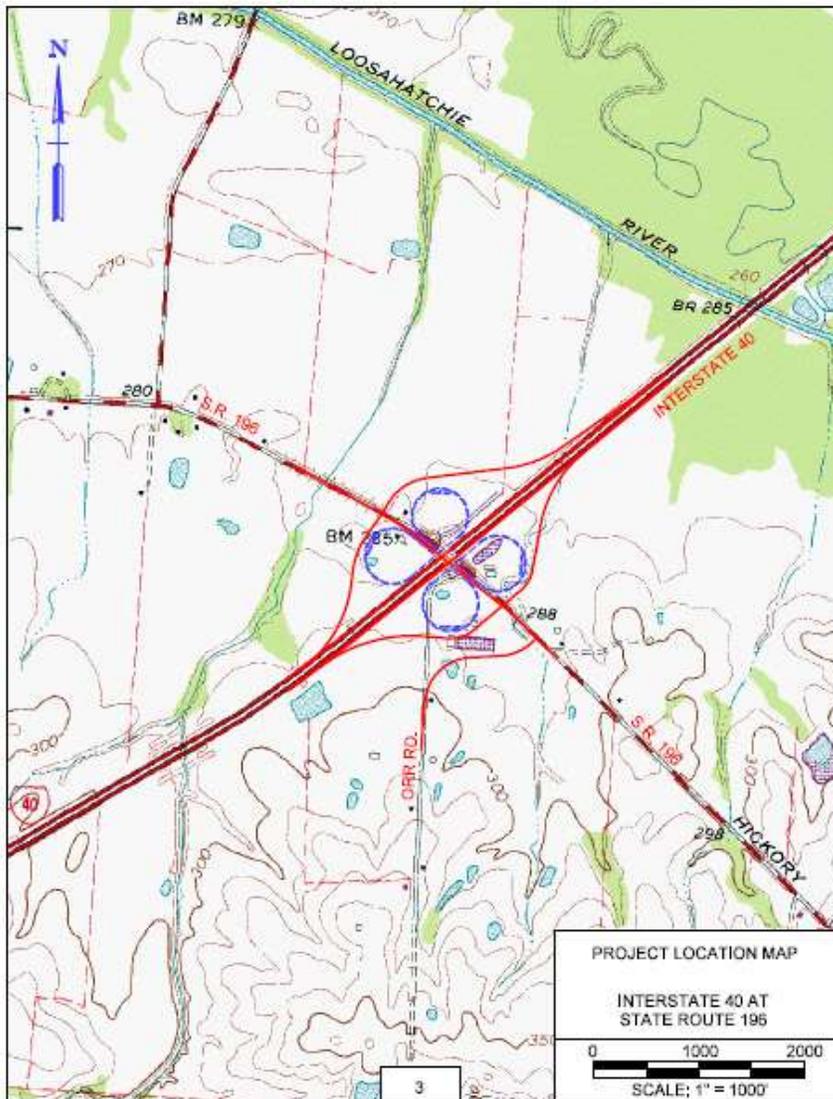


Environmental Assessment for Interstate 40 Interchange at State Route 196 (Hickory Withe Road), Fayette County, Tennessee

Project # 24001-1144-44; Pin #: 105597

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN



**INTERSTATE 40 INTERCHANGE AT STATE ROUTE 196 (HICKORY WITHE ROAD),
FAYETTE COUNTY, TENNESSEE**

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

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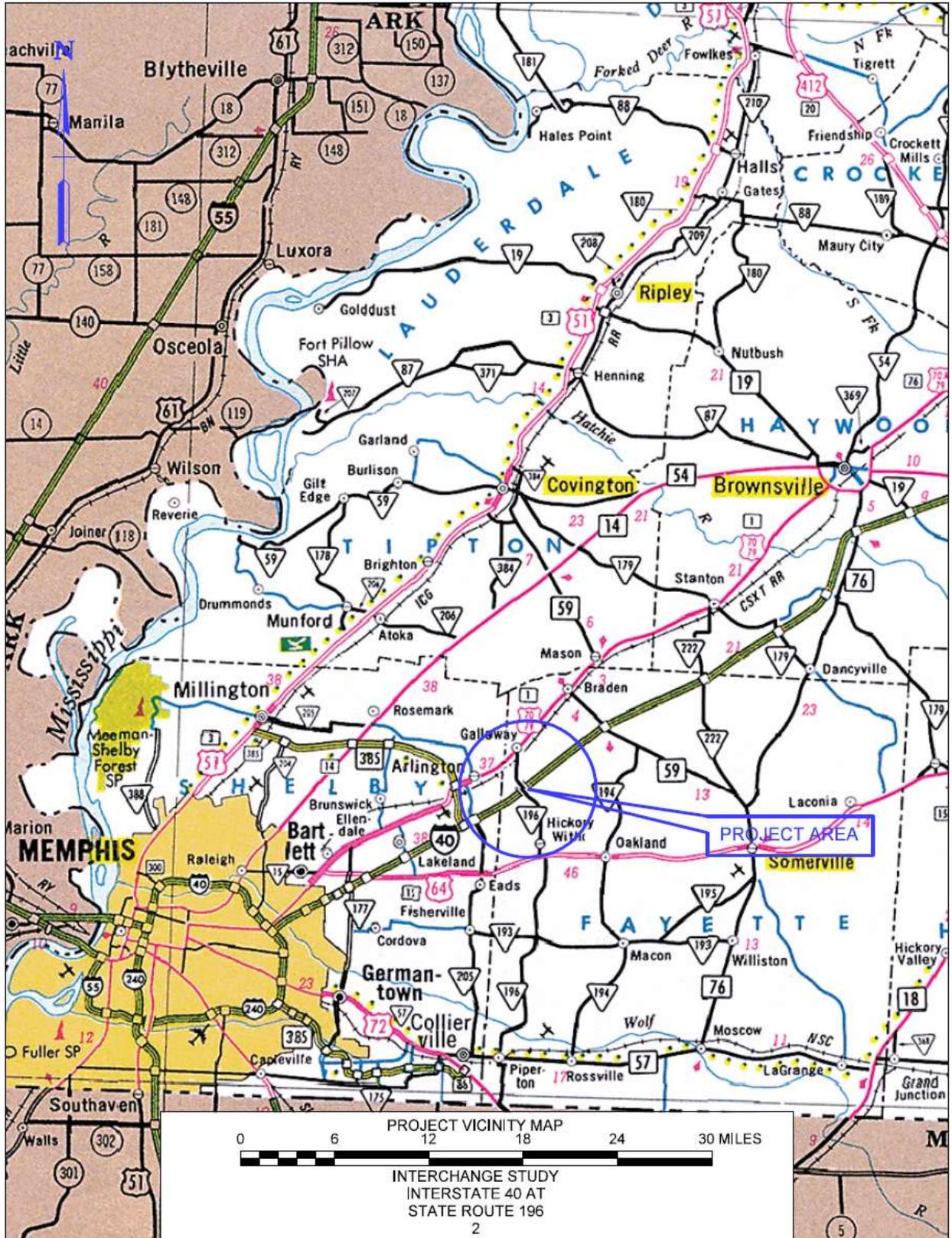
1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

1.1 Project Introduction and Background

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) proposes to construct a new interchange where State Route (SR) 196 (Hickory Withe Road) crosses over Interstate 40 (I-40) in Fayette County, Tennessee. An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared for this project. This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) has been prepared to describe the goals, objectives, and methods that will be used throughout the development of this project to ensure that all members of the public have an opportunity to become and/or stay informed about the project and provide any comments or information they may have related to the project. This was plan completed in compliance with the August 2007 Statewide Public Involvement Plan. The public involvement process is a valuable part of any transportation development project. Local citizens, landowners, and everyday users of the local and regional transportation network can provide important insight into potential impacts of projects such as this, or they may have other information that can be utilized during project development and design.

The proposed project is located in a rural area of Fayette County where SR-196 currently crosses over I-40. Construction of this project would make this the first Fayette County access point east of the Memphis Area. The adjacent interchange to the east is at SR-59 at a distance of approximately five miles. The adjacent interchange to the west is at New Airline Road in Shelby County at a distance of two miles. The closest urban development, Arlington, is located 4.5 miles northwest of the proposed project. A small rural community, Gallaway, is located 2.0 miles north of the proposed interchange location. The provision of an interchange at this location would allow access to I-40 from areas along both US-64 and US-70/79. This interchange would provide direct interstate access to Gallaway and an additional route to Arlington and Somerville. Figure 1 shows the project vicinity in relation to Memphis and the surrounding communities.

Figure 1. Vicinity Map for Interstate 40 Interchange at State Route 196 in Fayette County, Tennessee.



Within the project area, I-40 currently consists of a rural four lane, controlled access facility with a grass median and approximately 300 feet of right-of-way (ROW). SR-196 is currently a rural two lane, non-access controlled road with a pavement width of 22 feet and approximately 60 feet of ROW.

1.2 Project Preliminary Purpose and Need

This project has been undertaken in accordance with the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) policy for granting new or modified interstate access. A detailed Interchange Justification Study was conducted for this project and received operational approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on January 4, 2005.

It is in the national interest to maintain the Interstate System to provide the highest level of service in terms of safety and mobility. Adequate control of access is critical to providing such service. Therefore, new or revised access points to the existing Interstate System will be considered for approval only if:

1. It is demonstrated that the existing interchanges and/or local roads and streets in the corridor can neither provide the necessary access nor be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the design year traffic demands while at the same time providing the access intended by the proposal.
2. All reasonable alternatives for design options, location, and transportation system management (TSM) type improvements such as ramp metering, mass transit, and HOV facilities have been assessed and provided for if currently justified, or provisions are included for accommodating such facilities if a future need is identified.
3. The proposed access point does not have a significant adverse impact on the safety and operation of the interstate facility based on analysis of current and future traffic. The operational analysis for existing conditions shall, particularly in urbanized areas, include an analysis of sections of interstate to and including at least the first adjacent existing or proposed interchange on either side.
Crossroads and other roads and streets shall be included in the analysis to the

extent necessary to assure their ability to collect and distribute traffic to and from the interchange with new or revised access points.

4. The proposed access connects to a public road only and will provide for all turning movements. Less than “full interchanges” for special purpose access for transit vehicles, for HOV’s or onto park and ride lots may be considered on a case-by-case basis. The proposed access would be designed to meet or exceed current standards for Federal-Aid projects on the interstate system.

5. The proposal considers and is consistent with local and regional land use and transportation plans. Prior to final approval, all requests for new revised access must be consistent with the metropolitan and/or statewide transportation plan, as appropriate, the applicable provisions of 23 CFR part 450 and the transportation conformity requirements of 40 CFR parts 51 and 93.

6. In areas where the potential exists for future multiple interchange additions, all requests for new or revised access are supported by a comprehensive Interstate network study with recommendations that address all proposed and desired access within the context of a long term plan.

7. The request for a new or revised access generated by new or expanded development demonstrates appropriate coordination between the development and related or otherwise required transportation system improvements.

8. The request for a new or revised access contains information relative to the planning requirements and the status of the environmental processing of the proposal.

The Fayette County Growth Plan was adopted in August 2003. The entire area surrounding the proposed interchange is contained within the Fayette County Planned Growth Area. State Route 196 from Gallaway to Piperton is also located within the planning area of the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The proposed interchange project is consistent with the MPO’s 2026 Long Range

Transportation Plan (LRTP). In addition, the project was included in the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Local officials are anticipating residential and commercial development with the possibility of a shopping mall in the immediate vicinity. There will be growth pressure upon this location, which will be amplified due to the fact that it will become the first interchange located in Fayette County east of Memphis. Without an interchange, much of the development would likely still occur in the general vicinity, but access to the land would be via secondary, less direct routes resulting in increased traffic volumes and decreased safety on those routes. In addition, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and vehicle emissions would also increase as commuters are forced to use secondary roads to gain access to new developments in the immediate project vicinity.

As part of the Interchange Justification Study, an operational analysis of current and future traffic was made for all ramps and ramp termini within the limits of the interchange area. The proposed project site is currently located in a predominantly rural area. The traffic analysis indicated an acceptable level of service (LOS) for all ramps. With the proposed improvements in place, no adverse effects due to the proposed interchange are expected to impact I-40 mainline traffic. The left-turn movements at the interchange ramps show no less than a LOS C for the eastbound ramp onto northbound SR-196 and LOS D for the westbound ramp onto southbound SR-196. SR-196 provides LOS D or better north and south of the interchange for design year conditions.

The proposed interchange is a full diamond type interchange and would provide for all traffic movements. The recommended interchange design would meet or exceed all American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) criteria.

The primary objective of the proposed interchange is to provide safe and adequate transportation facilities for traffic projected to be generated by the anticipated residential and commercial development that would come as a result of the area being identified in the Fayette County Growth Plan, as a "Fayette County Planned Growth Area."

1.3 Project Alternatives and Impacts Analysis

During earlier planning stages, two design alternatives were proposed for the new interchange. These alternatives were reviewed and evaluated during meetings with representatives from TDOT's Design Division and TDOT's Planning Division. Both alternatives accommodated existing and future traffic sufficiently to warrant the selection of a standard diamond design.

In addition to the No-Build Alternative, one Build Alternative, identified in the Interchange Justification Study, is proposed for this project. The Build Alternative would include construction of a standard diamond interchange that permits future construction of loop ramps within all four quadrants. The cross section of SR-196 would be three-lanes within the interchange having 12-foot traveling lanes, 12-foot continuous left-turn lane and 10-foot shoulders. All interchange ramps would have 16-foot lanes and 6-foot shoulders. Orr Road, which currently intersects SR-196 immediately south of the interstate, would need to be relocated 960 feet south of its present location to allow for the construction of the ramp in the southwest quadrant of the proposed interchange. The realignment of Orr Road would be designed to meet minimum standards.

At this time, public transit is not available in Fayette County. While there are no HOV lanes currently proposed for I-40 in this location, there has been discussion concerning the ultimate number of lanes needed for the interstate facility. TDOT officials indicated that in the future I-40 should be widened to 6 or 8 lanes in the vicinity of the proposed project. In addition, there was discussion among the participants in the early planning meetings concerning the possibility of establishing an informal park-n-ride lot in conjunction with the anticipated commercial development, even though the MPO plan currently does not call for this measure. The results of the traffic analysis do not warrant the use of ramp metering at this location. The issues surrounding the proposed project location relate more to access issues than to TSM.

Land use in the project area is primarily rural with cotton fields and a sod farm immediately adjacent to the proposed interchange site. The area contains scattered residential and commercial developments along SR-196 to the north and south of I-40. Construction of this interchange is not expected to require the acquisition of any residences or other improvements. Acquisition of some acreage now being used for the

agricultural operations would be necessary. More detailed studies would be conducted as part of the EA to determine potential impacts to the environment including natural, social, cultural, and economic resources.

The fact that the land adjacent to the project site is located within a Fayette County Planned Growth Area as detailed in the Fayette County Growth Plan ensures that future residential and commercial development would occur in the immediate area if the interchange is constructed. It is most likely that development would first occur north of I-40 due to the relative ease of extending utilities from Arlington and Gallaway.

Highway-oriented commercial development, to include service stations, fast food restaurants, truck stops, and motels, would most likely be the initial types of development. Local officials are anticipating residential development to increase and have discussed the possibility of a shopping mall in the immediate surrounding area as well. Potential impacts anticipated to be associated with those developments would be discussed in the EA along with the impacts associated with construction and use of the interchange itself.

2.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

2.1 Public Involvement Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of this PIP is to develop the new I-40 Interchange at SR-196 in partnership with local governments, regional organizations, state elected officials, those impacted by the project, and those who use the transportation system.

The public involvement plan has the following objectives:

- Provide opportunities for anyone who chooses to help shape the overall future of the project through an involvement process that begins early, is convenient and meaningful;
- Develop partnerships with local community leaders, groups and organizations to provide an integrated, environmentally aware and multi-modal approach to the project designs, needs, and desires;
- Provide timely and easily understood information to citizens, other interested parties, and segments of the community affected by the overall project;
- Integrate citizen concerns and needs into the developmental process;

- Ensure adequate public input is obtained for developing Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) during project planning and design phases;
- Work with members of the impacted community to understand and consider their special needs by implementing procedures recommended for environmental justice by the USDOT, FHWA and other federal transportation agencies; and
- Build credibility and trust between TDOT and project stakeholders.

2.2 Identifying the Public Audience/Participants

One of the main goals of this public involvement process is to inform and involve many people in the planning process. The public would be presented with background information that explains the project scope, purpose and need, and the proposed alternatives of the I-40 Interchange Project. Once the initial information is presented and the public becomes involved, they would be considered participants in the project.

The involvement and coordination efforts help ensure that potentially affected parties are not overlooked and excluded from the design and implementation of the proposed I-40 Interchange Project. The idea is to ensure that no groups are “left behind.”

The following list includes the broad groups that the public involvement efforts would encourage involvement from:

- General Public;
- Special Needs Groups such as Hearing Impaired, Handicapped, and Non-English Speaking Populations;
- Minorities and Socially or Economically Disadvantaged Persons;
- Adjacent Private Landowners;
- Local Businesses and other Key Stakeholders;
- Regional Media;
- Local, State, and Federal Public Officials;
- State and Federal Regulatory Agencies;
- Environmental and Other Non-government Organizations; and
- Federally-recognized Native American Tribes.

In order to inform the public of this National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study and solicit input in regards to this project, a mailing list has been developed that included agencies, organizations, and public officials who have expressed, or are known to have, an interest or legal role in this proposed project. Mailing of letters to individuals representing each of the groups contained in the list is the first step to begin the public involvement process. Table 1 contains a listing of all the federal and state agencies, organizations, and public officials that have been identified as having an interest or legal role in the project.

Table 1. List of Agencies, Organizations, and other Stakeholders to be Involved in the Initial Coordination for the Interstate 40 Interchange at State Route 196 in Fayette County, Tennessee.

| AGENCY TYPE | NAME |
|--------------------|--|
| Federal* | United States Department of Defense U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Memphis District |
| Federal | U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| Federal | Department of Housing and Urban Development Environmental Officer |
| Federal | U.S. Department of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| Federal | Federal Railroad Administration Office of Economic Analysis |
| Federal** | Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Assessment Office |
| Federal | Environmental Protection Agency Office of Federal Activities |
| Federal | U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining |
| Federal | Federal Energy Regulatory Commission |
| Federal | U.S. Department of Interior U.S. Geological Survey Office of Environmental Affairs |
| Federal | Federal Aviation Administration Memphis Airport District Office |

| AGENCY TYPE | NAME |
|-------------|---|
| Federal | National Park Service Planning and Compliance Division |
| Federal | Federal Emergency Management Agency Regional Environmental Officer |
| Federal | U.S. Department of Interior U.S. Geological Survey Water Resources Division |
| Federal** | U.S. Department of Interior U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Federal | U.S. Department of Interior Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance |
| Federal | Advisory Council on Historic Preservation |
| State | Tennessee Department of Agriculture NEPA Contact |
| State | Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development NEPA Contact |
| State | Tennessee Department of Economic & Community Development Local Planning Assistance Office |
| State | Tennessee Department of Education Director of Operations |
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Division of Air Pollution Control |
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Division of Ground Water Protection |

| AGENCY TYPE | NAME |
|--------------------|---|
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Tennessee Division of Natural Heritage |
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste Management |
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Division of Water Pollution Control |
| State** | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Commissioner |
| State | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Division of Water Supply |
| State** | Tennessee Department of Environment & Conservation Tennessee Historical Commission (SHPO) |
| State** | Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency NEPA Contact |
| State | Tennessee Department of Transportation Civil Rights Division |
| State | Tennessee Housing and Development Agency |
| Local** | Memphis and Shelby County Office of Planning and Development , Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) |
| Local** | Memphis Area Rural Planning Organization (RPO) |
| Local | Mr. Rhea “Skip” Taylor Mayor of Fayette County |
| Local | Mr. Chester Cocke Mayor of Braden |

| AGENCY TYPE | NAME |
|--------------------|---|
| Local | Ms. Patricia Garrett Mayor of Gallaway |
| Local | Mr. Bill Mullins Mayor of Oakland |
| Local | Mr. Buck Chambers Mayor of Piperton |
| Local | Mr. Robert S. "Bob" Morris Mayor of Somerville |
| Local | Mr. Russell Wiseman Mayor of Arlington |
| Local | Mr. John Pitner Fayette County Planning and Development Office |
| Local | Honorable Dolores R. Gresham State Representative |
| Local | Honorable John Shelton Wilder State Senator |
| Local | Ms. Julie Perrine, Executive Director Fayette County Chamber of Commerce |
| Local | Tennessee Trails Association |
| Local | Memphis Area Association of Governments |
| Local | State Review Board |
| Local | West Tennessee Historical Society |
| Private | Tennessee State Chapter of the Sierra Club |
| Private | Sierra Club |

| AGENCY TYPE | NAME |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Private | Tennessee Conservation League |
| Private | World Wildlife Fund |
| Private | Tennessee Environmental Council |
| Private | The Nature Conservancy |
| Private | NAACP |
| <p><i>* Agency to be invited to become a Cooperating and Participating Agency</i></p> <p><i>** Agency to be invited to become a Participating Agency</i></p> | |

2.3 Section 106 Early Coordination

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act Requires consultation with Indian tribes for actions planned on tribal lands or for actions planned on historic properties not on tribal lands where the Indian tribes attach religious and cultural significance. Historic properties of religious and cultural significance are often located on ancestral, aboriginal, or ceded lands of Indian tribes. The FHWA would work with the State Historic Preservation Office to assure that the proper Indian tribes are designated for consultations. Tribal Scoping meetings would occur at the request of each tribe.

As a part of the consultation requirements for Section 106, a separate initial coordination package would be sent to parties with interests in historical and archaeological issues. Although this list is subject to change, the following ten Native American Tribes would be invited to request status as a Section 106 consulting party:

- Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town;
- The Chickasaw Nation;
- Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma;
- Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma;
- Kialegee Tribal Town;
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation;
- Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma;
- Shawnee Tribe;

- Thlopthlocco Tribal Town; and
- United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians.

If new information reveals the need to request another agency or tribe to serve as a consulting party, TDOT would issue that agency or tribe an invitation.

2.4 Strategies for Encouraging Public Involvement

In order to convey information to the public, solicit input from them, and provide them with an opportunity to participate in the planning of this project, a wide array of notification methods will be used. A combination of some or all of the following methods will be used to notify the public about the project and solicit participation:

- Coordination Letters;
- Public Official and/or Stakeholder Group Briefings;
- Project Web Site;
- Newsletters and Other Direct Mailers; and
- a Public Hearing.

2.4.1 Database of Names and Stakeholder List

TDOT's Environmental Division maintains an initial coordination list that includes the names of federal, state, and local agencies and organizations (such as regional planning agencies) TDOT will coordinate with for this project. The list also includes private entities that have requested to be included in initial coordination. The entities on the list would be sent copies of the initial coordination package, notices of public meetings, and notice of the availability of the approved EA for review and comment.

As appropriate, persons, organizations, and agencies on this list would also receive other correspondence related to the project such as newsletters and other coordination packages developed as part of the Tennessee Environmental Streamlining Agreement (TESA) for the Environmental and Regulatory Coordination of Major Transportation Projects. Table 1 showed the list of entities that would receive coordination letters. A separate Coordination Plan has also been developed for this project that discusses agency and organization coordination efforts in more detail, especially in terms of the TESA process.

2.4.2 Local Government Officials and/or Stakeholder Briefings

Briefings with local government officials and/or community/civic groups, business groups, or other interested groups or organizations will be used as an opportunity to introduce the project, provide project updates, and receive public input on the project. Such meetings would help maintain a continuous line of communication between the officials, stakeholders, TDOT, and FHWA. It is anticipated that at least two informal meetings/briefings would be held for this project that would include community/civic groups, business groups, and other organizations.

If necessary, two additional meetings may be held with local officials only. Local officials expected to be in attendance at those briefings would include:

- County Mayor;
- Mayor(s) of affected communities;
- Representatives of the Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); and
- Representatives of the Memphis Area Rural Planning Organization (RPO).

Depending on the number of stakeholders identified that have a strong interest in the project, it is possible that the stakeholder and public official briefings may be combined for this project.

2.4.3 Media Relations

Local newspapers will be identified for use in disseminating information about the project. Minority media outlets will be included. Notices of Availability and the announcement of the EA public hearing will be sent to these media outlets.

2.4.4 Project Website

A project website will be set up by TDOT to help keep the public informed about the project and provide another avenue for public input. The website for the project would be updated as needed with newsletters, public meeting announcements, public hearing transcripts, maps, and other project information that becomes available.

2.4.5 Frequently Asked Questions

To provide direct answers to some of the most frequently asked questions (FAQs) posed by the public, FAQ sheets will be prepared and will be distributed via TDOT's project website and hardcopies will be available via project newsletters as well as at briefings, public meetings, and other public involvement events. These questions/answers would be updated as new information becomes available.

2.5 Notice of Availability of Environmental Assessment

A notice of availability of the EA document will be published in the local papers. The notice would identify where the EA would be available for public review, how the public can provide input, and who to contact with comments or for additional information. Copies of the EA would be available for public inspection at the nearest local public libraries. The EA would also be available in electronic format on the TDOT's project website.

2.6 Environmental Assessment Public Hearing

Once FHWA approves the EA document for public and agency review, TDOT will hold a public hearing to receive comments from the public on the official findings presented in the EA and on the project. Input from the public hearing and public comment period will be used by TDOT to make a decision on the selection of the preferred alternative. This input will also be incorporated into the overall study prior to completion of the EA and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) (if appropriate).

One public hearing will be scheduled to be held in the project area. The hearing will be advertised in local newspapers. A minimum of 30 days notice will be provided prior to each meeting, with at least 21 days for submittal of comments after each meeting (in order for the comments to be included in the official record).

2.7 Comment Forms and Avenues

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are identified and taken into account, comments and suggestions will be solicited from all interested parties. The following methods will be used to collect comments from the general public throughout the NEPA process:

- Mail-in Comment Forms Distributed at the EA Public Hearing;

- Court Reporters at the EA Public Hearing;
- Electronic Comment Forms available on the Project Web Site;
- Mail-in Letters sent to the FHWA Address listed in the Notice of Intent (Field Operations Team Leader, Federal Highway Administration—Tennessee Division Office, 640 Grassmere Park Road, Suite 112, Nashville, TN 37211.);
- Telephone; and
- E-Mail.

Comment forms will be provided at the EA public hearing to encourage participants to provide their comments on the project. The comment form will also be available on the project website.

Comments may be provided in writing or electronically. Comments will be accepted at any time during the EA process. All comments will be reviewed and incorporated as appropriate.

2.8 Methods for Responding to Public Comments

The project proponents and consultants responsible for preparation of the EA will review all comments received through the methods listed in Section 2.7. All comments relative to the proposed action will be considered as part of the NEPA process.

Any similar comments would be grouped and become part of a general issue or question. These general issues and questions would be dealt with or answered with the most thorough, logical, and knowledgeable solutions or answers possible. Available data would be used when possible to support answers to specific questions. If required, additional data would be gathered to ensure that all issues and concerns are dealt with properly.

A listing of issues and questions along with detailed responses would be included as part of the EA to provide the public with evidence that efforts were made to respond to concerns of the public. This will also allow the public to see how their involvement in the project has been used to help develop the I-40 Interchange Project that takes into consideration the needs and concerns of the affected communities.

If the best solution or answer to a comment or question requires changes to the proposed design or plans for the proposed project, the necessary changes would be made so long as the goals and planned capabilities of the proposed project are not put in jeopardy. If unexpected issues arise during the public involvement phase of the project, potential changes could be made to the design of the project to ensure compliance with all laws and regulations. Also, solutions that minimize impacts to the social, cultural, and natural environments would be sought as part of the NEPA process.

The preferred alternative for the I-40 Interchange Project would be developed to handle anticipated traffic volumes in the immediate vicinity of the project while minimizing impacts to the environment. However, in order to fulfill the Purpose and Need of the project, not every impact would be avoidable. The NEPA process would help to identify unavoidable impacts and result in a development of mitigation, minimization, and avoidance techniques to help reduce the overall long-term adverse effects of the impacts while ensuring the long-term beneficial impacts.