

Officials break ground on Ga. 400-Hwy. 369 interchange, widening project



Local officials held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Ga. 400 interchange at Hwy. 369 and a widening project along Hwy. 369 on Tuesday, Nov. 17. - photo by Kelly Whitmire

Kelly Whitmire

FCN staff

Updated: Nov 17, 2020, 7:21 PM

Six years after Forsyth County voters supported a \$200 million transportation bond for the improvement of local roads, one of the bond's biggest projects cleared a major hurdle.

On Tuesday, Nov. 17, a groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new Ga. 400 interchange at Hwy. 369 and for a project to widen Hwy. 369 for about two miles from just west of Hwy. 9 to just west of Hwy. 306.

Forsyth County District 4 Commissioner Cindy Jones Mills recalled when the original bid for the bond came in much lower than expected, giving the county more money to work with for the project.

"The big thing I realized now is that never happens," Mills said. "Usually, bids come in over, as our board is so well aware, and that \$18 million coming under bid is what got us this [Hwy.] 369 interchange."

Mills said the project was “a game-changer” in north Forsyth.

The interchange project will be for a continuous-flow, partial-cloverleaf interchange at the current intersection, while the widening project is for a four-lane road divided by a 20-foot raised median that will include an 8-foot sidewalk trail along the south side of the highway and a 5-foot sidewalk on the north.

The project is expected to take 36 months to complete and open in late 2023, weather permitting.

Forsyth County Commission Chairwoman Laura Semanson said though the project was located in the north Forsyth, its impact would be felt across the county.

“This road, while it is going to stop the logjam of traffic, it is also going to help get us on a path to economic development on the north side,” Semanson said. “This is truly an opportunity for us as Forsyth County citizens to realize the dream of having a more fully functional economy here in the north part of the county, to invite investment, to enhance the way of life, to improve our commute times for our citizens and truly, truly to bring us forward as a community.”



Traffic navigates the intersection of Hwy. 369 and Ga. 400 on Thursday, July 11, 2019. Preliminary work is set to begin on a new interchange project that will upgrade the existing intersection to a "grade-separated, partial cloverleaf interchange."

Brett Johnson, CEO of Vertical Earth, the local company that will handle the project, said he is a lifelong north Forsyth resident and remembers when the intersection was only a stop sign.

Johnson said, like himself, many of the company's employees also called Forsyth home.

"We appreciate the trust that Forsyth County is putting in our company and our employees, and our employees are extremely excited to be part of this. They take great pride in working in areas where they live, and as many of our employees are residents, it's going to be great to be able to work locally and live here and keep the tax dollars here in the county."

Commissioners approved a bid for construction of the two projects from Vertical Earth for more than \$45 million in August.

The project is being funded by Forsyth County and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) along with \$3 million in grants. Forsyth County is contributing just over \$26 million from its 2014 transportation bond approved by voters, while GDOT will pay \$16 million.