

STATE AVIATION PLANNING EFFORT UNDERWAY

Jim Dove, representing the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions, was requested recently by leadership of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to serve on the Georgia Statewide Aviation System Plan Stakeholder Committee. The first meeting of the group was held at GDOT headquarters on February 28th. In addition to providing an overview of the role of the Committee and introductions of project team members several key items were discussed. These included:

Overview of the Plan

- Inventory
- Forecasts
- Airport roles
- System performance
- Airport performance
- Future Airport System
- Recommendations/implementation

Input from Project Focus Group

- Infrastructure needs
- Investment in infrastructure components
- Community support of Georgia Airports
- Threats/weaknesses facing Georgia Airports
- Strengths/opportunities for Georgia Airports
- Land use and height encroachment issues
- Current state of the general aviation industry

Other Aspects of the Plan

- Anticipated outputs/products
- Communication and outreach

The Committee, in addition to reviewing and commenting on documents produced by the project team, will meet a minimum of three more times during the next eighteen months. Updates will be provided as information is disseminated.

REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council will be held on **Thursday, April 20th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Our speaker will be **Abby Cox**, Division of Aging Services Director.

THREE PLANNING RETREATS FACILITATED

Mr. Dove and Executive Assistant **Mott Beck** recently facilitated the annual Planning Retreats for three municipalities – Braselton, Madison, and Elberton.

The Town of Braselton held its Strategic Planning Session on February 24th at the Planning and Utilities Building. After hearing an extensive review of projects undertaken in 2016, the Mayor and Council discussed short term goals. Priorities from that exercise included:

- Transportation infrastructure improvements on State Routes 211 and 53.
- Truck traffic control/enforcement on small streets.
- More events on the Town Green.
- Review of existing plans/zoning, etc.
- Funds for technology enhancements for the Courtroom.
- Multi-modal path funding sources.

Prior to adjournment, attendees also discussed potential long-term goals.

The City of Madison held its Retreat on February 27th in the NEGRC Conference Room. Items discussed included an overview of NEGRC projects and responsibilities, a discussion of the Council – Manager form of government, economic development, Service Delivery Strategy, Mayor and Council compensation, and planned residential development.

The City of Elberton held its Planning Session on March 4th at Richard B. Russell State Park. Discussion items included public works, natural gas operations, water/wastewater operations, electric operations, ElbertonNET, customer care and communications, downtown and community

development including Mainstreet, the Elbert Hotel, and the Elbert Theatre. In addition, **Rusty Warner** was present to discuss activities related to the Development Authority of Elbert County, Elberton, and Bowman.



City of Braselton



City of Madison



City of Elberton

MORGAN COUNTY WORKPLACE FUNDAMENTALS CLASS GRADUATION

Congratulations to the 2017 Morgan Works class that graduated on February 28th after completing a 5-week, intense Workplace Fundamentals course. Special thanks to local employers who provided words of motivation, the local school system, chamber of commerce, and

local elected officials who attended the graduation. The course is operated by Georgia Piedmont Technical College with funding provided by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board through the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Workforce Development Division. For information on this or other workforce development programs, please contact the **NEGRC Workforce Division** at (706) 369-5703.



Morgan Works graduates

SENIOR HUNGER LISTENING SESSION

How hungry are Georgia's seniors? This may shock you, but Georgia ranks 9th in the nation for senior hunger rates. Older Georgians face food insecurity daily - skimping to make it from one meal to the next and feeling unsure of whether they will have food on the table tomorrow. To begin working on this problem, the State of Georgia has started exploring senior hunger, analyzing challenges, and developing solutions. One part of their three-step process is to conduct twelve regional listening sessions around the state of Georgia this spring.

The Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging held a successful Senior Hunger Listening Session on Tuesday, March 14th at the Oconee County Senior Center in Watkinsville. The event was sponsored by the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS). Over twenty people attended the event from agencies including senior centers, food banks, churches, and community organizations. Key session topics were:

- Food Waste and Recovery
- Today's Seniors: What They Want and What They Need
- The Health Impact of Senior Hunger
- Options to Meet the Community's Needs
- Food Access

The Georgia Department of Human Services hired North Highland Consulting to provide objective professional moderators for the event. The results will be incorporated into a state plan on senior hunger, the first of its kind for the state.

For additional information on Senior Hunger, contact **Peggy Jenkins**, AAA Director, at (706) 583-2546 - ext. 101 or pjenkins@negrc.org.

UPDATING THE NORTHEAST GEORGIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The Regional Commission is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region. The CEDS serves as the guide for economic development efforts throughout Northeast Georgia. The update will identify strategies for growing the region's economy while improving "economic resilience" (the ability to avoid, withstand, or quickly recover from major disruptions to the economy).

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) requires CEDS updates every five years. In addition to guiding regional economic development efforts, the CEDS can open access to EDA funding and other federal and state grant opportunities.

The CEDS Committee, composed of public and private sector representatives from Northeast Georgia's 12 counties, is steering the CEDS update. Over the last two months, the Committee has met to discuss the region's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and to explore local demographics, area industries and business clusters, educational institutions, and current economic trends. Committee members are also considering the State's focus areas for economic development to ensure regional goals align, where possible. The following are major concepts and themes that arose during those meetings:

- Improving overall education and the incorporation of soft skill and STEM programs to K-12 curricula
- Retention of educated and skilled youth
- Providing support for and encouraging active participation from aging and retired residents
- Skilled trade jobs as competitive careers
- Natural, cultural, and historic resources
- Ensuring comprehensive emergency and other medical services
- Support of small businesses and entrepreneurs
- Expansion and improvement of broadband, cellular, and public utility services
- The role of multi-county (and municipal) partnerships in economic development and infrastructure improvement
- Protection of agriculture and timber industries against climate change, disease, and pests
- The need for improved promotion and marketing at a regional level
- Great quality of life as a regional characteristic

The CEDS Committee and NEGRC Staff are in the process of drafting specific goals and objectives for economic development strategies that address these topics. A public survey will be distributed between March 27th and May 21st. Your input is valuable to the update process; it is important that the CEDS is useful to all Northeast Georgia communities. NEGRC requests that local governments share a link to the survey on their website or through social media; the survey will be available at NEGRC.org.

A draft of the CEDS Update will be available for public comment from July 1st-31st on NEGRC.org. For additional information, please call **Eva Kennedy** at **(706) 369-5650**.



CEDS Committee at work

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION (ARC) IMPACT IN GEORGIA

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) is a state-federal partnership program that supports development of critical projects in the areas of workforce, infrastructure, leadership and community

capacity. Since 2015, ARC supported 48 projects in Georgia with \$4.8 million in project funding. This amount was matched by more than \$8.2 million in local funding and \$134 million in private investment. The net effect of these ARC investments resulted in the creation of 1,900 jobs.

In the NEGRC region, four counties (Barrow, Elbert, Jackson and Madison) are eligible for ARC programs. Over the years, these four counties have received planning assistance as well as ARC funding for a variety of projects. Many of these projects were unique and addressed specific needs for funding that could not be obtained elsewhere. For example, Elbert County is currently involved in developing a Master Plan for Bobby Brown Park by a private consultant. The cost of the Master Plan was supported, in part, by an ARC grant prepared by NEGRC and awarded to Elbert County. This plan will provide a critical tool for Bobby Brown Park's ongoing development that will continue to attract visitors and tourists while providing economic development opportunities.

As many are aware, the President's proposed budget released last month called for the elimination of ARC. As the budget process unfolds, information about ARC and its impact in Georgia and the NEGRC is particularly useful. Information about ARC in Georgia can be found on the NEGRC's website at www.negrc.org/local-services.php. Additional information about ARC and its wide-ranging impact within the 13-state region is also available at www.arc.gov.

For further information about ARC, especially activities within the NEGRC, contact **Burke Walker**, Director of Planning & Government Services, at bwalker@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.

2017 SETA CONFERENCE

Workforce Development Staff and Workforce Development Board Members attended the Southeastern Employment and Training Association (SETA) Spring Conference in Jacksonville on March 19th – 22nd. SETA provides training and networking opportunities to professionals in the Workforce Development Industry and its partners. In 2014, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed. With ongoing implementation of WIOA, conference attendees were able to attend workshops at the SETA Conference that highlighted the law and regulations. Speakers and presenters from across the country convened to provide workshops on WIOA Implementation, Serving Priority Populations including Veterans and People with Disabilities, Providing Services to Youth, Apprenticeships, Soft Skills Training Programs, Financial Systems, OneStop System Procurement and Operations, and much more. In addition, attendees were able to network with other agencies and organizations, as well as interact with vendors to identify ways we can better serve citizens of Northeast Georgia. Attendees included Workforce Development Board members **Winston Heard**, **Chris Kubas**, **Linda Gantt** and **Reg Woods** and Workforce Development staff **Carol Rayburn Cofer**, **Rhonda Keeter**, **Arun Hariani**, and **Rima Sullivan**.

For information on Workforce Development activities in Northeast Georgia, please contact the NEGRC Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.



*Workforce Development
Board Members and Staff*



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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS
APRIL

12	10:00 a.m.	NEGA Joint Development Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
20	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
20	3:00 p.m.	Firefly Trail Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



Sincerely & Respectfully,