

DOT picks route for northern stretch of I-73 in SC

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FLORENCE, S.C. --The Department of Transportation on Thursday picked the middle route for the northern leg of Interstate 73 in South Carolina.

DOT wants the highway to run from Interstate 95 north through western Dillon County into Marlboro County, skirting just to the east of Bennettsville before crossing the state line into North Carolina and meeting I-74 near Hamlet.

This portion of I-73 will be about 30 miles long. The DOT has already chosen a route to take the new freeway from around I-95 to Myrtle Beach.

The entire project is expected to cost nearly \$2 billion and take 10 years to complete once the money is secured and construction begins. State officials have called it South Carolina's top transportation priority.

The state still has to buy the land for the road and complete environmental impact studies.

The interstate, which will eventually link the state to Michigan, will run 90 miles across South Carolina, giving the 14 million tourists who visit the Myrtle Beach area each year their first direct interstate link to the Grand Strand. It also will go through some of the poorest areas of the state, and leaders hope businesses and other investment will follow.

The DOT rejected two other proposed routes. One would have built I-73 west of Bennettsville, while the other would have put the freeway just east of Clio and west of McColl.