

MORE TAXES?

Charleston County 2024 Sales Tax Referendum

What's going on?

Charleston County is asking residents to tax themselves for 25 years to pay for the Mark Clark/I-526 Extension. The existing transportation sales tax will not expire until 2027 at the earliest. Renewing this sales tax would mean Charleston County would have the highest allowable sales tax rate in South Carolina, *on par with places like Atlanta and Los Angeles.*

The Mark Clark/I-526 Extension is NOT NECESSARY and COSTS TOO MUCH.

- The total cost is \$2.3 billion—nearly half of all the money collected by this proposed sales tax over 25 years.
- Charleston County is responsible for \$1.9 billion of the project because it IS NOT a priority for state and federal funds.
- The extension is only 9 miles of road and would only benefit a fraction of Charleston County.
- This would drain funding away from other significant priorities across areas of the county, including North Charleston and Mount Pleasant.
- This would destroy 30 acres of wetlands, 20 acres of James Island County Park, displace homes and businesses, and open the floodgates to suburban sprawl unsustainably across rural Johns Island.
- This proposal would make traffic worse on local roads, including Maybank Highway, River Road, Calhoun Street, and more.

Cost Comparisons

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Mark Clark/I-526 Extension \$2.3 billion	
Construction of Lucy Beckham High School	\$103 million 4% of Mark Clark
Highway 41 Improvements	\$148 million 6.4% of Mark Clark
Affordable Housing Initiative	\$160 million 6.9% of Mark Clark
Charleston Harbor Deepening	\$580 million 25% of Mark Clark
Lowcountry Rapid Transit	\$625 million 27% of Mark Clark
Leatherman Terminal Phase One	\$1 billion 43% of Mark Clark
Peninsula Perimeter Protection (Seawall)	\$1.1 billion 47% of Mark Clark

What other transportation projects should Charleston County prioritize instead?

- Rather than spending \$2.3 billion on a single project, Charleston County should focus on fixing and upgrading existing roads across all of Charleston County.
 - Utilize the BCDCOG Long Range Transportation Plan adopted in 2019
 - The I-526 Extension IS NOT a regional priority.
- Fund Lowcountry Rapid Transit
 - South Carolina's first mass transit project is estimated to cost \$625 million. The federal government has pledged to fund 60% of the project, meaning Charleston County needs to contribute \$250 million, or 9% of the I-526 Extension.
- Improve the existing I-526/I-26 interchange to reduce congestion and improve safety.
 - It's important to note that the sections of I-526 that have been built are already at capacity, and more money is needed for widening and other improvements. If I-526 was really the answer to traffic woes, areas like Mount Pleasant and Clements Ferry Road would not be congested. Obviously, that's not the case.
- Intersection improvements on Sam Rittenburg & Savannah Highway
- Maybank Highway Improvements
 - Intersection Improvements at Maybank & River
 - Finish the Maybank Pitchforks
 - Extend Cane Slash Road
- Main Road Corridor
 - Improvements to the entire corridor are estimated to cost \$195 million or 8% of the I-526 Extension.
- Maybank Highway and Riverland Drive Intersection Improvements
- Fund and Implement the Rethink Folly Road Recommendations
- Better North Bridge
 - Provide safe bike and pedestrian connection across the Ashley River connecting North Charleston and West Ashley.
- Countywide Bike & Pedestrian Improvements
- Countywide Greenbelt Funding
 - The 2016 sales tax measure dedicated 12% to for greenbelt initiatives to protect land and waterways.
 - Land conservation is the most effective way to prevent future traffic congestion.
 - If the 2024 sales tax referendum moves forward, AT LEAST 15% should be dedicated for greenbelt projects.

Use Your Voice

Share your concerns at public drop-in meetings Mondays from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. in January and February:

- January 22 – St. Johns High School (1518 Main Road, Johns Island)
- January 29 – West Ashley High School (4060 West Wildcat Blvd Boulevard, Charleston)
- February 5 – James Island Charter School (1000 Forth Johnson Road, Charleston)
- February 12 – Moultrie Middle School (645 Coleman Boulevard, Mount Pleasant)
- February 26 – North Charleston City Hall (2500 City Hall Lane, North Charleston)