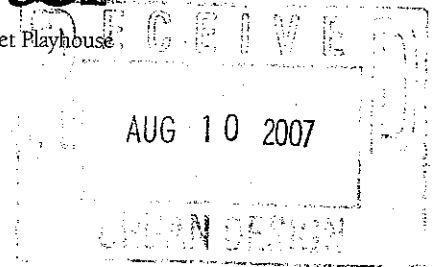


Woodruff Arts Center

■ Alliance Theatre ■ Atlanta Symphony Orchestra ■ High Museum of Art ■ Young Audiences ■ 14th Street Playhouse

August 9, 2007

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	RICHARDSON	
(2)	VANMETER	Darryl
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Wayne Fedora, P.E.
Major Projects Engineer
Federal Highway Administration,
Georgia Division
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Suite 17T100
Atlanta, GA 30303-3104

Darryl VanMeter, P.E.
Assistant State Urban Design
Engineer/Program Manager
Georgia Department of Transportation
#2 Capitol Square, SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

**Re: Comments on Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIS,
Northwest I-75/I-575 Corridor**

Dear Mr. Fedora and Mr. VanMeter:

INTEREST OF THE WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER

The Woodruff Arts Center ("WAC") is a Georgia not-for-profit corporation qualified and operating under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The WAC is among the 4 largest performing arts centers in the United States and is the largest in the Southeast. Within its single corporate structure the WAC operates the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art, the Alliance Theater and Young Audiences.

The WAC is located in the heart of the Atlanta Midtown and occupies an entire city block between 15th and 16th streets, bounded by Peachtree Street on one side and Arts Center Way on the other. Auto access to the WAC campus is generally by Peachtree or West Peachtree which are main arterial streets.

The WAC operates a large number of concerts, exhibitions, performances, conferences, events, and gatherings during the day and evenings throughout the year. The programs and exhibitions for children on the WAC campus and in the schools touch children in Georgia more than one million times a year. Direct access to the campus by students is predominately made by school bus transport and often results in more than 60 buses from near and far discharging and loading students and teachers from the surface streets surrounding the WAC campus. The safety of these children while on the streets surrounding the Arts Center and the adjacent MARTA Arts Center Station is a matter of priority for the Center.

Village
for the Arts

1280 Peachtree Street NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
404.733.4200
404.733.4281
www.woodruffcenter.org

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The WAC facilities include a central Memorial Arts Building erected in 1968 as a tribute to more than 100 patrons of the arts from Atlanta who perished in an air crash in France while on an arts trip charter in 1962. This structure houses the Atlanta Symphony, the Alliance Theater, the Young Audiences, the administrative support for these divisions, and the Woodruff Arts Center administration. The High Museum of Art and its staff are housed in several structures on the campus designed by Richard Meier (1983) and Renzo Piano (2005). The newest of these border the existing boundary immediately next to the Arts Center MARTA Station. See various pictures at: www.woodruffcenter.org.

The WAC campus is immediately adjacent to the Arts Center MARTA station and has direct access to the station from the Arts Center Way entrance. Buses enter and depart from this MARTA station by access points on both 15th streets (along side the WAC campus) and from West Peachtree. Regional Buses and shuttles also currently stop for loading and unloading in the traffic lanes on West Peachtree and Arts Center Way.

The WAC represents several generations of generous private contributions now amounting to over \$700 million dollars in buildings, assets, endowment, and investments. With an annual budget of over \$70 million it provides access to arts and education to hundreds of thousands of patrons and visitors annually. It is a critical community asset and has been important in attracting and supporting the redevelopment of Atlanta Midtown over the past 20 years.

The WAC is engaged in a comprehensive Strategic Planning Process building on the plans and ambitions of the various arts groups within the Center. Key among the issues are the questions of the further physical plant investments and expansion of the Center that is now surrounded by dramatic office and residential development that the mere presence of the Arts Center has helped to stimulate.

The access to and the use of the air rights over the MARTA Arts Center Station has been discussed as part of the WAC long term planning since 1990. In past years, and as part of the current planning process, the WAC has participated in various community meetings and reports to identify its current desires to expand the WAC campus over the existing MARTA Arts Center bus and train station. Current discussion contemplates the possible construction of one or more performance venues together with an education center and other arts related facilities. Discussions with MARTA about such rights have been underway for more than a year.

Thus the WAC has a direct, immediate and critical interest in the uses, access to, and impacts caused by the uses of the MARTA Arts Center Station. How that station is used and the impacts of traffic and environmental burdens created by the use of that station are critical to both current and future use and growth as well as the financial and artistic sustainability of the WAC campus and its various arts and educational efforts.

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SUMMARY OF THE POSITION OF THE WOODRUFF ARTS CENTER

The Woodruff Arts Center is a strong supporter of regional transportation access to its facilities. Although located in the heart of Atlanta, the WAC relies upon and wishes to encourage access to its exhibits, performances, and events by the broadest cross section of the communities throughout the region and the State of Georgia. The WAC is not critical of the proposal to enhance alternative transportation options, including BRT. Indeed, BRT offers access to those who might not choose or be able to afford car access to both work and play within Midtown.

The concerns of the Woodruff Arts Center have been made known to GRTA. There appears to be a willingness to find a way to meaningfully address the areas where additional information is needed to make an informed assessment of the impacts.

In summary, the WAC concerns are:

1. The use and expansion of the Arts Center MARTA Station needs to be studied with the same care that the various other potential bus terminals have been in the draft AA/EIS studies made to date. A comprehensive study should be made of the anticipated development of the currently anticipated Transit Oriented Development (TOD) over the Arts Center Station and how such uses might be harmonized with the various alternative uses or configuration of the Arts Center Station for BRT. The WAC is prepared to assist and participate in such an effort in conjunction with the Master Planning for the reconfiguration and development of the Arts Center MARTA Station for anticipated arts and educational purposes.
2. There has been no analysis of the current baseline uses of the Arts Center Station, nor what possible alternative increases/uses might be made in the utilization of the station, and what are the resulting environmental impacts (traffic, air pollution, noise pollution, and public safety on surface streets) on the current and anticipated uses of the Arts Center Station, limiting its potential development and the use and enjoyment of the immediately adjoining WAC campus.
3. There has not been an analysis of alternatives as how the BRT bus routes, bus stops and staging, and terminal loading might be distributed to other Midtown or Downtown terminals or staging facilities so as to more logically and reasonably distribute the anticipated bus loading, staging, and congestion to mitigate environmental and land use impacts.
4. There appears to be an implicit assumption, without analysis of options, that the Arts Center MARTA Station should be a main terminus for the BRT service. This may be driven by the assumption that there may someday be an additional HOV access on/off I-75/85 through a bridge that might be built at 15th Street. The existing EIS does not

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examine nor support such an assumption – nor is there any consideration of the impacts if such a bridge is not created or delayed so as not to be available to BRT use within the timeframe of the full implementation of the BRT service.

Certainly the use of the Arts Center MARTA Station for portions of the anticipated BRT bus traffic is both understood and accepted. The importance of regional transportation to the continued growth of our economy in general, and to the access to and enjoyment of the arts is an important part of the future of the Woodruff Arts Center. The key is that both expansion of the Woodruff Center and the compatible use of the MARTA Arts Center Station for BRT and rail must be studied in a coherent and comprehensive way.

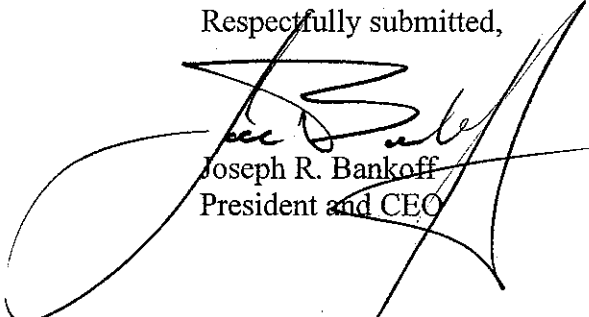
CONCLUSION

For these reasons, the WAC believes that a supplemental draft EIS should be prepared based upon an effort made jointly with the interested parties to address the issues raised in these comments¹. The WAC believes that there is a willingness to examine alternatives in the configuration, uses and loadings at and near the MARTA Arts Center Station that would demonstrate the range of existing and potential environmental impacts and allow a proper choice of alternatives at the receiving end of the BRT service.

The Woodruff Arts Center welcomes the opportunity to comment on the efforts that have been made to advance alternative transportation and looks forward to working with GRTA and other interested parties in seeking a mutually satisfactory resolution of the concerns that have been expressed. We are confident that with mutual effort and support a timely and useful result can be achieved.

In anticipation of the efforts to be made, the WAC reserves the right to withdraw all or specific portions of these comments as those concerns may be addressed by agreement or further joint effort.

Respectfully submitted,



Joseph R. Bankoff
President and CEO

¹ The Woodruff Arts Center also joins in and incorporates herein by reference the comments and technical submissions made by the City of Atlanta regarding the draft EIS, as those comments may specifically relate to the MARTA Arts Center Station.