

Welcome to the Location & Design Public Hearing for:

AHTD JOB No. 060432

***HIGHWAY 7 WIDENING
HIGHWAY 290-OUACHITA RIVER BRIDGE***

Baymont Inn & Suites, Lake Hamilton, Arkansas

Thursday, June 25, 2015

How do I become involved?

- Please register your attendance at the registration table.
- Gather information, view the displays, and ask questions of AHTD staff.
- If you wish to make an oral statement about the project, you must have your comments recorded at the recording station at this hearing.
- Written statements may be submitted on the attached comment form at the hearing or by mail or email to the AHTD Environmental Division by 4:30 p.m., Thursday, July 9, 2015.

*For more information, call (501) 569-2281
or email environmentalpimeetings@ahtd.ar.gov*

*AHTD Environmental Division
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, AR 72203*



Location & Design Public Hearing Information

Welcome to the Location & Design Public Hearing for the Highway 7 widening project in Lake Hamilton, AR. Your attendance and participation are greatly appreciated!

What is the Highway 7 widening project?

The AHTD, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration, is proposing to widen Highway 7 from two to four travel lanes and add a two-way left turn lane, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks, between the Ouachita River/Lake Hamilton and Highway 290. The project is located south of the City of Hot Springs in Garland County, as seen in Figure 1.

What would the project accomplish?

The project would improve traffic flow on Highway 7 by adding capacity with the addition of a travel lane in each direction as well as removing left-turning vehicles from the travel lanes with the addition of a two-way left turn lane. The two-way left turn lane, bicycles, and sidewalks will also increase safety for motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

What are the alternatives?

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would provide only routine maintenance on Highway 7. The No Action Alternative would not address the traffic flow and safety issues: road users would continue to experience delays and crash rates would not improve. These problems would continue to increase in severity as traffic volumes increase over the 20-year study period.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would involve widening Highway 7 from two to four travel lanes with a two-way left turn lane, curb and gutter, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks, as seen in Figure 2.

What is the project area like today?

The project is located within Ouachita Mountain Ecoregion; however, the immediate project area, the Ouachita River basin, is rolling to relatively flat. Land cover in the immediate project area was historically mixed oak-pine forest. Later, old-growth vegetation was removed through logging, then clearing for pasture, and finally for urban development.

Why would you consider an alternative that does nothing?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires decision makers to consider a “no-action” alternative in all NEPA studies. This alternative may not meet the project’s purpose and need but helps to compare the beneficial and adverse impacts of build alternatives and determine their significance.

Project Limits



Figure 1

Alternative 1 Typical Section

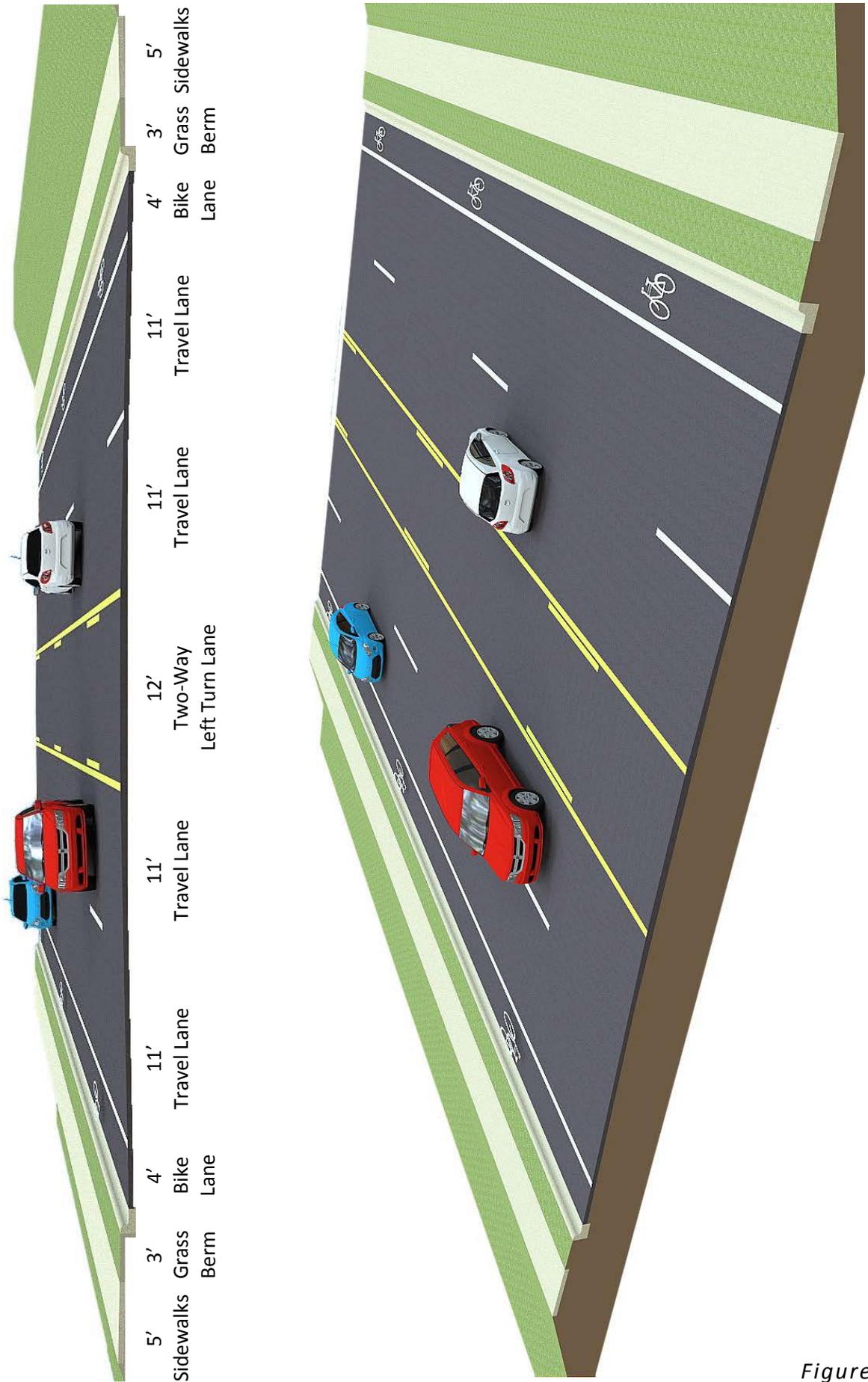


Figure 2

How would the completed project affect surrounding areas?

The most noticeable effects of the completed project would be the conversion of private commercial and residential property to transportation right of way, in some cases resulting in relocation of the business or residence. The following table summarizes the impacts associated with the two alternatives under consideration.

Alternative Impact Comparison

Alternative	Total Cost	Construction Cost	Right of Way Cost	Right of Way (acres)	Relocations	Noise Receptors Impacted	Stream Impacts (linear feet)
No Action	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Alternative 1	\$14.8 million	\$8 million	\$6.8 million	9.6	14	10	156

Alternative 1 would also result in lower crash rates for motor vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians and improve traffic flow. The No Action Alternative would result in increased crash rates and further deterioration of traffic flow across the 20-year study period.

What has already been completed on the project?

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was approved by the Federal Highway Administration in April 2015 that discussed potential social, economic, and environmental impacts and determined if any of the impacts were significant. The EA also identified Alternative 1 as the Preferred Alternative. Copies of this documentation are available for review at this hearing or online on the AHTD website with the Location & Design Public Hearing notice and information.

What were the EA findings?

The EA did not identify any significant impacts to the natural, cultural, or social environment as a result of either alternative.

Web Address:

www.arkansashighways.com

What is the purpose of this Location & Design Public Hearing?

The AHTD holds public hearings to ensure that the Preferred Alternative identified and its design are consistent with the goals and objectives of the project and the AHTD. In order to meet this goal, public participation is needed to identify, discuss, and resolve any problems or controversial issues. AHTD personnel are also available at the hearing to answer questions and explain the project and its impacts.

Where do I find out more about the environmental analysis?

For more detail on these impacts or on other impact areas not discussed here, please ask an AHTD employee at this meeting to view the EA or download a digital copy on the AHTD website.

What should I do if my property is being impacted?

The AHTD Right of Way Division has representatives available at this hearing to discuss how your property is being impacted and what to expect once right of way acquisition begins. No one will be required to surrender possession of their property until just compensation has been made. A

detailed policy and procedures brochure is available at the Right of Way table at this hearing or through the AHTD Right of Way Division.

The initial step in the acquisition process is the property valuation. Once the valuation is prepared, reviewed and approved, a negotiator will contact the property owner by mail or in person to begin the negotiation process. If negotiations are successful, a Contract to Sell is executed and submitted for payment. Once the AHTD completes the title opinion and the deed is prepared, a closing agent will be in touch to get the deed signed and deliver the check. At this time, the state takes possession of the property.

For those cases where all efforts to negotiate are unsuccessful, the tract is submitted to the AHTD Legal Division to file condemnation. The appraisal amount is deposited in the court and the landowner may withdraw the funds placed on deposit without affecting their right to claim additional compensation.

What if my business or residence needs to be relocated?

The relocation assistance program is intended to provide advisory assistance and payments help offset expenses incurred by those who are displaced by federally-aided highway projects.

Relocation assistance, which is separate from the compensation a person receives for real estate, comes in two basic forms — physical assistance and monetary assistance. In order to be eligible for relocation assistance and compensation, a person must be in occupancy at the initiation of negotiations for the property. The type of relocation payments one is eligible for depends on the type of displacee: owner, landlord, tenant, etc.

Relocation assistance and payments will be provided until all displacees have been relocated from the project. If a person is not satisfied with the amounts that have been offered as relocation compensation, an appeal may be filed and the case heard promptly and carefully reviewed by an AHTD Appeals Officer. Relocation assistance brochures explaining payments and eligibility requirements are available at the Right of Way Division table at this hearing.

What happens after this hearing?

After a review of comments received from citizens, public officials, and public agencies, the next step in the environmental process will be to respond to comments received as a result of this Location & Design Public Hearing and finalize the project design.

After the design is finalized, a Finding of No Significant Impact document will be prepared and signed by the FHWA, identifying the Selected Alternative and concluding the NEPA process. Right of way acquisition can then begin.

What is a relocation?

Relocations occur when a residence, business, or non-profit is impacted severely enough by a proposed project that they cannot continue to live or do business at their current location. This is usually due to the proposed right of way limits crossing a structure (house or business) or taking a majority of a business's parking.

Where can I get more information after the hearing?

Call: (501) 569-2281 or

Email:
environmentalpimeetings@
ahtd.ar.gov

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

Open Forum Location & Design Public Hearing

AHTD Job No. 060432

Hwy. 290-Ouachita River Bridge (S)

Garland County

Thursday, June 25, 2015

Please Print

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Which alternative do you prefer? (Please choose one.)

No Action Alternative

Alternative 1

Does your home or property offer any limitations to the project, such as septic systems, springs or wells, that the Department needs to consider in its design?

Additional Comments:

Use the back or additional sheets if necessary.

Comment forms may be left in the drop box at this hearing or received by 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 9, 2015.

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