



# APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared for:



Prepared by:





# TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM: COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Prepared for:



Prepared by:



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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

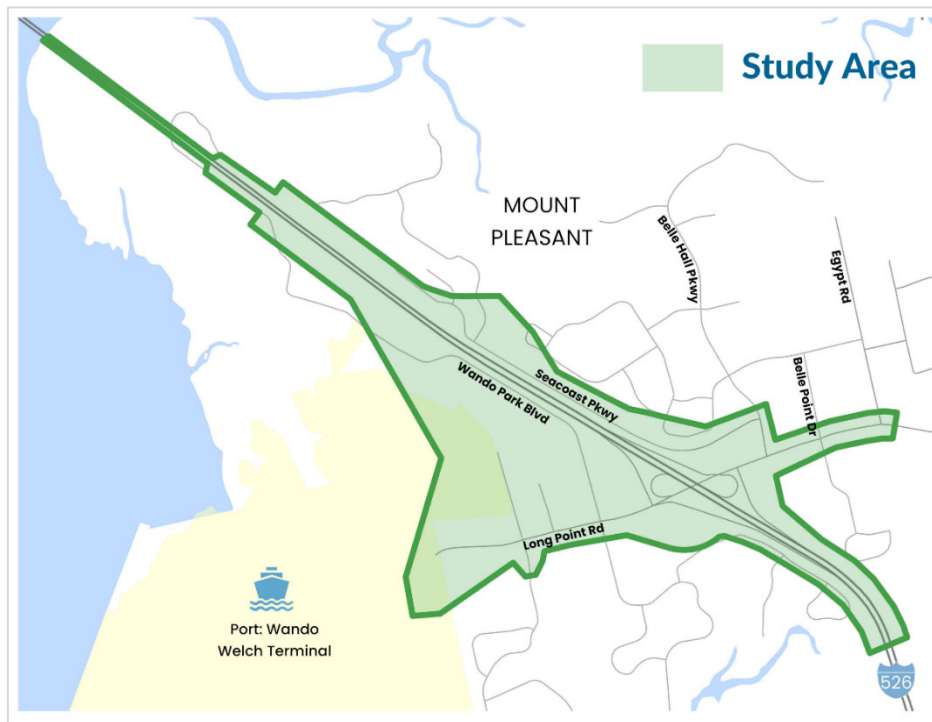
The Community Impact Assessment (CIA) analyzes the effects of the Reasonable Alternatives presented in the environmental assessment (EA) on the surrounding communities, neighborhoods, and quality of life for residents. Factors such as land use, displacements, community cohesion, mobility and access, visual quality, noise, and construction impacts are evaluated to assess the potential positive and negative impacts. The assessment of effects enables the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to address public concerns and minimize community impacts from the proposed project.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY FOR THE COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 1.2.1 STUDY AREA

A study area for the CIA was defined to identify the locations with the most potential for project-related effects on communities (**Figure 1.1**). The study area extends approximately two miles from the Wando River to Hobcaw Creek along I-526 and from the Wando Welch Terminal (WWT) to Egypt Road, approximately 1.5 miles, along Long Point Road, as shown in **Figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1: Study Area



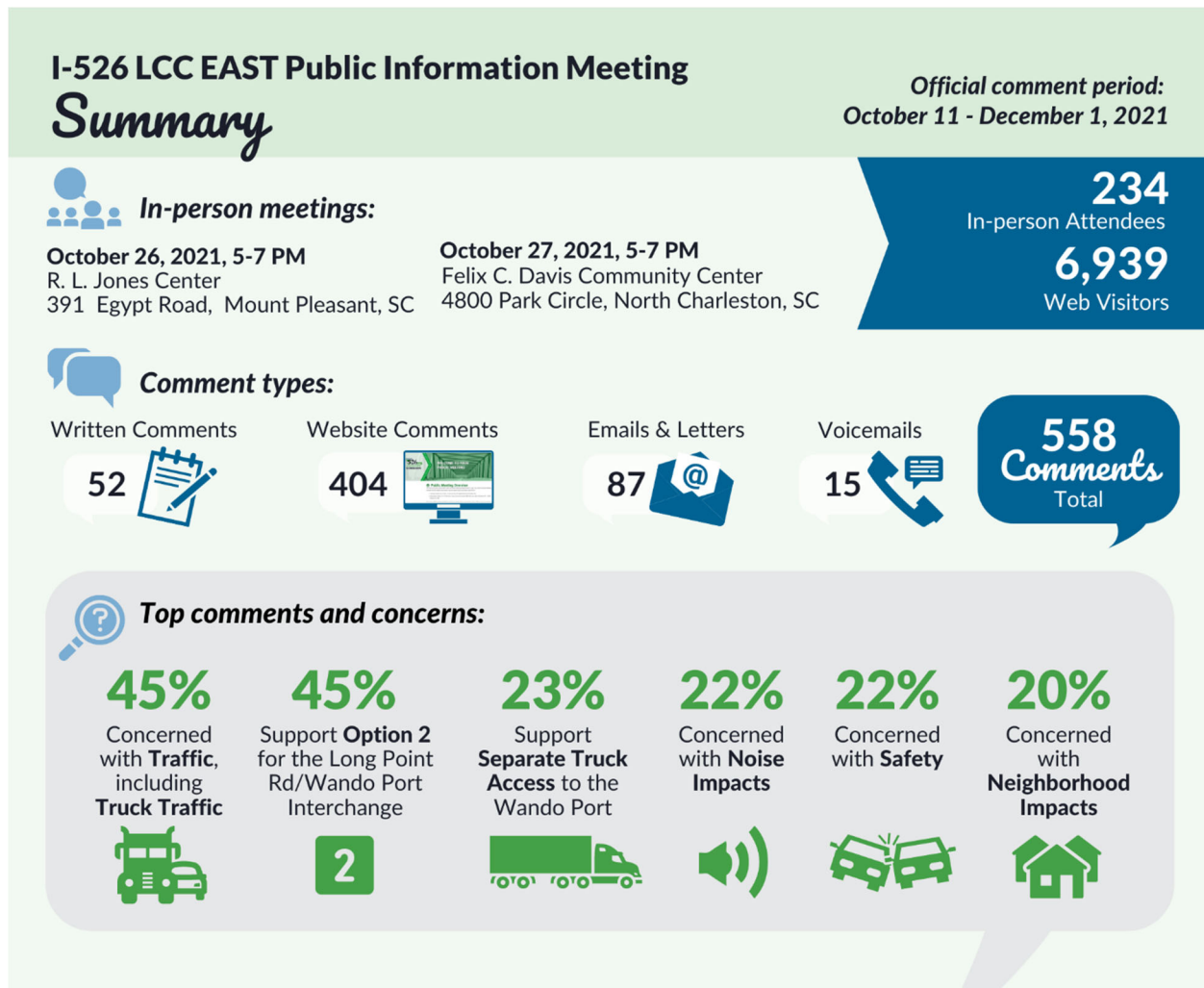
## 1.2.2 DATA SOURCES

Data collection for the CIA included a review of aerial photography, land use plans, real estate data, the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) Data, and Charleston County and Town of Mount Pleasant websites. Baseline conditions were established and demographic data from the 2020 census were used to analyze the effects the Reasonable Alternatives could have on existing neighborhoods and communities within the study area.

## 1.2.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The I-526 at Long Point Road Interchange Improvements project resulted from the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study for I-526 Lowcountry Corridor EAST project. The need for the project was demonstrated by the growing traffic on I-526 and Long Point Road, the existing interchange deficiencies, and the multiple concerns communicated by the public during the PEL study. During the public involvement process for the PEL, the top comments received were concern for traffic including truck traffic, support for Long Point Road/Wando Port Interchange options, and support for a separate/dedicated truck access to and from the WWT. **Figure 1.2** below provides a summary of the comments received during the October 11, 2021 - December 1, 2021 comment period for the PEL.

Figure 1.2: PEL Public Information Meeting Comment Summary October 11, 2021 - December 1, 2021



Upon initiation of the I-526 and Long Point Road Interchange Improvements project, SCDOT developed a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) in June 2022. The PIP details strategies and tools to ensure members of the public receive key information about the project and have opportunities to provide meaningful input on decisions that will affect their communities. The PIP is provided in Appendix N.

A public information meeting (PIM) for the project was held on August 2, 2022. Materials were made available to the public in a variety of methods including on the project website ([www.526lcclongpoint.com/](http://www.526lcclongpoint.com/)), in-person at the PIM, and by USPS, upon request. Additionally, the public could engage and ask questions of the project team by calling the project hotline (843.258.1135), emailing the project email address ([info@526LowcountryCorridor.com](mailto:info@526LowcountryCorridor.com)), or attending the PIM on August 2, 2022. Between July 26 and September 2, 2022, the official comment period, the landing page for the public information meeting materials had 5,284 views. On August 2, 2022, 301 people attended the in-person meeting located at the R.L. Jones Center in Mount Pleasant. A total of 535 comments were received during the formal comment period. The top comments and concerns received during the public comment period were regarding traffic concerns, safety concerns, concerns with the removal of a left turn lane onto Belle Hall Parkway, noise concerns, truck traffic concerns, and neighborhood impacts.

There will be one public hearing conducted during the EA where the Recommended Preferred Alternative and EA will be presented. A public notice will be prepared for the newspapers, and postcard mailings will also be distributed notifying the public of the meeting date, time, and location of the meeting. Materials will be prepared in English and Spanish, and a Spanish translator will be available at the meeting. Materials will include a meeting handout and displays showing the recommended preferred alternative and potential impacts. The public hearing will occur in a hybrid format. All public hearing materials will be made available online 15 days prior to the in-person meeting. The public hearing will consist of an in-person open-house meeting followed by a formal presentation and verbal comment session which will be live-streamed. For those unable to attend in person or via livestream, the public hearing will be recorded and made available online. For more information see Chapter 5 of the EA or Appendices P and Q.

## 2.0 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The study area is located within Charleston County and the Town of Mount Pleasant. The following sections provide an overview of the area's social and economic characteristics.

### 2.1 CHARLESTON COUNTY

#### 2.1.1 LAND USE

Charleston County is located on the Atlantic coast in the Lowcountry Region of South Carolina in the southeastern portion of the state on the Atlantic Ocean. Charleston County is bound by the Atlantic Ocean and four South Carolina counties of Colleton, Dorchester, Berkeley, and Georgetown. Charleston County contains a total of approximately 587,148 acres (917.42 square miles) and encompasses several sea islands including Johns, James, Kiawah, Seabrook, and Wadmalaw Islands. Also included are the cities of Charleston and North Charleston and the towns of Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, and McClellanville. The study area is entirely within the town of Mount Pleasant.

Existing major land uses include industrial, commercial, agricultural, recreational, and residential land. Charleston County is predominantly urban in character, with rural areas on the outer edges of the county to the west, northwest, and northeast. The urban portions of the county consist primarily of high-density residential uses and commercial districts, with some industrial areas, particularly in North Charleston. Rural areas have lower-density residential uses, some agriculture and forested areas, and large wetland areas.

## 2.1.2 POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### Growth Trends

The population in Charleston County has steadily increased over the past 20 years (**Table 2.1**). The factors driving growth have been the quality of life and employment opportunities the County offers. From 2000 to 2020, the County's population increased by 31.5 percent. The South Carolina Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs – Health and Demographics Section's population projections determined that Charleston County's population will increase to 508,730 by 2035. The greatest population growth has occurred in the City of Charleston and adjacent cities and towns.

Table 2.1: Charleston County Population 2000 to 2020

Year	Total Population	Percent Population Growth (2000–2020)
2000	309,969	31.5%
2020	407,543	

Source: 2000 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

### Race/Ethnicity

Historically, the County's population consisted of mostly white and African American residents. Between 2000 and 2020, there was a notable growth of Hispanic residents, and a decline in African American residents, which continues today (**Table 2.2**).

Table 2.2: Charleston County Demographic Changes

Year	Total Population	Total White	Percent White	Total African American	Percent African American	Total Hispanic	Percent Hispanic
2000	309,969	192,921	62.2%	105,870	34.2%	7,795	2.5%
2010	350,209	224,209	64.2%	104,239	29.8%	18,877	5.4%
2020	407,543	263,849	64.7%	105,775	26.0%	21,137	5.2%

Source: 2000 and 2010 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

### Age

Another notable population trend is the increasing number of people 65 and older residing in Charleston County (**Table 2.3**). These residents are retired or semiretired. One reason for this trend is the County's popularity as a retirement destination.



Table 2.3: Charleston County Age Group Changes, 2000 to 2020

Category	2000	Percent of 2000 Total Population	2010	Percent of 2010 Total Population	2020	Percent of 2020 Total Population
Age 65 and over	36,698	11.8%	44,990	12.8%	66,759	16.4%
Ages 45–64	67,809	21.9%	90,682	25.8%	102,317	25.1%
Ages 20–44	120,935	39.0%	131,103	37.3%	148,056	36.3%
Ages 10–19	43,919	14.2%	42,529	12.1%	44,649	10.9%
Ages 0–9	40,608	13.1%	42,178	12.0%	45,762	11.2%

Source: 2000 and 2010 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

According to the U.S. census, the 2020 population in Charleston County is 65 percent white and has a minority (non-white) population around 35 percent. The median age is 38 years old. The average household size is 2.4, and approximately 1.7 percent of the population are non-English speaking.

## Education

Just over two percent of the population of Charleston County has less than a ninth-grade education, while 91 percent have a high school graduate or higher and 41.9 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher. The percentage of those who have a high school diploma or higher or a bachelor's degree or higher is greater than the statewide average of 86.5 percent and 27 percent, respectively.

## Housing

In Charleston County, there were 163,411 residential housing units in 2020, and the median housing value was \$334,600. The homeownership rate was 62 percent, and the rental rate was 38 percent in 2020. The median gross monthly rent was approximately \$1,228 a month. **Table 2.4** summarizes the home value composition in Charleston County. Approximately 59 percent of homeowners have lived in their home longer than 10 years. As of 2020, vacancy rates for the county were at 15 percent.

Approximately seven percent of households have no vehicle available, and two percent have no telephone service.

Table 2.4: Charleston County Home Value Composition

Home Value	Percent of Housing Units
Below \$50,000	4.3%
\$50,000 to \$100,000	5.1%
\$100,000 to \$200,000	14.6%
\$200,000 to \$300,000	19.9%
\$300,000 to \$400,000	17.6%
\$400,000 to \$500,000	11.1%
\$500,000 to \$750,000	14.5%
Above \$750,000	13.0%

Source: ACS 5-year data, 2020

## 2.1.3 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### Schools

Charleston County School District has 44 elementary schools, 14 middle schools, and 10 high schools, along with five combination schools, seven charter schools and 11 magnet schools. In addition, there are 42 private schools within the county.

### Colleges/Universities

There are 17 universities, colleges, or post-high school educational opportunities in Charleston County.

### Medical Centers/Hospitals

Six hospitals are within the county including East Cooper Medical Center, Medical University of South Carolina, Ralph H. Johnson U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Roper St. Francis Healthcare, Trident Health System, and Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital.

### Police/Fire/Emergency Medical Services

Community services in Charleston County include police departments, fire rescue departments, and emergency medical services (EMS) (**Table 2.5**). The Charleston County Sheriff's Office is the primary law enforcement provider for unincorporated areas of the county, while many cities and towns have municipal law enforcement. Fourteen fire departments provide fire protection services to the residents of Charleston County. Charleston County EMS staffs 15 full-time medic stations throughout the county including four that are on duty during high call volumes.

Table 2.5: Charleston County Community Services

Police	Fire Rescue	EMS Units
Charleston County Sheriff's Office	Charleston County Volunteer Rescue Squad	EMS Medic Stations 1–12, 14, 15
City of Charleston Police Department	Awendaw Fire Department	EMS Awendaw Stations 1 and 2
Isle of Palms Police Department	City of Charleston Fire Department	EMS St. Paul's Station 5 and 7
Lincolville Police Department	Dewees Island Fire Department	City Fire Station 19
Mount Pleasant Police Department	Isle of Palms Fire Department	
North Charleston Police Department	James Island Public Service District Fire Department	
Sullivan's Island Police Department	Lincolville Fire Department	
	Mount Pleasant Fire Department	
	North Charleston Fire Department	
	St. Andrew's Public Service District Fire Department	
	St. John's Fire District	
	St. Paul's Fire Department	
	Sullivan's Island Fire Department	
	C&B Fire Department	
	National Park Service	

Source: Charleston County Comprehensive Plan, 2017

## Libraries

The Charleston County Library System houses its main library in downtown Charleston and has five regional and ten local branch libraries.

## Parks /Recreation

Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, Charleston County Greenbelt Plan, and the City of Charleston provide recreational opportunities including but not limited to parks, boat landings, and beach/water access. Numerous city and neighborhood parks are also within the county.

## Churches

There are hundreds of churches in Charleston County.

## Cemetery

There are over 50 cemeteries in Charleston County.

## 2.1.4 ACCESS AND MOBILITY

### Roadway Network

The primary roadway network in Charleston County includes two interstates, three U.S. highways and several state routes, including four within the study area. Interstate 26 (I-26) comes from the northwest into the center of downtown Charleston and ends, with connections to U.S. Highway 17 (US 17, Septima Clark Expressway) and U.S. Highway 52 (Meeting Street). Approximately 50 miles north of Charleston, I-26 connects with Interstate 95 (I-95). Beginning at its interchange with I-26 in North Charleston, Interstate 526 (I-526) forms a half-circle around the city of Charleston to connect to US 17 in Mount Pleasant to the east and to US 17 in West Ashley to the west.

### Public Transportation

Public transportation servicing the area is provided by Charleston Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) and Rural Transportation Management Agency. In Charleston County, CARTA provides service in and between North Charleston, Charleston, Mount Pleasant, West Ashley, and James Island. CARTA has regular routes that travel to major destinations and Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH) service that provides free bus transportation in the downtown area. A Tel-A-Ride Service provides curb-to-curb service for residents who meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) certification requirements.

TriCounty Link provides rural bus service to Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties. In Charleston County, three TriCounty Link bus routes serve the western portion of the County, including Johns Island, Kiawah Island, Seabrook Island, and Edisto Island, as well as the towns of Meggett, Hollywood, and Ravenel. Two routes serve the eastern part of the County and extend into the Towns of Awendaw and McClellanville. Commuter routes are also available through TriCounty Link.

Amtrak has a station in North Charleston, with daily service to destinations on the Eastern Seaboard.

### Airports/Waterways/Rail

Charleston County transportation modes include airports, ports, roads, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian paths. Charleston County contains three airports including the Charleston International

Airport located in North Charleston, the Charleston Executive Airport located on Johns Island, and the Mount Pleasant Regional Airport located in Mount Pleasant. The South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA) owns and operates five marine terminals in the Port of Charleston: Union Pier, Wando Welch Terminal, North Charleston Terminal, Columbus Street Terminal, and Veterans Terminal.

## 2.1.5 EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

### Employment

The labor force in Charleston County is composed of 207,897 employees. The top categories of employment by industry for Charleston County are educational, health, social services (22.7 percent); professional, scientific, and management, and administrative (15.2 percent); and healthcare and social assistance (13.7 percent). These categories differ from the top industries for the state, which includes educational, health, social services (22.1 percent); manufacturing (13.4 percent); and healthcare and social assistance (13.0 percent). Employment in manufacturing composes approximately 6.6 percent of the labor force in Charleston County, compared to 13.4 percent for the state. The top employers in the county include:

- Joint Base Charleston, 22,000 employees
- Medical University of South Carolina, 16,000 employees
- Roper St. Francis Healthcare, 6,000 employees
- Charleston County School District, 5,900 employees
- The Boeing Company, 5,700 employees

As shown in **Table 2.6**, Charleston County had an unemployment rate (2.3 percent) in 2020 less than both South Carolina and the United States. The 2020 census data showed that the median household income in Charleston County is \$67,182, which is above average for South Carolina. Additionally, Charleston County has a lower percentage (7.7) of the population that lives below the poverty level compared to both the state and the United States.

Table 2.6: Charleston County Economic Factors

	Charleston County	South Carolina	United States
Median Household Income	\$67,182	\$54,864	\$64,994
Unemployment	2.3%	3.3%	3.4%
Families Below Poverty Level	7.7%	10.5%	9.1%

Source: 2020 census, ACS 5-year data, 2020

### Income/Poverty Status

The 2020 census data showed that the median household income in Charleston County is \$67,182, which is higher than South Carolina and is similar to the United States (**Table 2.6**). A slightly smaller percentage of families are living in poverty in Charleston County (7.7 percent) compared to South Carolina (10.5 percent) and similar to the United States (9.1 percent).

## Travel Characteristics

The average travel time to work in Charleston County is 24.2 minutes. Most people in the workforce drive alone (78.2 percent) to work while 7.6 percent carpool, 2.4 percent walk to work, and 1.2 percent use public transportation.

## 2.2 STUDY AREA

The study area includes 6 block groups (BGs) located entirely within the Town of Mount Pleasant, including census tract (CT) 46.12 BG 1, CT 46.13 BG 1, CT 46.14 BG 1, CT 46.14 BG 2, CT 46.14 BG 3, CT 46.22 BG 2 (as shown in **Figure 2.1**).

### 2.2.1 LAND USE

Existing major land uses within the study area include industrial, commercial, recreational, and residential land. The study area is predominantly developed and urban in character. The study area consists of residential and commercial districts, with some industrial areas and the WWT.

### 2.2.2 POPULATION AND HOUSING

The demographic area evaluated includes the six BGs located entirely within the Town of Mount Pleasant as presented in **Figure 2.1**. BGs within the study area include CT 46.12 BG 1, CT 46.13 BG 1, CT 46.14 BG 1, CT 46.14 BG 2, CT 46.14 BG 3, CT 46.22 BG 2. The demographic characteristics of these BGs, based on 2020 census data, are shown in **Table 2.7**.

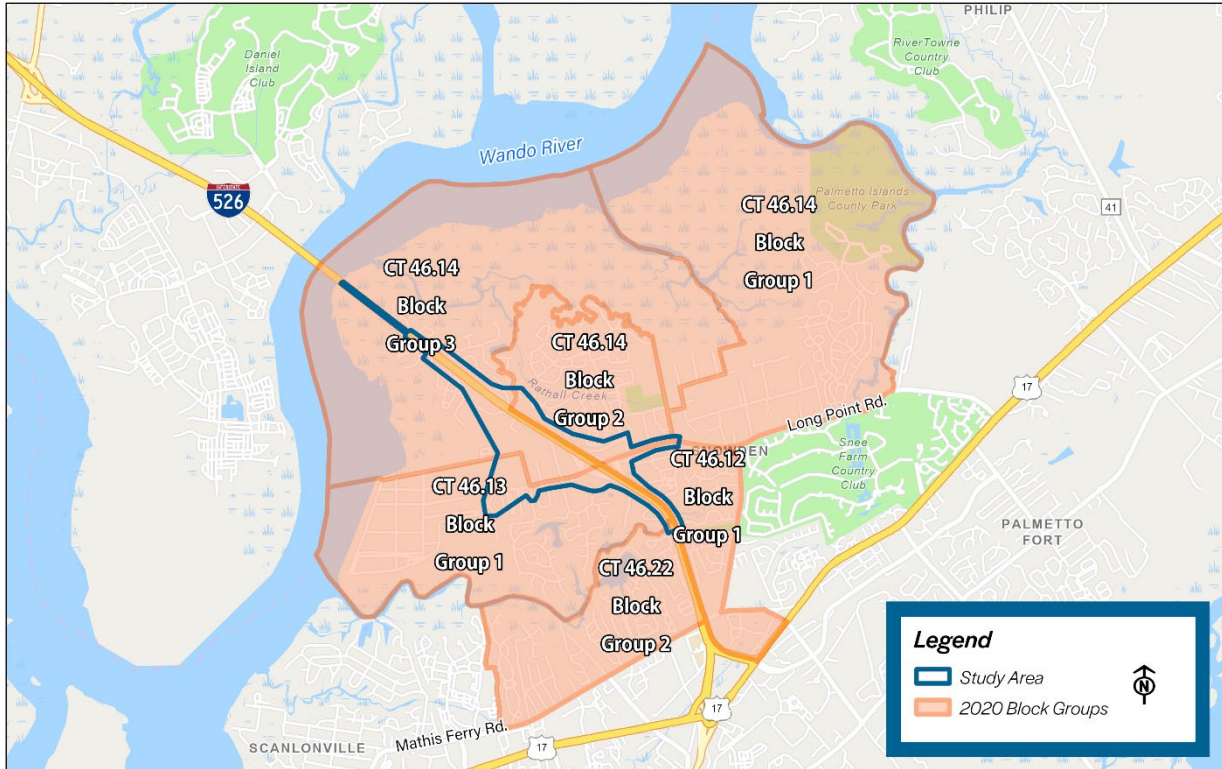
Table 2.7: Demographic Characteristics in the Study Area

Location/Block Group	Population	Percent Minority	Percent over Age 65	Percent Households with Children (under 18)
CT 46.12 BG 1	1,818	4.6%	18.0%	22.9%
CT 46.13 BG 1	1,785	9.0%	9.5%	49.8%
CT 46.14 BG 1	2,856	20.7%	12.8%	38.4%
CT 46.14 BG 2	2,605	7.0%	18.2%	35.9%
CT 46.14 BG 3	1,893	4.0%	4.8%	29.0%
CT 46.22 BG 2	3,792	18.4%	17.8%	25.4%
Study Area	14,749	12.1%	14.2%	32.3%
Charleston County	407,543	35.3%	16.4%	24.4%
South Carolina	5,091,517	36.6%	17.7%	28.9%

Source: 2020 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

According to census data, the population of the study area is 14,749. The population of BGs in the study area are similar, ranging from 1,785 to 3,792. The percentage of minority individuals within the BGs varies, with CT 46.14 BG 3 having the lowest percentage (four percent) and CT 46.14 BG 1 having the highest percentage (20.7 percent). The percentage of the population over age 65 ranges from 4.8 to 18.2 percent, while the percentage of households with children under 18 ranges from 22.9 to 49.8 percent.

Figure 2.1: Study Area with Block Groups



Approximately two percent of the population within the study area has less than a ninth-grade education. Approximately 98 percent of the same population is a high school graduate or higher, while 33 percent has a bachelor’s degree or higher.

As shown in **Table 2.8**, of the BGs that comprise the study area, owner occupancy varies from 20.8 to 99.8 percent. Residents who have lived in their home over 10 years varies from 18.7 to 88.3 percent of the BGs that comprise the study area.

Table 2.8: Housing Characteristics in the Study Area

Location/ Block Group	Median Value of Owner Occupied Homes	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied	Vacant	Lived in Residence over 10 Years	Households without a Vehicle
CT 46.12 BG 1	\$325,700	42.2%	57.8%	0.0%	46.2%	1.6%
CT 46.13 BG 1	\$494,600	97.5%	2.5%	4.9%	88.3%	1.3%
CT 46.14 BG 1	\$489,600	92.8%	7.2%	1.3%	83.6%	2.9%
CT 46.14 BG 2	\$427,500	97.1%	2.9%	5.4%	71.0%	1.1%
CT 46.14 BG 3	\$385,000	20.8%	79.2%	7.5%	18.7%	0.0%
CT 46.22 BG 2	\$535,600	99.8%	0.2%	0.0%	70.6%	2.3%
Study Area	\$443,000	75.8%	24.2%	3.0%	62.4%	1.6%
Charleston County	\$334,600	62.2%	37.8%	14.7%	58.8%	6.5%
South Carolina	\$170,100	70.1%	29.9%	15.4%	66.9%	6.0%

Source: 2020 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

### 2.2.3 COMMUNITY SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Community service providers are the same as those discussed in Section 2.1. There is one community facility in the study area, the Christ Church Presbyterian Church.

### 2.2.4 ACCESS AND MOBILITY

The primary roadway network in the study area includes I-526 and Long Point Road. I-526 forms a half-circle around the City of Charleston to connect to US 17 in Mount Pleasant to the east and to US 17 in West Ashley to the west. Charleston County transportation modes include roads, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian paths. Public transportation servicing the area is provided by CARTA. CARTA offers a Tel-A-Ride Service providing curb-to-curb service for residents who meet the ADA certification requirements.

### 2.2.5 EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Based on 2020 census data, the median household income average is \$135,683, which is higher than the state (\$54,684).

**Table 2.9** shows the employment and income characteristics of communities in the study area. The median household income ranges from \$81,890 in CT 46.12 BG 1 to \$240,027 in CT 46.13 BG 1. The percent living below the poverty line ranges from zero percent in CT 46.14 BG 1 and CT 46.14 BG 2 to 13.5 percent in CT 46.12 BG 1, as compared to the state (10.5 percent). The study area unemployment rate is 0.6 percent, which is lower than the state (3.3 percent). CT 46.14 BG 2 has the highest unemployment rate within the study area, at 1.7 percent. Most people in the study area workforce drive alone to work (77.5 percent) while 2.1 percent walk to work, and 1.1 percent use public transit.

Table 2.9: Employment and Income in the Study Area

Location/Block Group	Unemployment Rate	Median Household Income	Percent Below Poverty Level
CT 46.12 BG 1	0.0%	\$81,890	13.5%
CT 46.13 BG 1	0.3%	\$240,027	0.2%
CT 46.14 BG 1	1.4%	\$120,313	0.0%
CT 46.14 BG 2	1.7%	\$118,125	0.0%
CT 46.14 BG 3	0.0%	\$83,080	2.9%
CT 46.22 BG 2	0.0%	\$170,662	2.3%
Study Area	0.6%	\$135,683	2.5%
Charleston County	2.3%	\$67,182	7.7%
South Carolina	3.3%	\$54,864	10.5%

Source: 2020 census, ACS 5-year data 2020

## 3.0 IMPACTS

Reasonable alternatives include the No-Build Alternative and Alternative 2. The No-Build Alternative includes the anticipated widening of LCC WEST, which consists of a widening from four lanes to eight lanes starting at US 17 in West Ashley and ending at Virginia Avenue in North Charleston.

The No-Build Alternative includes no improvements within the study area and would not result in the relocation of any residences, businesses, or community facilities.

Alternative 2 would provide new access to Long Point Road for port-related traffic along with an Improved Partial Cloverleaf Interchange. Collector-Distributor (CD) roads would be used to help separate port-related and local traffic. This alternative is compatible with the planned widening of I-526. Alternative 2 would have direct, and proximity impacts on several areas within the study area, as it would provide a new additional access point to Long Point Road for port-related traffic along with an improved partial cloverleaf interchange. Direct impacts would be concentrated in the southwestern portion of the study area between I-526 and the WWT, while proximity impacts would consist of altered traffic patterns to users of Long Point Road, including the Belle Hall neighborhood.

### 3.1 RELOCATIONS

Alternative 2 would require ten building relocations, including the relocation of six multi-tenant commercial buildings and four single-tenant commercial buildings, and a cellular phone tower (representing four tenants). This results in the relocation of 51 businesses. In addition, Alternative 2 would relocate the Christ Church Presbyterian and two outbuildings. A total of 54 relocations have been identified for Build Alternative 2.

In addition, five WWT port buildings will be impacted by Alternative 2. The exact use of these buildings is undetermined at this time, but it is likely they are outbuildings that could be relocated somewhere else on the WWT property.

No additional impacts to businesses are anticipated as a result of displacements or proximity to the proposed roadway improvements.

No residential relocations are anticipated as a result of Alternative 2.

### 3.2 COMMUNITY COHESION

Alternative 2 would not create a physical barrier within the study area. No residents should be isolated from the community, and social interaction/networking between neighbors would not be affected. Existing access to local shopping, schools, and other facilities would be maintained. Community members would also benefit from Alternative 2, as it provides new access to Long Point Road for port-



related traffic along with an Improved Partial Cloverleaf Interchange. Collector-Distributor (CD) roads would be used to help separate port-related and local traffic.

### 3.3 Travel Patterns/Accessibility

Alternative 2 would provide new access to the western end of Long Point Road for port-related traffic, because of the addition of the two new ramps along I-526 that would extend to the western end of Long Point Road near the main gate of the WWT.

The improved partial cloverleaf interchange would facilitate the merging and diverging of traffic onto the I-526 mainlines. The collector-distributor (CD) roads would be used west of the interchange to separate port-related traffic and local traffic. I-526 eastbound diverging (exiting) movements onto Long Point Road would be distributed to either the western end of Long Point Road near the main gate of the port or to the improved interchange.

I-526 westbound merging movements from Long Point Road would be collected from both the western end of Long Point Road near the main gate of the port and from the improved interchange. The CD roads would tie into the existing Wando River bridge truck-climbing lanes and the existing directional (straight) ramps of the interchange. This would provide additional length for merging and diverging movements.

This should also reduce the likelihood of vehicles backing up on I-526 when exiting the interstate or on Long Point Road when merging onto the interstate. Alternative 2 is compatible with the planned widening of I-526.

In addition, the design will require the addition of a median at the entrance of the Belle Hall neighborhood, which will prevent vehicles traveling eastbound on Long Point Road from turning left at the intersection of Long Point Road and Belle Hall Parkway, thus altering existing traffic patterns at this intersection. However, vehicles traveling eastbound along Long Point Road would still be able to access the Belle Hall neighborhood by turning left at the intersection of Long Point Road with Belle Point Drive (one block downstream of Belle Hall Parkway) and Egypt Road (two blocks downstream of Belle Hall Parkway).

Incorporating a 10-foot multiuse path along the east side of Long Point Road from Wando Park Boulevard to Belle Point Drive to enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity – There are existing sidewalks located along Long Point Road on both sides of the roadway connecting to sidewalks on Wando Park Boulevard, Belle Hall Parkway, Belle Point Drive, and Egypt Road. An existing bicycle lane is located on the west side of Long Point Road from Belle Hall Parkway and continues outside the project limits along Long Point Road to Whipple Road. Incorporating a 10-foot multiuse path along the east side of Long Point Road will enhance connectivity within and around the study area. The proposed multiuse path will connect to the existing sidewalks and accommodate future connections to bicycle and pedestrian facilities outlined in the BCDCOG Walk-Bike Master Plan<sup>1</sup> and the “Mount Pleasant Way”<sup>2</sup> plan proposed by the Town of Mount Pleasant.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.walkbikebcd.com/documents.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tompsc.com/1347/Mount-Pleasant-Way>

## 3.4 COMMUNITY ISSUES AND ATTITUDES

Public comments regarding the Reasonable Alternatives were received during the August 2022 comment period. Analysis of the top comments received showed that 45 percent of respondents support Build Alternative 2, while 20 percent are concerned with neighborhood impacts. These concerns about neighborhood impacts largely represent residents of the Belle Hall neighborhood, who have expressed concerns about the median design located at the Long Point Road/Belle Hall Parkway, as this will eliminate left-turns to their access to the neighborhood when they are traveling eastbound along Long Point Road.

## 3.5 SPECIAL POPULATIONS

There are specific concentrations of low-income populations in the study area. Access to community facilities and services is not expected to be altered by Alternative 2.

## 3.6 VISUAL/AESTHETICS

This visual impact assessment (VIA) evaluates the effects of the proposed project on visual resources and has been prepared in accordance with the *Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* published in January 2015. The FHWA VIA guidelines begin with a scoping process to highlight visual resource issues and determine the appropriate level of study for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Based on the VIA scoping process for the proposed project, a VIA memorandum was deemed an appropriate level of study for NEPA compliance. The findings of the scoping process are provided in the EA, Appendix C.

### Compatibility

The proposed project would predominantly be compatible with the existing developed character of the AVE which consists of commercial buildings, industrial facilities, and large-scale transportation infrastructure. The proposed project would be similar in size, scale, color, and texture to existing roadways. Most improvements would be at existing grade, avoiding impacts to views outside of actively using I-526 or Long Point Road. The proposed project would predominantly be built within existing right-of-way, avoiding the removal of vegetation and impacts to the marsh/river landscape unit. Most residential areas are buffered from the proposed project by existing tree cover.

### Viewer Sensitivity

The proposed project would be primarily at-grade and similar in size, scale, texture, and color to existing transportation infrastructure within the AVE. No roadway lighting is expected as part of the proposed project, minimizing viewer sensitivity to the proposed project during non-daylight hours. Viewers within the AVE would predominantly be insensitive to changes.

Most residences, commercial buildings, and industrial facilities would be buffered from visual changes by existing tree cover. Travelers on I-526, Long Point Road, Wando Park Boulevard, and Seacoast Parkway would be able to see changes as a result of the proposed project while using these roadways. However, views would be of short duration and travelers would likely be routinely using these roadways, minimizing the attention paid and focus on visual changes.

Residents directly adjacent to the proposed westbound entrance ramp overpass onto I-526 (i.e., southeast portion of Tidal Walk and Grassy Creek neighborhoods, southwest portion of the Belle Hall Plantation) would be sensitive to visual changes. The proposed project would not be buffered from view by tree cover and skyline views would be obstructed. The duration of views of the proposed project could be of long duration while residents use yards or porches. Headlights from traffic would be a new source of lighting; however, traffic volumes are not expected to increase and more direct routing for truck traffic as a result of the proposed project could reduce the overall number of viewers or duration of views impacted by headlights within the AVE.

### Degree of Impact

Visual impacts from the proposed project would predominantly be neutral. The proposed project is predominantly compatible with the existing character of the AVE and viewers would predominantly be insensitive to changes. The exception is residents adjacent to the proposed westbound entrance ramp overpass onto I-526 (i.e., southeast portion of Tidal Walk and Grassy Creek neighborhoods, southwest portion of the Belle Hall Plantation) where localized adverse impact would occur. Impacts would be adverse because the overpass would obstruct views for adjacent residents.

### Mitigation

Mitigation includes feasible measures taken to avoid, minimize, and offset visual impacts associated with the proposed project. Public comment received by nearby residences indicated concern about impacts to views from the proposed project. To mitigate these potential impacts the design was modified to shift the proposed ramps approximately 1,000 feet to the east. This realignment provides the greatest distance between residences and the overpass and avoids and minimizes tree removal to retain the visual buffer between residences and the proposed project. In addition, noise walls are being evaluated for residential areas adjacent to the roadway improvements and would serve as a buffer from views of the road. Although the design, size, and location of noise walls is still to be determined, it is feasible to construct the barriers using various material types to complement the surrounding character of the area. No roadway lighting is expected as part of the proposed project, minimizing viewer sensitivity to the proposed project during non-daylight hours. No additional mitigation is proposed.

## 3.7 ECONOMICS

The addition of direct access and exit ramps between I-526 and the WWT would provide additional roadway capacity to meet truck traffic travel demand, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the WWT for freight and logistics carriers. This, in turn, will help support the growth and expansion of freight and logistics businesses within the study area, thereby supporting the SCPA.

In 2017, the Town of Mount Pleasant conducted a Port District Economic Development Study as part of a comprehensive assessment for the area surrounding the WWT. The study identified the section of Long Point Road and Wando Park Boulevard from the I-526 corridor to the WWT as a potential “economic ecosystem,” having a broad range of complementary land uses that may include offices and businesses providing port-related services, restaurants, breweries, health and wellness facilities, daycares, and small retail businesses. Additionally, the Town of Mount Pleasant Comprehensive Plan (2020) identifies the Long Point District as a community-commercial hub that supports a mixed use of residential, commercial, and light industrial land uses. The Comprehensive Plan outlines opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment, refining zoning to support and recruit port-related industries and