

PLAN 2040 Online Public Meeting #3: How Should We Grow? How Should Transportation Funds Be Split?

Report of Results

When: The third *PLAN 2040* online public meeting was available for review and comment from August 25, 2010 through September 30, 2010.

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

Participation Statistics:

- Online Public Meeting Visits: **416**
- Survey Responses: **67**

Survey Results and Summary of Open Format Responses:

1. *How should we grow? Based on computer models, targeting our region's job centers and commercial corridors for new households and new jobs will provide us with the best overall mobility. What do you think about focusing land use and transportation investments in existing communities and preserving rural areas?*

- **Strongly Agree: 81%**
- **Agree: 17%**
- **Disagree 0%**
- **Strongly Disagree 2%**

2. *Do you have other thoughts to share on the growth question above?*

Development

- As population grows, we should allow managed growth in those areas.
- We need to saturate our current holdings and not expand any more.
- Intown neighborhoods are crying for redevelopment and preservation of community.
- Live-here; work-here.
- Although locating employment opportunities near residential areas should reduce commuting distance, the uncertainty of job location stability and requirements of families having more than one worker are factors to consider.
- Need an urban growth boundary
- Focus on the development of communities that live, work and play in close proximity to job centers
- We should lean somewhat heavily towards concentrated growth within the perimeter. I like the growth I am seeing on I-20 E between downtown and Moreland Ave.
- Small communities should grow as self-sustaining villages with green/agriculture/forestry filling the spaces between villages.

- Georgia has been prone to many smaller communities, each with its own standards and demands which has made development and infrastructure fractured in many areas.
- The smart growth model is not only a financial imperative but an environmental and national security imperative in terms of foreign oil dependence and fixing our broken economy.

Infrastructure

- Neighboring rural areas should be joined intelligently through corridors and multi-use paths.
- Our poor radial roadway infrastructure design cannot support transit.
- Better designed communities to ease traffic congestion, less aggravating road time.
- Retrofit the suburban centers.

Travel

- Provide adequate means of movement within and between existing communities that is not dependent on private motorized vehicles, regardless of whether its fossil fuel or renewable fuel.
- There will be ready replacements for the gasoline powered car in the future – this means that compact urban development in the future will be a function of aesthetic preference and environmental stewardship – not necessarily an economic imperative.
- Need improved road capacity.
- ARC should not endorse the Managed Lane System Plan which will lead to more sprawl and not help intown and suburban residents.
- Hard working people of all means need to meet their basic needs without be subjected to whims of gas prices for a 40 minute commute, congestion, smog and horrific accident fatality rates.
- If a city wants family oriented growth within the city, schools are key.

3. *How should we grow? By continuously growing outward, we have more congestion and less greenspace. By focusing land use and transportation investments in existing communities, we could address those issues by putting more people near job centers and transit areas. What do you think?*

- **Strongly Support:** 75%
- **Support:** 23%
- **Disagree:** 2%

4. *Do you have any other thoughts to share on the growth question above?*

Development

- More transit oriented development is needed.
- We must be mindful of the existing and upcoming generational needs when developing our communities. We do not want to create hostage situations where members of the community do not have to leave the confines of their neighborhoods. There has to be a get-away-from-it-all opportunity.
- Provide for a variety of lifestyle areas and opportunities throughout existing communities. Room should be allocated within greenspace for tennis, walking paths, grass fields, water ways, hills/mountains, forests, etc.
- Why don't we have an urban growth boundary?
- Exurbs and suburban communities should be refocused to promote village attributes.
- Subdivision ordinances and zoning ordinances need to be revised to accommodate Transit Oriented Development.
- Ensure that retail developments and employment centers are scaled to the walking/transit shopper/worker.

- Encourage and support densification by linking transit funding to upzoning of intown areas.
- Focus on putting people near job centers by developing near them.
- There doesn't need to be another house built outside of I-285 until 2050.
- Mixed use high density developments create additional congestion that is not present with the typical rural development.
- I do not support growing outward but that is where the good school districts are and where the vast majority of the population can afford to live.
- We need to take an extremely strong stance on protecting the character of rural communities and shifting development not only from greenfields to infill, but also from haphazard infill development to transit-oriented infill development.

Mobility

- Consider improving or creating new connections to transit for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Create walkable communities with increasing land-use intensity versus continued expansion of the urban boundary.
- Focus on identifying areas where increased land use intensity and transit oriented development is promoted.
- Commuting options should take a secondary objective to creating areas where vehicle-miles-traveled are reduced.
- If people want transit, they have to be willing to accommodate additional density.
- Place new transportation investments in a position that can be leveraged to address future sprawl in addition to targeting existing communities.
- The blocks around the MARTA stations could be the "somewhere" to go. Achieve a critical mass of housing/job/retail balance in direct, walkable proximity to existing MARTA rail stations.
- Make MARTA the most convenient transportation options for more people with a wide variety of jobs and income levels.

Funding

- Do not use regional funds to pay for state and federal roads.
- Increase the cost of travel in private motorized vehicles by half an order of magnitude to a full order of magnitude will be required.
- New transportation monies should be spent on alternative modes of transportation.
- New transportation monies should not make commuting easier and cheaper.
- Trust costs of suburban development should be borne by those in the suburbs.

Safety

- People will live where they feel safe; not necessarily as close as possible to where they work.

Policy

- This doesn't motivate local governments to change – carrots aren't working.
- If we just manage to get the policy in place without considering concerns about crime, schools, etc., it won't last.
- Think in terms of the economy of the state; that defines the appeal of a better fit population.
- The beauty of the Beltline project is that many problems have been addressed in the congestion studies, park studies, and the precedent studies of previous transit stories.

5. Transportation Funding: We have identified a total of \$169 billion in total transportation needs (\$56 billion for maintaining the existing system and \$113 billion for expansion) from now to the year 2040. We have identified only \$64 billion in available funding. Because of

this, we must make hard choices. How should we split the funding pit between road/transit maintenance and expansion – where do you draw the line?

- **Available funding evenly divided between maintenance and expansion:** 36%
- **More available funding going to road and transit maintenance:** 30%
- **More available funding going to road and transit system expansion:** 25%
- **All available funding going to road and transit maintenance:** 5%
- **All available funding going to road and transit system expansion:** 5%

6. *Do you have any other thoughts to share on the funding question above?*

Transit Expansion

- Expand multimodal transportation options that would allow for more than only cars. Maintenance numbers could come down if you change the mix to less private auto traffic and more (lower impact) human-powered transportation.
- Focus on expanding transit.
- Concentrate the funding of public transit expansion over more and wider roads.
- Put more service under one umbrella. Let's get to expanding.
- Transit should get 80% of the money to make up for Atlanta's lack of transit investment
- Maintain roads and transit – expand only transit.
- Transit system should be expanded and combined into one entity.
- Most concerned about transit options – keeping what we have and offering more options.
- Transit should be expanded to provide alternate time and cost effective transportation during the peak periods.
- I think the majority of the money should go to roadway maintenance and transit expansion (with transit maintenance).
- Focus on MARTA expansion and preservation needs on the highways and inner arterial roads.
- We need to prepare for the future – so we should focus on expansion.
- Money should be split between road maintenance and transit maintenance and expansion.
- Expansion should be done in the core to provide a much more comprehensive rail transit system.
- Invest in our future – but not so much on heavy rail like what exists today.

Roadway and Transit Maintenance

- Maintain the currently existing roads and transit to the extent possible but don't put more money toward expanding roads.
- Maintain the systems we have but plan for some expansion.
- If you don't maintain what we have existing then we might as well tear it down and start all over at a higher cost.
- Rate the type of maintenance issues we have and tackle the most pressing.
- Expansion makes little sense if we cannot maintain what we already have.
- Maintain what is in place with the majority of the funds. People are already getting around somehow. If you make routes less attractive by not keeping them in functioning order, you will just move existing use onto the newer roads leaving invested resources to waste.
- Apply more case into maintaining the existing for sheer safety reasons.
- You can't let the existing infrastructure rot.
- Money should be split between road maintenance and transit maintenance and expansion.

Roadway Investments

- There needs to be more funding for all modes of transportation to remain competitive – make hard choices that at present are politically unpopular – raise taxes that the whole region pays for.
- Invest less in projects aimed at eliminating bottlenecks – bottlenecks move down the road to a new location.
- Invest more in pedestrian safety improvements on transit corridors – pedestrian fatalities on Buford Highway would drop by 91% if the region followed through on improvements.
- Existing configuration of every road and intersection should be reanalyzed to determine if the built capacity is really necessary before spending to maintain it.
- Consider replacement of signals with roundabouts.
- All non-freeway multi-lane roads should be considered for removal of unnecessary vehicular travel lanes to reduce maintenance costs.
- Dedicated tolled truck routes or lanes should be provided to fund their expansion and maintenance.
- Raise the gas tax so that those who are using the roadways are paying their fair share to do so.
- Do we have to have the super, super smooth roads of years past? Or can we let them go a little while longer like they do in the Midwest before we repave them?
- Use existing roads and transit more effectively – with automated control of car traffic. There may be less need for expansion than we think.
- Provide for solutions to our traffic congestion problems.
- There is way too much maintenance on highways and not enough on urban roads.
- Roads should be maintained but not expanded.
- Consider closing, redirecting, or gravel-pave rural roads to reduce maintenance costs in rural areas. In urban areas, converting winding alleyway streets to pedestrian-only corridors would also reduce maintenance costs.
- Much needed maintenance of our highways and bridges with a secondary focus on planned growth.
- We cannot afford to add more capacity and expand the system. We need to augment and enhance the existing system, provide new connections and improved street grid.
- Design new improvements to have the least amount of maintenance life cycle cost. Focus traffic operational improvements at bottlenecks and intersections and interchanges instead of expansion.
- Speed up the implementation of the Automated Traffic Management System and remotely controlling/monitoring all traffic signals.

Land Development

- If we can improve upon the system with quality alternatives then we will make our region more attractive to potential employers, developers and other stakeholders.
- Promote density and mixed use where major infrastructure investments have been made or are planned.
- Consider the negative impact on the local tax base when urban land is purchased to become part of the public right of way – measure externalized costs, such as impacts on safety, livability and public health.
- Guide people into the city more by focusing on inner city roads, highways, transit and leaving suburban and exurban transit up to the developers.
- Aggressively find the throw-away sprawl, leap-frog development that rewards short sighted investments at the public expense.
- Get more funding – look at MTR Corporation in Hong Kong – private company runs their rail system and makes large profits through real estate investments. Profit off land development around the rail stations.

Other Comments

- The question is not a good one – too simplified; hard to answer.
- Why get taxed into “tarnation” living in Fulton and sending your kid to a less than mediocre public school when you can live in Cobb for less and send him to a better school?
- If there is money left over, the money needs to go to transit expansion!!! We already have 16-lane highways.
- My primary concern is of fairness and equity in raising these funds. The taxpayers of Fulton and DeKalb should be credited for monies raised for the MARTA system.
- I think the question of “which” maintenance and expansion is more important than the question of just maintenance and expansion.
- We are in a crisis of resources and need to invest in durable, sustainable growth.
- Historical Funding Allocation allows for 45% readily available funds for maintenance, 45% readily available for expansion and 10% as a safeguard and a means for investing for emergencies.

7. What else would you like to share with ARC today?

Plan 2040 Directions

- Get away from previous car-centricity.
- You can do a lot for cyclists with just a fraction of the money spend on roads.
- Develop a policy statement that pushes the funding of transportation away from obsolete gas taxes and onto tolls and other user fees.
- Politicians must be on board.
- Support the Beltline.
- Use other cities’ models to determine what we need to improve.
- Focus growth into existing transportation corridors and centers of activity.
- More parity is needed between the level of scrutiny given to road projects and transit projects.
- Majority of the gas tax funds should go to transit expansion and multi-modal system integration.
- Listen to the Millennials. We are as large as the baby boomers and probably most in tune with the actual city versus the suburbs. We want to live in a city that pays more attention to the actual city residents than the retired folk and sprawl baby boomers way out in the suburbs. We will also eventually want good schools when we have kids.
- ARC needs to mitigate the effects of choices to locate at the fringe. Focus on promoting places or communities where people can work and live and have fun without getting on a major expressway.
- Sustainable industry is a vital part of making smart growth a comprehensive alternative to sprawl. See this podcast from the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s Center for Real Estate Analytics:
- http://www.frbatlanta.org/podcasts/podcastPlayer.cfm?f=ed_green_071410.mp3&t
- Research the economic impact of each design decision.

Travel in the Region

- Build express trail transit from I-85 North to 285 North/400 and back and parking and transfers
- Bring MARTA lines for more connections inside the city.
- I will not vote for the 1-cent sales tax unless transit gets at least 50% of the money.
- Make sure new sales tax be spent almost exclusively on the Beltline, transit, bike/ped, commuter rail and others aspects of Concept 3.
- Complete the connections between the existing non-motorized systems – should provide direct access to every school, most employment and retail areas and all transit systems.

- Lessen congestion in a safe way that enables more of Atlanta's greenspace to be retained.
- Double deck I-285, portions of 85 and 75.
- More money for transit – more high-density development.
- MARTA extend Proctor Creek or East-West rail lines to Brown Field airport – beyond 285 in a key traffic congested area (would allow Douglas and Cobb counties secondary access bypassing I-20; allow network of greenways to connect MARTA to Silver Comet Trail, Bus access to avoid I-20/I-285 interchange; provide pilots/crew/passengers easy car free access to city; 50% reduction of Six Flags shuttle route.

Other Comments

- Great job with presentations and survey.
- Good luck, these are tough issues.
- It's great to be a part of the process.
- Being part of the future is a pleasure.
- Keep a careful eye on the evolution of the automobile – its' a wild card that could upset many current planning activities.