

February 28, 2025

The Honorable Tom Davis
South Carolina Senate
203 Gressette Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Senator Davis:

As you are aware, Beaufort County and the Town of Hilton Head Island are in discussions about revising the US-278 Bridge project into a smaller project focused on the eastbound approach from Bluffton onto Hilton Head Island.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has developed an alternative to build a single span across Mackay Creek and Skull Creek. While designed for future capacity, the structure would be striped for two lanes and would tie into the existing US-278 once on Hilton Head Island. This approach would address SCDOT concerns about the US-278 eastbound bridge over Mackay Creek and advance a project that facilitates the long-term plan to reconstruct all four bridges onto the island.

Consistent with the original proposal for the full bridge, the revised plan would aim to reduce the environmental impacts to the Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge by not having the structure touch down on the island. Given the budgetary constraints of funds available from Beaufort County, the State Infrastructure Bank, and SCDOT, the current plan has public access to Pinckney Island solely from Hilton Head Island. Full access to Bluffton from Pinckney Island would be established in the future when the westbound structures are replaced.

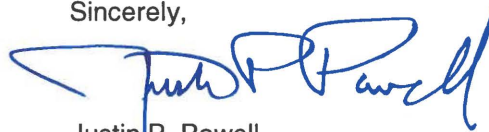
I recognize the concern about vehicles traveling from Bluffton to Pinckney Island will now be required to travel to Hilton Head Island first. To that end, I want to offer the following:

- 1) If the revised project proceeds, SCDOT will make it a "design build" project. In that process, SCDOT will select a joint design and construction team to finalize plans on the project and build the bridge.
- 2) The design build process promotes innovation and allows teams to propose alternatives that can improve the project. This could include proposing new ways to access Pinckney Island than currently contemplated.
- 3) SCDOT is willing to include in the procurement documents and in the scoring of the proposals from the teams a preference for alternatives that provide two-way access onto Pinckney Island than the current plan to provide access solely from Hilton Head Island.

This approach will allow the project to proceed on its current budget and provide an opportunity to apply additional innovation to the project that could resolve access concerns to Pinckney Island.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Justin P. Powell
Secretary of Transportation

CC: Beaufort County Legislative Delegation
SCDOT Commission

