

Transportation

Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce



Why is transportation a critical issue?

The short answer is jobs.

Over the last 10 years, metro Atlanta's traffic congestion has grown from the 15th to the 4th worst in the country, making it the region's top challenge to attracting and retaining companies and the high-quality jobs that come with them. Business leaders say traffic is the biggest hindrance to running and expanding their companies. Future economic success in the region depends on doing business differently, as this region prepares for the next 2.3 million residents and 1.7 million jobs – the equivalent of the population of Greater Denver – coming to our region over the next 25 years.

What are Atlanta's transportation challenges?

Atlanta's traffic is the unintended consequence of our overwhelming success. We simply grew faster than our infrastructure could keep pace.

Rapid growth

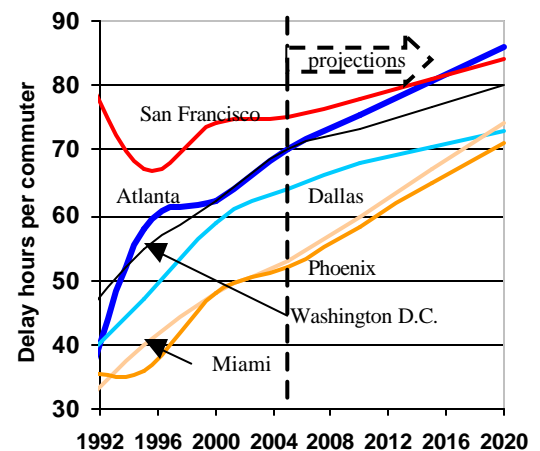
- Georgia has been the fourth fastest-growing state in the country in the last 10 years – growing twice as fast as the national average.
- At the same time, metro Atlanta has been the fourth-fastest growing metropolitan area in the country, growing at over 2 ½ times the national average rate.

Under-investment

- While Georgia's population growth has been the **fourth-highest** in the country, its rate of investment in new infrastructure has been the **fourth-lowest**: two-thirds the national average. Per capita, Iowa spends more on new roads and transit than we do.
- In metro Atlanta – where we drive 60 percent more than we did a decade ago – travel capacity has only increased 16 percent. Transportation investment has not kept up.
- The result: Metro Atlanta has had the single highest increase in traffic congestion in the country – a 76 percent increase in travel delay.

Future demand

- Georgia's population is projected to increase by 4 million people by 2030. Half will be in Atlanta.
- Planned investments cannot keep up: By 2020, traffic congestion will increase another 25%. Atlanta's traffic will increase to the second-worst in the country, surpassing that of San Francisco.
- From a quality-of-life standpoint, we risk losing our competitive advantage over other major cities.
- Other regions are now taking the lead. Denver, Charlotte, Dallas, Phoenix, and San Diego are just a few examples of regions that are investing heavily in new transportation infrastructure.



What transportation solutions does the Chamber advocate?

Under the leadership of Bill Linginfelter, Georgia State CEO of Wachovia Bank, and Phil Hickey, Chairman & CEO of RARE Hospitality International Inc., the Chamber's Transportation Policy Committee is focused on several priorities:

Seek increased and innovative sources of revenue for transportation investments.

- **Regional sales tax referenda have a strong record of support nationwide. When coupled with strong accountability – like specific project lists, tax sunsets, and independent taxpayer oversight – this tool provides an excellent opportunity to address local issues. We call on the Legislature to authorize regional referenda in 2007.**
- Support and expand the role of public-private partnerships. Private investment in long-term express tollways is a proven model, and Georgia needs to get these projects moving statewide.
- Examine the statewide transportation funding model. Georgia's transportation funding is based on a per-gallon-of-fuel tax – the 4th lowest rate in the country – which is being eroded by inflation and the advent of new technologies like hybrid and alternative-fuel cars. Georgia must overhaul its funding model and increase infrastructure investment.

Continue high-accountability and transparency in transportation spending.

- The state and region have limited resources, so the most congestion-relieving, cost-effective projects should be funded first. Data-driven metrics must be used to set these priorities.
- We applaud the Governor's Fast Forward program and the Congestion Mitigation Task Force and Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) "Envision 6" efforts. They all recognize the need to base transportation investments on congestion metrics and spend money properly.

Set and communicate performance measures for congestion and mobility.

- When Georgia considers its future transportation investments, it should first set clear goals and use real data to evaluate benefits. That means asking: Does the plan achieve our objectives, and do the improvements in mobility justify the investment?
- With a clearer picture of measures and benefits now emerging, additional revenue sources can now be considered. The Metro Atlanta Chamber is working with our transportation partners and our local and state leaders to move these discussions forward.

Move the region toward a truly regional transit system.

- Metro Atlanta needs a unified vision for transit infrastructure, operations, and funding.
- We applaud the leadership of the ARC and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), along with their partners, for creating the Transit Planning Board (TPB), the first significant step in 30 years toward a regional transit system.
- We call on TPB to deliver a plan for the future within the year.

Continue to promote a clear linkage between transportation and land use.

- The 2005 Quality Growth Task Force proved that land-use reform is linked to relieving congestion. When higher-density, mixed use development occurs in key activity centers – and there is adequate investment in transportation infrastructure – traffic congestion reduces.
- The Chamber supports the Peachtree Corridor Project and the Atlanta Beltline as models on this issue.

For more information on specific transportation issues, visit www.MetroAtlantaChamber.com.