

# **Virtual Public Open House Summary**

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**Oklahoma Department of Transportation**

**US-277 Improvements in Elgin**

**Comanche County, ODOT JP 33758(04)**

Prepared by:



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## Executive Summary

This document summarizes the virtual public meeting conducted for the US-277 Improvements in Elgin project. The purpose of the virtual open house was to inform the public of the proposed improvements to US-277 in Elgin, provide the information obtained during the environmental studies for the project, receive input on construction concerns and outline the next steps and schedule for the project.

Due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) held a virtual public meeting. The public meeting was held on-line between August 3 and August 17, 2021. Nineteen (19) members of the public signed in on the website; however, sign-in was not required. According to the website analytics, 328 unique users viewed the website over the two-week period. After the home page, the meeting presentation was the most frequently viewed page. In total, sixty-eight (68) written comments/questions were received during the virtual public meeting, including two (2) agency responses, forty-seven (47) comments submitted via the website comment feature, sixteen (16) Facebook comments, three (3) comments received via email, and one (1) comment collected via voicemail from a property owner.

Solicitation letters including notification of the virtual open house were mailed to the appropriate local, state, and federal resource agencies on August 2, 2021. Agency comments included the following:

- The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) indicated that the project does not appear to pose a hazard to safe and efficient use of navigable airspace.
- The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) indicated that riparian area and connected freshwater emergent wetland and ponds will be disturbed from siltation during construction. OCC recommends plans that reduce disturbance in the creek and surrounding wetland areas, as well as erosion control plans sufficient to minimize sedimentation impacts from construction activities.

Of the sixty-eight (68) public comments received, the majority were either in favor of the project or contained neutral questions or suggestions. The majority of the public's comments were focused on the traffic concerns in the area, improvements to the H.E. Bailey Turnpike, schedule concerns, and inquiries about traffic signals and planned development in the area. **Table E-1** summarizes the comments received. Please note that the number of concerns identified is greater than actual number of comments, because, in many cases, multiple concerns were included in a single comment.

**Table E-1: Major Issues of Concern**

Issue	# of Comments
Traffic Concerns	20
Design Suggestions	19
Project Needed	17
Provide More Exits on the Turnpike/Impacts to Existing Ramps	16
Addition of Traffic Signals	8
Schedule Concerns	7
Bypass Elgin	7
Upcoming Development	6

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Issue	# of Comments
Bike/Pedestrian Concerns	5
Safety Concerns	5
Adjacent Improvements	5
Property Concerns	4
Tolling Concerns	4
Intersection Inquiry	3
Business Access	3
Speed Limit Changes	2
Other Varied Inquires	7

**Responses to Comments**

Traffic Concerns

Thank you for your comment. A three-lane roadway with a two-way left turn lane is being considered over a four-or five-lane roadway for safety and right-of-way reasons. A four-lane highway with a center two-way left turn lane would require a significant amount of right-of-way that would adversely impact businesses. The addition of a center turn lane on US-277 will help reduce collisions and allow refuge for turning vehicles. Further, the Turnpike Authority is transitioning to cashless/coinless tolling which will allow the ramp to operate more efficiently in the future. By allowing the vehicles turning left to turn from a dedicated turn-lane, the through lane will be able to flow more freely.

Design Suggestions

Thank you for your comment. Your suggestions will be taken into consideration as appropriate.

Project Needed

Thank you for your comment.

Provide More Exits on the Turnpike/ Impacts to Existing Ramps

Thank you for your comment. The Turnpike Authority is transitioning to cashless/coinless tolling which will allow the ramp to operate more efficiently in the future. By allowing the vehicles turning left to turn from a dedicated turn-lane, the through lane will be able to flow more freely.

Addition of Traffic Signals

Thank you for your comment. Traffic signal warrants are based on guidelines set by ODOT and the Federal Highway Administration. As development and traffic increase, ODOT and the City of Elgin would study a particular location to evaluate whether a traffic signal is warranted.

Schedule Concerns

Thank you for your comment. Although construction is currently scheduled to begin in 2027, the schedule is anticipated to advance. Construction phasing will be provided to minimize impacts and delays during construction. The construction period is anticipated to be approximately 180 days.

Bypass Elgin

Thank you for your comment. Though there are currently no plans to provide bypass Elgin, any future projects will incorporate public outreach and a corresponding comment period.

Upcoming Development

Thank you for your comment. Traffic projections are developed using existing traffic data and growth rates for the area. ODOT will be planning additional projects in the Elgin area.

Bike/Pedestrian Issues

Thank you for your comment. One of the objectives of the project is to better accommodate pedestrian traffic. The project includes the construction of American with Disabilities (ADA)-compliant sidewalks on both sides of US-277. No signals are proposed at cross streets as part of this project; therefore, crosswalks have not been identified. If traffic warrants signalization, cross walks would be added at that time.

Safety Concerns

Thank you for your comment. The addition of a center left-turn lane on US-277 will help to reduce collisions and allow refuge for turning vehicles.

Adjacent Improvements

ODOT will be planning additional projects in the Elgin area. ODOT has a project in the 8-year work plan to upgrade SH-17 from Cypress Lane, east to Sterling.

Property Concerns

Thank you for your comment. Until right-of-way plans have been finalized, details about property impacts will not be fully known. Once right-of-way plans are finalized, if your existing property is required, ODOT right-of-way agents will meet with you to discuss potential impacts and negotiate with you regarding compensation.

Tolling Concerns

Thank you for your comment. The Turnpike Authority is transitioning to cashless/coinless tolling which will allow the ramp to operate more efficiently in the future.

Intersection Inquiry

Thank you for your comment. As development and traffic increase, ODOT and the city of Elgin would study a particular location to evaluate whether a traffic signal is warranted at an intersection.

Business Access

The two-way left turn lane will relieve some congestion, allowing for more opportunities to turn left out of businesses. Additional traffic signals may be necessary in the future as well.

Speed Limit Changes

Thank you for your comment. The design speed for this section of US-277 is 35 mile per hour.

Other questions not specifically related to this project are not answered in detail here.