



**The Town of Hilton Head Island
U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee
February 5, 2020, 3:00 p.m.
BENJAMIN M. RACUSIN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
AGENDA**

**As a courtesy to others please turn off/silence ALL mobile devices during the meeting.
Thank You.**

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. FOIA Compliance** - Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the requirements of the Town of Hilton Head Island.
- 3. Approval of Minutes** – January 29, 2020 Meeting
- 4. Interim Report and Strategy Recommendations to Town Council**
- 5. SCDOT's Response to Committee Questions**
- 6. Chairman's Comments**
- 7. Public Comment**
- 8. Adjournment**



Town of Hilton Head Island
U.S. 278 Gateway Corridor Committee
Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.
Benjamin M. Racusin Council Chambers
MEETING MINUTES

Present From the Committee: David Johnson, Jr., *Chairman*; Frank Babel, Alex Brown, Tom Crews, Craig Forrest, Hannah Horne, Tom Peeples, Brendan Reilley, John Taylor, *Members*;

Absent from Committee: Sarah Steward, *Co-Chair*; Jerry Cutrer, David Lunka, Kyle Theodore *Members*; Marc Grant, *Hilton Head Island Liaison*; Larry McElynn, *Beaufort County Liaison*; Dan Wood, *Bluffton Liaison*;

Present from Town Council & Town Staff: Bill Harkins, David Ames, Tamara Becker, *Town Council*; Charles Cousins, *Assistant to the Town Manager*; Shawn Colin, *Director of Community Development*; Anne Cyran, *Senior Planner*; Sheryse DuBose, *Historic Neighborhoods Preservation Administrator*; Krista Wiedmeyer, *Exec. Assistant/Town Clerk*

1. Call to Order

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. **FOIA Compliance** – Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and mailed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act and the Town of Hilton Head Island requirements.

3. Approval of Minutes – January 22, 2019

Mr. Crews moved to approve. Mr. Peeples seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved as written.

Chairman Johnson asked for a motion to amend the agenda, inviting Craig Winn to address the members of the Committee, to update them on the current status of the project. Mr. Crews moved to approve, Mr. Peeples seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Johnson addressed some community misconceptions. Specifically related to the recommendation that the Committee has been working on to submit to Town Council. He said that while the recommendation will not speak specifically to any one particular reasonable alternative, it will be focused on the five different areas of concern throughout the corridor. Chairman Johnson said that the Committee did not vote against the use of any of the reasonable alternatives, but that due to the lack of information for each one, the Committee did not feel it was appropriate to single out or recommend one specific alternative.

Chairman Johnson said that there have also been comments made to suggest that the SCDOT is driving the process. He said in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Services, the Department of Army Corps of Engineers, and Federal Highway Department, it is certainly true that the SCDOT is driving the Environmental Assessment process. Chairman Johnson stated that because the EA is a federally mandated protocol, it has to work the same way in every community with every project. He said that “we” meaning governmental officials invited the SCDOT to expand the process beyond the one bridge span to include the entire corridor. Chairman Johnson said that he just wanted to make sure that it is clear that the SCDOT was invited to review the entire corridor.

Mr. Winn, with SCDOT addressed the Committee and citizens in attendance concerning several matters related to the project. The first being that the SCDOT is about 50% through the EA process and continues to work with the required agencies. He also reported that they are currently refining the some of the alternatives, which he reviewed and said the information as refined would be on their project website shortly. Mr. Winn said that they are continuing to do their field studies and starting to evaluate the costs associated with each of the different alternatives. He reported that they are planning to hold meetings with the citizens whose property could be directly affected sometime in February. Mr. Winn then discussed the two firms they are working with for this project, KCI and Wilbur Smith Associates. He reviewed the credentials and experience of both firms, expressing the level of service and professional experience that comes with both of these firms. Mr. Winn then took questions from both the Committee and citizens. He addressed matters such as traffic simulations, reviewing what has being spent for traffic modeling/simulations. Mr. Winn explained that cost associated with the project is still being reviewed, but will be available before the release of the preferred alternative.

4. Discussion by Committee of Revised Committee Recommendation Document

Chairman Johnson opened the discussion up to the Committee, stating that the Committee had finished up the review of the essential recommendation, but that perhaps there was additional discussion that needed to take place. Mr. Brown indicated that he had two suggestions to include on the recommendation document. The first being the hydrology impacts throughout the island. Chairman Johnson asked if this was necessary to add, or should it be included in the cover memo to Council. The Committee as a whole agreed that it should become part of the recommendation, not in the cover memo. Mr. Brown also suggested that a recommendation related to the connectivity to the Cross Island Parkway, not just stopping at Spanish Wells Road. Chairman Johnson said that he rather include this type of item in the cover memo. After discussion with the Committee about the same, it was determined that this would not be its own recommendation, but something the Chair would include in the memo to Council. Mr. Babel reiterated a previous request to include traffic calming measures in the recommendation. Mr. Forrest explained that the Committee explored this in previous meetings and had determined that it was most appropriate to remove such a recommendation and include the incorporation of intelligent transportation systems. Chairman Johnson echoed Mr. Forrest's statement as did others on the Committee. With no further discussion, the Committee accepted the recommendation as drafted.

5. Discussion by Committee of Revisions to Mitigation Ideas Document

Chairman Johnson opened up the discussion to Mr. Brown to review the changes made to the document. Mr. Brown reviewed the changes noting the following:

- Expand scope of report to include route of Alternatives 5 and 6 in addition to current corridor.
- Recognize that acquisition of some Town-owned land came with restrictions and mitigation opportunities are limited to unrestricted Town-owned land.
- Expand the possible use of Town-owned land from "in the area" to "on the Island".
- State that dealing with the impact of the US 278 Gateway Corridor Project is a community responsibility.
- Recommend that the recommended mitigation effort should begin as soon as possible.
- Recommend that the Town designate a Staff member to act as point person for the effort.
- Recommend that the Town undertake the effort in addition to any initiative by SCDOT.
- Recognize that any transfers of Town-owned land may require rezoning.
- Seek to include funding for any negotiated mitigation in project costs to the extent possible.

The Committee discussed the document, but with no changes, accepted the document as drafted.

6. Discussion by Committee of Aesthetics Recommendation Document

Chairman Johnson opened the discussion to Mr. Crews who reviewed the document, citing no changes had been made since the last time it had been reviewed. There was some discussion about specifically what type of lighting needed to be used, but ultimately the document was left unchanged. As a whole, the Committee accepted the document as drafted.

7. Discussion by Committee of Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Recommendation Document

Chairman Johnson opened the discussion up to Mr. Babel who reviewed the updated document, and reviewed as written. With little discussion, and no changes, the Committee accepted the document as drafted.

8. Chairman's Comments

Chairman Johnson stated that all of the documents and recommendations that were reviewed during the meeting would be put into one full recommendation to Council. He said that a copy of the recommendation would be included in the next agenda packet for the Committee to review and consider.

9. Public Comment

Chairman Johnson opened the discussion to questions and comments from the general public. The public at large addressed the committee, making statements as they related to their concerns of the project as a whole. There was still public request for the Town/County to pay for an independent traffic study and supply it to the SCDOT once completed. Chairman Johnson, said that he thought the Committee had made it clear during the last meeting, that a recommendation would not be made to include an additional independent study. Many members of the Committee acknowledged that an independent study at this junction would not be appropriate at this time, but maybe after the preferred alternative was released. Chairman Johnson repeated and noted that in the recommendation that was being submitted to Council for review, would not include such a recommendation.

10. Adjournment – The meeting concluded and was adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Submitted by: Krista Wiedmeyer, Exec. Assistant/Town Clerk

Approved: 02/05/2019

DRAFT

**US 278 Gateway Corridor Committee
Interim Report to Town Council**

February 2020

“The purpose of the Committee is to work cooperatively with the South Carolina Department of Transportation to gather information, obtain and provide citizen input into the environmental assessment process and make recommendations to Town Council regarding the US 278 Environmental Assessment and Design Alternatives.”

–from the Town of Hilton Head’s charter for the US 278 Gateway Corridor Committee

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and other agencies began the environmental assessment process in the fall of 2018. The process, which is now about 40% complete, is a federally mandated first step to address structural deficiencies at the existing eastbound Mackay Creek bridge, increase capacity and reduce congestion along US 278 from Moss Creek Drive to Spanish Wells Road.

This interim report summarizes the work of the US 278 Corridor Committee (the Committee) to date and recommends a strategy for Town Council to consider in its communication with the SCDOT.

Work to date. The Committee first met in February 2019 and has met 32 times since then. We represent a wide variety of interests on Hilton Head Island. Members of the Committee have made 13-15 presentations to citizen groups and have had many conversations within our communities and with policy makers. We have taken questions from the public at each of our meetings. Between committee meetings, public meetings and stakeholder meetings we have met with the SCDOT 10 times. We gave the SCDOT input from communities and individuals before the SCDOT presented six recommended alternatives in the fall of 2019, and we gave the SCDOT feedback from the community after the alternatives were announced.

Timing. The SCDOT will begin to narrow the six recommended alternatives in March or April of this year, with the goal of announcing a single preferred alternative in the fall. In order to meaningfully influence the SCDOT's decision-making process, Town Council needs to formally make clear to the SCDOT what it sees as the critical issues for this project as soon as possible.

Recommended Strategy. Given the scope of and the timeline for the Environmental Assessment, it should not come as a surprise that the SCDOT is still analyzing many aspects of this project, including traffic patterns, intersection design, exact right-of-ways, property impacts and costs. Because these issues are not yet finalized, the Committee decided not to recommend or reject any one of the six alternatives at this time. Instead, the Committee has laid out the elements we consider to be essential for any solution to be effective. These touch on specific areas along the corridor as well as considerations for the corridor as a whole.

We emphasize that this is a work in progress. This is a project with far reaching consequences for the future of the island. In the months ahead, there will continue to be much communication between residents, communities, our committee, Town Council and the SCDOT. At the end of the day, we want a solution that satisfies the Guiding Principles that were approved both by our Town Council and Beaufort County Council. But there are many steps and much work to be done before we know exactly what that solution will be.

Respectfully submitted by David C. Johnson on behalf of the Committee

1/ Essential Elements of Success for the 278 Corridor Project

2/ Framework for Aesthetics

3/ Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Recommendations

4/ Potential Mitigation for Property Owners

5/ The US 278 Gateway Corridor Project Guiding Principles

1/ Essential Elements of Success for the 278 Corridor Project

Causeways

Engineer the three causeways within the corridor to reduce the potential of damage that could result in limited or loss of vehicular access to Hilton Head Island, Jenkins Island and Hog Island.

Due the nature of construction and elevation of these causeways the potential exists that significant storm events could result in damage or breaches of these structures.

Bridges

Ensure that all bridges have a similar useful life post project.

Pinckney Island

Eliminate all left turns on Pinckney Island. Maintain the water-oriented access and preservation of the environment, minimizing impact to the wildlife and any historical landmarks throughout.

Jenkins Island

Improve safety on Jenkins Island by eliminating all left turn movements and maintaining adequate access to all adjacent businesses, neighborhoods and cultural landmarks.

Stoney

Mitigate impacts of route choice to property owners and businesses by considering frontage roads for improved access and opportunities for relocation of homes and businesses if the owner chooses. The use of Town owned property should be considered to accomplish this.

Provide for efficient traffic flow on and off the Cross Island Expressway.

Consider access improvements that will enhance the opportunity for the economic development in Stoney.

Corridor-wide

- ✓ Design and program signals and intersections according to best practices so that they do not create backups on US 278 while also providing adequate opportunities for traffic on the side streets to enter and exit US 278.

- ✓ Incorporate intelligent transportation system technology throughout the corridor.
- ✓ Minimize impacts to the environment and meet any mitigation requirements locally.
- ✓ Cooperate with the Town and County to address aesthetics that reinforce the character of the community. Recognize that this includes the transitional experience from the mainland to the islands, including but not limited to bridge design, gateway improvements and corridor landscaping.
- ✓ Minimize the impacts to residences, businesses and traffic during the construction phase. Scheduling and phasing of construction should consider seasonal needs.
- ✓ Create roadway redundancy to address emergencies.
- ✓ Enhance the roadway's ability to meet community's needs resulting from natural disasters
- ✓ Provide safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout the corridor as well as provide for safe crossings at strategic locations. Provide connections to existing bike/ped facilities on each end of the corridor.
- ✓ Work with the Town and other governments in the region to plan for alternative transportation options – existing and future multi-modal needs, park and ride, etc.
- ✓ Mitigate noise impacts.
- ✓ Minimize the visual impact of any expansion of lanes in the entire corridor.
- ✓ Mitigate hydrology impacts throughout the corridor.
- ✓ Improve the level of service at all intersections throughout the corridor.

2/ Framework for Aesthetics

A primary aesthetic focus of the corridor should be creation of a sequence of experiences moving from the Mainland to the Islands. The visual and transitional experiences should create a Gateway; and the Island's "Blend with Nature" design standards should apply to all physical improvements constructed by SCDOT.

As a point of reference, the Town's Design Guide should be applied in determining appropriate bridge/roadway design; landscaping and tree protection; community character; materials and colors; lighting; signage; introduction of new bike and pedestrian paths, etc. Other characteristics that are not part of the specific road and road right-of-way design should acknowledge and celebrate the Communities' identity (i.e. Pinckney Island as a natural preserve area; Hog Island and Jenkins Island as distinct but connected components of the island hop from the mainland; and cultural/historical recognition of the Stoney Neighborhood).

As SCDOT provides options we suggest that the Corridor should be viewed as a canvas to be painted upon. All options should be reviewed for compatibility with this design philosophy.

Bridge/Roadway Design:

- ✓ Understated
- ✓ Nature Blending
- ✓ Allows vista views from vehicles
- ✓ Utilizes "do no harm" approach to storm drainage
- ✓ Utilizes native materials & colors

Community Design:

- ✓ Recognizes significance of Native Islander community
- ✓ Provides safe movement of pedestrians & cyclists within the corridor
- ✓ Provides a natural approach to noise abatement

Landscaping:

- ✓ Retains existing vegetation, whenever possible
- ✓ Includes replacement canopy trees
- ✓ Favors indigenous/native materials

Lighting:

- ✓ Utilizes low impact light sources (i.e. foot candles/color temp)
- ✓ Utilizes low profile fixtures (height)
- ✓ Limited to intersections and on pedestrian/bicycle pathways

Signage:

- ✓ Limited signage in the corridor
- ✓ Utilizes a unified package to minimize visual clutter & distractions

3/ Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Recommendations

Introduction

The US 278 Corridor serves a vital role for Hilton Head as it is the only vehicular access between Hilton Head Island, Jenkins Island, Hog Island, Pinckney Island and the mainland. While this important link for motorized vehicles has been established since 1956, little consideration has been given to providing a similar link for both pedestrians and bicycles. The Town of Hilton Head Island began constructing a pathway network in the early 1990s with its initial emphasis being along the on-island route of US 278. Since then, bicycling has become an important island transportation element and amenity with significant growth anticipated on the mainland. This bicycle/pedestrian network on US 278 currently ends at the US 278/Gumtree Road intersection. A narrow sidewalk immediately adjacent to the highway extends from that point towards the bridges but ends at the western edge of the Stoney Community. On the mainland, a series of pathways and bicycle lanes have been created by the Town of Bluffton and Beaufort County to link many areas in Southern Beaufort County. However there is a gap in the two networks from the Buckingham Landing Rd./ Bluffton Parkway intersection to US 278 on the mainland to the US 278/Gumtree intersection on Hilton Head Island. The current planning process by SCDOT to address deficiencies in the US 278 Corridor between these two points offers a tremendous opportunity to eliminate this gap and take a much needed step in the creation of a safe, integrated roadway and pathway system connecting all potential corridor users throughout the jurisdiction of Southern Beaufort County. While SCDOT has stated that the replacement of the bridges over MacKay and Skull Creek will include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, the following recommendations should be included by SCDOT when addressing the existing network gap.

Recommendations

- ✓ All efforts should be made to insure that SCDOT's planned pedestrian and bicycle improvements link the two existing networks at the terminus of the Bluffton Parkway pathways at Buckingham Landing Rd. to US 278/Moss Creek and US 278/Gumtree with a pathway system that is physically separated from the vehicular travel lanes. Further these improvements should provide a safe connection to all properties along the corridor.
- ✓ The pathway facilities should provide all users with a good experience by:
 - All improvements should be attractive and blend in with the architecture of the bridge and any other aesthetic considerations included in the corridor.
 - Physical barriers should be included on the bridge to separate vehicles from the pathway.

- A trail head for bridge users with parking should be included on both Jenkins and Pinkney Islands.
- Safety features should be included such as:
 - barriers on the water side of the bridge pathway
 - directional signage
 - pavement markings on the pathway bridge to separate pedestrians from bicycles
- The pathway on the bridge will offer excellent views. Provisions should be made so pathway users can stop and enjoy the views without blocking the pathway.
- Educational signage should be included along the route.
- Lighting meeting the International Dark-Sky Association standards should be considered.
- ✓ The existing sidewalk in the corridor should be eliminated and any sections of US 278 with raised curbing should be replaced with a 5 foot paved shoulder where practical, taking into account and balancing the needs of property owners in the needed additional right of way. The addition of this shoulder is to accommodate on road active cyclists and e-bikes.

4/ Potential Mitigation for Property Owners

Background

In the event SCDOT's "Preferred Alternative" for the Gateway Corridor Project involves expansion from four to six lanes of the current roadway between the causeway onto Hilton Head Island to the Spanish Wells Road intersection or incorporates routes in Reasonable Alternatives 5 and 6, this would result in significant impact to the properties along the selected corridor. The Gateway Corridor Committee encourages the Town of Hilton Head Island to explore the use of unrestricted Town-owned land on the Island to create land swap, relocation or other mitigation opportunities for the impacted property owners as possible alternatives to SCDOT taking of right-of-way through condemnation proceedings.

Objective

Dealing with the impact of the proposed US 278 Gateway Corridor Project is a community responsibility. The SCDOT is scheduled to begin meeting in February with property owners who are potentially impacted by the current set of reasonable alternatives. With SCDOT's announcement of the Preferred Alternative currently scheduled for the fall of 2020, it is in the best interests of the impacted property owners and the Town to start now and use the intervening months to work out reasonable solutions for improving conditions in the corridor for the property owners and the community at large. The ultimate goal would be to create a proactive versus reactive environment for dealing with the impact of a no-build decision or if SCDOT's Preferred Alternative incorporates the current corridor.

Recommendations to Achieve Objective

1. The Gateway Corridor Committee recommends the Town organize, advertise, coordinate and conduct a single meeting with affected property owners along the current corridor from the causeway to Spanish Wells Road and the corridor for Alternatives 5 and 6.
 - a. The effort should be initiated as soon as possible.
 - b. The Town should designate a Staff member to act as point person for the effort.
 - c. The Town's effort should be undertaken in addition to any initiatives by SCDOT.
2. The Town should identify individual parcels impacted and the respective property owners, then send meeting invitations to each affected property owner.

3. The agenda for the meeting with affected property owners should include:
 - a. An explanation of the role of the Gateway Corridor Committee and discussion of the Committee's Guiding Principles as adopted by the Town and Beaufort County.
 - b. A presentation by SCDOT to:
 - i. Bring all parties up to date on the Project's status and timetable.
 - ii. Review each SCDOT "Reasonable Alternative" and explain how it will impact the current corridor.
 - c. A presentation by the Town to:
 - i. Explain the advantages of working with the Town now versus waiting for the final Preferred Alternative.
 - ii. State that the Town is committed to working with interested property owners to explore mitigation options, including the use of Town-owned land where appropriate.
 - iii. Offer to meet one-on-one with any interested property owner.
4. The Town should follow up individually with any affected property owner who did not attend the meeting to convey its willingness to explore mitigation options.
5. The Town should meet one-on-one with any interested property owner and explore mitigation options for the affected property. Any transfers of Town-owned land to affected property owners may require rezoning.
6. Funding for negotiated mitigation should be absorbed in the costs of the project to the extent possible.

5/ The US 278 Gateway Corridor Project Guiding Principles

1. Fix the transportation issues in the corridor in a way that improves the safety and quality of life for all residents, workers and visitors to Hilton Head Island

- Address transportation needs for natural disasters and resiliency of island access
- Consider future transportation alternatives

2. Improve the safety and quality of life for the residents of the neighborhoods and businesses directly impacted by the US 278 corridor

- Stoney
- Neighborhoods on Jenkins and Hog Islands (including but not limited to Windmill Harbor)

3. Have a gateway to and from Hilton Head Island that the region will be proud of

- Aesthetically pleasing and reflecting the Hilton Head Island/Low Country values
- Safe and functional pathways for pedestrians and cyclists
- Minimizes environmental impacts and enhances the national asset of Pinckney Island

**INPUT FROM US 278 GATEWAY CORRIDOR COMMITTEE
DURING SCDOT OFFICIAL COMMENT PERIOD
FOR US 278 CORRIDOR PROJECT
OCTOBER 24, 2019**

Process

We are looking forward to SCDOT developing details on intersection improvements, signals, etc. and that information being shared with the public. Additionally, while we have heard from you that merely making improvements to intersection design and signals will not significantly improve congestion and capacity of the corridor, the public needs to better understand why this is so and have access to the data that backs this up. This would include outputs from the traffic model, the latest studies and most recent data resulting from signal timing changes. [The draft preliminary traffic report is being finalized and will be released to the public as soon as it is approved along with the draft growth memo. Additional traffic analysis will be completed for intersection level design.](#)

How do you address public comments that six lanes will not be enough and in the future and we will be back with another discussion of widening the corridor roadway beyond six lanes?

[The traffic analysis for the US 278 Corridor Improvements Project indicates 6-lanes will be needed to reasonably accommodate the traffic expected in the project design year \(2045\). Design year in this case means what will the conditions be in 20 years and will the proposed roadway configuration be too much or too little to handle the estimated traffic. The Lowcountry regional travel demand model has a future year projection year of 2040. A 20 year design year is standard practice for transportation projects as it as far out in the future traffic demands can be reasonably projected. We do not want to build something that exceeds the anticipated needs and like your question, we do not want to build something that puts us right back in the same situation in the future. With more than 60 years of roadway planning experience, the team has a firm understanding of how to balance today's problems with tomorrow's needs while being mindful of the project costs.](#)

How is the project team considering current and future transportation alternatives? While we understand that current mass transit impacts were incorporated into the traffic model and projections how will the future growth of alternatives be considered? How long term is the project team's horizon?

[This project is being designed for 2045 conditions meaning we are designing to adequately accommodate 20 years of growth based on numbers provided by local governmental agencies. The regional demand model has horizon year of 2040 and includes future transportation alternatives in the analysis. This is a standard policy followed by the SCDOT for future roadway needs and planning purposes. The future growth of transportation alternatives were included in the 2045 analysis and the 278 Corridor Improvements will not preclude the inclusion of transportation alternatives in the future.](#)

How is the project team planning to address congestion and traffic (including seasonal, major events, and possible evacuation) during the construction phase of the project? Can you provide any thoughts you might have on phasing the construction of the project?

[The SCDOT plans to mandate 4-lanes of traffic be open throughout construction with limited lane-closures during strategic, preplanned traffic shifts. SCDOT has lane closure restrictions on US 278 7 days a week typically from 6am to 10pm depending on the direction of travel. Lane](#)

closure may be allowed at nighttime but the staging of project will try to reduce the need for lane closures. This will ensure the roadway capacity will not be reduced during a majority of the construction. It should be noted limited lane closures will be required during traffic shifts to open up any widened areas or new sections of roadway and to make the necessary tie-ins when required. The SCDOT will also work with local agencies for special events where larger amounts of traffic are anticipated to ensure all 4-lanes of traffic are open with no lane closures as a direct result of the roadway construction activities.

What information will you share with the public before the Preferred Alternative is announced? Specifically, will you share any cost estimates? It will be difficult for the public to be put into a position of favoring certain alternatives only to find out that the SCDOT has determined that they are not feasible from a cost perspective.

Any information on the reasonable alternative impacts that do not pre-determine the preferred alternative will be released after it is vetted by FHWA and the resource agencies, finalized and not subject to any additional revisions. The SCDOT will have high level costs estimates for each of the 6 Reasonable Alternatives as costs are a part of the evaluation process. We will be happy to share those costs estimates once the alignments have been fully vetted and costs assigned to them.

How will you collaborate with the HHI Town staff and County staff on any right of way acquisitions? How might you work with the same staff on comprehensive solutions to issues presented by this project?

The SCDOT has very strict policies and procedures regarding the acquisition of property for roadway projects. We are required to follow Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA) (42 U.S.C. 4201-4655) and implementing regulations at 49 CFR part 24. We will be happy to coordinate the right of way acquisitions with the Town and County Staff to the extent Federal Highways allows.

Specifics

All of the proposed alternatives would impact the Stoney community. Can you provide additional information about what the SCDOT is considering to mitigate this impact?

The SCDOT is currently working on the community impact assessment as part of the Environmental Assessment and that will help to guide discussion on community mitigation but the SCDOT is open to mitigation suggestions from any property owner who may be impacted by this project. Over the years many options have been proposed to help mitigate impacts a roadway project may have on a particular piece of property and the SCDOT has consider each of these as part of the corresponding project.

Why do Alternatives 5 and 6 tie into the existing route at Spanish Wells Road rather than connecting directly with the Cross Island Parkway? This has repeatedly come up at our public forums and presentations as a logical connection.

All alternatives provide the necessary improvements to accommodate the Cross Island Parkway. Although the project terminus is called out as Spanish Wells, it is not the absolute end of the project. We are looking at the Cross Island Parkway and how it ties in and best fits with this project. The impacts associated with tying directly into the Cross Island Parkway would have potential precluding those alternatives from moving forward.

None of the alternatives include grade-separated intersections on Jenkins Island. What is SCDOT's

thinking on this?

The SCDOT has not excluded any design element from consideration on this project. As we said before, we are systematically evaluating the traffic needs for this corridor. We are still in the alignment stage at this point and will be drilling down to an intersection improvements stage now that we have reasonable alternatives. Potential intersection alternatives/improvements are now being evaluated.

Are you considering reversible lanes during high traffic hours?

Yes, we are considering reversible lanes. Data has already been introduced and preliminary discussions are ongoing.

Are you considering pedestrian improvements and pedestrian friendly crossings for certain high traffic areas?

Yes, as with any highway improvements, we are looking at pedestrian accommodations. In this particular project, we are also focusing on bicycle traffic as well.

You have stated several times that bike/pedestrian facilities will be included on the bridge. Are you also including bike/pedestrian connectivity throughout the entire corridor as well as connections to the existing pathway systems in Bluffton and Hilton Head?

Yes, based on public input we have included bike/pedestrian facilities in all of the Reasonable Alternatives and have looked at connecting the existing facilities to this project. The inclusion of Bike/Ped facilities in the final design will be subject to funding and maintenance agreements with the Town and County.

Are alternatives to the Beaufort County Jenkins Island project being considered given you are looking at broader corridor objectives since this project was first addressed?

The SCDOT is continuing its work for the US 278 Corridor as if the Jenkins Island Project continues its current path. However, we are mindful of the possible changes as it relates to that project and will be prepared to make revisions if needed. We are also looking at other alternatives to improve the access and safety of Jenkins Island.

If an alternative is chosen that doesn't include using the current westbound spans, what factors would you consider to allow them to be used for pedestrian/bike, recreation and disaster access?

Typically on projects like this the SCDOT is open to the idea of other agencies taking over the existing structures if they are to be removed as a result of new structures. However, many items must be addressed prior to approval for these structure(s) to remain. Items such as permitting, maintenance, liabilities, ownership and in this case Coast Guard approvals would be required to consider leaving the structure(s) in place.

How are speed limits factored into corridor design? Traffic calming measures?

The SCDOT is planning to recommend a consistent speed limit for the corridor, especially through the Mackay Creek and Skull Creek Bridge areas. Speeds are determined by many factors including the type of facility, the amount of traffic using the facility, horizontal and vertical alignments, crash history and the speed in which the traffic is moving in today's environment. This corridor is being evaluated and a design speed and posted speed limit will be recommended as a part of this project.

Storm/Accident Readiness

What consideration is being given to improve the existing causeways resilience to storm surge during hurricanes and the extreme high tides that are becoming more common?

The SCDOT is considering alternative stabilization methods and designs to ensure the causeways can accommodate weather conditions for the area. We are also considering ways to maximize the existing causeways where needed to limit the impacts. The elevation of the causeways and any improvements will be evaluated for the preferred alternative in the preliminary and final plans.

How do you consider the impacts of significant events such as natural disasters on the viability of the bridges, or major accidents (vehicular or maritime) on continuous traffic flow on the bridges? Does this affect bridge design?

The SCDOT is considering the potential natural disasters as they relate to this area as we develop the options for this corridor. Any new structures will be designed for seismic events as well as for major accidents on the bridge.