

MOBILE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD POLICIES AND POSITIONS – LOCAL ISSUES

SUPPORT FOR RENEWAL OF SCHOOL TAXES Board of Director Approved January 26, 2011

On March 22, 2011, citizens of Mobile County will vote on the renewal of three ad valorem (property) school taxes that support the Mobile County Public School System and the Saraland City Schools.

The three tax assessments total 13 mills and provide approximately \$55 million annually. These taxes will expire September 30, 2011, unless approved by voters this March.

It is important to remember these are not new taxes. One tax was enacted in 1915 (later increased in 1961); another in 1942; and a third in 1945. Each of these taxes has repeatedly been approved by Mobile County voters every 20 years.

Failure to re-approve these ad valorem school taxes will devastate the Mobile County Public School System and severely affect funding for Saraland City Schools. The taxes fund more than 6.2 percent of the Mobile County Public School System's general fund and 33.8 percent of its capital fund. In addition, renewing the 13 mills is part of the match required to receive state general funds and state capital funds.

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce supports a "yes" vote on each of the three taxes on the March 22, 2011 referendum.

POSITION STATEMENT REGARDING INTERSTATE 10 CONGESTION Board of Director Approved May 28, 2008

The Mobile community continues to wrestle with growing congestion along I-10. Locally, there is no indication our economic growth will slow. Nationally, a study* of projected freight movements labeled the I-10 tunnel a major bottleneck that presents a threat to public safety as well as to the vitality of the local, regional and national economy. In fact, there were blockages in the tunnel once every three days during 2006.

Many years ago the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) began a project to address the situation. The purpose and need of the project was to:

- Alleviate existing and projected traffic congestion on I-10 corridor
- Improve highway safety and driving conditions
- Reduce hazardous materials traversing the Central Business District
- Provide transportation improvements that meet interstate standards

Initially, 14 potential, alternative bridge routes were identified. These were narrowed to five and presented for public input in 2005. Three routes were then identified for further study. These routes – labeled A, B and C – cross the Mobile River, just south of downtown Mobile.

In 2005 the Chamber wrote the Alabama Department of Transportation to emphasize four criteria for any potential bridge route:

- That the bridge not curtail and jeopardize maritime commerce and construction;
- That the bridge have the ability to move the most people and product possible;
- That the bridge have minimal environmental impact; and
- That the project is doable in a reasonable timeframe so that we do not reach the gridlock that will inevitably come our way if the bridge is not forthcoming.

Knowing the importance of the maritime industry to Mobile, and given concerns from Chamber members along the waterfront, Chamber leadership recently conducted interviews to determine an acceptable route that would meet the stated purpose and need and be least damaging to maritime interests.

From those interviews, we request officials eliminate the southernmost route C because of its impact on the maritime community. Further, we request ALDOT and the Federal Highway Administration review current data on the “northern route’s” capability to address the project’s stated purpose and need, especially given recent economic developments, including the pending openings of Mobile Container Terminal, ThyssenKrupp, Berg Steel and Northrop Grumman/EADS.

Finally, in the event the proposed “northern route” does not comply with the project’s purpose and need as defined above, then the Chamber supports a bridge route that passes no further north than route A and no further south than route B.

COMMENT ON CITY’S ANNEXATION EFFORTS
Executive Committee Approved August 7, 2007

The Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce understands that the City of Mobile may offer to annex areas of west Mobile. It is critical that the city avoid the inequity of having different sales tax rates apply to neighboring businesses. The Chamber encourages the city to ensure that any commercial areas are not split as a result of annexation.

We are hopeful that the voters affected by this annexation proposal will actively participate in the process.