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## COMMUNITY RESIDENTS CHIME IN AT FIRST HEARING

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Five homes in Teresa Harrelson's family sit on land that has been passed down from generation to generation, but that tradition will end when a road divides her Ketchuptown community.

Harrelson's story is similar to dozens of families who will be affected by the preferred route of Interstate 73 that goes from Interstate 95 to S.C. 22.

Those 44 miles are expected to affect 81 homes, seven businesses, 1,708 acres of farmland and 384 acres of wetland.

More than 400 residents, those affected and others who just want to know exactly where the road is going, attended the first of three public hearings Thursday night at Aynor High School.

Satellite photographs of the area that stood nearly 10 feet tall with yellow, green and red lines of the routes lined the walls for residents to view and find their homes on during the hearing.

"I don't like it. If it's coming, it's coming, but I myself don't see where we need it," Harrelson said. "There's not much traffic on the roads they've already built, so I don't see why we need another. The tourists are going to take [U.S.] 501; that's what they know."

When officials announced the final preferred route of I-73's southern leg on May 30, they said it was chosen because it had the least effect on wetland, farmland and communities than any of the other proposed routes.

The route begins at I-95 and ends at S.C. 22, also known as Veterans Highway, between U.S. 701 and S.C. 319.

Officials say it will help bring tourist to the Grand Strand, of which 90 percent arrive by car, and provide another exit route during hurricane evacuations.

Aynor Mayor Charles Dawsey said he was worried about a route that brushed by the town.

“I had nightmares about it for a while,” Dawsey said. “We missed it, but we still feel sorry for people in others areas.”

Since the announcement, residents have talked on porches, in tobacco fields and at the nearby country store about what the future holds for their farmland and homesteads in its path.

“I hate to see these people who have had land in their families so long lose their land,” said Corella Scott, who lives along Bakers Chapel Road. The road just misses her home, but she’s worried about how it will change her country life.

“I like where we are because it’s quiet, less congested,” Scott said. “But I also understand how crucial it is for there to be access to the Strand, not only for business but to get people away for hurricanes.”

Temperance Hill resident Stephen Lane was in the area for work on Thursday and decided to attend the meeting.

He’s also planning to attend one of the other two public hearings closer to his home.

Lane’s home isn’t threatened by I-73, but his neighbors, his church and his family farm are in its path.

“I’m concerned about my neighbors. We’ll have to drive several miles further to get to my neighbors,” Lane said. “The general idea is a positive thing, but when you get down to the specifics of it, it’s hurting a lot of people. You do something on this scale, it’s going to hurt a lot of people for the positive of it.”

Lacy Cannon, who lives in Loris but owns land throughout Horry County, said his main concern is access.

He said residents should petition to get another access point to the road included in the plans so they won’t have to drive so far to use it once its built.

“These people are giving up a lot - at least they could get a little bit out of it,” Cannon said. “I like the route; it’s the best I’ve seen. These roads will help the values of their property, but if they don’t plan to move, then the value doesn’t mean anything.”

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