

# Bridging the Gap: Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River

Oklahoma Department of Transportation RAISE Grant Application  
February 28, 2023



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***PROJECT READINESS***

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**OKLAHOMA**  
Transportation

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## Project Readiness

### Environmental Risk Assessment

As shown in **Figure 1**, the preliminary study for the multimodal path and associated I-35 Bridge Component (“the Project”) is anticipated to be completed in Spring 2023. The Project is currently being solicited by ODOT and 65 percent construction plans for right-of-way and proposed NEPA process will begin in February 2026. Right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations are scheduled to be completed by Winter 2026. A final Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) is scheduled for December 2026.

*Figure 1: Project Schedule*

Task	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Pre-Construction</b>								
Preliminary Study	█							
Survey	█	█						
30% Preliminary Design Plans		█	█					
Access Justification Report (AJR)		█	█					
60% Preliminary Right of Way Plans			█	█				
65% Right of Way and Utility Plans			█	█	█			
NEPA (EA)			█	█	█			
Right of Way Acquisition				█	█			
Utility Relocation				█	█			
Final PS&E Plans				█	█			
Authorization & Letting					█			
<b>Construction</b>								
I-35 Bridge Multimodal Path Construction						█	█	█

ODOT intends to authorize the Project in 2027 and let the Project in early 2028. Construction is anticipated to begin in the Spring of 2028 and be completed by 2030. The Project is sufficiently advanced to begin plan development in a timely manner and construction completed within the funding deadlines for the 2023 RAISE program. RAISE funds are in little danger of expiring prior to the obligation and expenditure deadline. As described in the **Environmental Permits and Review** section, the Project has sought input through public involvement, which included features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT’s *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making* to engage the underrepresented communities adjacent to the Project area.

### Required Approvals

#### Environmental Permits and Reviews

ODOT will apply for NEPA approval from FHWA Oklahoma Division to construct the I-35 river Bridge improvements including the multimodal connection (“the Project”) once preliminary plans have been approved in March 2025.

For this Project, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is expected. The NEPA documents are anticipated to include a biological assessment, a cultural resources survey, an initial site assessment for hazardous waste, a detailed noise study, and a socioeconomic and environmental justice review. If required, the EA process would initiate after 30 percent Preliminary Design and be completed prior to the 90 percent Plans submittal.

### Access Justification Report (AJR)

The Project and associated I-35 Bridge Component is modifying access in an interchange-to-interchange system; therefore, an AJR is anticipated to be required. ODOT has experience working with FHWA on these types of documents. If required, the AJR process would initiate at 30 percent Preliminary Design and be completed before the 60 percent Preliminary Design Plans submittal.

### Section 404 Permitting

The Project and associated I-35 Bridge Component is anticipated to require Section 404 permitting. Permitting for these projects is expected to fall under Nationwide Permit 14. The United State Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is familiar with ODOT's efforts and expectations within the I-35 and I-40 corridors. ODOT has agency liaisons in place at the USACE, which greatly accelerate and improve the consistency of permitting reviews.

### Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation Plan

Relocations will not be required for this Project or associated I-35 Bridge Component. Preliminary ROW acquisitions are included in the in-progress preliminary concept study. All right-of-way acquisitions and relocations will be completed according to the Uniform Relocation Act and applicable regulations.

### Public Engagement

ODOT has performed preliminary stakeholder engagement in the early concept development for this Project. ODOT initially presented the Project to key stakeholders in 2016 and then reinitiated stakeholder engagement in 2022 as part of the preliminary engineering study. The 2016 meeting presented three I-35 bridge concepts for spanning the Oklahoma River. After years of concept development, two additional stakeholder meetings were held in 2022 to determine the feasibility of the concepts and receive feedback. Additional stakeholder meetings are being scheduled in 2023 to finalize the bridge aesthetics and funding partnerships. The public engagement will follow the ODOT Public Involvement Plan (PIP) and include features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT's *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making*.

### State and Local Approvals

The Project is currently programmed in ODOT's [Eight-Year Construction Work Plan](#). Preliminary meetings with The City of Oklahoma City have been held to review the bridge concepts. As discussed in the **Environmental Permits and Review** section, the Project has widespread community support.

### Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

**ACOG Regional Active Transportation Plan (RATP):** The ACOG RATP, [Encompass 2045](#), includes the I-35 River Bridge Project, which aligns with the 2045 goals related to safety, infrastructure condition, congestion, freight movement and economic vitality, and environmental viability and resilience.

**Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):** The [ODOT STIP](#) incorporates the first four years of the ODOT Eight-Year CWP. Construction is included in the STIP.

**Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** The [ODOT LRTP 2020-2045](#) is a policy document that provides a strategic direction for the development of the Oklahoma multimodal transportation system. The I-35 River Bridge Project aligns with ODOT’s long-range strategic direction. The Project is consistent with the goals set out in ODOT’s [2019-2028 Transportation Asset Management Plan \(TAMP\)](#) with the goal of maintaining and preserving Oklahoma’s transportation network.

**National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan:** The [Oklahoma National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Plan](#) was completed in August 2022. The Federal Highway Administration designated I-35 in Oklahoma as a compressed natural gas fuel corridor and electric vehicle (EV) charging corridor. This special designation is aimed at improving the mobility of passenger and commercial vehicles that run on alternative fuels.

### Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Potential Project risks and mitigation strategies to minimize the potential impact of the risks are summarized in **Table 1**. References to other sections of this application are included.

Environmental and right-of-way related risks are minimal given that minimal right-of-way acquisition is anticipated, and the Oklahoma River is a controlled waterway. Meaningful public involvement is anticipated to engage the environmental justice and disadvantaged communities affected by the Project.

ODOT has sufficient capacity to implement the proposed activities according to the schedule presented in **Figure 1**. ODOT has committed state matching funds more than what is required for projects in Historically Disadvantaged Communities and Areas of Persistent Poverty. This match will ensure ODOT is able to begin construction in a timely manner until grant funds are reimbursed.

*Table 1. Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies*

Project Risk (Probability of Occurrence)	Mitigation Strategies
<p><b>Cost Increases (High)</b></p>	<p>1) ODOT has included the Project in its Eight-Year Work Plan and remains committed to adjusting as needed to meet all RAISE and statutory deadlines for funding obligation and expenditure.</p> <p>2) Construction estimates are complete to a 30 percent level and contain 30 percent contingency, allowing for a margin of increase.</p>
<p><b>Delays Securing Right-of-Way (Minimal)</b></p>	<p>1) Minimal Right-of-Way acquisitions are anticipated. Potential acquisitions required will be from stakeholders that have been engaged in the study phase. Retaining Walls are anticipated to minimize required acquisition.</p>

<b>Section 404 Permitting Delays (Moderate)</b>	<p>1) The Project is anticipated to fall under an Individual Permit. Work in the Oklahoma River will be required for the construction of the bridge piers and superstructure.</p> <p>2) ODOT has a liaison in place at the USACE to accelerate and streamline approvals if needed.</p>
<b>Weather Related Construction Delays (Moderate)</b>	<p>1) ODOT collaborates closely with contractors to renegotiate project time while still meeting project commitments.</p>
<b>Issues with City of Oklahoma City Maintenance Agreement (Low)</b>	<p>1) ODOT and City of Oklahoma City have negotiated numerous maintenance agreements on previous projects and have standard language and terms.</p>
<b>Public Opposition (Low)</b>	<p>1) ODOT has initiated key stakeholder involvement through the preliminary study process. ODOT will continue to follow the features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT's <i>Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making</i>.</p> <p>2) The Project will provide additional connectivity and mobility to the Oklahoma River Trail system, which will directly benefit the local community.</p> <p>3) Stakeholder involvement participants have been extremely supportive of the Project.</p>
<b>Contamination from Industrial Use/Underground Storage Tanks (Moderate)</b>	<p>1) ODOT has a well-defined, successful approach for addressing potential contamination and Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (LUST) sites. Locations where these issues may arise are identified and included within the construction plans as "Areas of Environmental Concern" to put the contractor and their employees on alert that the potential exists for encountering contamination.</p>
<b>Earthquakes (Low)</b>	<p>1) Oklahoma's drilling practices have reduced the number of earthquakes in the state. All structures have seismic designs.</p>