First Week of 2016 Session Marked with Major Transportation Announcements

Monday, January 11 marked the first day of the 2016 legislative session. Georgia's state representatives and senators are back under the gold dome for a deliberative 40 days. Gov. Deal and representatives from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) announced on Tuesday his 10-year, $10 billion road investment plan as a result of revenue generated from the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. He also noted that within that decade-long plan is an 18-month project list aimed at resurfacing roads and providing maintenance to bridges and the purchase of road safety equipment such as signals and guardrails at an estimated cost of $2.2 billion. More information from Gov. Deal's transportation press conference can be found here.

Governor’s Budget Highlights

The Governor's Amended FY2016 Budget and FY2017 Budget were released this week.

Please click here for the Governor's Budget Highlights. Of importance to counties, in the FY16 Amended budget, an additional $36 million has been appropriated towards the LMIG program and an additional $41 million for FY17. ACCG will provide a comprehensive overview and summary of both in the legislative update next week.

2016 State of the State Highlights

Gov. Deal delivered his sixth State of the State address Wednesday, January 13. In it, he focused on teachers and education reform, citing that he would like to provide an overhaul of the funding formula currently used for schools. Included in his discussion on education was the need for a new compensation model for pre-K programs, in which he will enlist an advisory committee to provide recommendations, as well as an appropriation for locals to provide a 3 percent pay increase to their teachers. He went on to mention that all state employees would also receive a 3 percent pay increase. Readers may access a summary of the governor's address by visiting here.

Click here to access the full transcript to Gov. Deal’s 2016 State of the State.

Click here to read the Minority Caucus’ response.

Senate Majority Caucus Establishes Priorities, Speaker Ralston Sets Agenda

The Senate Majority Caucus released its list of priorities following the governor’s State of the State. The primary goal is set at protecting Georgia’s status as the best state to live, work, and play. The official press release outlines the complete list of priorities.

Speaker of the House David Ralston set his legislative agenda for the 2016
Adjournment Resolution Set Through Legislative Day 13

The General Assembly has set the calendar through Legislative Day 13. Visit here to access the Adjournment Resolution.

Counties to See Change in TAVT Distributions

On Friday, January 8, 2016, the Department of Revenue issued a notification to tax commissioners informing them that the local government share of the Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) would be reduced from 45 percent of the total TAVT revenues collected to 40.55 percent for the 2016 calendar year. Local governments were scheduled to receive an increased share (46.5 percent) for 2016, but collectively local governments exceeded their target amount of revenues for 2015 by $68,248,456. The target amount was calculated based upon the amount of sales tax and ad valorem tax local governments received from vehicles prior to the implementation of TAVT plus a 2 percent non-compounding growth factor. The current year’s collection amount was calculated by adding the total amount of local TAVT collected in 2015 to the amount of ad valorem tax collected on vehicles for 2015.

Click here to read ACCG’s notice to counties. Please contact ACCG Legislative Director Clint Mueller at cmueller@accg.org with any questions.

HB 0356 Place Boats Under TAVT

This legislation provides for a new TAVT system of ad valorem taxation of watercraft and provides for titling and registration of watercraft through the Department of Revenue and county tag agents.

Sponsor: Stephens, Ron 164th
Bill Status: 2/18/2015 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Clint Mueller

HB 0653 Transfer of Tax Executions

This legislation revises the procedures regarding transfer of tax executions. A property owner would be able to take out a loan from a private company to pay their delinquent taxes, and tax commissioners would be required to transfer the tax execution to the company making the loan until it is paid off. The transferred tax execution would take priority over any other lien including subsequent tax executions issued in future years.

Sponsor: Parsons, Don 44th
Bill Status: 3/26/2015 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Clint Mueller

What’s New
HB 0693  Georgia Legacy Trust Fund
Neutral

This legislation specifies that 75 percent of all of the state sales tax collected from the sale of outdoor recreation equipment be used for the Georgia Legacy Trust Fund. Loans and grants can then be issued by the State Properties Commission to the state, nongovernmental entities and local governments for land conservation purposes which include water quality and protection; protecting wildlife habitat; preserving cultural and historic sites; and park and recreation purposes.

Sponsor: Burns, Jon 159th
Bill Status: 1/11/2016 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards

HB 0711  New Cities - Paying off Pension Obligation of County Workers
Support

This legislation addresses the pension obligations of a county pension plan when a new city is created. The unfunded pension liability must be established and verified by an independent actuarial study ordered by the county board of pension trustees. The unfunded pension liability must be directly attributable to the county's inability to provide services in the newly incorporated area. HB 711 allows the county to establish a special district within the newly created city in which to collect the pension obligation created when the district was removed from the unincorporated area. Additional property taxes will be collected in the special district at a rate sufficient to retire the pension obligation in 30 years.

Sponsor: Oliver, Mary Margaret 82nd
Bill Status: 1/13/2016 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards

HB 0727  Fireworks - More Local Control
Support

This legislation attempts to correct some of the issues created by the new fireworks law adopted last year. HB 727 revises when and where fireworks can be used, as well as gives local governments limited authority to enforce public health and safety laws, including noise and littering ordinances. For a more detailed summary of the legislation, please [click here](http://www.ciclt.net/sn/clt/accg/legupd_archive.aspx?ClientCode=accg&E_ID=50179).

Sponsor: Battles, Paul 15th
Bill Status: 1/13/2016 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards

HB 0738  Option for Law Library Board of Trustees to Retain Excess Funds Previously Turned Over to the County Commission
Evaluating

This legislation would allow the county law library board of trustees (i.e., the chief judge of the superior court, the probate judge, the senior state court judge...
(if applicable), the solicitor (if applicable), superior court clerk and two attorneys) to change the disbursement of excess funds for the county law library. The county law library is funded by a $5.00 fee charged in all court actions. The board of trustees use the money to purchase books, supplies, equipment, and staff for the county law library, law libraries for the judges and the codification of county ordinances. Currently, the trustees must give any excess county law library money to a charitable tax exempt organization that provides civil legal representation to low income individual. Any additional excess funds must be given to the county board of commissioners to be used to purchase fixtures and furnishings for the courthouse.

HB 738 would give the trustees the option to continue to give excess money to the representation of low income individual or to purchase software, equipment, fixtures or furnishings for the district attorney, solicitor, and county judicial offices. If there are any excess funds remaining, the trustees would have the option, but would not be required, to turn it over to the county board of commissioners to use on the courthouse.

Sponsor: Caldwell, Jr., Johnnie 131st
Bill Status: 1/14/2016 - House Second Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Debra Nesbit

HB 0772  Advanced Voting - Fix Second Saturday Falling on a Holiday
Support
In 2015, the "second Saturday" of advanced primary runoff voting fell on the 4th of July, reducing voter participation and making it difficult to staff the polling stations. Under this bill, if the second Saturday of advance voting in any general, primary, or runoff election falls on a federal holiday or holiday weekend, then the third Saturday prior to these elections will become the Saturday for advanced voting.

Sponsor: Clark, Heath 147th
Bill Status: 1/15/2016 - House First Readers
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards

SB 0258  No Increase From Initial Assessed Value on Appeal
Oppose
This legislation restricts the assessed value from increasing beyond the initial assessment value established by the board of tax assessors when the property is appealed. The value can be decreased.

Sponsor: Millar, Fran 40th
Bill Status: 1/12/2016 - Senate Read and Referred
ACCG Staff Contact: Clint Mueller

SB 0259  Statewide Floating Homestead Exemption
Oppose
This legislation creates a new, statewide adjusted base year assessed value homestead exemption subject to referendum approval at the 2016 general
election. If approved, the exemption will apply to county, school district, and municipal taxes. The homestead exemption will increase to offset any valuation increases above three percent or CPI whichever is less. This new exemption can be stacked with all other applicable local exemptions that are in place so that the taxpayer gets the benefit of all the exemptions.

Sponsor: Millar, Fran 40th
Bill Status: 1/12/2016 - Senate Read and Referred
ACCG Staff Contact: Clint Mueller

**SB 0267**

**Guns - Reduce Local Licensing Fee by Half**

Under this legislation, the weapons carry license fee going to the county probate court is cut in half, from $30 to $15, for applicants age 65 and over. ACCG commends the state for proposing a reduced licensed fee for this age group; however, this $30 fee is the cost to counties to process and create the license. Otherwise local taxpayers would be subsidizing this cost. If the state wishes to reduce the license charge, it should instead step up and either reduce/eliminate its (GBI) state and federal background charge from the current $44 or simply not require the probate judges to process licenses all together.

Sponsor: Williams, Michael 27th
Bill Status: 1/13/2016 - Senate Read and Referred
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards

**SB 0269**

**Immigration Sanctuaries - Locals Must Certify Negative to get State Funds**

Under this legislation, cities and counties must "certify" that they are in compliance with Georgia's prohibition on immigration sanctuary law before receiving any state funds. ACCG is working with the author to clarify how certification is obtained, verified, its duration and other attendant issues in order to avoid a time and cost consuming re-certification process to separate state agencies each and every time a local government receives state funds.

Sponsor: Stone, Jesse 23rd
Bill Status: 1/14/2016 - Senate Read and Referred
ACCG Staff Contact: Todd Edwards