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GDOT demands quid pro quo to complete project

"The decision not to take this internally is primarily related to the ongoing litigation on a recent local road transportation improvement, the potential impacts related to this local community and limitations with our own resource availability."

— GDOT Commissioner Keith Golden

The commissioner was informing Bibb County that it, rather than the state, would have to pony up millions of dollars to buy rights-of-way for widening and improving Jeffersonville Road. GDOT has taken that stance, not because of anything to do with Jeffersonville Road, but because of the ongoing litigation over Forest Hill Road some 11 miles away. The statement by the commissioner should erase all doubt that the Georgia Department of Transportation believes it is the most powerful agency in the state.

This isn't a new posture for GDOT. For decades it has wielded a blunt ax over the heads of local officials. If an area needed or wanted a new road or have one improved, it had to play by GDOT's over-bloated, contractor friendly rules.

GDOT knows Bibb County can't easily come up with \$10 million, according to state estimates, for the widening, meaning the project, in the eyes of GDOT, is dead. There are several words to describe what GDOT is doing. Extortion would be the most accurate. Demanding a quid pro quo is the most charitable.

GDOT has decided to extract retribution from the citizens of Bibb County because Lindsay "Doc" Holliday — using his own bank account — sued GDOT over its plans for Forest Hill Road. GDOT is more accustomed to capitulation than lawsuits. Holliday's lawyers are surely adding this episode to his lawsuit that will be heard starting Oct. 21.

There is an option. Bibb County could issue bonds to cover the land acquisition and soft costs and make GDOT spend money already slated for the Jeffersonville Road project. East Macon residents have been waiting for 20 years on Jeffersonville Road improvements. They should not be made to wait another minute because of agency tactics more suited for ancient Rome than the great state of Georgia.