



Newsletter

ISSUE 1 - WINTER 2019

Introducing the US 278 Corridor Improvement Project

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is proposing improvements to the US 278 corridor between Bluffton and Hilton Head Island, from Moss Creek Drive to Squire Pope Road. The goal of these improvements will be to increase capacity, with resulting improvements in mobility and traffic congestion. Additional studies from Squire Pope Road to the Cross Island Parkway will be conducted to identify improvements needed between these two roadways.

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 access to Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge; and
- Improved access to the C.C. Haigh, Jr. boat ramp.



Community involvement and communication will be a primary focus of the project to ensure successful development of the environmental process. Additionally, SCDOT will be working hand-in-hand with the Federal Highway Administration and Beaufort County. The project is to be funded using federal, state, and local funds.

What is NEPA, and where are we in this process?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provides a national framework for environmental planning and decision-making. When planning projects using federal funds, an agency must conduct certain environmental reviews to understand any potential impacts the proposed project might have on the human and natural environments.

SCDOT will progress this project through the planning phase with an environmental assessment (EA), with the eventual goal of acquiring right-of-way and construction. Working alongside FHWA and Beaufort County, SCDOT will develop the EA, which will include reviewing alternatives and comparing impacts on the natural and human environments.



An EA includes a brief discussion of the need for the project, alternatives, environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives, and a listing of additional agencies consulted.

Where is all this traffic coming from?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) defines congestion as “an excess of vehicles on a portion of roadway at a particular time resulting in speeds that are slower-sometimes much slower- than normal or ‘free flow’ speeds. Congestion often means stopped or stop-and-go traffic”

There are three factors that cause congestion:

- Traffic-influencing events: construction, traffic accidents, or weather-related delays;
- Traffic demand: commuter traffic, tourism traffic, or special events; and
- Physical highway features: number of lanes, traffic signals, or roadway alignment.

To understand the traffic situation on the US 278 corridor, the project team has evaluated traffic growth over the past five years. Between 2013 and 2017, total traffic growth has increased by 8% which comes to an average of 56,300 vehicles per day.

The project team will use traffic forecasts to the year 2050 for this project.

Using the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) Regional Travel Demand Model, which comprises the Lowcountry Council of Governments Region (Colleton, Hampton, Jasper, and Beaufort counties), we can see that there is a projected:

- 41% total population growth from 2010 to 2040.
- 42% total household growth from 2010 to 2040.
- 61% total employment growth from 2010 to 2040.

VARIABLE	2010	2020	2030	2040
Total Population	247,000	282,000	317,000	349,000
Households	96,000	110,000	124,000	136,000
Total Employment	88,000	104,000	123,000	142,000

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LATS Regional Travel Demand Model



Public Information Meeting in Review

The first Public Information Meeting was held on September 27th, 2018 at the Hilton Head Island High School cafeteria from 6:00-8:00 pm. There were 203 total attendees at the meeting.

102 comments were received from online, email, in-person, and mailed-in comment submissions. Comments ranged in topic from bike lanes, preserving Gullah heritage, and road widening.

Over the next several months, the project team will be diving into a technical analysis of the traffic, roadways and environment to develop project alternatives. These alternatives will be presented to the public in at the next in-person and online Public Information Meetings in the fall of 2019.

Ways to Get Involved

Stay informed by following us on Facebook and Twitter; request a presentation from our [Speakers Bureau](#); and invite us to your [Community Meetings](#).



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