

April 28, 2022

RE: **Responses to Comments**
November 12, 2015 Public Meeting
US-70 Realignment; State Job Piece Number JP18835(04)(09), Marshall County, Oklahoma

A public meeting was held for the US-70 Madill Realignment at 6:00 p.m. on September 3, 2015 at the Madill Community Meeting. Documentation of the meeting is included in Appendix A of the Environmental Assessment. ODOT appreciates the feedback received during that 2015 meeting period. Responses to the written comments received during the meeting comment period are included below by topic/concern.

Impact of realignment to Open Range Cowboy Church

Comment: Thirty-five (35) comments were provided regarding the displacement of the Open Range Cowboy Church. Whiskey Creek Road was originally proposed to be realigned to accommodate the proposed realignment of US-70, resulting in the acquisition of land at the location of the church. At the time of the 2015 meeting, the church had recently been relocated to its current location and described as a prospering community-oriented church that attracts locals from Madill and the surrounding area. All the comments pertaining to the Open Range Cowboy Church requested that the proposed route be reconfigured (shifted west) to avoid acquisition of the land where the church is located.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The preliminary alignment shown at the public meeting depicted an interchange at US-70 and SH-199 with a realignment of Whiskey Creek Road to the east, which would displace the church. The alignment was preliminary and public comments were requested. Following the meeting, intersection options that would avoid the need for new right-of-way east of Whiskey Creek Road were evaluated. An interchange is no longer proposed at this location, and Whiskey Creek Road is not proposed to be realigned. Any acquisition will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, effected February 3, 2005. This project will not displace the Open Range Cowboy Church.

Impact to Jones Pawn

Comment: Four (4) written comments pertained the displacement of Jones Pawn as a result of the proposed US-70 realignment. According to the owner of Jones Pawn, over \$1.5 million has been invested in the business at its current location. Although, they will receive compensation for their relocation, the owners fear that it will not be enough and their business will suffer. The business owners suggested that a better and more logical option for the realignment would be to place the route on the west side of town because it would require fewer displacements and be less expensive.

Response: Thank you for your comment. The preferred alignment east of town was selected following the feasibility study and public involvement as a compromise driven by the socio-economic needs of the community. This eastern alignment would not be a bypass, or cut-through town, but would instead balance the movement of traffic while limiting the potential loss of commerce. Following the public meeting, the eastern alignment was reviewed and it was determined that an eastern realignment could not avoid the Jones Pawn Shop. Acquisition and relocation assistance for property impacts will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real

Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, effected February 3, 2005. It is anticipated that contact will be made in 2023 as part of the right-of-way process.

Land Surrounding the Proposed 3rd Street Bridge

Comment: One (1) comment pertained to the 11.7 acres adjacent to the proposed 3rd Street Bridge. The landowner requests access from his property to the new portion of US-70, and if this is not feasible, he would like to have the entire parcel purchased by ODOT.

Response: Thank you for your comment. This comment has been noted and taken under consideration. Acquisition and relocation assistance for property impacts will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, effected February 3, 2005. It is anticipated that contact will be made in 2023 as part of the right-of-way process.

Impacts to Residential Property

Comment: One (1) comment pertained to the displacement of a residential property resulting from the proposed realignment. The property holds sentimental value for the landowner, as it has been passed down through her family over the past 55 years. However, the property owner does acknowledge the need for the proposed project and understands that she will be compensated for her property loss. As such, she requests that she receives adequate compensation and be kept informed of future decisions relating to the project.

Response: Thank you for your comment. ODOT has taken it into consideration. Any acquisition and relocation assistance will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, effected February 3, 2005. It is anticipated that contact will be made in 2023 as part of the right-of-way process.

Property Fragmentation

Comment: Four (4) comments pertained to property fragmentation that will result from the proposed realignment. In two of the comments, it was noted that the proposed route would cut through a piece of land, causing the landowners' cattle lots and barn to be separated from the bulk of a property that has been passed down for several generations. The landowners requested that the proposed route be shifted to the west.

Response: Thank you for your comment. We have taken it into consideration. Any acquisition and relocation assistance will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, effected February 3, 2005. It is anticipated that contact will be made in 2023 as part of the right-of-way process.

Lack of Access at Smiley Road

Comment: Two (2) comments pertained to the proposed project's lack of access at Smiley Road and the need for access due to the large trucks associated with the industrial land uses. It is the opinion of these two constituents that the US-70 project would be more effective if access was provided at this location, thus improving traffic flow to Walmart and relieving truck traffic caused by Oklahoma Steel and Wire.

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Response: The intent is to provide a highway with mostly controlled access, thus limiting the number of access points. However, balancing the needs of nearby land use is an integral part of the project. An at-grade intersection is proposed at Smiley Road. This would allow access for SW Wire plant trucks to the new US-70 facility. Any improvements to deficient county bridges would be completed by Marshall County.

Consideration of Alternate Alignments

Comment: Five (5) comments pertained to the viability of other alternative alignments, specifically a realignment west of town. These commenters suggested that a western alignment would be more effective and cause fewer adverse impacts. Additionally, these commenters indicated that the community has changed significantly since the preferred route was originally chosen.

Response: The eastern alternative is the preferred route based on input received from the community during early studies, including the 2001 public meeting. Comments related to design modifications and concerns were requested at the public meeting. Due to funding challenges, the project did not advance in 2016. All environmental studies have been recently updated as part of this Environmental Assessment, and a public hearing is being held to provide the public with an opportunity to provide input on the Environmental Assessment and the proposed US-70 realignment. ODOT has continued coordination informal coordination with stakeholders, including the city and tribes throughout the project.

Additional Traffic Concerns

Comment: Two comments were traffic related. One indicated there would be no relief for traffic destined for the Willis Bridge/west side of Lake Texoma and Lebanon/Marietta, specifically Highways 377 and 32 heading south to Texas and southwest to I-35. There is heavy recreational vehicle and semi-truck traffic as well as passenger car traffic between Madill and Whitesboro. This traffic will continue coming through downtown Madill or taking shortcuts. There has been no allowance for this traffic in the proposed plan. Another comment expressed concern that the proposed realignment did not account for traffic congestion that will occur between Madill and Whitesboro once the Willis Bridge is replaced. The commentor is of the opinion that the US-70 project should address the indirect impacts of this upgraded facility.

Response: The purpose of the project is to accommodate increasing traffic and address capacity deficiencies along the US-70 corridor. Some motorists on US-70 will still proceed through downtown Madill. Capacity and level of service along the US-70 corridor were evaluated based on existing (2027) and future (2047) ADT. An origin destination study was previously conducted to estimate trips that would use the proposed realignment. Traffic studies show improved Level of Service and a reduction in delay at several intersections along existing US-70 in both the am and pm peak hours in the future condition with the proposed realignment compared to future operation on the existing US-70 corridor.

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