

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

I-55 INTERCHANGE
AT E.H. CRUMP BOULEVARD
AND SOUTH RIVERSIDE DRIVE
MEMPHIS, SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

JUNE 1, 2015

3:30 P.M. TO 7:30 P.M.

WEST MEMPHIS CIVIC CENTER

228 WEST POLK

WEST MEMPHIS, ARKANSAS

Charlotte R. Jaquet, LCR, CCR

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NICHOLE LAWRENCE: We appreciate everyone being here. My name is Nichole Lawrence. I work for the Department of Transportation in Tennessee. I am the West Tennessee Community Relations Officer. On behalf of TDOT Commissioner John Schroer and Governor Haslam, we appreciate you taking the time to be here. I want to thank the Civic Center for allowing us to have the space here for tonight's meeting.

Our local officials, we have several in the audience. Senator Ingram; State Rep Milton Nicks; Robert Moery from Arkansas's governor's office; the Marion Chamber is here as well; Mayor Bill Johnson. Also from the City of West Memphis, Frank Martin. I'm sure there are other local officials that I have missed, but we appreciate your presence. Thank you. Mr. Woody Wheelless, thank you for being here. We appreciate your presence and taking the time. We know this is a busy time of the year.

I would like to introduce our team, TDOT's team. We have Steve Chipman. A

lot of you all know Steve. We have Jim Ozment. He's standing up here with me. Bob Allen and Carma Smith, they're in the back. Then Michael Welch and Brandon Akins, they're from our construction office. We also have representatives from our consultant team, from Gresham Smith, Younger Associates, and The Redwing Group, if they will just raise their hands.

If you sat in a seat with a piece of paper, it has room for a name and questions. If you will, for us to manage the flow of the Q and A session that we'll have after the presentation, go ahead and start filling out your questions. Fill out your name and question and we'll come around and take them up. Then we'll collectively go through the questions and answers together. If you have any questions throughout, you can just let one of us know along the wall during the presentation.

We have a short video that we're going to show before we kick off the presentation.

(Video presentation.)

(4:00 p.m. presentation)

JIM OZMENT: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We really appreciate you all coming out. Obviously we have a very good turnout tonight, so we know that there's a lot of interest in this project. My name is Jim Ozment. I'm the Director of the Environmental Division for the Tennessee Department of Transportation. I'm here tonight to provide an overview of what this project is about.

There are a lot reasons that we want to get out early and start talking to the community. Obviously the sooner people know about something like a closure, the longer you have to prepare for it. It's beneficial for businesses to be able to plan in this regard. Also, we want to hear from you about the impacts that are going to be caused by this, whether it be to your business or yourself personally.

We have a large team of engineers and construction contractors that look at

ways to minimize these impacts that might be occurring. You never know everything until you come and ask people, so one of the things we're for tonight is to get your comments. We've provided comment cards, handouts talking about some of this information. We have websites that are going to be available for you to use to take a survey. You can tell your friends who couldn't make it tonight. You can take some extra comment cards home for them so that they can also provide input if they weren't able to make it. We're also holding another meeting tonight at 6:00 o'clock. It will be basically a repeat of this presentation for people that get off work later. We're also going to hold one June 4th, this coming Thursday, in Memphis, again having presentations at 4:00 and 6:00 o'clock.

Let's move on. During the question and answer period, we have a court reporter with us over here to the right. If you don't want to fill out a card or anything, you can go over and give your

comments to her, and she will take everything down and it becomes part of the official record that way also. I think I've covered the other ones. You can also email us at tdot.comments@tn.gov. That's the last email address up there. I'm sure everybody by now probably understands what our project is about. It's mainly the realignment and reconstruction of the Crump and I-55 interchange across the river over here.

I-55, just a few facts about it. It was designed in the 1960s. The design came about when the traffic was 13,000 vehicles a day. It had a tight cloverleaf design that was standard for the time. Obviously today we don't construct interstates to this type of standard. This is still a major north-south interstate for the United States and it's very important. It's a corridor for both business and for commuter traffic. There's over 60,000 vehicles a day that are basically on 55. I-40 has around just over 30,000 on it.

In this particular instance, 26

percent of those that are on I-55 are trucks. That equals about 15,000 vehicles a day that are truck components. That could be large trucks. Actually, the mix of trucks turns out to be more medium-size trucks when you measure all of the ones that go through there.

Let's talk a little bit about what's wrong with the interchange because there has to be a purpose and need for us to be here to want to fix something. First of all, this design allowed for almost driveway or local road connections straight into the interstate system. If you all are familiar with both sides of the interstate in this particular area, you just can exit or pull right out of a city street and onto the interstate system itself. Interstates are usually controlled access so that you can only get on them through interchanges or ramps.

Crump Boulevard, the interstate basically just stops and turns into a street if you go straight or the city street just

turns into an interstate. Again, you don't see these types of elements in an interstate system design. As we've mentioned earlier, with this cloverleaf design, you have to slow down considerably to get through there. That causes congestion and backup. That congestion then turns into accidents. We have a very high crash rate at this location because of a lot of side-swipe and rear-end collisions during the congestion.

In this particular instance, both ramps going southbound and northbound are signed at 25 miles an hour. Again, interstates are not designed to be signed for a speed limit of 25. We know that at times it's a lot less than 25 on these ramps when they're in a congested situation. They're just not designed to carry the traffic that's there today at interstate speeds. That's the purpose of us trying to reconfigure this interchange.

We had several constraints that were put upon us in the construction and design of this project. We had worked for a

number of years to get something that fit with the neighborhood and minimize impact. Ultimately that's what we are in business to do. To the north lies the Harahan and CSX railroad tracks, so you really can't move your interstate very far north without coming into direct conflict with all of that.

You have parks and historic sites. Those are always also something you try to avoid. You have French Fort neighborhood, which is a well-established neighborhood in close proximity to the current interstate. Then, as the video said, you have the Hershey plant, which is a large community employer, on the opposite side. So it's difficult to move into their property without causing them concerns about how they operate.

So given all of those constraints, the Department ultimately came up with a design which you've seen a couple of times in the video. This would be a design which allows for free-flowing traffic on both north and southbound lanes, and it

separates the local street system from the interstate system by a series of ramps that then allow for you to bypass the interstate and get off without having those conflicts and problems.

Just to back up for a minute and let you know how we got to where we are, anytime you design a road, it does take a long time and a lot of planning. It starts with the planning phase and moves through environmental studies. After those are concluded where the impacts are evaluated, we move into design, to design engineers to work on these plans down to all the last details. Then we go out and we buy the right-of-way necessary to construct the project. Then we move into -- before we go to construction, we usually stop and do what's called a re-evaluation. We look back. The Environmental Division helps to look back and say, okay, we know what our initial thought was about impacts based on what our conceptual design was, but does that still hold true today. So that's what we did recently.

In addition to that, we hold sort of a preconstruction review. Obviously before you can take a project and put it out for contract and figure out how long it's going to take to build, a lot of people have to work on that within our department to figure out basically traffic management needs and what the detours would look like. Is there any way to further minimize construction impacts, like construction noise, and what kinds of things are going to happen, based on the way we believe the road would be constructed, to a nearby community.

Also, we needed to determine a schedule and a cost, because we needed to know how much money we would have, and we would need to know how long to put in the contract for somebody to finish the project, what we think the length of that ought to be. Then we look at a constructability review that says is there anything we haven't thought about, about the way it needs to be built. Does it need roads across the stream or does it need something else that we

haven't thought about.

So in this particular case, we have done all those things. The first thing that I guess we're going to talk about is the schedule. We concluded that it needed to be a three-year schedule. During that first year, we're going to do -- I've got each of them in phases where I'll talk about them in more detail in a minute.

The first phase is a lot of getting ready for what the second phase is, which you've already seen in the video is going to include up to a nine-month closure of the bridge to build some of the ramps. The third phase, you're back open, I-55 back open, and then the fourth phase would be finishing it all up. During that nine-month period, starting in 2017, probably March if we can time everything correctly, will be the start of the nine-month closure. If our planning goes like we think it's going to, we would probably send the project out to letting in December. Contractors would mobilize and start working next March, March

of '17. So we're ten months out right now from the first contractor showing up on the project, which is well in advance to provide notice and to let everyone get ready. During that phase, we're going to move after that to the closure phase. I'll go through each one of these. I probably should change slides.

I know everybody is thinking, well, can I-40 carry traffic from both bridges. I've already heard from a number of you tonight that say, you know, it's already congested and backed up. Putting all that traffic over there is going to be, in essence, a nightmare. We understand that. But I-40 is going to have -- all the construction should be cleared up. We've communicated with FHWA the Arkansas Highway Department, and we're coordinating our construction activities with them. Everyone is looking to clean up and clear up all of their construction activities that are causing you backups today and get the facility back up and open. I think probably it's a little hard to remember what it was

like when it was flowing freely.

It is a six-lane facility and a six-lane facility has a lot of capacity to carry cars. It clearly can carry 90,000 cars a day at a reasonable and effective rate. That's not a lot for a six-lane facility in some instances.

One of the things that we talk about is the level of service. I don't want to get into too many acronyms or anything, but obviously if you have a level of service that's free flowing, that's called A. It's an A to F kind of system. Each step progressively gets a little bit more congested. Predictions that have already been done by the engineering community and our traffic engineers basically say that it will run at level of service B in the morning and C in the afternoon, which is still not down to stop-and-go traffic levels once it's back and open and running without construction delay.

We also plan on clearing up and finishing our I-40/240 project over on the

east side of Memphis and getting that out of the way and anything else that we can do. We have a number of mitigation plans that we'll talk about as we go forward, in addition to the I-40.

This slide, I'm not sure how good it's going to show up today. You all got here for the early version which has more light coming in than we anticipated. I apologize for it being a little bit washed out there. What this shows is at least the four levels of service, A, B, C, and D, with each one being a little bit more congested than the other. But at this point the projections are that it will run at B and C in those particular conditions.

Now, in 2012, the green line you can see up here, a study was done that looked at the traffic flow patterns and how fast everything moved in 2012. It basically was operating at 55 miles an hour. Today it appears that it's operating at less than that, substantially at times, because mainly of construction. What we believe, once the

closure conditions happen, is that it will operate pretty well and at pretty high speeds up through here. We know when we get to that interchange that we have additional problems with one-lane ramps going southbound. So there's projects that will be place before the closure happens that will try to put both ramps, northbound and southbound, to two lanes in order to facilitate traffic movement and not cause a bottleneck there.

So let me talk a minute about the construction phase. In phase one, it's going to be open to all traffic, I-55 will be. There's going to be a lot of work that goes on. We're going to build noise walls for that neighborhood and try to have construction noise minimized during the three-year period. We're going to construct some of the temporary and permanent ramp work that we need to do. In essence, we're going to have some local roads that will have to be closed during this time, as we're moving things around and getting prepared.

During the second part of this

first year, maybe the last two to three months, we will move truck traffic off of I-55. So there will be a period, if you're a commuter, where you will be commuting through a situation without truck traffic in place. So that will be an improvement on your daily commute. That truck traffic will move to 40, so if you're commuting on 40, obviously you're going to pick that truck traffic.

If you're in a business, obviously the moving of the truck traffic impacts you more. That's the thing about this project. It has impacts at all levels. It has impacts that are very localized right around the area, kind of city-wide, and even regional as to how the traffic flow will affect you. That, again, depends upon whether you hardly ever go back and forth across the bridge, you commute every day, whether you're a business that depends on that, or you're a long-haul trucking company. Each one will have a different type of an impact. We're trying to deal with all of those and reach out to all of those

particular interests so that we can talk to them and understand their concerns.

We're going to, in that first year, do some regional improvements. If you can see the red dots, they're here, there, there, there, and down here. That one washed out pretty bad. I apologize for that. The first one is here in Arkansas. It's over here. We're going to install traffic lights at the intersection so that it improves traffic flow on and off the ramp system there and so there's not a backup. We feel like there will be a lot of cut-over traffic originally that comes from here and may come back up that way. We want to be sure there's free-flowing traffic in there.

There is a weigh station on 40 headed into Arkansas and on 55 headed into Arkansas. Without that weigh station on 55 in operation, all those trucks will be going through. The capacity is not there for that particular weigh station to handle. So we're actually going to enhance that and make it able to carry the additional truck traffic

through there. It's either going to be modifying or improving the weigh station. We're still working with Arkansas on how to do that exactly.

I know a lot of you are concerned about traffic and what will happen if there's a bad wreck on the bridge when there's only one bridge. Obviously that's a concern for us too. We've communicated a lot with emergency management agencies, both here and in Tennessee. One of the things we know we can do is we can put what we call a gate in the median barrier, the concrete barrier in the center of the interstate, that basically would slide open. If there was a wreck that blocked traffic and we knew it was going to stay blocked for an extended period of time, we'll be able to set up and open the gates on both ends and divert traffic over into the other side, put cones down the middle, and then run traffic both directions under reduced conditions. We will get it open and operating. It's almost the same thing as if you had one lane blocked and you were running

on one lane. If you had two lanes blocked, you would move over and run on one lane on the other side.

I've already mentioned that we were going to work on restriping the interchanges up here, the 40/240 interchange, but also down at the 55 interchange with 240. One of the things we think is going to be of significant benefit and help is the HELP truck system that we run in Memphis and in Tennessee in a lot of our major metropolitan areas. We will have HELP trucks out 24/7 during this entire period to keep vehicles off the road that may break down. They work really well for people who run out of gas, have a flat tire, car just quits, or something like that. They can get them to the side of the road, put blinkers on, keep traffic moving, and get them out of the travel lanes in a hurry. It improved service nationally where this is done, but certainly on the interstate systems within our network. We know that it works well to help keep those moving. Additional to that, we may also

engage wrecker services that will be standing by in case there is something that really needs to get off the road in a hurry. We'll have a service that can reach in there move faster than what you would normally think it might be if you just had to call a wrecker service. So we're going to have cameras. We'll patrol it. We're looking for all ways to keep it opening and moving and functioning as best we can during any condition that might happen.

In the unlikely event that it was closed in both lanes and you couldn't get across, emergency vehicles -- emergency management in Arkansas has expressed concerns about that -- we would leave 55 in a condition where they can get across. They would wind up having to come through a construction zone, but we would have enough gravel or whatever around where trucks are still going to be able to move. You can't run interstate traffic through there, but if an emergency vehicle needed to get across in a hurry, we still would be able to

accommodate them coming through the construction zone. They would just need to be led through there on a construction-type road.

So after we've done all that to try to get it ready for the closure comes the nine-month closure. I-55 will then be closed to traffic. Remember, the trucks were off and now all traffic is off. It's going to be diverted to 40. The closure is going to be for us to construct the I-55 southbound lanes. I know a lot of people are going to say, well, why do you have to close it in order to build this road; people build roads all the time and don't have to close. Well, if you can see the red line in the middle, that's about where the ramp is now that's the southbound lane for coming off of 55 and turning south. The four new lanes that are going to be constructed on top of that are going to be virtually in the exact same location. You can't build those bridges. It's too low through there. You can't work right on top of it because it's going to

replace it. So it has to be closed in order to build this. This is the segment that all the work will be concentrated on during that nine-month period to get in, quickly get out, and build that portion that's in direct conflict with anything else that we can do to have detours or some other type of method to keep things open.

What happens about the detours? Well, once the bridge is closed, 55 remains open all the way to Bridgeport Road, which is down in here. It's going to be open to that level. From that point on, it will be closed. Whenever you're a transportation agency, you have to mark the detour routes in accordance with standard protocols. So for us to divert the interstate, we have to show the interstate detour. The yellow line is the interstate detour. In essence, it says 40 would be the detour route. If you measure the distance between the junction at 55 and 240 here, it's 13 miles by way of I-40 and 11-1/2 miles by way of I-55. So from a mileage standpoint, it's not that much

difference for the detour route. Obviously with the congestion, that's a different matter. Your travel time is now what you're concerned with, not so much your distance.

What we obviously recognize is the fact that a lot of people, depending upon where you want to go, and a high percentage of the truck traffic and other traffic that's moving through are going at least to that point or further points south or east. So it's pass-through traffic or it's moving further out. Let me back up. If you're coming somewhere in here or in here, obviously that makes it a detour that you would probably not follow the marked detour on the interstate. Most people will find a way that they like best to get to work. It happens every time any kind of detour is in place. People kind of seek the way that's easiest for them to get there. That might include a lot of surface streets. We can't mark those as detours but we recognize that that's a phenomenon that happens. So we're going to work with the city of Memphis to

locate those particular streets and look to see if there's anything that needs to be done to help modernize those also at the same time. That was part of West Carolina, Third, Riverside, and Danny Thomas. We know at times we're going to have to use Florida and West Carolina for detours ourselves, so we will mark those during certain periods of that time for local detour routes.

We're past the construction phase. I-55 is back open again, but not to truck traffic. At this time, it's back open to cars. We've built the north and southbound traffic lanes all up and down that's above and below the points that we just looked at. We're going to connect it back to the roundabout and to the local street system. Phase four is kind of the final phase, and it's where we go through and we do the final paving and connect everything and finish up.

The benefits of this are obvious that we're going to improve -- we're going to separate that local road system from the

interstate system so there's no more conflicts between the two. Free-flowing traffic obviously moves much faster and much better than anything in the congested state that it's at today. If you're a commuter through there, I'm pretty sure that you have concerns with it today. You know how bad that situation is. That situation will not be occurring in the future. So while there's a time period for construction impacts, ultimately on the other side of this there's a much better and freely operating system than there would be today.

The roundabout improves the street system and it improves, obviously, the congestion. So our safety numbers will go up and crashes will go down. Ultimately, safety is one of the highest concerns for Tennessee Department of Transportation. We're always looking for ways to minimize crashes and things of that nature.

Going into this project, we have a few commitments to people that we've committed to in the process. One is we would

try to reduce noise impacts, and we've done that. Others are that we will continue to provide access to the French Fort neighborhood and historic properties, parks, The Metal Museum and all in there. They had certain routes that were marked for them. It will improve the visual appeal of the intersection, having a roundabout and a lot larger green area. We'll improve access between the neighborhoods and points east. There are a limited number of access points in and out at this point.

In summary, we're back to improving the safety and travel time. One thing that we want to stress tonight is that we have found no way to avoid the closure. While we're here to talk about the impacts of the closure, everybody might have an opinion tonight about how to avoid that, but this is not a meeting where we can stand up in a public forum and debate a design or how the design is put together. We'll be glad to talk about those at any time you want to and probably side conversations would be better.

we're here to tell you that everything has led us -- FHWA and everyone else that's looked at this project says there's no avoiding that closure. I-40 will be fully open. There will be no construction at this point when the closure occurs, so it will be more in a free-flowing condition. It does have the capacity to handle this at hopefully a level that is not nearly as bad as maybe what you're thinking it might be.

For contact information, the video said it. Steve Chipman is the project manager. Stand up, Steve. I want you all to be able to see Steve. Steve is in Jackson. He's our project manager and will be the point of contact for most of our comments. You can still email us. Your handout has other ways that we can be contacted. We would be glad for you to take the survey so that we can understand better what your concerns are, which is again the reason we're here tonight, one of the main reasons. We can hopefully in this ten-month period see if there's anything else that we can do to

minimize the impact.

with that, I'm going to turn it back to Nichole. Steve and I and any others here are going to take questions at this point. Thank you.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: If you have your sheet, pass them to the end.

we'll start with a question from Richard from Southland Park. Richard wants to know, "Are you going to shorten the detour to the shortest path, I-55 going into Riverside into I-40?"

JIM OZMENT: I think as I said originally, we're not able to officially mark a detour of the interstate through a city street. I believe that's what that question would be, are we going to move the interstate to Riverside. So, no, that would not be an official detour route for us.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: This is from Al Appling. He lives in West Memphis, Arkansas. His question is, "Have you considered the negative impact, or does it matter, this will have on Eastern Arkansas

and the number of jobs lost?" Did I ask that correct, Mr. Al?

JIM OZMENT: That is part of what we're doing now. I mentioned that we're doing construction re-evaluation. It's to determine and find out these types of impacts to see what we can do to minimize those. So we're in that process right now. We hope to do that through the summer. All of your comments and questions that come in are going to be part of that analysis where we look at what those impacts would be and try to figure out exactly what we might be able to do to overcome those. In essence, the study is not complete. The study is underway and this is part of that study.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The next question comes from Michael Strieder with German Auto Tech. "Over half of my customers come from Memphis and Mississippi. I'm afraid this will cause a traffic jam on the new bridge. As a result, I could lose over half of my business." I believe there's probably a question of where can they go,

what can they do?

STEVE CHIPMAN: One thing that we're going to be doing is a public involvement plan where we will be keeping the people informed, everyone involved in Mississippi and Arkansas. We know that this is going to take a lot of information, keeping all the travelers informed. We'll be having media releases. We'll be working through your local elected officials to get the information out ahead of time on closures or detours or anything that we know so you can be aware of the travel time. So that's an ongoing process throughout the whole project. We also will have a telephone number you can call. You can also use the app, the 5-1-1 app. It will help you with the traffic flow. We know it's going to take a lot of communication and keeping everybody informed.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The next question is from Joe Baker from Southaven, Mississippi. He wants to know the cost versus the benefit to include disruptions to

people doing business in West Memphis.

JIM OZMENT: I think that answer goes with saying we're in the middle of that study.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: This next question is from Anita Bell. She asks, "What about Arkansas? How come we are just now being informed about this? How many homes are being affected in French Fort?"

ATTENDEE: I think if we're going to have any constructive dialogue here, we need to have the ability to make longer statements than just indicated here. You know, there's a lot of things that you all have discussed, some of which are relevant and some of which are not very relevant. I don't think you're getting a feel, from the way you're handing the questions, of what kind of catastrophic impact this is going to have. You know, West Memphis doesn't even have a hospital now. I live in Mississippi, but I still come -- I've lived in Crittenden County for 25 years. I still come here to see my dentist, veterinarian, eye doctor,

CPA. My family has bought 20 cars from Ford of west Memphis. There are not any franchise dealers on the west side of Tennessee at all. The place where I buy my cars services a lot of corporate vehicles. Also, I lived in Japan a number of years ago. When they did construction projects, they rarely ever had more than a mile torn up at one time. You know, the Japanese are not back in the stone age. They know how to do things. When Eisenhower built the Interstate 55 system for us, most of what was done greatly improved or substantially improved what existed. Now we spend transportation dollars for bicycle paths and weeds in medians dedicated to the honor of veterans, which is an insult. We do a lot of things that are not necessary, building all these noise walls like you have in east Memphis. It's a substantial waste of money.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I appreciate your comments. What we had planned here is just to take questions first because of the amount of time we've got. Then after we have the

questions, we'll open up the floor for any comments. Out of respect to everybody here who does have comments, we'll try to limit it because of the time we have. I appreciate your comments and we'll address those.

ATTENDEE: Are those recorded?

STEVE CHIPMAN: The court reporter is right there.

ATTENDEE: Thank you.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We'll go back to what was asked. The reason why we're here now is because when we started the environmental process, we were looking about -- we were looking at an interchange modification, changing the interchange. At that time, we were just looking at the alternative routes that we would have as far as constructing a free-flowing system. Out of that came what design you saw tonight. We did not know about a closure until we got into the design level. Our structure division started looking at the structure and how to build it. Because of the curvature you've heard tonight about, the horizontal

clearances, and how tight it is in that area, a lot of the things we ran into was like maintaining a 50-mile-an-hour design. If you move too far to the south, you drop below 50 miles an hour. If you went above 50 miles an hour, you got into the railroad and Hershey's. The Hershey's impact would mean a lot of jobs in that area. We came up with the design we had to maintain a 50-mile-an-hour zone for an interstate system, free flowing. With the structure, because of the curvature of a steel structure, they told us it would be on the footprint of the existing facility. Our structure division is saying you're going to have to have some type of a closure just to build the interstate portion. So that's why we held a constructability review with contractors that do this kind of work, to give us an idea of what we're looking for on closure. That's how we came up with the nine-month closure. Once we did that, we said, okay, the closure will mean West Memphis, Arkansas -- what would be the impacts to West Memphis. So that's when we

got in touch with Arkansas, the transportation department and your local officials here, and started talking to them. That's where we are led to now, our study to find out how it is impacting the area. So that's where we are tonight and that's the reason why we got to this point and why it's late in the game. At first, we didn't see it as being a closure involved. We thought we could do it without the closure. When we got into the structure itself, the steel structure, we just couldn't do it. We've got it where we can close the southbound -- have the closure to build the southbound portion and then open it back up after nine months. We'll have traffic in the southbound to keep everything going through.

ATTENDEE: Will the impact on Arkansas ever be enough for you to cancel this deal? Because right now it sounds like Congress with Pelosi's idea of when to read the ObamaCare act.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I will have to look at the comments and information we

collect at the meeting.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: We're going to open up the floor as soon as we go through these questions, I promise. We need to keep your comments so that the court reporter can gather your name and comment. If you all would just bear with us, we'll go through the stack of questions that you all filled out, and then we'll open it up to you. Okay?

ATTENDEE: You haven't answered the last question that you read.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: He's working through these questions right now.

STEVE CHIPMAN: How many homes? There were about nine or ten homes that would have been impacted by the project, plus two businesses that would have been impacted. That was the minimum impact.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The next question is from Fire Chief Wayne Gately. "Will you have a contact person for emergency vehicles in case the new bridge is blocked and we need to get across the river?"

STEVE CHIPMAN: Yes. We're

coordinating with the ambulance authority over here. That's how we came up with the emergency plan. We had heard about the closure of the hospital over here. We were concerned, so we had one meeting with emergency responders and we'll be having more meetings with emergency responders throughout this process and keeping them informed. Them having us to be able to know how to communicate and keep the information to them.

ATTENDEE: Will that be 24/7 contact?

STEVE CHIPMAN: Yes, throughout and to the end of the project.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The next question is from Mr. Dennis West. "During the scope of this project will the I-55 bridge be seismically retrofitted? That is, will such protection be installed as has been on the I-40 Hernando de Soto Bridge?"

STEVE CHIPMAN: This project is not intended to make improvements to the bridge. From the recommendations from Arkansas Highway and Transportation, as part

of the structure division, TDOT structure division, they said that there are some repairs that we can do. We're going to do as many repairs as we possibly can during the closure. We haven't identified those yet. It wasn't intended to do anything to the bridge. That will have to be a separate project. Now that we've got the closure, there will be repairs made, but I haven't got the details on that yet. We'll share that with you.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The next question is from Mike Demster. "Why was no impact study done in Crittenden County?"

JIM OZMENT: As part of the environmental impact study process, the local project limits were what I showed in the very first slide, which Steve has said is the interchange. Obviously we did advertise in the papers. We advertised in West Memphis as well. Probably people at that time, because this was not being discussed, didn't see that much reason to have input into that particular situation. As far as this goes,

this is why we're here tonight. As things change, that's why there are re-evaluations, to go back and look and say, well, we didn't think about that, or we didn't tell the folks about that the first time. So now we're here to tell the public what we know. As plans develop, as new information becomes available, we certainly want to be transparent and open and come and share what we know and what we can do and what we can't do. That's our reason for being here tonight.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: This next question is from Jeff Pitchford. He is from Little Rock, Arkansas. "During construction will there be only changes in regulations concerning grain trucks and overloaded trucks on I-55 or when it's closed and on I-40 bridges? Was there an economic impact study on this project?" I believe that second one was answered.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We're constantly looking at the truck restrictions. That's more we've got to look at. When we talk

about truck restrictions, we're talking about large trucks. If you get down to one lane, it doesn't give much room for trucks to travel through there. For instance, there was a bridge that we had in West Tennessee I can remember traveling. This is before we replaced the bridge with a new bridge and it had narrow lanes like this. When they passed with the mirrors extending out, they caught the mirrors and the mirrors rolled back on top of the car. There's a risk associated there because of the tightness and narrowness of the lane. We'll have the truck restrictions for 18-wheelers like we're looking at. We'll just have to look at the regulations and restrictions and include them in the decision making on big trucks for detour signs and all. You keep in touch with us and we'll give you updates as we go along.

ATTENDEE: What about the economic impact study he requested?

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: We're going to swap speakers.

JIM OZMENT: Was there an

economic impact study done on the project? In the initial study, there is always an economic study. It's probably not to the levels which this one will be done, because these impacts weren't seen at that particular time. That's why this one is being much more focused on the closure impacts for the economic study.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: That's what we're doing here today.

ATTENDEE: What did he say? Yes or no?

JIM OZMENT: Was there an economic study? There would have been an economic study done. Part of the environmental impact study that was done in 2009 through '12 would have included an economic study. It did not cover --

ATTENDEE: You ought to know whether or not an impact study was done. If you did one, you should have given a copy of it.

JIM OZMENT: Well, we have the environmental impact study with us tonight.

we'll be glad to show it to you.

ATTENDEE: Economic.

JIM OZMENT: The economic study is part of the environmental impact study. It's one of the elements of an environmental impact study.

ATTENDEE: Did you provide that to anybody in Eastern Arkansas?

JIM OZMENT: It circulated widely through the entire process. We have a public involvement process where it's distributed and it's advertised, including nationally.

ATTENDEE: It never made it to City Hall in West Memphis.

JIM OZMENT: Okay.

ATTENDEE: What's the results of it? Have you got the figures?

JIM OZMENT: I can't lay my hands on it at this moment and read it to you, no. I'll be glad to show it to you here afterwards.

ATTENDEE: Why not send me a copy of it?

JIM OZMENT: I'll be glad to do

that as well.

ATTENDEE: Sir, it's apparent that we were not considered at all when this was done. Your study is incomplete and the whole process that you're going through is going to take a lot longer than you say. I've never seen construction open on time. I make trips to Memphis every day. I don't work. I'm considered an old lady. I'm in school. I attend church there. I have three children who work in Memphis, so you are talking about the livelihood of people who live here, and you don't care because you are getting your paycheck for standing up there and telling us something that's incorrect.

JIM OZMENT: I believe the question or comment is did we look at the economic impact in West Memphis of this project at the time we did the initial study. I just said to this level no, because we did not envision this type of an impact would occur. So we couldn't study an impact if we didn't recognize it. That's the reason that it wasn't considered. Now that we know that,

that's why we're back to reconvene and study it more, to determine about the impacts and what can be done about it.

ATTENDEE: But you've shown us a done deal on the screen. In other words, we're going to do this. We're just listening so you can tell us what you're going to do.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Our next question is from Dan Rinke from Collierville. He's asking about diverting truck traffic from Arkansas to President's Island, through the park or French Fort, and has that been given any consideration? Also improving access from I-55 north to President's island? And what are the dates the bridge will be closed?

STEVE CHIPMAN: For us in Tennessee, our detour routes will be the state route. We will have to look at the possibilities. We're saying that the truck detour will be I-40 all the way to McLemore. That's the truck route. As far as French Fort Historic District, we've always said that we would keep two access points open to

the French Fort neighborhood. That was for people accessing the neighborhood. You have some historic property there. You've got two parks. You've got The Metal Museum. There are also some nonprofit organizations that use the facilities to raise money. The other thing was the President's Island Association told us that was one of their emergency routes. If anything ever happened on President's Island, they would always come to the French Fort neighborhood. We agreed to have two access points the whole time during construction. You will have two access points. I'll show you where the detours are. If you will see me after this, I'll show you where the detours are. We will have detours. We will have signs. We will keep information out there. You will have my contact number. You can also watch for media releases, the website, and Facebook.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Our next one is from Quinton Simison. He wants to know about the management of the increased traffic on Martin Luther King Drive in West Memphis.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We've worked with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department and was talking about putting two signals in there to manage the traffic flow through that area. We're still working with your Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department on any kind of improvements to the area to be sure we can keep traffic moving. We're still in conversation with them. But as of right now, that's something we've identified and we're going to put temporary signals on the ramps to help traffic flow.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Also are there any plans to allow access to I-55 South at Mound City?

STEVE CHIPMAN: I'll have to look at that. I think what was identified to us was Martin Luther King was the one that everybody used. Mound City wasn't mentioned to us. If that's something we need to look at, please write it down. If you will, put a star by that and we'll look at it. That hasn't been mentioned to us about Mound City. If that's something we need to look at, we

will.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: He has two or three more on here. The improvements to I-40/240 intersection would need more lanes merging to I-40 and 240 North.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We're looking at that. That's something that we're going to make improvements to by adding striping for an extra lane there.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Also the addition of cross gates on I-40 on the Arkansas side at the levee and at the truck scales.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Our plan is to put a big gate there to help move traffic.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The agreement for Tennessee responders to access I-40 the wrong way for severe accidents.

STEVE CHIPMAN: That's to get our first responders in there. That's something that we'll work on with them. We've got to work out an agreement between the states. Our HELP trucks will be involved. One of the things we know is very important is for what

is called a clear zone, clear out an accident. We'll be working with the state police, the highway patrol, and first responders to access that.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Also the signage on I-40 to direct to Bridgeport Road?

STEVE CHIPMAN: That's another thing that's important, the signage. If you think of anything that we might have overlooked as far as signage, please let us know. That's something that we've committed to.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Ms. Stephanie Day wants to know whose idea this was.

STEVE CHIPMAN: That's a good question. I started on this project when it was at the environmental stage and planning phase. I always wondered who designed an interchange that would intersect with a street. When I was in a meeting, after being in a meeting one time giving a presentation on this project, there was an engineer there. He said, "I worked on that." I said, "Well, what happened?" He said, "Well, we ran out

of money, so we just connected it and went on." Back then, the design fit because it was only 13,000 cars a day. This is because of a money crunch that we've always faced and the cost of it. It's just been something that's been pushed aside. So we finally made a decision to go ahead study it and work toward coming up with improvements to the interchange, because it wasn't going to get any better; it would only get worse. Whose idea it was, it was the public, elected officials, and transportation department looking at the need there.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: She also wants to know about building another bridge.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Well, the first thing that would solve that problem would be if you could come up with \$1 billion to do it. We were looking -- I know there were a lot of questions about a new bridge. We were looking at a new bridge study. The time it takes to do that, it would be several years before you would ever see the construction of it. You would be talking about over \$1

billion. In the environment we're in now with money available, it's just not there.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The actual closure is not until 2017. Will the first phase affect the traffic?

STEVE CHIPMAN: The only traffic that will be affected in the first phase will be the truck traffic. Later on the in first phase, as you saw on the video -- well, I'll have to show you the detour. The first phase will be moving traffic, northbound traffic, from I-55 onto the southbound. We will keep two lanes in each direction. The decision would be to move the truck traffic onto I-40 because of the safety factor of traveling through the bridge area on that southbound. As far as everything else, car traffic and smaller trucks will be continuing on I-55 until the closure in March of 2017. Then you will be back on I-55 in a free-flowing system. In the later part of 2017, what you're going to be is you're going to be at a faster speed than you are now. Right now, you're at five miles at hour. You'll be up

to 20 miles to 30 miles an hour. You're going to be going at a faster speed. Truck traffic will be detoured during that time.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Eddie Brawley, "With the expansion of the northbound 360-degree ramp to two lanes working well enough that backed up northbound have been eliminated, why not expand the southbound ramps at grade to two lanes with free flow southbound on I-55 and Riverside; southbound traffic merging with the I-55 traffic, rather than as it now requires I-55 traffic merging with southbound Riverside traffic? This would not require the proposed bridges and would save \$40 to \$50 million dollars."

STEVE CHIPMAN: Eddie, I'll answer your question. The improvements that we make on the north side is a problem. You've still got trucks coming through there having to still go -- they've got two lanes coming through the ramp, but when you get to the top to continue on I-55, they've got to merge over to one lane to continue on. We're seeing things that happen now. That was

built to kind of help relieve congestion until we got this project built. You've still got connection to Crump, Riverside, French Fort neighborhood. There are still a lot problems. As far as making it what it needs to be, this is what it needs to be, a free-flowing system to meet future demand for traffic where you've got 80,000. In 2035, I think it will be over 80,000 average cars a day. So to meet the facility needs, if you go ahead and do it so we won't have to be back here years later, it's doing it now and doing what we need to do to build you a facility that will meet the future needs of traffic through this area.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Mr. Walt Babineau. "Will I-69 projects open up during this project? What will be the impact?"

STEVE CHIPMAN: Right now, there's no money and that's all throughout the whole corridor across the United States. Tennessee has 65 miles of new construction, so there's not any money. We're going on. We're trying to do projects like this that

are much needed and can be done now.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Mr. John Wintermantel. "Were public hearings held before the planning stages? If so, when and how were they communicated?"

STEVE CHIPMAN: Whenever we're in the planning stage, it's just to develop a corridor or interchange. I know during the meeting there were several people that asked questions on why aren't you addressing the bridge problem. That would be a different project. It would increase the cost of the project. With the money situation like it's been, we're just trying to get something done like the interchange. At the time we were looking at it, we were seeing what options we could come up with on a free-flowing system. So we did have meetings over in Memphis, several meetings. We advertised them. At the time, you probably may not have thought much about it because it was talking about the interchange and not the bridge. The interchange was to be designed as a free-flowing system. At the time, that's what we

were looking at, the direct impacts to the neighborhood and to businesses in the area. So we've identified the direct impacts just from what we saw in the project. So then, once we got down to a coordinated effort between TDOT, the community, the business community, and with the Federal Highway Administration, we came up with this design we've got. So then we found out about the bridge. When you have a defined design, then your structure division starts looking at how to build the structures. That's when detail work gets started. So we got to looking at details, that's when they came to us and said, "we don't see how you're going to be able to do this without some type of closure." That's when we started identifying, at that point, what does that mean. The closure stretches beyond the neighborhood. It stretches across the river. We understand Hershey's said 30 percent of their employees are from west Memphis. I know on President's Island, they've already said they have about 2,500 workers on the

island, maybe it's a little more than that. So you start looking at it. During the process, you find out the hospital is closed here, so how does this impact that. That's when we started reaching out. That's what this is about tonight. We're not here to -- we're here to hear your comments. We're trying to see how it impacts you, trying to measure it. That's where we are. Until we get all this information -- you know, it helps us to understand more on what we can do to make this project work. So that's where we are.

ATTENDEE: Steve, let me just ask you while you're on that point. There's a difference between a public hearing, correct, and public information. Normally, the process has always been there are public hearings during the design phase. Nobody here -- I think that's one of the great things. I mean, obviously you consulted French Fort and their neighborhood in the design phase. We don't even know what options were available. For instance, we met

in December and you said the two options at that time were to close the bridge for three years or close it for -- now we're down to nine months for vehicle traffic; 18 months for truck traffic. We don't even know what the options were to start with. I think that's a problem in that I don't -- did you all follow FHWA guidelines on how you all went about in public hearings -- not public information -- in the design phase?

STEVE CHIPMAN: In the design phase, we have public information meetings; it's not a hearing. Hearings are in the NEPA process. In the design phase, it's what we call an informational meeting. We invite the public. It's advertised.

ATTENDEE: But it's already designed.

STEVE CHIPMAN: At that time, we did not have the bridge structures. The bridge structures we don't have until well after we get into the right-of-way phase, and that's where we were at when found this out. We don't have the bridge structures.

ATTENDEE: But, Steve, you all were looking back in 2008 and 2009 on the flyover for 40. It was understood there were going to be bridge structures and a flyover on 55. I mean, that doesn't really hold water.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Well, that's different from this situation here. We knew about those structures. We knew the structures. We started working the structures in design. In this situation, we didn't know or have the structure information in the design phase. We had information that goes into the right-of-way phase. Then structure starts looking at it. There was no right-of-way -- we started working with the bridge. The closure wasn't because of the constraint. The closure was a little bit different. The lane handling traffic now is through an area on an existing facility, so we did some lane closures. This one here is because the footprint is on top of I-55, the flow of I-55. Even the other options that we have is like -- the gentleman in your

community here, Ed Cain, he worked for Parsons. He said -- we were still having the dialogue. The structure would have to be on the existing footprint. We didn't know until we got on into the right-of-way phase, and that's when structure came to us. That's just what happened. At the time we designed it, we did not have that information on the structure, as what they're saying, that we would have to close it.

ATTENDEE: Steve, in December, Eddie Brawley and I were at a meeting and you had structures then. The concern at that point, quite honestly, that was driving it -- help me, Eddie, if I forget. You didn't want to have traffic moved on and off. You had talked about 12 to 13 different movements of having shut-down sections as you moved them in short increments, that you didn't want to do that. But there was an option to do that. We were told at that time that it was going to take 36 months to do that, but one lane would be open on the bridge at all times for 36 months. So that was as late as December.

I don't know when this change -- you're presenting to us that there's no other options. That's the way I'm taking it.

STEVE CHIPMAN: You're right. We came to you in that time span. We were looking to see how we could build and maintain traffic on that system. We were looking at if there was a possibility to move traffic and build one lane at a time, you're right. During that same time, our structure division was looking at it. They were trying to look at all possibilities. They did not, at that time, have all their studies completed to give us that information. It was after that when they came back to us and informed us saying that they didn't see how we could build this without some closure. They couldn't estimate how much the closure time would be. That section of interstate couldn't be built without some closure. So that's when we had to switch and say, well, there's going to have to be some closure.

ATTENDEE: You considered Memphis and you had them in on it. Did anybody

extend an invitation to West Memphis to hear what you guys have to say?

STEVE CHIPMAN: We advertised in the paper for the meetings. All I can say right now is that during that phase we advertised in the community, in the community paper, and it was on the local news network. We do our best and we try to reach out to the community. In this case here, the community has a direct impact. They knew it was right there. Their association reached out to us. We started reaching out to them. We reached out to local officials. You know, all I can say is we made an effort, and we try our best to reach out. It's advertised. It was advertised in the paper and on the news media. I don't know how come anyone in West Memphis didn't respond. Whenever you talk about a bridge, you get more response than you do if you say interchange. Back then, we did have comments from people asking about repairs to the bridge. We said no, it was just for the interchange. At that time, we gave information on what we had, as far as

what the project characteristics were, and that's what we shared. So the direct impacts were to the neighborhood. They kept staying in touch with us, and we worked to try to identify those direct impacts to the neighborhood and to the historic property. It wasn't until we got into -- like I said, until the structure division started looking at the steel structure. You're just going to have to do the closure; that's what they've told us. We're going based on what they've told us. They're the experts. We will try to do everything we can to minimize this. We're still trying to look at everything we can. Our goal is to minimize the impact and maximize the safety for you.

ATTENDEE: Were our city officials aware of that meeting?

STEVE CHIPMAN: If you want to know that, just give it to us in a comment and we'll research it back. For me to answer that, I don't know. That's been water under the bridge for me. There were a lot of people that signed in. We've got who

attended the meetings.

JOHN WINTERMANTEL: My name is John Wintermantel. I work at Southland Park Gaming & Racing. My question is who from the local community in Arkansas was involved in the actual decision to close the bridge?

STEVE CHIPMAN: We never had any comment response on the project from West Memphis. We advertised it. You know, we went forward with what information we had in the process. To answer your question, I never did have anybody respond.

JOHN WINTERMANTEL: Well, sir, obviously there were people who were invited to those discussions or those meetings. Was no one from Arkansas invited to those meetings?

STEVE CHIPMAN: Which meetings are you talking about? In the NEPA phase?

JOHN WINTERMANTEL: The closure.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Closing the bridge, this is what we've started doing. Here's what happened. When we started -- when we found out about the closure, our

protocol is that we work through your Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, because they're overseeing this and they're responsible for transportation decisions in your state. We work with them. We made contact with them, and then we started to talk to them. When we did the closure study, that information was given to your local MPO. I came over here to the local MPO to answer some questions there. That was when we started gathering some concerns of west Memphis, trying to figure out who we needed to reach out to. That's what got us to this point now, trying to find out -- to get your input on how we need to communicate this to you and get your comments. That's where we are today. We're taking your comments. The closure decision was made whenever the structure division told us that we couldn't do it without a closure.

ATTENDEE: When was that?

STEVE CHIPMAN: I would have to go back and look at the date on that. That was the last part of 2014.

ATTENDEE: The bridge is going to close; correct?

STEVE CHIPMAN: Right now, the only way we can build this project is to have a closure, yes.

ATTENDEE: And you say you're doing studies currently?

STEVE CHIPMAN: The study is economic impact. That's what we're doing.

ATTENDEE: Why, if it's already going to be closed?

STEVE CHIPMAN: Well, first of all, we want to see if there are any economic impacts. I know you laugh about that and say it's common sense, but what happens is for us to do this, we have to come up with documentation to say what it is. That's what we're trying to do. With your help, we can define it. To say that you're going to lose a million dollars, well, how do you know you're going to lose a million dollars and what do you base it off of? I mean that's information. That's why we're here tonight. Tell us how is it going to affect you. We

just want to know more about how you see that. Is there something that we can do on this project to mitigate that, reduce that. We're just trying to gather information to see how we can -- what we can do to help out.

ATTENDEE: That's your job.

STEVE CHIPMAN: That's what I'm doing.

THULA THOMAS: I'm Thula Thomas. I'm one of the local realtors here in East Arkansas. My question is what is the economic impact on the area of French Fort versus East Arkansas?

STEVE CHIPMAN: You're talking about the economic impact of French Fort neighborhood. It's going to disrupt the neighborhood that's been there for years. It's got dependency upon each other for assistance. Eight to ten homes was going to have to relocate. Like I said, at the time, the bridge closure was not -- we didn't know about it. Now that's what we're doing. We're coming to you to help us gather information.

THULA THOMAS: So you don't have the specifics on the economic impact that it's going to have on Crittenden County?

STEVE CHIPMAN: That's what we're saying, that's what we're doing.

THULA THOMAS: You are going to assassinate our economy. What I said was that they have not considered the economic impact that it's going to have on the people of Crittenden County. I also said that what you all are proposing would actually assassinate our economy here. I asked a question before but it got thrown in the trash can. Did you all consider a TSM? Isn't that what you all do? You all have a system put in place, a system management, that you look at the alternatives for doing one thing versus another. That's what I read about you all. What's your alternative to not closing the bridge as opposed to closing it.

JIM OZMENT: There were several questions like that.

STEVE CHIPMAN: The alternative

not to close the bridge right now is -- to build this project, we have to do a closure. We still have to close to construct this portion. That's what we've been told. It has to be closed to build this. So the alternative is if you don't build it, you're not solving the problem.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: You have five more minutes.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We have five more minutes. I'll be here. I'll take on any of your questions. We need to get ready for the next session at 6:00 o'clock.

DON BELL: My name is Don Bell. I live here. I've lived here all my life. I'm in real estate and I have also done other things. I think I need to correct one misunderstanding. You keep talking about the economy of West Memphis. There's people that work in Memphis from Helena, Forrest City, Wynne, Marked Tree, Blytheville. It's not just West Memphis. You have people from all over that drive back and forth every day to Memphis, as long as 60 miles or further.

This is going to have an impact not only on this little area, but on Eastern Arkansas as a whole.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Thank you. Thank you for your comments. Thank you for your attendance.

STEFANIE DOSTAL: My name is Stefanie Dostal. I own a pool service with my husband here. We are a small business. We spent about \$200,000 over in Memphis for supplies last year. Our supplier won't deliver to us. When the bridge is closed, we will have to drive to Little Rock to buy the supplies. They will also not deliver to Forrest City or Jonesboro during that time. So when you're asking about the impact, if you give me enough time, I could figure out the gas and labor for driving to Little Rock versus Memphis, or them delivering to us. It's a big impact on us. Also, we service the French Fort neighborhood because no pool company in Memphis will. We won't be doing that either. So there are lots of people that are impacted.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Thank you for your comments. I'll be here.

HUDSON HALLUM: My name is Hudson Hallum. I'm with Crittenden Emergency Medical Services. I think most people directed their questions at economic development, but my question regards emergency services and healthcare. It was said earlier in the meeting that you all consulted with the ambulance authority. I'm the largest provider of EMS in this part of this area, and I've talked to the other provider back here also. No one has consulted with us. We have a concern about the planning that involves us and how we're to get back and forth to Memphis with emergency patients, considering having no hospital and our emergency healthcare system right now.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I've got the names of the ones that were represented. We were reaching out and trying to find out who we needed to talk to about the hospital. They gave us two names. One was the chief

with the fire department. In the last couple of weeks, we found out more. You're going to be involved in the next round of talks to emergency management. We reached out and some locals gave us the contacts, and that's what we did. Thank you.

ATTENDEE: What is it going to take for us to get a better option on this bridge closure?

STEVE CHIPMAN: We've done everything we can to study it and to talk to experts. If you can, provide us other information. It's for public safety.

JIM OZMENT: I think that's it. Thank you for coming. We'll be glad to take more of your questions individually. We have people station around the room at the boards. Thank you.

(Conclusion of 4:00 p.m. session.)

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: We appreciate you taking time to be here. My name is Nichole Lawrence. I'm with the Tennessee Department of Transportation. I work for the

West Tennessee side. On behalf of Governor Haslam and Tennessee Department of Transportation Commissioner John Schroer, we appreciate you being here. You will see some sheets in your seats for your name and questions. We'll take them up during the course of the presentation. First, we're going to start with a video. If there are any elected officials here for the second portion of the presentation, we appreciate you being here. Thank you.

(Video presentation.)

(Presentation by Jim Ozment repeated for 6:00 p.m. session.)

JAMES HUDSON: My name is James Hudson. I live in Marion, Arkansas. On the third of November, 2014, we had a surprise storm to come through where both bridges were closed a very long time. I heard you say that it's a possibility you will be able to bring emergency traffic through on I-55. The concern that I have right now is how do you handle an accident or if there's ice and the

bridge is closed, as it was this last November for about two or three hours. That's my concern.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We know that's going to be a concern, so we're going to have to take extra measures. That means we're going to have to be watching the weather. Our construction office on this project will be involved. We know we're going to have to have watch that. We're going to keep you informed. We're going to use every means we've got, newspaper, website, media releases, contacting you to give you updates to keep you informed as far as what's happening in the construction phase, on traffic conditions. In threatening weather like that, we know we're going to have to work with Arkansas. I think on both sides we're going to have to be working together to keep this open. It's going to be a partnership with them. It's going to be a partnership with our involvement on this side and with our HELP trucks too, which is a big part of things like that. They can be out

there helping traffic and monitoring places that might be threatening, situations like ice patches and things. We know we're going to do a good job with that. That's what our commitment is. During this construction phase, we're going to be doing everything we can to keep you informed and keep you safe and keep traffic moving safely.

JIM OZMENT: I have a question here about the estimated cost of the project. I believe it's \$57 million, the estimated cost. This asks if the cost is to be paid by bonds or taxes. Tennessee has a pay-as-you-go system. We collect revenues from both state gas tax and federal gas tax. We get money from the federal government to fund lots of our construction projects. This is an 80/20-federal/state funded project. In essence, it comes off of gas taxes that are refunded to each of the states across the nation from the national gas tax.

ATTENDEE: That was my question. I mean, the infrastructure is so bad in Memphis. What about the potholes? Before

you start all that, fix the potholes.

JIM OZMENT: I can say that we're working on that pretty constantly from the time they occur on. I know it's probably never soon enough. In essence, that's part of our ongoing maintenance issues. You're correct that the infrastructure costs are not where we want them -- infrastructure funding is now where we would like for it to be. Just recently, as of yesterday or the day before, Congress passed a two-month continuing resolution to keep transportation funding in America moving. They used to do it in six-year increments so that you could plan projects and know with consistency that you had funding. In this particular case, they're kind of moving at two-month increments or six-month increments, one-year increments. So that creates a bit of a problem for us as well.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Bobbi Jones asked if we have an example of the ad that ran informing the public of the meetings that we held and a list of the publications in

which it ran? That is something that we're not going to know off the top of our heads. We're going to have to look into that. We'll get that information to you. We'll get your email address or something.

Your second question was, "What are your next steps to determine the impacts to this community? Will there be a fact finding process formally with the city, county, and local businesses? If so, when?"

JIM OZMENT: Well, that's exactly what we're in right now. As I said, there was a process that started as early as 2008 where we were doing environmental impact studies and reaching out with public hearings. This is a recent development. This past December of January is when we actually came to the realization that the closure was necessary. At that point is when we started to do our re-evaluation at the same time for the construction, which we always do. That's what this is for. We're here to gather input and understand what these impacts are. That's what we do in an

Environmental Impact Statement anyway. We're here to do that and collect that information and see if we can find additional ways to avoid or minimize the impact that would be caused by that particular project.

ATTENDEE: What I was looking for -- I get that here, but a lot of the people in this room aren't going to be able to view those numbers. What's the next step to collect those numbers to understand what the economic impact is going to be to the community?

JIM OZMENT: We have a consulting firm that we have hired that is doing the economic analysis and socioeconomic study, as well as the re-evaluation with us right now. Part of that is a wide outreach to many stakeholders from, as I mentioned earlier, businesses, trucking, rail, all types of industries, to see how this would affect them. Then it moves to the community level. We're gathering information from them and we're holding public hearings. We're doing it at multiple levels to try to get input

from each of those parties and stakeholders that might be impacted by this. We're hoping to wrap that up by the end of August so that we'll know and have a way to take all these comments that will go into the public record. Your comments will be part of the public record. We have to go through and basically look at and analyze them. We'll group them. A lot of you had the same question tonight, so it will group into those. We will continue to try to evaluate those impacts. At that point, we have to turn that in to the Federal Highway Administration. They review our document as to whether they believe it sufficiently analyzes the impact or not.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Conley Ferguson said, "You said that the six lanes could handle the 90,000 traffic flow. What is the estimated capacity it can handle?"

HOLLIS LOVEDAY: The short answer to that question is about 120,000. So I-40 operating with six lanes would have the ability to absorb the traffic on I-55 plus the traffic that's already on I-40 and still

have reserve capacity beyond what is expected to be projected on the road with the closure of I-55.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Mike Waddell, "The I-40 bridge is six lanes, but each direction goes down to two lanes on the east end for westbound and eastbound traffic. That will be a bottleneck in each direction. What are we going to do about that?"

HOLLIS LOVEDAY: That is true. There is enough traffic that drops off at that particular place. I think that's Riverside Drive. Because of what drops off at Riverside Drive, that road, even at two lanes in each direction, should be able to handle the traffic because of the reduction at Riverside Drive.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Kevin Waller asked, "Are weather delays and/or construction delays figured into the time estimate?"

STEVE CHIPMAN: Yes.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: Joyce Demster, "The bridge has an F rating, which to my

understanding, the Department (Federal) of Transportation can close the bridge at any time. When will TDOT address this issue and why not address this before beginning at project for the roundabout? safety for those who cross the bridge should come first."

STEVE CHIPMAN: I was trying to find out information on an F rating. We don't use F rating for bridges.

JOYCE DEMSTER: That's what was presented on the news. They said it was like the worst rating.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I don't know where they got that.

NICHOLE LAWRENCE: The bridge is actually rated deficient. Is that the proper term I'm using? Structurally deficient, which is passable, driveable, crossable.

STEVE CHIPMAN: According to the information that I've been getting from structure, it doesn't mean it requires closure for repair work. Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department does an inspection on the bridge and we administrate

repair work. In this case here, when this closure happens, each department has stated this would be a good time to do repairs on the bridge, so we're going to do that.

JOYCE DEMSTER: So it will be addressed? Even our officials over here have said it has an F rating.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I don't know about that. I only know about experience with our department. What we're going to do is do the repair work as much as possible within the closure. We don't want to delay the closure, so it will happen during that time. We'll also take steps where the contractor on the project will be handling that too, so we can also maintain traffic and make sure that traffic is being controlled. The project won't cause any delay for the time of closure on that.

JIM OZMENT: I just want to follow up a little bit on that. When they're talking about that. When they're talking about the deficiencies of the bridges, sometimes they say they're structurally

deficient. That doesn't mean that they're falling in deficient. What it means is it's too narrow for the traffic that goes across it. Because it's a truss bridge, maybe the height of vehicle that you can get onto it is limited. That's how it becomes structurally deficient instead of, you know, it's missing something. It can't miss something. We would close it if that happened.

STEVE CHIPMAN: I did get confirmation. We don't use a letter system to grade bridges. I don't know where that came from. TDOT doesn't rate them like that.

JIM OZMENT: The next question is from Trena Smith. It says, "Has the analysis on travel time been done to include those traveling to Southaven?" There's a model that's used in Memphis and West Memphis that's called the travel demand model. It looks at travel all across. You can kind of change those numbers in that model to get different answers to your questions. We have done the analysis that talks about the system. To Southaven specifically, I can't

say. As you saw, a lot of the traffic is moving all the way out of the state, either it goes 40/240 or goes on out 40 to the east. It goes down toward the airport and continues on. I don't actually have a travel time. We can look afterwards. I think that's all of our written questions. Does someone have a question you want to ask?

CONLEY FERGUSON: I'm Conley Ferguson with Southland Park. I wanted to direct my question to you. One of the comments you made earlier was that with the capacity being 120,000 where it goes down to the two lanes, people will be getting off on Riverside and that will help counter some of that. Are you considering that the majority of people who are going to cross the old bridge don't take Riverside?

HOLLIS LOVEDAY: I'm Hollis Loveday with CDM Smith, one of the consultants on the project. That's a good question. There is a lot of traffic that gets off at Riverside Drive. There's a lot that gets on Riverside Drive going to the

east. For sure, that section of road that's two lanes in each direction is the pinch point for capacity. Our analysis is suggesting that it is still capable of handling the additional traffic that's generated from I-55. There's just enough traffic getting off at Riverside drive to make that feasible. We believe it's still going to work at the level of service that we were mentioning before. That section of I-40, the four-lane section of I-40 would not have the capacity of 120,000.

JIM OZMENT: The capacity was 120,000, and I think the projection with the closure is 90,000. So it's not going to reach capacity.

ATTENDEE: When you say "getting off at Riverside," are you talking about the new bridge or the old bridge? Have you driven that? I drive it every day and nobody gets off at Riverside. Everybody is going to east Memphis or they're going towards the Madison exit, the Jackson, Mississippi exit. That's my question. As you stated earlier,

that's where your bottleneck gets, especially at rush hour. They decide they're going to head east or take that way to 240 towards Millington or they're going towards Jackson, Mississippi. It's that one lane right next to the Madison exit. If you've gone that way at any kind of busy time between 4:00 in the afternoon or 7:00 at night, it backs up and you're backed all the way up almost to St. Jude or past St. Jude, trying to get to east Memphis. I live in Southaven. I don't take that route because I know the traffic is bad. I take the south route and go around. I'm just asking. I've been driving it for eight years from Southaven, and nobody gets off at Riverside. They just don't.

JIM OZMENT: I'm sure that was based on traffic counts actually of what goes on and off. I certainly respect that that's your driving experience. That's a lot of what we want to hear tonight. We believe that all of our numbers are based in that we've actually had counts of what's going on there and no kind of just projections. The

projections come when it says, well, how many people would now do something different? We do believe that would pick up, that Riverside traffic would pick up if 55 is closed. The people that want to go to the south that are now forced onto 40 are going to immediately, at one of the first two or three streets, try to make their way back south if they don't follow the detour all the way around.

ATTENDEE: Now you have traffic with Bass Pro that you're going to have to compete with too. That's something to think about.

JIM OZMENT: Would you like to come forward and state your name? We'll get to the next question. Thank you.

TAMMY ALLEN: My name is Tammy Allen. I live in Crawfordsville, but my husband travels the bridge every day. Riverside Drive closes every year for a month, and nobody uses it because of that, number one. Number two, nobody is going to Riverside because there's nothing on it. That's a problem. The other thing is the

bottleneck that they're talking about coming and going on the new bridge is going to back up on our city streets. I work on Broadway. If there is a problem with the construction, it is truck-to-truck/car-to-car backed up and stopped in front of my office. I watch it. It's horrible. So if you shut the bridge down and it gets bottlenecked, every car figures out Broadway and the service road. I have a friend of mine that tries to get on the service road now because of the construction. She can't because of the wall-to-wall traffic. They're coming down the service road to avoid the construction on what is now the interstate. It's going to be the same aspect when they close that bridge. Our city streets are going to be destroyed by all the traffic. Is TDOT going to reimburse the City of West Memphis for all this traffic that's going to come across it, because it's going to be potholes like she was talking about in the city of Memphis. The other issue my husband brought up is, if you find Indian remains where you dig at -- which I

know you're not going to know what you're going to find until you get there -- that's going to push the project back even more in time because you've got to notify the Native Americans. I agree that they need to have their rights if there is something found. There is no way to know how long that is going to keep the bridge closed.

JIM OZMENT: We already have done an archeological study of the area over there and we did find things. We coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Office. Thus far, what we have found has been deemed either outside of our project limits or of such a small nature that it's not rising to the level of being historically significant. Now, you're absolutely right if for some reason we put a shovel way too deep that we weren't able to get to under the road, but most of that is believed to be previously disturbed and should not cause any significant delays, hopefully. As far as the city streets go, Riverside obviously is closed for Memphis in May. That would be

something that would probably continue. I'm not sure we've actually communicated or discussed that with mayor's office.

ATTENDEE: It's not just Riverside. It's Riverside and Front Street.

JIM OZMENT: Riverside and First.

ATTENDEE: Front Street.

STEVE CHIPMAN: We are aware of that. We know that it is closed for the month. They've used the same detour that we have on the project. We're in discussions with them about that. One more question.

JAMES TYLER: My name is James Tyler. My concern was did TDOT do a study that says Memphis is a major distribution center and you have major trucking companies there. I-40 and 55 were major trucking routes east and west. Did they look that one bridge cannot handle all that trucking traffic? That's why you have two bridges. I was just wondering how is it going to handle all that traffic with one bridge. Then you may have inclement weather, especially in the wintertime. It's going to be total gridlock.

We see what happens when there's an accident. You know, if it's two tractor-trailer rigs or whatever with one bridge, I don't see how that's going to be feasible at all. It's just a citizen concern.

HOLLIS LOVEDAY: Thank you for the question. We mentioned that I-55 has about 25 percent trucks. I think that's already been mentioned. We know there is a large percent of trucks on I-55. Those trucks would be transferred over to I-40, mixing in with the existing trucks. In our analysis, we believe that there is additional capacity to absorb the additional traffic from I-55, even the truck traffic. So there is some wiggle room there, if you will, to accommodate that additional truck traffic during the time of the closure. I forget if there was another part of that question. Oh, yeah, that the accident issue is extremely critical. TDOT will go to significant measures to move accidents out of the way as quickly as possible. They will be developing a plan to handle accidents when they occur.

We are well aware that you have to keep all six of those lanes open on I-40 as much as possible and clear accidents out and get that back to normal as quickly as possible.

JIM OZMENT: If you will recall, one of the earlier questions was what's the capacity of I-40. I believe the average capacity for it was 120,000. Today's traffic numbers have it at about 32,000, so it is significantly underutilized as far as its carrying capacity. I know on days where there is construction it's considerably different. If there's a major wreck like the gentleman mentioned where two trucks -- where you have two semis in there --

ATTENDEE: There's no way that 120,000 vehicles can go on two lanes, a two-lane roadway.

JIM OZMENT: The 120,000 was the carrying capacity of the six lanes.

ATTENDEE: I know it, but it goes down to two lanes.

JIM OZMENT: It goes from three to two eastbound.

ATTENDEE: That will not handle 120,000.

JIM OZMENT: Three to two, back to four, back to three. Then if you recall, part of the presentation showed that we recognize the southbound lanes at the 40/240 interchange were one lane south. We're going to move that to two so that we don't have a constriction point in there as well.

HOLLIS LOVEDAY: You bring up a good point. Let me explain this. When we do our traffic analysis, we're not dealing with daily traffic volumes. At 2:00 in the morning, there is traffic on the road but the road is flowing very freely and there's not a problem. We're doing our traffic analysis based on peak hour traffic volumes. The numbers that we're talking about are the peak volumes which people seem to understand more so than the daily volumes. All analysis is based on the peak hours, the morning peak hour and the afternoon peak hour. Our analysis has said that even those two lanes in each direction on I-40 just east of

Riverside is capable of handling the peak hour traffic adequately and still operate at a good level of service in that two-lane section of I-40. So it's peak hours that we're analyzing, but we're talking daily volumes.

JIM OZMENT: I think that was a really good point. I think other people have got questions about what would happen about delivery trucks during the day if they were bringing freight back and forth to your store. Those conditions are existing at 7:00 to 8:00 primarily as your worst peak hour travel, but 10:00 to 11:00 is projected to be much lower than that and, therefore, much more likely to be free flowing at that point. Again, we're trying to look at these peak hour pinch points, not so much the daily travel. A lot of those trucks are traveling overnight as well.

Let me read one more question from Patty Walker. It says, "when will the earthquake work be completed on I-40?"

within the next few months it

should be completed.

It says, "Are you saying there will be no construction in West Memphis during this time frame?"

I think that is what we're saying. We've communicated with Arkansas Highway Department, and they're going to finish up the work that's going on over here and not start any more. So, no, there should not be any work done on 40. All that should be cleared up. I think that's going to solve a lot of the issues that you're dealing with daily now.

There is a third question, "When did you do the averaging of vehicles crossing the bridge?"

I guess that question relates to how do we do traffic -- how do we count traffic.

ATTENDEE: No. When did you do it last?

JIM OZMENT: Oh, when was the last time we did the traffic counts on the bridge. Well, pretty recently for the I-55

numbers, because they just changed from what I was given in the last few months. I think it's probably considered to be this year. It's not old data.

Do we have any more questions from the community? Sir, would you come on up?

WESLEY KITCHENS: I'm Wesley Kitchens. I live here in West Memphis and I'm a truck driver. I haul containers from the UP rail in Marion over into Memphis, back and forth. I make four to five trips a day. I've been doing that for almost 20 years. I hate to say it, but I don't see your numbers when I'm driving out there and crossing those bridges every day. The A, B, C that you have showing the traffic congestion, it's always worse than that. When there's construction - - I mean, you all haven't even mentioned oversized loads yet. I know all the oversized loads are going to have to go 40 unless you're going to send them to Dyersburg or West Helena bridge. Some of those oversized loads are so wide they won't be

able to fit in between your sliding barriers. Some of them are so heavy that there's been times where they've had to shut the bridge down and that can be the only thing crossing the bridge at that time because of the weight of it. So you're going to have six lanes completely shut down when those particular loads come through there, not counting all the mobile homes and trailers that come through here. I don't see that happening.

JIM OZMENT: Thank you for that perspective. That's the perspective of someone who does drive it every day. I think one thing that I would add is that we do control permits on oversize, overweight, over-dimensional loads. So we can schedule that when we want to, which could be the very middle of the night so that it --

ATTENDEE: Oversize can't travel at night.

JIM OZMENT: Can't travel at night. Oh, man, you caught me there.

ATTENDEE: They can't travel after sundown.

JIM OZMENT: We'll look into that. You make a very good point. It's a well-established policy when we have construction, the reasoning behind that. There may be a way to do that. That's a good point.

STEVE CHIPMAN: Right now, there's been a restriction for years where it has to come across the I-55 bridge. They don't travel I-40.

ATTENDEE: See, there won't be an alternative.

STEVE CHIPMAN: It's because construction has been ongoing in West Memphis. We found that out. Once this construction ends, then it opens back up and they can travel the I-40 bridge. Anyway, that was one of the things during this process that Memphis alerted us to, that they can't come across there because of the restriction on West Memphis. We looked into it and that's the reason why. They do go I-55. That's narrow lanes when they travel that bridge. That's a good point. That's

something for us to look into. Thank you.

JIM OZMENT: Sorry I misquoted on that. I was a little outside my area of expertise on that. I didn't realize that. I've learned something here. Thank you.

We have about 15 minutes left to take questions before we're supposed to leave the facility. I think at this point, without just a lot of questions, I would prefer if everyone would just basically bring their questions to individuals to get answered while we continue to try to get ready to leave tonight. Thank you all so much. You've been a very good group. I hope that we've been able to answer your questions. Drive safely on the way home.

*****COMMENTS TO COURT REPORTER*****

MARY TONEY: 225 South 18th Street, West Memphis. The idea of closing the I-55 bridge is a calculated fiasco with dynamite on the end of it. I don't know whether anybody who came up with this idea or not sees what problem we have already with crossing into Memphis. I have lived in West Memphis all of my life. There have been times that I have gone to Memphis four times a day because I consider it a part of the metropolis. It's my understanding that nothing is going to be done to the actual bridge itself. I really do believe that whoever came up with this engineering design can go back to the table and come up with something else. Again, it is horrible. For the Memphis side of it, somebody is always coming up with something that will not work. I am against this in full force. Thank you.

SENATOR KEITH INGRAM: I am Arkansas state senator from West Memphis. I've followed this. As far as I know, we

have had public information meetings but no public hearings. It's my understanding that the Federal Highway Administration requires public input during the design phase. As far as I know, that has not been done. This is a bad project that will have a negative impact on our region. It's inconceivable that consideration could be to closing the 55 bridge. There are so many reason from critical access to emergency care to traffic bypassing our area to the cost that's involved to local industries on both sides of the river because of the extended travel time. I have not seen any economic impact study of what this will mean in dollars and cents. I wish that the public had had a chance to see the options that were considered before apparently TDOT has made a decision to try and implement unilaterally what they think is best for our entire region instead of at least allowing the citizens to have input, as well as see viable alternatives other than closing the 55 bridge.

TODD ALLEN: Thank you for listening to my comments today. My name is Todd Allen. I am a local farmer, and I am concerned about the closure of the bridge because it will affect all the farmers in the neighboring counties that will be delivering grain that go across the river in June and also in early October, September. If you have an accident or something on the bridge, it's just going to be a total nightmare. We would certainly like for there to be a way other than closing the bridge for nine months to complete the project. As long as I've been looking at construction projects, I have never seen an instance where they had to close the interstate or a bridge completely in order to complete the project. We also have a lot of students going both ways across that bridge and teachers every day. All of the trucking industries will certainly be affected because that's one of the major interstates east to west. It's going to be a big problem for all of them. I would like to know what kind of emergency response is being

considered if there's a traffic accident or a fire on the bridge. Sometimes that will shut a bridge down for two or three hours. If we're going to be shut down for nine months, we need some way to be able to get that accident cleared as quickly as possible to get that traffic moving. The other problem is we don't have a local hospital any longer. Memphis is the closest thing that we have. If we don't go there, we'll have to go to Forrest City or Osceola or Blytheville, which is an extra 30 minutes away. I just hope somebody doesn't end up dying because they can't get across the bridge. Thank you for listening to my comments.

BRIAN WHITE: My name is Brian white. I'm the supervisor for Lifeline EMS Ambulance Service. I talked to the gentleman after the meeting, and he stated that he was going to set up a meeting with all the emergency response people and companies, the state troopers, the Crittenden County officers, about this situation and about how we can handle the emergency transports of our

patients to Memphis during all this. He wanted me to give you my contact information. My phone number is 901-553-5979. The company number is 870-735-7080.

WESLEY KITCHENS: I'm a truck driver. I haul containers from the UP rail in Marion to Memphis. I make about four trips into Memphis a day. I would like for them to be able to tell us how much of a delay they're expecting per trip on something like that, not counting accidents, fixing potholes, oversize loads coming through. I mean, surely they've come up with some delay times, and I would like to know what that is.

RAMONA TAYLOR: I'm opposed to the closure of the I-55 bridge. There have to be other alternatives; there always are. No thought of the economic impact for a county of 50,000 and then the surrounding counties of Crittenden will also be adversely affected. It will affect people's ability to maintain employment, and it will have a negative impact on the businesses in this community. I think a lot of focus was on a

small group of people instead of looking at the big picture. Another issue is the traffic counts. The I-69 study concluded that there needed to be a third bridge in Memphis to manage the traffic flow, which seems ludicrous to say that the I-40 bridge can handle more, a triple volume than it's currently handling, which would make the third bridge study moot, that it was incorrect and flawed. Those are my thoughts.

-CERTIFICATE-

I, CHARLOTTE R. JAQUET, LCR, CCR,
being a licensed court reporter, do hereby
certify that the preceding is a transcription
of the Tennessee Department of Transportation
public information meeting held in West
Memphis, Arkansas on June 1, 2015.

So certified on the 8th day of
June, 2015.

Charlotte R. Jaquet

CHARLOTTE R. JAQUET, LCR, CCR

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