

Virtual Public Open House **Executive** Summary



Oklahoma Department of Transportation

SH-100 Bridge over the Arkansas River at the
Muskogee/Sequoyah County Line

Muskogee County, JP 32100(04)

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Executive Summary

This document summarizes the virtual public open house that was conducted for the SH-100/US-64 bridge over the Arkansas River at the Muskogee/Sequoyah County Line. The project begins on the west bank of the Arkansas River east of the Stand Waite Boulevard intersection in Webber Falls and extends approximately 0.5 mile east to terminate on the east bank of the river just west of Sandplant Road in Gore. The purpose of the virtual open house was to inform the public about the proposed highway bridge improvement project, describe the potential environmental impacts, obtain public input, and outline the next steps and proposed project schedule.

Due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, ODOT held a virtual public open house as opposed to an in-person open house. The public open house was held on-line between February 12 and February 26, 2021. Ten members of the public signed in on the website, however, signing-in was not required. According to the website analytics, 318 unique visitors viewed the website over the 15-day period. After the homepage, the project presentation page was the most frequently viewed, followed by the interactive project map, then the frequently asked questions, and project schematic pages. In total, twenty (20) written comments/questions were received during the virtual public open house, including one (1) agency response, nine (9) comments submitted via the website comment feature, eight (8) written comments received by mail, and two (2) emailed comments that were duplicates of mailed comments.

Agency comments included the following:

- The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) determined that no adverse environmental impacts under ODEQ jurisdiction are anticipated.

Seventeen (17) people submitted a total of nineteen comments on the project; two people submitted the same comment on the website and by sending an email. The majority of the comments were in support of the project most commonly citing safety as an improvement; however, the majority of concerns were about how access and travel patterns would be impacted during the construction phase. The majority were concerned about potential community impacts during the construction, especially for residents of Webbers Falls. Webber Falls does not have many of the services that are found in Gore such as grocery stores, healthcare services, or pharmacies. Many felt that the construction phase would be too long. There were two comments (three counting the comment that was submitted twice) that stated that farmers have operations on both sides of the river and the detour would impact the transport of farming equipment from one side to another, particularly if there were lane closures along the detour route. Two comments stated that there was no need for the project and one asked if building the new bridge on the old bridge road was considered. Comments are tabulated in **Table E1**. Note that the number of comments in the table is greater than 17 because several people submitted comments with more than one concern/issue.

Table E1: Comments

Comments	# of Comments
Approve of Project	8
Safety Improvements	3
Easier to transport farm equipment	3 (1 duplicate comment)
General Support	1
Support with concerns about schedule	2
Construction schedule too long	5
Community impacts	4
Access to necessities such as grocery stores and healthcare/economic hardship	2
Public safety/emergency response	1
Tourism/economic development	2
No need for the project	2
Waste of money	1
Should have shoulders but no extra lanes	1
Resurface and add lane but get rid of shoulders	1
Safety will be improved	4
Pedestrian facilities	3
Farming equipment transport	3 (1 duplicate comment)
Utility placement	1
Loan assistance for utility relocation	1
Navigational issues/pier placements	1

Responses to Comments

Approve of Project:

Thank you for your comments.

Construction schedule is too long:

The bridge construction will be accelerated to minimize road closure times. This includes a method that sequences construction of portions of the new bridge foundations before removing the existing bridge. The side slopes will be preserved to avoid park areas and increase the speed of construction. Existing utilities will also be moved before construction.

Concerns about access to necessities such as grocery stores and healthcare/economic hardship:

Thank you for your input on potential impacts to the communities of Gore and Webbers Falls as result of the proposed bridge closure. ODOT will conduct a Community Impacts Assessment to evaluate and assess potential impacts to the communities as a result of the project and the proposed bridge closure.

Concerns about public safety and emergency response due to detour:

Methods will be put into place to accelerate the bridge construction and reduce the closure times as much as possible. Local emergency service providers have been notified of the proposed bridge closure and detour route in order to plan for the closure during construction.

Concerns about impacts to tourism and economic development revenue for local businesses:

Thank you for your input on potential impacts to the communities of Gore and Webbers Falls as result of the proposed bridge closure. ODOT will conduct a Community Impacts Assessment to evaluate and assess potential impacts to the communities as a result of the project and the proposed bridge closure.

Project is not needed:

The project will provide a safer crossing over the Arkansas River. The existing bridge is showing signs of structural deterioration and substandard functional aspects of improved safety. In addition, the bridge, which was built in 1969, has reached the end of its intended design life. It requires frequent inspections and maintenance. A new bridge will allow additional traffic to cross more safely.

Safety will be improved:

Improving safety is one of the primary purposes of the proposed bridge. The existing structure is reaching the end of its design life and there are deteriorating conditions.

Impacts to pedestrians who use sidewalk on bridge and suggestion that bike/ped facilities be included:

As proposed, there are no pedestrian facilities included in the design. The existing roadway appears to have a sidewalk, but it functionally is considered the shoulder. It is being replaced by a larger shoulder than is there currently. There is also no adjoining sidewalk on either side of the bridge.

Concerns about difficulties transporting farm equipment from one side of the river to the other:

No projects on I-40 along the proposed detour are currently programmed to occur at the same time as the SH-100 bridge replacement over the Arkansas. ODOT recognizes the need to keep the detour on I-40 open to two lanes during the SH-100 bridge replacement in order to allow for the movement of large farm equipment across the Arkansas River.

Other Questions/Comments:

- Different alignment / location for new bridge
 - *In order to utilize existing highway infrastructure and minimize new right of way or easement to the fullest extent, it was decided to place the new bridge on the existing alignment.*
- Utility Placement
 - *Utilities will be relocated away from the bridge. The relocation will occur prior to bridge construction.*
- Loan assistance for utility relocations
 - *ODOT does not offer financial assistance in the form of loans for utility relocation costs.*
- Navigational issues/pier placements
 - *The number of spans will be reduced from 15 to 7 using fewer piers in the river waters. The new piers will be placed 38' west of the existing pier on the west side of the channel and 38' east of the existing pier on the east side of the channel. The available navigational width will continue to be controlled by the existing pier protection, which will remain unchanged. This will provide increased safety for boaters.*