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Thursday, March 13, 2008

Transit survey to start this month

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DULUTH - The Transit Planning Board will be initiating a metro-wide survey to determine whether a proposed concept plan meets the needs of area residents.

The Transit Planning Board's plan would cost \$54 billion to build and operate and would include two commuter rail lines through Athens and Gainesville, light rail, bus-rapid transit and regional bus systems that would all operate in Gwinnett.

Cheryl King, the board's director, said it will be put in the field next week and results are expected in April.

"We want to know what people think about transit. Does it make sense?" she said. "Do we have the right things in here? Do we not have the right things?"

Speaking to members of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District on Wednesday, King said the region is falling behind economically because residents' quality of life suffers when they are stuck in traffic.

The Transit Planning Board and local leaders will be traveling to Charlotte later this month to look at its light rail transit system. The city is drawing businesses away from Atlanta because of its attention to alternative transportation, King said.

"People should have an option, and right now, they don't," she said. "We don't want to lose our status as the crown jewel of the Southeast, and we certainly don't want to lose it to Charlotte."

King said the goal of any new transit projects would be to provide connectivity throughout the region and to give people options other than driving. Transit projects would have to be competitive with cars in terms of the cost to users and would have to have reliable travel times to work.

"We've got some catching up to do, and a lot of time has passed," King said.

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