

# Lanier County News

Covering Lanier & Northern Lowndes Counties

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## Lowndes & Lanier Counties to Get New Passing Lanes on SR 31/US 221

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

LANIER COUNTY, Georgia – The project of developing new passing lanes on SR 31/US 221 at four location in Lowndes and Lanier Counties is now in progress. Work started on March 11th, Monday. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) began the project by clearing and grubbing along the route. The current scheduled completion date is sometime during the summer of 2025.

According to GDOT, the project consists of adding passing lanes at four (4) sites along SR 31 / US 221 northeast of Valdosta in both Lowndes and Lanier Counties. The passing lanes will be added through a symmetrical 6 foot widening on both sides of the existing pavement. The typical section of all sites will feature a 12 foot travel lane in both directions, with a 12 foot passing lane on the inside lane traveling in either direction dependent on the site with three lanes and 10 foot outside shoulders of which 2 feet is paved.

Sites 1 and 2 are located in Lowndes County. Sites 1 and 2 are just south of Knight Academy Road. Site 1 is a northbound passing lane and Site 2 is a southbound passing lane. Sites 3 and 4 are located in Lanier County.

Site 3 is a southbound passing lane that begins just south of Shiner Pond Road.

Site 4 is a northbound passing lane that begins north side of the same Shier Pond Road intersection.

The project construction cost in 2024 is \$12,607,113.23. In 2017, the SCP (Scoping) cost approximately \$31,631.57. In 2018, the PE (Preliminary Engineering) cost estimate was \$1,732,233.09. The ROW (Right of Way) cost estimate in 2022 was \$1,600,000.00. The construction contractor is the Scruggs Company.

When developing the planned project, traffic volumes were analyzed in March 2017. According to GDOT, the road averages from 4,100 – 5,850 vehicles per day, with truck percentages up to 8.5% of that volume. The corridor currently operates at a Level of Service C or better, which is considered favorable operating condition. By the year 2023 and 2043, the AADT is anticipated to range from 4,600 – 6,650 and 5,650 – 8,000 vehicles per day, respectively, which translates into a LOS C or better.

Analysis of crash data reviewed available information for the number of crashes, injuries, and fatalities between 2013 and 2019. A total of 174 crashes occurred within the project limits during the study period. The total number of crashes increased



from 2013 (21) to 2014 (32), as did the injury crashes from 9 (2013) to 13 (2014). A downward trend for total number of crashes was observed between 2015 (26) through 2018 (17), before increasing in 2019 (30); 2016 and 2017 recorded 25 and 23 crashes respectively.

The injury crashes also decreased from 11 in 2015 to 6 in 2018 before increasing to 14 in 2019; both 2016 and 2017 had 10 injury crashes each. One crash involving fatality was recorded in 2013, 2014, and 2019. Of the 174 crashes reported, almost half (47%) were not a collision with motor vehicle, followed by rear end (22%) and angle (17%) crashes.

Again, GDOT estimates that the current scheduled completion date is sometime during the summer of 2025. This estimated completion date is subject to change.

## Brooks County Homicide Investigation

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

BROOKS COUNTY, Georgia – Jonah Kenney (27) of Quitman has been arrested by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). According to the GBI, the Brooks County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) responded to the Brooks County E911 Service on Wednesday March 13, about 8:40 p.m. The E911 Service had received several calls about a person, who had been shot in the 1800 block of Blair Road, Quitman.

When BCSO arrived on scene, deputies located Jed Maichele (56) of Quitman with apparent gunshot wounds to his body. When Brooks County Emergency Medical Service (EMS) personnel arrived, they immediately

began administering medical treatment as Maichele was transported to the Brooks County Hospital (BCH). He was later pronounced dead.

As the BCSO deputies investigated, they determined that Jonah Kenney was Maichele's nephew and likely involved in the incident.

A short time after the evening's earlier events, a Georgia State Patrol (GSP) Trooper stopped Kenney on an unrelated traffic violation and was interviewed by GBI agents, whose help had been requested. Jonah Kenney was arrested and booked into the Brooks County Jail.

The GBI has charged Kenney with malice murder,

felony murder, aggravated assault, and possession of a firearm during a crime in Brooks County.

The victim, Maichele, has been taken to the GBI Medical Examiner's Office for an autopsy.

The GBI has asked for the public's help with this case is active and ongoing. Anyone with information is asked to call the GBI Regional Investigative Office in Thomasville at 229-225-4090. Anonymous tips can also be submitted by calling 1-800-597-TIPS (8477), online at <https://gbi.georgia.gov/submit-tips-online/>, or by downloading the See Something, Send Something mobile app.

## Isaac Camon Back in Prison – This Time for Pandemic Fraud

By Carol A. Gasser Moore

MACON, Georgia - A former Lanier County resident, who has previously served time in a federal prison for drug trafficking and gun convictions, has again been sentenced by a federal judge. Isaac Camon (49) has more recently been convicted of illegally obtaining money from a federal pandemic unemployment program. Camon now faces a new federal prison sentence.

U.S. Department of Justice has released information about Camon's new sentence. Camon, who has been residing in Valdosta, has now been sentenced By U. S. District Judge TIlman E. "Tripp" Self III. Self sentenced Camon to 36 months in prison for one count of wire fraud, plus 36 months in prison for revocation of his supervised release for a total prison term of 72 months. Camon's prison term is to be followed by three (3) years of supervised release.

Peter D. Leary, U.S. Attorney of Middle Georgia, has stated, "Our office has prosecuted individuals responsible for millions of dollars of CARES Act fraud, money earmarked to help sustain hard-working and law-abiding citizens during the historic pandemic. Working with our law enforcement partners, our office will continue to root out fraud and hold individuals accountable for these criminal schemes."

"Camon clearly has no regard for the law, as he decided to defraud the state of Georgia during a national emergency, while he was still serving time for drug trafficking," Rich Bilson, supervisory senior resident of FBI Atlanta's Valdosta office, said. "This lengthy

sentence demonstrates the FBI's relentless pursuit of justice and will hopefully put an end to Camon's career as a criminal."

Court documents show that on June 16, 2020, Camon filed a fraudulent online claim for federal and state pandemic unemployment assistance with the Georgia Department of Labor. In the claim, Camon falsely asserted he worked for two companies, during a time period when he was actually serving a federal sentence in a prison, a halfway house or on home confinement for possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance in the Middle District of Florida.

Those documents also indicate that Camon never reported any work income for tax purposes and one of the companies Camon claimed to work for wasn't in operation at the time he stated he was employed by them. Camon is being held accountable for an intended fraud loss of \$19,452; the restitution amount payable to the Georgia Department of Labor is \$16,322.

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form/>.

Multiple agencies which include our own Lanier County Sheriff's Office, in addition to the FBI Atlanta's Valdosta Resident Agency, the U.S. Department of



Labor-OIG, and the U.S. Department of Transportation-OIG investigated this recent case against Isaac Camon. Both, Criminal Chief Leah McEwen and Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert McCullers, prosecuted the case for the U.S. government.



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