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A rendering of the Cross Island Parkway courtesy of Beaufort County.

lic input. And, in what may be one of those seminal moments in county history, the commissioners are confronting the infamous expanse of water that politically splits the county into north and south – the Broad River.

“We’re going to take that Broad River and make it a little less broad,” said Bethea.

Echoed Vaux: “I’m looking forward to ‘erasing’ the Broad River. We now have a real opportunity to blend the county together into a single organized unit.”

A vital part of this effort is achieving buy-in countywide, Bethea said. “If we do a lot of hard work on projects that are needed in the county, and if we don’t have buy-in once those projects are rolled out, we have worked for five or six months for naught,” she said. “My feeling is, this is an effort to improve our county, countywide. And when we sit at that table in there, we have to take off the hats of partisanship and put on the hats of all of us being Beaufort County residents working for the good of the whole,” Vaux said, “You’ve heard everybody say there’s got to be consensus, that we’ve got to come together if we’re going to make it through what is obviously a budget crunch and the inability of the state and the county to fund these necessary projects. We need to come together as people from Beaufort County, not from Bluffton, or Hilton Head or Beaufort, or Shelton or Lobeoco.”

Input from the public is essential, said Vaux. “For this thing to pass, the people have to own it. It’s their money, they’ve got to agree to spend it, and be taxed. They’ve got to have a complete and total involvement in both the determination of which projects are selected, how we do it, how long we do it. We need to hear from them. We need to have them intimately involved in this thing from the beginning to the end.”

Commissioners need only to look north to York County, South Carolina for an example of how voters put aside their differences and approved by 73 percent in November 2003 a continuation of a capital project sales tax for \$173 million over seven years for 25 projects. The initial referendum was approved in 1997.

At a recent meeting here of the Greater Island Committee’s subcommittee on transportation, Mayor Tom Peoples of Hilton Head Island discussed his ideas for a project list. He said Beaufort County must send a message loud and clear that growth management is important. The county can demonstrate its interest in growth management, he said, by ensuring one of the projects on the list is land acquisition. “This has to be a component to convince voters the county is serious about growth management.” Land acquisition takes property off the market that

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