

Memorandum To County Council Regarding 2026 Transportation Sales Tax Advisory Committee Recommendations

Final Recommendation Memorandum for Beaufort County Council Consideration

To: Chairman and Members, Beaufort County Council
From: Lisa Sulka, Chairwoman, Transportation Advisory Committee
Copy to: Members of the Transportation Advisory; Mike Moore, County Administrator; Jared Fralix PE, Assistant County Administrator; Bryan Bauer PE, Engineering Director; Sarah Brock, Clerk to Council
Subject: Transportation Advisory Committee Report and Recommendations for Proposed 2026 Transportation Sales Tax Referendum
Date: May 6, 2026

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit the recommendations of the Transportation Advisory Committee regarding a proposed 2026 Transportation Sales Tax referendum for Beaufort County Council's review, consideration, modification, and potential adoption.

County Council established the Transportation Advisory Committee by Resolution 2025/70 to provide recommendations regarding a possible 2026 Transportation Sales Tax referendum, including the proposed project list, the amount of sales tax to be collected, and the duration of the collection period.

The resolution further directed that the proposed projects should primarily focus on road widenings, intersection improvements, resurfacing, and paving projects that enhance safety, mobility, and connectivity across Beaufort County.

Executive Summary

The Transportation Advisory Committee recommends that County Council **move forward with a 2026 Transportation Sales Tax referendum** structured around an **eight-year (8)** collection period with an estimated program value of approximately **\$780 million**.

The recommended program is intended to address Beaufort County's most pressing transportation infrastructure needs through three major project categories:

- Widening Projects
- Resurfacing And Dirt Road Paving Projects
- Safety And Intersection Improvement Projects

The Committee's work focused on building a balanced countywide program that addresses capacity, safety, pavement condition, connectivity, and long-term mobility needs across municipal, unincorporated, rural, suburban, and island communities.

Executive Takeaway: The recommended program is designed to be focused, understandable, and implementable by organizing projects into clear categories tied directly to public safety, road capacity, and pavement condition.

Council's Charge of the Committee

Beaufort County Council established the Transportation Advisory Committee to provide citizen-led recommendations for a potential 2026 Transportation Sales Tax referendum. The Committee was charged with reviewing transportation needs, considering potential projects, evaluating the proposed tax amount and duration, and submitting recommendations to County Council.

The resolution established a 15-member committee consisting of one appointee from each of the eleven (11) County Council districts and one (1) appointee from each of the four (4) municipalities within Beaufort County: the City of Beaufort, Town of Port Royal, Town of Bluffton, and Town of Hilton Head Island.

Committee Membership and Officers

The Transportation Advisory Committee included the following members:

Member	Appointing Area	Role
Joseph Kline	District 1	Member
Paul Trask	District 2	Member
Anthony Jones	District 3	Member
Elizabeth Penn-Sanders	District 4	Member
Jerry Reeves	District 5	Member
Craig Forrest	District 6	Member
Bill Rickett	District 7	Member
Joy Coe	District 8	Secretary
Matt Harden	District 9	Member
Charles Perry	District 10	Member
Jennifer Ericksen	District 11	Member
Grady Woods	City of Beaufort	Member
Gary Freeman	Town of Port Royal	Member
Lisa Sulka	Town of Bluffton	Chairwoman
Glenn Stanford	Town of Hilton Head Island	Vice Chairman

At the Committee’s first meeting, Lisa Sulka was elected Chairwoman and Glenn Stanford was elected Vice Chairman. The first meeting agenda also identified County Administrator Mike Moore, Assistant County Administrator Jared Fralix, Engineering Director Bryan Bauer as staff resources supporting the Committee’s work.

Committee Process

The Committee convened its first meeting on February 4, 2026, in County Council Chambers. The initial meeting included welcome and introductions, a review of duties and responsibilities, a history of the sales tax program, appointment of officers, review of the future meeting schedule, and open discussion.

The Committee’s schedule included a total of nine (9) meetings throughout the County that were a combination of working meetings, municipal meetings, and community meetings. Meetings were designed to allow the Committee to receive information from County staff, hear from municipal partners, consider public input, and evaluate transportation priorities across the County.

Key Insight: The Committee process was structured to balance technical review, municipal coordination, citizen representation, and public input before presenting a final recommendation to County Council.

Recommended Program Framework

The Committee recommends a proposed **eight-year Transportation Sales Tax program** with an estimated value of approximately **\$780 million**.

The proposed program is organized into three primary project categories. The project category totals below reflect the current planning framework and are intended to support a program that also accounts for appropriate contingencies, escalation, implementation costs, and project risk over the eight-year collection period.

Project Category	Planning Allocation
Safety And Intersection Improvement Projects	\$326 million

Project Category	Planning Allocation
Widening Projects	\$205 million
Resurfacing And Dirt Road Paving Projects	\$249 million

The Committee recognizes that transportation project costs are subject to change based on design development, right-of-way needs, permitting, inflation, utility coordination, construction market conditions, and coordination with state and federal partners. For that reason, the proposed program is intended to include appropriate contingencies and risk factors over the eight-year collection period.

The Committee further recognizes that the recommended list represents a planning-level program and not final engineered construction budgets. Individual projects will require further development, scope confirmation, cost refinement, public engagement, and coordination with applicable jurisdictions and agencies before implementation.

Recommended Safety and Intersection Improvement Projects

The Committee recommends approximately \$326 million for safety and intersection improvement projects.

Project	Allocation	Description
Ribaut Rd/ Lady's Island Dr- Turn Lane Construction	\$4,800,000	See attached
Traffic Signal Improvements	\$19,075,000	See attached
SC 170/US 278 Diverging Diamond Interchange	\$18,054,000	See attached
Squire Pope/William Hilton Pkwy Improvements	\$14,400,000	See attached
Lady's Island Dr/Meridian Rd Improvements	\$8,164,000	See attached
US 21 Improvements at Chowan Creek	\$3,850,000	See attached
SC 170/SC 46 Intersection Conversion	\$10,237,000	See attached
SC 462 Realignment	\$19,760,000	See attached
SC 170 Corridor Improvements N.O.B.	\$6,200,000	See attached
Spanish Wells/William Hilton Pkwy Improvements	\$39,700,000	See attached
Savannah Hwy & SC 170 Improvements	\$1,020,000	See attached
Warsaw Island Rd	\$4,550,000	See attached
Bluffton Pkwy/SC46 Roundabout Improvements	\$6,000,000	See attached
US 278/Sun City Signal Improvements	\$2,623,000	See attached
US 278 & Buck Island Rd	\$1,800,000	See attached
Ribaut Rd/Depot Rd Intersection	\$3,750,000	See attached
Gumtree Rd Improvements	\$15,600,000	See attached
US 278 & Simonsville Rd	\$2,220,000	See attached
Bluffton Pkwy Improvements	\$7,130,000	See attached
Gateway to Port Royal (Ribaut Rd)	\$19,360,000	See attached
Gibbet Rd Signal	\$4,075,000	See attached
Grober Hill Rd/Parris Island Gtwy Intersection	\$1,190,000	See attached
High Visibility Crosswalks & RRFBs (Downtown Beaufort)	\$2,873,000	See attached
Short's Landing Signal	\$1,320,000	See attached
Sea Pines Circle	\$15,600,000	See attached
Evans Way/SC 170- Signalized RCI	\$7,878,000	See attached
RI/RO at Bluffton Pkwy/Goethe Rd	\$1,220,000	See attached

Project	Allocation	Description
Median Closings US 278	\$1,345,000	See attached
Old Jericho Rd Bridge Replacement	\$1,710,000	See attached
Goethe Rd Resurfacing/Traffic Calming	\$420,000	See attached
Main Street Road Improvements	\$9,500,000	See attached
Grober Hill Rd Corridor Improvements	\$8,310,000	See attached
William Hilton Pkwy- Chaplin Corridor	\$9,100,000	See attached
Stardust Ln Signal	\$811,000	See attached
Buckwalter Pkwy (HE McCracken Cir Section)	\$4,340,000	See attached
Joe Frazier Rd Roundabout	\$4,642,000	See attached
Laurel Bay/Joe Frazier Roundabout	\$5,326,000	See attached
Laurel Bay/Bay Pines Roundabout	\$4,331,000	See attached
Shanklin Rd RCI	\$690,000	See attached
Roseida Rd RCI	\$850,000	See attached
ITS Downtown Bridge Design/Construction	\$690,000	See attached
Middle Rd/SC 802 Roundabout Improvements	\$1,860,000	See attached
Guardrail on Middle Rd (B/W Doe Rd & Buck Rd)	\$140,000	See attached
Ribaut Rd/ Lady's Island Dr- Turn Lane Construction	\$4,800,000	See attached
Traffic Signal Improvements	\$19,075,000	See attached

Improvements include turn lanes, signal improvements, roundabouts, pedestrian accommodations, access management, striping, sight-distance improvements, operational upgrades, and other targeted safety enhancements.

The Committee recommends that this category remain focused on projects that improve safety, reduce congestion, enhance traffic flow, and provide measurable benefits to motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, emergency responders, and transit users.

Recommended Widening Projects

The Committee recommends approximately \$205 million for road widening projects. These projects are intended to address major capacity and mobility needs in high-growth corridors and areas experiencing significant transportation demand.

Project	Allocation	Description
SC 170	\$103,840,000	From US 278 to SC 462, including HDR-25.
SC 46	\$44,170,000	From the SC 170 roundabout to the Jasper County line.
US 278	\$51,984,000	From SC 170 to the Jasper County line.
Neil Rd Intersection Improvements	\$4,650,000	New signalized intersection at Neil Rd and Robert Smalls Pkwy

These widening projects reflect the Committee’s desire to focus major capacity investments on corridors that serve regional movement, commuter traffic, residential growth, commercial development, and long-term mobility needs.

Recommended Resurfacing and Dirt Road Paving Projects

The Committee recommends approximately \$249 million for resurfacing and dirt road paving projects. This category is intended to improve pavement conditions, extend the life of existing infrastructure, address long-standing dirt road paving needs, and support a more reliable countywide transportation network.

Project	Allocation	Description
Dirt Road Paving	\$12,381,521	18 County dirt roads with available right-of-way. See attached.
Municipal Roads – City of Beaufort	\$6,721,000	City of Beaufort-owned paved streets. See attached.
Municipal Roads – Town of Port Royal	\$1,034,000	Town of Port Royal-owned paved streets. See attached.
Municipal Roads – Town of HHI	\$8,272,000	Town of HHI-owned paved streets. See attached.
Municipal Roads – Town of Bluffton	\$3,877,500	Town of Bluffton-owned paved streets. See attached.
Daufuskie Island Roads	\$7,619,437	5 County-owned paved roads on Daufuskie Island. See attached.
Trask Parkway (US 17)	\$12,542,000	From the Jasper County line to US 21 at Garden’s Corner.
Trask Parkway (US 21)	\$46,708,500	From US 17 at Garden’s Corner to Wood’s Memorial Bridge, Lady’s Island Dr, and Ribaut Rd (Port Royal section)
Sea Island Parkway (US 21)	\$11,700,000	From the Lady’s Island Walmart area to the Harbor Island Bridge.
Sams Point Road (SC 802)	\$5,319,300	From Sea Island Parkway to the roundabout.
Parris Island Gateway (US 21)	\$12,292,500	Trask Pkwy to Bell Bridge
Savannah Hwy (SC 128)	\$4,867,200	From SC 170 to Parris Island Gateway.
Robert Smalls Parkway (SC 170)	\$42,073,200	From Boundary Street to SC 462 and from US 278 to SC 46 at the roundabout.
Buckwalter Parkway	\$10,099,700	From US 278 to SC 46.
Bluffton Parkway	\$14,661,600	From SC 170 to Buck Island Road and from Red Cedar Rd to the US 278 flyover bridge.
Fording Island Road (US 278)	\$27,096,400	From SC 170 to the Hilton Head Island bridge.
William Hilton Parkway (US 278 Business)	\$21,294,000	From the Hilton Head Island bridge to Sea Pines Circle.

The resurfacing and dirt road paving category is particularly important because it provides visible and practical benefits across the County. These projects are intended to improve daily travel conditions, reduce long-term maintenance costs, support public safety, and help ensure that existing infrastructure is preserved while new capacity projects are advanced.

Key Insight: The safety and intersection category provides flexibility to address high-impact operational improvements that may not require the same level of investment as major widening projects but can significantly improve daily mobility and public safety.

Program Implementation Considerations

The Committee recommends that County Council consider the following implementation principles as the program advances:

Establish An Oversight Committee to Maintain Transparency

County Council should establish an oversight committee to meet regularly, monitor project progress, and provide ongoing program oversight. These meetings should be open to the public and include an opportunity for public comment. The program should be organized around clear project categories, published project lists, regular progress reporting, and transparent financial tracking.

Consider Bonding to Expedite Delivery

The County should consider bonding for the Sales Tax Program to expedite project delivery where financially prudent and operationally beneficial.

Provide Municipal Project Management Opportunities

If feasible municipalities should be given the opportunity to manage projects located within their respective jurisdictions when those projects were submitted or endorsed by the municipal governing body.

If a municipality elects to manage a project, the responsibilities of the County and the municipality should be governed through an intergovernmental agreement structured as a grantor/grantee relationship. The municipality should be required to provide regular progress updates, submit supporting documentation, and present project updates to the established oversight committee.

Use Enhanced Striping on Primary Routes

Six-inch line striping should be utilized on sales tax-funded projects located on primary routes to improve visibility, safety, and consistency across major corridors.

Incorporate Complete Streets Principles

Widening projects along the SC 46 and SC 170 corridors should include pedestrian accommodations consistent with Beaufort County's Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. At a minimum, these projects should include multiuse pathways where feasible.

Pursue Matching Funds Where Available

The County should actively pursue state and federal funding opportunities to leverage local sales tax dollars and accelerate implementation where feasible.

Preserve Flexibility for Final Project Development

Because many projects are currently at a planning level, the County should preserve the ability to refine scopes, adjust estimates, coordinate with other agencies, and respond to changing conditions while remaining consistent with the referendum language and approved program intent.

Coordinate With Municipal and State Partners

Many recommended projects involve municipal roads, state-maintained roads, or corridors with regional significance. Successful delivery will require continued coordination with municipalities, SCDOT, LATS, Jasper County, and other partner agencies.

Executive Takeaway: The success of the proposed program will depend not only on the referendum itself, but also on disciplined project management, transparent reporting, intergovernmental coordination, and clear public communication.

Conclusion

The Transportation Advisory Committee appreciates the opportunity to serve County Council and the citizens of Beaufort County in reviewing transportation needs and developing recommendations for a proposed 2026 Transportation Sales Tax referendum.

The Committee believes the recommended program provides a focused, practical, and countywide approach to addressing Beaufort County's transportation infrastructure needs. The proposed program balances major widening projects, resurfacing and dirt road paving, and safety and intersection improvements in a manner intended to improve mobility, preserve existing infrastructure, and enhance public safety.

The Committee respectfully submits this recommendation to County Council for review, consideration, modification, and potential adoption.

Respectfully Submitted,

Transportation Advisory Committee

Signature Page

By signing below, each member of the Transportation Advisory Committee acknowledges the submission of this memorandum and the Committee's recommendations to Beaufort County Council.

Lisa Sulka

Chairwoman, Town of Bluffton

Signature:

Glenn Stanford

Vice Chairman, Town of HHI

Signature:

Joy Coe

Secretary, District 8

Signature:

Joseph Kline

District 1

Signature:

Paul Trask

District 2

Signature:

Anthony Jones

District 3

Signature:

Elizabeth Penn-Sanders

District 4

Signature:

Jerry Reeves

District 5

Signature:

Craig Forrest

District 6

Signature:

Bill Rickett

District 7

Signature:

Matt Harden

District 9

Signature:

Charles Perry

District 10

Signature:

Jennifer Ericksen

District 11

Signature:

Grady Woods

City of Beaufort

Signature:

Gary Freeman

Town of Port Royal

Signature:
