

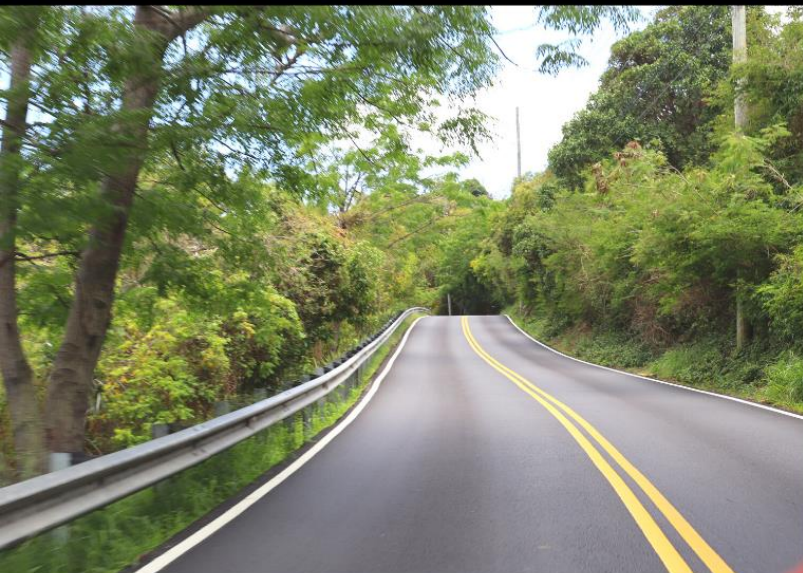
April 11, 2022

SENATOR MARVIN BLYDEN

Chairperson



**COMMITTEE ON HOUSING,
TRANSPORTATION &
TELECOMMUNICATIONS**



Derek Gabriel

Commissioner
Department of Public Works
DPW.VI.GOV





INTRODUCTION

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

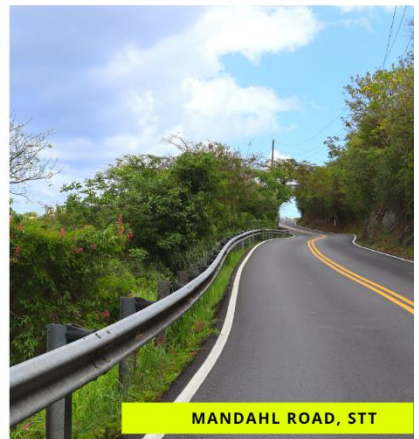
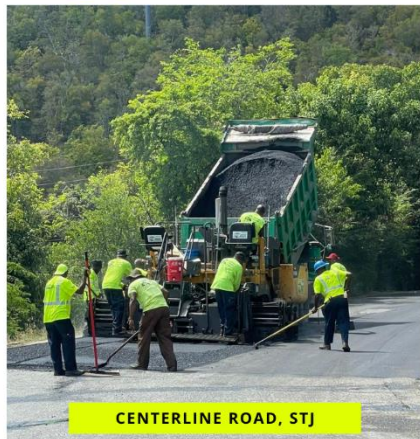
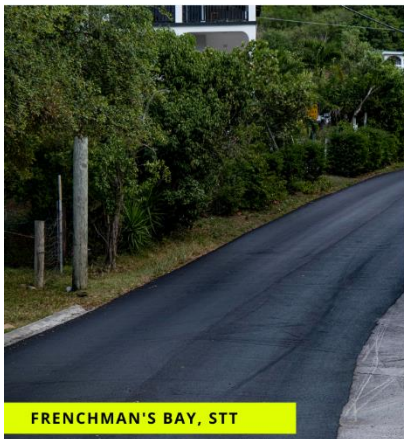
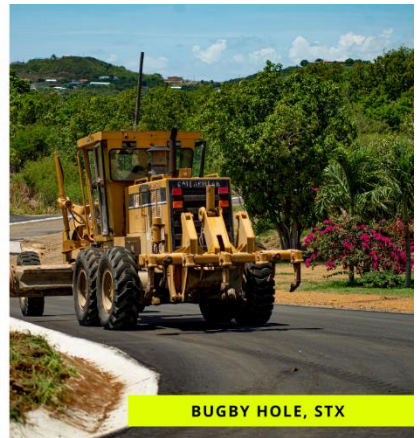
I am Derek Gabriel, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works. With me today is Deputy Commissioner of Transportation Karole Ovesen-McGregor, and Highway Program Manager Jomo McClean.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide general updates to this Committee on the status of public transportation and road projects across the Territory. Today, we have decided to focus our updates on the department's extensive work since October 2021 on the roads and public transportation system, to include both the ferry and transit systems, in the Territory.

ROAD PROJECTS

Territory-wide, residents have seen an increase in repairs to local roads, which is due largely to the funds appropriated, through this body, from the **DEBT SERVICE RESERVE EXCESS FUNDS | ACT 8454**. The department received about \$20 million for milling, paving, striping and drainage improvements to over 30 locations throughout the territory. We worked closely with Governor Bryan and this body to identify local roads and neighborhoods in severe disrepair. As of March 2022, eleven (11) of the seventeen (17) Act 8454 projects on St. Croix were completed and two (2) projects are nearing completion. In the St. Thomas/St. John district, seven (7) of the seventeen (17) projects are currently in progress. The projects seen below all included milling, paving, drainage improvements and striping.

A full list of Act 8454 projects, scopes and status can be found in the appendix.





QUEEN MARY HIGHWAY, STX



BASIN TRIANGLE, STX



HIDDEN VALLEY, STT



KING STREET, STX

The department received \$22 million from the **AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA)** in March 2022, to address several priority road projects throughout the territory. There are a total of 34 road projects designated for repair— 17 projects on St. Croix and 17 for the St. Thomas/St. John District. Road projects on Queen Mary Highway and the East End of St. Croix are in progress, while projects at Basin Triangle, King Street and Hidden Valley are all complete and awaiting striping. A full list of ARPA projects, scopes and statuses can be found in the appendix.

CARLTON ROAD PAVEMENT REHABILITATION (Route 667) – This project was awarded to Marco St Croix. Construction began in December 2020. The project is substantially complete with punch list items remaining to be completed. The scope for this project involves road reconstruction, asphalt paving, striping, new drainage crossings, new paved waterways, signs and guardrails.



CARLTON ROAD, STX

CLIFTON HILL CONNECTOR ROAD/MELVIN EVANS HIGHWAY-CONTAINER PORT INTERSECTION Phase I (Route 75/Route 66) - This project was previously authorized for construction by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 2017. The project was re-bid in Fall 2021, and we received FHWA concurrence to award in February 2022. The contract is currently being executed and we anticipate beginning construction by the end of April 2022. The scope for this project includes major road reconstruction, asphalt paving, roadway widening, striping, drainage, construction of turn lanes on Melvin Evans Highway, new signalization, waterline relocation and utility pole relocation.

MT. WELCOME PAVEMENT RECONSTRUCTION – GALLOWS BAY, ST. CROIX (Route 753) – Construction on this project is being performed by Eleven Construction. The scope includes major road reconstruction, pavement markings, signs and drainage improvements. Construction work will be completed by this summer.



GALLOWS BAY, STX

CLEARVIEW RETAINING WALL PROJECT ER-VI-33(7), CROWN MOUNTAIN ROAD, ST. THOMAS – Work on this project is approximately 78% complete. The contractor is Rumina Construction. Utility work delayed the project; however, we anticipate the final utility company to address their outstanding work within the next two weeks, allowing the contractor to complete the remaining scope items. The contract amount for this project \$1,098,805.



CLEARVIEW RETAINING WALL, STT

The following outlines the status of **GARVEE** projects, backed by the FHWA. To date, the department has expended over \$62 million of the allotted \$91 million in GARVEE funds.

VETERANS DRIVE PROJECT PHASE I, St. Thomas \$48 Million - In conjunction with Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division, this project was awarded to American Bridge. Construction is substantially complete, as work is 99% complete. The scope for this project includes new seawall construction, roadway widening, promenade construction, drainage improvements, historic styled pedestrian and street lighting, signalization, signage and landscaping.



MELVIN EVANS HIGHWAY PROJECT, Route 66, St. Croix \$15 Million – This project was divided into six segments, with four of the six segments now completed. The fifth segment is substantially complete, with punch list items remaining, and the final segment just received concurrence in award from FHWA on March 30, 2022.

MAHOGANY ROAD, Route 76, St. Croix \$8 Million – The design consultant has completed and submitted the 100% plans to the department. DPW is currently in the Right of Way acquisition process. The scope for this project includes pavement reconstruction, asphalt paving, new drainage crossings, paved waterways, striping and signage. We anticipate advertising this project in the fall.

HAM'S BLUFF ROAD, Route 63, St. Croix \$7 Million – The department is utilizing FHWA's RFP template for the territory to solicit for the services to perform this work.

SPRING GUT ROAD Phase I, Route 85, St. Croix \$9 Million – The construction documents for this project is approaching the 100% stage. The design firm has submitted Right of Way plans, and the department has initiated the acquisition process.

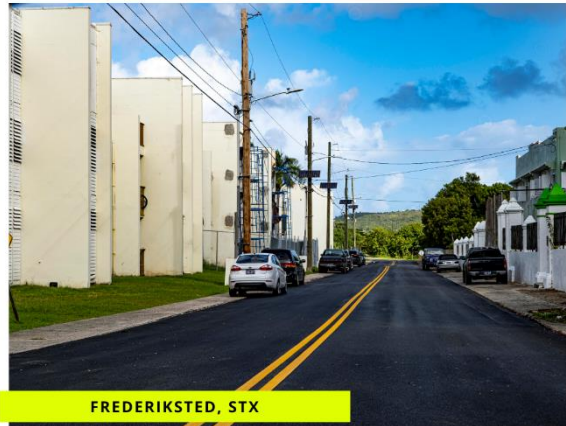
SION VALLEY ROAD, Route 81, St. Croix \$3 Million – Construction is nearing completion as the project is approximately 96% complete.



SION VALLEY ROAD, STX

RATTAN ROAD, Route 74, St. Croix, \$3 Million – Construction documents for this project are being prepared in house. Survey services are complete. Design underway.

FREDERIKSTED ROADS, Route 702, 7025, 7027, 7029, & 7023, St. Croix \$3 Million – This design firm has submitted construction plans to DPW for review. The department provided comments for the designer to address and we anticipate advertising this project for bid in June 2022.



FREDERIKSTED, STX

CHRISTIANSTED ROADS, Route 754, 75E, 75W, St. Croix – Eastern Federal Lands was assigned to the project development. This project is currently in preliminary design development. The department is also coordinating with our utility partners to synchronize the disruption to the public.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

Building permits, as well as the electrical and plumbing permits for the **PAUL E. JOSEPH STADIUM** project have been approved. The contractor recently completed concrete pours for the right field mat slab and sections of the left and right field stadium walls. They are currently working to move stockpiled soil and grading for the outfield. Next, the contractor will continue with concrete pours for the center field mat slab.

The **VITRAN MAINTENANCE FACILITY** project is about 50% completed. We anticipate reaching dry in status - all doors, windows and roof installed - for all buildings, by the end of April 2022.

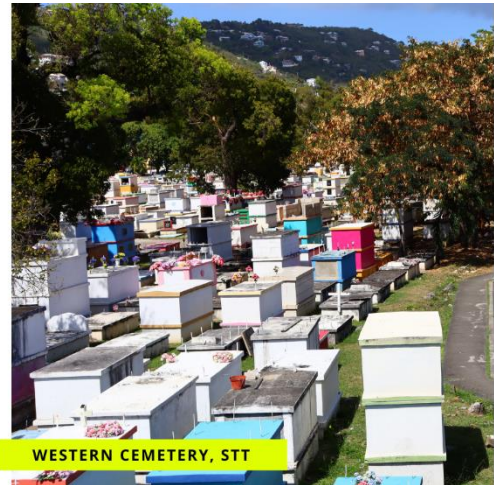
- Main Building
- Bus Wash / Maintenance Building
- Oil Containment Building
- Tire Storage Building



CEMETERIES

The department continues to make major strides in enhancing and expanding the territory's cemeteries. I would like to take this moment to thank this body for approving the funding to build additional crypts for veterans and the general public at the **SMITH BAY EASTERN CEMETERY** on St. Thomas. The department is currently seeking a crypt construction vendor and will advertise this job within the next two weeks. DPW is also conducting general repairs on the chapel, hiring an additional staff member to be stationed at this cemetery, and clearing space at the rear of the lot to provide more burial space.

In-house architects completed the design for the **WESTERN CEMETERY** walkway and wall repairs, as part of the department's overall Cemetery Improvement Plan. We are actively working with Governor Bryan, Lieutenant Governor Roach and Director O'Neal from the Office of Management and Budget to identify funding to begin this project by the end of the calendar year, as the Bryan-Roach administration is committed to honoring our loved ones and ancestors in a way befitting of their memory.



At the **KINGSHILL CEMETERY**, we have cleared and grubbed additional acreage to accommodate more burial spots. In the coming weeks, we will grade the land and anticipate the extra space being available by Summer 2022.

The **KINGSHILL CEMETERY PARKING LOT** is currently undergoing much needed repairs. Reconstruction work began in February 2022. The scope of work for this



project includes removal of the existing asphalt pavement, installation of new asphalt pavement, placement of soil erosion control measures, striping and temporary traffic controls. This \$624,564.50 project—funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency—is expected to be completed by the end of April 2022.

The hurricane-damaged **KINGSHILL CHAPEL** will soon get a face lift. This project was approved by FEMA and design is now 60% completed. We expect construction on the chapel to be completed by April 2023.

The **MAPPING OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS PUBLIC CEMETERIES** initiative is set to begin in Summer 2022 as well. The contract with Tulane University was recently finalized, which, when implemented, will utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to aid DPW's efforts towards modernizing its historical records. The GIS software will provide a mapping tool, using 3-D imaging and geocoding, to assist in the creation of geographical maps to pinpoint burial locations. The advanced capabilities of the GIS system will assist the department, and one day the public, in locating gravesites and plot numbers for all cemeteries within the Territory.

OFFICE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION – VITRAN

The **FERRY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM** was approved and officially accepted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in October 2021, after many years of having the ferry service within the U. S. Virgin Islands recognized as an integral part of our public transportation multi-modal system.

This is the first ever developed and approved ferry transportation program plan for the territory. The program includes planned ferry services between all major islands territory-wide. As part of the plan, the Office of Public Transportation will continue to apply for **grants** for ferry boats and services for all the routes on the territory's ferry system. Thus far, grants have been submitted for the St. Croix – St. Thomas route, and the St. John – St. Thomas route. In December, the Virgin Islands was awarded a Passenger Ferry Grant for \$5.1 million to purchase a 100 ft. ferry with a 300-passenger capacity to meet ridership demands and reduce congestion during rush hour on the St. John – St. Thomas route. As part of the multimodal system, buses are expected to meet ferry passengers on either side of the route.



FERRY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM



VITRAN - NEW BUSES

buses are expected to meet ferry passengers on either side of the route. I want to publicly thank the ferry operators - Transportation Services and Varlack Ventures - for their roles in these major successes. Their active participation and information provided was essential and we truly appreciate our partnership. We are looking forward to great things to come from this program in the near future.

NEW BUSES are in various stages of the procurement process with four (4) heavy duty buses and ten (10) Paratransit ADA buses (half are already en route to the Virgin Islands,

while the other half are in the final stages of the outfitting process). These new buses will replace **old buses** that have surpassed their useful life or are no longer safe to operate. Old buses slated for replacement will be assessed and recommended for disposal or donation.

Placing new buses in service will increase reliability, efficiency and the delivery of services. VITRAN is expected to realize an increase in **revenues** when compared to previous years, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Thus far, VITRAN has collected \$107,559 **this fiscal year**, while in **fiscal year 2021** revenues collected were \$182,519. Along with new buses, VITRAN has hired additional bus operators, which decreases employee burnout and overtime costs. VITRAN has seen savings in operations only to now be faced with the exorbitant increase in fuel costs.

VITRAN is implementing its **REVENUE-GENERATING ADVERTISING PROGRAM** on buses and shelters. We are finalizing the scope of work for solicitation, as our team believes the highest and best use for this program is to work with an advertising firm to manage this robust program with the department collecting a percentage of the gross revenues from advertising. This solicitation is expected to go out later this month.

HURRICANE REPAIRS

The department is undergoing hurricane repairs on four of its facilities.

Work on the **ST. JOHN MAIN OFFICE BUILDING** is nearing completion. This space will house the department's St. John Operations crew. Work included repairs on the second floor and exterior staircase.



The design for the **ANNA'S HOPE COMPOUND** is 50% completed, with a scheduled completion date of August 2020. This project is expected to be completed within five years – October 2027.

The design for the **ANNA'S HOPE TEMPORARY FACILITY** is 60% completed. The design is expected to be completed by June 2022, and the construction completed by September 2023. Once completed, employees housed at the current Anna's Hope Compound will move to this location, to allow construction on the permanent compound to begin.

The design for the **FREDERIKSTED COMPOUND** is also 60% completed, with a scheduled completion date of June 2022. This project will take 18 months to construct and is expected to be completed by March 2024.

HURRICANE PREPARATION

In preparation for the upcoming 2022 Hurricane Season, DPW is currently performing gut assessments and will develop a gut cleaning schedule to have all guts cleared and ready before June 1st.

Upon VITEMA's authorization, the department distributes sandbags to the public. In addition to sand and bags, DPW also provides necessary tools for filling. Pre-filled sandbags are reserved for the elderly and physically challenged individuals.

STRATEGIC PREPOSITIONING:

DPW has established the following protocol and preparation measures:

1. All DPW Operations personnel along with all Roadside Contractors are assigned to specific locations throughout the territory with a mandate to address all emergency agencies/locations first such as hospitals and fire stations. We meet seventy-two hours before the impending storm to review all assignments and protocol.
2. Once a Presidential Declaration has been made, Emergency Contractors join the process of roadside clearing and debris removal. They address all high priority locations first, which includes: all hospitals, fire departments, and police stations throughout the territory.
3. Emergency Contractors – DPW has contractors for the following:
 - Emergency Roadside Clearance
 - Emergency Debris Removal
 - Emergency Debris Monitors
 - Emergency Roof Repairs
 - DPW Emergency Generator Service & Maintenance

The Hurricane Emergency Task Order Contracts for the St. Thomas / St. John District were amended and approved. The St. Croix District contracts were also amended and are pending final approval from the Department of Property & Procurement. All contracts will be in place prior to the start of the hurricane season.

CLOSING

As always, I want to close by thanking the men and women who serve in this department. The projects mentioned in today's testimony would be impossible without their hard work and dedication. Words cannot adequately express my appreciation and I am honored to work side by side with this incredible team. I am motivated and encouraged by you every day. I want to personally thank our residents across the territory for your trust, patience and understanding as we continue the territory's transformation out of the hurricanes of 2017. We are excited about the great things to come and look forward to bringing the projects discussed today to fruition. My team and I are ready to answer any questions you may have.