

Business leaders push I-73 for federal stimulus

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Local business leaders are looking to get the Interstate 73 project going again soon. They say its hopes hinges right now on a proposed federal stimulus package.

However, some South Carolina lawmakers say I-73 doesn't qualify to be a part of the proposed \$825 billion bill.

Hugh Owens, President and CEO of the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation, says he's been a part of the I-73 project since its beginnings in 1981. Right now he says it's a golden opportunity to bring thousands of construction jobs to the area.

Owens says, "If we miss the boat on the federal stimulus package as well as the authorization bill that would be shortly following it. We will have missed an opportunity that may not come around again for a long time."

Owens says the I-73 project will be the most important one this area will see in the next 25 years. And if it gets approved for funding as part of Mr. Obama's proposed stimulus package, work could start as soon as a few months from now.

The interstate would run in our area from Richmond County in North Carolina down over I-95 and to Horry County. Other local business leaders think this is a can't miss opportunity for our area.

Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce President, Brad Dean says, "For too many years the Grand Strand is being ignored by state officials when it comes to infrastructure needs. Our view is that this money is going to be spent. We want to see it come back to the Grand Strand. Not simply because I-73 is so important to our economy, but we need jobs along here on the Grand Strand and in the Pee Dee."

Both Dean and Owens think if we can't get started now with construction, it may be several more years before we see another opportunity