

Sidewalk Progress at Veterans Home

By Catherine Dean

The planning stage of the new sidewalk along Vinson Highway in front of the Georgia War Veterans Home (GWVH) is nearly complete with groundbreaking soon to follow.

Dennis Mize, GWVH executive director, first contacted local officials more than a year ago concerning the lack of an adequate sidewalk for residents to use, especially those who are wheelchair bound. Many of the veterans choose to travel down the center of Vinson Highway—one of the most heavily traveled roads in the county—to visit local merchants.

“Once I witnessed our residents riding in their wheelchairs down the middle the highway, in heavy traffic, I knew we needed to act to resolve this issue,” said Mize.

Mize contacted local officials, who in turn reached out to Kyle Collins, the Georgia Department of Transportation District Two communications officer. “City and Council officials made me aware of the navigational issues the veterans were having along the sidewalk in front of their campus leading down Vinson Highway to McDade’s store,” said Collins.

Additionally, the portion of the sidewalk in front of Central State’s Allen Building lacks entry ramps that meet the American Disabilities Act requirements.

Collins felt the Dot’s Local Management and Improvement Grant (LMIG) program would be a perfect fit to provide funding to the project. The LMIG helps local governments achieve improvements to the state’s roadway network. The program allows local governments flexibility and faster project delivery and requires a funding match.

“The local governments receiving a LMIG must provide a 30 percent funding match,” said Collins.

According to Brian Wood, county engineer, the survey of the area is complete and plans have been drawn. “W.T. Dunahoo & Associates out of Winder, Georgia, did a fantastic job on creating the plans for the new sidewalk,” said Wood. “They had a lot of obstacles to work around including several power poles.”

The invitation for construction bids for the project was sent out in early March. The low-bid, at \$78,290, was received by the Sellers Construction Company.

All plans, along with the winning bid and match information, will be turned over to the DOT for final approval. Due to grant requirements, the project must start construction by June 30, 2016. Wood feels confident the sidewalk will be complete by this deadline.

“So many people have worked together to make this project possible including County Commissioners Hall and Craig, the Georgia DOT, and of course Ralph McMullen-our county manager,” said Wood.

Wood also recognizes those partners worked with one goal in mind-to provide a safe sidewalk for the GWVH residents. This sentiment is echoed by Mize. He said, “Our veterans deserve to exercise their rights to be as independent as possible and visit the local merchants of their choice, and do it safely.”