

STATE ROUTE 32/US 321 IMPROVEMENTS  
FROM SR 73 IN COSBY TO WILTON SPRINGS ROAD  
COCKE COUNTY, TN

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

FROM THE PUBLIC MEETING & COMMENT PERIOD,  
JUNE 29, 2010 THROUGH JULY 20, 2010

NOVEMBER 2010

PREPARED FOR:  
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, TENNESSEE DIVISION

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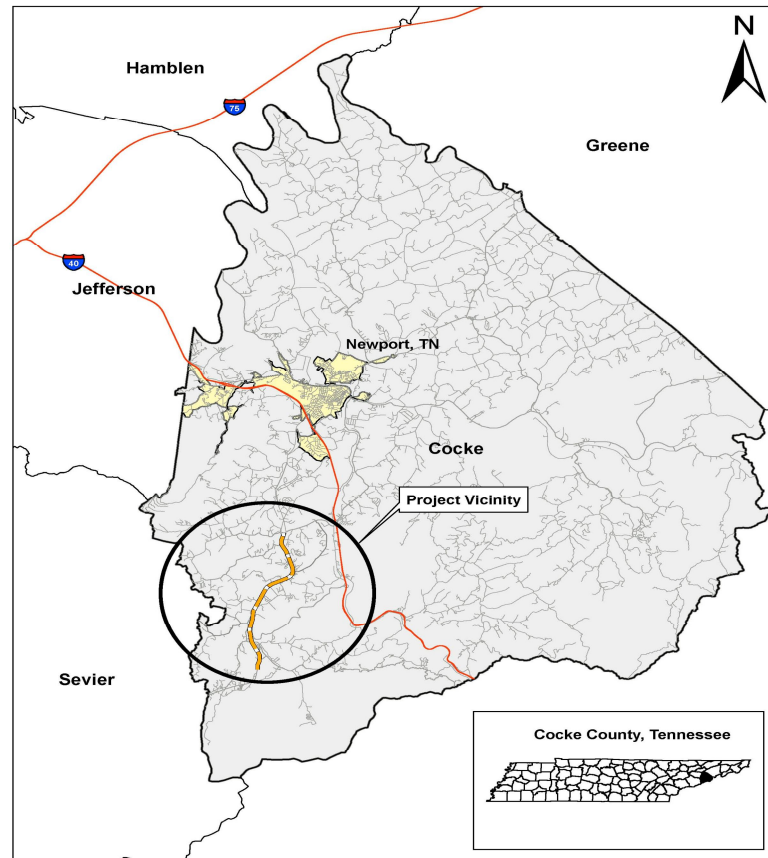
## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), are preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) for State Route 32/US 321 from State Route (SR) 73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road in Cocke County, Tennessee. The purpose of the project is to improve efficiency of traffic operations and increase capacity. The purpose of this project also includes improved safety for vehicles and to improve roadway deficiencies. This project began in 1998 as an alternative west of current build alternative in location of Foothills Parkway. The alignment has since been shifted to avoid Cosby Creek and archeological resources. In 2009, TDOT determined the need for updated technical studies as the project moves forward in the environmental review process. This project vicinity is illustrated in **Figure 1** below.

A Public Meeting was held at the Cosby High School on Tuesday, June 29, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. TDOT held this meeting to gather information from the public about the purposed purpose and need of the project and the proposed alternatives to be considered in the environmental review process.

This report provides a description of the Public Meeting and summarizes the comments received at the Public Meeting and during the official comment period, which extended through July 20, 2010.

Figure 1 Project Vicinity Map



## 2.0 PUBLIC MEETING

### 2.1 Notification

In order to publicize the Public Meeting, a public notice was published in *The Newport Plain Talk*. A public notice was also posted on TDOT's project website. Notification postcards were also passed out to all local business within the project area. A copy of the meeting postcard is included in the **Appendix**.

### 2.2 Description of Public Meeting

A Public Meeting was held in Cosby, Tennessee on Tuesday, June 29, 2010 from 5:00 to 7:00 PM at Cosby High School. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information from the public about the purpose and need of the project and the proposed alternatives to be considered in the environmental review process. Approximately 49 people attended the meeting.

At the beginning of the meeting, participants were asked to sign-in and pick up a meeting handout. The four-page handout provided details on the background of the project, the environmental review process, the purpose of environmental document, what environmental assessment is, alternatives that must be studied, why we are here, and the project's next step. The handout also included a comment form for participants to use to record their comments about the project. Participants had the option of returning the comment form before leaving the meeting, or mailing the comment form and/or letter to TDOT by July 20, 2010. Copies of the meeting handout and comment form are included in the **Appendix**.

During the first portion of the Public Meeting, a presentation was given describing the project and environmental review process. A question and answer session immediately followed the presentation, which gave participants a chance to respond and have their questions answered by representatives from TDOT and the project's consultant team. Several maps were posted around the room to illustrate the project area's context and the potential alternative corridors that are being considered. A court reporter was also available during the meeting for participants to have the opportunity to have comments recorded orally.

## **2.3 Summary of Public Comments**

In order for the comments to be included in this scoping report, TDOT asked that complete comment forms and letters be submitted by July 20, 2010. All comment forms postmarked by July 20<sup>th</sup> are considered part of this public scoping report. Comments will continue to be accepted and considered throughout the course of the project.

A variety of options was available to encourage public input during the scoping process. The public provided input through the following means:

- Informal comments provided during question and answer session;
- Written Comments – comment forms and letters.

During the official scoping period (June 29, 2010 through July 20, 2010), total public comments were received through the various formats listed above. Due to the variety of ways to respond, some individuals commented in multiple formats.

### **2.3.1 Informal Comments Provided at the Public Meeting**

During the public meeting held on June 29, 2010, members of the public were encouraged to express their comments or concerns and to ask questions about the project during the question and answer portion of the meeting. Participants were also encouraged to make verbal comments to the court reporter. Fourteen

people's comments were recorded during the question and answer portion of the meeting.

The following summarizes major points made by the public during the question and answer portion of the public meeting on June 29, 2010:

- Why does TDOT want this project?
- What kind of timetable are we looking at?
- This has been in the books and has been hanging over our heads for some time; make a decision.
- This is not progress, destruction of our environment.
- Would be taking traffic away from local businesses.
- Prefer improvements to existing roadways or a less impacting scenic byway like Blueridge Parkway.
- Need a turn land in front of Cosby High School, too dangerous.
- Would like to see bike lanes and greenways.
- Businesses would prosper from new road.
- We need progress, I'm for the road.

### **2.3.2 Official Comment to the Court Reporter**

During the public meeting held on June 29, 2010, no statements were given to the court reporter regarding the SR-32 (US-321) project.

### **2.3.3 Public Comment Forms**

The public provided written comments by filling out the project comment card provided by TDOT. Public comment cards were distributed by TDOT at the public meeting and could be downloaded electronically from TDOT's project website.

By the close of the comment period (received or postmarked by July 20, 2010), TDOT had received 20 completed comment forms. Ten completed comment cards came from concerned citizens, 11 came from landowners, six came from affected business owners, and 14 came from residents.

The comment form asked the respondents to provide input on the following:

- 1) Likes and dislikes of the two alternatives (No-Build Alternative and Build Alternative);

- 2) Issues and concerns with the project;
- 3) What are the transportation needs of the area;
- 4) What describes your primary interest in the project; and
- 5) If you dislike the proposed alternatives, what do you think would solve the transportation issues that have been identified as part of the purpose and need for the project?

**2.3.3.1** *Comment Card Question- What do you like/dislike about the No-Build Alternative versus the Build Alternative?*

Five participants commented in favor of the Build Alternative and five comments were received in favor of the No-Build Alternative. In addition, nine comments were made in regards to other alternatives such as improving existing roadway or creating a less invasive scenic byway.

Below is a summary of the responses received:

- Let's stop disrupting people's lives, businesses, wildlife, natural beauty, and environment.
- Road will destroy the "quaintness" and detract from its aesthetic value.
- Do not want to see five-lane road.
- You will put local business out of business.
- No Build will not fix any of the problems with the road.
- It is necessary, let us move forward.
- Safety is priority.
- Existing businesses need more traffic to generate more money.
- Will allow for more efficient, safer flow of traffic, especially during the peak tourist times or bad weather.
- I want to see progress but still preserve the beauty of Cosby.
- Add bike lane and walking trail.
- Prefer a scenic byway.
- Build a turn lane at Cosby High School.
- Road needs to be widened, it is heavily traveled by locals and tourists.
- Straighten curves and provide through lanes.

**2.3.3.2**     *Comment Card Question- What issues or concerns do you have about the project?*

Eleven participants commented that they were concerned about environmental impacts, fourteen participants were concerned with existing development, eight participants were concerned with impacts to agricultural land, six participants were concerned with historical and/or archaeological resources, six participants were concerned with parkland, and seven participants selected “Other” concerns.

The following bulleted list is a summary of the public’s issues or concerns with the SR-32 (US-321) project:

- Impacts to existing businesses.
- Community cohesion.
- Safety.
- Waste of money.
- Cause more congestion.

**2.3.3.3**     *Comment Card Question- What do you see the transportation needs of the area?*

Participants were also asked what transportation needs they believed would benefit the study area (Meet current passenger and freight transportation demands, improve safety, improve traffic operational efficiency, improve access for future development, and other).

In total, 19 responses were received for this question on the comment card. Seven of the respondents selected meet current passenger and freight transportation demands, fourteen selected improve safety, twelve selected improve traffic operational efficiency, nine selected improve access for future development, and six selected “Other.”

A response to the questions is summarized below:

- Would like to see bike trails and greenways.
- Use money to help people not contractors.
- Improve traffic flow during peak hours.
- Preservation of beauty and natural resources as means to economic development.
- Construction will cause traffic problems.
- Improve existing roads.



**2.3.3.4** *Comment Card Question- If you dislike the proposed alternatives, what do you think would solve the transportation issues that have been identified as part of the purpose and need for the project?*

*Their responses are summarized below:*

- I support the build alternative.
- We need this project, the environmental impacts can be mitigated.
- Should not relocate residences.
- A scenic parkway would create incentive to preserve landscapes and community, while also creating opportunities for economic development based on preservation.
- Improve existing road, make it safe.
- Widen shoulders of road, semi's can barely stay on the road.

**2.3.4 Official Comments in Letters**

TDOT has received four letters and no emails were received during the official comment period. A summary of the letter's key themes is found below:

- Benefits to this project include safety, increase business, and increase desirability of existing homes along Old 321.
- I do not approve of this project, will divide my property in two.
- The project would take lots from Stonebrook Village, impact the Valentine Creek, and loose local businesses.
- Opposed for following reasons: waste of money, bypass local businesses, destroy homes, take farmland, and increase air and water pollution.
- Would like to see existing roads improved by straightening curves, widening shoulders, adding turn lanes, and improving signage.

## APPENDIX

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Tennessee Department of Transportation will conduct a Public Information Meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> Day of June, 2010, at the Cosby High School located on 3318 Cosby Highway, Cosby, Tennessee 37722. The objective of this meeting is to discuss the proposed improvements on State Route (SR) 32 (US-321) from SR-73 to Wilton Springs Road in Cocke County, Tennessee.

This meeting will be held from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. in order to provide the public an opportunity to participate in the project development process. A brief presentation will be followed by a question and answer period. The public is invited to provide comments during the meeting and will be given the opportunity to make their opinions known concerning the purpose and need of the project as well as the alternatives being evaluated for the improvements. Representatives of the Department will be available to provide information on various aspects of the project. Anyone with questions regarding this meeting may contact:

Mr. Tom Love, Environmental Manager  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
TDOT Environmental Division  
Suite 900, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-0334

Phone: 615-741-5364  
Email: Tom.Love@tn.gov

Persons with a disability, who require aids or services to participate at the meeting, may contact Ms. Margaret Mahler no less than ten (10) days prior to the date of the meeting:

Ms. Margaret Mahler  
ADA and Safety Coordinator  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Suite 400, J.K. Polk Bldg.  
Nashville, TN 37243

Email: Margaret.Z.Mahler@stn.gov  
615-741-4984 (phone)  
615-532-5988 (fax)  
615-253-8311 (TTY Relay)

A court reporter will be available to receive oral statements to be included in the official project transcript. In addition, comment sheets will be available for those who prefer to make written statements. Written statements and other exhibits in place of, or in addition to these, to be included in the transcript may be submitted within twenty-one (21) days after the meeting date to the following address:

Public Information Meeting Comments  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-0332

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## **PUBLIC MEETING**

### **State Route (SR) 32 (US-321) Improvements**

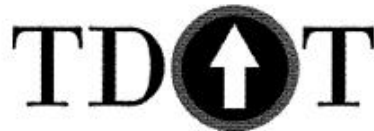
SR-73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road  
in Cocke County, Tennessee

TDOT PIN # 101422.00

**June 29, 2010**

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Cosby High School  
3318 Cosby Highway  
Cosby, TN 37722

TDOT Environmental Manager  
Tom Love  
(615) 741-5364  
Tom.Love@tn.gov



***Tennessee Department of Transportation***

## **WELCOME!**

*Thank you for attending the Public Meeting for the State Route (SR) 32 (US-321) Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA). This handout package contains information about the project to help you become better acquainted with the proposed improvements.*

*You are invited to listen to the project presentation and view the project location maps. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to gather information from the public about the purpose and need for the project and the proposed alternatives to be considered in the environmental review process. Tennessee Department of Transportation representatives are available to answer questions throughout the meeting. Representatives can be identified by the nametag they are wearing. Please take the time to discuss the project with them.*

*A court reporter is available for those persons who desire to make a statement about the project and want that statement included in the official transcript of this meeting. If you wish to make a statement, please see the representative at the court reporter's table.*

*Included with this package is a questionnaire for you to fill out. Please take a moment fill it out so that we know why you think the project is needed. The completed questionnaires may be deposited in the box by the door. If you do not wish to make a statement at this time, or if you arrive home and think of something you wish you had told the court reporter, you may submit written comments to:*

*Project Comments  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243*

**Written comments must be postmarked by July 20, 2010.**

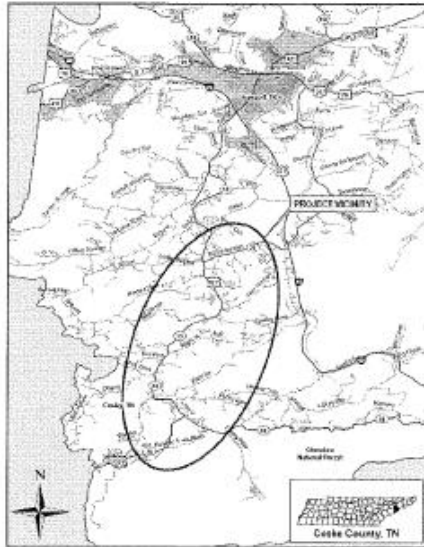
*Thank you for attending and participating in this meeting. Your comments are important to us.*

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) proposes to widen State Route (SR) 32 (US-321) from SR-73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road in Cooke County, Tennessee. The proposed project will widen the existing two-lane roadway to four lanes. The total project length is approximately 6.5 miles.

Two typical sections will be utilized. From SR-73 to just north of Orchard Road, the proposed project will widen SR-32 to a four-lane roadway divided by a 48-foot median with 12-foot shoulders. From just north of Orchard Road to Wilton Springs Road, the proposed project will widen SR-32 to four 12-foot lanes with a continuous 12-foot center turn lane with 8-foot shoulders. Some of the improvements will occur on new location.

The proposed project will also cross the Foothills Parkway, which is administered by the National Park Service (NPS). As currently proposed, the project will cross the Foothills Parkway east of the existing SR-32/Foothills Parkway intersection, on NPS land, and would result in the realignment of the current Foothills Parkway in this area.



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### WHY DOES THE PROJECT HAVE TO GO THROUGH THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that projects receiving federal funding or requiring federal actions (e.g., permits) undergo an environmental review process.

The project cannot proceed until this requirement has been successfully completed.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT?

The purpose of the environmental document is to:

- Fulfill NEPA requirements
- Disclose effects of the project at a stage in the development process where decision making can still be shaped by the environmental analysis and by the comments of agency and public reviewers.

### WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT?

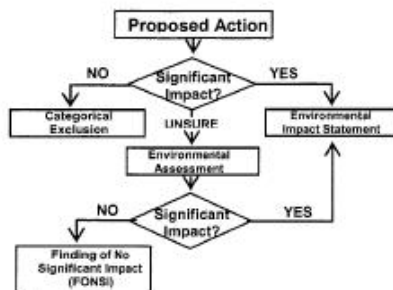
An Environmental Assessment (EA) is prepared if it is unknown whether or not a project has the potential to significantly impact environmental resources. If the EA identifies potential significant impacts then an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared.

Issues that must be addressed in the EA documents are:

- Noise
- Air Quality
- Historic and Archaeological Resources
- Traffic and Safety
- Ecology/Natural Resources
- Floodplains
- Hazardous Materials Sites
- Soils and Geology
- Land Use
- Social and Community Impacts
- Economic and Business Impacts

- Environmental Justice
- Farmland
- Visual Impacts
- Parks and Recreational Resources
- Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Considerations
- Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
- Construction Impacts

The major differences between an EA and an EIS are the level of detail, required study alternatives, and the procedural process.



#### **WHAT ALTERNATIVES MUST BE STUDIED IN AN EA?**

Alternatives that will be studied in an EA include:

- No-Build Alternative
- Build Alternative

##### The No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative:

- Examines what would happen if the new roadway was not constructed; and
- Serves as a baseline to compare the build alternative against.

##### Build Alternative

The Build Alternative will widen SR-32 (US-321) between SR-73 in Cosby and Wilton Springs Road.

#### **WHY ARE WE HERE TONIGHT?**

TDOT is currently proceeding with the EA process for this project. The purpose of this meeting is to provide the public with an update on the project and gather public input on the purpose and need of the project and the project alternatives to be studied.

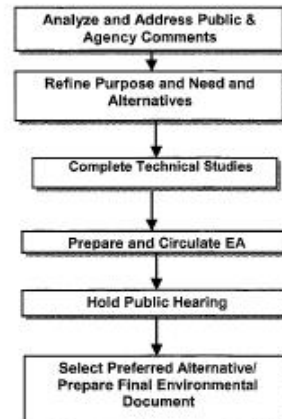
The purpose and need for a project can include, but is not limited to improving efficiency of traffic operations, improving safety for vehicles, improving roadway deficiencies, and increasing capacity along the roadway.

TDOT representatives are here tonight to listen to what you have to say about the purpose and need and the project alternatives.

#### **WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

The information that you provide will be used to further refine the purpose and need statement and the alternative(s) to be studied for the project.

#### **NEXT STEPS**



#### **YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO TDOT**

Representatives of TDOT are available to answer questions you may have regarding this project. You are encouraged to make a formal

comment that will be incorporated into the official project summary in one of three ways:

- 1) Make an oral statement to the court reporter.
- 2) Submit your written comments tonight before you leave.
- 3) Mail your comments to the Department (postmarked by July 20, 2010) to:

Tennessee Department of  
Transportation  
Project Comments  
505 Deaderick Street  
Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0332

**\* Please make sure to include your name and/or address on your submitted comment form or letter in order to be included in the official record.**

**WHEN WILL THE NEXT PUBLIC MEETING BE HELD?**

A public hearing will be held once the EA has been approved and circulated to the public and federal, state, and local agencies.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Call or email the TDOT Environmental Manager:  
Tom Love at (615) 741-5364 or  
[Tom.Love@tn.gov](mailto:Tom.Love@tn.gov)

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

County of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address (optional): \_\_\_\_\_ (Check here if you would like to receive e-mail notices ☐)

Would you like to receive future mailings about the project? YES ☐ NO ☐

\*Please make sure to include your name and/or address on your submitted comment form in order to be included in the official record.

**For additional project information:**

Contact Tom Love, TDOT Environmental Division at 615-741-5364 or by email at [Tom.Love@tn.gov](mailto:Tom.Love@tn.gov)

Fold at this line second

Project Comments  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-0332

Return Comments Postmarked by July 20, 2010 to:

**Public Information Meeting Comments  
Tennessee Department of Transportation  
Suite 700, James K. Polk Building  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-0332**

Fold at this line first

**If you dislike the proposed alternatives, what do you think would solve the transportation issues that have been identified as part of the purpose and need for the project?**

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**State Route (SR) 32 (US-321) Improvements  
Between SR-73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road in  
Cocke County, Tennessee  
Public Comment Form**

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has started work on an Environment Assessment (EA) that will explore the widening of State Route 32 (US-321) between Interstate SR-73 and Wilton Springs Road and the environmental impacts associated with the construction of the proposed project. Public comment is being solicited to identify areas of concern regarding this project. TDOT needs your assistance and input about the project. Please take a moment to answer the following questions. Please return comment form postmarked no later than **July 20, 2010**.

**What do you like and dislike about:**

**No-Build Alternative**

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**Build Alternative- Widening of State Route 32 (US-321) between SR-73 and Wilton Springs Road.**

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**What issues and concerns do you have about the project? (Check all that apply)**

☐ Impacts to the Environment (streams, wetlands, soils, species)

☐ Impacts to Existing Development (homes, businesses)

☐ Impacts to Agricultural Lands

☐ Impacts to Historic and/or Archaeological Resources

☐ Impacts to Parkland

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you see as the transportation needs of the area?**

Meet current passenger and freight transportation demands \_\_\_\_\_

Improved Safety \_\_\_\_\_

Improved Traffic Operational Efficiency \_\_\_\_\_

Improved access for future development \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Which describes your primary interest in the project?**

☐ Affected resident

☐ Affected business

☐ Affected landowner

☐ Concerned citizen