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Flowood makes a connection

City proceeds with its part of parkway project

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Work is ongoing at the new East Metro Parkway in Flowood, which is slated to connect Lakeland to I-20. The overall project, also touching Pearl and Brandon, is to be built in several phases. The portion in Flowood should be open in about a year. / Joe Ellis/The Clarion-Ledger

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Written by **Jeff Ayres**

The city of Flowood in coming years could get something it's been wanting for several decades - a more direct connection to other major cities in Rankin County.

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And Flowood's businesses could reap the benefits of extra traffic coming in and out of town once the road is built.

The city is proceeding with its portion of East Metro Parkway, a roughly \$16 million effort to directly connect that city with



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Crossgates Boulevard, which sits just off I-20 in Brandon.

The road will begin where Old Fannin Road intersects Lakeland Drive at the Dogwood retail corridor.

It will connect Hogg Creek to El Dorado Road, then run across the east end of Jackson-Evers International Airport and through Pearl before ending at Crossgates.

Andy Anderson is a manager at Mugshots Bar & Grill, which is at the corner of Lakeland and Airport Road and close to where East Metro will be located.

He says the road potentially could draw scores of new customers to the eatery since it will be more directly accessible from other parts of Rankin County.

"Right here where we are, 95,000 vehicles pass through that (traffic) light every day. Anything that improves the flow in Flowood will be good," he said.

The portion of the road in Flowood city limits should be open in about a year, says Flowood Mayor Gary Rhoads.

It's not clear when the road as a whole is expected to be finished. The parkway is to be built in several phases.

But the economic impact of East Metro Parkway could be huge, with roughly 1,000 acres along its length potentially open for some type of development, says Tom Troxler, who heads Rankin First, Rankin County's economic development group.

"It touches all three cities (Flowood, Pearl and Brandon)," he said. "It will be an extremely valuable (asset). It opens up a vast amount of property."

Rhoads said the land in Flowood that would sit along East Metro is largely zoned for residential use as opposed to commercial or industrial purposes.

But he added any population growth the city sees from the road project should be a boon for the city's businesses.

To comment on this story, call Jeff Ayres at (601) 961-7050.

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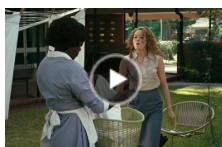
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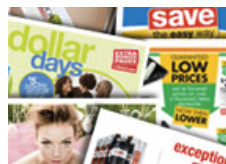
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