



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Environmental Programs Division

200 N.E. 21st Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3204
www.odot.org

June 18, 2018

Subject: Alternative Selection for SH-82 North of Tahlequah in Cherokee County, JP 27101(04)

Dear Stakeholder:

We are pleased to inform you that the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) in cooperation with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has selected the final alternatives for the improvements to SH-82 from the end of the Bertha Parker Bypass in Tahlequah extending north and west of the Town of Gideon in Cherokee County. Existing SH-82 has narrow or no shoulders and several sharp curves and rolling terrain, which result in inadequate sight distance to see oncoming traffic or turning traffic. These factors contribute to a substantial accident history. In addition, the current Average Daily Traffic count on SH-82 is 8,140 vehicles per day with a 20 year projected traffic count of 11,600 vehicles per day. The current two-lane highway cannot adequately handle this amount of traffic. A multi-lane highway is also desirable to complete the outer loop around the city of Tahlequah in anticipation of future traffic needs. The purpose of this project is to improve safety and traffic flow within the SH-82 corridor.

Based on the analysis of traffic and safety performance, completion of the divided 4-lane loop around Tahlequah, impacts to homes, businesses, and the environment, and public and agency input, **ODOT selects Alternative 1A for the south segment, which begins at the end of the Bertha Parker Bypass in Tahlequah and extends north to W. 710 Road, and Alternative 7 for the north segment, which begins at W. 710 Road and extends north to Gideon** (see attached map). Alternative 1A is a divided four-lane highway on a new alignment. Alternative 7 is a four-lane divided highway located adjacent to the existing SH-82 roadway on the east side. These alternatives are anticipated to have the most safety benefit, have fewer impacts to homes, and provide corridor continuity of the divided 4-lane loop around Tahlequah. In addition, Alternative 1A provides more opportunity for ODOT to program multiple construction projects to stay within existing budget constraints.

The study of this highway has been ongoing for several years. Two public meetings were held in Tahlequah (July 25, 2013 and January 27, 2015) that presented twelve alternative alignments for improving the highway: ten for the segment of SH-82 from Allen Road to W. 710 Road, known as the South Project, and two for the segment of SH-82 from W. 710 Road to Gideon, known as the North Project. Comments were received from residents at these public meetings. In addition, comments were received from solicitations sent to state and federal agencies. Based on the alignment study, evaluation of environmental considerations, right-of-way and utility impacts, public comments, and state and federal agency input, ODOT selected Alternative 1A for the South Project and Alternative 7 for the North Project. Alternative 1A provided a four-lane divided, limited access roadway from the south end of the project, near Allen Road, to W. 710 Road on a new alignment. Alternative 7 provided a four-lane divided highway from W. 710 Road to Gideon on an adjacent offset to the east of the existing highway.

After this selection occurred, the City of Tahlequah and Cherokee County requested that ODOT reconsider a hybrid Alternative 9-5, which combined two previously presented alternatives. Alternative 9-5 would provide a 5-lane curb and gutter roadway on the existing SH-82 alignment from the south end of the project to just north of Jones/Steely Hollow Road. From that point, Alternative 9-5 would provide a four-lane divided highway to W. 710 Road, where it would tie into Alternative 7. ODOT agreed to assess this alternative along with Alternatives 1A and 7 in the Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA was completed on July 31, 2017 and was made available for public review from August 4 through September 23, 2017. A public hearing was held on August 24, 2017 to present the findings of the EA and obtain public comments. Based on the findings of the EA and public comments, ODOT selected Alternative 1A for the South Project and Alternative 7 for the north project. Alternative 9-5 did not provide enhanced performance in meeting the purpose and need or overall reduced impacts.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the SH-82 on April 11, 2018 project based on the EA. The EA and FONSI are available for review at: [https://www.ok.gov/odot/Programs and Projects/Public Meetings and Hearings/20170824.html](https://www.ok.gov/odot/Programs%20and%20Projects/Public%20Meetings%20and%20Hearings/20170824.html).

"The mission of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation is to provide a safe, economical, and effective transportation network for the people, commerce and communities of Oklahoma."

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ODOT will move forward with design of Alternatives 1A and 7, while completing detailed environmental studies for these alternatives. ODOT currently has right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations scheduled to begin in 2020 with projected construction in years 2022 and 2024, depending on funding availability. The existing SH-82 roadway will remain open to traffic during construction.

Should you have any information or specific concerns, please contact Leslie Novotny, Environmental Project Manager at ODOT at (405) 521-2321 or lnovotny@odot.org, or Kirsten McCullough with Garver at (918) 858-3799 or KJMcCullough@GarverUSA.com.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Siv Sundaram", is written over a blue line that extends from the signature down to the text below.

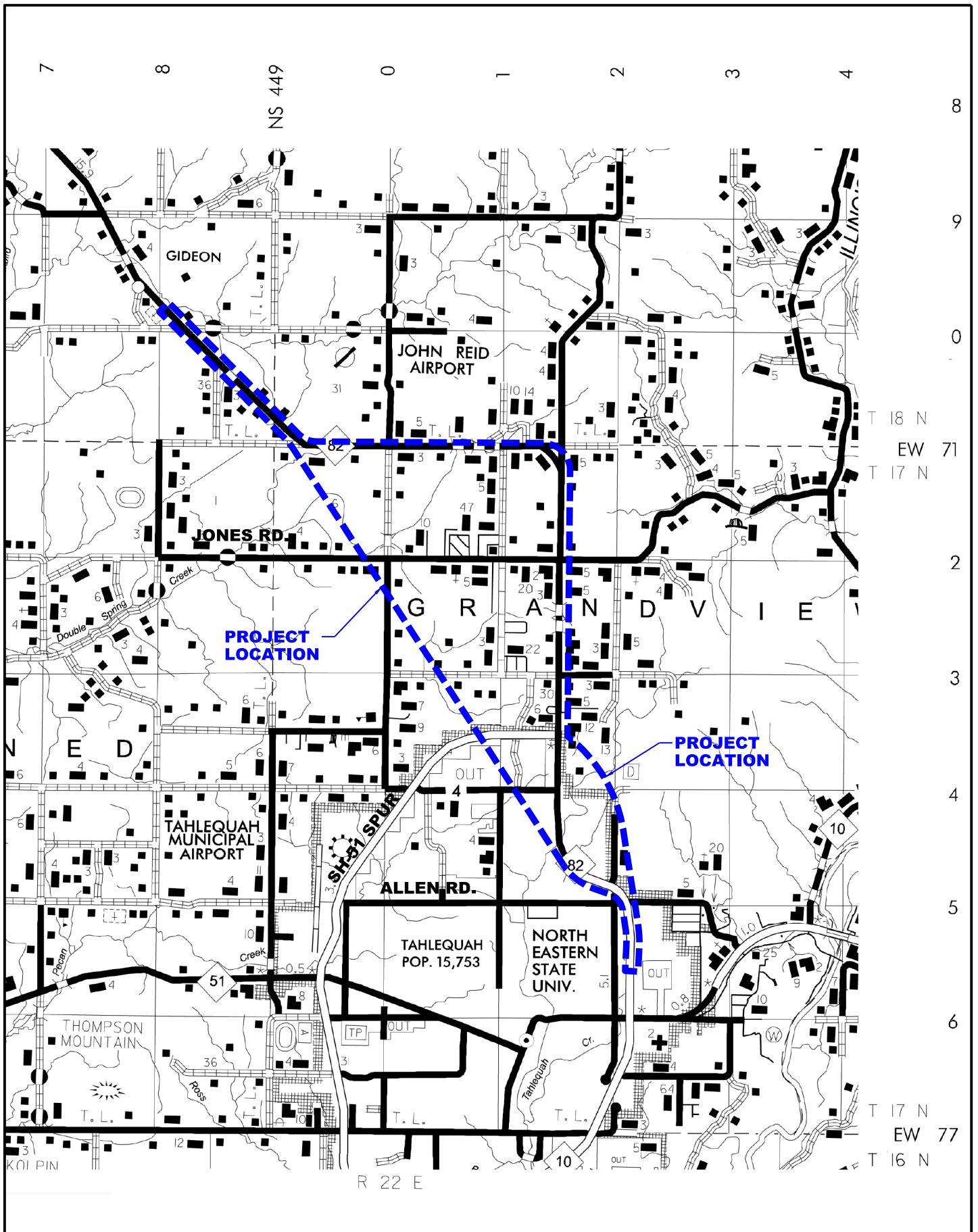
Siv Sundaram, P.E.
Environmental Programs Division Engineer

SS:LN:Garver

Enclosures: Preferred Alignment Map, Location Map
Copy to: Project Management Division, Field Division Engineer, Roadway Design Division, Cultural Resources Program, Tribal Liaison

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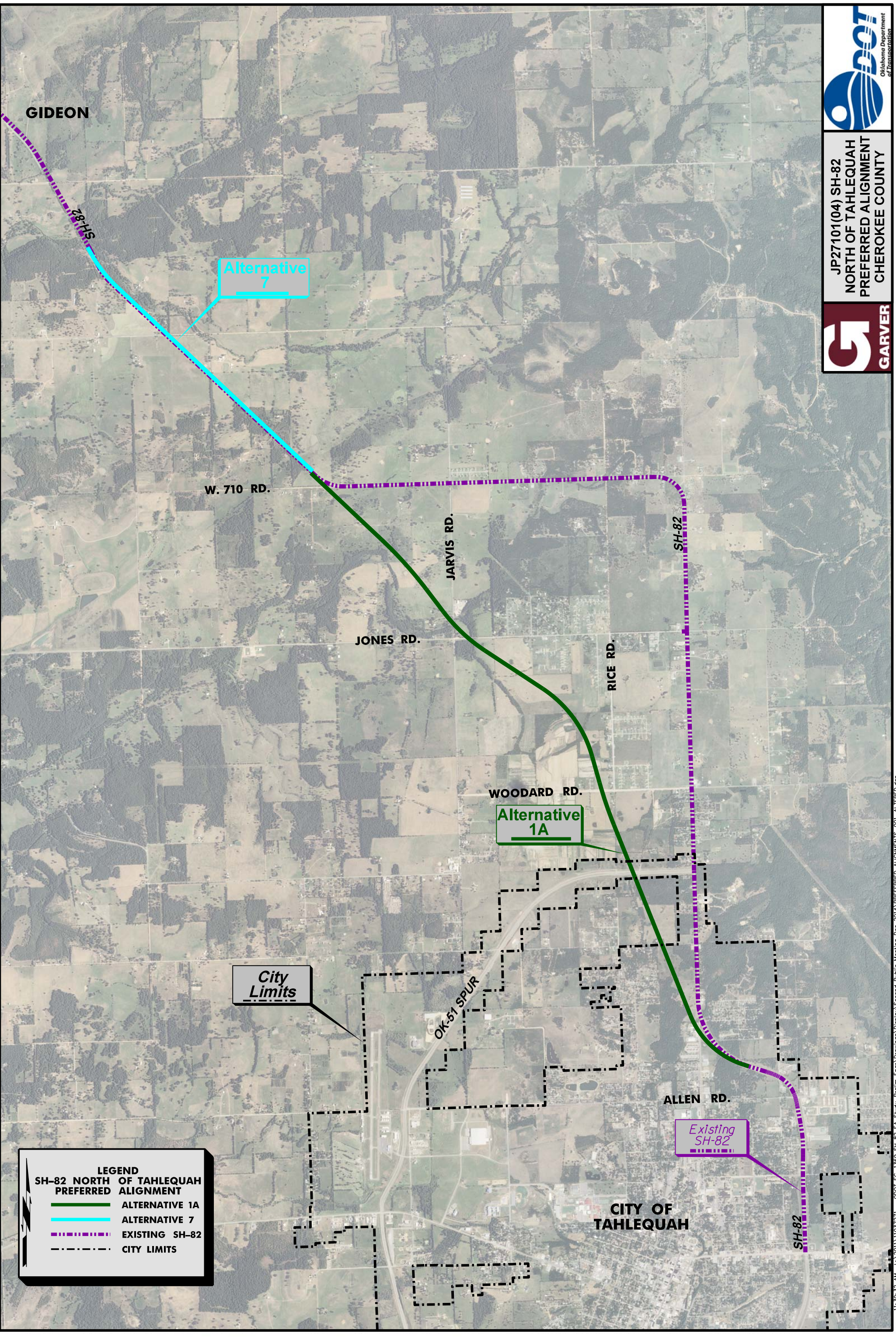
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Cherokee County SH-82
Job No. 27101(04)

Project Location Map





Alternative 7

Alternative 1A

Existing SH-82

City Limits

LEGEND

SH-82 NORTH OF TAHLEQUAH PREFERRED ALIGNMENT

- ALTERNATIVE 1A
- ALTERNATIVE 7
- EXISTING SH-82
- CITY LIMITS