Project Update
Since the last round of public information meetings in the fall of 2008, the project team has carefully studied comments received from the public regarding traffic issues, potential benefits and environmental concerns related to the proposed Mark Clark Expressway (I-526) project. Those comments and suggestions have been incorporated into an analysis of the 38 preliminary alternatives for the proposed I-526 project. Through this analysis, a set of eight “reasonable” alternatives have been identified. During the next several months, the project team will begin to analyze the reasonable alternatives, plus mass transit, transportation system management (TSM) and the no-build alternative. The results of this analysis will be documented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Goals of this meeting:
1. Present the results of the Tier I Alternative Analyses;
2. Present the “Reasonable Alternatives” to be carried into the DEIS;
3. Collect comments and input on the “Reasonable Alternatives.”

What is the Purpose of the Project?
The purpose of the project is to increase the capacity of the regional transportation system, improve safety, and enhance mobility to and from the West Ashley, Johns Island, and James Island areas of Charleston, South Carolina. It is the goal of South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Charleston County to accomplish these objectives in an environmentally sensitive manner.

What’s Next?
Detailed analyses for the reasonable alternatives will include cultural resources, community impacts, threatened and endangered species, noise, air quality, water quality, land use, environmental justice and Section 4(f) resources.

The benefits and environmental impacts associated with each of the reasonable alternatives will be the basis for the recommendation of a preferred alternative. The DEIS and recommended preferred alternative will be presented to the public in Fall 2009.

Summary of the Alternative Analyses
Introduction
The Tier I Alternative Analyses determine whether preliminary alternatives meet the project goals for the proposed I-526 project. Based on past studies, engineering analyses and public comments, a total of 38 preliminary alternatives have been analyzed for this project using traffic performance, safety and environmental criteria.

Goals of this meeting:
1. Present the results of the Tier I Alternative Analyses;
2. Present the “Reasonable Alternatives” to be carried into the DEIS;
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Tier I Criteria
The project team established units of measure for each criterion and used two tools for evaluating the alternatives – the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) Traffic Model and a Geographic Information System (GIS). Each alternative was compared to the no-build scenario to evaluate how well the alternative performed in each Tier I criterion.

To assess an alternative’s ability to “improve congestion on existing roads,” the project team calculated the number of hours travelers spent in their vehicles on an average daily basis for each alternative. The project team also assessed delays with the no-build scenario to evaluate how well the alternative performed in each Tier I criterion.

To assess an alternative’s ability to “improve regional mobility and system linkage,” the project team calculated the number of hours travelers spent in their vehicles and the number of miles they traveled on a daily basis.

What’s Next?
Detailed analyses for the reasonable alternatives will include cultural resources, community impacts, threatened and endangered species, noise, air quality, water quality, land use, environmental justice and Section 4(f) resources.

Thank you!
We would like to thank you for your time and participation in this project. Your comments and questions have been very helpful in making this project a success.

- The Project Team
To assess an alternative’s ability to “increase safety on existing roads,” crash rates and fatality rates were calculated for road segments in the study area to identify roads that had rates above the statewide average. Crash rates are calculated based on historical crash data and compared to the vehicle miles of travel on a road. Because future crashes cannot be predicted, a comparison of volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratio for these road segments was used to indicate an improvement in traffic conditions and thus, in safety. The number of road segments with an improved v/c ratio was quantified for each alternative.

Potential relocations and wetland impacts were quantified in GIS using preliminary right-of-way widths specific to each alternative. These two environmental categories were included in the analysis because they are important in the project decision-making process and were found during the scoping process to be important to the public.

Process and Results
The first step in the evaluation of alternatives identified natural breaks in data from the GIS analysis (relocation and wetland impacts) and traffic data (VMT’s, VHT’s, delays and travel times). Identification of natural breaks is a method of manual data classification based on the natural gaps in the data values. In this evaluation, 11 alternatives met the criteria for elimination, including: Alternatives 11B, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 31, 33 and 35. Twenty-five alternatives were carried forward.

The second step compared alternatives that followed similar alignments to determine which corridor provided better traffic benefits. In this evaluation, a total of twenty alternatives were compared to other similar alternatives and the following alternatives were eliminated: Alternatives 2, 3, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 27, 29, and 32. Fifteen alternatives were carried forward.

The third step assessed how well each of the remaining alternatives improved travel times between West Ashley, James Island and Johns Island in addition to their relocation and wetland impacts and relocations. The alternatives that did not meet the criteria in at least two of the four categories were eliminated. These four alternatives include: Alternatives 4, 5, 13 and 34. Nine alternatives were carried forward.

Based on the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) definition of “reasonable alternatives,” the project team determined that Alternatives 9, 17 and 30 were not practical or feasible from a technical and/or economic standpoint; therefore, they were eliminated.

Recommended Reasonable Alternatives
As a result of the Alternatives Evaluation Process, six build alternatives were carried forward, Alternatives 1, 8, 10, 11, 11A and 36, were carried forward.

Based on the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) definition of “reasonable alternatives,” the project team determined that Alternatives 9, 17 and 30 were not practical or feasible from a technical and/or economic standpoint; therefore, they were eliminated.

Next Steps
The next step in the project will be to conduct analyses on the reasonable alternatives, including the no-build, mass transit and TSM alternatives. The DEIS will analyze the impacts associated with each of the alternatives in order to recommend a preferred alternative.

Summary of the Alternative Analyses (cont. from page 1)
Keep Your Comments Coming!

Public Comment Period April 30th - June 5th, 2009
HOTLINE: 1-888-MCE-i526 (1-888-623-4526)

The project hotline will include a recorded message that will provide a recorded message that will provide information on upcoming project events/meetings, a brief project status and other project contact information. When you call, you may leave a project-related message that will be incorporated into the project file.

WWW.SCDOT.ORG/i526

These maps and project information can be found on the website. Comments can also be made via the website.

Contact information:
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Reasonable Alternatives

Alternatives with Substantially More Wetlands
Alternatives with Substantially More Relocations
Alternatives with Lack of Improvement in Delays in the Study Area
Alternatives with Increase in Miles of Travel in the Region and the Study Area
Alternatives with Less Improvement in Regional Mobility
Alternatives with More Wetlands and Relocations

Reasonable Alternatives Identified through Tier 1 Criteria to be Evaluated in the DEIS

Alternative 1
Alternative 2 Eliminated
Alternative 3 Eliminated
Alternative 4 Eliminated
Alternative 5 Eliminated
Alternative 6 Eliminated
Alternative 7 Eliminated
Alternative 8 Eliminated
Alternative 9 Eliminated
Alternative 10 Eliminated
Alternative 11 Eliminated
Alternative 12 Eliminated
Alternative 13 Eliminated
Alternative 14 Eliminated
Alternative 15 Eliminated
Alternative 16 Eliminated
Alternative 17 Eliminated
Alternative 18 Eliminated
Alternative 19 Eliminated
Alternative 20 Eliminated
Alternative 21 Eliminated
Alternative 22 Eliminated
Alternative 23 Eliminated
Alternative 24 Eliminated
Alternative 25 Mass Transit - Transportation System Management
Alternative 26 Eliminated
Alternative 27 Eliminated
Alternative 28 Eliminated
Alternative 29 Eliminated
Alternative 30 Eliminated
Alternative 31 Eliminated
Alternative 32 Eliminated
Alternative 33 Eliminated
Alternative 34 Eliminated
Alternative 35 Eliminated
Alternative 36 Eliminated
No-build

TIER 1 ALTERNATIVE ANALYSES

1st ELIMINATION - IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL BREAKS IN DATA

Elimination Criteria

2nd ELIMINATION - COMPARISON OF SIMILAR ALIGNMENTS

Elimination Criteria

3rd ELIMINATION - IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL BREAKS IN DATA

Elimination Criteria

DETERMINATION OF REASONABLE

Elimination Criteria

Reasonable Alternatives that are not Practical or Feasible
A total of 38 alternatives were developed for the I-526 project and are illustrated on the following pages. After being evaluated through the Tier 1 Alternative Analyses, total of eight build alternatives were determined to be "reasonable." The reasonable alternatives are highlighted on the following maps with a blue box.

During the next several months, the project team will begin analyses on the reasonable alternatives, including no-build, mass transit and TSM alternatives. These analyses will be documented in the DEIS.

This legend applies to the maps on the following pages.
ALTERNATIVE 5 extends from the existing I-526/US 17 interchange, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island west of River Road and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 6 extends from the existing I-526/US 17 interchange, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.
ALTERNATIVE 9 extends from the existing interchange at I-526/US 17, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then access to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 10 extends from the existing interchange at I-526/US 17, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 27 follows the alignment of Alternative 15 from the US 17/I-526 interchange to Maybank Highway on Johns Island; it then uses the existing Maybank Highway Bridge to cross the Stono River and then crosses James Island to connect with the James Island Connector.

ALTERNATIVE 25 is a mass transit alternative. Mass transit should be considered on all proposed major highway projects in urbanized areas over 200,000 in population (FHWA Technical Advisory 6640.8A). This alternative was not considered in this evaluation process, but will be evaluated in the DEIS using the CHATS Mode Split model, which is currently under development.

ALTERNATIVE 26 proposes an outer beltway which would begin at Main Road and extend north of Bees Ferry Road to the northeast, cross Ashley River Road and the Ashley River and use International Boulevard, to connect to I-526.

ALTERNATIVE 28 was recommended during the public comment period in Fall 2008. Upon further investigation, it was determined that Alternative 28 was the same as Alternative 2. Therefore, this Alternative was eliminated.
ALTERNATIVE 23 proposes to improve existing roads by widening various segments of the following roads one lane in each direction: US 17, Ashley River Road, St. Andrews Boulevard, Main Road, Glenn McConnell Parkway and Bees Ferry Road.

ALTERNATIVE 24 proposes to improve existing roads by widening various segments of the following roads one lane in each direction: US 17, Ashley River Road, St. Andrews Boulevard, Sam Rittenberg Boulevard, Old Town Road, Main Road, Glenn McConnell Parkway and Bees Ferry Road, I-526 and I-26.

ALTERNATIVE 11 follows the alignment of Alternative 15 from I-526/US 17 to the James Island Connector. This alternative provides two spurs on Johns Island, 11a and 11b. These partial interchanges are located at Maybank Highway and River Road north of Maybank Highway (11a) and/or River Road south of Maybank Highway (11b).

ALTERNATIVE 11A follows the alignment of Alternative 15 from I-526/US 17 to the James Island Connector. This alternative provides a partial interchange at Maybank Highway and River Road north of Maybank Highway.
ALTERNATIVE 13 extends from the existing interchange at I-526/US 17, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 14 extends from the existing interchange at I-526/US 17, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 15 extends from the existing interchange at I-526/US 17, across the Stono River, to intersect Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then across to James Island to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange.

ALTERNATIVE 16 begins at the existing I-526/US 17 interchange and follows US 17 south for 1.7 miles to the US Vegetable Laboratory to a new interchange; the section of US 17 between I-526 and the new interchange would also be widened. The alternative then crosses the Stono River to connect to Maybank Highway on Johns Island and then follows Alternative 15 across James Island to end at the James Island Connector.

ALTERNATIVE 17 follows Alternative 15 from the I-526/US 17 interchange across Johns Island, providing an interchange at Maybank Highway. The alternative crosses James Island south of the James Island County Park and connects to Folly Road near George Griffith Boulevard. Folly Road would be widened to the James Island Connector.

ALTERNATIVE 18 follows the alignment of Alternative 19 from US 17 across Johns Island as a four-lane roadway with low speeds. On James Island, the roadway would utilize Central Park Road, which would be widened to four lanes to the James Island Connector. Access to the roadway would be provided at intersections with Maybank Highway, Folly Road, and other future connections.

ALTERNATIVE 19 would include operational improvements along US 17 and Port Royal Road. The proposal includes a network of local streets in the following areas: Folly Road and the James Island Connector, including allowing additional access to the connector, Maybank Highway, River Road and Maybank Highway on Johns Island, I-526 and US 17 interchange in West Ashley, and along US 17.

ALTERNATIVE 20 proposes to improve existing roads by widening various segments of the following roads one lane in each direction: US 17, Folly Road, Maybank Highway and River Road.