

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, after many years of planning and dialogue between the South Carolina Department of Highways and Public Transportation (SCDHPT), local County governments and the State's environmental resource agencies, the SCDHPT has completed its planning and environmental impact assessment for widening of approximately 22 miles of U.S. Highway 17 from Gardens Corner in Beaufort County to Jacksonboro in Colleton County, and has submitted a permit application for this work to the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; and

WHEREAS, Colleton County Council has submitted a Resolution to SCDHPT opposing the widening of this section of U.S. Highway 17, and calling upon the SCDHPT to widen SC Highway 64 from Jacksonboro to I-95 around Walterboro as an alternative project; and

WHEREAS, Beaufort County Council feels that U.S. Highway 17 has long been, and will long continue to be, a vital, historic route through the eastern coastal states, and that Colleton County's expressed efforts to "become less of a throughway vista and more of a destination point" should not be realized at the expense of its neighbors and the convenience and safety of public and commercial transportation; and

WHEREAS, Colleton County's proposal is in part predicated on saving wetlands when the SCDHPT's Environmental Impact Study notes that the proposed SC Highway 64 widening may require the destruction of 13 more acres of wetlands than the U.S. Highway 17 widening plan, that no endangered species are threatened by the U.S. Highway 17 plan, and that the SCDHPT's U.S. Highway 17 plan includes mitigation of any wetlands damage; and

WHEREAS, Colleton County's proposal also appears predicated on the contention that high speed traffic along U.S. Highway 17 between the cities of Charleston to Savannah will be rerouted northwesterly along SC Highway 64 to I-95 rather than south along U.S. Highway 17, when, in fact, such routing along SC Highway 64 will add up to 15 miles to the route between the ports of Charleston and Savannah, and no logical or evidential information has been offered that either commercial or tourist traffic might opt for the longer route; and

WHEREAS, based on the SCDHPT's vehicle usage and accident statistics, traffic along this section of U.S. Highway 17 is projected by SCDHPT to reach maximum capacity by 1996, and that during the two-year period 1991-92 there have been as many as 174 vehicular accidents, with some 52 injuries and 8 deaths, and that at least 15% of the accidents and 20% of deaths have involved trucks, and that as recently as this past week a 10-year old child in one incident and 4 members of a family in another were either killed or critically injured along this route; also,

lacking any logical or evidential support to assume that Colleton County plan will substantially relieve the projected growth in traffic and related accidents, and in consideration of the daunting responsibility of the State and local governments to protect the safety of the motoring public along such public highways; and

WHEREAS, this project has been recognized by the SCDHPT to have a potential economic impact on much more of the Carolina coastal area than just Colleton County, and that Colleton County's proposal appears to ignore the importance of U.S. Highway 17 for military, commercial and emergency evacuation purposes for all of Beaufort County north of the Broad River, and that the proposed U.S. Highway 17 widening has been assigned a Priority 1 under the Department of Defense's Strategic Highway Corridor Network; and

WHEREAS, the SCDHPT, in its "Supplemental Document to Final Environmental Assessment" dated November 20, 1992, has thoroughly assessed, and appears to have adequately challenged each argument made by Colleton County and other environmental resource agencies relative to merits of widening SC Highway 64 as an alternative to widening U.S. Highway 17, and

WHEREAS, the Highway Commissioner for the Fourteenth Highway District, The Honorable W. Brantley Harvey, Jr., who represents both Beaufort and Colleton Counties, has gone on record as supporting the widening of SC Highway 64, but not as an alternative to the proposed U.S. Highway 17 widening; and

WHEREAS, County Council of Beaufort County passed a unanimous resolution on June 4, 1990, in support of the widening of U.S. Highway 17 in an environmentally sensitive manner.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, emphasizing our concern relating to the environmental sensitivity of the project, that County Council of Beaufort County offers its avid support to upgrading the 22 miles of U.S. Highway 17 from Gardens Corner to Jacksonboro and urges timely approval by all reviewing agencies.

Adopted this 11th day of January, 1993.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY

BY: 

Thomas C. Taylor, Chairman

ATTEST:



Suzanne M. Rainey
Clerk to Council