

526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR NEWSLETTER



ISSUE I, Summer 2016



YOUR INPUT IS VERY IMPORTANT!



The S.C. Department of Transportation is currently scheduling a series of meetings throughout North Charleston and West Ashley related to the 526 Lowcountry Corridor – and we want to hear from you! Feel free to attend any or all of the scheduled meetings (see inside for details). Local not-for-profits will be providing meals during the meetings, so please stop by, grab a plate and tell us what you think!



WHAT IS THE 526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR PROJECT?

The **526 Lowcountry Corridor** project extends along **existing** Interstate 526 from Rivers Avenue to Paul Cantrell Boulevard. The roughly 8-mile-long project is proposed to reduce congestion, improve traffic conditions and enhance safety along a heavily traveled segment of I-526. This project should not be confused with the extension of the Mark Clark Expressway, which is the completion of I-526 from its current end at U.S. 17 (Savannah Highway) to an end at S.C. 171 (Folly Road).

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.

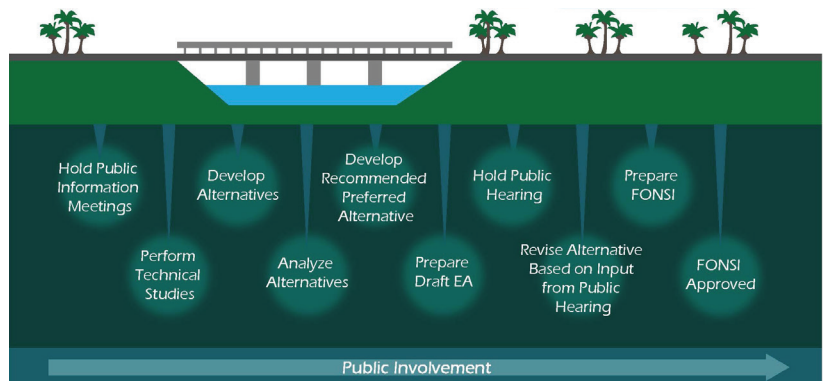
NEPA requires the 526 Lowcountry Corridor project to provide meaningful public involvement opportunities in developing the NEPA document. This involvement will take the form of an outreach process that includes community meetings, public information meetings, formal public hearings and/or other methods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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The 526 Lowcountry Corridor project covers 8 miles of I-526 between Rivers Avenue in North Charleston and Highway 17 in West Ashley, and includes the interchange at I-526 and Interstate 26. The project is intended to improve traffic flow, access and safety for residents, visitors and businesses along one of the most congested stretches of highway in the state.



NEPA PROCESS







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 conduct an Environmental Assessment (EA). 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 TIMELINE

The estimated schedule for the 526 Lowcountry Corridor is:

-  **NEPA:** January 2016 to early-2019
-  **DESIGN:** Mid-2016 to mid-2020
-  **RIGHT-OF-WAY:** Mid-2019 to early-2022
-  **CONSTRUCTION:** Begin in mid-2020

COMMUNITY MEETING INFORMATION

The first round of Community Meetings will start in July 2016. They will be informal and open to the public. All are welcome to stop by any meeting during scheduled hours to enjoy a complimentary meal and participate at a discussion table. Project Team members will be available to listen to concerns and talk about the decision-making process. The following topics will be covered:

-  **The proposed 526 Lowcountry Corridor**
-  **Traffic and safety issues along I-526 and neighborhood streets**
 -  *These include: Rivers Avenue, International Boulevard, Montague Avenue, Dorchester Road, and Leeds Avenue*
-  **Review of study area maps**
-  **Other issues and/or concerns**

Public involvement results will be shared with the entire project team so that their technical efforts can include residents' and stakeholders' views and interests in regard to any planned improvements. When alternative designs are developed, the community will be given an opportunity to review proposals and provide comments before a final design is approved.

Two 526 Lowcountry Corridor public information meetings will be held this fall. Meeting information will be posted on the project website, www.526LowcountryCorridor.com, once dates and times are confirmed. Meeting notices also will be published in local newspapers and on project social media sites.

FUNDING

Approximately \$21 million of National Highway Performance Program funds have been identified for preliminary engineering. The funding is identified in the Statewide Transportation Implementation Program, or STIP. As the project scope is defined through the EA process, an appropriate project budget will be developed. Additional funding sources will be identified, and funding allocations will be sought throughout the development of the project.

COMMUNITY MEETING SCHEDULE



Radisson Hotel

5991 Rivers Avenue

JULY 18, 2016 | 5-7 p.m.



Jerry Zucker Middle School

6401 Dorchester Road

JULY 19 & 20, 2016 | 5-7 p.m.



Alfred Williams Community Center

4441 Durant Avenue

JULY 21 & 25, 2016 | 5-7 p.m.



Danny Jones Gymnasium

1455 Monitor Street

JULY 26, 2016 | 5-7 p.m.



Felix C. Davis Community Center

4800 Park Circle

JULY 27 & 28, 2016 | 5-7 p.m.

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:



Attending public meetings



Visiting the project website: www.526LowcountryCorridor.com



Completing a comment form at a meeting or on the project website



Emailing your comments to 526LowcountryCorridor@scdot.org



Mailing a letter with your comments to the Project Manager



Following the 526 Lowcountry Corridor on social media



P.O. Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

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, 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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