



MISSISSIPPI COUNTY RURAL DEVELOPMENT CONNECTOR

TIGER 2017 APPLICATION

Department of Transportation's National Infrastructure Investments
under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017
TIGER 2017 Discretionary Grant Program

Project Name:

Mississippi County Rural Development Connector

Project Location: Highway 198, Arkansas
Mississippi County
United States Congressional District 1

Location Type: **Rural**

Total Funds Requested:	<u>\$6,000,000</u>
Other Federal Funds:	<u>\$0</u>
State/Local Match:	<u>\$0</u>
Total Project Cost:	<u>\$6,000,000</u>



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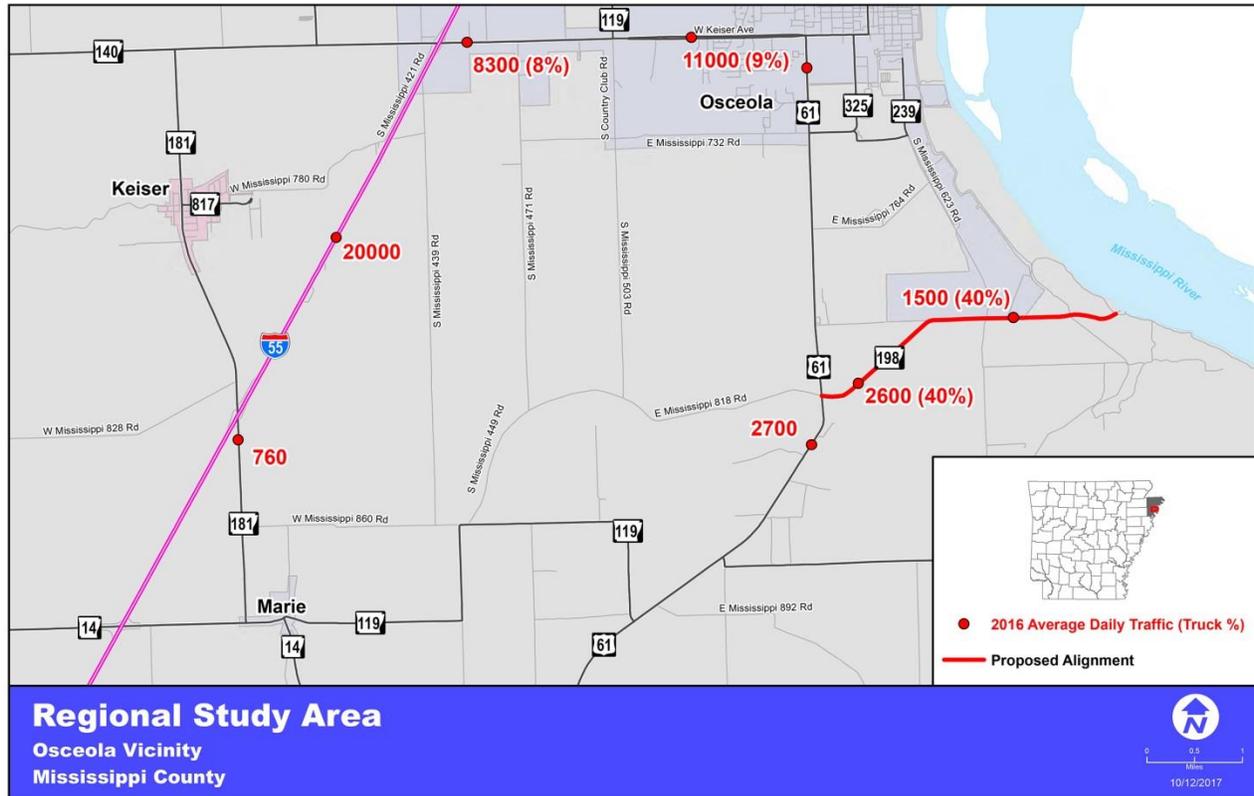
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Project Description

The Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) seeks \$6 million to upgrade 3.4 miles of Highway 198 in Mississippi County (Figure 1). The existing facility is a two-lane roadway with 10-foot wide lanes and gravel shoulders. If funding is awarded to this project, the existing lanes will be widened to 12-foot wide lanes with 4-foot shoulders will be constructed.

Figure 1: Regional Study Area



The need to make improvements to Highway 198 is due to the economic development that has taken place along this corridor. The economic development has led to increased traffic, which has amplified the need for Highway 198 to be improved. This project is simply a continuation of years of efforts to grow the northeastern Arkansas region by providing economic viability and opportunity. Efforts have involved the private sector, the State, and local communities. This short stretch of road, used primarily for truck transport of manufactured goods and agricultural products, has seen the introduction of new industry to the region resulting in over \$1 billion in investment, hundreds of new jobs, and corresponding regional growth, which has enhanced livability and quality of life for those working and living in the area.

In January 2013, then-Governor of Arkansas Mike Beebe held a press conference to announce the arrival of a new manufacturing facility just south of the small city of Osceola in Mississippi County in eastern Arkansas. Plans at the time called for construction of a \$1.1 billion state-of-the-art electric arc steel mill named Big River Steel (BRS)¹. It was estimated to create over 525

permanent new jobs at an average salary of over \$75,000. This was welcome news for a State with a median income of just under \$42,000.

In addition to the permanent jobs at BRS, the construction of the mill was anticipated to create 2,000 construction jobs, with additional employment opportunities being created to provide the necessities of life. BRS Chief Executive Officer, John Correnti, stated that the economic impact would be felt immediately, pointing to a previous investment in another city that spurred a double-digit percent increase in their sales tax revenue due to construction activity alone.

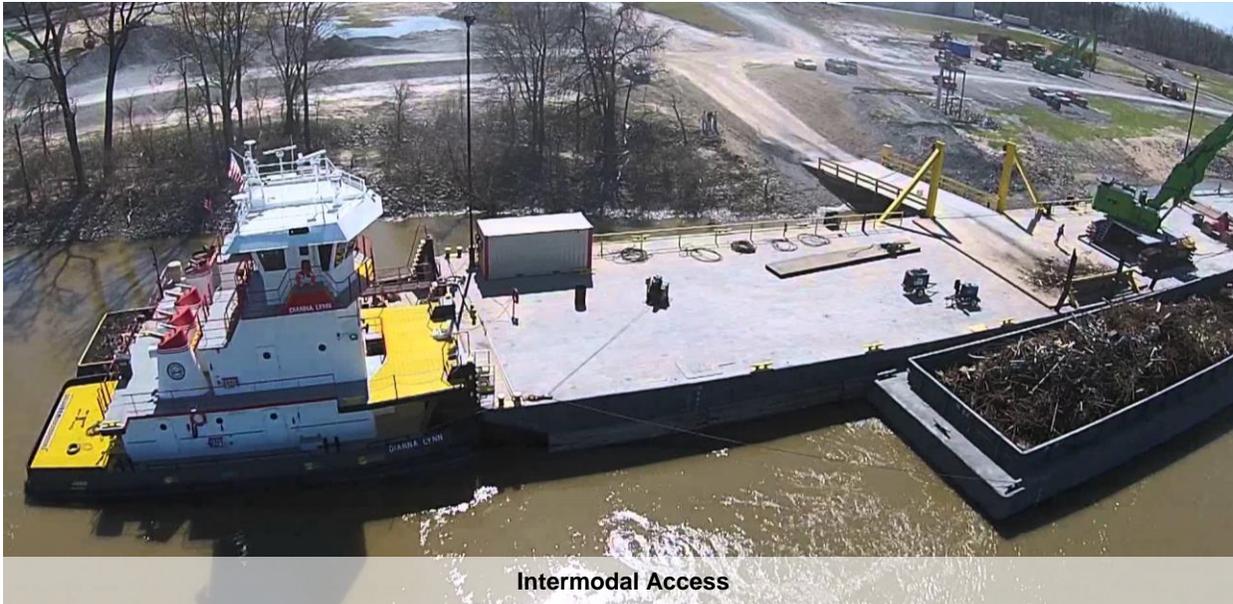
This project was the first one to be incentivized in Arkansas under its newly passed Constitutional Amendment 82, an amendment allowing the State to issue bonds to pay for infrastructure investment on projects that exceed \$500 million in cost and create at least 500 jobs. The incentive, in this case, was a \$125 million bond issue to be used to provide \$75 million in infrastructure investment and a \$50 million low-interest loan to BRS to be repaid over 20 years².



BRS broke ground on its new facility in July 2014. In December 2016, the first coil of steel was produced and sold. In a ceremony marking the occasion, the proceeds from the sale of the first coil produced were donated to the Wounded Warrior Project³.

The BRS mill has brought with it local and regional economic growth, including additional businesses seeking to provide supportive services to BRS. The economic impact of such a project cannot be overstated and will be more fully discussed under the Project Selection Criteria section of this application.

The main challenge is that the development of highway infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth in industry in the area. Funding to improve Highway 198 to accommodate the increase in traffic remains unavailable due to lack of funding on the state and federal level and commitments already made.



Intermodal Access

BRS is not the only reason for the economic growth. There are seven additional generators of economic development on Highway 198 that use it to receive and deliver materials (see Appendix). These industries have accelerated the importance of this rural state highway and the need to invest in upgrading the road to accommodate the increase in traffic, including heavy trucks.

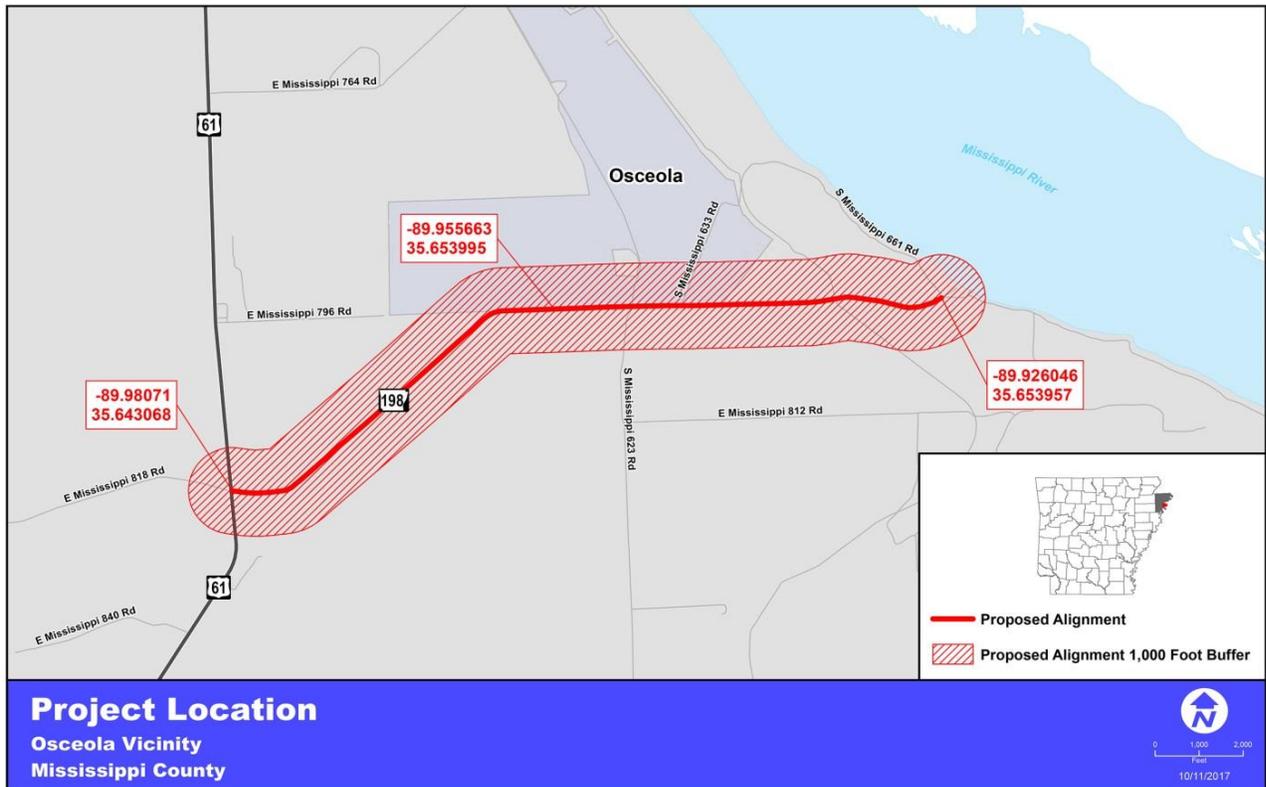
Since these companies are located on Highway 198, they are all dependent upon its ability to provide reliable access. It is important to remember that Highway 198 also provides access to an intermodal facility that is located on the Mississippi River. Not only does Highway 198 connect these companies to the rest of Arkansas and the nation, it connects them to the rest of the world. In 2017, due to this area's success, the Arkansas General Assembly passed additional incentives, seeking through tax credits to draw in Phase 2 of the BRS mill and bring an additional \$900 million investment and another 150 jobs to the region⁴.

This expansion, it is reported, would significantly increase the current daily traffic that is generated by BRS. It is expected that other companies in this area that support BRS would also see an increase in their traffic as well. If awarded TIGER funding, ARDOT would join with what the people of the State have done to support the continued economic expansion of this community by providing an improved transportation facility to the area.

Project Location

Highway 198 begins at Highway 61 and ends at the Mississippi River just south of Osceola, Arkansas. This rural route provides access to several companies located in this area. The route covers 3.4 miles in Mississippi County in eastern Arkansas (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Project Location



The TIGER Grant Program defines “rural area” as any area outside an Urbanized Area (UA) as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau. Per the Census Bureau, an UA is an area that consists of densely settled territory with a population of 50,000 or more people. The City of Osceola, AR, the closest city to the Project, only has a population of 7,757 people and is not included in an urbanized area. Therefore, the project is considered to be in a rural area (Table 1).

Table 1: Area Demographics

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
Osceola, AR	7,757	\$29,359	\$31,734	37.9%	42.7	53.9	0.3	0.1	3.0
Wilson, AR	903	\$48,000	\$52,167	22.1%	75.3	21.7	0.7	0.3	2.0

Mississippi Co., AR	46,480	\$34,612	\$42,005	26.8%	61.6	34.0	0.6	0.3	3.5
Craighead Co., AR	96,443	\$42,475	\$52,715	20.2%	81.2	13.1	1.1	0.4	4.2
Poinsett Co., AR	24,583	\$33,070	\$41,095	22.8%	89.9	7.2	0.3	0.2	2.4

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

Project Parties

The Arkansas Department of Transportation is the sole party seeking award of the grant benefits.

Grant Funds and Sources/Uses of Project Funds

ARDOT is requesting \$6.0 million in TIGER 2017 funds for this project. ARDOT has dedicated no state funds to match the TIGER funds. Project Funding Sources and Project Funding Activities are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Project Funding Sources

Sources	Costs	Percent
TIGER 2017 Funds	\$6.0	100%
State	\$0.0	0%
Total Project Funds	\$6.0	100%

Table 3: Project Funding Activities

Activities	Costs
Construction	\$4.2
Railroad Crossing	\$0.5
Right-of-Way/Utilities	\$0.5
PE	\$0.3
Construction Inspection	\$0.5
Total Project Funds	\$6.0

Project Selection Criteria

SAFETY

There are two primary safety benefits that arise as a result of the Project—(1) an expected crash rate reduction, resulting from the wider travel lanes; and (2) an expected crash rate reduction, resulting from the installation of rumble stripes.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published “Safety Evaluation of Lane and Shoulder Width Combinations on Rural, Two-Lane, Undivided Roads⁵.” The study showed “crash reductions for wider paved widths, wider lanes, and wider shoulders, all else being equal.” For purposes of this analysis, the study found 12-foot lanes provide the optimal safety benefit for a 32-foot total paved width. This will be the new width once the project is complete.

In addition to widening, the Project will receive rumble stripes, another safety enhancement that is well known to assist in reducing crashes^{6,7,8}.



STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

The most recent rating of Highway 198 indicated that nearly 50 percent of the roadway is in poor condition. Considering the nearly 1,000,000 trips made annually to companies along this route and the fact that over 50 percent of the trips are from truck traffic, the condition will continue to deteriorate at an accelerated rate unless improvements are made.

It is also reasonable to expect the costs of maintaining Highway 198 to continue to grow as the corridor continues to deteriorate. If improvements are not made in the near future, adverse economic impacts are anticipated, ranging from higher vehicle maintenance cost, more expensive shipping costs and decreased mobility. TIGER funding awarded to this project will allow ARDOT to make the needed improvements, which will help to support the continued economic development of the area.

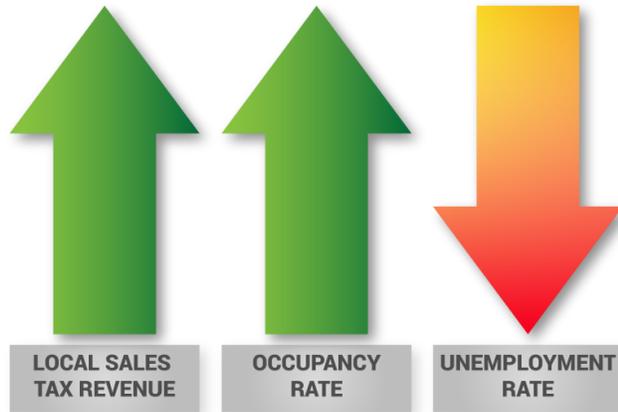


ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

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, and a corresponding 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. As the saying goes, “a rising tide lifts all boats.” This has been the case in this area.

Since the construction of the new BRS plant in northeast Arkansas, the economic benefit has spread through cities, towns, and surrounding counties. Growth in Osceola alone has accounted for increases in sales taxes, significant decreases in unemployment, and increases in housing occupancy rates.

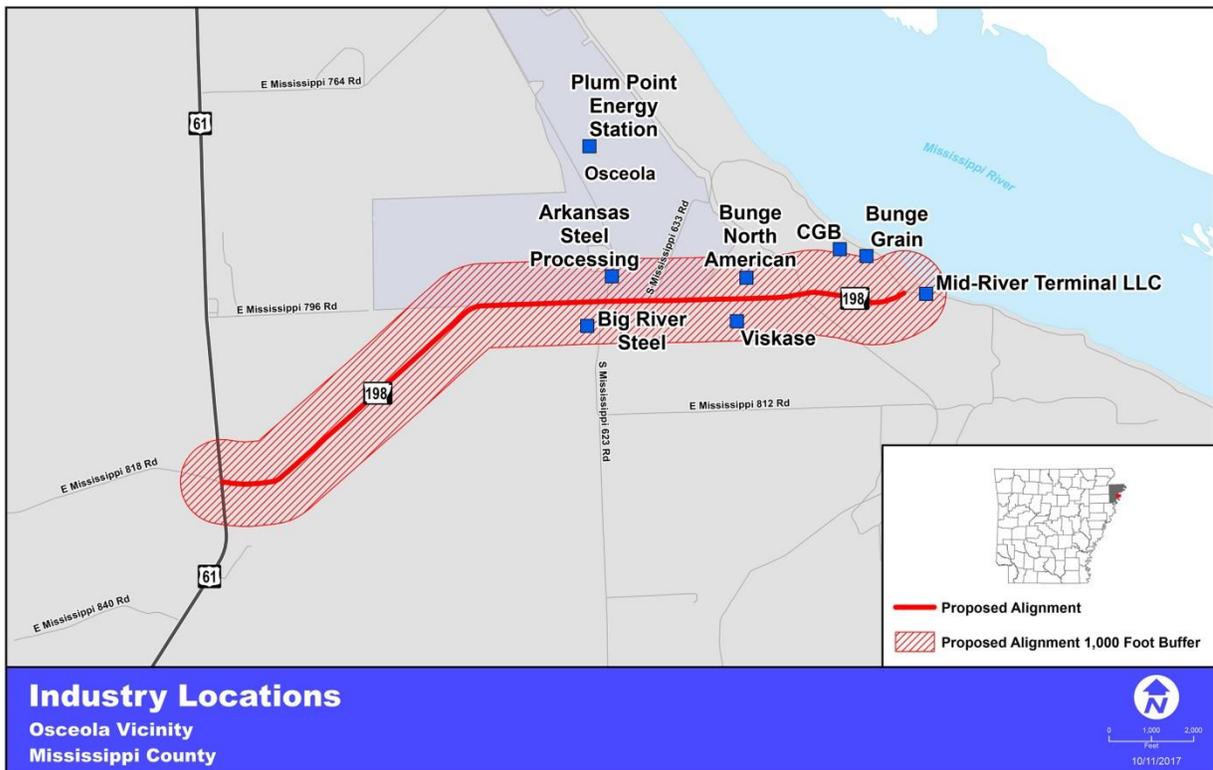
With the addition of BRS, the unemployment rate in Mississippi County decreased from 10.9 percent in December 2013 to 5.9 percent in August 2017⁹. The industries along Highway 198 currently employ approximately 893 people. If BRS implements Phase 2, it is anticipated employment levels will grow an additional 525.



Construction of the mill has brought other companies to the area. In February of 2016 officials with Arkansas Steel Processing announced plans to build a facility in Osceola and to hire 50 people, all in the process of working directly with products of BRS¹⁰. In addition, Arkansas Steel Processing, Consolidated Grain and Barge, Mid-River Terminal, TMS International Ozark Services, LLC, and Air Products have all moved to the area since the announcement by BRS in 2013. Figure 3 identifies these companies and their relative location to the Project. Please refer to the Appendix for a more detailed description of these companies.

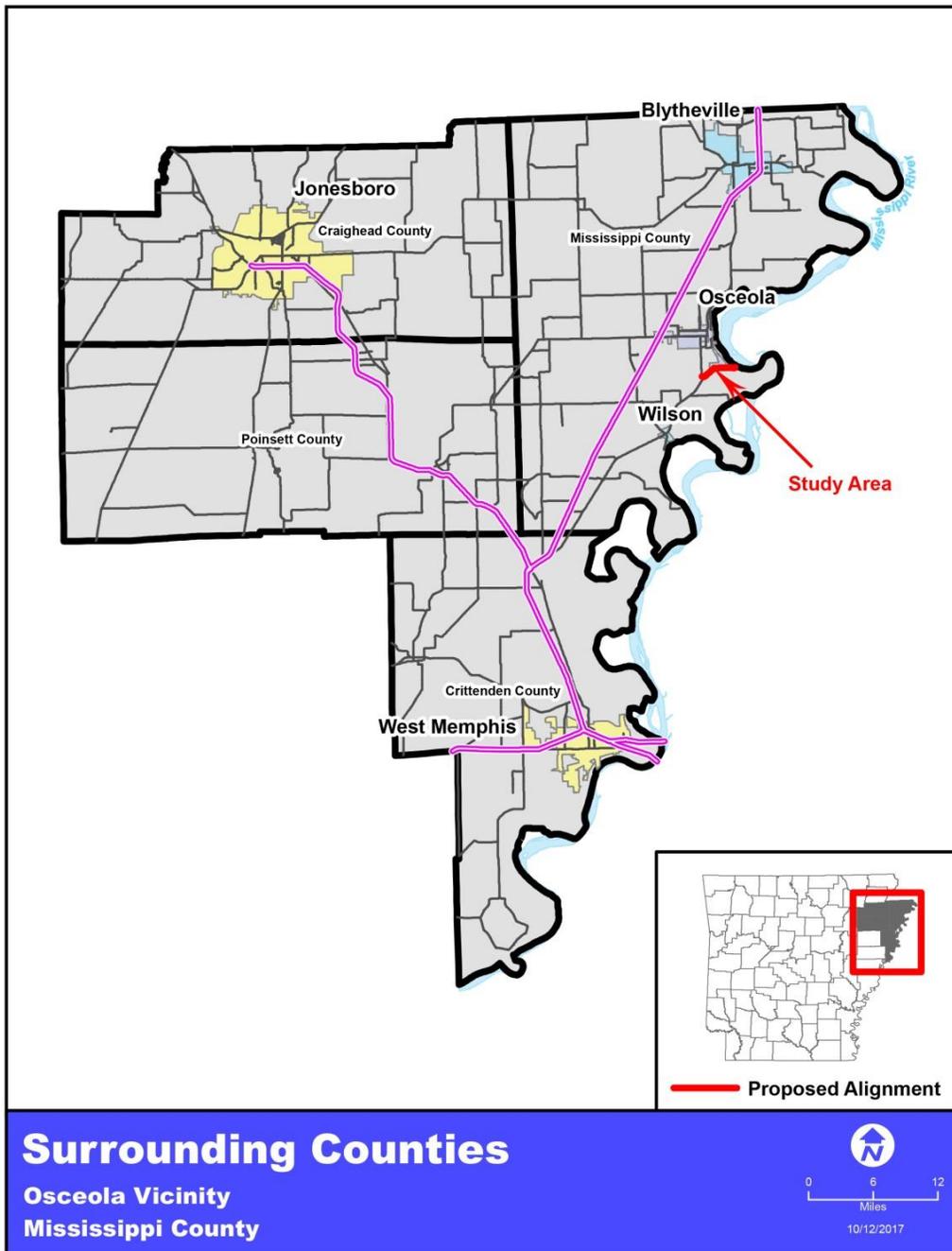
The City of Osceola’s one-cent sales tax revenue has also seen increases in the past three years. The tax, which was approved by voters in 2013, brought in \$750,000 that year and \$950,000 in 2014. The sales tax revenue jumped up to \$1.3 million in 2015¹¹.

Figure 3: Industry Locations



Additionally, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics recently reported drops in the unemployment rate in Mississippi County and several other surrounding counties from February 2015 to February 2016. Mississippi County saw its numbers drop from 10.2 percent to 7.7 percent, while neighboring Poinsett County dropped from 6.9 percent to 5.1 percent. The numbers dropped in Crittenden County from 7.7 percent to 5.3 percent and Craighead County dropped from 5.4 percent to 3.9 percent¹¹ (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Regional Area of Economic Impact



Another town to experience significant revitalization in the recent past is Wilson, Arkansas. Since 2012, something fairly amazing has been taking place some 12 miles south of Osceola. From a May 2016 article in the *Arkansas Times*:

On a recent Friday, excavators and dump trucks trundled back and forth at sites all over town, moving dirt in preparation for new construction. At the Wilson Cafe on the town square, new forks and spoons clinked on new plates, the food prepared by a young chef uprooted from a ritzy restaurant in Memphis and repotted here, the dining room tiled and painted and polished until it looked like something out of Architectural Digest. Near the center of town, an organic garden pushed into the damp April daylight, overseen by a young, never-slowng idealist and her staff, the operation spinning out from a new classroom/concert space/demonstration kitchen meant to resemble a tin barn, but which is decidedly not a tin barn. On the outskirts of town, in a restored mansion that might remind one of Harry Potter's alma mater inside and out, 45 kids attended the private Delta School, where a lesson on photosynthesis might be taught with a trip to the garden and physics might be demonstrated by building a go-kart, under the watchful eye of a brilliant, Ivy League-educated teacher whose groundbreaking ideas once landed her on the bestseller list.

In town, property values have doubled, with houses that go on the market routinely selling in fewer than four days. Residents out for a walk are getting used to being stopped by drivers who ask if they know of property in town, any property, that's for sale. The town's movie theater, which screened its last film around the time Raquel Welch was a big deal, will soon flicker to life again as a modular space that can host stage plays, concerts and films. Unseen in the air, the town's free Wi-Fi waits for someone strolling along Park Street to get a hankering to watch a cute cat video on her cell phone. Last spring, when the mosquitoes got out of hand, a crop duster buzzed the town twice a week, spraying, and a pickup truck with new fogging equipment in the back purred up and down the quiet streets. In the shadow of the flagpole dedicated to Robert E. Lee Wilson, builder and founder, the grass on the square is manicured, push-mown weekly, the clippings bagged, not a blade out of place. Down the street, dirt work has started for the new Hampson Museum, built to house a unique collection of Late Mississippian Period Native American artifacts unearthed in the area. It'll be open later this year¹².

These are the types of growth that America, Arkansas, and their people, are looking for in project investment. These economic improvements came about as a direct result of the investment of the people of Arkansas in the passage of Amendment 82, and the State of Arkansas with passage of the BRS incentive program in 2013.

Now, ARDOT seeks to partner with the Federal Government through this TIGER Grant application, and obtain funding for a project that will continue to support the current economic environment and help to encourage additional investment. It is our understanding that BRS is considering implementing Phase 2 development at the mill which would potentially leverage an additional \$900 million in investment and additional 150 jobs. This expansion would create another large influx of personnel during the construction phase. Permanent, lasting economic

development will induce additional growth, as already evidenced by the astounding impact Phase 1 has had on the region.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This project does not address this criterion.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The proposed project to improve Highway 198 will continue to support and grow the economic environment that has developed. It is worth noting that this area of the State is a distressed county, which means the unemployment rate is higher than the national average and the per capita income is lower than the national average¹³. Due to the new and expanding businesses, jobs have been created which have uplifted and supported the local communities by providing excellent employment opportunities for local residents. Access to jobs that pay above-average wages and are close to home afford the ability for residents to live at a higher standard of living while also providing the time to enjoy their lives.

INNOVATION

This project does not address this criterion.

PARTNERSHIP

This project does not address this criterion.

Project Readiness

TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY

The scope of the proposed project to improve Highway 198 involves widening of the existing roadway two to four feet and the addition of 4-foot wide shoulders to the roadway. It will also enhance the structural integrity of the roadway by increasing the thickness of the asphalt on the roadway, which increases the resilience and sustainability of this critical highway. While the benefits of this project are large, the required level of design is minor. ARDOT has extensive experience in developing projects of this type across all of Arkansas. Therefore, the contingency and risk level is low.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

Task	Completion Date
Design Surveys	July 2018
Environmental	January 2019
Right of Way	July 2019
Utilities	January 2020
Project Obligation	February 2020
Mobilization of Project	April 2020
Open to Traffic	February 2021

REQUIRED APPROVALS

ARDOT has extensive experience in developing projects of this type across all of Arkansas, the required environmental permits and reviews are also known. Since the terrain is level and the widening is minor, the impacts due to construction to the surrounding landscape will be limited. Therefore, the environmental issues that will need to be addressed will be identified early in the design phase which will allow adequate time to address them. However, it should be noted that if cultural resources are encountered adjacent to the existing embankment, the construction of the 4-foot shoulders may need to be eliminated from the Project.

This project is in a location where there are known areas of cultural resources. Since these areas have been identified, every effort will be made to avoid impacting them. If they cannot be avoided, the schedule provides enough time to mitigate the impacts since ARDOT is well versed with projects of this type.

It should be noted that due to the project location, coordination with the Keetoowah, Osage, and Quapaw tribes and the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Office may be required.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process is not complete for this project. However, the schedule has been prepared to provide adequate time to complete all of the needed approvals within the NEPA process.

Benefit Cost Analysis

Table 3 summarizes the approach used for conducting the benefit-cost analysis (BCA) for improving Highway 198. The benefits of the project are primarily derived from safety improvements. The benefit cost-ratio (BCR) for the project ranges from 0.65 to 1.20.

Table 3: Summary of Benefit-Cost Analysis

<i>Benefit/Cost Category</i>	<i>No Discount</i>	<i>Discounted at 7%</i>	<i>Discounted at 3%</i>
Benefits			
Safety Improvements	\$6,414,201	\$2,482,129	\$4,159,898
Net Maintenance	\$589,600	\$449,803	\$523,852
Sum of Benefits	\$7,003,801	\$2,931,932	\$4,683,750
Costs			
Capital	\$6,000,000	\$4,637,236	\$5,360,382
Sum of Costs	\$6,000,000	\$4,637,236	\$5,360,382
Benefit-Cost Ratio	1.17	0.63	0.87
Net Present Value	\$1,003,801	(\$1,705,304)	(\$676,733)

Cost Share

This project will not be completed without receipt of TIGER Discretionary Grant funding. ARDOT is seeking 100 percent funding for this project which is in a rural location. The current Statewide Transportation Improvement Program has allocated all available Federal and State funding to projects through Federal Fiscal Year 2020. Therefore, no Federal and State funding is available for this project.

State revenue dedicated to roadway and bridge improvements is primarily generated from a flat motor fuel tax that has not been increased since 1999. Combined with increasing construction and maintenance costs due to inflation, it is easy to understand how existing revenues have not kept up with much needed transportation improvements across the state. Due to limited State revenue, ARDOT has sought Non-Federal and Non-State funding for this project from private sources, but no funding has been identified.

Since Highway 198 is on the State Highway System, the full life-cycle costs associated with the project and operations and maintenance funding will be provided by ARDOT through Arkansas' motor fuel tax. It is worth noting that when the project is completed, the maintenance costs will be substantially less than it currently is due to the roadway being in a state good of repair.

APPENDIX

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Industries on Highway 198

Arkansas Steel Processing

Arkansas Steel uses a sheet metal slitter that will cut steel to various sizes. The steel is used to make electrical transformers and can be used in breaker boxes as well. The company uses a Canadian-based slitter to cut steel from 0.075 inches to 5/8-inch thick, weighing at least 100,000 pounds and at least six and a half feet wide, the publication noted. They process 300,000 tons of steel each year at the Osceola site.

Source: <http://talkbusiness.net/2016/02/arkansas-steel-processing-to-add-50-jobs-in-osceola/>

Big River Steel

Located in Mississippi County, Arkansas, Big River Steel's Flex Mill™ sits on 1,300 acres bordered on the east by the mighty Mississippi River and to the west by a main line railroad operated by BNSF.

Big River Steel's Flex Mill™ provides the widest and thickest steel material ever produced by electric arc furnace/compact strip production (EAF/CSP) as well as the widest and lightest products. With hot rolled sizes ranging from .054 to 1.0" thickness and 36" to 78" width, our hot mill technology is able to achieve grades previously only available from integrated mills.

Source: <https://bigriversteel.com/>

Bunge Grain

Bunge brings food from where it's produced to where it's needed. Our integrated value chain links origination, storage and transportation to activities further down the line, including processing, packaging and distribution. This helps farmers and communities prosper, puts better food on the shelf, increases sustainability, strengthens global food security and improves diets.

The three most important crops in the world are grains: corn (maize), wheat and rice. They are also the backbone of Bunge's agribusiness activities. As the global market continues to grow, particularly in developing countries, there is a widening mismatch between where crops are produced and where they are consumed. Complex geopolitics, extreme climate conditions and economic uncertainty mean trade in basic foodstuffs has never been more important.

It's a big opportunity and Bunge is well placed to meet this growing need. With our integrated value chain we can make the right connections, linking farmers large and small to the global marketplace. We supply high-quality commodity products to end-customers - from entire nations to small livestock producers.

Source: <http://www.bunge.com/our-businesses>

Bunge North America

Since the early 1900s, we have been in the business of trading raw agricultural commodities for domestic use and for export to world markets. Headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, we operate as the North American arm of [Bunge Limited](#), a New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: BG) company headquartered in White Plains, New York.

We have successfully grown our business by expanding into oilseed processing, refining edible oils, milling corn, rice and wheat, and [more](#). We are an important link in the producer-to-consumer food chain and take pride in our role in agriculture: sourcing grains and oilseeds grown by farmers and turning them into quality animal feed and value-added food ingredients used by the most trusted brands in the food industry.

Source: <https://www.bungenorthamerica.com/about>

Consolidated Grain and Barge Company

Consolidated Grain and Barge Company started operations in Osceola over 25 years ago by leasing a facility. “Our long history of serving local producers is important to us and we look forward to reentering that market with one of the fastest, high capacity elevators in the industry,”

This new state of the art facility will operate with four receiving pits, two high capacity shipping legs, a river belt, and a high efficiency grain dryer. In addition, customers will have access to cgbonline.com, a secure site where they can view up-to-date information regarding their grain transactions, contracts, tickets, and settlements at any time.

Source: <http://www.cgb.com/newscenter/artmid/1048/articleid/136/consolidated-grain-and-barge-co-announces-return-to-osceola-community.aspx>

Mid-River Terminal

Mid-River Terminal offers harbor and stevedoring services such as: lightening barges, spud barge, above water repair, barge sweeping, barge washing, loading and unloading, and cover handling.

Source: <http://mid-riverterminal.com/>

Plum Point Energy

The Plum Point Energy Station is a 665MW pulverised coal plant located in Osceola, in the northeast of Arkansas. It was commissioned in September 2010 after a four year construction period.

The \$1bn project generates electricity to power approximately 650,000 homes while emitting 25% less carbon dioxide than that of conventional coal plants. It is one of the first few major coal fired plants built in the south-eastern states of the US.

Source: <http://www.power-technology.com/projects/plum-point-energy-station/>

TMS International Ozark Services, LLC

TMS International is the largest provider of outsourced industrial services to steel mills in North America as measured by revenue and has a substantial and growing international presence. The company provides mill services at 80 customer sites in 11 countries and our global raw material procurement network spans five continents.

Source: <http://www.tmsinternational.com/locations.cfm>

Viskase

With this combination of automated stuffing equipment and pre-moisturized shirred casings, processors could now make uniform diameter products with greater efficiencies. During the 1970's, VISKASE[®] was the first company to manufacture **E-Z PEEL NOJAX[®]** Casings again

improving our customer's productivity. In addition to product development, meeting the world's expanding global market became a real challenge. The company responded by opening operations in Thaon, France; Osceola, Arkansas and Kentland, Indiana. In the 2000's, to continue providing the best in product development, support and services with strategic locations throughout the world, our new facilities were opened in Monterrey, Mexico; Atibaia, Brazil and Clark Freeport Zone, Philippines.

Source: <http://viskase.com/about-us/viskase-history/>

**WAGE RATE CERTIFICATION
FOR
THE CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS
ACT OF 2017**

Pursuant to the Fiscal Year 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act (Pub. Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), I, Scott E. Bennett, Director of the Arkansas Department of Transportation, 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 Department of Transportation may not receive TIGER 2017 funding unless this certification is made and posted.



Scott E. Bennett, P.E.
Director



Date

