

# BAD LEADS, 8A

DA chastises handling of Justin Gaines case

**THREE-PEAT**  
Buford sweeps Mill Creek for county volleyball title  
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# Gwinnett Daily Post

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2015

www.gwinnettdaily.com

\$2.00 ©2015 SCNI Vol. 46, No. 4

## New execution order issued for Gissendaner

By JOSHUA SHARPE  
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Kelly Gissendaner

A new execution order was signed Friday for Kelly Gissendaner, the former Gwinnett County resident who is Georgia's only woman on death row.

Judge Melodie Snell Conner set the time frame for the 47-year-old to be put to death between Sept. 29

and Oct. 6, according to an order released to the Daily Post.

District Attorney Danny Porter said he believes the state intends to schedule the execution for the first day.

The Georgia Attorney General's Office, which Porter said asked him to request the order Thursday, and Department of Corrections couldn't be reached immediately.

The judge's order comes after months of legal grappling between the inmate's attorneys and the state after her execution was halted in March due to a last-minute issue with the lethal injection drugs intended for her.

It also comes on the heels of a groundswell of support from friends, family, clergy and other onlookers, who lobbied officials to commute her sentence to life without parole.

With the news Friday, supporters once again took to social media to post messages for Gissendaner and links to petitions to save the former Auburn resident, who was convicted of or-

chestrating the 1997 murder of her husband, Douglas. They used the hashtag #KellyOnMyMind, which appeared in the run-up to her last execution date.

"Profoundly sad for Kelly's loved ones and our state as we prepare to kill another one of our own," one Twitter user named Dan Murphy wrote.

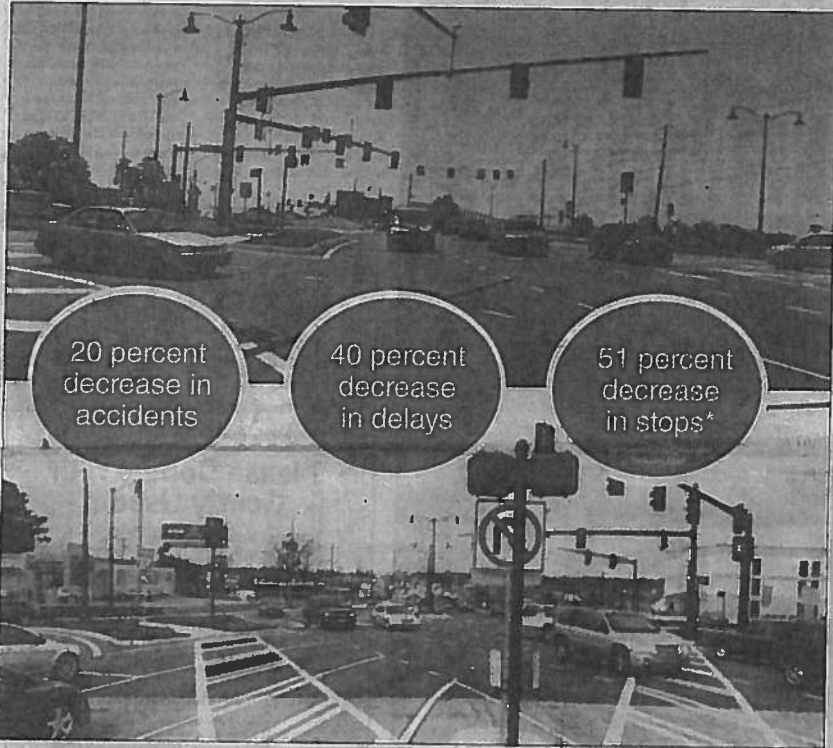
Others are hoping the judge's order holds,

including retired Gwinnett County District Attorney's Office investigator Tracey Reidy. With the agency from 1987 to 2012, Reidy didn't work the Gissendaner case personally, but she was well aware of it and called it "one you don't forget."

"I saw the pictures of Doug's body bent over

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## TRAFFIC GEM



20 percent decrease in accidents

40 percent decrease in delays

51 percent decrease in stops\*

## Gwinnett's diverging diamond interchanges touted as successes

By CURT YEOMANS  
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Joe Allen didn't need fancy studies four years ago to tell him that traffic on the Pleasant Hill Road interchange at Interstate 85 was bad.

The Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District's executive director

felt drivers' pain every time he had to cross the bridge to get to a meeting by the mall. That was all of the proof he needed that improvements to the interchange were needed.

Ultimately, changes were made. In 2011, CID and county transportation officials announced Pleasant Hill would get Gwinnett County's first diverging

diamond interchange.

"People would avoid Pleasant Hill Road just to avoid going across what I call 'The River,'" Allen said. "It could take me, just getting across from my building in the Gwinnett Commerce Center over to the mall, some days at lunch, 10 to 15 minutes because it was so backed up ... Now you can get across just like that."

It's been more than two years since the Pleasant Hill diverging diamond interchange opened and officials are now sharing data on its effect on traffic in the area. Those figures include a 20 percent drop in accidents and a 51 percent drop in the number of times cars had to stop between Club Drive

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## New Miss Gwinnett chosen at county fair

By JOSHUA SHARPE  
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LAWRENCEVILLE — The Gwinnett County Fair isn't always pretty. It's sprawling chaos, a sea of people milling in a cacophony of screaming rides and sweaty vendors hawking most any deep-fried item imaginable, with the scent of attendee's cigarettes and funnel cake covering the grounds off Sugarloaf Parkway.

But, in a cement-floored warehouse behind the fresh-squeezed lemonade stand, the focus is on beauty and gl-

On Saturday night, Victoria Bush, a junior majoring in psychology and dance at Kennesaw State University, rose above a field of five competitors, becoming 2015's Miss Gwinnett County.

Bush, who lives in Powder Springs and wore a flowing red gown, could

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Victoria Bush, a Kennesaw State University student, was crowned Miss Gwinnett County on Saturday night. (Staff Photo: Joshua Sharpe)

# Diamond

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and Satellite Boulevard, according to Allen and Gwinnett County Transportation Director Alan Chapman. There's also been at least a 40 percent decrease in delays, they said.

"That is a huge improvement," Chapman said. Diverging diamond interchanges operate by having traffic switch sides as cars cross a bridge. That lets travelers who want to turn left onto an interstate do so without waiting on a traffic light. Cars then cross back to their normal side of the road as they leave the bridge.

As the Pleasant Hill conversion was underway, county officials also worked with another CID, the Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District, to prepare the Jimmy Carter Boulevard interchange on I-85 for conversion as well.

The Jimmy Carter diverging diamond opened earlier this year. Related construction to finish pedestrian pathways on that bridge is just finishing up and Chapman said the continued work means accurate figures on that interchange's effect are not yet available.

Gwinnett Village CID Executive Director Chuck Warbington said district members have responded favorably to the new interchange at Jimmy Carter Boulevard. He said that corridor faced similar issues to what Gwinnett Place CID officials had to deal with on Pleasant Hill.

"It was to the point where businesses were leaving and commuters were finding alternate routes to miss the area, which then led to other

issues in the CID where we were having traffic issues where we shouldn't have had traffic issues," Warbington said.

The Gwinnett Village CID members responded to the diverging diamond interchange's opening with a chorus of "it's about time," Warbington said.

The county couldn't be happier with either interchange. They were two of the first three diverging diamonds in Georgia, behind the first one at Ashford-Dunwoody Road over Interstate 285. In all, there are 53 diamond interchanges in operation across the U.S., according to www.divergingdiamond.com, a website run by consulting group Advanced Transportation Solutions.

Pleasant Hill was the first eight-lane diverging diamond in the U.S., and its design earned it and its construction crews accolades from Georgia Partnership for Transportation Quality and the American Council for Engineering Companies.

The diverging diamond interchange movement in Gwinnett County came about as a cost-saving measure as CID and county officials looked for ways to ease traffic in the area. Chapman and Allen both said the alternative to a diamond interchange would have been tearing out the existing bridge and building an entirely new interchange, which would have been more costly.

"\$38.5 million to replace the bridge and do a (single-point urban interchange)," Allen said. "You had good infrastructure there and so the good thing with the DDI is you are able to keep that and just reconfigure things."

The diverging diamond

conversion cost about one-tenth of that, Chapman said. About \$2 million of the final cost was paid for with money put up by the CID and a grant from the State Road and Tollway Authority.

Warbington said the Jimmy Carter conversion cost about \$6 million, whereas bridge reconstruction that exit would have cost about \$78 million. He warned that the bridge will still have to be replaced in about 10 to 15 years because it has a low state efficiency rating after years of road work and changing federal road regulations.

"From a structural standpoint, it's not about to fall down so I don't want there to be a public outcry, but from an efficiency rating that DOT puts on bridges, this fits in that category that within the next 10 to 15 years it will have to be replaced," Warbington said.

The conversion bought all of the parties involved time to ease backups while still planning long-term for a bridge replacement.

Warbington said the CID found the diverging diamond option appealing in the short-term because "We needed immediate relief. We couldn't wait another 10 to 15 years to find \$78 million."

Once the final touch-up work is done on the interchange later this year, the CID will begin looking at what processes it must go through to replace the bridge with at least some federal funding for a long-term solution.

"This gave us immediate impact and relief that we need now ... especially as we begin to try to do some redevelopment work in the area," Warbington added.

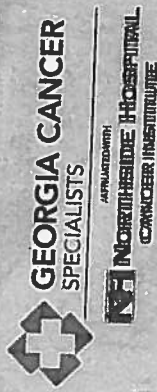
we'll definitely look at" in the future as the county continues to grow because of how the county's two existing interchanges have performed.

"Our two have been successful and, from what I've heard, the one at Ashford-Dunwoody has been successful as well, so I think it's something we're going to see more of in the future," Chapman said.

Department of Transportation officials announced plans to convert the Highway 20-Interstate 75 interchange in McDonough to a diverging diamond format.

Chapman said there are no plans on the drawing board at this time to convert any other interchanges in Gwinnett County to a diverging diamond. He added "it's something

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