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## I-85 bottleneck bridges eyed for upgrades

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**LAWRENCEVILLE** - A citizen committee boosted sales tax funds for proposed major overhauls of the Pleasant Hill Road and Jimmy Carter Boulevard bridges over the interstate.

The committee, which is deciding how 2009 sales tax funds approved last year will be spent on transportation, adopted a preliminary recommendation to give the bridge projects higher funding if two local community improvement districts match some of the funding.

The Gwinnett Village CID has proposed adding three more lanes to the Jimmy Carter bridge, and the Gwinnett Place CID is behind a conversion of the Pleasant Hill bridge into a single-point interchange while also adding capacity.

"For both areas, it's a bottleneck," Gwinnett Place CID Director Joe Allen said of the bridges. "(The funding) gives a strong push to move things forward."

A single-point interchange is where entrance and exit ramps for southbound and northbound I-85 traffic will all meet in the center of the bridge, instead of at two points on each end.

The sales tax proposal is to ensure \$5 million each to fund design and right-of-way costs for the projects, with an extra \$1 million if the CIDs put up \$1 million. A second tier funding level, if the sales tax proceeds come in higher than expected, would give another \$1.5 million to each project if the CIDs match that amount.

Allen and Gwinnett Village CID Director Chuck Warbington said the construction would take more than \$100 million total, but to have funding for the design will help the CIDs lobby for federal or state funds.

"You've got to have a chunk of money (up front)," Warbington said.

The sales tax proposal, which will ultimately be decided by the Board of Commissioners, also includes money to convert bridges proposed in a last sales tax to an interchange at Interstate 85, including a Gravel Springs Road bridge to be widened and the McGinnis Ferry Road bridge, which is expected to be under construction soon.

Nearly \$10 million was also set aside to replace and rehab older bridges.

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