

Residents ask for I73 to be moved to west

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Hamlet | Residents at a second public hearing about the northern leg of Interstate 73 in South Carolina said they want to see the highway routed to the west.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation meeting was held Tuesday night in Hamlet. Four miles of the South Carolina segment of the interstate are in North Carolina, where it will end at I-74.

The preferred route for the 30 miles of the new highway from Interstate 95 in South Carolina north is through western Dillon County into Marlboro County, skirting just to the east of Bennettsville, S.C., before crossing into North Carolina.

The state has already chosen a route to take the new freeway from I-95 southeast to Myrtle Beach. The entire road is expected to cost nearly \$2 billion in South Carolina.

Five people spoke at the public meeting. They wanted the highway to go farther west to bring more economic impact to places like Bennettsville.

The western route is closer to an airport, hospital and other infrastructure, said Dottie Babb, a Marlboro County resident.

Transportation officials will consider the comments along with field studies this fall, said Mitchell Metts, SCDOT's Interstate 73 project manager.

DOT officials said they did not pick the western route initially because it would cost more and require more people to move.