

Confidential Memorandum To: Dan Sweat  
Collier Gladin

*Central City  
Transportation*

From: Allan K. Sloan

Subject: The Basic CCTP Strategy in Atlanta

This memorandum expresses some of my views on the situation in Atlanta and our work program over the next month. As you know, we are supposed to have by November a firm list of candidate projects for Atlanta for which we will be requesting funds from the \$900,000 pool available for the CCTP consortium in Phase II. These projects can be of two kinds. One, specific actions, like the setting up of a shuttle bus service or undertaking a busways demonstration, or planning projects, like a project to develop the CAS technical work program or to help AATS develop some kind of interim planning framework. Apparently we will have quite a bit of latitude in describing the scope of Phase II projects. My own view is that it would make sense to come in with a series of actions for Atlanta, ranging from immediate ribbon-cutting projects to short- and medium-range program planning that would indicate Atlanta's strong intention to make basic improvements and move their long-range transportation program ahead. We hope to have at the end of Phase II a package of actions and planning programs for Atlanta which can be funded out of UMTA resources including demonstration funds, capital grants, technical studies, and others.

The list of six projects we developed for our first discussions with you back in September were basically designed to fulfill the key requirements of this November deadline. As you recall, there were three action projects: (1) the shuttle bus people-mover experiment; (2) the busways experiment; and (3) the center city bus circulation improvements which has evolved into some analysis either of bus service routing and scheduling in central Atlanta or an analysis of the fiscal structure of Atlanta transit with particular regard to the immediate problem of deadline on the current fare increase.

The planning projects were generally of two sorts; (1) the development of data base and development planning for the CAS program in whatever form would be appropriate for the CCTP team to help, and (2) the development of a transit policy and program which would assist AATS, MARTA, the City, in an intermediate range actions out of the basic plan that is adopted. This should give a clear idea of exactly what Atlanta expects to be doing in areas where their participation is essential over the next 3 to 5 years. We have not discussed this latter project at any length; but in my own opinion, this could be one of the most important results of the CCT project, for it would help UMTA develop the kind of program they desperately need in order to be able to intelligently get funds from Congress.

They certainly must have some kind of sensible program that each city has in mind, so that they can give more than just generalized rhetoric when going to Congress to request more funds. If they were armed with a specific package of things which cities themselves had thought through and were willing to go with and implement, there could be no better demonstration of the need for federal funding. It also makes the whole process of planning with federal funds in mind much more realistic.

These six projects have been discussed in various forms with people in Atlanta since the beginning of Phase II. I would like to give you briefly my view of where each of these projects stand at the present time.

1. The shuttle bus demonstration project. Everyone, including the CCT project, agrees that this should be the key kick-off project for Atlanta. It is a good one, and is something which can move quickly. We have been assuming that the initiative for this project lies with ATS, and we understand that they are getting material ready in which to make an application to Washington to UMTA for this project which would in this state require a capital grant to purchase new buses. We have been assuming that our roll would be to monitor the course of the project as it develops, with a particular view to seeing what expansion of this kind of shuttle service makes sense, both in terms of new areas to be served and new types of hardware that can be implemented. This, we think, will be extremely important, because in this way we can actually test whether intercepting highway traffic outside the central district into large parking facilities and shuttling people in with some quick service into the core downtown area will really make sense as an interim and longer term solution to some of the city's problems. We need some guidance as to how the CCT project team can relate to this project and develop the monitoring procedures.
2. Busways demonstration project. As you know, my feeling has always been that the key to Atlanta's thinking which we identified in Phase I which is of particular interest nationally is experimenting with a busways system, particularly to link the center city with expanding residential areas. We must keep in mind that running a bus on an exclusive right of way anywhere in the metropolitan region should not be the focus of our study. We should use such a demonstration to see if it really can provide suitable service to the downtowns of fast-growing medium-sized cities that may be in the position of needing some form of rapid transit service which is not as expensive or as difficult to construct as a complete rail rapid transit system. I think we all recognize that this is a controversial situation in Atlanta now and that MARTA must make the ultimate decision on what kind of system it should proceed with. We understand that there people advising MARTA who feel that a rail systems is the only one that would really make sense in the long run, and that busways in the short run would not make sense

if you have to invest in a long term rail system. We also understand that there are those who feel that the busway system would be the best for Atlanta in the long run, particularly to serve the East-West Corridor. We have no desire to take an active role in this debate which we think must be a local debate and should focus on the parties that are already dealing with this work technically. However, we feel quite strongly that if Atlanta decides to adopt a busway system, we could play a significant role in developing experimental programs of national importance, for a busway system might be exactly what these medium-sized cities need. Such systems could be designed to serve low-density areas without requiring a transfer of most riders from a car to a rail transit vehicle. Thus its economics might not have to rely on high density corridor development and could have much more flexibility in terms of its service. Clearly, we may need different kinds of vehicles and the standard image of bus service must be changed, but it seems to me that these are technically solvable problems.

However, this particular project which started out to be the allstar candidate in Atlanta we have held in abeyance, pending decisions on the part of MARTA as to what kind of systems they are going to advocate. As you know, I feel badly about this situation, because I had hoped that Atlanta would be in the mood to experiment with this kind of system. Indeed, in the Spring it looked very much as if that were feasible. However, the CCT team will wait for MARTA to make its basic position clear before doing anything of this kind.

3. Bus service improvements. Originally, this project started out with the focus on immediate improvements to the circulation system in the central Atlanta area. The CCT team would assist by doing whatever technical work was required to develop an immediate action program. However, in discussions with various people, we decided that it would not make sense to use the CCT team effort to duplicate the topics program. We then developed the notion that confining this circulation study to bus service in the central area might be more appropriate and useful. This idea was pushed by Bob Bivens but Bill Maynard seemed to feel that this would not be the most useful thing that could be done. Maynard suggested that we might turn this project into an evaluation of ATS's current fare problem particularly to evaluate whether abatement of local taxes on ATS would be a feasible area of cost elimination in order to keep the fare from going higher. Clearly, Bill was in the position of wanting to use the CCT team to test out one of his pet ideas. The way this project was left is that we have agreed to get back with Maynard and the ATS people to explore exactly what such an analysis would involve before making any commitments. We have not yet done this and we are particularly anxious to see whether this is something that the various interest in Atlanta are wishing to explore as a part of

the Phase II program. I have pointed out a number of times that this kind of financial analysis is something that the other cities have included as part of the Phase II program thinking, but I think that there are a number of issues that we should try to identify and decide on before this becomes a hot candidate. Of particular importance is the position on city tax abatement. If it has any reservations about wanting this studied, we should certainly know that before we go further with the project.

4. The CAS program. Originally, we proposed that the CCT project undertake helping CASS with two elements of its program: (1) the development of a system to improve the data base, an item we thought was extremely important from the national point of view because throughout the country there are no growing cities that really have a good fix on the nature of the dynamics of what has happened in the central areas, and (2) to develop sketch planning framework with particular emphasis on circulation improvements needed over various time periods. These projects are the ones to which we have devoted the most time in Phase II to date. We have had many more meetings and discussions on these than any of the others, and I think we are making good progress. The basic idea now is that we should try to help the CAS program develop a general framework for the particular kind of program improvements that are being considered in Atlanta at the present time and that the work we should do would help fit in to the particular program for which UMTA funds have been requested by CASS. We are currently going through the process of reviewing the CASS work program with Don Ingram and Tony Frey and hope to come up from this exercise with a good view about where the CCT team members can contribute to the CAS work program. Perhaps we can even start doing some of the technical work even before CAS has received its own funds. My own view is that CASS and the CCT team should get together and try to do two things at the present time: (1) to develop a sketch plan of circulation improvements for central Atlanta that are put into some kind of time frame. The notion behind this would be to develop an agenda of various improvements that people have been considering over time as being needed for central Atlanta, ranging from immediate service improvements that will be required when a subway is eventually constructed in Peachtree Street and a whole series of changes in the nature of central Atlanta will result. This exercise would have two purposes. One would be to try to provide a decent rationale for thinking through the specific action projects that are proposed either under the CCTP banner or under Atlanta's general program and to provide a good rationale for requests that will go into UMTA. The second purpose of this would be to provide a specific focus for the analytical and data base development program that the CASS study should eventually generate. By having this agenda of projects, we would have a good idea of what kind of plan and program alternatives and to develop the kind of feasibility analysis that everyone will require before final decisions can be made on these projects. Our view has consistently been that the CAS

program is a good example of the kind of program that UMTA does need to provide to fill in the gaps of the regional transportation planning process.

5. The intermediate range transit program idea we have not really discussed with anyone. However, it has become clear to me over the past few weeks that Atlanta needs to develop almost immediately a statement of the roles that various of your transportation planning and operating agencies play and how they are interrelated. This will give you a much needed explanation that the federal agencies require in order to fund your programs. It is apparent that they are having a difficult time sorting out who does what in Atlanta.