

Positive Signs for Outdoor Advertising

If someone had to put up a billboard to describe this year's outdoor advertising national conference, it would read, "SCDOT Wins Big!"

South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) swept the 2006 National Alliance of Highway Beautification Agencies (NAHBA) Conference Awards in Cleveland, Ohio. Representatives from 32 states, the industry and the Federal Highway Administration attended.

The South Carolina's Outdoor Advertising office has made great strides in improving customer service and showing uniformity in the program. The conference gave other states the opportunity to see how South Carolina administers its program and conducts its business. The Innovations in Outdoor Advertising Award was based on the Outdoor Advertising Office's web site, which has many handy features both for SCDOT employees and sign owners. The web site gives immediate access to a sign owner so he/she can view what has already been permitted or see the status of an application. With a click of a mouse, users can view their permit information. Outdoor Advertising staff can view digital photographs of each billboard. Coordinators in each district take the photos. The second award given to South Carolina was the Streamlining and Integration in Outdoor Advertising Award. South Carolina has streamlined the permitting process by introducing a new software program created by Bentley Systems. The program has cut down the time for permit approval and allows for a check and balance in the review of commercial or industrial activities. It gives the office the ability to produce numerous reports and process its annual billing.

The third award, called the Chairman's Award, was given to SCDOT's Barbara Wessinger of the Legal Office for her strong leadership skills as Chairperson of the national organization. Wessinger is the attorney for the Outdoor Advertising office.

South Carolina is currently working on a pilot program that, if approved, would allow sign owners the ability to take down two non-conforming signs in the SCDOT inventory in exchange for being allowed to upgrade one non-conforming sign on two popular highways for tourists, I-26 and I-95. This pilot program has the potential to change how non-conforming signs are addressed in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 23, Part 750.

The SC Outdoor Advertising office includes Keith Melvin, Director of Outdoor Advertising, Christine Brewster, Administrative Assistant, and Carolyn Lindsay, Administrative Specialist II. District Coordinators are

Teresa Harley, District 1; Karl Hoffman, District 2; Joyce Gardner, District 3; Leroy Davidson, District 4; Randy Ponton, District 5; Sheila Crouse, District 6; and Dorothy Ervin, District 7.



Pictured from left to right is Mel Cooper – Realty Officer, FHWA, Sheila Crouse - District 6 ODA Coordinator, Keith Melvin – Director ODA, Barbara Wessinger – Assistant Chief Counsel, Joyce Gardner – District 3 ODA Coordinator