

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,
MARCH 15, 2012 THROUGH APRIL 5, 2012

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

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NASHVILLE, TN

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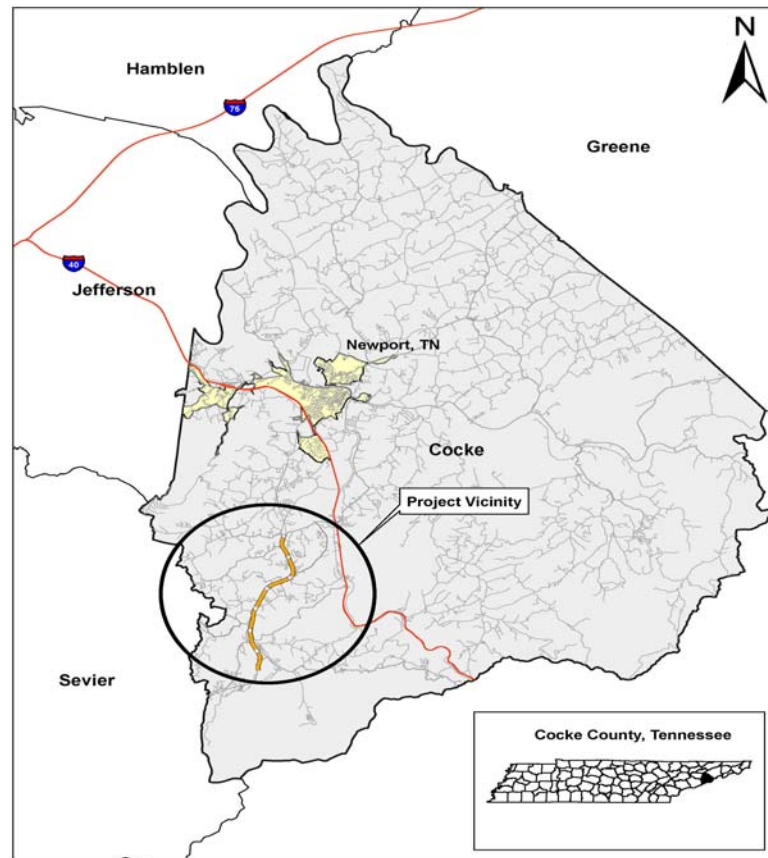
1.0 INTRODUCTION

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 improvements to address 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 moved forward in the environmental review process. The project vicinity is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

A Public Meeting was held at the Cosby High School on Thursday, March 15, 2012 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM. TDOT held this meeting to discuss the proposed improvements to SR 32 (US-321) from SR-73 to Wilton Springs Road and inform stakeholders on updates to the project.

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 April 5, 2012.

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* (Thursday) March 1, 2012. A public notice was also posted on TDOT's project website. Notification postcards were also hand-delivered to all businesses 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 Thursday, March 15, 2012 from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM at Cosby High School. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed improvements to SR 32 (US 321) from SR 73 to Wilton Springs Road and inform stakeholders about updates to the project.

At the beginning of the meeting, participants were asked to sign-in and pick up a meeting handout. The six-page handout provided information on the public meeting format as well as a summary of the project purpose and need, a description of the project's design features, potential environmental impacts of the project, and the next steps in the project development process. It also explained how to provide comments to TDOT. Participants had the option of returning the comment form before leaving the meeting, or mailing the comment form to TDOT by April 5, 2012. The public could also email a comment or send a comment via letter to TDOT by April 5, 2012. Copies of the meeting handout and comment form are included in the **Appendix**.

During the first portion of the meeting, the public viewed project displays and were given an opportunity to speak with the TDOT project team. A presentation immediately followed that provided updated information on the proposed SR 32(US 321) Improvement Project, including recent modifications based on stakeholder input. After the presentation, attendees had another opportunity to view displays and talk with the TDOT project team. A court reporter was also available during the meeting to provide participants with an opportunity to have their comments recorded orally.

Ninety-seven participants signed the sign-in sheet for the meeting.

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 postmarked or emailed by April 5, 2012. All comment forms and letters postmarked by April 5, 2012 are summarized in this public scoping report. Additional comments will continue to be accepted and considered throughout the course of the project.

A variety of options were available to encourage public input during the public meeting and comment period. The public provided input through the following means:

- Informal Comments – during question and answer session
- Oral Comments – provided to the court reporter
- Written Comments – comment forms and letters

During the official scoping period (March 15, 2012 through April 5, 2012) a total of eighteen 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 Comments provided during the Question and Answer Session

During the public meeting held on March 15, 2012, 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. Comments from ten (10) people 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 March 15, 2012:

1	Noise effect of new highway
2	Is the four lane road going to be limited access in certain locations?
3	Concern for wetlands
4	Will there be dynamite during construction?
5	Will you replace my well if you damage it up during construction?
6	If they do have to take some of our property, how much notice do they give us and will they pay us for it?
7	Concern for road going through Liberty Church.
8	Is there flexibility on adjusting the road?
9	What is the timing of this project and what does this mean in terms of what I tell the church?
10	Where is the highway going?
11	Businesses along the current corridor would be bypassed if new road is built and people will not know they are there.
12	I own a motel
13	Widening the road will impact my yard how much of my yard will you take?
14	I have a campground mobile home park and I need to do some maintenance on the swimming pool for this year. Is it going to be five years before we get anything going, or do I need to go ahead and do the five years work?
15	Why don't you stay on the right hand of the main road and just go on with the main road?
16	According to the maps, you're showing one entrance into Stonebrook after you get done with all of this.
17	Could you explain noise assessment a little deeper?
18	Very pleased to see the initial alignment of the road as being a five lane at that point so that people could turn into my place coming either direction.
19	Visitors like the quiet, out of the way places. They come up here to see the scenic beauty.

2.3.2 Official Comments to the Court Reporter

During the public meeting held on March 15, 2012, two statements were given to the court reporter regarding the SR-32 (US-321) project during the public information meeting.

Commenter: Bill Meurman

Okay. My name is Bill Merman. I'm at 3283 Cosby Highway. I have a small business. I sell some produce in the summertime, rather limited customers. So I was very pleased to see the initial alignment of the road as being a five lane at that point so that people could turn into my place coming either direction, and that's the only comment I wanted to make.

Commenter: Wilma Webb

Yes. My name is Wilma Webb. My address is 2765 Cosby Highway. We actually own Janice's Diner there at that address. And my comment is I work in Gatlinburg with a tourist industry. I work for a resort. Our Great Smokey Mountain National Park has nine point something million visitors per year. I have not heard one of them say, "I want to get on that busy highway and just go somewhere." They like the quiet, out of the way places. They come up here to see the scenic beauty. They don't want the hustle, bustle. And I am really afraid that if we get too big, then that's really going to hurt the entrances that we have in Cocke County going to the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. Thank You.

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. A copy of the comment form is provided in the Appendix.

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

- 1) Primary interest in the project;
- 2) The preferred alternative;
- 3) What are the issues and concerns;
- 4) Should there be any changes to the project; and
- 5) Respond to survey about hearing process

2.3.3.1 Comment Card Question - Which describes your primary interest in the project?

Seventeen participants responded to this question. Many identified as having multiple interests in the project. Most identified with being concerned citizens and affected landowners. Nine completed comment cards came from concerned citizens, nine came from landowners, three came from affected business owners, and two came from residents. One participant identified as being all four: concerned citizen; affected resident; affected landowner and affected business.

Interest	Total
Concerned Citizen	9
Affected Resident	2
Affected Landowner	9
Affected Business	3

*Respondents could check more than one interest.

2.3.3.2 Comment Card Question - The alternative you prefer and why?

Fourteen participants commented that they were concerned about the environmental impacts, safety, local businesses, property impacts(?), Cosby Hill, and traffic. Some additional alternatives that were mentioned included the No Build or the original plan. The following table provides a summary of the comments related to the alternative question.

Alternative You Prefer	Total
No Build	6
Original Plan	2

*Respondents were allowed to comment on more than one topic

There were also additional responses that were not directly related to this specific question. The following bulleted list is a summary of additional public issues or concerns identified for the SR-32 (US-321) project:

- Impacts to existing businesses
- Wetlands
- Safety
- Traffic
- Property
- Cosby Hill is a community asset
- Scenery
- Noise

2.3.3.3 Comment Card Question - What issues and concerns you have about the project?

In total seventeen responses were received for this question on the comment card. Although the responses vary, the repeating concerns include; consider original plan, safety, start of construction, acquisition of land, proximity to medical services and loss of businesses. In addition, there were five comments that stated the project was not needed.

Concerns	Totals
Original Project Design Creates Negative Impacts	1
Taking of Land, Homes and Businesses	6
Living Along Busy Highway	1
Access to Road	1
Do Not Need This Project	5
Impact on Businesses	2
Start Date	1

*Respondents were allowed to comment on more than one topic

Additional responses to this question are summarized below:

- Original project would negatively impact Stonebrook and local merchants
- Dangerous for school buses making a left turn
- Concerned about approval for septic
- Taking of a family farm
- Do not need this project
- Right of way proximity to rural medical services
- When will the project start

2.3.3.4 Comment Card Question - Any changes you would make to the project?

A total of nine (9) responses were received for this question on the comment card.

Recommended Changes	Total
Use Original Route	3
Widen Present Road	2
Straighten Curve on Cosby Highway	1
(Blank Comments) N/A	8

*Respondents were allowed to comment on more than one topic

Additional responses to this question are summarized below:

- Don't take our life use original route or widen present road.
- We prefer the 1st proposal
- Either plan would take property I own.
- Don't do it
- Straighten out bad curve on Cosby highway
- Stick with original plan

2.3.3.5 *Comment Card Question - Additional Comments?*

A total of one response was received for this question on the comment card, as summarized below:

- No one has visited the property. The route presented is based on aerial photos that are old. Wife had property taken by the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and now the state wants to take land without notification.

2.3.4 **Official Comments in Letters**

TDOT received a total of one letter and no emails during the official comment period. A summary of the letter's key themes is summarized below:

- Father's home was taken due to the first road built in the 1930's during the Depression.
- I cannot understand why the present road cannot be widened.
- Property has already been taken from me I believe once is enough.
- I believe I will lose more property than any other owner.
- I think the people or Cosby are being held hostage by the state.
- I would like very much for the proposed highway to be changed.

APPENDIX

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

The Tennessee Department of Transportation will conduct a Public Information Meeting on March 15, 2012 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 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 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 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:

Ms. JonnaLeigh Stack, NEPA Project Manager
Tennessee Department of Transportation
TDOT Environmental Division
Suite 900, James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-0334
615-253-2463
jonnaleigh.stack@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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SR 32 (US 321)

Public Meeting Information

Tennessee Department of Transportation
Communications Office
CRO Officer
(615) 741-7336(toffice)

When & Where

5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M. Thursday, March 15, 2012
Cosby High School
3318 Cosby Highway, Cosby, TN 37722
See Location Map attached

Learn about the SR 32 (US 321)

Between 1998 and the present TDOT has evaluated alternatives to improve SR 32 (US 321). Alternatives have been modified in response to public and resource agency input, and environmental constraints.

- National Park Service requested avoidance of Cosby Creek
- Avoidance of archaeological resources
- Minimize residential and business impacts

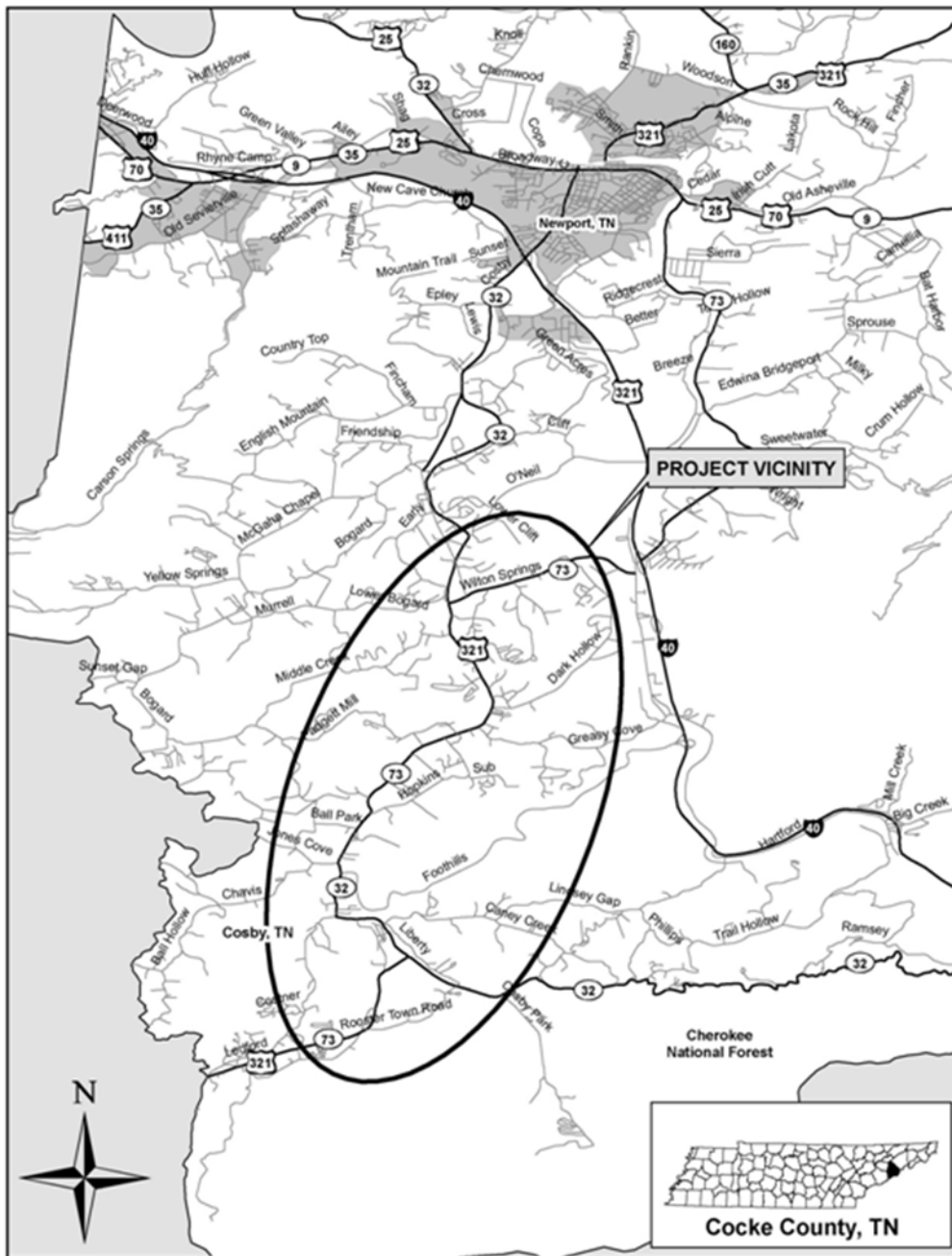
Ask Questions

Following a project presentation by TDOT representatives, there will be a brief question and answer opportunity for the public.

Need Assistance?

Persons with disabilities that require aids or services to participate at the meeting should contact TDOT at 615-741-4984.





**State Route 32 (US 321) Project Vicinity Map
From State Route 73 to Wilton Springs Road**



SR 32 (US 321)



PUBLIC MEETING
State Route 32
Presenting updates to the SR 32
Improvement Project

Thursday, March 15, 2012
5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.
Cosby High School
3318 Cosby Highway
Cosby, TN 37722

This meeting will discuss the proposed improvements to SR 32 (US 321) from SR 73 to Wilton Springs Road and inform stakeholders on updates to the project. TDOT representatives will be available to receive stakeholder feedback on the proposed improvements.

Contact:
JonnaLeigh Stack
TDOT, Environmental Division
505 Deaderick Street, Suite 900
Nashville, TN
JonnaLeigh.Stack@tn.gov
(615) 253-2463

Announcement of Public Meeting

The Tennessee Department of Transportation will conduct a Public Meeting to provide updated information on the State Route 32/US-321 widening project in Cocke County, Tennessee. At the meeting, representatives will discuss recent modifications to the project based on stakeholder comments.

**Thursday, March 15, 2012
5:30PM to 7:30 PM
Cosby High School
3318 Cosby Highway
Cosby, Tennessee 37722**

During the meeting, there will be a short informal presentation beginning at 6:00 p.m. and a brief question and answer period. The public is invited to ask questions and make comments during the meeting. Representatives of the Department will be available to answer questions concerning the project.

Anyone with questions regarding the Public Meeting should contact Mrs. Jonna Leigh Stack at 615-253-2463 or by email at JonnaLeigh.Stack@tn.gov.

Persons having a disability that requires aids or services to participate at the meeting may contact Ms. Margaret Mahler by telephone at (615) 741-4984, fax (615) 253-1477, TTY Relay (800) 848-0298 or e-mail Margaret.Z.Mahler@tn.gov no less than ten (10) days prior to the date of the meeting.

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ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Project #: PE 15005-1234-04
(for internal sorting)

FOLD HERE

FOLD HERE

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

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

You must staple or tape shut at top before mailing.

Corridor Comment Card
www.tennessee.gov/tdot

Project Description:

SR 32 (US 321) Corridor Improvement Project
From SR 73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road,
Cosby, Cocke County, Tennessee

Date: March 15, 2012

Project #: PE 15005-1234-04

County: Cocke

PLEASE PRINT

Name _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (include area code): _____

Which describes your primary interest in the project? Concerned Citizen _____ Affected Resident _____

Affected Landowner _____ Affected Business _____ Name of Business _____

We are interested in your comments about the proposed project. Please indicate:

The alternative you prefer and why _____

What issues and concerns you have about the project _____

Any changes you would make to the project _____

Please give us your assessment of our public involvement process. Rate us from 1 to 5, with 1 the worst and 5 the best.

Hearing Process Criteria:

	<u>Best</u>						<u>Worst</u>				
Organization of Materials	5	4	3	2	1	Information Presented	5	4	3	2	1
Length of Meeting	5	4	3	2	1	People Presenting	5	4	3	2	1
Time of Meeting	5	4	3	2	1	Knowledge of Staff	5	4	3	2	1
Convenience of Location	5	4	3	2	1	Courtesy of Staff	5	4	3	2	1
Facility Accommodations	5	4	3	2	1	Visual Aids	5	4	3	2	1

For any score lower than three (3), please provide an explanation. _____

DT-1702

MORE COMMENT SPACE ON BACK.



PUBLIC MEETING

**State Route 32 (U.S. Highway 321) Improvements
State Route 73 in Cosby to Wilton Springs Road,
Cosby, Cocke County, Tennessee**

Corridor Improvement Project

March 15, 2012

5:30 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.

Cosby High School

3318 Cosby Highway

Cosby, Tennessee 37722

Between 1998 and the present TDOT has evaluated alternatives to improve SR 32 (US 321). Alternatives have been modified in response to public and resource agency input, and environmental constraints. The most recent alternative modification are presented at this meeting.

**Contact: JonnaLeigh Stack
TDOT NEPA Project Manager
(615) 741-3655
Jonnaleigh.stack@tn.gov**

WELCOME!

Thank you for attending the public meeting for State Route 32 (SR 32) (U.S. Highway 321 (US 321)) Improvements Environmental Assessment (EA). This handout package provides information on the public meeting format as well as a summary of the project purpose and need, a description of the project's design features, potential environmental impacts of the project, and the next steps in the project development process. It also explains how to provide the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) your comments.

Below is the agenda for this evening.

- | |
|---|
| <p>5:30 – 6:00 PM – View displays and talk with TDOT Project Team</p> <p>6:00 – 6:30 PM – Presentation to provide updated information on the Proposed SR 32 (US 321) Improvement Project including recent modifications based on stakeholder input</p> <p>6:30 – 7:30 PM – View displays and talk with TDOT Project Team</p> |
|---|

During the first 30 minutes of the meeting, you will be able to view displays illustrating the alternative that is being evaluated in the SR 32 (US 321) Environmental Assessment (EA). After you sign in and receive the project handout, you are encouraged to view the displays and speak with representatives from the TDOT Project Team.

At 6:00 PM, the project presentation with update information will begin. Following the presentation, there is a Comment/Question Session. In the interest of time, TDOT Project Team members will provide a brief response to your question or comment.

If you would like a more in-depth response than time offers during the Comment/Question Session, or want to discuss a topic, please talk with a Project Team member either before the formal Comment/Question Session, or after the Session with TDOT Project Team members will again be available to talk with you individually.

The public meeting will conclude at 7:30 PM.



SR 32 (US 321)

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 proposed project alternatives currently under study.

PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

You will have several opportunities to make known your comments about both projects and have them included in the official transcript:

- A court reporter will record the meeting's formal Comment/Question session and will be available during the entire public meeting to record your individual oral comments.
- A comment form is included in this handout for your use. You may deposit your completed form in the box by the door before you leave the public meeting or you may submit written comments to:

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

Or by email to:
TDOT.Comments@tn.gov

* Written comments must be postmarked no later than **April 5, 2012** (include your name and address) in order to be included in the official transcript of this public meeting.

TDOT is an EEO/Affirmative Action Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, sex, religion, color, disability, or national origin.



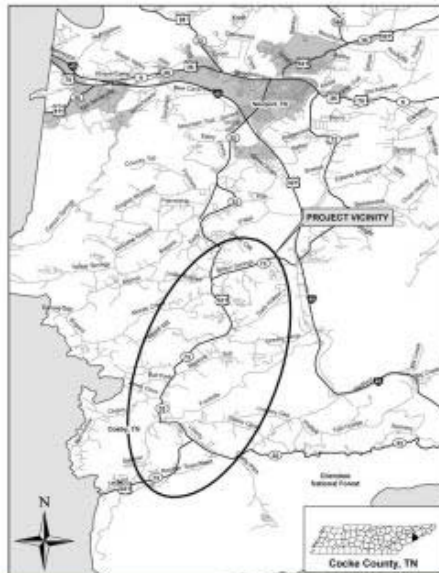
SR 32 (US 321)

SR-32 (US-321) PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

Two typical sections would 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 would occur on new location.

The proposed project would also cross the Foothills Parkway, which is administered by the National Park Service (NPS). As currently proposed, the project would 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.



SR 32 (US 321)

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 proposed project 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.

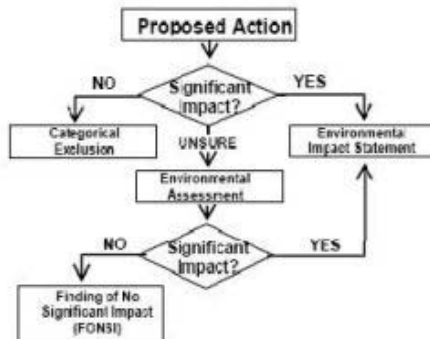
WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT?

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	Social and Community Impacts
Air Quality	Economic and Business Impacts
Historic and Archaeological Resources	Environmental Justice
Traffic and Safety	Farmland
Resources	Visual Impacts
Floodplains	Parks and Recreational Resources
Hazardous Materials Sites	Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources
Soils and Geology	Pedestrian and Bicycle Considerations
Land Use	Construction Impacts

SR 32 (US 321)

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

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 would widen SR 32 (US 321) between SR 73 in Cosby and Wilton Springs Road.

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.



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.

SR 32 (US 321)