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CID: New bridge would ease traffic

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Here comes another urban planning acronym: SPUI.

Pronounced "*spooey*," it stands for "single-point urban interchange." It's a bridge design the Gwinnett Place CID wants to use to remake the Pleasant Hill Road overpass at I-85.

Supporters of the project say it could cut traffic congestion at the intersection by 30 percent. It would do so by replacing with more curved ramps the existing 90-degree intersections coming from and entering I-85.

The intersection, unveiled by the CID this week, also would replace the two existing traffic lights on either side of the bridge with one light in the middle of the overpass.

But don't expect to see the new bridge soon, supporters say.

Joe Allen, executive director of the Gwinnett Place CID, said the project would cost \$46 million and take at least a decade to complete.

"We're in the process of doing more in-depth study [of the proposal]," said Allen.

For now, officials from the CID and the county are lobbying the Atlanta Regional Commission to have the project added to the agency's Transportation Improvement Plan by September. That could put it in line for federal funding in the future.

The CID is a organization of property owners created to try to revitalize the Gwinnett Place mall area.

Allen said county officials and members of his group have met several times with the state DOT in the past several months. That includes a meeting a week ago with state DOT Commissioner Harold Linnenkohl.

"We're going to be involved a little bit [in the project]," DOT spokeswoman Crystal Paulk-Buchanan said.

The state will have a minimal involvement because Pleasant Hill is a county road and not a state highway, she said.

"This is our highest priority," said Allen. "It's something that's needed. It's an aging bridge. When you've got 55,000 to 60,000 vehicles [a day] on that bridge, it's become a choke pit."

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