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**SC Coastal Conservation League Releases Independent Analysis Revealing Fatal Economic Flaws in Proposed I-73 Project**

*The study finds that improvements to existing roads would facilitate tourism and deliver significant economic benefits at a fraction of the cost of building I-73.*

*Charleston, SC – June 19, 2012 –* The Coastal Conservation League, a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in South Carolina’s coastal communities, today released an independent analysis it commissioned to compare the costs and benefits of the proposed I-73 interstate to the Myrtle Beach area with improvements to the existing SC 38/US 501 corridor, dubbed the Grand Strand Expressway (GSX) by proponents. Prepared by Columbia-based Miley & Associates, the study found that improvements to existing roads would create jobs and deliver significant economic benefits at a fraction of the cost of building I-73.

“We’ve taken a hard look at the I-73 project and simply cannot find a viable economic or environmental reason to support it,” said Nancy Cave, Director of the Coastal Conservation League’s North Coast office. “The smart decision – especially in light of our state’s dire transportation funding situation – is to improve existing roadways to meet the objectives of the I-73 project without saddling taxpayers with millions more in public debt.”

The study, “An Economic Analysis of I-73 and the Grand Strand Expressway (GSX) Alternative” uses the Transportation Economic Development Impact System (TREDIS) model to compare GSX revitalization with the proposed I-73. The findings indicate that the proposed I-73 has a benefit/cost ratio of .26, significantly less than the 1.0 ratio threshold that typically determines whether a project is in the public’s best interest. The GSX revitalization has a positive benefit/cost ratio of 1.4 and can be upgraded at 1/10th the cost of the interstate. Revitalizing the GSX would produce 22,000 jobs, would not displace existing jobs and has the opportunity to improve access to the Myrtle Beach area without requiring more than $1 billion in taxpayer dollars that could go to higher priority state transportation projects with greater economic benefit to the state.

“According to the TREDIS modeling system, an integrated framework for transportation planning and project assessment, the better investment is clear,” said Harry Miley, principal of Miley & Associates. “In fact, the comparison is not close. The GSX offers clear advantages over an entirely new roadway that in many respects merely duplicates what the GSX already offers.”

The analysis concludes that revitalizing the GSX is a more cost-effective use of state transportation resources, provides economic benefits to rural counties without displacing local businesses and improves access to the Myrtle Beach area without spending $1 billion that could go to higher priority transportation projects.

The American Public Transportation Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, U.S. Conference of Mayors and many other organizations have relied on TREDIS modeling for project planning and approval. In addition, the departments of transportation of New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina and other states have all applied TREDIS modeling to public transportation decision-making.

“The proposed interstate is a clear and present danger to the small businesses and communities already established along the GSX corridor,” said Harold Snipes, City of Latta Director of Public Utilities. “We don’t need a new interstate, we need to revitalize our infrastructure and existing roads, which will in turn revitalize our businesses.”

Jan Pate, owner of the now-closed D & J Convenience Store and the subsequent Jan’s on Main in Latta said, “I-73 forced me to relocate my 23 year old business, the relocation destroyed my business. I ‘m just one of many small business owners being displaced. The interstate will wreck rural business and our communities.”

**About The Coastal Conservation League**

Since 1989, the Coastal Conservation League has been working with communities, businesses, other conservation and citizen groups to protect what we love about the South Carolina coast. From the white sand beaches and pristine marshes to the freshwater swamps and pine savannahs, we focus on the most efficient and effective ways to protect natural habitats, the wildlife that depends on them and the variety of benefits they bring to this state. We also believe that the communities we live in, the air we breathe and the water we depend upon are important and that our quality of life deserves the same high level of attention. To learn more, go to [www.scccl.org](http://www.scccl.org).

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