

## **SPECIAL TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**October 28, 2025**

A meeting of the Traffic and Transportation Committee was held on this date, beginning at 3:11 p.m. in person in the Council Chambers at 80 Broad Street and over Zoom.

**Committee Members:** Councilmember Seekings (Chair), Councilmember Brady (Vice-Chair), Councilmember Gregg, Councilmember Gregorie, Councilmember McBride, and Mayor Cogswell

**Also Present:** Michael Mathis, Robert Somerville, Elizabeth Dieck, Deja Knight-McMillan, Magalie Creech, Melissa Cruthirds, Dan Riccio, Malena Dinwoodie, Councilmember Tinkler, Councilmember Appel, Julia Copeland, Councilmember Mitchell, Hampton Logan, Jason Kronsberg, Councilmember Shealy, Philip Clapper, and Donna Constance

Chair Seekings called the meeting to order

### **Invocation**

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Chair Seekings.

### **Approval of the October 14, 2025, meeting minutes**

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the October 14, 2025, Traffic and Transportation meeting minutes.

### **SCDOT Road Maintenance Transfer Requests - Request for Approval**

- Bear Swamp Road (S-394)
- Ingram Road (S-1650)

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the SCDOT Road Maintenance Transfer Requests for Bear Swamp Road and Ingram Road.

### **Approval of Code Enforcement Officer - Mr. Louis Staggers, III**

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Gregorie, the Committee voted unanimously to approve Mr. Louis Stagger, III as Code Enforcement Officer.

### **Traffic Calming Request - Request Approval**

- Wabeek Way - District 2, Councilmember Shealy

Mr. Mathis said this had been reviewed and recommended by staff for approval.

On a motion by Mayor Cogswell, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Committee voted unanimously to approve traffic calming for Wabeek Way.

### **Restriction of Motorcoach Buses - South of Broad Street**

Chair Seekings said that they had experienced several incidents over the past year involving large trucks and motorcoach buses. These vehicles were turning south onto streets like Church Street and New Street, where they encountered old historic oaks that leaned over the street. This method of vehicle distribution on their streets was common, and using large motor coaches didn't seem to make much sense.

Mr. Riccio explained that most of the complaints they received since taking over Tourism Management in 2014 came from residents, commuters, and citizens regarding large coach buses traveling south of Broad Street to Chisholm, Tradd, Murray, and then exiting on East Bay. The issue was that the drivers often did not follow the designated perimeter route. They realized they were going the wrong way, reversed, and then cut through to the South Battery and other streets or headed back down Broad. This caused congestion, led to buses getting stuck, and damaged the oak trees. The narrowness, limited width, and the perimeter route of South Broad were reasons for pushing those large buses and trucks.

Mr. Somerville said that with the infrastructure on the Battery, the street parking was 8 feet wide, leaving an 11-foot travel lane. If they went out there, they would see Limehouse and Murray. There was a pump, and if a large truck tried to pass, it couldn't go through, so they would have to go into the neighborhood to get out.

Chair Seekings said that as they deployed pumps along the low battery, it would restrict traffic flow to only regular-sized vehicles, and even then, it was sometimes difficult, leading to traffic being directed into the heart of the South of Broad neighborhoods. They want to publicize this issue, gather more input from the tourism and motor coach industries, and then ask their legal team to review their ordinances to see what actions they can take.

Councilmember Gregorie asked if they considered that the only traffic south of Broad would be residents.

Chair Seekings said that restricting traffic flow would violate SCDOT mandates and that they could not limit street usage to serve only a certain segment of the population, rather than specific vehicles that did not fit on those streets.

Councilmember Gregorie asked even if it was a safety issue, and if they perpetuate unsafe situations.

Mayor Cogswell said large buses.

Chair Seekings said if this were resident-only, nobody would be able to drive down there either, which would create some challenges.

Councilmember Brady asked if they could sign agreements similar to neighborhood signs, no through trucks, and no commercial vehicles, and include that as a restriction to make it clear. This way, rather than having a motor coach coming in from out of town without knowing the routes, they would have clear signage.

Chair Seekings said all the motor coaches entering town were supposed to check in before going south of the visitor center. Several signs south of Broad indicated no through trucks. Nowadays, people rely on GPS and Google for directions instead of signage, which makes shutting down

these streets challenging. They prefer larger vehicles to check in at the visitor center first so they can follow their team's instructions.

Mr. Riccio said that any coach bus entering Charleston must pre-plan well in advance, ideally months ahead. Once they submitted their application, they received a copy of the perimeter for coach buses, so they were aware beforehand which routes to take, and which streets were off-limits. The issue remains if they did not follow these rules, which is why enforcement was present.

Chair Seekings said this was why they needed to provide people with encouragement and guidance. There were other challenges with their streets and large vehicles that they would need to consider as traffic increased on those streets.

### **Transportation Sales Tax Initiative Discussion**

Mayor Cogswell said this was a refresher on what they had discussed regarding James Island and Johns Island. There would also be opportunities for West Ashley and the peninsula, which they would discuss in more detail at the next meeting, focusing on downtown and West Ashley. The goal is to finalize everything, obtain council approval, and hold a vote before the December 1st deadline. The projected amount the County could generate from what the TST might raise over the next 20-plus years was \$4.25 billion. Since the City of Charleston's pro-rata population was less than half, they determined that the amount the City could allocate would be the same figure, no more or less. For Johns Island, they hoped this would not need to be part of the TST26, which involves widening Maybank between Fenwick and the bridge. The County Council will allocate some of the \$75 million to move this project forward. The widening was crucial and would significantly improve access on and off the island. The second priority is Maybank Southern Pitchfork and the roundabout. They were working with the County on the design details for the roundabout, which would replace the traffic light at Fenwick and ensure a steady flow of traffic without signals from both northern and southern Pitchfork on and off the island. The third priority was improvements to Main Street. Although widening Maybank Highway from River Road to Main Road will be challenging, several enhancements could improve traffic flow and intersections. They also have substantial funds allocated for road paving, green belt development, public transportation, biking and pedestrian facilities, and sidewalk improvements.

For James Island, they planned to add two turning lanes that would extend from the Maybank Bridge and connect to Maybank Highway at Folly. Then, there was the Riverland and Maybank intersection, which would require removing trees along the golf course to allow for a left turn onto Riverland heading toward Johns Island. Harborview often experiences significant backups at the James Island connector, especially in the underwater section. They would need to explore raising that road, which would be costly. Next were the Folly Road Improvements to support the RSA. The DOT is funding the RSA, aiming to make roads and intersections safer and reduce traffic accidents.

Chair Seekings asked if this would be broken down further or combined into one, with an allocation to the City for spending the money.

Mayor Cogswell said they would break this down because they wanted to focus on the roads. They were also committed to bike improvements, green belt programs, paving, and sidewalks. They needed to start with the biggest projects first and stay within a reasonable budget.

Councilmember McBride said the northern part of the plan was to realign the northern Pitchfork so it would come closer to the bridge. That is where the northern Pitchfork would meet a future southern Pitchfork and eliminate the light.

Mayor Cogswell said the alignment of the two pitchforks that would come together would be below the power line and gas line, and cut through coming onto the island.

Councilmember McBride agreed with the Mayor's priorities for Johns' Islands. He preferred that the Upper River Road be addressed before the Maybank Main Street improvements for safety. The SCDOT completed 3,000 feet of stormwater ditch improvements on Upper River Road before the new school opened on Johns' Island, which increased safety, but several thousand feet of ditches still regularly swallow vehicles. Therefore, the priority should be to improve stormwater ditches with more piping and guard rails.

Mayor Cogswell said they considered the sidewalk improvements so they could break that out and evaluate shifting priorities.

He said West Ashley was the largest part of the City both geographically and in population. The three priorities for 17 South were widening, drainage, paving, and safety at intersections. This project extends out to the edge of Charleston County along 17. The next priority was the Glenn McConnell Flyover at Magwood because that intersection is dangerous and difficult. Following that is Ashley River Road, which needs to be raised, along with other improvements such as pedestrian safety, crossings, and beautification. There was also a need for public transportation, bike lanes, paving, and sidewalks.

Councilmember Shealy said Eric Adams and Charleston County did a great job of widening the Glenn McConnell. The current problem was the bottleneck at Magwood and Glenn McConnell, where traffic would back up in both directions. Previously, people had difficulty passing Magwood to access I-526, which was poorly designed because they had to stop at another red light. After clearing Magwood, they faced another red light to get onto I-526. The traffic flow at Glendale Road, coming out of Springfield and Canterbury Woods – three neighborhoods with three schools – was congested, with residents trying to enter and leave Glendale, so something needs to be done at that intersection. Representative Gary Brewer has been made aware of this issue and has been working along Ashley River Road to gain momentum for improvements. They discussed installing roundabouts at Ashley Crossing and Magwood, which was a dangerous intersection in the City of Charleston.

Mayor Cogswell said they couldn't address everything, but should support the efforts as much as possible and be strategic.

Chair Seekings said one of the challenges with raising the tax was that they would be doing a lot of road improvements on roads they did not own, nor did the County. They might need help from other jurisdictions, including but not limited to the state and federal government. They should be careful about this as they consider how they spend their money. He asked if there was a solution for Glenn McConnell and Magwood that was at a grade rather than a flyover.

Mayor Cogswell said he would defer that to those who had been studying it far longer than he.

Councilmember Shealy said that part of the 526 widening plans has slowed down quite a bit. Part of their situation involved what they called a half-flyover, as they wanted to move traffic off of 526. They did not build a full flyover in 2020 because it was not within the scope of the project. After all,

the scope was not to move traffic on Glenn McConnell but to move traffic on I-526. The County had looked into this and asked what they could do to move traffic both ways, which is when they came up with the flyover idea.

Councilmember Bowden said that a hospital was nearby. They would need to figure out how to manage traffic flow while ensuring access to the facility. He believed that no one from the Outer West Ashley would oppose considering a more affordable solution.

Chair Seekings said every slide in the PowerPoint presentation had water in the roads.

Mayor Cogswell emphasized the importance of being sensitive to this issue. They have a relationship and partnership with the Army Corps, which can help fund flooding improvements along 17. Most of the work on 17 involved large pipes, but they were not big enough to go under the road and drain a large part of West Ashley into the Stono River. Many of those pipes needed to be replaced. If they can leverage a partnership with the federal government to cover up to 65% of the cost, they should pursue it. They will need to make every dollar count to address this comprehensively. The priority for the peninsula was the Lockwood Drive and Hagood Improvements. This area on the western side of the peninsula was often submerged underwater. There had been many discussions about perimeter protection and the partnership with the Corps, debating whether it would qualify or not. Lockwood Drive was a major road from West Ashley and parts of North Charleston along the western side of the peninsula; access often required traveling down Lockwood, which was frequently underwater. They needed to raise Lockwood if it was just a road improvement, and that cost would be about \$600 million. The cost would be covered by the City, with no federal aid, or they could use money from the SIB. Lockwood Drive was critical to the historic district, the VA Hospital, and MUSC. The same situation applied to the eastern side of the peninsula; they needed to do road improvements by raising it or working in conjunction with perimeter protection. They allocated more to CARTA because that was where the LCRT's main focus was. As council members, they needed to be clear and proactive with the County about how important these priorities were and ensure everyone agreed. This would be a permanent solution to flooding on the peninsula, prevent tides from coming in, and protect against the surge. This would help significantly with storm drainage and stormwater runoff. It would also provide long-term mobility for bike and pedestrian access. The result would be a 7 to 12-mile loop around the peninsula, with 5 miles of which would have public access to the water and provide infrastructure to keep water off the peninsula when it rains. It would be in the best interest to do it, and in conjunction with this opportunity, the federal government would pay 65%. In terms of the allocation from the City's peninsula standpoint, they would not be seeking all of the local match for the battery extension from the federal government because the Port Authority would contribute a portion of it, as well as contributions from the Union Pier's TIF. Lockwood, East Bay, Morrison, and Concord would be considered for the transportation sales tax. They would also set aside money for the green belt, CARTA, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and paving.

Councilmember Gregorie said that since they were discussing the main arteries, he thought of Rutledge as a main artery. Because whenever it rained, it was shut down, and it should be considered. There was a lot of inland flooding in District 6, which was across the city, especially on Gordon Street, where people had to wait hours in their homes before they could get out.

Councilmember Appel said he agreed with the plans for the peninsula, which were essential for Charleston's future. A lot of analysis had been done, showing the percentage of the population around the County, but they needed to consider how much transportation sales tax revenue was generated on the peninsula from the 8 million tourists who visit each year. When discussing the

transportation sales tax with the community, they believed they were being overtaxed. They needed to communicate that tourists pay a significant portion of this tax, with 80% or more coming from the peninsula. Therefore, supporting peninsula projects and safeguarding their future was crucial, both in terms of data and messaging.

Mayor Cogswell said that a disproportionate amount of the sales tax revenue came from downtown, which visitors paid. This relieved residents of the burden, which is why the TST needed to be passed. It didn't have to be controversial or seen as the peninsula getting more than its fair share. The only reason this was possible was because of their partnership with the Army Corps, and now is the time to move forward with this.

Councilmember McBride said that the population breakdown was based on the proportion of each area. As the numbers were being refined, they considered what the population would be in 10 years, since some parts of Charleston were growing much faster than others.

Mayor Cogswell said they needed a place to allocate funds. They acknowledged that Outer West Ashley and Johns Island were experiencing population growth, along with a significant increase in downtown's population.

Chair Seekings said that 8 million tourists paid a significant amount of sales tax while visiting. Another group that regularly traveled into the County consisted of people coming from outside, who commuted to work at least five days a week and contributed to the half-cent sales tax. The largest employer was MUSC, which recorded 40,000 individual trips on CARTA to and from the MUSC campus. All the corridors mentioned were north-south, with the largest east-west corridor on the peninsula receiving the most attention. Next was the Calhoun Street corridor, which MUSC, CFC, and the LCRT depended on to be open and serve as a continuous, accessible route for mobility and transportation. The success of the Lockwood corridor depended on including the Calhoun Street corridor, as they are interconnected. The Rutledge and Calhoun intersection flooded more severely than any other in the city. It was important to discuss this corridor and the two mobility corridors to incorporate an east-west component. This corridor offered many opportunities since the LCRT was scheduled to open in 2029. If flooded, people would be unable to access the new cancer center, and without improved roads with new crosswalks and intersections, accessibility would be compromised.

Councilmember Mitchell said that with the Calhoun Street corridor running down Morrison Drive heading north, there were issues. The intersection of Huger Street, all the way back in front of Morrison, experienced severe flooding. Coming over Morrison Drive was a post office, and they were unsure if they could persuade them to work with the City to provide some funding. If they managed to raise those streets, the water would have nowhere to go but right back into the community. They would have to be careful when dealing with Morrison Drive because it was a busy thoroughfare and a heavy traffic area.

Mayor Cogswell said that the water on the roads was hindering traffic, and they would need to adopt a comprehensive approach. He was impressed with the efforts that the engineers were making, such as the work on Union Pier to prevent tidal flooding and find ways to remove the water. It was crucial to have data and science to demonstrate that these were smart investments, and when they did the modeling, it would be interesting to see what would happen to Rutledge.

Chair Seekings said they were receiving assistance from other sources as well. The people who entered the County and paid the half-cent sales tax were those who wanted the freedom to move around the County easily. The strongest supporters of implementing the half-cent sales tax were

Mayor Touchberry and Mayor Rainwater. They pushed for it because residents from their towns were frequently traveling in and out of Charleston. Many people were eager to ensure that, as a County, they secured the necessary funds to develop infrastructure, because it impacted not only residents but also visitors coming from other areas.

Mayor Cogswell said they owed the voters specifics on what they were voting for, and that was what they were doing now.

Councilmember Gregorie said not only did they want to see it, but they would also need to give people something that they could feel. They would have to make sure that the inner neighborhoods feel as though they were getting something out of this.

With there being no further business, the Committee adjourned the meeting at 4:17 p.m.

Clerk of Council's Office

Donna Constance