



Funding GRTA

This year, Governor Deal proposed utilizing part of the State's budget to fund the operations of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, better known as GRTA, in running its Xpress Service in metro Atlanta. The State Transportation Board strongly supports this initiative. The Georgia Department of Transportation has worked with GRTA since its inception helping remove thousands of vehicles from the roads during peak hours. Savings in lost fuel and productivity now total more than \$140 million annually for the region's commuters and commercial trucks.

The continued growth in ridership on GRTA's routes, prove both the need for the service, and the success of the service. Many of the routes are standing room only and the park and ride lots spaces are filled to capacity. In 2012, GRTA Xpress had more than 2.4 million boardings and took 1.5 million vehicles off metro area roads. Providing a commute alternative for people helps to ensure that Georgia's business community will be able to access the best employees within the key 40-minute radius. Access to quality employees continually ranks as a central need for industry, and transit services like GRTA positively impact the economic development efforts of the state.

Georgia DOT supports initiatives to reduce congestion including transit, carpools, vanpools, walking, bicycling and teleworking as alternatives. We encourage commuters to consider options through many programs and fund the successful Clean Air Campaign (now Georgia Commute Options). The GRTA Xpress service is a valuable component of the state's efforts to improve mobility and the benefit of providing funds to continue this service outweighs the dollar costs.

This Department and GRTA have a long relationship of cooperation and cohesion to provide transportation alternatives that not only allow for a more reliable trip time, but also successfully eliminate approximately 9,000 vehicles a day from the roadways by serving riders from 40 counties with 33 routes. More than \$70 million has been invested in motor coaches and new park and ride lots to accommodate the growth in customers. These efforts are complemented by the managed lanes planned on major routes throughout the metro area. New locations are being worked on each year, and transit vehicles are able to utilize the express lanes at no charge.

Raising the state's investment in transportation alternatives opens the road for more citizens to take advantage of these options. The need for transit services from organizations like GRTA is well documented and the ridership confirms it. Georgia needs more services, not less, so providing funds to support the operations of GRTA is central to the overall goal of reducing congestion and the number of vehicles on Georgia's roads each day.

The state general fund receives \$190 million annually from 1% of the state motor fuel tax collections – tax dollars that are paid by those using the roadways. This is more than adequate to cover the funding needs of GRTA each year. Allowing GRTA to receive these funds is a prudent choice and a positive for future economic development efforts.

Johnny Floyd is Chairman of the State Transportation Board.

