

The Argument for Building the Greenway Now

Something badly needs to be done about safety on Johns Island roads. There are currently an average of 10 accidents per week and 6 deaths per year. Half of the deaths involve hitting a tree. This is the consequence of roads built in the early part of the last century, to the lower design standards that existed at that time.

Congestion is also a problem. Some say there are no congestion problems on Johns Island. That is not true. Congestion levels of traffic are reached at much lower volumes per lane on one-lane rural roads with inadequate widths, no shoulders, and uncontrolled access than they are on six-lane freeways with wide lanes, unobstructed shoulders and access control. And, traffic congestion on these roads increases the problems with safety.

There is a solution to the safety and congestion facing Johns Island. The two feasible alternatives are: 1) widen Main Road and Bohicket Road, or 2) build a new road across the largely uninhabited center of Johns Island.

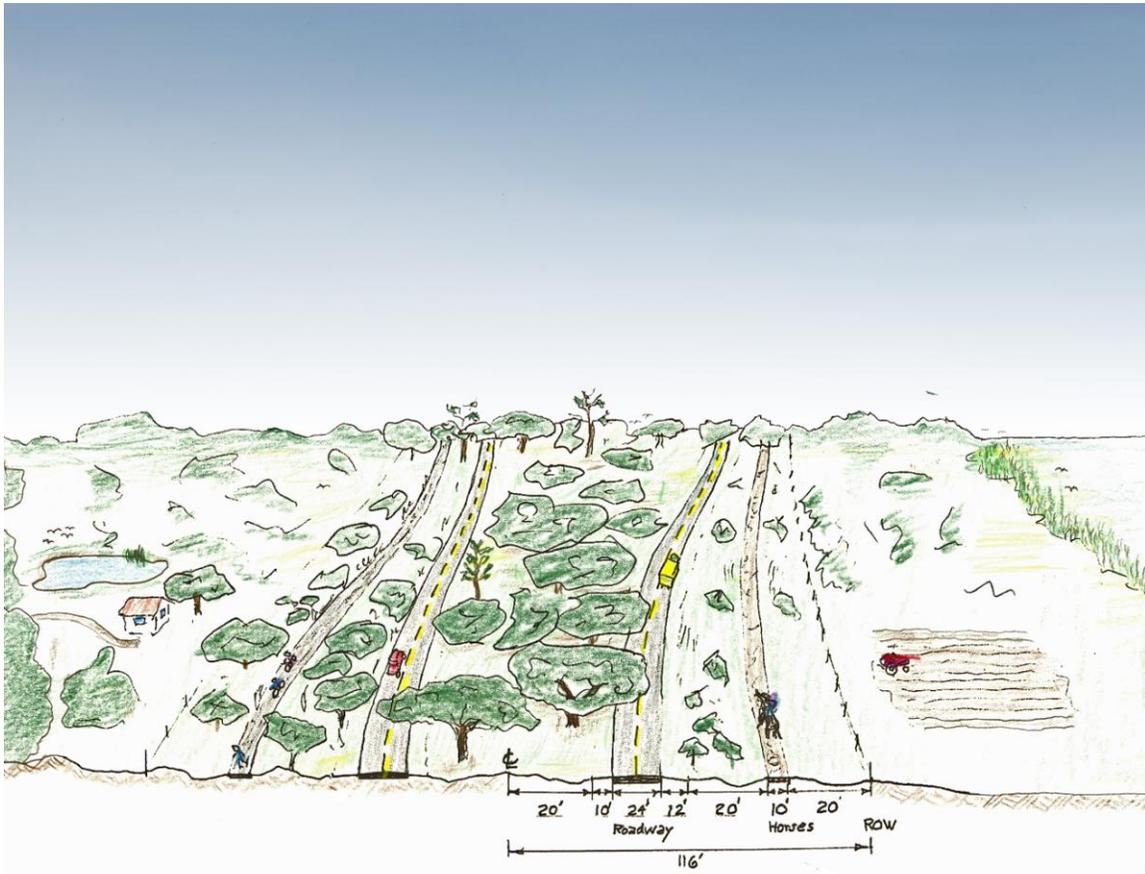
Widening Main and Bohicket Roads, reduces congestion on both roads, but fails to solve the serious left-turn problem at the intersection of Main Road with Route 17. If instead, I-526 is built, it is so much shorter for most trips that the traffic that is currently congesting Main and Bohicket will divert to I-526, eliminating congestion on Main Road. This diverted traffic, exiting I-526 at the northernmost interchange, then seeks new paths across the island to its final destination. If both I-526 and Main Road are improved, this "cross island" traffic creates new congestion on Murrywood and Brownswood Roads.

Furthermore, widening Main and Bohicket has a number of negative impacts on Johns Islanders. These fall into three major categories:

- 1) The loss of many of the roadside Live Oaks and the destruction of much of the beautiful and unique tree canopy along this historic route.
- 2) The negative impact on the large number of properties along Main and Bohicket Roads and the consequent disruption of the lives affected.
- 3) The building of almost 10 miles of the project as a five lane road would completely alter the character and feel of the island.

Safety would be improved to some degree by building a five-lane road. However, the increase in traffic volumes and the danger posed by higher speeds, risky left turns against oncoming traffic and unexpected turns onto the roadway from driveways along the route makes widening Main and Bohicket unacceptable as a solution to the problem. In fact, safety could be even worse than it is today.

A better solution is building the Sea Islands Greenway. Not only would building a new road down the center of the Island incur half the cost of widening Main and Bohicket, but it has better performance measures in almost every category. The LPA report shows that the Greenway can be built so that in addition to safety, it has a number of public amenities, such as a bike path, as well as walking and equestrian trails with attendant picnic areas. Also, if it were placed in a right-of-way that is buffered by conservation lands it would control access to the roadway and discourage the development of strip malls and new housing developments.



The Greenway should be built now during this era of historically low property prices and construction costs! If the road is not built now, urban growth and development will continue and it will be more disruptive and more expensive to build in the future.

The runs of the CHATS computer model by the LPA study team show that though this alternative does not by itself totally eliminate traffic congestion on Main Road, it returns both Bohicket and Maybank to quiet country roads. It also prevents River Road from being overrun with the continued growth in travelers seeking an alternative to Maybank and Bohicket. And all of this can be done at the lowest cost of any of the alternatives studied.

The County Council should not wait to see what happens with the I-526 extension. Building the Sea Islands Greenway meets both the long term and short term needs to relieve congestion and improve safety on Maybank, Bohicket and River Roads. Consequently, it improves traffic safety on Johns Island in a way that no other alternative can.