

COMMITTEE ON

**BUDGET, APPROPRIATIONS
AND FINANCE**

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

Derek Gabriel

Commissioner
Department of Public Works

Good day, Senator Novelle Francis Jr., Chair of the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance; committee members; all other senators in attendance today; all those seated in the Senate chambers; and those in the listening and viewing audience. I am Derek Gabriel, the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (DPW). With me today are Assistant Commissioner Rueben Jennings, Federal Highway Program Manager Jomo McClean, and Assistant Executive Delivery Manager Tawana Nicholas at the Office of Disaster and Recovery – Super PMO Office.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on all territorial transportation improvement projects, including road and bridge improvement projects, GARVEE-funded projects, and other capital projects in the St. Croix district.

PROJECT UPDATES – ST. CROIX DISTRICT

Over the past year, the Department of Public Works has continued our substantial progress in maintaining and rehabilitating our transportation infrastructure throughout the territory.

St. Croix Bridge Projects

The permanent bridge on East Airport Road officially opened to traffic on February 3, 2025, and the temporary Route 669 Bridge adjacent to the Agricultural Fair Grounds reopened on February 14, 2025, just in time for AGRIFEST 2025. These bridges now join the list of re-opened bridges, along with the Altona Lagoon and the Queen Mary Highway Bridges. Work on the remaining bridge continues. The contractor will drive piles at the Midland Road Bridge in the coming days. It is anticipated that work will be completed by September 2025. The bridge projects are managed by Eastern Federal Lands, a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) division within the U.S. Department of Transportation. DPW acts as a liaison between FHWA, local contractors, and the community.

Clifton Hill Connector Project

This project is in its final phase, with dedicated turning lanes on Melvin Evans Highway and paving scheduled for completion by April 2025. Most utility relocation has been completed. The streetlight repairs are approximately 80% completed, with approximately 100 poles remaining to be installed once delivered. The Contractor expects to receive the new poles and complete installation in the next three months (May 2025).

Airport Road

Work on Airport Road began on December 9, 2024, and is about 70% completed. The project includes milling, paving, and striping of the three-mile-long roadway. West Airport Road has been milled and paved, while sections of East Airport Road remain. Paving will resume once the contractor receives the necessary materials to complete the work, and then striping will ensue. We anticipate that this project will be closed out in March 2025. This project was awarded to Marco St. Croix.

Christiansted Roads

In Christiansted, DPW Contractor – VI Paving, Inc. – completed all Phase 2 roads except for King Cross Street. The roadways included in Phase 2 of this project were Queen Cross, King, Strand, Queen, New, West, and Smith Streets. This project included milling, minor drainage improvements, resurfacing, and striping.

St. Croix VITRAN Maintenance Building, Phase 2

The original contract for this project was terminated on October 28, 2024. The project is now out for re-solicitation. A pre-bid meeting and mandatory site visit occurred on January 31, and the solicitation will close on February 28, 2025. We expect construction to resume in August 2025.

Welcome to St. Croix - Sign and Landscaping Project

The department recently solicited a project to design, install, and maintain a welcome sign and decorative landscape at the East Airport Road intersection on St. Croix. The solicitation

closed on February 14, and a contractor will be selected next. This project aims to enhance the area's aesthetic appeal and provide directional information.

PROJECT UPDATES – ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN DISTRICT

Veterans Drive Improvements Phase 2A

This project proposes to widen and revitalize Veterans Drive to provide a tree-lined, four-lane, divided roadway with a waterfront pedestrian promenade that simultaneously addresses Charlotte Amalie's congestion and failing infrastructure problems while creating a signature pedestrian-friendly environment. The proposed work will cover an area from the west of Tolbod Gade (Vendors Plaza) to Hospital Gade (Fort Christian Parking Lot). This project will be managed by the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) division within the U.S. Department of Transportation. The bid documents have been reviewed and are now complete. Eastern Federal Lands has submitted the acquisition plan for certification and approval to the Federal Lands Headquarters. Once approval is obtained, they will begin the solicitation process.

Veterans Drive Resurfacing (Segments)

This project includes patching, milling, paving, and striping (to include crosswalks) on segments of Veterans Drive, from Emile Griffith Park eastward to the bus stop at the southwestern end of the Fort Christian Parking Lot. About 50 percent of the work is completed.

First Avenue Roadway and Drainage Improvements

Work continues on this project by the Contractor, Island Roads. This past month, the contractor installed 213 linear feet of curb and gutter, two drop inlet catch basins, and two 12" diameter drainage pipe laterals on the north side of the road in Work Zone No. 9. The contractor completed the placement of asphalt in Work Zones Nos. 7 and 8, which extends between 2nd and 4th Street. Traffic has been diverted between 1st and 2nd streets, and the road is currently open to vehicular traffic from 2nd to 10th Street. The contractor is currently

working in Work Zone No. 9, which extends between 1st and 2nd Street. This project is 59% complete.

Charlotte Amalie Town Drainage Improvements

Work continues on this project by the Contractor, Island Roads. This past month, the contractor replaced the damaged box culvert at the intersection of Raadets Gade and Wimmelskafts Gade (Back Street). Crystal and Raadets Gade were paved. Island Roads continues to clear and clean the swales and v-gutters on Raadets and Crystal Gade. Island Roads re-pointed and repaired 46 square yards of blue bit stone v-gutters swales on Crystal and Raadets Gade, along with some segments of Wimmelskafts Gade. This project is 55% complete.

Additional Road Maintenance – St. Thomas

During this first quarter of 2025, the department will undertake minor drainage improvements, pavement milling, resurfacing, and striping several segments of roadways on St. Thomas. These roadways include segments in Scott Free and Coki Point.

Fort Christian Parking Lot Renovations

The Fort Christian Parking Lot Renovations Project involves trenching, installing waterlines and valve boxes in the southern area of the lot, milling, paving, and striping. This project is scheduled to be completed by early April 2025, ensuring the parking lot is ready for use before the 2025 Carnival festivities. DPW contractor - Grace Civil, LLC - has completed over 80% of the trenching and installation of new water lines for the Carnival booths. Once complete, this project will also include EV charging pedestals, new automated payment booths, and will bring the parking lot into compliance with ADA standards.

Leonardo Trotman Drive

The design for this project is finalized. We revised the bid package to reflect the project's current budget and will put it out to bid by February 2025. The revisions will connect the

new roadway from the Weymouth Rhymer Highway to the rear of the Tutu Park Mall and Charles W. Turnbull Regional Library.

Fish Fry Drive

The department was awarded a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant to effectuate improvements along this area of Cruz Bay. The department has contracted a Design Consultant, who is currently designing the proposed solutions to alleviate flooding along this roadway including nature-based solutions where applicable. Once the proposed design concept has been completed, it will be submitted to FEMA for review and approval of construction funds for this project. In the interim, the department will perform maintenance resurfacing in the upcoming months.

Centerline Road (Segments)

Before the completion of the second quarter, the department will begin minor drainage improvements, pavement milling, resurfacing, and striping of several segments of roadways along Centerline Road and East End Road on St. John.

Johnny Horn Trail

During the first quarter of the year, the department will solicit design services for the road and drainage design of this roadway.

Cruz Bay Restrooms

The design-build solicitation began on January 12, 2024, and a pre-bid meeting and site visit was scheduled for January 22, 2024. Bids were submitted by February 29, 2024, and the evaluation process occurred on March 8, 2024.

The Evaluation Committee discussed the lack of competition, only receiving one proposal, the respondent's lack of relevant experience in construction, and the overall cost being over the agency's budget. The committee agreed that DPW would revise the scope of work and

solicit this project again to obtain more competition and comprehensive proposals. We anticipate the project being re-solicited in March 2025.

PAUL E. JOSEPH

Supplemental No. 2 Contract for the A La Carte Items was executed, and a Notice to Proceed for October 4, 2024, was issued. The draft designs for the communication duct bank reroute, solar panel site lighting, and concrete outfield wall have been submitted and are under review. Follow-up continues for the submittal and delivery of samples for the restroom and locker room flooring and partitions.

Construction progress meetings continue to be conducted on a routine basis. Additionally, utility coordination and scope review meetings with key stakeholders are conducted as required. The critical next steps are approval of the floor and wall tiles, restarting the foundation for the Terrance Martin facility, and continuing work on the right field exterior stairway.

CURRENT GARVEE PROJECTS

Frederiksted Roads

We have recently initiated the solicitation process for the GARVEE Frederiksted Roads project, which includes minor drainage improvements, pavement milling, resurfacing, and striping of Queen, King, and Strand Streets.

Ethel McIntosh Memorial Drive (Mahogany Road)

The Notice to Proceed was issued to Marco St. Croix on January 27, 2025, and a pre-construction meeting was held on February 3, 2025. Roadwork is expected to begin in March 2025. The project scope includes pavement rehabilitation for the entire Ethel McIntosh Memorial Drive, drainage improvements, retaining wall reconstruction, guardrail replacement, signage, and striping. This project is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2026.

Spring Gut Road (Route 85)

We anticipate initiating the solicitation process for this GARVEE Funded Project in March 2025. The project includes bridge replacement, drainage improvements, pavement reconstruction, and striping from East End Road southward to beyond the Tulipan Welcome Community.

FUTURE GARVEE PROJECTS

In November 2024, the 35th Legislature approved a \$156 million GARVEE bond issuance proposed by this administration. I am extending my sincere gratitude to the members of the 35th Legislature who supported this visionary initiative, which represents a generational investment in our transportation infrastructure.

This bond issuance allows for a \$48 million investment to fund the completion of Phase 2 of the Veterans Drive Project, \$28 million dedicated to repaving major roadways in St. Croix, including South Side Road (Route 62), Sidney Lee Road into La Vallee (Route 80) and East Scenic Road (Route 78), and \$20 million for the design, fabrication, and delivery of the long-awaited St. Croix-St. Thomas passenger-vehicle ferry. We expect the Coast Guard-approved design and updated pricing for the St. Croix-St. Thomas Ferry by March 2025.

These projects will create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and strengthen connections across our districts.

CLOSING

Thank you for your time and support. Before closing, I want to recognize our 2025 Employees of the Year – Mr. Brian Hendrickson of the Operations Division on St. Croix and Mr. Kelvin Pickering from VITRAN on St. Thomas. Both employees exemplify a commitment to service excellence, professional growth, teamwork, innovation, and leadership. Most importantly, both employees were recommended by their peers and immediate supervisors for this accolade. I want to personally thank them for their daily efforts, as well as all

employees at the Department of Public Works. We are committed to improving our quality of life daily. My team and I will remain and are happy to answer any questions you may have.