

It has been an exciting few years in Cobb. Less than two years ago, the Atlanta Braves announced that they will be moving to the Cumberland area and building a brand new world class ballpark and mixed use development. In addition, construction on the I-75 managed lane project is one-third of the way complete. Four new Class A office towers are underway for the first time in more than a dozen years and thousands of new jobs have been announced. And two weeks ago, the Georgia Department of Transportation announced a \$42 million funding partnership for multiple transportation projects in the Cumberland area.

Despite all of these successes for Cobb in the Galleria area there remains perceived issues with the multi-use bridge project. The bridge is proposed to provide a safe pedestrian connection between Cobb County's 2 major commercial and activity centers with 6,000 employees and the 363,000 guests who attend events at the Cobb Galleria Centre annually.

It seems to me to creating a connection between two of Cobb's largest investments in business and tourism is a win for everyone. Once completed, the facilities on either side of I-285 will complement and benefit the other. I am confident that future economic development and overnight convention prospects would also view this bridge as an asset during their decision making process.

Unfortunately, this \$9 million project has become a major distraction to a \$1.2 billion plan that is one of the most anticipated developments in Cobb County's history. Over the past several months, Team Cobb has been working in good faith with our partners at the Atlanta Galleria and the Coliseum & Exhibit Hall Authority toward an agreeable bridge concept and plan. While we are wrapping up the Bridge design and Circulator studies, our partners are conducting their own study and planning for an additional hotel.

While all of this work and coordination is necessary. Regrettably, we are no longer on schedule to complete bridge construction by the opening season at SunTrust Park. While this decision is not mine alone to make, I plan to make a motion that we postpone the implementation of this project.

Make no mistake about it, I am not rethinking the idea of the bridge. I continue to believe that the bridge would be a major asset to Cobb County. I know that future economic development and overnight convention prospects would also view this bridge as an asset during their decision making process.

Funding has been identified through the Cobb County SPLOST program and our annual Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. When our partners at the Galleria are ready to move forward, Team Cobb will be ready.

In the meantime, pedestrian safety remains a top priority and Cobb County will continue to stay laser focused on forward thinking transportation planning in this major activity center. We look forward to receiving the final results of the Cumberland District Circulator study and to the completion of dozens of projects underway to ensure a safe, efficient and enjoyable travel experience in the strongest and fastest growing commercial market in Cobb County.

The future is bright. This is a very exciting time in Cobb County! I am proud of how far we have come and I look forward to working with the Board of Commissioners to continue to make Cobb County THE place to live, work, AND PLAY BALL!

Timothy D. Lee



Chairman, Cobb County