

PROGRESS from page 1

and replaces seven overpasses, Hall said. Higher clearance will be critical for freight movement, and the improvements prepare for any need for future widening.

The concrete pavement will be 12 inches thick, topping 2 inches of asphalt below and additional 12 inches of foundation, for a total of “26 inches on I-26,” Hall said. This type of pavement extends the service life 40 to 50 years.

“A long-lasting, durable, innovative, accelerated project is what you’re looking at here today,” Hall said, adding that the proj-

ect created 400 jobs and used locally manufactured concrete.

The \$512 million Midlands Connection project is part of SCDOT’s overall vision to improve I-26 from Newberry to Charleston, a 114-mile strategic initiative.

But interstate work is going on well beyond I-26.

“We currently have about 80 miles of interstate under construction underway today, well north of \$2 billion worth of work including Phases I and II of Carolina Crossroads in Columbia and the I-85 corridor from Spartanburg to the North Carolina state line. Work is going on at I-20 at the Georgia border...and several interchanges are being worked on along I-77.

“So pretty much, every interstate in this state is under construction or receiving some sort of upgrade. That speaks really clearly to the commitment of the policymakers to

make sure our infrastructure is set to take us to that next level,” Hall said.

The funding is a combination of federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars, state money and gas tax revenue, along with the welcome news in August of an additional \$190 million in federal road funds for South Carolina.

The innovative acceleration project to widen I-26 in between Columbia and Charleston is another success story.

“Every other year, we’ll push out a 10- to 11-mile section of widening between Columbia and Charleston,” Hall said. “Instead of starting in 2034, we hope to have everything wrapped up in that time frame.

“This is a good example of our industry’s commitment and dedication to ensuring that we’re delivering a world-class project on an expedited time frame with the dollars entrusted to the State DOT.”

I-26 from page 1

ciation President/CEO Rick Todd. SCDOT Commissioner John Barnwell Fishburne of the 6th Congressional District was among the state officials in attendance.

Built more than 60 years ago, I-26 has seen its traffic increase to more than 22 million vehicles per year. The segment between Charleston and Columbia has at times been “plagued with congestion, delays and accidents,” Hall said.

The widened interstate will improve traffic flow, safety and “help support the growth that is occurring in this fast-growing region of our state,” Hall said.

“This initial \$218 million project that we’re launching today is 7 miles in length and stretches between Jedburg Road and S.C. 27,” Hall said. It is designed to modernize and upgrade the S.C. 27 interchange and replace several bridges.

“I’m pleased to announce Banks Construction, a construction company located right here in the Charleston area, will be building the project for us,” Hall said. “They have also pledged that approximately \$13 million of the project will be done by small and minority businesses located right here in South Carolina.

“We’re not stopping there,” Hall said. “Not only is this project being built by South Carolina firms, but the overwhelming majority of the materials that will go into building this magnificent interstate will be sourced right here from South Carolina. Concrete, steel, asphalt, rock, cement – all of that is homegrown and is amplifying the economic impact of just a single road project.

“Think about the ramifications of what that investment does to our economy.” Hall said.

In 2023, SCDOT will push out another \$600 million for work to widen a section of I-26 from the Columbia end to complement this first leg from Charleston, Hall said.

“And we’ll jump right to the I-26/I-95 interchange and upgrade that,” Hall said.

Looking at the big picture, SCDOT’s annual program has grown from \$1 billion, many years ago, to nearly \$4 billion today. “And I expect it to continue to grow as we push more and more interstate work, bridge work, safety projects and other much needed infrastructure work to contract all across our state,” Hall said.

Hall marveled at the speed in which the I-26 project came to fruition over the past few months.

While the initial plan called for widening 70 miles of I-26 in a few segments every few years all the way to 2034, the new, accelerated plan brings the total project six years ahead of schedule, she said.

“We have responded to the call of the Governor and Legislature by putting the pedal to the metal. We received final legislative approval for the funding for this project at the end of June 2022, just a few months ago. Within 30 days, we had a contract out to bid. We didn’t let the funding sit idly, we put it right out to market to get our contractors on board.”

Hall appropriately ended her remarks with three words: “Let’s get started.”

“If you turn your attention to the heavy equipment in the median, I’m going to ask the Governor to give the command to begin work,” Hall said.

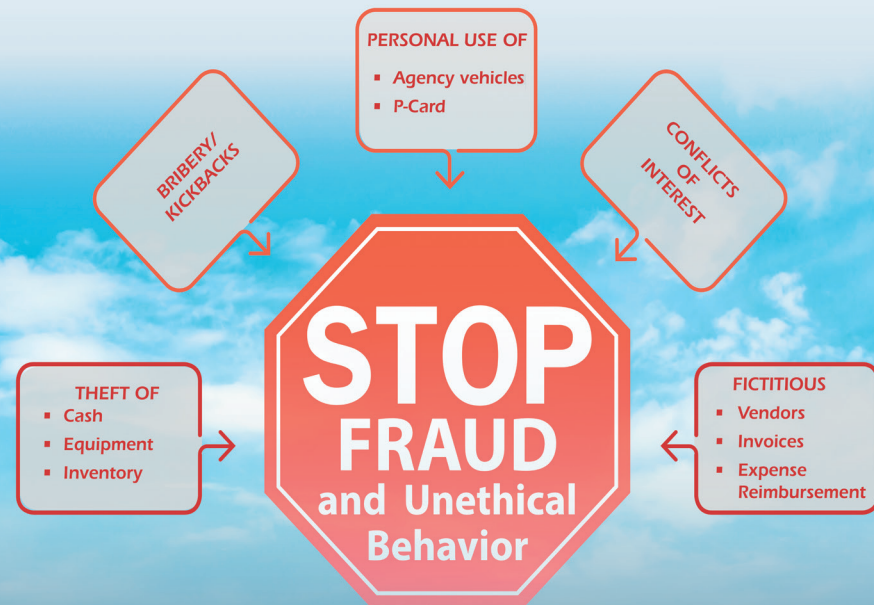
“Hit it, brother,” the Governor said on his radio.

And Greg Smith dug it.

SPEAK UP



PRESERVE OUR CULTURE OF INTEGRITY



To report potential wrongdoing or unethical activity, you may call toll free at **1-855-723-7283** or complete the online complaint form by visiting the website below.

<https://oig.sc.gov/file-complaint>
The form may be completed anonymously.

