

Open House Summary

US-75 at Preston Road Okmulgee County

Open House Date:

January 28, 2020

Time:

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Location:

Preston Schools Cafeteria
10165 Pringey Avenue
Preston, Oklahoma

Project:US-75 at Preston Road intersection improvement

Introduction

An open house for the US-75 at Preston Road intersection improvement project was held from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Preston Schools Cafeteria in Preston on January 28, 2020. The open house was a come-and-go event and no formal presentation was given. Handouts with information on the purpose and goals of the study were made available to meeting attendees at the sign-in table. Project team members were stationed at several tables with multiple layouts of the proposed alignment in order to facilitate any questions and comments from meeting attendees. A conceptual 3D animation of the proposed improvements was projected on to a screen in the cafeteria and ran on a continuous loop for the duration of the meeting. Comment cards and laptop computers for typed comments were both available for attendees. ODOT Right of Way Division representatives were available to discuss the acquisition process with residents who have property within the potential project area and who were interested in learning more about the process.

Purpose of the Project and Public Meeting

The purpose of the project is to improve safety and accessibility at the intersection of US-75 and Preston Road. This section of US-75 is a four-lane divided highway with four 12-foot-wide driving lanes, 10-foot-wide outside shoulders and 4-foot-wide inside shoulders. 2014 traffic volumes were estimated at 19,820 vehicles per day (VPD) and are projected to increase to 27,800 VPD by 2034. US-75 at Preston Road is currently an at-grade intersection. There is a history of severe collisions at the US-75 and Preston Road intersection, including over 30 injury collisions and 2 fatalities in the past ten 10 years.

The purpose of the open house was to inform the public of the purpose and goals of the project and obtain information from the public to further assist in the identification of critical social, economic, and environmental effects that may result from the project.

Meeting Notification and Outreach Efforts

Environmental Justice Populations

CP&Y utilized American Fact Finder and US Census data to determine the potential presence of low-income and low English proficiency (LEP) populations in the community.

Executive Order (EO) 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with LEP,” was signed by President Clinton on August 11, 2000. This EO calls for all federal agencies to examine the services they provide and identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency, and to develop and implement a system to provide those services so that LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. In compliance with this EO, the study of the proposed highway evaluated potential LEP impacts in the area of the proposed project.

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, or understand English are considered to have LEP. These LEP individuals are identified in the Census as people who speak English “less than very well.” As shown in Table 1, there are no LEP persons living within the census tract intersecting the study area, according to data available from 2017.

Table 1: LEP Populations

Census Tract	All Households	Total LEP	Spanish LEP	Indo-European LEP	Asian and Pacific Islander LEP	Other LEP
5	1,507	0	0	0	0	0

Source: US Census, 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates, “Limited English-speaking households”

EO 12898 requires federal agencies to “make achieving Environmental Justice (EJ) part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations or low-income populations.” To achieve this, federal agencies should collect and analyze information concerning a project’s effects on minorities or low-income groups when required by NEPA, and if such investigations find that minority or low-income groups experience disproportionate adverse effects, then additional measures are to be taken. Disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects are defined by FHWA as adverse effects that:

- (1) are predominantly borne by a minority population and/or a low-income population; or (2) will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and are appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effects that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population (FHWA, 1998).

Table 2 below identifies minority EJ Populations within the study area. There is a single census tract that intersects or is adjacent to the NEPA study area, and that is as detailed as the data available is for the area. The total population of Census Tract 5 is 1,507 households. Not included in the table are columns for the

categories Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race populations, as there are none present within the census tract. This census tract is not considered an EJ population.

Table 2: Minority EJ Populations

Census Tract	Total	White Alone	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Hispanic or Latino	Two or More Races	Minority Percentage
5	1,507	1,135	142	111	0	119	24.7%

Source: US Census, 2017, "Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino by Race"

There is one block group that intersects the study area. The median household income in this block group is \$56,927, which is above the Department of Health and Human Services 2018 Poverty Threshold of \$25,100.

There are no low-income EJ populations within the study area. The estimated percentage of the population within Census Tract 5 who are below the poverty level is 11.6%, which is lower than the county-wide estimate of 19.5% who are below the poverty level in Okmulgee County.

Prior to the open house, ODOT issued media releases announcing the date, time, and place of the event. Notifications of the open house were also posted on the ODOT website. Over 600 fliers were distributed in Preston to businesses, churches, residents within the project area, and to all students through Preston Schools. Written notifications of the open house were mailed on December 30, 2019 to federal, state, and local officials, and other local stakeholders. All property owners located within or adjacent to the project study area were mailed meeting invitations. In order to capture the maximum number of attendees, the open house was scheduled on the night of a high school basketball game and the location of the Preston Schools Cafeteria was chosen due to its proximity to the game (across the street). A total of 76 people signed the attendance roster, including representatives from ODOT, local business owners, residents, and members of the media.

Comments

Comment forms were made available to all open house attendees. In addition, all meeting materials presented at the open house were made available for public viewing on the ODOT website. Written comments were accepted for 2 weeks after the date of the open house. A total of 13 written comments and suggested solutions were received at the meeting. In addition, 6 comments were submitted via mail or email/online comment form. These comments have been summarized in Table 3, but general feedback is listed below.

- Most of the written comments indicated support for the project and its potential to increase safety and improve access at the intersection.
- Several commenters noted that they have been personally impacted by vehicle collisions at the US-75/Preston Road intersection and that this project cannot be completed soon enough.

- A few commenters expressed concern over the loss of local businesses and the hope that ODOT fairly compensates property owners.