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Marietta Daily Journal
Letters to Editor

State should be proactive, not reactive, on transportation

DEAR EDITOR:

The article in the Oct. 3, edition of the MDJ reporting on another example of the pragmatic - and visionary - leadership of Sam Olens in regard to transportation challenges in the metro Atlanta area was interesting, although the headline was misleading to some of us. Many who are knowledgeable about the benefits of passenger rail for the long haul - and for many other reasons - do not see "light rail" as being versus "rapid transit." We see it as part of "rapid transit," although perhaps not as rapid as "heavy rail," like MARTA, or proposed commuter rail.

Your story quoted Olens that "light rail" in some congested corridors in our area would be preferable to the much talked about Bus Rapid Transit, which some apparently consider as the solution to more transit in Georgia. Certainly, there are traffic corridors in the exponentially growing metro area in which BRT would be appropriate. But to suggest that this highway-dependent mode of transportation is the best way to attract commuters has long seemed shortsighted to many observers familiar with light-rail additions taking place in many U.S. cities.

It is truly heartening to some of us concerned with the future of metro Atlanta (and Georgia) to see political leaders, epitomized today by Sam Olens, willing to step out front and "lead" rather than react only to polls frequently of folks who may well be misinformed, uninformed or uninterested.

While, at long last, the transportation issue - and its importance to the economy and quality of life of citizens of this area - and the nation - seems to have become "front and center" on the agenda of increasing numbers of leaders of government and business, the question of how to proceed in a timely and economically acceptable fashion remains largely unanswered. But to pose the question and propose serious consideration of proven alternatives to past, sometimes failed, approaches, as Olens has done, are vital steps to reaching intelligent and workable goals and overcoming inevitable obstacles.

Chairman Olens is right to call for a "partnership" with the state on these matters. His quote in the MDJ that "the state needs to be proactive rather than reactive in the whole transportation area" was right on target.

And, it was another example of gutsy, look-ahead leadership not always much in evidence these days.

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