

The Future of Transit

A Transportation Symposium

Proceedings Summary

Produced by the Atlanta Regional Commission and Georgia Tech Center for Urban Research

Thursday, August 6, 2026 | 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Harry West Conference Room, Atlanta Regional Commission

Event Overview

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Georgia Tech Center for Urban Research co-hosted “The Future of Transit,” the third in an ongoing symposium series exploring emerging transportation topics in the Atlanta region. Earlier installments covered micromobility (January 2026) and autonomous vehicles (April 2026); land use, urban design, pricing, and bicycle/pedestrian issues are planned as future topics.

The symposium was framed around a central planning challenge: the region is updating both the Atlanta Regional Commission’s [Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(Mobility 2055 / MTP\)](#), with adoption expected in 2028, and the City of Atlanta’s forthcoming Comprehensive Transportation Plan, at a moment when travel demand, land use, and mobility technology are all shifting in ways that make the future of transit genuinely uncertain. The event was designed to surface expert perspective and audience input that can inform both planning efforts.

Format

The program opened with welcoming remarks from ARC and Georgia Tech, followed by seven-minute lightning presentations from six invited speakers. Dr. Hans Klein (Georgia Tech School of Public Policy) then offered a synthesis of cross-cutting themes and moderated a live panel discussion, drawing on questions submitted by the audience through Mentimeter (live polling and open Q&A) and written note cards. A short set of MTP-related polling questions was also woven in to gather direct public input for the plan update. The session closed with a networking reception.

Attendance

Approximately 86 people participated: 69 in person in the Harry West Conference Room and 17 joining via Zoom, including speakers (Dr. Kari Watkins presented remotely from UC Davis). Attendees represented ARC, MARTA, CobbLinc, Georgia Tech, the City of Atlanta and several other municipalities, consulting and engineering firms, advocacy organizations, and community and health-focused institutions. A full attendee list is provided in the Appendix.



A full house in the Harry West Conference Room during the symposium.

Speaker Presentations

Six speakers each presented for approximately seven minutes, covering research, regional data, and case studies from across the transit landscape.



Attendees taking notes during Dr. Kari Watkins' presentation on the Dutch STOMP hierarchy.

Dr. Kari Watkins — *University of California, Davis (joined virtually)* — *"If You Build It, They Will Come: Lessons Learned in 20 Years of Travel Behavior Research"*

Watkins, a former Georgia Tech professor now at UC Davis, opened with the costs of the current auto-oriented system: the average American commuter loses 54 hours a year to traffic delays, unintentional injury (mostly from motor vehicle crashes) is the leading cause of death for ages 1–44, transportation accounted for 29% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in 2021, and obesity risk rises roughly 6% for every additional hour spent commuting by car.

Her central argument: none of the technologies commonly discussed as transit “saviors” — autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles, or ride-hailing — change the fundamental picture on their own. What matters is how physical space is allocated and how much priority and separation is given to public transportation. She urged the region to think of transit as “mobility as a service”: a seamless, high-capacity backbone complemented by localized first/last-mile connections, with fare payment and information systems (real-time arrival, service alerts, rider feedback) rethought around the way people actually travel today rather than around monthly commuter passes.

She closed with the Dutch STOMP hierarchy — walking, cycling, public transport, mobility-as-a-service, and private cars, in that order of priority — and noted that in the Netherlands, half of all train trips begin with a bike ride and a quarter of all bike trips connect to a train station, illustrating how bike/transit integration expands a station’s effective catchment area.

Dr. Johann Weber — *Program Administrator, Georgia Commute Options / Atlanta Regional Commission — “Commute Demand & Trends”*

Weber presented findings from ARC’s Regional Commuter Survey (RCS), a scientifically administered mail/phone/online survey conducted every 3–5 years across the 20-county region. The 2025 wave — the first full post-pandemic iteration, fielded in three waves between February and May — collected over 6,000 responses (5,657 retained after cleaning) against a target of 5,000 for statistical precision.

Key findings: the share of workers who telework at least part-time rose nearly 50% since 2019 (43% to 60%), and full-time work-from-home more than tripled (6% to 20%) — a structural shift, not a temporary pandemic artifact. Among commuters who still travel to work, the drive-alone share edged up (79.7% to 81.6%) while transit and carpool shares declined. Average commute distance held roughly steady (19 to 18.5 miles) while average commute time fell (39.3 to 34.6 minutes), likely reflecting fewer cars on the road and more dispersed peak travel.

Weber cautioned against evaluating transit’s recovery purely against 2019 ridership, since 2019 itself was well below 2001 and 2010 levels (MARTA annual ridership: ~164 million in 2001; ~146 million in 2010; ~118 million in 2019; a pandemic low of ~23 million in 2021; and ~66 million in 2025). He also stressed a “one size fits none” framing: denser parts of the region are well suited to rail, micromobility, and walking, while lower-density areas need different tools — autonomous vehicles, commuter rail/bus, and shared trips — matched to their different constraints (land value and space versus distance and household cost). He closed by pointing to the region’s successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup as evidence that Atlanta can execute at a high level when it agrees something matters, and suggested a worthwhile transportation investment is one that, five years after opening, is hard to imagine living without.

Julius Bryant — *VIA — Microtransit in Georgia*

Bryant presented on VIA’s microtransit deployments across the state (VIA operates in 40 countries with over 800 partners and 165 million rides served globally; its Georgia partnerships have carried roughly 2 million trips with about 55,000 unique riders and a 4.8 average rider rating). He outlined how microtransit differs from fixed-route service — shared rides in wheelchair-accessible, mid-size vehicles; virtual rather than fixed stops; and fares aligned with public transit — and the typical use cases: filling coverage gaps, feeding fixed routes, and replacing underperforming fixed routes without leaving riders stranded.

Three Georgia case studies illustrated the range of applications. The Buc in Buckhead, launched in 2022 with CID funding, passed 100,000 rides in 2025 and connects riders to two nearby MARTA rail stations for first/last-mile trips. Shift On-Demand, an airport-area workforce shuttle, serves employees such as flight attendants, baggage handlers, and concessionaires; 73% of its riders lack access to a personal vehicle and 80% of area households earn below \$50,000, underscoring a strong transportation-equity use case. Valdosta On-Demand, deployed in a city that previously had no public transit system at all, has completed nearly 480,000 rides, sees roughly 75% of trips shared, averages 4+ rides per vehicle-hour at under \$18 per trip, and has been used by more than 40% of the city’s population, with 40% of riders using it to commute to or from work. Bryant closed by noting that fixed-route transit remains essential, but microtransit has become a permanent, integral piece of the overall system, particularly in lower-density and rural contexts.

Ryan VanSickle — *Director of Technical Services & Service Planning, MARTA — “MARTA’s NextGen Bus Network”*

VanSickle presented MARTA's NextGen Bus Network, the largest and most comprehensive network change in the Authority's history, replacing a roughly 113-route system that had grown incrementally over decades with mostly 40–60 minute frequencies. NextGen increased the number of zones with 15-minute-or-better frequent service from 5 to 17 (plus a new BRT line), and now more than a third of MARTA's bus network runs every 20 minutes, seven days a week, for most of the day — a deliberate shift away from a peak-commute-only design toward consistent all-day, all-week service.

MARTA Reach, an on-demand microtransit service, launched ahead of the broader network change (early launch on March 7) and now replaces fixed routes in 12 zones, operating daily from 6 a.m. to midnight with pickups typically within 30 minutes; each zone connects to a frequent bus route, rail line, or major timed-transfer point. The network redesign also included infrastructure upgrades — sidewalks, shelters, safer crossings at transfer points, and intersection adjustments to ease bus turns.

The design process ran from 2022 through 2025 in four stages: developing ridership- versus coverage-oriented network concepts and securing Board policy guidance; drafting the network in collaborative workshops with local government and stakeholder partners (with adjustments made to improve equity outcomes); an extensive public engagement period; and final refinement. Engagement totaled more than 50 public meetings, over 4,000 written comments, 20+ pre-launch open houses, 20+ stakeholder briefings, and 70+ station pop-ups, supported by 300+ ambassadors during the launch window. The redesign nearly tripled the number of residents living near frequent (15-minute) service and increased one-hour access to jobs, colleges/universities, grocery stores, and hospitals by roughly 20–31%, while increasing overall transit access by about 6%.

Three months after launch, the network was carrying about 629,700 weekly bus passenger trips and 5,780 weekly Reach passenger trips, both of which MARTA expects to continue growing as riders learn new travel patterns over roughly a two-year adjustment period. A first round of schedule fine-tuning is planned for August 22, 2026, with an ongoing listen-monitor-evaluate-plan-implement cycle guiding further adjustments.

Jacob Tzegaegbe — *Former Senior Advisor to Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms; MARTA Board Member — “A Future Atlanta That’s More Livable”*

Tzegaegbe opened by naming the region's often-imagined dream transit map — a dense, London Tube-style rail network — as exactly that: a dream, not a realistic plan, given cost and the region's governance structure. He argued Atlanta can still become meaningfully more livable without any single mega-project, pointing to five converging trends: continued population growth; increasing density in more locations (Midtown, the Eastside BeltLine, South Downtown, the Gulch/Centennial Yards, and suburban nodes like Alpharetta's Avalon and Forsyth County's Halcyon); a growing menu of mobility options beyond cars (e-bikes, scooters, and more to come); more tools available to transit agencies (microtransit, BRT, ART, and eventually autonomous vehicles, each serving different needs rather than any one being a panacea); and a generational shift, with younger people obtaining licenses at lower rates and an aging population increasingly less willing or able to drive.

He named two unresolved risks that these trends do not solve: the “suburbanization of poverty,” as people who need transit most move to areas the region is not yet equipped to serve, and persistent regional governance fragmentation that makes it difficult to align funding and priorities across jurisdictions. He closed by describing his vision not as a project or a map but as a trajectory: more people, living in denser and more walkable communities, served by a more diverse and steadily improving bus network with a better rider experience — all in service of continued regional growth, even if that growth brings more congestion along the way.

Lisa Cupid — *Chairwoman, Cobb County Board of Commissioners* — *Transit in Suburban Atlanta*

Cupid situated Cobb County as the region's third-largest county and a major economic hub, home to Fortune 500 companies, the Cumberland and Town Center business districts, Kennesaw State University, and the Atlanta Braves — while also being demographically and geographically diverse, spanning urban, suburban, and rural character within a single county.

She traced Cobb's transit history from a 1971 vote against joining MARTA, through ARC-supported studies and a narrowly approved 1987 referendum that created what is now CobbLinc, to the county's 2015 decision to add microtransit in areas with high need but lower fixed-route ridership following the post-2008 recession service cuts. Today, CobbLinc's local and rapid routes carry more than 150,000 riders a month (a 33% increase since 2022), paratransit serves about 5,000 riders monthly, and microtransit ridership has grown roughly fourfold since late 2024.

She candidly discussed the challenges of Cobb's 2019 MSPLOST transit referendum: an unusually long 30-year timeframe (versus the typical 4–6 year SPLOST) needed to bond a meaningful early build-out; the difficulty of educating voters about BRT and microtransit, neither of which had a visible local example; the county's political and socioeconomic diversity, which meant no single service model fit every area; and uncertainty about future technology and travel patterns. Looking ahead, Cobb is expanding microtransit into a new Acworth/Kennesaw zone, advancing design of a South Cobb Transit Center (before the Board of Commissioners on August 11, 2026), implementing the Cumberland Sweep autonomous-vehicle pilot (funded by a \$6.6 million FTA Low-No grant), offering free CobbLinc rides to Kennesaw State students, upgrading fare collection (contactless cards, Apple Pay, BetterBreeze), and adding camera coverage and private security patrols. She closed by echoing an earlier speaker's theme — that conditions sometimes have to get harder before they get better — as reason for optimism that public appetite for transit investment in Cobb will continue to grow.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Following the presentations, Klein offered a live synthesis before moderating the panel. Several threads ran across all six talks:

- From the abstract to the concrete. Speakers moved fluidly between framing transit as an abstract “service” (mobility as a service, point A to point B) and the concrete technologies, funding mechanisms, and infrastructure needed to deliver that service reliably — with the throughline being that the service experience, not any single mode, is what should drive decisions.
- Dynamism and constant adjustment. From MARTA's planned multi-year fine-tuning cycle to Georgia Commute Options' tracking of shifting telework patterns, the region's transportation system is treated less as a fixed plan to be executed once and more as a system that must continuously sense and respond to changing travel behavior.
- Technology as enabler, not solution. Microtransit's virtual stops and dynamic routing, real-time rider information, and account-based fare systems were repeatedly framed as tools that make a well-designed transit network work better — not as substitutes for the underlying network and service design.
- A cultural shift already underway. Several speakers pointed to changing generational attitudes toward driving and a gradual destigmatization of bus and transit ridership (Klein noted the moment as a hopeful

sign that “buses are no longer just for creeps and weirdos”) as a genuine, if incremental, tailwind for transit investment.

- Governance and regional collaboration as the binding constraint. Nearly every speaker, in different words, identified political fragmentation across the region's many jurisdictions — not technology, cost, or demand — as the primary obstacle to more ambitious regional transit outcomes.

Live Audience Polling (Mentimeter)

Throughout the presentations and panel, attendees responded to a series of live Mentimeter polls, both in the room and via Zoom. Between 68 and 84 people responded to each question. Results below are presented as raw counts; responses were also collected as direct input for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update.

Word Cloud: “When you think about transportation in the region in 2055, what word comes to mind?” (68 respondents)

“BeltLine rail” was by a wide margin the most common response, submitted more than a dozen times.

“Congestion” and “Trains” were also frequent. Other recurring words included Options, Walking, Connected, Equity, Multimodal, Sustainable, and Streamlined — alongside a scattering of more skeptical or pointed entries (Splintered, Stress, Unknown, Expensive).



Live word cloud response, Mentimeter, August 6, 2026

As our region grows, what worries you most about our transportation system? (74 respondents, pick one)

Response	Votes
The ability to travel safely (no matter the mode of travel)	20
Unequal access to opportunity across communities	20
Rising cost of living / housing near jobs	17
Aging infrastructure not keeping up	10

Response	Votes
Increased traffic and congestion	7

How often do you use transit currently? (75 respondents, select one)

Response	Votes
Rarely	22
Weekly	18
Daily	12
Several times a week	12
A few times a week	10
Never	1

What would need to change for you to use transit more often? (77 respondents, select up to 2)

Response	Votes
Service needs to be available closer to my home or destination	28
Service needs to run more frequently	15
Trip needs to take less time than it does now	11
It needs to be more connected to other multi-modal options	9
It needs to feel safer (at stops or onboard)	8
Other	6
It needs to cost less	0

What would most improve your ability to walk, bike, or roll to a transit stop or station? (76 respondents, select up to 2)

Response	Votes
More bike infrastructure to/from stations	36
Shorter distance to the nearest stop	26
More sidewalks	11
Safer pedestrian crossings	3

If the region could only pick one, which would you prioritize? (77 respondents)

Response	Votes
Extending transit to more places that don't currently have it (coverage)	36
Making transit faster or more reliable	28
Making existing transit run more often (frequency)	11
Other	2

How comfortable are you riding in an autonomous transit vehicle? (72 respondents)

Response	Votes
5 – Very comfortable	20
3 – Neutral	22
1 – Not at all comfortable	16
4	7
2	7

Opinion was sharply split: roughly equal shares reported being very comfortable and not at all comfortable, with the largest single group landing neutral — suggesting the region's riders have not yet formed settled views on autonomous transit.

Open Response: Biggest opportunity for the region in the next 25 years (74 respondents)

Responses spanned a wide range but clustered around several recurring themes: regional collaboration and governance (“Come to a regional consensus,” “Strengthening local collaboration,” “Building cross-jurisdiction, regional and mode-agnostic collaboration”); funding, including calls for dedicated state and local funding sources; coverage and equity of access, especially for underserved and outer-ring communities; the BeltLine and rail expansion generally; micromobility and bike infrastructure; and a cultural/marketing shift to make transit more appealing and trusted. A number of responses (“Make transit the easy choice,” “Changing cultural perspectives on transit,” “There are still so many people who don't even know MARTA exists”) echoed the panel's discussion of transit's image problem.

Open Response: Reactions to the 2050 MTP high-capacity transit map (58 respondents)

Reactions to the current adopted map (which the updated MTP, expected in 2028, will replace) were the most varied and pointed of the session. A large share of comments called for more BeltLine rail and voiced surprise that it had not come up more directly in the presentations; others pushed for more coverage in South Fulton, Clayton County, Southwest Atlanta, and other underserved areas; several questioned whether proposed BRT lines have genuinely dedicated right-of-way (“It's not BRT if the bus doesn't have its own lane”); and a number of commenters were skeptical that political will and funding exist today to deliver more than a handful of the plan's projects. A smaller set of responses pushed in the opposite direction, questioning the value of further

fixed-rail investment given cost and technological uncertainty, or asking for a stronger regional rail connection to Savannah, Greenville, and Charlotte.

Moderated Panel Discussion

Klein moderated a panel with all six speakers, drawing questions from the audience via Mentimeter and note cards. Given time constraints, seven questions were addressed directly on stage; a fuller list of questions submitted by attendees but not reached live appears in the following section.



The moderated panel, with Dr. Kari Watkins joining remotely via the screen at center.

How much can or should we try to build our future, versus let it happen to us?

Panelists were largely unified: every transportation system that exists today was built through deliberate choices (the Eisenhower Interstate System was repeatedly cited as an example), and “letting it happen” in practice just means development proceeds without transit access or priority, which panelists agreed would leave the region worse off. Tzegaegbe added that both public and private innovation should be allowed to continue — including in the public right-of-way — but that innovation still needs to be regulated and supported once it proves valuable.

What would it take to create a commuter rail system for the Atlanta metro?

VanSickle named the basics — funding, physical space for tracks or a willing rail partner, and sustained organizational coordination across many competing interests. Cupid, drawing on her experience as an elected official, added that any such project ultimately requires “50% plus 1” — sufficient buy-in from a governing body

or the public, achieved incrementally, which she noted is often a source of frustration for those who want to move faster.

What is the outlook for microtransit in rural and remote areas?

Bryant and Tzegaegbe (drawing on his prior experience at VIA) were both optimistic, citing successful rural and reservation-area deployments where fixed-route service simply does not work at reasonable cost. Watkins cautioned that cost per rider can climb sharply in very low-density settings, and argued that in those cases a subsidized ride-hailing or eventually autonomous-vehicle model may prove more efficient than a dedicated microtransit vehicle, since the driver is the largest cost component when serving only one or two riders at a time. Cupid reframed the question by suggesting transit and microtransit be evaluated as infrastructure — like a road serving only a few houses — rather than purely on a cost-per-rider basis, given the outsized impact access has for the people who depend on it.

How will the NextGen Bus Network be adjusted as more data comes in?

VanSickle described an ongoing cycle of listening (rider, community, and operator feedback), monitoring (ridership and on-time performance data), evaluating, planning, and implementing changes — with a first round of schedule fine-tuning scheduled for August 22, 2026, and larger structural changes considered on a roughly annual cycle rather than repeated full redesigns. A related follow-up question — whether a bus network's flexibility (versus rail's permanence) discourages transit-oriented development — drew responses from Watkins, who argued that BRT can combine rail-like permanence in its right-of-way with bus-like flexibility elsewhere on the route, and that claiming and formalizing the right-of-way on MARTA's newly identified priority corridors is the logical next step; and from Tzegaegbe, who agreed but noted Atlanta's culture has not historically treated a nearby bus stop as a development amenity the way a rail station is. A second follow-up on developer coordination drew responses from VanSickle (stakeholder and CID engagement during route design) and Weber (the informal but valuable channel through which employers, TMAs, and neighborhood groups feed granular, on-the-ground requests — like a specific stop relocation — directly to MARTA and Georgia Commute Options).

How do municipalities pay for VIA and other microtransit systems?

Bryant explained that microtransit, like most transit, is heavily subsidized — municipalities or CIDs typically cover the majority of cost, some services (like the airport workforce shuttle) are entirely free to riders, and fare revenue typically covers under 5% of total cost, consistent with fixed-route and rail systems generally.

How do we address social misbehavior and poor conduct on MARTA that might discourage ridership?

Tzegaegbe, speaking as a resident rather than in an official MARTA capacity, argued the issue has two sides: MARTA does have a responsibility to enforce norms and address real safety concerns, but riders also share a personal responsibility to be comfortable sharing public space with a full range of people. Cupid offered a more cautious view, noting that many communities — including in Cobb — remain socially and demographically siloed at the neighborhood level, and that discomfort with unfamiliar riders is a real and unresolved cultural barrier outside Atlanta's urban core specifically, not just a MARTA issue. Watkins pointed to LA Metro as a useful model, citing three practices: distinguishing data on actual crime from perceptions of safety; investing in better services for unhoused individuals who may otherwise take up long-term residence on vehicles; and deploying non-police “ambassador” programs to provide a reassuring presence, particularly on rail systems and at less-busy times.

The region is hamstrung by political fragmentation — what, if anything, can fix that? Will the new Georgia Transportation Efficiency Authority help?

As the closing question, Tzegaegbe argued that regional transit fragmentation is fundamentally a leadership problem rather than a structural one — the region already has bodies like ARC, but real change requires regional leaders explicitly committing to work together on hard, long-term projects, citing the World Cup as proof the region can do this when it decides to. Cupid noted a similarly candid conversation had taken place among elected officials and business leaders at ARC just the week before, and expressed cautious hope that appetite exists for more impactful regional collaboration. Weber pointed to the state’s relatively high-functioning DOT and ongoing efforts to integrate transit into major roadway investments (citing BRT on the top end of I-285) as a sign that the divide between “road money” and “transit money” thinking is beginning to narrow.

Submitted Questions Not Reached During the Live Session

The volume of audience questions exceeded the time available for the moderated panel. The questions below were submitted by attendees but not addressed on stage; they are preserved here as direct public input for consideration in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update and other ongoing planning work.

- How do we get people to shift their outlook/mindsets on transit so they actually vote for transit funding?
- How could we merge bike lanes with dedicated bus lanes?
- How do we reconcile a need for safe spaces to walk/bike with a prioritization of vehicle lanes at the federal level (e.g., restrictions in SS4A grants)?
- How do we squeeze parking out of the real estate development program to diminish the advantage we have given to personal automotive transportation?
- Johann — can we see the RCS survey for smaller geographies than the whole region? What is the smallest geography level at which meaningful data is available?
- What is the outlook for microtransit in rural/remote areas? (addressed live — see Panel Discussion)
- Has MARTA considered opening its new fare system to aggregated mobility wallets that employers could offer employees?
- How do we break through the “-isms” (racism, classism) that often get in the way of making the transit investments we need?
- How do we effectively advocate for large-scale transit projects (like BeltLine rail) when policy and political status quo can obfuscate public will?
- How can we align transit initiatives with economic development priority areas and real estate investments?
- How do we address the “unsafe” and “dirty” perception of MARTA for non-riders? How can we better communicate the value of transit to those who have never ridden it?
- Have external advisors or consultants been brought in to help improve MARTA’s public perception?
- How can we work towards getting state funding for MARTA projects, given that MARTA is the only transit system that does not receive state funding? Can organizations lobby for this?

- Should MARTA, CobbLinc, and other agencies partner on buying buses together to lower costs and achieve economies of scale?
- What are the advantages of squeezing parking out of the real estate development program?
- Explain how agencies and counties will actively work towards regional transit initiatives, since (as one speaker noted) transit is regional.
- To Commissioner Cupid: how would you describe the current culture of collaboration across the region with regard to transit? Trending better or worse?
- Georgia is among the worst states for state support of local and regional transportation service. Is there a strategy for changing that?
- What would you say to state lawmakers to stop the state from interfering with transit referenda and use its budget surplus to advance transit initiatives?
- Do you see fare capping as a solution to making transit more economically competitive as more people telework? Has it been discussed at MARTA?
- Corporations profit from gridlocked, car-centric cities with weak public transit. How can we convince the private sector that the positive externalities of public transit are good for business?
- BRT is one of the newest modes being deployed — how is the Summerhill line performing so far?
- Can you define transit and how it differs from “transportation”? Is it different from “mass transit,” and why?
- With our disparate region, how can long-range planning via regional and state organizations actually deliver results, especially when local projects get cancelled near the finish line?
- How soon might we see last-mile micromobility hub infrastructure, like in New York City, in Atlanta?
- The variety of modes is critical to a seamless network — how much work is being done to better connect government agendas to end-user needs?
- What AI applications are being explored?
- Autonomous transit options (like the airport-to-Convention-Center mini-buses) appear far cheaper than maintaining large buses and MARTA trains. What is the region’s plan for autonomous transit?
- For Jacob: if the region becomes more congested, how do we ensure buses still run on time?
- Could the region look more closely at the Dutch STOMP model and prioritize walking, given its low cost and health benefits?
- Ryan touched on this, but: how often is communication/community engagement built into planning from the start, rather than as an afterthought?
- Why do we have to vote for transit expansion, but not for interstate widening and expansion?
- What are the chances the new Georgia Transportation Efficiency Authority (GTEA/ATL) will be able to bring jurisdictions together for cohesive planning? Why have past opportunities for regional cooperation been weakened?
- How does a low-cost, fare-free microtransit shuttle like The Buc sustain its operations financially?
- Beyond work-from-home, what do you think are the other main reasons transit ridership has declined?

- Would adding commercial services or pop-up retail in MARTA stations improve perceived safety and ridership?
- How much of micromobility/transit infrastructure implementation is really a function of public health? Should it be framed as environmental justice rather than just infrastructure?
- Comment (submitted via Zoom): it's notable that the 2055 vision centers on congestion and the BeltLine, while system concerns center on unequal access — if access is unequal today, that risks being the dominant word in tomorrow's word cloud too.

Connection to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan

ARC framed the symposium explicitly as an input to the current [Metropolitan Transportation Plan \(Mobility 2055\) update](#), expected to be adopted in 2028, and to the City of Atlanta's parallel Comprehensive Transportation Plan process. As part of that update, ARC is starting from a cleared project list and inviting local governments, transit agencies, and GDOT to resubmit projects for evaluation against board-adopted policy criteria and public input — a process this symposium's discussion, live polling results, and the unanswered questions above are intended to help inform. Attendees were also directed to a postcard survey and the [MTP project webpage](#) for continued input beyond the event.

Appendix A: Attendee List

A total of approximately 86 individuals attended, including speakers: 69 in person and 17 online via Zoom.

First	Last	Organization	Attendance
Lilian	Al Haddad	Kimley-Horn	In Person
Nick	Albrinck	KB Advisory Group	In Person
Mike	Alexander	ARC	In Person
Kelsi	Broderick	KB Advisory Group	In Person
Jennifer	Brooks	CBHD	In Person
Walter	Brown	Micromobility Atlanta	In Person
John	Brown	Butter B Party Bus on Wheels LLC	In Person
Julius	Bryant	VIA (Speaker)	In Person
Naomi	Campbell		Online
Tyler	Carnahan	Georgia Tech	In Person
Solomon	Caviness	ATLDOT	In Person
Trisha	Colpetzer	TSW Design	Online
Lisa	Cupid	Cobb County Commission (Speaker)	In Person
Stephen	Dickerson	Georgia Tech Research Corp.	In Person
Amber	Dillard	American Institutes for Research	In Person
Jimmy	Dills	Georgia Health Policy Center	In Person
Sidney	Douse	MARTA	In Person
David	Edwards	GA Tech Center for Urban Research	In Person
Patrick	Ford	Livable Buckhead	In Person
Graham	Foster	VHB	Online
Brian	Gist	SELC	In Person
Darin	Givens	ThreadATL	In Person
Ansley	Goddard	ARC	In Person
Amy	Goodwin	ARC	In Person
Jeremy	Griffith	Inspire Placemaking Collective	In Person

First	Last	Organization	Attendance
Ezekiel	Guza	City of Sandy Springs	In Person
Patricia	Hansen	City of Brookhaven	In Person
Jammie	Hopkins	Morehouse School of Medicine	Online
Joseph	Hornbuckle	Autonomous Symmetry	In Person
Merritt	Hornbuckle		Online
Alyna	Inigo	Alta Planning + Design	Online
Shannon	James	Aerotropolis Atlanta Alliance	Online
Jill	Johnson	Atlanta BeltLine, Inc.	In Person
Sage	Kannan	Kimley-Horn	In Person
Rajith	Kedarisetty	TSW Design	In Person
Greg	Kennedy	Atlanta Bike Bus	In Person
Aprell	King	DeKalb County	In Person
Hans	Klein	Georgia Tech (Moderator)	In Person
Tejas	Kotak	ARC	In Person
Alex	Kozela	Inspire Placemaking Collective	In Person
Jeremiah	LaDuca	AtkinsRealis	In Person
Lawrence	Lane		Online
Jennifer	Larosa	Kimley-Horn	In Person
Brittany	Lavender	AECOM	In Person
Kaeli	Lawrence	Georgia Tech (Student)	In Person
Steve	Lewandowski	ARC	In Person
Andy	Macke		In Person
Odetta	MacLeish-White		Online
Heidi	Martinez		Online
Heather	Mase	Uber	Online
Tiffanie	McPherson	AECOM	In Person
Liston	Mehserle	MARTA	In Person

First	Last	Organization	Attendance
Kaycee	Mertz	WSP	In Person
Eric	Meyer	ARC	In Person
Arthur	Miranda	KB Advisory Group	In Person
Joshua	Morton		Online
Rasmitha Reddy	Mundla	Georgia Tech	In Person
Dani	Nicholas	Georgia House of Representatives	Online
Miguel	Nieves	Livable Buckhead	In Person
Bailey	Norman	Morehouse School of Medicine	Online
Thad	Oviatt	Parkent Cycles	In Person
Tirth	Patel	Collaborative Infrastructure Services Inc.	In Person
Amy	Perez	Gwinnett County	Online
Yaritza	Perez-Hooks	GA Tech Center for Urban Research	In Person
Josh	Phillipson	ARC	In Person
Emma	Polhemus	MARTA	In Person
Carly	Queen	Alta Planning + Design	In Person
Jeff	Rader	Georgia Tech	In Person
Carolina	Ramos	MARTA	In Person
Brittni	Russaw	AECOM	In Person
Ian	Samuels	WSP	In Person
Branden	Saunders	Alta Planning + Design	Online
Rebecca	Serna	Propel ATL	In Person
Austin	Shelton	City of Doraville	In Person
	Smith	MARTA	In Person
Chantha	Son	ARC	In Person
Whytne	Stevens	ATLDOT	In Person
Jacob	Tzegaegbe	MARTA Board / Former Senior Advisor to Mayor Bottoms (Speaker)	In Person

First	Last	Organization	Attendance
Emma	Uppelschoten	KB Advisory Group	In Person
Ryan	VanSickle	MARTA (Speaker)	In Person
Kofi	Wakhisi	ARC	In Person
Nikki	Washington	Perimeter Connects	In Person
Kari	Watkins	University of California, Davis (Speaker)	Online
Johann	Weber	ARC (Speaker)	In Person
Megan	Will	Cumberland CID	In Person
Arin	Yost	ARC	In Person