

## Who Knew? The 2012 May Mobile Classroom

Thirty-six Georgia county officials took off May 17-18 on the latest version of the ACCG Mobile Classroom – “Planes, Trains and Automobiles.” The two-day trip in metro Atlanta/Fulton County focused on transportation issues and visited Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the CSX REDI Campus and Tilford Yards, and the Georgia Department of Transportation Emergency Management Center. The traveling band wanted to share some of their experiences and thoughts, in hopes that other county officials would find them helpful!



### Some General Observations ...

If the group heard once it heard 25 times, “Well, since 9.11 ...” – Now more than 10 years later, it is obvious that homeland security remains the major force behind transportation policies and funding patterns.

It is a miracle of logistics that *anyone’s* luggage ever gets back to them when they are traveling by air.

People love trains! Don’t quite know why but we do ... the entire group was as fascinated as a bunch of little kids at the CSX yards.

Surely you already know your GDOT District Engineer but if you don’t, get to know that person – they can help you a lot!

Atlanta Braves games are fun – even if they don’t really have anything to do with transportation!

Special thanks to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) which provided our bus transportation and details about the work they are doing ...

#### Hartsfield-Jackson



ACCG’s Mobile Classroom was the first public group to tour the newly-opened International Terminal, thanks to Walter Vinson of Hartsfield-Jackson.

The numbers of people coming through Hartsfield-Jackson are staggering – 92 million passengers a year, 11 million international travelers a year, 1 million pieces of luggage a month traveling over 16 miles of conveyor belts in one baggage screening area alone (*the cause of the general observation, posted to the left ...*).

The airport is its own community with all the infrastructure and personnel in place that you’d see in a good size local government, even though the airport is a department of the government of the City of Atlanta.

And that local government has built its own Disney-like ride out to the new car rental facility, a train-like vehicle that is driven from “somewhere back there” – no one on board is driving it! It’s important to remember that a local government developed that – admittedly, a large local government but a local government nevertheless.

Agriculture is a huge part of the work of US Customs agents at airports and many people are not aware of that fact. At Hartsfield-Jackson, agents use beagles to check out agricultural products being brought into the country ... and they are always on the look-out for deep-fried monkey (yes, one traveler was bringing in one for his mom – it was her favorite – what a good son!)

## CSX

Get to know the railroad company staff in your county or region. Railroads are the second largest taxpayer in Georgia and sixth largest employer. They are major contributors to ad valorem taxes to local governments. They may also have expertise in economic development that could be useful to your community.

Railroads are the safest means of transporting hazardous materials and they will provide training to local emergency responders across the rail network.

Local governments have a responsibility to monitor your county's grade crossings. Make sure you and your public works staff are aware of the current conditions at those and that you understand the procedures and processes to get improvements made.



Lewis Sharpe of CSX answers questions from Charlton County Commissioner Alpha Benefield as Terrell County Commissioner Ernest Johnson and Franklin County Commissioner Angela Whidby listen in.



Landscape Architect Davie Biagi with Georgia DOT discusses the Gateway Program with participants in the May Mobile Classroom.



Watch for information soon on the August 2012 Mobile Classroom – you never know where we'll go next!

## Georgia DOT

Be sure you are aware of Georgia DOT programs that can assist your county. The Gateway program which funds plant material and installation for reclaiming greenspace near state roads appears to be one program that counties aren't taking full advantage of.

Another is the Off System Safety Program. There are 1300 road fatalities in the State of Georgia every year and 40% of those are on local routes. This program will provide federal dollars to help improve safety on local roads. It's also important that your local law enforcement personnel are reporting crash data to GDOT; that information is an important part of safety planning. Make sure you and your staff are aware of additional safety programs provided by the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. All of these programs are different and equally important.

Watch for information on the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) dollars. GDOT says the letters about the program are going out "soon" and to check their website for information too – GDOT officials are planning to put a spreadsheet on their website soon showing the county by county allocation of LMIG funding.

And if you aren't receiving these letters or getting information, contact your GDOT district engineer!