



FULTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS FOUNDATION

501©(3) Non-Profit Advocate of Lower Property Taxes in Atlanta/Fulton

May 2007

Peachtree Streetcar Corridor Project: 'Taxation Without Representation'

Almost every Atlanta taxpayer supports parks and plazas along Peachtree and other major city roads, improved lighting, wider sidewalks, bicycle paths, etc. at competitive cost paid by the city. However, most taxpayers are opposed to taxing a segment of the city for a project that benefits the entire city.

The proposed \$1 billion funding for the Peachtree Streetcar Corridor Project is unfair to Atlanta taxpayers. This project creates a Special Tax District for the property owners on Peachtree and those property owners within 1/4 mile of either side of Peachtree, significantly increasing taxes – without the consent of the taxed – by 3-4 mills or 7-9% of the current total property tax.

If this becomes law, the owner of a \$500,000 Peachtree condominium currently paying approximately \$8,000 in property taxes, will face an increase of \$560-720 annually for 25-years – without his or her consent. In addition to this Special Tax District that will generate \$450 million, the city is planning City Bonds and General Fund tax increases totaling \$150 million, still another Tax Allocation District to raise \$50 million, and Federal and State assistance of \$295 million. With private donations estimated at \$50 million, this is projected to be the funding for the \$1 billion Peachtree Streetcar Corridor Project.

The Peachtree Streetcars are proposed to extend from Buckhead in the north, going 14 miles south to Fort McPherson, with a spur on Auburn Avenue and a 2.4 mile Downtown Loop. These streetcars, if approved, will run every 10 minutes, driving up the cost of the

project, with little anticipated benefits for the taxpayers asked to foot the tab.

Comments of Community Leaders

- “As currently proposed, the project would be funded in large part with a new tax on property owners in the Peachtree corridor – a concept that could meet opposition” said Mike Dobbins, Atlanta’s former Planning Commissioner and currently a professor at Georgia Tech, in a *Creative Loafing* article. “Though the streetcars would share pavement with cars, they still might snare traffic – and wouldn’t be able to maneuver over the pothole-covering plates that are ubiquitous on Peachtree. What’s more, the Mayor’s Task Force is heavily stacked with powerful business types who could stand to profit from the project. There’s membership of the business community that has direct personal interest in the property along the way.”
- According to former Mayor Sam Massell, “Some people are concerned about the cost factor, while others are concerned about the streetcars’ overhead wiring and its ability to travel around special events like parades.”
- One prominent Midtown resident who wishes to remain anonymous said: “Residents of condominiums and single family homes within 1/4 mile of Peachtree with whom I have spoken do not think the project provides sufficient benefits to them to warrant the proposed additional taxes. MARTA stations are located every half mile in Midtown, so to the

Officers:

President: John S. Sherman

Vice President: Wesley E. Cantrell

Secretary: Lynda Wolfe Smith

Treasurer: William E. Lane

Board Chairman:

Joseph L. Kelly, Esquire

Board of Directors

Harold J. (Jay) Bowen, III, President
Bowen Hanes & Company

Wesley E. Cantrell, CEO (Retired)
Lanier Worldwide, Inc.

Larry R. Ellis, General
U. S. Army (Retired)

Marc Kanne, CPA
Habif, Arogeti & Wynne

Joseph L. Kelly, Esquire
Schulten Ward & Turner

William E. Lane, President
Hyde Lane

Seymour S. Lavine, Director
Emory Academy for Retired Professionals

Joseph M. A. Ledlie, President
The Ledlie Group

Glen P. Robinson, Jr., Founder
Scientific Atlanta

John S. Sherman, Former Mayor
Bal Harbour, FL

Lynda Wolfe Smith, President (Retired)
Atlanta Association of Educators

Fulton County

Taxpayers Foundation

309 E Paces Ferry Road, NE, Suite 607

Atlanta, Georgia 30305

Phone: (404) 869-6066

Fax: (404) 869-6101

Email: fcf1@bellsouth.net

Website: www.fcta.us

residents, the project seems redundant.”

- John Schaffner, Editor, *Buckhead Reporter*, states in his most recent editorial, “Do we really think we are going to get people to leave their cars at home because we now will have a streetcar going up and down Peachtree?”

- Michael Meyer, Director of Georgia Transportation Institute Georgia Tech said, “There clearly will be traffic disruption. You don’t put something like this in place and then assume there won’t be problems with the traffic.”

- State Senator Sam Zamarripa, an advisor to Atlanta Streetcar, Inc. said, “Once you put a streetcar down Peachtree, you’re going to see it become even denser than it is. Atlanta will look more like Shanghai than Dallas.”

A Referendum on the Tax Increase Would be Fair

Property owners in the proposed Special Tax District should have the opportunity to participate in a referendum to decide whether the benefits from the project are sufficient to warrant such an increase in their taxes. Although the streetcars will extend from the Georgia Dome through Auburn Avenue the taxpayers within 1/4 mile of Peachtree will subsidize the developments on Auburn Avenue, through the Auburn Spur and the Downtown Loop. How do the taxpayers feel about the streetcars replacing the buses? Only a referendum will tell.

History of the Peachtree Streetcar Corridor Project

Mayor Franklin brought together a group of business leaders to form the Peachtree Corridor Task Force. Many of these business leaders are from firms with vested interest in the Project. The Task Force released its final report on March 26 and was summarized by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*: “A \$1 billion overhaul for Peachtree that includes a 14-mile streetcar line from Buckhead to Fort McPherson and a 2.4 mile Downtown Loop to connect many of the City’s top tourist attractions. Along the way, sidewalks would be widened, landscaped medians built, improved lighting and street furniture installed. The streetcars –powered by overhead electric cables– would run every 10 minutes.”

Streetcar vs. Bus

The advocates of the streetcars indicate that they will run along Peachtree powered by overhead electric cables. Presently, MARTA buses now run along Peachtree every 20 minutes during peak hours, with the recent addition of the Peach Bus, which runs directly from Buckhead to downtown, without the need to change at the Arts Center MARTA station. To my knowledge, there has never been a professional feasibility study of the bus rider-ship on the Peachtree route. However, living on Peachtree Road and walking my dog at peak hours in the morning and evening, I can attest to the fact that the buses are never filled, southbound or northbound, often with only a few riders on a bus.

Survey of Peachtree Property Owners

(and those owners within 1/4 mile of Peachtree)

1. Do you support the Peachtree Streetcar Corridor Project?

Yes

No

2. If yes, do you support the Special Tax District, increasing your taxes by three to four mills?

Yes

No

3. Would you ride the streetcars?

Yes

No

4. The former City of Atlanta Planning Commissioner, Mike Dobbins, has stated “The Peachtree Corridor Task Force is heavily stacked with powerful business types who could stand to profit from the project.” Do you feel that a Super Community Improvement District, taxing the business community and not the residents, would be more appropriate than a Special Tax District?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

Name (printed) _____

Signature _____

Address _____

There is Still Time to Appeal Your Property Assessment!

The mission of the Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation (FCTF) is to lower your property taxes. Toward this end, we are pleased to offer our members (and non-members who join) the following services. Simply check the boxes of interest to you and return to us in the self-addressed, postage-paid envelope:

- Yes! I would like to have a review of my assessment by an experienced, professional Certified Appraiser to determine whether I have grounds for appeal. I understand that such a request must be accompanied by a copy of my latest Notice of Assessment and a check for \$150.
- Yes! In the event that I do have grounds for appeal, I would like to be represented by an experienced, professional Certified Appraiser. Please send me your Appeal Form together with fees.

Questions? Feel free to call (404) 869-6066 anytime.

Note: Members who are not receiving our emails, please contact us at: **Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation**, 309 E Paces Ferry Road, NE, Suite 607, Atlanta, Georgia 30305 Phone: (404) 869-6066 Fax: (404) 869-6101 **Email:** fctf1@bellsouth.net **Website:** www.fcta.us

Please detach here

Join the Fight To Bring Good Government to Atlanta and Fulton County!

I enclose my annual membership of:

\$50 Family ___ \$100 Patron ___ \$200 Corporate Member ___ \$500 Corporate Sponsor ___

In addition, I enclose a **tax-deductible** contribution of: \$100 ___ \$500 ___ Other ___

If you prefer, you can charge your membership or a donation online at www.fcta.us

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____