

## General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS)

### *What is GTFS?*

GTFS is an **open data format** for exchanging transit schedules, geographic, and fare information. Using GTFS feeds, public transit agencies can publish data to be consumed and utilized in applications (i.e. Google, Apple Maps, and publicly available transit tracking apps).

GTFS data can describe **scheduled service** (static feeds) or **arrival predictions** and vehicle positions (real-time).

### *Why GTFS?*

GTFS allows agencies to:

- Provide static and real-time trip **information to customers**
- Engage developers in the production of customer-focused schedule and trip planning **applications**
- Collaborate with other agencies in the creation of regional feeds for **regional trip planning purposes**
- Form a standardized basis for service analysis and **performance monitoring**

### *GTFS in the Atlanta Region*

MARTA, CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit, and Xpress all provide static GTFS feeds to third parties. The schedule information is available on Google, Apple Maps, and a number of other trip planning applications. **The feeds are all separate, which hinders multi-agency trip planning.** Reliable real-time GTFS feeds are not openly provided to third parties and are not available across the region.

### *Next Steps*

To become national leaders in GTFS data, **regional data standards** and agency roles and responsibilities should be formally established in policy. An **open data portal** with each agency's downloadable GTFS feeds should be made available to developers to enable the private sector to create trip planning applications, as well as other innovative uses of the data.



## Regional Fare System & Policies

### *What is a Regional Fare System?*

In a unified regional fare system, multiple operators offer riders **consistent fares and payment policies**—using the same type of payment system—throughout the region. From the passenger's perspective, a unified regional fare system will allow customers to travel across services without worrying about fares, transfers, or fare media.

On the back end, agencies share both revenues and costs related to reconciliation and processing.

### *Breeze – The Regional Fare System in the Atlanta Region*

The regional Breeze automated fare collection system is a stored value smart card-based fare payment system that is owned, operated and maintained by MARTA and first implemented in 2006. The system is utilized by MARTA, CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit (GCT), and Xpress. Cherokee uses its own separate fare media and does not utilize or accept Breeze for payment.

The Breeze smart card allows customers to add value or time-based passes to the card at Breeze Vending Machines (BVM) located at all MARTA rail stations and in certain walk-up locations. CobbLinc and Gwinnett County Transit continue to offer their own fare media in addition to Breeze cards and accepting cash. As of January 2019, the State's Xpress transit service became the first of MARTA's regional partners to eliminate its separate fare media system and switch to the exclusive use of Breeze or cash for fare payments.

While MARTA currently operates a clearinghouse to manage the data needed to document rider usage and transfers, **there is no regional fare product available**. MARTA and its regional partners have had ongoing discussions regarding the equitable apportionment of the costs associated with maintaining the clearinghouse and providing the necessary reconciliation and operational support for the system to be used regionally.

### *Regional Fare Policies in the Atlanta Region*



Costs for monthly passes and one-way fares vary between the different regional operators, as well as fare charging policies/approaches. MARTA uses a flat fare policy regardless of distance traveled for all of its service offerings. CobbLinc uses a flat fare structure for its local and express service, although the fares are different for its local and express service. GCT utilizes a flat fare policy for its local bus service and a zone-based fare structure for its express service. Xpress uses zone based for its express service.

MARTA customers are able to transfer to any partner agency (CobbLinc, GCT, or Xpress) for free. In addition, CobbLinc, GCT or Xpress riders can transfer to MARTA for free. However, there are no free transfers between GCT, CobbLinc, and Xpress.

MARTA is leading the exploration of mobile-based ticketing (i.e. use of cellphones for payment). This new fare payment platform is in its early piloting phases with MARTA and planned for regional deployment with MARTA's partner agencies.

### ***Next Steps***

Potential New Regional Fare System, Regional Fare Products and/or Fare Policies

A new regional fare system could include a **suite of universal regional passes and the integration of regional mobile payment technology**. These advances are also possible without the procurement of a new regional fare system. In the areas of regional fare policies there are many questions to be addressed:

- Should all regional operators adopt a uniform fare pricing structure?
- Should all regional operators adopt a uniform flat fare or distance-based fare structure?
- Should all transfers between systems be free or should there be a uniform transfer fee? Or,
- Should the status quo of multiple approaches continue?
- What are the financial impacts associated with these questions and potential decision points?

A collaborative approach and much discussion is needed in order to move towards the development of an appropriate fare structure(s), a roadmap for regional governance, a plan for equitable cost allocation and policies guiding transit fare collection and the distribution of revenues.



## Minimum Standards for Bus Rapid Transit/Arterial Rapid Transit and Light Rail/Streetcar

### *What are minimum standards?*

Minimum Standards for BRT/ART and Light Rail/Streetcar would be the minimum requirements needed to maintain frequency, reliability, capacity and customer experience for the mode across the region, regardless of the transit operator providing the service.

### *Why develop minimum standards?*

Minimum standards for modes that have overlapping features ensure that when a transit partner markets a mode, no matter where in the ATL region the customer is riding that mode, the customer will have a similar experience. It also gives the customer an expectation of frequency, capacity and reliability regardless of where in the region they are riding that mode.

Additionally, for evaluation and prioritization purposes in the ATL planning process, ATL must have apples – to – apples comparison of projects by mode. If one transit system calls a project BRT but does not have a minimum of infrastructure to ensure that line has the frequency, capacity and reliability of the ATL's standards for BRT then that project should not be reviewed as a BRT project when evaluated and prioritized.

### *Minimum Standards in the Atlanta Region*

The modes with overlapping features that directly affect their frequency, customer experience, capacity and reliability planned for the Atlanta Region are BRT versus ART and Light Rail versus Streetcar. BRT and ART are both bus-based modes that depending on the infrastructure investment and structure of the service can have varying levels of reliability and customer experience. Similarly, Light Rail and Streetcar are powered the same way and can use the same vehicles but have those same varying levels of reliability and customer experience.



### *Next Steps*

To ensure consistency across the ATL region, a minimum standards policy for these four modes should be developed to enable consistency from operator to operator. Some standards to consider are outlined below.

#### Sample LRT/Streetcar Standards:

- Dedicated ROW versus mixed traffic
- Intersection crossing priority versus signal priority
- Off board payment
- Level boarding
- Frequency

#### Sample BRT/ART standards:

- Dedicated ROW versus mixed traffic
- Traffic signal preemption versus traffic signal priority
- Off board payment
- Level boarding
- Frequency



## *Transit Asset Management (TAM)*

### *What is TAM?*

TAM is a business model that **prioritizes funding based on the condition and maintenance of transit assets**, which includes vehicles, equipment, guideway, and facilities. TAM provides a set of tools and plans for maintaining State of Good Repair (SGR), which is critical for providing safe and reliable transit service.

TAM enables transit agencies and regional entities to budget for ongoing maintenance needs and future capital expenditures.

In addition, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act emphasizes the importance of performance-based planning. To that end, FTA rulemaking requires transit agencies to **set transit asset targets, create asset management plans, and prioritize assets for replacement**. In addition, Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to set regional TAM targets and track progress in meeting them.

### *TAM in the Atlanta Region*

In keeping with FTA regulations, ARC currently maintains a record of all transit assets in the region. In partnership with the region's transit operators, ARC also sets regional TAM targets and tracks regional progress in meeting those targets. The records of all transit assets are voluntarily shared with ARC by the transit agencies.

SRTA/ATL is leading a joint procurement with CobbLinc and ARC (acting on behalf of Henry County, Douglas County, and Cherokee County) for the purchase of Enterprise Assets Management Software (EAMS). The procurement also considers the EAMS currently used by Gwinnett County Transit and MARTA for potential future data sharing purposes (it is not the desire or intent for GCT or MARTA to switch their EAMS under this procurement). The EAMS procurement has the potential to enable all transit operators in the region to share asset data in one database.

### *Next Steps*

ARC and ATL have a vested interest in understanding the region's SGR. Establishing **data sharing standards via policy**, exploring the evolving nature of **TAM targets**, and supporting a **future software solution** that enables efficient data sharing all play a role in the region's future SGR.

