



Georgia Chapter

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Footnotes Issue #80: Feb 7th, 2014

Atlanta's Snowjam: Why We Need Regional Rail Transit

Last week, metro Atlantans endured hours of gridlocked roadways after 2 inches of snow prompted local governments, businesses and schools to close down almost simultaneously. This largely uncoordinated decision led to an influx of hundreds of thousands of cars on the roads, all trying to make it home before the storm worsened. Unfortunately, many people did not make it home at all that night due to being stuck in traffic for up to 16 hours, prompting many to spend the night in department stores, or altogether abandoning their cars in favor of walking or taking MARTA.



The fiasco drew attention to several persistent problems in the Atlanta region. Namely, the icy road conditions highlighted our region's dependence on cars as our primary mode of transportation, the need for a regional rail network which includes coverage outside the Perimeter, and increased walkability in neighborhoods to provide many more people with alternative travel options--not just during severe weather events, but throughout the whole year.

Much has been made about the failure of the 2012 TSPLOST, suggesting that its passage would have helped prevent the chaos that ensued on Tuesday. The reality is that the TSPLOST contained no funding for rail construction outside 285, and it would have done as much to reinforce our automobile dependency as to remedy it. Going forward, we should look for opportunities to truly transform our approach to transportation investment, particularly regional and statewide rail transit.

Thankfully, opportunities for rail transit expansion abound in this state. The Georgia Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers gave the state a "B" on our rail infrastructure. With so much existing infrastructure in place, increasing investment could go a long way. The Georgia Rail Passenger Program compiled plans for several intercity and commuter rail projects: to the east, the Athens to Atlanta "Brain Train"; to the south, commuter rail to Lovejoy and eventually down to Macon. Additionally, a feasibility study was just concluded demonstrating the potential for a line from Columbus to Atlanta.

The snowpocalypse made one thing clear: Investment in long-range, regional transportation solutions is much needed. Doing so would not only lead to an improved regional transit system that offers access to people in more areas, but would improve quality of life by enabling more walkable, mixed-use development. With this year's legislative session already halfway gone, the sense of urgency is growing.

Say NO to SB 213

You may remember SB 213 from the 2013 legislative session, it was the bill we fought until the clock ran down, and we "won" by preventing a vote in the House. But in Georgia, bad ideas are like zombies, and SB 213 is back.

This year, the bill has been amended, and it now establishes a new property right in Georgia, for the State, at the expense of landowners, and allows the EPD Director to pick winners and losers from so-called "flow augmentation" projects. Among agricultural



riparian permittees the bill actually requires the EPD Director to establish LISTS of winners and losers any time the state funds and authorizes such a project, even if the state is not the entity operating the project.

Contact your State Representative now and tell them to oppose SB 213! Thanks for your efforts to protect Georgia's environment.

Sierra Club Meetings

Wildlands Committee Meeting, Tuesday, February 18, 7:00 p.m.
Mike Murdock - Chair, murdock1@mindspring.com

RAIL Committee Meeting, Monday, February 24, 7:00 p.m.
David Emory - Chair, david.emory@gmail.com

Fundraising Committee Meeting, Thursday, February 27, 7:00 p.m.
Colleen Kiernan, colleen.kiernan@sierraclub.org

Smart Energy Committee Meeting, Monday, March 3, 7:00 p.m.
Cecilia Harris, ceciliaharris@gmail.com

Other Events

Feb 8 - Sierra Club Outings Leader Training 101 - As a local outing leader, you have the opportunity to share your local wild areas with Sierra Club members and other community members - whether day hiking, peak scrambling, birdwatching, or multi day trekking. We are always looking for knowledgeable, passionate, outdoor-savvy people to join as Outings leaders. If that is you, why not become one, yourself? [Click here](#) for more information and to register.



Feb 19 - Capitol Conservation Day - Join the Georgia Water Coalition for its annual Conservation Day at the Gold Dome! The day kicks off with an issue briefing and tips on how to lobby, followed by a seasoned lobbyist showing you "the ropes" on the third floor of the Capitol. We'll get our picture taken with the Governor and our strong presence will remind our lawmakers that their constituents care about environmental protection. Join us at [the Capitol](#) from 8:30 AM - 12 noon.

[Click here](#) to register.

March 12 & 13 - Greenprints - Now in its 17th year, Greenprints is the premier convening of national thought leaders in sustainable design, construction and communities. On March 12 and 13, 2014 over 300 of these leaders will meet to explore issues related to green building, sustainable development and policy in the Southeast. [Click here to Register!](#)



March 13 - The Power of Policy: Women in Sustainability - Southeast Green will host four national women leaders in sustainability policy. Join them as they explore how these female leaders are shaping our nation's landscape from a policy perspective! [Click here](#) for more information.



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