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August 29, 2018

MARTA Board of Directors
2424 Piedmont Road, NE
Atlanta, GA 30324-3311

Dear Members of the Marta Board of Directors,

Your September 6, 2018 Board Agenda includes the deferred consideration of a contract between MARTA and Gwinnett County to structure Gwinnett’s membership in MARTA, subject to that County’s voter referendum, scheduled for March of 2019. That contract, negotiated by MARTA’s staff and Chairman, and the State statute that underpins it represents a significant departure from the structure and allocation of costs and authority that have defined MARTA from its inception in 1972. We welcome new participating jurisdictions to MARTA, however, we must address important deficiencies in the contract and in the level and quality of service that MARTA has delivered in DeKalb.

Accordingly, we are writing to express DeKalb’s expectations for maintenance and expansion of service under the existing MARTA penny, and conditions necessary for the success of proposals for an additional levy in the future. On behalf of the Governing Authority of DeKalb County, we believe it is as important for MARTA to renew its commitment to its original members with the same specificity and deference as the proposed contract offers to its newest prospective member.

What we need from MARTA is a tangible and specific commitment to correct long standing deficiencies within the existing service area, including the extent, quality and reliability of DeKalb County bus service, paratransit, and transit amenities like bus stops and shelters. For several years now, MARTA has made quarterly presentations to the DeKalb County Commission alluding to upgraded bus stops, improved amenities at MARTA rail stations, and new technologies MARTA is planning to deploy, but many of these improvements have not been accomplished. MARTA’s Comprehensive Operations Analysis has largely been experienced in DeKalb as the consolidation and elimination of routes that MARTA deems marginal, but new services and technologies purported to replace the obsolete ones have been conditioned on additional funding from DeKalb.

If the Contract is approved, we also expect implementation of strategies to maximize the benefit to DeKalb residents of new service traversing DeKalb, including stops in DeKalb and reverse commute scheduling. Routes such as the East Line and the Clifton Corridor that will become transfer destinations for cross county travelers should likewise be extended to logical termini rather than inundating DeKalb neighborhoods with connecting traffic.

Like you, DeKalb County's Governing Authority believes in and relies on transit as a fundamental mobility strategy for our population and economy. We hope that the Board and management of MARTA will respond with tangible and constructive proposals to meet these important objectives.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Thurmond
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County



Jeff Rader
Presiding Officer, Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County

CC: DeKalb County Board of Commissioners
Atlanta Mayor and City Council
Clayton Board of Commissioners
Fulton County Board of Commissioners
Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners