

PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY REPORT

**US-259 ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS
MCCURTAIN COUNTY
JOB PIECE NUMBER 34333(04)**

Prepared for:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) held a public meeting in Hochatown, Oklahoma at the Crystal Forest Event Venue on May 16, 2023, between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The purpose of the public meeting was to engage the community about the design alternatives for the proposed project. This allowed the public an opportunity to provide feedback to assist ODOT in selecting the preferred alternative.

Public meeting notification flyers with general project information and details about the timing and location of the public meeting were mailed on April 18, 2023, using the USPS Every Door Direct Mail service to 1,320 addresses along three postal routes adjacent to the project. Additionally, meeting notification letters were mailed by USPS on May 2, 2023, to elected officials (federal, state, and local), adjacent property owners, tribal nations, utilities, area businesses, and resource agencies. Five public entities/agencies responded to the notification letters, which are summarized below the tables.

The public meeting was held in-person as scheduled. Although sign-in was not required, 73 members of the public signed in to the public meeting. During the public meeting, project information and design alternatives were presented by ODOT and the design team. An alternative for a 3-lane configuration and an alternative for a 5-lane configuration were presented to the public. Following the presentation, break-out groups were set up to provide an opportunity to ask ODOT questions and review the traffic model visualizations from the presentation. ODOT then requested that the public provide written comments about the meeting and complete a survey about the proposed project. The project corridor was split into three segments to better facilitate public engagement. The South Segment begins at SH-259A South and extends north to SH-259A North, the Middle Segment extends from SH-259A North to just north of Stevens Gap Road, and the North Segment extends from just north of Stevens Gap Road to Golf Course Road.

A website with public meeting information was also created to provide the public with a means of reviewing the information online. The website included instructions on methods to provide feedback during the public comment period, held between May 16 and May 31, 2023.

Survey Responses

There were 39 public meeting surveys submitted. A summary of the seven public meeting survey questions and a tally of the responses are included as Table ES1. In summary, a significant majority of the survey responses were in favor of the 5-lane configuration versus the 3-lane configuration for all three

segments. Approximately 85% were in favor of the 5-lane configuration for the South Segment, approximately 70% were in favor of the 5-lane configuration for the Middle Segment, and approximately 80% were in favor of the 5-lane configuration for the North Segment.

Table ES1 – Summary of Survey Responses

	Survey Question Summary	Response Options	Tally
1	Do you prefer 3-lane or 5-lane (South Segment)?	3 Lane	4
		5 Lane	34
		Other	1
2	Do you prefer 3-lane or 5-lane (Middle Segment)?	3 Lane	10
		5 Lane	28
		Other	1
3	Do you prefer 3-lane or 5-lane (North Segment)?	3 Lane	6
		5 Lane	30
		Other	3
4	How often do you travel on US-259?	Daily	25
		Weekly	7
		Monthly	6
		Yearly	1
5	Typical purpose of travel on US-259?	Business	6
		Non-Business	4
		Both Business and Non-Business	29
6	How often traffic congestion experienced on US-259?	Yes, Daily	11
		Yes, Weekly	17
		Yes, Monthly	4
		Yes, Seasonally	5
		No	2
7	Importance of sensitivity to goals of community?	Very Important	30
		Somewhat Important	8
		Not Important	1

Public Comment Topics and Responses

There were 24 public comments received during the public comment period. Comments often addressed multiple topics. The topics are summarized below with a response for each topic.

Topic – Prefers 3-Lane or 5-Lane Configuration

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters stated their preference between the 3-lane or 5-lane configuration.

Response: *ODOT understands your concerns and appreciates your input. Thank you for taking part in the public comment process for this project.*

Topic – Traffic Flow

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters made various comments regarding the existing poor flow of traffic, and some stated that the project would help alleviate congestion.

Response: *ODOT has completed a traffic study to better understand the traffic flow along the study corridor, and the intent of each alternative is to improve the safety and operation of US-259, including reducing traffic congestion.*

Topic – Beauty/Aesthetics

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters were concerned about how the project could affect the beauty and aesthetics of Hochatown’s rural or “small-town feel”.

Response: *As part of the design process, ODOT plans to collaborate with the community about ways to minimize impacts to the aesthetics of the area.*

Topic – Noise Concerns

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters expressed concern regarding the increase of traffic noise caused by the proposed project.

Response: *A noise study will be completed for this project as part of the environmental review process. This noise study will determine if any impacts occur in the future condition as a result of the proposed construction and future traffic counts. If there are impacts, mitigation in the form of a free-standing sound wall or an earthen berm will be considered for those dwellings. Any noise barrier will have to be deemed feasible and reasonable according to ODOT’s Noise Policy to be considered for construction.*

Topic – Property Impacts/Loss

Topic Summary: Several commenters asked about impacts to adjacent property and potential property loss.

Response: *ODOT’s intent is for the proposed project improvements to remain within the existing right-of-way. If ODOT cannot avoid the need to acquire additional easement, details of land acquisition can be negotiated and agreed to with representatives of ODOT Right-of-Way and Utilities Division. These representatives would meet with each affected property owner and be able to discuss concerns and negotiate a workable solution. ODOT is required to follow specific federally mandated guidelines with the goal of giving the property owner opportunities and options to get fair and equitable solutions and compensation.*

Topic – Safety

Topic Summary: Several commenters expressed concern regarding the safety of the corridor following proposed improvements, including if the 5-lane configuration would result in higher traffic speeds.

Response: *ODOT appreciates your input on safety concerns. ODOT is designing the proposed improvements in conformance with numerous safety standards set by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and ODOT. The speed limit of the corridor is independent of the proposed number of lanes. Improved safety is a primary objective of the project.*

Topic – Wildlife

Topic Summary: Multiple comments were received regarding wildlife and increased collisions with deer crossing a larger highway.

Response: *ODOT will take into consideration minimizing wildlife impacts. An environmental review of the project is part of the design process, and ODOT will consider the use of signage to warn highway users in areas frequently crossed by wildlife.*

Topic – Cost

Topic Summary: Several commenters stated that a 5-lane alternative would bring a much higher cost of construction.

Response: *ODOT will select the alternative that meets the goals of the project while remaining sensitive to the needs of the community. ODOT will accomplish this while being a good steward of public tax dollars.*

Topic – Business/Economic impact

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters had questions or comments about the economic impact of the project. Some were concerned that construction would adversely impact the local economy, while others stated that expansion of the highway would result in economic expansion.

Response: *ODOT intends to maintain access to businesses adjacent to the construction throughout the project. Expansion of US-259 will allow for accommodation of traffic increases associated with the projected future growth of the area.*

Topic – Bypass/Alternate Routes

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters recommended a potential bypass or alternate routes being preferred over an expansion of US-259.

Response: *A potential bypass or alternate route is not part of this proposed project. The intent of the proposed US-259 project is to provide improvements within the existing US-259 right-of-way, which are needed to increase the safety and operation of US-259 in response to substantial growth in the area.*

Topic – Pedestrian Access

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters stated their concern about pedestrian crossing of US-259 in a 5-lane configuration.

Response: *Improved safety, including pedestrian safety, is a primary objective of the project. ODOT is evaluating the placement of sidewalks and/or trails in the design that could provide better access to businesses for pedestrians. ODOT will evaluate and include crosswalks that meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) and Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) standards as necessary. ODOT is designing the proposed improvements in conformance with numerous safety standards set by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and ODOT.*

Topic – Parking

Topic Summary: Multiple commenters stated their concern that there currently is not enough parking so an expansion of US-259 would impact the existing parking negatively.

Response: *ODOT understands your concerns and appreciates your input. ODOT recognizes the problem, will continue to evaluate it and collaborate with the community about ways to minimize impacts. The intent of the proposed project is to remain within existing ODOT right-of-way. However, currently there are parking spaces within existing ODOT right-of-way that will likely be impacted by either the 3-lane and 5-lane configurations.*

Public Entity/Agency Responses

The following five public entities/agencies responded to the notification letter:

- **The Oklahoma Corporation Commission** responded by email. In summary, there are no wells, new permits or intents on or near the proposed project area.

Response: *Thank you for your review of this project.*

- **The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)** responded by email. In summary, ODEQ commented that no adverse environmental impacts under DEQ jurisdiction are anticipated and authorization under the construction stormwater permit OKR10 is required for disturbances greater than one acre.

Response: *Thank you for your review of this project. ODOT will obtain authorization from ODEQ prior to construction and implement water quality BMPs during construction.*

- **The City of Broken Bow** City Manager responded by email. In summary, they referenced the importance of their main water transmission line that runs along US-259 within the project area, they said they support ODOT in this project, and something needs to be done (either the 3-lane or 5-lane configuration).

Response: *Thank you for your input on this project, the water transmission line and other utilities will be identified and considered during design to minimize impacts.*

- **The McCurtain County Assessor** commented that a 5-lane expansion is needed badly.

Response: *Thank you for your input on this project.*

- **The Town of Hochatown** passed a resolution in favor of the improvement of US-259 to 5 lanes beginning near the intersection of SH-259A (south) and extending north to near the intersection of SH-259A (north). The Town did agree to work with ODOT to find a collaborative solution for the remainder of the project corridor. No other segments of US-259 included in the project were addressed in the resolution.

Response: *Thank you for your input on this project.*