



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, November 5, 1971

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Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe today announced an initial \$22.6 million grant to the Metropolitan Atlanta (Georgia) Rapid Transit Authority to help MARTA buy 490 new transit buses and take over the faltering Atlanta Transit System.

Today's \$22,633,250 grant, made by the Department of Transportation's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), also will enable MARTA to purchase two-way radio communications equipment for the buses, 35 acres of land for five park-and-ride lots and for bus maintenance, and buy 104 bus stop shelters. Also included in the grant are funds for MARTA to buy 22 new bus service vehicles, 16 new supervisor cars and other related transit equipment, materials and services.

Secretary Volpe said that an additional UMTA grant of \$7,544,416 will be available to MARTA after Atlanta has its regional transportation planning requirements certified by UMTA. This will bring the Federal share of the \$45,266,500 project to \$30,177,666, or two-thirds of the project costs, Secretary Volpe said.

Local funding to cover the remaining one-third costs is expected to come from a proposed one-percent sales and use tax which Atlanta area voters are being asked by MARTA to approve by referendum November 9th. Additional proceeds from the local tax are expected to cover an anticipated operating deficit which will result from a proposed reduction in the present 45 cent bus fare to 15 cents per ride for at least the next seven years.

In addition, the one-percent sales and use tax will pay the local share of implementing a rapid transit system for the Atlanta region and it will provide local funds for proposed exclusive busways. The new buses and

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park-and-ride facilities covered by today's Phase One grant are a necessary element for the planned busways, according to UMTA Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal.

"It is very important for Atlanta to have a public transportation system fully capable of serving their rapidly-growing region," the Administrator said. "Atlanta now has an opportunity to make real progress and become a national leader in mass transit."

Of the 490 new diesel buses, 476 will be 47-passenger coaches and the remaining 14 will be 23-passenger vehicles. The total cost of the 490 buses is expected to be \$22.3 million. The purchase price of the Atlanta Transit System will be around \$13 million. Additional improvements and equipment will bring the total price for the project up to \$45 million, Administrator Villarreal said.

Atlanta Transit and its subsidiary, the Metropolitan Transit System, operates a fleet of 500 vehicles on 82 regular routes covering over 1,000 miles. In a 12-month period which ended last November, the combined systems transported 48.5 million passengers.

Administrator Villarreal observed: "With public control and new equipment, we expect to attract a larger percentage of rush-hour automobile commuters who will be able to use mass transit and put their cars to better use." By 1983, it is expected that mass transit vehicles will handle nearly 40 percent of all persons traveling to or from Atlanta's central business district, making 350,000 or more transit trips a day.

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