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Revised Funding Plan for Future Interstate 69 Southeast Arkansas

LITTLE ROCK (2-16) – At the request of local officials, the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) has investigated an alternative option for the remaining Future Interstate 69 federal-aid earmarked and state matching funds. A comparison of the current funding plan to construct the western portion of the Monticello Bypass versus an alternative funding plan that would construct the route from the eastern terminus of the Monticello Bypass to Highway 65 has been evaluated based on the current purpose and need for Future Interstate 69.

Approximately \$76 million in funds is available to construct the next phase of Interstate 69. The majority of these funds are Congressional “earmarked” meaning they can only be used for a specific purpose. In this case, these funds may only be used for Interstate 69.

The alternative funding scenario proposed by local officials would construct two lanes from the eastern terminus of the Monticello Bypass to Highway 65 in McGehee in lieu of constructing two lanes of the western leg of the Monticello Bypass. Funding to purchase the right of way for the ultimate four-lane Interstate facility for both segments is included in this alternative funding scenario. The eastern section of the Monticello Bypass now under construction is expected to be completed this summer and will extend from U.S. Highway 278, east of the city, to U.S. Highway 425 to the south.

“Not only would this alternative funding scenario allow freight in southeast Arkansas to move more efficiently and safely through the region, it would also provide a larger footprint for Future Interstate 69,” emphasized Commissioner Robert S. Moore, Jr. of Arkansas City.

Arkansas’ segment of Interstate 69 is part of a national, approximately 2,700-mile trade corridor that, when completed, will extend from Canada southward to Mexico.

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“Looking at the big picture, this new roadway and its connection to the eastern portion of the bypass makes good sense as the next phase of Future Interstate 69,” Moore continued. The alternative funding scenario would construct a safer new highway on new location that would serve as a connector between two major highways, U.S. Highways 425 and 65.

“There are many industries in the Southeast Arkansas region that stand to benefit from moving the funding to this alternative segment of Future Interstate 69,” commented ARDOT Director Scott Bennett. “This change would enhance freight travel and connectivity and, at the same time, create a higher profile project that should garner more support at the national level and increase the competitiveness of future federal funding grant applications. The alternative route has the advantage of connecting to several major U.S. Highways. It also puts a greater emphasis on the need for the addition of Interstate 69 to the nation’s Interstate System, including the Great River Bridge crossing of the Mississippi River.”

According to officials at ARDOT, at the February 6, 2018 meeting, the Highway Commission approved the publication of a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) amendment shifting the funds for construction from the western leg of the Monticello Bypass to the segment from the eastern terminus of the Monticello Bypass to US Highway 65 in McGehee. Right of way for the ultimate four-lane Interstate facility would be purchased for both segments. The STIP amendment process includes a public comment period. The STIP amendment will be published on February 23, 2018. Comments will be due to ARDOT by March 12, 2018. Written comments should be forwarded to the following address:

Program Management Division
Arkansas Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, AR 72203

All comments received will be addressed. Subsequently, the request for the amendment will be forwarded to the Federal Highway Administration for approval.

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