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DOT commissioner won't try to retain seat  
Georgetown representative exits to concentrate choices

By Zane Wilson - The Sun News

Department of Transportation Commissioner Joe Young of Georgetown has dropped out of the running for appointment to a full term on the panel that sets priorities for major road projects.

Young, who was named to an unexpired term for the 1st Congressional District seat on the commission almost a year ago, was one of 11 who filed for the unpaid post.

But when noon came on Friday, the deadline to have all application information in, the list for the 1st District seat was down to five, including Danny Isaac of Myrtle Beach.

The other candidates are Tara Welsh of Summerville in Dorchester County, David Bunch of Awendaw in Charleston County, Thomas Byrd of Moncks Corner in Berkeley County and Ken Willingham of Mount Pleasant in Charleston County.

Young, who served on the Santee Cooper board for 13 years and one term in the state House, said he enjoyed his short stint on the DOT commission.

"But with the number of candidates that filed for this office, I felt that perhaps our end of the district would have a better opportunity of electing someone if I dropped out," Young said.

He said he thinks his one year in the office was successful.

"I was the deciding vote on making Interstate 73 the top priority of the state," he said. He also was instrumental in bringing in Buck Limehouse, a former commission chairman, as the transportation secretary.

Young said he succeeded in having the remaining section of the U.S. 521 bypass of Andrews put on the high priority list for congressional funds, and in having the commission meet in the district and visit locations.

The board met at Litchfield Beach last year and visited Sandy Island to view the state preserve and talk to residents about their transportation needs.

The commissioner is elected by legislators from the congressional district. Horry County legislators said last year they want Isaac on the commission, but they can be outvoted if Charleston-area legislators get behind one of their candidates.

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