

CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF SIMPLY THE BEST IN SERVICE, SAFETY AND INNOVATION





Cover: From 1902-1913, the AAA sponsored auto tours to promote better roads. This scene captures a tour that passed through Cobb County in 1910. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Collection, Georgia Archives, cob711.

INTRODUCTION



2016 marks the year of Georgia DOT's centennial!

On August 16, 1916, the Georgia Highway Commission—now Georgia Department of Transportation—was created. And for the last 100 years, Georgia DOT has played a key

role in the growth and transformation of the state with transportation infrastructure improvements that increase economic growth through expanded markets and increased job opportunities.

In every decade of Georgia DOT's 100-year history, road building has improved mobility, enhanced quality of life, presented significant business opportunities beyond the paving of a road, and encouraged innovation. As road building evolved into a profession, jobs were created and more people were connected to more places. Tourism increased and the state experienced growth in businesses that serve the traveling public.

In the last three decades, demand for improved transportation and higher infrastructure investment has inspired great innovation. For example, the use of fiber optics for incident management; high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes; Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS); the Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) program; 511 service; and innovative roadway and interchange designs are all part of our continued effort to provide the best transportation system.

During the last century, funding for transportation infrastructure improvements has been a consistent discussion at the local, state and national levels. More recently, the federal Highway Trust Fund became unsustainable partly because gas taxes did not generate the revenue they did years ago when demand was higher and cars were less fuel efficient.

On the state level, we are indeed grateful for the turning point in transportation that came in 2015 with the passage by state lawmakers of the Transportation Funding Act (TFA). This historic legislation provides a sustainable transportation revenue source to address Georgia's transportation needs, and to restore and maintain the state's critical transportation infrastructure.

While we celebrate 100 years of Simply the Best in Safety, Service and Innovation, we reflect on our past accomplishments, but our work is not done. There are challenges to come in the next 100 years and beyond. The automobile of the future will have a tremendous impact on transportation, and finding new and innovative ways to address freight and mobility concerns will always be a primary goal for us. Our strategic goals of planning and constructing the best set of mobility-focused projects on schedule; making safety investments and improvements where the traveling public is most at risk; making GDOT a better place to work and taking care of what we have in the most efficient way possible, are entrenched in the work we do daily. And we are eager and well-positioned to meet the future.

Transportation is about connecting people and it is a critical part of our EVERYDAY lives. That's why it is important to us here at GDOT. We are indeed proud of Georgia DOT's long legacy—a legacy of employees working to provide the best transportation system for Georgia's citizens. We look forward to serving Georgians for another 100 years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Russell R. McMurry'.

Russell R. McMurry, P.E., Commissioner

1910s ... THE GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT, DIXIE HIGHWAY, AND THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ACT OF 1916

In the 1880s, the Good Roads Movement was a national crusade that was initially led by bicycle enthusiasts, riding clubs, and bicycle manufacturers. As interest in bicycles waned and automobile ownership gained momentum, Georgia farmers and rural communities saw roads as the best way to get products to and from markets not accessed by railroads. As automobile ownership increased, so did the demand for better roads. By 1916, the Dixie Highway, an early automobile highway connecting Chicago and Miami, served as a model for what was possible. Funded by a group of individuals, businesses, local governments and states, the Dixie Highway had three designated routes through Georgia. These routes and their impact on communities along them highlighted the potential of good roads. Nearly everyone agreed that good roads were good for Georgia, but the cost of construction and maintenance was beyond the capabilities of independent rural counties. Who should pay that cost would be debated for the next one hundred years.

Addressing this need in 1916, the United States Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act which allotted an initial \$75 million to finance roadways. In order to receive these funds, each state had to form a state highway department to oversee construction contracts and interface with Washington. On August 16th of the same year, the Georgia General Assembly founded the Highway Department of Georgia and tapped its members from the Prison Commission of Georgia, the State Geologist, the Dean of the College of Civil Engineering at the University of Georgia, and the Professor of Highway Engineering at the Georgia School of Technology. These individuals took office as the State Highway Commission.

- Despite the formation of the Highway Department, allocations for road construction during the first two years remained paltry. Federal Aid in 1917 was only \$134,329 and \$268,658 in 1918. In spite of these amounts, the Department succeeded in inaugurating 75 federal aid projects in 64 counties from 1916 to 1919.
- During this time, many counties took the initiative and voted large bond issues for road-building. This was significant since it enabled the Georgia General Assembly to avoid both higher tax rates and state-level bonded debt as county funds counted toward the federal matching funds mandate.
- An act by the General Assembly on August 18, 1919 created an entirely new State Highway Board (SHB), composed of three appointees of the Governor. The Board's first official act was the appointment of W. R. Neel as the State Highway Engineer with an annual salary of \$6000. As a testament to the political nature of road building in the state, Mr. Neel would also be the last professional engineer to hold this position until 1975.
- By 1919, twelve Division engineers were appointed - one for each congressional district - and the first budget was created. Funds were allocated among the congressional districts to construct projects recommended by the Division engineers.
- The SHB designated the first state system of highways; a total of 4 running 800 miles. The SHB also placed under construction 170.4 miles of paving, helped to make more roads passable by applying a sand/clay mixture on 673.5 miles of roads, and graded 34.4 miles of roadway. The construction of 28 new bridges was also initiated.
- The State Maintenance Office was formed in 1919 to inspect and repair roads which were part of the new highway system. The goal was to begin maintenance soon enough to prevent the deterioration of the roads and protect the investment. This office would also become the model for counties in the maintenance of their roads.



Road work using early horse-drawn grading equipment. Courtesy of Yancey Brothers archives.



Construction of the Memorial Bridge in Bainbridge, Georgia ca. 1926. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Collection, Georgia Archives, dec046.

1920s ... BUILDING THE DEPARTMENT AND THE AUTOMOBILE AGE

The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 was the legacy of the Good Roads Movement and the beginning of the federal and state partnership that continues today. As the federal government provided increasing funding for road building and maintenance, the Dixie Highway Association was disbanded, and the Dixie Highway was absorbed by the U. S. Route system. The federal government was the obvious choice to help fund the building of roads and resolve issues of standardization and interstate connectivity. During the 1920s, highway transportation began to assume a dominant role in America. The first two decades of the twentieth century saw the transition of the automobile from a rich man's toy to a fairly dependable method for transporting people and goods. World War I had inhibited road building for nearly three years. Along with a shortage of manpower, increased material prices due to the War meant that concrete for bridges was scarce. Much of the grading, drainage and surfacing work was done with local materials, if it could be done at all. On the positive side, the Department received a fleet of trucks valued at \$2 million from the War Department, and this much-needed equipment was distributed to counties. By 1920, the Department was ready to roll.

The Federal Highway Act of 1921 had solidified the state and federal partnership and allowed each state to manage their own road building with a budget of over \$75 million a year - five times what the 1916 act provided. The funding could only be secured when states matched it with funds of their own, and Georgia was primarily accumulating revenues from the state's gas tax; but not all of the revenue was dedicated to building roads. The annual report for 1922 stated that a total of \$23,299,550.22, which included \$9,362,230.50 in federal funds, had been dedicated to the construction of new roads. The Highway Department's leadership focused on creating an organization that could take on the challenge of building and maintaining roads strategically. By 1922, the Department's organization included a statistician, accountants, a maintenance testing engineer, a construction engineer and a bridge engineer. A Blue Print Department was added by 1923.

- New paving processes replaced dirt as the primary material for roadways; machinery developed for specific purposes, such as grading, tamping; and spreading asphalt, replaced farm tractors.
- A uniform system of numbering and marking interstate highways was developed by a board consisting of members from the Bureau of Public Roads and 21 state highway officials.
- Each state was tasked with selecting systems of roads--major north-south and east-west routes-- that would connect the country. By 1929, the Georgia map showed seven roads designated by the U. S. highway shield; they were U. S. 84, U. S. 17, U. S. 301, U. S. 80, U. S. 41, U. S. 29, and U. S. 1.
- On the state level, the gas tax increased four times during this decade. The original one cent increased to three cents per gallon in 1921, three and one-half cents in 1925, four cents in 1927 and six cents in 1929.
- In 1920, the first state highway map was published by the SHB. The map showed state roads, county seats and a few of Georgia's larger cities and towns.
- Efforts to improve highway safety began by addressing railroad crossings. This resulted in the elimination of many at-grade crossings where feasible.
- Nine new Division offices were established in Rome, Gainesville, Griffin, Augusta, Americus, Dublin, Savannah, Thomasville and Waycross in 1924. These offices provided a liaison between the General Offices in Atlanta and the highway construction and maintenance at the grass-roots level.
- As a result of requests from organizations including Garden Clubs, United Daughters of the Confederacy, Daughters of the American Revolution, the Federation of Women's Clubs and the Georgia Automobile Association, the Department began taking steps toward roadway beautification by planting trees along selected roadways in 1928.
- By 1929, funding for roads was provided by federal aid, the state motor vehicle license and registration fees, and the state gas tax. In contrast to the initial years of the Department, funding from the counties was minimal.

1930s ... THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND PAVING WITH POLITICS

The Great Depression worsened an economic downturn that began in Georgia a decade earlier. During the 1920s, the falling price of cotton and the effects of the boll weevil to the crop had robbed many small farmers of any prospect of making a living. Not until the United States' entry into World War II would the depression in the state fully recede. The Great Depression reduced the number of registered vehicles in state, and this impacted tag fees and tax collections from gas sales.

During the 1930s, Georgia's political landscape also had a marked effect on the work of the State Highway Department due in part to its success in obtaining federal funds. By 1933, the State Highway Department accounted for half of Georgia's budget, often making the funds a political football. Building new roads was frequently used as a campaign promise, as well as a payoff for support. The Department was also used as a dispenser of patronage jobs — especially at a leadership level. Friction between the State Highway Board and the Governor's office also resulted in another reorganization of the Department and a reduction in the motor vehicle registration fee.

The overall result of the Great Depression and political maneuvers was fewer new roads during this decade and a state falling further behind economically. In spite of these challenges, the Department adopted new road standards that brought more federal money to the state. The state also benefitted from the Works Project Administration (WPA) which spent \$14.4 million to help Georgia construct 3,201 miles of roads and over 300 bridges from 1935 to 1942.

- In March 1931, the Department moved to a new general office across from the State Capitol on the corner of Capitol Avenue and Mitchell Street, now known as Capitol Square. By the end of the decade, two floors were added to the original two with a basement to accommodate several new divisions and functions.

- In 1933, in a dramatic sequence of events, Governor Eugene Talmadge ordered the National Guard to seize control of the Highway Department after a much publicized dispute with the board.
- The same year, the six operating Divisions were reduced to three and a new three-man Highway Board was appointed.
- The General Assembly, facing a financial crisis, transferred \$2 million in highway funds to pay the salaries of teachers, school bus drivers, and pensions for Confederate veterans.
- On March 18, 1937, the Division of Post Roads was created by an Act of the General Assembly to focus on improving secondary or feeder roads.
- The Division of Highway Planning was established on June 1, 1937. The principal function of the Division was conducting studies of highway and traffic conditions in the state in order to develop long range plans. The new long-range planning capabilities would become the backbone of road building in later decades.
- A new State Highway Board was created in 1937, and it immediately increased the number of operating divisions from three to seven in order to maintain more supervisory control over the expanding work program. Offices were located in Rome, Gainesville, Augusta, Macon, Columbus, Savannah and Fitzgerald.
- The U.S. Bureau of Public Roads devised the first plan of a national interstate system in 1938. This study recommended a system of interregional highways with connections through and around cities. It also recommended that a federal land authority be created to acquire, hold and sell lands for highway rights-of-way. The debate on how to fund this program would rage on for the next 20 years.
- By June 1938, four interstate routes or trunk lines were completely paved from state line to state line from north to south, and four from east to west.
- The Maintenance Office began marking the state's primary roads with centerlines and implementing no-passing zones to improve roadway safety.
- Design standards advanced during the 1930s as roads were designed with wider rights-of-way; improved horizontal and vertical curvature to increase sight distance; wider travel lanes; wider shoulders; and flatter fill and cut slopes in order to improve safety.

Built as an emergency war effort between 1935 and 1944, view during construction of the bridge spanning the Darien River in McIntosh County. GDOT archives.



1940s ... WORLD WAR II, POST-WAR INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC WORKS CAMPAIGN

Between 1941 and 1945, America was fighting World War II. Gas was rationed to two gallons per week and gas tax collections declined. As a result, manpower and materials were scarce and these factors curtailed road building. All construction programs involved in the federal aid program were cancelled by the Public Roads Administration with only essential projects approved - mainly access roads to military bases or war-related industry. Roadway maintenance was also minimal due to manpower and material shortages.

In the 1930s and 1940s, politicians continued to use the promise of highway jobs to entice supporters and reward allies. Some workers lost their jobs during this period simply because they backed the wrong candidate. In 1949, the State Highway Department (SHD) was placed under the State Merit System of Personnel Administration, effectively removing politics from hiring and firing decisions.

The Department added new offices and new functions during this decade to prepare for the end of the war as well as the interstate construction that surely was the future. During the latter period of the war effort, surveys were made and plans were prepared for post-war projects making it possible, in 1946, to let the largest number of highway construction contracts in the Department's history.

Also in 1946, the Department provided an on-the-job-training program sponsored by the Veterans Administration to 881 employees. These employees participated in correspondence or other schools to qualify for positions such as construction inspector, project engineer, draftsman, designer, mechanic and other higher paying job.

- The Office of Traffic and Safety was organized in February 1940 under a resolution passed by the SHB. This office initiated a more uniform marking of roads and installed signals.
- In 1943, the General Assembly abolished the State Highway Board and placed the State Highway Department under the authority of a state highway commission, a state highway director, and a treasurer.
- Also in 1943, members of a new 12-man advisory commission were selected from Georgia's 10 congressional districts and two from state at-large berths. The director and treasurer served on a full-time basis while the commission members served part-time with a four-year term that ran concurrently with the governor's term.
- In this decade, several new offices were established. In April 1944, the Right of Way Office was organized to handle the acquisition of rights of way for state and federal-aid projects. Previous counties were responsible for acquisition. This foretold a shift from a time when most construction took place in or near existing right-of-way.
- In January 1945, the Landscaping Office was created to supervise the design, construction and maintenance of roadside projects including planting trees, and grassing and fertilizing slopes to prevent erosion.
- In 1947, the Division of Urban Projects was created to administer and process federal aid urban funds. An urban area was defined as a community having a population of 5,000 or more.
- In 1946, work began on the Downtown Connector - a four - and six-lane, divided expressway running north-south with limited access. Atlanta was on the fast-track 10 years before the Federal Highway Act of 1956. The effort was the result of a detailed transportation study by H. W. Lochner and Company, an engineering firm hired by the city. Atlanta's phenomenal growth is often credited to this early expressway effort, but this also marked the state's transition to long-range planning and a shift toward more involvement in urban areas as cities began to expand beyond their boundaries.
- In 1949, the Georgia General Assembly increased the state gas tax from six to seven cents.

In 1941, this Caterpillar road-grader was used during road construction around the Contract Training School at Bush Field in Augusta. Courtesy of Yancey Brothers archives.



1950s ... FUNDING OF RURAL ROADS AND BRIDGES, AND THE REALIZATION OF THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

During the post-World War II years, times were good, but roads were inferior. Although Congress had spent millions on roadways, it was still not keeping up with the demand. The country was on the verge of an economic and technological boom, and people were buying bigger cars with more powerful engines. The Bureau of Public Roads claimed that 76 percent of the country's roads were outdated, too narrow and too congested.

Increased industrialization, migration from the agricultural countryside, and the growth of cities and their expanding suburbs had fundamentally transformed Georgia. Because of this modernization, most Georgians recognized the need for effective transportation infrastructure - roads, bridges and interstate highways - as essential to the state's development. In a 1954 address to the Georgia State Budget Commission, the chairman of the State Highway Board, James L. Gillis stated, "We know that in the main this problem is one of finances. This is true in the cities and counties as well as in the State Highway System."

The General Assembly addressed part of the problem with the creation of the State Bridge Building Authority in March 1953. Slightly more than a year later, the legislature also established the State Toll Bridge Authority to finance the construction of the \$6.65 million Turtle River Bridge (currently the Sidney Lanier Bridge) in Brunswick.

While the state routes had been improved somewhat, the country farm-to-market roads were still neglected. The Rural Roads Authority was created in early 1955 in order to "lift rural Georgians out of the mud." The authority was funded by \$100 million in bond revenue, a significant departure from the "pay as you go" policy that Georgia had historically depended upon. Although the administration of Governor

Marvin Griffin was plagued with multiple charges of waste, fraud and inappropriate spending, no one could deny that thousands of miles of rural roads were paved during his four year term.

The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, shifted the dream into high gear. The Highway Trust Fund was created to collect gasoline taxes from motorists and disburse the accumulated funds to the individual states. It was the sole source of federal aid for the interstates and remains a major highway funding vehicle to this day. Under the 1956 Act, the federal government would be responsible for 90 percent of the construction finances while the remaining 10 percent would come from state funds.

- Standardization became the Interstate's hallmark. With collaboration between state departments of transportation and the US Department of Defense, planners laid out a highway system that would serve both peacetime and strategic defense needs. Choosing signs and shields, determining the best materials for roadway durability, and discussing the benefits of one design over another was done at a national level.
 - In February 1950, the Georgia General Assembly once again reorganized the State Highway Department. They abolished the position of state highway director, as well as the advisory commission, and established a three-man highway board instead.
- With more people traveling to more places, roadside parks became a popular service to the public. By the end of the 1950s, 188 parks had been built, almost entirely with state funds.
- Although aerial photography had been used by the Department since 1940, the Department purchased an airplane and hired a full-time pilot in 1952 as it began to use photogrammetric or aerial photography that would be useful in determining the paths for the new Interstates. A new laboratory was also built at the Atlanta Airport for the production of aerial photographs and maps.
- In order to determine the best materials to use for road construction in Georgia, the Division of Materials and Tests was established by the SHB in February 1956. To support this effort, a testing lab for joint research was built on the Georgia Tech campus at a cost of \$1 million.

- The Air Pollution Control Act of 1955 was the first federal legislation that addressed air pollution and led to the Clean Air Act of 1963 which would include mandates to control air pollution.
- Nearing the end of this decade, 1958 turned out to be a record year for construction in Georgia as \$136 million was spent on construction and improvement of roads in the state.
- By 1958, establishment of rest areas on the interstate system began. These rest areas would include paved parking, water, and a bulletin board with maps. They were planned to be spaced 25 miles apart.
- In 1959, Georgia's first interstate marker, I-75, was unveiled by Governor Ernest Vandiver in the largest road dedication ceremony in the state's history. Ribbon cutting ceremonies were held on the northern end of a 37 mile segment of I-75 in Turner and Tift counties.
- By 1958, public hearings were held on any roadway project bypassing or going through a city, town, or village to solicit the recommendations of local citizens in the final location of the roadway.

- With an increased need to inform the public of the impact of our projects, the Division of Public Relations was formed in 1956. This division would soon organize the largest road dedication ceremonies in Georgia history.
- During this decade several changes were made to personnel policy including the In-Service Training Program (1950) for civil engineering graduates/trainees to transfer from unit to unit. The Cooperative Plan of Employment also allowed civil engineering students to work for three months and attend school (Southern Technical Institute) for three months. In 1957, the SHB authorized the inauguration of a special recruiting program directed at civil engineer graduates. Within 18 months, the program had recruited 40 graduates and the cooperative plan had enrolled 50 students.
- By 1958, a new electronic computer was being used by the Division of Road Design, the Division of Bridges, Division of Urban Projects, and the Division of Finance and Audits. Design, payroll, and highway cost analysis were some of the functions that were mechanized.

Facing south on Atlanta's Downtown Connector in 1951. The North Avenue bridge is shown in the background. GDOT archives.



1960s ... THE GOLDEN AGE OF ROADS MEETS THE DAWNING OF THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

This decade has been called the Golden Age of Roads in Georgia and throughout the nation. Interstate construction had moved forward at a record pace, but this success, along with other upheavals of the times, caused an examination of the purpose of transportation. By the end of the 1960s, transportation decisions were not only aimed toward economic growth, but they also considered social impacts, beauty of highways and protection of the environment. At the beginning of the 1960s, the national press frequently reported claims of corruption and inefficiency in the implementation of the Interstate program. Controversy surrounding the lack of coordination between urban renewal efforts and freeway construction plans in urban areas also developed. At a time when society was embracing so-called slum-clearance projects, the Interstate program would also displace many residents. Both efforts devastated many historic neighborhoods populated by citizens with lower

incomes. As the Interstates began to run through blighted areas where right-of-way costs were low, the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum, illuminating this inequity.

Even as construction of the Interstate System continued, another financial crisis threatened to derail it. In response, the Federal Highway Act of 1961 made the 4-cent gas tax that was set to expire in 1961 permanent and adjusted other excise taxes to provide the revenue needed to complete the Interstate System. With state matching funds, the legislation accounted for \$27 billion to fund the remainder of the federal program through 1972. This was the same amount that Congress had thought in 1956 would be the total cost of the program.

The Golden Age of Roads could also be called the beginning of the golden age of environmental law making as legislative efforts were made to protect natural resources, involve communities in transportation decision making, and protect individual rights. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962 which took effect July 1, 1965, included two provisions of note. First, the 3C process directed only projects based on cooperative, continuing and comprehensive transportation planning to be approved in areas with a population of 50,000 or more. In Georgia, this mandate would apply to cities such as Albany, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Macon and Savannah.

The official opening of Interstate 285 was held on October 15, 1969 at the south end of the I-285 bridge over the Chattahoochee River near Bolton Road in Fulton County. After speeches by Governor Lester Maddox and other dignitaries, the governor led a motorcade to DeKalb County.

Second, Section 5 provided relocation advisory assistance for individuals, businesses, farms or nonprofit organizations displaced by federal aid projects.

Two pieces of important legislation aimed to address preservation and protection of the natural and built environment had a significant impact on transportation planning. In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act aimed to protect historical and archaeological resources from impact by federal undertakings. In 1969, the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act required that the responsible official of any proposed federal undertaking consider the environmental impacts of the proposed project. This legislation would require that highway builders adjust to an evolving public awareness that meeting transportation needs had environmental and societal consequences, as well as congestion relief, economic development, safety and other traditional factors.

- On January 25, 1963, the SHB was reorganized once again to be composed of ten members with a chairman and vice chairman elected by the board. The act also created the Director of the SHD, who was employed as a full-time public official and served as the chief administrative officer of the Department. The director had authority over the operations of the SHD while the board had authority to formulate broad highway policy.
- The first five Interstate System rest facilities, located on I-75 in Lowndes, Cook and Dooly counties, opened in 1963. Welcome stations had been opened in Hart County (I-85) and Catoosa County (I-75). Restroom facilities were also installed in the roadside parks built in the 1950s. In 1964, there were 254 roadside parks and rest areas with ten more under construction.
- The Division of Utilities was established in 1964 although the work had previously been part of the responsibilities of the Division of Road Design. This division would also serve as liaison with railroads.
- Rules and regulations governing the prequalification of contractors were developed and published in June 1965.

- The Appalachian Development Act of 1965 was created by Congress for the construction of new highways and to improve inadequate sections of existing highways in the Appalachian region. Georgia's portion of the Appalachian Corridor consisted of 86.4 miles of new and/or improved roadway extending from I-285 north of Atlanta to the North Carolina line.
- The Highway Beautification Act was signed into law on October 22, 1965. The goal of the act was to control the erection and maintenance of outdoor advertising adjacent to the Interstate System.
- On August 28, 1965, Congress passed the Highway Safety Act of 1966 to provide financial assistance to the states to address highway traffic safety programs. This marked the first major effort at the federal level to reduce the number and severity of highway-related crashes, although the Department had been involved in safety efforts since its inception.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation enabling act in 1966 established the new, cabinet-level Department of Transportation, which assumed a multi-modal responsibility linking highways, railways, airways, the U.S. Coast Guard and the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.
- Federal Highway Administration was formed in 1966 under the U.S. Department of Transportation Act, which merged functions of the Department of Commerce and the Interstate Commerce Commission.
- In 1966, a Landscape Design Section was added to the Division of Road Design. The section employed three landscape architects and a draftsman.
- The Bridge Inspection Program began in 1969 and was aimed at extending the usable life of bridges through routine maintenance.



1970s ... CHALLENGE, CONTROVERSY, AND THE YEAR OF THE INTERSTATE

By the early 1970s, American oil consumption was rising even as domestic oil production was declining, leading to an increasing dependence on oil imported from abroad. Despite this, Americans worried little about a dwindling supply or a spike in prices. In 1973, an oil embargo led to fuel shortages and sky-high prices throughout much of the decade. In an attempt to decrease demand, a national speed limit was imposed and daylight saving time was adopted year-round for the period of 1974-75. The energy crisis also impacted the state's transportation. Georgia received \$6 million less revenue from the federal highway fund while the cost of highway building materials climbed by more than 25 percent in two years.

The crusade to protect the environment from toxic industrial waste, dangerous meltdowns at nuclear power plants, and highways cutting through city neighborhoods accelerated during the 1970s and increased public scrutiny of roadway projects. Americans celebrated the first Earth Day in 1970, and Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act the same year. The Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act followed two years later.

The "mighty network of highways" planned by Congress and President Eisenhower was to be completed by October 1, 1972. On that date, 75 percent of Georgia's proposed 1,150 mile Interstate System had been constructed and opened to the motoring public. Between November 22 and December 23, 1977, Interstates 20, 75, 85 and 95 were completed, making 1977 the "Year of the Interstate" in Georgia. In 1978, Interstate 16 was opened to traffic, completing the original Interstate System in Georgia.

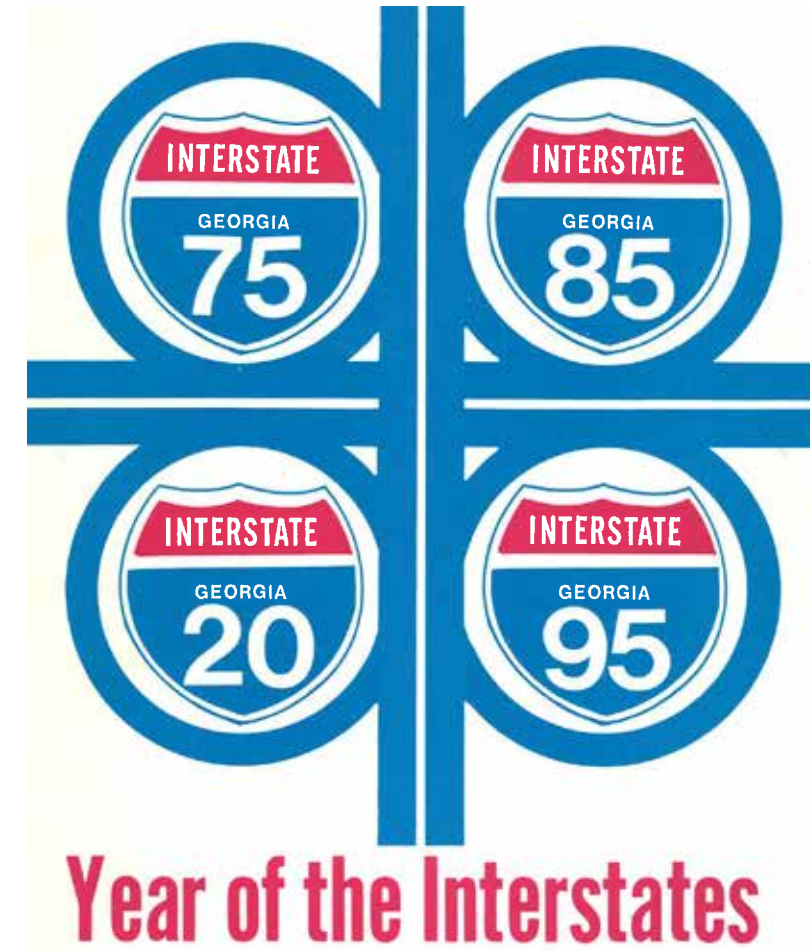
This decade saw a change in name and expanded function for the Department. The Executive Reorganization Act of 1972 transferred all powers from the SHD to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), which inherited a number of other state agency functions including airports, aviation, landing fields, and other aviation facilities; inspections of motor vehicles, size and weight permits; and some public

transportation activities. At this time, the former divisions became offices, a purely organization distinction. The State Highway Board was renamed the State Transportation Board with the same number of members. Thomas Bertram (Bert) Lance would become the first Commissioner of GDOT in 1972. Lance would not only implement Governor Jimmy Carter's transportation policy priorities, but he also served as one of the polarizing governor's chief lobbyists and boosters across the state.

- To meet the needs of the 1970s, the General Assembly had increased the motor fuel tax in Georgia to 7 ½ cents per gallon in 1969.
- The DOT implemented the "Motorist Aid Program" in 1972. This was later abolished due to the Department's efforts to cut costs.
- Between 1970 and 1975, Georgia DOT spent \$12 million in safety modifications and improvements. By 1976, Georgia ranked in the top 15 states in overall safety. Just 10 years earlier, the state had ranked 48th in the nation. From 1970-75, due to improved roads and safety features, along with the new 55 mph speed limit, there was a 39 percent decrease in traffic fatalities.
- The Federal Highway Act of 1974 provided a uniform speed limit of 55 mph to decrease gasoline consumption, more stringent controls on outdoor advertising, a new funding category, and changes in the weight allowance for trucks in order to protect infrastructure on the Interstate System. Federal highway funds were released to the states in early 1975.
- In 1975, Tom Moreland was elected commissioner. This marked the first time since 1919 that a professional engineer would serve as executive head for the Department. During his first months as commissioner he initiated an innovative reorganization of the department's five operating divisions by reshuffling them along functional lines. The five divisions—planning and programming, administration, operations, preconstruction and construction—represented the linear progression of any road building project, regardless of size, from beginning to end.
- In 1974, the first lady of Georgia, Rosalyn Carter established the Wildflower Program as a partnership between GDOT and the Garden Club of Georgia. By 1994, 10,000 miles of roadway would be enhanced by trees, shrubs and wildflowers.

- Permanent weigh stations were planned with the first station to be located in Monroe County near Forsyth.
- Georgia's Local Assistance Roads Program (LARP) debuted in 1978 with \$31 million spent on 259 projects covering 2,100 miles of resurfacing. More than \$14 million was spent on LARP's sister program, Local Assistance Bridge (LAB) program to replace 200 bridges off the state highway system, primarily on school bus routes.

- These projects helped cities and counties alleviate serious road maintenance problems due to severe winters and insufficient funding.
- Following the accelerated post-war/pre-interstate hiring, the Department reduced the workforce from approximately 9000 employees at the beginning of the decade to 6509 by the end of the decade.
- In September 1979, I-185 was completed connecting Columbus to I-85 for a total cost of \$83 million.



In 1977, Interstates 20, 75, 85, and 95 were completed and this image was used on internal and external bulletins commemorating the event. GDOT archives.

Reconstruction of the Downtown
Connector for Freeing the Freeways
project ca. 1982. GDOT archives



1980s ... FREEING THE FREEWAYS AND THE GRIP PROGRAM

The impact of the oil crisis was still being felt in the early 1980s. Drastic price increases, fuel-efficient vehicles and fuel shortages negatively affected motor fuel tax revenues. Spiraling prices for all petroleum products took their toll on the Department's expenses as resurfacing costs doubled from 1975 to 1980. Clearly the revenues from motor fuel tax alone could not support maintenance, resurfacing, safety improvements and capacity expansions. The General Assembly passed legislation which would effectively increase motor fuel tax and earmark interest earnings from the investment of these funds for highway use.

Nearing the completion of Interstate construction, emphasis immediately began to shift to reconstruction and rehabilitation of the existing infrastructure. A massive reconstruction program called Freeing the Freeways took aim at widening the maturing Interstate system in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The 6 or 8-laning of I-20, I-75, I-85, I-285, and the 10-laning of the I-75/I-85 Downtown Connector was underway in 1976 and continued throughout the 1980s. The plan included 127 miles at a cost of \$1.4 billion.

Interstates 985 (1984), I-675 (1986) and the Athens Perimeter Highway (1987) were completed during this decade. The Athens Perimeter Highway opened, after 28 years of work, making it the second circumferential highway in Georgia.

Among rural counties, those on the Interstates had seen better economic growth due to improved access to employment and the relocation of industry and distribution centers. Wherever there was growth in the state, it was almost without question near an Interstate.

At the end of this decade the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) was initiated to economically assist counties not located along Interstate routes. Composed of sixteen corridors totaling 2,500 miles, the GRIP system would convert existing primary routes and truck-connecting routes to multi-lane highways. When completed, the system would place 98 percent of Georgia's population within twenty miles of a multi-lane highway, and provide access for oversized trucks to all cities having populations above 2,000.

- **Energy Efficient Mobility for Georgians (EEMG)** provided citizens with alternative ways to deal with the continuing fuel shortage. Plans included building more Park and Ride locations; expanding the rideshare program statewide; constructing High Occupancy Vehicles (HOV) lanes; aiding the expansion of the existing intercity bus system and increasing public transit accessibility.
- In 1987, the replacement of the Talmadge Memorial Bridge was underway in Savannah harbor. The cable-stayed bridge would be completed in 1991.
- The Tom Moreland Interchange (I-85/I-285) opened in 1987. Construction of the five-level, stack interchange had begun in 1982. The interchange's colloquial name of "Spaghetti Junction" is immortalized in an eponymous song by the Atlanta-based hip-hop group Outkast in their 2001 album Stankonia.
- In 1988, the seat belt law passed and rural Interstate speed limits increased to 65 mph.
- Georgia's Adopt-A-Highway Program was initiated in 1989, and continues to enlist citizen volunteers' help to remove litter from state roadsides. While saving taxpayer dollars, the program provides recognition for participating companies and organizations, brings the environmental and monetary costs of littering into public awareness, and promotes civic responsibility and pride.

1990s ... INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION

By the late 20th century, transportation broadened beyond construction and maintenance of highways to focus on management and enhancement. Congestion and safety, along with the transport of freight, became big concerns, and construction began on numerous bypasses around cities and small towns in Georgia. However, the economic impact of such diversions was largely negative, and more modern solutions were sought for the state as a whole. Advanced Transportation Management Systems (ATMS), or Intelligent Transportation Systems, which focused on the processing of transportation data, new technology, quick responses, and the dissemination of public information, was at the forefront of the Department's efforts to "keep Georgia on the move." State and national partnerships, and public-private partnerships continued to bring innovation to complement the Department's initiatives.

In 1990, Atlanta was selected to host the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. The state's excellent transportation system was widely regarded as having been an integral part of the city's winning bid.

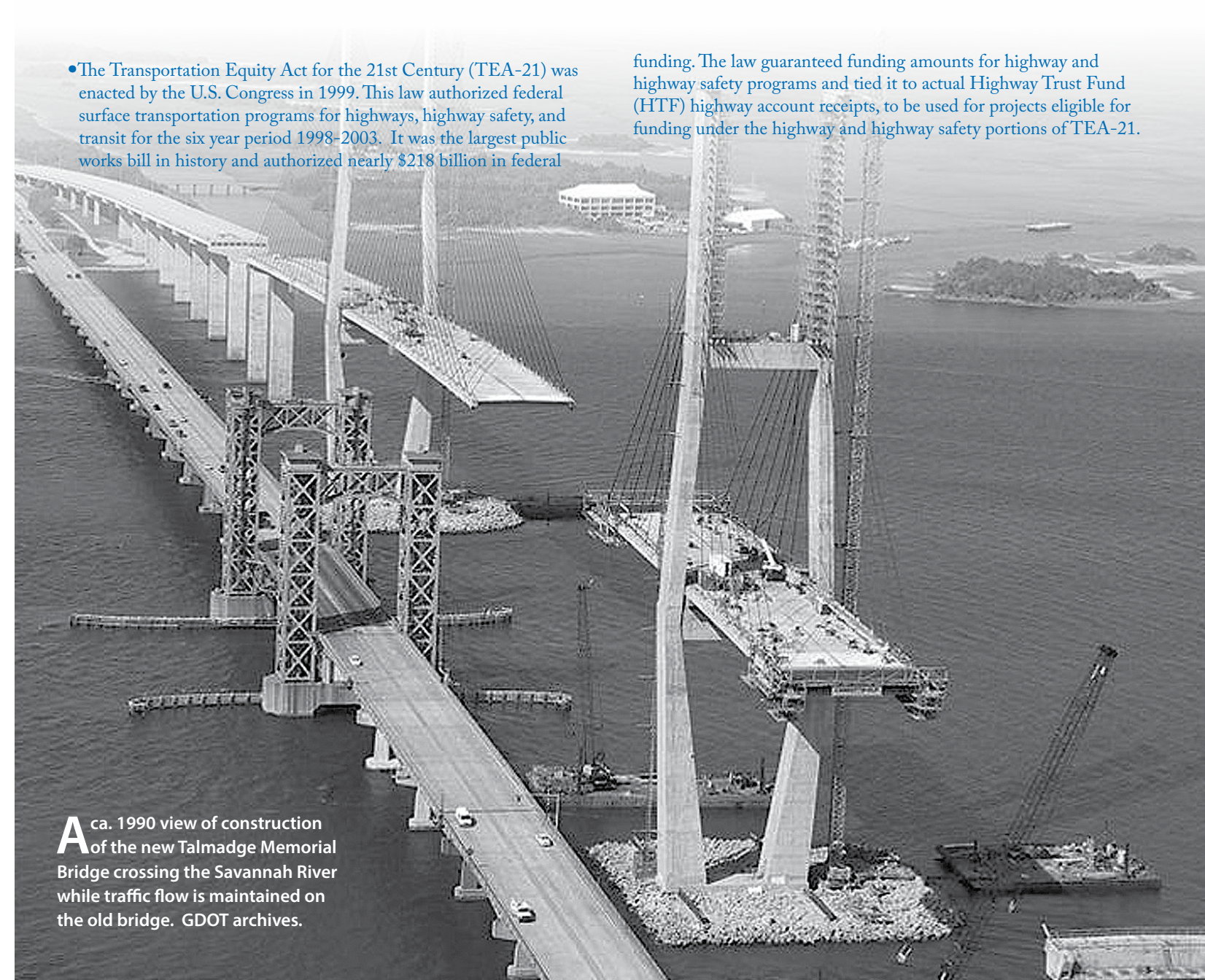
After half a century of building a national transportation infrastructure almost exclusively focused on accommodating automobiles, cities across the country began to shift course, redesigning streets and public spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. In 1997, the Georgia Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was adopted by the State Transportation Board.

- Georgia DOT was recognized for having the best maintained and most scenic roads in the country in 1992, 1993, 1994, 1997 and 1998.
- NAVIGATOR was initiated in 1991 as the world's first Advanced Transportation Management System to integrate management of the Interstates and arterials.
- "Let's Keep Georgia Peachy Clean" – Georgia's first anti-littering awareness campaign was inaugurated.

- In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) established the National Highway System (NHS) to serve as a network of highways linking different modes of transportation such as public transportation, airports, intermodal facilities and major shipping ports.
- Transportation Enhancement and National Scenic Byways programs were established as part of ISTEA.
- In 1993, the federal gas tax rose to 18.4 cents per gallon.
- In 1994, Georgia DOT began its first strategic planning initiative with the creation of a mission statement, vision statement, and identification of strategic goals and implementation projects.
- In November 1994, High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes were introduced to metro Atlanta on the east side of I-20.
- Also in November 1994, Georgia DOT launched the Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) program.
- The Georgia 400 Extension was completed in the summer of 1993. This project was marked by some of the most intense public scrutiny and media attention ever experienced by GDOT. The roadway included a 500-foot tunnel built beneath the existing 18-story Atlanta Financial Center. GDOT also introduced Automatic Vehicle Identification (AVI) technology using a device known as the Georgia Cruise Card. The card could be used by motorists to automatically pay the road's toll without having to stop.
- Summer 1994 floods from Tropical Storm Alberto that took lives, left 22,000 residents homeless, crippled South Georgia's transportation system and closed I-75 below Macon. GDOT mobilized more than 2,000 personnel from all Districts to help with the recovery effort.
- In 1995, the Transportation Management Center opened, housing the NAVIGATOR system with a fiber optic network along 63 miles of I-75, I-85 and I-285 with 41 Changeable Message Signs, almost 380 cameras, more than 130 electronic traveler information kiosks and 12 Highway Advisory Radios.
- In 1996, the Summer Olympic Games were held in Atlanta. It was widely agreed that the traffic and transportation plan was the best managed of any Olympic venue to date.

- The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was enacted by the U.S. Congress in 1999. This law authorized federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the six year period 1998-2003. It was the largest public works bill in history and authorized nearly \$218 billion in federal

funding. The law guaranteed funding amounts for highway and highway safety programs and tied it to actual Highway Trust Fund (HTF) highway account receipts, to be used for projects eligible for funding under the highway and highway safety portions of TEA-21.



Ac. 1990 view of construction of the new Talmadge Memorial Bridge crossing the Savannah River while traffic flow is maintained on the old bridge. GDOT archives.

2000 ... INVESTING IN TOMORROW'S TRANSPORTATION TODAY

At the beginning of the 2000s, Georgia DOT's greatest challenge continues to be finding a sustainable source of funding while accomplishing its mission and vision to maintain and improve mobility for Georgians. During this decade, more than half of the state's transportation budget came from federal funds and with the diminishing value of the gas tax, the greatest challenge continues to be funding. As a result, the Department focused on innovative and creative ways to manage assets, as well as seeking operational improvements that could provide the greatest bang for the buck and continue to provide mobility for the system's users.

This clearly reflected in the Department's strategic goals of:

- Planning and constructing the best set of mobility-focused projects on schedule;
- Making safety investments and improvements where the traveling public is most at risk;
- Making GDOT a better place to work will make GDOT a place that works better; and
- Taking care of what we have in the most efficient way possible.

Our birthday was August 16, 1916.

- In 2002, the Traffic Incident Management Enhancement (TIME) task force was launched to address critical issues related to incident management in the Atlanta metro area.
- The new and improved Sidney Lanier Bridge, located on US 17 in Glynn County opened to traffic April 7, 2003.
- In November 2003, Georgia DOT funded the state's first Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project in metro Atlanta to improve safety and increase the numbers of children, parents and school staff who walk and/or bicycle to and from school.
- In 2004, three ramp meters were introduced on Atlanta's Downtown Connector. By 2009, the program was expanded to all metro Interstates in an effort to enhance safety and relieve congestion on metro Atlanta Interstates.

Construction of flyover ramp on
Northwest Corridor Express
Lanes project in 2015.
Photo: Cedric Mohr/Georgia DOT





An aerial view of the Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI), at I-285 and Ashford Dunwoody Road interchange in DeKalb County.

- In April 2004, Governor Sonny Perdue announced the Fast Forward transportation plan - a six-year, \$15.57 billion state transportation investment strategy to relieve traffic congestion and expand economic development in urban and rural Georgia.
- In 2004, legislation allowed Georgia DOT to solicit and receive unsolicited proposals for Public Private Initiatives (PPI). In 2009, the legislation was revised to allow GDOT to only solicit proposals on specific projects. This allowed the Department to explore the concession alternative for the first time. Ultimately, the State decided to go with the Design Build Finance (DBF) approach which allows GDOT to customize the financing needs of a project based on cash flow and available funding for the project. Current projects being done under this method include the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes project and the I-285/GA 400 improvement project.
- In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law by the president. The law required every state to develop Strategic Highway Safety Plans. Georgia's plan was completed the following year.
- In 2007, 511 service was introduced, placing traffic and travel information a phone call away, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- In December 2007, Gena Abraham was hired as the first female Commissioner of the Georgia DOT.
- In June 2008, Governor Sonny Perdue announced Investing in Tomorrow's Transportation Today (IT3), designed to bring Georgia DOT, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, the General Assembly, local partners and the executive branch together to formulate strategies to improve transportation infrastructure throughout the state. This resulted in a Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan in 2010.
- In 2009, Georgia DOT received \$931 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) dollars. These funds were invested in nearly 2,500 safety, new capacity, maintenance and enhancement projects and bridges. This provided work in economically distressed areas of the state and maximized job creation.
- Also in 2009, the General Assembly created the Director of Planning position that is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly transportation committee. Todd Long, a Georgia DOT employee, was tapped to become the first Director of Planning.
- In October 2011, Georgia opened its first Express Lanes (Managed Lanes) on I-85 in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties.
- 2012 saw Georgia open the state's first Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI), at I-285 and Ashford Dunwoody Road interchange in DeKalb County.
- Beginning in 2012, GDOT increased its focus on short-term operational improvements to address congestion and safety with minimal costs - like flexible shoulder lanes and auxiliary lane conversions into continuous thru-traffic on GA 400.
- In 2012, the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Referendum was passed by Georgia voters in the regions of Central Savannah River Area, Heart of Georgia Altamaha and River Valley. These three regions implemented a one percent regional sales tax over a ten year period to fund transportation improvements. Georgia DOT is responsible for management of the budget, and schedule, execution and delivery of all projects contained in the approved investment lists.
- In 2013, Georgia's managed lane network advanced with the Northwest Corridor (NWC) express lanes anticipated to open in 2018 and the I-75 South express lanes scheduled to open in early 2017.
- In 2013 and 2014, GDOT's Quick Response Program improved the State Road system with low cost operational improvements requiring short construction times. Extended or added turn lanes, improved drainage, and concrete islands were completed across the state.
- The Transportation Funding Act of 2015 provides an estimated \$830 million to \$1 billion in annual additional revenues. This investment will allow the Department to work through a backlog of capital maintenance projects and to do routine maintenance that is ineligible for federal funds. The state funding allows the Department the ability to move federal funding to less complex projects; allowing projects to be potentially delivered faster and more economically.
- An increase in roadway fatalities in early 2015 resulted in the launch of DriveAlert ArriveAlive, a campaign to alert the public about the dangers of distracted driving. The campaign implores motorists to buckle up, stay off the phone and drive alert. The year ended with over 220 fatalities more than 2014 - the first annual increase in a decade.

LOOKING TO THE NEXT 100 YEARS ...

Like many state transportation departments, Georgia DOT's greatest challenge has historically been to adequately maintain assets while growing for the future, and to identify and secure sustainable funding to carry out its mission. This hasn't been easy.

After years of funding inadequacies on both the state and federal levels, Georgia lawmakers tackled the issue with HB 170 – the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. TFA addresses Georgia's critical transportation infrastructure needs with sustainable funding for much-needed routine maintenance and capital improvements.

On the federal front, there was positive news as well. After a decade of short-term funding patches to bolster the Highway Trust Fund, December 2015 saw passage of a five-year federal highway funding bill - Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This long-term legislation ends the cycle of temporary funding extensions that made it difficult for GDOT to efficiently plan and deliver major long-term projects.

Transportation in Georgia has come a long way in 100 years. While Georgia DOT reflects on the progress made in the past, the Department looks with optimism to the future ... a future with rapidly evolving technology. A future that is coming fast.

GDOT will continue to rise to new challenges, to seek out new opportunities, to break new barriers and to positively impact the lives of Georgians.

Georgia's best days for transportation are truly ahead.



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