

The Post and Courier

Pennies pave the way

First dirt road to be resurfaced using funds from May sales-tax increase

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The Post and Courier

Monday, October 19, 2009



Photo by Alan Hawes

George Wigfall Jr. stands at the end of George Wigfall Road in Berkeley County. The road, which was named after Wigfall's father, is to be the first of a dozen dirt roads to be paved using money collected through the county's penny tax increase.

Paving projects

The first roads that will be finished with the money from Berkeley County's penny sales-tax increase are a dozen dirt roads that residents have been complaining about for years.

--**Arthur Gillins Road** -- Moncks Corner, off U.S. Highway 17

--**Blanding Road** -- South of St. Stephen, off U.S. Highway 52

--**Calestown Road** -- East of Bonneau, between U.S. Highway 17 and S.C. Highway 41

--**Dennis Drive** -- Goose Creek, off Montague Plantation Road beside U.S. Highway 52

--**Fennick Drive** -- Moncks Corner, off U.S. Highway 52 just north of Main Street

--**Firehouse Road** -- West of St. Stephen, off SR-35 just south of S.C. Highway 45

--**George Wigfall Road** -- Cross, off S.C. Highway 6

--**Green Bay Road** -- Near Huger, east of S.C. Highway 41 between Halfway Creek Road and United Drive

--**Mitchum Town Road** -- Between Bonneau and Jamestown, off Bethera Road, which runs west of S.C. Highway 41 to connect with U.S. Highway 17 to the northwest

--**Spring Pond Road** -- East of Bonneau, between U.S. Highway 17 and S.C. Highway 46, just across Highway 17 from Calestown Road

--**Tobacco Road** -- South of St. Stephen, between Mendel Rivers and Harristown roads south of St. Stephen.

--**Wilder Road** -- South of St. Stephen, off U.S. Highway 52 between Blanding and Mandella roads

MONCK'S CORNER -- Life is about to change for a couple of hundred Berkeley County residents who live on dirt roads.

No more potholes knocking wheels out of alignment, no more mud spattering everywhere every time it rains.

It's something George Wigfall Jr. of Cross has been working toward for years. His family lives on George Wigfall Road off S.C. Highway 6. The road is named after his father, a retired Westvaco forest manager and gospel musician who died unexpectedly on Thursday at age 81.

"Too bad he didn't live to see the actual pavement," said the younger Wigfall, 52, a former teacher.

George Wigfall Road will be the first road finished with the penny sales-tax increase that took effect in May, County Engineer Frank Carson said.

The county has hired five engineering firms to design the paving of George Wigfall Road and 11 other dirt roads throughout the county.

They're not the biggest projects on the county's list. In fact, they're pretty small when compared with widening U.S. Highway 17A between Goose Creek and Monck's Corner, which will affect hundreds of cars a day.

But the dirt roads can be knocked out quickly, and they've generated their share of complaints over the years, County Engineer Frank Carson said.

"Several of these roads have long histories that we're trying to address first," he said. "Some of these roads have some severe problems."

George Wigfall Road has a head start because the residents already have lined up rights of way that will be needed to widen the road. Paved roads are typically wider than dirt roads, and the county often has to buy more land from residents along the edges.

In cases where residents don't want to grant rights of way, the county is prepared to condemn land to keep the projects moving, Carson said.

The road on the list that's probably generated the most complaints is Tobacco Road, a rough stretch south of St. Stephen. Residents complained about the potholes and mud until the

county tried out a new way of paving that generated even more complaints. The county covered the road with a mixture of coal ash from Santee Cooper's nearby power plant about four years ago. Residents said it caused even more dust, and some were afraid it contaminated their drinking water.

A consultant hired by Santee Cooper found no arsenic or selenium in the water, but some residents still weren't happy and retained lawyers.

Carson said he never thought the coal ash was a problem and that it won't make paving the road any more expensive. Coal ash that might be left is locked into place by other materials that have been put on the road over the last few years, he said.

The engineering firms that are designing the paving of the dirt roads are the LPA Group, STV Inc., RPM Engineers, **Dennis Corp.** and Wilbur Smith Associates.

On a bigger scale, the county also is accepting bids to widen Highway 17 from two to four lanes between Goose Creek and Moncks Corner, Supervisor Dan Davis announced this month.

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