

## Project Readiness

### Environmental Risk

As shown in **Figure 1**, ODOT anticipates completing Final Plans for Right-of-Way (65%) for the Project within the next 30 days. As described in the Project Description, ODOT completed and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the US-75 corridor in 2002. A NEPA Reevaluation of the 2002 US-75 EA was completed in 2018 (see below and project website at [US-75/81<sup>st</sup> RAISE](#)). ODOT will complete additional public involvement and an updated NEPA Reevaluation prior to right-of-way acquisition to confirm that the project is still consistent with the original NEPA approval. Right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations are anticipated to begin in summer of 2023 and will be completed by mid-2024. RAISE funding obligation could be obligated upon award given that 65% plans and NEPA are anticipated to be complete by that time. Obligation is shown in November 2024 in **Figure 1**, concurrent with letting, so that the project may begin construction upon obligation of grant funds. Construction is anticipated to begin in May 2025 and be completed by December 2026.

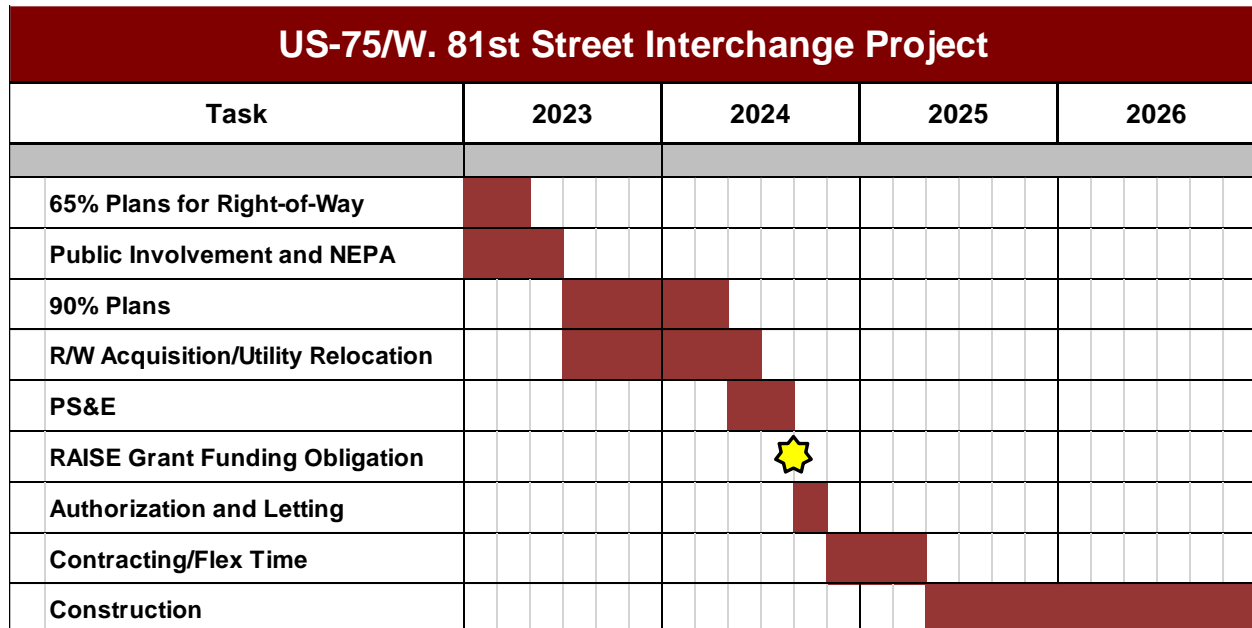


Figure 1: Schedule for the US-75/W. 81st Street Interchange Project

The project is sufficiently advanced to begin construction in a timely manner and well within the funding deadlines for the 2023 RAISE program. Even with a significant unanticipated delay, the RAISE funds are in little danger of expiring prior to the obligation deadline (September 30, 2027), and construction will be completed well in advance of the expenditure deadline (September 30, 2032).

### Required Approvals

#### Environmental Permits and Reviews

Construction of the US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange was authorized by the NEPA EA completed by ODOT in 2022. A Reevaluation of this EA was completed and approved by FHWA in 2018.

At that time, the project included only replacement of the US-75 bridges over W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street to correct the horizontal and vertical clearances. However, given the anticipated growth in the area and the expected congestion with the existing diamond configuration, ODOT redesigned the project to incorporate the diverging diamond interchange (DDI) configuration. In addition, ODOT partnered with the City of Tulsa to include the W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street improvements with the interchange. Combining these projects will improve the operation of the interchange and will mean only one construction project instead of two for the traveling public.

Given the age of this Reevaluation, ODOT intends to complete and update to ensure the project is still consistent with the original approval. No environmental impacts were identified in the 2018 Reevaluation. Environmental notes are limited to minimizing tree removal to the limits of construction and avoiding bridge removal during the migratory bird nesting season<sup>1</sup>. All lighting will be designed to be downward facing to avoid impacts to listed bat species. An updated noise study is underway to account for the new DDI design and the additional widening of W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street that is now included in the project. While noise impacts are not anticipated, if impacts are identified ODOT will perform the needed barrier analysis and include noise walls in the project if they are found to be feasible and reasonable<sup>2</sup>. This noise study is anticipated to be completed and approved by June 2023. The original EA and 2018 Reevaluation are available at [US-75/81<sup>st</sup> RAISE](#).

#### *Permitting*

The project may require a Section 404 Clean Water Act permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Permitting for these projects is expected to fall under Nationwide Permit 14. Coordination with the USACE was completed with the original EA, and ODOT received a Section 404 permit from the USACE in June of 2018, associated with the bridge replacement project. This permit will be update for the DDI project; however, impacts to jurisdictional waters and wetlands are not anticipated. ODOT has agency liaisons in place at the USACE, which greatly accelerates and improve the consistency of permitting reviews. The project may also require notifying the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of proposed construction via FAA Form 7460-1 prior to construction, in accordance with 14 CFR 77.13– 7.17 due to the location of Riverside Airport within 4 miles of the project location. Finally, the contractor will be required to obtain authorization under the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) OKR10 general construction permit for stormwater. This permit is obtained after letting and before construction begins.

#### *Right-of-Way Acquisition*

Relocations will not be required for the US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project. A small amount of right-of-way (approximately ¼ acre) will be needed for the widening and multiuse trail improvements on W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street. The City of Tulsa will perform this acquisition and any required utility relocation in late 2023/early 2024. The City of Tulsa will perform all right-of-way acquisition according to the Uniform Relocation Act and applicable regulations.

#### *Public Engagement*

Public engagement on the US-75 corridor originally occurred as part of the Major Investment Study and EA in 2002, including a formal public hearing. ODOT requested input from tribes, and local, city, state, and federal agencies. Many changes to regulations, policies, and best practices

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<sup>1</sup> Notes related to the American Burying Beetle are no longer applicable. The ABB was downlisted 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Per 23 CFR 772 and ODOT Noise Policy (2011)

for public involvement have occurred since that time, and ODOT intends to perform additional public outreach specific to the US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street interchange. As described in Section 7 of the Merit Criteria section of this application, ODOT recently completed a successful virtual public open house for another proposed DDI in Tulsa and intends to hold both an in-person and virtual public open house for the current project. ODOT's procedures for including environmental justice communities are documented in ODOT's [Public Involvement Plan](#) and are consistent with USDOT's *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making Guide*. Outreach to environmental justice populations in the study area is done through coordination with community facilities that serve these populations as well as direct mail deliveries to reach all households, regardless of owner status. More information about the proposed public involvement strategy for the US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project can be found in Section 7 of the Merit Criteria.

#### *State and Local Approvals*

The US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project is currently included in the [INCOG FY 2022-2025 Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) and the [ODOT Statewide Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\)](#), as well as the [ODOT 8-Year Construction Work Plan](#). The City of Tulsa has reviewed the project design at all phases to verify it meets local requirements for city streets, drainage, and lighting.

#### *Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning*

**ODOT Statewide Freight Transportation Plan:** US-75 is listed as a critical freight corridor in ODOT's [Freight Transportation Plan, 2023-2030](#) and is included in ODOT's Freight Investment Plan.

**INCOG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP):** The INCOG RTP, [Connected 2050](#), includes the widening of US-75 from SH-167 north to I-244 to 6 lanes, and the widening of W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street to 4 lanes. The US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange project is consistent with this plan, as the new US-75 bridges will be 70 feet wide in each direction, sufficient to accommodate the future lanes. The project is consistent with the Connected 2050 goals of safety, infrastructure condition, congestion, freight movement and economic vitality, and environmental viability and resilience.

**INCOG GO Plan:** The INCOG [GO Plan](#) is the pedestrian/bicycle master plan for the Tulsa area. The US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project is consistent with this plan, and provides additional improvements. The Go Plan identifies W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street from west of Union Avenue to US-75 as a signed bicycle route. The Project will provide a multiuse paved trail.

**Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP):** The [ODOT STIP](#) incorporates the first four years of the ODOT 8 Year CWP. Construction of the Project is included in the STIP.

**Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** The [ODOT LRTP 2020-2045](#) is a policy document that provides a strategic direction for the development of the Oklahoma multimodal transportation system. The US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project aligns with ODOT's long range strategic direction.

**Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP):** The project is consistent with the goals set out in ODOT's [2019-2028 Transportation Asset Management Plan](#) with the goal of maintaining and preserving Oklahoma's transportation network.

**National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) Plan:** US-75 is designated as an electric vehicle alternative fuels corridor in [ODOT’s 2022 NEVI Plan](#). The NEVI Plan identifies funding for future charging sites on US-75 to fill existing gaps.

**Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies**

Potential risks and mitigation strategies to minimize the potential impact of those risks are summarized in **Table 1**. References to other sections of this application are included. Environmental and right-of-way related risks are minimal given that NEPA approval has been obtained and right-way acquisition is underway. Meaningful public involvement has occurred that engaged the environmental justice and disadvantaged community affected by the project. ODOT has sufficient capacity to implement the proposed activities according to the schedule presented. The agency has committed state matching funds in excess of what is required for projects in Historically Disadvantaged Communities and Areas of Persistent Poverty. This match will ensure ODOT is able to begin construction in a timely manner until grant funds are reimbursed.

**Table 1: Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies**

Project Risk (Probability of Occurrence)	Mitigation Strategies
<b>Cost Increases (Moderate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost increases have become more common with rising inflation. Project estimates were completed in February of 2023 and have been adjusted accordingly.</li> <li>- ODOT has included the project in its 8 Year Work Plan and remains committed to adjusting as needed to meet all RAISE and statutory deadlines for funding obligation and expenditure. See Budget Narrative.</li> <li>- Construction estimates are complete to a 65% level and contain 15% contingency, allowing for a margin of increase.</li> </ul>
<b>Delays Securing Right-of-Way (Moderate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NEPA will need to be updated to account for the needed right-of-way acquisition. This is a small area (1/4 acre) and contains no structures. See Project Readiness.</li> </ul>
<b>Section 404 Permitting Delays (Low)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Project is anticipated to fall under Nationwide Permit 14 and is unlikely to require mitigation.</li> <li>- ODOT has a liaison in place at the USACE to accelerate and streamline approvals if needed. See Project Readiness.</li> </ul>
<b>Weather Related Construction Delays (Moderate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ODOT works closely with contractors to renegotiate project time while still meeting project commitments.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Opposition (Moderate)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street project will provide additional connectivity and mobility which</li> </ul>

	<p>will directly benefit the local community. However, the DDI may cause concern due to its unfamiliarity and innovative design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Public Involvement Plan is included in the Partnership and Collaboration Merit Criterion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Issues with City of Tulsa Construction and Maintenance Agreement (Low)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ODOT and City of Tulsa have negotiated numerous maintenance agreements on previous projects and have standard language and terms. See Partnership and Collaboration Merit Criterion and attached Letter of Funding Commitment.</li> </ul>

**Technical Capacity**

ODOT has the technical capacity to successfully complete the US-75/W. 81<sup>st</sup> Street Interchange Project. ODOT has a close partnership with the FHWA Oklahoma Division through which it receives its Federal aid allocation and discretionary grant funding. ODOT has been awarded several discretionary grants from various programs, including RAISE, and is familiar with developing grant agreements, administering the funding, and providing the necessary reporting. ODOT has the technical expertise and resources dedicated to the project to provide quality control over all aspects of design and construction, ensure the project meets all federal requirements<sup>3</sup>, and keep the public informed of the project’s progress. ODOT’s Contract Compliance Division oversees the Department’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program and ensures that ODOT and all of its consultants and contractors comply with applicable Civil Rights requirements.

ODOT has extensive experience completing projects with a similar scope, having improved interchanges across the state, including a DDI in Elk City, Oklahoma. The DDI at US-64 and US-169 was successfully awarded in late 2021 and recently began construction. The remaining right-of-way acquisition is minimal.

<sup>3</sup> Including, but not limited to, Buy America, ADA, Civil Rights, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.