

2016 Policy Agenda

Transportation Policy

Metro Atlanta and Georgia have prospered because visionary leaders created, maintained, invested in and supported our transportation infrastructure. Despite gaining ground in the 2015 legislative session, current investment levels fall short to adequately maintain the infrastructure. There is an increasing demand to move more people and goods, which will require more funds to expand our current transportation networks.

- **Identify Long-term, Dedicated Funding Source for Improvement and Expansion of Transit Operations:** Identify and enable long-term dedicated funding for transit. Support expansion of all of our public transit operators and encourage effective coordination among them. Strive for seamless, efficient service for riders, whether our long-term future is a single system or multiple interconnected systems.
- **Add Diverse Travel Modes:** Support initiatives that encourage transit, managed lane options, telecommuting, bike/pedestrian facilities and public/private solutions.
- **Increase Surface Transportation Funding:** Despite significant progress in 2015, a funding shortfall still exists in Georgia. Seek to reduce dependence on federal aid and minimize regulatory burden by utilizing federal aid for capital maintenance programs.
- **Upgrade Existing Freight Networks:** Increase freight capacity and safety on our existing interstates and rail networks. Maximize operational and regulatory efficiencies for movement of freight.
- **Increase Use of Technology:** Establish Georgia as a leader in innovation, research and applied technology in transportation.

Business Climate Policy

In order to sustain continued economic growth and investment, MAC seeks to strengthen our region's long-term competitiveness by capitalizing on our assets and focusing on strategic advantages. MAC focuses on growing innovation and knowledge-based industries, fostering entrepreneurship, boosting business growth and creating more partnerships with metro Atlanta colleges, universities and technical colleges.

- **Protect Georgia's Reputation as a Leading State for Business:** Defend against 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.
- **Support Measures that Encourage Economic Investment:** Support economic development tools and incentives to start, recruit and retain businesses and expand sports and cultural funding for our community.
- **Extend Sales Tax Holiday for ENERGY STAR and WaterSense Sales Tax Holiday:** Support renewal of the sales tax holiday set to expire in 2016.
- **Support Global Commerce:** Protect Georgia's standing as a global hub for international commerce.
- **Support Additional Funding for Invest Georgia:** Continue the financial support for the Invest Georgia venture capital fund.

Education and Workforce Policy

A highly-educated and skilled workforce is essential to attracting and retaining quality jobs in the metro Atlanta region. As the global workforce evolves, it is more important than ever to improve the alignment between employee skills and the jobs our employers need to fill.

- **Build an Educated Workforce:** Support initiatives such as Complete College Georgia, Go Build Georgia, Georgia College and Career Academies and other efforts that prepare graduates for college and careers in strategic high-growth and high-wage industries.
- **Develop a Skilled Talent Pool:** Advance policies and opportunities that expand career options and job readiness at all levels of skill to maintain and develop a talented workforce.
- **Support Georgia Common Core Standards:** Implement rigorous college and career readiness standards and support students and teachers to achieve best possible academic outcomes.
- **Prepare Teachers and School Leaders:** Advocate for policies and legislation that appropriately prepare teachers and school leaders to be effective and strengthen the teacher and school leader workforce.
- **Promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) initiatives:** Support the promotion of STEM in K-12 and post-secondary education that prepares students to become innovators and problem-solvers.
- **Support Early Learning:** Engage in early childhood development and learning efforts with a special emphasis on initiatives that ensure students are reading on grade level by third grade.
- **Advocate for Equitable Reform of Quality Basic Education (QBE) Funding:** As the legislature re-examines QBE funding formulas for K-12 education, promote funding reform that produces better student outcomes for metro Atlanta students.

Water, Energy and Environment Policy

Our business leaders understand the interdependence between good stewardship of the natural environment and long-term business success. In addition to wise management of our water resources, we must work together to maintain high air quality while providing low-cost, reliable energy for residents and businesses.

- **Implement a Sustainable Water Plan:** Implement an action-driven sustainable state water plan with focus on conservation, capturing our excess rainfall and effectively managing our water resources.
- **Maintain Interbasin Water Transfers (IBT):** Support current law for managing IBT as a water management tool. Any revisions to IBT should be based on science, recommendations by the Department of Natural Resources and state and regional water planning efforts.
- **Invest in Water Infrastructure:** Advocate for additional appropriations for water infrastructure projects. Investment in new water supply projects remains necessary and urgent for Georgia due to recurrent, persistent and intensifying droughts.
- **Defend Against Federal Overreach:** Secure needed funding to defend our state and the region against invasive regulatory overreach.
- **Promote Long-term Water Management:** Fund long-term water management on a regional basis using the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District and other water councils throughout Georgia.
- **Advocate for Negotiated Water-sharing Agreement with Neighboring States:** Support efforts by state leaders to negotiate and agree on water management solutions that support the economies and environments of the affected states.
- **Promote Sustainable Development:** Support developmental policies that enhance the sustainability reputation of the region as well as spur economic growth.