

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After tonight’s hearing, SCDOT will receive the public’s comments on the preliminary plans and potential impacts for the Preferred Alternative. **The EA, related maps and drawings, and other pertinent information will be available for public review until February 12, 2016, at the SCDOT District 7 Office** located at 1724 Charleston Highway, Orangeburg, SC 29115 (Phone: 803-531-6850). **The EA, as well as the handout, comment form, and project displays from this meeting are also accessible on SCDOT’s website at <http://www.scdot.org>** (“Public Hearings” Quicklink).

Comment forms are available and can be filled out tonight or returned by mail to the address on the form. Comments may also be mailed, e-mailed, or faxed to Ms. Michelle Shepherd at SCDOT (see contact information below). **Please return all written comments by February 12, 2016**, which will become part of the public record for this project.

After the close of the public hearing comment period, all written comments will be carefully reviewed and responses will be provided by SCDOT representatives. Please note that information provided through the public comment process, including name and address, will be published and is subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act. Following any necessary additional studies, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) could be issued by the FHWA. If a FONSI is determined and funding is available, right-of-way acquisition may begin. A SCDOT Right-of-Way Agent will contact the property owners to verify the information on ownership and property lines, and to explain how construction of the project will affect their property. The Right-of- Way Agent will make a written offer based on the fair market value for any property impacted by the project. Details of right-of-way acquisition procedures can be found in the brochure, “SCDOT Highways and You” which is available at this hearing. Right-of-Way representatives are also available at this hearing to answer your questions.

TITLE VI

SCDOT complies with all requirements set forth by Federal regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Any person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against because of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap or disability, or national origin under a program receiving federal aid has the right to file a complaint with SCDOT. The complaint shall be filed with the Title VI Program Compliance Coordinator, at the Office of Business Development & Special Programs, 955 Park Street, Suite 117, Columbia, SC 29202 or at (803) 737-5095. The complaint should be submitted no later than 180 days after the date of the alleged act of discrimination. It should outline as completely as possible the facts and circumstances of the incident and should be signed by the person making the complaint.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For additional information concerning the project contact: Ms. Michelle Shepherd, PE, SCDOT Program Manager, PO Box 191, Columbia, SC 29202-0191, Phone: (803) 737-4596, E-Mail: shepherdam@scdot.org.



Aiken County, SC

Public Hearing

Thursday, January 28, 2016

5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS), propose to improve SC 126 (Belvedere Clearwater Road) extending approximately 2.0 miles from US 1/78 (Jefferson Davis Highway) to S-1760 (Old Sudlow Lake Road). The project is partially located in the Town Limits of Burnettown and the Clearwater community, and provides a direct connection to I-520 (Palmetto Parkway) at the western end of the corridor. The proposed improvements include widening the existing two-lane roadway to a four-lane roadway with a center turn lane, and adding bicycle lanes and sidewalks throughout.



The proposed project is consistent with the ARTS 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), ranking ninth for Prioritized Road Widening Projects. This project is identified as a system upgrade in the SCDOT 2014-2019 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for Aiken County. Right-of-Way acquisition is scheduled to begin in summer 2016, with construction anticipated to begin in Summer 2018. The total cost of the project is \$10.5 Million based on current estimates, and the project is fully funded through construction.

PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING

SCDOT, FHWA, and ARTS welcome you to this evening’s public hearing and appreciate your attendance. The purpose of this public hearing is to provide an opportunity to review and discuss individually, with representatives from SCDOT, the preliminary plans for the proposed widening of SC 126 (Belvedere Clearwater Road) from US 1/78 (Jefferson Davis Highway) to S-1760 (Old Sudlow Lake Road). Another purpose of the hearing is to gather information from the public or any interested organization on historic or cultural resources in the area.

PUBLIC HEARING FORMAT

From 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., the hearing format will be informal. The Environmental Assessment (EA) and large aerial displays of the project will be available for viewing, and representatives from SCDOT will be present to discuss the project with interested citizens on an individual basis. Citizens are encouraged to ask questions and provide comments regarding the possible social, economic, and environmental effects of the project.

At 6:00 p.m., SCDOT will make a brief, formal presentation about the project’s purpose and need, schedule, and potential impacts to the community and the natural environment. Immediately following the presentation, citizens will have the option to make formal, verbal comments regarding the proposed project.

Anyone who wishes to verbally comment must sign up to speak between 5:00 p.m. and 5:55 p.m. Sign in will be available when entering the public hearing. Each comment will be limited to two minutes and may not be transferred. The informal portion of the public hearing will continue during this time. All formal verbal comments will be recorded as part of the official project record. Commenters will be asked to state their name, address, and any relevant group affiliation.

WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

The purpose of the project is to provide additional capacity to address future traffic volumes and to provide facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The need for the project is based on high traffic volumes. Current traffic volumes on this portion of SC 126 are 9,500 vehicles per day; future volumes are projected to be 20,920 by 2030. Traffic volumes this high create poor traffic flow with a high level of congestion.

The proposed project will help accommodate current and future traffic volumes, reduce delays, increase safety, and increase the overall efficiency of Aiken County’s multimodal transportation network.

ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS

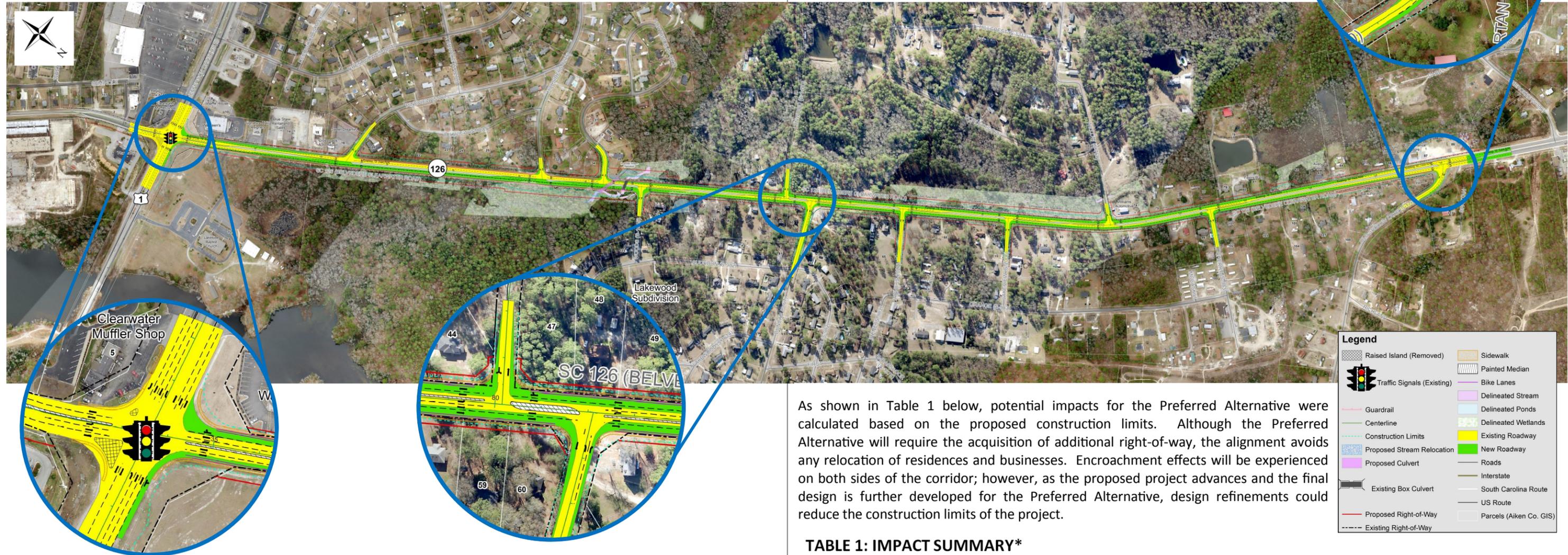
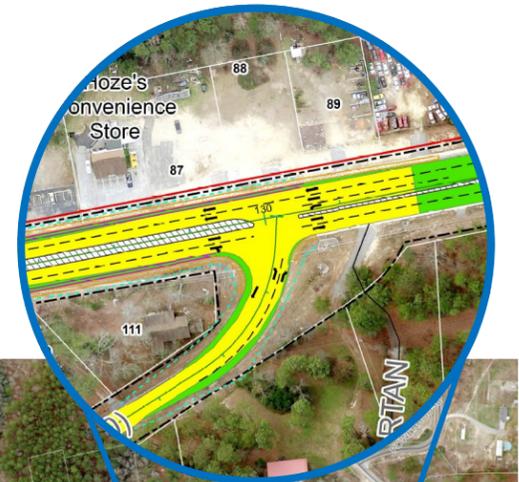
SCDOT developed and analyzed four preliminary build alternatives (Alternatives 1, 2, 3 and 4) in order to identify a preferred alternative that would minimize impacts, while achieving the project’s purpose and need. The build alternatives evaluated widening symmetrically about the existing roadway centerline (Alternative 1), to the north (Alternative 2), and to the south (Alternative 4), as well as a minimization (or “best fit”) alternative that combined portions of Alternatives 1 and 2 to best minimize potential impacts. The option of not widening the roadway (or No-Build Alternative) was also evaluated.

All four build alternatives were designed to include four 12-foot travel lanes, a 15-foot two-way left turn lane, two 4-foot bicycle lanes, and two 5-foot sidewalks, as shown on the back of this handout. Right-of-Way requirements vary throughout the project corridor but are typically 120 feet, measured symmetrically about the existing or relocated roadway centerline.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

In November 2015, SCDOT and FHWA approved the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed widening, which details the planning and design process, proposed improvements, and describes the anticipated impacts.

Measures to avoid and minimize impacts to the human and natural environment were also considered during development of the EA. As the proposed project advances and final designs are developed for the Preferred Alternative, additional design refinements will be evaluated to help further minimize impacts.



PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

SCDOT identified Alternative 3 (“minimization” or “best-fit” alternative) as the Preferred Alternative, because it meets the project’s purpose and need while best balancing impacts to the human and natural environment.

The Preferred Alternative widens Belvedere Clearwater Road (SC 126) to the north from Jefferson Davis Highway (US 1/78) to Woods Lane (S-1615), just west of the Little Horse Creek crossing. The widening then transitions to a symmetrical alignment from Woods Lane (S-1615) to the project’s western terminus at S-1760 (Old Sudlow Lake Road).

The Preferred Alternative avoids impacts to the stream and wetland system on the eastern portion of the project corridor, avoids impacting the pond just west of Woods Lane (S-1615), and requires the least amount of additional land outside the existing right-of-way. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative has the least overall construction impacts (including clearing and grading outside existing right-of-way), and the least stream impacts, surface water impacts, and encroachment impacts.

As shown in Table 1 below, potential impacts for the Preferred Alternative were calculated based on the proposed construction limits. Although the Preferred Alternative will require the acquisition of additional right-of-way, the alignment avoids any relocation of residences and businesses. Encroachment effects will be experienced on both sides of the corridor; however, as the proposed project advances and the final design is further developed for the Preferred Alternative, design refinements could reduce the construction limits of the project.

TABLE 1: IMPACT SUMMARY*

	Preferred Alternative Alt. 3 (Alt. 1/Alt. 2 Combination)
Residential Relocations	0
Business Relocations	0
Hazardous Material Sites	0
Noise Impacts (# of receptors)	33**
Historic Resources	0
Construction Impacts (acres)	18.67
Wetlands (acres)	0.133
Streams (linear feet)	533
Ponds (acres)	0

* This table shows anticipated project impacts based on proposed construction limits. Construction impacts are based on the construction limits outside the existing right-of-way.

** The No-Build Alternative would create 25 noise impacts based on future traffic volumes.