

**RIDE IV SALES TAX  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**April 20, 2023  
2:00 p.m.**



**HORRY COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT & JUSTICE CENTER  
MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM B/C/E**

**1301 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Conway, SC 29526**

**AGENDA**

- 1. Call to Order: *Chairman Gray***
- 2. Invocation**
- 3. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 4. Approval of the Agenda**
- 5. Approval of Minutes**
  - a. March 16, 2023**
- 6. Selection of Projects**
- 7. Homework**
  
- 8. Next Meeting: May 18, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.**
- 9. Adjourn**

**Committee Members:**

<b>Wayne Gray</b>	<i>Chairman</i>
<b>Jolene Puffer</b>	<i>District 1</i>
<b>Eddie Dyer</b>	<i>District 2</i>
<b>Carole vanSickler</b>	<i>District 3</i>
<b>Bo Ives</b>	<i>District 4</i>
<b>Reese Boyd, III</b>	<i>District 5</i>
<b>Steven Neeves</b>	<i>District 6</i>
<b>Eugenia Mishoe</b>	<i>District 7</i>
<b>David Ellis</b>	<i>District 8</i>
<b>Delan Stevens</b>	<i>District 9</i>
<b>Pam Creech</b>	<i>District 10</i>
<b>Sam Johnson</b>	<i>District 11</i>
<b>James Baldwin III</b>	<i>LOC</i>
<b>Benjy Hardee</b>	<i>LOC</i>
<b>Ronald Fowler</b>	<i>LOC</i>
<b>Brandon Harrelson</b>	<i>LOC</i>
<b>Mark Lazarus</b>	<i>LOC</i>
<b>Michael Dorman</b>	<i>LOC</i>

**RIDE IV SALES TAX  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**March 16, 2023  
3:30 p.m.**



**HORRY COUNTY  
GOVERNMENT & JUSTICE CENTER  
MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM B/C/E**

**1301 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue  
Conway, SC 29526**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Wayne Gray, Chairman; Steven Neeves, Vice Chairman; Jolene Puffer; Eddie Dyer; Carole vanSickler; Bo Ives; David Ellis; Pam Creech; Sam Johnson; James Baldwin, III; Mark Lazarus; and Michael Dorman

**Members Absent:** Reese Boyd, III; Eugenia Mishoe; Delan Stevens; Benjy Hardee; Ronald Fowler; and Brandon Harrelson

**Others Present:** Arrigo Carotti; Barry Spivey; David Gilreath; Steve Gosnell; David Jordan; Andy Markunas; Jason Thompson; Courtney Richardson; Jeremy Gile; Tony Cox; Felix Pitts; Mark Hoeweler; Marla Watson; Leah Quattlebaum; and Stacey Johnson

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

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Chairman Gray gave the invocation.

Pam Creech led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Before the agenda was approved, Chairman Gray wanted to inform the committee of a few additional documents that were placed with their packet. This included a letter from the Solid Waste Authority as well as some information Gina Mishoe wanted to present to the committee. An updated project scoring list was also provided.

Chairman Gray presented a motion to approve the meeting agenda; the agenda was approved unanimously.

Chairman Gray presented a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the February 16, 2023 meeting; the minutes were approved unanimously.

Chairman Gray stated next up on the agenda was County Attorney Arrigo Carotti. At the previous meeting, a motion was made to allocate funds to Coast RTA but wanted to receive a

legal opinion whether or not both the Capital Option Sales Tax law and resolution that County Council has passed supporting RIDE IV would allow such funding.

Arrigo stated at the February 16, 2023 meeting, a motion was made to allocate certain capital project sales tax funding for the construction and resurfacing of dirt roads, as well as \$10 million to fund Coast RTA. He raised the question whether funding of Coast RTA was allowable use of capital sales tax money under state law. His opinion is that the use of such money for that purpose is too risky and he would recommend against the use of capital projects sales tax revenue for that purpose. He referenced the state law, which has been provided to all committee members, Section 4-10-330 section A1.

Arrigo stated in his opinion, to County Council and the RIDE Four Commission, assuming the risk of including Coast RTA in the capital project sales tax funding is unnecessary and too problematic. If there were any questions regarding the various uses under the law, he will be more than happy to answer those. He also referenced Resolution R-71-2022, in particular the scope of duties set forth to the committee which can be found on the top half of the second page of the resolution.

Arrigo also stated it does not appear anywhere contemplated that this committee would address such issues as funding of a regional transportation authority. Basically, it's restricted to road projects in terms of the funding aspect. He mentioned this because it would be unfortunate to divert any of the limited funds available for road projects elsewhere.

Mark Lazarus stated he made a motion in the previous meeting to include Coast RTA but will take the advice of counsel and withdraw his motion. Pam Creech stated she would withdraw her second. However, Bo Ives realized he was the one who made the second, page 4 of the meeting minutes from the February 16, 2023 meeting, and he stated he would like to withdraw that. The withdraw was approved unanimously.

Leah Quattlebaum gave a presentation regarding the history of the Southern Evacuation Lifeline (SELL) and Carolina Bays Parkway (CBP/Hwy 31 Northern Extension).

SELL was initially part of the CBP study to provide a connection from Carolina Bays over to US 701. However, due to the potential confrontational nature of a project of that magnitude, it was decided it would be the best interest of CBP to separate that as a different project.

In 2000, GSATS allocated some set aside money to begin a feasibility study for this project. At the time, it was known as the US 701 Connector project. The study showed the project limits, to fully function, for the area that needed to extend west of Conway and east of the Waccamaw River so that ultimately it would be an alternative to utilizing Hwy 501 and Hwy 544; at the time, it started to be referred to as the Southern Conway Bypass. It was evaluated to not only utilize for congestive reasons but for hurricane evacuation as well. In 2003, there were different roadway segments part of the study.

In 2006, funding was allocated to being the official, draft environmental impact statement for the project. The FHWA was the lead federal agency for that effort. They used what is called a CAT

tool, a corridor analysis tool, to generate the alternatives for the project within the study area. They came up with 25 viable alternatives which went through the screening process, trying to see which ones best meet the purpose in need of that project while minimizing impacts. As a result of that analysis, they came up with 8 reasonable alternatives that they were going to move forward with a detailed study analysis.

Once the detailed study analysis was completed on the 8 alternatives, they ended up identifying, at that time, a preferred alternative which was presented in the draft environmental impact statement. *A map showing these routes was presented and given to the committee members.* All of the corridors connected where Hwy 22 terminates on Hwy 501 then they cross down at various locations throughout the Grand Strand.

The draft environmental impact statement was signed by FHWA in 2008. At this time, due to insufficient funding to move forward with the FEIS, the project was put to a halt. In 2016, the RIDE III Sale Tax Referendum allocated \$25 million towards completing the environmental document as well as purchasing some limited right of way acquisitions in the corridor.

In 2017, the project team got back together with FHWA, they were told they would have to start over due to the lapse of time that had occurred since the DEIS.

Shortly thereafter, FHWA in South Carolina implemented a new policy that they would not be overseeing these documents anymore unless significant federal funding was allocated. Since this was county money, FHWA excused themselves from being the lead agency for the document moving forward; this is when the Army Corp of Engineers became the lead agency for this project.

The Army Corp of Engineers has a different process than FHWA therefore there was a learning curve that the team had to get over to learn their processes. In 2019, the team advertised for consultant services to complete the EIS; even though this consultant is under contract with Horry County, they are essentially working for the Army Corp of Engineers. While working on the scope for the consultant, it became apparent the entity that is submitting the project to the Corps for the EIS has to provide that third party consultant with a great deal of information. If the information was up to date, the team would have given this information to the third party consultant to complete the environmental analysis. However, since this was dated, the team had to start over. With having to do all the work again, the team stopped trying to negotiate the contract with the third party contractor and decided it would be best to hire another consultant to come in and do the preliminary studies that would be utilized in the EIS. CECS was hired in 2022 to complete the preliminary studies. They have been actively working on coming up with the corridors that best meets the purpose and needs of the project while minimizing the impacts.

With the Army Corp of Engineers being the lead federal agency, you have to take the environmental document to the end, which is when you apply and get the permit for the project. When you get the permit for the project, this also means you have to secure the mitigation for the impacts associated with it. After the team started diving down deeper into the project, they found it was a wide range and cost of what was being faced. The cost would exceed the \$25 million allocated with RIDE III, therefore they decided to do a feasibility study and do a more detailed

analysis on the design than what is typically done at this stage. This was done so the team could get a good handle on what the impacts are and what the cost associated with moving forward with the project would be. The consultant is scheduled to have the preliminary study completed summer 2023, this time also includes a few iterations of comments and review. If the team has a solid path forward and additional funding can be secured for moving forward with the mitigation and permitting process, the team will immediately advertise for a third party consultant to come on board. They will get all the documentation that has been completed and they will start the EIS process. As early as 2025, they could complete the EIS process and shortly thereafter submit for the permit. This schedule is the best case scenario as long as all funding is in place, all agencies are fully cooperative and there are no challenges along the way.

Pam Creech stated she believes there will be environmental challenges to this and even though 2025 is the best case scenario, she does not feel this is a realistic scenario. She feels we may have not have the funding nor time and will have to restart this process over again in the future due to the challenges she expects the SELL project to have. She would like to see a more realistic view of what will actually happen with this project. With spending millions of dollars for studies that go out of date and cannot be permitted, and have to be redone, she feels this is too much money to lose. She asked if there were any state or federal matching monies for SELL. Leah stated there is some state money left over from many years ago that is still in the budget, and will be allocated to this project, but it is still minimal. Leah also stated having the Corps as the lead federal agency on the EIS process is new to SCDOT therefore they keep hitting roadblocks along the way with trying to learn their process. Leah stated years could potentially be added to the project if the permit is obtained.

Pam mentioned when it comes to RIDE IV, she does not want to include roads that will not be able to be finished or studies to waste money on if there is no realistic outcome.

David Gilreath asked Leah when we get to the end of this process, do we have a permit, and is there an expiration date on the permit? Leah stated if funding is secured and we move forward with the final environmental document, we will apply for a permit. Typically, the longest they have issued permits is for 25 years and on rare occasions, they can get them for that.

Mark Lazarus made a statement saying we don't have to have the full funding in order to get a permit, like I73; there is a permit but not fully funded. Leah stated we do not have to have the full funding for the project but currently we are lacking funding for the mitigation. The impacts associated with this projects are significant; we are looking at possibly \$50 million in mitigation for SELL. Due to there being a wide range, the team felt like they needed to move forward with the design a little bit more and analyze the impacts of all the corridors and find the realistic range. Mark asked, what the impacts that will be finished in August have on this project. Leah stated, this is just the preliminary studies and it should tell the team the corridors that meet the purpose and need. They are going to show what the impacts are therefore we will then be able to calculate the mitigation and the cost.

Steven Neeves stated he has been asked if he supports the SELL project and he told them he absolutely does; he believes it's a safety issues for the south part of the county. He was then asked if the funding was available. He said he does not feel we will ever have all the funding

available at one time for this project but feels it will take several RIDE programs to fully complete the project. He feels the committee needs to determine if the project has value for the safety of the people in the county, and if so, the committee needs to take small bites to getting the project started. The closer we can get to an actual number, he feels the committee needs to put a value on the project and if it will take the next 20, 30, etc. years or not. He feels the funding will never be available all at once.

Bo Ives asked Leah how confident she was we could obtain the permit by 2026 with having uncertainties and still not having the exact route identified. Leah stated she is not very confident at this time but wanted to give the committee an idea of what the very best case scenario could be.

Chairman Gray asked when drilling down to a more defined corridor for the entire project, if you had the funding for the first phase, would you have to buy the mitigation for the entire project before phase one could be started? Leah stated that is correct, you have to permit the entire project.

Leah began her presentation on the Carolina Bays Northern Extension project. This project began in the 1980s. Over time, various feasibility studies were conducted in both North Carolina and South Carolina; they had different phases and would keep adding and revising it over time. The major one in 2006, the study was completed for the section between SC 9 and Brunswick County. The project then sat idle for a while awaiting funding. In 2015, North Carolina allocated a minimal funding to begin the environmental analysis preliminary study process for the project. In 2016, the RIDE III referendum allocated funding to advance the project. In 2017, SCDOT began working with NCDOT and several environmental agencies as part of the merger process to start the project; at the time, the Army Corp of Engineers was the lead agency.

In 2017, the team went out to the public to receive feedback on the scope of the project study area which was identified. After meeting with the public, different corridors were developed to meet the purpose of the project. In 2018, these corridors were presented at two different public information meetings; one was in North Carolina and the other was in South Carolina. During this process, NCDOT determined they would like to keep the project eligible for federal money in the future. The project had to be put on pause and swap the lead agency from the Army Corp of Engineers to the FHWA. This did not slow the process down significantly because North Carolina has a merger process where they work together very well.

Based on public feedback and further analysis, the project team determined they were going to carry forward seven alternatives. Four of these alternatives were eliminated and two more were added. A lot of field work has been completed on these alternatives and the team has recently completed the draft environmental impact statement for this project; this has been sent to FHWA for their review and approval.

It is anticipated that the FHWA will approve the DEIS summer of 2023. If the document is approved this summer, SCDOT will be ready to have a public hearing in the fall of 2023. After the hearing, where the alternatives will be presented, based on public input, as well as further analysis, they will proceed with the development of the final environmental impact statement.

Once that has been completed, they will approve the document and issue the ROD (Record of Decision). As soon as the ROD is received, South Carolina can be ready to start acquiring right of way for the project. If all goes according to plan, SCDOT can start acquiring right of way in 2024 and potentially start construction in 2026.

Leah mentioned the ROD is the place you want to get to so we can move forward with the project. The only issue with that is FHWA will not sign and issue a RODE until the project is considered fiscally constrained. This means you have to have your funding available for the next phase of the project. This is not a problem for South Carolina but is problematic for NCDOT since their portion is significantly larger than ours, and at this time, they do not have the funding available to move forward with it. At this time, SCDOT is going to try and see if they can phase the project and terminate the project in various locations and see if that would work, so we can select bite size pieces of the project, not necessarily for South Carolina but for North Carolina.

They are currently evaluating right now terminating at S-111, Hickman Road, and Ash Little River Road. This will involve further traffic analysis to see if the roads can handle the traffic, and if not, what improvements would need to happen to the network in order for them to make the next step.

Based on current cost estimates right now, South Carolina's portion has a shortfall of a little over \$100 million. This is not a huge concern at this time since there are some other avenues that can be taken to help with the funding if North Carolina can bring their portion along with ours. There's federal earmarks already allocated to the project and we can continue to apply for those. There's the SIB that we can apply for as well and RIDE IV can potentially cover the shortfall. North Carolina currently has very minimal funding set up for the project; they have enough to complete the environmental impact statement at this point.

Mark Hoeweler gave a brief explanation of NCDOT's funding priority process. He stated their program is set up in three buckets. They have raised their gas tax \$.02 and they have increased a portion of their general fund sales tax related to automotive cost. He used this as an example: if you buy a new alternator, the sales tax associated with that item goes to the transportation fund, not the general fund.

Their STI (Strategic Transportation Initiative) is currently entering its seventh iteration; it is a two-year rotation. Round six had to be paused for two years because they were over budget. They were over budget due to including all projects and under estimating the cost of these projects statewide. This was originally set up because it was thought it wasn't equitable, it was too political, the rural areas were not getting their fair share, etc. When they came up with this formula, they found a lot of the big dollar projects were going to transit Raleigh and Charlotte and the rural areas weren't happy either. This has now been tweaked over time to get all areas covered. Approximately 40% of the funds go to the statewide mobility pot, so about \$1.2 billion a year, and about \$900 million in each of the other two pots; statewide mobility is data driven. The regional impact, which is divided up in seven regions. The division needs have fourteen divisions within the state; each region has two divisions. As you go down the line, you're dividing the money up smaller and smaller therefore a project of this nature can only be funded out of the statewide mobility pot.

Mark stated the statewide mobility is shared with other modes as well, not just roadway projects and other modes are included in the regional impact and division needs. If the non-100% data driven categories of regional division are based upon the local input points, as an MPO, we have 100 points while the DOT has 100 local input points as well. It takes a synergy between the local and DOT to be 100% behind the project. If both are not 100% behind the project, it will not happen. There are two state representatives who have been working hard on behalf of this project but they can only do so much being two people; they have to take this to the state house and fight on our behalf. They are currently trying get the project funded in pieces. The problem with this process is, the alternative they are talking about is not the preferred alternative that the public is looking at. It's not far off what the preferred route is, but may have more environmental impact. These are the things that are tweaked every time a new rendition comes around. They play around with different quantitative criteria and give them different weights such as cost benefit, congestion, safety, and freight.

Mark stated our project describes regional impact, which deals with improved connectivity within regions. This description fits into the regional impact description and that's a harder nut to crack coming out of that category. It's going to take some creativity and effort within the North Carolina system, outside the regular funding stream, to get the project built.

He also stated they have strategic corridors that have been identified in North Carolina across the bottom of the state, so there is some synergy there. He is unaware of what the funding outlay for working on their strategic corridor is, but it has been identified and this is interconnected in a related piece of that puzzle.

Bo Ives stated with the RIDE III Committee, it was mentioned you could not drop a four-lane highway into a two-lane highway. He questioned if we needed to wait for the connection or what's the plan to get there? Leah stated that is what's currently being evaluated. If we can terminate the project at S-111, without having to upgrade the entire network, if we can get just across the border, and they can provide enough funding to get there, then we open a portion of it up. There are different options they are currently looking at but ultimately, it all going to depend on North Carolina's funding situation and the data that comes out of the interim studies.

Eddie Dyer asked if there was anything formal signed between South Carolina and North Carolina? Leah stated we currently have an interstate agreement just as far as covering the funding and that we will work together on the environmental analysis but she is not aware of any additional written commitments. Eddie asked if North Carolina bails out, worst case scenario, we're going to have a four-lane road ending at somewhat of a farm to market road? Leah stated if that's even possible, they still have to do an analysis and she imagines the farm to market road would need improvements as well.

Eddie stated when RIDE III was underway, a representative from the Coastal Conservation League went into his office and indicated they were going to contest every route that North Carolina had indicated. He asked Leah if she was aware if they have followed through with this statement? Leah stated she has not been made aware of anything.

Mark Lazarus stated he was at the North Carolina meeting when this project was being discussed. He said when the project was originally approved by RIDE III, it was one of the top priorities in North Carolina. When they had their meeting, a lot of people came out and stated they did not want the project. This delayed the project on North Carolina's side and they pulled it back and started looking at other projects on their list. Mark stated since the citizens voted on this project, and we have the money allocated, we need to find a solution to bring the numbers down and figure out an alternative route to at least satisfy the citizens and do our part. If we do not do this, we need to figure out how we take the allocated funds, excluding what has been spent on the project to date, and where do we put it and what can we do with it legally?

Mark Hoeweler stated the only backlash he recalls was at a public information meeting. He said they did not want to participate in the MPO and they thought we were trying to force them and they told me if they did not want to join, they don't have to. He does not feel this was specifically towards this project. The community in that area is not against the project, they would prefer it be more inland instead of being closer to Hwy 17.

Pam Creech stated she would like to see a scenario, excluding North Carolina, what we need to do to finish the project in South Carolina. She understands we cannot dump a four-lane road into a two-lane road for safety reasons but she would like to see some kind of ending for us to do since that is what the taxpayers voted on.

Tony Cox stated when he was appointed interim commissioner, August of 2017, one of the first pieces of correspondence he received was from NCDOT stating this project was one of their top priorities. There was an attachment included showing different routes, including one the locals did not want. He mentioned North Carolina had some financial hardships; our gas tax is a little over \$0.28 a gallon, where North Carolina's is \$0.40 but the price in gas is not much different.

Tony mentioned he was up in that area recently and saw some new construction taking place. He said maybe we could slip it into Hwy 17 for the time being until they can further attach it or add a slip lane to Hwy 57, on the Horry County side, which would still be better than nothing.

Jolene Puffer wanted to clarify if this project was still viable or if the discussion was we were not able to complete it. Her understanding from the prior meeting was RIDE IV would cover any shortfall this project had. Mark Lazarus stated she was correct but the issue at hand now is where will it be terminated if we cannot terminate it in North Carolina like the original plan was. Jolene mentioned she knows this project is very important to Horry County and she just wanted to make sure she was on the same page in understanding as everyone else.

David Gilreath stated before we start jumping ship just yet on this project, he recommends the committee stays on the course right now until we get to the point we know we need to divert.

Tony Cox asked if we were obligated to build the road even if we do stop on or near the county line. Chairman Gray stated he would leave this to a legal analysis, but his general understanding is we have an amount of money allocated to this project to build to the state line as far as the money we've got available to head north to the state line is what gets built. He stated he knows there are practicalities to connecting it to roads and that is as far as that may go. He asked where

the \$248 million in the updated project cost would get us. Leah stated this is a completed project to the state line.

Chairman Gray stated what we are all learning is the unknowns and that's the challenge of trying to identify road projects over a 7 or 8-year window. During this time, issues change, roads don't become a priority by other political organizations, growth occurs, and those are things we cannot bog ourselves down too much to try and answer. He also stated we could use other money we are able to allocate from other sources like \$22 million Senator Graham was able to identify and build it as far as we can and if that means improvements to that connection, the we will do those improvements when the time comes.

Tony Cox stated he believes North Carolina wants the road and will connect to it at some point and feels we need to build it as close as we can to their state line.

David Gilreath made a statement trying to answer the general question of what does the committee do with any project that may be incomplete or underfunded as it relates to RIDE III. He stated the current thoughts are to put some sort of coverall line item at the top of the RIDE IV referendum along the lines of *completion of all projects listed on the RIDE III referendum passed by the voters in November 2016, and that were not completed due to revenue shortfall and cost escalations* and put a number beside it. We believe right now, barring anything catastrophic, we will come fairly close plus or minus to finishing everything in RIDE III. He also stated we do not want to allocate so much money in RIDE IV towards that effort that we overcommit ourselves to unnecessarily so put a number there that is somewhat inconsequential, but still reasonably substantial so it's defensible in the \$10 million range. This language has not been vetted legally, the process and concept seem viable but we will need some legal review to make sure that is consistent with state law.

Chairman Gray stated in our last meeting, we had a motion where we voted in majority to generally accept that content, but there was no dollar amount identified. He does not feel the dollar amount needs to be decided today, but if that ends up being a motion, and part of our work that we pass up to the Sales Tax Commission, we should probably identify an amount.

David Gilreath stated he would not recommend identifying specifically what we think we're going to fall short on and try to tie specific dollars to those projects because we will not know what those dollar amounts will be for at least two years beyond the passage of RIDE IV.

Arrigo stated the concept that David outlined appears doable and we can answer those specific questions as we go forward because of the opinion that he gave, it would be prudent but not required that would help us in the process.

Pam Creech stated she feels this is a great thing for the committee too look into and it would help us tremendously. She stated again, North Carolina or not, she would like for SCDOT to come back with us to look at something so they can finish what was started because she feels we are obligated to do that at some point and finish it. She also feels we need to be very careful in the other roads that we're choosing environmentally and working with other people, because this one

road is now \$101 million because we haven't gotten from one place to the next more than we had in RIDE III and we don't want to continue that into RIDE IV.

Eddie Dyer stated, speaking as Chairman for RIDE III, the City of North Myrtle Beach decided to ask for as their only project, the end of Hwy 31, which was not only beneficial to the City of North Myrtle Beach but the entire county and the whole coast. Since this specific project took approximately 20% of the budget, and they made somewhat of a sacrifice in asking for one project, he feels the committee needs to involve as much of the leadership from North Myrtle Beach as they can, along with their representatives on the committee Jay Baldwin and Benjy Hardee. He understands this is not their funds, but Horry County's, but feels because it was their project, they should be included before finalizing any plans.

Jay Baldwin stated even though he was not on RIDE III, from his understanding, North Myrtle Beach did not request that project. He understands it was the only project left and there was no more funding for the projects they requested. He stated the city does believe this is an important project and will do anything to help achieve and make this project happen.

Chairman Gray stated we have received a lot of information, overview, and details of road projects and have identified 34 consolidated road projects and a dollar amount of \$826 million that is the revenue estimate. If the committee continues with the 100 miles of dirt road paving and resurfacing, that is roughly \$130 million, no allocation of the \$10 million, we are now at approximately \$695 million that would be left to fund these projects.

He stated the committee's work needs to be completed by May so we can stay on the timeline of the Sales Tax Commission and what their responsibilities are according to state statute. He referenced the project list which was submitted by the RIDE III Advisory Committee to the Sales Tax Commission, that was provided to all members at the September 22, 2022 meeting. This list was not a prioritization of road projects, but a list of what projects would fit within the estimated revenue. There was not an identification of what dirt roads would be paved, just a dollar amount, and a dollar amount for resurfacing. The six-member committee will have about six months to complete its work and have some more finer and detailed information to it. It is his goal to produce a product for the Sales Tax Commission like they received with RIDE III.

Chairman Gray told the committee some hard decisions will have to be made. There is about \$3.4 billion worth of projects with a \$700 million budget. All of these projects have merit and are important. They have different scoring grades because of the way the committee has identified the scoring methodology. This doesn't mean that any project that doesn't get selected is not an important road project but he feels this highlights the demands are far greater than the resources that are currently available to us.

Chairman Gray wanted to reiterate what he feels the committee wants to do and that is do the most amount of good for the most amount of people, but also move forward with a product that is passable. This should not only be accepted by the Sales Tax Commission, but the 12 members of County Council who can unanimously support the projects being placed on a referendum.

Chairman Gray advised the committee to be careful and refrain from thinking about where the money is collected from or a thought of, I didn't get this, I didn't get that. This needs to be a complete countywide effort and a plan that we can move forward unanimously and we can all feel like we did the most amount of work for the most amount of people.

Chairman Gray then informed the committee on the adopted resolution by County Council to identify phase one of the SELL project, as a road priority and to seek any and all funding necessary to complete this project. They also adopted a resolution they would send to our delegation into the General Assembly and maybe have a professional advocate to advance the amendment of the capital option sales tax, extending the period from seven years to eleven years when the tax was re-imposed. On Tuesday, March 14, 2023, the I&R Committee adopted a resolution identifying the Lake Busbee Bypass as a road of priority. These are similar to what County Council approved last year or the year before regarding Hwy 90 and they want to seek any and all funding to build those roads and complete them as quickly as possible.

Jason Thompson & Andy Markunas presented an interactive map to highlight all projects, including dirt roads and resurfacing in RIDE I, RIDE II, RIDE III, and what has been submitted for RIDE IV.

Jason presented an excel spreadsheet that has been created to add the project to as they are submitted. This sheet starts with \$825.9 million and we have already taken out the \$100 million to pave 100 miles dirt roads that was voted on at the previous meeting and \$35 million for resurfacing of 100 miles of existing roadway. As projects are nominated, the spreadsheet will be filled out and once we get to \$0, that's going to be the bottom line.

Chairman Gray stated he would like for the committees work to be done in May so the goal is when someone recommends a project, the project needs to be seconded, then approved and then will be placed on the list.

Chairman Gray gave different options to the committee on how to narrow down the project list. When you look at the roughly \$700 million, you're looking at 8-12 projects. When looking at RIDE III, there may be 20 projects but several of those are for dirt road paving and resurfacing, therefore, you're down to around 12 major projects.

Jay Baldwin stated he has a project that secured funding to an annexation agreement and he was wondering by removing it from the list if it was to late to add something in its place. Chairman Gray asked which project this was. Mr. Baldwin stated this is Project #38 on the project list, Long Bay and Water Lily Road. Chairman Gray clarified the project and asked if he wanted to withdraw this project from the list; Jay stated he would. Chairman Gray stated he would accept this as a nomination to withdraw that project from the list if there is a second. Pam Creech seconded the withdraw; the withdraw passed unanimously.

Mr. Baldwin asked if the project could be replaced. Chairman Gray stated that is up to the committee but we are dealing with time constraints. Mr. Baldwin stated he was just informed of this annexation a few days prior. He was curious if his priority number 3 automatically came priority number 2. Jason Thompson was updating the excel spreadsheet and asked for

clarification on the project due to the description including Champions Blvd. Mr. Baldwin stated he is removing the entire project.

Chairman Gray made a general statement saying he was not sure if the committee wanted to remove projects with a lower score from the list and then reevaluate, or how exactly they wanted to approach this. He also clarified just because the project does not have a high score, doesn't necessarily mean it might be a good road or a road that would have merit. As we know, some of these projects are new roads and did not get scored high because they were not on a previous RIDE plan. He also stated the committee could identify the first few projects they know will be significantly considered.

Michael Dorman asked Jay what the project he removed came in cost wise for them to remove it. Jay stated he knew there was a number but was not sure what exactly the number was. Jolene Puffer stated she was the Council meeting when this took place and she heard there was a \$10 million price point. She found it interesting due to the cost estimate received from SCDOT being much higher. Chairman Gray stated these projects had a 2030 price point where as the project under the developer could start sooner and the price would not be inflated as much as it would several years from now. He also reminded the committee this project had been removed from the list due to a majority vote.

Chairman Gray asked the committee how did they want to handle the process and if they wanted to go through each project. He was open to all ideas.

Jolene Puffer stated she would like to know which projects they know will not be able to be fully funded and start with that.

Carole vanSickler stated, she knows this is a difficult task but every project is important, but she is not comfortable with the idea of massive programs that could wipe out other projects that have been requested for 10+ years. She wants to make sure we do what's best for the county.

Mark Lazarus stated he would get the ball rolling. He would like to make a motion to the funds allocated for the three projects requested on behalf of the City of Myrtle Beach. The project numbers for these are 49, 50, and 51. These three projects total \$140 million based off the cost estimates received. These projects had a score of 60.4, 50.8, and 45.64.

Eddie Dyer asked Mr. Lazarus to clarify if he wanted to add the projects to the list or remove them since he was under the impression of removing projects. Mr. Lazarus stated he wanted to put his projects on the list.

Chairman Gray stated he was just throwing ideas out to get something started but if someone wants to put a motion on the table and there is a second, then see what majority vote is.

Chairman Gray asked if there was a second for Mr. Lazarus' motion.

Jolene Puffer asked for clarification on what happens if the committee were to vote on this motion. She just wants to make sure she does what's best when it comes to voting for projects.

Mark Lazarus stated he feels the big projects that are asking for \$200 million will not happen but will look at doing this another way.

Chairman Gray stated he feels it would be best to identify some of the projects that all think may get included or either the ones that are going to get excluded and then spend the next two meetings really focusing on those projects.

David Gilreath used the SELL project for an example on how difficult it is to get an environmental impact statement or the difficulty in completing a road project, such as the northern extension of Highway 31. There are a lot of unknowns. When the Lake Busbee Bypass is discussed, there is a \$362 million cost estimate. He stated staff recommends that we not allocate construction dollars in RIDE IV just because of the time frame that is required to get through that process. He has no doubt this project is not needed. He suggested, if the committee went with this project, to break it down into two projects. The first project would be the process to do the preliminary environmental studies. Then we need to go talk to the property owners which include the South Carolina Public Service Authority, United States of America, and Grand Strand Water and Sewer; condemning these properties is not a likely possibility therefore we need to get them on board with the project before we allocate more funds to complete a final environmental statement and mitigate for that project.

Steven Neeves stated he believes the committee would not want to spend \$362 million out of \$690 on one project. He would like the committee to identify what the next bite would be. Chairman Gray stated due to the route being from Hwy 701 to Hwy 544, you cannot really break this project up.

He mentioned the cost of SELL from Hwy 707 to Hwy 701 has a cost estimate of \$450 million. There has been conversation about some money being allocated for that project that would then get a state match but in the State House of Representatives, in the first budget round, there was no money allocated for this project. He said there was \$200 million to the Department of Commerce for Strategic Infrastructure, \$200 million for the Department of Transportation for bridge acceleration which is mainly for interstate bridges throughout the state, and a one-time revenue of \$250 million to the statewide CTCs, of which our CTC will receive about \$14.5-15 million. Subsequent to that budget, there was \$1.3 billion allocated towards South Carolina's portion of the investment to the VW plant in Columbia.

Sam Johnson asked about a project that was submitted by himself and Michael Dorman, which was the ramp going across Highway 501 when getting off Hwy 22. He wanted to know if there was any possible state funding for this project or if anyone else was considering building it in the future. Steve Gosnell stated this would be where the SELL project would be connected.

Bo Ives stated in reference to the Lake Busbee Bypass, based upon the issues that have been presented regarding the SELL project, he does not feel RIDE IV should fund this project since the I&R Committee has established making it a priority, with County Council most likely to follow it, he would like to make a motion to remove this project from the list.

David Gilreath stated the committee will make the ultimate decision but if they ever wanted another crossing, he would suggest they start down the path of the environmental studies. With the growth estimation to be 650,000 people in the next few years, he would suggest considering the bigger projects.

Mr. Lazarus wanted to remind everyone, as a point of order, he had a motion on the floor. He wanted to restate his motion for a better understanding. He is not asking that the motion put the projects on the list, but to put those three projects as a consideration.

Mr. Lazarus stated in regards to Mr. Ives' motion, he doesn't feel we should remove the project, but shrink it down to get the EIS completed to get this project started.

Eddie Dyer stated instead of each member going around putting projects on the list, or taking projects off, can the committee send in 10 projects to a centralized location and have staff combine the list prior to the next meeting to see which projects received the most votes.

Chairman Gray stated that is not a bad idea and by doing that, the committee could take time to think about what they would like to prioritize based upon all the information given, the project list could then be narrowed down.

Mark Lazarus stated he would like a better understanding of what the projects are so he can select the top priorities. He stated he doesn't understand some committees project needs just as he assumes they do not understand his.

Sam Johnson stated he was on the RIDE III Advisory Committee and he liked the approach they took with the SELL project to get the project started and he would like staff or SCDOT to come up with a number to achieve the same goal and report back to the committee.

Chairman Gray reminded the committee if they did not feel comfortable with a motion made, they did not have to vote for it.

Jolene Puffer stated after seeing the numbers, she feels comfortable eliminating one or two of her projects to get others taken care of.

Steven Neeves stated there was a motion on the floor that needed to be seconded. Mark Lazarus stated he will let his motion die and they will figure out another way.

Chairman Gray stated he thinks what Mr. Dryer recommended is what he's recognizing to be good for the committee. There is approximately \$3.3 billion worth of projects with a \$700 million budget to choose from. He told the committee, staff does not want to direct the committee on what becomes recommended projects but wanted to provide enough information on the unknowns to some of the larger projects we are currently experiencing whether it be on the list for RIDE IV or a previous RIDE list. It is his goal to follow what Pam Creech stated earlier, that we find projects that do the most amount of good for the most amount of people and have the least unknown risk in terms of environmental and opposition that it may have or it may

just be so costly also. He asked staff if they thought the committee should submit the projects until they run out of money and ones that have the most submissions rise to the top.

Steven Neeves stated working off the number gives them a chance to back up and look to see what's really the best we have in their opinion for the whole county. He feels if asked to eliminate one or two of their original submissions is not going to be what's best, but after having two weeks to think about it and find projects to fit into the dollar amount, you will get a better outcome.

Eddie Dyer stated he would like to do that based on the project budget but he needs two things, who to submit the project list to and if the committee takes Mr. Gilreath's recommendation of reducing the cost for Lake Busbee, what is that number. Chairman Gray got confirmation from SCDOT stating \$10 million would be a good number to start with for the preliminary environmental study, no mitigation. Mr. Gilreath stated he was suggesting a preliminary study and if the findings of this study met the requirements to do a final environmental study. He would suggest \$10 million for the preliminary and \$50 million for the final.

Mark Lazarus asked how many years would it take to get the preliminary study before the final could take place. David Gilreath asked SCDOT what their thoughts were. Leah stated she would guesstimate the preliminary environmental studies would be three years. David stated immediately following that, if we find out in the study there is a preferred route, or the potential preferred route, we would need to work with the property owners of the three we do not have the power to condemn. If they are not on board with the project, we need to include some language in the referendum to stop the project at that point so we do not allocate additional funds to a final EIS then the United States Government tell us we are unable to do finish the project. This is an approach that has not been done before, but this is staff's recommendation.

Steven Neeves asked for clarification on the funds being discussed. David Gilreath said \$10 million would be for the preliminary environmental study to guide what we do with a follow up study in RIDE IV to be a final environmental impact statement which requires us to mitigate for that process.

Carole vanSickler stated when you originally have \$362 million but possibly cutting it down to \$60 million, she would like some more clarification from staff regarding the preliminary studies, right of way, etc. Due to some of these projects being on other list, maybe the committee could seed some and let the next RIDE program or other funding complete them. She feels if we start basing this off a number, she does not think the committee can make an appropriate decision based on the numbers received.

David Gilreath stated for the time being, if the committee wanted to, put \$60 million for Lake Busbee then the language could be figured out at a later date.

Sam Johnson made a motion to remove Project 34 and Project 36 but would like to put Project 35 on the list. Chairman Gray stated he is going to separate this motion and accept this as a motion to remove item 34 and 36. Chairman Gray asked if there was a second on this motion?

Pam Creech and Mark Lazarus seconded this motion at the same time. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Gray stated we are going to remove those two projects. He feels the best idea is to really think about what projects will do the most amount of good for the most amount of people and that is what he would call shovel ready projects that do not have a whole lot of major unknowns.

Michael Dorman stated the acceleration lane would be a shovel ready project.

Steven Neeves asked what Sam's number one priority would now be. Sam responded saying Project 35, the acceleration lane onto Hwy 501 from Hwy 319.

Chairman Gray stated so far, 3 projects have been removed from the list and one has been reduced from a construction project. Even though this reduction has not been voted on, he feels everyone is in concurrence to remove it from a construction project to a preliminary environmental study and a follow up with a full environmental impact statement.

Chairman Gray said if the committee is given two weeks to come up with a list and submit to David Gilreath, Jason Thompson, and Andy Markunas, trying to identify projects, not necessarily in priority order, but what can get funded in \$700 million.

Bo Ives stated he would like to revise his motion. Instead of eliminating the Lake Busbee Bypass, he would like to replace it with a preliminary study and an EIS study not to exceed \$60 million. Pam Creech seconded the motion. David Gilreath stated he would not include the not to exceed on any of these projects. Mr. Ives removed that from his motion.

Chairman Gray asked if there were any questions regarding the new motion. Mark Lazarus stated he cannot vote for that due to issues we are currently experiencing such as the shortfall on Hwy 31. He also wanted to know what happens with the funding if we are told we cannot complete this project by the property owners we are unable to condemn. He feels \$10-25 million would be appropriate to get the project started because that can be done but does not agree to including the second part of the motion. He would like to get the preliminary study completed then figure out funding for the EIS by other sources when that time comes.

Carole vanSickler asked for the motion to be repeated. Chairman Gray said the motion is for \$10 million to go towards a preliminary environmental study and \$50 million for a final EIS.

Steven Neeves asked if we put projects in the bucket, can they still be taken out. Chairman Gray stated absolutely, we are just taking advantage of removing some projects to help make the homework a little easier.

Carole clarified this was specifically for the Lake Busbee Bypass.

Chairman Gray clarified this is for \$10 million for a preliminary environmental study and \$50 million for the final EIS. David Gilreath stated he would just call it \$60 million for

environmental assessments. The language will be worked out when the final product is given. Chairman Gray stated at this moment, the motion is basically agreeing with reducing the project from \$362 million to \$60 million for environmental work.

Pam Creech withdrew her second for this motion. David Ellis stated he would replace the second for this motion. Chairman Gray asked for those in favor to show of hands. Chairman Gray stated the show of hands have it.

Bo Ives made a motion to remove Project 14. Eddie Dyer seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Gray stated Project 14 has been removed, Project 34 has been removed, Project 38 has been removed, Project 36 has been removed, Project 3 has been reduced to \$60 million.

David Ellis made a motion to removed Project 26 and Project 27. Bo Ives seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Jolene Puffer made a motion to remove Project 5. Pam Creech seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Gray stated he suggest we have made some progress by eliminating projects that folks may not find don't have a high priority. He told the committee to send their list to David Gilreath, Jason Thompson, Andy Markunas, and Courtney Richardson by Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Mark Lazarus asked staff to send out a new list referencing the projects that have been removed.

Chairman Gray stated a new list will be compiled and e-mailed of what projects remain. He asked the committee to send their list, not necessarily in priority order, but what could fit in the \$700 million budget.

Carole vanSickler asked if the committee had the opportunity to revisit the amount of money that's been generated towards dirt road and resurfacing. Chairman Gray stated a motion could always be made, and if there's a second, it will be considered.

Chairman Gray advised the next meeting would be held April 20, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

Chairman Gray adjourned the meeting at approximately 5:43 p.m.