



S-1 FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Administrative Action - Environmental Impact Statement

(X) Draft () Final (X) Draft 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 SC 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 2-1 (page 2-7) 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 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 2-2, page 2-10). 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 longest alternative would be 48.3 miles long and the shortest would be 42.6 miles long.



The proposed alternatives would have interchanges with I-95, U.S. Route 501, S.C. Route 41A, U.S. Route 76 and S.C. Route 22. Depending upon the alternative, they would also have an interchange with S.C. Route 41, S-23, or S-308.

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 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 384 acres (which includes approximately 19,200 linear feet of stream impacts), the relocation of 81 residences and 7 commercial establishments, and potential noise impacts to 37 residences (refer to Table S-1, page S-5).

S-7 ARE THERE ANY AREAS OF CONTROVERSY?

The alternatives described in this document will be 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 has not been submitted to the public yet, but will be at three public hearings to be 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. Once the public has had a chance to review and comment on the Preferred Alternative, and after the completion of the field work for wetlands, archaeological resources, and protected species, further refinements to the alignment may be made.

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 two potential crossings associated with all eight Build Alternatives are located along existing crossings to minimize impacts from a new corridor.

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. Cultural resource issues have also been identified that could be impacted by the proposed alignments. The one designated as the preferred has the least impact to potential cultural resource sites.



S-8 WHAT ARE THE UNRESOLVED ISSUES?

A wetland delineation has not yet been performed for the Preferred Alternative. This will be performed to determine precise wetland impacts and the conditions of the impacted wetlands before the preparation of the final EIS. Also, a protected species survey will be performed to determine the location of any previously unrecorded federally threatened and endangered species. An archaeological survey for the Preferred Alternative will also be performed prior to the final EIS. The wetland mitigation has not been precisely defined and the construction methodology that could affect wetlands has not been specified at this time. The design of the proposed stream crossings will be subject to review by the Agency Coordination Team. 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 7 (*Endangered Species Act of 1973*, as amended) compliance;
- 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
REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE MATRIX
Interstate 73 EIS: I-95 to the Myrtle Beach Region**

CATEGORY	Unit of Measure	ALTERNATIVE								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
PURPOSE AND NEED	System Linkage	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Economic Development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Hurricane Evacuation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Local Traffic Congestion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
	Multimodal Planning	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
ENGINEERING CRITERIA	Length	Miles	44.9	47.7	44.2	42.6	48.3	43.6	46.0	44.3
	Design Criteria	Meets/Does Not Meet	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets	Meets
	Constructability	Scale 1-6 (1 highest)	4	3	1	6	3	1	4	4
	Construction Cost	Dollars (Billions)	1.492	1.547	1.290	1.392	1.430	1.406	1.350	1.595
NATURAL FEATURES	Threatened and Endangered Species	Yes (#) / No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
	Species of Concern	Yes (#) / No	Yes (1)	No	No	Yes (1)	No	No	No	Yes (1)
	Wetlands	Acreage	417.5	443.6	384.1	497.0	412.9	413.1	492.1	448.6
	Fill	Acreage	372.8	386.6	352	453.2	372.9	365	453.0	386.8
	Bridge	Acreage	44.8	57.0	32	43.9	40.1	48	39.2	61.8
	Wetland Quality	Value	2,919.4	2,869.4	2,486.1	3,212.4	2,816.1	2,588.4	3,105.8	2,976.8
	Fill	Value	2,556.0	2,408.5	2,228.5	2,847.0	2,481.4	2,212.5	2,769.3	2,486.1
	Bridge	Value	363.5	460.9	257.6	365.4	334.7	375.9	336.4	490.7
	Streams									
	Total Crossings	# of Crossings	60	62	58	45	56	64	41	66
	Perennial	# (Linear Feet)	52 (18,086)	54 (18,052)	48 (16,243)	35 (12,891)	49(15,878)	53 (18,420)	32 (10,863)	57(20,260)
	Intermittent	# (Linear Feet)	8 (1,968)	8(3,070)	10(3,770)	10 (4,877)	7(3,060)	11 (3,780)	9 (5,969)	9(1,978)
	Water Quality									
	Outstanding Resource Water	# of Crossings	10	10	5	10	10	5	9	10
	303(d) Impaired	# of Crossings	3	6	3	6	2	7	5	7
Habitat	Unique	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	
Uplands	Acreage	2,139	2,210	1,923	1,884	2,154	1,979	1,899	2,194	
Floodplains	Acreage	173	193	94	321	176	111	323	191	
MAN-MADE FEATURES	Hazardous Material Sites	#	2	3	1	2	2	4	2	3
	Parks and Wildlife Refuges	Yes (#) / No	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
	Historical Structures	Yes (#) / No	1 Visual	2 Visual	1 Visual	1 Direct	1 Visual	2 Visual	1 Visual, 1 Direct	2 Visual
	High Potential Area for Archaeological Sites	Acreage	1,086	1,144	1,032	991	1,149	1,028	1,057	1,078
	Noise (R= Residential, C= Church)	#	18R, 1C	19R	37R	17R	22R, 1C	41R	20R	15R
	Farmland	Acreage	1,993	2,009	1,708	1,717	2,136	1,835	1,781	2,155
	Prime	Acreage	1,046	1,319	1,094	868	1,344	1,147	1,036	1,159
	Unique	Acreage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statewide Important	Acreage	947	690	614	849	792	688	745	996	
SOCIOECONOMIC ISSUES	Community Impacts	Scale 1-6 (1 least impact)	5	3	2	3	2	4	1	5
	Total Relocations	#	121	92	88	74	98	80	51	116
	Residential Relocations	#	109	82	81	61	93	68	45	98
	Commercial Relocations	#	12	10	7	13	5	12	6	18
	Environmental Justice	Yes / No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
INFRASTRUCTURE	Airports	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Fire Stations	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Schools	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Churches	#	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	3
	Cemeteries	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



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.
- 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 U.S. and mitigation will be completed for these impacts.
- In the event that previously unknown cultural resources are discovered during construction, the resources will be handled according to 36 CFR §800.11.
- 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.
- Best Management Practices in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines will be incorporated during the design and construction of the project to minimize impacts to water quality.
- 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.
- SCDOT and FHWA will obtain approval from the SCDNR Heritage Trust Preserve Board for the taking of property in the Little Pee Dee Heritage Trust Preserve. In addition, the SCDOT and FHWA will enter into a memorandum of agreement with the SCDNR for the taking of property in the Little Pee Dee Heritage Trust Preserve and purchase of compensatory mitigation.
- SCDOT and FHWA will coordinate with the ACT and other resource agencies on the final design of bridges and culverts for this project.