

MARTA Board of Directors - Planning and Capital Programs Committee Meeting

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Agency: MARTA Board of Directors

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Summary

- Clayton County residents approved a referendum in 2014 to join MARTA. MARTA has planned projects in Clayton County, including improved bus service, high-capacity transit services, and operations and maintenance facilities. As a part of this initiative, MARTA and Clayton County see a need for a program coordinator position. This position and the salary was discussed during this meeting.
- MARTA is making significant changes to the cost and schedule of the [Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit](#), including a budget deviation of nearly \$30 million. The planned date for starting “revenue service” has moved from August 2024 to July 2025.
- MARTA gave an update on the Clayton County Justice Center Transit Hub. This project is turning a temporary hub into something more permanent, with perks like better passenger amenities, greater access to jobs and services, and a reduction in traffic congestion. MARTA has 30% of the design plans complete. The schedule is now set at having the final design complete by April 2023 and construction complete by May 2024.

Additional Votes and Decisions

- For the Clayton County position, there was some information that needed to be clarified and questions by the board that needed to be answered, so they requested to be re-presented when complete.

- An easement agreement (an agreement to use another entity's land) was presented and passed: \$49,900 to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for traffic signal upgrades at three locations within Fulton County.

Follow-Up Question

- There was a point in which it was made fairly clear that there's a problem within MARTA or even The City of Atlanta at large with a "backlog of invoices." Why is this happening and what are the consequences?

Notes

Sources: [Meeting video](#); [agenda](#); [minutes](#)

The Scene

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) Board of Directors Planning and Capital Programs Committee Meeting took place on Thursday, August 25, 2022.

This list references [MARTA Board Members](#) online, but it may be outdated (several members not listed like Collie Greenwood) and without consistently visible placards, it was very difficult to identify every person. The following were present during the meeting:

Board Members:

- Rita A. Scott, Chair, DeKalb County
- Freda B. Hardage, Fulton County
- Roderick Frierson, Secretary, DeKalb County
- Robert L. Ashe III, Treasurer, City of Atlanta
- J. Al Pond, P.E., Fulton County
- Jim Durrett, DeKalb County
- Stacy Blakley, Fulton County
- Reginald Snyder, City of Atlanta
- Thomas Worthy
- William "Bill" Floyd, DeKalb County

Absent Directors:

- Rod Mullice, City of Atlanta, (absent)

- Katie Powers, Clayton County, (absent)
- Roberta Abdul-Salaam

General Counsel to the Board of Directors:

- Peter Andrews, Chief Legal Counsel
- Justice Leah Ward Sears

Staff:

- Collie Greenwood, Interim General Manager and CEO

Ex-Officio Members:

- Heather Aquino, Interim Executive Director, State Road and Tollway Authority
- Russell McMurry, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Transportation

The Agenda

1. Approval of the July 28, 2022, Planning and Capital Programs Committee Meeting Minutes
2. Resolution Authorizing the Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement ("IGA") Between Clayton County and MARTA for a Program Coordinator Position – Manjeet Ranu, Chief Capital Programs, Expansion and Innovation & Peter Andrews, Chief Counsel
3. Resolution Authorizing the Disposal of Permanent Easements to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in the Amount of \$49,900.00 for Traffic Signal Upgrades at SR 154/Lee Street at three locations, Fulton County, Atlanta GA– Robin Boyd, Director Real Estate
4. Briefing - Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Significant Change - Cost and Schedule
Abhay Joshi, Director Construction Management
5. Briefing – Clayton County Justice Center Transit Hub Update – Shelley Peart, Acting Assistant General Manager Planning and Project Development
6. Other Matters

AGENDA ITEM #1 [0:00](#)-1:35

Greenwood introduced Josh Rowan, who is joining MARTA as the deputy general manager over capital programs and expansion and innovations.

The board then reviewed and approved the previous minutes.

AGENDA ITEM #2 [1:35](#)-19:00

The first major point of discussion was around a program coordinator position being established between MARTA and Clayton County.

Manjeet Ranu, Chief of Capital Programs for Expansion and Innovation, presented the resolution information to the board.

Clayton County residents approved a referendum in 2014 to join MARTA. MARTA has planned enhancements in Clayton County, including improved bus service, high-capacity transit services, and operations and maintenance facilities.

As a part of this initiative MARTA and Clayton County see a need for a program coordinator position. This person would be employed by and report to Clayton County but their salary would be reimbursed by MARTA—a point that brought about discussion.

The term would be for three years, with an additional optional two, one-year term extensions, up to a total of five years.

The onscreen visual stated the annual compensation was \$260,000, but this was clarified as a “typo” with \$230,000 being the correct number.

Ashe then asked about the salary, when the typo was clarified. Ranu then explained this is a “fully burdened” compensation, which includes “all costs, not just salary,” and benefits. So, the take home pay would be less, but exactly how much is unknown.

“I’m curious to know what an equivalent position at an equivalent jurisdiction would cost, because that strikes me as a whole lot of money, for someone who reports to the Chief Operating Officer at the county and is a project coordinator,” Ashe said.

“I’m just trying to figure out why we are paying a quarter million dollars for that job,” Ashe said.

To Ashe’s original point of a comparable position, Ranu noted there is one within the City of Atlanta, the More MARTA position, but they do not know the salary at this time.

Board Request to Staff:

Ranu to provide a salary comparison with the City of Atlanta.

“So if there is an equivalent position at the City of Atlanta, we aren’t sure what the salary is?” Scott asked.

Ranu said that this is due to a backlog of invoices that they are working with the city on to obtain.

Andrews said that the cost of the salaries are roughly the same (so is the salary known then?) but the difference is the More MARTA position has several staff members to assist and the Clayton position would have more responsibility.

As for the lack of information about the CoA salary, Andrews clarified that they are supposed to be billed on a monthly basis but right now the city is covering it with a general fund. But in the first few months there were invoices but “as positions changed and individuals changed in those positions, that has slipped off the radar,” Andrews said.

Snyder then requested a full breakdown of the salary and asked who is doing the hiring. Ranu said this would include working with the vendor the Collaborative Firm.

“At the end of the day, they are hiring a position to provide their services and we are just funding it through their one penny sales tax,” Andrews said. The funds are raised in Clayton County but controlled by MARTA.

He added that he doesn’t anticipate a situation in which they hire someone that they don’t think MARTA could work with since the project has been collaborative since the start.

Ashe then asked for language in the agreement that would allow them to terminate the agreement at any time and either: a) that the person employed is not a third party beneficiary of the agreement, which would then give them grounds to sue; or b) that the contract gives MARTA the express right to terminate the employee.

“[Clayton County] does not have the capacity to help us get the projects done, so we are trying to provide that capacity internally for them so that we can work to get the projects done. If we have the ability to fire that person, I do believe it kind of clouds the effectiveness of that person working as a Clayton County employee versus a MARTA employee,” Andrews said.

There was some discussion to move forward with the resolution and amend the motion with some suggested added language but ultimately, Ashe requested that the resolution be re-presented once it has addressed the questions.

Due to the fact that MARTA wants control over the position even though the funds (one cent sales tax) come from Clayton County, Durrett then asked Ashe, “How much armchair quarterbacking is too much?”

Board Vote:

The motion passed five for, three against, one abstention.

AGENDA ITEM #3 [19:00-21:05](#)

Robin Boyd, Director of Real Estate, presented the following agenda item to the board. This is the easement of \$49,900 to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for traffic signal upgrades at three locations within Fulton County. Formally, a resolution authorizing the disposal of permanent easements to GDOT.

The three easement agreement locations are:

1. Parcel 1: Tyler Perry Studio Way, SW @ Lee St. near the Lakewood Station estimated at \$13,400
2. Parcel 2: Van Buren St. @ Lee St. near the Oakland Station estimated at \$26,300
3. Parcel 3: Lee St. Connector @ Lee St. near the West End Station estimated at \$10,200

Resolution:

Resolution Authorizing the Disposal of Permanent Easements to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in the Amount of \$49,900 for Traffic Signal Upgrades at SR 154/Lee Street at Three Locations, Fulton County, Atlanta, GA

Board Vote:

The motion was then moved by Hardage and seconded by Worthy. The resolution passed by a vote of 10 to 0 with 1 member abstaining and 11 members present with very little discussion.

AGENDA ITEM #4 [21:05](#)-58:10

Briefing:

Abhay Joshi, Director of Construction Management, led the next discussion which was a briefing on significant changes to the cost and schedule of the Summerhill Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

The Agenda for this portion includes:

- Significant Change per IGA
- Request for Modification per FY2017 TIGER Agreement
- Project Scope Changes
- Project Cost Changes
- Project Schedule Changes

Significant Change per IGA

What is a significant change?

MARTA and the City of Atlanta collaborated to agree on what constitutes a “significant change” to an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). Ultimately this was determined as a budget deviation of 10% or more.

The change originates with a Program Management Team which is submitted to a Program Governance Committee and once approved, moves to the City of Atlanta’s Mayor Office and finally to the MARTA board.

Request for Modification per FY2017 TIGER (federal grant) Agreement

This is a federally funded project, meaning they are obligated to provide a request for modification for any significant changes to scope, schedule, or budget.

Project Cost Changes - Scope Changes

A full list of changes can be seen at the bottom of this document ([appendix 1](#)).

These changes are the result of one of four items: city requests, MARTA requests, new information, or public/private utility.

Smaller ticket items include tree removals, conversion of beacon types, bicycle/ADA improvements, branding, an operator facility, tech needs, and an underground waterline relocation.

The most significant costs are:

- \$4.6M City of Atlanta repaving for general purpose lanes
- \$2.9M Pavement updates for transit lanes
- \$2.6M Red colorized paint bus lane treatment
- \$2.2M Georgia Power station connections
- \$1.6M On-route charges for electric vehicles
- \$1.2M Updates to shelters/platforms

They also conducted a Cost Reduction Analysis which resulted in \$14 million in potential reductions—five items eliminated from scope, two items funded by other sources, and three items with a change of material or reduction in quantity.

One major item is to eliminate solar power and battery backup—something that could be a concern for residents looking for greener transportation.

“We do want to position ourselves for future solar canopies, so there may be funding opportunities in the future, so we did want to go ahead and put the infrastructure in but just not go ahead and install them at this time,” Joshi said.

Another strategy is to eliminate two stations at Capitol Ave/Memorial Dr. and Memorial Dr./Trinity Ave.

Lastly, the general purpose lanes were deemed not within MARTA funding, since they aren't for public transit.

“We are working with the city, and they are looking for other funding sources to be able to do that work. It is work that needs to be done; it's just not through this program,” Joshi said.

Ultimately, they settled on just over \$9 million in savings.

Joshi then presented the overall cost increases, with the total increase at \$24.9 million. He also shared a visualization of the overall project cost changes (see bottom of this doc, [appendix 2](#)).

The total project cost is set at about \$91 million, with \$12.6 million from the TIGER (federal) grant, \$73 million from the More MARTA Program, and \$5 million from the City of Atlanta through other resources.

Project Schedule Changes

Joshi presented some of the reasons for a revised schedule and some pathways to getting the BRT up and running.

These three paths are: right-of-way acquisitions, electric vehicle design and procurement, completion of final design. The original Revenue Service Date was August 2024, and is now July 2025.

With the electric vehicles, Joshi notes that “currently, the entire country is ordering electric vehicles,” and they are watching it closely to ensure their procurement.

Discussion:

Following this presentation, the board [began discussing](#).

Floyd then pointed out that there will be two bus lines running down the same street, what he coined “a bus rapid transit and a bus not-so-rapid transit.”

“I think it's time that MARTA began to rename one of those,” Floyd said.

His concern over confusion residents might have in knowing which bus to take was clarified by Greenwood's note that they are already working on branding and have selected a name but are awaiting legal approval for that change.

“I'm really concerned because to me it feels like we are starting to normalize overspending,” Blakley said.

She continued to point out that there is a requested nearly \$30 million increase for this project, about two-thirds the original amount.

“When we are doing these original budgets, what are we missing that we have to come back down the road and ask for 60%, 75% increases over what we originally estimated?” she said. “Do we need to have additional people look at these, analyze these so we aren’t in this position? What needs to happen?”

Ranu replied one solution is that they’ve, “really stood up the CPMO through the Jacobs/Russell MARTA joint venture”—though what exactly this means to residents is unclear. [Editor’s note: This appears to reference a [project management centralization effort](#) that MARTA is undertaking.]

Blakley then pointed out a discrepancy between the totals on two different pages. Greenwood confirmed that one is scope changes, based on engineering reports, and the other is a summary of “scope plus,” which includes inflation, professional services and other items beyond the scope.

“In our conversations with the City of Atlanta, and I’ll just be transparent, I have not gotten positive feedback on this,” Blakley said, inquiring how this same presentation was received by the city the day prior to presenting it to MARTA.

Ashe mentioned “an hour plus that y’all spent with us yesterday, walking us through this.” He also added that while questions and concerns are valid, there will always be unexpected costs that pop up as the construction process goes on.

“MARTA hadn’t built anything in a very long time. We are relearning how to build things, and there are going to be some growing pains along the way,” Ashe said. “As we are shifting towards building things, I’d like to continue to make sure we are doing that as efficiently as possible. And I think part of the way of doing that (a) is to have people with real expertise in that topic on the board...”

Snyder then also encouraged that when preparing budgets for future programs to do work on the front end to get them as accurate as possible.

McMurry also acknowledged that they are “in a very difficult place when it comes to delivering projects due to the inflationary costs” and that “there’s a lot of tension there ... the world we live in, and still trying to deliver transportation projects to the citizens responsibly, acknowledging that these are taxpayer dollars that are trying to advance important infrastructure projects.”

Carrie Rocha, MARTA programs management officer, clarified that this does reflect the final design costs, but they don’t know what bids will look like as inflation is in play, but “we don’t anticipate additional changes at this time, but we do have built in contingency for the future.”

AGENDA ITEM #5 [58:10](#)-1:05:45

The final presentation was an update on the Clayton County Justice Center Transit Hub, presented by Shelley Peart, MARTA Acting Assistant General Manager of Planning and Project Development.

Peart explained this project is to turn a temporary bus station hub into something more permanent, with perks like better passenger amenities, greater access to jobs and services, and a reduction in traffic congestion.

She then provided a visual of where the project started with an empty parking lot, how the temporary hub appears now and a rendering of what they are hoping to build (see bottom of document, [appendix 3](#)).

The project site includes existing bus routes 191, 192, 193, and 800. In July 2020, MARTA opened a temporary transit hub with shelters, seating, passenger info, and art. Breeze card machines were installed in December 2021. The site was secured through a use agreement with Clayton County.

The concept includes eight bus bays, service buildings for restrooms and customer services, and an area for ridesharing.

MARTA has 30% of the design plans complete. The schedule is now set at having the final design complete by April 2023 and construction complete by May 2024. Several renderings were presented, including a bus entry view, a night view, and a passenger plaza. See meeting video for full details.

The next steps are to complete the transition documents, begin final design, and update cost estimates.

Frierson raised some concerns about the length of time between now and the final design, but Peart stated that this is typical for a transit hub of this size.

AGENDA ITEM #6 [1:05:45](#)-1:07:25

For the final portion of the meeting, the board addressed “any other matters.”

Board Request:

Blakley requested a briefing for the South Fulton’s projects for the next meeting, including scope, schedule, budget, where they stand, and any grants they are looking at to facilitate those projects.

Additionally, she has some safety concerns at Roosevelt Highway where a school is. Since they've added another grade level which increases the number of students, she's concerned about the "potential for there being a fatality or some type of incident there is growing exponentially as those students increase and they continue to walk."


They planned to discuss after the meeting the inclusion of this on future agendas.

The meeting then concluded at 10:39 am.

Conversation Highlights

- "MARTA hadn't built anything in a very long time. We are relearning how to build things, and there are going to be some growing pains. . . . As we are shifting towards building things, I'd like to continue to make sure we are doing that as efficiently as possible." — *Robert L. Ashe III, Treasurer, MARTA Board of Directors*

Appendix 1: List of Summerhill BRT project cost changes



Project Cost Changes – Scope Changes

City Request	MARTA Request	New Information	Public/Private Utility
\$2.6M – MMA red colorized bus lane treatment *	\$1.2M - Updates to BRT Shelters/Platforms based on MARTA Customer Experience, Technology, Architecture	\$2.9M – Pavement updates for transit lanes based on geotechnical engineer's report	\$2.2M - Georgia Power station connections direct from Georgia Power
\$4.6M – COA repaving for general purpose lanes *	\$450k - Southern Terminus final configuration based on field towing assessment and feedback from MARTA Operations / Real Estate	\$1.6M - EV on-route chargers based on EV route modeling results	\$400k - Underground waterline utility relocation costs direct from Department of Watershed Management
\$450k – Bicycle, ADA improvements, add'l pedestrian treatments	\$250k – System branding	\$440k - Tree removal / replanting based on tree survey	
\$800k - Conversion of four rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) to pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs)	\$270k – Operator relief facility	\$450k – Fiber optic communications backbone based on contractor's field testing / report	

**Amount modified in cost reduction initiative.*

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Appendix 2: Overall Summerhill BRT cost changes

Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@canopyatlanta.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line. If you use this work to power your own reporting, please credit Atlanta Documenters.

Project Cost Changes - Overall

Summerhill BRT Project - Project Cost Estimate Summary

FTA Standard Cost Category	Original Project Budget (2024\$)	30% Preliminary Design Estimate (2024\$)	Revised Project Estimate (YOES)
10 GUIDEWAY & TRACK ELEMENTS	\$5,640,000	\$4,470,000	\$9,353,000
20 STATIONS, STOPS, TERMINALS, INTERMODAL	\$10,780,000	\$15,150,000	\$16,814,000
30 SUPPORT FACILITIES: YARDS, SHOPS, ADMIN. BLDGS		\$0	\$272,000
40 SITEWORK & SPECIAL CONDITIONS	\$5,850,000	\$7,700,000	\$6,428,000
50 SYSTEMS	\$10,670,000	\$6,690,000	\$12,957,000
60 ROW, LAND, EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS	\$2,740,000	\$1,630,000	\$5,882,000
70 VEHICLES	\$6,220,000	\$10,110,000	\$8,698,000
80 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	\$11,260,000	\$10,120,000	\$18,098,000
SCC 10-80	\$53,160,000	\$55,870,000	\$78,502,000
SCC 90 UNALLOCATED CONTINGENCY (10%)	\$5,316,000	\$5,590,000	\$7,850,200
TOTAL SCC (10-100)	\$58,476,000	\$61,460,000	\$86,352,200

TIGER FY2017 Grant	\$12,629,760	\$12,629,760	\$12,629,760
More MARTA Funds	\$45,846,240	\$48,830,240	\$73,722,440

Total Project Cost Including Non-Eligible FTA Costs

Additional Pavement (not eligible for FTA Project Funding) in YOES	\$4,961,798
Total Project Cost (FTA Project and Additional Project Cost) in YOES	\$91,314,000

TIGER FY2017 Grant	\$12,629,760
More MARTA Funds/Other Sources*	\$78,684,240



*City of Atlanta to identify funding source for additional pavement, possibly LMIG program

Appendix 3: Clayton County Justice Center Transit Hub visuals


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The past, the present, and the future of the site

Before Quick Build Hub

Quick Build Hub



The Future Clayton County Justice Center Hub