

D R A F T

SECTION 4(f) EVALUATION

INTERSTATE 73

From I-95 to the Myrtle Beach Region

INTRODUCTION

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, 49 USC 303 requires that prior to the use of any land from a publicly owned park, recreational area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or historic property or archeological site on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), it must be determined that there is no prudent or feasible alternative which avoids such use and that the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to these resources.

According to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Section 4(f) Policy Paper a Section 4(f) resource is "used" as follows: (1) a direct use occurs when land from a Section 4(f) site is permanently incorporated into a transportation project, (2) a temporary use occurs when there is a temporary occupancy of Section 4(f) property that is adverse in terms of the statute's preservationist purposes, or (3) a constructive use occurs when the proximity impacts of the transportation project on the Section 4(f) site are so severe that the protected activities, features, or attributes that qualify the resources for protection under Section 4(f) are substantially impaired (USDOT, 1989).

In order for a park, recreational area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge to qualify for protection under Section 4(f), it must be publicly owned and officially designated as a park, recreational area, or wildlife or waterfowl refuge. When these areas are owned by private institutions and individuals, even if such areas are open to the public, Section 4(f) does not apply. The FHWA does however strongly encourage the preservation of such privately owned lands (USDOT, 1989).

Historic resources that are listed on or eligible for listing on, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) are not required to be publicly owned in order to be protected under Section 4(f). Archeological sites must also be in or eligible for the NRHP and important for preservation in-place in order to be considered a Section 4(f) site. Determinations of eligibility for the NRHP have been coordinated with the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officers.

This Section 4(f) Evaluation describes resources affected by the construction of Interstate 73 and provides an estimate of impacts. Avoidance alternatives and measures to minimize and mitigate harm are discussed.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) proposes to construct a new interstate highway, I-73, in Dillon, Marion, and Horry Counties, South Carolina. The facility would extend from I-95 in Dillon County to S.C. Route 22 in Horry County. The road would accommodate a six-lane facility with corridors for future multimodal facilities and allowances for frontage roads where needed. The interim design, which is proposed to be constructed initially, would accommodate two lanes of traffic in each direction. In the future, when traffic volumes 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 right-of-way corridor. 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.

A. PURPOSE AND NEED

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.

The following primary needs have been identified in connection with the proposed federal action:

- **System Linkage** – Improve national and regional connectivity by providing a direct link between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach region.
- **Economic Development** – Enhance economic opportunities and tourism in South Carolina.

These secondary needs have also been identified:

- **Hurricane Evacuation** – Facilitate a more effective evacuation of the Myrtle Beach region during emergencies.
- **Relieve Local Traffic Congestion** – Reduce existing traffic congestion on roads accessing the Myrtle Beach region.
- **Multimodal Planning** – Allow for future provision of a multimodal facility within the Interstate Corridor.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative 3 (Preferred Alternative) starts at the southernmost interchange with I-95, and from there extends southeast on the western side of Latta where it would have an interchange with U.S. Route 501, crosses to the east immediately north of Temperance Hill, then extends southeast where it would interchange with S.C. Route 41A. It continues southeast and would have an interchange with U.S. Route 76 on the western side of Mullins. Once south of Mullins it angles slightly east and crosses the Little Pee Dee River at the existing S.C. Route 917 crossing. It would have an interchange with Road S-308, then continues southeast on new alignment to an interchange with S.C. Route 22 near Bakers Chapel, about two

miles west of the S.C. Route 701/S.C. Route 22 interchange. The interchange with S.C. Route 22 would be designed so that the traffic movement from I-73 to S.C. Route 22 would be the predominant movement through the interchange. Like all of the Build Alternatives, it would follow S.C. Route 22 to its terminus with U.S. Route 17 near Briarcliff Acres.

This alternative would have the lowest total wetland impacts (384 acres) and would avoid crossing Buck Swamp, which has been identified as an important resource by the resource agencies. It is also the alternative with the lowest cost (\$1.296 billion). It would have the lowest farmland impacts (1,708 acres) as well. The proposed floodplain impacts (94 acres) are also the lowest for this alternative. It is one of three alternatives, with the other two being Alternatives 5 and 7, indicated as preferred by SCDNR and USFWS. The SHPO has indicated this route is their preferred because of the lack of impacts to cultural resources. It is in close proximity to the proposed “inland port” designated by Marion County as stated in their letters of March 2006.

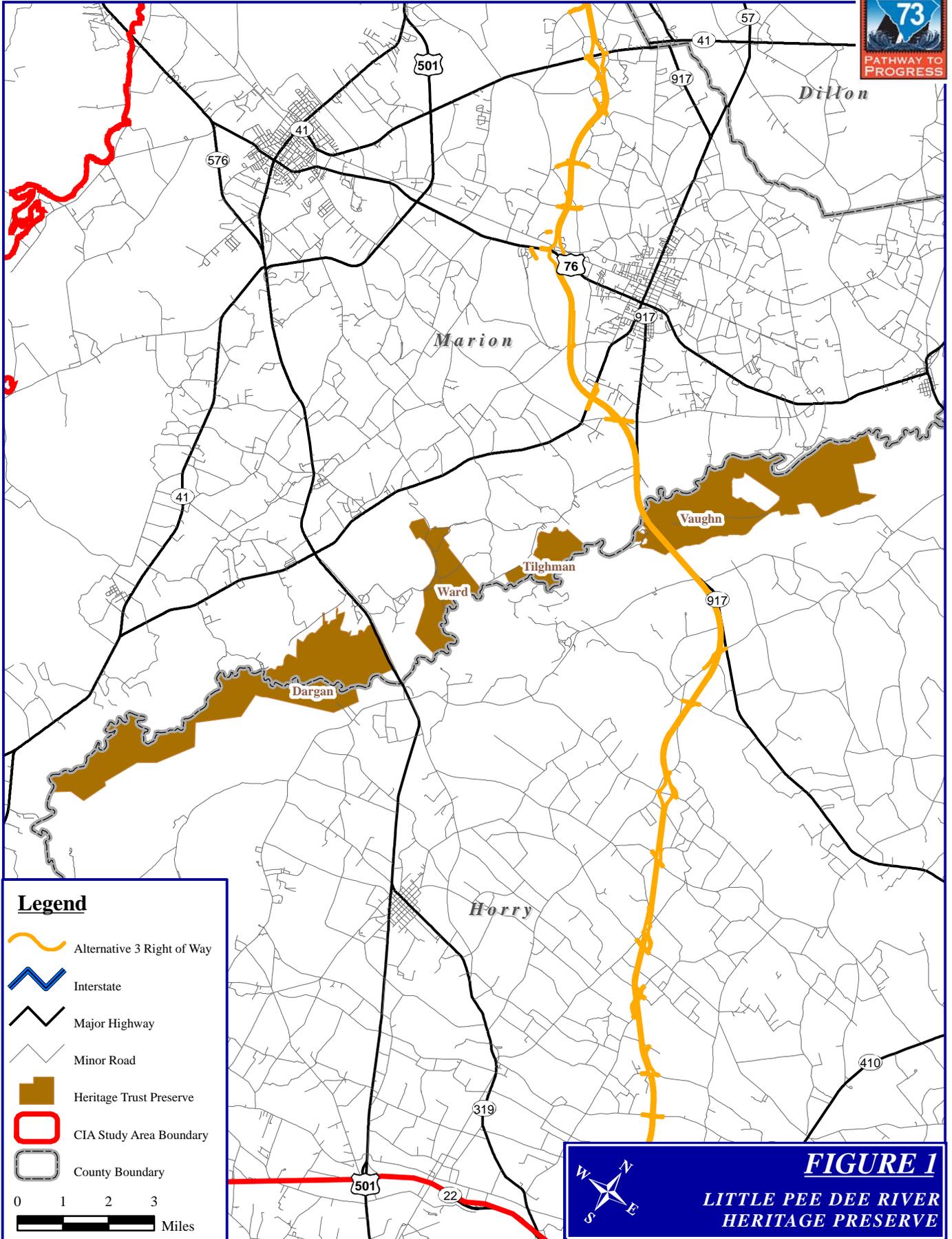
This alternative would impact a Section 4(f) resource, the Vaughn tract, part of the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve around the S.C. Route 917 crossing of the Little Pee Dee River. The Preserve is approximately 10,238 acres in size. The project would be built parallel, and to the south of existing S.C. Route 917 crossing of the Little Pee Dee River and would use approximately 30 acres of the Preserve. The alignment was moved to this location to avoid creating a new crossing of the Little Pee Dee River, which could lead to fragmentation of wildlife habitat. The Little Pee Dee River swamp has been given a high value by the resource agencies. The areas outside of the Heritage Preserve are rated no less highly than the areas within the Preserve. The former alignment had 408 acres of wetland impact, 24 more than the current alignment. It also would cost \$118 million more than the Preferred Alternative.

C. SECTION 4 (f) RESOURCES

Parks, Recreation Areas, or Wildlife Refuges

One site was identified as within or adjacent to the Preferred Alternative, the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve. No other parks, recreational facilities, or wildlife refuges were noted as being within or adjacent to the Preferred Alternative.

Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve is a property owned by SCDNR’s Heritage Trust Program (Figure 1). The preserve can be used by the public for various activities including fishing, hunting, boating, hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Due to the location of the preserve in relation to the Little Pee Dee River system, the property also protects wetlands and species’ habitats. The Preserve contains approximately 10,238 acres and is split into five tracts of land: Dargan, Vaughn,



Tilghman, Ward, and Johnson. Two of the Preserve's tracts, Dargan and Vaughn, are adjacent to an alternative corridor. The Dargan tract lies south of Galivants Ferry and is accessed from U.S. Route 501 and the Vaughn tract is to the north and accessible from S.C. Route 917.

Impact – The Vaughn Tract is situated on both sides of existing S.C. Route 917 roadway. Approximately 30 acres of the preserve would be taken to construct a crossing of the Little Pee Dee River that would be parallel on the south side to the existing S.C. Route 917 crossing. Access to the preserve would be maintained; however, recreational activities may be temporarily disrupted due to construction.

Mitigation - Mitigation would occur for the impacted property. This would include locating and purchasing compensatory acreage, which would be done in coordination with SCDNR through a Memorandum of Agreement prior to issuance of the Record of Decision.

Historic Properties

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 takes into account impacts that are a use of the historic property, whether it is of a direct, temporary, or constructive nature. A Section 4(f) use does not always include visual intrusion impacts or impacts that are not of an adverse nature. SHPO would make the determination as to whether an eligible site would be or would not be adversely impacted, while the use of a historic property is determined by FHWA. Archaeological sites eligible for the NRHP are only considered Section 4(f) properties if they warrant preservation in place, which indicates that the sites contain unique features or information that would be of value only if they are preserved in place.

The Preferred Alternative would have no direct impact to an historic property or historic district. There would be impacts of a visual nature to the Ketchuptown store.

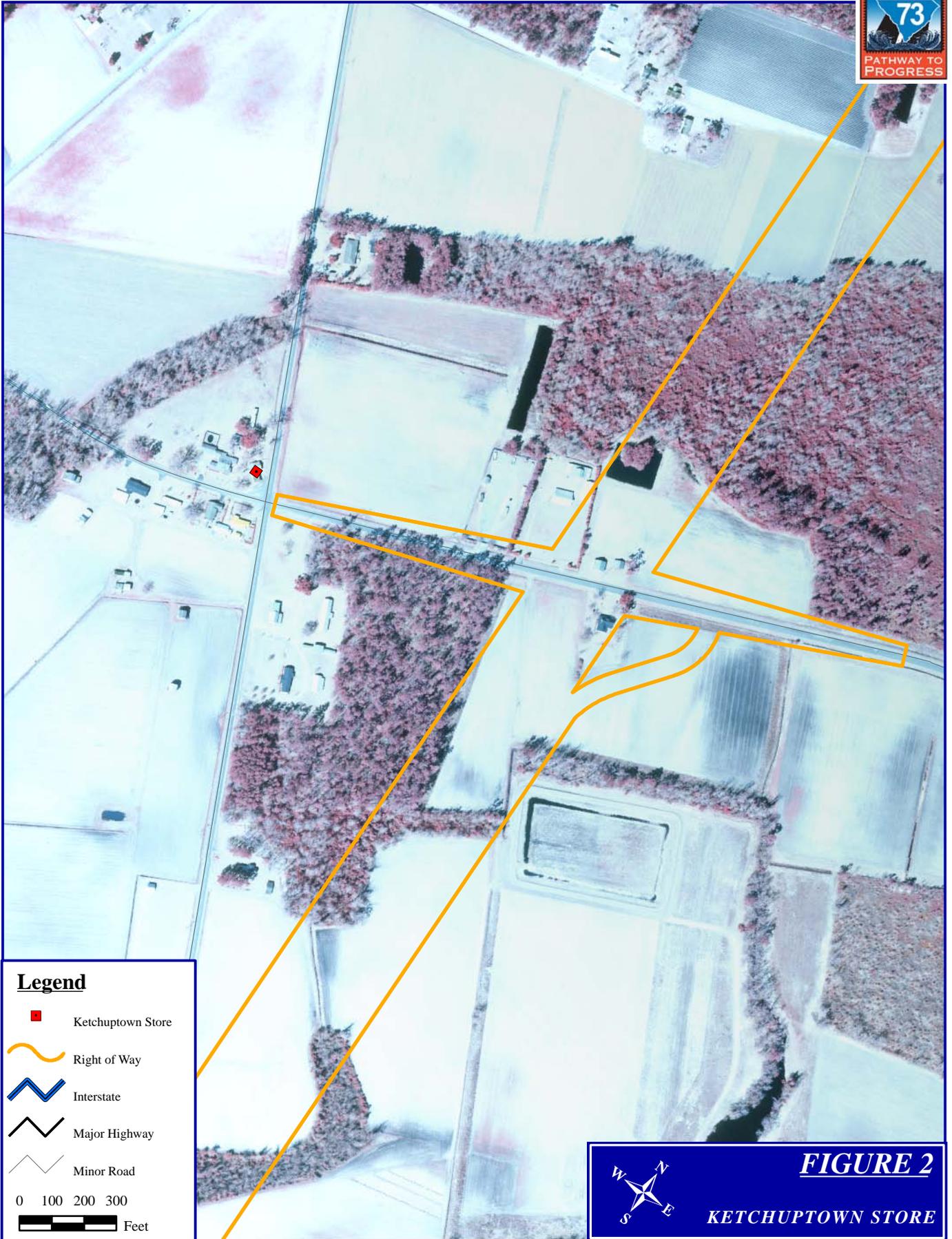
The **Ketchuptown Store** was constructed in 1927 and became the gathering point for local farmers in the area west of Lake Swamp in Horry County (Figure 2). It is now used as the community center and a museum.

Impact – The preferred alternative would not directly impact this resource but would have a visual effect on the property due to its proximity to the alternative. The proximity impacts would not constitute a constructive use of this resource because the visual effect would not substantially impair the features that qualify the property for Section 4(f) protection.

Mitigation – No mitigation is required for this resource under Section 4(f).

D. ALTERNATIVES AND FINDINGS

SCDOT considered various alternatives to avoid impacting Section 4(f) properties.



Legend

-  Ketchuptown Store
-  Right of Way
-  Interstate
-  Major Highway
-  Minor Road

0 100 200 300
 Feet



FIGURE 2

KETCHUPTOWN STORE

1. No Build Alternative – The No-build would not provide the interstate link between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach region. Failure to provide this link would lead to the loss of projected economic opportunities, the potential loss of tourism due to in-season congestion for tourists visiting Myrtle Beach, no improvement in local traffic congestion, longer travel times, the loss of the multimodal opportunities provided by the corridor, and no improvement in hurricane evacuation.

2. Alternative 1 - This alternative would have the most relocation of residents and businesses (121). It would have one of the highest costs, \$1.498 billion, \$202 million more than the Preferred Alternative. It would impact 418 acres of wetlands, roughly 34 acres more than the Preferred Alternative.

Horry County in a letter dated March 13, 2006, reported a unanimous vote against the route that crossed at Galivants Ferry and extended southeast along U.S. Route 501 through Aynor. The Town of Aynor voted unanimously to oppose the route that would be constructed along existing U.S. Route 501 at Galivants Ferry and through Aynor. Letters were also received from the Horry County School administration that expressed opposition to the segment that would go through Aynor along U.S. Route 501. Comments received at the public information meetings included those from a large number of people opposing this route. The SCDNR and USFWS also expressed opposition to this segment.

Alternative 1 would have one-way frontage roads along U.S. Route 501 in Aynor, which, although they are the best way to maintain access to properties on both sides of I-73, will be inconvenient for local residents used to accessing each side of U.S. Route 501. Construction of this alternative would also impact the athletic facility associated with Aynor High School, which, because it is also available for public use, would be considered a Section 4(f) impact as well (refer to Chapter 3 for information on Section 4(f)).

Based upon coordination with the SHPO, this alternative would also be expected to have the potential for negative visual impacts to the Galivants Ferry Historic District.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have a Section 4(f) impact, substantially higher construction cost (more than \$200 million), cause the relocation of more residents, and have more wetland impacts. It is also contrary to the stated position of the elected officials with jurisdiction over a portion of the study area.

3. Alternative 2 –This alternative would have no Section 4(f) impacts. It has one of the highest costs of all the alternatives (\$1.548 billion). It would potentially have visual impacts to two historic districts, one at Galivants Ferry and the other at the Bethea Property. This alternative would relocate three churches, the Dothan Baptist Church, north of I-95, the New Memorial Temple of Christ, at

the interchange of I-73 and U.S. Route 501, and the Spring Grove Baptist Church, just south of where this alignment crosses S.C. Route 917.

A petition signed by 258 people was received from the “residents living in the Northern Potential Corridor of the Southern Project” requesting that I-73 not be routed through the northern corridor from I-95. This alternative would impact residents along Winburn road. Several letters were received from people along Winburn Road objecting to the road being routed through their neighborhood.

This alternative would impact the Gateway Industrial Park, located just south of I-95. It would have approximately 444 acres of wetland impacts. These impacts would include a crossing of Buck Swamp. Farmland impacts (2,009 acres) would be higher than most of the other alternatives.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have substantially higher construction cost (more than \$250 million), cause the relocation of 3 churches, impact more farmland, and have more wetland impacts (64 acres).

4. Alternative 4 - This alternative would have the highest wetland impacts at 497 acres. As mentioned above, this alternative would go through Aynor, similar to Alternative 1. Its cost would be \$1.404 billion, \$108 million more than the Preferred Alternative. All the concerns raised by Horry County officials and the Town of Aynor and all of the other impacts that would result from the segment that follows U.S. Route 501 through Aynor (one-way frontage roads, school access, Section 4(f) impacts) would apply to this alternative as well. SCDNR and USFWS also expressed opposition to this segment. This alternative would have two Section 4(f) impacts, one associated with an archaeological site along U.S. Route 501 east of Marion and the other associated with the Aynor High School athletic facilities. There would also be a visual impact to the Galivants Ferry Historic District.

The Datwyler Rubber facility, located at U.S. Route 76 and U.S. Route 501 Bypass, could be impacted by this alignment. This is one of the largest employers in the County and the impacts could have effects throughout this area.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have two Section 4(f) impacts, substantially higher construction cost (more than \$100 million), and have substantially more wetland impacts (113 acres).

5. Alternative 5 - This alternative would have low wetland impacts (413 acres), which would be about 29 acres more than Alternative 3. Alternative 5 would have no Section 4(f) impacts. The cost for this alternative would be \$1.436 billion, about \$140 million more than the Preferred Alternative. It is one of two

with the highest potential farmland impacts (2,136 acres). It would also result in a relatively high number of relocations (98).

Based upon coordination with the SHPO, this alternative would also be expected to have the potential for negative visual impacts to the Galivants Ferry Historic District.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have substantially higher construction cost (more than \$140 million), impact more farmland, and have more wetland impacts (29 acres).

6. Alternative 6 - This alternative would impact the same Section 4(f) site, the Vaughn tract of the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve, as the Preferred Alternative. It would cost \$1.408 billion, \$112 million more than the Preferred. Alternative 6 would also have 29 acres more wetland impacts and farmland impacts (1,835 acres) than the Preferred Alternative. It would result in the relocation of three churches - the Dothan Baptist Church, the New Memorial Temple of Christ, and the Spring Grove Baptist Church.

It would be close to the proposed Bethea Historic District which might result in visual impacts to this district. Alternative 6 would also impact a portion of the Gateway Industrial Park located immediately south of I-95.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have substantially higher construction cost (more than \$116 million), cause the relocation of 3 churches, impact more farmland, and have more wetland impacts (29 acres).

7. Alternative 7 - Alternative 7 would cost \$1.362 billion, \$66 million more than the Preferred Alternative. It would also have a high number of wetland impacts (492 acres). This alternative would have the most floodplain impacts of all the alternatives.

It would impact a potentially eligible (for listing on the list of National Register of Historic Places) archaeological site near Marion and might have visual impacts on the Galivants Ferry Historic District. It would also impact the Winburn Road community.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have higher construction cost (more than \$60 million), cause the relocation of 3 churches, impact more farmland, and have substantially more wetland impacts (106 acres).

8. Alternative 8 - Alternative 8 would have the highest cost (\$1.596 billion) and a high number of total relocations (116). It would have the highest impact to farmland (2,155 acres). There would be 3 churches relocated, the same as

Alternatives 2 and 6. It would potentially have visual impacts to the potential Bethea Historic District and the Galivants Ferry Historic District.

It would impact the Gateway Industrial Park. It would extend through Aynor. Horry County and the Town of Aynor voted unanimously to oppose the route that would be constructed along existing U.S. Route 501 at Galivants Ferry and through Aynor. Letters that expressed opposition to this segment were also received from the Horry County School District administration. A large number of people expressed their opposition to this segment at the public information meetings. The SCDNR and USFWS also expressed opposition to this segment.

Alternative 8, like Alternatives 1 and 4 would have one-way frontage roads along U.S. Route 501 in Aynor, which, as previously described, will be inconvenient for local residents used to accessing each side of U.S. Route 501. Construction of this alternative would also impact the athletic facility associated with Aynor High School, which, because it is also available for public use, would be considered a Section 4(f) impact as well.

This alternative would not be a prudent alternative to the Preferred Alternative since it would have substantially higher construction cost (more than \$300 million), cause the relocation of 116 residences and businesses and 3 churches, impact more farmland, and have more wetland impacts (64 acres).

E. MEASURES TO MINIMIZE HARM

In order to minimize harm to the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve, compensatory acreage would need to be located and purchased, which would be done in coordination with SCDNR through a Memorandum of Agreement prior to issuance of the Record of Decision.

F. COORDINATION

This project has been coordinated with the agencies and officials having jurisdiction over Section 4(f) resources that could be affected. Archaeological and historical reports are being coordinated with the SCSHPO for determinations of eligibility and effects. Reviews of parks, recreational areas, and refuges are being coordinated with agencies and officials having jurisdiction over these resources.

As the alternatives were developed, the Agency Coordination Team (ACT), which included representatives from SCDNR and SHPO (as part of SCDAH), met regularly between 2004 and 2006. Shifting the alignment at the crossing of the Little Pee Dee River to parallel S.C. Route 917 was discussed at the January 19, 2006 meeting of the ACT. This is the portion of the preferred alternative that directly impacts the Little Pee Dee River Heritage Preserve. A field meeting was held February 23, 2006 with representatives from SCDOT and SHPO to discuss the eligibility of the Ketchuptown Store. These agency coordination meetings are described in Chapter 4.

Coordination will continue with SCDNR and SHPO through the refinement of the preferred alternative and the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Additionally, during the Public Hearing phase, property owners and area residents will be afforded the opportunity to comment on this project. Public sentiment and the wishes of the property owners will be considered in the final design of the project.