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I-73 WINS ADDITIONAL FUNDING Zane Wilson The Sun News

Interstate 73 garnered \$2.05 million in the annual federal transportation budget that passed Friday afternoon.

The money is in addition to \$81 million for I-73 that was granted in the five-year highway bill that passed in July.

``It's a pleasant surprise," said Brad Dean, president of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce. ``That's a pretty good little bit."

The road will be the Myrtle Beach area's first connection to an interstate highway. The area is the largest major tourism destination that does not have an interstate highway.

State Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach, leads the S.C. I-73 Association. He said the state's federal delegation promised more money for the road each year and they are following through.

``We are excited and pleased by the unanimity of our congressional delegation in funding the project," Clemmons said.

The delegation's work in getting I-73 named a highway of national significance in the five-year highway bill made it eligible for regular funding, he said.

Planning is under way on the 60-mile segment of I-73 in South Carolina.

A preferred route for the section between I-95 and the Myrtle Beach area is expected to be presented to the public in December.

The road was designated by Congress in 1991 to connect Detroit and Charleston, but the route was revised over the years to run from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to Myrtle Beach.

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