

Partners for a Prosperous Athens Housing & Transportation Committee

Transportation Subcommittee Recommendations

DRAFT 12/12/2006

Our recommendations address the relationship between transportation and poverty. Access to reliable, affordable transportation is an important component in overcoming poverty. The inability to afford reliable transportation can serve as a barrier to getting and keeping a job; participating in school activities; and accessing services.

Furthermore, the costs of automobile ownership – often the only option for low-income families living beyond the reach of public transportation – can be as high as 40% of the gross income of a family of four living at the federal poverty rate. If such a family could devote some of those transportation dollars to housing, they could begin building equity.

RECOMMENDATION # 1:

Increase the capacity of Athens Transit within Athens-Clarke County. Athens Transit does a good job of providing public transportation with the resources it has, but those resources are not sufficient to allow it to fully meet the needs of those who depend upon it as their sole means of transportation. Athens Transit needs additional resources to allow it to:

- **Increase hours, extent, and frequency of The Bus (general fixed-route service) to 24 hour per day, 7 days per week.**
- **Increase the number of available vans and drivers for The Lift (on-demand service for people with disabilities) and expand coverage times and area.**
- **Expand county-wide routes (The Link).**
- **Increase marketing and advertising of routes, services, etc. Create, post at bus stops, and distribute comprehensive route map and schedule.**
- **Make the Multi-Modal center more accessible to downtown. It is currently difficult for elderly people and those with disabilities to get to downtown locations from the Multi-Modal Center.**
- **Be affordable to those with low incomes.**

Strategies:

- ACC should increase local funding for Athens Transit. Public transportation should be considered a vital public service, like police or fire protection, that the community can not afford *not* to adequately fund.
- PPA conveners and participants should lobby the General Assembly to enact legislation proposed by the Georgia Transit Association, the Georgia Municipal Association, and the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia to increase the amount and flexibility of state funding available to Athens Transit. Specific proposals requiring action by the General Assembly include:
 - Establish a Transportation Infrastructure Fee on motor fuel tax purchases that could be used for various purposes including funding transit; this fee could be made revenue neutral with an accompanying TIF income tax credit.
 - Authorize local governments to place a Local Option Sales Tax referendum on the ballot; this tax would be used to fund local transit operating and capital costs.

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- Authorize cities and counties jointly or regionally to impose a “Local Option Transportation Tax” of up to 7.5 cents per gallon on the sale of motor fuel to address local transportation needs, including transit.
- Appropriate funds for operating assistance for transit systems.
- Provide additional state funds to increase the state’s share of the 20% non-federal match required for federally-funded transit capital projects.
- Pass a state constitutional amendment necessary to allow for a local sales tax for operational and capital funding of local transit systems, and pass general legislation to extend the statewide exemption of funds raised by local option sales taxes for public transit corporations and authorities from the existing 2% cap on local sales taxes.
- Pass legislation allowing a state individual income tax credit for persons who purchase their own transit fare cards or have other qualified personal mass transportation expenses.
- ACC should seek additional sources of funds for Athens Transit.
- ACC Planning Department should take public transportation into account as the Comprehensive Land Use Plan is updated. Park and ride facilities, bus shelters, accessible bus stops and sidewalks, and existing or proposed bus routes should be included in the coordinated and comprehensive planning process.
- Athens community organizations should fund more transit passes to be distributed by local agencies such as the Athens Area Homeless Shelter, the Ark, etc.
- Athens Transit should make it easier for elderly people and those with disabilities to get from the Multi-Modal Center to downtown locations, possibly by running a shuttle or adding regular stops at City Hall to more routes.
- ACC and other large employers should make arrangements, similar to UGA’s, for their employees to take Athens Transit to work without having to pay at the fare box.