Georgia Transportation Investment Act of 2010 Summary

Overview
Georgia’s Transportation Investment Act of 2010 (TIA 2010) was signed into law in June 2010. Regions throughout Georgia will vote to impose a one percent, 10 year regional sales tax to fund needed transportation improvements within their region.

TIA 2010 established 12 transportation districts throughout Georgia, following state designated Regional Commission boundaries. Additionally, the law established regional transportation roundtables in each district, consisting of elected officials from the counties and cities within each region. An executive committee was also required for each Roundtable.

The executive committee, working with the Georgia Department of Transportation’s (GDOT) Director of Planning (DP), developed a draft list of projects based on a criteria list and the state transportation plan. The local governments, legislators, metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and the public were able to submit comments on the draft list. Roundtables then met to approve or reject the draft list.

If the list was not approved by the roundtables, there would be no election and every local government in the region would have to provide a 50 percent match for all future local maintenance and state aid funding from the Department of Transportation. Since a list was approved for each region, the election for the sales tax increase will be held throughout the state on a region-by-region basis.

Key Players
Director of Planning
The Director of Planning is appointed by the Governor and is subject to approval by a majority vote of both the House Transportation Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee. The GDOT DP provides a project criteria list based on the state transportation plan.

Regional Transportation Roundtables
Each of the state’s 12 regions will establish a regional transportation roundtable (RTR). The RTRs include the chairperson or commissioner of each county in the region and one mayor from each county in the region, elected by the mayors of the county. In the Atlanta region, the Mayor of Atlanta will also be a member. The RTR votes on the final project list developed by the executive committee.

Executive Committee
Each RTR will select five members to an executive committee where they will be joined by three non-voting legislators appointed by the chairs of the transportation committees in both the House and the Senate. This executive committee develops the final project list to be voted on by the roundtable and, later, the public.

Three Phases of the Bill
Phase One – Criteria List
First, the GDOT Director of Planning (DP) provides local governments and MPOs with a draft project criteria list based on the statewide transportation plan. Local governments and MPOs provide comments on the draft project criteria list. Representatives are then selected from the appropriate entities to the district’s RTR. The RTR will meet only twice. In their first meeting, the RTR will approve the DP’s project criteria list and elect members to the executive committee.
Phase Two – Project Selection
Next, local governments and MPOs in each district submit project requests to the DP. The DP uses the approved criteria and requested projects to assemble a list of example projects for the executive committee. The executive committee consults with the DP and chooses from the example project list to create a draft list. Comments are taken from local governments, MPOs and the public. All of the comments are provided to the RTRs. The executive committee presents the final draft list to be voted on at the second and final RTR meeting. The final draft list must be approved or rejected by the RTR by a specific date. If the RTR approves a final project list by the specified date, the sales tax referendum will go to the public for a vote. If rejected, there will be no election by the public. As a consequence of rejecting the final project list, every local government in the region must provide a 50 percent local match and the region cannot try again for two years.

Phase Three – The Election
Finally, there is an election in each of the 12 districts. If the voters pass the tax in their region, all revenue collected will stay in that region. Every local government must only provide a 10 percent match for future local maintenance and state aid funding by the Department of Transportation for the next ten years. No counties or municipalities are permitted to be exempt from the tax. Local governments would share 25 percent of the revenue (or 15 percent of the revenue in Atlanta) on projects they choose. This local revenue will be allocated to cities and counties based on a formula of 1/5 population and 4/5 center line road miles. The other 75 (or 85) percent will be used to fund the final project list created by each region’s RTR.

If voters in a region fail to pass the referendum, every local government within the region must provide a 30 percent match for future local maintenance and state aid funding. The referendum cannot be presented to voters again for 24 months.

Beyond the election
Collection of the tax will begin at least 80 days from an election. After the 10 year period expires, a region’s voters may extend the tax through the same process. No extension of the sales tax is permissible without the direct approval of voters.