

Public Meeting Summary

US-70 over Lake Texoma (Roosevelt Bridge) Bryan and Marshall Counties, JP 33873(04)



OKLAHOMA
Transportation

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Garver Project No.: 20T03060



1.0 Introduction

This document summarizes the in-person public meeting and virtual public open house conducted for the US-70 project over Lake Texoma (Roosevelt Bridge) in Bryan and Marshall Counties [JP 33873(04)] (Figure 1). ODOT completed a study of seven Section 4(f) alternatives and eleven replacement alternatives to correct the at-risk bridge on US-70 over Lake Texoma. A virtual public open house was held on-line at www.odot.org/US70LakeTexoma and an in-person public meeting was held on July 25, 2023 in Kingston, OK. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the public of the alternatives under consideration and receive public input. The purpose of this project is to provide a safe crossing on US-70 over Lake Texoma that accommodates current and future traffic demand.

Figure 1: US-70 Project Extents



2.0 Agency Solicitation

Initial agency solicitation letters were mailed on June 26, 2023. A follow up correction letter was mailed on July 6, 2023 correcting the date of the public meeting. These letters provided a short project description, the purpose of the project, and an enclosed project location map. The letter requested recipients to provide input by August 10, 2023, and included an invitation to the public meeting held on July 25, 2023, as well as a link to the virtual public open house. This letter was sent to federal and state resource agencies and Indian Tribes. A copy of the agency solicitation letter and the mailing list is included in **Appendix A**.

3.0 Public Meeting

3.1 Public Involvement Plan

Public involvement for this project followed ODOT's Public Involvement Plan (February 2022) available at [Public Involvement Meetings and Hearings \(oklahoma.gov\)](http://Public%20Involvement%20Meetings%20and%20Hearings%20(oklahoma.gov)). Review of the 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate data for the study area did not indicate the presence of significant low-income populations in the project vicinity. Low-income populations are present, but in lower percentages than Bryan and Marshall Counties, and the state as a whole. Significant minority populations are present in the vicinity of the study area. The percentage of the American Indian and Alaska Native population within Bryan County Census Tract 7960.03 is higher (11.5%) than the state percentage (7.7%), and Bryan



County itself is almost double (13.7%) the state percentage. The percentage of the Hispanic or Latino population within Bryan County Census Tract 7960.04 was higher (8.0%) than the county's percentage (6.6%) but lower than the state. Marshall County's percentage of Hispanic or Latino population (18.4%) was significantly higher than the state's percentage (11.2%) as well. All populations were considered in outreach methods for the public meetings. See **Section 3.2** below.

3.2 Meeting Notification

In addition to the notification provided via the agency solicitation letters (see above), notice of the public meeting was provided by several other methods. A letter was sent to the Governor's office, elected officials (federal and state), Bryan and Marshall County Sheriff's offices, regional planning organizations, local school districts, emergency service providers, utility owners, and medical facilities in the study area. The letter provided a brief description of the purpose and need for the project and an invitation to the in-person and virtual public meetings. The letter was accompanied by a project location map. Letters were mailed on June 26, 2023 with a correction letter mailed on July 6, 2023. A copy of the letter and the mailing list is included in **Appendix B**.

In an effort to provide maximum notification, especially to rented and leased properties, postcards with information about the in-person and virtual public meetings were delivered by USPS Every Day Direct Mail (EDDM) to all addresses on postal routes 73449-R001 and 73449-R002 in Bryan County, and 73439-H068, 73439-H069, 73439-H072, 73439-H070, and 73439-H073 In Marshall County. In total, 4,670 postcards were delivered. A copy of the property owner letter and mailing list, postcard, and EDDM postal route map is included in **Appendix C**.

3.3 Meeting Information and Formats

The virtual public open house was held on-line at www.odot.org/US70LakeTexoma from June 29, 2023 through August 10, 2023. Eventually materials will be archived at [Public Involvement Meetings and Hearings \(oklahoma.gov\)](http://Public Involvement Meetings and Hearings (oklahoma.gov)) The virtual public open house included an introduction to the project and the following pages:

- Sign In and Handout
 - Public meeting handout available for desktop, mobile, and pdf viewing.
- Virtual Tour
 - A virtual tour highlighting the major components of the project
- Supporting Information
 - Meeting Presentation
 - Copy of the presentation given at the in-person public meeting in video/audio and PDF/written script formats
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Common questions and answers about the project
 - Study Background
 - Meeting minutes from Stakeholder Meetings held on 08/09/2021 and 03/23/2023
 - Section 4(f)
 - Discussion detailing what is Section 4(f) and the accompanying alternatives
 - Replacement Alternatives





- Depiction of the replacement alternatives and comparison matrix
- Project Timeline
 - Depiction of the project timeline and future steps
- Submit a Comment
 - On-line comment form and PDF comment form with instructions

The in-person public meeting was held on July 25, 2023, at 6:00 PM at the Kingston High School cafeteria at 400 NE 3rd Street, Kingston, OK. One hundred thirty-five (135) people signed in for the meeting. Meeting attendees included representatives from the Choctaw Nation, representatives from U.S. Senator Markwayne Mullin and U.S. Representative Josh Brecheen's offices, Oklahoma State Senators Jerry Alvord (District 14) and David Bullard (District 6), Oklahoma State House Representatives Josh Cantrell (District 49) and Cody Maynard (District 21), Marshall County Commissioner Chris Duroy, Madill Mayor Travis Williams, District 2 Transportation Commissioner James Grimsley, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Kingston, Madill, and Texoma Fire Departments, Lake Texoma Association, Durant Emergency Management, Durant Area Chamber of Commerce, Point Vista Development, ODOT, Garver, area businesses, and members of the public. A copy of the sign-in sheets is included in **Appendix D**.

Anthony Echelle, ODOT District 2 Engineer, opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. Mr. Echelle briefly described the project. Garver then gave a presentation about the project, followed by an open question and answer period facilitated by Mr. Echelle. The presentation covered:

- Introduction
- Purpose and Need of the Project
- Existing Conditions
- Section 4(f) Alternatives
- Replacement Alternatives
- Next Steps
- How to Submit Comments

ODOT and Garver staff were available both before and after the formal presentation for one-on-one and small group discussions with the public. Display boards showing matrices of the alternatives and an aerial map of the project area were available for public viewing in two locations. A handout including the purpose of the project, proposed alternatives, Section 4(f), and the alternatives impact matrices was provided. A copy of the presentation is included in **Appendix E**. A copy of the display boards and meeting handouts is included in **Appendix F**. The public and agency comment period was open until August 10, 2023.

3.4 Questions/Comments Received at Meeting

Comments and questions from the meeting covered several topics, listed below. Responses provided by ODOT at the meeting, if applicable, are listed in italics.

- A crew a few years back was doing maintenance on the bridge. Is the bridge safe?
 - *Yes, the bridge is safe. ODOT would not allow it to remain open if it was not safe.*
- The proposed detour is SH-199 and is also in the eight-year work plan to be upgraded. If this is the detour route, will it be under construction same time as Roosevelt Bridge?





- *That is something that ODOT will have to coordinate once a construction timeline is established.*
- A fatal accident on the bridge closed the bridge and cars were stuck on bridge. A state trooper said for people to get off bridge because the bridge could not hold the weight. Is that true?
 - *It was good for the trooper to have people leave the bridge for what he perceived as a safety issue. ODOT was not part of that decision.*
- If the one-way pair option is selected, will the old bridge have the same life expectancy as the new bridge?
 - *This will need to be further investigated and fleshed out if that option is selected.*
- Is the 4(f) only worried about the truss section of the bridge? Could the rest of the bridge be demolished, and that section be left in place?
 - *The entire bridge is of historical value not just the truss section.*
- What goes into the final decision?
 - *Multiple items including public input, federal and state input, and prudence and feasibility of the alternatives all go into the final decision.*
- What happens if we don't get money to repair or replace bridge?
 - *ODOT will continue to maintain bridge as long as possible. Eventually it will no longer be feasible to maintain bridge and it would be closed.*
- Is there money in the new bill passed by congress?
 - *ODOT is exploring every avenue to secure funding for this project. The grant ODOT received to do additional analysis came from the recently passed bill.*
- Is ODOT looking at tolling the bridge?
 - *No, that has not been part of any discussions.*
- Can we make sure we use our tax money on projects where we live and not in OKC and Tulsa?
 - *ODOT District 2 has a budget for the entire area. We are looking into all avenues for funding.*
- I would like to build a new bridge and leave the old one alone.
 - *If that is what you wish to happen, please provide a comment to ODOT.*
- Will it be 4 lane all the way to Willow Springs Road?
 - *Yes, 4 lanes for the entire project.*
- Can we go straight across the lake?
 - *One of the options did show a new straighter alignment. Please provide a comment to ODOT.*
- Has a double decker bridge been looked at?
 - *No that has not been considered. Adding weight to the existing bridge was not viewed as feasible.*
- What is the priority of this bridge over other projects within ODOT?
 - *This is currently a very high priority for District 2.*
- What happens to old bridge if left as is? Who owns it? Will it become part of the state park?
 - *Further discussion is needed for who will own and maintain the old bridge if it remains.*
- If the old bridge is left in place for pedestrian traffic, should there be less weight on bridge than with cars so would it be less expensive to maintain?
 - *The cost to maintain a pedestrian bridge is almost the same as a vehicle bridge. This would still be a significant cost.*
- Which outcome do you think will happen? (Asking Anthony Echelle from ODOT)
 - *I am not sure at this time, but the south offset looks pretty good.*
- What is the cost of maintenance on the bridge annually?





- *ODOT does not know the annual cost but just finished a \$1 million maintenance project last year.*
- What is the construction timeline when an option is selected? How long will it take to build?
 - *Roughly 3 years would be a good estimate.*
- Has the tribe been approached about helping pay for construction?
 - *ODOT is exploring every avenue, but the tribe has not offered at this time.*
- How long would the existing bridge be able to stand with no maintenance (if it were to remain as a monument)?
 - *It is unknown and would require further study to make that determination.*
- Why was the Willis bridge replaced before the Roosevelt bridge?
 - *The Willis Bridge was no longer able to be repaired so it had to be replaced.*
- How would the existing wildlife in the lake be protected during construction?
 - *There are no protected aquatic species in the lake. We do not anticipate that the project will adversely affect lake habitat.*
- What percentage of traffic would use SH-199 as opposed to going south through Texas?
 - *ODOT does not have those percentages. SH-199 was proposed as a detour because it is the shortest route around project site.*
- Has a barrier between the opposing lanes of traffic been looked at? Would there be two bridges with a barrier in the middle?
 - *Those details have not been finalized but the bridge could be barrier separated.*
- What is ODOT's annual budget versus the proposed cost of a new bridge?
 - *The ODOT District 2 annual budget is \$100 million, and this project is north of \$200 million. It would take a 2-year budget just to build this project while nothing else happens in District 2.*
- Is there federal money for project?
 - *ODOT is exploring every avenue for funding including federal grant funding.*

3.5 Summary of Written Comments

Seven (7) written comments from agencies and local governments, and 287 written comments from members of the public were received during the comment period. Copies of the written comments are included in **Appendix G**. ODOT responses to the comments are shown in italics after each comment.

3.5.1 Agency Comments

The **Chickasaw Nation** reviewed the project and support ODOT's effort to replace the structure. They recommend Alternative 6-17 B as their preferred alternative. *Response: Thank you for your comment.*

The **Caddo Nation of Oklahoma** reviewed the project and has no additional information to add at this time. *Response: Thank you for your comment.*

The **Oklahoma Corporation Commission** reviewed the project and did not identify any new intents or permits within or near the project area. Six wells, listed as plugged and abandoned within the OCC database, were identified near the project area. *Response: Thank you for the information.*

The **Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality** reviewed the project and found no adverse environmental impacts under DEQ jurisdiction. The ODEQ informed ODOT that prior to beginning any



construction activity disturbing more than one acre, ODOT must submit an NOI and obtain authorization under OKR10, construction stormwater. *Response: Thank you for your comment. ODOT will follow all requirements to obtain the OKR10 permit.*

The **Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission** stated that based on the limited information provided in the letter and their cursory review, the project may require a permit from the Commission. Additional information concerning site elevation and total height of any installed fixtures are required for a more thorough review in order to make that determination. OAC goes on the state the project will require a 7460-1: Notice to Proposed Construction to be filed with the Federal Aviation Administration based on the FAA’s Notice Criteria Tool. *Response: Thank you for your comment. ODOT will submit Form 7460-1 later in the project process.*

The **Oklahoma Water Resources Board** stated that before any type of permit is approved, ODOT will need to fill out an OWRB State Owned & Operated Property Floodplain Development Permit. In a second comment, OWRB informed ODOT that the permitting staff has reviewed the environmental impact statement and had found no questions or concerns. If any surface or groundwater is to be used or moved in the completion of this project, a permit through the OWRB may be required. *Response: Thank you for your comment. ODOT will coordinate with OWRB closer to construction to obtain all required permits.*

The **Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation** recommends ODOT consider public shoreline fishing opportunities when designing any rehabilitation or realignment options. The ODWC requests that fishing access amenities can and should be incorporated in the design phase and are willing to discuss options with ODOT staff. *Response: Thank you for your comment. ODOT will follow up with ODWC to discuss potential future opportunities.*

3.5.2 Public Comments

Two hundred eighty-seven (287) written comment forms or letters from the public were received. Most letters included more than one comment. Comments from the public are summarized in Table 1 and in the paragraphs below. Similar comments were grouped into categories with the number of comments per category shown. Most comment forms included more than one comment; therefore, the numbers of comments will total more than 287.

Table 1: Public Comment Summary

Need a New Bridge	194
A completely new bridge is needed (no alternative specified)	194
The current bridge is dangerous / there is a need to improve safety	93
Regional growth and anticipated traffic	34
Future Use of the Existing Bridge	120
Convert the existing bridge to recreational use (fishing, walking, biking, landmark)	76
Preserve the existing bridge in some fashion (non-specific)	29
Demolish the existing bridge once the new bridge is in place	11
Keep the bridge available for emergency vehicle use	3





Would like the bridge given to the Chickasaw Tribe	1
New Bridge Preferences	68
Would like the new bridge to be 4 lanes	50
Would like the new bridge to be wider (non-specific)	19
Specifically mentioned a preference for Alternatives 6-17 and/or 6-18	13
Would like the new bridge to include pedestrian/bike path	4
Specifically mentioned a preference for Alternatives 6-2, 6-3, and/or 6-6	3
Specifically mentioned a preference for Alternative 4	2
Specifically mentioned a preference for Alternative 5	1
Would like the new bridge to be tall enough for sail boats to pass under	1
Would like to see dedicated passenger rail part of the new bridge design	1
Would like to see a double decker bridge with traffic above and pedestrians below	1
Rehab Existing Bridge & New Bridge for Traffic in the Opposite Direction	29
Timeline and Detour	28
Does not want a detour and prefer route stays open during construction	17
Would prefer the project begins as soon as possible	11
Rehab Existing Bridge	23
Rehab the existing bridge by widening or constructing 4 lanes	18
Rehab the existing bridge in its current form	6
Concerns about Safety	19
No alternative preference stated but would like safety improved	14
Would prefer the speed limit is decreased	7
Would like to see a discussion on the safety of the alternatives	1
Concerned about people jumping from the existing bridge once it's out of use	1
Concerned about where the old bridge materials will go if it's demolished	1
Do Nothing	2
Cost is too high for a new bridge	1
Current bridge works	1

The most frequent comment received expressed the desire to have a completely new bridge constructed. The primary reasons for wanting a new bridge included the need to improve safety and the ability to handle the projected increase in traffic. Most expressed a preference for four lanes or wider, and those that expressed a preference for a particular alternative most frequently mentioned the new southern alignment (Alternatives 6-17, 6-18). Out of 287 comments, 194 (68%) suggested that a new bridge is needed in some way. One hundred nine (109, or 38%) stated the existing bridge should be preserved for non-vehicular use. The most popular suggestions were to convert the bridge to recreational use as a walking/biking path, fishing pier, and/or historic landmark. Eleven (4%) comments stated the desire to demolish the bridge once construction was finished. Twenty-nine (10%) people mentioned rehabilitating the existing bridge and constructing a new bridge for traffic in the opposite direction (i.e. the one-way pair alternative). Twenty-three (8%) people preferred rehabilitating the existing bridge either by keeping the





existing configuration, widening with shoulders, or adding additional lanes. Two people indicated no improvement was needed. Concerns were raised regarding the length of the detour and most preferred the route stay open during construction. As part of the need to improve safety, many people mentioned decreasing the speed limit and/or starting the project as soon as possible.

3.5.3 Responses to Public Comments

This section includes ODOT's responses to the questions and comments received. Italics indicate ODOT's response.

Comments in support of a new bridge, including a 4-lane (or wider) bridge to improve safety and accommodate traffic: *Thank you for these comments. Improving safety and accommodating existing and future traffic volumes is the primary purpose of the project. ODOT intends to provide four lanes on the bridge, whether the existing bridge is re-used or not. All the replacement alternatives (i.e., building a new bridge) would also include standard width shoulders that would improve safety. Alternatives 4 and 5 (using the existing bridge as a pedestrian/bicycle facility or as a monument) will also involve construction of a new bridge for vehicles. If preserving the existing bridge is not found to be prudent and feasible (pursuant to Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act), a new bridge will be constructed and the existing bridge will be removed.*

Comments supporting the preservation and/or conversion of the existing bridge to recreational use: *Alternative 4 would preserve the existing bridge as a pedestrian and bicycle facility. Many people requested that fishing also be allowed from the existing bridge. Preserving the existing bridge would likely require a maintenance commitment from another party. ODOT's maintenance dollars would be spent on the new bridge, and not on the existing. To date, no party has agreed to maintain the existing bridge. If maintenance funds cannot be identified, it is likely the existing bridge will be removed. However, ODOT is willing to consider pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on a new bridge. Fishing opportunities could potentially be explored in conjunction with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department, Pointe Vista, or other parties.*

Comments supporting the rehabilitation of the existing bridge: *Rehabilitation of the existing bridge, while feasible, presents certain challenges. Rehabilitating the existing bridge without widening it (Alternative 2A), would not meet the purpose and need of the project to accommodate future traffic volumes. To rehabilitate and widen the existing bridge (Alternative 2B) to provide four lanes was one of the most expensive options considered and would not likely preserve the historic integrity of the existing bridge. The two rehabilitation alternatives would also require a detour of almost 40 miles during construction, which could last up to three years. Impacts to the traveling public because of these detours would be substantial and would also negatively affect freight movement on US-70.*

Comments supporting construction of a new 2 lane bridge for traffic in the opposite direction. *Building a new bridge to carry one direction of traffic while the existing bridge carries the other direction was also considered (Alternatives 3A and 3B). Alternative 3A would leave the existing bridge at its current width, and Alternative 3B would add shoulders to the existing bridge. These options would both require rehabilitation of the existing bridge. Rehabilitation of the existing bridge without widening would not have as large a safety benefit as other options that would provide standard width shoulders. To rehabilitate and*





widen the existing bridge (Alternative 3B) to include shoulders was one the most expensive options considered and would not likely preserve the historic integrity of the existing bridge.

Comments supporting the demolition of the existing bridge: *Thank you for your comment. If none of the Section 4(f) alternatives are found to be prudent and feasible, ODOT would likely remove the existing bridge unless a party willing to maintain the existing bridge is identified.*

Preference for a specific alternative: *Thank you for your comments.*

Comments supporting advancing the timeline and starting as soon as possible: *The current ODOT 8-Year Work Plan has the project programmed in 2029 for construction. However, the project is not fully funded and ODOT will need to identify additional funding to complete the project. All potential sources of funds are being investigated. Once the funding is identified, construction may be able to begin sooner.*

Comments stating that no detour is desired, and the current bridge should stay open during construction: *Most of the alternatives under consideration would allow the existing bridge to remain open during construction. Only those alternatives that would rehabilitate the existing bridge without a new bridge would require the detour (Alternatives 2A and 2B). We anticipate that the Do Nothing Alternative (Alternative 1) would eventually require permanent closure of the existing bridge, requiring a permanent detour.*

Comments on reducing the speed today and in the future: *The new bridge would be wider with standard width shoulders and would be designed for 65 mph. A wider bridge with standard shoulders could be safely traveled at higher speeds.*

Comments on the desire to include a bike and pedestrian path on any new bridge built: *ODOT is considering options for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, whether on the existing bridge or on a new bridge.*

Comments on keeping the existing bridge open only for emergency vehicle use: *If a new bridge is built for vehicular traffic, the existing bridge would no longer be maintained for vehicular traffic. With a new four-lane bridge with shoulders, emergency vehicles would have better access to incidents on the bridge and would have more opportunity to clear traffic away from these incidents.*

Comments concerning the safety of the alternatives: *All the alternatives proposed would provide a safe crossing of Lake Texoma. It is likely that alternatives that preserve the existing bridge would require more extensive maintenance and would require rehabilitation and/or replacement sooner than a new structure.*

Concerns about people jumping from the existing bridge once it's out of use: *If the bridge is kept open for pedestrians or cyclists, safety barrier would be installed to protect users. The party responsible for maintenance will be responsible for the safety features.*

Comments on giving the existing bridge to the Chickasaw Tribe or other entities: *ODOT is open to discussing donation of the bridge to any interested party. The bridge has been made available for adoption on ODOT's website at [Adopt-a-Bridge - ODOT Cultural Resources Program](#).*



Concerns about where the materials from the demolished bridge will be discarded: *If the existing bridge is demolished, ODOT will work with the US Army Corps of Engineers to develop a demolition and disposal plan.*

Comments about the new bridge incorporating passenger rail: *Passenger rail is not currently part of ODOT's long range plan for the US-70 corridor and is not under consideration at this time.*

Comments stating no need for a new bridge (the bridge is historic, a new bridge is not cost effective, current bridge is functioning): *The existing bridge is narrow and is at risk of becoming structurally deficient. Improvements are needed to maintain a safe crossing of Lake Texoma and to accommodate future traffic demand. ODOT recognizes the historic significance of the bridge. However, if nothing is done, the existing bridge would eventually need to be load posted and at some point closed to all traffic as its condition would continue to deteriorate. Costs to the users of an additional 39-mile detour would far outweigh the costs of a new bridge. The bridge may function adequately today, but improvements are needed to continue to provide a safe crossing of Lake Texoma.*