

Pleasant Hill bridge conversion to begin Friday night

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By **Camie Young (3611)**
camie.young@gwinnettdailypost.com

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Staff Photo: Brendan Sullivan Operator Kenneth Cain, left, and Project Engineer Mike Nollen, right, discuss the plans for the pedestrian islands as crews continue to construct the diverging diamond on Pleasant Hill Road at Interstate 85 in Duluth on Wednesday.

DULUTH -- Going shopping this weekend? You might want to plan another route to Gwinnett Place Mall.

Beginning Friday at 9 p.m., cars will not be allowed to cross the Pleasant Hill Road bridge over Interstate 85, as crews work through the weekend to convert it to Gwinnett's first diverging-diamond interchange.

Officials have been watching the rain over the past couple of days and could change the plan as late as Friday, but on Thursday, contractors were set to shut down one of the county's busiest bridges.

And while the Gwinnett Place area could be quite busy, leaders say the conversion should only put a slight damper in the weekend.

"We are fortunate to have a good network of four- and six-lane roads surrounding the Gwinnett Place area, allowing for good alternative routes during the closure," said Deputy Transportation Director Alan Chapman. "The county plans to monitor traffic signal timing on these routes throughout the weekend so that adjustments can be made to ease congestion. Drivers may still see heavy traffic at times during the closure and should plan for some delays."

This weekend, drivers will still be able to use the Pleasant Hill entrance and exit ramps from I-85. However, they will not be allowed to cross over the bridge. That means people can get to the mall when driving south on I-85, but if they plan to eat at Bahama Breeze, they should turn right and take Satellite Boulevard to Old Norcross Road and then cut back on Shackelford/Breckinridge Boulevard.

If you are driving north on I-85, Bahama Breeze is an easy right off the Pleasant Hill Road exit, but to get to the mall, you should plan to take the Steve Reynolds Boulevard exit, turn left and then right onto Satellite.

"The area will be open for businesses, but there will be more congestion than normal. We have plans in place to help the motoring public as they travel into the are," said Joe Allen of the Gwinnett Place Community Improvement District.

CID leaders have visited businesses and area apartment complexes to alert people to the work and explain detour routes, and Allen said they have scheduled radio alerts and sent out mass e-mails to help people plan. Information can be found on the CID's social media pages and at www.gwinnettplaceddi.com

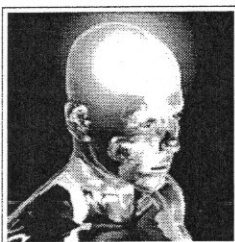
By 5 a.m. Monday -- or on Sunday, if the work wraps up early -- officials expect the traffic snarls to be a thing of the past. The DDI, Chapman said, could move traffic through the area much quicker.

"The DDI is expected to provide a significant improvement to safety and traffic flow," he said.

Map

Diverging diamond interchange location

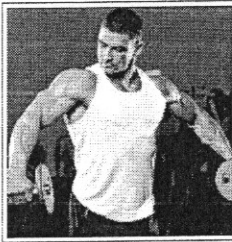
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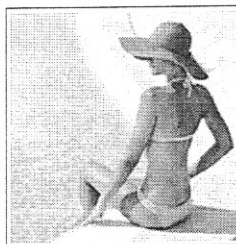
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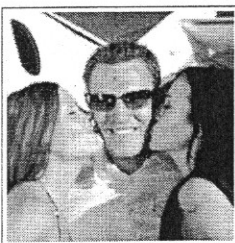
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