

# OFFICE HOURS SUMMARY REPORT

JP 34333(04) – US-259

FROM 8.25 MI. N. OF JCT. SH-3, EXTEND N. 4.00 MI.

Prepared for:

**Oklahoma Department of Transportation**

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Prepared by:

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FNI Project Number: ODT21749

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of hosting monthly Office Hours with community stakeholders in Hochatown was to establish an open and consistent forum to discuss the development of the US-259 roadway project between Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the project stakeholders. The initiative was announced at the Hochatown Board of Trustees meeting in November 2024, and Office Hours began in December 2024. These sessions provided a recurring opportunity for residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to receive information and offer feedback related to topics including safety, walkability, parking, aesthetics, and overall community impact.

This summary outlines coordination efforts and public engagement activities conducted to date and how stakeholder input has been considered in the ongoing development of the project design.

## **ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY:**

### **APPROACH AND COORDINATION STRATEGY**

The foundation of the Office Hours initiative is a commitment to genuine two-way communication. Rather than presenting static updates, the project team engaged in direct, candid conversations with stakeholders to clarify project intent and address questions. This personal approach helped build transparency and trust throughout the Hochatown community.

To maximize outreach and keep stakeholders informed, several coordination methods were implemented:

- Social media outreach: Regular updates posted to ODOT and Hochatown Facebook pages
- Board of Trustees Involvement: Project included in Board of Trustees meeting agendas to maintain transparency
- Business outreach: Phone calls placed to local businesses to provide updates and encourage participation
- Property owner engagement: One-on-one conversations held with numerous property owners, often resulting in further referrals and follow-ups
- Pre-Meeting notifications: Property owners were notified in advance of Office Hours to improve attendance

### **FORMAT AND DELIVERY**

Office Hours were hosted monthly from the community Town Hall and were attended by representatives from both ODOT and Freese and Nichols, Inc. (FNI), ODOT's Design Consultant. These sessions provided an open forum for reviewing the latest design materials and collecting feedback. To facilitate productive discussions:

- Updated visuals and KMZ files were prepared to illustrate proposed improvements. See **Appendix C** for summaries of the monthly Office Hours discussions and **Appendix E** for exhibits and figures.
- Stakeholder-specific exhibits were provided to help property owners understand how improvements would affect their property (see **Appendix E**).
- Agency representatives were present to provide technical insight and record feedback in real time.

## **COMMUNITY INPUT AND DESIGN RESPONSIVENESS**

Stakeholder feedback has been instrumental in shaping the direction of the project. Design refinements were guided not only by technical feasibility but also by a deliberate effort to reflect community priorities wherever possible. Each adjustment discussed during these meetings was carefully evaluated in the context of the latest design standards, ensuring alignment with the project's overall goals and intent. This collaborative approach has helped balance innovation, practicality, and community vision throughout the design process.

Throughout the course of the Office Hours discussions, three key aspects emerged as recurring priorities for refinement in the design.

- Driveway placement and improvements
- Access management regarding the center lane median
- Pedestrian improvements including street crossings and sidewalk connectivity

Community comments were carefully evaluated by the project team and implemented with the best interests of all parties in mind (see **Appendix E**). Suggestions that could not be incorporated were addressed with clear explanations while the key considerations that guided these decisions are outlined below.

- Design integrity and safety of the public
- Environmental or regulatory compliance
- Long-term maintenance
- Project schedule

## **CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED**

Despite proactive coordination, several challenges were noted:

- Misunderstandings about project scope: Clarification was needed to address outdated or inaccurate perceptions regarding the extents of the current projects design and impacts.
- Limited meeting attendance: Several sessions had low turnout (see **Appendix B**) which led to great one-on-one conversations; however, the goal was to discuss with as many community members as possible prompting exploration of alternative outreach strategies (see **Appendix D**).
- Engagement with non-resident owners: Difficulty reaching absentee property owners resulted in uneven participation and communication gaps that led to leaving letters at property owner doorsteps (see **Appendix G**).

**SCHEDULE AND KEY ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES:**

DATE	ACTIVITY
<b>September 2024</b>	Public meeting hosted to present initial project information and gather feedback.
<b>October 2024</b>	Interim Study conducted by local representatives requesting improved communication from ODOT.
<b>November 2024</b>	Hochatown Public Meeting held to announce start of recurring Office Hours, and a Walking audit completed to assess pedestrian and roadway conditions.
<b>December 2024</b>	First Monthly Office Hours held at Hochatown Town Hall to receive public feedback.
<b>January</b>	30% Conceptual Design Plans submitted to ODOT providing initial figures for coordination of improvements.
<b>January – May 2025</b>	Monthly Office Hours conducted to discuss potential improvements.
<b>May 2025</b>	Additional door-to-door outreach conducted to engage property owners that had not attended office hours.
<b>June – August 2025</b>	Continued monthly Office Hours to share updates and maintain engagement.
<b>August 2025</b>	Final monthly Office Hours conducted with informal community coordination ongoing.

**CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:**

The coordination efforts to date have been essential in fostering meaningful community dialogue, refining the project design, and building long-term trust with stakeholders. Through a combination of proactive outreach, transparent communication, and design responsiveness, the US-259 project continues to evolve as a reflection of both technical goals and community values.

Throughout the course of the monthly Office Hours and informal coordination efforts, approximately 82% of adjacent property owners were engaged through in-person meetings, phone calls, or written correspondence. Attendance at the Office Hours varied, with participation ranging from one to nine community members per session.

**NEXT STEPS**

- Conclusion of Office Hours by providing a final update at a Public Meeting in Hochatown on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and the Board of Trustees meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Project team to continue preparing for upcoming design milestones by incorporating stakeholder input where appropriate.
- ODOT will coordinate with the City of Hochatown to assess needs related to roadway tie-ins, illumination, aesthetics, and utilities for potential inclusion in the proposed design.