



**OKLAHOMA**  
Transportation

# *I-35* CAPACITY IMPROVEMENTS

FY 2023-2024 MPDG

*Project Readiness*

# PROJECT READINESS

## ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

ODOT is committed to delivering the I-35 project, a comprehensive initiative that includes the widening of the North and South sections and the construction of the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge. This project, meticulously planned and aligned with federal guidelines, showcases ODOT's readiness to undertake vital infrastructure improvements, enhancing traffic flow, safety, and reducing congestion along a crucial corridor. The thorough design and planning completed to date lend this project the ability to be executed according to the precise schedule and details outlined in the following sections. By securing the MPDG grant, these much-needed enhancements can be realized sooner, demonstrating a tangible commitment to community and regional advancement.

### Schedule

The schedule depicted in Figure 1 outlines the crucial design milestones for each component of the project, comprising the I-35 North Section Widening, I-35 South Section Widening, and the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge. With a successful grant application, these projects can be accelerated and bundled into one letting to not only satisfy grant requirements but also optimize construction along the I-35 corridor. Construction of the I-35 North Section Widening is planned to commence in 2026, and the entire project is anticipated to be constructed in 2028.

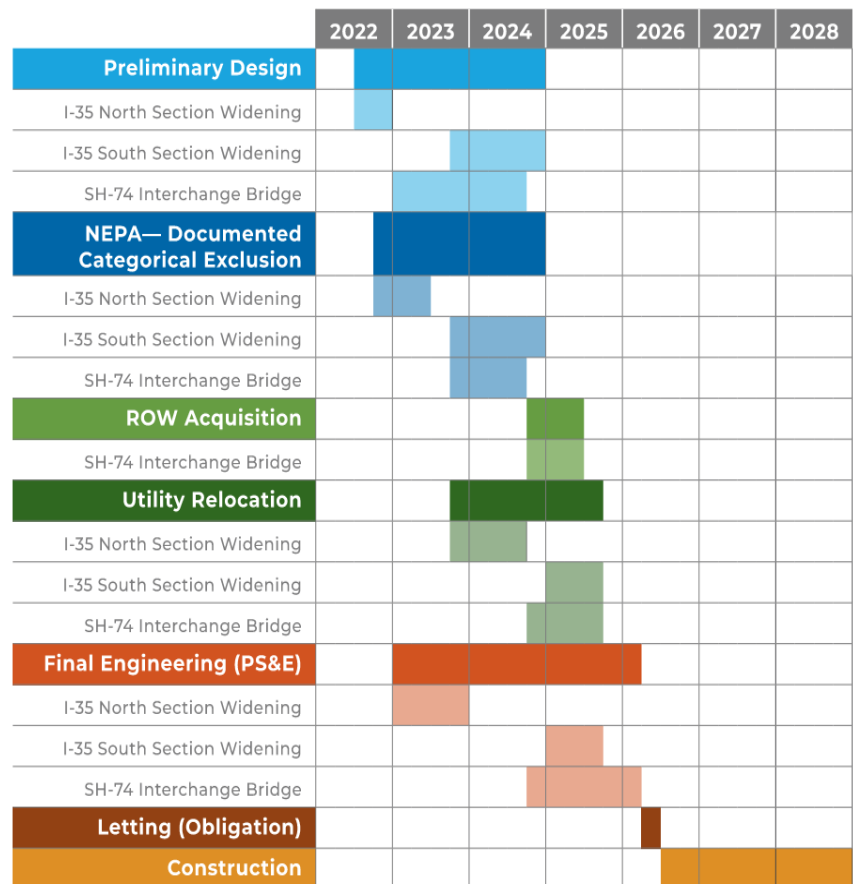


Figure 1: Schedule

### Required Approvals

The following sections summarize the status of the required approvals. The I-35 North Section Widening component has completed the environmental and permitting process which demonstrates ODOT's ability to complete the entire project per federal guidelines and meet the proposed schedule.

### Environmental Documents & Supporting Studies

- I-35 North Section Widening: Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE)<sup>22</sup> was completed on April 18, 2023 along with supporting studies including a wetland delineation, biological assessment, cultural resource survey, initial site assessment for hazardous waste, detailed noise study, and socioeconomic and environmental justice review
- I-35 South Section Widening: Due to similar impacts expected with widening this adjacent project, this is expected to be a documented categorical exclusion.
- SH-74 Interchange/Bridge: Alternative Analysis<sup>25</sup> selection was completed in March 2023. Preliminary potential impacts of environmental resources were completed. A programmatic categorical exclusion is anticipated based on the impacts which will be confirmed as the environmental studies and assessments progress.

### Reviews, Approvals & Permits by Other Agencies

The project will follow ODOT's design process that meets all federal guidelines. The following coordination has been completed on the I-35 North Section Widening and the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge. This process will continue per the schedule, and all required permits and approvals for each component will be in place prior to construction.

- The I-35 North Section widening has been approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for construction under the 404 Nationwide Permit 14<sup>33</sup>; the other components are expected to also meet the requirements for a nationwide permit.
- Required Resource Agency Consultations: Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and U.S. Fish and Wildlife services has been completed for the North Section Widening; findings are documented in Environmental Mitigation Notes (DCE<sup>22</sup>).
- Town of Goldsby: Coordination for the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge (Alternatives Analysis<sup>25</sup>).
- Federal Aviation Administration: Notification prior to construction (Form 7460-1) and a Tall Structure Permit is required (DCE<sup>22</sup>).

### Public Involvement

ODOT is committed to engaging with the public throughout the project and has conducted extensive public engagement in this corridor, including:

- I-35 North Section Widening: Virtual Public Open House<sup>34</sup> held on January 11 – January 25, 2023. Notifications letters were sent to 54 public officials, 27 agencies, and four tribal nations.

- I-35 South Section Widening: Public engagement will commence in early 2024 consistent with ODOT's standard process.
- SH-74 Interchange/Bridge: A virtual public open house<sup>35</sup> was conducted between Oct 10-31, 2022 along with an online survey and agency solicitation letters.

### **Right of Way**

Right of Way (R/W) impacts for the project are minimal and have been reduced or eliminated all components of the project. I-35 North Section Widening has no R/W acquisition (see Right of Way Plans)<sup>26</sup> and minimal utility relocations are needed. I-35 South Section Widening is not anticipating any R/W acquisition and similar design strategies will be used to minimize impacts. SH-74 Interchange/Bridge component will require some ROW, however due to the extensive alternatives analysis<sup>25</sup>, efforts to minimize impacts have been completed.

### **Federal Highway Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning**

The I-35 project, comprising three vital components, is prioritized by ODOT, and this is demonstrated by its inclusion in the following plans. With funding from this grant, the completion schedule can be expedited, thereby delivering this critical improvement to the region in a timelier manner.

- ODOT FFY-2023 through FFY-2030 Construction Work Plan (8-Year CWP)<sup>6</sup> – The 8-Year CWP includes all three components.
- Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (OFTP)<sup>5</sup> – The two I-35 widening components are incorporated in the OFTP for 2023-2030, validating their integration into the State Freight Plan.
- ODOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program FFY 2022 – 2025 (STIP)<sup>21</sup> – Although no components from this project are currently listed, the STIP will be modified to include the entire length of the project with the award of MPDG funds.
- I-35 Committee Study<sup>4</sup> – this ongoing study will continue to evaluate the I-35 corridor from Oklahoma City to Texas and recommend modifications to any applicable planning documents.

### Assessment of Project Risks & Mitigation Strategies

ODOT is prepared to design and construct the I-35 project which is demonstrated by the extensive environmental and design work done to date shown in the section above. ODOT will continue to look for ways to mitigate risks to schedule, budget and quality of the project to deliver a needed project for the region as demonstrated in the table below.

*Table 1: Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies*

Project Risk (Probability)	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Right-of-Way Acquisitions (Medium)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Right-of-Way (R/W) Acquisition is required for the I-35 North Section Widening (see R/W Plans<sup>26</sup>), and the South Section Widening is expected to not require R/W.</li> <li>• Alternative Analysis<sup>25</sup> for the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge completed to select bridge skew option with minimal R/W acquisition needs.</li> <li>• R/W acquisition (as necessary) is accounted for in the project schedule to begin in late 2024 for the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge component.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All components of this project can be found in ODOT's 8-Year CWP, and will be constructed with formula Federal funding and Oklahoma State funds; however, the addition MPDG funding will accelerate the timeline of construction to match this application's schedule.</li> </ul>
<b>Permitting (Moderate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts to wetlands and streams has been minimized in the design process.</li> <li>• Identification of environmental mitigation occurs early in the design phase.</li> </ul>
<b>Construction Cost Increases (High)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction costs continue to increase based on inflation. A 15 percent contingency has been added to the construction cost estimates to combat inflation and provide accurate estimating.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Justice (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-35 North Section Widening completed the environmental justice review<sup>22</sup> and found no potential for disproportionately high and adverse impact on minority or low-income populations.</li> <li>• Similar results are expected on the adjacent projects and will be confirmed early in the NEPA process.</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Review (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A DCE<sup>22</sup> was completed in April 2023 with no significant findings for the I-35 North Section Widening. Similar findings are expected on the I-35 South Section Widening and will be confirmed during NEPA process.</li> <li>• Preliminary environmental investigations have begun during the alternative analysis for the SH-74 Interchange.</li> </ul>
<b>Utilities (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I-35 North Section Widening project utility relocation has begun. Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE) was performed, and the design was minimized to avoid impacts to existing utilities. Similar efforts will be made on the I-35 South Section Widening.</li> <li>• SH-74 Interchange/Bridge began utility coordination during the alternative selection process.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Opposition (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ODOT has completed extensive public involvement outreach to inform and request comments from the public.</li> <li>• The project has completed a noise study to address concerns from the surrounding community. See DCE<sup>22</sup>.</li> </ul>

## TECHNICAL CAPACITY

ODOT has established a track record in adhering to federal guidelines to design and construct projects across Oklahoma. ODOT recently let a project to widen I-35 project for the two miles directly north of the extents of this project, illustrating ODOT's ability to execute similar projects with accelerated schedules and meet federal process. The I-35 North Section Widening component is progressing to 90 percent plans and will be ready for construction in 2024 with no R/W acquisition; the I-35 South Section Widening will also progress with no R/W acquisition; and while the SH-74 Interchange/Bridge does require some R/W acquisition, efforts will be made in design to minimize necessary R/W. ODOT's budget consists of 55% federal formula funding, and ODOT is dedicated to ensuring that all projects meet all federal requirements, including Buy America, ADA, Civil Rights requirements, FMVSS, and FMCSR. This approach reflects ODOT's commitment to technical accuracy and regulatory compliance.

## FINANCIAL COMPLETENESS

The financial details, including cost estimates, funding sources, and impact of the MPDG grant, are further elaborated in Project Budget section, providing comprehensive insights into ODOT's financial completeness for the project. The total future eligible cost is estimated at \$78.1M, with \$30M requested in MPDG funding and \$24.05M committed in state funding, constituting a 31 percent match. A 15 percent contingency has been calculated to accommodate early design stages and potential changes in materials and labor costs. The 8-Year CWP<sup>6</sup> is re-balanced annually, and the MPDG grant will enable critical improvements to be implemented within the next three years. This will allow ODOT's CWP to re-allocate funding to additional improvements along I-35. Without MPDG funds, timelines will be extended to 2030 or beyond, with increased costs and congestion impacts.