



Chatham Area Transit

Legislative Agenda 2013

Driving Our Future

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

The 2013 Legislative Program is divided into the following sections:

1. Federal.
2. State, Regional & Local.

Each section of the program consists of a summary of the key policy issues and related advocacy principles.

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

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

Covering approximately 632 square miles, CAT provides transportation demand management, fixed route bus service, complementary paratransit service through Teleride, accessible taxis with the CAT Freedom program, streetcar, and marine services on the Savannah River. Service operates daily from 5:00 AM—1:00 AM.

Federal Legislative Action Items:

- MAP-21 Funds
- Motor Vehicle Fuel Purchases

State Legislative Action Items:

- Transit Operating Assistance
- Regional Transportation Planning
- Accessible Taxis
- Tax Exemption from Motor Fuel Purchases

CRITICAL

The United States is in a **transit funding crisis**.

- ▶ Georgia has under-invested in our transportation network for years and ranks next-to-last in per capita transportation spending.
- ▶ Federal budget proposals will result in Georgia receiving 30% less federal gas tax funds.
- ▶ Georgia introduced a penny sales tax referendum (T-SPLOST) that failed to pass on 7/31/12.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEMS:

MAP-21 Funds

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



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

- ◆ Additional vehicles to revitalize an outdated fleet—40 buses, 25 paratransit, 5 paratransit taxis;
- ◆ Funding for transit stop infrastructure improvements, construction of 5 enhanced transfer locations, purchase and installation of 100 transit shelters and benches;
- ◆ Growth via Van Pool Program start-up (20 seven-passenger vans); Service expansion to major employers JCB, Mitsubishi and Gulfstream; Enhanced service on major corridors including express services; and a designated Park and Ride location.

Fuel Purchasing Flexibility

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



STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION ITEMS:

Transit Operating Assistance

In response to funding challenges, transit systems have had little choice but to cut services, eliminate jobs, and implement significant fare increases. CAT has worked diligently to avoid these measures by maximizing the extent of competitive federal grants and outside subsidies from various transit markets while shared revenue payments within Chatham County have remained flat or declined and State-imposed levy limits have restricted the dedication of additional local revenues. In order to maintain the transportation system and preserve its long-term viability while contending with an aging population, the State must continue to assist with public transit funding by increasing its portion to previous levels, and a dedicated, stable, local funding source must be created. **CAT strongly supports legislation that would permit all regions in Georgia to consider and implement funding mechanisms necessary for allowing other revenue streams for transit than the local property tax.**

Regional Transportation Planning

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

Accessible Taxis

One impediment to more widespread usage of wheelchair accessible taxis is the territorial limitation to taxi travel in Georgia under current law. SB 373 relates to certificates of public necessity and convenience for vehicles for hire and addresses the territorial issue by outlining the requirements under which wheelchair-accessible taxis can travel outside their home jurisdiction and return with a paying fare. **Supporting SB 373 allows taxi usage to become a regional transportation option.**

Tax Exemption from Motor Fuel Purchases

The Georgia General Assembly recognized in 2005 that incentives to expand transit operations were essential to addressing the challenge in meeting air quality attainment standards. Local transit systems must seek legislation to renew their exemption from paying motor fuel taxes every two (2) years. Other government entities, however, (e.g., counties, municipalities, and the university system in Georgia) enjoy a permanent exemption from sales taxes and the motor fuel taxes. The current transit exemption expired June 30, 2012. **A permanent exemption for local transit would allow for more accurate budgeting and free up resources used in seeking legislative renewal each period.**