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TRANSCENDING BARRIERS: RACE, MOBILITY, AND TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING IN POSTWAR ATLANTA, 1944-1975

by

JOHN ELPHONSO WILLIAMS, JR.

Under the Direction of Clifford M. Kuhn, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In response to the economic upsurges of World War II, leaders in Atlanta embarked on a planning mission to accommodate the increased demands of city living. From the onset of postwar planning with the Lochner Report in 1944, to the groundbreaking for the construction of the MARTA rapid rail lines in 1975, this project explores the contours of race and mobility through the lenses of transportation planning. It examines the city's planning entities and dissects the plans produced by these authorities, underscoring the lack of African American participation in the planning process. As planning authorities operated in segregation, this research connects the lack of African American participation in transportation planning with limited participation in planning for other areas including housing and urban renewal. This project's

framework is constructed with a two-fold function of mobility: first, in the physical sense of movement about the expanding metropolitan landscape; secondly, and more essential, in the social sense, showcasing a process of uplift for the African American community in Atlanta.

This research illustrates an upward trajectory for African Americans over the three-decade timeline. From being denied equal access and full political rights in a segregated society, to the election of Georgia's first black state senator of the 20th century and Atlanta's first black mayor, this research vocalizes the struggles of Atlanta's African American citizens in the fight for civil rights and full participation from the aspect of transportation planning. Using the city's historic black newspapers filled with primary accounts of the period, this project tracks the discourse of the diverse African American community from the leadership and business elite to the working-class citizens participating in public hearings. From little to no participation in highway planning and construction through historic African American sections in the early phases, to positions of demand in the creation of the rapid transit system in the latter phases, this research shows the evolution of African American participation and influence in shaping planning processes in postwar Atlanta.

INDEX WORDS: Lochner Report, Up Ahead Plan, NOW – For Tomorrow, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, Urban Renewal, African American Participation, Negro Housing, Segregation, Interstate Highways, Auburn Avenue, Rapid Transit, Metropolitan Planning Commission, Black Politics

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2015

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2015

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the ancestors, the countless persons of African descent who under barriers of racial oppression were rendered voiceless and powerless, yet they persevered. I also dedicate this dissertation to my great-grandfather **Mr. Charlie “B.U.” Daniels**, who at 89 years old continues to motivate, inspire, and favor me; and in memory of my great-grandmother, **Mrs. Tyra Lee Daniels** – her spirit, wisdom, humor, patience, protection, inspiration, tenacity, unconditional love, and strength continues to uplift and guide me in all that I do.

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INTRODUCTION

“Atlanta was born as a rail center and it has prospered as a hub of air and highway traffic. Atlanta needs an efficient transportation system to grow and to prosper. A successful and comprehensive transportation system is of paramount importance to Atlanta’s future.”¹

“To remain a viable and complete city, Atlanta must have a transportation system that is responsive to the needs of all its citizens.”²

-Maynard Jackson

During the mid-twentieth century, Atlanta’s motto declared it “the city too busy to hate.” A small, elite group of city leaders, planners, business leaders, and boosters sought to present an image of Atlanta unlike other cities in the South because they realized that the appearance of racial harmony served as a catalyst for economic growth. Already engaged in planning and growth management as a result of the economic upsurge and federal advances sparked by the Second World War, the city’s power players mapped out Atlanta’s emerging infrastructure with great emphasis on mobility and transportation planning, while holding fast to the traditions of segregation.³

Postwar transportation planning in Atlanta provides a lens to view shifts in the balance of power in the city. As city leadership begin to more accurately reflect the population, that is, as more African Americans were able to be elected and appointed to

¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973

² *Atlanta Daily World*, September 26, 1971

³ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 19. *Charleston News and Courier*, January 12, 1959. Stephen G.N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980*. (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2003), p. 102.

positions of modest authority, the decisions reflecting transportation planning and planning in general began to reflect movement towards biracial leadership and cooperation.

This research will argue that at the advent of planning the emerging transportation systems, and in the three decades to follow, the progress of transportation planning reflected a city operating in the traditions of white supremacy and segregation despite seeking to portray harmonious race relations. As the city of Atlanta moved towards more aggressive measures in transportation planning during the 1950s, that forward progress in most cases failed to comprehensively address the voices and concerns of its growing African American populace or seek fair representation. In response, a significant portion of the early planning and many of the decisions made mostly disregarded African American sentiments and had adverse effects on their lives and the communities in which they resided.

This project is rooted in my profound interest in United States cities and geography, interstate highways, and my desire to explore historic African American communities and enclaves across the country. As an avid traveler and historical tourist, I encountered in virtually every major American city I visited, the same phenomenon – the historic African American core traversed by major freeways and interstate highways. In New Orleans, Miami, Dallas, Detroit, Charlotte, Chicago, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, I witnessed highways and freeways disrupting these historic spaces. With such stark similarities, immediately various broad questions that would eventually become the basis of this project came to mind. How did these changes in the historic spaces happen and from what authority? What role did African American leaders play in

the development? How was the destruction of African American spaces justified?

Further research of this topic revealed the greater connections to federal, state, and local postwar policies; however, ample scholarship has not been dedicated to exploring and excavating the position of African Americans.

This research links two major contemporary developments in the history of Atlanta and explores their intersection. Moderation on behalf of the white power structure during the post-WWII period created a political and business climate conducive for the growth of black political and social mobility. This period also marked the progress of Atlanta's emerging transportation systems through planning as the city continued growing far beyond its traditional borders into a larger metropolitan region. The intersection of race and mobility with transportation planning falls within the category of what political scientist Clarence Stone referred to as specific conditions of social change, which present questions of on whose terms and concerns would policy development occur. He added that in postwar Atlanta, effective policy development hinged on balancing race and power. During this period, the white power structure and business elite, along with elements of the black leadership made substantial efforts to cope and shape arrangements to attend to their respective concerns. Arrangements and changes made in the area of transportation planning and African American participation over the three decades following World War II provide a central discussion for this research.⁴

Exploring the intersection of race and mobility with transportation planning adds to examining what Frederick Allen called the Atlanta "story." Atlanta's white power

⁴ Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*. (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1989) pp. 20-21

structure, in the wake of the *Brown* decision, being watched closely and judged on its handling of racial matters by critics across the nation. Allen adds, “Time and again, the white leaders had risen to the occasion, giving paternalism a good name while giving the city a gleaming national image.” Yet, this research explains, in the midst of Atlanta’s economic boom of the postwar period, blacks still lacked a place at the planning tables, transportation included. In insisting on immediate representation, blacks exercised power through the ballot and forced changes in city governance to be more responsive to the needs of the black electorate. By 1970, the white power structure gave way to a biracial coalition of leaders seeking to mutually shape and fashion the rapidly expanding metropolitan regional city. Transportation planning, with its critical importance throughout postwar planning, represented only one area of policy in which the coalition sought to improve.⁵

In Atlanta Unbound, Carlton Basmajian uses Atlanta’s racial geography during the postwar period as a major factor in explaining the layout of the political and physical landscape. From the placement of freeways and transit lines to the location of shopping malls, sports arenas, and office parks, Atlanta’s physical, economic, and social geography formed an expression of an implicitly racist growth machine, one bound to the spatial demands of modern capitalism. This meant that projects like the placement of the Downtown Connector through the Auburn Avenue district and construction of the Civic Center and Atlanta Stadium superseded the displacement of the neighborhoods (mostly black), which they altered. These projects not only provided capital and served as revenue sources for the city and business interests, but also served as buffers

⁵ Frederick Allen, *Atlanta Rising: The Invention of an International City, 1946-1996*. (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1996) pp. 160-161

between the central business district and black neighborhoods. Basmajian further explains that the politics of race, complicated by power and political economy, offers a good explanation of the process of development in the city of Atlanta, and echoes issues and conflicts documented in other cities. Yet, in my search and review of the scholarship, the agency of African Americans in the process is limited and sparse.⁶

Planning Atlanta and Abroad

Atlanta faced challenges in postwar planning, as did other cities across the South and throughout the country. In Sorting Out the New South City, Thomas Hanchett examines Charlotte during the same timeframe, illustrating issues of city planning on a regional and national scale. He explains how federal subsidies in housing, urban renewal, and transportation planning helped propel the city into a modern center for economic growth. Specifically, Hanchett details the impact of transportation planning through highway and road development. With federal aid available to America's cities in the late 1940s and 1950s, he notes how local officials in Charlotte realized they could secure the political benefits of additional jobs, enhanced economic opportunities, and an expanding constituency. Among those most in favor of better highways were those individuals wealthy enough to invest in land for development and growth. The ones opposed were the unfortunates who stood to lose their homes in the wake of highway construction. Like Atlanta, Charlotte's business and civic elite moved quickly to take advantage of the new federal advances. In 1944, around the same time of the drafting

⁶ Carlton Basmajian, *Atlanta Unbound: Enabling Sprawl Through Policy and Planning*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013). p. 3. Ronald H. Bayor, *Race & the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 61.

of the Lochner Report for Atlanta, the city of Charlotte became one of the first urban areas in the nation to receive federal planning assistance. Federal experts, in collaboration with state planners and local officials drafted a proposal for new transportation plans.⁷

The construction of the first “superhighway” or the Crosstown Highway in Charlotte marked the start of decades of federal road projects and transportation initiatives that widened city thoroughfares and created new connections to the surrounding regions. Simultaneously, these initiatives frequently created tension and protest as African American neighborhoods - Brooklyn in particular - received the brunt of destruction caused by road building. Given the weakness and powerlessness of African American voters, road building frequently crossed “politically safe pathways” with neighborhoods where elected officials and business elite stood to lose little or nothing. Once inside these spaces, highways helped expose the squalor of areas classified as the worst areas of the city. As a result, transportation planning in Charlotte, as in Atlanta and other major American cities, alerted leaders of the problems of urban decay, who then contended that federal advances could be used for demolition, slum clearance, and urban renewal. Urban renewal efforts in Charlotte first targeted Brooklyn, the historic African American neighborhood just east of downtown, and already scarred by highway construction. Hanchett showcases the eerily similar racial undertones and lack of African American participation in planning in the case of Brooklyn in Charlotte, as in Sweet Auburn in Atlanta, Overtown in Miami, the Treme in

⁷ Thomas Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City: Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 239

New Orleans, Bronzeville in Chicago, and many other African American neighborhoods across the county.⁸

Sociologist Floyd Hunter published Community Power Structure in 1953, coining the term power structure, and bringing it into the social science discourse. His work specifically treated Atlanta, known as “Regional City.” In this study, Hunter explained that power was a necessary function in society and also a necessary force in the community. He further explained that power involved decision-making and the functions of executing determined policies -- seeing to it that things get done which have been deemed necessary to be done. The social rights and privileges implied in power functions must be delegated to specific men to achieve social goals in any society. I assert that in the case of Atlanta, those specific men operated under the auspices of white supremacy with the social goal of maintaining the traditional boundaries of segregation; and throughout the postwar period, that goal came into fruition through highway and transportation planning, among other areas of planning for the city. Hunter’s thesis became a primary lens by which scholars have examined growth and policy development in Atlanta and the metropolitan region in the past half-century. It sparked others to similar studies in cities across the country. Hunter revisited the topic of community power structure with an update on Atlanta in 1980. His power structure framework influenced others, such as Clarence Stone, whose Regime Politics carries the story of Atlanta up through the 1980s. His study examines to what extent the rise of

⁸ Hanchett, p. 239-250

black political leaders and the increase in mobility for blacks influenced the power structure.⁹

In Race & the Shaping of Twentieth Century Atlanta, historian Ronald Bayor examines urban renewal and highway development in the postwar period through the lens of race. His research provided a starting point, which created broader questions for my research. He asserts that although highways and roads were to be built for the purposes of easing traffic flow around the city and subsequently furthering commercial activity and neighborhood development, they were conceived with ulterior motives. He adds that wherever the highway/road system could possibly serve a racial function, it was developed with that in mind. These racial functions served to limit mobility and confine blacks to certain areas. Many present highways and roads serve as physical proof of the actions and decision of power players' intent on achieving the goal of maintaining segregation during this period. Though prolific, Bayor's work fails to dig deep enough into the African American story, which is critical to understanding postwar development in Atlanta. My research builds on his foundation and fills the gaps with the names, legacies, and successes of the African Americans leaders who planned and organized on behalf of their communities in spite of segregation, unequal policies, and limited political power.¹⁰

With the rapid growth of Atlanta and its metropolitan area in the postwar period, transportation and highway matters constituted only a fraction of challenges faced in planning and development. The widespread effects of frequent changes and expansion

⁹ Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 2.

¹⁰ Bayor, p. 61.

of planning authorities can be seen through the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), later renamed the Atlanta Regional Commission. Its planning procedures presented me a greater opportunity to further showcase the lack of African American participation in metropolitan development. Likewise, the rapid transit discussion, introduced at the onset of postwar transportation planning, offered richness and depth to the research on African American participation. Effectively, my research now spanned three decades, from the onset of postwar transportation planning with the Lochner Report, the highway and transportation plan authorized in 1944 by the state of Georgia, through the creation and implementation of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). Research questions expanded to include those such as: Were there African American members of the MPC? If not, why? How did the rapid transit discussion development into the creation of MARTA? What role did African Americans play in the development of MARTA? The expansion of this project made a way for me to treat the agency for the African American community in the planning process, of addressing the non-monolithic state of the black community. For so long, African Americans were relegated to advisory roles with minuscule input in the planning process, creating a void in the planning of not only the transportation systems, but in all facets of life in the city.¹¹

Mobility: The Framework and the Foundation

Mobility serves as a central theme of this project with a two-fold purpose. The first purpose relates to its most common definition, the physical sense. In Edge City,

¹¹ Bayor, p. 27

Joel Garreau defines mobility as the ease with which you can get around a city. It is explained as primarily a measure of commutability, and scholars have demonstrated that no matter the transportation technology, most people desire to commute swiftly.¹² Just as important with moving people around is the movement of goods and service about the city. Since the beginning of the city, transportation and mobility have been key factors in growth and development. From the successive developments of the carriage industry, the railroad, public transportation, the automobile industry, and all forms of transport, increased mobility has been key to the success and sustainability of large cities. In Atlanta, as in other major American cities in the postwar period and subsequent decades, leaders mounted aggressive highway building and mass transit campaigns seeking to increase mobility. These ventures captured federal and local support.¹³

Robert Bruegmann explains in Sprawl that central city leaders and business interests heavily supported highways because individuals believed that highways, like their predecessors the railroads, would reinforce the centrality of the downtown core and make it easier for people from throughout the region to traverse it. They also believed that mass transit created efficiency and made movement about the downtown core easier and safer. In fact, highways and mass transit did make getting to and movement about downtown easier, but like the railroads, they also made leaving town simpler; ultimately creating greater issues of transportation, sprawl, and metropolitan politics. Mobility in the physical sense provides an organized framework for the

¹² Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*. (New York: Doubleday, 1991) p. 89

¹³ Garreau, p. 89

overarching discussions of transportation systems and their importance in urban life, growth, and development.¹⁴

The second purpose relates to mobility in the social sense. This category encompasses economic, political, and other forms of mobility that alters one's status or social position. Kenneth T. Jackson in Crabgrass Frontier affirms that over the course of American history, in most aspects of national life, the African American experience has been separated from that of white ethnics through various patterns of segregation and discrimination. He alludes that one of the most striking features of black life in the days of segregation was the ability to transcend barriers of systematic oppression while still pressing forward. In essence, mobility in the social sense relates to the ability of African Americans to express their citizenship and unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Being in control of individual destiny through one's own ability and volition is the crux of the American dream. The repressiveness of segregation contradicted the core values by which this nation stands. Mobility provides a useful lens to examine the status of second-class citizenship forced upon African Americans in Atlanta and throughout the country. This research showcases the resilience of the African American community in withstanding and ultimately transcending the barriers of segregation to achieve greater political rights, positions of power and influence, and more equal access and participation in planning for Atlanta.¹⁵

¹⁴ Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005). p. 108

¹⁵ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. 133

Overview

This dissertation is organized chronologically into four chapters. Chapter one and two outlines the first decade and a half following World War II. As the population surged and borders expanded, the need for organized planning on a greater scale surfaced. As such, the late 1940s and 1950s witnessed the establishment of the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) and the enhancement of plans set forth by the Lochner Report. The most striking features of the report prepared the city for increased mobility through advanced highway and road networks. Of course, federal advances and the emphasis on highway transportation and interstate commerce played a major role in many of the advances. For the city of Atlanta, the Lochner Report initiated postwar planning and outlined the foundations for modern highway and transportation plans. With the recommendations from that outline, the newly established MPC created more definitive proposals. *Up Ahead* and *Now – For Tomorrow*, both works of the MPC, shared similarities and exhibited the active engagement of the city's power structure to foster economic growth and development while operating within the confines of a segregated society. Yearning for input in planning, African Americans appeased city leaders into placing them in advisory roles, giving them modest voice on issues such as housing, education, municipal services, urban renewal, and transportation. At the same time, African Americans soothed their own desires with the establishment of self-reliant and mutual development organizations. These organizations carried out campaigns urging biracial cooperation and participation in all entities of planning and development. Nevertheless, highways were built and planning ensued, both at the greatest detriment to the places and spaces of those with the most limited input.

By the 1960s, the population of metropolitan Atlanta surpassed the one million mark, confirming the population boom predicted for the postwar period. Chapter three tracks this ongoing surge that prompted a new wave of planning and economic growth for the city and the region. With numerous federal advances and input into the operations and implementation of various planning initiatives, tension grew as moderation along with the liberal measures of federal aid challenged the antiquated systems woven into the fabric of Georgia politics. With the Democratic white primary and the county-unit system overthrown, full participation for African Americans in the political process gained momentum. African American residents of the city and the state continued to fight for representation, rights, and privileges due them, and an early victory came with the 1962 election of Leroy Johnson, Georgia's first black state senator of the 20th century. With the Civil Rights Movement in progress, the spotlight shone on Atlanta, drawing attention to its handling of civil rights issues. As the tides gradually turned towards progress and biracial cooperation, a new generation of leaders emerged to carry Atlanta forward. With moderate leaders in place, restructured and enhanced measures came about in the processes of metropolitan planning, gradually integrating African Americans.

Throughout the 1960s, ongoing highway development and rapid transit dominated the discussion of transportation planning and growth management. In particular, rapid transit took center stage with the creation of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). Originally planned as a five county transit system, MARTA introduced even greater challenges for metropolitan planning. After failing to gain necessary support in its first conceptualization, planners continued working on the

transit system. They enhanced the original plans with the incorporation of suggestions from public hearings and citizen participation. With expanded boundaries and rapid suburban development, linking and incorporating the new developments into the transportation system became a high priority as industry and economic development followed the trends of suburban migration. Downtown Atlanta, like the central core of many other cities, faced massive reconstruction as a result of the transportation developments, urban renewal, rapid migration, and other federal advances. By the end of the decade, the city's physical and social structure along with the built environment experienced dramatic alterations, setting the stage for even more change in the decade to follow.

As the 1970s approached, Atlanta emerged as an invigorated metropolis - equipped and adept, capable of maintaining and managing the facets of being a major national urban center. With advances in biracial cooperation and leadership, rapid transit, and economic development, the metropolis was geared for international prominence. Chapter four opens on the eve of this decade, when the city elected its first Jewish mayor along with an African American vice mayor. With the new leadership came the increased appointments of African Americans and other minorities to positions of civic authority. Also, by this time, the city reached a black majority in population, truly changing the face of city politics. African Americans took advantage of this newfound power, using it to gain mobility in all areas of city life.

In particular, African American support and consequently the vote in the final MARTA referendum played a critical role in the adoption of the rapid transit program. Blacks used their majority status to gain the upper hand, creating a list of demands

presented to MARTA officials. The support of the referendum and entire rapid transit program underscored MARTA's pledge to diversity and commitment to meeting the needs of all citizens with equality and fair practices. Moreover, Ira Jackson became the first African American appointed to the planning commission. This appointment came 25 years after the initial creation of the Metropolitan Planning Commission. Finally, in perhaps the greatest showcase of African American mobility in this story, Maynard Jackson was elected as the city's first black mayor, the first election of a black mayor in a major southern city. As a strong supporter of transportation planning, he proclaimed Atlanta's need for an efficient transportation system, responsive to the needs of all citizens. In essence, Jackson realized that Atlanta was born a center of transportation and prospered over the years as a center of transportation; therefore, a successful and comprehensive transportation system consistently remained a necessity of paramount importance to Atlanta's future.¹⁶

Major primary sources consulted in the compilation of this project included the Lochner Report, *Up Ahead* plan, *NOW – For Tomorrow* plan, *Atlanta Daily World*, *Atlanta Constitution*, City of Atlanta Records, Atlanta Bureau of Planning Records, Atlanta Transit Authority Collection, Mule to MARTA Collection, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records and the countless MARTA publications. Various oral histories in the Georgia Government Documentation Project in Georgia State University's Special Collections, the Living Atlanta Collection at the Atlanta History Center, and the personal collections of Mr. Thomas Hills also served as invaluable tools of research. The many additional sources including books, unpublished dissertations,

¹⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 12, 1971, September 26, 1971, August 16, 1973. *Atlanta Inquirer*, September 28, 1971,

maps, magazines, articles, and pamphlets, provided a great foundation and helped weave the story together to present this comprehensive study of race, mobility, and transportation planning in postwar Atlanta.

CHAPTER 1 – PHASE 1, 1944-1952

As World War II started to wind down in 1944, Atlanta's political and business leaders began to turn their attention to postwar development. The war changed Georgia's economy and accelerated the end of the cotton plantation system. These factors aided in the rapid migration of workers, many of them black, to Atlanta seeking employment. The transformation of the economy had profound consequences on race relations and the immediate racial impact of the wartime economy not only boosted black employment, but also political and social activism. Atlanta faced similar struggles and challenges with rapid expansion, immigration, and race relations as other large cities throughout the country after the war. Its development depended greatly on how various governmental entities, organizations, people, and agendas interacted to advance the "Gate City of the South" and maintain its place as a leading southern metropolis. Concurrently, blacks mounted attacks on Jim Crow and sought to transform racial customs.¹⁷

By 1944, city and state entities engaged in planning created preliminary plans for postwar improvements and advances in the areas of civic life, education, watershed management, mobility, and transportation planning for Atlanta. The plans included outlines for parks, reorganization of schools, city hall additions, airport improvements, a

¹⁷ Tuck, pp. 30-31

new dam on the Chattahoochee River, a new \$5,000,000 Grady Hospital, and other lesser developments. For transportation improvements, the plans included an outline for the “plaza plan,” a system of elevated highways over railways to carry traffic in and out of the city. The preliminary outlines garnered attention with an estimated price tag of approximately \$100,000,000 -- with no definitive means of financing the ambitious programs. The *Atlanta Constitution* noted the preliminary plans as being in “picture stage,” and by October 1944, no detailed or working drawings had been authorized. At that time, only projections had been drafted by groups of engineers and planners. Though expertly planned, the plans still presented great challenges for the near future. For the plans to be successfully implemented and attract financial support, the *Atlanta Constitution* noted that they needed basic amendments in order to transfer them from projections to reality.¹⁸

At the onset of postwar planning and in the midst of creating a comprehensive development agenda, planners and engineers faced various challenges and constraints. First of all, the haphazard expansion of Atlanta, as well as other cities, and the development of other contiguous cities and suburbs posed a great problem. Solving this problem proved to be necessary for American cities to function properly and economically.¹⁹ Outward migration presented the next challenge and ranked among common problems of larger American cities. Solutions to the migration problem included annexations, consolidations, and the sheer reclamation of blighted areas and slums to provide more open spaces within city boundaries. In most cases, Atlanta in the

¹⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1944

¹⁹ Basmajian, pp. 3- 4.

postwar period provided the perfect example of how planners sought to address both problems of sprawl and the continued development of the central city. And no matter what the city, modern transportation provided sufficient means and easy access to the city centers and commercial districts, as well as the comforts of the city outside confining city lines in open and more attractive surroundings. Because outward migration continuously increased, transportation rose to the top of the list of planning problems.²⁰

With a shift towards metropolitan planning, the need for meaningful and effective cross-jurisdictional conciliation topped the list of future challenges for the metropolitan area. The *Constitution* expressed the need for metropolitan and regional cooperation, stating: “Regional planning for land uses, for transportation, for sanitary services, education and other governmental service is almost mandatory if the whole community is considered as an entity instead of piecemeal.” Outward migration in particular contributed to the movement of population beyond city lines, creating “runaway” suburbs and small, incorporated areas, which aggravated the problems of the city.²¹

These problems were connected to Georgia’s county-unit system, installed in the early 20th century to assure rural domination of the state. And as more people left the countryside over the 20th century, the inequalities of the system became ever more acute. The city competed with suburbs and smaller incorporated places for state funding. Success came in only a few instances where the cities dealt directly with the federal government on large projects such as public housing and national highway

²⁰ Basmajian, p. 4. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1944.

²¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1944.

measures. In the end, people dispersed about the region, still maintaining close connections with the central city. Transportation planning and more efficient methods of communication strengthened ties between city and rural areas while simultaneously perpetuating the growth of the surrounding region. Such connectivity gave birth to metropolitan planning.²²

Basic to the circulatory system of a healthy city is the centripetal transportation system. A city's transportation system helps guide economic prosperity and fosters development throughout a region."²³ At the close of World War II, the arteries of transport focused on downtown and funneled millions of Americans to the urban core. Downtown served as the heart of the city, pumping vitality to all extremities of the metropolitan region and beyond. Downtown interests heavily supported transportation improvements because they considered it a way to rejuvenate the city. While breathing life back into the city centers, transportation planning simultaneously contributed to sprawl on the suburban fringes. Thus, transportation planning created discourse beyond the central city. It now required the input of not only central city officials, but also involvement from municipalities throughout the metropolitan region.²⁴

Transportation planning played a central role in the postwar planning of the city of Atlanta and the metropolitan region. It proved to be a critical link in the extended development, economic prosperity, and future growth of the metropolis. With the explosive growth of previous decades, along with the surge in economic activity and

²² Basmajian, p. 4. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 1, 1944.

²³ Teaford, p. 9.

²⁴ Bruegmann, pp. 101-105.

pent-up demand after WWII, Atlanta's current transportation systems became antiquated. Less efficient systems presented challenges in the face of continued growth, making planning even more critical. In response to the need for expedient transportation planning, in August 1944, Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield elaborated, "With the war rapidly nearing an end, this makes it highly necessary that we get something definite immediately, or we will be caught in the postwar era with nothing definite in hand." At the urging of the mayor, and with the support of local governmental entities and the business community, transportation planning in the postwar era commenced, making Atlanta and its surrounding region the centerpiece and gateway of the American South.²⁵

The Plaza Plan

In a sweeping series of proposals, city-planning officials in conjunction with the State Highway Department and the Federal Bureau of Roads introduced a plan illustrating the remapping of main arteries and vehicular transportation facilities for downtown Atlanta. The plan included the construction of a plaza over the railroad tracks, which lay underneath downtown. Referred to as the "Plaza Plan," it provided solutions to Atlanta's transportation issues stemming from traffic congestion. The proposed plan won the strong support of Governor Ellis Arnall. He believed the plan to "add beauty and at the same time, relieve the traffic problems of the city, eliminate smoke, noise, and dirt." Forceful in his support, Arnall added, "This project is one which ought not to have any opposition from the railroads, or any other groups. Any efforts to

²⁵ Teaford, p. 9. *Atlanta Constitution*, August 25, 1944.

block it would be reprehensible as also, incidentally, would be attempts to make of it a purely commercial enterprise which would further congest the city.”²⁶

Arnall’s advocacy for the project may have also stemmed from the fact that he stood at the forefront of a lawsuit against the nation’s railroads. He charged them with a conspiracy to fix transportation rates that hindered economic growth of Georgia, Atlanta, and the rest of the South. He argued to the Supreme Court that discriminating rates stifled, impeded, and crippled old industries, and prevented the establishment of new ones. The rates as they stood placed the South at a disadvantage in competitive markets. Ultimately, the Supreme Court deemed the discriminatory rates unjust and unfair, and that rates on southern manufactured products must in the future be no higher in the South than in the North. Arnall’s efforts led to the equalization of the freight rates for the South by the Interstate Commerce Commission.²⁷

For Atlanta in particular, Arnall’s freight-rate victory came well timed. Thousands of people had flocked to the city as a result of wartime mobilization. The freight-rate victory opened the gates for the expansion of manufacturing and industry. This rapid surge in population and activity created traffic problems in the industrial and commercial core of the city. The proposed Plaza Plan aimed at solving the aggravation of traffic problems in the core and providing easy access and movement. It called for approximately ten miles of elevated roads constructed over railways converging in the heart of the city, along with a mile-long plaza with an estimated cost around \$2,000,000. This plaza would help to coordinate and expedite the flow of traffic in the congested

²⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 29, 1943, January 2, 1944.

²⁷ Harold Martin, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events, Volume III*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 117-118

downtown core within a one miles radius of Five Points, the heart of downtown. With interest in the future of Atlanta and its transportation systems, Arnall urged that the plans be put into blueprints within the year 1944.²⁸

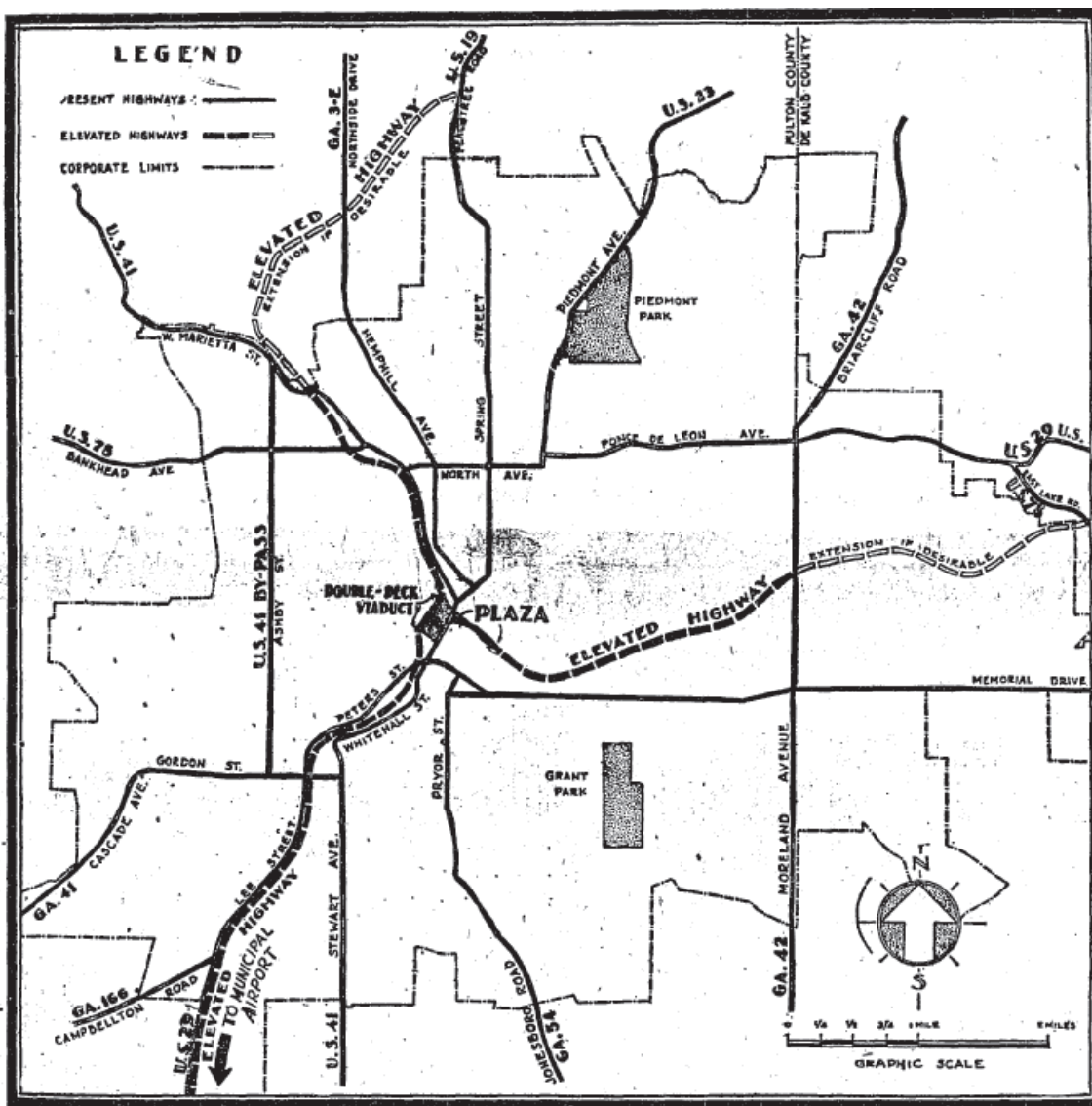


Figure 1: Plaza Plan, *Atlanta Constitution*, 1944

²⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 29, 1943, January 2, 1944. Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 118

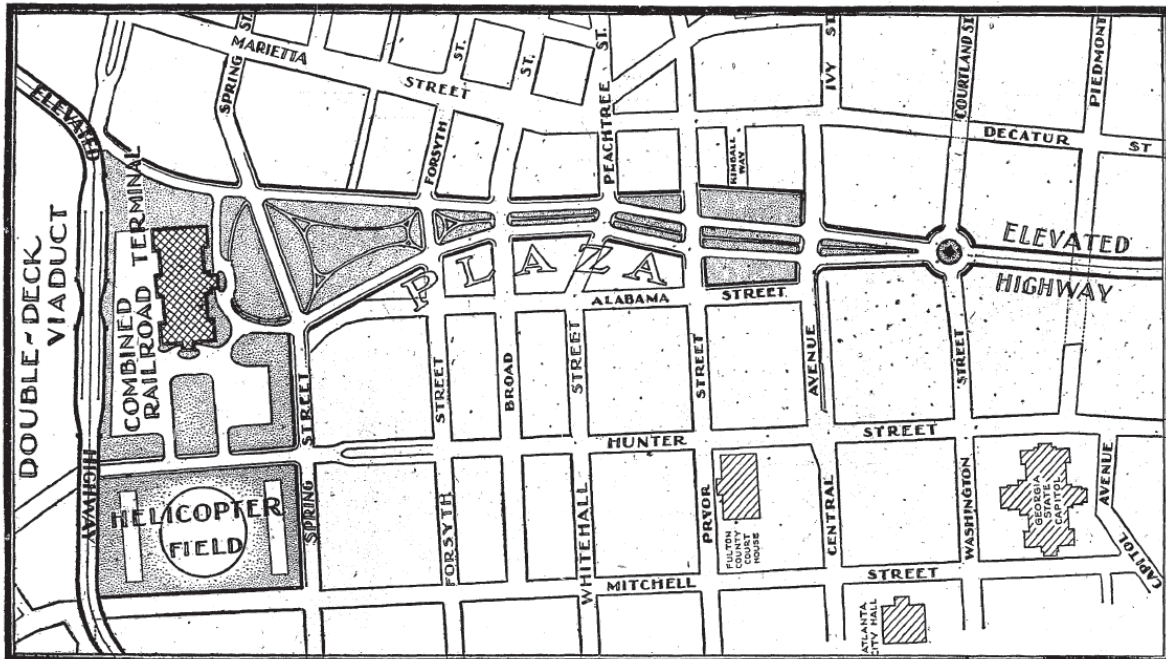


Figure 2: Plaza Plan, *Atlanta Constitution*, 1944

City, county, and state officials jointly developed the Plaza Plan with proposed solutions for Atlanta's traffic congestion problems. Those solutions included: (1) Construction of three elevated four-lane highways over railroad lines, to converge in the heart of Atlanta -- each stretch of elevated highway traversing more than 10 miles with estimated costs ranging from \$50,000 to \$500,000 per mile. Portions of the highways featured double-decker construction. (2) Erection of a mile-long plaza over the gulch from Washington to Walker Streets. (3) Construction of a combined railway terminal located northeast of the present Union Station. (4) Conversion of the present Terminal station site into a helicopter field to expedite air traffic. (5) Extension of the Hunter Street viaduct from its present terminus at Spring Street across the railway yards into Hunter Street beyond the present Terminal Station. The Plaza Plan served as a forerunner for a master street plan for the Atlanta Metropolitan area. Planning officials believed this

project would promote local, state and national government cooperation in funding this venture. Because elevated highways could be toll highways and parking charges could be levied on the plaza, Raymond W. Torras, engineering-secretary for the city planning commission, Alderman Ed A. Gilliam, chairman of both the city council's finance and public works committees, and Commissioner Ellis B. Barrett, chairman of the Fulton County Commission's public works committee, all promoted this development as "self-liquidating" over a period of years.²⁹

The new elevated highways were essential components of the Plaza Plan. These highways would be comparable to the viaducts in the city, which had been developed at the dawn of the automobile age. Motivated by the rise in automobile ownership and the worsening of downtown traffic, city planners devised a system to move the city above the railroad tracks through a series of viaducts. The viaducts bridged the railroad tracks, freed the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and increased parking for downtown.³⁰ Unlike the viaducts, the proposed elevated highways would be built over the rail tracks for their entire length rather than merely crossing the tracks at an angle. A major feature of the elevated highways was that they were "limited access roads" and would provide high-speed travel from suburban areas to or through

²⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1944, January 7, 1944, July 9, 1944

³⁰ In 1909, Architect Haralson Bleckley proposed covering over the railroad tracks from Central Avenue west to Spring Street and creating a series of plazas lined with skyscrapers. Bleckley's plan fell victim to legal precedent, as it did not appeal to the railroads. Their grants placed their tracks on Atlanta's original city level and with ownership of air rights, they did not want to allow construction over the tracks. While Bleckley's plazas never came into fruition, the city continued in search of solutions to bridge the railroad tracks. In 1924, with automobile ownership on the rise and traffic in the downtown core worsening, the city commissioned the John C. Beeler Organization to produce a comprehensive study of Atlanta's traffic needs. The Beeler Plan recommended additional viaducts to speed vehicular movement and increase parking for downtown. After reaching agreements on the terms of building the system, the viaducts were finally constructed, sparking building booms near the railroads and easing traffic in downtown. Tim Crimmins and Anne H. Farrisee, *Democracy Restored: A History of the Georgia State Capitol*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007) pp. 106-107. Franklin M. Garrett, *Atlanta and Environs: A Chronicle of Its People and Events, Volume II*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969) pp. 685, 848-850.

the central section of the city. The two elevated highways considered extremely important were the northbound and southbound. The southbound stretch would be the longest, extending about six miles from the municipal airport to the heart of the city. It would provide a rapid transit route from the suburbs of East Point, College Park, Hapeville, and Fairburn, in addition to handling motor traffic from the airport.³¹

The city had recently purchased 400 additional acres of land to double the size of the municipal airport. This route would improve highway travel to the growing airport with more direct access. The northbound stretch would extend from the combined railway terminal about two and a half miles towards the suburban city of Marietta. Another two-mile extension was proposed into Peachtree Road if considered desirable at a later date. The initial stretch would serve Marietta and points beyond. The final stretch, in the eastbound direction, would radiate from the end of the plaza at Washington Street about two miles east towards the direction of rapidly developing DeKalb County. It would provide a genuine memorial drive to Stone Mountain. It would also facilitate movement of traffic in areas beyond Decatur. Raymond W. Torras, engineering-secretary of the city planning commission and one of the engineers drafting the plan, elaborated, "All three of these arteries would secure Atlanta as the trading center of the Southeast."³²

Although the Plaza Plan gained momentum at the local and state levels, it never came into fruition. After being dissected and debated over the course of 1944, financing remained the most contested item. The city planning commission decided to await the

³¹ Crimmins and Farrisee, pp. 106-107. Garrett, pp. 685, 848-850. *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1944.

³² *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1944

completion of a transportation survey of the metropolitan area by the State Highway Department before acting upon any measures. In the interim, Ryburn Clay, director of the state highway department, announced that he had approved nearly \$5,000,000 worth of underpass and bridge planning for the metropolitan area from the Plaza Plan. From that point, transportation surveying commenced while efforts to move forward with other projects of the Plaza Plan were deferred. State, city and county officials realized that by waiting, funding for the grand projects could possibly be supplemented by the federal government. Clay noted that at the time, bills were pending in Congress, with the support of Georgia congressional representatives. Those bills could grant federal aid to postwar projects for municipalities and funding for many of the projects envisioned by the city and county planning commissions. With that notion in mind, city officials awaited the results of the survey to continue with the ambitious planning of the postwar transportation systems.³³

Creating a “Master Plan”

“This is a crisis in the history of Atlanta,” proclaimed Robert L. MacDougall on behalf of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce in a letter sent to Atlanta Mayor William B. Hartsfield and Chairman Charlie Brown of the Fulton County Commission in June 1945.³⁴ “The question is,” MacDougall asked, “whether Atlanta is to grow into a city of a

³³ *Atlanta Constitution*, August 29, 1944, August 31, 1944

³⁴ R.L. MacDougall, representing the Chamber of Commerce; Henry W. Chandler, President of the Atlanta Federation of Trades of the A.F. of L., and C.H. Gillman, regional director of the CIO signed identical letters which they sent to Mayor Hartsfield and Chairman Charlie Brown of the Fulton County Commission urging the appointment of a committee to coordinate various postwar plans, *Atlanta Constitution*, June, 10, 1945. MacDougall, a prominent businessman and civic leader, was a member of the Chamber of Commerce. He had also served as an administrator for the Works Progress

million persons and continue to be the leader in the South or decline.” He noted that other cities were prepared to take advantage of the postwar improvements funds already approved by the federal government. MacDougall continued, “The soldiers are coming home and must find jobs; industry is ready and is scouting for locations for new factories.” Atlanta had had no improvements in twenty years and when new cars appeared on the streets, the traffic problems would be intolerable unless something was done immediately. He concluded that all plans, both public and private, depended on the master plan for metropolitan Atlanta then being drawn up by the State Highway Department.³⁵

“Is the city of Atlanta to go ahead, or remain static?” MacDougall asked. “The life blood of a community is in its transportation and communication systems. We must see that it is easy for the children to get to school, and that we have easy and quick transportation for marketing and shopping. At present, our streets and highways are few, congested and poorly arranged for the ever-increasing traffic they must bear. New workers are questioning the advisability of buying or renting a home because of transportation problems. Our transportation should be such that a new factory could be started and employees could get to work easily, quickly and without fatigue. Terminal facilities for passengers and freight must be improved and coordinated with street and

Administration (WPA), Technical Director of the Atlanta Housing Authority, President of MacDougall-Warren, Inc. of Atlanta, and director of the MacDougall Construction Company of Atlanta. He served as chairman of the Citizens Bond Committee, which prepared plans and made financial arrangements for various postwar improvements in Atlanta and Fulton County. He also served as a member of the Joint Atlanta-Fulton County Bond Commission which supervised the expenditures of funds and construction of new expressways, Atlanta Library, Broad Street extension, and other such improvements, (*Georgia Tech Alumni Magazine*, Vol. 29, No. 1, p. 9, September-October, 1950)

³⁵ *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1945

highway systems.” This letter represented the sentiments of leaders in business and labor in support of the creation of a committee to coordinate postwar plans, especially those in transportation planning.³⁶

By the summer of 1945, postwar transportation planning commenced, though not in coordinated efforts by an official planning committee. The State Highway Committee under the direction of Ryburn G. Clay had allotted \$275,000 to three expert firms to draw up “master plans” for metropolitan Atlanta. Those firms were H.W. Lochner & Company, general engineers of New York; the Deleuw, Cather & Company of Chicago, transport and public utility engineers; and Earle Andrews of New York, expert on high speed highways. These companies had already drawn up the postwar plans for the city of Chicago and were noted among the best in their respective areas. Clay announced that the plans would be available in August 1945. He also noted that Congress had already allocated \$12,000,000 to the state of Georgia for postwar improvements. Postwar transportation planning rose in priority for Atlanta, and local, state, and federal officials placed more resources towards planning efforts and growth management. This surge in planning activity characterized cities across the country. In his letter to Mayor Hartsfield and Chairman Brown, MacDougall noted the advances and successes in cities such as St. Louis, Chicago and Detroit, and Ryburn Clay echoed his sentiments.³⁷

³⁶ *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1945

³⁷ Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 106. Basmajian, p. 23. *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1945. Joseph F.C. DiMento and Cliff Ellis, *Changing Lanes: Visions and Histories of Urban Freeways*. (Cambridge: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2013) p. 3

The Lochner Report

In preparation for rapid growth, the State Highway Department launched the development of a comprehensive highway and transportation plan for the Atlanta Metropolitan area on December 14, 1944. Prepared by H.W. Lochner and Company and DeLeuw, Cather & Company, this plan became known as the Lochner Report. In an introductory statement to the highway and transportation plan, the planning companies exclaimed: "There is every indication that Atlanta is approaching a period of great growth and prosperity. Improved highway and transit facilities are essential if the community is to capitalize on its natural assets. Failure to take prompt action would not only retard growth but add to the overall cost of the capital improvements required. We respectfully urge vigorous action on a sound program of financing and construction to translate the plans embodied herewith into reality."³⁸

The Lochner Report referenced the city of Atlanta as the capital of the southeastern United States by virtue of its position as a transportation center. Historically, the very existence of the city hinged on its early role as the terminus for the various railroads that converged. The report's overview labeled the entire city as a terminal area, and its future prosperity depended on the successful integration of its various transportation facilities. The proposed expressways, which would be the urban portions of the interstate highways, formed a logical starting point for such comprehensive planning of all future traffic and transportation improvements. The report

³⁸ H.W. Lochner and Company and DeLeuw, Cather and Company (1946), *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, GA*. p. XI. Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 106. Basmajian, p. 23

included traffic analyses, expressway location and design, and estimates of the cost for the highway plan.³⁹

State highway engineers along with Atlanta, Fulton County and DeKalb County administrators pooled their studies with the planning companies to write the Lochner Report. This transportation survey dealt not only with the movement of private vehicles, but also with public transportation services, including transit and truck movements. Lochner and associates mapped a proposal in which they recommended the erection of a giant union freight terminal to expedite the handling of truck freight and relieve local congestion. The survey also included studies to provide better efficiency in rail service. The *Constitution* noted that Atlanta's face would be lifted under the programs of the Lochner Report. The construction of modern facilities prompting the expeditious handling of a large volume of vehicles would be applied to relieve congestion and speed up movement. While expressways were the backbone of the new plan, existing streets and thoroughfares would also be enhanced to provide maximum efficiency for the completed program. Harry W. Lochner, head of the firm, explained that according to the 1945 traffic surveys, 69,000 vehicles traversed Atlanta's roads daily, and by 1970, that number would increase almost 100 percent. He noted that unless the city enhanced its expressways to alleviate the current and anticipated congestion, the city could expect no relief from the traffic ills. Furthermore, he continuously emphasized the importance of express thoroughfares and their efficiency in solving local congestion.⁴⁰

³⁹ Lochner, p. XIII

⁴⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 7, 1945. Lochner, *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, GA*.

Advances in Federal Highway Planning

While the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia prepared for the expansion of the highway system in the region, the Federal government also engaged in planning. By the late 1930s, pressure for construction of transcontinental superhighways surged. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, repeatedly expressed interest in construction of a network of toll superhighways as a way of providing more jobs for people out of work, continuing the agenda of his New Deal programs. Congress also decided to explore the concept. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1938 directed the chief of the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) to study the feasibility of a six-route toll network. The results of this study were presented in a two-part report on Toll Roads and Free Roads and were based on the statewide highway planning surveys and analysis. On April 27, 1939, President Roosevelt transmitted the report to Congress. He recommended that Congress consider action on:

“A special system of direct interregional highways, with all necessary connections through and around cities, designed to meet the requirements of the national defense and the needs of a growing peacetime traffic of longer range.”

Political opponents criticized the president's actions as being yet another folly of Roosevelt's New Deal economics; however, highway advocates reacted favorably. With the Second World War on the horizon, the timing of such as massive highway program lacked feasibility. Nevertheless, the notion of such a project remained on Roosevelt's mind in part as a solution to postwar employment for returning soldiers in case of job shortages.⁴¹

⁴¹ Richard F. Weingroff, “Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System” *Public Roads*, v. 60, no. 1 (1996), p. 10-11

In the third term of the Roosevelt Administration, discussion of a Federal Interstate Highway System resurfaced. In 1941, Roosevelt requested to have the Public Works Administration make a survey of highway facilities from the viewpoint of national defense. He suggested that particular attention be given to the strength of bridges, the width of strategic roads, adequacy of ingress and egress from urban centers, and the servicing of existing and proposed Army, Navy, and Air bases. On April 14, 1941, the president appointed a National Interregional Highway Committee to investigate the need for a limited system of national highways.⁴²

Interregional Highways, the publication released on Jan. 14, 1943, refined the concepts introduced in Part II of Toll Roads and Free Roads report. It recommended an interregional highway system of approximately 40,000 miles, designed to accommodate traffic twenty years from the date of construction. This became the basis for the Federal Highways Act of 1944. From its inception, this act created division among its supporters. Contending apportionment formulas along with battling interests between urban and rural delegations divided them. Also, the states sought increased authority from the federal government. The result of these disagreements was an inability to agree on the major changes needed in the post-war era to address accumulated highway needs. Due to the multitude of issues, the Federal-Aid Highway Act failed in gaining momentum needed to swiftly forge the National Interstate Highway System, but debate, discussion and planning ensued.⁴³

⁴² *America's Highways 1776-1976*, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Washington, D.C., 1976. p. 144, 151. Weingroff, p. 10-11

⁴³ Ibid

The greatest advance of the Federal-Aid Highway Act came from Section 7 of the act, which designated authorization for a 65,000-km "National System of Interstate Highways" to be selected by joint action of state highway departments.

Its purpose was:

“ . . . To connect by routes, as direct as practicable, the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers, to serve the national defense, and to connect at suitable border points with routes of continental importance in the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Mexico.”⁴⁴

Although Section 7 authorized the interstate system, it did not include provisions to give the interstate highways priority ranking based on national importance. Also, Section 7 did not authorize special funding or make a federal commitment to construct the system.⁴⁵

The Public Roads Administration (PRA), as the Bureau of Public Roads was now called, moved swiftly to implement Section 7. Section 7 called on the states to submit recommendations on which routes should be included in the interstate system. PRA also began working with state and local officials to develop interstate plans for the larger cities. In addition, PRA worked with the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) to develop design standards for the interstate system. Construction of the interstate system moved slowly and many states did not wish to divert federal-aid funds from local needs. Others complained that the standards of the interstate system were too high. Some of the heavily populated states, finding federal-aid funding too small in

⁴⁴ Weingroff, p. 10-11

⁴⁵ Ibid

comparison with need, decided to authorize construction of toll roads in the proposed interstate corridors.⁴⁶

This legislation brought state and federal highway engineers officially onto the postwar urban planning stage, a stage already occupied by city planners, architects, municipal engineers, and local officials. With approximately 5,200 miles of the interstate highway system proposed for urban areas, the postwar urban planning stage drew considerable attention. Much of the attention focused on the shortcomings of the legislation. One issue in particular lay in the fact that it did not require state engineers to clear their plans with city and local officials. This measure appeared in the legislation despite the precedent of city and local approval in previous federal regulations. Next, route designations were to be by “joint agreement” of state highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads, diminishing the role of city and local officials. Moreover, the legislation did not require a comprehensive transportation planning process for metropolitan area, causing city and county planners to fear that they would be at the mercy of having to accept highway plans that did not meet the needs of local conditions. Nonetheless, despite shortcomings, the Federal Highway Act of 1944 placed the federal government and the state highway departments in leading positions to shape highway and transportation planning in postwar America.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Weingroff, p. 10-11. *America's Highways*, p. 152

⁴⁷ DiMento and Ellis, pp. 66-67

Atlanta Responds to the Lochner Report

The highway and traffic study used in preparing the Lochner Report consisted principally of research conducted by the State Highway Department in cooperation with the city of Atlanta, Fulton County, and the Public Roads Administration. The creation of the report also gained momentum from the PRA's proposal to construct a network of interstate highways. Atlanta's importance in the interstate highway system seemed apparent, as five of the proposed highways would enter the city. Even at the time of the research, the Georgia State Highway Department proposed a sixth route to Augusta. Described as a prototype for regional transportation planning, the Lochner Report presented a rough blueprint to guide the routes and planning of the impending Interstate Highway System.⁴⁸

Not only did the Lochner Report present a comprehensive highway plan, but it also covered external traffic crossing the metropolitan area and predicted the movements of rural and inter-city traffic in the postwar period. The report suggested "Downtown connectors" to tie main routes together outside the central business district, along with the widening of downtown streets. Furthermore, it provided recommendations for downtown parking and the creation of a smoothly flowing artery system by eliminating jogs and separating grades. The traffic patterns of future generations of Atlantans took shape with the provisions of the Lochner Report.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Lochner, *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, GA*. pp. 1-3. Basmajian, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Lochner, *Highway and Transportation Plan for Atlanta, GA*. pp. 1-3. Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 106

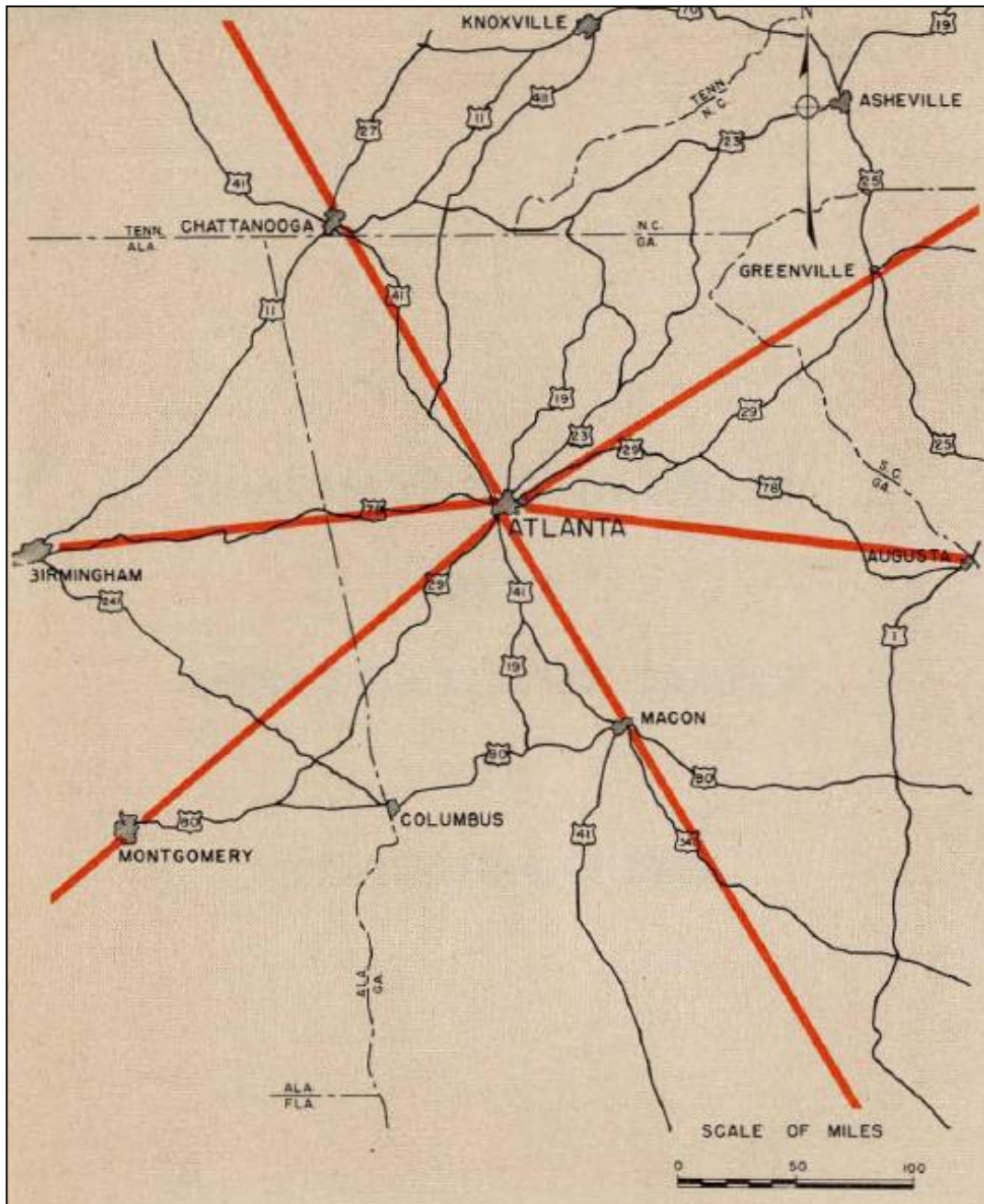


Figure 3: Proposed Highway Routes, Lochner Report, 1946

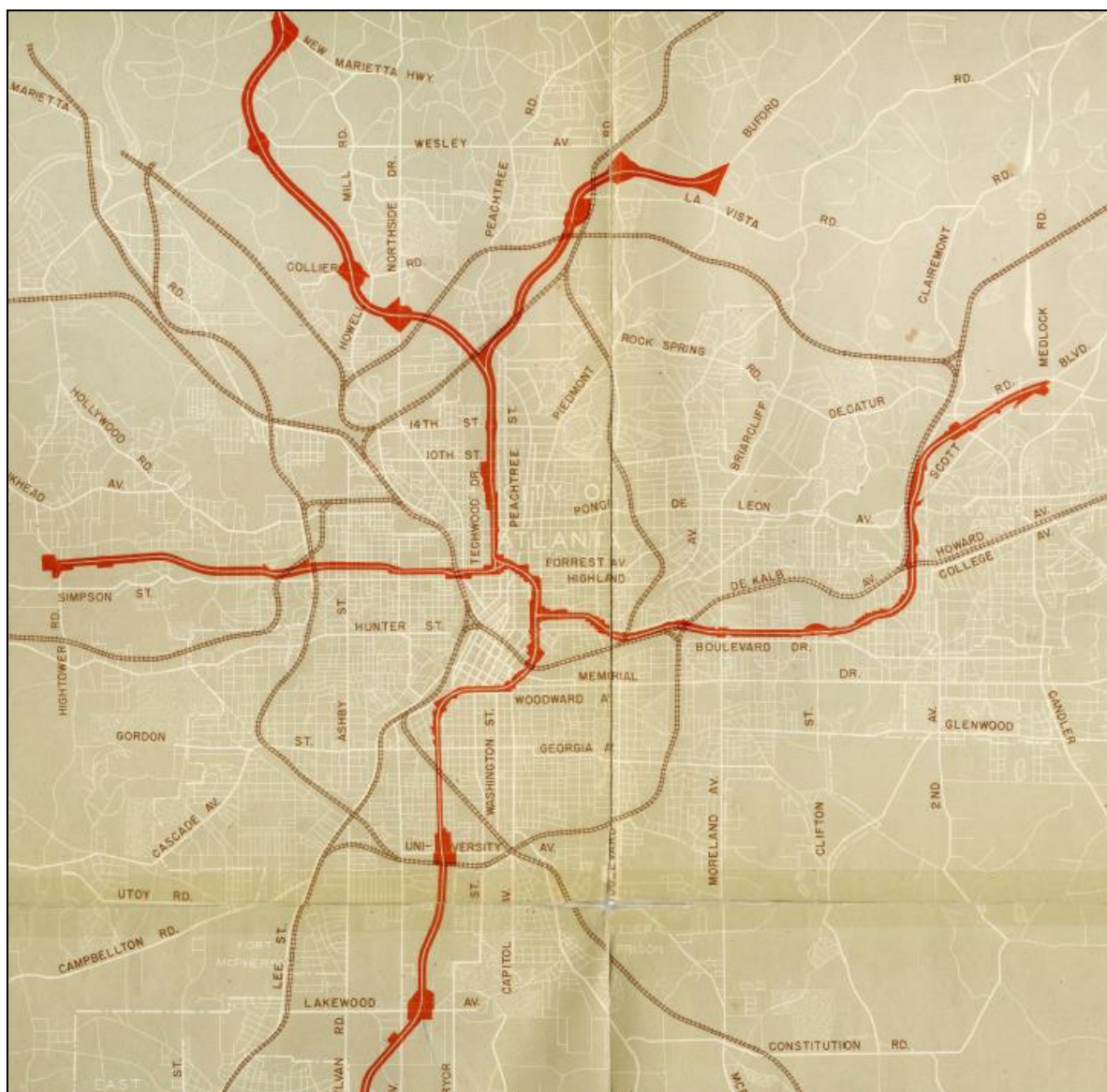


Figure 4: Highways Sketch, Lochner Report, 1946

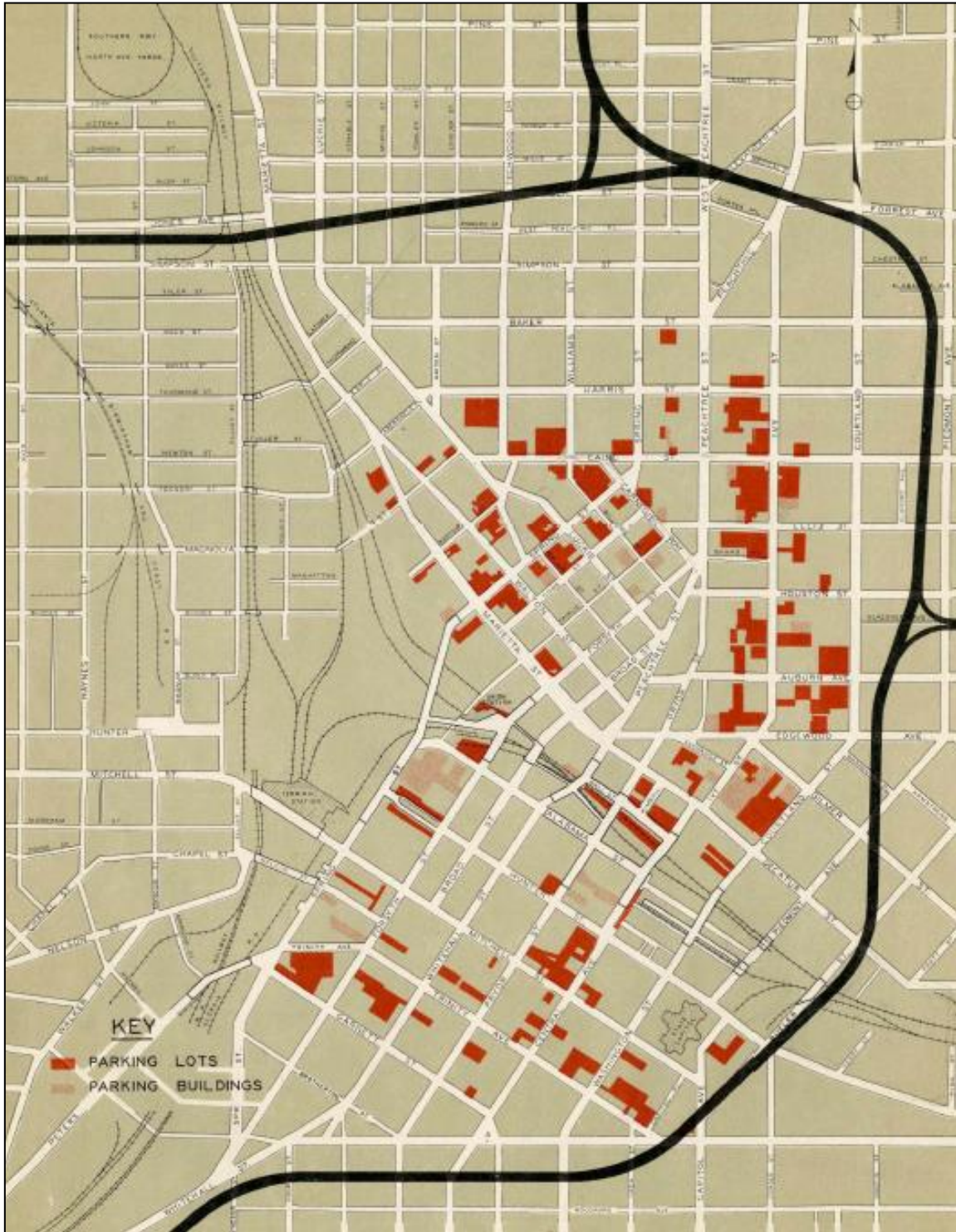


Figure 5: Proposed Downtown Connector and Parking Lots, Lochner Report, 1946

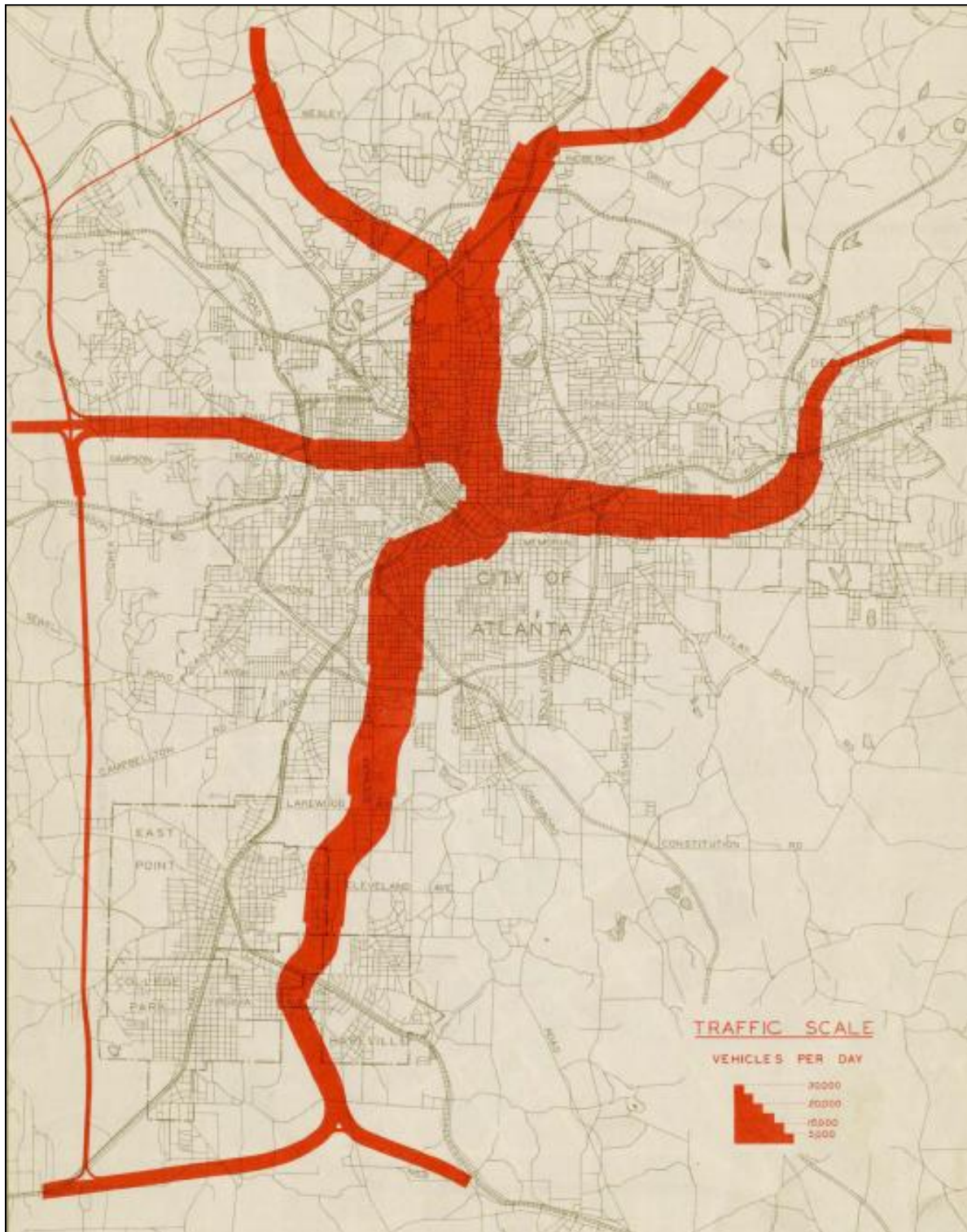


Figure 6: Traffic Analysis of Vehicles Per Day, Lochner Report, 1946

In a speech in support of the Lochner Plan to the Rotary Club in October 1945, Atlanta Mayor William Hartsfield stated, “If we expect Atlanta to grow, we must open up the traffic congestion. There is no cheap solution – it will cost big money and we must be willing to pay the taxes to put through the Lochner Expressway Plan, or one like it.” He noted that although he had not gone over the plan in detail or heard an engineer’s verdict, it “generally looked good.” He further laid out the financial parameters of the plan, placing the expenditures at \$47,000,000. In this speech, he pointed out that the improvements in the Lochner Plan were necessary for progress and dependent on the citizens’ willingness to spend money and pay taxes. He called for a modernized and streamlined city government through which these improvements would be administered. Furthermore, he likened the city of Atlanta to a “big, gangling adolescent boy who doesn’t know exactly what to do with himself.” In continuing the analogy, he concluded, “it (Atlanta) is reaching adulthood, going into the big city phase and the next four years will be decisive.”⁵⁰

After hearing the details of the Lochner Plan, many leading Atlantans praised the report and the plans to relieve the city’s traffic woes. Robert McDougall of the Chamber of Commerce stated, “It appears to be a splendid study of Atlanta’s needs.” He further stated, “Congress is going to appropriate large sums to match those available to local governments and we must get ready to take full advantage of any and all opportunities which present themselves.” William E. Mitchell, president of the Georgia Power Company, praised Lochner for the work completed in the comprehensive study and asserted that the plan was the best thing that had been brought to the city of Atlanta in

⁵⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 9, 1945

many years. Frank H. Neely, executive vice president and secretary of Rich's, Inc., and former chairman of the Fulton County Planning Commission, concluded the plans outlined in the Lochner Report were conclusive and near to those which his organization had envisioned, and that the completed job was "outstanding and constructive." Neely further elaborated that it was apparent that the Federal Roads Administration had selected the city of Atlanta as the focal point of a vast interregional highway system of 40,000 miles. This emerging highway system would link every important center of the country. "It is up to the community to take full advantage of our position," he said, "and to prepare for the city of one million which we are destined to become if we do accept our opportunities." C.H. Jagels, president of the Davison-Paxon Company, referred to the plans as being splendid. He concluded that the entire program should be adopted and constructed by all means necessary to be realized.⁵¹

In August 1946, voters in Atlanta and Fulton County jointly approved a bond issue totaling \$40.4 million with significant portions to implement recommendations from the Lochner Report. The report preceded the actual funding of the Federal Interstate System by ten years, thus financing alternatives through bond referenda provided the most logical source. This foresight in planning and the efforts put forth by city leaders and supporters alike placed Atlanta in a very favorable position to receive federal highway funds when they became available as a result of federal legislation. The recommendations of the Lochner Report joined the list of capital improvements in the metropolitan infrastructure. The city of Atlanta received \$20.4 million, of which \$7.1

⁵¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, October 7, 1945

million would be allocated for transportation improvements. Fulton County's figure totaled \$20 million, with \$13 million allocated for transportation improvements.⁵²

The bond issue, carrying the recommendations of the Lochner Report, featured many additional capital improvements that garnered support and contributed greatly to the favorable vote. Though transportation improvements ranked high on the agenda, school improvements impressed black voters the most. Black voters rallied around school improvements as the most specific benefit for their community. At a community meeting held in support of the bond issue, John Wesley Dobbs, president of the Atlanta Civic and Business League⁵³, explained:

This is the first time in 20 years that Negroes can support with all of their moral strength a bond election in which they will get a fair and just share. Now, we will have no more double sessions. Now, we will reduce the teaching load of Negro teachers to 35 pupils a classroom. And now, for the first time, Negro schools will have auditoriums and cafeterias. These improvements merit the support of all Atlanta voters and I hope not a single Negro voter will stay away from the polls.⁵⁴

Clark McDonald, president of the Central Atlanta Improvement Association⁵⁵, joined Dobbs in urging all qualified voters to support the bond issue. In rallies across the

⁵² Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 122. *Atlanta Daily World*, May 24, 1946.

⁵³ The Atlanta Civic and Business League was established in 1936 through the work of John Wesley Dobbs. Their goal was to register about ten thousand voters in order to push demands for the correction of a number of problems regarding schools, teachers' salaries, hiring of black police and firemen, employment of black doctors in city hospitals, and the development of park and playground spaces in black neighborhoods. The league was effective in defeating bond issues that neglected the black community, Bayor, p. 20.

⁵⁴ Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 122. *Atlanta Daily World*, May 24, 1946; August 8, 1946

⁵⁵ Organized in 1941, Central Atlanta Improvement Association (later called the Central Atlanta Association and finally Central Atlanta Progress) assembled the major property holders in downtown Atlanta in a small, elite group that was better capable of acting together in the shared interests of big business. Because of its elite status in the early stages of planning, the organization could bypass the Chamber of Commerce and dominate the planning agenda for Atlanta. Stone, p 16.

city, officials declared the bond a stepping-stone in Atlanta's progress. Even Harry W. Lochner, head of the firm of consultants responsible for designing the Lochner Report, lobbied citizens for support of the bond issue, which passed by a 5 to 1 margin. Mayor Hartsfield, Robert MacDougall, chairman of the Citizens Bond Commission; and Harry Sommers, president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, all hailed the successful passage of the bond issue as a mandate from the voters to keep metropolitan Atlanta the business, commercial, and educational center of the Southeast.⁵⁶

Establishment of the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC)

The Lochner Report represented a seminal moment in the planning history of Atlanta. Though not the first attempt at postwar planning, it set a precedent for all master planning thereafter. The report provided a concise vision for the postwar period; building on iterations of plans that took shape before and on the eve the war's ending. The Lochner Report, along with the Reed Report, encouraged regional planning and played a role in the establishment of Atlanta's permanent metropolitan planning agency.⁵⁷

Metropolitan planning had entered the planning discourse in Atlanta shortly before World War II. In 1937, Fulton County, the city of Atlanta, and the Chamber of Commerce contracted noted municipal consultant Dr. Thomas H. Reed to conduct a complete survey of both county and city governments. By early 1938, he produced an official report, known as the Reed Report, which dealt with every department and

⁵⁶ Martin, *Atlanta and Environs*, p. 122. *Atlanta Daily World*, May 24, 1946; August 8, 1946; August 16, 1946

⁵⁷ Basmajian, p. 22-23.

function of both jurisdictions. The report provided detailed recommendations for the simplification and centralization of both governments. Dr. Reed's recommendations included collaboration between Atlanta and Fulton County regarding the delivery of city services to unincorporated areas, the need for annexation, and the consolidation of city and county police forces, health services, parks departments, hospital, fire, and library services. Perhaps the highlight of his recommendations was the need for the establishment of a metropolitan Atlanta planning commission. Dr. Reed's recommendations received both approval and silence, along with criticism from city and county officials on the grounds of widespread changes. Ultimately, the bleak economic outlook at the issuing of the report rendered it impractical and economically unfeasible, causing it to be tabled for additional critical review.⁵⁸

The momentum of the wartime economy sparked a spirit of revitalization for Atlanta's business and planning communities. Against this backdrop, many of the recommendations of the Reed Report were adopted in some fashion, affecting both city and Fulton County entities. The 1941 creation of the Central Atlanta Improvement Association (later renamed Central Atlanta Progress or CAP), an organization of the downtown business elite, signaled that "big money" in Atlanta had collective interests in future planning and development. As it became increasingly clear that downtown Atlanta was not assured of remaining the economic hub of an expanding metropolis and region, the business elite used their influence to sway patterns of development in the direction of downtown. Sprawl changed the character of downtown to reflect the growing presence of large businesses and big money interests. CAP, in conjunction with major

⁵⁸ Garrett, pp. 956-958. Basmajian, p. 22-23.

players in entities such as the Chamber of Commerce, launched long-range planning initiatives and engaged in sustained actions in support of a comprehensive redevelopment agenda.⁵⁹

In 1947, members of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce rallied fellow members to urge the enactment of state legislation authorizing the creation of a metropolitan planning commission, yet another recommendation from the Reed Report. This jurisdiction for commission included all of Fulton and DeKalb Counties. The enactment of this legislation represented an investment in the future of planning not only for the city, but the growing metropolitan area. The entity birthed from this organizing became known as the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC). The commission was financed by annual voluntary appropriations from the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and DeKalb County. The new commission had the distinction of being the first official metropolitan planning organization in the country supported from the beginning entirely by public funds.⁶⁰

The job of the MPC as defined by law was to make and, from time to time as it deemed proper, amend a master plan of orderly growth and development for Metropolitan Atlanta, including Fulton and DeKalb Counties. The commission was given “advisory powers” and its Master Plan would be published as general information at public discretion. The commission consisted of a staff of fourteen members, of which ten were regular members serving three-year terms. The mayor of Atlanta appointed four of the regular members (two from the DeKalb section of the city and two from the

⁵⁹ Stone, pp. 15-16. Garrett, p. 958

⁶⁰ Thomas Reed, *Report: The Governments of Atlanta and Fulton County, Georgia* (Philadelphia: National Municipal League, 1938). Mel Scott, *American City Planning since 1890*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) pp. 442-443. Garrett, pp. 956-958. Basmajian, p. 22-23.

Fulton section). Three were named from Fulton County by the Board of County Commissioners of Roads and Revenue and the other three are chosen from DeKalb County by its Commissioner of Roads and Revenues. The ex-officio members were the mayors of Atlanta (William B. Hartsfield) and Decatur (A. Mell Turner), the chairman of the Fulton County commissioner (J. Gloer Hailey) and the DeKalb County commissioner (Scott Candler). The commission appointed Phillip G. Hammer as director for an indefinite term. The newly created MPC began its first full-time staff activities in 1949. At the start of the 1950s, MPC and its staff initiated a process of inventory, analysis and plan formulation, culminating with its first regional master plan.⁶¹

The Metropolitan Planning Commission worked closely with local governments and provided financing to assist in matters of overall planning. MPC's tasks included developing metropolitan plans, keeping those plans up to date and accurate, and working with the various agencies and departments of the local governments in putting the plans into action. MPC did not intend to diminish the work of the planning and zoning bodies of local governments. It aspired to supplement their work by bringing to their problems solutions from a metropolitan standpoint. The commission's recommendations drew considerable apprehension from local agencies concerned with the regulation of private activities, those controlled and regulated through zoning. Their concerns extended to the recommendations affecting local public works, utility and facility programs. In these cases, the commission instructed the agencies to coordinate the planning of public expenditures in their respective governments. The Metropolitan Planning Commission promoted itself as a bearer of efficiency and concluded that no

⁶¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 16, 1952. Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta*, Atlanta, GA, February 1952

reasons existed as to why the advisory role of the MPC and the zoning and internal coordination roles of local planning agencies could not “mesh easily and smoothly.” Ensuring continuous regional planning resonated as perhaps the strongest reason for creating a metropolitan planning body rather than having a “master plan” prepared by an outside consultant. Having a metropolitan planning body promoted efficiency and aligned with current trends in planning.⁶²

Expanded Black Political Influence

John Wesley Dobbs suggested that the 1946 bond issue containing improvements featured in the Lochner Report offered the first chance in the postwar period for blacks to support an election in full strength and receive fairness and equality. The fervor of that election linked to the dismantling of a storied history of disfranchisement for blacks in Atlanta and throughout the South. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century, white supremacists triumphed in efforts to keep blacks in subordinate roles and without political influence. Their platform of black disfranchisement spanned all backgrounds of whites. It appealed to the less educated, working class, marginal middle class, and the educated and well off. Disfranchisement guided the white supremacists’ attitudes towards black politics and created a milieu of racial hostility. That environment paved the way for the Disfranchisement Act of 1907, Georgia’s county unit system, and the Democratic white primary, all of which kept voter participation and the black political involvement at an abysmal level.⁶³

⁶² *Up Ahead*, p. 10

⁶³ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 8, 1946. John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977) pp. 101-103. Stone, p. 14. Clifford M. Kuhn, Harlon E. Joye &

Nevertheless, disfranchisement did not eliminate the black vote altogether. A small black electorate existed, leading intensely political lives in the pre-WWII period. The tools of disfranchisement limited black participation in politics, particularly the Democratic primary - a primary election in which only whites were permitted to participate. It narrowed black participation to only special elections such as bond referenda. Blacks used that small influence to bargain for improvements in the areas of education and other facilities. A successful bond referendum required a two-thirds vote of those registered to vote. By merely increasing registration before a referendum, blacks could exert clout to influence the outcome. This made the black electorate a sitting force, ready to participate in the political process without restrictions.⁶⁴

In the ongoing struggle against the Democratic white primary, black leaders stood firm on the belief in equality through the ballot. They realized the immense social and civic responsibilities attached to voting. In the pre-WWII period, black leaders and even whites were vocal in opposition to the white primary. An editorial in the *Constitution* entitled "The Ballots of Democracy," called the ballot the root of democracy. It declared anything taking away the right of the citizen to vote as a weapon aimed at the very foundation of the democratic system of government. It argued that when any citizen, properly qualified as a voter, is deprived of the full balloting right, those individuals depriving are striking at the very core of democracy. Though not written specifically for support of black voting rights, John Wesley Dobbs, grand master of Georgia Masons and president of the Atlanta Civic and Political League, agreed and

E. Bernard West. *Living Atlanta: An Oral History of the City, 1914-1948*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990). p. 322

⁶⁴ Stone, p. 14. Kuhn, p. 322.

called the editorial “one of the strongest arguments for the ballot” he had ever read. He believed that this editorial summed up in dynamic language a dream of American democracy.⁶⁵

Black elites hoped that participation in the electoral system would end a system of white patronage and open the door to a political coalition with moderate white elite voters and elected officials. Blacks’ electoral votes would translate into political influence, as white candidates would no longer be able to disregard black interests. Whites would consider African-American interests when local government enacted laws, issued civil service jobs, allocated municipal facilities and services, and formulated policy. In this case, policy pertaining to the mobility and transportation issues of blacks could reflect their interests and sentiments. A.T. Walden, lawyer and co-organizer of the Negro Voters League with Dobbs,⁶⁶ believed the ballot would be a “powerful force,” and would help to usher in democracy that would work for African Americans.⁶⁷ The *Atlanta Daily World*, Atlanta’s leading black newspaper, emphasized messages in stories and editorials, such as: “Voting is the key which ends police brutality,” and “Voting is the way to better living standards, to greater justice in the courts, and it is the fountain-head to equality of economic and political opportunity.” Even with election

⁶⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, September 20, 1940, *Atlanta Constitution*, September 7, 1940

⁶⁶ Negro Voters League – Nonpartisan organization comprised of black Democrats and Republicans created in 1949 to prevent the splitting of the black vote in local elections and to offer a united front. Bayor, p. 25.

⁶⁷ Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). p. 42

awareness in the black community, registration continued to fall short due to the realities of the black voting power stifled by disfranchisement.⁶⁸

Clarence Bacote, Atlanta University professor and director of the citizenship schools at Atlanta University designed to educate black votes and increase registration, explained that there were many challenges in convincing blacks to register and vote because of the obstacles encountered.⁶⁹ He added that even if they registered, blacks did not have a voice in selecting the people to be voted on. In spite of the challenges affecting the black electorate, the black leadership, represented through organizations like the Atlanta Civil and Political League, persevered because no one knew when change might come through the Supreme Court and the federal level.⁷⁰ World War II contributed to that change and inspired activists seeking solutions to black civil rights issues. The war raised the idea of the contradictions inherent in fighting a war against Nazism while maintaining racism in the United States. The struggle for black voting power continued, setting the stage for a tumultuous political environment at the start of the postwar era.⁷¹

The force of the black electorate gained strength with the dismantling of the Democratic white primary. In 1944, the Democratic Party's white primary was declared

⁶⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 2, 1944. Bayor, p. 20

⁶⁹ Black citizenship classes began in 1932 and were held at Atlanta University in order to increase black registration. Citizen Schools were later created using the framework of an idea by Lugenia Burns Hope (community activist and wife of John Hope, Morehouse College and Atlanta University President) and were under the direction of Clarence Bacote, an Atlanta University history professor. These programs offered six-week courses about registration, voting, government powers and politics to the black community. The classes were eventually held in the black churches and help spark mass voter registration drives and a demand for voting rights, Bayor p. 19.

⁷⁰ Interview with Clarence Bacote, Living Atlanta Collection, Atlanta History Center. Bayor, p. 20

⁷¹ Bayor, p. 20

unconstitutional through *Smith v. Allwright*, a federal court case in Texas. Because the Democratic Party had controlled politics in the South since the late 19th century, most southern elections were decided by the outcome of the Democratic Party primary. Outlawing the primary had a significant impact across the South.⁷² Historian Darlene Clark Hine traced the two-decade long legal battle in Texas from the mid-1920s to the mid-1940s. She suggested that the key to victory in civil rights cases across the South linked directly to the efforts of black communities to mobilize their internal resources against white supremacy and systematic disfranchisement. The resources of a substantially reinvigorated NAACP also contributed to these efforts. She further explained how the “constant reminder of their political impotence,” motivated blacks into developing community-based political coalitions through which they persevered towards gaining full entry in the political process. The federal court’s decision in Texas set precedent, sparking debates and challenges in states across the South.⁷³

⁷² *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649 (1944), a landmark decision of the United States Supreme Court with regard to voting rights and, by extension, racial desegregation. It overturned the Democratic Party’s use of all-white primaries in the state of Texas, and other states where the party used the rule. Lonnie E. Smith, a black voter in Harris County, Texas, sued county election official S. S. Allwright for the right to vote in a primary election being conducted by the Democratic Party. The law he challenged allowed the party to enforce a rule requiring all voters in its primary to be white. Because the Democratic Party had controlled politics in the South since the late 19th century, most Southern elections were decided by the outcome of the Democratic Party primary. Representing the NAACP, Thurgood Marshall had argued this case in favor of Lonnie E. Smith. Texas claimed that the Democratic Party was a private organization that could set its own rules of membership. Smith argued that the law in question essentially disfranchised him by denying him the ability to vote in what was the only meaningful election in his jurisdiction. The Court agreed that the restricted primary denied Smith his protection under the law and found in his favor. Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas*. (Millwood, NY: Kraus-Thomson Organization, 1979).

⁷³ Darlene Clark Hine, p. 155

Challenging Georgia's White Primary

While the Texas decision faced resistance in Georgia, organizations like the NAACP mobilized in preparation for similar results. The NAACP played a major role in the Texas victory, and Attorney A.T. Walden, working with national NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall, prepared to mount a similar challenge to Georgia's white primary. Atlanta's Mayor Hartsfield also recognized the implications of the Texas decision for Georgia. In a 1944 discussion with Herbert Jenkins, future Atlanta police chief, on the Texas decision, Hartsfield stated: "What the courts have done is give the black man in Atlanta the ballot. And for your information, the ballot is a front ticket for any-damn-where he wants to sit, if he knows how to use it. And Atlanta Blacks know how to use it."⁷⁴

Though Atlanta's black community leadership assumed they would be at the forefront of the state's white primary challenge, black leaders in Columbus believed otherwise. In open defiance of the Atlanta delegation and Thurgood Marshall, Dr. Thomas Brewer of Columbus both organized and financed Georgia's challenge to the white primary. Dr. Brewer maintained a preeminent medical practice, reputedly making him the wealthiest black professional in Columbus. In the 1930s, he became increasingly irritated by the restrictions placed upon blacks in the South by Jim Crow. This provided the motivation for his gathering black professionals into a group directly opposed to white supremacy and organizing a local NAACP chapter. Following the decision in Texas, Dr. Brewer encouraged local Columbus minister Rev. Primus King to

⁷⁴ Tuck, pp. 40-44. Interview with Herbert Jenkins, Living Atlanta Collection, Atlanta History Center. Bayor, p. 21. Kuhn, p.333.

lead a small delegation to try and vote in the 1944 primary. That attempt became the basis for the challenge to Georgia's white primary.⁷⁵

With the end of the Georgia's white primary in sight, a shift towards a new direction in Atlanta politics began. Robert Thompson of the Atlanta Urban League said that leaders in the black community took great concern for the lack of black participation in political affairs and launched a series of registration drives. The successful registration drives more than doubled the number of registered black voters in the city from numbers a few months preceding the special election. This dramatic increase played a major role in the special election of February 1946, and foreshadowed future elections with black voters. On the eve of the overthrow of the white primary, the special election in February 1946 of Helen Douglas Mankin to Congress proved that Atlanta's black community knew how to strategically use their electoral force. Elected primarily because of black support, Mankin's victory foreshadowed the future of elections in the city. Dubbed "the belle of Ashby Street" by Georgia governor Eugene Talmadge, Mankin won by a narrow margin forged by the black turnout at the Ashby Street precinct, thus becoming the first woman elected to Congress from Georgia. As a special election, blacks voted without restrictions. Voter registration in the black community had increased dramatically in response to the Primus King case in deliberation and hope for the removal of the white primary.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Tuck, pp. 37-42.

⁷⁶ Bayor, p. 21. Lorraine Nelson Spritzer, *The Belle of Ashby Street: Helen Douglas Mankin and Georgia Politics*. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1982) p. 69-74. Robert Thompson, Interviewed by Lorraine Nelson Spritzer, 28 July 1977, P1977-17, Series G. The Belle of Ashby Street: Helen Douglas Mankin and Georgia Politics, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library, Atlanta. Tuck, pp. 41, 65.

In April 1946, U.S. Supreme Court let a lower ruling stand, ending Georgia's white primary. This action created a surge in black political activism although some voting restrictions still remained. The impact of black voting up until this point carried little force, so the removal of the white primary expanded the role of blacks in city politics. The Democratic white primary had effectively barred blacks from voting where it counted in an overwhelmingly one-party state like Georgia. Under the reign of the white primary, the majority of the limited black political activities occurred through the limited resources of the Republican Party. Black businessman and civic leader John Calhoun stated: "And the Republican Party, because of slavery and Emancipation and Reconstruction and all like that, didn't have influence in places like Georgia. Republicans had no influence over local governments. You'd never see a Republican mayor or a councilman, or nothing." The dismantling of the white primary supported the growing black Democratic leadership and provided for a stronger presence in Atlanta and throughout the state.⁷⁷

Transportation Woes & Black Representation in Planning

In the immediate postwar period, social and political change like the ending of the Democratic white primary developed against the backdrop of a rapidly expanding city. Atlanta's population had grown well past the three hundred thousand mark, and the swift advent of the automobile challenged the city's layout. A major issue on the horizon was that of the changing role of downtown in an increasingly spread out metropolitan area. Suburban sprawl took shape, traffic congestion was enormous, and downtown

⁷⁷ Kuhn, p. 330. Jack Walker, *Negro Voting in Atlanta: 1953-1961*. *Phylon*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (4th Quarter, 1963) pp. 379-387. Tuck, p. 64-65.

was divided by railroad tracks, adding to the multitude of traffic problems. The automobile altered urban life, and movement away from downtown affected the civic activities. The more pressing issues, those centered on mobility and transportation planning, required immediate action. The automobile brought powerful technological, economic, and social change that city policymakers would be challenged to cope with. The emphasis on the automobile and transportation-related innovations in city life also ushered in greater issues pertaining to metropolitan growth and the expansion of the city's infrastructure and facilities to accommodate. The social and political change, along with the mobility and transportation issues, creates a framework to discuss Atlanta's progress in planning during the postwar period.⁷⁸

In the earliest period of master planning for growth and development in Atlanta and the metropolitan region, African American representation on planning boards was unknown. Shortly after the Metropolitan Planning Commission began functioning, black leaders requested of Mayor Hartsfield that black members be appointed to the various boards that had the responsibility for carrying out the city's colossal slum clearance and redevelopment programs. Those persons requesting appointments represented various fields of interest in their appointments. The delegation comprised of: builders T.M. Alexander, committee chairman, Walter H. Aiken, president of Aiken, Inc., and Elmer Lewis; political leaders A.T. Walden and J.W. Dobbs; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, president of Morehouse College; ministers W.W. Weatherspool, M.L. King, and Bishop J.W.E. Bowen; civic organizations representatives R.A. Thompson and John H. Calhoun; real estate representatives Q.V. Williamson, J.L. Wolfe, and Albert L. Thompson, racial

⁷⁸ Stone, p. 14

advisor of the Federal Housing Administration; labor representative Charles Atkinson; C.A. Scott, editor of the *Atlanta Daily World*; and Business League representatives C.W. Greenlea, W.R. Cochrane and E.M. Martin, Vice President-Secretary of the Atlanta Life Insurance Company.⁷⁹

Black representation would combat and help prevent many of issues present in city planning and redevelopment due to the lack of representation. Case in point, the Lochner Report presented challenges for black Atlanta in areas including housing. Planners had included various maps that proposed limited access highways being placed in the direct paths of African American centers of population across the city. In reference to the areas where proposed highways were to be constructed, the report stated: "The neighborhoods of Atlanta through which it would be feasible to purchase suitable rights-of-way, being the most depreciated and least attractive, are most in need of this rejuvenation." Included were captions reading: "Views of Sub-Standard Areas Which Would be razed by the Expressways" -- with photos of period-styled houses in communities with unpaved streets. Photos even depicted black residents in the streets and about the community. Black representation could counter the blind insensitivity in planning and provide the voice of the people occupying the places deemed the least attractive by white planners and officials.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 6, 1950, April 28, 1950, March 21, 1952

⁸⁰ Lochner p. 9-10

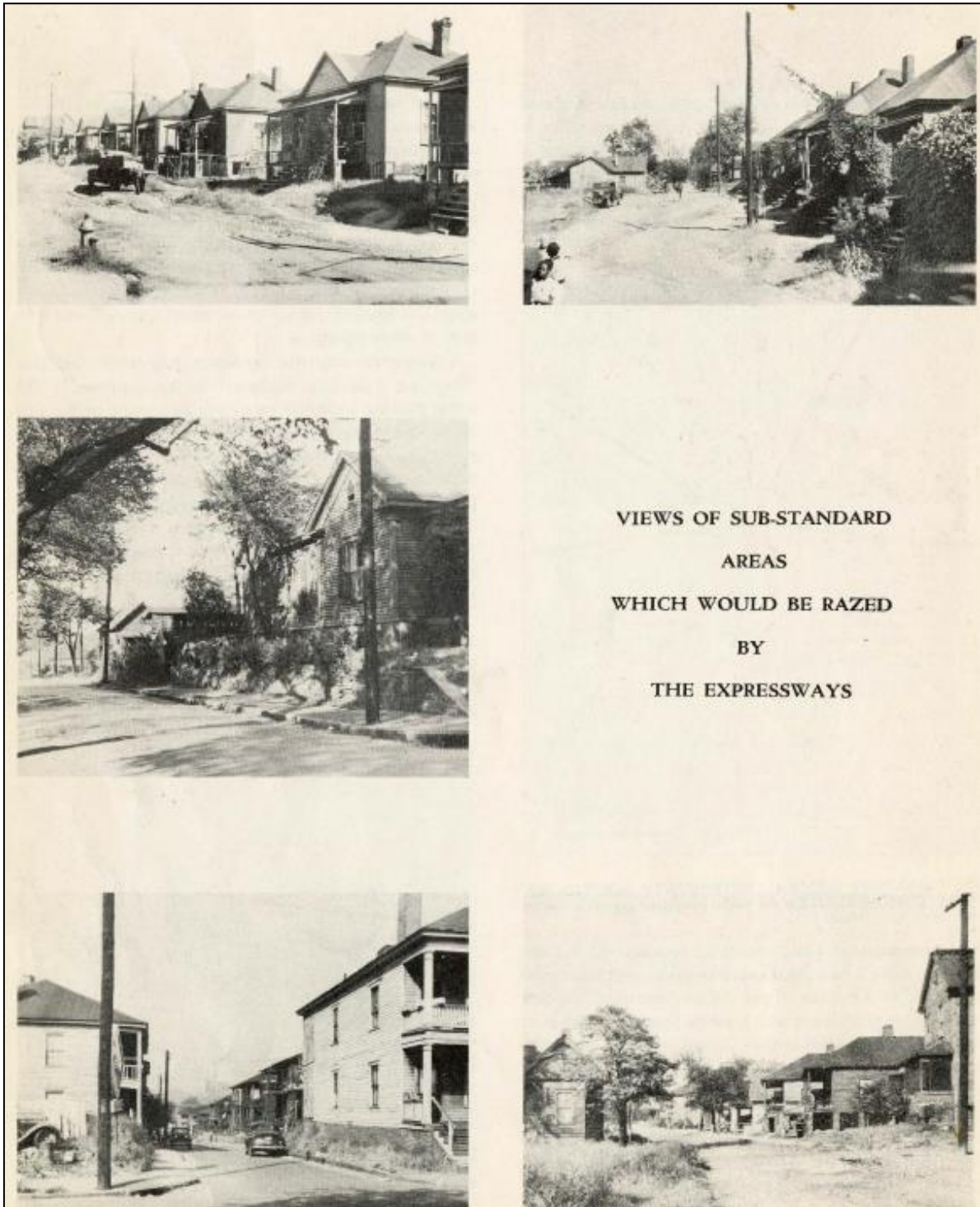


Figure 7: Views of Sub-Standard Areas, Lochner Report, 1946

Members of the delegation and those to serve on the advisory committee to the various planning commissions and the Atlanta Housing Authority were also all members of the Atlanta Business League's Committee on Housing. The Atlanta Business League, an affiliate of the National Negro Business League,⁸¹ operated with the mission of enhancing and expanding the business community at large while encouraging civic pride and reinvesting community money within the community. Its housing committee was established following a panel discussion in early 1950 hosted by the League on slum clearance and housing to consider all matters pertaining to blacks in the Atlanta area. Officials of the Federal Housing Administration, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, and the city administration all participated in the panel discussion. The goal of the committee was to protect the interests of black residents and businessmen in the areas slated for slum clearance and to secure an adequate portion of government funds for private homes and public housing. The delegation asked specifically that black members be appointed to the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the City Planning Commission, the Atlanta Housing Authority, the city building inspector's office, and the public works department. T.M. Alexander, chairman of the delegation, outlined the group's sentiments in a statement to the mayor. It explained the request for representation, while also praising the progress of the administration. It also pointed out

⁸¹ National Negro Business League (NNBL) – Founded in 1900 by Booker T. Washington, it was organized in a pyramid structure, with Washington at the top level, state presidents on the second level, local presidents below them, and the general members on the bottom. Men and women from a number of professions, ranging from farmers and carpenters to businessmen and doctors, were members of the NNBL. According to organization literature, the object of the organization was to inform the world of the progress of the Negro in making every part of the country, and to stimulate local business enterprises through its annual meetings and in any other manner deemed wise. This organization's mission also included encouraging the organization of local business for the purpose of furthering commercial growth in all places where such organizations were needed. David Jackson, *A Chief Lieutenant of the Tuskegee Machine: Charles Banks of Mississippi*. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002) pp. 90-91

specifically how the decisions being made in planning, such as the housing and slum clearance program, would directly and indirectly affect every human being within the city of Atlanta.⁸²

Blacks in Atlanta realized the crucial role that diversity and fair representation could play in city and metropolitan decision-making. Already scarred by a history of broken promises and discriminatory actions, especially the drastic measures already presented by various commissions in the areas of housing and slum clearance, the black community was leery about leaving the decision-making powers to panels of people that did not represent them. In the statement to the *World*, Alexander and those who had some political leverage expressed confidence in the fairness of the members of the planning commissions and in the Housing Authority. They warned though that, “however diligently they may work and however noble may be their objectives, it is highly improbable and presumptuous to assume that they can interpret all the needs, aspirations, desires, and what is for the best welfare of one-third of Atlanta’s population, if there is no representation of this group on any of the planning committees.” Upon receipt of the statement, Mayor Hartsfield assured the delegation of his desire to cooperate and to do all in his power to see that their wishes were considered in city planning.⁸³

Raising the issues of black representation and getting the mayor’s attention was only a miniscule victory for the delegation. Numerous challenges continued to impede black representation on the various planning commissions. Although the mayor had

⁸² *Atlanta Daily World*, April 6, 1950, April 28, 1950

⁸³ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 28, 1950

given his assurance, he also explained that the issue was out of his jurisdiction and beyond his immediate powers. He added that the Planning Commissions and Housing Authority were limited by state law as to the number of members, and only through a vacancy created by one of the present members leaving or through amending of the law by the state legislature would he be able to appoint black members. He concluded that in the case of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, Fulton County and DeKalb County authorities had to share in the appointment of members. As a solution, the mayor suggested the delegation accept the role of “advisory committee” as a temporary expedient. In this role, the advisory committee would consult the various planning commissions and the Atlanta Housing Authority in all matters pertaining to the city’s black residents. To further appease the black leaders’ requests, Mayor Hartsfield impressed upon the delegation that they should keep in mind that efforts would be made to get real representation on the actual bodies [planning commissions] as soon as possible.⁸⁴

A.T. Walden and J.W. Dobbs both urged Hartsfield to take direct action in the appointment of blacks to the various planning entities. Walden told the mayor that there was ample precedent for the appointment of blacks to such planning bodies in the South. He listed Durham, Winston-Salem, Nashville, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Newport News as cities with blacks on the local housing authorities. Dobbs explained to the mayor that the committee’s main reason for calling on him at that point was to prevent any complications in the future after the programs was actually in motion. He warned that with the federal government’s investment in housing and slum clearance,

⁸⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 28, 1950. May 9, 1950

the local program could run into “trouble” if the interests of the black citizens were not considered.⁸⁵

Continued Struggle for Representation

Two years after the initial establishment of the advisory committee by Mayor Hartsfield, the leaders of the delegation remained at a lesser, unofficial status. With no black appointments to any of the planning commissions or the Atlanta Housing Authority, the delegation continued to rally for representation on each board. At this critical juncture, greater problems had arisen for the black leaders with the creation of the Metropolitan Planning Committee’s report, “Up Ahead, A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta.” In an April 1952 radio forum discussing the parameters of MPC’s report, commission director Phillip Hammer accused the mayor’s black advisory committee chairman T.M. Alexander and other civic groups of duplicity. He stated that the same groups had already approved six expansion areas for blacks in 1947, and three of those areas were included in the Commission’s report. Following that statement, officials of the Atlanta Business League questioned the motives of the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s efforts to divert criticism along with the continued lack of black representation. The Planning Commission insisted that it had consulted black leaders and the expansion areas for blacks were representative of those selected by the black civic groups.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 28, 1950

⁸⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952

In response to the claims made by MPC, officials of the Atlanta Business League called attention to a May 1951 report of the Commission, which cited the Atlanta Urban League as the organization that had advised its staff on the subject of expansion areas for blacks. The Business League also claimed that apparently the Urban League and the Commission were using a report issued by the defunct Atlanta Housing Council in 1947. Several civic organizations in the Business League and the Urban League endorsed the Atlanta Housing Council in 1946 and 1947. The organization led efforts to find new areas where housing could be secured for the influx of blacks resulting from the demobilization of the armed forces. These efforts also sought to relieve crowding and tension on the fringes of existing areas. The topics of redistribution and relocation did not even come up for discussion. The report entitled “Proposed Expansion Areas for Negroes” identified six potential areas in which to expand housing for blacks. On the city’s near south and west sides, the Council located land appropriate for the building of multifamily complexes and single-family-home subdivisions adjacent to existing black neighborhoods or distant from white residential areas.⁸⁷

According to officials of the Atlanta Business League, the defunct Atlanta Housing Council was organized to meet an emergency in October of 1946. The Council’s status was similar to that of the “advisory committee” created in 1950 supposedly for an interim period. The purpose of the Housing Council was to assist the Mayor’s Emergency Committee in securing expansion areas for blacks in order to relieve housing tension. At that time, the discussions of slum clearance or the reference to relocating blacks out of their current business and housing areas did not appear in

⁸⁷ LeeAnn Lands, *The Culture of Property: Race, Class, and Housing Landscapes in Atlanta, 1880-1950*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), p. 184. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952

the discussion. Robert Thompson, Atlanta Urban League housing secretary and member of the Housing Council, circulated the report among black leadership, white social, business, and political leaders, and a host of bureaucracies that governed land use. The list of organizations included the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the Buckhead Trade Association, neighborhood associations, and area colleges and universities. With no legal binding, the plan purposely sought comment and “approval” to assist in easing land purchases and zoning approvals for new black housing development.⁸⁸

Both the Atlanta Housing Council and the Mayor’s Emergency Committee functioned in 1946 and 1947, before the establishment of the Metropolitan Planning Commission. National-level actions and concessions to black demands for proactive development of black housing had little initial impact in Atlanta, causing ongoing struggles for black housing developers and prompting white resistance. Similar committees all over the country worked on housing problems in the various localities made acute by the rapid demobilization, formation of new families, and other population increases. The Georgia General Assembly established the Metropolitan Planning Commission in 1947 for the purposes of easing such planning issues dealing with housing. This organization’s goals included making and amending master plans for the orderly growth and development in the Atlanta Metropolitan District. Master plans would maintain orderly growth in the wake of the rapid and explosive growth and movement in the postwar period. Other federal advances during this period also expedited the need for such organization and stability in planning. With the passage of the Federal Housing

⁸⁸ Lands, p. 186. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952

Act of 1949 and the provision of financial tools for slum clearance and urban redevelopment in America, committees interested in securing benefits hastily revised their planning strategies to conform to the new legislation. Furthermore, the United States Supreme Court outlawed racial restrictive covenants in a historic decision that prompted blacks all over the country to take new positions on matters related to housing and planning. Black groups in Atlanta interested in housing and planning gained motivation and momentum. They began thinking in terms of better locations and the establishment of representative patterns of living; thus planning of the previous year, such as that initiated by the Atlanta Housing Council and the Mayor's Emergency Committee became somewhat obsolete.⁸⁹

The Atlanta Housing Council had gone out of existence prior to preparation of the plan by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, as well as to the issuance of the Supreme Court decision outlawing racial restrictive covenants. Leaders of the Atlanta Business League took offense to the fact that the Planning Commission attempted to use outdated and obsolete information and approaches to current problems for a long-range program. They considered it extremely unfair to the civic-minded individuals of the previous council given the fact that so many advances had taken shape. Meanwhile, the obsolete approach of the black leaders remained in use as the current standard. For that matter, the Atlanta Business League continued to stress the importance of black representation on the various planning commissions and within the Atlanta

⁸⁹ Lands, p. 181. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952.

Housing Authority. By April 1952, black representation in planning remained non-existent.⁹⁰

According to Mayor Hartsfield's appointment of the advisory committee with quasi-official status, it was the responsibility of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, City Planning Commission, and the Atlanta Housing Authority, to consult with the advisory committee on all aspects of housing and planning as it affected blacks. Black leaders proclaimed that as of April 1952, at no time had they been consulted or invited by the Metropolitan Planning Committee to discuss the Commission's master plan. Phillip Hammer, chairman of the MPC, stated that he had expected the advisory committee to seek him. In response, the committee emphasized that it had taken proper initiative to reach out when its chairman, not the whole committee, visited him to let him know the availability of their services and support. Hammer at that time promised that he would call upon the committee from time to time. This action, the committee explained, reinforced the agreement outlined in the mayor's earlier designation of the advisory committee and placed the responsibility directly upon the Metropolitan Planning Commission to consult the committee. J.L. Wolfe, president of the Atlanta Business League, called the attention of Mayor Hartsfield to the objections rendered by the status of the advisory committee as ineffective and urged the mayor to appoint black representatives in filling two vacancies on the Metropolitan Planning Commission when terms expired on May 1, 1952.⁹¹

⁹⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952

⁹¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 25, 1952. *Up Ahead Plan*

To Appoint . . . or not

From the genesis of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, black leaders engaged in an ongoing struggle for representation. At the center of the struggle was Mayor Hartsfield who attempted to act as a liaison and keeper of the peace between the black community and the planning commission. In spite of concerted efforts for black representation on the MPC in early 1952, Mayor Hartsfield told the *Atlanta Daily World* on May 9, 1952, that he would reappoint Oby T. Brewer, president of George Muse Clothing Company, and George R. Bollinger, a well-known engineer, to succeed themselves as members of the Metropolitan Planning Commission. The mayor explained that leaders of the black delegation, including A.T. Walden, T.M. Alexander, W.H. Aiken and several others whom he had discussed the committee's vacancies, supported his position in the matter. Hartsfield also acknowledged the many letters and correspondences which he had received requesting black representation on the various planning commissions, but noted that it would have been very difficult for him to remove the two newly renewed members. He said removing them "would set up a chain of political repercussions which, I really believe, would do your group much more harm than good." He continued, "People who do a good job expect reappointments." He also emphasized that he would be severely criticized if he replaced Brewer and Bollinger with blacks – or "even whites." He added, "I would be charged with interference in view of the good job both are doing with the Commission." To appoint black representation or not remained a topic of contention as the protest of black leaders continued.⁹²

⁹² *Atlanta Daily World*, May 10, 1952

Throughout the ordeal on black representation, leading citizens and organizations requesting black appointments presented more than 400 petitions to the planning commission. Mayor Hartsfield attempted to contain the heated debate over representation by repeatedly asserting that the Metropolitan Planning Commission maintained only “advisory” powers. He strongly emphasized that the Commission’s findings served merely as recommendations and not the final word. In spite of the mayor’s attempt to persuade black opinion, the struggle for representation continued. The black delegation deemed as undemocratic the Metropolitan Planning Commission and all planning efforts and recommendations presented by the body, due to the lack of black representation in the planning.⁹³

T.M. Alexander and other black leaders responded to the mayor’s statements on why he could not replace members of the planning commission whose terms had expired. Alexander stated that members of the black delegation had not agreed with the mayor’s refusal to name a black member to the Metropolitan Planning Commission. He added that in light of the mayor’s refusal, the black delegation continued to discuss plans for securing black representation on the commission, and the steps discussed would be taken immediately.⁹⁴

Mayor Hartsfield was unavailable for further comments. This lack of representation further enhanced segregation already in place and used in shaping the city. Black leaders called many of the recommendations of the Planning Commission

⁹³ *Atlanta Daily World*, 10, 11 May, 1952. Bayor, p. 70-72

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

“insulting and insensitive” and remained opposed to planning that would control black mobility and enhance segregation of the black population.⁹⁵

Conclusion

In the period addressed in this chapter, many changes came about in the area of city planning, more specifically in transportation. At the close of World War II, cities across America began preparing for unprecedented growth on the horizon. This growth would be felt throughout the country and very heavily in the South. Early on, Atlanta leaders realized the position in which the city stood and attempted to create and implement measures to place Atlanta as the South’s leading metropolis. In doing so, great efforts in planning ensued from the preliminary plans through the Lochner Report. With planning and funding at the federal level, many of the initiatives conceived by city and regional planners in Atlanta gained speed with more available resources.

This story follows the timeline of transportation planning and fills in voids of the African American voice and participation in the planning efforts. In the period between the Lochner Report and the *Up Ahead* plan, city planning systematically excluded African Americans in line with the practices of segregation. Blacks struggled throughout this period to make their presence known and gained momentum along the way. The outlawing of the white primary in Georgia in 1946 along with unification in the black community created newer avenues by which blacks could exert their rights as Americans. Yet despite significant gains at the ballot box, African Americans remained excluded from the planning process. They had hoped that increased political power

⁹⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, 10, 11 May, 1952. Bayor, p. 70-72

would lead to formal appointments on boards that directly impacted the black community. This era ushered in greater African American power, however, it was still quite limited. All in all, this period contributed to greater challenges in both transportation planning and the ongoing struggle of African Americans for equality.⁹⁶

CHAPTER 2 – PHASE II, 1952-1960

At the beginning of the 1950s, most transportation planning activities focused on highways and road networks. Federal intervention and the emphasis on highway transportation and interstate commerce played a major role in highways and roads gaining the most attention. For the city of Atlanta, the Lochner Report had set the foundation for the postwar transportation plans to be created by the newly established Metropolitan Planning Commission. Along with the MPC, city power players became actively engaged in the layout of the highway system. The Lochner Report and plans of the planning commission clearly displayed absence of black representation. They also displayed ideas of maintaining segregation while moving Atlanta forward.⁹⁷

While struggling for representation on the Metropolitan Planning Commission, blacks continued to demand a greater role in the planning decisions that would affect their fast growing population in the city. With the increasing political potency of blacks, city leaders continued to debate the impact of the black vote. At the opening of the 1950s, blacks made up 37 percent of the city's population and their vote became a target of white leaders. With social change on the horizon, white city leaders sought

⁹⁶ Tuck, p. 41

⁹⁷ Lochner, p. 9-10.

solutions to maintain control of the city, while coaxing blacks to ensure that the decisions made were in accordance with the traditions of the segregated city. By 1952, Atlanta's mayor William B. Hartsfield worked incessantly to maintain control and favor from all residents in the growing metropolis to ensure that Atlanta become a great economic center. In doing so, he set in motion a plan for improvement that paralleled metropolitan planning and the racial challenges of the period. These actions contributed to new planning issues that placed Atlanta at the center of social change in the 1950s.⁹⁸

Hartsfield's Plan of Improvement

When Hartsfield took over as mayor in 1937, the city was on the verge of bankruptcy. And, he made the city's financial status his first and most urgent concern. The city had been operating on an antiquated system of budgeting that allowed it to spend on a basis of anticipated revenues, which created an ever-increasing deficit. In finding solutions in matters of fiscal responsibility, Hartsfield soon won the support and full confidence of Robert Woodruff, CEO of Coca-Cola, and that of many of the city's other power players and business leaders. Their support prompted banks to willingly help restore and stabilize financial obligations. From that success, Mayor Hartsfield urged the legislature to pass legislation setting in motion a model budget system for the city which provided that no department could budget more than 99% of the money that it had actually received from the previous year. To ensure a margin of safety, the council

⁹⁸ Harold H. Martin, *William Berry Hartsfield: Mayor of Atlanta* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1978) p. 24

limited the budget to 95% of the previous year's receivables. With this system working correctly, Hartsfield transformed other areas of city governance.⁹⁹

One of his greatest accomplishments centered on his push for Atlanta to be a transportation hub. Known as the "father" of the Atlanta Municipal Airport, he insisted on improving Atlanta's transportation facilities and investing in transportation planning for the purposes of continued growth. With the city on track for growth and prosperity, he promoted with great zeal throughout his tenure the development of Atlanta as a great economic center tourist destination, and gateway to the American South.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Martin, *Hartsfield*, p. 24. *Atlanta Constitution*, August 25, 1944

¹⁰⁰ Martin, *Hartsfield*, p. 24

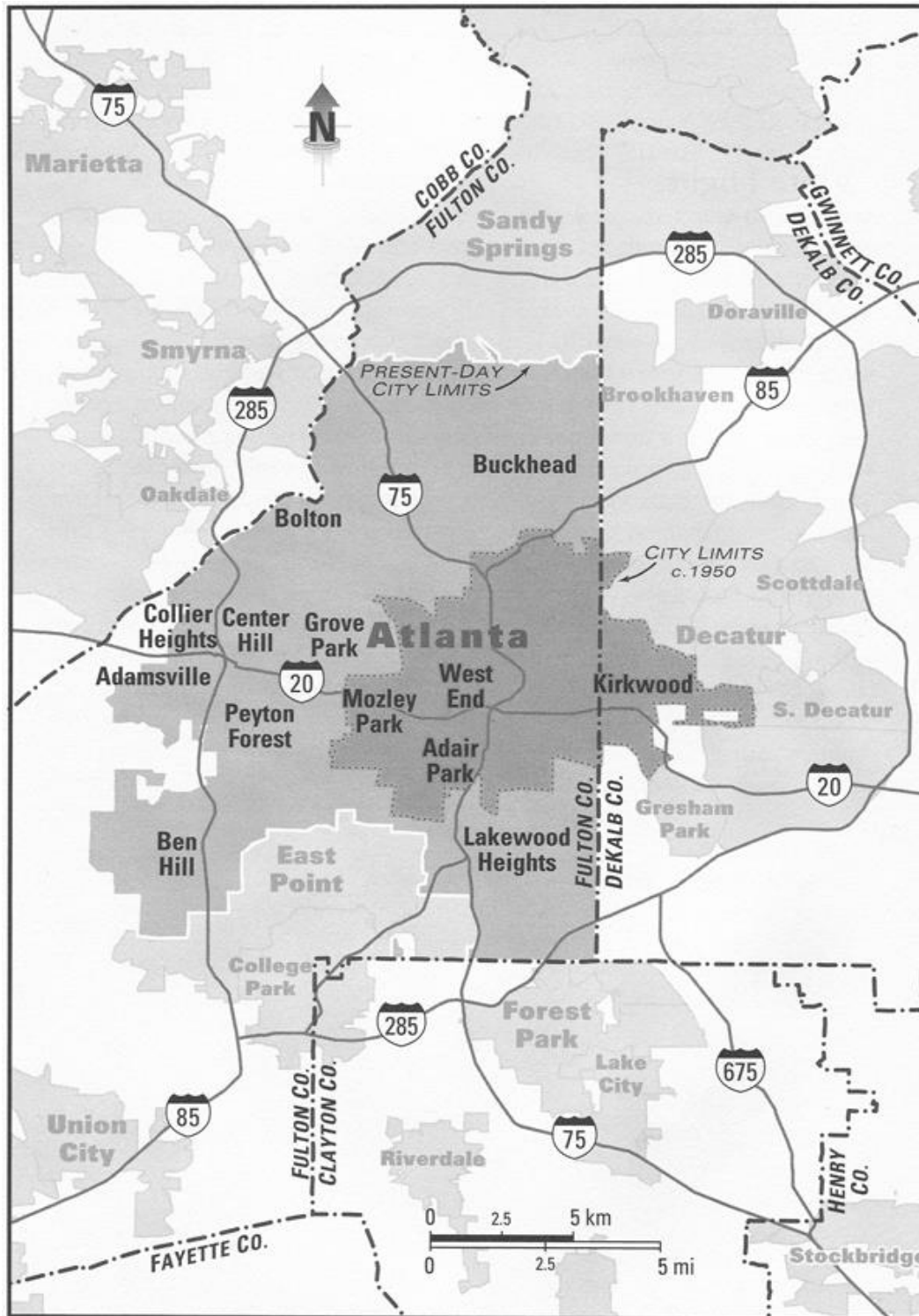


Figure 8: Overview Map of Atlanta, Kevin Kruse, White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005

Hartsfield's political career progressed amidst a sea of change in southern race relations. Early in his career, he came into office and served with the support of a white electorate. Not until the 1940s with the outlawing of the white primary and the increase in black voter registration did he make changes to his strategies. After 1946, he came to see the potential in a new governing coalition. Historian Louis Williams states, "By supporting the interests of black leaders and the moderate instinct of the business community, Hartsfield was able to oversee the slow breakdown of the color line in Atlanta and to maintain himself in elected office."¹⁰¹

Hartsfield realized that his political future depended on being able to incorporate the budding black electorate into his alliance. Since blacks constituted a large voting bloc, he had to pay attention to them. The special election of Helen Mankin also made him understand that blacks constituted a political force to be reckoned with in local politics and elections.¹⁰²

Hartsfield's reelection in 1949 set in motion an era of new politics and black participation in the city of Atlanta. Hartsfield avoided a run-off in this election by just 102 votes – a victory made possible only by the huge majorities he received in black precincts.¹⁰³ Hartsfield also received a majority of the white vote on Atlanta's affluent north side, but not an overall majority among white voters. Despite great appreciation for the support from a growing black electorate, Hartsfield understood that whites still represented the majority of the city's voters. For that reason, he had to be careful in his

¹⁰¹ Louis A. Williams, *William Berry Hartsfield: The Reluctant Accommodationist and the Politics of Race in Atlanta, 1900-1961*. (Ph.D. Diss., Georgia State University, 1996), p. ix-xii.

¹⁰² Williams, pp. ix-xii

¹⁰³ Martin, *Hartsfield*, p. 72. Stone, p. 30

pursuit of the black electorate and not stir up issues upon which his opponents could build strong opposition. Hartsfield began to realize that racial cooperation and good relations played an essential role in the growth and progress of Atlanta; and he was intent on maintaining a steady balance to ensure Atlanta's economic momentum. He also understood the role in which it would play in his political future.¹⁰⁴

In order to maintain balance, Hartsfield had to figure out a way to capture the black vote without abandoning his white constituency. He had to devise a plan gradual enough to maintain the support of a substantial element of his white voting base. To make his strategy work, Hartsfield sought to strengthen his connection with community leaders throughout the city, both black and white, to forge a biracial coalition. He maintained close ties with the affluent communities of the north side and later won their support for annexation. Hartsfield's goal early on was to recapture the out-migrating educated and affluent middle class, the group that became the core of his constituency. In doing so, he weakened his appeal to Atlanta's white working class. Nonetheless, the support of the affluent, white middle-class, coupled with the growing black electorate, made way for Hartsfield's Plan of Improvement that took shape in the early 1950s.¹⁰⁵

To accommodate growth, the Plan of Improvement emphasized the expansion of the city limits further outward. The migration to the suburbs of Atlanta's moneyed elite alarmed and angered Hartsfield, since this meant that the inner city would be dominated by the working-class vote. In previous elections, Hartsfield drew his support from the business and professional community, while the working-class vote tended to favor his

¹⁰⁴ Williams, xii. Stone, p. 27

¹⁰⁵ Williams, xii-xiii. Stone, p. 27

opponents. He became determined to recapture by annexation his supporters in the Buckhead area, the affluent area just north of the city limits. The successful annexation of Buckhead, and other majority-white suburban areas came on January 1, 1952 when the Plan of Improvement took effect. This plan, regarded as the most innovative change in Atlanta's municipal government in half a century, included sweeping ramifications and effective changes in the governance of the city. Although annexation (the term itself was removed from the final writings of the plan in order to gain support) proved to be most beneficial to the Hartsfield coalition, it ushered in many new responsibilities for the city.¹⁰⁶

In winning support for causes such as the annexation of affluent white suburbs, Hartsfield maintained constant communication with the affluent white middle class communities. His quest for annexation had begun much earlier in his tenure as mayor. During his first term, he wrote many letters seeking support. In one letter, he said:

The most important thing to remember cannot be publicized in the press or made the subject of public speeches. Our Negro population is growing in leaps and bounds. They stay right in the city limits and grow by taking more white territory inside Atlanta. Out-migration is good, white homeownership citizens. With the federal government insisting on political recognition of Negroes in local affairs, the time is not far distant when they will become a political force in Atlanta if our white citizens are just going to move out and give it to them. This is not intended to stir race prejudice because all of us want to deal fairly with them; but do you want to hand them political control of Atlanta?¹⁰⁷

Upon securing the support of the whites on the northside, Hartsfield then turned his political skills to mobilize Blacks. He argued to them that whites on the northside represented a reasonable element, one capable of counterbalancing rabid

¹⁰⁶ Martin, p. 25, 86-87

¹⁰⁷ Martin, p. 42. Stone, p 30.

segregationists. Black leaders were well aware of Hartsfield's outlook and reservations about their political strength. They believed that amidst all his reservations rested deep wells of political wisdom, which over time caused him to modify his views. With both factions on board, the Plan of Improvement, which included the annexation of the northern suburbs and areas of southwest Atlanta, received a majority vote and was set in motion. This plan expressed the strategy of maintaining a white majority city, but one dominated by the affluent middle class. Though it reduced the Black electorate for a short period, it helped to protect the coalition's foundation of black participation at a time when federal activity on behalf of minority rights was very limited. The Negro Voters League supported the plan and urged the black community to vote in favor. The plan included the incorporation of areas of black expansion on the city's west side. Black leaders made immediate plans to organize the "new residents" politically, adding strength to the black voting bloc. The Plan of Improvement tripled the size of the city from 37 to 118 square miles and added an estimated 100,000 to its population, bringing the city's total to 428,299. It also realigned functions between city and county and created a smaller city council elected at-large.¹⁰⁸

MPC and its Master Plan

"Planning is the key to our metropolitan future," proclaimed the MPC. It added, "Not that we'll face complete chaos without planning. We won't. But without planning, neither will we realize the promise our future holds or the savings that can come with

¹⁰⁸ Stone, p. 30. Bayor, p. 87. *Atlanta Daily World*, June 28, 1950.

orderly rather than disorderly growth.”¹⁰⁹ In 1950, the MPC had initiated a two-year program to develop a basic master plan for projected metropolitan growth. This master plan included recommendations about all aspects of the area’s growth and development. MPC explained:

Metropolitan Atlanta faces a great epoch of its history. It can become unique among U.S. cities for its open downtown area, its well-planned use of rolling land, its decentralized homes and factories and its web of efficient highways. Already the problems that come with its promise are being felt. But the area has taken the first steps toward planning for its future. There is now need for haste in developing the plans and putting them into effect.¹¹⁰

The Commission and its staff began a process of analysis and planning, which in its first year, included studies of the area’s economy, industry, population, commerce, land use, and neighborhood patterns. The second year of master planning brought about a series of technical studies, resulting in schedules of future needs for expansion of water and sewer systems, rail and truck facilities, schools, parks, and community services. This work also produced a general capital improvements budget to estimate the cost of these expansion programs over the years. This phase culminated with the 1952 plan entitled *Up Ahead: A Regional Land Use Plan for Metropolitan Atlanta*.¹¹¹

Based on the objective of controlling the outward expansion of the urban area, this two county plan encouraged outlying cities to absorb growth beyond the planned limit for the urban area. It also featured the essential component known as the Atlanta Area Transportation Plan. This 1952 transportation plan embodied much of what had

¹⁰⁹ *Up Ahead*, p. 9

¹¹⁰ *Up Ahead*, p. 10

¹¹¹ *Ibid*

been set forth and recommended in the Lochner Report. In particular, it recommended a vast web of coordinated arterial and trunk highways, improved downtown traffic circulation, and a strong mass transit system. The goals of the *Up Ahead* plan reflected the need to coordinate growth and the provision of public infrastructure. City officials recognized that transportation was an essential component to growth and that parameters must be set.¹¹²

Being created at the height of segregation, the planning commission and the plans drafted reflected the discriminatory attitudes of the time. An example of segregation written in the *Up Ahead* plan is clearly exhibited through the need for areas of “Negro Expansion.” These areas provided ample space for the displacement of the city’s African American population resulting from the vast highway and road networks planned to penetrate heavily populated centers in which they currently resided. This example of segregation provided a basis for black disapproval of the *Up Ahead* plan.¹¹³

Examining the Up Ahead Plan

The *Up Ahead* report provided a 25-30 year projected growth plan with instructions for planning and creating sufficient infrastructure to make way for the expansions in population, industry, trade, and commerce. In terms of physical land use, the plan noted that the most important thing about this growth was the explosion over an ever-widening area. At the creation of the plan, an estimated 550,000 people lived in the urbanized core of Fulton and DeKalb Counties. The report projected an estimated

¹¹² *Up Ahead*, p. 10

¹¹³ *Ibid*

900,000 inhabitants by 1980, along with 350,000 more located in the surrounding hinterlands. Industry projections showed 30,000 acres for industrial purposes in use by 1980, increasing the industrial capacity by more than five times. They also displayed most of the future industrial spaces to be on the fringes of the metropolitan area. By 1980, projections indicated the need for 20 million more square feet of commercial or trade space, a number 50 percent higher than figures available at the creation of the plan. With decentralization and sprawl into the suburban fringes, most of the new space promoted migration of businesses and commerce to areas beyond the city center. This in turn forced the central business district to become more specialized in its function. The report concluded that the outward growth projected recognized no political boundaries and upon approaching the boundaries on the fringes and the hinterlands, nearby towns and cities would experience rapid growth and development.¹¹⁴

MPC spoke of the possibilities of the metropolitan region that could be achieved if “we set out to get it.” The report stated that the trends and studies pointed towards a future Metropolitan Atlanta of great comfort, beauty and efficiency. According to it, the future could include:

“ . . . 30 or more large “communities” separated by free-flowing arterial highways. Within each community, 30,000 to 40,000 people can live in pleasant “neighborhoods.” Each community and neighborhood can have an independence of its own - combining the benefits of small-town living with the advantages offered by a great metropolis. Population density can be low. Green ridges and creek valleys can provide open park areas. Industry can be concentrated largely in well-planned and convenient locations on all sides of the area. Rail traffic can be dispersed to serve the outlying industrial district. Truck terminals on designated arteries can give fast circulation without congesting traffic or blighting neighborhoods. The central business districts can be opened up and beautified. Downtown property can be protected and made to play an increasingly important role.

¹¹⁴ *Up Ahead*, p. 3

The entire urbanized area can be tied together by a network of arterial highways that would use the rolling land for a two-level system of express routes. It can be a beautiful and efficient metropolitan unit with a proper balance of homes, factories and stores.”¹¹⁵

However, the possibilities as proposed in the plan merited value and reasonable consideration, fell short as elements of segregation appeared throughout the planning process. Planning decisions in most cases disregarded African American voices not present throughout the planning period. The MPC noted that the project’s projections suggested the possibilities of a well-integrated, beautiful and efficient metropolitan Atlanta. It also noted that answer as to whether the city of Atlanta and the metropolitan region were capable of achieving this vision rested in the people placing trust in planning.¹¹⁶

The *Up Ahead* Plan sought to equip the region with necessary methods for coping with the explosive growth. The first item on the planning agenda and perhaps the most important in accordance with growth and mobility rested in the success of the vast web of coordinated arterial trunk highways. Through *Up Ahead*, the MPC proposed an outline of the network and specified the general location of major future routes, which prompted contention along racial lines. The commission also proposed areas for industrial expansion with sites for dispersal and new warehousing districts. Next, railroad patterns had to be revised in terms of industrial decentralization and expansion. The commission recommended the future building of a railroad belt line to encircle the entire area, with interchange yards along the belt. The current rail lines

¹¹⁵ *Up Ahead*, p. 3

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*

would be consolidated into three major lines. Finally, the trucking pattern was to be amended with the proposed construction of four large consolidated truck terminals located on a major truck loop highway to serve each quadrant of the metropolitan region. These proposals placed transportation as a focus of the study for regional land use and planning.¹¹⁷

Although the MPC placed great focus on outward growth and movement towards the hinterlands, the central business district also received considerable improvements. The Commission recommended specific action to improve downtown traffic circulation, eliminate substandard sections in the downtown area, and provide facilities needed for the central business district's role as the thriving heartbeat of the metropolis. Improvements included a combined transportation center for rail, bus and air travel; a merchandise mart, a central transit depot, a government mall, a civic center and downtown parks. Plans reserved outlying and suburban locations for large shopping centers and retail districts. It also addressed the need for green spaces and green areas along creek valleys, large parks, and an ample water supply to serve the growing population.¹¹⁸

The commission suggested the need for a second municipal airport and several smaller ports. It also proposed that attention be given to new policies for mass transit. The commission tagged mass transit as essential to mobility advances in the metropolitan area's future. The commission suggested new areas to be provided for the expansion of the black population, noted as "Negro expansion." The plan presented a

¹¹⁷ *Up Ahead*, p. 3

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*

number of expansion districts where “colored” neighborhoods could be developed on predominantly open and unoccupied land. These areas made way for slum clearance and redevelopment programs in the areas centrally located to be vacated by a vast number of black residents. The commission also urged the development of a uniform, comprehensive set of zoning ordinances for the entire metropolitan area. These varied suggestions in the *Up Ahead* Report unleashed a number of complications, especially within the black community. This made advancing many of the proposed ideas very challenging. Upon release, the *Up Ahead* Report immediately faced opposition, especially from black citizens who had petitioned for representation in planning long before the plan’s creation.¹¹⁹

Negro Expansion Areas

Philip G. Hammer sent a rush of anxiety and widespread speculation throughout the black community of Atlanta. In interview after interview to the public, Hammer explained the plan as a broad outline to guide city officials in the long range planning and declared that it could become obsolete before the plans were even distributed. He explained that because of the commission’s status with only advisory powers, the report needed the approval of local governments in order to be transmitted into final form. The discussion and plans for “Negro Expansion Areas” presented the greatest issue for the black community. In regards to the areas delegated for movement and mobility among blacks, the plans suggested that new areas must be provided for black expansion. The commission suggested a number of expansion districts in which black neighborhoods

¹¹⁹ *Up Ahead*, p. 3

could be developed on predominantly open and available lands. The plans also recommended that the Auburn Avenue business district, the largest and most important center of black business in the city, and the adjacent area bounded by Piedmont Avenue, Edgewood Avenue, Boulevard and Cain Street-Highland Avenue be replaced with a new civic center, an art museum, library, large convention auditorium, recreational facilities and downtown parks.¹²⁰

Historian Fitzhugh Brundage argues that blacks in the South, unlike whites, could not control how market forces and government policy reshaped their communities. Instead, they watched with mounting alarm as whites unleashed the forces of urban renewal in black neighborhoods. Brundage adds that white power manifested in urban renewal and threatened to radically degrade the traditionally black spaces that had sustained black community life. Furthermore, urban renewal demonstrated white determination to extend control over urban spaces that whites previously had ceded to black control. Blinded by both superiority and insensitivity, many whites ignored the value and wholeness of black community life in targeted areas. Instead, they saw only degraded environments that impeded their ambitions for their cities. Brundage concludes that whites took for granted that they had both the right and the wisdom to dictate how public space, whether traditionally used by whites or others, should be arranged and used. This persistent inequality of power exiled blacks and fueled the demand for immediate representation in planning processes.¹²¹

¹²⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, March 22, 1952

¹²¹ William Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 230

The ambitious proposals for the Auburn Avenue business district in the *Up Ahead* plan provide an example for Brundage's thesis. The proposed dismantling of this space coincided with speculation that Atlanta was preparing for a bid for a World's Fair. Architect Cecil Alexander, who had been drawing plans for a World's Fair, believed the federal government would join Atlanta in buying up land designated for a future slum clearance project. The land in question consisted of that within the Auburn Avenue Business district. Alexander expressed his belief indicating that there was a strong possibility that the city could stage a World's Fair during the decade and this fair could generate much revenue. This revenue would assist the city in financing much of the slum clearance designated for the Auburn Avenue district and other areas throughout the city. Alexander also explained that the permanent buildings left after the closing of the fair could be used to house the proposed Atlanta Fine Arts Center. Alexander's theory aligned with the planning commission's recommendation to replace the Auburn Avenue business district and the surrounding heavily black populated area with a new downtown cultural center.¹²²

¹²² *Atlanta Daily World*, April 12, 1952

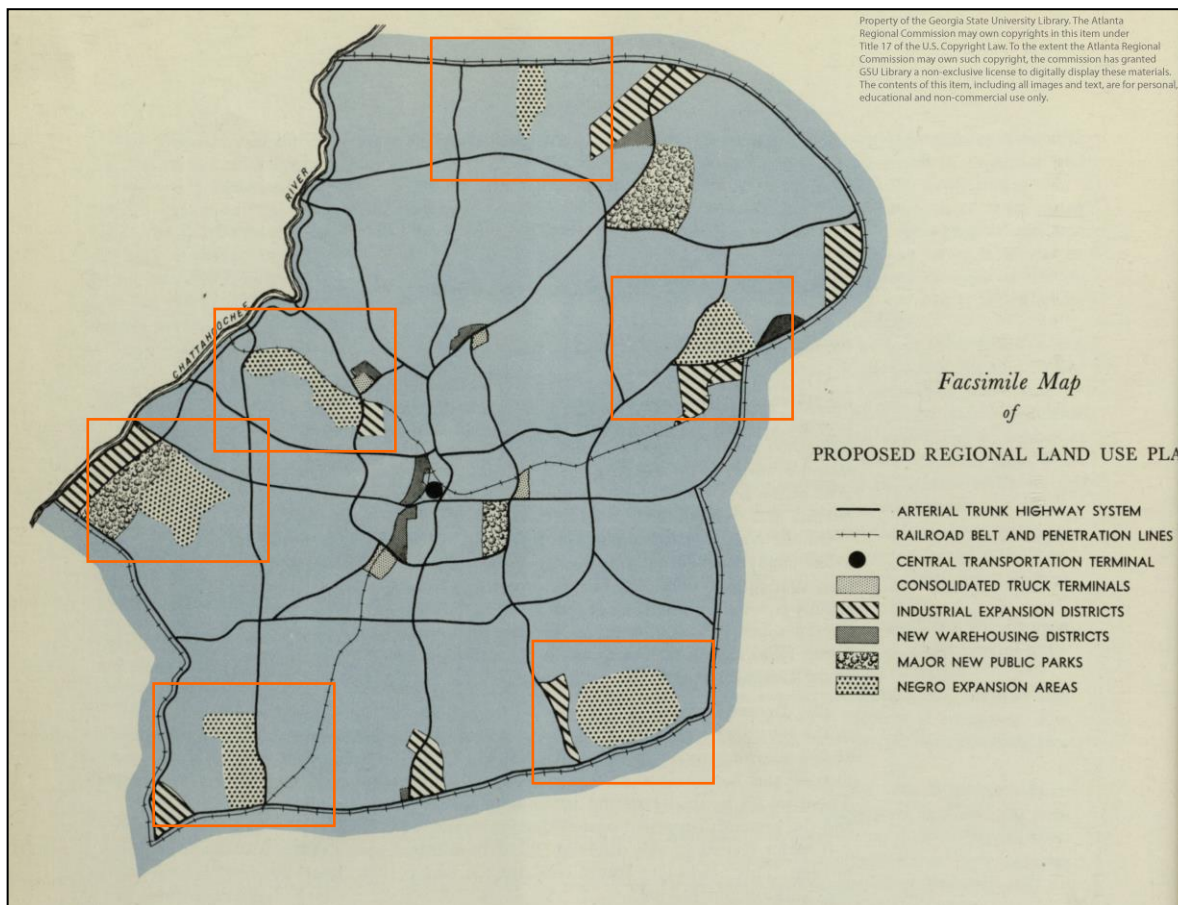


Figure 9: Negro Expansion Areas as illustrated in the *Up Ahead Plan* on the fringes of the city, 1952

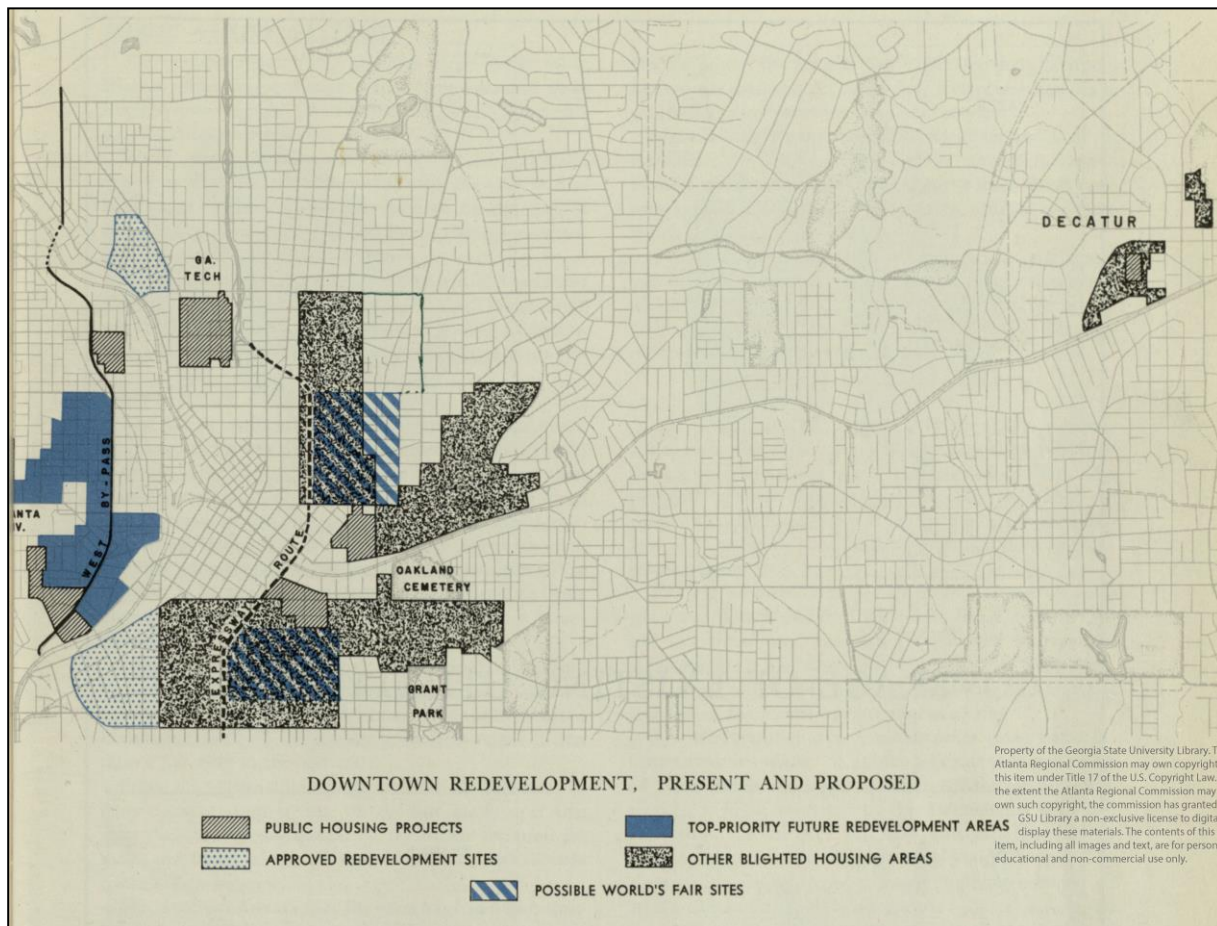


Figure 10: Possible World's Fair Site,
Auburn Avenue Business District, Up Ahead, 1952

Approximately 20,000 Blacks lived in the Auburn Avenue district and were to be most affected by the uprooting and relocation to the proposed “Negro Expansion Areas” if city officials approved the plans of the Metropolitan Planning Commission to transform the area into a “permanent park and civic center.” Piedmont, Forrest, Boulevard and Edgewood bounded the area under consideration, the so-called “Black Bottom.” Within

these borders, reverberated the heart and nerve center of Black life – social, religious, business and political. The *World* noted, “Virtually all of the Negro mass behavior is formulated, crystalized, and manipulated by the sensitivities and pounding pulsations of this area’s ‘Black Heart,’ Sweet Auburn Avenue.” An area characterized by extremes, contradictions, and paradoxes, the district housed the bulk of poverty and the bulk of wealth among the city Black population. Property values ranged from \$6,000 to \$90,000. Blacks owned businesses in the area whose values ranged from \$60,000 to \$1,000,000. From this area, the city claimed \$25 in taxes for every \$1,000 in assessed value. Again, the “Negro Expansion Areas” argument formed the basis for the black protest to the *Up Ahead* plan.¹²³

According to the MPC’s report, the area around the Auburn Avenue district contained one of Atlanta’s worst slums. The commission explained, “As it now stands, it is a definite menace to the future health of the downtown area (to say nothing of the health of its residents) . . . It could be converted into a large civic center to contain an art museum, library, large convention auditorium, recreational facilities and downtown park areas. The buildings could be located along the ridge slopes with park areas and possibly a small lake in the bottom.” The commission stressed this plan in conjunction with the World’s Fair plans. The fair development “would wipe out slums and leave permanent civic improvements,” explained the commission. “This idea is not to be taken lightly . . . A downtown fair site would appear both economically sound and psychologically attractive,” stated the commission. At the completion of the fair, after two seasons or more, the commission believed that the “Black Bottom” and surrounding

¹²³ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 19, 1952

areas could be converted into areas of more usefulness and would open up the heart of Metropolitan Atlanta, making possible the construction of new downtown housing and hotels in the adjacent sections. With civic attention focused on the World's Fair idea for 1957 or thereafter, the possibility of receiving federal redevelopment support for slum clearance motivated the commission to continue exploring this possibility.¹²⁴

One of the greatest challenges to black life presented by this proposal was that if the "Black Bottom" area were to be redeveloped, it would eliminate the Auburn Avenue business district. This district was the central commercial area of the Black population and one of the foremost "Main Streets" within black America. The commission believed in relocating the commercial center for the Black population, and that a large, new, modern and thoroughly adequate black business district could be created on the Westside in its place. Commission officials believed that "the Atlanta Negro population badly needed a first-class central district." The commission directed the migration of Black population and the "colored" center of gravity westward. It suggested the eventual commercial development of Ashby Street between Hunter Street and Simpson Road. The commission's plan designated Atlanta's Westside to field the migration of Blacks from other areas of the region.¹²⁵

In addition to the focus on the "Black Bottom" area, the commission reiterated that other blighted downtown areas also received consideration for possible development. "These areas too contained concentrations of housing of such poor quality that the cost of rehabilitation would be prohibitive," asserted the commission. It

¹²⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 19, 1952

¹²⁵ *Ibid*

continued, “These areas are harmful to the health and welfare of the residents and costly to the community as a whole.”¹²⁶

R.O. Sutton of the black-owned Citizens Trust Company denounced the proposal relating to Auburn Avenue. He said the commission was protective of the so-called “Golden Heart¹²⁷” district – the area comprised of the downtown and uptown business districts - and deliberately not protective of the Auburn Avenue district. He noted:

The commission seems to be operating on a false assumption that Auburn Avenue is a so-called shopping center. What about Auburn Avenue’s great financial and commercial institutions? One of our enterprises, for example, not only serves Atlanta and the Southeastern region, but its service can be described by an arc stretching all the way from Texas to Michigan and its existence has not only contributed to the growth of Auburn Avenue, but to all Atlanta.¹²⁸

Sutton further elaborated that the businessmen of Auburn Avenue were seeking the opportunity to participate in the economic life of the growing metropolis on a competitive basis with regards to race, color, creed or national origin. Relocating the Black businessmen to “some little shopping center,” would impede progress and create even more barriers to equality. Black leader Walter “Chief” Aiken emphasized that Auburn Avenue was about as valuable as Peachtree. He added, “the patronage of the Auburn Avenue came from all over Atlanta alike.” Black leaders sought the chance for the Auburn Avenue district to become a part of the “Golden Heart” district. According to the

¹²⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 19, 1952

¹²⁷ “Golden Heart” – Area comprised of the downtown and uptown business districts. Also referred at the central business district, Up Ahead, p. 69. T.M. Alexander, *Beyond the Timberline: The Trials and Triumphs of a Black Entrepreneur*. (Edgewood, MD: M.E. Duncan & Company, Inc., 1992) p. 162

¹²⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 24, 1952

commission, repurposing blighted areas in the Auburn Avenue district showcased the necessary improvements “needed for the expansion of Atlanta’s central functions.”¹²⁹

Black continued to rally against the *Up Ahead* plan and the protest gained momentum. “We don’t want all of our planning done for us,” proclaimed T.M. Alexander.¹³⁰ “We have grown up and have plans of our own for our future economic and social development.” Known in Georgia as “Mr. Insurance,” Alexander founded Alexander & Company, which grew to become one of the most successful minority owned full-line independent insurance agencies in the country. It served major clients throughout the United States. His emphatic statement was a rallying call for the residents, patrons and businessmen of the Auburn Avenue district who stood firm in their opposition. Alexander further stated that the relocation of Auburn Avenue businesses would be considered especially insulting and insensitive. He added, “Comparable White business interests would not have been treated so cavalierly.”¹³¹

Negro Housing

The proposed removal and relocation of blacks from the Auburn Avenue district and the eastern edge of downtown coincided with another growing challenge of the postwar period, available housing. One of the greatest problems for the Metropolitan Planning Commission in drafting its plans was that of locating housing sites for the black

¹²⁹ Alexander, p. 162. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 24, 1952

¹³⁰ T.M. Alexander – Known in Georgia as “Mr. Insurance,” he founded Alexander & Company in 1931. The company grew and became one of the most successful minority owned full-line independent insurance agencies, serving major clients throughout the United States. In addition to insurance, he and his associates formed other businesses in the areas of real estate development, banking, and social establishments. Alexander, p. 257

¹³¹ Alexander, p. 162, 257. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 24, 1952

population. By 1950, African Americans constituted a significant population in the city of Atlanta and most were crowded in six areas: the Atlanta University section, Simpson Road, Auburn Avenue, McDaniel Street, South Atlanta, and Parkway. The commission reported that these areas contained about nine-tenths of the entire black population of the city. It also explained that the Black housing issue stemmed from the inability of African Americans to find either enough available secondhand housing or enough open land to meet the growing needs of the community. The commission further elaborated that most of the new housing from the housing boom in Atlanta during the postwar period had been for the benefit of whites.¹³²

In his memoir, T.M Alexander explained that like Blacks in other cities, Atlanta's Blacks followed patterns of expanding into housing vacated by Whites during an early period of growth. He said that no shortage of land existed, but land had to be politically cleared for black expansion to prevent housing tensions and not prompt bad race relations. He explained that the suggestion of "Negro Expansion Areas" garnered vigorous protest from Whites who owned the designated land and objected to the aid of relinquishing it for Black housing. On the other hand, Blacks resented the designation of segregated areas of black homes in the face of impending federal desegregation rulings. "The segregated areas for black housing was based on a plan that was supposed to foresee the picture 50 years hence," he stated. And according to him, the progressive element among Negroes anticipated the abolition of all segregation and discrimination in housing and other areas in less than a half century. He concluded that foresight, leadership and financial resources which blacks themselves made available

¹³² *Atlanta Daily World*, April 17, 1952

served as one of the most important factors in clearing the way for black housing expansion.¹³³

In reporting on matters of black housing, the commission noted three things that had blocked improvement in the past: (1) The pattern had been one of blacks taking over houses vacated by whites. This resulted in numerous “ghetto” areas near the heart of the city. Two or three black families moved into dwellings formerly occupied by a single white family. The homes in those areas then fell into a poor state of repair as little or no investment was made by the owners to keep structures up to standard after blacks took over. (2) There were few areas available for building new black housing and the most desirable areas were developed for whites. There was a general agreement that new areas must be opened up for blacks, but it was difficult to get particular acreage set aside for that purpose. (3) Blacks were seeking low-cost housing and a large portion of the black population could not afford moderate or high cost housing. This automatically eliminated the attractiveness of the black housing market to most builders who were faced with high land and construction costs. It was also difficult to construct low-cost projects within reasonable proximity to the downtown area.¹³⁴

These barriers to improvement in Black housing contributed to a more acute economic problem “with a fairly fixed supply and increased demand,” explained the commission. “Properties for black occupancy took on a fictitious value, which maintained no counterpart in the white housing market. Quality of housing considered, local blacks paid more for housing than white people did.” With the lack of suitable land

¹³³ Alexander, pp. 162-163

¹³⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 17, 1952

as one of the major barriers preventing the construction of new housing for blacks, the master plan reflected the opinion that improving the situation rested with opening up and developing expansion areas for black outside the central city and downtown core, which many black residents endorsed.¹³⁵

The proposed expansion areas for blacks were detailed in the *Up Ahead* plan with various maps showing these places in outlying areas of the city. The commission provided brief descriptions of the proposed locations along with their current statuses. Westside expansion areas included the Sweat Road location, lying in the northwest section of Atlanta, was bounded on the north and south by the Southern Railway and Proctor Creek, respectively; on the east by the Rockdale Negro community; and on the west by Brownsville, Hollywood and Bolton Roads. This undeveloped land could support a community of at least 15,000 people. West Gordon Road expansion area, west of the Atlanta city limits in Fulton County, was bounded on the north by Gordon Road, on the east by Fairburn Road and on the west by the Botanical Gardens. The largely undeveloped land was near the proposed new industrial district along the Chattahoochee River west of the Botanical Gardens.¹³⁶

Southside expansion areas included the Redwine Road location, lying west of College Park along Camp Creek and Redwine Road. This area was another large undeveloped area in Fulton County. Its east end would tie in with the existing Negro development in College Park. The commission said the development of this area located near the proposed Red Oak Industrial expansion district could make possible

¹³⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 17, 1952

¹³⁶ *Up Ahead*, p. 69

the elimination of several Negro slum districts in East Point and College Park. On the Eastside, the Bouldercrest expansion was earmarked for future development. It was a large area in southwest DeKalb County near the Clayton County line that was completely undeveloped and could accommodate future population growth. Also on the Eastside, the Washington Park expansion area was proposed near the existing Washington Park Negro section north of Scottdale near Lawrenceville highway in DeKalb County. Largely undeveloped except for scattered farms, the proposed development was near the East Ponce de Leon and proposed Tucker Industrial districts.¹³⁷

Finally, on the Northside, the commission believed the existing Negro Community known as Lynwood Park on Osborne Road north of Brookhaven in DeKalb County could be expanded northward in Nancy Creek Valley.¹³⁸ Historian Veronica Holmes defined the area as an underclass African-American community settled in the late-1920s in the then heavily wooded and rural northwestern DeKalb County. This enclave provided safety from white racism during the Jim Crow era, and was in close proximity to Oglethorpe University, and two exclusive golf clubs, which provided employment within walking distance of the community.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ *Up Ahead*, p. 69

¹³⁸ *Ibid*

¹³⁹ Veronica Holmes, *Stories of Lynwood Park*. (Ph.D. Diss., Georgia State University, 2008), p.1

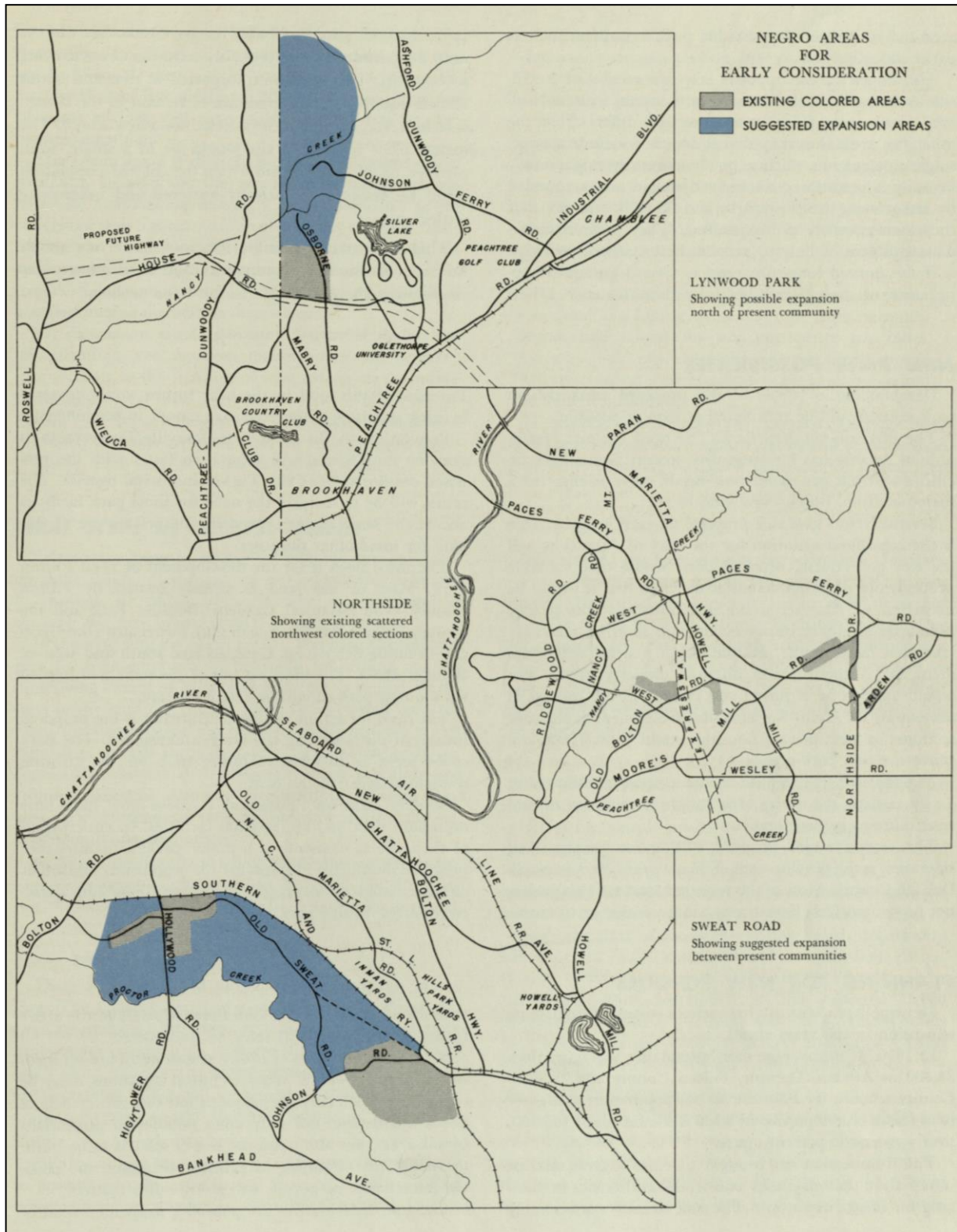


Figure 11: Black Expansion Areas, Up Ahead, 1952

The commission also proposed the development of a new black neighborhood in Atlanta's northside section, however suggested no specific site. The commission pointed out in reference to the north side development: "At present there are small Negro settlements on the Old Bottom Road, Moores Mill Road, Northside Drive, Lenox Road and in several other scattered locations. Each of these settlements is surrounded by high-value white property; in each, the black residents usually own their homes. Most of the settlements are old, antedating the growth of the adjacent white suburbs. Most are not expanding at present; some are in path of obvious white expansion. The major problem presented by scattered settlements is how to provide adequate public facilities especially schools. There are three substandard frame school buildings now serving several areas."¹⁴⁰

Urban League and Up Ahead

"Social conditions which seriously affect a population often give rise to social intercourse which result in the birth of institutions whose growth is developed and stunted in proportion as they meet specific needs,"¹⁴¹ explained Robert E. Johnson, staff writer for the *Atlanta Daily World*. Johnson described the birth of the Metropolitan Planning Committee as "born against the backdrop of a postwar crisis in which Atlanta's growth was as controlled as a boil weevil's behavior in a cotton patch." Understanding its origins also explains the lack of black participation on the planning commission and in planning decisions. Johnson further elaborated that the lack of planning for orderly

¹⁴⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 17, 1952

¹⁴¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 18, 1952

growth and development of the city created ongoing tensions in the area of housing. The city was in dire need of adequate housing in the period in which wartime savings had “fattened” pockets and created a growing market of those seeking to buy land and homes. In a city where segregation ruled, housing the black population presented an agonizing problem in planning. In order to maintain support, planners remained cognizant of the opposition faced whenever customary segregative measures were not followed. In order to prevent backlash in the planning stages, the planning commission used the resources of other institutions and agencies, one being the Atlanta Urban League.¹⁴²

Whenever it faced problems in finding expansion areas suitable for the black population, the commission turned its attention to the Atlanta Urban League. The Urban League had already investigated independently the adequacy of several sites as possible expansion areas for black residences. Its investigation recommended six expansion areas, some of which differed from that of the planning commission. In explaining the relationship between the Atlanta Urban League and the planning commission, Mrs. Grace Towns Hamilton, league executive, explained: “The Atlanta Urban League has used the Metropolitan Planning Commission and other planning bodies as a resource for factual information needed in our program. The Metropolitan Planning Commission has similarly sought our cooperation in securing factual information on the program in which they were involved. We do not endorse the proposed *Up Ahead* plan for Atlanta’s growth, but we sincerely believe that the proposal should be studied carefully and that black citizens should participate as all other citizens

¹⁴² *Atlanta Daily World*, April 18, 1952

are asked to do in the revision of the proposal made. We believe also that the right of criticism carries with it the responsibility for constructive assistance in improving the conditions, which need immediate attention. We have a job of trying to work for the greatest good for the greatest number. There are many ways in which black businesses, as can all other businesses, profit by understanding and by looking ahead of what will be the new Atlanta.”¹⁴³

The Atlanta Urban League (AUL), officially established on March 15, 1920, ten years after the founding of the national organization in New York City, aimed to improve housing, living, and working conditions for blacks in Atlanta. It also aimed to promote interracial understanding and cooperation. Grace Hamilton assumed leadership of the organization in 1943 and received praise from the national organization for her calm, rational approach to social problems and her experience with interracial groups. Most of her activities with the Urban League focused on large-scale, fact-finding surveys concerning the varying problems of the Atlanta’s black community. Hamilton initiated programs focusing on the areas of education, housing, health, and voter registration and citizenship. Hamilton’s tenure also focused on improving employment opportunities and recreational facilities for blacks in Atlanta. Hamilton believed solutions to these problems among many others facing Atlanta’s black community would facilitate full and equal participation and viability in the city as a whole.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 18, 1952

¹⁴⁴ Alton Hornsby, Jr. and Alexa Benson Henderson, *The Atlanta Urban League, 1920-2000*. (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005) p. 1-7. Sharon M. Mullis, *The Public Career of Grace Towns Hamilton: A Citizen Too Busy to Hate*. (Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 1976) p. 106-108.

Black Atlanta Responds to *Up Ahead*

After being unveiled in early 1952, *Up Ahead* prompted vigorous protest among African American leaders and activists. The *World* printed a series of editorials to present *Up Ahead* to its readership. The paper sought to give as complete and accurate information as possible, and to explain, clear up, and point out what was at stake in the plan in order to help make intelligent opinions. It also intended to help guide public opinion by pointing out what seemed to promise the greater good for the greater number. With these goals solidified, writers at the *World* sought to express the sentiments of black Atlanta in response to the recommendations of the planning commission. “While we hasten to say planning is desirable, noted a *World* writer, “we are equally hasty to say that planning is not subject to the rigid cross examination of reasonability as trustworthy as daydreaming born out of unconscious rambling.” Black Atlantans in general understood the importance of planning in the wake of tremendous growth and expansion in the postwar period, and they called for recognition and cooperation at every level of the planning and decision-making processes.¹⁴⁵

In a rousing call for recognition and cooperation in planning, *World* staff writer Robert Johnson noted some good recommendations proposed in the so-called master plan for the city’s residents. Yet, upon initial review, blacks realized the repercussions and high level of destruction proposed by the plan. Blacks also sensed racial insensitivity and the lack of their own contributions in the planning process. Johnson added: “When the plan is viewed from the generous frame of humanity, informed in deep knowledge of Christianity and democracy, we immediately note some of the grave

¹⁴⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

shortcomings.” He noted that the MPC, a legal body created by an act of the Georgia General Assembly in 1947, had no black members, and failed to consult the advisory board of blacks that had been appointed by Mayor Hartsfield. Also, the commission had made a radical recommendation, which if approved, would have replaced the central business district for blacks on Auburn Avenue, “thereby deadening the nerve center and plucking out the heart of black life,” noted Johnson. Finally, the commission, apparently ignoring a well-known fact that there was no legal sanction for restriction nor zoning on the basis of race, proposed that six major black expansion areas be developed on the outskirts of the city, bounded by railroad tracks and the Chattahoochee River. The writer concluded that it was quite apparent that the commission kept a “sharp eye on the folkways and mores of ‘Southernism’ and had no desire to break the cake of custom.”¹⁴⁶

Central to black Atlanta’s protest of *Up Ahead* was the simple fact that there was no black presence on the planning commission, nor had blacks even been consulted. In an exercise of his power to appoint advisory bodies of lay citizens in connection with certain problems, Mayor Hartsfield had named a ten member advisory committee for issues pertaining to housing and urban renewal. In the wake of widespread planning for highway/road projects and other renewal programs involving the demolition of black housing and neighborhoods, this committee included black leaders. Nevertheless, as historian Stephen Tuck has noted, these black leaders remained as “junior partners,” with only minor consideration being given to their demands. Hartsfield noted that this advisory board should be consulted during the formative stages of all matters relating to housing and urban redevelopment that affected blacks in Atlanta. Yet T.M. Alexander

¹⁴⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

noted that in the formative stages of *Up Ahead*, the advisory committee was not consulted by the MPC. He also explained that, “Members of the advisory committee accepted the appointments only as an emergency measure until there were vacancies whereby they could be accepted into full membership. This, at least, afforded an opportunity for Blacks to be in planning rather than being planned for.”¹⁴⁷

An anonymous resident of the Auburn Avenue district denoted *Up Ahead* as “such a bold insult . . . so evil in intent . . . so unreasonable and unfair to blacks that it leaves me speechless.” Because of its harsh implications for the relocation of the Auburn Avenue business district and its patrons to other areas zoned for black expansion, these sentiments echoed throughout black Atlanta. One *World* writer stated:

We cannot see the need of blueprinting segregation for the future. We believe that in 1980, when metropolitan Atlanta’s population reaches the predicted million mark, racial attitudes will be so healthy that we will have to dig deep into history recorded in our newspaper files to learn that once upon a time there lived in this metropolis persons and groups who were known as peddlers of prejudice and passion; vendors of venom and verbosity; and dealers in deceit and defamation.¹⁴⁸

Blacks demanded consideration when it came to issues directly affecting them and were ready to protest to ensure that their voices be heard. *Up Ahead* invoked discussions of transportation planning, housing, and urban renewal. In planning for *Up Ahead*, whites maintained control over decision-making, which was evident in the exclusion of blacks. Though blacks were given some token consideration, most of the final decisions still reflected the goals of city leaders operating under the mores of segregation and white supremacy. With these attitudes and sentiments engrained in

¹⁴⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 16, 1952, Tuck, p. 93. Alexander, pp. 162-163

¹⁴⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 16, 1952, April 29, 1952

leadership and in the decision-makers, postwar planning exhibited in *Up Ahead* and throughout the decade reflected the absence of full consideration of black Atlanta. It would take more moderate measures to make way for biracial cooperation to bring about change. Change also came through the strengthening of black political power and the direct action that it prompted. With issues of transportation planning and urban renewal on the rise, the next few years ushered in more challenges stemming from the persistence of blacks for equal participation.¹⁴⁹

Outspoken Disapproval: Calhoun's and Reddick's Stand

The *Up Ahead* plan continued to face thorough examination and scrutiny in the black community and fervent disapproval among its leaders. John H. Calhoun, realtor, and member of Mayor Hartsfield's advisory committee, stood adamant in his beliefs that the "master plan" was against the interest of the black community. Calhoun, a member of the Atlanta Business League and executive secretary of the Atlanta branch of the NAACP, analyzed the report from the standpoint of segregation and found some of the recommendations against the best interest of blacks, "especially in view of national and international trends towards extending principles of democracy to all people." The fundamental ideal of justice and equality provided the basis of many a argument and a rallying charge of black struggles. Calhoun explained, "When the commission issues the valuable data as a basis for recommending the relegation of a class of citizens to isolated sections, replacing Negro slums with white housing projects and destroying business values, our faith in democracy is thereby weakened." Central to Calhoun's

¹⁴⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 16, 1952, April 29, 1952

opposition was the relocation of residents and black businesses from the Auburn Avenue district. He argued:

In the first place, the directing of Negro housing to seven specific areas, outside the city limits and several in DeKalb County, in a report that should receive general approval of the community, is not consistent with democratic principles. Secondly, the fact that Auburn Avenue is an integral part of the downtown business district, means that it cannot be transplanted in a section outside the downtown area. Nor should any representative group of citizens attempt to destroy the historical, sociological and economic values, which have been developed in this area, through generations of sacrifice and effort on part of intelligent Negro businessmen and women.¹⁵⁰

Calhoun also spoke of the political implications of the master plan, stating that in the past blacks had been unprotected from zoning and planning bodies because they lacked political influence. He explained, "Groups of white citizens, activated by whatever motives, effectively secured approval or disapproval of projects in Negro communities which met their desires." And thus, in many cases, the value and beauty of the black sections became depreciated. With the outlawing of the white primary, along with a growing black electorate, blacks boasted some political strength that could bring about some change. As a result of a little political force, the steadied depreciation of black property declined. Nonetheless, he further elaborated that zoning and planning laws didn't protect black sections, nor provide for their development in a truly democratic fashion, stating "That is why recommendations of the Metropolitan Planning Commission carry such serious import in the future developments as they relate to the Negro population."¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 26, 1952

¹⁵¹ Ibid

As for segregation embedded in the master plan, Calhoun criticized providing new areas for Negro expansion as not a useful or acceptable approach to harmonious development and biracial cooperation. He probed, "Why should Negroes be specifically directed to land that is now predominantly open or to areas now generally inaccessible to transportation and other facilities, or to sections which are not in line with the Negro population trends that have gained momentum with the past few years?" He added that forcing blacks into secluded expansion areas could result in the establishment of ghettos, which was certainly not in keeping with the principle of extending democracy to all peoples. Furthermore, in a democratic society, he wrote, "free people will not respond favorably to directions which are inimical to their best interests." Calhoun believed that it was unreasonable to expect intelligent and wise blacks to accept rigid recommendations in which *Up Ahead* placed on housing. He affirmed that in general, experience showed that as a distinct racial group, blacks tended to live more or less together, in naturally developed communities. Expansion, like natural and evolutionary tension and issues, should be approached and guided by civic-minded, courageous leadership in both races, without government or semi-political intervention.¹⁵²

Dr. Lawrence Dunbar Reddick¹⁵³, historian and chief librarian at Atlanta University, shared Calhoun's sentiments. Knowledgeable in city and regional planning, Dr. Reddick had observed practices in various locations throughout the country including Los Angeles, Baltimore, Detroit, and New York; and realized immediately that

¹⁵² *Atlanta Daily World*, April 26, 1952

¹⁵³ Dr. L.D. Reddick, University of Chicago-trained historian and holder of the Ph.D. degree, studied city planning in municipalities that included Los Angeles, Baltimore, Detroit, and New York. His point of view was based on research and his published studies, "Race Relations on the Pacific Course" and "The Negro in the North During War Time." *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

some phases of the MPC's master plan were not in the interest of Atlanta's Black communities. Dr. Reddick's dissection of the *Up Ahead* plan provided insight from one skilled in various fields of research. He examined the plan from principles of sound sociological planning in a democratic society. He criticized the planning commission in calling "Up Ahead" simply a land-use proposal, ignoring the wider implications. He explained, "Of course, we want better paved streets, speedier communication, more comfortable transportation and other physical improvements . . . But the end product of all this is that there shall be better living for the people." He asserted that a "good plan" would provide for all the inhabitants of the city and offer a better chance for cooperation and peace.¹⁵⁴

Dr. Reddick deemed human relations as the supreme weakness and failure of the commission's plan. He added:

This plan violates the first principle of democratic planning in that the composition of the planning commission is not democratic. We might ask, how could the product of such body be democratic when that body itself is not democratically composed? No Negroes are represented on the commission or on its paid staff. If it is said, in answer, that those appointed and hired represent all of the people, the best answer to that is for us to take a look at the report that this body brought.¹⁵⁵

Reddick argued the recommendations of the master plan were undemocratic and if adhered to, they would: (1) "Cut the throat" and disrupt Auburn Avenue businesses; (2) Under the banner of slum clearance, remove/relocate thousands of Black residents who lived in the city limits; (3) In some cases, replace the Black residents with other whites when new housing has replaced the slums; and (4) Scatter and disperse Blacks

¹⁵⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*

in six or seven ghettos clustered on the periphery of the city. Reddick supported the ideas and advances of slum clearance, but asked why not let the people who already occupied blighted areas live there after those locations became fit to live in. He believed it not necessary “to shuffle Negroes to the open country.” As for the proposed expansion areas, Reddick noted that three of them were adjacent to industrial sites. He even noted that one of the proposed areas seemed conveniently located for whites to have their domestic servants live in close proximity. While labeling all labor as honorable, including domestic service, Reddick said, “It is revealing when the commission betrays its conception of a Negro neighborhood as a reservoir of domestic servants.”¹⁵⁶

The political implications of the *Up Ahead* plan appeared blatant and visible to the black community. Already, the black electorate of Atlanta was rapidly growing, and through community involvement and civic programming, this electorate was slowly becoming a force in city politics. In early success as a growing force, the black electorate contributed to the passage of the annexation plan of 1952. This aided in stabilizing and maintaining a white majority. Reddick noted that the relocation and removal of thousands of Black citizens from the old city into six or seven small blocks was yet another ploy towards destroying the political strength of Atlanta’s Black electorate. The Atlanta of the future would be a more segregated city than at the present upon the recommendations of the commission, he explained. He continued, “There would be less chance of Atlantans of different backgrounds and colors to know each other as good neighbors; residential segregation would be greater than it is now

¹⁵⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

and as ever, would be the mother of all manner of institutional segregation.” Reddick further elaborated that riots and racial tension seemed less likely to take place in mixed neighborhoods because good neighbors don’t assault each other. Ultimately, he believed the *Up Ahead* plan to be a violation of provisions of good human relations, such as those outlined in the Declaration of Independence. He stated, “*Up Ahead* points to a rather dismal future in this regard, and is merely a the creature of certain political and social forces.” Like Calhoun, Reddick declared this plan unjust and in need of modifications to align with the ideals and values of the communities to be most affected. He concluded, “I say change it and make it come closer to the democratic ideal.”¹⁵⁷

Black Community Triumph

For the Black community, the greatest issues of the *Up Ahead* plan centered on its lack of democratic ideals and equal representation in planning. Because the plan was simply a proposal requiring support and approval before becoming final, the planning commission hosted a 10-day public hearing for leaders and citizens alike to voice opinions on aspects of the “master plan.” The hearing commenced on May 26, 1952, at the Municipal Auditorium, and featured representatives of business, professions and educational institutions. Letters were sent to specific representatives, individuals, and organizations of all racial groups. The commission instructed residents who wished to be heard to contact them.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1952

¹⁵⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 21, 1952

At the public hearings hosted by the Metropolitan Planning Commission, representatives voiced grievances of the master plan. The biracial panel of guests included black representatives, along with other leaders, including: Dr. Allen D. Albert, Jr., of Lockheed Aircraft, Inc.; Robert Leopold, managing director of Greater Atlanta Safety Council; Elbert Tuttle, Atlanta Community Planning Council; Richard H. Rich, of Central Atlanta Improvement Association (CAIA); A.H. Sturgess, Atlanta Chamber of Commerce; Pearce Matthews of Atlanta Title Company; and Harold Bush-Brown, School of Architecture, Georgia Tech. At the hearing, varying disagreements existed about aspects of the *Up Ahead* plan. The black delegation remained firm in their grievances, which included the threat to the Auburn Avenue business district, the relocation of Blacks to segregated expansion areas, and the lack of Black representation on the planning commission.¹⁵⁹

Many white from the greater Atlanta community found less criticism of the report. Dr. Albert of Lockheed said the magnitude of the work that went into the plan in such a short space of time was incredible. He also noted that the result of letting things grow up had cost taxpayers lots of money, and planning was necessary because Atlanta was undergoing such a tremendous transformation in economy and structure. Leopold of the Greater Atlanta Safety Council hailed the plan as an outstanding achievement. Richard Rich noted that a city, like a business, must plan for the future. According to Rich, a poor plan was better than no plan at all. Sturgess and Matthews were both “enthusiastically” in favor of the master plan and Bush-Brown of Georgia Tech also favored it. He complimented the Commission for “planning democratically,” and stated,

¹⁵⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 27, 1952

“if we can’t plan successfully under our democratic system, we are in danger from fascism and communism where planning can be and is being carried out by imposition.” As the public hearings continued, leaders expressed and took into consideration the sentiments from all neighborhoods, communities and cities in Fulton and DeKalb counties.¹⁶⁰

After months of public hearings and ongoing debate, MPC announced changes in the recommendations of the *Up Ahead* plan. Robert H. White, chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Commission announced at one of the final public hearings that the recommendation to relocate the Auburn Avenue business district would be dropped. This came after vociferous dissent from the members of the black delegation and the community altogether. T.M. Alexander told the commission that blacks could not support the relocation of the Auburn Avenue business district because it was the “Golden Heart”¹⁶¹ of the community, and “its beats are our inspiration and our pride.” This district also served the spiritual center of Black Atlanta. Epitomizing the vitality of black life in the city, Auburn Avenue was the main thoroughfare which Black leaders were adamant in protecting.¹⁶² A white spectator at the public hearings at the Municipal Auditorium directed a question to Alexander, asking: “What is it that the Negro actually wants in this expanding city?” Alexander passionately responded: “We want the same thing that you want on an equal basis. We want an opportunity to develop to our fullest

¹⁶⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 27, 1952

¹⁶¹ “Golden Heart” refers to both the downtown and uptown districts. In *Up Ahead*, the commission explained that the health and efficient functioning of this area was essential to the future well-being of the entire metropolitan area. MPC, *Up Ahead*, p. 68-69

¹⁶² Gary M. Pomerantz, *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta*. (New York: Scribner, 1996) p. 123

capacity – economically, socially and politically – without restriction, discrimination or segregation. In other words, we want to run the same race that you run, with you, but without the additional hazards.”¹⁶³

So what caused this shift in the fate of the Auburn Avenue business district? Was it the persistence of the Black community in creating a unified force of resistance to recommendations that would drastically alter their way of life? Or did the members of the commission realize the detriment? On the question of abandoning the proposal to relocate historic Auburn Avenue, Commission Chairman White asserted that there was quite a lot of work involved in planning and several “technical mistakes” were made in printing. There was one mistake in particular, which was in the wording of the section on Auburn Avenue. The commission felt that section had been misinterpreted and needed an explanation:

“You’ll notice in the report what we said about the Central Business District. We have found that there are certain consumer industries or businesses that are moving outside of the Central Business District. There is a decentralization trend affecting that type of business. They are going out, they’re going closer to the people they serve. In studying Auburn Avenue, which is part of the Central Business District, we found that this trend had lagged behind the other parts of the Central Business District primarily because of the presence of a rather large residential area north of Auburn Avenue and running up to Forrest Avenue. So when it was proposed that the Golden Heart be developed which would eliminate the area as a Negro residential section, we then felt that Auburn Avenue would begin to be affected by the same trends felt by other business districts until it had ‘caught up’ with them in the decentralization of their consumer business. Thereafter, the Auburn Avenue section would follow the same trends as other sections of the Central Business District.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ *Atlanta Daily World*, June 4, 1952

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*

The commission stressed that it was “never contemplated in our thinking” that those businesses in the Auburn Avenue district whose functions were regional or more than simply consumer businesses would be moved from the Auburn Avenue section. It also explained that the word “eliminate,” which was used throughout the report in referring to the Auburn Avenue district occurred in error. “They [Auburn Avenue businesses] will stay and there will probably be more development of that specialized type of business just as we have forecasted it for the other Central Business Districts.” The commission reiterated that the ideas of elimination and removal were intended for purposes of progress in the Auburn Avenue district as a whole community. In linking this issue to that of trends affecting the other business districts in the area, the commission members claimed they were thinking in terms of dispersment from Auburn Avenue. They claimed that relocation would be voluntary, calling it advisable and potentially economical for black from the area to move. According to final statements, no one would be forced through government intervention and be removed. Removal would only take place in voluntary cases. The commission used the final statements to provide justification for the many concerns hovering around the elimination of the Auburn Avenue business district. Finally, the commission reassured the unified Black leadership that in the final report, the proposed elimination of the business district on Auburn Avenue would be removed.¹⁶⁵

Shortly thereafter, the Metropolitan Planning Commission removed its recommendations for “Negro Expansion Areas.” The expansion areas, along with the proposed elimination of the Auburn Avenue business district, had set the foundation for

¹⁶⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, June 4, 1952

the hotly contested debates of the *Up Ahead* plan on behalf of the Black community. The victories came about as a result of the public expressions voiced by citizens and leaders alike during the series of hearings on the plan. Philip Hammer stated that his organization was in agreement with an overall policy of removing the contested items from the final plan, and that maybe it had been a mistake to make such designations in the report altogether. Hammer also stated that the commission's approach taken to issues as sensitive as housing for the growing black population was not proper, but housing was still a very critical issue. Moving forward, the commission vowed to continue seeking solutions for this issue affecting residents of the region. Hammer said it had been suggested that local governments settle problems growing out of locating land for black expansion with direct community involvement. He said the commission would attempt to find out the sentiments of governing officials and would ask them to make suggestions to bring about solutions in the area of finding available land to adequately house the growing black population.¹⁶⁶

Apparently the feedback received during the public hearings had resonated with the Metropolitan Planning Commission, bringing about some of the democratic change for which many Black leaders had spoken fervently. The commission regarded the hearings as an essential part of the planning process. It was through these hearings that change came about in preparation for the final plan to be submitted to local governments. Blacks saw the hearings as opportunity to engage, galvanize, articulate, and leverage. The persistence and unity among the black community ushered in changes at this stage of planning, but more aggressive physical changes were on the

¹⁶⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, June 26, 1952

horizon. Over the course of about six months, two of the Up Ahead plan's recommendations with the most detrimental effects had been defeated, but many still existed. Auburn Avenue had been spared in this instance, but black leaders would not be as lucky in facing the next wave of challenges.¹⁶⁷

Mobility via the Hartsfield Coalition and Biracial Organizing

In the aftermath of success in defeating detrimental recommendations of the *Up Ahead* plan, an invigorated community continued to press for expanded roles in planning and in all areas of city government. In a much larger city by 1953 through annexation, greater strides in biracial cooperation ensued. The Hartsfield coalition consisting of the upper class elite on the north side in conjunction with the large black electorate initiated a chain of events that enhanced racial mobility and progress for the black population. This coalition helped Atlanta elect its first black to citywide office in the twentieth century, when Dr. Rufus Clement, president of Atlanta University, was elected to the school board in 1953. In addition, A.T. Walden, prominent attorney and member of the Atlanta Negro Voters League, and pharmacist Dr. Miles Amos were elected to the City Executive Committee. The Plan of Improvement envisioned by Mayor Hartsfield was making progress. The outlawing of the white primary together with the strategies of the Plan of Improvement assisted in eliminating barriers for blacks through a policy of racial moderation and negotiated gradualism.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, June 26, 1952

¹⁶⁸ Stone, p. 31

Attaining support for the adoption of the Plan of Improvement presented a great share of challenges. It required the support of many people, organizations and institutions throughout the city. Key to the success of the plan was the support of the city's business leadership, which led the campaign to have it approved in the state legislature leading to a successful referendum. The business leadership was successful in acquiring the support of organizations including the League of Women Voters, and with Hartsfield's influence, they also received the confidence of the strategically important Atlanta Negro Voters League. The newspapers provided a critical link in this success. Along with the public campaign of the business leadership, extensive background bargaining proved instrumental in the success of the plan. Hartsfield stood as the public face of the program, staying away for the background bargaining. He served as a mediator in the coaxing and dealing, rather than being involved in the direct application of political pressure. He believed this method would limit opportunities for racial conflict and unrest. Hartsfield's incremental steps through the Plan of Improvement, largely symbolic and extensively staged and planned, represented the city's modest steps in a more moderate direction.¹⁶⁹

As a result of the tension caused by the lack of democratic planning and black representation in creating the *Up Ahead* plan, Hartsfield sought to bring blacks and whites together as a permanent planning committee to sort out the matters of the growing developmental problems in the various sections of the city. On the west side, the establishment of the West Side Mutual Development Committee (WSMDC) created a biracial organization to play a pivotal role in determining the course of racial transition.

¹⁶⁹ Stone, p. 31

WSMDC's biracial charter roster included: prominent black leaders, builder Walter Aiken, realtor T.M. Alexander, and attorney A.T. Walden. Giving the organization a twist, Hartsfield selected top leaders in the growing white resistance movement as white counterparts in mutual planning. Those members included: Sid Avery, engineer at General Electric; Richard Florrid, executive secretary of the Atlanta Restaurant Association; and Ernest Sewall, a serviceman for an adding machine company. T.M. Alexander stated the overall goal of the WSMDC as: "to try to work out on the community level the peaceful, orderly expansion of the communities of both white and colored." As a means for promoting the "orderly and harmonious development" of the city, the creation of such racially balanced mutual development committees was well in line with Hartsfield's Plan of Improvement for the city of Atlanta and the growing demands for progress and biracial cooperation.¹⁷⁰

T.M. Alexander believed the biracial approach of the WSMDC to be a timely approach to an increasingly intense problem as Atlanta's population continued to expand beyond its capacity to adequately and equitably house both races. He described the beginning of the WSMDC: "The first meeting was 'cold' and cautious. There was a definite lack of mutual understanding and sympathy on both sides. The forced handshakes were limp and without warmth. There was even a feeling of inner tension and resentment, and a wall so thick between the groups on opposite sides of the table that it was almost visible." Mayor Hartsfield reiterated the purpose of the committee carefully and concisely. He generally believed that if the group could sit together and

¹⁷⁰ Kevin M. Kruse, p. 78. *Atlanta Daily World*, December 3, 1954. City of Atlanta Records, Bureau of Planning, Box 3, Folder 5. Alexander, pp. 164-165

take an objective look at the mutual problems as intelligent citizens, they might be able to work out a solution.¹⁷¹

In its capacity, the WSMDC monitored rumors of racial change and conflict throughout the city. The committee's purposes included:

- (1) Providing channels of information to civic and other groups, Negro and white, and bringing them into fuller participation in governmental and community activities; and
- (2) Seeking to solve specific problems through fact-finding and mediation.

The two most frequent, time-consuming and critical problems faced by the Committee since its creation were how to handle controversy, violence or potential violence in transition areas; and how to locate vacant land areas for Negro housing expansion. The Committee's success in solving problems of this type traced to a straightforward approach. Backed by the city, the Committee invited all parties concerned to sit around a table, review the facts together, and exchange viewpoints until a meeting of minds was achieved. The backing of the City government provided a vital force in effectuating and maintaining agreements reached in this way.¹⁷²

The WSMDC investigated reports of racial transitioning and set in place mass campaigns to organize and investigate via canvassing, written questionnaires, and public meetings. Information collected provided leaders with detailed information and insight into the processes of racial transitioning. WSMDC gained support and allies from various groups. The information collected through their labor stood to limit the impact of desegregation and racial transitioning in the city and assisted in maintaining peace on its streets. The approval from city government proved critical in garnering support. City

¹⁷¹ Alexander, p. 164

¹⁷² City of Atlanta Records, Bureau of Planning, Box 3, Folder 5. *Atlanta Daily World*, March 14, 1954

approval validated the organization's purposes and provided a vital force in securing and maintaining peaceful resolution. The committee also received the overwhelming support of local newspapers and businessmen, and its members were also interwoven in strong networks and institutions. As a result, recommendations from the WSMDC carried clout on the subjects of race and residence in the city of Atlanta. Throughout the 1950s, the West Side Mutual Development Committee wielded tremendous influence, using its prowess to negotiate conflicts and seek equity throughout the city.¹⁷³

Land-use issues provided the next challenge. The wave of land-use issues, many centered on expressway construction and redevelopment, implied massive displacement. Coupled with changes on the state and federal level, these land-use issues created many new problems and challenges that shook the coalition's core.¹⁷⁴

Now – For Tomorrow

Two years after publishing *Up Ahead*, the MPC presented a new report, *NOW – FOR TOMORROW: A Master Planning Program for the DeKalb-Fulton Metropolitan Area*. Like its predecessor, it provided a broad outline to serve as recommendations only. The power and responsibility for more detailed community planning rested with the city and county agencies. *Now – For Tomorrow* did not cause the kind of uproar that followed *Up Ahead*. The new recommendations omitted the need for “Negro Expansion Areas” and the relocation of the Auburn Avenue business district, two ideas that had faced the greatest challenge from blacks in the city. This plan, like the previous one,

¹⁷³ Kruse, p. 78-79. *Atlanta Daily World*, March 14, 1954. Stone, p. 31-32.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

focused greatly on economic outlook and upward trends in population as the necessary steps towards orderly growth for the region. The plan stated:

“The timing of its growth is another factor which makes metropolitan Atlanta a favored urban center. Real growth has come at a time of great mobility, both of people and of industry and the greatest growth is yet to come. There is a real opportunity to develop patterns of living, working, and playing that were not possible in the late Nineteenth Century when most of America’s larger cities grew into bigness . . . The physical layout and terrain of the local area invite orderly community development. There are no major physical obstructions to expansion in any direction. The ridges and valleys can provide protection of one type of land use from another to make it feasible to construct grade separation of major streets, expressways, and railroad intersections . . . Our community has unlimited opportunity for growth.¹⁷⁵

In continuing the theme of metropolitan planning, the commission stressed that the complexity of the problems in which the area faced were greater because they spilled over municipal and county boundary lines, and required inter-governmental cooperation for their solution. The commission stated, “No longer is the job of local government administration a simple one. Every day brings new demands on the city and county government.” And with these new demands, along with the growing constituency, came the need for measures of this new master plan.¹⁷⁶

The *Now – For Tomorrow* plan, like *Up Ahead*, placed particular focus on transportation planning. Mobility issues amidst the rapid growth of the region remained among the greatest challenges in planning, from traffic in Central Atlanta to the growing paths throughout the region. The commission made many recommendations similar to the previous plans with the intent of providing the easiest access to the central city.

¹⁷⁵ Metropolitan Planning Commission, *NOW – FOR TOMORROW: A Master Planning Program for the DeKalb-Fulton Metropolitan Area*, 1954. p. 7

¹⁷⁶ Ibid

Many of the freeways and other methods of transportation in use today in the metropolitan region, such as the circumferential highway (I-285) and the MARTA rail system, made their debut in this plan. The commission outlined plans for central Atlanta to include:

“Completion of the north-south connector to remove through traffic from the downtown streets; location and protection of the right-of-way for the east-west expressway; additions to the supply of close-in, off-street parking facilities; elimination of on-street parking in the central area; more efficient use of downtown streets through improved, expanded transit service; greater restrictions on loading, stopping, and turning movements on heavily travelled transit streets; substantial improvements to many streets, particularly those which will carry vehicles from and to the new expressways.”¹⁷⁷

The particular interest of city leaders and the business community in increasing the visibility and marketability of the area for economic development linked to their interest in transportation planning for central Atlanta. The commission noted that most people came to the central business district by vehicle, deeming vehicular transportation the area needing the most investment. It further concluded that the systems of mobility throughout needed to be efficient and accommodate the large numbers of people who interacted daily.¹⁷⁸

Highways and expressways drew a large amount of treatment as central topics throughout the plan. With great federal advances on the horizon, the city and the state remained fully engaged in planning routes to and through Atlanta, adding to its role as the transportation center of the southeastern United States. Because movement within and around the metropolitan area was viewed as “difficult, hazardous, and painfully

¹⁷⁷ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 10

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*

slow,” the commission in *Now – For Tomorrow* proposed a unified major street and highway system. This included expressways and limited access roads to carry the heaviest traffic volumes safely around the metropolitan area and major streets to connect the metropolitan area with an efficient and safe expressway and limited access roads system. This layout would facilitate crosstown movement and provide circulation between residential areas and the commercial and industrial centers. The wheel and spoke system which became a standard for many urban centers was prescribed in the plan, and ultimately became the model in which highway development was constructed. Planners strongly emphasized the urgent need for forward-looking transportation policy for various reasons, including as a cost-saving mechanism. At that time, estimations showed that traffic congestion and transportation issues came at a cost of sixty-five million dollars every year to local citizens, businesses and industry. As such, it was clear that the adoption of public policy on transportation could assist in solving issues prohibiting economic progress.¹⁷⁹

Two of the most valuable components of *Now – For Tomorrow* were the *Trafficways* and *Transit Plan*. These plans contained the measures that were ultimately used as the layout for the emerging transportation systems for the metropolitan region. The *Trafficways* Plan consisted of a coordinated system of streets and highways to serve all parts of the metropolitan area. It was integrated with the plans for other forms of traffic, including transit, truck, railroads, and aviation. A main purpose of the plan was to move future traffic as swiftly, smoothly, and safely as possible. Its goals were also aimed at economy, both in construction and in motor operating costs. *The Trafficways*

¹⁷⁹ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 43

Plan was also designed to coordinate with plans for the National System of Interstate Highways, which would contribute vastly to defense needs and the advancement of interstate commerce. The schematic maps of the plan portrayed a system of radial streets, ring roads and crosstown arteries needed to handle future traffic flow. The central city was the focal point of the planned traffic system.

Although the *Trafficways Plan* received greater attention, advances in the *Transit Plan* still provided significance. The commission noted that success at moving the area's traffic depended highly on the effectiveness of good transit. Transit, or public transportation, provided the greatest source of mobility for those utilizing the central city business district. Transit also provided greater convenience in the struggles with traffic and parking. The commission ultimately believed that improved transit could be the answer to the greater traffic issues, and made recommendations in favor of investment, in rapid rail transit in particular. Altogether, improved transportation policy, which had been a goal since the Lochner Report, was becoming more apparent and planners sought to use *Now – For Tomorrow* to bring the recommendations of years of transportation planning into fruition.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 44 - 54

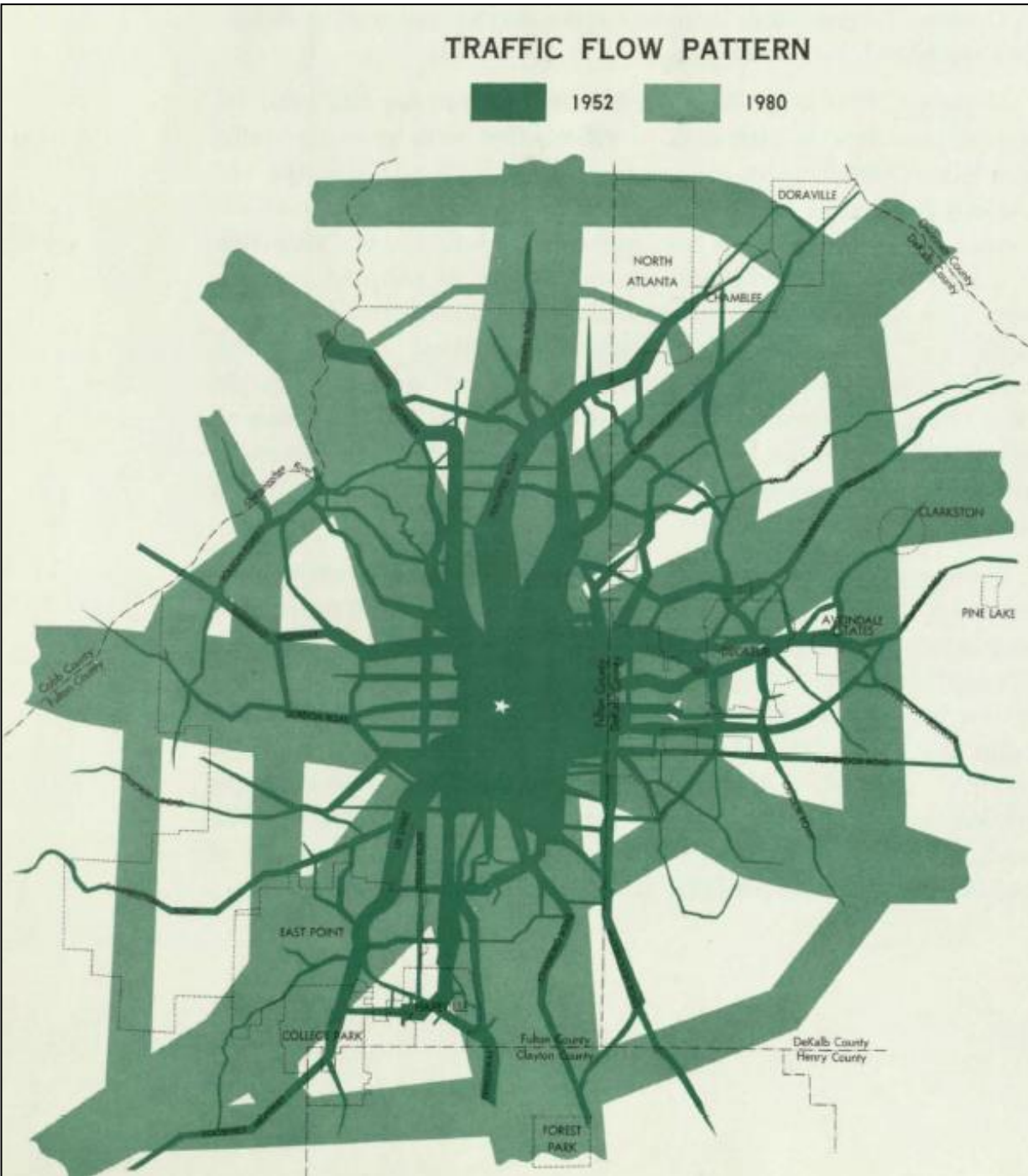


Figure 12: Traffic Flow Pattern in 1952 and estimated for 1980,
NOW – FOR TOMORROW, 1954

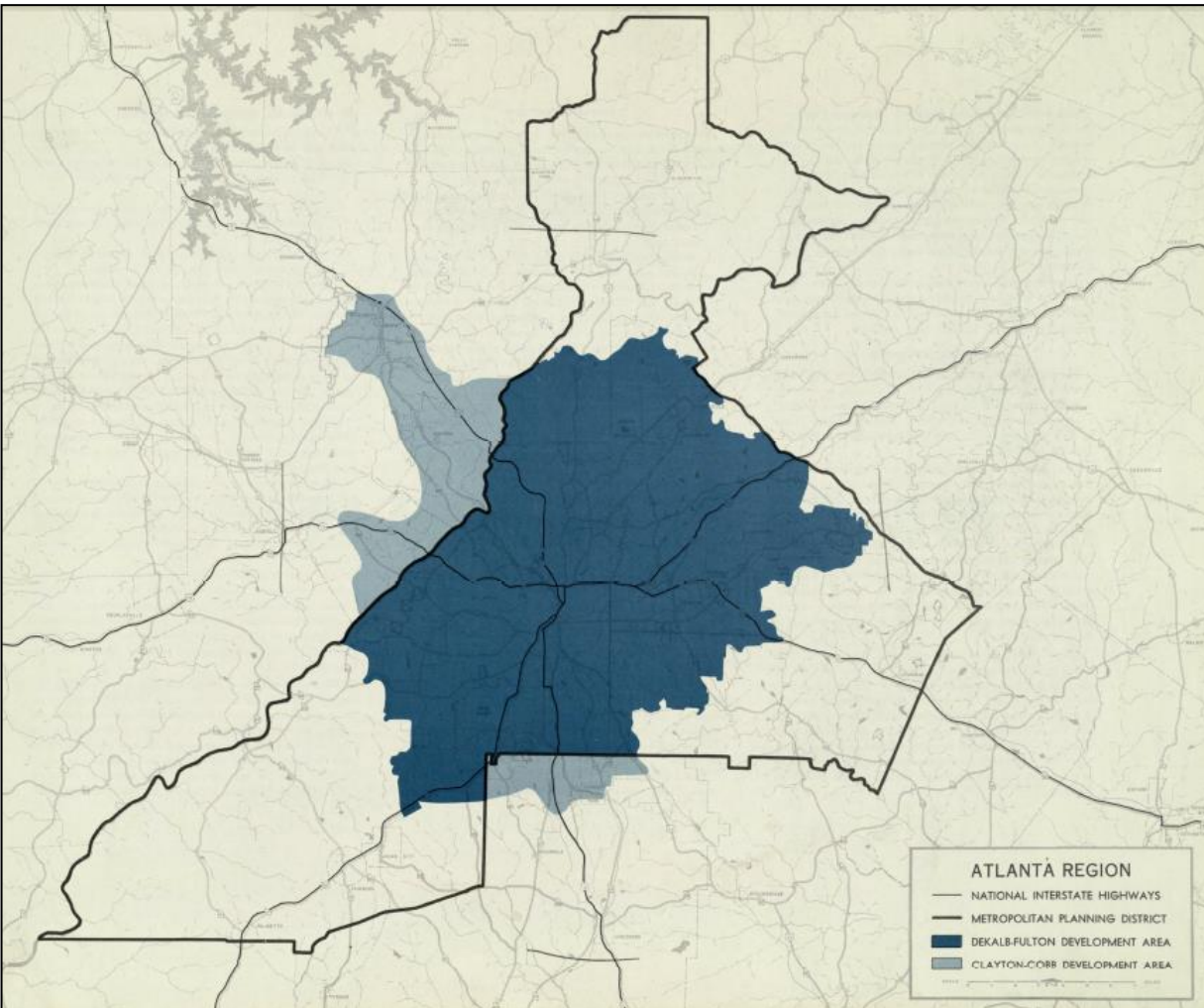


Figure 13: Atlanta Region, *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, 1954

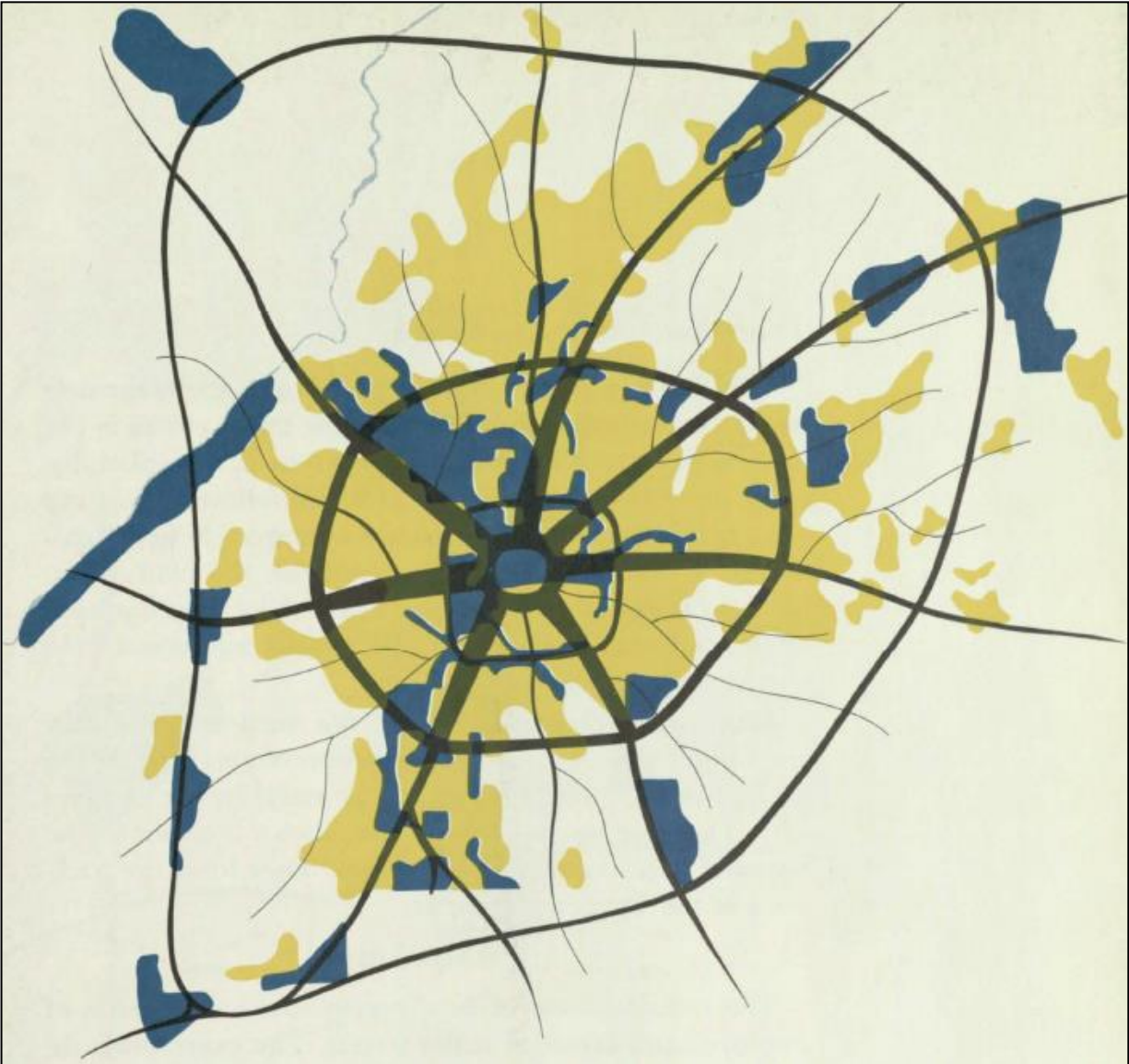


Figure 14: Schematic Sketch of the System of Radial Streets, Ring Roads, and Crosstown Arteries, *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, 1954

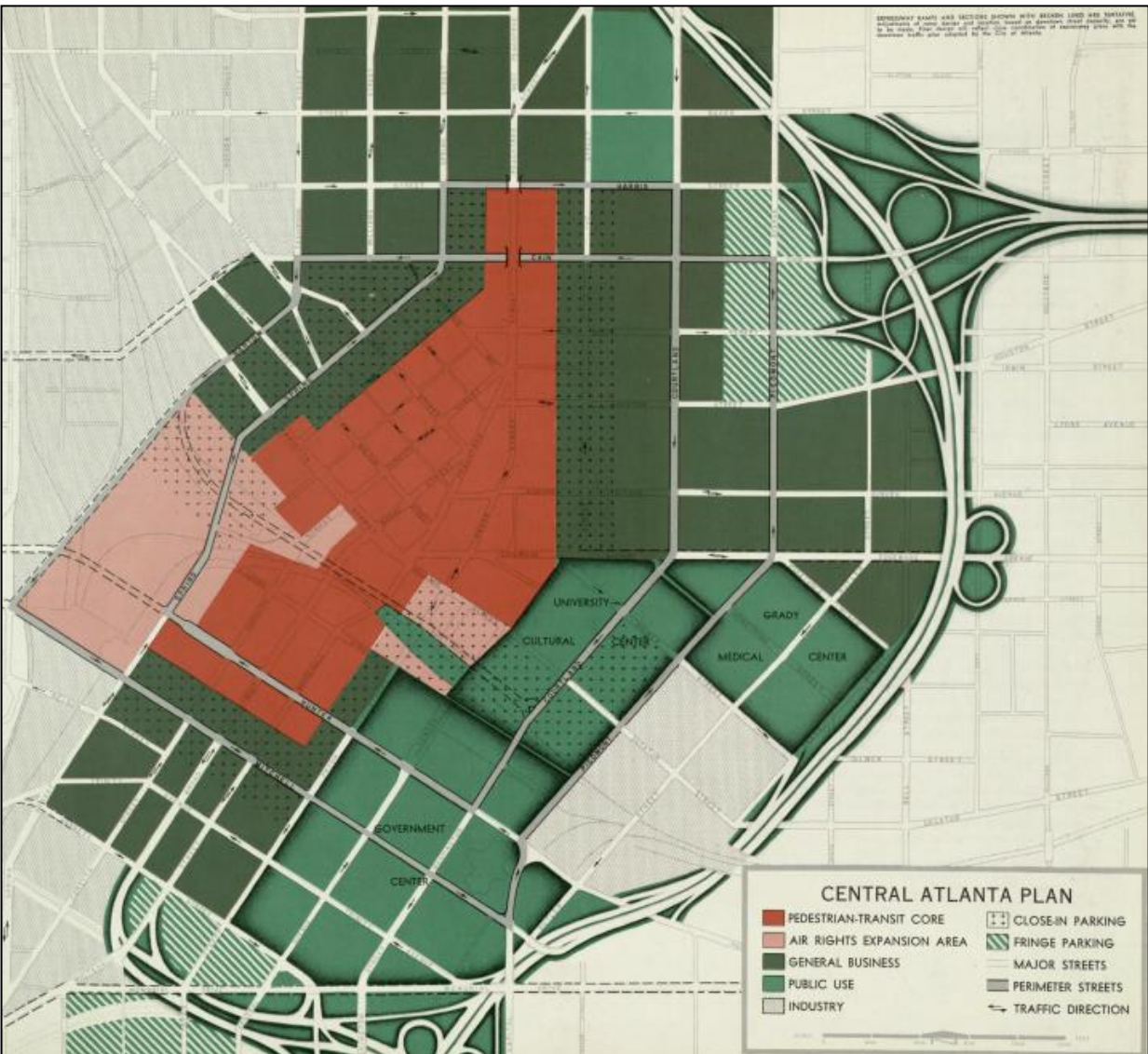


Figure 15: Central Atlanta Plan depicting the reorganization of the Central Business District with highways and interchanges included, *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, 1954

Federal Advances & Highway Legislation

NOW – for Tomorrow provided a new and improved master plan building upon the strengths of the previous plan. It served as a revised version of *Up Ahead*, removing the expansion areas for black residents and the relocation of the Auburn Avenue business district. Though the new plan eliminated features that prompted the vigorous protest of the earlier plan, it still lacked the representation of blacks on the MPC in its creation. Blacks continued to demand representation as larger federal advances in planning took shape. As *Up Ahead* provided an outline for *NOW – For Tomorrow*, *NOW – For Tomorrow* would provide the outline for planning that would be aided by impending federal legislation.¹⁸¹

By the 1950s, highway and transportation planning had risen to a top priority at the federal level. The plans for the federal interstate highway systems added necessary strength to the plans set in motion locally by the city of Atlanta and the planning commission. The German Autobahn network served as a model for the U.S. Interstate Highway system, opening the first segment in May 1935. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who during World War II was a U.S. Army general, saw the advantages Germany enjoyed because of the autobahn network. He also noted the enhanced mobility of the Allies when they fought their way into Germany. His first realization of the value of good highways had come in 1919, when he participated in the U.S. Army's first transcontinental motor convoy from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco. Shortly after being elected president, during the State of the Union Address in 1954, Eisenhower made it clear that the time had come to focus attention on the nation's

¹⁸¹ Tuck, p. 98-99

highway problems. He deemed it necessary to "protect the vital interest of every citizen in a safe and adequate highway system." Having held extensive hearings in 1953, Congress quickly enacted the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1954.¹⁸²

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower took office in January 1953, the states had completed little over 6,400 miles of system improvements and only 24 percent of interstate roadway was adequate for present traffic. This meant very little of the distance had been reconstructed to meet traffic expected 20 years hence according to the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR). In response, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1954 authorized an additional \$175 million for the interstate system. During the signing ceremony at the White House on May 6, 1954, the president said, "This legislation is one effective forward step in meeting the accumulated needs." Immediately, he realized the pitfalls of the legislation and decided to do something about it. He began quickly planning for a more elaborate interstate highway program for America.¹⁸³

Eisenhower's new plans, known as the "Grand Plan," set a goal for a \$50 billion highway program that would be attainable in a ten year period. He argued that this program be implemented because the current highway system was "inadequate locally, and obsolete as a national system." He listed five "penalties" of the nation's obsolete highway network: the annual death and injury toll, the waste of billions of dollars in detours and traffic jams, the clogging of the nation's courts with highway-related suits, the inefficiency in the transportation of goods, and the appalling inadequacies to meet the demands of catastrophe or defense should an atomic war come. The president

¹⁸² Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System."

¹⁸³ *America's Highways*, p. 171. Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System"

believed the grand plan would facilitate a properly articulated system of highways. The president wanted a self-liquidating method of financing that would avoid debt. He wanted a cooperative alliance between state and federal officials to accomplish the federal part of the grand plan. And he wanted the federal government to cooperate with the states to develop a modern state highway system. After two years of debate and compromise, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, was enacted on June 29, 1956. With an original authorization of \$25 billion for the construction of 41,000 miles of the Interstate Highway System over an anticipated 20-year period, it became the largest public works project in American history through that time.¹⁸⁴

Atlanta and Federal Advances

With the necessary support and funding in place at federal, state and local levels, six planned interstate highway routes would radiate from Atlanta. These routes would head northeast towards Spartanburg, northwest towards Chattanooga, westward towards Birmingham, southwest towards Montgomery, southeast toward Macon, and east towards Augusta. These proposed routes would penetrate the heart of the Atlanta metropolitan area and serve the greatest feasible number of vehicles making trips within the urban area. They would converge on the central business district, and at the core of the system would be a downtown connector extending around the north, east and south

¹⁸⁴ *America's Highways*, p. 171-175. Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System," p. 10-11. "Keeping Highway Transportation on the Right Road," Seventh Highway Transportation Congress, Washington D.C., 1958, p. 2. "The Nation's Highway Program: A Comprehensive Review of the Federal-Aid Highways." Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Washington, D.C., 1960, p. 22.

sides of the downtown area. The construction of the downtown connector, along with other links of the federal interstate highway system triggered an era of highway projects that greatly altered the built environment of the city of Atlanta and the metropolitan area. These large-scale civil engineering feats, coupled with other urban renewal programs and the social goals of segregation, dramatically changed the lives and daily habits of its citizenry. They dramatically changed the lives of the many African Americans whose communities functioned in the very paths in which the interstate highways encroached.¹⁸⁵

By 1957, construction of the Downtown Connector neared completion. This highway carried the north/south routes of Interstates 75 and Interstate 85, which converged for the span of the distance through downtown. With a dramatic curve around the rim of the Central Business District (CBD) to the east that began at the initial approach of the CBD, the highway would not impede the flow of traffic within the city center and harm valuable real estate. Rather, it would skirt around the edge and still maintain the best access to the city's core. In this planning move, directing the route east of the central business district led to the heavily populated core of the city's African American business district, the Auburn Avenue corridor. Already labeled undesirable and in most need of rejuvenation in the Lochner Report, this community and the other centers of the African American population had been relegated to this condition after decades of disfranchisement, segregation, and unequal distribution of resources to them. Highway construction frequently served as a method of urban renewal, which made the black neighborhoods even more vulnerable and by the standards of white

¹⁸⁵ Lochner, p. 11-12

leaders and highway planners, in need of rejuvenation. In the wake of planned revitalization and rampant destruction, the black community became alarmed and began to mobilize and voice their concerns over the growing issues of highway construction and urban renewal programs.¹⁸⁶

In Atlanta, wherever the highway/road system could possibly serve a racial function, planners developed with that in mind. During the postwar decades, some new highways became factors in the creation of buffers and barriers attempting to confine blacks to certain parts of the city. The 1950s and 1960s produced various racial uses of roads as the city attempted to maintain segregation while acknowledging the need for additional black housing. The black community's demands for more residential areas also coincided with Atlanta's extensive highway planning and road building during this period. Though racial factors weighed heavily in planning highways, economic concerns also played a major role. Nonetheless, race served as a significant factor in highway planning and construction along with the use of roads as barriers.¹⁸⁷

Amidst the tumultuous environment stemming from a faltering biracial cooperation, blacks continued to voice their issues and make their opinions known. They continued to challenge the lack of participation in transportation planning, the housing crisis, and urban renewal. In a meeting of the Atlanta Business and Professional Association in June 1958, Roswell O. Sutton, vice president of the black-owned Citizens Trust Bank¹⁸⁸ and leader in the black business community, stated: "It will

¹⁸⁶ Lochner, p. 11-12

¹⁸⁷ Bayor, p. 61-62

¹⁸⁸ Roswell O. Sutton, vice president of Citizens Trust Bank and leader in the Black Business community, addressed the Atlanta Business and Professional Association on the problems of urban renewal. *Atlanta*

be difficult to solve any problems in urban renewal or urban redevelopment as long as we are forced to work with the bounds of segregation and discrimination.” In addressing the construction of the downtown connector through the Auburn Avenue district, Sutton stated that the expressway displaced many families and cut them off from the Auburn Avenue shopping district. In his conclusion on highway construction and urban renewal programs, he added that in the decision making and planning of such programs, those persons affected needed representation on committees in authority. Sutton informed that no blacks had been consulted or appointed to the planning committee for the expressway. He asserted that the erection of this project disrupted or removed many hundreds of black families. Sutton said, “Blacks should have the opportunity to know who is in actual authority, and to appoint or elect our own representation, rather than have them selected for us.” Black leaders, very aware of the parameters of operation in a segregated society, realized early the damaging effects that would be caused by rampant urban renewal in their communities. They showed concerted efforts to fight for sustainability and long-term investments in their community.¹⁸⁹

An opinions article appeared in the *Atlanta Daily World* in December 1959 entitled “The People Must Wake Up” and served as a call to action for the Auburn Avenue community in the wake of the construction of the expressway and various other

Daily World, June 4, 1958. Citizens Trust Bank opened on August 16, 1921 on Auburn Avenue. An instance of discrimination inspired the creation of the bank by founder Heman Perry. So that black businessmen could own and operate businesses independently of white-owned financial institutions, Perry and four other partners formed Citizens Trust Bank. Citizens Trust became the first African American–owned bank to become a member of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. In 1948 Citizens Trust became the first African American–owned bank to join the Federal Reserve Bank. Willard C. Lewis, "Citizens Trust Bank." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. August 26, 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Lochner, p. 9. *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 June 1958.

urban renewal projects. The article referred to that period of rampant urban renewal and highway construction as a “sad picture in the municipal lives of blacks in the Auburn Avenue district and Atlanta’s fourth ward.” It added that unfortunately, the racial issue acted as the motive behind zoning issues and planning, and it should not be allowed to influence urban renewal one way or the other. It concluded: “The entire black community had better wake up. If the present trend of forcing displaced persons out of the eastern portion of the city continues, the churches and business in the Auburn Avenue district will die on the vine. And if this happens, the economy of our racial group in the city in general will be undermined. Our people in general must wake up before it is too late!”¹⁹⁰

Conclusion

In this phase, planning took center stage as a major catalyst for growth and prosperity in the city of Atlanta and the metropolitan region. The city’s leaders, both black and white, engaged in an ongoing debate about plans that were to be most beneficial to the city’s growing population. Perhaps the greatest issue in this ordeal was that of proper representation in the creation of the plans. From Mayor Hartsfield’s Plan of Improvement for the city to the Metropolitan Planning Commission’s *Up Ahead* and *NOW – For Tomorrow* plans, race and representation played critical roles in the acceptance and support. Without support, none of the plans could be successful in satisfying neither the black electorate nor the white constituents of the expanding city. Through public meetings, background maneuvering, annexation, unified leadership, and

¹⁹⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, December 9, 1959. Bayor, 72-73

forceful resistance, the advances in planning for the city made way for the cooperation instrumental in shaping the city. Cooperation would also be key in preparing the city for more challenges on the horizon. Racial attitudes continued to influence policy decisions in this period of desegregation and the battles heated up after 1954 as resistance to change ensued. Federal advances seeking to bring about moderation and integration arrived and faced great opposition in a place where traditions of segregation had long delegated protocol. As Atlanta continued growing and planning, leaders continued to cope with the challenges of segregation that had long prevailed.¹⁹¹

By the end of the 1950s, it had become increasingly clear that race and power in the city of Atlanta remained intertwined with transportation planning and the physical layout of the emerging federal interstate highway system. The swiftness of construction and success of the Downtown Connector in increasing mobility and access to the central business district while simultaneously serving as a barrier and line of demarcation to the black population centers due east prompted more projects of this nature. At the onset of the 1960s, plans for the West Expressway gained momentum. Planners explicitly designed this project to separate the large and expanding African American population on the Westside from their white counterparts. Transportation planning and the struggle for equal rights and representation continued to be an ongoing battle in the city of Atlanta throughout this period. Even as blacks became part of a biracial political coalition that controlled city politics, they remained junior partners throughout this era. Due to their voting power, there was some recognition of blacks; however, this small advantage had no success in securing solutions to many of the

¹⁹¹ Bayor, p. 220

community's long-term problems. Without vested interest or even consideration for the long-term problems of the African American community, the white power players maintained the balance of power and continued on principles and traditions of segregation.¹⁹²

CHAPTER 3 – PHASE III, 1960-1968

After two decades of comparative racial progress, master planning, and explosive growth, leaders and planners in the city of Atlanta aggressively pursued the status of gateway of the American South. The 1960s and 1970s ushered in a new wave of planning and growth for Atlanta and the region in general. In response to rapid growth, the Georgia General Assembly established the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC), reorganizing metropolitan planning to create plans aimed at making greater Atlanta a convenient and more desirable place. At this point, expanded federal input and legislation brought more moderate measures to planning. Problems stemming from the movement towards moderation and more liberal measures grew as federal support created tension with the old and antiquated system woven in the fabric of Georgia politics. Meanwhile, black residents of the city and the state continued in the struggle for representation, rights and privileges. That struggle collided with ongoing efforts in planning for city and metropolitan growth. Transportation planning remained central in the planning discourse, now expanded to include rapid transit.

¹⁹² Bayor, p. 73

The establishment of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) created a new avenue for black participation in transportation planning. Because MARTA's plans required voter approval for enactment, blacks used their growing political power to their advantage. Also, with the Civil Rights Movement, city leaders and boosters alike cautiously approached the handling of the impending change. They were intent on presenting the city's image as one of progress and promise, unlike Little Rock, Birmingham, and other southern segregated strongholds. The motto, "A city too busy to hate," which had been coined by Mayor Hartsfield in earlier decades, would be put to the test during the ongoing tumult of the decade.¹⁹³

By 1960, the population of the metropolitan Atlanta region surpassed the landmark one million mark. Rapid transit dominated the discussion of transportation planning and growth management. With expanded boundaries and migration into the surrounding unincorporated areas and hinterlands, linking and incorporating new industrial and commercial developments into the transportation system became high priority. The central core would be shuffled and reorganized as a result of the transportation developments, urban renewal, rapid migration, and other federal advances. Concurrently, the city's spatial and built environment, and economic, political, and racial structure experienced dramatic alterations. Approaching a new decade, Atlanta emerged as an invigorated metropolis with advances in biracial cooperation,

¹⁹³ Louis A. Williams, *William Berry Hartsfield: The Reluctant Accommodationist and the Politics of Race in Atlanta, 1900-1961*. (Ph.D. Diss., Georgia State University, 1996)

leadership, and rapid transit, and prepared for economic growth and development in the decades to follow.¹⁹⁴

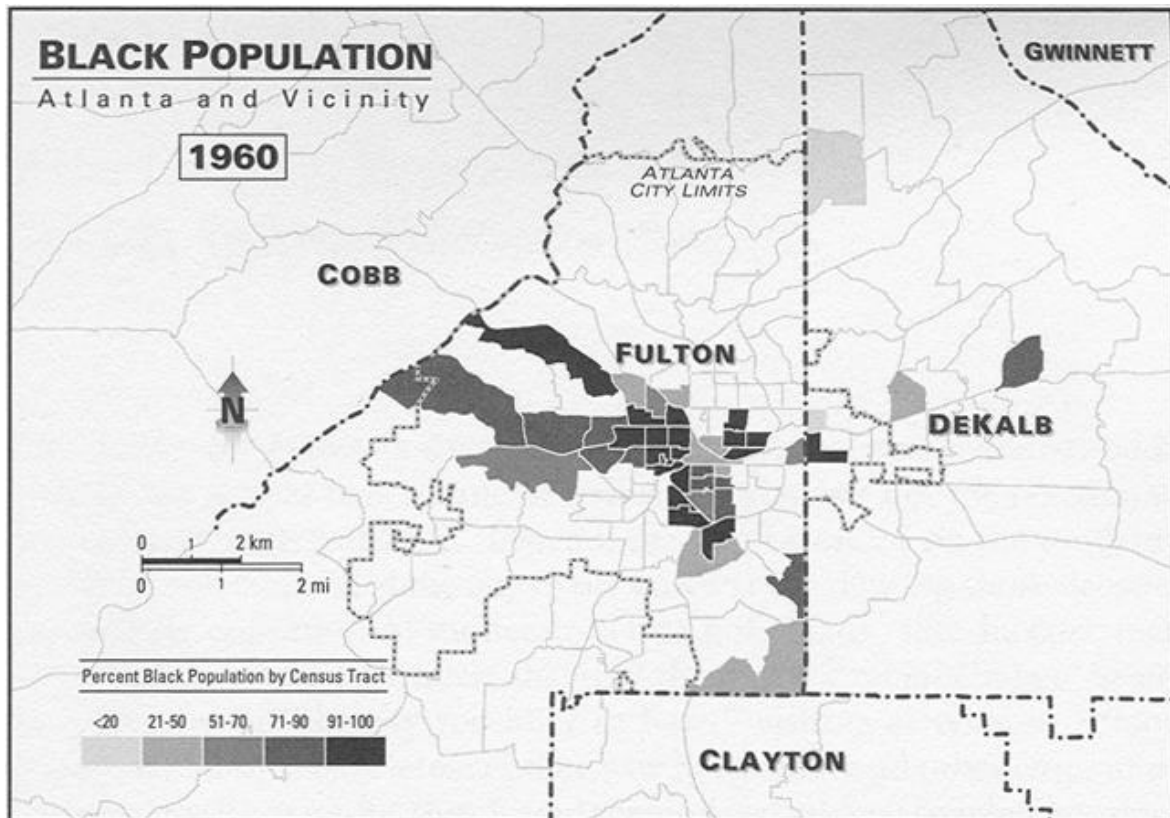


Figure 16: Black Population: Atlanta and Vicinity, 1960 – Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005

Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission

In accordance with growing trends in metropolitan planning and the accelerated growth of the region, the 1960 session of the Georgia Assembly authorized the creation of the new Atlanta Region Metropolitan Commission (ARMPC) and the agency held its

¹⁹⁴ Darlene R. Roth and Andy Ambrose, *Metropolitan Frontiers: A Short History of Atlanta*. (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, Inc., 1996) p. 161-162

organizational meeting that July. The amendment to the Metropolitan Planning Commission's legislation made way for the new agency, now a five county planning commission. The restructured agency represented the city of Atlanta, along with Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties. As set forth in Georgia Law; was

It shall be the duty of the Commission to make comprehensive surveys and studies of transportation facilities, land use, public utilities, governmental facilities and services, natural resources, and other physical, social, and economic factors, conditions, and trends that are relevant to the probable future development of the district, and to make and from time to time, as it may deem proper, amend, extend, or add to a master plan for the orderly growth and development of the district as a whole. Such master plan and amendments, extensions and additions thereto, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts and descriptive matter, shall be furnished to the governing authorities of the political subdivisions participating in the fiscal support of the Commission and shall show the Commission's recommendations for the development of the district.¹⁹⁵

With a steadily rising population, Atlanta ranked first in the Southeast and twenty-third in the nation in terms of metropolitan population. ARMPC released an annual report on population in 1960, showing outward growth of the metropolitan area in all directions from the central city. With explosive growth radiating from Five Points, ARMPC placed greater interest in joint efforts of planning for the expanding metropolitan area as a whole. With more jurisdictions, ARMPC responsibilities and planning now affected more people and its advisory powers involved interaction with more local municipalities within the five-county planning area.¹⁹⁶

The Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission composed of fifteen members representing the six participating governments. Three members each were

¹⁹⁵ Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission. *What It Is, What It Does*. May, 1963. Georgia Law #847, Article V, Section I.

¹⁹⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 4, 1960, January 1, 1961

appointed from the City of Atlanta, DeKalb County and Fulton County; and two each from Gwinnett, Cobb and Clayton counties. Leadership and protocol within the commission was established and adopted once the full commission was set and in order. The executive director served as the head of the staff with responsibilities including overall administration and community relations. The planning director's task involved direct charge of planning programs, the supervision of projects and the preparation of reports, studies and surveys. The work of the commission would be developed from the continued review and analysis of the region's problems and potential. Projects would be reviewed on an annual basis, along with the submission of program and budget requests. With reorganization set and in motion, ARMPC's overall purpose was the development of the best public policy for the entire metropolitan region. In its introductory literature, ARMPC stated, "Metropolitan planning functions at a new level of government; it serves as a vehicle for coordinating planning of municipal and county units of government, relating it all to the area as a whole. Furthermore, planning at the metropolitan level seeks to harmonize local plans with those of the state and the nation."¹⁹⁷

The support of the federal government further expedited metropolitan planning.

President John F. Kennedy in a message on urban affairs stated:

The city and its suburbs are interdependent parts of a single community, bound together by the web of transportation and other public facilities and by common economic interests. Bold programs and individual jurisdictions are no longer enough. And increasingly, community development must be a cooperative venture toward the common goals of the metropolitan region as a whole.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *What It Is, What It Does*. May, 1963

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*

With the four broad functions of maintaining research programs, making comprehensive plans, furthering teamwork and coordination among all local governments, and providing assistance and advice to local agencies and governments; ARMPC mobilized to assist in the complex process of helping citizens give order, direction and guidance to the growth of the expanding metropolitan Atlanta region.¹⁹⁹

New Leadership on the Horizon

Along with the changes in planning, there were changes in city leadership. When Mayor Hartsfield decided not to seek reelection in 1961, the biracial coalition that had held the city together through racially charged adversity began to falter. After the Egleston controversy in 1960, faith in Hartsfield and the continued assurance of the coalition became lackluster. The controversy stemmed from proposed usage of the former site of Egleston Hospital located on Forrest Drive in an area that had become extensively black. The site, located near the all-white Georgia Baptist Hospital, had been purchased by the Housing Authority for the construction of 350 units of public housing. White citizens feared the hospital would become encircled by blacks with the expansion of public housing in the area, creating an expanding eastside ghetto. The city's all-white Board of Aldermen ultimately voted not to allow the land to be used for public housing, angering blacks that believed the site would provide housing for residents of the Eastside being displaced by highway construction and other urban renewal projects. In the end, Hartsfield came under considerable criticism from the

¹⁹⁹ *What It Is, What It Does*. May, 1963

coalition, and moderate white leaders became fearful that responsible black leadership would abandon protocol in the biracial coalition.²⁰⁰

Now over the age of seventy, Hartsfield had served as mayor for nearly twenty-five years and some supporters begin to question his vitality in the role. The moment for a transition in city leadership approached and the coalition, still struggling to maintain its dominant role in the progress of the city, selected businessman Ivan Allen, Jr. as its candidate in the upcoming mayoral race.²⁰¹ As a member of the power structure, Allen headed the Chamber of Commerce. His father had served as a Georgia state senator and led one of Atlanta's most prominent corporations, the office equipment firm known as the Ivan Allen Company. Allen, Jr., born and reared in Atlanta in the manner of an established white family with means, was oblivious to many racial issues early in his life, yet ironically helped oversee a period of great racial upheaval. In his notes on the 1960s, Allen explained:

. . . A Negro woman named Bertha Lewis attended my mother as midwife. But after that first moment of my life, when the first hand to touch me was a black hand, it was a very long time before I came into close personal contact with a Negro again – except with the succession of maids who helped raise me and later, raise my own children. We were members of the comfortable white Southern business establishment, and therefore had no reason to mingle with the black except on a paternalistic boss-to-lackey basis.²⁰²

He further explained that due to the “system” and traditions of the South, and the upward mobility and status of his position in society, the “social problems” of southern

²⁰⁰ Stone, p. 43

²⁰¹ Stone, p. 44

²⁰² Ivan Allen, *Mayor: Notes in the Sixties*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971) p. 10-11

society were considered those of poor whites in the rural South, rather than those of blacks in America.²⁰³

The paradox of the role of race in Allen's life is fascinating considering his role in race relations, which was very critical to the growth, prosperity, and progress of the city during this period. His story is consistent with the cycle of the racial issue in Atlanta and is very similar to that of many other progressive white leaders throughout the South and around the nation. From not even being able to recall the racial issue being mentioned while enrolled at Georgia Tech, to it being a central issue of his platform and administration as mayor, Allen's approach to mending many of the city's problems was based on maintaining the ties of biracial cooperation, which had held the city together thus far. In seeking advice on how to approach the racial issue as he geared for public service, he fell short as many of the city's leading whites were without knowledge or innovative solutions. Even his own father, heralded as a moderate by the standards of his time, and a big supporter of New Deal social welfare programs, was without sound advice. Allen realized that he would have to be innovative in his approach to race relations. With the inevitability of the Civil Rights Movement, moderation and equality were prominent themes of the Allen era of leadership in Atlanta.²⁰⁴

Allen's entrance into the full spectrum of Atlanta's political life took place at a critical juncture in the history of the city and the state. A much more conservative attitude in terms of race persisted throughout the state of Georgia than in Atlanta and other small urban centers. This difference in attitudes enhanced the growing divide in

²⁰³ Allen, p. 11

²⁰⁴ Allen, p. 13-14

the state. With measures such as the county-unit system in place, moderate leaders from urban centers stood no chance against the conservatism of the rural counties. Racial conservatives were entrenched by the “system” which literally pounced the black quest for rights and equality out in all areas. Scraping the thought of statewide leadership, Allen turned his focus and attention towards the city of Atlanta and answered the charge set for by the old guard of white leaders. In realizing that times were changing and they were not prepared for the challenges of the second half of the twentieth century, the old guard released their power to the new generation. This group, Allen included, was younger and expected to function in similar fashion, and to make the city a better place than it was when they inherited it. The transfer of power began in the early 1950s, and in less than one decade, Allen assumed the position as mayor in one of the most tumultuous decades in American history.²⁰⁵

Ivan Allen and the Direct Action of the Civil Rights Movement

Allen’s awakening to the problems of blacks in Atlanta came through his association with Grace Hamilton, executive director of the Atlanta Urban League. He became acquainted with her through the Atlanta Urban League’s association with the Atlanta Community Chest, a social services organization in which he headed. Traditionally, the Community Chest paid the \$500 National Urban League dues for the Atlanta branch and its director. In 1949, Allen became the first white man asked to attend the black division of the Community Chest’s opening dinner. This event reminded him of the historic closeness that he shared with blacks and evoked in him a

²⁰⁵ Allen, p. 28-30

spirit of compassion and gradual moderation. So when Allen decided to run for office in the city, he solicited the support of Hamilton and some of the city's major black leaders, in particular president of the Citizens Trust Company L.D. Milton. Allen's connection to Milton also stemmed from his role at the Community Chest. Allen knew that without their support, he would have an extremely difficult time being elected mayor of the city with the political atmosphere of the early 1960s.²⁰⁶

The first two years of the 1960s proved to be pivotal years not only for Allen, but also for blacks through actions of the civil rights movement. The birth of the sit-in movement in Greensboro, North Carolina on February 1, 1960, launched the direct action phase of the civil rights movement. Six weeks later, Atlanta entered this phase of direct action known as the Atlanta Student Movement with a declaration from students at the Atlanta University Center. An appeal for human rights drafted by the students appeared as a full-page advertisement in the *Constitution* and struck Allen and all leaders in white Atlanta with a jolt. The advertisement stated:

“AN APPEAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: We, the students of the six affiliated institutions for the Atlanta University Center . . . have joined our hearts, minds, and bodies in the cause of gaining those rights which are inherently ours and members of the human race and as citizens of the United States.”

Signed by the student leaders from the respective schools, the manifesto called for an end to racial prejudice and injustice in all facets of life in Atlanta. Direct action and the threat of sit-ins heightened racial tensions in Atlanta to such a degree that white and black leaders feared not only widespread racial violence, but also a disruption of the steadfast voting coalition of blacks and upper income whites. They believed this

²⁰⁶ Pomerantz, pp. 176-179. Mullis, p. 202.

disruption would result in the election of a racially insensitive mayor and further exacerbate racial tensions.²⁰⁷

As racial tension grew over the sit-in movement, Ivan Allen realized that his role in the matters of desegregation could greatly affect his political future. By the fall of 1960, as the student movement unfolded, Allen was on the brink of change, about to be recast by changing laws and political realities into a southern liberal. As the student boycotts of downtown stores gained support among blacks in the city, students intensified plans and challenged the leadership of the old guard of blacks leaders. By this time in the Civil Rights Movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. had entered the scene in Atlanta and brought national attention to many of the actions of the student movement. On October 19, 1960, the series of sit-ins began at Rich's, Atlanta largest department store, and continued to other department stores across downtown. This event ended in the arrest of Martin Luther King, Jr. and over fifty students. Most of the protesters refused bail and remained in jail, a tactic they hoped would increase pressure on the white merchants of the downtown businesses.²⁰⁸

Meanwhile, as the student movement progressed, Allen developed a comprehensive proposal for his role as president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Entitled "The Six-Point Program," the proposal seemed to reflect a platform for an aspiring mayor rather than a blueprint for a Chamber of Commerce leader. The proposal called for the construction of a coliseum-auditorium and a stadium, and the support of urban renewal and low-income housing opportunities. Interestingly, it called

²⁰⁷ Alton Hornsby, Jr., *A Short History of Black Atlanta, 1847-1990*. (Atlanta: Apex Museum, 2003), p. 76. Pomerantz, p. 251

²⁰⁸ Pomerantz, pp. 258-260. Hornsby, p. 76

for the completion of all projected expressways by 1970 and the development of a rapid transit system. The proposal also called for a nationwide advertising program called “Forward Atlanta,” a concept and name borrowed from an earlier chamber program which his father helped implement. Finally, the proposal supported the desegregation of schools. Though leery of his motives, especially his willingness to compromise with blacks, leaders of the Chamber of Commerce reluctantly appointed him to the presidency.²⁰⁹

As president of the Chamber of Commerce, Allen took a leading role in the negotiations to end the sit-in demonstrations. He had impressed the old black elite with his growing moderation on racial matters during negotiation meetings, but his role in the sit-ins settlement had not garnered him favor among the college students. Allen had orchestrated the parameters for the negotiations and hosted the sessions in the fourteenth-floor boardroom of the Commerce Club. He even met with editors of the Atlanta newspapers to explain the negotiations and requested that the newspapers minimize publicity to prevent fear. He recognized that fear could undermine chances for settlement. The negotiation meetings included members of white business community and core black leaders including members of the old guard, student leaders, and business leaders. After weeks of tense negotiations, the two factions reached an agreement. Announced on March 7, 1961, the agreement stated that lunch counters would reopen immediately on a segregated basis, but would be desegregated in the fall in concert with desegregation of city schools. In the meantime, the black student

²⁰⁹ Pomerantz, pp. 258-259

protests would end. Through this role as negotiator, black Atlantans began to know Ivan Allen, Jr.²¹⁰

On June 19, 1961, Allen announced his candidacy for mayor. For the first time since 1937, Atlantans had an opportunity to elect a new mayor. Hartsfield announced that he wouldn't seek a seventh term and declared himself mayor emeritus. The white power structure had already selected Allen as Hartsfield's successor. Privately, Hartsfield told his friends that if a segregationist won the primary he might enter the general election. With the impending desegregation of the public schools, Hartsfield knew that racial matters would be the central issue in the mayor's race. Already experienced in peaceful negotiations in racial matters, Ivan Allen Jr. stood poised to assume leadership in the city's highest office.²¹¹

A Westside Story

Throughout his tenure as mayor during the 1960s, Allen faced challenges across the city's racialized landscape. He worked with officials to pursue aggressive measures in planning to accommodate rapid growth and changes over the decade. The city's Westside provides the perfect backdrop to view this period's changes as they happened. The story of the Westside of Atlanta in transportation planning including the development of the West expressway parallels that of earlier highway construction through the Auburn Avenue district. With lines of racial demarcation made evident in

²¹⁰ Pomerantz, pp.265-267. Hornsby, p. 76

²¹¹ Pomerantz, pp. 272-275. Hornsby, p. 76

events like the Peyton Wall fiasco, the Westside story ties transportation planning with white flight and racial transition.

Since the late nineteenth century, the immediate west of downtown extending to Ashby Street had been an area with a concentration of black residents. Through the establishment of black schools, colleges, and churches, the black population grew and flourished on the Westside of town. By the turn of the twentieth century and well into, many of the city's black residents lived in the area surrounding the Atlanta University Center, including Vine City and the West End. Segregated communities created throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century contributed to many of the issues that arose in the postwar period, especially those associated with black population growth, expansion, mobility and movement throughout the city. The expanding Westside of Atlanta, including Washington Park, Mozley Park, and east of Ashby Street, became an area of great contention and racial transition, and provides a great background for a story of race, mobility, and transportation planning in Atlanta.²¹²

²¹² Kruse, p. 42. Bayor, p. 7

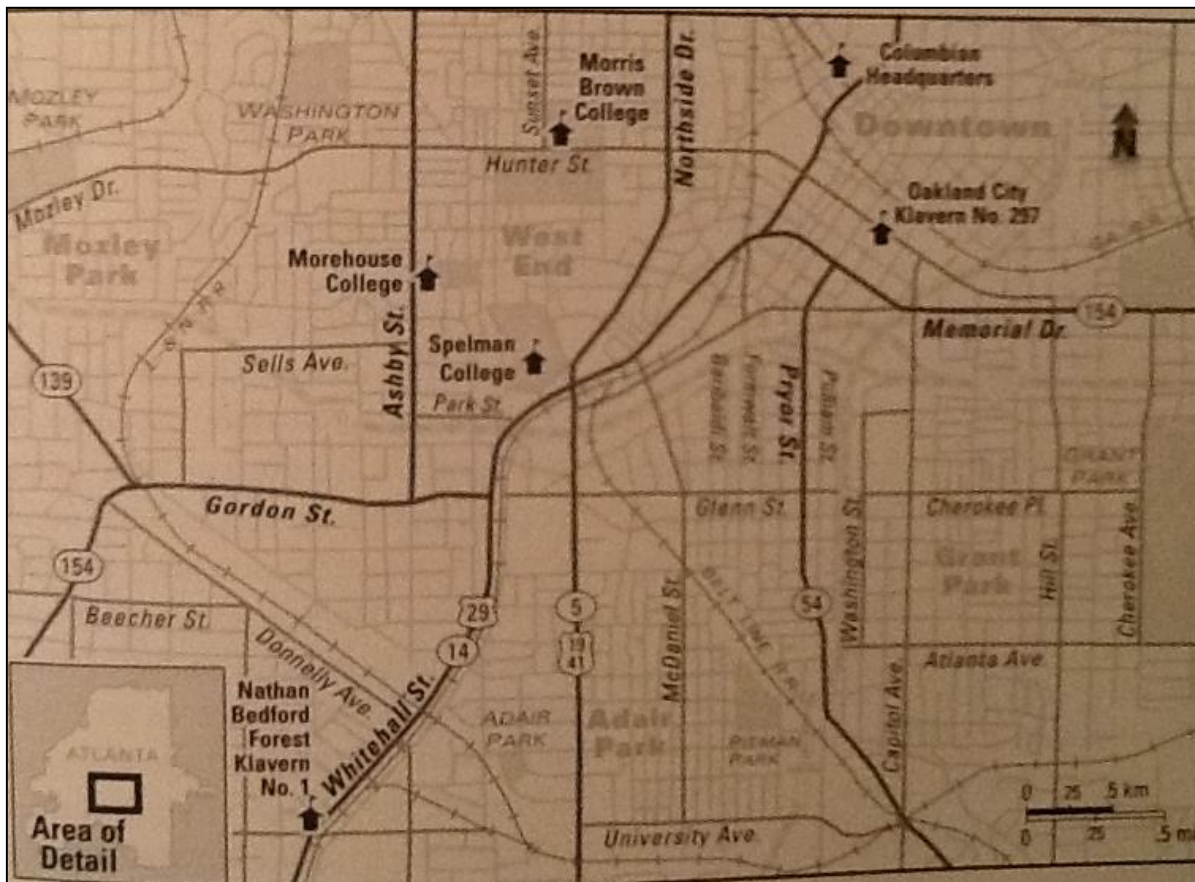


Figure 17: Map of Atlanta's Westside, showing the West End, Black Colleges of the Atlanta University Center, and neighborhoods beyond Ashby Street, 1950 – Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005

Atlanta's great investments in highway and transportation planning of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s geared the city to continue in its role as the transportation center of the southeastern United States, while simultaneously coinciding with the black community's demand for racial equality. Postwar transportation planning in the form of highway and road building faced great opposition with the construction of the downtown connector through the heart of the Auburn Avenue business district. This highway came even after the black community in that area rallied to prevent such destructive measures. Lacking representation in planning efforts, blacks continued to face such

measures in other areas of the city, most notably the Westside. During the postwar period, some new highways, including the west expressway, became a factor in the creation of buffers and barriers to try to confine blacks to certain parts of mainly west side Atlanta. At the point of highway construction on the west side, the issues of residential segregation had boiled over into highway planning. In the west side community of Adamsville, a 1960 planning report noted that there was a general knowledge that the west expressway would serve as a boundary between the black and white communities. And there were many understandings of this nature where city leaders and highway planners listened to the white citizens of the area.²¹³

The specific functions of the west expressway as listed in the *Now – For Tomorrow* plan in 1954 included providing a new interstate route to Birmingham. The west expressway would also encourage the development of the Chattahoochee Industrial District and link the district to industrial and commercial facilities in the central city. It would provide a direct interchange with the north-south expressway and the ring roads already planned or completed. Moreover, it would provide highway access to the sprawling westward populations.²¹⁴

The use of the west expressway as a racial buffer appeared destined, as its route traversed one of the most racially contested areas of the city. The Westside in many cases became the site of expansion for blacks during the rapid of urban renewal and redistribution of population as a result of displacement by major projects such as that of the highways. Large black populations being displaced ended up in the west near

²¹³ Bayor, p. 61. Kruse, p. 86

²¹⁴ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 46. Bayor, p. 60. *Up Ahead*, p. 88.

sections like the Atlanta University Center where black neighborhoods already existed. Black expansion deeper into the Westside coincided with the growing need for black housing during the postwar period and the growing political presence and fight for recognition during this period.²¹⁵

By 1960, the racial line on the Westside was firm, and white citizens were intent on maintaining the boundaries of separation by any means necessary. With an influx in planning associated with the west expressway and other large-scale projects, redevelopment on the Westside had become steady. The Atlanta University Center (AUC) and other areas further west became the focus of many of the new redevelopment plans. Although the new expressway received much of the focus, the plans also included urban renewal programs, housing projects and industrial development. Black leaders affiliated with the AUC urged city officials to include consideration of the needs of the center and its constituencies in the redevelopment process.²¹⁶

Robert Thompson of the Atlanta Urban League stated the west expressway posed a great threat to the Atlanta University Center community and the surrounding areas. He continued that if the proposed expressway were placed in its planned route, it would destroy the continuity of the campuses in the AUC. He also stated that the construction of a large number of public housing projects in the area would create a concentration of black population in one area of the city, which would help to stifle black mobility and political potential. Congregating blacks in such specific areas would

²¹⁵ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 46. Bayor, p. 60. *Up Ahead*, p. 88.

²¹⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 20, 1956. Kruse, p. 3, 79-86. Bayor, p. 62

diminish black political presence in other wards and districts across the city. His recommendations were hardly taken into consideration as white citizens often requested of city leadership that highways, as well as urban renewal, housing projects, and industrial development be used as lines to racial demarcation. Fighting racial transition by any means necessary, and protecting the “integrity”²¹⁷ of their communities became the clarion call of white citizens on the west side of Atlanta. From Adamsville to Center Hill to Mozley Park, these citizens sought to thwart the undesired encroachment by the growing black population and use whatever methods, tools and connections they had available to hinder black mobility.²¹⁸

Perhaps one of the most well-known challenges to black mobility took place in the rapidly transitioning west side of Atlanta. The “Peyton Wall” was highly publicized and garnered unfavorable attention on a city where maintaining a peaceful and progressive image was everything. Peyton Forest Subdivision, a white development, secured approval from city officials to close and barricade sections of Peyton and Harlan Roads to maintain the “integrity” of the white neighborhood. City construction crews placed barricades as barriers to prevent blacks from encroaching upon yet another contested neighborhood on the city’s west side. The roadblock stood at the precise location between black and white sections, with wooden beams painted black and white, bolted to steel I-beams, and planted into the pavement. A member of the

²¹⁷ A community with “integrity” was defined by the WSMDC as “a complete, homogenous community. It was a community composed on neighbors who were accustomed to living together, and whose children go to the same schools, churches, and parks. It had its own shopping center and a variety of homes in various classes. It had potential growth, and development was already in progress. It was not a “fringe” or “pocket” community nor tied into any other community of similar character. Alexander, p. 165

²¹⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 20, 1956. Kruse, p. 3, 79-86. Bayor, p. 62

delegation before the city's aldermanic board gave the following reason for closing the streets:

To preserve the area, the homes, and what is already. Our main point is to preserve this area because the road [Peyton] is not essential to get anywhere . . . I am interested in the stability of our community. Closing of the two streets is absolutely necessary for the welfare of our community. As a result of closing the streets no one will lose, but everyone will gain.²¹⁹

Unified black leadership in the city called the Peyton Wall an “indefensible bar to Atlanta’s progress,” and stated that the move to “wall-in” blacks would not be tolerated at election time. Elsewhere, the national press compared this fiasco to the Berlin Wall. Blacks rallied intensely against the “Atlanta Wall,” as it would become known, exerting some political clout and threatening economic boycotts of merchants who supported the idea. Attorney Donald Lee Hollowell stated that permitting such actions as the Peyton Road barricade would be an extraordinary bad precedent to set in 1962 in Atlanta. He added, “at a time when our nation is struggling to maintain the leadership that it has, Atlanta cannot set precedents in building walls at this time when we look across the waters and see what buffers do.” In another statement to the Greater Atlanta Council on Human Relations, black leaders noted, “this is not the time for irresponsible action, which could only compound, not solve our problems. It is not time for Atlanta to start building a Berlin Wall.” In the end, black resistance and the negative publicity in which “the city too busy to hate” received, forced an end to the “Atlanta Wall” and any further

²¹⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, December 14, 1962

use of city planning and zoning policies for the purposes of maintaining racial boundaries and limiting black mobility about the city.²²⁰



Figure 18: Peyton Wall, Atlanta History Center

Challenging Georgia's County-Unit System

Throughout its existence, rural Georgians argued that the county unit system was their only mechanism of defense against the cities, in particular Atlanta. Without it, they believed farmers and rural constituents would have no voice in state government. The county unit system ensured victories in most cases for the rural population and they had been so supportive of the virtues of the system that they defended it with their all. The

²²⁰ Bayor, p. 66-67. *Atlanta Daily World*, December 14, 1962, December 22, 1962.

county unit system was a burdensome, costly and grossly unfair process for electing state officials, and most politicians and practically all urban, middle-class Georgians knew it. Yet for 45 years, this system dominated Georgia politics and disenfranchised various segments of the total state electorate.²²¹

The county-unit system was deeply unequal from the beginning and increased over time. The inequities became more pronounced as the boll weevil caused an exodus from the farms, the Great Depression, New Deal programs leading people to leave farms, and the urbanizing effects of World War II. Thus, the inequities became even greater as the population became increasingly urban. In 1960, the state's three smallest counties, with a combined population of approximately 7,000, together, yielded the same unit votes as the largest county, Fulton County, with a total population over 550,000. Case in point: to be elected governor, one would need 206 of the 410 county unit votes. Under the auspices of the county unit system, a candidate could bypass all the major urban centers in the state and still receive enough units to be victorious. The candidate could have simply targeted units in 103 of the 121 two-unit counties.²²²

Units were assigned according to population, and placed in three categories: urban, town, and rural. The urban counties constituted the state's most populous (Fulton, DeKalb, Chatham); town counties included the next 30 in population (Floyd, Lowndes, Baldwin); and rural, the most dominate in the equation, encompassed the remaining 121 (Echols, Glascock, Quitman). Using this scale of assignment, the urban counties received six unit votes, the town counties received four, and the rural counties

²²¹ Calvin Kytte and James A. Mackay, *Who Runs Georgia?* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998) pp. 9-10

²²² Ibid

received two. And because the county unit vote superseded the popular vote, candidates often concerned themselves with winning unit votes rather than the popular vote. Staunch segregationist governor Eugene Talmadge famously said that he never campaigned in a town that had a streetcar, meaning he never campaigned in urban counties.²²³

The county unit system effectively disfranchised the people in large population centers, virtually placing state leadership and decision-making power in the hands of the rural electorate. The prerequisite for winning a state election was thereby through the keenness of dealing with political leaders in those counties whose combined units would automatically ensure a majority. With rural dominance at the helm of Georgia politics, the protection of rural interests in the case of such policies as legal segregation and other aspects of white supremacy remained at the forefront. In many cases, diluting the influence of more liberal urban and black voters became the goals of rural interests under the county unit system.²²⁴

In the spring of 1962, the elimination of Georgia's county unit system hit the state's political scene like a bombshell. The challenge to the system presented to the federal courts by activist Fulton County citizen James O'Hear Sanders, against James Gray, chairman of the state Democratic Committee, and Ben Fortson, secretary of state, along with top officials in both the party and state government. Sanders contended that the county unit system gave rural counties a disproportionate share of votes and

²²³ Kytle and Mackay, p.11. Louis T. Rigdon, *Georgia's County Unit System* (Decatur, GA: Selective Books, 1961)

²²⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Turning Point: A Candidate, a State, and a Nation Come of Age* (New York: Times Books, 1992). p. 25-26. Kytle and Mackay, p.11.

discriminated against city voters. *Sanders v. Gray* tested the legality of Georgia's laws and antiquated customs that had protected rural dominance and maintained white supremacy. The three-judge Federal Court of Appeals declared that the system constituted "invidious discrimination" and violated Sanders' rights under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.²²⁵

This momentous decision in the political life of Georgia was handed down only one month after *Baker v. Carr*, the Supreme Court decision in Tennessee that carved a legal path for such ruling. In the landmark decision of *Baker v. Carr*, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down practices throughout the United States that permitted gross political inequities among both individual citizens and communities. This decision set the precedent for federal courts to take jurisdiction in such state political matters. The "one man, one vote" ruling strengthened the popular vote and propelled the democratic ideal that representation be based on population. In his memoirs, Jimmy Carter noted that the outcomes of these two cases transformed the political scene in Georgia and a new day was on the horizon.²²⁶

Extended Black participation and the Election of Leroy Johnson

The elimination of Georgia's county unit system made way for the upward movement of blacks in Georgia politics. It especially assisted those in urban centers like Atlanta and Savannah where larger populations could greatly determine elections. The county unit system had decided primary elections, representation in the state house

²²⁵ Carter, p. 26-33. *Atlanta Daily World*, April 29, 1962

²²⁶ Ibid

and Senate, and allowed politicians to win with less than a majority of the popular votes. The system also contributed to the lack of recognition for Fulton County and its invigorated black electorate. The “one man, one vote” policy that came with the removal of the county unit system ushered in the measures of reapportionment in the state senate based on population and required candidates to qualify from their particular districts. Rural legislators had long controlled the Georgia senate and house, and their domination created legislative bodies underrepresented with individuals from urban and heavily populated areas since representation was not based on population. With the court-ordered reapportionment in place in the Senate in 1962, the possibility of blacks being elected into the Georgia state became a reality and black citizens became prominently mentioned as possible Fulton County senatorial candidates for the first time in Georgia’s modern political history.²²⁷

With the removal of barriers to political mobility, electoral politics became a more useful and powerful weapon in which the black community used in the fight for equality. In the fall of 1962, attorney Leroy Johnson entered the state legislature as Georgia’s first Black senator since 1870. A special session in the fall of 1962 reapportioned the Senate, resulting in increased black representation for Atlanta and Fulton County. Johnson challenged and successfully defeated four white candidates in the Democratic primary, along with T.M. Alexander, the black Republican candidate in the general election. Johnson carried District 38 in Fulton County and Atlanta, and his election marked the integration of the Georgia State Capitol. In various instances, Johnson acknowledged his election as groundbreaking and assured that his representation

²²⁷ Bayor, p. 38. *Atlanta Daily World*, October 4, 1962

would not be for blacks alone, but for all people. With the possibility of blacks actually being elected to such positions, this election created waves of participation and mobilization efforts. It set the precedent and invigorated the forward charge for the full incorporation of blacks into the democratic processes and liberties already enjoyed by white citizens of Atlanta.²²⁸

“Urban Renewal . . . or Negro Removal”

While political change altered the social and governmental structure, federal advances and available funding in the postwar period led to great alterations of the built environment in cities across the country. During this period, urban decay became more pronounced as aging infrastructures could not accommodate widespread growth. City planners and leaders were intent on finding solutions to the problems of urban decay. Economic depression along with the war efforts had halted construction and prevented needed repairs on the infrastructure of many American cities. As a result, physical decay and acres of slum and blight were visible in cities across the nation.²²⁹ In the rapidly growing metropolis of Atlanta, as in other cities, urban renewal was complicated by race and the system of American apartheid, which dominated planning and decision-making. With public policy decisions in the hands of white leaders in favor of modernizing and economic progress, the renewal of the city’s urban core reflected large-scale projects that enhanced business and commercial activities and simultaneously displaced mostly the poor black population. Investigating urban renewal

²²⁸ Winston A. Grady-Willis, *Challenging U.S. Apartheid: Atlanta and Black Struggles for Human Rights, 1960-1977*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) p. 38. Crimmins and Farrisee, p. 139-140

²²⁹ Teaford, p. 40

in Atlanta in the postwar period reveals the intent of white leaders to maintain traditions of segregation and restrict mobility among blacks.²³⁰

The Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal, a biracial committee designed to promote understanding of Atlanta's urban renewal programs, became the leading authority on issues pertaining to urban renewal. Mayor Hartsfield established the committee in 1958 for the purpose of advising him on the city's multi-million dollar investment in urban renewal programs. In its fact sheet for Atlanta's urban renewal programs, the committee defined urban renewal as a national program dedicated to conserving and rebuilding cities, implemented by the National Housing Act of 1954. It further explained that the goals of urban renewal were: prevention of blight, neighborhood conservation or rehabilitation, and slum clearance and land redevelopment. In financing urban renewal programs, one-third of the net costs would be met by the locality, either in cash or by local improvements such as streets, sewers, and parks. The remaining two-thirds was to be paid by the federal government. Federal assistance hurried urban renewal, and the city was intent on capitalizing on these resources, which aided business and commercial interests. Though well intended, urban renewal programs in the city of Atlanta often created adversity rather than solutions to the issues which the programs were designed to solve.²³¹

Members of the black community grew skeptical of urban renewal tactics from the very beginning in the 1950s. Leaders questioned the "silent tactics" used by white leaders of the city's Urban Renewal Committee. L.D. Milton, president of the Citizens

²³⁰ Bayor, p. 70

²³¹ City of Atlanta Records, Bureau of Planning, Box 3, Folder 3, Atlanta History Center. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 8, 1958.

Trust Company and a black leader of high regard, served as a member of the Urban Renewal Committee. Ivan Allen referred to Milton as a proud black man who was obviously better educated than him. He also regarded him as one who would defer to no one and a leader of the black community whose caliber and status he wished he had in his own community.²³²

As a vocal committee member, Milton relayed stories of “cover-up schemes” back to his constituents. He stated that neither he nor any other black leaders had been able to persuade renewal officials to honestly pinpoint how renewal would impact the black communities. Milton elaborated that each black citizen affected by proposals of urban renewal had the right to know how all property seized would be used in the redevelopment plans. Further investigation of the urban renewal plans revealed what Ron Bayor has referred to as “not simply incidental by-products” of the process. Milton believed that there was no reason to believe the urban renewal plans would directly affect Auburn Avenue businesses and other black businesses in general. He argued that there could be a scheme to “freeze out” black businesses by removing all potential customers. For that matter, Milton urged black citizens to exert as much pressure as needed to guarantee equal opportunity in reclaiming lands in clearance zones. Urban renewal zones became areas of contention and racial divide as white leaders sought to bring economic and business development to the urban core, even if it was at expense of the black community and businesses who occupied premium downtown and peripheral space.²³³

²³² Allen, p. 12

²³³ *Atlanta Daily World*, October 15, 1958. Bayor, p. 70

Highway and transportation planning directly linked with urban renewal in Atlanta and in cities across the nation. The creation of the national system of interstate highways was an undertaking on the federal level in the works since the early postwar period. By the 1960s, this program had matured greatly and the impacts were felt and seen all about the nation. In Atlanta, the routing of the interstate highways through the urban core altered the landscape dramatically and caused displacement of those living in the residential sections, which were mostly black. Although intended on using routes as methods of revitalization and redevelopment, the actions of highway planning dramatically increased the need for housing. Planners labeled areas in the path of the encroaching highways as blighted, uninhabitable and in most need of renewal. These slums, as they were referred, impeded the progress of a city on the move like Atlanta. Likewise, federal policy that created the emerging highway systems would bear the responsibility of finding solutions to amend the problems created by it. Urban renewal programs, which originated in housing, were now needed even more in the area of housing for the city of Atlanta. Because of measures and restrictions of segregation, the programs contributed to the ongoing issues of the racially charged city.

Rapid Transit Discussion

Expressed as one of the highlights of the regional planning program in the early 1960s, rapid transit rose to the forefront of planning by the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission. This shift to rapid transit came as Atlanta embarked upon its ambitious highway and expressway building campaign, like other major American cities. With the passage of the Federal Interstate Highways Act in 1956, which made 90

percent federal aid available in the construction of the interstate highways, the state was more than eager to pick up the 10 percent remainder.²³⁴ With that assistance, Atlanta was able to begin in the construction of a vast network of highways. Though deemed efficient, planners realized that even the ambitious highway plan would not be enough to accommodate the growth and facilitate the mobility for the millions in the region. In the early stages of planning, the Metropolitan Planning Commission wrote of the need for rapid transit in *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, which was presented in 1954. Further supporting the rapid transit discussion, in *Crosstown and By-Pass Expressways*, published in 1959, MPC suggested that in the design of future expressway routes, the eventual accommodation of a rapid transit line in conjunction with the expressway “would have the double advantage of providing for eventual relief of the expressway and of facilitating the acquisition of rapid transit right-of-way which would otherwise be difficult to acquire.” It concluded that drastic transit innovations, such as rapid transit, was essential and should be studied as a solution to the growing transportation issues in the wake of explosive metropolitan growth.²³⁵

At the onset of the rapid transit discussion, ARMPC published various reports and felt that rapid transit had reached the stage in Atlanta by 1963 where it could be characterized in a regional plan ready for implementation. *What You Should Know About Rapid Transit*, published in 1960 and the *Atlanta Region Comprehensive Plan*, published in 1961, both provided the metropolitan area with literature on the benefits of rapid transit. Another publication, *Rapid Atlanta*, published in 1960 by the Atlanta

²³⁴ *What It Is, What It Does*. May, 1963

²³⁵ *NOW – FOR TOMORROW*, p. 43. Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Crosstown and By-Pass Expressways*, Atlanta, 1959, p. 26-28

Transit System, was the first of the literature created to promote rapid transit. The earlier publications were only meant to introduce the concepts and benefits of rapid transit, while latter publications produced specialized reports intended to garner serious and professional consideration. With more support for rapid transit along the realization of its benefits among city leaders and planners, the likelihood of a program for Atlanta became more viable.²³⁶

The discussion and implementation of rapid transit paralleled the discussion of progress and economic development that guided city leaders and boosters in the postwar decades. Many cities and states across the country joined in extensive quests for financial and administrative solutions to critical mass transportation problems. Created in 1951 by the California Legislature, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit Commission recommended a rapid transit system as part of a unified network of local and interurban transportation. In Washington, D.C., the National Capital Planning Commission completed land-use surveys of the Washington metropolitan area as a basis for determining the future rapid transit system. In 1960, Congress created the National Capital Transportation Agency for the purpose of establishing a regional network of rail rapid transit facilities focusing on downtown areas and extending into Virginia and Maryland. Cleveland also made the decision to construct a rapid rail transit route and other improvements to the transit system. By 1960, the Cleveland Transit system operated one of the fastest transit lines in the country, bringing people

²³⁶ Julian Rodney Johnson, *MARTA: The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, A Brief History*. (History Honors, 1970) p. 9. *The Impact of Rapid Transit on Metropolitan Atlanta*. Prepared by Eric Hill Associates, Inc., 1968, p. 2.

downtown in fifteen minutes from points as far as seven miles away. Atlanta's rapid transit story fits directly in the national narrative on rapid transit in the postwar period.²³⁷

Planners viewed rapid transit as an "unusually useful tool for improving the Atlanta metropolitan area." In *The Impact of Rapid Transit on Metropolitan Atlanta*, a study produced by planning consultants vying for rapid transit and the contracts it would create, preparers noted that, "no single activity will direct the shape and forge the character of Atlanta metropolitan area as will the proposed rapid transit system." In speaking of the progress that it would bring, the planners stated, "over the next three decades, most office construction and high-rise apartments as well as many public buildings, commercial facilities and places of work may be located in regard to the system." Rapid transit would therefore help to create the high quality and efficient urban environment, which was the objective of metropolitan planning.²³⁸

Proponents of rapid transit argued that it could offer a suitable solution to the transportation needs of the rapidly expanding metropolitan area. Along with the system of interstate highways and expressways, construction and implementation of rapid transit would not only meet the transportation needs for the new few years, but well into the next century. Planning consultants explained:

Rapid transit has within its power the ability to help create an urban environment of high quality. It can improve the efficiency and reduce the cost of living in the metropolitan area. It can make the urban area safer, more beautiful and more habitable. It can elevate the lives of all citizens: improve the level of schooling of its children, enliven the growing amount of leisure time, bring the arts closer to people, improve job opportunities,

²³⁷ Wilfred Owen. *The Metropolitan Transportation Problem*. (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1966), pp. 100-109

²³⁸ J.R. Johnson, p. 9. *The Impact of Rapid Transit on Metropolitan Atlanta*. p. 2.

help eliminate the problems of the poor, and expand the choices for housing.²³⁹

Tremendous growth around such a system aligned with projected progress and growth for the metropolitan area. Rapid transit added a new element to transportation planning, which would require the participation and representation of all citizens, regardless of race. Rapid transit would expand the roles of city leadership in transportation planning, and require more cooperation. Rapid transit planning provided a new avenue for black participation in public policy and another means of achieving the goal of getting blacks on the metropolitan planning commission. With more active political participation and prowess within the Atlanta political arena, blacks were well on their way to demanding that the void of representation be filled in the area of transportation planning.²⁴⁰

Atlanta's plan for a rapid transit system gained momentum in January 1962 after a series of public hearings before the Board of Aldermen brought greater attention to the benefits. The proposed rapid transit system comprised of a chain of rail lines to bring fast commuter trains from outlying areas of the metropolitan region into the heart of the city. A proposed act of the State legislature providing for a constitutional amendment to enable a self-governing "Rapid Transit Authority" to be created had already caused raised questions among local officials and those in the surrounding counties and towns. In accordance with the onward plans for economic development of the central business district, Mayor Ivan Allen had advocated the project during his mayoral campaign. Questions raised from the original proposal stemmed from the fact some members of the aldermanic board felt the that city should have sole control over

²³⁹ *The Impact of Rapid Transit on Metropolitan Atlanta*, p. 2

²⁴⁰ Ibid

the proposed rapid transit authority to the exclusion of any voice by Fulton, DeKalb, and outlying towns and counties of the metropolitan area. They felt that this measure would best protect the interest of Atlanta taxpayers. The public hearings helped to bring clarity and definitive plans for a final proposal to be submitted to the General Assembly. After hearing the opinions of business, labor and civil leaders from the metropolitan area, a final proposal included the necessary changes and addenda. The resolution in the final form outlined the establishment of a rapid transit authority with representation from Fulton and DeKalb counties and other outlying areas, which the system would serve. The essential point outlined was the fact that the city of Atlanta should have equal controlling power and representation on the transit authority.²⁴¹

The authorization of a six-government Rapid Transit Commission by the 1962 General Assembly to study the present and future transportation problems of the areas represented a great task for those chosen to function on the 11-person committee. The members represented Atlanta, and Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, Gwinnett, and Cobb counties. The five county region of the Atlanta metropolitan area had surpassed the million mark by 1960 and was rapidly growing in all directions. According to planners, a high quality regional rapid transit system would complement and relieve the expressway system. It was urgent in preparations to meet future transportation demands. ARMPC recommended an initial rapid transit system with 60 miles of high-speed lines serving the five counties. The recommended system, at an estimated cost of 200-215 million dollars, included right-of-way purchases, rolling stock, structures, stations, and installations. ARMPC estimated the construction of the system to take 5 – 8 years, to be

²⁴¹ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 14, 1962

completed by the end of the decade at a time when the need for rapid transit would be extremely necessary. The creation of the Rapid Transit Study Commission represented the continued need in planning for orderly development and solutions for good transportation for the rapidly growing region. It also represented continued progress in black mobility with the appointment of a black representative among the four Atlanta members of the study commission. The appointment was highly commended by the black community.²⁴²

In a move consistent with his progressive attitude and the changed realities of Atlanta, Mayor Ivan Allen appointed C.A. Scott to the 11-member Rapid Transit Study Commission. Scott, editor of the *Atlanta Daily World*, accepted the appointment and began work with the study commission on defining and establishing a solid program of rapid transit for the region. Scott's post as the head of Atlanta's leading black newspaper could assist in promoting rapid transit in the black community. In a speech before the Atlanta Frontiers Club, Scott pointed out the explosive growth of the region and the need for rapid transit. He explained, "some sort of rapid mass transit will be required if the people are to be able to get into and out of the downtown area. Atlanta is about where Cleveland, Ohio was some years ago when it began a study for rapid transit, and today it has a fine rapid system." Scott further explained that with the recommendations of ARMPC, and the aid of an engineering firm with experience in rapid transit study and operations, the Study Commission would determine "what should be built and where and find the approximate cost." The commission voted to employ the firm of Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade, and Douglas, a New York engineering firm, to

²⁴² *Atlanta Daily World*, March 23, 1962

begin the study to be presented to the General Assembly for the authorization of an act to establish and operate a rapid transit system.²⁴³

At a cost of \$200,000, the report produced by the Rapid Transit Study Commission to determine the feasibility of rapid transit in Atlanta was completed by December 1962 and released in January of the next year. This strategic move occurred in order to prevent the significance of the report from being detracted by the Christmas season, explained Dr. Howard K. Menhinick, chairman of the commission. The report needed the attention of all citizens to gain much needed support for the adoption of its measures. Glenn E. Bennett, executive director of ARMPC, applauded the engineers for completion of the report in a timely fashion, and described it as being “optimistic, scholarly, and exciting.” Bennett explained that the report indicated that rapid transit was feasible in the Atlanta region and could be obtained if the region was willing to pay for it. He also explained that if the region was not willing pay, ultimately, not having a rapid transit system would cost the region a high premium in the long run. Once presented, the next step in the process required the support of the affiliated counties of metropolitan Atlanta. From that point, the state legislature would have to authorize an official authority in the capacity of rapid transit to implement the plans of the report of the study commission.²⁴⁴

The 117-page report on a proposed rapid transit system consisted of 42 stations and 66 miles of track grade-separated, electrified rail lines. It included 46 miles of construction on grade, 17 miles of aerial structure, and 3 miles of subway or tunnel

²⁴³ *Atlanta Daily World*, March 25, 1962

²⁴⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, December 2, 1962. *Atlanta Constitution*, January 6, 1963

construction. Approximately 49 miles of the system would be in close proximity and parallel to existing railroad lines. The report indicated that the estimated date for the opening of an initial, operable, rapid transit system was January 1, 1971. Construction on the full system would steadily continue and by 1975, a basic system consisting of all lines would be in operation. The target date of completion for the entire system would be 1980. The report suggested three phases of development: First, a main line running North-South through the downtown area between the airport and Oglethorpe University, which also included East Point and West End. This main line would cost about \$131 million with most of the money borrowed by the governments of the metropolitan governments involved. This line was slated for operation by 1971. The second phase would include the addition of an East-West line, the western portion extending to Hightower Road. The cost of this would be \$72.8 million and would be completed by 1975. The third and final phase of the system would extend to Marietta, Norcross and Forest Park, and be completed by 1980, costing approximately \$88.2 million.²⁴⁵

In great detail, the report highlighted the benefits of rapid transit for the metropolitan region. Based on the complex transportation issues for the metropolitan region at the creation of the report, it estimated that rapid transit could provide a capacity of 25,000-seated passengers per hour in either direction to and from downtown. The rapid transit facilities could travel at speeds approximately 45 miles per hour, including time for stops, and could reach peak traveling speeds safely at 70 and 75 miles per hour. The 42 stations planned for the proposed system would be points of public entry and exit, and were designed and strategically placed to encourage and

²⁴⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 6, 1963, January 8, 1963. *Atlanta Constitution*, January 6, 1963

facilitate patronage. At stations where parking lots were proposed, free parking on paved surfaces would be provided. The report called for six transit lines running from the proposed downtown central station with the cumulative miles from the transit center as follows: Downtown to Marietta: 18.3 miles; Downtown to Norcross: 18.2 miles; Downtown to North Druid Hills Road: 10.3 miles; Downtown to Avondale Estates: 7.4 miles; Downtown to Forest Park: 12.9 miles; and Downtown to Hightower Road: 4.5 miles. Rail lines would effectively travel to various cities included in the study commission jurisdiction.²⁴⁶

As the black representative on the Rapid Transit Study Commission, C.A. Scott informed the African American community of the advances of rapid transit by providing updates in the *World*. The transit line to most impact the black community would be the west line, which would extend from downtown to Hightower Road. The shortest of the proposed lines, it would service the rapidly developing area of homes west of Hightower Road in Fulton County, as well as the residential areas closer in and the business district in the Ashby and Hunter Street vicinity. The west side of town contained a significant portion of Atlanta's black population and was continuously growing as more blacks were moving or being relocated to the section. Stops on the west line included Northside Drive, Ashby Street, Chappell Road, West Lake Avenue, and Hightower Road. Scott, in his support for the report, concluded that other alternative means of additional transportation were considered for the region, but rapid transit seemed to be the best manner to adequately meet the future situation.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 6, 1963, January 8, 1963. *Atlanta Constitution*, January 6, 1963

²⁴⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 6, 1963, January 8, 1963

With the process in motion, the Rapid Transit Study Commission and ARMPC predicted the passage of a constitutional amendment by at least the counties involved in the study to authorize their governments to invest in rapid transit. It was also expected that a new statewide amendment for the creation of a rapid transit authority be proposed to voters in 1964. In short, the plans and recommendations of the rapid transit study commission's report could not succeed without two things: voters' approval and authorization from the Georgia General Assembly for the creation of a rapid transit authority to operate the system, and in that order.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 6, 1963, January 8, 1963

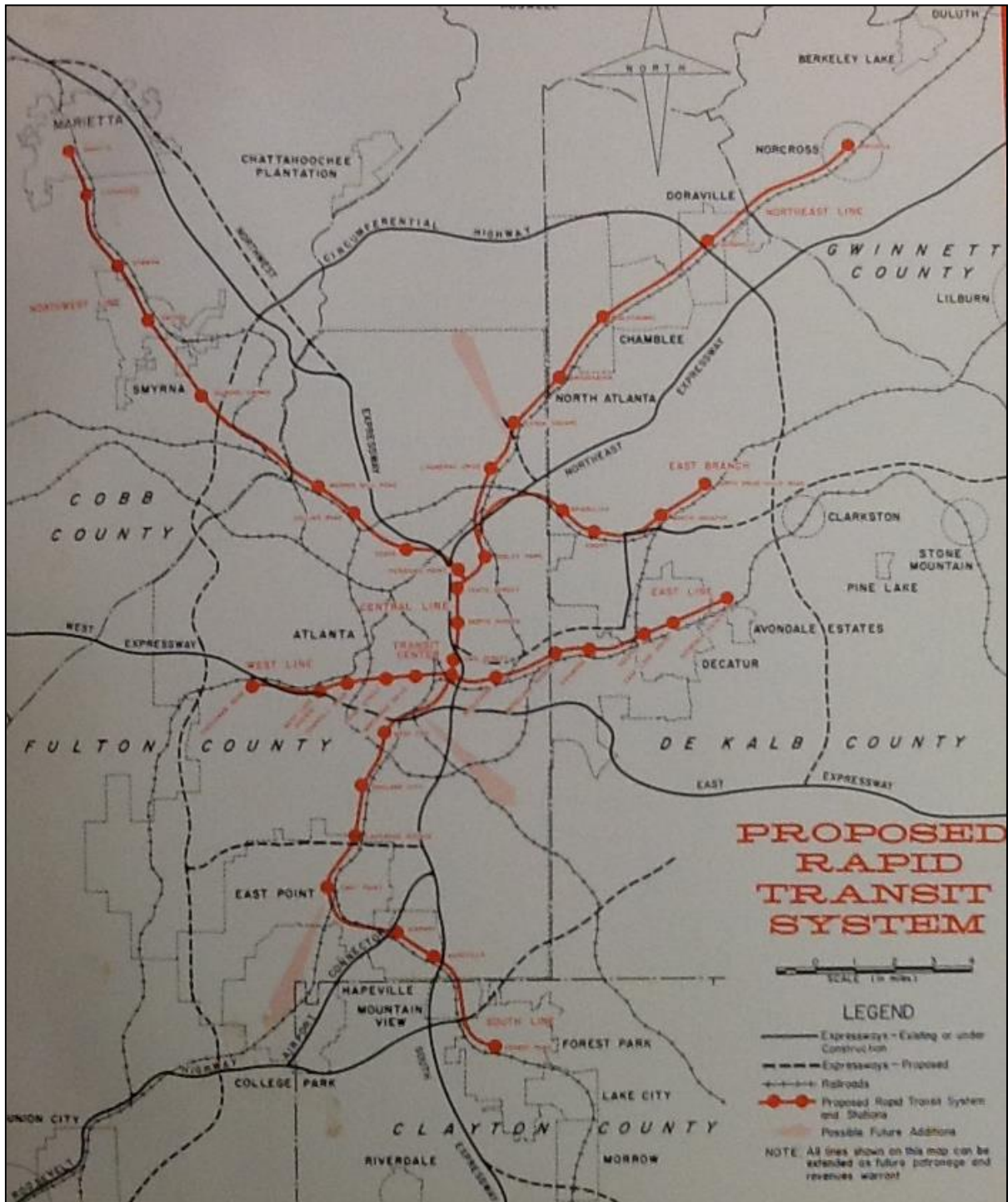


Figure 19: Proposed Rapid Transit System, Atlanta History Center

Movement for MARTA

To pursue regional support, along with legislation for the enactment of an official rapid transit authority, Atlanta leaders and the regional governments created the Metropolitan Rapid Transit Committee of 100. Comprised of members from the five-county area, the committee launched a public information campaign designed to take the need for rapid transportation to the public. The Committee of 100's roster included 25 Atlanta representatives, 20 members from Fulton County, 20 members from DeKalb County, 15 members from Cobb County, and 10 from Clayton and Gwinnett counties. It created the public campaign for the purpose of soliciting approval for a constitutional amendment to provide modern transportation in the area. Mayor Ivan Allen appointed former governor of Georgia Ernest Vandiver and Robert Sommerville, president of the Atlanta Transit System, as Atlanta representatives on the campaign. Allen noted, "I am delighted that the City of Atlanta will have such fine representation on this committee which has ahead of it, a task of such vital importance to the metropolitan areas." He added that Governor Vandiver possessed wide experience in his long and distinguished career in state administration, and Mr. Sommerville had shown his comprehensive understanding of transit problems and solutions through his role and leadership with Atlanta Transit System. Vandiver would be chosen to direct the campaign and Sommerville was selected as co-chairman. The Committee of 100 took on the responsibilities in an endeavor geared to take the metropolitan area to a new level in providing a good and efficient transportation system.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, March 8, 1963, March 21, 1963

The Committee consisted of a biracial group of leading citizens of the metropolitan region. "The civic-minded citizens on the committee will perform services of invaluable service for the benefit of all," explained Mayor Allen. The citizens on the committee were regarded as well and widely known for their public spirit and the faith and devotion to this cause. The committee included black members from Atlanta, but none from other jurisdictions. The black representatives included Margaret Davis Bowen of the League of Women Voters, C.A. Scott, editor of the *World*, and Robert Thompson, Atlanta Urban League housing secretary. In completing the appointments, Allen stated that he could not stress enough the importance of the work of this committee because the future of the entire metropolitan area hinged on the caliber of work performed. Early in the work of the committee, polls by an Atlanta public relations firm indicated that a majority of citizens were in favor of rapid transit even at the risk of taking an extra tax burden.²⁵⁰

Congressional approval of President Kennedy's mass transit bill also provided support for the committee's cause shortly after its formation. In the spring of 1962, Kennedy in his transportation message to the Congress called for federal financial assistance for local urban mass transit systems. Funding for mass transit systems would coincide with the various loans and grants that had already been made available for housing programs. Kennedy's message became reality with the passage of the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. This new measure would provide \$375 million in federal grants to help cities get commuters in and out of towns at a faster pace. Under the bill, federal grants would be made available over a three period to help cities

²⁵⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, 16, 21, 24, March 1963. 3, 5 April 1963

build rapid transit systems to include the purchase of land, right-of-ways, parking facilities, rail cars, stations, and terminals. The bill also carried a provision guaranteeing loans, which communities could make on their own to build rapid transit systems. In order to be eligible, an area seeking aid must have worked out a coordinated urban transportation system as part of a comprehensive plan for the region. As official across the region planned for rapid transit, so too did their state representatives. The addendum of an interim committee for rapid transit in the Georgia Legislature further strengthened the quest for rapid transit in Atlanta. Senator Joseph E. Loggins headed the special committee and Senator Leroy Johnson, the Senate's lone black member, also served as a member. The possibility of a metropolitan rapid transit system took shape, still with great challenges on the horizon.²⁵¹

Dr. Robert C. Weaver,²⁵² African American head of the federal Housing and Home Finance Agency and the person chiefly responsible for administering any federal rapid transit funds, found the case of the Atlanta rapid transit system "quite interesting," as Atlanta was the first in the Southeast to engage in this type planning. Not only did the case of Atlanta gain national attention in the quest for rapid transit, but it also received continued publicity for its metropolitan traffic congestions and issues. An *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article explained:

²⁵¹ Owen, p. 112. *Atlanta Daily World*, 16, 21, 24, March 1963. 3, 5 April 1963

²⁵² Dr. Robert C. Weaver, a Harvard educated economist, became the first African American appointed to a cabinet-level position when he was appointed Secretary of the newly created Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1966. HUD absorbed HHFA, so many of Weaver's responsibilities carried over from his former post. After assuming the responsibilities as HUD secretary, Weaver promoted the Metropolitan Development Act in November of 1966 and the Demonstration Cities Program. (Miller Center, University of Virginia, 2013)

Traffic congestion is creating a crisis for metropolitan areas in getting millions of people to and from work. Congestion is so bad that in some areas it takes more time now to travel through a town than it did in the horse and buggy days. Highways alone will not do the job. The federal government is spending \$41 billion to help build a highway system for the 1970s. But it won't solve the problem of commuting within metropolitan areas. And the problem will get worse if the government doesn't provide some help. The population is growing rapidly and there is increasing concentration of people living in the great complexes beginning to do the nation.²⁵³

Experts predicted that by 1975, the population of the United States would total more than 280 million, and at least half of those people would occupy and settle in 40 crowded urban complexes. Each of those areas would have a population of more than a million. Proponents viewed mass transit as the solution to traffic issues to be created in the crowded urban areas. They argued that if the federal government helped build highways, why shouldn't it help to build improved mass transit systems? Opponents viewed mass rapid transit as a local problem, and nothing for the federal government to get involved with. They added that localities should decide whether they needed mass transportation systems and if the government started passing out grants, it would discourage local initiative and promote federal handouts. The federal discussion resounded in Atlanta as supporters and opponents of mass rapid transit continued to debate the issue.²⁵⁴

The Committee of 100 prepared for the creation of a new constitutional amendment to be submitted to voters for the authorization of a five-county metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit organization. That organization would then create and operate the

²⁵³ *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 21, 1963. Mule To MARTA, MSS 619, Box 35, Folder 1

²⁵⁴ *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, April 21, 1963. *Atlanta Journal*, October 10, 1963. Mule To MARTA, MSS 619, Box 35, Folder 1

rapid transit system. Planning organizations, including the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission, also appealed to state lawmakers for a provision in a new state constitutional amendment to allow cities and counties to levy taxes for the financing of rapid transit. Glenn Bennett, executive director of ARMPC, said the Atlanta region could not continue to function at its present capacity in the future without supplementing its present system of roads and expressways. He didn't think that a taxation provision for rapid transit in the rewritten constitution would be controversial if voters were properly informed.²⁵⁵

Ed Hughes, managing director of the Atlanta Traffic and Safety Council, told a subcommittee of the state Constitution Revision Commission that barriers to rapid transit must be struck down. In a prepared statement before the group, he proclaimed that rapid transit would soon be an absolute necessity to the continued progress and development of the Atlanta area. Roy A. Blount of the Committee of 100 told the Slum Clearance, Redevelopment and Rapid Transit subcommittee that a rapid transit system would benefit all Georgians. He further elaborated that parking spaces occupied 54 percent of downtown Atlanta and predictions estimated the number of automobiles to double in a decade. With that rising number in mind, he explained the necessity of a rapid transit system in helping to cope with that problem. Rapid transit interest and support continued to grow through the coordinated efforts of the various planning

²⁵⁵ *Atlanta Journal*, September 4, 1963. Mule To MARTA, MSS 619, Box 35, Folder 1. Minutes of the Metropolitan Atlanta Study Commission, November 20, 1962. Johnson, p. 35

bodies, along with the advances of the federal government. This definitely helped to shape and strengthen the campaign for an official rapid transit organization.²⁵⁶

With former governor Ernest Vandiver leading the Committee of 100, support came from local and state organizations. This support proved invaluable in the Georgia State Senate for the passage of the new amendment. The Commission's recommendations before the General Assembly in February 1964 provided much needed publicity for the coordinated efforts of rapid transit. The recommendations showcased the advantages of rapid transportation for the Atlanta metropolitan area and outlined how the constitutional amendment if approved, would give local governments, alone or in conjunction with others, the power to construct and operate rapid transit. It would also provide the power to issue bonds or otherwise finance the system. The campaign for the amendment became even more widespread with organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, ARMPC, and the Senate Commission fully engaged in obtaining an amendment to the Georgia Constitution enabling rapid transit. Finally, Senator Ben Johnson of DeKalb County constructed and introduced the amendment to the Georgia State Senate. As a member of the Senate's interim commission on rapid transit, Johnson had developed an interest in a more swift form of mass transportation when he realized the positive impact for DeKalb County.²⁵⁷

Johnson recalled: "I drew up the legislation to create the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority. I was new in the legislature, and I had traveled to other cities, Boston, New York and others to study their legislation to help me draw up the MARTA Act." To

²⁵⁶ *Atlanta Journal*, September 4, 1963. Mule To MARTA, MSS 619, Box 35, Folder 1. Minutes of the Metropolitan Atlanta Study Commission, November 20, 1962. Johnson, p. 35

²⁵⁷ Ben Johnson, Interviewed by Thomas Hills, Atlanta, GA, October 16, 2004. Johnson, p. 46-48

help assure the passage of the amendment, it was introduced to the General Assembly under the local courtesy rule. Under the provisions of that rule, if approved by a certain percentage of the delegates from both houses of the General Assembly in the areas affected, it would not have to go through mandated channels, moving more swiftly towards acceptance. As a result, the amendment faced no real challenges in passing the General Assembly. It required a majority of those voting in each of the five counties of the metropolitan area only, as opposed to statewide, in order to avoid the negative results of earlier attempts for such an amendment.²⁵⁸

With the measure passed by the legislature, Johnson and advocates of rapid transit set out to continue to educate the general public and provide support for the enabling amendment. The various committees also focused on fundraising efforts to provide the financial backbone for the growing movement. Also at this point, the Commission of 100 disbanded as the objectives of obtaining the constitutional amendment to create a rapid transit authority and support for the federal Urban Mass Transportation Act had been accomplished. Although that objective had been achieved, the goal of rapid transit still seemed far off, as an official authority had not been created and approved. Still in pursuit of the goal of an official transit authority, Ben Johnson began drafting the necessary legislation. Realizing that it would be of no benefit politically to have the rapid transit authority legislation develop as a City of Atlanta, Fulton County, or Atlanta Chamber of Commerce plan because of the hostility towards the city of Atlanta from outlying metropolitan counties, he enlisted the consensus of officials representing the other counties involved. A committee of ten formed with two

²⁵⁸ Johnson, p. 46-48

representatives each. Within the committee, opposition from the Cobb County delegation appeared at the onset. Cobb County officials feared ultimate control of the proposed authority by the city of Atlanta. Ultimately, a mandatory referendum allowing voters to decide, as stated in the enabling amendment, was required for the official establishment of the transit authority.²⁵⁹

After it passed both the Georgia State House and Senate, Governor Carl Sanders signed the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Act into law on March 10, 1965. The act officially established that a rapid transit system through the joint efforts of the local governments within the metropolitan area was a reasonable approach to the growing transportation issues that plagued the region. This act also legally created and named the rapid transit body to be known as the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). Since MARTA could not officially begin until 1966 if approved through the 1965 referendum, the MARTA act called for the creation of an interim study commission. This commission would function as the governing body until an official board of leadership could be established for MARTA. With the MARTA Act active, the Committee of 100 was reactivated and joined with the various planning organizations to mount a campaign of support before the special referendum was to go before the general public for a vote. The new campaign stressed the fact that a vote for the authority would not involve any immediate long-term commitment to public funds. The publicity campaign reassured and informed voters that in order for taxes to be levied on behalf of MARTA, elections similar to bond referenda would be required. It emphasized that MARTA was not a super-agency with any powers to institute neither

²⁵⁹ Johnson, p. 53-58

taxes nor eminent domain. Importantly, it also exclaimed that support existed from the top officials of all local governments within the auspices of the transit authority.

Opponents also mounted a more conservative campaign to counter, warning against the domination of the city Atlanta in the processes of the transit authority.²⁶⁰

The greatest opposition to the MARTA Act, just as earlier in the planning process, came from Cobb County. Supporters of rapid transit in Cobb County warned the Committee of 100 that there would be great challenges to overcome in obtaining the necessary votes for the passage of the referendum in the county. Opposition in Cobb County stemmed from various issues, in particular race. Some residents in south Cobb County, who had left the city of Atlanta via white flight, blamed having to leave on the policies of Atlanta leadership. These residents harbored resentment towards the city and Mayor Allen's liberalism and progressive measures enacted over the course of his tenure. They also feared that blacks would settle along the rapid transit lines, prompting the same issues in which they had fled. Residents objected to the fact that Cobb County would not be included in the proposed system until the latter stages, tentatively 1980, but would have to pay taxes anyway. They believed that the city of Atlanta would benefit much greater than Cobb, and that they would be stuck with paying higher taxes while reaping little to no benefits. The negative sentiments prevailed in Cobb and outweighed the support of rapid transit. On June 16, 1965, the referendum for the MARTA Act successfully passed in all of the metropolitan counties, with the exception of Cobb County.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ *Atlanta Constitution*, June 7, 1965. Johnson, p. 71-72

²⁶¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, June 7, 1965, *Atlanta Journal*, June 3, 1965, Johnson, p. 72-75.

The momentum for the failed Cobb referendum did not come as a surprise, for the campaign mounted against rapid transit had been so strong. Supporters of rapid transit throughout the metropolitan area remained disappointed. However, the MARTA Act had successfully passed in the remaining counties, providing for implementation of a rapid transit system in spite of. The participating counties immediately began planning a rapid transit system that would meet the needs of the counties involved. Without the participation of Cobb County, earlier proposals and plans had to be amended to adapt to the results of the 1965 referendum vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Fulton County	31,167	11,452
DeKalb County	15,285	6,321
Cobb County	5,276	6,869
Clayton County	3,049	2,135
Gwinnett County	1,421	1,284

Table 1: Referendum Results, 1968

The Interim Study Commission formed immediately after the local referendums passed, creating the preliminary backbone for the MARTA. In its short existence, the Interim Study Commission successfully selected engineering and financial consultants for future planning, and operated in official capacity until January 3, 1966, when MARTA officially launched.²⁶²

²⁶² *Atlanta Constitution*, June 17, 1965, Johnson, p. 75-77. Voting Record on Rapid Transit Legislation, MARTA, June 19, 1969, Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

MARTA Starts Planning

From inception, MARTA's activities revolved around planning for its first referendum for funding in 1968. Activities were divided into three categories: administrative, which consisted of selecting more consultants, hiring employees, and launching public relations efforts; legislative, working for new laws, on both the state and national levels; and planning, the largest and most important element of the task of creating an efficient rapid transit system. Administrative efforts during this period moved forward the plans set forth by the Interim Study Commission in many cases. Many of MARTA's newly appointed Board of Directors had been involved in efforts creating the Authority. Richard Rich, chairman of the board, had been the chairman of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce's Rapid Transit Authority. Roy Blount, vice chairman of the board, had been the vice chairman of the Committee of 100. Glenn Bennett, secretary of the board and director of ARMPC, received the appointment to facilitate coordination between the Metropolitan Planning Commission and MARTA. In a move of biracial cooperation and progress, Mayor Allen appointed a black member to MARTA's Board of Directors. L.D. Milton, president of Citizens Trust Bank. He represented the sentiments of the black community in the rapid transit program. From the beginning, MARTA officials realized the role the blacks would play in the success of the rapid transit program, therefore, it was essential to make sure that blacks had representation, which proved to be a critical link to success.²⁶³

²⁶³ *First Annual Report*, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 1966. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 1. *Rapid Transit Progress*, October 1966, Vol 1, No. 1, Mule to MARTA Box 71, Folder 7. Johnson, p. 77-78

In completing the hiring of staff, MARTA made important appointments to steer the implementation of the rapid transit program. Henry L. Stuart, former director of Service Control for the Southern Railway system, became general manager. His responsibilities included the overall development of the rapid transit system from the preliminary engineering and design, through construction, to the overall operations. Next, MARTA hired King Elliott, former director of WSB Radio, as the public information director. His job included the development and implementation of a complete public information and education program about rapid transit. MARTA also solidified the final engineering consultants composed of three experienced companies. The joint firm now known as Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Tudor and Bechtel, received a contract to plan Atlanta's rapid transit system. Already involved in the designing and construction of San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, the firm brought much needed experience to the planning of Atlanta's system. MARTA also successfully obtained funding in its first year of operation. A \$300,000 pledge from the participating governments in the region provided funds to set up offices and matching funds for applications for federal funding. As a result, federal funding received approval and provided \$369,000 to assist in planning efforts. MARTA then received more funding when Governor Carl Sanders made provisions in the state budget for the organization to receive \$500,000 in efforts to show state support for the rapid transit project. In the first chairman's report, Rich proclaimed, "The acceptance of the project by Federal, State, and Local Governments, and by the people of the State At Large, and in the Metropolitan Atlanta Area, has been most gratifying and inspires us to increase our

efforts in 1967 for even greater strides towards our ultimate goal of providing our citizens the most modern, efficient, and economical rapid transit system possible.”²⁶⁴

Planning served as an essential component of MARTA in the first two years of existence and the organization placed great focus on creating a coordinated rapid transit system to be presented to voters in a referendum. The legislation creating MARTA called for a referendum to be passed to provide the necessary funding for the massive transit project. The referendum would appear as a bond referendum because voters in the counties involved would vote to raise their property taxes to underwrite a bond issue to partially finance the construction of the system.²⁶⁵

MARTA’s goal became creating a system to gain widespread support and satisfy the transportation needs of the sprawling region. The planning efforts during this period remained geared towards updating previous transportation plans to include rapid transit, unifying transportation planning in the region, and developing a detailed proposal for a feasible transit system to be presented for a bond referendum in November 1968. MARTA’s planning approach broadened when planners realized that plans could not be developed for a stand-alone rapid rail system only. MARTA officials believed that in order to plan a most effective system as an integral member of a balanced transportation system for the region, bus service should accompany the rapid rail system. “Rail rapid transit, along with an effective bus service, a highly developed network of arterial and surface streets, and an expanded expressway system, if properly

²⁶⁴ *First Annual Report*, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 1966. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 1. *Rapid Transit Progress*, October 1966, Vol 1, No. 1, Mule to MARTA Box 71, Folder 7. Johnson, p. 77-80

²⁶⁵ *Second Annual Report*, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 1967. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 1. Johnson, p. 80

coordinated, could effectively reduce traffic congestion and make transportation faster, more efficient and more comfortable,” explained Richard Rich. To obtain the desired results, MARTA fully participated in the Atlanta Area Transportation Study to jointly coordinate and design the most effective system for the metropolitan area.²⁶⁶

In June 1966, ARMPC, in coordination with MARTA, received an Urban Planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to revise and update the 1962 Regional Transportation Plan. The revised and updated report became known as *Rapid Transit for Metropolitan Atlanta*, serving as the basis of the plan to be presented before voters in the future referendum. This amended report contained both an engineering and financial component for the proposed rapid transit system. Several topics discussed in the 1962 report proved to be outdated or no longer pertinent to the discussion of rapid transit in metropolitan Atlanta. Perhaps the greatest change stemmed from the fact that the earlier report included a rapid transit system planned for the five-county metropolitan region including Cobb County, rather than the current four-county composition. The amended report, or the 1967 report, featured updates including the technological advances that had emerged since 1962. It outlined a system complete with at-grade, aerial and subway configurations for the rapid rail lines. A high degree of automatic control would guide rail cars that could reach speeds between 70 and 75 miles per hour and travel times of only 90 seconds between stations during peak hours in Central Atlanta. The 1967 report placed great focus on stations because they would serve as the entry and exit points of the system. Stations were planned with specific functions to serve the areas in which they were placed, i.e., business, commuter, or

²⁶⁶ *Second Annual Report*, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 1967. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 1. Johnson, p. 80

residential. The introduction of rapid busways and coordinated bus service to link with rapid rail stations also provided an addendum to the new plan for rapid transit. The 1967 report, along with other proposed plans were debated upon to be the final plan for the future referendum.²⁶⁷

Once completed by contracted engineers, MARTA presented the preliminary plans for the 1968 referendum to the general public for approval through a series of 14 well-attended public hearings. Following the hearings, many local leaders endorsed the plan. Recommended changes from the people attending the forums would be adopted in the final product. Some of the recommendations included the requests of local businessmen that the proposed West End station be moved to another location. Decatur citizens requested that the Decatur station to be moved closer to the City Square and residents along Peachtree Street requested that the Northeast Line follow the Southern Railway tracks rather than go through Brookwood Hills, Peachtree Hills, and Garden Hills. Black leaders requested a longer West Line along with rail service to the isolated black community in the Perry Homes housing project on the Northwest. The recommendations received only consideration while others would be implemented in the final proposal. After MARTA and its consultants carefully examined all preliminary reports and recommendations, they adopted the final plan. MARTA revealed the plan in September 1968 and it featured a total system of public transportation that included 40.3-mile rapid rail and a feeder bus system. The estimates of system costs included the purchase of the Atlanta Transit System which would not only provide feeder service, but would also provide service to those areas not directly served by rails. The proposed

²⁶⁷ Johnson, p. 86-92

40.3-mile rail system consisted of the basic routes proposed in the 1967 report with some visible changes according to public accommodations.²⁶⁸

The 40.3-mile rail system included an East-West Line, from Kensington Road in the east through the Central Transit Center, to Lynhurst Drive in the west. Planners extended the west line extended from Hightower Road in earlier reports to move it nearer to I-285. On the West Line, the Rhodes Street Station, renamed University Station, had been moved westward to better serve the Atlanta University Center and the urban renewal areas of the west side. On the East Line, the Kirkwood Station, renamed Candler Park Station, was shifted westward to obtain better access and better serve the East Atlanta Urban Renewal Project. Renamed Grant Station, planners shifted the former Boulevard Station to better serve Grady Homes. Planners also realigned the East Line to better serve Downtown Decatur, as requested by the citizens of the area. The Northeast Line would extend from the Pershing Point Station to Doraville and the junction with I-285, and the Northwest Line from Pershing Point to Northside Drive to be started in hope that Cobb County would eventually join MARTA. The proposed South Line would run from the Central Transit Station to the Atlanta Airport with an additional station named Tri-Cities Station. Planners added this station to serve the business district of East Point. They also moved the Oakland Avenue Station northward for better east-west access. The overarching idea of the proposed 40.3-mile system presented in the 1968 referendum offered service in four major directions and provided adequate service for the total area inside the boundaries of I-285.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ *Third Annual Report*, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 1968. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 1. Johnson, p. 118-119

²⁶⁹ Johnson, p. 119-123

HOW FAR HOW FAST?

The map at left shows the proposed routes for the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit System. The following table shows typical distances and travel times from Stations to Transit Center, which will be located downtown south of Marietta St., between Broad and Peachtree Streets.

<i>Station</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Time</i>
Norcross	18.2 miles	23 minutes
Doraville	13.6	19
Oglethorpe	10.4	15
Lenox Square	7.1	11
Ansley Park	3.4	6
Tenth Street	2.0	4
Forest Park	12.9	16
Hapeville	9.9	13
East Point	6.4	9
West End	2.2	2
Avondale Estates	7.4	11
Decatur	6.1	9
Moreland Avenue	2.8	4
Hightower Road	4.5	8
Ashby Street	1.6	3
Marietta	18.3	25
Smyrna	12.9	18
Moore's Mill Road	7.2	12
Cooks	4.7	8
North Druid Hills Rd.	10.3	15

Figure 20: Typical Distances and Travel Times from Stations to Transit Center in Proposed Transit System, Atlanta History Center

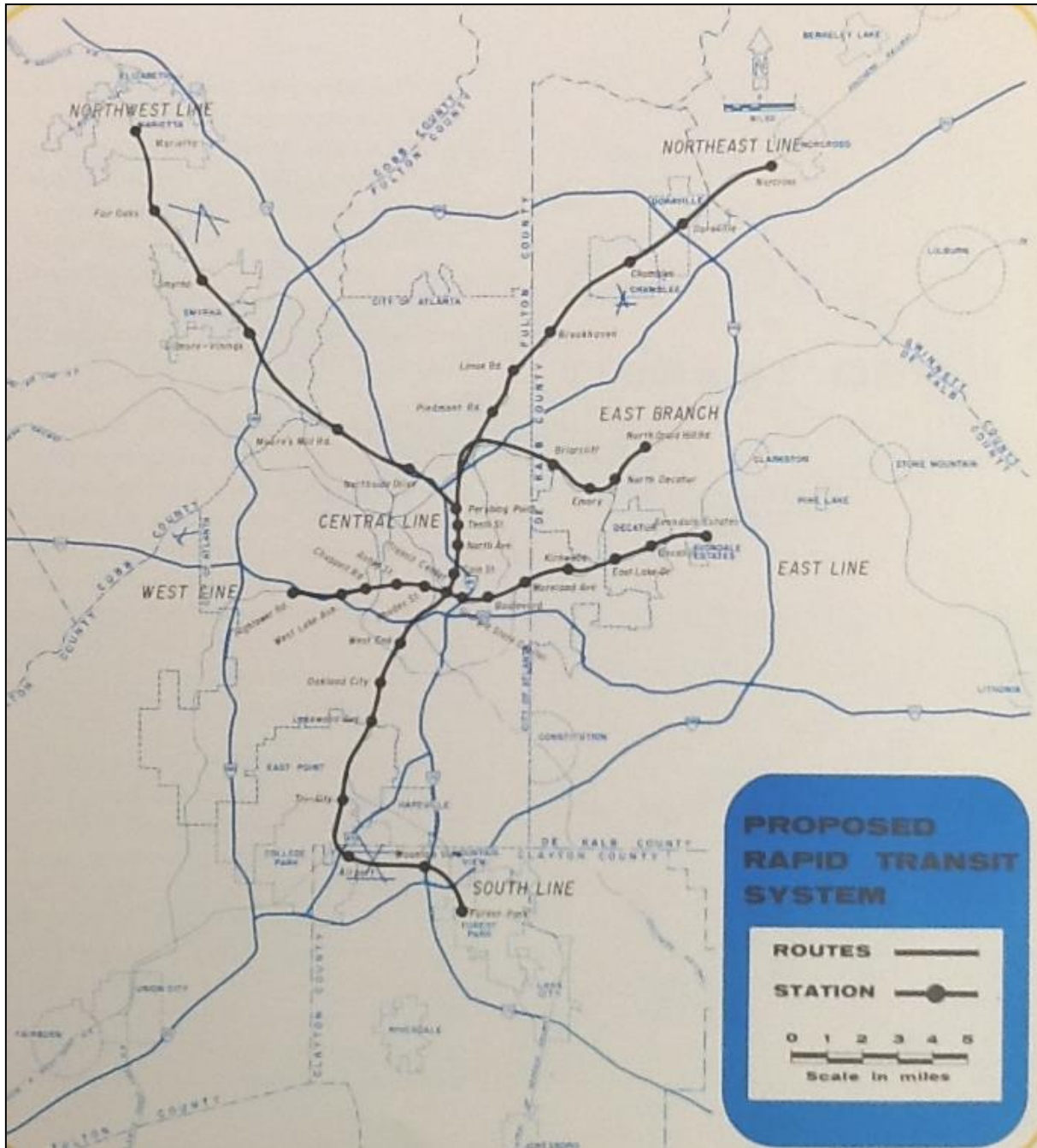


Figure 22: Proposed Rapid Transit System, 1967. Atlanta History Center

The 1968 Referendum and the Black Community

If passed by voters in the November 1968 referendum, MARTA would authorize conceptual designs, begin surveying, and acquire right-of-ways in a phase extending until January 1971. At that point, MARTA would begin the general construction. The first line to open for service would be the East-West Line in July 1975, and the system would be completed by July 1978.²⁷⁰

These lofty plans reached a standstill when the referendum in November 1968 failed in all jurisdictions involved. The official returns indicated that in the city of Atlanta alone, only 43.6 percent of voters favored the outlines of the referendum. The defeat of the referendum came in spite of the optimism of MARTA supporters. Much of MARTA's success had come from support in the City of Atlanta, Fulton County, and DeKalb County. The 1968 referendum reflected a change in the consensus of the residents. In particular, opponents launched boisterous campaigns against the proposed plans to be initiated by the referendum. Conservative factions on the Northside opposed the financial aspects of the plan and opponents like Governor Lester Maddox opposed for more radical reasons of a segregationist agenda. Perhaps in the most organized manner, the greatest opposition came from the black community, who opposed for many reasons. Particularly, the lack of services and participation in planning prompted the greatest unrest. Since the incorporation of transportation planning in Atlanta, blacks had protested their lack of participation. This stage of MARTA planning occurred an apex in the mobility struggles of blacks in Atlanta.²⁷¹

²⁷⁰ Johnson, p.123

²⁷¹ Ibid

MARTA's proposed plans for the rapid transit system featured too many flaws, as voters did not approve the 1968 referendum to fund the program. Members of the black community in particular hesitated to support MARTA's plans. The Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference (MASLC), an umbrella organization of nine civil rights organizations, stated: "If MARTA wants to secure the support of the black community, it must come by, not pass over, around, or miss completely the low-income areas." In a list of suggested recommendations to MARTA officials, MASLC also called for the hiring of blacks within the planning of MARTA. Officials of the Summit Leadership team, along with members of the respective organizations met with MARTA officials to give notice of "final requirements" for MARTA to receive the support of the black community. The requirements included the requests for changes and additional service to adequately meet the needs of blacks in the low-income areas. Mary Sanford, president of the Perry Homes Tenant Association, included a rousing argument for improved transportation and services to the growing concentration of apartments in the Perry Homes area. State representative Julian Bond also joined the Summit in taking a closer look into rapid transit for Perry Homes and other areas. He urged citizens in need of improved transportation to stay aware of its status and the affects it would have on certain areas. The summit requested additional service for the Perry Homes area, Thomasville, Poole Creek, Hapeville and the Model Cities area, along with extensions of the west line further into the areas in which blacks continued to relocate.²⁷²

MASLC believed that the city's power players had not demonstrated that Atlanta was ready for a rapid transit system, stating: "It's not to imply that the city does not need

²⁷² *The Atlanta Inquirer*, May 18, 1968. Central Atlanta Progress Records, Box 217, Folder 11.

a rapid transit system, but the city had not shown an honest, integrated system or consistency in the equal opportunity around the development of the system.” Leaders of the MASLC made specific requests of the MARTA commission including the considering proposed lines, additional black representation, and proposals for employment and training in the system. MASLC stated that MARTA attempted to appease them with the “false impression” that a Perry Homes-Proctor Creek line would be established and the inclusion of black members as representatives on the trip to Canada to explore the transit system of Toronto. However, the group was certain that MARTA didn’t grasp the full magnitude of their ultimatum. Furthermore, MASLC leaders concerned themselves with the displacement of blacks as a result of the rapid transit system. One community in particular, the Johnson Town community near Lenox Square, had been slated for demolition to make way for the Lenox Station. Leaders stated that the rapid transit project “will be just like urban renewal, it will be black removal.” As the plan stood, MASLC and its supporters vigorously prepared to campaign against the referendum.²⁷³

Summit Co-Chairman Reverend Samuel Williams elaborated, “The system is planned for the rich at the expense of the poor.” He added that the Westside line, the one most critical to the black community, was the shortest of all the lines. Summit officials believed that the people who needed the line the most received no consideration. “These people want to get to and from as quickly as anybody else,” argued the Summit leadership. Julian Bond, representative of the section in which the proposed Westside line would pass through, elaborated that he would also seek

²⁷³ Press Release from The Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Congress, Inc., October 10, 1968. Mule to MARTA, Box 71, Folder 10

solutions for those families displaced by the construction of the Westside rail line. Senator Leroy Johnson implored, “no one should make a mistake that we [blacks] are against rapid transit, we just want to strengthen it.” He continued, “It ought to serve Negroes and whites equally and ought to employ them equally. Our position is firmly in favor of rapid transit.” Summit leadership’s recommendations included a firm request that blacks be included in job opportunities and the recruiting of future personnel and future inspection teams that visit various other cities with rapid transit. Johnson elaborated that at the time of planning for MARTA, there were no blacks involved. He also urged that, “rapid transit be brought down to the masses of people who didn’t know what it [rapid transit] was. Those people could not identify with it; therefore, they had no reason to support it.”²⁷⁴

Summit leadership informed MARTA that unless changes happened, they would not recommend the rapid transit plans to the black community. Using MARTA’s own criteria, the summit concluded:

“We find inconsistencies that result in the neglect of Negro communities and poor white and poor Negro areas . . . We are proposing two additional transit routes and the extension of the proposed Westside line . . . We are urging all citizens to attend the rapid transit hearings.”

Next, they requested a clearer understanding and assurance of job opportunities for blacks, a list of all current staff positions of MARTA personnel and job descriptions, and that blacks be included in all future recruiting of personnel and on future inspection teams. They also requested a list of all firms doing business with MARTA, a detailed description of Transit route right-of-way plans and land acquisitions, and a description of the various types of stations and the proposed location of each. Bond said that he

²⁷⁴*The Atlanta Inquirer*, May 18, 1968. Central Atlanta Progress Records, Box 217, Folder 11

hoped that the black community would attend all meetings and hearings, for this would be the only chance to express their feelings and concerns about the system. In the midst of the black community efforts to derail the plans of the MARTA referendum, studies initiated by MARTA indicated that the highest percentage of undecided voters for the referendum included low-income black residents. The survey indicated that this group was suspicious of the white community trying to “put something over on the them.” Nevertheless, the black community would continue to be a critical link to the development and realization of any plans set forth by MARTA. From this point forward, its support proved necessary and crucial.²⁷⁵

The 1968 referendum was a turning point for blacks in transportation planning. It, along with other events including the outlawing of the county unit system, the election of Leroy Johnson, and the appointment of blacks to the Committee of 100, illustrated the changes of the decade that brought blacks representation, rights, and privileges that had not existed before. With its establishment amidst the changes of the decade, MARTA experienced and was subjected to the increasing power and sophistication of blacks, facing challenges never before presented in transportation planning in Atlanta. Increases in population throughout the 1960s, along with the changing social environment put blacks in a position of demand. Moving forward, black used this position to ensure full participation not only in transportation planning, but also other areas affecting their lives and communities.

²⁷⁵ *The Atlanta Inquirer*, May 18, 1968. Central Atlanta Progress Records, Box 217, Folder 11. Survey of Voters on the Rapid Transit Issue, May 1968, Prepared by: Marketing Information Service, Atlanta, GA. Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

CHAPTER 4 – PHASE IV, 1968-1975

At the end of a very turbulent decade, the city of Atlanta remained intact. As an epicenter of the Civil Rights Movement, social change unfolded throughout the city as citizens sought equality. From the desegregation of schools, neighborhoods, and public spaces to the assassination of Atlanta's own, the national civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., citizens contested traditions of segregation and endured the repercussions of change. National influences and grassroots protests called attention to controversies over racially based exploitation and discrimination, while those opposed to moderate change provided strong resistance, ultimately removing themselves altogether. They fled to spaces surrounding the city with the intent of maintaining their private and personal preferences. The resulting change within the city promoted commerce, growth, and reconfigured commercial life. This change also provided for enhanced planning, restructuring, and redevelopment to accommodate equality in all functions of the city. While many inequalities persisted, participation rested more freely in the hands of all citizens, regardless of color.²⁷⁶

This chapter describes a new era of city politics in Atlanta, one following the changes ushered in with civil rights period legislation and advancement. With more barriers removed, black leaders along with those outside of the established coalitions stood the chance of being elected or appointed to positions of high authority. Citizens elected the first Jewish mayor along with an African American vice mayor. With the new leadership came the increased appointments of African Americans and other minorities

²⁷⁶ Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 9

to positions of civic authority. Also, by this time, the city had reached a black majority in population, truly changing the face of city politics. Blacks took advantage of this newfound power, using it to gain mobility in areas of city life. With advances in biracial cooperation and leadership, rapid transit, and economic development, the metropolis resembled a completely different city than it did just one decade earlier.

New Era of City Politics & Leadership

Changes in leadership and the power structure came at the end of the decade. Atlanta elected its first Jewish mayor in October 1969 after a run-off election. Sam Massell, the incumbent vice mayor and a Democrat, defeated Rodney Cook, a moderate Republican in a 62,632 to 51,289 vote. The black vote played a major factor in Massell's victory. Two weeks earlier, voters had elected the city's first black vice mayor, Maynard Jackson. The *New York Times* reported, "In a political year that has seen law-and-order candidates emerge victorious elsewhere, Atlanta, a progressive city that likes to be known as 'a city too busy to hate,' will enter the 1970's with a Jewish mayor and a Negro vice mayor."²⁷⁷

From the onset, Massell presented himself as an underdog fighting the monied business interests and corporations whose backing generally determined elections. He identified as an unapologetic liberal and believed most people in the city shared his philosophy, especially on human relations. He put together a new coalition of white liberals and poor blacks who noted a fraying of the business community's publicized "progressiveness." He noted that the business community's plan catered to the needs of

²⁷⁷ *New York Times*, October 22, 1969

the business climate rather than a genuine concern for the poor. Massell's criticism of the business elite placed him at odds with the city's white power structure. His underdog approach received sympathy and support necessary for victory. Massell's plan of action as mayor included a top priority of improving race relations. "This isn't accomplished by simply maintaining an attitude of goodwill," he explained. "It's achieved by doing specific things. For instance, there is a big gap in the number of blacks employed by the city – a gap caused by 100 years of neglect. The answer is not just equal opportunity, but an active recruitment of blacks for jobs." He noted other challenges of the growing metropolis to be given high priority, including a new airport, new low-cost housing, and importantly, new roads and rapid transit systems.²⁷⁸

Both mayoral candidates actively sought the black vote in a city, where at the time of the election, blacks represented 48 percent of the population. At this point, the black vote was essential for victory in city elections; however, the election of 1969 provided a unique and specific challenge. For the first time, black names appeared on the ballots as viable candidates for mayor and vice mayor. Dr. Horace Tate, the third mayoral candidate, stated, "after 122 years, Atlanta is ready for a black mayor." Tate, a noted educator and only the second black elected to the Atlanta Board of Education, rallied support from the black community but faced dissension. Tate ran into conflict with Senator Leroy Johnson who also had interest in becoming Atlanta's first black mayor. Tate's declaration of candidacy short-circuited Johnson's projected candidacy. In response, Johnson challenged Tate's candidacy by seeking to put the decision of the best candidate in the hands of Atlanta's black power structure. Despite such measures,

²⁷⁸ *New York Times*, October 22, 1969, October 23, 1969

Tate deemed himself viable and continued his campaign. He rallied the support of Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Hosea Williams of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Georgia House Representative Julian Bond, and noted Civil Rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson. Senator Johnson, with the support of local black leaders including insurance executive and MARTA board member Jesse Hill, Jr., withdrew his candidacy, and urged the support of Vice Mayor Sam Massell with support for black candidate Maynard Jackson as vice mayor as a means of racial compromise.²⁷⁹

A split among black voters along with support of the established black power structure behind Sam Massell caused Tate's candidacy to fall short. Voters eliminated Tate in the general election prompting a run-off between Massell and Cook. Now with the major support of blacks, Massell progressed to the run-off with victory in sight. When faced with negative propaganda aimed at discrediting Massell's candidacy, black supporters continued to rally in support. Atlanta's two major newspapers, *The Constitution* and *The Journal*, under the influence of the city's white power structure, endorsed Cook editorially. In past elections, the newspapers had backed Allen and his predecessor William B. Hartsfield. Massell's campaign and election illustrated the necessity of the black vote. It also showcased some reluctance to change from the established power structure. Andrew Young, aide to Rev. Ralph Abernathy, head of the SCLC, explained that he saw a "raw power coalition" going to great lengths to preserve itself. No matter the case, the election of 1969 brought about moderate change. On

²⁷⁹ *Chicago Defender*, October 6, 1969. *Atlanta Daily World*, February 25, 1968

Inauguration Day, 1970, the *Daily World* commented that for the first time since Reconstruction, city government reflected all people of the city.²⁸⁰

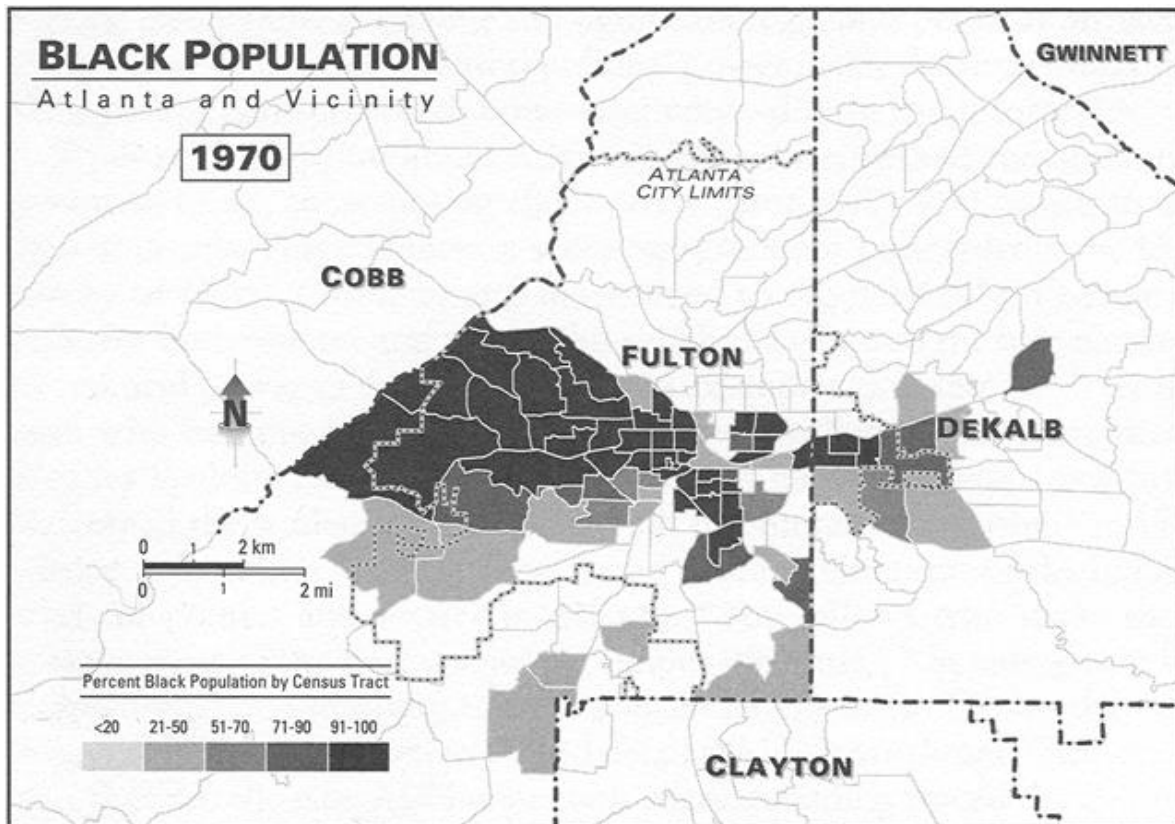


Figure 23: Black Population, Atlanta & Vicinity 1970

Monumental gains in black political participation during this period of transition came when attorney Maynard Jackson became the first black man to ever be elected vice mayor of the city of Atlanta. Jackson, founding partner of the all-black law firm Jackson, Patterson, & Parks, deemed the time “right and ripe.” He ran on the platform of enforcing anti-discrimination laws and defeated his white opponent, veteran alderman Milton Farris, by a substantial margin. This victory came one year after Jackson’s

²⁸⁰ *Chicago Defender*, October 21, 1969. *New York Times*, October 22, 1969. Pomerantz, p. 393. *Atlanta Constitution*, October 3, 1969, October 21, 1969.

attempt to unseat Georgia's longstanding Democratic U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge. He had achieved national attention as he opposed a candidate who even white men in Georgia were afraid to challenge. Benjamin E. Mays declared, "I supported Maynard Jackson in his race against Talmadge and I believe I was the largest black contributor to his campaign fund." He added, "It surprised most of the people when Jackson polled 200,000 votes. It was significant that he received more white votes in Atlanta than Talmadge." Jackson's gains in the former election prepared him for the challenges of the next. He campaigned for "action programs that give hope to people." He promised to enforce existing anti-discrimination laws and fair housing codes, and to eliminate scare tactics and block busting authorized by some realtors. Jackson appealed for votes both black and white, with success in both communities. Estimates showed 50 percent of the 87,000 black registered voters went to the polls and that 90 percent of blacks voted for Jackson. Jackson also won over 17,000 white votes.²⁸¹

The election of October 1969 represented more black gains with the election of Benjamin E. Mays, the 74-year-old retired president of Morehouse College, to the Atlanta Board of Education. Even more groundbreaking, following his election to the post, the 10-member board, with only three blacks, elected him to the board's top post. In his initial term as a board member, Dr. Mays immediately assumed board leadership. At the helm of leadership, Mays placed the overdue full desegregation of schools and faculty in line with a federal court order as the first order of business. The school system faced a deadline of January 12, 1970 for coming up with a plan to shift faculty to reflect the racial makeup of the city's schools. The significant deadline marked the twelfth

²⁸¹ *Chicago Defender*, October 9, 1969, November 1, 1969. Pomerantz, p. 393

anniversary of the original school desegregation order for the city of Atlanta. The impending changes, shifting of faculty, and pay disagreements from previous sessions of the board spurred discontent among faculty and personnel, threatening strike at any moment. Dr. Mays played a pivotal role in overseeing the full, peaceful integration of Atlanta's schools, while managing the list of inherited challenges faced the new board. Conclusively, the elections of Sam Massell, Maynard Jackson and Dr. Benjamin E. Mays showcased the expanded role of black voting and participation at the end of the 1960s, and foreshadowed an even greater role that blacks played in the politics of the following decade.²⁸²

MARTA Regrouping Phase

In the wake of political changes along with the failed referendum of 1968, MARTA officials went back to the drawing board to devise new strategies on how to move the rapid transit program forward. "Too much uncoordinated planning, which helped defeat the rapid transit bond issue, still threatens to further complicate efforts to solve Atlanta's transportation problem," said MARTA official Rawson Haverty to the *Atlanta Constitution*. He also added that weak communications, too little coordination, and conflicting local governments also hindered efforts in creating the rapid transit system. Strong racial and class-based issues also served as hindrances in the passage of the MARTA referendum. Although black community members generally believed in the promises of rapid transit and agreed that it was needed in Atlanta, they recalled how the city previously handled the issues of race and class. Blacks were convinced that

²⁸² *Atlanta Daily World*, January 4, 1970

they would not get their fair share with the program and even alluded to rumors that MARTA had secret maps and plans that were not reviewed by city officials or available to the public. Black community leaders decreed that before full support would be given, the MARTA board would have to come out and clear the air of all secrets. In order to gain greater support from the black community for rapid transit, MARTA officials continuously attempted to reach deeper into the community, attempting to fulfill many of the demands which the community set forth.²⁸³

First, MARTA hosted a series of forums to allow neighborhood residents and groups to offer their suggestions and opinions as part of the process of planning the rapid transit system. A MARTA briefing luncheon on March 5, 1970 at Paschal's Restaurant on Hunter Street was held for a cadre of black aldermen, city leaders, state officials, leaders throughout the communities, and interested citizens. Those in attendance included Jesse Hill, Jr., an insurance executive with Atlanta Life Insurance Company, Senator Leroy Johnson, Alderman Q.V. Williamson, and Alderman Ira Jackson. With this meeting, MARTA intended to establish better communication with the black community, and to discuss new plans for the future of MARTA and rapid transit in Atlanta. The meeting revealed many of the desires of rapid transit in the black community. Leaders and concerned citizens alike were concerned about the level of black participation in MARTA decision-making. Participant observation forms completed by attendees revealed some of the issues and questions among blacks in response to MARTA: Some of them included: (1) what major changes were to take shape from the original design? (2) Would the plan deal with social problems created by inadequate

²⁸³ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 12, 1969. Bayor, p 192-193. *Atlanta Daily World*, July 4, 1971, April 11, 1971

transportation in low-income communities? (3) What consideration has been given to the proposed Perry Homes line in the new design? (4) In seeming to serve primarily the needs of the business community (CBD) and the suburbs, what services will serve travel between the inner city and to the perimeter area? (5) How can black consultant firms get involved in MARTA planning? (6) Will blacks be actively recruited when MARTA begins recruiting staff? (7) Will all sections of the city be provided the same type of system? These were some of the questions and challenges which MARTA faced in securing the support of the black community in preparation for a new referendum.²⁸⁴

Gradually, MARTA hired more blacks and named to various board appointments and other leadership roles. With three strategic assignments, MARTA placed blacks in roles critical to gaining the support of the Atlanta's black communities. When MARTA appointed Lauren Hanks as assistant to the public information director in 1970, she became the first black female to be employed by MARTA. Hanks, a graduate of Clark College, became responsible for assisting in the preparation of new releases and other informational materials. She also had the duty of developing exhibits, displays, and other materials to be presented at the rapid transit public forums. MARTA appointed Morris J. Dillard, a Morehouse College graduate and former labor affairs representative with the National Urban League's southern regional office, as a senior staff member charged with developing and directing communications between MARTA and various communities and neighborhoods, as well as conveying MARTA information to the people. Board member Rawson Haverty explained that Dillard would play a vital role in the planning development and implementation of all MARTA projects. "He will provide

²⁸⁴ Notes from Race Relations – Meeting with Black Community – March 5, 1970, Mule to MARTA, Box 69, Folder 7

extremely valuable leadership as we try to develop an acceptable plan for rapid transit,” stated Haverty. These appointments followed Mayor Allen’s appointment of Jesse Hill, Jr. as a board member. With Hill’s appointment, MARTA’s board included of two black members. In appointing Hill, Mayor Allen acknowledged the role blacks played in the defeat of the 1968 referendum and answered the call for broader-based representation of the MARTA board.²⁸⁵

With the appointment of more blacks to key positions, including those on the board, MARTA continued to reach out and involve the black community in much greater roles in planning for the next referendum. Also, the establishment of the Action Forum, an organization linking white business elites and top-level black leaders, helped foster communication and create greater responsibility for blacks. This organization grew out of the realization that if MARTA were to make a comeback after the 1968 referendum, black support would be essential. The brainchild of prominent black real estate broker W.L. (Bill) Calloway and Mills Lane, chief executive officer of Citizens and Southern National Bank, the Action Forum comprised of white business leaders, mainly chief executive officers, and a host of black leaders from diverse backgrounds. They included heads of social agencies, college presidents, and business executives. The organization met once a month, with no minutes or officers, for the purposes of facilitating open discussion about major community issues. The discussion of MARTA took center stage as one of the major community issues for which the Action Forum sought solutions. Lyndon Wade, executive of the Atlanta Urban League and member of the Action Forum, explained the organization as “a great forum for people to talk about

²⁸⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, June 7, 1970, November 15, 1970. *Atlanta Journal*, December 8, 1969

things . . . we finally decided that MARTA would be great for everybody.” Wade believed that credit should be given to the Action Forum for moving along the ideas of MARTA. Jesse Hill agreed with Wade and added, “The Action Forum was a key entity, not the Chamber, but the Action Forum.”²⁸⁶

The Action Forum served as a springboard for ideas and planning for the new referendum, but also facilitated the integration of blacks into the economic lives of the white business elite. Lyndon Wade said the black leaders within the Action Forum initiated a plan to show how involving the black community and working together would move MARTA and the economy forward. Wade proclaimed:

. . . But the bottom line was that people began to talk to each other. You know, this was a real issue; This wasn't just somebody sitting up, daydreaming about race issues – you were talking about real stuff, and it was fascinating, and it was dynamic – it was just something for the whole town – it began to flow out, you know - because then guys would begin to have conversations with each other, when they were not at the Action Forum, I mean things here - things there. And so MARTA was more than just a transportation system. MARTA was an economic catalyst for this region. It was a system that empowered people from the standpoint of mobility to be able to have access to jobs. It created, you know, jobs. And, we found a way to share in this community. I mean, there was not a thing left uncovered.²⁸⁷

The Action Forum provided the foundation for the new referendum which the failed referendum lacked. Communication and connectivity between the white business community and the leadership of the black community had not existed. The elite status of the Action Forum helped spread the revised plans of MARTA and drew support from

²⁸⁶ Stone, pp. 96-97, 104. Lyndon Wade, Interviewed by Thomas Hills, Atlanta, GA, October 11, 2004. Jesse Hill, Jr., Interviewed by Thomas Hills, Atlanta, GA, November 13, 2004. Alexander, pp. 227-228. Bayor, pp. 193-194

²⁸⁷ Lyndon Wade, Interviewed by Thomas Hills

major community and business factions throughout the city. It also helped to increase the black visibility associated with MARTA, which would be key to the overall success of the new referendum.²⁸⁸

Black Demands of MARTA

The Atlanta Coalition on Current Community Affairs (ACCCA), composed of black leaders and individual citizens, presented MARTA with a list of issues which they described as “crucial” to the city of Atlanta, especially the black community. Senator Leroy Johnson explained that this list was divided into two areas: issues that should be acted upon immediately, and those that should receive formal commitments. The areas to be acted upon immediately included: the hiring of 35% minorities on the MARTA staff at all levels maintaining a policy that all of its consulting firms do the same, and to increase the black voting membership on the MARTA Board. Johnson particularly emphasized the need for increased black voting power on the MARTA board. By July 1971, the board only had two black members, Jesse Hill, Jr. and L.D. Milton, one active and the other inactive respectively. Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson was also involved in the presentation to MARTA. He discussed the fact that opposition existed from the planning commission, which did not favor extensive black representation. In response, Jackson stated, “We do not want to take over the programs, we merely want to share in the planning and coordination of issues which affect our lives.” An overall common theme presented by the black leaders and the community in general was the need for MARTA to provide better service to the areas where people depend on public transit.

²⁸⁸ Lyndon Wade, Interviewed by Thomas Hills. Stone, p. 97. Bayor, pp. 193-194

Rapid transit at first took on a planning process similar to that of public housing development: blacks being planned for, not with. However, unlike public housing, mass transit needed voter approval in the various phases, including design and financing. In the case of MARTA, blacks commanded power that forced officials to seriously take into accounts the needs and demands of the black community.²⁸⁹

In the request to MARTA, the ACCCA presented the list of issues, which required formal commitments in order to gain the support of black leadership and the community in general. This detailed list appeared provided an outlined as to how MARTA could better serve the black community. The top priorities on the list included: establishment of fifteen cents fare for ten years, high-speed rail service to Northwest Perry, priority to those dependent on public transit, the purchase of Atlanta Transit System (ATS) and implementation of immediate improvement programs, and public transit service from all inner city communities to major employment centers. Next, the list called for high-speed rail service to Fulton Industrial Park, East Atlanta-Kirkwood areas, Carver Homes-South Atlanta area, and Southwest Atlanta-Cascade, Ben Hill. Moreover, the list demanded at least 35% minority manpower utilization at all levels of MARTA staff, at least 35% of each services and goods contracts to minority firms and consultants, and that no contracts or agreements be extended to any organization that prohibits or limits hiring an/or promotion of persons because of race, sex, and national origin. Finally, the list called for an adequately staffed equal employment office and provisions for transporting Atlanta Public School Children.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁹ Bayor, p. 191. *Atlanta Daily World*, July 4, 1971. Correspondence from the ACCCA to MARTA, July 1, 1971, Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

²⁹⁰ Correspondence from the ACCCA to MARTA, July 1, 1971, Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

Black leaders also noted other transportation-related issues plaguing the black community and requiring formal commitments. The group called upon the metropolitan business community and political leadership, including MARTA officials and supporters, to address a list of issues. The issues were in conjunction with the perceived faults of the rapid transit proposal, and included: (1) The widening and realignment of Simpson Road, (2) Improvements to Gordon Road, (3) Moratorium on planning and construction of freeways and expressways through residential areas; (4) Exit ramp from I-20 West to Gordon Road, (5) Representation on the Regional Planning Commission and all regional and state planning boards; (6) Black Chief Administrative Officer or Deputy of City of Atlanta; (7) Definitive land use plan for Fulton and DeKalb Counties to include disbursement of low-income housing; (8) Minority manpower in county governments, (9) Minority judges in municipal, civil-criminal, and superior courts. As illustrated, black leaders used the requests to MARTA to call attention to various other problems in the community. They used the political power illustrated through transportation planning to demand changes in many areas of black life in the city of Atlanta and the region.²⁹¹

The demands of black leadership and the black community as a whole were rooted in the distrust harbored towards white leadership. With moderate change over the past two decades, blacks still lacked full faith in the promises of white leadership. As explained by the leaders of the ACCCA, "Historically, the black community has given full support to programs and individuals claiming to improve the quality of life in the entire metropolitan community, only to find that once the goals of the white community have

²⁹¹Correspondence from the ACCCA to MARTA, July 1, 1971, Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

been realized, no further consideration is given to the needs, desires and interests of the black community.” Black leaders believed rapid transit to be the issue that could bring about the change and the push needed to move forward in many areas. Rapid transit therefore became the “call to action” launched by the black community to draw closer attention to the neglect by white leaders on other issues of the black community. Knowing that their support was critical to the success of the programs of MARTA, blacks touted their clout, stating “MARTA officials and Atlanta’s leaders must convince the black community that they must consider rapid transit as only one component of a forward Atlanta thrust, and that other social and civil matters will be given equal attention.” The black community in effect, held MARTA hostage in order to demand widespread changes. MARTA was urged to use its authority and influence to see that action was taken on all issues set forth before the black community would give its full support.²⁹²

Changes in Planning

In the midst of planning for the referendum to fund the MARTA plans, the boundaries of metropolitan and regional planning faced restructuring. The Atlanta Region Metropolitan Planning Commission experienced reorganization in accordance with the Area Planning and Development Commissions’ standards set forth by the Georgia General Assembly. During the 1960s, planning became widespread, and other organizations were created: the Metropolitan Atlanta Council for Health (MACHealth), the Metropolitan Atlanta Council of Local Governments (MACLOG), and the Atlanta

²⁹² Correspondence from the ACCCA to MARTA, July 1, 1971, Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

Area Transportation Study (AATS). Each organization, focusing on their respective areas, created alternating views on topics and issues of the metropolitan area. The organizations lacked interconnectivity and each maintained its own board of directors and individual programming. This widespread approach to holistic planning for the region became monotonous for local governments involved, furthermore, making coordination and unity much more difficult. Local governments envisioned a single metropolitan agency for comprehensive research, studies, advice and review. This organization's responsibilities would include land use and transportation planning, law enforcement planning, health planning, social welfare planning, planning for parks and recreation, water and sewer planning, and other similar activities.²⁹³

The purpose of the new planning body was to strengthen the means for intergovernmental cooperation and coordination by acting as the official planning body. The new planning body would be referred to as the "Commission" for the Atlanta Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. The phasing out of ARMPC and the implementation of the Atlanta Regional Commission signified "a new comprehensiveness" in the goals and approach to regional planning. The creation of the new planning organization also strengthened the push for the participation of blacks in planning Atlanta. Since the inception of the metropolitan planning committee, blacks had called for representation on the official planning board. After three decades, the new Metropolitan Planning and Development Commission answered the call with the appointment of Ira Jackson. Jackson became the first black member named to the commission and would represent the Atlanta Aldermanic Board. With his appointment,

²⁹³ Correspondence from Fulton County Board of Commissioners to Mr. Nelson Severinghaus, Chairman, ARMPC, January 5, 1971. Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6.

black leaders expected the appointment of more blacks from the general community. Jackson noted that one of his main concerns was that blacks get fair representation on the commission. He added, “this is an important commission where the planning for the future will be done. This is where the basis will be laid for federal assistance funds; for programs like Model Cities.” The Model Cities project south of downtown in the area of the Atlanta Stadium was an urban renewal program promising to significantly impact the displaced black communities in the area. With “a new comprehensiveness” as the forward goal, the new Commission had a new name, a new charge, and a “fresh start.”²⁹⁴

After a series of forums and solicited participation of residents to be affected by the rapid transit system, planning consultants revealed a revised and improved major transportation plan. The improved plan now faced public hearings in each of the four counties and the city of Atlanta before being studied and reviewed by the MARTA board of directors. In reviewing, the board paid close attention to the recommendations of the public before adopting a final plan. These measures were to try and ensure ratification of the transit plans in the November referendum.²⁹⁵

The improved plan featured many of the recommended changes to the plan included in the 1968 referendum. This plan outlined approximately 70 miles of bus and rail rapid transit, 52.09 miles of rail transit and 17.6 miles of rapid busways. It included 40 rail stations and eight rapid busway stations with six additional on and off ramp

²⁹⁴ Correspondence from Fulton County Board of Commissioners to Mr. Nelson Severinghaus, Chairman, ARMPC, January 5, 1971. *Regional Planning for Metropolitan Atlanta: A Fresh Start*, Prepared by the staff of the Atlanta Region Metropolitan Commission, March 1971. Mule to MARTA, Box 1, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, July 18, 1971

²⁹⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, July 27, 1971. MARTA Reports in Mule to MARTA, MSS 619, Box 80, Folder 1.

locations. The purchase of the Atlanta Transit System, proprietor of the city's bus transit system, was also included in the plan. MARTA's plan included acquiring the system and improving it by providing more frequent service and new routes, more than doubling the system's mileage. Upon the completion of the rail lines, the bus system would serve as a feeder service between the rapid transit stations and the neighborhoods of the region. The planned bus transit system to serve the rail transit station would include over 1,530 route miles. Of the total mileage, approximately 775 lay miles in Fulton County; 540 miles in DeKalb County, 100 miles in Clayton County, and 115 miles in Gwinnett County.²⁹⁶

In the case of the rapid rail transit system, the improved plans outlined seven lines extending in virtually all directions of rapid development. The South Line would extend from Forest Park, north to Garnett Street. Stations along this line would be located at Hapeville, Atlanta Airport, East Point, Lakewood, Oakland City and West End. The Southwest Line would extend from East Point to College Park. Serving the central business district, the Central Line would extend from Garnett Street, north to a point north of Pershing Point. From there, the line would diverge to the Northeast and Northwest. Stations along this line would be located at Five Points, Cain Street, Civic Center, North Avenue, Tenth Street, and Pershing Point. Serving areas above the central business district, the Northwest Line would extend from the junction with the Central Line due north of Pershing Point veering westward to Northside Drive. A station would be located at 26th & Peachtree. The Northeast Line would extend from the Central Line junction north of Pershing Point to Norcross. Stations along this line would

²⁹⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, July 27, 1971. MARTA Reports in Mule to MARTA, MSS 619, Box 80, Folder 1.

be located at Lindbergh, Piedmont, Lenox, Brookhaven, Chamblee, and Doraville. The West Line would extend from Fulton Industrial Boulevard to the Five Points, with stations at Lynhurst, Hightower, West Lake, Chappell, Ashby, and Vine City. Finally, the East Line would extend from Five Points to Indian Creek, with stations at Georgia State University, Grant Street, Moreland Avenue, Candler Park, East Lake Drive, Decatur, Avondale Estates, and Memorial Drive.²⁹⁷

About two-thirds of the total recommended rail system would be located on railroad right-of-ways with seven miles of subway, 21 miles of aerial structures, and 24 at-grade levels. Four rapid busway routes included in the improved plans would provide service to East Atlanta, Northwest Perry Homes, North Atlanta, and North Decatur. With the improved outline for the bus and rail rapid transit lines, estimates showed approximately 90 percent of the population in the Perimeter Highway would be within walking distance of a bus route, and all buses would connect with the rapid transit stations. With improved plans outlined, MARTA faced the challenge of ensuring a majority vote for the impending referendum.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, July 27, 1971. MARTA Reports in Mule to MARTA, MSS 619, Box 80, Folder 1.

²⁹⁸ Ibid

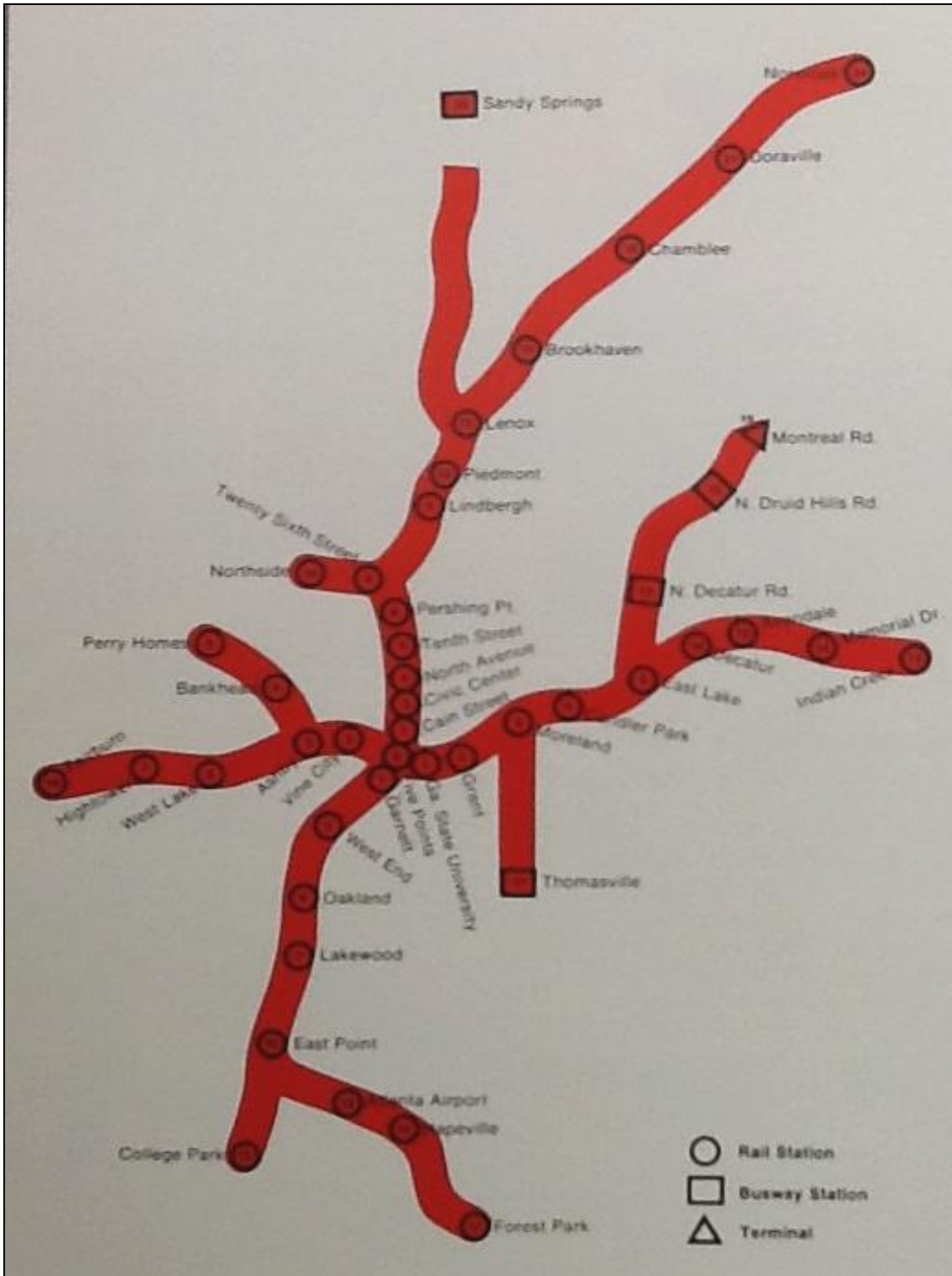


Figure 24: MARTA Map including Clayton & Gwinnett counties, 1971

After reviewing the tentative plan produced by consultants and the recommendations from the citywide public hearings which included black residents, the MARTA board scheduled official action on the plan with major changes reflecting the public reactions. Maintaining the favor of the public served as a major goal of MARTA through the improved plans. The major changes included: Termination of the West rapid rail line in the vicinity of the Perimeter Highway (I-285) instead of extending to the Fulton Industrial Boulevard, and the elimination of the Chappell Road Station on the West Rail Line. Other changes included the inauguration of new bus service to Alpharetta in north Fulton County and to Lithonia in eastern DeKalb County. Perhaps the most striking of the addendum was the addition of a rapid rail branch to the Perry Homes area in northwest Atlanta instead of rapid busway. This had been one of the primary objectives of the black coalition for support of the rapid transit program. That particular change by the MARTA board represented the force of the black electorate in the rapid transit planning process. In addition to amending and finalizing the official plan, the board also scheduled action on policy statements relating to fares; and pledged non-discrimination in hiring practices, construction, and operation of the total system. MARTA also vowed to provide monetary and other assistance in relocating persons and businesses displaced by transit routes and facilities; however, since 70 percent of the rapid rail system was designed to use existing railroad right-of-way or city streets, relatively few residences or businesses would be displaced.²⁹⁹

The MARTA program would entail the largest construction project ever undertaken in the South and would provide employment for thousands over the

²⁹⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 12, 1971. *Atlanta Constitution*, May 27, 1971. MARTA Reports, Mule to MARTA, MSS 619, Box 80, Folder 1.

construction period. An estimated 3,000 persons would be employed at the peak of construction. As for financing the massive undertaking, the plan would take maximum advantage of federal funds aimed at improving transportation systems in urban America. The largely pay-as-you-go plan would also save taxpayers \$150 million in long-term interest, according to the MARTA board. Under the plan, two-thirds of the \$1.4 billion capital cost of buying and improving the service of the Atlanta Transit System and constructing 70 miles of rapid rail and bus transit would be covered by the federal government under the Mass Transportation Assistance Act of 1970. Sources at the federal level predicted that federal funds would be guaranteed with the approval of the referendum by the voters of the metropolitan area. A sum total of more than \$938 million over the eight-year construction period would be provided. The remaining one-third of the cost, approximately \$469 million, would come from a one percent sales tax to be levied in Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, and Gwinnett Counties with voter approval in each jurisdiction in the November 1971 referendum. In addition to the capital costs, operating costs of the total system were projected at \$806 million over an initial 15-year period. These costs were to be met by the sales tax, along with revenue generated from passenger fares. The plan for rapid transit and improved transportation in the metropolitan Atlanta region continued to gain momentum with seemingly only one road block left: the November referendum.³⁰⁰

In the period nearing the 1971 referendum, the improved regional transportation plan set forth by MARTA gained the support and key endorsements, in particular, the support of black leadership and black voters. The ACCCA, with Vice Mayor Maynard

³⁰⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 12, 1971, August 29, 1971. MARTA Reports in Mule to MARTA, MSS 619, Box 80, Folder 1.

Jackson, State Senator Leroy Johnson and Community Relations Commissioner Andrew Young as spokespersons, endorsed the plans, adding that the entire process would remain under watchful eye. The coalition emphasized the real necessity of transportation being administered by a public agency, and noted that the agency should concentrate on excellent service as opposed to profit. The coalition also continued to stress the idea that public transit and better access to efficient transportation systems was readily needed in the areas of the city where people depended on it. Vice Mayor Jackson added, “to remain a viable and complete city, Atlanta must have a transportation system that is responsive to the needs of all its citizens, and it is imperative that the system provide service, not only to commercial districts, but to industrial areas, residential clusters, and all other institutions in our area.” Ultimately, the coalition felt that the MARTA program was a step in the right direction and that MARTA had addressed itself to the needs of the total community, urban and suburban, black and white. The black leaders endorsed the improved plans and collectively expressed that MARTA’s job was to see that its commitments “be lived to.” The coalition vowed not only to endorse the November referendum, but pledged its support during construction and all other phases without dropping the watchful guard.³⁰¹

Throughout the planning and construction phases of the rapid transit project, MARTA made it clear that residents, businesses and supporters would have significant voice in the planning, location and designs of buildings, parking lots, street improvements, and other factors. Final detailed designs of the project would not begin until it was certain the voters were in support of the project through the successful

³⁰¹ *Atlanta Inquirer*, September 28, 1971. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 12, 1971, September 26, 1971

passage of the referendum. Once overcoming that hurdle, MARTA pledged to continue to seek the preferences and ideas of the people who would use it. Also, MARTA officials continuously urged support for the rapid transit program which they predicted to trigger a \$4 billion economic boom for metropolitan Atlanta, extending through the 1970s. This great sum of money would be the direct and indirect impact of the implementation of the rapid transit system, which would affect area employment, manufacturing, retail trade, service industry and other commercial activity. The most dramatic impact would be the thousands of new construction jobs created. The proposed impact of the construction was compared to that of the Lockheed Corporation, which had revolutionized the economy of Cobb County and the surrounding area, bringing tremendous growth and employment. According to MARTA officials, economists at Georgia State University estimated that every dollar spent on construction would turn over three and a half times through the generation of supporting activities, such as housing for construction workers, retail purchases, consumer services, banking, auto sales, and many other areas of life.³⁰²

On the day of the November 1971 referendum C.A. Scott, editor of the *Atlanta Daily World*, published in his editorial corner a call for support entitled "Rapid Transit Is Necessary." Black leaders like Scott recognized the role that the black community would play in ensuring that passage of the referendum. Scott had also been appointed by the mayor to serve on the exploratory committee for MARTA preparations. In his editorial, he wrote:

The voters in Atlanta, Fulton County and other areas, except Cobb County, which make up Metropolitan Atlanta, will decide in a referendum

³⁰² *Atlanta Daily World*, October 8, 1971, October 21, 1971

whether Atlanta will be stagnated or provided with an opportunity to move forward and grow. Already there is a problem here in traffic and transportation from one point to another. It is obvious that more people will move to Atlanta and more business will come here, so transportation will become a more acute problem unless the voters follow their official leaders and civic and business leaders in supporting today's referendum by voting yes . . . Negro organizations and prominent leaders in all fields have expressed approval and support of the present Rapid Transit Plan, so the balloting today should be overwhelmingly in favor of it. Some Negroes are saying it will help white persons who have moved to the suburbs get back into the city at a low fare. Some white opponents to the plan are arguing it will help mostly those who use the public transportation system and those persons reportedly are about 75 percent Negroes. There may be a little truth in both the charges, but there is not enough to oppose the plan. They rather suggest that all the people will be benefited by Rapid Transit.³⁰³

Scott believed that in spite of the charges against the plan, MARTA was needed for the progress of the city. He elaborated that no plan would be perfect, and necessary adjustments could be made if they were deemed desirable in the future. To further encourage support, Scott noted that mayors from across the country supported Atlanta's plan for rapid transit. "When one is in doubt over an issue, it is helpful to listen to disinterested competent sources for information," added Scott. He believed these mayors of cities comparable to Atlanta were abreast on how adequate transportation benefited and progressed large cities and metropolitan areas. He added that they praised Atlanta's efforts for rapid transit and believed that it would be a mistake if the city failed to take advantage of this monumental opportunity.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 9, 1971

³⁰⁴ Ibid

MARTA Plans: “Yes”

Despite the support, MARTA barely passed in two counties. Voters in Fulton and DeKalb voted “yes” to the November 9th referendum, authorizing MARTA to proceed with development of a coordinated bus and rail rapid transit system with the local share of the cost to be funded by a one percent sales tax in those two counties. The referendum was overwhelmingly defeated in Clayton and Gwinnett Counties by a 4-1 margin. In Gwinnett County, returns showed 2,475 in favor of the proposal to 9,506 against. Clayton County returns showed 10,903 rejected while 3,189 supported. Voters in Fulton and DeKalb narrowly approved the measures. Voting returns in Fulton County showed the referendum passing by a little more than 2,000 votes – 55,736 for to 53,725 against. DeKalb County illustrated a slightly higher margin with 38,886 for and 35,752 against. Voter turnout for the referenda surpassed expectations as 42 percent of eligible voters casted ballots, compared to the 33 percent predicted.³⁰⁵

With overwhelming defeat in Clayton and Gwinnett counties, suburban, tax paying whites who felt they would foot majority of the bill for rapid transit had succeeded in preventing mass transit from making way for unwanted elements into their prized spaces. Resistance also came from blacks who felt that MARTA would simply work out as a means for whites who had fled from Atlanta to avoid taxes and integration. In general, race, rather than issues of financing or alternative transportation, dominated the MARTA campaign. Some suburban opponents characterized it as a plot to scatter blacks throughout the metropolitan area and bring about metropolitan school integration. They suspected that the bus and rail lines would be used to transport poor

³⁰⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 11, 1971, November 18, 1971, November 21, 1971

black students to lily-white suburban schools. Others feared that such joint association between city and suburb, even unofficially, as “metropolitan Atlanta” would prompt the courts to view them that way in all matters other than rapid transportation. Conservative elements objected to the referendum and linked it with other issues such as annexation and consolidation. And because those in favor of consolidating Fulton County and the City of Atlanta also supported MARTA, the more radical conservatives continued to oppose the referendum. One writer to a suburban weekly newspaper wrote: “If you want the drug pushers, muggers, rapists, and other degenerates who are now stalking the streets of downtown Atlanta to invade your community, the vote for rapid transit . . . A speedy 15-cent ride will drop them off near your front door and your neighbor’s front door.”³⁰⁶

At a public hearing in Clayton County, residents expressed disapproval in the fact that MARTA would only provide one rail station in the county at Forest Park. They argued the need for additional service, especially rail service to Jonesboro in a more timely fashion. Others believed Clayton County deserved more consideration in the overall system. In Gwinnett County, residents argued the need for cross county service and assurance that their rural lifestyle in the countryside would not be harmed or altered. In speaking about Gwinnett and Clayton counties, Sam Massell later stated, “You know, they were never strongly supportive at all. The best we could get out of them was they didn’t oppose; they never strongly supported it.” The major racial issues coupled with political issues, lack of service, and the long projected arrival of the rail

³⁰⁶Summary of Five Public Hearings on Routes and Stations --- July 30, 1971. Mule to MARTA, Box 68, Folder 1. Stone, p. 100. Kruse, pp. 248-249. Johnson, pp. 144-145. *Wall Street Journal*, November 9, 1971.

system to outlying areas ultimately deterred suburbanites in Gwinnett and Clayton counties from supporting the MARTA referendum.³⁰⁷

Despite a “no” vote in Clayton and Gwinnett counties, the approval by DeKalb and Fulton counties initiated a series of events to create the system to function as a two-county system. With the necessary approval, MARTA General Counsel conferred with Fulton and DeKalb Counties, along with the state revenue commissioner to coordinate the levying of the sales tax and the drafting and publications of rules, regulations, and procedures as necessary to carry out the collection of the tax and the other purposes of the MARTA Act. Next, MARTA began the procedures to acquire the Atlanta Transit System. The acquisition of the system had been included in the planning and development of an efficient rail and bus rapid transportation system. MARTA also initiated procedures to acquire new buses for expanded bus routes within the new system. The successful vote in the two counties made necessary the acquiring of right-of-ways and a land acquisition program. This program, along with the amendment of the Technical Studies program, which had been created earlier in MARTA’s development, began solidifying the physical realizations of the rapid transit system. The Technical Studies program worked on financial support for the full scope of the expanded work program, including such work as title searches and environmental studies associated with land acquisitions and rail and facilities construction.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁷ Summary of Five Public Hearings on Routes and Stations --- July 30, 1971. Mule to MARTA, Box 68, Folder 1. Stone, p. 100. Kruse, pp. 248-249. Johnson, pp. 144-145. Sam Massell, Interviewed by Thomas Hills, Atlanta, GA, October 5, 2004.

³⁰⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 18, 1971

At the behest of MARTA Chairman Roy Blount, MARTA Director Jesse Hill, Jr. met with MARTA General Manager Henry L. Stuart concerning the development of a training program to prepare local minority citizens to qualify for the jobs to become available with the rapid transit program. The *Daily World* reported that in order for blacks to get a fair share throughout the whole system, the earliest phase of the MARTA plan required swift action. To ensure fairness, MARTA instituted a plan of equal hiring and opportunity in all phases of employment and construction. MARTA stayed true to this promise made during its campaign for referendum support. MARTA also intended on establishing means to safeguard the plan from those who profited from the city's jobs and rapid transit without paying taxes because they lived outside the city limits. In many cases, those same people resided in the counties that rejected MARTA, but could benefit just as much from the convenience of the rapid transit program.³⁰⁹

To show further commitment to honesty in the rapid and transit plans, MARTA had to set a top priority of making sure bus and train lines went through black communities in full equity with white areas. They also had to guarantee that old and poor people being uprooted would be transplanted with as little fear, pain, and suffering as possible. A *Daily World* writer explained that in order for MARTA to have a fair chance, it took a real effort for democracy, and "many an old timer has seen such efforts fail; and there is reason today to mistrust efforts for fair play . . . but it is a fact the Negro leaders have not all been weak or wrong; black organizations have brought about some changes; and our black public office holders have done much more than is seen directly." The writer continued, "The picture is changing, and blacks can force a better

³⁰⁹ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 18, 1971, November 21, 1971

hour upon us now by seeing to it that MARTA stays honest.” Affirmative action efforts on behalf of the city’s leaders also sought to ensure honesty and fairness in not only MARTA planning, but also all aspects of city and metropolitan planning. The Equal Employment Opportunities Act of 1972 created measures to prevent job discrimination at the state and local government level. Through annual reports to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, cities had to show that they did not practice discrimination in hiring. Affirmative action enjoyed a high priority in Atlanta city government as a result of both the Massell and Jackson Administrations.³¹⁰

Citizen participation, recommendations, and suggestions from residents throughout the metropolitan area proved critical to the success of the rapid transit program immediately following the approval of the referendum. MARTA continued hosting meetings throughout the region, informing residents of studies being conducted to determine the impact of the system on the environment. The meetings allowed citizens to present to MARTA and their consultants a series of specific concerns regarding environmental aspects in the neighborhoods. The suggestions and recommendations reflected their sentiments, ranging from requests that MARTA ensure that the system added to and not detract from the area through which it passes; to MARTA providing community facilities such as linear parks and recreational areas during construction. Likewise, throughout the metropolitan region, residents voiced concerns about disruption caused by construction, noise from the system, the date of

³¹⁰ *Atlanta Daily World*, November 18, 1971, November 21, 1971. Bayor, p. 122. Stone, p. 87

completion, displacement of people due to construction of the rail system, and the overall impact of the MARTA system in the metropolitan area.³¹¹

MARTA intended to take positive and affirmative steps in the carrying out of the rapid transit plan. It prepared an environmental statement elaborating the commitment of the plans to ensure a high quality of life in Atlanta for the betterment and benefit of all residents. Other studies conducted concerned historic preservation, aesthetics of the system and related components, ecological aspects, air and water quality, noise pollution, and economic considerations. Citizen participation in the various studies allowed MARTA and its consultants to create a more comprehensive total impact study to be presented to the federal government for final approval. It also allowed them to take necessary actions to uphold promises and enhance the maximum benefits of the rapid transportation system.³¹²

³¹¹ Summary of Public Hearings in Mule to MARTA Files. MSS 619, Box 68, Folder 5.

³¹² Summary of Public Hearings in Mule to MARTA Files. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 3, 1972

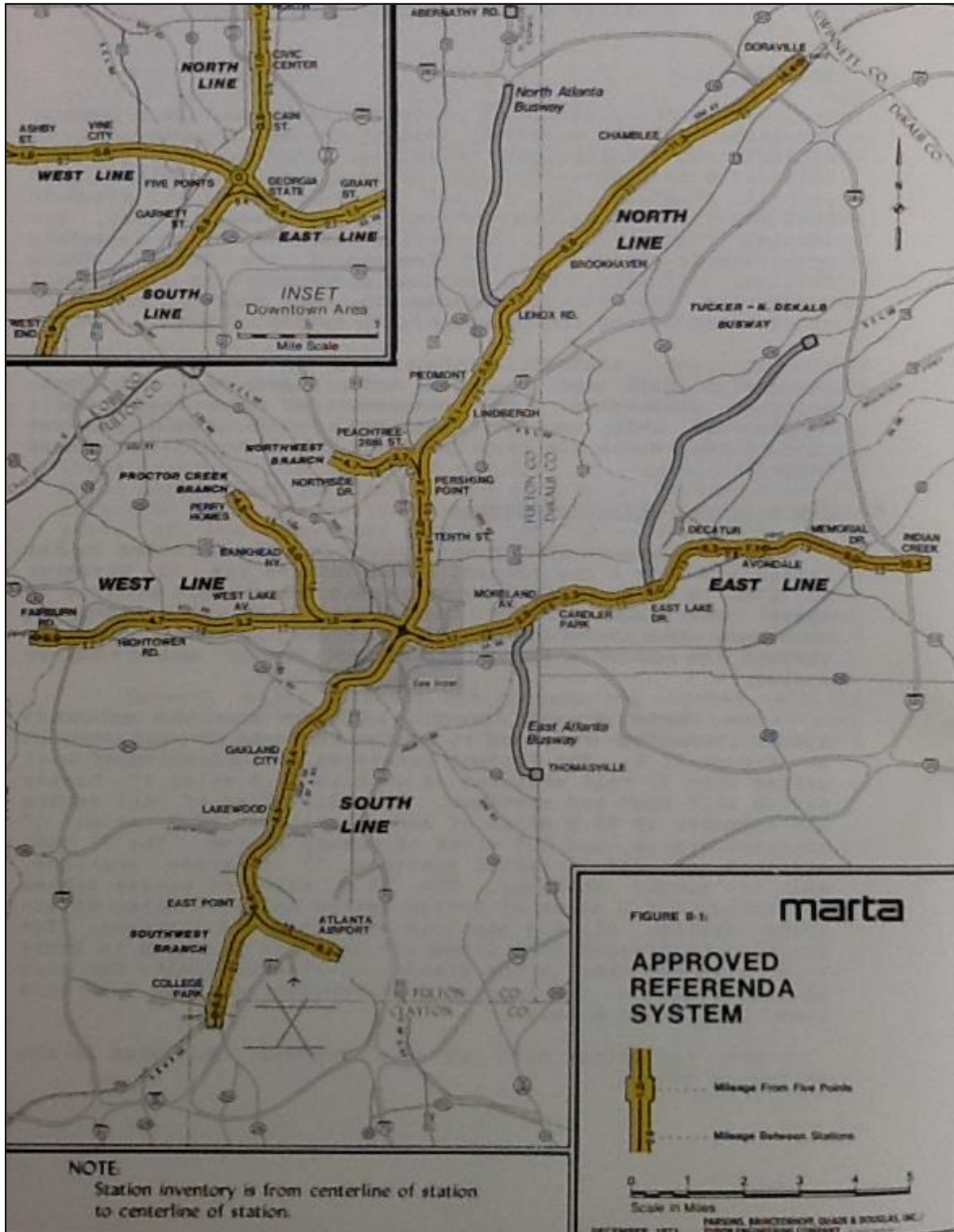


Figure 25: Approved Referenda System, 1971 – Atlanta History Center

RAPID TRANSIT

FORUM

TUESDAY APRIL 6, 1971, 7:30 P. M.

ARCHER HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

2250 PERRY BOULEVARD, N. W.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING IS TO ALLOW THE PEOPLE TO TELL MARTA WHAT THEY WANT AND NEED IN A NEW TRANSIT SYSTEM. IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS, OPINIONS, OR SUGGESTIONS ABOUT RAPID TRANSIT, BE SURE TO ATTEND THE MEETING AND TELL IT TO MARTA.

SOME OF THE SUBJECTS LIKELY TO BE DISCUSSED INCLUDE:

- LOCATION OF ROUTES AND STATIONS
- BUS SERVICE
- FARES AND COSTS OF SERVICE
- EMPLOYMENT AND JOB OPPORTUNITY
- SERVICE TO POOR, DISADVANTAGED, HANDICAPPED
- POLLUTION AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
- DEVELOPMENT AROUND FUTURE STATIONS
- RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION AND RELOCATION POLICIES
- ANY OTHER ASPECTS OF RAPID TRANSIT WHICH ARE OF CONCERN TO PEOPLE

THIS IS THE FIRST OF A NUMBER OF PUBLIC FORUMS MARTA IS PLANNING. BE SURE TO BE AT THIS MEETING. IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AND TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

Figure 26: Rapid Transit Forum Announcement for event held at Archer High School near Perry Homes, Atlanta History Center

RAPID TRANSIT FORUM

In order that local citizens might tell rapid transit officials what the people want and need in rapid transit facilities, a series of public forums are being conducted by the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. The information and comments presented at these forums will be carefully considered by MARTA in the development of a proposal for a regional transit system.

Your opinions and suggestions are important to MARTA; please use this form to indicate your particular interests. Check the category of subjects of most concern to you, and use the blank spaces below for noting your opinions, comments and questions, or for making statements that you think will be helpful to MARTA in developing a system to serve this region.

YOUR OPINIONS ARE IMPORTANT--PLEASE SHARE THEM WITH MARTA!

I have a deep concern about the following subjects:

- Routes and station locations
- Bus service and bus routes
- Fares and transfers
- Taxes for transit, and taxes for low fares
- Employment, training programs, job opportunities
- Service to low income, handicapped, other special rider categories
- Development around future stations (impact of station lines)
- Right-of-way acquisition and relocation policies
- Pollution and other environmental considerations
- Engineering factors, such as car design, track structures, etc.
- Other factors, such as _____

My comments and questions are as follows:

I wish to receive any information you mail out regularly _____.

My name is _____

(Address) _____ (Apt) _____

(City) _____ (Zip Code) _____

Figure 27: Rapid Transit Forum Form, Atlanta History Center

JOHN BROWN
OFFICE - 524-7312
HOME - 344-8275

MARTA BRIEFING LUNCHEON - MARCH 5, 1979

PARTICIPANTS' OBSERVATIONS

Questions I would like answered about rapid transit: _____

1. ROUTE LINE TO BLACK COMMUNITY (HOW MANY)?
2. HOW MUCH OPEN SPACE IS ANTICIPATED IN? BLACK COMMUNITY?
3. HOW MUCH OPEN SPACE IN WHITE COMMUNITY
4. HOW MUCH WILL THE FRINGE OF ATLANTA PAY FOR MARTA (%)?
5. WHY CAN'T THE OUTER AREA PAY MORE THAN CORE OF ATLANTA?

Observations I would like to make about rapid transit: _____

People I would like to see considered for Advisory Committee: _____

Name BEN BERRY

Business WACK

Title _____

Address _____

Figure 28: Completed Rapid Transit Forum Form, Atlanta History Center

Equal Opportunity

From the beginning, black leaders made it clear they “weren’t kidding about black participation in MARTA.” Serving as “watchdogs” throughout the entire planning process of MARTA, safeguarding interests and promoting honesty, fairness, and equal opportunity occupied the agendas of black elected officials and community leaders. “We’re not trying to throw the baby out with the bath water,” explained Senator Leroy Johnson to MARTA officials. “We are trying to keep the baby in the bath. But all we’re asking is that you let us minorities get in the bath water too.” Johnson and the delegation of black leaders met with the MARTA board periodically to bring forth grievances with the racial policies and practices of the transit company. They also noted that staying visual and vocal alerted transit officials to the severity of black demands and the need for participation.³¹³

In a January 1973 meeting, the employment practices of MARTA came under heavy criticism as Alderman Q.V. Williamson pointed out that in one MARTA division some thirty white supervisors had the right to fire any black employee at any time. Williamson explained that “low mentality ideas about race” still existed within MARTA operations. Major controversy also arose over the small number of blacks employed by the rapid transit authority in executive positions. Johnson expounded on the fact that whites occupied forty-six of the top positions, while blacks only held 10 high posts. “We take the position that 50 percent of the MARTA work force should be black from the top down,” explained Johnson. Adding to the debate, Johnson stated, “We take the further position that there should be a moratorium on all hiring until we’re caught up.” At this

³¹³ Stone, pp. 98-102. Bayor, pp. 194-195. *Atlanta Daily World*, January 21, 1973

time, while under the scrutiny of the black delegation, MARTA sought to fill thirteen staff vacancies. Johnson continued, “with thirteen vacancies, just as sure as I’m sitting here, you’d hire ten whites and three blacks.” Calling forth more issues, the delegation of black leaders from the ACCCA protested the use of firms and contractors with questionable business practices and most importantly, not in compliance with equal employment policies.³¹⁴

Accusations of non-compliance surfaced in the case of the hiring of the firm of Huie and Harland as legal counsel. Black leaders disapproved and MARTA officials defended the hiring by explaining that the firm “had added one minority law school graduate to its professional staff and one minority employee to its clerical staff.” The firm, which originally employed 14 people, benefited \$396,095 from MARTA contracts. In order to be in compliance with MARTA equal employment policies, the requirements included: a contribution of \$1,000 to the Emory University Law School Scholarship Internship Fund; depositing funds in a minority banking institution; and sub-contracting \$21,000 in title work to a minority law firm. State Representative Julian Bond further explained that the firm’s affirmative action plan dealt in “tokenism,” as the black staff did not work in the same offices as the white lawyers. This firm also came under fire for taking part in a business deal in which one of its clients purchased property in a proposed zone for a MARTA station in Doraville. The firm argued that the transaction took place without knowledge of the MARTA plans and produced certified deeds in support. Nonetheless, equal employment practices remained high on the agenda of the

³¹⁴ Stone, pp. 98-102. Bayor, pp. 194-195. *Atlanta Daily World*, January 21, 1973

black delegation as they worked to ensure that black Atlanta “got its piece of the action.”³¹⁵

Black elected officials and community leaders presented a unified front in the struggle for equal black participation at all levels of rapid transit development. The issues of equal opportunity and affirmative action dominated the rapid transit discussion, as black Atlanta demanded a fair share. Alderman Marvin Arrington noted concerns that not enough money had been earmarked for minority firms. According to Arrington, MARTA reports indicated inequity in the funds spent with black and white firms. He further stated, “We are asking MARTA to set aside some funds for minority contractors.” Rev. Joseph E. Lowery, pastor of Central United Methodist Church, suggested MARTA change its current policy of awarding contracts simply on promises to comply. He supported earlier sentiments that contracts should not be awarded to any firms not in compliance with equal employment opportunity laws. Lowery went further to admonish the MARTA board to make available information on the goods and services needed for upcoming years so that minority firms could prepare to make bids and enter competition. Leveling the playing fields in competition served as an equalizing factor necessary to ensure opportunities for minorities. Finally, Vice Mayor Maynard Jackson in summing up the delegation’s positions stated, “The elimination of racial bias from the operations and policies of MARTA is an affirmative duty and the general manager of MARTA has that affirmative duty.” He added that in regards to that affirmative duty, “the MARTA General Manager’s nonfeasance, misfeasance, or malfeasance shall be cause for his or her discharge, and that the board of directors should so declare.” He solidified

³¹⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 21, 1973

the delegation's decree to MARTA officials in stating, "We are for MARTA, but we are for MARTA being right."³¹⁶

Parallel to black Atlanta's demands, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UTMA) called for "an effective affirmative action program" to ensure equal representation of minority groups at all levels of MARTA's operation. UTMA studies evaluated MARTA's civil rights compliance activities and identified two basic needs of MARTA: increasing the number of blacks and women in upper level Transit Division jobs; and developing a plan to include goals and timetables to implement equal employment policies. Though UTMA did not formally charge discrimination, its report revealed undesirable conditions, most prevalent being the lack of blacks in the job categories of dispatchers, supervisors, and office and clerical workers. It also revealed the overlooking of two minority women for office positions for which they appeared to be more qualified than the white women hired. They applied for the position prior to the application of the white woman who got the job. In matters concerning job titles, discrimination presented a concern. The report claimed the Accounting Department discriminated against women in job titles, compensation, promotions and benefits. Women in the department received the title "bookkeepers," while male counterparts maintained the title "accountants." The study indicated a lesser pay for women in comparison to their male counterparts and showed no women supervisors out of a total of sixty.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 21, 1973. Stone, p. 87. Bayor, pp. 48-49

³¹⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 26, 1972. Stone, p. 87. Bayor, pp. 48-49

With regard to the undesirable conditions pinpointed by the UTMA, Morris Dillard, a black MARTA executive, explained, "MARTA is expanding and that gives us a wonderful opportunity to correct the weaknesses." He also indicated that the UTMA report provided positive input into MARTA planning and the recommendations provided insight to be complied with. At this point, the rapid transit discussion in metropolitan Atlanta had endured the challenges associated with social change since its conception. Rapid transit came about at the height of the civil rights struggle and did not escape the grasp of change. The ongoing struggle to eliminate inequality based on a "minority group status" ranked among planning issues of the period. Well into a second decade of planning, social change continued to both dominate and stall progress on the full implementation of Atlanta's rapid transit system.³¹⁸

Changing the Color of Leadership

As rapid transit debates continued, so did changes in city leadership, economic development, and outlook on the future. In 1960, Atlanta's black population accounted for 38 percent of the total population. By 1973, the year of Maynard Jackson's election to the city's top post, blacks constituted a majority at 54 percent of the total population. Jackson believed Atlanta to be the best city in America for black people to live, and its reputation as an epicenter of opportunity attracted masses of young, ambitious blacks from across the nation. State representative Julian Bond believed Atlanta to be the best city for middle class blacks with college degrees; however, for poor blacks, the city remained reminiscent of Birmingham, Jackson, and other southern cities. Nevertheless,

³¹⁸ *Atlanta Daily World*, May 26, 1972

Jackson realized the voting potential of his city, where blacks accounted for 48 percent of the electorate, and were steadily increasing.³¹⁹

Most of the black leadership conceded the idea of Sam Massell serving a second term as mayor, then step aside for a black mayor in 1977. However, Jackson's plan did not reflect such belief. His plan placed him at the forefront in the 1973 election. As the grandson of one of Atlanta's foremost black leaders and civil rights giants John Wesley Dobbs, he had been reared in the shadows of a leader at the forefront of struggles for equality. Raised to think in broad terms, of principles and morals, and equality for all during a period of great social change, he knew the experiences and challenges of his leadership would be different from those of his grandfather and predecessors. Jackson realized that in order to be mayor of Atlanta, his style needed to be all-inclusive, representing whites and blacks, calming white fears and exceeding black expectations. Achieving victory in this task depended on the successful merger of two different worlds, a feat Jackson believed himself to be thoroughly prepared.³²⁰

At the beginning of his campaign, Maynard Jackson solicited the support of Atlanta's black leadership for the first time in all his campaigns. As a mature Atlanta politician, Jackson realized that the support of the established black leadership accompanied resources and influence necessary for victory. In particular, he courted the support of Jesse Hill, Jr., who had been a central figure in Andrew Young's victorious 1972 campaign to become the first black U.S. congressman from the Deep South since Reconstruction. Hill's stamp of approval lent credibility, money, and votes,

³¹⁹ Pomerantz, pp. 400-401

³²⁰ Ibid

as he served as chief executive of Atlanta Life, a large black business. Hill, like other members of the black leadership elite such as officers of the Atlanta Urban League, thought the 1977 election to be perfect for a black mayor and expressed early reluctance to Jackson's 1973 bid. Jackson and his advisors conducted polling and survey research of diverse groups of Atlanta citizens, which indicated favorable results. With the results, they convinced Hill and the other black leaders that Jackson's vision of becoming Atlanta's first black mayor might be worthwhile.³²¹

On the other hand, Senator Leroy Johnson, who originally supported Jackson's mayoral bid, had a change of heart and decided to run for mayor himself. Johnson, revered as the most powerful black politician in the South, provided an early threat and could potentially split the black electorate. Jackson - the first black ever elected vice mayor of Atlanta, and Johnson - the first black elected to the Georgia legislature in the 20th century, both running on "law and order" platforms and vowing to "bring honesty back to government," squared off for the support and endorsements of the black electorate through debates, interviews, surveys, and polls. In the end, Jackson came out on top. Ultimately, Jesse Hill and the black leaders reported to members of their interracial coalitions, including banker Mills Lane, that clearly, Maynard Jackson possessed the necessary requirements to be Atlanta's first black mayor.³²²

Gary Pomerantz explains, "To many blacks in Atlanta in 1973, Maynard Jackson became more than a mere candidate. He was a cause, a symbol, a spiritual manifestation of black hopes and dreams a century old. Whites could not comprehend

³²¹ Pomerantz, pp. 401 – 405. *Atlanta Daily World*, March 30, 1973

³²² Ibid

it.” Jackson’s popularity continuously grew throughout 1973. In the weeks preceding the October 1973 election, *The Daily World* interviewed a cross-section of voters about their opinions on the upcoming election, and the interests centered most about the candidacies of current mayor and vice mayor, Massell and Jackson. Interviewers noted, “Only a few of those contacted mentioned Senator Leroy Johnson or attorney Charles Weltner.” Charles Weltner had been the candidate endorsed by the corridors of power in white Atlanta. Moreover, still positive and upbeat, Sam Massell persevered in his campaign for a second term. Elected mayor in 1969 with majority black voter support, he responded to their needs. He called for blacks to comprise 50 percent of all city government employees, and in four years, he raised the total by nearly 20 percent, or to 42 percent. He appointed blacks to head city departments and serve as local judges. He created an Office of Affirmative Action and successfully lobbied for the passage of the 1971 MARTA referendum. Massell and supporters believed his record as mayor sufficed to gain the necessary support for a second term as mayor.³²³

In the primary election, Maynard Jackson won nearly 47 percent of the vote, including more than 80 percent of the black electorate. He entered a run-off with Sam Massell, who defeated Weltner by fewer than 1,000 votes to finish second, 19.8 percent to 19.1 percent. Leroy Johnson finished last with a miniscule 4 percent of the total vote. Jackson’s seat at the top came only 3,500 votes short of a majority. Fear immediately hit the Massell campaign. In response, the team attempted to reenergize the campaign and overcome the 27-point gap in the election results. The infamous “Atlanta’s Too Young to Die” slogan grew from an attempt to regroup, but drew unwanted negative

³²³ Pomerantz, pp. 406, 408. *Atlanta Daily World*, September 23, 1973

attention. Sam Massell believed that every decision made by Jackson as vice mayor occurred along racial lines, and potentially as mayor, he would accelerate white flight. He believed that with the rapid departure of whites, the inner city would decay at a faster rate via the decimation of the tax base. This lack of that tax base would render financial death upon the city. Attempts by the Massell campaign to racialize the mayoral race failed in materializing the reaction necessary for victory in the run-off election. Jackson garnered 73,603 votes, enough to triumph over Massell, who received 49,300 – becoming the first black mayor in a major southern city. He received solid black support – 95 percent of the black vote, and considerable white votes at 21 percent. With this election, Atlanta joined six other major U.S. cities with black mayors: Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Gary, and Newark.³²⁴

Maynard Jackson and Transportation Planning

“Atlanta is the most successful city in the nation,” proclaimed Jackson upon his election to the city’s top post. “We have a city which fundamentally is attractive to people. What we have to do is turn the statistics on a few things.” Jackson identified keys to improving the city image and functionality as: attacking crime, improving housing for middle and upper income groups, protecting inner-city neighborhoods, and importantly, improving transportation systems. He further elaborated, “Atlanta was born as a rail center and it has prospered as a hub of air and highway traffic. Atlanta needs an efficient transportation system to grow and to prosper.” He concluded, “A successful and comprehensive transportation system is of paramount importance to Atlanta’s

³²⁴ Pomerantz, pp. 409 – 411, 420. *Atlanta Daily World*, October 18, 1973

future.” Jackson believed it possible to have a better and more efficient transportation system to carry more Atlantans cheaper and faster without destroying stable neighborhoods, uprooting people, and destroying the ecology of Atlanta. His platform on transportation explained his belief that a transportation plan could be developed to preserve existing neighborhoods, yet strengthen the downtown business areas. In a press conference at city hall during his campaign for mayor, Jackson explained:

I do not see a successful movement of traffic as being inconsistent with the public's interest in protecting the livability of Atlanta's neighborhoods. Yet in recent years, some transportation planners in Atlanta have all too often thought more about pavement than about what a transportation system must be all about – people. The Atlanta Area Transportation Study and the Central Area Study include among their plans construction of 91 miles of new expressway, 715 miles of new and widened streets, and over 1,000 acres near or in downtown to park 160,000 new cars, and the purchase of right-of-way, often through existing residential communities, for 40 more miles of future expressways – all at a cost to exceed \$2 billion. These studies and plans reflected outmoded assumptions that persons are or can be isolated from the interests of the affected neighborhoods. Many of the proposed expressways date back to the 1946 Lochner Plan and the 1959 Expressway Policy Study. Each subsequent study has relied too greatly upon the conclusions of those studies, with little critical evaluation of changing conditions.

Effectively, Jackson's goal of updating the city's transportation plans became apparent in many of his subsequent actions. He proposed the city immediately implement a comprehensive transportation system to reflect modern and ongoing changes.³²⁵

“We in Atlanta have learned the hard lesson that over-dependence on expressways and avoidable street widening is counterproductive,” explained Jackson. His comprehensive transportation plans rejected intra-city expressways, including the proposed I-485, an intra-city north-south expressway with a main artery through northeast Atlanta. The neighborhoods most affected, unlike those affected by the

³²⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973

original north-south expressway (downtown connector), contained mostly white and middle to upper income residents. Opposition to the expressways came through the efforts of neighborhood mobilization in areas accustomed to having weight in community affairs while possessing resources useful in the prolonged controversy. Furthermore, after the approval of MARTA in 1971, highway opponents pointed to it as an alternative to expressways. They also used the newly enacted federal requirement for environmental impact statements as grounds for a court challenge, prompting a lawsuit which temporarily delayed construction of I-485. As the case progressed, it rallied popular opposition and the freeway revolt ensued. The actions eventually drew the support of Congressman Andrew Young and federal officials ultimately halted construction.³²⁶

Jackson believed intra-city expressways destroyed established communities with little compensating benefits in improved mobility. As a fourth-generation Atlanta resident and a third-generation Auburn Avenue native, Jackson had witnessed firsthand the devastation and results of intra-city expressway construction and development. After all, his grandfather John Wesley Dobbs led black delegations in securing black rights and opposition to issues such as expressway construction in the main commercial district and residential areas of black Atlanta in the 1950s. Jackson advocated no new expressways or major street widening to be planned through residential areas with maximum community involvement at every level of planning and approved environmental studies at the earliest stages. He also advocated improving MARTA, making it more responsive to the needs of the people. Overall, Jackson's outlook on

³²⁶ Stone, pp. 82-83

transportation planning centered on maximum community involvement and citizen participation at every level.³²⁷

Central to Jackson's transportation plans were improvements to MARTA. Jackson's support increased because Atlanta's rapid transit system could benefit tremendously from the opening of the Federal Highway Trust Fund for rapid transit funding on the same basis as highway funding. Improving MARTA's responsiveness and creating a quality, efficient system to enhance mobility in all aspects of city life ranked high in his transportation plans. In 1974, he outlined his city's ambitious mass transit plans before a congressional committee in a report that contained large doses of what his aides later referred to as "community soul." This meant that the designers of Atlanta's transit system kept the needs of the citizens as a top priority. At the hearing on urban transit problems held by the Joint Economic Committee, Jackson explained:

Mass rapid transit is the fastest, most efficient way of moving large numbers of people in densely packed urban areas, but it can also play a key role in revitalizing decaying areas of a city and boosting people's morale. Approached properly, mass transit can spur better housing, contribute to a strong downtown area and help stem the flight of the white and black middle class to the suburbs. Cities must be made livable again, and to do that mass transit must not be used just to cart people out of the concrete canyons at 5p.m.³²⁸

His plans for MARTA efficiency also included: maintaining the 15 cent fare, increasing frequency of service, providing better route coverage with the city, offering special services to the elderly and handicapped, and ensuring that no citizen lived more than three blocks from public transportation. He also proposed MARTA make the most

³²⁷ *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973. Bayor, pp. 61, 74, 134, 175.

³²⁸ Excerpt from *The Detroit News*, April 30, 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973

effective use possible of its right-of-way along existing railroad corridors to reduce to an absolute minimum relocation of persons and businesses in the path of construction.³²⁹

Maynard Jackson saw rapid transit as a means of elevating the quality of life in Atlanta for all people. Adamant about the positive effects of mass transit on citizens, he said that mass transit could no longer be designed without major attention to community values and concerns. Jackson boasted that concessions had already been made in the rapid transit designs of Atlanta that skirted residential areas, which might have been ruined. He also proclaimed that rapid transit could help increase a city's tax base if the city tightly controlled zoning in transit paths and spurred both commercial and residential development along its routes. In Atlanta, planners engaged in using rapid transit to achieve economic goals of opening up isolated areas to new businesses, making job opportunities in the suburbs more accessible to inner city residents. Jackson boasted of the job opportunities created by MARTA construction to train low-skilled and low-income residents. In his closing statements before the hearing, Jackson solidified his support for Atlanta's rapid transit program in stating:

The federal government should make increased transportation planning money directly available to the cities to ensure that the cities have prime input in regional transportation planning. I'm not anti-highways, but I am anti-destroying neighborhoods. We have a white . . . and to some extent, a black flight problem in Atlanta and the irony of my position as the first black mayor is that I have to fight to make sure they don't leave the city. But we can't on one hand, say don't leave Atlanta to a person then on the next day, run a freeway through his bathroom.³³⁰

³²⁹ Excerpt from *The Detroit News*, April 30, 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973

³³⁰ Ibid

In the case of Atlanta, Jackson believed that rapid transit could assist in making the city “livable again.” Once efficient and rooted in the concerns of the people, Atlanta’s transportation systems could enhance the economic outlook while improving the quality of life in the city. Simply put, Jackson’s plan used transportation planning and improved transportation systems not only for movement about the city, but also as a catalyst of social, economic, and upward mobility.³³¹

Ready, Set, Go!

After years of political maneuvering, constant changes, and joint efforts in planning, the full scope of Atlanta’s rapid transit program moved closer to a reality. With community support, along with funding and design in place, MARTA geared for the largest public works construction project in the southeastern United States. In February 1974, MARTA began demolition and clearing the path for the rapid rail system. MARTA General Manager Alan Kiepper called the demolition “a very significant step toward actual construction of the rapid rail system.” MARTA acquired properties along the planned train lines, relocating families and businesses as necessary. Over the course of construction, MARTA estimated the dislocation of some 2,200 families, business, or individuals with suitable compensation. Next, MARTA solidified contracts necessary for construction, including: legal, design, labor, and insurance. In reference to questions about diversity in the offering of contracts, MARTA officials explained that contractual services had been and would continue to be offered to minority contractors, with the bulk of such contracts to continue over the course of construction. MARTA’s Assistant

³³¹ Excerpt from *The Detroit News*, April 30, 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, August 16, 1973

General Manager Gladstone Chandler further explained, “we are not only concerned with equal employment provided for people we do business with, but also within our own organization.”³³²

By November 1974, MARTA reported that contractual agreements had been extended to 28 minority firms. Services as either contractors or subcontractors on construction and non-construction projects exceeded over \$1 million. Services ranged from moving services and sale of office supplies to design work on the Moreland Avenue and Ashby Street Stations. Since the inception of MARTA’s Affirmative Action Plan, a program designed to ensure that minorities – chiefly blacks and women – receive a fair share of MARTA jobs and business opportunities, MARTA showed concerted efforts to be inclusive in decision-making. With blacks being key supporters of the rapid transit program and critical to ratification, along with being the group to be most adversely affected by construction, their demands for inclusiveness carried weight. Atlanta’s mass transit improved considerably in the 1970s in regard to service and minority involvement. It served more neighborhoods and involved blacks in policy-making positions. With inclusiveness came a better quality of decision-making to reflect the complexities of Atlanta and its entire people in areas other than rapid transit. The role of race in mass transit development and operation proved significant as race served as a major factor in most planning decisions.³³³

With construction drawing near, MARTA official continued to solidify designs and final contracts. The selection of the architectural design for the aerial structure to be

³³² *Atlanta Daily World*, March 9, 1973, February 15, 1974

³³³ *Atlanta Daily World*, March 9, 1973, June 22, 1973. Bayor, 195

used along some 16 miles of the rapid rail system proved important. Each of the four lines of the planned rail system included aerial structures. The selected design featured a “clear line” look to give the entire structure a minimum profile. In areas where needed, concrete panels were to be attached to reduce train noise. With the selection of the aerial design came the selection of firms for the trackwork. In particular, MARTA selected the familiar DeLeuw, Cather and Company, a Chicago-based engineering and architectural firm with a branch operation in Atlanta, for trackwork design on the East Line. As the nineteenth firm selected by MARTA, DeLeuw, Cather and Company would be responsible for the approximately seven-mile section between the Georgia State University Station and the Avondale Station. This portion of the East Line would be the first section of the system to be opened. The firms selected by MARTA consisted of architectural and engineering professionals joining forces to execute specific functions on the MARTA system. By January 1975, 69 firms actively engaged in designing 22 portions of the system. 45 of the firms represented Georgia: 43 from Atlanta, and one each from Albany and Macon. Of the 69 firms, 10 were minority owned. Other areas of responsibility for selected firms included: (1) North Line: Civic Center Station and subway between Alexander Street and Baltimore Place, (2) North Line: Cain Street Station and subway between Marietta Street and Alexander Street, and (3) South Line: bridge over I-20 and aerial rail between the intersection of Whitehall Street and Memorial Drive, and Eugenia Street. MARTA continued finalizing plans as the construction groundbreaking drew near.³³⁴

³³⁴ *Atlanta Daily World*, February 7, 1974, December 24, 1974, January, 21, 1975

In the final weeks preceding the construction of the rapid rail lines, MARTA continued in preparation for the momentous task ahead. In January 1975, in the largest single real estate transaction in its history, MARTA acquired key land for the Five Points Station plus temporary air rights easements needed for construction from Forsyth Street west to Spring Street. The Five Points Station, designed to be the central hub of the MARTA rapid rail system, would handle 205,000 passengers daily by 1995. MARTA directors considered this successful transaction essential to the planned schedule and overall functionality of the rapid transit program. “We can now proceed in an orderly fashion to our published goal of providing rapid rail transportation to the citizens of Metropolitan Atlanta and Fulton and DeKalb Counties by 1978,” explained MARTA General Manager Alan Kiepper. In another significant event, MARTA named William Earl Callier as its first trainee in the two-year program designed to prepare minorities for managerial positions in transit operations. The program involved trainees in all phases of MARTA’s transit operations through assignments in each of the four divisions within the Department of Transit Operations. As MARTA neared construction, it attempted to hold true to the promises made to citizens whose support made rapid transit possible.³³⁵

In preliminary plans available on the eve of construction, MARTA provided summary fact sheets to make clear the long-range goals and improvements to be implemented with the completion of the rapid transit program at full scale. MARTA explained:

The total rapid rail and rapid busway system will consist of 60.9 miles of rapid rail and busway lines in Fulton and DeKalb Counties. The system will utilize 39 rapid rail stations and 2 rapid busway stations and parking will be provided for over 30,000 vehicles. The rapid rail and busway

³³⁵ *Atlanta Daily World*, January 7, 1975, February, 14, 1975

system will be coordinated with the surface bus operations that will be operating on over 1,350 miles of arterial and expressway systems in the two-county area. The rapid rail system will be completed and placed into full revenue operation by 1980. The construction of the rapid rail system will include 10.1 miles of subway with 13 stations, 16.3 miles of aerial with stations, and 26.5 miles of at-grade construction with 19 stations.³³⁶

MARTA's short-range goals included: expanded and improved bus routes, improved communication and informational services, providing earlier and later service hours, and placement of over 100 passenger waiting shelters. In gearing for construction, MARTA also provided construction maps and graphic timelines in a project master schedule to outline every step of the process.³³⁷

Conclusion

On Wednesday, February 19, 1975, MARTA broke ground on the East Line of the rapid rail system before some 1,000 people in an hour-long ceremony. At the intersection of DeKalb and Arizona Avenues, the ceremony included guests: Mayor Maynard Jackson, Governor George Busbee; Frank C. Herringer, administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, MARTA Board Chairman John E. Wright, and MARTA's General Manager Alan Kiepper. The historic occasion came some three years and four months after residents of metropolitan Atlanta narrowly approved a one percent sales tax to finance the purchase and improvement of the existing private bus system and the construction of a rapid rail system. MARTA Chairman John E. Wright

³³⁶ MARTA Fact Sheet, April 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6

³³⁷ MARTA Fact Sheet, April 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, February 18, 1975

said the groundbreaking represented the introduction of a new and exciting construction effort designed to improve transportation in the entire metropolitan region.³³⁸

With construction on the way and the first rapid rail service slated for late 1978 via the East Line, the tangible realization of the journey that began a decade prior moved a step closer to being achieved. A decade of intense back and forth negotiations between MARTA officials and the citizens of the region produced a more responsive plan that ultimately gained the support necessary to be adopted. MARTA's development over the decade links directly with the changing political environment that altered the face and dynamics of city leadership. No longer could decisions be made that disregarded certain groups, especially the black majority. In that regards, black participation in the development of MARTA illustrates what black leaders had argued throughout the postwar period, that equal participation in planning would create a more efficient transportation system that would be responsive to the needs of all citizens and necessary for the city's future.

³³⁸ MARTA Fact Sheet, April 1974, Maynard Jackson Mayoral Administrative Records, Series B, Box 67, Folder 6. *Atlanta Daily World*, February 18, 1975

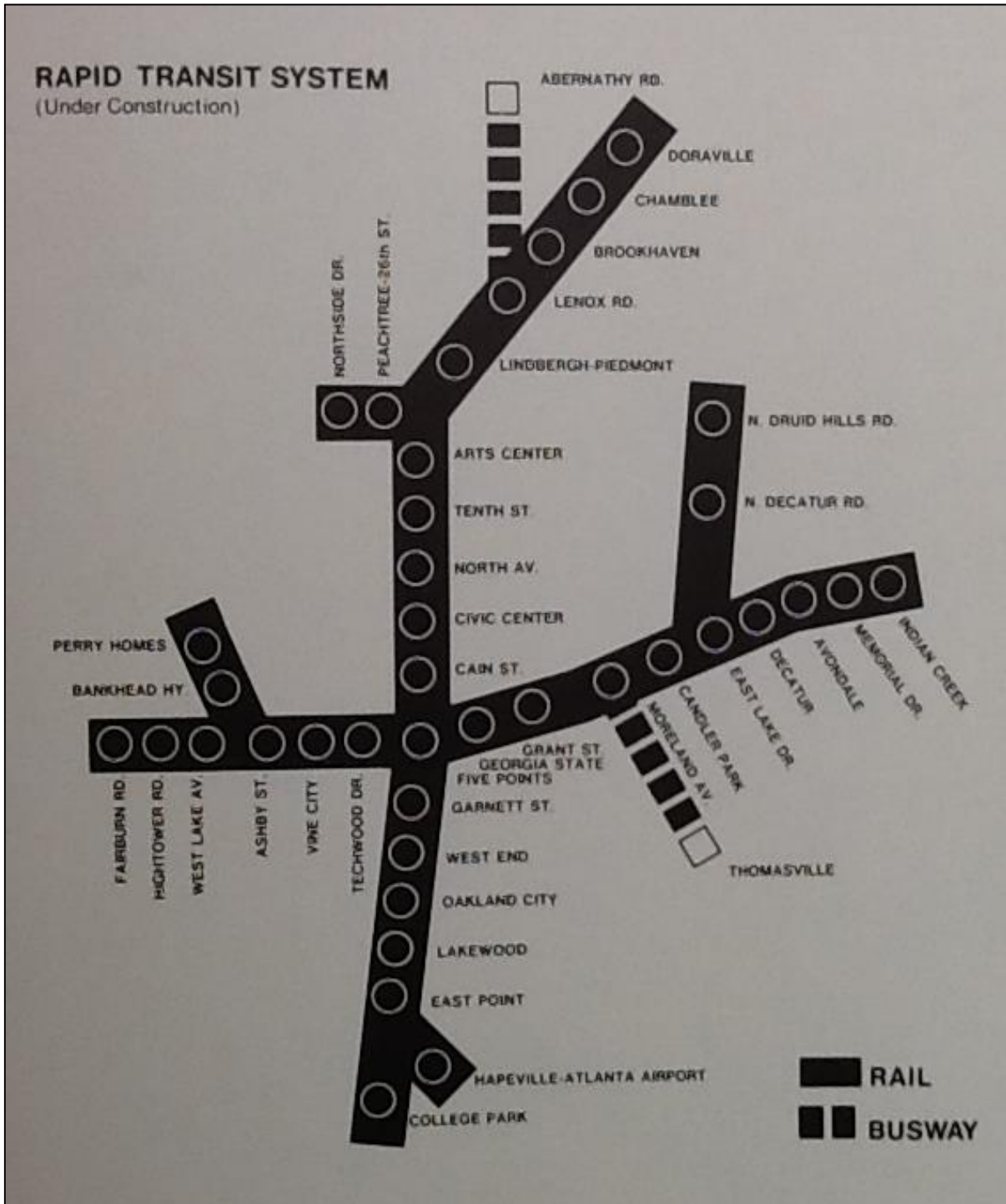


Figure 29: Rapid Transit System under Construction and Design Layout, Atlanta History Center



Figure 30: Rapid Transit System, 1975. Atlanta History Center

AFTERWORD

Atlanta's experience demonstrates physical and social change in the postwar American city. Many factors and historical forces contributed to change, which triggered patterns that institutionalized customs and traditions. In particular, segregation in Atlanta and throughout the South, dictated virtually every aspect of life in the postwar period. It created an environment that shut African Americans out of most processes, including those pertaining to planning. Yet, with limited resources and participation, they were able to help shape change. The desire for equality and full participation continuously gained strength over the early 20th century and collided with segregation, creating tension and hostility in the postwar period. History records an era marked by turmoil, strife, and progress. In the aftermath of the postwar changes and planning, decision-making reflected a more concerted effort to include and meet the needs of all citizens, regardless of race.

By the start of the postwar period, Atlanta already functioned as a regional hub of commerce and a transportation center for the southeastern United States. The city boasted the title "Gate City of the South," the region's leading metropolis. The city also maintained a class of business elites and commercial leaders determined to transform the city's economic enterprises into large scale ventures with greater reach. These boosters envisioned not just a regional gateway, but national and international prominence as well. One of the keys to creating the modern city of Atlanta rested in effective planning; particularly in the area in which the city owed its existence – transportation. Since its founding over a century earlier, transportation continued to play a central role in the growth and development of the city and the region. With the

economic advances of WWII and increases in urban population, Atlanta, along with cities across America scrambled to find solutions to cope with the increased demands of city living through planning. However, planning, like other functions of civic policy, fell victim to segregation. With African Americans forced into a category of second-class citizenship, void of rights and representation, early postwar planning produced blueprints of modern Atlanta without the participation of African Americans.

* * * * *

In response to the economic upsurges of World War II, leaders in Atlanta embarked on a planning mission to accommodate the increased demands of city living. From the onset of postwar planning with the Lochner Report in 1944, to the groundbreaking for the construction of the MARTA rapid rail lines in 1975, this project explores the contours of race and mobility through the lenses of transportation planning. It examines the city's planning entities and dissects the plans produced by these authorities, underscoring the lack of African American participation in the planning process. As planning authorities operated in segregation, this research connects the lack of African American participation in transportation planning with limited participation in planning for other areas including housing and urban renewal. This project's framework is constructed with a two-fold function of mobility: first, in the physical sense of movement about the expanding metropolitan landscape; secondly, and more essential, in the social sense, showcasing a process of uplift for the African American community in Atlanta.

This research illustrates an upward trajectory for African Americans over the three-decade timeline. From being denied equal access and full political rights in a

segregated society, to the election of Georgia's first black state senator of the 20th century and Atlanta's first black mayor, this research vocalizes the struggles of Atlanta's African American citizens in the fight for civil rights and full participation from the aspect of transportation planning. Using the city's historic black newspapers filled with primary accounts of the period, this project tracks the discourse of the diverse African American community from the leadership and business elite to the working-class citizens participating in public hearings. From little to no participation in highway planning and construction through historic African American sections in the early phases, to positions of demand in the creation of the rapid transit system in the latter phases, this research shows the evolution of African American participation and influence in shaping planning processes in postwar Atlanta.

Though this project ends at the groundbreaking for the MARTA rapid rail lines in 1975, it can very well be extended to the present day. Since 1975, race, mobility, and transportation planning have been constant themes of Atlanta history. They remain ever-present topics in the dialogue of a diverse metropolis rapidly approaching the six million-population mark. As the gateway to the South, Atlanta is a center of regional, national, and international importance.

Much of Atlanta's success can be attributed to effective planning and the expansive transportation networks. Subsequent growth and development since 1975 has exceeded projections of the postwar period, compelling metropolitan planning to continuously evolve to accommodate. Yet, gridlock traffic congestion, limited mass transit, public rejection of transit measures, major inter-governmental disputes, and a list of other transportation and planning issues still exist. In planning and policy-making

around modern issues as gentrification, in-migration, sprawl, tourism, traffic congestion, water management, municipal services, crisis management, healthcare, education, historic preservation, mobility and access, citizen participation and consideration of all individuals involved can make the process more viable and complete. I assert that the lifeblood of a city is rooted in how it provides equal and fair accommodations that meet the needs and desires of its entire people, without limits or restraints.

As cities across the nation and the world embrace urban and metropolitan growth, all can take lessons from the pages of Atlanta history. Segregation created more problems than it solved. It created a society of hostility and unequal distribution of rights and privileges, stifling the mobility of African Americans. The consequences of segregation resonated in every aspect of city living during the postwar period and continue to play a role in race relations and social development in the modern age. Successful planning requires unabridged citizen participation. It must be comprehensive and cognizant of all individuals within its boundaries. Importantly, it must be historically accurate, as well as accurate in projections and fair in implementation. In the case of Atlanta, transportation birthed the city, nurtured the city, and continues to provide sustenance. From rail to highway to mass transit to air, innovation in transportation systems and transportation planning propels a city, fostering growth and development. All in all, through the victories and failures of a tremendous investment in transportation, Atlanta continues rising, invigorated by its past, present, and future.

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