



*Cobb County Government*

**2009 Annual Report**



# From the Chairman



**C**obb County Government is committed to providing the best services available for you and your family and we are constantly striving to find innovative ways to do more for less.

Cobb prides itself on being open and accountable to the public we diligently serve and this year we found ways to be even more accessible, such as using Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and iTunes to foster communication. Cobb's open policy did not go unnoticed. The county was rated a top-tier local government for doing business in an open way by [sunshinereview.org](http://sunshinereview.org) and earned a perfect score for transparency.

Cobb continues to be a leader in the region by stewarding our natural resources and this year developed and implemented a sustainable practices policy. From constructing energy-efficient buildings and implementing a departmental recycling program to hosting "green" summer camps, all aspects of the county made great strides to be environmentally-friendly. In fact, Cobb was the first county to earn the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities certification. Others are recognizing these efforts, including the Environmental Protection Agency who honored Cobb as one of only five national WaterSense Partners of the Year. The county took a leading role in promoting water efficiency and helped residents save water, energy and money on utility bills.

Finally, our greatest resource is our county employees. Following the tremendous flooding in September, these excellent employees found new ways to exceed our expectations. From working countless hours in rescue operations and aiding flood victims to inspecting every single bridge in the county, employees demonstrated their commitment to the well-being of our community.

It has been a great honor to serve as your county commission chairman in 2009 and I look forward to a very positive future for all of Cobb County.

*"Cobb continues to be a leader in the region by stewarding our natural resources."*



# District Commissioners



## **Helen Goreham, *Commissioner, District 1***

Despite current economic challenges, we continue to work diligently in District 1 to address the needs of our residents. Progress has been made in many areas, such as parks and recreation, transportation and government services. We maintained the aesthetic beauty of our community with a new sign ordinance that sets standards for residential and commercial properties. SPLOST projects are moving forward, including much-needed improvements to Stilesboro Road and Mars Hill Road. Renovations have begun at Powder Springs Station for our new senior center and government office complex. This year, the county unveiled the Cobb Safety Village and I am honored to have been intricately involved since the beginning. Significant recreation and quality-of-life opportunities were opened with approval of the master plan for passive use of the Bullard-Stockton property along Dallas Highway. These are just a few of the innovative and community-oriented projects that embody our commitment to excellence.



## **Bob Ott, *Commissioner, District 2***

Over the past year, it has been my honor to serve the residents of this district as the newest member of the Cobb Board of Commissioners. We have seen a great deal of progress and worked through difficult times. The historic flood brought damage to many areas, including east Cobb and Vinings. By taking a hands-on approach and clearing red tape, we've been able to help residents begin recovering and rebuilding. As a result of the sale of Merchant's Walk Library this year, the new East Cobb Library will be almost double the size and offer state-of-the-art amenities, including self-checkout stations. Transportation improvements continue around the district with the Powers Ferry Corridor Study and Johnson Ferry Corridor Study underway. Additional corridor studies are planned for South Cobb Drive, Atlanta Road and U.S. 41/ Cobb Parkway. I look forward to continuing to work together and building on this strong foundation.





**Tim Lee, Commissioner, District 3**

Cobb County has faced a difficult year financially due to the down economy. From the board rooms of our largest companies to the homeowner down the street, all of us have had to make tough decisions. For county government, these decisions included reducing expenses and finding more efficient ways to do business, all without reducing the level of service expected by our community. While holding a series of town hall meetings throughout the year, I heard first hand how the county is doing and what we can do to better serve the community. Many times some of the best ideas and most pointed critiques come directly from those we serve. So it is with a strong focus on increasing efficiency and forming new community partnerships that we enter another fiscally-challenging year. As District 3 commissioner, I will continue to encourage our residential, civic and business communities to work side-by-side toward the common goal of forging a solid future for Cobb County.



**Woody Thompson, Commissioner, District 4**

This year, we have worked hard to lay the foundations for continued improvement in District 4. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program has helped us rejuvenate the housing market in our area by using federal and state funds to acquire foreclosed residential properties. Almost three-fourths of the homes obtained through the program to date are in Austell, Mableton and Powder Springs. These properties are being redeveloped and sold to eligible individuals and families, helping them realize the dream of homeownership and strengthening pride in our neighborhoods. We are also working to establish a zoning classification in the Six Flags Drive area that encourages private sector investment in pedestrian-friendly, mixed-used developments. The area is great for this kind of redevelopment with its easy access to Interstate 20, Interstate 285 and downtown Atlanta. I will continue to work hand-in-hand with the county and community to enhance our quality of life.

# SPLOST Projects

**C**obb's Department of Transportation completed the fourth year of the six-year Transportation Improvement Program approved by voters in 2005. In the four years, DOT has started construction on more than 75 percent and completed construction on more than 50 percent of the 260 total projects in the program.

■ This year, about 55 projects, valued at \$70 million, were bid for construction.

■ Three school improvement projects were completed, leaving only three of the original 26 projects left. Six bridge rehabilitation and replacement projects were finished, completing all of the scheduled projects. In addition, 55 roads, or about 11 miles, were resurfaced.

*“DOT has started construction on more than 75 percent of the SPLOST projects.”*

■ In March, ground was broken for Noonday Creek Trail, which will cover six miles when completed. The trail will be built in phases and eventually start on Old Highway 41, connect with the Kennesaw Mountain trail, continue behind Town Center Mall and end at Bells Ferry Road.

■ Construction of the trail is being funded by SPLOST, the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Town Center Community Improvement



District and the federal government.

■ Cobb DOT is constructing a three-story, 20,000 square foot Traffic Management Center that will serve as a state-of-the-art facility to help improve traffic flow and reduce congestion by monitoring traffic incidents and remotely managing signals. The facility will include a video wall for observing traffic conditions and travel and weather data.

■ This will help provide the public with accurate and timely traffic information. Workers at the facility will also be able to share pertinent information with emergency response providers and other agencies in Cobb and metro Atlanta. SPLOST is partially-funding this project and it is set to open in the spring.

■ The \$110 million expansion of the Cobb County jail facility continued this year on time and within budget. Construction of the visitor

## Metro Area Sales Tax Comparison

Atlanta	8%
Fulton	7%
DeKalb	7%
Gwinnett	6%
COBB	6%

and administrative buildings was completed, as well as expansion and renovation of the laundry and kitchen areas. Work on the housing tower continues and should be completed by the beginning of 2010. Once done the expansion will add more than 320,000 square feet and 1,152 beds to the jail.

■ With the opening of the visitor building this year, many functions, including records, bonding and inmate visitation, were relocated to the new facility. Video conferencing is now available and offers increased security, decreased costs and more convenience for the public.

■ In May, Cobb dignitaries broke ground for the new courthouse complex, which will combine all of the county's court services on one campus and allow Juvenile Court to move to downtown Marietta. The new building will also provide state-of-the-art security and a larger jury assembly room. The courthouse should be open for business in spring 2011.

■ Construction continues on the Windy Hill

## Sample Cobb Property Tax Bill

Homestead Exemptions:

\$10,000 County BOC / \$10,000 Schools / \$2,000 State

Based on residential home with market value of \$180,000

**County Schools (BOE) \$1,171.80**

**Maintenance & Operations \$1,171.80**

**County Government (BOC) \$623.00**

**General Fund \$422.84**

**Fire District \$184.32**

**Debt Service \$15.84**

**State Government \$17.50**

**TOTAL \$1,812.30**

**(BOE) 65% \$1,171.80**

**(BOC) 34% \$623.00**

**(State) 1% \$17.50**

**TOTAL \$1,812.30**

Other exemptions include BOC Floating Homestead Exemption & BOE Exemption for homeowners over 62

Road-Macland Road connector. A portion of phase one is complete and includes a new underpass opened to Callaway Road traffic. Improvements will help alleviate traffic on the Powder Springs/Austell Road corridors by adding an additional route for west Cobb commuters to reach U.S. 41 and Interstate 75. The roadway is set to open in spring 2011.

■ SPLOST information is updated monthly and available at [cobbcip.org](http://cobbcip.org).

**T**he American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided funds for new community-oriented programs, such as the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. Several existing programs also received additional funding.

■ The Neighborhood Stabilization Program helps Cobb stem the decline of home values by acquiring and redeveloping foreclosed properties in areas of greatest need. It also helps workforce individuals and families become homeowners.

■ Cobb was once again provided independent evidence of its fiscal strength. For the 13th consecutive year, the county earned AAA ratings for its general obligation bonds from the nation's three major rating agencies, Standard and Poor's,

Fitch Ratings and Moody's Investment Service. Cobb is among the top 1 percent nationwide with only about 20 counties achieving this prestigious status.

■ In February, the Cobb Board of Commissioners approved the new Commercial and Industrial Property Rehabilitation Incentive Program, which encourages owners of older commercial use or industrial properties in select areas to revitalize those properties. This incentive will help create jobs and improve the county's tax base.

■ The Atlanta Regional Commission awarded Cobb County and the City of Atlanta a joint \$120,000 Livable Centers Initiative grant to promote quality growth and enhance livability in the Donald Lee Hollowell/Veterans Memorial corridor. The study will explore how to take advantage of the area's potential for mixed-use centers, strengthen existing industrial uses and improve mobility and accessibility to all modes of transportation. Once the study plan is complete, it will be eligible for a larger amount of federal funding to implement recommended projects.

■ The Georgia National Guard assumed ownership of the former Naval Air Station Atlanta and broke ground for its new Joint Forces headquarters this fall. More than 1,500 Georgia Guard soldiers and airmen will train on the property in the future.

■ Communications and IT provider Cbeyond



announced this year that it will build a new call center and training facility at its Cobb headquarters and add more than 400 jobs over three years.

■ FedEx Ground also plans to expand its Cobb distribution center and add 270 jobs.

■ Other new company relocation and expansion announcements this year include Ryla Teleservices, GLOCK USA and Gentiva Health Services.

■ Collectively, the companies will create about 1,750 new jobs in Cobb County.

■ A group of community leaders from Mardan, Turkey visited Cobb in October to discuss economic, educational and cultural opportunities that could benefit both communities.

■ In September, the Board of Commissioners approved a resolution designating certain areas of the county as recovery zones under the federal government's Build America Bonds program. Recovery Zone Facility Bonds are tax-exempt bonds that can be used for most private-use property to help revitalize areas with significant poverty, unemployment or high rates of foreclosed homes.

■ Cobb purchased a vacant shopping center on Powder Springs Street in Marietta and is in the process of completely renovating the facilities to include a senior center and several county departments. It is set for completion in 2011.

■ This cost-effective project will help rejuvenate the area and is modeled after the successful renovation of an old shopping center on Whitlock Avenue into the West Park Government Service Center.

## Metro Atlanta Millage Comparisons

KEY	FY 05	FY 06	FY 07	FY 08	FY 09
Atlanta	21.22	20.91	19.20	19.08	22.20
Fulton	11.64	11.47	10.28	10.28	10.28
DeKalb	15.48	16.07	16.07	16.07	16.86
Gwinnett	11.47	11.30	11.08	10.97	13.25
COBB	9.60	9.60	9.60	9.60	9.60

Figures are without school & state taxes (based on Fiscal Year)

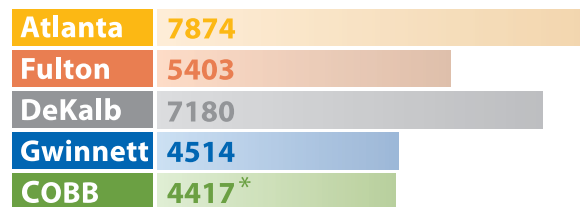
## Total Operating & Capital Budgets



Atlanta	City of Atlanta	\$ 1,631,473,352*
Fulton	Fulton County	\$ 1,006,732,271
DeKalb	DeKalb County	\$ 1,515,877,937
Gwinnett	Gwinnett County	\$ 1,326,619,264
COBB	COBB COUNTY	\$ 812,996,894*

\*Cobb and Atlanta figures = FY 10, other jurisdictions = FY 09

## Full-time Government Employees



\*Cobb County figures = FY 10, other jurisdictions = FY 09



# Services

**C**obb County has been at the forefront among local governments in conserving and protecting the resources entrusted to it by residents. The Cobb County Sustainable Practices Policy was adopted in February.

■ Because of these practices, Cobb became the first community in the region to qualify for a Silver Level Green Communities Certification from the Atlanta Regional Commission.

■ The Environmental Protection Agency recognized Cobb's fleet management as the newest steward to join the National Partnership for Environmental Priorities. The commitment includes using lead-free wheel weights and recycling lead wheel weights on existing vehicles. About 2,500 pounds of lead were safely recycled, eliminating a potential toxic pollutant.

■ With a focus on clean fuel alternatives and cost savings, the county is working to install propane fuel systems in at least 100 police and sheriff patrol cars. This will expand each car's driving range to more than 600 miles.

■ Library staff helped residents combat the difficult economic times. In a partnership with CobbWorks Mobile Career Van, the mobile computer center visited several libraries where job training and resume writing assistance were provided. CobbWorks staff also conducted free career skill development classes at different libraries.



■ Cobb Library System ranked number one in computer usage in the state with approximately one million sessions logged in 2009. It also ranked second in circulation of materials with more than four million materials borrowed by library card holders.

■ Working with Senior Services, the Books-to-Go program was instituted to provide library materials to Meals on Wheels participants.

■ Senior Services hosted its popular free Information fair in May and more than 1,200 people attended. Vendors provided information on topics including legal issues, recreation and finances.

■ Cobb opened the newly-renovated Mountain View Regional Library in April. The 4,000 square foot expansion added space in the children's wing, three new study rooms, a teen space, additional computer workstations and more parking.

■ Merchant's Walk Library was sold and proceeds are being used to build a new library in Parkaire Mall on Lower Roswell Road. The new East Cobb Library will be almost double the size and eventually include technology such as self-checkout stations. The library is set to open in early 2010.

■ The Cobb Library Foundation donated more than \$19,700 to establish a portable laptop training lab and hire a temporary teacher for the free computer classes that were offered to the public.

■ The Friends of the Library raised more than \$66,800 through its annual book sales and proceeds fund literacy programs, such as the vacation summer reading program that provides fun reading activities for local children and families.

■ Starting this year, Cobb posts its surplus equipment, vehicles and furniture on three auction Web sites instead of holding an onsite auction once a year. This innovative approach reaches a broader, more competitive audience and has resulted in revenues 15 to 20 percent higher than the old method.

■ Extension Service's staff trained Master Gardeners who conducted more than 100 earth stewardship lessons to elementary and middle school students. Some of the activities included planting trees, developing wildlife viewing areas and building weather stations and butterfly gardens.

■ Extension's 4-H staff piloted a new high-tech treasure hunting activity called Geocaching, which requires students to use math skills to find containers hidden outdoors. The 4-H Youth Summit Team presented interactive safety programs to more than 750 students and adults covering topics such as crosswalk safety and bicycle and helmet safety.

■ The county generated more than \$30,000 in sales of maps and data from the base map of Cobb showing topography, transportation features and waterways.



# Services

■ With more citizens taking advantage of Early and Advance Voting, Cobb Elections has been able to reduce the number of precincts open on Election Days and provide more equipment and staff at early and advance locations. This is a more efficient use of resources and provides the best service for voters.

■ For the 16th consecutive year, Cobb received the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association. The award represents a significant achievement and reflects Cobb's commitment to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting.

■ In keeping with Cobb's goal of providing accurate information in a timely fashion, the county's Communications Department ventured into the social media arena this year, with a presence on Facebook, Twitter, iTunes and YouTube. Residents are able to quickly and easily access information

such as road closure and severe weather alerts, as well as helpful videos.

■ A Web site that establishes a standard for governmental transparency, [www.sunshiner-eview.org](http://www.sunshiner-eview.org), rated Cobb as a top-tier local government for doing business in an open way. Cobb earned a perfect score and the county's Web site, [www.cobbcounty.org](http://www.cobbcounty.org), was praised for containing a wealth of information, including budgets, meeting agendas and minutes, building and zoning details, property tax information and listing of vendors and how to place a contract bid.

■ TV23 launched the new local television program "Senior Focus" in May. Each month, guests from the region discuss topics and issues facing older adults in the county. Topics have included grandparents raising grandchildren, re-entering the workforce and affordable housing options.

■ A new senior complex will be included in the Powder Springs Station, which began construction this year. The complex will include administrative offices, a multipurpose center, Marietta Neighborhood Center, Senior Day Center, Meals on Wheels and a senior health clinic. This will be the first center focused on senior health and wellness and should open in December 2010.

■ In collaboration with Cobb Public Health, Extension staff conducted ServSafe Food Management Certification training. More than 600







managers have passed the exam in the nine years it has been offered, providing important food safety information and meeting new state regulations for food establishments.

- Information Services implemented Accela, a comprehensive computer system that facilitates daily operations of the Community Development Agency, such as enforcing zoning codes, issuing permits and conducting permit inspections. Future Accela endeavors include issuing business licenses and occupational tax certificates.

- There are three components of the system. Citizen Access is available through the county Web site and provides residents the ability to report and track complaints submitted. Accela Wireless provides information to code enforcement officers in the field investigating and Accela Automation provides reports to management.

- Using Accela has decreased the average number of days a code enforcement case remains open from 49 to 24 days. The system significantly reduces the time code enforcement officers spend on paperwork and allows more time for investigating and resolving the issue.

- In preparation for a central call center, 3-1-1 calling was established within the county for land lines and cell phones. Once it is implemented, 3-1-1 will serve as an easy way for residents to get information on all county services and provide a tool to track reported issues.

- Information Systems continued working on the Cobb County Web Portal which, when completed, will give residents unprecedented access to county services online with a personalized Web site approach.

- To better serve the residents of Cobb, a fourth satellite vehicle registration tag office was opened in Acworth. The office is co-located with Fire Station 28 on Kemp Ridge Road.

- The property tax division of the Tax Commissioner's Office transitioned from paper checks to wire transfers, reducing bank costs and expediting disbursement to Cobb's taxing authorities. The Image Cash Letter solution was also implemented to cash checks electronically which accelerates funds' availability, maximizes interest earned and increases staff efficiency.

# Public Safety

**T**he state-of-the-art Cobb Safety Village, on Al Bishop Drive in Marietta, opened this summer and is the first of its kind in Georgia. It is the most comprehensive safety training environment in the region. The nearly eight-acre site features a 27,500-square-foot education building with an interactive safety house, classrooms, an auditorium, a multi-purpose banquet room and a three-bay child seat inspection station.

■ The rest of the village will hold scaled down buildings, working traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, a school bus, railroad crossings and other interactive safety displays. Local school students and home-educated children use the facility to learn how to protect themselves from accidents and hazards.

*“Cobb’s Community Emergency Response Team is recognized as the largest CERT program in the state.”*

■ Police and fire personnel have been able to provide hands-on education to almost twice as many children at the Safety Village as during the same period last year. An average of 3,000 children per month have visited.

■ Keep Cobb Beautiful helped the Quality of Life unit acquire thousands of dollars in equipment to reduce crime and beautify the county. KCB wrote a grant and the money was used to



purchase a laptop computer, LCD projector, DVD player, GPS receiver and locators, video camera and color printer. The equipment is being used to provide educational outreach to the community.

■ Fire and Emergency Services will build a new Station 30 on the Macland/Windy Hill Connector. Preliminary plans have been approved and the station will include the department’s Air Lab. The station should be completed by November 2010.

■ The False Alarm Ordinance went into effect this year and has reduced the false alarms by 28 percent. Fewer false alarms enhance the delivery of police services by increasing proactive patrol and reducing fuel consumption. The False Alarm Unit is self-supportive and does not use taxpayer funding for operational costs.

■ Upgrades to Cobb Emergency 911 are nearing completion. Five positions were added to the



primary center, bringing the total to 35, and new dispatching consoles were purchased for both the primary and backup 911 center.

■ E911 is installing CODE RED, a reverse 911 system that allows officials to make mass notifications to the entire county or select areas. The system can make more than 1,000 calls per minute and allows the county to make customized calling and texting databases to ensure people using mobile applications are up-to-date with the latest emergency information.

■ A wall-size monitor and DOT cameras are also being added to the 911 center. The monitor will help fire command staff for Cobb and Marietta manage distribution of resources by providing a countywide perspective of fire unit allocation, weather changes and calls for service. This will help prioritize calls for service and organize multi-unit responses.

■ DOT cameras will provide emergency dispatchers with real time visual information on wrecks, stalls and traffic hazards. This information will improve the ability to clear roads quickly and safely.

■ The police department acquired an Armored Personnel Carrier from the military at no cost under a federal program and spent about \$50,000 restoring it. The vehicle has night vision camera and thermal imaging capabilities, which can be

used in many ways, including “officer down” rescues, search operations, SWAT perimeter placement and evacuation.

■ Two new K-9 dogs, Robbie and Cato, were acquired this year to replace retiring dogs. A new K-9 vehicle will be purchased with grant funds to provide rapid response of the bomb-detecting K-9 team within Cobb and surrounding areas.

■ The formation of the Reserve Police Officer Program was approved in September. The program allows retired Cobb police officers to return to the department in a volunteer capacity. The reserve officers assist with necessary, yet time-consuming, administrative details. As a cost-effective alternative to hiring more personnel, reserve officers relieve this burden and keep more patrol officers on the streets.



# Public Safety

■ Funds from an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice were used to purchase 100 Taser electronic control devices and all sworn officers attended mandatory training. Tasers help reduce injuries to both officers and suspects and in some cases the mere presence of a Taser has been an effective deterrent to physical confrontation.

■ Cobb Police formed the Burglary Apprehension Team to address a rise in property crimes. The team's mission is to target areas that have high incidents of burglaries and implement enforcement and prevention methods to lower the rate. Plainclothes and uniform officers are used to identify and arrest suspects and educate residents.

■ Cobb's Public Safety Agency obtained \$675,000 in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to continue upgrading interoperable

communication between Cobb and the city of Douglasville.

■ Always striving to help our neighbors, Cobb continues to share its Emergency Vehicle Operations Course and Firing Range with other jurisdictions that do not have facilities.

■ The new Fire Station 28 opened on Kemp Ridge Road in Acworth. The \$2.5 million facility also includes a satellite tag office.

■ Cobb EMA coordinates emergency management services by providing leadership, planning, education and resources to protect lives, property and the environment. The Local Emergency Operations Plan was completed this year, as well as the Severe Weather Plan, the Regional Evacuation Plan and the Shelter Plan.

■ Cobb received re-certification for StormReady, meaning our community is better prepared to save lives from the harm of severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness.

■ EMA participated in a full-scale exercise to better prepare for a public health emergency that would require distribution of medications in a limited time frame.

■ Cobb also conducted its own exercise that evaluated response times, management, coordination and logistical support. The scenario





simulated a tornado touch down in the county and required an unannounced full activation of the Emergency Operations Center. About 50 representatives throughout Cobb participated and gained valuable insight on how a real emergency situation might unfold.

■ An upgrade of the county's outdoor weather siren system from analog to digital was completed in the spring. Five older model sirens were replaced and nine were upgraded. The county is the first in the nation to have a digital siren system.

■ Cobb was one of 20 emergency management agencies across the country selected to receive a \$250,000 grant to enhance its Emergency Operations Center. The EOC is being relocated and will

include additional office and storage space, upgraded equipment and new technology. This will help Cobb maintain a superior level of service during a crisis while coordinating resources and support.

■ Cobb's Community Emergency Response Team has more than 950 members and is recognized as the largest CERT program in the state. This year, Cobb conducted its first CERT class with all teenagers. For more information on the program, including how to join, visit the Web site [cobbcounty.org/ema](http://cobbcounty.org/ema).

■ In April, a five-member team representing Cobb participated in the first state CERT Challenge and won first place, receiving a perfect score. The team was awarded more than \$2,000 in prizes for the local CERT program, including training equipment, backpacks and fire extinguishers.

■ CERT members were activated in September when the historic flood hit our area. Members went to work in various aspects and locations and four were able to develop an Internet-based system to coordinate information between volunteers available to help and people needing help.

■ Cobb County Animal Control's facility was renovated this year, providing a bright, new environment for employees, animals and visitors.



# Judicial Services

**T**he Sheriff's Office has been actively-involved in the planning and design of the new SPLOST-funded courthouse. The building is being constructed with state-of-the-art security as a major component. Incorporating security features into the design lowers overall cost and provides the safest environment possible for staff and the public.

■ The Sheriff's Office also implemented major technology enhancements. Video visitation began at the county jail, which eliminates the cost of building secure visitation corridors in the new facility. Judges can also hold hearings using a video conferencing system.

■ In 2010 the video system will be expanded, allowing attorneys to visit with clients. All of this speeds up the justice process and reduces unnecessary inmate transports.

*“The courthouse is being constructed with state-of-the-art security features.”*

■ Magistrate Court is working with Information Services to interface civil e-filed suits into the court's case management system. The court is also exploring ways residents can pay ordinance violation fines online with a small fee. These improvements will increase convenience, reduce traffic on the square and help the court handle additional caseload without adding staff.



■ Magistrate Court improved the functionality of the court's Pretrial Case Management System and Electronic Warrant Interchange System. An interface was also developed between the warrant and case management systems. These technology upgrades helped improve accuracy and efficiency, maximize work hours and increase the quality of customer service.

■ In only its first seven months of operation, the State Court's DUI Court pilot program saved taxpayers more than \$28,600 in jail costs. Funded partially by participant fees and state grants, this post-conviction, intensive probation program targets multiple DUI offenders and offers less jail time in exchange for completing a rigorous 12-month program that includes treatment, frequent drug and alcohol tests, bi-weekly court appearances, home searches and curfew checks.

■ Security-protected court and real estate records

are available on the Superior Court Clerk's Web site. Real estate deeds are accessible online within two hours of filing and criminal accusations and indictments are available within 30 minutes. Upcoming calendars also became available online for public use.

■ The Family Dependency Treatment Court Program, part of the Cobb Juvenile Court, received a more than \$445,000 grant to help break the cycle of substance abuse and neglect. The program has been extremely successful and the grant will help hire a full-time in-home therapist and implement new family-oriented education and treatment. The grant will be distributed over three years.

■ The State Court Clerk's Office upgraded its online ticket payment system and added another payment option via the telephone. This additional feature did not impact the county budget because users pay for the service through a convenience fee to the vendor.

■ The Solicitor General's Office had a total case-load of 141,269, one of the highest in the state. The office filed 7,813 accusations with the State Court Clerk's Office, 407 cases were diverted through the Pre-Trial Diversion Program and 2,160 domestic violence cases were handled through the Domestic Violence Pre-trial Intervention Program. The office also prosecuted 126,640 traffic citations in State Court and 4,656 ordinance violations in Magistrate Court.

■ Probate Court performed a complete review this year to ensure safety and maximize efficiency. Storage area was added to provide better record retention and access to the public. A full internal audit was also conducted on financial systems and cash handling procedures. Each staffer attended comprehensive safety and cash handling training, while officials from other departments reviewed internal systems and accounting programs.





# Transportation

**W**ork began on the Johnson Ferry/Abernathy Road project, which will include bridge widening, additional lanes and intersection improvements designed to lessen congestion along these major roadways. Cobb is partnering with the Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority and the City of Sandy Springs on the project. It is scheduled for completion by summer 2012.

■ Cobb Community Transit is adding global positioning satellite technology that will provide the public with real-time vehicle location and arrival and departure information. Passengers will be able to review this information at CCT transfer centers and on CCT's Web site, making it easier for commuters to plan travel. The data will also help CCT develop more accurate schedules. The project will cost about \$1.25 million and should be fully-implemented by late 2010.

■ Community Development worked with DOT and Economic Development to facilitate the Powers Ferry Corridor Study and Master Plan, which outlines a vision for future growth and redevelopment. A series of goals and policies were formed based on public input to address transportation needs, land use, commercial rehabilitation and the aesthetics of the corridor.

■ The Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan was completed and identifies ways the county can improve conditions for bicycling and walking. It also outlines a strategy for investing in these improvements over time. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities include sidewalks, streets, bike lanes, shoulders and shared-use pathways like the Silver Comet Trail.

■ Cobb has received approval for a proposed interchange on Interstate 75 in the vicinity of Third Army Road. If the project is included in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, the \$80 million project will qualify for state and federal funding. If constructed, it will be the first new interchange on I-75 in metro Atlanta since the Kennedy Interchange in 1999 and provide much-needed congestion relief in northwest Cobb and surrounding areas.

■ The Mableton Park and Ride Lot opened. The \$343,000 project included 205 parking spaces and a new passenger waiting area, making travel much easier for transit users in the area.





■ The Acworth Park and Ride Lot was also expanded from 274 to 496 spaces, safety was improved by additional lighting and a new passenger waiting area was constructed.

■ McCollum Airport upgraded Air Traffic Control tower equipment, funded mainly by federal and state grants. Operators based at the airport completed construction on 98,000 square feet of hangar and office space, improving hangar storage capacity at no cost to the county.

■ As part of the federal stimulus package, three improvement projects began on State Route 176, including Lost Mountain Road at Corner Road, Mars Hill Road at Hadaway Road and Mars Hill Road at Mars Hill Church Road. The projects will add turn lanes and result in a significant realignment to improve safety. Additional intersection projects, funded by SPLOST, will begin construction next year with

completion expected by spring 2011.

■ Another stimulus-funded project is improvements to State Route 120 Loop, adding a ramp for westbound vehicles turning to southbound on the Loop. This \$7.5 million project is scheduled for completion in summer 2011. Combined with another project that will make Roswell Road six lanes from the Loop to east of E. Piedmont Road, it will play a significant role in reducing congestion in the area.

■ The Austell Road Access Management Plan was completed and serves as a guide to improve access and traffic circulation within the corridor.

■ DOT replaced a single-lane timber bridge on Concord Road over the Silver Comet Trail with a steel truss bridge. Crews also made extensive improvements to the Concord Road Covered Bridge and associated roadway, including a unique truck turnaround.

■ Using federal funds, adaptive traffic signals were installed throughout the Cumberland CID area in the first project of its kind in the South. The project allows signal timing adjustments to reduce congestion. Transit priority emitters will be installed in CCT buses to aid on-time bus arrival to the Cumberland Transfer Center. The project will also expand to seven signals in Marietta, improving signal coordination in the area.

# Recreation

**M**able House Barnes Amphitheatre presented its most successful summer concert series to date, with several sold out performances. The venue hosted big stars, including The B-52s, Peter Frampton and the legendary B.B. King.

■ Summer camp programs in Cobb went “green” this year. Staff collected recyclable materials and household items and taught campers how to transform them into arts-and-crafts projects, game boards and equipment. Weekly themes centered on environmental concepts and included activities such as an eco-scavenger hunt.

*“Mable House Amphitheatre presented its most successful concert series to date.”*

■ Keep Cobb Beautiful was awarded a \$10,000 Think Green grant and will use the money to increase recycling options at county parks and facilities.

■ Community Development used an extensive public process to formulate the River Line Master Plan, which examined land use, recreation and preservation. The goal was to reach a consensus on how residential, commercial and industrial property owners can compliment one another in this rapidly-changing area in southeast Cobb.

■ Last year, Cobb purchased 42.5 of the 95 acres of Hyde Farm on Lower Roswell Road using parks bond funds approved in 2006. The property will



serve as a historical, educational and functional farm where students and visitors can learn about rural life in the 1900s. The county added two mules this year, Jack and Jill, who will help demonstrate how the land was plowed a century ago.

■ The University of Georgia’s College of Environment and Design will work with county and National Park Service staff to develop a program of activity for Hyde Farm based on the importance of agriculture to the development of Cobb.

■ Four additional land tracts were purchased this year using money from the 2006 parks bond. The two properties on Hyde Road, one on Old Hamilton Road and one on Watts Drive total more than 38 acres and cost about \$4.3 million.

■ The Board of Commissioners also approved the master plan for another property preserved using parks bond funds — the 112-acre Bullard-Stock-

ton site off Dallas Highway. The plan includes a network of nature trails, passive open fields, garden and green home areas, a playground, gazebo and 600 parking spaces.

■ In September, Friends for the East Cobb Park and local dignitaries officially opened Cobb's first "all-access" playground specially-made for children with disabilities. Resurgens Charitable Foundation raised funds to build the specially-designed all-abilities playground.

■ To keep an important local public recreation spot, Cobb renewed a 50-year lease agreement with the Secretary of the Army for about 910 acres of Lake Acworth, a part of Lake Allatoona and Cobblestone Golf Course.

■ Further recognizing the importance of preserving park land around the county for future generations, Cobb voters approved an additional \$40 million parks bond in November 2008. This year, the Citizen Advisory Committee again took land nominations from residents and diligently worked with county employees to produce a list of the best recommended properties.

■ Through a grant program, 14 projects were completed by youth athletic associations this year, resulting in almost \$370,000 in park improvements. The program provides matching funds to volunteer associations that offer programs at county parks. Since the grant's incep-

tion, more than \$3.3 million in improvements have been made to parks throughout Cobb.

■ Cobb hosted the Amateur Softball Association's 14-under Girls' Class A Fast-Pitch National Championship. It was the largest youth softball tournament in the county, resulting in a local economic impact of several million dollars.

■ Cobb's aquatic centers were among the first in the nation to come into compliance with new federal mandates by replacing main drain covers. The county saved more than \$100,000 by having its staff install the drains.

■ The lease of cell phone towers located in county parks provided funds of more than \$320,000 to maintain and refurbish tennis courts in parks throughout Cobb, including Rhyne Park, Fullers Park, Nickajack Park, Larry Bell Park, Shaw Park and Oregon Park.





# Water and Environment

**T**he Environmental Protection Agency honored Cobb as one of only five national WaterSense Partners of the Year. As the 2009 Promotional Partner of the Year for a large utility, the EPA credited Cobb for taking a leading role in promoting water efficiency to its more than 650,000 water customers and helping residents save water, energy and money on utility bills.

■ Cobb Water System maintained its superior Triple AAA bond rating for the eighth straight year. The county is one of only three water and sewer systems in the nation that are self-funded, or not supported by taxes, to have AAA ratings from the three major rating agencies.

■ The three-year drought in north Georgia officially ended in June and level 4 water restrictions were lifted. Cobb's comprehensive Drought Response Plan and Water Efficiency

Program provided useful resources and materials to assist residents in saving water. Overall water use during the drought was cut by about 20 percent.

■ Even though restrictions were lifted, the lessons of water efficiency have resonated with Cobb residents because water use remains well below what it was prior to the drought. As the region faces ongoing resource challenges, water conservation remains a necessary component of long-term water management.

■ Work continued on the South Cobb Tunnel project, which involves building a six-mile, 27-foot diameter tunnel located in hard rock, with depths between 150 and 450 feet. The upstream and downstream construction shafts and the pump station shaft at the South Cobb Water Reclamation Facility have been excavated. The tunnel boring machine has been transported to the site and reassembled below ground in preparation for the boring operation. Construction of the \$305 million project is slated for completion in summer 2014.

■ In celebration of its 25th anniversary this year, Keep Cobb Beautiful unveiled the newest marketing tool - a van decorated with the organization's programs and volunteers. KCB's goal is to promote stewardship of our community through litter prevention, beautification, recycling and environmental education.







■ Cobb is committed to teaching the future stewards of our natural resources about their essential value to a successful community. The Water System's educational programs, in cooperation with KCB and Parks and Recreation, designated more than 300 "green" classrooms and 26 "green" schools in 2008-2009 school year. This was a huge increase from eight participating schools the previous year.

■ After a design and permitting period of almost 10 years, Cobb accepted bids for construction of the Chastain Meadows Stormwater Management Facility. The project will produce an impoundment on Noonday Creek and provide flood control and water quality benefits in the creek basin downstream of the Town Center area. Project completion is slated for late 2010.

■ A formal effort was initiated this year to inventory all water department assets and

ensure they are being managed as effectively as possible to minimize costs. Many key issues are being addressed, such as required level of service, maintenance and investment plans and long-term funding strategies.

■ The implementation of a new work order system afforded an excellent opportunity to inventory assets. Workers catalogued information on the condition of assets, established required service levels and determined how critical each is to providing excellent service.

■ The Water System earned numerous honors from the Georgia Association of Water Professions, including Wastewater Collection System of the Year and Distribution System of the Year for large systems. During the review process, Cobb earned 97.25 out of 100 possible points, the highest ever awarded to a water system.

■ Platinum Awards were also received for 10 consecutive years of perfect permit compliance at R.L. Sutton Water Reclamation Facility and eight consecutive years of perfect permit compliance at Northwest Water Reclamation Facility. Noonday Creek and South Cobb Water Reclamation facilities were honored with Gold Awards for compliance in 2008.

■ The design of the R.L. Sutton facility earned an Engineering Excellence Award from the Georgia Engineering Alliance.

# From the County Manager



**I**t is often said that necessity breeds innovation and in these tough times Cobb's employees have really proved this by working together toward the common goal of providing the best for our community.

We have had our challenges with the economy and historic 500 year flood, yet employees worked even more efficiently and found innovative ways to cut the budget while still maintaining a consistent level of service.

The good news is that Cobb County remains a leader in the Southeast and we are still making progress on some very innovative projects. We continue to work on the South Cobb Tunnel project, which will prove to be the best waste water management solution for many years into the future.

Saving lives and preventing property losses continue to be top priorities for county government. A great example of our commitment is the state-of-the-art Cobb Safety Village that opened in August. Using this facility, we have been able to increase our life and property safety education outreach by 200 percent while dramatically improving on the quality of these important safety lessons.

Along with smart planning, we have really focused on environmental efforts this year. To manage in the future and protect resources, we have to look at things in a totally different light. Our new buildings are "going green" to help manage and reduce energy and utility costs. We continue to make strides in conserving water and encouraging recycling and the use of recycled products.

Cobb's success can be attributed directly to the leadership provided by our Board of Commissioners and the determination and resourcefulness of our employees. Every day our employees find new ways to improve the quality of life in Cobb. We all take pride in representing Cobb County and look forward to another great year of service.

*"Every day our employees find new ways to improve the quality of life in Cobb."*





*100 Cherokee Street*  
*Marietta, Georgia 30090*

**770-528-1000**

**[www.CobbCounty.org](http://www.CobbCounty.org)**