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County may bid out \$23.5M I-4 flyover by year's end

Tourist-area overpass to help ease traffic woes, prompt new development

BY ANJALI FLUKER

A long-awaited \$23.5 million Interstate 4 overpass project — in the works for nearly a decade — finally may start construction next spring.

The project, known as the I-4 flyover, will extend Regency Village Drive near Orlando Premium Outlets-Vineland Avenue through some privately owned land, form a bridge over I-4 and touch down at Palm Parkway.

It offers residents, businesses and other drivers an alternate route to cross the highway between two

heavily congested tourist-dominated interchanges: Sand Lake Road, near the International Drive intersection; and State Road 535, which leads to the entrance to Downtown Disney and the Crossroads at Lake Buena Vista retail center.



Stevens

Vineland Road, and another near the Sand Lake interchange. "This is

Dwaine Stevens, spokesman for Publix Super Markets Inc., said the grocery store chain would benefit from the project since it would offer better access to customers at one of its stores on International Drive and

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JIM CARCHIDI

What this means to you:

- Road construction opportunities
- New roads will encourage new development, increase property values and make it easier for customers to get to businesses in that vicinity.
- Less traffic congestion for those who travel to the area for business

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a much-needed major project, so we see a long-term benefit."

Orange County — now wrapping up groundwater and soil testing on the site — should have a better sense of

the construction timetable later this month, said county engineer Roberto Ng, who is leading the project.

A request for bids could go out on the project by the end of this year or early next year for contractor packages, including building and construction, marine construction, highway/drainage, public utility services and underground utilities. The project could create an estimated 658 temporary construction jobs.

The planned flyover first was introduced in 2002, when the county approved an agreement with a developer to begin work on the project, also known as the Wildwood Extension Network. The project took a long time to get going, since it involved the county securing right-of-ways on properties owned by the



Florida Department of Transportation and private developers. Orlando-based real estate firm Maury L. Carter & Associates Inc. is one of the largest landowners, with nearly 200 acres straddling the two sides of I-4. President Daryl Carter said his firm — which



Carter

already spent about \$2.3 million on planning, design, surveying and engineering for the flyover project — looks forward to the county's groundbreaking since it will make his land more attractive to possible buyers.

"Properties in that area are already very valuable," Carter said. "Once the new roads are in, the beautiful urban design will enhance the marketability of that location."

Carter's land has approvals for 1.1 million square feet of retail, 545 hotel rooms, 600 timeshare units and 650 multifamily units.

afluker@bizjournals.com | (407) 241-2910