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I-95 interchange, parkway plan for Palm Bay rolls on

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Without comment Thursday night, the Palm Bay City Council approved agreements for acquiring rights-of-way for the South Parkway interchange at Interstate 95 and portions of the long-planned Palm Bay Parkway, connecting Babcock Street and Micco Road.

"It's going to be a game-changer," said Tuck Ferrell, a longtime proponent of the project. "We need to do something to fix our transportation destiny."

Ferrell, at Thursday's meeting, said the interchange and parkway would bring a job and activity center, eco-tourism and an evacuation route for the south county area. A large planned community is in the works for that area.

The parkway is designed to link North Indian River County and South Brevard residents with the airport and high-tech corridor in Melbourne, as well as provide an evacuation route. The parkway will take drivers south and then west of Palm Bay, West Melbourne and Melbourne.

City staff has been negotiating with property owners within the area, including Cypress Bay Preserve, Sebastian Resources, Brevard Landvest, and Jeff Lee, a property owner.

Property owners will dedicate the right-of-way within 30 days of a project development and environment report being approved. That report is currently under way by the Florida Department of Transportation and must be completed by Dec. 31, 2012.

Construction on the interchange must begin within five years of that for the property dedication to remain valid.

According to city documents, the Florida Department of Transportation has approved Palm Bay's agreements with the property owners.

The right-of-way purchases will not cost the city tax dollars. Instead, impact fees and fair share credits will be used to buy the land. And land with a value that exceeds the fair market value will be considered a donation to the city.

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