

Business district to pay for Pleasant Hill bridge upgrades

Want daily summaries and Breaking News alerts?

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

© Copyright 2012 Gwinnett Daily Post

By **Camie Young (1378)**

camie.young@gwinnettdaily.com



LAWRENCEVILLE – An area business coalition has added \$1.2 million to enhance the Pleasant Hill Road bridge over Interstate 85, which will soon be transformed into a diverging-diamond model.

The Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District, which collects extra taxes from members including the county's oldest mall and surrounding property owners, agreed to pay for upgrades to the lighting, sidewalks, landscaping and more, improving the aesthetics to the bridge while the traffic work is under way.

"It's something we traditionally don't include in our road projects," Gwinnett Transportation Director Kim Conroy said Tuesday, after commissioners approved the additional funds from the CID, which will be applied to the contract for the overall project. "They are having our contractors do it, but they are paying for it."

The CID, which has worked to improve the aesthetics and other aspects of the community in an attempt to increase business, worked to design a unique look to the bridge, which will link streetscaping improvements in the works on both sides along Pleasant Hill.

"We're trying to dress Pleasant Hill up," said CID Director Joe Allen. "We wrestle with the barren, congested streets we have now. We want to make them more inviting and walkable."

With a break expected during the holiday shopping season, the upgrades are expected to be complete about this time next year.

"It brings a synergy back to the area, that something is going on here," Allen said. "I think people are getting excited. ... It's going to be a signature piece of architecture for the area."

Using sales tax dollars, the county will pay for the diverging-diamond construction, which is expected to be awarded to a contractor in the coming months, Conroy said. The new model will shift traffic to the opposite side of the road, allowing right turns on and off the interstate.

The design is also being applied to the Jimmy Carter Boulevard bridge over I-85, and the Gwinnett Village CID, a neighboring organization, will pay for similar upgrades. That project is a couple of months behind the Pleasant Hill one, Conroy said.