

526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR NEWSLETTER



ISSUE II, Fall 2016

Meet with us on your schedule.

www.526LowcountryCorridor.com

JOIN US ONLINE!

Virtual Public Information Meetings



The first 526 Lowcountry Corridor Virtual Public Information Meeting (VPIM) is now available online to provide all interested residents and businesses a basic overview of the project and the opportunity to provide feedback also. Learn about the project, see the map of the project area and find out how you can connect with the planning process. You can also fill out a survey to provide the project team with your thoughts and concerns about the project. The virtual meeting video and other materials are available on the project website, www.526lowcountrycorridor.com.

What we have heard so far...

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER MEETING UPDATE

The project team met with local stakeholders including business and agency representatives on June 30, 2016. Issues raised by stakeholders include: construction costs, project design alternatives, 526 interchange spacing, interchange improvements they would like to see, residential and business relocations, project analysis process, and project coordination efforts with local agencies, businesses, and property owners. Further meetings for business stakeholder groups -- large and small -- are scheduled for November 10.

Community meetings were held July 18 through July 28 in North Charleston and on October 25 for the West Ashley Community. Community members were given the opportunity to provide feedback on their current concerns about I-526 and the proposed improvement project via electronic and paper surveys as well as conversations with project team members.

Issues raised included: Congestion • Safety • Project Timeline • Increased Traffic in Neighborhoods • Air Quality • Noise • Quality of Life Impacts • Poor Drainage • Traffic Flow • Lighting on I-526 • Right-of-Way Acquisition • Truck Traffic • Train Traffic • Improved Transit • I-526 Speed Limit • EMS Access • Merging on I-526/I-26 • Local Road Maintenance • Wetlands • Creek Impacts

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

In order for SCDOT to obtain federal approvals and funding for the 526 Lowcountry Corridor, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision-making process must be followed. NEPA requires federal agencies to determine the environmental impacts of a proposed action or project before making a decision.

The NEPA process contains both significant environmental review and public involvement. Study of the 526 Lowcountry Corridor, for instance, will consider possible effects that versions of the project, or “alternatives,” might have on a variety of human, environmental, and economic resources.

NEPA requires the 526 Lowcountry Corridor project to provide meaningful public involvement opportunities in developing the NEPA document. This involvement will take the form of an outreach process that includes community meetings, public information meetings, social media, a project website, formal public hearings and other methods that will provide information to the public while also gathering citizen input on the potential project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 526 Lowcountry Corridor project involves about 8 miles of I-526 between Rivers Avenue in North Charleston and Paul Cantrell Boulevard in West Ashley, and includes the cross street interchanges as well as the interchange of I-526 and I-26. The project intends to improve traffic flow, access and safety for both businesses and residents along one of the more congested corridors in the state. Congestion will be reduced along route I-526 and the intersecting roadways, including Rivers Avenue, I-26, International Boulevard, Montague Avenue, Dorchester Road, Leeds Avenue, and Paul Cantrell Boulevard.



MEDIA OUTREACH



The 526 Lowcountry Corridor project team has been meeting regularly with local media, which has resulted in informative coverage!

PROJECT OVERVIEW

I-526 currently experiences high traffic volumes and considerable congestion during peak travel times. Several large-scale developments and businesses are planned – or have recently been constructed – along the corridor and in the greater Charleston area, which is placing even more pressure on I-526.

To address the existing and anticipated future traffic needs of this corridor, SCDOT, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), which is a type of NEPA document. This in-depth analysis will promote informed decision-making as solutions are developed to reduce congestion, improve traffic operations, enhance safety and increase capacity.

PROJECT SCHEDULE



WHAT ARE WE EVALUATING??

FIELD SURVEY UPDATES

The planning process includes evaluating the potential impacts on 26 different resources and determining the impacts on people, the environment and traffic.

TRAFFIC STUDIES

These studies are being completed for the Lowcountry Corridor and its cross streets to determine future traffic growth trends. Historic trends and other area projects including the Airport Connector Road and the Palmetto Commerce Parkway Phase 3 were considered in the analysis and development of the rates of growth to forecast Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes on the Lowcountry Corridor. The adjacent chart outlines the actual and projected number of vehicles per day on the Lowcountry Corridor from 1990 to 2050.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

A survey for historic buildings and archaeological sites was conducted this summer. Although there were some interesting findings no sites were found in the study area that are recommended to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A report with the findings of this survey is being prepared to be submitted to the S.C. State Historic Preservation Officer for their review and approval.

WETLANDS AND STREAMS

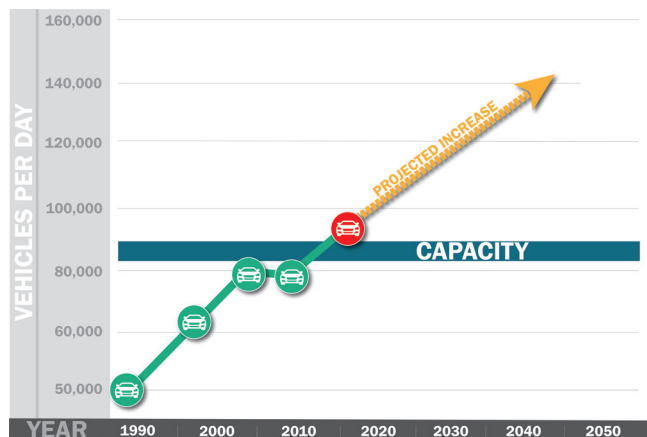
These features within the project study area have been surveyed. This survey will identify areas that are considered under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and some of which are under the jurisdiction of the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM). As is typical of the Lowcountry, there were many jurisdictional wetlands and streams found in the project area. A map of these will be prepared by the surveyors and provided to the design team so that they can work to avoid these areas. A package that shows all of these jurisdictional areas will be submitted to the USACE and the OCRM for their approval.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

A hazardous material study has been completed. This effort noted sites that may have had releases of hazardous materials or may contain hazardous materials that could be an issue for the development of design alternatives. While no environmental concerns were noted in connection with the project study area, a list of nearby properties with either confirmed or potential releases of hazardous substances has been prepared to ensure worker safety during construction of the project.

TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

The survey of existing topographical conditions is nearing completion. This provides information that is essential to the development of any design alternatives. It includes ground elevations and manmade features (like bridges and buildings) within the project study area. This is critical information for the design group to make sure that any proposed changes will fit with the existing roadway elements. During the topographical survey, monuments and other physical evidence of property lines are also located. This field information will be supported by highway records and property research to identify the right of way, or the existing property line for the highway. This will be used to determine what property may need to be acquired for any of the alternatives that are studied.



GET INVOLVED AND STAY INVOLVED!

SCDOT will use public input as part of the decision-making process to determine what type of changes will be made to I-526. There are many easy avenues to provide feedback! They include:

🛡 Visiting the project website: www.526LowcountryCorridor.com

🛡 Completing a comment form on the project website

🛡 Emailing your comments to 526distribution@scdot.org

🛡 Mailing a letter with your comments to Joy Riley (Project Manager)

🛡 Following the 526 Lowcountry Corridor on social media



Facebook - facebook.com/526Corridor



Twitter - @526Corridor



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SIGN UP FOR THE **526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR** MAILING LIST



Newsletters, like this one, and other media will be used to provide status updates and other information around critical project milestones. Newsletters will be distributed to residents and businesses in the project outreach area when requested, as well as to anyone on our contact list. Visit the project website and submit your information via the online contact form to sign up for our newsletter and other public involvement notifications.



PROJECT **CONTACT**

For more information, please contact the SCDOT Project Manager:

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