

NEGRC RECEIVES 2014 EXCELLENCE IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AWARD FROM NADO

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has been awarded a 2014 Excellence in Regional Transportation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for its Northeast Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Program.

NADO is a Washington, DC-based association that promotes programs and policies to strengthen local governments, communities and economies through regional cooperation, program delivery, and comprehensive strategies. The Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards showcase organizations for noteworthy projects and practices in rural and small metropolitan transportation planning, program delivery, and special initiatives. Award winners received national recognition at the 2014 National Rural Transportation Peer Learning Conference, December 3rd – 5th in Cincinnati, Ohio. NEGRC was represented by Senior Planner **John Devine**.

Recognized as an innovative leader in bicycle and pedestrian planning throughout the state, the Northeast Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Program has continued its noteworthy work in local planning, regional planning, and outreach and education. Some of the Programs most recent accomplishments include Project Road Share, the Firefly Trail concept, and the inaugural Georgia Trail Summit.

According to NADO President **Terry Bobrowski**, Executive Director of the East Tennessee Development District in Alcoa, Tennessee: "The Excellence in Regional Transportation Awards highlight the important results of programs and projects like the Northeast Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Program. Such initiatives are central to fostering quality of place and facilitating economic vitality in our nation's communities by promoting effective transportation networks."

For additional information about the award-winning project, contact the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission at (706)369-5650.

SPARER PORTRAIT PLACED AT HEADQUARTERS

At the creation of the Northeast Georgia Area Planning & Development Commission (now Regional Commission) in 1963, **Burt Sparer** was named Executive Director. Burt served with distinction in that position until 1970, at which time he remained in the planning profession, most notably as a faculty member at the University of Georgia Institute of Community and Area Development. The impact of Mr. Sparer's work is evident in communities throughout the state of Georgia. He passed away three years ago at the age of 86. **Dot Sparer** recently contacted Executive Director **Jim Dove**, and they determined it would be most appropriate to place a portrait of Mr. Sparer in the atrium of the headquarters building as a tribute to his many efforts on behalf of the organization. This was done in late December, and many visitors have commented as to its appropriateness. Dove stated, "Burt Sparer was truly a visionary and his leadership resulted in many of the achievements enjoyed not only by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, but by similar organizations throughout the state."



REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council will be held on **Thursday, February 19th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information on the meeting will be forthcoming.

GEORGIA POPULATION SURPASSES 10 MILLION

U.S. Census Bureau state population estimates released in late December indicate that Georgia's population surpassed 10 million for the first time and is now ranked eighth nationally. Florida passed New York to become the nation's third most populous state. Florida now stands at 19.9 million persons, compared to 19.7 million in New York. California remained the nation's most populous state at 38.8 million residents, followed by Texas at 27 million. North Dakota was the nation's fastest growing state over the last year. Its population increased 2.2 percent, followed by 1.7 percent growth in Nevada and Texas. Each of the 10 fastest growing states was in the South or West with the exception of North Dakota. Six states lost population during the last year - Illinois, West Virginia, Connecticut, New Mexico, Alaska, and Vermont. The United States as a whole saw its population increase by 2.4 million, or 0.75 percent to 318.9 million.

THE 10 MOST POPULOUS STATES ON JULY 1, 2014

RANK	STATE	POPULATION
1	California	38,802,500
2	Texas	26,956,958
3	Florida	19,893,297
4	New York	19,746,227
5	Illinois	12,880,580
6	Pennsylvania	12,787,209
7	Ohio	11,594,163
8	Georgia	10,097,343
9	North Carolina	9,943,964
10	Michigan	9,909,877

THE 10 FASTEST-GROWING STATES FROM JULY 1, 2013 TO JULY 1, 2014

RANK	STATE	PERCENT CHANGE
1	North Dakota	2.16
2	Nevada	1.71
3	Texas	1.70
4	Colorado	1.59
5	District of Columbia	1.51
6	Florida	1.49
7	Arizona	1.45
8	Utah	1.38
9	Idaho	1.34
10	South Carolina	1.27

THE 10 STATES WITH THE LARGEST NUMERIC INCREASE FROM JULY 1, 2013 TO JULY 1, 2014

RANK	STATE	NUMERIC INCREASE
1	Texas	451,321
2	California	371,107
3	Florida	292,986
4	Georgia	102,584
5	Arizona	96,487
6	North Carolina	95,047
7	Washington	87,788
8	Colorado	83,780
9	South Carolina	60,553
10	Virginia	55,944

THE 2015 GEORGIA TRAIL SUMMIT RETURNS TO ATHENS

After an incredibly successful inaugural Georgia Trail Summit (GTS) in Athens last spring, the popular event returns to Athens June 4th – 6th to coincide with National Trails Day. The newly-renovated Graduate Athens is reserved for rooms, meals, and meetings – a special-events facility full of history and personality; additional accommodations are offered at Hotel Indigo.

Last year's Summit, the first statewide trails event in well over a decade, drew 153 registrants (well exceeding expectations) from across Georgia, nearby states, and the District of Columbia. Time was split between traditional presentations, on-trail mobile workshops, and an afternoon-long *unconference* that featured expert facilitators engaging participants in 32 different attendee-chosen topics. Lead GTS organizers included the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, Decatur Active Living, the MillionMile Greenway, and the National Parks Service. The 2015 GTS will focus on three main tracks:

1. Building a culture of health within Georgia's trail networks
2. Trails as transportation solutions
3. Economic impacts of trails

Integral to the 2015 program will be a host committee of local and regional supporters. The host committee plans mobile workshops, organizes social gatherings, and helps to raise funds for conference activities. Last year's host committee was well served by the NEGRC, the Oconee Rivers Greenway Commission, BikeAthens, Georgia Bikes!, the Firefly Trail, the Georgia River Network, Walton Wellness, Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services, and others.

Sponsorship is also a key component of Summit planning. For the 2014 GTS, organizers raised \$18,900 in cash donations from local,

regional, and state governments, nonprofits, educational institutions, corporations, and individuals. The funds were so well-managed that, factoring in the \$5,880 in registration revenues, the 2014 Summit generated a surplus of over \$4,000 for use in 2015 and beyond.

If your agency or organization would like to be involved in the 2015 Georgia Trail Summit as a host committee member and/or sponsor, if you would like to nominate yourself or anyone else as a speaker, or if you would like to participate in another way, please contact NEGRC Senior Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at jdevine@negrc.org.



PLANNING SESSIONS/RETREATS IN FULL SWING

Executive Director **Jim Dove** and Executive Assistant **Mott Beck** have been busy conducting planning sessions and retreats for local governments and authorities. A visioning session was facilitated for the Jefferson Downtown Development Authority (DDA) on December 12th at the new Jefferson Station Government Facility. The session focused on a review of the purpose of DDAs in general and specific goals and objectives for the Jefferson DDA. A retreat for the Greene County Board of Commissioners was held at NEGRC headquarters on January 7th. Topics of discussion included economic development and tourism efforts, budget overview, appointments to boards, committees, and authorities, appointment of a Vice Chairman, and strategies, priorities, and plans for the coming year. A work plan/visioning session was facilitated for the Braselton DDA at the Planning and Utility Building in that Town on January 12th. The meeting covered a review of the Main Street approach, identification of goals regarding organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring, and selection of specific objectives and identification of responsible parties. As the newsletter went to press, there were two other planning sessions to be held during January, those being for Walton and Oconee Counties. Reports on those will be included next month.



Jefferson DDA participants



Greene County Participants



Braselton DDA Participants



COMMUNITY PROFILE: SMALL AREA STRATEGIC PLANNING IN COMMERCE AND BOWMAN

Over the past several years, the staff of the Planning and Government Services (PGS) Division has been frequently engaged by local governments in Northeast Georgia to facilitate small area, strategic planning processes. These efforts take a variety of forms, from formalized urban redevelopment plans to small area development strategies.

PGS staff is currently assisting stakeholder committees in the cities of Commerce (Jackson County) and Bowman (Elbert County) in the development of target area plans that will be integrated into their respective comprehensive plans. While each community is unique, Project Manager Nina Kelly is taking a similar approach to both planning processes following these main steps:

1. **Solidify geographic target area boundary**
2. **Identify needs categories and assets within the target area**
3. **Identify current projects/initiatives impacting the target area**
4. **Develop goals under each needs category**
5. **Develop measurable objectives to achieve each identified goal**

Stakeholders in both Commerce and Bowman have opted to heavily engage the public in these efforts. The first public meeting for the Downtown Commerce target area was held on January 8, 2015 in the Commerce Public Library auditorium (see photos below). NEGR staff facilitated the development of the agenda over the course of two meetings, and a robust outreach strategy was formed; individual stakeholders were tasked with spreading word of the meeting to specific groups, including business owners, civic clubs, and racial/ethnic minority neighborhoods. In order to encourage participation, the City offered a \$10 utility bill discount to all meeting attendees. With between 60-75 people in attendance, City and NEGR staff found it necessary to move small groups into other sections of the library during the discussion and feedback portion of the agenda. By the end of the meeting, the stakeholder committee and city officials had successfully demonstrated the value they place on the community's input into the vision for Downtown Commerce.

Stakeholders will soon begin planning the first public meeting for the Bowman Square target area. The outreach strategy in Bowman will vary from the one used in Commerce due to the community's smaller population and the target area's smaller geographic size,

among other differentiating characteristics. PGS staff facilitators encourage stakeholder groups to identify the strategies that will best fit their specific community instead of relying on a "one size fits all" approach.

If you are interested in learning more about how the NEGR can help your community facilitate the development of target-area strategic plans, contact PGS Division Director **Burke Walker** at bwalker@negrc.org.



Commerce Mayor Clark Hill with Group

WIA ASSISTS CLARKE COUNTY RESIDENT

Rebecca, a 41 year old Clarke County resident, was working part-time and raising a child. Her husband and primary provider suddenly left and filed for divorce. Rebecca knew that she was going to have to return to school in order to help support her son. She wanted to gain self-esteem and be proud of something that she accomplished on her own.

Rebecca had interest in the medical field but wasn't sure what direction to take. She had just accompanied her father to have a procedure at an imaging center. During this appointment, Rebecca's father was fortunate enough to have a technician that shared the ins and outs of working at the imaging center.

Rebecca enrolled at Gwinnett Technical College in 2012, and began taking core classes. Upon completion of those, she hoped to be accepted into the Cardiovascular Program. Since she was technically still married at the time she started school, she did not qualify for the PELL grant and had been out of school too long to qualify for HOPE. Rebecca was trying to work part-time, juggle school full-time, and take care of her son. To make matters worse, she was told that her part-time job was ending. Rebecca contacted the school's financial aid office and was advised of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Rebecca called the NEGR Workforce Development staff.

In 2013, she was enrolled in the WIA program. Her tuition, books, uniforms, and certifications were paid by this program, and also helped with afterschool care and transportation costs. Rebecca completed the program in December 2014 and is now working full-time at DeKalb Medical Center as an Imager in the Cardiovascular Lab. She is currently making \$26.60 an hour and gets full benefits for she and her son. She said, "If it wasn't for WIA, I would not have my job and would not be able to take care of myself and my son. I have told many of my patients and friends about the WIA program and how it helped me get through school. I know that if I can do this anyone can."

For further information, please contact the NEGA Workforce Development office at **(706) 369-5703**.



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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS
FEBRUARY

11	10:00a.m.	NEGA Joint Development Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
19	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
19	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trails Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
20	10:00 a.m.	Senior Center Directors	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



Sincerely & Respectfully,