

Metropolitan Setting¹

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Since 1950 Atlanta has become the major economic and cultural center in the southeastern United States. During this period the city has experienced unprecedented expansion in downtown construction. Atlanta's ambitious campaign to become a city of international importance coupled with its downtown orientation helped stimulate interest in a rapid rail transit system.

Although the Atlanta metropolitan area is growing fast, it remains a city with a relatively low population density (3,775 and 560 persons per square mile in the center city and suburban ring respectively—see Figure 2). Most of the population gain over the past decade has occurred in Atlanta's suburban ring. The center city comprised 47.9 percent of the area's population in 1960; but by 1970 this percentage had dropped to 35.7 percent. Evidence of dispersal of population centers is provided by the addition of 10 counties to the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area after 1970 census data were processed.² The increase in the number of work trips to and within Atlanta's suburbs is another indicator of suburbanization (see Figure 3).

Although the suburbs have grown faster, Atlanta's center city has remained stable and in some ways has gained vigor. Downtown real estate values grew as middle- and high-rise offices rose on Peachtree Street. The population of the center city gained 1.8 percent between 1960 and 1970, and density also increased. Likewise, the number of work trips to center city destinations increased slightly. In comparison, in many other older U.S. metropolitan areas center city population and employment dropped during the same period.

EXISTING PASSENGER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

As in many cities of relatively low density, Atlanta's highway network is more fully developed than its transit system. The circumferential loop, Interstate 285, is augmented by radial interstate highways intersecting in Atlanta's central business district. Interstate 20 crosses the region east to west. The northeast to southwest corridor is served by Interstate 85 and the northwest to southeast corridor by Interstate 75. The latter two routes merge to parallel the Peachtree Ridge through central Atlanta. Citizen action over the past few years has halted further expansion of the freeway system, but the existing network is one of the best developed of any major city on the eastern seaboard.

Until 1972 Atlanta was served by a private company, the Atlanta Transit System (ATS). Principally a bus operation, ATS had a reputation as one of the best-managed transit companies during the 1960's. Trolley coaches ran until 1963. Patronage held relatively steady during the 1960's but took a downward turn at the end of the decade (see Figure 4). During the same period the percentage of work trips carried by public transit fell 20.4 percent, while the portion using automobiles rose by 84 percent (see Figure 3). By 1971, with ridership at its lowest point ever and fares at their highest, public takeover was proposed.

In 1971 Atlanta voters authorized a three-point program of transit improvements. The program hinged on a pledge of Federal capital assistance for transferring ATS ownership to the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), for purchasing new buses, and for constructing a rapid rail system. A short-range package promised new routes and other service improvements in the bus transit system. Transit fares were lowered from 40 cents to 15 cents. A long-range 50-mile rapid rail transit system was augmented by 14 miles of exclusive busways (see Figure 5). A 1-cent hike in the sales tax was authorized to provide the local share of support for the program. Final design is

¹ See Figure 1, center fold.

² The 10 counties added to the Atlanta SMSA after 1970 are Cherokee, Butts, Henry, Forsyth, Fayette, Douglas, Newton, Rockdale, Paulding, and Walton. The earlier boundaries included 5 counties: Fulton, De Kalb, Clayton, Gwinnett, and Cobb.

LAND AREA (1970)
(square miles)

Center City	131.5
Suburban Ring	1,597.5
Entire SMSA	1,728.0

POPULATION

	<u>Suburban Ring</u>	<u>Center City</u>
1960	529,733	487,455
1970	893,743	496,421

DENSITY
(population/square mile)

	<u>Suburban Ring</u>	<u>Center City</u>
1960	332	3,707
1970	560	3,775

POPULATION
Percent Change 1960-1970

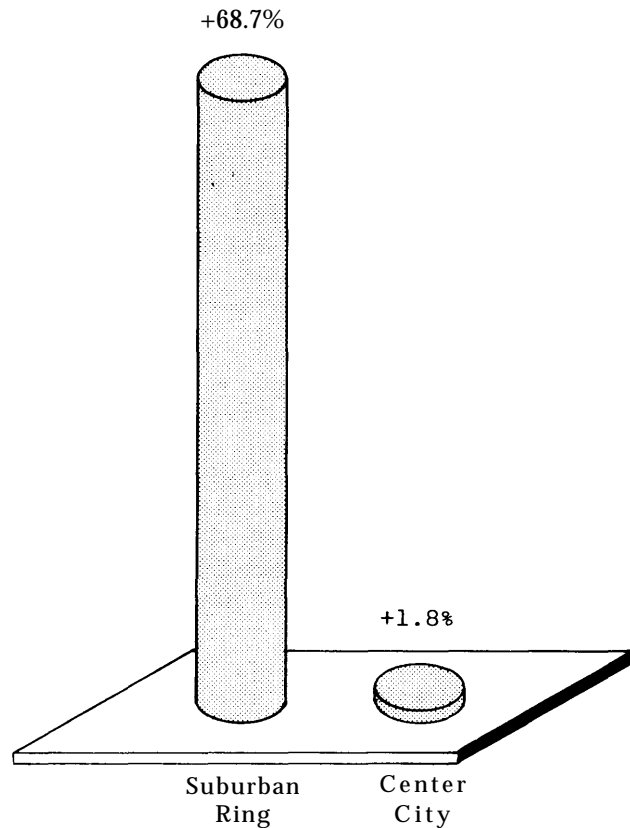


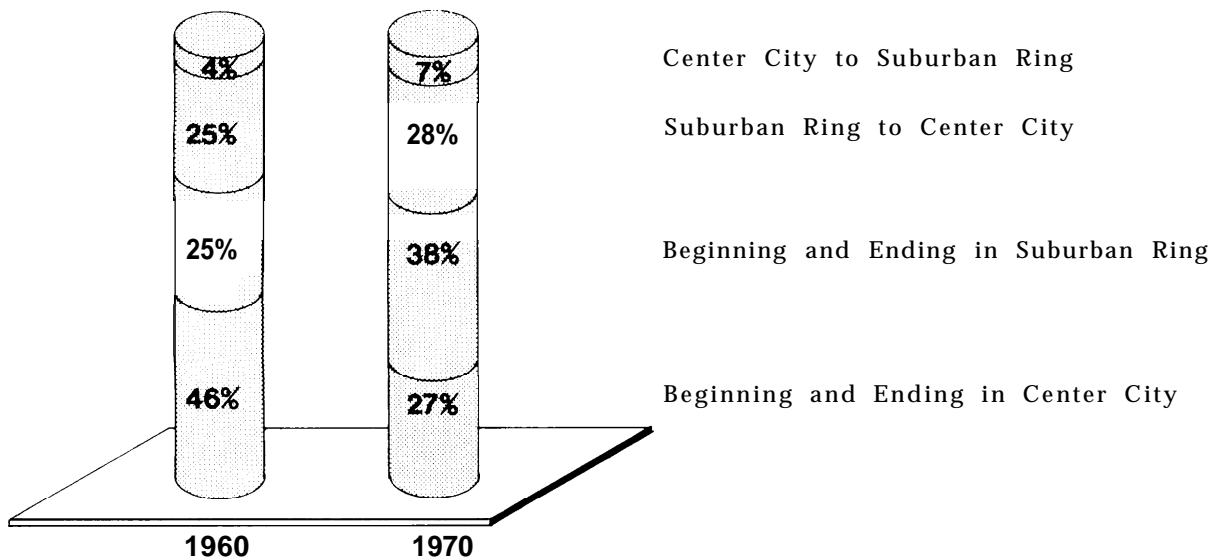
FIGURE 2: ATLANTA METROPOLITAN CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.

A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) includes a center city (or cities) , usually with a population of at least 50,000, plus adjacent counties or other political divisions that are economically and socially integrated with the central area.

The ten new counties added to the Atlanta SMSA since the 1970 census are not included in these figures.

WORK TRIP DISTRIBUTION



WORK TRIP MODE

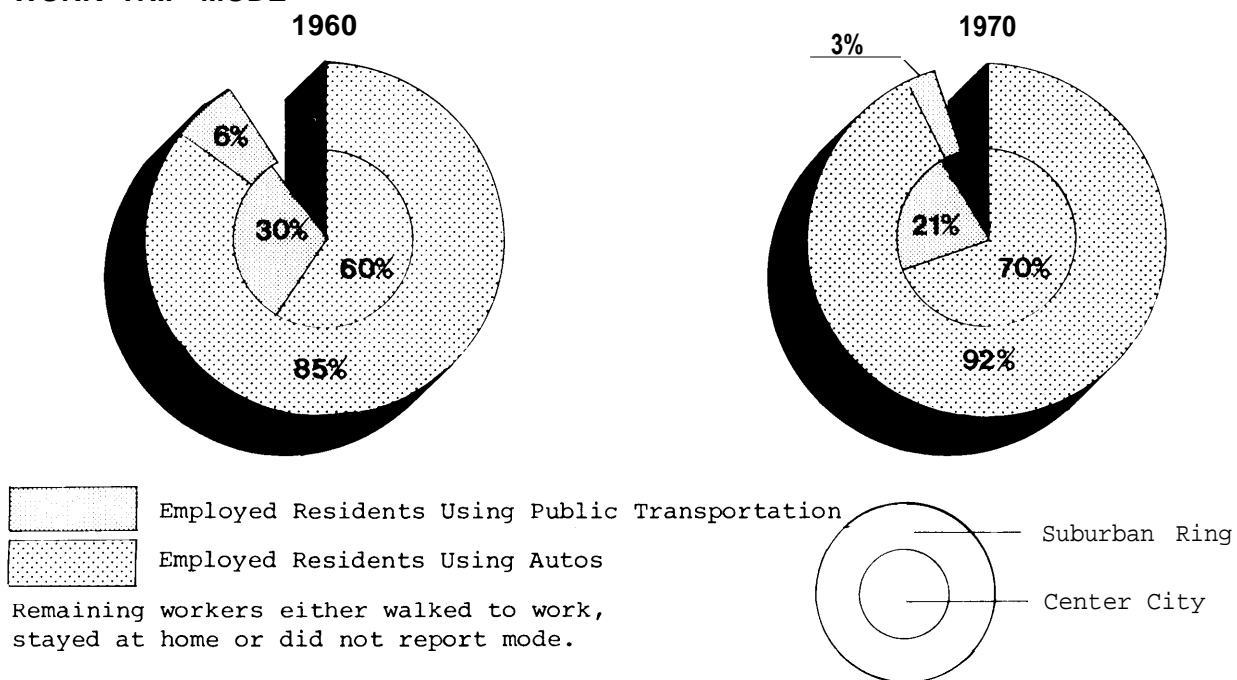


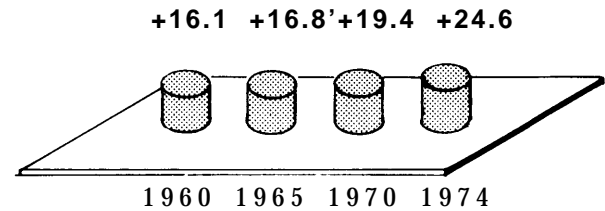
FIGURE 3: ATLANTA SMSA TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974.

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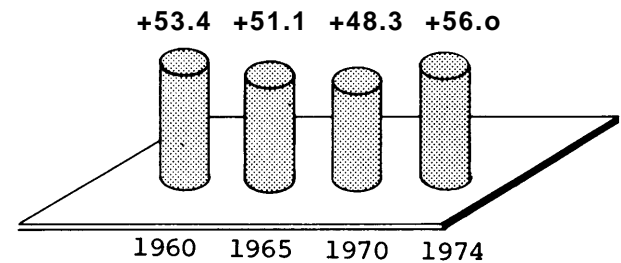
VEHICLE MILES OPERATED
(millions of miles)

peak Year= 1974 (24.6 million miles)
Low Year= 1961 (15.9 million miles)



REVENUE PASSENGERS
(millions of Passengers)

Peak Year= 1974 (56.0 million riders)
Low Year= 1971 (44.4 million riders)



NET OPERATING REVENUE
(millions of dollars)

peak year= 1965 (\$818,578)
Low year= 1974 (-\$17,003,983)

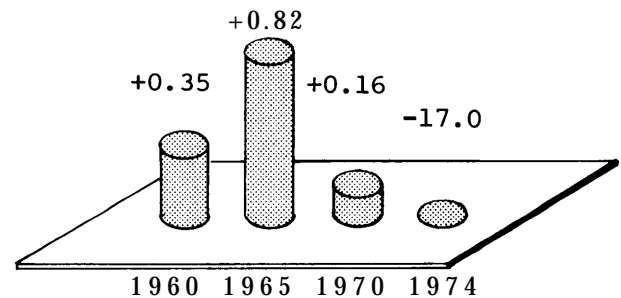


FIGURE 4: ATLANTA TRANSIT OPERATIONS 1960-1974'

Source: Urban Transportation Fact Book, American Institute of Planners and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association of the U.S., Inc., 1974. IAtlanta Transit System; Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority,

Data not available for 1972.

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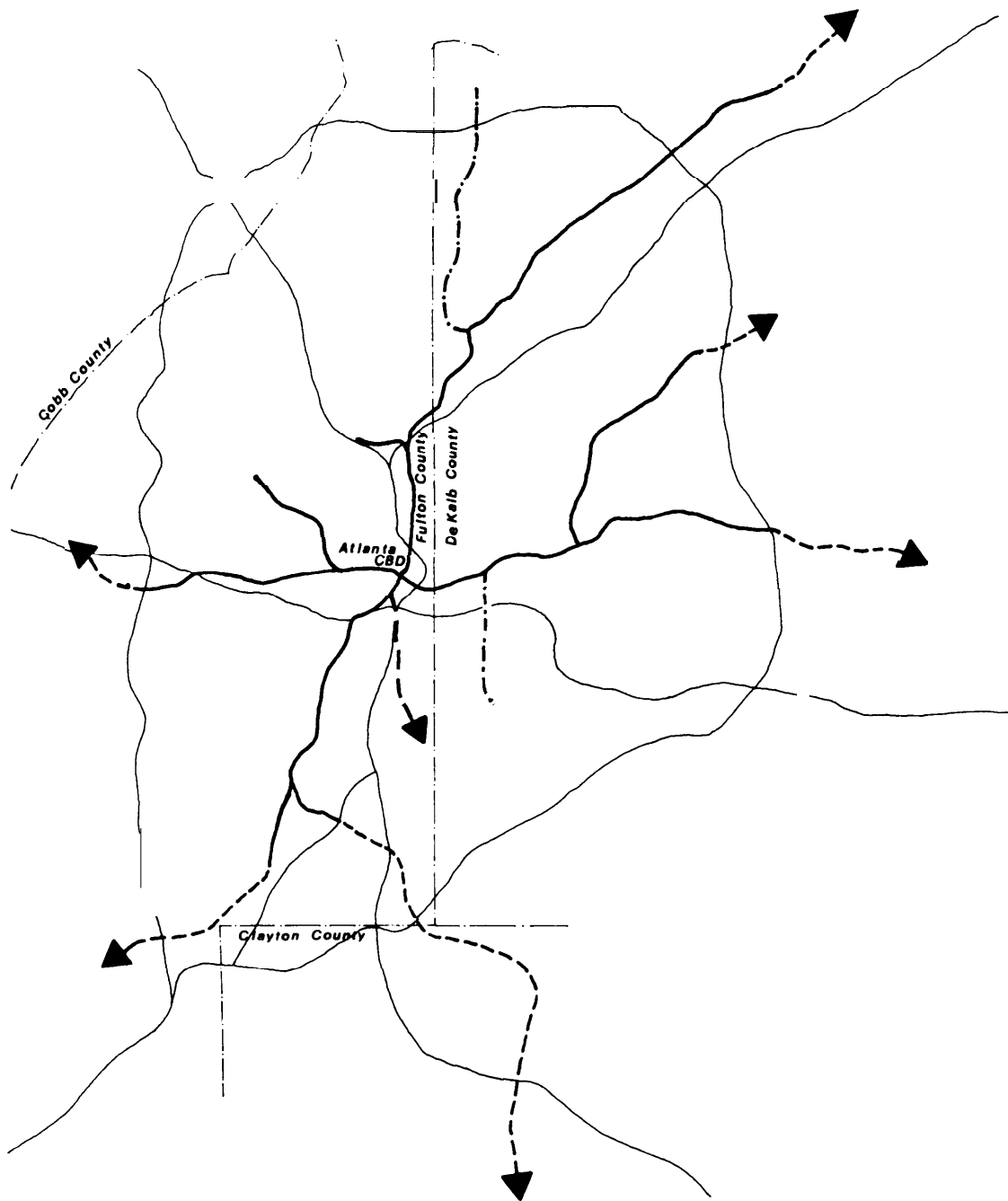


FIGURE 5 : ATLANTA - ADOPTED RAPID RAIL SYSTEM

	Rapid Rail Transit Line		Future Extensions of Rapid Rail Transit Line
	Busway Rapid Transit Line		Major Highways
	County Boundary		

Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

underway on a portion of the rail system, and formal groundbreaking took place in February 1975.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING INSTITUTIONS

TABLE I.—Federal Assistance to Atlanta Transit Programs From F.Y. 1962 to May 31, 1975

Type of Assistance	Federal Share	Total Costs
Capital Grants	\$239,809,000	\$621,360,000
Technical Studies	9,066,000	14,401,000
TOTAL	\$248,875,000	\$635,761,000

Source Urban Mass Transportation Administration

The institutional setting for planning rapid transit in the Atlanta metropolitan region traditionally has fostered cooperation between transportation planners and regional comprehensive planners. The relatively close relationship is reflected in the complex organizational structure that coordinates transportation planning with other regional planning functions in Atlanta.

TABLE 2.—Federally Recognized Agencies

Designation	Agency
A-95	Atlanta Regional Commission
MPO	Atlanta Regional Commission

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

The Atlanta Regional Commission was created in 1971 by an act of the State legislature. Seven of the region's counties currently participate in ARC. Modeled after the Metropolitan Council in Minneapolis-St. Paul, ARC is the Federal grant review agency from the regions and the agency charged with coordinating all transportation plan-

ning and programming in the region. i ARC is essentially a merger of the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Area Council of Health Agencies, and the Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS), the organization originally created to coordinate transportation planning in the region.

The transportation planning relationships between the modal agencies (the transit authority MARTA and the Georgia DOT) and ARC are institutionalized in the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program (ARTPP) that was adopted in 1971. Under the ARTPP agreement, transportation policymaking is handled by an ARC subcommittee called Transportation Policy Subcommittee, which includes representatives from ARC, MARTA, GDOT, and (since 1971) each jurisdiction participating in the ARC. Technical issues are decided by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), which is made up of the chief technical staff persons from the participating bodies. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) reports to the Transportation Policy Subcommittee (TPS). TPS technically is a subcommittee of ARC's Community Development Planning Liaison Committee, which is one of ARC's three principal committees.⁵

The ARC board theoretically has final review over TPS policy decisions. In practice most disagreements are arbitrated within TPS itself. ARC's staff has been directly involved in overseeing and coordinating work the city and MARTA are doing on environmental impact analysis and station area impact studies.

~ The Urban Mass Transportation Administration and the Federal Highway Administration require Governors to designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in each area to carry out the "continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process . . . carried out cooperatively. . ." (the "3-C" process) mandated by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 and the Urban Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1974. According to joint UMTA-FHWA regulations published in September 1974, MPO's must prepare or endorse (1) a long-range general transportation plan, including a separate plan for improvements in management of the existing transportation system; (2) an annually updated list of specific projects, called the transportation improvement program (TIP), to implement portions of the long-range plan; and (3) a multiyear planning prospectus supplemented by annual unified planning work programs.

⁵ ARC members are assigned to one of the three "liaison" committees: Health and Social Services Planning Liaison Committee, Governmental Services Liaison Committee, and Community Development Planning Liaison Committee. Each committee has staff support.

³ Circular A-95 of the Offices of Management and Budget requires one agency in each region to be empowered to review all proposals for Federal funds from agencies in that region. Circular A-95 replaced Circular A-82, which was created to implement Section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3301).

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority is the principal transit operator in the region and the body charged with the design, engineering, and construction of the rapid transit system. MARTA was created by an act of the Georgia General Assembly in 1965 to perform a range of tasks:

The authority shall exist for purposes of planning, designing, leasing (as lessee), purchasing, acquiring, holding, owning, constructing, improving, equipping, financing, maintaining and administering a rapid transit system within the metropolitan area, and operating same, or contracting therefor, or leasing (as lessor) the same for operation by private parties.

Four counties and the City of Atlanta participate in MARTA: Fulton, De Kalb, Clayton, and Gwinnett. Clayton and Gwinnett voted not to take part in MARTA's transit development program authorized in 1971.

City of Atlanta

The City of Atlanta also is a major actor on the regional scene. Formally, it participates in the process through its membership on the ARC and MARTA boards and through the ARTPP process. The city also has created a special MARTA Liaison Office to coordinate and expedite city actions on

MARTA plans and construction activities, and its Department of City Planning is working on Station Area Impact Studies with ARC, MARTA, and local community organizations.

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

On the State level, the Georgia Department of Transportation plays a major role in Atlanta's transit planning activities. Formerly called the State Highway Department, GDOT was involved heavily in the AATS program before it was incorporated into ARC. GDOT maintains a special branch for planning and programming in Atlanta metropolitan area.

The Georgia Department of Transportation was established in November 1972. It is governed by the State Transportation Board. A Mass Transportation and Aeronautics Division was established to deal with questions of mass transit and gradually is taking on a more active role.

Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC)

The Georgia General Assembly created the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee in June 1973. MARTOC oversees the fiscal operations of both the bus and rapid transit activities of MARTA. The overview committee, which was inspired by the example of the Office of the Legislative Analyst in California, serves as an ombudsman for the public as well as an instrument of the General Assembly.