Littlejohn Coliseum could benefit from transport complex

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CLEMSON — Clemson officials said Monday that Littlejohn Coliseum stands to benefit greatly if the city is successful in its grant application to construct an estimated $35 million four-level multimodal transportation complex adjacent to Littlejohn Coliseum and Death Valley.

"Littlejohn Coliseum would be a primary beneficiary of this," said City Administrator Rick Cotton. "It is one of the prime tourism destination areas in the Southeast and, last year, they hosted roughly 170 events.

"If you're looking for ways to bolster the Upstate economy, it's to continue to support regional events at this facility."

During the regularly scheduled city council meeting, Cotton, George Smith, associate vice president for student affairs at Clemson University; Chris Stone, of Neal Prince Architects; and Victor Iraheta, of Walker Parking Consultants told council members that a team has been assembled to seek federal funding. The funding derived from the American Reinvestment Recovery Act (or stimulus) is 100 percent and no match is required of the applicant who, in this case, is the city of Clemson even though it is partnering with Clemson University.

TIGER Discretionary Grants features $1.5 billion in funding that will be distributed nationwide for selected projects. Applications to receive a portion of that funding must be submitted by Sept. 15 and the Department of Transportation will make a formal announcement in February 2010.

Not only will the grant, if awarded, benefit Littlejohn Coliseum, officials said it would provide additional parking through a four-level parking deck totaling 1,640 spaces — a net gain of 841 from what is now available. In addition, Smith said the facility would support Clemson University's goal of moving parking more to the perimeter, away from the core of campus, lessen vehicular emissions and provide additional pedestrian safety.

"Gameday (football) is seven days," Smith said. "We're talking about something that will benefit the other 350 plus days."

Stone said the parking deck provides flat bays to improve visibility and would store up to 15 CAT buses during the day or night. The four-story deck, including a police station, would not obstruct the view of Littlejohn Coliseum.

"It does not dominate the landscape — it actually complements it," Stone said. "Littlejohn Coliseum will continue to dominate."

The deck would also serve as a transit point for CAT, Greyhound and airport and Amtrak shuttles as well as feature a bicycle transit point. An area of grass-covered greenspace would be featured on the roof for tailgating and community activities. Stone added that individuals parking at the facility, most of which would be assigned, could view the Tiger Walk procession prior to each home football game and interact with those outside the building.

Cotton said the project could also create another revenue stream to assist long-term transportation services through Pay to Park and by renting retail space at the top of the parking deck.