



Project Update

February 2021



Schedule Update

To ensure a detailed analysis of the Stoney Community is performed and to build community consensus surrounding the proposed community mitigation items, the project schedule has shifted. More information on this can be found in subsequent sections.

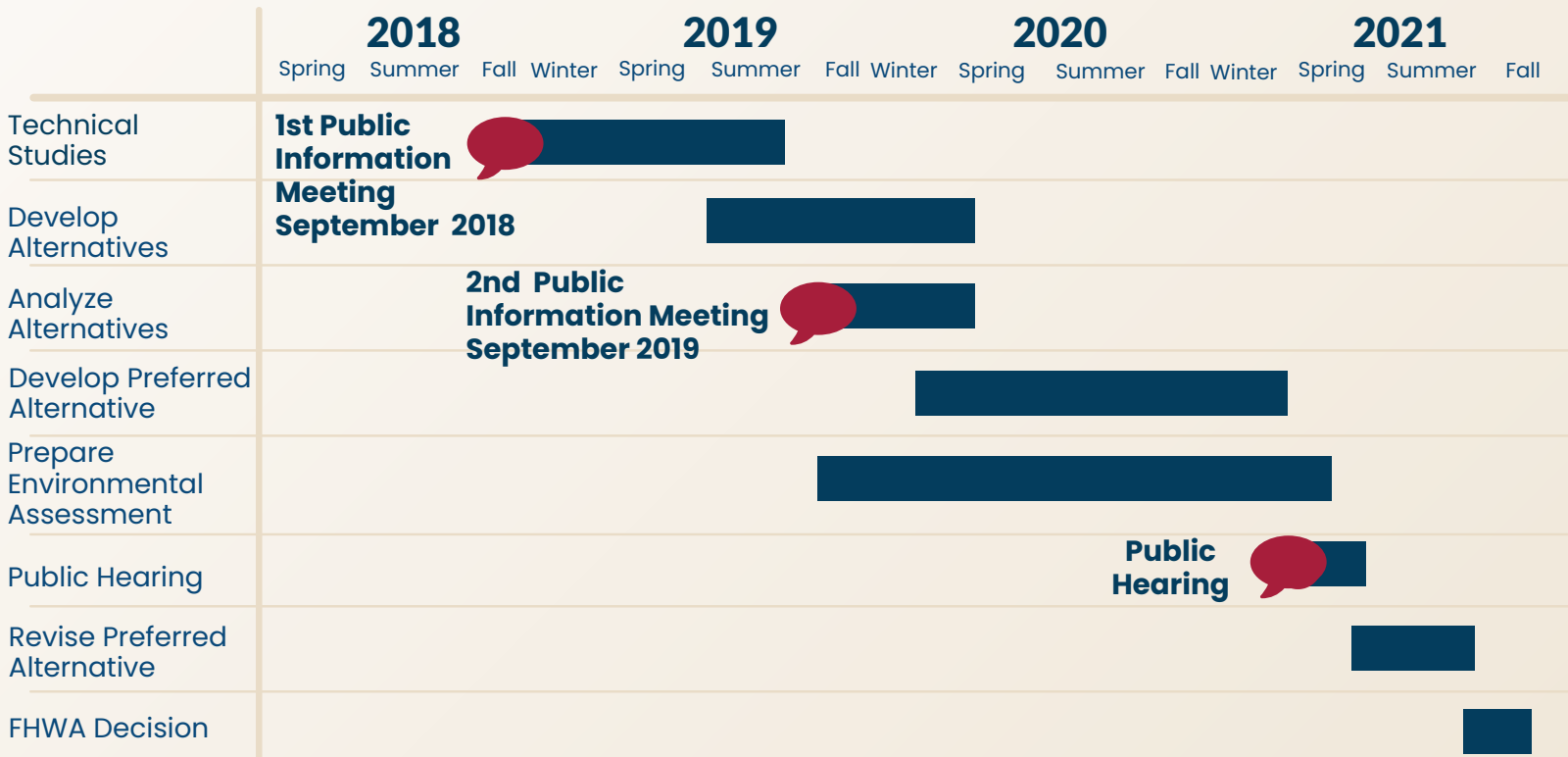
The public hearing and the release of the recommended preferred alternative will likely occur during late spring (potentially late May). The project team is hopeful that during that time the current public health concerns will have lessened somewhat to allow for in-person engagement opportunities. However, the project team will continue to monitor the situation and ask for local guidance on how best to engage the communities at that time. Regardless, the team will be prepared to offer a multi-tiered approach to engagement which will include extensive online and phone engagement opportunities.

Project Overview

Beaufort County, in coordination with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), is proposing to make improvements to the US 278 corridor between Bluffton and Hilton Head Island, from Moss Creek Drive to Spanish Wells Road. This would improve the final segment of US 278 between I-95 and the Cross Island Parkway. The purpose of this project is to address structural deficiencies at the existing eastbound MacKay Creek bridge and reduce congestion along US 278 from Moss Creek Drive to Spanish Wells Road. The eastbound Mackay Creek Bridge will be replaced; it was originally built in 1956 and is scheduled for replacement. Additional studies for potential improvements include:

- Modifications to the remaining three bridges;
- Improved performance at the major intersections (Squire Pope, Old Wild Horse, Spanish Wells);
- Improved access to Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge; and
- Improved access to the C.C. Haigh, Jr. Boat Ramp.

US 278 NEPA Process Schedule





Stoney Community: Engagement

Stoney Community Meetings

The project team met with the Stoney community five times during the fall of 2020 and has already met with them once since the beginning of 2021. Those with direct, potential property impacts were invited to participate, in addition to those representing the Stoney Community in the 278 Stakeholder group and the Town's Gateway Committee. Meetings were limited in attendance for the health and safety of the individuals present, and those invited were tasked with sharing the information they received with their fellow community members.

March 10, 2020 **Hilton Head Island Library**

A series of four, one-hour meetings were held with the four Stoney families that may experience right-of-way acquisition. Each family had the opportunity to meet with the project team individually to allow for candid conversations to voice their concerns. Following the project-specific session, the families were invited to participate in an oral history interview as part of the Traditional Cultural Properties evaluation.

August 20, 2020 **Hilton Head Island Rowing & Sailing Center**

This meeting started the dialogue about community enhancement. The project team identified the potential right-of-way impacts and relocations and answered related questions. Relocations had been reduced to two businesses. The topic of community enhancement was introduced and participants were asked to brainstorm potential enhancement ideas with other community members.

September 29, 2020 **Hilton Head Island Rowing & Sailing Center**

This meeting focused on specific, potential community enhancement ideas including a Stoney Community history video, family monuments, improvements to the Jenkins Island Cemetery, an access road for properties between the causeway and Squire Pope Road, and an access/driveway to the Stewart family properties. Safety concerns in crossing US 278 (on foot) were also discussed. Attendees were encouraged to further explore the discussed community enhancement ideas with their community and identify additional ideas for the October Meeting. The project team also toured the Jenkins Island Cemetery.

October 27, 2020 **Hilton Head Island Rowing & Sailing Center**

The project team met with the Stewart family individually to discuss the proposed driveway to their property to address the safety concerns. Then, the larger meeting focused on fleshing out details of the community enhancement ideas the community members brought forward. A community member presented her idea for an open-air, cultural pavilion. All the participants present agreed that such an item would be appropriate and welcome. It should focus on displaying the history and vibrancy of the area. Additionally, lighting was brought up as a concern.

December 8, 2020 **Central Oak Grove Church**

This meeting explored the previously discussed community enhancement ideas: signage, an open-air pavilion, theme-based street and multi-use path lighting, a community history video/story map, improvements to the Jenkins Island Cemetery and the access road for the Stewart Family parcels. The project team brought example renderings. However, the project team agreed to bring additional renderings to better understand the scale the proposed pavilion and signage options.

January 26, 2021 **Hilton Head Island Rowing & Sailing Center**

As requested at the December 8, 2020 meeting, the project team discussed the additional renderings that were developed to better understand the community enhancement ideas that included signage, an open-air pavilion, a theme-based street, and multi-use path lighting. All of the meeting participants responded favorably to the renderings. Improvements to the access road to the Jenkins Island Cemetery and the Stewart Family parcels are still under consideration and coordination is ongoing.



Stoney Community: Mitigation Ideas

At the most recent meeting with the Stoney community, the renderings below were provided for additional conversation. These renderings were created to provide a sense of scale for the potential mitigation ideas at the request of the community. However, the design of the final products would be created in concert with a design firm and coordination with the local governments.



Stoney Community: Traditional Cultural Property Update

Traditional cultural properties are defined by the South Carolina Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) as a “subset of historic properties associated with cultural practices, traditions, beliefs, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any living community.”
[Learn more here.](#)

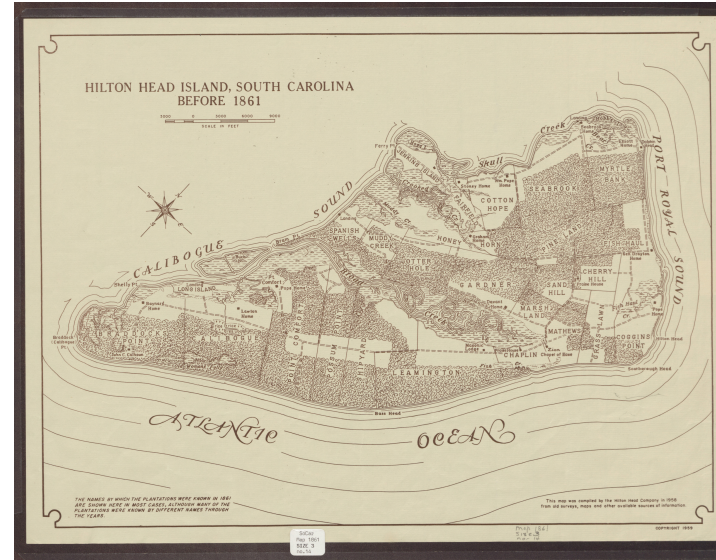
Stoney is one of Hilton Head Island’s historic and socially connected Gullah communities, which also include nearby Squire Pope, Spanish Wells, Jonesville, and Jarvis. To better understand the Stoney community’s significance as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) and to evaluate its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), oral history interviews with longtime residents, archival research, and historical landscape analysis were completed. This work suggests that Stoney remains central to the Gullah identity through its long history of Black landownership; as a cultural gateway to the island; and as a place of progress, prosperity, and education for the island’s Black community. At this time, the study is being finalized and will be submitted to SHPO this month.



Top: Stoney Community Oystering;
Bottom: Mr. Charlie Simmons, Sr., "Cap'n Charlie"

Cultural Resources Update

A few archeological sites were found during initial project work. The project team has been coordinating with the State Historic Preservation Office to determine the best ways to address these sites. Project impacts to one site located on Pinckney National Wildlife Refuge could not be avoided. However, SCDOT proposes to mitigate impacts through an effort to excavate, preserve, and document the presence and characteristics of any buried features. The recommended preferred alternative corridor design should be able to avoid the additional two sites. Each of these areas will be marked as a "Restricted Area" during construction. SCDOT also commits that if any significant portions of this site are encountered, construction activities will be halted and it will be treated as a late discovery. A memorandum of agreement has been prepared for FHWA, SCDOT, US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Catawba Indian Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and SHPO as signatories.



Map of Hilton Head Island: Before 1861

Utility Update

Utility coordination will be an integral component of the construction of any of the proposed recommendations. To that end, the project team has been working with all utilities within the project corridor, including separate meetings with both water/wastewater utilities and Santee Cooper. The discussions to-date have included confirmation of each utility's existing facilities, evaluation of any conflicts, and determination of any high-level relocation costs for each alternative. These ongoing dialogues serve to update utility owners on the corridor study progress and identify any concerns they have regarding the project impacts to their facilities, including prior rights discussions.

Want more information?

The latest information on the US 278 Corridor Improvements project can always be found on our project webpage. All information from past presentations is also posted under "Resources." Check it out today!
www.SCDOT278Corridor.com



Craig Winn, PE, SCDOT Project Manager

info@SCDOT278Corridor.com

Facebook: [SCDOT278Improvements](https://www.facebook.com/SCDOT278Improvements)

Twitter [@scdot278](https://twitter.com/scdot278)

