



# US 278 Corridor Improvements

## Public Hearing

### Purpose of the Public Hearing

- Provide an update on the US 278 Corridor Improvements.
- Present the Environmental Assessment (EA), including the Recommended Preferred Alternative and Section 4(f) uses. The EA is available to view on the project website or in hard copy at the public hearing events, the Hilton Head Island Branch Library, South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) Headquarters, or the SCDOT District 6 Office.
- Ask for YOUR comments, feedback, and concerns!

**We want to hear from you!**  
**Official comment period runs through August 22, 2021**

### Project Overview

SCDOT and Beaufort County are proposing improvements to the US 278 corridor between Moss Creek Drive in Bluffton and Spanish Wells Road on Hilton Head Island. The Recommended Preferred Alternative, Alternative 4A, would widen US 278 between Moss Creek Drive and Squire Pope Road from 4 lanes to 6 lanes, replacing the existing 4 bridges with one 6-lane bridge. In addition to replacing the eastbound Mackey Creek bridge, which has reached its useful life, this single new bridge would meet the current seismic standards, providing a full "lifeline" on and off the island.

### Project Purpose

- Address structural deficiencies at the existing eastbound Mackey Creek Bridge
- Reduce congestion along US 278 from Moss Creek Drive to Spanish Wells Road

### Proposed improvements also include:



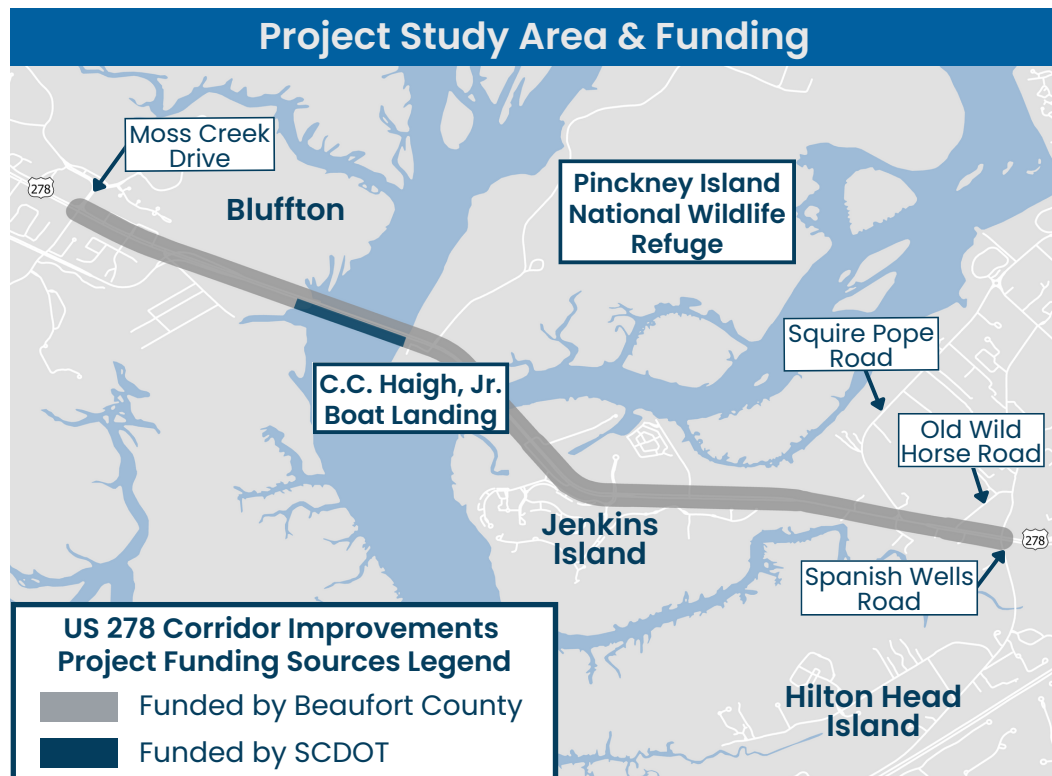
Improving traffic performance at the key intersections on Jenkins Island, at Squire Pope Road, and at Old Wild Horse Road/Spanish Wells Road



Improving access to Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge (PINWR)



Improving access to the C.C. Haigh Jr. boat landing





# Where are we in the Project Schedule?

SCDOT is taking this important project through an EA as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. We are seeking YOUR INPUT on the Recommended Preferred Alternative as well as the potential right-of-way and environmental impacts of the proposed improvements.

Following the public hearing, we will incorporate your feedback, as well as input received from federal and state agencies, to revise the project. If approved by the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), we would begin right-of-way acquisition with the goal of starting construction in late 2023 or early 2024.

## FAQs

### When should I expect to hear from a right-of-way agent?

If the project is approved by FHWA, which we anticipate occurring late in 2021, then right-of-way agents would begin contacting property owners in early 2022.

### When would construction begin?

Our goal is to begin construction in late 2023 or early 2024. Assuming approval by FHWA, construction could begin after the necessary right-of-way has been purchased.

## Proposed Project Schedule



*This schedule is updated as of July 2021 and is subject to change. Right-of-way and construction start dates are based on a successful environmental permitting process.*

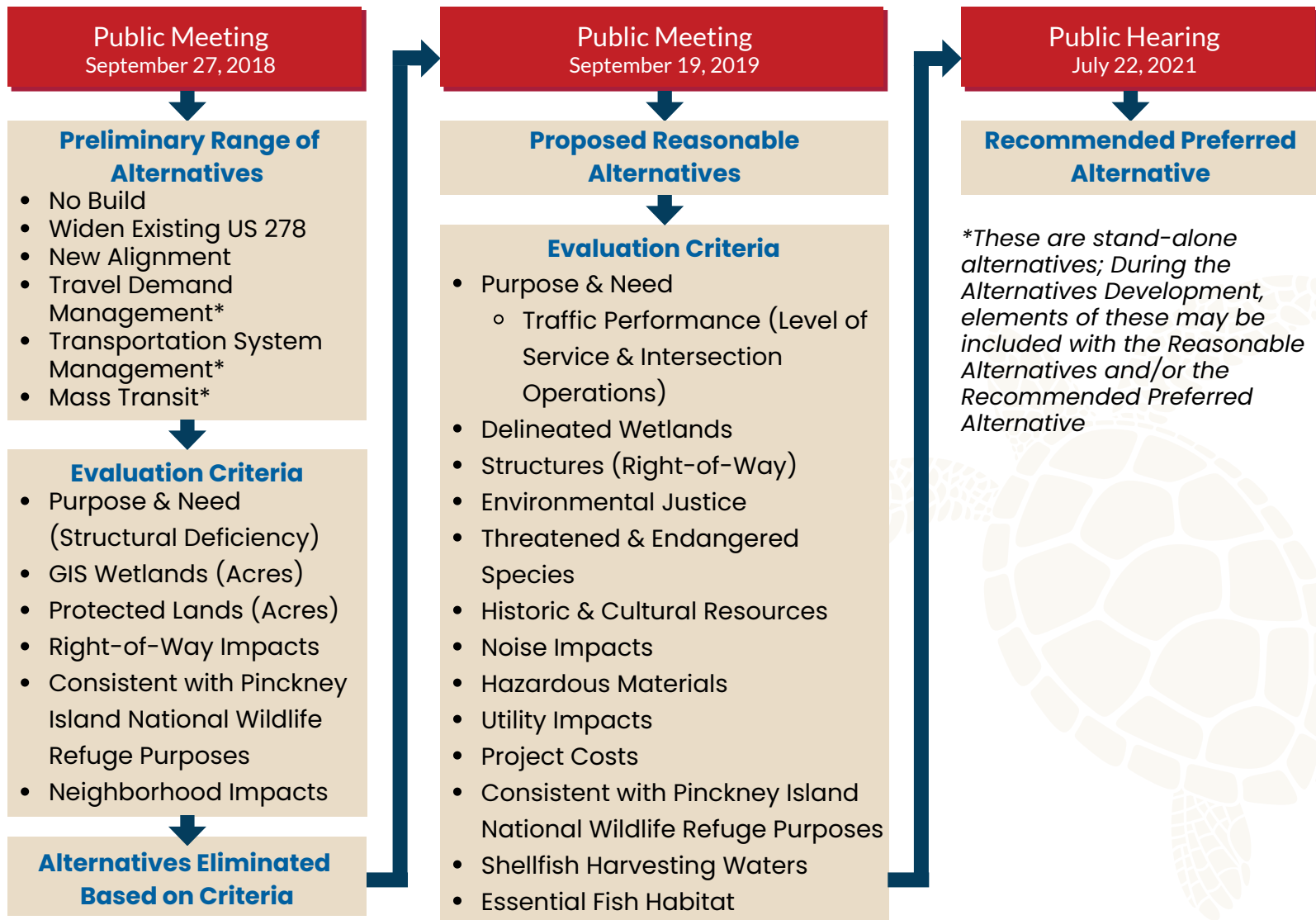
# How did we arrive at the Recommended Preferred Alternative?

To meet the purpose and need of the project, our team first evaluated several alternatives called the “Preliminary Range of Alternatives.” These alternatives were developed based on ideas from the US 278 project team, local representatives and most importantly from you, the public.








These preliminary alternatives, in addition to the “no build” or “do nothing” alternative, have undergone a systematic evaluation process, reducing the Preliminary Range of Alternatives to the Reasonable Alternatives, which were presented for your input at the second Public Information Meeting Fall 2019.

Based on YOUR input about the importance of reducing community impacts, the 6 proposed Reasonable Alternatives were expanded to 9 and further evaluated. From this analysis – and input you have provided – SCDOT and FHWA arrived at Alternative 4A as the Recommended Preferred Alternative, which is presented now for your feedback. See this process visually below, including the evaluation criteria.

## ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT FLOWCHART



## Reasonable Alternatives Matrix

Evaluation Criteria		RA 1	RA 2	RA 3
	Level of Service of AM/PM (2045)	D/E	D/E	D/E
	at Squire Pope Road	D/E	D/E	D/E
	at Spanish Wells Road	C/E	C/E	C/E
	Wetlands (Acres)	19.3	18.4	19.4
	Relocations	10	10	9
	Consistent with PINWR Purposes	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
	Meets Current Seismic Design Standards (# of Structures)	1 of 4	1 of 4	2 of 4
	Construction Duration	5 years	5 years	5 years
	Projected Cost	\$241,180,557	\$241,455,717	\$248,406,992

The table above shows the Reasonable Alternatives that were revised from the Proposed Reasonable Alternatives based on input received from the public and agencies. Revisions included:

- All Proposed Reasonable Alternatives, except for Alternative 5, were revised to provide more efficient connections to Hog Island. This would also allow for improved maintenance of traffic during construction.
- Alternative 4A resulted from coordination with US Fish and Wildlife Service that modified Alternative 4 to have the proposed interchange on Pinckney Island closer to the existing US 278 corridor.
- Alternatives 5A & 6A resulted from input from the utility companies that suggested shifting the alignments of Alternative 5 & Alternative 6 to run south of the existing power line easement across Jenkins Island.

RA 4	RA 4A	RA 5	RA 5A	RA 6	RA 6A
D/E	D/E	c/c	c/c	c/c	c/D
C/E	C/E	D/E	D/E	D/E	D/E
19.4	18.5	29.9	26.8	29.8	25.8
11	11	16	19	17	20
Less Consistent	More Consistent	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent	Consistent
4 of 4	4 of 4	2 of 4	2 of 4	4 of 4	4 of 4
3 years	3 years	5.5 years	5.5 years	3.5 years	3.5 years
\$281,318,085	\$287,573,555	\$385,499,062	\$362,124,172	\$420,691,410	\$412,280,095



To view the Reasonable Alternatives on a map, please visit the project website at [www.SCDOT278corridor.com/alternatives](http://www.SCDOT278corridor.com/alternatives).



*The costs above reflect initial estimates for utility impacts and construction costs.*





# The Recommended Preferred Alternative

The Recommended Preferred Alternative, Alternative 4A, would replace all 4 existing bridges with one new bridge immediately south of the existing bridges. After exiting from the new bridge, heading from Bluffton to Hilton Head Island, you would continue onto the current US 278 alignment. Intersection improvements would be made at C Heinrichs Circle, Jenkins Road, Squire Pope Road, Old Wild Horse Road, and Wild Horse Road/Spanish Wells Road.

## The Driving Factors



The Recommended Preferred Alternative best meets the purpose and need of the project while minimizing impacts to the community and environment. Based on the design refinements, the potential relocations were reduced to:

**0**  Residential Relocations

**2**  Commercial Relocations



We heard your concerns about high speeds in the area. The speed limit for the project is proposed to be a consistent 45 mph throughout.

## We heard your concerns!



During previous outreach, we often heard that having a "lifeline" between Hilton Head Island and Bluffton was important. Alternative 4A would provide a new, 6-lane bridge that would meet the current seismic/earthquake design standards. Replacing all bridges now could add longevity and increased safety to this singular link between Bluffton and Hilton Head Island, and could reduce future construction inconveniences.

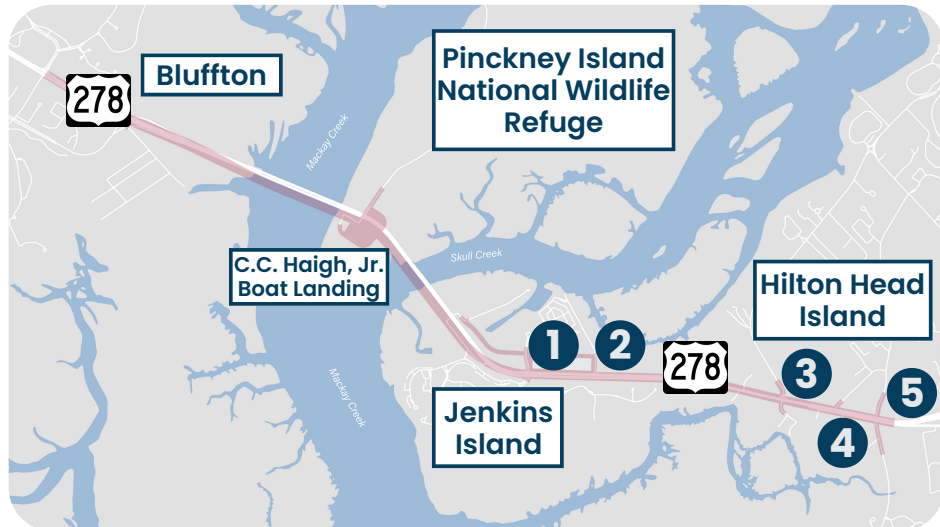


We also heard your concerns about traffic during construction. This alternative could potentially reduce construction time by 1.5 to 2 years, as compared to others, because construction on the new bridge could begin while the current bridges remain in place.

## Proposed Intersection Improvements

### Key Intersections








- 1 C Heinrichs Circle (formerly Gateway Drive):**  
Install traffic light with left-turn lanes on all approaches
- 2 Jenkins Road:**  
Convert to one-way (Northbound only)
- 3 Squire Pope Road:**  
Eliminate left turns onto Squire Pope Road when travelling Eastbound from Bluffton
- 4 Old Wild Horse Road:**  
Install traffic light; Convert Old Wild Horse Road to one-way (Northbound only)
- 5 Wild Horse Road/Spanish Wells Road:**  
Eliminate all left turns from US 278



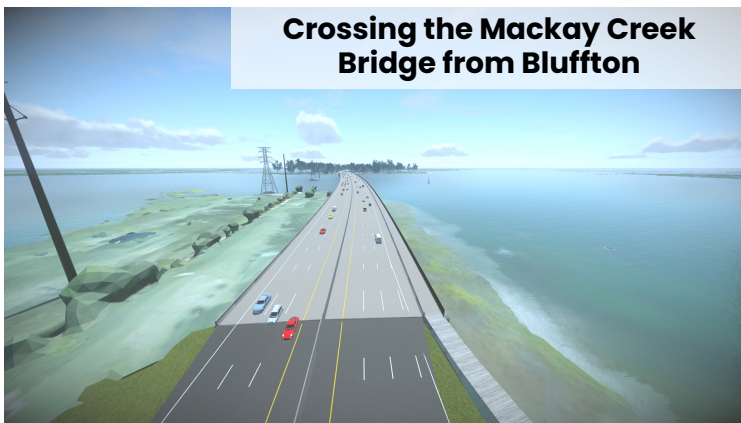
For access to the PINWR and the C.C. Haigh Jr. Boat Landing, Alternative 4A proposes a new right-in/right-out type of interchange.

# Comparison of Reasonable Alternative 4A to Recommended Preferred Alternative 4A

## Comparison Matrix

Evaluation Criteria		Reasonable Alternative 4A	Recommended Preferred Alternative 4A
	Level of Service of AM/PM (2045)	D/E	C/B
	at Squire Pope Road at Spanish Wells Road	C/E	A/C
	Wetlands (Acres)	18.5	22.9
	Relocations	11	2
	Consistent with PINWR Purposes	More Consistent	Most Consistent
	Meets Current Seismic Design Standards (# of Structures)	4 of 4	4 of 4
	Construction Duration	3 years	3 years
	Projected Cost	\$286,473,555	\$289,902,745

Due to design modifications, numbers in this table represent revisions made after the identification of Alternative 4A as the Recommended Preferred Alternative. These design modifications were required to meet SCDOT and FHWA design standards for the proposed bridge and roadway approaches, as well as the intersection improvements within the project corridor.



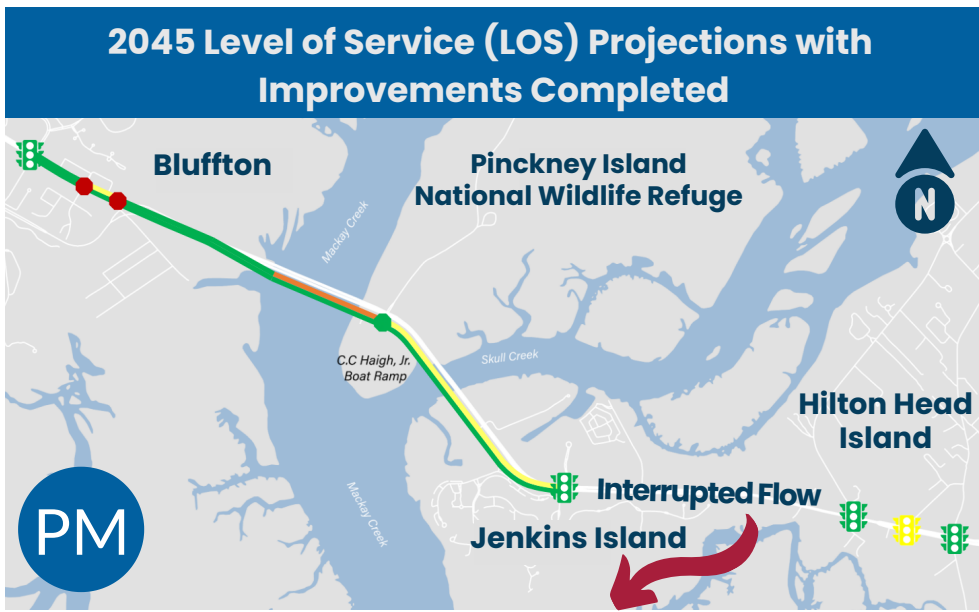
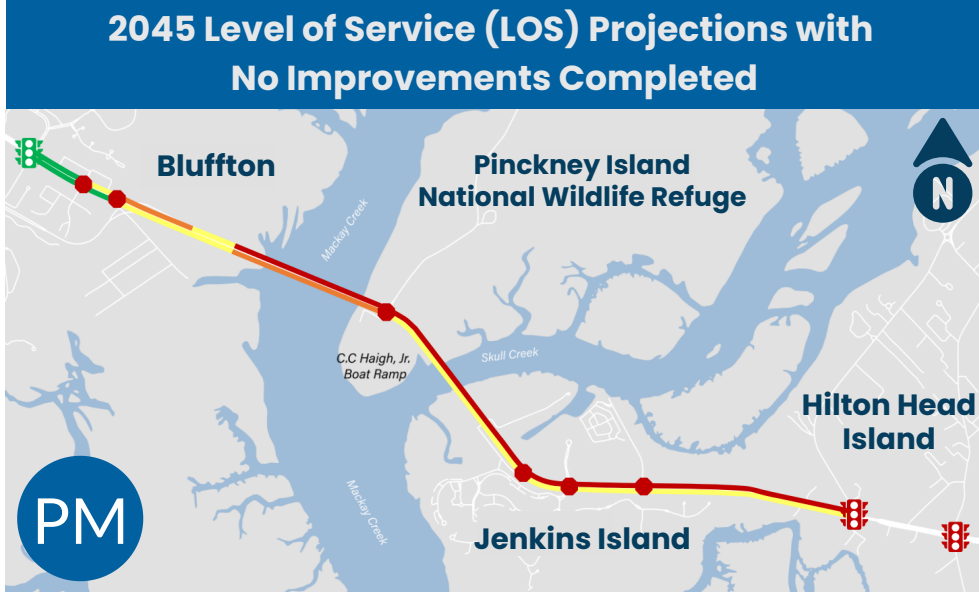


# What would Traffic be like in this corridor?

Alleviating traffic congestion is at the core of the proposed US 278 Corridor Improvements project.

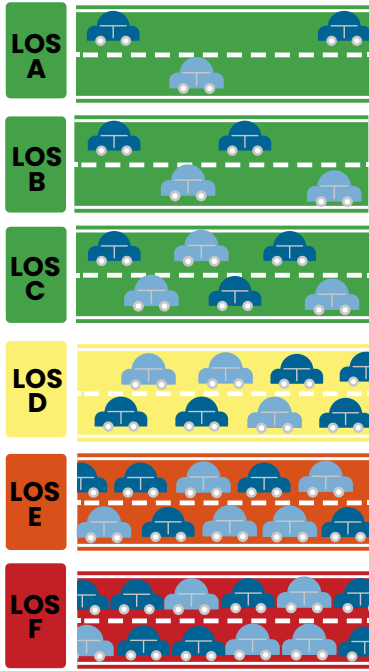
When we conduct a traffic analysis, we don't just look at what is happening today. We also look at projected growth and changes in the area such as population growth, future land uses, and other planned transportation projects.

For this project, we projected what traffic would look like in 2045 if no improvements were made to the US 278 corridor from Moss Creek Drive to Spanish Wells Road. We also analyzed the difference that the proposed improvements would make on travel times. We know congestion can make life more difficult and recognize there is a lot currently along this corridor.



*Interrupted flow occurs when the traffic on the mainline (US 278) can not flow freely due to a traffic control device such as a stop sign or traffic signal. A mainline LOS can not be calculated for interrupted flow.*

## WHAT IS LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)?



The amount of red and orange shown in the first graphic above demonstrates the high congestion levels along this corridor by 2045 if no improvements were made. The second graphic shows the congestion reduction if the Recommended Preferred Alternative were constructed.

**What does this mean for you? This means, if the proposed improvements were made, shorter travel times would be anticipated along this corridor than if no improvements were made.**



# Did you conduct a Noise Analysis on this project?

We conducted a detailed noise analysis to understand the existing and future noise levels as a result of the proposed project. If the existing or future noise levels exceeded a level defined by FHWA as a traffic noise impact, we considered how those noise levels might be reduced through the construction of a noise barrier.

The following factors were considered as part of this evaluation:

- Is a noise wall technically feasible?
- How effective would a noise barrier be at reducing noise? Would the noise barrier effectively reduce noise for the majority of residents behind the barrier?
- How much would a noise barrier cost to construct? Is the cost of the noise barrier a reasonable cost as compared to the anticipated reduction in noise?

## How did we evaluate traffic noise?

- Using complex computer modeling, we predicted expected noise levels at noise-sensitive locations along the project corridor for future traffic conditions.
- Then, we determined which noise-sensitive locations were permitted before the Date of Public Knowledge and, therefore, would be eligible for noise reduction.
- If the anticipated noise level or increase in noise was more than the level defined by SCDOT policy, we began to consider possible ways to reduce the noise, such as with noise walls.

## FAQs

### Are there any noise walls proposed?

No. The noise walls evaluated did not meet the criteria above to be reasonable and feasible.

### What is a common reason noise walls were not recommended for this project?

Most locations would not have had enough benefitting residences (low density). Or, in many cases, a break in the wall would have been needed to access houses, which would make the noise wall ineffective.

*View the SCDOT Traffic Noise Abatement Policy online.*

*Visit [www.scdot.org/business/environmental-toolshed.aspx](http://www.scdot.org/business/environmental-toolshed.aspx) and select "Traffic Noise."*

## Understanding the Cost vs. Benefit of Noise Walls

### High Density



A wall could reduce noise at many houses.

### Low Density



The cost of the wall would be high when considering how few houses would benefit.

### Distance



Although there are many houses, they are too far from the highway for a noise wall to reduce enough noise.



# What are Section 4(f) Resources?

Section 4(f) Resources include publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife or waterfowl refuges, and any historic resource listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

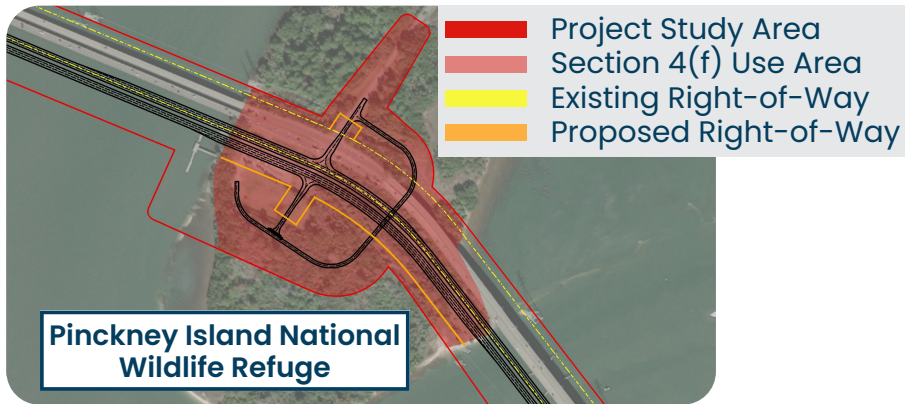
Use of these resources is protected under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act.

## Section 4(f) Resources:

- Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge (PINWR)
- Stoney Traditional Cultural Property (TCP)
- Community Park at 152 William Hilton Parkway



## Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge



### Section 4(f) Uses:

- New right-of-way acquisition (8.02 acres from 4,053 total acres)
- Improved access
- Roadway improvements within PINWR
- Temporary closure of the C.C. Haigh, Jr. Boat Landing
- Relocation/improved access to the C.C. Haigh, Jr. Boat Landing

*FHWA determined these Section 4(f) Uses will result in a Net Benefit to PINWR*

## Community Park at 152 William Hilton Parkway



### Section 4(f) Uses:

- New right-of-way acquisition (0.22 acres from 6.1 total acres)
- Construction of roadway to provide adequate turning space

*FHWA is seeking input regarding the impacts to this community park. Based on the minimal impact, the Section 4(f) Uses qualify as a de minimis (minor) impact.*

## Stoney Traditional Cultural Property (TCP)

### Section 4(f) Uses:

- New right-of-way acquisition (4.8 acres from 300.1 total acres)
- 2 commercial relocations

*FHWA is seeking input regarding the impacts to the Stoney Traditional Cultural Property. Based on the anticipated impacts, the Section 4(f) Uses may qualify as a de minimis (minor) impact to the Stoney Traditional Cultural Property.*



## Stoney Community Enhancements

The Stoney community remains central to the Gullah identity and therefore the land has been identified as a Traditional Cultural Property.

A goal of the project is to provide community enhancement options to preserve and highlight the history of the Stoney community.

The project team met with the Stoney community, Gullah stakeholders, the Town of Hilton Head Island, and Beaufort County many times to discuss the project and potential community enhancement opportunities. Based on this feedback, the enhancements include:

- Signage to bring awareness of the Stoney community;
- An open-air pavilion to highlight the history of the Stoney community and other Gullah neighborhoods on the Island;
- Placemaking improvements such as street and shared use path lighting; and,
- An online interactive map highlighting the history of the Stoney community.

Traditional cultural properties are defined by the South Carolina Historic Preservation Office as a “subset of historic properties associated with cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any living community.”





# Engage with us!

Meaningful input is our number one priority! Below are the ways to make your voice heard in the official project records. Please provide your comments by August 22, 2021.

**We want to hear from you!**

**Official comment period runs through August 22, 2021**

## How to Comment



### Project Website

[www.SCDOT278Corridor.com](http://www.SCDOT278Corridor.com)

Fill out a comment form on the project website.



### Project Email

[info@SCDOT278Corridor.com](mailto:info@SCDOT278Corridor.com)



### Mail

Craig Winn, PE  
c/o South Carolina Department of Transportation  
Lowcountry Regional Production Group  
955 Park Street, Room 401  
Columbia, SC 29202-0191



### Project Hotline

**843.258.1110 (Call or Text Us)**

Press "2" to leave a verbal comment. Comments will be limited to 2 minutes.

*Leaving a comment? Be sure to include your name and address for the record!*

## Meet In-Person



### Personal Appointments

**@ the Island Rec Center**

Personal appointments are available by reservation only. Call us or schedule online at [www.SCDOT278Corridor.com](http://www.SCDOT278Corridor.com)!

*July 14-16 & August 18-21, 2021*



### Public Hearing

**@ the Island Rec Center**

View materials & ask questions from 2:00PM to 6:00PM! Verbal comment session begins at 6:00PM with the close of the open house.

*July 22, 2021*

*All formal comments received during the comment period will be evaluated and included in the project record. Please note, only written comments will receive a formal response. All information provided will be published and subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.*



**Craig Winn, PE, SCDOT Project Manager**

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