



## MEETING MINUTES

# COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 20

**Date:** May 7, 2022

**Time:** 10:00 am

**Location:** I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office, 5627 Rivers Avenue, N. Charleston, SC; Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

**Project Name:** I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

**Attendees:**

Tina Baxley, Ferndale

Larenda Baxley, Ferndale

Earl Muhammad, Ferndale

Michael Halls, Ferndale

Gilbert Reeves, Ferndale

Michael Miller, Highland Terrace

Angela Anderson, Russelldale

Tony Grasso, Russelldale

Joy Riley, SCDOT

Chad Long, SCDOT

Will McGoldrick, SCDOT

Syrees Oliver, SCDOT

Maxine Smith, Maximum Consulting

Mattese Lecque, Maximum Consulting

Gwendolyn Boyd, Maximum Consulting

LaTonya Derrick, Stantec

Ryan White, Stantec

Horrace Tobin, Stantec

Jamelle Ellis, Empowerment Strategies

**Participant Summary:**

Total participants: 19

Ferndale: 5

Highland Terrace/ Joppa Way: 1

Liberty Park: 0

Russelldale: 2

Adjacent affected communities/ agencies: 0

SCDOT: 4

FHWA: 0

Community Liaisons: 3

Stantec: 3

Facilitator: 1

**Meeting Summary:**

Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call (online and phone participants)

**Agenda Review**

- Welcome and Administrative Items
- Neighborhood Update
- Proposed CAC Meeting Dates Review
- Project & Mitigation Plan Updates
- EJ Community Outreach Update
- Community Resource Guide Content Review
- Project Schedule/Milestone Review
- Summary and Next Steps

### Neighborhood Update

Ferndale: Very few people are interested in hearing about the project since the projected start date is so far out.

Highland Terrace: No members present at the start of the meeting.

Liberty Park: There has been a good bit of misinformation being shared throughout the community. Communication by the project team is very important. The community updates shared by Maximum Consulting are appreciated but there is a request to figure out how to expand the messaging to others not on the email list.

Russelldale: When will acquisitions begin along Russelldale Avenue.

**ANSWER:** It all depends on what is received during the litigation window. It is not an easy or direct question to answer. If nothing, then next year would be the earliest. ROW will take about five years to accomplish but no one will have to move until there is a place for them to live. Please let people know to not move or else they will forfeit their benefits package.

Joppa Way: No members present during this meeting.

### Proposed CAC Meeting Dates Review

The first Saturdays are preferred since we've already committed to that date. The Saturdays preceding the July and September holidays are fine.

### Project & Mitigation Plan Updates

An update of both projects (WEST and EAST) was provided.

- The interchange improvements at Long Point Road will likely go to construction in July 2024.
  - Additional ramping to prevent the backups on the interstate.
- The Community Mitigation Plan has been under review by USDOT and Federal Highway Administration.
  - The Washington Post article attracted more attention to the project and the mitigation commitments.
  - Your comments during the public involvement period and your letters from the CAC helped.
- The goal is to host more community meetings to share the final schedule and comm
- ROW acquisition to begin in 2023 through 2027 and construction would begin in 2028 or 2029.
- The Mitigation Commitments would begin before the construction, except for the coordination with the railroad.
- The Enhanced Right of Way Services is an expanded element of the ROW program. A dedicated ROW Agent will be available to provide advisory services related to all of the acquisition, displacement, voucher programs, home buyer assistance, and more.
- The Acquisition Fairness Program will address concerns raised about appraisals. SCOT will pay for independent second appraisals. So if that first appraisal comes in and the property owner says we don't agree with this appraisal, we'd like to get a second opinion, then they can go select their own appraiser. That appraiser has to be licensed and we do have to see the scope of work and the fee in advance to make sure that they're giving you the right type of appraisal. But once that's approved, then you can get that second opinion from your selected appraiser, and we pay that that appraiser's bill. There will also be a special review of appraisals. For example, if there is a property, where the

access has been damaged in the past due to projects. Maybe the shape of the lot is not the same as some of the other lots in the neighborhood because of past public acquisitions. So in a normal appraisal, they're going to look at access and shape and things like that and they would probably take the value down or damage the property a little bit and lower the value because of those conditions. This review will be a special review that will look at those past impacts and not allow it to be devalued based on conditions like that. So that includes changes in zoning, rail projects, local planning projects and more. A larger lot may need to be evaluated like a commercial parcel to get the best and highest use.

- Enhanced Rental Assistance Program – If a tenant is moved to another building that we're not building, they should have similar rent. If they choose to go to another apartment complex that fits their needs better, but the rents are higher, we pay supplemental rents for 60 months which is longer than the 42 months allowed in the Uniform Act.
- Affordable Housing for Residential Displacements – Still planning to build 100 new, affordable housing units through the SC State Housing, Finance & Development Authority. We are now looking at 45 versus the original 20 residential lots for single-family affordable replacement housing. Developments must have direct access to transit with priority given to those that are conveniently accessible to the proposed Lowcountry Bus Rapid Transit. Relocated residents will get first priority to these developments and the remaining units will be open to other residents in the EJ communities.
- Financial Literacy and First-Time Home Buyer Counseling – The goal is to start in 2022. We are still talking with HUD and SC Housing to figure out how this is going to be structured. But basically what this program will do is provide financial grants for down payment assistance and loan assistance.
  - If someone who wants to go into home ownership, but they're maybe their credit score is in the five hundreds or is really low. What that means on the regular market is you're going to get a higher interest rate. So instead of a 5% rate, you're probably gonna have 8% rate or something like that because your credit score is lower. You're kind of being penalized for that. Through this partnership with the housing, all the mortgages would be facilitated through the Housing and Finance Authority. So those will be fixed rates. We would still have to work to try to get their credit kind of cleaned up a little bit of beforehand, but they're not gonna penalize you. The rate is set based on whatever that market rate is. So if it's 5% right now, it's going to be a 5% rate. It's not going to be upped because you're low income or you know your credit is not as clean. You know you don't have a 700 credit score or whatever. So that's one benefit. The other would be providing that additional financial assistance so.
- Community Recreational Amenities – The only thing that changed here is Solar Power. The CAC had originally asked for solar power and the feds came back and said we're doing solar power now. I'm still talking with the City to make sure they know that they're ready to step up to the plate and manage that because we'll pay to get it installed. But they will be on for maintenance of that. So I'm still talking to the City, but we intend to add that on the recommendation of USDOT. Nothing else changed on the community recreational facilities and amenities.
- Educational & Employment Opportunities – The only change is the College Aid Initiative. This was increased from \$100,000 to \$500,000. The POC will determine the criteria and can vary from year to year based on the responses
- Summer Transportation Institute – We are already recruiting for this year. The program will give priority to student from impacted communities for up to 50% of the slots/year. We are trying to create some flexibility and maybe offer the program locally, but we are working on that and will see from year to year.

- Pre-Employment Training – Still working on the CDL program but we'll continue to develop more diverse types of training programs and try to partner with someone like Trident Tech or something like that to expand those opportunities. SCDOT will fund that and that will go through the entire project. Once we have some contractors working in the area, we'll probably put them under the contract for them to do some of that training.
- School to Work Program – This program is really to create internship opportunities with local businesses. And it's really just giving them that exposure and internship opportunity. The funding through this program really goes to pay that hourly wage for the intern. So we might partner with industries like Boeing or the airport or just all kinds of different industries here to provide those opportunities so people can go in and get that experience working in that industry. And then also this might help create some folks that want to come back and apply for a scholarship to go to tech to get a certification or whatever they need to do to go back and work in that industry.
- Also, our intention is to try to have interns in the Community office here each summer, provide that opportunity to see this side of what we do here and then also we do have SCDOT positions that are internships here in our Charleston office, which is right on the other side of the Interstate.
- Careers in Transportation Education Program – This is a new program that we're adding and this is something that kind of came about because the Summer Transportation Institute Program is really geared towards recruiting for college degree type careers. There are a lot of jobs that only require a high school diploma or a trade, some sort of trade training from a technical college. So this program is something that we're gonna try to create that some other DOTs have done. That really tells you about all the different.
- Small Business Development Program - This came from now former Commissioner McLawhorn. When I briefed him on this mitigation plan, he suggested this and I thought it really hit a lot of the things that we talked about during our previous CAC meetings. And this is really just to help educate folks about what it takes to start a small business and some of the government programs and training and things like that that are out there to help small businesses get started, or even if you qualify as a minority owned business for the Disadvantaged Business program. There's a lot of programs that are out there that the federal government and the DOTs offer.
- Mitigation Barriers – Barriers will also be constructed on the I-526 corridor. We we're not quite sure about putting these on bridge structures since South Carolina hasn't ever done it. So I the commitment was a little looser there for us to figure out what was the best best method of noise reduction whether it was the wall or the quiet pavement and bridge joints or some sort of underbridge insulation. And so the federal government came by and said they wanted to see a firmer, more solid commitment for those barriers because the barriers offer a little bit more than just noise protection; they can provide some visual aesthetics and there's a general feeling out there that unless I can see a barrier, I don't feel like the noise has really been addressed. So the commitment is now that there will be a barrier. There might be a combination of items. It might be a barrier plus some of those other things. But at a minimum, there will be at least one barrier.
- Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP) – Nothing has changed here.
  - QUESTION – What about the security cameras?
  - RESPONSE – SCDOT doesn't have jurisdiction over this but I can look into that with the City.
- Community Air quality Monitoring Program - Nothing has changed here. We're working with SCDHEC on this particularly during the construction of the highway.
- Larger Community Office – As we think about starting all these programs next year, we really feel like we might a space slightly bigger than this one, especially to allow for us to really have classes here. And you know if something were to happen again, like a pandemic or whatever, having enough space

since people are used to having a lot of space now. We kind of let our landlord here know that if one of the spaces became available nearby, we would maybe want to double our amount of space to allow more room. We're gonna need a couple more offices to for when ROW starts happening and credit counseling and stuff like that. Some private offices where people can go in and sit and do that. So there's a space right down the way here next to the beauty shop down there.

**QUESTION** – How will beautification be handled since the entry to the neighborhoods looks bad and the underside of 526 between Liberty Park and Russelldale is an area for drug deals.

**RESPONSE** – That should be cleaned up during construction. The vegetation will be taken down because they'll be facilitating construction under there and having equipment and stuff like that. So it will be cleaned up. Once SCOT is done with the project, I wanna be realistic with you, it's kind of up to the community to put in those maintenance requests at SCDOT.org. If you put in a maintenance request, they will call you and respond.

### **EJ Community Outreach Update**

Some of the same approaches, as listed below, will be used in the past will be deployed but we need help with new ideas:

- Local Events and Pop-Up Meetings
  - A list of upcoming events was provided
- Coordination with Religious and Faith-Based Organizations
  - We will be visiting churches again
- Flyer Box Initiative
  - The top 15 sites could be deployed again
- Community Workshops & Information Sessions
  - These will be offered again in the near future. A schedule will be provided.
- Community History Preservation Program (CHPP) w/ Community Event
  - We need your help with recruiting participants.
- Community Resource Guide (CRG)
  - This will hopefully be helpful to those that don't know of needed resources available to them.
  - The CAC recommends using a website to provide the updated information annually.
- Organizational Training
  - This will be offered to anyone interested in starting a Community Advocacy Group.
  - Recruitment ideas are needed.
- Small Business Development Program (SBDP) and Summer Transportation Institute/School-To-Work-Program
  - Covered earlier in the meeting

### **Community Resource Guide Content Review**

Covered earlier in the meeting.

### **Project Schedule and Milestone Review**

Community Office Stats

(April 2022)

- |                       |                     |                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Visitors: 10        | • Incoming Calls: 7 | • Voicemails: 0 |
| • ROW Appointments: 1 | • Outgoing Calls: 5 |                 |

### **Summary and Next Steps**

CAC Meeting #21 – June 4, 2022