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FEATURED

Officials eyeing possible transportation connections between CIDs, arena

By Curt Yeomans

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Officials from two community improvement districts, and the Infinite Energy Arena, are hoping a partnership with the county's government will lead to some transportation improvements along the Satellite Boulevard.

The Gwinnett Village and Gwinnett Place CIDs, and Explore Gwinnett officials, are working on a transportation corridor study that would "connect the dots" between the three areas, according to Gwinnett Village Executive Director Chuck Warbington.

The effort, which is being led by Gwinnett Village, will look at a variety of transportation options, such as multi-use trails and public transit, as part of the review, Warbington added.

"I look at it as our own version of the (Atlanta) Beltline, right here in Gwinnett County," Warbington said. "It doesn't go around in a circle, but it's at least a mini one. A lot of people don't realize Satellite Boulevard goes by the arena, and Gwinnett Place and then dead-ends into Beaver Ruin and Brook Hollow. It parallels Interstate 85."

County commissioners agreed this week to join in on the study, which would affect both Satellite Boulevard and Brook Hollow Parkway corridors. Documents show the entire study is expected to cost \$251,000, with the county contributing \$219,000 from the 2009 SPLOST fund.

“The study will review and assess previous plans, studies, guidelines and proposed projects,” county transportation director Alan Chapman wrote in a letter to commissioners. “Study deliverables will include a vision, branding and communication strategy.”

Although Satellite Boulevard goes up to the Buford area, the study has been confined to the area that includes two of the county’s biggest activity centers in the arena and Gwinnett Place Mall, as well as the new Atlanta Media Campus in the Norcross area.

Gwinnett Place CID Executive Director Joe Allen said groups got the idea from a similar project in Macon, which tied Mercer University to the city’s downtown area.

“It just makes sense,” he said. “We’re all doing our own studies. How can we just continue to build the momentum, the synergy, and look at the entire corridor, and not just pockets of it here and there?”

Each area touched by the study corridor is in the middle of the planning redevelopment areas, or are home to major ongoing redevelopment projects.

The Gwinnett Place CID is studying the feasibility of elements from its ACTivate Gwinnett Place plan. Meanwhile while county tourism officials have created a long-term master plan that includes creating an entertainment district around the arena. At the same time, developers are building up the Atlanta Media Campus down in the Gwinnett Village CID.

“We’re all looking at the same type of development options,” Allen said. “So, it just makes sense to make sure, even though we communicate with each other, that we’re looking at it holistically and not just me doing my little thing, Gwinnett Village doing its own little thing and up at Sugarloaf, doing their own thing.”

Warbington said exploring possible connections to MARTA’s system could also be in the cards, but he added that will be a secondary area of focus for the study.

“We’re kind of looking at it finite, Gwinnett Arena to Atlanta Media Campus, and then what kind of connection can we get to the Doraville station, and the old GM site, or is that even possible,” he said.

The study was not the only transportation-related issue the commissioners took up on Tuesday, however. The board also approved a memorandum of understanding with the Atlanta Regional Commission for transit planning and coordination activities, as well as participation on the ARC's Regional Transit Committee.

The agreement includes \$5,000 the county will pay to cover its 2016 local government voting members dues for the transit committee, which was created six years ago to coordinate regional transit in the Atlanta area.

"This allows Gwinnett county to coordinate transit planning and operations activities with our regional transit partners," Chapman told commissioners during a work session.

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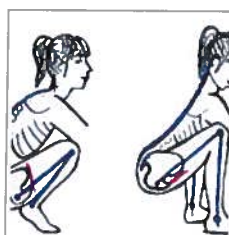
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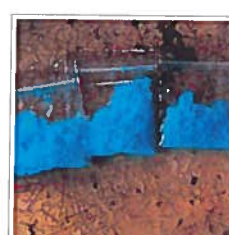
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