



Newsletter

ISSUE 4 - WINTER 2020

Fall 2019 Public Involvement

Fall 2019 was an eventful time, filled with many public engagement opportunities for the US 278 Corridor Improvements project. One highlight was the project's second public information meeting held on September 19, 2019 from 5-7 p.m. at the Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head Island. This meeting was extremely well attended, with a total of 330 actively engaged participants. Earlier that day, SCDOT project manager, Craig Winn, presented the public information materials to the Town of Hilton Head Island's US 278 Gateway Committee as well as the project stakeholder committee.

Along with the in-person meeting, a virtual meeting was available on the project website throughout the official public comment period, from September 4 to October 25. During this time, approximately 6,000 people visited the website. Thank you to everyone who participated in both meetings and especially to our partners who went above and beyond to ensure their respective communities were well informed about these opportunities—the Boys & Girls Club of Hilton Head Island, the Towns of Hilton Head Island and Bluffton, as well as Beaufort County. Your comments will help shape this project.



PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

During the fall, the project team was also very active in the community. On October 17, the project team attended a Town of Hilton Head Island US 278 Gateway Committee open house at the Hilton Head Island Library. This provided the public with an additional opportunity to view the public information materials and talk through the alternatives one-on-one with the project team. SCDOT Project Manager, Craig Winn, had the opportunity to speak at the Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce on October 29th and at the Daufuskie Island Council on November 19th. Both meetings were well attended and allowed the public additional opportunities for questions and comments.

If you would like our project team to speak at your community's event, email info@scdot278corridor.com. Engaging with the community and hearing YOUR questions and concerns is integral to the success of this project.



PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING SMARTBOARDS

Public Information Meeting Statistics (Sept. 4 - Oct. 25, 2019)

330 Total Attendees

~6,000 Web Visitors

We Heard You! Frequently Asked Questions

Your input is influencing the alternatives analysis



Are there more aesthetically pleasing options for safety, other than the typically used “Jersey Barrier,” that exist for the low-profile bridge design?

Jersey Barriers are the only known products crash tested for the potential speed limit under consideration for this structure. However, SCDOT will research and consider new options that adhere to the crash requirements. If a multiuse path is constructed on the bridge, there may be additional options on the side with the path since the multiuse path will be separated from traffic with a Jersey Barrier, or something that adheres to the crash requirements. SCDOT can only consider a more aesthetically pleasing outside barrier as long as it meets the standards for bike and pedestrian safety.



Are speed limits less than 55 MPH an option for the US 278 corridor? Slower speeds may offer more opportunities for aesthetic improvements, but would that be at the expense of improving capacity and reducing congestion?

The posted speed will be a part of the traffic evaluation of the recommended preferred alternative. The recommended preferred alternative is not necessarily going to be designed for 55 MPH. The team will evaluate volumes, mainline performance, intersection needs, and how best to manage the entire corridor, including the sections beyond the project study area.



Are the powerlines crossing the Mackay and Skull Creeks being addressed aesthetically? Is it possible to bury or attach the lines underneath the bridge structure?

SCDOT is working with Santee Cooper, the owner of the powerlines, to address the impacts. The powerlines cannot be buried underwater because of the amount of heat generated by the lines themselves. This is important to protect the stability of service and the overall safety of the public. For the same reason, the powerlines cannot be attached to the underside of the bridge, even with chemically infused conduit attempting to control the heat. SCDOT cannot support attaching these types of electrical transmission lines to an SCDOT-owned and -maintained bridge because of public safety concerns.



Will SCDOT be implementing improvements to address resiliency during major storm events?

While the hydraulic and hydrology efforts for this project are still in their early stages, these areas will be fully studied as we analyze the reasonable alternatives. SCDOT has a strong stormwater design standard requirement for all our projects. These standards can be viewed on the SCDOT Website at: www.scdot.org/business/storm-water.aspx. SCDOT is also investigating new alternative methods of strengthening causeways and limiting the environmental impacts of any improvements planned for projects in the area.



What data is still being collected on the six reasonable alternatives?

There will be additional data collected for the reasonable alternatives that includes data on natural resources, potential community impacts, and estimated costs among others. It is not efficient or cost effective to conduct this research on the full range of alternatives. All data and related technical reports will be hosted on the project website and in the form of appendices to the Environmental Assessment.



Is mass transit being evaluated? Could it have a major impact on addressing the goals of this project?

The project team is evaluating the current transit services/carpooling resources available in the corridor. Part of this evaluation is understanding the demand for such services, available funding, and the potential performance of providing additional services within the corridor. This evaluation utilizes data such as housing and employment densities along with the potential reduction in automobile traffic resulting from the modal shift from auto transportation to transit transportation. The results of this evaluation will be included in the Environmental Assessment along with the evaluation of the other reasonable alternatives.

In the case that additional mass transit service would not meet the capacity needs in the corridor, the US 278 evaluation currently underway may result in the incorporation of design guidelines that accommodate safer access to transit facilities. This could include more sidewalks connecting destinations to a bus shelter, bus pull-outs near those destinations, or the provision of bus shelters at those locations. Mass transit alone will not have enough impact to improve the congestion on US 278 as a stand-alone solution.



How will SCDOT avoid left turns across three lanes of traffic?

SCDOT is actively limiting left turn movements on roadway improvements with six or more through lanes of traffic. A concrete or grass median is planned for portions of the US 278 corridor that will help limit left turns. In the event there are large traffic generators, such as high-use intersections, businesses or other similar conditions along the corridor, SCDOT will consider access adjustments for each of these areas on a case-by-case basis.



Are traffic calming measures being evaluated in the traffic analysis for the US 278 corridor?

The performance of traffic calming measures has not, to date, been incorporated into the traffic analysis. Looking forward, as a result of public comments, these techniques may be considered to improve the identified safety issues in the corridor.



Is SCDOT evaluating intersection improvements at Squire Pope and Spanish Wells Roads? What is being done to the intersections beyond making US 278 a 6-lane highway?

SCDOT is evaluating the potential for reconfiguring the existing roadway and intersections before fully designating the widening as part of the recommended preferred alternative. The resulting performance of the intersections at Squire Pope and Spanish Wells Roads will be clearly demonstrated in the final reports. The study team is evaluating the design and safety at those intersections for automobiles, trucks, pedestrians, and bikes. As a result of several safety and traffic projects conducted by SCDOT, Beaufort County and Hilton Head Island, projects have been developed to improve intersections and traffic operations. The resulting performance of those improvements are considered in the forecast-year studies. Even with those improvements, the corridor requires both mainline AND intersection improvements. The needed intersection configurations are still being evaluated, but they are not the sole contributor to the US 278 congestion issues that exist today.



Will improvements, or changes, be limited to US 278?

No. This project is a corridor improvement project, which will likely include modifications to each of the intersections within the corridor. This may include turning lanes, signals, signs, or other similar modifications on US 278 as well as intersecting roadways to improve mobility throughout the corridor.

FOR MORE FAQs, VISIT OUR WEBSITE WWW.SCDOT278CORRIDOR.COM

What we Heard and Next Steps

The project team heard you and will continue to incorporate your feedback throughout the alternatives evaluation process. We received a total of 340 comments throughout the Official Public Comment Period. Thank you for your participation!

As the project continues, we will be further evaluating the alternatives, taking an even closer look at project construction costs and traffic performance. We will also be meeting with potentially impacted property owners in the community.

What We Heard

340
Total
Comments

In Favor of Bike/
Ped or Transit



In Favor of
Reversing Traffic



In Favor of
Widening



Against
Widening

In Favor of
Additional
Access Point



Concerned with
Noise Impacts



Concerned with
Preserving the
Natural Environment



Concerned with
Preserving Gullah
Heritage



Next Steps

- Continue to Refine Alternatives
 - Detailed Impact Evaluation
 - In-Depth Traffic Analysis
 - Evaluate Costs
- Meet with Potentially Impacted Property Owners
- Anticipated Public Hearing: Fall 2020
 - Present Preferred Alternative



ADDITIONAL PROJECT INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEBSITE: WWW.SCDOT278CORRIDOR.COM

STAY INVOLVED

Look for the project team at community events around town. Invite us to present project information at your neighborhood or community group's meeting. Reach out using one of the various contact methods below!



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