PROJECT UPDATE AND STATUS
In early 2008, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) began the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the Mark Clark Expressway (I-526) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Since the beginning of the project, the SCDOT has hosted three public meetings at which project updates were provided and public input was sought. All of the comments received from the public and state and federal agencies during the comment period following each meeting were taken into consideration and have become part of the project record.

The study team developed an initial range of alternatives (17 alternatives). These alternatives were presented to the public in the Fall of 2008. Through public comments, a number of other options for the project were suggested and a total of 38 alternatives were evaluated. The study team conducted an analysis of the 38 alternatives to determine which ones met the goals for the project (for more information on the alternatives analysis, please see the project website www.scdot.org/I526). Nine alternatives were considered “Reasonable Alternatives.”

The study team is currently evaluating the impacts associated with the nine “Reasonable Alternatives” that will be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The results of the environmental studies will be released in the DEIS in the Winter of 2010.

SPRING 2009 PUBLIC MEETINGS
In April and May 2009, the SCDOT held a series of public information meetings on the proposed Mark Clark Expressway (I-526) project to update the public on the project and present the nine “Reasonable Alternatives” that would be studied in the DEIS.

Goals of these public meetings were to:
• Present the results of the preliminary Alternatives Analysis (How we went from 38 to 9 alternatives)
• Present the “Reasonable Alternatives” to be evaluated in the DEIS
• Collect comments and input on the nine “Reasonable Alternatives”

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS
During the comment period, SCDOT received over 500 comments from the public providing input on the proposed project:
• 206 comments supported building a new road
  ◦ 81 supported Alternative 1
• 38 comments supported any build alternative
• 60 comments supported other alternatives
  ◦ 42 supported mass transit
  ◦ 3 supported transportation system management
• 108 comments opposed the project and/or supported the no-build alternative

Detailed information on the alternative analysis can be found on the Mark Clark Expressway (I-526) project website www.scdot.org/i526.

Public comments also expressed notable concern for:
• Impacts to traffic on Calhoun Street as a result of the project
• Impacts to the rural character of Johns Island
• Impacts to James Island County Park
• Impacts to the Dill Sanctuary
• Impacts to the wetlands and wildlife within the study area
• Inclusion bike/pedestrian facilities in any build alternative

Since the public meetings, a number of neighborhood associations, towns and cities have passed resolutions and submitted comments to the study team regarding the project:
• The Town of Seabrook passed a resolution in support of the project
• The City of Folly Beach passed a resolution opposing the project
• The James Island Town Council passed a resolution opposing the project
• The City of Charleston has worked with the project team since the beginning of the project development process to ensure their ideas have been considered; they have expressed support for a parkway facility for the completion of the project

The study team has also met with several neighborhood associations and their comments have been incorporated into the comment record. All comments were taken into consideration when evaluating the reasonable alternatives which resulted in adjustments to the alternatives.
Mass transit should be considered on all proposed major highway projects in urbanized areas over 200,000 in population (FHWA Technical Advisory 6640.8A). Alternative 25/mass transit will be evaluated in the DEIS using the CHATS Mode Split model, which is currently under development.

Transportation System Management (TSM) are improvements that involve increasing the available capacity of the facility (road) within the existing right of way with minimum capital expenditures and without reconstructing the existing facility. Items such as the addition of turn lanes, striping, signaling, signalization, and minor realignments are examples of TSM physical improvements. Traffic law enforcement, speed restrictions, access control, and signal timing changes are examples of TSM operational improvements.

The No-build Alternative consists of the existing roadway network, without the completion of an I-526 Alternative. This alternative includes roadway projects and land use developments that are currently planned within the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments region. The No-build Alternative is used as a basis to compare all other alternatives in this analysis.

Reasonable alternatives include:

- Six “build” alternatives that propose a new road from U.S. 17 to the James Island Connector
- Mass Transit
- Transportation System Management (TSM)
- No-build

Alternative 1 extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to a proposed interchange at Maybank Highway on Johns Island, east of River Road. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 1 continues south of the James Island County Park to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.

Alternative 8 extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to a proposed interchange at Maybank Highway on Johns Island, west of River Road. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 8 continues south of the James Island County Park to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.
Alternative 10 extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to a proposed interchange at Maybank Highway on Johns Island, east of River Road. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 10 continues north of the James Island County Park to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.

Alternative 11 extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to Johns Island. Two spur interchanges are located on Johns Island; one at Maybank Highway east of River Road and the second at River Road south of Maybank Highway. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 11 continues through the James Island County Park to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.

Alternative 11A extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to Johns Island. One spur interchange is located on Johns Island at Maybank Highway east of River Road. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 11A continues through the James Island County Park to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.

Alternative 36 is a parkway with lower posted speeds. It extends southward from the existing interchange at I-526/U.S. 17, across the Stono River to Johns Island. Two spur interchanges are located on Johns Island; one at River Road north of Maybank Highway and the second at River Road south of Maybank Highway. Once across the Stono River onto James Island, Alternative 36 continues north of the James Island County Park, utilizing Central Park Road to end at the existing James Island Connector/Folly Road Interchange.
WHAT'S NEXT?

During the next several months, the study team will begin to analyze the potential benefits and environmental impacts associated with each of the reasonable alternatives, including the six new location alternatives, mass transit alternative, transportation system management (TSM) alternative, and the no-build alternative. These studies will provide an analysis of the potential effects of the alternatives on people and the environment. Potential effects are impacts or changes that could occur as a result of proposed improvements. The effects may be ecological, aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health related. Examples might include how increased noise levels from traffic flow could affect nearby residents, or how the filling of wetlands as part of the construction could affect local habitat.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES WILL INCLUDE EVALUATION OF:
DIRECT, INDIRECT & CUMULATIVE IMPACTS TO THE NATURAL & HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Environmental Factors:</th>
<th>Human Environmental Factors:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands (freshwater, salt marsh)</td>
<td>Relocations (residences &amp; businesses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stream crossings</td>
<td>Socio-Economics</td>
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<td>Water Supply and Conservation</td>
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<td>Outstanding Resource Waters</td>
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<td>Impaired sites</td>
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<td>Fish and Wildlife Values</td>
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<td>Conservation</td>
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<tr>
<th>Engineering Criteria:</th>
<th>Ongoing traffic analysis:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Length</td>
<td>Ability to improve congestion of existing roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Bridges</td>
<td>Ability to increase safety on existing roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Costs (2013)</td>
<td>Ability to improve regional mobility and system linkage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of these studies will be documented in the DEIS. The study team will develop, refine and analyze the reasonable alternatives throughout the course of the study. The benefits and environmental impacts associated with each alternative will be evaluated. SCDOT will make the recommendation of a preferred alternative based on the alternative that best addresses the need and purpose for the project. This alternative will have specific advantages over other alternatives such as minimizing impacts to the human and natural environment to the greatest extent possible. The DEIS and recommended preferred alternative will be presented to the public in Winter 2010. Public hearings will be held at that time.

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Direct impacts are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

Indirect impacts are caused by the project and occur later in time or are farther removed in distance than direct impacts, but are still “reasonably foreseeable.” An example of indirect impacts would be the construction of the homes and increased water consumption caused by improved access to an area. The impacts are not directly caused by road construction, but rather are indirect impacts.

Cumulative impacts are impacts on the environment resulting from the incremental impact of the project when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects regardless of what agency or person undertakes them. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

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The EIS Process

1. Spring 08: Scoping
   Gather comments from the public and federal and state agencies to identify potential issues.

2. Summer & Fall 08: Need And Purpose
   Define the problems to address and the goals the project will accomplish.

3. Spring 09: Develop Alternatives
   Identify potential alignments that meet the purpose and need of the project.

4. Summer 09: Study Environmental Impacts
   Consider the existing human and natural environment and how each of the Proposed Alternatives, Reasonable Alternatives, and No-Action Alternative may impact the area.

5. Winter 10: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
   A report presented to the public that evaluates the environmental impacts of a number of project alternatives and identifies SCDOT’s Preferred Alternative.

6. Winter 10: Public Review and Comment
   A 45-day period during which the public may submit comments on the Draft EIS.

7. Winter 10: Field Studies
   An opportunity for the public to review and discuss the findings of the Draft EIS and SCDOT’s recommended Preferred Alternative.

8. Spring 10: Public Hearings
   The project team conducts field studies of the Preferred Alternative and makes adjustments to the project according to the findings and comments from the public.

9. Fall 10: Final EIS
   A report that addresses agency and public comments, documents potential environmental impacts of the Preferred Alternative and presents how these impacts shall be mitigated.

10. Winter 11: Record of Decision (ROD)
    Documents the final decision and summarizes mitigation measures to be implemented into the project.
The purpose of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires Federal Agencies to evaluate many categories of potential social, economic, and natural environmental impacts for the alternatives under consideration. The purpose of the NEPA process and the DEIS is to provide the decision makers with the best available information so that agency personnel can make an informed decision about the project. The DEIS will discuss in detail, the various impacts associated with each of the alternatives.

**LEAD AGENCY**

The lead agency is defined as the federal agency proposing to take an action. This agency supervises the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and has the responsibility for managing the day-to-day conduct of the environmental review.

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**

FHWA carries out the Federal highway programs in partnership with the State and local agencies to meet the nation’s transportation needs. State transportation agencies hold varying degrees of responsibility for the construction and maintenance of public highways. FHWA administers and oversees the highway programs to ensure that Federal funds are used efficiently and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

**JOINT LEAD AGENCIES**

According to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), A Citizen’s Guide to NEPA, if another Federal, State, local, or Tribal agency has a major role in the proposed action and also has NEPA responsibilities or responsibilities under a similar NEPA-like law, that agency may be a joint lead agency. A joint lead agency shares the lead agency’s responsibility for management of the NEPA process, including public involvement and the preparation of documents.

**South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT)**

SCDOT is responsible for the systematic planning, construction, maintenance, and operation of the state highway system in South Carolina. The goal of the department is to provide adequate, safe, and efficient transportation services for the movement of people and goods. SCDOT is developing the EIS for the I-526 project at the request of Charleston County.

**Charleston County**

Charleston County initiated the I-526 project by applying to the South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank (SIB) in 2006 for assistance with project funding. Upon review of the application, the SIB committed to fund the project.

**COOPERATING AGENCIES**

According to [23CFR 771.111(d)], FHWA may request other agencies having special interest or expertise to become cooperating agencies. Agencies with jurisdiction by law must be requested to be cooperating agencies.

Cooperating agencies for this project are:
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC)
- SCDHEC - Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (SCDHEC-OCRM)

**PARTICIPATING AGENCIES**

According to SAFETEA-LU (Section 6002) participating agencies are federal and non-federal governmental agencies that may have an interest in the project because of their jurisdictional authority, special expertise, and/or statewide interest.

Participating agencies for this project are:
- Berkeley Charleston Dorchester – Council of Governments (BCDCOG)
- City of Charleston
- Charleston County Parks and Recreation
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – National Marine Fisheries
- S.C. Department of Archives and History (SHPO)
- S.C. Department of Commerce
- S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- S.C. Emergency Management Division – Hurricane Coordinator (SCEMD)
- S.C. States Ports Authority (SCSPA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
MERGING THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND PERMITTING PROCESS

To be implemented, this project will require approvals from two federal agencies, FHWA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). FHWA’s roles and responsibilities are defined on the previous page. The USACE is responsible for evaluating permit applications for all work that occurs in wetlands or waters of the United States, pursuant to Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act and/or Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Both the USACE and FHWA are responsible for assessing environmental impacts under NEPA before taking action.

On past projects, FHWA and USACE have completed their NEPA responsibilities separately and consecutively, increasing the time to complete the environmental studies and obtain a DA permit. Many times, FHWA’s NEPA document does not satisfactorily address all of the USACE’s permitting needs (due to additional components required by USACE regulations). Therefore, the USACE must complete a separate NEPA document, duplicating efforts and increasing the time it takes to get an approved DA permit. Since the USACE and FHWA in coordination with SCDOT, are required by law to evaluate the impacts of a proposed project in similar ways, these agencies agreed to use an integrated “NEPA/404 Merger Process” for the I-526 project.

Implementing the “NEPA/404 Merger Process” is an attempt to streamline reviews, to provide a more comprehensive environmental analysis, and to reduce the overall time needed to complete the project. As stated in FHWA’s guidance, “Interaction [agency and public] is particularly important whenever agencies propose projects that will affect environmental resources such as air, water, lands, and wildlife.” In addition, CEQ Section 1500.2(c) states that Federal agencies shall to the fullest extent possible: Integrate the requirements of NEPA with other planning and environmental review procedures required by law or by agency practice so that all such procedures run concurrently rather than consecutively.

The “NEPA/404 Merger Process” has the potential to improve the project development process by identifying and resolving issues throughout the project, which will assist in maintaining schedules and eliminate duplication of effort between the two federal agencies.

Seven “Decision Points” have been built into the “NEPA/404 Merger Process,” where USACE, SCDOT and FHWA must agree on the level of information and required studies at key stages of the project development. This will minimize the risk of redundant reevaluations during the DA permit process and will ensure that the environmental document will meet both agency’s requirements. SCDOT will provide FHWA and USACE seven written decision points throughout the I-526 project. These decision points are shown as red diamonds on the flow chart above.

The above graphic is a condensed depiction of the “NEPA/404 Merger Process” and the arrow indicates where the project team is in the process. While working together through the “NEPA/404 Merger Process” there are some inherent differences, in addition to the regulations discussed.
above, that each Federal agency must follow. Some of the key differences between FHWA and the USACE’s environmental requirements are listed below:

1. Purpose and Need – The USACE uses “purpose”, in compliance with 404(b)(1) guidelines, to identify and evaluate alternatives. For “need”, USACE will generally accept the applicant’s “need” statement; however, they must conduct an independent evaluation to ensure that it is not “unduly speculative”. FHWA uses “purpose and need” to justify the project, including demonstrating that a “need” exists and describing the problems which the proposed action is to correct.

2. Timing Requirements for Public Involvement Activities – At what point public input must be obtained varies between the two agencies.

3. The “Preferred” Alternative – Since the USACE is not constructing the project, but making a permit decision, their “preferred” alternative will be one of three options: 1. issue a permit, 2. deny permit, or 3. issue a permit with conditions. For FHWA, the “preferred” alternative is the alternative which best meets the purpose and need, while having a balance between human and environmental impacts.

YOUR COMMUNITY:

HOW WOULD THE EXTENSION OF I-526 AFFECT YOUR COMMUNITY?
Please help us learn more about you and your community by filling out the following questionnaire. Your responses will help us understand issues and concerns and determine how this project could affect your community.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT?
During 2009, a Community Impact Assessment will be conducted in the communities within the I-526 project area. The Community Impact Assessment is a process used to evaluate the impacts I-526 could have on each community and its quality of life. The Community Impact Assessment is used to ensure that the values and concerns of the human environment (i.e. your community) are taken into account during project development. The Community Impact Assessment includes items of importance to each community, such as mobility, neighborhood cohesion, aesthetics and safety. In order to address these various issues, information is being collected from communities (within the project area) through the public information meetings and this survey. The project team needs your help in making the Community Impact Assessment a success.

Please detach and fill out the Community Assessment Survey on the back and mail to:
David A. Kinard, P.E.
SCDOT Project Manager
PO Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202-0191
1. In what community/neighborhood do you live?

____________________________________________________________________________________

☐ West Ashley ☐ James Island ☐ Johns Island ☐ Charleston

2. How long have you lived in your neighborhood?
   _____Years _____ Months

3. If you work, where is your job located (area of city)?

4. How often do you interact with your neighbors?
   ☐ Often ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Don’t know/No opinion

5. Please help us identify sites that are important to your community:
   ☐ James Island County Park ☐ West Ashley Greenway
   ☐ Natural features ☐ Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities
   ☐ Vistas/Views ☐ Public Transportation
   Other__________________________________________

6. Would a new road be beneficial or detrimental to your area?
   ☐ Beneficial ☐ Detrimental
   Why____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

Optional Questions:
I am:

☐ Male ☐ Female

☐ Under 30 years old ☐ 30 – 50 years old
☐ Over 50 years old

☐ Native American Indian ☐ Asian, Indian
☐ Pacific Islander ☐ African American
☐ Hispanic ☐ Caucasian

Thank you very much for your time and input.