YOUR *TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT*

and you ...

...form a partnership which goes into the making of Georgia's transportation system. Your comments are needed to make this partnership go.

Public involvement is a key phrase in the department's decision process. This involvement is the result of experience. The Georgia Department of Transportation has found that by involving you, the citizen, early in the decision making, the most agreeable solutions to your area's transportation problems are found.

Your transportation department

Your Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is one of several state agencies created by the General Assembly to provide the services you've come to expect from your state government. The GDOT's purpose is to provide the most efficient transportation system available, but it needs your help to do this. This booklet is meant to be a guide so that you may better understand the workings of the GDOT and your role in transportation planning.

First formed as a commission in 1916, the present GDOT became a state highway department in 1919 and in 1972 it became a full-fledged department of transportation, broadening its outlook to include all forms of transportation.

More than a building of cold marble and impersonal blueprints, the Department of Transportation is people working in Atlanta, seven district offices and 80 residencies throughout the state. Their jobs vary, but in order for these people to do their assigned tasks properly, they must be knowledgeable about your area's transportation needs.

In order to obtain this knowledge, your participation is needed. This can be achieved in two ways. One, your elected officials can tell the department what your area's needs or wants are, or your planning commission, made up of specialists and citizens, can develop transportation plans for your area.

These plans are placed in a department five-year construction work program which matches available manpower and money. Using computers as a management tool, the department continually revises this program, keeping up-to-date information on the priorities which you, through the various planning agencies, give to your area's transportation needs.

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Once, the only consideration in transportation planning was the traffic corridor's capacity. If the roads couldn't carry the load, then more roads were added. Today, due to popular pressures and increasing self-enlightenment, GDOT realizes that the "shortest distance between two points" road building philosophy must change. Road alignment is now altered, when required, to save irretrievable natural and historic resources and projects are changed to reduce the adverse effects on human and biotic communities. If the adverse effects are too great, "No-Build" alternatives are also incoprorated into the planning.

During the first two decades of the 20th century, Georgians were crying to get out of the mud. During the fifities their cry

was "get us out of the muddle" and going into the final quarter of this century the plea has been to find other viable transportation modes.

Values have changed, creating additional complexities in the decision process. Once projects could be justified on the basis of the greatest need at the least expense in the shortest time. Today, the emphasis is on the quality of life. It takes more than traffic counts to justify transportation projects, now seemingly unrelated facts are required before a project receives final approval. These facts and information can only be supplied by you, the citizen, because only you, know what resources must be preserved in your area.

A transportation project from conception to construction and beyond, involves many people, many agencies, many months and a lot of coordination. First a plan must be developed which meets an area's requirements at the same time it must be capable of fitting into a statewide transportation system. This plan must meet future – often 20 or more years – as well as immediate needs. At the same time, it must consider more than transportation factors alone, it must weigh the impact that such a system will have on the area's environment, economy, social and natural communities.

Organization

In order to meet the challenge of providing the best transportation system available, the GDOT is composed of a line staff organization. The line organization, i.e. the chain of command, is composed of the State Transportation Board, the commissioner and five separate divisions. These divisions are Planning and Programming, Pre-Construction, Construction, Operations and Administration. The staff units are Deputy Commissioner, Assistant

State Highway Engineer, Systems Development, Personnel Office, Information Office and Executive Assistant for Transportation. (See page 8 for organization chart.)

The Planning and Programming Division is divided into two offices, planning and programming. Planning collects the information on an area's transportation needs, checks to see if these projects fit into a statewide transportation system and conducts initial SEE (social, economic, environmental) studies. Programming places these projects in a computer file and assigns them to a five or twenty-year work plan based on the priorities assigned to them.

Pre-Construction Division is responsible for the design, location and right-of-way phases of a project. There are four offices in this division: Road and Airport Design, Urban and Multi-modal Design, Bridge and Structural Design, Location and Right-of-Way.

In the Construction Division, there are the offices of Construction, Materials and Research, Contracts Administration and the seven district offices (See page 20 for map showing locations of these districts). Construction is responsible for assuring that the work is done according to departmental specifications. Materials and Research tests the materials used in the projects and finds new ways and new materials for doing things. Contracts Administration develops the project contracts and verifies that bids submitted by the contractors are correct. The district offices are responsible for conducting the department's field work.

In the Operations Division there are five offices. Maintenance is responsible for maintaining the project once it is completed.

Utilities work with public and private utility companies in order that electric, water, sewage and gas lines are not interrupted accidentally when a project is underway. The Traffic Engineering and Safety office is responsible for highway signs, safety features and other aspects of transportation which make transportation systems safer. The Office of Permits and Enforcement issues permits for oversized loads and enforces the weight restrictions imposed by the General Assembly and Congress. The Office of State Aid is responsible for county contract agreements.

Under the Administration Division fall the offices of General Accounting, Audits and Fiscal Procedures, General Support Services and the office of Air Transportation. This division is responsible for distributing the departmental funds. Air Transportation, which is included in this division, houses the state's planes.

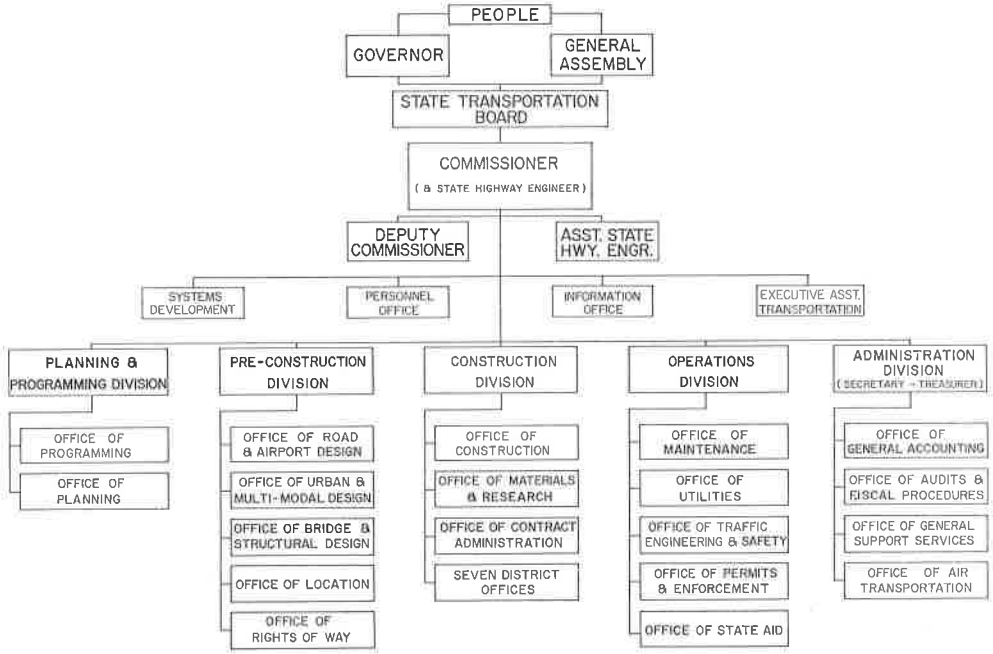
Staff functions are those tasks which assist the department in carrying out its mission but are not directly related to the primary job of developing a statewide transportation system. In this category are the Systems Development Office, Personnel, Information and Executive Assistant for Transportation.

Systems Development formulate computer programs for more efficient departmental operations. Personnel is responsible for hiring and other employment-related aspects of the department. Procedures used in this office are regulated by the State Merit System. The Information Office is responsible for keeping the public informed as to what the department is doing. The Executive Assistant for Transportation is responsible for developing legislation and acts as a liaison between the department and the General Assembly.

Under a 1975 law, the Commissioner can also hold the position of State Highway Engineer, as long as he has the experience and credentials to hold both jobs. He is advised by the Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant State Highway Engineer with the Deputy Commissioner authorized to act in the commissioner's absence.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



You and your

Transportation Board

Representing each of the state's congressional districts, the 10 members of your State Transportation Board insure that their constituencies receive their fair portion of the transportation dollar.

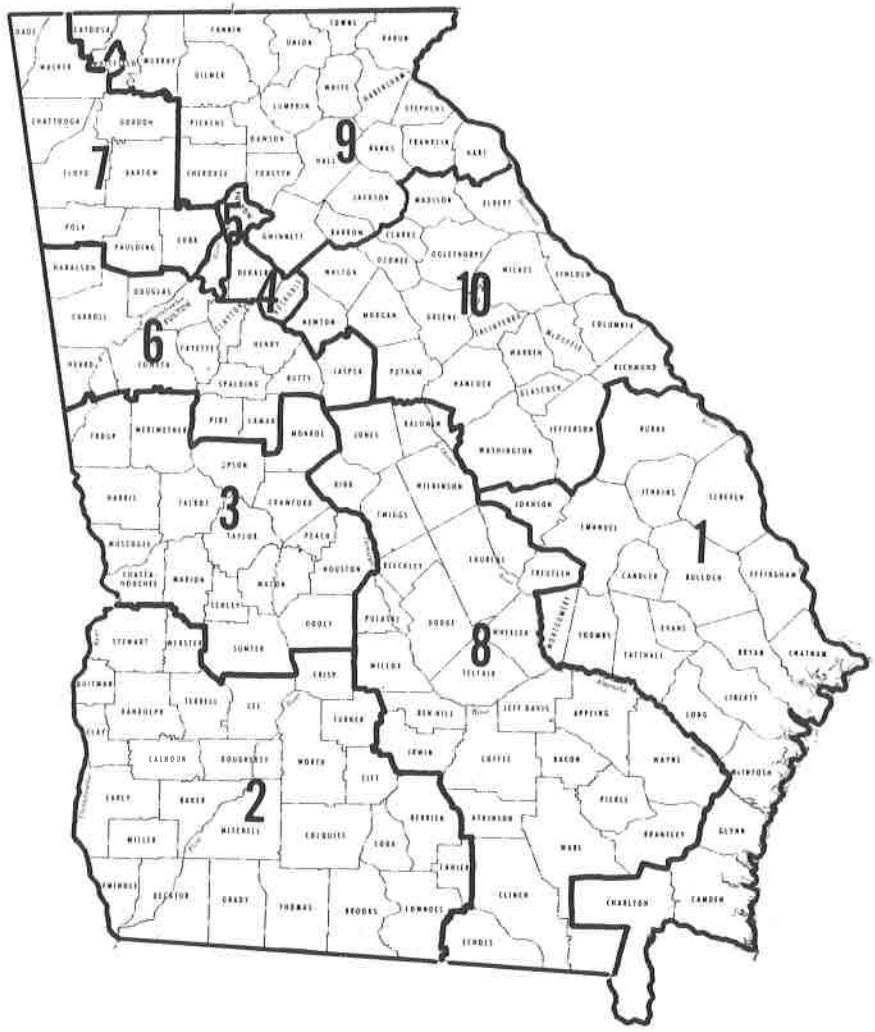
Created to provide "general control and supervision" over one of the state's largest budgeted departments, the board designates the roads on the State Highway System, approves negotiated construction contracts, elects the commissioner, confirms the appointment of the deputy commissioner, the state highway engineer, the treasurer and assistant treasurer, and approves all long-range plans and programs for the department.

Members are elected by a majority vote of a General Assembly caucus from each of the 10 congressional districts. Each member serves a five-year term, with the terms staggered so that two members are chosen each year.

A majority of the board constitutes a quorum for conducting business, including the removal or election of the commissioner. Any power of the board (except where restricted by law) can be exercised by a majority vote of a quorum. This majority elects its own chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer. The first two officers must be members, but the treasurer may be a non-member. All officers serve at the board's pleasure.

GEORGIA

Transportation Board Districts



Kinds of Highways

As strange as it may sound, GDOT isn't directly responsible for every road in the state. There are some 98,000 miles of roads in Georgia, yet the department is only directly responsible for some 18,000 miles of highways which are on the State Highway System. The remaining 80,000 miles are under city or county jurisdictions.

Classification of highways is necessary because over the years several ways of funding these systems have developed. Each funding plan limits itself to particular highways or kinds of highways, and therefore each fund establishes a new classification. Also, it is possible for a highway to be on two or more systems.

These classes are:

1. National System of Interstate & Defense Highways
2. Federal-aid Primary Systems
3. Federal-aid Secondary Systems
4. Forest Highway Systems
5. State Highway Systems
6. Post Roads
7. County Roads

Funding sources

Funding for GDOT comes from state apportionment, receipts from state authorities (i.e., Tollway, Bridge and Road), airplane rental fees, cash and non-cash participation by others, and other minor miscellaneous incomes.

The divisions of highways, administration and planning and programming receive revenue from these sources:

a. state appropriations, which consist of motor fuel taxes as established under the state Constitution, Article VII, Section IX, Paragraph IV, and in some instances come from the state's general funds

b. federal apportionments, which are federal funds used with state matching costs, participation costs for construction, reconstruction, highway improvements, planning and research

c. reimbursements from the U.S.Department of Defense

d. receipts from state authorities consisting of collections for engineering services rendered for work on State Authority-financed projects

e. receipts from other sources

    1. cash participation from counties, cities, railroads and others

2. non-cash participation by counties and railroads, where they furnish material, equipment, etc.

3. miscellaneous income from sale of junk, such as scrap sign metal, pay phones, etc.

The Office of Air Transportation receives funds solely from state appropriations and airplane rental fees.

The state highway system is built and maintained solely with funds derived from the 7½¢-per-gallon tax on gasoline. The additional four cents per gallon is added to this, making a total of 11½¢ per gallon. This is the lowest gasoline tax in any southeastern state.

The decision process

Providing you with the best transportation possible involves many people making many decisions over a period of many months. These decisions cannot be made without comments from you. Indeed, without your input, the department would be very limited in its ability to perform its goal of providing the services you've come to expect. The department works toward this goal of involving you early in transportation decisionmaking by encouraging your participation. This decision process is outlined in the GEORGIA ACTION PLAN and consists of five phases and 26 steps – several of which require your participation and others of which offer opportunities for your comments and observations.

Diagrammed here is this decision process:

System planning phase

Step 1:

Conduct System Planning Studies

In this step, planners and citizens' groups, through the Policy Committee, Technical Coordinating Committees (TCC) and the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) of the various APDC's, MPC's and various planning commissions, define an area's transportation needs. At this point, the first evaluation of the project's impact on the community, environment and economy is made.

Step 2:

Integrate Transportation Needs Into Proposed Long-Range Plan

Transportation studies, outlining long-range projects and developed by the various planning commissions, are placed in a computer program in the state DOT. These long-range plans represent the transportation goals for the state as defined by local elected officials and the 3-C committees (comprehensive, cooperative and continuing) of the various MPC's and APDC's. These plans are not only the projected needs from transportation studies and previous plans, but are also a reflection of the goals and priorities of the local citizens, the GDOT and the state and federal government.

Step 3:

Review and Approve Long-Range Plans

All long-range, comprehensive plans are reviewed on the state level by the GDOT commissioner and the State Transportation Board, whose 10 members represent the state's congressional districts and who are elected by state legislative caucuses. This 10–member board approves or rejects these long-range plans.

Project definition phase

Step 4:

Prepare Five-Year Highway Plan

The Office of Programming extracts projects from the long-range plan, matching these selected projects with available manpower and funds, and puts them into a five-year construction work program. This selection is partially based on the geographical location of the proposed projects to assure an equitable statewide distribution; i.e., one area won't get more of fewer projects than the others.

Step 5:

Assign Preliminary Level of Project Significance

The Georgia DOT recognizes that not all federal-aid projects are of the same magnitude, nor will they have similar economic, social and environmental effects. Therefore, a preliminary level of significance is assigned by a standing committee composed of the planning and programming director, the assistant state highway engineer for pre–construction and the chief of the Environmental Analysis Bureau in coordination with a Federal Highway Administration representative.

Assignment levels are based on three criteria:

a. the geographical location and improvement type
b. the function classification of the facility
c. the potential impact on the community, economy and the environment.

These levels are classified into three categories ranked "A," "B" and "C" and designate the degree of analysis, which range from major to minor. (For further details on this or any other step see the GEORGIA ACTION PLAN)

Step 6:

Publicize Proposed Project and Preliminary Levels of Significance

Before a "level of significance" is assigned, legal notice must be given through appropriate local newspapers which gives you an opportunity to ask for a change in the assigned significance level. Also, a simultaneous A-95 Clearinghouse Review will be done at this time by the appropriate statewide, regional or metropolitan clearinghouses. (A-95 Clearinghouse is another way the department gathers citizen input and assures that the projects meet local transportation needs.)

Step 7:

Establish Final Project Levels

All comments concerning the transportation project and the preliminary level of significance will be reviewed by the Level Assignment Committee and a final level assigned to the project. If the A-95 review or the public gives the initial level of significance an unfavorable reaction, the project may be recycled to the SYSTEM PLANNING PHASE for re-evaluation.

Step 8:

Program Review and Approval Process

The State Transportation Board is responsible for the final approval of the program after it has been reviewed by the commissioner, deputy commissioner and the state highway engineer.

Step 9:

Federal Participation

Following the board's approval, the state DOT Office of Programming requests authorization for preliminary engineering, which initiates the next phase of the process – the location phase. Also the A-95 Clearinghouses are notified of the request.

Location phase

Step 10:

Determine Alternative Location Corridors

Alternative location corridors are determined by the GDOT offices of Surveys and Aerial Mapping and Planning. The former is responsible for the engineering feasibility evaluation, and the latter is responsible for the social, economic and environmental evaluation.

Before further work is done, the state highway engineer and the director of the GDOT Division of Planning and Programming must concur in the recommendations of the two offices.

Step 11:

Prepare Social, Economic and Environmental Evaluations

Several important, concurrent evaluations are begun at this step. These evaluations include preparing the Conceptual Stage Right-of-Way and Relocation Assistance Study, the Location Study Report and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) or Negative Declaration. Each of these evaluations or studies involve GDOT offices, citizens, local officials and local, state and national agencies, and the resulting findings consider all possible impacts the alternatives, including the "no-build" alternative, will have.

Step 12:

Circulate DEIS and Hold Location Hearings

After receiving approval from the Federal Highway Administration to circulate the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Office of Planning notifies you that the DEIS is available for your comments. This office also holds a LOCATION PUBLIC

HEARING at which you will be able to make additional comments or submit your observations directly to the GDOT. These comments help determine which alternative location is selected.

Step 13:

Finalize EIS and Location Study Report

Transcripts from the Location Public Hearings and the other comments are analyzed, and the appropriate actions, including additional environmental analysis, are taken.

After the hearing and after GDOT's selection of the general location is made, the selection is submitted to local governing bodies for review and comment. Then the complete data on all alternatives, including the "no-build," are reviewed by the state highway engineer and the GDOT Division of Planning and Programming engineer, who recommend the best possible alternate to the GDOT commissioner for final location selection. Also, the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is completed.

Step 14:

Secure Location Approval

Upon passing this increasing collection of data on to the FHWA for approval or rejection, the GDOT simultaneously publishes a notice in the appropriate newspapers announcing this move. If the location is rejected by the FHWA, the project is recycled to the appropriate step in the decision process. Regardless of the FHWA decision, a second notice is placed in the newspapers informing you of the outcome.

Design phase

Step 15:

Project DATA Gathering and Preliminary Design

The Design Phase begins with an extensive gathering of data from the different offices in GDOT, and a Design Study Report will accompany each request to the FHWA for a project design.

Step 16:

Field Plan Review

A PS & E (plans, surveys and estimates) Team, which includes an environmental generalist, physically walks the project line and reviews the preliminary plans to determine how well the design has met the engineering, EIS and other requirements.

Step 17:

Prepare Detailed Design

Included in the GDOT Offices of Design detailed plans are a second submission of right-of-way plans, a coordinated review by other offices in GDOT, FHWA and local officials of the cost and materials estimate, and a submission of plans to the GDOT Office of Utilities for review by utility owners in order that utility relocation can be made, if necessary.

Step 18:

Evaluate Social, Economic and Environmental Assessments with Regard to Design Details

The Offices of Design recheck the project design to verify that the original social, economic and environmental considerations were followed. If the original assumptions don't reflect the present conditions, these offices will re-evaluate the plans to determine whether any changes are needed.

Step 19:

Certify that Social, Economic and Environmental Design Requirements Were Followed

The Design Offices will certify to the FHWA, the GDOT Environmental Analysis Bureau and local officials that the social, economic and environmental (SEE) assumptions were followed. If these officials consider any deviation to be significant, the project will be recycled to Step 11.

Step 20:

Hold Design Public Hearings and Finalize Design Study Report

At this stage, there are several design alternatives to choose from, and the public hearings provide an opportunity for you to tell the department which design alternative meets your area's needs. Upon completion of this hearing, the FHWA will approve or reject the project, and if the project is rejected by the federal agency, it will be recycled to the appropriate step for reconsideration.

Contract etc. phase

Step 21:

Supplemental PS & E Inspection

Like the original PS & E Inspection (Step 16), the purpose of this one is to establish how well the design met the governing engineering criteria, the EIS, the Location Study Report and Design Study Report.

Step 22:

Prepare Contract for Letting

Using final plans and specifications furnished by the other GDOT offices, the Office of Contracts Administration prepares contracts and advertisement documents, and the Office of Programming requests FHWA authorization to advertise for bids on the project.

Step 23:

Let and Award Contract

After the receipt of sealed bids submitted by private contractors, the Office of Contracts Administration opens the bids at a public meeting and after careful analysis submits the bids to the commissioner, who decides whether the contracts should be awarded, subject to FHWA approval. A contract can only be awarded to the lowest bidder.

Step 24:

Construct Project

Construction is done by the successful contractor and in accordance with the contract and construction plans. The GDOT is responsible for assuring that this is done correctly.

Step 25:

Inspect and Accept Project

Upon the satisfactory completion of the project as determined by the resident engineer, the GDOT Office of Construction makes a final detailed inspection and accepts the project on behalf of the state, with final acceptance made by the GDOT commissioner and the FHWA.

Step 26:

Maintain Quality of Project

Shortly after a project has been opened to the public, a team consisting of the project's maintenance engineer, project engineer and an environmental generalist will conduct an on-site review and discussion of the completed project. A review of each major new location project will be made during the first year of operation to determine whether SEE and engineering concerns were properly met.

Transportation Districts