

MUSKOGEE TURNPIKE – PROPOSED NEW INTERCHANGE

Steering Committee Meeting

Minutes

24

Wednesday, July 23, 2019 10:30 a.m. Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center

I. Welcome and Statement of Purpose

Senator John Haste opened the meeting with introductions.

II. Planning Subcommittee Report

Kenny Schwab – The planning subcommittee, made up of representatives from the City of Broken Arrow, City of Coweta, Wagoner County, Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), and the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (OTA) met on June 28, 2019. This group started meeting approximately a year ago as a regional planning group to discuss the Highway 51 corridor from Broken Arrow to Coweta and the various existing and future traffic signals. The group will now serve as a subcommittee for the Muskogee Turnpike Access Gates Steering Committee.

Mr. Schwab presented a brief highlight of the topics discussed at previous meetings of the regional planning group:

Midway Road and Highway 51 Intersection

There is a new signal located by the Armory which is a few years old. Once that signal was installed and there was more traffic along Highway 51, there was a concern that the high volume and rate of speed would slow down over time. The subcommittee talked about those issues as well as the beginning discussions of the Muskogee Turnpike and access gates.

91st St (Washington Street in Broken Arrow) and Highway 51 Intersection

225th E. Avenue (Evans Road) and Highway 51 Intersection

Evans Road in Broken Arrow has a high incident of accidents. In the last five years, it has had the highest rate of fatalities.

Creek 51 Business Park Intersection with Highway 51

There is a proposed development close to the Creek Turnpike ramp that will need access. The planning committee discussed potential signals or potential other forms of traffic control (e.g. J-turn).

219th E. Avenue and Highway 51

This is an industrial park located in the middle of 91st St. and 225th. Broken Arrow Public Schools may consider as a secondary access point for school buses once a new elementary school is built at this location. The connection at 219th and Highway 51 is a concern.

III. Review of Previous Actions

Chris Wallace – This corridor acts as two highways at the same time, 1) high speed corridor for the people of Coweta and those further east or Tulsa traffic to get from one side of the metropolitan area to the other; and 2)

it acts as a local connector getting people to and from their homes. We are fortunate that there is residential and commercial development along Highway 51, but with this development comes a lot of traffic from those trying to get onto the highway.

ODOT has received a number of calls requesting signals at different intersections as well as requests for them to take down various signals. There are side effects to having signals, as when they are installed, you are held to those cycle times, and it delays traffic.

Mr. Wallace turned it over to Joe Echelle to present a recap of the June 28, 2019 planning group discussions of four possible locations for the Muskogee Turnpike access ramps.

IV. Proposed Feasibility Study Presentation

Joe Echelle - Tim Gatz, Secretary of ODOT, was not able to attend this meeting. It is OTA's perspective that there will be an interchange built; the goal of this meeting is to determine where it needs to be built.

There were four potential locations discussed at the June 28th meeting: Oneta Road (241st E. Avenue), Midway Road (257th E. Avenue), Oak Grove Road (273rd E. Avenue) and Oak Grove Road (305th E. Avenue/Ben Lumpkin Road). There is a significant amount of development on Oneta Road with a number of houses, and this location would help with access to Broken Arrow Expressway or Creek Turnpike. Midway is on the north side of the Armory. Oak Grove is to the east. OTA consultants looked at the Lumpkin Road location because it is a decent farm-to-market road. If there is future development, this location might be a place where an interchange can be built someday.

Mr. Echelle wanted to be clear that OTA would never be able to build at all four locations. OTA requires at least a mile between interchanges. Turnpikes that have close interchanges can cause merging issues with traffic trying to get on and off the turnpike. If Oneta is built, the Midway connection would not be allowed. If Midway is built, then Oneta and Oak Grove would not be built. The best scenario would be that three interchanges could be built, and it would be a long time in the future that the third would become necessary.

In response to a question by Senator Haste, Mr. Echelle stated that there is a mile distance between Oneta Rd. to Midway and Midway to Oak Grove, and the distance between Oak Grove to Lumpkin is two miles.

After the June 28 meeting, it was determined that building at Oneta Road does not serve the city of Coweta. The one furthest east does not serve the development of an interchange that would be far off in the future. Therefore, the group zeroed in on Midway and Oak Grove.

Mr. Echelle provided handouts that showed three options for construction costs for Midway to Oak Grove. The costs for all three were similarly in the \$7.5m range with OTA stopping as soon as they can with construction. This dollar figure does not include right of way, purchasing utilities, or a construction of sound wall in the case of Midway. Through the OTA *Driving Forward Campaign* initiative of building new turnpikes, he knows that the Midway Alternate 1 location would require the condemnation of a dozen or so houses. The costs for the addition of a sound wall for those homes that will now face the turnpike will add about \$400 a foot to the \$7.5 – \$8.5m construction cost. Utility cost is also not included in this cost. A utility locate has not yet been completed on this interchange.

There will be a few houses to buy on the south side of this intersection. OTA anticipates building a new bridge in the location of the existing one with it requiring closure during construction. In similar projects, bridges were closed for approximately five months during construction (if utilities are relocated prior to construction).

To save cost, someone may favor building ramps on the west side of the interchange instead of the east, and you can point to several locations on the turnpike that were built like that originally. However, OTA does not

want to repeat that pattern as it will cause major development problems in the future if the entire interchange is not built.

The 273rd St Alt 1 handout shows a redesign or relocation of the bridge. The advantage in this design is that we would be able to keep the connection open longer by putting it back on section line. The other advantage from OTA perspective is that they own all the right of way on the southwest side of the interchange. There is one house affected on the northeast corner, but they have not verified who owns that. The cost of this location is approximately \$7.5m for construction. The bridge would stay longer which is a mobility advantage. After the project is completed, they would transfer the right of way back to the city/county.

The next scenario is similar to the previous one discussed with a little less right of way, but we still take some of the home on the northeast corner. This is the cheapest alternative at \$7m. This squares the bridge up which makes the construction a bit cheaper. The bridge is shorter because it's not on a skew. The ramps are shorter because they don't have to taper over to reconnect the highway. However, it doesn't line up with the current 273rd street going south. And, this is the least amount of right of way.

Mr. Echelle laid out OTA's stipulations for either of these locations. OTA requires a good solid connection to Highway 51 which is defined as a four-lane facility. They don't know if turns into five lanes, four lanes undivided, or four lanes divided.

Regarding the Midway interchange, people think it is great location because it's been built to the Armory, but it is two lanes, and there are a number of houses on it. OTA wants it to be four lanes because it will carry a lot of traffic. If it is only two lanes and there is additional commercial development, it would turn into a headache for OTA for whoever owns that. They prefer that there be a four-lane connection to the north of either of these interchanges at least until the first section line road; however, it is not required. That gives OTA the ability to take traffic on and off the turnpike, and if someone goes north, it doesn't back up immediately. They have situations on the Creek and Kilpatrick turnpikes where it develops and gets urbanized very quickly. The traffic that is not OTA's starts backing up and causes significant issues when you have 80 mph traffic.

In response to Kenny Schwab's question regarding the utilities at Oak Grove/273rd, Mr. Echelle stated they do not have a utility layout. If this committee wants to proceed with both these options, he would start a task order with the consultant to move toward that.

Mr. Echelle continued stating OTA has a five-year capital plan, but projects that require right of way are usually further out. When a new interchange is added, it goes at the end of their capital plan in the form of a right of way and utility project. They would move ahead with design plans, but, would not move into construction until the sixth year. OTA is in the process of rebalancing their construction workplan. They were waiting to find out how much the Gilcrease Expressway was going to cost (it was awarded July 22). In December 2019, he will ask their board to approve a right of way and utility project which will go in the fifth year of their construction workplan, with next year being the first year (2024 would be the fifth year and construction would be the following year after that).

Senator Haste asked Mr. Echelle to address Secretary Gatz's comments at the June 11 meeting that it would take three years. Mr. Echelle explained that everything would have to be lined up in order for that to happen. If we had plans today, it takes OTA six months (best case) to purchase right of way. If it proceeds to condemnation, it takes longer. Mr. Echelle noted that OTA does not typically spend federal funds; therefore, they do not have to follow federal condemnation guidelines (which states you have to wait 60 days to move forward if the owner does not want to sell). OTA can move the project forward in their plan, but in order to do that will need financial assistance. They will add the \$7.5m project in the six-year plan at OTA's cost. They are not asking for construction help on their interchange, which is just to the ramps, on the \$7.5m construction project. Mr. Echelle stated he wanted to be clear that they would be an interchange at either location. If we build at the Midway location, there will be a significant increase in cost due to right of way, possible utilities and the addition of a sound wall, and OTA will need financial assistance in getting this accomplished. The

sound wall cost will be significant (\$400/foot for 700-800 feet). We could do without it, but it would not be advised.

Chris Wallace – After the last meeting, OTA and ODOT were going to look at the different layouts. ODOT wants to get this hooked back into the highway somehow. Mr. Wallace provided handouts to three different options (Midway, 273rd and a new alignment that came out of the planning group meeting). Starting out with the new alignment, if the interchange was to be built there (southeast of the Armory/Oak Road), it looks like a practical design. You would see impact to one business some open properties, and one possibly one house. It does add another intersection to Highway 51, and undoubtedly, it adds another signalized intersection. But, in any of these cases, it adds a signalized intersection to or from a high-speed route. All three options show 160-foot lines. They chose 160 feet because when they look at OTA's requirement of wanting a four-lane, ODOT will have an estimated traffic count. If we expect to have 10,000 to 20,000 people over the next six to twenty years, we don't want to build a two-lane road that is going to be congested trying to get to the turnpike. We need free flowing traffic as much as possible. With 160 foot, that should give us a large enough footprint to ideally have a four-lane divided or a five-lane segment through there. A rough estimate for right of way on this option is \$3.4m and \$2.5m for construction. It would offer a new direct connection and possibly a new development area.

The next option is 273rd and 111th. Using the existing system, we would need to not only widen 273rd but 111th as well. Norm Stephens asked if 273rd at 111th would be signalized. Mr. Wallace responded that there is one if not more residential developments already in the works. In addition, there is a swamp in the area with at least two to four endangered species within it. We looked at this area, but it is not practical due to complications.

The third option that was looked at is the expansion of Midway Rd. Over the last few years, this project was administered by ODOT, and they have numerous utilities in that area. That project was built pushing the right of way to the smallest footprint as possible. It is an option, but there will be houses to be acquired. When you work with these utilities, you have water lines, gas lines, and storm/sewer. A lot of those utilities were able to remain in place and are 6-8 inches away from each other. When going through state or federal funds, they have to put them in the minimum standards. These processes are difficult to explain to property owners. This is an option, but it's a timely and expensive option.

ODOT is open to an engineering study on these options, and engineering wise, they don't do anything without a study. It would give them a better idea of right of way and utility needs and help locate unmarked cemeteries.

Kenny Schwab – The planning committee concurs from a technical aspect. The cost will be greater at Midway, but it will create a potential for future growth of other access ramps. It would be restrictive at Oak Grove. At Midway, there is a 30 inch Calpine raw water line that runs to the plant. There is a lot less utilities involved with Oak Grove Road. Broken Arrow's concern is that if you look north from the Muskogee Turnpike and try to connect back to Broken Arrow, Midway makes more sense. Broken Arrow has GO Bond funds available from Kenosha (71st St.) to Houston (81st St.) on Midway. That would only leave a little more than a mile to the turnpike, and right of way in that location is already platted. The concern from Broken Arrow's perspective with Oak Grove is that the city limits do not go out that far. The right of way north of the turnpike on Midway is statutory right of way at best. There are a lot of issues trying to get back to 71st St., a main arterial in Broken Arrow, in looking at future expansion. His recommendation on behalf of Broken Arrow is to look at both of them in a feasibility study and make decisions based on that report.

Rachael Cooper – Wagoner County also participated in the planning group and concur with the options. They are prepared as a county to address the concern of infrastructure north on Oak Grove Road. There are two commissioner districts that border that area, and they are in agreement that it is viable to Wagoner County development. They want to pursue the four miles, the turnpike to 61st St. Wagoner County has a five year plan and has worked with ODOT and the Muskogee Creek. Oak Grove Road is more beneficial to Wagoner County. Chip Cohrs, City of Coweta Engineer, is not present but would concur.

Kevin Hutchins – There is a small section at Midway that is of interest to the Coweta school district.

Michelle Bergwall - The Midway option is advantageous for Broken Arrow Schools. It is better for their busing routes.

Mary Ann Colston – She lives by Midway/71st St and has been anticipating three-five lane road. She stated there would be more access to the turnpike from Midway, and it's already a strong collector road. There are some problem areas on Midway and Oak Grove. The 273rd option is good for Coweta. Midway would be a better choice for economic development for Coweta.

Norm Stephens – Wagoner County will see stronger manufacturing economic development on the east side towards Coweta. We are already seeing this with the Creek 51 development.

Joe Echelle – Senator Haste asked for a timeline. Mr. Echelle responded that to get a study for Midway and Oak Grove, it usually takes a few months to get a consultant on board and approximately six months to complete the study. Chris Wallace agreed with it taking six months. Before surveying is completed, they would recommend conducting a public meeting to address questions from the public.

Senator Haste– The purpose of this steering committee is to gather information and make a recommendation to the larger body. **He called for a vote to proceed with a study to make a recommendation to the larger body. Everyone was in agreement to recommend the study; no one was opposed.**

Viplav Putta - He posed the question that if we build to Midway, is the option of building at the other locations off the table. Joe Echelle clarified that if we build Midway, OTA is not interested in the other two. OTA does not have the funds to put towards the other two, and there would be restrictions on how they are laid out. There is a two mile standard.

Viplav Putta – He asked in looking at two options in the middle, is Oneta Road off table for the first round?

Joe Echelle - Once they choose locations, it will drive the toll rate, and it would be more than the .90/mile. Costs increase when you get to an urban turnpike. He does not know what the toll rate would be, but it would probably in the \$1/mile range.

Kenny Schwab – Broken Arrow agrees that a ramp at Oneta does not serve Wagoner County or Coweta.

Chris Wallace – Oneta would benefit the state even less. The next step is dividing the highway and controlling access. ODOT will not buy the railroad or the businesses out.

Norm Stephens – We have seen it change in the last ten years. In the next ten years, the area would resemble South Memorial with the traffic lights that would be installed.

Chris Wallace – We need free-flow traffic. If it is just limited to highway and we slow it down, the desire to commute to Tulsa lessens.

Viplav Putta – Signals are what drives most traffic onto the turnpike, so having a turnpike might allow drivers to avoid signals.

Senator Haste – He asked if the large group meets next month and agrees to a study, will it take us beyond the six years for construction?

Joe Echelle – He responded to Senator Haste's question and stated that it would not as his plan is to have the right of way and utility project added to this year. He anticipates we will get a decision on how to proceed and

how it will look after several meetings. If someone wants to fund the project, it would move it up. He reiterated that OTA does not work with federal dollars, so it would have to be private or other type of funding.

Rich Brierre – The study at these two locations make sense. He asked who would be the contractor, ODOT or OTA. Joe Echelle answered that they could do it jointly. Mr. Brierre stated that he finds the Highway 51 diagonal intriguing. The distance is probably close to Midway. It would be imperative for Coweta and Wagoner County to get that on their major highway plan to protect right of way if there is an effort to develop that property and should do that irrespective on where the interchange is built. The study will help determine the costs.

Joe Echelle – He and Chris Wallace can provide these two projects to the consultant and treat it as one project, with OTA taking the lead due to interchange. When the project is complete, they can turn over to the municipalities.

Senator Haste – He asked if the study would go beyond what OTA and ODOT need to do and include city/county involvement.

Chris Wallace – The study will include a matrix, utility relocation and the number of people it will affect. The chart's data generally is clear about what the decision needs to be.

Senator Haste – He asked if we want to consider all three connection options.

Chris Wallace – He responded that 273d and 111th is not feasible.

V. Closing Comments

Senator Haste – He summarized **the recommendation that will be made to the larger body to complete one study looking at two different locations. At the Midway Road (257th E. Ave) there is one option; at the Oak Grove Road location there are two options. All were in favor of this decision.**

Senator Haste – He asked Joe Echelle if OTA found out if legislative approval is necessary. Mr. Echelle completed the research and determined that nothing in the statute needs to be changed to identify the location of the interchange. Should we move forward with one option over the other, there might be actions that need to be taken at the city or county level.

Next meeting: August 12, 2019 at 2:00 p.m., BAPS PAC, 1st floor boardroom

Attendance:

Senator John Haste

Joe Echelle, OTA, Assistant Executive Director of Maintenance, Engineering & Construction

Chris Wallace, ODOT Division I, Division Engineer

Jonathan Arps, ODOT Division I, Maintenance Engineer

Jamie Malmstrom, ODOT Division I, Construction Engineer

Kenny Schwab, Assistant City Manager, Broken Arrow

Rich Brierre, INCOG

Johnnie Parks, Broken Arrow City Councilor

Mary Ann Colston, Citizen

Viplav Putta, INCOG

Michelle Bergwall, Chief Operating Officer, Broken Arrow Public Schools

Rachael Cooper, Wagoner County Engineer

Kevin Hutchins, Operations Director, Coweta Public Schools

Darla Heller, Vice President of Economic Development, Broken Arrow Chamber of Commerce

Norm Stephens, Economic Development Manager, City of Broken Arrow

Jed Cochran, Senator Inhofe
Lori Hendricks, Wagoner County Clerk
Crickett Moore, Executive Assistant, City of Broken Arrow