



Transportation Roadmap FAQ

Has Richland County Council decided to continue the Transportation Penny Tax? Richland County Council passed a third reading of the Transportation Sales Tax Referendum on July 16, 2024.

Council passed a first reading of the Transportation Sales Tax Referendum on April 9 and approved a second reading on May 14.

These actions by Council authorize a referendum that, if passed in November, would authorize a new 1 percent Transportation Penny Tax when maximum revenue is received under the current Penny tax.

Is the proposed new Penny an additional tax on top of what is already being collected? No. With the new Penny, if passed, individuals would not pay more into the Transportation Penny program than they do now.

What is the projected revenue from a potential new Penny? The projected revenue from a potential new Penny collected over 25 years or until the maximum revenue is received, whichever comes first, is estimated at \$4.5 billion.

What questions will be on the ballot for Richland County voters in the November elections?

- **QUESTION 1:** I approve a special sales and use tax in the amount of one percent to be imposed in Richland County for not more than twenty-five (25) years to fund certain projects with an aggregate cost of not exceeding \$4.5 billion. Collection of the special sales and use tax will not begin until the current special sales and use tax imposed in Richland County is terminated. The special sales and use tax proceeds will be used to fund the following projects: 1. Community Investment Projects; 2. County advancement projects; 3. COMET Enhancement Projects (yes/no)
- **QUESTION 2:** I approve the issuance of not exceeding \$950 million of general obligation bonds of Richland County, payable from the special transportation sales and use tax described in Question 1 above, maturing over a period not to exceed twenty-five (25) years, to fund projects from among the categories described in Question 1 above. (yes/no)

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What happens if the referendum passes but the bond does not? Instead of new projects starting in 2027, those would likely begin in 2029, as two years of revenue would need to be accrued.

Does the \$4.5 billion include funding for The COMET and if so, at what amount? Yes, 22 percent of the projected figure includes funding for COMET-related enhancement projects.

How would the remaining 78 percent be allocated? County Council would allocate 48 percent to community investment projects and 30 percent to County advancement projects.

The motion also included a minimum of \$20 million for each Council district that could be spent on advancement and/or investment projects.

What is considered a community investment project? A community investment project targets the integrity, safety, reliability and sustainability of transportation infrastructure in local communities that impact the day-to-day activities of residents and local businesses. These projects include viable and unfunded 2012 Penny projects as well as road improvements, widening, resurfacing, paving of dirt roads, intersection improvements, bikeways, greenbelts, greenways, sidewalks and other pedestrian-friendly enhancements.

What is considered a County advancement project? These projects target the expansion of transportation infrastructure to achieve, sustain and support economic growth on a county-wide basis. They include new construction, improvements and widening for major roadways, intersections and commuting corridors.

How is project cost determined? Cost is determined by various factors, including but not limited to:

- Recent construction cost history – Per foot of improvement based on recent bids received by Richland County and the S.C. Department of Transportation
- Complexity – Review of considerations such as drainage, utilities, railroads and bridges
- Associated costs – Professional fees, utility costs, land acquisition and construction services
- City of Columbia-provided cost estimates for its requested projects

Have future projects been determined? Council participated in three Transportation Work Sessions to help determine a list of future projects.

- During its first work session March 12, 2024, Council reviewed the results of a Transportation Needs Assessment completed by Stantec Consulting. This session also included information related to recent Transportation Planning Meetings (TPMs) held in each Council district, as well as next steps.
- A second work session was held April 23. Council discussed project principles, defined transportation project categories, and considered estimated revenue projections from a potential new Penny.
- At a third [work session](#) June 25, Council worked to finalize principles (guidelines), projects and allocations regarding a potential new Penny.

Along with community investment projects, County advancement projects, and COMET enhancement projects, County Council anticipates the presence of emerging transportation-related needs. Working with the Transportation Penny Advisory Committee, the Transportation Penny Department will establish

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a protocol for tracking such needs. Once emerging needs are identified, Transportation will assign a project score to each and then prioritize them appropriately for work under the new Penny.

The [Projects, Principles and Categories document](#) includes a summary of current needs.

What is a Transportation Needs Assessment? An evaluation of various components of a transportation system, including the system's existing condition, current use and projected future use.

How was Richland County's Transportation Needs Assessment accomplished? Stantec hosted TPMs in January and February 2024 to hear from residents in each of the County's 11 districts. Additionally, Stantec received a list of projects as determined by the Central Midlands Council of Governments, local municipalities, and input received via email and social media to compile the report.

How will the list of 2024 projects be prioritized? The goal is to fairly and accurately prioritize projects based on six project principles. Unfunded projects from 2012 will be completed first.

What are the project principles?

1. Additional funding sources (up to 10 points)
 - a. Matching state or federal funds
2. Overall impact and cost ratio (up to 20 points)
 - a. The number of County residents affected by the project
3. Safety (up to 25 points)
 - a. The impact a project would have on improving public safety
4. Improvement of overall condition (up to 10 points)
 - a. The effect a project would have on the improvement of blighted conditions
5. Economic development (up to 20 points)
 - a. The impact a project would have on economic development in the County
6. Public support (up to 15 points)
 - a. The input of the public and other stakeholders

How can I find out more information? Additional information can be found at www.richlandpenny.com.