Clemson wants traffic light at Freedom Drive

Pedestrian safety a concern near site of planned Publix

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CLEMSON — City officials have raised concerns over pedestrian safety along a stretch of Clemson's busiest highway that is expected to see even more traffic if and when work is completed on a proposed shopping complex.

Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy said he will contact the state Department of Transportation about installing a traffic light on Tiger Boulevard (U.S. 123) at the intersection with Freedom Drive.

Developer Tom Hamilton has said he wants to build a 77,500-square-foot mixed-use commercial center on land bordered by Freedom Drive, Tiger Boulevard and State 93.

The plans, which are currently under review by the city's Architectural Review Board, would include a Publix grocery store, restaurants and several smaller stores.

Clemson Administrator Rick Cotton said city staffers have already met with state DOT officials about the proposed traffic light at Freedom Drive.

DOT officials raised concerns about the proximity of the light to the State 93-Tiger Boulevard interchange.

Cotton recently told the City Council that DOT officials fear the new traffic light could create vehicle "stacking" issues on the southbound side of Tiger Boulevard, where traffic stopped at the proposed light would interfere with State 93 traffic trying to merge onto Tiger Boulevard.

"(DOT) isn't real warm and fuzzy about this," Cotton said.

But Clemson City Council members are concerned about pedestrian traffic in that area primarily coming from two hotels located directly across Tiger Boulevard from the proposed shopping complex, as well as two additional hotels located within walking distance of the complex.

Pedestrian safety has been an ongoing concern for the college town, especially along Tiger Boulevard between State 93 and College Avenue.

There is currently only one traffic light on that half-mile stretch of the five-lane highway, and it's common to see people on foot scampering across the highway.