

# Upstate Forever

Promoting Sensible Growth and  
Protecting Special Places in the Upstate

## **Action Alert: Stop I-3 through South Carolina!**

A new interstate corridor connecting Savannah to Knoxville was proposed by Georgia Rep. Max Burns in 2004. It has tentatively been named "I-3" and \$1.3 million was authorized in the transportation bill in 2005 to study its costs and feasibility (not environmental impacts). While no route was specified, the original corridor concept did not enter South Carolina. It skirted the Savannah River and crossed the Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee mountains. The mountain corridor met with tremendous resistance from all three states, and to date, the study has not been started.

This spring, Georgia Rep. Paul Broun, who represents Augusta, Athens and much of northern Georgia, is planning to file an amendment to the transportation bill (known as SAFETEA-LU) which would *require* the study to look at a route between Augusta and Knoxville which would cross Upstate South Carolina. Broun originally opposed the interstate altogether, recognizing it as a bad idea to draw traffic and sprawl into what few lightly developed areas we have left, but he has since bowed to political pressure from Augusta.

### **The I-3 corridor:**

- was poorly conceived from the beginning
- duplicates existing infrastructure (which must be maintained adequately first)
- benefits the Port of Savannah over the Port of Charleston
- would encourage sprawl in South Carolina
- would jeopardize air quality improvement efforts
- would encourage development in a Heritage Corridor & through a National Forest.

**Representative Broun wants South Carolinians to pay the price that Georgia residents are not willing to pay without reaping any economic benefits.**

### **BACKGROUND AND DETAILS**

#### **Routes and Problems**

Possible routes suggested by Broun include Highway 25 from Augusta to I-85 at Greenville (then I-85 to I-26 to I-40 to Knoxville). Currently, a substantial section of Highway 25

through Edgefield and Greenwood counties has **two lanes** and is designated a **National Heritage Corridor** due to its abundant natural and historical resources.

A National Heritage Area is a region where residents, businesses, and local governments have come together to **conserve special landscapes and their own heritage**. It encompasses a region of the state which retains a large percentage of **rural landscapes**.

The highway also passes through **Sumter National Forest**. Another **route variation** would connect I-3 to I-26 using Highway 25 to Greenwood and then would head northeast on State Road 72 (mostly four lanes) connecting Greenwood to Clinton. This route skips Greenville but **still turns the Heritage Corridor into an interstate** (or a four lane highway at best) and crosses Lake Greenwood, adding development and runoff stress to that body of water, which is the primary source of drinking water for Greenwood. A third possibility (not yet expressly proposed) utilizes Highway 25 past Greenville, through Travelers Rest and **close to Greenville's Saluda Reservoir** until it intersects with I-26 in North Carolina.

In addition to opening up the Heritage Corridor to development, the proposed I-3 could cause **significant air quality issues** in the Upstate. In 2004, Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson counties failed to meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for smog and entered EPA's Early Action Compact program, suspending a "non-attainment" designation if air quality standards could be met by December 31, 2007. Most of these **air quality** concerns still exist and are tied to **sprawling development** patterns and increasing **dependence on cars and trucks** for transportation. The proposed I-3 corridor will only exacerbate the problem. In an ironic twist, if the Federal Highway Administration moves forward with I-3 and the Upstate becomes an area of non-attainment, we will lose federal highway funds!

Finally, the proposed I-3 route **closely mirrors an existing interstate route** connecting Savannah to Knoxville: I-95N to I-26W to I-40W. Depending upon the final corridor, mileage traveled between Savannah and Knoxville is not much less, and could even be longer, than the 95-26-40 corridor.

Unfortunately, Rep. Gresham Barrett (SC 3<sup>rd</sup> Dist.) has tentatively indicated support in the press for the proposed amendment. Rep. Bob Inglis (SC 4<sup>th</sup> Dist.) has not yet commented publicly. Senator Lindsey Graham has expressed concerns that I-3 will compete with I-73 (Myrtle Beach) for funding.

Hal Johnson, President and CEO of the Upstate Alliance, which markets the 10 counties in northern South Carolina for economic development, has said, "I would like to see it come through, and I will lobby any way I can for it." He does not recognize that the revenue gained from truck stops will not pay for the **costs to the Port of Charleston, for the funding diverted from highway and bridge maintenance, for the degradation in value of our Special Places along the Heritage Corridor and in the mountains, and for our increased healthcare costs as traffic and sprawl increase while our air quality declines**.

## TAKE ACTION!

**1) Contact your federal representatives** ([www.upstateforever.org/region\\_officials.html](http://www.upstateforever.org/region_officials.html)) today and urge them to oppose any amendments to SAFETEA-LU which will fund study of an I-3 corridor through South Carolina. Please further encourage them to see that the I-3 corridor was a bad idea from the beginning, is redundant of a route already in existence, and is a waste of taxpayer dollars. **An amendment to kill the study funding altogether before \$1.3 million is wasted is the wisest course of action.**

**Rep. Bob Inglis**

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**Rep. Gresham Barrett**

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**Sen. Lindsey Graham**

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**Sen. Jim DeMint**

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### Talking Points

- Hi, my name is [--NAME--], and I live in [--CITY--}, South Carolina.
- I am calling to urge my [--SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE--] to oppose any amendments to SAFETEA-LU which would study I-3 coming through South Carolina.
- The costs to our port, to our beautiful Heritage Corridor, to our National Forest, to our mountains, and to our air quality far outweigh the low-wage economic benefits.
- I-3 is redundant of existing interstates and will waste taxpayer dollars on new construction at a time when maintenance of existing roads is already under-funded.
- An amendment removing the I-3 study and its waste of \$1.3 million would be even better!

**2) Contact Hal Johnson of Upstate Alliance** and let him know that South Carolina is a wonderful place and does not need to pay the costs that Georgia residents are not willing to pay for a project that benefits their own port over the Port of Charleston. If they won't pay them, why should we?

Hal Johnson, President and CEO

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**THANK YOU!**