



STATEMENT FROM THE CITY OF PORT WENTWORTH REGARDING CHATHAM COUNTY DECISION TO DENY CAT VOTE FOR PORT WENTWORTH

PORT WENTWORTH, GA – June 18, 2026 – The City of Port Wentworth is deeply disappointed by Chatham County Chairman Chester Ellis’ decision to decline consideration of Port Wentworth’s request to join the Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Tax District. The City of Port Wentworth is the first City on the West side of Chatham County to request inclusion in the Tax District. This inclusion is in direct alignment with Chairman Ellis’ “One Chatham” initiative to improve the quality of life for “everyone” in Chatham County.

With that commitment in mind, the City is extremely disappointed by Chatham County Chairman Chester Ellis’ decision to deny even consideration of bringing Port Wentworth into the CAT Tax District. The City is excited for our future partnerships and coordination with CAT – as the VyStar Pavilion opens on August 1, the Ice Cove opens in August, and the rest of Anchor Park opens in the near future, we are in the midst of coordinating expanded CAT coverage throughout the City.

Bringing Port Wentworth into the CAT Tax District would generate roughly \$1 million annually for CAT services. The current agreement between the City and CAT only provides approximately \$420,000 for CAT services. By denying the County Commission the opportunity to even consider expanding the Tax District to Port Wentworth, Chairman Ellis is undermining CAT’s mission to connect communities with the people and places they need and love. More importantly, this decision jeopardizes the long-term future and sustainability of CAT service in Port Wentworth and weakens opportunities for future transit expansion throughout western Chatham County. At a time when regional cooperation and investment are needed to strengthen public transportation, denying additional dedicated funding and ridership opportunities sends the wrong message about the future of transit in our community.

Chairman Ellis’s letter is clear that denying Port Wentworth and the rest of Chatham County the opportunity for expanding CAT service in the City is part of his litigation strategy against CAT. Neither of the two active lawsuits between the County and CAT prevent the County from expanding the Tax District to include Port Wentworth. Indeed, as Superior Court Judge Walmsley wrote in his October 16,

2025 Order, “Granting the injunction preserves the status quo (a board constituted under H.B. 756) and allows the Authority [CAT] to continue its business operations ...”

Current litigations do not prevent the expansion of CAT’s Tax District. Port Wentworth Mayor Tracy Saunders is disappointed, “The Chairman’s decision to deny this basic service to our residents is contrary to conversations and information we received in a meeting with the Chairman and I along with our management and legal teams on May 18, 2026. In that meeting, we discussed our request to be included in the CAT Tax District being placed on an upcoming June Commission agenda.”

The City formally requested inclusion through a Resolution and email dated **June 16, 2025**. Prior to that request, the Port Wentworth City Council unanimously adopted a resolution supporting inclusion in the CAT Tax District, demonstrating the City’s unified commitment to regional transit and expanded transportation opportunities for its residents. Then, exactly one year later, and less than a month after discussion with Chairman Ellis, the Chairman denied the City the opportunity to present its request to the County Commission.

“Port Wentworth has acted in good faith throughout this process and has fulfilled every requirement placed before us,” said Mayor Saunders. “Our residents deserve access to the same opportunities and mobility available elsewhere in Chatham County. We remain committed to achieving that goal.”

The City of Port Wentworth remains committed to working collaboratively with Chatham County, CAT, and regional partners to provide critical and reliable transit services that connect residents to employment, education, healthcare, shopping, and other essential destinations while supporting economic development throughout the region.

Chairman Ellis’ decision not only denies Port Wentworth residents expanded transportation options today but also places the future growth and viability of CAT service in Port Wentworth at risk. The city will continue to advocate for the transportation options residents deserve and for a stronger regional transit system that benefits all of Chatham County.

For more information about the City of Port Wentworth, visit portwentworthga.gov.

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