

Information on the TSPLOST Referendum - 2012

The “Fact vs. Fiction” list was created by the Georgia Transportation Alliance. Created in 2011, the Georgia Transportation Alliance is affiliated with the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Its primary mission is to secure the passage of TSPLOST referendums outside metro Atlanta. The alliance operates the Connect Georgia website, www.connectgeorgia2012.com.

Fact vs. Fiction on 2012 TSPLOST vote

The 2012 TSPLOST is an opportunity for all Georgians to take control of their future by choosing to make significant investments in transportation projects that are vital both to the economy and quality of life throughout the state. With the upcoming vote on July 31 nearing, there are several misconceptions floating around about this one penny sales tax. In order to help clarify statements of fiction from the facts of TSPLOST, this primer serves as a guide to answer any potential questions you may have.

The following “Fact and Fiction” information was distributed by Newnan-Coweta Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with its series of focus group discussions on the proposed TSPLOST vote.

A focus group discussion was held following the Chamber’s breakfast forum on April 24.

“Fiction” statements are followed by “Fact” discussion point

- **Fiction: TIA violates Home Rule of GA Constitution, taking authority away from local governments.**

Fact: TIA neither gives new authority nor takes away existing authority from local officials. It gives voters the option to improve the transportation network through a referendum.

- **Fiction: Regional Roundtables are a new level of unelected government.**

Fact: Regional Roundtables consisted solely of locally elected officials. They were created for the select purpose of compiling a regional project list and disbanded after the completion of that obligation.

- **Fiction: Once a tax begins it will go on forever.**

Fact: The TIA law is very specific. If approved, this tax can’t be collected beyond 10 years. It must be reauthorized by voters in order to be extended. This will not be like the GA 400 toll extension.

- **Fiction: The project selections only benefit special interest groups.**

Fact: The projects were selected by local officials in a transparent process with public input. Projects were required to have a regional impact. All Georgians will see the benefit of these projects through safer roads and more jobs.

- **Fiction: The money goes to GDOT in Atlanta and doesn't come back to the region.**

Fact: GDOT never receives any money from the Transportation Improvement Act (TIA). All monies collected locally will be spent locally with NO exceptions.

- **Fiction: There are no guarantees that the projects will be built as stated.**

Fact: A Citizens Review Panel of five everyday citizens will oversee the finances and construction in each region. Projects must be built as approved by the voters in each region.

- **Fiction: Georgia already has good roads; new taxes will hurt the economy.**

Fact: Georgia's road network is in good shape, but the capacity simply has not kept up with our state's growth. Not building new roads will hurt the economy.

- **Fiction: The gas tax should be raised instead of the TIA.**

Fact: The gas tax is a declining source of revenue. As people drive more fuel-efficient cars and buy less gas, less revenue is raised to support the existing network. A 25 cent/gallon increase in the gas tax would be required to match TIA.

- **Fiction: The TIA is a redistribution of wealth from rich counties to poor counties.**

Fact: TIA is a regional solution to improve localized transportation networks. Projects built in one county undoubtedly benefit neighboring counties. Economic activity doesn't stop at the county line.

- **Fiction: TIA subsidizes MARTA and expensive transit projects.**

Fact: Outside Region 3, no money is spent on MARTA. Some regions contain local transit projects (mostly bus service) selected by local elected officials.

- **Fiction: The entire process of monetary allocations among counties and regions is a "Need Fest" established by desire, political coalitions, negotiations and bartering.**

Fact: Local officials in each region developed a list of transportation projects that can be funded by the additional revenue generated — and only projects on this approved list will receive funding. Every project on the list leads directly to more jobs, safer roads, and less congestion.

- **Fiction: Our county will endure economic damage and losses to local businesses.**

Fact: Every penny that is raised in the local regions will be spent on local projects with local oversight. Additional transportation funding will jumpstart Georgia's economy, provide more jobs in each region and make our roads safer.

- **Fiction: A 10-year tax is an unreasonable commitment in uncertain times.**

Fact: This 10-year commitment would allow every region of Georgia to see a steady increase of jobs, which would positively impact the economy of local communities. If the sales tax is passed, it will free up funds previously allocated to transportation and those will now be eligible for additional regional priorities. A 10-year tax allows regions to provide real solutions to serious transportation problems.

- **Fiction: Taking on these projects is dangerous and costly for our region.**

Fact: All of the projects have been scaled to meet the funds made available by the passing of the TSPLOST. These projects include vital transportation improvements that will help create jobs and increase economic investment in local communities.

- **Fiction: The high increase of transportation spending is too excessive in light of the current recession. A tax increase is never the answer to an economic recovery.**

Fact: Despite our fast-growing population, Georgia spends less per capita on transportation than almost any other state. This is beginning to make our state less attractive to employers and is negatively impacting our quality of life as Georgians. An investment in transportation will generate jobs, foster economic development, and ensure safety on the roadways.

- **Fiction: A sales tax is especially critical to low-income families and elderly people on a fixed income.**

Fact: Sales taxes are a fair approach to taxation, ensuring a broad tax base with a lower rate. Sales taxes for transportation reduce the amount of other taxes required to fund local governments. In many cases, non-Georgians will be paying these taxes as they visit and pass through our state.

- **Fiction: SPLOSTs are bonus taxes and not essential for basic operations.**

Fact: The states we compete with for new jobs have taken transportation seriously, investing in it while Georgia has stalled. Funding transportation is a critical role of limited government and helps businesses get their good to customers.

• Fiction: Taxes should be cut — not expanded — so that employers have more money to grow their business activities.

Fact: Investing in transportation gives businesses the opportunity to compete. Getting products to customers on-time gives Georgia businesses a leg up.

• Fiction: TIA’s regional projects and decision making is controlled by Atlanta-based politicians.

Fact: TIA takes the power away from a central decision-making geography (such as Atlanta or Washington D.C.) and independently gives decision-making power to local elected officials and voters.

• Fiction: TIA is an unnecessary law, especially during a recession.

Fact: TIA is an investment that will bring nearly \$19 billion to Georgia during the next 10 years. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction and improvements supports nearly 28,000 jobs, amounting to more than 530,000 jobs throughout the state in the 10-year span.

• Fiction: Expanding MARTA is problematic because it is only 20 percent supported by fares and 80 percent subsidized.

Fact: Outside Region 3, which is the 10-county metro Atlanta region, no money from the TSPLOST would be spent on MARTA. Some regions contain local transit projects selected by local elected officials from that region.

• Fiction: Transportation is not Georgia’s number one priority. Business recovery, job production, and economic stability are our top priorities.

Fact: According to the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan, a new transportation investment strategy can produce more than \$480 billion in gross domestic profit growth over the next 30 years and create nearly 425,000 jobs. TSPLOST is going to be a large piece of the puzzle when it comes to rebuilding Georgia’s economic status.

• Fiction: The TIA is an unnecessary law because Georgia transportation infrastructure is not in crisis.

Fact: Despite the fact that Georgia is the 3rd fastest growing state, it is 49th on transportation spending per capita; only Tennessee spends less. Our gas tax revenue, the primary source of transportation funding, continues to decrease annually with the rise of more fuel-efficient vehicles. Without TIA, Georgia will see less money for transportation, year after year.

• **Fiction: Some counties are donor counties and get back less money than they pay in.**

Fact: Commerce goes beyond county lines. People live in one county, but work and shop work in another. Counties that generate more revenue depend on neighboring county roads to get customers to their businesses. Connecting counties together is good for everyone.