

MUSKOGEE TURNPIKE – PROPOSED NEW INTERCHANGE

Minutes

Tuesday, June 11, 2019 10:30 a.m. Coweta City Hall

I. Welcome

Senator Kim David opened the meeting at 10:41 a.m. She thanked Senator John Haste for organizing the meeting.

II. Introductions

III. Discussions regarding traffic patterns around Broken Arrow Armory

Tim Gatz, Secretary of Transportation - Department of Transportation (ODOT) recognizes that Highway 51 has some extreme traffic challenges, and the intersections are problematic. However, if a stop light is installed every mile or so it can create a problem with traffic and travel times, and comes to the point where it is a step backwards in moving traffic effectively. Southeast Tulsa County is experiencing explosive growth that is evident on the turnpikes and Highway 51. This meeting is an opportunity for the group to work together to come up with a solution. ODOT and the Oklahoma Transit Authority (OTA) are both operating under a fiscally constrained eight (8) year plan. It is very important as Secretary to understand each community's needs, and it is a good communication tool for him to see what the expectations are in order to develop a plan.

Michael Spurgeon, Broken Arrow City Manager - This project is very important to Broken Arrow as the growth in the city moves eastward. All of BA's councilors are present in this meeting. Broken Arrow has been interested in bringing an interchange to the turnpike for years and has been working with DOT for approximately a year to discuss the challenges of Highway 51. A number of businesses have approached the city to request a traffic signal. One large business, Zeeco, is located in this area and has requested that traffic concerns be addressed. He is looking to see if the city will need to cost participate so it can be included in the capital improvement plan. This project will take a commitment from both the city and state officials. It should be noted that FEMA has expressed an interest in using the Army Reserve Center to supply their materials should there be a local catastrophic event. This need may open opportunities for federal funding. Broken Arrow wants to continue these conversations so improvements can be made to the turnpike.

Craig Thurmond, Broken Arrow Mayor - Last week, he and Broken Arrow Assistant City Manager Kenny Schwab attended meetings at the White House and the Department of Transportation in Washington, DC and discussed this intersection. There may be grants available to apply for this project such as the CREATE grant or INFRA grant. *Robert Aery* (Congressman Kevin Hern's office) stated he will confer with Representative Hern.

Roger Kolman, Coweta City Manager – He believes that it is important to get ahead of the growth curve as it will be important to the futures of Coweta, BA, and the Tulsa metro. Coweta will continue to growth north and then eastward towards to turnpike. They have 1,000 new housing units in development, and within next five (5) years, these homes will be built along the turnpike. If we determine the best location of the onramp, it will serve the current residents of both BA and Coweta and encourage growth towards the necessary infrastructure. This project will also help the private utilities to stay ahead. He is concerned that Highway 51 will have barriers to future growth as Highway 75 had due to not keeping ahead of future growth.

Dorita Huckabee, INCOG provided historical context to this project. The first meeting held on this topic was in 2014. At that time, it was discussed whether or not legislation was required in order to complete a feasibility study. In 2015, Representative David Brumbaugh introduced HB 1707. This bill passed the House but stalled in the Senate. In 2017, Brumbaugh promised to make this bill a priority; however, he passed away before that could happen. One of INCOG's tasks is long-range transportation developer, and this overpass is on their long-range plan.

Viplov Putta, INCOG - INCOG has the technical capacity for long-term planning. There is a growth pattern in this area. There are four interchanges planned along the same 12-mile stretch. A feasibility study would assist us in exploring how Coweta and the Muskogee Turnpike area will grow over the next 20 years. He wants to look beyond this project at additional areas along this stretch of highway.

Tim Kelley, Wagoner County Commissioner - Wagoner County is growing. At the time the Muskogee Turnpike was built in 1969, the area was countryside. Other than Oneta Road, the overpasses are outdated. Residents frequently reach out to him and report accidents or near-miss accidents. He believes the whole corridor needs to be addressed. Several large subdivisions are being built in Wagoner County south of Highway 51 on Evans Road and Oneta Road. The population is growing faster than the money is available to fix the roads.

Representative Kevin McDugle – When response times are faster for the Armory, it makes this project important for the entire state of Oklahoma. He agrees with INCOG's comments about looking at multiple places for the interchange to assist with Coweta's economic development.

Secretary Gatz – There are a few approaches that can be taken. We first need to collectively determine which interchange we need to work around. A location needs to be determined, and it has to have a strong connection to Highway 51. The corridor does warrant a study, and it needs to encompass the city/county road system. Long-term planning is important so we are not without a plan five years from now. It is important to choose the right location. In the past, different options for the interchange have been discussed. Midway Drive has its challenges. From his perspective, if we want to try to leverage resources with ODOT with connection of Highway 51 and the turnpike, it has to be a strong road to serve that connection. OTA is currently trying to finish a big expansion program and has some challenges to get that done and get their feet back on the ground. ODOT Divisions 1 and 8 have a long history of partnering and working with communities across the state.

Michael Spurgeon - Can OTA or ODOT commission a study or does the legislature need to authorize?

Secretary Gatz response - The local entities participation is critical as it is beneficial and helps guide OTA investment. Local traffic patterns are changing, and a study needs to be completed. Talking about where we need to expand streets, etc. is how we solidify our input. DOT and OTA will take the lead on it and work with communities to get engagement.

Michael Spurgeon – He and Roger Kolman have spoken about where the interchange will go. Broken Arrow and Coweta will need to review the effect it will have on their respective comprehensive plans. We do not want these areas to be immediately underserved as those parts of the community have the possibility to immediately grow exponentially.

Secretary Gatz – From the OTA's perspective, we want to provide relief from Highway 51 onto the turnpike, and local traffic patterns is the only way to accomplish that. If there is not good ingress/egress and participation from communities, it will not work.

Michael Spurgeon – Legislators are supportive. Broken Arrow wants to participate in the study.

Kenny Schwab, Broken Arrow Assistant City Manager - Approximately a year ago, the Broken Arrow City Council asked the City Manager to reach out to ODOT Division 1, Coweta, and Wagoner County and start discussions about 81st St in Broken Arrow to Coweta (where the high school is located). Presently, there are 11 traffic signals along this stretch of road (one is not active). This corridor will change like the Memorial area to include high volume, low traffic speed. The closest connection to the turnpike is Midway and 273rd. We must have infrastructure, not just bridges and ramps, around it. Broken Arrow is more than willing to participate.

Senator David requested a timeline from ODOT.

Secretary Gatz – If we name a location and initiate engineering/design, it would realistically be about a three-year process to construction (accelerated process).

Joe Echelle (Oklahoma Turnpike Authority) and Secretary Gatz – This timeline is assuming there are no federal funds involved and it would be completed from 100% of the money we have today. Environmental studies would add to the cost and would take another 18 months to get clearance. OTA has not used federal funding on turnpikes. What local infrastructure is required also comes into play as the interchange has to be connected to strong infrastructure. If the project involves OTA funds only with no federal dollars, it would be three years. If there are federal funds involved, it will add another 18 months to two years.

Michael Spurgeon – Broken Arrow did not include money in the 2018 bond package to anticipate this project. The city may have some capacity to go back to the voters to meet our cost participation. BA will need time to accumulate the funds from capital improvement funds or from the voters.

Secretary Gatz – This project will be put on ODOT's radar for capital funding; it will move faster with more participation. If we come up with the right concept, it is powerful to study this corridor. Communities need to take a hard look at transportation systems and how they should look in the future.

Michael Spurgeon - We do not want a new interchange and not have road access.

Secretary Gatz – We will not build it if there is no infrastructure as it places a burden on the communities and does not serve the purpose of the OTA.

Senator Haste – We need ensure we are moving in the same direction.

Senator David asked if Midway was a federally funded project, and Secretary Gatz stated it was.

Michael Spurgeon – Broken Arrow has had preliminary conversations with our federal delegation, and there needs to be a smaller working group to continue those discussions. The goal today was to make sure there is support and to discuss a feasibility study to look at the options and obstacles. He asked if there anyone not in the room today that is a stakeholder.

Senator Haste - Military representatives are not present. Senator David stated they were present at the 2014 meeting.

Senator Haste – He pointed out that there will be federal funding in Wagoner County due to the recent flooding event that could possibly be used for this project due to the disaster declaration.

Robert Aery - With the disaster declaration, whatever FEMA spends, 15% will be taken off that for state infrastructure. He does not know the timing of that.

Secretary Gatz - We need to be mindful that congress is gearing up for the next highway bill within the next two years. Resiliency and infrastructure will make us stronger to withstand future flooding. There may be grant opportunities. We want to make sure we leave here and continue conversations.

Senator Haste - This process will be ongoing until there is a ribbon cutting.

Secretary Gatz - If we move forward with federal funding, stakeholder meetings are very important.

Michelle Bergwall, Broken Arrow Public Schools- Coweta schools should be invited to these meetings. She is pleased to hear that we are discussing the infrastructure around the interchange. BAPS was not able to run two bus routes recently due to rain making roads impassable.

Michael Spurgeon – The cities need to identify people from their jurisdiction to be on a smaller work group to help the Secretary and Senator Haste's office identify the next action steps and keep the larger group informed.

Senator Haste - Following this meeting, he will work with the different stakeholders to put a smaller group together to include objectives and timelines and a line of communication to the larger group.

Senator Nathan Dahm agreed we need a smaller work group and to proceed with a feasibility study.

Secretary Gatz - From OTA's standpoint, the feasibility study is an output of the larger work we will do. We do not have to wait to declare this feasible. A lot will depend on each community's participation. It is important that the interchange's connectivity support the local traffic. Phase I

will be engaging the communities. Phase II will be starting the design. Out of those two initiatives, OTA can concurrently make some feasibility assessments and work with ODOT on how to keep it moving.

Senator Dahm – We want to make sure we are not waiting on the study to proceed.

Secretary Gatz – Ideally, local improvements will support the interchange, and it will be built under one project.

Senator David – The Secretary is in unique position to look at the highway and turnpike system and see how important it is for the communities to be involved.

IV. Next Steps

Senator Haste – Notes from this meeting will be sent out and everyone can review to make sure that nothing has been missed.

Viplov Putta – Regarding the timeline for federal funding - we are entering the last year of the FAST Act. We will have one more opportunity for larger grants such as the BUILD grant and INFRA Grant that will open up in March or April 2020. Obtaining the grant funds may not be successful, but we could have a 25% chance. Some grants are 20/80 match. Turnpike funding can be demarcated without using the federal money. The local roads can be the federal part. By that time, we want to have our plan in place.

Secretary Gatz - He would like to obtain input from the smaller communities and put together a scope of what is necessary for a long-range study. We need a scope of what that looks like and secondarily how it will serve everyone's needs. The Armory is a possible location, we but need everyone's input.

Michael Spurgeon – Wagoner County definitely needs to be part of those discussions.

Senator Dahm – He asked if there has been any pushback from residents in the Midway area, and Michael Spurgeon responded that at this point there had not been any. However, he has only made announcements at a couple of City Council meetings. Since we have had this meeting, he can review how this will affect BA's fence line and the county. City Council will be reviewing the comprehensive plan on June 20. These discussions may cause them to relook at this area.

Kenny Schwab – The group he previously mentioned will meet in the next 30 days. They will review the scope of a feasibility study, figure out costs, and report back to the larger group. INCOG will be brought to the table.

Senator Haste – The work group will meet July 24 at 10:30 a.m. He will determine a location and send a calendar invitation.

Secretary Gatz - He will start discussions with ODOT on engaging a consulting engineer. He will also check to see if something needs to be put into statute, as he does not want a roadblock with the legislature.