



## **BRYAN COUNTY 144 WIDENING GETS BOOST FROM STATE, PROJECT NOW ON TRACK TO BEGIN IN 2018**

**RICHMOND HILL, GA – January 26, 2018** – Bryan County's transportation infrastructure plans are rolling along at a good clip. One such project – the long-anticipated 144 widening – received a substantial boost on Thursday when it was once again added to Georgia's 2018 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program list.

Previously, the widening had been pushed back to the 2025 STIP project list, meaning residents and visitors would continue to deal with increasing traffic problems for the better part of a decade. However, Bryan County officials teamed up with officials from the City of Richmond Hill, as well as area legislators, Department of Transportation officials and advocates to emphasize the importance of the project and lobby for its placement on the 2018 list. Their persistence paid off, they learned Thursday. The 144 widening will now be funded and is slated to move forward.

Those who partnered to push the project to the forefront include Bryan County Commission Chairman Carter Infinger, Richmond Hill Mayor Russ Carpenter, County Administrator Ben Taylor, Rep. Ron Stephens, Senator Ben Watson, Rep. Jesse Petrea, Department of Transportation planner Jay Roberts, Richmond Hill City Manager Chris Lovell, DOT representative Ann Purcell, and local transportation advocate Steve Croy.

"We are very excited about the widening of 144 and the county has already started engineering work on roundabouts and other areas in anticipation of this initiative," said Infinger. "There was a lot of work behind the scenes to reach this decision and I could not be more delighted."

"This collaboration is a prime example of the county and the city working together," Carpenter said. "People think we're so much at odds, but that's just not the case. If we hadn't worked together on this, it wouldn't be happening. The 144 widening is something we've all been working on for 10 years now, and we're finally going to see it come to fruition. To say it's good news is an understatement."

Stephens concurred and also credited the previous Bryan County and Richmond Hill administrations for getting the ball rolling.

"Former Mayor Harold Fowler and Commission Chair Jimmy Burnsed worked on this, too. It's way overdue," Stephens said. He acknowledged the work will cause a few traffic headaches as the project gets under way but, in the long run, the benefits to residents will be worth it.

"It reminds of folks who work out a lot, looking toward the future. They say, 'No pain, no gain.' And that's true here. It'll be painful for a short while but ultimately, the project is very beneficial for this fast-growing county. They'll finally get some relief from traffic problems."

Other recently approved projects that will offer drivers some respite include plans for two major intersections. Last week, the Bryan County Commission gave the OK on funding for engineering intersections at Belfast River Road/Harris Trail and Belfast River Road/Belfast Keller Road.

The county is also exploring options with Highway 17 and Belfast Keller, according to Bryan County Administrator Ben Taylor. "This is all in preparation for the passage of the upcoming TSPLOST referendum which will provide construction funds," he said. "We want these projects ready to go if it passes."

For more information on Bryan County, please visit [www.bryancountyga.org](http://www.bryancountyga.org) or call 912-653-5252 or 912-756-3177.

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