

Area roads included in next phase of SCDOT rural program

BY GREG OLIVER
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COLUMBIA — The South Carolina Department of Transportation has approved the second phase of the agency's Rural Roads Safety Programs encompassing an additional 446 miles of safety improvements across the state — including roads in Oconee and Pickens counties. Oconee County roads included in the program

are U.S. Highway 76, Long Creek Highway and Main Street starting at Unity Church Road and ending at South Bibb Street; U.S. Highway 76, Main Street and Sandifer Boulevard, starting at South Bibb Street and ending on Mauldin Mill Road; U.S. Highway 76, Long Creek Highway, starting at the North Carolina state line and going to Unity Church Road; and S.C. Highway 183, East Pickens Highway, starting at Rochester

Highway near S.C. Highway 130 and ending at the Oconee-Pickens County line.

Pickens County roads include S.C. Highway 183, Walhalla Highway, starting at the Oconee-Pickens County line and ending on Stephens Road, and S.C. Highway 183, Walhalla Highway, starting on Stephens Road and ending on Allgood Farm Road.

“South Carolina’s

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fatality rate is the highest in the nation, and this program is attacking that problem mile by mile,” SCDOT Secretary of Transportation Christy Hall said in a news release.

Hall said 58 percent of South Carolina traffic fatalities take place on rural roads.

In the first year of its 10-year plan, Hall said the SCDOT has already awarded contracts totaling 187 miles of safety improvements that are well ahead of projections. The department has another 276 miles in Phase I currently under development and that, along with the additional 446 miles of safety improvements across the state, brings the total to 909 miles in projects approved for development.

Hall added that nearly 30 percent of the rural fatal and serious injury crashes are taking place on just five percent, or approximately 1,900 miles of SCDOT’s road network of more than 41,000 miles.

SCDOT rural road safety engineer Bryan Jones said while each road will be assessed and safety treatments tailored to each, there are typical improvements that will be made.

“These improvements will consist of rumble strips, wider and brighter pavement markings,

brighter signs, wider and paved shoulders, improved clear zones, guardrails, cable barriers, eliminating vertical dropoffs along pavement edges and beveling of driveway pipes,” Jones said.

Jones added the timeline of each project will vary.

“The approval of Phase II allows SCDOT staff to begin our assessment of each roadway to include the level of corridor improvements, project development path, potential environmental impacts, permitting and so forth,” he said. “Therefore, project development may vary from road to road,” he said.

Since S.C. Highway 183, which is among the projects in the local area, has

yet to be assessed, Jones said a defined schedule for project development has yet to be finalized.

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Gary Clary
State representative

Improving South Carolina roads is the result of a plan approved last year by the South Carolina General Assembly.

“Rural roads are where many of our accidents occur, and that’s due to a lot of different reasons,” said State Rep. Gary Clary, who represents the Clemson, Central, Six Mile and Norris areas of House District 3. “So the DOT, as part of the

gas tax increase, wanted to earmark part of that for safety. We have people who are getting injured or killed every day because of our roads.”

State Sen. Thomas Alexander, who represents

Oconee County and a portion of Pickens County, said he is very supportive of the rural roads program.

“They’re using data of where accidents have occurred to improve safety of those areas,” Alexander said. “That was part of the actual commitment of doing the road program last year — that the rural program would be the top part — so they’re look-

ing at reducing fatalities using data of where accidents and fatalities have occurred. They see there are more accidents and fatalities on rural roads than state roads.

“This is a tremendous step of this highway program. I concur with these efforts and it will be in the best interests of the people of this state to provide them with safe roads to travel. This is not a one

year and done but a long term plan to address and continue to improve the safety of these roads, doing it on a priority basis. That is a positive as well.”

Anyone wishing to get detailed information on the project can visit scdot-transfer.org/SCDOT-photos/RuralRoadsSafetyProgram.pdf.

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Several roads in Oconee and Pickens counties are scheduled for upgrades as part of the South Carolina Department of Transportation’s Rural Roads Safety Program.

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