

Testimony of Collie Greenwood

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Before the Senate Banking Committee

“Advancing Public Transportation under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law”

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Good morning, Chairman Brown and Ranking Member Toomey, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am Collie Greenwood, Interim General Manager and CEO of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority in Atlanta, Georgia, known as MARTA. I am honored to have the opportunity to appear alongside my transit agency colleagues to share our experience at MARTA, and future expansion efforts made possible in part by the Congress’s passage of the Bi-partisan Infrastructure Law.

Serving MARTA in this role has been the culmination of 35 years of experience in the transit industry. I worked my way through college as a transit bus operator. At first, it was just a job that paid the bills, but at some point, the mission of getting people where they needed to go became a part of me. I rose to Chief Service Officer at Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), and I guided that agency through several transformational initiatives. In 2019, I was personally recruited by MARTA’s former CEO Jeff Parker because of the alignment of our vision for public transportation. Jeff spoke about it as “lines and dots” – the lines being the transit and the dots as the communities and places we serve.

MARTA is the largest public transit agency in the southeast and one of the largest in the country, providing bus, rail, paratransit, and streetcar services, and has a robust transit-oriented development program that incorporates affordable housing and equitable access, driving economic growth and development around our rail stations. We have eagerly embarked on three expansion projects that I’ll briefly describe today, as we hope they will be direct beneficiaries of funding and policy changes made possible by the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law. These expansion projects will benefit from a key change to the Small Starts Program – which as you know increases project eligibility from \$300 million to \$400 million. I’d like to personally thank Senators Warnock and Ossoff for their leadership on securing that change that is already having an impact for MARTA.

One of the first initiatives I worked on when I arrived at MARTA was a series of improvements to bus amenities and a focus on bus service enhancement and expansion. As a former bus operator, I understand the importance of reliable bus service and that while rail may get most of the attention – it is the bus that is the backbone of public transit and bus service, particularly bus rapid transit, has the potential to be transformative for a community.

With that in mind, MARTA is pleased to share that the Clayton Southlake Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project has advanced to the project development phase of the Small Starts Program. The estimated \$338-million -project will provide high-capacity transit service connecting College Park rail station in the southern part of metro Atlanta that is close to the airport – to several key destinations in Clayton County, including major commercial corridors, the hospital and the City of Riverdale Town Center. As the first BRT in Clayton County, the project will feature 13 new BRT-branded stations with offboard fare

collection, ten BRT-branded electric buses and associated electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and the installation of transit signal priority equipment at key intersections. Additionally, the FTA recently awarded MARTA a \$1 million Transit-Oriented Development Corridor Planning Grant to analyze and develop a potential project list of community developments at and around those proposed BRT stations in order to amplify the positive benefits of transit investments in the area.

Another one of MARTA's highest ridership bus routes is along Campbellton Road in Southwest Atlanta. MARTA, in partnership with the City of Atlanta, is investing in high-capacity transit to improve connectivity, accessibility, and mobility along this important corridor. The transit and transit-oriented development investments planned for this vibrant part of the city will support the overall economic and community development sought by the established neighborhoods along the route. MARTA is hopeful these investments will spur the redevelopment of Greenbriar Mall and former U.S. Army facility, Fort McPherson, which in years past were significant economic drivers for this community.

One of the exciting parts of bus rapid transit is the planned use of electric buses to travel through dense urban corridors – leaving no emissions or noise in their wake. In 2019, MARTA was awarded a \$2.6 million FTA Low/No Emission Bus Grant to support the purchase of our first six electric buses and charging infrastructure. These buses replace six 2005 diesel buses and will be put into service on routes serving Atlanta and DeKalb County on May first.

For comparison – the six diesel buses combined operate for almost 333,000 miles and consume 94,900 gallons of diesel fuel each year. These new zero-emission buses will reduce MARTA's fleet emissions by approximately 935 short tons of greenhouse gases, while also reducing harmful fine particle matter that is linked to a variety of health issues. The increase in funding for the Low/No Emission Bus Grant program will help MARTA accelerate the transition of our fleet.

We are also working with the City of Atlanta on the transformation of our largest and busiest train station – Five Points – which sits in the heart of the city. MARTA will be seeking a RAISE grant and new discretionary grants to support the \$150 million redevelopment of the station that is the intersection of MARTA's four rail lines and transfer hub for dozens of inter-city bus routes that serve major government and educational facilities, job centers, and Atlanta's vibrant arts and cultural scene.

MARTA is investing in the bus facilities at Five Points station to improve the customer experience by minimizing transfer time, covering waiting areas, providing better seating, signage and arrival and departure information screens. MARTA and the City of Atlanta will remove the canopy above the station to allow for the development of two mixed income affordable housing towers. There is a high demand for affordable housing units in Atlanta and particularly at those locations connected to transit, providing an ideal opportunity for MARTA and the City.

Federal investment in this vital hub of the MARTA transit system has wide-reaching economic development benefits including the Summerhill BRT project for which MARTA received a U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER Grant in 2018. This BRT connects the Atlanta BeltLine, Peoplestown, Summerhill, Capitol Gateway and South Downtown and is nearing design completion with buses on the street in 2025. The Five Points transformation will enhance the area adjacent to the State of Georgia's Two Peachtree Building and Georgia State University's downtown campus while also helping to boost the convention and hospitality industries, left reeling from the pandemic. While the goal is to have the project complete in time for Atlanta to host the World Cup in 2026, the effects of the

transformation will stretch well beyond that, accelerating billions in private development planned in South Downtown Atlanta. Five Points station is a landmark for Atlantans and its opening over 40 years ago placed Atlanta in the company of other world-class cities with vital transit systems. This redesign seeks to recapture that glory and reimagine the ways in which a transit hub can enhance a city center.

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity to present to the Committee today. I'm very proud of the progress that we've made in the Atlanta region, including in very challenging circumstances while we continued to provide service during the ongoing pandemic. I'm grateful for the leadership of the Georgia congressional delegation and their role in the passage of the Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Law. Senators Ossoff and Warnock have provided steadfast support of MARTA and the communities we serve. Our leadership team here at MARTA is confident that the passage of this law will contribute to sustained growth of MARTA, as we expand in cost-effective and practicable ways with the support of the Federal Transit Administration. Thank you for your attention.