Inland port now open for business

BY BRUCE SMITH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON — South Carolina's new $50 million inland port near Greer began operating this week, providing a global shipping hub in the Upstate that's expected to eliminate tens of thousands of trucks making the journey on busy Interstate 26 between the Greenville-Spartanburg area and the coast.

"The inland port is open for business," Jim Newsome, the president and chief executive officer of the South Carolina State Ports Authority told reporters on Tuesday. That word came moments before the authority board approved an additional $2.7 million to pay the final costs for the project.

The facility off Interstate 85 provides a place where shipping containers can be transferred to and from trucks for the journey by train to and from the state's coastal ports.

The project was announced in January of last year and construction began last March.

Some of the additional money approved Tuesday covers work to complete the project when the schedule was hampered by about 75 days of rain from this year's unusually wet spring and summer. Workers also unexpectedly encountered rock on the 90-acre site, adding to construction costs.

The authority's share of the project is about $44 million with Norfolk Southern Corp. providing $7.5 million.

The original Ports Authority estimate was about $25 million, but officials decided to develop more of the land than originally planned.