



Interchange to open up Camden; Exit and entrance ramps will provide access on and off I-95.

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Byline: MIKE MORRISON

A nearly \$11 million interchange on Interstate 95 at Horse Stamp Church Road will open up the middle and northern portions of Camden County for development, county officials said.

The Georgia Department of Transportation announced Friday that it has awarded a grant for the project, which is expected to take a year to complete.

Plant Improvement Co. of Brunswick and Rogers Bridge Co. of Atlanta will build that interchange that will include a diamond-configured system of entrance and exit ramps.

Horse Stamp Church Road crosses I-95 via an overpass, but there is no access to the busy interstate highway for several miles in either direction.

"We've been working on this for a very long time," said Camden County Commission Chairman David Rainer. "It will open up that part of the county, which right now is a tremendous undeveloped area of pine trees and palmettos."

An additional benefit will be the shortening of several school bus routes, which now must travel north to the Dover Bluff Road exit near the Glynn County line before doubling back toward the center of the county.

"In some cases, the bus trip could be 20 miles or more shorter," Rainer said.

The area in the vicinity of the interchange now is populated sparsely, he said.

"There's been some development along Dover Bluff Road and at Sanctuary Cove," he said, "but when the bottom fell out of the economy, it about stopped everything. When the economy turns around, there's a tremendous opportunity for growth in that area."

David Keating, executive director of the county's Joint Development Authority, said developers had shown much interest in that part of the county before the recession hit.

"Maybe this will start to turn the tide," he said.

The project has been several years in the making, Rainer said, and to get a commitment from the state, Camden County first had to upgrade Horse Stamp Church Road.

"The road was a dirt road on the eastern side of the interstate," he said. "The state said we had to bring that road up to standards and pave it, and that has been done."

The new interchange will allow Camden County to take fuller advantage of a major transportation artery that funnels tens of thousands of travelers through the county every day, Keating said.

"Camden County has 27 miles of I-95 frontage," he said. "This additional interchange will help the community capitalize on the high volume of traffic which uses that interstate highway."

At least one resident has mixed feelings. William Ligon Jr., the Republican nominee for a state Senate seat who practices law in Brunswick, says he believes the community's low-key lifestyle will remain.

"It's quiet, and I think it's going to continue to be quiet" at least for a few years, he said.

Ligon said he rides his bicycle on Horse Stamp Church Road some mornings without seeing a car.

While enjoying the lack of traffic, Ligon said, "I'll be glad to be able to get on the interstate at that exit and come to my office."

Times-Union Georgia Editor Terry Dickson contributed to this story.

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