

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 11

Date: August 29, 2020

Time: 10:00 am – 12:39 pm

Location: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor Community Office, 5627 Rivers Avenue, N. Charleston, SC,
Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

Project Name: I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST

Attendees

Larenda Baxley, Ferndale
Tina A. Baxley, Ferndale
Gilbert Reeves, Ferndale
Earl Muhammad, Ferndale/Muhammad Mosque
Tony Grasso, Russelldale
Jeanaris Bannister, Liberty Park
Carolyn Varner, Liberty Park
Doris Twiggs, Liberty Park
Prayonda Cooper, Joppa Way
Joy Riley, SCDOT (Project Manager)
Chad Long, SCDOT
David Kelly, SCDOT
Pamela Foster, FHWA

Yolonda Jordan, FHWA
Maxine Smith, Maximum Consulting
Mattese Lecque, Maximum Consulting
Carolyn Lecque, Maximum Consulting
Clay Middleton, Maximum Consulting
Janelle Ellis, Empowerment Strategies
Rick Day, Stantec
Amy Sackaroff, Stantec
LaTonya Derrick, Stantec
Ryan White, Stantec
Hannah Clements, Stantec
Horrace Tobin, Stantec (Community Office)

Participant Summary:

Total participants: 25

Ferndale: 4	Adjacent/affected communities/agencies: 1	Community Office: 1
Highland Terrace: 0	SCDOT: 3	Stantec: 5
Liberty Park: 3	FHWA: 2	Facilitator: 1
Russelldale: 1	Community Liaisons: 4	

Meeting Summary:

Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call (in-person, online, and phone participants)

Administrative Items:

- Participants were thanked for joining and participating in CAC Meeting 11.
- CAC Meeting 11 was hosted using a hybrid approach with participants joining via the Microsoft Teams platform, by phone, and in person.
 - The meeting was recorded solely for accuracy of meeting minutes.
 - LaTonya will serve as the technical host for participants joining remotely.
 - Participants may raise their hands, virtually and in person, to ask questions.

- CAC Meeting 11 packets were distributed to meeting participants prior to the meeting date, including minutes for CAC Meeting 10.
- CAC Meeting 10 minutes were approved with no recommended changes.

Review of Agenda:

- Neighborhood Update
- 1-Year CAC Recap
- Community Center & Pocket Park Update
- Review Recreational Program Survey results
- Project Schedule/Milestone Review
- DEIS EJ Project Commitments
- Outreach Update
- Summary & Next Steps

Neighborhood Update:

Facilitator: CAC Members representing each of the impacted communities were asked to share concerns expressed by the residents of impacted communities regarding the I-526 project since CAC Meeting 10.

CAC Member(s) Feedback (Liberty Park):

- COVID has made it difficult to go into communities and connect with residents, but he would like to begin distributing flyers again and using visual tools, such as yard signs. This may motivate the community to get involved by calling the office and to have ample opportunity to plan for and participate in CAC meetings.
- Community members have asked if there will be additional interstate expansion 10-20 years from now.
- Requested distribution of flyers containing accurate I-526 project information in order to help prevent inaccurate information within the community.

CAC Member Feedback (Joppa Way):

- Looking forward to the I-526 project yard signs to help inform communities about the CAC

Facilitator:

- I-526 project yard signs will be discussed in further detail during the Outreach Update portion of the meeting agenda.
- The project team encourages questions from the CAC and community members from the impacted communities.

Project Team Member:

- A large part of the CAC Meeting 11 agenda will cover the EJ Mitigation Plan. We will ensure that the mitigation plan includes making information available to the public, including sending out a flyer and getting feedback. The target date for the start of the Public Comment period is October 1, 2020, which will be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

One-Year CAC Recap:

- Why develop a Community Advisory Council? A review was provided as a reminder of the reason the CAC was formed and the main responsibilities of CAC members.
 - Provide a way for you to voice your opinions, feelings, and ideas
 - Help shape the project and create a positive, local impact
 - Provide input on actions to minimize and mitigate impacts
 - Build relationships that will facilitate and sustain long-term solutions for impacted communities
 - Convey ownership
 - Meaningful engagement

- Desired outcomes of the Community Advisory Council
 - Provide a forum for open communication between the project team and the community
 - Emphasis placed on the importance of cross-generational (all age groups) and cross-cultural (all represented races and ethnicities) engagement during the pre-construction and post-construction phases of the I-526 project to facilitate long-term programs and solutions
 - Early collaboration to frame expectations and identify solutions
 - Social Needs Assessment (CAC Meeting 2, conducted October 28, 2019)
 - Mitigation Work Session (CAC Meeting 6, March 7, 2020)
 - Help SCDOT understand the community history, needs, concerns, and priorities
 - Including the Community History Preservation Study led by Maximum Consulting
 - Help SCDOT gain a better understanding of the project impacts on the community
 - Help shape the community mitigation package

Facilitator:

- CAC Members must make a distinction (know the difference) between their role as the Community Advisory Council and the role that members who choose to serve as the Project Oversight Committee will play. Currently, the CAC is in place to ensure that all initial (recreational facility design) concepts and general community concerns are captured and included in the initial mitigation plan because once the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Record of Decision have been finalized and approved, those documents serve as the final contract. No changes may be made to the mitigation plan once these documents are finalized.
- CAC and community input are critical in the development of the mitigation package. It is the responsibility of the CAC and community members to submit comments and questions, or to voice their concerns during the public comment period.
- CAC members are encouraged to submit comment cards or contact the project team with any questions you may not feel comfortable speaking about in front of the group or if you have additional input after the conclusion of the meeting.
- The public hearing and comment period will take place in October 2020.

Project Manager:

- The draft mitigation plan will be released and available for public comment October 2020 through December 2020.
- She reiterated that this is the time for the CAC and community members to have their voices heard. The project team will give their best effort to make sure information is distributed in the community, and to ensure community members know how to get involved and how to submit their comments and opinions on I-526 project (impacts and design) during the public comment period.

- Some community members may think SCDOT already has plans in place. That is not the case. Community input is valued and considered during the planning process.
- This is the big opportunity for the CAC and community members to look at the different options SCDOT is presenting and to submit feedback for the project team to take into consideration. Public (community) input will be taken into consideration until next year, but the window for public input will eventually close.
- This is the time for people to voice their opinions and to be a part of the process.
- The Community Mitigation Plan addresses issues and concerns, such as traffic expertise, affordable housing, and community amenities that are not managed by SCDOT. Issues that are outside of SCDOT authority and the I-526 West LCC project scope of work, must be addressed and solutions must be driven by community members.

Community Center & Pocket Park Update:

Project Team Member:

- Two locations in Russelldale are being considered for the pocket park. Both will be compatible with recommended infrastructure improvements (such as crosswalks, pedestrian signs, curb improvements, and traffic calming measures) and will provide safety considerations and features. Two locations under consideration:
 - Parcel at the corner of Rebecca and Rockingham (original location)
 - Parcel in the cul-de-sac at the corner of Rebecca and Twitty Street

Project Manager:

- Requested feedback from CAC members.
- She is actively pursuing parcel located at Rebecca and Rockingham. SCDOT cannot condemn the property for this use. The current property owners will not sell this parcel unless we can trade it for another property that can be used for duplex construction. She is checking into potentially trading some of the property purchased in Ferndale for this parcel. However, they may not agree to trading those properties. Because she is on a timeline, she would like feedback on the next best option(s).
- The property at Rebecca and Rockingham Streets is in the open and feels safe.
- The property at the end of Rebecca Street next to the railroad seems isolated, and perhaps less safe, but she asked for feedback from the community.
- If none of the options presented are acceptable, the project team could consider some of the original pocket park concepts that were situated near the overpass on Margaret Drive. This location would be a last choice for the project team because it would be difficult to construct and remain open prior to the interstate widening. We would not be able to construct the pocket park until the interstate widening project is complete because we don't want a playground in the middle of an interstate construction project.
- For CAC members, if we are unable to secure the parcel at the corner of Rebecca and Rockingham, what are the second and third options preferred for purchase?

CAC Member: Requested an explanation of the purpose of and amenities associated with the pocket park.

Project Manager:

- The amenities associated with the pocket park include a basketball court, a playground, and an open-air pavilion. It will not contain a community center.

- Based on feedback from the City of North Charleston, having three separate community centers is not feasible due to operational and maintenance costs associated with enclosed facilities. The City has expressed their preference for the single, larger facility at Filbin Creek. This would include no additional enclosed facilities at pocket parks.

CAC Member:

- What can be done to reduce or eliminate drug activity in the vacant areas, particularly in the Russelldale/Ferndale areas?

Project Manager:

- Law enforcement issues are outside of SCDOT control. These concerns may be expressed to the City of North Charleston.
- Reiterated her concerns with the Rebecca and Twitty Street parcel. The Margaret Drive locations are more open, but construction logistics will cause challenges to community use of the pocket park.

CAC Member:

- Community member reported witnessing crime on Rockingham and Delta Streets and recommended posting hours of operation and signage at pocket parks to help prevent illegal activities.
- Concerns that a pocket park on Rockingham will encourage drug activity.

Project Manager:

It may be possible to install cameras or other means to discourage illegal behavior and keep the area safe.

Asked the CAC to prioritize the following pocket park locations.

- Rebecca and Rockingham Street parcel
- Rebecca and Twitty Street parcel
- Filbin Creek Community Center (Margaret Drive) parcel

CAC Member:

Expressed concern about planning based on a property that has not yet been purchased

Project Manager:

- We are in negotiations with the owners of both parcels on Rebecca Street, but we must have a back up plan if we are unable to secure those properties.
- Traffic calming audits and lighting audits will need to be conducted and included in the final plans. The City of North Charleston is ultimately responsible for lighting because they pay the associated power bills. SCDOT does not have a funding source for non-interstate lighting.

CAC Member:

Regarding safety concerns for residents, particularly children that use the facilities, adequate lighting and the right amenities to minimize the current safety concerns in the Russelldale community.

Summary:

CAC was asked to prioritize the following parcels as potential pocket park locations:

- Rebecca and Rockingham Street parcel
- Rebecca and Twitty Street parcel
- Filbin Creek Community Center (Margaret Drive) parcel

CAC Member:

The Filbin Creek location was prioritized as the preferred location based on access, connectivity, and safety for all communities.

Project Team Member:

Pedestrian safety and lighting components have been included in each community center option.

Project Manager:

Many of these items may not be included in great detail in the draft Mitigation Plan. However, we will have to include the details in the final plan. SCDOT will do lighting and traffic calming audits. Results must be shared with and co-signed by the City of North Charleston. These ideas will continue to be discussed and developed, and included in the final Mitigation Plan. This applies to issues such as sidewalks and trails as well.

CAC Member:

What feedback do we give to community members who will remain in the area and are asking where we are in the process? My biggest concern is how the community will look when we walk away.

Project Manager:

We should be able to answer this question when we discuss the mitigation framework in today's agenda. There is a planning process to tie all of the components together. These will be discussed during the discussion of the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan.

CAC Member:

What is the status of the Liberty Hill/Highland Terrace pocket park?

Project Team Member:

- Trying to include as many amenities as possible at the Filbin Creek Community Center
- No enclosed spaces at the Russelldale and LH/HT pocket park in order to maximize connectivity and
- Both pocket parks will have outdoor, covered pavilions

CAC Member:

(Called in by phone to make provide feedback regarding preferred pocket park locations)

- Losing a whole community center is not good (for the Russelldale community)
- A pocket park is preferred so that children have recreational options in the Russelldale community
- Older residents may want to have an option for an outdoor facility in the Russelldale community
- This will also encourage Russelldale residents to have more pride in their community
- CAC member prefers the parcel at the corner of Rebecca and Rockingham streets for the pocket park that will service Russelldale. She also likes the Rebecca and Twitty street parcel, but only if there is a barrier that protects the property from the railroad and provides proper lighting.

Recreational Program Survey

- Survey was distributed to CAC members in July 2020
- Thank you for your participation in the survey.
- The data is presented and sorted based on existing programs that received votes.
- Items that received no votes were not reflected in the survey results.

- Other options deemed important by survey participants:
 - Family dynamics
 - Health programs that benefit all ages and various health situations
 - Mentoring
 - Professionals
 - Crafts
 - New/single parents
- Based upon CAC feedback, solar power was added as a community center feature.

Project Schedule/Milestone Review:

- A high-level review of the project was provided. Request for CAC input on the Mitigation components.
- CAC will continue to meet until December 2021.
 - The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the Record of Decision will include the final commitments when they are published.
 - The committee will continue to help develop the Mitigation Plan until that time. Input from the community is also needed.
- December 2021 – Transition into a Project Oversight Committee (POC). Any members of the CAC with continued interest in serving on the POC will have responsibility to ensure that the commitments made by the CAC and accepted in the FEIS and Record of Decision are completed. The structure of this committee has not been finalized. The CAC will play a role in developing the structure, roles, and responsibilities of the POC.
- An overview of the draft Community Mitigation Plan is projected to be available to the public on October 1, 2020. This will begin the public comment period for community members to voice their opinions about the details of the draft Community Mitigation Plan.
- A project website is available to the public.
- A mailer about the plan and timeframe will be distributed throughout the impacted communities. The mailer will direct residents to the website to get more details about meeting with Community Liaisons and learning about this process and Environmental Justice.
 - November 2020 – Draft EIS issued. This will include the draft Mitigation Plan.
 - December 2021 – Final EIS projected to be issued. This will be combined with the Record of Decision. This will complete the NEPA process.
 - 2023 – Right-of-Way Acquisition projected to begin. SCDOT will begin to acquire the property for the highway improvement project. During this process, the POC will begin to oversee various mitigation components.
 - 2027 – Construction will begin. There will be approximately four years of highway construction and upwards of eight years of construction, including mitigation components and highway improvements.

Project Manager:

- The schedule normally moves much faster (approximately three years), but due to the significant community impact, SCDOT wants to make a commitment to building affordable housing, designing and building community centers, and implementing mitigation before the impacts related to the highway project occur.

CAC Member:

- Are you replacing tenant-based housing or owner-occupied homes?

Project Manager:

- Both. Our affordable housing mitigation plan has two parts. SCDOT is partnering with SC Housing Authority to build a larger, rental based housing unit. This will primarily be for individuals that qualify for Section 8. This will not be located within the affected communities due to the limited availability of land for development. SCDOT is also actively buying undeveloped, vacant lots to replace single-family homes, and will work with owners to purchase parcels of land in the impacted communities.

CAC Member:

- What about totally disabled individuals that may be displaced?

Project Manager:

- There is a developer planning to redevelop the old hotel on Aviation and Rivers Avenue. This will be a senior-oriented, disabled-accessible, affordable housing facility. SCDOT can also retrofit market homes identified by residents in the impacted communities.

Facilitator:

- Participants were reminded to review the minutes from CAC Meeting 5 for a detailed overview and explanation of tax incentive programs and the approach that SCDOT will follow for replacement and relocation housing as it relates to rental and single-family units.

Project Manager:

- These are items that will evolve over the next five months. These details will be formalized in the final Mitigation Plan. Once we reach the final Mitigation Plan, we are required to have final agreements in place with organizations such as the Housing Authority and nonprofits that outline roles and responsibilities, and commit funding.
- If a resident is being displaced under the Right of Way (ROW) process, SCDOT has an obligation to provide them with comparable housing that is accessible and accommodates any special needs.

DEIS EJ Project Commitments:

- First Draft of Mitigation Plan
 - The legal goal of the Mitigation Plan is to address impacts of the project.
 - The CAC will continue to operate until December 2021 (tentative date), after which they transition into the POC.
 - As members train to serve on the POC, SCDOT will bring in subject matter experts to speak to and better equip, inform, and prepare POC members.
 - The Community Office will be available through the final design and ROW Acquisition phase (tentative date 2027). The Community Office will continue to be staffed by the Office Manager, Community Liaisons, and ROW Liaisons. A new community office will be established by the contractor once the project goes into construction.

CAC Member:

Can SCDOT work with N. Charleston to create greenways in the proposed project pathway areas since all of the highways will be elevated? Can we make those areas underneath the highways greenways?

Project Manager:

Greenways are proposed under every overpass. When we get to that part of the planning process, someone from the City will join the CAC meeting to discuss.

Project Team Member:

- As a part of the Mitigation Plan, SCDOT and Maximum Consulting are working together to identify local organizations that can provide financial literacy and first-time home buyer counseling to displaced residents. Assisting renters' transition to first-time home buyers is a first quarter 2021 goal. CAC member input regarding this plan is welcome.
- Feedback will be considered throughout the ROW process.
- We are targeting implementation of three new education and employment initiatives:
 - School-to-Work program - This will engage 10 high school or college students annually from the impacted communities with a focus of fields in construction, engineering, and transportation.
 - Pre-employment Training
 - College Aid Initiative – This will provide up to \$50,000 in scholarships for high school and college students in the impacted communities.

CAC Member:

How long is “each year” that a student can participate?

Project Team Leader:

It is generally a summer internship program.

CAC Member:

What does ‘attend the selected educational institutions’ mean?

Project Team Leader:

We will work with specific institutions to help develop the program. The scholarship will be made available for the students to use at an accredited institution (technical college or institution of higher learning) of their choice within the state of South Carolina.

CAC Member:

Can the CAC play a role in selecting which institutions may play a role in the initiative?

Project Team Leader:

Yes, CAC input will be valued.

- Recreational facilities
 - We are working with the City to implement the list of programs and activities that was created with CAC input. That will be part of an inter-governmental agreement between SCDOT and the City regarding the amenities required for the Filbin Community Center.
 - Qualified residents from these communities will be used to staff these centers.
 - Will post jobs within the community
 - Will encourage the CAC to submit and select qualified applicants
- Connectivity and bicycle & pedestrian and safety components
 - This involves ensuring safe travel for the bicyclists in the community as they travel back and forth between the community centers. Improvements include:

- New and improved sidewalks
 - Lighting
 - Crosswalks
 - Pedestrian signage
 - Traffic calming
 - Areas where these improvements should be made are being identified, including improvements at the CARTA bus station
- Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan
 - There was review of the Sidewalk Improvement Map to show what the Infrastructure Enhancement Plan does.
 - This plan looks beyond the connectivity of the community centers and looks more holistically at all four communities to evaluate needs from a sidewalk, lighting, project-related storm water, and pedestrian safety standpoint to develop a plan that SCDOT will ultimately implement to address these improvements.
- The Community History Preservation Study
 - Ms. Carolyn Lecque (Community Liaison) participated in the Liberty Hill history exhibit. She is sharing her experience and “lessons learned” as a resource while the Community History Preservation Study is implemented. A list of potential historians and photographers has been developed to help lead the study. CAC will play a key role in this upcoming study. The goal is to initiate the study this fall.
- The timeline blends the two requests made from the CAC:
 - (1) To understand where the commitments fall in the project timeline and to understand where commitments fall over the course of years, including beyond the project
 - (2) To understand where it fits in the development timeline and its construction
 - CAC has been given the project timelines and provided with estimations of when different commitments begin, are implemented, and end.
 - Key takeaway: The majority of the mitigation tasks end before the project goes to construction. The goal is to have the community centers up and running prior to construction of the project. This includes:
 - Connectivity
 - Affordable Housing
 - Financial literacy
 - School-to-Work program
 - Scholarships, etc.

ACTION ITEMS:

Project Team Leader: Provide an overview of the School-to-Work and Scholarship programs at the next meeting and what was done on the Port Access Road, as this will be used as the model.

FHWA: Coordinate with Pamela Foster for technical assistance developing the School-to-Work and Scholarship programs. She helped develop these programs for SCDOT.

Outreach Update:

- An infographic mailer that captures that commitments will be distributed to the residents of the impacted communities. This mailer will include options to provide feedback and advise that residents may receive more details from the Community Office.
 - This all leads up to the public comment period prior to the public hearing.

- Environmental Justice videos are being considered for website, as well as possible CAC experience testimonials.
- MetroQuest is a creative platform that has been previously used by the SCDOT. It is an online public involvement tool/survey that will also be used for people that are comfortable going online to access information and provide feedback.
- Links for all of the tools and the mailer will be housed on the Environmental Justice webpage on the I-526's website. The website will also include information about the Advisory Council formation and meeting notes.
- The Community Office has been open to anyone that has scheduled an appointment.
- The community and CAC members are welcome to invite the SCDOT project team to community/resident organized informational events to share and engage groups in a socially responsible manner.
- Hispanic/Latino Community Outreach Specialists has been contacted about the project. They are looking to engage the affected residents with grassroots canvassing and project advertising on their respective radio and online platforms.

How can we best reach your neighbors to gather feedback on potential mitigation ideas?

CAC Member:

This is a lot to digest, even as a CAC member. How do we “eat this elephant” one bite at a time especially considering current events, the pandemic, the election, etc. considering there is a timeline and a desire to get all the stakeholders onboard? Is it asking too much for this project to be shared on television or through another means of sharing information? A person of age looking at all these things that are going to happen may feel overwhelmed. We lose people because we throw so much at them at one time. Is there a way to get the information out quickly but in smaller bite sizes?

Project Team Leader:

This is an excellent comment. The project team loses sight of how complex this is and how much information there is. The project team will think about how this can be delivered in bite sized pieces. We welcome your input and encourage a future conversation to brainstorm about how to deliver in a manner that is easy to be consumed.

- ACTION ITEM: Maximum Consulting will reach out to the minority media anchors at the three TV stations, as well as, the radio DJs at station WJNI and Cumulus Media, and the Charleston Chronicle to provide a media bite.
- ACTION ITEM: LaTonya will follow up with CAC members to solicit feedback about to distribute information in bite sized pieces. Members are encouraged to contact her with ideas.
- Magnet outreach
 - Magnets will be mailed to residents in the four impacted neighborhoods and Joppa Way.
 - The final magnet will not contain the images as shown in the packet but will include the most important part, the branding at the bottom with contact information.
 - The magnet will be mailed along with a letter from Joy Riley encouraging the residents to call the Community Office and make an appointment to discuss questions or concerns.
- Yard signs
 - There are two versions that may be provided for residents to place in their yards. They were reviewed in the meeting packet.

- *“Which option would you prefer to see in your front yard?”*
- The magnet and yard signs are available in Spanish.
- Low Country Street Grocery is interested in identifying families that need fruits and vegetables. Residents may leave a message with the Community Office. They will receive a call back to determine their food needs.
- There is an upcoming special event that is not sponsored by the project but is sponsored by organizations in the community.
 - On Thursday, September 3, 2020, there will be a Back-to-School giveaway event sponsored by Origin South Carolina and Low Country Street Grocery.
 - 75 to 100 backpacks will be given to residents of the four impacted neighborhoods in this drive-by/walk-by event. Backpacks will be distributed at the following times and locations:
 - 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Ferndale Community Center
 - 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Biblical House of God
 - Carolyn Lecque is in the Community Office and has flyers. Interested parties may also call the office for information.

Meeting Summary and Next Steps

- Summary of CAC member feedback:
 - SCDOT should prioritize the pocket park location that is situated nearest to Filbin Creek Community Center. This is dependent on SCDOT’s ability to secure this parcel.
- Review of the results of the CAC Recreational Program Survey.
- Review of the project schedule timeline and milestones
- Review of the DEIS/EJ project commitments
- Update on the initial outreach using traditional mail and online options
- Review of the ability of the project team to attend meetings and assist the CAC information dissemination and community education along with ensuring that Hispanic residents receive information
- Review of magnet outreach efforts, including a visual example. Review yard sign options
- Review of Low Country Street Grocery Outreach
- A community event, the Back-to-School program will be held on September 3, 2020
- Request for closing comments:
 - CAC Member: Is there a facility available to hold socially distant CAC meetings?
 - Project Manager: SCDOT will return to their offices in a week. The feasibility of having in-person meetings will be evaluated at that time. This is expected to evolve over the next month.
 - LaTonya: Please review the request to provide a video testimonial. Anyone that has not responded to the initial request will receive a follow up. Testimonial recordings will tentatively take place on September 4 and will be scheduled prior to that date.

CAC Meeting #12 scheduled for September 19, 2020, 10 AM.