non-ADA funding is shared with 28 other rural counties.
source: Georgia at a Crossroads, compiled by Georgia State University

TRANSIT PROPENSITY INDEX



TIER 4 MOBILITY SNAPSHOT

2018 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

GENERAL CONTEXT

HST DRT SERVICES

Forsyth

N/A people with low income

N/A zero car households

N/A population above 65

Located in the northern portion of the Atlanta region, Forsyth County is rural. The county currently has no fixed route services bus is undergoing a transit master plan study. At present, Dial-a-Ride service is available.

Forsyth County runs a county-based DRT service (not exclusive to HST populations), and reports the current situation with 8 vans is not enough to meet demand.

Henry

10% people with low income

2% zero car households

12% population above 65

Henry County is located southeast of the core of the Atlanta region and is primarily comprised of rural communities. There is a fixed bus route in North Henry, and both DRT and HST services are available.

Henry County Transit runs a county-based DRT curb-to-curb service (not exclusive to HST populations).

Henry County Transit also provides HST services for individuals to use services offered by the Georgia Department of Human Services.

Paulding

10% people with low income

3% zero car households

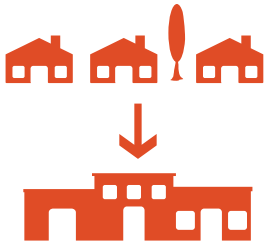
N/A population above 65

Paulding County is located northwest of the core of the Atlanta region, and is primarily rural. There are no fixed route services in the county, though DRT services are available.

Paulding Transit runs a county-based DRT service (not exclusive to HST populations), and the trip purposes include education and social/recreational, though medical is the main purpose.

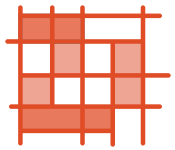
Source: American Community Survey

Observations



TRANSITIONING TO 5307 STATUS

Tier 4 includes counties that provide only DRT service. Some in Tier 4 are considering a small fixed route system, similar to Tier 3, to help address a potential post 2020 Census designation as small urban (from 5311 to 5307) while also providing a viable new type of transit service in their area. They can learn from Tier 3's lessons. Forsyth is undertaking a transit master plan.



STAND-ALONE TRIPS

There is potential to provide new/additional DRT services that support primarily stand-alone trips and feeder trips to some extent.

TECHNOLOGY

Tier 4 is particularly interested in TNC partnerships to provide turnkey DRT services in their counties without having to own and operate their own fleets; they could learn from Tier 1's experiences. They are also somewhat interested in technology to improve operating their own DRT fleets, such as with microtransit led by Tier 2. Each Tier 4 county has specifically mentioned this technology interest.

Coweta County

Although not part of the ten-county ARC planning area, Coweta County is closely associated with the Atlanta region. Coweta runs a county-based DRT service (not exclusive to HST populations) and the primary trip purposes are for training/work, medical, and senior centers. Coweta staff report the county is becoming a regional medical center (Cancer Centers of America, Piedmont-Newnan, and others), which may increase regionwide medical-purpose transportation needs. Coweta completed a fixed route study and would like to move forward with fixed routes. However, the main city where the service would operate, Newnan has not yet agreed to fund service, making the option not viable.

the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

the Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- TAC Meeting Summaries
- Deep Dive Sessions
- Regional County Profiles
- Best Practices and Strategies

Best Practices and Strategies

September 2020

INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta Regional Demand Response Implementation Plan is an effort to operationalize recommendations from the Atlanta Regional Human Services Transportation (HST) Plan adopted by ARC board in March 2017. That plan included as a key goal to develop a menu of local and regional tactics that will work in a coordinated manner to improve mobility in the Atlanta region.

This report summarizes the work undertaken for the current planning process to identify best practices and strategies. Based on input from the ARC and the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the consultant team researched applicable examples of effective coordination strategies in other regions, and conducted interviews, and used this information to develop initial strategy recommendations for consideration.

The research included more than 10 topic areas. For some of the topic areas, examples of effective practices could not be easily identified. In other instances, examples of effective practices were identified but may not be directly applicable to the Atlanta region. This report summarizes nine areas for which the consultant team undertook research that can lead to draft strategy recommendations as follows:

1. Consistent ADA eligibility processes and rider policies
2. Procedures for efficiently coordinating ADA trips between adjacent service providers
3. Co-mingling riders
4. Supporting the Section 5310 funding application process
5. Regional fare payment options, including demand response transportation
6. Trip planning resources that incorporate demand response transportation
7. Trip scheduling technology
8. Same-day demand response transportation
9. Sustainable regional coordination and collaboration

Report Organization

Each of the strategies includes an overview, a discussion of the identified need and why it is important for this project, and how it supports what the project team learned through research, interviews, and meetings of the technical advisory committee (TAC). As applicable, examples of how other regions or agencies have addressed the topic are presented, including an assessment of potential applicability to the Atlanta region.

CONSISENT ADA ELIGIBILITY PROCESSES AND RIDER POLICIES

In recent years, some transit agencies have made efforts to coordinate and standardize certain key policies and procedures related to the provision of regional ADA paratransit across all of the provider agencies and organizations within a particular homogeneous city region to ensure consistent service delivery as well as compliance with federal ADA requirements. This can include establishing consistent ADA paratransit eligibility processes

(applications, policies, documents, assessment procedures, and appeal policies), and consistent public-facing rider policies and definitions on topics such as no-shows and cancellations, rider assistance, personal care attendants, service animals, etc.). This was a recommended strategy in the HST Plan.

Need

In the ARC region, five transit agencies provide complementary paratransit service as required by ADA (MARTA Mobility, CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit, Connect Douglas, and CATS Paratransit (Cherokee County). MARTA Mobility and CobbLinc have overlapping service areas, riders served by the other providers may need to travel within other providers' service areas, particularly MARTA Mobility. Having consistent policies, procedures, and rider materials helps to simplify matters for agencies and for riders, and fosters further collaboration among agencies.

Importance

ADA paratransit is a complicated program with service-specific terms and definitions. When more than one entity is operating in a region, defining similar functions differently is confusing for riders and caregivers.

What We Heard

During TAC meetings, the lack of consistency was identified as a concern for those who use the service. Further, during a focused discussion among paratransit providers attending the HST Summit in February 2020, participants expressed support for improving consistency.

Best Practice

Valley Metro, Phoenix, Arizona

Valley Metro is the primary agency providing ADA paratransit service in the Phoenix metro area (Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Scottsdale, Mesa, Tempe, and others). There are currently four partner paratransit service providers under the Valley Metro umbrella:

- Valley Metro Paratransit (East Valley)
- Glendale Dial-a-Ride
- Valley Metro Paratransit (Northwest Valley)
- Peoria Dial-a-Ride

Beginning in 2008, Valley Metro and its partners began to establish a regional paratransit program, including coordinating and standardizing key policy areas. Over the past 12 years, Valley Metro and its partners have fully coordinated about half of the key policy areas that had been recommended for coordination (eligibility, trip purposes and number of trips, pickup windows and vehicle wait times, no-shows and cancellations, personal care attendants/companions/service animals, service refusal). All providers operate during the same core period (5 am–8 pm). Fares are the same throughout the region. The reservations process is streamlined. In 2008 there were nine call centers, today

there are four. Rider assistance polices still vary. For example, for regional paratransit and within Phoenix, Paradise Valley, and the East, Northwest and Southwest valleys, door-to-door service is the norm. In Glendale and Peoria, service is curb to curb, but door-to-door service is provided upon request.

Following are the key take aways and lessons learned from Valley Metro:

- **Change Takes Time** – Coordinating policies across multiple agencies will not happen overnight, and conflicting priorities must be managed. Observations and strategies to help address this lesson include:
  - **Establish clear goals and objectives early** – Establishing clear goals and objectives is crucial to securing buy in and participation from agency partners and other stakeholders and will guide the process as it moves along.
  - **Build a formal team and process** – Without regular meetings and coordination efforts, change is unlikely. In Phoenix, one staff member from each agency, as well as key representatives from member communities and stakeholder groups, meet at least monthly to continue ongoing work on policy coordination.
  - **Get the right people on your side, and in the room** – Ensure you have and maintain political support for your effort and engage with elected officials periodically.
- **Manage expectations, and understand the tradeoffs** – Understanding, and clearly communicating, the trade-offs of policy coordination is just as crucial for as knowing the motivations and benefits. Observations and strategies to help address this lesson include:
  - **Avoid associating coordination with costs savings** – While cost savings could result from policy coordination, using cost savings as a selling point is risky.
  - **Identify your barriers and limitations, and prioritize strategies accordingly** – Some decisions about policies and procedures are driven by local budgets and priorities, and sometimes these can serve as barriers. For example, Valley Metro's effort to standardize service hours and days presented challenges for some smaller providers. This led to the decision to focus on consistent core service hours.

Applicability

The Phoenix example and lessons learned are directly applicable to Atlanta. Several of these concepts were discussed at the HST Summit and subsequent meeting of the Transit Operators Group in May 2020. Further information on existing policies and opportunities to ensure consistency will be included in the forthcoming project report.

PROCEDURES FOR EFFICIENTLY COORDINATING ADA TRIPS BETWEEN ADJACENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

The DOT ADA regulations established a coordination requirement during development of complementary paratransit plans. Coordination is an ongoing process, and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) expects transit agencies to have a mechanism in place to

ensure that complementary paratransit riders have an ability to make interjurisdictional trips on a comparable basis to individuals using the fixed route system. As with the ADA paratransit eligibility process, some transit agencies have worked to better coordinate trips for those traveling between service areas beyond meeting the initial regularly requirements. This strategy aims to improve upon coordination to enhance the rider experience and improve efficiencies.

Need

In the ARC region, five transit agencies provide complementary paratransit service as required by ADA (MARTA Mobility, CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), Connect Douglas, and CATS Paratransit (Cherokee County). MARTA Mobility and CobbLinc have overlapping service areas, riders served by the other providers may need to travel within other providers' service areas, particularly MARTA Mobility. GCT connects to MARTA at Doraville Station. Connect Douglas and CobbLinc transfer riders at Six Flags. In addition, Connect Douglas operates close to MARTA bus routes in southwestern Fulton county. Having established procedures in place to facilitate reservations and smooth transfers among overlapping or adjacent service providers is advantageous to riders and providers.

Importance

As with policies, delivering complementary paratransit efficiently is difficult. When riders need to travel on more than one service, the reservations process can be time consuming and overly complex. Coordinating transfers is also operationally challenging.

What We Heard

During TAC meetings, the lack of consistency was identified as a concern for those who use the service. Further, during a focused discussion among paratransit providers attending the HST Summit in February 2020, participants expressed support for improving consistency.

Best Practices

Throughout the U.S., regional complementary paratransit providers with overlapping services have established procedures for coordinating travel. This is most common in regions with both urban and suburban providers, including Washington, DC. Chicago, IL, Phoenix, AZ, Detroit, MI, and elsewhere. In some instances, customers call one provider who then coordinates travel with the other provider. This helps to avoid requiring the rider to make two sets of reservations for each trip and enables the two providers to coordinate schedules. A best practice is to establish protocols through the use of scheduling software for call takers to be able to "see" other provider's run structures and schedule the transfer during the call.

SMART and DDOT, Detroit, Michigan

To address challenges in scheduling transfer trips in Detroit, the Suburban Mobility Agency for Regional Transit (SMART) and the Detroit Department of Transportation

(DDOT) received a Michigan Mobility Challenge grant to develop a mobile app for customers to request trips. As of August 2020, this app is in final testing phases. Customers can request a series of trips through the app and schedulers from both agencies can collaborate on schedules and offer trip information through the app. Customers can also see their schedule trips, cancel trips in advance, and receive notifications when the vehicle is arriving.

Applicability

Through the Transit Operators Group, a paratransit operators subcommittee can work to formalize protocols for transfers among providers, and investigate technology solutions to facilitate the process.

CO-MINGLING RIDERS

One of the key challenges in advancing HST DRT is to coordinate travel among different overlapping providers. Throughout the region, HST trips are serving common origins and destinations, yet because services are funded differently and provided by different agencies, service inefficiencies are common.

Need

In the context of limited resources and growing need for HST DRT, opportunities to capitalize on available vehicle capacity, particularly for medical trips, is seen as a way to serve more people.

Importance

To be cost efficient, transit providers will work to fill as many seats as possible, within reason, on a single vehicle run. Human service agencies support co-mingling public transit and human service agency client trips because it increases service options for riders. State-level support is often based, in part, on the potential cost savings gained through reduced duplication of services and making the most use of available capacity on existing resources.

What We Heard

From interviews with stakeholders, it became apparent that services are operating separately, yet often carrying customers who have dual eligibility. We also learned that the current reimbursement policies make it difficult to co-mingle riders.

Best Practices

Maine Department of Health and Human Services/Penquis Community Action Program, Inc. and Waldo Community Action Partners

Penquis and Waldo Community Action Programs are non-profit brokers for Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Non-Emergency Transportation. In

addition to brokering and providing trips for Non-Emergency Transportation, the two non-profits also provide transportation for other DHHS program services including trips that are not reimbursed by the NET program. As providers for multiple DHHS programs, the two non-profit agencies are able to create consistency for riders whose trips may be funded by multiple DHHS programs and cost-efficiency by co-mingling passengers with trips funded by different agencies on the same vehicle, when appropriate.

Central Pennsylvania/rabbittransit

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania adopted a regional strategy HST Coordination in 2009 based on a report predicting an additional 3% in cost reductions could be achieved through consolidation of administrative practices and reduced duplication of trips. Regionalization of shared programs in Central Pennsylvania has resulted in cost savings. An overall reduction in cost per trip occurred between 2009 and 2018. The overall result was a savings of approximately $1.3 Million due to regionalization. Ridership losses also occurred in most systems after they consolidated but the declines may have been associated with external factors such as economic conditions and fluctuations in funding sources for shared ride transportation. It is likely that available revenue from major funding sources that were subsidizing the cost of the trip for the passenger drove ridership changes more than changes in operational practices.

Eastern Connecticut Transportation Consortium (ECTC)

ECTC is a non-profit agency formed through a partnership of a local council of governments and a foundation. ECTC serves 41 towns in eastern Connecticut. The purpose is to serve older adults, individuals with low incomes, and people with disabilities by promoting the coordination of paratransit services. ECTC operates demand response transportation programs in member communities and is the ADA paratransit operator for the local public transit system. It also coordinates a volunteer dial-a-ride program and manages the mobility program. Each program is funded separately, and funding comes from multiple Federal and state sources.

Where possible, attempts are made to group an agency's needs with other agencies that provide transportation in the same general vicinity or to the same client group. The mixture of collaborating agencies and variety of services enables agencies to offer additional services to clients without affecting the current transportation services. Through sharing resources with other agencies, every agency reduces operating costs. This coordination process helps to achieve higher levels of efficiency in the use of public and private funds. Private funding programs can be used to provide seed money to start a transportation consortium but will not provide long-term support.

Applicability

Given that most of the overlapping transportation services are funded locally or are limited by regulations, it is less likely that county-level services can achieve significant co-mingling of riders. Nonprofits such as CPACS and others Section 5310 recipients have more flexibility in the services they provide and may be able to collaborate more on service coordination. One strategy that may support better service coordination can be tied to future development of trip planners that enable the collection of data on where

needs are greatest. Similarly, shared scheduling platforms that enable schedulers to "see" other providers' trips can help to build relationships for future trip sharing.

ASSISTANCE WITH THE SECTION 5310 FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS

FTA Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities) helps meet the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities. In Georgia, the Department of Human Services is the designated funding recipient for the Atlanta region. ARC oversees a portion of these funds while DHS oversees the rest. Navigating this application process can be challenging, particularly for entities that are unfamiliar with the process or for new staff. This strategy would provide additional technical assistance to potential recipients.

Need

According to Georgia at a Crossroads prepared by Georgia State University, in 2018, the region's recipients of Section 5310 funding provided 95,000 trips to older adults and people with disabilities.

Importance

Since many of the services in the region are supported by Section 5310, applicants for funding must be able to navigate the process and maximize use of available funding.

What We Heard

During the project kickoff meeting in September 2019 with the TAC and subsequent agency interviews, navigating the grant funding process was identified as an ongoing concern. During the February 2020 HST Summit, a focused discussion on funding elaborated on these concerns. Specific comments included:

- Timelines are too short and do not line up well with other day-to-day needs and operations, such as budgeting.
- Education is needed on the application process.
- Not enough staff available to support the grant process.
- Obtaining the local match can be an issue when budgets are constrained.

Best Practices

Maryland DOT Maryland Transit Administration

The Maryland Department of Transportation Maryland Transit Administration (MDOT MTA)'s Office of Local Transit Support (OLTS) administers the Section 5310 program along with other federal and state transit funding. The OLTS developed a Section 5310 Program Manual that provides comprehensive guidance on federal and state rules and regulations related to the program. This manual is geared for those subrecipients of section 5310 funds in Maryland who do not also receive other FTA funding through MTA.

In most cases these subrecipients are affiliated with human service programs rather than public transit programs, and therefore are not as knowledgeable of federal requirements as are public transit providers.

The OLTS has a strong partnership with Transportation Association of Maryland (TAM), the state's transit association. Through this partnership TAM hosts a page on their website that provides specific resources, including the section 5310 Program Manual. This manual, along with program applications and others guides, is available at: www.taminc.org/office-of-local-transit-support.

Arizona DOT

Arizona DOT's Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)[1] provides funding for training and provides technical assistance to meet the specific needs of Section 5311 and Section 5310. While this is focused on rural areas, the RTAP program's mission is to:

- Enhance and develop the skills and abilities of persons involved in providing passenger service in rural Arizona
- Promote the safe and effective delivery of training for Section 5311 and Section 5310 grantees
- Improve the quality of information through the development of training and technical assistance resource materials

The program offers scholarships to Section 5311 and 5310 grantees to further the development of management skills and encourage professional networking. Scholarships are available to agencies for transit-related courses, workshops, seminars, driver training and conferences with subject matter applicable to rural transportation and appropriate to the level of expertise of the persons attending.

Applicability

Deep dive sessions held in late July 2020 with TAC members covered funding and coordination among other topics. The Georgia Transit Association was specifically cited as a valuable forum for information exchange. At a minimum, future GTA meetings should include training sessions on the 5310 program and those new to the grant application process should be encouraged to participate. In addition, ARC can investigate development of a program manual similar to Maryland DOT's and/or work with DHS to provide additional technical assistance.

REGIONAL FARE PAYMENT OPTIONS, INCLUDING DEMAND RESPONSE TRANSPORTATION

A regional fare payment system that includes HST DRT will simplify travel for many vulnerable travelers. Since, fare payment is a key part of the trip process, fare media

[1] https://azdot.gov/planning/transit-programs-and-grants/rural-transit-assistance-program-rtap

(e.g., card, mobile tickets), fare products (e.g., monthly passes), and fare policies (e.g., children ride free) must all be aligned for regional fare payment systems to work.

Need

There are fare payment options for HST DRT trips. For agencies providing such trips, such as county-based DRT and ADA paratransit, payments can be handled in person with cash, with paper-based multi-trip passes, or by leveraging technology. Technology supports media such as RFID cards (e.g., Breeze card), often tied to online accounts, as well as mobile ticketing systems. Providers throughout the region can move fare payment options forward in ways that work best for their needs.

Importance

As more providers integrate advanced fare payment systems, the more seamless the user experience becomes. In addition, regional fare payment enables cross-jurisdictional trips. Including more providers in a regional fare payment program involves understanding how the accounting/reconciliation will work. Further, advanced fare payment systems can support better data collection, user tracking, and reimbursement.

What We Heard

In individual interviews and at TAC meetings, the consultant team learned that Douglas and Cherokee counties would like to become part of the Breeze system. MARTA's Regional Transit Group (RTG) focuses on technology issues including Breeze/regional fare payments. Cherokee County is already included in RTG and other countries are welcome to join.

MARTA's CIO reported that additional agencies could possibly be added to Breeze. The mobile platform could be added separately enabling a provider such as Connect County to add passes as a fare product.

Best Practices

Lynx, Orlando, Florida

LYNX has a mobile ticketing platform, Paw Pass[2]. Mobile tickets are available for all LYNX services, including ADA paratransit and its on-demand service Neighborlink.

RTD, Denver, Colorado

RTD also has a mobile ticketing platform[3] developed as a 'while label' app by a multi-system app developer[4]. Though mobile tickets are available for RTD's on-demand service FlexRide, they are not available for ADA paratransit.

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[2] https://www.golynx.com/tripapps/

[3] https://www.rtd-denver.com/fares-passes/mobile-ticketing

[4] https://www.masabi.com

Applicability

The presence of the Breeze app, the work of MARTA's RTG, and the ability to incorporate multi-system platform apps as 'white label' products all support the extension of advanced fare payment systems throughout the region, including for HST DRT providers.

TRIP PLANNING RESOURCES THAT INCORPORATE DEMAND RESPONSE TRANSPORTATION

A long-term and sustainable trip planning tool can provide a central, single point of contact (a website and/or call center) where people can learn about available transportation resources, including demand response transportation (DRT).

Need

People in search of transportation services often do not know where to begin or what services are available to them, or in some cases need to coordinate and plan their trips through several providers, platforms, and services. As such, trip planning and mobility management solutions can help address the challenges experienced by users. Human services transportation (HST) DRT options are often not included in such solutions, representing a significant informational gap.

Importance

The region previously invested in Simplygetthere but has not been able to maintain it. The ATL is now developing regional trip planning tools through an FTA Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI) grant. Incorporating HST DRT into the tool is critical to support travel outside the region's fixed route transit service areas.

What We Heard

Throughout this project, the need for useful information to learn about and plan for travel has been identified as an ongoing priority. At the February 2020 HST Summit a strategies workshop focused on technology's role in trip planning, key takeaways were:

- The region needs a single software/app for trip planning (and eventually booking) that includes all modes with demand-response options.
- DRT real time data currently has a gap; part of region has automatic vehicle location (AVL) but some counties/providers such as CPACS, Paulding, and Cherokee do not.
- A single software/app would require management and funding as well as political will.

Best Practices

VTrans, Vermont

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) has a multimodal trip planner developed with Open Trip Planner (OTP), an open source trip planning software, which originally included fixed route, walking, and biking options only. VTrans added 'flexible transit' options to OTP in 2019[5]. The flexible transit feature (e.g., demand response) leverages GTFS-Flex, an extension of the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). Using the GTFS-Flex data standard supports future innovations such as potential incorporation into the Google Maps trip planner. A key advantage of this approach is that agencies can leverage the open source software, adding to its code and sharing updates with others.

The VTrans effort did not include key HST features, such as eligibility factors and required accommodations. Such features could potentially be added.

Lynx, Orlando, Florida

In the Orlando, Florida Region, the LYNX Connects Multi-modal Trip Planner and Provider Directory[6], the trip planner developed in 2019 includes choices for bus/train, bicycle, and 'find other options.' Find other options provides a way to enter accommodations (e.g., wheelchair and service animal), characteristics (e.g., ADA eligibility), and age. The user is then connected with a provider directory of sorts with HST options. LYNX uniquely combines provider directory information on HST options in a location-based trip planner.

Applicability

Both examples are applicable to HST DRT services throughout the region and should be considered as a regional project. Simplygetthere, which was developed on an OTP base, leveraged the HST options data that powered the precursor to ARC's Empowerline service, which appears to be primarily phone-based. There is online provider directory for HST options.

The region could consider having a trip planner and an online provider directory separately, or a hybrid as LYNX has done.

Further discussions with the ATL regarding incorporating GTFS-Flex into the regional trip planner should be a priority.

TRIP SCHEDULING TECHNOLOGY

There are a range of available options to coordinate trip scheduling among multiple programs, agencies, and providers. A coordinated trip scheduling platform supports various scales. The main benefit of integrated scheduling is the ability to capitalize on available capacity and improve service efficiency.

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[5] https://www.transit.dot.gov/research-innovation/integrated-mobility-innovation-imi-fiscal-year-2019-selected-projects

[6] https://www.lynxconnects.com/#/locator/transportation

Need

HST DRT trips may lack region-wide efficiency since trips are often provided separately through different programs and funding sources, each with their own eligibility criteria. Communicating quickly within and between agencies about a trip request, involving trip details, user eligibility, and schedule availability, is a barrier to sharing trips within and between counties.

Importance

Coordinated scheduling enables improved region-wide efficiency and enhances the customer experience. It may be considered as an alternative to jointly procuring software since having the same software does not guarantee it works across multiple agencies nor is it an option for agencies committed to their current software.

What We Heard

In interviews and at TAC meetings, representatives of Cobb, Douglas, and Gwinnett counties noted overlapping services within their own counties. Overlapping travel and/or the need to coordinate travel is noted as an operational concern for MARTA Mobility and adjacent providers. See ADA coordination discussion above.

For regional HST DRT, ARC's Empowerline provides information and referral (I&R) services. GA DHS provides regionwide trips.

Best Practices

Lynx, Orlando, Florida

LYNX developed the WebACCESS[7] online booking platform, which enables HST DRT customers to book trips through two different programs (ADA paratransit and Florida's transportation disadvantaged) and a single HST DRT service. The service provides a unique identifier for each passenger, keeps track of eligibility factors, past trips, and available funding sources. The tool supports financial reconciliation/accounting across two different programs with different funding sources for accurate cost sharing. This solution helps to reduce fragmentation among HST DRT providers.

RTD, Denver, Colorado

RTD's Trip Exchange[8] software enables multiple providers of HST DRT to exchange trips (i.e., provide trip instead of the first provider contacted) when client is eligible. The program involves multiple providers, each with different software. Posting a trip to a neutral location for other providers to claim and provide to the user. There are plans for the Denver Area Agency on Aging (AAA) to use the software to book trips across multiple HST DRT providers.

[7] https://www.golynx.com/plan-trip/riding-lynx/access-lynx/webaccess.stml

[8] https://ctd.fdot.gov

Applicability

Both examples are applicable to HST DRT services throughout the region and should be considered as a regional project. It may be appropriate to start implementation at the county level by identifying overlapping services in either Tier 2 (Gwinnett and Cobb counties) or Tier 3 (Cherokee and Douglas counties).

SAME-DAY DEMAND RESPONSE TRANSPORTATION

Same-day DRT (i.e., microtransit) is an on-demand transportation that supports spontaneous rather than pre-scheduled travel. For the general public and/or target populations, same-day DRT is typically supported with advanced software and public-facing apps. This service can be provided directly by a transit agency or through a turnkey service via a third party

Need

Same-day DRT is becoming increasingly common across the U.S. for two primary reasons. First, geographic service gaps exist that may not be best served with fixed route service. Second, improved technology enables real-time communication to fulfill trip requests, making this service type more viable and efficient to provide.

Importance

Same-day DRT often addresses service gaps. It can connect with fixed route service, contributing to overall system functionality. In addition, same-day DRT can be tailored to target populations who need curb-to-curb service due to mobility restrictions.

What We Heard

While same-day DRT is open to any user, HST populations are often strong users. At present, several agencies in the region provide same-day DRT, while other agencies are very interested in learning about the service.

At the February 2020 HST Summit, some of the key takeaways were:

- There are several pilots growing into new programs in the region. It is important to think of these now as a regional system especially when they are geographically adjacent (people will want to travel freely without a transfer).
- These types of on-demand transit could end up being similar to other demand-response options with transfers at the county line or be truly reimagined without assumed constraints.
- Perhaps there could be a regional on-demand system that operates across county lines.
- Transportation network companies (TNCs) (e.g., Lyft/Uber) already operate this way, so this works with the existing model.
- For microtransit, the counties/providers would have to agree to travel in adjacent geographic areas (i.e., one handling the outbound trip and the other handling

the inbound trip or the region could have a single fleet/service in on-demand areas.

- On the back end, cost allocation could connect the passenger trip cost with the correct funding source.
- There could be a regional on-demand booking app that brings together the various on-demand options, and there could be a regional marketing program to get the word out on the services/app.

Best Practices

FlexRide, RTD, Denver, Colorado

RTD's FlexRide[9] began as RTD Call-n-Ride in 2008. Over time, RTD has upgraded the technology, enabling same-day trips (minimum 10 minutes notice) and the ability to book online/via an app. In 2019, it was rebranded FlexRide. This service represents an example of upgrading technology on an existing call-n-ride (advance reservation) program to provide same-day service. It also supports stand-alone trips as well as feeder service to bus stops and rail stations.

OC Flex, Orange County, California

The Orange County Transportation Authority/OCTA began an on-demand service for the public in early 2018. OC Flex[10] has had 3 iterations, first turnkey and then 2 different technology providers for the agency-provided model.

GoLink, Dallas, Texas

DART GoLink[11] is a public on-demand service currently serving 14 areas. It is a hybrid of the agency-provided and turnkey models using UberPool but also including agency-provided service.

Applicability

All three examples as well as others are applicable to HST DRT services throughout the region. Transit agencies with same-day service (e.g., GCT) are interested in moving from a pilot to established program, while transit agencies without same- day service (e.g., MARTA and Connect Douglas) may want to a) start a pilot program with advanced technology or b) upgrade technology on existing programs to provide same day service. County-based transit agencies (e.g., Coweta and Henry) are interested in a) starting a pilot program with advanced technology or b) upgrading technology on existing programs to provide same day service.

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9 https://www.rtd-denver.com/services/flexride

10 http://www.octa.net/OCFlex

11 https://dart.org/riding/golink.asp

County-based agencies with same day service (e.g., Fulton County Senior Services, Forsyth County) are interested in moving from pilot to established program (typically via the turnkey model), while similar agencies may want to start pilots.

SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

This strategy focuses on ways to achieve lasting collaboration within the HST community to share knowledge, build relationships, and implement a structured approach to coordination.

Need

To truly achieve sustainable HST DRT coordination, ongoing collaboration is needed. In other words, participating in TACs for the development of an HST plan and this implementation plan is not enough to be sustainable. Maintaining meaningful collaboration after the planning process ends requires dedicated and intentional action.

Importance

Regional collaboration on HST DRT is difficult. Those involved in overseeing these programs have ongoing daily responsibilities to deliver service to a growing market of users, often with static resources. But to overcome barriers to coordination, to improve efficiencies, and to capitalize on regional investments in transit, a sustainable coordination program is needed.

What We Heard

During the July 2020 deep dive session on coordination, four different models of HST coordination were presented including:

1. Independent: New York Mobility Managers Network[12] (no longer active)
2. State DOT/Human Services Agencies: Mass Mobility[13] (discussed below)
3. Regional Planning Agency: DRMAC[14]
4. Association: Community Transportation Association Northwest[15]

Comments received included:

- There is a need for continued collaboration and to share information. Follow-up is always a challenge.
- An ongoing advisory committee could be beneficial, and funding may be available, albeit with some limitations that could be a barrier.

[12] http://mobilitymanager.weebly.com/

[13] https://www.mass.gov/massmobility-newsletter

[14] https://www.drmac-co.org/

[15] ctanw.org

- For counties that have small DRT programs, they cannot serve everyone; learning how others have met these needs will be helpful.
- The Massachusetts coordination model is nice because partners can opt in or out. We need more information on how hard it is to replicate.
- The Georgia Transit Association (GTA) has always held a conference which is seen as beneficial due to the quality of the sessions and networking, including being able to speak with contractors.
- There may be an opportunity for collaborating with GTA to include DRT. Most of the agencies attending GTA are smaller and wear many hats, but it may not be something that they need to do. If DRT can be covered through a subgroup via an organization such as GTA, it may be a better opportunity.
- The Transit Operators Group (TOG) is a good model because many members wear multiple hats.
- Meeting regularly allows in-person or virtual participation, which has been helpful for the region and helpful for folks to volunteer and share what they're working on. A similar example exists with regional technology group, where specific topics are presented at the meeting present on a topic, and then those who are interested in discussing in further detail would participate in a follow-up session.

Best Practices

Utah Transit Authority Local Coordinating Councils

Local Coordinating Councils (LCCs) were established as forums to coordinate transportation efforts, foster partnerships and to create and implement locally developed plans and projects. Council members include government agencies, nonprofit HST providers, private companies, citizen members, and UTA. Due to the large size and different conditions across the region, three LCCs were created to lead the development and update the Wasatch Mobility Plan.

LCCs meet on a quarterly basis to discuss unmet needs, challenges, and transportation opportunities. The UTA Mobility Manager leads the LCC meetings and prepares the agendas. The LCCs have active participation because the groups have become a resource for information as well as a forum to create and collaborate on new programs. Some of the new programs that have been recently developed include Voucher Programs, which are a partnership between local agencies and the Utah Transit Authority Coordinated Mobility Department. Vouchers help seniors and individuals with disabilities to gain access to transportation that would otherwise not be available to them. UTA serves as the program administrator and coordinates with the local agency to distribute and track vouchers.

McHenry County Public Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC) / McHenry County, Illinois

The PTAC advises the MCRide dial-a-ride service for seniors and the public. MCRide formally began in 2012 when local dial-a-ride services were consolidated to form one coordinated program. The program grew from three municipalities and three townships. Today the program includes 12 municipalities and eight townships. The PTAC is a group of

professionals with technical expertise and/or interest in public transportation, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian issues. The PTAC is an advisory committee to the McHenry County Board's transportation committee. Agencies providing representatives to PTAC are appointed by the transportation committee of the McHenry County Board. There are currently 34 organizations, including villages, townships, and agencies participating in the PTAC.

PTAC by-laws identify the agencies and communities that will be represented. The agencies that will delegate representatives to the PTAC are appointed by the transportation committee chair. The number of PTAC members will vary based on the number of municipalities and townships that partner for MCRide. The PTAC guided the growth of MCRide as it expanded into service for previously unavailable inter-community trips. The MCRide program provides one consistent set of policies, one phone number, and one transit provider for all communities in this suburban Chicago county. The broad representation of all participating communities and agencies in the PTAC has been important to preserving the trust and building new partnerships between communities and agencies that were previously either operating individual services or not providing transportation at all. Effective cost allocation formulas that are accepted. MCRide Partners meet regularly (as the PTAC) and work together to ensure that performance of the transit service meets the standards of all members.

Applicability

Based on the input of the deep dive session participants, the establishment of a formal advisory committee seems to be an applicable model. This could be a subcommittee to the Transit Operators Group (TOG) with a regular slot on the agenda at least every other meeting.