

CIDs well-positioned to get stimulus money

By Dave Williams

STAFF WRITER

The \$787 billion economic stimulus package President Barack Obama signed Feb. 17 could yield \$2.6 million for highway and streetscaping improvements along Georgia 400 in Alpharetta.

The \$44 billion going to transportation infrastructure may include \$2 million for electronic message boards along Pleasant Hill Road in Duluth.

Or even \$11.7 million to rebuild the U.S. 41 bridge across the Chattahoochee River connecting Fulton and Cobb counties.

All of those major highways in Atlanta's suburbs lie within community improvement districts hoping to tap into the massive stimulus aimed at jolting the nation out of a deepening recession.

For the CIDs, whose bread and butter typically are infrastructure improvements funded with taxes business owners impose on themselves, the stimulus is a unique opportunity.

"We're excited," said Ann Hanlon, chief operating officer for the **North Fulton CID** in Alpharetta. "This is going to be 100 percent instead of the traditional money that requires a match. ... That's highly unusual, if not unheard of."



Williams
Perimeter CIDs

While highway and transit projects within CIDs will be competing with other infrastructure needs identified by state and local governments, CIDs should have an advantage, said Yvonne Williams, president of the **Perimeter CIDs**, just north of Interstate 285 in Sandy Springs and Dunwoody.

As major employment areas, CIDs go directly to the purpose of the economic stimulus package, she said.

"If you're going to create and sustain jobs, you need to be investing in these types of areas," she said.

Some CIDs are more prepared than others to meet the major requirement of the stimulus package, that projects be ready to go within 180 days.

"We are a very young CID," said Joe Allen, executive director of the **Gwinnett Place CID** in Duluth. "We don't have any large projects that are shovel-ready."

As a result, Allen said, Gwinnett Place is asking for \$2 million to install directional signs and electronic message boards along Pleasant Hill Road.

Gwinnett County's other two CIDs are in a similar position. The **Gwinnett Village CID** also is seeking about \$2 million from the feds to pay for intersection improvements and streetscaping in the Norcross area, Executive Director Chuck Warbington said.

The **Evermore CID** hopes to tap into the stimulus package to fund improvements at two intersections along U.S. 78 in Snellville, Executive Director Brett Harrell said.

At the other end of the spectrum is the 20-year-old **Cumberland CID** in Cobb County, with a list of 32 projects carrying a price tag of more than \$150 million.

"Nobody said to me, 'Don't ask for too much,'" said Malaika Rivers, executive director of the Cumberland CID, which includes the Cobb Galleria Centre.

Being an older CID, Cumberland has some major projects that have been in the planning stages for years but haven't moved forward for lack of funding. Examples include the reconstruction of the I-75/Windy Hill Road interchange — at \$88 million, the largest project on Cumberland's stimulus wish list by far — and the \$11.7 million U.S. 41 bridge rebuilding project.

"Some of these projects we've been working on a long time," Rivers said. "The rest of them we're trying to quickly advance."

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CORRECTIONS

A Feb. 4 online story about the David McDavid lawsuit incorrectly reported the judgment's financial impact on Turner Broadcasting System Inc. and its parent company, Time Warner Inc.

The company's Networks Segment, which includes Turner Broadcasting and HBO, reported operating income before depreciation and amortization of \$682 million for the fourth quarter of 2008, a decline from a profit for fourth-quarter 2007 of \$857 million. Without the Networks Segment's losses to take a charge of

