Bids for S.C. 133 bridge, road projects delayed

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — Bids for the S.C. 133 bridge replacement and road widening project will now take place in mid-April instead of mid-March as initially planned.

"We met with SCDOT representatives and they're finalizing plans," said City Administrator Rick Cotton. "The city can't work on utility relocations until that occurs."

The $8 million project, funded by federal stimulus funds, consists of removing the existing railroad bridge and installing a temporary bridge for trains to use as well as an additional track, or "fast track" as referred to by Mayor Larry Abernathy, regarding future light rail capabilities.

The project will also consist of widening S.C. 133 to add two lanes and a middle lane as well as water and sewer relocations and mast-arm traffic signals at the upgraded intersection.

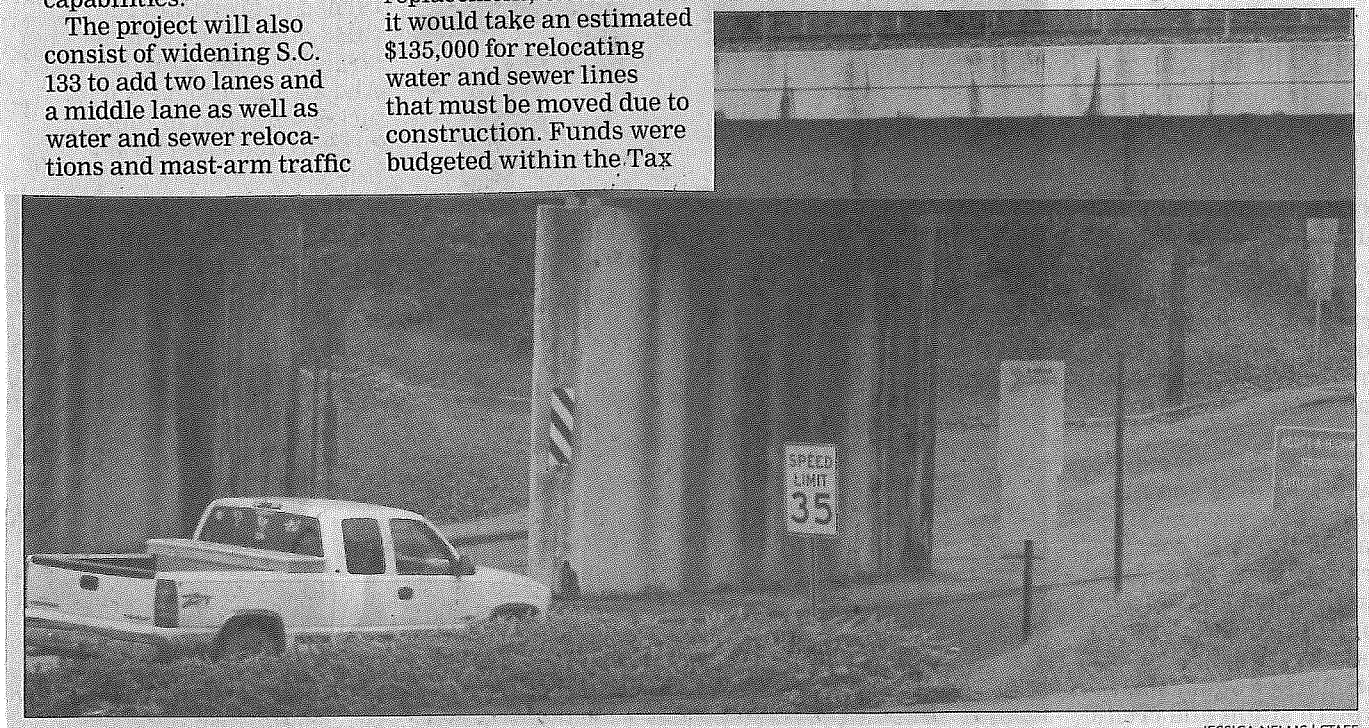
Clemson officials say the most beneficial aspect of the project is that it will improve fire response to that area of the city and reduce flooding that often occurs under the underpass as the result of heavy rain. The flooding also provides a hindrance to fire trucks when responding to emergency calls in that area.

Initial plans called for project bids to be received in March of 2010, with a bid award set for the following month. Although construction was originally expected to begin in June of 2010 and take approximately 18 months to complete, no word was given as to how that will be impacted by the delay.

In addition to the bridge replacement, Cotton said it would take an estimated $135,000 for relocating water and sewer lines that must be moved due to construction. Funds were budgeted within the Tax Increment Finance (TIF) fund ($250,000) and spread over two fiscal years.

City Council has also approved an additional $80,200 to perform four primary upgrades consisting of brick paver sidewalk replacement, decorative mast-arm traffic signal structures, specialty painting options for the bridge structure and street print decorative crosswalks. Cotton said the options exceed standard construction practices and required that the city pay the cost differential between the standard project cost and the upgrade.

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Bids for replacement of the S.C. 133 bridge have been delayed for a month, but officials are unsure how much that will impact construction originally set to begin in June.