

# Summary Case Assessment

The purpose of this section is to summarize the transit planning and decisionmaking process in the Atlanta region in light of the guidelines listed in the Introduction to the case assessments. The summary, therefore, is divided into two parts: (1) Assessment of the Institutional Context, and (2) Assessment of the Technical Planning Work.

## 1. ASSESSMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

**Forum for Decisionmaking.**—The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Atlanta Region Transportation Planning Program (ARTPP), both created in 1971, provide a relatively well-integrated decisionmaking forum. Under the auspices of the ARC, land use planning can be closely coordinated with transportation planning. However, the tendency of the modal agencies (MARTA and Georgia DOT) to negotiate agreements in ARC's Transportation Policy Subcommittee, below the ARC board level, creates a degree of confusion over where decision-making really occurs.

**Accountability of Decisionmakers.**—The ARC and MARTA commissioners responsible for transportation planning in Atlanta in theory are directly accountable to the public through the county governments in which they serve or that appoint them. In practice, local interests at times supersede a regional perspective, although the system functions well on the whole. The decision-making forum is given a wider perspective by the legislative oversight committee, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Overview Committee (MARTOC). To the extent decisions are made in the Transportation Policy Subcommittee, they tend to be removed from public view.

**Public involvement.**—In the wake of an extensive community relations campaign, Atlanta citizens felt they were provided

adequate opportunity to contribute to the transit program that was approved in public referendum in 1971. In contrast, insufficient public participation was one of the principal reasons for the defeat of the 1968 transit proposal. Since 1971, however, as the plan becomes reality, more complaints are heard from affected citizens.

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF THE TECHNICAL PLANNING PROCESS

**Goals and Objectives.**—Atlanta began planning its transit system before formal goal-setting had become a conventional step in planning. Nevertheless, the objective of reducing traffic congestion and shaping future growth has guided transit planning from the beginning. In more recent years officially formulated goals have been used to guide station area development planning.

**Development of Alternatives.**—The first rigorous look at alternatives came with the AATS Voorhees study after MARTA's first transit proposal failed in the referendum of 1968. While the Voorhees team identified an impressive array of alternative rail-bus combinations, it ignored options that were not considered practical at the time, such as priority bus lanes.

**Evaluation of Alternatives.**—The Voorhees evaluation appeared technically competent, but its pro-busway conclusions were modified to respect the political need to offer rail service in all rapid transit corridors.

**Financing and Implementation.**—From the beginning, transit plans in Atlanta were drawn up with an assumption of Federal aid, and the lack of firm commitment from UMTA has been a recurrent issue. Other problems have been the difficulty in obtaining the local share and escalating construction cost estimates,