

Taxi-Transit Integration in the Atlanta Region

MARTA Station Review

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Introduction:

Between July 22, 2000 and August 4, 2000, Dr. Randall Guensler of Trans/AQ, Inc. visited each of the 37 operational stations on the MARTA rail system to determine the number, configuration, and accessibility of taxi stands. The location of all taxi stands were recorded in a field book and transcribed to station maps obtained from Barry Hodges, MARTA's Manager of Architecture.¹ When appropriate, MARTA station managers, MARTA police officers, and taxicab drivers were interviewed to ascertain the operational design of the station and to identify issues of concern associated with taxi facility design. After performing the field reviews, the MARTA Architectural Design Standards and Civil Engineering Design Standards (also obtained from Barry Hodges) were reviewed. This report first summarizes the general findings from the field review. The second section of this report presents the findings for each individual section. The final section of the report discusses MARTA's design and construction standards.

Station Review Summary:

The field visits and discussions with drivers at the individual stations reveals that there are insufficient taxi stands present at the majority of MARTA stations. Fifteen of the 36 active stations have no taxi stands at all. No stations appear to provide an oversupply of taxi stands. One of the most critical issues is that the stations with some of the highest potential demand for taxi service have the fewest number of stands. For example, Five Points and Lenox stations are poorly supported by taxis. However, there are no studies regularly undertaken to ascertain taxi service demand. This could be accomplished by monitoring taxi stand occupancy and number of fare departures using video or other electronic surveillance techniques.

Visibility

As discussed in the taxi forum and agency interview documentation, the taxi industry is heavily reliant upon taxi stand visibility. Many decisions to take a taxi are impulsive. For example, a patron arriving at the MARTA station seeing a cab may elect to take the cab to their final destination rather than calling a friend, relative, or co-worker for a ride. Many of the stations do not have taxi stands located in direct view of departing patrons. At a few stations, taxi stands have been moved to less desirable locations in favor of buses or kiss-and-ride parking spaces. Because the taxi industry is not invited to participate directly in this decision making process, the allocation of spaces at MARTA stations should be reexamined.

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Signage

All stations were inspected to determine signage and information availability. No MARTA stations provided any information on local cab companies (i.e. names and telephone numbers). Travellink information kiosks do not contain information on taxi operations. MARTA should consider adding to every station well-lighted areas with signs bearing the telephone numbers of local taxi companies (located near the public telephones). This is especially important because patrons often remove applicable pages from yellow page directories at public telephones (assuming the yellow pages are even available).

Only a few stations provided directional signs indicating the locations of station taxi stands. MARTA should add additional floor level signs to all stations with taxi stands. Signs should also indicate when a station does not have a taxi stand so that patrons will know that they need to call a cab directly and will not waste time looking for a stand. Signs should employ international taxi symbols as well as text to assist foreign travelers. Table 1 summarizes the stations that did provide directional signage to the taxi stands at the station.

Station Assistance

The MARTA station managers are well informed regarding the location of station taxi stands. In some cases, the station managers can provide taxi company telephone numbers (although some might consider this a potential problem in that MARTA employees would be directing patrons to one service over other services). All station managers should receive training regarding how taxi assistance should be provided to patrons.

Station Security

Taxi stands located near the station exit are generally well lighted and secure. Stations located away from the station exit do provide the same sense of security. Drivers complain that additional cameras and lighting are needed at several of the station. Taxi drivers and MARTA Police officers unanimously agree that security is enhanced through the presence of taxi stands. Drivers have an opportunity to observe more activity in the parking lot, serving as unpaid security guards. Designing MARTA lots to provide multiple stands and staging areas (including staging areas to the rear or center of the parking lot) increases driver vigilance and improves station security.

Driver Amenities

In general, stations do not provide benches and shade for taxi driver use in the taxi stand areas. Benches with armrests should be provided in these areas for drivers awaiting passengers and passengers awaiting drivers. Provision of shade in the taxi stand areas would encourage drivers to shut off their engines while awaiting a fare. Drivers complain that some MARTA station operators and police officers will not allow them to use the station restrooms. Considering the support service that taxicabs provide, MARTA should consider implementing a policy that allows these drivers to use the station bathrooms.

Table 1
Summary of Station Taxi Stands and Signage

Station Name	Station #	Taxi Stands	Visibility	Signs
Hightower/Hamilton Holmes	W5	7	Excellent	None
West Lake	W4	2	Good	None
Bankhead	P4	2	Poor	None
Ashby	W3	0	None	None
Vine City	W2	0	None	None
GWCC/Dome/OMNI	W1	7/0/0	None	Multiple
Five Points	C	4	Fair	None
Georgia State	E1	0	None	None
King Memorial	E2	0	None	None
Inman Park/Reynoldstown	E3	1	Good	None
Edgewood/Candler Park	E4	2	Good	None
East Lake	E5	0	None	None
Decatur	E6	0	None	None
Avondale Estates	E7	0	None	None
Kensington	E8	8+	Excellent	None
Indian Creek	E9	5	Poor	1 Overhead
North Springs	N11	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sandy Springs	N10	n/a	n/a	n/a
Dunwoody	N9	4	None	10+ Overhead
Medical Center	N8	5	Good	None
Buckhead	N7	0	None	None
Doraville	NE10	9	Excellent	None
Chamblee	NE9	7	Excellent	None
Brookhaven	NE8	13	Good	None
Lenox Mall	NE7	0	None	None
Lindbergh	N6	10	Excellent	None
Arts Center	N5	1	Poor	None
Midtown	N4	0	None	None
North Avenue	N3	0	None	None
Civic Center	N2	0	None	None
Peachtree Center	N1	0	None	None
Garnett	S1	5	Good	None
West End	S2	8	Poor	2 Floor
Oakland City	S3	1	Good	None
Lakewood	S4	0	None	None
East Point	S5	3	None	None
College Park	S6	7	Good	None
Airport	S7	300	Excellent	None

Standing Policies

MARTA Police policy on overflow taxi arrivals is not always consistent across stations. Drivers indicate that some police officers will allow taxis to wait in the back of the parking lot when the number of taxis exceeds available stand space. Other officers will require that the excess taxis leave the station entirely. Because there are different numbers of taxi stands at each location, it is important that stations with few stands be equipped with a taxi staging area somewhere in the parking lot.

End-of-Line Stations

Taxi demand at the end-of-line stations is higher than most stations because a significant number of commuters are taking rail in to the city. According to MARTA staff, the end-of-line stations have higher taxi demands than were anticipated during the design process. As such, MARTA is providing additional taxi stands at the two new North line stations.

Dominance of Outbound Trips

Drivers indicate that more than four times the number of taxi trips depart the station than arrive at the station. Passengers that carpool into the city or are dropped off at the station by a family member, friend, or work colleague will sometimes take taxicabs back to their original work or home location. This fact is important in undertaking planning studies that collect data related to the combined use of taxi and transit. Because the number of access and egress trips from transit stations by taxi are very different, surveys sampling plans need to account for this. Furthermore, sampling should be conducted of patrons using taxis at the station, rather than solely relying on onboard rail surveys. Taxi trip is often impulse decisions that will be underestimated in an onboard stated preference survey. Plus, the decision to take a taxi may be significantly influenced by the visibility of the taxi at the station. Hence, kiss-and-ride surveys should also be performed.

Individual Station Reviews

Hightower/Hamilton Holmes (W5)

The Hamilton Holmes station is the end of the west line. Passengers on route to Six Flags can take a bus from this location. The concourse exit is at the west end of the station, with a street exit to the south and a tunnel leading to a parking lot on the north. There are seven taxi stands located in the north parking lot. However, all of these stands were closed to taxi use by MARTA police barriers. These stands may or may not be needed (additional interviews and observation should be conducted). A number of passenger cars were parked in these spaces behind the barriers. The station manager was not aware that the spaces were currently closed to taxi use and could not explain why the barriers were present. The south side exit provides eight taxi stands immediately across from the station exit. Visibility is very good and taxi activity at this station is very high. When asked about finding a taxi at this location, the station manager even provided a business card for one of the taxi companies. MARTA should install signs directing patrons to the south lot for taxi service.

West Lake (W4)

The West Lake station has a single street exit. Upon leaving the concourse, patrons walk between two bus turnaround areas to reach the parking lot. Two taxi stands are located on the roadway approaching the busways in the direction of passenger flow to the parking lot. The stands are highly visible to individuals leaving the station. There was no station manager present to interview and no answer on the courtesy white telephone. No taxis were observed in the area and drivers were not interviewed. It is not clear whether additional taxi stands are needed at this station.

Bankhead (P4)

The Bankhead station is at the end of the line of the east-northeast MARTA line (P). The single center platform provides stairs down to the street level. Passengers exiting the station turn right to Bankhead Highway, or left to the busway and a small parking lot. There are two taxi stands in the small parking lot. However, visibility of the taxi stands is poor, and passengers are unlikely to expect they should move through the busway and into the small parking lot to find a taxi. . There are no taxi stands or stopping areas along Bankhead Highway. Signs should be installed to direct passengers to the taxis. No taxi drivers were available to provide information on whether two stands is sufficient for this station.

Ashby (W3)

The Ashby Street Station provides three exits: one to the west of Ashby Street, and two on the east side of Ashby Street. There are no taxi stands at any of the exits. The west exit serves a parking lot, where taxi stands could be added. However, patrons would more likely expect to find the taxis at the street exit on the east side of Ashby. A busway between the two east side exits could also accommodate taxi operations.

Vine City (W2)

The Vine City station has a single platform with stairs leading to a street level concourse. No station manager was present to interview at this station. The general signage at the station is very poor and patrons are unlikely to know where they are relative to nearby attractions. This station is walking distance from the Georgia Dome (just west of the Dome). There are no taxi stands provided at this station, and the station does not appear to be completely constructed. A MARTA researcher collecting bus traffic data was interviewed at this station. She indicated that MARTA routes a significant amount of passenger traffic through this station whenever there is operational trouble on the line. The small station is heavily utilized at times. In addition, many tour companies and convention transportation services have started routing conference attendees going to the Dome through this station. Companies provide conventioners with written walking directions from this station to the Dome (or serve them by bus from this station). It is easier access to the Dome from this station than from the OMNI/Dome/GWCC station. There is an increased perception of safety at this ground level station crossing compared to walking along the isolated caged walkway at the next station. The parking lot site reserved for "Stage II" development at this station should be developed and should include taxi stands at this location.

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OMNI/Dome/GWCC (W1)

There are two main exits from the OMNI/Dome/GWCC station: a west exit to the Georgia Dome and an east exit to the Georgia World Congress Center, CNN Center, and other major attractions.

The west exit leads up to a long caged walkway leading to the entrance of the Georgia Dome. The walkway is isolated and does not provide patrons with a sense of personal safety. Presumably, patrons only use this station exit when seeking access to the Georgia Dome during events. There are no taxi stands in this area, but it is not likely that stands would be needed here on an ongoing basis, only during events.

A triple set of escalators leads up to the street level from the east exit of the concourse. Upon reaching ground level, patrons can exit to the left toward the Georgia World Congress Center or to the right to CNN Center. Techwood Street runs behind the station exit. Stairs lead up from the station exit to Techwood Street on the CNN exit side. This exit also serves Phillips arena. Upon arriving at the street, passengers will not find any taxi stands or service. The available streetside locations (probably 20 spaces in all) are used by Atlanta Police vehicles. There are no standing areas on either Techwood or Marietta Drive for taxi operations. There are no signs indicating where patrons can find a cab.

Exiting toward the GWCC side, passengers arrive on a street runs between Techwood and International Boulevard (where the GWCC is located). This street is open to passenger cars only and parking is not allowed on this street. There are no taxi stands immediately present, although it would be relatively easy to add them on this street. Between 40 and 50 cabs could be staged in this area. A traffic study would have to be performed to see if these stations would impede traffic during events. Taxis are located near the GWCC center exit, a one-block walk to the south where this road intersects International Boulevard.

The front entrance of the GWCC provides tour bus stations. The GWCC taxi stands are located on International Boulevard across the street and 1/2 block south of the GWCC entrance. The taxi stand is poorly visible from the GWCC entrance (the view is usually blocked by buses). The stand can hold seven taxis (although part of the area used by taxis is actually labeled for bus use). A staging area wraps around the block to the south and then east around the next corner. There are no taxi starters working at the GWCC entrance. Hence, it is not possible to hail a cab at the entrance. Patrons must rely upon the overhead signage to determine that taxis are available to the south of the exit. Drivers indicated that their stands were moved back from the GWCC entrance about three years ago to a new location across the street (in favor of the tour buses). About one year later, the taxi stands were again moved, this time southward from the entrance to the current location. Restoring taxi service to the entrance would significantly benefit the taxi industry. Given the overall poor accessibility to taxis at the OMNI/Dome/GWCC station, restoring taxi service at the entrance (and providing a GWCC taxi starter during major events) is recommended.

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Cab drivers report that relationships with the Georgia State Patrol (responsible for GWCC security) are very good. Whereas, relationships between taxi drivers and Atlanta Police/County Sheriff officers are not nearly as cooperative. Cab drivers are satisfied with the level of personal security provided at the GWCC areas. Taxi operators state that there is a clear bias on the part of the Police in favor of bus operations over taxi operations. Limousines are sometimes allowed to encroach on the taxi service areas. There is no permanent presence of the Taxi Bureau at this station.

Five Points (C)

The Five Points station is the largest in the system and serves as the intersection of the North-South and East-West rail lines. The North-South line runs on the bottom level, the East-West line runs on the second level, and the exit to the street is on the top level. Upon reaching the upper level, patrons can exit in three directions: east to the Peachtree Street, south to the bus lines on Alabama Street, and west to an additional bus staging area on Forsyth Street (Braves Shuttles pick up here). An additional underground exit leads directly to the Underground Mall. There are no designated taxi stands at this station.

Traffic on Peachtree Street precludes the establishment of stands at the station exit. City police officers will write taxicab drivers tickets if they stop to pick up passengers at this location. The conflict between fare refusal and police prohibition of stopping on Peachtree Street is significant. Drivers are not allowed to pick up passengers here without fear of a citation. Passengers can misconstrue the passage of the taxi as a fare refusal. Signs that inform potential taxi patrons that cabs are not allowed to pick up passengers at this location are desperately needed in such locations.

The large number of buses picking up on Forsyth and Alabama likely preclude the establishment of permanent taxi stands on these streets (further, police vehicles routinely park on the sidewalk along these streets). A number of MARTA station managers are available to provide information to patrons at this station.

An unofficial taxi stand is located on Alabama Street in the section that is closed to vehicle traffic above the Underground Mall. Three to four taxis can queue in this area, serving the Underground Suites Hotel. MARTA patrons can see this area from the east exit, but visibility is only fair to good. The area becomes crowded with turnaround traffic and hotel patrons arriving to check in. This area could be redesigned to support taxi operations. The limited pedestrian traffic along this closed section of Alabama Street may also support the ingress of taxis from the opposite block.

Broad Street intersects Alabama Street at the center of the MARTA station. This street is reserved exclusively for bus traffic. Given the limited volume of buses operating on this street, it seems likely that taxi stands could be located on this street. With proper signage inside and outside the station, this area could serve as a large taxi queuing area.

Georgia State (E1)

The Georgia State station provides an exit to Piedmont Avenue and another to Butler Street. Both street exits provide yellow-curb pullout areas that taxis could use. However, no areas are officially identified as taxi stands. The station manager indicated that patrons cannot expect to find taxis here. To catch a cab you will "need to go to the downtown station." Given the proximity to Georgia State, it is likely that a stand on Piedmont coupled with station signage would be used by taxi operators.

King Memorial (E2)

The King Memorial station has stairs leading down from the platform to a single concourse exit. The busway is located to the south side, and the north leads to an adjacent streetside parking area. The parking area provides no taxi stands but does contain approximately 20 spaces that are marked with a yellow curb. All of these spaces are occupied by passenger vehicles. Some of these spots should be clearly marked as taxi stands.

Inman Park/Reynoldstown (E3)

The station concourse provides two pedestrian skyways to opposite sides of the MARTA and Railroad line. On the south side of the tracks (Reynoldstown), a small parking lot contains 26 parking spaces, three bus pullouts, and kiss-and-ride spaces. There are no taxi stands at this station side, but spaces could be readily accommodated. The north Inman Park side of the station provides a significantly larger parking lot containing two kiss-and-ride spaces and a single taxi stand. No taxis were noted at this station during the site visit.

Edgewood/Candler Park (E4)

The Edgewood/Candler Park station also provides two pedestrian skyways to north and south parking lots (similar layout to the Inman Park station). As with the last station, the south side lot contains limited parking spaces and some kiss-and-ride slots, but no taxi stands. The north side parking lot contains a single taxi stand in front of nine kiss-and-ride spaces. At least two of these spaces should be converted to taxi stands.

East Lake (E5)

Two exits leave from the station concourse: one to DeKalb Avenue and one to College Avenue. There are no taxi stands on either lot serving the station. More than five kiss-and-ride spaces are located adjacent to each of the entrances, some of which could be readily converted to taxi stands.

Decatur (E6)

The Decatur station has two exits, one to Church Street and one to the dedicated busway to the west of the station. There is a curb cut provided on Church Street with painted yellow curbs. Although the area is not identified as a taxi stand, the station manager indicated that the Decatur Police allow taxis to queue in this area during rush hours. Some of this curb should be dedicated to taxi operations (and labeled as a taxi stand). The Swanton Way busway does not currently contain taxi stands or allow taxis to stage in the area. Because patrons are likely to look for cabs in the busway area, signage should

be added at the platform and concourse indicating that cabs can be hailed on Church Street.

Avondale Estates (E7)

The Avondale station has signs indicating that taxi stands are located at the north end of the station. However, there are no taxi stands at this station. The north side exit from the station has two kiss-and-ride spaces that could serve as taxi stands. However, this conversion is probably not wise. This curbside area is too separated from the other parking areas by an uphill grade, alternative kiss-and-ride spaces would not be viable on this side. The south exit from the station leads to a small upper level parking area containing provides five kiss-and-ride spaces as well as ten regular parking spaces. These spaces are highly visible from the station exit and five should be converted to taxi stands. A taxi driver standing in one of the kiss-and-ride spaces indicated that station security is an issue at Avondale Estates. Additional security is needed at night. Because there are no taxi stands (or standing) allowed at the Avondale station, taxi drivers indicate that they often respond to telephone calls for service at Avondale while they are staged at the Indian Creek station.

Kensington (E8)

The Kensington station provides the most complicated but probably one of the most effective taxi operating structures. Taxis are heavily used at this station, and four fares departed in a 20-minute period. As many as 20-30 taxis can locate at this station during busy periods. Taxis entering the station first gather in the back of the parking lot in an area designated for taxi staging. From the staging area, taxis move to four taxi stand spaces located on the vehicle access bridge leading from the main entrance into the parking lot. From this staging area, cabs move forward to four additional taxi stands located at the main passenger entrance to the station. Taxicab operators self-enforce the staging structure at the station, ensuring that cabs follow a first-come first-in policy. The station concourse provides two exits to the parking lot, each served by one of the taxi stands. Hence, no matter which exit a patron selects, there is a high probability that a taxi will be readily visible. Station security is enhanced through the staging area and multiple taxi stand locations. Drivers have an opportunity to observe more activity in the parking lot, serving as unpaid security guards.

Indian Creek (E9)

The Indian Creek station is at the end of the east MARTA line.² Overhead signs in the station direct patrons to the kiss-and-ride and taxi stands at this station. Other stations should be equipped with similar overhead signs (as well as waist-level level signs similar to those noted at West End station). As patrons exit the station, the kiss-and-ride area with 12 spaces lies straight ahead. Taxis are located around the corner to the left of the kiss-and-ride area, completely hidden from view by the fencing that surrounds the busway. The two sections of the parking lot (kiss and ride and taxi) exit to different

² Pedestrian access to this station is a problem. Neighborhood residents do not have direct access to the station and have to take a circuitous route by vehicle to access the station. A pedestrian bridge is needed.

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roadway facilities. The parking area containing the kiss-and-ride spaces only exits to I-285. The parking area containing the taxi stands exits to local roadways. Switching the taxi stand and kiss and ride areas would significantly improve taxi visibility. However, a pass through gate would need to be provided allowing taxicabs to move between the parking areas.

Providing only five taxi stands at this location is inadequate. Even the drivers at the Dunwoody station, when asked about problems at other stations, indicated that there is a significant deficiency in taxi stands at the Indian Creek station. This station seems to be a high priority for improvement among taxi drivers. According to the drivers, this station needs more than 12 taxi stands. During the rush evening hours, more than 16 cabs are estimated to serve the station. MARTA police officers have the additional cabs wait in the upper are of the parking lot until space opens on the taxi stands.

When asked about relationships between taxi companies and MARTA police, taxi operators indicated that MARTA police do not support taxi operators to the same extent on the east line as they do on other lines. Police officers and station managers discourage taxi drivers from sitting in the shaded areas near the taxi stands while awaiting fares (officers have banned drivers from the station for a day). Station managers are reluctant to let taxi drivers use MARTA bathrooms. Relationships between drivers and station officials are said by drivers to be improving.

North Springs (N11) and Sandy Springs (N10)

These new stations are under construction. Design specifications do contain provisions for taxicabs. Barry Hodges, MARTA architect, indicated that MARTA has learned from the taxi demand at station ends and is integrating taxi operations into the station design.

Dunwoody (N9)

The Dunwoody station is the end of the North Line. The concourse provides a single exit. The taxi stands are located downstairs in the parking lot. Elevators provide access to the lower level, and overhead signs direct patrons to taxis at Level 1 (the signs do not indicate that you are currently on level 3). Four taxi stands are immediately visible upon exiting the elevator in the parking lot. Five additional slots are located in the back of the parking lot, but drivers cannot see the elevator exit. Two hotel shuttle slots are also near the elevator entrance. Drivers indicate that taxis are always available at this location. The limited number of taxi spaces at the station is a problem. MARTA police stringently enforce the no standing requirements at this location, and tickets for waiting outside of an official taxi area are \$50.00. Drivers indicate that an additional 5 to 7 spaces are needed immediately near the elevator. Drivers indicate that some of the kiss-and-ride slots located to the left as you exit the elevators could be converted to taxi stands. .

Medical Center (N8)

The station contains five taxi stands, located immediately outside of the station exit and adjacent to the kiss-and-ride area. The taxi stands are visible to patrons upon exit. Signs at the station platform direct patrons to the kiss-and-ride area. These signs could be modified to indicate that taxis are also located there. Drivers indicate that patrons can

always catch a cab at this station. Additional cabs do queue in the back of the parking lot, indicating that additional taxi stands are warranted.

Buckhead (N7)

The Buckhead station is relatively new compared to the other stations. The lower concourse provides escalators up to the north side of Peachtree Street, and a tunnel access to an escalator leading to the opposite side of Peachtree Street. Signs clearly indicate that passengers should use the tunnel, as Peachtree Street is very wide and heavily traveled. At street level, there is room for approximately six buses on each side of the street. There are no officially marked taxi stands, nor information regarding taxi service. However, taxis do cruise along Peachtree Street and will pick passengers at this station. Out-of-town visitors are likely to take MARTA to the Buckhead Station, recognizing the area name, but cannot readily determine where they (relative to local attractions) are when they arrive at the station. Additional local maps at this station could provide visiting patrons a "neighborhood context." The proximity to the Buckhead bar and restaurant area provides a significant potential demand for taxi operations. This station would provide a perfect opportunity for a demand-response technology demonstration project, allowing patrons to push a button on a kiosk to call for a radio-dispatch taxicab.

Doraville (NE10)

The Doraville station is at the end of the Northeast line. There is a single exit from the station leading immediately to the handicap parking section and kiss-and-ride area. There are five taxi stands directly across from the station exit, clearly visible to exiting patrons. An additional four stands are located around the corner from the exit area which serve as a staging area for taxis. The stationmaster indicates that patrons can always catch a cab at this location. This station supports taxicab operations extremely well.

Chamblee (NE9)

Seven taxi stands are located across from the station exit at curbside. The stands are clearly visible to all exiting patrons. Taxi drivers indicated that there is always a taxi presence at this station and that taxis serve the station until station closing. As many as seven taxicabs queue at this location, additional taxicabs must move to the upper parking lot to await an open slot.

Brookhaven (NE8)

Aside from the airport station, the Brookhaven station provides more taxi stands than any other station. Four of the taxi stands are located curbside to the concourse. An additional nine taxi slots are located in the parking lot across from the concourse with decent visibility to exiting patrons. The kiss-and-ride slots and taxi stands could be reversed to increase taxi visibility at this location. Taxicab operators indicate that the majority of trips are from the station to residences. Very few of the trips are from the station to businesses. Surprisingly, taxi drivers indicate that very few of the trips are passengers returning from the airport with luggage (this comment was also supported by other drivers at other locations). Additional studies should be conducted to determine whether strategies can be implemented to increase the use of taxi-transit for airport trips.

Lenox Mall (NE7)

The Lenox Mall station consists of: a lower platform level, a second level exclusive busway level, and a third level exit to the street. Patrons exiting the station to Lenox mall or the street level must move to the upper floor and leave through a single street corner exit. These individuals must then cross a wide street with high traffic volumes to reach the mall. There are no taxi stands at this station. Patrons looking for taxis are advised by station managers and MARTA Police officers to cross the street to the Marriott Hotel. The taxis at this location are poorly visible. A secondary crossing to the Atlanta Plaza business center is provided by exiting the east side of the busway and moving up stairs to an overhead crossing (parking is located at this side). No taxis are located on the Atlanta Plaza side. General signage improvements are necessary at this station, considering the fact that so many of the patrons will be visitors to the city at this station (Lenox Mall is one of the most heavily visited attractions in Atlanta). There is plenty of room in the busway to provide safe and convenient access to taxicabs. Management should consider allowing taxicabs to queue in this area and providing signage to support operations in this area.

Lindbergh (N6)

The Lindbergh station is the transfer station on the north line at the split between the Dunwoody and Doraville tracks. MARTA headquarters is also located within walking distance of the station. There are two exits from the platform leading up to the concourse and out to the parking lot. This station has the most visible taxicab presence, aside from the airport station. There are 10 well-marked taxi stands at the exit from the station, both at curbside and at the ends of the parking rows. Taxicabs are visible from both exit ends of the concourse. This station can serve as a model for providing taxicab visibility to exiting patrons.

Arts Center (N5)

The Arts Center Station has an upper parking lot containing kiss and ride slots and a single taxi stand marked with a sign at the curb. During the site visit, no cabs were present. A private vehicle was parked in the slot. The driver returned to the vehicle and departed, and another private vehicle parked in the stand and the driver left the vehicle for the station. The West Peachtree side of the station does not provide information on taxi operations. Taxis do operate on this street and two passed the station during the site visit. There is no designated stop for cabs on this side. However, curb cuts and signage for taxis could be provided at this location.

Midtown (N4)

The midtown station provides no taxi stands or taxi waiting areas. This station has high taxi potential, given the proximity to Midtown business and commercial destinations. The nearest taxi stands are located at a hotel approximately one block away, but no signage at the station provides information on obtaining taxi service. Eleven parking spaces on the east side of the station could be readily converted to taxi stands. The extremely wide sidewalks on 10th street and Peachtree Place (north and south of the station, adjacent to the two station exits) could be readily fitted with taxi pullout areas.

North Avenue (N3)

The North Avenue station has two exits, one at the corner of West Peachtree and North Avenue and another exit into the Bell South Center (a large office complex).

Surprisingly, there are no visible taxi stands at the North Avenue station. While taxicabs are known to ply West Peachtree street, there is signage indicating that stopping and standing are not allowed. Given the number of major local businesses here, and proximity to Georgia Tech for employees and visitors, taxi stands should be provided at this location. The traffic volumes on West Peachtree may pose a problem unless curb cuts are provided for taxi waiting areas. A traffic engineering study should be conducted to determine the best location for five taxi stands either on West Peachtree, one of the two side streets (with signage indicating their location), or in the busway.

Civic Center (N2)

The Civic Center station provides escalator access to the east and west sides of West Peachtree street on the I75/I85 overpass. Patrons arriving at street level can either walk to their destination at the end of the overpass, or take a number of buses that serve the station. Automobile traffic on this overpass is light. No taxi stands are located at this station. A traffic engineering study should be undertaken to determine whether such stands could be provided without a curb cut (however, there is sufficient area to provide such curb cuts on both sides if desired).³

Peachtree Center (N1)

Peachtree Center is a downtown station with four exits to Peachtree Street. The concourse exits lead to the east and west sides of the street and the exit pairs appear more that one block apart from each other in the north and south directions. Drivers indicate that they can be cited for stopping for passengers on Peachtree Street.

The northeast exit enters the Peachtree Center complex and mall. The northwest exist leads past the post office and reaches the street across from Peachtree Center. There are no taxi stands at either of the north exits and no visible cabs parked in unofficial waiting areas. Taxis can be found approximately one block north of the exit, at the Hyatt hotel. An additional 20 cabs are stationed along Baker street, queued for entrance to the Hyatt turnaround. Hyatt staff indicated that they will always hail a taxi for anyone arriving at the hotel entrance. Signs should be installed at the station and station exits that direct patrons to this taxi area.

The southwest station exit arrives at the street at the convergence of three streets, including Peachtree and Forsyth. No taxi stands are visible to existing passengers. The southeast exit arrives on Peachtree Street about 1/4 block north of the other exit. From

³ MARTA patrons arriving by bus must make their way to the rail station entrance. Northbound patrons enter on the east side of the overpass, southbound patrons enter the station from the west side of the overpass. This creates a very dangerous crossing situation. Southbound patrons arriving on the east side of the overpass (from a northbound bus) immediately jaywalk across four lanes of traffic as a group. A signalized pedestrian crossing should be added to this location.

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this station, MARTA passengers can often see taxicabs waiting along Ellis Street in an informal taxi staging area. These cabs appear here when the official taxi stands on Ellis Street in the next block east are full. Taxis are stationed here to serve the Ritz Carlton Hotel. Signs should direct patrons exiting this station to the entrance to the Ritz Carlton. Moreover, the informal staging area should be converted to an official taxi stand.

Garnett (S1)

The Garnett station is an intermodal passenger station. The MARTA station is adjacent to the "temporary" Greyhound bus terminal. Five taxi stands are located at the corner of Forsyth and Brotherton Transportation Way, within view of the Greyhound Station. MARTA patrons on the platform can see the cabs at these stands if they look for them. However, additional signage is still needed to direct patrons to the taxi area. There is space for five taxis at this location, but two additional spaces are needed.

Drivers at this station indicate that there is a significant indigents problem affecting taxicab operations. Between 10pm and 5am, there are a significant number of homeless individuals that loiter at the cab stands. Cab drivers complain that these individuals steal personal property of Greyhound bus riders, harass passengers, and affect patron willingness to cross the street to the taxi waiting area. Police patrolling the area often believe that these individuals are cab drivers and do not remove them from the area. Drivers are quick to point out that the Atlanta Police beat officer assigned to this area on Friday nights (11pm to 7am) keeps order at the taxi stand. This local officer knows the individual drivers and ensures that indigents are not allowed to remain in the area. This officers dedication to the local problems is worthy of note and serves as a good example of how local beat policing can be used effectively in the community surrounding MARTA stations.

Drivers interviewed at this station acknowledge that there is a serious fare refusal problem at the station. Many drivers will refuse to carry bus patrons into certain areas of the city, or will refuse to carry a patron at all simply based upon race or apparent income. Daily enforcement by Bureau staff at this location appears to be necessary. When asked about annual vehicle inspections, drivers indicated that air conditioning on many of the older vehicles only works on the day of the annual inspection. Drivers here support the proposed maximum 8-year limit on taxi vehicle age, provided the requirement is phased in. Drivers indicate that they need a shaded area for waiting on this street. There is a significant amount of property at this location to establish an enhanced taxi waiting area.

West End (S2)

The platform at the west end station is elevated above the concourse level. Patrons descend stairs or escalators to the lower level. The kiss-and-ride parking area is located along Lee Street and is visible to patrons through windows as they move from the upper level platform to the concourse. Upon arriving at the concourse level, two small signs at waist level direct patrons to the south parking area where the taxi stands are located. The taxis are not visible to the patrons from the station, so the signs are critical. MARTA riders interviewed in the station indicate that these taxi stand signs are always located at the station. Similar signs should be deployed at other stations. Drivers interviewed at the

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station indicated that the taxi stands were originally located at the kiss-and-ride area. In November 1999, the stands were moved to the South parking lot. Drivers complain that taxi fares have dropped significantly since the stands were moved from the highly-visible area alongside the station. Drivers indicated that MARTA has been non-responsive to their complaints regarding the relocation of the stands. Drivers also indicate that the new stand area is poorly lit and not as safe as the original location.

Oakland City (S3)

The Oakland City station provides two exits to the street: the west exit leads to Lee street and the bus concourse, and the east exit leads to Murphy avenue. There was no handicap access to the Murphy Avenue exit, so this area was not inspected. However, the Station Manager indicated that there are no taxi stands on the Murphy Street side. The Lee Street exit has a single taxi stand immediately adjacent to the station exit, at the front of a line of kiss-and-ride slots. Drivers complain that security is a major issue at this station. The security camera does not provide sufficient coverage a larger police presence is needed here. Teenagers are reported to use this parking lot for high speed driving and traffic breaks are needed to prevent this. Drivers indicate that MARTA Police will allow them to stand in the kiss-and-ride spaces, but additional taxi stands are needed here.

Lakewood (S4)

The Lakewood station is an elevated platform with passenger skyways to very large parking lot on the west and east side of the stations. The east lot is very large and was completely empty during the Saturday site visit. Passengers indicated that the west parking lot is heavily used by MARTA commuters and employees of the adjacent military base (Fort MacPherson). No taxi stands were visible on the east side. The west lot is smaller and has no taxi stands. No taxis were observed during the site visit. However, MARTA passengers reported that taxis do operate here during the week. The area was described as a "very rough neighborhood" and that it is difficult to get a taxi at this station.

East Point (S5)

MARTA patrons exit from the station at the south end of the concourse. A turn to the left at the exit takes passengers to the parking lot and three taxi stands. Signs are needed to direct patrons to the left rather than to the main thoroughfare. Taxi drivers indicated that passengers will often wait for a taxi on the street for long periods before they notice that taxis are available in the parking lot. Taxis are not allowed to pick up passengers on the thoroughfare because the high rates of vehicle speed make stops unsafe without a pullout. Additional signs for passengers should be located on the main street to direct patrons back into the lot for taxi service. Drivers indicate that at least seven taxi stands are needed in this area as taxis are in high demand. Drivers reported excellent relationships with MARTA Police. Most of the taxi drivers interviewed throughout the MARTA system knew the name of the MARTA Police major with jurisdiction over the applicable line.

College Park (S6)

The College Park station provides two exits: one to East Main Street and one to a plaza and parking area. The East Main Street side provides kiss-and-ride spaces, but no taxi stands. Seven taxi stands located on the plaza station side, immediately adjacent to the exit. Taxis are clearly visible to departing MARTA passengers. Drivers indicate that the demand for taxis is high and that five additional stands are needed at this station. Additional in-station signage should direct passengers to the plaza-side taxi stands. Taxi drivers indicate that benches are needed in the taxi stand areas. MARTA police officers will allow them to use the bathrooms at this station, but this is not the case at most MARTA stations.

Airport (S7)

The airport provides a structured transportation system supporting taxicabs, limousines, rental car shuttles, parking shuttles, hotel shuttles, local and regional shuttles, buses, and MARTA rail. The Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport Department of Aviation Ground Transportation (Winston Cooper, Director) governs airport taxi operations. Between 52,000 and 58,000 taxi trips are made from the Airport every month. Given the high demand for taxi operations, the Airport Authority provides a bullpen that allows as many as 300 taxicabs to queue for access to the curbside terminal. The Airport Authority contracts with a third-party to manage taxicab dispatch operations from the bullpen. When additional taxis are needed at curbside, curbside operators (known as taxi starters) ring the bell in the bullpen, dispatching taxis in groups of 10 to 20. There are no interior signs in the MARTA station or at the airport specifically indicating the location of taxicabs. However, standard "ground transportation" signs do direct airport patrons to the appropriate area. Taxicabs are visible through the window as patrons ride the escalators down from the platform, so signage is not a critical issue.⁴

MARTA Design Standards

Barry Hodges, MARTA's Manager of Architecture, provided relevant sections of the MARTA Architectural Design Standards and MARTA Civil Engineering Design Standards for review. Chapter 14 of the Architectural Standards document contains design requirements for parking, site work, and landscaping. Chapter 6 of the Civil Engineering Standards contains engineering criteria for Streets and Parking Facilities.

Architectural Design Standards

There are very few components of the architectural standards that are applicable to the incorporation of taxi stands into station design. Taxi stands are never directly mentioned

⁴ The lack of signage indicating to airport passengers that MARTA serves regional transportation needs is very surprising. Signs do not inform visitors that they can easily take MARTA to reach their downtown destinations at a fraction of the cost of a vehicle for hire or shuttle bus. In addition, potential patrons are not made aware that taking the rail will save time during peak congestion periods. Customers would have to enter the MARTA station and seek information from a station manager to make these determinations.

in the architectural design standards. The Civil Engineering standards do indicate that taxis and kiss-and-ride should be treated as part of the kiss-and-ride basic mode (6.4.1(G)). Hence, it is assumed that a similar definition applies in the architectural design standards. The architectural standards require that kiss-and-ride parking facilities be located "close to the ticket area (curbside) with some waiting stall parking (14.2(C)(1)(d))." Walkways should be designed to serve as collection areas for individuals coming from the kiss-and-ride areas (14.2(D)(6)). The architectural standards should be updated to provide specific design criteria for taxi stands. These guidelines should focus on visibility for the taxicabs and should provide some limited amenities for cab operators (such as shade and seating). Signage requirements should also be incorporated into the design standards.

Civil Engineering Design Standards

The Civil Engineering standards do indicate that taxis and kiss-and-ride should be treated as part of the kiss-and-ride basic mode (6.4.1(G)). The definition of kiss-and-ride includes taxi parking to "pick-up or discharge passengers and where the duration of parking is limited to a relatively short period." However, the operating criteria for taxicabs and personal vehicle kiss-and-ride are very different. The civil engineering standards should consider the disparate operating requirements of these modes and treat them separately in development of standards.

Section 6.5.5.3 requires that parking spaces for kiss-and-ride passenger cars and taxicabs should be located near the station entrance, but should not interfere with ingress or egress to the station from the adjacent surface street or internal circulation systems. Such stands shall not be located closer than 20 feet from a crosswalk. The specific design criteria for kiss-and-ride facilities (and therefore taxi stands) are contained in Section 6.7.5.

6.7.5 KISS-RIDE FACILITIES

6.7.5.1 CAPACITY

The required design capacity for a station will be determined by MARTA and provided to the Section Designer; the number of spaces will be based on the individual requirements of each station. The kiss-ride spaces shall be for attended vehicles only.

6.7.5.2 LOCATION

Location of kiss-ride facilities shall be in accordance with the following:

A. Kiss-ride spaces located off-street, either in a parking lot or a parking structure, shall be located as near to the station concourse entrances as practicable and shall be physically separated so as not to appear as an integral part of long-term parking areas within the parking lot or parking structure.

B. Kiss-ride spaces located within a parking structure shall only be upon levels of the structure which have direct access to an adjacent street.

C. Kiss-ride spaces should be adjacent to sidewalk, preferably with loading on the right hand side adjacent to the station entrance.

6.7.5.3 SIGNING AND MARKING

All kiss-ride parking spaces shall be delineated by signs. Signs shall be as shown on MARTA At-Grade Standard GS039.

6.7.5.4 *DESIGN DETAILS*

Kiss-ride parking stalls may be either parallel to the curb or at a 60 or 90 degree angle thereto, depending on the configuration of the available area and the most effective utilization of that area to accommodate the required number of spaces, preferably immediately adjacent to the station entrance. Angle parking may be used when provision of the required number of spaces as parallel spaces would cause the most distant space to be farther than 200 feet from the station entrance. For general design criteria relating to stall layout, curbing, and similar subjects, refer to MARTA At-Grade Standard GS045 and to applicable portions of Articles 6.5.5, 6.7.6.4, 6.7.10, 6.8.5, and 6.8.9.

MARTA determines kiss-and-Ride facility capacity, although the requirements do not specify who is to make this determination. Barry Hodges of MARTA indicated that the architecture group makes the initial determination of taxi demand. "The number of spaces will be based upon the individual requirements of each station (6.7.5.1)." The initial estimate is an educated guess, based upon experience at existing station. No specific guidance is available for staff to estimate this demand. Mr. Hodges indicated that MARTA staff did not plan for taxis on the east-west line during the original design phase. Although MARTA included consideration of taxis in the design of station on the north-south line, Mr. Hodges indicated that MARTA staff significantly underestimated the demand for taxis at the Dunwoody station. MARTA planned for eight taxi stands at Dunwoody, but as many as fifteen stands are needed. In designing the two new facilities on the north-south line (North Springs and Sandy Springs), MARTA will incorporate a larger number of additional taxi stands. It did become clear during the station visits that research studies are necessary to quantify the demand for taxi stand facilities at existing stations. Controlled experiments should also be undertaken to determine whether demand for these facilities increases proportionally when additional facilities are provided (and increased visibility of the taxi fleet results).