

Welcome to the Location and Design Public Hearing for:



I-555 – Hwy. 49
(Commerce Dr.
Extension) (Jonesboro)

ARDOT Job 100657

February 7, 2019

How do I become involved?

- Register your attendance at the registration table.
- Gather information, view the displays, and ask questions.
- Oral statements can be taken at the recording area.
- Written statements may be submitted at the hearing by using the attached comment form, or mail/email it to the ARDOT Environmental Division by 4:30 p.m., Monday, February 21, 2019.
- Your attendance and participation are greatly appreciated!

For more information, please call 501-569-2281 or email
environmentalmeetings@ardot.gov

ARDOT Environmental Division
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261

Location and Design Public Hearing Information

What is the purpose of this hearing?

This packet has been prepared to provide general information about the project and its potential impacts. Information has been included pertaining to the proposed design, environmental impacts, and right of way. Additional information on each of these topics is available at the hearing or by contacting the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT).

One of the primary objectives of this hearing is to provide a medium of free and open discussion, which hopefully will result in the resolution of any problems or controversial issues. In order to accomplish this goal, we must have your cooperation and participation.

The Department hopes to make you familiar with the proposed design and give you an opportunity to express your opinions. In order to meet these goals, public participation is needed to identify, discuss, and resolve any problems or controversial issues. ARDOT personnel are also available to answer questions and explain the project and its impacts.

Copies of the Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for this project are available at this hearing and on the ARDOT website at www.ardot.gov. The EA describes potential effects associated with this project.

What is the Commerce Drive Extension project and what would it accomplish?

The project proposes to provide a north-south route connecting Interstate 555 (I-555) and Highway (Hwy.) 49 in the City of Jonesboro. The project would include widening of Hwy. 18S, commonly known as Commerce Drive, and extending it on a new location route. This project would provide a new connection between I-555 and Hwy. 49 and help alleviate congestion on nearby roadways.

What are the project alternatives?

Two alternatives were considered for this project: the No Action Alternative and one build alternative, Alternative 1.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would not provide changes to the existing roadway network, but routine and preventative maintenance treatments would still be performed as needed. Although there are no direct construction costs with this alternative, indirect costs would include maintenance costs and additional vehicle operating costs due to indirection and delays. The No Action Alternative does not meet the project's purpose and need of improving current and forecasted traffic flow, safety, traffic congestion, or provide connectivity. The No Action Alternative was considered in the Environmental Assessment as a baseline comparison of impacts against Alternative 1.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would include widening of Hwy. 18S (Commerce Dr.) from I-555 north for 1.25 miles to Hwy. 18 and would be curb and gutter providing four 11-foot travel lanes, a 12-foot center turn lane, and 5-foot sidewalks. Commerce Dr. from Hwy. 18 to Pacific Dr. (1.0 mile) would be widened and would be curb and gutter providing four 12-foot travel lanes, a 16-foot raised median, and 5-foot sidewalks. This same cross section would continue north on new location for 2.4 miles from Pacific Dr. to Hwy. 49. A grade separation of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) main line would also be constructed. A curbed cross section is consistent with Jonesboro's Master Street Plan and a design speed of 45 mph in an urban/suburban area. The alignment for Alternative 1 is shown in Figure 1 and the typical cross section of the proposed improvements are shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

What has been completed on the project?

The Federal Highway Administration approved an Environmental Assessment (EA) in August 2018. The EA describes potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the project alternatives.

Figure 1 - Alternative 1



Figure 2 - Typical Cross Section: Four Lanes with Center Turn Lane

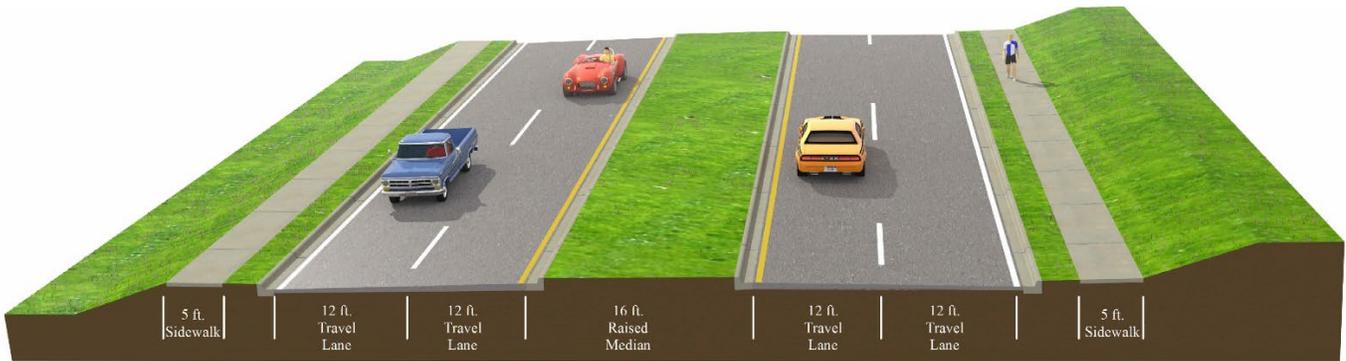


Figure 3 - Typical Cross Section: Four Lanes with Raised Median



What happens when new right of way is acquired?

Acquiring right of way involves property owners being contacted by ARDOT Right of Way Division personnel. These may include appraisers, negotiators, closing agents, and possibly property managers.

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 ARDOT 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 ARDOT 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.

No one will be required to surrender possession of their property or improvement 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 ARDOT Right of Way Division.

What if businesses or residences need to be relocated?

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

No one can be required to move without at least 90 days' advance written notice, and comparable replacement housing will be made available to all residential displaces (built if necessary) before project construction begins. This housing must be fair housing and offered to all affected persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

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 individuals are eligible for depends on the type of displacement: i.e., owner, renter, etc.

Relocation assistance and payments will be provided until all displaces 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 ARDOT Appeals Officer.

Relocation assistance brochures explaining each payment and eligibility requirement in detail are available at the Right of Way table at this hearing.

What happens after this hearing?

The ARDOT will review the comments received from citizens, public officials, and public agencies.

The ARDOT will prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document for review by the Federal Highway Administration. The approved FONSI will identify the Selected Alternative and concludes the National Environmental Policy Act process. Right of way acquisition can then begin.

For additional information, please visit our website at www.ardot.gov; call us 501-569-2281, or email us at environmentalpimeetings@ardot.gov.

Thank you for your attendance and participation in this hearing!

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ARDOT)
CITIZEN COMMENT FORM
Location and Design Public Hearing
Job No: 100657
I-555 – Hwy. 49 (Commerce Dr. Extension) (Jonesboro)
Craighead County**

February 7, 2019

Please Print

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Street Address

City, State, Zip

• REMEMBER •

Your comments must be in writing or recorded on tape to be considered part of the official record of this public hearing.

Comments:

(Use additional sheets if necessary)

Written Comments should be left in the drop box at this hearing or received by 4:30 p.m., Monday, February 21, 2019 at the following address:

Arkansas Department of Transportation
Environmental Division
P.O. Box 2261
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-2261
Telephone: 501-569-2281
Fax: 501-569-2009

Email: environmentalpimeetings@ardot.gov

For additional information, please visit our website at www.ardot.gov