



HABERSHAM COUNTY  
GEORGIA | Est. 1818

## Roads & Bridges SPLOST

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. What is a Roads & Bridges SPLOST?

A Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) is a sales tax used to fund capital outlay projects proposed by the county and municipal governments. A Roads & Bridges SPLOST is a transportation special purpose local option sales tax where the projects consist of transportation purposes only.

#### 2. What sales tax is currently being collected and how are those funds distributed?

Currently, the sales tax in Habersham County is 7 percent. Of that 7 percent, most of the tax (4 percent) does not stay in the County but goes to the State of Georgia. Of the remaining 3 percent, 2 percent goes to education, and 1 percent (SPLOST) is distributed among the County and municipalities. In general, only 1% of the sales tax currently collected remains in Habersham County to be put towards projects and needs, other than education, throughout the County, cities, and towns.

#### 3. Why is Habersham County considering a Roads & Bridges SPLOST?

A Roads & Bridges SPLOST would provide much needed funds for road and bridge maintenance and improvement needs throughout the County, cities, and towns, as well as other transportation project needs. Currently, our roads are on a 40 year repaving cycle approximately. The Roads & Bridges SPLOST would allow a repaving cycle of every 20 years. The Roads & Bridges SPLOST is a fair tax in that it applies to all who purchase goods in our County, not just Habersham County property owners. Those who travel our roads, including those visiting or just passing through, would contribute to the maintenance and improvement of our roads and bridges through this tax.

#### 4. How much money will be raised with the Roads & Bridges SPLOST?

Habersham County estimates approximately \$35.5 million will be collected during the five years of the Roads & Bridges SPLOST. These funds, if approved, will be distributed between Habersham County and the cities/towns of Alto, Baldwin, Clarkesville, Cornelia, Demorest, Mount Airy, and Tallulah Falls based on road miles and population within the County.

#### 5. How will the funds be distributed?

Habersham County	\$ 27,127,827
Alto	\$ 447,177
Baldwin	\$ 1,358,499
Clarkesville	\$ 1,143,612
Cornelia	\$ 3,087,055
Demorest	\$ 1,351,826
Mount Airy	\$ 929,589
Tallulah Falls	\$ 121,887
TOTAL	\$ 35,567,472

## **6. Are there items that will be exempt from the Roads & Bridges SPLOST?**

Yes, there are six items that are exempt from taxation (see O.C.G.A 48-8-269):

- The sale or use of any type of fuel used for off-road heavy-duty equipment, off-road farm or agricultural equipment, or locomotives;
- The sale or use of jet fuel to or by a qualifying airline at a qualifying airport;
- The sale or use of fuel that is used for propulsion of motor vehicles on the public highways;
- The sale or use of energy used in the manufacturing or processing of tangible goods primarily for resale;
- The sale or use of motor fuel as defined under paragraph (9) of Code Section 48-9-2 for public mass transit; or
- The purchase or lease of any motor vehicle pursuant to Code Section 48-5C-1.

## **7. How can the money be spent?**

Funds can only be spent for “transportation purposes”.

*O.C.G.A. 48-8-260(5):*

*(5) 'Transportation purposes' means and includes roads, bridges, public transit, rails, airports, buses, seaports, including without limitation road, street, and bridge purposes pursuant to paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Code Section 48-8-121(see below), and all accompanying infrastructure and services necessary to provide access to these transportation facilities, including new general obligation debt and other multiyear obligations issued to finance such purposes. Such purposes shall also include the retirement of previously incurred general obligation debt with respect only to such purposes, but only if an intergovernmental agreement has been entered into under this part.*

*Code Section 48-8-121(b)(1):*

*If the resolution or ordinance calling for the imposition of the tax specified that the proceeds of the tax are to be used in whole or in part for capital outlay projects consisting of road, street, and bridge purposes, then authorized uses of the tax proceeds shall include: (A) Acquisition of rights of way for roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths; (B) Construction of roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths; (C) Renovation and improvement of roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths, including resurfacing; (D) Relocation of utilities for roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths; (E) Improvement of surface-water drainage from roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths; and (F) Patching, leveling, milling, widening, shoulder preparation, culvert repair, and other repairs necessary for the preservation of roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, and bicycle paths. (2) Storm-water capital outlay projects and drainage capital outlay projects may be funded pursuant to subparagraph (a)(1)(D) of Code Section 48-8-111 or in conjunction with road, street, and bridge capital outlay projects.*

## **8. Does the Georgia Code require that the money be spent in a certain manner?**

A minimum of 30% of revenue generated must be used on projects consistent with the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan (SSTP). The SSTP is a policy document and does not include an exhaustive list of projects. The SSTP outlines a series of statewide priorities and identifies several programs and/or plans which directly support those priorities. A handful of key projects are identified in various places throughout the document to illustrate how a program or plan may ultimately result in implementation of a specific project. Because the SSTP identifies a broad range of supportive strategies and programs, most or all of our projects will be consistent with the SSTP. For example, some projects that would be considered consistent include interchange projects, safety projects, operational improvement projects, etc.

## **9. Are Project Criteria required?**

Although there are no project criteria specified in the Code, it is recommended that there be a high level of coordination among the jurisdictions to assure adherence to local, regional and statewide plans, consistency of corridors, connectivity, etc.

#### **10. Does the tax cause GDOT to give less money to the local governments?**

No. The proceeds of this tax are not subject to any balancing formulas used by GDOT. Note that there is no reduction in LMIG match (the required local match remains at 30%).

#### **11. Does the law address the project selection process?**

No. The law allows flexibility in project selection. The cities and county have a broad range of transportation projects and programs to choose from in identifying projects and purposes. Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs), as well as other local and regional plans such as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) or the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), include projects and priorities and have been formally adopted by a variety of local and state government bodies.

#### **12. What other Counties currently have a Roads & Bridges or Transportation SPLOST?**

There are currently 75 counties that have passed a Transportation SPLOST, and 12 counties considering adoption of one.

You can also view a map [here](#).

#### **13. How is a referendum called?**

The Habersham County Board of Commissioners held a joint meeting with the municipalities on June 28, 2018 to discuss the possible projects for inclusion in the referendum and the rate of the tax. An intergovernmental agreement was approved by all local governments setting the tax rate and distribution formula. The Board of Commissioners called for the referendum during a called meeting held on July 30, 2018 with an election date of November 6, 2018. The required ad ran in The Northeast Georgian on August 3, 2018. The Resolution for the call for the referendum was submitted to the County Election Superintendent and included the following:

- Specific transportation purposes to be funded
- The approximate cost of those purposes and the maximum amount of net proceeds to be raised by the tax
- The maximum amount of time in calendar years

#### **14. What will the ballot question look like? (See O.C.G.A 48-8-263)**

*“Shall a special 1 percent sales and use tax be imposed in the special district consisting of Habersham County for a period not to exceed five years and for the raising of not more than an estimated amount of \$35,567,472 for transportation purposes?”*

#### **15. When will the Roads & Bridges SPLOST be collected?**

If approved, collection will begin April 1, 2019.

#### **16. How long will the Roads & Bridges SPLOST last?**

The Roads & Bridges SPLOST, if approved, will be levied for 5 years at a rate of 1 percent. The tax ceases to be imposed on the earliest of the following dates: the final day of the maximum period of time (5 years) OR the end of the calendar quarter that the state revenue commissioner determines the tax will have raised revenues sufficient to provide funds specified as the maximum amount of funds to be raised by the tax.

#### **17. When will the election be held?**

November 6, 2018. For more information on elections, please contact the Habersham County Elections and Voter Registration department at 706-839-0170 or visit their page [here](#).