



TIGER₂₀₁₆

I-555 GRANT APPLICATION



ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
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Department of Transportation's National Infrastructure Investments
under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016

TIGER VIII Discretionary Grant Program

Project Name: **Jonesboro to Interstate 55**

Project Location: Interstate 555, Arkansas
Poinsett, Craighead, and Crittenden Counties
United States Congressional District 3

Location Type: **Rural**

Total Funds Requested:	<u>\$41,000,000</u>
Other Federal Funds:	<u>\$43,020,000</u>
State/Local Match:	<u>\$4,780,000</u>
Total Project Cost:	<u>\$88,800,000</u>



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April 2016
Department of Transportation’s National Infrastructure Investments
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Project Description

Newly designated Interstate 555 (I-555) is on the National Highway Freight Network (NHFN) and connects the City of Jonesboro to Interstate 55 (I-55) north of Memphis in rural northeast Arkansas. Interstate 555 follows the route formerly signed as U.S. Highway 63 (U.S. 63) for approximately 44 miles. This corridor is a lifeline for trade and commerce in the region. The agrarian economy literally puts food on people's tables. In 2013, 2.0 million tons of agricultural freight began its journey on I-555 and traveled not only nationally, but globally.

Northeast Arkansas is also benefited by a healthy industrial and manufacturing sector that is growing rapidly. Over 6.6 million tons of nonagricultural freight was trucked along this route in 2013. This number is expected to double by 2040. As industry and manufacturing in the region continues to grow, the infrastructure needs of the region will continue to grow as well, which will only accelerate the decline of the condition of I-555.

The current pavement condition along I-555 is rated predominantly as fair to poor. Several segments of I-555 experience higher crash rates than other similar facilities of the same type in the State. Interstate 555 from the City of Jonesboro to Interstate 55 is in need of repairs ranging from minor preventive maintenance to full depth reconstruction.

To demonstrate the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department's (AHTD) commitment to this corridor, \$47.8 million has been programmed for I-555 in the 2016-2020 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). As substantial as this amount is, it will not be enough to bring the entire corridor up to an acceptable level. For these reasons, we are seeking additional funding for the much needed improvements. The estimated cost to address the needs of this important interstate corridor is \$88.8 million.

Any TIGER funds received, from this application, will help to improve the newly designated I-555. If funding is awarded, it will be used to let projects to contract beginning in calendar year 2017. An improved I-555 means a benefitted economy in the mid-south region of this nation and improved safety for the motorists who drive it.

Project Location

Interstate 555 connects the City of Jonesboro to I-55 north of Memphis in rural northeast Arkansas (See Figure 1). A mostly rural route, I-555 serves the small town of Trumann, the community of Payneway, and the city of Marked Tree as it joins the Memphis area. This route covers 44 miles in Craighead, Poinsett, and Crittenden Counties in Arkansas.



Figure 1

An important aspect of I-555 is the fact that it crosses the St. Francis Sunken Lands (See Figure 2). The term “sunken lands” refers to the part of Arkansas that shifted and sank during the New Madrid earthquakes, which took place between 1811 and 1812. This area is located in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain on the east side of the St. Francis River. The area is characterized by a series of north-south trending channels and is seasonally inundated by flood waters in winter and spring. If traffic was not able to cross the St. Francis Sunken Lands on I-555, traffic would be forced to take a detour of 90 to 120 miles (See Figure 3). A detour of this length would not only substantially increase travel time, but would add considerable cost to the products of agricultural, industrial and manufacturing efforts in the region. Interstate 555 is not only an important interstate facility, it is a critical freight corridor due to the access it provides.

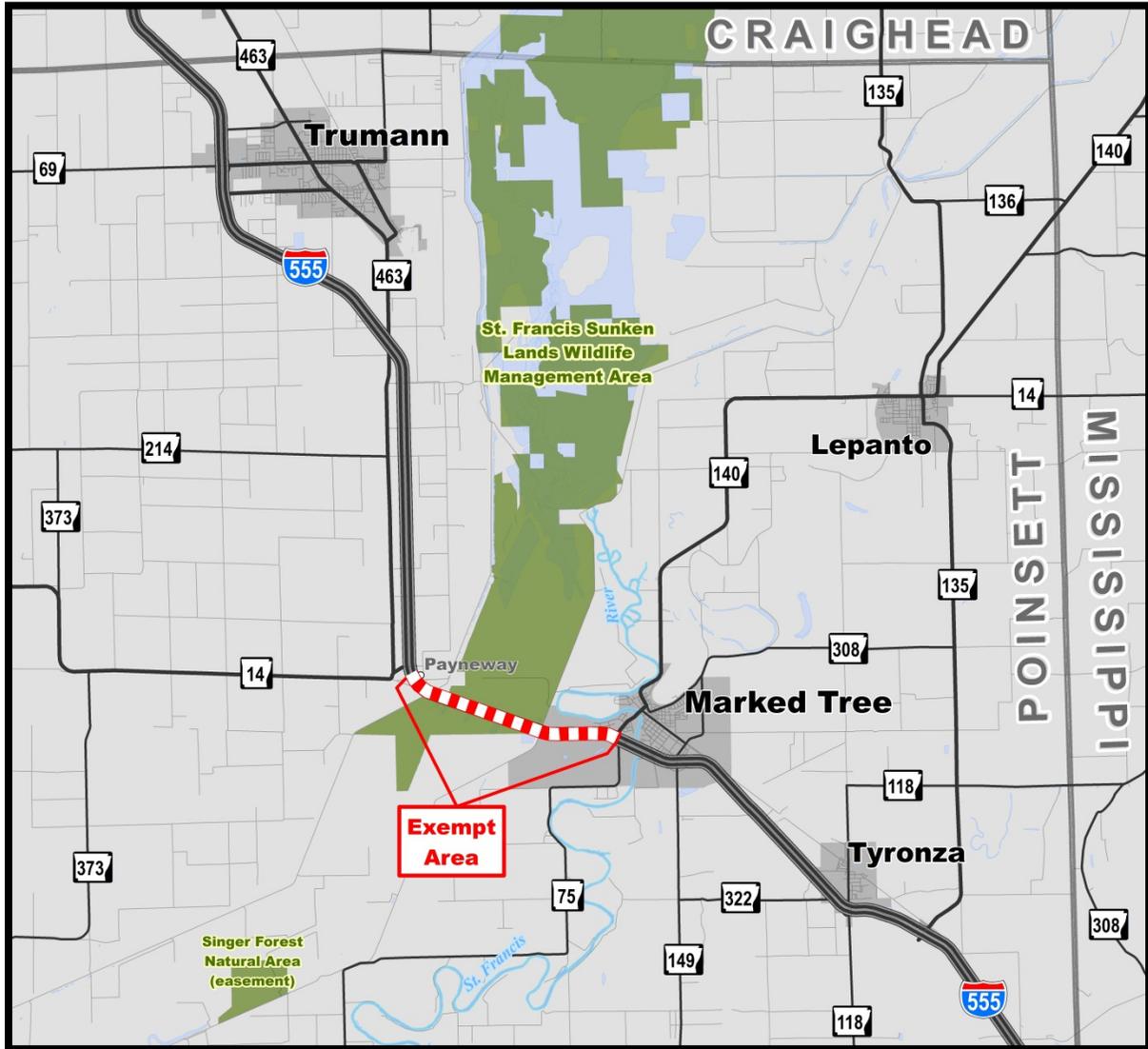


Figure 2

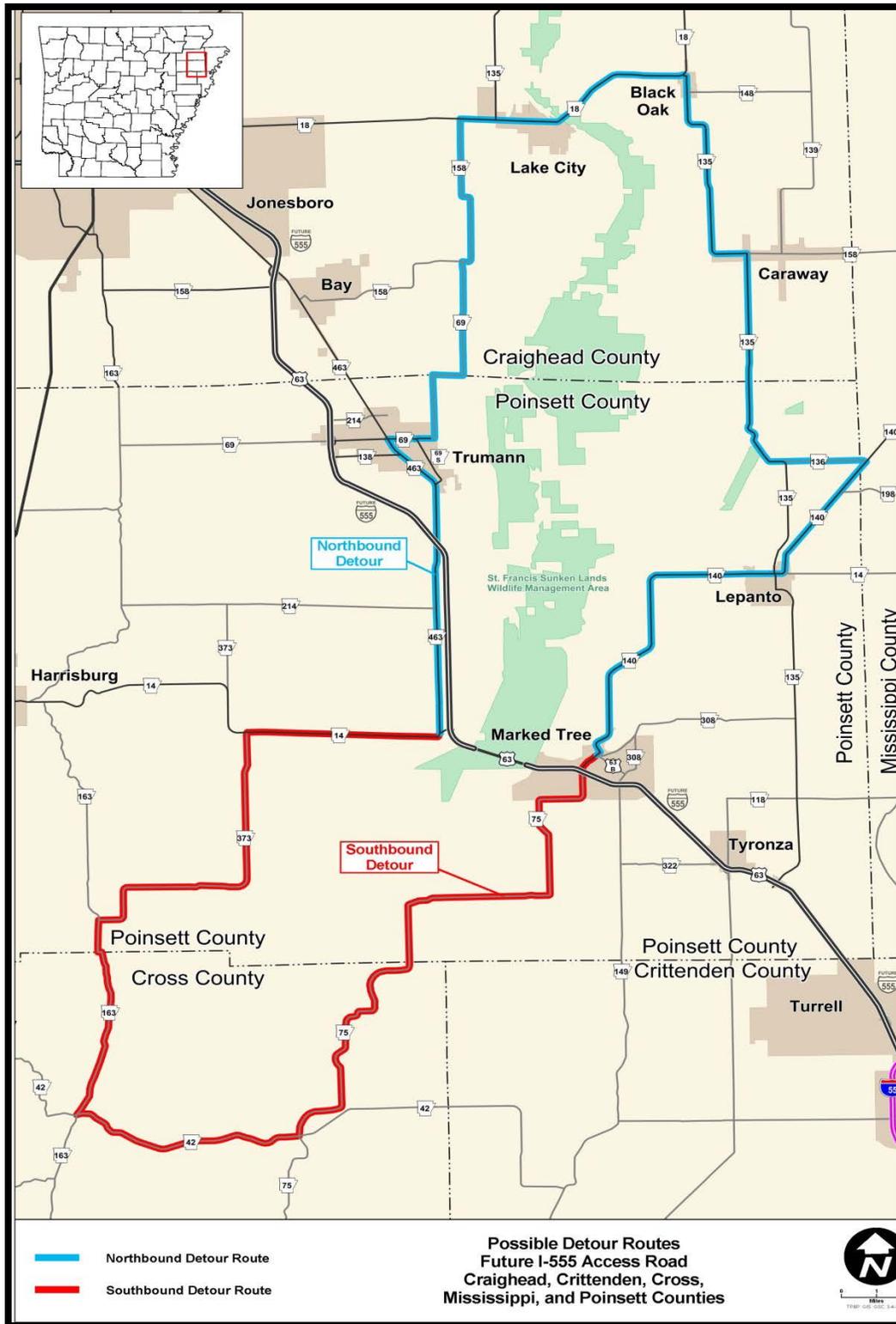


Figure 3

Project History

Interstate 555 has an interesting history. Converting U.S. 63 to I-555 has required a coordinated effort by federal, state, and local officials and stakeholders to overcome the lack of financial resources available for its completion.

Starting in the late 1960s, the first major improvement to U.S. 63 began in the form of a Jonesboro bypass project. During the last 40 years, \$250 million including \$65 million in congressionally delegated Federal-aid earmarks have been spent to build a facility that is up to interstate standards.

The highway had been signed as “Future I-555” for almost 15 years. It could have been designated as an interstate as early as 2007. However, since there is no frontage road across the St. Francis Sunken Lands and Federal Law prohibits slow moving, oversized farm implements and agricultural vehicles carrying loads in excess of 80,000 pounds from traveling the interstates, designating U.S. 63 as I-555 would have placed a substantial financial burden on the agricultural community by forcing them to take a 90 to 120 mile detour (See Figure 3). Therefore, the designation of this route as I-555 was delayed until a solution could be found.

The estimate to construct the 2.7 mile frontage road across the St. Francis Sunken Lands was \$33 million not including right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation or construction engineering. Due to the high cost for such a short length, we began to look for another solution.

You have probably heard the old saying, “It would take an Act of Congress to make that change.” In this situation, not only did it take an Act of Congress, it also took an Act of State. Both State and Federal Laws had to be changed if we were to be granted an exception, and that is exactly what happened thereby saving more than \$33 million while accomplishing the goal of providing a new interstate designation to U.S. 63, which has been an elusive dream to the region for the past 15 years.

The history of this project is an important point to take into consideration when evaluating this application because officials on the Federal, State and Local levels acknowledged the importance of this route by granting the exception. An Act of Congress and an Act of State do not occur unless there is an essential need. The exception provides Jonesboro interstate access which is a critical issue in recruiting new industrial and manufacturing firms while providing the same access for agricultural activities across the St. Francis Sunken Lands.

Project History Timeline

- ▶ The first job was let to contract on the Jonesboro bypass in 1968.
- ▶ In 1998 Congress designated the segment from I-55 to Marked Tree as High Priority Corridor 39.
- ▶ The entire route was designated as Future Interstate 555 in 2001.
- ▶ In 2007, the last three at grade crossings were replaced with grade separated interchanges.
- ▶ In June 2015, further substantiating the need for the exemption, the State of Arkansas with Senate Bill Three (90th General Assembly) determined that with agriculture being one of Arkansas' most important industries, it is incumbent on the state to accommodate farmers and other persons engaged in agricultural industries in the state as much as possible, and is necessary for the preservation of public health, peace and safety.
- ▶ On December 2, 2015, the Arkansas Highway Commission voted to designate 44 miles of U.S. 63 from Interstate 49 in Jonesboro as Interstate 555. The official designation was contingent upon Congress approving the 'Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act' (FAST).
- ▶ On December 4, 2015, the FAST Act was signed by President Obama resulting in the official designation of Interstate 555. This Act included an exemption introduced by U.S. Representative Rick Crawford and U.S. Senator John Boozman regarding building the frontage road across the St. Francis River floodway, and saving \$33 million in estimated costs for building the frontage road. Representative Crawford's office said the designation "will have positive economic impact on the region and will help bring new industry and jobs to the communities that are located on the highway as well as many surrounding communities in northeast Arkansas." State Senator John Cooper concurs: "it will bring great change for the area. There will be tremendous economic development possibilities for this part of the state because companies look for an interstate designation when they look to relocate."



- ▶ Signs referencing the farm equipment usage went up on I-555 on January 28, 2016.
- ▶ On March 11, 2016, U.S. 63 was formally dedicated as I-555 from Jonesboro to I-55.

Economic Impacts

It is widely known that highway improvement projects generally afford additional access to broader sets of origin or destination opportunities and enable faster and more reliable travel. Transportation improvements make an area more attractive as a place for living, working and recreating, resulting in greater demand for land at the location of the improvements. Better roads lead to a better economy which is fueled by population increase, all of which contribute to a growth in traffic. Traffic growth entices more businesses and the cycle can continue for many years in a place like northeast Arkansas where traffic volumes are modest and the cost of living is low. Interstate 555 will directly contribute to ladders of opportunity in the region by bringing jobs, increased prosperity and efficiency to the area. The small, economically depressed cities of Tyronza, Trumann, Gilmore and Marked Tree and the community of Payneway will directly benefit because of their proximity to I-555.

Travelers need to stop for gas, food and lodging. Highway improvements promote homogenization of businesses near interchanges, helping to lower prices of goods and making them more available. Greater accessibility adds value to a location by attracting investments in new construction, an expansion of housing, commercial buildings and/or recreation facilities.



A good highway system increases competition and results in a larger selection of goods at lower prices. The ripple effect initially manifests itself in the form of new construction. New or upgraded building structures add economic value. The associated spending leads to increases in income and sales tax collections. Truckers also benefit from good highways that enable them to deliver goods faster and more reliably. Good roads

mean their repair costs are reduced and they do not consume as much fuel. This benefit to the trucking industry is passed on to the consumer in the form of lower shipping costs.

To further highlight the importance of well-maintained freight corridors, seventy percent of goods in Arkansas are moved by truck while seventeen percent are moved by rail. I-555 makes the important connection from the commercial hub of Jonesboro to Interstate 55, Interstate 40 and the nationally critical intermodal hub of Memphis.

Communities Served

Jonesboro

Jonesboro is the fifth-most populous city in the state and the largest in northeastern Arkansas and the Arkansas Delta. Jonesboro is in Craighead County and is one of two county seats. Craighead County has a population of 96,443 (2010 Census). Jonesboro is one of eight metropolitan statistical areas in Arkansas and it has been one of the fastest growing in recent years with a population of over 126,000 (2014). After growing relatively slowly during the 1970s and 1980s, Jonesboro’s population has expanded quickly over the past couple of decades. The population growth has been supported by robust job growth and economic development. Jonesboro has been recognized as a City of Distinction for Workforce Development, by Arkansas Business magazine and as one of the Top Ten Small Markets of the Decade by Southern Business and Development. Jonesboro has been called “the trade center” of this region and attracts business from a wide radius.

City	Population (2010)	Median Household Income	Median Family Income	Estimated % Below Poverty Line	Racial Makeup of Population (%)				
					White	Black	Asian or PI	Native Amer.	Other
Jonesboro, AR	67,263	\$40,583	\$51,848	25.3%	76.3	19.0	1.8	0.5	2.4
Tyronza, AR	762	\$37,772	\$41,932	23.6%	99.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Marked Tree, AR	2,566	\$25,382	\$41,827	33.6%	69.3	29.0	0.0	0.4	1.3
West Memphis, AR	26,245	\$29,764	\$33,471	34.8%	32.8	65.5	0.6	0.1	1.0
Memphis, TN	646,889	\$37,099	\$43,539	27.4%	30.3	62.8	1.7	0.2	5.0

Craighead Co., AR	96,443	\$42,085	\$52,077	21.5%	82.5	13.6	1.4	0.4	2.1
Poinsett Co., AR	24,583	\$33,238	\$40,852	24.8%	89.5	7.9	0.0	0.3	2.3
Crittenden Co., AR	50,902	\$37,781	\$47,508	25.9%	45.8	51.2	0.4	0.1	2.5
Shelby Co., TN	927,644	\$46,213	\$57,175	21.3%	40.5	52.5	2.5	0.2	4.3

Source: American Fact Finder <http://factfinder.census.gov/>

Arkansas Business reports that “the City of Jonesboro weathered the recession well and leads the state in job growth. Jonesboro had the most robust job growth among the state’s major metropolitan areas in 2015, and that growth is expected to continue into this year, according to [a report released by the U.S. Conference of Mayors.](#)” According to the report, Jonesboro is on track to finish 64th in the nation in job growth in 2016.

Jonesboro’s location affords easy access to major markets including America’s Distribution



Center in Memphis, Tennessee. It is a regional center for trade, manufacturing, agriculture, medicine, and education. Jonesboro boasts a trade area of over 1.3 million people, drawing from nearly two dozen counties in Arkansas, Tennessee and Missouri. Forty-one motor freight carriers service the area and there are three nearby ports on the Mississippi River. There are several industrial parks with infrastructure already in place for expansion. Jonesboro is also home to the world's largest rice mill, Riceland Rice and has always enjoyed a lucrative agricultural association.

The largest employer in Jonesboro is **St. Bernard's Healthcare** Center. It is a general medical and surgical hospital with 2,969 employees.

The second largest employer in Jonesboro is **Arkansas State University**. Founded in 1909, Arkansas State University (ASU) headquarters is in Jonesboro. With additional campuses across Arkansas, 45 degrees and over 160 undergraduate and graduate fields of study, the university continues to meet the needs of citizens and companies of the future, with a total economic impact of over \$1.2 billion to the state. ASU employs 2,435 people.



NEA Baptist Health System has a new \$300 million state of the art healthcare facility in Jonesboro and is the third largest employer with 1,030 employees.

Other companies such as Walmart, Hytrol Conveyer Company, Ritter Communications, Nestle, Frito-Lay, Post Foods, Great Dane Trailers, Alberto Culver, and others also call Jonesboro home.

Tyronza and Marked Tree

Tyronza and Marked Tree are cities located on I-555 in Poinsett County, midway between Jonesboro and I-55. Tyronza is one of the oldest cities in Poinsett County. Marked Tree is unique because it is located between two rivers, the St. Francis River and the Little River, which in some places, are only a quarter of a mile away from each other yet flow in opposite directions. Marked Tree is perhaps best known for the Marked Tree Lock and Siphons, just a few miles out of the city limits, which were constructed for flood control and are on the National Register of Historic Places.

West Memphis

With a population of 26,245 based on the 2010 Census, West Memphis is the State’s 18th largest city. West Memphis is located on the west bank of the Mississippi River. Primarily because of its central location and transportation infrastructure, West Memphis has become a hub for distribution and assembly operations.



Southland Gaming and Racing has been a major West Memphis attraction since 1956. Open the year around, the schedule includes live greyhound racing, plus simulcast dog and horse racing.



Top Five Largest Employers in West Memphis

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) Schneider Truckload & Transportation Services | 880 |
| 2) Southland Park Gaming & Racing | 864 |
| 3) West Memphis School District | 650 |
| 4) Family Dollar Distribution Center | 500 |
| 5) Walmart | 450 |

West Memphis is home to major operations including distribution centers for retailers such as Family Dollar Stores and manufacturers such as Ciba Chemicals.

West Memphis is connected to various regions through its extensive network of major highways including: Interstate 40, Interstate 55, U.S. Highway 64, U.S. Highway 70 , U.S. Highway 79.

Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis is the second largest city in Tennessee with a population of 646,889 and is the county seat of Shelby County. It is the largest city on the Mississippi River, the third largest in the greater Southeastern United States, and the 23rd largest in the United States. The greater Memphis metropolitan area, including adjacent counties in Mississippi and Arkansas, had a 2014 population of 1,316,100.



The city's central geographic location has been strategic to its business development. Located on the Mississippi River and intersected by five major freight railroads and two Interstates, I-40 and I-55, Memphis is ideally located for commerce in the transportation and shipping industry. Its access by water was critical to its initial development. Railroad construction strengthened its connection to other markets to the east and west.



The city is home to Memphis International Airport, the world's second busiest cargo airport (following Hong Kong). Memphis serves as a primary hub for FedEx Express shipping. As of 2014, Memphis was home to nine Fortune 500 companies: FedEx, HCA Holdings, International Paper, Dollar General, Community Health Systems, Unum Group, AutoZone, Eastman Chemical, and Vanguard.

Project Parties

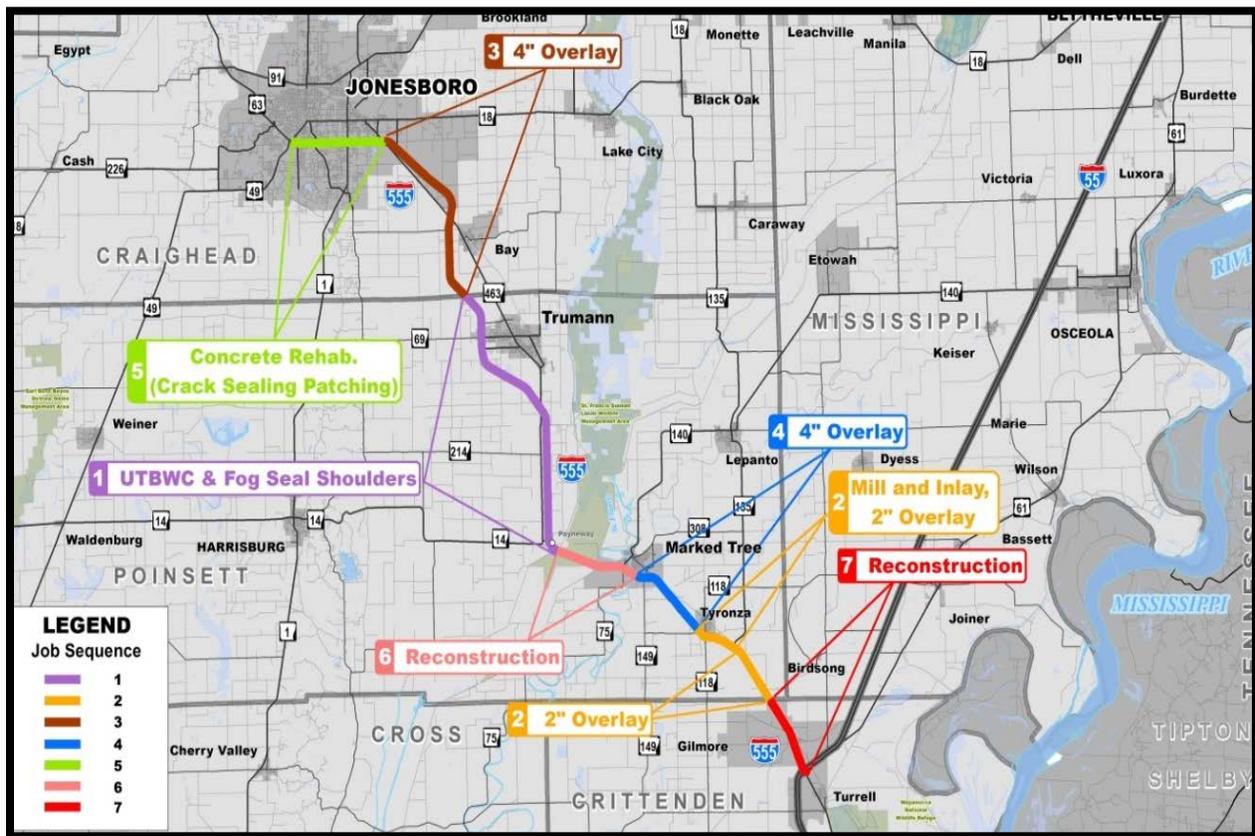
The primary party in this project is the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department.

Grant Funds and Sources/Uses of Project Funds

Seven projects to improve the condition of the corridor are planned. These projects will be implemented as funding becomes available. Each project represents a segment of independent utility. A brief description of each project including location, treatment type and cost estimate are detailed below. TIGER funding will be used to fund each project until the funds are fully obligated. The remaining projects will be funded with regular federal-aid and state money if and when this funding is available.

If TIGER funding is not received, portions of the work listed below will not be performed.

Forty-one million dollars of 100% rural TIGER funding is requested. If deemed ineligible for 100% federal-aid funding, AHTD will provide the necessary matching funds for grant funding at 80%. With the exception of Projects 3 and 5, the projects listed below are all located entirely within a rural area. Project 3 lies partially inside the urban area of Jonesboro and Project 5 lies entirely within the urban area. No request for TIGER funding is made for the urban segments. The urban segments will be constructed using National Highway Performance Program Funding with state matching funds.



Project 1

The pavement on this segment between the town of Payneway and the Craighead County Line (13.47 miles) is currently in fair condition. The fatal and serious injury (KA) crash rate for this segment is nearly 40% higher than the average KA crash rate for similar facilities in the state. The improvement planned for this project is an Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course (UTBWC) and a fog seal for the shoulders. The construction for this project is estimated to cost \$3.8 million. This treatment will help to preserve this structurally sound segment of pavement and provide a surface with increased friction to help reduce the number of crashes.

Project 2

The pavement on this segment between the Crittenden County Line and the City of Tyronza (5.07 miles) is currently in fair to poor condition. The fatal and serious injury crash rate for this segment is nearly 40% higher than the average KA crash rate for similar facilities in the state. The improvements planned for this project are a mill and inlay with two-inch overlay for the poor section (2.28 miles) and a two inch overlay for the fair section (2.79 miles). The construction for this project is estimated to cost \$4.4 million. These improvements will help preserve the pavement.

Project 3

The pavement on this segment between the Poinsett County Line and Highway 463 in the City of Jonesboro (8.94 miles) is currently in fair condition but has some minor structural issues that will be addressed with an overlay. This segment has both KA and overall crash rates that eclipse the statewide average rates for similar type facilities by almost 70% and 40% respectively. The improvement planned for this project is a four-inch overlay. The construction cost estimate for this work is \$10.5 million.

Project 4

The pavement on this segment between the City of Tyronza and Highway 75 in the City of Marked Tree (4.04 miles) is fair with minor structural needs. A four-inch overlay is planned for this segment. The construction of this project is estimated to cost \$4.8 million.

Project 5

The pavement on this segment in the City of Jonesboro between Highway 463 and Highway 49 (4.72 miles) is currently in fair condition. This segment also has the highest traffic counts along the corridor, averaging over 30,000 vehicles per day in some locations, and crash rates that are higher than the statewide average rates for similar type facilities. Concrete rehabilitation work including crack sealing and patching is needed throughout this segment. The construction for this project is estimated to cost \$17.0 million.

Project 6

Between the City of Marked Tree and the town of Payneway (4.21 miles) the pavement is currently in poor condition. This section requires full depth reconstruction of the current asphalt pavement and is estimated to cost \$25.0 million.

Project 7

The pavement on this segment between I-55 and the Poinsett County Line (3.87 miles) is currently in poor condition. The improvement planned for this project is full depth reconstruction. The construction is estimated to cost \$23.3 million.

Selection Criteria

Project Sequence	Project Termini	Project Readiness				
		Design Survey	Roadway Design	Environmental	Right of Way	Utilities
1	Payneway – Poinsett County Line	N/A	Nov-16	Jan-17	N/A	N/A
2	Crittenden County Line – Tyronza	N/A	Nov-16	Jan-17	N/A	N/A
3	Poinsett County Line – Hwy. 463	N/A	Nov-17	Jan-18	N/A	N/A
4	Tyronza – Marked Tree	N/A	Nov-17	Jan-18	N/A	N/A
5	Hwy. 463 – Hwy. 49 (Jonesboro)	N/A	Sep-17	Nov-17	N/A	N/A
6	Marked Tree – Payneway	Jan-19	Apr-19	Jun-19	N/A	N/A
7	I-55 – Poinsett County Line	Jan-19	Apr-19	Jun-19	N/A	N/A

Project Sequence	Project Termini	Project Schedule				
		Project Obligation	Let to Contract	Mobilization of Project	Project Substantially Complete	Open to Traffic
1	Payneway – Poinsett County Line	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	Sep-17	Sep-17
2	Crittenden County Line – Tyronza	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	Sep-17	Sep-17
3	Poinsett County Line – Hwy. 463	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	Sep-17	Sep-18
4	Tyronza – Marked Tree	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	Sep-17	Sep-18
5	Hwy. 463 – Hwy. 49 (Jonesboro)	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Aug-19	Aug-19
6	Marked Tree – Payneway	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Sep-21	Sep-21
7	I-55 – Poinsett County Line	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Sep-21	Sep-21

State of Good Repair

Regional stakeholders have, for the last 40 years, worked to procure an interstate along the U.S. 63 from I-55 to Jonesboro to promote economic development in the northeast region of Arkansas. Over these years the pavement condition on some segments of the corridor has deteriorated. This route is on the National Highway System (NHS) and thus receives annual pavement rating of either good, fair or poor for ride quality, rutting and cracking. The current state of the corridor is fair to poor.

The annual maintenance cost for this corridor averaged \$16,300 per mile over the past 10 years. This is 33% more than I-55, a similar corridor in this region, which averages \$12,300 per mile. It is reasonable to expect these maintenance costs to continue to grow as traffic volume increases and the corridor continues to deteriorate. If improvements are not made in the next 3-5 years, adverse economic impacts are likely, ranging from higher vehicle maintenance cost, more expensive shipping costs and decreased mobility. Additional TIGER funding will allow AHTD to accomplish more of the rehabilitation work in a shorter time frame.

Safety

As stated earlier, several segments of I-555 have crash rates that are higher than the statewide average rate for facilities of similar types in the state. Some segments exhibit high frequencies of wet weather crashes. The planned projects will improve safety by simply improving the driving surface.

A pooled fund study that was organized by FHWA in 2005 showed that Ultra-Thin Bonded Wearing Course (UTBWC) can be expected to reduce wet pavement related crashes by 31%. An overall decrease in dry weather crashes was also noted. AHTD has used UTBWC surface treatments to successfully reduce crash rates in several locations. The same results are expected along the area. Resurfacing has also been proven to improve pavement friction; therefore safety improvements are expected throughout.

Results of Benefit-Cost Analysis

Summary and Conclusions

This summary describes the methodology used for conducting the benefit-costs analysis for the I-555 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction. The economic benefits of implementing this project include cost savings for users due to reduced vehicle operating costs, reduced travel delays, and safety benefits. The summary of BCA analysis yields a current ratio of 2.78, a three percent discounted BCA ratio of 2.06, and a seven percent discounted BCA ratio of 1.48.

The benefits of the I-555 reconstruction and road diet improvements were evaluated in the following areas:

- Vehicle operating costs due to poor roadway conditions
- Safety impacts due to poor pavement conditions (particularly crashes on wet pavement)

Table 10 is a summary of the benefit-cost analysis for the entire I-555 corridor.

Table 10. Summary of I-555 Pavement Restoration Benefit-Cost Analysis

Benefit/Cost Category	No Discount	Discounted at 3%	Discounted at 7%
Vehicle Operating Cost Benefit	\$7,670,884	\$4,992,485	\$2,994,128
Safety Benefit	\$184,083,692	\$127,232,458	\$83,519,779
Sum of Benefits	\$191,754,576	\$132,224,943	\$86,513,907
Project Life Cycle Costs	\$68,875,962	\$64,141,329	\$58,304,172
B/C Ratio	2.78	2.06	1.48

Federal Wage Rate Certification

**WAGE RATE CERTIFICATION
FOR
THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS
ACT OF 2016**

Pursuant to the Fiscal Year 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. Law 114-113 (December 18, 2015), I, Scott E. Bennett, Director of Highways and Transportation for the State of Arkansas, certify that all laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and subcontractors on projects funded directly by or assisted in whole or in part by and through the federal government pursuant to the Act shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality as determined by the Secretary of Labor in accordance with subchapter IV of Chapter 31 of Title 40, United States Code, the Davis-Bacon Act.

I understand that the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department may not receive TIGER 2016 funding unless this certification is made and posted.



Scott E. Bennett, P.E.
Director of Highways and Transportation



Date