



A Brief History of Public Transit in Atlanta

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

marta 

Andrew McBurney,
Senior Service Planner

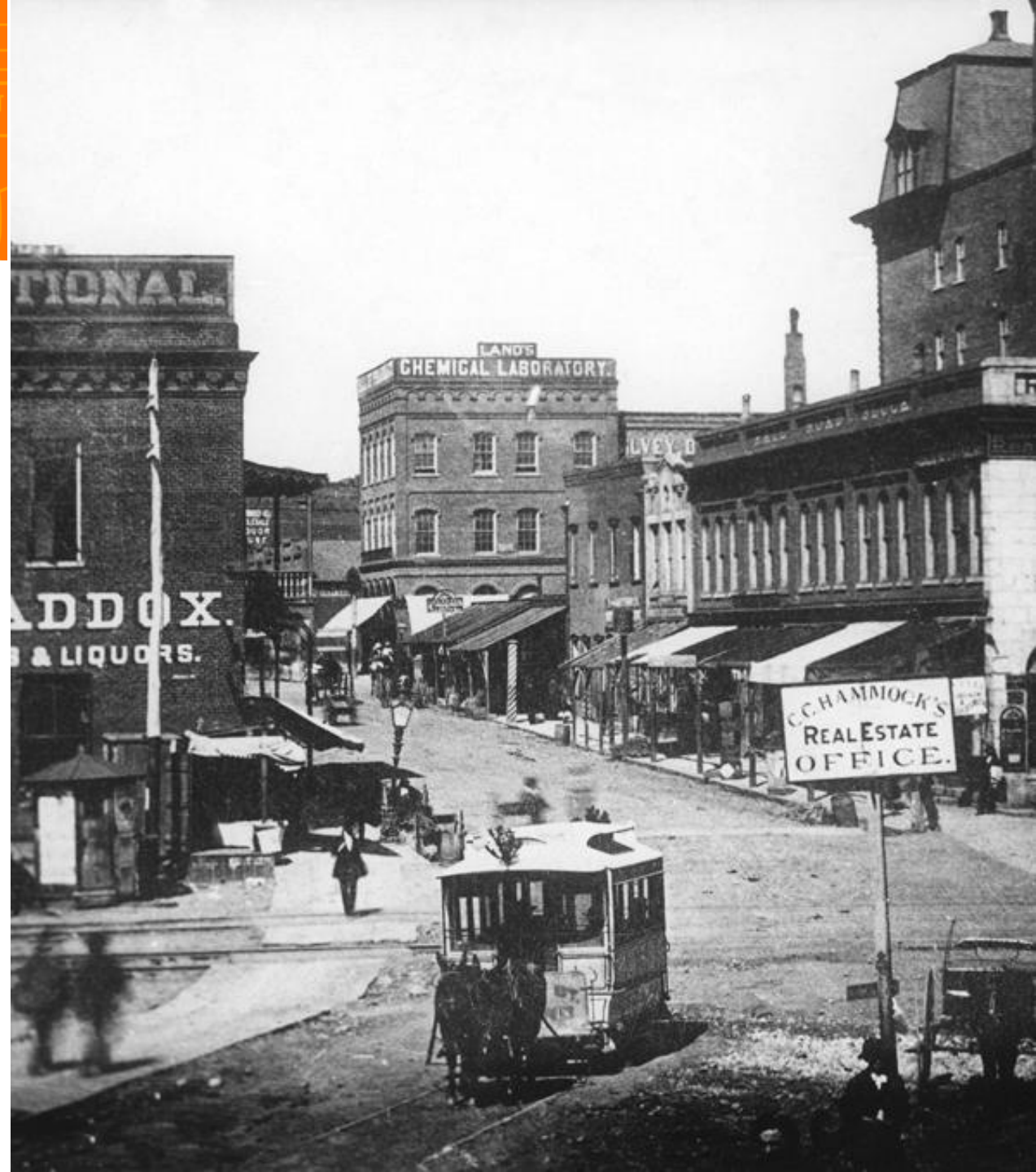


1871

Street railway service begins.



1871



Map Credit: S. Dawn Haynie, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2012

1870s-1890s

Expansion, competition, and consolidation follow.

1894



1900s-1940s

The system unifies under Georgia Power's ownership.



1924



Map Credit: S. Dawn Haynie, Georgia Institute of Technology, 2012



1920s-1930s

New technologies bring the transit system into a multimodal era.

- › Georgia Power's first motor buses entered service in 1925
- › Trolley coaches ("trackless trolleys") entered use in 1937



Interurban railways

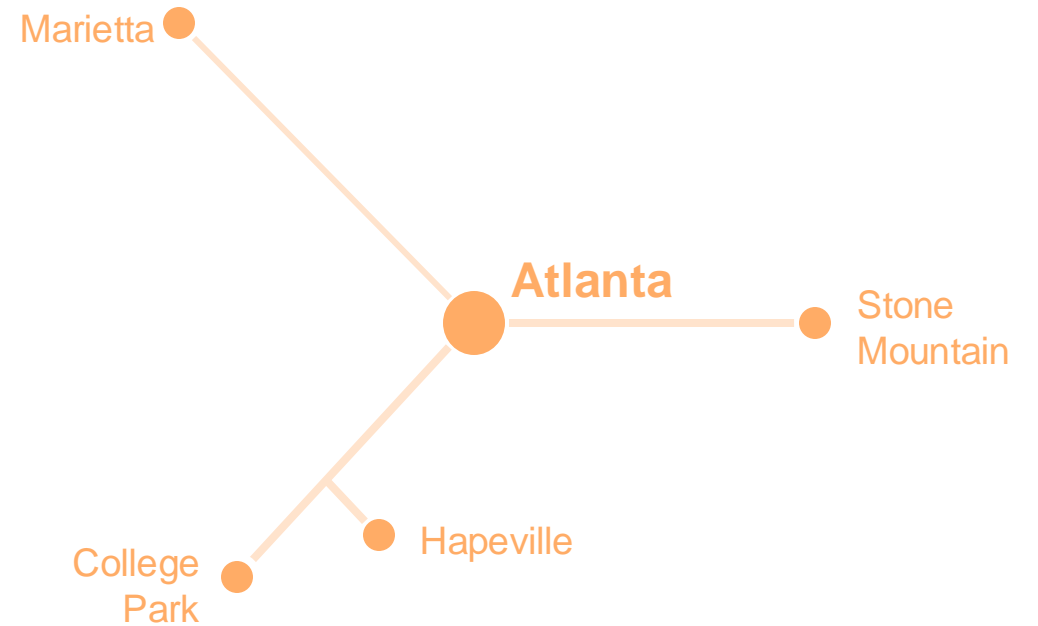
extended the system's reach to neighboring cities.

- › College Park/Hapeville
- › Marietta
- › Stone Mountain



Co 609 at Stone Mountain, GA, Aug 1947, by Tony Kozla

Don



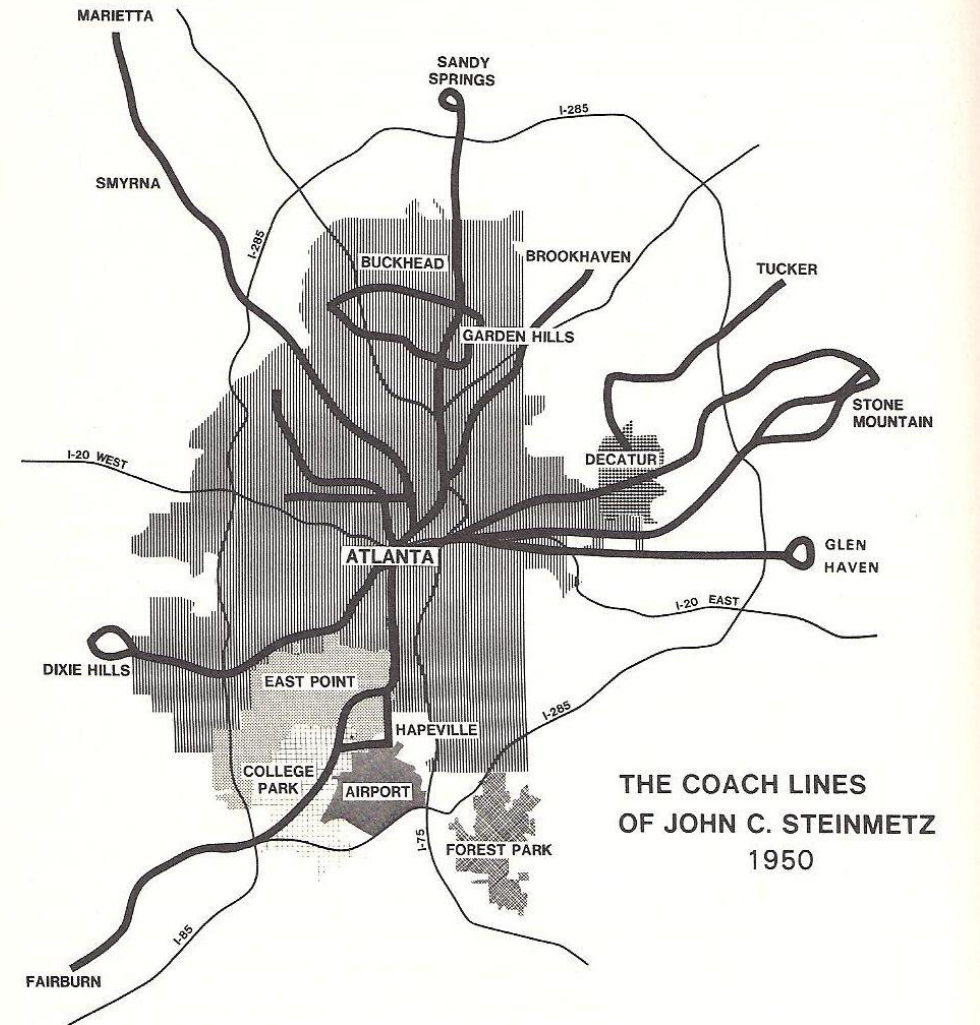
A Stone Mountain interurban car boards passengers at a shelter.

The end of streetcars

began in 1936. It was prolonged by World War II, but the last car ran in 1949.



Atlanta Transit takes over
in 1950 and grows the trolley
coach and motor bus network.



- › Suburban services are purchased in 1951.

Desegregation begins
in 1957 with a court case,
integrating in 1959. The first Black
operators are hired in 1962.



**Rapid transit
comes into
focus in the
1950s and
1960s.**

*...and MARTA is
born.*



A push for rapid transit
produces a wave of plans by
several entities.

- › **1950** – Up Ahead (MPC)
- › **1954** – Now for Tomorrow (MPC)
- › **1960** – Rapid Atlanta (ATS)
- › **1961** – Comprehensive Plan:
Rapid Transit (MPC)
- › **1962** – A Plan and Program of
Rapid Transit (MATSC)
- › **1967** – Rapid Busways (ATS)
- › **1967** - Rapid Transit for Metro
Atlanta (MARTA)



Left: from the Atlanta Transit System's "Rapid Atlanta" plan.

This early era of planning
produces different and competing
visions of the future.

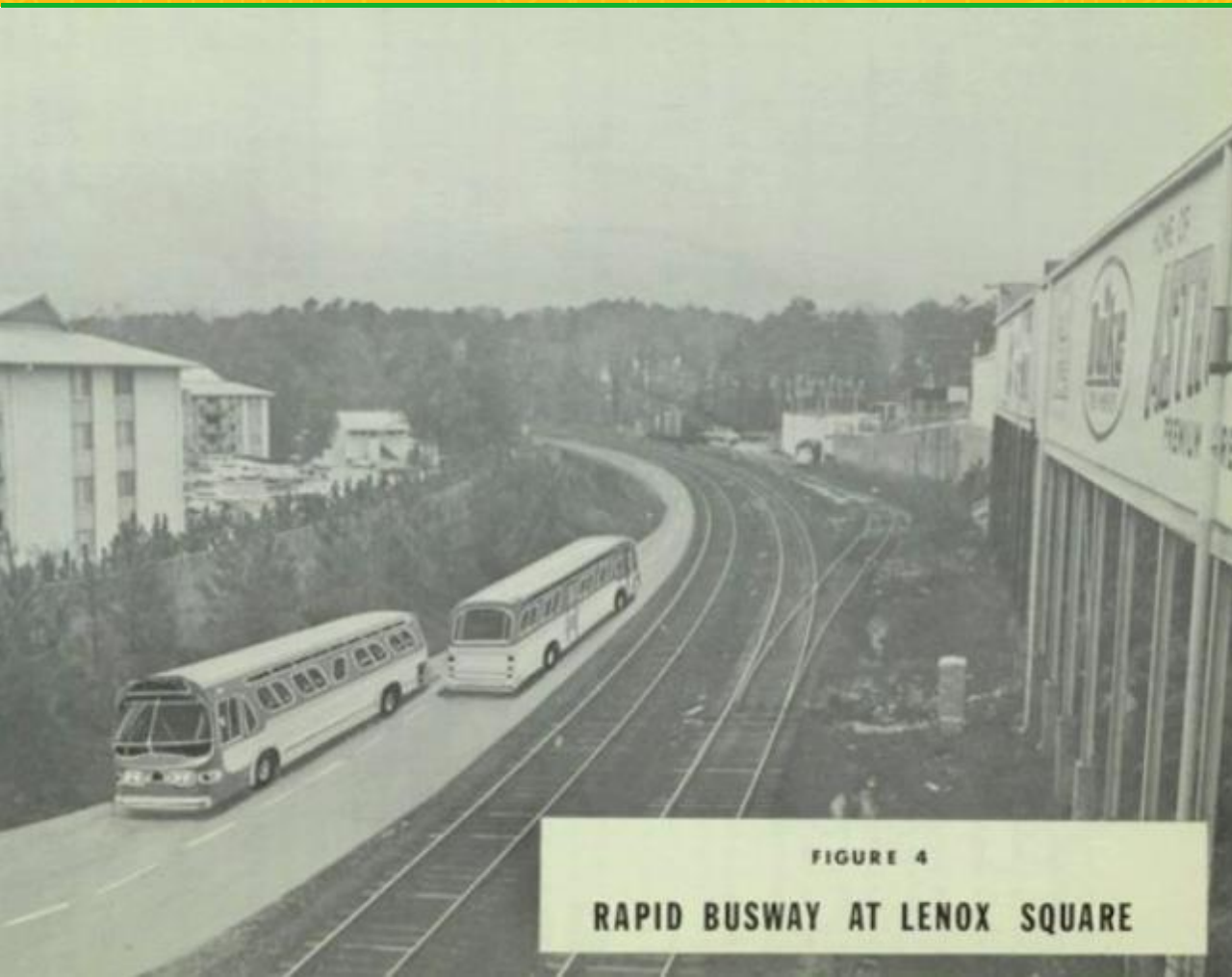
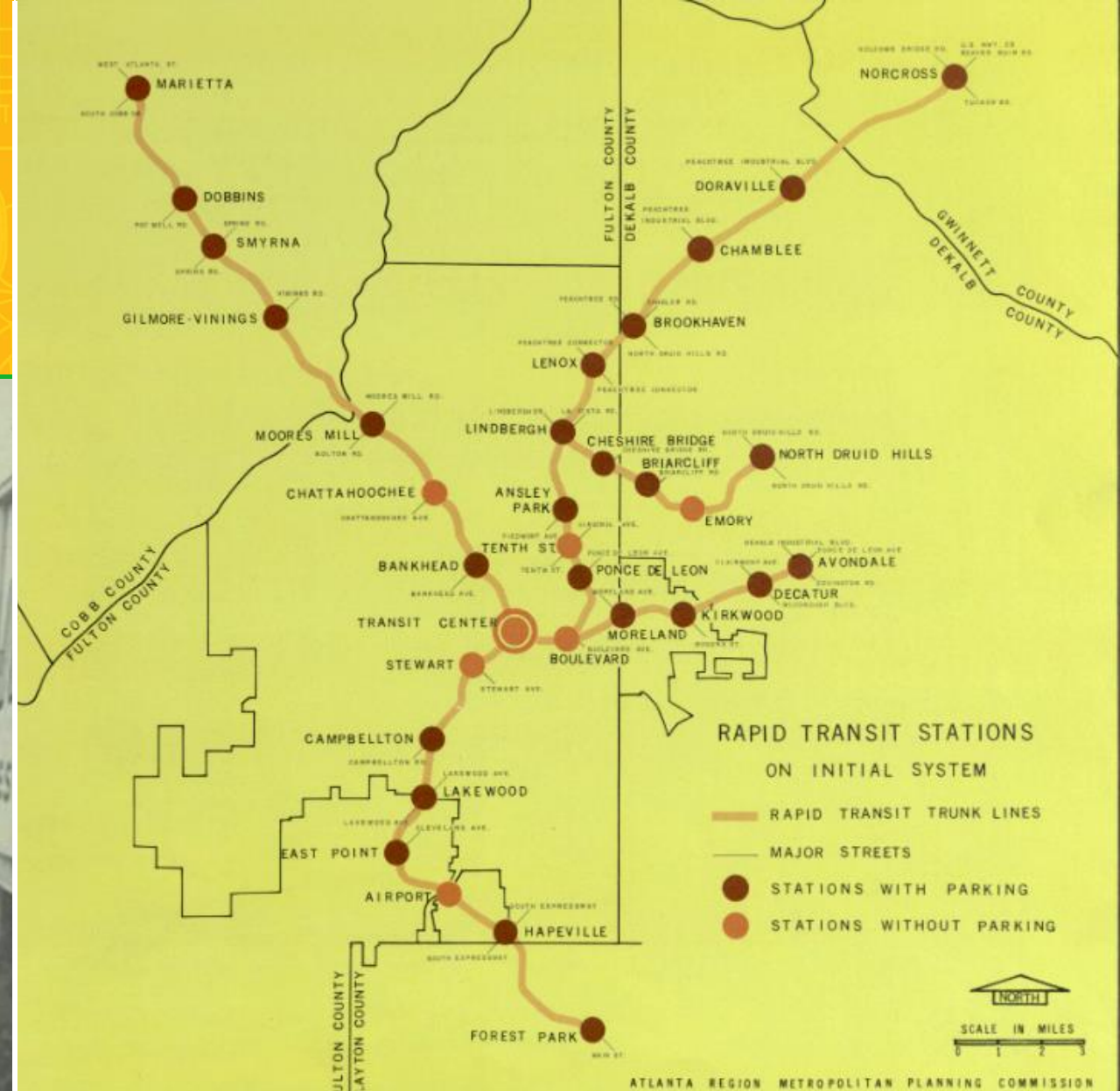


FIGURE 4
RAPID BUSWAY AT LENOX SQUARE



Above: the MPC's 1961 system concept.

Left: the Atlanta Transit System's "Rapid Busway" concept at Lenox.

The State creates MARTA
in 1965 to plan, design,
construct, and operate the rapid
transit system.



Left: MARTA engineers at work.

Above: MARTA's rapid transit system plan.

A 1968 referendum fails.
 A second referendum is held in 1971 and passes by a slim margin.

- > 50 miles of rapid rail
- > 4 counties – Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Clayton (Cobb removed)
- > 14.4 miles of busways
- > Expanded bus service, new buses, bus shelters, reduction in fares to 15 cents

Voters in Fulton, DeKalb Okay Rapid Transit Plans

MARTA Vote Said Milestone

By PHIL GAILEY and FRANK WELLS

Jubilant supporters of MARTA hailed Tuesday's referendum as a milestone in Atlanta's continued progress while opponents predicted that voters will regret their decision.

Atlanta Mayor Sam Massell called it a "triumphant" victory and added, "I'm as excited tonight as I was the night I was elected myself. We truly affirmed the positive."

"If there was a question whether Atlanta is still going and still has that drive, I think it was dispelled. We showed that we still have that spirit."

Massell added, "This will provide us a greater thrust than anything in my political lifetime. It will give us dramatic new mobility."

However, Atlanta Alderman Henry Dodson, a staunch MARTA foe, warned, "I don't think I lost. I think the people of Atlanta lost and in the next four or five years the people will think so."

And former Alderman Everett Millican, one of the most outspoken MARTA opponents, said, "I'm very disappointed. The MARTA people and the Committee for Sensible Rapid Transit spent nearly \$3½ million for propaganda. Fulton County made a mistake by using paper ballots for the first time in 10 years."

MARTA officials promised to "give the people the kind of rapid transit system we promised" and expressed hope that Gwinnett and Clayton counties, which rejected MARTA in Tuesday's referendum, will join the project later.

"Fulton and DeKalb have just proved that counties can work together to solve their problems," said Roy Blount, MARTA board chairman. "I'm sorry about Gwinnett and Clayton. I hope they will decide to join us later. But right now, we're going to push ahead with building the nation's best rapid transit system. We're going to deliver what we promised to the people."

MARTA director Bill Schwartz of Atlanta said he thinks Gwinnett and Clayton defied MARTA because "they're not close enough to the problem. It's possible that the further people are removed from the city the more difficult it is for them to see and understand these problems."

Millican said he believed that "traffic has been slowed up for the past few days just for the impact it had on the voters. There are some traffic lights on Peachtree Street that just stayed red, slowing up the traffic."

The former state senator and alderman said he thought it "underhanded" that city officials "would do things like that and also that letter that went out to all parents of school children saying they had the opportunity to approve of rapid transit Tuesday. Now if the letter had said approve or disapprove that would have been fair. But it didn't."

Bernard McIlhenny, chairman of the Truth

NEWS THIS MORNING

November 10, 1971

WORLD

SEA AND AIR DISASTERS off France and Italy brought death to more than 80 persons. Most of a crew of 29 was feared lost when a French freighter went down. Forty-six Italian paratroopers perished along with a crew of six when a British military transport crashed in the Ligurian Sea. Page 9-A.

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y. — The first Chinese Communists came to the U.N. Monday in advance of the Peking delegation that will take the seat formerly held by Nationalist China. The new arrivals tipped like very big capitalists but lunched on the special. Page 2-A.

SALGON — B-52s flying in two waves hit Communist positions south of the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Vietnam. The targets were described as supply bunkers and antiaircraft installations. Page 13-A.

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — British troops raiding three Catholic sections of Belfast arrested 43 persons they suspected of being members of the Irish Republican Army. Page 9-A.

NATION

WASHINGTON—Longevity and merit pay increases—frozen these past three months—will be allowed after Nov. 15, informed sources said, provided they fall within the 5.5 per cent guideline for annual increases. Page 1-A.

WASHINGTON—Supreme Court nominee William Rehnquist gave the Senate Judiciary Committee an affidavit denying he had ever belonged to the John Birch Society.

Civil rights leaders questioning the statement drew rebukes from Sen. Birch Bayh and Edward Kennedy. "You have left an atmosphere that is rather poisonous," said Kennedy. Page 2-A.

WASHINGTON—A regulation effective in 90 days will implement a 1967 law requiring the states to provide free preventive medical care to poor children. Page 7-B.

WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that a pension plan compelling women to retire earlier than men violated the civil rights law. Page 14-A.

GEORGIA

FORTY-NINE GEORGIA SCHOOLS are totally uncertified insofar as fire safety is concerned, said Compt. Gen. Johnnie Caldwell. Another 93 schools are only partially certified. Page 1-B.

THE STATE'S CORRECTIONS DIRECTOR ordered



By ALEX COFFIN
 Voters in Fulton and DeKalb counties Tuesday approved rapid transit by a narrow margin. A one per cent sales tax to finance the system goes into effect Jan. 1.

Clayton and Gwinnett counties overwhelmingly rejected the proposal, but approval was needed only from Fulton and DeKalb for the project to go forward.

Turnouts in Fulton and DeKalb, afflicted with the most traffic congestion in the metropolitan area, far exceeded expectations.

Under the law, a second vote in Clayton and Gwinnett could be held by Dec. 31, 1972.

Metropolitan Atlanta voters in 1968 rejected a 40-mile system, to be financed by property taxes. The vote Tuesday was

How They Voted

| | FOR | AGAINST |
|----------|--------|---------|
| Fulton | 55,738 | 53,725 |
| DeKalb | 25,441 | 26,100 |
| Clayton | 3,200 | 11,147 |
| Gwinnett | 2,500 | 9,505 |

* Precinct-by-precinct tables of the vote in all four counties are on Pages 5-A, 7-C and 8-C. A news analysis of the vote is on Page 10-A.

on increasing the sales tax 1 cent to pay the local share of the 70-mile, \$1.4-billion rapid rail-busway system. Federal funds are to pay for two-thirds of the capital costs.

With all of 198 Fulton precincts and absentee ballots counted, unofficial returns were 55,738 for rapid transit and 53,725 against. About 43 per cent of the registered voters turned out.

With all 114 DeKalb precincts and absentee ballots counted, unofficial returns were 25,441 for rapid transit and 26,100 against. More than 43 per cent of the registered voters turned out.

Vote totals for the two counties in 1968, when the earlier rapid transit system was rejected, were: No—114,922; Yes—85,852.

With all 21 precincts and absentee ballots counted Tuesday night, Gwinnett voted 11,147 to 3,200 against rapid transit. Clayton, with all 11 precincts and absentee ballots counted, voted 3,200 to 2,500.

The turnout was about 40 per cent in Gwinnett and about 45 per cent in Clayton. A majority in every precinct in Gwinnett and Clayton county voted against rapid transit. Unless these later join the system, the plan will be scaled down with the northern rail line ending at Doraville and the southern leg ending at the Hartfield Atlanta International Airport. Bus service proposed

See MARTA, Back Page

FRANCHISE SET

Atlanta Gets NHL Hockey

By AL THOMY

Continuation Sports Writer

Mayor Sam Massell, armed with a hockey stick, slid into the press room at City Hall Tuesday afternoon and announced that Atlanta had rounded out its major league

conversation with league President Clarence Campbell. At the same time, the NHL had also admitted Nassau County, Long Island.

Massell said the franchise was awarded to Atlanta, not the city government but to the

Hawks and developer of the \$17 million Atlanta Coliseum, now under construction. Massell indicated other prominent Atlantans had been mentioned as potential owners of the team and he added that he hoped the

MARTA Grows Up

*Construction,
operation, and
highlights*

marta



First Subway in the Southeast!

Joint Venture Construction of
Batson-Cook and H.J. Russell

Completed May 1977

Ahead of Schedule
Within Budget

Frank Christman, Resident Engineer

*That's MARTA
Relax and Enjoy the ride.*

MARTA begins bus operations in 1972.

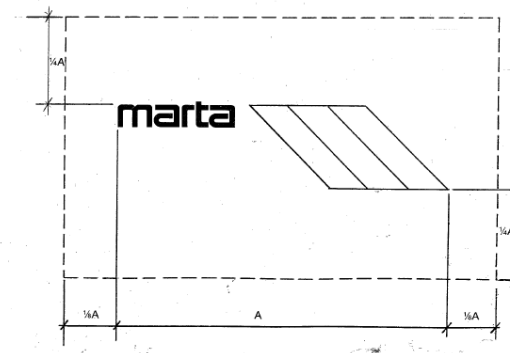


- › MARTA buys out the Atlanta Transit System and starts to operate service for the first time.
- › Ridership climbs with bus service improvements and the fare reduction.

Immediate improvements are made to bus service.



- › A fleet of modern new buses is purchased.
- › MARTA's new logo and brand is introduced across the bus fleet.

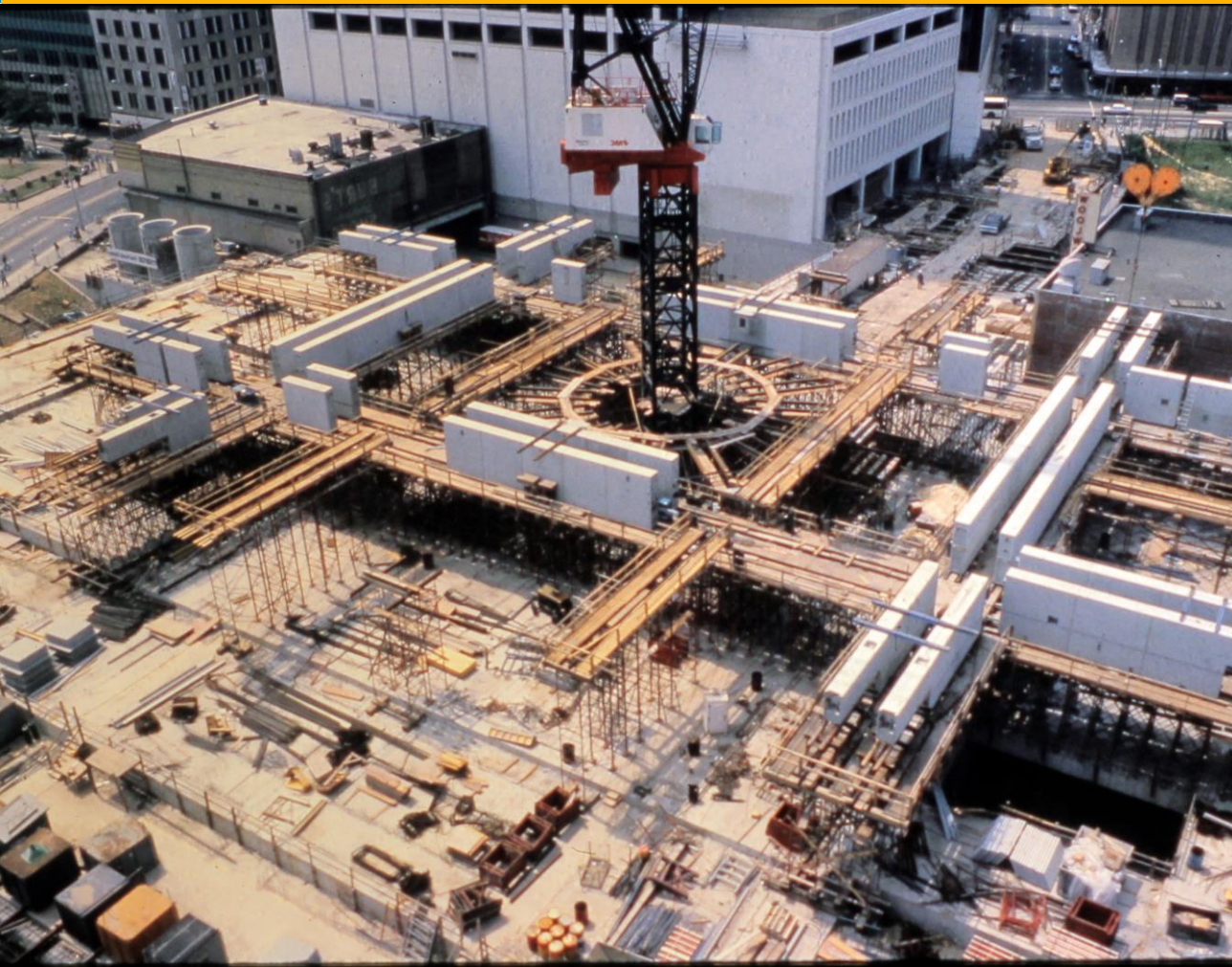


Immediate improvements
are made to bus service.



- › New bus shelters are constructed throughout the bus network.
- › New park/ride lots are built.

Rail system construction
begins in 1975 and continues
rapidly.



*Above: construction of the guideway and platforms at
Inman Park/Reynoldstown Station.*

Left: construction of the Five Points Station plaza and canopy.

**The first railcars arrive in
March of 1978.**



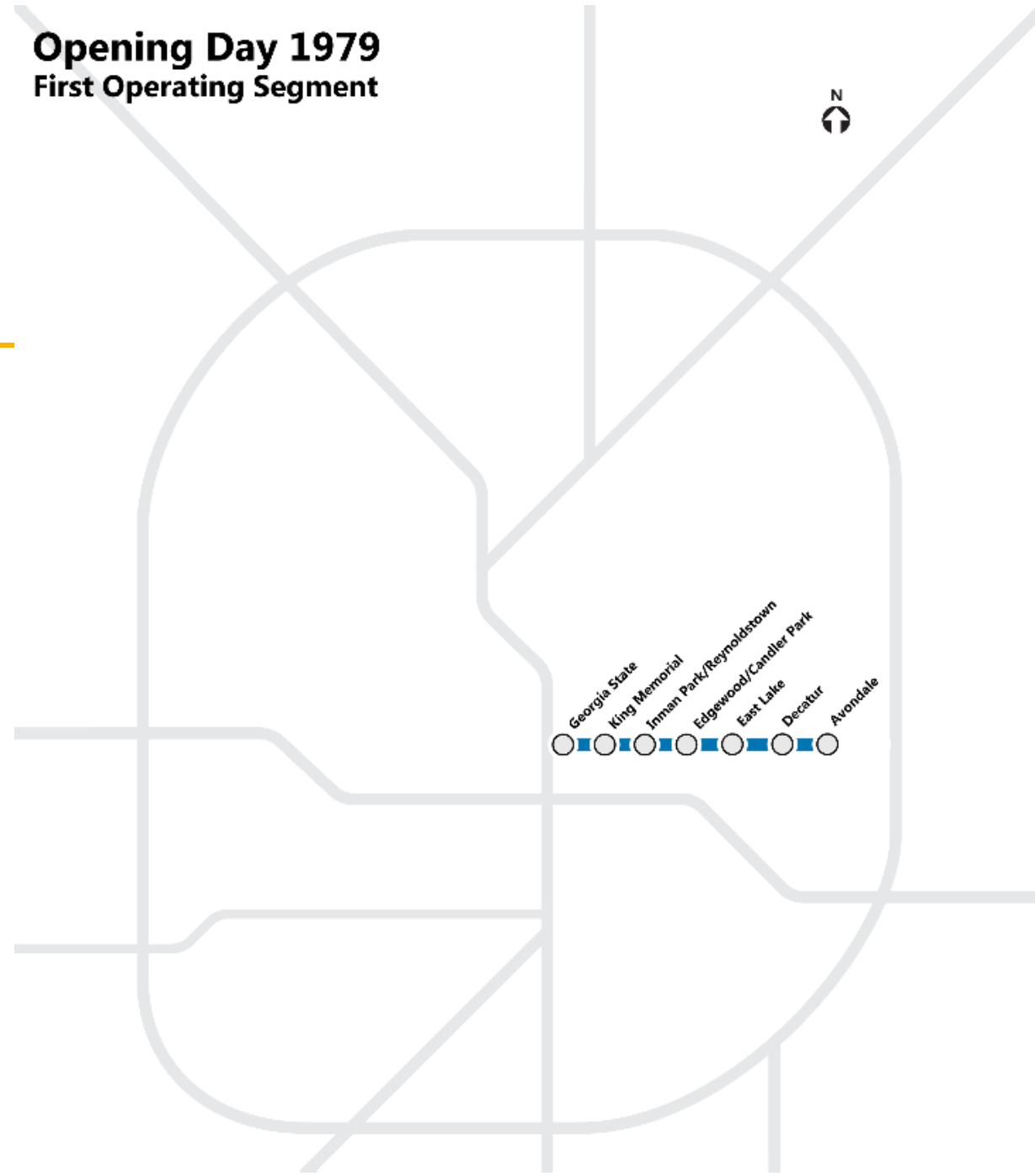
Above: a CQ310 carbody is loaded for shipment from France.

Left: the original interior of MARTA's CQ310 railcars.

The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



Opening Day 1979
First Operating Segment



- Georgia State
- King Memorial
- Inman Park/Reynoldstown
- Edgewood/Candler Park
- East Lake
- Decatur
- Avondale

The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1979



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1981



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1982



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1984



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1986



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1987



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1988



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1992



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1993



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.



1996



The rail system opens in June of 1979 and expands over the following decades.

2000



In 1996, MARTA serves an integral role in the Centennial Olympic Games.



- › Downtown is closed to private vehicles.
- › Over 1 million passengers ride per day.
- › Rail and 29 bus routes run 24-hour service for nearly 3 weeks.
- › MARTA operates a regional bus shuttle system, transporting spectators to more distant Olympic venues.

The 2000s bring changes and new challenges.



- › Breeze is introduced and becomes the nation's first all-smartcard fare collection system.
- › Armour Yard opens.
- › Financial challenges spur service cuts and fare increases, culminating in the Great Recession.

The 2010s bring stability and growth.



- › Clayton County joins and service starts in 2015.
- › Atlanta votes for more transit funding in 2016.

expanding...SERVICE

History in the making as MARTA buses roll for the first time in Clayton County during an early morning motorcade celebrating the overwhelming vote by residents to join the transit system.

The 2020s bring new challenges and opportunities.



- › MARTA weathers the COVID-19 pandemic and advances a large capital program.



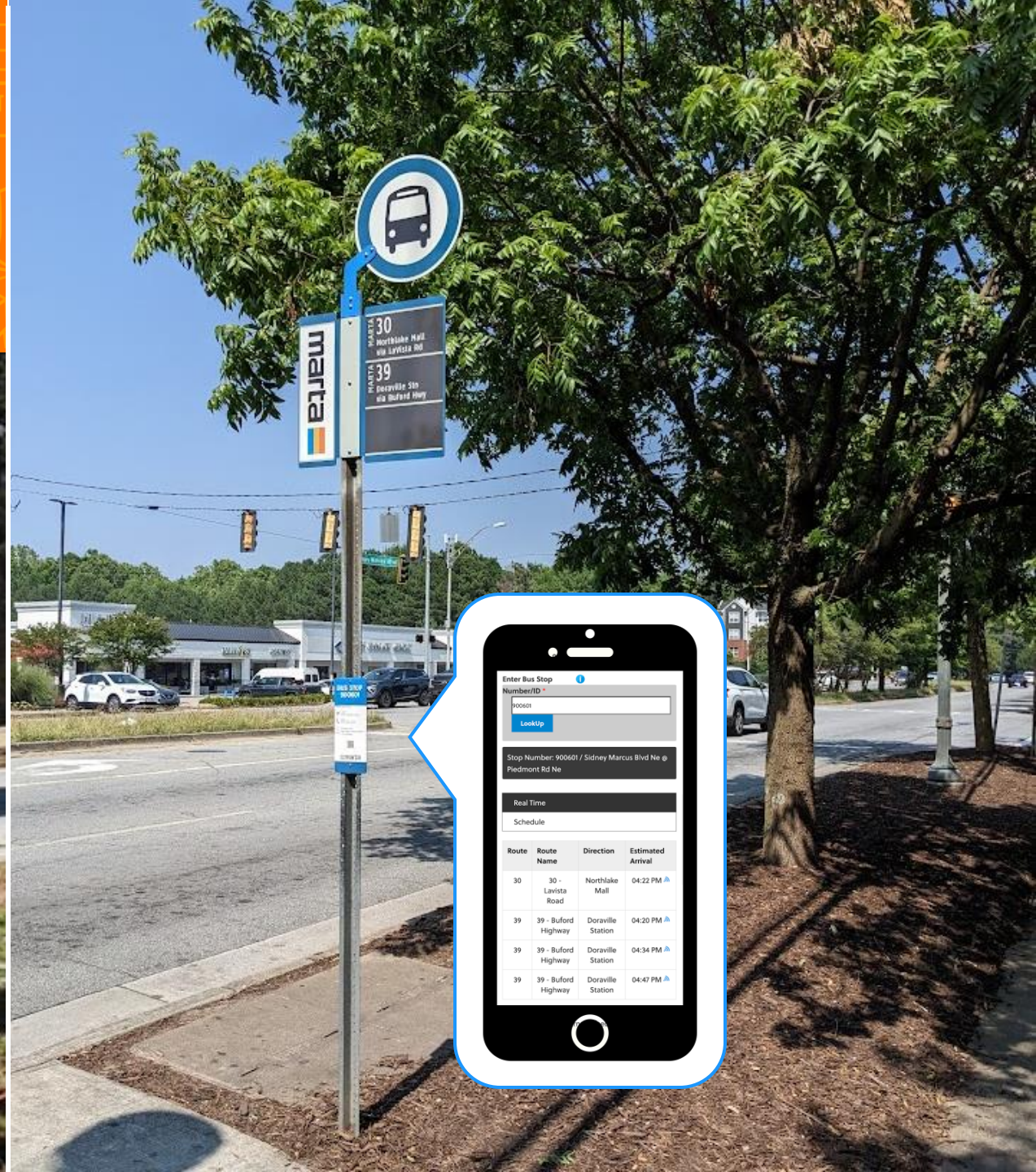
MARTA Today and Tomorrow

*Service,
experience, and
expansion*



Better bus stops

New signage, more amenities



Enter Bus Stop

Number/ID

Stop Number: 900601 / Sidney Marcus Blvd Ne @ Piedmont Rd Ne

Real Time

Schedule

| Route | Route Name | Direction | Estimated Arrival |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 30 | 30 - Lavista Road | Northlake Mall | 04:22 PM |
| 39 | 39 - Buford Highway | Doraville Station | 04:20 PM |
| 39 | 39 - Buford Highway | Doraville Station | 04:34 PM |
| 39 | 39 - Buford Highway | Doraville Station | 04:47 PM |

New Vehicles

Electric buses, new railcar fleet



New Services

*Bus Rapid Transit, Arterial
Rapid Transit, Streetcar East*



New Facilities

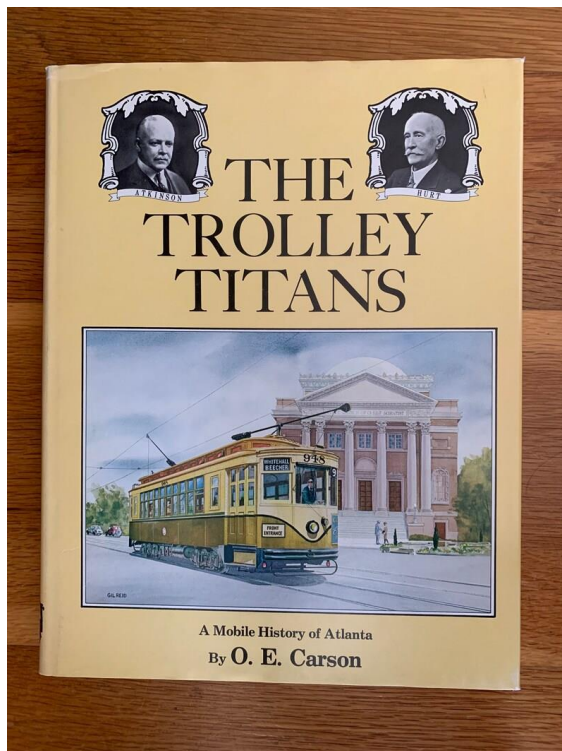
*Transit hubs, New Clayton
Operating Facility*



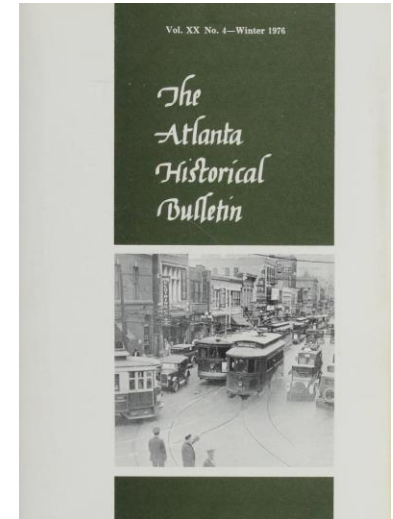
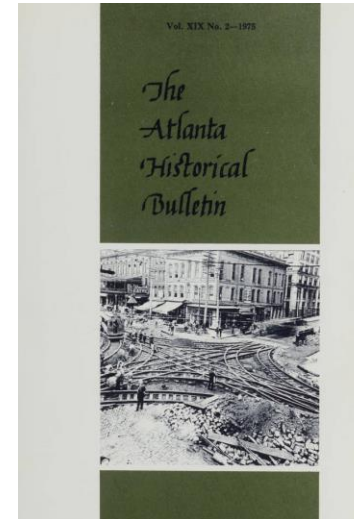
Recommended Reading

Mule to MARTA Vol I and II, by Jean Martin

The Trolley Titans, by O.E. Carson



amazon



ATLANTA
HISTORY
CENTER



Thank You

