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Jet Fuel Tax Break Bill Gets ‘Hijacked’ By The Airport Takeover

EMMA HURT (HTTPS://WWW.WABE.ORG/PEOPLE/EMMA-HURT/) • MAR 20, 2019

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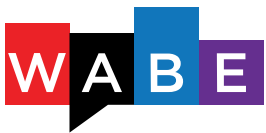
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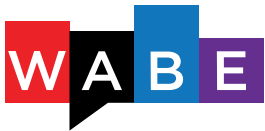
   
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Delta Airlines' chief executive has been vocally opposed to the airport takeover idea, but he's supported a jet fuel tax break.
CREDIT DAVID GOLDMAN / ASSOCIATED PRESS



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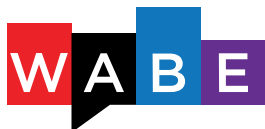
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A proposed state takeover of the city of Atlanta's airport had seemed stalled in the Georgia House of Representatives after [passing](https://www.wabe.org/georgia-senate-passes-state-airport-takeover-bill/). (<https://www.wabe.org/georgia-senate-passes-state-airport-takeover-bill/>) the Senate. But the proposal came roaring back to life Wednesday when, in a Senate subcommittee, it was added onto a different bill, [HB 447](http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20192020/HB/447), (<http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/en-US/display/20192020/HB/447>) that extends a jet fuel tax break (<https://www.wabe.org/delta-fuel-tax-break-moves-through-general-assembly/>).

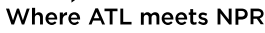
Delta Airlines' chief executive has been vocally opposed to the airport takeover idea, but he's supported a jet fuel tax break. This new bill shoves both ideas together, with some tweaks.

A spokesman for Delta said the company does not support this new bill: "By doubling the tax rate that airlines pay in the State of Georgia and making Georgia the highest jet fuel tax state in the country among States with hub airports, it would make the state less competitive and give commercial aviation reason to grow somewhere other than the state of Georgia."

The changes did not go over well with the sponsor of the fuel tax break bill, Rep. Dominic LaRicca, who says his original bill was "hijacked."

In the Senate Finance committee, LaRicca expressed his surprise.

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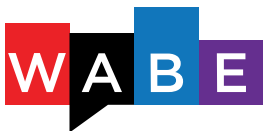
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Sen. Chuck Hufstetler, chair of the finance committee, agreed LaRiccia's original proposal would not generate enough money for the state's regional airports:

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“The tax being dropped to what is was, was going to raise a little over \$3 million to match with federal dollars,” he said. “We’ve got \$26^ million in needs for 2020 in our airport infrastructure around the state ”

LaRiccia argued this wasn’t a good idea and said it “could be the highest effective rate in the nation.”

Hufstetler also said they needed to mix the two bills to save the takeover proposal, since “it wasn’t getting a hearing in the House.”

How does he think this will shake out?

“It’s still going to go through the process and we’ll see what happens with it,” he said.

Kemp supported the original fuel tax break bill but had stayed noncommittal on the takeover idea. His office had no comment on how the new version changes their position.

Atlanta City Council President Felicia Moore has testified against the takeover idea and attended the committee meeting. She said she had gotten word this might happen. “These are mixing issues which is unnecessary,” she said of the bill’s edits. “But I certainly hope the mixing of the issues ends up being the complication that will keep it from being passed. That’s my hope.”

The bill passed out of the finance committee 5-4.

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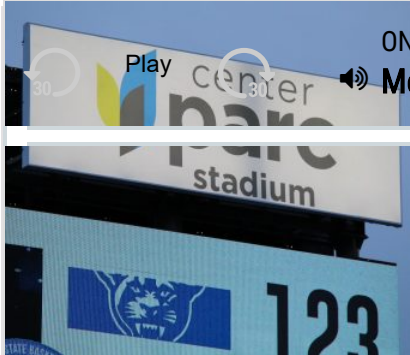
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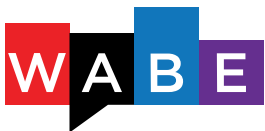
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