**Four Week Check-In**

Are there any stories, data, or ideas you'd like to talk about more in future meetings? Has anyone been riding transit more now compared to a few weeks ago?

**Discussion Outline**

The breakout room discussion will last 40 minutes, after which we will reconvene, hear from all breakrooms, and conclude for the evening.

*Note for Facilitators: Before starting the discussion, please ask if there were any points of confusion in the chapter and help clarify the concept before moving on.*

Below are the summary and questions to discuss with your breakout group:

Both these chapters delve into the reliability of a transit system. These get into core ideas of what MARTA's bus network redesign should address for how useful transit can be to any one person's lifestyle and as a viable transportation option in the Atlanta region. Improving the reliability of the bus network can make transit “a useful and liberating alternative”, and bring a needed level of respect and dignity to riding transit.

**Chapter 6 - Peak or All Day?**

Chapter 6 discusses when transit is operating. Specifically the hours of day it is in service. The chapter asks the following questions:

- When does the service come?
- Does it come only at rush hour, or does it run all day?
- Where does the service run, and which areas does it connect?

All the main scenarios Walker discusses both involve peak periods, but with different mindsets from the agencies. Looking at the charts below, the middle graph is where the agency primarily focuses on serving those peak period riders because that is when ridership is highest. The bottom graph focuses more on all-day service; extra service is provided to accommodate demand surges during peak, but the core riders are those who use the system throughout the day.
Walker spends some time focusing on commuter routes that run primarily at peak morning and evening periods. These services bring people from the suburbs into the center business district during the morning, and then take them back to the suburbs during the evening. The Xpress bus service in metro Atlanta is an example of this. A common practice from MARTA is also to run buses and trains more frequently during morning and evening peak periods, and then at lower frequency the rest of the day. Similarly, MARTA has lower frequencies on weekends.

Labor costs will always be the most expensive part of running a transit service, and are a much larger long-term factor to improving service compared to other costs like new buses, fuel, and maintenance. Part of the system reliability here also involves ensuring drivers are paid well and have reasonable schedules.

An unasked question of chapter 6 is “Who are we serving?”. Peak service can adequate transport 9-5 workers into, out of, and around the city, but it may not be good for people with different work schedules or lifestyles that need reliable transportation throughout the day and night.
Chapter 7 - Frequency Is Freedom

Chapter 7 discusses how often a bus comes during its service hours, and what those service hours are.

- **Frequency** = How often the service come?
- **Span** = What hours of the day does it come?

“Frequency is freedom” is a phrase that Walker is famous for.

High frequency transit routes offer a system that is reliable enough whenever you want it, even for unexpected trips. This paired with long spans creates reliable service throughout the week, and on weekends, that can provide dignity and empowerment to its riders. A bus that comes every 10 minutes is one that someone does not need to plan for, or can be comfortable missing. Buses that run frequently from early morning to late night, or even 24/7, provide flexibility in all kinds of daily activities.

*Current practice aims for 15-minute or better frequency, 12 hours per day, and weekdays only.*

**MARTA has different service types, frequencies, and spans.** It's local bus service typically has 20 hour service on weekdays.

Walker discusses the importance of conveying the right information on transit maps. Most maps show all of the bus and train lines without any regard to frequency or span. MARTA's maps adhere to this practice. More informative maps could show the different frequencies of routes through line thickness, colour changes, or both.

- [MARTA PDF System map](#)  
- [MARTA Interactive Map](#)  
- [Maps of MARTA frequencies by time and day -- 2019 data](#)

The political question of frequency considers where high frequency routes are focused. There may be large areas on a service map that do not have many, or any, high frequency routes. This could be ok if those are less dense areas with limited population; denser areas with more jobs, destinations, and residents would deserve the investment of higher frequencies. This is the divide between how large an area is vs its population, and the real and perceived fairness of a transit network. Who is it serving and what is its goal?

**Discussion Questions**

- Do you know the frequency and service span of your main bus or train? Has that changed during the pandemic in a way that has affected your travel patterns?
- What hours of the day and days of the week should transit run to accommodate your schedule and lifestyle?
- Who should MARTA aim to serve and how should they do that?