

RESOLUTION

Designating US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) as a  
State Transportation Improvement Program (Unfunded)

WHEREAS, the primary purpose of the US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) is to provide an alternative parallel roadway to US 278 through southern Beaufort County and Southern Jasper County between US 278 at Buckingham Landing and I 95 in Jasper County; and

WHEREAS, explosive growth in southern Beaufort County and anticipated growth in Jasper County will exceed the capacity of US 278 and its ability to serve the needs of the population and tourism on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, the ability to expeditiously and safely evacuate residents on Hilton Head Island and the greater Bluffton area during a natural disaster such as a hurricane would dramatically improve with the development of US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway); and

WHEREAS, the US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) will serve as an arterial for east-west routing of traffic through Southern Beaufort County as an alternate route to US 278 (Fording Island Road) which is currently over capacity by over 10,000 vehicles on a daily basis; and

WHEREAS, projections indicate traffic volumes on US 278 to grow by more than 50% over the next 20 years which will exacerbate the ability of this roadway to function; and

WHEREAS, US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) will provide the needed roadway lane miles to serve this growing community and facilitate movement of traffic and economic vitality of the region; and

WHEREAS, the US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) will improve the efficiency of the roadway network during a hurricane evacuation providing realistic and acceptable evacuation times for the community; and

WHEREAS, the US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) needs to be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) through Lowcountry Council of Government's 20-year long-range transportation plan as an unfunded project; and

WHEREAS, inclusion in the STIP will allow Federal earmark of funds toward the project.

WHEREAS, The anticipated cost of Phases 5 through 7 will exceed both Beaufort County and Jasper County's ability to fund; therefore State and Federal funds will need to be identified; and

WHEREAS, with the project included in the STIP, Beaufort County and Jasper County will be able to apply to the State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) for financing of the project. It is likely that the SIB will look favorably on the County's funding and construction of Phases 1 through 4 as a strong local commitment to the project and may serve towards any required matching funds. A financial plan is included in the proposed feasibility scope for Phase 5; and

WHEREAS, including the project in the STIP, completing the feasibility study and environmental assessment are the next steps in the process to have this phased roadway plan constructed:

- Phases 1 and 2 of the US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) between Burnt Church Road and Simmonsville Road are complete.
- Phases 3 and 4 between Simmonsville Road and SC 170 have been designed and bids for construction are being accepted through 9/21/05. These phases are anticipated to be completed by the end of January 2007.
- Phase 5 will extend US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) from Burnt Church Road to Buckingham Landing at an estimated cost of \$50 million. This will be done by constructing a new roadway that will tie into US 728 near Buckingham Landing with a possible interchange. This phase will improve east-west traffic flow through this corridor and relieving congestion on the existing US 278. An engineering team to develop the functional plans and Environmental Assessment (EA) for Phase 5 is currently being selected and should begin engineering in November 2005.
- Phase 6 and 7 will extend US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) from SC 170 to the Beaufort County/Jasper County Line and then connecting to I 95 with a new interchange between US 17 and US 278. This phase will allow US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) to provide an alternate route to the Greater Bluffton Area and to traffic heading towards Hilton Head Island from I 95 and serve the projected/anticipated growth in the region. This should improve the efficiency of the existing roadway network including US 278 and intersecting roadways. Jasper County and the City of Hardeeville are utilizing an engineering consultant to analyze and evaluate this phase of the project; and

WHEREAS, an access management plan for US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) is being developed and the roadway will be constructed with controlled access to maintain the capacity and safety of the roadway; and

WHEREAS, the County is developing the Purpose and Need for this project in accordance with Federal guidelines.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the members of the Beaufort County Council support the inclusion of US Highway 278 Alternate (Bluffton Parkway) in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) through Lowcountry Council of Government's 20-year long-range transportation plan as an unfunded project. This will allow Federal earmark of funds toward the project.

Dated this 12th day of September, 2005.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BEAUFORT COUNTY

By: Wm. Weston J. Newton  
Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman

ATTEST:

Suzanne M. Rainey  
Suzanne M. Rainey, Clerk to Council