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## TALKING TOLLS FOR I-73

Helping pay for Interstate 73 by making it a toll road is one of several objectives that area legislators and Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce officials agreed to work toward earlier this week.

Working to persuade the S.C. General Assembly to consider tolling for I-73 is an important goal for the chamber and the legislators. If the S.C. portion of the interstate is to be built, the bulk of the money will have to come from the state because the days of the federal government paying up to 90 percent of the costs are over. The project is estimated at up to \$2 billion, and so far Congress only has allocated about \$83 million of that.

The General Assembly and the S.C. Department of Transportation will have to come up with most of the remainder, so it makes sense to examine whether tolling is the best way to raise the revenue.

The road will run from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., to Myrtle Beach, finally providing the Grand Strand with an interstate link so desperately needed. The highway will make it easier for tourists to make their way to the Grand Strand, and that means more money for state tax coffers, not just for the region.

North Carolina is moving to get approval for Interstate 74 to be a toll highway. The Brunswick County commissioners have passed a resolution calling for the construction of toll roads if that means I-74 and other roads could be completed sooner.

While I-74 being completed quickly would help the Grand Strand because it would link with S.C. 31 at the state line, that road also could make N.C. beaches more attractive destinations.

The faster I-73 can be built, the better. In addition to bringing in more tourists, it will spur economic development all along its route. Tolling could be the quickest way to get it built.

