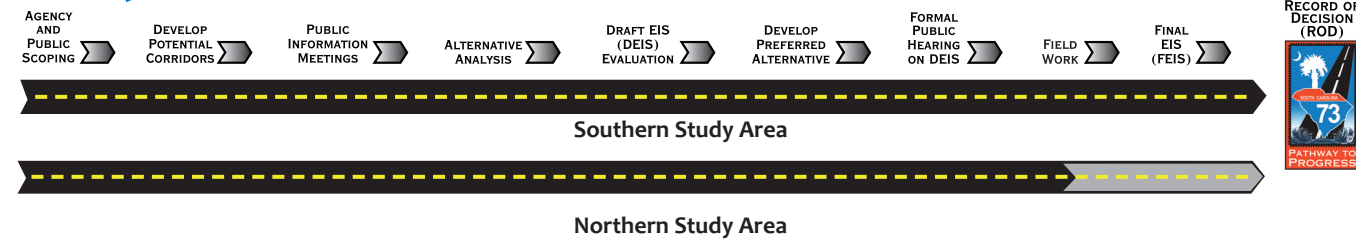


# Project Schedules



A fundamental part of the I-73 projects is the ongoing public involvement program. Essential to the program is dynamic two-way communication, which encourages public feedback. This feedback is used by the Project Team to shape the decision-making process and project outcome. Through meetings and briefings, surveys, a project website, a telephone hotline, and various other methods, citizens in both Project Study Areas have helped identify needs and issues, provided an understanding of community values and concerns, and participated in developing the alternatives.

## Your Comments Matter

Please continue to provide us with your comments on the Project Website ([www.I73inSC.com](http://www.I73inSC.com)), or the Project Hotline, 1-866-I73-inSC (1-866-473-4672).

SOUTH CAROLINA  
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# Environmental Impact Statement Project I-73 Newsletter

Welcome to the third issue of the I-73 Newsletter, which is periodically published by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) as part of their on-going effort to inform residents and businesses within the Project Study Area, as well as other interested members of the public, about the progress of the I-73 Project.

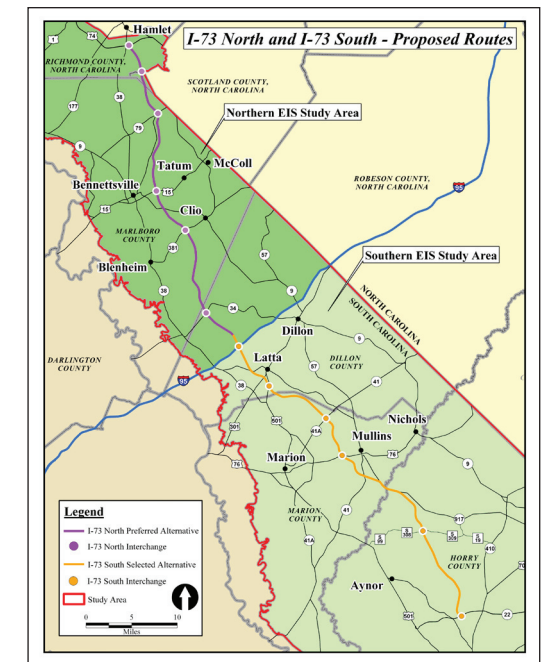
### Project Milestones

- I-73 South Record of Decision (ROD) Issued – February 8, 2008
  - I-73 South Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) Approved – November 29, 2007
  - I-73 North Public Hearings Conducted – August 14 and 28, 2007
  - I-73 North Draft Environmental Impact Statement Approved – July 19, 2007
- (For more information on these milestones, please see pages 2 and 3.)

## Project Overview

I-73 is a national high priority highway project that will provide a transportation corridor from Michigan to South Carolina. The South Carolina portion of the new interstate was split into two separate projects. The I-73 Southern Project will provide a direct link between Interstate 95 and the Myrtle Beach region, enhance economic opportunities and tourism in South Carolina, and facilitate hurricane evacuation. The I-73 Northern Project will provide a direct link between Interstate 95 in South Carolina and the future I-73/I-74 (I-74) in North Carolina, and is also intended to enhance economic development. Throughout the two projects, SCDOT has continuously explored ways to improve the projects and to minimize the impacts on the surrounding human and natural resources as much as practicably can be done.

The Southern and Northern Preferred Alternatives are shown in the map below.



“Pathway to Progress”

**SCDOT**  
SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION



**Federal Highway  
Administration**

### I-73 EIS ( North and South) Public Involvement by the Numbers

Stats at a glance	North	South	Total
Number of Visits to Project Website ( <a href="http://www.I73inSC.com">www.I73inSC.com</a> )	-	-	150,000 +
Number of Citizens Attending SCDOT meetings	1,285	3,004	4,289
Number of Written Comments Received	529	1,752	2,281
Number of Public Scoping Meetings Conducted	2	2	4
Number of Public Information Meetings Conducted	2	4	6
Number of Public Hearings Conducted	2	3	5
Number of Community Briefings Conducted	26	20	46
Number of Persons Who Attended Community Briefings	1,619	622	2,241



# PROJECT UPDATE

## I-73 SOUTHERN PROJECT

### Recent Milestones

**Record of Decision Issued** – The Federal Highway Administration issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on February 8, 2008. U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Secretary Thomas Barrett came from Washington, D.C. to sign the ROD with South Carolina Secretary of Transportation H.B. “Buck” Limehouse in a brief ceremony in Myrtle Beach. The ROD signifies the formal completion and acceptance of the I-73 southern project, and enables SCDOT to move forward with the Right of Way acquisition on the approved route.

### **Final Environmental Impact Statement**

(FEIS) Approved – South Carolina Secretary of Transportation H.B. “Buck” Limehouse Jr. and Federal Highway Administration Division Administrator Bob Lee signed the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Southern I-73 Project on November 29, 2007. “The signing of the FEIS is the culmination of more than 3 years of work and represents the most significant milestone achieved to date for I-73,” Limehouse said during the signing. Lee added, “The national average for approval of an environmental document of this magnitude is five to six years, but because of partnerships in South Carolina, we were able to accomplish this milestone in a little over three years.” The FEIS represents a comprehensive assessment of all relevant human and environmental features within the project study area and results in the least overall impact alternative for I-73 in this area. Approval of the FEIS, along with the Record of Decision document, allows for the right of way acquisition process to begin.

### **SCDOT Commission Authorizes Acquisition of Right of Way**

– In September 2007, the South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission made available \$80 million of the funding that has been allocated for I-73 on right of way acquisition. Now that the Southern Project ROD has been received, the SCDOT is able to begin the process of acquiring new right of way along the Selected Alternative. The SCDOT is currently in the process of developing a schedule for this acquisition of property.

### Project Summary

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement, with the Preferred Alternative, was approved on May 30, 2006. Alternative 3 was recommended as the Preferred Alternative because it has the least wetlands impacts, lowest cost, least impact to farmland, least impact to potential historical sites, and would be the most constructible. Three Public Hearings were conducted in the

Project Study Area in June 2006 to obtain comments on the recommended Preferred Alternative. After the Public Hearings were completed, members of the Project Team performed field investigations to document conditions along the Preferred Alternative. These field investigations began in July 2006 and continued through the fall. Comments received at the Public Hearings, as well as the information from the field investigations, were used to refine the Preferred Alternative alignment and further avoid potential impacts to environmental and community resources. The alignment was adjusted to avoid impacts to businesses, residences, communities, and natural resources where practicable.

SCDOT has begun acquiring some right of way for the Southern Project. For the remainder of the affected tracts, detailed design plans will be required. SCDOT is currently procuring engineering services to produce these detailed plans. Once those services have been obtained, it is estimated that it will take one year to complete all of the required design. The remainder of the right of way acquisition can begin once this effort is complete. More information on the right of way acquisition process is available on the I-73 Project Website ([www.I73inSC.com](http://www.I73inSC.com))



*Citizens view a map of the Preferred Alternative during the Southern Project Public Hearing at the Marion County Vocational Education Center on June 20, 2006.*



*A member of the Project Team helps a citizen locate his home on a map of the Preferred Alternative at one of the three Southern Project Public Hearings.*

## I-73 NORTHERN PROJECT

Public Involvement efforts for the Northern Project began with a Public Scoping Meeting at the Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville, SC on August 30, 2005, and a similar Public Scoping Meeting at the Cole Auditorium at the Richmond County Community College in Hamlet, NC on November 28, 2005. Using input received from the public at these meetings, as well as input from the various resource and regulatory agencies involved with this project, the Project Team developed Potential Alternative Corridors that were presented to the public during the Public Information Meetings held in Bennettsville, SC on September 7, 2006 and in Hamlet, NC on September 12, 2006.

The **Northern Project** DEIS, identifying the Recommended Preferred Alternative north of I-95 to Hamlet, NC (as shown in the map on Page 1), was approved on July 19, 2007. The SCDOT and the FHWA, in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), conducted two Public Hearings for the Northern Project in August 2007, located at the Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville, SC and the Cole Auditorium at the Richmond County Community College in Hamlet, NC. These Public Hearings were conducted in a new format. Before the formal hearings began, there was an informal open house, with displays set up and members of the Project Team available to answer questions. The formal hearings then started with a presentation about the project. Following the presentations, citizens were invited to make formal, verbal comments that were recorded by court reporters. The public was also able to provide written comments during the meeting or through the mail.

Now that the Public Hearings have been completed for the Northern Project, the Project Team is currently completing field investigations along the proposed right of way for the Preferred Alternative. Surveyors have been placing flags to mark the centerline of the Preferred Alternative alignment. Teams of scientists have also been in the field working. The actual locations of these resources will be used to perform the detailed analysis of impacts to the resources. Input received from the public is also being considered, and the Project Team is in the process of reviewing potential shifts in the recommended Preferred Alternative alignment to determine whether the impacts to the natural and the human environments can be further reduced. Adjustments to the alignment that have already been made include the shift near the McKinnon Farm area, the Boykin shift north of Family Farm Road, and the Ghio shift, which avoids the Spring Hill community and significantly reduces relocations.

The Project Team will continue to evaluate comments received during the Public Hearing process, input from the resource and regulatory agencies including NCDOT, and the results of the field investigations to determine if additional modifications to the recommended Preferred Alternative alignment may be warranted. These revisions to the alignment will be considered and evaluated to determine if they would result in an overall reduction in impacts to the natural and/or the human environments. These efforts will be included in the FEIS. It is anticipated that the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Northern Project will be completed by mid-2008.



*A local citizen makes a verbal comment on the Northern Project at the Public Hearing held at the Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville on August 14, 2007.*