



Legislative Update

March 26, 2021

GRA Legislative Agenda Items

Short Line Tax Credit: Earlier this session House Transportation Chairman Rick Jasperse (R-Jasper) introduced [House Bill 452](#), which will extend the sunset for the short line income tax credit by five years from December 30, 2023 to December 30, 2028. This week, provisions from several tax bills were added to [Senate Bill 6](#), including the Class III railroad sunset extension. Senate Bill 6 passed the House on Thursday by a vote of 152 to 14 and was sent back to the Senate for consideration, where it received a ‘disagree’ vote. House and Senate members must come to an agreement on changes made in the measure in order for it to be sent to Governor Kemp’s desk.

A sunset extension for the short line tax credit was also added this week to [House Bill 586](#) in the Senate Finance Committee. The ‘Georgia’ Economic Recovery Act of 2021’ also includes provision relating to several tax credits in Georgia. The language added to the bill would extend the sunset from December 30, 2023 to December 20, 2026. The Senate Finance Committee typically has a policy of only extending sunsets on tax credits five years at a time in order to reassess the state’s return on investment before deciding the sunset should be further extended.

Relevant House and Senate members will likely work to come to an agreement on which sunset extension to pass- the one currently in Senate Bill 6 or the one currently in House Bill 586.

Freight and Logistics: Following the work done by the Joint Commission on Freight and Logistics over the last two years, this session Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) has introduced legislation to create a similar commission with a slightly different name. [Senate Resolution 102](#) would create the Georgia Commission on E-Commerce and Freight Infrastructure Funding. The resolution recognizes that the “current and future economic health of Georgia relies on a thriving and productive freight and logistics industry.” It also mentions the Freight and Logistics Commission’s finding from last year that the state needs to invest \$1.5 billion annually in our freight and logistics infrastructure. After passing the Senate unanimously earlier this session, the resolution was approved by House Transportation Committee last week. This week the Rules Committee sent it back to the Transportation Committee, where it was favorably reported by substitute.

Truck Size and Weight: Oppose any legislation that increases the allowable size and weight of truck carrying freight. Typically, advocates seek to revise O.C.G.A. 32-6-26 (g) (1), which allows for a weight increase and various radius distance increases for forest products, live poultry, cotton, feed, granite, raw ore or minerals, solid waste concrete or poultry.

Earlier this session the Senate Transportation Committee considered, but did not take action on Senator Tyler Harper’s (R-Ocilla) [Senate Bill 118](#), which would allow for the issuance of an annual forest product

permit allowing 100,000 lbs. for vehicles hauling forest products from the forest where cut to the first point of marketing or processing if the vehicle has six axles.

Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Frank Ginn created a subcommittee to analyze and research the bill between this session and the next session. The Sub-committee Members are Sen. Ginn, Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega), Sen. David Lucas (D-Macon), Sen. Burt Jones (R-Jackson), Sen. Lindsey Tippins (R-Marietta), and the bill's author Sen. Tyler Harper (R-Ocilla).

While we are encouraged by Chairman Ginn's action and the fact that the bill did not cross over to the House, we are continuing to actively oppose the bill through the end of session.

Earlier this session, Representative James Burchett (R-Waycross) introduced [House Bill 496](#), which also seeks to increase the allowable weight to 95,000 lbs. for trucks carrying forest products. Like the Senate version, this bill did not pass out of the Transportation Committee and did not cross over to the Senate, but we are continuing to monitor this legislation and to actively work with other groups opposed to increased truck weights to ensure this legislation does not pass.

Two Man Crew: Oppose any legislation which would seek to require a train that is in use for the movement of freight to operate with at least two crew members. Similar legislation was introduced in the 2019 session. We are closely monitoring this issue, but no legislation has been introduced at this point.

Blocked Crossing: Oppose any bills that would prevent a railroad common carrier from authorizing the operation of a train that causes a road to be blocked for longer than 15 minutes. Similar legislation has been introduced in recent years. Freshman Representative Mesha Mainor (D-Atlanta) introduced [House Bill 139](#), which prohibits a train from blocking any street, road, or highway grade crossing for longer than 15 minutes, except under certain circumstances. This bill never received a hearing by the House Transportation Committee, so it did not cross over to the Senate.

Georgia 811: Oppose any legislation which would remove the Georgia 811 exemption for railroads, thereby requiring them to join Georgia 811, "call before you dig." Georgia code currently exempts railroads from mandatory Georgia 811 membership. Any attempts to change the law to make Georgia 811 membership compulsory for railroads would be harmful to the industry, as it would slow railroads down.

[House Bill 449](#), introduced by Representative Vance Smith (R-Pine Mountain) earlier this session, revises the 'Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act' in order to enhance the processes for locate requests of underground utility facilities or infrastructure and to require that 9-1-1 be contacted if an excavator damages a gas or hazardous liquid pipeline. We are monitoring this bill, which has been assigned to the Senate Regulated Industries and Utilities Committee, to ensure that the bill is not amended in a way that would adversely impact the rail industry in any way.

Overview of General Assembly