



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UMTA 72-16

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The U. S. Department of Transportation today made an additional \$7.5 million grant to the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) to assist in financing the acquisition of the Atlanta Transit System and the purchase of 490 new buses.

Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe said that today's Federal grant is in addition to \$22.6 million previously given to MARTA. "This money brings the Federal share up to the full two-thirds funding of the MARTA program, and its release is based upon the satisfactory achievement by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), MARTA and the State Highway Department of a cooperative planning process, including comprehensive transportation planning for the Atlanta area," Secretary Volpe said.

The \$7.5 million grant, made by the Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), will help MARTA to repay local bank loans, which will reduce interest expense.

Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal of UMTA said acquisition of Atlanta Transit System and replacement of aging diesel buses is the first step of the MARTA program that eventually will result in a 56-mile rail rapid transit system for the Atlanta area.

"The people of Atlanta (Fulton and DeKalb Counties) voted last year to tax themselves at the rate of one percent on retail sales to assure the

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availability of the one-third local share for their transit program," Villarreal said. "President Richard Nixon's \$3.1 billion, five-year program for mass transportation assistance makes it possible for us to aid Atlanta and other areas that are taking steps to improve local transit."

On March 1, MARTA reduced its fares from 40 cents to 15 cents, and in the first two weeks, ridership increased by 26 percent. The fare reduction was made possible by the new sales tax. The sharp rise in transit use by Atlantans is considered an encouraging sign that urban area citizens want inexpensive and convenient public transportation.

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For further information, contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs at (202) 426-4043, or Mr. King Elliott, Director of Public Information, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, 808 Glenn Building, Atlanta, Georgia 30303, (404) 524-5711. (UMTA Project No. GA-UTG-7)

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