



WACCAMAW REGIONAL
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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March 31, 2009

The Honorable Henry Brown
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Attn: Ryan Bowley

Dear Representative Brown:

I am writing to express the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments' support for Horry and Georgetown Counties' efforts to improve the ability of the Grand Strand's residents to evacuate during a natural or manmade disaster, to relieve congestion and to provide access to critical and necessary services. The Council of Government (COG) is the staff for the Grand Strand Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the rural portions of Horry and Georgetown Counties where the proposed project is envisioned. We oversee the transportation planning efforts for the entire Grand Strand.

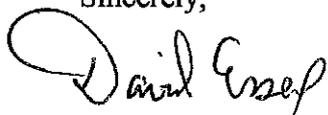
A project of critical importance to Horry County, and our region, is the Southern Evacuation Life Line (SELL). This project currently is in the State of South Carolina's State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Local matching funds are available to supplement federal funds.

The SELL project is a proposed new location, multi-lane, controlled access facility extending from US 17 in southeastern Horry County or northern Georgetown County to the US 501 and SC 22 interchange northwest of Conway. The South Strand and Waccamaw Neck areas are isolated from mainland South Carolina by the Waccamaw River. Crossings of the river are located at Conway and in Georgetown. The distance between river crossings on average is approximately forty miles by road. The SELL project will provide the region a critical new location roadway that will provide improved evacuation times, congestion relief and improved access to needed services.

The ability to evacuate the Grand Strand for a major hurricane has been maximized using the current road network. No major additional reductions in evacuation clearance times can be achieved using the existing highway system. Traffic studies show that many roads in the current road network are at or beyond capacity and will be unable to support future traffic demand. With the two crossings of the waterway located so far apart, residents on both sides of the river have a one-way commute of as much as an hour or more to reach jobs, community services, medical facilities and other necessities.

The COG is supportive of this vital transportation project, because it will address safety, efficiency of flow, and provide increased access to jobs, goods and services. If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at (843) 546-8502.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Essex". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

David Essex, AICP
Executive Director

Cc: Mr. Howard Barnard, Horry County Council
Sen. Ray Cleary, Chairman, GSATS
Mr. James Kirby, Chairman, WRCOG Board of Directors
Ms. Debbie Harwell, Adobe Palm Communications