

# **VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT**

**Open House Dates:  
September 25 to October 12, 2020**

**SH-9 IMPROVEMENTS: FROM 108<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE SE, EAST TO 156<sup>TH</sup>  
AVENUE SE IN NORMAN**

**CLEVELAND COUNTY  
J/P No. 20266(14); Project No. J2-0266(014)**

Prepared for:



**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION**

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## **1.0 VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE OVERVIEW**

As part of the Oklahoma Department of Transportation's (ODOT) efforts to keep the public informed and involved in the decision-making process, a Virtual Open House was held. Due to ongoing concerns over the spread of COVID-19, the Virtual Open House was hosted in a web-based format, and no in-person meeting was held. The following is a generalized summary of the information provided and the comments received. ODOT responses to comments are also presented in this document.

### **1.1 OPEN HOUSE DATES**

September 25 to October 12, 2020

### **1.2 MEETING WEBSITE**

[www.odot.org/SH9](http://www.odot.org/SH9)

### **1.3 PURPOSE OF MEETING**

The purpose of the Virtual Open House was to inform the public of the proposed improvements, solicit input, and answer questions regarding construction activities, sequencing, and scheduling.

### **1.4 PROJECT BACKGROUND**

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to make safety improvements and add capacity to this segment of SH-9 from approximately 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, extending east approximately 4.4 miles to 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, in Norman, Cleveland County, Oklahoma. This segment of SH-9 is a two-lane highway with 12-foot wide driving lanes and 10-foot wide paved shoulders. There are two bridges and several drainage structures within the project extent that would be addressed as part of this project. This section has deteriorating pavement, limited sight distances, steep slopes, and higher than average traffic. Current traffic volumes are 10,190 vehicles per day (vpd) and are projected to increase to 15,200 vpd by 2045. The purpose of the proposed improvements is to correct roadway deficiencies, enhance safety, and efficiently accommodate future traffic.

### **1.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

In an effort to increase safety and accommodate elevated traffic levels, the highway will be widened to create four 12-foot wide driving lanes with a 16-foot wide center turning lane, and 10-foot wide paved shoulders on existing alignment or on slightly offset south alignment. Slight offset alignments were selected to minimize impacts to Thunderbird State Park, local residences and community facilities.

During construction, the highway will remain open, and access to residences, businesses, and the Lake Thunderbird State Park will be maintained throughout the project duration.

### **1.6 PUBLIC NOTICES**

- ODOT mailed Virtual Open House pamphlet via Direct Mail to property and business owners on three mailing routes along the project area on September 23, 2020.
- Virtual Open House pamphlets were mailed to various political entities, interested parties and public on September 23, 2020.
- ODOT mailed Virtual Open House pamphlets to property owners, utility owners, and other stakeholders on September 24, 2020.
- ODOT mailed solicitation letters to various state and federal agencies and Native American Tribes on September 25, 2020. These letters provided a short project description and included information about

the Open House and requested that recipients provide input by October 12, 2020. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of the project location and overview maps.

- ODOT sent out a press release and general media announcements on September 29, 2020.

## 1.7 MEETING FORMAT

The Virtual Open House was available for public access online at [www.odot.org/SH9](http://www.odot.org/SH9) between September 25 and October 12, 2020. The Open House combined the SH-9 project in Cleveland County with a separate project located on SH-9 in Pottawatomie County (JP# 23288(04)). On the Virtual Open House home page, the user could choose which project to view. Once the user was directed to the project page for SH-9 in Cleveland County, the user could select from the following pages for detailed information:

- Sign-In and Handout – This page included a PDF form for signing in and a PDF copy of the virtual Open House pamphlet.
- Project Presentation – This page contained a PDF of the project presentation with script.
- Interactive Project Map – This page contained an interactive online diagram that showed the proposed project in detail, and allowed users to comment on specific areas of the map.
- 3D Fly-Through – This page presented a 3-D animated video of the proposed improvements as construction stretches east on SH-9.
- Environmental Compliance – This page compiled the findings of the detailed environmental studies.
- Noise Studies – This page provided information regarding noise impacts and policies, and detailed results of noise studies conducted along SH-9.
- Right of Way Information – This page included a copy of the ODOT Relocation Brochure and the ODOT Property Rights Brochure to give users more information regarding relocations and right-of-way issues.
- Comment Period – The public was encouraged to participate in the public outreach process, and were provided several methods for submitting comments regarding the project. This page provided the deadline and contact information for providing comments.
- Frequent Questions – A list of frequently asked questions regarding the project and their answers.

## 2.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RESPONSES

In total, three hundred thirty-six (336) participants viewed the webpage as part of the Virtual Open House process, and ODOT received twenty-two (22) comments/questions, including five (5) phone calls, three (3) agency and tribal responses, one (1) website comment, six (6) emailed comments, and nine (9) paper comment forms received by mail.

The comments and responses associated with each medium are presented in the following sections.

### 2.1 WEBSITE ANALYTICS

VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE WEBSITE VIEWS	
VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE WEBSITE PAGE	TOTAL VIEWS
Virtual Open House Home Page	336
Sign-In & Handout	35
Attendees Who Signed Electronic Sign-In Sheet	11
Interactive Project Map	102
Comments on Interactive Map	12
Project Presentation	79
3D Fly Through	69
Environmental Compliance	17
Noise Studies	16
Right of Way Information	29
Frequently Asked Questions	26
Submit a Comment	16
Attendees Who Filled Out Electronic Comment Form	6

## 2.2 PUBLIC COMMENTS

### 2.2.1 Phone Calls

Interested parties had the option to call ODOT with comments regarding the proposed project. Five (5) calls were received. The comments are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Phone comments received.

PHONE CALL COMMENTS	
INDIVIDUAL	INPUT
Local Resident 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wanted to know why he was contacted since he did not live along the highway.</li> <li>Asked why ODOT would not complete the 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave portion of SH-9 first.</li> <li>Lives south of the highway about one mile. Has lived in the area for 52 years, before the lake was built, and knows the area very well.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerned about the proposed right-of-way and what it would do to his business. (His business is actually not located within this project footprint.)</li> </ul>
Local Resident 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked about the 72<sup>nd</sup> – 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. project.</li> <li>Wanted to know about a sidewalk or bike path between 48<sup>th</sup> Ave.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wanted to know why ODOT is skipping the 72<sup>nd</sup>-108<sup>th</sup> Ave segment of SH-9.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asked if ODOT would need some of his property at the corner of Chaparral Rd. and Lindsey St. east of SH-9.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.2 Email Comments

The public also emailed ODOT with comments and questions. Five (5) property owners and one (1) Agency emailed comments on the project. In general, there was no opposition to the project. Most individuals approved of the proposed improvements. Some had questions about the section of SH-9 between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. that was not included in the Open House materials. Another commentor requested bike lanes to be added to the project. The comments are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Email comments received.

EMAILED COMMENTS	
INDIVIDUAL	INPUT
Local Resident 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first phase of the SH-9 expansion project covered town through 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave. If the new phase begins at 108<sup>th</sup> Ave., what happened to the stretch between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup>? Is it going to be left as two lanes, or is it scheduled for future expansion?</li> <li>He does not live between 108<sup>th</sup> and 156<sup>th</sup> Ave., so he wondering why he received the notification. It seems he will be affected by the current expansion; wanted to know if he was missing something.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a long-time user of SH-9, he is fully aware of the need to improve the proposed section of roadway.</li> <li>He is concerned that the section between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. will remain a two-lane road. Changing from four lanes to two lanes, then back to four lanes is an ill-conceived plan, and will create a bottle neck. It would seem to move the problem from one area to another.</li> <li>It would make more sense to continue the four-lane road from 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Would like to know why this section was not included.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rather than making the road a 4-lane highway, ODOT should do something about the hazardous SH-9 stretch between Norman and the Newcastle area? There are many wrecks in that area.</li> </ul>

Local Resident 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see both widening projects done as soon as possible. This is a very dangerous road with no place to pass.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see a bike lane on the SH-9 widening plan. Lake Thunderbird is a recreation destination for bicyclists and hikers with its many mountain biking and hiking trails.</li> <li>• It would be advantageous for the Norman community if one could safely bicycle from Norman to Lake Thunderbird.</li> <li>• All across the country, new highway projects are including bike lanes to promote the health of community members and reduce carbon emissions from combustion engines.</li> <li>• Strongly encourages ODOT to include a bike lane in this plan.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to know what impacts the SH-9 improvements from 108<sup>th</sup> to 156<sup>th</sup> Ave will have on her. She lives in the Cinnamon Run Addition ½ mile south of SH-9 and 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.3 Interactive Map Comments

Visitors to the Virtual Open House website could use the Interactive Map to leave comments on specific areas of the project. One (1) Agency made several comments requesting the protection of Reclamation lands, and requested that culvert designs meet or exceed the capacity of the current structures. There was no opposition to the project. The comments are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Interactive Map comments.

INTERACTIVE MAP COMMENTS	
INDIVIDUAL	INPUT
Bureau of Reclamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally: Reclamation will follow up with formal correspondence documenting their comments (emailed official comments 10/14/2020)</li> <li>• Generally: Please ensure Lake Thunderbird's pool elevations are considered during design, especially for the proposed culvert and bridge. Conservation Pool Elev. 1039.0 ft, Flood Pool Elev.1049.4 ft, Surcharge Pool 1064.7 ft, record elev. 1053.2 ft</li> <li>• Generally: Reclamation requests the entire boundary between the highway and Federal land in the project area be fenced.</li> <li>• Please ensure the culvert to be installed meets or exceeds the capacity of the existing structure.</li> <li>• Please re-establish the cleared firebreak taken by the additional right-of-way in this area. The firebreak should be a minimum of 20 feet wide.</li> <li>• There is concern the driveway to the parking area will be too steep to be functional depending on the proposed grading and elevation changes for the highway. We look forward to receiving plans so the issue may be further discussed if necessary.</li> <li>• Reclamation requests a turnout be installed in this area to access lands south of the highway for fence line maintenance.</li> <li>• Reclamation requests the opportunity to review the design for the new bridge. The design should meet or exceed the capacity of the existing culverts.</li> <li>• Reclamation requests the ends of the culvert in this area be modified to prevent trespassing onto Federal land from unauthorized access points.</li> <li>• Reclamation requests ODOT accept and fence all of Reclamation's lands in this location.</li> <li>• Please remove this turnout to prevent unauthorized use.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.4 Comments Submitted Through ODOT’s Open House Website

Responders were also given the option to respond directly through ODOT’s virtual Open House website. One (1) commentor responded to the proposed project. The commentor approved of the proposed project and looks forward to there being reduced accidents along the corridor. In general, there was no opposition to the project. The comments are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Website comments.

WEBSITE COMMENTS	
INDIVIDUAL	INPUT
Local Resident 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical concerns for many residents and businesses along SH-9 include improved safety and the availability of good transportation access.</li> <li>• It appears ODOT engineers have once again analyzed all possible civil impacts of changes proposed to SH-9 and made recommendations for improvement to address both of these critical concerns; changes that will improve safety and travel time, and even stimulate economic viability and/or job growth.</li> <li>• Believes the proposed SH-9 modifications will decrease the likelihood of drivers making errors that lead to vehicular or pedestrian accidents, and those (preventable) accidents resulting in life-altering injuries or death.</li> <li>• Welcomes any and all proposed changes to an important highway that will improve the safety of residents and travelers along that corridor and improve access of various businesses and Lake Thunderbird.</li> </ul>

### 2.2.5 Mailed Comments

Responders also commented on provided forms and mailed them to ODOT. Nine (9) property owners and one (1) Agency mailed in comments. Most responders approve of the proposed project and believe it will increase safety along the corridor. Some were concerned about drainage issues in the area, and there was a request for a traffic light, but most questioned why the segment of SH-9 between 72<sup>nd</sup> to 108<sup>th</sup> Ave was not included in the Open House materials. In general, there was no opposition to the project. The comments are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Mailed-in comments.

MAILED COMMENTS	
INDIVIDUAL	INPUT
Local Resident 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approves of all improvements.</li> <li>• Would like to know when the area will be getting four lanes from 108<sup>th</sup> Ave west.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to request traffic lights be installed at the intersection of SH-9 and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave., and the intersection of SH-9 and 120<sup>th</sup> Ave. to safely enter the flow of traffic on SH-9. Due to the speed and the increase in traffic, poor sight distances and grade of the roadway make it hard to judge the traffic gap to enter or cross the roadway.</li> <li>• Would like a light with a sensor that activates for traffic on SH-9 to stop only when a car is waiting to enter or cross SH-9.</li> <li>• Currently waits up to 10 minutes to cross. When the roadway is expanded, that wait time will increase and become even more dangerous with increased accidents without a traffic light.</li> <li>• On game day it is nearly impossible to cross SH-9 at 108<sup>th</sup> Ave.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accidents will increase as traffic increases. She has almost been hit head-on each year at the intersection of SH-9 and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. as she waits in the turning lane to turn north onto SE 108th Ave. This will not change with the proposed plan without a traffic light at this location.</li> <li>• If one life is saved, it will be worth the cost of the state installing the traffic light.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believes it would be much safer to continue from 72<sup>nd</sup> Ave rather than going from four lanes to two, then back to four again. Why not 72<sup>nd</sup> to 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. or 120<sup>th</sup> first?</li> </ul>
Local Resident 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary concern is with drainage. There is currently a culvert between Red Fern Ln and the Thunderbird Chapel that drains through her property. During heavy rains, the water washes out fences on their goat dairy and threatens some of their livestock shelters.</li> <li>• The hillside facing them on the north side is heavily wooded and reduces some drainage from surfaces. Highway expansion will likely clear out the trees and make their situation worse.</li> <li>• Would like to urge mitigation of drainage in this area.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responder is for anything that helps keep people from passing on the shoulder of the road.</li> <li>• Does not think the highway is as bad as the drivers that use it.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to know what will happen between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to know about the section between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. It will not be four lane and traffic will get backed up.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approves of the project.</li> <li>• Would like to know what's happening between 72<sup>nd</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave, and why this segment is being skipped.</li> </ul>
Local Resident 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very pleased with the excellent planning and work completed so far.</li> <li>• City of Norman speed limits are not appropriate for a four-lane state highway.</li> </ul>



## 2.2.6 ODOT Responses to Public Comments

The responses received were summarized and generically grouped into categories, each of which are presented below. Next to each comment is ODOT’s response.

Table 7: Generalized Responses to Public Comments.

ODOT RESPONSES TO ALL PUBLIC COMMENTS	
ISSUE/COMMENT/CONCERN	RESPONSE
SH-9 between 72 <sup>nd</sup> Ave and 108 <sup>th</sup> Ave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The SH-9 segment between 72<sup>nd</sup> to 108<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE will be constructed before the 108<sup>th</sup> to 156<sup>th</sup> Ave project portion. Construction is currently planned for 2021. Utility work and right-of-way acquisition is underway. There will be a continuous 4-lane segment (that is, at least two lanes in each direction) from 72<sup>nd</sup> to 156<sup>th</sup> Ave.</li> <li>Also, there are future plans to make SH-9 a 4-lane highway all the way to Tecumseh, OK.</li> </ul>
Sidewalk or bike lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The plans do not include any bike path or sidewalks. ODOT will not be constructing any paths at this time.</li> <li>ODOT will coordinate with the City of Norman on their multi-modal trail future safe locations through this corridor. There currently is no bike lane planned; however, the new highway will have 10’ shoulders.</li> </ul>
Property impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ODOT Right-of-Way Acquisition agents will contact property owners personally in the next four to six months.</li> <li>More information, along with ODOT’s Property Rights Brochure can be found at ODOT’s website. <a href="https://oklahoma.gov/odot/programs-and-projects/public-meetings-and-hearings/20200925.html">https://oklahoma.gov/odot/programs-and-projects/public-meetings-and-hearings/20200925.html</a></li> </ul>
SH-9 between Norman and Newcastle area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comment noted. ODOT appreciates the feedback and is working to improve safety throughout Oklahoma’s entire infrastructure system.</li> </ul>
Federal Land & State Park Property Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All comments were noted, reviewed and complied.</li> <li>These comments are specifically associated with the Section 4(f) process and will be handled according. Specific comments and responses will be addressed via separate document.</li> </ul>
Safety Improvements Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ODOT is in agreement—safety improvements are needed throughout the corridor.</li> </ul>
Traffic Lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current traffic volumes and turning movements do not warrant traffic signals at the sideroad intersections.</li> <li>ODOT may reevaluate situation as traffic use and need changes over time.</li> </ul>
Drainage Issues in General & at Red Fern Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highways are designed to provide proper pavement surface drainage for traffic safety and proper cross drainage to maintain natural overland flow through the highway corridor.</li> <li>Highway right-of-way is only wide enough to adequately support the pavement and provide maintainable ditches. As such, highway projects are designed to facilitate natural drainage, but have very limited ability to effect drainage issues outside of the highway right-of-way.</li> <li>The drainage between Red Fern Lane and Thunderbird Chapel will be improved as much as possible within the highway right-of-way.</li> </ul>
Speed Limit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highways are designed to support the posted speed limits. ODOT determines the speed limit based on several safety and design factors. The city of Norman is not involved with determining the posted speed limit.</li> </ul>

### 2.3 AGENCY COMMENTS

After the Open House Meeting, several agencies were mailed solicitation letters requesting comments on the proposed project. Three (3) agency comments were received. Individual comments are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Agency Comments.

AGENCY COMMENTS	
AGENCY	INPUT
<b>Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)</b> Supervisor, Resource Management Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Bureau of Reclamation administers Lake Thunderbird, part of the Norman Reclamation Project, in conjunction with the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department and Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District.</li> <li>Lake Thunderbird lies adjacent to the proposed improvements, and ODOT would acquire some right-of-way from Reclamation to achieve the proposed action.</li> <li>BOR provided comments informally via the Virtual Open House website, but are formally stated in this letter.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ODOT RESPONSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These comments are specifically associated with the Section 4(f) process and will be handled according. Specific comments and responses will be addressed via separate process.</li> </ul>
<b>OK Aeronautics Commission (OAC)</b> Aviation Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OAC wanted to remind ODOT of the obligation to comply with 14 CFR Part 77.13 regarding construction activity near federal airports.</li> <li>OAC did state that the potential project does not appear to pose a hazard to safe and efficient use of navigable airspace.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ODOT RESPONSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments noted.</li> <li>No FAA airports are located within 4 miles of the proposed project.</li> </ul>
<b>City of Norman</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Floodplain permits from the OWRB will not be required if the only disturbance is on state right-of-way.</li> <li>The alignment changes to make sure intersections and driveways meet SH-9 at close to right angles will improve sight distances and hopefully reduce crashes on this corridor.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ODOT RESPONSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comments Noted.</li> </ul>
<b>Osage Nation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Osage Nation has a vital interest in protecting its historic and ancestral cultural resources. The Osage Nation anticipates reviewing and commenting on the planned Phase I cultural resources survey report</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ODOT RESPONSE</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ODOT’s Tribal Liaison will coordinate with the Osage Tribe regarding the specific request.</li> <li>• ODOT provides cultural resources reports for all projects that ODOT determines to have the potential to affect historic properties.</li> <li>• The Osage Nation does not have “jurisdiction” to require that ODOT conduct a cultural resources survey for any project, unless it is on Osage Nation trust land, which is not the case for this project.</li> <li>• If ODOT determines there to be a potential to affect historic properties, then a cultural resources survey will be conducted and provided to the applicable tribes for review and consultation.</li> <li>• ODOT’s Tribal Liaison provided the Osage Nation the Cultural Resources survey for this area that was conducted in 2005 as part of an SH-9 corridor study, as well as the SHPO and OAS correspondence.</li> </ul>
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### 2.2.6 Overall Comment Summary

All public comments (excluding Agency Solicitation responses) were summarized in the Table 9 below. The table is designed to provide an overall summary of the input received with respect to project approval and the major issues of concern.

Table 9: Comment summary.

<b>SUMMARY OF ALL COMMENTS</b>	
<b>ISSUE / COMMENT / CONCERN</b>	<b>NUMBER OF COMMENTS/RESPONSES</b>
Total Number of Commenters / Responders	22
Specifically Approve of Project / Provided Support for Project	6
Specifically Disapprove of Project	0
General Comment Categories	-
Why not construct SH-9 between 72 <sup>nd</sup> Ave. & 108 <sup>th</sup> Ave first?	11
Safety improvements are needed	6
Questioned why they were contact; (do not live near SH-9)	2
Additional of sidewalk or bike lanes	2
Property / Right-of-way Impacts	1
Installing side road traffic lights	1
Drainage Issues	1
Unrelated project comments	1