

Officials make new stride toward I-73 construction

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(Columbia) -- Department of Transportation officials, along with Federal Highway Administration Division officials, took the next step toward making the Southern I-73 Project a reality for South Carolina.

Secretary of Transportation Buck Limehouse and FHA Division Administrator Bob Lee signed the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the project Thursday.

Limehouse said the signing marks the most important accomplishment with the project, and marks three years of work toward the goal.

Lee said the average time for such a document to be approved usually rests between five and six years.

Officials say the Southern I-73 Project would connect I-95 in Dillon County through Marion County to SC 22, Veterans Highway, in Horry County.

According to officials, the statement reflects the relevant human and environmental features of the surrounding area, and shows the results for the least overall impact alternative for I-73 in the area. They say the acquisition process can begin after the Record of Decision document is approved.

SCDOT officials say they anticipate the final environmental impact statement for the project to be completed in the Spring of 2008.