



Water disrupts routes

Fulton County Marshal A. Cappuccio turns traffic away from Milton Avenue in Atlanta after several minor fender benders occurred Thursday at a blind corner that dead-ended at a blockade where the road had flooded. JOHN SPINK / JSPINK@AJC.COM

New interchange in Gwinnett 'good for us'

'Diverging diamond' to ease traffic, boost business, some say.

By Christopher Hong
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Casey Coffee said it's a blessing his commute doesn't take him through the stand-still traffic of the I-85 interchange on Pleasant Hill Road.

But potential customers do if they want to shop at his car dealerships. He said the traffic keeps people away from his business at a time when they are already watching their money.

That's why he's looking forward to the upcoming construction of a new "diverging diamond" interchange, similar to the one at Ashford-Dunwoody Road that officials say has

reduced congestion.

"I just know people's general conception is it's congested, and they try to avoid it," Coffee said. "Anything we can do to get traffic moving and keep people coming to our area is going to be good for us."

The new interchange will consist of a series of lights and crossing lanes that brings traffic to the left side of the bridge, allowing cars to turn freely onto the interstate. A protected 8-foot sidewalk also will be built.

About 58,000 vehicles pass through the interchange every day. It can take more than 10 minutes just to cross the bridge when cars line the left lane to turn on the interstate, said Joe Allen, executive director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District,

which has put nearly \$1.2 million into the \$4.3 million project.

Coffee said the congestion can strike at any time of the day. "You could have it bad at 2 and 3 o'clock," he said.

Allen, citing a CID survey, said people avoid the area because of the unpredictable traffic. He hopes clearing the roads will bring shoppers to the struggling Gwinnett Place mall and other businesses.

Construction will begin in the next several weeks, said Alan Chapman, deputy director of the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation. The new interchange is expected to open next summer.

The county also plans to build a diverging diamond interchange at Jimmy Carter Boulevard.