



Press Release
IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CARTA and Town of Lookout Mountain Reach Landmark Agreement on Future of Incline Railway

Agreement provides new public-safety funding, protects Incline operations and establishes framework for collaboration on future Upper Station improvements

CHATTANOOGA, TN— The Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) and the Town of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee announced today that they have reached a comprehensive interlocal agreement resolving months of discussion regarding the historic Incline Railway and establishing a new long-term partnership focused on public safety, responsible operations and the future of one of the Chattanooga region's most treasured assets.

Under the agreement, CARTA will provide the Town with a new passenger-based Public Safety Fee to support the Town's fire, police, dispatch and emergency services associated with Incline operations. CARTA has also agreed to reasonable limitations on hours of service and the total number of daily passengers. The Town, in turn, has agreed not to proceed with the previously proposed ordinance that would have been more restrictive of Incline operations.

The agreement also establishes operating parameters for the Incline, thereby providing greater operational certainty for CARTA and the hundreds of thousands of visitors and Town residents who experience the Incline, and strengthens visitor messaging regarding the surrounding residential neighborhood.

Just as importantly, the agreement looks beyond the immediate dispute. CARTA and the Town have committed to working together in good faith to plan the future of the Upper Station, including potential improvements and new uses that could strengthen the visitor experience, create a gathering place for Town residents, all while respecting the residential character of Lookout Mountain. The agreement also calls for cooperation between CARTA and the Town in pursuing grants and infrastructure improvements that could benefit both the community and the Incline.

The agreement becomes effective August 11, 2026.

“This agreement demonstrates what can happen when two organizations stop focusing on their positions long enough to understand each other's interests,” said Charles D. Frazier, CEO of CARTA. “The Town needs the resources to provide excellent public-safety services to its residents and the hundreds of thousands of people who visit Lookout Mountain. CARTA needs the ability to operate, invest in and thoughtfully improve a historic asset that belongs, in many ways, to this entire region. Through persistence, candid communication and a willingness to listen, we found a solution that accomplishes both.”

Frazier added, “What began as a significant disagreement has ultimately created the foundation for a stronger partnership. That is a win for the Town, a win for CARTA, and most importantly, a win for the passengers, residents, businesses and visitors who care about the future of Lookout Mountain.”

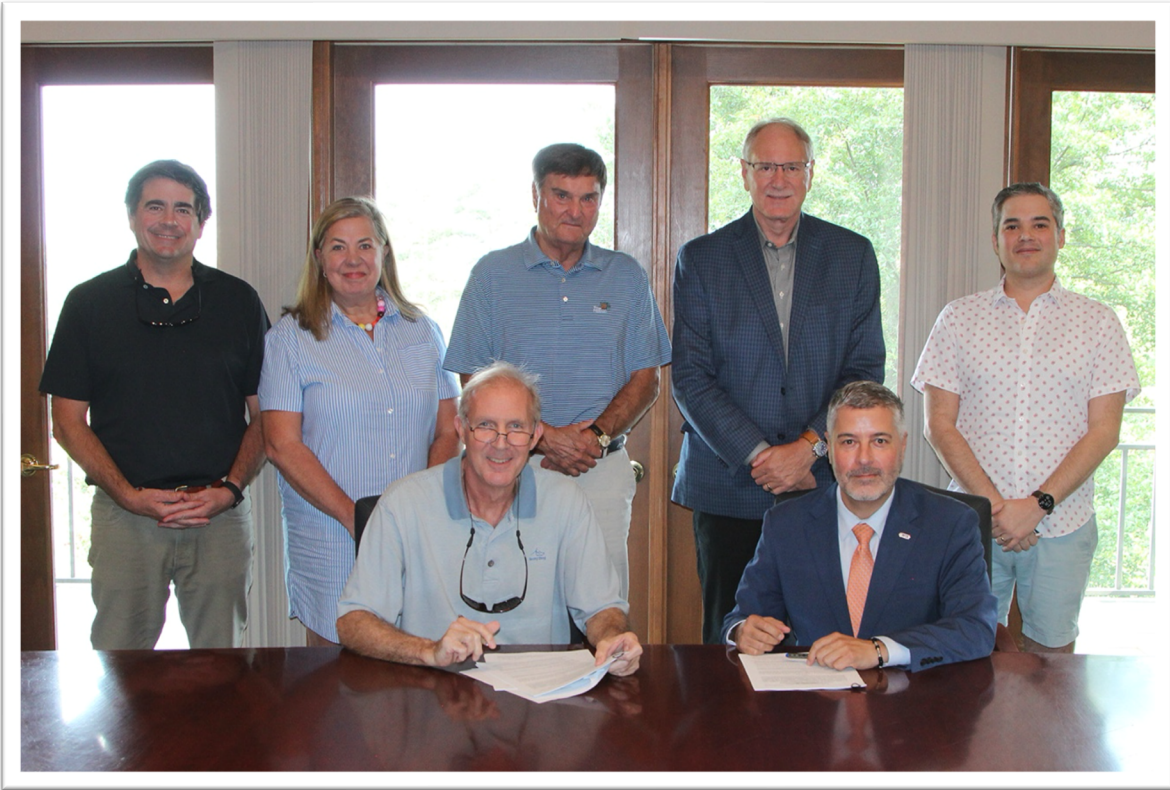
Town Commissioner Jim Bentley said the agreement demonstrates that economic vitality and neighborhood interests do not have to be competing objectives.

“The Town has a responsibility to protect our residents, provide quality public-safety services and preserve the character of our community. We also recognize the historical and economic importance of the Incline Railway. Through these discussions, both sides gained a better understanding of what the other needed, and that allowed us to move beyond disagreement and find common ground. This agreement gives us a framework to work together—not just on today's issues, but on opportunities for the future.”

The parties said the process itself offers an important lesson as communities throughout the region balance tourism, economic development and quality of life.

Major visitor destinations and residential communities inevitably create shared opportunities and shared challenges. CARTA and the Town believe those interests are best reconciled through early communication, mutual respect and a willingness to develop solutions that allow important regional assets to thrive while addressing legitimate community concerns.

Originally opened in the late 19th century, the Incline Railway remains one of the Chattanooga region's most recognizable attractions and an important component of the area's tourism economy. The new agreement positions CARTA and the Town to begin a new phase focused on preserving, improving and strengthening the Incline for future generations while also preserving, improving, and strengthening the Town for its citizens.



Shown, front row, left to right, are Lookout Mountain, Tn. Mayor Walker Jones and CARTA CEO Charles D. Frazier. Back row, left to right, are Commissioner of Parks and Playgrounds John Tugman, Commissioner of Education Karen Leavengood, Commissioner of Fire and Police Jim Bentley, CARTA Chairman of the Board Johann de Nysschen, and Commissioner of Public Works William Valadez.

ABOUT CARTA

The Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) is Chattanooga's public transit system, founded in 1973. As the driving force behind the city's mobility, CARTA connects communities through a comprehensive range of services, including fixed-route buses, paratransit services (Care-a-van), microtransit (CARTA Go), the Incline Railway, and the free downtown electric shuttle system.

CARTA is also responsible for managing the Chattanooga Parking Authority, overseeing a network of garages, parking lots, and on-street parking. By shaping the future of mobility, CARTA fuels Chattanooga's economic growth, enhances accessibility, and drives the city's progress.

ABOUT THE TOWN OF LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN, TENNESSEE

The Town of Lookout Mountain is a residential community located atop Lookout Mountain in Hamilton County, Tennessee. The Town provides municipal and public-safety services to its residents and to visitors accessing attractions and destinations within the community.

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