

Transit Planning Board

Public Engagement  
Summary Report

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Transit Planning Board  
Public Engagement Report  
December 2007 – August 2008  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### Introduction

After 30 years of local transit planning, the metro Atlanta region came together to create a vision to guide the transit network in the region. This regional transit vision, developed under the auspices of a temporary planning entity known as the Transit Planning Board (TPB), resolves years of uncertainty regarding the role of transit in the region's future.

Concept 3, The Regional Transit Vision<sup>1</sup> created by TPB, not only meets expectations for a comprehensive transit system but was developed with the support of state and local governments, regional planning agencies, and everyday citizens.

This support is due largely in part to TPB's commitment to engaging key stakeholders and the general public in a dialogue regarding the vision to expand metro Atlanta's regional transit network. This report details the public engagement activities of the Transit Planning Board that led to Concept 3 as we know it today.

This report covers the time period from the November 29, 2007 board meeting when the Board empowered the TPB staff to release Concept 3 for public input and concludes at the end of August 2008.

During this timeframe (December 2007 – August 2008), TPB conducted 12 town hall meetings, more than 70 stakeholder briefings, a scientifically-based, statistically significant regional phone survey and a related online survey. These activities informed key stakeholders and elected officials about the public's receptivity towards transit and their outright enthusiasm towards a regional transit network as identified through Concept 3.

In August of 2008, the TPB Board of Directors unanimously voted to adopt Concept 3 as the proposed Regional Transit Vision. Following the TPB board vote, partner agencies, Metro Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) also adopted the vision. Finally in December 2008, the third and final partner agency, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), adopted Concept 3 as well making it a part of the ARC's long-range regional Aspirations Plan; the ultimate goal for TPB.

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<sup>1</sup> TPB's Regional Transit Vision was originally known as "Concept 3." In the Transit Planning Board's effort to create a regional transit plan the staff developed two conceptual system frameworks. The staff was later directed to refine the two in creation of a third framework. The result built upon the strengths of two previous concepts and came to be referred to simply as "Concept 3."

## Context

A number of events occurred during the reporting period which may have influenced the public's receptivity towards TPB and its work to gauge support for a regional transit network.

1. **For the first time in history, motorists experienced gas prices beyond \$4/gallon.** This occurred after a steady climb in prices that began in February and peaked beyond the June 30, 2008 timeframe (the highest average per gallon price in Georgia for regular unleaded was \$4.07 on 7/17/08). This circumstance enraged cash-strapped motorists and emboldened elected officials and the media both nationally and within the Atlanta region. In blogs, newspaper columns, and op-eds, the work of the TPB became more relevant to metro Atlanta residents.

National and Georgia Average Price per  
Gallon of Gas from Sept 2007 to June 2008



Source: [www.atlantafuelgaugereport.com](http://www.atlantafuelgaugereport.com)

2. **Transportation and the Legislature:** Funding became an important topic of discussion for the Georgia legislature, reaching its peak during the final minutes of the 2008 legislative session. Leaders within the Atlanta region witnessed Senate Resolution 846 fail by three votes in the Georgia Senate. SR 846 would have enabled regions throughout the state to fund additional transit and roadway expansion through a one-cent sales tax. Such an option might have made TPB's efforts even more relevant than it is today. However, SR 846's near passage triggered a wave of public dialogue that kept transit and the work of TPB at the forefront of the public agenda. Specifically, these leaders drew heavily from

TPB's April 2008 phone survey – bolstering visibility of the need and desire for transit and the Board's vision of an interconnected regional transit network.

3. **The July 2008 Gwinnett straw vote regarding MARTA.** After two unsuccessful ballot bids in 1965 and 1990 for MARTA expansion in Gwinnett County, the issue resurfaced in the 2008 July primary election. The proposal that failed overwhelmingly with a 70 percent to 30 percent vote in 1990 only bypassed passage in 2008 with a vote split 53 percent against to 47 percent in favor. The outcome of this non-binding vote garnered much attention across the region. Such circumstances suggest that regional efforts to engage counties once thought hostile to transit may yield different outcomes as new strategies are advanced in the years ahead. For the present, however, the straw vote's outcome, suggests public support for transit has improved.

### Goals of Public Engagement

There were three primary goals of TPB's public engagement effort:

- Raise awareness among key stakeholders and the general public about the need for a regional transit system.
- Gather feedback in response to the vision for an expanded regional transit network, a concept vision that mapped out a regional transit network
- Explore the public's willingness to pay for an expansion of the regional transit network.

### Strategy and Tactics for Public Engagement

In developing this strategy, a nontraditional approach to public engagement was taken. This approach focused on bringing the stakeholder engagement to the public whenever possible. This commitment was expressed by TPB staff director Cheryl King, who frequently stated her emphatic willingness *"to meet with any one, any time, any place."* This commitment was also expressed in activities of TPB's public engagement team during the study period. The 12 town hall meetings, the special events that TPB staff attended on weekends, the 70 stakeholder meetings conducted throughout the region, and even the phone and online survey attempted to engage a diverse and comprehensive array of regional interests as extensively and as cost-effectively as possible.

A complete listing of the various public engagement tactics employed during the study period are listed below, along with a brief synopsis of each tactic's relative impact:

- **Town Hall Meetings:** TPB worked with local "hosts" to coordinate a total of 12 geographically-disbursed town hall meetings throughout the metro Atlanta region. Through town hall meetings, TPB reached a total of 569

residents. At the more widely-attended meetings in Cobb, Gwinnett, and downtown Atlanta, real-time voting technology was employed to allow staff to instantly collect responses and to present findings on-screen for all to see. Such technological tools aided in promoting greater dialogue and discussion within larger gatherings.

- **Special Events:** TPB staff set up booths at heavily-trafficked weekend destinations in an effort to connect with the average citizen. These efforts included weekend outings to Phipps Plaza, the Mall at Stonecrest, Lenox Square Mall, and the Henry County's Geranium Festival (sponsored by the McDonough Lions Club).
- **Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte:** On March 27, a delegation of 50 regional leaders headed to Charlotte aboard a Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) Xpress Coach. On a whirlwind tour, the delegation met with regional leaders in Charlotte, toured Charlotte's newly-opened light rail line (Lynx Blue Line) and returned home later that evening. An integral part of the Charlotte trip was participation by the local media. By engaging with regional leaders and by being provided full access to activities, media were encouraged to contribute and to experience the dialogue unfolding before their eyes. Such an approach helped in gaining the trust of media who were eager to assist the collective effort to raise the level of public discourse regarding regional transit.
- **Stakeholder and Board Briefings:** More than 70 stakeholder briefings reached 50 stakeholder groups and a combined total of 1,566 participants. Engagements ranged from large gatherings of 200 people (Good Morning Cherokee) to smaller, more intimate gatherings. Groups reached included a wide range of interests: business, government (local and state), environment, transportation, citizen/community groups, minority/multi-cultural groups, institutions of higher education, religious/faith communities, the elderly and the disabled. The interaction and engagement of these stakeholders proved to be vital to the success of TPB's efforts. Their advocacy and support was demonstrated through the sponsorship of public meetings, financial backing for TPB's regional phone survey, and an outpouring of letters and emails in support of the plan. In April 2007, before any work on Concept 3 was completed, the public engagement team met with each TPB Board Member individually to gauge their priorities and opinions on regional transit. These thoughts were used in the initial concept work for the regional system and are reflected in Concept 3.
- **State Legislature Briefings:** Since TPB began its public engagement process in November 2007, the state legislature was a priority and a valued stakeholder. Throughout this process, members of the legislature were kept abreast of TPB's progress through one-on-one briefings, reports to various legislative committees, and an open door policy for all TPB board and committee meetings. In preparation for the 2009 legislative

session, TPB is compiling a final report detailing its efforts and accomplishments over the past two years.

- **Partner Coordination:** TPB leveraged the expertise of the three agencies that created TPB: the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). In addition, local government representatives that served on the Board greatly amplified TPB's message, serving as local ambassadors on TPB's behalf. Fulton County aired a 30-minute TV interview between Chairman John Eaves and TPB staff director Cheryl King on its cable access station, FGTV. Cobb County co-branded marketing materials and went to great lengths to promote TPB's Cobb town hall meeting. These are just two examples of ways in which TPB's partners expressed their commitment and support.
- **Phone Survey:** A telephone survey of 4,123 residents of the metro Atlanta region was conducted by Ayres McHenry and Associates in March 2008. This survey and its findings informed the regional dialogue on transit and positioned TPB as a thought leader on transit-related issues. By providing content on regional attitudes towards transit and transportation, TPB provided elected officials, regional decision makers, and the news media with content that has continued to inform the regional conversation on transit.
- **On-line Survey:** In addition to the phone survey, an online survey was also conducted by TPB. This survey, fielded from April 1 – May, 23 2008, generated 889 submittals.
- **Media Relations and Paid Advertising:** Extensive efforts were made to engage the media during TPB's public engagement effort. These efforts include the drafting and distribution of press releases, fact sheets, and other materials as well as the cultivation of relationships with key media personalities through one-on-one media briefings and other engagement efforts. The media was also educated on the various transit technologies and specifics of the plan providing them with the resources to adequately inform the public. Town hall meetings, the leadership trip to Charlotte, and the release of survey information all served to position the efforts of the TPB as newsworthy. These efforts, in addition to targeted paid advertising in local newspapers, bolstered public engagement and helped channel additional respondents into TPB feedback mechanisms.
- **Collateral and Web site Support:** TPB's web site provided a repository of useful information related to Concept 3, the survey, and various outputs of the TPB process. Flyers, fact sheets and handouts were created during this engagement period which are included as part of this report.

In sum, TPB's public engagement effort directly engaged approximately **7,500 people across the geographic region in a six month period.** The efforts described above

generated a database of **more than 1,400 specific comments** received via email, letters, phone calls, online survey responses, comment forms and phone survey responses.

### Analysis

In analyzing TPB's public engagement effort in response to the goals that were established for the project, a consistent picture emerges:

*Goal#1: Raise awareness about the need for a regional transit system.*

- **TPB's public engagement effort raised awareness through a range of public engagement tactics.** The full report catalogues the extensive breadth of the tactics employed and reactions to those efforts. Responses include public comment and feedback (1,400 specific comments) in addition to news reports, blog posts and other communications generated as a result of TPB's public engagement effort.

*Goal#2: Gather feedback in response to the board's vision for an expanded regional transit network:*

Through stakeholder briefings, public meetings, the TPB web site, online survey, phone survey, and media relations, TPB has a database of more than 1,400 comments. TPB solicited input from the public to ensure that the proposed vision accurately reflected the needs and desires of the region. This catalogue of public comments and feedback was essential in the revision of Concept 3 before its adoption by the Board.

Below are some of the findings from the statistically valid survey that was conducted as a part of the public engagement effort:

- **Voters expressed strong support for increased investment in transit throughout the region.** Eighty-five percent of registered voters in the 11-county area agreed with the statement, *"Increased investment in public transportation would strengthen metro Atlanta's economy, create jobs, reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and fuel consumption."* Three quarters of voters agreed with the statement, *"My community needs more transportation options like commuter rail service, light rail, buses, and trolleys."* These findings suggest voters are attuned to the principle benefits of transit and would like to see more transit options in their communities.
- **Voters largely recognized that increased investment in transit is part of the solution to traffic congestion.** Eighty percent of metro Atlanta voters agreed with the statement, *"Metro Atlanta needs to continue funding road construction, but also needs to spend additional money on*



*new public transportation options.”* In contrast, 56 percent voters disagreed with the statement: *“Metro Atlanta can solve its transportation problems by building new and wider roads, without including new public transportation options.”* These findings suggest that a majority of voters disagree with roads as the only strategy to addressing the region’s traffic congestion issues. Further, transit is not perceived to be the “silver bullet,” either. Voters appear to favor a balanced approach that includes both roads and transit.

- **There is strong support throughout the region for Concept 3.** While the phone survey was of great value in gathering insights into voter preferences, it didn’t provide input specific to Concept 3. For this task, the public engagement team relied on staff reports from stakeholder briefings, responses to an online survey and other feedback mechanisms. These efforts provided findings specific to the public’s reaction to Concept 3:

**Online Survey (889 respondents<sup>2</sup>):**

- **Eighty six percent** of online respondents agree that Concept 3 “will dramatically increase the availability of transit choices in the metro Atlanta region.”
- **Eighty two percent** of online respondents agree with the statement, *“I support Concept 3.”*

**Town Hall Meetings Comment Forms (46 forms received)**

- **Eighty one percent** of respondents agree that Concept 3 “will dramatically increase the availability of transit choices in the metro Atlanta region.”
- **Seventy four percent** of online respondents agree with the statement, *“I support Concept 3.”*

*Goal#3: Explore the public’s willingness to pay to support an expansion of the regional transit network.*

- **Voters support a regional one-cent sales tax referendum for transportation funds by a wide margin.** Voters heard the following proposal: *“Some have proposed having a referendum in metro Atlanta to fund a specific list of transportation projects, including rail and bus*

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<sup>2</sup> As referenced above, references to “respondents” refer to a different data set than those that refer to “voters.” Whereas references to “voters” refer to information that was obtained through TPB’s statistically significant, scientifically-based telephone survey of registered voters in the 11-county TPB study area, references to “respondents,” refer to data gathered from online surveys and comment forms that were provided and collected at town hall meetings. While the various data sets define the public in somewhat different terms, the data collected from all of these sources reinforced a consistent view that is further detailed in this document.

*service. Would you support or oppose a sales tax of one cent per dollar for the region, which would end after a specified time period unless renewed by voters, in another election?”* Fifty-eight percent of voters supported this proposal, 36 percent opposed it, and six percent of voters remained undecided. Strong levels of support were identified in each of the counties surveyed. Further analysis demonstrated consistent support within major demographic sub-groups of voters (voters were largely supportive of the measure regardless of gender, race, age, or income levels).

- **To the extent that providing funding for MARTA expansion has an effect on voters’ support for the referendum, it is positive.** Forty-eight percent of voters say that providing funding for MARTA expansion would have no effect on their support for a regional transportation referendum, 33 percent would be more likely to support the referendum, and only 15 percent were less likely to support the referendum, if MARTA were the administrator of transit funds.
- **Voters also support raising local funds for transportation projects in their neighborhood.** Voters support *“raising local revenue in your local community that would fund specific transportation projects in your neighborhood, such as a circulator bus, or a shuttle that would connect to other regional public transportation systems”* by a wide 58 to 37 percent margin (58 percent support and 37 percent oppose), with five percent undecided.

### Conclusion

TPB views its public engagement activities as an extremely successful effort that has moved the public dialogue forward regarding the need to expand the regional transit network. In revisiting the primary goals of this effort, it is clear that it has raised awareness among key stakeholders and the general public about the need for a regional transit plan. With respect to the Board’s vision for Concept 3, it is clear that the vast majority of respondents and stakeholder groups reached are enthusiastically supportive of Concept 3 and clearly see the benefits in making such a regional vision a reality. Last of all, TPB has identified that registered voters in the study area are willing to pay to support an expansion of transit and roads that could be seen as a first installment in building the expanded transit network as identified by Concept 3.

In the concluding months of 2008, TPB was successful in linking Concept 3 to the ARC’s transportation planning process. This process will help to keep this vision moving forward, as the desire to expand the region’s transit network moves beyond concept to reality.



## **OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

### **Transit Planning Board**

The Transit Planning Board (TPB) was created by a joint resolution of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). TPB held its inaugural meeting on February 16, 2006. Bylaws were adopted on April 20, 2006 and a work plan on August 17, 2006.

The TPB Board of Directors includes the County chairs from the 11 counties in the region, the Mayor of Atlanta, three appointees from the Governor, the Board chairs from GDOT, GRTA, MARTA and the MARTA General Manager.

TPB, as defined, is a partnership leading the establishment and maintenance of a seamless, integrated transit network for the Atlanta region. Specifically, TPB was directed to:

- Develop a regional transit plan including a comprehensive financial plan;
- Work to improve regional service coordination, including integrating fares, marketing and customer information;
- Measure system performance; and,
- Advocate for increased federal funding for regional transit.

### **Regional Transit Plan Development**

The effort to create a regional transit plan began with a review of existing transportation and land use plans (Fall 2006 – April 2007) to understand the current framework. Key findings with respect to travel/mobility, land use, economic development/demographic trends, and transportation projects were inventoried during this task. Out of the 100-plus projects that were identified as a part of this process, 63 major projects of regional significance were finally selected for evaluation.

Through a series of stakeholder interviews as well as the project review process, an overall evaluation framework emerged. This framework consisted of 17 specific criteria that were used to evaluate the 63 major projects. Beyond this evaluation, TPB staff acted on TPB Board direction to gather further information concerning regional travel patterns and travel demand projections.

Finally, with a solid understanding of prior planning efforts and projected transportation demands facing the region, TPB approached the task of developing two conceptual system frameworks for a regional transit plan which were presented to the Board at the September 2007 Board retreat. The Board directed the staff to refine the framework further in the creation of a third framework for regional transit that was developed. This third framework built upon the strengths of the two previous concepts. Moreover, this new third framework (which came to be referred to simply as “Concept 3”) came to represent a new milestone in regional collaboration towards a unified vision for transit in the metro Atlanta region.

In November of 2007, TPB agreed to take this conceptual vision for metro Atlanta’s transit plan, called “Concept 3,” to key stakeholders and the general public for input and comment.

## **TPB Public Engagement**

While it is accurate that there was a spirited sense of stakeholder and public engagement throughout the duration of TPB, the remainder of this report focuses on the time frame that was officially known as the public engagement period. The time frame for this period begins with the Board's instruction to release Concept 3 for public comment and review, November 2007, and ends in August 2008 with the Board's adoption of Concept 3 as the proposed regional transit vision.

Despite the passage of Concept 3, there was ongoing interest by various stakeholders and members of the public so TPB staff, Board and partners continued to engage various groups as requested to come speak and be heard. This subsequent feedback will be inserted into the public policy process at the next appropriate vantage point.

## **Goals of Public Engagement**

Unlike public engagement efforts that focus on specific transportation investments (such as a road or a specific light rail line), TPB's Concept 3 concerned a high-level, conceptual plan for building out the metro region's transit infrastructure to a robust network of transit investments that would increase accessibility and mobility for residents throughout the region. Beyond the plan as presented on a map, the public engagement team was also tasked with determining the perceived need for such a network and a willingness (especially among voters) to put such a plan into place.

The purpose of TPB's public engagement effort was to:

1. Raise awareness among key stakeholders and the general public about the need for a regional transit plan;
2. Gather input from key stakeholders and the general public regarding Concept 3, TPB's vision of an expanded regional transit network; and
3. Explore the public's willingness to pay to support an expansion of the regional transit network.

## **Key Audiences of TPB Public Engagement**

Key audiences of TPB's engagement effort include:

- People living within the 11-county TPB area.
- Stakeholder groups that are likely to influence and/or likely to be impacted by the creation of a regional transit network (or lack thereof).

While TPB's engagement effort was interested in garnering feedback from the region's current transit riders, they were equally interested in gaining feedback from those who currently do not use transit. Given the likelihood of some of the funding for regional transit to come down to an issue of a public referendum, the interests of registered voters in the study area were of critical importance. In addition, it was recognized that stakeholder groups could leverage their respective consistencies. By doing so, stakeholders could provide TPB with cost-effective ways of reaching greater numbers of people via indirect methods rather than solely relying on direct engagement tactics.

## **Public Engagement: Strategy and Tactics**

In developing the strategy to support this vision for the future of transit in the region, the consultant team took a nontraditional approach to public engagement. This approach focused on bringing the engagement to the public (and the stakeholder), as opposed to the other way around, whenever possible. This commitment was expressed by the TPB staff's willingness, in their own words, "to meet with any one, any time, any place."

While conventional tactics, such as conveniently-located town hall meetings and an information-rich Web site, were employed, the desire for greater community engagement prompted the need for proactive tactics that augmented traditional public meetings. These tactics included stakeholder briefings and subsequent empowerment, tabling at malls and community festivals, a leadership trip to neighboring Charlotte (which had recently opened its Blue Lynx Light Rail line), an Internet-based survey, and an extensive, statistically-valid telephone survey.

TPB's public engagement effort directly engaged approximately 7,500 people in a nine month period. These efforts, as well as the efforts of engaged stakeholders (who created signage, mailed postcards and leveraged e-resources), the media (newspapers, radio and TV) and non-TPB Internet resources (bloggers, as well as Web and email content developed by media and key stakeholders) generated a wealth of valuable feedback in the form of phone calls, emails, letters, comment forms and survey responses.

All told, TPB views its public engagement activities as an extremely successful effort that has moved the public dialogue regarding the need to expand the regional transit network to a new place. This goal has been achieved through a cost-effective, multi-faceted public engagement effort that leveraged third party efforts.

**This effort has also proven successful in what it revealed: broad-based support for a regional transit network, broad based support specific to Concept 3, and substantive feedback regarding Concept 3 that will help planners in meeting the region's increasingly insistent demand for increased accessibility and mobility in the metro Atlanta region.**

## **OUTREACH SUMMARY**

### **Overview**

TPB's public engagement effort directly engaged 569 people who attended town hall meetings, the 1,600 people reached through stakeholder briefings, the 889 respondents to the online survey, the 4,123 people reached through the phone survey and the 400+ people reached through a variety of other methods. All told, this effort directly engaged a total of 7,500 people in a nine month period. The following section provides an overview of the activities. This section is comprised of two sections. The first section reports on the tactics themselves and details various aspects of TPB's efforts. The second section examines the feedback received as a result of these efforts. These sections are further broken down as follows:

#### **Section One: Tactics (What We Did)**

- Town Hall Meetings
- Special Events
- Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte
- Coalition Building: Stakeholder Briefings & Empowerment
- Partner Coordination
- Phone Survey
- Online Survey
- ULI Study: Focus Groups and Online Survey
- Media Relations and Paid Advertising
- Collateral and Web site support

#### **Section Two: Feedback (What We Heard)**

- Letters/Emails (citizen)
- Letters/Emails (stakeholder)
- Town Hall Meetings
  - Comment forms
  - Staff reports of town hall meetings
- Stakeholder Meetings
  - Staff reports of stakeholder meetings
- Phone Survey
- Online Survey
- ULI Grant: Focus Group and Online Survey

## ***SECTION ONE: TACTICS***

## Town Hall Meetings

TPB participated in a total of 12 “town hall” meetings. While the format varied somewhat from meeting to meeting, the general format included a sign in sheet, an information station with various transit-related handouts, a station that asked attendees to mark their commute on a map, and larger presentation displays that introduced visitors to the Concept 3 map and provided visuals of various transit technologies. A presentation was provided that took approximately one hour that included opportunities for questions and answers.

Attendees were encouraged to mingle with other attendees and ask questions of the TPB staff and consultant team. Board members, staff from partnering agencies and representatives from various stakeholder groups also attended, including:

- Fayette County Chairman Jack Smith
- Douglas County Chairman Tom Worthan
- Cobb County Chairman Sam Olens
- Directors from Fayette County Government Staff
- Harvey Keeper of GDOT Intermodal
- Rockdale County Staff including Transportation Director
- Cherokee County Chairman Buzz Ahrens
- Former Cherokee County Chairman Mike Byrd
- Gwinnett County DOT
- Clayton County Chairman Eldrin Bell

To encourage interactivity, handheld voting touch pads were provided in most of the meetings to allow attendees to register attitudes and preferences as well as to answer basic questions regarding familiarity with the region’s existing transit services (see Appendix for results from real time voting). In addition to these feedback mechanisms, a comment form was developed that provided attendees with a way to provide feedback in written form. Last of all, staff took copious notes at each of the town hall meetings and those records are also included as part of the Appendix.

While the majority of the town hall meetings took place in the month of April, Cherokee hosted their meeting in February, Spalding did theirs in March and Clayton hosted the final town hall on May 13. From February 7 through May 13, TPB reached 569 people through town hall meetings.

<i>County</i>	<i>Group/Sponsor</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Attendees</i>
Cherokee	Cherokee County Chamber	Moose Family Center	200
Spalding	Griffin-Spalding Chamber	Griffin Welcome Center	40
Cobb	Sponsored by Cobb Department of Transportation	Cobb Central Library	45
Gwinnett - Lawrenceville	Gwinnett DOT/ Gwinnett Village	Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center	9
Douglas	Douglas County	Douglas County Library	10



North Fulton	North Fulton Chamber	Crabapple Middle School	11
Gwinnett - South Gwinnett	Gwinnett DOT/ Gwinnett Village	Global Mall	75
Fayette County	Fayette County Chamber	Fayette County Library	18
Rockdale	Rockdale County		8
Central	Metro Atlanta Chamber	Central Library - Auditorium	75
Clayton	Clayton County DOT	Southern Regional Hospital, Educational Room	3
Clayton/Fulton	Clayton County Chamber/Airport Chamber	Airport Chamber	75
Total			569

TPB used a variety of strategies to promote the town hall meetings. These efforts included an aggressive media relations effort that involved extensive outreach to local and regional media. Print advertisements ran in the local newspapers prior to town hall meetings in Douglas, North Fulton, Gwinnett, Clayton, Fayette and Rockdale. Beyond the push with public relations and paid media efforts, TPB staff and partners used a separate flyer to promote the town hall meetings at stakeholder briefings. This flyer was disseminated in hard copy format as well as through emails and other communications.

Local partners, including the Cobb DOT, Gwinnett Village CID and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce (MACOC), developed their own flyers and other communications (Gwinnett Village distributed a visually attractive postcard to its membership, Cobb County DOT produced a flyer, MACOC relied more upon email). Examples of all these materials are provided in the Appendix.

Where applicable, TPB extended invitations and provided free booth space to transportation demand management service providers (The Clean Air Campaign and area transportation management associations (TMAs)) as well as local transit providers. Those that took advantage of the opportunity included Cobb County DOT, Commuter Club, The Clean Air Campaign, Gwinnett County Transit, City of Atlanta (Connect Atlanta Plan)

Of the 12 town hall meetings, the ones that were promoted by local partners produced the largest number of attendees. In TPB communications for these meetings, directions were provided for attendees arriving by car as well as transit.

## Special Events

In an effort to reach a cross-section of people throughout the metro Atlanta region, TPB participated in several special events during the seven month public engagement period. These events targeted the “average” citizen who may have otherwise been unaware of TPB and Concept 3. These special events included:

- TPB at Phipps Plaza
- Earth Day Celebrations
  - The Mall at Stonecrest – “Earth Day at Stonecrest”
  - Lenox Square Mall – “Go Green & Commute Clean”
- The Geranium Festival (Sponsored by the McDonough Lions Club)



### Phipps Plaza

TPB visited Phipps Plaza on Saturday, April 12, 2008. The informational booth provided Phipps shoppers with a wealth of information on Concept 3, transit technologies, and current transit systems. TPB staff took notes on the public's comments and questions and offered interested parties the opportunity to fill out comment forms. More than 50 shoppers visited the TPB booth. See Appendix for complete staff report from this visit.

### Earth Day Celebrations

In observance of Earth Day, TPB participated in events held at both Lenox Square Mall (Atlanta/Fulton County) and The Mall at Stonecrest (Lithonia/DeKalb).

The Earth Day celebration at Lenox Square Mall was sponsored by The Buckhead Area Transportation Management Association (BATMA). The event, "Go Green & Commute Clean," focused on services and products that help commuters get around Buckhead in an eco-friendly way and adopt a green lifestyle. Similarly, the Earth Day event at The Mall at Stonecrest treated guests to green entertainment as well as options and education in an effort to provide easy-to-take steps to protect the environment.

TPB reached more than 100 attendees at both events.

### The Geranium Festival - Sponsored by the McDonough Lions Club

On May 17, 2008, the Geranium Festival celebrated its 31<sup>st</sup> year as an outdoor arts and crafts exhibition. TPB, along with more than 300 other vendors, participated in the one-day festival that attracted more than 25,000 people. The annual event is sponsored by the McDonough Lions Club of Henry County.

### **Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte**

On Thursday, March 27, 2008, a delegation of regional leaders departed Atlanta in an Xpress Coach for an unlikely destination: Charlotte, North Carolina. This delegation included representatives from the city, county and statewide level, including:

Dick Anderson, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority Executive Director  
Charles Bannister, Gwinnett County Commission Chairman  
Eldrin Bell, Clayton County Commission Chair and TPB chair  
Luz Borrero, City of Atlanta Deputy Chief Operating Officer  
Eddie Freeman, Spalding County Commission Chair  
Chick Krautler, Atlanta Regional Commission Executive Director  
Clair Muller, City of Atlanta Councilwoman  
Sam Olens, Cobb County Commission Chair and Atlanta Regional Commission Chair  
Beverly Scott, MARTA's CEO and General Manager  
Pam Sessions, Gov. Sonny Perdue appointee to TPB  
Doug Tollett, Gov. Sonny Perdue appointee to TPB

*Please see appendix, for complete list of attendees and itinerary.*

Reports trickled into Atlanta regarding the success of Charlotte's LYNX Blue Line, a 9.6 mile light rail line that runs through downtown Charlotte to South End. Since the LYNX Blue Line opened for service in November of 2007, ridership has outpaced projections. Equally as significant, transit expansion in Charlotte was understood to be fueled in part through state, local and federal resources. Atlanta leaders were particularly interested in the local funding piece achieved in Charlotte through a half penny sales tax that had recently survived a repeal effort.

The "Charlotte delegation" that addressed the Atlanta group included:

- Jennifer Roberts, Chair, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners; Chair, Metropolitan Transit Commission
- Keith Parker, Chief Executive Officer, CATS
- Natalie English, Senior Vice President of Public Policy, Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
- John Muth, Deputy Director of Development, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)
- Laura Harmon, Economic Development Program Manager, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department

After a half day work session, the Atlanta delegation experienced a guided bus tour as well as a trip on the LYNX Blue Line. Having satisfied their interest in Charlotte, metro Atlanta's regional leaders returned home upon the Xpress Coach they rode in on.

In the days and weeks after the Charlotte trip, media reports continued to raise the Charlotte trip as a discussion point that generated greater interest in TPB and the group's efforts to engage the region in a discussion regarding the role of transit in the region's future.

### **Coalition Building: Stakeholder Briefings and Empowerment**

As a part of TPB's public engagement strategy, TPB staff and Board members actively engaged a coalition of supporters by conducting outreach to key stakeholders. This

outreach was primarily achieved through stakeholder briefings and presentations and supported by ongoing communication and stakeholder empowerment.

This tactic reinforced the goals and objectives of the public engagement strategy by raising awareness among key stakeholders about the need for a regional transit plan; educating key decision makers and influencers; and providing an avenue for public input on Concept 3.

As a result of this high level engagement strategy, stakeholders felt empowered to carry the message of the TPB and solicited support of their own networks and constituents. Stakeholders engaged their audiences about Concept 3 through internal communications (e-newsletters and email blasts) and external communications (blogs, inclusion on their websites, op-eds, and advertisements). Involvement and engagement of the key stakeholders is also evident in the overwhelming amount of responses from the online survey, media coverage, and written support in the form of letters, emails, and formal endorsements.

Since November 2007, more than 70 meetings were held representing more than 50 organizations, 1,500 participants, and 11 counties throughout the local business community, civic organizations, environmental groups, faith-based organizations, pro-transit groups, minority and multi-cultural organizations, the disabled community and special interest groups.

See below for a complete list of stakeholders reached throughout the public engagement process.

### **Partner Coordination**



TPB leveraged the expertise of four agencies that created TPB: ARC, GRTA, GDOT and MARTA. In addition, local government representatives that served on the Board greatly amplified the message of TPB, serving as local ambassadors on TPB's behalf. Fulton County aired a 30-minute TV interview between Chairman John Eaves and TPB staff director Cheryl King on its cable access station, FGTV. Cobb County co-branded marketing materials and went to great lengths to promote TPB's Cobb town hall meeting. These are just two examples of ways in which TPB's partners expressed their commitment and support.

### **Phone Survey**

A telephone survey of 4,123 residents of the metro Atlanta region was conducted by Ayres McHenry and Associates on behalf of TPB, March 13-24, 2008. This survey was granted approval by TPB at the February 28<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. The findings were then presented at the Board's April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The 11 participating counties included: Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Rockdale and Spalding. The regional survey has a margin of error of +/-2.32 percentage points; the county-specific data has a margin of error ranging from +/- 3.98 to 5.66 percentage points.

The cost of the survey was \$135,000. It was funded through contributions from metro Atlanta's Community Improvement Districts (CIDs). These include the Cumberland CID, Atlanta Downtown Improvement District, Gwinnett Village CID, Gwinnett Place CID, Buckhead CID, North Fulton CID, Town Center CID, Perimeter Fulton CID and Perimeter CID.

The findings of this survey are presented in the public comment section of this report. In addition, topline results from Ayres McHenry and Associates, press materials, a fact sheet and the PowerPoint presentation that accompanied Jon McHenry's presentation to TPB on April 24<sup>th</sup> are all provided in the Appendix.

### **Online Survey**

In addition to the phone survey, TPB conducted an online survey. The survey was fielded from April 1 – May, 23 2008. During this time, 889 surveys were submitted online.

The online survey was promoted through all of the various TPB outreach efforts. These efforts included media relations, stakeholder meetings and empowerment efforts and through the TPB Web site. Emails were regularly sent out to stakeholders encouraging them to promote the survey and many of the stakeholders sent messages to their respective constituencies.

Each survey respondent was asked if there was a referral organization that led them to take the survey. The most frequent response was none, friend or loved one. When a specific organization was cited, most common referrals included:

- Sierra Club
- Atlanta Journal Constitution
- Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
- Central Atlanta Progress
- Transit Planning Board
- Citizens for Progressive Transit
- Emory University
- McKinsey & Company
- BlogAtlanta
- Georgia-Pacific
- Downtown TMA
- BATMA
- Midtown Alliance
- CobbRides

A copy of the topline results is provided in the Appendix.

### **ULI Study: Focus Group and Online Survey**

During the early stages of TPB's public engagement process, it became apparent that there was a lack of public understanding and many misconceptions about how some of the proposed transit technologies would fit into and impact different environments. In an effort to increase the public's understanding and awareness, TPB solicited the help of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to conduct a study through the ULI Foundation's community action grant. Upon receiving the grant, a team was created that included members of ULI and the three partner agencies (MARTA, GRTA, ARC). For several months the group worked to create a program that would satisfy three primary goals:

1. Educate communities about transit technologies that are new to the region;
2. Explain and show how those technologies interact and fit into different built environments/communities; and
3. Gauge community support and understanding of these new technologies and how they fit into the region

What resulted was a study that centered on visualization as the primary tool for engaging and educating the public. Participants would actually be able to see what transit would look like in "their" communities and give feedback on elements that they did and did not like. This would give TPB and the partner agencies an opportunity to see how better to engage, educate and inform the public.

The study consisted of two parts:

1. Series of four interactive sessions (potentially patterned after a focus group format)
2. Web-based portion – online version of the interactive session

For the interactive sessions, or focus groups as they were referred to, the Clean Air Campaign assisted in providing a pool of participants. The pool consisted of those who had registered through the Clean Air Campaign's Cash for Commuters program and were classified according to their daily commute: frequent transit users who live and work inside the perimeter; frequent transit users who live outside the perimeter and work inside the perimeter; and non transit users who live inside and outside the perimeter and work inside the perimeter.

TPB then used its contacts from the public engagement process as the pool for the fourth session. For the online portion, stakeholders were again encouraged to promote the survey to their networks and constituencies. The survey was also mentioned on several online blogs and in the local magazine *Creative Loafing*.

The participation from both the focus groups and online survey were overwhelming. From the online survey alone more than 1,200 responses were received - almost double the amount from the initial online survey conducted in April.

In addition to educating the public about the various transit technologies, TPB was also able to continue building consensus around the regional transit vision.

*For full results from the focus groups and online survey, see Appendix.*

## **Media Relations and Paid Advertising**

Extensive efforts were made to engage the media during the TPB's public engagement effort. The media relations initiative was a strategically integrated communications effort that combined advertising with proactive public communications outreach to deliver TPB's messages to key stakeholders and the public. These efforts included the drafting and distribution of press releases, fact sheets and other materials, as well as the cultivation of relationships with key media personalities.

Media Components:

- **Traditional Media Outreach (Print/Broadcast/Online)**
- **Social Media (Blogs/Discussion Boards)**
- **Advertising**

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### **Traditional Media Outreach**

Proactive news media outreach and the leveraging of TPB milestones enabled the delivery of the TPB's messages while elevating the profile of Concept 3.

Through these efforts, the media became an active and engaged participant, resulting in substantial coverage from print, broadcast, and online media outlets.

An example of how this outreach paid off is expressed in the example of the attendance and coverage of the Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte. In this instance, AJC columnist Maria Saporta, WSB-TV/PBA30 reporter Sally Sears, and Clayton News Daily reporter Daniel Silliman came on the trip as participants. By engaging with regional leaders and by being provided full access to activities, media were encouraged to contribute and to experience the dialogue unfolding before their eyes. Such an approach

helped in gaining the trust of media who were eager to assist the collective effort to raise the level of public discourse regarding regional transit.

Overall, TPB received more than 90 hits via print, broadcast, and internet media. Of the 93 articles and/or mentions of TPB, about 90 percent were positive and balanced towards Concept 3 and TPB. The remaining 10 percent presented a more critical view.

Public awareness and participation generated from the media coverage was evident through the attendance at town hall meetings, website hits, and online survey references. Coupling circulation numbers with readership (online and print) of each of the regional and local outlets, TPB reached a significant amount of people over a seven month period.

Below is a summation of the TPB coverage, through August 2008, categorized by TPB milestone, followed by a breakdown of coverage regionally and locally.

<b>TPB Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Coverage (#)</b>	<b>Article(s)</b>
November Board Meeting	November 29, 2007	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AJC: Transit Planning Board seeks comment on rail, bus ideas</li> <li>- Atlanta Business Chronicle: Expanded transit for \$1 a day</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: We need help now: Some on transit board say plan would delay relief</li> <li>- NPR/WABE: Regional board approves transportation plan</li> <li>- WXIA-11: Transportation Plan Proposed</li> <li>- Broadcast Atlanta: TPB rolls out proposed regional transit plan</li> </ul>
Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte	March 24, 2008	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- News 14 Carolina: Atlanta Eyes Queen City transit ideas</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily: Atlanta leaders look to Charlotte's transit success</li> <li>- Henry Daily Herald: Atlanta leaders look to Charlotte's transit success</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Trip offers insight on light rail</li> <li>- Creative Loafing: Charlotte's light rail transit shows Atlanta leaders possibilities</li> <li>- AJC: Charlotte transit plans leave Atlanta in slow lane</li> <li>- AJC: Charlotte shows state support for transit is vital</li> </ul>



Town Hall Meetings	April 1, 2008 – May 1, 2008	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AJC: North Fulton Chamber will hold info session on transit plans</li> <li>- AJC: Atlantans voice opinions on area's regional transit plan</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: CID director stresses transit in Village revitalization efforts</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Residents say they want more from transit plan</li> <li>- The Citizen: Transportation meeting is today</li> <li>- Douglas County Sentinel: Public input hearing tomorrow on regional public transportation 'vision'</li> <li>- Douglas County Sentinel: Board promotes regional public transportation</li> <li>- Hometown Cobb: Cobb County to host Transit Planning Board town hall meeting</li> <li>- Hometown Cobb: Transit Board seeks public input on 30-year plan</li> <li>- Henry Herald/Clayton News Daily: Transit board solicits support for plan</li> <li>- Rockdale Neighbor: Sparse crowd hears about future transit plans</li> </ul>
Survey Release	April 24, 2008	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AJC: Hello? Share your views on metro-wide transit</li> <li>- AJC: Transit Board phone survey seeks input on new plan</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Survey – More transit options needed</li> <li>- AJC: Metro drivers – tax us and build more transit</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily/Henry Daily Herald: Survey – Support for public transportation strong</li> <li>- The Citizen: Fayette supports regional transit</li> <li>- Creative Loafing: Study – Metro Atlantans want transit expansion...and 90 percent of 'em drive to work alone</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily/ Henry Daily Herald: Wanted – Regional transportation governance</li> <li>- Mass Transit News: Metro Atlantans ready to tax to fix transit woes</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Transit survey to start this month</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Survey – more transit options needed</li> <li>- WGST-AM: Interview with Cheryl King</li> <li>- WSB-Radio: Atlantans would support transit tax</li> <li>- WXIA-11 Alive: Survey says more transit</li> </ul>
TPB Adoption of Concept 3	August 28, 2008	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Atlanta Business Chronicle: Transit board adopts bold regional plan for trains, buses</li> <li>- AJC: Future of Mass Transit</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily: Transit vision gets initial approval</li> <li>- Henry Daily Herald: Transit vision gets initial approval</li> </ul>
<b>TPB Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Coverage (#)</b>	<b>Article(s)</b>

General Coverage of TPB/ Concept 3	Varied	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fayette Neighbor/Henry Neighbor: Mass transit plan takes to the streets</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily/Henry Daily Herald: What's next for transportation planning board</li> <li>- Georgia Engineer: World class transit for a World Class City</li> <li>- Progressive Railroading: MARTA's turning point: The agency's aim? To steer clear of 'plan-it is'</li> <li>- Gwinnett Daily Post: Local funds could get transit built faster</li> <li>- AJC: A vision that keeps moving</li> <li>- AJC: Plans to get us out of our cars</li> <li>- Rockdale Citizen: Mayor: State leaders key to local transportation</li> <li>- GA Public Policy Foundation: Don't railroad taxpayers into transit subsidies</li> <li>- Talk Gwinnett: Don't railroad taxpayers into transit subsidies</li> <li>- AJC: Gwinnett Opinions – A regional transit plan has support</li> <li>- AJC: Outcome of MARTA vote in Gwinnett signals shift</li> <li>- AJC: Defining a Transit Vision for Atlanta (OP-ED)</li> <li>- Clayton News Daily: Planning Board Transformed Transit Issue</li> <li>- Passenger Transport: Metro Atlanta Embraces Regional Vision for Transit</li> </ul>
TPB References	Varied	21	See Appendix

Type	Publication	Coverage (#)
<b>Metro Atlanta (Regional)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Atlanta Journal Constitution</li> <li>2. Atlanta Business Chronicle</li> <li>3. Atlanta Progressive News</li> <li>4. Broadcast Atlanta</li> <li>5. Creative Loafing</li> <li>6. WXIA-11 Alive (NBC)</li> <li>7. WABE-FM (NPR)</li> <li>8. WGST-AM</li> <li>9. WSB-AM</li> </ol>	<p>27</p> <p>4</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>

<b>County</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gwinnett Daily Post</li> <li>2. Clayton News Daily</li> <li>3. Henry Daily Herald</li> <li>4. Henry Neighbor</li> <li>5. Fayette Neighbor</li> <li>6. The Citizen (South Metro: Fayette, South Fulton, Coweta)</li> <li>7. Marietta Daily Journal</li> <li>8. Hometown Cobb</li> <li>9. Douglas County Sentinel</li> <li>10. Talk Gwinnett</li> <li>11. Rockdale Citizen</li> <li>12. Rockdale Neighbor</li> <li>13. Forsyth County</li> <li>14. Go DeKalb</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8</li> <li>8</li> <li>8</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>3</li> <li>2</li> <li>2</li> <li>2</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> </ol>
<b>Trade Publications</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business to Business Magazine</li> <li>2. Georgia Engineer</li> <li>3. Georgia Public Policy Foundation</li> <li>4. Mass Transit News</li> <li>5. Passenger Transport</li> <li>6. Progressive Railroading</li> <li>7. Urban Transportation Monitor</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> <li>1</li> </ol>
<b>Total</b>	30 unique publications/media outlets	93

## Social Media

Social media has become a vital tool in many public engagement strategies giving engaged audiences the opportunity to feel empowered and “join the conversation.”

Although social media tools were not directly employed by TPB, several tools, particularly blogs and discussion boards, helped to complement much of the TPB’s traditional media outreach. For example, several articles featured on AJC.com gave readers the opportunity to comment through the use of discussion boards. Sample comments are below:

- *Regardless of its name, we need ONE regional transit system run by ONE regional transit authority. Concept 3 proposed by the Transit Planning Board should be the foundation of this system, with more regional rail service to come in the future.*
- *Must agree with ‘professional skeptic’ and others who’ve opined that we need a single regional transit system, with some version of the Transit Planning Board’s Concept 3 as its foundation...It’s time for a real REGIONAL vision for transportation; one that recognizes that our transportation needs far exceed our sense of the county or state we’ve come to believe we owe allegiance.*

In addition to media-sponsored discussion boards, several individuals featured TPB-related blog postings on various online sites. Bloggers offered information on Concept 3 as well as ways to comment or offer support for a regional transit system in metro Atlanta. An example of this is below:



Lorelei ([lorigami](#))  
wrote in [atlanta](#),  
@ [2008-05-21](#) 10:40:00

### ***Want better public transportation?***

Show Your Support for a Comprehensive Transit System for Atlanta

Metro Atlanta ranks second in the country for traffic congestion, and cars, trucks and other vehicles are the source of more than half of the metro area's ground-level ozone problem and one of the largest sources of fine particulates (soot). As Atlanta continues to grow, the need for an expanded public transit system is becoming more and more apparent.

To meet this need, the Transit Planning Board (TPB) was established between the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority. Its primary mission is to create a regional transit plan along with a new regional source of funds to implement and operate the proposed system.

TPB has produced a regional transit vision known as Concept 3. Concept 3 spans 11 counties and includes a new light rail network and MARTA extensions; a commuter rail system; a system of express buses, vanpools and arterial buses; and a network of regional suburban buses. The map and details can be found at [www.tpb.ga.gov](http://www.tpb.ga.gov).

The public input phase of the process ends on May 23, and TPB needs to hear from you! If you support a comprehensive transit system for metro Atlanta, please act now and comment on the plan.

There are two ways to comment:

Email your comments to [info@tpb.ga.gov](mailto:info@tpb.ga.gov) or call 404-463-1700 to express your opinion. Complete TPB's online survey by going to [www.tpb.ga.gov](http://www.tpb.ga.gov) and clicking on "survey."

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## **Advertisements**

As referenced in the town hall meetings section, paid advertisements were taken out in the Douglas County Sentinel (April 8), North Fulton Neighbor (April 9), Eastern Coweta Neighbor (April 9), the Gwinnett Daily Post (April 15), Clayton News Daily (April 15), Fayette Neighbor/Marietta Daily Journal (April 21) and the Rockdale Citizen (April 22).

## **Collateral and Web site support**

In support of the TPB public engagement efforts, displays were created that highlighted the various transit technologies as well as the Concept 3 map. In addition, various flyers, fact sheets, and handouts were created.

### Collateral

- Newsletters/Fact Sheets
  1. Atlanta's Regional Transit System: Today's Reality
  2. Atlanta Regional Transit System: Recent Transit History (1972-2008) in Atlanta 36 Years of Progress
  3. Atlanta Regional Transit System: Metro Atlantans Talk Transit
  4. TPB Fact Sheet
  5. Transit Technologies
  6. Survey Fact Sheet
  7. Concept 3 Fact Sheet
- Photos & Graphics
  8. Concept 3 Map
- Concept 3 Vision
- Concept 3 Brochure

- Presentations
  - 9. Stakeholder Briefing PowerPoint Presentation
  - 10. Survey PowerPoint Presentation
  - 11. Board Meeting Presentations
- Press Materials
- Town Hall Meeting Flyers
  - 12. County specific flyers
  - 13. Meeting series flyer
- Town Hall Meeting Displays
- Town Hall Meeting Handouts
  - 14. Sign-In Sheets
  - 15. Comment forms

To view these materials, please see Appendix.

#### Web site Support

The TPB web site was launched in 2006. The site included information about the overall planning process, collateral materials on Concept 3, including transit fact sheets, the TPB survey results, information on other major planning projects in the region, and links to current transit providers. The web site was used to inform the public of forthcoming meetings and public involvement opportunities and to provide a channel for continuous public input and comments on the plan and planning process.

### ***SECTION TWO: PUBLIC COMMENT***

Critical to the success of the public engagement strategy was the gathering of input from the public. Through stakeholder briefings, public meetings, the TPB web site, online survey, phone survey, and media relations, TPB has a database of more than 1,400 comments received via email, letters, phone calls, online survey responses, comment forms, and phone survey responses. This section specifically examines the feedback received by TPB as a result of these efforts.

These areas of input are considered in the following order:

- Letters/Emails (citizen)
- Letters/Emails (stakeholder)
- Town Hall Meetings
  - Comment forms
  - Staff reports of town hall meetings
- Stakeholder Meetings
  - Staff reports of stakeholder meetings
- Phone Survey
- Online Survey
- ULI Grant: Focus Group and Online Survey

#### **Letters/Emails (citizen)**

During the nine months of the public engagement period, 288 comments were received via email and mail. For those who submitted comments and letters by email, a member

of the TPB staff personally responded to each comment. Comment letters varied and included specific recommendations to Concept 3, feedback on existing transit services, support or opposition to Concept 3, and general remarks about traffic and congestion in metro Atlanta.

Of the 288 comments, 235 responded favorably to Concept 3 and four responded adversely to Concept 3.

- 270 mentions and/or recommendations for Concept 3
- 31 mentions of MARTA
- 20 mentions of CCT/Cobb
- 9 mentions of Fayette County
- 5 mentions of GRTA
- 3 mentions of Clayton County
- 3 mentions of DeKalb County
- 3 mentions of BeltLine and/or Peachtree Streetcar
- 1 mention of Douglas County

Dominant themes in the comments received included:

- More rail, less bus
- Current system is unreliable, unsafe, and “doesn’t go where I want to go”
- Imperative that a new system/transit plan be realistic, affordable, safe, comfortable, time-effective, reliable, and integrated with a unified fare structure
- Concept 3 is a good start
- Concept 3 is overly ambitious and grandiose or unrealistic
- Implementing Concept 3 will take 20-30 years, which is too long
- Comprehensive transit system for metro Atlanta is long overdue
- Traffic is affecting Atlanta's competitiveness with other markets

For a complete catalogue of all citizen letters and emails as well as the responses from the TPB staff, please refer to the Appendix.

### **Letters/Emails (stakeholder)**

Key stakeholders were encouraged to provide their feedback of Concept 3 through written letters and emails that provided TPB with specific recommendations and changes for Concept 3, as well as general support for the plan. Letters from more than 20 stakeholder organizations were received over the public engagement period. These organizations and institutions include:

- City of Atlanta
- Georgia Conservancy
- Mothers and Others for Clean Air
- Georgia Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)
- North Fulton CID
- City of Conyers
- Rockdale County
- City of Roswell
- Conyers Downtown Development Authority
- Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce
- DeKalb Chamber of Commerce

Dominant Themes in these comments included:

- Support for Concept 3

- Specific county/city recommendations

*Concept 3 lays out a regional vision to provide a seamless, well-connected transit system that increases mobility choice and connects major employment and mixed-use centers, government, and medical centers as well as major educational and cultural destinations. The regional system supports the City of Atlanta's transportation and land use goals by providing mobility, access and transportation choice for commuters, those without automobiles, and business and leisure travelers.*

- City of Atlanta

*We would like to express our support for Concept 3 and urge TPB and its member agencies to move forward as quickly as possible to implement this plan. Implementing the comprehensive public transit system outlined by Concept 3 will improve air quality and public health, enhance the quality of life for many metro Atlanta residents, and strengthens Atlanta's ability to compete with other large metropolitan areas.*

- Mothers and Others for Clean Air and the Georgia Conservancy

*The time is right for a transit revelation for our region. The need for additional mobility options has been calcified by the recent, atmospheric rise of fuel prices, and media coverage continues to focus on the Atlanta market as having some of the worst congestion in the country. TPB's Concept 3 Plan supports our vision for a bright future in North Fulton.*

- North Fulton CID

## **Town Hall Meetings**

During the public engagement process, town hall meetings provided TPB with a platform to reach citizens in each of the 11 counties in the metro Atlanta region. Town hall meetings encouraged the public community to voice their opinions while raising their awareness and knowledge of TPB and Concept 3. Comments from these town hall meetings were received through public comment forms, results from our real time voting, and the staff-recorded public input from audience questions and comments during the meeting.

### Comment forms

Approximately 46 comment forms were received from the 569 attendees at the 11 town hall meetings. Comment forms specifically gauged the public's input on the presentation of Concept 3, the impact Concept 3 would have in their area, and their level of support for Concept 3. Each town hall meeting attendee was provided with a comment form, and in addition to the short survey on Concept 3, was asked to provide contact information and given the option to receive additional information and updates. Of the 46 respondents, 38 requested additional information and updates. The results from these forms are below:

1. In what county do you reside:
  - **Cobb: 18 (39%)**
  - DeKalb: 3 (6%)
  - Fayette: 1 (2%)
  - Fulton: 9 (20%)
  - Gwinnett: 9 (20%)



- Rockdale: 1 (2%)
- Clayton: 3 (6%)
- Douglas: 1 (2%)
- Cherokee: 1 (2%)

Total: 46

2. In what county do you work:

- Cobb: 7 (15%)
- DeKalb: 2 (4%)
- **Fulton: 21 (46%)**
- Gwinnett: 3 (6%)
- Douglas: 1 (2%)
- Other: 3 (6%) (Globally; DeKalb and Gwinnett; metro Area)
- No work: 9 (20%)

Total: 46

3. This vision for transit will dramatically increase the availability of transit choices in the metro Atlanta region:

- **Strongly Agree: 21 (46%)**
- Somewhat Agree: 16 (35%)
- Somewhat Disagree: 7 (15%)
- Don't Know/No Opinion: 2 (4%)

Total: 46

4. Frequent Travel...

- Too much emphasis on my area: 1 (2%)
- **Adequate Emphasis: 18 (39%)**
- Not enough emphasis on my area: 17 (37%)
- Not enough information: 10 (22%)

Total: 46

5. I support Concept 3, the Transit Planning Board's regional vision for transit:

- **Strongly Agree: 17 (37%)**
- **Somewhat Agree: 17 (37%)**
- Strongly Disagree: 3 (6%)
- Somewhat Disagree: 4 (9%)
- Don't Know/No Opinion: 5 (11%)

Total: 46

Staff reports of town hall meetings

Several common themes or threads appeared from the spoken public comments over the course of the 12 town hall meetings. The most prominent are below:

General Themes:

1. Current Transit State

- People have a fear that MARTA/transit bring crime and bad people.
- Not enough Park & Ride lots.
- General inconvenience with current system: not extensive enough, infrequent, slow, doesn't go where I need to go (key destinations); expensive, difficult to use, dirty, unsafe.

- The transit fare system in the region is very confusing and difficult to use:
  - Problems and confusion with MARTA Breeze card.
  - Need a unified fare system.
- People should have an alternative to driving even if they don't always use it, it should still be available.
- Environmental concerns
- Other cities recruiting away our businesses.

## 2. Concept 3:

- Plan is not as aggressive as it needs to be.
- Will take it [Concept 3] if it is convenient and goes where we want to go.
- Concern about the number of transfers required with increased modes
- Safety, convenience, ease and accessibility are key to Concept 3
- Need more public information on transit technologies and increased outreach on Concept 3
- Need more hike and bike trails
- Consider transit incentives (i.e. weekend pass/ticket for use at special events, parks, shopping venues to multiple destinations)

## 3. Funding

- Does the current sales tax legislation under consideration help transit?
- What are the costs and benefits of transit?
- Do not take money from roads to build transit. We should not be subsidizing people who ride transit.
- Continued discussion about benefits of long range vs. short range costs
- How do we sell it to the public? How can we justify the higher initial costs?
- Does the TPB Board have to approve the funding structure?
- How do we pay for it? Alternatives to more taxes?
- Capitalize on tourism: greater revenues from the hotel/motel tax; more rental car fees, more riders on the transit system; more food taxes. We should make a transit pass a part of their tourist package for their hotel and air travel.
- What is the role of the state in transit?

## 4. Implementation

- How long will it take to build this plan?
- What kind of administrative agency would run this system?
- What are the priorities? There are different views about how to prioritize.
- What is next if the plan is approved?
- Is this all or nothing, or can we do it piecemeal? Does plan have some thing for us now and in the future?

County Specific Recommendations/Comments:

Cherokee County:

- How does Cherokee benefit now if they buy into Concept 3? Favor for BRT.

Griffin-Spalding:

- Southern Crescent: An area that needs more study, but may have demand for cross-regional travel
- Incorporate the abandoned rail line between Newnan and Griffin
- Henry County needs more to the South. Stopping at McDonough is shortsighted because of population growth. Need a P&R at Locust Grove (S.R. 155) and further out. Maybe start with a vanpool P&R

Cobb County:

- Desire for Sunday service and longer operation hours

Gwinnett County:

- LRT line needs to go all the way to Gwinnett Civic Center about a mile north of the mall.
- The train should go further north or south or east or west using the Marietta to Lawrenceville alignment that was previously studied.
- Many upset at the recent announcement that Gwinnett County public transit fare increase.
- Support for LRT to several destinations in Gwinnet: Gwinnett Place Mall, Arena, the Mall of Georgia

Douglas County:

- Simply not enough transit in Douglas County

North Fulton County:

- GA 9 and GA 120 are suited for arterial bus rapid transit; The Sugar Loaf Parkway extension to GA 316 will provide east/west access on the north side. Should there be transit facilities built as a part of these roadway improvements?; The regular expansion and growth along GA 316 can be served by the planned Brain Train if the station is in the right location.
- Congestion areas: Roswell; Crabapple and Windward Pkwy; Windward to North Point

Fayette County:

- Fayette county residents were split among support and opposition to transit in the county.
  - Opposition: Fearful of crime and the threat it poses to rural, “small town” environment. Don’t want tax increase.
  - Support: County needs options to driving alone in their cars, especially for special events and daily commutes.

**Stakeholder Meetings**

Overall, there was general support of Concept 3 from stakeholders as understood during the stakeholder briefings. For a complete catalogue of all stakeholder reports, please refer to the Appendix.

### Phone Survey

A telephone survey of 4,123 residents of the 11-county metro Atlanta region was conducted by Ayres McHenry and Associates on behalf of TPB, March 13-24, 2008. The survey was developed as a part of TPB's effort to cultivate a greater regional understanding of voter interests and attitudes regarding transit and transportation. The findings were also used to aid in the refinement of Concept 3.

Areas of focus included:

- Commuter habits
- Views of regional traffic congestion
- Use and views of public transportation
- Funding issues

### Summary of Findings

According to the survey, the majority of registered voters in the 11-county metropolitan Atlanta study area expressed highly favorable views towards transit and were supportive of funding strategies.

Voters strongly agreed with the statements about the benefits of, and need for, increased transportation options. In contrast, less than half of voters agreed with the statement: Metro Atlanta can solve its transportation problems by building new and wider roads, without including new public transportation options (**40% agree**, 56% disagree).

Consider these findings:

- Increased investment in public transportation would strengthen metro Atlanta's economy, create jobs, reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and fuel consumption (**85% agree**, 12% disagree).
- Metro Atlanta needs to continue funding road construction, but also needs to spend additional money on new public transportation options (**80% agree**, 17% disagree).
- My community needs more sidewalks and bike lanes (**77% agree**, 21% disagree).
- My community needs more transportation options like commuter rail service, light rail, buses and trolleys (**74% agree**, 23% disagree).

Additional Findings:

- **Traffic congestion is recognized as a problem for a large number of metro Atlantans:** Traffic congestion is a very serious problem for one-third of metro Atlanta voters (31%), including nearly two-fifths (39%) of those voters who work full time. More than half of all commuters (57%) spend at least half an hour getting home from work, and a fifth (19%) spend more than an hour.
- **Current transit service received high marks among voters throughout the study area.** Eighty-one percent (81%) of respondents who have used public transportation in the last year are satisfied with their experience.
- **Limited availability is the primary reason for voters' infrequent use of public transportation.** In response to the question, "What is the primary reason you don't use public transportation more frequently in metro Atlanta," the two largest responses were "Doesn't go where I need to go" (26%) and "Isn't available" (20%).
- **A solid majority of voters support a regional sales tax for transportation funding.** Fifty-eight percent (58%) of voters in the 11-county area support a ballot referendum to fund "a specific list of transportation projects, including rail and bus service." Thirty six percent (36%) of voters in the study area oppose such a referendum. Voters in support outweighed those opposed to such a referendum in each of the 11 counties. This perspective is consistent across a wide range of demographic subgroups (race, age, gender and income categories).
- **Voters appear open to MARTA as the implementer of regional transit funds (received through a regional sales tax), even in counties where MARTA does not currently operate.** For the majority of voters, the question of MARTA's role in implementing regional transit funds (in such a case where the state passes a regional sales tax for the Atlanta region) largely had no effect (48%) on support or opposition of a regional sales tax referendum. However, the net impact ("more likely to vote for" minus "less likely to vote for") was a net positive impact for support both regionally (33% more likely versus 15% less likely) and on a county-by-county basis. This perspective is consistent across a wide range of demographic subgroups (race, age, gender and income categories).

## Online Survey

Realizing that a growing number of the population gets their news and information online, TPB found it very important to utilize the Internet as a way to disseminate information on Concept 3. One tool that became a key component of the public engagement strategy was the online survey, which produced more responses specifically on Concept 3 than any other public engagement tool used. Capturing close to 900 participants, the online survey provided TPB staff and board members with information on metro Atlantans' attitudes towards current transportation and transit, Concept 3, and funding for a regional, comprehensive transit system. Survey participants were asked 18 multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions. Below is a summation of the online survey results. A complete analysis of responses is included in the Appendix.

- Online surveys submitted: 889

- Survey period: 2 months; April 1, 2008– May 23, 2008
- Non-random sample of engaged participants

#### Demographic Breakdown

- Gender: 52 percent male and 46 percent female
- Work status: 86 percent full-time, six percent part-time, seven percent non-working
- Race: 77 percent white, 11 percent African American, seven percent other, and five percent unknown
- Income: 5.4 percent \$30,000 or less, 14.2 percent \$30,000-\$50,000, 19.3 percent \$50,000-\$75,000, 19.9 percent \$75,000-\$100,000, 21.1 percent \$100,000-\$150,000, 11.5 percent \$150,000 or more
- Age: 37 percent ages 18 to 34, 38 percent ages 35 to 49, 21 percent ages 50 to 64, three percent age 65+

#### Survey Responses

##### *Part One: Transportation Snapshot*

- Majority of respondents resided in DeKalb and Fulton County: 26 percent from DeKalb and 33 percent from Fulton. Cobb and Gwinnett residents ranked just below with 11 percent from Cobb and 12 percent from Gwinnett.
- Fifty-six percent of respondents worked in the City of Atlanta. DeKalb ranked second with 17 percent of respondents working in DeKalb.
- Forty-five percent responded that traffic congestion during weekday rush hours was a very serious problem in metro Atlanta; 34 percent felt it was somewhat serious; 20 percent replied that it was not so serious.
- Sixty-three percent responded that it takes 30 minutes or more to get from home to work
- 41.5 percent responded that they are somewhat satisfied with the public transportation systems they've used in the metro Atlanta area. 26 percent responded that they were somewhat dissatisfied.
- Some reasons for dissatisfaction included:
  1. Infrequent and unreliable
  2. Doesn't go where I need to go
  3. Lack of coverage
  4. Long wait times
  5. Schedules
  6. General inconvenience
  7. Dirty
  8. Unsafe
  9. Not available in my area
  10. Takes too long
  11. Inconvenient to get to
  12. Poor service

##### *Part Two: Concept 3 "A Regional Vision for Transit"*

#### Reaction to Concept 3

*Question: Please react to the following statement: This vision for transit will dramatically increase the availability of choices in the metro Atlanta region (See map of Concept 3)*

<b>Online Survey</b>	Agree (87%)	Disagree (9%)	Don't know/No opinion (4%)
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<b>Online Survey</b>	Strongly Agree (50%)	Somewhat Agree (37%)	Somewhat Disagree (6%)	Strongly Disagree (3%)	Don't know/No opinion (4%)
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N=790

*Question: Please locate your commute and/or other areas of frequent travel on the map (See map of Concept 3). If constructed, how would the proposed investments impact your area of frequent travel?*

<b>Online Survey</b>	Too much emphasis on my area (2%)	Adequate emphasis in my area (56%)	Not enough emphasis in my area (31%)	Not enough information to answer (11%)
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N=790

*Question: Please react to the following statement: I support Concept 3, the Transit Planning Board's regional vision for transit.*

<b>Online Survey</b>	Agree (82%)	Disagree (12%)	Don't know/No opinion (5%)
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<b>Online Survey</b>	Strongly Agree (45%)	Somewhat Agree (37%)	Somewhat Disagree (7%)	Strongly Disagree (5%)	Don't know/No opinion (5%)
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N=790

- When asked to share any additional comments regarding Concept 3, some of the following dominant themes were expressed:
  1. Skeptical: funding and feasibility
  2. Less bus, more rail
  3. Long overdue
  4. Good start
  5. Seamless, accessible, express service, security, cleanliness, timeliness, convenience, frequency, ease
  6. More direct connections to major attractions
  7. Times competitive with cars
  8. Hours of service
  9. Bike lanes

10. Not enough emphasis on my area/ does not address all the issues of the region
11. Specific recommendations
12. Adequate free parking, reasonable fares, convenient to get to and transit to activity centers

*Part Three: Funding Questions*

- A solid majority of respondents support a regional sales tax for transportation funding

*Question: Some have proposed having a regional referendum in metro Atlanta to fund a specific list of transportation projects, including rail and bus service. Would you support or oppose a sales tax of one cent per dollar for the region, which would end after a specified time period unless renewed by voters in another election?*

<b>Online Survey</b>	Support (73%)	Oppose (70%)	More information needed (18%)	Undecided (2%)
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- Respondents also support raising local revenue for neighborhood transportation projects.

*Question: Do you support or oppose raising revenue in your local community that would fund specific transportation projects in your neighborhood, such as a circulator bus, or a shuttle that would connect to other regional public transportation systems?*

<b>Online Survey</b>	Support (62%)	Oppose (10%)	Need more information (26%)	Undecided (2%)
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**Additional Comments:**

- Atlanta behind other major cities
- Transit will cause crime and decrease in property values
- Transit system will help improve quality of life and reduce pollution
- Consider direct, express routes from certain areas of the region into downtown
- Adequate parking is imperative to the success of a regional transit system
- Rail is preferred over bus
- Support for MARTA rail extensions into various counties in the region
- State government should be involved in the funding
- No more roads; funding should go towards transit
- Incorporate bicycles lanes and accommodations into plan
- Alternative funding solutions to increased sales tax: gas tax, state funding, additional license plate/tag fee, tolls

*“Lived here since 1984 and am thinking of moving to Charlotte.”*

*“This is one of the most hopeful things I've seen in a while. This could save Atlanta as a city. If possible, I'd be glad to be a part of the effort.”*



*“The metro area is drowning in traffic. We desperately need a comprehensive public transit, reasonably priced, reasonably accessed, that gets people where they want to go. Our future economic growth and metro livability depend on it.”*

*“It is imperative that Atlanta initiates regional mass transit solutions to ensure that we secure our economic competitiveness along with enacting measures to consumer less gasoline and mitigate negative environmental impacts.”*

*“Concept 3 finally represents a rational way forward for transit in Atlanta. If Atlanta wants to continue as a leading city nationally and the leading southern city, it must address its transportation problems and increase transit opportunities.”*

*“Looks great on paper, but needless to say I'm skeptical about implementation. Transportation, as evidenced by your own analyses, is a long term planning process, and this type of planning should have occurred, like, over a decade or longer ago. I honestly wonder if it's simply too late because Atlanta metro has grown too quickly in terms of sheer physical area. As much as I'd love to see Atlanta have real public transit infrastructure in place, I'm incredibly skeptical that it will happen.”*

#### Specific Route Recommendations:

- Atlanta to Athens
- Service to Emory
- More East/West connections
- Rail options for eastside corridor and outlying communities of Covington eastward to Madison
- Consider South Moreland Ave. transit, linking 285 to I-20 and/or the Beltline
- More emphasis on Northern Cobb
- More emphasis on West Cobb
- Alpharetta to Emory
- Stockbridge to Emory
- East DeKalb/Rockdale
- Buford to Downtown
- More emphasis on Henry County
- Northwest I-75 Corridor
- Kennesaw / Town Center to Downtown Atlanta.
- Transit around I-285
- Direct connections to the airport from northeast and northwest
- Connector linking with MARTA into Roswell / Marietta along GA -120.

#### **Phone Survey versus Online Survey**

Often a limitation of any public engagement effort is the question that arises on whether the input provided through proactive strategies (town hall meetings, feedback forms, etc.) are representative of the preferences of the population as a whole or merely a narrow segment of the population. For these reasons, it is helpful to consider ways in which the self-selected sample obtained through the online survey is similar and ways in which it differs from the randomly selected sample registered voters obtained through the phone survey. What follows is a side-by-side comparison of the two data sets:

	Phone Survey	Online Survey
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<b>Respondents</b>	4,123	889
<b>Survey Dates</b>	March 13-24, 2008	April 1 – May 23, 2008
<b>Gender</b>	45% male 55% female	52 % male 46% female
<b>Work Status</b>	46% full-time 10% part-time 44% non-working	86% full-time 6% part-time 7% non-working
<b>Race</b>	58 % white 33 % black 5 % other 4 % unknown	77 % white 11 % black 7 % other 5 % unknown
<b>Income</b>	10 % \$30,000 or less 13 % \$30,000-\$50,000 17% \$50,000-\$75,000 16 % \$75,000-\$100,000 13 % \$100,000-\$150,000 20 % \$150,000+	5.4 % \$30,000 or less 14.2 % \$30,000-\$50,000 19.3 % \$50,000-\$75,000, 19.9 % \$75,000-\$100,000, 21.1 5 \$100,000-\$150,000, 11.5 % \$150,000+
<b>Age</b>	8% 18 to 34 27 % 35 to 49 37 % 50 to 64 28 % 65+	37 % ages 18 to 34 38 % ages 35 to 49 21 % ages 50 to 64 3% ages 65+
	Statistically valid survey of registered voters	Non-random sample of engaged participants
	Margin of error +/- 2.32	N/A

Comparison of phone and online survey respondents:

- Online survey and phone survey (which were selected randomly) respondents were similar in gender and income.
- Online survey respondents were much more likely to be full-time workers; online survey contained fewer respondents that were non-working.
- Online respondents differ most dramatically from respondents of the phone survey in the youngest and oldest categories. Whereas only eight percent of respondents to the phone survey are ages 18 to 34, 37 percent of online respondents were ages 18 to 34. In contrast, 28 percent of the respondents to the phone survey are over age 65, as compared to just three percent of the online respondents.
- Online survey shows greater participation by whites and less participation by blacks as compared with the phone survey.

Why Compare?

- Value of phone survey is that it provides a detailed look into the views of a statistically-valid sample of registered voters in the 11-county study area regarding transportation in today's context. Provides insight on regional support

- for the proposed policy solution in general terms (more funding for roads & transit, sales tax referendum, etc.).
- Value of online survey is that it provides standardized responses to some of the same questions posed towards the random sample and allows for comparison of how those that are engaged in the process provide feedback similar to and/or different from the so-called average voter.
- Additional value of online survey is to be able to use benefits of the medium (Internet) to share the Concept 3 map and gain additional insight on support for the proposed policy solution.

#### View of Regional Traffic Congestion

Online respondents are much more likely than the random sample (those reached via the phone survey) to see traffic congestion as a serious problem. Even when isolating responses from the phone survey to those that work full-time, the online respondent is still much more likely to rate traffic congestion as a serious or very serious issue.

*Question: Traffic congestion is a real problem for some people in metro Atlanta, while it is not such a problem for others. How about you? Is traffic congestion during weekday rush hours very serious, somewhat serious, or not so serious for you? (Results have been combined, see Appendix for complete survey results)*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	Serious (51%)	Not Serious (47%)	Don't know/ No opinion (2%)
<b>Phone Survey*</b>	Serious (61%)	Not Serious (38%)	Don't know/ No opinion (2%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	Serious (79%)	Not Serious (20%)	Don't know/ No opinion (2%)

\*Cross tab of sample from phone survey that identified as “full-time workers”

#### Time in Traffic

Online respondents show no noticeable differences in comparison to the random sample (those reached via the random phone survey) in the time they spend in traffic.

*Question: On a typical day, how long does it take you to get home from work?*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	<15 min. (17%)	15-29 min. (25%)	30-44 min. (23%)	45-59 min. (15%)	Hour or more (19%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	<15 min. (12%)	15-29 min. (24%)	30-44 min. (22%)	45-59 min. (15%)	Hour or more (19%)

#### Use and Views of Public Transportation

Online respondents are much more likely to use transit regularly in comparison to the random sample. Online respondents are more likely to have used transit at least once in

the past year. The percentage of occasional transit users in both groups is essentially the same.

*Question: How often have you used public transportation in the metro Atlanta area during the last year: several times a week, a few times a month, once or twice during the year, or never?*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	Several times a week (5%)	A few times a month (7%)	1-2 times a year (29%)	Never (58%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	Several times a week (32%)	A few times a month (22%)	1-2 times a year (32%)	Never (13%)

Online respondents are much more likely to identify as having used other transit services in addition to MARTA. The percentage who identifies MARTA as a system they use is essentially the same in both groups. The difference between the two might be related to the fact that online respondents had the benefit of a list, whereas the phone respondents did not.

*Question: Which public transportation systems in metro Atlanta have you used in the last year? (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES)*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	MARTA (90%)	Other (7%)	CCT (3%)
	GCT (2%)	GRTA (2%)	The Buc (1%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	MARTA (90%)	CCT (8%)	GCT (6%)
	The Cliff (Emory) (9%)	GRTA (7%)	The Buc (4%)
	Atlantic Station Shuttle (8%)	Georgia Tech (7%)	Other (3%)

While both groups show a majority of transit riders being satisfied with the public transportation systems they have used, the percentage that is satisfied is much lower and the percentage that is dissatisfied is much higher among online survey respondents (as compared with the random sample).

*Question: Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the public transportation systems you've used in the metro Atlanta area – very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied.*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	Satisfied (81%)	Dissatisfied (17%)	Don't know (2%)
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<b>Online Survey</b>	Satisfied (57%)	Dissatisfied (42%)	Don't know (1.5%)
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### Funding Issues

Online survey respondents were more supportive of a regional sales tax for transportation funding projects (as compared with the random sample).

*Question: Some have proposed having a regional referendum in metro Atlanta to fund a specific list of transportation projects, including rail and bus service. Would you support or oppose a sales tax of one cent per dollar for the region, which would end after a specified time period unless renewed by voters in another election?*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	Support (58%)	Oppose (36%)	More Information Needed (2%)	Undecided (4%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	Support (73%)	Oppose (7%)	More Information Needed (18%)	Undecided (2%)

Engaged participants were slightly more supportive of raising local revenue for neighborhood transportation projects (as compared with the random sample).

*Question: Do you support or oppose raising revenue in your local community that would fund specific transportation projects in your neighborhood, such as a circulator bus, or a shuttle that would connect to other regional public transportation systems?*

<b>Phone Survey</b>	Support (58%)	Oppose (37%)	More Information Needed (1%)	Undecided (4%)
<b>Online Survey</b>	Support (62%)	Oppose (10%)	More Information Needed (26%)	Undecided (2%)

### **ULI Study: Focus Group and Online Survey**

*For full results from the focus groups and online survey, see Appendix.*

## ANALYSIS

The efforts described above generated a database of more than 1,400 specific comments received via email, letters, phone calls, online survey responses, comment forms, and phone survey responses.

In analyzing the various articles of feedback <sup>3</sup>received through TPB's public engagement process, a consistent picture emerges:

*Raise awareness among key stakeholders and the general public about the need for a regional transit system.* Note: Do these bullets do the job that is needed to meet this objective?

- **There is strong support for increased investment in transit throughout the region.** Eight-five percent of registered voters in the 11-county area agreed with the statement, *“Increased investment in public transportation would strengthen metro Atlanta’s economy, create jobs, reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and fuel consumption.”* Three-quarters of voters agreed with the statement, *“My community needs more transportation options like commuter rail service, light rail, buses, and trolleys.”* These findings suggest voters are attuned to the principal benefits of transit and would like to see more transit options in their communities.
- **Increased investment in transit is perceived as part of the solution to traffic congestion.** Eighty percent of metro Atlanta voters agreed with the statement, *“Metro Atlanta needs to continue funding road construction, but also needs to spend additional money on new public transportation options.”* In contrast, 56 percent of voters disagreed with the statement: *“Metro Atlanta can solve its transportation problems by building new and wider roads, without including new public transportation options.”* These findings suggest that a majority of voters disagree with roads as the only strategy to addressing the region’s traffic congestion issues. However, transit is not perceived to be the “silver bullet,” either. Voters appear to favor a balanced approach that includes both roads and transit.
- **Most transit riders are satisfied with their experience.** Eighty-one percent of those registered voters who had ridden transit in the past year were satisfied with their experience. Of those who were dissatisfied, most were dissatisfied because of long wait times or a lack of available transit service. These findings suggest greater dissatisfaction by voters with the lack of transit as opposed to transit service.

*The public’s willingness to pay to support an expansion of the regional transit network.*

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<sup>3</sup> Please note: The passing references in the bullets above to “registered voters” in contrast to “respondents” refer to different data sets utilized during the public engagement process. Whereas references to “voters” refer to information that was obtained through TPB’s statistically-significant, scientifically-based telephone survey of registered voters in the 11-county TPB study area, references to “respondents” refer to data gathered from online surveys and comment forms that were provided and collected at town hall meetings. While the various data sets define the public in somewhat different terms, the data collected from all of these sources reinforced a consistent view that is further detailed in the bullets below.

- **Voters would support a regional one-cent sales tax referendum for transportation funds by a wide margin.** Voters heard the following proposal: *“Some have proposed having a referendum in metro Atlanta to fund a specific list of transportation projects, including rail and bus service. Would you support or oppose a sales tax of one cent per dollar for the region, which would end after a specified time period unless renewed by voters, in another election?”* Fifty-eight percent of voters supported this proposal, 36 percent opposed it, and six percent of voters remained undecided. Strong levels of support were identified in each of the counties surveyed. Further analysis demonstrated consistent support within major demographic sub-groups of voters (voters were largely supportive of the measure regardless of gender, race, age, or income levels).
- **To the extent that providing funding for MARTA expansion has an effect on voters’ support for the referendum, it is positive.** Forty-eight percent of voters say that providing funding for MARTA expansion would have no effect on their support for a regional transportation referendum, 33 percent would be more likely to support the referendum, and only 15 percent were less likely to support the referendum if MARTA were the administrator of transit funds.
- **Voters would also support raising local funds for transportation projects in their neighborhood.** Voters support *“raising local revenue in your local community that would fund specific transportation projects in your neighborhood, such as a circulator bus, or a shuttle that would connect to other regional public transportation systems”* by a wide 58 to 37 percent margin (58 percent support and 37 percent oppose), with five percent undecided.

*Feedback in response to Concept 3.*

- **There is strong support throughout the region for Concept 3.** While the scientifically-balanced phone survey was of great value in gathering insights into voter preferences, it was of limited use in gathering feedback specific to Concept 3. For this task, the public engagement team relied on staff reports from stakeholder briefings, responses to an online survey, and other feedback mechanisms. These efforts provided findings specific to the public’s reaction to Concept 3:

**Online Survey (889 respondents):**

- Eighty-six percent of online respondents agree that Concept 3 *“will dramatically increase the availability of transit choices in the metro Atlanta region.”*
- Eighty-two percent of online respondents agree with the statement, *“I support Concept 3.”*

**Town Hall Meetings Comment Forms (46 forms received)**

- Eighty-one percent of respondents agree that Concept 3 *“will dramatically increase the availability of transit choices in the metro Atlanta region.”*
- Seventy-four percent of online respondents agree with the statement, *“I support Concept 3.”*

These responses, combined with the staff reports from more than 70 stakeholder meetings and the various other feedback mechanisms, suggest near universal support for the vision put forth by TPB.

These feedback forms were further combed by TPB technical staff and coupled with a technical analysis of the Concept 3 Vision Plan and its impact on the regional transportation network that were then used to refine the vision for an expanded regional transit network.

The results of this effort were presented to the Board at its July board meeting. The presentation provided a brief description of the proposed changes to the Concept 3 Regional Vision Plan following the six-month public involvement process. Each change was briefly described, illustrated, and the source of the proposed change noted. An associated document, *Impacts of Regional Transit Infrastructure Investment on Metropolitan Atlanta: An Examination Using the Transit Planning Board Concept 3 Vision Plan*, provided a more full examination of the impacts, including costs and benefits, of a regional transit investment.

These documents can be viewed in their entirety in the Appendix of this report:

July 08 Proposed Concept 3 Changes Report  
July 08 Proposed Concept 3 Changes Presentation  
Impact of Regional Transit Infrastructure Investment



## **CONCLUSION**

TPB views its public engagement activities as an extremely successful effort that has moved the public dialogue forward regarding the need to expand the regional transit network. In revisiting the primary goals of this effort, it is clear that it has raised awareness among key stakeholders and the general public about the need for a regional transit plan. With respect to the Board's vision for Concept 3, it is clear that the vast majority of respondents and stakeholder groups reached are enthusiastically supportive of Concept 3 and clearly see the benefits in making such a regional vision a reality. Last of all, TPB has identified that registered voters in the study area are willing to pay to support an expansion of transit and roads that could be seen as a first installment in building the expanded transit network as identified by TPB's Concept 3.

In the concluding months of 2008, TPB was successful in linking Concept 3 to the ARC's transportation planning process. This process will help to keep this vision moving forward, as the desire to expand the region's transit network moves beyond concept to reality.

## APPENDIX

- A. Report Addendums
- B. Surveys
- C. Media & Advertising
- D. Collateral Material
- E. Technical Reports
- F. Public Comment
- G. Public Comment Catalogue

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- A. Report Addendums
    - Results of Real Time Voting
    - Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte Attendee List
    - Regional Leadership Trip to Charlotte Itinerary
  - B. Surveys
    - Online Survey
      - o Copy of Online Survey
      - o Survey Results - *For results to open-ended responses, please refer to the public comment database*
    - Phone Survey
      - o Copy of Phone Survey
      - o Survey Methodology
      - o Survey Fact Sheet
      - o Regional Toplines
      - o County to Region Comparisons
    - Non TPB Surveys
      - o Memo
      - o Non-TPB Surveys
  - C. Media & Advertising
    - Clips
      - o Media Clips
      - o Social Media
    - Advertisements
    - Press Releases
      - o November Board Meeting Press Release
      - o Town Hall Meeting Press Releases
      - o Survey Release Media Kit (April 08 Board Meeting)
      - o Georgia Engineer Article
      - o Board Adoption of Concept 3
      - o Chairman Eaves Op-Ed
      - o Trade Release
      - o ARC Adopts Concept 3
  - D. Collateral Material
    - Concept 3 Vision
    - Concept 3 Brochure
    - Executive Summary
    - Photos & Graphics
    - Newsletters/Fact Sheets
      - o TPB Basics
      - o Transit Technologies 101
      - o Atlanta's Regional Transit System: Today's Reality

- Atlanta Regional Transit System: Recent Transit History (1972-2008) in Atlanta 36 Years of Progress
    - Atlanta Regional Transit System: Metro Atlantans Talk Transit (Survey Fact Sheet)
  - Presentations
    - Town Hall Meeting Presentation
    - Stakeholder Meeting Presentation
    - Board meeting presentations
      - Ayres Presentation: Survey Results (April 2008)
      - Public Engagement Update (June 2008)
      - Public Engagement Update 2 (July 2008)
      - Proposed Changes to Concept 3 (July 2008)
    - GPA Fall Conference: Public Engagement Presentation (October 2008)
    - ULI Focus Group Presentation (December 2008)
  - Town Hall Meetings
    - Handouts
      - Public Comment Form
      - Meeting Sign-In Sheet
    - Displays
    - Flyers
      - County Specific flyers
      - Meeting series flyer
- E. Technical Reports
- July 08 Proposed Concept 3 Changes Report
  - July 08 Proposed Concept 3 Changes Presentation
  - Impact of Regional Transit Infrastructure Investment
- F. Public & Stakeholder Comment
- Town Hall & Stakeholder Meetings
    - Town Hall Meetings
      - Staff comments & reports
    - Stakeholder Meetings
      - Stakeholder Meeting Agendas
      - Stakeholder Comments & Letters
      - Staff comments & reports
  - ULI Grant: Focus Group and Online Survey
    - ULI Grant Request
    - Focus Groups
      - Sign-In Sheets
      - Focus Group Notes
    - Online Survey
      - Copy of Online Survey
      - Survey Results
      - Analysis of Online Survey
  - Partner and Stakeholder Outreach
    - ARC: Web Article - Nov 2007
    - Georgia Assoc. of Railroad Passengers: Newsletter Article – Nov 2007
    - Georgia Assoc. of Railroad Passengers: Newsletter Article – January 2008
    - Gwinnett Village CID: Town Hall Meeting Flyer – March 2008
    - Livable Communities Coalition: Newsletter Article - March 2008
    - Spalding County: Town Hall Meeting Flyer – March 2008
    - Atlanta Downtown Improvement District: Meeting Announcement - April 2008

- Livable Communities Coalition: Meeting Announcement – April 2008
- Central Atlanta Progress: Meeting Announcement – April 2008
- Cobb DOT: Newsletter Article - April 08
- Georgia Assoc. of Railroad Passengers: Newsletter Article – April 2008
- Central Atlanta Progress: TPB Public Meeting Poster – April 2008
- Kennesaw State University (KSU) Ride: Newsletter - April 2008
- Citizens for Progressive Transit: Meeting Announcement - April 2008
- North Fulton CID: News Flash
- Citizens for Progressive Transit: Blog Post - May 2008
- Citizens for Progressive Transit: E-Newsletter Article - May 2008
- Georgia Environmental Action Network: Action Alert – May 2008
- Peachtree Corridor Partnership: Milepost Newsletter – June 08
- Urban Land Institute: Announcement – July 2008
- CobbRides: Newsletter Article - Aug 2008
- ARC: Action Newsletter Article - Sept-Oct 2008
- Peachtree Corridor Partnership: Milepost Newsletter – October 2008
- Georgia Environmental Action Network: Web Post – December 2008
- Public Comment Database (Excel Workbook)
  - Public Comments (Letters/Emails: Citizen)
  - Stakeholder comments/letters
  - Stakeholder meeting database
  - Media Inventory
  - Social Media
  - Partner & Stakeholder Outreach
  - Online Survey Responses
  - Town Hall Meeting Public Comment Form Responses
  - ULI Focus Group Attendance Roster

G. Public Comment Catalogue (See Notebooks)

Notebook 1

Town Hall Meetings

- Town Hall Meeting Public Comment Forms
- Town Hall Meeting Staff Comments
- Town Hall Meeting Live Survey Responses

Stakeholder Meetings & Feedback

- Stakeholder Letters/Emails
- Stakeholder Meeting Sign-In Sheets & Agendas
- Partner & Stakeholder Outreach

ULI Study: Focus Groups & Online Survey

- ULI Grant Request
- Sign-In Sheets

Notebook 2

- Letters/Emails (citizen)