

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Industrial CIDs study freight movement

BY TONYA LAYMAN
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A handful of Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) in metro area industrial areas are working to shape the future of Atlanta's freight transportation, thus supporting a huge driver of Atlanta's economic landscape.

With the continued growth of **Hartsfield Jackson International Airport**, the **Port of Savannah** expansion, and expansions and relocations to Atlanta of many companies that move and receive goods, CIDs in these areas leverage their funds and influence to increase efficiency, said **Taylor Morison**, senior policy analyst with **Council for Quality Growth**, a trade association of which most CIDs are members.

"They are focused on transportation projects on arterial and surface street roadways that help support the industrial industries," Morison said. "Many times, their projects are not seen as sexy by the day-to-day commuters, but these projects certainly play an important role in the quality of life for all of us. We take a lot of these things for granted, but they are the grease that keeps the wheels churning for freight transportation."

The **Boulevard CID**, located in the unincorporated portion of southwest Fulton County, encompasses approximately 46.1 million square feet of industrial inventory within about 553 industrial buildings among its 4,800 acres near **Fulton Industrial Boulevard**, said executive director **Gil Prado**. There, efficient traffic flow, beautification and safety are top priorities.

"We are focused on making the district safer, cleaner and more vibrant," he said. "Public safety is a top concern. With industrial properties, there is often no nighttime population – people leave the area at 5 p.m., and that creates more opportunity for crime."

To help with beautification, **Boulevard CID** funded a landscaping maintenance program starting in 2010. A company mows, cleans and maintains 10 miles of median and shoulders within the district, and it has managed a streetscape project at all four exit ramps – as well as a half mile both north and south of the **Fulton Industrial Boulevard/Interstate 20** interchange – with trees, streetlights, upgraded crosswalks, trash cans, shrubs and gateway signage.

"This is helping us create a brand for the district and build on our community pride," Prado said, adding that the project includes the surrounding areas from **MLK Drive** to **Frederick Drive**, and is costing \$1.7 million. The CID is paying \$500,000, \$1 million is coming from **TSPLOST** and **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)** kicked in \$200,000, according to Prado.

The CID has completed four intersection improvement projects at major intersections leading to the district's warehouses, all designed to facilitate



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freight mobility, with upgraded traffic lights and improved turning radius for larger vehicles.

The \$900,000 projects were funded by \$460,000 from the **State Road and Tollway Authority**, \$200,000 from **GDOT** and \$250,000 from the **Boulevard CID**.

"Atlanta is the Southeast's transportation and logistical epicenter," said **Kent Walker**, **Boulevard CID** board member and vice president at **Selig Enterprises**. "The CID is committed to **Fulton Industrial's** historical preeminence as the most suitable location in Atlanta for meeting industry's needs."

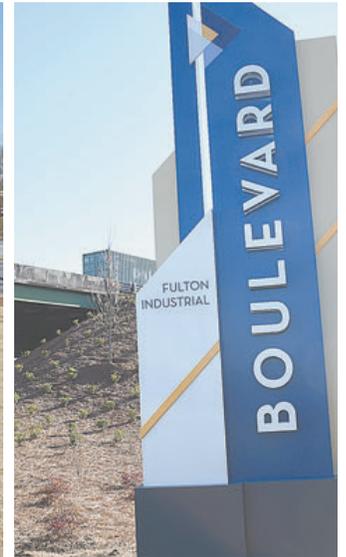
An overhaul of the **Fulton Industrial Boulevard** intersections at **Camp Creek Parkway** and **Cascade Road**, in an effort to ease the flow of traffic, will begin soon. The CID funded the design work. **TSPLOST** funds will cover \$1 million of the work and the CID is working with **GDOT** to secure more

funds for the project, according to CID officials.

Nearby, **Aerotropolis Atlanta CIDs** encompasses both the **Airport West CID** and the **Airport South CID**, and is made up of about 60 percent industrial properties, said **Gerald McDowell**, executive director.

His district is unique in that it serves the world's busiest airport, and, as the area's industrial offerings grow, so do the commercial additions. **McDowell** said he predicts this convergence will create a more even split between commercial and industrial, meaning more visitors to the area will be there for office work and play as well as travel.

"If you look at our master plan, which we just completed in 2017, and the slate of projects in there, we are focused on managing the transportation that takes place in the entire airport area. We want to make the airport area a destination," he added. "We are focused on



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supporting the industrial sector while the commercial and office is growing. We have to put in place the necessary infrastructure that will accommodate all sectors."

The volume of freight movement in the area is a huge consideration in their planning for infrastructure initiatives, **McDowell** said. **Aerotropolis Atlanta CIDs** recently received a \$250,000 grant from **Atlanta Regional Commission** to conduct a freight cluster study of both truck and industrial traffic, he added, "to understand the current activity and future activity so we can accommodate the growth that will be taking place, [as] this growth will have far reaching impacts."

Morison said the **ARC** has also awarded these grants to **Stone Mountain CID** and **Gateway 85 CID** for the study of freight clusters in their areas. These studies will lead to focused freight-oriented projects.

McDowell said the CID is working with **GDOT** and local jurisdictions to re-imagine and construct gateways at each interchange within the district, the first being **Camp Creek Parkway** – which will be converted to a diverging diamond configuration – and possible other enhancements including upgraded lighting, public art, enhanced signaling, signage, fencing and landscaping.

"We need to make sure the area matches the wonderful airport we have. We have the **Disney World** of airports, so we want to create the **Disney World** area of airports," said **McDowell**, adding that the CID recently launched a transit study to identify new ways to help people with extended layovers venture out into the area using new technologies like autonomous shuttles or an expanded **Atlanta SkyTrain**.



Boulevard CID has a landscape maintenance program.

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