

SCDOT begins widening of U.S. 17 in Jasper County

Project will improve safety, boost regional growth and economic development

By Ted Creech

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has begun construction to widen nearly 4.2 miles of U.S. 17 from the Georgia border to the intersection of S.C. 315 near Hardeeville, SC. SCDOT will widen the roadway from two to four lanes and make other improvements to enhance its safety and accommodate increasing traffic associated with residential growth and economic development in the region.

The \$41.9 million project is made possible by South Carolina's gas tax increase, enacted by the General Assembly in 2017, and the agency's 10-Year Plan to improve the state's roads and bridges. Improvements to U.S. 17 include a divided grass median between the new four lanes, wider shoulders and safety rumble strips. SCDOT will also install bike lanes and intersection improvements, including the installation of new traffic signaling at the S.C. 315 and U.S. 17 intersection. A second phase of the project is being designed by Georgia DOT to construct a second bridge over Back River near the Savannah River.

"The Highway 17 widening project accomplishes several goals. It updates the road infrastructure and improves the safety of our citizens as they travel the corridor," said J. Barnwell Fishburne, Chairman of the SCDOT Commission representing the 6th Congressional District. "It also supports the region's growth and economic development efforts now and for the future."

"Better safety and quality and a stronger economy for South Carolinians are what SCDOT's mission is all about," he said.

Concrete construction barriers are now in place along the corridor. SCDOT's contractor, R.B. Baker Construction, has been installing erosion control measures and clearing brush and trees along the sides of the existing road to make way for a widened road bed. Except for some temporary lane closures, two-way traffic on U.S.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY R. B. BAKER CONSTRUCTION

Construction barriers have been put into place as SCDOT prepares for construction on nearly 4.2 miles of U.S. 17 in Jasper County from the Georgia border to the intersection of S.C. 315 near Hardeeville.

17 will be maintained. Motorists can expect some delays.

"We're going to experience some delays during the Highway 17 construction, but in the end it's going to be a much-improved and much safer highway," said Andrew Fulghum, Jasper County Administrator. The Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) and the Lowcountry Council of Governments rate the project as a top road infrastructure priority for the region.

Significant ground improvements, such as specialized work on the new roadway embankments and compacting the soil to support the new highway, will add time to construction. SCDOT expects the construction work to be completed by late 2025.

SCDOT is concluding year four of its 10-Year Plan to repave South Carolina's aging corridors, rebuild or replace deteriorating bridges, make our rural roads safer, and improve key portions of our interstates. SCDOT has tripled its road work to \$3.4 billion in recent years.



The intersection of U.S. 17 and S.C. 315 in Jasper County will be upgraded to improve safety and traffic flow. The roadway will be widened to four lanes with shoulders, a grass median and bike lanes.