

PLAN 2040 Online Public Meeting #4: Focusing Our Resources; Maximizing Transportation Resources

Report of Results

When: The fourth *PLAN 2040* online public meeting was available for review and comment from November 16, 2010 through December 31, 2010.

Meeting Objectives: To share and receive comments on draft plan key decisions in land use and transportation and get policy direction.

Participation Statistics for the Period (11/16/2010 – 12/31/2010):

- PLAN 2040 Visits: 1,068
- Online Public Meeting Visits: 203
- Survey Responses: 16

Survey Results and Summary of Open Format Responses:

1. *Focusing Our Resources: PLAN 2040 is fundamentally based on Sustainability, balancing environmental responsibility, economic growth and social needs. Its intent is to maximize our available resources to make the most efficient use of them. The focus of PLAN 2040 is to provide the metro Atlanta area with the means to encourage: - Economic recovery – Job creation and better access to jobs – Water availability and quality – Housing alternatives – Mobility options – Access to community resources. What do you think of this director for PLAN 2040:*

- **Supportive:** 81.3%
- **Neutral:** 18.8%

2. *What have we missed and other thoughts?*

- Affordability – of quality transportation, housing, education and utilities.
- PLAN 2040 holds an underlying assumption that today's transportation modes will be the only choices for decades to come; trains, lanes and buses. A comprehensive, long range plan should consider advanced technologies as well as the century-old conventional ones. I strongly recommend that your staff and/or consultants include Personal Rapid Transit in their analysis of alternatives. The analysis should fully reflect the current state of the art and not revert to decades-old shibboleths about PRT that are typically used to dismiss this mode. Serious analysis would almost certainly recommend this mode because of its superior cost/benefit performance but cannot until it is more proven in services. You could therefore strongly encourage the transit industry and federal R&D efforts to make this mode available. This outcome would help break the chicken and egg cycle of agencies not having a proven choice and industry not have proven demand from agencies. Evolving technologies certainly belong in your three-decade plan.
- We need bold plans. We need a second deck to 85, 285 and 75 across the top end perimeter all the way over to I-20, and MARTA heavy rail to go with it. The new deck would be paid for by a PPP toll, with government subsidy to fill the capital gap to the extent necessary. Oh yes, and we don't need it by 2040. We need it by 2020.
- Most of the problems in the Atlanta region could be solved if ARC focused only on reducing VMT. Also, where's air quality?
- Air quality.

- There are current investments that do not deserve to be supported at the current level. We need fewer highways; more transit, better connectivity of surface streets, etc.
- In my opinion, the ARC or another authoritative body should be more influential in metro county and municipal governance. Beginning with the City of Atlanta, everyone has to work together and should be controlled under one unified government, similar to Nashville, TN. Duluth, Marietta, Newnan, etc. should have a say in the way the City of Atlanta conducts its business and visa versa. The governing model for the region has to change or else we will continue to grow inefficiently and lag more organized/unified metro areas around the southeast.
- Atlanta needs a more comprehensive and holistic approach to environmental management. While water availability and quality is important, it is just one of a host of ecosystem services required to support a metro area of 5 million+ residents. Central to better environmental management is better land use policies and practices that align urban systems with national systems in terms of resource use and materials management, that is, all resources are renewable and all materials are re-used or recycled.
- I don't believe you. Public sector officials are notorious for using pretty words that don't describe the real agenda. ARC has 2 mandates: 1) to build a transportation plan every 6 years to beg our own money back from the Federal government, while agreeing to do Stupid Planner tricks like supporting the Peachtree Streetcar to nowhere; 2) DCA requires a land use plan. All the while Mr. Leithead is wanting ARC to show some teeth. The people are preoccupied with life; they assume public sector leaders will do what is best for the region according with life; they assume public sector leaders will do what is best for the region according to the voters' preferences. Instead, we get environmental tyranny couched in pretty words life sustainability. Does anybody realize that the Federal courts have mandated that the water be turned off to North Atlanta? We are supposed to sit on the banks of the Chattahoochee and watch drinking flow on its way to the Gulf of Mexico, all because the Federal government considers shellfish to be more important than people. This is an outrage that is what you get when you rely on public sector officials with their pretty words and benign sounding "directions".

3. *Achieving the Vision: We have shared with you the direction of the plan. Using that direction to provide implementable initiatives, the plan's primary emphasis will be on the following. Please review and share what you think.*

| | Supportive | Neutral |
|---|-------------------|----------------|
| Concentrate plan resources on existing communities – making them more efficient and viable | 80% | 20% |
| Maintain our infrastructure – investing in what's on the ground | 86.7% | 13.3% |
| Support local governments – provide incentives to implement the plan's initiatives | 80% | 20% |
| Promote activities to create jobs – find creative ways to promote economic development | 80% | 20% |
| Target transportation investments that support desired land use | 100% | 0 |
| Manage and coordinate environmental, cultural and historical resources based on the PLAN 2040 Resource Plan, newly adopted. | 66.7% | 33.3% |

4. *What have we missed and other thoughts?*

- Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) "invests in what's on the ground", for example by providing circulation/distribution around rail stations.
- The first goal has to be mobility, which means road capacity. But for the long run we also need transit rail capacity as well.
- Linking transportation and land use is the key for the Atlanta region. Widening suburban highways leads to more sprawl which leads to more highway expansions and so on. Atlanta needs to break this cycle. And the solution is not to spend billions of dollars on managed lanes.
- Embedded I believe is transportation investments that promote healthy lifestyles...but making it explicit might be good. E.g., bus stops that one can walk to without crossing 8 lanes of traffic, biking lanes that are sufficiently protected that auto traffic won't include, sidewalks that are level and unbroken.
- There WILL be new Greenfield development – support good versions of that.
- I guess there should be stronger lobbying and management of the transportation planning processes for the tax referendum from ARC, right?
- Atlanta needs to tie land use and transportation. No more sprawling subdivisions!

5. *Given the challenges the Atlanta region is facing today and in the future, no one entity can make the difference. Everyone needs to step up to the plan: all levels of our government,*

the private and non-profit sectors, the larger community and individuals. What are the most important ways you think individuals should contribute to our solutions?

- Individuals can help most by reducing their transportation demand. People who work should choose homes closer to their jobs. If a two-worker family makes that difficult, they should choose homes in areas served by transit. People who are retired should move to compact, walkable communities.
- The decisions made about public investment should reflect their opinions. So, ten years from now when someone asks “who suggested that?”, our answer should be “the community”.
- Think outside the box. A consensus of the usual agencies will not produce the kind of innovative thinking and planning that Atlanta needs to really solve its problems.
- Georgia Tech should be working on automated vehicle transportation. Cities should be building more bike trails. My car tracks average MPH in addition to MPG. My commute is so slow, on my 5-mile commute I average...get this, 13 miles per hour. I can ride a bicycle faster. So we might as well have bike lanes everywhere traffic stinks. Cities should also be working on automated stoplights with a central “nervous system” to figure out instantaneous light time. Another Georgia Tech project. And MARTA should be shutting down underutilized bus routes. It would be far more efficient to provide riders a relocation expense of \$1000 for regular riders (those with monthly cards) and tell them the bus line will be gone in a year, so continue to use transit. You have a year to make the transition and most apartment leases only last a year, so everyone would have time to relocate. Businesses need to add recharging stations for commuters with newly coming electric cars. Cities (Atlanta in particular) need to be building city parking garages to mitigate the need for surface parking lots. That should keep you busy for a while.
- Individuals can contribute by voting for the Transportation Investment Act. However, in order for that to happen the onus is on the ARC to promote the Concept 3 vision and convince Atlantans to invest in that vision.
- Willingness to use public transport and to have the train stop in my backyard; willingness to pay the actual cost of driving a car (add a \$4 per gallon tax); willingness to conserve.
- Support regional planning and governance.
- Agree to the higher taxation needed to build the infrastructure of the future.
- There needs to be a grass-roots effort to understand the balance between transit and non-car transportation alternatives vs. the previous/legacy practices of promoting all things car related. The regional transportation tax planning, based on published accounts, is not looking good. Is the public sufficiently aware of what’s at stake? Are the various stakeholder interests adequately being communicated? What is ARC’s role in seeing that this happens? The economic growth I believe will follow our efforts and success with moving the entire transportation (transit + other non-car initiatives) forward. The job creation alone that forward movement would create is significant. But the following development and economic activity is even greater. We need more beltline and faster. We need light rail, commuter rail and high speed rail, sooner. We definitely need more sidewalks and bike lanes. (Aren’t these the least expensive?)
- Vote for people who actually understand urban planning and urban needs.

*6. Maximizing Transportation Resources: During the current Online Public Meeting, we shared with you the ways PLAN 2040 is seeking to maximize existing transportation resources. This is necessary because there will not be enough resources to do everything we would like – so the focus is on shoring up our transit system, making our roadways more efficient, and strategically planning for future investments when funding is available. Here are the major emphasis areas: * Placing the highest priority on asset management * Maintaining what we have on the ground today * Strategically pursuing system expansions (roads, transit, bike and walkways), and * Supporting programs leading to sustainable growth patterns. What do you think of this direction?*

| | |
|-------------------|--------------|
| I Agree | 80.0% |
| Not Sure | 6.7% |
| I Disagree | 13.3% |

7. Specifically, when choosing transportation projects and initiatives, we will concentrate on the following. What do you think?

| | Supportive | Neutral | Not Supportive |
|---|------------|---------|----------------|
| • Preserve existing transit asset and service levels..... | 80.0% | 6.7% | 13.3% |
| • Relieve interstate bottlenecks..... | 40.0% | 40.0% | 20.0% |
| • Expand the managed lane system (High Occupancy Toll Lanes)..... | 20.0% | 53.3% | 26.7% |
| • Concentrate on lower cost roadway efficiencies such as signal timing and intersection improvement | 80.0% | 13.3% | 6.7% |
| • Deliver on projects already in the construction pipeline | 33.3% | 46.7% | 20.0% |

8. What have we missed and other thoughts?

- The expansion projects listed above all serve motor vehicles. The ARC should invest in expanding transportation alternatives, including walking, bicycling, and transit. The transit service level needs to be improved, not just preserved at the existing level. When used in relationship to surface streets, “efficiencies” and “improvements” are typically euphemisms for faster speeds and wider intersections, both of which have negative impacts on pedestrians and cyclists. These are not appropriate in urban areas. HOT lanes will not be supported by the public unless good transit options are available. People who are accustomed to 50 cent tolls on GA 400 will be shocked by the tolls likely to be charged on managed lanes. The Atlanta region cannot build its way out of congestion. Relieve one bottleneck; another will appear down the road. ARC has not had a call for new projects since 2005. It’s past time to get rid of grandfathered projects so we can add projects more in line with current needs and programs, including lifelong communities, stricter emission standards and federal concerns about global warming, public health, and livability. In urban areas, the ARC should support increased connectivity and reallocation of space from motor vehicles to other modes.
- Maintenance is indeed very important. But, getting more utility out of those prior investments is equally important, and deserves more focus.
- I would say “Preserve and enhance existing transit assets and service levels.
- The focus should be on expanding transit options, namely rail. MARTA is underutilized today because it simply doesn’t provide easy or fast access to Atlanta’s employment centers, particularly to and from the suburbs. To commute from my home in Decatur to my job in Alpharetta takes over an hour and half on MARTA. By car, the trip is half that. The fact that ARC is continuing our existing failed focus on roads and highways is utterly disappointing. How can anyone reasonably expect managed lanes to be successful (other than cynically as an additional funding source for the state) when there are not reasonable alternative transit options available? Having listened to Ms. Hayse’s presentation, I also find it bizarre that ARC is not considering the possible additional funding that would come from the Transportation Investment Act. In order to get people to vote for the act, ARC must provide a clear, compelling and concrete transportation plan that people will vote for. A person is more likely to vote for the act if they can point to a concrete way in which it will improve their lives. For example, IF Concept 3 is implemented my commute from Decatur to Alpharetta can be accomplished entirely on rail. I will vote for the act because of this fact. However, I am one of very few people who is interested enough in this subject to actually research and find this material online. You cannot even find the Concept 3 map without navigating through multiple links. The ARC should be spending its resources to promote the Concept 3 that it has spent a significant amount of money and time to develop. Unfortunately given the uninspiring content in Ms. Hayse’s presentation, I expect that Atlanta will once again squander the opportunity to improve itself due to its leaders’ unwillingness to actually promote a vision.
- Making roads more efficient causes more cars to use them...it is self defeating. I would put those resources into alternative/public transit so that there are real alternatives to the private vehicle.
- There are current investments that do not deserve to be supported at the current level. We need fewer highways; more transit, better connectivity of surface streets, etc.
- These questions are way too vague. Of course everyone supports these principals.
- Atlanta needs a truly multi-modal transportation system. I won’t support any funding of new roadway capacity until other modes are fully built out.
- Expansion of alternative transportation options besides more roads.
- No mention of bike paths or sidewalks. If the other goals are met (like maximizing existing centers, and increasing mixed use, dense development) then the failure to adequately address these transportation options would be a HUGE oversight.
- Stop expanding roads.
- Prioritize, but you need to do all of these.
 - more highway road capacity through toll lanes on a second deck
 - converting one lane to toll to provide avenue for BRT – a good idea

- improved local signal timing
- get rid of unused bus service to free funds for 5,6,7
- heavy rail transit across 285 and up 75 and 85 OTP, and 400
- commuter rail transit
- light rail transit
- high speed rail to Charlotte, Chattanooga/Nashville, and Jacksonville.

How do you pay for something that will cost a lot in the short term but provide long term benefits? Borrow. And slash other wasteful spending. And raise the stupid gas taxes and tolls. Also, the 400 toll should be modified. It needs a toll. Tolls are a good idea. BUT, instead of a toll across all lanes, the toll booth needs to be taken down and there should be one toll lane north bound and southbound just like the 85 project, all the way up and beyond Alpharetta. A small segment paying for all the 400 costs up and down 400 is nonsensical and doesn't even achieve what you're trying to achieve, which is a mobile lane for people who need it and for bus service.

9. Do you have additional thoughts to share?

- I am concerned by the disconnect between PLAN 2040's vision of sustainability and the types of projects question #7 suggests the ARC will prioritize. The project types listed in #7 do not increase mobility options or support desired land uses. The region cannot build its way out of traffic congestion by relieving bottlenecks. We also lack sufficient funding for a complete managed lane system. PLAN 2040 should prioritize transportation options that support compact development. The best way to increase the number of people who live within 45 minutes of their job is not by expanding the geographical boundaries of the 45-minute workshed – but by encouraging increased residential density in job centers. This comes through improving the quality of life in livable centers through investments in walking and transit.
- Please take this input seriously.
- You guys need to get on it. Our city is becoming Detroit East because you guys have underinvested in transportation infrastructure for two decades now. If we have to pay a higher gas tax, so be it. If we have to pay tolls, so be it. If we have to cut stupid transit service (empty bus routes) so we can use the funds to use rail that serves everyone, so be it. But you guys need to get on the ball. Lack of infrastructure is suffocating business in this city.
- 1. Aggressively pursue TOD strategies. 2. Push new sources of transit operating funds. 3. Push the legislature to permanently remove the 50/50 MARTA restriction. 4. Make Atlanta's air quality a priority. 5. Stop expanding highways!
- Impact taxes..the externalities of transportation charges needs to be paid by those who are causing them. If I were the transit guru I would use taxes to move folks from cars to light rail...of course the light rail has to be available and useful..
- Let's get it right this time?
- Key on building concept 3 and high(er) speed rail connections to Charlotte, Birmingham, Savannah.
- Yes. I would like to see the commission recommend funding for Municipal Public Works Departments in the Atlanta area to implement sidewalk "grinding" projects as an alternative and supplemental program to their sidewalk repair, maintenance and preservation programs. This alternative and supplemental (to reconstruction) way of repairs to the "existing" sidewalk displacements and defects will provide numerous benefits to pedestrian traffic and health, homeowner pride, citywide pride and safety, and municipal visibility that they prioritize spending efficiently and for the benefit of the taxpayer and their health and safety. The message I am sending goes hand in hand with your PLAN 2040 objectives. I would be happy to attend a designated meeting of your choice to discuss this Sidewalk Grinding Program I am speaking of. I am a contractor of over 20 years and specialize in implementing Sidewalk Grinding Programs to municipalities. A program consists of three phases: 1) survey 2) grinding, patching and ramping 3) monitor. This full blown program is just as valuable as the municipal program call Pavement Maintenance System (developed for road maintenance and preservation). Although, most municipalities rarely allow proper amount of funds to be allocated for our other capital improvement, "concrete hardscapes", for its maintenance and preservation. Prioritizing the maintenance and preservation of the "existing" capitol improvement, pedestrian walkways, annually, is: 2) cost-effective – (many miles a month can be accomplished for a fraction of the cost of R&R); b) proactive – (helps reduce costly trip and fall lawsuits and improves municipal visibility); c) community wise (will promote more mobility thru walking to work, for groceries and socializing); d) reduces waste – (the survey identifies R&R, removing and replacing, ONLY the scenarios absolutely necessary rather than wastefully spending valuable tax dollars or grant money on frivolous R&R that can be accomplished thru the grinding program and monitored). In closing, you can see that the funds allocated to the Atlanta municipalities for a broader Sidewalk Maintenance and Preservation Program will manage: 2) preserving the "existing" sidewalk while "reconstructing" only the most necessary; b) increasing the municipality visibility of prioritizing safety and health for their citizens (the "shift" of spreading money between both means of repairs increases productivity); c) paying for itself thru reduced trip and fall lawsuits each year the program is in place (risk management departments and PW depts. Will also experience support w/less complaints); d) improving the health, safety and visibility of pedestrians in each city. A source of pride. E) using local resources, volunteer groups, to help implement surveying and monitoring the program; f) employment opportunities in the Atlanta area for implementing the program. Thank you for listening to my suggestion. I encourage you to give me the opportunity to be of help in implementing your PLAN 2040.

- No more roads; we have enough.