



October 9, 2013

Editor
The Macon Telegraph
Macon, Georgia

RE: No Changes in Jeffersonville Road Project Agreement

Dear Sir:

An article in last Friday's *Telegraph* about the widening of Jeffersonville Road and the newspaper's subsequent editorial on the subject were so error-filled as to demand a corrective response.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has not changed any of its commitments on this project, contrary to statements made at a Bibb County Commission meeting and subsequently reported by the *Telegraph*. Georgia DOT has always agreed on the need for improving Jeffersonville Road, so much so, in fact, that we included state and federal funding for property acquisition for what is a local road. Bibb absolutely will not have to wait "several years" for reimbursement of right of way acquisition expenses. Georgia DOT agreed last December, as an accommodation to the County, to make periodic reimbursements of these costs. We so informed Commission officials then and again just this past July. We do this at considerable risk. It is an exception to the way other local governments are reimbursed; we are doing so to help Bibb County. As to so-called "soft" project costs, never on any local project in any city or county in the state has Georgia DOT paid for these administrative expenses that local governments incur on their own projects. County staff knows this as well as we have explained it on multiple occasions.

Innuendo implying the Department is trying to somehow punish Bibb County is incorrect. What was never mentioned at the Commission meeting or in the *Telegraph's* reporting was that the County requested to change the previously agreed upon terms that they purchase the property by instead requesting the Department handle the procurement of the property. The correspondence cited was in response to that written request – informing them that the Department would not perform the actual property acquisition. We have never deviated from our original position; we will periodically reimburse Bibb's actual property costs with state and federal transportation funds. Yes, we did turn down the County's request to either perform the property acquisition ourselves or fund the County's administrative costs. And yes, the current status of the Forest Hill Road project was a factor in that decision, but not so in the context of exacting retribution. Rather, Forest Hill was cited as an example of what can happen: the Jeffersonville Road project is more complex with a very definite potential for complications and local controversy; the Department has limited financial and human resources at our disposal and a responsibility to use them wisely; and as Forest Hill proves, even worthy projects can be delayed.

The Georgia Department of Transportation has professional, positive working relationships with virtually all of the state's hundreds of communities. We work very hard to assist them all in meeting their transportation needs. That is part of our job. We often are called arrogant when, in reality, we simply are implementing local projects from locally adopted transportation plans. We understand; it's part of the job. Another part of that job, however, is to be a responsible steward of the taxpayer money entrusted to us.

We always seek to improve our performance and will continue to do so – in Bibb County and throughout Georgia.

Sincerely,

Keith Golden
Commissioner

