

"Certain conditions continue to exist in our society, which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. ... And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again. Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention." - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dear MARTA Employees, Customers and Stakeholders:

Between the public health crisis and ugly reminders of the deeper sickness of systemic racism in our country, these days compel me to reaffirm my personal and professional commitment to the goals of civic equality and social equity. As the General Manager/CEO of MARTA, I am humbled by the special opportunity and obligation to build on the promise of public transportation as an equalizer and a gateway to opportunity for all.

MARTA occupies a unique position in the region with a complicated legacy around race that many would like to forget or just not talk about. From the very first vote in the Georgia General Assembly in 1965 to create MARTA, to the decisions on how to fund and where to build, the votes were only superficially about transportation; the underlying issue was race. The public transit network we know today has a lot we can be proud of, but we cannot deny that systemic racism has left its mark.

The "certain conditions" that Dr. Martin Luther King spoke about – that's systemic racism. And it's toxic. George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor are the most recent victims and they deserve justice. Beyond the criminal charges and convictions that I hope are forthcoming for the perpetrators, I am convinced that rooting out the illness of racism requires individual and institutional behavior and cultural change. And as the leader of this institution, I am determined that MARTA will be a transit agency that condemns injustice, reflects and respects the diversity of our region and advances equity – from planning to operations to capital expansion to hiring, to contracting to community engagement and, most of all, to policing.

The events of recent weeks have again cast a spotlight on policing. I want to state clearly that the MARTA Police Department will be grounded in community-oriented policing approaches and transparency. Specifically, use of excessive force will not be tolerated and all police officers will receive annual training in cultural competency and implicit bias. Accountability and respect must flow in both directions between the police and the communities they are sworn to protect.

MARTA has been a catalyst for change in the past and will continue to play that role as we build a better, more just future for all of us. Building on the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials (COMTO) "Town Hall on Race" that I and many members of the senior team and MARTA Board of Directors participated in last Friday, we will convene an ongoing series of facilitated conversations with employees and stakeholders. And I want to hear from you. Email BLM@itsmarta.com with your comments, opinions and ideas on meaningful steps MARTA can take to support our employees and the communities we serve. Thank you for your engagement as we continue this critically important conversation.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Parker

MARTA General Manager & CEO