

## **2006 SPLOST Project Overview**

## Overview

This overview is provided as an information guide to the 2006 SPLOST project recommendations. These projects were selected for SPLOST funding based on community service priorities, economic development potential, and county-wide impact. It is a slate of projects that will improve the County's transportation corridors, protect public safety, grow the local economy, and receive community support. Project selection was based on a rigorous and thorough review process. The task of creating the SPLOST project list spanned over four months and involved a collaborative effort between the County and the cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins. From an initial project list of over \$239 million, a list was selected based on the following criteria:

- County Commissioner and City Council priorities;
  - Viability and economic development Potential;
  - Leveraging of other funding sources;
  - Impact on the operating budget; and,
  - Community impact/citizen support.

This resulting 2006 SPLOST project list totals \$130,000,000 and funds projects that address all major County needs that can be legally addressed in SPLOST.

## **1. Road, Street, Bridge and Sidewalk Improvements \$100,675,000**

The road improvement projects identified in the 2006 SPLOST are designed to provide the transportation infrastructure necessary to support our growing population and economy. Houston County's population is growing in both number and diversity. We are becoming a more urban county with increasingly higher levels of congestion.

These funds will be used to widen streets and improve intersections on major arterial and collector routes. Due to tremendous increase in vehicular traffic, streets must be widened or constructed to help alleviate congestion. The transportation of goods and services, as well as people, is vital to our community. It is anticipated that the County will spend \$100,675,000 to meet current and future transportation needs. These funds will be used to prepare plans, acquire rights-of way, move utilities and construct road improvements on key transportation corridors. The Department of Transportation will likely contribute additional funding to assist with this effort.

Most road projects were selected in accordance with the planning guidelines outlined in the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS). Through the planning process, WRATS has developed a local transportation plan that has been adopted by all participating governments. Many of the road projects in the WRATS plan are included in the 2006 SPLOST. Moreover, over 80% of these road projects will serve the new schools being constructed by the Board of Education.

**2. Water and/or Sewer Improvements** **\$10,025,000**

Houston County and the cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins each have comprehensive plans that outline the orderly replacement and expansion of the community's water and sewer systems. These dollars will be utilized to replace and upgrade present facilities in order to provide quality water and sewer services throughout the County. For example, Houston County plans to expand and enhance its water system in south Houston County primarily in the Haynesville, Henderson and Elko areas. Centerville plans on extending sewer along Houston Lake Road to serve the growing area to its north. The City of Perry needs to upgrade its sewer treatment plant and extending water and sewer mains in its newly annexed areas. Warner Robins plans on replacing 40 year old water lines and terra cotta sewer lines north of Watson and east on North Houston Road.

**3. Acquiring, Constructing and Equipping Public Safety Facilities** **\$7,100,000**

The cities of Perry and Warner Robins will use these funds primarily to construct new fire stations and purchase new fire trucks to serve city residents and maintain current ISO ratings. Rapid growth in southwest Warner Robins has made it necessary to build a new fire station somewhere around State Route 96 between Moody Road and South Houston Lake Road. In order to maintain current response times, a second ladder truck has also been proposed. The ladder truck will help adequately fight fires in large commercial buildings and schools as well. Warner Robins also plans to construct a new law information center and crime lab. The police department has outgrown its existing facilities which it's occupied since the early 1970's. The new facility will house all the forensic and crime lab functions and will be equipped with the latest technological equipment.

The City of Perry is growing rapidly to the northeast and to the south. It will utilize its funds to construct and equip two fire stations to serve citizens in these areas. Like Warner Robins, these stations and equipment are necessary to protect the public safety of Perry's residents and maintain its current ISO rating. Perry has also earmarked a portion of its SPLOST funds to improve a 50 year old animal control facility, upgrading and increasing kennel size, office space and work rooms to improve animal care.

**4. Library Improvements** **\$5,225,000**

All three branches of the Houston County Library are too small. The Centerville branch has 4,500 sq. feet and a book circulation of 112,481. The number of people visiting the branch was 77,583. The building was built in 1993 and is located in a rapidly growing area and serves people from the cities of Warner Robins and Centerville as well as county residents.

The Perry Library has 12,000 sq. feet and a circulation of 120,600. The number of people visiting the branch was 67,916. This building was built in 1972 and enlarged in 1980. The Perry facility serves the citizens of Perry and the surrounding areas of south Houston County. The Perry area is growing with the population expected to double in the next 10 years.

The Nola Brantley Library in Warner Robins has 23,000 sq. feet and a circulation of 235,286. The number of people visiting the branch was 154,072. This building was built in 1976 with an

8,000 sq. foot addition in 2001. This library serves the citizens of Warner Robins, the students of Macon State College, RAFB residents and workers and the surrounding area. The population of this area is also increasing rapidly.

Local funding for the public libraries is \$5.41 per capita with no money for books. This per capita amount makes the library system number 49 out of 58 systems.

The Houston County Library Board held three small focus group meetings during the fall of 2005 and 1 large group meeting in order to identify its infrastructure needs. From these focus group meetings, the library board came up with the following plan:

- The size of Centerville should be tripled.
- A children's room should be added to Perry. This would allow more space for the adult collection and internet computers while giving children a space of their own.
- Warner Robins will renovate the present meeting room to use for a children's area. Small group rooms for studying or meeting will be added. A new state of the art meeting room will be added which will be used for training, library programs, and meetings. Storage will be added along with a sorting room for donations to be used by library staff and Friends of the Library. Space will also be added for more book stacks to hold both reference books and circulating materials.
- The SPLOST also contains money for books (materials) of \$117,000 per branch. This is an extremely important need for this library system.

**5. Constructing and Equipping a new Jail Pod **\$4,000,000****

In 2002, Houston County Sheriff Cullen Talton opened a new 506 bed detention facility to house 350 inmates. Since its opening, the cities of Centerville, Perry and Warner Robins have contracted with the County to house their inmates as well. This influx of municipal inmates combined with the county's rapid growth rate has caused the average inmate population to increase to 450 inmates in 2005. While the current inmate population is not an immediate concern, the long term growth trend is disturbing. In response, Commissioners have increased the number of court personnel to "fast track" inmates through the system in an effort to reduce the number of days an individual is incarcerated. Alternative sentencing programs such as work release and electronic monitoring or house arrest have also been implemented to reduce the inmate population. While these programs have been successful, it is evident that it will ultimately be necessary to build a jail addition. The 2006 SPLOST includes funds to construct an additional 86 bed housing pod near the end of the SPLOST program. If sufficient funds are available, a second housing pod will be constructed.

**6. Retire Previously Incurred Debt **\$2,575,000****

In 2000, Houston County and the City of Perry struck an agreement with the Houston County Development Authority to build a \$2,100,000 Speculative Building to attract new industry in the Perry Industrial Park. Houston County and Perry agreed to split the annual interest payment of

approximately \$100,000 until the facility was leased or sold to an industrial prospect. The SPLOST includes \$2,100,000 to pay off the debt service on this building and save the taxpayers future interest payments on this note. In addition, the City of Centerville will pay off \$475,000 in debt associated with the acquisition of a rescue truck, fire truck and construction of a fire station. Should the SPLOST not pass, the burden of paying this debt will continue to fall on property owners.

**7. Acquire, Construct and Equip Recreation Facilities for the City of Perry      \$400,000**

Increasing demand combined with aging facilities has made recreational spending a priority in the City of Perry. The 2006 SPLOST seeks to help create a parks and recreation system which will serve the residents of Perry now and well into the future. The SPLOST funds will be used to improve Rozar, Creekwood and Calhoun parks and continue constructing passive neighborhood parks that serve local neighborhoods. The City of Perry, in conjunction with other non-profit groups, will extend and install improvements within the Big Indian Creek Corridor Park.