Frequently Asked Questions

Updated February 2025

1. Q: How wide will the roadway be? Why does the road need to be widened?

A: The section of US-64/SR-40 from Welcome Valley Road to SR-314 will be widened to include two 12-foot travel lanes, one 12-foot center turn lane, a 6-foot paved left shoulder, and a 4-foot paved right shoulder. The proposed design also supports multimodal transportation, featuring a 10-foot shared-use path along US-64/SR-40 (separated by a 10.5-foot grass buffer) that connects the Ocoee River Bridge to Sugarloaf Mountain State Park. [HS1] This widening aligns with the objectives of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS), aiming to enhance both safety and efficiency while balancing the needs of local and recreational traffic with regional connectivity.

Recent traffic data shows that Locations 3 and 4 experience an Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) of approximately 6,000 vehicles, with 9% truck volume (nearly 1 in 10 vehicles is a tractor-trailer). Since trucks and recreational users are the primary users of this corridor, the proposed design seeks to improve ADHS connectivity while addressing local community needs. The main benefit of these improvements is the reduction of crashes and fatalities in the most cost-effective way possible. Since 2022, crash data has recorded 19 collisions between Locations 3 and 4, with nearly 58% resulting in injuries and one fatality. Notably, 43% of crashes in this area are rear-end collisions, a rate higher than the state's average of 24% since 2022.

To enhance safety and reduce crashes, the proposed design includes a dedicated left-turn lane, allowing turning vehicles to move out of the primary travel lane. This improvement will reduce traffic slowdowns, create safer turning opportunities, and improve business access along the corridor. Additionally, the widening of the paved shoulders—from the current 3-foot to 6-foot on the left and 4-foot on the right—addresses safety concerns. Widening shoulders is a proven countermeasure to reduce run-off-the-road crashes by the Federal Highway Administration's Crash Modification Factors (CMF) Clearinghouse. The 10.5-foot grass buffer separating vehicle traffic from the shared-use path also provides a distinct, visual separation, increasing the perceived safety for pedestrians and cyclists using the path.

2. Q: Will the posted speed of the roadway increase?

A: The project is being designed so the posted speed limit will remain 45 miles per hour. The project will improve sight distance where required so that it meets design standards for a 45 mile per hour posted speed. Sight distance is the distance a driver needs to see to avoid collisions with other vehicles or objects. The project will complete improvements such as flattening vertical curves (hills), removing roadside obstructions, and realigning intersections

to improve the safety of the roadway as it provides drivers a greater amount of time to perceive and react to traffic conditions.

3. **Q: Why does the project need to cut into some existing hills along the corridor? Can retaining walls be used in those locations?**

   A: Cuts will be used where needed to provide room for the widened roadway, improve curves, and provide ditches for drainage along the corridor. The steepness of slopes will be determined through collaboration between the roadway and geotechnical engineers. Retaining walls will be considered based on many factors including cost, avoidance of obstacles, future maintenance, and right-of-way.

4. **Q: Why does the bridge over Cloud Branch need to be replaced? What will it look like?**

   A: Based on its most recent inspection, the existing bridge over Cloud Branch is rated "Poor" (rated a 3 on a 0 – 9 scale). The bridge is also weight posted which limits the size of vehicles that can legally cross the bridge and utilize the corridor. The new bridge will provide the structural capacity needed to permit all legal vehicles and loads to cross and will include shoulders and new traffic railings. The new bridge will also be greater in length to achieve a "No-Rise" Certification in compliance with FEMA and National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. A "No-Rise" Certification is an engineering analysis that demonstrates that a proposed project meets the requirements of 44 CFR Section 60.3(d)(3) and will not increase flood levels. Aesthetic features including decorative rails and other finishes are currently being considered for the replacement structure. Potential aesthetic features will be selected to complement both the Ocoee River Bridge and the Madden Branch Bridge that were recently completed.

5. **Q: Why will the new bridge be shifted north of the existing bridge and why will it have a center turn lane?**

   A: During the development of the project, several factors were considered in the alignment of the new bridge. These included impacts on adjacent properties, the amount of grading (cuts and fills), bridge length, and traffic phasing. Ultimately, it was determined that an alignment to the north was the better solution due to its shorter bridge length, reduced fill, and phasing that allowed for maintaining 12-foot lanes in each direction during the entire period of the bridge construction. The new bridge will have three lanes to match the adjacent proposed roadway, as the center turn lane may be used to access properties just beyond the bridge and maintain the safety benefit of separation between opposing lanes.

6. **Q: Can the roadway be closed, and traffic detoured so that the new bridge can be built in the same location as the existing bridge?**

   A: During the initial coordination of the project with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC); TDOT agreed to provide traffic control which would keep US-64/SR-40 open during construction.

7. **Q: Can Accelerated Bridge Construction (ABC) for the bridge over Cloud Branch be used during off-peak tourism season to minimize traffic disruptions?**

   A: The off-peak tourism season coincides with the time of year when the contractor will have increased limitations due to weather conditions. With that, the commitment to leaving the corridor open during construction, the need for larger staging areas, and higher construction costs associated with accelerated construction, ABC has limited benefits for this bridge replacement.

8. **Q: Why does the intersection at SR-314 need to be realigned?**

   A: There are currently four entry/exit points along US-64/SR-40 at this intersection for SR-314 and the driveways to Ocoee Dam #1 and Sugarloaf Mountain Park. The new intersection design will consolidate the two driveways, remove the split in SR-314, and provide turn lanes to provide for a safer intersection and reduce overlapping turning movements and conflict points. [HS2]

   Furthermore, the new design will improve the geometrics of the SR-314 leg of the intersection by creating a safer angle and line of sight. Crash data for the SR-314 intersection reports three crashes at this location since 2022, two of those with injuries and one fatal injury. The current skew of the eastbound leg of SR-314 has an intersection angle of approximately 33 degrees, making it hard for drivers to see eastbound traffic on US-64/SR-40 before turning left onto US-64/SR-40. The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets,* the leading reference manual for roadway design throughout the United States, emphasizes that ideally, intersections should be 90 degrees but providing an angle of at least 75 degrees provides most of the benefits of a 90-degree intersection angle while reducing ROW acquisition and construction costs. The proposed realignment includes an intersection angle of approximately 77 degrees where SR-314 and US-64/SR-40 meet.

9. **Q: Why does the project include a multimodal path?**

   A: TDOT, as a multimodal agency, is committed to the development of a transportation system that integrates these facilities where appropriate to ensure access for all users (vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.). The multi-use path along Locations 3 and 4 connects residents and tourists to recreation and business areas along the corridor.

10. **Q: Can TDOT reserve funds from the roadway project and use those funds later to build a greenway along the Ocoee River?**

    A: The Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) funds being used to construct these projects must be used along the corridor and cannot be used to construct an “off-alignment” greenway. TDOT, being a transportation agency, does not have funding available for the development of recreational facilities.

11. **Q: Will the utilities have to be relocated? Will aerial utilities be placed underground and will water and sewer service be available to both sides of the roadway?**

    A: Utilities in conflict with the proposed improvements will be relocated through the approved TDOT procedures once the extents of those conflicts are identified. This is done through coordination with the impacted utility owners. The decisions on the location and whether the utility will be above or below ground are at the discretion of the utility owner and are determined during that coordination activity. Per the Tennessee Code, TDOT can only reimburse utilities for in-kind replacements to current standards and not additional costs to upgrade facilities, known as "betterment".

12. **Q: Is this section of US-64/SR-40 part of the Scenic Byway? Can TDOT provide the requirements and resources for additional signage and/or facilities?**

    A: The Scenic Byway designation starts east of the SR-314 intersection on SR-40. All signage requirements are being coordinated with the USFS, which is responsible for operating and overseeing the nearby Cherokee National Forest.

13. **Q: What environmental studies and documents will be completed for these projects?**

    A: Environmental studies are coordinated with state and federal agencies and conducted during the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document development process. The NEPA class of action (i.e. Categorical Exclusion (CE), Environmental Assessment (EA), or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)) is determined based on a proposed improvement's potential to significantly impact the human or natural environment. As projects are identified and defined, TDOT will confirm the NEPA class of action for each in partnership with FHWA. Additionally, each project will have logical termini (beginning and end points of the project) and independent utility (a project that has a distinct purpose and function that is not reliant on the completion of other projects).

    As part of the project development process, TDOT coordinated with FHWA and determined that a CE was the appropriate NEPA class of action for Locations 3 and 4 as the proposed project is not anticipated to have an individual or cumulative significant environmental effect. TDOT is currently preparing the CE in accordance with NEPA, and it will include all necessary technical studies to satisfy NEPA requirements. These technical studies could include but are not limited to, the assessment of impacts on ecological resources, threatened and endangered species, cultural resources, presence of hazardous materials, Section 4(f), and others.

14. **Q: What design elements will be included to address safety, aesthetics, and noise impacts on the locations?**

    A: The roadway is being designed to TDOT standards to address safety. Safety elements will include turn lanes, paved shoulders, a multi-use path offset from the roadway, and flattened slopes within the clear zone as defined by FHWA and TDOT design standards. Where clear zones cannot be achieved, guardrails or other protective barriers will be utilized. Aesthetic

finishes on the bridge over Cloud Branch are being considered. If noise impact commitments are identified in the NEPA document, accommodations such as barriers or buffers will be provided.

15. **Q: How does the proposed design address higher speeds and safety conflicts along the widened corridor?**

    A: Along Locations 3 and 4, the roadway is being designed to TDOT standards for the specified design speed (45 mph) and cross-section. More specifically, the vertical geometry (hills and valleys along the roadway) was redesigned to improve sight distance at the design speed of 45 mph. This will improve a driver's ability to see and respond to upcoming road and traffic conditions.

    Crash data from Locations 3 and 4 report a total of 19 crashes since 2022, with 42% of those being rear-end collisions. In addition to the improved profile, the proposed continuous left turn lane will provide a safe area for drivers making turns into homes and businesses, while allowing through traffic to continue uninterrupted.

16. **Q: Can grassed medians be installed instead of a center turn lane in areas that do not have much turning traffic to discourage motorists from using the center turn lane to pass right-turning vehicles?**

    A: This can be evaluated as part of the design process and requires consideration of future access and maintenance at a minimum. A drawback of grassed medians is that as parcels develop and driveways are added or moved, the cost of adding openings to the median to provide access will be the responsibility of the property owner. A narrow, grassed median may allow water to infiltrate the roadway subgrade which accelerates deterioration and requires additional drainage.

17. **Q: Are there any "traffic calming" elements incorporated into the proposed design that will help to reduce speeds?**

    A: Currently, the project is being designed to accommodate a consistent design speed throughout the segment. Given its role as a regional corridor with 9% truck traffic, traditional traffic calming measures often seen on streets with lower speeds (speed humps, raised medians, etc.) are likely inappropriate based on Federal Highway Administration Guidance.

    According to the FHWA Publication, *Factors Influencing Operating Speeds and Safety on Rural and Suburban Roads*, several components within the proposed design have been identified as calming measures. See the table below for a summary of speed-reducing measures:

Design Feature	Safety and/or Speed Reduction Effectiveness
Longitudinal Rumble Strips	• Some studies have shown that the treatment can reduce injury crashes by 14%, severe crashes by 18%, fatal and serious crashes by 67%, and overall crashes by 20% • Longitudinal rumble strips have been found to reduce speeds by 4.5 mph
	• Source: *FHWA Publication No. FHWA-HRT-15-030*, p. 281
Center Lane & Edge Line Striping	• Studies have shown that lane striping can reduce fatal and injury crashes by 8.6% • Reduction in speeds by 1-2mph on rural, two-lane roads • Source: *FHWA Publication No. FHWA-HRT-15-030*, p. 295
Two-Way Left-Turn Lane (TWLTL)	• TWLTL have shown 29% reduction in crashes at 3-leg intersections • Speed reduction by nearly 8 mph on rural and suburban roads • Source: *FHWA Publication No. FHWA-HRT-15-030*, p. 319
Paving Shoulders	• Paved shoulders (preferred width of 6' to 8') have been shown to reduce crashes by 30% • Source: *FHWA Publication No. FHWA-HRT-15-030*, p. 321

Source: *Factors Influencing Operating Speeds and Safety on Rural and Suburban Roads* (*Publication No. FHWA-HRT-15-030*), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), May 2015, www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/15030/15030.pdf.

18. Q: Can revegetation buffers be re-installed as part of the project to replace existing natural buffers?

A: Property owners will be compensated fair market value for any existing vegetative buffers on their property that are removed as part of the right-of-way (ROW) negotiation process for their use in restoring the vegetation as the property owner deems appropriate. TDOT will establish stabilized slopes within areas disturbed by construction.

19. Q: Can permeable pavement be utilized for the roadway shoulders to help with drainage runoff?

A: Permeable pavements are not typically used by TDOT on its highway facilities due to higher traffic volumes that could lead to maintenance issues. To be effective in the long term, permeable pavement structures must be periodically maintained through vacuuming, debris sweeping, and inspection. While permeable pavements can aid in stormwater

management, FHWA's Tech Brief on Use of Permeable Pavement states that the structural capacity of these materials is lesser than traditional pavements. With 9% truck volume and the maintenance of the traffic plan intending to use shoulders for temporary traffic, the shoulders along US-64/SR-40 must be designed to withstand 20% of the mainline traffic load per TDOT's Pavement Design Manual. Furthermore, constructing permeable shoulders adjacent to traditional pavement imposes a more complex construction plan and higher costs.

The current drainage design throughout the corridor is in alignment with TDOT's Drainage Manual. TDOT's standards require culverts to be designed based on the 50-year storm event and checked for the 100-year storm, while ditches are designed for the 10-year storm.

Sources:

Use of Permeable Pavements (Publication No. FHWA-HIF-23-076), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), September 2023, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/pavement/pubs/hif23076.pdf.

2019 Pavement Design Guidelines, Tennessee Department of Transportation Roadway Design Division, November 2019, https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/roadway-design/documents/pavement-design/TDOT%20Pavement%20Design%20Manual.pdf

20. **Q: Are additional improvements proposed at the intersection of US-64/SR-40 and Welcome Valley Road?**

    A: The proposed design improves the curve onto Welcome Valley Road from westbound SR-40. Drainage improvements are also included at this location to ensure stormwater runoff is adequately managed. [HS3]

21. **Q: Are the spot improvement projects being looked at holistically so that improvements at one location work together with improvements at the other locations?**

    A: A series of potential spot improvement projects have been identified along an approximately 20-mile stretch of Corridor K from the Ocoee River to SR-68 near Ducktown. This series of projects is referred to as the "targeted approach" for providing proposed design improvements including turn lanes, shoulder widening, guardrail installation, curve correction, and rockfall mitigation measures. The corridor is being managed and designed by a project team that is aware of the entirety of the targeted approach. While each location is being developed as a spot improvement, design features are intended to be consistent with the selected design speed while also meeting the intended safety and operational goals of that segment.

22. **Q: Are there plans to develop recreational river access near or below the Hwy 64 bridge across the Ocoee River? If so, how can the public provide input concerning the aesthetic design and operational plan for that site? (May not include. Copied from Ocoee Gateway Community Initiative letter.)**

A: There have been some discussions in this regard, but there are currently no plans to make this connection. The decision to create recreational river access at this location will be made by the Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency (TWRA). The public may provide input concerning potential river access at this location by contacting TWRA Region 3 at TWRA.ASKRegion3@tn.gov

Links to Concepts: Corridor K Maps - Locations 3, 4, 7, and 9.pdf [HS1]