



Georgia Chapter

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Transportation Funding

After several years of false starts, the Georgia General Assembly finally passed major transportation legislation, **H.B. 277**, in 2010. The legislation is five bills rolled into one and, while far from perfect, represents the most significant state action on transportation policy in over a decade. The bill will, for better or for worse, **define the context** in which much of the advocacy on issues such as mass transit and sustainable development will take place for the **next several years**.

The components of the bill that are receiving the most attention are the regional votes on special-purpose local option sales taxes for transportation ("T-SPLOSTs"). The votes will be held in July 2012 in each of the state's 12 regional commission districts (see a map [here](#)); passage of the vote in any district will authorize a **one-penny sales tax** to be levied in that district for a 10-year period. Each region will have a list of projects, so voters will know where the money will go in their region. These project lists will be determined based on recently released draft criteria developed by GDOT to guide the selection of projects (see <http://www.it3.ga.gov>).

GDOT has to take input from local governments, therefore our opinions matter. In the Atlanta region, contact the ARC until September 2nd [here](#); if you live outside Metro Atlanta, contact your County Commission Chair. [Tell them you want transit, pedestrian and bike projects to be prioritized over roads.](#)

The two sets of criteria, one for the Atlanta region and another for the remaining eleven, raise a number of concerns regarding the fair treatment of sustainable transport modes such as transit, walking, and bicycling. The guidelines establish minimum and maximum investment levels for various types of projects. **Not surprisingly, roads are given preference over all other modes.** In the Atlanta region, the range for roadway capital projects is 40-60 percent of all tax revenue to be spent regionally, compared with 15-40 percent for transit capital projects. Bicycle and pedestrian projects are given a paltry 0-5 percent. In the regions outside Atlanta, the disparity is even greater, with transit capital investment capped at a mere 10 percent, while road spending could range as high as 70 percent.



Furthermore, transit projects are proposed to be subject to a lengthy set of eligibility requirements, such as the demand in the Atlanta region that projects serve at least two counties **effectively ruling out popular proposals such as the Beltline**. Road projects, by contrast, are subjected to a far less stringent set of requirements.

Transit supporters can influence these priorities because by law, GDOT has to take input from local governments. In the Atlanta region, contact the ARC until September 2nd [here](#); if you live outside Metro Atlanta, contact your County Commission Chair. **Tell them you want transit, pedestrian and bike projects to be prioritized over roads.**

Quick Links



The Big Picture: A Clean Energy Future

Each year coal plants pour millions of tons of harmful pollution into our air, worsening asthma, causing heart attacks, emergency room visits and missed work days. That pollution doesn't stop at county or even state lines, and as a result people throughout the country are forced to breathe unhealthy air. But the EPA's proposed Good Neighbor Rule can change that by reducing air pollution escaping across state lines -- preventing at least 23,000 heart attacks, 26,000 hospital visits and 240,000 asthma attacks while saving \$100 to \$290 billion in health care costs, according to EPA estimates. Join us at an EPA hearing on September 1st in Atlanta as we stand up to

industry pressure and show that Americans support the EPA's work to protect our health by protecting the air we breathe. To sign up or for more information, please [click here](#).

Plant Washington Permit Appeal

The hearing on the air pollution permits for Plant Washington will begin Monday, September 13th, at the Office of State Administrative Hearings, 230 Peachtree Street, Atlanta. The 854-megawatt coal-fired power plant proposed to be built in Sandersville, 60 miles east of Macon. Please demonstrate your interest in the issue by attending some part of the hearing, which is expected to last 8-10 days. Contact colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org for more information.



Sierra Club Meetings

Smart Energy Team Meeting, Monday, September 13th, 6:30p.m refreshments, 7p.m. start, Colleen Kiernan - colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org or Erin Glynn - erin.glynn@sierraclub.org

Wildlands & Wildlife Committee Meeting, Tuesday, September 21st, 7:00p.m., Phil Zinsmeister - Chair, pzinsmeister@oglethorpe.edu

Fundraising Committee Meeting, Wednesday, September 22nd, 7:00p.m., Erin Wetty - Chair, ewetty@seyfarth.com

RAIL Committee Meeting, Monday, September 27th, 6:45p.m., Jim Dexter - Chair, call 678-313-2407, jimdex@aol.com

Inner City Outings Meeting, Tuesday, September 28th, 7:00p.m., Allison Williams - Chair, adwilliams8@yahoo.com

Environmental Events

Georgia Organics Agriculture Commissioner Debate

Thursday, September 2nd, 7:30p.m. - 9:00p.m.

Emory Law School, Tull Auditorium, 1301 Clifton Rd., Atlanta, GA 30322 ([map](#))

Join community and university partners at the state's first sustainable agriculture debate with candidates for Agriculture Commissioner of Georgia. Commissioner Tommy Irvin is retiring after 41 years of overseeing Georgia's No. 1 industry, making this year's election an historic opportunity to shape policies that advance sustainable foods and farms across the state. Come hear what the candidates have to say about their commitment to sustainable agriculture. For more information or to RSVP, please [click here](#).



Silers Bald, N.C. Hike

Saturday, September 4th

Franklin, N.C. ([map](#))

After hiking through the forest to our lunch stop at 5,000 feet above sea level, we will learn about one of the unique ecosystems in the southern Appalachians. Also, if it is clear, we will have spectacular 360 views.

Minimum 5 participants. Contact volunteer outings leader, Lee Thomas @ (770)-458-3389 or for more information [click here](#).

Ecolife Lifestyle Event

Saturday – Sunday, September 25th – 26th, 10a.m. – 6p.m.

Atlantic Station, Atlanta, GA

Enjoy two full days of eco-friendly family edutainment and fun.

The event provides live entertainment, variety of games, demonstrations and learning experiences for all ages. This includes partners like Captain Planet Foundation, Georgia Recycling Coalition & Earthshare of Georgia. For more information, please [click here](#).

**Georgia Giving Society Thank You Party**

Thursday, September 30th, 6:00p.m. – 8:30p.m.

Seyfarth Shaw LLP, Midtown

The Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club will host a special event to thank our Georgia Giving Society supporters. Their support is critical to our success! It will be an evening of hors d'oeuvres, refreshments and remarks by Georgia Chapter Director Colleen Kiernan and Dr. Marilyn Brown from Georgia Tech. For our donors, please expect your invitation in the mail soon. If you would like to donate now to join the Georgia Chapter and guests, please donate now by [clicking here](#).

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