



CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT

Always on the Move!

Chatham Area Transit

Legislative Agenda 2014

Making Connections



Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) has adopted its Legislative Program to provide direction for its legislative and policy activities for the year. The purpose of the Legislative Program is to establish financial, statutory, regulatory, and administrative policies and principles to guide CAT's advocacy efforts. The program is meant to be flexible in order to give CAT the ability to pursue unanticipated legislative and administrative opportunities that may present themselves during the course of the year, and to respond expeditiously to the dynamic political and policy processes in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and the Savannah-Chatham County area.

The 2014 Legislative Program is divided into two sections—federal (below) and state/regional/local. Each section consists of a summary of the key policy issues and related advocacy principles.

Chatham Area Transit is charged with the responsibility of managing mobility in our community. We work diligently every day to generate growth in our economy, to protect our environment, and to move further down the road for American energy independence. We accomplish this task by providing more than four million annual trips for jobs, education, shopping, health care, and a host of other activities. CAT understands that elected officials and policy makers are required to make tough decisions based upon limited resources and nearly unlimited demands. The role of public transit is ever-evolving and ever-expanding, yet resources continue to lag. An investment in public transit is an investment in our current infrastructure and our future as dependence upon affordable transportation continues to grow.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEMS:

MAP-21 Funds

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) replaces the current Surface Transportation Program, but retains the same structure, goals, and flexibility to allow states and metropolitan areas to invest in the projects that fit their unique needs and priorities.

CAT relies on local and state funds to match Federal grants to meet the Authority's capital and operational needs. The State of Georgia can provide up to a 20% match of grant costs and is an essential partner in the provision of mobility services in Chatham County. Projects critical to the safe and efficient operation of public transportation services to people in Chatham County include:

- ◆ Additional vehicles to revitalize an outdated fleet—50 buses, 25 paratransit, 5 paratransit taxis;
- ◆ Funding for transit stop infrastructure improvements, construction of 5 enhanced transfer locations, purchase and installation of 100 transit shelters and benches;
- ◆ Growth via Van Pool Program start-up (20 seven-passenger vans); Service expansion to major employers JCB, Mitsubishi and Gulfstream; Enhanced service on major corridors including express services; and a designated Park and Ride location.

Fuel Purchasing Flexibility

As is the case for all Americans, urban and rural transit systems are paying some of the highest fuel prices ever while continuing to face other funding challenges. **Providing transit agencies with the flexibility to utilize federal transit capital dollars to assist in the purchase of fuel would aid all transit systems in meeting these challenges.**

CAT is the Regional Transit Authority for Chatham County and surrounding areas.

Covering approximately 632 square miles and service hours of 5:00 AM—1:00AM, CAT provides transportation demand management, fixed route bus service, complementary paratransit service, accessible taxis, streetcar, and marine services on the Savannah River.



STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEMS:

Transit Operating Assistance

In response to funding challenges, transit systems have had little choice but to cut services, eliminate jobs, and implement significant fare increases. In order to maintain the transportation system and preserve its long-term viability while contending with an aging population, the State must continue to assist with public transit funding by increasing its portion to previous levels, and a dedicated, stable, local funding source must be created. **CAT strongly supports legislation that would permit all regions in Georgia to consider and implement funding mechanisms necessary for allowing other revenue streams for transit than the local property tax.**

- ◆ **TRANSIT SERVICES DISTRICT**—A BILL to modify the enabling and subsequent authorization for the Chatham Area Transit including any Exclusion Provisions within Chatham County. The new language would allow that all of Chatham County is considered a special district for transit services. No area within Chatham County shall be served by the Chatham Area Transit Authority unless it is part of a special district for transit services created by the Board of Commissioners of Chatham County as provided by law and as authorized by Article IX, Section II, Paragraph VI of the Constitution of the State of Georgia. All areas of Chatham County that are included within a special district for transit services shall be served by the transit system of the Authority on a reasonable basis throughout such special district.
- ◆ **HB 651/SB 92**—A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 5 of Chapter 13 of Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to excise taxes on rental motor vehicles, so as to add public transit to the authorized purposes for the proceeds of such tax; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Regional Transportation Planning

A vital communication link is well established between CAT, government agencies, and local utility companies to ensure the inclusion and successful installation of safe ADA accessible bus stops and shelters in various construction and repair projects. A comprehensive land use and transportation plan that maintains a clean environment, fosters orderly development, and preserves natural and historic resources is essential to the quality of life in our communities. **Emphasizing public transportation connectivity in the layout of new developments minimizes congestion and maximizes accessibility.**

- ◆ **HB 195**—A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 5 of Chapter 8 of Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the special district transportation sales and use tax, so as to provide for a legislative purpose; to provide for the method for creation of special districts for the purpose of a special district transportation sales and use tax; to provide for the expiration of special districts in certain instances; to revise and repeal certain definitions; to provide for a sunset date for certain provisions; to provide for the election, ballot, imposition, collection, and cessation of a special district transportation sales and use tax; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.
- ◆ **HB 265**—A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 9 of Title 32 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to mass transportation, so as to repeal provisions relating to the suspension of restrictions on the use of annual proceeds from sales and use taxes by public transit authorities; to repeal provisions relating to the board of directors of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to provide for contingent repeal; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Accessible Taxis

One impediment to more widespread usage of wheelchair accessible taxis is the territorial limitation to taxi travel in Georgia under current law. A Senate bill relates to certificates of public necessity and convenience for vehicles for hire and addresses the territorial issue by outlining the requirements under which wheelchair-accessible taxis can travel outside their home jurisdiction and return with a paying fare. **Supporting this allows taxi usage to become a regional transportation option.**

**Joe Murray Rivers, Jr.
Intermodal Transit Center**

