

ASSESSING ELECTORAL DEFEAT:
NEW DIRECTIONS AND VALUES FOR MARTA

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Published as: Almy, Timothy A., William Bartley Hildreth, and Robert T. Golembiewski, "Assessing Electoral Defeat: New Directions and Values for MARTA," in Robert T. Golembiewski, Mass Transit Management: Case Studies of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority. Washington, DC: Urban Mass Transportation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1980, pp. 1:1-18.

A product of the Case Study Project on MARTA Management, funded by Research and Training Grant No. GA-11-0006, Urban Mass Transportation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation.

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Assessing Electoral Defeat:
New Directions and Values for MARTA

The morning of November 6, 1968 saw the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority facing a deadly-serious question: Could the Authority survive? Voters on the previous day resoundingly defeated a referendum important to MARTA. At issue was a bond proposal which would have provided the money needed for advanced engineering, land acquisition, and construction of the first phase of rapid rail in Atlanta. The defeat ended MARTA's immediate hopes of transitioning from a planning and coordinating agency to an operating rapid-transit system.

MARTA being unsure of its own survival was no new thing, however, since from its creation there were no assurances that rapid rail would ever become a reality in Atlanta. Although the Georgia State Legislature passed the MARTA Act in March 1965, the establishment of the Authority was contingent upon voter approval in the metro-Atlanta area. In November 1965, local referenda ratifying participation in the Authority succeeded in four of five metro counties. This approval provided local governments with the constitutional authority to contribute city or county revenues to MARTA for rapid transit planning. Even so, local participation in the funding of detailed engineering and construction programs would require additional referenda in each participating jurisdiction. So the 1968 referendum defeat did not change MARTA's basic condition but simply increased the uncertainty of its survival.

This case focuses on MARTA during the transition period, 1968-1971, which culminated in a successful referendum in November 1971 and propelled the embryonic Authority into complex engineering and construction projects. So this case provides perspective on how MARTA turned the 1968 defeat into success three years later. Three major sections introduce major features of this critical turnaround. First, the case briefly reviews the 1968 Referendum. Second, attention gets directed at MARTA's examination and assessment of the reasons for its failure. Third, the new emphases and directions chosen by MARTA for its 1971 referendum plan will be highlighted.

The Referendum of 1968

The plan presented to the Atlanta voters in November 1968 was complex. A four-corridor, fixed rail, rapid transit system of slightly over forty miles in

length was at stake. The estimated cost of the project was calculated to be \$993 million, including interest payments. The project would service Atlanta and two counties, Fulton and DeKalb. Long-range plans, however, anticipated service to three other metro counties -- Gwinnett, Clayton, and Cobb. The MARTA proposal called for rapid transit to some thirty stations; and park-and-ride stations would be built in outlying areas, while feeder buses would complement the fixed-rail system. The MARTA plan remained, nonetheless, essentially a rapid-rail proposal. Initiation of service was predicted for December 1978.

Did the public support these transit plans? A 1965 referendum revealed public commitment to rapid transit, to be sure, but that commitment was largely conceptual and symbolic. Public support for the generalized concept of rapid transit was easy for the Authority to gain. The referendum in 1968 challenged this generalized support to put up the cash for specific fixed-rail routes with an enormous price tag. Atlanta-area voters proved unready to reinforce their symbolic support of rapid transit with the required material commitment.

The defeat in November 1968 dealt MARTA its first significant failure. But that failure became an opportunity for the Authority to contemplate its mistakes of the past and to consider alternatives for the future.

Dismayed at Losing and
Used to Winning

The election loss was an especial blow to the efforts of the "downtown establishment" that had strongly supported the referendum in the belief that a rapid rail system in downtown Atlanta would be good for the city. The rail system, they thought, would enhance the viability of the downtown areas which in most other major cities were decaying. A modern mass transit system would provide an impetus to development and assure the continuance of the central city's retail and commercial dominance. It was imperative to the merchants and retailers that the rapid transit plan get electoral support.

The 1968 defeat was dismaying, and threatened the reputation of "progressive" Atlanta, whose business and commercial

interests had grown accustomed to success in convincing Atlantans of the need for change and progress. That confidence convinced local civic leaders that rapid transit would be as successful as other "progressive" proposals backed by the downtowners. In the area of civil rights, as an illustration, the local Chamber of Commerce referred to Atlanta as "The City Too Busy To Hate" -- racial tensions and violence were counter-productive to good business. Normally conservative Southern business interests thus supported social and political policies progressive for the day and locus. A buoyancy also characterized Atlanta's life more generally. In 1964, for example, Mayor Ivan Allen announced that local interests "were going to build a stadium on land we don't own with money we don't have for a team we don't have." Soon, three major league professional teams were playing in that stadium.

"Progressive Atlanta" rested on a coalition of conservative whites and liberal blacks that had become the dominant political force in local politics. Since each group had become accustomed to the other's support, the business community had expected the black leadership to support rapid transit.

The voters' rejection of the 1968 referendum was shattering to the civic leaders who had labored for the passage of the bond issue. Particularly painful was the overwhelming rejection of MARTA by the black voters. For example, this frustration was evident in a post-election letter from Alexander Smith, a member of the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce, to Chairman of the MARTA Board Richard Rich, an important business leader in Atlanta. Smith reviewed the referendum failure and seemed to speak for the Atlanta power structure. Smith outlined several changes needed the next-time-around -- expanding the MARTA Board, hiring a new public relations firm, changing the MARTA system to fit social realities, rethinking the finance plans, and so on. Smith concluded that "none of us should be ashamed of losing . . . our only problem is we are simply used to winning."

The official MARTA response to the election loss indicated disappointment, but not surprise. MARTA's press release of November 6 said "the people have spoken and they have made it very clear that many of them are not sympathetic to the plan that MARTA has put together, and that this Board thinks would be the key to the solution of Atlanta's traffic problems." The news release went on to warn the citizenry that "when the traffic doubles in Atlanta . . . we will no longer have a viable city. . . ." MARTA promised to explore alternatives for

the future of rapid transit in Atlanta. Limited by time and money, however, the Authority had no alternative plans ready at the time.

The defeat was clear-cut and indicated serious problems ahead. Less than forty-five per cent of the voters supported the plan for financing the system. Some analysts noted after the election that the level of opposition was not nearly as important as the significant apathy that Atlanta voters displayed about the transit issue. This apathy was reflected in the fact that less than fifty per cent of those Atlantans voting in 1968 for President of the U.S. completed their ballots and voted on the last measure on the ballot, the rapid transit referendum. The post-election efforts of MARTA and its supporters, therefore, had to focus on remedying apathy as much as opposition to MARTA.

Clearly the "downtowners" had failed to sell 1968 transit plans to area voters, but the individuals who had been the major backers of the rapid transit concept reacted to the defeat with a commitment to continue. Their efforts in the several months after the elections were centered on re-grouping and analyzing "what went wrong" in the campaign. MARTA Board Chairman Rich reflected the common attitude in reflecting on the loss in a letter to former Governor Carl Sanders, an advocate of the referendum. Rich mused that "in politics neither defeat nor victory is permanent . . . /and/ MARTA /will/ continue to work for a solution to the transportation problem in Atlanta."

The Post-Mortem: Inquiring into the Loss

The electoral post-mortem sought to be as open and critical as possible. The MARTA Board of Directors sought explanations for the defeat from close supporters as well as from opponents. These evaluations isolated the following contributing factors:

- o technical disagreements over a fixed-rail versus a balanced bus/rail system, in part resulting from the fact that a major transit study for Atlanta was not completed before election time, as anticipated;
- o incomplete public education program on the advantages of rapid transit for Atlanta;
- o little visible political support from local elected officials, and opposition from Governor Lester Maddox;

- o confusion about alternative rapid transit systems available to Atlanta;
- o opposition by leaders of the black community;
- o an unacceptable financial plan, relying solely on the property tax to repay bonded indebtedness;
- o uncertainty of federal funds to supplement local money;
- o the placement of the MARTA bond question last on a ballot already containing over one hundred other referendum questions;
- o MARTA's image as being technically-oriented and not concerned with social concerns, especially relating to blacks; and
- o the proposed fixed rail system did not allow flexible service to suburban and poor areas of the region.

These were comprehensively devastating conclusions. Some critics suggested that MARTA's election failure was largely self-inflicted, that MARTA was not a socially and politically responsive public agency, that it had presented a confused plan to area voters.

MARTA staff and Board were aware that future success at the polls would depend, in large part, on the quality of their assessment of the referendum failure. This reassessment would necessarily take several months. Before the initiation of this lengthy process, however, the Board responded to immediate pressures and identified several opportunities for early change.

The Pressures for Change

The MARTA Board quickly responded to two major sources of pressure to alter its approach to planning, financing, and campaigning -- courting the black community and local elected officials, who had been obviously and perhaps deliberately neglected or at least taken for granted prior to the 1968 election. Rectifying those oversights occupied a number of executive meetings of the Board of Directors held in the two months immediately following the election. After soliciting input from leaders of the Atlanta black community and from elected officials, the MARTA Board tentatively settled upon

objectives for the near-future. These objectives would involve both political and technical changes for MARTA, and sought a new "political respectability" by learning from the mistakes of 1968. The Board looked to the detailed reassessment period to give substance to these new objectives, which were summarized in a 1969 in-house memorandum having five major emphases:

1. Legislative: The MARTA Board must be made more representative of the community, moving away from the image of a downtown interest to a city-wide and representative body.
2. Citizens Advisory Committee: MARTA should establish an advisory committee of prominent citizens of both races to foster the acceptance of a transit system. The advisory committee would help the Authority to redesign the system, and could enlist the support of community groups to sell the system to the voters.
3. Financial: MARTA must seek alternatives to the property tax to finance the system. Detailed cost estimates of the system must be prepared, and contracts with participating local governments should specify the amount and method of financing the cost-shares of specific local governments.
4. Revised System of Rapid Transit: MARTA should adopt a system that is compatible with the needs of the area, with emphasis on bus service having special relevance for the poor and blacks as well as a rapid-rail component linking suburbs and central city.
5. A vigorous, well-organized campaign must be conducted by supporters of rapid transit that would not repeat the mistakes of last year.

These recommendations for MARTA's agenda were accepted by the Board with little hesitation. An observer recalls that the major concern of the MARTA staff was the poor image of the Authority in the community -- an image of being remote, technical, and unresponsive. Another participant raised a different but related issue. One prominent Board member commented that the success of MARTA was now very much dependent upon the support of the black community -- "a community unfortunately ignored in the last referendum, and a population without any representatives in MARTA."

MARTA Reexamines Itself

These and other concerns absorbed MARTA's energies during a year-long reappraisal that would significantly change the Authority. Following its failure at the polls, the Authority determined to change in directions that would insure success at the next referendum. Particular attention was devoted to planning processes, financing, and campaign strategy. Each emphasis will be reviewed in the next three major sections.

Transportation Planning Assessed

MARTA was criticized by supporters and opponents alike for not providing mechanisms for the involvement of important groups in their planning. Three groups in Atlanta were especially critical to the success of the MARTA referendum: area transportation planners, local elected officials, and non-political community leadership, especially blacks. At the time of the 1968 election, no unified agreement existed among metro-transportation planners that the MARTA plan was technically appropriate. Additionally, there were charges by opponents that MARTA had acted like a "super-government" and ignored the wishes of elected officials, who claimed that they had been left out of the planning process. Finally, the vote indicated that the resistance by black community leaders to the referendum -- which was influenced by a perceived exclusion from the planning process -- had been instrumental in causing MARTA's defeat.

In sum, the transportation planning process stereophonically failed in one of its purposes: to develop the broad base of support necessary for success at the polls.

A brief history of transit planning in Atlanta provides detailed perspective on MARTA's failure to develop adequate support from regional transportation planners, and also illustrates broader failure to provide mechanisms for involving important groups in MARTA planning.

The 1968 plan was the product of a long relationship between the Atlanta Regional Metropolitan Planning Commission (ARMPC) and Atlanta's business leadership. In 1960, Ivan Allen, President of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, established contact with ARMPC soon after its establishment to form an alliance between government and business to plan a comprehensive rapid transit plan for the region. The Chamber earlier had established a group called the Rapid Transit Steering Committee, of which Richard Rich -- later Chairman of MARTA -- was the chairman. ARMPC and the Steering Committee worked to develop

a comprehensive plan, which eventually was endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce in August 1961.

The 1961 plan did not stimulate construction of rapid transit, but it did encourage the establishment of the Inter-governmental Rapid Transit Steering Committee, composed of elected officials from throughout the metro area. It seemed to many that the Chamber and ARMPC had successfully transferred their interests in rapid transit to a larger group of governmental leaders, a critical element in successful planning.

Not all area officials supported these regional planning efforts. William Hartsfield, the mayor of Atlanta, opposed the comprehensive transit plan endorsed by the Chamber and drafted by ARMPC. Some commentators noted that Mayor Hartsfield was highly suspicious of governmental organizations which might dilute the power of the central city. Whatever the case, Hartsfield did not accept the thesis that regional planning and effort were essential for a successful transit plan. Hartsfield's influence was short-lived because he could not succeed himself in office. His successor was Ivan Allen, the stimulant behind the joint Chamber-ARMPC planning effort.

The next few years witnessed a series of planning efforts aimed at reassessing the earlier Chamber-ARMPC plans, but major barriers to linking planning and construction still existed. Most of these new planning efforts were organized and managed by ARMPC, acting in behalf of the local governments in the area. These governments were forbidden by state law to expend any local money directly on transportation. ARMPC was a general planning agency which could spend money for planning in all areas, including transit, but it could not spend money on construction. In transportation, the Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS) performed that function. But ARMPC, AATS, and later MARTA often had different interests, on which greater detail will be provided later.

Eliminating this legal prohibition against local governments' spending money on transportation became the focal point of Chamber of Commerce activity in 1964. A new Chamber-inspired group, "A Rapid Transit Committee of 100," was formed to channel private money into a lobbying campaign to change the Georgia Constitution to accomplish this result. In November 1964, voters in the Atlanta area approved a constitutional amendment which allowed such local expenditures; and the State Legislature in 1965 approved the creation of MARTA, which would be financed by local government contributions and could get into construction.

The new Authority suffered because of its small size and inexperience. Since its staff was too small to carry out regional transportation planning, MARTA turned over this responsibility to the most likely group, ARMPC. This was reasonable. The planners in ARMPC and its Executive Director, Glenn Bennett, had been instrumental in getting the MARTA Act passed through the state legislature. In addition, ARMPC was the region's duly-constituted planning agency. MARTA was not.

MARTA's next concerns essentially involved design and engineering. ARMPC and MARTA hired a consortium of engineering consultants -- Parsons-Brinckerhoff, Tudor, Bechtel, or PBTB -- who would prepare preliminary engineering designs for the system. This technical study was to last for at least one year and -- significant in later criticisms -- PBTB was not required by either ARMPC or MARTA to consult elected officials on the plans they were developing. Instead, PBTB was to prepare the technical report, while ARMPC and MARTA would later solicit reactions from local governmental officials and civic leaders.

During the first year of planning, neither MARTA nor ARMPC saw the need for local involvement in planning. Some critics of the 1968 MARTA referendum felt that this behavior indicated secrecy and avoidance. MARTA and ARMPC believed, however, that engineers and planners were able to go about their business without much political interference and that planning was more efficiently managed.

The lack of civic and governmental involvement probably encouraged opposition to the technical report when it was finished, but it is only certain that the report had rough-going. PBTB presented its designs to ARMPC in August 1967. In September, ARMPC passed the designs to the MARTA Board which soon tentatively accepted the PBTB plan. Even before the MARTA Board approved the PBTB-ARMPC plan, however, critics pointed out possible flaws. One vocal critic was the president of the Atlanta Transit System, Robert Sommerville. Sommerville criticized the total reliance upon fixed rail, and argued instead for an integrated system capitalizing upon the flexibility provided by buses. The Chamber of Commerce's Transit Committee agreed that the Sommerville plan had attractive features, and the Chamber began a study of its feasibility. However, MARTA remained unconvinced. It rejected Sommerville's recommendations and, indirectly, the Chamber's. Nonetheless, MARTA requested Chamber endorsement of the MARTA fixed-rail plan. The Chamber questioned the complete reliance upon fixed rail, and did not endorse the MARTA plan.

This lack of support by the important and influential Chamber of Commerce led the Authority to seek outside confirmation of its plan. The firm of Alan M. Voorhees was hired to conduct a study of the rail system and to make a policy recommendation to the Board. Voorhees' services were paid, in part, out of a federal grant to MARTA. Additional funds were provided by the State Highway Department. The study was to be coordinated by the Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS).

The Voorhees report was expected in October 1968, one month before the proposed referendum. MARTA officials hoped that the report would support the PBTB plan. In turn, a favorable report might reduce uncertainty about the technical features of the proposal; and it also might convince the Chamber of Commerce to actively support the 1968 referendum.

MARTA knew, however, that it had to gain the support of other planning agencies before it could approach the referendum with confidence. The Atlanta Area Transportation Study (AATS) was one of these groups. AATS was largely a paper organization founded by the State Highway Department to create long-range traffic projections for metro-Atlanta. MARTA had worked infrequently with AATS in 1966 and 1967, as in using its traffic projections in developing the PBTB plan. But AATS had not been a party to the development of the PBTB plan.

The role of AATS in MARTA activities was to change drastically in 1968. New federal guidelines mandated that federal construction funds would not be available until the Atlanta area had adopted a "comprehensive transportation policy." AATS was a state-designated transportation policy group, and any "comprehensive" plan needed its involvement and support. Although the agency charged with that responsibility, AATS simply did not provide that intergovernmental planning.

No super agency coordinated the efforts of the several transit-related agencies operating in Atlanta, then, and MARTA recognized the seriousness of this condition. Alan Voorhees was asked by MARTA to include in the AATS study an evaluation of the region's comprehensive planning abilities in his report. That additional request -- unknown at the time to MARTA -- would significantly delay the final report. MARTA went into the election not knowing the results of either the technical study, or Voorhees' recommendations about comprehensive transit planning.

What is the bottom-line concerning this planning process? MARTA had accepted a rapid rail plan from ARMPG, which had contracted for the plan with PBTB. During the preparation of the transit prospectus, neither PBTB nor ARMPG had regularly involved local governmental officials, the Chamber of Commerce, or AATS in their deliberations. After the plan was completed, federal directives appeared that required "comprehensive, regional planning," which ARMPG, obviously, had not carried out. Therefore, the MARTA referendum proposal suffered from a major liability when it came to getting a funding commitment from the federal government. MARTA had not been able to comply with the federal requirement prior to the 1968 election, because of AATS's inability to serve adequately as a comprehensive planning agency. Indeed, MARTA was still awaiting the Voorhees report which, in fact, was not completed until April 1969. More importantly, MARTA had not received the unqualified support of other relevant transit-planning agencies.

If MARTA's failure to comprehensively plan was major, its failure to gain the support of the political leaders of the City of Atlanta, Fulton and DeKalb counties was fatal. By the time of the 1968 election, few political leaders in the metro-area were willing to "jump on the MARTA bandwagon."

This lack of support has several explanations, the most powerful of which inhere in the basic philosophy of the MARTA Board, and the attendant values reflected in the planning process. Specifically, the MARTA Board was meant to be non-political, and determinedly acted that way. Revealingly, no member of the Board could be an officeholder. This was an effort to keep the Authority "above" as well as "out of politics."

Moreover, MARTA's civic-business support also was shaken. The MARTA Board was composed of males -- predominantly white, upper-middle class -- who were to act in the best interests of the whole community. Close working relationships between the Board and the civic-business community would inevitably develop because of their similar values and outlooks, it was believed. MARTA's mode of planning hindered that, or at least cramped the fullest development of that commonality. As the planning process evolved in 1967 and early 1968, the civic-business leadership in Atlanta and DeKalb County gradually became alienated from MARTA. The planning process was essentially technical; and the MARTA Board prided itself on its ability to keep political considerations out of transit deliberations. As the PBTB engineers were preparing their plans for routes, stations and mode of transport, consequently, the Board did not seek out local officials. This behavior, rightly or

wrongly, was interpreted by many civic and elected officials as "high-handedness and isolation." With few exceptions, local officials did not feel any sense of "ownership and involvement" in the plan. Although local officials had many opportunities to request the Board to provide information, consequently, they often chose not to do so. Local officials had many reservations about the public's willingness to support a system with such a big price tag, so they chose not to get involved. Disregarding the interpretations of motives, all sides agreed after the 1968 election that MARTA erred in a big way in not pushing involvement in the planning process.

The erosion of support damaged MARTA's campaign effort. MARTA had not gained political support before the election that might have been influential in the campaign process. Its remaining prominent supporters were members of an increasingly-reluctant Chamber and civic-business community, who found themselves conducting a political campaign without the support of the political leadership in Atlanta. The lack of political support also exposed MARTA to charges that rapid transit mainly served the interests of the business community, the only visible advocates of the referendum.

In addition to the transit planning groups and the political community, the third influential party in the defeat of the referendum was the weak support of the community leadership in Atlanta. The result seemed to have a clear cause: very little neighborhood and community involvement in the development of the rapid rail design.

This generalization holds especially in the case of MARTA's failure to gain the support of the black leadership for the referendum. Black leaders had made many efforts to have an impact on the design of the rail system, but they encountered the same obstacles facing political leaders. In the year before the referendum, the Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference (ASLC) had continually warned the MARTA Board and General Manager that the black community would not support a system that failed to adequately serve poorer neighborhoods. In fact, several weeks before the election, the ASLC issued a press release urging all Atlanta blacks to vote against the bond issue. In response, MARTA's Public Information Office organized two meetings in predominantly-black neighborhoods to listen to the concerns of residents. Critics claimed that these forums were tokens, empty symbols of concern intended to camouflage the reality that engineering and financial plans were set. In any case,

Atlanta blacks overwhelmingly rejected the referendum.

These details of MARTA's post-election assessment revealed several important shortcomings in its transit planning. Certainly, the impression existed among MARTA's relevant publics that the Authority had operated secretly and avoided public input. The mandate received by PBTB from both MARTA and ARMPAC contributed to that image. The "no-involvement" philosophy precluded public and elected officials and civic leaders from actively participating in the design of the system. The final system also neglected significant realities of the politics of Atlanta in 1968, primary among them being the rapid dissolution of the old white leadership and the emergence of a new black leadership with burgeoning authority and influence. In addition, the evaluation highlighted the lack of intergovernmental coordination in the preparation of the rapid rail design. This failure was critical in the inability of MARTA to secure federal commitments for engineering and construction, even if the 1968 referendum had passed. The other important learning from the assessment of the electoral failure related to the image of the Board. The Board's carefully-developed image -- detached, aloof and non-political -- did not generate positive responses from ordinary citizens. An awareness was evident in the post-election evaluations that the composition of the Board should begin to reflect the political and social realities of the region. Finally, the post-mortem indicated that a viable, credible public advisory system was essential. Each of these concerns would compel MARTA to make some significant changes in its decision-making style.

Financial Reappraisal: Who Pays and How?

The failure to capture the unqualified support of elected officials, transit experts, and black leaders no doubt influenced voters, but opponents of the referendum focused on the financial aspects of the 1968 plan. Three points stood out. First, the reliance on the property tax to pay the local governments' debt obligations was critical. Second, the failure of MARTA to have a definite financial commitment from the federal government for its share of the project attracted much adverse publicity. Third, the financial plan of the system was very complex and not easily understood by the electorate. The opponents did not focus upon those complex issues, dwelling instead on the more emotional issue of heavy property taxes.

A clearer understanding of these campaign charges can be provided by brief discussion of

the MARTA system. Several financial issues were identified: federal commitment; state involvement; apportioning of local government debt; bond type; source of local government revenue for debt retirement; and total system cost. Each aspect was evaluated by MARTA to determine if the 1968 arrangements would need to be changed to insure future success at the polls.

In mid-1968 MARTA transit planners did not have any definite commitment from the U.S. Department of Transportation for federal funds. Although the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964 authorized the DOT to pay up to 66 per cent of the cost of new mass transit facilities, the Atlanta area was not guaranteed any specific amount of federal dollars. Moreover, the failure by ARMPAC and MARTA to provide evidence that their transit plan met the criteria of "comprehensive, regional planning" did not place them in a favorable position. The inability in the campaign to show specific dollar contributions from the federal government worked against MARTA, according to post-election analyses. MARTA resorted to a conservative guess that the federal share of the project would approximate 40 per cent.

The state's contribution, however, was well established. The state had passed a constitutional amendment in 1965 allowing the legislature to pay up to 10 per cent of new mass transit projects. MARTA expected the full amount from the state.

The financial prospectus thus provided that local governments would pay approximately one-half the total costs. The original transit plan called for a system to be built in Atlanta and five metro counties. In June 1965, a referendum to participate in MARTA passed in four of these five counties. Two of the four counties, Clayton and Gwinnett, were subsequently dropped out of the plan. Atlanta and the counties of Fulton and DeKalb were the remaining three jurisdictions voting in the 1968 referendum. The local government share of the system's cost -- \$377 million -- would be apportioned between the City and the two counties.

How were the costs to be allocated? MARTA planners proposed to the local governments that the costs be related to benefits. Factors proposed to the participants included: intensity of system use; capacity to pay; economic benefit; and amount of system located in each jurisdiction. Each local jurisdiction would contract separately with MARTA for a definite sum of money that would be paid to the

Authority, following a detailed schedule of payments over the several decades of indebtedness. Most local leaders felt that this openness of the MARTA plan was a positive feature. Local governments would determine the manner in which they would pay their indebtedness.

MARTA also had to decide about the type of bond to be issued. Two alternatives were available. The participating local governments, by law, could issue general obligation bonds in their own names to meet MARTA obligations. Another alternative would be that local jurisdictions would contract to pay the principal, interest and charges on bonds that MARTA would issue. Each of the two proposals had advantages and drawbacks, which need not be detailed here. The agreement reached by the Authority with the local governments provided that MARTA issue bonds on the strength of the local government's contracts to pay a certain sum of money each year.

These funding arrangements hung by a very delicate thread, for Georgia law was very restrictive as to revenue sources available to cities and counties. Proposals for local-option sales taxes had been defeated in the 1968 legislature, for example. Many elected officials were concerned, therefore, that the only monies to meet bond obligations would come from ad-valorem or property taxes. The reliance upon the property tax was a major campaign issue, and important in the defeat of the 1968 referendum. MARTA officials concluded that alternative sources of local government taxes would have to be made available.

Although the total system cost was included on the 1968 ballot, the referendum was not a bond referendum in the strict sense. Instead, the passage of the referendum would constitute an approval of the contractual arrangements between the local governments and MARTA. The ballot showed the total price of the bond issue: principal, interest, and charges. Although the principal amounted to \$377,600,000, the total contractual obligation was \$933 million. MARTA officials applauded this openness because it indicated the true obligation of the participating governments. Critics of the referendum pointed to this high cost, and post-election commentaries seemed to indicate that the high price-tag influenced voters.

MARTA's financial critique surfaced several major concerns, but two were especially central. The reliance upon the property tax was viewed by most supporters as the major weakness of the financial plan, followed closely by the unknown federal dollar-commitment. Other issues were of

lesser importance. Local governmental officials expressed some discontent with the apportioning of costs; and some difficulties developed in negotiating the four components of the formula. These disagreements delayed the signing of contracts until October 5, the last date for MARTA to get its referendum on the ballot.

The lessons were well-learned in the 1968 electoral loss. MARTA sought to secure legislation in the Georgia General Assembly which would provide funding alternatives for Atlanta and the participating counties, given widespread concern about reliance on the property tax. In addition, a definite federal promise for funding of the new system was seen as necessary for a successful future referendum.

Campaign Strategy in Review

In addition to concerns about the transit planning process and the financial plan, the shortness of the 1968 campaign period was criticized. The failure of the referendum surely indicated that the political campaign had not educated voters, with MARTA's own public information program being especially culpable. That is, no wonder that a three-week campaign failed to accomplish what MARTA had not been able to do in two years.

A review of MARTA's public information efforts provides useful perspective on the 1968 election. MARTA in-house discussions in late 1968 centered upon five campaign components: MARTA's public information (PI) program; the political campaign; the length of the campaign; group opposition; and leadership support. MARTA had acknowledged the importance of public information as an educational tool in 1966 when it established an office of Public Information, whose activities centered around publishing a newsletter, "Rapid Transit Progress." The newsletter was originally mailed to local chambers of commerce, businessmen, local clubs, corporations and elected officials. At the height of its mailing -- the week prior to the referendum -- the circulation was 15,000 copies. The lack of mass-mailing hindered educational efforts. Post-referendum discussions also pointed out the biases in the mailing lists. Almost no leaders in the black community received the publication.

PI also provided a speaker's bureau for organizations who wanted to learn more about MARTA and rapid transit in Atlanta, but that effort limped in a crucial particular. According to MARTA figures, over

1,000 speeches were delivered to groups in the two-year period preceding the election. A review of the groups requesting the speakers showed that MARTA had not provided much breadth to its speakers' program. Most of the speeches were to civic clubs in the region's white communities, and only at the very end of the political campaign did PI conduct public forums in the black communities of Atlanta.

Other MARTA PI efforts also had awkward features even as they succeeded. The Authority provided an exhibit at the Southeastern Fair in Atlanta in 1968. A rapid transit car was on display, and MARTA estimated that over a half-million people walked through it. Unfortunately, the car was not the type that MARTA proposed using in its own system. The point was brought out several times in the campaign. Similarly, MARTA sponsored a trip by interested civic leaders to Toronto and Montreal to view rapid transit systems. Each participant paid his own way, and about ninety businessmen took advantage of the opportunity. Very few black leaders were included on this trip, however, a point raised by the black leadership during the campaign.

Timing also limited the impact of other PI efforts. As part of MARTA's legal responsibility under the charter, public hearings had to be conducted by the PI Office before the referendum. Fourteen hearings were conducted in the three jurisdictions, with a total attendance of 325. Two were held in the black communities, and provided the opportunity for black residents to voice criticisms about the MARTA planning process, which they claimed excluded their inputs. In principle, these forums were to have been held to solicit public inputs into the transit plan. The lateness of the hearings precluded this, and MARTA was criticized for not taking citizen inputs seriously.

In general, MARTA before the election felt that its public information program was successful. Many brochures had been distributed and speeches delivered outlining "what MARTA intended to do" in the region. MARTA officials had not grasped the fact that local civic and political leaders expected a different approach, one that emphasized involvement.

MARTA's educational efforts should be distinguished from the actual political campaign itself. MARTA was forbidden by state law to spend any money on the campaign, so the supporters of the referendum organized a "Committee for Rapid Transit Now." This Committee solicited \$100,000 from downtown retailers and merchants for public relations and media advertising, but its efforts were hampered by the shortness of the campaign period -- three weeks.

The short campaign period was due to two factors. First, Richard Rich, the Board Chairman, delayed officially requesting ballot space until the Board had recomputed the entire system cost to include an estimated higher inflation rate. The Board raised the estimated inflation rate -- from 3 to 7 per cent -- so as to provide voters with the best-available information. This caution was prompted by BART's experience in San Francisco, which grossly underestimated total system cost.

Second, major delay resulted from the consequent need to renegotiate the contracts with each participating local government. The recomputation for increased inflation raised the costs of the system by almost \$125 million. The cooperating local governments had to approve the new payment schedules before the MARTA Board could authorize the election. These negotiations took longer than expected.

The decision to go ahead with the election, given the short campaign period, was debated by the Board. Several Board members wanted to wait until after the November general elections, and have a special election. The special election, it was thought, would focus public attention on rapid transit, and would allow a longer educational period. Other Board members disagreed. They felt that a longer campaign period and a special election would only give MARTA opponents more time to organize. Advocates of placing the issue on the November 1968 ballot also argued that the increased turnout due to the presidential election would be in MARTA's favor. MARTA was unaware at that time that their issue would be placed last on the ballot containing 118 other measures. That placement resulted because the official filing of the referendum was not received by the Georgia Secretary of State until the last filing day.

The abbreviated campaign was managed by two firms -- Helen Bullard and Associates, and Gerald Rafshoon and Associates. Bullard and Associates were hired by "Rapid Transit Now" to manage the overall campaign, while Rafshoon developed the media advertising segment of the campaign. Bullard's major activities involved opening a campaign headquarters in downtown Atlanta and distributing rapid transit literature, including the intendedly-wide distribution of a public educational brochure answering many questions about MARTA. An estimated 200,000 copies were prepared, but because of the shortened campaign these materials were not distributed in any systematic fashion. Critics alleged that most of the brochures were left on street corners in Atlanta and Decatur.

Rafshoon was to conduct the media campaign. Rafshoon's concept -- which "Rapid Transit Now" approved -- sought to avoid any discussion of "technical issues," such as routes, cost, technology. His perspective was that "rapid transit was packageable, like most products." The media campaign emphasized the attractive and convenient nature of the rapid rail cars.

Overall, the campaign may be best characterized as having a take-it-or-leave-it theme. For example, both Bullard and Rafshoon argued against the Board detailing routes and station locations. The Board also was discouraged from considering some re-routing to black areas after criticism of the project by black leaders. The MARTA staff and Board generally agreed with the campaign experts, resisting any public efforts to modify the system. This resistance probably enhanced the image of the MARTA Board as being unresponsive to local community concerns.

Although restricted from engaging in the campaign, as such, MARTA was involved. MARTA's PI office was searching for appropriate ways "to sell the package." MARTA was urged by Bullard and Rafshoon to take all available opportunities for free media exposure, which would not violate state law. Particularly important to Rafshoon was getting MARTA on local television. Free air time was offered to MARTA by local radio-TV stations, and it was accepted. Opponents then demanded equal and free time under FCC regulations, and they received immense publicity at no cost. The post-election concluded that MARTA's acceptance of free time was a serious mistake.

Observers of the campaign defeat did not uniformly conclude that its brevity contributed to the loss. Some observers felt that the short campaign really benefited MARTA, and that a longer campaign would only have resulted in a more severe defeat. In any case, little organized opposition to the MARTA referendum developed. Much of the opposition emanated from one man -- Atlanta Alderman Everett Millican -- and one group -- the Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference, a black organization. Millican spent less than \$9,000 in newspaper advertisements arguing against the MARTA plan. His opposition emphasized: the failure to incorporate bus lines into the design; the lack of federal commitment; and the lack of systematic planning, especially the tardy Voorhees Report. Unfortunately for MARTA, its campaign did not answer these challenges.

Another source of opposition was The Metropolitan Atlanta Summit Leadership Congress, an offshoot of an important black organization -- the Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference, or ASLC. The black leadership in

Atlanta -- and especially Jesse Hill, Jr. -- had been opposed to MARTA since late summer. Hill and others claimed that the planning process did not incorporate any black concerns, and that the system was designed for the benefit of the downtown merchants, as well as affluent suburbanites. The neglect of a major bus component in MARTA's plans was seen as deliberate neglect of blacks, who would be more dependent on buses even as whites might profit more from the rail component. Hill also pointed out to MARTA staff after the campaign that it was only in the last week prior to the election that a forum was even held in a black community.

Other issues were also important to the black community -- paramountly, black employment in MARTA, and black representation on the MARTA Board. The lack of both got much attention. Only one Board member was black. And only in the two-week period prior to the election did MARTA hire a black secretary and community relations representative. After the defeat, both of these staff members were dismissed by the Board because of a shortage of funds.

MARTA During the Transition: 1969-1971

In the interval between the 1968 and 1971 referenda, MARTA struggled to demonstrably reject the earlier assumption that rapid transit would automatically gain voter approval because of its intrinsic value. Three changes reflect major shifts in MARTA emphases and directions. First, the Authority sought to formally and informally involve citizens and political leaders in the transit planning process. Second, an attractive short-range transportation improvement program evolved. Third, MARTA developed a new approach to financing the debt obligations of participating local governments.

Public Involvement in MARTA Planning

MARTA activities in the two post-election years focused on improving relationships with citizen organizations and public officials, and especially by formalizing public involvement. During the 1967-1968 planning period citizen input was informal and disparate. Prior to a second campaign effort, citizen input was to occur in two ways: through the creation of a formal body, Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC); and the use of meetings or hearings by MARTA Community Relations staff with neighborhood groups.

MARTA's intentions were motivated by the 1968 defeat as well as by federal guidelines which required comprehensive planning with

substantial public input into transit plans, but events in 1969 and 1970 were not favorable to major progress. In early January 1969, for example, Richard Rich recommended to AATS that it establish a citizens advisory body that would assist in area-wide planning. This recommendation was not quickly acted upon. The establishment of CTAC was not to occur until the end of the next year, 1970. Moreover, little formal or informal citizen involvement, public information or community relations activities got launched during 1969. Why? The MARTA operating budget had been slashed after the 1968 defeat to slightly over \$125,000, and community involvement in planning was difficult for a small staff of five to achieve. Much of the year was devoted to evaluating technical studies, such as the Voorhees Report. Many of these evaluations were funded by UMTA grants to MARTA and ARMPC. The major activity in planning was reassessing and doing engineering designs on new routes, and PBTB operated on its own in this regard.

While ineffective in finding a vehicle for citizen involvement, the Authority's attention did turn to another important arena: the area's public officials. The Authority attempted to repair its political credibility with elected officials. Political fence-mending became of prime importance to MARTA after its defeat. Soon after the election, representatives of local governments met with MARTA officials in a series of meetings, whose general tenor was reported by an observer to be "strained," with MARTA seeking the support of "disgruntled and alienated" local government officials while being limited in following-through. Some present at the sessions remarked that many of the elected officials criticized MARTA's "too little, too late" approach to involving local governments in 1968 planning decisions. In response, MARTA Board members assured these officials that some regularized pattern of involvement would be established in the future, somehow. Consider that one major focus of discussion between transit staff and local government leaders was the absence of coordination of MARTA's plans and projects with city and county plans. This coordination theme was to be repeated for the next eight or nine years, and is the subject of another case in this series, MARTA and the City of Atlanta; The Structuring of Intergovernmental Coordination. The response by the General Manager was that coordination, "while desirable, was difficult to achieve" with such a small permanent staff. Originally, the proposed budget for the year after the referendum was just over \$1 million. The Board reduced that to \$268,950 after the defeat. Even this amount was criticized by Atlanta Alderman Milton Farris, who claimed that this expenditure was wasted until the results of the Voorhees Report would be known. Facing other local government resistance, the Board further reduced the requested amount to

\$135,475. Several Board members from Fulton County thought that MARTA "ought to go into hibernation," after which "bears come out a lot stronger than before."

This lively debate between the MARTA Board and local government representatives did surface some festering issues. Roy Blount, Vice-Chairman of the Board, said that the Authority has had to "beg for everything that it has ever gotten from the local governments . . . local governments have taken no responsibility for MARTA since we were created." Another Board member, John Wilson, commented that "we /MARTA/ ought to toss this hot potato /transportation/ back to those who have to face the responsibility /the local governments./" The local governments had some concerns of their own. Fulton County Commissioner Mitchell and Atlanta Alderman Farris both argued against any use of the property tax to finance MARTA. Indeed, the property tax caused the 1968 defeat, they added. Moreover, each of the delegations also expressed disapproval of the ambiguity of the contracts underlying the last referendum. Delegates demanded that MARTA provide specific details about total financial obligations. Alderman Farris also criticized MARTA for not heeding the advice of elected officials that the 1968 campaign was too rushed to allow local officials time to study the design of the system. MARTA attendees remarked that the next referendum would be fully coordinated with area officials.

In general, the early meetings with local officials established certain expectations for future relationships. MARTA was expected to be more open and solicitous of local government concerns, to provide better coordination of transit plans with city and county plans. Local government officials -- who appointed the members of the Board of Directors -- were expected to provide support to the programs eventually worked out by MARTA. Perhaps the character of the relationship was best summed up by Roy Blount:

. . . I can't see spending a great deal more time in our transit authority meetings, however well intended, unless we can get the backing of the elected officials who have appointed us to the job.

The backing ought to be in the form of a commitment that they recognize that the MARTA Board has been established by them, and that they have every right and responsibility to tell us what is expected of us, so that when we produce they will understand that it is of their making as well as our own.

Political situations also developed during the fall of 1969 that stimulated an increased concern for better liaison between the Authority and the black community. Atlanta held municipal elections and a new coalition of voters elected Sam Massell as successor to Ivan Allen. Massell campaigned to attract black and white working-class voters. His anti-downtown campaign theme heralded an end to the white conservative/black liberal coalition that had held power in Atlanta for a considerable time. The portents did not escape local observers. Thus MARTA's former public relations firm made two specific recommendations to the Board: develop a concerted public information program aimed at the black community; and show some commitment to hiring black staff as well as to getting blacks on the Board.

The MARTA Board took several important actions following the city election and the subsequent resignation of Richard Rich from the Board. His replacement was Jesse Hill, Jr., a black insurance company president, who had been executive director of ASLC, and a major critic of the MARTA planning process in 1968. Hill's appointment was made by Atlanta's outgoing mayor, Ivan Allen, who had said after the 1968 referendum that he would appoint a black, if given the opportunity.

Moreover, new Board Chairman Rawson Haverty urged his colleagues to request increased budgetary support from local governments for the community relations and public information programs that had been cut-back in late 1968. Relatedly, the Board of Directors passed a resolution asking AATS to speed up the creation of a citizens' advisory board. This pressure was due, in part, to the fact that MARTA did not qualify for maximum federal grants for capital programs because of Atlanta's failure to establish formal citizen advisory committees and to have a regional transit plan.

MARTA also augmented its staff resources in significant ways. One issue focused on the desirability of using internal resources for public information and relations, or contracting with an outside firm to do the Authority's image-building. For several meetings, the Board debated the pros and cons of this issue, and decided to hire a Director of Public Information. The new Director would be a member of the MARTA staff, answerable to the General Manager. Under the leadership of Jesse Hill and anticipating further delays by AATS in constituting an advisory committee, the Board also examined the usefulness of hiring a fulltime Community Relations Director. This position would complement the office of Public Information, but would not get involved in writing press releases, reports, and the like. Hill conceived the role of Community Relations Director as one of establishing

working relationships with the Atlanta black community. In November 1970, Morris Dillard, a black, was hired as Director of Community Relations.

The efforts of MARTA to push AATS to appoint an advisory committee were finally successful in early June 1970. The Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) was created, with 60 members appointed by jurisdictions cooperating in the MARTA planning effort. The MARTA Board applauded this move and promised full support for the Committee. The Authority was anxious to begin working with the group to fulfill its federal requirements for citizen input, but Mayor Massell was reluctant to fill the 23 positions allocated to the City.

Massell's resistance raised potential problems for MARTA's schedule. Board Chairman Haverty spoke to Mayor Massell several times in late 1970 to push the appointment process along. Haverty was motivated by the Board's concern that the referendum was less than one year away, and the plan was already in advanced stages. Citizen input was critical at the earliest moment to give MARTA a comfortable lead on the desired three-month campaign. Massell resisted these pressures. His main argument: he wanted to select individuals who would not act as rubber stamps for all MARTA actions. Additionally, Massell was reported to have had some reservations about MARTA's commitment to citizen participation. Nonetheless, by the end of November the Mayor made his appointments.

CTAC quickly encountered several organizational problems which diluted its effectiveness. The advisory committee held its first organizational meeting on December 5, 1970, but it was not able to elect officers until the end of January 1971 because a quorum of appointees did not attend the first meeting. Even on the date in January when officers were elected, only 21 of 60 members were present but the rules had been waived.

MARTA's schedule for transit planning also hindered the effectiveness of CTAC, and provided no real opportunity for its input into the financial plan. MARTA and local government representatives had been negotiating for months over alternatives to the property tax. Finally, agreement was reached. MARTA resolved the critical issue of local governmental financing in a meeting with area elected officials on January 7, 1971. This was a bare two weeks before CTAC would elect officers. MARTA sought the commitment of local leaders to insure the introduction and passage of needed legislation in the session beginning that week. That schedule, however, all-but-precluded CTAC review.

The design process agreed to by MARTA and PBTB also inadvertently diminished CTAC's involvement. MARTA had arranged with ARMP and PBTB that the final plan for the system would be voted upon by the Board at its August 1971 meeting. That meant the preliminary design had to be presented to the Board at its June meeting to allow modifications in the design. Unfortunately for CTAC, MARTA staff were not able to brief the committee until the end of April on any of the major characteristics of the PBTB proposal.

Members of CTAC were angered by what appeared to them to be duplicity on the part of the Authority. One member commented to the press that MARTA was no more interested in citizen opinions now than it was in 1968. MARTA answered this charge, and shifted the blame by suggesting the CTAC would have had much longer to review designs if Mayor Massell had appointed the committee at the earliest opportunity. Massell did not respond to this MARTA indictment.

Other efforts by the Authority, however, did successfully involve community groups in the planning process. The Authority's office of Community Relations held a series of 13 public forums in May 1971. This provided an opportunity for citizens to offer suggestions for changes in preliminary designs, and the sessions were attended by an average of 45 to 50 residents. MARTA's concern for black input was evident in that 4 of the 13 forums were held in black neighborhoods.

However well-intentioned, these public forums suffered from the same handicap as CTAC. Advanced engineering designs had to be provided to the Board by the first of June. Significant changes suggested by citizens could not be incorporated into the PBTB plans in such a short time. Critics of MARTA wondered why the public review stage was so short, and why the planning process could not have allowed for more give-and-take between citizens and planners. Again, the Authority showed the record of its interest in citizen input stretching back to Rich's recommendation in January 1969. According to MARTA spokesmen, it was the failure of other responsible agencies to establish citizen advisory committees quickly that was at fault.

The Short-Term Improvements Program

A major flaw in MARTA's 1968 position was the massive fact that its program, even if approved, would take many years to implement. The Authority's plan did call for a rapid rail system with feeder buses, but no proposals were offered which improved rapid transit in the immediate future. Voters may have been reluctant to pay increased property taxes to

support a system that would not become operational for seven years, at best. MARTA's second plan sought to blunt these concerns with a short-term program that would show early results.

Consistent with the need for quick improvements in public transit, MARTA planned to acquire the Atlanta Transit System (ATS). For a complete discussion of this acquisition process, read another case in this series, MARTA Acquires the Atlanta Transit System: Who Assimilated Whom, and to What Degree? MARTA then applied to UMTA for \$30 million to finance a \$45 million short-term improvement program utilizing ATS as the base. MARTA's short-range improvements would approximately double the capacity of the bus system. Table 1 highlights the main areas of improvement.

The proposed improvements were many, each attempting to create new ridership for the bus system. A list of service changes documents the extensiveness of short-term improvements:

1. Eight new cross-town routes designed to provide direct and faster service between major points in the metro area;
2. Eight new radial routes and seven radial route extensions designed to provide bus service to communities not served by ATS;
3. Changes and revisions to 22 existing bus routes aimed at improving travel times;
4. Six new rush-hour express services designed to provide fast transit for downtown commuters;
5. Upgrading service on 33 existing routes increasing service frequency;
6. Four hundred ninety new air conditioned buses which will increase the fleet to 866;
7. One hundred and four passenger shelters at 80 major boarding areas;
8. Improvement of transit information services in the form of improved telephone information service, a redesigned schedule format, system maps and bus stop signs;
9. A park-and-ride program directed toward accommodating rapid transit riders;

10. Enhanced mobility in the black neighborhood areas of Model Cities, Northwest Perry and Dixie Hill.

The decision concerning a finance scheme was invariable related to the short-run improvements program recommended by the Authority. For example, several Atlanta

TABLE 1
SHORT RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Purchase of ATS	\$12,958,100
Purchase 490 Buses	22,820,000
Other New Equipment	1,415,000
104 Bus Stop Shelters	260,000
Maintenance-Service Facilities	4,250,000
Park and Ride Lots	2,500,000
Professionalize Services	1,063,000
TOTAL	\$45,266,100

Several of these proposals were aimed directly at convincing black residents that the MARTA system was not downtown-oriented. These recommendations for service to the black neighborhoods resulted from a study performed for MARTA by Economic Opportunity Atlanta (EOA), and included extensive interviews with potential transit-users.

Generally, these proposals for short-range improvements were designed to draw voter attention away from the long-range, fixed-rail system. The new philosophy at MARTA proposed that the transit plan had to be politically acceptable. This acceptability, in sum, provided immediate benefits to the community in exchange for its support at the polls and cash registers.

Financing the 1971 Referendum Plan

Commencing in early 1969, numerous meetings were held by MARTA staff and Board members with local elected officials in the metro region. These formal and informal sessions eventually included 95 per cent of all the elected officials in the metro-governmental jurisdictions that would vote again on another MARTA referendum in 1971, with especial attention going to the financing of the rapid transit system. The Authority concluded from the comments of officials that there was a difference of opinion between central city and suburban representatives. Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell urged upon the group the adoption of an income tax. Spokesmen for the outlying communities believed that a sales tax increase would be acceptable. Another alternative envisioned the establishment of a rapid transit district which would tax only those areas receiving direct benefits from the system.

Leaders were willing to support the $\frac{1}{2}\%$ sales tax proposed by suburban influentials if, after a successful election, the Authority would provide free bus transportation. Mayor Sam Massell of Atlanta introduced that idea at the eleventh hour. That idea sparked considerable debate among and between the local representatives and MARTA officials, but was soon scotched when MARTA General Counsel Stell Huie noted that the Authority was authorized to carry passengers for fares, not for free. (For more background on the fare issue, see another case in this series, What's Fair About Low Fare?) Eventually, a compromise was reached, and local officials supported a $\frac{3}{4}\%$ sales tax along with a 15¢ bus fare. The length of commitment to the low fare was unsettled at that time, but eventually it became seven years.

The legal issue of getting authorization for a sales tax increase was thorny. State law was very restrictive in allowing local governments discretion in revenue choices, and research concluded that enabling legislation was required. Approval was obtained from all the local governments that they would support the proposed legislation when the bills were introduced in the General Assembly.

The introduction of the needed enabling state legislation was delayed until the 1971 session of the Georgia legislature, for an obvious reason. Governor Lester Maddox was an opponent of MARTA, and had successfully vetoed much MARTA-related legislation in 1968 and 1969. He was also a vocal opponent of the 1971 referendum and urged its defeat. Fortunately for the Authority, Maddox could not succeed himself as Governor after 1970,

although he did successfully run for the office of Lieutenant Governor. And Maddox's successor -- Jimmy Carter -- had committed to support MARTA.

Even with Carter's support, the legislative dynamics which eventually yielded a sales tax were both complex and chancy. Three major pieces of legislation were introduced, in fact. Stripped of details, the final legislative package had two significant new features. First, although the state had agreed in the original MARTA Act to pay 10 per cent of the total cost of the system, Governor Carter -- behind-the-scenes and successfully -- argued for a fundamental change in that particular. Carter believed that a sales tax collected in the MARTA region constituted a tax with a state-wide basis, i.e., the sales taxes would come from purchases there by Georgians from across the state, for whom Atlanta was a commercial and entertainment magnet. MARTA was eager for the support of Carter and accepted the loss of the state commitment. The final financial plan did not include any direct state contributions to the Authority, therefore, but Carter did suggest that the tax be increased to 1% to compensate for the loss of the state contribution. HB 220, as amended, reflected Carter's views.

Second, ex-Governor Lester Maddox -- serving as the newly-elected Lieutenant Governor and thus, ex officio, as President of the Georgia Senate -- again impacted on MARTA. Maddox held the entire MARTA legislative package as a hostage in committee, until HB 220 was amended in two significant ways. Thus the 1% sales tax was limited to 10 years, after which time it would be reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ %; and the amendment also required that after 10 years fare-box receipts would support one-half of the operating costs of the system, with the obvious goal of using much of the sales tax for capital investments in the system.

Even though changed in these two fundamental ways, the MARTA legislation had benefitted from the unified support of local officials, which augured well for the referendum. But Spring 1971 had yet to see any public commitment by the federal government to finance the new MARTA plan. Opponents in 1968 pointed, with success, to the Authority's lack of federal support for capital programs. However, as part of its short-term improvements program MARTA applied for an emergency grant from UMTA, in the amount of \$30 million. This would finance two-thirds of the short-range improvements program planned by the Authority. The financial plan offered to the voters assumed this level of federal support. In fact, the federal commitment was announced just four days before the referendum in November 1971.

The Campaign: Some General Perspectives

It was obvious to those charged with conducting the campaign in 1971 that substantial changes in philosophy were needed. Two changes were paramount: a committee managing the campaign not identified with the "downtown power structure" needed to be established, and an educational campaign acquainting area voters with the pros and cons of rapid transit would be vital.

Committee for Sensible Rapid Transit

The lessons of 1968 were well-learned by MARTA. The political campaign of 1971 was conducted by the Committee for Sensible Rapid Transit. This was a politically active group of ten volunteers organized "away from MARTA," but in fact selected by the MARTA Board. Representation from both races was evident: two co-chairmen were selected, one black and one white. The group was conceived as a working group, rather than the group of prominent names associated with 1968's Rapid Transit Now. Each of the eight other members of the Committee were chosen because of their political credibility in the various communities of Atlanta.

An aggressive political campaign also required a full-time director. An experienced, campaign executive was loaned from General Electric and served throughout the campaign period with two paid secretaries. The salaries of these three full-time people were paid out of general campaign funds collected by a blue-ribbon task force of community leaders.

The major concerns of the 1971 Committee initially focused on fund-raising -- a problem that was less a matter of total amount than of sub-fund availability for specific purposes. Solicitations were of two types, that is. The first was for use by MARTA in its public educational program. The second was for the Committee to use for political campaign purposes. The contributions to MARTA were tax deductible, but they could be used only for educational purposes, not political ones. Consequently, a good deal of printed matter, billboard and bus advertising, bumper stickers and lapel buttons were designed to be of strictly educational nature, in the sense that the words "Vote For" were not included in the messages. The far-smaller cache contributed to the Committee was spent to pay for radio and TV ads, for renting the main campaign office, and for the salaries of the permanent staff.

In addition, the Committee developed a large Speaker's Bureau. A Director was

appointed, again loaned by an Atlanta area firm, whose major responsibility involved training numerous volunteers. Over 100 volunteers were drawn from a variety of metro clubs and organizations. The speaking engagements were carefully monitored by the Director, and the material was packaged to represent the official position of both MARTA and the Committee. The post-referendum review of the 1971 campaign indicated that the Speaker's Bureau was very effective in dispelling the image that the Authority was out of touch with civic and community organizations, or that the rapid transit plan was essentially the product of downtown interests.

The Committee staff also monitored referendum public relations. An orderly, controlled flow of information to the media and the public was essential to the campaign. Three rules were adopted by the Committee that reflected its concern with its image. First, the Committee appointed a full-time press secretary who was the only person authorized to issue press releases. This curtailed the practice of off-the-cuff statements to the media that could have damaged the campaign. Second, the Committee appointed a firm -- Wright, Jackson, Williams, Brown, and Stephens -- to serve as public relations advisors in the black communities. They worked with Rafshoon and Associates as consultants. Third, the Committee limited the number of people authorized to make public appearances on its behalf. The Executive Director and the Co-chairmen were the three individuals chosen. MARTA's legal counsel, Stell Huie, was chosen to answer questions on a day-to-day basis for MARTA, especially questions that came from the press. These rules adopted by the Committee tightened the flow of reliable, accurate information to the media. These arrangements reduced the number of contradictory press releases and public statements, and sought to insure that the educational phase of the campaign had a consistent and coherent impact on the voter.

In general, then, the Committee for Sensible Rapid Transit provided the referendum campaign with a group of politically-conscious volunteers. It provided a necessary on-going link between MARTA and the campaign consultants. The presence of the Committee indicated to Atlantans that rapid transit was a bi-partisan, bi-racial, progressive change that needed voter support.

Educating and Motivating Voters

The role of the Committee in educating and motivating provides useful perspective on its operations. The duration of the political campaign was three months, August to November, and its opening educational period lasted approximately two months. Its primary thrust

was to create an understanding on the electorate's part of the need for rapid transit. Subsequently, the campaign's advertising segment would motivate the voters to support the referendum. This second segment would comprise the six weeks immediately prior to the election.

The educational portion commenced with a June 30 airing on all Atlanta TV stations of a thirty-minute show entitled "Rapid Transit: Who Needs It?" The film was produced to highlight MARTA's transit system -- its use of buses and trains. An explanation of the financial plan was also included. This thirty-minute production was divided in five portions:

- o Rapid Transit: Who Needs It?
- o Rapid Transit: How Does It Work?
- o Rapid Transit: Who Does It Serve?
- o Rapid Transit: Who Pays For It?
- o Rapid Transit: Who Rides It?

One short film was shown seven times each week at 11 PM throughout the five-week period. Initial responses to the film were satisfying to the Authority and to the Committee.

A Speaker's Bureau also carried the "Message of MARTA" to the public. The Speaker's Bureau enlisted the support of 100 individuals who underwent training for 10 days on all aspects of rapid transit in Atlanta. Recruits were carefully drawn from community organizations in both the black and white community. Hundreds of speeches were made by these volunteers to groups much wider in variety than those addressed during the 1968 campaign.

Integrated with the educational program was an advertising campaign -- using radio, television, newspapers, bus cards, billboards, and direct mailings. The advertising phase adhered to the established strategy that presented rapid transit in a straight-forward, truthful and factual manner. Most of the commercials were developed from footage drawn from the film "Rapid Transit: Who Needs It?"

Coupled with the showing of the films, a survey of 700 potential voters was conducted to test the usefulness of the films in encouraging voters to support the referendum. The survey turned up some results disturbing to the Authority. Again, apathy and disinterest were identified as major elements to be attacked in the campaign. But this would be left to the advertising, mass media element in the campaign.

The September survey of probable voters highlighted that the likely supporters of the referendum would be upper- and middle-class whites and blacks, and also that MARTA's supporters would have low turn-out rates. The media programs focused upon the advantages of the rapid transit system for the black community, getting to jobs and to the downtown. The upper- and middle-class white approach drew attention to the economic benefits derived from the system. The thrust of advertising sought to motivate both groups to vote in November.

A glimpse at the campaign budget for this referendum implies the importance of educational and motivational programs. Rafshoon and Associates projected a budget of \$288,500 for the three-month campaign. The media costs of the educational phase were nearly \$18,000; the media costs of the advertising phase were \$170,000. Production of all these media efforts required \$70,000. The remainder of the money was spent on a survey (\$22,000), and agency compensation (\$10,000). No estimates are available for volunteer efforts, but a major portion of the educational phase was implemented by the Speaker's Bureau.

The educational and advertising phases of the campaign were also directed at off-setting possible opposition to the plan. The 1968 campaign was noteworthy in that MARTA and its campaign group, Rapid Transit Now, did not attempt to challenge the minimum opposition that developed. The campaign of 1971 was meant to be aggressively responsive to whatever arguments might evolve.

The 1971 opposition never did present a feasible alternative to the MARTA plan, and their most effective arguments were racial and economic in nature. At base, the opposition argued that rapid transit would only distribute lower-income blacks throughout the metro area. Oppositely, black opponents claimed that the system was a "white man's subway." Some observers felt after the election that these two conflicting viewpoints tended to offset each other in the black and white communities. Polls also showed that the opposition may have peaked too soon. The campaign strategy allowed sufficient time for the Committee to respond to most of the attacks with its speakers and mass media.

Referendum Results: Truth
in Balloting

The vote on the rapid transit special election was held on November 9, 1971, and success for MARTA required that at least Fulton (Atlanta) and DeKalb counties had to approve. Success it was, but just barely, as the referendum results show:

	For	Against	Per Cent
Clayton County	3,300	11,117	23.1
Gwinnett County	2,500	9,506	20.8
DeKalb County	39,565	36,207	52.5
Fulton County	53,793	53,322	50.2

All counties that rejected the plan were eliminated from the project, but they retained representation on the MARTA Board.

Post-referendum analyses turned to an appraisal of the victory. Several factors were thought to be important in the close success. Perhaps the best review was provided to the MARTA Board in a study by an executive close to the campaign. The report is quoted below.

1. Traffic - The fact of Atlanta's mind-boggling daily traffic crush cannot be disputed. Every freeway, perimeter highway and major artery suffers from serious traffic congestion for periods of from three to seven hours each working day. The prospect of some relief in traffic congestion, the thought that "there must be a better way," had much to do with the election outcome.
2. Pollution - People today are concerned about the environment. Their concern is reflected in their close scrutiny of projects (such as I-485) which ignore the environment in their implementation. Because transit offered a way to relieve concentrations of auto-originated pollutants in the downtown area and a way to move the rapidly increasing numbers of rush-hour commuters without doubling the size of the freeway network, people supported transit.
3. Black Community - Blacks were practically ignored as a political force in 1968. They responded by voting as a block against rapid transit. They were included in planning, educational and advertising efforts in 1971. They responded by voting like any other average voter group -- healthy percentages were for and against the issue.
4. Community Self-Image - Atlantans surprised themselves by voting against rapid transit in 1968. In a city known for its pro-

gressive, forward and upward direction, people did not like the image of the two-time loser. This self-image may have been a positive factor in the referendum outcome.

5. The Winning Image - Although the opposition was quite vocal in the month before the campaign, transit proponents succeeded in achieving a "winning-image" for their candidate. This was achieved by obtaining the outright endorsement of most of the influential political, civic, fraternal, and religious leaders and organizations in the metro area (not including Clayton and Gwinnett Counties) and by emphasizing transit's positive effects on the city.
6. The Bus Improvement Plan - Transit campaign officials realized the difficulty of voting for something nine years away. They therefore decided to push the immediacy of the bus improvement program as part of the overall program. They did so with such success that later polls showed a need to de-emphasize the bus aspects of the campaign. The availability of frequent bus service with new equipment at low fares was a particularly important factor in securing the votes of the present-day bus rider.
7. The Low Fare - In the more affluent areas of the community the low fare was looked upon as a giveaway to the black community and a hindrance to successful financial operation of the system. It probably cost MARTA many votes in those areas. But the low fare was a big factor in securing the vote in the less affluent, bus-riding areas of the community. The two effects thus tended to offset each other.

In general, the favorable results of the 1971 referendum showed that the lessons learned from the 1968 defeat could be put to good use. To repeat the quotation from Richard Rich, "in politics neither defeat nor victory is permanent."