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## Major bridge upgrades studied

*Community improvement districts fund reports on Pleasant Hill, Jimmy Carter*

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LAWRENCEVILLE - In the hopes of building new bridges at two major interchanges, two redevelopment groups are funding studies to get their projects on the fast track.

New bridges at Jimmy Carter Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road are critical, revitalization leaders said. Required interchange modification reports will cost \$150,000 each and are expected to take between 12 and 18 months to complete.

Joe Allen, the director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, said the study is a vital step in replacing the Pleasant Hill bridge. Traffic in that area is bad, he said, and getting worse.

"We've looked at a no-build scenario, and congestion is so horrific at Pleasant Hill, people will just say, 'Forget it,'" Allen said. "We've got to have infrastructure to support that type of traffic movement."

On Jimmy Carter, the situation isn't any better. John McHenry, program director for the Gwinnett Village CID, said traffic on that road operates at a service level "F" for most of the day, the worst possible rating.

At Jimmy Carter's interchange with Interstate 85, the state Department of Transportation has said changes need to be made, said Chuck Warbington, director of the Gwinnett Village CID.

A structural study completed by Georgia's DOT about two months ago recommended that the bridge be replaced, Warbington said. A new bridge would be 7 feet higher and include two additional through lanes and one more turn lane.

"It's the most critical project we're working on," Warbington said.

Today, the county's Board of Commissioners will consider approving the agreements that will fund the studies, required if either project is to go forward. While the CIDs will pay for them, GDOT can only make such agreements with the county.

Warbington said the studies are rare - only two interchange modification reports have been completed in the state in the past five years, both of them for bridges.

In addition to helping the transportation needs of the area, Allen said Pleasant Hill's proposed single-point urban interchange bridge design - a proposal that looks like two Us stuck bottom to bottom - will be a signature project for the CID.

"This is where we justify why this is needed to the federal officials," Allen said. "It's definitely needed here."

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