



MAINTAINING AND PROTECTING OUR ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Each year, more than three trillion miles are traveled on America's roads, with a considerable amount of those – more than 113 billion -- occurring right here in Georgia. Our location and excellent road network means Georgia serves as a prime connecting route for vacationers and for freight movement. Georgia is the main route by which tourists from all over the USA and Canada reach popular year-round southern vacation destinations. And when we add the increasing numbers of tractor trailers traveling throughout the state, our roads are usually crowded.

So why is it that every summer, the Georgia Department of Transportation carries out statewide construction projects that further delay traffic?

Roads, like anything else, require maintenance and upkeep to stay in a state of good repair and the warm summer months are best suited to carry out this work in the shortest possible time.

We are all excited when we cut the ribbon on a new transportation project. Yet, it is important to note that as soon as the ribbon is cut, that project goes on the maintenance list and has to be maintained going forward.

For roads, a typical life cycle covers about 15 years. Once a road is constructed and opened to traffic, deterioration begins immediately. Temperature changes, precipitation, and the wear and tear from cars and trucks all play a role. Deterioration starts out as small cracks, stress points and even settling. This type of deterioration is normal and generally repairable if caught early. If left unchecked, the level of deterioration becomes more visible, ultimately resulting in failure of the road surface through disintegration. Maintenance, preservation and routine resurfacing must be performed regularly to ensure the integrity of the pavement.

In the last three years, the Department has completed 357 resurfacing and repaving projects during the spring and summer seasons. By embarking on the resurfacing at the time it is needed, the life cycle of the pavement can be extended for years, and provide a more comfortable surface for vehicles traveling on the roads.

Preventive maintenance saves taxpayer dollars from more costly repairs later; it keeps the roadway from total deterioration and preserves one of our most valuable assets – our transportation system. The costs associated with delaying maintenance can be staggering –up to 14 times more than the cost of proper maintenance. In other words, a total reconstruction project generally costs \$14 for every \$1 in preventative maintenance costs that would have been spent if repairs had been made as needed. Beyond the greater costs due to delayed maintenance, the time required to bring roadways back to useable conditions is more extensive and causes even more inconvenience to motorists.

The Federal Highway Administration stresses the need for maintaining roads and bridges to enhance safety, provide mobility, promote economic development and ensure a usable transportation system for the future. Good roads are the route to everything from education, jobs, vacations, shopping and entertainment. For these reasons, we try to minimize interruptions to traffic flow as much as possible. Summer construction causes delays and inconvenience, but it is vital to Georgia's economic growth, to preserve one of our most valuable assets and to our quality of life.

Finally, above all else we are committed to the safety of the travelling public and the dedicated men and women at Georgia DOT who strive to provide the excellent level of service that our citizens deserve. So, for your protection and theirs, please be patient; slow down; and drive cautiously through our construction zones.

Vance C. Smith, Jr. is Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation