

A GEORGIA NEWSPAPER 1987

TOM MORELAND INTERCHANGE — DESIGNATED.

Names merge at giant, new interchange.

Although some Atlantans are calling the interchange of Interstate 85 and Interstate 285 in DeKalb County Spaghetti Junction, Transportation Commissioner Hal Rives announced that it has a new formal name and a new official nickname. The junction was formally named the "Tom Moreland Interchange", in honor of former transportation chief Tom Moreland, who retired in May. Moreland is now executive vice president and chief operating officer of Williams Service Group Inc., a Gwinnett County company that has nine subsidiaries involved in a variety of industrial and commercial services. Listeners to radio station WSB's "Skycopter" traffic reports are accustomed to hearing announcer Scott Slade refer to the interchange of Interstate 85 and Interstate 285 in DeKalb County as Malfunction Junction.

If they ever hear Slade use that expression again, the next sound they hear may be the bark of an anti-aircraft gun followed by the thud of the Skycopter hitting the ground.

According to State Transportation Commissioner Hal Rives, the junction actually functions very well now that a four-year, \$71.6-million reconstruction project has been completed. "If I ever hear the WSB Skycopter say Malfunction Junction again, we're going to shoot it down," Rives promised last week at a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially marking the end of the project.

DeKalb Chief Executive Officer Manuel Maloof said he wants to be the one who pulls the trigger.

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Moreland was present at the ceremony and heard Maloof describe him as "the greatest highway commissioner in history." Maloof's remark was punctuated by enthusiastic applause from the crowd of local dignitaries attending the event.

Then Rives announced the new official nickname of the intersection. The name, suggested by the winner of a contest conducted by WSB, is the "DeKalb Super Looper."

Either name seems appropriate for the sprawling interchange, the statistics of which are stupendous in many respects. It is, for one thing, the busiest intersection in the Southeast, handling an average of 280,000 vehicles a day.

In constructing the 36 retaining walls, 12 ramps, and 14 bridges that make up the interchange, contractors Jasper Construction Co. and the Ben-Tom Corp. used 41,110 cubic yards of plain Portland cement and 150,000 cubic yards of concrete. Nearly 240,000 tons of asphaltic concrete went into the paving.

Workers built 6.4 miles of roadway, of which 2.62 miles consists of bridges. The longest bridge, connecting the eastbound lanes of I-285 to the northbound lanes of I-85, is more than 3,000 feet long. It also is the most elevated, soaring 90 feet above I-85 at its highest point.

The Super Looper covers 311 acres, stretching from Henderson Road to Buford Highway and from Chamblee-Tucker Road to the Gwinnett County Line.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was sponsored by the DOT, DeKalb County government and the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, which has made improving transportation in the county one of its major priorities.

Speaking through a portable public address system, chamber board chairman Carol Cherry noted that people in the audience could barely hear her. "You should be glad," she said, "because the reason you can barely hear me is that I'm being drowned out by the hum of traffic flowing freely."

The chamber presented Maloof with a framed aerial photograph of the interchange. Ms Cherry praised Maloof "for his leadership in support of this project."

Also present at the ceremony was Wilma Hipps, executive director of Georgians for Better Transportation, who commented that Maloof and the DeKalb chamber were among the first advocates of the interchange project.

The importance of the Super Looper, said chamber president Jim Dunn, is that it has made travel "easier, safer, and faster" for motorists passing through that area of the county.

July 16, 1987.

**The Atlanta Journal Constitution, EXTRA section
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