

LOST, SPLOST, ESPLOST and TSPLOST

This is a slight shifting of gears from my normal health and fitness column but since we have the transportation special purpose local option sales tax (TSPLOST) on the ballot here in Peach County, I wanted to share a few things about these sales tax pennies and what it means to the health of our counties where these sales tax pennies come back to. For the folks in Macon, Taylor and Crawford counties that have already voted and passed a Transportation SPLOST, it might make you feel better when knowing the value added for you and your county from the 4 cents that comes back to your county.

The fairest tax: the sales tax is one of the best ways to keep pressure of inflationary tax increases off property owners as well as state income taxes (since the 4 cents that goes to the state pays a massive amount of our state government bills). Florida doesn't even have a state income tax, (a lot of Florida's government costs are defrayed because of the sales tax from the massive amount of tourism dollars spent there).

Part of the reason I like a state and local government's reliance tied in large part to the sales tax, is it increases their desire to create a business-friendly environment for the businesses (that collect sales tax). There are far too many government officials that take these businesses for granted. When there is a healthy flow of traffic through your county and there are good businesses along these routes, chances are high that a lot of your county and city's bills are being paid by people simply traveling through that had a reason to stop and shop!

LOST, SPLOST, ESPLOST and TSPLOST: these are the 3 or 4 cents (added to the state's 4 cent sales that come back to your local community).

LOST (local option sales tax) is the local option sales tax penny that helps rollback property taxes (this goes directly toward reducing your property tax).

SPLOST (special purpose local option sales tax) is a special purpose sales tax penny that pays for special projects in your county or municipality and keeps it off your tax bill.

ESPLOST (education special purpose local option sales tax) is for special purpose projects for our education system within your county and keeps it off your tax bill.

TSPLOST (transportation special purpose sales tax) is for specific road and infrastructure projects. There is a provision made on this tax that lets a local government create a bond on projected revenue and go ahead and get started on the road projects instead of having to wait until the money is collected. The projected revenue that a TSPLOST will bring into Peach County for roads and street projects is \$27,000,000.

Changes in online sales tax distribution: smaller less populated counties (such as Peach, Macon, Taylor and Crawford) now have an advantage when their residents shop online for products they normally had to go to a competing county or city to shop at or to get a product at. Sales tax law has been shaped so that the local portion of the sales tax (LOST, SPLOST, ESPLOST and TSPLOST) goes back to the county and municipality that an order originated from or was delivered to. Georgia also recently passed the 3rd party marketplace facilitator law to keep large platforms for retailers such as Amazon and EBAY from skirting around sales tax (giving their online stores an advantage over local stores). Not only has this helped level the playing field, it also should boost the revenue from sales tax even higher!

I'm a libertarian at heart, so anytime there is added taxation my guard goes up, especially with government's seeming appetite to do big things with ever increases taxation on the people they are supposed to be serving. However, I know that I use and enjoy the resources made available in our community and this cost must come from somewhere (whether its highways, protective services, court system, recreation, schools etc.).

My recommendation, to everyone (on current or past projects): put a magnifying glass over your county or city's spending of these special purpose local option pennies and make sure it is being spent exactly as they said it would. It should be readily available as well as the status of the project(s) the money was tagged for.