



Plan 2040 Neighborhood Forum

Gwinnett County, April 14, 2011

On April 14, 2011, The Civic League for Regional Atlanta hosted a Neighborhood Forum on the future of regional transportation at the Suwanee City Hall in Gwinnett County. A staff member from the Atlanta Regional Commission gave two presentations, the first on Plan 2040, which is the regional plan for accommodating economic and population growth sustainably over the next 30 years, and the second on the Transportation Investment Act, which was passed by the state legislature in 2010 and will allow citizens to vote on a regional penny sales tax to fund transportation improvements over a 10-year period. Though Plan 2040 addresses both land use and transportation, the presenter focused on the plan's transportation recommendations, as they have raised far more questions and concerns during previous public meetings.

Seventeen people participated in the forum. Of the 12 who turned in completed demographic forms, nine were residents of communities in Gwinnett County and three were residents of Alpharetta in neighboring Fulton County. Eight participants were male and four female. Eight were white, two were African-American, one was Asian and one was Hispanic. Ten participants were between ages 40 and 65, one was between younger than 18 and one was between 25 and 39.

In previous Neighborhood Forums, participants were grouped into several discussion circles, but because turnout was unusually low for this forum, the facilitator opted to have one large discussion group. Following each of the ARC staff member's presentations, the forum facilitator asked participants to address several questions, and their responses were recorded on flipcharts. The following notes were transcribed from those flipchart pages. For clarity, we have:

1. Inserted the discussion questions posed by the facilitator above their respective answers.
2. Noted where groups did not record answers to certain questions.
3. Numbered questions and answers for easy reference (i.e. Group 1, Question A, Answer 3).
4. Corrected obvious spelling and punctuation errors.
5. Written out obvious abbreviations (i.e. "Rd.") but left alone ambiguous ones (i.e. "trans" might mean "transportation" or "transit").

In some cases, groups recorded notes that did not clearly correspond to any of the discussion questions. Those notes are identified by the heading "Other".

Note: Because of low turnout for this forum, attendees participated in a single group discussion rather than breaking into smaller discussion groups, so only one set of questions and answers is included below.

A. Briefly share your motivations for attending this forum.

1. Interested in transportation improvements and T-SPLOST
2. Interested in future of transportation funding. Want to hear what others think.
3. Sees this as a nexus for regional issues and different perspectives across the region.
4. Want to see how we're developing – where we're going
5. Wanted to get involved with Civic League
6. Local manufacturer and member of Junior League – want to take information back and share with others
7. Educator and member of Lead Gwinnett. Involved in steering committee for transportation for seniors.
8. Served on local transportation board. Activist. Hoping we do a better job in the next 30 years that we did in the last 30 years.
9. Support effort of grassroots involvement. Need to gather info.
10. Came to see what citizens want.
11. Came to see what the vision is for the future.
12. How can we handle our growth?
13. Seventh-grade civics teacher and community person
14. Local government official; want to listen to citizens

B. Please list any questions you have.

1. Given the economy, how can we project this kind of growth?
2. Regarding managed lanes, is there a report that explains how they work and why they're effective?
3. If sales tax passes, how far will it get us? Everything we need?
4. What possibilities are there for public-private partnerships to maximize or leverage funding?
5. Could you clarify "aging in place" initiatives?
6. Are you looking at changing land use?
7. How does this plan incorporate/accommodate Gwinnett's plan?
8. Growth won't be spread evenly across all counties. What's the impact for Gwinnett? How about Forsyth?
9. How will environmental impact change as we are forced to find substitutes for gas-powered autos?
10. Are there plans for electric charging stations?
11. Can you explain the differences between heavy, light and commuter rail?
12. Curious about cost per mile for light rail v. heavy rail.
13. Would light rail connect with MARTA?
14. Will there be bike lanes in areas like Midtown?
15. What's the plan for the first 10 years?
16. What happens to the gas tax if the T-SPLOST passes?
17. How do airport projects fit into the Transportation Investment Act?
18. Re. the TIA, we were told that the GA 400 toll would end when the road was paid for and that bargain was not kept. How is this different?

C. What excites you about the recommendations for maximizing transportation resources in our region?

1. Trains! Would love to take a train to the airport.
2. Light rail and trains. Transit would give us better options for getting around.

D. What changes would you make to the regional recommendations to further maximize limited resources?

1. All mass transit systems coordinated and not called MARTA.
2. An umbrella agency for all transit in the region.

E. Which transportation projects must be on the Transportation Investment Act list and considered for funding?

1. Highway 20
2. Managing traffic through cameras and technology – see gcsmartcommute.com
3. “Intelligent Transportation Systems” to make the most out of the roads we have
4. Light rail
5. Citizen traffic commissions
6. Great opportunity. Think about carpool stops and managed lanes.
7. Atlanta is a great area. Hope to see more sidewalks and parks.

F. Which transportation projects should be excluded from the Transportation Investment Act list?

1. Would like to see people and businesses close together. We don’t need more roads.
2. DOT, stop with the concrete medians in the middle of the road.

Other (In addition to the above suggestions, the group had a number of general comments about the Transportation Investment Act):

1. Seems fair. Not tied to the property tax, so everybody participates.
2. Wish we could get more private citizens out here.
3. Let’s share this information with our neighbors.
4. Look into the Gwinnett SPLOST for an understanding of how the TIA would work.
5. Keep an open mind.
6. Need for community input.