

**STATE TRANSPORTATION BOARD OF GEORGIA  
MINUTES**

**Georgia Ports Authority  
2 Main Street  
Garden City, Georgia 31408**

**October 17, 2024  
9:00 a.m.**

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ann R. Purcell, Chairman  
Jamie Boswell, Vice Chairman  
Cathy Williams  
Robert L. Brown Jr.  
Rudy Bowen  
Curt Thompson  
Tim Golden  
Jeff Lewis  
Dan Snipes  
Micah Gravley

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Dennis McEntire  
Stacey Key  
Emily Dunn  
Dana Lemon

**DOT STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:**

Russell McMurry, Commissioner  
Brad Saxon, Deputy Commissioner  
Meg Pirkle, Chief Engineer  
Andrew Heath, Deputy Chief Engineer  
Matt Markham, Deputy Director of Planning

Chair Purcell called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Rudy Bowen gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Purcell called for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 2024 board meeting; Tim Golden made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Dan Snipes and unanimously approved. \*

Meg Pirkle, Chief Engineer, gave a report on the Letting results for Fiscal Year 2025, the September 2024 Letting results and the projects in the November 2024 Letting. Chair Purcell

called for a motion to approve the November 2024 Letting; Robert Brown made a motion to approve the November Letting, seconded by Rudy Bowen and unanimously approved.

Matt Markham, Deputy Director of Planning, presented two additions to the Construction Work Program that will be brought to the board for action next month. He then presented four revisions he brought to the board last month for approval. Chair Purcell asked for a motion to approve the revisions to the Construction Work Program. Rudy Bowen made a motion to approve the changes to the Construction Work Program, seconded by Micah Gravley and unanimously approved.

Trevor Brown, P3 Post-Let Design-Build Assistant Administrator, and Meg Pirkle, Chief Engineer, gave an update on Savannah Area projects. Trevor discussed the I-16 at I-95 Improvement Projects which includes the I-95/I-16 Interchange, the widening of I-16 from I-95 to I-516, the Chatham Parkway Bridge repair, and the I-516 Interchange area.

Meg Pirkle then began her presentation on the US 17/SR 404 Spur Bridge Major Maintenance Project. The SR 404/US 17 Bridge Spur across the Savannah River serves as a gateway for ships calling on the Port of Savannah, located upriver from the bridge. With a vertical clearance of 185 feet, the bridge effectively limits passage from an ever-larger fleet of ships seeking to access the Port. GDOT has partnered with the Georgia Ports Authority to study long term improvement alternatives to address these clearance limitations. The existing bridge air draft limits the passage of Port of Savannah-bound vessels up to approximately 14,000 TEUs. For these large ships, Savannah harbor master pilots prefer a minimum 3-foot air draft clearance between the bottom of the bridge and the top any structure on the ship. Four feet are required between the bottom of the ship and the channel floor, referred to as the under-keel clearance. She discussed the new bridge option and a tunnel option. The bridge alternative allows traffic to be maintained during construction and this option has greater impact on the Back River bridge than the tunnel. Future refinements include evaluating the location of piers and straddle bents, and again, finding ways to manage future traffic growth in the area. The other option, the upstream bored tunnel, will be advanced. This tunnel also allows traffic to be maintained during construction and would eliminate future vertical clearance concerns. FHWA recognizes this as a major project and wants to ensure that our public outreach is inclusive and meaningful. The Project was introduced to FHWA on 3/04/2024 and to the City of Savannah on 04/02/2024. It has been discussed with community access to computers, recommended languages for Public Involvement materials, input on times and venues for public and stakeholder meetings. Moving forward, GDOT plans to schedule regular calls with the city and county jointly to share project updates and coordinate as needed. The Approved Concept Report is estimated for Q4 of 2025.

Commissioner Russell McMurry gave the monthly department report including transportation fund collections ending September 2024; total employment figures ending September 2024; and the monthly procurement report for September 2024.

The commissioner moved on to highlight four projects open to traffic: Bridge replacement on SR 377/South Lee Street in Sumter County (Congressional District 2, GDOT District 3); Roundabout construction at the intersection of SR 372 and Birmingham Road in Fulton County (Congressional District 6, GDOT District 7); Resurfacing on SR 120 from SR 120 Alternate to the Fulton County Line in Cobb County (Congressional District 6 and 11, GDOT District 7); Widening and reconstruction on SR 24 from east of Chambers Brooks Road to west of Helton Lane in Washington County (Congressional District 12 and GDOT District 2).

Commissioner McMurry discussed the preparations and recovery of Hurricane Helene. On September 22<sup>nd</sup> emergency operations began messaging for a potential storm off the coast of Mexico. GDOT began initial preparations on Monday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> by creating WebEOC event, issuing project numbers, rest area discussions, and weather briefings. On Wednesday, October 9<sup>th</sup> Helene became a hurricane and GDOT continued internal preparations, districts readying personnel and equipment, extra staffing at rest areas, situation reports for the agency begin, liaisons deployed to district EOC's, weather briefings. On Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup> Helene crossed Georgia and when safe GDOT began emergency road clearance, damage assessments, and assesses the needs and priorities statewide. GDOT responded to resource requests throughout the state, strike teams to push debris, traffic equipment, motor graders, message boards, assisting electric companies with temporary closures/pacing for repairing power lines over the interstate.

Bridge inspections are occurring throughout the state, in total 127 bridges were inspected. Concurrently, Hurricane Milton formed on October 5<sup>th</sup>. GDOT responded to Milton and the heavy influx of Florida evacuees by activating 3rd shift at rest areas, putting CHAMP on 24/7 operations, monitoring the evacuee traffic, sharing social media information, and communications with FDOT. Governor Kemp also declared a State of Emergency for Hurricane Milton. The department continues to work with debris contractors, hauling and pushing in our districts and are preparing to file for FEMA and FHWA reimbursements while, again, filing for Hurricane Debby.

The Commissioner shared stats and photos surrounding the storms and thanked all the dedicated employees who participated in the clean-up effort. The maximum number of State Routes and Interstates blocked initially: 305 impacts to state routes and Interstates (181 closed/blocked and 124 passable) and the current number of blockages on system by county (w/power line): 0. With 34 approved debris sites, and 1 pending there were 216,461.65 CY hauled after the storm.

Finally, the commissioner closed out his report by remembering one of our own, Johnny Floyd who served on the State Transportation Board for 12 years. He asked everyone to observe a moment of silence for our friend and colleague Johnny.

Chair Purcell thanked the Georgia Ports Authority and the City of Savannah again for hosting the State Transportation Board for their monthly meeting. She stated that the board greatly enjoyed their tours and their visit to the City of Savannah.

There being no further business, Chair Purcell adjourned the board meeting at 10:27 a.m.

**Approved:**

**Respectfully submitted**

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Ann R. Purcell., Chair

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Dennis McEntire, Secretary

**\*Denotes documentation in file.**