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Completed US 27 widening brings hopes of increased tourism and development to Randolph County

The first fully funded Transportation Investment Act (TIA) project to begin construction was recently completed in Randolph County. The \$31 million project widened a segment of US 27/SR 1 completing a continuous four-lane route that connects motorists as far south to Florida and north to Indiana.

While construction of the project took less than three years, the widening of this segment of US 27 was over 30 years in the making. According to Randolph County Commission Chair Jimmy Bradley, the initial talks of widening the corridor began decades ago, but just as the planning was completed and the project was to begin construction, funding fell away.

“It was just sitting there on the shelf, pretty much ready to go, and we were starting to think that we’d just never get it done,” Bradley said. “When TIA came, we thought, finally, here’s our chance to make this happen and our folks were happy to put their own pennies on the line to push this forward.”

In September 2013, the project did finally move forward with the help of TIA. Bradley said that the project is already showing signs it was worth the wait. One goal of the project was to give drivers an alternative north-south route to I-75, which for the community surrounding the project meant a greater opportunity to attract travelers to the local businesses.

“We are already seeing cars cruise through town with license plates from counties all over Georgia and out of state, so the project is paying off. It’s been great for our local businesses,” Bradley said.

Patricia Goodman, President of the Randolph County Chamber of Commerce, hopes that the project will attract not only more economic and community development interest in the area.

“We’d like businesses and investors to realize that there is a lot of potential for industry development in Randolph and that has only improved with the new logistics and transportation opportunities the US 27 project will provide,” Goodman said. “With industry comes community, and we hope people will see our quality of life, and decide to become residents.”

Goodman also related the importance that US 27 plays in local tourism. As part of a local initiative with the Highway 27 Association, Goodman said a study was commissioned to learn what types of travelers were using the highway.

“We learned that people that were choosing {US} 27 were usually couples, with no young children, more often than not were travelling with dogs, and liked to take their time exploring the local communities – key information that will help us, and local businesses, accommodate visitors,” Goodman said.

Based on this information, the Chamber is working with the cities throughout the County to design a series of driving tours that highlight historical churches, courthouses, cemeteries, and other points of interest in part of Georgia that dates back to 1820s. Bradley said having a four-lane road with limited traffic lights that is surrounded by areas of rich historical significance, makes hopping off the interstate an easy decision for drivers.

“If you’re heading north or south you may as well enjoy the scenic route,” Bradley said.

Forty-six counties and their respective cities comprise the three regional districts that approved the TIA referendum in July 2012. Cumulatively, they are expected to self-generate approximately \$1.6 Billion in new revenue dedicated to local transportation improvements. All projects were selected by regional commission roundtables of local elected officials after much public input. Seventy-five percent of the revenues will be utilized for the construction of these roundtable pre-selected projects while the remaining 25 percent will be disbursed to the regions’ governments each month on a predetermined formula basis for discretionary use on local transportation-related efforts. For more information on Georgia DOT, please visit www.dot.ga.gov or you also may follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/transportationinvestmentact) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/TIAatGDOT>).