

Visitors To South Brunswick Islands Can Expect Road Construction Delays

BY SUSAN USHER

Visitors headed to the South Brunswick Islands this year and for several years to come are likely to continue encountering delays when traveling U.S. 17 between the South Carolina state line and N.C. 87 north of Bolivia.

Contractors for the N.C. Department of Transportation are completing the widening of U.S. 17 to four lanes through Brunswick County. The work is being done in stages and the entire project will not be completed until 1994.

So far, construction costs alone total \$26.69 million, with several contracts pending.

Two contracts are due to be let this month for widening, grading and paving U.S. 17 south, from the Shallotte bypass to N.C. 904 at Grissetown and from Grissetown toward the South Carolina state line.

Allen Pope, resident engineer with DOT, said highway contractors will have to "work around" contractors still relocating utilities to a new corridor in the DOT right of way.

Atlantic Telephone Membership Corp. is completing its relocation work between Shallotte and Grissetown and starting work on the southernmost segment, he said, while Brunswick Electric Membership Corp. is just beginning its relocation work south of Shallotte.

Brunswick County also plans to install a water main along the route, but that work hasn't begun.

"We try to take care of utilities before we start, but they're not moving fast enough," Pope said. "We're just going to have to let the contractors and let them work around the utility contractors."

J.R. Wilkins, construction administration engineer with DOT, issued a U.S. 17 traffic alert this week, urging motorists to use caution in traveling through project areas and to allow more travel time.

He said lane closings will continue to be necessary to complete the widening. But lanes are not to be closed on holidays or holiday weekends in consideration of increased traffic volume.

Traffic switches may also cause delays. Location of these traffic switches throughout the project area will change frequently.

A bypass of Shallotte is completed and a bypass of Bolivia under construction.

Just what else is happening along U.S. 17 through Brunswick County? In addition to the contracts to be let this month, Pope said these separate projects are in various stages of construction.

—Dickerson Carolina Inc. crews

are continuing to build and pave new northbound lanes along the 4.3 miles from N.C. 87 at Bell Swamp to the Bolivia bypass. Once all but the final layer of surface is completed, traffic will be switched to the new lanes to allow for widening and reconstruction of the southbound lanes. The contract calls for completion by Dec. 1, but the estimated date of completion is actually March 15, 1992, said Pope. Work began July 30, 1990, and is about 60 percent completed. Cost: \$3.88 million.

Grading of the Bolivia bypass is behind its April 15 completion schedule, but Pope said the delay is "not holding up anything" and may be finished by the end of October. Grading and drainage contractor W.E. Blackmon Construction Co. Inc. began work May 1, 1989, and is 95 percent complete. Cost: \$5.22 million.

Paving contractor S.T. Wooten Construction Co. Inc. began clearing tie ends for the Bolivia bypass in late August and is setting up its asphalt plant. The company is expected to complete grading and paving of the 7.5-mile stretch by Dec. 1, 1992. Cost: \$3.6 million.

Traffic is already moving along a 1.7-mile stretch of four-lane between the Bolivia bypass and N.C. 211 at Supply. Begun by contractor C.M. Lindsay & sons in November 1989, the grading, drainage, bridge-work and other structures and paving was completed June 11. Cost: \$2.39 million.

Widening, grading, installing culverts and paving a 5.3 mile stretch from Supply to Shallotte began Aug. 6 and should be completed by Dickerson Carolina Inc. by June 1, 1993. Workers are clearing and grubbing right of way and beginning to cut lateral ditches and build culverts. Cost: \$4.7 million.

Work continues by BMCO Construction Inc. on a combination welcome center and rest area at the intersection of the bypass and N.C. 130 West, with an estimated completion date of Dec. 1, though the contractor has until Jan. 15 to finish. As building and paving continue, the contractor is preparing to landscape lawn areas. Cost: \$1.15 million.

Propst Construction Co. completed the end grading and paving of the 4.8-mile Shallotte bypass Sept. 25. Cost: \$3.86 million. Two other contractors had already finished their share of the work. Grading and drainage contract work by Vecellio & Grogan Inc. for 2.3 miles of the bypass from N.C. 130 south was completed April 19, 1989 at a cost



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

WORKERS WITH Dickerson Carolina Inc. are clearing land for two more lanes along a 5.3-mile stretch of U.S. 17 between Shallotte and Supply. Begun Aug. 6, the \$4.7 million project should be completed by June 1, 1993. This work is just one of the projects under way along U.S. 17 from north of Bolivia to the South Carolina line.

of \$1.52 million, and grading and drainage contract work for 2.5 miles July 1, 1989, by BMCO Construction Inc. at a cost of \$1.46 million.

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Two Towns Get Grants

Two towns in the South Brunswick Islands area recently received land use planning grants.

Shallotte and Sunset Beach will use the federal funds to prepare plans as required under the N.C. Coastal Management program, according to a release from the governor's office.

Shallotte received \$6,000, providing a local match of \$1,500. Sunset Beach was awarded \$7,000, with a local match of \$1,900. They were among 10 coastal communities to receive grants this month.

In updating their land use plans, the towns will seek guidance from property owners in regard to the community's future direction relating to growth.

The planning process enables local officials to conserve valuable resources while guiding community growth to areas best suited for development.

The grants are administered by the Division of Coastal Management, Dept. of Environment, Health and Natural Resources.

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