

ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Gwinnett CIDs partner with county on transportation studies

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It's no secret that Gwinnett County has major transportation issues to address. The county suffered a setback in March 2019, when a referendum to expand transit in the county failed.

What may not be as widely known is the coordination among Gwinnett County Community Improvement Districts (CIDs), and city and county officials that are resulting in some significant studies and efforts

to improve the county's transit and traffic issues.

"There is cooperation and coordination like never before," said **Emory Morsberger**, executive director of **Gateway 85 CID**. "It's beyond anything that has happened in the past. In the past, it's been everybody does their own thing, and we realize now that we get a lot more done working together."

One initiative the CIDs are working on is the Loop Trail Study, an analysis of an approximately 14-mile segment of a



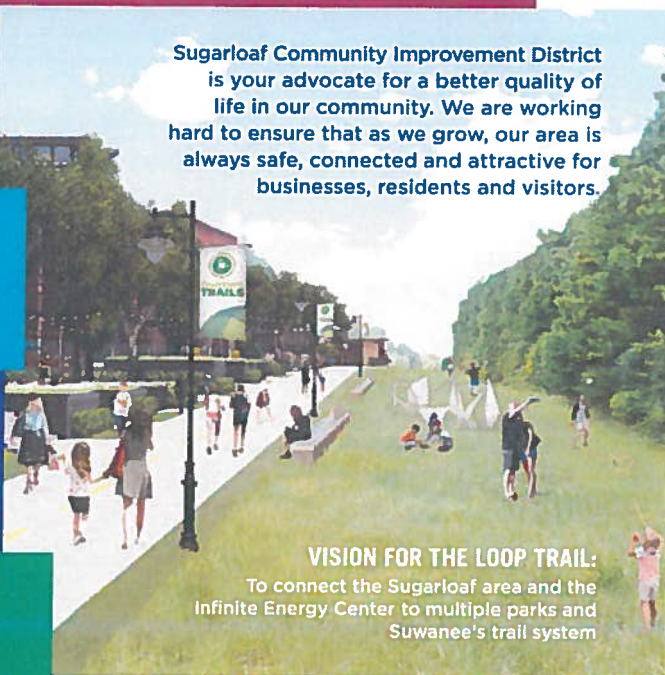
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Emory Morsberger is executive director of Gateway 85 CID, which is partnering with other Gwinnett County CIDs and the county government on projects.

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17-mile trail that will link to the Western Gwinnett Bikeway. The trail's purpose is to improve connectivity between existing parks and trails, as well as to heavily traveled destinations and events. **Sugarloaf CID** and **Gwinnett Place CID** are partnering with Gwinnett County and the **Atlanta Regional Commission** (ARC) on the study, according to **Joe Allen**, Gwinnett Place CID executive director.



Joe Allen

In March 2019, Gwinnett County awarded an engineering contract to **Pond & Company** to implement the study and concept design for the Loop Trail, said Allen. The trail will connect Shorty Howell Park, McDaniel Farm Park, the Infinite Energy Center/Sugarloaf area, Suwanee, Peachtree Ridge Park, Suwanee Creek Park, Western Gwinnett Bikeway



Alan Chapman

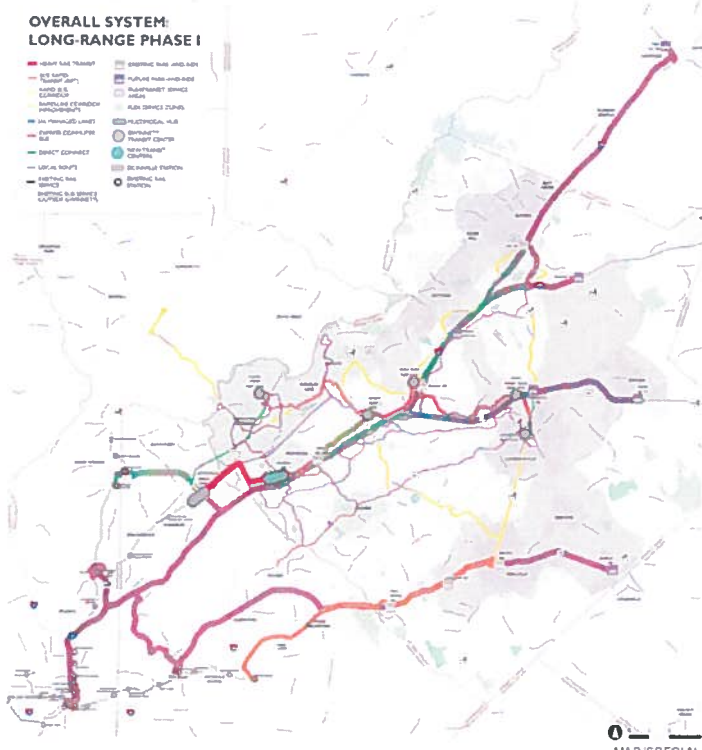
and Duluth, and the study will identify typical sections and the trail experience, he added. The current schedule calls for developing the engineering plans for phase one along Commerce Avenue in late 2020.

The county has requested federal funds to allow engineering to begin on segments of the trail in both the Gwinnett Place and Sugarloaf CIDs, according to **Alan Chapman**, Gwinnett County director of transportation.

"If the funding is awarded later this year, we would pursue additional partnerships with the CIDs to advance those projects toward construction," Chapman said.

Allen said he hopes the trail will help cement Gwinnett Place as a thriving

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS



Gwinnett County's transportation projects include several partnering with CIDs.

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community center. "By creating safer, more scenic and direct pedestrian routes, along with providing added transportation options," Allen said, "transit and trail connectivity can help spark redevelopment in the area and promote our vision to transform Gwinnett Place into a flourishing center for an internationally diverse, livable, green, sustainable urban community."

Another study the Gwinnett CIDs are



Alyssa Davis

working on is the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Corridor Study, part of Gwinnett County's Livable City Initiative (LCI), according to Chapman. The BRT line, which is part of the county's transit plan, would run parallel to Interstate 85,

linking a multimodal hub at Jimmy Carter Boulevard to Gwinnett Place Mall to the Infinite Energy Center and Sugarloaf Mills.

"BRT functions like light rail with rubber tires," said Alyssa Davis, Sugarloaf CID executive director. "It would have a dedicated lane to allow reliable trip times and create the potential for transit-oriented development at station areas."

The study is being funded by the Atlanta Regional Commission (an LCI grant), and the Sugarloaf CID, Gwinnett Place CID and Gateway85 CID are all contributing funding to the study, along with Gwinnett County, Davis said.

"The business community sees the value in transit to connect people to jobs,

so it was important to our CIDs to partner with Gwinnett County to complete a study to advance plans for transit that would connect our three CIDs to the regional transit system," she added.

The BRT study will go beyond the visioning and high-level assessment of previous studies into a more detailed game plan, considering economic development, land use, station design, performance measures and an implementation strategy, Allen said.

"Transit is the missing piece necessary to improve mobility choices, facilitate redevelopment in aging areas such as Gwinnett Place, to attract talent and create better opportunities for our growing population," he said. "The I-85 corridor remains one of the most congested corridors in the Atlanta region. New mobility options are needed to improve connectivity between major activity centers in Gwinnett, provide a high capacity transportation alternative, and improve the quality of life and the economic livelihood of key strategic nodes."

According to Chapman, Gwinnett County director of transportation, the study will provide recommendations to the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners late this year.

Gateway 85 CID is also involved in additional transit transportation studies, according to Morsberger, including: a county-wide truck parking study to determine how to handle tractor trailers seeking places to park overnight; and a freight study with the ARC.

Also on Morsberger's list is the Incredible Corridor Study, reviewing traffic along Jimmy Carter Boulevard/ Mountain Industrial Boulevard.

"It's unique because it brings Gateway 85 CID, Lilburn CID and Tucker Summit CID

together with officials in DeKalb County's city of Tucker, working on an upgrade of the Incredible Corridor in a partnership that is really going to move things forward," he added.

While the aforementioned studies represent significant partnership among multiple CIDs and county officials, they are not the first that have brought the entities together, Chapman said.

"Gwinnett DOT has partnered with the county's CIDs for years on various studies and projects, and the CIDs have always provided us with a good understanding of the needs of the local business communities," he added. "They have also invested important matching CID funding

that we can use to supplement our sales tax dollars to obtain grant funding from state and regional agencies. They have also partnered with us in the public outreach and project management of our joint efforts."

Transit issues are at the forefront for CIDs more than ever before, Morsberger said.

"Traffic begins to worsen and there is no way to accommodate the growth that is coming. None," he said. "The roads are over capacity; you can't fit more roads on the current road structure. The only answer is transit. All of the CIDs and most of the elected officials in the county recognize that."



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