

**RIDE IV
SALES TAX COMMISSION**

**December 21, 2023
2:00 p.m.**



**HORRY COUNTY
GOVERNMENT & JUSTICE CENTER
COUNTY COUNCIL
CONFERENCE ROOM**

**1301 2nd Avenue
Conway, SC 29526**

MINUTES

Members Present: Robert Wilfong, Chairman; William Goldfinch IV, Vice Chairman; Jay Baldwin; Cecil Patrick; and Jody Prince

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Jason Thompson; David Gilreath; Steve Gosnell; Barry Spivey; David Jordan; Courtney Richardson; Mikayla Moskov; Leah Quattlebaum, and Brett McCutchen

Public Input: Becky Ryon and Amelia Wood

In accordance with the FOIA, notices of the meeting were provided to the press stating the time, date, and place of the meeting.

Chairman Wilfong called the meeting to order at approximately 2:00 p.m.

Jody Prince led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chad Prosser gave the invocation.

Chairman Wilfong asked if anyone signed up for public input. Courtney Richardson stated there were two individuals who signed up and they were Becky Ryon and Amelia Wood.

Becky Ryon, with Coastal Conservation League and a Horry County resident, stated if the commission decided to pursue the Transportation Tax for the full twenty-five years, Horry County would be committed to only those projects for the life span of the tax. With the county growing so quickly, she feels it is hard to determine what will be needed twenty years from now, using Highway 90 as an example, stating it would not have been a priority in 2003. The Capital Project Sales Tax, RIDE IV, which has an eight-year term, allows for more frequent re-evaluation for the county's needs. She stated the county's most pressing needs are improvements to existing roads and bridges. Using the December 2023 rain storm, Tropical Storm Idalia, and Hurricane Matthew and Florence as examples, these storms shut down roads and schools, she stated which allows the county to see where the needs are. Ms. Ryon stated previous discussions for new highways have proposed the needs for evacuation routes, but what good is an interstate grade highway if the citizens cannot get out of their neighborhood. The US Army Corp has

called for a name change to the proposed Southern Evacuation Lifeline because it is not a true evacuation route. The newly named Highway 22 Extension is over a billion-dollar project going through hundreds of acres which have experienced several flooding events and already facing traffic congestion on Highway 701 and Highway 707. Ms. Ryon also stated I73 is another costly project going through wetlands and farmland when the focus should be on fixing our existing roads. However, if it is a priority of the committee to build a new crossing over the Waccamaw River, the Lake Busbee Bypass would create another crossing at a fraction of the cost of the SC Highway 22 Extension; the bypass would mostly avoid residential areas. The bypass is a preferred route by the Waccamaw National Refuge staff, would alleviate local traffic congestion rather than bringing new beach traffic, and would allow for improvements to be made to US 501 Business and the more urgent bypass bridges. Ms. Ryon stated the Lake Busbee Bypass makes more sense and we do not need both the Lake Busbee Bypass and the Highway 22 Extension. At the last Sales Tax Commission meeting, someone said we would like to widen this street, improve this intersection, etc., but we need to know how much it is going to cost so we it can be considered. With having a twenty-five-year tax, the problem is identifying the current problems and cost; with the way Horry County is growing, needs need to be reassessed every few years, not every couple of decades. Ms. Ryon asked the commission to not waste billions of dollars building new highways, instead prioritize fixing the problems we currently have, then see where we are in eight years, not twenty-five. This concluded Ms. Ryon's public input.

Amelia Wood, a resident of Horry County, is speaking on behalf of Highway 90 residents. She and her neighbors ask the committee to focus more on Highway 90. She stated there are several misaligned and dangerous intersections they would like improved for safety reasons. Even though she has not been at previous meetings, she has read the meeting minutes and noticed all of Highway 90 was not included but she likes the revisions that have been made, including making East Cox Ferry road four-lanes to help prevent bottle necking at the end of Highway 90. Ms. Wood stated they have trouble getting out of their neighborhoods. They would like the focus to be on the local roads, and improving those with the sales tax money. When she was reading in the meeting minutes, regarding Coast RTA's former presentations, she feels they have some valid points. If we are looking twenty-five years into the future, she feels we have to think about mass transit and she would not mind seeing some bus stops on Highway 90. We also need to think about how the mass transit impacts the economy and helps get people to their jobs. This concluded Ms. Wood's public input.

Chairman Wilfong asked if there were any changes to the agenda; there were none. Chad Prosser made a motion to approve the agenda; Jay Baldwin seconded. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Chad Prosser made a motion to approve the October 18, 2023 meeting minutes; Jay Baldwin seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chairman Wilfong stated there was a Public Information Meeting held regarding Highway 90 and he wanted to make sure that information had been given to the committee.

Brett McCutchen with Stantec Consulting stated GSATS hired his company to develop the SC 90 Corridor Study along with Highway 57. Brett presented a map of the corridor and stated it ran

from US 501 in Conway to US 17 in Little River which is around 23 miles; Highway 57 is approximately 3 miles. They looked into existing conditions, volumes, crashes, pedestrian, bike facilities and the future traffic growth in 2045. Stantec was also tasked to identify recommendations for short, mid, and long-term improvements along the corridor. Brett went over a map showing where majority of the crashes happen along the corridor and the darker the red, the more frequency of crashes. Brett stated the darker red color runs from Hwy 22 to US 17. Over a 6-year period, out of the 14 fatalities, 12 were in that segment.

Brett stated they prioritized the segments, a similar way how GSATS prioritize and rank their projects, Public Safety, Traffic Volume & Congestion, Financial Viability, Environmental Impacts, and Public Involvement. Tied for first was the segment from Highway 22 to Robert Edge Parkway and Robert Edge Parkway to US 17. These were logical termini based on many different factors. These seem to be the most logical termini to widen Highway 90 because the 2045 horizon year will not accommodate the traffic occurring along this intersection because of the rapid growth. The average travel speed for this corridor is 45 miles per hour in the 2045 horizon year when upgrading the road. William Goldfinch IV asked about the percent improvement from East Cox Ferry. Brett stated there was an 88% improvement which would allow the average travel speed to go from 29.2 to greater than 45 miles per hour.

Chairman Wilfong asked if the committee wished to amend the project list to include Highway 90 from East Cox Ferry to US 17. This will allow the committee to move forward with improvements along the entirety of Highway 90. William Goldfinch IV made a motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Wilfong informed the committee they had a project list with description and cost that would be presented at the Public Information Meetings. Chairman Wilfong asked for a motion to approve the projects on the list and move forward with the Public Information Meetings. Cecil Patrick made a motion, Chad Prosser seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Wilfong stated there were seven proposed locations for the Public Information Meetings. The public would be invited to give comments and ask questions about the projects on the list. Mr. Goldfinch wanted clarification regarding the project list. He wanted to confirm the list was not set in stone, but once we receive feedback, the list can then be finalized or revised. Chairman Wilfong stated that is the project list we will move forward with to present at the Public Information Meetings and when we receive the input, we will be able to update the project list if needed.

Chad Prosser asked if we would be in session at the meetings or would they be drop-in style. David Gilreath stated they would be an open house most likely from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. with the projects set up on individual boards so the public can go around and see what each project is and have the opportunity to ask questions and give comments. This will be a drop-in style meeting with no formal presentations. If the committee would like something more formal, we can do that. Mr. Gilreath stated we do hope the committee members are there, especially at the meetings for the area they are representing. Chad Prosser stated he thinks the informal sessions would allow citizens an easier way to ask questions. Mr. Goldfinch asked when scheduling the meeting dates to try and avoid council meetings. Mr. Gilreath stated there have been a few dates

discussed, but once the dates, locations, and rooms are coordinated, we will then let everyone know.

Chairman Wilfong confirmed the next meeting will be held on February 21, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Gilreath stated the Public Information Meetings would be held at the end of January, beginning of February, therefore a meeting will not be needed in January unless the committee feels there needs to be a meeting.

Mr. Goldfinch stated he knows the benefit and value of public transportation, but one concern he has, assuming all the projects on the list goes to the referendum, when you spend a certain amount of money on a road or bridge project, people know what they are getting, but when it comes to mass transit, it is very vague. He thinks it may be worth discussion so the voters know exactly what they are getting. Chairman Wilfong stated he has spoken with Coast RTA and there will be an opportunity to have more in-depth conversations.

William Goldfinch IV made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Chad Prosser seconded. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:28 p.m.