

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 1, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Secretary Chao,

We write today in support of the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant application submitted by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) for Interstate 73.

In 1991, Congress designated Interstate 73 as a high priority corridor. The proposed highway will run from the Great Lakes region to the coast of the Carolinas. In South Carolina, the interstate will cross the North Carolina line in Dillon County and travel through Marion and Marlboro counties before connecting with the Conway Bypass (SC Highway 22) in Horry County. In June of 2017, the United States Army Corps of Engineers issued the permit to begin construction of I-73.

Interstate 73 will provide new economic opportunities to some of the poorest counties in the state of South Carolina. Construction of Interstate 73 will create 29,000 jobs and have an economic impact of \$2 billion. Completion of Interstate 73 would be economically transformative for the region.

Peak tourist season in the Grand Strand also coincides with the annual hurricane season. While South Carolina had made improvements to hurricane evacuation planning, the outdated and bottlenecked evacuation route remains dangerous during hurricane evacuations. The southern section of Interstate 73, which will run between the Grand Strand and Interstate 95, is projected to reduce evacuation times by 11 to 15 hours, allowing thousands of people to safely and effectively leave the area during an emergency.

Interstate 73 has the support of the local communities and governments. A 2008 statewide poll showed that 82 percent of South Carolina registered voters supported construction of Interstate 73 and felt it was important to the state. On November 28, 2018, Horry County voted to enter into a Funding Participation Agreement with the South Carolina Department of Transportation, whereby the County will contribute \$25 million annually in local taxes to be used in the construction of Interstate 73. Horry County plans to dedicate \$300 million to the project.

Interstate 73 has the potential to drastically improve the lives of many South Carolinians. Its completion will grow the economy and improve the safety of those traveling in South Carolina. As such, we firmly support the INFRA grant application submitted by SCDOT.

Sincerely,



Tom Rice
Member of Congress



Lindsey O. Graham
United States Senator



Tim Scott
United States Senator