



# 526

# DRAFT LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR

*July 13, 2020 Stakeholder Meeting  
Joy Riley, PE, PMP, DBIA SCDOT*



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration





# Project Background

*An Environmental Impact Statement*

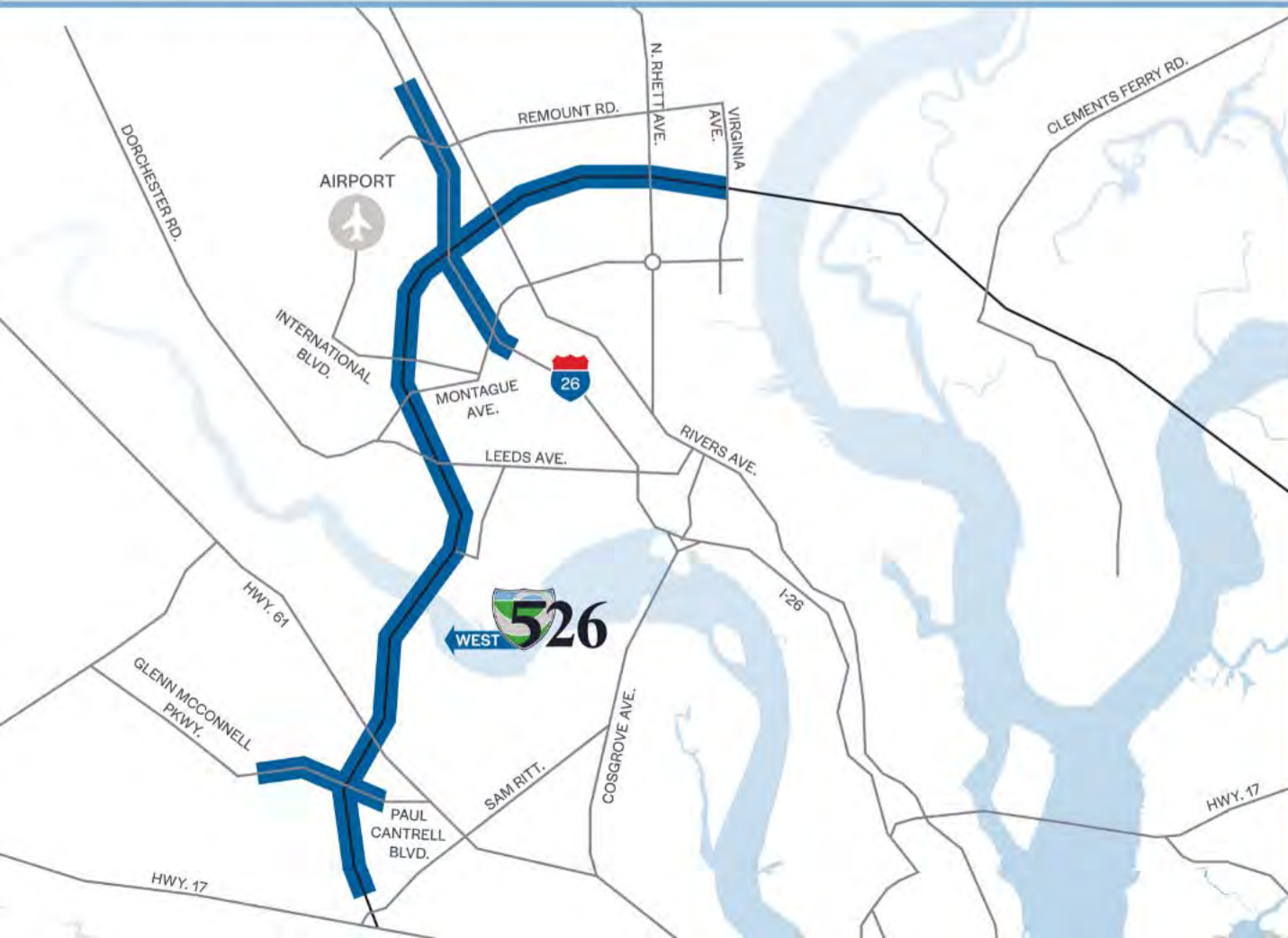




# WEST 526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR



WEST PROJECT



## I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

*Project Termini*

**Virginia Avenue  
North Charleston**



**Paul Cantrell Boulevard  
West Ashley**

**526 LOWCOUNTRY  
CORRIDOR**

**SCDOT**

# Project Purpose

*What is the reason for this project?*



*Increase Capacity* at the I-26/I-526 interchange  
and along the I-526 mainline

— thereby —

*Improving Operations* at the I-26/I-526 interchange  
and along the I-526 mainline from Virginia Avenue  
to Paul Cantrell Boulevard



# Project Need: Why?



**I-526 is one of South Carolina's most congested interstate segments**

*Congestion*

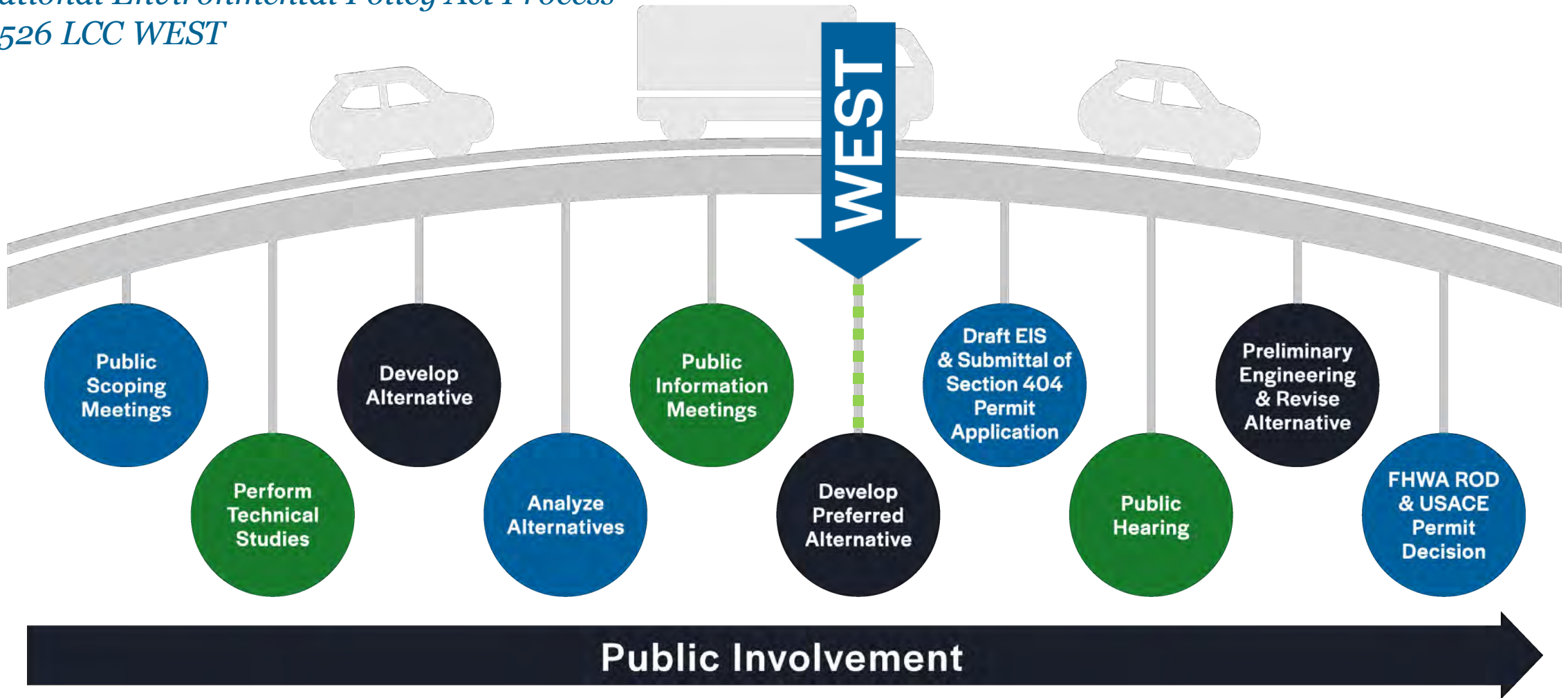
#2: 2035 CHATS LRTP

#6: SCDOT Interstate Capacity List  
Top 20 most congested interstate  
segments (SCDOT 2014 Multimodal  
Transportation Plan)



# NEPA Project Development Process

*National Environmental Policy Act Process*  
*I-526 LCC WEST*



# Stop & Pause for Questions

*Type in the chat box or  
“raise your hand”*







# Public Involvement

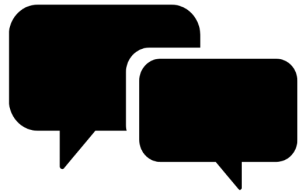
*Fall 2019 Efforts & Outcomes*





# Public Involvement Opportunities

*Fall 2019 Efforts & Reach*

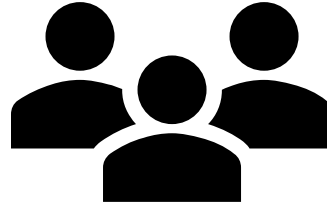


## 5 Community Drop-Ins

Small groups in potentially affected communities

**Early Nov 2019**

**188 People**



## Public Information Meeting

Larger Meeting; Drop-in, informal style; Project team available to answer questions & hear concerns

**Nov 21, 2019 | 11am-7pm**  
Charleston Area Convention Center

**223 People**



## Virtual Meeting

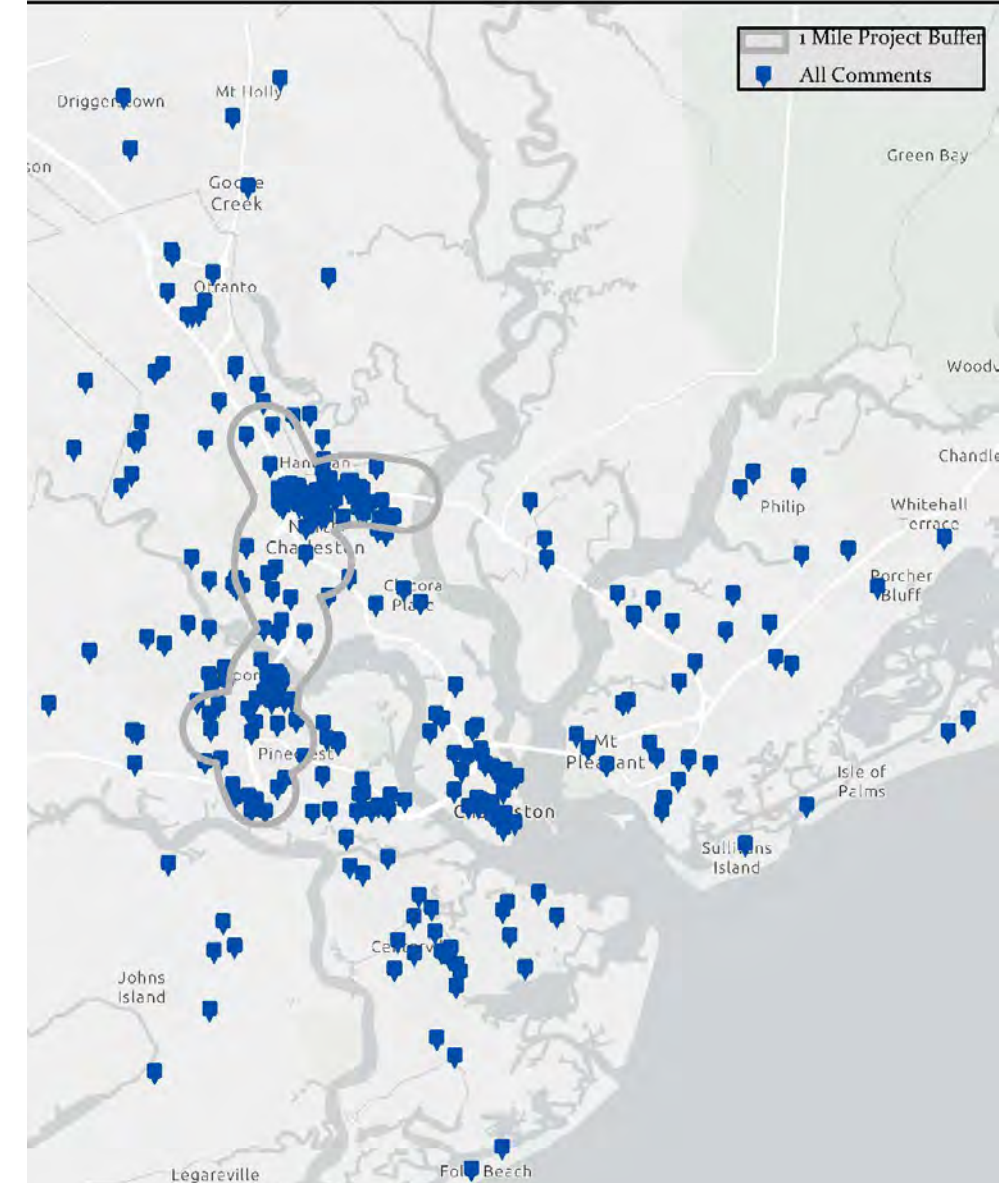
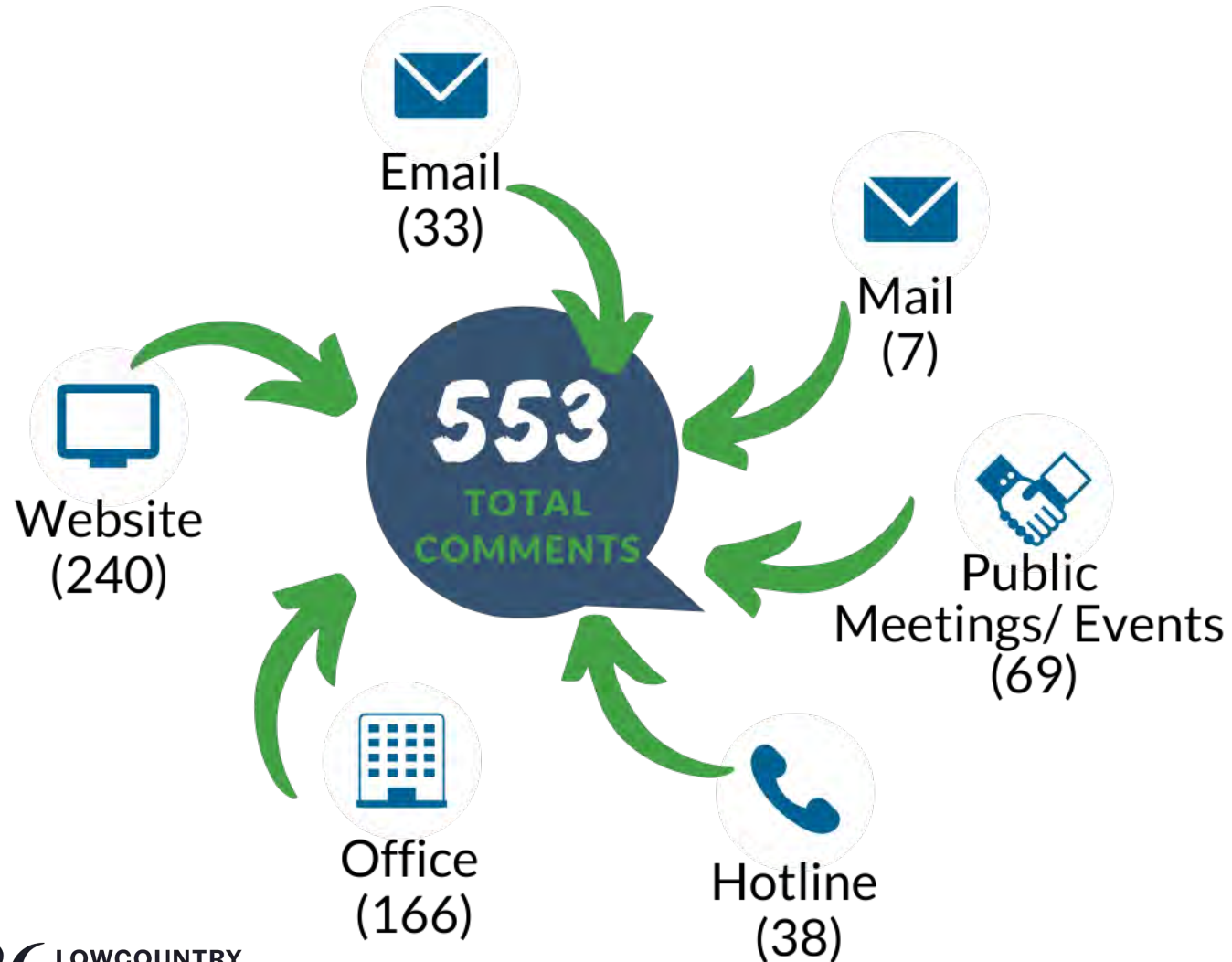
All materials available online

**Nov 21 2019 –  
Jan 31, 2020**

**526lowcountrycorridor.com**

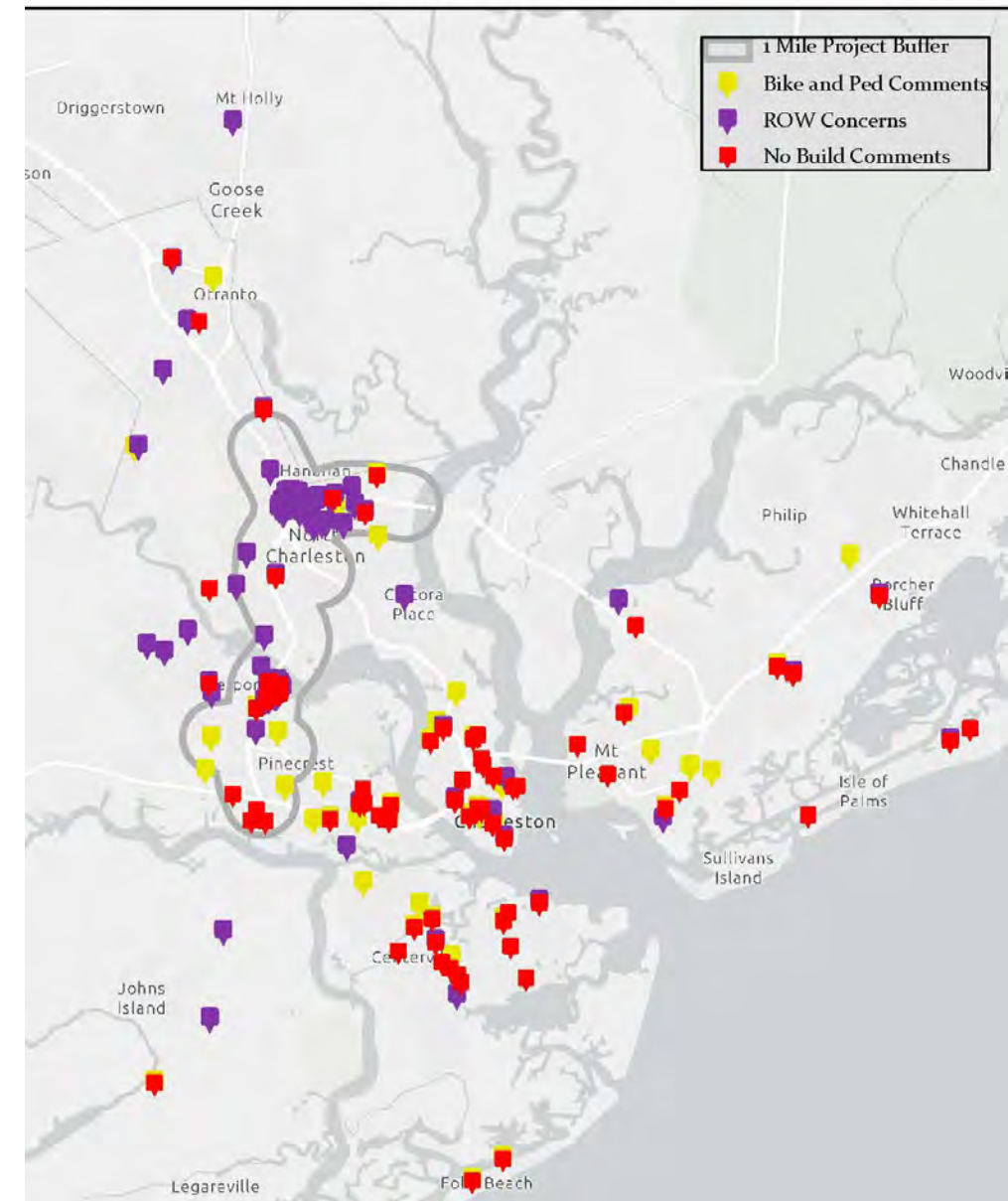
**6,000 Pageviews**

# Fall 2019 Public Comments





# Fall 2019 Public Comments



# Fall 2019 Public & Agency Comments

*North Rhett Avenue/I-526 Alternatives Concerns*

**Volume of trucks required to go through North Rhett Avenue instead of directly onto I-526**

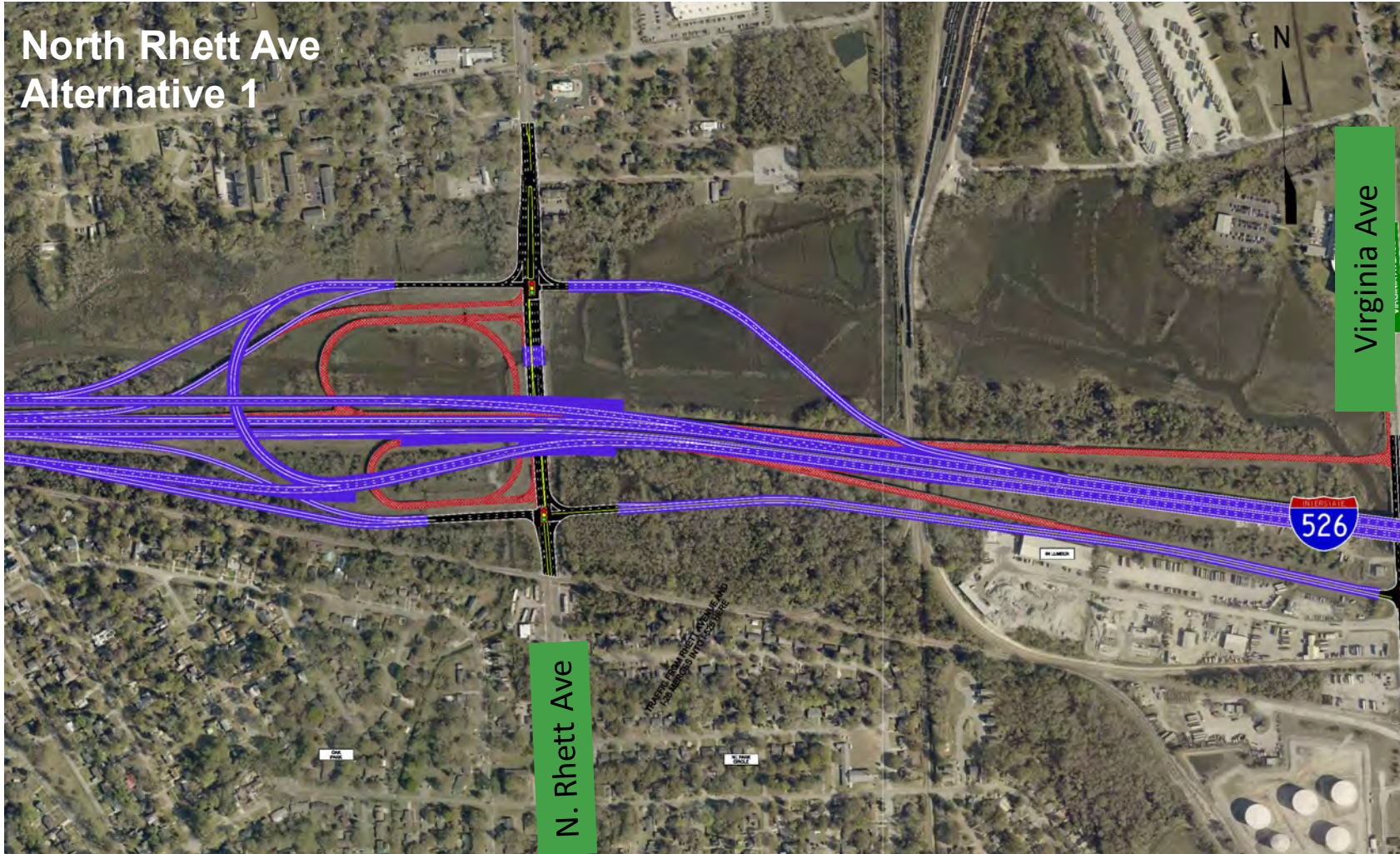
**Infrastructure investments by Joint Base Charleston to redirect truck traffic to Virginia Avenue**

**Potential growth at the North Charleston Port Terminal**



# Reasonable Alternatives

## *North Rhett Avenue/I-526*



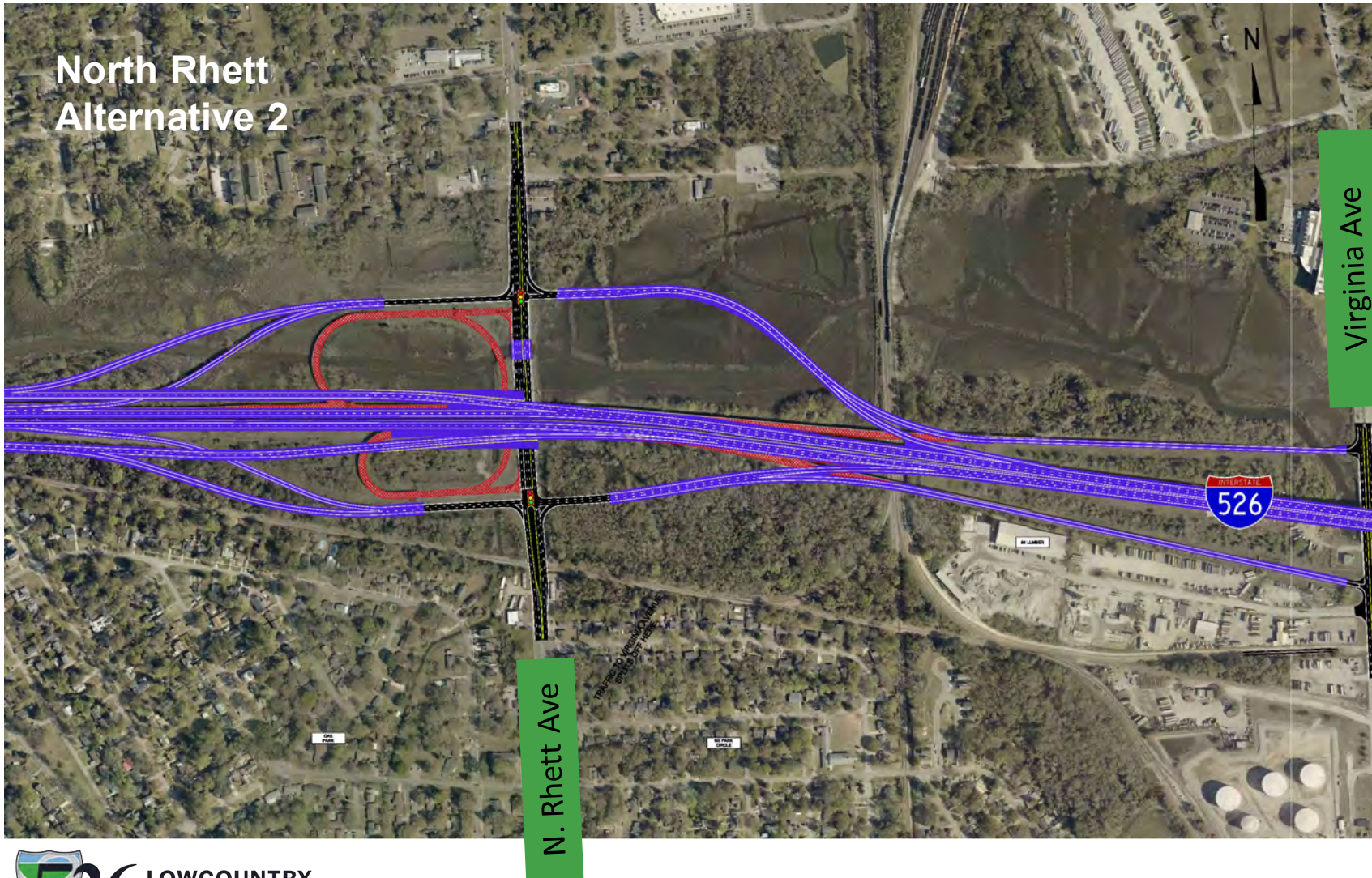
### North Rhett Ave Alternative 1

- Provides access from **one intersection** on N Rhett Ave to Eastbound & Westbound I-526
- Provides separate, **2-way** frontage road between N Rhett & Virginia Avenues
- Exit ramps from Eastbound & Westbound I-526 terminate at intersections on the south & north sides



# Reasonable Alternatives

## *North Rhett Avenue/I-526*



### North Rhett Ave Alternative 2

- Entrance ramps begin at **separate intersections** for eastbound & Westbound I-526
- Provides separate, **1-way** frontage roads on either side of I-526 connecting N Rhett Ave to Virginia Ave
- Exit ramps from Eastbound & Westbound I-526 terminate at intersections on the south and north sides of I-526

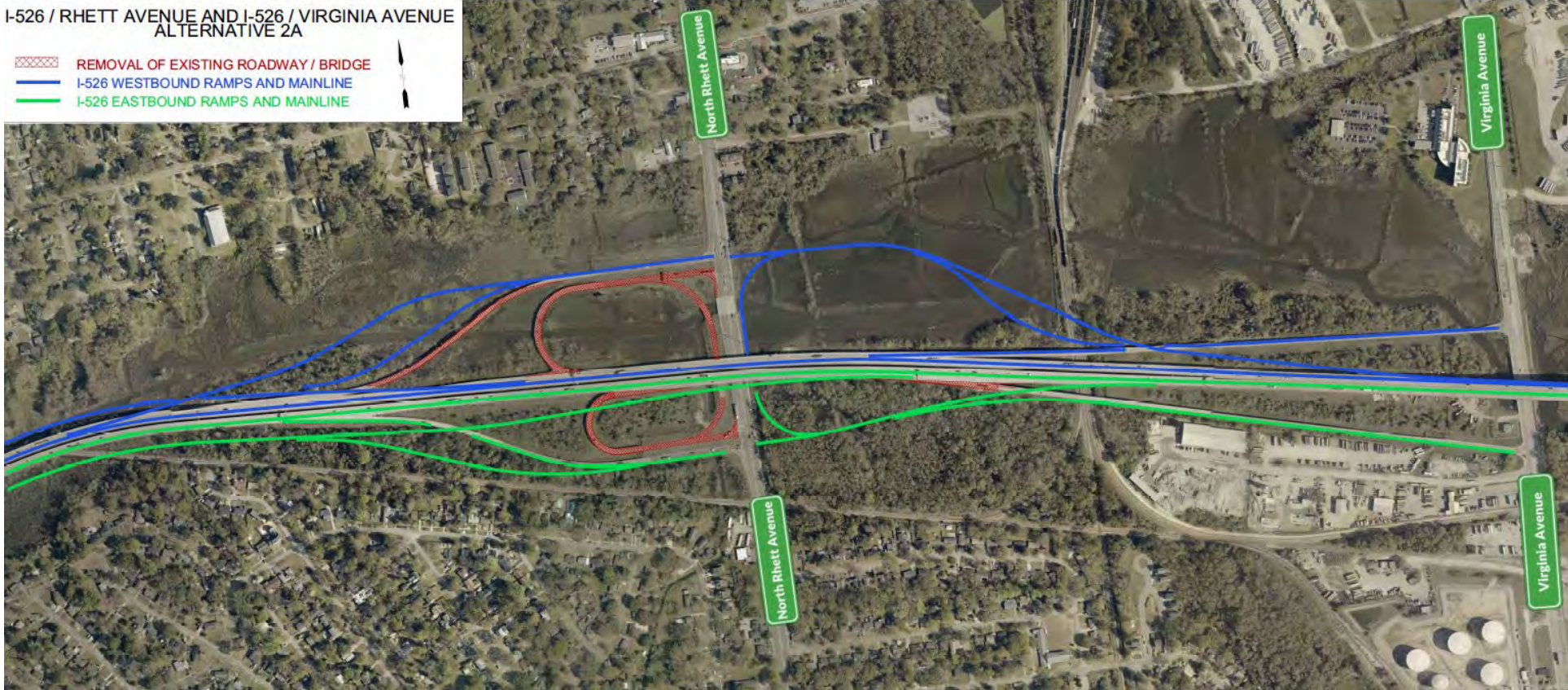


# Addressing Concerns

## *North Rhett Avenue/I-526 Alternatives – New Alternatives*

I-526 / RHETT AVENUE AND I-526 / VIRGINIA AVENUE  
ALTERNATIVE 2A

- REMOVAL OF EXISTING ROADWAY / BRIDGE
- I-526 WESTBOUND RAMP AND MAINLINE
- I-526 EASTBOUND RAMP AND MAINLINE



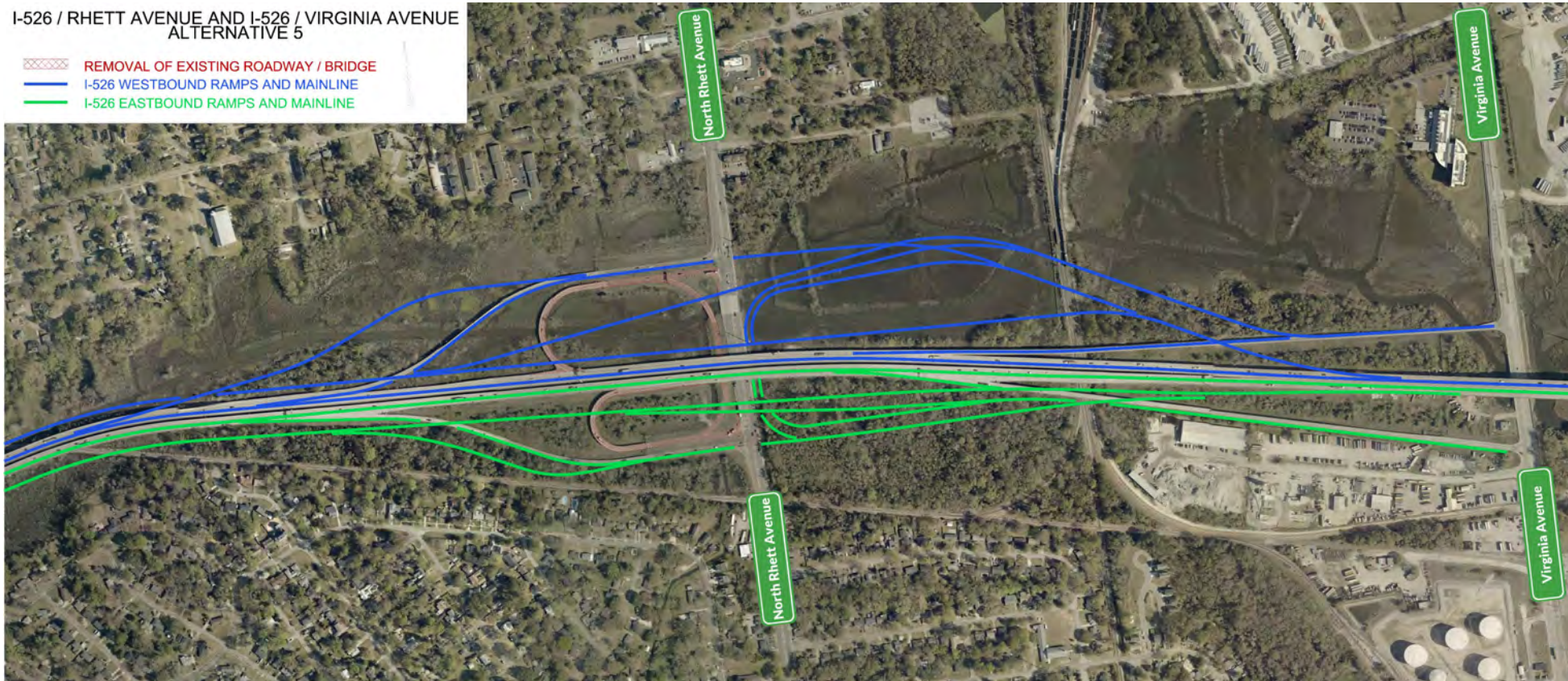
### **North Rhett Ave Alternative 2A**

- Restores direct access from Virginia to I-526 Westbound
- Streamlines access from Virginia to I-526 Eastbound by adding Texas U-turn
- Vehicles travelling I-526 Eastbound & Westbound go through N Rhett Intersection to access Virginia Ave



# Addressing Concerns

## *North Rhett Avenue/I-526 Alternatives – New Alternatives*



### **North Rhett Ave Alternative 5**

- Direct access ramps provided from/to I-526 & I-26 provided to/from N Rhett Ave and Virginia Ave
- Merge from I-26 EB C-D and diverge to I-26 WB C-D both occur just west of Virginia Ave
- Traffic from Virginia Ave to I-526 EB and from I-526 WB to Virginia Ave do not mix on U-turn under I-526

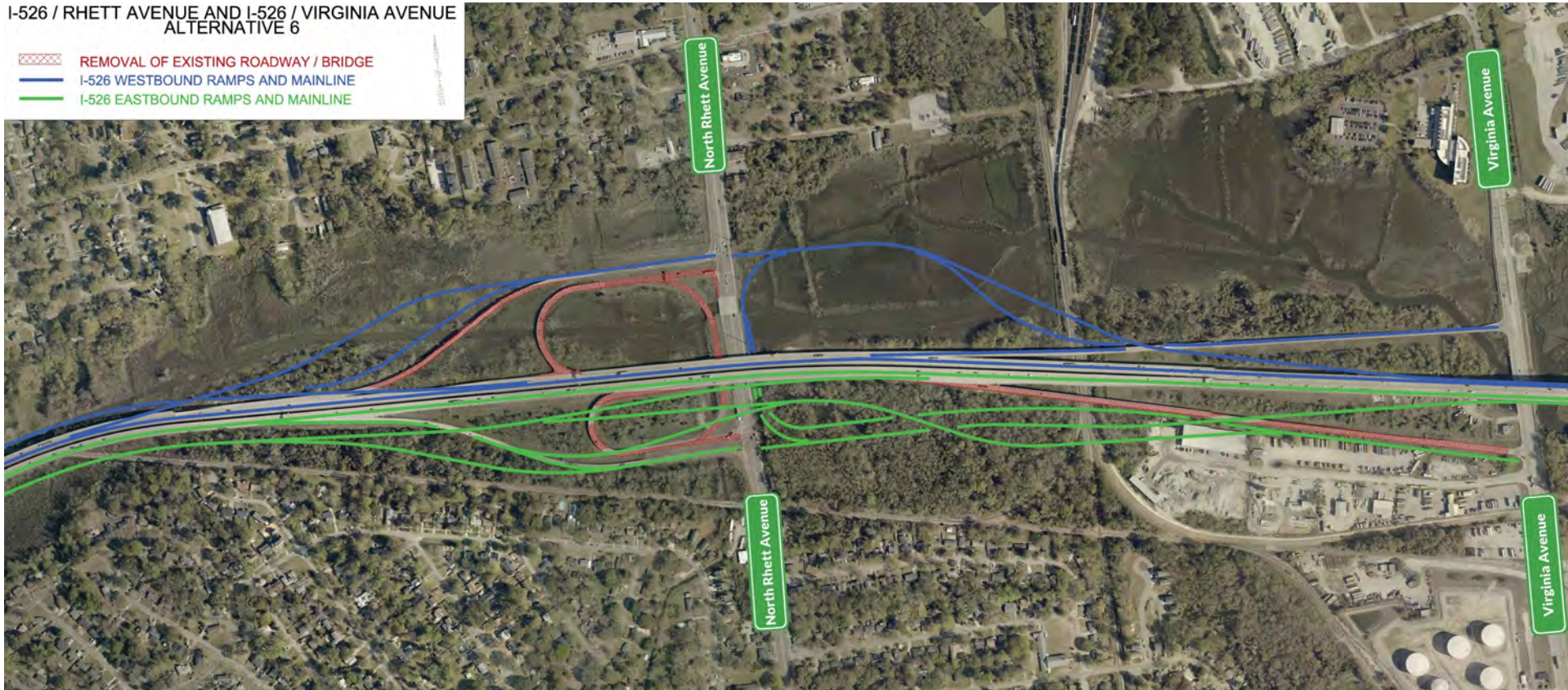


# Addressing Concerns

## *North Rhett Avenue/I-526 Alternatives – New Alternatives*

I-526 / RHETT AVENUE AND I-526 / VIRGINIA AVENUE  
ALTERNATIVE 6

REMOVAL OF EXISTING ROADWAY / BRIDGE  
I-526 WESTBOUND RAMP AND MAINLINE  
I-526 EASTBOUND RAMP AND MAINLINE



### North Rhett Ave Alternative 6

- Direct access ramps provided from/to I-526 and I-26 provided to/from N Rhett Ave & Virginia Ave
- Merge from I-26 EB C-D & diverge to I-26 WB C-D both occur just west of N Rhett Ave
- Traffic from Virginia Avenue to I-526 Eastbound & from I-526 Westbound to Virginia Ave weave through U-turn under I-526

# Stop & Pause for Questions

*Type in the chat box or  
“raise your hand”*







# Community Mitigation





# Environmental Justice Community Impacts



Right of Way RELOCATION IMPACTS	I-526 WEST Project EJ Impacts	I-526 WEST Project TOTAL
Apartment Units (16 Buildings/Duplexes)	68	68-90
Single Family Homes / Mobile Homes	44	48-67
Parks / Community Centers	2	2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>159</b>

72% of impacts on 12 miles is in this 1 mile



# Community Advisory Council (CAC)

- First Meeting: September 30, 2019
- Monthly ongoing meetings
- Once the project mitigation reaches the implementation phase, the CAC will transition into a Project Oversight Committee



## Advise

Help transportation agencies create effective mitigation measures that will benefit your neighborhood



## Connect

Share your knowledge, experiences and perspectives



## Represent

Your input gives your community a strong voice



## Communicate

Help get the word out about public meetings and other project-related information

# What is a Community Advisory Council (CAC)?

“A collection of individuals who bring **unique knowledge** and **skills** which augment the knowledge and skills of the formal project team in order to more **effectively guide** the organization.”





# Why develop a CAC?

- ▶ Provide a way for citizens to voice **their opinions, feelings, and ideas**
- ▶ **Help shape this project** and create a positive, local impact
- ▶ Provide **input on actions to minimize and mitigate** impacts
- ▶ Build **relationships**
- ▶ Convey **ownership**
- ▶ **Meaningful** engagement

*“Cities have the capability of providing something for everyone, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”*  
- Jane Jacobs

# How was the CAC Selected?

1

Enlisted local churches, schools & other entities to identify residents of the potentially impacted EJ neighborhoods

2

Contacted visitors from the I-526 LCC Community Office from the potentially impacted EJ neighborhoods

3

Contacted candidates individually through phone calls to gauge interest & availability

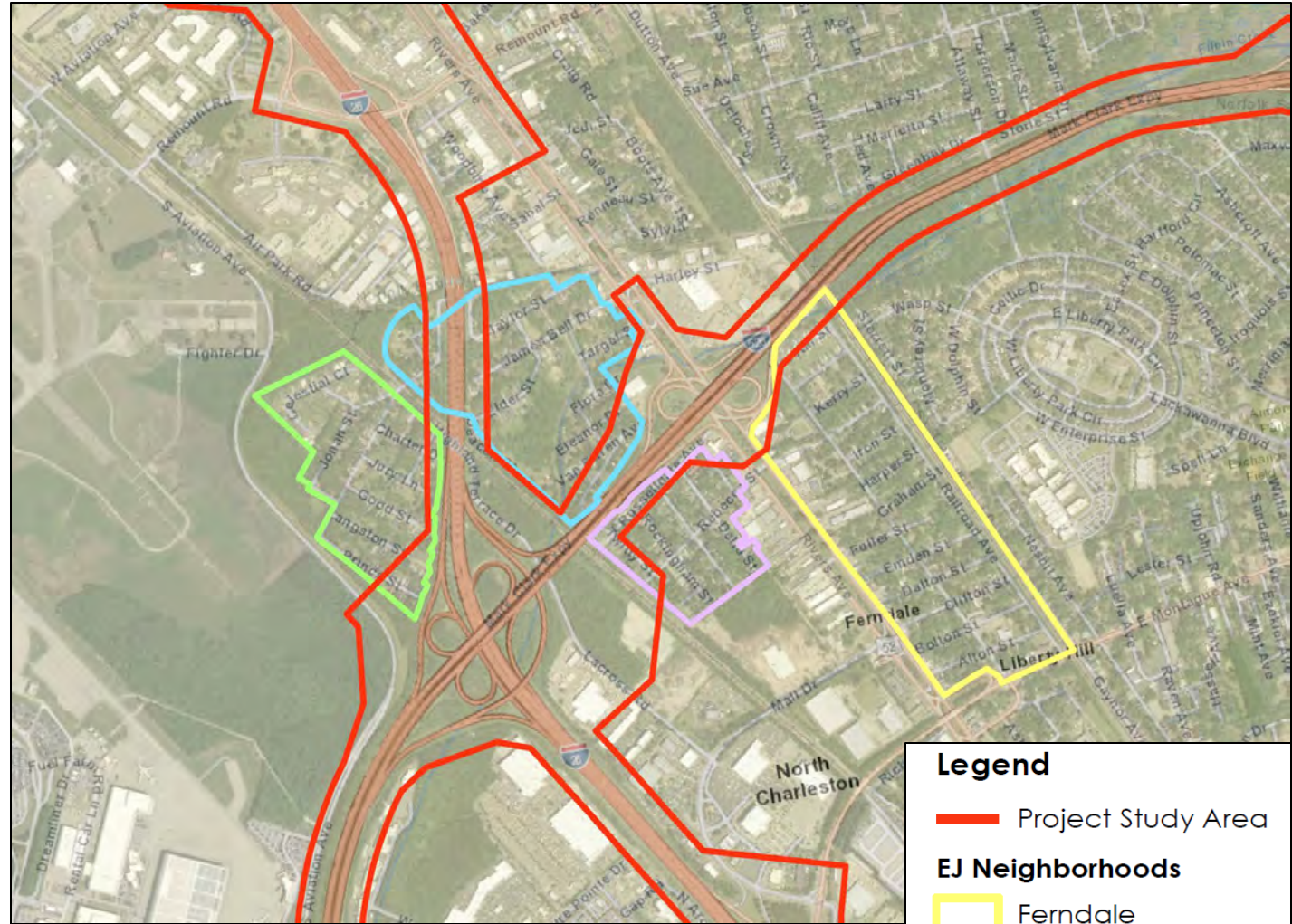


# Who is on the CAC?

Residents, business owners, property owners, proxies for elderly family members & local religious leaders from:

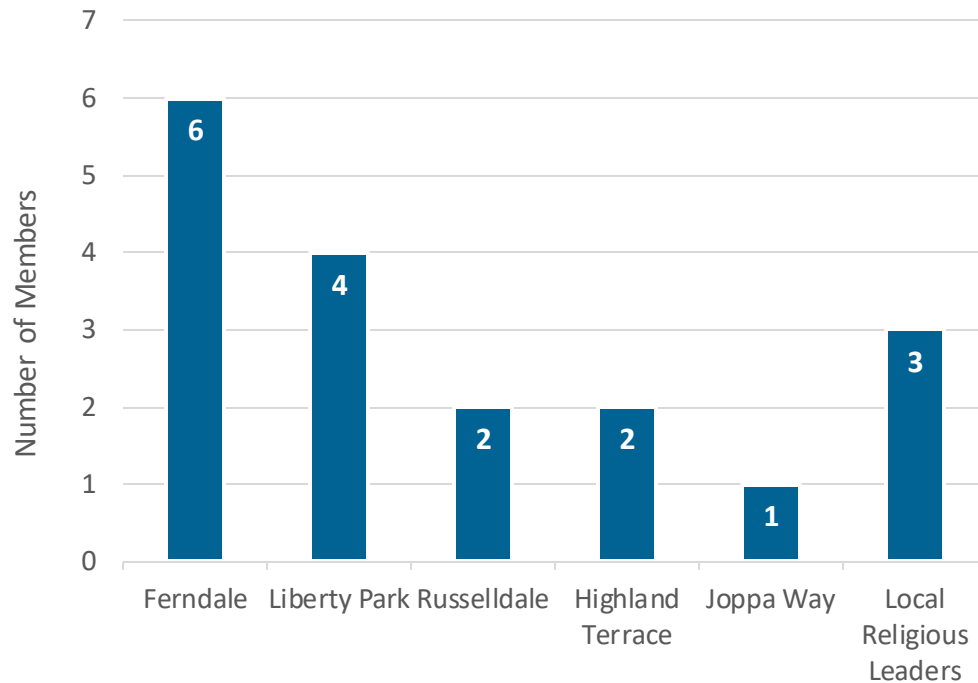
- **Russelldale**
- **Liberty Park**
- **Highland Terrance**
- **Ferndale**

Various **ages, backgrounds, and demographics** to represent each neighborhood's history & future goals

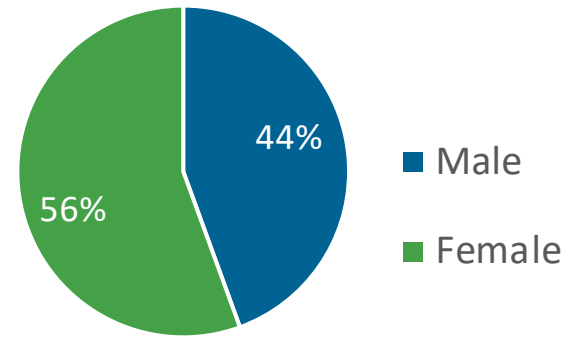


# CAC Demographics as of June 2020

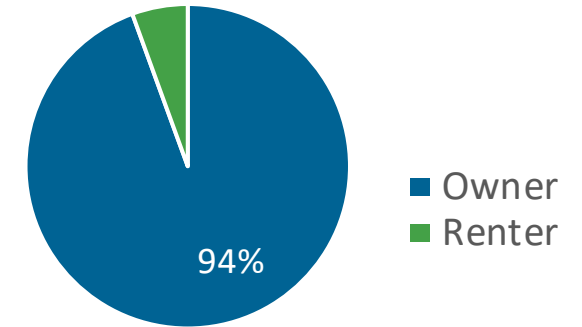
## Area Representation



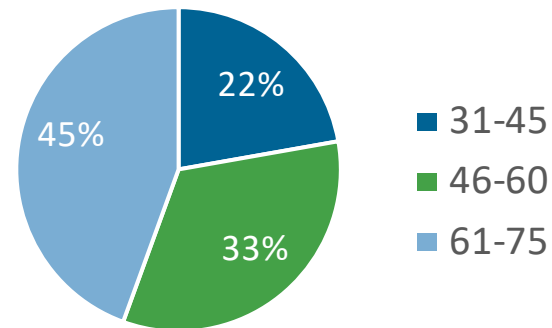
## Gender



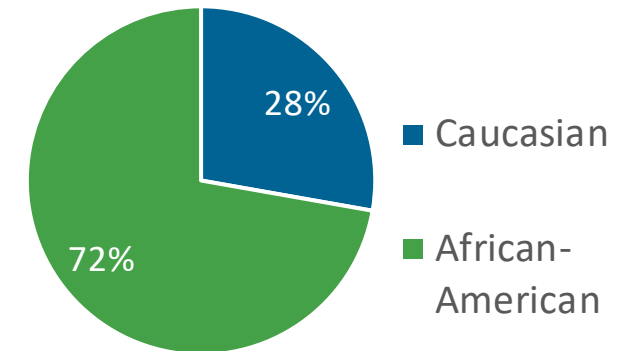
## Residential Status



## Age Range



## Ethnicity





# CAC Topics of Discussion 2019 - 2020



## Meeting #1

Sept. 30, 2019

Background Information



## Meeting #2

Oct. 28, 2019

Community Issues & Priorities  
Public Meeting Materials  
Preview of Design Alternatives  
Social Needs Assessment



## Meeting #3

Dec. 7, 2019

Recap of Public Outreach Efforts  
Social Needs Assessment Survey  
–Results/Discussion  
Right-of-Way/Relocation  
Information Session

# CAC Topics of Discussion 2019 – 2020

*Continued*



## Meeting #4

Jan. 4, 2020

Meeting Logistics Survey  
Outreach Update



## Meeting #5

Feb. 8, 2020

Approve CAC Roles &  
Responsibilities  
Highway Project Impacts  
Brainstorming Session: Potential  
Mitigation Ideas for Recreational  
Facilities  
Outreach Update



## Meeting #6

March 7, 2020

Community  
Mitigation Workshop



# CAC Topics of Discussion 2019 – 2020

*Continued*



## Meeting #7

April 4, 2020

Present aggregated results of the Mitigation Work Session

In-dept discussion on replacement housing



## Meeting #8

May 5, 2020

Provide update on mitigation concept development

Present replacement community facilities conceptual plans

Discuss potential functions and services of replacement community facilities



## Meeting #9

June 6, 2020

Present preliminary (unofficial) Mitigation Framework

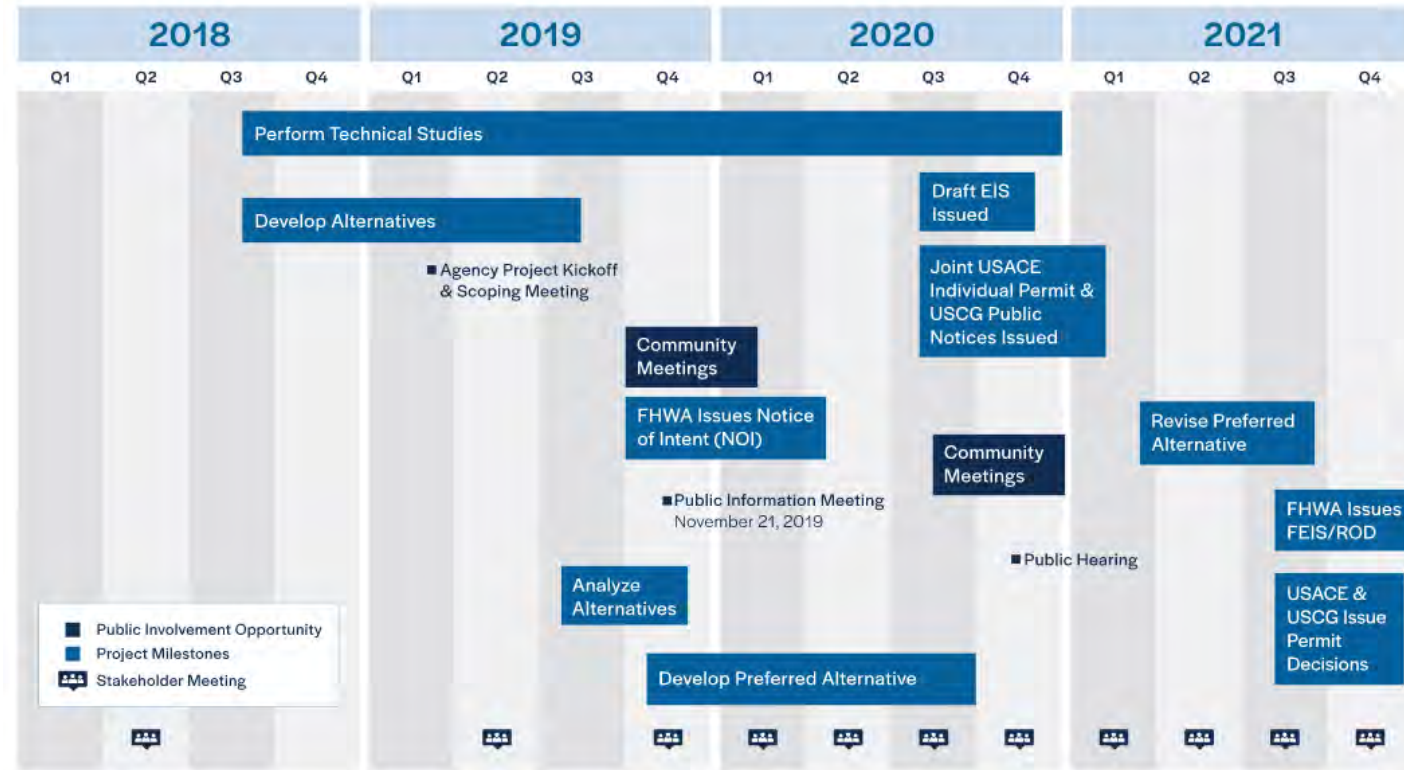
Report on FHWA Peer Exchange and meeting with the City

Work session on how to engage with elected and appointed officials

# Role of the CAC in the Future

The CAC will continue to play an **advisory role** in the mitigation process according to the project's milestone schedule

The CAC will transition at a future date to providing **oversight** during implementation of the EJ Community Mitigation Plan





# Community Mitigation Strategies

## *Under Development*



**Community Office with Outreach Specialists**



**Community Advisory Council to help assess impacts and drive mitigation planning**



**Early Right-of-Way phase to identify or create Affordable Housing**



**Develop Construction Program for Replacement Homes in Community**

# Community Mitigation Plan

Effectively mitigate direct, indirect, and cumulative (/recurring) impacts on EJ communities by **establishing relationships, building trust, and gathering feedback that will inform decisions** on mitigative measures and other aspects of project development





# CAC Mitigation Work Session: March 7, 2020

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**526 WEST LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR**

**Community Advisory Council Mitigation Work Session**

March 7, 2020

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR WEST

**Brainstorming Activity: Community Cohesion**

Direct and cumulative impacts from past and planned highway projects and other factors such as crime, high cost of living, and home-ownership trends have reduced the amount of community cohesion in the affected Ex neighborhoods. The purpose of this activity is to gather the CAC's input on potential measures that can be evaluated to improve community cohesion. Please note your ideas for potential actions that SCDOT and/or others can explore as ways to offset project-related impacts.

**What do you see as resources that are currently lacking that would improve community cohesion?**

YOUR THOUGHTS:

Are there details that could be added to specify needs specific to your neighborhood?

YOUR THOUGHTS:

Members of the CAC have indicated that crime is a problem in their neighborhoods, in general. **North Charleston crime rates exceed state and national crime rates.** The purpose of this activity is to gather the CAC's input on potential measures, in addition to any measures related to increased police presence ("hotspot" patrols, for example) that can be taken to help prevent crime. Please note your ideas for potential actions that SCDOT and/or others can explore as ways to offset project-related impacts.

**What measures can be taken to increase the number of "eyes" on the street?**

YOUR THOUGHTS:

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR WEST

**Brainstorming Activity: Community Cohesion**

**What measures can be taken to show a sense of ownership (public or private)?**

YOUR THOUGHTS:

Where are the locations in your neighborhood where these ideas could be developed to help improve residents' perception of safety?

YOUR THOUGHTS:

**What activities would you like to see in your neighborhood?**

YOUR THOUGHTS:

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY

**Section 7a (Session 1): Community Cohesion**

**Section 7b (Session 2): Community Enhancement**

**What does community enhancement look like?**

- Community enhancement projects improve the value, quality, desirability, and attractiveness of a neighborhood.
- The images below show enhancements that could be developed in conjunction with the replacement community centers and recreational facilities.

**Calisthenic Park Port Angeles**

**FREE Wellness Checks!**

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR WEST

**Brainstorming Activity: Community Enhancement**

The proposed project would relocate the **Kuukilade and Highland Terrace Liberty Park Community Centers**. The purpose of this activity is to gather the CAC's input on potential locations that and community center use and needs. Please note your ideas for potential actions that SCDOT and/or others can explore as ways to offset project-related impacts.

**Based on the preliminary mapping of potential locations for replacement facilities, what are your thoughts on locations that would be most optimal for neighborhood residents?**





YOUR THOUGHTS:

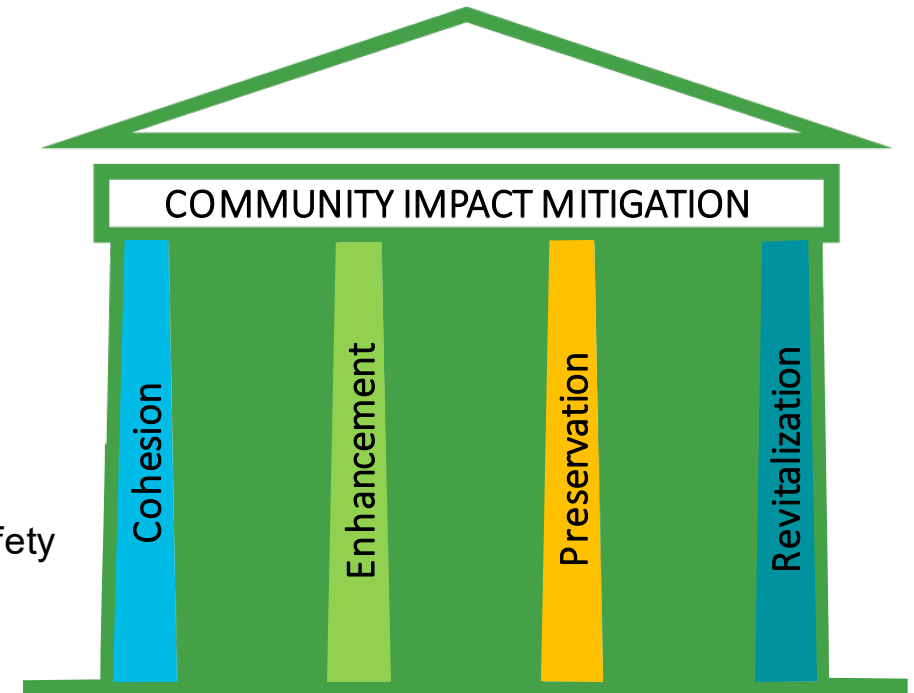
**What are your thoughts on having a single, larger, centrally-located replacement facility versus two smaller facilities? How would the location of the replacement facility, or facilities, affect your thoughts on this idea?**

YOUR THOUGHTS:

I-526 LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR WEST

# CAC Community Impact Mitigation: Overview

-  **Cohesion**
  - FOCUS AREAS: Actions that strengthen neighborhood connections
-  **Enhancement**
  - FOCUS AREAS: Community centers and recreational facilities
-  **Preservation**
  - FOCUS AREAS: Infrastructure needs, including transportation and safety
-  **Revitalization**
  - FOCUS AREAS: Housing, employment, economic opportunities





# CAC Meeting with the City of North Charleston



**Replacement Recreational  
Facilities/Programs**



**Community Appearance**



**Public Safety**



**Transit and Connectivity**



**Stormwater Infrastructure**



**Community Livability Plan**

# Community Office

Update



Starting March 17, 2020



## Visitors

As of March 17, 2020

**240 People**

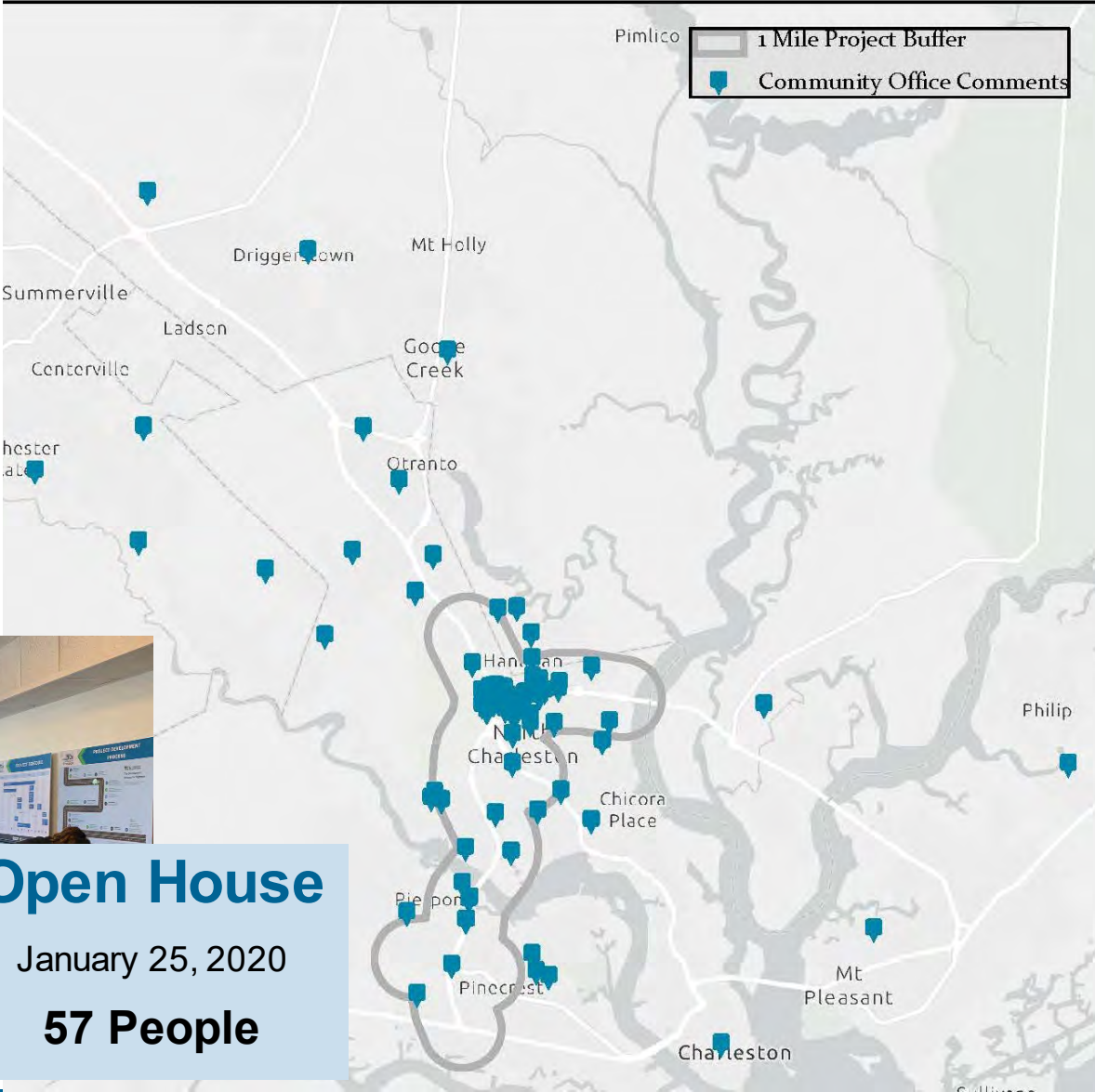


## Open House

January 25, 2020

**57 People**

I-526 LCC WEST Community Office Comments  
November 7, 2019 - January 31, 2020





# Stop & Pause for Questions

*Type in the chat box or  
“raise your hand”*





# EAST Updates

*Planning & Environmental Linkages Study*



# 526 EAST LOWCOUNTRY CORRIDOR



EAST PROJECT



## I-526 Lowcountry Corridor East

*Project Termini*

**Virginia Avenue  
North Charleston**



**US 17  
Mount Pleasant**

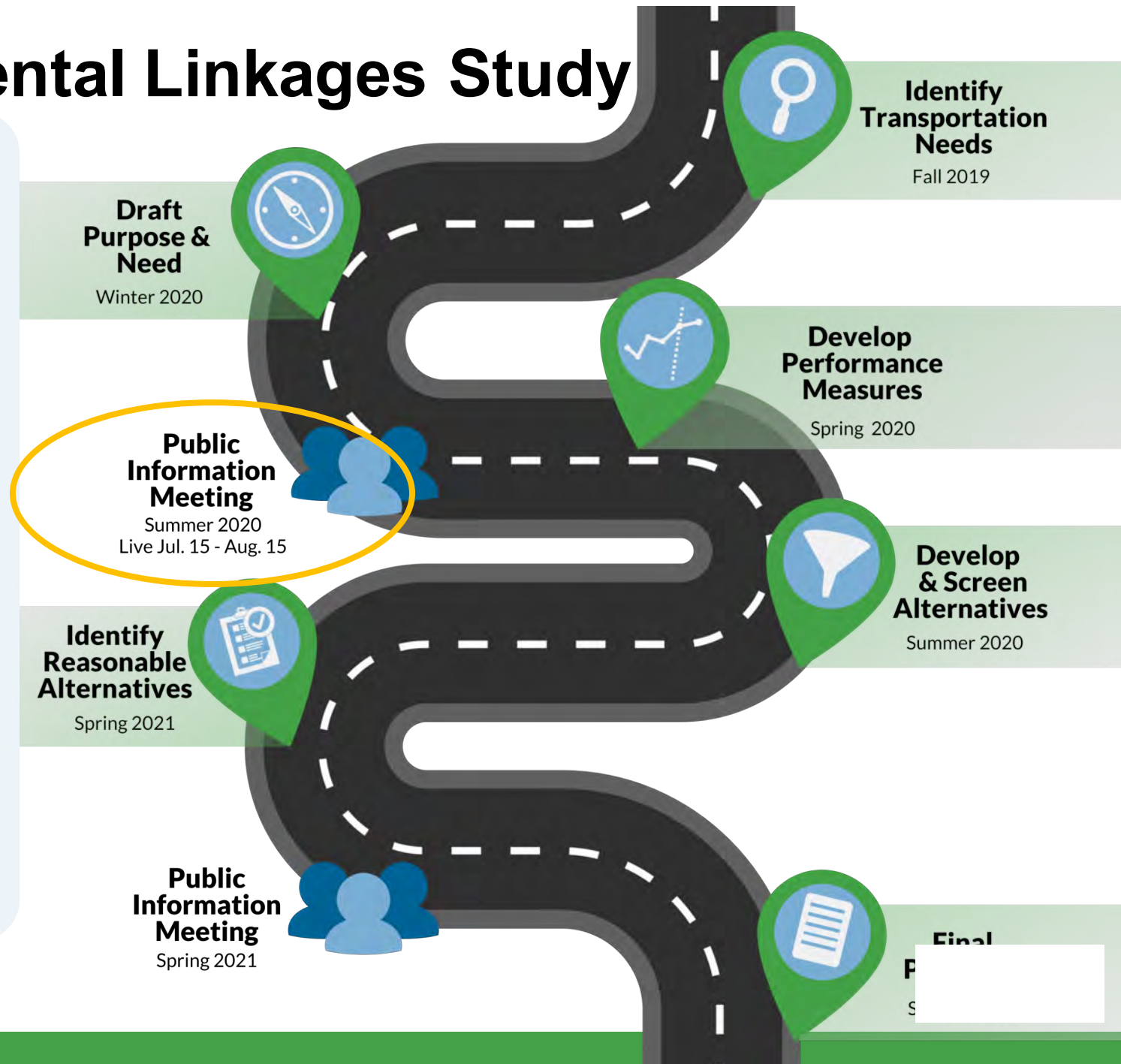
# Planning & Environmental Linkages Study

- 1 Tool for **creating efficiency** in transportation development
- 2 Considers **environment, community & economy**
- 3 **Collaborative & integrated** approach to decision-making

*What are the Benefits of including a PEL Study in the project development process?*



*Who Participates?*





# Draft Purpose & Need



## Draft Purpose & Need

### Draft Purpose

The purpose for transportation improvements along this corridor is to **improve travel time reliability & reduce congestion** along I-526 from Virginia Avenue in North Charleston to US 17 in Mount Pleasant

### Draft Considerations

- Coordinate with local plans & projects
- Accommodate increased traffic volumes
- Enhance mobility for people & goods

### Draft Need

#### Roadway Deficiencies



Over Capacity



Shoulder Widths



On & Off Ramp Lengths



Tightly Curved Ramps

#### Mobility



Traffic congestion from high traffic volumes & incidents

- Improve seismic resilience
- Accommodate future transportation technologies
- Improve connections with area ports & transit



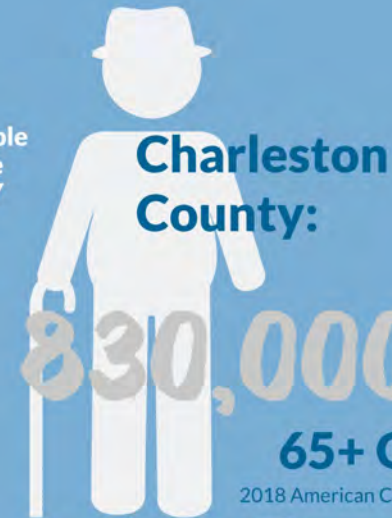
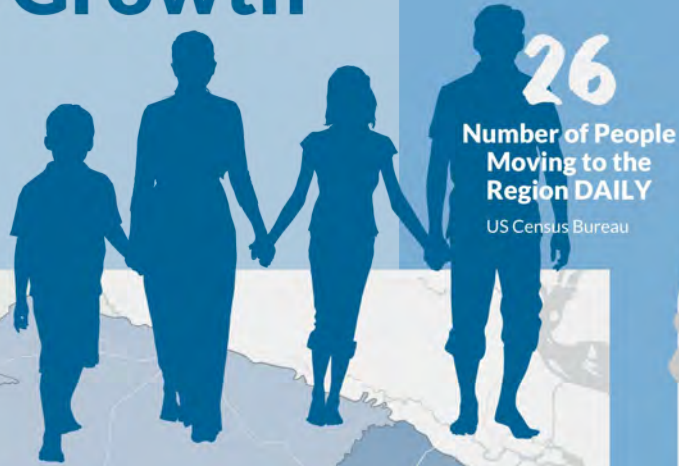
# How is our region changing?

## Population Growth

**77%**

Increase in  
Regional  
Population  
2015-2050

Berkeley Charleston Dorchester  
Council of Governments, 2019



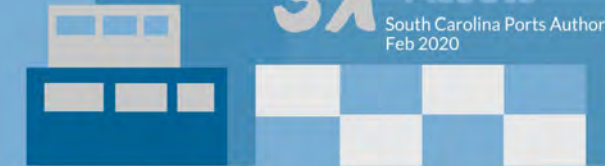
## Aging Population



Over the last  
decade, the South  
Carolina Ports  
Authority has:

**2X** Volumes

**3X** Assets  
South Carolina Ports Authority  
Feb 2020



**Daniel Island:**

**5.3%**

Per Year Household  
Growth

Projected Annual Population Growth (2015-2050)

≤1%

1.1-1.5%

1.6-3%

3.1-5.5%

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments, 2019

## Jobs Expansion

**91,200**  
Jobs in North  
Charleston in 2015

**121,400**  
Jobs in North  
Charleston in 2050

**#7**

Best U.S. City for  
Starting a Business 2020

Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments, 2019

[www.inc.com/surge-cities](http://www.inc.com/surge-cities)

**85%**

Of all Container Cargo  
Moving Through Port of  
Charleston is handled in  
Wando Welch Terminal in  
Mount Pleasant (2019)

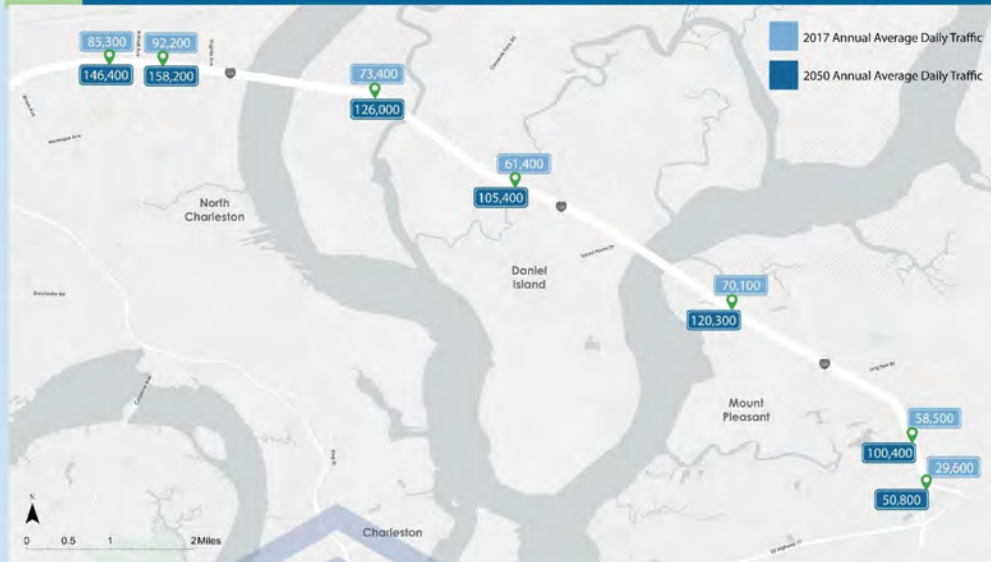
South Carolina Ports Authority  
Feb 2020



# Traffic Analysis

## Traffic Growth

### 2017 and 2050 Annual Average Daily Traffic



**68%**  
increase in truck  
volume expected in  
**2050**

**72%**  
increase in  
AADT  
expected in  
**2050**

Annual Average  
Daily Traffic (AADT)  
is the total traffic  
volume passing a  
point or segment of a  
highway facility in  
both directions for a  
year divided by  
365 days



### 2017 and 2050 Average Daily Truck Volume

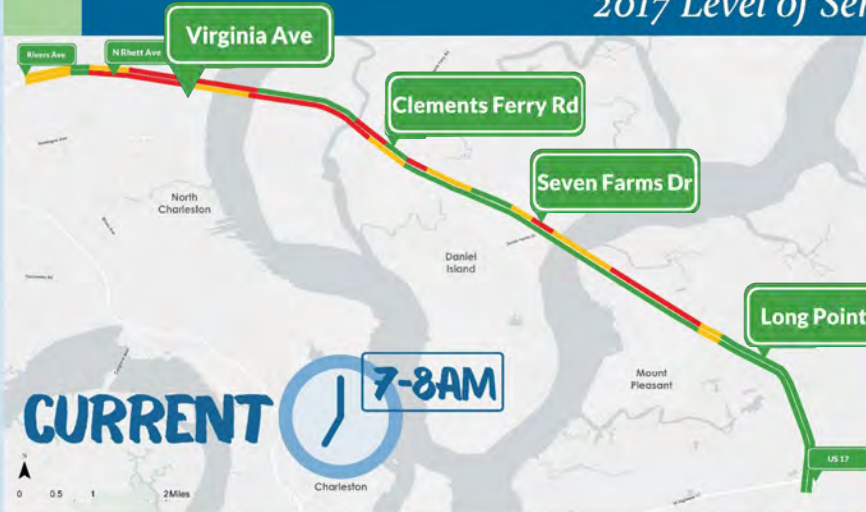


*What might  
this growth  
mean to the  
I-526 LCC?*

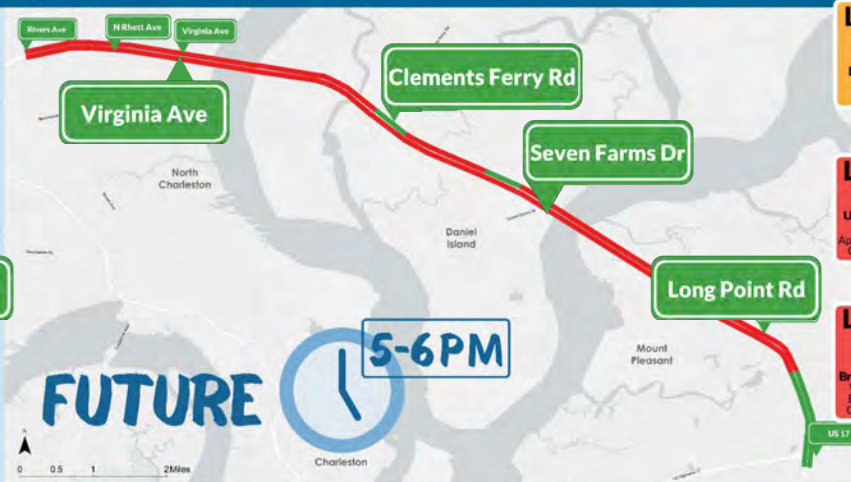
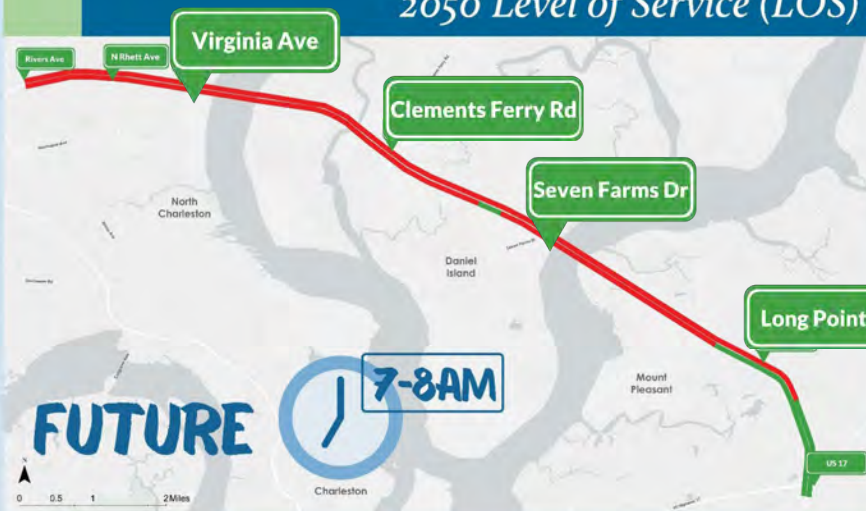
# Traffic Analysis

## Level of Service

2017 Level of Service (LOS) Conditions



2050 Level of Service (LOS) Projections with No Improvements



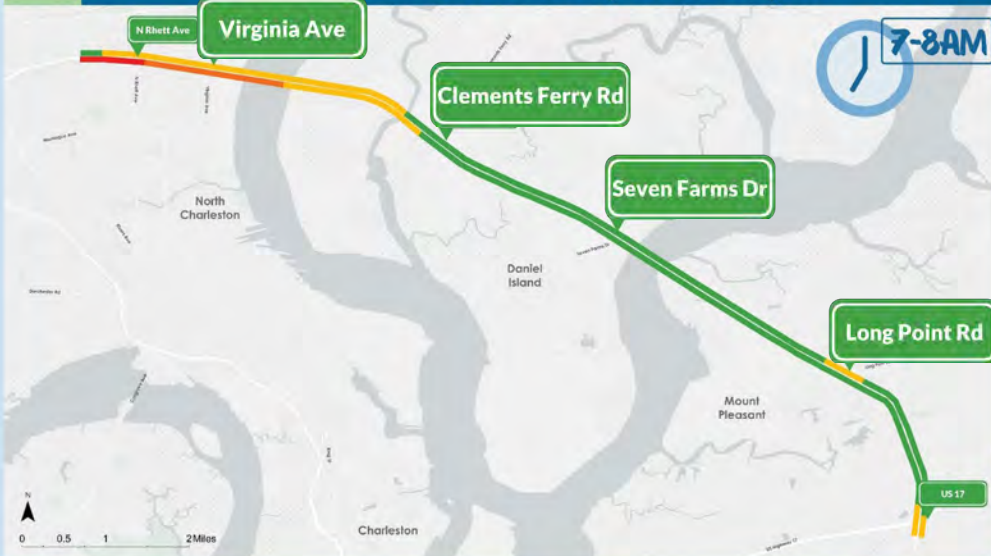
*What might traffic be like in 2050 if no improvements are proposed?*



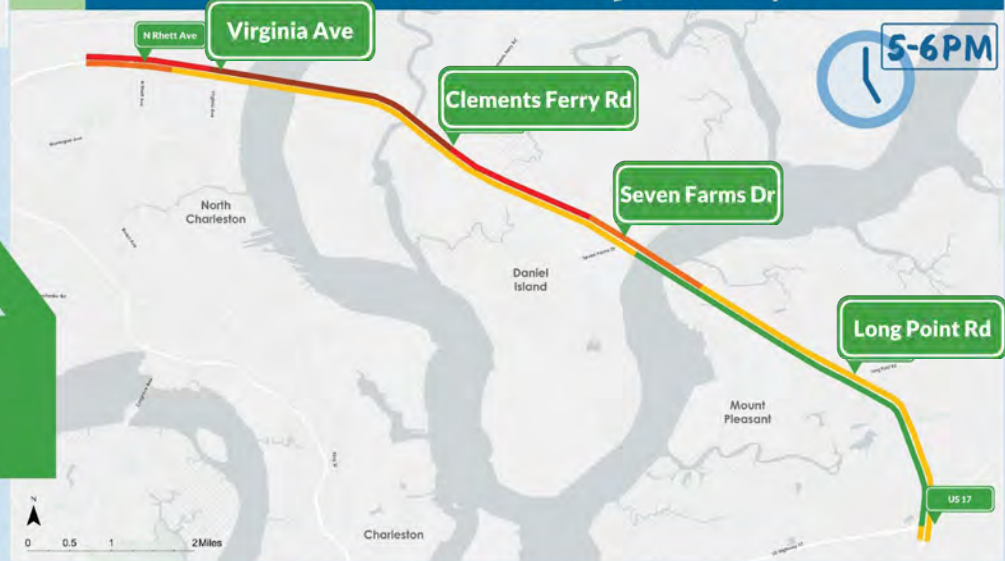
# Traffic Analysis

## Speed Analysis

### 2017 AM Rush Hour Speed Analysis



### 2017 PM Rush Hour Speed Analysis



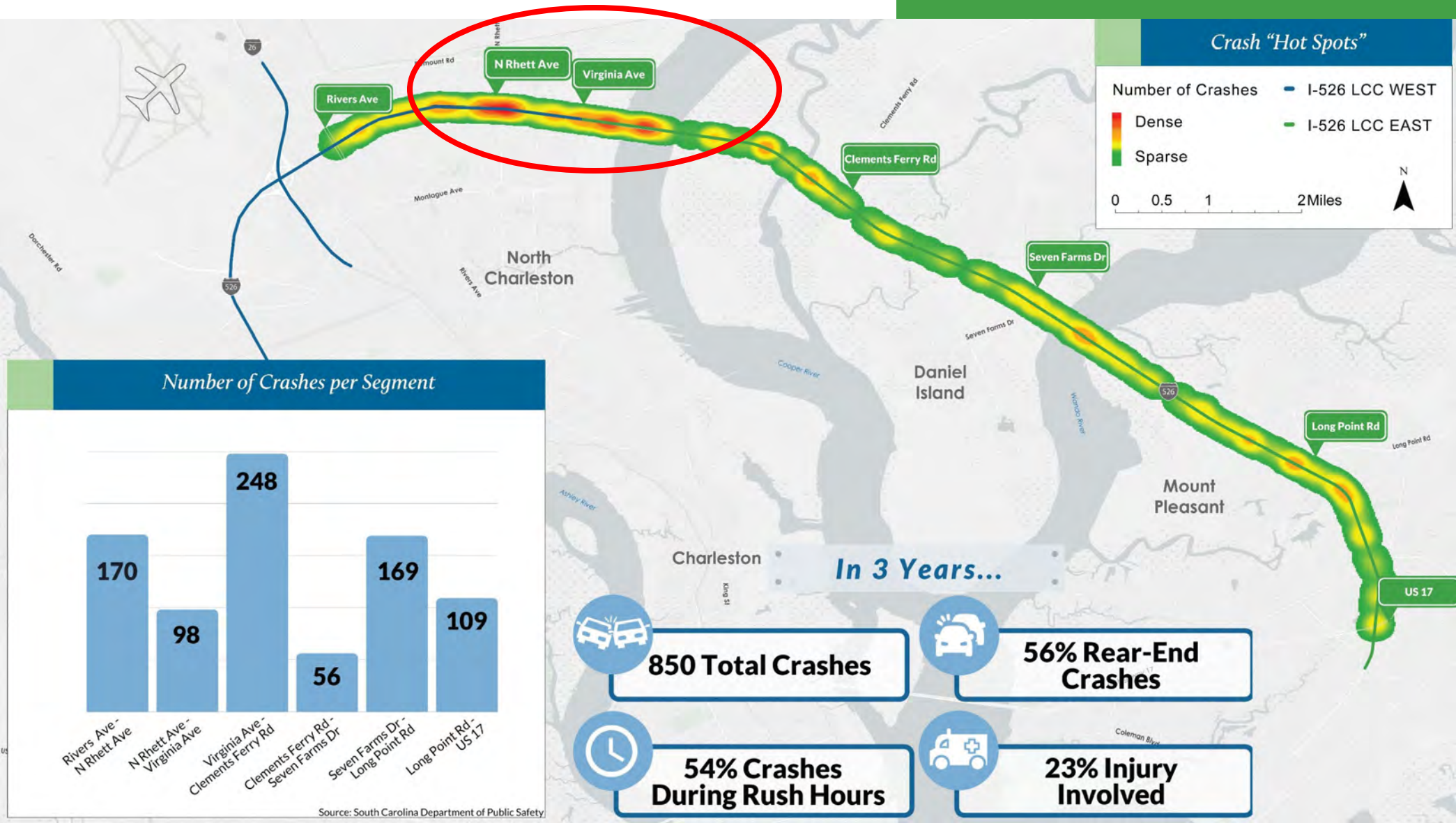
### Posted Speed Limits



*What are current travel speeds like on I-526?*

# Safety Analysis

Crash Data



Where are the current safety concerns?



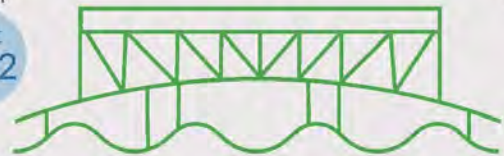
# Existing Conditions: Bridges

Did you know over 65% of I-526 LCC EAST is elevated roadway & bridges?

## Don H. Holt Bridge Cooper River

~27,100 FT

Built 1992



### Current Conditions

- Single structure, 88 ft. wide
- 155 ft. high
- 2 lanes each direction with truck climbing lane
- 73,400 vehicles per day (2017 avg.)

### Needs



## James B. Edwards Bridge Wando River

~7,900 FT

Built 1989



### Current Conditions

- Twin parallel structures, 44 ft. wide
- 138 ft. high
- 2 lanes each direction with truck climbing lane
- 70,100 vehicles per day (2017 avg.)

### Needs



## Other Typical Bridges

Various Lengths

Built late 1980s & Early 1990s



### Current Conditions

- 4 overpass bridges; 6 marsh bridges
- Lengths range from 150 ft. - 1300 ft.
- 2 lanes each direction
- 58,500 - 73,400 vehicles per day (2017 avg.)

### Needs





# Stop & Pause for Questions

*Type in the chat box or  
“raise your hand”*



# Public Involvement Opportunities

*We want your input!*

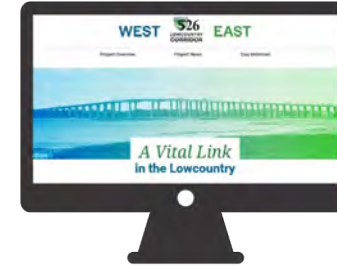


## Survey

Short survey to capture corridor usage, concerns and priorities for the corridor

**March 17–  
August 15, 2020**

**[526lowcountrycorridor.com](https://526lowcountrycorridor.com)**



## Virtual Meeting

All materials available online

**July 15 –  
August 15, 2020**

**[526lowcountrycorridor.com](https://526lowcountrycorridor.com)**

# What we are hearing from the survey so far...

*Most people are using the corridor daily for:*

work, shopping,  
entertainment, & recreation



*Travelers are experiencing congestion during morning & afternoon/evening commutes*



*Most people travel the corridor using their **personal vehicle***



*Travelers are experiencing these top safety-related issues:*



Congestion



Truck Merging



Aggressive/  
Distracted  
Drivers

Speeding



*Most people want to see these improvements along the corridor:*



Truck-only Lanes

High Occupancy  
Vehicle (HOV)

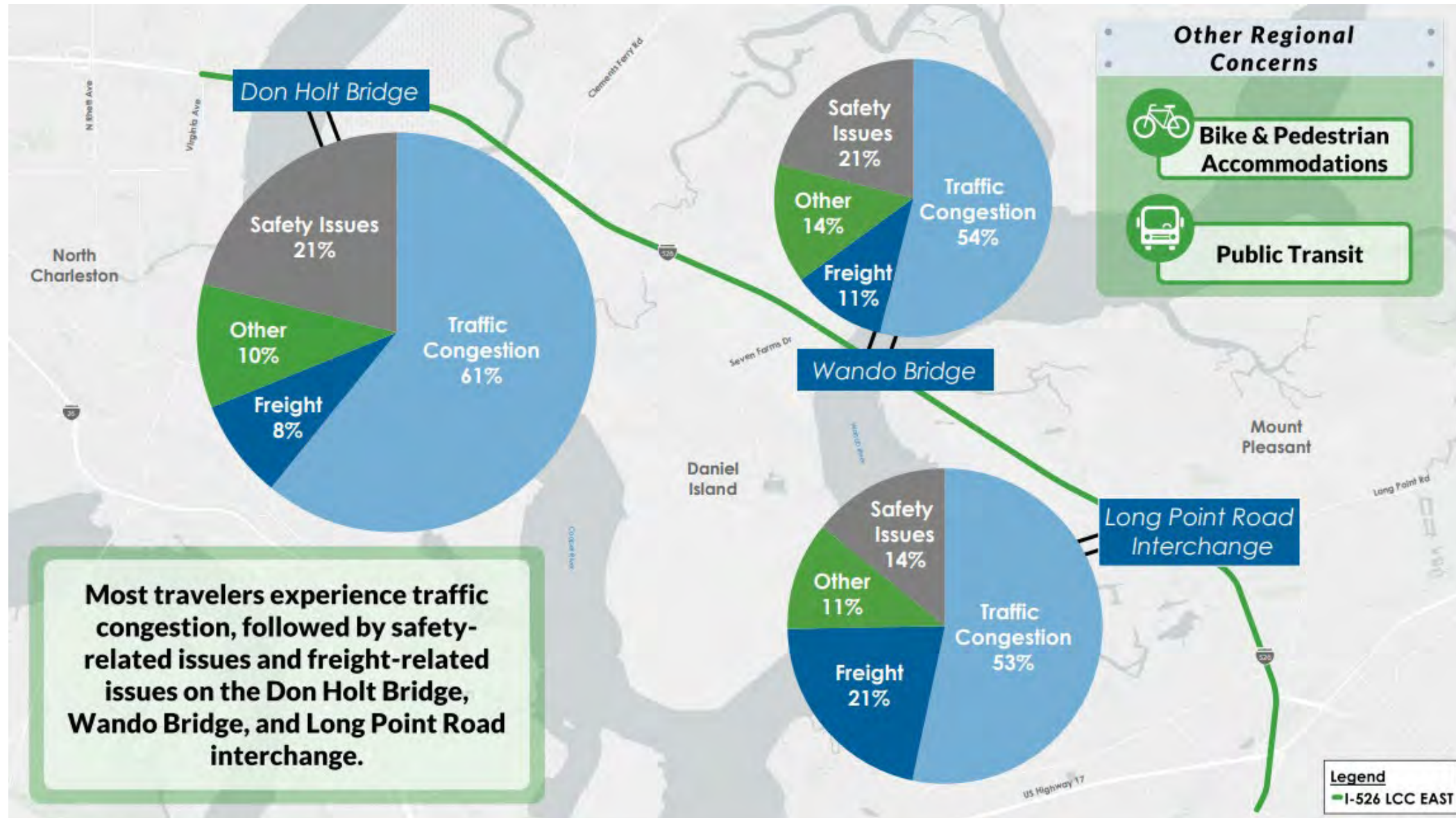


Carpool Lanes

\$ High  
Occupancy  
Toll (HOT)



# What we are hearing from the survey so far...



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## *How should we address problems or issues experienced on the corridor?*

Most people are choosing these four solutions from eight possible categories:

### Roadway/ Bridge Design

*Add more travel lanes, improve the existing corridor alignment and clearances, increase corridor lifespan, and design for extreme weather events*



### Safety



*Widen shoulders to get emergency vehicles to crashes quicker and space to pull vehicles off of the road to keep traffic moving; Provide enhanced lighting and real-time travel information via improved dynamic messaging*

### Traffic Operations

*Maximize existing capacity by improving pavement markings, enhanced signage, incident and work zone management*



### Freight Connectivity



*Improve truck freight connections to nearby ports and rail facilities, implement rush-hour incentives/disincentives, increase availability of truck parking*



# Contact Information



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