

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
I-85 WIDENING AND IMPROVEMENTS: MILE MARKER 80-96

PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, December 1, 2015
6:02 p.m. - 6:40 p.m.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation Public Hearing was held at Gaffney High School, 149 Twin Lake Road, Gaffney, South Carolina, on the 1st day of December, 2015 before Jennifer L. Cash, Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina.

APPEARANCES

Heather Robbins, SCDOT
Bradley S. Reynolds, P.E., SCDOT



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1 **MS. ROBBINS:** I work in the South Carolina
2 Department of Transportation and the
3 Environmental Services Office and I want to
4 welcome you here tonight to the public hearing
5 that we are having on the I-85 widening
6 project. I thank you all for coming and
7 braving this rainy weather. We appreciate your
8 attendance and we're -- we're happy that you
9 came. I want to explain first the format of
10 the public hearing and formal presentation and
11 then I'm going to turn it over to Brad Reynolds
12 who is the project manager for a little bit of
13 a discussion about the project specifically.
14 As you noticed when you came in we first had an
15 informal portion of the public hearing that is
16 still going on at this time. So there's still
17 people in the hallway there to answer your
18 questions and to discuss with you impacts of
19 the project. But during this time it is a
20 formal -- the formal portion of the public
21 hearing where we will give you a presentation
22 about what the project is, the background of
23 the project and the path forward from here on.
24 Following Brad's presentation we will take
25 speakers for public comment. During that time



1 each person will get two minutes and you'll see
2 a sign when you have 30 seconds remaining.
3 Nicole will hold up a sign that says 30
4 seconds, that's when you have 30 seconds left.
5 And then you will see a time expired when your
6 two minutes is over. The time is not
7 transferrable but if during the -- hearing
8 other people talk if you don't -- decide not to
9 talk if you'll just say pass then we can move
10 on to the next person. Tonight it looks like
11 we've got about 19 different people scheduled
12 to speak so we'll go through those following
13 Brad's presentation. After that we will -- we
14 will break back into the informal portion of
15 the public hearing where you can then go back
16 out into the hallway and review the plan and we
17 will be here until seven o'clock tonight. At
18 this time I'd like to welcome Brad up and he's
19 going to give you a presentation on the
20 project.

21 **MR. REYNOLDS:** Thank you, Heather. Good evening
22 every one and thank you for taking the time out
23 of your busy schedules to attend the public
24 hearing. My name is Brad Reynolds and I'm a
25 project manager for the South Carolina



1 Department of Transportation also known as
2 SCDOT. Tonight on behalf of the Federal
3 Highway Administration and the DOT I'm
4 presenting the I-85 widening project. The
5 project begins on the south end near where the
6 six lane section currently ends near Exit 80
7 which is Gossett Road. And that's in
8 Spartanburg County. And it extends to about a
9 quarter mile from the Broad River bridge, which
10 is just north of Exit 96 which is SC 18. And
11 that's in Cherokee County. We realize that
12 many of you have concerns about the project and
13 comments and your statements are extremely
14 important as we continue this process. I see
15 some familiar faces here tonight as we've had
16 several public information hearings on the
17 project. And since March we've had the ability
18 to be looking at -- the ability to be looking
19 at the environmental impacts of the project and
20 we've been adjusting or evaluating our plan
21 accordingly. As I already mentioned tonight
22 any questions about the project and statements
23 -- I already mentioned -- I just wanted to
24 mention that we will address all comments that
25 are -- that are issued tonight and the oral



1 comments need to be written down so that they
2 could be addressed at a later date. Also I'll
3 mention that the handouts that we're giving out
4 has a lot of this information on it that I'm
5 sharing here tonight. And also this
6 presentation is being put on the -- the Website
7 that -- for you to review at a later time. And
8 this is just a picture of the project corridor
9 that shows it from exit 80 all the way to the
10 Board River bridge. I want to give you a
11 little history on the corridor. In the 1920's
12 the original divider was for US29. It ran from
13 northern portion of South Carolina from Georgia
14 all the way up to North Carolina. And then in
15 the late 1950's they converted US29, the lanes
16 on it, to southbound 85 and then constructed
17 the new northbound lanes adjacent to the
18 southbound sections. In that time frame not a
19 lot has been updated within this corridor. You
20 can see up there, this is a view of the bridge.
21 The main line bridges on 85 have been updated
22 and Exits 90 and 92 in the corridor have also
23 been updated. And most of you are probably
24 familiar with the SC150 which was newly
25 constructed after it was hit by a tractor



1 trailer. There was an accident in that area
2 that took that bridge out. So those are the
3 few things that have been updated in the
4 corridor. Within the last 50 years or so not
5 a whole lot has changed throughout this
6 corridor which is what we're looking at for
7 this project. So what's the purpose of the
8 project. This project only has three primary
9 purposes, increase roadway capacity for future
10 traffic flow in the area and correct any
11 geometric deficiencies along the corridor and
12 bring the interchanges in the mainline up to
13 current state and federal standards. Secondary
14 purpose is to increase the safety which will be
15 enhanced by these geometric improvements. So
16 what's the need for the project? The existing
17 traffic volume's along 85 in this corridor on
18 the southern end near Gossett Road are already
19 or have reached the amount of capacity that
20 roadway can handle during our peak times. Our
21 peak travel times are considered to be seven to
22 nine in the morning and four to six in the
23 afternoon. And the 20 year projections for the
24 entire corridor have most of it reaching those
25 peaks or reaching capacity in that -- in that



1 time frame. Also combining the fact that this
2 section of the Interstate as most of you know,
3 has a high truck volume. It -- during our peak
4 times it averages 25 percent trucks which is,
5 statewide that is a little above average, but
6 during our non-peak times this actually
7 averages about 30 percent trucks. And those
8 trucks along with the terrain that we have out
9 here which is a rolling terrain they contribute
10 to that congestion. The -- also along with the
11 unimproved interchanges they reduce the safety
12 throughout the corridor. And the
13 configurations of the current interchanges
14 contribute to be the higher than average of
15 accidents throughout the corridor. Existing
16 conditions out here if you -- most of you are
17 familiar with this section of 85 is a four lane
18 Interstate that has a grass median for pretty
19 much most of the corridor. It has about a 100
20 foot right of way on each side of the center
21 line for a total corridor width of about 200
22 feet. At the southern end of the project it
23 widens out the six lane section we talked about
24 earlier today to eight. The area includes six
25 interchanges. It also has 16 major bridge



1 structures including one with a railroad bridge
2 near Exit 80. It's about a mile north of Exit
3 80. And then it has frontage roads that
4 parallel the Interstate most of the corridor.
5 Exit 83, 87, 95, and 96 are all what we call
6 unconventional diamond interchanges and they
7 all have exit ramps. They either have two way
8 access and or direct right of way access to the
9 ramps. And there are substandard bridge
10 clearances throughout the entire corridor and
11 I have several -- a few pictures of that here.
12 You got the two way ramps shown in the upper
13 left hand corner. This is picture of an
14 unconventional diamond interchange. This drive
15 on Exit 83 should have direct right of way
16 access to it. And then this other substandard
17 bridge has both horizontal and vertical
18 clearances so new -- new vehicles can fit
19 underneath them and also for three lanes going
20 underneath the underpasses they are
21 substandard. So what's our proposed design for
22 this corridor? The proposed design is adding
23 new travel lanes in both directions from the
24 inside of the existing -- where the existing
25 median is. We would modify the interchanges of



1 83, 87, 95, and 96 and we will fix the two way
2 ramps and the direct highway access in
3 substandard geometry. Both horizontal and
4 vertical bridge clearances will be corrected
5 throughout the corridor and in areas where we
6 have frontage roads we will -- that are real
7 close to the interstate will have barrier walls
8 between the frontage road and the main line.
9 The typical cross section for this project is
10 shown in the top diagram. You'll see a twelve
11 foot lane is being added to the inside. It's
12 the dark area on the inside of the diagram.
13 And we're going to have a typical 4.75 foot
14 median throughout the corridor. That sort of
15 going to change a little bit depending on in
16 areas where you find it can go up to as much as
17 eight in some areas and the median barriers
18 that you see in the center will be on about 90
19 percent of the corridor. There is a piece
20 north of 95 that will have enough room and not
21 have to have median barriers in the center.
22 The middle of the section right that's up here
23 shows the barrier walls along the frontage
24 roads so in -- when they are closed they we
25 will -- that would be where we will put the



1 barrier walls along the frontage roads. Here
2 and here and you -- some of you were saying
3 this while we were out front, the typical
4 section at the bottom is showing that those
5 barrier walls will be placed at a location that
6 would be able to accommodate a future eight
7 lane section, so we don't have to change them
8 in the future. And also because they're a
9 permanent structure and also the bridges that
10 are being redone throughout the corridor
11 they're going to be able to accommodate a
12 future eight lane section as well. After going
13 through a rigorous environmental analysis of
14 the interchanges we looked at multiple
15 alternatives for these interchanges and we
16 established the preferred alternatives for Exit
17 83, 95 -- 87, 95, and 96 so ... I realize you
18 can't see at least on here on this screen but
19 the easiest way where we're out front if you
20 haven't seen them, you can see them after this
21 presentation. But all these meet current
22 federal and state regulations or state
23 standards. And they do establish controlled
24 access to the ramps so no more trying to access
25 old ramps and they eliminate the two way



1 frontage road access on the ramps that we were
2 looking at earlier. These changes -- these
3 interchanges will improve the safety and safety
4 operation of these. Environmental
5 considerations, to evaluate the potential
6 effects to the environment in 1969 Congress
7 passed the National Environmental Policy Act.
8 Those of us here that I work with know this
9 already or basically we refer to as NEPA. So
10 you'll find here some of us saying that from
11 time to time. As outlined in the NEPA process
12 an environmental assessment was identified for
13 this corridor in order for an EA, you maybe
14 hear some of us say EA. In this type of
15 document we show the potential effects of both
16 the human and natural environment. You can see
17 the EA tonight. We have some of the copies of
18 the EA here. It does have the alternatives
19 that we evaluated and we shared those with the
20 public information back in March. And it also
21 discusses project related issues -- other
22 issues of the environment and it also describes
23 and plans to address those issues. In our
24 evaluation of the impacts of the preferred
25 alternatives there were two major ones that



1 were identified throughout the project and even
2 with our effort to minimize these impacts the
3 relocations and the wetlands there were still
4 some impacts associated with them. Then we
5 have as you see here we have 13 residential
6 relocations and 15 businesses and then streams
7 -- there 1,279 linear feet of streams. And .25
8 acres of wetlands and .84 acres of ponds. We
9 are trying within our abilities to minimize but
10 we still have these impacts associated with
11 this project. And last thing I will say is,
12 you know, we wanted to give you an idea of
13 where we -- where this project goes from here.
14 What we were -- after this meeting ends we will
15 be accepting comments until December 16 on
16 preferred alternatives. And we'll be
17 addressing those comments formally by written
18 letter throughout December and January. We
19 will be -- we will be working on the contract
20 in January. We also will be filing our
21 preliminary plans and we anticipate a finding
22 of no significant impact from the Federal
23 Highway Administration sometime in February if
24 we can address the comments. The design build
25 contract, the construction contract is



1 scheduled to begin in October or in the fall
2 2016. That's when the contractor will begin to
3 finalize the design and begin reaching out to
4 the properties that are being impacted and talk
5 about the personal property. And we will also
6 be working on getting the scheduling permits
7 for the project and they'll begin final design.
8 And they will start construction in the early
9 -- in 2017. If your property is impacted by
10 the project that's -- we will be contacting you
11 before any work begins on the property. The
12 estimated completion date on this project --
13 you see it's a little ways out here. It is a
14 very large project being 16 miles. It's in
15 late 2020 to early 2021. The construction
16 costs are estimated being in excess of
17 \$254,000,000 and this project was identified by
18 the South Carolina legislature and is being
19 funded through the South Carolina Construction
20 Bank. In closing we're especially interested
21 in hearing your input. There are several ways
22 you can do that tonight. You will have a
23 opportunity in a minute to make an oral comment
24 for the project and also written comments as I
25 was talking about earlier on will be the ones



1 that the DOT will address formally. And the
2 date again was for the comments to be submitted
3 is December the 16th. And I want to thank you
4 again for your time to express your concerns.
5 On behalf of the everybody at the SCDOT we
6 appreciate your patience and cooperation during
7 construction of this project. I want to thank
8 you again. And Heather is going to talk a
9 little more about the comments and invites you
10 all to do that.

11 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Brad. I want to wait just
12 a moment for the reporter to move his mic over
13 to here. This portion of the formal public
14 hearing is for members of the public to have an
15 opportunity to verbally express their opinions
16 and recommendations for the project. As Brad
17 explained if you do comment verbally here it
18 will not be responded to. It's not a question
19 and answer time. What you have to do is fill
20 out a comment form, put it in the box or submit
21 it online in order for your comment to have a
22 written response back. So during this time we
23 have a court reporter as you -- as you have
24 noticed and your comments will be entered into
25 a formal public record and as such will be part



1 of the permanent file of this project. If you
2 would like a response to it you do need to
3 write down your comments. Again this is not a
4 question and answer time. So I will be calling
5 up the people that have signed up to speak and
6 Nicole is sitting right here and what she's
7 going to do is she has a little timer set for
8 two minutes once you start speaking and then
9 she'll hold up the 30 second's left when you
10 have 30 seconds remaining and then when your
11 time has expired and we ask that you be
12 cognizant of everyone's time and please keep
13 your comments to two minutes as we have 19
14 people signed up to speak. When you come up to
15 speak if you could state your name for the
16 court reporter and if it's a difficult name if
17 you could spell that name for her that would be
18 very good so that way in the record she has
19 correct spelling of your name. For instance,
20 I'm Heather Robbins, H-E-A-T-H-E-R, Robbins is
21 R-O-B-B-I-N-S. So we will start there. At
22 this time I do want to recognize we have
23 Representative Moss here with us. He stopped
24 by and I just want to thank you for attending
25 and SCDOT Commissioner Cook. He's up in the



1 back. I want to thank the Director for coming
2 as well. So we have two representatives here.
3 At this time I would like to ask Keith Babcock
4 to come up.

5 **MR. BABCOCK:** Thank you. Keith Babcock, B-A-B-C-O-
6 C-K on behalf of Builders First Source which
7 has a truss facility at Exit 83. Like many
8 other land owners there's impact -- sometime
9 those impacts have great consequences. For
10 Builders First Source there are really two
11 impacts which we hope to have the DOT address
12 as we move forward. One is a typical one we
13 are going to be losing one of our buildings and
14 that's something that can be dealt with in the
15 normal course of things. The other is a loss
16 of access as a result of Dewberry Road being
17 relocated so the facility will no longer have
18 direct access there. Brad, we appreciate the
19 -- the responsiveness that you have provided to
20 me over the months that we've interacted and
21 appreciate the -- the responsiveness by other
22 members of the DOT tonight. I do want to
23 emphasize that this is of particular importance
24 to my client and look to have the DOT address
25 the issue as soon as possible for us to have



1 access and for DOT to make the project work.
2 So we appreciate your time tonight and we will
3 be submitting a written synopsis or written
4 comments to you. Thank you.

5 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Mr. Babcock. I have Gary
6 Howard, please come forward. That was the
7 second person who signed up. Okay. We'll go
8 back to that. George Arnon? No. Willie Jean
9 Humphries.

10 **MR. HUMPHRIES:** Pass.

11 **MS. ROBBINS:** Pass? Bruce Humphries? Are you
12 Bruce?

13 **MR. HUMPHRIES:** Bruce Humphries. B-R-U-C-E. Last
14 name is H-U-M-P-H-R-I-E-S. I got a property
15 directly on 85 in the corner that elevates
16 around 1605. My main concern with my property
17 is the two adjacent properties is the amount of
18 slope at that area and how it impacts
19 specifically my house. The slope it looks like
20 it's right at my front door. That's all about
21 as much as I can say.

22 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Mr. Humphries. Steve
23 Jewel? No. Bobby Green? Mr. Green?

24 **MR. GREEN:** Bobby Green. B-O-B-B-Y, G-R-E-E-N. I
25 live at exit -- actually a mile close to 95 --



1 there is no exit there. I'm concerned about
2 the same slope as Bruce because my neighbor
3 built a brand new house built next to me two or
4 three years ago and they're going to take his
5 house and property -- cut my property in half.
6 I think there's another way to do it. Thank
7 you.

8 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Mr. Green. Kim Hunter?

9 **MR. HUNTER:** Kim Hunter, H-U-N-T-E-R. My family
10 owns land at Exit 87 and my main concern there
11 is the impact to the businesses from looking at
12 the proposed plans. The one that has been more
13 preferred is the plan that has the most
14 business relocations. I am happy that a lot of
15 the residents they're homes are left intact but
16 we have businesses there that even though they
17 can be relocated is probably not possible for
18 them to be relocated because of the type of the
19 business they are and because of the other
20 exits that are involved. This new plan will
21 cause a lot of businesses to be relocated and
22 it will have a loss of direct access for
23 another business that will probably seal the
24 fate for that business as well. So we're
25 looking at probably six different businesses



1 that impact the community. I know that
2 basically this plan would minimize the impact
3 to the community as a whole and I guess if
4 you're looking at some of the other factors
5 that's true but business feeds into the
6 community and it will have a tremendous impact
7 in that way. It's also the plan that has the
8 most farm land taken of the choices. Twenty-
9 eight acres are being taken and even the acres
10 that are being taken it seems like that instead
11 of going down closer to the property line of
12 the business out of the acreage what they're
13 doing is going down the middle of the acreage
14 for a lot of these people it's really messing
15 up their property on both sides. I just
16 appreciate it if you would think about those
17 impacts. Thank you.

18 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Ms. Hunter. Makesh Bahani?
19 No. Makesh Bahani? I may be saying it wrong.
20 Deana Blanton.

21 **MS. BLANTON:** D-E-A-N-A, B-L-A-N-T-O-N. My name is
22 Deana Blanton and I'm a business owner in
23 several of the businesses on Exit 87 and it's
24 going to affect our businesses with a building
25 of the new design of 85, which is Fatz and



1 Carolina Pottery. Along with that it is also
2 effecting several other business there that we
3 have which is Lemmons Farms and we've been
4 selling peaches and providing a market -- an
5 agriculture market for our products and not
6 only our products but since 1934, this had been
7 the location even before I-85 was ever built we
8 sold our produce there. We don't want the same
9 highway that's benefitted us and helped us move
10 our market, you know, it's helped us to make
11 our living but we feel like also it may be the
12 death of our -- what we really and truly love
13 and that's having a business to sell our
14 produce and other farmers business there also.
15 I appreciate it if you will, you know, take
16 that in consideration how that would affect,
17 you know, us there at that business we would
18 really appreciate it. Thank you very much for
19 listening.

20 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Ms. Blanton. Daisy Lemmon?

21 **MS. LEMMON:** Pass.

22 **MS. ROBBINS:** Mike Spencer?

23 **MR. SPENCER:** I'm Mike Spencer, S-P-E-N-C-E-R. I
24 own land at Exit 87 on the south of Green River
25 Road where they going to come straight through



1 the middle of my field. It's been in my family
2 for -- since 1930's. Not much farmland left
3 but we still farm ours. We turn that grass
4 into hamburger meat and I think everybody in
5 here probably eats hamburger or mostly they do.
6 I'd like to say that if it was coming down the
7 edge it would be a whole better instead of
8 starting in the middle of it. Like to see
9 another alternative. Thank you.

10 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Mr. Spencer. Shannon
11 Tyler?

12 **MR. TYLER:** I'm Shannon Tyler. S-H-A-N-N-O-N, T-Y-
13 L-E-R. I live at the intersection of Exit 87,
14 have property on both sides -- the north side
15 of the interchange. It's been in the family
16 kind of like with Mike and Deana's family which
17 is way back before World War II and just the
18 impact that the project will have going through
19 -- the present plan will come through the pond
20 the centerpiece of the property there. It will
21 cut pastures in half and cut two pastures in
22 half. And that cost a lot of land in the
23 original building of 85. It just hurts to
24 think that this project is going to devastate
25 the family to where we are left with two pieces



1 of land separated by roads that we used to not
2 have to worry about. And the other thing is
3 the environmental concerns where there is a
4 pond on our property about two and a half acres
5 and coming through the center of it. It's a
6 spring fed pond that the creek runs down by --
7 to the property behind the Macedonia Church and
8 just concerned about the environmental impact
9 that putting a road through there will be as
10 well as what impact it will have on family
11 having a road in the back and side of your
12 house is just not something that's a palatable
13 option to us and we just appreciate your time
14 to look into some other options. If you're
15 going so far away from the intersection on the
16 south side of 85 why can't you maybe do
17 something and go a little farther on the north
18 of 85 and that way we can keep most of the
19 property intact. I appreciate that.

20 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Mr. Tyler. Pat Branch?

21 **MS. BRANCH:** Pass.

22 **MS. ROBBINS:** Joey Allen?

23 **MR. ALLEN:** Pass.

24 **MS. ROBBINS:** Angie Moore?

25 **MS. MOORE:** Hey, Angie Moore. A-N-G-I-E, M-O-O-R-E.



1 I'm here on behalf of Hamrick's Incorporated,
2 Exit 90. There is a portion of this road that
3 is cutting through a large portion of Hamrick's
4 land and parking that would be detrimental to
5 the company. I would like to request to see if
6 the DOT would reconsider that proposal. Thank
7 you.

8 **MS. ROBBINS:** Thank you, Ms. Moore. Kevin Winter?

9 **MR. WINTER:** Pass.

10 **MS. ROBBINS:** I'm going to go back to the few did
11 not answer pass or ... Gary Howard? I gave
12 him one more last chance. No. George, A-R-A-
13 T-I. Arati? No. Steve Jewel. Makesh Bahani?
14 No. Well, that's it. That's the last of the
15 formal presentation. At this time if you did
16 not sign up to speak -- sir? You did sign up?

17 **MR. LEMMONS:** Yes, I have a question.

18 **MS. ROBBINS:** Wait did you sign up, sir? Can you
19 come down here and speak into the -- oh, you
20 passed and then --sure. That's okay. We just
21 want to make sure that we can get you on for
22 the court reporter.

23 **MR. LEMMONS:** I have just a simple question I want
24 to ask you. If I don't speak will that hold
25 less impact that if I just write it on the



1 form?

2 **MS. ROBBINS:** No, sir. Writing it on the form is
3 where you'll get the written comment back and
4 so speaking just allows Brad to hear your
5 comments verbally and he can make notes about
6 what he needs to go back and look at but he
7 will also read the transcript so he know's
8 exactly what the transcript says and be able to
9 read your comment.

10 **MR. LEMMONS:** I was just making sure that I won't
11 get less notice if I don't speak.

12 **MS. ROBBINS:** No, you will not. Okay at this time
13 that concludes the formal portion of our public
14 hearing. We will stay until seven o'clock in
15 the informal portion so you can -- anybody with
16 a badge on, they will be able to answer
17 questions or at least help you find the correct
18 person that you'd like to talk to. We
19 appreciate you coming and hope you have a very
20 safe night.

21 **(There being nothing further, the Public Forum**
22 **concluded at 6:40 p.m.)**

23

24

25

