

I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

Public Hearing

Official Comment Period
October 30, 2020 - January 15, 2021

Purpose of the Public Hearing

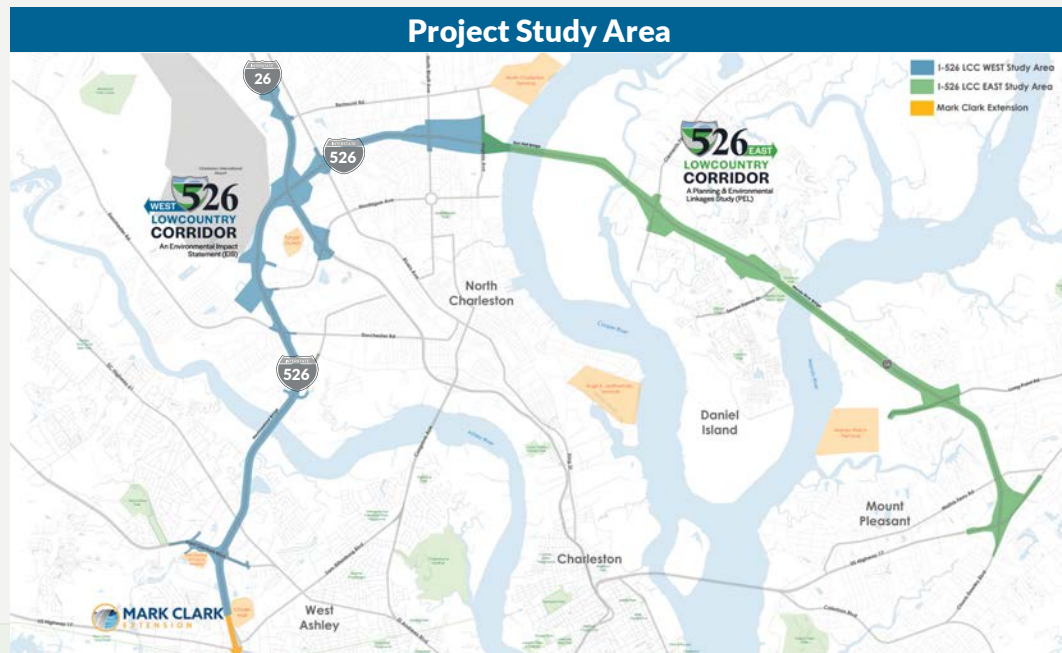
- Provide an update on the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST (I-526 LCC WEST)
- Present the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), including the Recommended Preferred Alternative and the DRAFT Community Mitigation Plan. The DEIS is available for view on the project website or in hard copy.
- Ask for YOUR comments, feedback, and concerns!

Project Overview

The I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Recommended Preferred Alternative consists of a widening from 4 lanes to 8 lanes between Paul Cantrell Boulevard in West Ashley and Virginia Avenue in North Charleston, as well as making improvements at the interchanges of I-26/I-526, Virginia/North Rhett Avenues, and at Paul Cantrell Boulevard.

The need for this project was identified in several documents. The I-526/I-26 interchange was listed as the 2nd most important project in the 2035 Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) Long Range Transportation Plan, the 6th most important project on SCDOT's ACT 114 Interstate Capacity List, and it is listed in SCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Plan 2017-2022. Other plans and studies have cited this congestion and need for improvement, as well.

The purpose of the project is to **increase capacity** at the I-26/I-526 interchange and along the I-526 mainline, thereby **relieving traffic congestion** and **improving operations** at the I-26/I-526 interchange and along the I-526 mainline.





What is a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)?

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement, or DEIS, is the culmination of technical studies and reports, interagency coordination, and community outreach and feedback.

The DEIS documents the purpose and need for the project; presents a discussion of the alternatives and the analysis of them; describes the affected environment, assessment of environmental, transportation, social, and economic impacts; identifies appropriate mitigation measures to offset impacts; and presents a recommended preferred alternative.

It also incorporates analysis and feedback from public and agency sources gathered during the various phases of the DEIS development. We encourage you to explore the DEIS and its detailed appendices. The DEIS is available online at www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/WEST/DEIS and is also available in hard copy to view by appointment at the Community Office and SCDOT's District 6 Office in N. Charleston (Call 843-740-1667).

It is a document for YOU - the public, stakeholders, and decision makers!



Document Highlights

- Chapter 2: Project Purpose & Need
- Chapter 3: Alternatives Development
- Chapter 4: Existing Conditions & Environmental Consequences
- Chapter 5: Navigation
- Chapter 6: Public & Agency Involvement

Appendices Highlights

- Community Impact Assessment
- Environmental Justice Analysis
- Relocations Report
- Traffic Analysis Report
- Air Quality Report
- More!

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

View the Draft EIS

**www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/WEST/DEIS
By Appointment at the Community Office**

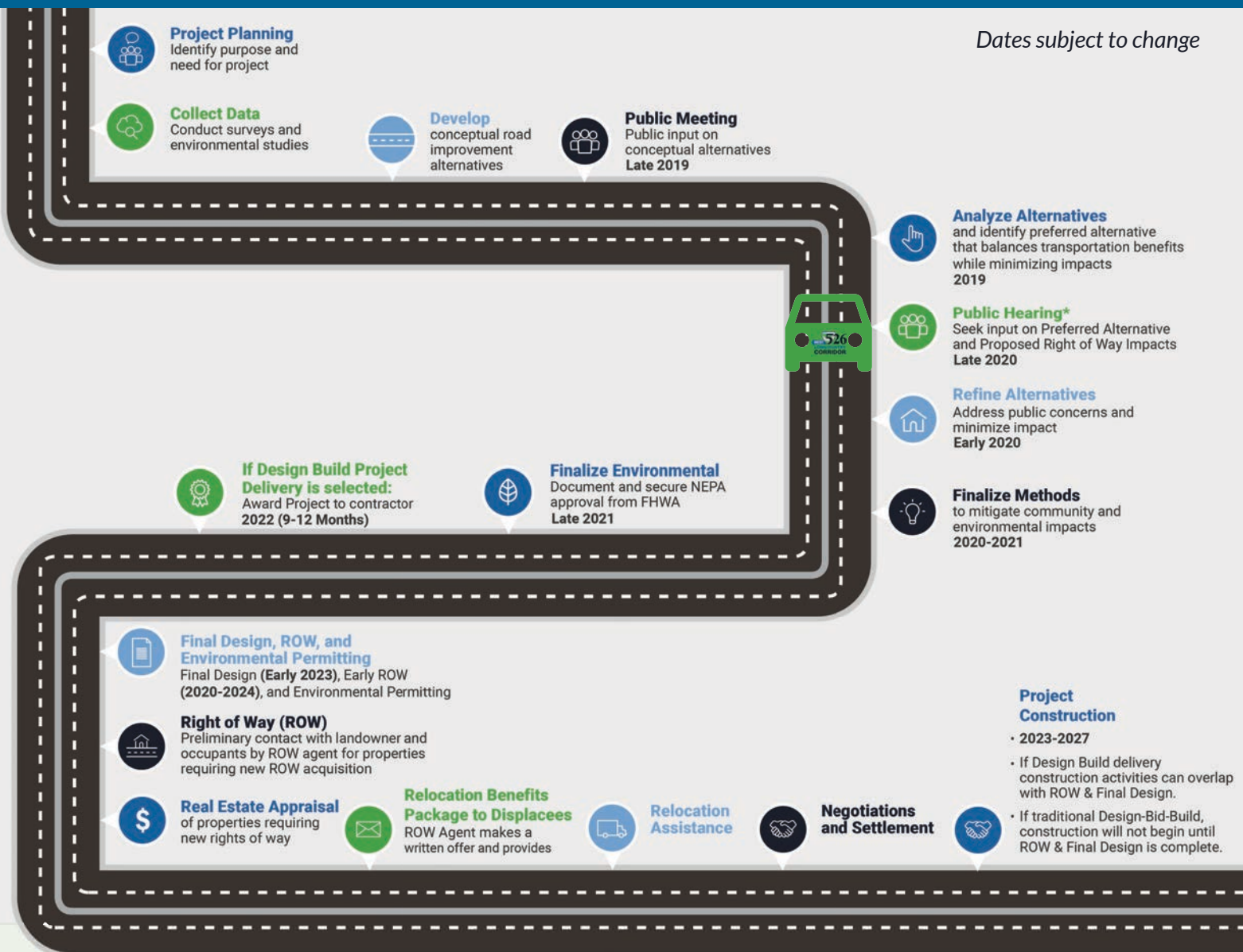
Visit our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square)

What are the steps that would happen before construction?

The I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST project is currently undergoing a federal environmental review process called an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). 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. This includes the DRAFT Community Mitigation Plan for those impacts in traditionally underserved communities.

We will use your comments to refine the Recommended Preferred Alternative and DRAFT Community Mitigation plan. We are on track to complete the NEPA process in late 2021. Then, we can finalize right-of-way acquisitions and move to construction. We are working to acquire properties now to address the need for affordable housing within the potentially impacted communities.

Project Development Process for Highways



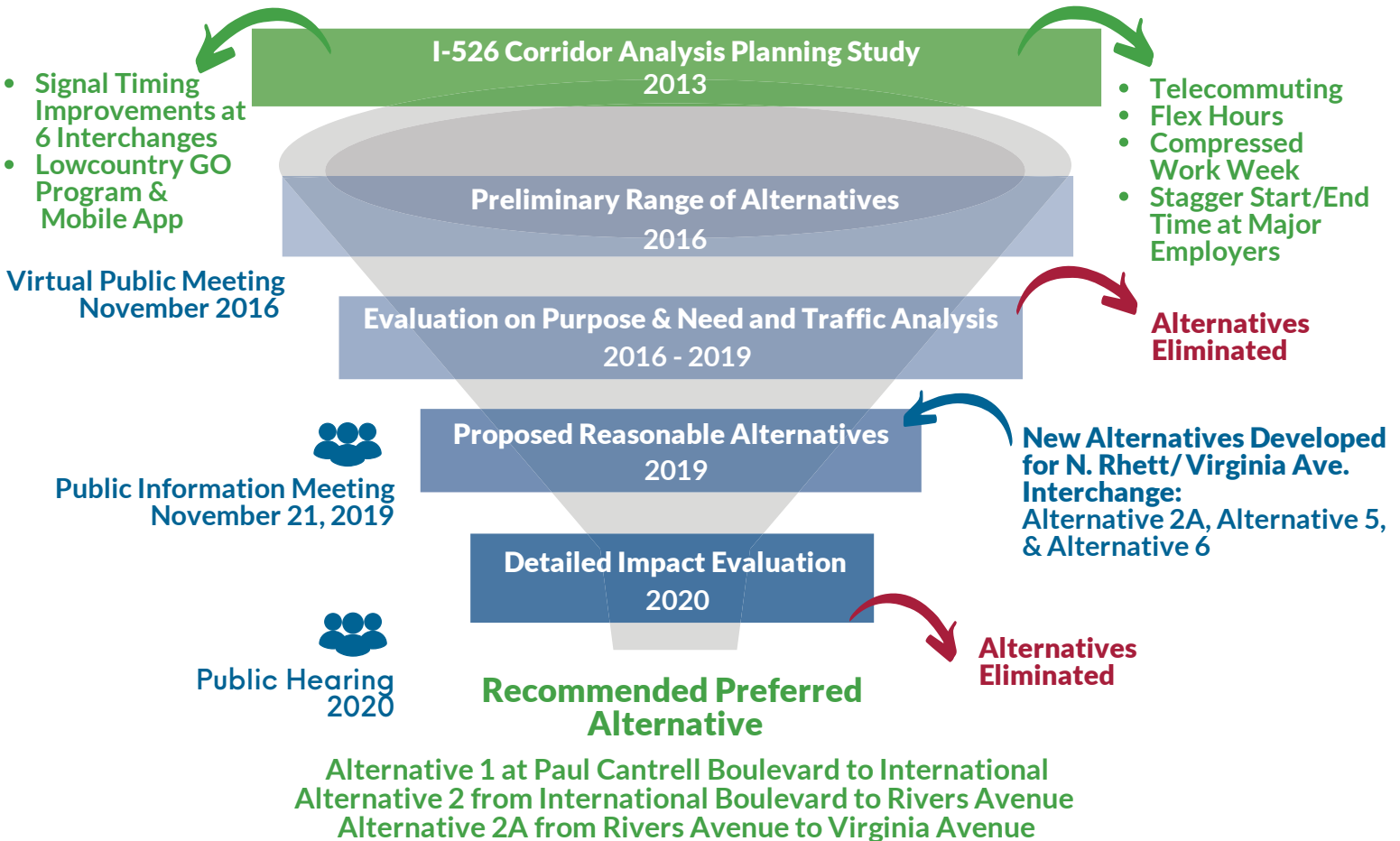
How did we arrive at the Recommended Preferred Alternative?

The project team has performed traffic analysis, environmental studies, and preliminary design to identify and analyze the transportation solutions which meet the purpose and need of this corridor. The preliminary range of alternatives was evaluated to determine which of the alternatives would meet the purpose and need of the project. While other alternatives, such as increased transit and flex hours (known as Travel Demand Management) did not show enough of a traffic reduction potential to be standalone solutions, many were determined to be cost-effective and have some positive impact. To begin alleviating some of the growing congestion today, we have funded and begun implementing many of these solutions.

The preliminary alternatives were then evaluated to determine if they were both practicable and feasible. The alternatives that met each of these criteria, along with the no-build alternative, were identified as the Proposed Reasonable Alternatives and were presented to you last fall. Based on your feedback last fall, we also developed a few new alternatives at North Rhett Avenue - for a total of 5 Reasonable Alternatives.

All the Reasonable Alternatives were evaluated again to arrive at today's Recommended Preferred Alternative. This detailed evaluation focused on each alternative's traffic performance and potential impacts to communities and the natural environment.

Alternatives Evaluation Process



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Alternatives Evaluation Process

The Recommended Preferred Alternative includes the components that best meet the purpose of the project while minimizing impacts.

Recommended Preferred Alternative:

Alternative 2A from Virginia Avenue to Rivers Avenue

Alternative 2 from Rivers Avenue to International Boulevard

Alternative 1 from International Boulevard to Paul Cantrell Boulevard

The Recommended Preferred Alternative was identified because of the lower number of relocations, fewer potential impacts to traditionally under-represented populations, lower impacts to wetlands and streams, improved traffic operations, and the ability to resolve a high number of existing roadway deficiencies.

	NO BUILD	RECOMMENDED PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE
What is the Weighted Volume/Capacity Ratio?	Greater than 1.0	Less than 1.0
What would be the Mainline Level of Service in 2050?	F	Paul Cantrell Blvd to Leeds Ave: D Leeds Ave to Dorchester Rd: D Dorchester Rd to Montague Ave: C Montague Ave to International Blvd: C International Blvd to I-26: C I-26 to Rivers Ave: C Rivers Ave to North Rhett Blvd: C North Rhett Ave to Virginia Ave: D East of Virginia Ave: C
Number of Freshwater Wetland Impacts	0 acres	97.7 acres
Number of Stream Impacts	0 feet	18,631.7 feet
Number of Critical Area Impacts	0 acres	22 acres
Number of Relocations Proposed	0	113
Number of Environmental Justice Relocations	0	92
Are Cultural Resources present?	No	Yes
Are Section 4f/6f Impacts present?	No	Yes
Cost of Utility Impacts	\$0	\$53.5 Million
Cost of Construction	\$0	\$1.428 Billion



What is the Recommended Preferred Alternative?

1

More lanes on I-526.

To improve mobility and reduce traffic congestion, I-526 would be widened to include two additional lanes in each direction between Paul Cantrell Boulevard and North Rhett Avenue.

Alternative 2 from Rivers Avenue to International



2

No more weaving at the I-526/I-26 System Interchange.

To eliminate weaving and improve mobility through the I-526/I-26 system interchange, tight, closely spaced, low-speed ramps would be replaced by long, sweeping, high-speed ramps.

3

Introduction of Collector-Distributor Roads.

The Recommended Preferred Alternative features collector-distributor (CD) roads at all four legs of the I-526 and I-26 system interchange. Collector-distributor roads are lanes used to collect the most significant traffic movements and distribute them efficiently through congested areas to their destinations. These new, longer, separated ramps would add capacity to the system. They would allow the major traffic movements to be separated as they move throughout the system by guiding exiting vehicles to their destinations sooner. This would also prevent conflicts between entering and exiting traffic.



Wondering how your property might be impacted? Call or text 843.258.1135. Our Community Liaisons and Right-of-Way Specialists are there to assist you.

Recommended Preferred Alternative

Alternative 2A from Virginia Avenue to Rivers Avenue



4

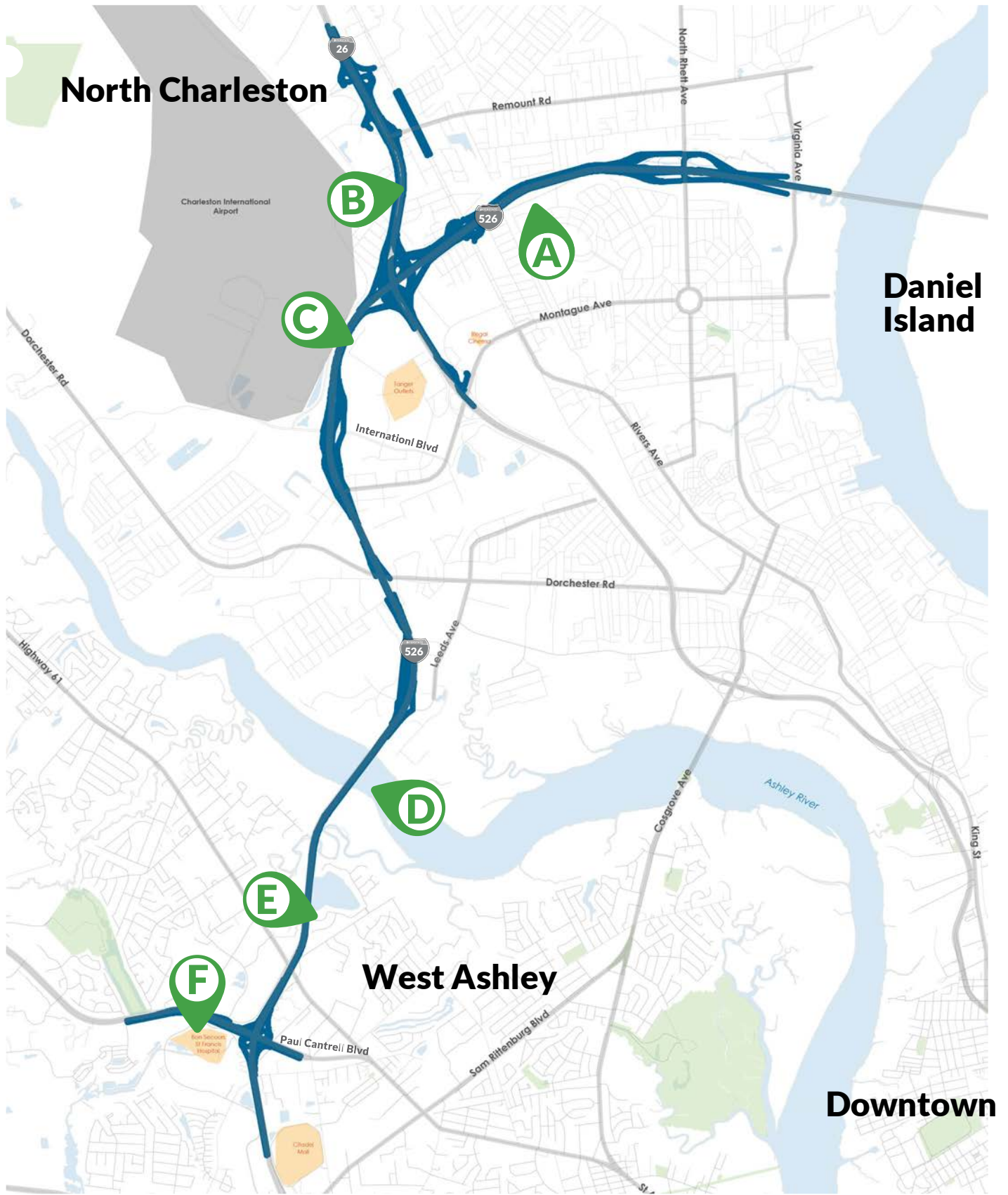
Improvements to the I-526 interchanges at both ends of the project.

At the east end of the project, the interchanges with North Rhett Avenue and Virginia Avenue would be improved to add access to the new collector-distributor (CD) roads to eliminate weaving between Virginia Avenue and North Rhett Avenue and to replace the low-speed loop ramps with higher speed on- and off-ramps. This weaving and tight ramps cause significant congestion today.



At the west end of the project, an entrance ramp from Paul Cantrell Boulevard would be improved to eliminate the need to merge when heading toward North Charleston. The exit ramp would be improved for those commuters heading north on Glenn McConnell Parkway, by bridging over the Magwood Drive intersection.

Alternative 1 from International Boulevard to Paul Cantrell Boulevard





Visit our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square)

✉ info@526LowcountryCorridor.com ☎ 843.258.1135(Call/Text)   @526Corridor

Recommended Preferred Alternative - Typical Sections of Improvement

What are the proposed lane configurations along the corridor?

Below are representative of the typical sections of improvement. The graphics correspond to the lettered labels on the map. To view the Recommended Preferred Alternative in greater detail, visit our public hearing webpage or our Community Office.

A Existing I-526 2-Lane Viaducts Retained & Proposed 2-Lane Structures Outside



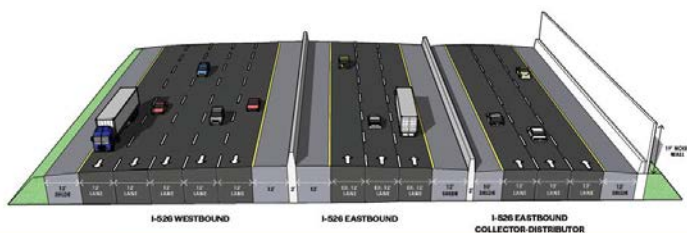
- Existing elevated section between I-26 & Virginia Ave would remain the same
- An elevated 2-lane collector-distributor road added in both directions with direct connections to I-26

B I-26 from Remount Road to I-526/I-126 Interchange



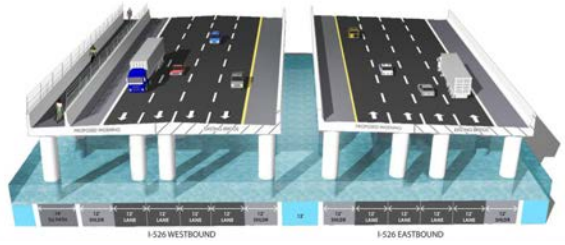
- Existing 10-lane section of I-26 from Remount Road to the I-526 interchange
- 3-Lane collector-distributor roads proposed on either side of the facility to reduce congestion

C I-526 from I-526/I-26 Interchange to International Boulevard



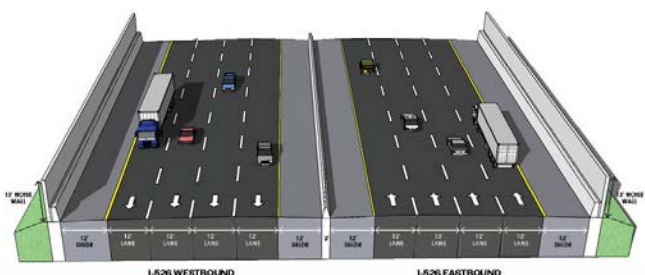
- Widened by 2 lanes for a total of 5 lanes in this section in the Westbound direction
- Existing 3 lanes would remain Eastbound
- A 3-lane collector-distributor road would provide access to I-26 to reduce congestion

D I-526 Mainline Ashley River Bridges



- Mainline widening of both East- and Westbound bridges over the Ashley River
- Would accommodate a 14-foot shared-use path across the Ashley River

E I-526 Mainline Eastbound and Westbound (with Noise Walls)



- Widening from 2 to 4 lanes in each direction with widening occurring to the center
- Noise walls proposed on both sides
- 12-Foot shoulders on the inside & outside planned for safety and potential future improvements

F Paul Cantrell Boulevard: Ashley Crossing Drive to Bridge over Magwood Drive



- Left to Right:
- Existing East- & Westbound Paul Cantrell Boulevard
 - New bridge heading Westbound over Magwood Drive to Glenn McConnell Parkway
 - Frontage road would remain for 2-way local traffic from Ashley Crossing Drive to Ashley River Road and 1-way from Magwood Drive to Ashley Crossing Drive

What would traffic look like in 2050?

Alleviating traffic congestion is at the core of the proposed I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST project.

When we conduct a traffic analysis, we look at what is happening today and also analyze projected growth and changes in the area, such as population growth, future land uses, and other planned transportation projects.

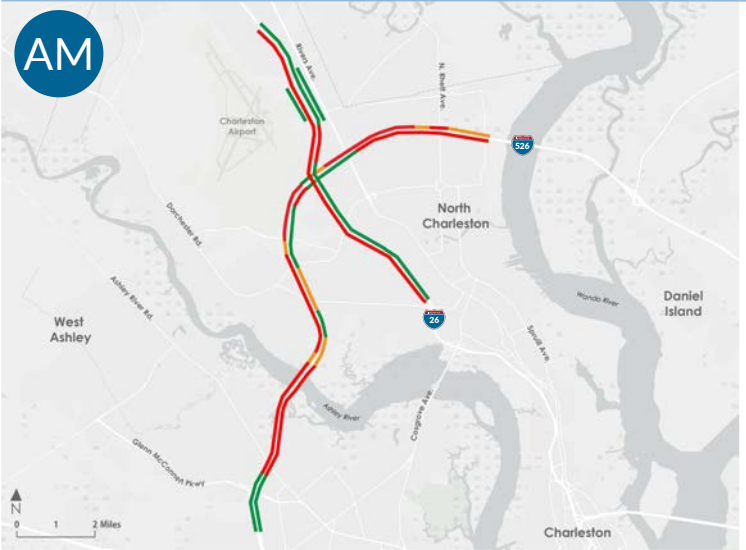
For the I-526 LCC WEST, we projected what traffic would look like in 2050 if there were no improvements made to the existing I-526 corridor from the North Rhett Avenue/Virginia Avenue Interchange in North Charleston to the Paul Cantrell Boulevard interchange in West Ashley. We also quantify how the proposed improvements would impact your quality of life.

There is a lot of congestion currently along this corridor. As you will see based on the amount of red and yellow in the graphics below, if no improvements are made, this congestion would continue to worsen. This is true for both morning and evening rush hours when traffic is at its heaviest. However, when comparing the potential traffic if the recommended preferred alternative is constructed, you will notice a lot of green, even in 2050.

How would these improvements affect your morning commute?

The average rush hour travel time on I-526 would be **13 minutes** between Sam Rittenberg Boulevard and Virginia Avenue, as opposed to **27 minutes** with no improvements!

2050 Level of Service (LOS) Projections with No Improvements Completed



2050 Level of Service (LOS) Projections with Improvements Completed



Visit our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square)

Traffic Analysis

The Traffic Analysis includes:



Population Growth



Regional Transportation Projects



Route Choices



Rush Hour Traffic

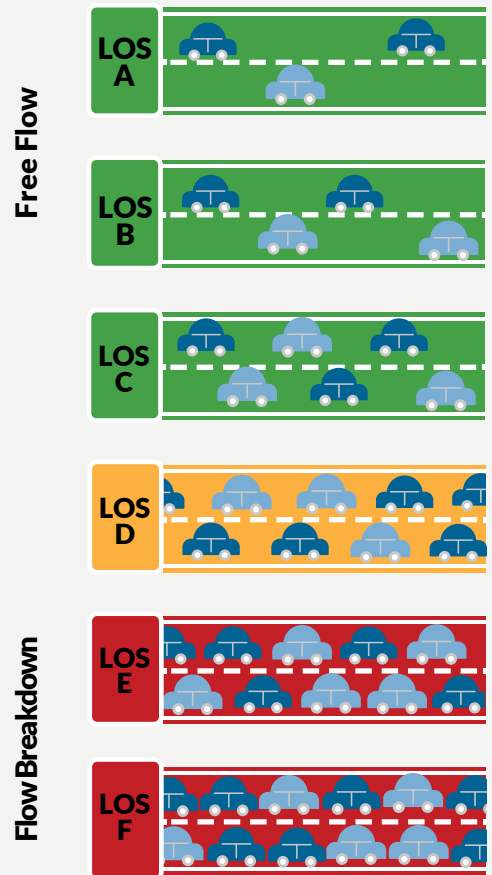


Federal & State Standards

How would these improvements affect your evening commute?

Average rush hour speeds on I-526 would be **46 MPH** between Sam Rittenberg Boulevard and Virginia Avenue, as opposed to **24 MPH** with no improvements!

WHAT IS LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)?



2050 Level of Service (LOS) Projections with No Improvements Completed



2050 Level of Service (LOS) Projections with Improvements Completed



How do we propose addressing Traffic Noise Concerns?

SCDOT conducted a detailed noise analysis of the project to understand existing and future noise levels. If the existing or future noise levels exceeded a level defined by the Federal Highway Administration as a noise impact, we considered how those noise levels might be reduced through the construction of a noise barrier. This analysis led us to identify the potential noise walls. As the next step, public preference for or against a wall will be obtained through a balloting process among adjacent property owners and tenants.

There are many ways to reduce noise. Noise walls are one tool, but berms and highway design can help reduce noise as well. Sometimes, noise walls will not reduce the noise because of the location of the road. Each new road or modification of an existing road that adds capacity must be examined individually to determine what measures can be taken.

For more information on how noise walls are determined and the process, visit:
www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/west/traffic-noise/



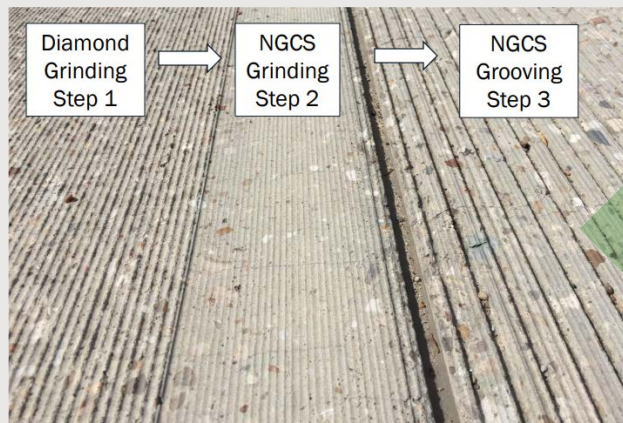
Other Noise Abatement Measures Under Consideration

Technology to Reduce Bridge Joint Noise



Image of T-Mat bridge expansion joint

Next Generation Concrete Surfaces (NGCS)



NGCS is the quietest and smoothest concrete pavement surface, while maintaining the appropriate friction for safety.

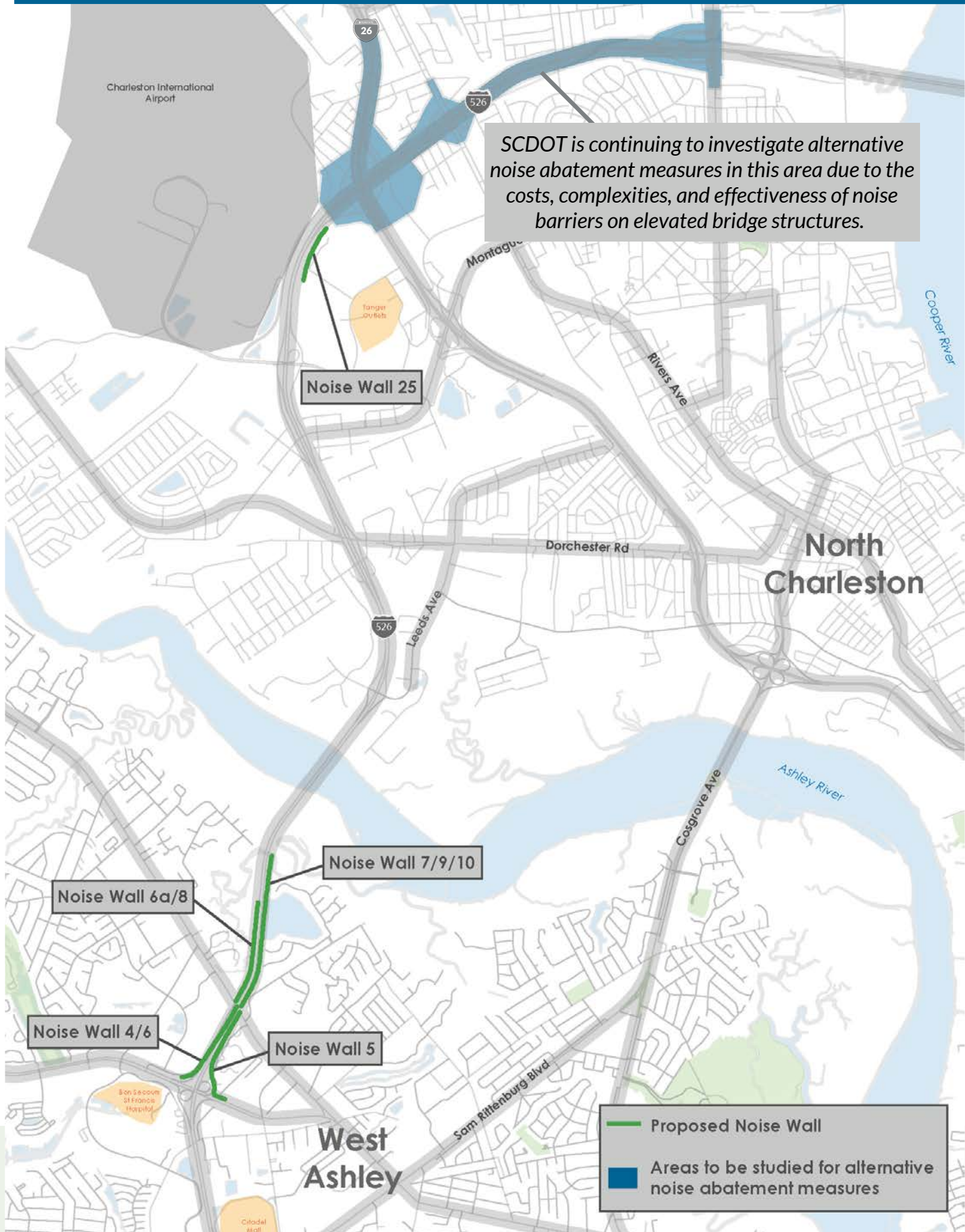
Source: TXDOT

1. Traditional Diamond Grinding is performed
2. NGCS grinding is done to create a uniform profile
3. NGCS grooving is then done to create negative texture

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Where do we propose measures to address traffic noise?



SCDOT is continuing to investigate alternative noise abatement measures in this area due to the costs, complexities, and effectiveness of noise barriers on elevated bridge structures.

Noise Wall 25

Noise Wall 7/9/10

Noise Wall 6a/8

Noise Wall 4/6

Noise Wall 5

West Ashley

North Charleston

- Proposed Noise Wall
- Areas to be studied for alternative noise abatement measures

How does SCDOT address the disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities?



The overarching goal of the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST Community Mitigation Plan is to effectively mitigate project impacts in partnership with residents of the Ferndale, Russelldale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park neighborhoods.

WHAT IS MITIGATION?

noun [mit-i-gey-shuhn]
the act of lessening the force or intensity of something unpleasant

The 4 Pillars of Community Mitigation

for Transportation Improvements



Cohesion

To provide a common vision and sense of belonging for residents who may have been divided



Enhancement

To increase the value, quality and attractiveness of a community by providing aesthetic improvements and replacing lost recreational amenities



Preservation

To connect the neighborhood's past, present, and future to encourage residents of all ages to thrive despite relocation impacts



Revitalization

To restore employment opportunities, safety, and affordable housing that has been diminished

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Community Mitigation Plan *Highlights*

Background

Every effort was made to avoid and minimize impacts to your community during the development of the project alternatives. However, because of the close proximity of many communities to the existing interstate, significant community impacts were unavoidable in all reasonable alternatives and would require community mitigation.



Community Mitigation Plan

Developed by identifying & considering the social needs & priorities of neighborhood residents

Community Office

In November 2019, a Community Office was opened in close proximity to the potentially impacted communities. Located in Gas Light Square at 5627 Rivers Avenue (CARTA Route 10), the Community Office is where you can meet one-on-one with the project team and connect with resource specialists such as right-of-way relocation experts.



- CAC's Role**
-  Advise
 -  Connect
 -  Represent
 -  Communicate

Community Advisory Council (CAC)

A Community Advisory Council (CAC) was formed as a resident-led group to facilitate meaningful engagement between the residents and SCDOT.



Social Needs Assessment

The CAC and residents of the potentially impacted neighborhoods completed a Social Needs Assessment (SNA) survey to provide insight into the daily operations, needs, and desires of the community.



Your Voice Matters!

**Live in a potentially impacted community?
NOW is the time to have your voice heard!**
Complete our survey & leave a comment by January 15, 2021:
www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/community-commitments

What are the potential impacts to Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale and adjacent communities?

The following impacts are unavoidable and would require community mitigation:



The need for SCDOT to purchase many homes & strips of land, resulting in less affordable housing



Removal of the Russelldale Community Center & changes to the Highland Terrace-Liberty Park Community Center

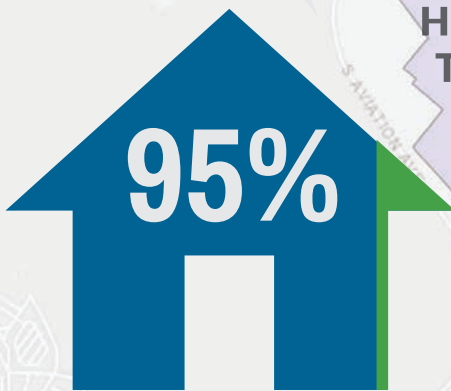


Increase in Traffic Noise

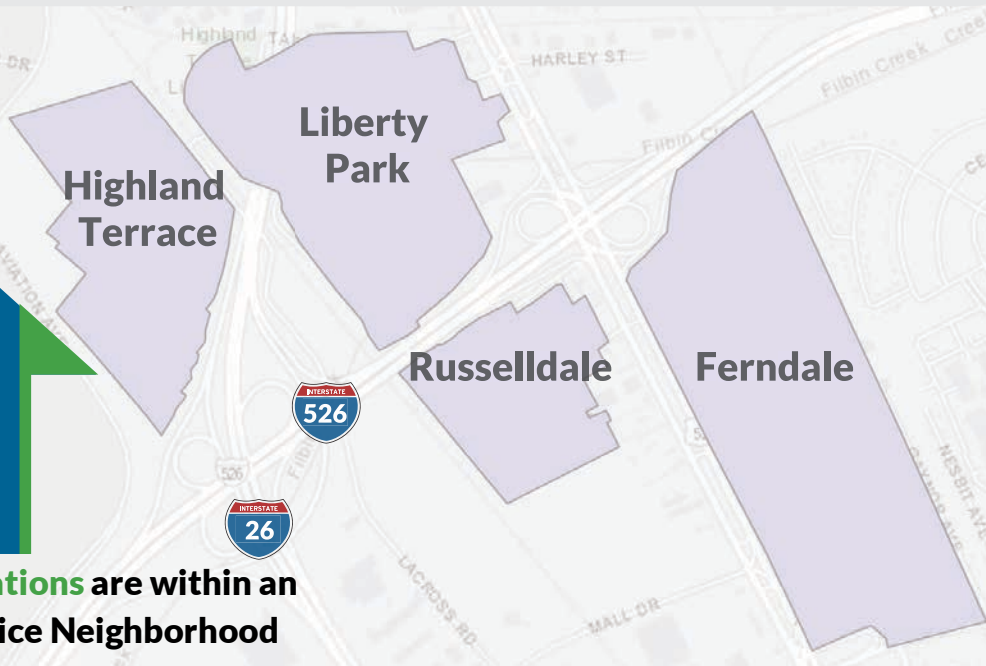


Temporary Noise & Dust during Construction (highways and replacement facilities)

The potential impacts of the project would negatively affect these neighborhoods more than others, and therefore should be offset by measures designed to benefit these communities. The goal of the Community Mitigation Plan is to do just that - to lessen the impacts to these environmental justice communities.



95%
of Residential Relocations are within an Environmental Justice Neighborhood



Visit our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square)

WHAT IS Environmental Justice (EJ)?

FAIR TREATMENT

No group of people should bear a disproportionate share of negative environmental consequences.



MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

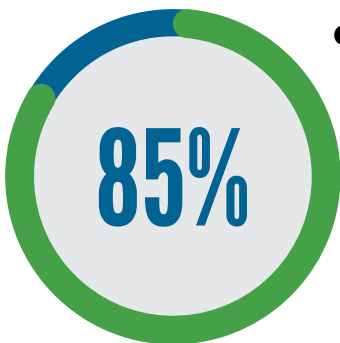
Decision-makers seek to encourage the involvement of potentially affected communities so they can participate in the process. This input may help identify community concerns and influence decisions about activities that may affect their environment and health.

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

What happens now that impacts have been identified?

The project team has worked closely with neighborhood leaders on the Community Advisory Council to identify potential impacts and ask for guidance on potential improvement measures. Community mitigation finds ways to offset the impacts of a project to a community. This could include the building of other facilities or adding programs designed to benefit the community. These suggested mitigation measures are identified in the DRAFT Community Mitigation Plan.

The Community Mitigation Plan online and summarized here is a DRAFT. We need input from the residents and business owners in the potentially impacted communities to help finalize this plan. NOW is the time for that input! After the public comment period ends on January 15, 2021, the project team will use your input to develop the FINAL plan.



of Residential Relocations are within 1 mile of the I-526/I-26 Interchange



of Residents in Russeldale & Highland Terrace rely on Section 8 housing assistance

Learn more about the impacts or the proposed draft plan here:
www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/Community-Commitments

What is included in the DRAFT Environmental Justice Community Mitigation plan, and when will it be implemented?

PUBLIC HEARING

FINAL DESIGN 2021-2023

RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION 2023-2027



Community History Preservation Study

A study will document the cultural history and character of the impacted neighboring communities. This study will be available online and at the new, replacement community center.



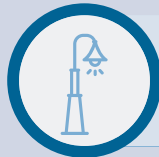
Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan

A Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan would identify a set of improvements to address bicycle and pedestrian safety, access to community centers, enhanced street aesthetics, project-related stormwater improvements, and traffic calming measures that would be implemented as part of the project.



Community Centers & Parks

A large, centrally located community center complex and 2 smaller parks will be constructed within the affected neighborhoods to replace lost, smaller centers and parks.



Connectivity; Bike & Pedestrian Safety

Enhanced bike and pedestrian facilities within the community to provide safe access to new community centers, parks, and transit stops.



Affordable Housing

Replacement affordable housing (multi- and single-family) will be constructed near the impacted communities. SCDOT is acquiring vacant lots within the communities early so displaced families will have affordable housing options within their communities.



Financial Literacy/First-time Home Buyer Counseling

Financial literacy and first-time home buyer counseling will be made available to displaced residents to assist in securing residential loans and transitioning from renters to homeowners.



School-to-Work Program

Will partner with educational institutions to develop internship opportunities in the fields of construction, engineering, and transportation.



College Scholarships

Up to \$50,000 in scholarships will be awarded to students from the impacted communities (up to 10 scholarships of \$5,000 each.)

Get more details, take the survey, or participate in our Community Forum:
www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/Community-Commitments

CONSTRUCTION 2027-2032

Mitigation Schedule is based on approval of environmental documentation without legal challenge; subject to change



Community Programs & Activities

The new modern community center will be equipped to provide enhanced programs and activities, including priority for community residents for programs and facilities.



Pre-Employment Training

Job readiness training will be provided to prepare program participants for On-The-Job Training during the project's construction.

As of September 11, 2020

Your Voice Matters!

**NOW is the time to have your voice heard!
Provide a comment by January 15, 2021**

Meaningful input is our number one priority. Below are the ways to make your voice heard in the official project records. The public will have until January 15, 2021 to provide comments and participate in the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan Survey.

**Official Comment Period
October 30, 2020 - January 15, 2021**

**Make sure to include your name &
address for the record!**

How can I make a comment?



Project Website

526LowcountryCorridor.com

Fill out a comment form on the project website.



Project Email

info@526LowcountryCorridor.com



Project Hotline

843.258.1135 (Call Us)

Press "2" to leave a verbal comment. Comments will be limited to 2 minutes. Verbal comments left here will be played at the Live Virtual Comment Session.



Mail

Joy Riley, PE, PMP, CPM, DBIA
SC Department of Transportation
Post Office Box 191
955 Park Street, Room 401
Columbia, SC 29202-0191



Live, Virtual Comment Session

526LowcountryCorridor.com/WESTPH

A live public hearing comment session will be held on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. Join online by visiting the web address above and clicking the link or by calling in. If you need the call-in information, call us!

There will be a short presentation followed by a listening session. Comments received on the hotline will be played after hearing from those who have pre-registered. To provide a 2-minute verbal comment, you must register in advance by visiting the webpage above or by calling the Community Office. No registration is needed to listen.

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.

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

6:00 - 8:00 PM

Register Online or by Phone to Comment



Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Survey

526LCCWest.metroquest.com



Visit our Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue, Gas Lite Square)



info@526LowcountryCorridor.com



843.258.1135(Call/Text)



@526Corridor



SCDOT Project Manager
Joy Riley, PE, DBIA, PMP, CPM