

Next Step for I-73

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Now that state officials have nailed down their selection for the path of Interstate 73, there are many steps remaining to drive the project home.

NewsChannel 15 was told I-73 will cross the South Carolina border near Bennettsville and continue on to Myrtle Beach, crossing I-95 along the way. The interstate will help make the drive to Myrtle Beach easier. Brad Dean, President of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, said Saturday since we now know the final route for I-73, the big question is how to pay for it.

Dean said the price tag will be around the \$2 billion mark. He said in the next few months, officials will have to secure an environmental impact statement and permits before construction crews can begin actually moving dirt. As far as the money goes, Dean said the federal government will invest most of the funding, but alternative financing could come into play.

"Tolls is a big part of that. The state has approved that, we're waiting on the federal government and hoping they'll allow us to make this an exclusive toll road," said Dean.

Dean told NewsChannel 15 South Carolina could also look to private industries that might want to invest in I-73. Dean says State D.O.T. Commissioners will be in Myrtle Beach next month for the Coastal Carolina summit dedicated to the I-73 project.

There is a series of public meetings planned about Interstate 73. The next meeting takes place August 14th starting at 5:00 p.m. at the Marlboro County High School in Bennettsville.