

January 19, 2007
Marietta Daily Journal

Cobb puts SPLOST projects in motion
Amanda Casciaro - Staff Writer

PINE MOUNTAIN - Revenues from a 1-cent Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax have exceeded what Cobb commissioners initially projected by about \$4.5 million in the first year, but a federal funding shortfall has caused unwanted delays for many road projects.

Rather than wait for later appropriations from the U.S. Department of Transportation, commissioners have decided the best remedy is to concentrate federal dollars on larger projects such as the \$15.4 million Powder Springs Connector and a \$19 million phase of Big Shanty Connector from Busbee Parkway to Chastain Meadows Parkway.

Those projects now are in the county's long-range plan.

"What we've done is modify the schedule to get more projects moving forward faster," Cobb Transportation Department Director David Montanye said.

An unexpected \$66 million less from the U.S. Transportation Department in this year's Transportation Improvement Plan also has led to reductions in the scope of some projects.

The Windy Hill flyover bridge, for example, which already had a concept design, did not gain public support from surrounding businesses and residents.

That project, along with the South Barrett Reliever, has been moved to the long-range plan with construction to begin sometime in 2012.

The public input process also is expected to slow completion of widening projects on Cobb Parkway, which officials hope will alleviate congestion on South Cobb Drive.

Despite federal shortfalls and "the Katrina factor" of rising costs, "we need to get more dirt moving," Cobb Commission Chairman Sam Olens said.

Eighteen projects have been completed or awarded construction contracts including several intersection and bridge projects that were county staff completed to save time and money.

Intersections at Bob Cox and Dallas Highway, Old Highway 41 and Airport Road, and Midway at Luther Ward were completed in 2006.

In 2007, commissioners have agreed to an "accelerated" SPLOST improvement schedule that includes beginning construction on 45 transportation projects.

"We want to move very rapidly on this," Montanye said.

acasciaro@mdjonline.com