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## EXPLODED CONSPIRACY

Most of the conspiracy theories that rocket around Horry County these days have to do with land deals involving ``connected" individuals and companies bent on turning obscene profits. When the S.C. Department of Transportation designated the Interstate 73 corridor through Horry County this year, the theorizing reached fever pitch.

The S.C. DOT, as we all know, chose to link the interstate to S.C. 22 in the Aynor-Cool Springs area. Some local folks were positive the ``connected" ones had gotten advance word on where the corridor would be. They were certain the DOT resisted local political pressure to move the I-73 corridor to southern Horry County because the ``wrong" people would profit from right-of-way purchases and from having land adjacent to interstate exits.

Well, it turns out the I-73 land-speculation conspiracy theories were - to put it kindly - hokum. The public record - that scourge of folks who hate it when the facts explode a good story - shows few recent land sales in western Horry County. A records check by The Sun News does reveal an increase in land trades in that part of the county over past periods. But Assessor Rendel Mincy attributes the sales to the county's ongoing westward growth, not to I-73. The completion of I-73 won't appreciably increase the value of the recently transferred land parcels.

What we have here is a cautionary tale for folks who get all lathered up over the perception that the ``connected" ones routinely manipulate the ``system" to direct wealth into their own pockets - and that the rest of us somehow get disadvantaged. The record doesn't lie: This rarely happens. Some speculation is unquestionably going on here; most conspicuous is the purchase and rapid resale of certain condos. But most of the folks who are making good money in these parts get it the old-fashioned way: By dint of smarts and hard work, they earn it.