

DATE: April 10, 2014

TO: Regional Transit Committee Members

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The 2014 session of the Georgia General Assembly adjourned sine die on Thursday, March 20th, having completed its 40-day session. Below is a status of the transit-related bills and resolutions ARC monitored or worked during this two-year General Assembly term. Governor Deal has 40 days after session to sign or veto any legislation, and any bill on which he takes no action automatically becomes law.

PASSED – HB 264/HB 265: Revisions to the MARTA Act/ Rep. Mike Jacobs (R-Brookhaven) and others

The versions of the bills that passed on Day 40 allow the mayors of North Fulton to collectively make two appointments to the MARTA Board of Directors, and the mayors of DeKalb one. The GDOT Commissioner and GRTA Executive Director become non-voting members, and the Governor is allowed to appoint one new voting member. Board changes become effective in 2017. The bills also relax some financial and reporting provisions for MARTA, including a three-year lifting of the “50/50” restriction on MARTA sales tax revenues. Importantly, HB 264 allows MARTA to engage in rail contracting services at the request of a county (in addition to bus service, which is already allowed).

PASSED – HR 1573: Study Committee on Transportation Infrastructure Funding/ Rep. Jay Roberts (R-Ocilla)

This resolution creates a joint study committee to include the respective Senate and House Transportation and Appropriations Committee Chairs, as well as additional representatives from the House and Senate (3 each), the Georgia and Metro Atlanta Chambers of Commerce, ACCG and GMA, and two citizen members appointed by the Speaker and Lt. Governor. The study committee will meet no more than 8 times and conclude its business by December 1, 2014, and is expected to conduct meetings throughout the state this summer. The study committee may make recommendations to the 2015 Assembly in the area of transportation funding for the legislature to consider.

PASSED – HB 1009: Exempting Clayton Co. from Sales Tax Cap for Transit/ Rep. Mike Glanton (D-Clayton Co.)

This bill extends the time frame until 2016 for Clayton County to hold a voter referendum for the purpose of levying a sales tax to fund public transportation. The bill is necessary in that it exempts such a tax from the current sales tax cap for counties, which Clayton is already up against. The Clayton Board of Commissioners is expected to call for a referendum for this purpose, possibly to join MARTA, for November 2014.

FAILED – SR 735: Unified Website for Metro Atlanta Transit Agencies/Sen. Brandon Beach (R-Alpharetta)

This non-binding urging resolution was the result of Sen. Beach’s Study Committee on Public Transit, which met three times in late 2013, and calls for GRTA, MARTA, Cobb Community Transit, and Gwinnett County Transit to work together to establish a common website at www.GoATLTransit.com where customers could



plan a trip and pay their fare across the agencies' systems. The resolution places GRTA in charge of the effort, and sets a deadline of July 1, 2014 for the development of the website. The agencies have been meeting regularly, along with ARC, in efforts to meet the request, and despite the fact that the resolution failed to make it through the House, work is expected to continue on this effort.

FAILED – HB 775: Transit Authorities/ Rep. John Carson (R-Cobb)

This bill was part of an effort by several legislators to remove outdated population provisions in the Georgia Code, and removes a population threshold under which no municipality could form its own transit authority. After some discussion with the Georgia Transit Association and MARTA, among others, Rep. Mike Jacobs authored an amendment which would require any municipality forming its own transit authority to enter into an intergovernmental agreement with any existing transit authority prior to formation. The bill failed to move in the Senate after it was amended to include language concerning billboards.

FAILED – HB 153: Fractional Sales Tax for SPLOST/ Rep. John Carson (R-Cobb)

This bill would have allowed counties to ask voters for a fractional percentage for the SPLOST. An intergovernmental agreement between cities and counties would have been required. This bill passed the House, but met resistance in the Senate, where it was opposed by GMA and some influential county commissioners. ACCG was neutral on the bill.

FAILED – HB 195: Changes Definition of Special Districts in TIA Legislation/ Rep. Ed Setzler (R-Cobb)

This bill generated some discussion as a revised method to approach transportation funding post-TIA, allowing new special districts to be formed through intergovernmental agreement between two or more counties or cities, and a sales tax (including fractions) levied for a period of 3 to 10 years. This discussion will now continue in the Joint Study Committee approved by HR 1573.

FAILED – HB 648: “Fourth Penny” to Transportation/ Rep. Brett Harrell (R-Snellville)

Currently, Georgia collects a 4 cent state sales tax, of which 3 cents is reinvested into transportation by Georgia DOT, with the additional cent going into the General Fund. This bill would have established that 1/4 cent will be returned to GDOT beginning in 2016 and ending in 2020 when the full cent is collected. The bill did not advance beyond introduction, and will be part of discussions on transportation moving forward.

FAILED – HB 390: DeKalb County Tax Cap/ Rep. Rahn Mayo (D-DeKalb)

This bill would have allowed only DeKalb County the ability to levy a sales tax for transportation purposes for up to 10 years, which the county is currently not able to do since it has both the MARTA tax and a HOST. The bill passed a House committee, and was later added to a Senate bill in hopes of getting it through, to no avail.

