S.C. DOT's plans for $10 million grant receive federal approval

COLUMBIA – The S.C. Department of Transportation has received the go-ahead to use the $10 million grant it received from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the Interstate 73 project.

The S.C. DOT applied for $300 million in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant money for the project in 2009. The department received $10 million at that time.

S.C. DOT staff members submitted plans to the Federal Highway Administration for improvements to U.S. Highways 501 and 301 that will eventually tie in to I-73 when construction on that road begins. The modified plan for the TIGER grant will meet the $10 million budget approved for I-73.

The project involves the widening of about one mile of U.S. 301 and approximately 1.25 miles of U.S. 501 near Latta from two lanes to three, as well as the realignment of the existing U.S. 501/U.S. 301 intersection. Also included will be the replacement of the Catfish Church Road bridge over Interstate 95 and associated frontage road relocation.

Interstate 73 is designed to connect South Carolina and Michigan.

S.C. DOT Commission Chairman Danny Isaac of Myrtle Beach welcomed the green light from the highway administration.

"I think the public will be pleased to see some actual work begin on I-73," Isaac said. "The improvements that will be made to U.S. 501 and U.S. 301 will bring about immediate benefits until more funding for I-73 can be secured."



Belgian knitting company opens facility in York County

YORK – Lava USA Inc., a manufacturer of knitted fabrics for mattress covers, has located its new operations in York County.

The company invested more than $3.8 million to renovate a former plastics manufacturing facility and expects to add 30 new jobs over the next five years.

"We are pleased to have our new plant up and running and look forward to adding more production capacity over the next few years. York County had an excellent building available that suited our needs and provides us with ample space to grow," said Robert Jones, plant manager for Lava USA.

Lava USA has located its new textile production and warehouse facility in the former Sattler Plastics building on Railroad Avenue in York. The company has already begun operations at the new facility and plans to continue adding machinery to the 100,000-square-foot facility over the next few years.

"It is refreshing to see a globally competitive manufacturing operation added to York County's rich textile history. We welcome the new jobs and investment from Lava USA in western York County," York County Council Chairman Buddy Motz said.

The company has already begun hiring and is accepting applications. The company plans to add at least 10 new employees this year, with more positions coming open as equipment is added to the facility.

Lava is a family-owned and -operated knitting company that has been in business since 1925. The company specializes in the production of knitted fabrics for mattress covers and has offices in Belgium as well as the United States.

The S.C. Department of Commerce and York County joined in the announcement.



Southwest Airlines announces S.C. routes

GREENVILLE – Chicago, Baltimore/Washington, Nashville, Tenn., and Houston.

Those are the destinations to which Southwest Airlines will fly nonstop each day from Charleston International Airport, the company recently announced.

The discount airline made a simultaneous announcement in the Upstate but added Orlando, Fla., to the mix of destination cities for Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport.

The company will be flying Boeing 737s, which hold 137 passengers, out of South Carolina. Southwest also plans to add about 40 employees at the airport.

Bob Montgomery, vice president of properties for Southwest Airlines Co., said previous traffic patterns helped the airline decide how it wanted to launch in South Carolina.

"It's all based on research, and we found that more people are coming from these places than others," Montgomery said.

The destinations are not set in stone, however; Southwest could change routes and likely will expand service. When asked, company representatives said there are no direct flights between Greenville and Charleston because the goal, at least initially, was to connect the S.C. markets with existing networks, not with each other.

"Southwest Airlines is delighted to bring our special brand of low-fare, high-quality customer service to travelers in Greenville-Spartanburg and Charleston," said Dave Ridley, Southwest Airlines' senior vice president of marketing and revenue management.

The Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport plans to expedite facility upgrades to have space ready for Southwest Airlines by the end of the first quarter of next year.

