



Newsletter

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How are Community Impacts & Mitigation Determined for the US 278 Corridor Improvements Project?



BACKGROUND

The project study area for the US 278 Corridor Project includes multiple communities with rich histories. The project team has been identifying these communities and documenting the potential community impacts from the project in the Environmental Assessment (EA). In addition to the EA, a separate Community Impact Assessment (CIA) is also being prepared.

A CIA is a process to evaluate the effects of a project on a community and its quality of life for residents. Land use, displacements, community cohesion, mobility and access, visual quality, noise and construction impacts are factors evaluated to assess the potential positive and negative impacts of the Reasonable Alternatives on the communities. The assessment of these effects allows the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to address public concerns and minimize community impacts.



THE PROCESS

The CIA process started by collecting data from a variety of sources including aerial photography, field visits, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), public outreach, websites, demographic data from the US Census Bureau and existing community studies. This allowed the project team to evaluate the following:

- Existing land use
- Population
- Housing and neighborhoods
- Community services and facilities
- Access to different modes of transportation
- Employment and income

This information then helped the project team identify the communities within the study area so that additional public outreach could be performed.



OUTREACH

These efforts have included:

- Providing project newsletters and surveys in Spanish
- Holding meetings with community leaders
- Holding outreach meetings in churches and social service organizations to inform, educate, and seek input from residents and businesses in these areas
- Distributing project information in The Gullah Sentinel (newspaper) and by WLVH 101.1 in Hardeeville
- Hosting information booths at the 2019 Gullah Festival and the 2019 Bluffton Arts and Seafood Festival
- Holding individual meetings with residents of the Stoney Community
- Holding meetings with multiple neighborhood associations including Indigo Run, Mariners Cove, Sea Pines, Windmill Harbor, and Daufuskie Island
- Meeting the caretaker of the Jenkins Island Cemetery
- Continuing discussions with the Gullah community



Based on this additional public outreach, exciting ideas have been proposed by the community for mitigation and are currently under evaluation. Potential community mitigation is being developed in cooperation with the neighborhoods, Gullah stakeholders, and the Town of Hilton Head. Once the ideas have been fully vetted, they will be presented to the public for input.

Evaluating Intersection Improvements

Our traffic analysis determined the US 278 would need to be widened to 3 lanes on each side within the corridor (Moss Creek to Spanish Wells). While intersection improvements alone would not alleviate congestion enough to eliminate the need for the additional lanes, we are now focused on looking at what types of improvements should be considered at the major intersections. The project team has evaluated each intersection by manually taking turn count movements. These counts were used to determine how each intersection functions and to understand where the heavy turn movements are and how this turning traffic would impact the main corridor.

The intersections along the US 278 Corridor (between The Cross Island Parkway and Hog Island) include:

- Spanish Wells Road/Wild Horse Road Intersection
- Old Wild Horse Road Intersection
- Squire Pope Road/Chamberlin Drive Intersection
- Jenkins Road Intersection
- Gateway Drive/Crosstree Drive Intersection
- Blue Heron Point Road Intersection

These six intersections are really a combination of two separate groups of intersections. The first includes the intersections of Spanish Wells Road/Wild Horse Road, Old Wild Horse Road, Squire Pope Road/Chamberlin Drive. The second is the group containing Jenkins Road, Gateway Drive/Crosstree Drive, Blue Herron Point Road. These intersections need to work together for the most efficient traffic movement, while minimizing impacts to the US 278 mainline flow of traffic.

The US 278 project team looked at more than 14 different types of intersection designs, including multiple combinations for each group of intersections. These intersection types included grade separated (bridges and flyovers) interchanges, continuous green-T intersections, restricted turn movement intersections, displaced left-turn movements, optimizing lanes intersections and jug-handle intersections. The team even went outside

the typical intersection design options and developed a viaduct design that would create a raised multi-lane roadway that would run down the median of existing US 278. This viaduct design would provide uninterrupted traffic movement for those traveling to and from the Cross Island Parkway. Unfortunately, this viaduct option offered no improvements to the overall performance of US 278 and was eliminated.

As each of these design types were applied to the intersections, we began to see which of these designs offered better performance. Those designs that offered a more efficient traffic movement with the least amount of impact to the flow of traffic on US 278 were then moved into further design and evaluation.

The intersection designs have been carried forward for a more detailed analysis for the first group include:

- The Jughandle
- The Flyover
- Optimizing Lanes
- New Traffic Signal at Old Wild Horse Road

The intersection designs for the second group of intersections that have been carried forward for a more detailed analysis include:

- Construction of a new connector road or connector road combination
- Right-in/Right out combinations (with no left-turns)
- Right-in/Right out combinations (with limited left-turns)
- A variation of the SuperStreet concept
- Optimize the number of lanes at all intersections with some restricted movements

Each of these designs are being evaluated as stand-alone options, as well as various combinations to see what provides the best performance. More information on intersection improvements will be available at the public hearing.



SCDOT is evaluating the potential for reconfiguring the existing roadway and intersections as part of the recommended preferred alternative. The study team is evaluating the design and safety at the intersections along the US 278 Corridor for automobiles, trucks, pedestrians, and bikes.



What Can You Expect to See at the Public Hearing?

SCDOT is taking this important project through an Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, process. We are currently at Step 7 of this process, preparing the DRAFT Environmental Assessment. The Recommended Preferred Alternative and DRAFT Environmental Assessment will be presented at the Public Hearing in early 2021. Our project team will be available to walk you through the alternatives analysis process, explaining how the Recommended Preferred Alternative was selected. We will also be showing the proposed intersection improvements for the project. Additionally, potential community impacts associated with the project and our relative mitigation recommendations will be shared. Your comments can be provided at the meeting, submitted online, or mailed to SCDOT. The public comment period for the Public Hearing is YOUR time to share your feedback and input on the Recommended Preferred Alternative, potential community and environmental impacts, and mitigation recommendations!

THE NEPA PROCESS FOR THE US 278 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Remember that 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 to our project website under the "Resources" page. Check it out today! www.scdot278corridor.com



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