

# RETHINK FOLLY ROAD

## A COMPLETE STREETS STUDY

### WHAT IS “RETHINK FOLLY ROAD”?

**Rethink Folly Road: A Complete Streets Study** is being undertaken by BCDCOG in association with the City of Charleston, the Town of James Island, the City of Folly Beach, Charleston County, the Charleston Area Regional Transit Authority (CARTA), and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). The purpose of this study is to identify the opportunities and explore the potential to transform the Folly Road corridor into a more sustainable, multimodal corridor, which could serve as a precedent for the Charleston region.

### HOW WAS THE VISION CREATED?

A week-long public design charrette was held in May 2015. Community meetings provided opportunities for group brainstorming and input; an open studio allowed community members to have one-on-one conversations with members of the planning team as draft ideas were being explored. Feedback was gathered through written surveys and keypad polling; in addition, a MindMixer site ([follyroad.mindmixer.com](http://follyroad.mindmixer.com)) was launched to allow online participation. Following the charrette, concepts were refined with input from the multi-jurisdictional project Steering Committee. A Community Open House was held in August 2015 to gather additional feedback on the draft ideas and summary report.

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN IDEAS?

Through the charrette, five “guideposts” were established, which express an ideal future for Folly Road. Each improvement recommended by this study promotes one or more guidepost.



### WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOBILITY?

The goal of the proposed mobility improvements is to progress Folly Road toward becoming a Complete Street where people that use transit, walk or bike feel comfortable and can move with motor vehicles along the corridor. Recommendations described in further detail in the summary report include:

- **Motor Vehicle Efficiency & Safety Improvements:** improve traffic signal coordination and access management; consolidate commercial driveways; add new access points to neighborhoods and between parking lots.
- **Design for Appropriate and Safer Speeds:** increase safety and platooning of vehicles, increase comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists by reducing speeds to 30 to 40 mph through street design.
- **Better Connectivity for Bicyclists and Pedestrians:** connect Folly Road and surrounding neighborhoods by providing sidewalks, crosswalks, and a network of bike lanes, shared lanes, and separated shared-use paths.
- **Better Transit:** improve bus stops / shelters; “Folly Trolley” service from a park-and-ride lot to the beach; decrease time between buses to 30 minute intervals; provide new express routes; in the long term, create bus only lanes.
- **Monitor Traffic Volumes & Repurpose Lanes:** continue to monitor traffic volumes and seek opportunities for “road diets” that reallocate travel lanes for other modes (transit, bikes, pedestrians) when feasible.

### FIVE GUIDEPOSTS

#### Folly Road can be made SAFER by:

- Building continuous sidewalks, frequent crosswalks, and protected bikeways
- Using slower, safer “design speeds”
- Preserving evacuation routes

#### Folly Road can be CONNECTED by:

- Making it more convenient to reach the beach
- Upgrading transit: Make it faster & more frequent, add covered shelters, employ modern technology
- Creating new connections between adjacent properties and to and from Folly Road
- Adding cross-access easements, new street network segments and pedestrian paths to connect Folly Road, commercial parcels, & surrounding neighborhoods

#### Folly Road can be made GREEN by:

- Modernizing stormwater infrastructure with creative, sustainable, memorable designs
- Increasing tree canopy; adding real street trees in the right-of-way
- Introducing landscaped medians and a range of public green spaces

#### Folly Road can be made VALUABLE by:

- contributing to property values and daily life
- improving business conditions with better building designs that look good and encourage walking
- making possible gradual change and incremental development

#### Folly Road can be more SYNCED by:

- optimizing traffic signal timing with modernized software
- sharing costs and responsibilities
- creating a joint design review body
- appointing a project manager to oversee the whole suite of Folly Road improvements



## IMPLEMENTATION: COORDINATION, MOU, FUNDING

Implementation of the Folly Road vision will require agreement and coordination among all four jurisdictions in the area (Charleston County, City of Charleston, City of Folly Beach, and Town of James Island). All of the jurisdictions are conducting meetings to adopt the plan within the context of their policy framework, which may include an approval by Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) resolution. The importance of plan adoption becomes the initial pledge of each jurisdiction to work together to realize the vision.

The benefit of entering into the MOU at the time of the adoption is the opportunity for the jurisdictions to work together to begin to outline policy items such as funding, project management, the role(s) of a steering committee, and coordinated zoning and development standard review. The MOU will not include commitments to specific policies, regulatory amendments or funding amounts, but rather a commitment to work together as these details are addressed.

The summary report contains a matrix of implementation steps organized by timeframe (immediate, near-term and longer-term). The matrix also identifies responsible parties, approximate costs, and potential funding sources. Several Federal, State, and local funding programs could be tapped to help fund plan improvements; potential programs and sources to investigate further have been identified. Ultimately, implementation will need to take advantage of a multitude of sources, which will change over time as new funding mechanisms and priorities are established.

## HOW WILL THE IMPROVEMENTS DEPICTED IN THE PLANS AND ILLUSTRATIONS BE REALIZED?

It is unrealistic to expect all of the proposed improvements for Folly Road to happen tomorrow or even in the next year; while the ideal scenario is described and illustrated, potential phases toward full implementation and initial “get started” steps are described as well. These phases are described in three steps - “good”, “better”, and “best”. While the “best” approaches are ideal outcomes for Folly Road, they represent conditions that may only be possible to achieve over time or installed in increments, after “good” and “better” steps change current dynamics and shifts to walking, biking, and transit use take place, and as funding is available. Focusing on what can be done is the key to success of any Complete Streets project, rather than the component that “can’t” be done yet.

Transportation and feasibility studies for the Folly Road Corridor will be conducted as projects move forward to implementation. It is recommended that traffic and how people move be monitored on an annual basis, or three to six months after a major initiative is implemented (“good” approaches first). Modeling and forecasting should then be adjusted based on the data collected, to reflect current conditions. In addition, existing analysis practices and methods for defining and measuring success should be evaluated to be consistent with Complete Street goals and the vision for Folly Road.

## WHAT IS THE VISION FOR NEW BUILDINGS?

The vision for Folly Road considers the design and functionality of the entire streetspace, which includes land in the public right-of-way as well as land on private properties. The functionality and visual appeal of the corridor can be improved through better building design. Details include:

- **Building Orientation:** buildings should face Folly Road, accessed from a plaza or sidewalk, with parking and service entrances located to the side or rear.
- **Building Transparency:** doors and windows, not blank walls, face the street.
- **Building Materials:** choices should reflect James Island’s unique character.

Refinements to zoning and development standards can be made to specify these building details as well as standards for landscaping, new public open spaces and street design that are part of future developments. In this way, as individual projects and improvements are proposed and implemented following the updated rules, they will contribute toward and complement the ultimate vision.

## WHAT IS “FOLLY GREEN”?

A Complete Street accommodates pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicular drivers and transit users; to be truly complete it should also contain trees, quality open spaces, and sustainable stormwater management practices. The vision for Folly Road offers an opportunity to utilize green infrastructure systems to treat stormwater runoff as a resource, prioritizing systems that celebrate water while also improving drainage, providing water quality, flood control, traffic calming and street beautification functions. The “Folly Green” approach is organized into three main elements:

- **Preserve Existing Tree Canopy & Add Real Street Trees:** add green to Folly Road, and maintain the green that currently exists.
- **Green infrastructure:** utilize best practices including bioretention systems (using soils and plants to remove pollutants from stormwater and provide decentralized infiltration); green roofs; permeable pavement for sidewalks, plazas and parking areas; and more trees to intercept and store rainfall.
- **Better Landscape & Open Spaces in Each Context:** specify appropriate plantings for each context along the corridor, from beach to town.