APPENDIX K

Agency Coordination

Letter of Intent
And
Responses

South Carolina
Department of Transportation

October 9, 2025

Re: Letter of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Interstate 26 (I-26) Corridor Improvements (Mile Marker 172 to 187) in Dorchester and Berkeley Counties, South Carolina

To Whom It May Concern:

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to widen approximately 15 miles of I-26 from just west of the existing interchange of I-26 and US Highway 15 (US 15, Exit 172 A-B) to just west of the I-26 and South Carolina 27 (SC 27) interchange (Exit 187). The project would include adding a travel lane in each direction of I-26, grading median/outside shoulders, installing median barrier walls and/or cable guardrail, replacing 11 bridges (including 5 overpass bridges, 4 mainline bridges, and 2 interchange overpasses), addressing 6 hydrological box culverts and 2 "access" box culverts, and making drainage improvements. The interchange overpass improvements would include improving the ramps and associated frontage roads at Exits 172 and 177. The proposed project would address existing and future traffic conditions while improving mobility and operations of local roadways in the project study area (PSA) (see attached figure).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of this project and to initiate interagency coordination to assist in project scoping regarding the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts related to the proposed project. SCDOT, in consultation with FHWA, is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the benefits and impacts from the proposed project, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and implementing regulations.

As part of project development, preliminary data and information have been collected. A review of available mapping, including the National Wetland Inventory, aerial photography, and topographic mapping indicates the presence of streams and wetlands within the PSA.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, appropriate documentation will be prepared for the project and will include a species database search and field survey for federally protected species. In addition, a cultural resources assessment survey will be completed in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

A noise analysis will also be conducted for the proposed improvements to predict future noise levels in accordance with SCDOT's Traffic Noise Abatement Policy. The noise analysis will model individual noise receptors, potential sensitive receptors within the PSA, and will measure and model existing noise levels and predict future noise levels.

To ensure that the impacts of the proposed project are fully evaluated, we request your written response concerning any beneficial or adverse impacts of the project relating to the interest

Post Office Box 191
955 Park Street
Columbia, SC 29202-0191

of your agency. We look forward to receiving your comments on the project within 30 days of receipt of this letter. Comments should be addressed to:

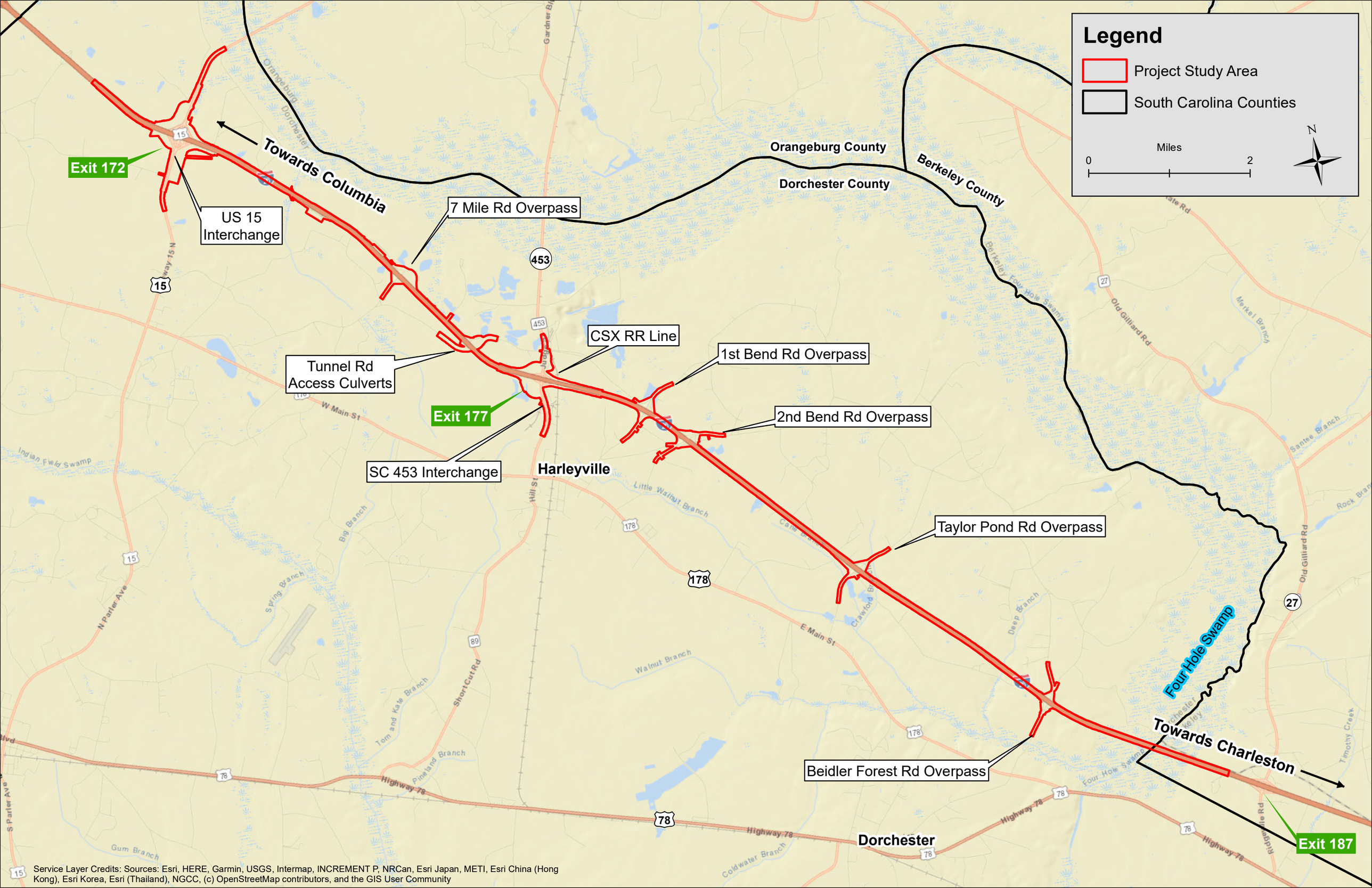
C.T. York
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Manager
Post Office Box 191
Columbia, SC 29201

Or by email: i26improvements@scdot.org

Sincerely,

Bill Jurgelski
RPG 1 (Lowcountry) NEPA Coordinator

CC: Chad Long, SCDOT


Legend
Project Study Area
South Carolina Counties
Miles
0
2
N
Exit 172
US 15 Interchange
Towards Columbia
7 Mile Rd Overpass
Orangeburg County
Dorchester County
Berkeley County
453
CSX RR Line
1st Bend Rd Overpass
Tunnel Rd Access Culverts
Exit 177
2nd Bend Rd Overpass
SC 453 Interchange
Harleyville
Taylor Pond Rd Overpass
178
Four Hole Swamp
Beidler Forest Rd Overpass
Towards Charleston
Exit 187
Dorchester
78
Highway 78
W Main St
E Main St
Old Gilliard Rd
Indian Field Swamp
Walnut Branch
Pineland Branch
Tom and Kate Branch
Spring Branch
Big Branch
Gum Branch
Coldwater Branch
Merkel Branch
Santee Branch
Timothy Creek
N Parler Ave
S Parler Ave
ShortCut Rd
Hill St
Crawford Br
Deep Branch
Rock Branch
Ridge Rd
Service Layer Credits: Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

From:	Jurgelski, William, M.
To:	Jurgelski, William, M.
Bcc:	"Dawson, Aaron (FHWA)"; "jermaine.hannon@dot.gov"; "Brad.J.Carey@usace.army.mil"; "ann.eaddy@usace.army.mil"; "brian.hardee@usace.army.mil"; "ivan.fannin@usace.army.mil"; "Christopher.D.Mims@usace.army.mil"; "Melanie_olds@fws.gov"; "holly_t_gaboriault@fws.gov"; "Lisia.J.Kowalczyk2@uscg.mil"; "Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil"; "Jennifer.N.Zercher@uscg.mil"; "gary.l.tomasulo@uscg.mil"; "laycock.kelly@epa.gov"; "militscher.chris@epa.gov"; "myra.reece@des.sc.gov"; "rhonda.thompson@des.sc.gov"; "juli.blalock@des.sc.gov"; "christopher.stout@des.sc.gov"; "renee.shealy@des.sc.gov"; "henry.porter@des.sc.gov"; "ann.clark@des.sc.gov"; "swashington@ors.sc.gov"; "mcaldwell@schac.sc.gov"; "HWEATHE@SCDA.SC.GOV"; "msherrer@scdah.sc.gov"; "EEmerson@scdah.sc.gov"; "EJohnson@scdah.sc.gov"; "MixonG@dnr.sc.gov"; "DanielT@dnr.sc.gov"; "RigginL@dnr.sc.gov"; "boylesR@dnr.sc.gov"; "ddawson@scrpt.com"; "information@admin.sc.gov"; "bhitt@sccommerce.com"; "hwelch@scfc.gov"; "charlesnortonjr@scdps.gov"; "Dwaynewilson@scdps.gov"; "Leecatoe@scdps.gov"; "Alanparker@scdps.gov"; "davidhilpisch@scdps.gov"; "thomaswhite@scdsp.gov"; "Tabithajenkins@scdps.gov"; "sara@scwf.org"; "mrobertson@tnc.org"; "michelle@scnhc.com"; "mhoffstatter@nwtf.net"; "Clancy_C@bellsouth.net"; "toombs@cherokee.org"; "wenonahh@ccppcrafts.com"; "Section106@muscogeenation.com"; Creech, Ted; Moore, Kelly, E.; Leaphart, Andrew, T.; Perry, Rob; Powell, Justin, P.; "tomfernandez@scsenate.gov"; "brianadams@scsenate.gov"; "seanbennett@scsenate.gov"; "mattleber@scsenate.gov"; "DeonTedder@scshouse.gov"; "harrietholman@schouse.gov"; "garybrewer@schouse.gov"; "gildacobbhunter@schouse.gov"; "gilgatch@schouse.gov"; "chrismurphy@schouse.gov"; "robertrobbins@schouse.gov"; "tiffanyspannwilder@schouse.gov"; "justinbamberg@schouse.gov"; "ronm@bcdcog.com"; "johnny.cribb@berkeleycountysc.gov"; "Danny.thrower@berkeleycountysc.gov"; "jward@dorchestercountysc.gov"; "PSmith@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "DChinnis@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "RMRanck@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "SFriddle@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "ECrosby@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "Bill.WRHearn@gmail.com"; "JByars2@DorchesterCountySC.gov"; "publicworks@dorchestercountysc.gov"; "tmcneal@dorchestercountysc.gov"; "harleyville@usa.net"; "clerk@hollyhill.sc.gov"; "ceh.ridgevillemayor@gmail.com"; "kjohnson@dd4.k12.sc.us"; Johnson, T.J.; Blackwell, J. Britt; Rhodes, Thomas L.; "vonkolnc1@gmail.com"; "bcole@greenerinstitute.org"; "peedeesierrasc@gmail.com"; York, Ct; Kelly, David, P.
Subject:	I-26 Mile Marker 172-187 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment Letter of Intent
Date:	Thursday, October 9, 2025 1:30:00 PM
Attachments:	P042567 - I-26 MM 172-187 Letter of Intent.pdf

Dear All,

Please find attached a Letter of Intent notifying that SCDOT, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will be initiating an Environmental Assessment for the above referenced project. Please read through the information and provide comments or responses if desired. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Respectfully,

Bill Jurgelski
RPG 1 NEPA Coordinator
SCDOT
955 Park Street
Columbia, SC 29202
803.737.1448

Name	Title/Agency	Address	City, State, Zip	E-mail
Federal Contacts				
Mr. Aaron Dawson	Deputy Division Administrator Federal Highway Administration	1835 Assembly St Suite 1270	Columbia SC 29201	aaron.dawson@dot.gov
Mr. Jermaine Hannon	Division Administrator SC Federal Highway Administration	1835 Assembly St Suite 1270	Columbia SC 29201	jermaine.hannon@dot.gov
Mr. Brad Carey	US Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District	69A Hagood Avenue	Charleston, SC 29403	Brad.J.Carey@usace.army.mil
Ms. Ann Eaddy	US Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District	69A Hagood Avenue	Charleston, SC 29403	ann.w.eaddy@usace.army.mil
Mr. Brian Hardee	US Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District	69A Hagood Avenue	Charleston, SC 29403	brian.hardee@usace.army.mil
Mr. Ivan Fannin	US Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District	69A Hagood Avenue	Charleston, SC 29403	ivan.fannin@usace.army.mil
Mr. Christopher Mims	US Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District	69A Hagood Avenue	Charleston, SC 29403	Christopher.D.Mims@usace.army.mil
Ms. Melanie Olds	US Fish and Wildlife Service	176 Croghan Spur Road Suite 200	Charleston, SC 29407	Melanie_olds@fws.gov
Ms. Holly Gaboriault	Project Leader U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Savannah Coastal Refuges Complex	694 Beech Hill Lane	Hardeeville, SC 29927	holly_t_gaboriault@fws.gov
Ms. Lisia Kowalczyk	US Coast Guard Bridge Permitting Office	909 SE 1st Ave Suite 432	Miami, Fl 33131	Lisia.J.Kowalczyk2@uscg.mil
Mr. Randall Overton	US Coast Guard Bridge Permitting Office	909 SE 1st Ave Suite 432	Miami, Fl 33131	Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil
Ms. Jennifer Zercher	US Coast Guard Bridge Permitting Office	909 SE 1st Ave Suite 432	Miami, Fl 33131	Jennifer.N.Zercher@uscg.mil
Captain Gary Tomasulo	US Coast Guard Commanding Officer	909 SE 1st Ave Suite 432	Miami, Fl 33131	gary.l.tomasulo@uscg.mil
Mr. Kelly Laycock	US Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 Wetlands Regulatory Section (404 Issues)	61 Forsyth Street, S.W.	Atlanta, GA 30303	laycock.kelly@epa.gov
Mr. Christopher Militscher	US Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 Office of the Environmental Assessment (NEPA Issues)	61 Forsyth Street, S.W.	Atlanta, GA 30303	militscher.chris@epa.gov
State Contacts				
Ms. Myra C Reece	Director SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	myra.reece@des.sc.gov
Ms. Rhonda Thompson	Chief, Bureau of Air Quality SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	rhonda.thompson@des.sc.gov
Ms. Juli Blalock	Chief, Bureau of Land and Waste Management SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	juli.blalock@des.sc.gov
Mr. Chris Stout	Chief, Bureau of Coastal Management SC Department of Environmental Services	1362 McMillan Ave, Suite 400	Charleston SC 29405	christopher.stout@des.sc.gov
Ms. Renee Shealy	Assistant Deputy Director, Environmental Programs SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	renee.shealy@des.sc.gov
Ms. Henry Porter	Deputy Director, Environmental Programs SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	henry.porter@des.sc.gov
Ms. Ann Clark	Chief, Bureau of Water SC Department of Environmental Services	2600 Bull Street	Columbia SC 29201	ann.clark@des.sc.gov
Ms. Stacey Washington	Deputy Director, Energy Office Office of Regulatory Staff	1401 Main Street Suite 900	Columbia SC 29201	swashington@ors.sc.gov
Mr. Marvin Caldwell	Interim - Commisioner, SC Human Affairs Commission	1026 Sumter Street Suite 101	Columbia, SC 29201	mcaldwell@schac.sc.gov
Mr. Hugh Weathers	Commissioner SC Dept of Agriculture	PO Box 11280	Columbia, SC 29211	HWEATHE@SCDA.SC.GOV
Ms. Mary Sherrer	Transportation Review Coordinator, State Historic Preservation Office SC Department of Archives & History	8301 Parklane Rd	Columbia, SC 29223	msherrer@scdah.sc.gov
Dr. Eric Emerson	State Historic Preservation Officer, SC Department of Archives and History	8301 Parklane Rd	Columbia, SC 29223	EEmerson@scdah.sc.gov
Ms. Elizabeth Johnson	Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer SC Dept of Archives & History	8301 Parklane Rd	Columbia, SC 29223	EJohnson@scdah.sc.gov
Vacant	SC State Archaeologist SC Dept of Archaeology & Anthropology-USC	1321 Pendleton St, Suite 16	Columbia SC 29208	
Mr. Greg Mixon	SCDNR Office of Environmental Programs	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	MixonG@dnr.sc.gov
Mr. Tom Daniel	SCDNR Office of Environmental Programs	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	DanielT@dnr.sc.gov
Ms. Lorianne Riggin	Director, SCDNR Office of Environmental Programs	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	RigginL@dnr.sc.gov
Mr. Tom Mulliken	Agency Director, SC Dept of Natural Resources	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	mullikent@dnr.sc.gov
Mr. Duane Parrish	Director, SC Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism	Edgar A Brown Building 1205 Pendleton Street Suite 248	Columbia SC 29201	ddawson@scrpt.com
vacant	SC Department of Administration Procurement Services Division Director	1201 Main St, Suite 600	Columbia SC 29201	information@admin.sc.gov
Mr. Robert Hitt	SC Secretary of Commerce	1201 Main Street, Suite 1600	Columbia SC 29201	bhitt@sccommerce.com
Ms. Holly Welch	Environmental Program Manager SC Forestry Commission	PO Box 21707	Columbia SC 29221	hwelch@scfc.gov
Capt. Chuck Norton	SC Department of Public Safety - Dorchester Weigh Stations	10311 Wilson Blvd	Blythewood SC 29016	charlesnortonjr@scdps.gov
	SC Department of Public Safety	This project only as requested by SCDP-		Dwaynewilson@scdps.gov
	SC Department of Public Safety			Leecatoe@scdps.gov
	SC Department of Public Safety			Alanparker@scdps.gov
	SC Department of Public Safety			davidhilpisch@scdps.gov
	SC Department of Public Safety			Tabithajenkins@scdps.gov
NGOs and Tribal Contacts				
Mrs. Sara Green	Executive Director SC Wildlife Federation	215 Pickens Street	Columbia SC 29205	sara@scwf.org
Mr. Dale Threatt-Taylor	Executive Director The Nature Conservancy	PO Box 5475	Columbia SC 29205	d.threatttaylor@tnc.org
Ms. Michelle McCollum	Heritage Corridor President and CEO	208 Archdale Drive	Aiken, SC 29803	michelle@scnhc.com
Mr. Tyler Reeves	National Wild Turkey Foundation Regional Director	770 Augusta Road, Post Office Box 530	Edgefield, SC 29824	mhoffstatter@nwtf.net

Ms. Linda Clancy	Ridge Heritage Association	Post Office Box 117	Johnston, SC 29832	Clancy_C@bellsouth.net
Ms. Elizabeth Toombs	Tribal Historic Preservation Office	P.O. Box 948	Tahlequa, OK 74465	elizabeth-toombs@cherokee.org
Dr. Wenonah G. Haire	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Catawba Indian Nation	1536 Tom Steven Road	Rock Hill SC 29730	wenonah.haire@catawba.com
Ms. LeeAnne Wendt	Tribal Historic Preservation Office	P.O. Box 580	Okmulgee, OK 74447	Section106@muscogeenation.com
SCDOT Internal Contacts				
Ted Creech	SCDOT, Governmental Affairs	PO Box 191	Columbia, SC 29202	CreechJT@scdot.org
Kelly Moore	SCDOT, Office of Public Engagement	PO Box 191	Columbia, SC 29202	MooreKW@scdot.org
Blind Copy the Following for "all Commission, Senator, and Representative correspondence, as well as any others you thinks will be hot topics"	Per email Correspondance - FW: Correspondence with Commissioners and Elected Officials- December 28th, 2016.			
Mr. Andy Leaphart	Chief Engineer for Operations, SCDOT			LeaphartAT@scdot.org
Mr. Robert E. Perry	Deputy Secretary for Engineering, SCDOT			PerryRE@scdot.org
Mr. Justin Powell	Secretary of Transportaion, SCDOT			PowellJP@scdot.org
Mr. C.T. York	SCDOT RPG 1 Program Manager			YorkCT@scdot.org
Mr. David Kelly	SCDOT NEPA Coordinator			KellyDP@scdot.org

Name	Title/Office	E-mail
Legislative Delegation		
Tom Fernandez	Senate District 39	tomfernandez@scsenate.gov
Brian Adams	Senate District 44	brianadams@scsenate.gov
Sean Bennett	Senate District 38	seanbennett@scsenate.gov
Matthew Leber	Senate District 41	mattleber@scsenate.gov
Deon Tedder	Senate District 42	DeonTedder@scsenate.gov
Harriet Holman	House District 102	harrietholman@schouse.gov
Gary Brewer, Jr.	House District 114	garybrewer@schouse.gov
Gilda Cobb-Hunter	House District 95	gildacobbhunter@schouse.gov
Gil Gatch	House District 94	gilgatch@schouse.gov
Chris Murphy	House District 98	chrismurphy@schouse.gov
Robby Robbins	House District 97	robertrobbins@schouse.gov
Tiffany Span-Wilder	House District 109	tiffanyspannwilder@schouse.gov
Justin Bamberg	House District 90	justinbamberg@schouse.gov
Local Government		
Mr. Ron Mitchum	Executive Director of BCDCOG Council of Governments	ronm@bcdcog.com
Mr. John P. Cribb	Berkeley County Supervisor	johnny.cribb@berkeleycountysc.gov
Mr. Danny Thrower	Berkeley County Chief Infrastructure Officer	Danny.thrower@berkeleycountysc.gov
Mr. Jason Ward	Dorchester County Administrator	jward@dorchestercountysc.gov
Mr. Peter Smith, Jr.	Dorchester County Council	PSmith@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Mr. David Chinnis (Vice-Chairman)	Dorchester County Council	DChinnis@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Ms. Rita May Ranck	Dorchester County Council	RMRanck@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Mr. Todd Friddle (Chairman)	Dorchester County Council	SFriddle@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Mr. Eddie Crosby	Dorchester County Council	ECrosby@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Mr. William (Bill) Hearn	Dorchester County Council	Bill.WRHearn@gmail.com
Mr. Jay Byars	Dorchester County Council	JByars2@DorchesterCountySC.gov
Mr. Mike Goldston, PE	Director, Dorchester County Public Works	publicworks@dorchestercountysc.gov
Mr. Thomas McNeal	Director, Dorchester County EMD	tmcneal@dorchestercountysc.gov
Mr. Jody Eargle	Mayor, Harleyville	harleyville@usa.net
Mr. Billy Chavis	Mayor, Holly Hill	clerk@hollyhill.sc.gov
Mr. Clarence Hughes	Mayor, Ridgeville	ceh.ridgevillemayor@gmail.com
Mr. Karim Johnson	Transportation Director, Dorchester School Dist. 4	kjohnson@dd4.k12.sc.us
SCDOT Commissioners		
Mr. T.J. Johnson	SCDOT Commissioner 1st Dist	JohnsonTJ@scdot.org
Vacant	SCDOT Commissioner 6th Dist	
Mr. Britt Blackwell	At Large	blackwelljb@scdot.org
Mr. Thomas Rhodes, III	At Large	rhodestl@scdot.org

Name	Title/Agency	Address	City, State, Zip	E-mail
Ms. Christine von Kolnitz	Chapter Chair Robert Lunz Group (Mount Pleasant) Sierra Club	Post Office Box 2388	Columbia, SC 29202	vonkolnc1@gmail.com
Mr. Bruce Cole	Contact for Lowcountry Group (Nancy Cathcart) Sierra Club	Post Office Box 2388	Columbia, SC 29202	bcole@greenerinstitute.org
Mr. Ben Mack	SC Chapter Chair Sierra Club	Post Office Box 2388	Columbia, SC 29202	peedeesierrasc@gmail.com

Automatic Responses Received

	Recipient				Automatic Response
Ms. Melanie Olds	US Fish and Wildlife Service	176 Croghan Spur Road Suite 200	Charleston, SC 29407	Melanie_olds@fws.gov	Due to a lack of appropriations funding, I am currently out of the office on furlough and will return once
Ms. Stacey Washington	Deputy Director, Energy Office Office of Regulatory Staff	1401 Main Street Suite 900	Columbia SC 29201	swashington@ors.sc.gov	I am no longer with the State Energy Office. Please contact Gretchen Pool at gpool@ors.sc.gov. Best Regards, Crystal Garcia
Alan Parker - SCDPS					I will be away from the office 10/3/25 - 10/10/25
Mr. Jody Eargle	Mayor, Harleyville	harleyville@usa.net			Thank you for contacting the Town of Harleyville. This email is no longer in use. Please send all future emails to one of the following: General information or concerns: town@harleyvillesc.gov Invoices: billing@harleyvillesc.gov Traffic violations or concerns: police@harleyvillesc.gov
Ms. Elizabeth Toombs	Tribal Historic Preservation Office	P.O. Box 948	Tahlequa, OK 74465	toombs@cherokee.org	Many thanks for your email. Our Tribal Historic Preservation Office is on travel status during the week of October 6. If your matter is urgent, please phone my cell at 918.506.8391. Otherwise, I will respond when I return to the office. Thank you for your understanding. Wado, Elizabeth Toombs
Dale Threat Taylor					I'm in Washington, DC with TNC Trustees and national leaders to meet with our Congressional leaders. Response to emails will be delayed, as these meetings are crucial to the future of our conservation work across our lands. Definantely wearing my heels this week. Back to my sandals, sneakers or boots next week. Your support helps us conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. Thank you for that. Our life on earth depends on it. Dale

Henry Phillips

From: Sherrer, Mary <MSherrer@scdah.sc.gov>
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2025 9:30 AM
To: i26improvements@scdot.org
Subject: I-26 MM 172-187 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment Letter of Intent

Good morning,

Regarding the Letter of Intent for the subject-referenced project which we received October 9, 2025, our office will address any concerns regarding cultural resources within the project study area in our comments on the cultural resources assessment survey submitted to us for review.

Thank you,

Mary Sherrer

Mary Sherrer
Review Coordinator for Transportation Projects
State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
SC Department of Archives & History
8301 Parklane Road
Columbia, SC 29223
803.896.6184
https://scdah.sc.gov/historic-preservation

State of South Carolina
Department of Natural Resources

P.O. Box 167
Columbia, S.C. 29202
803-734-4199

Robert H. Boyles, Jr., *Director*
Lorianne Riggin, *Director, Office of Environmental Programs*

November 7, 2025

C.T. York
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Manager
Post Office Box 191
Columbia, SC 29201

Electronic submittal

RE: I-26 Mile Marker 172-187 Corridor Improvements, Dorchester and Berkeley Counties.

Dear Mr. York,

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is the state agency charged by state law with the management, protection, and enhancement of wildlife, fisheries, and marine resources in South Carolina. In addition to natural resource management responsibilities through research, management and licensing, the SCDNR is also charged with statewide responsibilities for regulating watercraft operation and associated recreation on state waters, conducting geological surveys and mapping, promoting soil and water conservation, flood mitigation, drought response planning and coordination, and the coordination of the state scenic rivers program. SCDNR's mission is to serve as the principal advocate for and steward of South Carolina's natural resources. (SCDNR authorities and responsibilities are described in Titles 48, 49 and 50, South Carolina Code of Laws (1976), as amended). As such, personnel with the SCDNR have reviewed the Letter of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), evaluated its impact on natural resources and offer the comments below.

Project Summary

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration proposes to widen approximately 15 miles of I-26 from just west of the existing interchange of I-26 and US Highway 15 (US 15, Exit 172 A-B) to just west of the I-26 and South Carolina 27 (SC 27) interchange (Exit 187). The project would include adding a travel lane in each direction of I-26, grading median/outside shoulders, installing median barrier walls and/or cable guardrail, replacing 11 bridges (including 5 overpass bridges, 4 mainline bridges, and 2 interchange overpasses), addressing 6 hydrological box culverts and 2 "access" box culverts, and making drainage improvements. The interchange overpass

improvements would include improving the ramps and associated frontage roads at Exits 172 and 177. The proposed project would address existing and future traffic conditions while improving mobility and operations of local roadways in the project study area. SCDOT has requested interagency coordination in identifying potential areas of concern associated with the project in preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA).

SCDNR Comments

As this project is still in the planning stages, we are unable to provide specific comments on potential impacts to natural resources at this time. However, we can provide general comments regarding wetlands and best management practices to consider when preparing the EA and finalizing project plans. Staff with SCDNR have participated in several Agency Coordination Effort (ACE) meetings and reserve the right to review and provide comments on additional information as it becomes available. During the ACE meetings, SCDNR identified several state-listed species that should be considered during biological evaluations for the study area.

Several parts of the project site are adjacent to conserved lands managed by the Audubon Society, including Beidler Forest. These areas provide recreational opportunities for visitors as well as protection for numerous plant and wildlife species. SCDNR recommends coordination with the Audubon Society to ensure any potential impacts to the property are minimized.

Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species

According to the SCDNR Natural Heritage Trust database, there are several state and federally protected species within a 1-mile radius of the project corridor. Based on the information provided, a review of aerial photography and other element occurrence records nearby, the SCDNR finds that there is potential for the following protected species to be found within or near the project footprint:

- Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*); state endangered
- Spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*); state threatened
- Tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*); federally proposed endangered
- Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*); federally endangered
- Red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*); federally threatened
- Wood stork (*Mycteria americana*); federally threatened
- Broad striped dwarf siren (*Pseudobranchus striatus striatus*); state threatened
- Carolina gopher frog (*Lithobates capito*); state endangered

The SCDNR recommends that a protected species habitat assessment should be compiled to describe the habitats onsite with representative photos and a discussion of whether suitable habitat exists for any federal or state protected species that could exist in Dorchester and Berkeley counties. Following the suitable habitat assessment, it is likely that additional avoidance and minimization measures for state protected species may be needed as take of state

listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-20 and §50-15-30. The SCDNR provides avoidance and minimization measures for these species in Appendix 1. Additional information regarding habitat assessments for state protected species can be found in the SCDNR State Listed Species Protection Guidance found here: https://dnr.sc.gov/environmental/docs/SCDNRStateListedSpeciesProtectionGuidance.pdf.

In addition to the aforementioned species, Dorchester and Berkeley counties are home to several reptile and amphibian species of highest conservation priority identified in the SCDNR State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) including the Eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*), and Chamberlain's dwarf salamander (*Eurycea chamberlaini*). SWAP species are those species of greatest conservation need not traditionally covered under any federally funded programs. Species are listed in the SWAP because they are rare or designated as at-risk due to knowledge deficiencies; species common in South Carolina but listed rare or declining elsewhere; or species that serve as indicators of detrimental environmental conditions. Measures to avoid or minimize impacts to these species of conservation importance should be considered in the proposed project.

The proposed project involves the replacement of 11 bridges and work on 8 box culverts. Cavity-roosting bat species, including the federally endangered Northern long-eared bat, federally proposed endangered tricolored bat, and state-endangered Rafinesque's big-eared bat, can be found roosting and hibernating in these structures. All bridges/culverts planned for maintenance or replacement should be visually surveyed for signs of bats or bat usage (e.g., individuals, urine staining, guano) with the use of a spotlight or other bright light source. Binoculars may be helpful for bridge surveys. For helpful information on completing bat surveys in transportation structures, visit the link below of the training put together by GADNR, USFWS and FHWA. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuFwkT7q8Ws There is a Bats and Transportation Structures survey protocol in Appendix K of the USFWS Range Wide Indiana Bat and Northern Long-eared Bat Survey Guidelines found here: https://www.fws.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-04/final_usfws_rangewide_ibat-nleb_survey_guidelines_508-compliant.pdf.

Roadways have been documented to have significant effects on herpetofauna populations with high rates of direct mortalities on the roads as well as habitat fragmentation and reduction in gene flow and habitat utilization (Andrews et al. 2007). Research has shown that amphibians and reptiles can utilize culverts as wildlife crossings with roadways. The most successful structures for herpetofauna are a combined system of guide fences and underpasses to funnel organisms beneath roadways (Dodd et al. 2004; Aresco 2005; Andrew et al. 2007; Patrick 2010). In fact, a review of studies on herpetofauna road mortalities found exclusion fencing to be the most effective mitigation strategy to reduce road mortality, diminishing roadkill by an average of 54% across studies and taxa (Rytwinksi et al. 2016). Therefore, the SCDNR recommends permanent wildlife fencing be put in place to avoid impacts to the aforementioned species.

Aquatic Resources

As shown in Figure 1 below, a portion of the project site is within a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area Zone AE. This means the project will be constructed in a high-risk flood area where there is at least a 1 in 4 chance of flooding during a 30-year timespan, requiring flood insurance. Floodplains function to support groundwater recharge, filter pollutants and abate floodwaters. Because of the mapped Special Flood Hazard Area, a permit from the County National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP) Manager may be required before construction can occur; to determine contact the County's NFIP Manager please refer to https://www.dnr.sc.gov/water/flood/documents/nfipadmindirectory.pdf to find the appropriate contact.

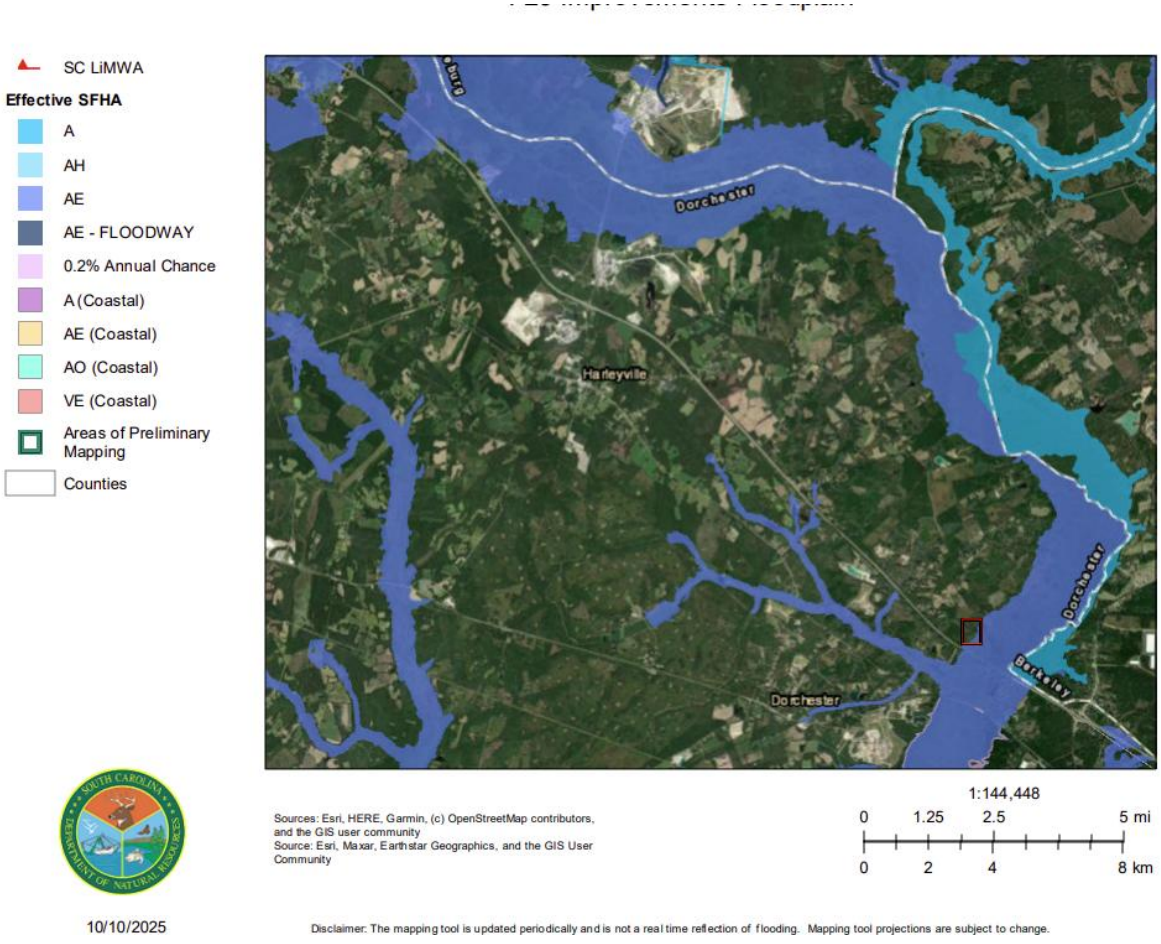


Figure 1. FEMA Flood Zones in project area. Project lies within zone AE.

Wetland impacts

According to National Wetland Inventory Maps, the information provided, and USDA Web Soil Survey data, multiple streams and freshwater wetlands are present in the project area. These include Four Hole Swamp, Mill Branch, Spring Branch, Pee Dee Branch, and Deep Branch. SCDNR advises that you consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to determine what jurisdictional features are present and if a permit and mitigation is required for activities

impacting these areas. SCDNR recommends that project plans avoid or minimize stream crossings and wetland impacts whenever possible.

Means for avoiding and minimizing wetland impacts should be incorporated early in the planning process and should include things such as bridging and culverting wetland crossings, reduced median and shoulder width, and the use of top-down construction methods. Mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts should be addressed in the planning and environmental review stages of the project and should focus on the in-kind replacement of lost wetland functions.

The SCDNR recognizes the difficulty in balancing transportation needs with environmental protection, especially in high growth, coastal areas. The SCDNR appreciates the opportunity to provide input in the early stages of this project and will be available for future input. Should you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at norregaarde@dnr.sc.gov or by phone at 803-667-1307.

Sincerely,

Ann Elizabeth Norregaard

Elizabeth Norregaard
Office of Environmental Programs
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

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Appendix 1. Survey, Avoidance and Minimization Measures for State Protected Species

The SCDNR offers the following comments for future assessments and consideration for protected species. Additional information regarding habitat assessments for state protected species can be found in the SCDNR State Listed Species Protection Guidance found here: https://dnr.sc.gov/environmental/docs/SCDNRStateListedSpeciesProtectionGuidance.pdf.

Bats

Although no element of occurrence records are known for cavity- and tree-roosting bat species on the property, three listed species of bats have been known to occur in Berkeley, Dorchester, and adjacent counties, and within one mile of the project area including: the state-endangered Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*); the federally endangered northern long-eared bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*); and the federally proposed endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*)[1]. The hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) and the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), which are both federally at risk and listed as species of highest conservation priority in the SCDNR State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), can also be found near the project site. Species are listed in the SWAP because they are rare or designated as at-risk due to knowledge deficiencies; species common in South Carolina but listed rare or declining elsewhere; or species that serve as indicators of detrimental environmental conditions. Please keep in mind that information regarding the presence of species is derived from existing databases, and SCDNR does not assume that it is complete. Areas not yet inventoried by SCDNR biologists may contain significant species or communities. Please note that take of a state endangered species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-30.

The clearing of trees has the potential to disturb the aforementioned species of bats. Considerations for minimizing disturbance may include protecting and maintaining large diameter roost trees, large snags, decadent trees, hollow trees, and roost structures, especially near water or riparian areas. Additionally, creating or preserving patches of structurally diverse forest in order to provide access to roosting sites will benefit these species. The SCDNR recommends that the applicant determine if suitable habitat, as described below, for the aforementioned bat species exists within the project area, the SCDNR recommends that prior to any land-clearing activities of forests in the proposed project area, the applicant implement the following avoidance and minimization measures.

Rafinesque's big-eared bat

Option 1

Suitable habitat for Rafinesque's big-eared bat is defined as swamp forests, hardwood or mixed mature bottomlands, maritime forests and black gum (*Nyssa aquatica*) and water tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) stands (Cochran 1999, Hofmann et al. 1999, Lance et al. 2001, Gooding and Langford 2004, Trousdale and Beckett 2005).

[1] Please note that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a proposed rule to list the tricolored bat as endangered on September 14, 2022. The USFWS has yet to finalize the rule. https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/09/14/2022-18852/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-tricolored-bat

If suitable habitat exists within the project, the SCDNR recommends assumption of presence of Rafinesque's big-eared bat within areas of forested wetlands and to further protect these areas, surround them with a 1000-foot buffers and avoid tree clearing from May 1st to July 31st to minimize disturbance and destruction of habitat that may be used by females during gestation or maternal care for pups.

All other tree clearing outside of the forested wetlands and its associated buffer may occur in areas that are not wetlands or other aquatic resources in non-Rafinesque's big-eared bat maternity roosting habitat anytime. Where wetlands occur that are not Rafinesque's big-eared bat habitat, but they are spotted turtle habitat, tree clearing should only occur August to December to prevent impacts to spotted turtles during reproduction. However, if wetlands are dry January to June, they may be cleared, but they must be completely dry (no surface water present).

Option 2

To further define areas of Rafinesque's big-eared bat habitat identified in option 1 and to reduce the number of areas being avoided during maternity season, surveys for maternity roosts may be conducted. To identify potential maternity trees, surveyors shall walk transects across suitable habitat at a spacing based on the density of onsite vegetation. Line of sight should always be maintained between surveyors. Surveyors should be spaced in a manner where all area in between them will be inspected with a slight overlap (e.g., closer for densely vegetated habitat vs. open habitat). Any maternity roost tree identified must then be buffered with a 1000-foot radius and an avoidance for tree clearing implemented May 1st to July 31st. Maternity roost trees are defined as trees standing 59 to 82 feet tall with large, hollow, cavities – 4 feet tall by 1 feet wide external width, with large basal cavities potentially being preferential (Mirowsky 1998, Gooding and Langford 2004, Trousdale and Beckett 2005, Carver and Ashley 2008, Bat Conservation International and Southeastern Bat Diversity Network 2013).

All other tree clearing may occur in areas that are not wetlands or other aquatic resources in non-Rafinesque's big-eared bat maternity roosting habitat anytime. Where wetlands occur that are not Rafinesque's big-eared bat habitat, but they are spotted turtle habitat, tree clearing should only occur August to December to prevent impacts to spotted turtles during reproduction. However, if wetlands are dry January to June, they may be cleared, but they must be completely dry (no surface water present).

Northern long-eared bat
Please note that the northern long-eared bat is now listed as federally endangered as of March 31, 2023, making the take of the NLEB prohibited under Section 9 of the Endangered Species Act. Therefore, please consult with the USFWS regarding impacts to this species.

Tricolored bat
Tricolored bat were proposed for listing as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on September 13, 2022. This species utilizes caves, rock crevices, tree foliage and basal cavities, Spanish moss and man-made structures, such as houses, barns and culverts, as roosts during the

summer months and they will use more than one roost location. Please consult with USFWS regarding impacts to this species.

If any of the above species are found on-site, please contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and SCDNR. In summary, the SCDNR recommends the applicant assume presence of the aforementioned species and abide by a clearing moratorium from May 1st to July 31st if suitable habitat for the above species is likely or are explicitly identified within the project footprint.

Frosted Flatwoods Salamander

Frosted flatwoods salamander (*Ambystoma cingulatum*), a federally threatened and state endangered species, has been known to occur near the project area. Flatwoods salamander live underground most of the year and migrate between isolated wetlands and uplands through mostly open woodland habitats. All seasonally ponded wetlands identified as suitable habitat shall be classified as either "active habitat" or "inactive habitat" based on whether there is enough water to allow larvae to inhabit the site during the current season for which it is surveyed.

Presence of the following species likely notes the lack of suitable habitat for *A. cingulatum*: Large predatory fish such as bass (*Micopterus spp.*), sunfish (*Lepomis spp.*), and bowfin (*Amia calva*) (Palis, 1997a). It should be noted, however, that smaller fish species such as pygmy and dwarf sunfishes (*Elassoma* spp.), pigmy killifish (*Leptolucania ommata*), least killifish (*Heterandria formosa*), mosquitofish (*Gambusia* spp.), grass pickerel (*Esox americanus vermiculatus*) and redfin pickerel (*E. americanus americanus*) may coexist with *A. cingulatum*.

Should appropriate habitat exist within the project area, surveys are recommended to rule out presence of frosted flatwoods salamander. If frosted flatwoods salamander are found within the project area, please consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service before proceeding with any construction activities. Please note a take of this state listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-30.

Habitat Assessment

Habitat assessments should be conducted via pedestrian surveys and can be conducted year-round. Suitable habitat includes both aquatic (breeding) habitat and terrestrial (non-breeding) habitat and can be broadly defined as forested pine uplands with relatively open mid-story and understory often dominated by wiregrass with isolated wetlands or depression that are seasonally flooded. Please note that wiregrass is not the only groundcover that could be deemed suitable habitat—other similar grass species may serve as a supplemental habitat.

Aquatic habitat includes wetlands that are seasonally flooded by rainfall in late fall or early winter and dry in late spring or early summer within the pine flatwoods-savanna communities that have relatively open canopies. Suitable depressional wetland habitat for breeding and larvae/juvenile life stages meets the following characteristics:

- Occurs within 1,500 feet or immediately adjacent to suitable terrestrial habitat as described below.
- Occurs in areas with 0-2% slopes.
- Wetlands are isolated from other water bodies via overland flow and ephemeral/seasonal in nature, meaning they are completely dry at least annually. Wetlands obtain only a

small accumulation of organic matter and have average water depths less than 24 inches. The acreage of the wetland is not a determining factor in suitability; the species has been found in wetlands as small as 0.074 acres (ac) and as large as 31 ac (Palis, 1997b).

- Canopy and mid-story are often dominated by pond cypress (*Taxodium distichum* var. *ascendens*), with a smaller component of swamp blackgum (*Nyssa biflora*) and slash pine. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*), sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), sweetbay magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*), and loblolly bay (*Gordonia lasianthus*) saplings may be present as well if fire has been suppressed in the area. Most often occurs with the aforementioned species in addition to myrtle leaved holly (*Ilex myrtifolia*), titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*), sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), fetterbush (*Lyonia lucida*), and bamboo vine (*Smilax laurifolia*) (Palis, 1996).
- Wetlands often appear marsh-like with groundcover dominated by graminaceous species, including beakrushes (*Rynchospora* spp.), sedges (*Carex* spp.), panic grasses (*Panicum* spp.), witch grasses (*Dichanthelium* spp.), bluestems (*Andropogon* spp.), jointtails (*Coelorachis spp.*), three-awned grasses (*Aristida* spp.), plumegrasses (*Erianthus* spp.), nutrush (*Scleria baldwinii*), hatpins (*Eriocaulon* spp.), and yelloweyed grasses (*Xyris* spp.) (Palis, 1996). However, in sinkhole ponds, herbaceous vegetation can be patchier, often only occurring around the edges. These herbaceous communities within the wetlands are of more significance to the suitability of the habitat than the canopy and mid-story story species within the wetland.
- Roadside ditches and borrow pits nearby natural isolated wetlands with the aforementioned herbaceous communities that are only inundated late winter through spring may be suitable habitat in drought years when there may be more limited fillings of ideal habitats (Palis 1996; Anderson and Williamson 1976).

The terrestrial habitat includes upland pine flatwoods-savanna habitat that are within 1,500 feet of adjacent or accessible aquatic habitats. Suitable upland, terrestrial habitat for adults meets the following characteristics (Palis, 1996):

- Topographically flat or slightly rolling.
- Seasonally saturated, poorly drained sandy soils
- Ideal upland habitat consists of open (widely scattered), mesic longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) woodlands maintained by frequent fire with wiregrass-dominated groundcover and little to no mid-story.
- Groundcover may also contain low-growing shrubs such as saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*), gall berry (*Ilex glabra*), and blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.)
- Due to losses in ideal habitat, areas that have been converted to slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) flatwoods can also be considered suitable habitat, so long as the soil isn't heavily disturbed by bedding, root-raking, etc.

All seasonally ponded wetlands identified as suitable habitat shall be classified as either "active habitat" or "inactive habitat" based on whether there is enough water to allow larvae to inhabit the site during the current season for which it is surveyed.

Survey Protocol

Due to the fossorial nature of adult and subadult flatwoods salamanders, surveys should be conducted during the larval stage during late January 15 through April 15. All surveys must be

completed when water is present in the wetlands and should be performed by a biologist with flatwoods salamander survey experience. Surveys can be conducted using either dip netting or funnel traps. Preferred surveys would consist of a combination of dipnetting and trapping simultaneously.

Dipnetting
Each isolated wetland previously determined to be suitable habitat shall be sampled via walking transect lines throughout the wetland using a 4 millimeter (mm) or less mesh dipnet. Survey effort should focus solely on areas with emergent or submerged vegetation. For smaller wetlands (0.1 acre or less), it is preferred that transects are spaced tightly enough that the entirety of the aquatic resource surface area is sampled. For larger wetlands, transect spacing does not need to be a set distance; however, at least 50 transects should be sampled throughout the aquatic resource.

The dipnet bag should be initially submerged adjacent to the beginning of the first transect to be sampled. The dipnet should be thrust forward through the submerged vegetation while the surveyor uses their hand or foot to create quick, sweeping motions in the opposite direction they are moving (i.e. towards the net).

In deeper, less heavily vegetated wetlands, the dipnet can instead be vigorously swept back-and-forth in a zig-zag pattern through the inundated vegetation (Palis, 1997a).

Funnel Traps
Funnel traps can result in mortality if neglected. Traps should never be left unchecked for more than 24 hours; however a successful survey effort should extend for at least 5 days or 4 trap nights. Trap locations should be well-marked and secured so that traps are not lost. All traps should be "set" so funnels are completely submerged, but at least 25% of the trap remains above the water surface. Additionally, a small floatation device should be left inside each trap in case the trap is moved, or a rain event occurs; this prevents drowning of air breathing organisms. When available, plastic, or mesh, is preferred over metal wire traps to reduce the injury to captured individuals. "Baiting" traps with a glow stick/trap has been shown to increase capture rates for aquatic salamander larvae and should be considered while trapping for this species (Bennett et al. 2012).

<u>Broad-striped Dwarf Siren</u>
Broad-striped dwarf siren (*Pseudobranchus striatus*) are a state-listed threatened species that inhabit heavily vegetated, cypress swamps and ponds, flooded ditches, marshes and other permanent and semi-permanent aquatic habitats in the Coastal Plain. Take of this state listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-20(C). Please note as a state threatened species, it is unlawful for any person to take, possess, transport, import, export, process, sell, offer for sale, ship, or receive for shipment any dwarf siren without a permit from the SCDNR. Therefore, since habitat for the dwarf siren exists within the proposed project footprint, the SCDNR recommends prior to any habitat disturbance in the proposed work area that surveys be conducted by qualified individuals with dwarf siren survey experience. The detection of dwarf sirens utilizing a visual survey is highly unlikely due to their cryptic nature. The SCDNR

recommends a combination of dip net and trap surveys be conducted to identify dwarf siren larvae when water is present.

Survey Protocol
All surveys must be completed when water is present in the wetlands and air temperatures are above freezing. Surveys should be performed by a biologist with wetland amphibian survey experience. Surveys are typically conducted from fall through the spring. Although summer surveys can occur, it is not recommended as this is when the ephemeral wetlands utilized by this species are often dry. Surveys can be conducted using either dip netting or funnel traps. Preferred surveys would consist of a combination of dipnetting and trapping simultaneously.

Dipnetting
Each wetland determined to be suitable habitat shall be sampled via walking transect lines throughout the wetland using a 4 millimeter (mm) or less mesh dipnet. Survey effort should focus solely on areas with emergent or submerged vegetation. For smaller wetlands (0.1 acre or less), it is preferred that transects are spaced tightly enough that the entirety of the aquatic resource surface area is sampled. For larger wetlands, transect spacing does not need to be a set distance; however, at least 50 transects should be sampled throughout the aquatic resource.

The dipnet bag should be initially submerged adjacent to the beginning of the first transect to be sampled. The dipnet should be thrust forward through the submerged vegetation while the surveyor uses their hand or foot to create quick, sweeping motions in the opposite direction they are moving (i.e. towards the net). In deeper, less heavily vegetated wetlands, the dipnet can instead be vigorously swept back-and-forth in a zig-zag pattern through the inundated vegetation (Palis, 1997a).

Funnel Traps
Funnel traps can result in mortality if neglected. Traps should never be left unchecked for more than 24 hours; however, a successful survey effort should extend for at least 5 days, or 4 trap nights. Trap locations should be well-marked and secured so that traps are not lost. All traps should be "set" so funnels are completely submerged, but at least 25% of the trap remains above the water surface. Additionally, a small floatation device should be left inside each trap in case the trap is moved, or a rain event occurs; this prevents drowning of air breathing organisms. When available, plastic, or mesh, is preferred over metal wire traps to reduce the injury to captured individuals. "Baiting" traps with a glow stick/trap has been shown to increase capture rates for aquatic salamander larvae and should be considered while trapping for this species (Bennett et al. 2012).

<u>Spotted Turtle</u>
The spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) is a state-threatened species and a federal At-Risk species (ARS) that is known to inhabit Jasper County. Suitable habitat includes heavily vegetated, shallow wetlands with standing or flowing water including Carolina Bays, bogs, swamps, marshes, and wet meadows (wetlands with soft, mucky substrates are preferred) (Jensen et al. 2008). While often associated predominantly with wetlands, spotted turtles spend a considerable amount of time on land throughout the year; however, preferred upland habitat types have not been identified. Keep in mind that spotted turtles are known to move considerable distances

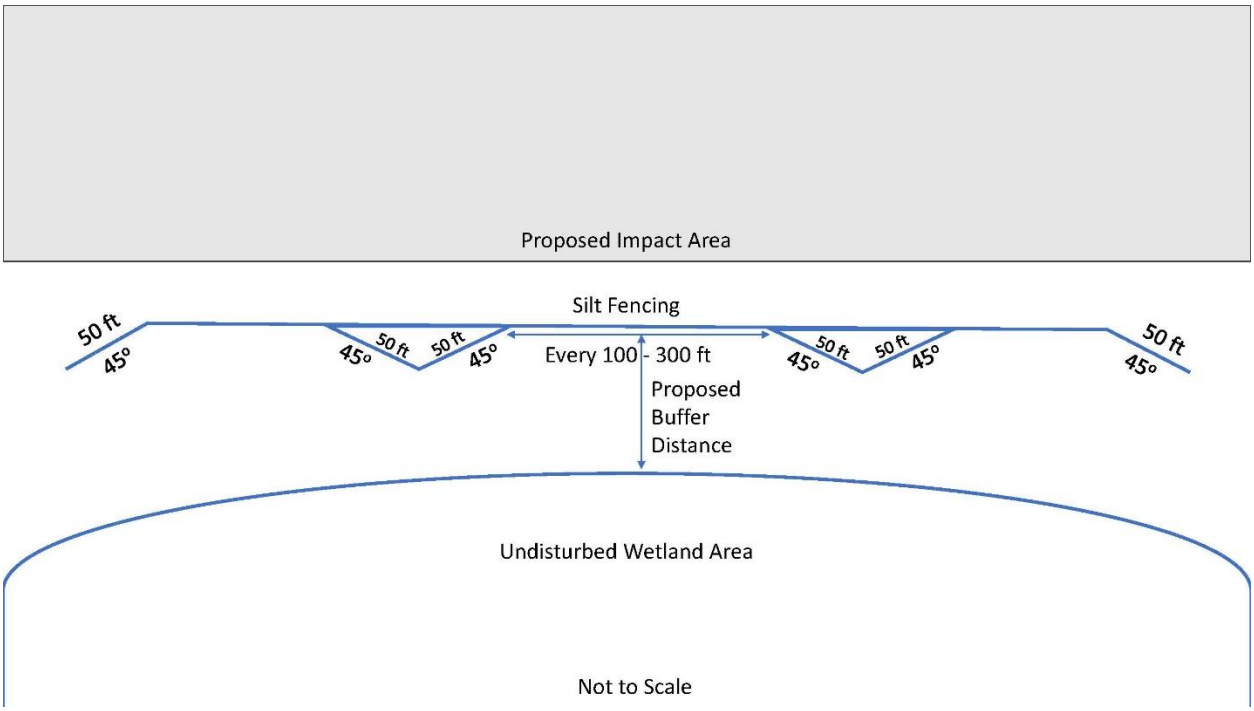
between and within habitats; a male can have a home range of 5 hectares, where females have been documented to have home ranges of 16 hectares (Litzgus and Mousseau 2004).

Because the project area contains a variety of wetlands and the fact that spotted turtles are known to move considerable distances between and within habitats, the SCDNR recommends that the applicant assume spotted turtle presence on the proposed project site. To prevent the take of a spotted turtle the applicant can either choose to avoid any construction in areas within or adjacent to aquatic resources (wetlands, streams, etc.) from January 15th through May 31st or utilize exclusion methods outlined below.

For areas where wetlands are being avoided, the SCDNR recommends the following:

- Prior to any construction activity, install silt fencing from November 15th through January 15th. Silt fencing should include 45-degree arms to direct spotted turtles to the uplands adjacent to the waterbody and away from the construction site. The 45-degree arms should be placed at a minimum of 100 ft from the waterbody and no more than 300 ft from the waterbody. Additionally, silt fence arms should extend at least 50-ft and extend in each direction so that the ends of each 45-degree angle to the fence meet to form a triangle. Silt fencing should remain in place throughout the duration of the proposed construction activities. If silt fencing cannot be placed in accordance with this timing, see additional silt fencing exclusion below.
- Prior to construction, monitor the silt fencing to ensure it is effectively working properly on a monthly basis. This should effectively exclude the species from the project area prior to construction activities. Once construction activities begin, the silt fence should be monitored weekly for the integrity of the fencing and the presence of spotted turtles or other herpetofauna or small wildlife species. The SCDNR recommends that a permit is in hand prior to exclusion to address handling and relocation of any spotted turtles encountered during the project; see the Spotted Turtle Temporary Relocation Guidance below.

Should the applicant find that the spotted turtle avoidance and minimization measures cannot be completed, the SCDNR would then request that a trap survey for the presence of spotted turtle be completed. Please note that because take of this state listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-20(C), a permit will be needed from SCDNR prior to completing the survey.



Silt fencing exclusion diagram for Spotted Turtle

Survey Protocol
All surveys must be completed when water is present in the wetlands. Spotted turtles utilize wetland habitat during certain times of the year, but during periods of drought or low water levels, spotted turtles will aestivate in the surrounding forests adjacent to wetlands. Surveys should be conducted from March 1st – May 15th when air temperatures are between 60-88°F and water temperatures between 60-82°F. Surveys can be conducted using visual survey or trap surveys; however, the SCDNR recommends only the use of trap surveys due to the low detectability of spotted turtle with the use of visual survey only. Trap surveys should be conducted between March 1st and May 15th. Further survey details can be found in the Spotted Turtle Assessment Protocol developed by the Spotted Turtle Working Group in Appendix 2.

Trap Surveys
Trapping is usually most effective March to May. Further survey details for trapping can be found in the Spotted Turtle Assessment Protocol developed by the Spotted Turtle Working Group in Appendix 2.

If silt fencing for exclusion cannot be placed at the appropriate time outlined above, then the following should be abided:

Should the applicant not be able to install the silt fencing in accordance with the proposed window, it will require the applicant to install the exclusion fencing when the species is more active and has the potential to trap individuals with the area of proposed construction. Therefore, the SCDNR recommends checking the perimeter of the fencing twice daily for 14 days prior to

ground disturbance and/or clearing in areas adjacent to and near these wetlands to ensure that spotted turtles are not trapped within the proposed project footprint.

Any turtles found within the construction area during this initial monitoring period and the construction monitoring period described below must be relocated. The relocation plan must be submitted to the SCDNR Permitting Biologist[2] and a permit received from SCDNR prior to the installation of any silt fencing construction.

All surveys must be completed when water is present in the wetlands. Spotted turtles utilize wetland habitat during certain times of the year, but during periods of drought or low water levels, spotted turtles will aestivate in the surrounding forests adjacent to wetlands. Surveys should be conducted from March 1st – May 15th when air temperatures are between 60-88°F and water temperatures between 60-82°F. Surveys can be conducted using visual survey or trap surveys; however, the SCDNR recommends only the use of trap surveys due to the low detectability of spotted turtle with the use of visual survey only. Trap surveys should be conducted between March 1st and May 15th. Further survey details can be found in the Spotted Turtle Assessment Protocol developed by the Spotted Turtle Working Group in Appendix 2.

Relocation Guidance
Relocation can occur moving animals to similar habitats onsite or to suitable habitat offsite. The relocation plan for moving spotted turtles away from areas they will be impacted must be submitted to SCDNR for review prior to the installation of the silt fencing and the proper permits acquired from the SCDNR Permitting Biologist[3] for the movement of a state protected species. If you have questions, please contact the State Herpetologist by emailing herps@dnr.sc.gov.

The relocation plan should include the following:

- Maps of where habitat will be impacted and the proposed relocation area.
- Photos of suitable habitat in the proposed relocation area.
- **Temporary Relocations** generally entail translocating individuals immediately outside of exclusion fencing and into adjacent or nearby areas outside of areas of active construction where they were encountered and only in areas that provide similar suitable habitat and cover. Protocols for temporary relocations should include silt fencing monitoring plan and may also include the following best management practices:
    - Reptiles may move during the night and seek shelter, therefore, all machinery and construction materials or debris that remain overnight at the work area shall be inspected by a designated and qualified environmental inspector. All personnel will be responsible for visually inspecting vehicles and equipment throughout the lifecycle of the Project. Details outlining visual inspections will be provided during project-specific training for all on-site Project personnel. Project-specific training material for protected species conservation will be developed and used to inform onsite workers of spotted turtles.
    - Depending upon the specific location for clearing or intrusive work, if a spotted turtle is encountered during the daily pre-work examination, field

[2] https://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/scientificcollinstructions.pdf
[3] https://www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/scientificcollinstructions.pdf

work/construction may be delayed temporarily in the immediate vicinity until after the animal has voluntarily moved outside the work area or is relocated.
    - If work is in progress after completion of the pre-work examination and a worker observes an animal that may be a spotted turtle, all workers within a 50-foot radius shall cease work immediately and all machines within the same radius shall be turned off. The permit holder's environmental professional shall be contacted immediately. The person that detected the reptile will maintain observation of the specimen until the designated professional arrives, while maintaining a separation distance of no less than 25 feet from the reptile, to avoid being detected and cause the animal to hide. Upon arrival of the approved designated professional, the person that encountered the individual animal will show the professional where the turtle is for relocation as needed.
- **Relocation Trap Assessments** are a more intensive method intended to facilitate the collection of all individuals in an area that will be impacted or completely lost. These sites should be trapped at a minimum of two weeks per month in March, April and May. Each week of trapping should include a 4-night trap run for a total of at least 12 nights during the entire Spotted Turtle active season, March 1 to May 15. The relocation plan must include a trapping protocol and survey schedule with maps that show all wetlands and trapping schedule/plots/protocol/density of traps when applicable.

Trap Configuration

- Within each of the four circular sampling plots, place ten traps (recommended: ProMar TR-502 or TR-503 24 or 36"x12" collapsible turtle traps OR crab traps utilized in FL/GA, see equipment section, below) 0–200 m from the reference point at the plot centroid (40 traps total over the four reference plots) in areas within the project footprint that will be impacted.
- Ideally, all ten traps within a single reference plot should be the same trap type, though different reference plots could have different trap types. The ten traps per sampling plot can be placed in any number of wetlands (e.g., one large wetland or as many as five small wetlands). Ideally, traps should be placed at least 30 m intervals (the average daily movement distance of females in the spring observed by Litzgus and Mosseau [2004] in South Carolina)) in different directions from the reference point (e.g., 30 m to NW; 60 m to NE, etc.); however, the configuration and wetlands and microhabitat will often preclude this strategy. In instances where the wetland configuration is a single linear feature (e.g., a ditch or canal), the traps may be placed in a line along the wetland, separated by at least 30 m, ideally.

Trap Placement

- *Microhabitat.*—Traps should be located within high potential use areas, if they exist in the project footprint to be impacted. High potential microhabitat is as follows:
    - In shallow (≤0.2 m, <trap diameter) flow channels that may direct movement of individuals;
    - At the edge of thick vegetation (e.g., sedges, grasses, shrubs) or structure (e.g., logs, debris);
    - Proximal to basking sites;
    - At sites with good solar exposure;

        - Surrounded by cover that conceals traps;

If high potential use areas aren't available in the project footprint to be surveyed, the consultant should use their expertise of the species to place traps in locations that have the highest potential for capturing spotted turtles.

- *Placement.*—Traps should be firmly staked into the ground (e.g., with 4' plastic-wire coated tomato stakes) or affixed to adjacent structures (e.g., using rope) at two locations to prevent animals, wind, etc. from moving them. The traps should be set so that turtles have adequate headspace to breathe. For ProMar traps, place 1–2 empty plastic bottles (16 oz, with caps on tight) within traps or pool noodles along the outside of traps to ensure breathing space. GPS coordinates should be recorded at each trap once they are placed, and traps should be flagged or marked in accordance with each researcher's preference, including the reference number and trap number. In locations where traps may be seen by the public (e.g., roadsides, boardwalks, etc.), traps can be inconspicuously labeled, instead, so as to not attract attention. On the day of trap deployment, complete the trap set-up field form including habitat suitability information. Surveyors must watch forecast weather conditions and pull or monitor traps if heavy precipitation or flooding is expected. During subsequent DA trap placements, traps should generally be placed in the same location as during the previous run, unless this is impossible due to changing water levels.
- *Trap Checks.*—Traps should be checked at least every 24 hours. On each trap-check day, the trap-check field form should be completed, and the turtle individual field form should be completed for each Spotted Turtle captured in the trap (see protocol for processing individual turtles). Traps should be baited with ~½ can of sardines in oil (e.g., Beach Cliff) and rebaited every 24 hours.

- Protocol for handling captured animals (including target and non-target organisms) – photos verification of each individual and documentation of other species (see photo verification details below). Captured animals shall never be left in the sun, and if relocation cannot take place immediately, animals must be placed in a shaded, cool, dry place that is clear of vehicles and heavy equipment, human activity, and project activities. If an animal needs to be temporarily housed, a labeled, disinfected, plastic container with a lid that has airholes may be used, however, the individual must be relocated within 24 hours. In the event an individual is killed or dies during holding, it will immediately be reported to SCDNR, and the permittee will implement any instruction requested by SCDNR accordingly for specimen disposition. If individuals are encountered, sub-meter accurate GPS coordinates will be collected for the collection location and the translocation location. Any data or information collected during the Project will be compiled and provided to SCDNR. Data will include photographs, GPS coordinates, and any other relevant data available to collect or requested during observations and/or collection.
- Handling and capture of protected species will only occur if individuals are encountered inside the construction areas and relocation will result in avoiding inadvertent adverse impacts to these species. No other handling or capture of these species are allowed.
- Protocol for transporting and releasing captured animals to relocation site including details on when and where.

- Resumes/curriculum vitae of entities completing this work; reptile and amphibian survey trapping experience is required.

Photo Voucher Protocol

General photography procedures

The camera used for photo vouchers should be 1024 x 768 pixels or higher. For all voucher photographs of each individual should include at a minimum, a photo the dorsal view (from above), ventral view (belly) and lateral view should be obtained. It is ideal to photograph the specimen on a light background including a ruler to show size. Photographs in an individual's hand is also acceptable if no other options are available. This also helps to capture the size, but please keep in mind to try to allow the animal to occupy as much of the field of view as possible to capture the detail necessary for identification. In general, effort should be made to photograph any distinguishing features.

Example Photo Vouchers of a Gopher Frog as a reference

Photo 1 (Dorsal view)

Photo 2 (Lateral View)

Red-cockaded Woodpecker

Red-cockaded woodpecker (*Leuconotopicus borealis*), a federally threatened and state listed endangered species, is known to occur within Jasper County and within 1.0 mile of the project area. Red-cockaded woodpecker utilize open pine (e.g., longleaf pine ecosystems) or a combination of pine and hardwood habitat. Suitable habitat includes pine trees for both nesting and foraging habitat. Pine trees in excess of 50 years in age provide habitat that allow the excavation of nesting/roosting cavities, whereas foraging habitat consists of pines of any species that are at least 30 years old and are typically a minimum of 10 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH). Pine species should be the dominant trees (50% or greater) in a foraging stand. However, please note red-cockaded woodpecker can also use younger pine stands for both nesting and foraging as the use of artificial cavity inserts have allowed the colonization of red-cockaded woodpecker in younger pine stands.

For all habitat assessments and surveys for this species, please follow Appendix 4 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recovery plan – Guidelines for Surveys to Assess Potential Project Impacts to Red-cockaded Woodpecker Nesting and/or Foraging Habitat found at the following link: https://ecos.fws.gov/docs/recovery_plan/030320_2.pdf. Surveys to rule out red-cockaded woodpecker within the project footprint is advised, regardless of habitat condition.

If red-cockaded woodpecker or their cavity trees are located, the SCDNR's Red-cockaded Woodpecker Project should be notified immediately by calling 803-260-4132 or emailing RCW@dnr.sc.gov, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before proceeding with any construction activities. Once red-cockaded woodpecker or cavity their trees are located, all cavity trees should be marked and a foraging habitat analysis of any suitable foraging habitat within ½ mile should be conducted.

If it is determined that the proposed activity would reduce available forage for each identified red-cockaded woodpecker group to less than 3000 ft^2/acre in pines greater than 10 inches DBH

within the range of 40-70 ft^2/acre, the activity would result in take. If suitable foraging habitat exists, but suitable nesting habitat does not, it will need to be determined if there are known red-cockaded woodpecker groups on adjacent properties who may rely on the foraging habitat. This determination should be made through correspondence with SCDNR's Red-cockaded Woodpecker Project biologists by calling 803-260-4132 or emailing RCW@dnr.sc.gov. If it is determined that the neighboring group is reliant upon forage within the project area, a foraging habitat analysis will need to be conducted to determine the project effect.

Surveys to rule out red-cockaded woodpecker within the project footprint is advised, regardless of habitat condition, and use of heavy machinery is prohibited within 200-feet of a cavity tree during the breeding season (April through July). While any proposed work is being conducted, significant effort should be made to avoid damage to any known cavity trees through contact with equipment, damage to surface roots, soil compaction, damage from felling nearby trees, etc. Please note the take of this state listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-30.

Wood Stork

Wood stork (*Mycteria americana*), a federally threatened and state endangered species, is known to occur within or near the project area. Surveys to rule out nests in the project area are advised to avoid negative impacts to wood stork. While nesting sites may not be located on the project site, wood storks and other wading birds may seasonally use the water features if any are within the project footprint. If wood storks are found to be within the project area, please consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before proceeding with construction or other management activities. Please note take of this state listed species is prohibited under S.C. Code of Laws §50-15-30.

Habitat Assessment

Habitat assessments should be conducted via pedestrian surveys and can be conducted year-round. Suitable habitat includes both nesting and foraging areas that are associated with fresh and estuarine waters. Nesting habitat occurs in trees or shrubs that are found in standing water or along the edges of ponds, impoundments or marshes. The species will forage in isolated depressions, ponds, marshes, tidal creeks, tidal pools, and even roadside ditches with water levels that are 6 to 10 inches deep and little to no canopy cover (GADNR 2022). The foraging areas are typically located within 20 km of a breeding colony or rookery.

Survey Protocol

Surveys to rule out nests in the project area are advised to avoid negative impacts to wood stork. While nesting sites may not be located on the project site, wood storks and other wading birds may seasonally use the water features if any are within the project footprint.

Avoidance & Minimization

To avoid the unlawful take of the state protected species and to further minimize impacts to this important wood stork rookery, the SCDNR recommends construction activities are avoided during the nesting season from February 15 to September 1. In the event this window cannot be adhered to, the SCDNR recommends a 1000-foot, forested buffer of trees are left undisturbed to act as a visual screen between the rookery and construction. To ensure overall changes in land use do not hinder storks from utilizing the established rookery in subsequent years, the SCDNR

recommends a 500 feet undisturbed vegetated secondary buffer remain during all times of the year.

If the secondary buffer cannot be abided, the SCDNR recommends a monitoring plan for visual observation to occur during construction be developed and prepared for SCDNR review. The monitoring plan should include daily monitoring while construction is ongoing, beginning a half-hour before sunrise from April 16 or through August 31, whichever occurs first. Monitoring would not be required on days when no major construction activities are occurring, except for the initial observation after sunrise prior to construction starting each day.

If impacts to the visual screen are unavoidable, the SCDNR recommends clearing occur outside of the nesting season, before the birds arrive for breeding, allowing them to habituate to the environment without disturbance.

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south carolina
DEPARTMENT of PUBLIC SAFETY
PROTECT. EDUCATE. SERVE.

Office of Support Services

10311 WILSON BLVD.
BLYTHEWOOD, SC 29016

November 3, 2025

C.T. York
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Project Manager
Post Office Box 191
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. York,

The South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) is in receipt of the *Letter of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Interstate 26 (I-26) Corridor Improvements (Mile Marker 172 to 187) in Dorchester and Berkeley Counties, South Carolina.* We look forward to supporting the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), and our federal partners at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), to minimize environmental impacts and ensure a positive result for the citizens, visitors, and stakeholders of South Carolina for generations to come.

SCDPS has an interest in this project due to locations of two weigh stations, both on I-26 in Dorchester County: One on the eastbound side at mile marker 173 and one on the westbound side at mile marker 174. Our agencies have shared communication regarding this project since 2023 and we had an informative meeting on September 20, 2024. SCDPS does not foresee this project creating environmental impacts which have greater immediate adverse effects for the weigh stations compared to other areas on this project. Please note, the weigh station facilities have septic tanks, drain fields, wells, roadside drainage ditches and roadside signage. Though not anticipated, the drainage ditches and septic drain fields may be affected by the shoulder widening.

This project will likely impact the pavement near and on the exit ramps of the weigh stations. SCDPS is currently involved in a project with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to replace all roadway and parking lot lighting within these two weigh stations. The shoulder widening may cause issues with the soon-to-be installed lighting on the exit ramps.

Finally, there's been discussion for SCDOT to add weigh-in-motion (WIM) technology to the scope of this project. This technology is beneficial to both agencies, our federal partners, the motoring public, and the commercial motor vehicle industry. WIM technology supports the State and FHWA's size and weight program, thereby showing initiative to protect our investments. WIM allows our agencies to collect traffic data in efforts to make real-time enforcement decisions and forecast potential infrastructure needs. WIM has potential to make our roadways safer by reducing pavement damage which can cause vehicle damage and unstable driving conditions; it also reduces traffic congestion and unnecessary maneuvering into the weigh stations.

Thank you for facilitating the discussion on this project. Please let us know how we can be helpful in any way to make sure this is a successful endeavor.

Sincerely,

David Hilpisch
STP Facility Manager, Office of Support Services
SC Department of Public Safety Headquarters
10311 Wilson Blvd.
Blythewood, SC 29016
803-318-9690 (cell)
davidhilpisch@scdps.gov

SC DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Office of Environmental Affairs
2600 Bull Street
Columbia, SC, 29201

November 25, 2025

C.T. York
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Post Office Box 191
Columbia, SC 29201
via email: i26improvements@scdot.org

Re: Proposed Interstate 26 (I-26) Corridor Improvements (Mile Marker 172 to 187)
Dorchester and Berkeley Counties, SC

Dear Mr. York:

I am writing on behalf of the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) in response to your letter of October 9, 2025, regarding the invitation to provide input to the environmental process for the proposed I-26) Corridor Improvements (Mile Marker 172 to 187) in Dorchester and Berkeley counties. As South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) seeks input to be integrated into the project's environmental assessment, contacts for programs and divisions within the SCDES are below.

A. Bureau of Coastal Management

1. Any proposed work impacting jurisdictional wetlands (WOTUS) that would trigger a Federal Individual or Nationwide 404 permits would need a Coastal Zone Consistency (CZC) Federal certification from the Bureau of Coastal Management. Additionally, any State Land Disturbance permit submittals would need CZC state certification. SCDES encourages SCDOT to leverage liaisons for pre-application coordination, as well as begin early coordination with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and South Carolina Department of Archives and History-State Historic Preservation Office for potential impacts to coastal resources. Please contact Benjamin Thepaut, (843) 953-0205 or benjamin.thepaut@des.sc.gov as needed.

B. Bureau of Water

1. SCDES will review the proposed project in accordance with Section 401 of the Clean Water Act in conjunction with the Federal 404 permit. Please contact

Charles "Chuck" Hightower, (803) 898-0369 or charles.hightower@des.sc.gov as needed.

2. NPDES Construction permit coverage is required for projects including 1 acre or more of construction activities or sites that are part of larger common plan of development where the cumulative amount of construction activities are 1 acre or more. Submissions are also required for proposed construction activities less than 1 acre in scope and that are located within ½ mile of a coastal receiving water. Please contact Shannon Hicks, Manager, Coastal Stormwater Permitting Section, (843) 953-0240 or shannon.m.hicks@des.sc.gov as needed.

C. Bureau of Land and Waste Management

1. Based on the information provided, it appears some of the work area (red lines) fall within a property that has a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Hazardous Waste Permit. The RCRA Permitting Program and current property owners will need to have discussions related to this proposed work and any necessary approvals, land transfers, etc. These are mainly around the Exit 177 interchange and possibly the Tunnel Rd Access Culverts and 1st Bend Road Overpass. Please contact Kent Kreig, Director, Division of Waste Management, (803) 898-0255 or kent.krieg@des.sc.gov as needed.

2. Ronnie's Shell Gas Station (NPP Permit No. 05673), located at 495 Judge Street, and Enmarket 892 (UST Permit No. 03018), located at 2722 Highway 15 North, are active fueling facilities in Harleyville, South Carolina. Project activites should avoid any monitoring wells associated with petroleum releases from these sites to prevent accidental damage during construction activities. If monitoring wells interfere with project plans, or if contaminated soil and/or groundwater related to these petroleum releases are encountered, please contact the SCDES Underground Storage Tank (UST) Management Division immediately. Maps identifying the monitoring well locations for both facilities are attached for reference. The UST Management Division should be notified if any active gas stations will be impacted within the project footprint as well. Please contact Ed Mendenhall, Director, UST Management Division, (803) 898-0607 or ed.mendenhall@des.sc.gov as needed.

As SCDOT prepares its proposed EA and moves forward with this project, please let me know any way that SCDES staff can help address any questions, clarify permitting needs, update permit application status, or share additional information. Likewise, I can assist in coordinating agency-focused meetings that your team feels could be beneficial to these efforts. I can be contacted via email ryan.ariail@des.sc.gov or via phone (803) 898-9418.

Respectfully,

Ryan D. Ariail
Economic Development Liaison
SCDES Office of Environmental Affairs

cc: **Henry Porter**, Deputy Director of Environmental Programs, SCDES, via email: henry.porter@des.sc.gov
Benjamin Thepaut, Director, Coastal Zone Consistency Division, via email: benjamin.thepaut@des.sc.gov
Charles "Chuck" Hightower, Manager, Water Quality Certification Wetlands and Navigable Waters Section, via email: charles.hightower@des.sc.gov
Shannon Hicks, Manager, Coastal Stormwater Engineering Section, via email: shannon.m.hicks@des.sc.gov
Kent Kreig, Director, Division of Waste Management, via email: kent.krieg@des.sc.gov
Ed Mendenhall, Director, Underground Storage Tank Management Division, via email: ed.mendenhall@des.sc.gov

N

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE GRID NORTH SC ZONE 3900 SCVRS NAD83 (2011)

MICHAEL W. INFINGER TMS# 025-00-00-007 1.15 ACRE		
PT. to PT.	BEARING	DISTANCE
5002 – 5005	N 82°40'42" W	228.40
5005 – 5007	N 02°52'22" E	224.94
5007 – 5010	S 82°35'51" E	224.84
5010 – 5002	SEE CURVE TABLE	

MICHAEL W. INFINGER TMS# 025-00-00-007 1.15 ACRE — CURVE TABLE

PT. to PT.	BEARING	CHORD	RADIUS	CURVE LENGTH	TANGENT	DELTA
C1	S 01°37'50" W	224.93	1,959.56	225.05	112.65	6°34'49"

SURVEY REFERENCES

1. PLAT FOR RONALD J. WAY BY ROBERT J. SAMPLE, RLS DATED JUNE 4, 1998 AND RECORDED IN THE DORCHESTER REGISTER OF DEED OFFICE IN PLAT BOOK J, PAGE 113.
2. DEED: BOOK 3200, PAGE 55
3. PLAT FOR LAFARGE BUILDING MATERIALS, INC. BY ASHLEY LAND SURVEYING, INC AND RECORDED IN THE DORCHESTER COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS OFFICE IN PLAT BOOK L, PAGE 111.

SURVEY NOTES

1. THIS PROPERTY IS LOCATED IN FLOOD ZONE "X" AS INDICATED ON FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAP #45035C0180E DATED 07/18/2017.
2. THE BEARINGS SHOWN HEREON ARE BASED ON SOUTH CAROLINA STATE PLANE COORDINATES, NAD 83, (2011 ADJUSTMENT), INTERNATIONAL FEET, AS DETERMINED BY GLOBAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM (GNSS).
3. THIS PLAT REPRESENTS A SURVEY BASED UPON THE LISTED REFERENCES ONLY, AND IS NOT THE RESULT OF A TITLE SEARCH.
4. AREA DETERMINED BY COORDINATE METHOD.
5. TOTAL ACRES SURVEYED AND SHOWN HEREON = 1.15 ACRE.
6. ANYTHING SHOWN OUTSIDE OF DEFINED BOUNDARY IS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES ONLY.
7. NO WETLANDS WERE LOCATED DURING THE COURSE OF THIS SURVEY.
8. CONSIDERABLE EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE TO DETERMINE THE LOCATION OF UNDERGROUND UTILITIES. LOCATIONS ARE ACTUAL FIELD MEASUREMENTS TAKEN FROM MARKS PAINTED ON THE GROUND BY LOWCOUNTRY LOCATING, LLC. THIS SURVEY DOES NOT WARRANT THAT UTILITIES ARE SHOWN ACCURATELY NOR THAT ALL UTILITIES ARE SHOWN. FIELD VERIFICATION IS RECOMMENDED PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION, EXCAVATION, DRILLING, OR ANY OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT MAY DISTURB OR DISRUPT UNDERGROUND UTILITIES.

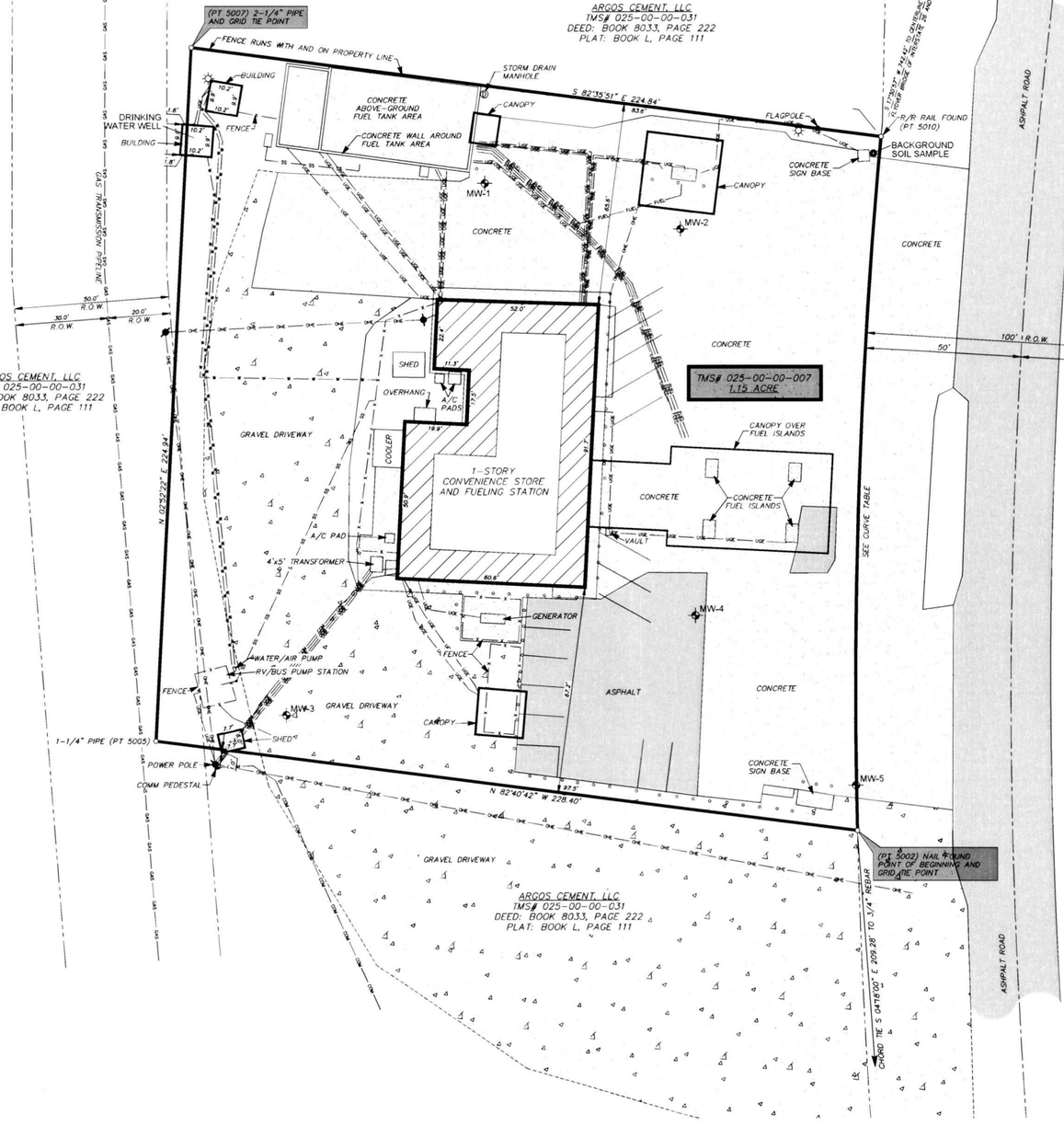
CERTIFICATION NOTE

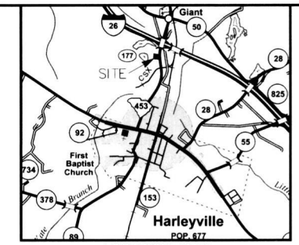
I HEREBY STATE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE, INFORMATION AND BELIEF THE SURVEY SHOWN HEREON WAS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE STANDARD OF PRACTICE MANUAL FOR THE PRACTICE OF LAND SURVEYING IN SOUTH CAROLINA, AND MEETS OR EXCEEDS THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A CLASS "A" SURVEY AS SPECIFIED THEREIN.

GARREN B. MULLINAX — S.C. REG. # 27456
342 Riverchase Way, Lexington, SC 29072 — (843) 769-7378

SYMBOL LEGEND

- COM — UNDERGROUND COMMUNICATION LINE
- GAS — UNDERGROUND GAS LINE
- FUEL — UNDERGROUND FUEL SUPPLY LINE
- SS — UNDERGROUND SEWER LINE
- UGE — UNDERGROUND ELECTRIC LINE
- OHE — OVERHEAD ELECTRIC LINE
- W — UNDERGROUND WATER LINE
- MONITORING WELL
- POWER POLE
- LIGHT POLE
- BOLLARD
- COMMUNICATION PEDESTAL





LOCATION MAP
NOT TO SCALE

GEODETIC AND SC STATE GRID POINT DATA

HORIZONTAL DATUM: NAD83 (2011)

POINT NUMBER: 5002 (NAIL FOUND)
SC GRID COORDINATES:
NORTH: 508,570.7140'
EAST: 2,169,010.6052'
GEODETIC COORDINATES:
LATITUDE: N 33°13'47.5950"
LONGITUDE: W 080°26'50.0260"

POINT NUMBER: 5007 (R/R RAIL)
SC GRID COORDINATES:
NORTH: 508,824.4331'
EAST: 2,168,795.3828'
GEODETIC COORDINATES:
LATITUDE: N 33°13'50.1170"
LONGITUDE: W 080°26'52.5440"

COORDINATE DERIVATION: GNSS COMBINED REDUCTION FACTOR: 0.99982288
MEASUREMENTS SHOWN ARE FIELD SURVEY DISTANCES.

NOTE: THIS TIE DATA TO BE USED FOR LOCATION ONLY.

GRAPHIC SCALE
0 20' 40' 60' 80'
1" = 20'

REVISIONS				
NO.	DATE	ISSUED BY	APPRV'D BY	DESCRIPTION

GEL Engineering LLC
a member of THE GEL GROUP INC
ENVIRONMENTAL • ENGINEERING • SURVEYING
problem solved
342 Riverchase Way
Lexington, South Carolina 29072
Telephone: 803.958.4724
www.gel.com

SITE MAP WITH SAMPLE LOCATIONS

RONNIE'S SHELL GAS STATION
495 JUDGE STREET
HARLEYVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

SOUTH CAROLINA CERTIFICATION — GEL ENGINEERING, LLC — No. C00548 — CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION

SOUTH CAROLINA — GARREN B. MULLINAX — No. 27456 — LAND SURVEYOR

DATE SURVEYED
JUNE 6, 2022

DRAWING FILENAME
minf00122.dwg

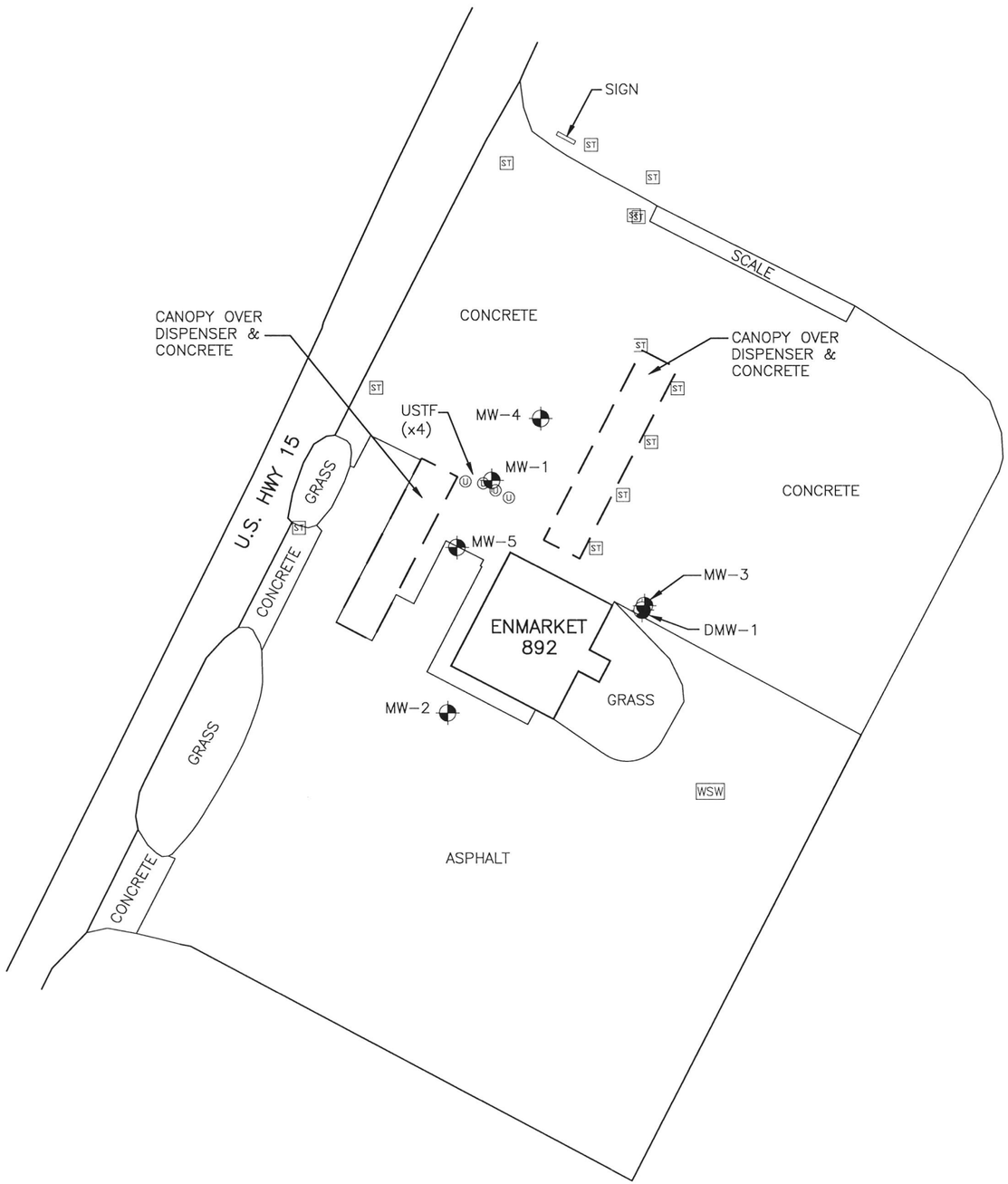
PROJECT NUMBER
MINF00122

SHEET NUMBER
2

SOURCE FILE: JAY S. JOSHI PLS COMPREHENSIVE SITE SKETCH 05-27-25

LEGEND

- MONITORING WELL (TYPE II)
- MONITORING WELL (TYPE III) (DEEP)
- WSW — WATER SUPPLY WELL
- U — USTF = UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK FILL
- ST — STORMWATER CATCH BASIN



N

0 80' 160'
SCALE IN FEET

NOTES:

TITLE **FIGURE 2**
SITE MAP
ENMARKET 892
2722 HIGHWAY 15 NORTH
HARLEYVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

CAD FILE 1254500.dwg | TYPE CODE

PREP. BY BH | REV. BY

SCALE 1"=80'

DATE 06-02-2025

PROJECT NO. ENMKCG109

ATLAS
6904 North Main Street, Suite 107
Columbia, South Carolina 29203
(803) 735-0003

06/03/2025 11:12am – Admin – H:\125 – ATC__1254500_p1-06-02-25.dwg

Outlook

RE: I-26 Mile Marker 172-187 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment Letter of Intent

From Robert Robbins <RobertRobbins@schouse.gov>
Date Fri 10/10/2025 4:05 PM
To Jurgelski, William, M. <JurgelskWM@scdot.org>

Excellent

From: Jurgelski, William, M. <JurgelskWM@scdot.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 9, 2025 1:31 PM
To: Jurgelski, William, M. <JurgelskWM@scdot.org>
Subject: I-26 Mile Marker 172-187 Corridor Improvements Environmental Assessment Letter of Intent

Dear All,
Please find attached a Letter of Intent notifying that SCDOT, in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will be initiating an Environmental Assessment for the above referenced project. Please read through the information and provide comments or responses if desired. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Respectfully,

Bill Jurgelski
RPG 1 NEPA Coordinator
SCDOT
955 Park Street
Columbia, SC 29202
803.737.1448

Agency Coordination Effort Meeting

Appendices

SCDOT AGENCY COORDINATION AND ENGAGEMENT MEETING

Date: February 20 , 2025

Time: 10:00 am- 11:00 am

Location: SCDOT (955 Park St. Columbia, SC 29201) and MS Teams Online

ATTENDEES:

South Carolina Department of Transportation	Will McGoldrick Austin Purgason Jeremy Harmon Brad Reynolds Leaha Quattlebaum Bill Jurgelski Caycee Cleaver Chris Beckham CT York Charle Muir LaToya Grate-Adams Marx Saintelus
Environmental Protection Agency	
Federal Highway Administration	Shane Belcher Sandra Saint-Surin
Fish and Wildlife Service	Jessica Hinson
NOAA Fisheries	
National Parks Service	Sabrina Henry
SC Department of Natural Resources	Greg Mixon Kyle Brown
South Carolina Parks Recreation and Tourism	Justin Hancock
South Caroline Department of Archives and History	Mary Sherrer
South Caroline Department of Environmental Services	Chuck Hightower Colleen McDonald
US Army Corp of Engineers	Brad Carey Ann Eady Dana Heston Ivan Fannin
CDM Smith	Mark Mohr Michael Belvin Charlene Cassidy Andy Castro Karen Hadley
ICE	Barrett Stone

	Mitchell Metts

Agenda:

- **I-95 Pee Dee PEL Study Update**
  - Coordination Point 3- *Alternatives to be evaluated for the I-95 Great Pee Dee Planning and Environmental Linkages (I-95 PEL) Study* – update include relaying that FHWA is required to send all documents requiring signature approval to DC for vetting prior to signing. CP3 has been sent per that protocol. SCDOT will continue to coordinate with FHWA on preparing and reviewing the final document.
  - PEL Study Final Draft
- **I-26 Widening from mile markers 172-187—fact sheet provided. presented by ~~CDM~~ ICE and CT York (SCDOT PM**)
  - Permitting:
    - ICE/SCDOT proposed a delineation only submittal with the permit package; discussion with USACE and group about submitting a PJD ahead of the permit submittal – consensus was to move forward with submittal because of the large project size – Reference made to RGL 16-01
    - Pre-application meeting will be help upon permit submittal which is expected late 2025/early 2026. SCDOT permit manager will coordinate with USACE for meeting.
    - Brad reminded group while recent Executive Orders have impacted NEPA review regarding EJ and climate change, USACE still has specific regulations regarding community and public interest factors that will be applicable to the permit request.
  - Protected Species - ICE provided summary/update of bat survey:
    - 3 tricolored bats and 1 Rafinesque's big eared bat identified during structure survey/field reviews
    - ICE noted that a potential acoustic survey was being discussed and would likely be conducted beginning of survey season 2025; however was going to wait upon findings from the Determination Key
    - Kyle with DNR and Jessica with USFWS offered to review plan
    - Brad with USACE asked to be kept involved
    - Will continue offline coordination with USFWS and DNR regarding status/process
    - Greg with DNR – Four Hole Swamp and Audubon site is known habitat for spotted turtles (state listed) recommend team assess habitat and consider during project development
  - Discussed Early ROW Acquisition – Hardship for Ronnie's Gas Station
    - ICE summarized acquisition, the site has documented groundwater/soil associated with the above ground storage tank facility; a NPCE will be required for the early acquisition

        - Shane with FHWA emphasized coordination with the FHWA Right of Way Lead, Robert Woodward, to get approval to proceed
        - CT acknowledged and would ensure this process is initiated prior to proceeding with NEPA
    - Discussed Audubon tract
        - ICE explained that the project avoids direct impacts, but will reconstruct a frontage road that provide additional access to the tract
        - Brad with USACE questioned if project was intentionally designed to avoid; ICE confirmed that the impacts to the tract was considered and designed to avoid and minimize; he also questioned their comments on the project to date; ICE acknowledged that they have submitted formal comments as part of the Public Meeting, and comments are currently being drafted; in addition ICE summarized that their main concern was in regards to access, direct impacts, and ensure the SCDOT was aware of the mitigation/easements.
- **Momentum 2050 –presented by SCDOT planning office**
    - No specific agency comments on planning presentation

Next Scheduled Meeting

- Thursday March 13, 2025

SCDOT

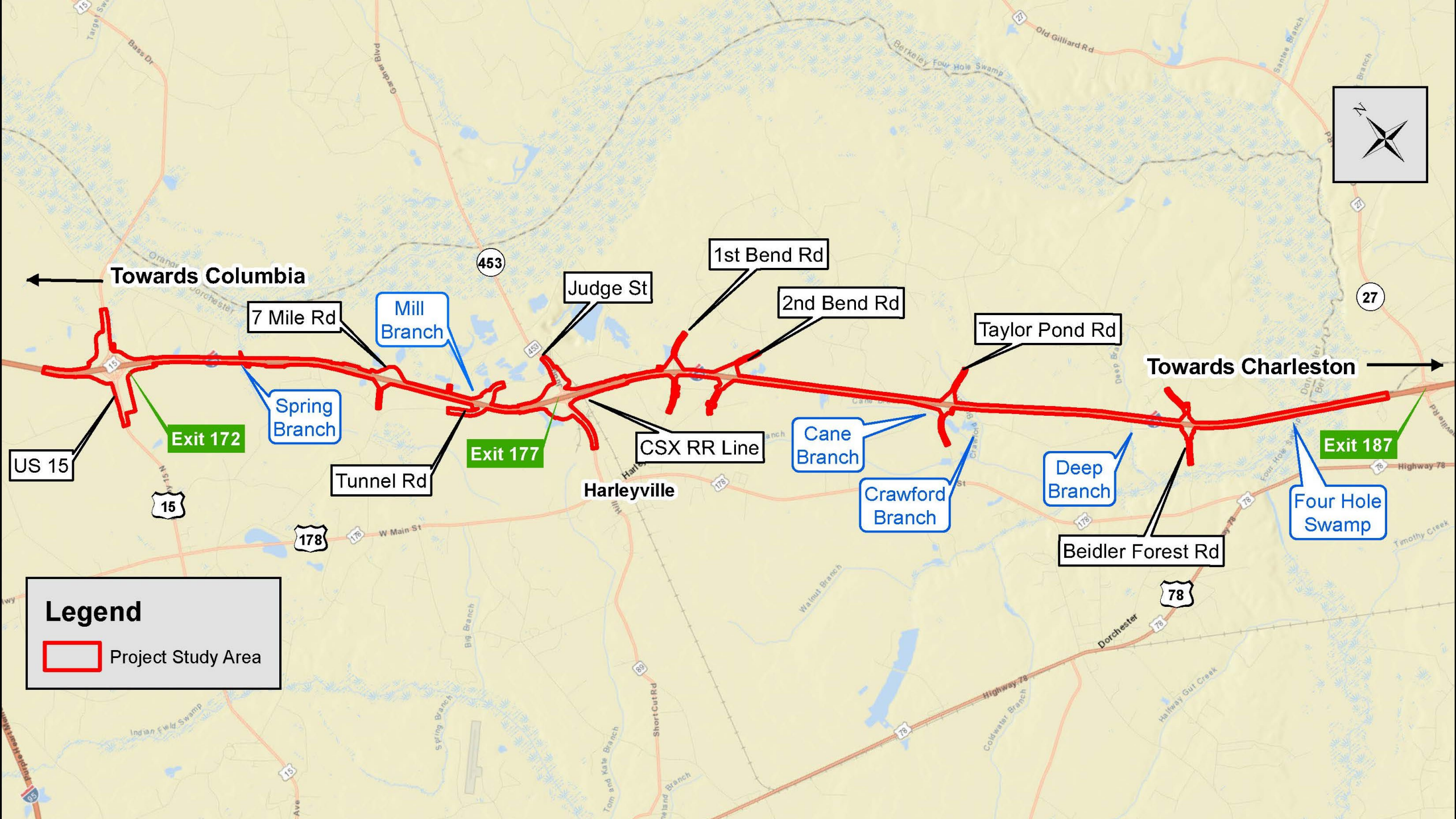
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

I-26 Corridor Improvement Project

from MM 172 to 187

Project Overview and Update

February 20, 2025


Towards Columbia
7 Mile Rd
Mill Branch
Judge St
1st Bend Rd
2nd Bend Rd
Taylor Pond Rd
Towards Charleston
453
27
US 15
Exit 172
Spring Branch
Tunnel Rd
Exit 177
CSX RR Line
Harleyville
Cane Branch
Crawford Branch
Deep Branch
Beidler Forest Rd
Four Hole Swamp
Exit 187
15
178
78
W Main St
Highway 78
Dorchester
Legend
Project Study Area

Project Overview

Roadway

- Widen I-26 toward the median from 4 to 6 lanes from just west of the existing interchange of I-26 and US Highway 15 (Exit 172 A-B) to just west of the I-26 and SC 27 interchange (Exit 187)

Bridges

Replace:

- Dual mainline bridges
  - CSX Railroad
  - Four Hole Swamp
- Overpass bridges
  - 7 Mile Road
  - 1st Bend Road
  - 2nd Bend Road
  - Taylor Pond Road
  - Beidler Forest Road
- Access Box Culverts
  - Tunnel Road (2)

Interchanges

- Exit 172 (US 15) Bridge Replacement and upgraded interchange
- Exit 177 (SC 453) Bridge Replacement and upgraded interchange

Project Development Process

Preliminary Design

Summer 2024 – Winter 2025

- Identify constraints
- Develop options to meet Purpose and Need while minimizing impacts
- Initiate environmental studies

Public Involvement

Winter 2025

- Postcards/letters to stakeholders
- PIM held January 16, 2025
- Discussions with impacted property owners

Refine Design Options

Winter – Spring 2025

- Modify design based on public comment, stakeholders, and resource agencies input
- Notify stakeholders of impact changes

Complete Environmental

Summer – Fall 2025

- Submit a NPCE to SCDOT
- Prepare/submit appropriate permit applications

Finalize Design

Fall 2025

- Engineering and construction drawings finalized

Right Of Way

January 2026

- Contact impacted property owners and occupants

Begin Construction

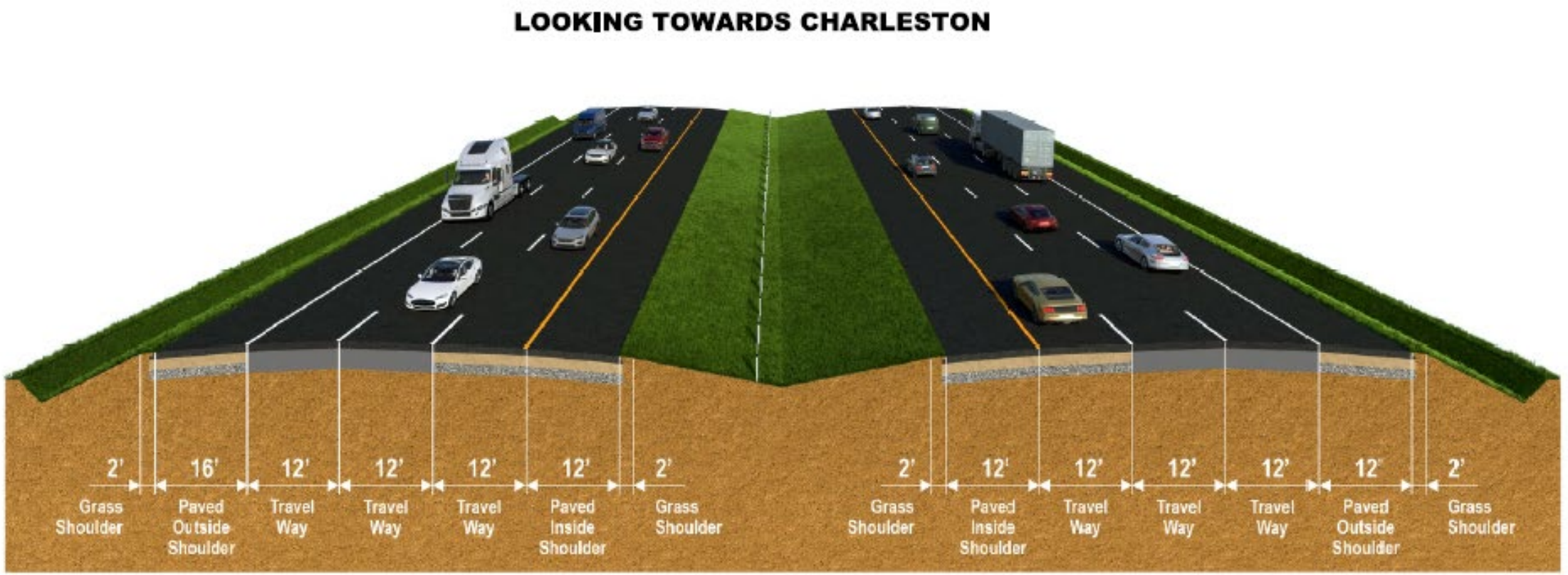
Spring 2027

Project Updates

Public Involvement

- Created website www.i26improvements.com/mm172-187
- Mailed out 3,658 postcards and 259 stakeholder letters
- Meetings with key stakeholders
  - Audubon Society
  - Giant Cement
  - ARGOS Cement
  - Convenience stores
  - CSX Railroad
- Held Public Information Meeting on January 16, 2025
  - 89 attendees from the public
  - Received 26 written comments
    - General support
    - Tree clearing
    - Property access
    - Design recommendations
- Follow up with responses to comments (February 2025)
- Discuss design changes with impacted stakeholders (February 2025)
- Update website (Ongoing)

3D Typical Section



INTERSTATE 26 (I–26) CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
EXIT 172 US 15 ALTERNATE 1
RECOMMENDED PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

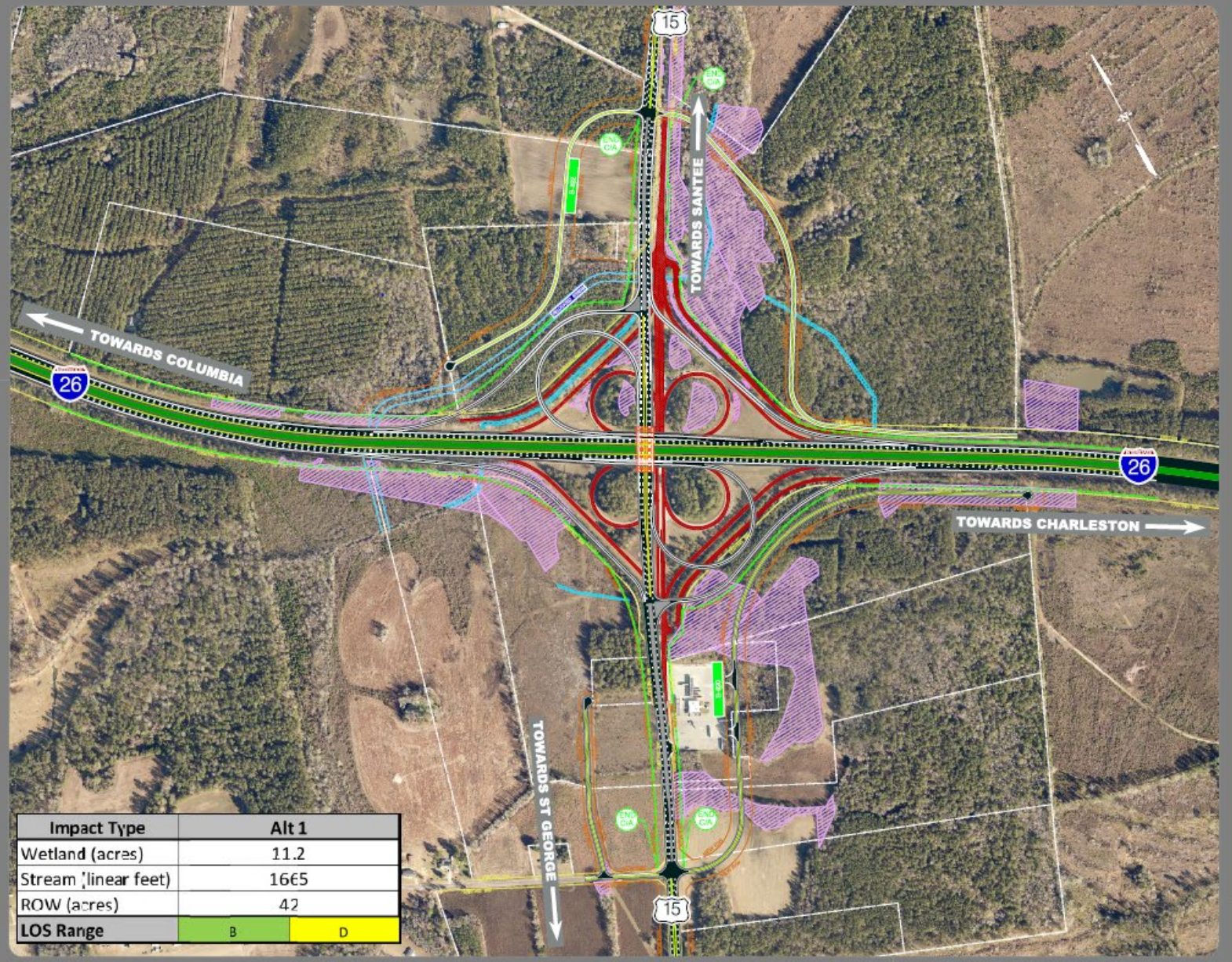
South Carolina Department of Transportation

Project Location
Dorchester County

Map Legend

- PROPOSED ROADWAY
- PROPOSED BRIDGE
- PROPERTY LINE
- EXISTING RIGHTS OF WAY
- NEW RIGHTS OF WAY
- CONCRETE ISLANDS
- REMOVAL OF ROADWAY
- GRASSED MEDIAN
- STREAMS
- WETLANDS
- CONTROL ACCESS (C/A)

SCALE: 1" = 200'



Impact Type	Alt 1	
Wetland (acres)	11.2	
Stream (linear feet)	1665	
ROW (acres)	42	
LOS Range	B	D

Contact Information

C.T. York
South Carolina Dept. of Transportation
955 Park Street
Columbia SC 29201
Email: I26Improvements@scdot.org
I26Improvements.com/mm172-187

Disclaimer

These displays are meant to show concepts for planning purposes only and are subject to change.

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

JANUARY 16, 2025

INTERSTATE 26 (I–26) CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
EXIT 177 SC 453 ALTERNATE 4
RECOMMENDED PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

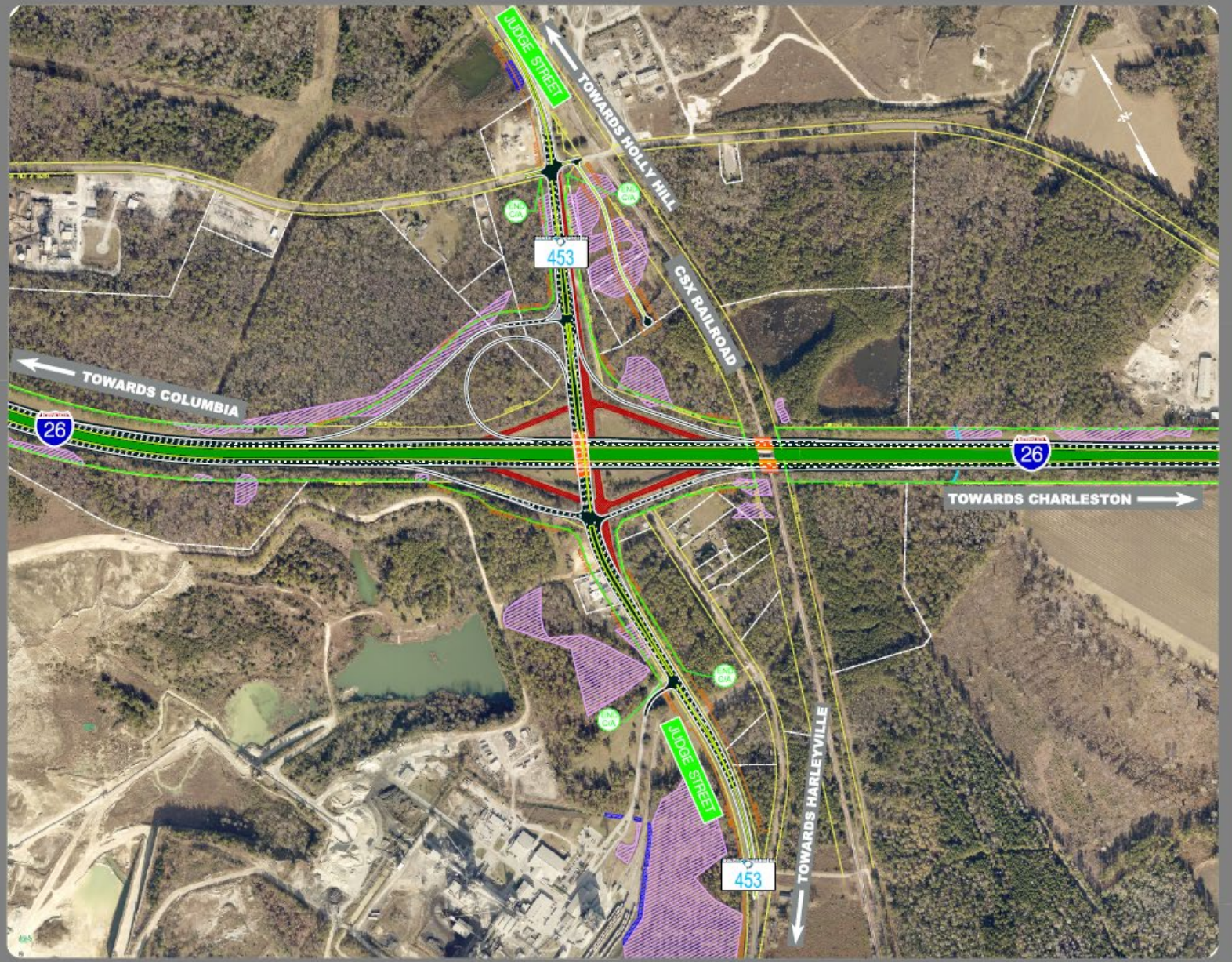
South Carolina Department of Transportation

Project Location
Dorchester County

Map Legend

- PROPOSED ROADWAY
- PROPOSED BRIDGE
- PROPERTY LINE
- EXISTING RIGHTS OF WAY
- NEW RIGHTS OF WAY
- CONCRETE ISLANDS
- REMOVAL OF ROADWAY
- GRASSED MEDIAN
- STREAMS
- WETLANDS
- CONTROL ACCESS (C/A)

SCALE : 1" = 200'



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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

JANUARY 16, 2025

Environmental Status

- Wetland Delineations
  - 1,232 acres surveyed in project study area
  - Delineation/JD request will be included in permit application
  - 404/401 permitting (Individual permit) for anticipated wetlands (~ 15 acres) and streams (~ 2,000 linear feet)
  - Mitigation – SCDOT has secured credits from project area approved banks
- Endangered Species Surveys
  - Surveys began Summer 2024 and will continue through Spring 2025
  - Structure surveys for bats ongoing, dKey to be completed by end of February 2025
  - Acoustics for bats to be performed in May 2025, if required
- Noise – Workplan approved by SCDOT
  - Fieldwork expected to be completed March 2025
- Historic Resource Survey
  - Fieldwork completed December 2024
  - No new resources expected to be NRHP eligible
  - Two existing resources (Cemeteries) to be avoided
- Phase I Resource Survey – Fieldwork completed/Draft report due March 2025
- Development of NEPA document is ongoing

Questions

PROJECT FACT SHEET

I-26 Corridor Improvement Project
From MM 172 to 187

Dorchester and Berkeley Counties

Project Scope

- Widen I-26 toward the median from 4 to 6 lanes from just west of I-26 and US-15 interchange (Exit 172 A-B) to just west of the I-26 and SC 27 interchange (Exit 187)
- Replace two dual mainline bridges and two box culverts
- Replace five overpass bridges
- Bridge Replacement and upgraded interchange at Exit 172 (US 15)
- Bridge Replacement and upgraded interchange at Exit 177 (SC 453)

Environmental

- Public Involvement
  - Public Information Meeting was held January 16, 2025
  - Received 31 comments during comment period that ended January 31, 2025
- Wetland Delineations
  - 1,232 acres surveyed in project study area
  - Delineation/JD request will be included in permit application
  - 404/401 permitting (Individual permit) for anticipated wetlands (~ 15 acres) and streams (~ 2,000 linear feet)
  - Mitigation – SCDOT has secured credits from project area approved banks
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- Development of NEPA document is ongoing

Schedule

- Complete NEPA and prepare/submit Summer-Fall 2025
- Finalize design Fall 2025
- Begin Right-of-Way January 2026
- Begin Construction Spring 2027
- Complete Construction 2031

I-26 Corridor Improvement Project
From Exit 172 to Exit 187