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## Metro Atlanta could see more Diverging Diamond Interchanges



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By Sandra Parrish

As Gwinnett County and state officials hold a ribbon cutting on the new Diverging Diamond Interchange at I-85 and Pleasant Hill Road, metro Atlanta could see several more of the interchanges in coming years.

Georgia Department of Transportation Deputy Commissioner Todd Long says the state is looking at bringing two to Cobb County at I-75 and Wade Green Road and I-75 at Windy Hill. A third possible location is I-285 and Camp Creek Parkway near the airport.

"A lot of interchanges in Atlanta are bottle necks, but the ones we're looking at would accommodate this type of design fairly easily," he tells WSB's Sandra Parrish.

Long says the interchange at I-75 and Wade Green would likely be first and the state is already working to secure funding.

A fourth DDI is possible near Savannah's busy ports at SR 21 and I-95.

DDIs are considered among the most innovative ways of moving traffic by shifting vehicles to the left side of the bridge and avoiding left-hand turns.

Long says they are actually cheaper--about 10 percent of the costs of building a new bridge.

The DDI at Pleasant Hill, which moves 54,000 vehicles a day, is actually the first in the country to have eight lanes.

"I really think the more pronounced benefit is in those off-peak hours where there's still an awful lot of traffic out here," says Gwinnett

County Department of Transportation Director Kim Conroy.

Gwinnett County's second DDI at I-85 and Jimmy Carter Boulevard is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year with traffic "crossing over" to the left side of the bridge by this fall.

Long says the state actually wants to see the results of the Gwinnett DDIs one to two years down the road before moving ahead with others.

But besides a better flow of traffic, local businesses are already seeing financial benefits from the new DDI at Pleasant Hill Road.

Leo Weiner, one of the owners of Mall Corners shopping center, says more tenants are interested in locating there and shoppers are happy too.

"Now that we're moving people through and creating an incentive for people to actually travel through Pleasant Hill Road, people are taking another look," he says.

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