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# Anderson-Oconee I-85 sewer venture in the works

## County talks could revive 2004 infrastructure master plan

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SENECA — Preliminary talks are under way between Anderson and Oconee government officials to collaborate on a sewer project on both sides of the county line along the Interstate 85 corridor.

Such a venture, if it materializes, would finally open the way for retail, commercial and industrial development in an area pegged long ago as a high-growth "Boom Belt" between Atlanta and Charlotte.

Anderson County Council Chairman Eddie Moore confirmed this week that he's talked back and forth with his Oconee counterpart, Reg Dexter, about the opportunities available not just to the two counties, but to the entire Upstate.

Moore said Anderson's Interim Administrator Rusty Burns is in the process of setting up an initial meeting between pertinent sewer officials from the two counties as early as next month.

Bob Winchester, director of the Oconee Joint Sewer Authority, said Friday the talks are coming.

"We'll be sitting down," Winchester said. "Right now it's an idea, and we'll talk about it in the near future."

Winchester indicated that discussions would eventually center on financing the project and issues related to joint ownership should a proposed wastewater treatment plant straddle the county line.

Planning for such a joint venture for sewer along the I-85 corridor is not new in Oconee County.

In 2004, Oconee officials put together a Master Plan for infrastructure that addressed getting water and sewer into the area and its associated costs.

According to the plan, prepared by Seneca-based Goldie & Associates engineering firm, the five-phase project would have a total price tag of approximately $31.8 million.

The Master Plan, which was never adopted by the Oconee County Council, called Oconee's 4-mile portion of I-85 "a prime location for industries and commercial development." Although the plan called for all phases of the project to have been completed by 2011, it has yet to get off square one, stifling development in the area.

"Sewer and water infrastructure facilities are needed along I-85 exits 1, 2, 4, 11 and 14 in Oconee and Anderson counties in order to address this limitation to development in this area," the plan concluded.

For his part, Moore said Anderson County is ready to forge ahead.

"It would be a good venture," Moore said. "It's to our benefit to work closely. We're hoping to have some productive meetings together."

The renewed interest in a joint venture between the two counties comes as a blue-ribbon panel selected by the Oconee County Council is beginning to review all studies and plans for establishing sewer in the southern part of the county, particularly at the proposed industrial park site near Fair Play and the I-85 corridor.