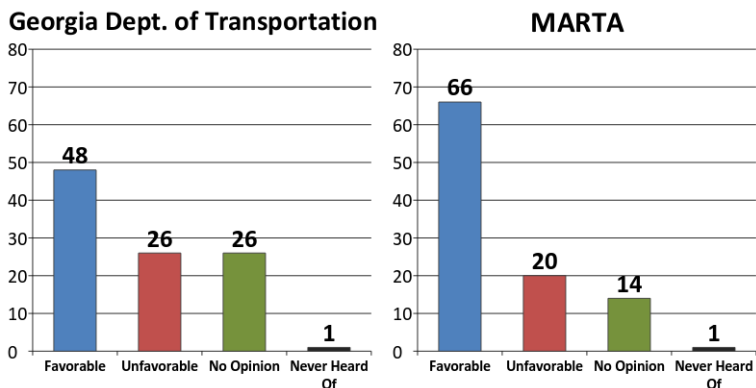
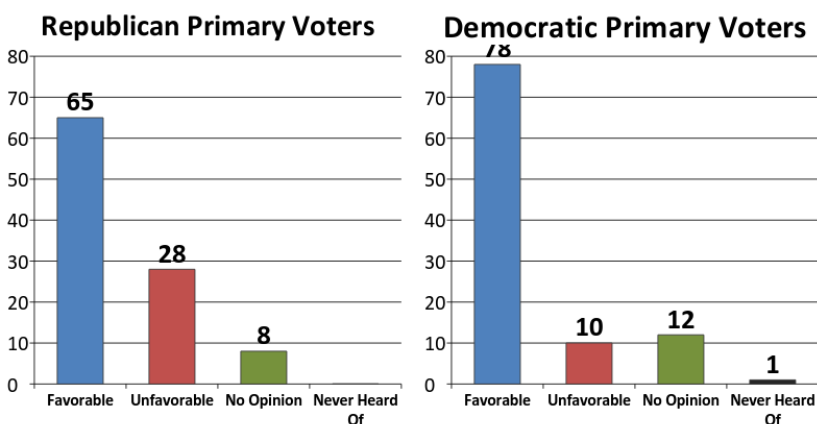


MARTA Expansion's Unprecedented Support

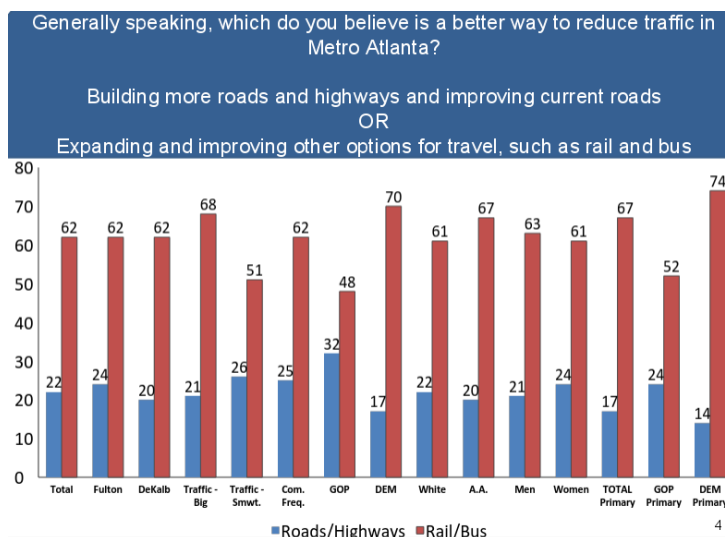
Voters have a widely favorable opinion of MARTA transit service:



Even among Republican primary voters:

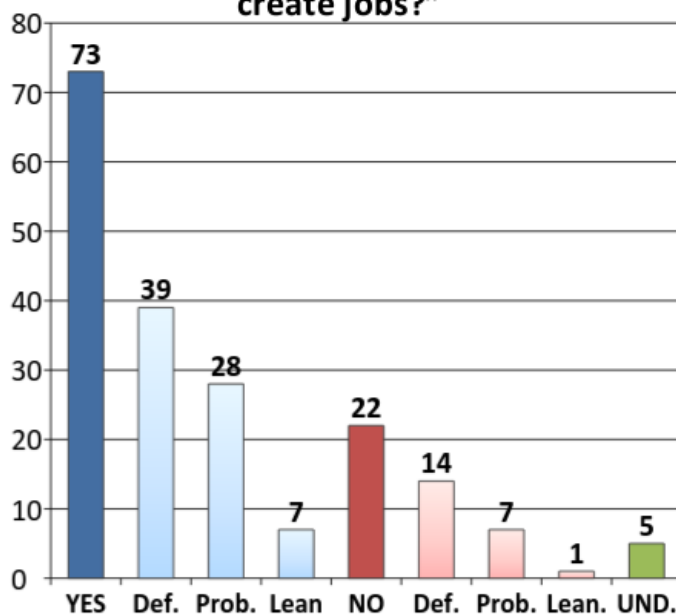


In fact, across almost every demographic polled believes MARTA is a key component to relieving Atlanta's traffic issues:

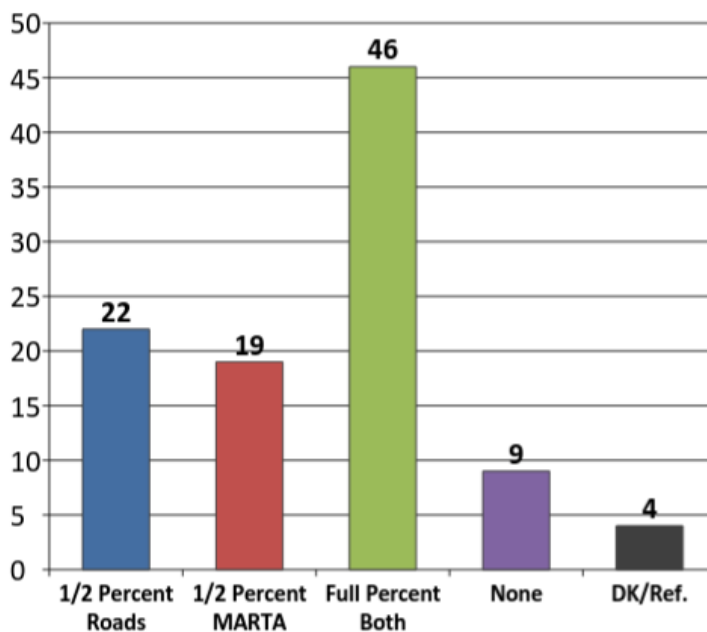


So the vast majority are in favor of a tax to expand MARTA services:

“Shall a special sales and use tax of half of one percent be collected in COUNTY for the purpose of significantly expanding and enhancing MARTA rail service to reduce traffic congestion and create jobs?”



Which would you be MOST willing to support?



MARTA officials pitch sales tax hike for rail expansion

Feb 16, 2016, 6:47pm EST Updated: Feb 17, 2016, 9:36am EST

MARTA officials and the agency's strongest advocate in the General Assembly pitched the state Senate Transportation Committee Tuesday on proposed legislation that could raise up to \$4 billion for a planned rail expansion.

"We have not expanded transit in 18 years," Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Alpharetta, the bill's chief sponsor, testified during a hearing on the measure. "It's time to invest in it."

Beach's bill would authorize Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton counties and the city of Atlanta to ask their voters to raise the 1-cent sales tax MARTA charges in those jurisdictions by a half penny. The revenue would go to help finance an \$8 billion extension of MARTA rail lines north to Alpharetta and east along the Interstate 20 corridor to Stonecrest Mall, and pay for the proposed Clifton Corridor line.



BYRON E. SMALL
MARTA trains

MARTA General Manager and CEO Keith Parker outlined the operational overhaul he has overseen at the agency since taking the reins more than three years ago, including a ridership increase and budget efficiencies that have turned a \$35 million deficit into a \$35 million surplus. Past management inefficiencies have hurt support for MARTA in the legislature.

"We should be responsible stewards of the tax dollars and fare dollars we're entrusted with," MARTA board Chairman Robbie Ashe said. "[But] we will never 'efficiency' our way to the billions of dollars we need for this expansion."

Ashe expressed support for a proposal put forth earlier Tuesday during a meeting of Fulton County commissioners and mayors from Fulton's 14 cities. The plan calls for limiting MARTA's tax increase for the first five years after the tax takes effect to a quarter penny, while the county and cities would divide the other three-fourths of a cent for needed local road projects.

After five years, the road tax would expire and the MARTA tax would continue into the 2050s as a half-penny tax. By nature, transit projects take longer to finance than road improvements because they're more expensive.

In a foreshadowing of the referendum campaign that would follow approval of the MARTA bill, Roswell homeowner Mike Lowry said the money would be better spent improving east-west arterials like Holcomb Bridge Road. He cited a 2003 study of urban density by the World Bank.

"Atlanta is the least dense city its size in the world," he said. "No fixed rail can be a transportation solution for Atlanta, no matter how much money you throw at it."

The committee plans at least one more hearing on the bill before taking a vote.

Fulton's transportation stance nears consensus despite differences among mayors

Feb 16, 2016, 3:06pm EST

Fulton County Commission Chairman John Eaves has been working for months to build consensus among all the mayors in his county on how to move forward with transportation funding.

At Tuesday's meeting of Fulton's mayors and county commissioners, the various political leaders moved a step closer to consensus – with the exception of Alpharetta Mayor David Belle Isle.

They voted to support legislation that will be presented later today by Georgia Sen. Brandon Beach (R-North Fulton) to draft a referendum that would allow residents in Atlanta, Fulton, DeKalb and Clayton to increase the MARTA sales tax by up to another half penny.

The legislation would leave the door open for Atlanta to pass half a penny for MARTA for the next 40 years and half a penny for a T-Splost for the next five years.

Fulton County outside of Atlanta could then pass a T-Splost of 75 percent of a penny for the next five years with MARTA getting 25 percent of that penny. After five years, the Fulton share for MARTA would go to 50 percent for the next 35 years.

MARTA Chairman Robbie Ashe said that proposal would cost the transit agency some of the longterm funding, but it would permit it to issue bonds to dramatically expand the system.



MARIA SAPORTA

Johns Creek Mayor Mike Bodker sits next to Roswell Mayor Jere Wood and Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed at a meeting at Fulton County Tuesday to discuss transportation funding options.

Millennial group pushes MARTA expansion

By Andria Simmons - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, February 9, 2016



An upstart group of millennials is trying to reshape the debate about public transportation in Atlanta, starting with the proposed expansion of MARTA.

In a press conference Tuesday at the Gold Dome, a new nonprofit called Advance Atlanta urged the Georgia Legislature to pass Senate Bill 330 (previously filed as Senate Bill 313). The bill would allow for a ballot initiative in DeKalb and Fulton counties that, if approved, would raise the sales tax by a half-percent to fund at least three major MARTA expansion projects.

Advance Atlanta aims to mobilize a sometimes politically disconnected age group to lobby for a bigger, better transit system. The founding members served together on the Atlanta Regional Commission's Millennial Advisory Panel last year. A few months ago, they decided to coalesce into a permanent transit advocacy group.

"For too long we've been kicking the can on transit," said Advance Atlanta President Nick Juliano. "That's why traffic and congestion currently rank as the top complaint of metro residents. We urge our lawmakers to make decisions that are not based on short-

term planning, but on long-term investments that will pay off for decades, and indeed generations to come.”

Over 70 people showed up for Advance Atlanta’s first event on Jan. 28 in Alpharetta to discuss mass transit during the 2016 Georgia legislative session. Although the organization comprises mostly millennials, it is open to area residents of all ages, Juliano said.



The sponsor of SB 330, state Sen. Brandon Beach, R-Roswell, said he wants to seize the momentum around transportation funding in Georgia that began with last year’s passage of a \$1-billion-per-year bill to pay for highway and bridge improvements. Beach’s proposal, when paired with federal matching funds, would generate about \$8 billion for MARTA projects over the next 40 years.

MARTA officials have said that would be enough money to pay for an expansion of heavy rail north along Ga. 400 to Windward Parkway in Alpharetta and east along I-20 to The Mall at Stonecrest in Lithonia, as well as a light rail line through the Emory/CDC corridor in Decatur.

Businesses have been among the biggest backers of the idea, including the Metro Atlanta Chamber and Georgia Chamber of Commerce. They co-funded a study by consulting firm HNTB Corp. that found expanding MARTA could generate \$5.2 billion in gross regional product for the metro Atlanta region through 2040.

But many lawmakers remain staunchly opposed, including Sen. John Albers, R-Roswell. Albers chairs the State and Local Government Committee, which heard testimony about the bill Tuesday.

Albers said north Fulton already has among the lowest unemployment rates in the state and doesn't need MARTA to attract businesses. Also, he said the benefits would be lopsided because 70 percent of the tax would be collected in Fulton, but two-thirds of it would be spent in DeKalb.

Only 3 percent of metro Atlantans use transit, according to U.S. census data from 2013.

However, a 2015 survey of metro Atlanta residents conducted by the Atlanta Regional Commission found that — across all age groups except for those 65 and older — expanding public transit was seen as the best long-term solution to traffic. Forty-four percent of respondents held that view, as opposed to 31 percent who preferred improving roads and highways.