

State names contractor for I-85 bridge replacement

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DAVIDSON COUNTY—The state of North Carolina last week named a general contractor for the first phase of the Interstate 85 bridge replacement over the Yadkin River and moved up the completion date for the project, even before work begins.

The N.C. Department of Transportation awarded a \$136 million contract to **Flatiron-Lane**, a joint venture of Flatiron Constructors Inc. and Lane Construction Corp.

Construction is expected to begin in October, according to the DOT. Completion is set for January 2013, which is about eight months earlier than state officials initially anticipated.

"After working for so long to generate the funding needed for this critical project, it's exciting to prepare for construction to start," Transportation Secretary Gene Conti said.

The first phase involves the majority of the work related to replacing the out-of-date bridge from the 1950s, which was opened as part of the original interstate system.

The first phase includes replacing the four-lane span with an eight-lane bridge, reconstructing the interchange of I-85 at N.C. 150 in southern Davidson County, widening about three miles of I-85 from four lanes to eight lanes in northern Rowan County and building walls to limit the impact of vehicular noise.

The funding for the project comes through the federal stimulus, state funding that was set aside for the project and bonds that allow the DOT to borrow against future federal funding, the DOT reports.

The DOT is finalizing the relocation of utilities and buying the needed right-of-way. Flatiron-Lane is conducting design work.

Flatiron is based near

Denver, while Lane is based in Cheshire, Conn.

The second and final phase of the project, which will cost an estimated \$120 million to \$130 million, includes widening about 3.5 miles of I-85 to just north of Business Interstate 85 in Davidson County and reconstructing the interchange of I-85 at Belmont Road.

"The department currently does not have the money available to fund phase two. NCDOT is seeking innovative ways to finance this critical portion of the project. One possible funding source is the Mobility Fund, which is part of Gov. Bev Perdue's proposed budget. It would generate \$300 million over a three-year period by phasing out transfers from the Highway Fund and the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund, and slightly increasing some DMV fees," the DOT reports.

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