



Stop I-3 Coalition Newsletter

March, 2007

Coalition taps new executive director, approves board officer transitions

The Stop I-3 Coalition is pleased to announce the hiring of Holly Demuth as its new executive director, effective immediately, and the election of Lucy Bartlett of Tiger, Georgia, as chair of the organization.

— Stop I-3 Board of Directors

Demuth, a graduate of Agnes Scott College, most recently served as development director of the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy in Hendersonville, North Carolina. Before that, she worked as a development associate for the Community Foundation of Henderson County, and as a National Park Service ranger.

Bartlett, previously vice-chair of the coalition, succeeds Greg Kidd of Asheville, who remains on the board. Ted Doll of Sautee-Nacoochee, Georgia, takes over from Bartlett as vice-chairman.

“We are pleased to see Holly come on board, and look forward to what I am sure will be excellent and strong performance,” said Bartlett.

Demuth holds a master’s degree in secondary science from Georgia State University. She is an avid hiker.

From the director

Why Stop I-3? Looking at what our intricate interstate system in the United States has enabled over the past 50 years, why not support an addition to this web of progress? Myriad reasons for not doing so have been articulated on this website via resolutions signed by county boards of commissioners, town councils, and a planning and economic development commission; through research papers, and through news articles and editorials.

We support progress, acknowledging that progress looks different in rural areas than it does in large metro areas. We claim a sustainable blueprint that is congruent with the unique cultural and natural aspects of this region, which inherently nourishes those who dwell here.

This board of directors perseveres with tenacity, skill, and finesse in navigating these choppy waters. This month we welcome our new board chair, Lucy Bartlett. Lucy has been an integral part of the Stop I-3 movement from the beginning, initially as Rabun County’s spokeswoman, and this past year serving as board vice-chair. It is an honor to serve under and with such able leadership, both from the new chair and the entire board of directors, as we foster prosperity.

Will you join me to help Stop I-3? With the support of all the people, with an understanding of, and sense of worth, in what is unique to this area, and with a well-articulated vision of what represents progress in this mountainous region, we most certainly will. In doing so, we all come to better understand and integrate what is essential to the well being of our irreplaceable treasures.

— Holly Demuth, Stop I-3 Coalition executive director



Georgia officials eye new highway tax

Georgia highway officials, legislators and the highway lobby are floating the idea of a \$20 billion public transportation initiative, financed by a one-cent increase in the state sales tax, for new roads across the state, including a reconfigured “Northern Arc” that would stretch for Interstate 85 to Interstate 75.

The plan put forward early this month would aim to cure some of the many traffic woes in the Atlanta metropolitan area, while throwing rural Georgia a bone – in the form of promises to pave all public dirt roads in the state.

Initial reaction to the plan has been tempered by political reality – that is, that rural Georgia voters might not vote for a new tax that would benefit Atlanta disproportionately.

Metro Atlanta officials also are floating their own transportation tax proposal, which would affect metro taxpayers only.

— Joseph Gatins, Stop I-3 Coalition board member



GDOT collateral damage

The Georgia Department of Transportation has paid more than \$50,000 in fines to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division after highway construction fouled a creek in Rabun County, according to a report in The Gainesville Times. The incident took place last August along U.S. 441 between Clayton and Tallulah Falls, where the highway builders are converting a



six-mile segment of the road to four lanes, with completion expected in June.

Bert Langley, manager of the EPD's mountain district in Cartersville, said EPD inspectors visiting the site in August found "significant failure of slopes, where a big chunk of the hill had slid into Tiger Creek."

Langley said the incident highlights a problem that is common with GDOT projects, the newspaper reported.

"The DOT is the largest land-disturbing entity in the state," Langley said. "Georgia's erosion and sedimentation law specifically exempted the DOT from control by local issuing authorities (for land-disturbance permits), with the understanding that the DOT's own Environmental Compliance Bureau would monitor the sites. But the DOT is understaffed."

While procedures are in place to try to guard against such problems, GDOT spokesman David Spear suggested erosion control failures are common on such highway projects. "I wish (the Rabun incident) were an isolated case, but unfortunately it's not," Spear told The Times.



— Ted Doll, Stop I-3 Coalition board vice chair

So, what's happening to the I-3 study?



Currently, the proposed \$1.4m each studies of I-3 and I-14 are awaiting the selection of an outside contractor who will execute them for the Federal Highway Administration. The contractor selection process requires the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) by the FHWA to interested parties and the subsequent review and selection of winners from the submitting bidders. To date these RFPs have not been issued due to competing higher priority projects within the FHWA Contracting Office and complications caused by the fact that the past Congress did not complete the FY 2007 Appropriations Bill prior to adjourning. As of this writing, we have been unable to get a serious estimate of when the procurement process might get started. When it does, it could take as many as several months to get completed, the contracts issued and the studies underway.

Photo by Larry Winslett

One of the earlier causes for delay of the studies involved the questions of who should lead and manage them and how to come up with the required 20% state funding. Responsibility was initially delegated by the FHWA to the state of Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). GDOT, however, declined the lead and sent the project back to the FHWA.

Then there was the problem of coming up with each involved state's share of the required 20%. For the I-14 study, both Alabama and Mississippi agreed to participate. In the case of I-3, however, neither North Carolina nor Tennessee agreed to participate, even though the proposed road will pass through their states and impact their established transportation plans. GDOT then agreed to foot the whole bill for all three states using \$330,000 of Georgian provided gas tax funding to do so. This was apparently done without any senior state executive or legislative review.

For those interested, the FHWA has a website for these studies at www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/sec1927corridors.htm.

— Charley Kraus, Stop I-3 Coalition board member

"Burma Shave' campaign update



We are still in the process of getting out our Burma Shave signs through out the area. If you are interested in a set of signs please contact Sandy Lyndon by calling 706.754.0046 or by email at bandit@bbinc.org Help us to educate the public about Interstate 3 by placing a set of signs on your pasture fencing or in your yard near highways that have good traffic flow. It's best to have 200 feet or more for spacing unless you are in an area where the traffic is 45 MPH or slower. Here are the slogans to choose from:

The wildlife calls
Out to the brave
This is my home
You must save
STOP I-3

Roll the dice
Wait and see
Will they take
My home from me?
STOP I-3

From the Mountains
To the Sea

That little store
Where I bought gas
Is now a concrete
Overpass.
STOP I-3

They took my house
They took my bed
They took the
Whole darn watershed!
STOP I-3

The wildlife needs
The water clean

I used to gaze
At pretty stars.
But now the lights
Are trucks and cars!
STOP I-3

Smoky Mountains
Will be lost.
The smoke will soon
Be truck exhaust!
STOP I-3

So we get there
A little late

Protect the beauty
That we see
STOP I-3

Fields and meadows
And trees of green
STOP I-3

We do not need
An interstate
STOP I-3

This freeway is
A thing to stop
Proclaim it from
The mountaintop!
STOP I-3

— Sandy Lyndon, Stop I-3 Coalition board member

More on nuclear transport policies and I-3



In previous newsletters we mentioned the opportunity for public comment on an Environmental Impact Statement scoping process on Complex 2030, the Department of Energy's plan to revamp the nuclear weapons complex, partially located at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and the Savannah River Site in South Carolina, both of which are located on all proposed I-3 corridors. The Stop I-3 Coalition submitted a comment requesting that nuclear transport between facilities be considered in assessing the potential impact of these plans.

The Department of Energy now reports that it heard about 350 comments at hearings and received over 32,000 e-mails commenting on Complex 2030. The DOE reports that, "the majority of comments asked DOE to add an alternative that assumes continued reduction in the size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile." Please see <http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa/process/II/March2007IIqr.pdf>, page 3.

Also in the same DOE newsletter, at (<http://www.eh.doe.gov/nepa/process/II/March2007IIqr.pdf> page1) is an update on the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) which is also going through an EIS process with an opportunity for public comment. The GNEP would potentially greatly increase nuclear transport in our region including shipments of high-level radioactive waste from all over the country to the Savannah River Site and Barnwell, S.C., facilities. This could involve both the I-3 and I-14 routes, as well as international transport through the Port of Savannah. For more information on the GNEP, please see www.gnep.gov. The deadline for public comment on GNEP is April 4, 2007. Please see <http://www.gnep.gov/pdfs/gnepNOI010407.pdf>

The Stop I-3 Coalition will continue to monitor nuclear activities in the region, which may increase the pressure to build I-3.

— John Clarke, Stop I-3 Coalition Board Member

“Private Cities” bill promotes road-building

The Georgia state senate is considering a bill that would allow developers and owners of large tracts of land to issue bonds and levy taxes on residents of those developments, powers that only cities and counties now enjoy. Senate Bill 200 and a related constitutional amendment, SR 309, would encourage development in rural areas by providing money to build infrastructure, like water and sewage disposal systems. These “special districts” or private cities, would have their own elected boards and the power to assess residents with fees and property taxes above and beyond those imposed by local government.



Advocates of the bill say it is needed to help finance new developments in rural areas. But opponents say the bill is not needed, and would encourage urban sprawl and “leapfrog” development, in which new developments gobble up pristine forest and agricultural land.

One of the most troubling aspects of the bill is that it would encourage development of additional highways to reach new developments in the hinterlands. This would destroy valuable farms and forestlands, and the cost of such highways would have to be paid by county and state taxpayers.

— Ted Doll, Stop I-3 Coalition board vice chair

STOP I-3 brochures available!



The Coalition has developed a new, handsome and informative brochure to provide the public with basic information about the coalition and its aims. Contact Ginny Heckel, at gheckel@wt.net to secure enough copies for your next community event.

