

Technical Assistance Panel



Maybank Highway Improvement Recommendations

Johns Island , SC
02.06.2009



**Urban Land
Institute**

South Carolina



Urban Land Institute

South Carolina

ULI – The Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 and has over 40,000 members from more than 80 countries. It is one of America's most respected sources of information and knowledge on urban planning, growth and development. ULI is a nonprofit research and education organization. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. To encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences, ULI membership represents the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. Among its members there are developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, planners, public officials, brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students and librarians.

ULI South Carolina

In local communities, ULI District Councils bring together a variety of stakeholders to find solutions and build consensus around land use and development challenges. The ULI South Carolina District Council was formed in 2005 to encourage dialogue on land use and planning throughout this state and with each of the three main regions (Upstate, Midlands, Coastal), and to provide tools and resources, leadership development, and a forum through which the state can become better connected. The District Council is led by an Executive Committee with statewide and regional representation, as well as steering committees within each region that focus on the development of membership, sponsorship, programs and Young Leader initiatives. With over 600 members, ULI South Carolina is committed to bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs.

Maybank Highway TAP Sponsor

Charleston County sponsored the Maybank Highway Improvement Recommendations TAP in order to receive an unbiased professional opinion on the recommended way forward to address the highway's traffic congestion and safety concerns. Though Charleston County financially sponsored the TAP, the City of Charleston fully supported the initiative and worked with the County staff in an open and transparent manner to ensure that the TAP was fully supported by both parties.

Charleston County is one of three counties in the Charleston metropolitan area and includes 16 municipalities as well as unincorporated areas. The City of Charleston lies within Charleston County and has jurisdiction over 62% of the parcels of land that lie within the Urban Growth Boundary on Johns Island. The remainder of Johns Island is under the County's jurisdiction. Due to the annexation system in place in South Carolina, both governments currently have jurisdiction over property along and within the vicinity of Maybank Highway. In addition, both have invested several years trying to determine the improvements required to address the traffic congestion and safety issues experienced along this important transportation corridor.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Maybank Highway is a two-lane state highway (SC-700) that runs in a northeasterly-southwesterly direction across Johns Island in the metropolitan area of Charleston, South Carolina. It has been experiencing increased traffic congestion and longer travel times and conditions are expected to worsen as the area continues to grow. This is particularly the case on the highway's approach to Johns Island from the Stono River Bridge and at its intersections with River Road and with Main and Bohicket Roads. Safety for travelers along Maybank Highway is an additional concern and one that will also grow in importance in the future as the use of alternative forms of transportation – walking, cycling, public transit – increases as improvements outlined in the Johns Island Community Plan and its Transportation Element are put into place and the corridor becomes more developed.

Charleston County and the City of Charleston have both studied the Maybank Highway corridor on Johns Island and made recommendations for potential roadway improvements. Their views on how to address its traffic congestion and safety issues currently conflict. Charleston County favors a four-lane road widening plan for the highway while the City of Charleston prefers a “pitchfork” and town and country roadway network plan (referred to as “the Hall plan”) for the area in which Maybank Highway is not widened to four lanes. Not only do the County and City have differing views that make it difficult to proceed but there is also concern that improvement funds previously awarded for a road widening plan may be at risk if the City's plan is pursued. It is this situation that has brought the County and City together in seeking an independent professional opinion from the Urban Land Institute's TAP program.

THE PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

The mission of the ULI TAP team was to evaluate the Hall Planning and Engineering concept for Maybank Highway Improvements, particularly in the context of the goals of the City of Charleston's Johns Island Community Plan and the Johns Island SmartCode, which emphasize integrating land use and transportation as part of the transportation planning process. The team was also to look for ways to satisfy the requirements of the SCDOT and the NEPA process, while protecting the efficiency of the transportation system that serves the citizens of Johns, Wadmalaw, Kiawah and Seabrook Islands.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing its recommendations, the Maybank Highway TAP first determined that it was important to define community in the context of the questions asked and recommendations made. This allowed the TAP to establish that the underlying principle that should guide them and others when making decisions concerning improvements to the highway should be as follows:

All transportation-related decisions need to be consistent with community land use plans.

The panel made four key recommendations for improvements to Maybank Highway that respond to the sponsor's problem statement and respect their underlying assumptions. The first recommendation is broad in scope while the remaining three pertain to specific segments of the highway. They are:

1. Establish a street and roadway network
2. Widen Maybank Highway from Stono Bridge to River Road
3. Improve Maybank Highway / River Road intersection
4. Adopt the primary components of the Johns Island Community Plan for Maybank Highway from River Road to Bohicket / Main Roads

All transportation-related decisions
need to be consistent with
community land use plans.

TAP Panel

BACKGROUND ON TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS

The Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) is offered by ULI South Carolina to provide local municipalities and community based nonprofit organizations with objective, multi-disciplinary advice on land use planning, development and redevelopment issues.

WHAT ARE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANELS (TAPs)?

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Advisory Services Program has been assisting communities by bringing together two-day or week-long panels of seasoned real estate, planning, financing, marketing, and development experts to provide unbiased pragmatic advice on complex land use and development issues.

How Do TAPs Work?

Sponsors request the services of a TAP with regard to a specific issue that can be addressed by a panel of experts in one or two days. The local District Council assists the sponsor in refining the scope of the assignment and convenes a panel of volunteers from the ULI membership base to address those specific issues. The sponsor works within the ULI guidelines to provide background information to ULI panelists prior to the panel's convening. When convened, members of the TAP view the subject site, hear from public and private stakeholders, and then deliberate on the assigned issues. At the conclusion of its work, the panel presents an oral report to stakeholders; that is followed by a written report within approximately two weeks.

WHAT DO TAPs Cost?

A fee is charged for the advisory service, but the panel members are not compensated for their time. The fee depends on the length of the actual TAP convening but it is typically between \$8,000 and \$12,000, including panel expenses. Each TAP is different, and fees are negotiated individually with the client sponsoring it. Panel members donate their time and are only reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses, such as overnight lodging and transportation to attend the TAP. To ensure objectivity, panel members cannot be involved in matters pending before the sponsor, be working for the sponsor, or solicit work from the sponsor during the panel's assignment period.



Panel members prepared for the Town Hall meeting.

BACKGROUND ON MAYBANK HIGHWAY TAP

STUDY AREA FEATURES AND JURISDICTION

Maybank Highway is a two-lane state highway (SC-700) that runs in a northeasterly-southwesterly direction across Johns Island in the metropolitan area of Charleston, South Carolina. The northeastern end of the highway begins on neighboring James Island and its southwestern end terminates on Wadmalaw Island. However, the TAP study area is focused on the 3.8-mile segment of the highway that runs from the Stono River across Johns Island to where it intersects the meeting of Bohicket and Main Roads. The entire length of Maybank Highway that forms the study area lies within the City of Charleston's Urban Growth Boundary.

Since Maybank Highway is a state highway, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has approval authority over improvements. Land and development on Johns Island along and within close vicinity to the highway fall under the jurisdiction of either the City of Charleston or Charleston County, depending on annexation status. Current land uses along the highway are mixed and include residential, commercial, industrial, public and undeveloped. An aerial view of the highway and adjacent land is shown below.

MAYBANK HIGHWAY NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS

The number of motor vehicles using Maybank Highway and other primary and secondary roads on Johns Island has been increasing due to the development of new neighborhoods and other uses there as well as on neighboring Kiawah and Seabrook Islands. This growth will continue both within the Urban Growth Boundary that extends onto Johns Island (with Maybank Highway as its spine) and on the resort islands. The added traffic load currently has limited options to disperse on Johns Island, resulting in increased traffic congestion and longer travel times on the existing arterial roads and at key intersections on the island. This is particularly the case along Maybank Highway, especially on the approach to Johns Island from the Stono River Bridge and at its intersections with River Road and with Main and Bohicket Roads.

Safety for travelers along Maybank Highway is an additional concern and one that will grow in importance in the future. This is because the use of alternative forms of transportation – walking, cycling, public transit – will increase as improvements outlined in the Johns Island Community Plan and its Transportation Element are put into place and the corridor becomes more developed.

MAYBANK HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS TO DATE

Charleston County and the City of Charleston have both studied the Maybank Highway corridor on Johns Island and made recommendations for potential roadway improvements. Their views on how to address its traffic congestion and safety issues currently conflict. Charleston County's transportation staff and consultants believe the originally requested four-lane widening plan will better serve the transportation needs of Johns Island and the surrounding islands. However, the City of Charleston prefers a "pitchfork" and town and country roadway network plan for the area in which Maybank Highway is not widened to four lanes. Not only do the County and City have differing views that make it difficult to proceed but there is also concern that improvement

"They're going to build. It's going
to grow."

**Blase Keegel, Johns Island
landowner**



funds previously awarded for a road widening plan may be at risk if the City's plan is pursued.

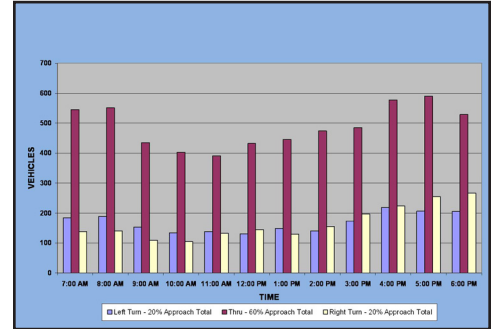
While the County has always maintained that it believes a four-lane road widening plan is required, the City has not always supported its current "pitchfork" and town and country roadway network plan. The City was actually the first to request in 2001 that Maybank Highway be widened to a four-lane facility and this plan was approved by the regional planning agency, thereby qualifying it for federal funds. That plan was provided additional support in 2006 by a voter referendum that authorized the issuance of bonds to partially fund the improvements. That same year, the County included a four-lane divided highway facility for Maybank Highway in its Comprehensive Transportation Plan, listed the project in its RoadWise Program that is funded by the sales tax and began to develop a conceptual design.

As this was taking place, the City began to prepare the Johns Island Community Plan which involved extensive participation from residents of Johns Island and other stakeholders and was adopted in 2007 as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Community Plan emphasizes a shift toward form-based zoning and development that is intended to protect the unique character of the island. Its Transportation Element recommends a "pitchfork/network" design that emphasizes interconnectivity and a sequence of town and country sections for Maybank Highway in which it is not widened to four lanes. The plan's land use recommendations for property within the Urban Growth Boundary on Johns Island – including along the Maybank Highway TAP study area– have since been supported by the City's SmartCode, a form-based code developed in 2008.

During the development of the Johns Island Community Plan, the City notified the County of its revised plans for Maybank Highway. In response, the County RoadWise staff expressed concern that the town and country roadway network concept would not adequately address existing and anticipated traffic levels on Maybank Highway and recommended to County Council that the original four-lane project be continued. When the City reiterated its desire to move forward with its revised plan, the City and County agreed to fund a traffic study conducted of the City's plan in order to find a consensus. The City hired Hall Planning and Engineering, Inc. to evaluate whether the planning recommendations of the Johns Island plan could be implemented. The consultant recommended improvements to the "pitchfork" network of streets concept that balanced the need to move traffic through the corridor more efficiently while protecting the character of Johns Island.

City Council endorsed the Hall plan in September 2008 while County staff remain concerned about its ability to adequately address traffic congestion, anticipated construction costs, compliance with environmental permitting through NEPA, the impact of the plan on other residents of Johns Island and the neighboring islands who must travel through Maybank Highway to reach their destinations as well as the potential risk of losing federal and state funds that had been allocated to previously approved plans for the highway. It is this situation that brought the County and City together again in seeking an independent professional opinion, this time from ULI's TAP program.

Traffic studies indicate that approximately 40% of southbound traffic on Maybank Highway is turning onto River Road.



Based on Traffic Counts for the Maybank Highway Widening Study



"Pitchfork" and town and country roadway network plan proposed by the City of Charleston.



Hall Planning and Engineering, Inc.

Four-lane widening proposal by Charleston County.



The LPA Group, Inc.

MAYBANK HIGHWAY TAP PANELISTS

The nine panelists selected to participate in the Maybank Highway Improvement Recommendations TAP have diverse expertise. Listed on the back cover of this report, they come from the development, investment, law, market analysis, economic development, architecture, landscape architecture and transportation planning professions. They are all members of the Urban Land Institute.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement directed to the Maybank Highway TAP reads as follows:

The mission of the ULI team was to evaluate the Hall Planning and Engineering concept for Maybank Highway Improvements, particularly in the context of the goals of the City of Charleston's John's Island Community Plan and the Johns Island SmartCode, which emphasize integrating land use and transportation as part of the transportation planning process. The team was also to look for ways to satisfy the requirements of the SCDOT and the NEPA process, while protecting the efficiency of the transportation system that serves the citizens of Johns, Wadmalaw, Kiawah and Seabrook Islands.

THREE QUESTIONS POSED TO THE PANEL

The sponsor asked the panel to address three strategic questions regarding the TAP study area. The questions are listed below and their responses are incorporated within the TAP recommendations provided later in this report.

1. How can Charleston County improve Maybank Highway to accommodate the City of Charleston's Johns Island Community Plan and the Johns Island Smart Code goals while still protecting the efficiency of the transportation system that serves the citizens of Johns, Wadmalaw, Kiawah, and Seabrook Islands?
2. How can Charleston County improve Maybank Highway to accommodate the City of Charleston's Johns Island Community Plan and the Johns Island Smart Code goals while still satisfying the requirements of SCDOT?
3. How can Charleston County improve Maybank Highway to accommodate the City of Charleston's Johns Island Community Plan and the Johns Island Smart Code goals while still satisfying the requirements of the NEPA process?

PANEL PROCESS

The Maybank Highway TAP process consisted of 10 steps:

Situation Analysis – In November 2008, representatives of the ULI South Carolina District Council, Charleston County and the City of Charleston met to discuss efforts that had been undertaken and conflicting recommendations that had emerged to address the traffic issues relating to Maybank Highway and how the ULI – through TAP – might help determine the best way forward to improve the situation.

TAP Panel Selection – The ULI South Carolina District Council considered the County's and City's goals for the TAP and selected panelists who had the expertise most tailored to addressing the issues raised by the County and the City.

Review of Briefing Materials – Prior to arriving in Charleston, the TAP panelists reviewed a comprehensive set of pre-meeting briefing materials on the County's and City's plans, studies and other supporting documentation relating to the TAP study area that had been assembled by ULI SC, the County and the City. The materials included the County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan, the City's Johns Island Community Plan and the concept plan prepared for the City by Hall Planning and Engineering, among several other items. To ensure full representation, TAP members conducted preliminary interviews with select key stakeholders.

Sponsor Debriefing – The TAP panelists first assembled at the Francis Marion Hotel in downtown Charleston on Thursday, February 5th in order to meet with the County and the City to discuss any questions or requests for clarification that had arisen from their review of the briefing materials. Representatives for the TAP included Kurt Taylor, Deputy Charleston County Administrator and Jim Armstrong, Director of Transportation Development from Charleston County as well as Christopher Morgan, Director of Planning for the City of Charleston.

Study Area Tour – The TAP panelists traveled by van to conduct a driving tour of the Maybank Highway study area later that afternoon that involved approaching it from downtown Charleston and James Island via the James Island Connector and Folly Road. Time was spent examining the approach to Johns Island from the Stono River Bridge to the River Road intersection, the Maybank Highway / River Road intersection, the locations of the "town" nodes identified in the Johns Island Community Plan, the Maybank Highway / Bohicket / Main Roads intersection as well as the general nature of existing land use and transportation activity along the overall corridor.

Town Hall Meeting – The TAP panelists attended a town hall meeting at the Johns Island Library on Thursday evening. After briefly introducing themselves and informing the audience of their mandate and areas of expertise, the public meeting was then opened to the floor to allow the public to express their views. The primary objective of the town hall was to provide the panelists with the opportunity to hear from a wide range of community leaders, including elected and appointed officials, business owners and active residents. Stakeholders who could not be accommodated during the stakeholder interview sessions due to time constraints were given the first opportunity to speak. Immediately

prior to this event, the panelists also met with Councilman Paul Thurmond of Charleston County Council, who represents the River Road area of Johns Island as well as Kiawah and Seabrook Islands.

Stakeholder Interviews – On the morning of Friday, February 6th, the panelists held interviews with community leaders representing all points of view in meeting rooms at the Charleston County Judicial Center in downtown Charleston. A total of 19 interviews, each averaging 30 minutes in duration, were conducted in three parallel streams. Every effort was made to assign two to three panelists to each stakeholder and match them according to stakeholder concern and panelist area of expertise.

Working Sessions – The panelists held two working sessions, the first on Thursday evening following the public workshop and the second immediately after the stakeholder interviews concluded late Friday morning. During these sessions the panelists reviewed the significant findings drawn from the previous tasks, identified key issues to cover, came to a consensus on key assumptions, developed recommendations and prepared a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted their key findings, assumptions and recommendations.

Presentation – The panelists presented their PowerPoint presentation of findings and recommendations at 4:00PM on Friday, February 6th in an open session at the Charleston County Judicial Center. They then took questions from the audience and spoke with the attending media.

Report Preparation and Release – The TAP, under the leadership of the ULI South Carolina District Council, prepared this report on its conclusions and recommendations. It presented the report to the sponsor on February 20, 2009.

A list of the key stakeholders who spoke at the Town Hall meeting or were granted individual interviews is provided in the Appendix.



Panelists listened to community members at the Town Hall meeting.

FOUNDATION FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To set the foundation for recommending improvements for Maybank Highway, the TAP members first came to a consensus on several assumptions relating to the community served, community values, guiding principles, major challenges faced and desired outcomes of their recommendations. The TAP members strongly encourage the authorities ultimately responsible for determining and making improvements to Maybank Highway to also adhere to them.

COMMUNITY SERVED

The panel established that the “community” to be served by improvements to Maybank Highway is composed of three broad segments. The first segment – determined to merit priority attention due to its location, size and direct impact – consists of Johns Island residents. This is followed by two secondary segments: the population of the larger region that travels to and through Johns Island for employment or leisure purposes and the resident / visitor base of the nearby sea islands that must traverse Johns Island in order to access downtown Charleston and other parts of the metropolitan region.

The resident population of Johns Island was estimated to total approximately 14,000 in 2008. Of this total, approximately 4,500 live within the incorporated area of the City of Charleston and the remainder live in the unincorporated area that falls under the jurisdiction of Charleston County. The neighboring sea islands of Kiawah and Seabrook each have an estimated 1,100 to 1,400 residents.

COMMUNITY VALUES

The values that the community holds for Johns Island have been clearly stated through the public participation process associated with the development of the Johns Island Community Plan and the SmartCode as well as during the Town Hall meeting and stakeholder interviews conducted as part of the Maybank Highway TAP assignment. They



Town of Kiawah's Mayor Pro Tem, Alan Burnaford, spoke to the TAP members during the Town Hall meeting.

We can preserve the character and
still get places in a timely manner,
it's possible to do it right."

**Sam Furr, Maybank Highway
resident**

This image conveys the guiding principle.



Images produced by Town Planning & Urban
Design Collaborative

relate to both the island's existing and desired qualities. These include its rural character, its stately trees and forest canopy, its strong sense of community, its desirable quality of life as well as the community's strong desire for focused growth and improved connectivity / walkability.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE

The TAP members collectively determined that the underlying principle that should guide the recommendations and decisions made concerning improvements to Maybank Highway to be as follows:

All transportation-related decisions need to be consistent with community land use plans.

This fundamental principle recognizes that transportation and planning for growth must go hand in hand.

MAJOR CHALLENGES FACED

The panel identified five major challenges that added complexity to making recommendations for improvements to Maybank Highway. They are:

Coastal growth – The coast of South Carolina, including the Charleston metropolitan area, has been undergoing rapid growth and this is expected to continue. The region's scenic beauty and climate is attracting both new residents and visitors. While there is much resistance to growth on the part of many of the residents of Johns Island, the island is on the path of development and it is the gateway to the exclusive resorts of Kiawah Island and Seabrook Island. Recognizing the growth pressures faced by Johns Island was a major challenge for the TAP panel as well for the authorities responsible for managing this growth and for making the needed improvements to Maybank Highway. Consideration of the access needs of the neighboring resort islands was another challenge. Their resident and employment base needs to be given a voice when considering improvements to Maybank Highway and other access routes.

I-526 uncertainty – Extension of the southeastern portion of the Mark Clark Expressway has been proposed as a "high priority" project by the SCDOT and several scenarios are under consideration. However, the SCDOT does not currently have the funds to proceed with this project so its future remains uncertain. Whether and where this expressway would be extended and provide access has potentially serious implications for Johns Island. For the purposes of this study, the panel has assumed that, in the event that the extension of I-526 does proceed, it is not likely to do so within the next ten years. Nevertheless, it requires further study and consideration.

Limitations of River Road and Bohicket / Main Roads – Maybank Highway intersects with River Road near the northeastern end of the study area and with Bohicket/Main Roads at the southeastern end. These roads are popular routes for island residents going to and returning from work as well as for travelers driving between Charleston and Kiawah and Seabrook Islands. Traffic backs up at these key intersections during heavy commute times. Except for where they intersect with Maybank Highway, River Road and Bohicket / Main Roads are outside of the TAP study area. Not knowing their capacities or potential for improvements to the same level of detail as for Maybank Highway placed a limitation on the TAP study. Furthermore, what is known about them – their stately tree-lined nature that exemplifies the island's special character that its residents wish to protect – places an

even greater limitation on the additional traffic they can absorb and the improvements they can undergo in the future. The TAP was aware that these issues and possible solutions are being studied by a committee of the Mayors and County Councilmembers of the islands along with citizens of Johns and Wadmalaw Islands in order to identify possible improvements that could increase their capacity. The TAP strongly encourages that these efforts continue.

Building consensus – Public consultation conducted as part of this TAP process and previous studies reveals that many residents of Johns Island feel it is important to preserve the “rural” character and maintain the “low density” of Johns Island. Yet these terms have different meanings for different people. In addition, the various authorities involved with addressing the traffic and safety concerns associated with Maybank Highway have very different views on how to proceed. Interpreting the meaning of the terms used among the Johns Island community and the views expressed by the authorities was a challenge for the Maybank Highway TAP as was coming up with recommendations in a way that builds consensus among all involved.

Political/community will – What should be done to address the traffic problems on Maybank Highway has been under consideration for quite some time. Numerous studies have been conducted and distinct views on the best way forward have emerged. There is a risk that “analysis paralysis” or a “stalemate” between the responsible jurisdictions will set in and that a suitable solution will not be adopted and implemented. There is also a risk that the funding authorities will not support any plan other than that originally approved by them with regard to improvements for Maybank Highway. Given the lengthy process involved, the community may also weaken in its determination to see their preferred plan come to fruition. These possibilities posed a major challenge for the TAP in that it hoped to make a set of recommendations that the community and authorities can get behind and push through the planning, approval and implementation process. The TAP encourages the community and stakeholders to remain passionate, stay interested and be civil with those who have conflicting views.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

The TAP members established four positive impacts as the desired outcomes of their recommendations for improvements to Maybank Highway:

1. Protect quality of life/rural character
2. Relieve congestion
3. Plan for future growth
4. Preserve and support the economic viability of the Maybank corridor

Each desired outcome is expanded upon below.

Protect quality of life / rural character – The recommendations developed by the Maybank TAP must reinforce the values held by the Johns Island community with respect to their unique community and natural environment as well as their strong desire to preserve and protect the rural character of their island. In the same light, recommendations made should discourage suburbanization and the uniform distribution of density. This can be accomplished by making recommendations for the Maybank Highway corridor that relate in a positive way to the town and country concept put forth in the Johns Island Community Plan and strongly favored by the local community. This interconnected approach sees higher levels of development occurring in three village nodes along the highway that are separated by sections that retain a lower density and more rural nature. These areas are supported by a street and roadway network that collectively provides

improved access, permits higher density development in designated areas and creates an overall village-style of development that is pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Recommendations made by the TAP should therefore serve to integrate infrastructure needs with land use plans in the Johns Island Community Plan and the SmartCode zoning plan in order to respect community values.

Relieve congestion – The Maybank TAP was to focus largely on developing recommendations that will relieve the congestion that occurs at key points along the Maybank Highway corridor. This was in direct response to the problem statement that they were provided by the TAP sponsor. The recommendations center around three broad areas of improvement that relate to access, key intersections and the roadway grid. Accordingly, the transportation planners on the TAP have played a significant role in developing these recommendations.

Plan for future growth – The recommendations developed by the TAP for Maybank Highway are intended to accommodate the transportation-related aspects of the dynamic growth anticipated for the corridor over the next 15 to 20 years and accounted for in the Johns Island Community Plan. In this way, design-related decisions that are made today should meet established goals while not preventing future opportunities for improvement from taking place.

Preserve and support the economic viability of the Maybank corridor – The TAP's recommendations for Maybank Highway are intended to support the land use development patterns that are proposed for this important corridor in the Johns Island Community Plan and the SmartCode. These plans call for a mix of land uses, including commercial and residential, along the corridor at densities that vary according to location near or within village nodes or more rural zones. Commercial development is proposed to include a variety of retail, office and light industrial uses. Easy access to these destinations is critical for their survival. Residential development is proposed to be in close proximity and consist of many forms such as multifamily villages, workforce housing and low density single family. Safe travel by various modes both within and through the Maybank Highway corridor is a key consideration among these residents and visitors to the area. Transportation-related recommendations made by the TAP should address these access and safety concerns in order to preserve and support the economic viability of the Maybank corridor.



Residents spoke strongly about protecting the scenic qualities and rural character of Johns Island.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

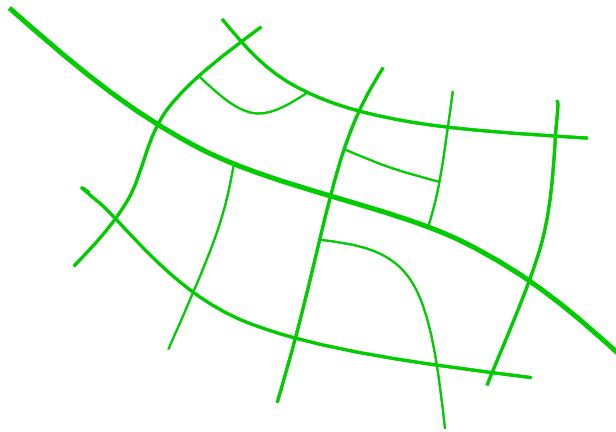
The panel made four key recommendations for improvements to Maybank Highway that respond to the sponsor's problem statement and respect the underlying assumptions stated above. The first recommendation is broad in scope while the remaining three pertain to specific segments of the highway. They are:

1. Establish a street and roadway network
2. Widen Maybank Highway from Stono Bridge to River Road
3. Improve Maybank Highway / River Road intersection
4. Adopt the primary components of the Johns Island Community Plan for Maybank Highway from River Road to Bohicket / Main Roads

ESTABLISH A STREET AND ROADWAY NETWORK

The panel supports previous recommendations to establish an integrated, connected network of streets and roadways so that vehicular travel on major arterials is reduced. This involves creating streets that parallel and connect with Maybank Highway and introducing accessways that link interconnected parcels as part of development plans for larger parcels that adjoin Maybank Highway. It also involves adopting a new definition for roadways that incorporates the development and application of new design standards for pedestrian and bicycle ways that allow for the safe and efficient movement of non-vehicular traffic. These recommendations are set out in detail in the Johns Island Community Plan and in the Hall plan.

Developing a street and roadway network in the vicinity of Maybank Highway will provide several benefits. It will result in reduced travel times without corresponding increases in travel speed. It will improve access opportunities to commercial establishments and for emergency response vehicles. It will allow local trips to remain on local streets and use accessways linking interconnected parcels. With traffic dispersed, it will also allow more opportunities for non-vehicular connections. In this way, pedestrians and cyclists will be given equal consideration.



WIDEN MAYBANK HIGHWAY FROM STONO BRIDGE TO RIVER ROAD

This section of Maybank Highway is recognized as the most significant challenge in terms of improvements required. It serves as the gateway to Johns Island for travelers coming from downtown Charleston via James Island. The significance of this is two-fold. First, it is important that its scenic quality be preserved so that it provides a positive first impression that reflects the rural image and character of Johns Island that its residents wish to maintain. Second, as a gateway, it is subject to intense use such that it is often the most congested section of the highway, at least during peak travel times. This dual significance calls for improvements that balance the need to protect the corridor's scenic beauty with the need to relieve the traffic congestion that occurs here.



The TAP team recommended a hybrid three-lane approach for the Stono Bridge to River Road segment of Maybank Highway.

Not only is the overall scenic quality of this section worthy of preserving but there are also significant stands of older oak and pine trees on the land adjoining the highway that not only enhance this beauty but are also protected and cannot be destroyed. Opportunities to expand the highway along this section are therefore limited and require careful study of possible routes that will not diminish the scenic beauty of the approach or harm or destroy the protected trees.

In light of these considerations, the panel makes two recommendations for this section of Maybank Highway. First, improvements should be made on an incremental basis. The value of this approach is that it promotes flexibility and integrates well with the recommended roadway network. It does not preclude additional improvements that may be required later in time. It permits an evolution of design that can respond to growth, the introduction of other roadway improvements and unanticipated events. Second, it is recommended that a “hybrid three-lane” approach be considered for Maybank Highway between the Stono Bridge and the River Road intersection. This consists of a primarily two-lane approach to Johns Island from the Stono Bridge that is paralleled at some distance to the southeast by a single lane exit from the island towards the bridge. The distance between the two directions of traffic will be dictated by the need to route the new laneway away from significant stands of trees. Delineation of this route is beyond the scope of the TAP panel as it requires detailed site analysis and sensitive planning.

Providing two lanes of southeast bound traffic and a third lane for traffic exiting the island across the Stono Bridge between River Road and the bridge – and doing this in combination with improvements to the Maybank Highway / River Road intersection that are described below – will relieve the congestion that mounts on this section of Maybank Highway and improve the arrival experience.

IMPROVE MAYBANK HIGHWAY / RIVER ROAD INTERSECTION

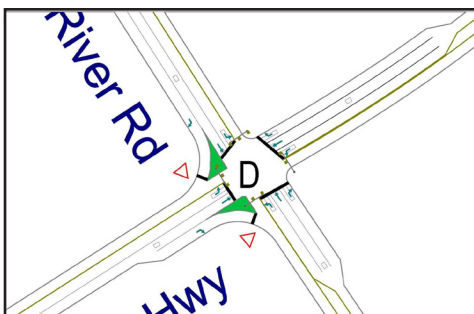
Given the heavy congestion that occurs at the intersection of Maybank Highway and River Road during peak travel times, the panel considers this intersection to be the most important short term priority with respect to improvements needed for the Maybank Highway corridor. Making appropriate improvements to this intersection as a first step can give incremental and immediate relief to the traffic congestion experienced here and in the immediate area.

Data that has been collected during previous studies indicate that approximately 40% of southeast bound vehicular movements on Maybank Highway at River Road are turning northwest and southeast onto River Road. Yet there are currently only limited turn lanes available to them. As a result, through traffic gets caught behind traffic that must wait for opportunities to turn left or right onto River Road.

The panel recommends that, at a minimum, dedicated left, through and right turn lanes should be provided on Maybank Highway and River Road to relieve the congestion that occurs here. Dedicated left and right turn lanes will allow left and right turning vehicles to move into their own lanes while they await opportunities to turn left or right. This will thereby permit through traffic to proceed without delay when traffic signals instruct them to advance. This set of intersection improvements at Maybank Highway and River Road should be done immediately. The diagram to the left indicates how this should be done.

These intersection improvements will not only relieve the traffic congestion experienced at the intersection but also on the section of Maybank Highway that approaches Johns Island from the Stono Bridge.

The TAP panel supports dedicated left, through, and right turn lanes for the Maybank Highway and River Road intersection.



Hall Planning and Engineering, Inc.

ADOPT THE PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF THE JOHNS ISLAND COMMUNITY PLAN FOR MAYBANK HIGHWAY FROM RIVER ROAD TO BOHICKET / MAIN ROADS

The City's concept for the Maybank Highway corridor consists of a series of "town" and "country" zones in which the roadway characteristics and design correspond with the nature of development and activity allowed in each zone. It maintains that Maybank Highway generally remain a two-lane roadway with some modification. Highway improvements in the "town" sections incorporate left-turn lanes into more urban style streets. The "country" sections show a wider road, but maintain two travel lanes with green medians and bicycle/pedestrian facilities. Another key facet of the City's concept is that a parallel network of streets be created and linked to form a grid pattern for local and neighborhood traffic.

It is the panel's recommendation that the primary components of the Johns Island Community Plan be adopted to address improvements needed to Maybank Highway for its 3-mile stretch between River Road and Bohicket / Main Roads.

Four notable components of the plan that the panel believes would relieve congestion and improve safety along Maybank Highway are:

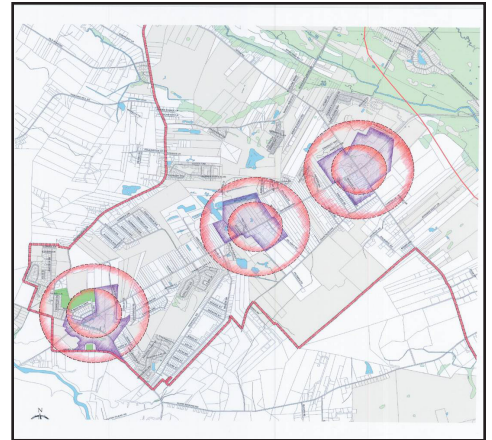
1. Maintain Maybank Highway as a two-lane facility for most of this section of the highway.
2. Provide dedicated left-turn lanes at key intersections such as Walter Drive in order to allow through traffic to proceed more efficiently.
3. Create a street and roadway network that provides connectivity, permitting alternative travel routes and encouraging the use of alternative transportation modes.
4. Provide on-street parking at the "town" nodes where people are expected to come and go in order to shop, conduct business and gather, and to do so by private vehicle and public transit as well as on foot and by bicycle. On-street parking needs to respect land use and development patterns and activity.

It is important that accommodations be made for pedestrians and bicycles. Guidelines should be developed so that both skilled and unskilled riders can travel easily and safely both to and within these town nodes. They should permit flexibility according to their location within the "town" nodes and in the more rural sections.



TAP Co-Chair Steve Navarro introduced the panel speakers who presented the final TAP recommendations. "Satisfying the people who live on Johns Island is the first priority," Navarro said.

The city's concept for the Maybank Highway corridor consists of a series of "town" and "country" zones.



Johns Island Community Plan



"We're all working hard to figure out a solution to a complicated problem."

Mayor Joseph P. Riley,
City of Charleston

CLOSING REMARKS

The TAP strongly believes that the recommendations it has proposed in response to the problem statement presented to them, if implemented, will greatly relieve the traffic congestion that has been experienced along the Maybank Highway corridor and improve the level of safety provided regardless of travel mode. Its recommendations offer concrete solutions for moving forward, as opposed to the need for further study. The panel recognizes that these recommendations must complement the ongoing efforts of Charleston County to improve transportation on Johns Island as a whole.

The Maybank Highway TAP recognizes that there will be continued challenges in going forward with plans to improve Maybank Highway on Johns Island. But, more significantly, it feels it is important to acknowledge that the level of commitment to determine a solution is strong among the authorities involved as well as among area residents and stakeholders. The TAP also found that while diverse views have in many ways polarized the authorities and the different segments of the community, there are many commonalities upon which consensus in moving forward can build. For example, the majority of those consulted as part of the TAP process agree that it will take a great deal of time and effort to develop and finalize solutions and that the solutions pursued must be appropriate for the long term. So, while there is an urgent need to address the issues at hand, they will not be solved over the next few days, weeks or months and no one is expecting them to be.

The panel was given two additional questions to answer that related to satisfying the requirements of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and the NEPA permitting process. It is the panel's opinion that the hybrid set of recommendations it has made will meet SCDOT requirements. However, it anticipates that the Charleston Area Traffic Study's (CHATS) 20-year regional plan would have to be modified as it reflects the four-lane widening plan that the City initially proposed for the Maybank Highway in 2001. The TAP further believes that no major problems should be encountered from an environmental standpoint in terms of its recommendations achieving compliance with the NEPA permitting process.

Funding many of the recommended improvements could be an issue as the SCDOT does not build street networks. However, the City has explained that their development regulations require that developers construct connective streets at their expense, as a condition of development. Additionally, if the legal issues regarding the referendum approvals can be resolved, along with the concerns of the SCDOT regarding design standards, the County sales tax funds could be used to fund a substantial amount of what has been recommended for Maybank Highway proper.



The panel is of the opinion that with no major obstacles presented regarding SCDOT or NEPA, some additional effort will still be required. However, when considering the objectives of the community and adhering to the community's guiding principles, this extra work is well worth the effort in order to enable a sustainable future.

APPENDIX: TOWN HALL AND STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The following stakeholders were each given five minutes to speak at the start of the Town Hall meeting held at the Johns Island Library on Thursday evening, February 5th since there was not enough time to accommodate them during the stakeholder interview sessions on the morning of Friday, February 6th:

Al Burnaford – Councilman / Mayor Pro Tempore, Town of Kiawah Island
Cindy Floyd – Planning Commission Member / Former Council Member, Charleston County
Thomas Legare – Johns Island Resident, Member, Concerned Citizens of the Sea Islands
Frank McNulty – Mayor, Town of Seabrook Island

Panel members met with several community leaders on the morning of Friday, February 6th to hear their perspectives on improvements needed for Maybank Highway on Johns Island. Individuals with whom they met are listed in alphabetical order below.

Jim Armstrong / Peter Valiquette – Director of Transportation Development, Charleston County / Consultant
Jim Bobo, Jr. – Realtor
Alec Brebner – Interim Director, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments
Sam Brownlee – Johns Island Resident, Member of Johns Island Growth Management Committee
Ryan Castle – Charleston Trident Board of Realtors
Colleen Condon – Councilmember, Charleston County
Yvonne Evans – Councilmember, City of Charleston
Rick Hall / Tracy Hegler – Transportation Planners, Consultant to the City of Charleston
Curtis Inabinett – Councilmember, Charleston County
Tim Keane – Land Planning Consultant to City of Charleston on Johns Island Community Plan
Jimmy Kerr / Vince Graham / Mitch Laplante – Kerr property development team
Timothy Mallard, Councilmember, City of Charleston (district includes Johns Island)
Josh Martin / Megan Desrosiers – Coastal Conservation League
Louise Maybank – Wadmalaw Island Resident
Christopher Morgan – Planning Director, City of Charleston
Andrea Petraeus for Dan Pennick – Planning Director, Charleston County
Joseph Riley, Jr. – Mayor, City of Charleston
Dr. Paul Roberts – Kiawah Island Resident, former Transportation engineer
Bill Saunders – Johns Island Resident, Member of Concerned Citizens of the Sea Islands

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