

The Capitol Report

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SR 845: Compromise Must Be Worked Out by Friday Or The Bill Dies

The House of Representatives passed the Regional Transportation Funding legislation last week by a vote of 136-35. There was bipartisan support for the issue with 72 Republicans and 64 Democrats voting yes.

The House version of Senate Resolution 845 provides for a constitutional amendment this November which would allow regions to create a regional transportation plan through their RDC. The regions would then take the plans to their voters in a separate regional referendum for approval along with up to a 1% sales tax to pay for it. A project list would be required to be published before the vote and the tax would have a sunset to ensure that voter's have accountability.

The Senate version provides for a constitutional amendment as well. That amendment would allow two or more counties to form their own region through an intergovernmental agreement before moving forward with their own SPLOST. Enabling legislation would be required to be passed by the General Assembly before a vote could take place.

SR 845 is now in the hands of a conference committee of Senate and House members. Senate leaders have expressed concern over a regional vote. House leaders don't believe counties will voluntarily join with other counties to complete projects. They're also concerned that a county by county vote would lead to a "patchwork quilt" of projects as counties that voted no would have their projects taken out of the plan.

With significant differences remaining, the conference committee will have to work diligently to come up with a compromise that the two houses can agree to by 2/3 vote. Complicating matters is the fact that the Session is scheduled to finish this Friday. If the legislation does not get worked out and voted on by both chambers by that day, the regional transportation funding mechanism will fail to pass.

To send an e-mail to your legislators asking them to make sure that SR 845 passes this year, please go to www.getgeorgiamoving.com and click the Contact Your Legislators button at the top of the screen.

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