

# **Transportation Improvement Program FY 2020-2025, Amendment #5**

## **Public Review May 5, 2022 to May 18, 2022**

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the mechanism by which federal, state and local funds are approved for all significant surface transportation projects and programs in the region. The FY 2020-2025 TIP comprises the first six years of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Atlanta region. As the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for a 20-county region, ARC is responsible for developing and amending/updating the TIP and RTP to meet federal planning requirements and address local needs.

### **Purpose of Amendment**

- Program additional fiscal year 2022 federal funding apportioned under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- Incorporate new GDOT-sponsored bridge upgrade projects and related federal funding
- Address project cost estimate and programmatic changes that are of a time sensitive nature or cannot be handled administratively.

An email was sent to ARC's interested parties distribution list indicating the TIP Amendment was open for public review. Details regarding the amendment project list, process, and timeline were posted on ARC's website. Additionally, the request for review was advertised via newspapers and various ARC newsletters and presentations.

ARC received one partner agency request, eleven written public comments, and one public comment submitted verbally at the May 11<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing held prior to the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) meeting. The summary of the comments received are listed in the following pages. This document, along with specific comments will be shared with ARC Transportation Coordinating and Transportation & Air Quality Committee members, as well as all appropriate regional transportation project sponsors. Additionally, this document will be shared with respondents who submitted public comment, via a link to the Amendment webpage, where this report will be posted, available at <http://www.atlantaregional.org/amendment>.

### **Partner Agency Request**

Staff at the Georgia Department of Transportation requested further changes to the following amendment 5 project IDs:

AT-295 (GDOT PI 0013810)  
BA-186 (GDOT PI 0017927)  
FS-350 (GDOT PI 0014081)  
GW-184B (GDOT PI 0013901)  
WA-037 (GDOT PI 0017942)

These projects were already documented in the draft amendment 5 list. Changes are summarized below

- Remove the proposed change to ARCID AT-295 / GDOT PI 0013810 on the FY 2022 ROW phase funded through Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (Flexible) funding (Z240). This request was granted and as it was the only trigger responsible for incorporating this project into amendment 5, the project was dropped from the final proposed amendment change list.
- Update the total funding amount for long range construction activities on ARCID BA-186 / GDOT PI 0017927 to a total of \$6,500,000 – rather than the previous total of \$6,580,000. This request was granted and is now reflected in the final proposed amendment change list.
- Modify the project description on ARCID FS-350 / GDOT PI 0014081 to reference the state route designation for South Fulton Parkway – SR 14 ALT. Also change the phase status of FY 2022 HB 170 funded PE to ‘Authorized’. These requests were granted and are now reflected in the final proposed amendment change list.
- Increase the total cost of the FY 2025 National Highway Performance Program (Z001) funded ROW phase to \$8,193,000 and move to FY 2026. Both change were made to the final proposed amendment change list and are lumped into the general long range scheduling band (2026-2030) for this project (ARCID GW-184B / GDOT PI 0013901
- Update the total funding amount on long range (2026-2030) project activities to \$4,300,000 total funding, incorporating a state funded match of \$860,000. This request was granted and is now reflected in the final proposed amendment change list for ARCID WA-037 / GDOT PI 0017942.

## Public Comment Submittals

The following are the public comments submitted to ARC for the FY 2020-2025 TIP Amendment #5 along with a response from ARC:

### Public Comment #1

Hi ARC,

Urbanize Atlanta wrote a very thorough piece on the infrastructure funds incoming to TIP, for use with buses and bus infrastructure. I think bus infrastructure is the last big opportunity for mobility in Atlanta, given heavy rail is too expensive to build and maintain. If Atlanta can make bus riding safer and more attractive, MARTA could have a revenue streams on its hands. I would say the only addendum to the existing plan would be adding many more EV charging stations in very conspicuously heavy traffic areas (Cobb Pkwy, Windy Hill Rd, Chastain Rd, Barrett Pkwy, Piedmont, Peachtree, DeKalb Ave, Boulevard, Memorial, Moreland, Briarcliff, Ponce, Roswell Rd, Paces Ferry, Peachtree Dunwoody, Pleasant Hill Rd, Holcomb Bridge Rd, Windward Pkwy, etc.) rather than waiting for land developers to build charging stations into new developments. If we can be seen on the cutting edge, the public will utilize the city's transit resources more frequently. Many people I know have three big complaints about Atlanta that need improvement yesterday: high crime, difficulty in getting around, access to affordable housing. I think MARTA and other systems have low credibility right now because riding the bus is dangerous and doesn't go where people need it to go. Make it a stronger value proposition by expanding AND improving transit and ridership will improve.

Appreciate accepting the feedback.

Thanks,

M. Scott McMillan

Thank you for your comment. ARC supports the efforts of our region's transit operators to increase the efficiency, convenience, and attractiveness of their services – such as MARTA's Bus Rapid Transit projects on Campbellton Road, Southlake and Summerhill. Also, ARC continues to take proactive steps to support further electrification of the region's transportation network, as evidenced by our current and proposed investments in electrification planning and charging infrastructure.

**Public comment #2**

Please invest in sidewalks. This is critical in downtown Atlanta and throughout the City in school zones and neighborhoods. Please make it easy, inviting and safe for people to walk and ride ADA personal mobility devices.

Please make sidewalks a priority.

Thank you,

Jennifer Brooks

**ARC Response:**

*Thank you for your comment. ARC is excited to provide financial assistance to Cobb County close gaps in their sidewalk network in and around bus stops and shelters throughout the CobbLinc network as part of this TIP amendment. ARC would be happy to consider an application for funding on a similar project within the City of Atlanta, should that municipality submit an application through ARC's regularly held TIP project solicitation cycles.*

**Public Comment #3**

Please use the money to convert existing car lanes into transit lanes along frequent bus routes.

All these other projects are just tweaks to a fundamentally broken transportation system that over-relies on cars to the death and detriment of all other modes. We can't really begin to make progress until we recognize, and fund, the reallocation of our limited road space from cars to other uses. In this case transit.

Respectfully,

Jason Lathbury

**ARC Response:**

*Thanks for your comment. Approximately 23 percent of the funds allocated within the long range 2050 Atlanta Region's Plan focus on projects designed to increase the efficiency of the current transportation network. These projects include bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit expansion, freeway managed lanes open to transit vehicles and transportation demand management strategies to decrease single occupant vehicle usage in the Atlanta region.*

#### **Public Comment #4**

As Founder and Executive Director of SHOWAbility, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, that support and promote talented people across the disability spectrum (born, acquired, visible and invisible), I want to bring onto your radar the needs of riders with disabilities - the often forgotten member category of "diversity and inclusion" group. Many in the general population do not realize that the disability community is the largest minority population in the country (20% - 1 in 5 people) and is the only minority population that anyone can join at anytime. In addition, the disability community represents over \$220 billion in disposable income. That said, this population of tax payers need to be considered in all transportation initiatives.

My question: What aspects of the allocated funding will go toward human-centered development that complies with the minimalistics of ADA and beyond? MARTA Mobility needs to be totally overhauled. It's service is beyond poor, but unfortunately "it's the best looking kid of an ugly family" - no other transportation service in Georgia offers the minimums of what it offers. Moreover, all of the funded locations (from Cobb to Calyton to non-urban/rural communities) have disadvantaged populations, including the disability community, that are severely underserved.

SHOWAbility is available to serve as consultants on each of the initiatives and we can put together a team of area disability community representatives from the respective counties to help factor in inclusive riding elements into the operational plans.

All the best,

Myrna Clayton

#### **ARC Response:**

*Thanks for your comment. ARC supports projects which increase the accessibility of our region's transportation system. Approximately 21 percent of the funds allocated within the long range 2050 Atlanta Region's Plan focus on projects which support walkable communities and transit service in the Atlanta region. ARC primarily makes grants from its FHWA suballocated funding streams through a competitive, performance driven application process. Should MARTA, or any other transit operator, submit an eligible project proposal to make eligible improvements to its Mobility system, ARC would gladly evaluate said proposal for funding consideration.*

**Public Comment #5**

1. Complete the original MARTA Act 1970, see plans.

- A. Extend line from the airport to South Fulton cities ,Fairburn, Palmetto
- B. Extend the west line to Fulton Ind Blvd.
- C. Complete line from Candler Park Station to Emory via the RR right of way from turnout from Candler Park station.
- D. Complete East line to Lithonia / Stonecrest Mall via RR right of way.
- E. Complete existing traction power building with acceleration and de-acceleration energy saving system.(the original plans had space reserved at each station in the first phases.)
- F. Coordinate with GA Dot to using existing turnout under WSB TV, north line, to parallel I-75 with rail system.
- G. Security addition( not upgrade) items eliminate doing Phases A, B, C, & D for cost saving.

From – Anonymous

**ARC Response:**

*Thank you for your comment. We continue to work with MARTA to document components of the current edition of the Rapid Transit Contract and Assistance Agreement in the ARC Transportation Improvement Program and Regional Transportation Plan as advised by MARTA.*

## **Public Comment #6**

My comment is regarding the planned use of \$16 million for purchasing fossil fuel burning buses and road widening projects. Why are we spending a single penny on anything that burns natural gas? And making roads wider simply induces further usage of the road, leading to more traffic and more pollution.

The other listed projects seem worthwhile, but please consider finding a better use for the two projects referenced above. We have a woefully inadequate rail network and a barely there streetcar network. Maybe throw some more money that way. Or if you want to do something truly transformative, consider a feasibility study of an Amsterdam-style tram network crisscrossing Atlanta. We can no longer be a region defined by interstates or parking lots. Growth and productivity demand we do better. And if we don't do more on climate change, it will be simply unbearable to even live here.

Regards,

Matthew Pociask

## **ARC Response:**

*Thanks for your comment. ARC supports investments which support regional transportation system electrification – which is underscored by the establishment elsewhere within this proposed amendment of a \$14.8 million dollar electrification pilot program for bus and bus facilities throughout the metropolitan Atlanta area. Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) engine systems represent the current standard for bus rolling stock across our region's transit fleet and have helped contribute to continual improvements in the Atlanta region's air quality since their introduction in the 1990's. We expect even further improvements as energy production within Georgia continues to migrate to cleaner sources (such as nuclear) and as our partner transit agencies develop and implement their own fleet electrification plans. ARC also supports our partners at the Georgia Department of Transportation through their investments in the Atlanta region's roadway and bridge network.*

## **Public Comment #7**

As a HUGE fan of expanding transit option here in Atlanta, I love seeing more buses and trains, and hope we can continue to bring funds to these projects.

To that end, I absolutely abhor the idea that we would invest in battery-powered buses. Battery locomotion only really makes sense with *very* light-weight vehicles (i.e. bikes and small cars) and MARTA would be doing itself a disservice by making a long-range investment into this technology. Operationally, overhead-wire 'trolley' buses would be best, natural gas will be fine but not great, and battery is simply the worst of both worlds. They tend to be underpowered, have long cycle-times, and have a massive, [MASSIVE embodied carbon footprint](#) that can't be made back.

Further, batteries at this scale make the bus *significantly* heavier, which has obvious implications for pedestrian/bike safety and accordingly, liability concerns for the transit agency.

Lithium-ion batteries, while cheaper than other storage options today, are rife with ethical concerns in how its extracted and potentially worse consequences on how the batteries are disposed of at end of life.

To that end, MARTA would be wise to take [Denver's lead](#) on e-bike rebates and other low-cost, high-return mobility spending options. E-bikes are transit multipliers, put more money into the local economy and are significantly more route-flexible than fixed mass transit options. Further, e-bikes and cargo bikes are now truly capable of being car replacements, freeing up residents financially and reducing road congestion at drastically lower costs.

Sorry for the long input, but I am deeply passionate about Atlanta's transportation investments as it becomes a truly world-class city.

Best,

Brad Raber

*Thank you for your comment, which has been shared with MARTA staff.*

### **Public Comment #8**

It seems that poor decisions are following previously poor decisions to continue to push more and more automobiles onto are already heavily congested, smog producing and unsafe roadways. We can never build sufficient roadways to solve our local and area transportation problems and challenges.

I strongly believe and totally support the construction and expansion of rail lines to carry Atlantans and surrounding areas passengers to and from the inner city and surrounds.

Save our planet. Improve the time and congestion spent on highways. Expand the rail system in and surrounding Atlanta! That's the path we should follow!

Barbara Balsler

### **ARC Response:**

*Thank you for your comment. We work closely with our partners in project delivery at the state, county and municipal level to deliver projects which offer a variety of modal choices for travel to the residents of the Atlanta region. Approximately 30 percent of the funds programmed within the ARC Transportation Improvement Program and Regional Transportation Plan are dedicated to projects which expand public transportation, support programs designed to decrease single occupant vehicle usage, and active modes such as walking and bicycling. ARC is committed to supporting our regional project sponsors in their efforts to advance such projects, including rail transportation systems.*

### **Public Comment #9**

Thank you for your work in this area. I support building a multi-modal transit system that includes new rail.

Bobbi (Barbara) Patterson

### **ARC Response:**

*Thank you for your comment. Expanding and improving the transit network constitute two major ARC Board objectives for regional transportation investment. Accordingly, the Atlanta Region's Plan allocates 24 percent of project funding on projects which expand and maintain regional transit operations. ARC is committed to supporting our regional transit providers in their efforts to advance transit projects, including rail systems.*

**Public Comment #10**

Good afternoon ARC,

As a resident of the ATL Metro area, I'd like to offer my input into the way funds are allocated for transportation projects from the TIP. As I was reviewing the website for the proposed projects, I noticed a significant lack of rail transit improvement projects. I believe that the best way to proceed in the Atlanta region is to invest in more permanent heavy rail transit that has high passenger capacity and is unaffected by traffic conditions. As the region grows, its population pushes outwards to the exurbs. And these people moving into the exurbs create congestion to the already beleaguered highways that are beyond capacity. We need to look at alternative modes of transport rather than simply invite more traffic to our highways with lazy, short-term, road expansions. We need heavy rail. One of the most important changes is to expand MARTA's Red Line further north to Alpharetta along GA 400. This region has a large population with many commuters that overwhelm GA400 on a daily basis. The demand is there, the need is there, the funds are there, all that's left to ask is, is the support of our leaders there?

Thank you for your consideration of my comments, I hope you find them beneficial.

Best Regards,

Jalees N.

**ARC Response:**

*Thank you for your comment. Expanding and improving the transit network constitute two major ARC Board objectives for regional transportation investment. Accordingly, the Atlanta Region's Plan allocates 24 percent of project funding on projects which expand and maintain regional transit operations. ARC is committed to supporting our regional transit providers in their efforts to advance transit projects, including rail systems.*

**Public Comment #11 (transcribed from verbal comment delivered at the May 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 ARC public hearing)**

I'm grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the TIP that would allocate \$45 million from the federal infrastructure act. I spoke at the combined ARC Board of Directors and TAQC Committee meeting on May 11, 2022 to urge the ARC to invest in infrastructure projects that help the Atlanta region address the climate crisis. I'm writing today to provide a written version of comments I made.

With regards to the climate crisis, time is of the essence. The World Meteorological Organization reported on May 9 that the world is closing in on the 1.5 degrees Celsius warming threshold, and we have a 50/50 chance that the world will meet the threshold by 2026.

The proposed investments in electric buses and charging stations, improvements to the Clayton County transit center, and improvements that provide safe access to CobbLinc buses are just what we need to help prevent climate change from getting even worse.

Investing in infrastructure that reduces car dependency and encourages people to rely on transit to get around will make the region more resilient. It's also essential that our transit agencies shift away from fossil-fuel powered vehicle dependency.

For the same reasons, I urge you to avoid funding road expansion in Barrow and Henry counties. We can't build our way out of congestion. Building bigger roads induces increased demand for driving, facilitates sprawl, and makes traffic worse. And by inducing more driving, bigger roads also worsen climate change.

I support the purchase of additional MARTA buses, but urge MARTA to shift the proposed investment in compressed natural gas buses to purchasing more electric buses and charging stations. The negative impact of natural gas has gained more attention in 2021 and early 2022, with an emphasis on the negative climate impact of methane. If MARTA isn't ready to purchase more electric vehicles at this time, I encourage it to do so on all future additions to its fleet.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. ARC must focus on more than regional impact and local relevance. It also has an urgent responsibility to take actions that protect our planet and the future of human civilization.

Sally Flocks

Founder and former President, PEDS

ARC Response:

*Thank you for your comment. We work closely with our partners in project delivery at the state, county and municipal level to deliver projects which offer a variety of modal choices for travel to the residents of the Atlanta region. Approximately 30 percent of the funds programmed within the ARC Transportation Improvement Program and Regional Transportation Plan are dedicated to projects which expand public transportation, support programs designed to decrease single occupant vehicle usage, and active modes such as walking and bicycling. ARC is committed to supporting our regional project sponsors in their efforts to advance such projects, including rail transportation systems.*