

Sun News, The (Myrtle Beach, SC)
August 12, 2004
Section: FRONT
Page: A8
Column:Editorial

LAUNCHED AT LAST

True to its word, the S.C. Department of Transportation this week formally launched its environmental study for Interstate 73 between Myrtle Beach and the S.C.-N.C. border. This project, which has the potential to eliminate the Grand Strand's chronic substandard road service, is now begun.

That qualifier ``potential" is necessary because Congress has not yet found money to finance the construction of the highway. The S.C. DOT's environmental study will proceed, with cooperation from other state and federal agencies, regardless. Nor is it yet clear whether N.C. political leaders and the N.C. Department of Transportation will designate that state's portion of I-73 - apparently because they're hoping a parallel effort to secure funding for Interstate 74 between Charlotte and southeastern North Carolina will be successful. If that highway is finished ahead of I-73 - much of the route has already been built - N.C. vacation traffic could be diverted to N.C. beach communities. Because of this N.C. games-playing, the S.C. DOT is planning I-73 in two phases: from the Grand Strand to Interstate 95, and from I-95 to wherever the N.C. folks decide to put their stretch of I-73.

Regardless, we'll know soon whether Congress will appropriate construction money for the project. And N.C. leaders eventually will see that it's in their state's interest to build an I-73 link: Interstates do carry commerce - and wealth - in both directions.

For now, it's enough that work toward our highway link with the outside world is under way at last.