MEETING #1 AGENDA

Meet & Greet: 6:30-6:45

Introduction: 6:45-7:00
- Welcome & Purpose
  - Goal #1: Learn how we as individuals, organizations, and agencies can win the fight for effective transit in Atlanta
  - Goal #2: Create a space for those who are curious or passionate about buses to learn what effective bus service entails
  - Goal #3: Meet new people and hear about their experiences

Bus Stories: 7:00-7:30
- Give everyone a moment to answer the following questions in their head and then have everyone share with the group:
  - What is your favorite bus memory?
  - What brought you here tonight?
  - What do you hope to gain from the book club?

Chapter 1 Discussion: 7:30-8:30
- The following discussions are only recommendations, allow room for others to bring up their own questions
  - Was there anything that was surprising from this chapter?
  - Do you agree with the 7 criteria outlined at the beginning of chapter one? Pg 17
    - Are criteria missing?
    - Which criteria matters to you the most and why?
  - What are all the other methods of getting around besides the bus in Atlanta? Pg 15
  - How have you seen the bus depicted in pop culture? Pg 1
  - What are your thoughts on the assertion “we need to make the bus sexy” before and after reading chapter 1? Pg 18
  - How does the fact that more than two-thirds of transit trips are non-commute trips influence our efforts to fight for effective transit? Pg. 19
  - What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Transit Alliance organization in Miami? Pg 20
  - Organizer Ai-jen Po wrote that civic groups have different potential powers: political, economic, disruption, and narrative. What power is needed the most in Atlanta and why?
MEETING #2 AGENDA

Introduction: 6:30-6:40

How Frequent is MARTA: 6:40-7:00
- Work together to identify the frequency makeup of MARTA routes
- Map of MARTA routes and their frequency

Chapter 2 Discussion: 7:00-7:30
- How does frequency impact the way you build your life around transit?
- Chapter 2 introduces the tradeoffs between ridership and coverage. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?
- Which purpose do you think MARTA leans more towards: ridership or coverage?
- One of the major reasons Houston needed a network redesign was because the neighborhoods had changed and the buses did not effectively serve the new low-income residents. How does gentrification and the changing neighborhoods in Atlanta impact the bus network?
- MARTA Army has supported MARTA in the past during service interruptions or changes. What can we learn from the Houston network redesign rollout to better organize and mobilize volunteers and resources.

Chapter 3 Discussion: 7:30-8:00
- Higashide writes in chapter 3 about what makes a quality BRT. MARTA is in the process of designing and building the Summerhill BRT. The quality of the Summerhill BRT will depend heavily on the street allotment it is given by the city for dedicated right away, off-boarding payment, and bus stops. What pressure can advocates apply to the city for high quality BRT?
- The City of Atlanta along with Midtown Alliance has recently tested out a pop-up bike lane on 10th Street. How can advocates support the city and agency and making it happen and making it successful?
- If you could do a popup bus lane where would you do it? Route and section?
- What are the trouble spots you experience most? How could we crowdsource known trouble spots for MARTA’s use?
MEETING #3 AGENDA

Introduction - 6:30-6:35

Bus Highs and Lows - 6:35-6:45

Participant Testimonials Intro - 6:45-6:50

Chapter 4 Discussion: 7:50-7:30
• What are ways you have observed the walkability/inclusivity of bus stops be impaired?
• What are ways you’ve noticed bus stops being used in a way that was not intended? (i.e. avoiding shelter because it is in direct sunlight)
• MARTA Army currently participates in the do-it-yourself system with our Adopt-A-Stop signs. In what way could this system be made more effective at bringing dignity and/or applying pressure to decision makers? This can include ideas outside of Adopt-A-Stop program.
• Based on MARTA’s service standards for bus shelters and benches, what are the strengths and weaknesses?
• How could we rethink bus stops as activity centers?

Chapter 5 Discussion: 7:30-8:00
• What are the key characteristics of an inclusive bus service?
• Who are the most vulnerable transit riders?
• What do advocacy groups need to consider when working with marginalized communities?
• What are the biggest opportunities available to MARTA to improve equity through fares?
MEETING #4 AGENDA

Introduction - 6:30-6:35

Participant Testimonials Photos - 6:35-6:45

Opportunities in Bus Transportation - 6:45-7:05
- Split into groups of 2-3
- Take 2 minutes to list as many opportunities that could improve bus transit in metro Atlanta
- Rank the opportunities
- Answer the following questions:
  - What problem does this address?
  - Why is this important to you?
  - What is the first step to solving the problem this opportunity addresses?

Chapter 6 Discussion: 7:05-7:35
- What are the lessons learned from the campaign for transit expansion in Indianapolis and Dallas?
- What leaders and organizations would make up the “grasstops” coalition in Atlanta?
- What role should faith communities play in the fight for effective transit?
- What are effective strategies for educating a public that shares diverse political views and personal values?

Chapter 7 Discussion: 7:35-8:00
- What are the hypes or distractions in metro-Atlanta?
- How can we tell the difference between hype and viable solutions?
MEETING #5 AGENDA (FINAL PANEL)

- Tell us about a time when you had an excellent experience on the bus. (It could be service-related, or maybe you had a fun exchange with a fellow passenger.)

- In his book, Steven Higashide identified seven basic criteria for useful transit service:
  1. Service goes where you want to go.
  2. Service runs frequently enough to not think about it.
  3. Service is reasonably fast.
  4. Service is reliable.
  5. Service is walkable at the final destination.
  6. Service is comfortable and safe.
  7. Service is affordable.

Do you believe these are the right criteria? Is there anything you’d add or take away?

WHO TAKES THE BUS + BARRIERS TO ENTRY + FARES

- Audience participation: Raise your hand if you often take the bus. Raise your hand if you take the train but rarely, if never, take the bus.

- One of the common concerns we heard during the book club meetings related to accessing bus stops.
  - Collie: We recognize that MARTA doesn’t own the property where it may put a bus stop or shelter. How do you address pedestrian safety in the MARTA bus stop standards?
  - Jacob: What is the city’s role in making sure a bus stop is safe for our most vulnerable citizens?

- Tradeoff between coverage and high-quality service...

- We know one of the barriers to the bus is not having real-time arrival information like there is with rail. MARTA Army’s Adopt-a-Stop program was started to provide the bus route and arrival schedules for bus stops. What can and should be done to bring real-time arrival information to bus customers – whether through mobile technology (texts
or an app) or signage at bus shelters?

- Does MARTA plan to restructure its bus network as has been done in other transit agencies across the country? (There was a Comprehensive Operations Analysis in 2016. What happened with that?) If not, why? If so, what will that process look like?

- Fare-capping: rewarding passengers with free rides after they meet the fare equivalent of a daily, weekly or monthly pass.

- One of the attendees of the book club mentioned it’s cheaper for him to drive his family into the city for an event like an Atlanta United game and park the car than it is for them to take transit. How should this inequity be addressed?
  - Follow-up: Example of my meeting with a large Atlanta employer and that their employees pay $20/month to park downtown. This clearly does not incentivize the use of transit and, in fact, makes transit the last consideration. What should the region’s leaders be doing to make transit the first consideration?

MORE MARTA PROGRAM + TRANSIT IN ATLANTA

- The MoreMARTA program has invested millions of dollars in local bus service in the City of Atlanta since the 2016 referendum. How has ridership changed on the routes that received more frequent and later service?

- We know the fight for dedicated bike lanes continues to be a heavy lift. MARTA has at least three BRT or LRT projects slated in the city of Atlanta. While federal standards call for a 50% transit-only lane, what’s the city’s plan to prioritize transit and make it a truly competitive option to sitting in traffic?

TRANSIT IN THE REGION

- More than four years ago, State Senator Brandon Beach took a 38-mile bus transit trip across three suburban counties. It took him about four hours and required different payments across transit systems. “The ubiquity of the phrase ‘must have access to reliable transportation’ in job listings underscores what’s at stake.”

  What should be done to combat what the author calls “mobility redlining” where parts of the region receive limited or zero transit service?
The Regional Transportation Plan calls for three bus rapid transit projects to connect Clayton, Cobb, and Gwinnett counties to MARTA rail. Is BRT the new rail for metro Atlanta?

The new Atlanta Regional Commission Metro Atlanta Speaks survey shows transit remains the #1 issue in the region. Nearly 49% of respondents said expanding public transit is the best long-term fix to traffic challenges. These numbers were particularly high from those in Gwinnett, Cobb, and Cherokee counties.

What does this say to you about the state of transit in the region?

PRIORITIZING AND FUNDING TRANSIT

Transit ridership is down in the country. Bus ridership is also dropping. How can cities and agencies prioritize the bus and make the case for choosing the bus and transit over driving or services such as Uber and Lyft?

Chicago recently modified its Uber and Lyft rider taxes based on if you use these services in areas already served by transit. $12M of the monies raised annually will fund bus improvements such as dedicated lanes. Is this something that should be considered in Atlanta and the region?

“Equitable transit requires equitable politics.” While it’s fantastic that the City of Atlanta prioritized transit by putting more transit funding on the ballot in 2016 (the More MARTA referendum), other cities and counties in the MARTA service area have not done so.

How can the folks in this room “plan, run, and win the fight for effective transit?”