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## Taking the high road Project to hit milestone when bridges open

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Staff Photos: Jason Braverman  
Contractors put the finishing touches on the flyover that will connect Ga. Highway 316 west to Interstate 85 on Wednesday morning. The bridge will be open Saturday if weather permits.



Cars fly by on Interstate 85 North as workers put the final touches on the flyover bridge from Ga. 316 that will open Saturday.

leave the interstate about a mile earlier to reach Pleasant Hill Road. Detour signs will remain posted for a week or two to help drivers who miss the exit, Pope said.

The Boggs Road entrance to I-85 south, which was closed as part of the construction, will also reopen.

### Related Links

LAWRENCEVILLE - Drivers will have a totally new experience commuting from Lawrenceville this weekend, when crews open two new bridges that connect Ga. Highway 316 to Interstate 85 and Pleasant Hill Road.

"Using that one merge is 85,000 people a day," said Crystal Paulk-Buchanan, as she pointed to the current Ga. 316 west to I-85 south merge from atop a bridge Wednesday. "We're going to be splitting them up into three lanes. It'll be great."

But transportation officials don't want drivers to get too excited during the milestone in the three-year \$147 million interchange reconstruction project.

"We don't want 20 crashes because everyone is looking at the great view," said Teri Pope, another transportation spokeswoman. "It's going to be beautiful. But don't get completely distracted because it's going to be completely different."

The project, which won't be complete until next year, is three months ahead of schedule, a contractor said Thursday. But the bridge opening, which starts tonight, if weather permits, is good news to businessmen in the Gwinnett Place Mall area.

While drivers from Lawrenceville previously had to cross five lanes of traffic within a mile of the merge, one of the new bridges provides direct access to Pleasant Hill Road.

"It will encourage more people to come to the area to shop," during the Christmas season, said Joe Allen, executive director of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District. "The business (owners) we've spoken with are thrilled."

This weekend, crews will also open a collector-distributor extension, which means drivers coming south on Interstate 85 will have to

# Property tax reform

## Renters do pay fair share

One of the more humorous fallacies propounded by supporters of House Speaker Glenn Richardson's tax scheme was exemplified in Jim Wooten's Sept. 30 column, when he noted: "1.5 million homeowners bear half the burden of providing local services for 9.4 million Georgians." ("House speaker takes tax case to professionals," @issue)

To swallow this, one must forget or never believe that owners who rent property do not include property taxes as part of the lease. But supposing that most owners are a bit brighter than that, if the bill passes, how many honestly believe that renters will see a decrease in their monthly payments?

**BOB HAWKINS**  
Duluth



JOHN SPINK / Staff

State House Speaker **Glenn Richardson** (R-Hiram) wants to get rid of the property tax and later the income tax. He supports raising the sales tax to make up the difference.

## Speaker takes selfish approach

Speaker Glenn Richardson's plan would replace a steady source of revenue (property tax) with the well-chronicled economic uncertainty of a statewide sales tax.

While attempting to lure voters by eliminating property taxes, Richardson's plan effectively removes funding authority from elected local governments and concentrates it largely in the hands of one man: Richardson. All bills raising revenue and appropriating money originate in the House, the chamber over which Richardson presides. The speaker, who isn't subject to statewide election, would become arguably the most powerful man in Georgia.

If taxpayers do not like the tax and spending decisions made by our local representatives, it is up to us to vote them out of office. My local school board member and county commissioner are far more responsive to my concerns than is Richardson.

**STEVE REILLY**  
Norcross

## Change would hit poor hard

Nobody I know objects to tax reform, but Glenn Richardson's plan to abolish both property and state income tax is not reform; it's a planned assault on the poor and middle-class.

Abolishing taxes on something people don't have much of anyhow will matter little to them. Raising taxes on what they really need will hurt a lot. A high sales tax on car repairs will be a daunting burden, but the really affluent will barely notice the extra charge.

There are many inequities in our tax system, particularly in property taxation, that need correcting, but Richardson's proposals take advantage of the already disadvantaged.

To do that just because a person has the power to do it has always been defined, including by the Bible, as the ultimate injustice.

**MARGARET CURTIS**  
Atlanta

## Interstate plantings during a drought?

Has anyone paid attention to the new plantings along I-85 in Gwinnett County, along the new construction areas at Steve Reynolds, Pleasant Hill and other sites? Why the state is using taxpayer money to plant all those trees, shrubs and ground cover during the worst drought in 50 years is beyond me.

Why even plant them at all? Every landscaped exit and entrance ramp in DeKalb County, with the exception of Ashford Dunwoody Road, collects litter on a daily basis, and the state takes weeks and months to halfway clean them up. The person who signed off on the plantings should be fired or made to pay for all of the plants that are surely going to die.

**CAROLYN LASSITER**  
Atlanta



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Douglas Roark of Leach Landscaping tends to a tree in August at the I-85-Indian Trail interchange in Norcross.