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The Leon and Marie Cothron Macon County Welcome Center would not be possible without \$450,000 in grant money, thanks in large part to Congressman Bart Gordon, and a \$127,000 gift from the Cothron family. The project funding also includes a \$90,000 appropriation from Macon County and the City of Lafayette.

- In 2004 applied for Rural Development Grant through the United States Department of Agriculture and an Enhancement Grant through the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The Rural Development Grant was approved for \$40,000 in 2005.

- Congressman Bart Gordon secured an additional \$160,000 in Federal Transportation funds.
- Resubmitted TDOT Grant application in 2005 for 2006 funding. This application was approved for \$250,000.
- Site search began in 2006 with several possible locations identified and prioritized. The committee's recommendation was to find a site located on Highway 52 West; the top choice was a portion of the Cothron farm near the Lafayette Municipal Airport. After presenting the Welcome Center plans to Michael and Marie Cothron, they offered to "sell" approximately (1) acre of their farm to Macon County for the building for \$10,000 (the land appraised for \$137,000).
- The process has been very tedious working with various divisions within TDOT (local programs, right-of-way, environmental) and the Federal Aeronautics Administration.
- The Cothron's generosity paid off for Macon County when TDOT approved using the appraised value of the land as our local match.
- The TDOT mandated protocol was followed in advertising for engineering services. Several firms sent "letters of interest" and three were asked to submit a formal proposal. Palmer Engineering was selected. MJM Architects designed the building based on the information we provided.
- Palmer Engineering is waiting for final TDOT approval to bid the project and anticipates awarding the contract to construct by early July 2008. Construction is expected to be complete by the end of the year.