Bridge construction comes to halt

Could last anywhere from six to eight months

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — South Carolina Department of Transportation officials said Thursday that construction of the railroad bridge and intersection improvement project on U.S. 123 at the intersection of S.C. 133 in Clemson is nearly two-thirds complete.

However, the remaining one-third of the project won't be finished anytime soon.

On Thursday, the SCDOT announced that construction would be halted June 21 and that the delay could last anywhere from six to eight months. Officials say the unplanned work stoppage is necessary to allow for the design of permanent and temporary Amtrak facilities due to the relocation of train traffic from its current path to a new, temporary route.

Once the temporary route is completed, construction on the bridge will then resume.

Emily Toler, assistant program manager for the SCDOT, said this is the latest development of an announcement initially made in March. Toler said a meeting between SCDOT, Norfolk Southern Corp. and Amtrak officials to expedite approval of Stage I plans to switch train traffic to a temporary route revealed that Norfolk Southern and Amtrak would require approvals for the following items:

- A temporary Amtrak facility to handle Amtrak traffic while Stage II of the rail bridge and rail bed are under construction;
- Norfolk Southern required approval for the design of a retaining wall on the Norfolk Southern track;
- Norfolk Southern and Amtrak required approval for the design of a permanent Amtrak facility.



FILE PHOTO

Construction of the railroad bridge and intersection improvement project on U.S. 123 at the intersection of S.C. 133 in Clemson will be halted June 21 for a period of six to eight months.

"Once the SCDOT has worked through the Amtrak access issues with Norfolk Southern and Amtrak, the final value engineering plans approved by Norfolk Southern and the detour rail in place and fully functioning, we will then be able to request Thrift to proceed with Stage 2 bridge construction," Toler said.

The original completion date of April 30 of this year has been shifted to late 2013.

SCDOT officials say that while the public will see no construction during the delay, Thrift Development Corporation will be working to satisfy the Norfolk Southern and Amtrak requirements for the three designs.

Transportation officials are anticipating increased traffic at the U.S. 123-S.C. 133 intersection due to the project and the SCDOT has requested a price from the contractor to supply and install a traffic timing signal at the intersection and other intersections in the immediate area.

The timing system, which will have the capability to react immediately to increased traffic demands caused by Clemson University sporting events and other school traffic, will allow SCDOT traffic engineers to adjust signal timing from a remote location.

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