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Georgia Chapter

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Footnotes Issue #63: August 8, 2012

T-SPLOST: An Open Letter and Moving Forward

Many of you have expressed your concerns, disagreement and anger about the [position we took](#) on the July 31st sales tax referendum. Many other of you have expressed your support, enthusiasm and thanks for that same position. And all of you want to know what the Georgia Chapter's plan is to bring about the transportation vision that we share. I would like to take this opportunity to try to address those topics. Our focus was on the Metro Atlanta T-SPLOST, but transportation is a statewide issue, so for those of you in "Georgia," rather than "Atlanta" please bear with us. I have written a much longer letter with more history, which you can read by going [here](#), but to cut to the chase, continue on.

The Georgia Chapter began seriously discussing our position on the referendum in March. At the time, the pro-T-SPLOST campaign was beginning to take shape, and it was becoming evident that the campaign would focus overwhelmingly on suburban, conservative voters, a losing strategy in our view. The conclusion of the Chapter's political leadership was that chances of passage in the Atlanta region were extremely slim, with or without the support of Sierra Club.

At the same time, opposition to the T-SPLOST was beginning to crystallize. Much of the early opposition focused on the transit component of the project list; the road spending, despite being just as substantial, was largely receiving a free pass. With various other environmental / pro-transit groups lining up in favor of the tax, we sensed that the emerging narrative of the vote as a "referendum on transit" could be very dangerous given the likelihood that the referendum would fail. Opposition was seen as a way to reframe the debate and to shift the conversation toward discussion of alternative options that would need to be considered going forward. With these considerations in mind, the RAIL committee recommended the option of opposing the referendum with an emphasis on supporting "Plan B."

Our thorough and well-researched position paper elevated the level of debate about transportation issues across the region. Now, the primary message coming out of the election is that voters didn't trust the government. While we recognize that the Governor is not an ally on transit, we did prevent \$4 billion in additional road spending that would have worsened sprawl and pollution, and now have the opportunity to fix the things that are broken, restore trust, and lay the groundwork for a viable rail expansion program.

In addition to continuing conversations with others who opposed the referendum, like NAACP and the Tea Party, we are reconnecting with our longtime allies on transportation, including the Livable Communities Coalition, Citizens for Progressive Transit, Environment Georgia, Southern Environmental Law Center, and others. The Sunday AJC ran our [joint Opinion Editorial](#) that covers the more general points of agreement between us and those on the other side of the spectrum. We will share more detailed policies and ideas with those of you who are interested as we continue to develop and refine them (sign up below for the transportation mailing list).

We will also be initiating a fundraising effort to support hiring a transportation organizer, who will be able to effectively capture the energy and interest T-SPLOST generated in these issues to achieve our goal of getting a better solution than the project list. With your continued support, I am confident in our success.

Ways you can help:

Sign up for our [transportation mailing list](#) and stay informed on progress and opportunities to make a difference

Join our [RAIL Committee](#), which meets the last Monday of the Month

[Contribute](#) generously

Yours for a better transportation future,

Colleen Kiernan
Georgia Chapter Director

Quick Links

The [Coalition for the Right Road](#), which is opposing the US 411 Connector through Dobbins Mountain scored a [victory last week](#) when the National Register of Historic Sites found Dobbins Mine eligible for designation as a historic resource.



Sierra Club Meetings

Atlanta Inner City Outings (ICO), Tuesday, August 14, 7:30 p.m.
Naomi Bock - Chair, atlantaico@gmail.com

Wildlands Committee Meeting, Tuesday, August 21, 7:00 p.m.
Mike Murdock - Chair, murdock1@mindspring.com

Fundraising Committee, Wednesday, August 22, 7:00 p.m.
Clay Tucker - Chair, tuckerwf12@aol.com

RAIL, Monday, August 27, 7:00 p.m.
David Emory - Chair, david.emory@gmail.com

Smart Energy Team Meeting, Monday, August 6, 7:00 p.m.
Seth Gunning - Staff, seth.gunning@sierraclub.org

Upcoming Events

August 11 – Sierra Club 101



You want to work with Sierra Club to help protect the environment but you're not sure what you can do? Come learn about the Sierra Club and how to get involved in our local efforts. Participation is power! By working together -- sharing what we know and talking to others one at a time -- we can help build environmental community in Georgia. Open to members and non-members, 10:30 a.m. - Noon, breakfast provided.

August 21 - Movie Night! In Organic We Trust

We can no longer stomach our food system. It's killing more and more Americans and costing billions in health care. 78% of Americans eat organic food, because they think it's healthier. But is organic really better for us or is it just a marketing scam? Join ImagineAtlanta at the Midtown Art Cinema on the free, one-time screening of ['In Organic We Trust.'](#) Register for your ticket [here](#).

August 26 – GreenLaw Fundraiser in Athens

GreenLaw provides free, high quality legal and technical assistance to environmental organizations and community groups throughout Georgia and works very closely with the Georgia Chapter on many issues. Show your support by attending an event in Athens that will include readings by Janisse Ray, James Holland and Dorinda Dallmeyer, music by Randall Bramblett, catering by Athens Chef Hugh

Acheson of 5&10 Restaurant, and Aerial Dance Solo by Susan Murphy, Founder of Canopy Studio. Click [here](#) for more info and tickets.

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