

Forum will be held on Jimmy Carter upgrades

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LAWRENCEVILLE — How would you fix Jimmy Carter Boulevard?

Traffic gurus and development experts will ask that question Monday night as part of a \$130,000 study commissioned by the Gwinnett Village Community Improvement District. Composed of commercial property owners, the self-taxing group will use its revenue to make upgrades in the swath of land between Norcross and Lilburn that holds Gwinnett's oldest strip centers and subdivisions.

District officials have already hired workers to remove litter and keep land along the roadways mowed, but before tackling larger projects it must draft an improvement plan. Part of that plan will focus on Jimmy Carter Boulevard, and Monday will be the first chance for public input.

The county is paying for the corridor study, and the district hopes the final report will help it get money from regional officials who dole out federal transportation funds.

The funds, which are part of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative, would be used to pay for projects that the report says are needed.

Exactly what those improvements might be are unknown, said Gwinnett Village CID Executive Director Chuck Warbington.

"It's wide open at this time," Warbington said.

The Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, which is focused on rejuvenating the business district around Gwinnett Place Mall, recently wrapped up a traffic study of its own. That study calls for two new bridges over Interstate 85, including one that is not currently in the county's long-range plans.

That newcomer would link Breckinridge Boulevard to Venture Drive and would cost between \$15 and \$20 million, said Gwinnett Place CID Executive Director Joe Allen.

"This is a brand new thing we are looking at," Allen said.

The other overpass already in the county's plans would link West Liddell Drive to Club Drive.

The bridges would reduce traffic congestion by giving motorists more ways to cross the interstate, Allen said.

The study recommends a total of eight road improvements and several pedestrian fixes, including additional sidewalks and four pedestrian bridges that would help walkers get across busy thoroughfares like Pleasant Hill Road.

The Gwinnett Place board still must prioritize the potential projects, Allen said.

Like the Gwinnett Village district, the Gwinnett Place group hopes to use the study results to get federal dollars. The study cost \$55,000, with the county paying \$35,000.

Other community improvement districts in metro Atlanta have used their tax revenue as seed money to speed up state and federal road projects.

Community improvement districts at Perimeter Center worked with the state and region to facilitate a new Interstate 285 overpass.

The \$32 million project broke ground last year, and will provide pedestrians and motorists

with another route over the interstate while providing congestion relief at two other overpasses.