



## 2010 Legislative Agenda

### I. Background

ACT Now Georgia is a grassroots, non-partisan coalition of individuals and organizations who recognize that public transit is a necessary component of Georgia's economy, environment, and quality of life. Using education, public outreach, and advocacy, we aim to ensure that transit has the necessary federal, state, regional, and local resources needed to maintain and extend service.

### II. Bill & Proposals of Interest

Below is a list of bills and proposed legislation ACT Now Georgia considers vital to the current state of public transit throughout the state. Additional updates and information can be found at [www.actnowga.org](http://www.actnowga.org).

- With regard to transit system-specific legislation, only MARTA has a bill outstanding; **SB120**. This is the "50/50" bill that would provide MARTA access to its capital reserves and interest income to help alleviate compounding operating costs constraints. ACT Now Georgia currently **supports** this legislation.
- There are currently two separate funding bills that remain in play during 2010: **SB39/SR44** and **HB277/HR206**. The Senate option, **SB39/SR44**, known colloquially as the "Regional" option, outlines a voter-created transportation funding source via a one-cent sales tax increase at the county or regional level. Funds would be used for all modes of transportation, including operating costs. In addition, it would be flexible on a sunset date, provide the option from localities/regions to select which transit projects would be funded and implements a dual system in which the Atlanta metro region is pre-defined for the additional tax with the caveat that individual regions within these counties (or cities) may form outside the Atlanta metro area and levy the tax. ACT Now Georgia eagerly awaits debate on this legislation to determine its impact on our platform.
- The House option, **HB277/HR206**, known colloquially as the "Statewide" option, allows voters to derive a new transportation funding source from a statewide one-cent sales tax. Under this option, a list of individual geographic transportation-specific projects (not limited to public transit) would be created. Additionally, a ten-year sunset is specified and there is potential funding for maintenance and operating costs for *some* transit systems, but specifically not for rural transit or a large number of urban systems. ACT Now Georgia eagerly awaits debate on this legislation to determine its impact on our platform.
- Governor Sonny Perdue recently announced a plan for transportation funding legislation that would include \$300 million per year in General Obligation Bonds for the next 10 years that would emphasize statewide projects that predominantly advance the movement of freight via road and rail. The proposal also calls for a referendum to be held the same day in each of 12 pre-designated regional districts around the state to decide on a 1% sales tax that would be used for funding transportation programs agreed to in advance of the region itself. The regions would be determined by the current "regional commission" district boundaries. This referendum, according to the Governor's plan, is not slated to be voted on until 2012 and, if passed, the tax would be levied in 8-year intervals, pending approval in subsequent referenda years. Several problematic caveats exist with this plan, namely:
  - o The proposed timeline for debate and implementation on the proposed referendum is much too slow to have any impact on the immediate distress public transit faces statewide.
  - o Funds raised in a district can only be spent in that district.
  - o The "project lists" that are agreed upon do not necessarily guarantee that raised funds will be directed in that manner. More clarification regarding "where" the fund will be directed, specifically toward public transit, needs to be provided.
  - o The GDOT Planning Director will have final approval of all regional district plans

### III. ACT Now Advocacy

In addition to the legislation we are monitoring, we would like to see future bills consider the following:

## 2010 ACT Now Georgia

### Short-term Goals

- Increased flexibility with regard to MARTA funding:
  - o Pass the 50/50 bill immediately
- Legislative proposals that provide state-level funding for statewide transit needs

### Long-term Goals

A sustainable source of transit funding that includes:

- **Operating Funds:** any new source of funding for transit must include funds to operate and maintain existing and future transit service
- **Governance:** decisions on new fund allocation should be made by jurisdictions that contribute funds, with voting weighted by population or funding level
- **Equity:** consideration must be made for Fulton and DeKalb Counties, as well as the City of Atlanta – these entities have been paying for transit for the past 38 years

## **IV. Taking Action**

### **Join ACT Now Georgia!**

Become a part of our grassroots movement to get Georgia's public transit back on track! Visit us at <http://www.actnowga.org/> to join our cause, learn more and find out how you can make a difference!

### **Take action on legislation!**

Let your legislators know how you feel by writing, e-mailing, faxing, calling and scheduling meetings with them to tell them how their decisions on public transit funding are effecting you and threatening the economic strength of the state!

### **Contacting legislators...**

Every member of the legislature has an e-mail address, however; the most effective way to communicate is by direct letter or phone. Legislators prefer to hear directly from their own constituents and may not pay attention to mass e-mails or form letters from people outside their districts. Contact information about legislators is available in the "White Book" available at [www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us), click on "Picture Book" or obtain them from the House or Senate Clerk's offices at the Capitol.

### **Reviewing legislative votes...**

Voting records are online by bill number, not by legislator. Posting votes may take up to 5 days following a vote. Go to [www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us) and click on "House" or "Senate." Next, click on "House Votes" or "Senate Votes" for a completed roll call on how each person voted on a certain bill. Printed copies may be obtained from the Clerk of the House (404-656-5015) or the Secretary of the Senate (404-656-5040). A complete record of votes on every bill is available for a fee.