



Bringing the best together to help Atlanta thrive.

## 2010 Policy Agenda

### Water & the Environment: Capture, Conserve and Control Water Resources

The Chattahoochee River is the smallest river in the nation serving as the major water source for a region our size, and North Georgia is 98 percent dependent on surface water. These factors combined with previous severe droughts, mismanagement of Lake Lanier by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and now a federal court ruling have produced a water crisis in our region.

#### 2010 Call to Action:

- We support the work of the Governor's Water Contingency Task Force and the implementation of an action-driven contingency plan focused on increasing conservation efforts, capturing our excess rainfall and implementing control measures to efficiently manage our water resources.
- We support fully funding the historic statewide water plan passed in 2008, which could total more than \$10 million in state and federal funds during the final year of implementation.
- We support restoring funds in water planning grants originally passed in the 2008 budget to expedite reservoir development and other water management tools.
- We support an appropriation of \$250,000 in state matching funds for the Metro North Georgia Water Planning District, ensuring that long-term water management planning continues for a vital economic region.
- We oppose any further restrictions or bans on interbasin water transfers because most counties in the metro region are located in two or more river basins.

### Transportation: Support a Regional TSPLOST, MARTA, Modernize the Excise Tax

Georgia is the third-fastest-growing state in the nation, yet transportation funding per capita is next to last. As a result, today our traffic is third-worst in the country, and companies say traffic is a major factor when they decide whether to bring or keep their business here.

#### 2010 Call to Action:

- We support a regional funding authorization with statewide application. There is already a funding bill and a constitutional amendment in conference committee between the House and Senate and years of debate and study behind us. We call upon legislative leaders to act quickly to come to an agreement on and pass a regional, voter-approved sales tax for the metro Atlanta region that contains the same opportunities for all of Georgia's cities and counties. We believe such a measure may be done through amending the state's constitution or through simple legislation.

#### Any new funding solution must:

- generate enough funding to provide the congestion relief we need
  - be open to all modes of transportation
  - require a clear list of defined projects -- determined by the current federal "MPO Process" -- and include strong fiscal accountability measures, and have a meaningful impact on our quality-of-life and our economic competitiveness
- We support converting the state's motor fuel excise tax, last adjusted in 1971 to 7.5 cents per gallon, to a revenue-neutral sales and use tax. Such a conversion would help stabilize the state transportation program over time, providing needed capital for critical safety repairs and key statewide corridors.
  - We support allowing MARTA, which carries more than 500,000 passenger trips daily, the flexibility to access capital reserves to maintain service during this severe economic downturn. No other comparable transit system in the country has such onerous restrictions in addition to receiving no state budgetary support.



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### **Education: Support Governance Reform and Teacher Recruitment & Retention**

In 2008, Clayton County in Georgia became just the second school system in the nation to lose its accreditation in nearly 40 years, jeopardizing the educational future of its students and the economic vitality of the community. And in the last decade, roughly one-fifth of school boards across Georgia have experienced problems, according to AdvancED, the parent organization of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which accredits more than 90 percent of the schools in Georgia. In addition, Georgia has a serious teacher shortage: Roughly 15,000 new teachers are needed each year but only 3,500 are newly certified through the state's colleges and universities.

#### **2010 Call to Action**

- The Metro Atlanta Chamber supports SB 84, which embodies the recommendations from the final report of the Commission for School Board Excellence, including additional school board accountability, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of school board members, additional qualifications for school board members and temporary state intervention when school systems are in trouble.
- The Chamber also supports teacher pay linked to performance in order to retain the most effective teachers.

### **Economic Development: Bring Down Barriers to Growth and Attract Quality Jobs**

Metro Atlanta is a magnet for attracting talented people and fast-growing companies. The region boasts the fourth-highest concentration of Fortune 500 headquarters in the country and a track record as one of the nation's top jobs producers. Metro Atlanta accounts for roughly two-thirds of Georgia's economy, nearly 60 percent of the state's jobs and 75 percent of its population growth. Corporate headquarters additions include UPS, GE Power Systems, Merial, Wendy's/Arby's Group, Novelis, Newell Rubbermaid, Rayovac, Travelport, NCR and First Data Corporation. And we continue to see home-grown companies such as The Home Depot, CNN and Coca-Cola become household names around the world.

#### **2010 Call to Action**

- Enhance Georgia's deal-closing fund in key industries to keep pace with our fiercest competitors for quality jobs.
- Enact targeted tax incentives to stimulate the recruitment of key companies to Georgia and grow our hometown businesses.
- Advocate for other public policies that bring down barriers to growth of targeted industries and produce quality jobs.