

CAT BOARD REFUTES CLAIMS ALLEGED BY CHAIRMAN ELLIS

Fact versus fiction...

SAVANNAH, GA – During a press conference on Tuesday, November 18th, Chatham County Chairman Chester Ellis made multiple vague, deliberately misleading, and false statements regarding the Chatham Area Transit system and its management.

The vast majority of Ellis's allegations refer to events that occurred during a long-tenured period of time in which the county held majority control over board appointments, citing incidents that go as far back as 2022. Additionally, Chairman Ellis, without any evidence, claimed that CAT either lost or misappropriated millions of dollars of paratransit funding provided by the County.

Fact: The contract between CAT and Chatham County totals approximately \$4 million annually. These funds only apply to the operating costs of CAT's paratransit service. It does not fund any capital costs, like vehicles.

Fact: There has been a separate agreement for years that the County would fund necessary paratransit overhead expenses. The overhead costs total around \$3 million. Between the contract amount and the additional funding for overhead costs, the County pays approximately \$7 million to CAT each year for paratransit.

When Chairman Ellis says the County pays \$7 million each year, but that CAT has failed to account for \$3 million of that total, he is apparently thinking only of the main contract amount but ignoring the fact that every dollar of the additional overhead funding is accounted for.

Fact: At the end of every fiscal year, CAT and the County conduct a "true-up" in which CAT reimburses the County for any overages paid out during the prior year. The true-up

calculations are thoroughly documented and are well-known to County staff, who handle the matter every year. **If there is any mistake in accounting, it is unfortunately their own.**

Chairman Ellis directed the defunding of vital paratransit services for County residents, and continues to leave the County's three CAT Board appointments vacant. He then lobbed wild, false allegations at a press conference, instead of consulting his staff for accurate information. This is not a way in which our leaders should operate such important business, while people who rely on the bus to get to work are being used as collateral damage in a feud that CAT and taxpayers did not ask for.

The Chatham Area Transit Board is willing to work together with the County in order to find fair and reasonable solutions to the problems our transit system faces.