

# TESTIMONY



COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

DEREK GABRIEL  
COMMISSIONER

APRIL 24, 2023  
1:30 P.M.



# INTRODUCTION

Good afternoon Senator Marvin Blyden, Chairperson of the Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunications; Committee members; all other senators in attendance today; as well as those in the listening and viewing audience.

I am Derek Gabriel, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works. With me today is Rueben Jennings, Assistant Commissioner for the St. Thomas/St. John District; Jomo McClean, Highway Program Manager; and Andrew Ray, Transportation Planner.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an update to this Committee on the status of road projects across the territory.

## **DEBT SERVICE RESERVE EXCESS FUNDS - ACT 8454 | ARPA**

Between 2021 and 2022, the department received over \$40 million for milling, paving, striping, and drainage improvement projects in over 50 locations throughout the territory. I am happy to say we have completed all the identified projects, with a few exceptions, and residents throughout the territory are now able to enjoy smoother commutes. Project areas included Campo Rico, Estate Mandahl, Centerline Road on St. John, Estate Peters Rest, and Altona, just to name a few. The department has not seen such a huge investment in our road infrastructure in almost fifteen years when the territory received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. Thank you to the members of this Body for your continued partnership. Many of these projects are a direct result of funding from this Body. Others involve your direct input as well as your recommendations, so we look forward to continuing to work with you in the future.

The **CLIFTON HILL CONNECTOR ROAD PROJECT** is our current marquis road project, which aims to provide a safer connection between the Melvin Evans and Queen Mary Highways. It will also provide a widened intersection on the Melvin Evans Highway to accommodate dedicated turning lanes in both the eastbound and westbound lanes. The existing roadway has a steep incline, which has caused many vehicular accidents. Once the new road is completed, most of the existing roadway will be demolished. The project began in April 2022 and is approximately 50% complete. The scope of work includes major road reconstruction, asphalt paving, striping, new drainage, signs, signalization, guardrail, raised pavement markers, waterline relocation, and utility pole relocation. The base asphalt placement on Clifton Hill Road and Melvin Evans Highway was completed. The contractor is now connecting the side streets and driveways to the new roadway. This project is currently scheduled to be completed by July 2023 and the total contract amount is \$9,587,505.

The final phase of the **MELVIN EVANS HIGHWAY PAVEMENT PRESERVATION** project, from the Good Hope Intersection to the Williams Delight Intersection, is underway. This project was divided into six segments and five of them are now complete. The scope of

# ST. CROIX DISTRICT



ESTATE WORK AND REST PHASE 2



MT. WELCOME / GALLOWS BAY



CAMPO RICO PHASE 2



ESTATE HERMAN HILL PHASES 3&4



UPPER LOVE PHASE 2

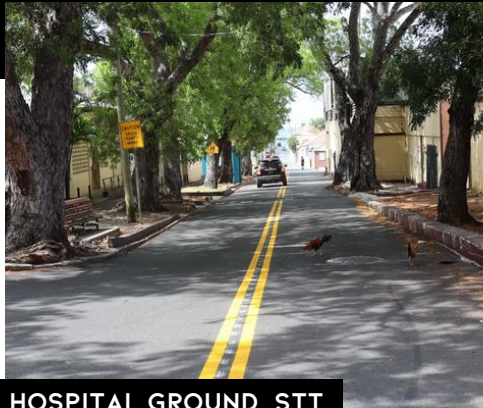


ESTATE PETERS REST

# ST. THOMAS / ST. JOHN DISTRICT



CENTERLINE ROAD, STJ



HOSPITAL GROUND, STT



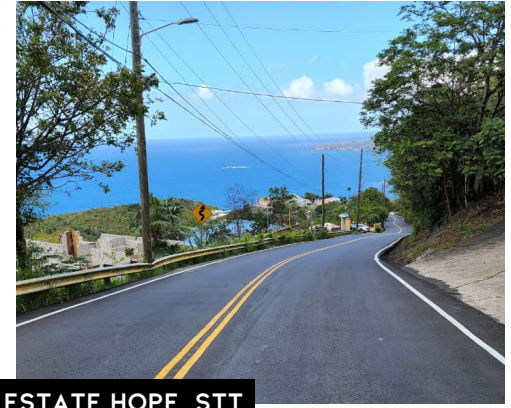
ALTONA, STT



ESTATE MAND AHL ROAD, STT



DONOE ROAD INTERSECTION, STT



ESTATE HOPE, STT

work for this section of the highway includes road reconstruction, asphalt paving, milling, striping, drainage rehabilitation, signs, guardrails, raised pavement markers, vehicle detection replacement, and other miscellaneous work. The streetlight repairs, which were added later, will be paid for with local funds. The 158 streetlights installed will illuminate Hannah's Rest to the Williams Delight Intersection. Leveling of the roadway is 75% complete. All concrete light pole bases have been installed and the sidewalk construction at the William's Delight Intersection is complete. Contractors are currently working to improve drainage at the Good Hope and Carlton intersections. This project is scheduled to be completed by Summer 2023 and the total contract amount is \$12,865,506.41.

The **CLEARVIEW APARTMENT EMERGENCY ROAD REPAIR** project was re-mobilized on July 25, 2022, and deemed substantially completed on August 17, 2022. The contractor completed the concrete pour for the remaining 30-foot extension on the east retaining wall and swale. The scope also entailed roadway reconstruction, grading and paving of the roundabout in the residential area, thermoplastic permanent striping, milling, as well as roadway paving. Punch list items were generated during a pre-final inspection meeting that was held on August 22, 2022, and all tasks were completed before the final inspection on September 16, 2022. The contractor is awaiting the installation of the guardrails and the completion of striping by his subcontractors to close out this project. The total contract amount is \$1,222,741.

The **MOUNT WELCOME ROAD PAVEMENT RECONSTRUCTION AND DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS** project is complete, except for a few punch list items and additional signs that were ordered at the request of the Virgin Islands Police Department to restrict parking along the roadway. This project began in June 2021 and ended in March 2023. The scope included major road reconstruction, pavement markings, signs, and

The **FIRST AVENUE** project was solicited as a design-build project through the Department of Property & Procurement. It is currently in solicitation with contract award expected in May 2023.

Phase 1 of the **FREDERIKSTED ROADS** project is completed. That scope included repairs and drainage improvements to Queen Cross, Hill, Hospital, New, King, Customs, Lagoon, and Market Streets. The project was funded by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI). The total contract amount for Phase 1 was \$1,483,843.75. Phase 2 of this road project is under construction. The scope for this phase includes drainage improvements and sidewalk repairs to Prince Street in the vicinity of St. Patrick's Church and Elementary School. It also includes road repairs to King Cross Street, East Street, Veteran's Shore Drive, and Route 702 (from LaGrange to Frederiksted). Repairs to King Cross and East Streets, as well as the segment of Route 702, are completed. The total contract amount for Phase 2 is \$987,266.10 and is also DOI-funded.

The scope for the first segment of the **CHRISTIANSTED ROADS** project entails repairs to Queen, Hill, Market, East, and Prince Streets. This project went out for re-solicitation and is currently in evaluation. We anticipate a notice of award to be issued to the contractor by the end of April 2023. The scheduling of the construction will be coordinated with the Virgin Islands Waste Management Authority to coincide with their current wastewater line repairs in progress. This project is also DOI-funded.

The department has several disaster recovery projects in the construction phase. Their scope of work consists of road repairs and drainage improvements to the various sites. The **WATER ISLAND WATERSHED** project is approximately 90% complete. Sites include the parking lot, Honeymoon Beach, Overdown Road, Flamingo Road, and Providence Hill. The total contract amount is \$2,805,562. The **ST. THOMAS WATERSHED** project, which also includes slope stabilization and the replacement of retaining walls, is about 50% completed. Sites included in this project are in Estate Fortuna, Estate Frenchman's Bay, and Estate Nazareth. The total contract amount is \$ 2,493,575. There are 13 sites in the **ST.**

**JOHN WATERSHED** project. Construction began in a few locations: Susannaberg, Pocket Money, Francis Bay Hill, Coral Bay, Adrian Hill, and Pastory. The overall project is about 30% complete and has a total contract amount of \$3,942,078.

The **MOUNT PLEASANT** project is currently in the final stages of design and is expected to be advertised for bid by June 2023. The scope of work consists of road reconstruction and drainage improvements.

The **FERRY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM** continues to grow with the receipt of two awards totaling \$6.8 million in grant funding to purchase a new 300-passenger capacity, ADA-accessible ferry vessel. This 100 ft. ferry will serve the St. Thomas/St. John route during passenger peak hours and is currently being solicited as a design-build project through the Department of Property & Procurement. Bids are due on April 28, 2023. Earlier this year, we also applied for a RAISE grant in the amount of \$25 million which will allow us to secure ferries for the St. Croix - St. Thomas route. We anticipate receiving feedback on our grant application later this summer.

The department recently completed the purchase of 10 new buses and paratransit vans.

The Division of Transportation is pursuing other options for the procurement of fixed-route buses. We are in the process of finalizing quotes on a few options, including hybrid, diesel, and electric buses. Obtaining maintenance parts for the current bus fleet continues to be difficult since the COVID pandemic. With an aging fleet, keeping buses on the road has proven to be a challenge as well. VITRAN's current territorial fleet has a

<b>Territorial VITRAN Fleet</b>	
<b>55</b>	Fixed-Route Buses & ADA Vans
<b>31</b>	Operational
<b>5</b>	To be disposed
<b>19</b>	Non-Operational

total of fifty-five (55) fixed-route buses and ADA vans. Of that number, thirty-one (31) are operational, five (5) are waiting to be disposed of, and nineteen (19) are non-operational – waiting for repairs.

DPW remains “On the Move” as our popular slogan says. I have challenged our team to elevate our service for the people of our Territory and they have delivered. I want to thank each person that works in this department for their commitment to service and going above and beyond their normal call of duty on a regular basis. The projects mentioned in today’s testimony would be impossible without their hard work and dedication. The Department is fully committed to transforming our Territory’s infrastructure through the myriad of projects and programs in various stages. My team and I are ready to answer any questions you may have.