



## **DRAFT RBC 2016 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

The Regional Business Coalition of Metropolitan Atlanta (RBC) is an organization of 15 local Chambers of Commerce throughout the metro Atlanta region. RBC member chambers represent over 10,000 businesses that collectively employ over 1 million metro Atlanta residents. The RBC's primary goal is to represent the interests of RBC Chamber members on public policy issues impacting our transportation, water and air quality and to advocate for solutions that improve metro Atlanta's quality of life and economic vitality.

### **1. Water**

Metro Atlanta receives an average over 50 inches of rainfall annually, more than most other large inland cities in the U.S. While we receive a healthy amount of rainfall, metro Atlanta residents have embraced a conservation ethic, reducing our per capita consumption by over 20% in the past decade, which is well-below the consumption levels of Charlotte, Birmingham and Tallahassee.

New technologies continue to make water conservation and efficiency effective tools to meet residential and commercial water supply needs. Combining efficient technologies with conservation measures, constructing additional reservoirs, and adequate access to water supplies in multiple watersheds in our region will help meet metro Atlanta's present and future water supply needs.

- **RBC supports the continued management of our region's water resources to meet the needs of metro Atlanta's growing population and businesses.**
- **RBC supports the continued review and update of regulations and laws, as well as funding to ensure adequate sources of clean water for metro Atlanta's future growth and quality of life.**

In previous years, legislation has been introduced that would have severely limited metro Atlanta's ability to utilize permitted inter-basin transfers (IBT). IBT's are currently approved and used in 28 Georgia counties, benefitting approximately 1 million Georgians. IBT's constitute less than two percent of the water used in Georgia statewide.

- **RBC supports existing state laws and regulations that protect downstream river flows when new or expanded water withdrawals occur, and the authority given to the Department of Natural Resources in the State Water Plan to review inter-basin transfer regulations when necessary.**

## 2. Transportation

Georgia's current and future economic success is directly and inextricably linked to our transportation infrastructure. A 2014 report by global infrastructure consultants HNTB and EY concluded that Georgia needed \$1.5-2.0 billion of new annual funding simply to preserve our existing transportation networks.

**Funding:** We applaud Georgia's legislature, which in 2015, passed \$900 million in new annual funding, primarily for roads and bridges. Yet a funding gap still exists, particularly for transit. Specifically, HNTB/EY found that \$120-160 million was needed annually to adequately maintain and expand Georgia's key transit systems.

- **RBC supports additional funding for critical transportation infrastructure.**
- **RBC supports additional flexibility in how Georgia's local governments fund their transportation infrastructure, including transit operations and expansions.**

Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP): Georgia has appropriated its share (\$266 million) of the \$665 million required to deepen the Savannah Harbor from 42 feet to 47 feet, allowing post-Panamax ships to access the Savannah port. Over the next twenty years, container traffic in the I-75 corridor is expected to more than double from 2010 levels, leading to both increased employment opportunities and the need for transportation infrastructure improvements. Georgia's ports are responsible for providing almost 300,000 jobs statewide and over \$7 billion to metro Atlanta's economy.

- **RBC supports the appropriation of the full share of federal funding for SHEP and the completion of deepening project as quickly as possible.**

Transit Coordination: The efficient operation of the multiple transit systems in metro Atlanta encourages economic development and provides an alternate mode of transportation for many metro Atlanta residents. However, maximizing the benefits of metro Atlanta's transit services requires a coordinated effort, both for raising revenue and providing seamless interconnections for transit riders between MARTA, Cobb Community Transit, Gwinnett Transit, GRTA's Xpress and other transit service providers. Whether metro Atlanta's transit future consists of operating as a single transit system or multiple interconnected transit systems, the role of transit coordination is critical to metro Atlanta's transit future.

- **RBC supports transit service coordination to address the needs of metro Atlanta transit riders and include appropriate representation of key stakeholders.**

Transportation Options: Metro Atlanta is home to over 5 million people within a land area larger than the state of Massachusetts. Multiple modes for commuting workers are necessary to provide employers with an adequate workforce and employees with a choice of employment opportunities. How metro Atlanta commuters travel to and from work will help determine metro Atlanta's future ability to attract jobs externally, as well as encourage investment internally. While the automobile will remain the primary mode of transportation within the metro Atlanta region, effective transportation networks rely on diverse transportation options, both for Metro Atlanta residents and visitors.

- **RBC supports investments in alternate forms of transportation (ride-sharing, carpools, managed lanes, transit, bike lanes, cart paths/mixed use trails, last-mile connectivity, etc.) to provide metro Atlanta commuters and residents a choice of transportation modes to meet their needs.**

### **3. Air Quality**

RBC stands united in support of cleaner air and healthier communities. Over the last several years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has adopted several new, sweeping rules relating to air quality. The latest rule, called the Clean Power Plan (CPP), was adopted in 2015.

The sweeping and controversial nature of the EPA Clean Power Plan cannot be overstated. EPA has taken an obscure provision of the Clean Air Act and applied it in a novel way that Congress did not intend. The end result will be to fundamentally reshape electrical generation in the United States. As many as half of the states in the Union already have or are expected to challenge the Clean Power Plan in court.

- **RBC urges the EPA to stay implementation of the Clean Power Plan until its legality is tested in court.**

The EPA's rules methodology has largely ignored past efforts towards greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. Georgia utilities, including Georgia Power, Southern Company and EMC's, continue to reduce emissions in cost-efficient ways. Without federal mandates, they have achieved GHG-emission reductions almost 20 percent below 2005 levels, while providing clean, safe, reliable and affordable power to customers. Specifically, Georgia Power has spent approximately \$4.3 billion in capital expenditures on environmental compliance since 1990.

- **RBC opposes rule-making or new standards imposed by regulatory agencies that would treat Georgia utilities unfairly and force energy costs higher, therefore penalizing Georgia citizens, businesses, utilities and their customers.**

#### **4. Economic Development**

Business tax policy can encourage, or hinder, economic development in metro Atlanta. RBC welcomes the periodic review of tax policies to determine their continued applicability to meeting the job creation and economic development needs of metro Atlanta and all of Georgia.

As Georgia exits the “Great Recession”, new economic development drivers will be needed to keep Georgia competitive in the global marketplace. Whether those drivers consist of providing a more educated, work-ready labor force, access to venture capital, improving/expanding existing infrastructures, or other economic development tools, public policies need to be adopted with clearly stated goals and objectives, rather than a patchwork of investment incentives and tax breaks.

- **RBC supports tax policies and other economic development tools that encourage investment in metro Atlanta and Georgia businesses, enhancing Georgia’s global competitiveness and creating more jobs for metro Atlanta and Georgia.**
- **RBC opposes legislative measures that would negatively impact our business climate, are discriminatory in nature or would harm our ability to create, attract, retain and expand jobs in Georgia.**