

An Opportunity To Meet All Transportation Needs: HB 277 – Georgia’s Transportation Sales Tax

Background on HB 277 – Transportation Sales Tax:

At its 2010 Session, the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation (*House Bill 277*) to provide an added funding source for transportation improvements in our state – a regional transportation sales tax.

Prior to passage of the new law, Georgia’s only method of making transportation improvements was to build roads and bridges by using its gas tax revenues, which the State’s Constitution limits solely to these types of projects.

HB 277 opens up an additional funding source for transportation – the transportation sales tax – which can be used for *any type of transportation project*:

- roads and bridges
- transit capital and operating needs
- safety and traffic operations
- freight and logistics
- sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycling
- aviation
- other transportation alternatives

HB 277 enables Georgians at the grass roots level to design transportation improvements (projects) in their communities and offers greater flexibility to Georgians than ever before in our state.

The weblink below provides the language HB 277:

<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display.aspx?Legislation=26558>

Getting Ideas for Projects to the Voters:

- HB 277 authorizes a regional transportation sales tax for a period of up to ten years if approved by voters in the 12 Regional Commission areas of our state.
- The attachment “*RC Map and E.D.’s*” provides the boundaries for all these Regional Commissions and contact information for each of their Executive Directors.
- Information on timelines, meeting schedules for input and action, and key contacts can be obtained by contacting these non-elected officials.
- Decisions on projects will be made by elected officials who comprise the Regional Roundtable and their Executive Committees. See the weblink below for a listing, by Regional Commission, of members of both these groups:

<http://www.it3.ga.gov/pages/legislation.aspx#regionalroundtable>

- Voting to approve or reject this new sales tax will take place in each region in August 2012. Voters will vote for the transportation sales tax and for specific projects which would be paid for by the money raised through the tax.
- Leading up to these votes in all 12 regions, residents in each region can provide input on their ideas for projects to elected and non-elected (staff) persons.

The Critical Timetable (Key Dates and Action Steps Needed):

1. Develop the Unconstrained Project Investment List (draft project list which is not limited by available funding) –

- Solicit Projects from Regional Commissions and Local Jurisdictions (January-March 30, 2011) –

See the link below, GDOT communication imposing a March 30, 2011 deadline and procedures for submitting projects for the unconstrained lists. The application form for projects is also provided:

<http://www.it3.ga.gov/Documents/Notice/Notice-ProjectCoverLetter.pdf>

<http://www.it3.ga.gov/Documents/Notice/Notice-ProjectSubmittalForm.pdf>

- Evaluate Projects according to Regional Criteria (February-May 2011)
- Unconstrained Example Investment List Developed (May 2011)

2. Develop the Constrained Draft Investment List (project list which is limited by available funding) –

- GDOT Director of Planning and Executive Committee collaborate to develop constrained list (May-August 2011)
- Executive Committee submits final Constrained List to Regional Roundtable (August 15, 2011)
- Finalized List compiled with full Regional Roundtable (August 15 to October 15, 2011)

Regional Roundtable Membership and Duties

- For each Regional Commission area, a Regional Roundtable has been established.
- See the attached lists of members, by Regional Commission area.
- Membership consists of two members from each county (the County Commission chair and a mayor elected by the mayors within the county).
- Each Regional Roundtable has selected an Executive Committee, as required in the law, to develop and refine project lists.
- Based on “Project Criteria” established by the GDOT Planning Director and local elected officials and the general public, lists of eligible projects will be compiled to be voted

upon within each Regional Commission's boundaries at the August 21, 2012 statewide referenda.

- These "Project Criteria" developed for each region establish the percentage ranges for the types of projects to be voted upon in the statewide vote within the region: roadways, transit capital and operating, bike and pedestrian, aviation, freight, etc.
- **NOTE:** Added flexibility is provided by setting aside: (1) 25% of total available funds for use within each county (and cities in them) outside the Atlanta Regional Commission area, and (2) 15% of total available funds for use within each county (and cities within them) inside the Atlanta Regional Commission area. These funds are distributed by formula, and may be used for any transportation purpose. This guarantees each local community "gets something" from the new law.
- **ACTION STEPS**–
 - *Contact your Roundtable members and give them your ideas for projects (which can include transit or human services transportation items including operating expenses);*
 - *Contact your other local government elected officials (even if they aren't on the Roundtable) and get them to push your ideas for projects to their fellow elected Roundtable officials, and*
 - *Don't stop working – for the entire period in advance of the statewide vote in 2012.*

Executive Committee Membership and Duties

- 5 Roundtable members selected by Roundtable members (and discussed above).
- 3 non-voting state legislators selected by Chairs of House and Senate Transportation Committees.
- Executive Committee develops a draft investment list of projects to submit to the public for comment prior to the August 2012 vote on transportation sales tax.
- **ACTION STEPS**–
 - *Follow the steps outlined above under "Regional Roundtable ACTION ITEMS"*
 - *'Work' all local officials, Regional Roundtable and Executive Committee members, as well as your state legislators to get projects included on the draft investment list!*
 - *If folks you talk with tell you "that's not my job, since I'm not on the Roundtable (or) the Executive Committee (or) Other," tell them you want them to call on your behalf to whoever IS on the Roundtable/Executive Committee/Other so your ideas can be moved forward!*

Other Resources:

<http://www.it3.ga.gov/Pages/default.aspx> - This GDOT link gives detailed information (including summaries of key issues and processes) on the new law.

<http://www.accg.org/content.asp?contentid=1498> – This link is to the Association County Commissioners of Georgia, and provides summary information on the new law.

<http://www.gmanet.com/> - This link is to the Georgia Municipal Association, and provides summary information.

