

Georgia 515 Project...from Page 1A

scheduled for advertisement to contractors in December 2020, but that timing can be impacted by the remaining parcels in acquisition,” Strickland said.

Things that can affect project scheduling include appraisal updates triggered by changes in property ownership; requests by property owners to acquire more right of way, i.e. remnant properties; or requests for design changes that cause additional environmental and/or utility coordination.

Project scheduling can also be impacted by non-responsive property owners or legal representatives.

“This project consists of widening the existing SR 515 to a four-lane (with rural divided sections outside the city limits of Blairsville and Young Harris, while widening from a three-lane urban section with bike lanes and sidewalk inside the city limits of Young Harris,” according to GDOT.

“Also included is a two-lane rural bypass on new location around the west side of downtown Young Harris,” GDOT continued. “The location is in Union and Towns County between Blairsville and Young Harris.

“Two new bridges are planned – one bridge replacement and one new location at the county line, over Brasstown Creek. The widening along the corridor alternates from side to side of the existing alignment in order to avoid impacts to streams and wetlands, as well as historic and

archaeological resources. The total length of the proposed project is approximately 8.4 miles.”

Strickland said there have been no changes to the project design in the last year and that layouts are available on the GDOT public outreach website at por.dot.ga.gov.

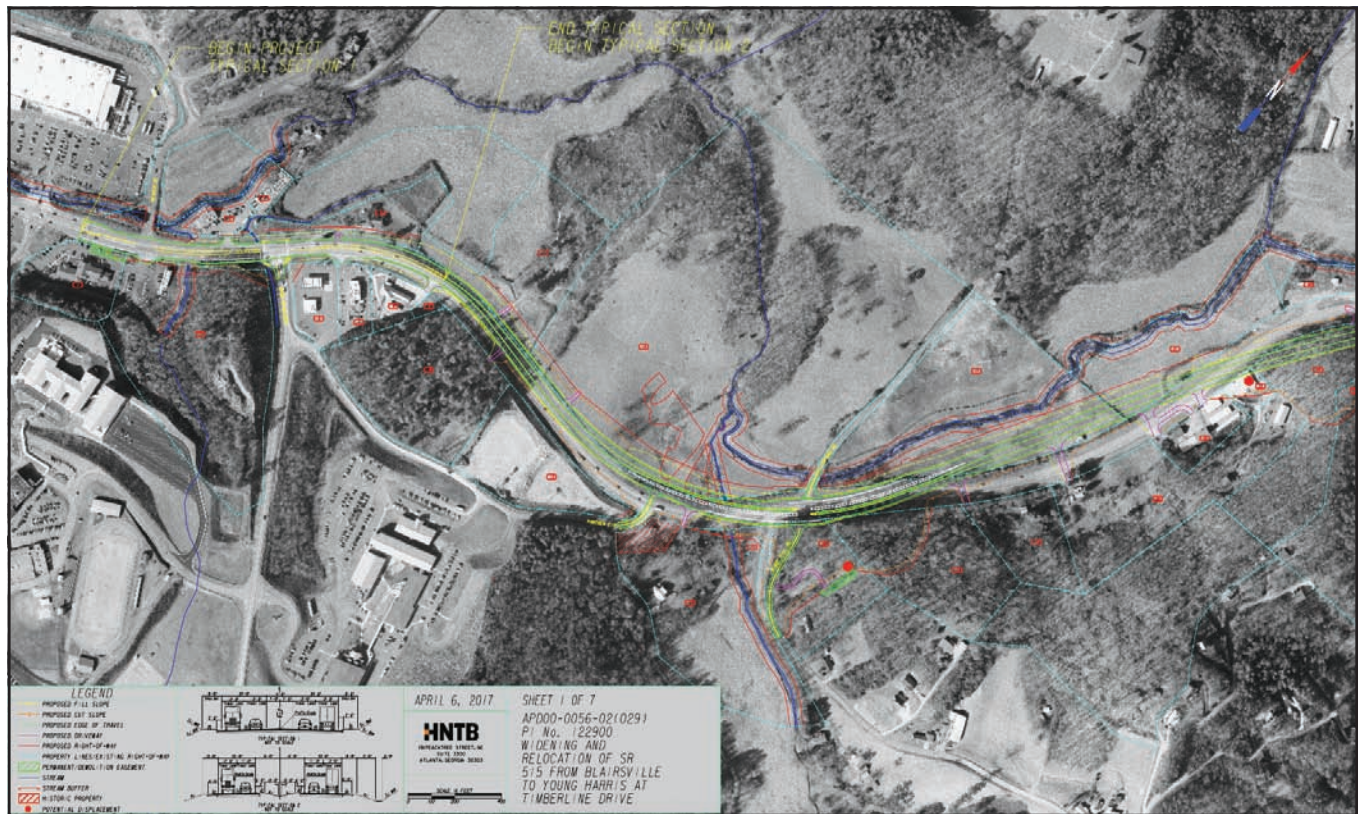
Once there, select Union County, click “Go,” then click on “122900 Young Harris Bypass.” This will bring up links to the project layout maps and other details.

As part of the project, GDOT has been conducting archaeological digs near Brasstown Creek off Georgia 66 for several years now, resulting in the discovery of “pre-contact period” Native American artifacts within the proposed area of the Young Harris Bypass.

According to GDOT, the goal of the digs, which are expected to run through spring 2020, is “to recover data that will contribute to an understanding of the lives of past inhabitants in this area” ahead of new road construction.

Two unavoidable archaeological sites are being mitigated by a team that’s currently busy digging up whatever artifacts it can uncover for analysis before the bypass project gets underway.

“These two sites are significant for their data potential and what we can learn about the previous inhabitants from the past,” GDOT Archaeologist Pamela



This aerial map of Blairsville starting near Young Harris Street on Georgia 515 is overlaid with the first leg of construction plans on the highway widening/relocation project.

Baughman said. “They are significant for the archaeological data or information that we can understand about who lived there.

“That’s why we are focused on these two sites in particular, because they are significant and unavoidable by the bypass project.”

Added Baughman, “We keep the artifacts kind of general, because we can’t legally share information about the location of sites or sometimes the particular components of sites

because we don’t want people going out there on their own.

“What I can say is that these are significant sites that date back to the pre-contact period, and they are older sites that relate to previous Indian occupations. They are significant within the context of the inhabitants of Towns County, with one site being a geologic feature with an outcropping of soapstone.”

All access to the excavations is restricted to

authorized personnel, though GDOT will host a public day at each site before excavations conclude “so that the public can see the excavations and talk with the archaeologists doing the work.”

In other GDOT news, the planned widening project for a 9-mile stretch of Murphy Highway is still in the state’s long-range plan, which Strickland said means a funding year has not yet been assigned.

The project is in the value engineering phase at this time, where the cost of each component of the project is evaluated for soundness.

As previously reported, “Roundabouts are being considered as an alternative to signalized intersections at five locations: Blue Ridge Street, Pat Haralson Memorial Drive, Pat Colwell Road, Gumlog Road, and Ivylog Road,” according to GDOT.

Night to Shine...from Page 1A

around the globe.

The aim of Night to Shine, co-sponsored locally by First United Methodist, is to create unforgettable prom night experiences for people with special needs ages 14 and older.

“We have over 100 guests again this year and around 300 volunteers,” said Joe Tatman,

one of the event’s organizers. “We went with party buses instead of the limos this year, and they look nice and have a lot of room for the guests, so they don’t have to worry about being tight in there.

“This is a great year, and we are looking forward to all the fun.”

As the guests started

coming in, they grabbed their “buddies,” or partners, who would be with them for the entirety of the evening and made their way down the red carpet to meet with “paparazzi” who applauded and cheered them on.

The night continued with a dinner before guests split into groups of three to either hit the dance floor, take a spin on the party bus or participate in karaoke.



More than 300 volunteers rolled out the red carpet on Feb. 7 to make over 100 guests and their buddies feel special on their “Night to Shine.” Photo by Jarrett

Those in the karaoke room sang along to popular songs while dancing, wearing sunglasses and holding microphones.

“This is a great event, and you can really tell that everyone is having a great time,” volunteer Don Koebler said.

Near the end of festivities, the groups all returned to the main area to watch a video made by Tim Tebow, who announced that all guests were to be crowned kings and queens of “Night to Shine.”

As the names of guests at each table were called out, the buddies crowned their excited guests, who cheered after being crowned king or queen for the night.

With the conclusion of the crowning, attendees danced to a few final songs to conclude the night, and everyone enjoyed the closing balloon drop.

Buddies walked their partners to the exit of the event, and everyone said their goodbyes, all while hoping to see one another and be buddies again next year.

“I’m a special education teacher, and I have been for over 25 years now over at Towns County,” said buddy

Erin Schuette. “This is just my heart, and you can see the joy on their faces, and you just want a night for them to come out and feel special.

“We have a lot of fun together, and they get to do a lot. It’s just a great night.”

First United Methodist hopes to keep hosting the event to continue bringing an exciting event to people in the surrounding area with special needs.

The volunteers behind Night to Shine in Union County accomplish their goals through sponsorships and community donations, and everyone involved is incredibly grateful for those community partnerships and for the Tim Tebow Foundation.

“As I reflect on year six of Night to Shine, I can’t help but think how incredibly unique each event is around the world and even around the country,” Tebow said of the night. “From cities like Rome, Paris, New York and Los Angeles, to Jinga, Uganda, Nepal, Haiti, Kolkata, India and Mazatlan, Mexico – the cultures are as different as the many languages, but the language of God’s love transcends them all.

“The reach of this

worldwide movement to share faith, hope and love is truly humbling and encouraging. Seeing the faces of these kings and queens being loved and celebrated across the globe, knowing each one of them is being shown the truth that they are significant, valuable and worthy – I can’t help but get emotional.

“It’s a dream come true seeing so many people come together from around the world to experience this one night, and see each face reflect the love of Christ in their joyful smiles and beautiful spirits.”

Blairsville PTO Strawberry Fundraiser



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