



MARK CLARK *Expressway*

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) began the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the I-526 Extension Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at the request of Charleston County in 2008. Project coordination will be carried out by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), SCDOT, Charleston County, cooperating agencies and participating agencies.

SCOPING (Spring 2008)

Scoping is a process used to identify key issues of concern at an early stage of project planning. In April 2008, SCDOT hosted a public scoping meeting, which provided the public an opportunity to learn about the environmental review process, as well as to voice any issues or concerns regarding the proposed I-526 Extension project. A total of 444 people attended the public scoping meeting, and 588 comments were collected during the public comment period following the meeting. In addition to the public scoping meeting, community leaders, neighborhood association representatives, interest groups, and elected officials were invited to attend a stakeholders' meeting was held in June 2008. A total of 31 project stakeholders attended the meeting, where they were introduced to the project team and the environmental review process.

Using information collected during the scoping phase, the project team developed a draft **Purpose and Need** statement, which guides the evaluation of the proposed transportation improvement project.

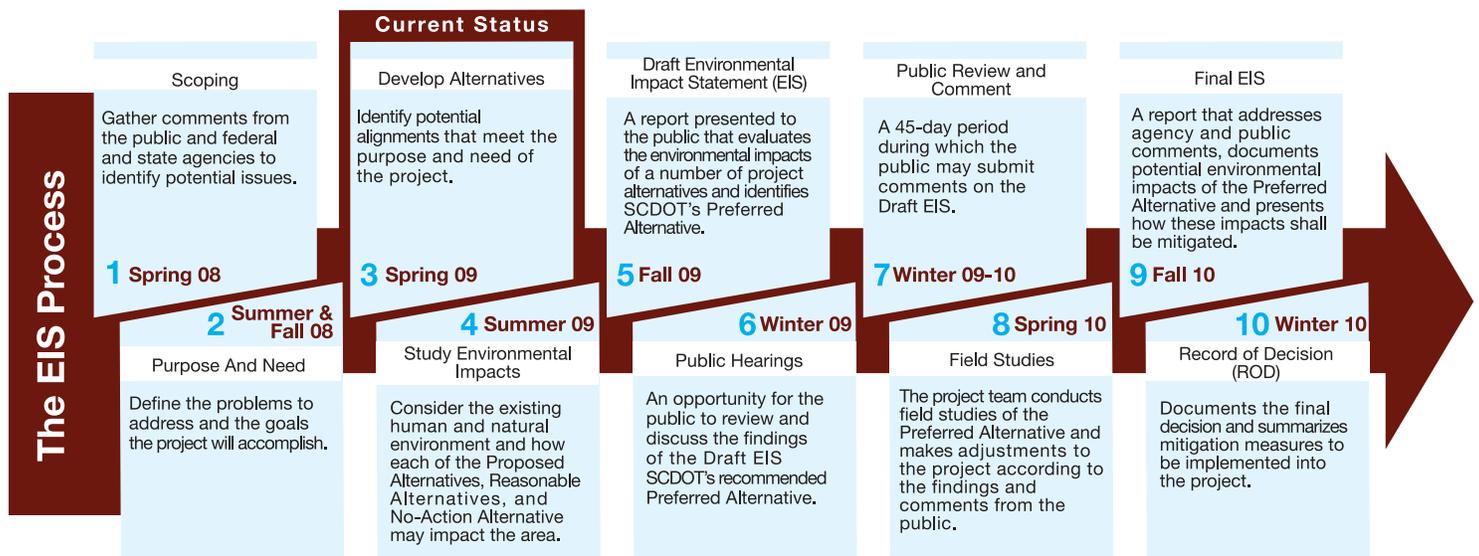
PURPOSE AND NEED (Fall 2008)

In November and December 2008, SCDOT conducted a series of public meetings, with three goals: (1) present the draft Purpose and Need, (2) present a range of alternatives, and (3) collect additional ideas and alternatives from the public.

The public meetings were held at West Ashley High School, Fort Johnson Middle School on James Island and Johns Island High School. A total of 451 people attended those meetings, and the project team received 460 comments during the formal public comment period following the meetings. Comments were received at the public meetings, and through the SCDOT project website, the US Mail, and the project telephone hotline. A second stakeholders' meeting was held in December 2008, where 36 community leaders participated in a working session to review, express concerns, and recommend project alternatives.



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 area of Charleston, South Carolina. It is the goal of SCDOT, FHWA, and Charleston County to accomplish these objectives in an environmentally sensitive manner.



The Alternatives Analysis Process:

The project team incorporated ideas from the public to develop a broad range of preliminary alternatives. These 38 alternatives will be evaluated through the analysis process. Those alternatives can be grouped into three categories of alternatives: improve existing roads, mass transit, and new location alternatives. All new location alternatives are illustrated in this newsletter. Maps of individual alternatives can be found at www.scdot.org/i526.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (Summer 2009)

The project team will complete an analysis to determine whether the 38 alternatives meet the purpose and need for the project. The results of the analysis will be presented to the public in Spring 2009 (meeting dates on back).

By combining public sentiment with technical analysis, a refined list of “reasonable alternatives” will be evaluated in further detail during the Summer of 2009. The findings and conclusions will be documented in the Draft EIS and an Alternative Analysis report, which will be presented to the public in Fall 2009.

Why study environmental impacts?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a detailed analysis of any major federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. This analysis includes an assessment of the impacts to the environment from the proposed action and any adverse effects that cannot be avoided should the proposed action be implemented, as stated by 42 U.S.C. 4332(C)(2)(i)-(ii). The purpose of a NEPA document is to provide the decision makers with the best available information to make informed decisions about the project. According to the Federal Highway Administration, the principles or essential elements of NEPA decision-making include:

- Assessment of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of a proposed action or project;
- Analysis of a range of reasonable alternatives to the proposed project, based on the applicants defined purpose and need for the project;
- Consideration of appropriate impact mitigation: avoidance, minimization and compensation;
- Interagency participation: coordination and consultation;
- Public involvement including opportunities to participate and comment; and
- Documentation and disclosure.

3 Categories of Alternatives Under Consideration



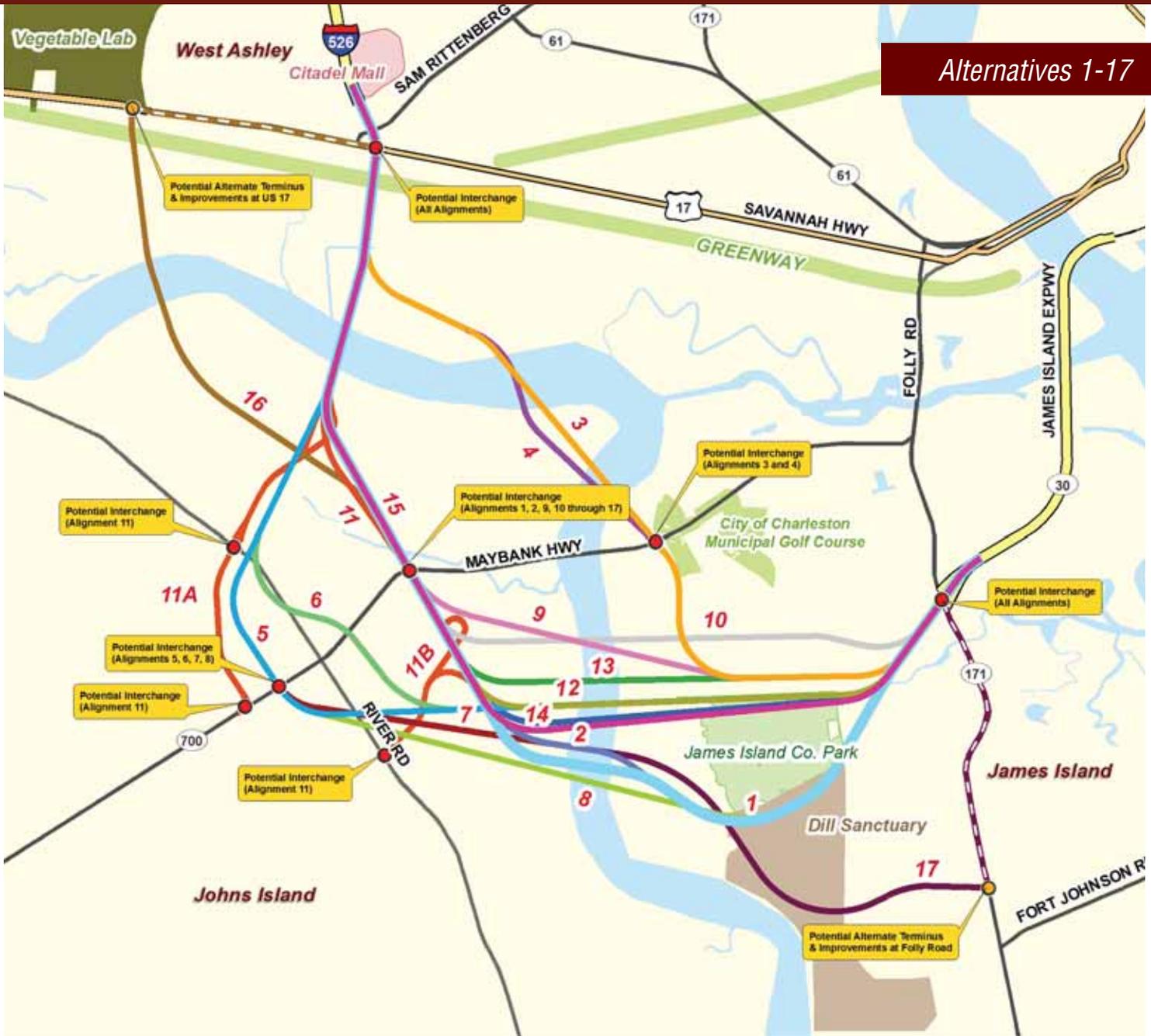
Improve Existing Roads
(Illustrated on project website at www.scdot.com/i526)



Mass Transit



New Location
(As illustrated on following pages)



Alternatives 1, 2, 5 – 10, 12 - 15 extend 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.

Alternatives 3 and 4 also extend from the existing I-526/US 17 interchange to the James Island Connector/Folly Road interchange. However, instead of intersecting Johns Island, these alternatives provide an additional interchange on James Island at Maybank Highway in the vicinity of Riverland Drive.

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 at Maybank Highway and River Road north of Maybank Highway (**11a**) and/or River Road south of Maybank Highway (**11b**).

Alternative 16 begins at the existing I-526/US 17 interchange but follows US 17 south for 1.7 miles to the U. S. 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.

* Maps of individual alternatives can be found at www.scdot.org/i526.



Alternatives 18, 19, 24 & 32



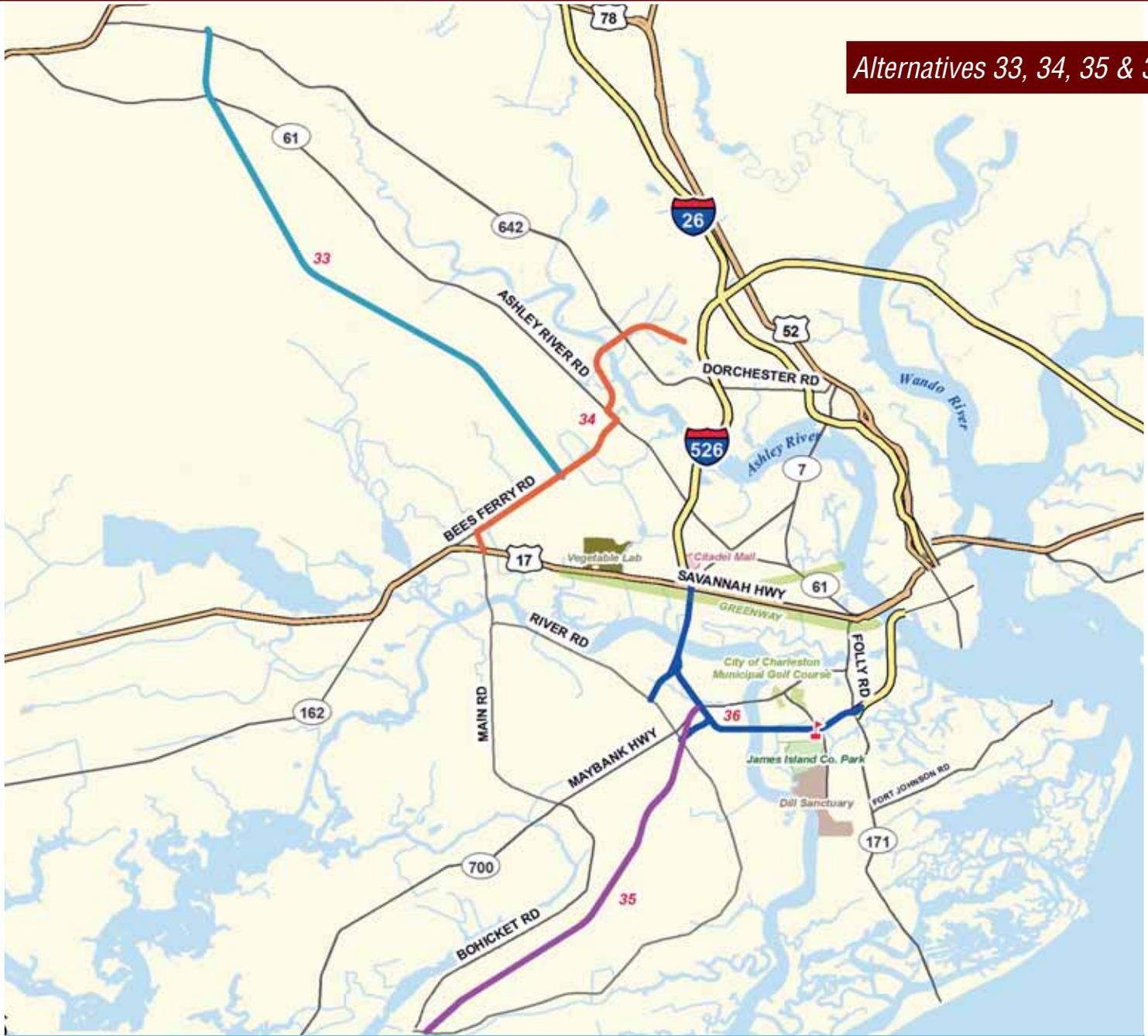
Alternative 18 follows the alignment of Alternative 15 from US 17 across Johns Island as a four-lane parkway with low speeds. On James Island, the parkway would utilize Central Park Road, which would be widened to four lanes to the James Island Connector. Access to the parkway would be provided at intersections with Maybank Highway, Folly Road, and other future connections.

Alternative 19 would include operational improvements along US 17 and Harborview 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 24 proposes a tunnel utilizing the alignment of Alternative 3 to connect I-526/US 17 to the James Island Connector, including above-ground interchanges at I-526 / US 17, at Maybank Highway in the vicinity of Riverland Drive and at the existing Folly Road / James Island Connector interchange.

Alternative 32 follows the alignment of Alternative 16 from the James Island Connector to US 17 and then continues north of US 17 around the US Vegetable Laboratory property and then curves east to connect to the Glenn McConnell Parkway and to I-526.

* Maps of individual alternatives can be found at www.scdot.org/i526.



Alternative 33 is a proposed extension of the Glenn McConnell Parkway from its current terminus at Bees Ferry Road to the northwest to end at Dorchester Road (SC Route 642) near Summerville.

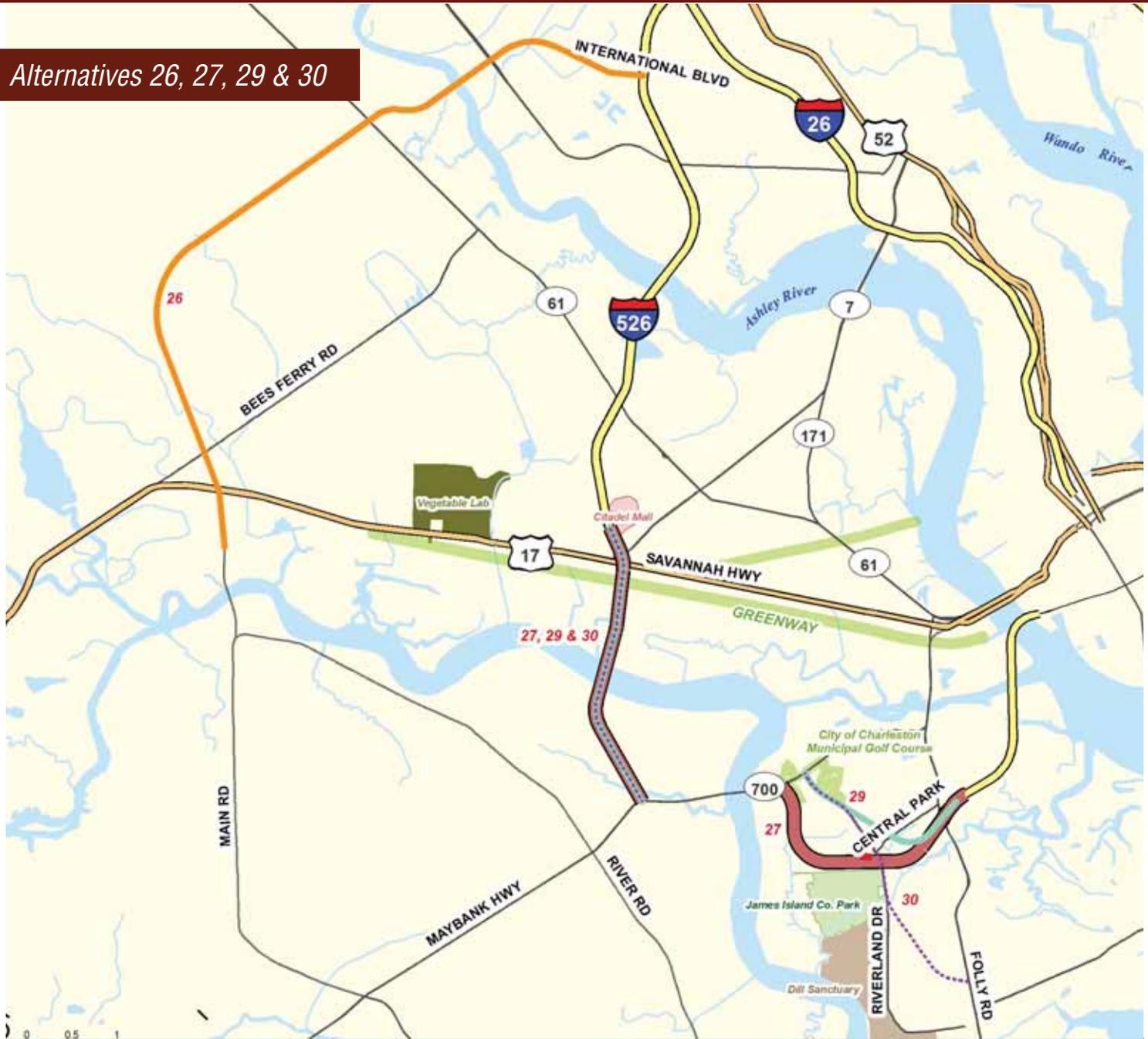
Alternative 34 widens Main Road (from US 17 to Bees Ferry Road) and Bees Ferry Road (to Ashley River Road) from 2 to 4 lanes. Beyond Ashley River Road, this alignment would be on new location and would not use existing roadways. The new location section would cross the Ashley River north of Micheaux Parkway and then utilize International Boulevard to connect to I-526.

Alternative 35 proposes the Cross Island Parkway project on Johns Island, using a previously proposed alignment, from Betsy Kerrison Parkway, to Maybank Highway, near the existing Stono River bridge.

Alternative 36 follows the alignment of Alternative 18 from I-526/US 17 to Johns Island, crosses the Stono River to James Island and then utilizes a widened Central Park Road to the James Island Connector. This alternative is a full access road on Johns Island south of Maybank Highway. This alternative includes an access ramp on Johns Island to River Road north of Maybank Highway and an at-grade intersection and roadway to River Road south of Maybank Highway. This alternative does not interchange with Maybank Highway.

Alternatives proposed during the public comment period

Alternatives 26, 27, 29 & 30



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 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 29 follows Alternative 15 from the I-526/US 17 interchange to Maybank Highway on Johns Island. It uses the existing Maybank Highway Bridge to cross the Stono River to Riverland Drive, which would be widened from Maybank Highway to Hollings Drive; the alternative then connects to the James Island Connector.

Alternative 30 uses the alignment for Alternative 15 from the I-526/ US 17 interchange to Maybank Highway on Johns Island. This alternative uses the existing Maybank Highway Bridge to cross the Stono River and widens existing Riverland Drive to Camp Road. From Camp Road, it would extend southeast on new location to intersect with Folly Road south of George Griffith Boulevard.

* Maps of individual alternatives can be found at www.scdot.org/i526.



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 and has the responsibility for managing the day-to-day conduct of the environmental review.

Federal Highway Administration



U.S. Department of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

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 the National Environmental Policy Act*, 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



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

Charleston County



Charleston County initiated the 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)], the Administration 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)



South Carolina Department of Transportation
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Columbia, SC 29202

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WWW.SCDOT.ORG/I526

Visit the project website or telephone hotline (1-888-MCE-i526) for additional information.
The official public comment period will be open April 30, 2009 - June 5, 2009.

Mark Your Calendar

Please plan to attend the Public Information Meetings regarding the Proposed I-526/Mark Clark Expressway.

All meetings will be Open House from **6 – 8 p.m.** at the following locations:

Thursday, April 30, 2009
West Ashley High School
(Accessible via CARTA Route 32)

Tuesday, May 5, 2009
Johns Island High School
(Accessible via Tri-County Link Route C-204 Blue)

Thursday, May 7, 2009
James Island High School
(Accessible via CARTA Route 31)

