OKLAHOMA Transportation

Project Narrative

Bridging The Gap: Multimodal Connections On I-35 Over the Oklahoma River

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Fiscal Year 2025 Large Bridge Grant Application

June 16, 2025

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June 2025 Resubmittal Supplement

The June 2025 resubmittal makes the following changes:

- The Project narrative has been updated to address the revised NOFO released by FHWA as of June 2, 2025.
- The Project history has been updated to include additional steps completed by ODOT on the Project.
- The Project schedule has been updated to reflect the updated timelines.
- The total Project cost has been updated to $180.1 million, to reflect the newest estimates. The construction schedule has also been updated, based on ODOT and consulting engineers' plans.
- The BCA now uses crash data from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2024, the latest data available.

Project Description

Bridging the Gap: Multimodal Connections on I-35 over the Oklahoma River is a marquee project in Oklahoma City that will have tremendous community impacts. The Project includes replacing two mainline bridges on I-35 (National Bridge Inventory (NBI) 21356 and 21723), rehabilitating the two I-35 ramp bridges over the BNSF Railway (NBI 21335 and 21708), constructing a new I-35 ramp bridge spanning the Oklahoma River, and lengthening an existing box structure (NBI 14239) that traverses underneath the I-35. The Project also includes a separate "shared use" multimodal bridge that will be constructed west of the I-35 southbound (SB) bridge, which will connect to the recently constructed Oklahoma River Trail system on both sides of the river. The multimodal bridge was awarded $17.3 million of 2024 BUILD grant funds. Based on the 2022 National Bridge Inventory (NBI), the I-35 NB and SB condition rating of the deck, superstructure, and substructure is rated as a 5, is in Fair condition, and is at risk of falling into Poor condition within the next three years.

As one of the primary Oklahoma River crossings, I-35 is a critical link in the regional highway network, included in the National Highway System (NHS), Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), National Highway Freight Network (NHFN), and the National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN).

As the lead applicant, Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) is requesting $89 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Large Bridge funds to replace the I-35 NB and SB bridges and I-35 ramp bridge and to rehabilitate the I-35 bridge over the BNSF railroad operated by Stillwater railroad (collectively the Project). The new I-35 bridges would provide six 12-foot lanes in each direction, and a minimum of 12-foot inside and outside shoulders. Currently, the I-35 bridges have five lanes in each direction, but the shoulder widths are inadequate, causing both bridges to be considered functionally obsolete. The Project cost totals $180,136,500. In addition to the $89 million requested in BIP Large Bridge funds, ODOT will use $55,109,200 in other Federal funds. To cover the 20 percent match, ODOT will contribute $36,027,300 of state funds (Funding Commitment Letter). More detailed budget information is included in the separate **Project Budget** narrative.

Consistent with USDOT's BIP outcome goals, replacing and rehabilitating the I-35 bridges will improve safety, reduce travel times, and improve reliability for people and freight moving on this critical local, regional, and national Interstate.

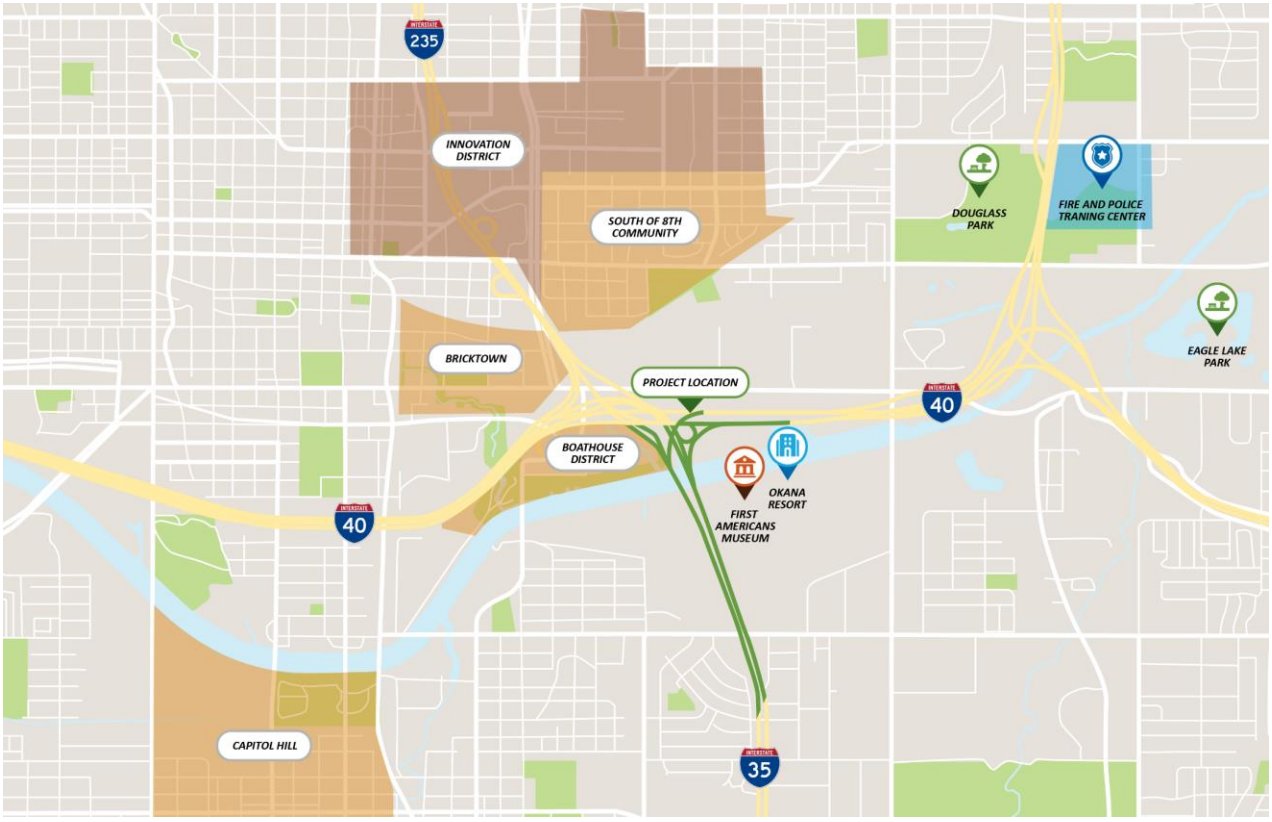
I-35 begins in Laredo, Texas, and extends north through Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa before ending in Duluth, Minnesota. I-35 is a critical national corridor, as it is on the National Highway System (NHS), the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), and the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN). ODOT is currently conducting an I-35 Corridor Study from the Texas state line to Oklahoma City. The I-35 bridges over the Oklahoma River in Oklahoma City comprise a critical section of this corridor, and replacing and rehabilitating the I-35 bridges will make the I-35 corridor more resilient to passenger and truck traffic and earthquakes, as well as other natural disasters such as flooding and tornadoes.

Replacing and rehabilitating the I-35 bridges is a priority project for ODOT, and it is in the Eight-year Construction Work Plan (CWP), scheduled for construction in 2028.

Project Location

As shown in Error! Reference source not found., the Project is located 1.5 miles east and 0.5 miles south of downtown Oklahoma City and is in the Census-designated Urbanized Area of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Oklahoma City, located in central Oklahoma, is the state capital and the state's largest city. There are numerous employers, restaurants, parks, and entertainment districts in the Project area, as shown in the map below. Additional information about the Project area is provided in the **Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity** section in the Merit Criteria narrative.

Figure 1: Project Location



Transportation Challenges

As documented in the 2022 National Bridge Inventory (NBI) file, the 2020 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on both bridges is 136,350 and is projected to grow to 218,160 (60 percent increase) by 2040. Today, there are more than 16,000 trucks per day that cross the I-35 NB and SB bridges, and this will increase to over 26,000 trucks per day in 2040. As shown in **Table 1**, the Level of Service (LOS) on the I-35 bridges in 2020 was LOS E and by 2035 it will be LOS F. In 2022, the Level of Travel Time Reliability (LOTTR) on the I-35 NB and SB bridge segments was 1.28 and 1.74, respectively. The Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) on the I-35 NB and SB bridges was 2.36 and 4.33, which is rated as poor. ODOT's TTTR Interstate target is 1.33 and the current statewide average TTTR is 1.27. While the I-35 SB direction has similar traffic volumes, the

reliability performance is worse than that of I-35 NB. This is due to the geometric configurations of these segments. First, these segments of I-35 south of the Oklahoma River are characterized by substandard interchange spacing. The distance between the merge points of the I-40/I-35 system interchange and the SE 15th Street interchange is only half a mile. Additionally, in the southbound direction two lanes from westbound I-40 merge with the three mainline lanes of I-35 SB. Immediately after this merge condition, the left lane drops, narrowing the capacity from five total lanes to four.

The limited bridge travel lane capacity, reduced shoulders, and merging of travel lanes directly south lead to traffic stopping and weaving. This further exacerbates queuing along I-35. In 2018, ODOT restriped the bridges to add a travel lane, and this helped reduce the backup on the I-40 to I-35 ramps. However, it narrowed the shoulder width on the bridges, making the I-35 NB and SB bridges functionally obsolete.

Table 1: Traffic Volumes and Congestion Measures

Segment	2020 ADT	2040 ADT	Percent Change	2020 LOS	2035 LOS	2040 LOS	2022 LOTTR	2022 TTTR
I-35 NB	67,950	108,720	60%	E	F	F	1.28	2.36
I-35 SB	68,400	109,440	60%				1.74	4.33

SOURCE: ODOT AND 2022 NATIONAL BRIDGE INVENTORY FILES

Project History and Incurred Costs

ODOT has incurred $9.01 million to date maintaining, improving, and studying the I-35 bridges, bringing design status to 30 percent. The following provides the ODOT work history:

- **August 2016**: ODOT commissioned an Interchange Capacity Study.
- **September 2017**: Interim I-35 ramp improvement plans developed.
- **October 2017**: Preliminary river bridge concepts introduced to stakeholders.
- **December 2017**: Stakeholder meeting to review bridge concept options.
- **Spring 2018** Interim I-35 Ramp improvement project striped an additional lane on both the NB and SB bridges using the shoulders to provide additional capacity.
- **August 2018**: Began traffic operational analysis for bridge concepts.
- **January 2019**: The Oklahoma City Boulevard Exit Ramp off of the I-35 NB bridge traffic opens, connecting I-35 to the newly constructed OKC boulevard.
- **Spring 2020**: ODOT initiated a Long Span Bridge Study to evaluate bridge concepts to span the Oklahoma River.
- **October 2021**: Long Span Bridge Study completed.
- **February 2022**: Stakeholder Meeting #1.
- **November 2022:** Stakeholder Meeting #2.
- **May 2023**: Stakeholder Meeting with Oklahoma City Leadership and the Chickasaw Nation to discuss the multimodal bridge.
- **June 2023**: Meeting with Oklahoma City Engineering Department to discuss the multimodal bridge.
- **October 2024**: I-35 Bridge Kickoff Meeting with ODOT

- **March 2025**: Meeting with Oklahoma City and ODOT to discuss pedestrian bridge size and location, aesthetic ties to the mainline bridges and trail impacts.
- **April 2025**: Meeting with Oklahoma City and ODOT for Design Engineer to present aesthetic alternatives for pedestrian and I-35 mainline bridges.
- **April 2025**: Meeting with Stakeholders to discuss schedule and impacts to proposed Class A rowing course and utilities.

Project Parties

The Project is led by ODOT. As a state transportation agency, ODOT plans, constructs, and maintains the highway system in Oklahoma and manages a large portfolio of Federal funds that are programmed within its Eight-Year CWP. While ODOT will lead the Project, there is significant support from local, regional, and Tribal officials as evidenced from the letters of support from the Oklahoma Congressional Delegation, the Chickasaw Nation, City of Oklahoma City, State Chamber of Oklahoma, Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, EMBARK, Oklahoma Trucking Association, First American Museum, Oklahoma City Riverfront Development Authority, and Riversport.

National Bridge Inventory

The National Bridge Inventory (NBI) data for the five existing bridges are provided in the separate Large Bridge Template.

Project Budget

The Project cost totals $180,136,500. In addition to the $89 million requested in BIP Large Bridge funds, ODOT will use $55,109,200 in other Federal funds. To cover the 20 percent match, ODOT will contribute $36,027,200 from the Oklahoma State Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety (ROADS) fund (Funding Commitment Letter). A more detailed budget narrative and tables are included in the separate **Project Budget Narrative**.

Outcome Criteria

State of Good Repair

Current Bridge Conditions

Prior bridge maintenance improvements have improved the bridges from previously being rated as Structurally Deficient (SD), but over time, continued wear has put the bridges at risk of becoming SD again. In the 2022 NBI bridge inspection report, the deck, superstructure, and substructure had a condition rating of 5 (Fair). If any of the three ratings were to decrease to a rating of 4 (Poor), the bridges would become SD. ODOT understands that if the bridges are not replaced it may threaten future transportation network efficiency, mobility of goods and people, and regional and local economic growth and thus included is in the eight-year Construction Work Plan (CWP) and scheduled for construction in 2028.

Recent Projects

In 2019, an interim ramp project was completed on the I-40 to I-35 ramps to add a lane and shoulder. The project added a lane to both the NB and SB I-35 bridges over the Oklahoma River by reconfiguring the striping and reducing the shoulder widths. The existing shoulder width was

reduced from 10 feet to 4 feet to accommodate the additional 12-foot driving lane. This capacity improvement, while helping reduce traffic queuing and improving safety concerns, caused the existing two I-35 bridges to become functionally obsolete. The current bridges' lane configuration reduces traffic backups on I-40 that were leading to a high density of rear-end collisions in the ramp queues. The ramp project did not relieve capacity and collision issues south of the I-35 bridges, which are anticipated to increase with Oklahoma's growing population and the rising ADT numbers, which are expected to nearly double by the year 2040 as noted in the **Transportation Challenges** section in the **June 2025** Resubmittal Supplement

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Project Description.

Future Maintenance Costs, Savings, and Responsibilities

Over the next 26 years, the estimated maintenance and rehabilitation costs for the Project will be over $3.9 million less (in discounted terms) than maintaining the existing bridges. For details, please refer to the Benefit Cost Analysis and associated narrative.

As a state transportation agency, ODOT plans, constructs, and maintains the state highway system in Oklahoma and will maintain the I-35 bridges in a state of good repair.

Improved Performance and Conditions with New Bridges

Replacing the I-35 NB and SB bridges will restore and modernize these critical infrastructure assets along one of the nation's most traveled corridors to a full level of performance and this Project will lengthen the useful life of the I-35 bridges. As noted above, replacing the two bridges will significantly reduce future operations and maintenance costs throughout the life of the bridges. The Project is in ODOT's 2022-2031 Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP) and it is aligned with the TAMP's goal to "*preserve and maintain the condition of Oklahoma's multimodal transportation system in a state of good repair through risk-based, data-driven decision-making processes*". ODOT will apply the principles of the TAMP to maintain the bridge and pavement assets in a state of good repair throughout their useful life. These principles include life cycle planning, performance management, risk management, and inspection and condition monitoring.

Safety and Mobility

The existing bridges are a known bottleneck that leads to increased collision rates. The limited bridge travel lane capacity, reduced shoulders, and merging of travel lanes directly south lead to conditions that cause traffic stopping and weaving, and lead to higher collision rates. By improving reliability, the proposed improvements to the project area will result in fewer crashes.

Safety

Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) relies on crash data from the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office (OHSO) because it provides in-depth crash data for specific project locations. OSHO produces publications and problem identification data including in-depth analysis of crash numbers, rates, and locations. The OHSO crash data is used by highway safety professionals across Oklahoma to evaluate traffic safety priority areas and propose potential solutions. OHSO gathers data from various sources including:

- Motor Vehicle Crash Reports
- Motor Vehicle Citation Data
- Drivers' License Records
- Motor Vehicle Registration Records
- Breath Test Analysis Reports
- Attitude and Awareness Surveys
- Occupant Protection Surveys
- Fatality Analysis Reporting System
- Department of Transportation Crash Rates

As shown **Table 2**, there were a total of 814 collisions on I-35 between SE 15th Ave and the Dallas Interchange (the Project area) between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2024 (latest available data), 174 involving injuries and 3 with fatalities.

The most prevalent collision type within the interchange was rear-end (front to rear) collisions, accounting for nearly half of all collisions. These types of crashes are commonly observed with congested roadways where stopped traffic occurs in the driving lanes and sudden deceleration from vehicles traveling at higher rates of speed is required. It has been demonstrated that the queues caused by deficiencies in this segment extend well outside of the project area. The area of crash history included in this analysis does not extend beyond the project limits and should be considered a conservative estimate as there are likely many more similar crashes occurring in the queues caused by these bottle necks that are not included in this crash history.

Table 2: Crashes on I-35 between SE 15th Ave and the Dallas Interchange

Type of Collision	Fatality	Injury	Property Damage	Total
Rear-End	1	103	278	382
Head-On	1		1	2
Right Angle		1	1	2
Angle Turning		1		1
Sideswipe Same Direction		32	255	287
Fixed Object	1	26	65	91
Overturn/Rollover		9	6	15
Other Single Vehicle Crash		1	6	7
Other		2	25	27
Total	3	174	637	814

SOURCE: OKLAHOMA HIGHWAY SAFETY OFFICE. NOTE: THERE WERE NO COLLISIONS REPORTED DURING THIS PERIOD DUE TO OTHER ANGLE, SIDESWIPE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, PEDESTRIAN, PEDAL CYCLE, OR ANIMAL

Crash Reduction Factors

To compute the expected crash reduction associated with the infrastructure improvements, this analysis leverages CMFs from the CMF Clearing house. The analysis uses CMF 8342 to estimate the expected crash reduction associated with the additional lane. The CMF is 0.91 for upgrading facilities with wider shoulders, representing a 9% decrease in all crashes except property damage only. Given the amount of PDO crashes on these facilities, and the nature of the crashes, this should be considered a conservative estimate since no benefit is applied to 78 percent of the crashes.

Protecting non-motorized travelers

The Project will upgrade existing Interstate highway facilities. Non-motorized travelers are not permitted to use these facilities, so the project does not present a safety risk to these groups. In addition, ODOT has been awarded BUILD grant funding to construct a separate multimodal bridge parallel to the I-35 bridge project. That bridge will provide a safe alternative for non-motorized travelers to cross the river.

Mobility

As outlined in the **Transportation Challenges** section, the I-35 bridges are often congested, causing roadway users to experience delays. As shown in **Table 3**, the Project will improve

mobility for roadway users. Drivers, transit users, and truck freight will benefit from improved travel times, increased safety, reduced congestion, and improved reliability on the I-35 NB and SB bridges. These mobility improvements will expand access to jobs and opportunities as further detailed in the **Quality of Life** section.

The 2020 ADT on both bridges is 136,350 and is projected to grow 60 percent to 218,160 by 2040. The total person miles traveled in 2020 was 227,704 and based on projected 2040 ADT the total person miles will increase to 364,236.

Truck traffic makes up 12 percent of the vehicles on the I-35 NB and SB bridges. Today, there are more than 16,000 trucks per day that cross the I-35 NB and SB bridges, and this will increase to over 26,000 trucks per day in 2040. The Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) on the I-35 NB and SB bridges was 2.36 and 4.33, which is rated as poor. ODOT's TTTR Interstate target is 1.33 and the current statewide average TTTR is 1.27. The **Freight Movement** section provides further information on the importance of the Project to the freight network.

Table 3: Mobility Impacts of the Project

	I-35 NB	I-35 SB
Travel Lanes (Current)	Five 10-foot lanes	Five 10-foot lanes
Travel Lanes (Proposed)	Six 12-foot lanes	Six 12-foot lanes
Structure length	820 feet	820 feet
Roadway width	72 feet NB Bridge (four lanes) and 42 feet Ramp Bridge (two lanes)	96 feet
Shoulders	12 feet	12 feet
Design Load	MS 18 (Metric); HS 20 (English)	
2020 ADT	67,950	68,400
2020 Person Miles Traveled	67,950 x 1.67 = 113,476	68,400 X 1.67 = 114,228
2020 Total Person Miles Traveled	227,704	
2040 ADT	108,720	109,440
2040 Person Miles Traveled	108,720 x 1.67 = 181,562	109,440 x 1.67 = 182,764
2040 Total Person Miles Traveled	364,236	
2020 Average Daily Truck Traffic	8,154 (12%)	8,208 (12%)
2040 Average Daily Truck Traffic	13,046 (12%)	13,132 (12%)
Truck Travel Time Reliability	2.36 (Poor)	4.33 (Poor)

SOURCE: ODOT AND 2022 NATIONAL BRIDGE INVENTORY FILES

Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

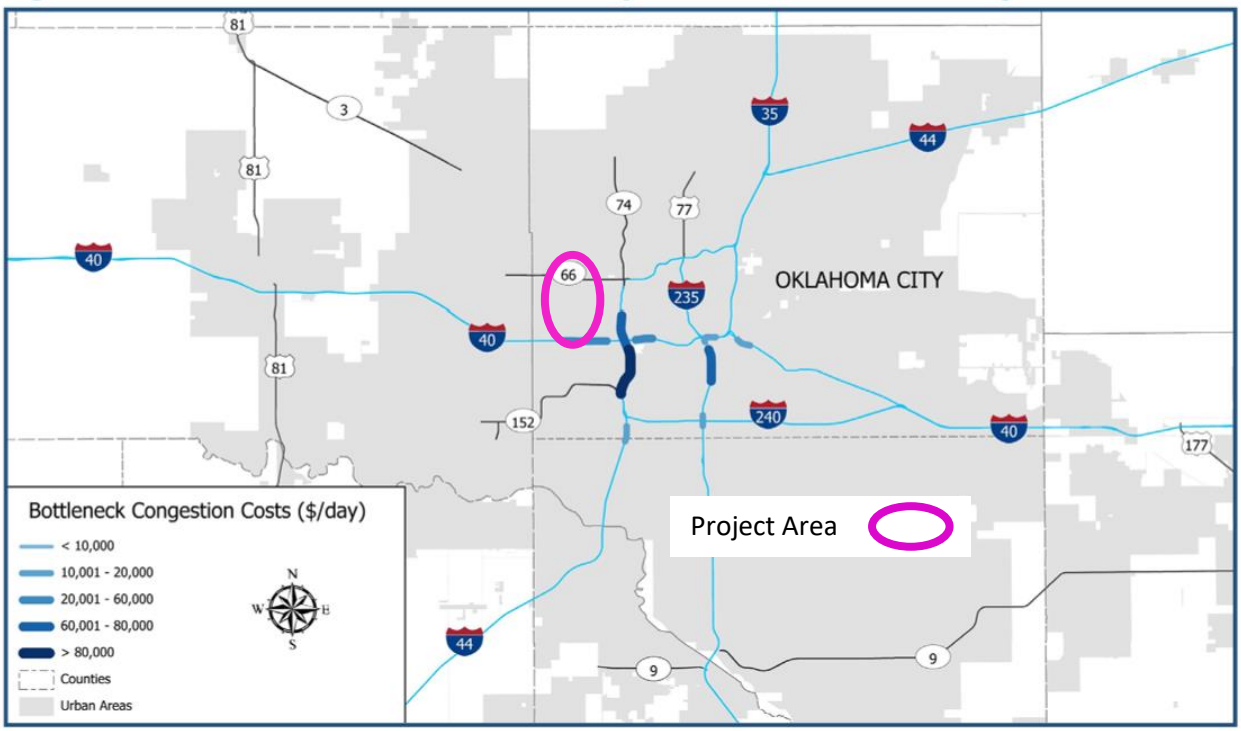
Freight Movement

I-35 traverses six states and is on the National Highway System (NHS), Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET), National Highway Freight Network (NHFN), and the National Multimodal Freight Network (NMFN). I-35 is one of the most significant truck freight corridors in the U.S. and the highest volume truck corridor in Oklahoma. There are over 16,000 trucks per day that cross the I-35 NB and SB bridges with average daily truck traffic at 12 percent.

In Oklahoma City, I-35 intersects other major east-west freight corridors, I-40 and I-44, and the I-35 bridge in Oklahoma City is critically located at the crossroads of intercontinental goods movement, linking west and east coast ports to major urban areas throughout the country, and connecting to major national and international trade routes.

this Project addresses one of the worst freight bottlenecks in Oklahoma as identified in the 2023-2030 Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan. The Freight Transportation Plan analysis indicates that daily cost of congestion at the at the I-35 bottleneck could be as high as $80,000 per day, or nearly $30 million annually, as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Oklahoma Freight Bottlenecks



SOURCE: ANALYSIS OF HIGHWAY PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEM AND NATIONAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH DATA SET[1]

[1] https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/odot/ompt/freightplan/2030freightplan/OKFreightPlan2023-2030_FINAL_FreightPlan_withAppendices-1.pdf

The 2022 Truck Travel Time Reliability (TTTR) on the I-35 NB and SB bridges was 2.36 and 4.33 respectively, which is rated as poor, more than double ODOT's TTTR Interstate reliability target of 1.33. Additional information on TTTR is in the **Transportation Challenges Section** in the **Project Description**. Replacing and widening the I-35 bridges will improve traffic flow and freight reliability and therefore facilitate the movement of goods through both Oklahoma and the United States. Additionally, the Project improves the largest single North-South truck freight corridor in the Central United States.

In Acres Park, which lies just south of the Project location, there are several freight and logistic centers which would benefit from improved freight flows across I-35, including Pallet Logistics of America, Saia LTL Freight, Old Dominion Freight Line, and Estes Express Line. There are limited truck parking areas in the Project area. The additional lanes included in the project will improve access to these facilities, resulting in more efficient freight movement and improved supply chain reliability regionally and across the country.

Enhance Recreational and Tourism Opportunities

The Oklahoma River was dammed in 2004 as part of Oklahoma City's first Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) capital improvement program for new and upgraded sports, recreation, entertainment, and cultural facilities. The $54 million project, supported by a self-imposed sales tax increase, rejuvenated the dry riverbed of the former North Canadian River by creating a dam-controlled river segment flanked by landscaped recreation Oklahoma River trails that connect to the larger Oklahoma City Trails network. This transformative public investment led to the privately funded construction of the Chesapeake Boathouse in 2006. There are now numerous boathouses, including the University of Central Oklahoma Boathouse and the $10 million Devon Boathouse which is home to the U.S. Rowing National High Performance Center.

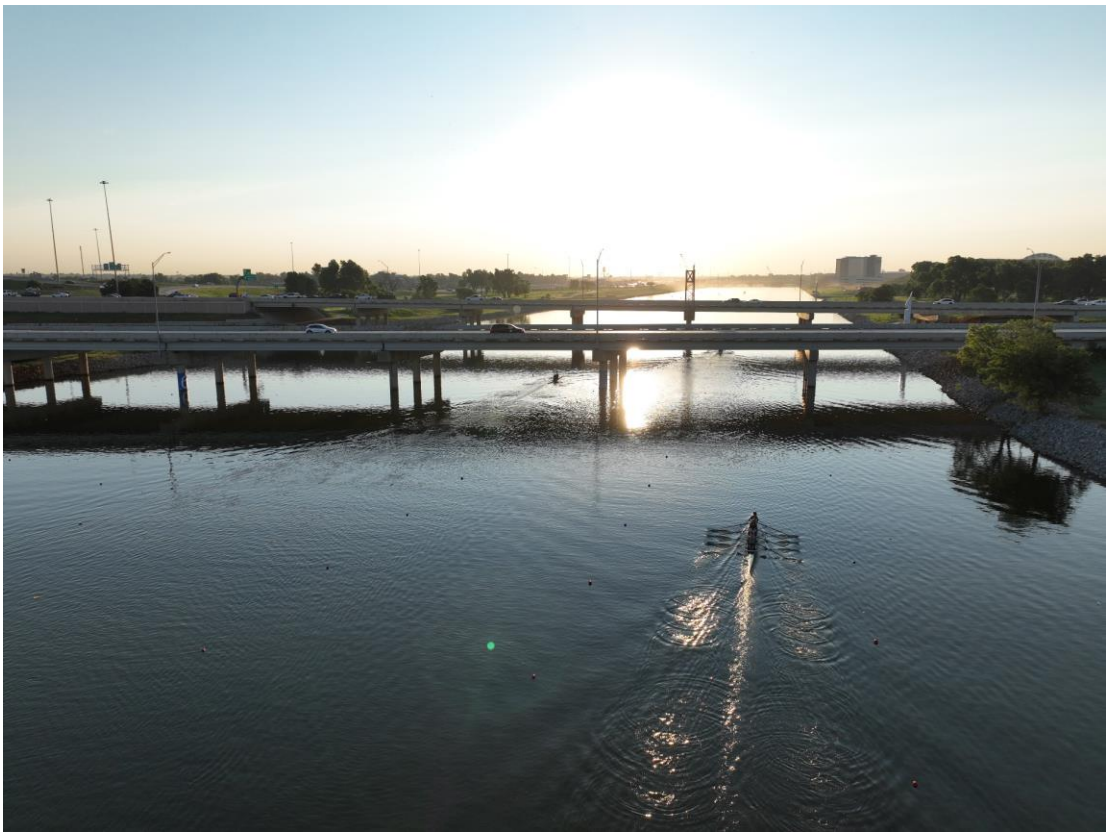
Because of these investments, and a temperate climate that allows year-round training on the water, the Oklahoma River has quickly emerged as one of the premier rowing venues in the world for both competition and training. In 2007, the USA Rowing World Challenge drew teams from Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland and in 2008, the U.S. Canoe and Kayak Olympic Trials for flatwater sprint were held on the Oklahoma River.

In June 2028, Oklahoma City will host the Canoe Slalom events for the LA28 Olympics at the Project location. However, Olympic-level international rowing events require 2,000 meters of unobstructed linear river; the current I-35 bridges have five piers that obstruct this course **(**Error! Reference source not found.). The new I-35 bridges will have only three piers. This design will remove the obstructed view and provide adequate room to host the Olympics and other future officially sanctioned events, such as Rowing World Cups, NCAA rowing events, U.S. Rowing National Championships, and Olympic trials.

Riversport has estimated the economic impact of the races announced through 2025 will exceed $10 million, with each competition drawing 400 to 800 athletes from more than 60 countries for pre-event training weeks as well as the competitions. Executive Director Mike Knopp states, "Hosting international races at this level means that some athletes and coaches will actually move to Oklahoma City to live, work, and train … You will also have officials, coaches, and family members as well as media. We will see the impact in our hotels, restaurants, transportation, tourism, and entertainment. That is not even considering the

economic ripples that happen when a city is elevated like this on the world stage." In total, the river development, supported by the bridge redevelopment project, will become an engine for regional economic growth, attracting international recognition and investment, and creating new economic and employment opportunities in the community.

Figure 3: Rowers approaching the existing bridge pier obstructions



Economic Impacts

The bridge serves as one of the primary river crossings in Oklahoma City, making it an important link for economic activity in the region. Nearby businesses rely on the bridge to improve access for employees, customers, and goods, and this demand is set to increase. The Chickasaw Nation recently developed the $400 million private OKANA resort next to the First Americans Museum on the downtown riverfront shore adjacent to the Project, opened in March 2025. **(Figure 4**). In addition to an 11-story, 404-room hotel riverfront hotel, the private resort includes a spa, outdoor adventure lagoon, indoor waterpark, gold center, conference space amphitheater, restaurants, Native American marketplace, and retail outlets. The OKANA resort is projected to have a $97 million impact on Oklahoma City within one year of completion and a billion-dollar impact within the next decade. In addition, it is estimated that within the first decade, OKANA resort will create 800 full-time jobs. To ensure the success of the OKANA development and other businesses on both sides of the river, a safe and reliable connection is critical. The Project will provide much needed improvement to connectivity between downtown Oklahoma City and economic activity to the south of the river, including the OKANA resort. This will drive regional economic success, ensuring residents have reliable access to new jobs, and businesses are easily accessible for visitors.

Figure 4: OKANA Resort Site and Rendering

SOURCE: UNITED FOR OKLAHOMA AND POE AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Support for Good-Paying Jobs

This project will directly create numerous safe, good-paying jobs. As of September 2023, the average hourly pay for highway construction jobs in the Oklahoma City metro area is $26.23 per hour, which is higher than the median hourly wage of $24.54 for all jobs in the region according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Recognizing the opportunity these jobs present for American workers, ODOT annually sponsors a Transportation & Construction Job Fair with industry recruiters. The event is free of charge and allows job seekers to meet with recruiters from all aspects of transportation, civil engineering, surveying, trucking, highway construction and heavy equipment operations.

ODOT has also established an On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation at 23 CFR Part 230, Subpart A, Equal Employment Opportunity on Federal and Federal aid Construction Contracts. It is ODOT's policy to require full utilization of all available training and skill improvement opportunities to assure the increased participation of local candidates in all phases of the highway construction industry.

Sustainability, Resiliency, and the Environment

Pollution Reduction

A primary goal of replacing the I-35 bridges is to reduce congestion on this section of I-35 as traffic volumes in Oklahoma City continue to increase by up to 30 percent by 2040. In addition to the efficiency and economic benefits, reducing idling due to congestion will also reduce air pollution from carbon dioxide (CO_2). The Project may also reduce the effect of ozone (O3), for which the Oklahoma City region has worked tirelessly to remain in attainment with EPA air quality standards. Oklahoma City is one of the very few major metropolitan areas in the United States to remain in air quality attainment. This Project would be a huge contributor to maintaining attainment in the region and improving air quality, especially in the Capitol Hill district adjoining the Project location.

Resiliency

Due to its geology, rivers, and flood plains, ODOT has long recognized the vulnerability of its transportation assets to extreme weather and the risks it can present to the condition and performance of pavements and bridges; therefore, ODOT has integrated resiliency

considerations into its life cycle planning and project programming. ODOT has developed well-regarded resiliency-focused design guidelines for bridges and roadways in flood-prone areas to reduce potential damage from extreme weather events and minimize overall life cycle costs. Furthermore, the agency is increasingly incorporating resiliency and redundancy considerations into its decision-making.

Replacing the existing bridges with new infrastructure and modern materials would address concerns regarding the structural deficiency of the existing bridge and offer an opportunity to improve resiliency to hazards and disasters of all types. Use of fewer spans in these bridge structures will reduce the number of joints, bearing devices and connections that could present a potential failure point.

Scour, or the erosion of soil around a bridge pier, is also one of the main reasons for bridge collapse. The current I-35 bridges have five piers in the water (10 total) and the new I-35 NB and SB bridges will have three piers in the water. Due to the reduction in the number of piers located within the waterway, the likelihood of scour having an adverse impact is reduced. Additionally, the piers will have shaped pier impact protection that should help alleviate the potential for scour to occur. The new bridges will utilize three continuous spans with plate girder steel beams. The continuous spans will allow the longest span over the center of the river to have a less deep section than if simply supported spans were used.

Impacts on Local Communities

Reducing congestion at the Project location will reduce residents' exposure to potentially dangerous air pollution. The majority of the Project is located in census tract 1053. The share of residents in tract 1053 who have asthma is in the 94th percentile, and the tract is in the 87th percentile for diesel particulate matter exposure and 84th in PM2.5. There is "consistent evidence that exposure to traffic-related air pollution...is associated with an increased risk of developing asthma."[2] Asthma can be especially impactful for families, as it is one of the leading causes of hospitalization for children. According to 2023 estimates by the US Census Bureau, 40% of households in tract 1053 have at least one child, much higher than the national rate of 30%. The emissions reductions delivered by the project will directly reduce these young families' exposure to harmful pollution and improve the community's health.

Quality of Life

Community Engagement

An integral part of the Project's development has been the consistent continued discussion with a broad base of stakeholders to arrive at a "consensus built" bridge solution for the Oklahoma River crossing that not only understands and meets the needs of each stakeholder but also meshes with the financial abilities of the Project sponsors. This public engagement process followed the features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT's *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement* in Transportation Decision-making. While there was an initial desire to have an iconic structure with no bridge piers in the Oklahoma River, after meaningful discussion, the consensus resulted in the recommendation of

[2] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7648850/

the steel girder span structure with three piers in the Oklahoma River with a multimodal bridge connecting the Oklahoma River trails on each side of the river.

The Project is unique in that it is taking place in a new frontier of urban development with a unique meshing of cultural, commercial, and residential development with a broad partnership base. An Interchange Capacity Study, Long Span Bridge Study, and stakeholder involvement meetings have brought together a strong partnership between the State of Oklahoma (ODOT), Tribal Community (Chickasaw Nation), local municipalities and agencies (City of OKC, Riversport Oklahoma River Authority), community-based groups (ACOG, First American Museum, and OKC Chamber) and local resident groups (Capitol Hill Community).

The public involvement process will continue to partner with Capitol Hill residents to ensure their considerations are integrated into the Project design.

Preventing Displacement

The project consists primarily of replacing existing bridges spanning the Oklahoma river, as well as the construction of a new multimodal bridge spanning the river. Thus, the site consists entirely of open space, meaning the project will not result in any displacement of residents.

Increasing Access and Affordable Transportation Choices

A primary goal of the Project is to reduce congestion and increase reliability on the I-35 corridor. As shown in **Table 3**, thousands of travelers use the bridges every day to conduct business, move goods, and access daily destinations. The reliability and safety improvements delivered by the Project will result in reduced travel times, more predictable commutes, and improved quality of life.

In consultation with stakeholders in the Project area, ODOT has also decided to build a multimodal bridge directly to the west of the southbound I-35 bridge. This multimodal bridge will connect communities south of the Oklahoma River with opportunities and amenities in the desirable Boathouse District and Bricktown areas north of the river, as well as more convenient access by affordable active transportation to jobs and hospitals in Downtown Oklahoma City.

Finally, reduced congestion will benefit multiple transit services that use the bridges, further expanding affordable transportation options. Oklahoma City's transit agency EMBARK's route 024, known as the Norman Express, crosses the existing I-35 NB and SB bridges over the Oklahoma River. The Norman Express intercity bus provides service between Norman to Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma State Capitol and surrounding offices, the OU Medical Center, and cultural attractions including the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, and the Civic Center Music Hall, among others. EMBARK operates nine inbound and nine outbound routes each day with an average daily ridership of 83 passengers. Only 45 percent of the Norman Express buses achieved on-time performance, which may contribute to low ridership. The 2022 OKC Moves Bus Study identified that "Ridership and productivity on Route 024 may be improved by making the service faster…The route may also be improved by adding later evening service, and operating at more consistent,

clockface service frequency." [3] Reducing congestion on the I-35 bridges may increase ridership on the Norman Express route.

Innovation

Technology Innovations

ITS Deployment During Construction – During construction, ODOT will use Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to ensure work zones on I-35 are safe and to minimize travel delays for drivers. Radar, cameras, Dynamic Message Signs (DMS), and probe data will be used together to monitor travel speeds and congestion and support incident management. Once construction is complete, these ITS assets will remain in place and will be used by ODOT to monitor traffic and provide travel information to the public.

3D Digital Project Plans – ODOT commits to providing 3D digital project plans as part of the contracting process. This technology will allow contractors to use state-of-the-art GPS-controlled automated equipment in the construction process, which reduces the risk of human error in establishing grades and elevations while improving efficiency in earthmoving during the construction process and reducing the overall cost of construction.

Accelerated Bridge Construction – ODOT will use Accelerated Bridge Construct (ABC) to improve site constructability, total project delivery time, and work-zone safety for construction workers and the public, as well as reduce traffic impacts, onsite construction time, and weather-related delays. ABC uses innovative planning, design, materials, and construction methods safely and cost-effectively to reduce the onsite construction time that occurs when building new bridges or replacing and rehabilitating existing bridges. The Project's construction method will utilize barges next to the site to build the superstructure. Once complete, it will be floated and then lowered into place by a series of cranes. This will minimize the interruption of traffic by allowing the existing traffic to stay on the existing bridges during the construction of the superstructure.

Aesthetic Improvements – Aesthetic improvements to the I-35 NB and SB bridges will be incorporated to enhance the cultural and innovative development. These aesthetic improvements could reflect the local cultures including Native American and Capitol Hill Hispanic District and nearby amenities such as Riversport in the Boathouse District.

Project Delivery Innovations

"No Excuses Bonus" – For construction, ODOT will incentivize contractors to achieve early delivery of the whole project and minimize traffic closures by deploying no excuses bonuses, including a substantial completion incentive valued at 5 to 10 percent of the contract and smaller incentives for internal milestones tied to key project elements.

Asset Management – ODOT is responsible for maintaining on-system facilities throughout the state. As such, ODOT has a $500 million 4-Year Asset Preservation plan which is both federally and state-funded to address pavement and bridge conditions throughout the state. The ODOT has dedicated funds for maintenance and ODOT has an approved Transportation Asset

[3] https://www.okcmoves.org/_files/ugd/b59736_25bf184f61804995b948d08b970cb45f.pdf

Management Plan (TAMP). The TAMP dedicates funding to improving surface conditions, rehabilitating bridges, and providing access improvements.

Financing Innovations

Increased Revenue – Bills passed by the Oklahoma State Legislature in 2018 increase state revenue to ODOT by $194.0 million per year, generated from the ownership or operation of a motor vehicle, and reduce transfers of general-purpose state revenue to ODOT by the same amount. Increased state revenue improves ODOT's ability to meet the needs of the Project.

Funding Partnerships – ODOT will potentially utilize multiple funding partners to unite the cultural, ethnic, and economic development districts that are accessed by using the I-35 corridor. Project partners such as ACOG, City of Oklahoma City, Chickasaw Nation, and Watco railroad have a history of financial partnership on large transportation projects in Oklahoma.

Benefit-Cost Analysis

BCA Results

The BCA calculates a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 2.87 with a net present value (NPV) of over $273 million. Additional BCA information and an explanation on the sensitivity analysis scenarios are shown in **Table 4** is provided in the separate **Benefit-Cost Analysis Report**.

Table 4. Benefit-Cost Analysis Results

Category	New I-35 Ramp	I-35 Box Culvert	I-35 NB RR	I-35 SB RR	I-35 SB	I-35 NB	Total
Safety	$2.29M	$0.04M	$0.18M	$0.18M	($1.21M)	($1.69M)	**($0.22M)**
Travel Time	$98.20M				$109.42M	$208.99M	**$416.61M**
Maintenance	($0.00M)	$0.00M	$0.28M	$0.28M	$1.70M	$1.70M	**$3.56M**
Total Benefits	$100.48M	$0.04M	$0.46M	$0.46M	$109.91M	$209.00M	**$420.35M**
Total Discounted Costs	$28.65M	$0.45M	$2.28M	$2.28M	$47.04M	$65.74M	**$146.47M**
BCR	**3.51**	**0.08**	**0.20**	**0.20**	**2.34**	**3.18**	**2.87**
Net Present Value	**$71.83M**	**($0.41M)**	**($1.82M)**	**($1.82M)**	**$62.85M**	**$143.25M**	**$273.88M**

Project Readiness and Permitting Risk

Technical Feasibility and Technical Competency

Statement of Work

The I-35 NB and SB and ramp bridges will utilize a three-span configuration on plate girder steel beams. A long central span will be incorporated into the design to provide the necessary spacing to accommodate Class A course dimensions according to U.S. Rowing regulations. Between the piers, there will be room for seven 13.5-meter lanes (or eight 12-meter lanes) with a 5-meter buffer between the outer lanes and the piers. A minimum of 14-foot clearance will be provided over the normal water surface elevation to allow for motorized boat traffic. The bridge width will be approximately 96 feet for I-35 SB to accommodate six lanes with 12-foot shoulders. I-35 NB will be approximately 72 feet wide (four lanes with shoulders) and the two-lane ramp bridge approximately 42 feet wide. The three bridges will be approximately 820 feet long with a primary span extending at least 360 feet. The multimodal bridge awarded 2024 BUILD funds will be offset west of the I-35 SB bridge. The continuous spans will allow the longest span over the river's center to have a less deep section than if simply supported spans were used.

Lighting and other aesthetic enhancements will be provided on the bridge structures to enhance the user experience and provide additional safety.

To accommodate the widened I-35 roadway section, deck and superstructure rehabilitation and widening is included for the I-35 NB and SB bridges over the BNSF Railroad. The current bridges are three span PC beam bridges that extend over the top of three existing rail lines. It is anticipated that new columns with an additional beam line are needed to accommodate the wider bridge deck. Rehabilitation efforts may include joint rehabilitation, deck replacement, patching areas of spalling on the substructure as well as other efforts.

With the widened I-35 section, an existing bridge sized Double 10 feet x 10 feet RCB will be extended on the upstream and downstream side. The total barrel extension is anticipated to be around 15-20 feet per side. Along with extending the structure, the construction of new headwalls, wingwalls, aprons, and curtain walls will be constructed to meet current state design standards.

Technical Capacity

ODOT has the technical capacity and competency to successfully complete this Project. ODOT has a close partnership with the FHWA Oklahoma Division through which it receives its federal aid allocation and discretionary grant funding. ODOT has been awarded several discretionary grants from various programs and is familiar with developing grant agreements, administering the funding, and providing the necessary reporting. ODOT has the technical expertise and resources dedicated to the Project to provide quality control over all aspects of design and construction, ensure the Project meets all federal requirements, and keep the public informed of the Project's progress.

Civil Rights and Title VI

ODOT's Contract Compliance Division oversees the Department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program and ensures that ODOT and all its consultants and contractors comply

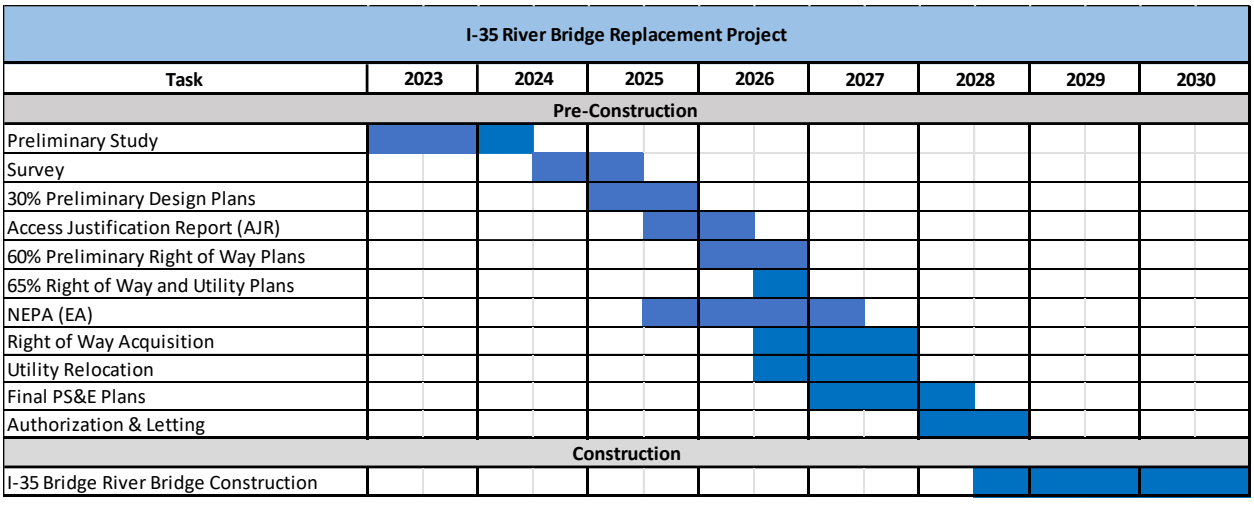
with applicable Civil Rights requirements. ODOT's 2023-2025 Triennial DBE goal is 16.0 percent and the FFY 2023 goal attainment was 17.33 percent. Total dollars to DBEs increased almost 40 percent from 2022 to 2023. Oklahoma's project-level goal setting is data-driven utilizing current DBE certification information and historical DBE pay item performance to identify the project goal achievement possibility.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the main legal authority for ODOT's external nondiscrimination programs. ODOT ensures that no person or groups of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, retaliation, or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities administered by ODOT, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. ODOT complies with Title VI by developing a Title VI Implementation Plan, conducting internal and external compliance reviews, conducting training for staff, suppliers, vendors, contractors, local governments, and other ODOT sub-recipients of federal funds, and developing Title VI compliance information for internal and external dissemination.

Project Schedule

As shown in **Figure 5,** the preliminary study for the Project ended in Q2 of 2024, at which time the survey update and design process started. The Project designer is under contract and construction plans are 30 percent complete. The NEPA process will begin in Q3 of 2025 and be completed early in Q1 of 2027. Right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation are scheduled to be completed by end of 2027. A final Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) submittal is scheduled for Q2 in 2028.

Figure 5: Project Schedule



ODOT intends to obligate and authorize the Project in Q1 of 2028 and let the Project in Q2 of 2028. Construction is anticipated to begin in Q3 of 2028 and be completed in Q4 of 2030. The Project is sufficiently advanced to begin plan development on time and construction completed within the funding deadlines for the BIP Large Bridge program. BIP Large Bridge funds are in little danger of expiring before the obligation and expenditure deadline.

Required Approvals

Permits and Reviews

ODOT will apply for NEPA approval from FHWA Oklahoma Division to construct the Project once preliminary plans have been approved in spring 2025.

A Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE) will be developed to obtain environmental clearance for this Project. The NEPA documents will 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.

Noise studies will be conducted as typically occurs during the NEPA process. The characteristics of the corridor do not appear to indicate that there will be many impacted receptors. In the area of the I-35 work, there may be a slight improvement due to the use of taller barriers alongside traffic, thus reducing the perceived noise levels along the right-of-way.

Access Justification Report (AJR)

The Project is modifying access in an interstate-to-interstate system interchange; 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 the 30 percent Preliminary Design stage and be completed before the 60 percent Preliminary Design Plan submittal.

Section 404 Permitting

The Project is anticipated to require Section 404 permitting. Permitting for this Project is expected to fall under Nationwide Permit 14. The United States 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 accelerate and improve the consistency of permitting reviews.

Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation Plan

Relocations will not be required for this Project. Minor right-of-way acquisitions are identified in the ongoing preliminary study. All right-of-way acquisitions will be completed according to the Uniform Relocation Act and applicable regulations.

Public Engagement

Detailed information is provided in the **Public Engagement** section.

State and Local Approvals

The Project is currently programmed in ODOT's Eight-Year CWP, and construction is scheduled in 2028 (JP Number 30444(04)).

Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): The ODOT STIP incorporates the first four years of the ODOT Eight-Year CWP. If this Project receives BIP Large Bridge funding, ODOT will include it in the biennial update for the 2026-2029 STIP that will be developed in 2025.

Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan (OFTP): The 2023-2030 OFTP identifies the section of I-35 over the Oklahoma River as a truck bottleneck in proximity to identified freight generators.

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. ODOT is currently developing the 2025-2050 LRTP, and this Project aligns with ODOT's long-range strategic direction in both plans.

Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP): The Project improves system resilience and reliability and is consistent with the goals set out in ODOT's 2022-2031 TAMP with the intent of maintaining and preserving Oklahoma's transportation network.

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 5**. Environmental and right-of-way related risks are significantly reduced given that minimal right-of-way acquisition is required, and the Oklahoma River is a controlled waterway. Meaningful public involvement is anticipated to engage the local communities affected by the Project. ODOT has sufficient capacity to implement the proposed activities based on the schedule presented in **Figure 5**.

Table 5: Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies

Project Risk (Probability of Occurrence)	Mitigation Strategies
Cost Increases (High)	1) ODOT has included the Project in its Eight-Year Work Plan and remains committed to adjusting as needed to meet all BIP Large Bridge and statutory deadlines for funding obligation and expenditure. 2) Construction estimates are complete to a 30 percent level and contain 30 percent contingency, allowing for a margin of increase.
Section 404 Permitting Delays (Moderate)	1) The Project is anticipated to fall under a Nationwide Permit. Work in the Oklahoma River will be required for the construction of the bridge piers and superstructure. 2) ODOT has a liaison in place at the USACE to accelerate and streamline approvals if needed.
Contamination from Industrial Use/Underground Storage Tanks (Moderate)	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.
Earthquakes (Low)	1) Oklahoma's altered drilling practices have reduced the number of earthquakes in the state. All structures have seismic designs.

DOT Priority Selection Considerations

The Project meets the two initial considerations outlined in the NOFO. **Table 6** identifies the relevant sections that address each consideration.

Table 6: DOT Selection Considerations

Initial Considerations	Section(s)	
(A) Plans to improve the condition of a bridge or bundle of bridges in poor condition or in fair condition and at risk of falling into poor condition within the next 3 years	✓	**Current Bridge Conditions**
(B) Demonstrates but for a BIP grant the project sponsor(s) will be unable to complete the Large Bridge Project.	✓	**Project Budget**

The project meets eight of the nine priority selection considerations. **Table 7** identifies the relevant sections in the application that address each consideration.

Table 7: DOT Priority Selection Considerations

Priority Selection Considerations	Section(s)	
1) The geometric design standards used for the construction of the bridge met the applicable standards at that time but no longer meets the current geometric design standards.	✓	Error! Reference source not found.
2) The total future eligible project costs are no less than $1 billion.	✓	**Project Budget**
3) The application demonstrated a need for a BIP grant of not less than $100 million.	✓	**Project Budget**
4) The project readiness evaluation demonstrates that the project can distribute a BIP grant of not less than $100 million over a multiple year period if a multi-year grant is awarded to the project.	✓	**Project Readiness and** Permitting Risk
5) The applicants are an FLMA that owns the bridge and a State, and Large Bridge Project application provides evidence that upon completion of the project, the bridge will be divested.	No	**The applicant is not a Federal Land Management Agency.**
6) The project is or will be ready to proceed to the next stage of project delivery within 12 months of a CE Determination, FONSI, or ROD.	✓	**Project Readiness and** Permitting Risk
7) The project has national or regional economic significance. (e.g., the project connects two states, or a significant number or share of its users are from another state);	✓	**Freight Movement** and Error! Reference source not found.SOURCE: ODOT AND 2022 NATIONAL BRIDGE INVENTORY FILES

		Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity
8) The Department intends to support the creation of good-paying jobs with the free and fair choice to join a union and strong labor standards, such as through the use of project labor agreements, registered apprenticeship programs, and other training and placement programs	✓	**Support for Good-Paying Jobs**
9) Without a BIP grant, construction of the project is unlikely to commence before September 30 of the fiscal year plus 3 years (September 30, 2026, for FY 2023 funds, September 30, 2027, for FY 2024 funds, September 30, 2028, for FY 2025 funds, and September 30, 2029, for FY 2026 funds.).	✓	**Project Budget**