

Public Meeting Summary

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

**I-40 & Gary Blvd. (Exit 65) Interchange
Custer County, JP 31482(04)**

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Garver Project No.: 17037360



Meeting Date: February 28, 2019

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1.0 Introduction

This document summarizes the public meeting conducted for the I-40 & Gary Blvd. (Exit 65) interchange project in Custer County [JP 31482(04)]. ODOT completed a study of six initial alternatives in 2016 (Alternatives 1-6) and held a public meeting on May 24, 2016. In response to public feedback, ODOT tasked Garver to develop two additional alternatives to provide improved mobility on I-40 and improved access for both interstate and local traffic (Alternatives 7 and 8). These two additional alternatives were evaluated taking into consideration construction costs, right-of-way and utility costs, and environmental constraints, which resulted in the selection of an alternative for the corridor (Alternative 7). The purpose of this meeting was to inform the public of the selected design and receive public input. The purpose of this project is to improve safety and traffic operations and improve mobility in the I-40 corridor and on adjacent city streets and intersections.

Alternative 7 consolidates the interchanges at Exits 65 and 65A (Gary Boulevard and Neptune Drive) into a single interchange by utilizing frontage roads and modern roundabouts located near the midpoint, between the two interchanges (**Figure 1**). I-40 would be reconstructed and raised to accommodate the new bridges over the railroad west of Gary Boulevard and over Neptune Drive. Alternative 7 also consolidates Red Wheat Drive and Gary Boulevard into one through street with a connection south under I-40 to Chapman Road.

Figure 1: Alternative 7 Overview





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2.0 Agency Solicitation

Initial agency solicitation letters were mailed on January 24, 2019. These letters provided a short project description, the purpose of the project, and a brief description of the design selection process along with an enclosed project location map and selected alternative map. The letter requested recipients provide input by March 14, 2019 and included an invitation to the public meeting to be held on February 28, 2019. This letter was sent to federal and state resource agencies and Indian Tribes. A copy of the agency solicitation letter and the mailing list is included in **Appendix A**.

3.0 Public Meeting

3.1 Public Involvement Plan

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was prepared for this project to ensure effective community engagement, particularly of traditionally underserved populations (low-income and minority populations) and those with limited English proficiency. The PIP identified the locations of these populations and included methods specifically intended to reach these groups. A copy of the Public Involvement Plan is included in **Appendix B**.

3.2 Meeting Notification

In addition to the notification provided via the agency solicitation letters (see above), notice of the public meeting was sent by letter to the Governor's office, elected officials (federal and state), Custer County Commissioners, officials of the city of Clinton, local school districts, emergency service providers, and medical facilities in the study area. The letter provided a brief description of the purpose and need for the project and an invitation to the public meeting. The letter was accompanied by a project location map. Letters were mailed on January 24, 2019. A copy of the letter and the mailing list is included in **Appendix C**.

Notice of the public meeting was also sent by letter to all property and utility owners in the study area on January 24, 2019. A flyer announcing the meeting was hand-delivered to all homes and businesses within the study area on February 12, 2019. A copy of the letter, mailing list, flyer, and flyer distribution map is included in **Appendix D**.

3.3 Meeting Information and Format

The public meeting was held on February 28, 2019, at 6:00 PM at the Frisco Conference Center at 101 South 4th Street, Clinton, OK. Eighty-six (86) people signed in for the meeting, including Senator Brent Howard, Clinton Mayor David Berrong, representatives from the Cheyenne & Arapahoe Tribes, City of Clinton, Town of Arapahoe, Custer County, Southwestern Oklahoma Development Authority, Clinton Economic Development Authority, ODOT, Garver, area businesses, local media, and members of the public. A copy of the sign-in sheets is included in **Appendix E**.

Brent Almquist, ODOT Division 5 Engineer, opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. Mr. Almquist briefly described the project. Garver then gave a presentation about the project, followed by an open question and answer period facilitated by Mr. Almquist. The presentation covered:





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- Purpose of the Meeting
- Purpose of the Project
- Project History
- Project Area Information
- Proposed Design
- Benefits and Impacts
- Next Steps

ODOT and Garver staff were available both before and after the formal presentation for one-on-one and small group discussions with the public. Display boards showing the proposed design were available for public viewing in two locations. A three-dimensional video presentation of the proposed design ran on continuous loop, and a roundabout walk-through station was set up for the attendees to simulate maneuvering through a model roundabout on foot. A handout including a description of the study, the purpose of the study, and showing the proposed design for the project was available in English and Spanish. Copies of the FHWA handout *Roundabouts: A Safer Choice* were also available in English and Spanish. A copy of the presentation is included in **Appendix F**. A copy of the display boards and meeting handouts is included in **Appendix G**. All materials, including the video, were posted to the ODOT website on March 1, 2019

(https://www.ok.gov/odot/Programs_and_Projects/Public_Meetings_and_Hearings/20190228.html).

The public and agency comment period was open until March 14, 2019.

3.4 Questions/Comments Received at Meeting

Comments and questions from the meeting were primarily related to how the roundabouts would be signed, truck use of the roundabouts, access and visibility to businesses on Gary Boulevard, travel times, and construction duration. The questions and comments posed after the presentation are presented below with ODOT/Garver responses in italics. An additional list of comments heard during one-on-one discussions is also presented.

Comments During Open Q&A Session:

- How will the project be let? One project or separate for road and bridges? *If funding permits ODOT would prefer to let the whole project as one contract.*
- Will the roadway be asphalt or concrete? *Still looking into it.*
- The roundabouts will need signage to direct people.
- What will be the speed limits on the ramps and in the roundabout? *Speed limit in the roundabouts will be 15 mph. The ramps are designed to be longer than normal to allow more time for acceleration and deceleration.*
- What are the dimensions of the roundabouts? *They have a radius of 55-60 feet (120 feet inside diameter, 150 feet outside diameter). They were designed to accommodate a double semi-trailer.*
- What is the distance between Gary Blvd. or Neptune Dr. and the roundabout? *Approximately 2000 feet (less than ½ mile).*
- Thank you for keeping Exits 65 and 65A. Will this affect the use of businesses on Gary Blvd. or travel times to residences near Neptune because of increased distances/out of direction travel? *This solution is the result of much study by several groups to try and keep both interchanges*





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open. Currently they are too close together and it is difficult to design something that meets federal standards.

- Is this the only option? What about the diverging diamond? *This is the best option to keep both interchanges open.*
- How will this help traffic at the Gary/Lexington/Oliver intersection? *It will become a more traditional four-leg intersection and less confusing for drivers. It eliminates multiple roadways in same direction (e.g. WB ramps, Red Wheat Drive).*
- This is a great idea and concept.
- How long will construction take? *Estimate about 450 days.*
- Will Gary Blvd. have a center turn lane? *Yes*
- Thank you for getting this project in Clinton, it needs to be fixed.
- Thank you for coming. Not crazy about the concept but need to think about it.
- What will happen to my property value? *Improved access may increase property value.*
- I am the director of transportation for the Cheyenne & Arapahoe Tribes – what can you do about Exit 69? We would like to see it on ODOT's 8 year plan. *Let's discuss after the Q&A session.*
- What will be the elevation change on I-40? *Estimate about 7-8 foot raise on I-40 to accommodate new bridges. There will be excavation under I-40 for the new Gary Blvd.*
- Will this provide local jobs? *It will be put out to bid, but yes it could.*

Comments During One-on-One Discussions:

- Specific property concerns with right-of-way, noise, loss of trees, utilities
- Creek on the north side of I-40 is full of debris and needs to be cleaned out
- You should have considered a cloverleaf interchange
- Desire to keep Blvd of Champions in current location near Neptune Dr. intersection
- Concern that (EB) I-40 traffic will bypass Gary Blvd because they will have to exit and turn back
- Like the extension of Gary Blvd south to Chapman Road.

3.5 Summary of Written Comments

Thirteen (13) written comments from agencies and local governments, and nine (9) written comments from members of the public were received both during and after the public meeting. Copies of the written comments are included in **Appendix H**. ODOT responses to the comments are shown in italics after each comment.

3.5.1 Agency Comments

The **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** found no BLM surface lands or Federal minerals within or near the project area. The BLM has no concerns or objections to the proposal. *Response: Thank you for your comment.*

The **National Park Service** has no comment at this time. *Response: Thank you for your response.*

The **Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)** found that there are tribal or Individual Indian trust lands within the project area. The BIA is concerned about impacts to these properties and would like clarification and consultation on what improvements will be made once design is finalized. The BIA recommends ODOT





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contact the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes as they have historic ties to the area and should be consulted. *Response: ODOT is aware of the Indian trust lands in the area and no impacts to these properties are currently anticipated. ODOT will continue to consult with the BIA as the project develops. ODOT notified the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes of the project and representatives from the tribe attended the public meeting. Formal consultation regarding sites of traditional religious or cultural importance will take place in the next phase of the project.*

The **Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes** have reviewed the project and determined it will have no adverse effect. However, the Tribes request notification if additional studies indicate the presence of traditional cultural properties or other cultural materials. The Tribes also state that ODOT would be required to assess any cultural materials discovered during construction. *Response: Thank you for your comment. Additional consultation with the Cheyenne and Arapaho and other interested Tribes will continue throughout the project development process.*

The **Oklahoma Corporation Commission** found no active or plugged oil and gas wells located in the project area. *Response: Thank you for the information.*

The **Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation, State Parks** found a Land and Water Conservation park in the study area that would be adversely affected by decreasing the buffer and landscape on the margins of the tennis courts on the Clinton High School property. The existing trees provide a pleasant landscape and add a sense of established settlement and place to Clinton. Damage to these trees would be a cost to replace and rebuild. Use of the tennis courts would be diminished by increased noise from the decrease of the buffer. If any land not currently owned by the City is acquired in this area, it must be replaced and costs absorbed by the City. The City would be required to notify State Parks of any conversion of use and work with State Parks to resolve the differences. This is a complicated and costly process and limits opportunities for other recreational projects to make progress. Information is available on the National Park Service website under the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. State Parks provided a photograph and map indicating the relevant area. *Response: There may be temporary impacts to the Clinton High School property during construction in order to construct the new Gary Blvd/Lexington Ave. intersection. However, these impacts will not affect the tennis courts or the landscape trees adjacent to Lexington Avenue or Gary Boulevard. ODOT will continue to coordinate with the City of Clinton, Clinton High School, and the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation as design progresses.*

The **Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ)** stated that prior to beginning any construction activity disturbing more than one acre, a Notice of Intent (NOI) must be submitted and authorization under OKR10, construction stormwater, must be obtained. *Response: Once a construction project is defined, ODOT and its contractors will follow all requirements of OKR10.*

The **Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC)** reviewed the project and noted that it does not appear to pose a hazard to the safe and efficient use of navigable air space. The OAC recommends that ODOT use the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) notice criteria tool to determine if a 7460-1 form needs to be filed with FAA. *Response: Once a construction project is defined, ODOT will determine the need for the 7460-1 form and file with the FAA if required.*





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The **Oklahoma Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)** found that the roadbed for Route 66 has been documented along Gary Boulevard, Exit 65, and Neptune Drive. The SHPO provided links to the Route 66 thematic study and references to the discussion of Route 66 in Clinton. The SHPO understands that ODOT will initiate formal consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if and when required. *Response: Thank you for the information on Route 66 in the project area. ODOT will initiate formal consultation under Section 106 in the next phase of the project.*

The **Oklahoma Archeological Survey (OAS)** found that there are no known archeological sites listed in the project area, but that based on topographic and hydrological setting, archeological materials are likely to be encountered. The OAS considers a field inspection necessary prior to project construction. The OAS also indicated that ODOT must have a letter from the SHPO's office to document consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The OAS also stated that ODOT is responsible for consultation with the appropriate Native American tribe/groups to identify any concerns regarding properties of traditional and/or ceremonial value. *Response: Thank you for the information. ODOT will perform an archeological evaluation pursuant to Section 106 in the next phase of the project, and will continue to consult with the OAS and well as the SHPO and Native American tribes.*

The **City of Clinton** passed a resolution of dissent on March 14, 2019 stating that the alternative presented at the February 28, 2019 public meeting was not in the best interest of the citizens of Clinton. The City recognized the need for improvements, and the City would prefer that one of the options presented in 2016 be selected, keeping both Exit 65 and Exit 65A open. *Response: ODOT will reconsider two of the alternatives from the previous study: Alternative 2 Conventional Diamond and Alternative 5 Modern Roundabout (Dumbbell). ODOT will further investigate the feasibility of these alternatives and present a comparison of the benefits and impacts of all three alternatives (Alternatives 2, 5, and 7) at a future public meeting. ODOT will continue to work with the City of Clinton and area stakeholders to understand local concerns and address these as completely as possible in the design.*

David Berrong, **Mayor of Clinton**, submitted two separate written comments. Mayor Berrong requested that ODOT consider an alternative to Alternative 7 presented at the public meeting. Keeping both Exit 65 and 65A open is important. He is concerned that commerce on Gary Blvd. might suffer with the roundabouts between the two exits. He states that commercial development experts have questioned the impacts that the proposed plan would have on Gary Blvd properties south. In a letter to ODOT Chief Engineer Brian Taylor, Mayor Berrong expressed a desire to work with ODOT to modernize the Exit 65/65A interchanges and that the impression of the city and the public following the 2016 public meeting was that the final design would be selected from one of the options presented at that time. The Mayor asks that ODOT refocus on the 2016 alternatives and keep both Exit 65 and 65A open. *Response: ODOT will reconsider two of the alternatives from the previous study: Alternative 2 Conventional Diamond and Alternative 5 Modern Roundabout (Dumbbell). ODOT will further investigate the feasibility of these alternatives and present a comparison of the benefits and impacts of all three alternatives (Alternatives 2, 5, and 7) at a future public meeting. ODOT will continue to work with the City of Clinton and area stakeholders to understand local concerns and address these as completely as possible in the design.*

Lyle Miller, **Custer County Commissioner**, likes the plan. He was impressed by the recently constructed roundabout in Oklahoma County. He would like to see an entrance from Gary Blvd. added





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between Braums and Long John Silvers to help development. Selling unused ODOT property south of Kmart would also help development. Thank you for the project – it is badly needed. *Response: Thank you for your comments.*

3.5.2 Public Comments

Nine (9) written comment forms/letters from the public were received. Some letters included more than one comment. Comments from the public are summarized in Table 1 and in the paragraphs below:

Table 1: Public Comment Summary

Comments in Support of Alternative 7	5
It is needed and will solve problems	
Like the roundabouts	
Like the long accel/decel lanes	
Provides easy access to Gary and Neptune	
Works well to keep both exits open	
Please follow through with this important plan	
Supports future growth	
Like the Gary Blvd. improvements	
Comments with Concerns about Alternative 7	2
Does not help traffic flow	
Does not support development south of I-40	
Plan will reduce traffic on Gary Blvd. and hurt businesses	
Go back to previous plan that maximized traffic on Gary Blvd. and kept interchange in current location	
This plan only benefits the businesses adjacent to I-40 (same owner)	
General Comments/Questions	3
Specific concerns about access	
Keep both Exit numbers on highway signs	
Would like additional exit to north on north roundabout	
Would like additional roundabouts at frontage road/Gary Blvd intersections	
Keep Red Wheat Drive as business access drive	
Ok if you have to close 65A/Neptune if it simplifies things	
Allow local businesses to bid/subcontract	
Proposed new interchange at 28 th Street	
Concerns about noise	
Concerns about property values	
Consider naming frontage road Red Wheat Drive	
Will you place signs at exits for food/shopping?	

Comment 1:

- Happy to see comments from 2016 were incorporated into new design.
- Roundabouts are unusual but well thought out and workable
- Much of the plan will be on our land and will affect our businesses (businesses owned by commenter were listed in the letter).
- Information provided regarding status of underground storage tanks on various properties and well/water line location





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- Concern about internal parking lot access at Water Zoo for campers/RVs
- Don't need driveway to Water Zoo maintenance door
- Request for exit off north roundabout for proposed new development to the north
- Keep both exit numbers on signs

Comment 2:

- This is a unique concept. I like the long acceleration and deceleration lanes. Also like having eastbound access to I-40 from Gary Blvd. Provides easy access to Gary Blvd. and Neptune Dr. which we don't have today.
- Request for additional roundabouts at Gary Blvd/frontage road intersections to address accidents from left turning vehicles. Allow access to roundabout to/from the west for future development.
- Limit access to Gary Blvd and keep Red Wheat Drive for business access. Allows for travel between businesses without having to use Gary Blvd.

Comment 3:

- I like the idea and works well to keep both exits open.
- I am not opposed to keeping only Gary Blvd. open to simplify things.
- Would like to see opportunity for local businesses to be able to bid or be subcontractors.

Comment 4:

- I approve of the plan, please follow through on this important improvement
- The plan presented will solve many existing problems

Comment 5:

- City has two major concerns: 1) facilitate growth, 2) provide safe traffic flow. The proposed plan does provide some assistance to commercial, industrial, recreational, and residential growth.
- The plan has shortcomings related to traffic flow.
- The plan will limit city growth to the south including industrial areas, brick plant park area, on west, southwest, and southeast sides of the city. These areas need easy direct access to I-40.
- Exit 65/65A interchange location provides only limited access to potential growth areas.
- Like the proposed Gary Blvd. improvements – suggest also improving Chapman Road and extend east to US-183.
- Provide new interchange at I-40/28th Street

Comment 6:

- Pizza Hut has been in business in Clinton for over 40 years. It was originally on 10th Street because it had on and off-ramp access to I-40 for customers and deliveries. Over time that part of town declined and Pizza Hut began looking for a new location. Relocated to Gary Blvd/Jacee Ln. across from High School. We got visibility from Gary Blvd. and traffic from Route 66. Our business has doubled since the move due to the location on Gary Blvd.
- The current plan will reduce traffic on Gary Blvd. and destroy my business and other businesses on Gary Blvd.
- Against this plan. Want an alternate plan that provides access to I-40 eastbound from Exit 64 (typo? Exit 65?).



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- Encourage you to scrap the current design and go back to a previous design that maximized traffic flow on Gary Blvd. and keeps Exit 64 (65?) in its current location.
- Under current plan, traffic will skip the new exit and will take exits to the east or skip Clinton.
- Current plan appears to benefit the businesses adjacent to I-40 with provide entrances – these are all owned by the same individual. Looks like this owner influenced the plan. You should not change traffic to benefit one owner at the expense of others on Gary Blvd.

Comment 7:

- Build a wall to reduce noise on the north side of the project behind the neighborhood and/or behind Hampton Inn.
- How will home values be affected?

Comment 8:

- Concern about noise impacts – Concord Avenue is very close to the project. Please notify us if the study determines a noise wall is warranted.
- Consider naming the frontage road Red Wheat Drive – this is a culturally significant name in Cheyenne and Arapaho tribal territory.

Comment 9:

- As a business owner on Gary Blvd – will you be placing signs at the exits for food/shopping?

3.5.3 Responses to Public Comments

Response to Comments in Support of Alternative 7: ODOT thanks you for your comments and appreciates your input. ODOT believes that improvements to the interchange(s) are needed to resolve safety and access concerns.

Response to Comments with Concerns about Alternative 7: ODOT will reconsider two of the alternatives from the previous study: Alternative 2 Conventional Diamond and Alternative 5 Modern Roundabout (Dumbbell). ODOT will further investigate the feasibility of these alternatives and present a comparison of the benefits and impacts of all three alternatives (Alternatives 2, 5, and 7) at a future public meeting. ODOT will continue to work with the City of Clinton and area stakeholders to understand local concerns and address these as completely as possible in the design.

Responses to General Questions: ODOT understands the concerns about access and signage, and the importance of signing the new interchange appropriately to clearly direct travelers to their intended destination. We appreciate the input on signage for the interchange, local streets, and area businesses. As the project progresses, ODOT will study impacts to properties in more detail, including a detailed noise study.

Appendix A

Agency Solicitation Letter and List

Appendix B

Public Involvement Plan

Appendix C

Public Meeting Letter and List

Appendix D

Property Owner and Utility Letter and Mailing List and Flyer

Appendix E

Public Meeting Sign-in Sheets

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