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## Area roads on federal wish list

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**COLUMBIA** - Four area projects are among 28 on a wish list for federal funds that the state Department of Transportation Commission agreed Thursday to send to Washington.

Interstate 73, the first interstate link to Horry County, is on the list as one of five projects identified as statewide priorities.

The other area projects, not marked as statewide priorities, are the final leg of the Carolina Bays Parkway, the U.S. 701 Connector and widening U.S. 521 to four lanes between Andrews and Manning.

Commissioners did not put the list in order of preference or ask for specific amounts of money. The list is provided to the state's federal delegation as a request, to help steer funds if any federal transportation dollars are made available to the state.

The request is for money for the section of I-73 between the N.C. state line and Interstate 95, where a final proposed route is under study. A final preferred route for the section between I-95 and S.C. 22 near Conway was presented last year.

The interstate is designed to connect Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., and Myrtle Beach.

On another matter, the commission discussed criteria for deciding which projects to fund. Projects such as bridge replacements and repaving could be ranked by how unsafe the existing conditions are, for example.

Projects should be evaluated for accident rate, volume of traffic as compared to the designed capacity, truck traffic, and pavement or bridge quality, a staff report suggested.

Possible rankings under those terms, prepared by the staff as an example, would put the intersection of U.S. 701 and S.C. 410 north of Conway at 16th on a list of 20 safety projects.

The possible rankings were by type of project, such as safety or bridges. The commission said it liked the idea but one problem is deciding how many of each type of project to do.

The commission is responding to criticism in a state performance audit and looking for ways to be more and transparent in how it chooses projects.

"We can't take the politics out of it," said Commission Chairman Tee Hooper, but the agency should be able to provide information to lawmakers on technical justifications for projects.

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### At a glance

Local projects on the wish list for federal funding that the state DOT agreed to send to Washington:

Interstate 73

The final leg of the Carolina Bays Parkway

The U.S. 701 Connector

Widening U.S. 521

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