



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Regions are the powerhouses of our national economy and trends point to even greater prosperity. Regions have the critical mass of infrastructure, labor markets, capital markets, and other assets to best compete in the global economy.

Atlanta is at the forefront of our nation's burgeoning metro economies. Our economic development strategies are evolving, as we have become a top-tier metropolitan area. The region no longer competes on a pure "low-cost to operate" model.

To attract the talent that will keep our economy strong, we must improve our quality of life. It's all interrelated. In the end, it's the connections between the economy, transportation, water and education that will yield the greatest improvements

in our quality of life.

The prosperity of local communities are inextricably linked to the success of our region. With our common airport, highway system, rivers and airshed, Regional Business Coalition's 16 chambers of commerce come together to advance a common agenda that fosters greater economic vitality. RBC focuses on current challenges and needs, all the while developing regional stewards that address issues far beyond formal work plans.

TRAFFIC, SPRAWL, AIR QUALITY, WATER SUPPLY. While it's tempting to only boast about our assets, the business community realizes that key infrastructure and natural resource challenges are diminishing the value of our Atlanta brand.



Atlanta is the 10th largest region in the nation.



80% of the nation's economic output comes from metropolitan areas.



Regional leaders visited Chicago for 2002's LINK study tour.

1.2 million new jobs are expected by 2030.



1 million new people settled in the region during the 90s.



58 buses will provide new express service to 11 counties by 2005.



Recently, RBC successfully:

- Advocated for 11 county express bus service
- Advocated for adoption of model storm-water ordinances
- Advocated for inclusion of quality growth principles in the new Regional Development Plan
- Hosted a Water District progress report luncheon
- Awarded five Developments of Excellence
- Hosted a regional media luncheon
- And much more!

Since our inception in 1997, RBC focuses on transportation, air quality, water resources and land use issues. These issues remain critically important to the region's economic competitiveness and business engagement is vital to achieve success.

In addition to our advocacy work on primary economic drivers, RBC provides opportunities for information sharing and

issue discussion among the region's business and policy leaders.

In partnership with ARC and RLF, LINK study visits to peer regions and the Regional Leadership Institute are just a few examples of how RBC adds value to the regional dialogue.

As a coalition of 16 chambers of commerce, RBC is a unique problem-solving model in the 13 county Atlanta region. In total, RBC's chambers of commerce have 25,000 business members. The importance of the issues and breadth of perspectives at the RBC table continues to engender excited, relevant engagement that provides great value to all involved.

I know you agree with me that by creating a common table for all chambers of commerce to engage important issues, RBC positions the region for a bright and competitive future.

KESSELL STELLING
RBC CHAIR

TRANSPORTATION

Recent polling confirms that traffic is the public's number one concern. From a business perspective, all of RBC's 16 chambers of commerce cite transportation challenges as critical when recruiting companies and top talent.

The region is currently updating our 25-year transportation plan. As with prior plans, we grapple with our ability to reduce congestion and expand transit services in the face of rapid growth and auto-oriented land use patterns.

As a core element of an effective transportation system, RBC advocates for a new transit plan that: includes service for all thirteen counties in the air quality nonat-

tainment area; reduces congestion and air pollution; improves workforce and customer access thereby supporting economic development opportunities; advances cost-effective solutions; coordinates these investments with land use polices; coordinates these investments with transportation demand management programs; and provides an excellent customer experience.

Fortunately, GRTA's new transit plan affirmatively addresses these policy goals. Also, transit providers are developing a single, electronic fare system that will allow riders to use the same card to seamlessly transfer and connect.

The remaining major hurdle is finance for our existing systems and needed expansions. Our current 2025 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) totals nearly \$40 billion. While this represents substantial public invest-

ment, it falls short of the investment required to reduce congestion and expand transit.

Compared to other regions, state funding is the weakest link in our transportation investment portfolio. Georgia's gas tax is only 7.5 cents per gallon plus 3% on the dollar. This is the third lowest in the nation.

Local investment sources include general funds, impact fees and Special Local Option Sales Taxes (SPLOST). Historically, SPLOST funding for new infrastructure has been unpredictable and uneven across the region. This has resulted in transportation projects being funded based on available local funds versus their ability to address regional policy aims.

The City of Atlanta, Fulton and Dekalb Counties continue to bare the entire financial responsibility for the MARTA system. A one percent sales tax levied in these jurisdictions raises approximately \$300 million annually. This levy, combined with other taxes, limits the ability of these governments to fund other needed transportation investments that would benefit the entire region.

A variety of funding options are being discussed to address our transportation needs. Applying a one percent sales tax to ARC's ten counties, and maintaining Fulton's and Dekalb's rate, could generate \$12 billion in additional funds over 25 years.

Bringing Georgia's gas tax up to the national average, a 10-cent increase, could

generate \$6 billion for the region over 25 years. Raising Georgia's vehicle fees to the southeastern average could yield \$1.1 billion over 25 years.

RBC recognizes the need for additional funds for transportation investment and that these funds should be permanent, dedicated and flexible in use. Transportation finance is RBC's top public policy issue. ■



11 counties are participating in GRTA's express bus program.



Many transit providers provide real-time information for their riders.



Bus rapid transit is often half the cost of light rail.



GDOT plans to build 130 new miles of HOV lanes.



MARTA's one cent sales tax in Fulton and Dekalb generates \$300 million annually.

WATER

Water is such a basic human need that it evokes considerable interest and care from everyone. This fundamental need for clean and ample water is driving this region's efforts to plan for our long-term water future.

Planning challenges include extraordinary population growth, high-impact land use and development practices, limited water supply resources, degraded water quality, the public's poor understanding of the issues, and lack of funds for implementation.

In 2003, the Water District will adopt the region's first-ever long-term water supply, wastewater and stormwater plans. These plans have been a work in progress since the District's formation in 2001.

The Clean Water Initiative, a project of the Regional Business Coalition and the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, was the basis for creating the Water District in 2001. Creation of the Water District was a bipartisan effort, co-sponsored by Sen. Eric Johnson and Sen. Steve Thompson.

To date, the Water District has already developed and adopted a comprehensive set of stormwater management ordinances and a short-term wastewater plan to address sewer moratoria.

The population of the 16 county district is forecasted to grow from four million to six million by 2030. While the region has enough

water through 2030, after this, the region has less than 10 years or water supply remaining unless we practice aggressive conservation, increase indirect water reuse, and develop new sources.

Indirect water reuse is a critical regional issue. Gwinnett County's proposed discharge of highly treated wastewater into Lake Lanier and their related withdrawal from the lake is one example of this concept. In order to extend this region's water supply it will become increasingly necessary to direct wastewater into our reservoirs for later use as water supply.

Our primary water quality challenge comes not from our public sewers and private industries, but from polluted runoff from construction sites, lawns, parking lots and other developed areas. When rain water hits our increasing number of roofs, roads, driveways, parking lots, and cleared construction sites it is not naturally absorbed into the ground; instead it runs over these surfaces, taking with it pollutants such as oil, gas, fertilizers and sediment; the run-off then makes its way directly into our rivers, lakes and streams.

The Regional Business Coalition has recommended that the Water District's plans: provide adequate water supply, wastewater treatment and stormwater management for forecasted economic development; effectively utilize existing water resources to meet water

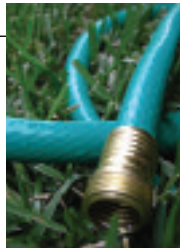


600 million more gallons per day will be used by 2030.

5 new reservoirs are part of the region's 2030 plan.



Lawn irrigation represents up to 25% of household water use.



Our rivers are home to over 50 species of fish.



supply needs; implement effective and aggressive water conservation strategies; maximize the water supply potential of wastewater return flows (i.e the discharge of highly treated wastewater into reservoirs); minimize consumptive water use; develop new water supply resources; and protect instream water quality, especially upstream of potable water supplies.

Additionally, four key issues need active business community involvement for the plans to succeed: implementation and funding of stormwater management plans, regionally-oriented water supply and wastewater planning, a water allocation agreement, and coordination among other regional plans.

These plans will form the basis for future EPD permits, hence, our ability to build the water infrastructure needed to sustain our region's economic development is at issue. For too many years these decisions have been made on a piece meal basis with little coordination. With Atlanta now the tenth largest metro area in the nation, RBC is at the table to ensure that our approach to water resource management reflects these new metropolitan realities. ■

LAND USE

Thirty-four percent more people and forty percent more jobs came to the region during the 1990s. In nearly every way, we're proud that so many people and jobs wanted to call Atlanta home. After all, we've got a robust economy, a diverse population, pleasant climate and a beautiful environment.

As with most things, however, this prosperity has had some negative consequences. The region consumes over 20,000 acres annually, becomes less dense, drives 66% more, and spends 44% more time traveling

during congested conditions. Is this how we want to accommodate future growth?

Land use and development underlie many of the challenges facing our region. Travel patterns, water quality, infrastructure costs, schools and other issues that more quickly resonate with the public are, in large part, driven by where and how growth is accommodated. Numerous obstacles exist to achieve quality growth in metro Atlanta ranging from state legislation to reactionary homeowners. RBC is committed to engaging this complex and critical issue.

RBC supports the current Regional Development Plan and is working with the ARC, GRTA, DCA and local governments to promote quality growth. RBC successfully advocated for quality growth principles in the new Regional Development Plan. RBC continues to champion the Livable Centers Initiative program, especially as it relates to

ARC's prioritization of transportation funds.

Recently, RBC conducted a quality growth audit of 25 local governments. With few exceptions, most comprehensive plans, zoning codes and development regulations do not enable quality growth. RBC is using this information to pursue a focused land use and development reform agenda.

RBC and ARC cosponsor the annual Developments of Excellence awards. The 2002 awards were announced at the State of the Region breakfast. The awards recognize developments that best exemplify the Regional Development Plan policies.

This year's winners include: Milton Park by Pope and Land Enterprises and AMLI; Gateway Village; Silver Springs Village by Oakley Development Company; Smyrna Market Village by Wieland Homes and Neighborhoods; and Villages of Lafayette Park by Eagle Real Estate Advisors.

ARC's Livable Centers Initiative continues to be an effective and popular strategy for encouraging quality growth. RBC, like-minded organizations, and participating local governments successfully advocated for increased LCI funds, \$73 million over three years, in last year's transportation plan. On the ground, RBC's local chambers of commerce have embraced the LCI program. For example, the Douglas Chamber of Commerce is moving their office into downtown Douglasville, a decision that will



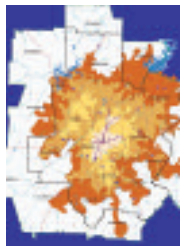
Few local governments have zoning codes that allow quality growth.



48 Communities have completed Livable Centers plans.



Milton Park, 2002 Development of Excellence.



The region's urbanized area now touches 19 counties.



A safe and pleasant walking environment is a critical ingredient of quality growth.

further contribute to this community's livability and prosperity.

In 2002, RBC served on the Department of Community Affairs task force to rewrite the regulations for local government planning. This was the first major revision since the law was passed in 1989. In the future, planning will be required to be done in way that better serves communities located in our metropolitan area. ■

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The RBC is a recognized leader in identifying and advocating sustainable solutions that foster greater economic vitality by building consensus, shared commitment and the cooperation of chambers of commerce in the Atlanta region.

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