The following information was included in a response by Bartow County to a citizen inquiry about road safety concerns:

You inquired about the poor visibility of the striping for many of the county roads. You are noticing the poor staying power and reflective properties of paint, when compared to thermoplastic. Thermoplastic is about 4 times as expensive as paint to put down. So for many years, especially during the recession era, Bartow County used paint. Paint also fades within a few years. We made the decision last year to switch to striping with thermoplastic. While it costs more up front, it delivers better reflectivity and three to four times the longevity.

Also, commencing with the recession in about 2008, the amount of road miles the county could repave shrunk dramatically as budgets got squeezed. Traditionally, the county only re-striped a road when it was resurfaced. We also changed that practice last year. We have added a line item to the road budget that will pay for approximately thirty miles of striping (separate from the striping on newly resurfaced roads). We are also applying for a grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation that would likely pay for about 60 miles of additional striping.

We are also trying to increase the amount of resurfacing we perform annually. Last year we resurfaced around 22 miles of road and, with the new SPLOST collection commencing, we hope to repave more like 30 miles this year. So that all adds up to about 50 newly repaved miles of road with thermoplastic striping and an additional 50 to 100 miles of striping on existing roads. We have about 850 miles of county road, so that still leaves a good bit to be done of course. And some county roads are too narrow to stripe. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices calls for centerline markings on roads that are rural arterials and collectors with an average daily traffic count of 3,000 vehicles per day, as long as the road is 18 feet wide. Engineering judgment is required on placing centerline markings on narrow roads due to the potential to cause traffic to encroach into the opposite lane, or go off the edge of pavement. Most county roads began in the distant past as dirt roads or driveways or farm roads that eventually were paved and taken over by the county. Often the county right of way only extends ditch to ditch and we have no room to widen the road. In the past, citizens often willingly donated the necessary right of way to improve a road, but these days most people want to get paid a premium for any right of way the government takes for road improvements which significantly increases the cost to the taxpayer.

Another 150 miles of road are state highways, and GDOT maintains those. This includes all numbered highways such as Highway 20, 41, 61, 113, 140, 293, and 411 as well as I-75. The new "R-Cut" intersections that GDOT installed on Hwy 41 at Zena and Collins Drive were state projects. They vastly reduce dangerous collisions. GDOT has recognized an issue with the lack of visibility of the new medians and has already initiated a maintenance request to place reflective posts to mark these RCUT medians.

Construction zones can be difficult to navigate with all the temporary markings. GDOT recently announced it will be adding rumble strips to the center and edges of a number of State highways to reduce single car accidents and we will be looking at that as well.

I need to add that local road safety planning and countermeasures that can be effective in reducing accidents will be a topic of discussion at the March meeting of our MPO Technical Coordinating Committee. Some excellent tools have been provided by GDOT working with the Federal Highway Administration for the purpose of evaluating crashes and their root causes in a systemic manner.

So please understand we at the county and the GDOT officials at the State are always working to improve road safety. If you have any particular safety issues with our local roads, please contact us.