



2007 Legislative Agenda

Transportation: State Authorized Regional Transportation Solution (St.A.R.T.S)

The growth of this state and region in past decades is a stunning economic success story. Unfortunately, a by-product of this tremendous growth is more congestion for the citizens and businesses. This congestion drives up the cost of doing business, and drives down the quality of life for residents. Moreover, the problem promises to get worse, as the state is the fourth fastest growing in the country, yet transportation funding per capita is fourth from the bottom. Without action, the funding gap could result in metro Atlanta having the second worst congestion problem in the country.

The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce supports the passage of enabling legislation to empower local governments to work cooperatively on transportation plans across political jurisdictions, and take these plans along with a funding proposal to the voters for approval. A successful enabling mechanism should provide flexibility to address unique local needs, and include the following safeguards: (a) Voluntary opt-in provisions for local governments by agreement; (b) a specific project list; (c) 'sunset' provision requiring the termination of the tax after a determined number of years or the completion of the project list; and (d) an independent oversight committee.

Economic Development: Support State Pension Diversification into Alternative Investments

We support enabling the state employee retirement fund to invest no more than 5% in alternative investments. This type of diversification would ignite economic development by providing support for the private equity markets, especially in the high-tech and biotech industries. 47 other states already allow this diversification, however, the Georgia state employee retirement system (ERS) is limited mostly to publicly-held investments such as stocks and government or corporate bonds. Additionally, market research shows diversification consistently also leads to more consistent and higher overall returns to the state employee pension plans.

Environment: Support Sound Water Policy and Water Planning District

The Metro Atlanta Chamber supports two key areas for the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District that will or may require legislative action in the future:

1. Include funding for the District in the amount of \$400,000 in the FY08 budget. These funds are used as "matching funds" and are combined with the local government dues that make up approximately two-thirds of the District's budget.
2. Oppose efforts to further restrict or ban the use of interbasin transfers as a water management tool in the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District. Although the District plans seek to minimize interbasin transfers, most of the counties in the metropolitan region are located in two or more river basins (some are in as many as four) and these jurisdictions have no option but to move water between basins to serve their residents.

Education: Support Funding for Graduation Coaches, Teacher Recruitment

We will continue our drive to improve graduation rates and workforce development in the 2007 Session by supporting the following education initiatives:

1. The high school graduation rate in Georgia continues to lag behind most other states. The Metro Atlanta Chamber supports state funding for middle and high school graduation coaches to identify and work with at-risk students in order to keep them in school and on track towards graduation.
2. Attracting and keeping top-flight educators in our state's schools is a good investment as studies have shown a strong linkage between quality teachers and student performance. Last year, the State of Georgia hired 14,000 new teachers. The state's colleges and universities produced only about 5,000 of these teachers. As of November 2006, 1,000 teacher slots remained open in Georgia. Additionally, like all professions, baby-boomer teachers will be reaching retirement age in the next five to 10 years creating even more critical needs in the teacher workforce in the upcoming years. To address this 'teacher gap,' the Metro Atlanta Chamber supports funding and policy initiatives to teacher recruit and keep teachers in the region.



2007 Secondary Legislative Agenda

Economic Development: Support Improving the Headquarters Tax Credit

The Metro Atlanta Chamber supports simplifying the job creation tax credits available to companies moving their headquarters to Georgia as well as allowing existing headquarters companies that are adding jobs to be able to use it. Headquarters companies generate good publicity, tax revenues and most importantly, high-paying jobs.

Economic Development: Support an Increase in REBA funding

Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) funds are used to close economic development deals in Georgia. Budget cuts had reduced this fund to \$3.2 million in past years. The increased appropriation of \$5 million in last year's session, along with a plan to increase appropriations in the future, will make this important tool more viable. We will continue to actively support the bolstering of this important economic development tool.

Economic Development: Grow the Biotech Industry with Facilities Funding

Biotech firms create high-paying jobs for Georgia's best and brightest. Many of these companies have difficulty accessing capital to build the right kind of research facilities. Last year, the state bolstered the facilities fund to \$5 million. We support an *additional* \$5M (\$10M total) in support of this critical deal closing fund program in the coming year.

Environment: Oppose Expanding the Scope of Inverse Condemnation Claims

Responsible land use planning and environmental regulations are a necessary government function to protect the safety, health and well-being of its citizens and their property. Current law adequately provides property owners with remedies for inadvertent impacts on their properties caused by government action. Expanding the claims private land owners can bring against state or local governments for compensation for inverse condemnation is not warranted at this time.

Transportation: Protect Viability of New Commute Alternatives

The Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce generally supports commute alternatives—such as commuter rail and bus-rapid transit projects—as a part of an comprehensive, effective transportation network. We oppose legislation of state-wide scope that specially burden these transit projects with mandatory referendums or other discriminatory obstacles, which do not apply to road or bridge projects.