



SEAC
Southeastern Archaeological Conference

Representative Christian Coomer
Chairman, House Transportation Committee
Georgia House of Representatives
Georgia General Assembly
218-B State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

March 6, 2016

RE: SB 346, Environmental Policy Act

Dear Representative Coomer:

I write today on behalf of the 900 members of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, including many members in Georgia, out of concern for Senate Bill 346, which will soon be considered by your House Transportation Committee. The intent of this bill, to exempt from GEPA environmental review GDOT projects costing less than \$100 million, will certainly lead to unnecessary damage and destruction of Georgia's natural and cultural resources.

If public road construction and maintenance projects are properly planned, environmental review will identify impending impacts to wetlands, endangered habitats, and significant archaeological and historical sites and enable planners to avoid those resources, or to mitigate those impacts. If delays occur in multi-year construction projects, they are almost always due to poor planning at the front end that fails to identify environmental impacts in a timely manner. A process, such as the one proposed in SB 346, that simply skips the environmental review process, will fail to protect resources we all value.

Georgia's great historical heritage is placed at risk by SB 346. One good outcome of environmental review has been to avoid unnecessary public outcry over the loss of important archaeological and historical sites. Who benefits when cemeteries of any age are inadvertently damaged or destroyed? Surely their prior identification and treatment with proper respect is something we all find preferable. If there are problems with the environmental review process in Georgia, I urge you and your fellow legislators to address those problems and not to bypass the review process altogether.

Sincerely,

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