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*Georgia DOT October Board meeting held in Valdosta*

### **LOWNDES COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS HIGHLIGHTED AT STB MEETING**

VALDOSTA—Major transportation projects in Lowndes County and the South Georgia region were featured at the State Transportation Board (STB) meeting held today in Valdosta. A total investment of approximately \$229 million for 20 widening, interchange reconstruction, maintenance and resurfacing, bridge maintenance and signal upgrade projects in Lowndes County were discussed. Total investment includes the design, property acquisition and construction cost for the projects. In addition, regionally significant projects such as SR 133 and US84/SR 38 were also discussed. The Board met in Valdosta at the invitation of Tim Golden, who represents Georgia's 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

"Transportation is fundamental to local and regional economic development and partnerships play a crucial role in making projects a reality," Golden said. "We are delighted to host the State Transportation Board and to showcase Lowndes County and the South Georgia region."

Georgia DOT Chief Engineer Meg Pirkle provided a presentation on current and future regional projects.

Of regional importance, **State Route 133** is a major north-south corridor in South Georgia that provides a vital connection between Valdosta on the south and Albany to the north. SR 133 will be widened to a four-lane divided roadway from south Albany to I-75. The project is part of the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP), and widening is needed due to the high volume of vehicles it carries. The portion from Moultrie to I-75 is under construction and scheduled to be completed in 2018. The Albany to Moultrie portion is under design and expected to begin construction in 2019. The estimated total investment for the entire corridor is \$328 million which includes the design, property acquisition and construction costs.

A 25-mile section of **SR 38/US 84**, currently under construction from Waycross to Homerville, is being widened from two to four lanes with a grass median. This will complete the widening to four lanes of the 259-mile corridor from Alabama to I-95 in Liberty County. The total investment for the 25-mile widening is \$176 million. The project is scheduled for completion in 2019. The widening of this GRIP corridor will spur economic development in Clinch and Ware counties and the surrounding area.

"The US 84 widening is a critical project that provides a lifeline to communities in Waycross, Valdosta, Thomasville, Bainbridge and every city in between," Tim Golden added. "The corridor is critical to the south Georgia economy and provides a direct route to the Ports of Savannah and Brunswick."

On **I-75**, bridge preservation projects include painting the steel superstructure of 11 bridges in Lowndes, Cook, Crisp and Tift counties. The I-75 Phase II Interchange improvements will eliminate substandard outside shoulders and reduced clear zones that resulted from the widening of I-75 at several interchange locations. Phase II will also reconstruct seven overpasses to allow for I-75 to be widened to eight/ten lanes in the future.

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Other Lowndes County projects include:

- Road widening at Lake Park/Bellville Road from SR 7 to I-75; Jerry Jones Drive/Eager Road from Baytree Road to Oak Street; SR 31 from SR 7 in Lowndes County to SR 135 in Lanier County
- Maintenance and resurfacing projects under construction on I-75 from south of SR 133 to Cook County line and SR 31 from I-75 to Florida state line; with upcoming projects scheduled to begin spring/summer 2017 on SR 7 Business through Downtown Valdosta and SR 125 from Hightower Road to SR 11.
- Traffic signal upgrades in Downtown Valdosta, sign replacements on county roads, bridge replacement or repair, and off-system safety projects; and
- Upgrades and repairs to the Lake Park Welcome Center.

"The state of Georgia is making major transportation investments in the Valdosta and Lowndes County region," said Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell R. McMurry. "The projects not only contribute to the development of South Georgia, but also ultimately benefit the entire state."

The meeting also included a presentation on routine maintenance and the Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Program by Deputy Commissioner Mike Dover, who highlighted the increased mowing cycle, vegetation removal and maintenance efforts on I-75 from the Florida state line to Cook County.

Dover also noted the \$1.6 million LMIG allocation to Valdosta and unincorporated Lowndes County, an increase of \$376,000 as a result of the Transportation Funding Act. The LMIG Off-System Safety Program is an effort to reduce the severity and frequency of crashes and improve safety on local routes. In Lowndes County, the program funded two shoulder widening and sidewalk projects in FY 2016 and will provide funding for signing and striping in 28 locations in FY 2017.

For a detailed presentation on the projects, [click here](#)

On Wednesday, Board members, the Commissioner and others participated in the dedication of the James Slaton "Jay" Shaw Memorial Highway on U.S. Highway 22/State Route 31 from the intersection of SR 11 and SR 31 in Lakeland to the intersection of SR 7 and SR 31 in Valdosta in Lowndes County. Shaw served on the State Transportation Board from 2010 to 2015 and was chairman in 2013. Prior to his tenure on the Board, Shaw served 17 years in the Georgia General Assembly where he represented the residents of Berrien, Clinch, Lanier and Lowndes counties/House District 176. Shaw was also the mayor of Lakeland for 10 years.

The Board occasionally holds its monthly meeting outside the city of Atlanta to provide Georgia cities and counties with the opportunity to highlight their transportation needs and to underline the value of their transportation investments.

*The 14-member State Transportation Board determines policy and generally governs the Georgia Department of Transportation. Each member is elected by a caucus of Georgia General Assembly members from their specific congressional district. Board members serve staggered five-year terms. Visit <http://www.dot.ga.gov/AboutGDOT/Board>.*

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