



Frequently Asked Questions – Alternatives Public Comment Period

August 1, 2018

Project Overview

What is the Highway 41 Corridor Improvements project?

The Highway 41 Corridor Improvements project is located on an approximate five-mile stretch of Highway 41 in Mount Pleasant, between US Highway 17 and the Wando River Bridge at its intersection with Clements Ferry Road. This project is expected to ease traffic congestion, improve safety for commuters, and play a significant role in positively influencing the long-term transportation planning of Charleston County. As the area continues to grow traffic congestion will grow, too. Improving Highway 41 will reduce traffic congestion by improving the flow of traffic and increasing capacity along the project corridor. During peak traffic hours the roadway is overwhelmed by traffic, which will only get worse over time.

What agencies are overseeing the project process?

Charleston County is leading the project in a partnership with the Town of Mount Pleasant and the South Carolina Department of Transportation. The Charleston District of the US Army Corps of Engineers (<http://www.sac.usace.army.mil/>) is the lead federal agency for the project and is responsible for reviewing the environmental assessment and Clean Water Act Section 404 permit application, commonly referred to as the Wetland permit.

How is the project funded?

This project has a combination of committed funds from Charleston County, Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) and the Town of Mount Pleasant. Taxpayers voted in 2016 to increase Charleston County's sales tax and as a result Highway 41 was allotted \$130 million of sales tax funding to fully fund the proposed improvements. The Town of Mount Pleasant has provided an additional \$400,000 for the design of the project. Additionally, the CHATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) has allocated \$2 million for this project.

Environmental Process

What is the status of the environmental evaluation?

An environmental document is expected to be complete and available for public comment in early 2019.

Noise

What studies have been completed on noise in the corridor?

Preliminary noise data collection began in September 2017, when we measured current noise levels and identified sensitive receivers, such as residences, churches and parks. Noise measurements have occurred during times of the year when school is in session. A preliminary noise analysis of the three reasonable alternatives will begin later this summer. A detailed noise analysis and noise barrier analysis will be completed once a preferred alternative has been identified.

Cultural Resources & Traditional Cultural Properties (Phillips Community)

What are cultural resources and how do they impact the alternatives?

Due to the historic nature of the areas around Highway 41, a cultural resources study was conducted in the corridor. As a part of the report's findings, the project team identified nine new archaeological sites and 11 new historic architectural resources in addition to five previously identified archaeological sites and 36 previously recorded architectural resources. Documenting these sites is a crucial step that allows the project team to develop alternatives that will either avoid or minimize impacts to these resources.

Phillips Community is recognized as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP): what does that mean and how does it affect the alternatives?

Phillips is a Gullah community founded by previously enslaved African Americans following the American Civil War. The culture of Gullah people is distinct from other African-American communities because of their particular cultural history, which was recognized with the 2006 establishment of the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, of which Phillips is a part. In 2010, the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SC SHPO) determined the Phillips Community to be a traditional cultural property (TCP) and a cultural resource that is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). In 2016, SC SHPO concluded that the Phillips Community is NRHP-eligible because of associations with African-American ethnic heritage and Post-Civil War African-American settlement patterns.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), federal agencies must consider the effects or impacts of their actions on NRHP-eligible, -listed, or otherwise significant cultural resources and take measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects. Between September 2017 and March 2018, an ethnohistorical, ethnographic, and archival study was conducted to document the NRHP-eligible Phillips community as a TCP. An assessment of the potential for adverse effects to the Phillips Community Cultural Landscape will occur following selection of the reasonable preferred alternative. Effects findings will help direct project planning and selection of the preferred alternative. In compliance with NEPA and the NHPA, the preferred alternative will be designed to avoid and/or minimize impacts to the Phillips cultural landscape. Measures will be developed to mitigate any adverse effects that cannot be avoided or minimized.

What other studies were completed on the surrounding community and neighborhoods?

The project team prepared a Community Characterization Report, which will be expanded into a Community Impact Assessment and used to evaluate project impacts to the human environment. The Charleston County portion of the study area includes Phillips Community, Rivertowne, Brickyard/Colonnade, Horlbeck Creek, Planters Pointe, Park West, Dunes West, Seven Mile, Gregorie Ferry, Ivy Hall, and Cardinal Hill. The Berkeley County portion of the study area includes the Cainhoy community.

Alternatives Process

What factors were considered in developing the range of 12 alternatives?

The range of alternatives was developed using data from preliminary traffic studies, regional planning documents, community and stakeholder working group meetings, and agency input. The preliminary traffic analysis consisted of looking at existing and future traffic conditions as well as the planned developments in Berkeley and Charleston Counties that would have an impact on the 41 corridor. Our traffic analysis also took into account the Charleston Area Transportation Study (CHATS) model along with traffic counts and data sources from the SCDOT. Alternatives were eliminated from further consideration if they did not meet the purpose and need of the project, which is to reduce traffic congestion and accommodate future traffic along Highway 41. All 12 of the range of alternatives can be viewed in the [Alternatives Online Meeting](#), which is now archived on the project website on the Resources page.

How was the range of 12 alternatives modeled for traffic?

We modeled alternatives based on adding capacity directly to Highway 41 or by adding connecting parallel roadways. We then evaluated the range of alternatives based on the level of service each alternative would provide for the forecasted traffic volumes.

What is Level of Service?

Level of service is a standard measurement based on vehicle delay and speed, which reflects the ease of traffic flow on a scale of A to F. A through C would represent a stable flow of traffic, D and E would represent moderate traffic delay, and level F would represent bumper to bumper traffic.



What does “design year 2045” mean?

The project team is planning for the longevity of the roadway and anticipating for future growth and development. Although the project timeline for Highway 41 to be completed with construction is 2025, we are aiming for traffic projections with a level of service C in 2045.

Did you consider new developments in Mt. Pleasant as well as Berkeley County in the planning process?

Yes, the project team has been meeting regularly with representatives from various municipalities to anticipate all of the new and planned developments, including traffic projections and new homes.

Why did Alternative 1, Alternative 2, Alternative 7 and the No-Build option move forward for further analysis?

We evaluated each alternative based on traffic findings and traffic projections for the year 2045. These three alternatives, known as “reasonable alternatives,” were carried forward based primarily on their traffic level of service performance for design year 2045 with the target level of service C. These reasonable alternatives were carried forward for further analysis of impacts on the natural environment and community and their ability to meet the purpose and need of the project. Some alternatives that were not carried forward had higher levels of service, but were determined to be unnecessary and provided too high a level of service. Further detail on why each reasonable alternative is moving forward for further evaluation and why others are not can be found in the [Alternatives Online Meeting](#) on the Resources page of www.hwy41sc.com.

Why is the No-Build Alternative considered?

The No-Build Alternative provides a baseline of comparison for the alternatives. In the No-Build Alternative, the current configurations of Highway 41 would remain unchanged.

When will a preferred alternative be identified?

The project team will not identify a recommended preferred alternative until all environmental studies have been completed. The project team will make every effort to take into account public comment and avoid and minimize impacts of the final design. The project team expects to recommend a preferred alternative in the spring 2019.

What is the cost of each alternative?

The cost of each alternative has not yet been identified. Conceptual construction costs will be developed for each of the reasonable alternatives after each alternative’s conceptual level design is completed.

What are the environmental impacts of each reasonable alternative?

The results of our preliminary environmental screening for each reasonable alternative can be viewed in the Alternatives Online Meeting, which is archived on the Resources page of www.hwy41sc.com. These findings are based on preliminary screening and the values in the matrix were based on assumed corridor widths and natural resource boundaries. These will be further refined with more detailed studies over the next several months.

Design Elements

Where can we view maps of the design for each alternative and connecting roadways?

Only conceptual alternatives have been identified thus far, and those maps can be viewed on the Resources page of www.hwy41sc.com. Once a preferred alternative is identified, the project team will begin design for public comment.

Conceptual designs are currently being developed for each of the three reasonable alternatives. As design progresses, the project team will identify ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts to local residents. Design considerations may include landscaped medians, complete streets concepts, cross-walks and safety beacons, roundabouts and traffic signals, and speed limits.

How does the Town of Mt. Pleasant’s proposed project to widen Park West Boulevard affect this project?

The Highway 41 alternatives analysis, traffic model, and conceptual plans will take into account the traffic affects of planned roadway improvements, such as the Park West Boulevard Widening, which is proposed by the Town of Mt. Pleasant in an effort to improve traffic congestion within Park West. Park West Boulevard will be widened from two lanes to a four-lane divided section between the Town’s recreation facility and the Bessemer Roundabout. Improvements will include bike lanes and a mixed-use path. For more information on the Park West widening project visit the Town’s Transportation page at www.tompssc.com.

Will Gregorie Ferry Road be configured for better connectivity to Highway 41?

The project team is aware of the difficulty accessing Highway 41 from Gregorie Ferry Road. The project team will incorporate into the final design the reconfiguration of Gregorie Ferry Road to provide improved and safe connections to Highway 41.

Will the design include more options for connectivity of bike lanes and sidewalks?

Yes, the design will incorporate bike lanes, sidewalks and/or shared pathways throughout the corridor.

Public Input

What opportunities have there been for public input in this process?

The project team has held special meetings before each public meeting with representatives from businesses, communities and neighborhoods along the corridor to keep them updated on the project and present the alternatives for feedback. The purpose of these meetings with neighborhood representatives and business owners is to provide an open dialogue between parties so that the project team can stay apprised of any concerns or opportunities. The project team also identified a Stakeholder Working Group comprised of local and regional officials, municipalities, community organizations, and key decision makers to provide insight to the project team, serve as community liaisons, and provide input on behalf of other stakeholders, businesses and residents. In addition Stakeholder Working Group meetings and community/neighborhood meetings were held in September 2017 prior to the Public Kickoff Meeting and in April 2018 before the Public Information Meeting for Alternatives.

The neighborhoods we've met with individually include:

- The Colonnade/Brickyard
- Dunes West
- Park West
- Horlbeck Creek
- Rivertowne
- Cardinal Hill
- Planters Pointe
- Phillips Community

As of the Public Information Meeting for Alternatives on May 16, 2018:

- 20,053 project mailings sent to residents in the study area
- 562 e-newsletters sent to individuals on the e-mail list
- 28 Stakeholder Working Group members identified
- 12 neighborhood/business meetings held

Next Steps

I see construction is anticipated for completion in 2025. Will there be opportunities to advance the schedule?

We realize the impacts that Highway 41 sees from heavy traffic volumes, and the project team will make all efforts to expedite portions of the project for design and construction, including possibly pursuing the design-build route where the final design and construction services would be performed by a single contractor. We have already initiated early coordination efforts with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to advance the permitting process.

How do I stay involved and informed?

Community involvement and stakeholder engagement are critical to the success of the project. The project team is committed to engaging the community and keeping interested parties informed through a number of opportunities for stakeholders to learn about the project and provide input. Individuals can stay informed and involved by signing up for the e-mail list and connecting with us on social media. Visit the Contact page on www.hwy41sc.com for more information or to sign up for the e-mail list.