



Sierran

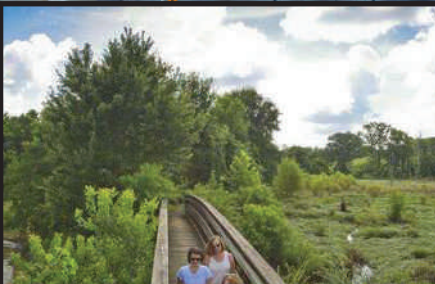
To Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

Planes, Trains & Automobiles

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Turning the Page

By Colleen Kiernan

In case you don't read our e-newsletter, Footnotes, (and you should!) I want to let you know that I'm stepping down as your Georgia Chapter Director on April 1. By making this change, I hope to continue to learn, grow and challenge myself in new ways while also creating space for new leadership in the Chapter that will foster new ideas and will bring about the next era of the Georgia Chapter. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Georgia Chapter Director; I am truly proud of what we have accomplished and I've had a lot of fun.

The best analogy I've come up with to explain this change is that I am a middle distance runner. I'm not a sprinter – the person who would pour it all out over a few months or a year – and I'm not a marathoner, someone who would retire after 30+ years in this role. My comfort zone is somewhere in between. After sustained effort, a series of accomplishments as well as disappointments, and through multiple changes of coworkers and coalition partners, I'm ready to hand the baton to someone who can give a fresh look at where we



Colleen Kiernan, Chapter Director

are as a Chapter and chart out the next course.

I'll be spending April in Marin County, California, where I'll finally explore Muir Woods, and wherever else I can be reach in a few-hour drive that sparks my interest on a given day. After this much-needed downtime, I'll return to Georgia and plot out the next phase in my career.

Please help me congratulate Brionté McCorkle, who has been promoted to Assistant Chapter Director. Brionté is a quick study, has a great demeanor, and loves engaging communities and fighting the good fight. I hope that by the

time this issue hits your mailbox that our Chapter ExCom will be very close to naming my successor, and I hope that he or she will be able to count on your continued support to build upon the strong foundation we have built together over the last five years. 🌲

About Georgia Sierran

Articles: Send materials to: gasieran@gmail.com. Maximum word length: 750 words with one photo. Please include high-resolution digital photos (200 dpi) with your story.

Moving? Send address changes to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968. Send changes by email: address.changes@sierraclub.org

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Did you know that the Georgia Chapter spends roughly six percent of its annual budget printing and mailing the Sierran? Looking for an easy way to help the Chapter – and the environment? Remember that at any time you may opt out of receiving the printed Sierran. Members who do so will continue to receive every issue in its entirety (in full, brilliant color, no less) – only it will arrive in their inboxes, not their mailboxes.

If you prefer to continue receiving the printed newsletter, there is no need to do anything. But if you'd like to switch to the electronic edition please contact the Chapter office at **404-607-1262 x221** or **georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org**. Our budget – and our trees! – will thank you.

Note: in accordance with Chapter bylaws, all members will receive the annual election issue by mail.

Focus: Transportation

*“...transportation infrastructure does more than move people.
It builds communities, and it constructs our way of life.”*

- Ryan Gravel, “Where We Want to Live”



In this issue of the Sierran we invite you to read and think about the big issue of transportation in our state.

In his new book, “Where We Want to Live: Reclaiming Infrastructure for a New Generation of Cities,” Ryan Gravel writes, “...transportation infrastructure does more than move people. It builds communities, and it constructs our way of life.”

For a long time now, our way of life in Georgia has revolved around the car and the creation of ever-expanding roads and highways to facilitate getting around within the sprawl and from one major city to another. For some, especially paving companies and politicians, thinking about transportation doesn’t get much beyond how to fund the next asphalt spendarama. See Neill Herring’s recap of the latest on that issue.

Fortunately, not everyone thinks building a new bypass, creating a new highway, adding more lanes or commercializing an airport is the solution to an improved community. Three articles show how citizen activists in Paulding and Ware Counties, and across north Georgia, helped change outcomes on transportation projects by influencing their communities’ decision makers.

Improving mass transit options has long been a struggle. In spite of a lot more friendly talk from legislative leaders, no

state money for MARTA is on the table, and even the bill allowing the City of Atlanta to raise its own sales tax was a major lift, leaving behind the rapidly growing North Fulton County.

Both Cobb and Gwinnett counties rely on bus systems after initially rejecting MARTA. However, there are signs that attitudes are changing, especially in Gwinnett. In the meantime, we are all going to get to watch as the Braves move to a new home nowhere near a MARTA station and as the bulk of the 41,500 people that will fill the stadium try to navigate afternoon and evening traffic on the Perimeter and find one of 6,000 official parking spaces.

On the other hand, the state does have a State Rail Plan, which David Emory explains in his article, and which may eventually result in some intra-state passenger rail, especially when leaders like Mayor Teresa Tomlinson get behind the push for better transportation options.

As Sierrans we recognize that how we choose to transport ourselves and the goods we need affects the environment we live in and the quality of our lives. Having more options and creating more compact communities could lead to fewer car trips, which improves air quality. With the growing concern about climate change, this is no small thing. 🌱

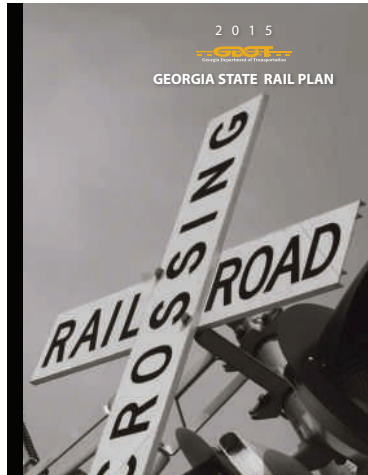
Georgia's Rail Outlook: Fewer Coal Cars, More Passengers?

By David Emory

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recently released the final version of the 2015 State Rail Plan, providing a comprehensive assessment of the state of rail transport in Georgia, both present and future. The plan, available on the GDOT website at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/IS/Rail/StateRailPlan>, is the result of several years of development and community involvement, including active engagement from the Georgia Sierra Club. Chapter RAIL (Regional Action to Improve Livability) campaign organizer Brionté McCorkle was among the project stakeholders and is interviewed in a video that accompanies the plan.

Georgia's rail network currently serves freight traffic primarily, and much of the plan is devoted to discussion of current and anticipated trends in freight transport. Among the most striking findings is one that pertains to the future of what has long been the largest single commodity transported by rail in Georgia - coal, which accounted for over 30 percent of inbound rail tonnage in 2011. Regarding future freight trends, "the most notable change concerns inbound coal movements, which are forecast to decline 62 percent," the plan states. "This projected decline is a result of planned and forecast retirements of coal-fired electric generating plants in Georgia" (see p. 71 of the plan).

This dramatic shift is a testament to the success of efforts to transition Georgia from a coal-reliant energy portfolio to a clean energy future, work the Sierra Club has been leading through its Beyond Coal campaign. This campaign



has already secured commitments to retire a third of Georgia's coal power fleet, while also blocking proposals for new coal-fired plants. With the portion of Georgia's rail capacity dedicated to coal transport set to plummet, we have the opportunity for more sustainable use of our rail infrastructure going forward, including passenger service.

While passenger rail in Georgia is currently limited to three long-distance national Amtrak routes serving a total of five stations, the plan indicates "significant support" among stakeholders for both statewide intercity rail and commuter rail service in the metro Atlanta area. The plan includes an inventory of passenger rail proposals and identifies a number of short-term projects, such as improvements to existing stations and additional planning and engineering work for future intercity and commuter rail. The plan also identifies capital needs that affect both freight and passenger movement, such as unclogging the congested Howell Junction near downtown Atlanta.

Though the plan does a good job of identifying and prioritizing potential next steps on statewide passenger rail, the major obstacle to moving forward continues to be a lack of political will among state elected officials. With public attitudes continuing to shift in favor of increased transportation options, now is an excellent time to get involved with the effort to expand statewide rail transit in Georgia. Learn more about the RAIL committee, the Chapter's transit advocacy arm, at <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/rail>. 🌲

Bill Allows City Vote on MARTA Expansion

Residents in the City of Atlanta could have the chance to vote on a major expansion of MARTA after the Georgia General Assembly voted to approve Senate Bill 369, which authorizes an additional half-penny sales tax for MARTA within Atlanta city limits. The State Senate approved the bill by a 43-5 vote in the final hours of the 2016 session, following a 159-4 vote in the State House. The bill now heads to the governor's desk for approval.

The bill is the result of a protracted negotiation among lawmakers and local officials that spanned multiple legislative sessions. An earlier, more ambitious proposal would have allowed all of Fulton and DeKalb Counties to participate, raising as much as \$8 billion, but political strife among officials in suburban Fulton and DeKalb Counties, some of whom continue to favor road expansion over transit, scuttled the proposal. The Atlanta-only bill will still raise \$2.4 billion over the life of the tax, which, like the current MARTA tax, would extend to 2057.

Assuming SB 369 is signed into law, the next step will be for Atlanta officials to draw up a list of specific projects, which could include such improvements as rail transit on the BeltLine and new infill MARTA stations. The bill stipulates that a project list must be finalized by July 31. The Georgia Chapter's RAIL committee expects to be actively involved in this campaign; see the Chapter website for further details.

Columbus Mayor Favors Passenger Rail to Atlanta

By Brionté McCorkle

The proposed Columbus to Atlanta high-speed passenger rail line has been making headlines for several years, since Columbus convened the Mayor's Commission on Passenger Rail in 2012. The commission received a \$350,000 grant to study the feasibility of a high-speed rail line connecting the Columbus Airport with Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, thus igniting intense discussions about passenger rail all over the Peach State.

Georgia could be closer than ever to getting passenger rail now that MARTA is working to deliver what could be the first segment of commuter rail, proposed to travel from the city of Atlanta to Lovejoy. This rail line is the product of a successful 2014 campaign effort to have Clayton County join the regional transit system and is part of a larger proposed regional rail line that would shuttle passengers all the way to Macon and beyond.

The timing of all this is exciting, as the state is beginning to acknowledge the importance of investing in transportation choices whereas, in the past, mobility throughout the Peach State has relied heavily on a roads-only plan. Complimenting this sentiment, the Georgia Department of Transportation released its State Rail Plan, which lays out the potential for passenger rail networks that would connect every corner of the state, earlier this year. The Columbus to Atlanta line is prominently featured in the plan and would be 90 miles long, reach speeds of 210 mph, and take just 61 minutes to travel with just one stop in Newnan.

We checked in with Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson for an update about this transformative project, asking why Columbus wants the passenger rail line and why they should go first.



Mayor Tomlinson responded with background on the project, mentioning that the feasibility study was handled by the nationally respected transportation consulting firm HNTB and shows the potential for an electric high-speed rail line running along I-185 and I-85, right of way that is already owned by Georgia. The mayor stated, "The feasibility study was also supported by private dollars from the business community," and "... [the rail line] would cost \$3 billion to construct and would attract \$1.1 million in one-way trips per year. This project could have an economic impact of a minimum of 33,000 new jobs." This potential impact has increased support for the project, and news articles have shown residents in places like Newnan and LaGrange are on board.

But what will it take for this rail line to actually get constructed? Mayor Tomlinson laid out the next step: conducting an Environmental Impact study, which would allow for public comment, along the proposed corridor. According to the mayor, "The Federal Railroad Administration has allowed us to consolidate the required Tier I and Tier II Environmental Impact studies because the corridor has been previously studied. We are in the process of fundraising in order to pay for the Environmental Impact study."

The Mayor's Commission on Passenger Rail still meets regularly and with federal and state governmental officials to brainstorm how to move this initiative forward. "It will take a broad public-private partnership to bring this project to fruition," the Mayor stated. The feasibility study demonstrates that the cost of a one-way ticket would be approximately \$41 and shows that the revenue from the rail line would pay for the operation and maintenance of the line in its first year of function. For such a low cost, we imagine many commuters will trade wasted gas and hours in traffic congestion for a cleaner, faster commute. 🌱

Find Your Local Chapter Outings @
<http://sierraclub.org/georgia/outings>



Does Georgia Need a Spaceport?

By William Tomlin

In 2015, the Camden County Board of Commissioners proposed building a commercial spaceport in Georgia's south-eastern-most county that would allow up to twelve rocket launches per year. A website for the project, known as Spaceport Camden, explains that the location would allow rockets to take a due east course across the Atlantic Ocean. This route would take rockets directly across the northern end of Cumberland Island.

Since much of Cumberland is protected as a federally designated wilderness area and houses a fragile coastal ecosystem that includes important nesting grounds for endangered loggerhead sea turtles, the outcry from environmentalists was prompt. Twenty-five to 30 percent of Georgia's loggerhead nesting sites are found on Cumberland each year.

Before building Spaceport Camden, the county must first obtain a Launch Site Operator License from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). As part of the process of issuing that license, federal law requires the FAA to complete an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the potential environmental consequences of the spaceport. The FAA is working with NASA and the National Park Service to complete the EIS. The National Park Service oversees the Cumberland Island Wilderness as part of the Cumberland Island National Seashore.

According to the FAA, Camden County "plans to offer the site for up to 12 vertical launches and up to 12 landings of associated launch vehicle first-stages per year ... 12 static fire engine tests; and up to 12 wet dress rehearsals, which are a pre-launch test to simulate the countdown of a launch, per year," along with "recovering spent stages at sea that may be barged back to the site for rehabilitation and reuse."

Documents released by the FAA show that Spaceport Camden would consist of four separate sites, three of which appear to be currently undeveloped. The largest site, the Launch Facility, will be constructed on one of these undeveloped sites adjacent to marshland at the mouth of the Satilla River and would include lighting towers and a propellant tank farm.

Any development has environmental consequences, and the exceptional nature of a spaceport, including the heavy machinery and the large amounts of fuel required to launch a rocket into space, could pose much greater risks to the environment than an average development.

The Wilderness Act, which protects a large part of Cumberland, requires agencies to preserve the "wilderness character" of designated areas. It also prohibits the use of motorized vehicles and mechanical transport within wilderness and only allows the use of aircraft where those uses have already become established. While the act is silent on the matter of rocket



An Antares rocket launches at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport.

launches adjacent to wilderness areas and generally does not govern any actions that occur outside of federally designated wilderness areas, a federal district court in Minnesota decided in *Izaak Walton League of America v. Kimbell* in 2007 that agencies could be required to limit activities on lands they administer outside of wilderness areas if those activities have impacts, including noise, in wilderness areas.

National Park Service regulations prohibit unreasonable noise and noise measured over a certain level in national parks and the operation of portable motors or engines or devices powered by portable motors or engines, unless operated according to a permit, in undeveloped areas. Additionally, regulations also prohibit the "frightening or intentional disturbing of wildlife nesting, breeding or other activities." The Endangered Species Act includes similar restrictions related to species listed as threatened or endangered, like the loggerhead sea turtle.

In spite of all these concerns, supporters assert Camden County's geographic location is the right one because of Georgia's status as a right-to-work state, its business-friendly environment, and because the project would bring much needed jobs to the area.

In an effort to move the project forward, Representative Jason Spencer, R-Woodbine, introduced The Georgia Space Flight Act, House Bill 734, during the 2016 legislative session. The bill passed out of the House but stalled in Senate hearings, thus ending the year in a study committee. Spencer told The Brunswick News discussions had little to do with the legislation itself and asserted they were influenced by a lobbyist hired to help thwart the act. In addition to environmentalists, some residents of both Cumberland and Little Cumberland were none too happy with the possibility of rockets flying over their homes.

But Spencer is not giving up. At last report he was discussing the creation of a Select Commercial Space Industries Subcommittee to study the issue, so look for the idea of a spaceport to reappear in another year. 🌱

An Airport for the North Metro?

By Fenly Foxen and
Colleen Kiernan

Most Georgians can agree that a benefit of living here is being able to get a direct flight almost anywhere in the world from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. The Atlanta airport has been the busiest airport in the world since 2000, and plans for new gates, doubled parking capacity and a sixth runway are underway.



In spite of this behemoth, the Paulding County Airport Authority has proposed commercializing their own Silver Comet Field. Economic development agencies built the airport, completed in 2010, to spur financial growth in the area. Then, Propeller Investments, the same company that unsuccessfully attempted to commercialize Briscoe Field in Gwinnett County, worked behind closed doors with the Paulding County Airport Authority on the plan to open the facility to commercial flights. An agreement between the Industrial Building Authority, the Airport Authority and Propeller Investments was reached in November of 2012. Ten months later, in October of 2013, the public learned about the deal, right before the Paulding County Board of Commissioners approved a \$3.4 million bond for the project.

Outraged citizens pursued various legal challenges to the project, which resulted in a settlement requiring the Airport Authority to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In November 2014, two incumbent county commissioners were ousted by airport opponents, who now hold the majority on the Paulding County Commission. Despite the tougher political climate, the Airport Authority and Propeller Investments are still moving forward with the project.

From an environmental perspective, the primary concerns include those typical of development, increased stormwater runoff due to paving, increased air pollution from planes and all the auxiliary vehicles that support such development. And from an equity standpoint, Hartsfield-Jackson is the state's largest employer, and it's south of Interstate 20, providing an important economic engine in a part of our region that needs it the most. Would it be fair to chip away at it by develop-

ing similar service to the wealthier north? More social and economic impact analysis would be needed to answer these questions.

To the casual observer, the proposal appears to be a typical case of home cooking, using tax money to enrich a small group of connected folks through one of the hundreds of Georgia industrial and development authorities. To one long-time observer, the project appears to be a solution

looking for a problem. The citizens being fleeced in this case have a key ally in Delta Airlines, which is very much invested in keeping Hartsfield-Jackson a monopoly of air travel. 🌲



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HB 170: Filling Potholes or Filling Pockets?

By Neill Herring and David Emory

Speaking before a legislative budget panel, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Commissioner Russell McMurtry began by saying, “Thank you for HB 170; it was truly transformational. This is the most important infrastructure vote this legislature has ever taken.”

As you may remember from the 2015 legislative session, House Bill 170 was the “must pass” highway funding package, consisting of an increase in the motor fuel tax, a new \$5 per night fee on hotel rooms and a \$200 annual fee for electric vehicles. The bill was estimated to raise an additional \$1 billion per year, which was the bare minimum proponents argued was needed to maintain our current infrastructure.

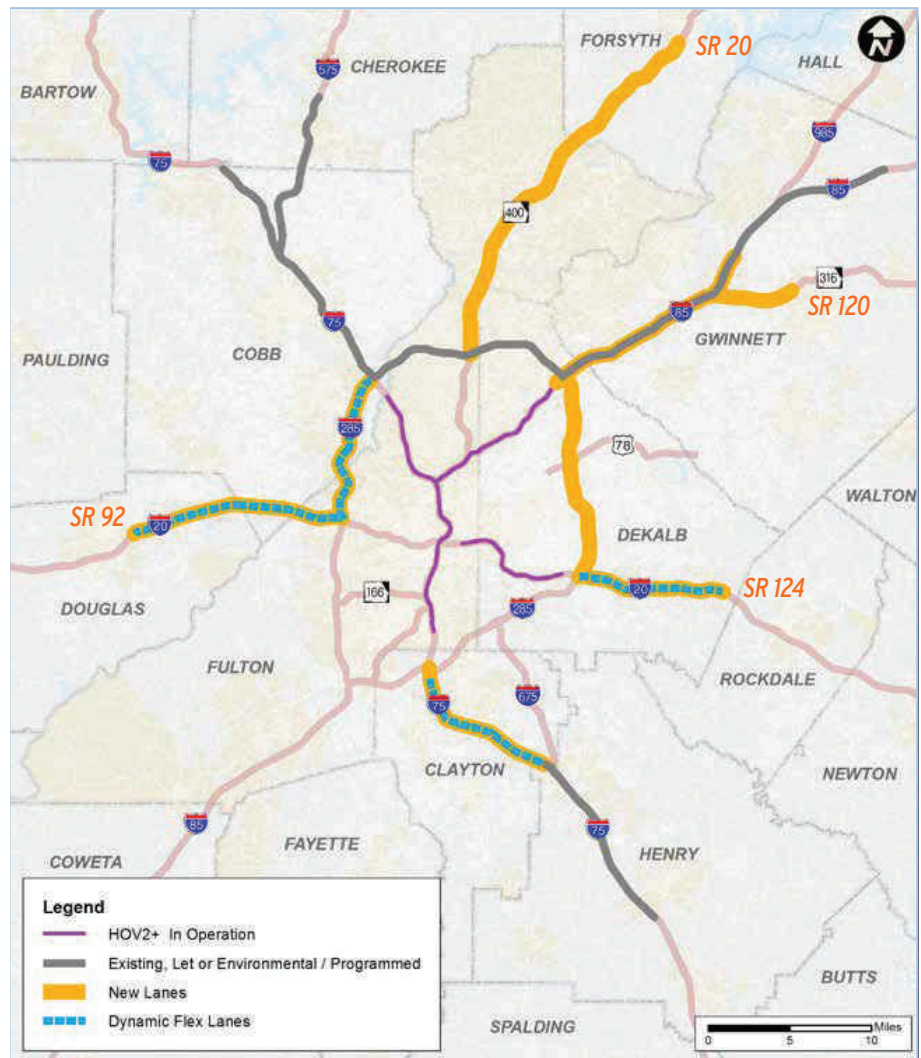
The new taxes became effective on July 1, 2015, and details of the spending became apparent for the first time when the Supplemental Budget for 2016 was unveiled after the legislature reconvened for the 2016 Session.

(Each Session of the General Assembly considers and passes two Budget bills: one, the Supplemental, for the remaining months of the existing fiscal year to reflect changes in revenues and expenditures, and the second is the Big Budget, the spending plan for the next fiscal year.)

McMurtry told the budget writers, “Now through June over a billion dollars in contracts going out. Generally we do a billion a year, now we are going to do a billion between now and June.”

He continued, “We have \$700 million in capital projects. Some is construction and some is maintenance. This is really big. A big shot in the arm. We need to apologize because there’s going to be a lot of barrels out there in the spring.”

The specific breakdown between roadway expansion and maintenance spending is a critical question. At a press



The state’s long-term plan for interstate highway expansion in metro Atlanta. The plan is expected to be a major focus of revenues from 2015’s roadway funding bill, HB 170.

conference early in the session, Governor Nathan Deal set forth a plan for \$10 billion in spending, much of it for highway capacity expansion. The plan, to be funded by HB 170 proceeds as well as toll and public-private partnership revenue, includes construction of extensive new toll lanes on interstate highways in Metro Atlanta, widenings of Interstates 16 and 95 near the Port of Savannah, and a project to build new truck-only lanes along a section of I-75 between Macon and McDonough.

Roadway maintenance was the cen-

terpiece in the campaign to pass HB 170 in 2015 and, indeed, much of the early HB 170 revenue has been earmarked for roadway resurfacing and similar “state of good repair” projects. At the same time, there are indications that federal funds will be used as much as possible for maintenance work, thereby allowing state funds, which are subject to less stringent environmental regulations, to be focused more on new construction. How this balance plays out over the long term will be a key point for transportation advocates to watch going forward. ♣

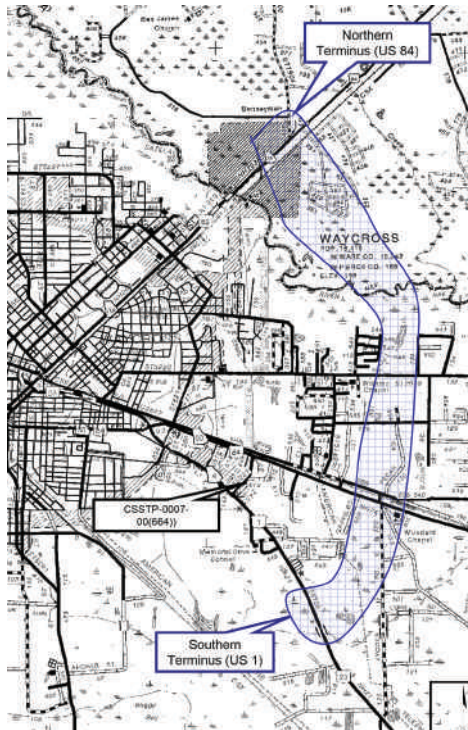
Citizens Defeat the Waycross East Bypass

By Craig Kubiak

The Waycross East Bypass project was a road designed to connect U.S. Highway 84 with U.S. Highways 82 and 1. It was to start in western Pierce County, cross wetlands and the Satilla River, and end in eastern Ware County. The Pierce County section was to be a two-lane road with a part of the Ware County portion becoming four lanes. The stated objectives were to decrease truck traffic in downtown Waycross, Georgia, and to decrease traffic across Morningside Drive and the Cherokee Heights neighborhood.

First revealed to the public in 2011 at a public information hearing sponsored by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the project immediately met with overwhelming opposition. People felt that damage to existing neighborhoods, wetlands and the Satilla River, and the cost of over \$60 million, were all too high a price to pay.

The public also perceived it to be the wrong road in the



The proposed alignment of the Waycross East Bypass

wrong place. It was felt that the proposed alignment would not meet either of its two goals. The City of Waycross believed it would cause further harm to its fragile downtown businesses and voted to pull out of the project.

After an informal town hall meeting sponsored by GDOT, and a second official public information hearing, where again the majority of the public was firmly against the project, the Ware County Board of Commissioners also voted unanimously to remove their support. Faced with overwhelming public opposition and the decisions of both the City of Waycross and Ware County, GDOT announced early in 2016 that a no-build alternative was being selected. In other words, the project was canceled.

Both the Satilla Riverkeeper and the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club were vocal in their opposition to the project, primarily due to damage to wetlands and

the Satilla River, and their support was much appreciated by local citizens who also opposed the project. 🌲



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Please be as generous as you are able - and remember, these funds directly affect your way of life in your neighborhood.

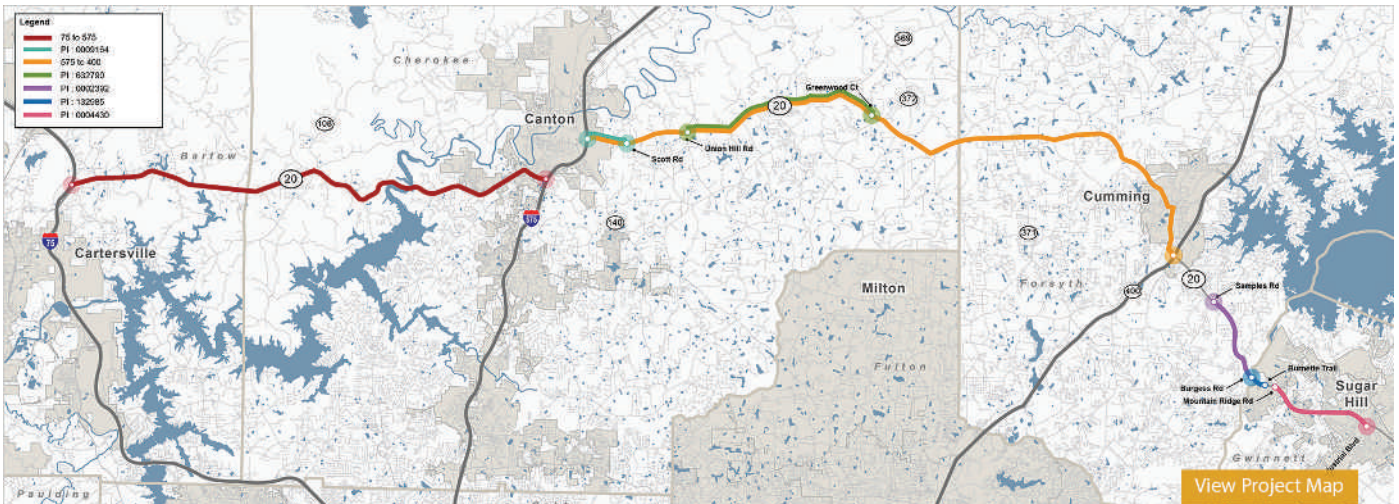
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Canton to Cumming: An Update on SR 20



Current plans call for expansion of SR 20 to occur largely along the alignment of the existing roadway, an improvement over earlier plans that called for construction of a new-alignment freeway.

By Robert G. Chambers

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has been striving for more than three decades to construct a new freeway across north Georgia to relieve what is primarily freight congestion on the northern sections of Interstate 285 in metro Atlanta. Their efforts have included the fabled and failed Outer Loop more than 30 years ago, the Northern Arc across Cherokee and Forsyth counties more than a decade ago, and most recently the State Route (SR) 20 Improvement project.

The SR 20 Improvement project was a segmented approach, covering more than 20 miles from Interstate 575 in Canton to SR 400 in Cumming. In GDOT's convoluted thinking, constructing a new freeway and naming it SR 20 would constitute an "improved" SR 20. This program was to be funded 80 percent by federal money and 20 percent by state dollars.

The need for federal money greatly complicated the planning and permitting stage, dragging it out for many years with extensive public involvement along the way. One important requirement was that GDOT consider the "universe" of possible solutions in a multistep pro-

cess. This evolved into consideration of widening the existing roadbed as well as studying two separate locations for a possible new freeway. Fortunately, this review period coincided with an election year at the state and local level.

The Highway 20 Coalition, a citizens' action group I was privileged to lead during its first formative year, organized to ensure that local concerns were given due consideration. The coalition adamantly opposed construction of a new freeway. We contacted every elected official from the county board of commissioners up to the state House of Representatives and Senate who represented constituents from the affected area. We also contacted all candidates for elected office in the area. Our request was that they support our opposition to the construction of a new freeway and limit work to the current roadway. All candidates and all but two elected representatives supported our position. We also received support from two candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives. A member of the state House and a state senator from the Canton area, although not opposed to our position, would not commit to support the Coalition.

The entire focus of the SR 20 project was changed when the Georgia Leg-

islature created a source of new state funds totaling about \$1 billion per year dedicated almost exclusively to roads with virtually nothing for mass transit. GDOT almost immediately announced that the SR 20 project would be funded by new state money, virtually extinguishing federal oversight of the project.

One of GDOT's first steps was to disband the Citizens Advisory Committees which were required by the federal process but not for state projects. GDOT cannot avoid federal laws like the Clean Water Act or the Endangered Species Act, but their consideration of environmental and social factors will be much less stringent without federal oversight. For example, under the federal umbrella of previous planning, GDOT submitted a 6,000-page report on historically significant features. This is not required by the state process.

GDOT Commissioner McMurry, speaking in Cherokee County a few months ago, announced that GDOT would no longer give consideration to constructing a new freeway but would focus instead on widening the existing SR 20 roadway. Apparently a four-lane, divided SR 20 will be constructed, although details remain up to the plan-

Continued on next page

SR 20, continued from previous page

ners as to what will actually happen, especially at choke points and in the congested confines of Cumming.

Simply widening SR 20 requires a solution to various spots prone to traffic snags in the Buffington, Macedonia, Free Home and Ducktown communities. Recent reports are that churches in Buffington and Macedonia have agreed to sell their buildings if agreeable terms are negotiated, potentially eliminating the bottlenecks in those communities. There is no word yet on solutions for Free Home and Ducktown where the problems are old buildings of some significance to the local community.

This is a good news/bad news update. The good news is that new freeways will not be built and that current congestion will be alleviated. The bad news is that the wider road will increase capacity enabling the counties to continue permitting construction of sprawl-inducing cul-de-sac subdivisions. For example, two large developments have reportedly either been approved or are in the process of permitting in the Ball Ground and Buffington communities of Cherokee County. So the sprawl will continue, the capacity will be used up and the call for more asphalt solutions will be heard again. The rural nature of northern Cherokee is in peril and only creative and foresighted leadership can forestall what appears to be its inevitable sprawl into a congested “bedroom county supplying workers to Atlanta.”

Maybe it is not too late for the vision of the Chattahoochee Hills country of south Fulton County to be transported to north Cherokee County: rural landowners owning valuable development rights to be sold to developers in designated growth areas where livable/walkable communities and mass transit have a fair chance. The newly improved SR 20 is not a step in this direction, but it is not too late if leaders step forward. 🌲

Braves Relocation Causes Transit Dilemmas in Cobb County



A conceptual rendering of a pedestrian bridge that would carry Braves fans across 18 lanes of roadway traffic. Funding for the bridge is uncertain.

By Linda Bell

Transportation discussions in Cobb County revolve around the Atlanta Braves’ move to the northwest Cumberland Mall area. SunTrust Park, due to open in spring 2017, sits next to the Interstates 75 and 285 interchange, and creates a complex set of congestion and transit issues.

People in Cobb County and the metro area are anxious about what will happen on game days in an area that is already choked, so multiple road projects are already underway to relieve congestion, both on the interstates and local streets. Intersection redesigns, sidewalk installations, a diverging diamond for Windy Hill Road, and widening of roads are now taking place.

In addition, the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes project will add almost 30 miles of toll lanes to Interstate 75. However, this project is designed to utilize reversible lanes with traffic being directed north in the evenings, so it does not appear this will help fans get to the game. It is also not scheduled to open until 2018.

The Braves report that there will be about 6,000 parking spaces at the stadium which seats 41,500. Estimates are

that 25,000 cars could be expected for sold-out games. Utilizing other parking in the area will require the use of a circulator bus or a pedestrian/bus bridge over Interstate 285. Officials hope that traffic will be somewhat dispersed, with people arriving and departing games at different times due to the planned development around the ballfield.

In addition, the Cumberland Community Improvement District (CID) has hired the PATH Foundation to put together a plan to make it easier to bike to the games.

What about mass transit? The closest bus connection point is the Cumberland Transfer Center, but it is almost a one-mile walk from the stadium and necessitates crossing some busy intersections. There are plans, however, to add six buses to serve as a circulator bus system in the area which would shuttle folks along various routes.

The impending arrival of the Braves makes the need for mass transit obvious. Conventional wisdom has always been that Cobb voters won’t support mass transit options. If and when massive traffic problems develop, will they support it then? Will the Braves? Will elected officials and businesses? 🌲

Gwinnett's Growth, Changing Demographics and Transit

**By Alyssa Davis, Program Director
Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District**

Do you wish it were easier to get around in Gwinnett?

That was one of the many questions posed to Gwinnett County residents and workers in August 2015 as part of the Great Exchange on Transportation, a community-wide conversation about how to address the county's transportation challenges. The weeklong initiative, led by the Gwinnett Village and Gwinnett Place Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) garnered over 4,000 survey responses showing that most wanted more options for transportation beyond just the car. When asked, "If you could wave a magic wand and change one thing about transportation in Gwinnett, what would it be?" the most popular response was transit expansion and improvements to existing transit services.

The views on transit in Gwinnett are certainly changing. With close to 900,000 residents, Gwinnett is the second largest county in Georgia, and it is forecast to become the state's most populous county by 2040. Gwinnett is also the most diverse county in the Southeast, with a majority-minority population and a quarter of the population born abroad.

Gwinnett was one of the original counties included in the legislation for the creation of MARTA, but voters rejected MARTA in 1971 and again in 1990. In 1971, the population of Gwinnett was 78,959. In 1990, the population was 356,979 and 91% white. While many in the Atlanta region have adopted the belief that Gwinnett does not want MARTA because the county has repeatedly voted against it, it is important to remember that the county is now a different place; the majority of today's Gwinnett residents were not here when those votes took place.

Gwinnett was one of the fastest growing counties in the nation through the 1990s and 2000s, and that has caused a strain on infrastructure. Gwinnett, like much of metro Atlanta, developed in a very sprawling, automobile-centric pattern, resulting in an overreliance on driving to get almost anywhere. Many Gwinnett County residents travel outside the county for work, and many workers in Gwinnett commute in from other parts of the region. This has led to daily congestion on Interstate 85, State Route 316, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and many other major corridors connecting the county with the rest of the region.

Gwinnett has a local transit system and regional express bus service that began in the early 2000s, but many residents have voiced opinions that the existing services are not enough. The Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce conducted a poll in early 2015 asking voters if they favored MARTA expansion in Gwinnett. Sixty-three percent favored MARTA expansion, and half supported a one-penny sales tax increase to pay for it. The

support for MARTA was strongest in the southwestern portion of the county closest to the urban core (and the existing MARTA system).

The southwest region of the county was the first area to develop and is now urbanizing and interested in redevelopment. Members of the business community see transit as an important economic development tool, especially as more and more companies are favoring walkable locations connected by transit over isolated office parks. The Gwinnett Village and Gwinnett Place CIDs have completed several studies examining transit expansions to connect the Doraville MARTA station to the Infinite Energy Center through major activity centers along the Interstate 85 corridor. The first study, in partnership with MARTA, examined a heavy rail extension. Two subsequent studies examined the feasibility of light rail transit, and an Alternatives Analysis was completed at the end of 2014.

The cities in Gwinnett are also responding to the demand for more transportation options by creating walkable activity centers. Clearly, many in Gwinnett recognize a need to adapt to changing preferences. At her 2016 State of the County address, Chairwoman Charlotte Nash described the future vision for Gwinnett, focusing on concepts for Gwinnett's activity centers with renderings that included bus rapid transit. She is running for re-election in November, and her opposition is Democratic Party Chairman Jim Shealey, who is running on a platform advocating for mass transit and allowing citizens to vote on MARTA. Two other commissioners, Jace Brooks (District 1), and Tommy Hunter (District 3) are also up for re-election in November.

State Representative Pedro Marin, D-Duluth, introduced a resolution at the beginning of the 2016 legislative session asking commissioners to have meetings about MARTA expansion, and, if there is public support, to put a MARTA referendum on the ballot in November. Most county leaders, however, oppose a November vote on MARTA because the Gwinnett County SPLOST is up for renewal. The SPLOST pays for many projects, including parks, roads, bridges, sidewalks, trails, police and fire stations, libraries, and county and city facilities, so leaders do not want to jeopardize its passage by including another sales tax on the ballot. A tax increase for transit is more likely in 2017 or 2018. Gwinnett's current tax rate is 6%, one of the lowest in the state.

The county is currently updating its Comprehensive Transportation Plan, with its first set of public meetings beginning in March. This will be an important opportunity for residents in Gwinnett to speak up about what transportation improvements they value, and for transit supporters to make their voices heard. 🌲

Georgia Power's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) Offers Much Room for Improvement

By Colleen Kiernan

Every three years, Georgia Power, our state's regulated, monopoly utility, files an update to its long-term plan for how it will meet Georgia's electricity needs. To construct this Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), the company uses models to make a best guess at what demand will look like, and then goes about choosing resources that they either build or purchase along with programs that reduce demand. The staff of the Public Service Commission (PSC) and interested parties, known as "intervenor," review Georgia Power's data and methodology and provide additional data and expert opinion on the methodology. Some issues are hammered out and agreements are reached, and if there are outstanding issues, the five elected Public Service Commissioners decide. Costs are considered during this process, but how much customers pay is determined through a different process, known as the Rate Case. The next Rate Case will be filed in August of this year.

In 2013, Georgia Power did propose retiring 25% of their coal fleet, but did

Solar & Wind	Coal
<i>Clean Line, a high-voltage line that will be able to deliver wind from the Midwest to the Southeast, gets regulatory approval</i>	<i>New regulations including the Coal Combustion Residual Rule, Effluent Limitation Guidelines and Cooling Water Intake Structure Rule have compliance deadlines in the next several years that will require more controls and add more costs</i>
<i>Clean Line estimates that they will be able to deliver clean wind for \$33/megawatt hour (MWh); similar numbers proposed by respondents to a Wind Request for Information filed by Georgia Power in February 2015</i>	<i>Report published that estimates electricity from Plant Hammond costs \$94/MWh</i>
<i>2015 is solar's best year ever, with 7.3 gigawatts installed; Georgia is #8!</i>	<i>Coal producers Alpha Natural Resources, Patriot Coal Corporation and others file for bankruptcy; Arch Coal taken off the New York Stock Exchange</i>
<i>Investment Tax Credit and Production Tax Credit for solar and wind are extended by Congress</i>	<i>International climate deal reached in Paris</i>

not propose any additional solar power, despite the success of a 210 megawatt (MW) solar program approved just a year earlier. The Commission did approve the coal retirements but gave the company preliminary approval to invest a lot more in the remaining coal plants. Commissioner Bubba McDonald led the effort to build on the program and add an additional 525 MW as part of the 2013 IRP.

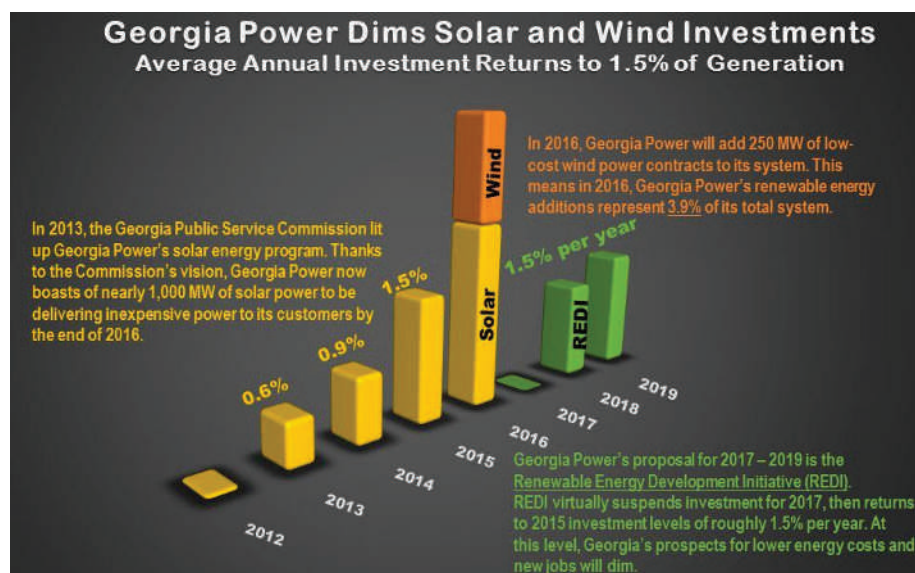
Since 2013, all sorts of favorable things have happened that have helped

renewables and made coal even more expensive.

So, you'd guess that in 2016 Georgia Power proposed retiring much more coal and adding a lot more renewables, right? Guess again! Georgia Power did not propose any coal retirements and plans to scale back their successful solar program and lump solar, wind and biomass together.

Other utilities are already finding that by combining wind, solar and energy efficiency, they can replace much of the need for new gas plants and significantly reduce operating costs by retiring outdated and expensive coal plants, like Plant Hammond, which rarely operate. Georgia already has 20,000 jobs in the clean energy sector, and the PSC can continue to support this growth industry by scaling up this successful program.

Georgia Power's proposed IRP does not meet the standard of taking all cost-effective steps to save energy, lower electricity bills and foster a robust, clean energy economy in the state. Ultimately, the draft plan represents a missed opportunity and must be changed. Please stay tuned for town hall meetings in an area near you and make your voice for clean, cheap energy heard! 🌱



Georgia Giving Society 2015

Live Oak Champions

\$5,000+

Lee Adrean	Jim Smith
Carey and Doug Benham	The Wardlaw Foundation
Charles and Mary Bosserman	Mark Woodall
Margaret and Bob Reiser	

Longleaf Pine Protectors

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Martha and Tom Black	Laura Turner Seydel
Sam and Laurie Booher	Ankush Patel
Mike and Peggy Dobbins	Charles Tisdale and Martha Eskew
David Emory	Joni Winston
Rex Fuqua	Jim Smith
Jennifer and Bill Kaduck	John and Midge Sweet
Rebecca and Mark Klein	William Tietjen
Kopelman Law Group, P.C.	Joni Winston

Southern Magnolia Society

\$500 - \$999

Robert Benfield and Stephanie Stuckey-Benfield	Richard and Nancy Negley
Aubrey and Carol Bush	Kevin and Marcia Nuffer
Marjorie Cohen	Martin Rosenman and Angie Netterville
Sandeep and Kiran Dadlani	Sabina and Asheesh Saxena
Jannah Goodell and Konrad Hayashi	Norman Slawsky and Marcia Abrams
Seth Gunning	Zolinda Stoneman
Scott and Carol James	Pamela Woodley
Cynthia Jeness	David Worley
Weyman Johnson	

Evergreen Partners

\$100 - \$499

Kathryn Adams
Gavin Appleby
Arbor Montessori School
Mirza and Sunita Balic
Marylou Barnes
David Barrett
Jeanne Barsanti
Lynn and Michael Beach
Lovett Bennett
Joseph Bentley
Sally Bethea
Felicia Bianchi
Stephen Bick
Bonnie Boatright
Samuel and Laura Breyfogle
Max and Carolyn Brown
Carl Buice
James and Tyra Byers
Jim Callison
Catherine Carter
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Daniel Ciomek
Tom and Stephanie Coffin
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Ralph Connell
Brenda Constan
Charles Cook
Jody Cook
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James Darby
Ed and Sherryl Decker
Theodore and Lynda Doll

Continued on next page

Support Your Chapter

Evergreen Partners

(continued from previous page)

Deborah Donovan	Henry Kahn and Mickey Gillmor	Thomas and Margaret Rasmussen
Francine and Richard Dykes	Howard Kaplan and Julie Edelson	Stewart Roberts
David & Mindy Egan - Initiative to Protect Jekyll Island	Michelle and Scott Kegler	Cindy Roesel
Eddie Ehlert	William Keir	Susan Schultz
Bruce Emory and Day Ann Doak Emory	Gloria Kittel	Nancy Scott
Bil Everitt	Kathleen Knudsen	Diane Shearer
Paul and Meera Garcia	Arnold and Nancy Kraby	Curt Smith and Lynn Razaitis
Sidney and Patricia Gay	Michael Krause	Bob and Jane Springfield
Arthur Hagar	Nancy Krecklow	Bill de St. Aubin
Earline Ham	Walter Kruger and Sandra Stewart-Kruger	Suja Subramanian
Eleanor Hand	Fred Law	Tally Sweat
Robert and Carolyn Hargrove	William And Mary Bal Long	Marianne Tanner
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Steven and Susan Hauser	Bruce and Dell MacGregor	Jerome Walker
Chad and Kristy Helmick	Tom MacMillan	Joy Walker
Neill Herring	Aniket and Shruti Maindarkar	Lynn Walston
James and Mabel Hicks	Laura and David Majors	Morning Washburn
Bruce and Lilly Higgins	Katha Massey	Ronald White
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Elizabeth Hodges	Kitty Meyers	Amelia Woolums and Philip Santangelo
Lindsay Holliday	Thomas and Marie Neff	Joel Wooten
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	Jim and Karen Powell	Kurt Zeller
	Jonathan Price	Philip and Dorothy Zinsmeister
	Mark Rappaport and Susan Briskie	

The Georgia Chapter of Sierra Club established its Georgia Giving Society to honor individuals making significant gifts to the Georgia Chapter. Their partnership and commitment to our work leaves a lasting legacy.

Contributions from the Georgia Giving Society are integral to the hard work of volunteers and staff all around Georgia including promoting renewable energy, monitoring and protecting Georgia's pristine coastal marsh, and protecting our public forests in the North Georgia mountains. Please join us in thanking current members.

Listed are the supporters who donated at the Live Oak Champion, Longleaf Pine Protector, Southern Magnolia Society and Evergreen Partner levels in 2015. If you would like to join or renew for 2016 please contact the Chapter office at 404-607-1262. Your support is much appreciated.

Thank You to Georgia Giving Society of 2015!

Discover Ocmulgee with Sierra Club, April 23

Did you know that plans are progressing through Congress to make the Ocmulgee National Monument near Macon Georgia's first National Historical Park, and to increase its size from 702 to 1,280 acres?

On our April 23 visit to this prehistoric site, we will learn about the 17,000-year history of Native Americans in the Georgia Piedmont and see the mounds built during the Mississippian Period. We will begin with a guided tour in which members of the Ocmulgee National Park and Preserve Initiative will share with us their continuing efforts to enlarge this site to include a corridor along the Ocmulgee River including the Bond Swamp.

After the tour, we will share a picnic lunch (catered, with a vegetarian option, available for \$10 or you may bring your own). Participants will have plenty of time to visit the museum, including viewing a film about the rich and long history of this area, or to explore the park on their own. Admission and parking are free.

Following the tour and lunch, two additional outings options will be available:

1) Bettye Harris will lead a hike on several nearby trails. (Six miles of trails are available at the site.) Difficulty level: easy to moderate.

2) Laura Breyfogle will lead a two-hour float on the nearby Ocmulgee River. Cost for boat rental from Ocmulgee Expeditions is \$30 per person, with kayak and canoe options available. Difficulty level: easy. Beginners welcome!



John Muir Outing to Ocmulgee

Date: Saturday, April 23

- 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. - Tour/Lunch/Museum
- 2 - 4 p.m. - Hike or Paddle Trip
- 5 p.m. - Park Closes

There will be a limit of 25 participants. All ages welcome. Wear comfortable, sturdy footwear. Bring drinking water and sunscreen.

To register, visit <http://bit.ly/1Rigzys>. For more information, contact Bettye Harris at bettyeharris@gmail.com or Laura Breyfogle at breyfogle@gmail.com.

Sierra Club Outings provide a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors. To find out more about what outings are being offered, please visit our website at:

<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/outings>

Saturday, April 23, 2016

Hike at Congaree National Park

Time: 8 a.m.

Leader: Cathy Black - 706-284-0230 sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com

Presented by: Savannah River Group

Rated: Moderate

Description: Join us for a hike at Congaree National Park. The park has the largest tract of old growth bottomland hardwood forest left in the United States. We will explore this hardwood bottom by following an easy 7 mile hike starting with an informative walk along the boardwalk. Meet at the Unitarian Church. Bring water, lunch and walking shoes. Contact Richard Dillenbeck (706-869-8770) to reserve your spot.

Saturday, April 30, 2016

Paddle the Augusta Canal

Time: 10 a.m.

Leader: Kathy Jo Champion - kjchamp23@yahoo.com

Presented by: Savannah River Group

Rated: Moderate

Description: Join us for a paddle down the canal to Lake Olmstead. Bring your own kayak/canoe or rent one from Savannah Rapids Kayak Rental. You will need: whistle, life jacket (available at kayak/canoe rental facility), lunch, water/drinks, sun screen, hat, sun glasses. Meet at the dam near the kayak rental store. At 10 a.m. the outing leader will be at the dam dropping off kayaks and shuttling a truck and trailer to Lake Olmstead. Anyone needing to drop their vehicle down there can follow him. Questions: contact Larry, larrkomp@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 7, 2016

Sun Power and River Run

Time: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Presented by: Georgia Chapter

Description: Georgia was the #1 state in 2015 for new solar energy jobs! On Saturday, May 7, join the Sierra Club Smart Energy Solutions team to tour the Suniva solar panel factory and a net-zero home, and see the solar industry in action. After seeing how solar panels are manufactured, we will tour a home in the process of being certified as net-zero, followed by a paddle down the Chattahoochee River. For additional details and to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/outings>.

National Sierra Club Elections are Underway - Vote!

A democratic Sierra Club demands grassroots participation, and the annual election for the Club's Board of Directors is now underway.

Those eligible to vote in the national Sierra Club election should have received in the mail (or by Internet if you chose the electronic delivery option) your national Sierra Club ballot in early March. This will include information on the candidates and where you can find additional information on the Club's web site. Your participation is critical for a strong Sierra Club.

The Sierra Club is a democratically structured organization at all levels. The Club requires the regular flow of views on policy and priorities from its grassroots membership in order to function well. Yearly participation in elections at all Club levels is a major membership obligation.

In a typical year less than 10 percent of eligible members vote in the Board elections. A minimum of 5 percent is required for the elections to be valid. Our grassroots structure is strengthened when our participation is high. Therefore your participation is needed in the voting process.

How can I learn about the candidates?

Members frequently state that they don't know the candidates and find it difficult to vote without learning more. Each candidate provides a statement about themselves and their views on the issues on the official election ballot. You can learn more by asking questions of your group and chapter leadership and other experienced members you know. You can also visit the Club's election web site for additional information about candidates: <http://www.sierraclub.org/board/election>

Voting online is quick and easy!

Even if you received your election materials in the mail, we encourage you to use the user-friendly Internet voting site to save time and postage. If sending via ground mail, please note your ballots must be received by no later than Election Day, April 27, 2016.



Cut Clear Cutting

Americans deserve clean air and water, healthy forests and a sustainable economy. In California alone, over a million acres of forested land are scheduled for clear-cut type logging. Clearcutting and loss of natural forests is harming water quality, air quality, wildlife habitat, recreation and tourism throughout the nation. Help the Sierra Club fight to replace clear cutting with sustainable logging.

Make the Cut & JOIN Sierra Club

Georgia Sierran 🌲 April/May/June 2016

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☐ Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club
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Card Number _____ Exp. Date ____ / ____
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Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 15	N/A
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 49
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Student	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35
Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$ 35

Contributions, gifts & dues to Sierra Club are tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$ 7.50 for a subscription to SIERRA magazine and \$ 1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Join today and receive
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Enclose a check and mail to: Sierra Club,
PO Box 421041, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1041
or visit our website: www.sierraclub.org

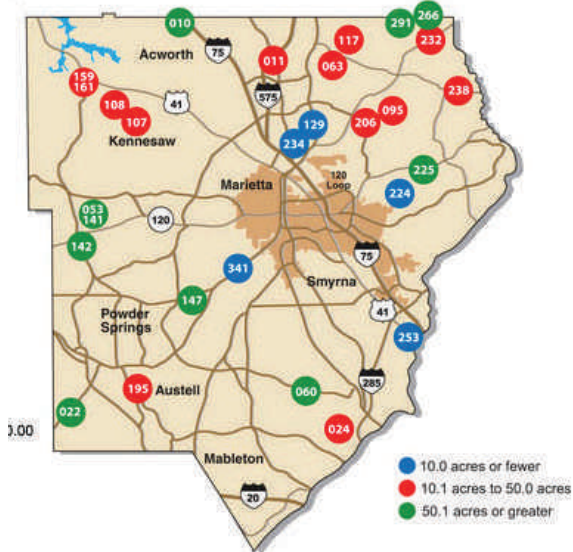
Thanks and Welcome

The Centennial Group thanks our departing treasurer and team leader, Barbara Owens, for excellent support the past few years. Barbara is now in California promoting electric car technology and assisting her parents. Thanks also to Todd Daniel who takes a well-deserved break after many years supporting our communications. A big welcome to these folks in their new roles: treasurer Jeff Jones, website manager Jennifer Burke, newsletter editor Lee Graham, membership chair Steven Bell, chapter delegate Ankush Patel (Bettye Harris alternate), legislative and political chair Linda Bell, and conservation co-chair Kaye Klapper.

We do need team members and backups, so let us know if you can assist any of these individuals. Our 2016 ExCom members are Lynn Walston (chair), Linda Bell, Gigi Burke, Kaye Klapper and Angie Netterville.

Save Our Parks

Centennial greenspace volunteers continue partnering with the newly re-formed Cobb Parks Coalition (www.LoveCobbParks.com) to persuade Cobb commissioners to issue the 2008 \$40 million parks bonds funds Cobb voters approved for purchase of parkland and green space. We have mounted a strong campaign by attending and speaking at commission meetings (To see three Centennial members testify at the Jan. 18 meeting, follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CO7OQkvqxks>), calling and visiting commissioners, and writing hundreds of notes and letters. In January, commissioners agreed to allow the public to propose land tracts for purchase consideration. We still need your help with letter writing and at commission meetings. Follow our progress and contact us: www.LoveCobbParks.com.



Meetings, Outings and Activities



Our 2016 group meetings have been well attended so far: In January a panel of chapter staff and volunteer leaders led "Hot Topics: Sierra Club Georgia's Key Initiatives for 2016"; in February, Neill Herring and Mark Woodall gave their legislative update; in March, Georgia Tech Professor Dr. Kim Cobb discussed "What El Nino and Corals Can Tell Us about Climate Change." Upcoming meetings include:

May 5 – Audubon Society, “Endangered Bird Species in Georgia”

June 2 – Colleen and Peter Morich, “Slow Food Atlanta”



We led three outings in January (including Vogel State Park to Blood Mountain, pictured above), two in February and four in March. Upcoming outings include:

April 23 – Ocmulgee National Monument Tour and Lecture, with optional hike or short guided paddle on nearby Ocmulgee River

April 30 - River Rendezvous (cleanup and water testing on Rottenwood Creek) with Cobb County Water and Chattahoochee Riverkeeper; contact Ina Allison at al-lison@loma.org or Lynn Walston at lynnwalston@yahoo.com.

For more details, view our outings calendar:
<http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/outingscalendar>

We started 2016 by having leaders from the Georgia Chapter committees on Smart Energy Solutions, R.A.I.L. (Regional Action to Improve Livability), Wildlands and Wildlife, political campaigns, and membership summarize recent work and explain what's next and how we as a group can help. Then on Feb. 9, Neill Herring (Sierra Club lobbyist) and Mark Woodall (Georgia Chapter Legislative Committee Chair) briefed us on the Georgia General Assembly's 2016 40-day session as it had proceeded up to that point. They made the case for contacting our state legislators (find yours at <http://openstates.org>) to voice our opinions. Input from constituents is known to make a difference.

Upcoming Meetings

Metro Atlanta Group meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Come for snacks at 7 p.m. and the program from 7:30 to 9 p.m. General meetings are open to the public.

Upcoming meeting dates:

May 10: Topic to be determined

June 14: Our annual picnic! Meet at 6:30 p.m. for a short walk in a local park, followed by a picnic and then a longer evening hike.

PLEASE NOTE: *Our meeting location has changed to **Decatur Public Library** (215 Sycamore St., Decatur, GA 30030). For the time being, we will not be meeting at the previous location, which was the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany. Please check our webpage for updates on meeting topics and locations: www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta.*

Get Ready for Springtime Outings and Actions!

As the weather warms up, start looking out for advocacy opportunities, guided hikes, city walks, neighborhood tours, movie screenings, arts events, service projects and more with Metro Atlanta Group. We will be making as many of these happen as we can in 2016! Contact executive committee members Denise LaSonde (deniselasonde@gmail.com) or Nina Dutton (nddutton@gmail.com) if you want to help bring these ideas to life.

Adopt-A-Stream Program

Our activities involve Peachtree Creek in Medlock Park (see directions below). For biologic monitoring, we need many eyes to find the macroinvertebrate critters found in the creek.

Saturday, June 25 (tentative): 10-11 a.m. for chemical monitoring, 10 a.m.-noon for biologic monitoring). Because we must schedule these events so far in advance for the Sierran announcement, dates do need to be moved on occasion. Typically the monitoring date is on the Saturday following the group meeting. The Water Sentinels have suggested that some dates may change - chemical more likely than biological. Please contact Larry before the chemical events. Also, refer to the Metro Group's website for schedule changes.

Contact: For information about chemical monitoring dates, call Larry Kloet at 404-636-7226. For more details about biological monitoring, call Nancy Wylie at 404-256-1172.

Directions: From Clairmont Road (between N. Decatur and N. Druid Hills Roads), take Desmond Drive (third street north of N. Decatur Road) until it intersects with Willivee Drive. Turn left and follow Willivee around to Scott Circle where you turn right. Parking is on your left when you reach the park. Park in the middle, and walk the dirt road with the two-story building on your left and ball fields on either side. Go into the woods behind ball field #5. Bear left and you will see us at a picnic table by the creek.

Help Wanted!

We're looking for a new webmaster and a new treasurer! If you or someone you know would like to take on either of these roles or just learn more, please write to executive committee member Nina Dutton at nddutton@gmail.com.

Is there a local problem you want to address? Let us know, so we can work with you on a campaign. Is there an environmental topic you're excited about? Tell us, and help bring a speaker to an upcoming meeting.

- Nina Dutton

For more information, directions, updates and new events, please see
www.sierraclub.org/georgia/atlanta

Find us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/SierraClubATL

LaGrange Group

LaGrange Group Goes Wild!

Thanks to live snakes and gators as bait, the LaGrange Group's January program was the best attended yet.

Our public library hosted and helped advertise a Snake Encounter program presented by Southeastern Reptile Rescue. Apparently their sign on Vernon Street, a main drag in LaGrange, announcing snakes and alligators got people's attention. An estimated 200 people of all ages streamed into the meeting room to be thoroughly entertained by Jason Clark. Rattlesnakes slithered on a table nearby while Jason taught us snake etiquette. A large copperhead hung from his special snake hook while he taught us to identify the telltale "Hersey kisses" patterns on its side. One volunteer bravely accepted having a nonpoisonous snake draped around her neck. We learned a healthy respect for snakes, identification skills and basically how it's pretty easy to avoid being bitten when



one keeps one's distance and doesn't mess with the snakes.

We've been wanting to offer opportunities for young families with children, and this program did the trick. Thanks to a generous donation from board member Sim Blich, we were able to fund this outstanding program.

In addition, we celebrated Georgia Arbor Day on three occasions by tree planting with elementary students at their school, planting a screen at a popular city park and landscaping at our local library. With Sam Breyfogle's leadership, we partnered with the school system and City of LaGrange to recognize the value of trees at an annual Arbor Day Proclamation and Celebration. A generous donation allowed us to purchase trees and landscaping materials.

- Laura Breyfogle



Greater Gwinnett Group

The coldest weather is now behind us, and it was a warm winter. In fact, it was the warmest January ever, which means our work is more important than ever. While the "SEC" primaries are a couple of days away as I write this, by the time you read this every Sierran should have voted. There are many issues: foreign policy, education, immigration, terrorism and who will have the opportunity to appoint the next Supreme Court justices to name a few. Of course, for us as environmentalists, there is climate change and all of its constituent parts: fossil fuels, transportation, and smart energy solutions such as wind, solar and tidal.

We are continuing our efforts with an environmental film series on relevant topics of concern. One of our films and lecture presentation was about bees, the recent colony collapse syndrome and the ramifications for farms and gardens. Come out and join us for future films.

We are also focusing on transportation and environmental education. First, we are educating people about transporta-

tion and building support for transit. Gwinnett's population demographics have changed, and now is the best opportunity for getting the message to the citizens.

The county is in the process of developing a Comprehensive Transportation Plan, "Destination 2040," and is holding six meetings for public input. Four were in March, but there are two more in April where you can make your voice heard:

Monday, April 18, 6 to 8 p.m.

Dacula Park Activity Building
2735 Old Auburn Avenue, Dacula 30019

Thursday, April 21, 6 to 8 p.m.

One Justice Square, Gwinnett County Planning & Development Conference Room, Second Floor
446 West Crogan Street, Lawrenceville, GA 30046

- Dan Friedman

Savannah River Group

Living along the state boundary (the Savannah River) means we get the dubious pleasure of attending public meetings dealing with transportation planning for both Georgia and South Carolina. In Augusta, future plans, if adopted, will result in many changes to routes and urban streets, including expansions, relocations, etc. Therefore, our group has



decided to focus on the need for bicycle lanes. Larry Komp, an avid cyclist and bicycle outings leader, has attended many local meetings to promote the need for more construction of safe bicycle lanes. This is a work in progress!

Several of our local parks and outdoor facilities

have bicycle lanes as well as bicycle trails. For example, Mistletoe State Park has recently expanded its trails. Our February meeting speaker, Ruth Mead of the Phinizy Center for Water Sciences, included bicycle trails in her presentation describing outdoor experiences available at Phinizy.

As many of you know, our group once belonged to both the Georgia and South Carolina Sierra Club Chapters. In that spirit of cooperation, three of our longtime members supported the South Carolina Sierra Club by attending their annual state awards meeting. The featured speaker for this event was National Sierra Club President, Aaron Mair.

- Judy Gordon



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Sierra Club

Gift Planning Program

85 Second Street, Second Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105

gift.planning@sierraclub.org • (800) 932-4270

Chapter Contacts

Executive Committee

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At-Large Elected Member

Vice Chair - Conservation: Mark Woodall,
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At-Large Elected Member

Diane Shearer, 404-388-1217,
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At-Large Elected Member

Chapter ExCom Meeting

The next Chapter Executive Committee meeting will be Saturday, May 21 in Tybee Island. Meetings are open to the membership. For more information, call the Chapter office at 404-607-1262 x221.

Officers & Chairs

Conservation Chair: Alan Toney,
mudflat@comcast.net

Secretary: Eddie Ehler, edehler@bellsouth.net

Treasurer: Tom Neff, tsneff2003@yahoo.com

Finance Chair: Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

Fundraising Chair: *vacant*

Human Resources Chair: *vacant*

Legislative Chair: Mark Woodall,
woodallmark8@gmail.com

Litigation Chair: Norman Slawsky,
nslawsky@gmail.com

Membership Co-Chairs: Lindsay Crumpton,
lcrumpton1@gmail.com and Sharon Soucek,
soucek.sharon@gmail.com

Newsletter Editors: Diane Shearer and Tanya
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Outings Chair: Sammy Padgett,
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Political Chair: Eddie Ehler,
edehler@bellsouth.net

Webmaster: Charlotte Gardner,
ga_sierra_webmaster@yahoo.com

Issue Campaigns and Contacts

Clean Air: Dale Kemmerick,
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Coastal Issues: Karen Grainey,
karengrainey@bellsouth.net

• **Coastal Marsh:** Karen Grainey,
karengrainey@bellsouth.net

• **Marine Species/Habitat:** Karen Grainey,
karengrainey@bellsouth.net

• **Okefenokee Swamp:** Sam Collier,
sam.collier3@gmail.com

• **Savannah Port:** Steve Willis,
snwillis@yahoo.com

Factory Farms: Leah Garces,
leah.garces@ciwf.org

Organic and Locally Grown Foods: Bryan
Hager, bhager@mindspring.com

Population: Todd Daniel,
todddan@mac.com

Recycling: Lori Blank, lblank@hotmail.com

Regional Action to Improve Livability (RAIL):
Meeting: 4th Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office.
Committee sometimes skips months. Email first.

Smart Energy Solutions:

Eleanor Hand, eghand@bellsouth.net and
Cecilia Harris, ceciliaharris@gmail.com
Meeting: 1st Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office

• **Beyond Coal:** Ian Karra,
ian.karra@sierraclub.org

• **Natural Gas:** *vacant*

• **Nuclear:** Glenn Carroll,
atom.girl@nonukesyall.org

• **Solar:** Thomas Jackson, tj31975@gmail.com

• **Wind:** Eleanor Hand, eghand@bellsouth.net

Water Sentinels/Adopt-a-Stream:

Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

Wildlands and Wildlife:

William Tomlin, wmltom@gmail.com

Meeting: 3rd Monday, 7 p.m., Chapter office.
Committee sometimes skips months. Email first.

• **Chattahoochee National Recreation Area:**
Alan Toney, mudflat@comcast.com

• **Federal Endangered Species:** Larry Winslett,
winfog@windstream.net

• **Rivers and Wetlands:** Keith Parsons,
kparsons@mindspring.com

• **State Lands/Georgia DNR:** Phil Zinsmeister,
pzinsmeister@oglethorpe.edu

Georgia Chapter Staff

Assistant Chapter Director:

Brionte McCorkle, 404-607-1262 x232,
brionte.mccorkle@sierraclub.org

National Staff

Beyond Coal Organizing Representative:

Ian Karra, 404-607-1262 x233,
ian.karra@sierraclub.org

Southeast Military Veterans & Outdoors

Coordinator: Lornett Vestal, 404-607-1262 x222,
lornett.vestal@sierraclub.org

Sierra Club National Programs

Inspiring Connections Outdoors

Contact Terri Lyde (lydeterri@bellsouth.net) for
more information.

Sierra Student Coalition

Contact Tyler Faby (tfaby@uga.com) for more
information.

Local Group Directory

A great way to get involved in your Chapter is by joining and participating in a local group. Some groups take certain months off, so it's a good idea to email first. Each group has a website. For maps and additional information on each group, visit the website: <http://www.sierraclub.org/georgia/get-involved>.

Centennial Group

Serving Cobb, Cherokee & North Fulton

Chair/Meetings Contact: Lynn Walston, lynnwalston22@yahoo.com

Outings Chair: Lee Graham, leegrah3@gmail.com, 404-202-9065

Meetings: 1st Thursday, welcome/refreshments 7 p.m., program 7:30 p.m.; Life College, 1269 Barclay Cir. SE, Marietta. For directions contact Lynn Walston, lynnwalston22@yahoo.com.

Coastal Group

Serving Savannah & surrounding counties

Chair: Karen Grainey, karengainey@bellsouth.net

Outings Chair: Steve Wagner, sjwgnr@hotmail.com

Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 520 E. Washington Ave., Savannah.

Greater Gwinnett Group

Serving Gwinnett County

Chair: Dan Friedman, dan3688@aol.com

Conservation Chair: Art Sheldon, asheldon.cp81@gtalumni.org

Outings Chair: Jake Hardison, jake.hardison@ssa.gov

Meetings: 3rd Thursday, 7 p.m., Berkmar High School, 405 Pleasant Hill Road, Lilburn 30047.

LaGrange Group

Serving the LaGrange area

Chair: Laura Breyfogle, breyfogle@charter.net

Conservation Chair: Sim Blitch, simblitch@charter.net

Outings Chair: Joanna Baxter, joannabbaxter@yahoo.com

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. welcome and refreshments, 7 p.m. program; St. Mark's Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 207 N. Greenwood St., LaGrange (no meetings June-August).

Georgia Sierran 🌲 April/May/June 2016

Metro Atlanta Group

Serving Atlanta, Dekalb & South Fulton

Co-Chair: Konrad Hayashi, rainingatl@gmail.com

Co-Chair: Denise LaSonde, deniselasonde@gmail.com

Outings Chair: Martin McConaughy, mcmarty@bellsouth.net

Meetings: 2nd Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m., Decatur Public Library, 215 Sycamore St.

Savannah River Group

Serving Augusta & surrounding areas

Co-Chair: Linda McBurney, msmcb@outlook.com

Co-Chair: Sam Booher, sbooher@aol.com

Conservation Chair: Frank Carl, frankcarl@knology.net

Outings Chair: Cathy Black, sonnyandcathyblack@gmail.com

Meetings: 3rd Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., Unitarian Church on Walton Way, Augusta.

Regional Contacts

LeConte Group/Athens & Northeast Georgia

Terry Jones, wolpers4@aol.com

Forsyth County

Jim Callison, callisonjim@bellsouth.net

Macon

Fletcher Winston, winston_f@mercer.edu

North Georgia

Larry Winslett, winfog@windstream.net

Valdosta

Brian Day, bjday@valdosta.edu

Looking for a group near your home?

The Georgia Chapter website (<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/>) contains a map showing the locations of all groups. Or, call the Chapter office at 404-607-1262.



Georgia Chapter Office

743 East College Ave., Suite B
Decatur, Georgia 30030
404-607-1262 • FAX: 404-876-5260
georgia.chapter@sierraclub.org
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org>

Directions to take MARTA to the Sierra Club office:

Our office is an easy 3-4 minute walk from the MARTA Avondale station (E7). We encourage you to take MARTA when possible. Exit the MARTA station towards the SOUTH PARKING LOT, located on the East College Ave. side. Once outside, proceed to the right towards Sams Street. Cross over Sams Street and the office is the building located right behind the convenience store. The office is the second door from Sams Street – Suite B.

Stay Informed!

SIERRA CLUB WEB SITES

GA Chapter Web Site:
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/>
GA Chapter Outings:
<http://georgia.sierraclub.org/outings/>

EMAIL LISTS

Subscribe to a Georgia Chapter email list. Just send an email to:

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GA-RAIL-NEWS (RAIL/Transit Advocacy Committee)

Subscribe to the Smart Energy Solutions listserve at:
gasmartenergycommittee@googlegroups.com

Subscribe to Georgia Chapter Online E-Newsletter at:
http://action.sierraclub.org/CHP_GA_Signup

Visit the Georgia Chapter web page and click on "Local Groups" for info on local groups' email lists.



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JOHN MUIR OUTINGS

Celebrate Earth Day – and Georgia’s spectacular beauty – all month long. Each Saturday in April, we’re hosting an outing where you can learn about our state’s threatened areas and how to protect them. To support the Georgia Chapter’s work, a donation of \$25 per person per outing is requested. What better way to honor Earth and our founder, John Muir?

Outings are underway! See details at
sierraclub.org/georgia/johnmuiroutings



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