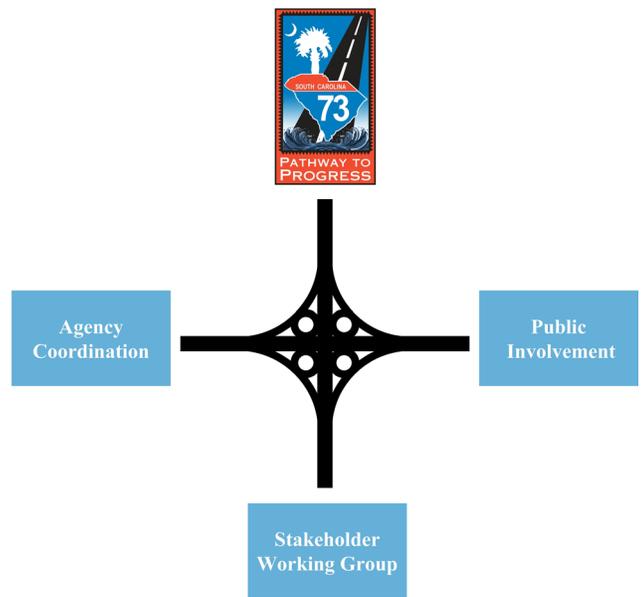




This chapter tells the story of the extensive public and agency involvement that took place throughout the project.

Chapter 4. Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

The FHWA and SCDOT developed a three-tiered approach for public involvement, which included agency involvement through the formation of the Agency Coordination Team, special interest and local involvement through the Stakeholder Working Group, and public input through meetings, mailings, a website, and a telephone hotline. The public, agencies, and other interested parties or groups (such as local governments and organizations) had extensive project involvement during this process.



Public Involvement

4.1 How was the public engaged in the project?

The public has been involved throughout the project. Several public meetings were held, including the following scoping and information meetings, as well as public hearings:

- Public Scoping Meeting in Bennettsville, South Carolina – August 30, 2005;
- Public Scoping Meeting in Hamlet, North Carolina – November 28, 2005;
- Public Information Meeting in Bennettsville, South Carolina – September 7, 2006;
- Public Information Meeting in Hamlet, North Carolina – September 12, 2006;
- Public Hearing in Bennettsville, South Carolina – August 14, 2007; and,
- Public Hearing in Hamlet, North Carolina – August 28, 2007.

A telephone hotline and a website have been available since June 2004 for the public to view information and comment on the project. All of the public meetings were advertised in local newspapers (*refer to*



the Public Involvement Technical Memorandum). Community information meetings were also held throughout the project study area in an effort to reach out to local citizens, minority populations, and other community groups.

4.1.1 What happened at the Public Scoping Meetings?

Public Scoping Meetings were held to gather comments and input from the communities during the early stages of the project. The meetings allowed the public to provide input on issues and resources that could be considered during alternative development. There were two public scoping meetings for the project. The first meeting was held at the Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville, South Carolina, on August 30, 2005. At the meeting, the Project Team was available to explain the project and answer questions. There were four stations set up in the room, which included maps of the project study area, the Purpose and Need for the project, an area to specifically record citizens' issues and concerns, and maps showing constraints (such as wetlands and historic resources) that were known in the project study area. A total of 280 people attended this meeting. Each person attending the meeting was requested to complete an "Issues Survey" that asked questions about how they felt about the project. They were also given a "Comment Card" to fill out information about the overall quality of the meeting and provide demographic information.



Citizens at the Bennettsville Public Scoping Meeting



A member of the Project Team discussing the project with a citizen at the Bennettsville Public Scoping Meeting

The second meeting on November 28, 2005, at the Richmond County Community College in Hamlet, North Carolina, was held in the same format. Sixty-one people attended this meeting, which followed the same format as the first meeting.

A total of 33 comments were received from both public scoping meetings. Most of those who completed the issues surveys and comment cards supported the construction of I-73, while only one respondent voiced opposition to the project's construction. The potential for economic development and job creation were important to the majority of those who responded. In addition, improved transportation connections (system linkage) were important to respondents. Respondents were also concerned about other issues including possible impacts to



wildlife, wetlands, historic resources, and urbanization of the rural farm setting. Individual comments expressed concern about community cohesion, quality of life changes, relieving traffic congestion, and maintaining access to farmlands.

4.1.2 What took place at the Public Information Meetings?

Following the development of potential alternatives, evaluation, and the subsequent refinement, six potential alternative corridors were selected. Another series of public meetings were held to provide information and seek public input on the potential corridors. Comment forms were distributed and could be returned at the meeting or via mail. Displays were set up at six stations illustrating the six potential alternative corridors on county road maps. In addition, the project study area was depicted on a large aerial photograph with community boundaries that had been identified by the Project Team. The public was asked to modify the community boundaries and to add their communities that had not been identified (refer to *Community Impact Analysis Technical Memorandum* for more information about the CIA process). Project Team members were available at all stations to answer questions and listen to comments from those attending.



Citizens at the Bennettsville Public Information Meeting

The first meeting was held at Bennettsville Middle School in Bennettsville, South Carolina, on September 7, 2006. At this meeting, 417 people attended and 59 left comments. The comments included concerns about disruptions to communities, impacts to historical sites, and the division of family farms by the project. Many respondents were in support of the project, in hopes it would bring economic development and job creation to Marlboro County and the Pee Dee Region. Those respondents who were against the project felt that existing routes should be upgraded such as S.C. Route 38, and that the project would not economically benefit Marlboro County. Of those in favor of the project, most supported either the central route (Alternative 2) or western route (Alternative 1) through Marlboro County. Those respondents outside of the project study area in neighboring Chesterfield County were especially in favor of the western route, to not only benefit Bennettsville economically, but also to benefit Cheraw and Society Hill.

On September 12, 2006, a second Public Information Meeting was held at the Richmond County Community College in Hamlet, North Carolina. A total of 73 people attended and seven people left comments at the meeting. The comments varied from supporting the project to opposing certain alternatives due to their proximity to homes and communities.



Following the meetings, 50 additional comments were received by mail from citizens within the project study area. Those in favor of the project felt that it would help encourage economic development in the project study area and pull out-of-state traffic off rural roads, which may make the roads safer for those living in the area. The majority of those supporting the project favored either Alternatives 1 or 2, stating both were closer to Bennettsville and the existing infrastructure. Those opposing the project felt it would not help create new jobs, and instead, would only benefit Horry County and tourism. Others were against the project or certain alternatives stating that they were concerned it would impact their communities, properties, or way of life.



Members of the Project Team discussing the project with a citizen at the Hamlet Public Information Meeting

A total of 831 people attended the public scoping and information meetings and 149 comment cards were received as a result of these meetings. Comments varied from support for the project because of its potential for attracting new businesses and creating job growth to opposition due to the concerns of splitting family farms and disrupting community cohesion.

4.1.3 What occurred at the Public Hearings?

The first Public Hearing was held at Bennettsville High School in Bennettsville, South Carolina, on August 14, 2007, with 322 people attending. Three identical stations were set up so that the public would have ample opportunity to see the displays. The stations consisted of an aerial photograph of the project study area that showed the Preferred Alternative. This aerial photograph also identified the properties potentially impacted by the Preferred Alternative. Since the distance between alternatives was so large, a smaller-scale aerial photograph display was also included at each station that depicted where the Preferred Alternative was in relation to the other two alternatives. Display boards summarizing the potentially impacted resources for the three alternatives were also available at each station, as were the four-lane and future six-lane typical sections. Project Team members were available at each station to answer questions and help individuals find their property. A computer station, operated by the Project Team, showed individuals where their property was in relation to the Preferred Alternative. Tables were provided to write comments and a private area was available for those who wanted to record verbal comments. Fifty-one comments were received at the



The public views the Preferred Alternative during the Public Hearing at Bennettsville



A member of the public speaks during the formal portion of the Public Hearing at Bennettsville

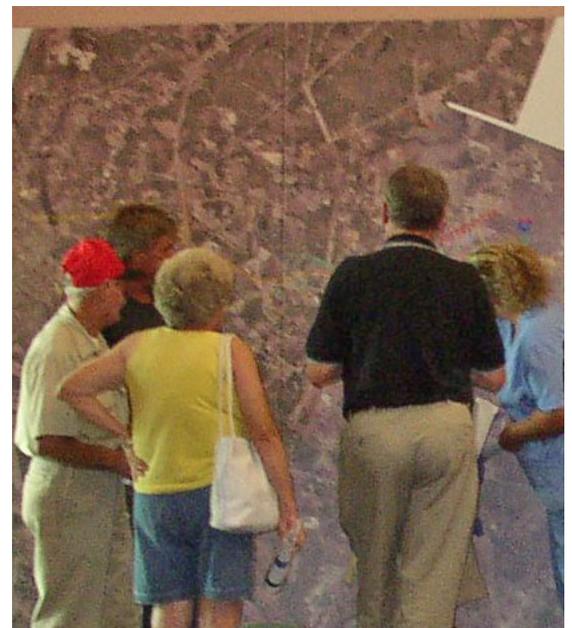
meeting. Of those who commented, 19 were in favor of the Preferred Alternative, while three asked that Alternative 1 be reconsidered as the Preferred Alternative. Others commenting were opposed to the Preferred Alternative due to its impacts to their properties, or asked that the Preferred Alternative be shifted in certain areas to avoid additional environmental impacts. Other comments received concerned the addition of overpasses and providing access to secondary roads impacted by the Preferred Alternative. In addition to this, a formal hearing took place so that those wishing to address the FHWA and SCDOT in front of an audience could do so. Each participant in the formal hearing was required to sign up, and had two minutes to

speak. Comments were recorded by a court reporter, and a public hearing officer was present to keep time and order. Twenty-six people participated in the formal hearing at the Bennettsville Public Hearing.

The second Public Hearing was held in Hamlet, North Carolina, at the Richmond Community College on August 28, 2007, with the same format as the Public Hearing in Bennettsville. One-hundred and thirty two people attended this meeting, and five of those attending spoke during the formal portion. Twelve people left comments at this Public Hearing, mostly suggesting potential shifts in the North Carolina portion of the Preferred Alternative to further reduce impacts.

After the Public Hearings, 22 comments were received during the public hearing comment period. Most of the comments received were from property owners affected by the Preferred Alternative asking the Project Team to look at possible ways to avoid their property or move the alignment farther away.

All comments received during or after the Public Hearings were addressed individually by the Project Team. The Project Team evaluated possible shifts to the Preferred Alternative, access issues to properties, and the addition of overpasses based on public input; these are further discussed in Chapter 2, (refer to Section 2.7.2, page 2-47).



Members of the public discuss the Preferred Alternative with a Project Team Member at the Public Hearing in Hamlet



4.2 How did the FHWA and SCDOT reach out to communities?

Communities were engaged throughout the public involvement process. The Community Impact Assessment (CIA) process was implemented to better understand the communities in the project study area and to collect their opinions and comments on the proposed project. Several methods of community outreach were used in the project study area based on preliminary community information, including demographic characteristics (refer to the *Community Impact Analysis Technical Memorandum* for more information). The CIA process was customized to each county and/or community based on their specific needs. Surveys were distributed throughout the project study area in various methods discussed below. Approximately 6,100 surveys were distributed in communities throughout the project study area and 592 were returned.



Citizens identifying their communities at the Bennettsville Public Information Meeting

At the Public Information Meetings in Bennettsville, South Carolina and Hamlet, North Carolina, the Project Team displayed maps and aerial photographs of the project study area with known communities identified. Those attending the Public Information Meetings were asked to identify key areas of interest in the communities (such as churches, cemeteries, local gathering areas) and to outline or modify any community boundaries that were incorrect or not defined. In addition, community surveys were handed out to attendees at the Public Information Meetings.

During the fieldwork phase of the CIA process, surveys were distributed throughout the project study area at various community locations, convenience stores, and churches. Surveys were also mailed to all postal customers along rural postal routes within the project study area. Three schools in Marlboro County, Bennettsville Elementary, McColl Elementary, and Clio Elementary, participated in the CIA process and distributed surveys to students in fifth grade classes for their parents to complete.

Once the surveys were returned to the Project Team, a database was created that detailed the survey question responses and comments. The database was geo-coded to compare where the survey-defined community boundaries existed based on the addresses from the returned surveys. Areas within the project study area that lacked survey responses were identified, and the Project Team distributed additional surveys to those areas by mail. For more information on the communities in the project study area or the CIA process, please refer to the Communities Section (Chapter 3, Section 3.2, page 3-26), or the *Community Impact Analysis Technical Memorandum*.



4.3 What other meetings took place?

4.3.1 Community Information Meetings

In addition to the Public Scoping and Public Information Meetings, there were also several community information meetings (refer to Table 4.1). These meetings were held to reach out to the local communities. At the meetings, representatives from the Project Team presented the project and then answered questions.

**Table 4.1
Community Information Meetings**

Organization/Community	Date	Number of Attendees
Pleasant Hill Missionary Baptist Church	October 24, 2005	Approximately 15
Cheraw Chamber of Commerce	February 2, 2006	Approximately 100
Darlington Kiwanis Club	May 4, 2006	50
Minturn Community	January 9, 2007	24

The Project Team met with 24 people from the Minturn community on January 9, 2007. The Project Team presented a general overview of the I-73 Project then opened the floor up to the community and answered questions. Concerns and questions raised during the meeting included the following:

- An explanation of the community’s view of the project and how they support the far western alternative (Alternative 1) or, as a fallback, Alternative 2 with a proposed crossover;
- How traffic on existing roads would be impacted throughout the project study area with the project;
- Who makes the final decision on the route to be chosen as the Preferred Alternative;
- Impacts to farmlands and cultural resources in the project study area;
- Impacts to their community; and,
- How to be heard and involved in the project.

During this meeting, a proposed crossover from Alternative 2 to the terminus of Alternative 1 at I-95 was proposed by community members of Minturn. This crossover was taken into consideration by the Project Team and further analyzed. Once analyzed, it was found to have lower impacts to wetlands, relocations, farmlands, and communities. This crossover was presented to and approved by the ACT, and incorporated into Alternative 2 (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.7.2, page 2-47, and *Alternative Development Technical Memorandum* for more information). A petition was received



from the Minturn community with 106 signatures for the proposed project (refer to *Public Involvement Technical Memorandum*). This petition stated that all of those in attendance at the Minturn meeting favored the far western route as their Preferred Alternative. The proposed crossover route from Alternative 2 to Alternative 1 was also endorsed as the Preferred Alternative route by Minturn if the far western route was not chosen.

Three other petitions were received from the public for the proposed project. The “Lt. Colonel Newton Petition” asked that the Preferred Alternative be moved “to cross Highway 79 at the fork with 385, crossing Newton Road between the two curves nearest Hwy 385, and rejoining the former route near Ronnie Crow’s home.” This undated petition had 38 signatures. A written statement was received from the “Citizens for a Reconsideration of the Western Route for I-73 around Bennettsville” dated January 2008, with no signatures. A written statement was sent on January 24, 2008, by the “South Carolina Daughters of the American Revolution” regarding their position on the proposed project with no signatures.

4.3.2 Other Meetings

The Project Team attended a series of meetings that were intended to stimulate interest in the I-73 Project and increase attendance at the public meetings by members of the minority communities. Since October 2005, the Project Team attended 22 meetings with churches and civic organizations (refer to Table 4.2). The project was briefly presented and the participation of community members in the I-73 development process was encouraged.

4.4 What other forms of information were available to the public?

The project website, www.i73inSC.com, included the history of the project, the Purpose and Need for the project, and maps of the project study area. The website also contained important information concerning the times and locations of public meetings. Once the DEIS was published, it was placed on the website for the public to review. The public was able to provide input or ask questions about the project by submitting comments via email at the website. Since its inception in March 2005 and as of April 2008, the website has received over 210,000 visits.

The project telephone hotline, 1-866-I73-inSC (1-866-473-4672), allowed the public who could not attend meetings or did not have internet access to be involved in providing input on the project. When the number was dialed, an



I-73 Project Website



**Table 4.2
Other Public Meetings**

Organization	Date	Number of Attendees
Berea Missionary Association Banquet	August 13, 2005	Approximately 100
Greater St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Community Meeting	August 17, 2005	Approximately 50
Pee Dee Missionary Baptist Church Community Meeting	August 18, 2005	Approximately 40
Marlboro County NAACP Annual Meeting	October 15, 2005	Approximately 100
Trinity United Methodist Church	October 18, 2005	18
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority	January 7, 2006	17
Richmond County NAACP Meeting	January 10, 2006	50
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity	January 14, 2006	20
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority	January 14, 2006	15
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity	January 19, 2006	20
Bennettsville Breakfast Club	February 11, 2006	23
Berea Missionary Baptist Association Mid- year Session	April 8, 2006	125
Trinity United Methodist Church Community Meeting and Prayer Breakfast	July 19, 2006	60
Berea Missionary Baptist Church	July 30, 2006	150
Marlboro County NAACP Meeting	August 8, 2006	50
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity	August 10, 2006	25
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity	August 17, 2006	32
Berea Missionary Association Sunday School Conference	August 18, 2006	175
Berea Missionary Association Women Missionary and Education Conference	August 19, 2006	200
New Zion AME Church Conference	September 13, 2006	125
Marion County/SCDOT DBE Seminar	September 16, 2006	25
Marlboro County NAACP	December 7, 2006	20



informational message explained the project and gave the most up-to-date information concerning the time and location of public meetings. At the end of the message, the hotline allowed for messages to be recorded to provide input or ask a question. As of April 20, 2008, 115 people left comments and questions for both the Northern and Southern I-73 Projects.

4.5 How were local governments and leadership involved?

The SCDOT has had extensive communication with many federal, state, county, and local elected officials throughout this project. In order to assist these elected officials, the Project Team has performed a variety of activities to provide information and answers to these officials. Many local government officials and community leaders were also involved through the Stakeholder Working Group (refer to Section 4.12, page 4-24).

Numerous resolutions and letters were received from county and local leadership in and near the project study area (refer to Table 4.3). The majority supported either Alternative 1 or Alternative 2. Chesterfield County Council, Chesterfield Town Council, Cheraw Town Council, and the Society Hill Town Council all passed resolutions supporting the western route (Alternative 1) of I-73 through Marlboro County. Bennettsville City Council and Blenheim Town Council passed resolutions supporting the central route (Alternative 2) of I-73, while the Marlboro Herald-Advocate and Weyerhauser Paper submitted letters also supporting Alternative 2. Once the Preferred Alternative was announced, the Chesterfield County Council passed a resolution asking that the Project Team reconsider the western route (Alternative 1) as the Preferred Alternative. A copy of the letters and resolutions can be found in Appendix D.

The Project Team met with local leadership and elected officials throughout the project study area. On August 23, 2006, the Project Team met with the Marlboro Electric Cooperative Board to gather input regarding electrical service in the project study area. The Board was provided an overview about the project from the Project Team. Possible project funding scenarios were also discussed.

The Project Team met with the Bennettsville Economic Development Partnership on October 23, 2006. Included at this meeting were many local elected officials. The Partnership provided the Project Team with maps of current sewer infrastructure in Marlboro County. The Project Team gave the Partnership an overview and update of the proposed project and answered questions. The Partnership felt that interchange locations would be important in determining how economically beneficial the proposed project would be to the project study area.



*Members of the Project Team
with local leaders and elected officials*



Table 4.3
Summary of Letters and Resolutions Received for Proposed Project

Person/Entity	Date	Description
North Eastern Strategic Alliance	October 11, 2007	Asked SCDOT to take consideration of locally historic house that may be potentially impacted by the Preferred Alternative
Chesterfield County Council	September 21, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing reconsideration of the western route (Alternative 1) as the Preferred Alternative
Society Hill Town Council	March 12, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing the western route (Alternative 1) of I-73 through Marlboro County
Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership	February 20, 2007	Letter from Chairman stating that Marlboro County Economic Development Partnership voted unanimously to support the center route (Alternative 2) through Marlboro County.
Cheraw, Inc., Economic Development Group	February 15, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing the western route (Alternative 1) through Marlboro County.
Greater Cheraw Chamber of Commerce	January 30, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing the western route (Alternative 1) through Marlboro County.
Chesterfield Town Council	January 11, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing western route (Alternative 1) of I-73 through Marlboro County
Chesterfield County Council	January 3, 2007	Passed resolution endorsing western route (Alternative 1) of I-73 through Marlboro County
S.C. House District 53 Representative Ted Vick	January 2, 2007	Letter expressing approval and complete support of the western route (Alternative 1).
Cheraw Town Council	December 12, 2006	Passed resolution endorsing the western route (Alternative 1) of I-73 through Marlboro County
Weyerhaeuser Paper	November 29, 2006	Letter from Vice President of Weyerhaeuser Paper supporting central route (Alternative 2) of I-73 through Marlboro County
Town of Blenheim	November 22, 2006	Letter from Mayor of Blenheim stating that Blenheim Town Council voted unanimously to support central route (Alternative 2) of I-73 through Marlboro County
City of Bennettsville	November 22, 2006	Letter from Mayor of Bennettsville stating that Bennettsville City Council voted unanimously to support central route (Alternative 2) of I-73 through Marlboro County
Marlboro Herald-Advocate	November 16, 2006	Letter from editor and publisher of Marlboro Herald-Advocate endorsing central route (Alternative 2) of I-73 through Marlboro County
North Carolina Board and Department of Transportation	March 3, 2005	Resolution of North Carolina Board of Transportation and North Carolina Department of Transportation to collaborate with the South Carolina Department of Transportation on I-73 from I-95 in South Carolina to Rockingham, North Carolina



On October 10, 2006, the Project Team attended a meeting with the City of Bennettsville to discuss the proposed project. The Project Team gave an update on the proposed project and projected schedule for the release of the DEIS and subsequent public hearings. The corridor analysis and evaluation was discussed in detail, along with possible scenarios for funding the construction of I-73. Interchange locations, right-of-way, historic sites, and how the Preferred Alternative would be selected were questions and concerns of those attending the meeting.

The Project Team met separately with both the City of Bennettsville and Marlboro County on December 5, 2006, to discuss potential interchange locations. The City was in agreement with the potential interchange locations along the three Build Alternatives and discussed which interchanges they would be able to provide with utility service. The County also was in agreement with the potential interchange locations being proposed. The County officials attending expressed their concerns regarding areas where utilities were lacking and that Alternatives 1 and 2 may be better in terms of growth and economic development.

On January 17 and 18, 2007, the Project Team met with local elected officials from Richmond and Marlboro Counties, as well as the City of Bennettsville, to discuss how the project would benefit the project study area.

The Project Team updated North Eastern Strategic Alliance members at the February 8, 2007 meeting and took questions from members about many different aspects of the project such as possible funding sources and the schedule for distribution of the DEIS and for Public Hearings.

Agency Involvement and Coordination

From the beginning, FHWA and SCDOT recognized that agency involvement was a vital component to the success of the project. *Executive Order 13274: Environmental Stewardship and Transportation Infrastructure Project Reviews*, signed in 2002, directs federal agencies to promote environmental stewardship in transportation projects and expedite environmental reviews of high-priority transportation infrastructure projects. The FHWA and SCDOT, recognizing the goals and policy of Executive Order 13274, wanted a more efficient, teamwork-oriented approach to the agency involvement process to promote environmental stewardship and streamline environmental reviews. As a result of this modified approach, the Agency Coordination Team (ACT) was formed.

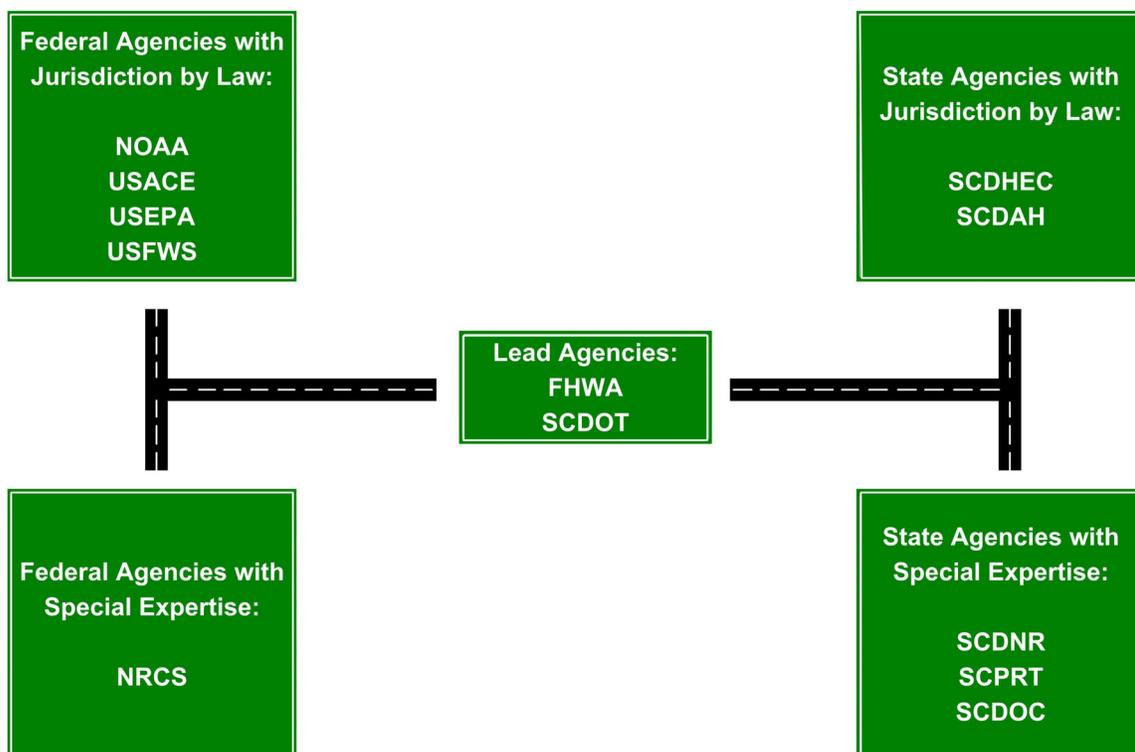
Agency Coordination Team

The Agency Coordination Team (ACT) is a group of representatives from state and federal agencies that provided input and helped make decisions throughout the project.



4.6 What is the Agency Coordination Team?

The ACT is an enhancement of the cooperating agency process found in 40 C.F.R. §1501.6 and SAFETEA-LU. Lead agencies, in this case, the FHWA and SCDOT, are those with the primary responsibility for the project. The lead agencies can invite other agencies that have special expertise or jurisdiction by law over a resource to be a cooperating agency. Due to the large study area and array of resources, FHWA and SCDOT invited NOAA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOC, SCPRT, USACE, USFWS, and the USEPA to be cooperating agencies on this project (refer to Chapter 1, Section 1.1.4, page 1-7 for further information). Since the project included approximately four miles of roadway in the state of North Carolina, federal resource agencies in North Carolina agreed that their South Carolina counterparts would be the lead for their agencies. The North Carolina state agencies had separate interagency meetings and discussed the issues that were relevant to their area.





The ACT enhanced the cooperating agency process by allowing extensive agency involvement and collaboration on the project. The main goals of the ACT were the following:

- To increase agency involvement;
- To reach decisions by consensus;
- To improve efficiency of the NEPA process;
- To meet or exceed agency mandates; and,
- To improve communications and relationships between agencies.

4.7 How did the ACT contribute to the project?

The ACT has been involved since the beginning of the project, providing input on many aspects of the project. The ACT was initially formed for the Southern Project (I-73 from I-95 to the Myrtle Beach Region), and agency involvement was done in the same format for this project. The ACT followed the same process agreement and participated in the same manner as it did in the previous project. Several major decision points in which the ACT was involved included defining the Purpose and Need, developing alternatives, evaluating the alternatives, giving input on the Preferred Alternative, and determining the mitigation needed to adequately offset impacts. The ACT met on a regular basis for meetings, workshops, and a field trip. During the meetings, ACT members were informed of the latest updates on the project, discussed issues they had with the project, made decisions by consensus voting, and worked together to determine the best alternatives for the project. In the end, the ACT process resulted in an improved and more informed decision by incorporating agency comments and input into the process early, rather than after the DEIS was completed.

4.8 Were there any meetings with agencies prior to the formation of the ACT?

All previously mentioned agencies were formally invited by letter to be cooperating agencies and members of the ACT; refer to Appendix A. Meetings prior to the first ACT meeting were held between the Project Team and NOAA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, and USEPA to discuss the project. The initial meetings between these agencies and the Project Team pertained to the formation of the ACT, and occurred in May and June of 2004. The agencies received a brief overview about the project, as well as an anticipated level of involvement as cooperating agencies and as members of the ACT. In addition to these meetings, the project was presented to the Southeast Natural Resources Leaders Group on July 13, 2004.

4.9 Who participated in the ACT meetings and contributed to the project?

Each agency designated representative(s) to be ACT members and to give input on the project. The ACT had a total of 42 members from various agencies. Several members were involved for only a



portion of the ACT process and were replaced by other representatives from their agency. Each agency had only one vote in the ACT process. A list of ACT members is found in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Agency Coordination Team Members

Member	Agency	Member	Agency
Shane Belcher	FHWA	Greg Mixon	SCDNR
Hamilton Duncan	FHWA	Bob Perry*	SCDNR
Patrick Tyndall	FHWA	Leo Rose*	SCDNR
Stephania Bolden*	NOAA	Ralph Willoughby*	SCDNR
Prescott Brownell	NOAA	Ed West	SCDOC
Kay Davy*	NOAA	Wayne Hall	SCDOT
Christy Fellas*	NOAA	Mitchell Metts	SCDOT
Jocelyn Karazsia*	NOAA	Amanda B. Queen	SCDOT
Ronnie Feaster	NRCS	Wayne Roberts	SCDOT
Pam Thomas	NRCS	Berry Still*	SCDOT
David Kelly	SCDAH	Charles Harrison*	SCPRT
Richard Chinnis*	SCDHEC-OCRM	Steve McCalla	SCPRT
William C. Eiser*	SCDHEC-OCRM	Steve Brumagin	USACE
Quinton Epps*	SCDHEC	Tina Hadden	USACE
Rheta Geddings	SCDHEC	Travis Hughes	USACE
Robert "Hop" Ridgell*	SCDHEC	Kacy Campbell*	USEPA
Mark Giffin	SCDHEC	Bob Lord	USEPA
Ron Ahle*	SCDNR	Ramona McConney	USEPA
Susan Davis*	SCDNR	Mark Caldwell	USFWS
Ed Duncan	SCDNR		

* Participated for part of the ACT Process

4.10 When did the ACT meetings occur and what happened at the meetings?

The ACT team met regularly during the project for both the Northern and Southern I-73 Projects. The following pages summarize the ACT meetings, sub-committee meetings, workshops, and a field visit that took place between 2005 and 2008 for the Northern Project. A list of the agencies that participated in each meeting is found in Table 4.5 (refer to page 4-16). A few meetings were held between the Project Team and agencies to address specific concerns or issues, for information exchange, special expertise, and methodology for evaluating certain resources. These meetings are not referenced in Table 4.5 because they were not formal ACT meetings.



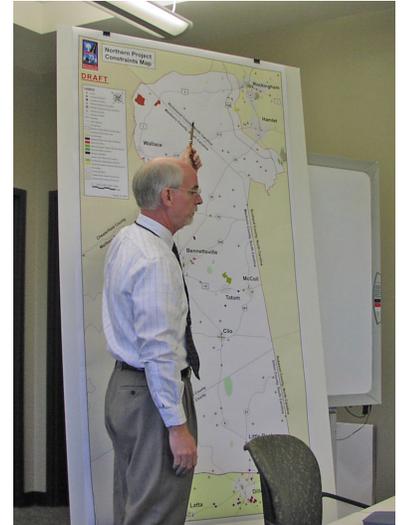
Table 4.5
ACT Meetings and Attendance for Northern I 73 Project

Date	Agencies Attending	Number of Representatives
October 19, 2005	FHWA, NOAA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, SCEMD, USACE, and USEPA	13
December 15, 2005	FHWA, NOAA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	14
January 10, 2006 CAT Workshop	FHWA, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, and USFWS	10
January 19, 2006	FHWA, NOAA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16
March 2, 2006	FHWA, NOAA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16
April 19, 2006	FHWA, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	13
July 13, 2006	FHWA, NOAA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	19
August 3, 2006	FHWA, NOAA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16
September 13-14, 2006 ACT Field Trip	FHWA, NRCS, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, and USFWS	14
September 28, 2006	FHWA, NOAA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16
November 2, 2006	FHWA, NRCS, SCDNR, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	13
January 18, 2007	FHWA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16
February 22, 2007	FHWA, NOAA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	17
May 9, 2007	FHWA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	25
May 14, 2007 Addendum Meeting Conference Call	FHWA, SCDOT, and USEPA	7
December 12, 2007	FHWA, NRCS, SCDAH, SCDHEC, SCDNR, SCDOT, SCPRT, USACE, USEPA, and USFWS	16



4.10.1 October 19, 2005 ACT Meeting

The ACT met on October 19, 2005, to outline potential issues pertaining to the Northern Project. SCDOT gave an update on the project status and how the process would work between the North Carolina and South Carolina agencies. All North Carolina agencies were invited to be cooperating agencies for the project, as well as the South Carolina resource agencies; however, the ACT would only be composed of members from the South Carolina agencies. The ACT agreed to use the same process agreement for the project that was used in the Southern Project. Maps were distributed of the project study area and ACT members were asked to provide information on areas that should be avoided during alternative development.



October 19, 2005 ACT Meeting

Members of the ACT discussed issues about the project study area to determine the scope of the project. Issues ranged from potential impacts to Lake Paul Wallace and its tributaries to division of farmlands. Social issues, such as impacts to small communities, churches, and environmental justice populations were also discussed as well as impacts to wildlife corridors, protected species, migratory birds, and air quality.

The Purpose and Need for the project was also discussed by members of the ACT, and comments by ACT members were taken for developing the Purpose and Need statement.

4.10.2 December 15, 2005 ACT Meeting

The ACT met on December 15, 2005, and the members discussed a rough draft of the Purpose and Need section of the EIS. Members made suggestions on how to improve the section and the ACT decided to review the Purpose and Need section in detail and provide the Project Team with suggestions for modifying it.

ACT members reviewed the values for each resource layer used in the Corridor Analysis Tool (CAT) to determine if any of those needed to be changed. A CAT workshop was scheduled for January so that members of the ACT had the opportunity to look at preliminary runs and provide input on the CAT.

4.10.3 January 10, 2006 CAT Workshop

ACT members from the FHWA, SCDOT, USFWS, USACE, SCDNR, and SCDHEC met to look at prior CAT runs, and discuss suggestions for modifying the values and the methods of valuation for the CAT. Based on the workshop, those attending proposed changing upland evergreen forest



and upland evergreen irregularly flooded forest values from 4 to 1, upon approval by the ACT. Members suggested CAT runs that would be completed prior to the next ACT meeting for review and discussion.

4.10.4 January 19, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT held its third meeting on January 19, 2006. The Purpose and Need section was approved by consensus vote of the ACT. The results from the CAT workshop were summarized then the ACT voted and reached consensus to change two category values from 4 to 1 within the CAT program.



January 19, 2006 ACT Meeting

4.10.5 February 10, 2006 Meeting with SCDHEC-OCRM

The Project Team met with SCDHEC-OCRM on February 10, 2006, and gave the agency an update on the project.

4.10.6 February 23, 2006 Meeting with SCDAH

The Project Team met with SCDAH on February 23, 2006, to discuss the proposed Bethea Rural Historic District, composed of two plantation homes, tenant houses, schoolhouse, cemetery, store, mill, outbuildings, and barns. The property was significant to the local and regional history of the area. If SHPO determined the property was eligible for listing as a rural historic district, then a field trip would be needed to set the boundaries of the district.

4.10.7 March 2, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT met for its fourth meeting on March 2, 2006, and was updated on the project. SCDAH gave an update on the proposed Bethea Rural Historic District.

The Project Team presented the CAT results. Smaller communities were identified in the project study area and designated as constraints rather than using Census Block Groups for identification of communities. Results of the CAT were discussed and it was agreed that suitability layers that ranged from 99.75 percent to 100 percent would be combined to generate as many alternative corridors as possible, which would be presented at the next ACT meeting.



March 2, 2006 ACT Meeting

4.10.8 March 14, 2006 Meeting with SCDAH

SCDAH met with the Project Team on March 14, 2006, to further update the status of the newly proposed Bethea Rural Historic District in the project study area. The Project Team, SCDAH, and SCDOT had completed a field review of the district to determine eligibility. SCDAH stated the proposed Bethea Rural Historic District was eligible and would more than likely become a historic district within the year.

4.10.9 April 19, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT met on April 19, 2006, for its fifth meeting. Additional CAT runs were discussed at this meeting. The Bethea Rural Historic District was not yet added to the CAT as a constraint layer, but would be avoided.

4.10.10 July 13, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT held its sixth meeting for the Northern Project on July 13, 2006. A summary of the alternative development process was given and six potential alternatives were presented to the ACT members. The ACT members gave feedback on the potential Build Alternatives to the Project Team for further refinement.

4.10.11 August 30, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT met on August 30, 2006, for its seventh meeting. At this meeting, the Project Team updated the ACT on the further refinements to the potential alternatives based on field visits to the project study area. The ACT then discussed the potential alternatives in detail. Some issues brought up during this discussion were access to infrastructure for development, wetland and stream crossings, economic benefits, social impacts, and preliminary costs. After the discussion, the ACT voted on which potential alternatives would be carried forward for further evaluation. It was determined that all six potential alternatives would be studied in further detail and presented to the public.



July 13, 2006 ACT Meeting



The SCDOC opposed Alternatives 2, 4, and 6 due to their close proximity to the North Carolina/South Carolina border and lack of infrastructure in the area, which may not provide an economic benefit to South Carolina. Alternative 5 was a consensus choice by the ACT for further analysis, however, the SCDHEC, SCDNR, and NOAA opposed this alternative. These agencies felt that Alternative 5 had more stream crossings and was closer to the Great Pee Dee River floodplain, while SCDAH was neutral on Alternative 5.

4.10.12 September 13-14, 2006 Field Trip

The eighth ACT meeting was held on September 13 and 14, 2006. Members attended a field trip and were taken to areas that the ACT had previously identified as being of interest within the project study area. Some resources of concern identified during the trip by the ACT included wetlands, important farmlands, large agricultural operations, streams, and historic sites.



September 2006 ACT Field Trip

4.10.13 September 28, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT met for its ninth meeting on September 28, 2006. Members discussed the resources observed during the field trip including wetlands, streams, cultural resources, and agricultural operations. The ACT preliminarily listed advantages and disadvantages to each resource, based on what was known about the project study area.



September 28, 2006 ACT Meeting

4.10.14 November 2, 2006 ACT Meeting

The ACT held its tenth meeting on November 2, 2006. The Project Team updated the ACT about the potential interchange designs where the alternatives connected to I-95. It was explained that the three alternatives that did not directly tie into the Southern Preferred Alternative (Alternatives 1, 2, and 6) would use a portion of I-95, requiring complex interchange designs and additional lanes along I-95, which resulted in greater impacts to resources.



The Project Team led the ACT in a comparison discussion of the six potential alternatives. After lengthy discussion, the Project Team recommended that the three potential alternatives that did not tie directly into the Southern Preferred Alternative be eliminated due to their higher impacts. The ACT voted by consensus to eliminate the three reasonable Build Alternatives that did not tie directly into the Southern Preferred Alternative (Alternatives 1, 2, and 6) and to keep those that directly connected to the Southern Preferred Alternative (Alternatives 3, 4, and 5) for further study. These Alternatives were renamed in the following manner:

- Alternative 5 became Alternative 1;
- Alternative 3 became Alternative 2; and,
- Alternative 4 became Alternative 3.

4.10.15 January 18, 2007 ACT Meeting

The eleventh ACT meeting was held on January 18, 2007. The Project Team provided the ACT with a summary of public and local government involvement. The community of Minturn had a small community meeting and stated they supported Alternative 1, which was the farthest from their community (refer to Section 4.3.1, page 4-7). A crossover from Alternative 2 to Alternative 1 was presented to the ACT, and it was noted by the Project Team that impacts had not yet been quantified for it, however, if it were used, Alternative 2 would avoid the communities of Free State and Minturn.

It was determined that Alternative 3 would impact two historic resources, Alford Plantation, which is NRHP eligible, and the Selkirk House, which is listed on the NRHP. The Project Team stated it was evaluating possible modifications to Alternative 3 to avoid those sites and would present the results to the ACT at the following meeting. The Project Team stated that it would be meeting with local and county governments about possible interchange locations.

4.10.16 February 22, 2007 ACT Meeting

The twelfth ACT meeting was held on February 22, 2007. The Project Team presented modifications discussed during the January 18, 2007, meeting with quantified impacts. The first modification, a proposed crossover by the community of Minturn from Alternative 2 to the terminus of Alternative 1, would reduce wetland impacts by 15 acres, floodplains by one acre, and prime farmlands by 50 acres. The second modification, a shift of Alternative 3 to avoid the two historic sites, would reduce wetland impacts by 12 acres, floodplain impacts by 10 acres, prime farmlands by 81 acres, and result in one less relocation. The ACT members asked the Project Team about specific issues with each proposed modification, and then voted unanimously to accept both modifications.



4.10.17 May 9, 2007 ACT Meeting

The thirteenth ACT meeting was held on May 9, 2007. The Project Team updated the ACT on the progress of the project and presented proposed changes to the reasonable Build Alternatives. The Project Team presented proposed crossovers for Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 to connect the alignments to the eastern interchange. The modified Alternative 1 would impact approximately 37 less acres of wetland, less linear feet of streams, less total farmland, less prime farmland, fewer relocations, and less floodplains. The modified Alternative 2 was moved farther south, which avoided a large crossing of Crooked Creek near Bennettsville. Approximately 44 acres less wetlands would be impacted, less linear feet of streams, less floodplains, less acreage of farmlands, and less relocations. The ACT members reached agreement to eliminate the use of the western interchange. The Project Team requested input on the reasonable Build Alternatives and agencies including the NRCS, SCDOC, SCDAH, SCDNR, and USFWS offered comments.

4.10.18 December 12, 2007 ACT Meeting

The ACT held its fourteenth meeting on December 12, 2007. The Project Team provided a brief update on the Public Hearings that had occurred in August 2007 for the project. The Project Team also discussed the potential modifications, suggested by the public, that were being evaluated for the Preferred Alternative. A potentially eligible NRHP site, the Beauty Spot Motor Court Office, would be taken by the current alignment at the U.S. 15/401 interchange. David Kelly of SCDAH discussed the reasons why the SHPO thought it was eligible. The Project Team stated that it had looked at avoiding the site by relocating the alignment and interchange; however, shifting the alignment would result in greater impacts to homes and wetlands in the area. The Project Team stated that it would have to mitigate the impacts of taking the building and would coordinate with SHPO to determine the mitigation needed for the taking of the building.

4.10.19 May 2, 2008 Meeting with SCDAH

The Project Team met with SCDAH to discuss the taking of the potentially NRHP eligible Beauty Spot Motor Court Office, located at the U.S. Route 15/401 interchange of the Preferred Alternative. Potential shifts in the alignment in this area were evaluated by the Project Team, but they would result in greater impacts to homes and wetlands in the area. David Kelly of SCDAH discussed the possible ways to mitigate impacts to the site, and it was decided that a Memorandum of Agreement would be drafted between SHPO and the SCDOT for mitigating the site. For further information regarding this site, please refer to the Historic Resources Section (Chapter 3, Section 3.6, page 3-104).



4.11 How were the North Carolina agencies involved in the project?

Although the North Carolina resource agencies were not directly involved with the ACT; they had opportunities to participate in the project. The FHWA and SCDOT invited North Carolina resource agencies to be cooperating agencies for the project (refer to Appendix A, Agency Letters). There were separate meetings as well as a field trip specifically for the N.C. resource agencies. Those meetings are summarized below.

4.11.1 October 13, 2005 Meeting

The first presentation of I-73 was made to the North Carolina Interagency Meeting on October 13, 2005, with representatives from the SCDOT, NCDOT, FHWA offices from both North Carolina and South Carolina, North Carolina resource agencies, and the Project Team. The SCDOT gave a short history of the project while the FHWA, South Carolina Office, explained the Northern I-73 Project in detail, including defining the project study area, discussing how the EIS would be completed, and the 404 permitting process. The North Carolina agencies then asked questions and provided comments about the project.

4.11.2 February 23, 2006 Meeting

A second presentation of the project was made to the North Carolina Interagency Meeting on February 23, 2006. The agencies were updated on the recent Public Information Meetings that had taken place in Bennettsville, South Carolina and Hamlet, North Carolina. The Project Team discussed the CAT and its use in developing preliminary alternatives. In addition, the Project Team explained some preliminary runs that were performed by the CAT and answered questions from the agencies.

4.11.3 July 20, 2006 Meeting

At the Interagency Meeting on July 20, 2006, the South Carolina FHWA provided the agencies with a third update on the project. The Project Team discussed the results of the CAT and how the preliminary alternatives were narrowed down. The Project Team explained how they eliminated alternatives with high impacts to resources such as wetlands, relocations, and communities. They explained six potential alternatives remained. These alternatives were presented to the agencies for questions and comments.

4.11.4 December 6, 2006 Meeting

A fourth presentation was made at the North Carolina Interagency Meeting on December 6, 2006. The agencies met and took a field tour of the North Carolina portion of the project study area. Sites



of particular interest were visited, including where the proposed crossings of Mark's Creek and Crooked Creek were located. The agencies pointed out resource features to the Project Team and asked questions about how the proposed alternative would be designed in certain areas.

4.11.5 June 14, 2007 Meeting

A presentation was made of changes to the proposed alternatives. The western interchange was eliminated due to high wetland impacts to the Marks Creek system. This led to the realignment of Alternatives 1 and 2 so they could utilize the eastern interchange. The proposed impacts from each alternative in North Carolina, as well as the overall impacts associated with each alternative were presented. Comments regarding the proposed alternatives were solicited.



December 6, 2006 North Carolina Agency Field Trip

4.11.6 November 15, 2007 Meeting

The Project Team presented possible shifts to the North Carolina portion of the Preferred Alternative due to input received during the Public Hearings. Agencies provided feedback on the potential shifts, and helped further modify the alignment to minimize impacts.

Stakeholder Working Group Involvement

4.12 What was the Stakeholder Working Group?

The Stakeholder Working Group was composed of volunteers from state, local, and county governments, along with businesses and non-government organizations that had an interest in the project from both North Carolina and South Carolina. They provided input to the FHWA and SCDOT regarding the project. They were given information about the project to share with their constituencies.

4.13 What happened at the Stakeholder Working Group Meetings?

The first Stakeholder Working Group meeting was held on August 16, 2005 in Bennettsville, South Carolina. There were 34 attendees at the meeting from various local and county governments, non-government entities, and citizen's groups. At this meeting, the attendees were given an overview of the project and the environmental process. The attendees discussed the possible issues and concerns about



the project, which included impacts to the economy, environment, schools, wetlands, and land use of the areas. Other comments raised concerns about the project route, width of the right-of-way, safety, design of the road, toll booth possibilities, and planning for the future needs of the area. The Project Team encouraged attendees to come to the Public Scoping Meetings and invite others in their communities to attend.

The second Stakeholder Working Group meeting was held on August 29, 2006, in Bennettsville, South Carolina with 30 people attending. The attendees were given a short presentation about the alternative development process. They were also shown the 2,500-foot corridors that would be presented at the Public Information Meetings. The Project Team answered questions from those attending regarding the project.



August 29, 2006 Stakeholder Working Group Meeting

The Stakeholder Working Group met for the third time in Bennettsville, South Carolina, on August 2, 2007. Twenty-one members were in attendance. The Project Team presented the Preferred Alternative to the Stakeholder Working Group, and discussed why it was chosen over the other alternatives. In addition, the Project Team discussed the upcoming Public Hearings and encouraged members to spread the word to their constituents to attend. The Stakeholder Working Group members asked questions about the Preferred Alternative and provided comments on the alignment. Three comment cards were turned in by members following the meeting.

Tribal Involvement

4.14 How was Tribal Consultation handled for this project?

Federal agencies are required under the *National Historic Preservation Act* to consult with Native American Tribes before undertaking actions that may have effects on historic properties of religious or cultural significance. The FHWA and SCDOT made a good faith and reasonable effort to identify and contact Tribes that may have such properties in the project study area. The FHWA, as the lead federal agency, gathered information about the federally-recognized Tribes that may have had an interest in the project study area.

During the project scoping process, the FHWA sent letters to 16 Tribes listed in Table 4.6 (refer to page 4-26), including the Cherokee, Shawnee, Choctaw, Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Chickasaw, Catawba, and Tuscarora Nations, describing the project, its location, and requested any information on sites or



Table 4.6
Tribal Consultation Process

Scoping Letters to Tribal Chiefs (sent September 2004)	Response Letters or Communications from Tribes	Consultation			
Shawnee Tribe of OK	Expressed interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005	FHWA contacted Tribe for further consultation	DEIS sent July 25, 2007.
Catawba Indian Nation	Expressed interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005	Met with Catawba Indian Nation Historic Officer on 9/17/04 and 2/11/05 about project; Catawba Indian Nation provided comments on Draft Cultural Resources Report 05/16/07	DEIS sent July 25, 2007.
Cherokee Nation of OK	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005		
Choctaw Nation of OK	Initially expressed interest; however, follow-up call on 10/12/05 stated that they had no interest in the project.	Follow-up email sent November 2004	No further update needed	No further consultation needed	
Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation	Expressed no interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	No further update needed	No further consultation needed	
Eastern Shawnee Tribe of OK	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005		
Jena Band of Choctaw Indians	Expressed no interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	No further update needed	No further consultation needed	
Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005		
Muscogee (Creek) Nation	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005		
Poarch Band of Creek Indians	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005		
Tuscarora Nation	Expressed interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005	FHWA contacted Tribe for further consultation	DEIS sent July 25, 2007.
Shawnee Tribe	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005		
Seminole Tribe of FL	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005		
Seminole Nation of OK	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005		
The Chickasaw Nation	No response from Tribe as of 4/2006	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Nation October 2005		
United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians of OK	Expressed interest in the project	Follow-up email sent November 2004	Updated Tribe October 2005 and May 2006	Wanted to be included on future mailings and updates	DEIS sent July 25, 2007.



resources in the area (a copy of the correspondence with Native American Tribes is located in Appendix J). The letter included a project study area map and fact sheet about the project. The FHWA offered funding for Tribal members to travel to South Carolina to meet about the project and to provide updates about the project as they became available. An email was sent in November of 2004 to update the Tribes about the project. Of the seven Tribes that responded to the initial letter and email, three did not wish to receive additional project information. The Jena Band of the Choctaw Indians stated that they had no interest in the project. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation responded by stating they had no interest in the project because it was outside of their traditional territory. The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma originally stated it did not want to meet with the FHWA, but did want to be included on future mailings. Later, the Choctaw Nation asked to be removed from future mailings concerning the project. The Catawba Indian Nation, Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma, Tuscarora Nation, and the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma corresponded that they were interested in the project. Attempts at follow-up communications were made with the Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma and the Tuscarora Nation, and have not been successful as of yet. The project was discussed with the United Keetoowah Band of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, and their Tribe will be included in future mailings.

The FHWA met with the Catawba Indian Nation on September 17, 2004, and February 11, 2005, to discuss the project. The project study area was presented, as well as the current status of the project. The Catawba Indian Nation Historic Officer requested that the Tribe be able to review the Preferred Alternative once it was selected.

The FHWA will continue to update the Tribes as the project continues, and a copy of the Draft EIS was sent to interested Tribes for review and comment on July 25, 2007. The only comments received were in an email from the Catawba Indian Nation. They requested a copy of the archaeological report, expressed a preference for Alternative 2, and noted that the THPO had not been included on page 4-13 as a federal agency with special expertise. The agencies listed on page 4-13 were those that participated as members of the ACT.

DEIS Comment Letters

What comments were received on the DEIS and how were they considered during the FEIS?

Several letters were received that provided comments on the DEIS. Each letter was reviewed and the comments were given due consideration. The FEIS was amended in response to many of these comments, and in some cases, the information was already present within the document. Each letter received commenting on the DEIS is found in this section. A response to each comment is included on the opposite page. A section number and page number are also provided to identify where a change was made or where the information referred to in the comment was already present.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Patrick Tyndall
Federal Highway Administration
1835 Assembly Street, Suite 1270
Columbia, SC 29201-2430

SEP 11 2007

Dear Mr. Tyndall:

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has reviewed Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Interstate Highway 73 (I-73): I-95 to North Carolina. NOAA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this document.

As the nation's federal trustee for the conservation and management of marine, estuarine, and anadromous fishery resources, the following comments and recommendations are provided pursuant to authorities of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. In addition, the DEIS has been reviewed within the areas of NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) geodetic responsibility, expertise, and in terms of the impact of the proposed actions on NOS activities and projects.

General Comments

The DEIS is well-written and includes adequate analysis of alternatives and general plans for mitigation of project effects on environmental resources. The NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (Fisheries) is a member of the Agency Coordination Team (ACT) formed by the Federal Highway Administration and South Carolina Department of Transportation to guide preparation of the DEIS. In our view, the ACT facilitated early resolution of project issues and thorough analysis of project alternatives and mitigation plans.

If there are any planned activities that will disturb or destroy geodetic control monuments, NOS requires notification not less than 90 days in advance of such activities in order to plan for their relocation. NOS recommends that funding for this project includes the cost of any required relocation(s). All available geodetic control information about horizontal and vertical geodetic control monuments in the subject area is contained on the National Geodetic Survey's home page at the following Internet address: <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov>. After entering this website, please access the topic "Products and Services" then "Data Sheet." This menu item will allow you to directly access geodetic control monument information from the National Geodetic Survey database for the subject area project. This information should be reviewed for identifying the location and designation of any geodetic control monuments that may be affected by the proposed project.

Specific Comments

Chapter 3. Existing Conditions and Environmental Consequences

We recommend adding a specific section on fishery and aquatic resources to complement the current sections for wildlife, noise, air quality, etc. Adding a specific section for fishery and aquatic resources would provide for a more thorough and clear presentation of this important natural resource. Additionally, a special subsection should address migratory diadromous fish, including American shad, blueback herring, American eel, striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, and shortnose sturgeon. NOAA Fisheries offers to help identify additional, appropriate information on migratory diadromous fish species in the project area for inclusion in the final EIS.

