U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

APPENDIX L

AGENCY COORDINATION

L-1: Letter of Intent & Agency Comments
L-2: Agency Coordination Effort Meetings & Agency Comments

L-1: LETTER OF INTENT & AGENCY COMMENTS

South Carolina
Department of Transportation

March 25, 2025

Subject: **Letter of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Interstate 26 (I-26) Widening from MM 145 – MM 172 in Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties, SCDOT Project ID: P041967 & P042454; FHWA Project Number: EAXX---XSC-1733319228**

To Whom It May Concern:

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) proposes to widen I-26 from mile marker (MM) 145 to MM 172 in Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties. The project includes the following elements: adding a travel lane in each direction of I-26 toward the existing median, median clearing, barrier walls and cable guardrail installation, addressing all structures, and improving the interchanges and ramps at Exits 149, 154, 159, and 165. The interchange at I-26 and I-95 is excluded from this project and is being improved via a separate project.

The project will be implemented in two phases:

- Phase 1 (SCDOT Project ID P041967) includes I-26 from the eastern limits of the interchange with US 601 (Exit 145) through the interchange with US 301 (Exit 154).
- Phase 2 (SCDOT Project ID P042454) includes I-26 from the eastern limits of the interchange with US 301 (Exit 154) to the western limits of the interchange with US 15 (Exit 172).

The proposed improvements will seek to reduce congestion, improve traffic operations, and increase capacity along this stretch of the interstate. The project will be financed utilizing federal funds as documented in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of this project and to solicit any information that you may have related to the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed project on the area. SCDOT, in consultation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are 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, a project study area (PSA) has been established, and preliminary data and information has been collected. The PSA includes the existing right of way plus 75 feet along the mainline section of I-26 from east of Exit 145 to west of Exit 172, as well as additional area at the four interchanges and overpasses. A review of the available mapping, including the National Wetland Inventory (NWI), aerial photography, and topographic mapping indicates the presence of streams and wetlands within the project corridor. Additional field work and coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be conducted to further identify and confirm the jurisdictional status of all wetlands and other waters of the U.S. along the project.

In accordance with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the project will be designed to minimize impacts to wetlands and waters of the U.S. to the maximum extent practicable. Coordination will occur with the USACE Charleston District.

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In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, a database search and field survey will be conducted for federally protected species. Coordination will occur with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

A cultural resources survey will be conducted within the PSA and coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), 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 the current SCDOT Traffic Noise Abatement Policy. The noise analysis will model individual noise receptors, potential sensitive receptors within the project corridor, and will measure and model existing noise levels and predicted future noise levels.

Additionally, the EA will be conducted in accordance with FHWA regulations and requirements, including all applicable federal, state, and local governmental laws and regulation. A draft of the applicable agency milestones for the federal permitting dashboard is included with this letter for your review. SCDOT will establish a project website to share additional project information and milestone updates, as well as allow for comments from agencies and the general public. The website address will be provided when it is available.

As an integral part of the environmental process, SCDOT is soliciting input from agencies and individuals regarding the various potential impacts of the proposed project. To ensure that issues of the proposed project are fully evaluated, SCDOT requests your written response concerning any beneficial or adverse impacts of the project relating to the interests of your agency. SCDOT looks forward to receiving your comments on the project within 30 days of receipt of this letter. Comments should be addressed to:

Ed Frierson
SC Department of Transportation
Environmental Services Office
P.O. Box 191
Columbia, SC 29201

Or email by: FriersonEW@scdot.org

Your expeditious handling of this notice is appreciated. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (803) 737-1861.

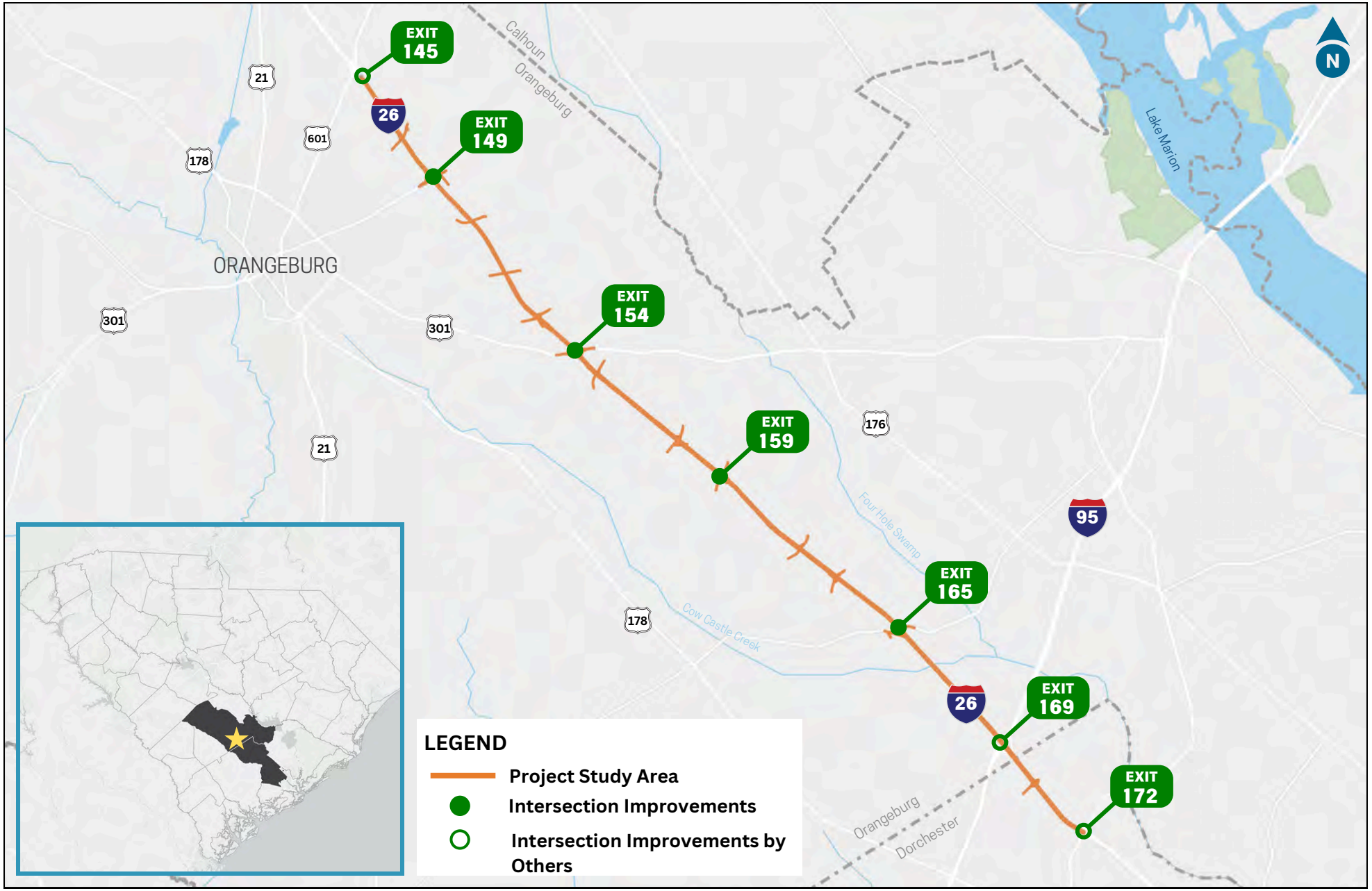
Sincerely,

Edward W Frierson

Edward W. Frierson
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Midlands NEPA Coordinator/Biologist

Enclosure A – Project Study Area Map
Enclosure B – Project Milestone Schedule

cc: Alex Bennett, PE, SCDOT Program Manager



I-26 WIDENING PROJECT MM 145-172
PROJECT STUDY AREA

ORANGEBURG & DORCHESTER COUNTIES
SOUTH CAROLINA

Figure
1

MILESTONE SCHEDULE

Actions	Milestones	Target
Initiate Agency Coordination	Hold ACE Meeting	January 2025
Clean Water Act Section 404	Submit Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination (PJD) Package	January 2025
Letter of Intent	Distribute Letter of Intent to prepare Environmental Assessment	March 2025
Section 106 Review	Submit Cultural Resources Survey Report to SHPO for Review and Concurrence	April 2025
Endangered Species Act Consultation	Submit Biological Evaluation for USFWS Review and Concurrence	May 2025
National Environmental Policy Act	Distribute Environmental Assessment (EA) for Agency and Public Review and Comment	October 2025
	Hold Public Hearing	November 2025
	Issue Decision Document	May 2026
Right of Way Obligation (Phase 1)	Begin Right of Way Acquisition for Phase 1 (MM145-154)	May 2026
Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401	Submit Individual Permit Application	June 2026
Construction (Phase 1)	Begin Construction on Phase 1 (MM145-154)	October 2027
Right of Way Obligation (Phase 2)	Begin Right of Way Acquisition for Phase 2 (MM154-172)	October 2026
Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401	Submit Individual Permit Modification	November 2026
Construction (Phase 2)	Begin Construction on Phase 2 (MM154-172)	March 2028

Name	Title/Agency	Address	City, State, Zip	E-mail
Federal Contacts				
Mr. Shane Belcher	Environmental Coordinator Federal Highway Administration	1835 Assembly St Suite 1270	Columbia SC 29201	Jeffrey.Belcher@dot.gov
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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
Mr. Randall Overton	US Coast Guard Bridge Permitting Office	909 SE 1st Ave Suite 432	Miami, Fl 33131	Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil
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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				
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Dr. Adam King	SC State Archaeologist SC Dept of Archaeology & Anthropology-USC	1321 Pendleton St, Suite 16	Columbia SC 29208	aking@sc.edu
Mr. Greg Mixon	SCDNR Office of Environmental Programs	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	MixonG@dnr.sc.gov
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Mr. Tom Mullikin	Agency Director, SC Dept of Natural Resources	1000 Assembly Street, PO Box 167	Columbia, SC 29202	MullikinT@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 SCDPS		Dwaynewilson@scdps.gov
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Ms. Michelle McCollum	Heritage Corridor President and CEO	208 Archdale Drive	Aiken, SC 29803	michelle@scnhc.com
Mr. Mike Hoffstatter	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. LeeAnne Wendt	Tribal Historic Preservation Office	P.O. Box 580	Okmulgee, OK 74447	Section106@muscogeenation.com
Dr. Wenonah G. Haire	Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Catawba Indian Nation	1536 Tom Steven Road	Rock Hill SC 29730	wenonahh@ccppcrafts.com
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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

Outlook

REVISED: Letter of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment

From FRIERSON, EDWARD, W. <FriersonEW@scdot.org>

Date Wed 3/26/2025 4:18 PM

To Belcher, Jeffery - FHWA <Jeffrey.Belcher@dot.gov>; Hannon, Jermaine - FHWA <Jermaine.Hannon@dot.gov>; brad.j.carey@usace.army.mil <brad.j.carey@usace.army.mil>; ann.eaddy@usace.army.mil <ann.eaddy@usace.army.mil>; brian.hardee@usace.army.mil <brian.hardee@usace.army.mil>; Fannin, Ivan W III CIV USARMY CESAC (USA <Ivan.Fannin@usace.army.mil>; Christopher.d.mims@usace.army.mil <Christopher.d.mims@usace.army.mil>; melanie_olds@fws.gov <melanie_olds@fws.gov>; holly_t_gaboriault@fws.gov <holly_t_gaboriault@fws.gov>; Lisia.J.Kowalczyk2@uscg.mil <Lisia.J.Kowalczyk2@uscg.mil>; Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil <Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil>; Jennifer.N.Zercher@uscg.mil <Jennifer.N.Zercher@uscg.mil>; gary.l.tomasulo@uscg.mil <gary.l.tomasulo@uscg.mil>; laycock.kelly@epa.gov <laycock.kelly@epa.gov>; militscher.chris@epa.gov <militscher.chris@epa.gov>; myra.reece@des.sc.gov <myra.reece@des.sc.gov>; jennifer.hughes@des.sc.gov <jennifer.hughes@des.sc.gov>; rhonda.thompson@des.sc.gov <rhonda.thompson@des.sc.gov>; keith.frost@des.sc.gov <keith.frost@des.sc.gov>; christopher.stout@des.sc.gov <christopher.stout@des.sc.gov>

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1 attachment (1 MB)

Revised I-26MM145-172_LOI_2025-03-25.pdf;

To whom it may concern:
The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is providing you the attached revised letter of intent for the proposed Interstate 26 widening from MM 145 to MM 172 in Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties, South Carolina.

Edward W. Frierson

SCDOT Midlands NEPA Coordinator/Biologist

Office: 803-737-1861

Cell: 803-312-2759

State of South Carolina
Department of Natural Resources

Thomas S. Mullikin, PhD, JD, *Director*
Lorianne Riggin, *Director,*
Office of Environmental Programs

April 17, 2025

Edward W. Frierson
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Environmental Services Office
P.O. Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202

Electronic submittal

RE: Letter of Intent to prepare an Environmental Assessment Interstate 26 (I-26) Widening from MM 145 – MM 172 in Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties, SCDOT Project ID: P041967 & P042454

Dear Mr. Frierson,

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 proposed project, 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 (FHWA) has proposed a widening project for the Interstate 26 (I-26) corridor between mile marker (MM) 145 and MM 172 in Orangeburg and Dorchester Countis. The project includes 27 miles of widening from 4 to 6 lanes, adding a travel lane in both directions toward the existing median. The project will include bridge and culvert replacements, median clearing, installation of barrier walls and cable guards, and improving interchanges and ramps at exits 149, 154, 159 and 165. The project will be implemented in two phases with Phase 1 covering the eastern limits of the US 601 interchange (Exit 145) through the interchange with US 301 (Exit 154). Phase 2 will include the eastern limits of the interchange with US 301 to the western limits of the interchange with US 15 (Exit 172). The goals of the project will be to reduce congestion, improve traffic operations, and increase capacity along the interstate. 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, we have previously identified several state-listed species that should be considered during biological evaluations for the study area. We provide additional information regarding state and federally protected species that have the potential to occur in the proposed project area below.

Rare, Threatened & Endangered Species

According to the SCDNR Natural Heritage Trust database, there are several state and federally protected species within a 2-mile radius of the project corridor. Based on the project 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 sublflavus*); federally proposed endangered
- Red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*); federally threatened

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 Orangeburg or Dorchester 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, Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties are home to several species of conservation priority identified in the SCDNR State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) including the hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Eastern diamondback rattlesnake (*Crotalus adamanteus*), Chamberlain's dwarf salamander (*Eurycea chamberlaini*), and Carolina birds-in-a-nest (*Macbridea caroliniana*). 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.

Roadways have been documented to have significant effects on wildlife 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). Based on aerial reviews of the project area, it appears that Cow Castle Creek and associated riparian corridors may provide wildlife with an important linkage between undisturbed habitats in this portion of the state. Therefore, the SCDNR

would request that consideration be given to incorporating fencing and corridors for wildlife movement into the designs for the widening project.

General Comments

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. 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. 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 brownmk@dnr.sc.gov or by phone at 803-734-3766.

Sincerely,

Kyle Brown

Kyle Brown
Office of Environmental Programs
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

References

Andrews, K. M., Gibbons, J. W., & Jochimsen, D. M. 2006. Literature synthesis of the effects of roads and vehicles on amphibians and reptiles. Federal Highway Administration, US Department of Transportation. Report No. FHWA-HEP-08-005. Washington, DC. p151.

Aresco, M., 2005. Mitigation measures to reduce highway mortality of turtles and other herpetofauna at a north Florida lake. Journal of Wildlife Management 69, 549–560.

Dodd Jr, C.K., Barichivich, W.J. and Smith, L.L., 2004. Effectiveness of a barrier wall and culverts in reducing wildlife mortality on a heavily traveled highway in Florida. Biological conservation, 118(5), pp.619-631.

Patrick, D.A, Schalk, C.M, Gibbs, J.P., Woltz, H.W. 2010. Effective culvert placement and design to facilitate passage of amphibians across roads. Journal of Herpetology. 44. 618–626.

Rytwinski, T., Van Der Ree, R., Cunnington, G.M., Fahrig, L., Findlay, C.S., Houlahan, J., Jaeger, J.A., Soanes, K. and van der Grift, E.A., 2015. Experimental study designs to improve the evaluation of road mitigation measures for wildlife. Journal of Environmental Management, 154, pp.48-64.

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

According to the SCDNR Natural Heritage database, there are element of occurrence records for several cavity- and tree-roosting bat species in or near the project corridor, including: the state-endangered Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*) and the federally proposed endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*)[1]. There are also records present for the Southeastern bat (*Myotis austroriparius*), the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), and the hoary bat (*Lasirurus cinereus*), which are all listed as species of highest conservation priority in the SCDNR State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). 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.

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.

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

[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

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).

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).

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.

Spotted Turtle

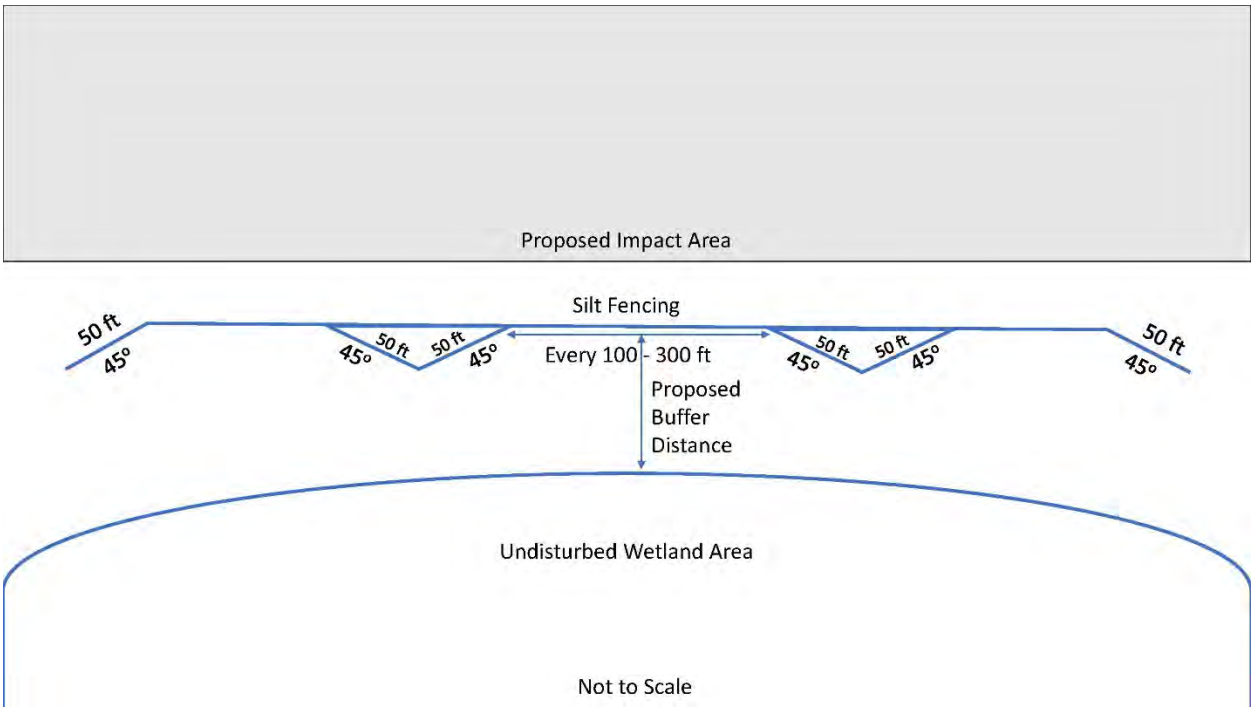
The spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*) is a state-threatened species and a federal At-Risk species (ARS) that is known to inhabit Jasper County. Suitable habitat includes heavily vegetated, shallow wetlands with standing or flowing water including Carolina Bays, bogs, swamps, marshes, and wet meadows (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 July 15th 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 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

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

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 Dorchester County and within 2 miles 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.

References

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L-2: AGENCY COORDINATION EFFORTS & AGENCY COMMENTS

I-26 WIDENING MM145-175
ACE Meeting
January 16, 2025

Project Team Attendees:
Chad Long, SCDOT
Will McGoldrick, SCDOT
Caycee Cleaver, SCDOT
Ed Frierson, SCDOT
Kenneth Johnson, MBI
Lee Williams, MBI
Christy Shumate, Three Oaks
Shelby Ellenburg, Three Oaks
Wade Biltoft, Three Oaks

Invited Agencies
☒Shane Belcher, FHWA
☒ Sandra Saint Surin, FHWA
☐ Benjamin Thepaut, SCDES
☐ Blair Williams, SCDES
☐ Chris Stout, SCDES
☐ Chuck Hightower, SCDES
☒ Colleen McDonald, SCDES
☒ Evan Tyler, SCDES
☒ Haley Smarr, SCDES
☐ Sarah Reed, SCDES
☐ Bill Post, SCDNR
☐ Dev Bendell, SCDNR
☐ Elizabeth Miller, SCDNR
☐ Ellen Waldrop, SCDNR
☒ Kyle Brown, SCDNR
☒ Greg Mixon, SCDNR
☐ Lori Ann Riggin, SCDNR
☐ Stacie Crowe, SCDNR
☐ Kelly Laycock, EPA
☒ Alya Singh-White, EPA
☐ Wenonah Haire, Catawba Indian Nation
☐ Caitlan Rogers, Catawba Indian Nation
☐ Ann Eaddy, USACE
☐ Brad Carey, USACE
☐ Dana Heston, USACE
☐ Ivan Fannin, USACE
☐ Omar Beceiro, USCG
☐ Randall Overton, USCG
☒ Jessica Hinson, USFWS
☐ Melanie Olds, USFWS
☐ Andrew, Herndon, NOAA
☐ Kelly Shotts, NOAA
☒ Jordan Wolfe, NOAA
☐ Elizabeth Johnson, SCDAH
☒ Mary Sherrer, SCDAH
☐ Jeff Duncan, NPS
☐ Jo Anne Blankenship, NPS
☐ Stan Austin, NPS
☐ Sabrina Henry, NPS
☐ Sean Bonnage, NPS
☒ Justin Hancock, SCPRT

Meeting Materials (distributed via email on 12/18/2024) to meeting attendees:

- Agenda
- Project Background and Updates presentation

Discussion:

A. Project Background & Updates

Christy Shumate (Three Oaks Engineering) reviewed a presentation with information about the Fix I-26 MM145-172 project:

- Project Overview
  - Project/Phase 1 (SCDOT Project ID P041967) is from MM 145 – 154 Orangeburg County

- Project/Phase 2 (SCDOT Project ID P042454) is from MM 154 – 172 Orangeburg and Dorchester Counties
- Both projects will proceed as one project (MM 145 – 172) through the completion of conceptual/preliminary plans and NEPA documentation. Then, Project 1 and Project 2 may take different schedules for final design and construction.
- The project generally includes adding a travel lane in each direction of I-26 toward the existing median (where possible), median clearing, barrier walls and cable guardrail installation, addressing all structures, and improving the interchanges and ramps at Exits 149, 154, 159, and 165. There are 10 bridges and 7 bridge sized culverts (excluding the 4 interchanges) in the project corridor. All overpass bridges (except 4 Holes Road over I-95) and bridge sized culverts will be replaced.

- Project Status
  - The project is following the traditional SCDOT project development process.
  - Completed and on-going activities include:
    - NEPA Class of Action – determined in coordination with FHWA to be an Environmental Assessment due to potential impacts to:
      a. Wetlands and streams
      b. Protected species (bats, red-cockaded woodpecker, monarch butterfly, state-listed species)
      c. Cemetery
      d. Noise
      e. Business relocations
    - Traffic Reports – underway
    - Noise – existing conditions analysis complete
    - Wetland delineations and field surveys – complete and Preliminary Jurisdictional Determination package submitted to USACE for review
    - Endangered Species Surveys – some completed concurrent with wetlands field work; additional surveys upcoming including structures inspections for bats based on recently approved SCDOT work plan
    - Historic Resources Surveys – complete; one cemetery identified in the median of I-26 near MM155 (not historic)
  - Next steps
    - Letter of Intent for EA to be distributed early March 2025
    - Alternatives development and technical studies – Spring 2025
    - Public Information Meeting & ACE Meeting #2 – Summer 2025
    - Environmental Assessment, Notice of Availability, and Public Hearing – Fall 2025
    - Decision document – early 2026
    - Permitting – Summer 2026

B. Agency Comments & Discussion

Will McGoldrick facilitated questions and discussion from agency representatives:

- Greg Mixon (SCDNR) noted potential for Rafinesque bats and spotted turtles, and Kyle Brown (SCDNR) reiterated.
  - Christy responded that a memo summarizing state-listed species in the study area will be prepared and included with the biological evaluation for the project. Surveys for Rafinesque bats will be completed with surveys for federally listed bats; spotted turtle coordination will occur during permitting.
- Colleen McDonald (SCDES BCM) offered assistance with the e-permitting submittal process. She noted that SCDES (Haley Smarr) would take the lead in reviewing the submittal for the 401, which will trigger BCM review of the Dorchester County portion of the project for Coastal Zone Consistency. Colleen added that information should be broken out by county to help facilitate permit review
- Haley Smarr (SCDES) stated that any impaired waters in the study area should be noted in project documentation. Following the meeting, she provided information about some study area waters.
- Jessica Hinson (USFWS) commented that Monarch butterfly has been upgraded from candidate species to proposed threatened and could be officially listed later this year.
- Will asked if there were available mitigation banks for the project study area. Jordy Wolfe noted there are a few banks in the Ridgeland area, and Chad Long said he would follow up with SCDOT permitting staff.
- Alya Singh-White (USEPA) noted that NEPAssist shows about 53 percent minority and 20-25 percent low-income populations near the corridor and asked about potential residential relocations.
  - Christy noted that residential relocations are not anticipated but will need to be confirmed as designs are advanced. There are low-income and minority populations identified in the corridor and documented in the Public Involvement Plan, which includes provisions for small group meetings if needed, in addition to general public information meetings and a public hearing.
- Justin Hancock (SCPRT) offered to review the project study area for properties of concern, including Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) properties.

Fix I-26: **Widening from MM145-172**

Project Background and Updates

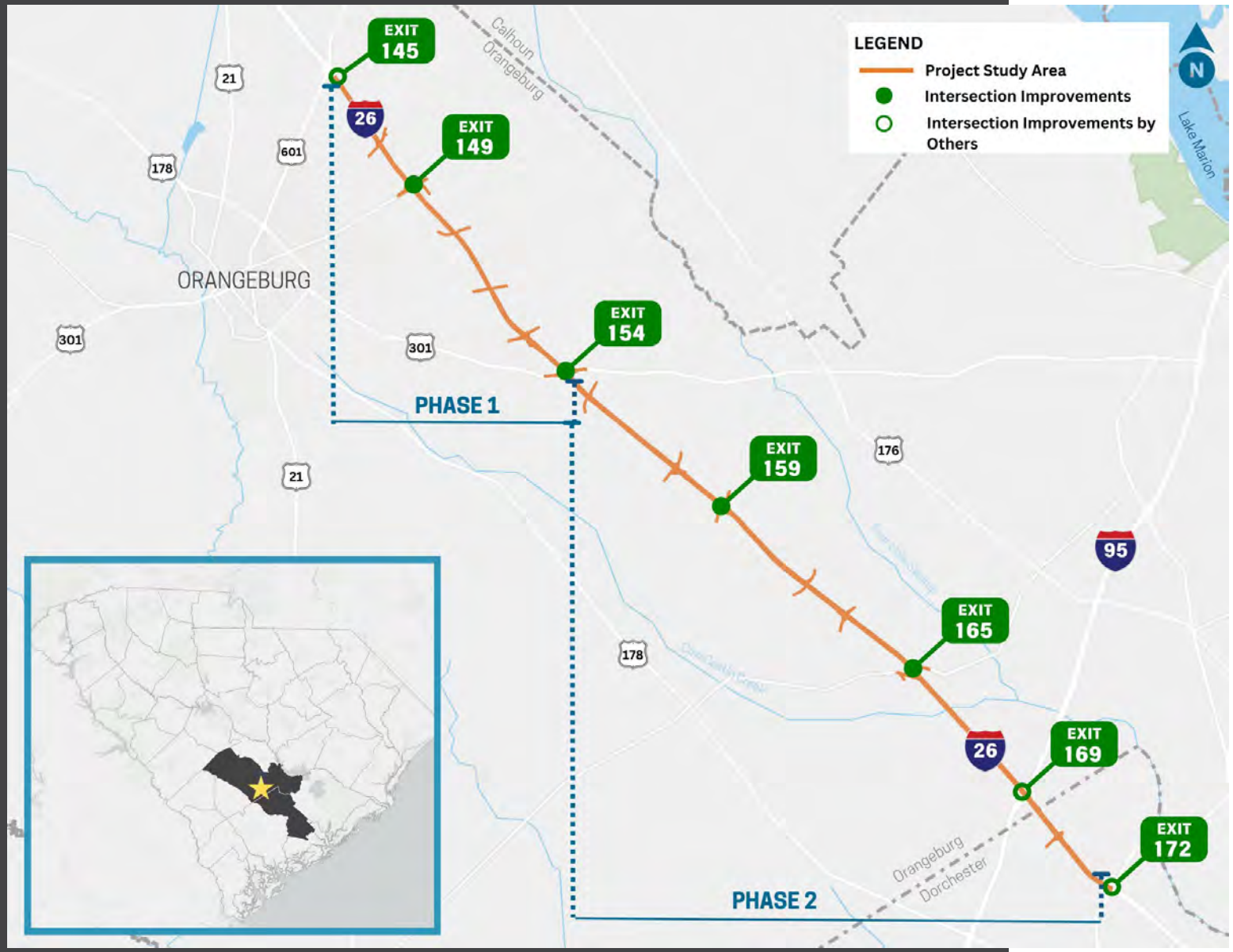
January 2025

SCDOT

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

EAXX---XSC-1733319228

Project Background



The corridor includes:

2 construction phases

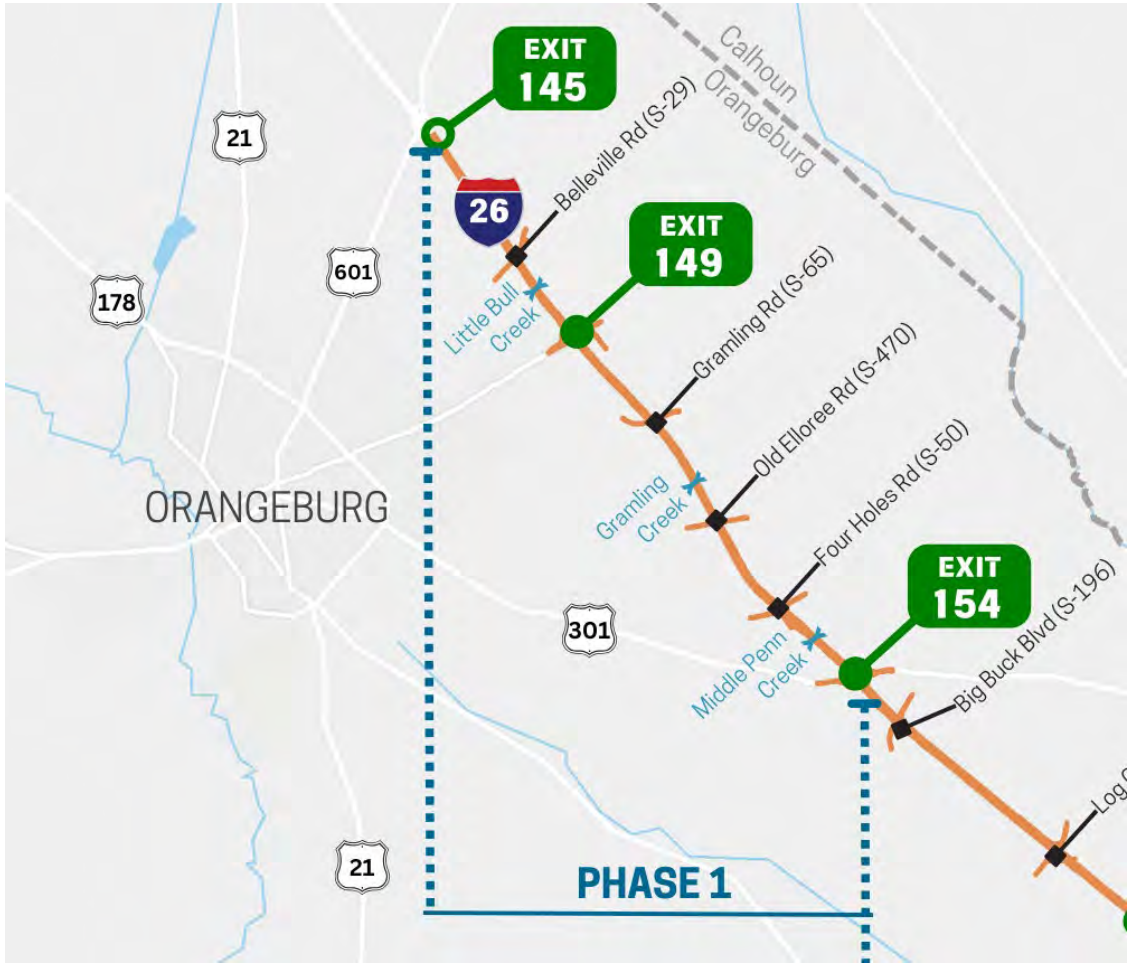
27 miles of widening

4 existing interchanges

8 overpass bridges

7 bridges/bridge-sized culverts

Project Overview – Phase 1

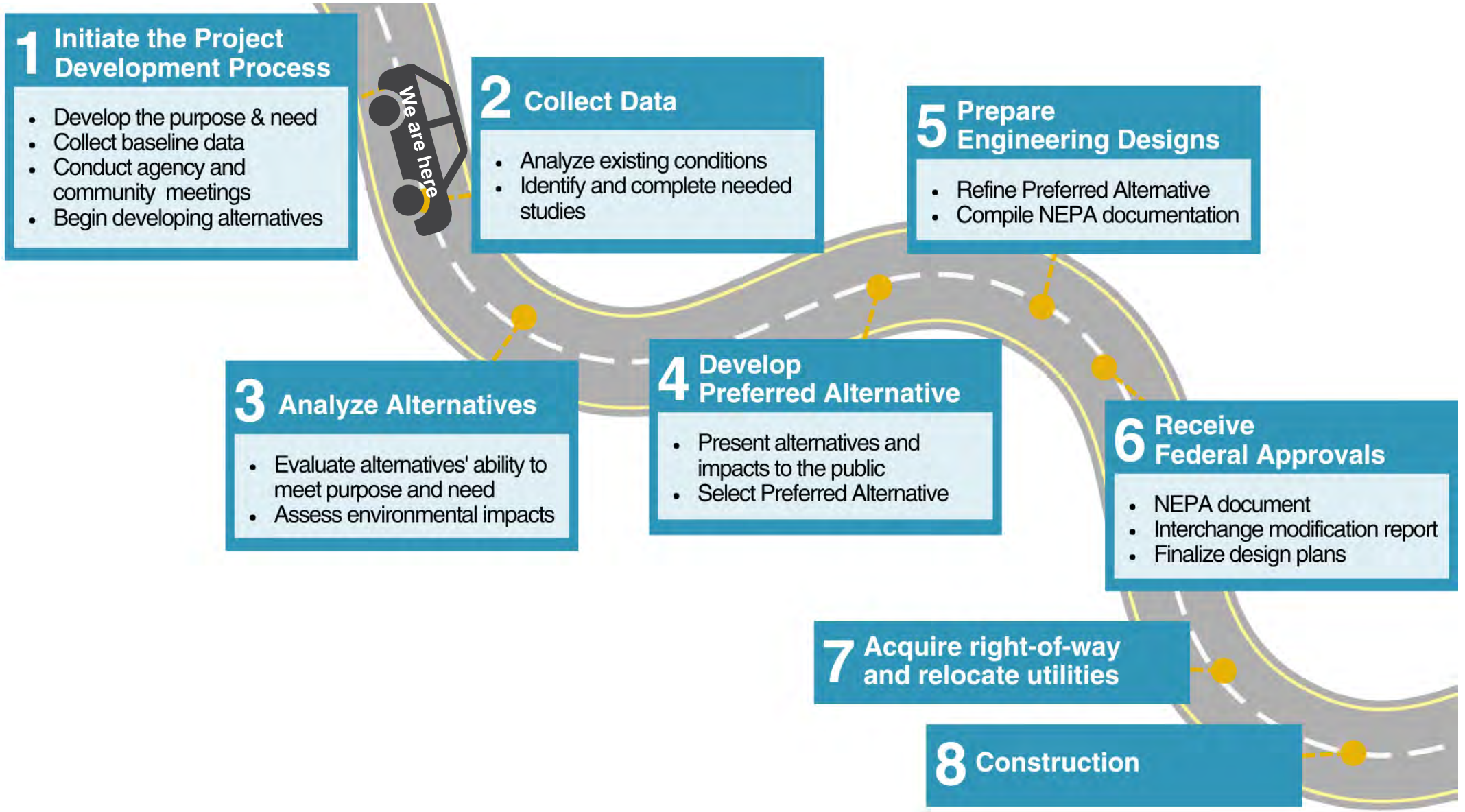


- East of Exit 145 (US 601) to east of Exit 154 (US 301)
- **Widen I-26** toward the existing median **from 4 to 6 lanes**
- **Improve Interchanges**
  - Exit 149 (S-33 and CSX RR)
  - Exit 154 (US 301)
- **Replace Overpass Bridges**
  (except Four Holes Rd)
- **Replace Culverts**

Project Overview – Phase 2

- East of Exit 154 (US 301) to west of Exit 172 (US 15)
- **Widen I-26** toward the existing median **from 4 to 6 lanes**
- **Improve Interchanges**
  - Exit 159 (Homestead Rd)
  - Exit 165 (SC 210/Vance Rd)
- **Replace Overpass Bridges**
- **Replace I-26 Bridges over Cow Castle Creek**
- **Replace Culverts**

Project Status


1 Initiate the Project Development Process
• Develop the purpose & need
• Collect baseline data
• Conduct agency and community meetings
• Begin developing alternatives
We are here
2 Collect Data
• Analyze existing conditions
• Identify and complete needed studies
3 Analyze Alternatives
• Evaluate alternatives' ability to meet purpose and need
• Assess environmental impacts
4 Develop Preferred Alternative
• Present alternatives and impacts to the public
• Select Preferred Alternative
5 Prepare Engineering Designs
• Refine Preferred Alternative
• Compile NEPA documentation
6 Receive Federal Approvals
• NEPA document
• Interchange modification report
• Finalize design plans
7 Acquire right-of-way and relocate utilities
8 Construction

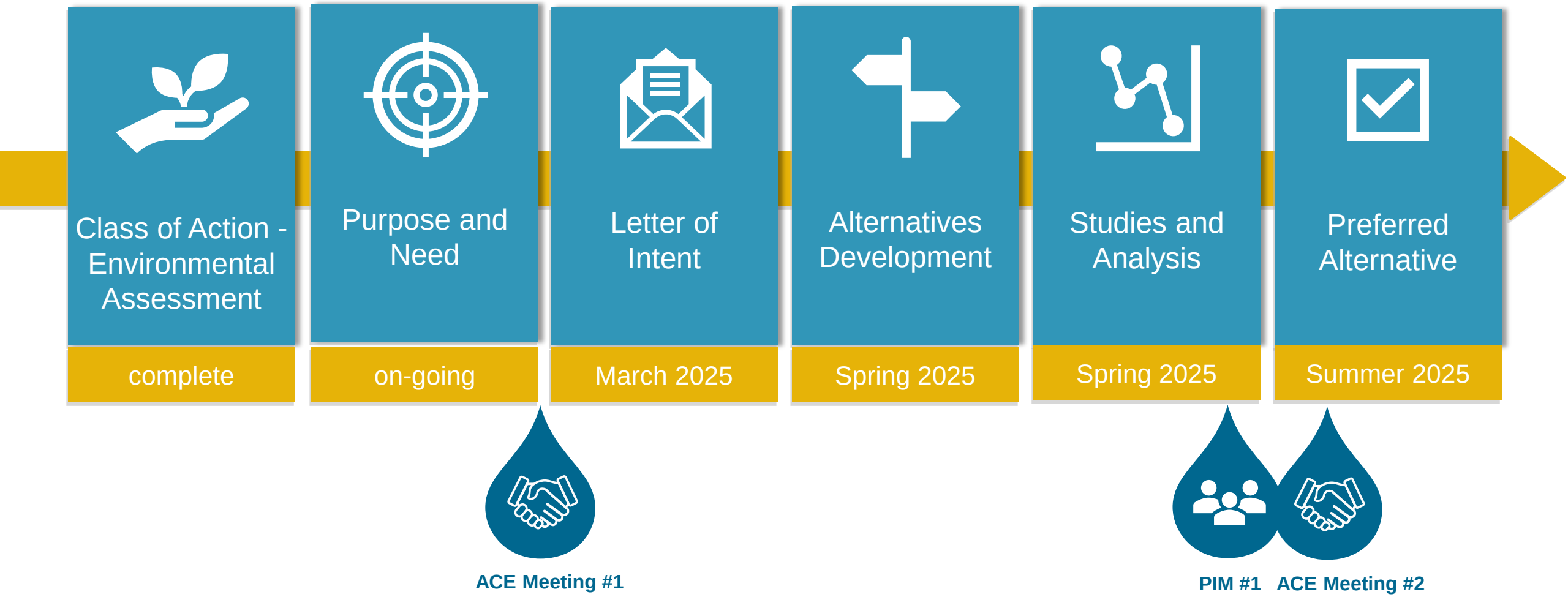
Completed & On-going Activities

- NEPA Class of Action
- Wetland Delineation – Field Surveys
- Development of Traffic Reports
- Endangered Species Surveys
- Noise - Existing Conditions Analysis
- Historic Resources Surveys

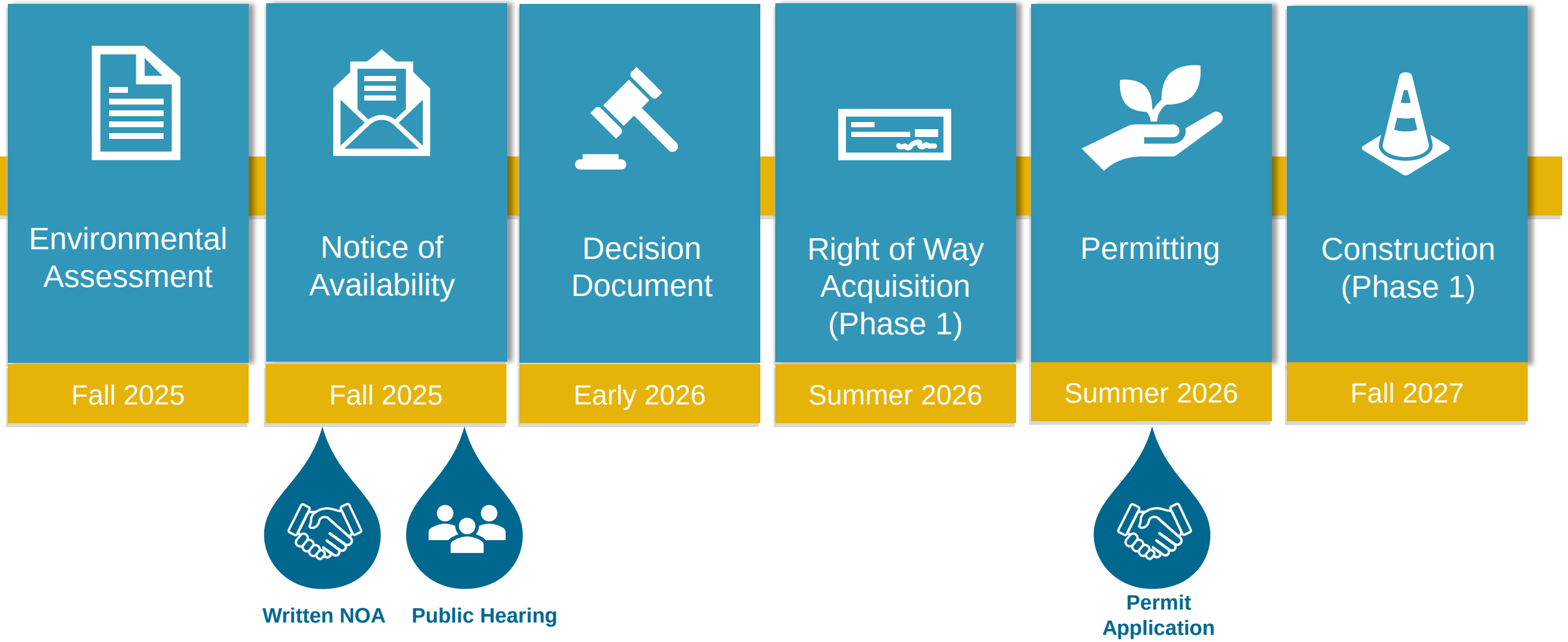
Environmental Assessment

- Wetlands & Streams
- Protected Species
  - NLEB & TCB
  - RCW
  - Monarch butterfly
  - State-listed species
- Cemetery
- Noise
- Business Relocations

Schedule


Class of Action - Environmental Assessment
complete
Purpose and Need
on-going
Letter of Intent
March 2025
Alternatives Development
Spring 2025
Studies and Analysis
Spring 2025
Preferred Alternative
Summer 2025
ACE Meeting #1
PIM #1
ACE Meeting #2

Schedule


Environmental Assessment
Fall 2025
Notice of Availability
Fall 2025
Written NOA
Public Hearing
Decision Document
Early 2026
Right of Way Acquisition (Phase 1)
Summer 2026
Permitting
Summer 2026
Permit Application
Construction (Phase 1)
Fall 2027

Questions

Alex Bennett, PE
SCDOT Program Manager
bennettja@scdot.org

Ed Frierson
SCDOT NEPA Coordinator
friersonew@scdot.org

Outlook

FW: Feb ACE Meeting

From Christy Shumate <christy.shumate@threeoaksengineering.com>
Date Tue 8/26/2025 4:31 PM
To Shelby Ellenburg <shelby.ellenburg@threeoaksengineering.com>

Christy Shumate, AICP | Sr. Environmental Planner
D: 803.948.9238 | M: 919.600.4101

From: FRIERSON, EDWARD, W. <FriersonEW@scdot.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 19, 2025 8:48 AM
To: Christy Shumate <christy.shumate@threeoaksengineering.com>
Cc: Williams, Lee <Lee.Williams@mbakerintl.com>
Subject: FW: Feb ACE Meeting

Hey Christy,
See email below from Justin Hancock.
Ed

From: MCGOLDRICK, WILLIAM, R. <McGoldriWR@scdot.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2025 9:10 AM
To: FRIERSON, EDWARD, W. <FriersonEW@scdot.org>
Subject: Fwd: Feb ACE Meeting

FYI
Will McGoldrick | SCDOT
Alternative Delivery Env Manager
Environmental Services Office
Mobile Reply

Begin forwarded message:

> **From:** Justin E Hancock <jhancock@scprt.com>
> **Date:** February 17, 2025 at 7:58:44 PM EST
> **To:** "MCGOLDRICK, WILLIAM, R." <McGoldriWR@scdot.org>
> **Subject: RE: Feb ACE Meeting**
>
> *** This is an EXTERNAL email. Please do not click on a link or open any attachments unless you are confident it is from a trusted source. ***
>
> Hey Will,
>
> I checked our LWCF records against the project map for the I26 project. The only potential area of concern is around Harleyville. There are two parks there that have been assisted by LWCF – Harleyville Community Park and Harleyville Tennis Courts. If those aren't in the APE, then I don't think we'll have any 6f concerns.
>
> Thanks!
>
> Justin
>
> **From:** McGoldrick, Will <McGoldriWR@scdot.org>
> **Sent:** Thursday, February 13, 2025 4:41 PM
> **To:** Andrew Herndon (andrew.herndon@noaa.gov) <andrew.herndon@noaa.gov>; Andrew S. Castro - CDM (castroas@cdmsmith.com) <castroas@cdmsmith.com>; Austin, Stan J <Stan_Austin@nps.gov>; Beceiro, Omar CIV DHS (USA) <Omar.Beceiro@uscg.mil>; Belvin, Michael L. <belvinml@cdmsmith.com>; Bill Post <PostB@dnr.sc.gov>; Caitlin Totherow - Catawba (Caitlin.Rogers@catawba.com) <Caitlin.Rogers@catawba.com>; Carey, Brad J CIV USARMY CESAC (USA) <Brad.J.Carey@usace.army.mil>; Chris Stout (christopher.stout@des.sc.gov) <christopher.stout@des.sc.gov>; Chuck Hightower (Charles.Hightower@des.sc.gov) <Charles.Hightower@des.sc.gov>; Connolly, Sean <ConnollyMS@scdot.org>; Dev Bendell <BendellW@dnr.sc.gov>; Eaddy, Ann W CIV USARMY CESAC (USA) <Ann.W.Eaddy@usace.army.mil>; ejohnson <ejohnson@scdah.sc.gov>; Elizabeth Miller <MillerE@dnr.sc.gov>; Ellen Waldrop (WaldropE@dnr.sc.gov) <WaldropE@dnr.sc.gov>; Fannin, Ivan W III CIV USARMY CESAC (US) (Ivan.Fannin@usace.army.mil) <Ivan.Fannin@usace.army.mil>; Haley A. Smarr <Haley.Smarr@des.sc.gov>; Heston, Dana M CIV USARMY CESAC (USA) <Dana.M.Heston@usace.army.mil>; Jeff Duncan (jeff_duncan@nps.gov) <jeff_duncan@nps.gov>; Jessica Hinson (Jessica_hinson@fws.gov) <Jessica_hinson@fws.gov>; Justin E Hancock <jhancock@scprt.com>; Kelly Laycock (laycock.kelly@epa.gov) <laycock.kelly@epa.gov>;

kelly.shotts@noaa.gov; Kyle Brown <BrownMK@dnr.sc.gov>; Long, Chad C. <LongCC@scdot.org>; Sherrer, Mary <msherrer@scdah.sc.gov>; mixong@dnr.sc.gov; Mohr, Anthony (Mark) <mohram@cdmsmith.com>; Olds, Melanie J (melanie_olds@fws.gov) <melanie_olds@fws.gov>; Purgason, Austin <PurgasonA@scdot.org>; Reynolds, Bradley S. <ReynoldsBS@scdot.org>; Riggin Lori Ann ('RigginL@dnr.sc.gov') <'RigginL@dnr.sc.gov'>; Sabrina Henry (Sabrina_Henry@nps.gov) <Sabrina_Henry@nps.gov>; sandra.saintsurin <sandra.saintsurin@dot.gov>; Sean Bonnage (sean_bonnage@nps.gov) <sean_bonnage@nps.gov>; Shane Belcher - US FHWA (Jeffrey.Belcher@fhwa.dot.gov) <Jeffrey.Belcher@fhwa.dot.gov>; Singh-White, Alya <singh-white.alya@epa.gov>; Stacie Crowe <CroweS@dnr.sc.gov>; Wenonahh Catawba (Wenonah.Haire@catawba.com) <Wenonah.Haire@catawba.com>; benjamin.Thepaut <benjamin.Thepaut@des.sc.gov>; Blair N. Williams (blair.williams@des.sc.gov) <blair.williams@des.sc.gov>; Cassidy, Charlene M. <cassidycm@cdmsmith.com>; Clark, Tyler A. <ClarkTA@scdot.org>; Cleaver, Caycee C. <CleaverCC@scdot.org>; Colleen PM McDonald <colleen.mcdonald@des.sc.gov>; Evan J. Tyler (evan.tyler@des.sc.gov) <evan.tyler@des.sc.gov>; Hadley, Karen (hadleykl@cdmsmith.com) (hadleykl@cdmsmith.com) <hadleykl@cdmsmith.com>; Humphreys, Jennifer H <humphreysjh@cdmsmith.com>; Jordan Wolfe - NOAA Federal <jordan.wolfe@noaa.gov>; Long, Chad C. <LongCC@scdot.org>; Mattox, Jae <MattoxJH@scdot.org>; Randall Overton (Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil) <Randall.D.Overton@uscg.mil>; Sarah Reed - OCRM (sarah.reed@des.sc.gov) <sarah.reed@des.sc.gov>
Cc: Long, Chad C. <LongCC@scdot.org>; Phillips, Henry <henry.phillips@ice-eng.com>; Barrett Stone <barrett.stone@ice-eng.com>; Jurgelski, Bill M. <JurgelskWM@scdot.org>
Subject: Feb ACE Meeting

All,
Please see attached agenda and fact sheet for next week's ACE meeting. Look forward to gathering. Just as a reminder, there will not be an update on Mark Clark Extension specifically. However the I-26 project is located in coastal counties but there are no tidal waters associated with it.

Respectfully,

Will McGoldrick, DBIA
Env Mgr for Alternative Delivery
SCDOT
955 Park St, Rm 504
Columbia SC 29202-1394

O: 803-737-1326 | M: 803-767-3005