



Office of the Mayor Savannah, Georgia

Van R. Johnson, II
Mayor

July 28, 2025

Chairman Chester A. Ellis and Members
Chatham County Board of Commissioners
124 Bull Street, Suite 210
Savannah, GA 31401

Dear Chairman Ellis and Honorable Commissioners:

On behalf of the City of Savannah, I write to respectfully and urgently implore you to maintain the current millage rate for Chatham Area Transit (CAT).

Any reduction, particularly the proposed \$1.9 million decrease, would have significant and far-reaching impacts on our public transportation system and, most importantly, on the residents who rely on it daily. The proposed reduction would:

- Require CAT to further modify or eliminate routes and schedules, disproportionately affecting working families, seniors, students, and those with limited mobility.
- Severely limit CAT's ability to meet federal grant local match requirements for critical capital purchases in FY 2026, including buses and operational equipment needed to track data that supports federal subsidies for operator wages and preventative maintenance; and
- Undermine the reliability of public transportation as a means for residents to get to work, school, medical appointments, and other essential destinations.

Savannah, Chatham County and our municipal partners share a mutual responsibility to ensure that mobility remains accessible, equitable, and sustainable. CAT provides two fare-free services—the Savannah Belles Ferry and the DOT Shuttle—that exemplify this shared commitment.

These services are made possible through dedicated contributions, including:

- \$1 million in POR fees assessed on hotels,
- Support from the Savannah Convention Center and the Westin, and

- A transit tax assessed on Hutchinson Island property owners.

The City of Savannah alone invests \$2.5 million to support the DOT Shuttle, which connects riders to key ferry pickup points to include free service to the Carver Village and Cloverdale communities. Savannah-Chatham residents, particularly those employed on Hutchinson Island, depend heavily on these services to maintain gainful employment and economic mobility.

Additionally, CAT has demonstrated strong public accountability by launching the *CAT Chats* public education initiative, designed to share transit information and gather critical feedback from the community. These conversations underscore how vital reliable, consistent transit access is for economic opportunity and quality of life.

I urge you to consider the full weight of what is at stake. A reduction in CAT's millage rate compromises more than just a budget—it compromises livelihoods, equity, and access for thousands of your constituents.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued partnership in advancing public services that work for all Chatham County residents.

Sincerely,



Van R. Johnson, II
Mayor

Cc: Joseph "Jay" Melder, Savannah City Manager
Michael A. Kaigler, Chatham County Manager
Chairman Detric Leggett, Chatham Area Transit
Chatham Area Transit Board Members
Stephanie Cutter, Executive Director, Chatham Area Transit