

Residents speak out on proposed southern evacuation route

August 26, 2008

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SCNOW.com

Horry County residents got a look at the preferred route for a new southern evacuation route at the first of three public input sessions Tuesday night.

South Carolina Department of Transportation officials answered questions from several residents during the meeting at Socastee High School.

Charles Wells, who lives on MacDowell Shortcut Road, said the preferred route would take out his home and his business.

“I’m at the age that I’m getting too old to start all over again,” said Wells, who is 62.

The route would connect with Highway 17 Bypass just south of the intersection with Holmestown Road, and wind up through interior Horry County, close to Lucas Bay Road and the Pee Dee Highway, before ending near the intersection of Highways 501 and 22. Transportation officials say this is key because that intersection is close to where future Interstate 73 would connect, and that could help with evacuation efforts.

Ten people spoke during the formal public comment portion of the meeting, including Wells, who asked officials to consider connecting the route with Holmestown Road near Highway 707, thereby sparing his property.

Conservations also spoke about the importance of not building the road, and saving the wetlands along the Waccamaw River and the inland swamps from further development that could follow the road.

The route also comes with a pricetag of more than \$600 million.

Mike Barbee of the S.C.D.O.T. said these public meetings are all about listening to everyone’s concerns and putting that input to good use.

“The only thing we can do is not over-stress the importance of public involvement,” Barbee said.