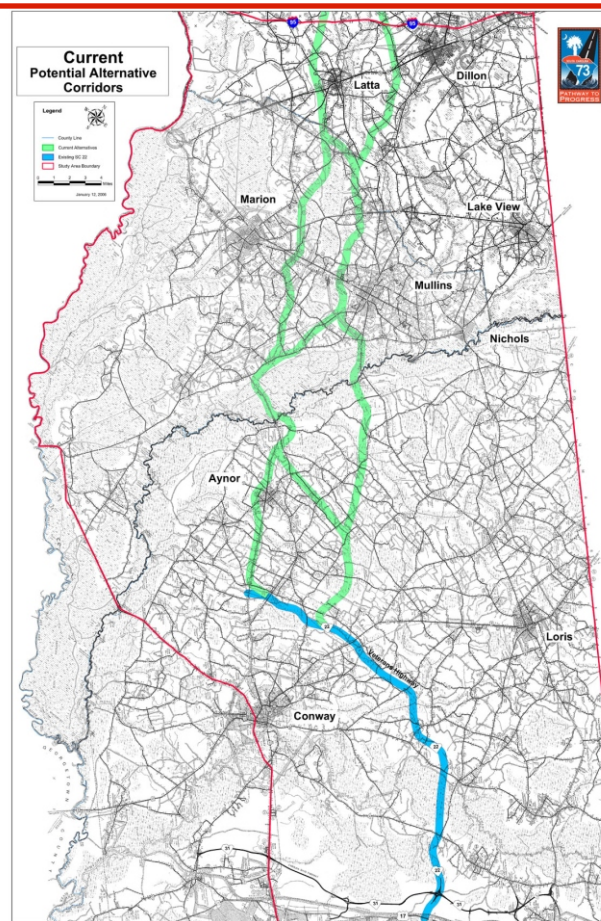


Stay Informed / Stay Involved

A variety of approaches are being used to provide opportunity for the community to be actively involved in the project. The SCDOT wants and needs the public to play an integral role early in the planning process of this important and vital project. In addition to participating in the various public meetings, the SCDOT encourages everyone to visit the Project Website (<http://www.i73inSC.com>) to receive the latest information available on the project. While visiting the website, please provide the SCDOT with your comments by completing the on-line comment form. If you would rather provide a comment via voice mail, please call the Project Hotline at 1-866-I73-inSC (1-866-473-4672).

Your Comments Matter



**SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**
P.O. Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

PROJECT MANAGER
Mitchell Metts
803.737.1617

PROJECT WEBSITE:
www.i-73inSC.com

PROJECT HOTLINE:
(Toll Free)
1.866.473.4672

ISSUE No. 2 ■ May 2006

"Pathway to Progress"

SCDOT
SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

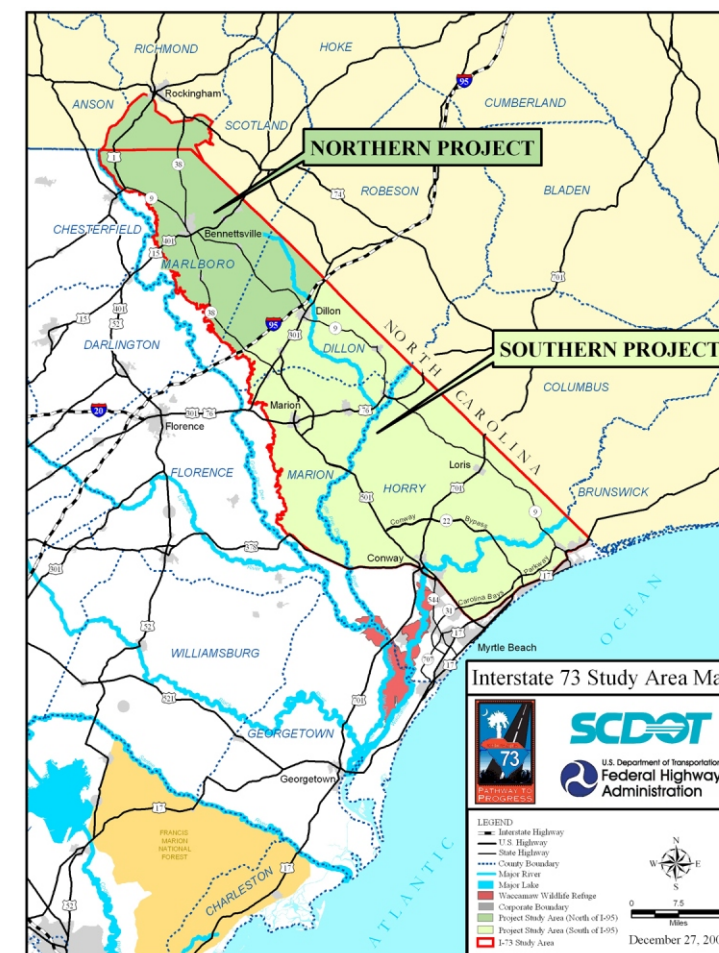
Environmental Impact Statement

Project I-73 Newsletter

Welcome to the second issue of the I-73 Newsletter, which is periodically published by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to inform residents and businesses within the Project Study Area, as well as other interested members of the public, about the progress of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A key to successful transportation planning is informing the public through all means available and the SCDOT will utilize this newsletter as one of several ways to report to the public about this important project.

Project Update

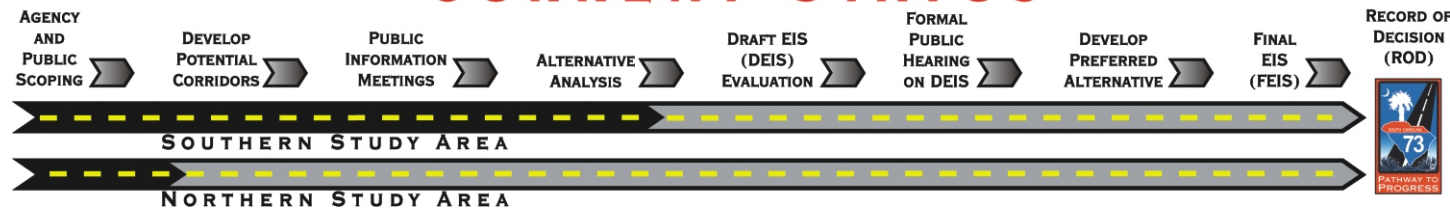
FHWA and SCDOT are currently preparing two Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the new Interstate in South Carolina, one EIS for the Southern Project and one for the Northern Project as shown on the map to the right. South Carolina's portion of I-73 will begin just across the South Carolina/North Carolina border near Hamlet, NC and continue to the Conway/ Myrtle Beach area. The study area is generally bounded to the west by the Great Pee Dee River floodplain and to the east by the South Carolina/North Carolina State line. The public input phase of the **Southern Project** began in September 2004. As a result of several public meetings and with the help of citizens, stakeholders, and the various agencies, several alternative alignments have been produced. "The public input we have received and the cooperation from all interested entities on this project has been fantastic," according to Mitchell Metts, SCDOT Project manager, "and as a result, we are accelerating the release of the Draft EIS to early summer 2006, which will include our Preferred Alternative." After the DEIS is published,



the project team will hold several Public Hearings where interested persons can view maps and speak directly with members of the Project Team.

The **Northern Project** began the public input phase in August 2005. The project team conducted public scoping meetings

CURRENT STATUS



I-73 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

It is important that the public understand the I-73 EIS follows a process outlined by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The process is designed to ensure that reasonable transportation alternatives are considered, that the environmental and community impacts are fully disclosed, and that community input plays a key role. The public input the Project Team has received on this project has been meaningful, and it has played a significant role in developing the various alternatives. The Project Team has received a large number of similar questions from many interested persons. A brief collection of these questions is listed below:

1. When will we know where I-73 will be in the Southern Project area? The Project Team is currently completing the analyses of the Potential Alternative Corridors. The recommended Preferred Alternative is expected

- to be presented to the public in May/June 2006.
- 2. Who makes the final decision where I-73 goes?** The SCDOT will develop a Preferred Alternative that best meets the purpose and need of the project and results in the least overall impacts. This decision will be made utilizing input from the public and various resource agencies, and must be approved by the Federal Highway Administration.
- 3. When is the next Public Meeting?** A series of Public Hearings for the recommended Preferred Alternative for the Southern Project will be scheduled in June/July 2006. A Public Information Meeting to present several Potential Alternative Corridors for the Northern Project will be scheduled in July/August 2006.
- 4. What are the white "X" markers I see on my property?** These markers, called "panel points" are placed on the ground to assist the aerial photographers in making

scaled photographs of the study area. The markers are field surveyed to determine accurate distances, and their locations are specified by the photographers based on their ability to see them from the air. "X does not mark the spot," and these panels do not correspond to the actual location of the route for I-73.

- 5. What is the status of tolling?** A Project News Alert regarding the possible tolling of I-73 is located on Page 3.
- 6. What happens if the road comes through my property?** Although it is too early to tell if I-73 will affect specific properties, you would first be contacted by a right-of-way agent. The SCDOT will offer fair market value for any property needed for right of way. Additionally, the SCDOT offers relocation assistance to those persons whose homes are directly impacted by the new interstate.
- 7. Where will we be able to access the new interstate?** Access will be provided only at interchanges, which will be shown on the plans for the recommended Preferred Alternative. These interchanges will be strategically located to provide access from major roads. Some minor roads may go over (or under) the new interstate using bridges, but will not connect to I-73. Other minor roads will be cut,

with access to adjacent property owners provided by frontage roads.

- 8. When will we be able to drive on I-73?** It would be possible to complete construction of the new interstate in approximately 8 years after the approval of the EIS, if funding were available. Federal and state elected officials are currently working to obtain funding for construction. Given this, it is not yet possible to say when I-73 will be open to traffic.



Project Update (continued from page 1)

from those who live or work in the study area. These meetings gave the public an opportunity to express their views before the Project Team began the development of Potential Alternative Corridors, which will be

ready for public presentation by early summer of 2006. Completion of the Final EIS and environmental permitting is expected in early 2008. "We will be able to benefit from the many things we have learned about

the Study Area and what the residents feel is important as we progressed with the Southern Project. This information will help us as we develop the Northern Project." said Metts.

The Role of the Stakeholder Working Groups

In each edition of the I-73 Project Newsletter, we will be highlighting an aspect of this project that may be of special interest or is unique. In this edition, we will highlight another way that the SCDOT is approaching the development of major roadway projects in South Carolina – the Northern and Southern Stakeholder Working Groups (SWG).

The I-73 SWGs were created to provide structured public education and outreach. They include representatives of various groups and institutions who serve as a sounding board for the Project Team. The SWGs were formed to advise FHWA and SCDOT on concerns and issues of the communities and citizens within the I-73 study area. The SWGs are an important component of a broader public outreach effort that includes public meetings, a website and hotline, media efforts, and this newsletter.

The SWG membership has the flexibility to expand as appropriate, but the representatives were selected to represent the Business, Environmental,

Government, Minority, Tourism (Hospitality), and Transportation sectors, as well as other related interest groups in the northern and southern study areas.

The purpose of the SWG is to provide input, comment, and feedback on study issues in support of key decisions, enhance project planning and coordination through group discussion of issues, and create a forum for informing participants who may become spokespersons for the project, creating wider project interest and involvement.

The responsibilities of the working groups are to review information and materials presented and advise on any concerns, make recommendations to the Project Team regarding preferred project elements, and provide continuity throughout the evolving project effort which includes the initial scoping, environmental analysis, detailed engineering and construction.

Meetings are generally scheduled to coincide with major project milestones

of the project, and are generally held a few weeks before a new series of public meetings. The Project Team includes a professional meeting facilitator who leads the SWG members in a meaningful and productive dialogue. Because SWG members live throughout the project study area, the meetings are conducted at varying locations within the four-county area in an effort to minimize travel time.

The success of this project is due in large part to the dedication of these SWG members, all of whom have volunteered their time for this effort.

