



S.1 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Action - Environmental Impact Statement

() Draft (X) Final (X) Final Section 4(f) Statement Attached

S.2 WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The following individuals may be contacted for additional information concerning this project:

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S.3 WHAT IS THE PROJECT AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), in association with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to construct Interstate 73 (I-73) on new alignment in northeastern South Carolina. The portion of the project to be analyzed in this environmental impact statement (EIS) is located in the northeastern corner of South Carolina. The project study area, shown in Figure 1-2 (page 1-3), extends southeast from I-95, and is bounded to the northeast by the North Carolina/South Carolina state line, to the southeast by U.S. Route 17, and to the southwest by the eastern edge of the Great Pee Dee River floodplain, U.S. Route 378, and U.S. Route 501. The project would extend from I-95 in Dillon County, through Marion County and into Horry County. It would terminate at S.C. Route 22 in Horry County, which would be made part of I-73.

A typical section was developed to accommodate a six-lane facility with corridors for future rail lines and allowances for frontage roads where needed. Figure 1-3 (page 1-4) represents the interim design, which is proposed to be constructed initially. It would accommodate two lanes of traffic in each direction. In the future, when traffic volumes have increased to a point that additional lanes would be necessary in order to maintain an acceptable level of service, an additional lane in each direction could be added within the median (refer to Figure 1-4, page 1-5). An estimated 400-foot wide right-of-way would be acquired where frontage roads would be needed. Where frontage roads are not required, an estimated 300-foot wide right-of-way would be adequate. The Preferred Alternative would be 43.5 miles long.



The Preferred Alternative would have interchanges with I-95, U.S. Route 501, S.C. Route 41A, U.S. Route 76, S-308, and S.C. Route 22.

The purpose of the proposed project is to provide an interstate link between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach region to serve residents, businesses, and tourists while fulfilling congressional intent in an environmentally responsible and community sensitive manner.

S.4 WHAT OTHER GOVERNMENT ACTIONS ARE BEING PLANNED?

In consultation with the SCDOT, the following projects were identified as other important planned improvements to be implemented in the vicinity of I-73:

- The widening of S.C. Route 38 is on-going. The at-grade intersection with U.S. Route 501 is being replaced with a grade-separated interchange;
- The Southern Evacuation Lifeline project is currently being evaluated; an EIS is being prepared for this road that will connect the southern Grand Strand with the Conway area;
- The widening of S.C. Route 9 between Nichols and Green Sea is being evaluated;
- A bridge replacement project is proceeding on the U.S. Route 378 crossing of the Little Pee Dee River;
- A bridge replacement project is proceeding on the S.C. Route 917 crossing of the Little Pee Dee River;
- The Main Street Connector between S.C. Route 22 and Main Street in North Myrtle Beach is currently underway; and
- The Fantasy Harbor Bridge is also underway between Harrelson Boulevard and George Bishop Parkway.

S.5 WHAT ALTERNATIVES WERE CONSIDERED?

Initially there were 141 potential alternatives developed for this project. They were evaluated and reduced to two primary corridors with connectors between them that made it possible to combine the corridors in different ways. The Reasonable Alternatives for the proposed project include the No-build Alternative and eight Build Alternatives (Alternatives 1 through 8). These were developed in conjunction with agency and public involvement.

The No-build Alternative would not satisfy the purpose and need for the project, because the purpose of this project is to provide interstate linkage between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach region, promote economic development in the three county area, improve hurricane evacuation, reduce local traffic congestion and provide a corridor for future rail access.



Each of the Build Alternatives satisfied the purpose and need for the project. However, seven of the eight alternatives were eliminated based upon their potential impacts. Alternative 3 was recommended as the Preferred Alternative because it would have the fewest impacts to wetlands, lowest impacts to farmlands, least impact to cultural resources, lowest cost to construct, and would be the least disruptive to existing traffic patterns to construct (refer to Table S-1, page S-5).

S.6 WHAT WOULD BE THE MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS?

The environmental consequences that would result from implementation of the proposed action are impacts to wetlands of approximately 313 acres (which includes approximately 3,860 linear feet of stream impacts), the relocation of 74 residences, 3 commercial establishments, and one government facility (a waste transfer station), impacts to a Section 4(f) resource, and potential noise impacts to 13 residences (refer to Table S.1, page S-5).

S.7 ARE THERE ANY AREAS OF CONTROVERSY?

The alternatives described in this document were presented to the public. Alternatives similar to many of the current alternatives were presented at four Public Information meetings. After the Public Information meetings the alternatives were modified, new segments added, and previous segments eliminated in response to comments received.

The Preferred Alternative was submitted to the public at three public hearings held in June 2006. The alternative has been selected based in part upon the comments received from the public over the course of the project development. The public had the opportunity to review and comment on the Preferred Alternative. After the completion of the field work for wetlands, archaeological resources, protected species, and consideration of comments received, further refinements to the alignment were made. A wetland delineation was performed for the Preferred Alternative to determine wetland impacts and the conditions of the impacted wetlands. Also, a protected species survey was performed to determine the location of any previously unrecorded federally threatened and endangered species. A historical and archaeological survey for the Preferred Alternative was also performed.

The impacts to wetlands and to streams are two areas of natural resources that are of concern for this project. The location of the crossing of the Little Pee Dee River has been a major focus of discussion. The crossing of the Vaughn Tract of SCDNR's Little Pee Dee Heritage Preserve, a Section 4(f) property, led to extensive discussions and negotiations between FHWA, SCDOT, and SCDNR. The SCDNR Heritage Trust Advisory Board has recommended that the SCDNR Board allow the right-of-way to be purchased at a 10 to 1 ratio for replacement.

Two conservation easements managed under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) were identified as being impacted by the Preferred Alternative after the publication of the DEIS. The FRPP prohibits the development of protected properties for non-agricultural use and has no mechanism for the USDA to relinquish their easements. After coordination with the USDA, the Preferred Alternative was modified to avoid both easements (refer to Chapter 2, Section 2.8.2, page 2-78 and Chapter 3, Section 3.10.9.2, page 3-137).



The Town of Dillon and representatives of Dillon County Economic Development organizations requested that Alternative 6 be designated as the Preferred Alternative and/or that the interchange at U.S. Route 501 be relocated to U.S. Route 301. After several extensive meetings and review of the proposed changes, it was determined not to make these changes to the Preferred Alternative. However, a frontage road was extended from S.C. Route 917, across U.S. Route 301 to U.S. Route 501 to improve access to this interchange.

Many residents along the potential alignments have expressed concern over the proximity of the alignment to them. Petitions have been submitted on behalf of several of these residents.

S.8 WHAT ARE THE UNRESOLVED ISSUES?

The wetland mitigation has not been precisely defined. A conceptual plan based upon the USACE Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for calculation of impacts has been developed. The SOP will be used to determine a number of credits to be required to compensate for wetland impacts. This will be used to determine potential mitigation sites. A mitigation review group will be established to oversee the selection and acquisition of compensatory mitigation. A detailed mitigation plan will be developed prior to the Section 404 permit application. The funding for construction of the project is not currently available. It is planned that the right-of-way will be acquired initially and then construction will proceed as funding becomes available.

S.9 WHAT OTHER GOVERNMENT ACTIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED?

The following governmental agencies are involved in review of this project: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; National Marine Fisheries Service; U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control; S.C. Department of Archives and History (State Historic Preservation Officer); S.C. Emergency Management Division, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, S.C. Department of Natural Resources, and S.C. Department of Commerce. The following types of actions have been, or will be, needed for the proposed project:

- Section 402 (*Clean Water Act of 1972*, as amended) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit;
- Compliance with the *South Carolina Stormwater Management and Sediment Reduction Act* (1991);
- Sections 401 and 404 (*Clean Water Act*) wetland and stream impact permit;
- Section 9 of the *Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899* coordination with the USCG; and
- Section 10 of the *Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899* compliance.



**Table S.1
PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE IMPACT MATRIX
Interstate 73 FEIS: I-95 to the Myrtle Beach Region**

	CATEGORY	UNIT OF MEASURE	PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (Alternative 3)
PURPOSE AND NEED	System Linkage		Yes
	Economic Development		Yes
	Hurricane Evacuation		Yes
	Local Traffic Congestion		Yes
	Multimodal Planning		Yes
ENGINEERING CRITERIA	Length	Miles	43.5
	Design Criteria	Meets/Does Not Meet	Meets
	Constructability	Scale 1-6 (1 highest)	1
	Construction Cost (Year 2011)	Year 2011 Dollars (Billions)	1.290
NATURAL FEATURES	Threatened and Endangered Species	Yes (#) / No	No
	Species of Concern	Yes (#) / No	No
	Wetlands	Acres	313.0
	Fill	Acres	288.8
	Bridge	Acres	24.2
	Wetland Quality	Value	1,510.8
	Fill	Value	1,378.9
	Bridge	Value	131.9
	Streams		
	Total Crossings	# of Crossings (Linear Feet)	22
	Perennial	# of Crossings (Linear Feet)	13(3,155)
	Intermittent	# of Crossings (Linear Feet)	9 (705)
	Water Quality		
	Outstanding Resource Water	# of Crossings	3
	303(d) Impaired	# of Crossings	0
	Habitat	Unique	No
Natural Upland Communities	Acres	576.5	
Floodplains	Acres	114.2	
MAN-MADE FEATURES	Hazardous Material Sites	#	0
	Parks and Wildlife Refuges	Yes (#) / No	1
	Historical Structures	Yes (#) / No	0
	Noise (R= Residential)	#	13R
	Farmland	Acres	1,915
	Prime	Acres	1,186
Statewide Important	Acres	729	
SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUES	Community Impacts	Scale 1-6 (1 least impact)	2
	Total Relocations	#	78
	Residential Relocations	#	74
	Commercial and Government Facility Relocations	#	4 (3C, 1G)
	Environmental Justice	Yes / No	No
INFRASTRUCTURE	Airports	#	0
	Fire Stations	#	0
	Schools	#	0
	Churches	#	0
	Cemeteries	#	0

C= Commercial, G=Government



S.10 WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE?

- To provide an interstate link between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach region to serve residents, businesses, and tourists while fulfilling congressional intent in an environmentally responsible and community sensitive manner (refer to page 1-10).
- A minimum design speed of 45 miles per hour, where appropriate, is necessary to be maintained in the construction area in order to minimize undue traffic backups and delays (refer to page 1-30).
- In the event that in the future a rail facility was constructed, bridges and overpasses would be retrofitted to accommodate the increased height and length that would be needed to meet installation criteria for rail, while the railroad would be designed out of the existing right-of-way at the interchanges (refer to page 2-48).
- Relocation will be conducted in accordance with the *Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*, as amended. Relocation resources will be available to all relocates without discrimination (refer to pages 3-80 and 3-83). A conceptual relocation study was completed (refer to Appendix F), but relocations will be evaluated at a more detailed level during final design.
- According to 49 CFR Part 24.205(A)-(F), relocation planning and service will be provided to businesses. These relocation services include the following:
 - Site requirements, current lease terms, and other contractual obligations;
 - Providing outside specialists to assist in planning and move, assistance for the actual move, and the reinstallation of machinery and other personal property;
 - Identification and resolution of personalty/realty issues;
 - An estimate of time required for the business to vacate the site;
 - An estimate of the anticipated difficulty in locating replacement property; and,
 - An identification of any advance relocation payments required for the move (refer to page 3-83).
- Bridges constructed to elevate roadways over the interstate would have 10-foot shoulders, which would accommodate pedestrian and bicyclists safely (refer to page 3-85).
- The Preferred Alternative was shifted to travel along the edge of the Zion community to avoid impacting the Zion Grocery, which serves as an important community store and meeting place. An interchange at S.C. Route 41A would be located west of the community center, and the right-of-way limits for the interchange would have potentially impacted the Zion Grocery. However, design considerations will be incorporated into the final interchange design to ensure this important local landmark is not impacted (refer to page 3-93).



- In the event that previously unknown cultural resources are discovered during construction, the resources will be handled according to 36 CFR §800.11 in coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office and appropriate Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (refer to page 3-103).
- The results of the noise analyses will be given to local governments to aid in future planning in their respective areas (refer to page 3-115).
- Sufficient upland areas that could be utilized for borrow activities are present in close proximity to the Preferred Alternative alignment. Therefore, it appears that impacts to wetlands due to the borrowing activities could be avoided. Wetland delineations would be performed at the borrow pit sites and potential impacts to federally listed species and cultural resources would be evaluated prior to beginning excavation, in accordance with the SCDOT Engineering Directive (EDM – *Borrow Pit Location and Monitoring*) (refer to page 3-156).
- The use of pipes or culverts and the final bridge lengths would be determined after performing detailed hydraulic studies during the final design phase and would be dependent on several factors, such as watershed size, and the presence of FEMA regulated floodplains and floodways (refer to pages 3-157 and 3-231).
- Pipe and culvert bottoms would have to be recessed below the bottom of perennial stream channels to allow movement of aquatic species through the structure (refer to pages 3-157 and 3-202).
- Where practicable, 2:1 side slopes were used that reduced the roadway footprint through wetlands and other sensitive areas and thus reduced the impacts (refer to page 3-163).
- Properly sized pipes and culverts, as determined by the final hydraulic study, would be installed under the roadway to maintain the historic hydrologic connections of wetlands and prevent the drainage or excessive flooding of jurisdictional areas (refer to page 3-163).
- Upon completion of the bridges, the temporary means of access would be removed and the area reseeded with native species to deter colonization by invasive species (refer to page 3-163).
- A Section 404 permit from the USACE and a Section 401 Water Quality Certification from SCDHEC will be obtained for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and waters of the United States and mitigation will be completed for these impacts (refer to pages 3-165 and 3-237).
- Modifications, such as the installation of coffer dams in stream channels in order to construct footings for bridge pilings, might be required. However, if these modifications were needed



they would be temporary and would be removed upon completion of construction and the natural grade of the wetland restored and reseeded (refer to page 3-163).

- Construction activities would be confined within the permitted limits to prevent the unnecessary disturbance of adjacent wetland areas (refer to page 3-164).
- During construction, potential temporary impacts to wetlands would be minimized by implementing sediment and erosion control measures to include seeding of side slopes, silt fences, and sediment basins, as appropriate. Other best management practices would be required of the contractor to ensure compliance with the policies of 23 *CFR 650B* (refer to page 3-164).
- Measures will be taken to reduce the likelihood of importing invasive species (refer to page 3-171).
- SCDOT will implement a seasonal moratorium pertaining to the shortnose sturgeon, in the Little Pee Dee River, for all in-water work between February 1 and April 30 of each year. Work will not impede more than fifty percent of the channel between January 1 and April 30. No special measures will be employed outside this moratorium except for normal Best Management Practices (refer to page 3-197).
- A Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures Plan will be developed to address potential impacts from construction activities (refer to page 3-209).