

While those in the Downtown Atlanta area will see improved train cars, more stops in between stations, and an enhanced fare system where new MARTA riders can tap their debit cards to pay for their fare, those living in the Suburbs or outer Atlanta areas will continue to have their access to MARTA stay stagnant.

Over 200,000 people use MARTA every day to commute to work, home, and destinations within Atlanta. As one of the last great city rail systems built in the US, with its first rail line constructed in 1979, it is surprising that it has not seen expansion to suburban communities. Through a mixture of class divides throughout history, the inability of MARTA to expand, as it relies on counties to vote for the expansion of the rail system, and the lack of funding compared to road infrastructure, MARTA has been unable to expand beyond its bounds in the Metro Atlanta region.

People who live in Suburban communities, such as one former Lawrenceville resident, Rich Patton, have to drive over 20 miles to the nearest station to make use of the MARTA rail in Doraville. "If I wanted to take MARTA from downtown out to Truist Ballpark, there's no way for me to get there". The inaccessibility to MARTA stations highlights a key issue in the sparse infrastructure built for public transportation in Georgia. Without a way to access stations, fewer people will be able to utilize them, resulting in a greater reliance on cars, which reduces the need for public transit.

In an interview with Greg Japa, Director of Capital Communications at MARTA, he states that "There were public votes in each of the counties to choose whether to join the system, and Cobb and Gwinnett voters rejected joining... It only passed in Atlanta, Fulton, and DeKalb. Clayton, Cobb, and Gwinnett all rejected it at the time ... There have been recent votes in Dekab and Gwinnett to join MARTA, Still, they have all been rejected ... At the time, we are only dedicated to serving our core service areas, we support efforts in counties to join, but it's their choice." According to voting records, the most recent vote to expand MARTA's heavy rail to Gwinnett failed by less than a 0.5% margin.

Even if governments were able to pass a vote to expand, it's unlikely that local governments will be able to pay for the rail to be constructed. Japa spoke about the resistance in the Federal Government to fund public transportation networks, which trickles down. Public Transportation in Georgia should be shifted from a city issue to a State issue.

Despite the challenges, plans to expand MARTA are still in swing, according to WSB-TV, Re-Elect Andre Dickens has plans to expand MARTA outwards to Gwinnett, MARTA also works closely with Gwinnett and Cobb transit systems, even using the same Breeze payment system to board, and for those who don't have direct access to a rail, MARTA will be offering a MARTA Reach service, where riders can request a smaller MARTA vehicle to pick them up for the same \$2.50 fare.