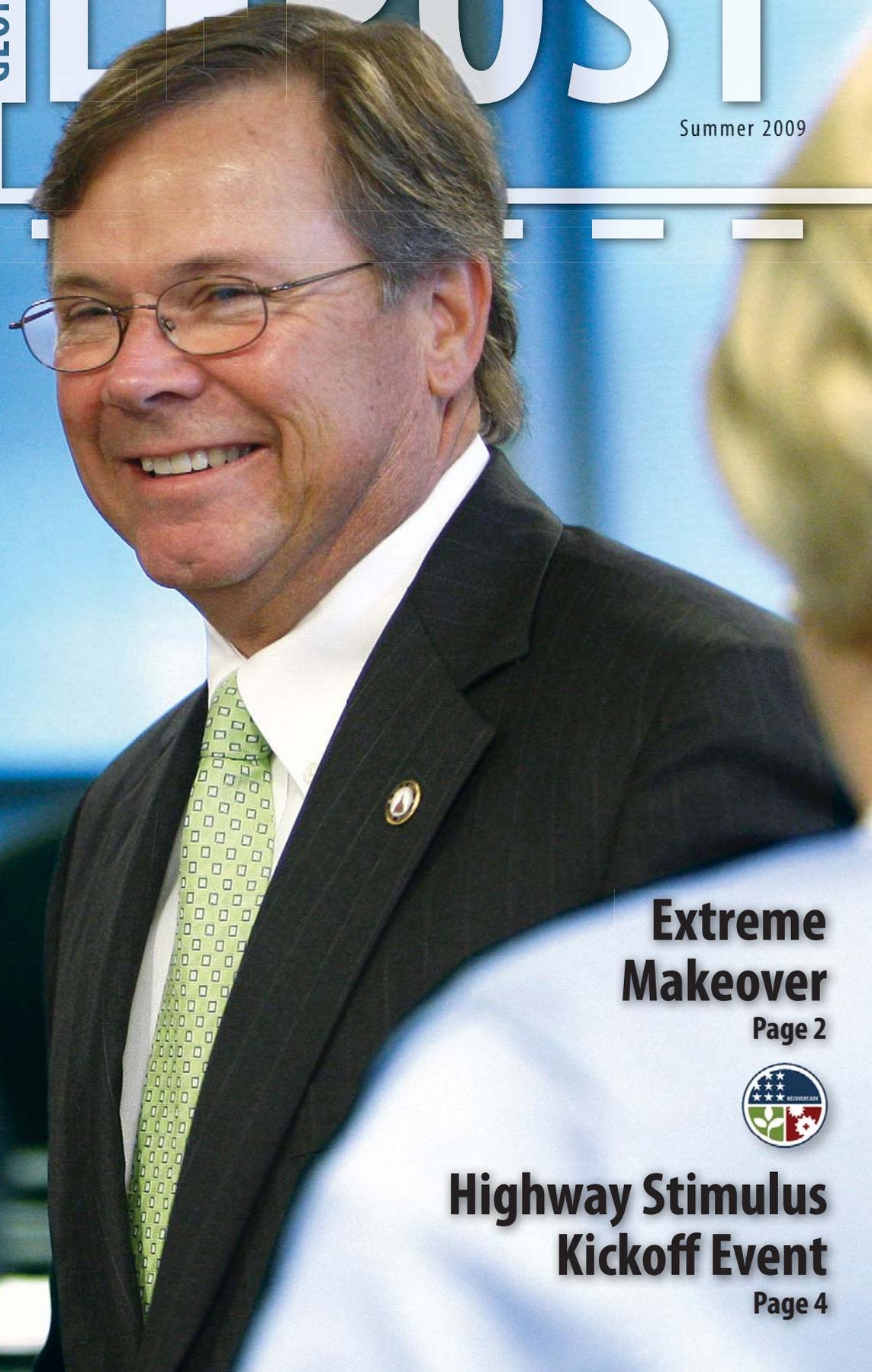


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On the cover: Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr.

Commissioner's Column

Achieving Our Goals and Getting the Job Done



I am deeply honored to have been chosen Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation. Having wanted to serve the state in this capacity for a while, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to help further the Department's mission: to provide a safe, sustainable and seamless transportation system to the citizens of Georgia and the traveling public.

Since arriving at One Georgia Center, I have had an opportunity to listen to and learn from the many knowledgeable and experienced men and women working for GDOT. Despite the challenges we face, they continue to work hard and excel at every task. In this issue of Milepost are just a few examples of their dedication to excellence and customer service to the people of Georgia, especially the care they take with preserving history in the face of progress. Additionally, readers can learn about our highway stimulus kickoff event in Hapeville with U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary John D. Porcari; our new sponsorship opportunity with State Farm and our HERO program; and the appointment of Todd Long, Gerald Ross and Sandra Burgess to key positions with the Department. I'm proud to work alongside them.

Enjoy this issue of Milepost as it explores just a few of the many projects and programs the Department of Transportation has undertaken. I am humbled to have been selected to lead one of the best agencies in our great state.

Vance C. Smith, Jr.

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Extreme Makeover

U.S. 78 Reversible Lanes Removed

By Teri Pope

U.S. 78 in Gwinnett County is in the process of an extreme makeover. A four-lane reversible lane system is being removed to make way for a concrete median and three lanes in each direction.

The makeover follows the July 14 removal of the last section of reversible lanes on U.S. 78 in Gwinnett County. The latest project is 6.65 miles long and is expected to encourage economic development along the corridor.

“C.W. Matthews has a \$31 million construction contract to widen U.S. 78 and remove the reversible lane system from East and West Park Place in Stone Mountain to SR 124 in Snellville. When completed, there will be three lanes in each direction, a new concrete median, sidewalks on both sides of the roadway

and ATMS equipment will be installed,” explained Georgia DOT District Engineer Russell McMurry.

An additional contract with the Evermore Community Improvement District (CID) will install illuminated street signs, decorative mast arms, landscaping and

benches along the corridor. The completion and removal of the reversible lane system continues to draw praise from the Evermore CID.

“This project is an important initial step in our strategic plan for improving the quality of place here at Evermore,” said Interim Executive Director Jim Brooks. “The additional lanes, the median and the addition of timed lights and dynamic signal modification will allow traffic to flow more smoothly and with greater safety for the 60,000 or more motorists who travel the corridor every day. We are proud to partner with Georgia DOT and look forward to the project’s completion.”

Crews have removed the overhead reversible lane signage and restriped the roadway with a center turning lane, three westbound lanes and two eastbound lanes.



GDOT Employees perform work at U.S. 78.



2007 Average Daily Traffic on US 78

@ East Park Place	66,520
@ Killian Hill Road	49,200
@ SR 124/Scenic Highway.....	35,230

**REVERSE
LANE
ENDS**

These lanes will remain in place until project completion, when three lanes are opened in each direction. Work continues on U.S. 78 from Killian Hill/Bethany Church roads to Highpoint Road as crews begin installing the concrete median. They will also pave and stripe the newly-widened roadway for three lanes in each direction. Motorists should expect overnight work to occur every weeknight as weather permits.

Site work on the project began September 17, 2007 at the west end. The project was divided into four sections for construction:

- East Park Place to Stone Drive
- Stone Drive to Killian Hill Road/Bethany Church Road
- Killian Hill Road/Bethany Church Road to Highpoint Road
- Highpoint Road to SR 124/Scenic Highway

Work can only occur in two sections at a time to minimize impact to the community. Construction began at the western end of the project and works east.

Sidewalks will also open as construction concludes in each section. Work will begin on the eastbound side of U.S. 78, grading

and building the width needed for the addition of a median, sidewalk and one more lane. Once the eastbound side is completed, work will shift to the westbound side. Work hours are restricted during construction – most work requiring lane closures will occur weeknights from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. the following day.

- No lane closures are allowed Week days from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. or 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- No lane closures are allowed Week ends from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
- No lane closures are allowed Friday and Saturday nights during Stone Mountain Park's "Laser Show" season from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Corridor Details from East Park Place to State Route 124

- **6.65 miles long**
- **45 miles per hour speed limit**
- **469 Commercial Properties**
- **1,585 Businesses**
- **16,913 Jobs**
- **\$465 million in property sales**
- **\$1 billion in annual sales from businesses along Corridor**

"This is the beginning of our extreme makeover – the transformation of U.S. Highway 78 into a dynamic commerce corridor that will attract new businesses, encourage capital investment and bring new jobs and new opportunity to the people of south Gwinnett," said Evermore CID Economic Development Director David Stedman. "We plan to add sidewalks, landscaping, signage and decorative benches to create a vibrant community where people will be able to live, work and play."

Traffic flow is already improved along the corridor from East/West Park Place to Killian Hill/Bethany Church roads. "Three lanes east and three lanes west are operational for about half the project right now. Overall operation of the corridor has improved. We look forward to the completion of the work. This project impacts traffic flow not just along the project but to Loganville and Monroe too. It is a regional improvement," concluded McMurry.

The project is currently on schedule for its November 30, 2009 completion date.

Highway Stimulus Kickoff Event

Paving the Way for Job Creation and Retention in Georgia

By Lillian Jackson



On June 30, 2009, Georgia's American Recovery Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) Road to Recovery officially began, as U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary John D. Porcari and Governor Sonny Perdue joined Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. at Georgia's highway stimulus kick-off event. Legislators, county and city elected officials, and area business owners gathered in celebration of the start of the state's first stimulus project – a \$940,000 resurfacing project spanning a federally-designated economically disadvantaged area (EDA) in Clayton and Fulton counties.

At the kick-off event, Deputy Secretary Porcari stated: "I want to commend Georgia state officials... for your good stewardship of federal recovery dollars... projects like this will... retain good-paying jobs in a very tough economy."

On that day, Porcari also commended Georgia DOT for investing ARRA funding in smaller projects in many counties around the state as well for being among the states that exceeded our 50 percent obligation for Phase 1 by the ARRA-established deadline of June 30. Our target was \$393 million, and we actually obligated 56 percent (\$448.6 million) by June 30.

One month later, by the end of July, the required ARRA signage was seen on projects across the state, as Georgia's Phase 1 projects moved through the Department's administrative processes toward getting work crews started. The Department has obligated more than \$527 million in projects across the state, and nearly 60 projects have been let, awarded and issued notices to proceed.

"I want to commend Georgia state officials... for your good stewardship of federal recovery dollars... projects like this will... retain good-paying jobs in a very tough economy."

John D. Porcari, Deputy Secretary

The real telling success of Georgia's ARRA projects, however, will come from the monthly reports required of contractors on the number of employees either hired or retained for each project,



Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. talks to reporters regarding the highway stimulus.

including work crews hired by sub-contractors and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms.

As an example, Bill Hammock, president of C.W. Matthews Contracting Company stated: "These contracts will have a significant positive impact on our company's ability to retain over 250 current Georgia employees... along with the benefit that will accrue to numerous suppliers and subcontractors."

Georgians can log on to the Department's stimulus Web site at www.dot.ga.gov/gastimulus to see how many jobs have been created through highway ARRA projects, determine whether a project is in an EDA, and get other project information as required by the emphasis on transparency in ARRA guidance.

Commissioner Smith, the State Transportation Board and senior staff are currently working toward the deadline of March 2010 for Phase 2 ARRA funding obligations, and readying proposed projects for lettings through the end of calendar year 2009. Approximately \$70 million in ARRA funding is "rolling over" from contractors' low bids for Phase 1 projects; therefore, \$455 million will be available for Phase 2.

Georgia DOT and State Farm Insurance Unveil New Sponsorship Initiative

By Monica Luck

The Georgia Department of Transportation and State Farm Insurance have launched a new collaborative sponsorship designed to create a long-term, supplemental funding source for the Department's Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) program.

Under terms of a contract between GDOT and State Farm, the popular HERO program, which provides incident management and motorist assistance on Metro Atlanta freeways, is now sponsored by State Farm. The company will pay up to \$8.75 million over the next five years for the privilege of displaying its company logo on HERO vehicles, operator uniforms and signs delineating the HERO service area. All monies received will be used to support the HERO program.

"Our HERO program is one of Georgia DOT's most acclaimed units," noted State Transportation Board Member Brandon Beach, who was instrumental in advocating the sponsorship. "We are thrilled at the opportunity to create new revenue sources that will



Left to right: GDOT Deputy Commissioner/Chief Engineer Gerald Ross, State Transportation Board Member Dana Lemon, Governor Sonny Perdue, State Transportation Board Member Brandon Beach, and State Farm Representative pose in front of the newly-sponsored HERO truck.

sustain funding for this critical program, both now and in the future. We're going to save the taxpayers millions of dollars in operating costs over the years and allow the HEROs to continue doing what they do best... protect lives and property; assist motorists; and reduce incident delays."

As the need for additional funding sources increased, GDOT staff and State Transportation Board members began aggressively pursuing strategies to overcome budget challenges. Recognizing that there may be interest in sponsoring various aspects of its opera-

tions in return for advertising privileges, GDOT officials researched similar highway response programs in other states and concluded that a sponsorship program would prove beneficial to the Department.

The sponsorship opportunity was advertised this past January in a Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposal (RFQ/RFP). A Department selection committee, using criteria stipulated in the RFQ/RFP, awarded the sponsorship to State Farm from three respondents.

Sponsorship fees will be used solely to support and supplement the operation of the HERO program, which currently has an annual operating budget of approximately \$7.5 million, 80 percent of which is provided by federal funds, and 20 percent by state revenues.

Currently, HEROs patrol 280 miles of Metro Atlanta freeways seven days per week. The number of HERO assists has increased nearly 100 percent in the last five years, approaching 100,000 annually. Motorists send to GDOT an average of three "thank-you" messages and letters for HERO assistance every day.





Mr. Smith Comes to GDOT

By Crystal Paulk-Buchanan and Carla Murphy

The State Transportation Board in June unanimously selected former State Representative Vance C. Smith, Jr. Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation. Smith, a longtime legislator who chaired the House Transportation Committee, brings with him a vast knowledge of the Department and experienced leadership, both of which he discusses in this issue of the Milepost.

In an interview for this publication, Commissioner Smith underscored the Department's commitment to four areas of focus, stressed the importance of building relationships and praised employees for their dedication to GDOT's mission. Following are responses to a Question & Answer with the Commissioner two weeks after he assumed the Department's top position.

Q: Prior to your arrival, the Department was focused on four areas – improving project delivery; working toward a statewide transportation plan; exploring additional opportunities for alternative financing; and providing outstanding customer service. Will these continue to be our areas of focus, or can we expect a shift or change in our priorities?

A: I think as we work through these first few weeks with new planning director, Todd Long, these will definitely continue to be the areas of focus for the Department, with the possibility there may be an additional one or two that we might add after talking to senior staff. We don't want the list of priorities or areas of focus to be too long, because we want to have a center and a clear sense of where we are going. So, we will continue on the path of improving in those four areas, as well as take on others as we move forward.

Q: What experience (s) in your life (including your time as a county commissioner and state legislator) do you think has prepared you for your position as GDOT Commissioner?

A: Past experiences are just so important in any new position. I think definitely serving on the county commission – having the opportunity to serve as chairman was tremendous. Learning local issues while on the county commission and then expanding that to a seat in the House of Representatives for 17 years have certainly prepared me for my most recent position. In fact, I can't imagine doing this job without having served in those capacities and learning how to work with local and state leaders to resolve issues.

Q: Recognizing that you have only been in your new position for exactly two weeks, how do you see the Department working with local governments to meet their transportation needs?

A: I foresee it being a great collaboration, with no immediate changes. I have been meeting with not only local governments, but with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and many of our partners. Without question, those relationships are critical to us resolving some of the key issues around transportation. It will take the collective energy of all of us to leverage our resources to make sure we are using our dollars wisely and to make sure we are meeting our short-term and long-term needs. Today, that is extremely important, as we work our way through these tough economic times.

Q: What is the one thing (or more if you would like) that you didn't know about the Department, that you have come to learn in your two weeks as Commissioner?

A: I continue to be impressed with the Department's dedicated employees. I am going out to the districts and meeting employees

all across the state, and as I talk to them I learn more and more about the Department and what we need to focus on.

Q: Everyone recognizes that funding is critical for the Department in the coming months and years, how do we position ourselves to get adequate funding? Is there anything that we can do differently or is there anything we can do now that we have not done before?

A: One of the first things we can do is continue to work on being an efficient organization. In my meetings in the districts and in our offices here (One Georgia Center), I am encouraging staff to share with me ways we can streamline to become more efficient. While the Department has made some improvement, we can always do more. What is clear to all of us is that in these challenging times, we simply must do more to demonstrate that we are making the best use of the dollars we have. And we have to use facts to make our case. We can't simply keep asking for more money without facts to show that we are developing and implementing a comprehensive plan that will deliver a transportation network that among other things, will relieve congestion and provide economic opportunities for other regions of the state.

Q: What are two things you hope to accomplish during your tenure?

A: I think number one is to bring cohesion to the Department, particularly with so many of our employees who work in districts across the state. We want to make certain that the workflow is seamless and that communication is across the districts and reaches all corners of the state.

The second is to make sure that we develop a working relationship with the executive branch and the General Assembly, which is vital for the success of GDOT. I think that is huge. And I think that with my 17 years in the state legislature, I can help facilitate improving those relationships. For GDOT to be successful, it will take elected officials, our transportation partners, the business community and many others working together if we are going to see better results. I think we are all committed to working together, and people will begin to see all of these parties come together to implement a comprehensive transportation plan that our state deserves.

Favorite Vacation Spot in Georgia:

Lake Harding, near Columbus on the Chattahoochee River

Favorite Movie:

Armageddon, Meet Joe Black

Favorite Book:

John Grisham novels

Things you like to do on a Saturday:

Spend time with five grandsons. Spend time with family.

Todd Long Named GDOT's New Director of Planning

By Monica Luck

As Georgia Department of Transportation's new Director of Planning, Todd Long is proving that you can come home again, but don't be surprised if there has been some remodeling.

In the year since Long exchanged his 18-year career with the Department for a position with the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, Georgia DOT has seen the appointment of a new Commissioner and the relocation of the Department's headquarters from its 50-year location across from the State Capitol to an office building in Midtown Atlanta.

"There have certainly been some changes over the past year, but the fundamental mission of Georgia DOT hasn't changed at all," Long said. "We build and manage one of the best transportation systems in the country. I've always been proud to be part of the GDOT family and I'm so pleased to be back. We have a lot of work to do."

Much of that work is directly related to Long's recent appointment by Governor Sonny Perdue. In the last days of the 2009 legislative session, the House and Senate passed legislation to restructure how the Department determines which road projects will be built. Although the details of Senate Bill 200's (GDOT Governance Law) reorganization are still being worked out, Long and Georgia DOT Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. are meeting daily to work through the requirements of the law. According to the new law, the plan must be submitted to the Georgia General Assembly and the Governor's Office by December 31, 2009.

"My primary function is to lay the framework for a vision for transportation in Georgia," Long said. "I hope to develop the vision, then develop the proper implementation of that vision. And a vital part of that is establishing a sustainable funding source."

In appointing Long to his new position, Governor Perdue said, "Todd's qualifications and knowledge of the DOT planning process make him the perfect candidate to take on this new role. I think all Georgians want a statewide transportation plan that provides value for our tax dollars, and we are taking a big step in that direction."

As Long moves forward in his new position, he is very focused on his mission. "The number one factor in developing a successful [transportation improvement] program is understanding the growth of the state and how proper investments in transportation produce that growth, including jobs," Long said. "The second factor is managing what we already have. Georgia is fortunate to have some great incident management and quick clearance programs in place."

The Director of Planning position also requires working closely with GDOT Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr., the State Transportation Board, the Governor's Office, and lawmakers in the state House and Senate.

"The General Assembly now has more of an oversight role in the execution of the statewide transportation plan than they did before," Long explained. "It's going to take a lot of collaboration and open, honest communication among all of these entities to be successful."

Long credits his upbringing and his previous experience for paving the way to his new position. "My parents really prepared me for leadership," he said. "And ever since I decided to go to college, everything I've done has prepared me for this. I think I've had nine or ten different jobs in my career that all led me here."

Long previously spent 18 years in various positions at GDOT, including serving as Director of both the Preconstruction and Administration divisions. He also spent seven years at the District One office in Gainesville, rising to the position of District Engineer.

In August 2008, Long was appointed director of all engineering, IT and business-related projects for the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). A registered professional engineer and a registered professional traffic operations engineer, he has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in civil

engineering – transportation, both from Georgia Tech. Long lives in Lilburn with his wife, Kelli, and four children – Drew, Evan, Jack and Rachel.



Todd Long

"Todd's qualifications and knowledge of the DOT planning process make him the perfect candidate to take on this new role. I think all Georgians want a statewide transportation plan that provides value for our tax dollars, and we are taking a big step in that direction."

Governor Sonny Perdue

NEWSMAKERS

State Rep. Bobby Eugene Parham Elected to State Transportation Board

State Representative Bobby Eugene Parham was elected to the State Transportation Board by a caucus of state representatives and senators from the 12th Congressional District. He will fill the remaining four years of the term of retiring Board member Raybon Anderson.

A pharmacist from Milledgeville, Parham began his public service on the Baldwin County Commission. He was first elected to the Georgia General Assembly in 1975 as a Democrat and served in the House of Representatives for 18 terms. Parham served on the Rules, Appropriations and Motor Vehicles committees. He resigned from the House immediately after his election to begin his Board tenure.



Bobby Parham

Gerald Ross Appointed Deputy Commissioner

Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. announced the appointment of Gerald Ross to Deputy Commissioner. Ross, who recently served as the Department's Interim Commissioner, has been with GDOT for 27 years. He was appointed Chief Engineer in August 2007, and will continue in that capacity as he takes on the additional duties of Deputy Commissioner. An Atlanta native, Ross graduated from Tennessee Tech University and is a registered professional engineer.



Gerald Ross

Sandra Burgess Appointed General Counsel

Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. announced the appointment of Sandra Burgess as General Counsel for the Department. Burgess began her career at the Department in 1978 when she joined the Legal Division as an Administrative Hearing Officer. She graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in History from the University of Georgia. Burgess went on to graduate from the UGA School of Law in 1978 and is a current member of the State Bar of Georgia.



Sandra Burgess

Georgia DOT Changing Perceptions

By Crystal Paulk-Buchanan

The Georgia Department of Transportation was recognized recently by the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation for its underwater archaeological investigation of the Civil War vessel *Water Witch*. The annual awards celebrate businesses, organizations or individuals that have made significant contributions to the field of historic preservation.

The Department was an unlikely winner because the annual Preservation Service Award typically does not go to a government agency – particularly one known more for laying asphalt than safeguarding historic sites.

Kate Ryan, program manager for the Trust, said it was that incongruity that first struck the judging panel. “We were so impressed by the quality and scope of work. It’s not just an archeological site, though that in itself would be significant – there were many partners who contributed to tell the story of this amazing project.”

The Department discovered what is believed to be the scuttled remains of the *Water Witch* during an October 2007 underwater survey for the proposed Harry S. Truman Parkway extension over the Vernon River near Savannah. The vessel was built in 1851, stationed in Ossabaw Sound during the Civil War, captured by Confederate raiders in 1864 after a fierce battle, and sunk by the Confederate Navy to avoid



*Georgia DOT Archeologist Jim Pomfret and Historian Chad Carlson worked extensively on the *Water Witch* project.*

it falling back into Union hands in December 1864.

Georgia DOT archeologist Jim Pomfret and historian Chad Carlson worked closely with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources in developing a memorandum of agreement for the project.

Coinciding with these investigations, the National Civil War Naval Museum at Port Columbus, through its educational and heritage tourism initiative, constructed a full scale replica of the 160-foot long wooden hulled double side-wheel steamer. Furthering the heritage education opportunities presented through this discovery, Georgia DOT produced a short documentary of the archaeological investigations

entitled “*Water Witch: Traversing the Seas of History*” available for viewing on The Archaeological Channel, and the University of Georgia’s Dramatic Media Department is producing a computer animated short film to complement the National Civil War Naval Museum’s *Water Witch* exhibition.

Convincing the public that Georgia DOT can grow the state’s transportation system and protect its cultural resources is an ongoing effort, according to Eric Duff, Archeology Unit manager for the Department.

“There was a time when Georgia DOT would never have been recognized by an organization like the Georgia Trust, but we are cutting through that barrier,” Duff said. “Today, Georgia DOT can walk arm in arm with some of the best preservationists in the state. This award shows that a successful transportation project does not have to come at the cost of our history.”



*USS *Water Witch**

Georgia DOT Project Uncovers Family History

By Crystal Paulk-Buchanan

Roads connect places. They bring people together from far distances. In Bibb County, just south of Macon, a Georgia Department of Transportation road project is bridging time.

Georgia DOT archeologists and historians discovered an African-American cemetery of more than 35 graves that dates to the early 1800s. Assisted by potential descendants, they are uncovering history long lost to the community and helping a family reconnect to their past.

The extension of Sardis Church Road from east of Skipper Road to US 129/SR 247 initially seemed like a typical collaborative effort between the state and county DOTs. The Department agreed to purchase right-of-way and pay for construction and the county would pay a portion of preliminary engineering. In mid-summer 2008, with environmental documents completed, Department staff was notified that one of the parcels might contain a slave cemetery.

"It was an off-hand comment from a landowner," recalls Georgia DOT archeologist Sara Gale. "He said he had always heard there was a cemetery on the old McArthur family plantation."

Although the area had previously been inspected, it was determined that the potential of a cemetery was too important not to check again. In fall 2008 Gale led a team back to the section indicated by the landowner to confirm his recollection.

"Not only was it the most appropriate decision for the project to move forward, it was the right thing to do for people who were buried there."

**Nicoe Alexander,
GDOT Project Manager**

Initial shovel tests were inconclusive so Gale returned a few months later with Georgia DOT District 3 maintenance staff to clear the underbrush and remove the top few inches of soil. They discovered seven unmarked burials, and an additional one just outside the fenced area. There were no

headstones, only evidence that the ground had been disturbed in such way to indicate a grave shaft.

"We didn't dig very deep- we didn't want to find any remains at that time – just confirm that (the graves) actually existed," she said. "I checked the survey map and the site was right in the center line of the road."

Gale immediately notified supervisors of her findings and began looking at options. It became apparent that realigning the road was not feasible because shifting south would bisect an established and maintained cemetery for the McArthur family and shifting north would impact a retention pond adjacent to the Middle Georgia Regional Airport. Since any change at this stage would increase design and right-of-way costs the Department recommended to the State Historic and Preservation Office (SHPO) that the cemetery be relocated.

"This was the best decision for the cemetery itself," said Georgia DOT Project Manager Nicoe Alexander. "The only access to the cemetery was through private property and the area is zoned for redevelopment. Not only was it the most appropriate decision for the project to move forward, it was the right thing to do for people who were buried there."

The Department contracted with New South Associates, who specialize in mortuary archeology, to proceed with the relocation. In the meantime, Gale and Georgia DOT historian Sharman Southall continued research into deeds and wills – hoping to locate cemetery descendants. They posted a message to a genealogy Web site and within days were contacted by Amma Crum, a great-great-granddaughter of John McArthur and Talerie Boyd, a descendant of slaves who worked the plantation. Although Crum and Boyd's families had moved from the Macon area in the early 1900s, they were in contact with each other, even sharing a recent family reunion.



Descendants of the plantation owner and former slaves inspect artifacts found on the site.

As the news spread, both families were excited and overwhelmed to learn of the discovery and fully supported the Department's decision to relocate any remains to a nearby cemetery where they could easily visit.

Mortuary archaeologists Matt Matternes and Valerie Davis, who are leading the cemetery excavation project for New South, used several non-invasive methods to survey the area. To find the hidden graves they assessed soil compaction using a steel probe which can identify disturbances in the natural structure of soil such as the digging and refilling of a grave pit. They also called upon human remains detection dogs. The three dogs identified the burial locations previously discovered by Georgia DOT and signaled several burials outside the initial section.

"The dogs were the first clue to indicate that we were dealing with a much wider area," Davis said.

In the following weeks, crews cleared a quarter acre area of all vegetation, revealing sandy clay checkerboarded with dark rectangular patches.

These patches, currently numbered at 38, are gravesites. Matternes says there could ultimately be twice that number and artifacts they are finding show that three different families used the cemetery for more than 50 years after Emancipation.

In addition to human remains, archeologists removed coffin handles and other hardware manufactured in the 1890s.



Left-Right: GDOT Geologist Loren Petruny poses next to a four-ton boulder containing stromatolites. Jerry German of Georgia DOT inspects scattered rocks along the Rome Bypass where prehistoric fossils were found.

Georgia DOT Geologists Find More Than Rubble on Rome Bypass

By Crystal Paulk-Buchanan

Visitors to a science museum in northwest Georgia will be in awe of the enormous Tyrannosaurus rex, but another fossil outside is 300 million years older than the dinosaur and was discovered just a few miles away by the Georgia Department of Transportation.

The four-ton rock near picnic tables at the Tellus Northwest Georgia Science Museum in Cartersville might not seem very impressive, but look closer at a four- to five-inch wide band of grayish, somewhat circular indentions extending across the rock face. These are stromatolites, the fossilized remains of blue-green algae that formed more than 500 million years ago, and many scientists consider them one of building blocks of life on Earth.

Department geologists found this boulder and several other smaller specimens during construction on the Rome Bypass in October 2008. They were conducting a typical inspection of blasted rock which the contractor, C.W. Matthews wanted to use as Rip Rap. Loren Petruny recognized the fossils from her post-graduate work in upstate New York.

“To find (these fossils) in Georgia is very rare – I’ve only heard of one other case and these are some of the best I’ve seen.”

Julian Gray, museum curator

“It was one of the best days of my career,” she said. “You never think you will find something this important on a construction site.”

At Petruny’s request, the contractor set the boulder aside and the Department later contacted museum curator Julian Gray to see if the science center would be interested in the find.

“To find (these fossils) in Georgia is very rare – I’ve only heard of one other case and these are some of the best I’ve seen,” said Gray who immediately began scoping out a site among other large mineral and rock specimens in the museum’s landscaping. He said he selected the picnic tables because so many visitors utilize the area.

The museum, which opened in January 2009, is still updating exhibits and

Gray said he hopes to incorporate some of the smaller stromatolite fossils in another display area.

The find is scientifically significant because stromatolites can only thrive on the seabed in tropical climates. The discovery of these fossilized organisms in Floyd County is another indicator that the tectonic plate shifted over millions of years from its beginnings near the equator to its current location. Additionally scientists theorize oxygen photosynthesized by the algae enabled complex animals to evolve and breathe air.

Jerry German, Branch Chief for Pit and Quarry Branch at the Office of Materials and Research (OMR), agreed that the find was an extraordinary discovery in an unlikely location.

“It was like finding a needle in a haystack,” he said, referring to the jumbled field of blasted gray rock mixed with slabs of shale. “Someone else could have missed it, but she was the right person, in the right place, at the right time.”

Georgia Safe Routes To School Program Announces \$4.9 Million in Infrastructure Funding



by Carla Murphy

The Georgia Department of Transportation recently awarded more than \$4.9 million to fund Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) Infrastructure Projects in Georgia, paving the way for thousands of children across the state to bike or walk safely to their neighborhood school.

Through the SRTS program, the Department awarded funding to top-scoring projects from each of the state's 13 Congressional Districts. All of the projects are within a two-mile radius of a K-8 school and demonstrate active involvement in SRTS activities. The estimated cost for each award is \$500,000 or less.

"We are pleased with the progress of the SRTS program, particularly as we move forward with the implementation of these important projects," says GDOT Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. "These funds will have a meaningful impact in communities across our state and benefit an important group — *children*."

In the first selection round, the Department received 65 infrastructure applications totaling approximately \$23 million, far exceeding the program's available funding for the year.

The awarding of funding represents a major first step for the SRTS program. The next steps call for the Department to work with SRTS Design Consultant Kimley-Horn to streamline the project implementation process. Additionally, Kimley-Horn will provide the preliminary engineering for the 13 selected projects and prepare projects for letting. GDOT will coordinate with the local transportation or public works departments and school districts on the project designs. "Awardees will not be responsible for designing or letting any part of the project, nor will they be required to provide a local match for their projects," explains Special Projects Branch Chief Elaine Armster.

In addition to implementation support, the SRTS program has created a Resource Center that will serve as a clearinghouse for awardees and any K-8 school in Georgia.

Schools and organizations may enroll in Georgia's SRTS Resource Center to receive Non-Infrastructure SRTS services at no cost. Consultants URS and Toole Design Group have contracted to implement the Non-Infrastructure component of the SRTS program, which will be available for enrollment by September 2009. The Center also will assist schools with all education, encouragement, enforcement, evaluation, planning and other non-construction related activities, such as bike or pedestrian safety training.

The implementation of SRTS projects will help create safer routes for walking and bicycling and emphasize the importance of issues such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion, concern for the environment, and building connections between families, schools and the broader community.

For more information on Georgia's SRTS program, visit www.dot.ga.gov/localgovernment/fundingprograms/srts

2009 Hurricane Season

GDOT Hurricane Brochure Offers Evacuation and Safety Information to Motorists

By Carla Murphy

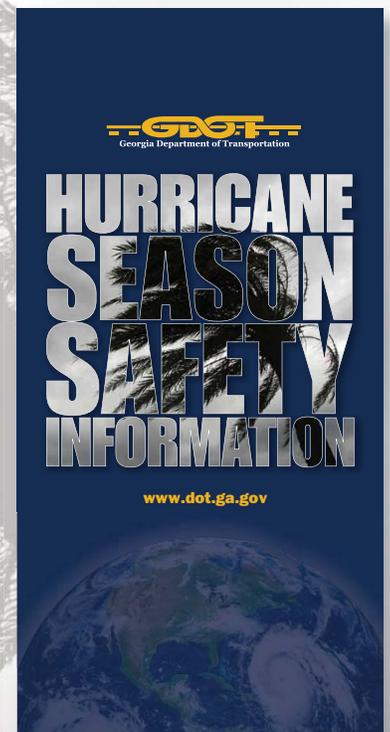
Motorists escaping potentially dangerous storms can now find important information about evacuation and safety plans at rest areas across the state.

The Department recently delivered some 1,000 Hurricane Season Safety Information brochures for use by the traveling public in six coastal counties at risk of storm surge in Georgia, including Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty and McIntosh counties. The brochures also were made available to local governments for distribution.

The full-color brochure, which offers information about everything from contra-flow lanes to recommended items for a "ready kit," was created in collaboration

with several state agencies, including the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and the Georgia State Patrol. It provides information on what occurs once evacuations have been ordered, including how drop gate barricades and contra-flow lanes work to keep traffic flowing on Georgia's interstates; the availability of Highway Emergency Response Operators for traffic incident management and 511 for travel information; Web links for additional information; and a recommended list of items to pack before evacuation.

Produced by the Division of Communications, the brochure also is available on GDOT's Web site at www.dot.ga.gov/travelingingeorgia/Pages/HurricaneInformation.aspx



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