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### Transportation officials breathe sigh of relief over air quality Video

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CHARLOTTE, N.C.-- The air quality in the Charlotte area is actually getting better, even during the summer months when air pollution usually is at its worst.

That word comes as good news to local transportation officials who were faced with the threat of a cut-off of federal highway funding by next May if pollution levels were not brought under control.

The good news from state and federal air quality experts came at a day-long transportation summit

sponsored by the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce.

Two reasons were cited by the experts: An unusually mild summer and the downturn in the economy that kept many summer drivers home this year.

This region has to have a clean air plan in place by next May and Sheila Holman of the North Carolina Department of Air Quality said, "I'm optimistic that we'll have a conforming plan in place by early May next year."

As for the long-delayed last leg of I-485 that Governor Bev Perdue promised would be started by the end of this year, Transportation Secretary Gene Conti said plans were on track to start acquiring the land by the end of the summer.

Financing the last leg is still up in the air.

State Senator Malcolm Graham, (D) Mecklenburg County, was recently appointed co-chair of the Appropriations Committee.

He said he would use that new position to work to find funding for construction and to work with the Governor to keep her word.

"The Governor made a pledge and I think we ought to hold her to it," said Graham.