

Public Involvement Program

Introduction

A public involvement program has been an integral part of the Corridor Study process. Public discussion of the need for improvements to State Highway 20 had occurred for several years before the beginning of this study. Because of the widespread interest in potential improvements to the highway, a very extensive public involvement program was planned for the study. The program included public meetings, the establishment and meetings of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), development of a study mailing list, the production and distribution of three issues of a study newsletter, the distribution and receipt of comment cards, press releases, advertisement of public meetings, and briefings of public officials and civic groups. A public hearing will be conducted to receive comments and questions about the Environmental Assessment of the preferred alignment. Responses to the comments and questions raised at the public hearing will be prepared and included in the Final Environmental Assessment. Documentation of these activities is available at ODOT District 8 offices, 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. The following discussion describes the program, the individual components, and the input received to date in more detail.

Public Involvement Process

Public Meetings

Three (3) public meetings were held during the study. The first public meeting was held on Tuesday, February 27, 1997, in the gymnasium of the Collinsville High School. An estimated 525 persons attended the meeting. The consultant project manager described the purpose of the study and noted that the first meeting was held

to receive input from the public about conditions on SH 20 and potential solutions to roadway problems. Key issues arising from the question and answer session were:

- Need to protect environmentally-sensitive areas
- Avoid disruption of existing neighborhoods
- Results and costs of past studies
- Funding sources of current study
- Construction schedule
- Keetonville Hill crossing
- Right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and compensation for property owners
- Keep alignment through downtown Collinsville
- Keep the present alignment of SH 20

As a result of this meeting, every previous State Highway 20 improvement study was incorporated into the study process as a viable alternative.

Following the presentations about the study and the question and answer period, the audience was divided into three (3) groups based on geographic segments of the study corridor. Nominations for membership on the Citizens Advisory Committee were then solicited from persons in these three groups. A total of forty-nine (49) persons were nominated.

The second public meeting was conducted in an open house format. This meeting was held at Rogers University in Claremore during four (4) hours of the afternoon and evening of Thursday, July 17, 1997. The number of registered visitors to the open house was 219. Exhibits and displays about the study and the roadway were placed around the large room in which the open house was held. These exhibits included displays showing a schedule of the study process, preliminary traffic counts, environmental factors to be investigated, recent safety records of the roadway traffic, and two (2) corridor maps - one (1) showing all previously identified potential alignments and the other showing those alignments identified by the CAC for detailed study. Also available were maps of the east, central, and west sub-areas of the study corridor, showing the previously identified potential alignments and those identified by the CAC for detailed study. Handouts included the list of CAC members and a description of the environmental assessment process and expected schedule. Members of the consulting team and ODOT staff were available to discuss the study with visitors and to answer questions about it. Comment cards were made available for those wishing to present in writing their questions and thoughts about the roadway and the study.

Key issues arising from the questions and comments at this open house were:

- Specific individually-preferred alternatives
- Retention of current alignment
- Safety of road at Keetonville Hill
- Bypass options at Claremore and Collinsville
- Retention of alignment through downtown Collinsville
- Recommendation of specific design feature, e.g., left-turn lanes
- Need for roadway shoulders
- Desire to maintain rural quality of life
- Protection of environmentally-sensitive areas
- The effect on property values
- Potential disruption of established neighborhoods

The third public meeting was held after the alternative alignments had been reduced in number to nine (9). This meeting was held in Owasso on Tuesday, September 29, 1998, beginning at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was preceded by a 1-hour open house period, when displays were available for viewing and members of the consulting team and ODOT staff were available for one-on-one discussions of the displays and to answer questions about them. This meeting was held in the Owasso High School gymnasium. A total of 423 persons registered in attendance at this meeting. The purpose of the third meeting was to describe the alternatives evaluation process and to present the alternative alignments still under consideration as the preferred alignment. At this meeting, it was announced that both the northern and southern alternatives in the Central sub-area and the northern alternative in the East sub-area had been eliminated as alternatives for further detailed study. Again, input was solicited from those present.

The major issues expressed during the meeting included:

- Crossing of Keetonville Hill
- Number of displacements
- Basis for determination of indirect takings
- Accuracy of aerial photos
- Feasibility of any other alternatives
- One-way pairs in Claremore and Collinsville
- Tie-in to Will Rogers Turnpike sought of Claremore
- Representation of Riverbend Estates and Keetonville Hill areas on CAC
- When preferred alternative will be announced
- Schedule for ROW acquisition
- Validity of traffic projections
- Possible improvement of existing alignment through Claremore

- Traffic volume increase on subsidiary roads
- Individual environmental impacts on residential property

Advisory Committees

Citizens Advisory Committee. At the first public meeting nominations were received for members of the Citizens Advisory Committee. Nominations of persons residing or owning property in one (1) of the three (3) geographic areas of the study corridor - east, central, and west - were solicited from those present who were residents or property owners in any one of those areas. The number of persons nominated totaled forty-nine (49) - thirteen (13) in the east sub-area, twenty-one (21) from the central sub-area, and fifteen (15) from the west. Later, a few additional nominations were submitted in writing.

Following that public meeting the consultants verified addresses of those nominated and then located on the study area map the approximate location of each nominated person's property. The goal was to achieve balanced representation from throughout the corridor. Letters inviting twenty-four (24) nominees to become members of the Advisory Committee were distributed and responses received. Three (3) declined to serve and three (3) other nominees from the respective geographic sub-areas were invited to serve. The Committee was originally comprised of twenty-four (24) members. However, the area near Keetonville Hill, two (2) other areas of the central sub-area, and one (1) in the west sub-area were later felt to be unrepresented and one (1) person from each of those areas was asked to serve on the Committee, bringing the total membership to twenty-eight (28).

The Citizens Advisory Committee met four (4) times during the study. The first Committee meeting was held on Monday, June 16, 1997, beginning at 7:00 p.m., in the Owasso Community Center. There were twenty (20) Committee members and forty (40) visitors registered in attendance. At this first meeting, Committee members made self-introductions and heard a presentation about the purpose, need, and scope of the study, the study schedule, and their role as communicators during the study. Criteria for evaluating alternatives were discussed and agreed to by Committee members, who made one addition - use of existing facilities - to the list of criteria.

Key issues raised by Committee members during the open discussion period included:

- Roadway crossings of streams or waterways
- Railroad crossings of the roadway
- Section 4(f) properties in the study area
- Property devaluation as part of the economic/community development criterion

Members of the three (3) geographic sub-areas in the study area then worked with the consultants and ODOT staff on sub-area maps to eliminate some potential alignments from further study and to identify alignments to be studied in detail.

On Tuesday, September 16, 1997, the CAC met for the second time. This meeting was a joint meeting with the Technical Advisory Committee. The meeting was held in the Claremore Community Center, 104 South Muskogee, Claremore, and began at 6:30 p.m. There were twenty-two (22) CAC Committee members registered in attendance and twenty-five (25) visitors. The purpose of the meeting was to reduce the number of alternatives by use of the evaluation criteria. Committee members raised several key issues following a presentation about the alternatives evaluation process. Those issues were weighting (or not) the criteria and the derivation of the criteria.

The attendees were divided into sub-area groups to review the alternatives and to eliminate some, using the criteria. Each sub-area group requested removal of some segment in the respective sub-areas. One (1) segment of the alignment in the Central sub-area was added and carried forward for further study. One (1) CAC-preferred segment in the east sub-area was eliminated by consensus. Two (2) other segments had been eliminated by the screening process and two (2) segments were carried forward. A northern segment in the East sub-area was retained for detailed study. Four (4) CAC-preferred segments were carried forward in the west sub-area.

The third meeting of the CAC was held on Thursday, December 4, 1997, beginning at 7:00 p.m., in the ODOT District 8 offices, 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. This meeting was also held jointly with a meeting of the TAC. There were twenty-two (22) CAC Committee members and twenty-five (25) visitors registered in attendance. Consultants and ODOT staff restated the rationale and procedures for the study process and presented information about the alignment segments that were undergoing detailed study. Discussion after the presentation centered on public notification about the meeting, facility type throughout the alignment, overpasses of SH 20 at Highway 169 and 136th Street North and 126th Street North, and costs of the alternatives.

On Monday, August 31, 1998, the fourth and final meeting of the CAC was held in the ODOT District 8 offices at 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. Twenty-two (22) Citizens Advisory Committee members and forty-seven (47) visitors registered in attendance. This meeting was also a joint meeting with the TAC. The presentation focused on the facility type, the alternatives remaining under consideration as likely candidates for the Preferred Alternative, and a simplified evaluation criteria matrix. An evaluation matrix had been developed to show the impact of each remaining alternative on the various environmental factors. A preliminary environmental

assessment of each remaining alternative was presented. The evaluation process, which led to this short list of alternatives, was discussed.

Issues raised concerned:

- The alignment in the Keetonville Hill area
- The negotiation with the Turnpike Authority to use the Turnpike as part of the East sub-area alignment
- The use of business routes in Claremore and Collinsville
- The removal of 106th Street North as a final alternative
- The responsibility for maintenance of abandoned sections of the old SH 20
- The schedule for completion of the study

Technical Advisory Committee. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was organized in order to provide technical or professional information to the consulting team and to ODOT concerning the SH 20 roadway and the study corridor. Thirty-three (33) federal, state, and local agencies were invited to name representatives to TAC. Those entities whose representatives comprised the Committee membership were:

Federal Highway Administration	Grand Gateway Economic Develop. Authority
US Army Corps of Engineers, Tulsa District	City of Claremore Mayor
Okla. Natural Resource Conservation Service.	ODOT, Division 8, Div. Engineer
Okla. Dept. of Environmental Quality	ODOT Planning Division
Okla. Dept. of Wildlife Conservation	ODOT Bridge Division
Oklahoma Secretary of the Environment	ODOT Rail Planning
Oklahoma Archaeological Survey	ODOT Survey Division
Indian Nations Council of Governments	ODOT Division 8 Project. Mgr.
City of Collinsville Mayor	ODOT, Utilities Div., Claremore
ODOT Roadway Design	ODOT Public Affairs Division
US Environmental Protection Agency, Reg. 6	Rogers County Commissioner
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Board of Tulsa Co. Commissioners
Okla. Corp. Comm., Oil/Gas Conservation Div.	City of Tulsa Public Works Dept.
Oklahoma Historical Society	City of Owasso Community Development Dept.
Oklahoma State Board of Agriculture	Tulsa County Engineer
Oklahoma Conservation Commission	ODOT Chief Engineer
Oklahoma Tourism/Recreation Dept.	

There were four (4) meetings of the TAC during the study. The first meeting of the Committee was on Monday, June 16, 1997, at 10:00 a.m. in the ODOT District 8 offices at 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. There were twenty (20) Committee members and one (1) visitor registered in attendance. At this first meeting, Committee members introduced themselves and described their agency's interests in the study. They heard a presentation about the purpose, need and scope of the study, the study schedule, and their role as technical resource persons during the study. They discussed potential new alignments for the roadway. A proposed list of criteria

for evaluating alternatives were discussed and agreed to by Committee members. Several additional criteria were suggested by the Committee and were added to the list of criteria.

The second meeting of the TAC was a joint one with the CAC. Those registered for the meeting included eleven (11) committee members and twenty-five (25) visitors. (For a summary of the meeting, issues raised, and the date, time, and place, see the discussion under Citizens Advisory Committee.)

The third meeting of the TAC was also held jointly with the CAC. Ten (10) TAC members registered in attendance and twenty (20) visitors were present. (For a summary of the meeting, issues raised, and the date, time, and place, see the discussion under Citizens Advisory Committee above.)

The TAC met for the fourth time on Monday, August 31, 1998, in the ODOT District 8 offices, 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. Again, this was a joint meeting with the CAC. Twelve (12) members of the TAC registered in attendance and there were four (4) visitors. (For a summary of the meeting, issues raised, and the date, time, and place, see the discussion under Citizens Advisory Committee above.)

Study Mailing List

A mailing list was developed and continually updated throughout the study. The initial addressees on the mailing list included persons who had communicated earlier with ODOT about SH 20, local and state public officials, and representatives of study area civic groups, business organizations, the media, and special interest groups. Following the first public meeting, names and addresses of those attending the meeting whose names were not yet on the mailing list were added. Additions were made after each public meeting and as persons contacted ODOT or the consultants and asked to be added to the mailing list. The list reached totaled 2,180 addressees at the time the draft Environmental Assessment was completed. The mailing list was used to notify members of the public and others about the public meetings conducted during the study and for the distribution of study newsletters.

Study Newsletters

There were three (3) 4-page newsletters published and distributed during the study. An address form to be used to add an addressee to the mailing list was included in each issue. The first newsletter, dated February 1997, introduced the study and consulting team, described the purpose and scope of the study, and presented the public involvement program.

The second newsletter, published in June 1997, focused on issues raised at the first public meeting, an announcement of the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee, a notice of the second public meeting/open house, and responses to questions left unanswered at the first public meeting. These responses addressed the issues of the purpose and need for the study, the parameters and schedule of the study, the composition of the CAC, Federal funding involvement in the study, costs of previous and current study, previous studies on impact of bypasses on a downtown, Verdigris River crossing, access to SH 20 from residential frontage properties, funds available for construction of the project, membership of the Oklahoma Transportation Board, access roads for SH 20, consultant selection, compensation for ROW acquisition, and notification about study. A map of the study corridor and a map showing the previously identified potential alignments were included.

The third newsletter, issued in June 1998, presented an update of the study, the Purpose and Need for the project, a summary of traffic projections and travel patterns, design criteria for the roadway, and a revised schedule for the study. All these newsletters were distributed to those on the mailing list and a supply of newsletters was sent to each of the public libraries and Chamber of Commerce's in the area. Copies of the three (3) newsletters are kept on file at ODOT.

Communications

During the study at every public meeting and at meetings of the CAC and TAC and at briefings to local civic groups, comment cards were available. These cards were used by citizens to present their comments and questions in writing to the consulting team. The comments and/or questions from all comment cards received after each public or committee meeting were noted and transmitted to the appropriate consultant or ODOT staff for response, when indicated.

In addition, the comment cards were added to the large volume of letters, petitions and records of phone calls that were received during the study. (Communications concerning SH 20 received before the study started, beginning in the year 1994, are also included in the documented communications for this study.) All of this volume of communications has been organized chronologically and categorized by issue. These communications have been tabulated and the issues summarized. The following is a summary of all the communications received concerning SH 20.

The citizens in the SH 20 area had expressed their interest in participating in the decision-making process even before this study began in early 1997. ODOT held a public meeting in July 1994 at which improvement alternatives for the roadway were discussed. In the months following this meeting, ODOT staff and elected officials received 196 pieces of correspondence. While some persons sent in a form to add

their names and addresses to the notification list, many more expressed strong opinions about where the roadway should, and should not, be located.

The current SH 20 Corridor Study has generated even more interest and written responses. At the first public meeting in late February 1997, more than 100 people completed comment cards. Comments from the majority of those cards were requests to be placed on the mailing list to receive newsletters and notification of future public meetings. Many also addressed specific issues such as route preference ("Keep 20 on 20"), safety concerns, economic and social impacts, environmental conditions and questions about the study process. Many additional cards and letters were received in the four (4) months following. In all, 369 pieces of written comment were received during that time period. Several petitions were circulated before the study began and in its final stages. These petitions all requested the SH 20 roadway be retained in its current alignment.

At the July 16, 1997, public meeting, seventy-six (76) persons completed comment cards, many expressing specific choices for roadway location. By the end of the year, ninety (90) additional pieces of correspondence were received. Many of these included multiple copies from one household, some from children, and duplicate copies to elected officials.

Technical and Citizens Advisory Committee meetings during the process generated renewed interest and additional correspondence. Committee members shared information about evaluation of the alternatives with their neighbors as it became available. People in neighborhoods and residential developments organized to write letters expressing their concerns about relocating the highway. As newsletters kept over 2000 people on the mailing list informed about the study progress, many continued to send written comments to the consulting engineers, ODOT staff, and elected officials.

The City Council of Claremore made known its adopted transportation plan, including routing of SH 20, and sent a map showing the southern bypass preference. The City of Collinsville, the Collinsville Chamber of Commerce, the City of Owasso, the Owasso Chamber of Commerce, and the Owasso Economic Development Authority adopted official positions and sent letters urging the decision to keep the highway on its current alignment. State elected officials, in response to concerns expressed by their constituents, wrote to support alternatives preferred by their constituents.

The volume of mail declined in 1998, to a total of seventy-three (73) written comments, probably because there were no public meetings with progress reports about the evaluation of the alternatives until September. At the September 29, 1998,

public meeting, it was announced that the alternative which had generated the most opposition (106th Street North) was eliminated from further detailed study and there were twenty-seven (27) comment cards received.

Table F1 gives more detailed information about the correspondence received and indicates the primary issues addressed.

Table F1
FREQUENCY OF ISSUES RAISED IN CORRESPONDENCE
State Highway 20 Corridor Study

Issues	0-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
(Stated in 608 pieces received from Feb. '97 – Oct '98)					
Add to mailing list			X		
Specific route preference				X	
Keep 20 on 20/Not 106th				X	
Collinsville routes	X				
Claremore routes	X				
Keetonville Hill	X				
Improve, don't widen	X				
Design/right-of-way	X				
Study process including public involvement	X				

In support of the comments and issues (identified in the preceding table), correspondents expressed concern about the following:

- Quality of life in the country
- Disruption of established neighborhoods
- Environmental (flooding, wetlands, wildlife)
- Decline in or uncertainty about property values
- Safety of roadway and adjacent properties
- Transportation plans/access
- Economic development potential and business impacts
- Cost effectiveness

Press Releases

Draft press releases were prepared prior to each public meeting. These drafts were then used by ODOT public affairs staff to prepare final press releases for distribution to the media. A copy of each draft press release is included in the information located at ODOT.

Legal Notices and Advertisements

In order to publicize the upcoming public meetings, legal notices and advertisements were placed in study area media publications prior to each meeting. These notices and advertisements insured that even area residents who were not yet on the mailing list could be apprised of the public meetings and the study if they read any of the local area publications. Copies of the legal notices and advertisements are available at ODOT.

Briefings of Public Officials

The consultants and ODOT staff conducted one formal briefing for study area public officials. This was held on Thursday, August 28, 1997, in the District 8 offices at 4002 Mingo Valley Expressway, Tulsa. Issues raised by the public officials at this briefing included methodology for selection of Citizens Advisory Committee members, the environmental assessment process, alignment potentials in the central sub-area, the alignment through or south of Collinsville, and alignment potentials in the Claremore area.

One-on-one briefings of state and local public officials were conducted by ODOT staff and consultants several times during the study. The purpose of these briefings was to provide an update of the study progress so that the officials were aware of the study actions and decisions and could respond to their constituencies in a knowledgeable way about the study.

Public Hearing

A formal public hearing will be held at the end of a 30-day public comment period, following the completion of the draft Environmental Assessment. Notice of the hearing will be given to all those on the study mailing list. Legal notice of the hearing will be placed in study area media in compliance with federal regulations. Responses to all comments and questions raised at the hearing and requiring responses will be prepared. These responses will be included in the final Environmental Assessment. The final environmental document will be presented to

the Oklahoma Transportation Commission with the recommended preferred alternative stated. Upon the decision of the Commission about the preferred alternative, a Record of Decision will be issued.

Appendix
