Western North-South Connector Study

Virtual Public Meeting
August 29 - September 20, 2021
01
Background
ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

MINUTE ORDER

District: Nine
County: Benton
Category: Miscellaneous

WHEREAS, IN BENTON COUNTY, local officials have suggested that a highway connection from the proposed Highway 612 (Springdale Northern Bypass) to Highway 49 (Bella Vista Bypass) east of Interstate 49 and in the vicinity of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport could improve regional mobility.

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study of the existing highway network, upcoming highway improvements and possible new location alternatives in this region should be considered.

NOW THEREFORE, the District is authorized to conduct a planning study of the region west of Interstate 49 to identify the need for and feasibility of a western connection between the Springdale Northern Bypass and the Bella Vista Bypass.

[Signature]
District

[Signature]
Chairman

[Signature]
Vice Chairman

[Signature]
Secretary

[Signature]
Assistant Secretary

[Signature]
2019 011
JAN 9 2019
02

Study Purpose
• Determine the need for a new highway connection from the proposed Highway 612 (Springdale Northern Bypass) to Highway 549 (Bella Vista Bypass) west of Interstate 49

• Identify feasible alternatives for addressing regional needs
03
Study Goals
Improve connectivity (primary study goal)

Improve mobility/relieve congestion

Improve reliability

Enhance safety/security

Improve resiliency

Strengthen economic competitiveness

Support alternative transportation choices

Maintain a state of good repair

Minimize impacts to the natural, historic and cultural environments
04 Transportation Demand
• Utilized historical data and latest Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission (NWARPCC) Travel Demand Model to forecast future traffic volumes

• Determined Vehicle Miles Travelled, Vehicle Hours Travelled, and Total Travel Delay for western Benton County

• These measures were used to quantify the benefits of a new roadway or other improvements
Evaluate various data such as:

- Traffic
- Safety
- Environmental
06
Public Involvement
Summer 2020 meeting results

Eighty-four percent of respondents felt there was a need for a north-south connector

**MOST CRITICAL CONCERNS**

- Lack of highway infrastructure to support regional growth
- Lack of direct north-south routes within the study area
- Traffic congestion on existing routes
- Indirect access to Northwest Arkansas National Airport
Potential Connector Benefits
A new roadway corridor could improve:

- Connectivity in western Benton County between Highway 612 and Highway 549
- Mobility by providing an alternate route to avoid congestion
- Access to Northwest Arkansas National Airport
- Resiliency of regional transportation system
08
Action Alternatives
Four alternatives were developed and evaluated for:

- Cost
- Environmental and Community Impacts
- Connectivity and Access
- Travel Time
- System Reliability
- Coordination with local master street plans (MSPs)
- Constructability
- Traffic Attracted
NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Pros
• No environmental impacts

Cons
• No direct, efficient north-south route between I-49, Centerton, Highfill, and XNA
• Travel times will remain higher due to indirection and congestion
• No relief if incident occurs on other north-south routes
ALTERNATIVE 1

Pros
• Provides additional capacity to an existing route

Cons
• No direct north-south route between I-49, Centerton, Highfill, and XNA
• Community impacts to the built environment
• Not carried forward
  – Does not improve connectivity
ALTERNATIVE 2

Pros

• Direct/efficient north-south route
• Improved travel times
• More resilient travel
• Coordinates well with MSPs
• Easily constructed in phases
• Low environmental impacts
ALTERNATIVE 3

Pros

• Direct/efficient north-south route
• Improved travel times
• More resilient travel
• Attracts more traffic than alternatives

Cons

• Doesn’t coordinate with MSPs
• More expensive to construct
• Environmental impacts
ALTERNATIVE 4

Pros
• Attracts traffic away from other routes

Cons
• Environmental challenges
• Difficult to construct
• Lower benefit for the cost
• Doesn’t coordinate with MSPs
• More indirect
• Not carried forward
  – High construction costs and impacts
ALTERNATIVE 2 & ALTERNATIVE 3

Greater benefit to the transportation system by providing:

- Connectivity and access
- Travel time savings
- System redundancy
- Least impact on the community and natural environments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Cost (Millions)</th>
<th>Environmental and Community Impacts</th>
<th>Connectivity and Access</th>
<th>Travel Time</th>
<th>System Redundancy</th>
<th>Coordination with MSPs</th>
<th>Constructability</th>
<th>2045 Traffic Attracted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No-Action</strong></td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No direct, efficient north-south route between I-49, Centerton, Highfill, and XNA</td>
<td>Travel times will remain higher due to indirection and resulting congestion</td>
<td>No relief if an incident occurs on other north-south routes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative 2</strong></td>
<td>$179.4</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Direct, efficient north-south route between I-49, Centerton, Highfill, and XNA</td>
<td>Improved travel times to communities along corridor</td>
<td>Additional north-south route provides more resilient travel</td>
<td>Coordinates well with MSPs</td>
<td>Able to be constructed in phases</td>
<td>14,000 (8,000 New)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative 3</strong></td>
<td>$249.2</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Direct, efficient north-south route between I-49, Centerton, Highfill, and XNA</td>
<td>Improved travel times to communities along corridor</td>
<td>Additional north-south route provides more resilient travel</td>
<td>Does not coordinate well with MSPs</td>
<td>More difficult to construct in phases</td>
<td>9,000 (9,000 New)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
09

Next Steps
PUBLIC INVOLEMENT

Virtual Meeting

Sunday, August 29 through Monday, September 20

WNSConnector.TransportationPlanRoom.com
• Study team will review stakeholder input and finalize study documents for presentation to the ARDOT Administration and Arkansas State Highway Commission

• At this time, no funds have been identified for implementation of any improvements discussed in this study

• Once funding is available, future steps include the environmental review process and design
10 Questions/Comments