



HIGHLIGHTS

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Newsletter
Spring 2015

2010 TIA T-SPLOST COMPLETES SECOND SUCCESSFUL FULL YEAR

The 2010 Transportation Investment Act One Penny Sales and Use Tax, known by many as the T-SPLOST, continues a successful and enviable implementation within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. December, 2014 marked the completion of two full years of tax collection. Through 2014, TIA has resulted in the total collection of \$57.097 million within the Region for transportation improvements. While this total remains about 17-18 percent below initial projections, the program remains on target as many projects have come under estimates and approved band change projects have resulted in additional savings. Of the \$57.097 million collected, \$14.274 million has been directly distributed to the Region's local governments for transportation use. Treutlen County has received the least for an unincorporated county portion, and yet has received over \$317,000 in funds to date. Laurens County has received over \$1,491,500 to date, the most for an unincorporated county portion. The City of Jacksonville has received the least amount for a municipality to date, and still has received over \$2,500.



Local and State dignitaries at U.S. 1 Altamaha River Bridge groundbreaking ceremony with Senator Tommie Williams speaking.

The program is already making a noticeable difference in improvement of the Region's roads, streets, and highways. GDOT officials have noted that all the projects in Band One (scheduled to end in 2015) are on schedule, either complete, or at least will be in progress by the end of the year.

Three major regional projects are also underway. The Northwest Eastman Bypass held groundbreaking in January, 2014, and is well underway in construction. The new Oconee River Bridge Project in Laurens County held a January, 2015 groundbreaking, while the new U.S. 1 Bridge Project over the Altamaha River in Appling/Toombs counties held a well-attended groundbreaking ceremony in February, 2015.

For more information, see www.ga-tia.com.



Officials break ground for new Oconee River Bridge.

Counties served: Appling, Bleckley, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Johnson, Laurens, Montgomery, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, Wheeler, and Wilcox

Workforce Development Changing and Improving

On July 1, 2015, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) officially replaces the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The new federal jobs training program, WIOA, was signed into law in 2014, replacing WIA, which was signed into law in 1998 and went into effect in Georgia in July, 2000. The WIOA program is designed to streamline jobs training, foster collaboration, increase flexibility of use of funds, promote more work-based training, encourage career pathways, and redirect youth funds to out-of-school disconnected youth. The new workforce development act will help job seekers and workers access employment, education, training, and support services to better succeed in their existing labor market, and help employers increase access to trained workers with the skills they need to compete in the global economy. WIOA strongly emphasizes engaging employers across the local workforce system area to align training with needed skills, and to better match employers with more qualified workers.

This new emphasis WIOA puts on flexibility and more adaptivity in training to meet local employer needs is a win-win proposition for both workers and employers alike, and should provide much benefit for enhanced economic development within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. The changes support Governor Deal's continuing efforts to enhance Georgia's competitive advantages and economic development success in the global economy. In April, 2014 Governor Deal had repositioned state oversight of the WIA program from the Governor's Office of Workforce Development to a new Workforce Division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). This change was intended to ensure that Georgia's workforce development efforts are aligned with the economic realities of the marketplace and what private businesses need to succeed in Georgia. The GDEcD Workforce Division will administer the WIOA.

Within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region, Region 9, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission will continue to provide oversight to the WIOA program and to serve as the program's grant recipient. The HOGARC Regional Council will continue to serve as the CLEO Board for the program, including confirmation of recommended WIOA local board appointments. Job Training Unlimited, Inc., of Claxton, is the administrative entity of WIA/WIOA funds through contract with the Regional Commission. Both agencies will continue to work in collaboration with the GDEcD Workforce Division to make the new WIOA workforce development program a success. More appropriate jobs training better designed to meet identified Regional needs and available job openings should result. This should make the Region even more competitive in economic development, and an even better place to live, work, and do business.



The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

For more information, visit www.region9wib.org, call Job Training Unlimited, Inc. at 800-503-0204, or call the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission at 478-374-4771.

Area Agency on Aging Offering New Program to Heart of Georgia Altamaha Residents

ConverseOptions



In 2014 Brett Manning, Regional Commission Executive Director; Gail Thompson, Area Agency on Aging Director; and Lynn Joyner, Resource Specialist, went through the Division of Aging Services – Area Agencies on Aging Initiative to Sustain Aging Services: Business Planning Seminar Series. As a result of this initiative, the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission, Area Agency on Aging, Aging and Disability Resource Connection is offering a new program available to Heart of Georgia Altamaha residents. This program, **ConverseOptions**, is designed to be a conversation around aging and disability options that exist in the community. Callers, family members, and care partners can talk with an Options Counselor who will listen to their needs, preferences, values, and circumstances to determine what options exist so that they can remain independent and in the community for as long as possible. **ConverseOptions** is a conversation that can be held long before a crisis occurs and affords the opportunity to develop a plan of action that could reduce the level of stress when a sudden event occurs. There are several package options available ranging in price from \$50 for a Basic Conversation, \$100 for an Assessment Conversation, to \$150 for an Advance Conversation. If you would like to begin planning for the future, whether for yourself, a family member, or friend, call us at 1-888-367-9913 and ask for the **ConverseOptions** Counselor.

Johnson County One of Inaugural PlanFirst Communities Designated by DCA



Johnson County Courthouse

Johnson County was one of ten Georgia communities selected by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for the inaugural designation as a "PlanFirst Community" in 2014. PlanFirst was established by DCA to recognize and reward excellence in community planning, including effective public involvement in comprehensive plan development, active use and implementation of the comprehensive plan, and measured success in achieving the plan's vision or goals.

Johnson County's PlanFirst designation will last for three years beginning January 1, 2015, and allows Johnson County to take advantage of various incentives, including statewide recognition, eligibility for annual Community Development Block Grant awards, and reduced rates on certain state loan programs. Upon designation, then DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin stated, "Good planning by local communities is the hallmark of economic growth. These (PlanFirst Communities) are communities that can serve as statewide models for others in how to actively and strategically implement a vision for the future."

DCA's PlanFirst program received 30 applications the inaugural year. Other PlanFirst designees included Athens/Clarke County, Coweta County, and Jones County, and the cities of Braselton, Gainesville, Madison, Suwanee, Vienna, and Woodstock. Johnson County's joint comprehensive plan is entitled, "From Wiggle and Twist to Hospitality and Opportunity," and was prepared in 2013 with the assistance of Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission Planning staff. Johnson's comprehensive plan was the first in the state approved under DCA's new Planning Standards. Regional Commission Planning Staff also assisted Johnson County with their PlanFirst application.

PlanFirst applications are accepted on annual basis in May. The program particulars and application can be accessed through DCA's website, www.dca.state.ga.us, and searching "PlanFirst."



Upgrade your mapping to an interactive digital basis. Contact: gis@hogarc.org

McRae and Helena Consolidate

The newest municipality in Georgia is within the Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region. On January 1, 2015, the cities of McRae and Helena were officially dissolved, and a new City of McRae-Helena established by House Bill 967 passed by the Georgia General Assembly in its 2014 session. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region now officially includes 17 counties and 62 (not 63) municipalities. In accordance with the legislation, a special election was held in November 2014 to elect a mayor and city council. Mike Young, the former Mayor of Helena, was elected to become the first City of McRae-Helena Mayor. Liz McLean, the former editor of the Telfair Enterprise, is the new McRae-Helena City Manager.

Creation of the new municipality caused the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to require the Telfair County Service Delivery Strategy to be updated by its closest statewide deadline, February 28, 2015. The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission assisted the local governments in updating the Telfair County Service Delivery Strategy. The updated Service Delivery Strategy has already been verified by DCA. The Regional Commission is also assisting the community with updating personnel policies and its comprehensive plan.

Local Comprehensive Plans Continue Development Under New Standards

The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission continues to assist the Region's local governments develop new comprehensive plans under the Georgia Planning Act of 1989 in accordance with the new Minimum Standards and Procedures of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs first made effective in January, 2013, and now with minor amendment, effective as of March, 2014. During 2014, Regional Commission Planning Staff assisted the county government and the municipalities therein in Evans, Laurens, Toombs, and Wheeler coun-

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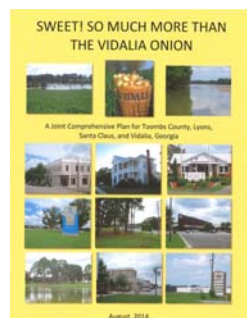
Local Comp Plans Continue Development Under New Standards

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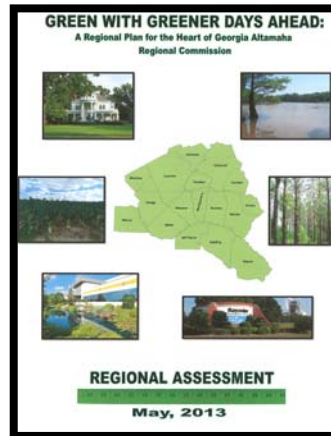
ties prepare joint plans meeting the new standards. The new standards, which reduced and simplified local planning requirements, allow for more flexibility and attention to local designated needs and issues and implementation of a locally defined community vision and work program. The result is a much more useful document and guide to local growth and development while addressing the state mandate for plan preparation.

The new comprehensive plans prepared have engaging, locally determined titles to better stimulate interest from both within and outside the local community, as well as to enhance local usage and implementation. The Evans Plan is entitled “Canoochee Delight: Fruitcake, Family, and Fortune;” the Laurens Plan is entitled “Green and Growing Jewel: Regional Hub of Commerce, Home, Heritage, and Health;” the Toombs Plan is entitled “Sweet! So Much More than the Vidalia Onion;” and the Wheeler Plan is entitled “Correcting Course, Moving Forward.” All of the plans are illustrated with local photos. Although joint plans, the new plans also include individual descriptions and visions for each municipality in addition to the overall community vision. Each government also has an individual community work program. The new comprehensive plans all include economic development and land use elements, in addition to the necessary elements of community goals, needs and opportunities, and community work program.

These four new joint plans from 2014 join the three plans prepared in 2013 by the Regional Commission for Johnson, Tattnall, and Wilcox counties under the new standards. All these plans have been approved by DCA and adopted by each local government as official policy to retain Qualified Local Government (QLG) status with the State of Georgia. QLG status is necessary for eligibility for state grants, loans, and permits. With these plans, the Regional Commission has now assisted seven (7) counties and 27 municipalities develop new comprehensive plans. During 2015, the Regional Commission is assisting those governments in Montgomery, Telfair, and Wayne counties to develop new locally driven comprehensive plans under the new standards. By the end of 2017, all 17 counties will have new comprehensive plans. The cycle will then start anew in 2018 with Johnson, Tattnall, and Wilcox counties having to revisit and update their new comprehensive plans as the planning standards now require major plan update every five years. All these new comprehensive plans are available for review at www.hogarc.org or www.georgiaplanning.com.



New Regional Plan “Green with Greener Days Ahead” Adopted



The Heart of Georgia Altamaha Regional Commission’s Regional Council officially adopted a new Regional Plan at its September, 2014 meeting in Mount Vernon. The action officially adopted the Regional Agenda portion of the plan prepared in 2014, and approved by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The adoption completed a nearly three year process which began with adoption of a Regional Resource Plan in 2012 and preparation and approval by DCA of a Regional Assessment in 2013.

The Regional Plan is entitled “Green with Greener Days Ahead” in recognition not only of the Region’s still predominant agricultural and forested landscape, but also of its many assets and opportunities for continued growth and development. The Region has enjoyed slow, but exceptional and steady, growth for a rural area without a metropolitan center. The Region’s location, transportation assets, natural resources, and proximity to Georgia’s coast and ports, among other things, portend continued future success in growth.

The Regional Agenda contains an implementation program and framework and activities for achieving an identified Regional Vision of a thriving and prospering Region which retains an attractive, sustainable natural environment and rural, small-town character while remaining family and business friendly and globally competitive economically. The plan is a roadmap for all concerned for making the Region an improved place to live, work, recreate, and visit, and contains guidance not only for the Regional Commission, but also for local governments, the State of Georgia, and other public and private agencies. The Regional Agenda includes overall comprehensive Guiding Principles, a Regional Work Program for the Regional Commission, recommended Implementation Strategies for other parties, and prescribed minimum and excellent Local Government Performance Standards for local governments within the Region. Local governments are required by DCA to meet the minimum performance standards within three years of plan adoption (or by September, 2017). Most Heart of Georgia Altamaha Region local governments already meet these minimum standards. The Regional Plan is available for review at our website, www.hogarc.org.