

# State 11 to keep its 'scenic' status

## Highway committee investigated whether road is too commercialized

By Julie Howle

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State 11's status as a scenic highway is still intact, although a state committee had some concerns about commercialization along part of the corridor.

South Carolina Scenic Highway Committee members recently reviewed State 11 but didn't think they needed to recommend the corridor lose its scenic designation, said Michael Covington, director of administration for the state Department of Transportation.

He said there were signs of development and change, which were "basically just a tendency toward commercialization," but said they weren't enough to warrant the highway's losing its designation.

The area of State 11

that was discussed the most is in Oconee County, stretching from below Walhalla toward Fair Play near Interstate 85, Covington said.

"There seemed to be some commercial development that was pretty much just strip-type development," he said.

Covington said the committee asked staff to contact officials in the five counties — Pickens, Greenville, Oconee, Spartanburg and Cherokee — that State 11 winds through to remind them that the preservation of the scenic quality is a local responsibility.

Aaron Gadsby, an Oconee county planner, said having scenic highways such as State 11 is good for tourism and shows off good qualities of the county.

He said County Council



File

State 11 — Scenic Highway 11 — passes Caesars Head and several other nature areas and parks.

He said designated highways have such an inherent value with vistas, panoramas, history and geography that those involved want to try to preserve the scenic quality.

"It can be a very positive impact not only the obvious — tourism — but also

just quality of life for the people who live there," Covington said.

He said State 11, which has been designated as a scenic byway since 1971, would come up for review again in two years.

passed an ordinance in 2007 with a provision that prevents new billboards on any designated scenic highway, which includes State 11.

"We're thankful that they chose to keep it (designated)," Gadsby said. "It's a very positive thing to have the scenic highway in the county."

Covington said evaluations of scenic byways involve driving the roads from one end to another to look at things like billboards, industrial sites, landfills and cell towers.



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