

HB 930: Bill Summary

This document summarizes the intended effects of HB 930 and should be read together with the Bill (LC 39 1885S)

HB 930 creates the Atlanta-region Transit Link Authority (**the 'ATL'**): a new structure for coordinated and integrated transit planning for the 13-County Metro Atlanta region. The Bill establishes the governance and accountability of the ATL, as well as outlining new and enhanced transit funding; including through optional local taxes (TSPLOST) which counties may apply to raise transit funds.

Purpose and Objectives

HB 930 creates a new regional governance and funding structure for transit in Metro Atlanta. Metro Atlanta is defined as the 13-County nonattainment area, namely: Cherokee, Clayton, Coweta, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Paulding, and Rockdale Counties. Counties that are newly established nonattainment areas will have the ability to join the jurisdiction of the ATL by majority vote of the board and passage of a resolution by the board of commissioners, of such county.

HB 930 intends to improve the coordination, integration and efficiency of transit in the region, to promote a seamless and high-quality transit system for Metro Atlanta. HB 930 would achieve this by creating a regional governance structure ("the ATL") which would develop a Regional Transit Plan ("the Plan"). The Plan encompasses all transit projects and initiatives across the region. Access to new funding sources would be linked to activities within the Plan and conditional on approval of the ATL.

The Bill empowers the ATL to contract for delivery of transit services, delivery of capital projects and ensure unified branding for transit across the region.

Creation of the Atlanta-region Transit Link (ATL)

This Bill would establish a new transit governance structure: the Atlanta-region Transit Link ('ATL'). The ATL will be a unifying entity that ensures coordinated planning and funding of transit across Metro Atlanta. It will oversee all transit activity – planning, funding and operations – within the 13-County Metro Atlanta region.

The ATL would be established as a new state agency that is administratively attached to GRTA which allows for shared administrative resources. The ATL is required to submit an annual report for note to the House and Senate Transportation Committees, and provide copies to relevant local government authorities. This will be a key mechanism that would increase transparency around regional transit planning, funding and operations.

Regional Governance

The ATL would be governed by a 16-member Board.

10 of these members would represent 10 new, specially created Transit Districts. These Districts were developed to distribute the region's population as equally as possible, and to match population and traffic movement patterns. The representatives for each of these 10 Districts is chosen by a combination of County Commission Chairs, a caucus of local legislative delegations and one Mayor, chosen by a caucus of Mayors, within (or partly within) each District. Any district within or partly within the City of Atlanta will also let the Mayor of Atlanta contribute to the vote on selection of that District's representative.

The Board Chair would be appointed by the Georgia Governor, and the vice-chair will be selected annually by a vote of the ATL Board Members. Two Board Members would be appointed by the Speaker of the House and two Board Members would be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. The Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner would sit on the Board as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

Board members serve four-year terms, except the first Board where half will serve two-year terms to ensure staggered terms going forward.

The board may, in its discretion, appoint an executive director as the administrative head of the authority and shall set his or her salary. The executive director of GRTA shall serve as a temporary director until the board is constituted and an executive director is appointed by the board.

Regional Transit Plan

The core activity of the ATL will be development of the Regional Transit Plan. This Plan would design the ideal future transit for the Metro Atlanta region, identifying and prioritizing the projects and initiatives required to develop optimal region-wide transit. The Plan would be developed for six and 20-year time horizons, and would involve analysis of the region's transit needs and how transit can contribute to broader economic and social objectives.

The plan would be developed in consultation with the region's Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Regional stakeholders, including local governments, may submit requests to the ATL for additions and amendments to the Plan from time to time based on changing conditions.

Transit Funding

The Bill improves access to transit funding for the region.

At a local level, the Bill expands transit-specific local sales and use tax ('TSPLOST'), empowering Counties within the ATL to raise additional sales tax of up to 1% for up to 30 years, if they choose. Non-ATL Counties may partner with neighboring Counties to adopt a TSPLOST. The process for implementing TSPLOST is in the [Appendix](#), below.

The Bill empowers Cobb County to create a Special District for Transit Committee to be composed of the members of the board of commissioners of Cobb County and the members of the House of Representatives and Senate whose respective districts include any portion of Cobb County. The Committee may formulate a map for a proposed Cobb County Special District for Transit for the provision of public transportation services. Upon approval of such map Cobb county can work in consultation with the ATL to negotiate terms of a rapid transit contract, on behalf of the special district, if such contract is to be entered into after January 1, 2019. The transit services must be in the ATL's Regional Transit Plan and must be approved by the ATL, if such contract is to be entered into after January 1, 2019. A rapid transit contract must be entered into on behalf of the Cobb County Special District for Transit prior to December 1, 2019 or the subsection relating to the Cobb County Special District shall be repealed.

The Cobb Commission may choose any method to finance this transit expansion. However, passage of that referendum will authorize Cobb County to implement a special retail and use tax.

Access to these funding streams will be conditional on allocating this money to the projects and priorities in the Plan. Once collected, these funds can be used for capital costs as well as ongoing operations and maintenance of transit systems.

Upon receiving federal designated recipient status, the ATL will be the sole recipient of federal transit funding for the region.

Interaction with Existing Transit Operators

Current providers – particularly MARTA – will have their current operational and funding autonomy preserved. MARTA will continue to have control over its existing revenues and funding sources, and will be the sole provider of passenger heavy-rail for the region.

The ATL can – if the Board of Directors and impacted Counties agree – take a more active role in transit operations, including choosing to deliver specific transit services as appropriate. There is no timeline for this as it will depend on the transit needs of the region, and this will only occur if all relevant parties (the ATL and affected Counties/Cities) decide this is appropriate and necessary.

The ATL will assume transit operations from GRTA, no later than July 1, 2021.

The ATL will create unified branding for the Metro Atlanta transit system, helping commuters to have visibility and accountability over their service provision. The Local MARTA Act will be amended so that by 2023 all MARTA vehicles and branding will reflect the ATL brand. Branding will be required on buses, stations and trains, but not on assets which are not visible to the public or are disposable or short-term property.

Appendix: Process for implementing TSPLOST

The process below applies to all 13 Counties with the exception of Fulton County:

- Any County that seeks to implement a TSPLOST in line with this Bill must write to the Mayor or Chief Elected Official in each municipality with the date and time for a meeting at which the governing authorities of the County will discuss possible transit projects for inclusion in the TSPLOST referendum, and the proposed TSPLOST rate.
- These projects must be selected from the Regional Transit Plan and through agreement with the ATL.
- After this meeting, and the execution of any required intergovernmental agreements, a referendum shall be held for approved electors of the County or Counties to decide on the proposed projects and rate of tax.
 - Referenda must identify the projects, the approximate costs, the operators and the period of time (in years) for which the tax will be imposed. That period may not exceed 30 years.
- If the referendum is successful, the tax shall be imposed on the first day of the next succeeding calendar quarter which begins more than 80 days after the referendum date. All proceeds will be collected and kept in a separate account.
- All TSPLOST revenue will be used exclusively on transit projects identified in the Regional Transit Plan (except that 1 percent of the amount collected will be paid into the State general fund).
- No later than December 31 of each year, the governing authority of each County and municipality shall publish annually in a newspaper a simple, nontechnical report the estimated costs and expenditures of the projects.
- Counties may hold referenda for re-imposition or continuation of the taxes prior to their expiration.

Any two or more neighboring counties outside the 13-County region may adopt TSPLOST by following the procedures in the Bill.

The process for Fulton County is similar to the above with the exception that TSPLOST may be for a maximum of 0.20 percent, requires a project list be approved by the ATL, if levied after January 1, 2019, and intergovernmental agreements must be between all relevant Counties and qualified municipalities and governing authority representing at least 70 percent of the population of Fulton County outside the boundaries of the city.