

## TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

July 15, 2025

A meeting of the Traffic and Transportation Committee was held on this date, beginning at 3:06 p.m. in person in the Council Chambers at 80 Broad Street and over Zoom.

**Committee Members:** Councilmember Michael Seekings (Chair), Councilmember Karl Brady (Vice-Chair) 3:32 p.m., Councilmember William Dudley Gregorie, Councilmember Jim McBride, and Mayor William S. Cogswell

**Also Present:** Robert Somerville, Michael Mathis, Josh Martin, Steve Ruemelin, Magalie Creech, Melissa Cruthirds, Julia Copeland, Elizabeth Dieck, Amy Wharton, Jason Kronsberg, Deja McMillan, Councilmember Stephen Bowden, Councilmember Joe Boykin, and Donna Constance

Chair Seekings called the meeting to order.

### Invocation

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Councilmember Gregorie.

### Approval of the May 27, 2025, Minutes

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the May 27, 2025, Traffic and Transportation meeting minutes.

### Ashley River Crossing Update

Mayor Cogswell said that the project was progressing well. The West Marsh continued with the installation of concrete piles, caps, beams, and treads. A total of 640 linear feet of permit track boardwalk had been installed. Work on the river also continued, with nine of the 17 drill shafts completed so far. In the West Marsh, the contractor relocated and flipped the crane pad and installed the boardwalk system. Regarding the river work, the contractor planned to finish the remaining two drill shafts on the west side of the river before moving to the east side to install the remaining six drill shafts.

### Lowline Phase 1 Project Update

Mr. Martin said they were moving forward with the final schematic and pricing set, which was the first round of pricing to be completed by the following week. Then, they would be able to move toward establishing the GMP, which they would bring to Council in August.

Mayor Cogswell asked Mr. Martin if they were still within budget on what had been discussed several months ago.

Mr. Martin said yes.

**Lowline Construction - Request to accept transfer of ownership and maintenance of streets from SCDOT**

Mr. Martin said there were three intersections, and as part of that, they designed mid-block crossings. (Inaudible).

There was a 90-day lead time to request that streets be removed from the system for a fall commission meeting. Murray Boulevard was taken out of the DOT system to facilitate those mid-block crossings. In anticipation of planning ahead, if they believed it might be necessary to remove them, they would seek approval from the committee and council.

Councilmember Gregorie said that a lot was happening in the corridor along with 275, between Huger, King, and Meeting, and that they would need to secure funding to improve those streets.

Mr. Martin said they had this identified currently.

Councilmember Gregorie said that they had \$2 million for mitigation purposes.

Mr. Martin said yes.

Councilmember Gregorie said there were discussions about using the \$2 million for affordable housing and developing along that corridor to cover the cost of the streetscapes.

Mr. Martin said they considered all options, and the original Huger Streetscape Project would extend from Meeting Street to Morrison. Currently, they are focusing on this area because they are constructing the Lowline at Huger Street, including a drainage project and parking lot improvements. They met with business owners and residents along that corridor, who wanted more parking. The streetscape plan would include on-street parking on both sides and a fully protected bike lane. They are working with Ms. Wharton and her team to figure out how to accomplish everything, possibly making this the first phase before moving to the other side of the street, as this area is also being mobilized. Instead of tearing up the infrastructure multiple times, they could do it all at once and consider the funding sources Councilmember Gregorie mentioned.

Chair Seekings asked what the specific request was. He inquired whether it would involve the street at the intersection or between the northern and southern intersections.

Mr. Martin said this would involve taking the entire street from the edge of the right-of-way of King Street, the eastern edge, to the western edge of the right-of-way of Meeting.

Chair Seekings asked along Huger Street and Cypress.

Mayor Cogswell said if necessary.

Chair Seekings asked if that was a 75-day plus or minus lead time.

Mr. Martin said it was a 90-day.

Chair Seekings asked what the trigger point or the deciding factor was.

Mr. Martin said they were preparing for further discussions with DOT. They had been sharing designs and concepts, but they were reaching the point where they'd get a yay or nay, and it was just a matter of where they landed with this.

Mayor Cogswell said that the DOT had been helpful and easy to work with. He didn't want to make them seem like the bad guys; they just follow certain statewide standards and processes, and

they were concerned about setting a precedent. This was a unique situation, as are others in Charleston, given how long they've been around. This gave them the option, if they couldn't get approval through their process, not to delay the project to ensure the necessary safety on those three streets and crossings.

Mr. Martin mentioned that the unique aspect was dealing with small street geometries. Specifically, Cypress and Romney were very narrow, which made the task even more challenging.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to give pre-approval for this request, should it be necessary, back to the DOT.

### **Lowline Parking Lots - Management & Enforcement**

Mr. Martin said that when this was put out to bid, they scoped the Lowline Project Phase One, which included three revenue-generating parking lots. When negotiating the lease with DOT, any revenue generated was considered an endowment through those parking lots. Therefore, any income from these lots was reinvested into the project and did not go into City funds; it had to stay within the Lowline. Currently, these lots could generate enough revenue to cover annual maintenance costs year after year, relieving the Parks Department and its staff of that burden. This revenue was an important source of funding for the project. They had a design-built contract with Edifice and their team, which was included in the scope, and they were working on establishing a GMP. This was an early GMP for the parking lot portion of the overall project. The main GMP would be established later. The parking lots targeted for improvements were light on land, and lease restrictions introduced complications and increased costs, as certain triggers made modifications more difficult. Presently, they are improving three lots for one-third of the budget originally allocated for one lot in the capital project.

(Inaudible)

Next, they would go out to bid for hiring a parking management company. The lots needed to operate 24/7 due to the issue at the Huger Street lots when their policy changed. It requires residents to start paying monthly for parking, which costs between \$150 and \$160 per month. People living in those buildings were parking there, and businesses were excited about this new approach. A system would be implemented instead of being manned, making collection easier and more efficient.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if they would be parking under the overpass.

Mr. Martin said over.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if there would be other opportunities throughout the City where there would be space available under the overpass for parking.

Mr. Martin said they would treat this as a pilot project because it would be their first 24/7 enforced lot outside of a structured parking garage and would have the ability to be less human-dependent for enforcement and revenue collection. They also wanted to be aware of the Lowline not becoming overly parking lot-like along the Lowline. They are trying to think strategically about this in the planning of phase one.

Mayor Cogswell said this had a positive impact, and the three parking lots would provide great income and would be an incredible amenity for their residents in the Lowline. They had a capital

projects budget, which was a significant amount for just one of the lots, and were able to do all three for well under that budget.

Chair Seekings asked when all three lots were completed, and how much space was represented.

Mr. Martin said 120 spaces, and they did not plan on selling monthly passes. They were working with businesses, so their employees could have monthly passes.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee unanimously approved and agreed to present this to Ways and Means for funding.

#### **Chauffer License Appeal - Terrell Simmons**

Chair Seekings asked if this matter had been resolved.

Mr. Ruemelin said yes and that he had been working with Mr. Simmons's attorney. Mr. Simmons needed one document, and that has now been remedied, and he will reapply.

#### **Safe Streets and Roads for all (SS4A) USDOT Grant update**

Mr. Wallace said they have been working on the Safety Action Plan Development for the past 8 months. He invited Mr. Jehn from Kimley-Horn Consulting to give a presentation on the action plan, which is expected to be finalized within the next month.

Mr. Jehn said he was with Kimley-Horn Consultants and had been working with the City to develop a safety plan. The City's crash history over the last six years showed incidents within Charleston resulting in either serious injuries or fatalities, with more than 2,700 crashes leading to hospitalization or death. Focusing only on pedestrians and cyclists, there were over 1,000 crashes involving vulnerable road users. Out of 37,000 total crashes, only 2,700 resulted in injuries, but more than half of those involving pedestrians and cyclists caused injuries. The City created the Citywide Transportation Plan, which identified safety issues across the city. The SCDOT conducted a statewide Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan, and findings from that plan were reviewed during a recent road safety audit. Six safety action plans, either in development or completed, were underway in the region, including Mount Pleasant, Folly Beach, North Charleston, Summerville, Goose Creek, and BCDCOG. The safety action plan, which started last December, was funded through a grant the City applied for in 2023. The City contributed 20%, while the federal government covered 80%. This was the first step in a process outlined by USDOT as part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which extends into next year. Under this bill, \$5 billion was allocated nationwide for road safety. Two grants supported this: the Planning and Demonstration Grant, which funded this plan, and the Implementation Grant for constructing the projects. The City focused on the Implementation Grant. They conducted two rounds of public engagement to gather resident feedback before and after identifying the countermeasures they planned to implement as part of the safety analysis.

Mayor Cogswell asked whether they have a contract with the City of Charleston or the DOT.

Mr. Jehn said the City.

Vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and motorcyclists, were disproportionately involved in injury crashes across the city. If they were non-motorists, they were 20 times more likely to be injured in a crash compared to those in cars. The city has more than 50 public and private schools, and 30% of all fatalities and injuries happen within a quarter mile of these schools. The same percentage applies to disadvantaged communities, where 30% of all fatal and serious injury

crashes occur within the city's 12 disadvantaged Census Tracts. The aging population, those aged 55 and older, has experienced a rate three times higher than other age groups since 2013. For non-residents, mobile location data from Spring 2023 shows that up to 144,000 trips are made daily within the city by non-residents. A safety summit was held at the Christopher Center in January for stakeholders, including city staff, peer agencies, Fire, EMS, Police, the school district, and advocacy groups like Charleston Moves.

Their observations across the city on safety issues needing attention included concerns about e-bikes and golf carts, excessive speeding, aggressive driving, and two-way left-turn lanes where they were common. They also noted a disconnect between recent growth and infrastructure development. Analyzing feedback from the safety summit, stakeholders, and initial findings helped define four main goals: adopt a safe-system approach, serve various city areas and populations, promote regional communication, collaboration, and cohesion, and establish a safety-first culture. They asked residents about their general safety perceptions. Some said they felt safer when driving, walking, or biking. Others called for better bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and some emphasized addressing driving behavior. In the second engagement round, they surveyed the public to confirm they were focusing on the right areas. Most respondents responded positively to the proposed safety measures, especially related to transportation safety. One part the public didn't fully understand was upgrading control devices, which included installing or improving signage and pavement markings to boost visibility. As consultants, they analyzed 40,000 crashes from their database over the last six years to interpret the data and prioritize efforts. They used a GIS-based platform to identify half-mile segments that represented less than 10% of the city's roadway miles but accounted for over half of all fatal and serious injury crashes.

They organized the proposed countermeasures into four main categories: intersection upgrades, pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements, access management projects, and roadway departure or traffic control device projects. As part of this process, they evaluated an inventory of all signalized intersections as well as all unsignalized and signalized pedestrian crossings to identify low-cost improvement opportunities. They focused on areas with outdated equipment at signals, markings, or signage that could be upgraded, especially in locations with high numbers of crashes. Some sites were on their high-injury network, where they identified opportunities for other geometric improvements at intersections and similar areas. A total of 10 projects were categorized under intersection upgrades, covering 50 to 75 intersections grouped within individual projects. The same approach was applied to pedestrian and bicycle facility upgrades, since most involved individual crossings that could benefit from low-cost improvements. As part of this effort, the City pursued a demonstration grant through the USDOT during this year's grant cycle for those locations. They planned to install temporary countermeasures to gather data on their effectiveness before expanding and implementing them across the City. They identified access management corridors with the most crash histories and a high injury network, due to significant overlap. These corridors overlapped with areas explored by the DOT and included in other program projects. Highlighting these locations in the plan was essential to meeting its goals and objectives.

The most critical part was the Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation Plan, which aimed to establish a safety culture. This was achieved at the individual level by creating educational opportunities and ensuring that people understood the safety issues they faced and how they could influence those numbers. Additionally, it was important to inform everyone about what the City and the DOT were doing to address these issues. As part of this effort, the City planned to push a target zero resolution at a future City Council meeting to formally commit to reducing

fatalities and serious injuries on the roadway. Other municipalities in the area have already done this or plan to do so as well. This approach would foster accountability, enable action, and facilitate tracking progress. Achieving this would require partnerships within the community and across different jurisdictions to make a regional impact and move the needle.

Chair Seekings asked what the connection was between the SCDOT and the City, and if they received the grant money, then did the hiring.

Mr. Jehn said that because the DOT was not allowed to apply for the grant, the City would have to do so. Also, since the DOT owned most of the roads, there was a permitting process.

#### **Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity**

- MGM Grand II (Taxi)
- Lowcountry Limousine

Mr. Mathis said they had two applications, which had been reviewed by staff and the Legal Department, and they were recommending approval.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity for MGM Grand II (Taxi) and Lowcountry Limousine.

#### **Maybank Highway/Riverland Road Intersection Safety Improvement Discussion**

Councilmember McBride said that data had been collected over the past five years for three intersections—Maybank Highway, Golfview Road, and Maxcy Road—regarding traffic collisions. Although they were only halfway through the year, the collision rate was on track to be higher than in previous years. A HAWK light would be installed there by year's end, primarily to improve pedestrian safety. In 2018, the City conducted a study on the Maybank intersection to explore ideas and improvements, but the majority of those ideas were rejected by the state. He asked if they could get a quick update on the current status of that study so they could develop new ideas. He also mentioned a meeting with Neil Sneath, the president of the Riverland Terrace Neighborhood Association, and a City police officer. Mr. Sneath met with his constituents and refined some suggestions, focusing on low-cost options rather than a major intersection project, which would be funded by the Charleston County Sales Tax in 2026.

Mr. Somerville said that Charleston County had Stantec Engineering conduct the study. They examined this corridor and came up with four recommendations, which were reviewed by the City, the DOT, and the neighborhoods. There was some opposition to the recommendations, such as removing a lane of traffic, designating left-turn lanes, creating a jughandle that would loop through the neighborhood, and restricting traffic or left-turn movements on Maybank. As a result, all traffic at the intersections of Maybank or Riverland would go straight. The study that Stantec conducted in 2017 used count data showing 27,000 vehicles a day, compared to the 2024 report, which indicated 37,000 vehicles currently. There are now significantly more vehicles on Maybank than when that study was conducted.

Chair Seekings asked if that was 27,000 more per day.

Mr. Somerville said that in 2017, it was 27,000 and 37,000 at present.

Councilmember McBride said he was not surprised by the accidents at that intersection, given the high speed from east or west on Maybank Highway. Some ideas discussed with Mr. Sneath

included installing flashing warning lights and speed warning lights on both sides of Maybank Highway. They also considered putting rumble strips across the road, combined with flashing speed lights to alert drivers about their speed. Reducing the speed limit and adding a 5-headlight signal were also considered, but the state would not permit those lights at that intersection.

Mr. Somerville said they would like to have a dedicated left-turn lane.

Councilmember McBride asked if that would be for a separate left-turn lane.

Mr. Somerville said yes.

Councilmember McBride said it could be part of a long-term plan with the county regarding the turning lanes. They wanted to work with the county and state on the idea of installing warning lights, rumble strips, or a combination of both to see if there's something they can do to reduce the accident rate or find ways to secure grant funding for simple solutions.

Mayor Cogswell said that this was a problematic intersection contributing to traffic issues and, from a safety perspective, needed to be addressed. They regularly meet with City staff, the Mayor, Councilmembers, Charleston County, and their staff to discuss Johns Island concerns. They scheduled a meeting to explore further solutions, focusing not on the initiatives Mr. Sneath proposed but on potential mid- to long-term solutions for the intersection. Their goal was to collaborate closely with the county and DOT to ensure unified efforts, preventing them from acting independently of the DOT and county. They believed simple, cost-effective solutions could be implemented for this intersection and parts of Johns Island.

Councilmember Boykin said this was a good opportunity to come together and work with the county and other municipalities. Even though they had made significant progress, more work was still needed. In 2026, they might have another half-cent tax referendum. The intersections were a challenge, and the more they collaborated to develop projects for the list, the better chance they would have to complete the work and be included.

Councilmember Brady asked why they could not put up a no left turn sign on Maybank during rush hour, especially since that's when accidents tend to happen due to the increased traffic. They also inquired why signs couldn't be installed in other parts of the City, given that they have them downtown.

Mayor Cogswell said they had discussed this and planned to talk about it with the county as a potential option. There are some drawbacks and concerns that the DOT and the neighborhood might have. One idea was to implement this as a pilot program, gather data, see if crashes decrease, and assess how it impacts the neighborhood.

Councilmember McBride asked for their thoughts on the speed signs, the flashing warning sign, and the slowdown of the intersection from a traffic and transportation perspective.

Mr. Somerville said they believed all options were good, which was why they were meeting with the county to ensure everyone was aligned. They wanted to discuss what was feasible and what they might be able to put into action.

Chair Seekings said that the two words used in Councilmember Boykin's comments, which he considered appropriate, were collaboration and resources. They look forward to working with the county, particularly on ensuring the safety of roads throughout the county. This highlights the challenges and opportunities they face in making their roads passable and safe. It was agreed

that they need to work together to ensure resources are available, such as the half-cent sales tax. The consensus is that it is necessary, and these resources will be allocated for infrastructure improvements and additions.

With there being no further business, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

Clerk of Council's Office

Donna Constance