

2.0 Public Involvement

As with any design or planning project, public participation, including providing information about the project to the public and receiving feedback from the public, was important in shaping the project to the interests and needs of the community. Different ideas, problems, and solutions were identified by collaborating with the public rather than just the input of the project team.

For the study of the I-526 project corridor, the community was engaged through several avenues, including the project steering committee, the project stakeholder committee, public information meetings, a project website, and surveys. Information gathered from the local Charleston community was vital in developing the ultimate improvement strategies considered in the analysis.

2.1 Public Information Plan

Before any analysis was performed for the I-526 study corridor, a *Public Information & Community Outreach Plan* (May 2011) was developed. The public information plan proposed a project name and central messaging to distinguish this analysis from the Mark Clark Expressway completion project. Furthermore, the plan provided the approach to sharing information and gathering feedback from the community, including two public meetings, a project website/webpage, a local media campaign, regularly distributed project updates, and the project steering committee and the project stakeholder committee.

2.2 Steering Committee

The project steering committee consisted of individuals representing organizations who are currently addressing transportation issues in and around the I-526 study corridor. The steering committee members were asked to participate in six meetings and provide feedback as requested during the duration of the study. Members from the following organizations made up the project steering committee:

- Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG)
- Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA)
- Charleston County
- City of Charleston
- City of North Charleston
- Federal Highway Administration

- South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)
- South Carolina State Ports Authority (SPA)
- TriCounty Link/BCDC Rural Transportation Management Association (RTMA)

2.2.1 Steering Committee Meetings

The initial steering committee meeting took place on July 19, 2011, and included an introduction of the project tasks. Community involvement, existing traffic data and infrastructure, and the four improvement strategies were discussed. Input from this meeting included general support for the need of the analysis and suggestions of names for additional stakeholder and steering committee members.

The second steering committee meeting was a two-day workshop that was held on October 11 and 12, 2011, which also included several key stakeholder committee members whose knowledge of the different improvement strategies was beneficial to the workshop. The first day of the workshop was an overview of the project and the four improvement strategies. Based on the focus of the attendees, they were separated into strategy brainstorming groups for each of the four categories and set out to provide more specific strategies related to the corridor. On the second day of the workshop, the individual strategies were then discussed by the entire group in attendance, and the resulting final strategy list then served as a basis for the impact and feasibility analysis for improvements to the I-526 study corridor.

Exhibit 2-1: Two-day Workshop Group



The third steering committee meeting took place on February 7, 2012, which served as an informative meeting for the committee as the project team presented the various research and analysis efforts to date for each of the TDM, Modal, Traffic Operations, and Capacity Improvement strategies.

The fourth steering committee meeting was held on June 20, 2012. This meeting included discussion of the VISSIM modeling results and the recommended geometric improvement strategies for the I-526 mainline and all of the I-526 study interchanges. Participants were also asked to prioritize their commitment to each

of the improvement strategies within the four improvement categories by filling out a survey of investment preferences, answering the question, “If you had \$100 to spend, where would you spend it?”

The fifth steering committee meeting was held on February 27, 2013, and served as an informative meeting for the committee as the preliminary final recommendations for each of the TDM, Modal, Traffic Operations, and Capacity Improvement strategies were presented for review and comment.

The sixth steering committee meeting was held on September 10, 2013, at which the final recommendations in each of the four improvement categories were summarized. Also discussed was the recently identified funding for the study recommendations and the I-526 projects planned to be programmed in the STIP for fiscal years 2015 to 2019, including strategies in all four improvement categories and the widening of I-526 and I-26 & I-526 interchange improvements. Finally, the draft State Infrastructure Bank Improvement Funding Plan was also discussed, which at the time lists the I-526 Corridor improvements fourth in priority for funding.

2.3 Stakeholder Committee

The project stakeholder committee consisted of individuals representing organizations that have a vested interest in the I-526 study corridor due to their proximity to the corridor and/or the impact the study corridor has on their everyday operations. Committee members provided valuable input as everyday users of the study corridor, giving the project team insight to the existing deficiencies along the corridor and potential improvements to address those deficiencies.

- Berkeley County
- Boeing Commercial Airplanes
- Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital
- Charleston County School District
- Charleston County Aviation Authority
- Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce
- Charleston Moves
- Charleston Regional Development Alliance
- Citadel Mall
- CSX
- Daniel Island Property Owners Association
- Joint Base Charleston
- League of Women Voters of the Charleston Area

- MeadWestvaco
- North Charleston Coliseum, Convention Center, and Performing Arts Center
- Norfolk Southern
- Palmetto Cycling Coalition
- South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
- South Carolina Trucking Association
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- South Carolina Public Railways
- SPAWAR
- Tanger Outlet Mall
- Town of Mount Pleasant
- Trident Technical College
- Trident Workforce Investment Board
- US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Law Enforcement Training Center
- The Weiser Companies

In addition, the following elected leadership members were invited to project stakeholder committee.

- South Carolina Senate Districts 041, 042, and 043
- South Carolina House Districts 109, 111, 113, 114, and 119
- Charleston County Council members
- City of Charleston, City of North Charleston, City of Hanahan, and Town of Mount Pleasant leadership

Finally, the following homeowner’s associations were also invited to project stakeholder committee.

- Ardmore/Sherwood Forest Neighborhood Association
- Ashley Hall Plantation Civic Association
- Canterbury Woods Community Association
- Charleston Farms Neighborhood Association
- Ferndale Advocates
- Forest Lakes Extension Neighborhood Association
- Glynn Terrace/Oakridge
- Grand Oaks Tenants Association
- Huntington Woods Civic Club
- Liberty Park/Highland Terrace
- Marsh Cove Neighborhood Association
- Melrose Neighborhood Council
- Oakland Civic Club
- Providence Commons Neighborhood Council

- Rice Hollow Neighborhood Association
- Sylvan Shores East Homeowners Association
- Sylvan Shores Neighborhood Association
- Wando Woods

2.3.1 Stakeholder Committee Meetings

The first stakeholder committee meeting was held on August 30, 2011, which was separated into a meeting for elected leadership in the morning and a meeting with breakout groups for other stakeholders in the afternoon. Community involvement, existing traffic data and infrastructure, and the four improvement strategies were discussed, and feedback from the attendees was solicited for problem areas and potential improvement strategies for the four categories. The first Public Information Meeting was also announced to the committee.

The second stakeholder committee meeting took place on June 20, 2012 in conjunction with the fourth steering committee meeting earlier that day. This meeting included discussion of the VISSIM modeling results and the recommended geometric improvement strategies for the I-526 mainline and all of the I-526 study interchanges. As with the steering committee meeting, attendees were also asked to prioritize their commitment to each of the improvement strategies within the four improvement categories by filling out a survey of investment preferences, answering the question, “If you had \$100 to spend, where would you spend it?”

The third and final stakeholder committee meeting was held on February 27, 2013, and served as an informative meeting for the committee as the preliminary final recommendations for each of the TDM, Modal, Traffic Operations, and Capacity Improvement strategies were presented for review and comment.

2.4 Other Public Engagement

As discussed previously, the public information plan outlined several other approaches for sharing information and gathering feedback from the community. These other approaches include the project website, two public information meetings, and the local media, and are discussed herein.

Exhibit 2-2: Project Website Homepage



2.4.1 Website

With the help of SCDOT Information Technology staff, the project website was developed:

<http://www.scdot.org/inside/I-526/I526.aspx>

The website launched in September 2011, and the home page, as shown in Exhibit 2-2, includes a description of the project, an explanation of the four strategy categories for improving the corridor, and an invitation for the community to offer their ideas and input. Additional data including a project fact sheet, a project map, the project schedule, and a link to send the project team an e-mail are also available on the website as well.

2.4.2 Public Information Meetings

The first public meeting was held on September 20, 2011 in the council chambers of North Charleston City Hall. The meeting was publicized with a press release sent to all area media through SCDOT's Public Information Office. Attendees were offered the opportunity to look at numerous graphics showing the study area and existing traffic data along the corridor, as well as a VISSIM video simulation of existing conditions. A presentation was given on the study approach and the four strategy areas being considered. Attendees were invited to share their thoughts and comments on reducing traffic congestion the study area on feedback sheets given to attendees as they arrived at the meeting.

2.4.3 Local Media

In addition to the community involvement previously discussed, including the steering and stakeholder committees, the public information meeting, and the website, comments were also gathered from stories from the local media. The project has generated numerous newspaper and online articles, television news stories, and radio spots, and the discussion sections of the respective pieces were monitored to further identify more indirect comments for the project. In the development of the potential improvement strategies, all of these comments were considered for further evaluation.