

Virtual Public Open House Summary



Oklahoma Department of Transportation

**US-81: Intersection Improvement at the US 81/SH-7
Junction Between Marlow and Duncan**

Stephens County, ODOT JP 33761(04)

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Executive Summary

This document summarizes the virtual public open house conducted for the proposed improvements to the intersection of US-81 and SH-7 between Marlow and Duncan. The purpose of the virtual public open house (VPOH) was to inform the public of the proposed improvements to the intersection of US-81 and SH-7 and obtain input from the public on existing conditions and proposed alternatives.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) held a VPOH. The open house was held on-line between November 16 and December 1, 2021 and then extended through December 15, 2021. Twenty-nine (29) members of the public signed in on the website; however, sign-in was not required. Property owners within and adjacent to the project area were notified of the public meeting. An additional 938 notifications were sent to cover a larger geographic area via Every Door Direct. Packages were also sent to freight businesses in Stephens County. According to the website analytics, 2,294 unique users viewed the website over the two-week period. After the home page, the preliminary project plans were the most frequently viewed page. In total, two hundred and twenty-five (225) written comments/questions were received during the virtual public meeting, including four (4) agency responses, thirty-three (33) comment forms, one hundred and seventy (170) comments submitted via the website comment feature, fifteen (15) Facebook comments, two (2) comments received via email, and one (1) comment collected via voicemail from a property owner.

Solicitation letters including notification of the virtual open house were mailed to the appropriate local, state, and federal resource agencies on November 12, 2021. Agency comments included the following:

- The Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) indicated that the project does not appear to pose a hazard to the safe and efficient use of navigable airspace.
- The Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) recommended contacting the local floodplain administrator as a floodplain development permit is required in the case that the proposed project falls on state owned or operated property. Otherwise, OWRB recommended completing the project so it is safe from flooding and does not flood adjacent property.
- The OWRB Water Rights Administration Division responded with no comments on the proposed project.
- The Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation indicated that the proposed project would not have a significant adverse impact on any federally funded park, recreation area, or state park.

Of the two hundred and twenty-four (224) public comments received, the majority were either in favor of the project or contained concerns, neutral questions, or suggestions. The majority of the public's comments were focused on providing an alternative preference and concerns regarding the other alternatives. **Table E-1** summarizes the comments received. Please note that the total number of comments for each concern identified is greater than total number of comments received, because, in many cases, multiple concerns were included in a single comment.

Table E-1: Major Issues of Concern

ISSUE OF CONCERN	# OF COMMENTS
ALTERNATIVE PREFERENCE	
Public Preference*	176
Roundabout Considerations	42
Clarification for Displaced Left	3
Driver Expectation	5
Medcalf Street Considerations (Alternative A)	11
Turn Lanes	10
Pedestrian Accommodations	1
SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES	35
Four-way Stop	10
Overpass/Bypass	25
SAFETY	30
General Safety and Operation	14
Adjacent Property Cut-through	3
Lighting	1
Speed	2
ACCESS	1
SCHEDULE	4

*Public Preference refers to the total number of comments received in support of one of the three alternatives: Alternative A – Signalized Intersection, Alternative B – Displaced Left, and Alternative C – Multi-Lane Roundabout

Responses to Comments

Public Preference

Thank you for your comment. ODOT appreciates the feedback received during the open house. Based on the input received, the public preference is overwhelmingly in support of Alternative A. Input received from the public will aid in identifying a preferred alternative to move forward for further design and study.

Roundabout Considerations

Thank you for your comment. ODOT appreciates your concerns about roundabouts and how they are a new intersection type in this area. ODOT has considered this intersection type because traffic studies have shown that roundabouts increase safety, improve traffic flow, and also reduce cost. Although drivers may initially be unfamiliar with roundabouts, signage at the roundabouts helps drivers recognize quickly how to navigate a roundabout. The roundabout alternative is expected to reduce delay and collisions at this location. Because they reduce the speed of through traffic, they also have been shown to reduce the severity of collisions that do occur. A roundabout would be specifically designed to accommodate the large size of the vehicles using the intersection. Similar to Alternative B, if this alternative is selected as the preferred alternative, additional public education will be needed to provide the educational support to those that travel the intersection.

For additional information on roundabouts, please visit the Federal Highway Administrations guide to Roundabouts (<https://nacto.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Roundabout-An-Informational-Guide.pdf>).

Clarification for Displaced Left

Alternative B is a displaced eastbound left turn and is being considered at this location because separation of heavy movements has shown to promote safety and efficacy at intersections. This alternative is used to separate the eastbound left turning vehicles from conflict with the northbound traveling vehicles. This is achieved by moving the eastbound to northbound left turns to the north side of the roadway in advance of the approach. This allows the eastbound to northbound left turns to only conflict with the southbound through movement and provides a protected area for those vehicles to turn into and accelerate before merging with northbound traffic.

Driver Expectation

Driver expectation is important and needs to be considered due to the different nature in which movements are handled at the intersection under Alternatives A and B. If Alternative A or B is selected as the preferred alternative, additional public education will be needed to provide the educational support to those that travel the intersection.

Medcalf Street Considerations (Alternative A)

Medcalf Street currently experiences low traffic volumes entering and existing and is projected to increase only marginally in the future. With the lane alignment of Medcalf versus that of SH-7 being asymmetric, if a signal is placed at this location, it would need to be designed to provide a green phase for all vehicle movements in one direction, followed by a phase for all movements in the opposite direction (split phased) to avoid movement conflicts. Split phased operation with vehicle detection would allow Medcalf Street to be served when needed and skipped in the phasing sequence when dormant.

Turn Lanes

Alternative A is proposed to provide both a northbound to westbound and a southbound to eastbound left turn lane to facilitate movements to the east and west. Similarly, the eastbound approach will provide a designated left turn lane and a shared thru and right turn lane.

Pedestrian Accommodations

Once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase, design specifics and additional accommodations, such as pedestrian accommodations will be evaluated as part of the ultimate intersection configuration.

Four-way Stop

A four-way-stop, while effective under certain circumstances, was not considered as a viable alternative at this location due to the increasing traffic volumes through the area. The alternatives presented provide both safety and efficiency benefits to the intersection for the current and projected traffic volumes through the area.

Overpass/Bypass

An overpass/bypass option at a current at-grade intersection should be considered only when other alternative solutions or techniques are unsuccessful in reducing the congestion to an acceptable level.

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These other alternative solutions or techniques include signal timing and phasing optimization, lane additions, approach geometry modification, or redesigning the overall intersection layout.

The traffic analysis under the design year peak hour traffic conditions indicates that multiple at-grade intersection alternatives evaluated as part of the study, are anticipated to reduce congestion, and operate at acceptable levels of service. Therefore, the need for a grade-separated intersection is not justified at this time.

General Safety and Operation

The goal of these improvements is to promote safety and efficacy of the intersection and to promote travel through the area as intended. Each of the alternatives under consideration provide a safety and operational benefit (reduced delays during peak travel times) compared to existing conditions.

The delay statistics provided in the public meeting materials are for the AM and PM Peak hours and would not be characteristic of the delay exhibited on the intersection during off-peak times. Delay during the off-peak hours would be less than that of the peak hours.

Adjacent Property Cut-through

Once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase, design specifics and additional considerations, including access, will be evaluated as part of the ultimate configuration.

Lighting

Once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase, design specifics and additional accommodations such as lighting will be evaluated as part of the ultimate intersection configuration.

Speed

Once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase, design specifics and additional accommodations will be evaluated (such as approach speed) as part of the ultimate intersection configuration.

Access

Once a preferred alternative is selected and the project moves into the design phase, design specifics and additional accommodations (such as driveway access) will be evaluated as part of the ultimate intersection configuration. Although not final, the drives along US-81 are likely to maintain their existing access but the drive connection at Medcalf Street will need to be adjusted.

Schedule

The schedule is contingent on funding, but ODOT is looking for opportunities to accelerate the project's construction start. Through this process, various factors are being considered, including the potential delays associated with alternatives that may impact right-of-way or utility relocation.