

About the I-526 LCC WEST Public Hearing

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is proposing to make improvements to existing I-526 between Paul Cantrell Boulevard in West Ashley and Virginia Avenue in North Charleston. The Recommended Preferred Alternative presented at the I-526 Lowcountry Corridor WEST (I-526 LCC WEST) Public Hearing this fall consists of a widening from 4 lanes to 8 lanes between Paul Cantrell Boulevard in West Ashley and Virginia Avenue in North Charleston, as well as making improvements at the interchanges of I-26/I-526, Virginia/North Rhett Avenues, and at Paul Cantrell Boulevard. The purpose of the I-526 LCC WEST project is to increase capacity and improve operations at the I-26/I-526 interchange and along the mainline from Paul Cantrell Boulevard to Virginia Avenue.

The I-526 LCC WEST Public Hearing (October 30, 2020 to January 15, 2021) offered many ways for the public to engage comfortably and safely. Opportunities included one-on-one appointments at the Community Office (5627 Rivers Avenue), at a virtual verbal comment session, on the project website, and by mail. Additionally, the public could ask questions of the project team by live chatting the team on the project website, calling/texting the project hotline, visiting the Community Office, or sending an email.



The Purpose of the Public Hearing was to:

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



What We Heard!

243 Total Comments
October 30, 2020 - January 15, 2021**26%**

Right-of-Way

**12%**

Interchanges

**11%**

Transit/BRT

**16%**

Noise

**10%**Bike/ Ped
Lanes**7%**

Environmental

**14%**Support the
Project**24%**Affordable Housing/
Community
Mitigation

What comes next for the I-526 LCC WEST?

Revisions to the Recommended Preferred Alternative

Based on your input, our project team is already making some improvements to the Recommended Preferred Alternative. For example, we have added a retaining wall beside Ashley Harbor to avoid impacting the neighborhood trail. In North Charleston, we identified the need to replace the I-26 mainline bridge over the Norfolk Southern railroad and LaCross Road. As part of mitigation for impacts to the adjacent communities of Liberty Park and Highland Terrace, a pedestrian bridge would be constructed over the railroad and a multi-use path would connect to the south end of the pedestrian bridge.

Noise Wall Balloting Process

Own property or live near a proposed noise wall? There is an additional public involvement process. Those who would benefit from one of the proposed noise walls will be asked to participate in a balloting process to document if the noise wall is truly desired. This spring, these potential beneficiaries will receive a letter or door hanger with instructions to participate. SCDOT continues to evaluate other noise reduction strategies, such as quieter bridge joints and next generation concrete surfaces, for those areas where a noise wall would not be effective.

Finalization of Community Mitigation Plan

The project team continues to work with the potentially impacted neighborhoods of Ferndale, Highland Terrace, Liberty Park, and Russelldale to finalize the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan. A critical component of this plan includes the completion of the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan. More information can be found on the final page of this document.

Completion of the Environmental Permitting Process

The goal is to complete the environmental permitting process by the end of the year after the Final Environmental Impact Statement/Record of Decision is approved in late fall. This will allow engineers to design the final detailed plans and key pieces of the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan to begin, such as construction of replacement community centers and affordable housing. SCDOT is committing to begin that work ahead of any relocations.

Recommended Preferred Alternative Revisions



Key Milestones

Schedule based on approval of environmental documentation without legal challenge

Late 2021



**Environmental
Permitting Complete**

2021-2023



**Final
Design**

2021-2032



**Community
Mitigation**

2024-2027



**Right-of-Way
Acquisition**

2027-2032



**Road Construction
(Phase 1)**

How is I-526 being planned for the future?

► "Complete Streets Policy;" Shared-Use Path over the Ashley River

Last fall, Secretary Hall committed to accommodate a 14-foot, regionally planned shared-use path along the I-526 corridor at the major river crossings of the Ashley, Cooper and Wando Rivers. For the I-526 LCC WEST, we have modified our bridge widening designs for the Ashley River and have been working with the Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) and local municipalities to accommodate their recommended pathway alignments for that location.

Currently, there are no public bike or pedestrian accommodations on either end of the Ashley River I-526 bridge, so additional planning will be needed. BCDCOG is leading the planning effort, along with local municipalities and organizations like Charleston Moves, to refine the local plans to provide the regional connections to this shared-use path. SCDOT will continue to assist the local agencies in accordance with SCDOT's new "complete streets" policy.



SCDOT's "Complete Streets" Policy requires consideration of accommodations for bicycling, walking, and transit in the design, construction, maintenance and operations of the state transportation network.

Learn more here: <http://info2.scdot.org/SCDOTPress/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=3102>



► Preparing now for Traffic Management Strategies in the Future

With the growth and future travel demands in this region, SCDOT knows that simply adding capacity is not going to be the sole, long-term solution for congestion in this corridor. However, there are many basic infrastructure needs that must be addressed in order to implement new technologies known as "Active Traffic Management." These strategies, such as variable speed limits, ramp metering, managed lanes and opening up shoulders during peak times (for example, transit on shoulders to allow for better, more reliable travel times), not only require additional lane capacity, but also other new infrastructure, such as upgraded electrical systems and internet capabilities. The current alternatives presented "pave the way," quite literally, for these types of future alternative traffic management strategies.

SCDOT is proactively planning for the appropriate traffic management strategies by ensuring the upgraded infrastructure being proposed for the WEST project can support the future implementation of such strategies. The timing of implementation of these types of strategies, such as managed lanes or Active Traffic Management Infrastructure, requires complex planning and a calculated implementation plan. It requires new technologies and equipment to be installed in coordination with additional lane management or restriping. As we move forward, we will continue coordination with BCDCOG for the local transit framework to determine how bus lanes or managed lanes may enhance local transit and/or expanded bus operations.

 *Want to learn more?*

View FAQs online:
www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/WEST/FAQs/

About the Community Improvements Open House

 **78**
Attendees

On Saturday, March 6, 2021, SCDOT hosted a Community Improvements Open House to introduce the Community Infrastructure Enhancement Plan (CIEP). The CIEP is a component of the Environmental Justice Community Mitigation Plan that is being developed to address the potential impacts of the I-526 LCC WEST Project in the Ferndale, Russelldale, Highland Terrace, and Liberty Park neighborhoods. The CIEP is being developed to identify community infrastructure needs related to:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Safety
- Landscaping
- Pedestrian and Street Lighting
- Speeding Concerns
- Stormwater Management
- Bus Shelters

Neighborhood residents and property owners were invited to review and provide input on each element of the CIEP. The goal was to gather feedback on which improvements they would most like to see in their communities and where. Additionally, the project team introduced the Community History Preservation Program and asked for input on the focus of upcoming personal and professional skills trainings.



SCDOT and FHWA have received additional funding to support their commitment to offering personal and professional development resources to residents of the potentially impacted Environmental Justice neighborhoods. Interested in more information, or have other opportunities you would consider? Call or text the Community Office! 843.258.1135

Couldn't make the Open House?

View the materials online:

[www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/
WEST/Public-Involvement/](http://www.526LowcountryCorridor.com/WEST/Public-Involvement/)



We want to hear from you!



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Stay tuned for more information on the I-526 LCC EAST! Lookout for a special edition newsletter later this spring, and a public meeting is planned for summer of this year!

Your comments and suggestions are important to the development of a quality transportation project. We have multiple ways for you to stay informed about upcoming project-related events and information updates.