



LEGISLATIVE Update

April 3, 2017

Sine Die Report

The General Assembly concluded the 2017 session in chaotic fashion around 1 a.m. on Thursday March 30. The major development from a GRA perspective since the last report was the inability of the legislature to reach agreement on a joint transit study committee that would have included freight rail. Instead, the House of Representatives passed HR 848 that created the House Commission on Transit Governance & Funding. Most of the other bills that GRA tracked, received final passage in the closing days of the session.

GRA Legislative Tracking

- **SB 89:** The ‘Right Track Act’ championed by Senate President Pro Tem David Shafer (R-Duluth) is the GRA’s primary agenda item. This bill passed the Senate unanimously. As planned, the House will take up the bill over the interim for consideration in 2018. Last week, the GRA team joined GDOT in making a presentation to the House Transportation Committee on freight rail issues and funding.
- **SB 6 and HB 160:** These bills, SB 6 by Senator Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) and HB 158 by House Transportation Chair Kevin Tanner (R-Dawsonville) were intended to create a mechanism for the study of a statewide transit plan, including a study of freight rail. When the chambers could not agree on a joint committee, the House passed **HR 848** that sets up a commission to study transit funding and government.
- **SB 160:** This is a Senate priority called “Back the Badge” that adds additional criminal penalties when a law enforcement officer is assaulted. The bill was amended to include railroad security officers. The bill passed and is on its way to the governor for signature.
- **HR 369:** This initiative by Speaker Ralston and Rep. Sam Watson creates a Rural Development Council that will hold sessions throughout the year to address rural Georgia’s challenges. GRA intends to monitor and participate in the meetings to highlight the economic development potential of rail and rail investment to rural Georgia.
- **HB 265:** This Administration bill amends the Quality Jobs Tax Credit by allowing qualified projects which have at least \$2.5 million investment to receive a subsequent

quality jobs tax credit if fifty or more new quality jobs above its previous single year high of the average number of jobs are created. The bill achieved final passage last week and is headed to the governor's desk.

- **HB 328:** This GDOT bill conforms state provisions to the recent changes in the federal act. GRA is watching the bill closely since there is a minor noncontroversial amendment to the current provision relating to truck weights. GRA opposes any amendment to the bill that would allow for a weight increase. The bill passed the Senate without amendment and is headed to the governor for his signature.
- **SB 219:** This bill by Senator Steve Gooch addresses some basic licensing and other issues pertaining to autonomous vehicles. The bill passed and is on the governor's desk for consideration.
- **HB 481:** This bill by House Transportation Chairman Kevin Tanner preempts local ordinances relating to drones. The bill passed and is on the governor's desk for consideration.
- **SR 228:** This was the State Properties Commission's annual bill seeking legislative approval and authority for the states conveyances and leases. This bill contained reference to the CSX lease of the rail between Atlanta and Chattanooga. Congratulations to GRA member CSX and the State Properties Commission for achieving passage of this bill that was of great importance to our industry as well as the economic well-being of the State of Georgia.

What to expect next:

- GRA will be diligently working on building support for SB 89, which is our freight rail funding program. We will also be representing the industry at the House Commission on Transit Governance & Funding, and monitoring the House's Rural Development Council.

Upcoming Events:

April 17th: GRA Legislative Work Session on SB 89 in Atlanta.
May 15 and 16: GRA Annual Meeting in Brasstown Valley Resort.