



**BOARD MEETING DATE: May 26, 2026**

**PROJECT NAME: Advertising Policy Revision DEPARTMENT: Marketing and Communications/ Procurement**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) is requesting Board approval to revise its Advertising Policy to modernize and expand revenue-generating opportunities while maintaining alignment with the organization’s mission and public service values.

The proposed updates introduce new advertising formats, including full and partial bus exterior wraps, paid interior bus advertisements, and digital signage placements.

**DATE AND IDENTIFICATION OF PRIOR BRIEFING OR AUTHORIZING ACTION:**

The Board of Directors approved the Advertising Policy in the following month and year:

- March 2018 (Board Policy Approval)

**ISSUE:**

CAT’s existing Advertising Policy limits the Authority’s ability to fully capitalize on its advertising potential. Interior bus advertising space is currently provided to nonprofit organizations at no cost, resulting in lost revenue opportunities and inconsistent valuation of advertising assets.

Additionally, the absence of approved formats such as bus exterior wraps and digital signage restricts CAT’s competitiveness compared to peer transit systems.

Without a modernized policy, CAT risks underutilizing valuable advertising space, missing opportunities for increased non-fare revenue, and lacking clear, standardized guidelines for advertisers. This can also lead to inefficiencies in administration and reduced ability to reinvest in transit services and community initiatives.

**DISCUSSION:**

The proposed revisions reflect a strategic shift toward maximizing CAT’s existing assets while maintaining its commitment to community service and responsible public messaging. Transit systems across the country have increasingly adopted diversified advertising models—including exterior bus wraps and digital displays—to generate non-fare revenue and offset operational costs.

Introducing bus exterior wraps offers a high-visibility, premium advertising product that can attract a broader range of commercial partners. Similarly, transitioning interior bus advertisements from a no-cost nonprofit model to a structured, fee-based system ensures more consistent valuation of advertising space while still allowing CAT the flexibility to support community organizations through discounted or prioritized placements.

Digital signage further enhances CAT’s ability to provide dynamic, timely, and visually engaging content, increasing the value proposition for advertisers and improving the rider experience.

These updates also establish clearer administrative processes, including standardized pricing, content guidelines, and contract terms. Collectively, the proposed changes position CAT to operate a more competitive, transparent, and scalable advertising program.

**PROCUREMENT | COMPLIANCE** *(provided by the Procurement Officer):*

Following DOT, FTA and CAT regulations additionally staff will ensure a strict limitation to advertisement prohibiting/promoting political advertising, public issues, offensive advertising, smoking, legal advertising, and alcoholic consumption. All advertising must be accurate, clear, and not misleading.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

While initial revenue will depend on market demand, this program is designed to grow into a consistent and scalable funding source over time. By establishing structured pricing and expanding available formats, CAT can increase occupancy rates and maximize the value of its advertising assets.

In the long term, advertising revenue can become a reliable funding source to assist with operating expenses, support service improvements, and capital needs. The program can also expand over time through periodic rate adjustments, bundled packages, and strategic partnerships, strengthening CAT’s financial sustainability.

**POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The proposed action represents a formal amendment to CAT’s existing Advertising Policy, expanding both the scope and structure of permissible advertising across the system.

In addition to expanding allowable formats, the amendment modifies how advertising space is managed and valued.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Upon approval of the revised Advertising Policy, staff will initiate a phased implementation plan to ensure a smooth and effective rollout. Key next steps include:

**Internal Alignment**

CAT staff will finalize administrative procedures, including rate cards, advertising guidelines, contract templates, and approval workflows. Internal teams will be trained in policy updates to ensure consistent application and compliance.

**Market Assessment & Pricing Strategy**

Conduct a local and regional market analysis to validate pricing for bus wraps, interior ads, and digital signage. This may include benchmarking against peer transit agencies and assessing demand from potential advertisers.

**Procurement / Partnership Strategy**

Determine whether advertising services will be managed in-house or through a third-party vendor. If outsourcing is preferred, CAT will initiate a procurement process to secure an experienced advertising partner.

**Inventory Preparation & Asset Readiness**

Prepare advertising assets for market, including identifying buses for wraps, designating interior ad spaces, and assessing or installing digital signage infrastructure where needed.

**Sales & Marketing Launch**

Develop and deploy a marketing strategy to promote CAT’s advertising opportunities to local businesses, nonprofits, and regional/national advertisers. This may include creating a media kit, rate sheets, and outreach campaigns.

**Pilot Program**

Launch a pilot phase for selecting advertising formats to test pricing, demand, and operational processes before full-scale rollout.

**Performance Monitoring & Reporting**

Establish metrics to track revenue, occupancy rates, advertiser mix, and overall program effectiveness. Provide periodic updates to leadership and the Board, with recommendations for adjustments as needed.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Redlined Advertising Policy – March 2018

**COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT:**

N/A

**PROPOSED MOTION: (to be read into the minutes)**

Move to: Board approval of the revision of the Advertising Policy

**REQUIRED SIGNATURES**

**Department Item Preparer – Prepared by: A’riel Johnson, Public Information and Communications Officer**

**Department Chief – Reviewed by: Stephanie Cutter, Executive Director/CEO**

**Procurement | Compliance – Procurement and Compliance Reviewed by: Victor Colon, Procurement Manager**

**Chief Financial Officer – Financial Impact and Budget Reviewed by: Gloria Royal, Interim Chief Financial Officer**

**Executive Director/CEO - Final Reviewer: Stephanie Cutter, Executive Director/CEO**

**Board of Directors – Final Approval [insert board action]**

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**This section is completed by the Board Administrator**

Passed and approved this [insert date] of [insert Month and Year]

Motioned by:

Seconded by:

AGENCY BOARD DESIGNEE: \_\_\_\_\_



CHATHAM AREA TRANSIT

# ADVERTISING POLICY

Effective Date: March 27, 2018

Revised Date: May 26, 2026

~~As a public service, the Chatham Area Transit (CAT) will display interior bus card advertisements for non-profit agencies promoting a service beneficial to its transit customers and the community. The requesting agency is responsible for all costs, design, and obtaining the necessary licenses, permission, and/or approval from all holders of intellectual or artistic property rights or interests in the material(s) used in the creation of the signs. CAT no longer accepts exterior advertising on its buses, bus stops, or facilities.~~

~~All interior advertising content and layout must be submitted to the Marketing and Business Development Manager for approval prior to the production of the signs, which must be delivered to CAT administrative offices located at 900 E. Gwinnett Street, Savannah, GA. Signs must be delivered at least seven business days prior to installation unless other arrangements have been expressly and specifically made.~~

## Policy

The Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) Board of Directors, as the governing body of the Authority, hereby adopts this Advertising Policy to establish a systematic, consistent, and transparent framework for the placement and management of advertising across CAT-owned and operated assets. This policy applies to, but is not limited to, public transit vehicles (including both interior and exterior bus advertising), bus shelters, and digital signage.

The purpose of this policy is to formalize CAT's approach to advertising by clearly defining permissible formats, standards, and administrative procedures. Through this structured framework, CAT seeks to ensure equitable access for advertisers, maintain appropriate content standards reflective of the Authority's public service mission, and provide clear guidance for the review, approval, and placement of advertising materials.

This policy is further adopted to support CAT's long-term financial sustainability by:

- Generating non-fare revenue through strategic advertising opportunities
- Maximizing the visibility and value of CAT's assets and
- Enhancing the overall rider and community experience

In addition, a standardized process for evaluating potential advertising and sponsorship opportunities will support these objectives by enabling CAT to determine whether each opportunity aligns with its goals and the messages the Authority seeks to communicate.

This Policy establishes the criteria by which all advertising and sponsorship opportunities shall be evaluated effective as of the date of adoption. All advertising and sponsorship agreements, placements, or approvals existing prior to the adoption of this Policy shall not be considered precedent and shall not serve as a basis for the approval or denial of any future advertising or sponsorship requests.

CAT reserves the right to require the modification or removal of any advertising or sponsorship material that is determined to be unlawful, noncompliant with applicable regulations, or otherwise inconsistent with CAT's policies, standards, or public service mission.

CAT further reserves the right to amend, suspend, or revoke any portion of this Policy as necessary to ensure compliance with legal requirements, to support its core public transportation responsibilities, and to advance the Authority's operational, financial, and community service objectives.

### **Approval Criteria and Restrictions**

- a. In General.** CAT's decision to enter into any advertising contract shall be based upon the requirements, standards, and restrictions established in this Policy. CAT may, at its discretion, delegate the administration and/or solicitation of advertising to a third-party agent. In such cases, the designated agent may review proposals and provide recommendations for acceptance or denial in accordance with the provisions of this Policy. Notwithstanding any such delegation or recommendation, CAT retains sole authority and final decision-making responsibility for determining whether any advertising proposal satisfies the criteria set forth herein and whether such opportunities will be accepted or pursued.
- b. Approval Criteria.**

### **~~SPECIFICATIONS~~**

~~Interior bus cards must measure 11 inches vertically and 28 inches horizontally. The preferred material is .020 styrene.~~

### **~~QUANTITY~~**

~~CAT currently has a total of 65 buses for its fixed routes that operate on a daily basis. Non-profit agencies may provide up to 130 signs (two per bus). CAT does not guarantee that all signs will be posted in all 65 buses but will make every attempt to do so if the space is available. Once posted, signs will remain on the buses for a minimum of three calendar months or until expiration date. Any signs not displayed will be retained for replacement and/or returned to the agency. Signs will be retained for replacement by CAT for posting as long as the condition of the signs remains acceptable and the message and relevant information continue to be accurate and timely.~~

### **~~ACCEPTABLE MESSAGES AND APPROVAL~~**

It is the intent of ~~Chatham Area Transit~~ CAT to provide information on the ~~buses~~ public transit vehicles (including both interior and exterior bus advertising), bus shelters, and digital signage that ~~is~~ are useful and beneficial to its customers and community.

- ~~Proposed advertising~~ must be legible and of professional quality, and the information presented in an accurate and positive manner.
- All ~~proposed~~ advertising content and layout must be submitted to the ~~CAT Marketing and Business Development Manager~~ Marketing Coordinator prior to the preparation of the sign.
- Any ~~signage proposed advertisement~~ that is received without prior approval ~~may~~ will not be posted. ~~Signage Proposed Advertisement~~ that is not acceptable will be returned to the agency with an explanation of why it is not acceptable.
- The ~~CAT Marketing and Business Development Manager~~ Marketing Coordinator's decisions on content, appearance, or materials may be appealed to the ~~Chief Strategy Officer (CSO)~~ Public Information and Communications Officer (PICO) in writing within 15 working days of the denial. The decision of the ~~CSO~~ (PICO) is considered final.

- Proposed advertising content must not negatively impact public safety by creating a distraction to bus operators, bus riders, other motorists, or create an attractive nuisance.
- Proposed advertising must not adversely affect the service life of any Asset or the ability to access an Asset or its components for maintenance.
- Proposed advertising must not conflict with existing or planned uses of an Asset.
- The person or entity desiring to advertise on CAT Assets shall be responsible for ensuring that its advertising materials comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies, as well as any other generally applicable legal standards in CAT's discretion.
- CAT will not accept any advertising opportunity which may fall into one more or the prohibited categories set forth below.

## **PROHIBITED ADVERTISING**

Advertising will not be permitted or posted if it:

1. Demeans or disparages an individual or group of individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected under federal, state, or local law.
2. Encourages or depicts unsafe behavior with respect to transit-related activities, such as non-use of normal safety precautions in awaiting, boarding, riding upon or debarking from transit vehicles.
3. It is a Political Advertisement. Political advertisements are defined as advertisements that contain political speech referring to a particular ballot question, initiative, petition, referendum, law, candidate, political party, or social issue or expresses or advocates opinions or positions upon any of the foregoing. This prohibition includes any advertisement referring to or depicting a candidate for public office in any context.
4. Declares or implies endorsement by Chatham Area Transit of any product, service, or point of view, without prior written authorization of Chatham Area Transit.
5. Promotes or depicts the sale, rental, or images of, or participation in, products, services, or activities, or that uses brand names, trademarks, slogans, or other materials that are identifiable with such products, services, or activities:
  - a. Tobacco products, including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, smokeless tobacco (e.g., chewing tobacco or snuff), or electronic or vapor cigarettes.
  - b. Alcohol: Beer, wine, distilled spirits, or any alcoholic beverage.

6. Contains profanity or any profane, obscene, or offensive language.
7. Contains an image or depiction of a firearm or promotes or solicits the sale, rental, or distribution of firearms, firearm-related products, ammunition, or other weapons.
8. Promotes, encourages, or appears to promote or encourage the use or possession of unlawful or illegal goods or services.
9. Promotes, encourages, or appears to promote or encourage unlawful or illegal behavior or activities.
10. Contains obscene material or images or aspects of the human anatomy in a way that the average adult, applying contemporary community standards, would find offensive or inappropriate for viewing by minors.
12. Libels or infringes upon copyrights or trademarks or contains any material that is libelous or infringes upon copyrights or trademarks.
13. It is a Religious Advertisement. Religious advertisements are defined as advertisements that contain any direct or indirect reference to religious content, including references to any deity or deities, or which includes the existence, nonexistence, or other characteristics of any deity or deities, or to any religious creed, denomination, belief, tenet relating to (including opposing or questioning) any religion. This prohibition shall include the depiction of text, symbols, or images commonly associated with any religion or with any deity or deities, or any religious creed, denomination, belief, or tenet relating to (including opposing or questioning) any religion.
14. Contains material that is so objectionable as to be foreseeable that it will result in harm to, disruption of, or interferences with the transportation system.
16. Prominently, it contains website addresses or telephone numbers that direct visitors or callers to material that violates any of the above restrictions.
17. CAT reserves right of refusal for advertising. CAT retains strict control over the nature of the advertising accepted for posting in its transit vehicles and maintains its advertising space as a limited public forum. CAT reserves the right to suspend, modify, or revoke any advertising on its property and to modify or revoke any part of this advertising policy as it deems necessary to conduct its ultimate transit purpose and comply with any applicable law.

**Pending Approval and adoption by the Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT) Board of Directors on May 26, 2026.**