

SANDY SPRINGS

Sandy Springs roadwork: Things won't be the same

AJC Article - By JIM OSTERMAN

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I tend to be fairly cynical about road projects. My feeling is by the time a traffic problem is identified, a solution is crafted, funding allocated and the actual work scheduled to begin, the problem has morphed into something different. Often worse. The solution no longer fits the problem.

Then someone will announce with exaggerated gravitas: "Life as we know it will never be the same." And we all laugh.

This comes to mind with the announcement that work is finally going to start on the widening of Abernathy between Roswell Road and Johnson Ferry this spring, to be completed by 2011. It's not the sexiest of projects, but I wonder two things.

Will it really alleviate traffic along that corridor?

How is it going to change the city? Not is it going to change the city — because the simple act of having roadwork in progress for that long will change things.

After it's finished, things will never be the same.

Not better. Not worse. Just not the same.

And it's easy to overlook these kinds of things when we talk about the changing face of our city. We look at things like the possibility of city hall relocating to the property that used to house Target. Or the building of some loft condos. Or the addition of a sports complex.

Those get our attention by virtue of cosmetics, but things like widening a major traffic corridor like Abernathy will have more aftershocks. This affects our daily lives. How we get to work. How we get to the store. How we get the kids to soccer.

If it truly does ease the commute, it means more people coming through our city every day. If it complicates things, it means we start using other streets, changing traffic patterns.

Not better. Not worse. Just not the same.

We can resist change all we want, but that's as wise a course as trying to run between raindrops to keep from getting wet. Rather than resist we need to manage it as best we can.

When we don't, life as we know it will never be the same.

• **Jim Osterman**, with a few work- and school-related breaks, has lived in Sandy Springs since 1962.