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Subject: SCDOT Update on I-526 West Bridge Over the Wando River

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) provided an update to the public Wednesday May 23, 2018, on the around the clock repairs of the Interstate 526 westbound bridge over the Wando River.

The bridge is on schedule to reopen June 11. The westbound structure has been closed since bridge inspectors found a broken cable on May 14.

"Repairs are going very, very well," SCDOT Deputy Secretary of Transportation Leland Colvin said during a noon briefing atop the bridge.

Secretary of Transportation Christy Hall thanked Gov. Henry McMaster for sending employees from the SC Department of Public Safety, SC Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies to work in traffic management and response operations. She thanked local governments as well for all of their efforts and partnerships.

SCDOT is using national and international bridge experts not only to repair the bridge but also to find out the cause of the broken cable.

"We've got a tremendous number of national and international experts helping us," Hall said, "all designed and intended to provide that level of assurance that the repairs are appropriate, and they are looking to see what additional steps we may take in South Carolina for this structure and others. At the end of the day, our goal is to make sure we're making the proper assurance to the citizens of our state that this bridge is a safe bridge."

Colvin pointed out a "major milestone" behind him as new cable was being fabricated by Strand-Tech Manufacturing of Summerville. Behind Colvin on the bridge were two large spools with 9,000 feet of new cable materials.

Colvin provided a summarized technical update of the work, which involves installing a new cable to replace the broken one along with an additional new cable for "redundancy to increase our factor of safety." By June 11, there will a total of nine cables, which is one more than existed when the bridge was built. Each cable has 19, seven-wire strands to be housed in a black conduit covering plus cement grout, Colvin said.

SCDOT Director of Traffic Engineering Rob Perry said traffic conditions have been gradually improving since "two-way" traffic flow was put in operation on the eastbound bridge Sunday, May 20. Since then, 20,000 vehicles a day have been able to traverse the bridge westbound that otherwise would be unable to take that route. A total of 40,000 vehicles have been crossing the bridge in both directions each day, Perry said.

As far as the other two alternate routes, Perry said, speeds have been increasing on the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge and congestion has eased on the SC Highway 41 bridge since the two-way traffic switch on I-526 eastbound.

So far, 200 motorists have been helped by SCDOT SHEP trucks (motorist assistance program), Perry said.

SCDOT Commission Vice Chairman Robby Robbins urged motorists to have patience and use the best travel routes from those available. "We are still on schedule for the June 11 reopening. They are working as hard as they can every day for you to get this bridge reopened."

The SCDOT website, www.scdot.org, has helpful information such as maps, traffic cameras and travel times to help motorists choose the best alternate route available.

Plan your trips to allow for extra travel time. Additional traffic cameras have temporarily been added to the

area to help drivers select the best routes. Use SCDOT's traveler information system <http://www.511sc.org/> to check current conditions 24/7.

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