

Title: **Road improvements**

Author:

Size: 10.69 square inch

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## Road improvements

Not surprisingly, reforming the state Department of Transportation and improving the state's infrastructure lead the agenda the (S.C.) Chamber shared in a recent meeting with the Editorial Board.

On this, the Chamber is definitely on the right track, joining the chorus of voices calling for an increase in the state's gasoline tax along with DOT reform that brings more accountability to infrastructure decisions.

The Chamber hasn't identified a specific figure for an increase in the gasoline tax that hasn't been raised since 1987, but it says the state needs to find an additional \$600 million a year for its infrastructure budget.

It would be encouraging to hear the Chamber advocate for a tax increase without the corresponding income tax cut that Gov. Nikki Haley has proposed and many legislative Republicans support. Instead, the Chamber says income tax relief is politically vital to passage of a gas tax increase.

Such a plan may be an acceptable fallback position, but it would be preferable to hear business leaders emphasize the importance of fixing the state's substandard highways, period.

— Greenville News

Title: **Road improvements**  
 Author:  
 Size: 14.88 square inch  
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



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– Greenville News

Title: **SC House bill provides \$40 million in aid to flood-devastated farmers**  
 Author: Associated Press  
 Size: 39.68 square inch  
 Greenwood, SC Circulation: 16494



# SC House bill provides \$40 million in aid to flood-devastated farmers

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina farmers devastated by last fall's flooding could get up to \$40 million in state aid to stay afloat under legislation advanced Wednesday to the House floor.

The legislation approved 21-0 by the Ways and Means Committee allows farmers in disaster-declared counties to apply for grants of up to \$100,000 each. The grants could equal 20 percent of a farmer's total loss.

"We can't make them whole," chairman Brian White, R-Anderson, said of his bill. "This may not be everything they want but it's something to keep the industry going."

Last October's torrential rains wiped out \$330 million worth of crops at harvest time. Farmers lost an additional \$45 million because they couldn't plant winter crops in bogs, according to the state Department of Agriculture. Those figures don't include losses from last year's spring freeze and summer drought.

Farmers essentially lost their entire inventory after incurring a year's worth of expenses, leaving many unable to pay operating loans that came due Dec. 31. Hopefully, next season's harvest will be

profitable, but many family farms won't survive in the meantime, said State Farm Bureau President Harry Ott.

About 30 percent of farm loans through the Farm Service Agency in South Carolina are already delinquent, he said.

"We were totally exposed and had an event nobody could plan for," Ott, the House's former minority leader, told the committee. "The only way out of this quagmire is to put a crop in the ground and plant it forward."

The measure is meant to provide a revenue bridge so farmers aren't forced to literally sell the farm. It specifies the grant can't be used to pay down debt. Instead, it must be spent on seeds, fertilizer and other expenses toward planting this year's crops.

"It helps them on the back side and helps grow the economy," since farmers will be spending money that keeps local supply stores open, said Rep. Kenny Bingham, R-Cayce. "It's not going to do any good just to pay off bankruptcy debt."

Legislators said some have already given up on farming. Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach, said that

includes a sixth-generation farmer in his area.

Legislators in both chambers and parties have said the state needs to help farmers survive.

In December, hundreds of farmers packed the Statehouse to beg Gov.

Nikki Haley to ask for federal money to offset losses. But the Republican governor refused, saying farmers shouldn't be treated differently than other businesses beyond what's already available, such as subsidized flood insurance.

But GOP Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers has said even farmers who paid for the most insurance available didn't recoup enough money to even cover what it cost them to plant the crops. Flood insurance for farms is far more complicated than insurance for homes and other businesses, and a change in the last federal farm bill means farmers are no longer eligible for other disaster aid, he's explained.

The bill's \$40 million would come from state surpluses, so the money would not have to wait on the budget process.

Title: **BMW REIGNS AGAIN**  
 Author: MICHAEL BURNS MDBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM  
 Size: 68.04 square inch  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# BMW REIGNS AGAIN

## COMPANY'S GREER FACILITY NATION'S LARGEST VEHICLE EXPORTER

**MICHAEL BURNS**

MDBURNS@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

BMW Manufacturing Co. has announced that the export value of its passenger vehicles through the Port of Charleston in 2015 totaled \$9.8 billion, confirming the company's Greer facility as the leading U.S. automotive exporter by value, a position it's enjoyed since 2014.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, this accomplishment represents a 7.8 percent increase since then.

More than 280,000 vehicles were exported from BMW's South Carolina plant in 2015, more than 70 percent of the plant's total volume.

"Once again BMW is proud to claim the top vehicle-exporter spot," said Manfred Erlacher, president and CEO of BMW Manufacturing. "We had a record production year and a record sales year. In addition to being the largest U.S. automotive exporter, our South Carolina plant has also become the largest facility in BMW's global production

network. These achievements are significant and clearly reinforce BMW's ongoing commitment to the U.S."

BMW Manufacturing currently produces more than 1,400 vehicles each day and is the exclusive exporter of X-model vehicles (X3, X4, X5 and X6) to more than 140 global markets. In 2015, the Greer plant produced a record 400,904 vehicles, and a \$1 billion expansion investment announced in 2014 continues.

The BMW brand finished 2015 with record sales of 346,023 vehicles in the U.S. Nearly 30 percent of that represents a Greer-made X-Model.

"BMW has been a treasured part of the South Carolina family since the first cars rolled out of its Spartanburg County facility," said South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley. "Today's announcement is another reminder that there's no limit to what we can achieve when Team South Carolina, and our world class workforce, work together with a

great corporate citizen like BMW."

"We congratulate BMW on being the largest automotive exporter to the world as its value reaches nearly \$10 billion," said S.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Bobby Hitt. "This announcement reinforces the success a company can have when choosing to locate or expand here in South Carolina. We look forward to their continuing to grow and thrive for many years to come."

Greer's Inland Port enables BMW to ship vehicles overnight 212 miles to the Port of Charleston.

"SC Ports Authority has a strong partnership with BMW, and their operations are a tremendous asset to our port," said Jim Newsome, SCPA president and CEO. "We are proud to serve the nation's leading automotive exporter through both our Charleston and Greer facilities and look forward to supporting their future growth."

Follow Michael Burns on Twitter @MikeNearGreer



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FILE

Robots assemble parts at BMW's X4 body shop in Greer. BMW said \$9.8 billion of its vehicles passed through the Port of Charleston in 2015.

Title: **President's budget would pull plug on mixed oxide**  
 Author: MARY ORNDORFF TROYAN THE GREENVILLE NEWS  
 Size: 54.40 square inch  
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



# President's budget would pull plug on mixed oxide

MARY ORNDORFF TROYAN

THE GREENVILLE NEWS

WASHINGTON – The unfinished \$4 billion plutonium recycling project in South Carolina would be abandoned under President Obama's proposed budget for fiscal 2017.

After years of cost overruns and searches for cheaper alternatives, the

Obama administration wants to finally pull the plug on the mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication facility at Savannah River Site.

The budget released Tuesday, the last one Obama will propose before leaving office next January, would allocate just \$270 million to start winding down the

project.

"I'm sure we'll have a lively discussion about this in the Congress," Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said Tuesday.

**See MOX, Page 4A**

## MOX

Continued from Page 1A

As an alternative, the Energy Department will pursue the dilute-and-dispose option, which analysts predict will be a cheaper and faster way to deal with excess weapons-grade plutonium.

South Carolina officials and advocates of the MOX facility near Aiken are fighting the decision legally and politically.

"South Carolina will not idly stand by while DOE continues — in violation of federal law — to ignore its commitment

to the people of South Carolina," Gov. Nikki Haley wrote to South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson last month.

Wilson, with support from Haley, sued the Energy Department on Tuesday, demanding the federal government halt further shipments of plutonium into South Carolina and pay the state \$1 million per day in economic assistance. The state says the government failed to remove 1 metric ton of plutonium from the state by Jan. 1, as required.

"The federal government has a responsibility to follow through with its promises," Wilson said about the lawsuit.

Members of the state's congressional delegation may try to reverse the MOX decision through the appropriations process, where Obama's budget requests are routinely dismissed.

The U.S. and Russia have an agreement to dispose of 68 metric tons of the excess plutonium, half in each country.



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MOX advocates are concerned that switching disposal methods would require the treaty to be renegotiated.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., called Obama's proposal "ill-conceived and dangerous."

"Simply scrapping the MOX program and not honoring the commitment made to South Carolina is a non-starter," Graham said in a statement. "If they have a better idea, one that is well-thought-out and properly vetted, then they should bring it forward. Right now, they have nothing."

Energy officials have warned Congress for months that the estimated cost of finishing and operating MOX isn't affordable. The project's operational costs are estimated at between \$800 million and \$1 billion per year for several decades, and newer estimates of MOX's total costs are \$30 billion-\$50 billion, well beyond the \$3.8 billion predicted 15 years ago.

MOX converts the plutonium into fuel for commercial nuclear reactors. The administration's preferred alternative

involves diluting the plutonium and disposing of it at a facility in New Mexico at an estimated cost of about \$400 million a year over several decades.

Moniz said Tuesday that closing down the MOX project would cost \$600 million to \$700 million over a few years.

Specifically, the federal government will direct the companies building the MOX facility to halt construction for 90 days while they develop a termination plan that puts the facility in a "safe and secure state."

Moniz said there will be "some capacity to recapture some value of the project but frankly much of it will have to be written off, to be perfectly honest."

Taxpayer and nuclear watchdog groups have labeled MOX a multi-billion-dollar boondoggle and applaud the administration's efforts to shut it down before more money is spent.

Shutting down will cost hundreds of jobs. Energy Department officials estimate 200 people would be kept to bring the construction site to a "safe state"

and 350 more employees would be needed to maintain the facility through 2017.

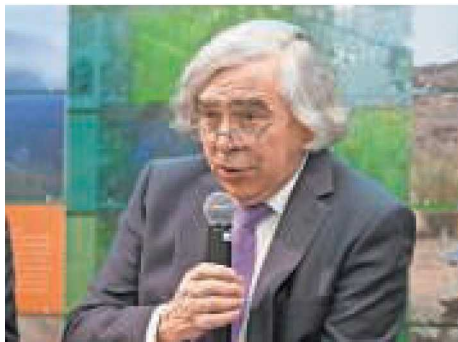
"Once the department issues contract direction to MOX Services, approximately 500 craft personnel will be released and approximately 750 salaried personnel will be released after 60-120 days, with an average of two weeks of severance pay," according to the proposal.

Moniz said the 13 tons of plutonium now at the Savannah River Site could eventually fit into the New Mexico disposal facility.

Rep. Joe Wilson, R-Springdale, argued the MOX is 70 percent complete and closing it now would make South Carolina "a de facto permanent repository for nuclear waste."

"The MOX facility is crucial to our environmental clean-up missions, which produces green fuel, and national security. This decision to eliminate funding to the MOX facility is counter-productive and short-sighted," Wilson said.

Contact Mary Troyan at [mtroyan@usatoday.com](mailto:mtroyan@usatoday.com)



MICHEL EULER/AP

U.S. Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz