

Supplementary Notice of Intent Document

Walnut Ridge to Missouri State Line (Future I-57)
ARDOT Job Number 100512

May 2021

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Introduction

This Supplementary Notice of Intent (NOI) document contains important details about the ARDOT's plans for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will be prepared to study the effects of a highway project under consideration for the Highway 67 corridor in Clay, Greene, Lawrence, and Randolph counties, Arkansas. This Supplementary NOI Document and the NOI published in the Federal Register should be read together. FHWA and ARDOT request and encourage all affected State, Tribal, and local government agencies, and the general public, to carefully review this Supplementary NOI document with the NOI and submit comments on any aspect of the project that might benefit the project understanding. Specifically, agencies and the public are asked to identify and submit potential alternatives for consideration and information such as anticipated significant issues or environmental impacts and analyses relevant to the proposed action for consideration by the lead and cooperating agencies in developing the Draft EIS. Instructions for submitting comments are on the last page of this document. Comments must be received within 30 days after publication of the NOI in the Federal Register.

Purpose and Need

What is meant by purpose and need?

A project's **need** is a detailed explanation of the specific transportation problems or deficiencies that exist or that are expected to exist in the future. A project's **purpose** defines the goals and objectives that should be included as part of a successful solution to the problem. The purpose and need are the foundation for all the project studies and are used to identify the range of alternatives (solutions to the transportation problem) that best address the purpose and need of the project.

The purpose and need statement is a living document until the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is drafted, and therefore, can be changed or modified as needed as new information is gathered. The local officials, agencies, public, and other stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide comments on the purpose and need throughout the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

This chapter will describe the social and environmental conditions in the study area, why transportation improvements are needed, and the purpose of this project.

What are the logical termini and study area limits?

Logical Termini

Logical termini identify rational end points for a transportation improvement project. The logical termini for the proposed project are the Hwy. 412/Hwy. 67 interchange at Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, and the Arkansas Missouri State line. The length of the project is approximately 43 miles.

The southern terminus was selected because Hwy. 67 has been constructed to interstate standards from Interstate 40 (I-40) north to the Hwy. 412/Hwy. 67 interchange in Walnut Ridge.

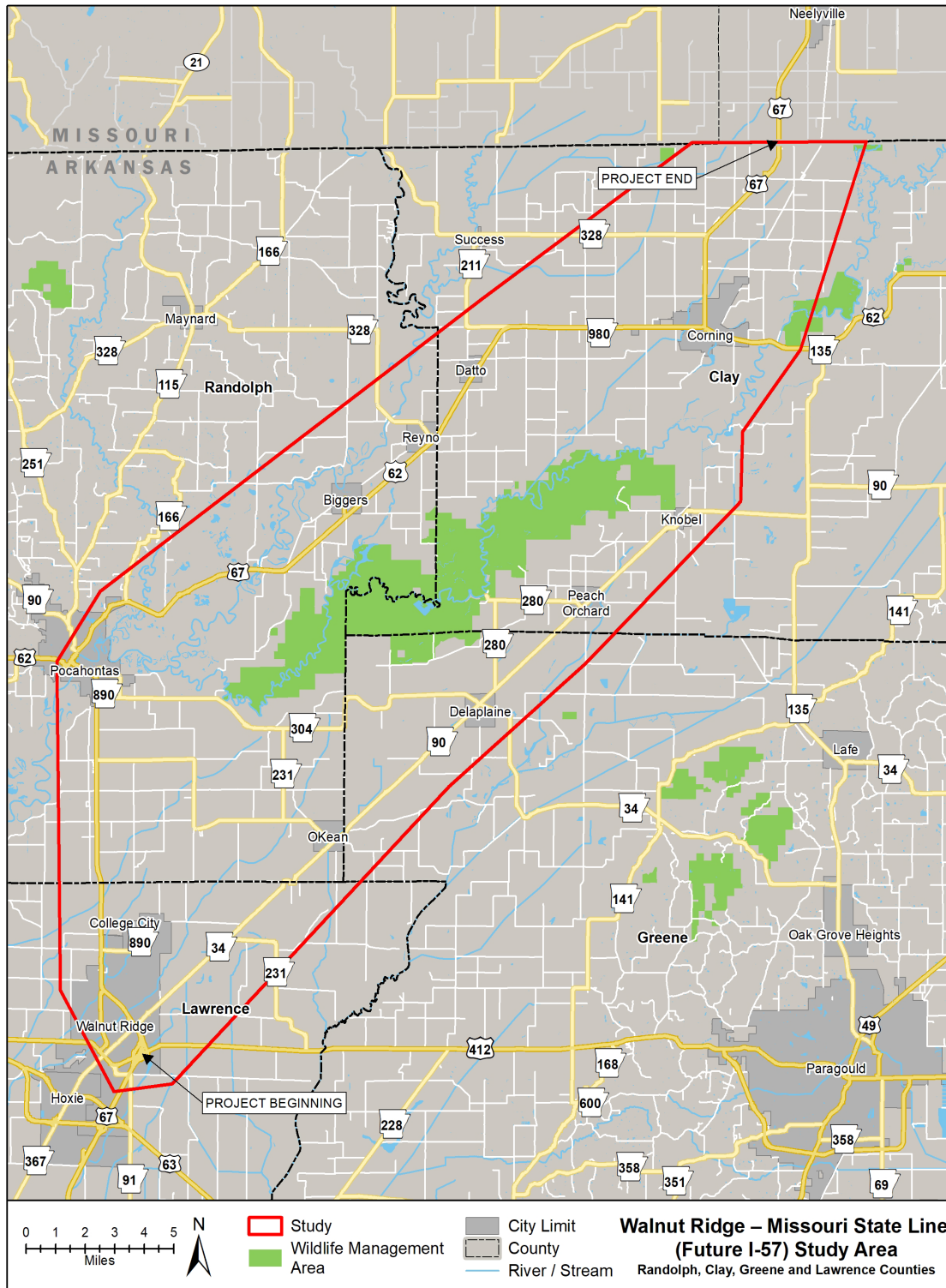
In consideration of the north terminus, a political boundary such as a state line is not necessarily a good choice, but in this case it is appropriate as it serves as a viable location for future coordination between the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). MoDOT completed a Final Environmental Impact Statement for Hwy. 67 from just south of St. Louis, Missouri to just south of Neelyville, Missouri, approximately two miles north of the Arkansas-Missouri State line. The southern terminus of the MoDOT study was identified because it avoids forcing a specific northern terminus for ARDOT's portion of Hwy. 67. The two-mile gap north of the state line allowed MoDOT to wait to align their final section of Hwy. 67 with the ARDOT terminus. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by ARDOT and MoDOT in 1998 for the two states to cooperate on the northern terminus of Hwy. 67 in Arkansas.

The logical termini, as described above, provide rational end points for this project, provide enough length for a comprehensive review of the project's needs and environmental impacts, and will not preclude staged construction of independent sections as funding becomes available.

Study Area

The study area was developed based on the 2015 ARDOT planning study that examined several new location corridors that met the needs identified in the study while minimizing impacts to the natural and social environments. The study area extends from Walnut Ridge, Arkansas to the Missouri State line within Clay, Greene, Lawrence, and Randolph Counties in northeast Arkansas. The study area is approximately 40 miles in length and 10 miles wide at its broadest point (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Study Area



What is the study area like today?

The study area includes the larger cities of Walnut Ridge, Pocahontas, and Corning. Other smaller cities and towns located in the study area include College City, Manson, O’Kean, Delaplaine, Peach Orchard, Knobel, Biggers, Reyno, and Datto, Arkansas. Population estimates for the study area’s four counties and selected municipalities are presented in **Table 1**.

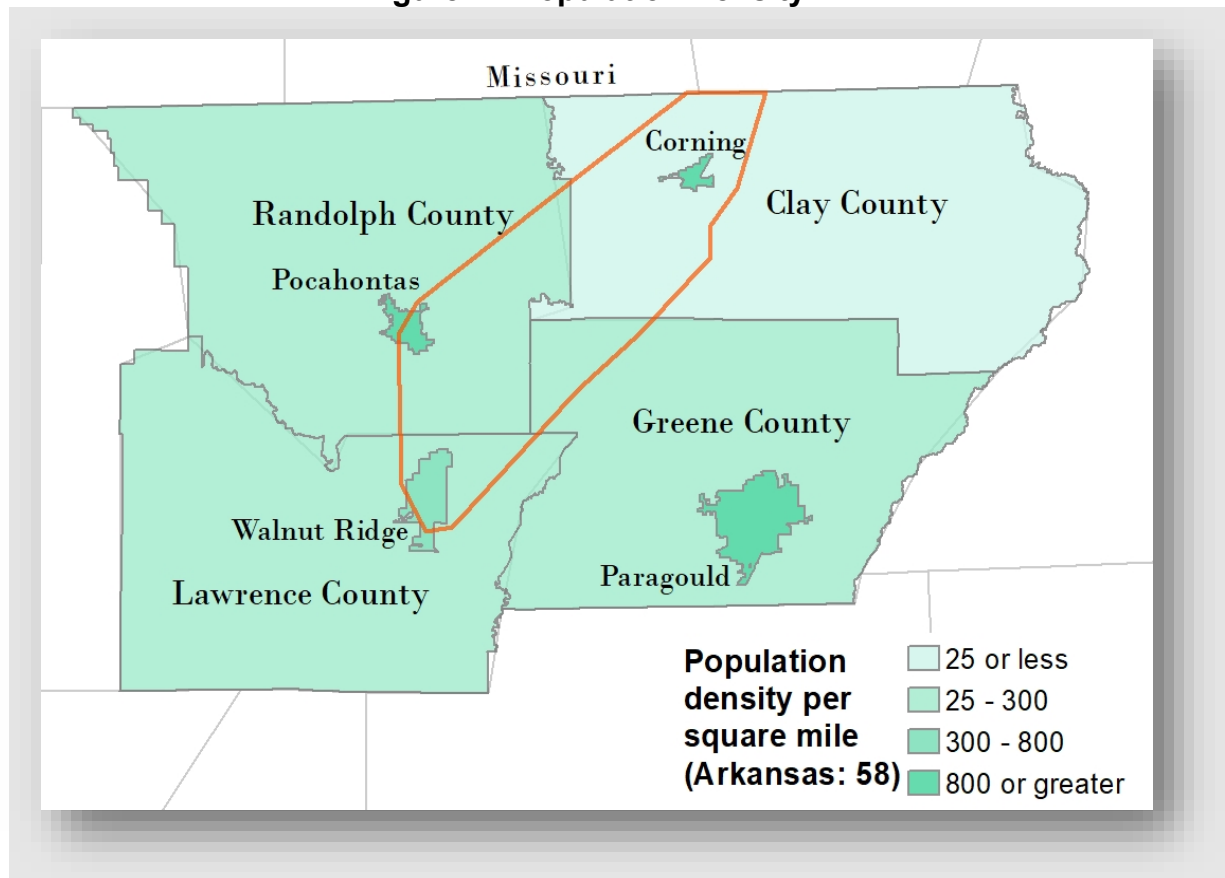
Table 1: Population Estimates

County	County Population	City (within County)	City Population
Clay	15,190	Corning	3,205
Greene	44,197	NA	NA
Lawrence	16,777	Walnut Ridge	5,146
Randolph	17,514	Pocahontas	6,459

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2013-2017 American Community Survey, Table B01003 – Total Population.

The study area is generally rural with population densities ranging between 25 300 people per square mile (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Population Density



U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

Most of the population in the study area is white with no less than 94% whites for any of the four study area counties (see **Table 2**). Hispanics and Latinos make up 2.2% of the population and Black individuals make up 0.9% of the population for each of the study area counties combined. The median age is older than the state average of 37.7 years for all counties. with the oldest median age being Clay County at 44.0 years. As shown in **Table 3**, of those over the age of 25, with the exception of Greene County (3.1%), the study area has a greater number of people with less than a 9th grade education than the state average (3.0%). Additionally, the study area has fewer people with a four-year degree than the state average (see Table 3).

Table 2: Demographic Data

Geography*	Total Population	Median Age	White alone	Black or African American alone	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
CITY					
Corning	3,177	46.9	3,107 (97.8%)	0 (0.0%)	70 (2.2%)
Paragould	27,521	36.1	26,170 (95.1%)	359 (1.3%)	858 (3.1%)
Pocahontas	6,470	38.9	6,224 (96.2%)	143 (2.2%)	113 (1.7%)
Walnut Ridge	4,723	38.5	4,572 (96.8%)	57 (1.2%)	18 (0.4%)
COUNTY					
Greene	43,745	38.2	41,969 (95.9%)	411 (0.9%)	1,144 (2.6%)
Randolph	17,584	42.9	16,981 (96.6%)	184 (1.0%)	312 (1.8%)
Lawrence	16,915	41.8	16,436 (97.2%)	122 (0.7%)	209 (1.2%)
Clay	15,202	44.0	14,632 (96.3%)	76 (0.5%)	275 (1.8%)
Counties Listed Above	93,446	41.7	90,018 (96.3%)	793 (0.8%)	1,940 (2.1%)
State of Arkansas	2,968,472	37.7	2,307,136 (77.7%)	460,638 (15.5%)	207,049 (7.0%)

* U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

Table 3: Education Data

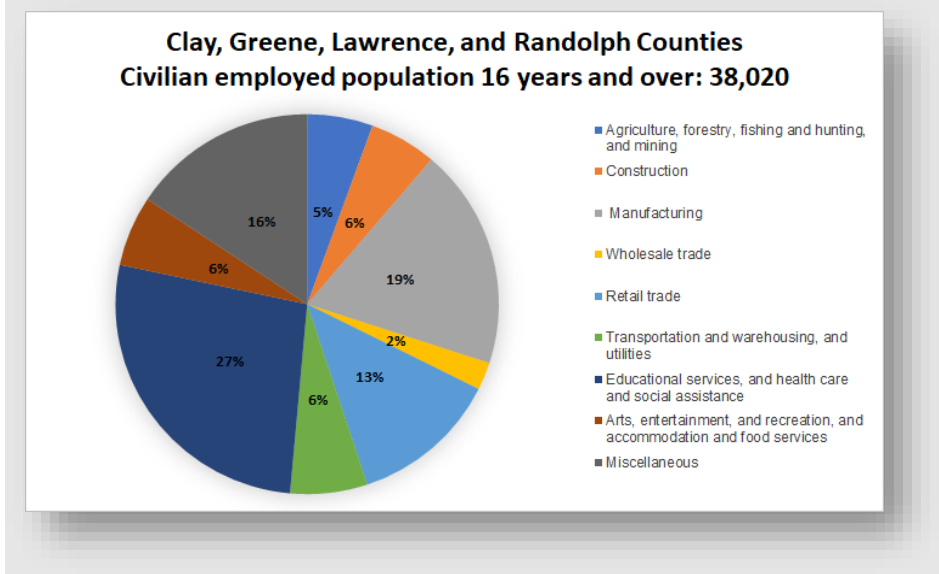
Geography*	Population 25 years and over	Educational Attainment (25 years and over) Number of people (% of population over 25)		
		4-year Degree	High School Equivalent	Less than 9th Grade
CITY				
Corning	2,288	99 (4.3%)	1,109 (48.5%)	251 (11.0%)
Pocahontas	4,366	450 (10.3%)	1,588 (36.4%)	320 (7.3%)
Walnut Ridge	3,114	327 (10.5%)	1,242 (39.9%)	307 (9.9%)
COUNTY				
Greene	29,009	3,262 (11.2%)	12,468 (43.0%)	1,354 (4.7%)
Randolph	12,276	1,059 (8.6%)	4,707 (38.3%)	807 (6.6%)
Lawrence	11,438	969 (8.5%)	4,707 (41.2%)	926 (8.1%)
Clay	10,812	775 (7.2%)	4,586 (42.4%)	1,053 (9.7%)
Counties Listed Above	63,535	6,065 (9.5%)	26,468 (41.7%)	4,140 (6.5%)
Arkansas	1,973,591	273,557 (13.9%)	683,886 (34.7%)	106,297 (5.4%)

* U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

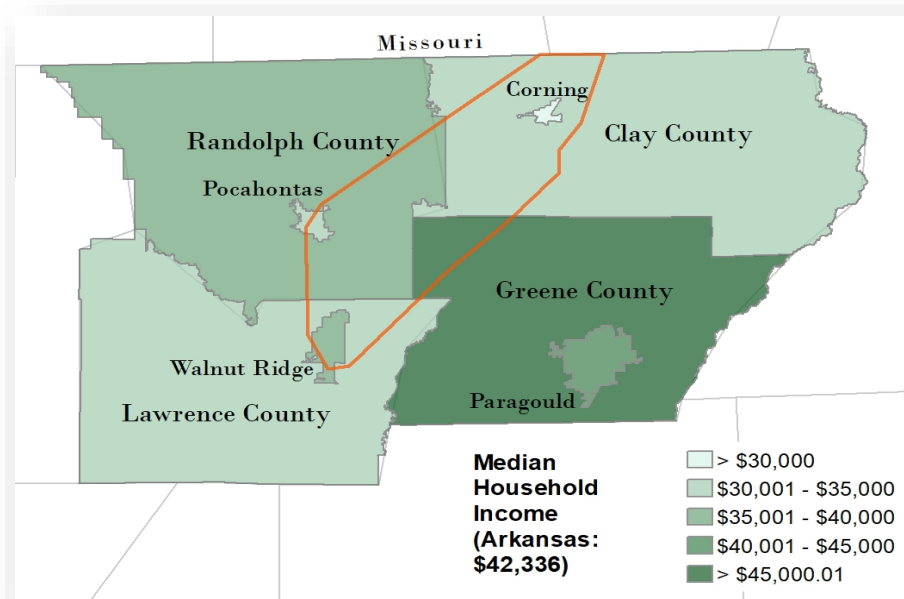
Economic Information

Manufacturing, retail, educational services, healthcare, and social assistance generally employ the greatest number of residents within the study area. Agriculture and transportation are also prominent industries in terms of the employment numbers. **Figure 3** shows the major breakout of employment for the four counties.

Median household incomes in the study area range from a low of \$32,404 in Clay County to a high of \$49,195 in Greene County, general household income ranges are presented in **Figure 4**.

Figure 3: Employment for All Study Area Counties Combined

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

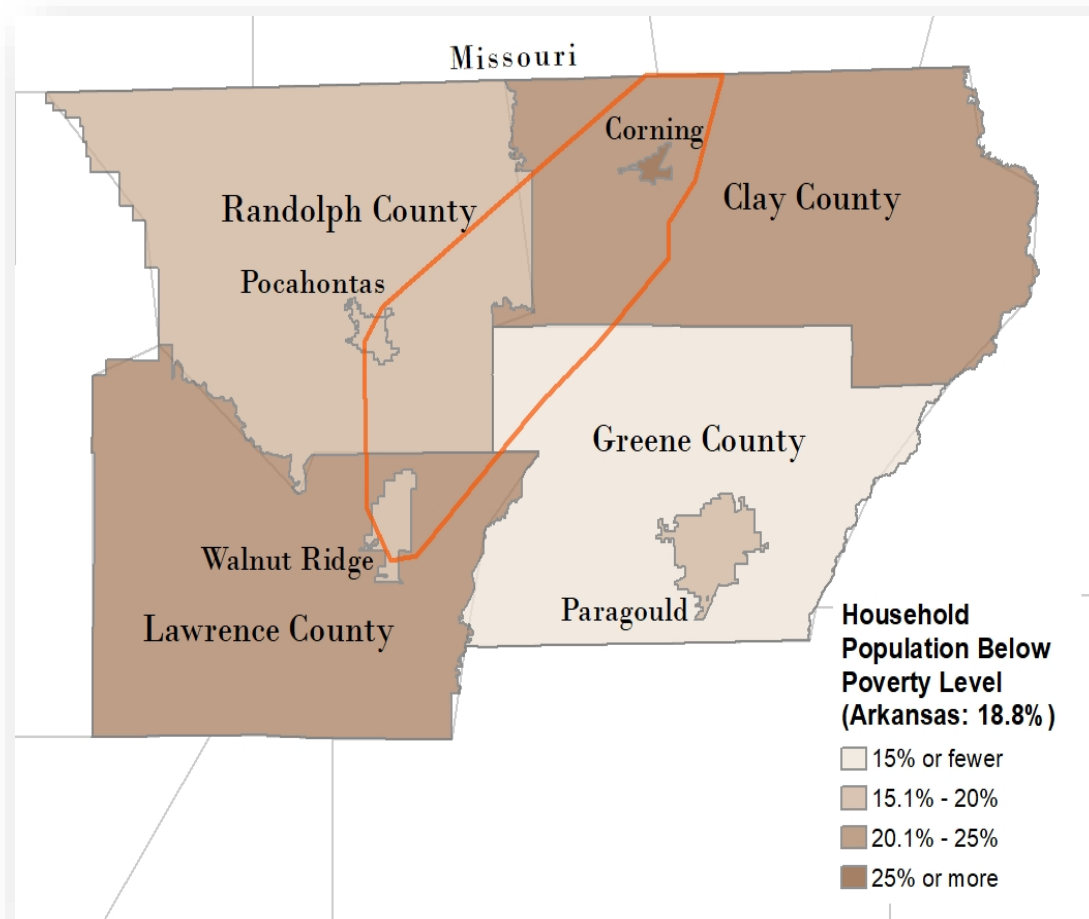
Figure 4: Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

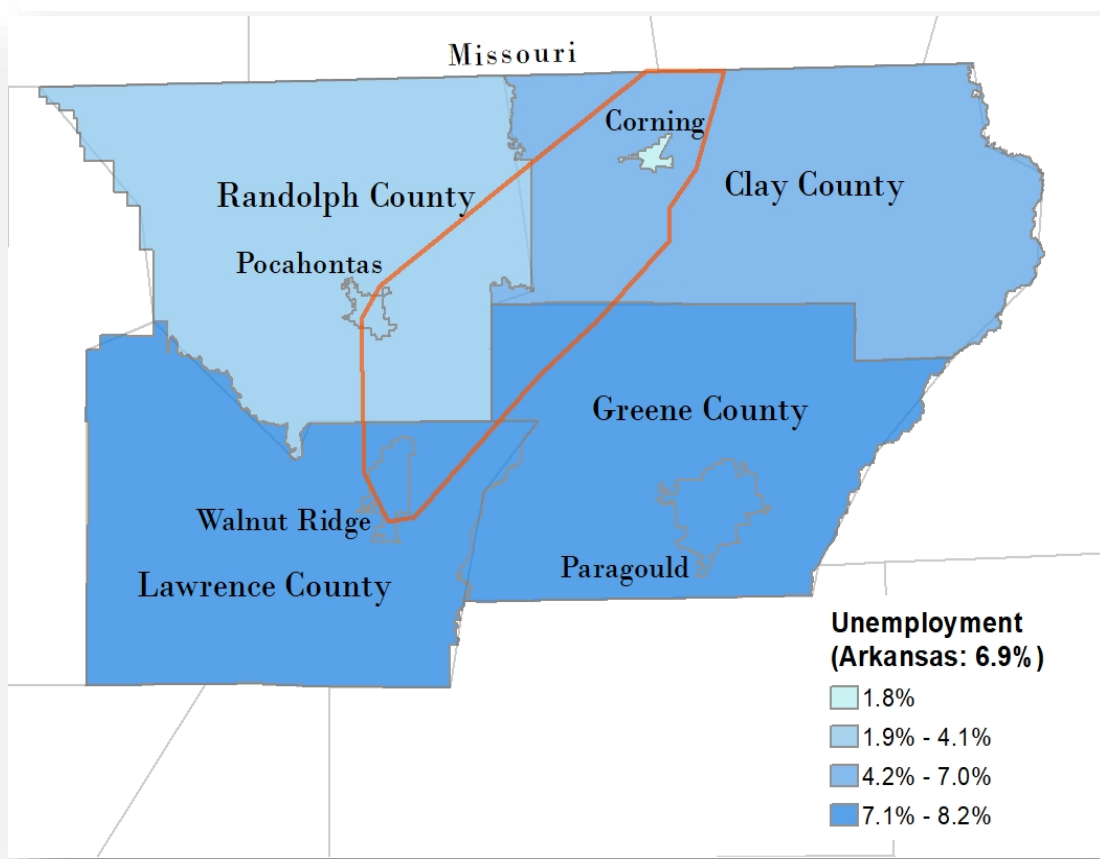
Clay County and the City of Corning have the lowest median household incomes and have the highest number of households living below the poverty level (**Figure 5**). Most of the study area has higher poverty levels than the rest of the state.

The unemployment rate is lower than the rest of the state in Randolph and Clay counties, while Greene and Lawrence counties have a slightly higher rate than the state average (**Figure 6**).

Figure 5: Household Population Below Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

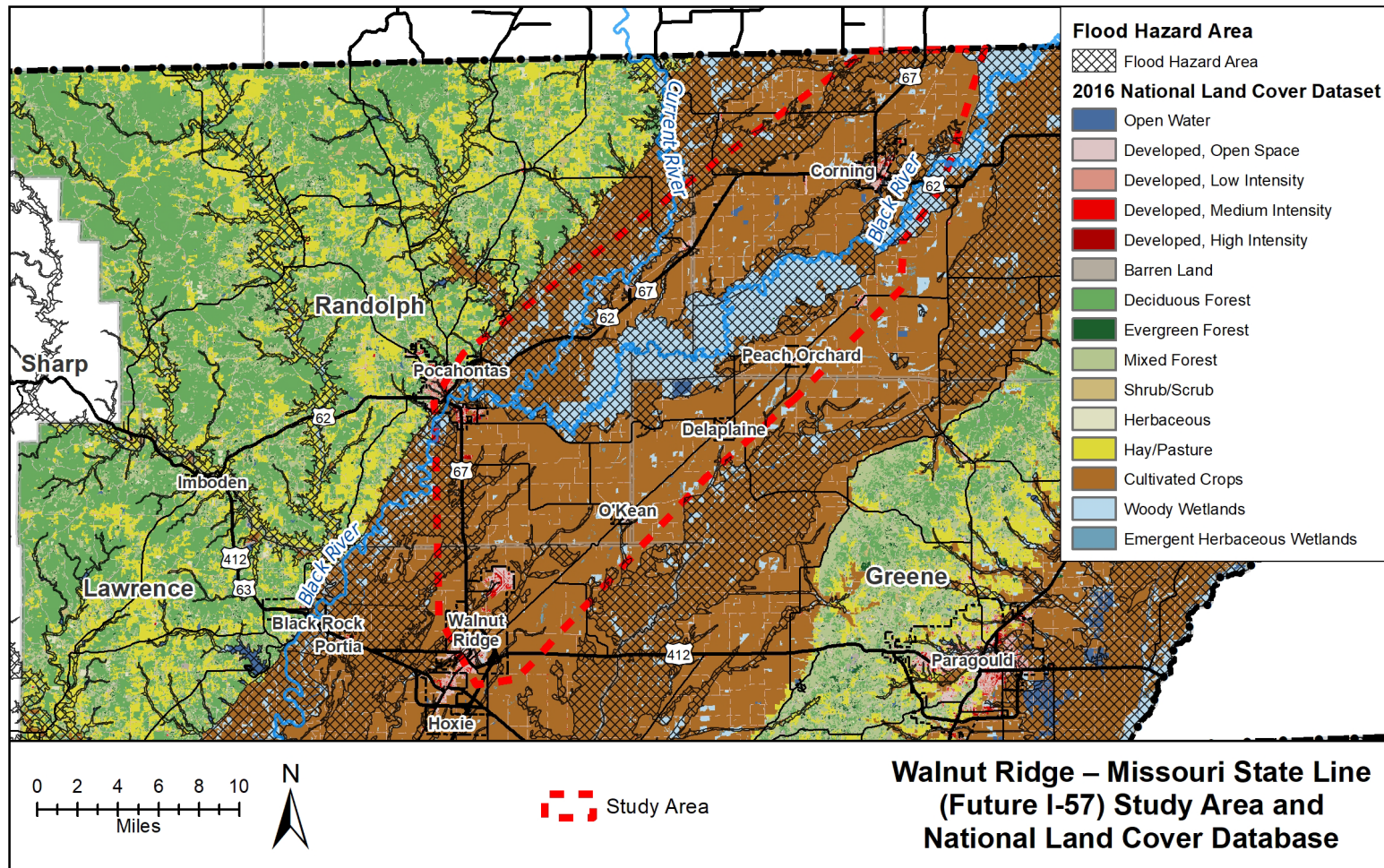
Figure 6: Unemployment

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey: 2012-2016. Processed by Demographic Research, Arkansas Economic Development Institute, College of Business Administration, UALR

Land Use and Environmental Features

Cultivated crops are the dominant land use in the study area as shown in **Figure 7**. The Dave Donaldson Black River Wildlife Management Area (WMA), the Black and Current Rivers, and substantial floodplains and wetlands are the major environmental features in the study area. As shown in Figure 1, the Dave Donaldson Black River WMA lies directly in the middle of the study area. The WMA is approximately 25,000 acres in size and supports important bottomland hardwoods and substantial recreational opportunities.

Figure 7: Land Use



Northeast Arkansas Road Network

Within the study area, there are four primary highways that provide for regional transportation and connect the study area to the rest of the state and beyond: Hwys. 62, 63, 412, and 67 (**Figure 8**). Hwy. 412 is the only continuous principal arterial parallel to, and north of, I-40 in Arkansas. Hwy. 412 extends from New Mexico to Tennessee and connects I 49 to Hwy. 67 in northeast Arkansas. As a Congressionally-designated High Priority Corridor, Hwy. 412 is part of a strategic network of highways that support national economy, defense, and mobility.

There is a network of other minor two-lane roadways in the study area, specifically Hwys. 90, 34, 304, and 135, that provide an alternative route from Walnut Ridge to Corning passing through small communities such as O’Kean, Delaplaine, and Peach Orchard. This alternate route to Highway 67 generally follows the Union Pacific Railroad and is on the eastern edge of the study area.

Regional Roadway Network

Currently, I-57 runs from Chicago, Illinois to Sikeston, Missouri, where it meets I-55 (**Figure 9**). The future I-57 corridor will eventually be extended west from Sikeston, Missouri along Hwy. 60 to Poplar Bluff, Missouri and then south along the Hwy. 67 corridor to North Little Rock, Arkansas, ending at I-40.

Missouri has already upgraded 62 miles of the Hwy. 60/67 corridor between Sikeston and Harviell to a four-lane highway with partial access control, with plans to convert it to a fully-controlled access interstate. An approved alignment for improvements to interstate standards from Harviell to just south of Neelyville has recently been reevaluated. Funding has been secured for design and construction for part of this section. This leaves an approximately 2-mile section of the future I-57 corridor just north of the Arkansas State line that does not have a final alignment approved through the NEPA process.

Traffic Operations

The 2015 Draft Highway 67 Improvement Study found that congestion levels were acceptable then and would still be acceptable without improvements in 2035. For this study, the 2015 and 2035 volumes developed in the previous planning study were updated to show 2018 and 2040 volumes. Annual growth rates used to calculate the 2040 volumes were based on the previous study growth rates. Since the 2040 traffic volumes did not show a significant increase over the 2035 volumes, additional traffic analysis was not performed. The previous study indicated that most of Highway 67 in our study area operates at acceptable levels today, and similar operations are expected in 2040. The exceptions were in Pocahontas and Corning for both 2018 and projected 2040 conditions where conditions were not

always acceptable. Accordingly, traffic congestion and crash rates are the worst in Pocahontas and Corning both now and in 2040 due to the higher traffic volumes, stop light intersections, and residential and business density.

Figure 8: Northeast Arkansas Roadway Network

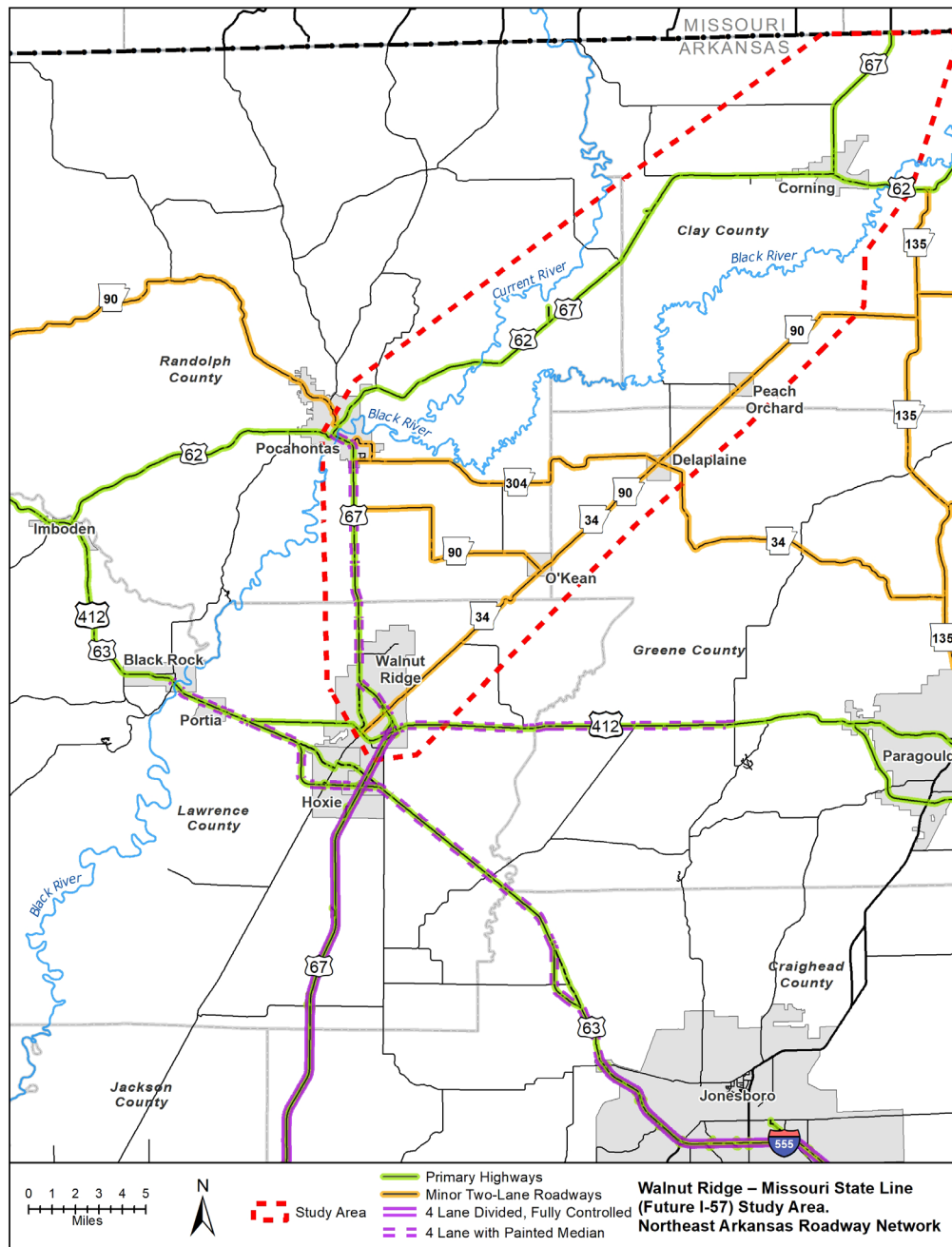


Figure 9: Regional Roadway Network



What studies have been completed in the past for this corridor?

A list of the important actions and reports related to the Hwy. 67 corridor in Arkansas are presented below in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Summary of Project History for the Hwy. 67 Corridor

Action/Report	Date	Details
NE Ark Arterial Highway Study	1975	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended that a freeway facility be studied
Minute Order 78-186	1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHC authorized the updating of the 1975 study.
U.S. 67 from Newport to Walnut Ridge	1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update to the 1978 study Study led to recommendations for an improved transportation system, not just improvements to selected routes.
Walnut Ridge – Pocahontas (Hwy 67) EA	Aug. 1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed action to widen Hwy. 67 from Walnut Ridge to Pocahontas from two-lanes to a four-lane highway, transitioning into a five-lane section inside the city limits of Pocahontas.
U.S. 67 Corridor Study – Walnut Ridge to the Missouri State Line	Feb. 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose of study to recommend a preferred alignment for a freeway-type facility from Walnut Ridge to the Missouri State line. Recommended a new-location, four-lane freeway approximately 39 miles in length.
Minute Order 2012-025	March 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AHC authorized a study to re-evaluate the long-term improvement needs for the Hwy. 67 Corridor from Walnut Ridge to the Missouri State line.
Highway 67 Improvement Study	Aug. 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluated the long-term improvement needs for the Hwy. 67 corridor from Walnut Ridge to the Missouri State line. Alternatives retained for further study included improving existing Hwy. 67 with bypasses, a central new location route, and a northern new location route. No action retained as required by NEPA.
H.R. 1625-Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 SEC. 128	Jan. 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 1105(c)(89) of Public Law 102–240, as amended, is amended to read as follows: “(89) I–57 Corridor Extension as follows: In Arkansas, the corridor shall follow United States Route 67 in North Little Rock, Arkansas, from I–40 to United States Route 412, then continuing generally northeast to the State line, and in Missouri, the corridor shall continue generally north from the Arkansas State line to Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and then follow United States Route 60 to I–57.”

Why is the project needed?

The project is needed because there is a gap in the system linkage which diminishes connectivity and mobility of the National Highway System. Additionally, there is a lack of reliable transportation infrastructure to support economic development and a need to enhance resiliency to extreme weather events along the route. Furthermore, legislation designated this route as future Interstate Route 57. The project needs and supporting information are discussed further in the following sections.

System Linkage & Continuity

Hwy. 67 in the study area does not match the transportation system in the rest of this regional corridor (Figure 2). South of the study area, Hwy. 67 is a fully controlled interstate type facility from I-40 in North Little Rock to Walnut Ridge. North of the study area, Hwy. 67 is either built or planned to be built to a four-lane interstate type facility from the Missouri State line to Sikeston, Missouri. From Sikeston, existing I-57 heads north through Missouri and Illinois until it ends in Chicago, Illinois.

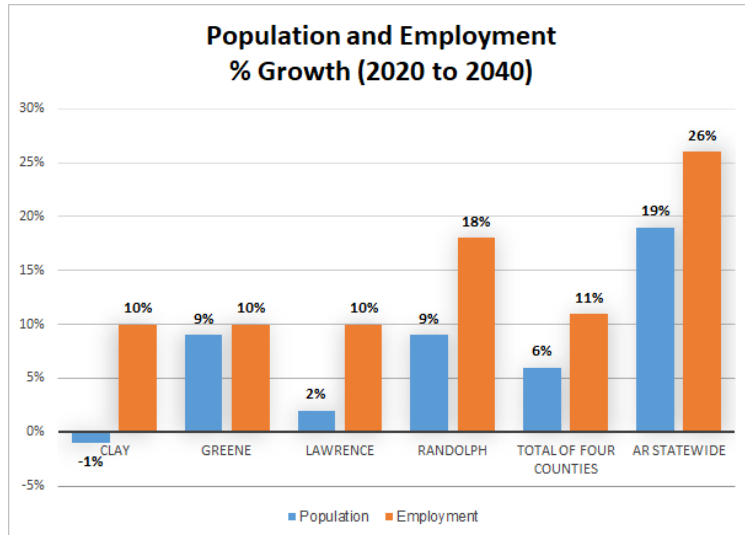
Improving this section of Hwy. 67 to interstate standards would also provide an important interstate connection between I 55 at Sikeston, MO and I-40 and I-30 in North Little Rock, AR. An improved Hwy. 67 that allows for higher speeds and greater traffic volumes, as well as a more direct route through northeast Arkansas, would enable commercial trucks carrying freight to use this route as an alternative to I-40 and I-55. This improved linkage would allow for more efficient movement of people and goods between the Great Lakes and the Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Texas, as well as within and between localized segments along the proposed corridor.

Economic Development

As presented above, the study area populations have a lower standard of living than the rest of the state. The median age of people in these counties is older than the state average and trending higher. Census data also shows that since 1990 populations in Clay and Lawrence Counties have decreased by 24% and 6%, respectively. Randolph and Greene Counties have increased populations by 6% and 30%, respectively. For comparison, the state population has increased 22% between 1990 and 2019.

The projected population growth between 2020 and 2040 is approximately 6% for the four study area counties as compared to 19% for rest of the state¹. Employment growth is projected to average 11% for the four study area counties as compared to the state's 26% growth¹. These demographic characteristics can be directly correlated with reduced economic

opportunities and fewer jobs creating an environment where younger people move away to find more work opportunities and higher standard of living.



According to U.S. Department of Transportation studies², a region's industrial and employment base is closely tied to the quality of the transportation system. High-quality, dependable transportation systems allow businesses to receive inputs to production facilities and to transport finished goods to market in an efficient manner. An efficient transportation system allows companies to lower transportation costs, which lowers production costs and enhances productivity and profits.

Climate Resiliency

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Order 5520 establishes FHWA policy on preparedness and resilience to climate change and extreme weather events. It encourages state departments of transportation to implement and evaluate risk-based and cost-effective strategies to minimize extreme weather risks and protect critical infrastructure using the best available science, technology, and information.

¹-<https://arstatedatacenter.youraedi.com/past-census-data/> and <https://arstatedatacenter.youraedi.com/demores/demoscripts/subcountyestimates2019.php>

²- <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96spring/p96sp16.cfm>

Over the past 12 years, the Hwy. 67 corridor has experienced several major flood events causing highway disruption. The first major flood event occurred along the Black River in 2008, submerging portions of Hwy. 67 in Pocahontas³. In 2011, Hwy. 67 from Pocahontas to Walnut Ridge was shut down for more than a week due to flooding. From south of Pocahontas to Corning,

Hwy. 67 south of Pocahontas in Randolph County in 2017.



Hwy. 67 was closed for several days due to high water in May 2017. Additional minor flood events impacting the Hwy. 67 corridor have occurred as well, especially between Pocahontas and Corning.

In recent years, a higher percentage of precipitation in the U.S. has come in the form of intense single-day events⁴. The prevalence of extreme single-day precipitation events remained fairly steady between 1910 and the 1980s but has risen substantially since then. Nationwide, nine of the top 10 years for extreme one-day precipitation events have occurred since 1990. The occurrence of abnormally high annual precipitation totals (as defined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has also increased. Increases and decreases in frequency and magnitude of river flood events generally coincide with increases and decreases in the frequency of heavy rainfall events⁵. This trend is expected to continue.

A resilient Hwy. 67 is needed to withstand such extreme weather events. By remaining open to travel, it would serve to keep valuable commerce moving through the region, give locals the ability to access jobs and commerce, facilitate emergency vehicle access, and serve as an evacuation route for lower lying areas. An improved Hwy. 67 would provide an alternate route to Interstates 40 and 55 during construction work or emergency closures on those facilities, improving not only local and regional but national mobility.

³-<https://www.noaa.gov/weather>

⁴-<https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/weather-climate>

⁵- <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov>

Congressional Designation

Recent Federal legislation emphasized the importance of this extension of the I-57 corridor. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 states: *“I-57 Corridor Extension as follows: In Arkansas, the corridor shall follow United States Route 67 in North Little Rock, Arkansas, from I-40 to United States Route 412, then continuing generally northeast to the State line, and in Missouri, the corridor shall continue generally north from the Arkansas State line to Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and then follow United States Route 60 to I-57”.*

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the project is to enhance connectivity and continuity of the National Highway System, provide a more resilient roadway, and provide for increased opportunity for economic development in northeast Arkansas.

Preliminary Alternatives

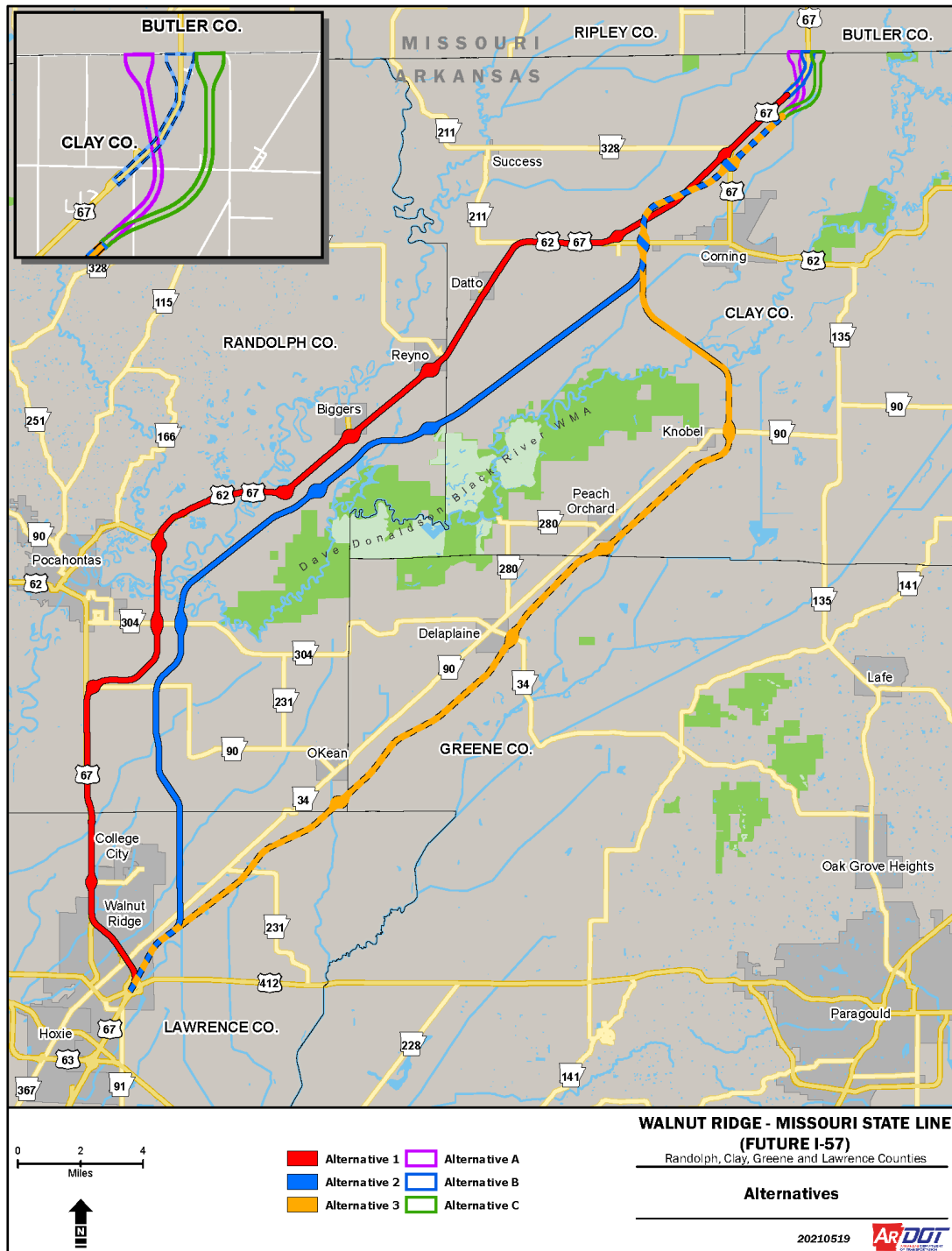
Study Area and Proposed Alternatives

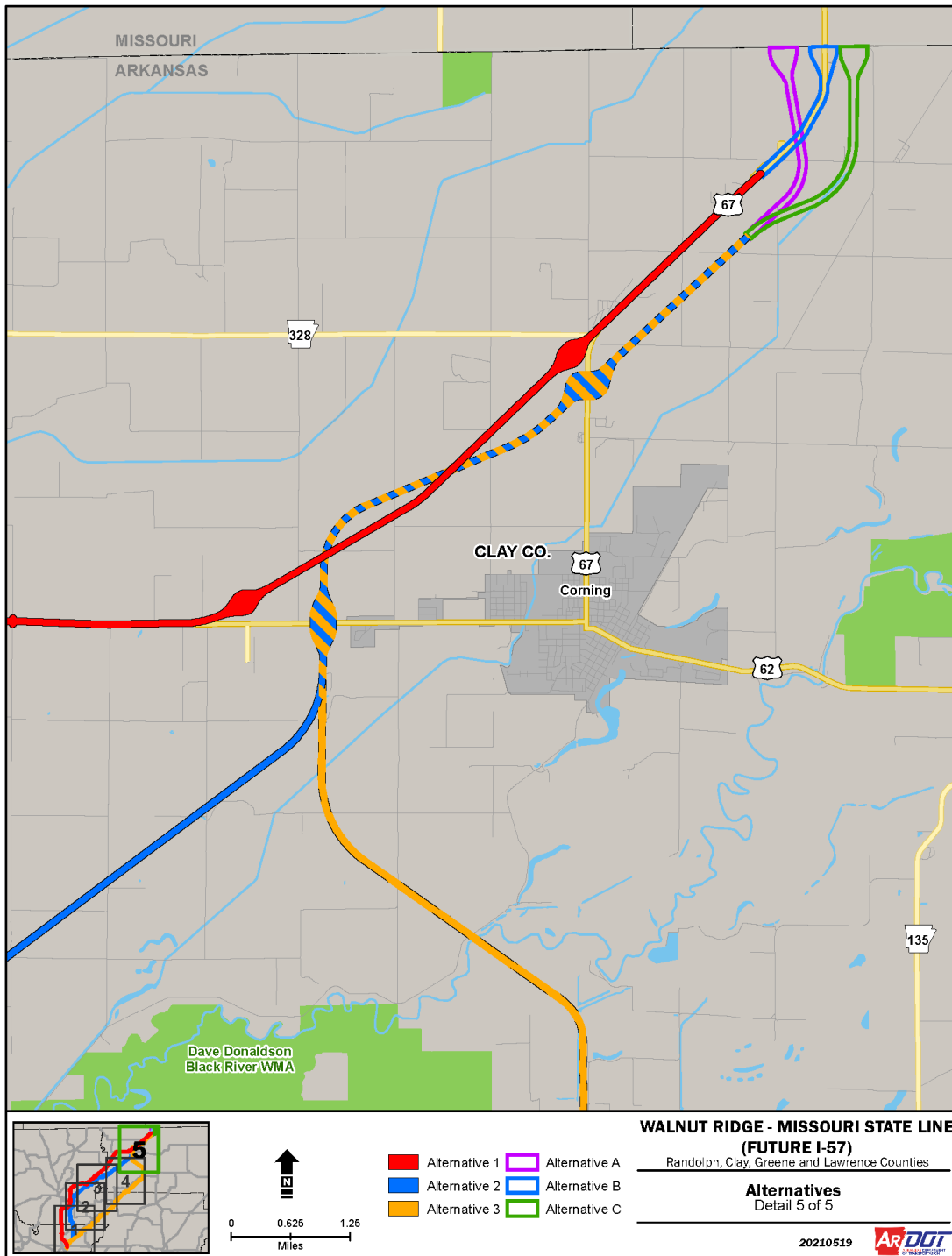
Please refer to **Figure 10** for the general alternatives’ location map and additional more detailed maps.

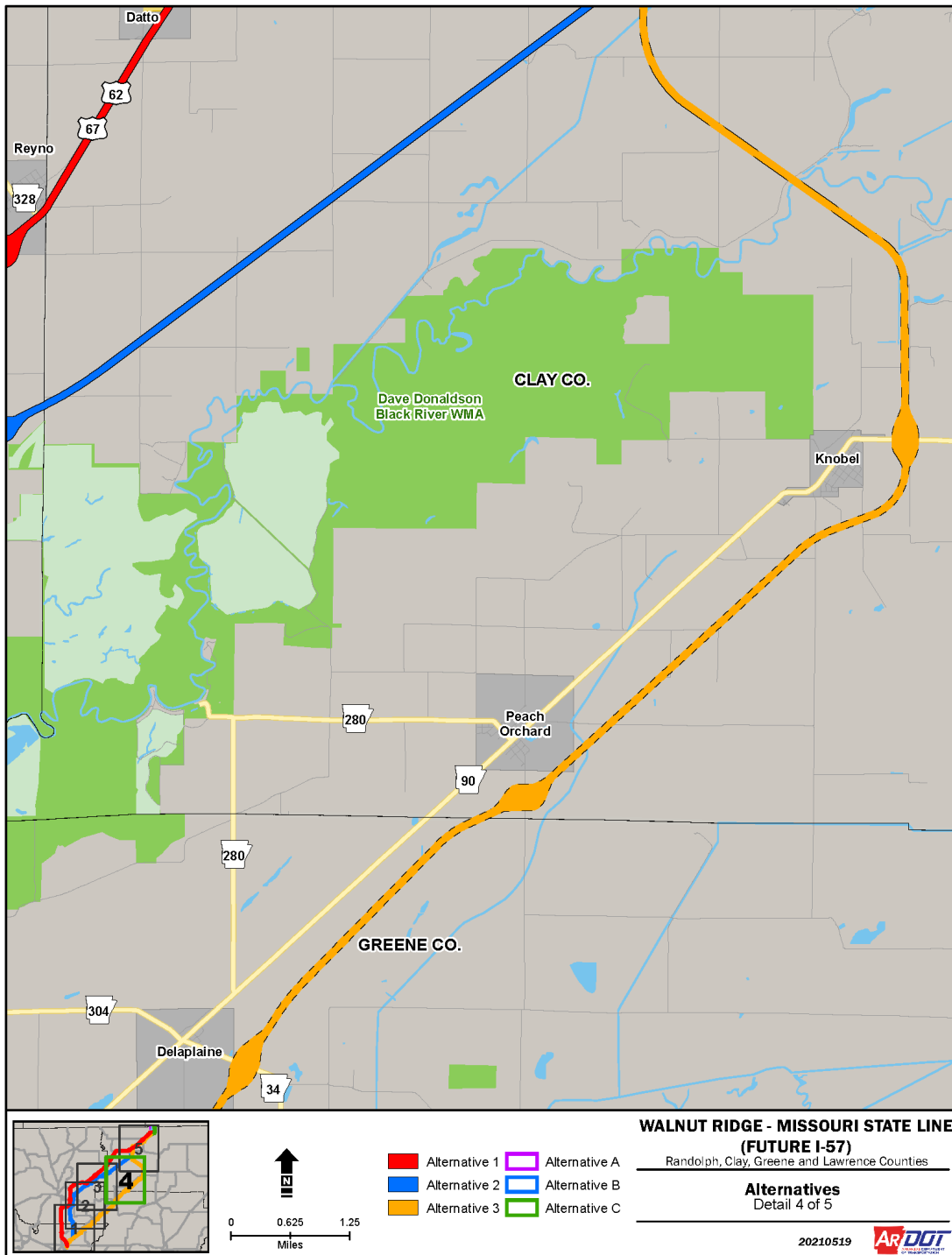
The project starts at the Highway (Hwy.) 412 /67 interchange at Walnut Ridge and extends north to the Missouri State line north of Corning. There are three main alternatives (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3) and three “connector” alternatives (Alternatives A, B, and C) currently under consideration. Alternative 1 essentially improves the existing Hwy. 67 alignment except for bypasses around Pocahontas and Corning on new location. Alternative 2 is on a new location and provides a route generally between the existing Hwy. 67 corridor and the Dave Donaldson Black River Wildlife Management Area (DDWMA). It bypasses Corning to the west and then extends north up to the Missouri State line. Alternative 3 is on a new location and is the easternmost corridor generally following the Hwy. 34/90 corridor between Walnut Ridge and Knobel. At Knobel it then turns north to follow the same alignment as Alternative 2 and proceeds north to the Missouri State line.

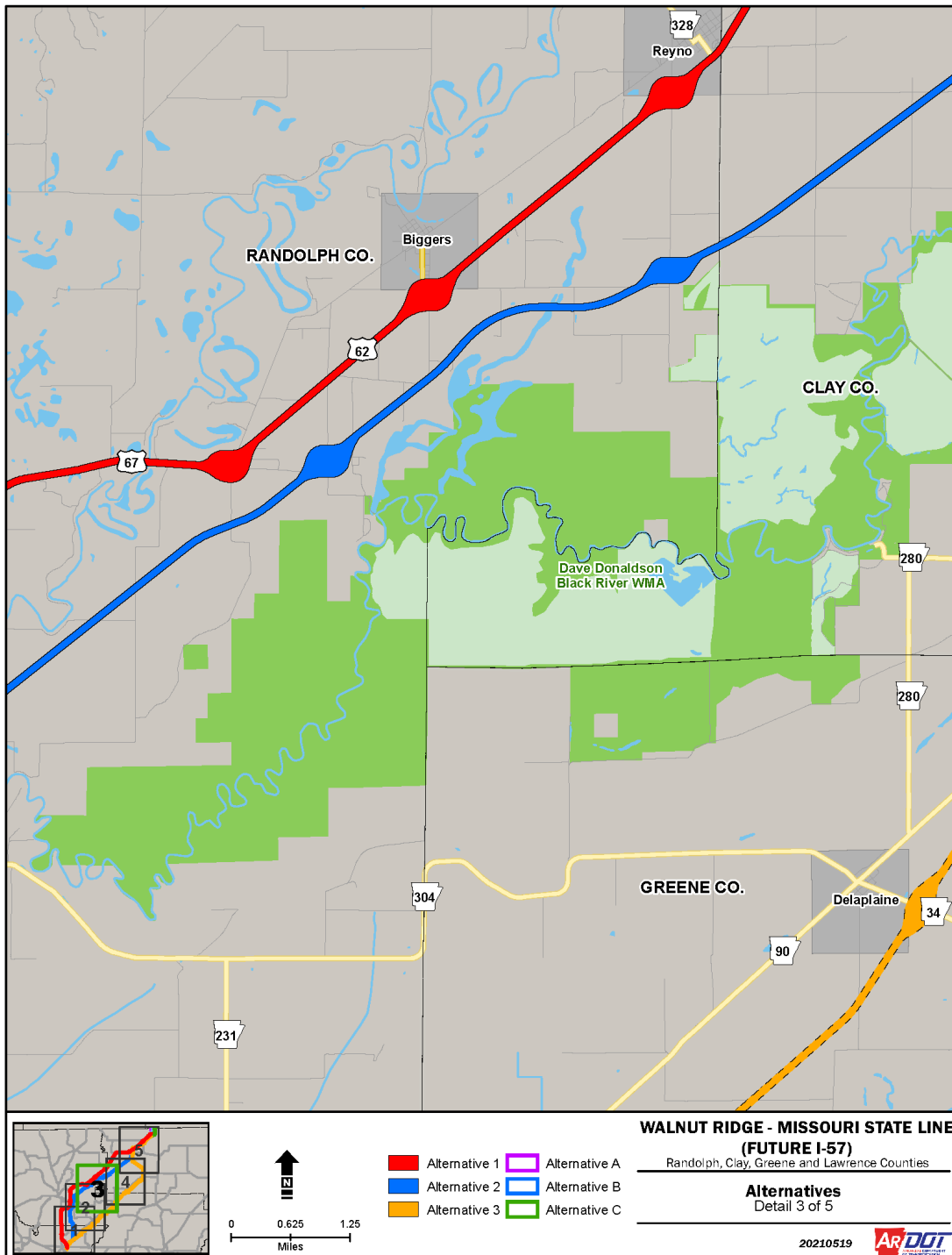
At the Missouri State line there are three alternatives to choose from, all three connectors will work with any of the main alternatives. These connectors were separated so that the main alternatives and the connectors could be evaluated separately. Alternative A is just west of Hwy. 67 on new location, Alternative B improves existing Hwy. 67, and Alternative C is east of Hwy. 67 on new location.

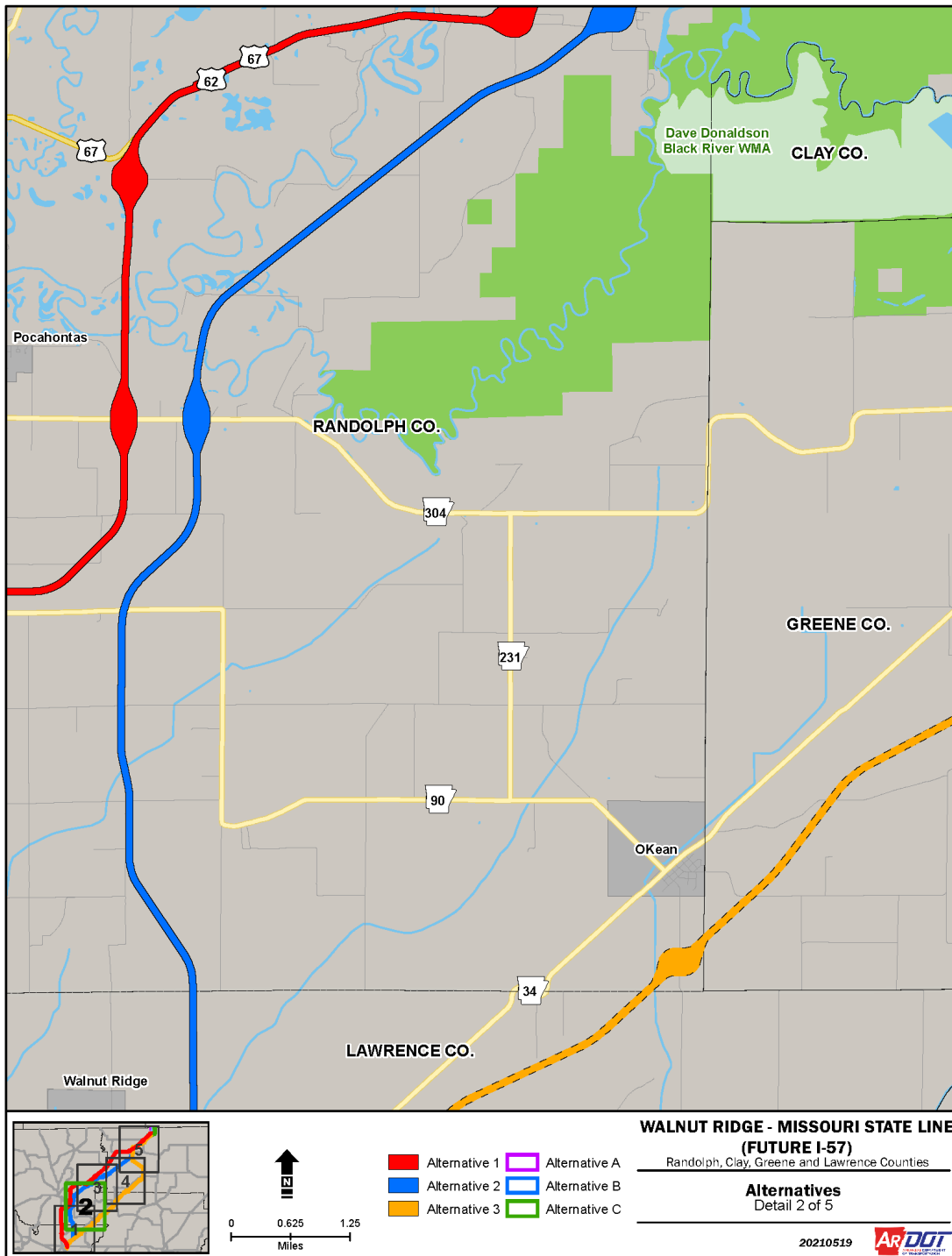
Figure 10. Alternative Location Maps

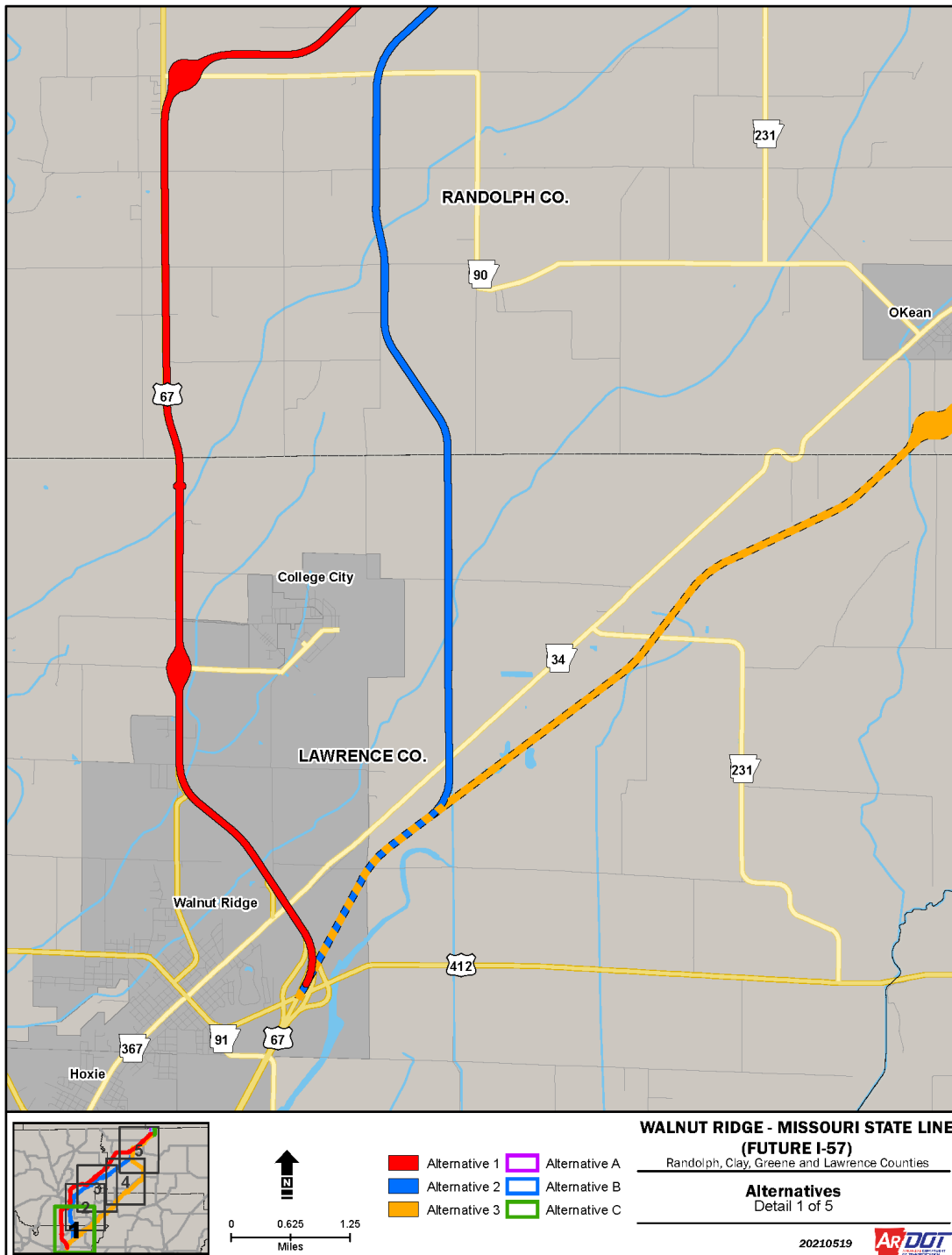












Additional detail on each corridor is provided below.

Main Alternatives

Alternative 1: This alternative improves existing Hwy. 67 from Walnut Ridge to Hwy 90 intersection then veers off to the east on new location to cross the Black River at a strategic bridge location and to avoid substantial impacts to the built-up human environment closer to and in Pocahontas. The alignment then proceeds north on new location where it ties back into Hwy. 67 northeast of Pocahontas. The alignment then follows existing Hwy. 67 toward Corning crossing the Current River. Approximately 3.5 miles west of Corning the alignment turns northeast on new location to bypass Corning and avoid substantial impacts to the built-up human environment. To the north of Corning there are several proposed options for the Arkansas-Missouri connection. This alignment is approximately 42 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations is approximately \$577 million.

Alternative 2: This alternative is completely on new location. It begins at the Hwy 67/412 interchange at Walnut Ridge and extends northeast approximately 2 miles where it turns north to pass approximately one mile east of College City. The alignment follows a path north to the Black River that minimizes splitting of the farmland tracts to the extent possible. It crosses the Black River and floodplain east of Alternative 1 at the best possible crossing location. It then turns northeast to avoid crossing the Current River and proceeds northeast between Hwy. 67 and the DDWMA, eventually turning more northward approximately 2.5 miles west of Corning. After crossing Hwy. 67 the alignment turns back northeast where there are several proposed options for the Arkansas-Missouri connection. This alignment is approximately 40 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations, is approximately \$493 million.

Alternative 3: This alternative is completely on new location. Alternative 3 extends northeast from Walnut Ridge approximately 2 miles on the same alignment as Alternative 2 then splits just south of Murta and continues northeast on the east side of Hwy. 34/90 to the town of Knobel. At Knobel the alignment turns north and crosses the Black River and then converges with Alternative 2 just south of Hwy. 67 and east of Corning. Alternative 3 then follows the same alignment as described above for Alternative 2 after crossing Hwy. 67. This alignment is approximately 44 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations, is approximately \$482 million.

Missouri Connector Alternatives

These alternatives were separated from the main alternatives to offer multiple alignment options for the final connection to Missouri. The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) has not completed the final studies for the future I-57 alignment in Missouri. Consequently, MoDOT is a cooperating agency on this project and working closely with ARDOT on the connector location because this will determine the southern terminus for the MoDOT section of future I-57. MoDOT has indicated that they want to stay on or very close to the existing Hwy. 67 alignment. The main alternatives (1, 2, and 3) can combine with any of the connector alternatives (A, B, and C) and therefore this location will not impact the selection of the preferred main alternative.

Alternative A: This alternative starts on the east side of Hwy. 67 then crosses Hwy. 67 and terminates at the Missouri State line approximately one-half mile west of Hwy. 67. Other than crossing Hwy. 67, this is all new location. This alignment is approximately 1.7 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations, is approximately \$25 million.

Alternative B: This alternative improves existing Hwy. 67 up to the Missouri State line. This alignment is approximately 1.5 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations, is approximately \$27 million.

Alternative C: This alternative starts approximately one-half mile east of Hwy. 67 and parallels the highway, terminating at the Missouri State line approximately one-quarter mile east of Hwy. 67. This alignment is approximately 1.9 miles long and the estimated construction cost based on preliminary design, not including right of way or utility relocations, is approximately \$20 million.

Anticipated Impacts

Discussions below separate the main alternatives (1, 2, and 3) and the connector alternatives (A, B, and C) because they will be compared and advanced independently. Please see **Table 5** on following page for the Environmental Impacts Comparison. These estimates, based on 1000-foot-wide corridors, are for comparison or relative impacts between alternatives. Actual impacts will change as the studies advance and the design details are refined down to a typical section of roadway approximately 300 to 400 feet wide.

Table 5: Environmental Impact Comparison

	Alternatives					
	Main Corridors			Missouri Connectors		
Construction	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt A	Alt B	Alt C
Length (miles)	44	40	41	1.5	1.5	1.5
Social Impacts						
Residences (#)	174	11	15	3	24	8
Businesses (#)	68	0	0	0	14	0
Agricultural Structures (#)	92	54	25	1	4	3
Cemeteries (#)	1	0	1	0	0	0
Other Structures (#)	76	4	6	2	11	9
Cultural Resources (#)	28	8	1	0	0	0
Hazmat Sites (#)	15	1	0	0	0	0
Community features (#)	4**	0	0	0	10*	0
Cell Towers (#)	3	0	0	0	0	0
Pipelines (# crossings)	18	10	3	0	0	0
Public Comment (# stating a preference)	26	68	31	37	46	20
Environmental Impacts						
Farmlands (ac)	3,628	4,304	4,369	193	87	208
100- Year Floodplain (ac)	1,513	1,042	271	105	107	84
Wetlands (ac)	191	123	86	1	0	1
Streams (# crossings)	51	48	73	1	1	1

*State Welcome Center Buildings

**Churches

Main Alternatives

Social Setting - Alternative 1, which improve existing Hwy. 67, would displace significantly more structures directly, and indirectly cause the loss of access and use for many others, than Alternatives 2 or 3 which are located primarily on rural farmlands (see Environmental Impact Table on following page). There is substantially greater risk for impacts to known hazardous materials and cultural resources sites for Alternative 1 when compared to Alternatives 2 and 3, again because of the built-up human environment. Alternatives 2 and 3 are relative similar in most social impacts with the exceptions of pipeline crossing and agricultural structures where Alternative 2 has greater potential impacts.

Environmental Setting – Typically utilizing an existing roadway for improvements project reduces the natural environmental impacts because at least some of the required right-of-way (ROW) is already developed. But even with the developments that are built up around Hwy. 67 there are still many natural

environmental impacts predicted for Alternative 1. Of the four primary environmental concerns listed in the table below, Alternative 1 has the greatest impacts for floodplains, wetlands, and stream impacts. Alternative 3 would impact the least floodplain and wetlands than Alts 1 or 2.

Missouri Connectors

Social Setting - Alternative B which improve existing Hwy. 67 would displace significantly more structures directly, and indirectly cause the loss of access and use for others, than Alternatives A or C which are mostly located on undeveloped farmlands. The impacts to other social resources are relatively similar between all three alternatives.

Environmental Setting – Alternatives A and C would impact similar acres of farmlands while Alternative B impacts the least farmlands. Alternatives A and B impact similar acres of the floodplain while Alternative C impacts the least. Wetland and stream impacts are very minor and comparable between all of the alternatives.

Anticipated Permits and Study Schedule

The following agencies have agreed to be a cooperating agency for this project, meaning they will have a more involved role with review responsibilities: United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); United States Corps of Engineers (USACE); United States Department of Agriculture; and MoDOT.

These cooperating agencies were provided the draft purpose and need statement and the range of alternatives in January 2021 and all agencies concurred with the proposed project approach.

Permits and authorizations anticipated for the project include a USACE Section 404-10 individual permit for wetland and stream impacts, and Section 408 approval for levee impacts. Coordination with the USACE began in November 2020 when they accepted the responsibility to be a cooperating agency.

A Section 401 Water Quality Certification from the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment will be required for potential impacts to surface waters and is part of the USACE Section 404 process. Coordination began May 2020 when they accepted the responsibility to be a participating agency.

Consultation with the USFWS pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, will be required for biological assessments and threatened and endangered species surveys. Coordination with the USFWS began May 2020 when they

accepted the responsibility to be a cooperating agency. A Request for Technical Assistance for USFWS was completed in early 2020 and a preliminary plan for habitat resource evaluations and bat and mussel surveys was submitted to the USFWS for review.

Concurrence from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for compliance with Section 106 regulations will be required for historical and archeological resources potentially impacted. Coordination with SHPO began January 2021 when they accepted the responsibility to be a participating agency. An Archeological Resource Study (historic structure survey) will be completed prior to the completion of the DEIS. A Phase I Shovel Survey for archeological resources will be completed after the preferred alternative is approved in the DEIS and before the completion of the FEIS/ROD. It is possible, depending on the study findings, that additional studies will need to be completed and those will be identified and defined in memorandum of agreement between ARDOT and SHPO to be included in the FEIS/ROD.

The schedule for permit and approval processes required by NEPA regulations are provided in the following Permitting Timetable worksheet. This schedule is based on assumptions of the level of effort for various tasks within the overall study as well as preliminary coordination with the permitting agencies on the required permits and approvals. This schedule will be captured on the FHWA Permitting Dashboard website [Permitting Dashboard \(performance.gov\)](https://www.performance.gov) and updated as the project develops.

Environmental Impact Statement
Permitting Timetable Worksheet for Permitting Dashboard
Project Title: Hwy. 412 – Missouri State Line P.E.
State Project Number: Job No. 100512
Sponsor: Arkansas Department of Transportation

Federal Lead Agency/ Action:

FHWA - Environmental Impact Statement

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Issuance of Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	7/15/2021	
Scoping	8/15/2021	
Official Notice of Availability of a Draft EIS published in the Federal Register (FR) beginning both the public comment period and concurrent CAA Section 309 Review	6/31/2022	

Official Notice of Availability of a Final EIS published in the FR beginning both the public review period and concurrent CAA Section 309 Review	2/28/2023	
Issuance of Record of Decision or combined Final EIS / Record of Decision	2/28/2023	

FHWA- Cultural Resources

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Consultation initiated with SHPO/THPO	8/31/2021	
Section 106 Consultation Concluded	5/31/2022	

Responsible Agency: FHWA
 Phone: 501.324.6430

POC: Randal Looney
 Email: randal.looney@fhwa.dot.gov

Cooperating / Participating Agency Actions:**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Section 404, 10, and 408 Clean Water Act**

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Pre-construction Notification (PCN)/Form ENG 4345/Joint Application Form Received	2/28/2023	
Complete Pre-Construction Notification (PCN)/Application Received (Submittal includes Section 404-408-10 information)	3/31/2023	
Publication of Public Notice	4/30/2023	
Final Verification/Permit Decision Rendered	7/31/2023	

- **This permit requires ADEE Section 401 Water Quality Certification**

Responsible Agency: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers POC: Johnny McLean
 Phone: 501.765.9938 Email: Johnny.I.mclean@usace.army.mil
 Cooperating Agency YES Participating Agency Only NO

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Section 7 Endangered Species Act Consultation

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Request for ESA Consultation Received	1/31/2022	
Consultation Package (Formal Consultation):	3/02/2022	

Conclusion of ESA Consultation I	6/15/2022	
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Responsible Agency: USFWS
 Phone: 501.513.4489
 Cooperating Agency YES

POC: Lindsey Lewis
 Email: lindsey_lewis@fws.gov
 Participating Agency Only NO

State, Local, Tribal, Other Non- Federal Agency and not cooperating or participating agency

Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Section 401 Water Quality Certification

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Initial Application Received	1/31/2023	
Issuance of decision for permit/approval	7/31/2023	

Responsible Agency: ADEE
 Phone: 501.682.0744
 Cooperating Agency NO

POC: Beck Keogh
 Email: Keogh@adeq.state.ar.us
 Participating Agency Only NO

Agency and Public Coordination Plan

As part of the preparation of the EIS, NEPA requires that there be an early and open process for determining the scope of the issues to be addressed by a study. This process is commonly known as “NEPA scoping,” during which the project lead agency will solicit input on the project. Please refer to Appendix A for the draft 23 USC Section 139 Coordination Plan for details on the scoping and coordination process.

Scoping is a process that continues throughout the planning and early stages of preparation of an EIS. For an EIS, the lead agencies must use scoping to engage State, local, and tribal governments, and the public in the early identification of concerns, potential impacts, and relevant effects of past actions and possible alternative actions. Scoping is an opportunity to introduce and explain the project and solicit information as to additional considerations that should be included. Scoping also provides an opportunity to bring agencies and applicants together to lay the groundwork for setting time limits, expediting reviews where possible,

integrating other environmental reviews, and identifying any major obstacles that could delay the process.

Per 40 CFR 1501.9(a) scoping may begin as soon as practicable after the proposal for action is sufficiently developed for agency consideration. Scoping may include appropriate pre-application procedures or work conducted prior to publication of the notice of intent. Scoping for this project began with the 2015 Highway 67 Improvements Planning Study. This study introduced various alternatives and engaged the State and local officials and public for input and comments on the purpose and need and range of alternatives.

As discussed earlier in the Purpose and Need, the current EIS study was built upon the findings of the 2015 Highway 67 Improvements Study. The general corridors recommended by the 2015 Study were reintroduced in the current study along with an updated purpose and need statement and a refined range of alternatives. We retained the corridors recommended in the 2015 Study. The major change in the project purpose and need from 2015 to the current study is the project is now part of a future interstate system (I-57) and so there are not alternatives with partial access control offered.

This updated information was presented to the local officials and the public in a virtual project meeting held August 13 through September 2, 2020. A full synopsis of that meeting and the comments is provided on the project website. **Table 6** below provides an overview of the results of the public participation at the 2020 virtual public meeting. There were over 2000 unique visitors to the project website and 163 comments received. The public and local official comments and project preferences from this meeting were similar to those resulting from the 2015 public involvement meetings.

Table 6: Results of 2020 Public Meeting

The following questions were provided to the public meeting participants:	
1. Do you believe there is a need for an improved connection between Walnut Ridge and the Missouri State Line?	
Yes	122
No	13

The following questions were provided to the public meeting participants:	
2. Do you believe the proposed project would have any impacts on your community (economic, environmental, social, etc.)?	
Beneficial	67
Adverse	21
Both	34
Neither	3
3. Which corridor alternative do you prefer?	
No Build	7
Corridor 1	26
Corridor 2	68
Corridor 3	31
4. Which Missouri Corridor do you prefer?	
A	37
B	46
C	20

Scoping for this EIS study officially continues until 30 days after the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. That will be the end of the official scoping. However, there will still be opportunity to comment on the project through the end of the completion of the DEIS document. The current schedule is set to provide a public hearing before February 2022 for the public to review and comment on the full DEIS document. Project updates will be posted on this website and alternatives and other information can be reviewed and commented on anytime from now through the end of the DEIS comment period.

Request for Input and Contact Information

How to Comment

Public and other stakeholder input is a very important part of any transportation project. Environmental specialists and design engineers working on a project may be unaware of special circumstances or important considerations that only the local residents know about or understand. And that information could directly impact the design or some other aspect of a project's outcome and help this highway project to better fit within the context of the social or natural environment for which it will be a part.

We respectively request and encourage your participation in the proposed project and want to make your involvement as simple as possible. We have provided multiple ways for comments to be submitted and they are listed below:

Web Site: For access to the documents, go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal located at <http://www.regulations.gov> or the project website located at Future57.transportationplanroom.com. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Fax: Randal Looney at 501-324-6423

Mailing address or for hand delivery or courier: Federal Highway Administration, Arkansas Division, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Room 3130, Little Rock, AR 72201.

Email address: Randal.Looney@dot.gov.

All submissions should include the agency name and the docket number that appears in the heading of this Notice. All comments received will be posted without change to <http://www.regulations.gov> or Future57.transportationplanroom.com, including any personal information provided.

Your comments can be specific to any of the materials provided as part of the Notice of Intent, or may be provided for any other idea, suggestion, or concern you believe should be considered for the proposed Future I-57 project.

For any additional information and/or to get on the project mailing list, contact Mr. Randal Looney, Environmental Coordinator, Federal Highway Administration, Arkansas Division Office, 700 West Capitol Avenue, Suite 3130, Little Rock, AR 72201-3298, email: randal.looney@dot.gov, (501) 324-6430; or Mr. Bill McAbee, Environmental Project Manager, Garver, 4701 Northshore Drive, North Little Rock, AR 72118, email: WCMcAbee@GarverUSA.com, (501) 537-3259.

APPENDIX A

23 USC Section 139 Coordination Plan

Walnut Ridge to Missouri State Line (Future I-57)
ARDOT Job Number 100512

June 2021

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Overview

The Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has prepared this Coordination Plan ('Plan') to facilitate and document the lead agency's planned coordination with agencies for the Future Interstate 57 (I-57) Project ('Project') under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public Outreach is also a component of this plan. This document is in compliance with 23 U.S.C. Section 139 "Efficient environmental reviews for project decision making".

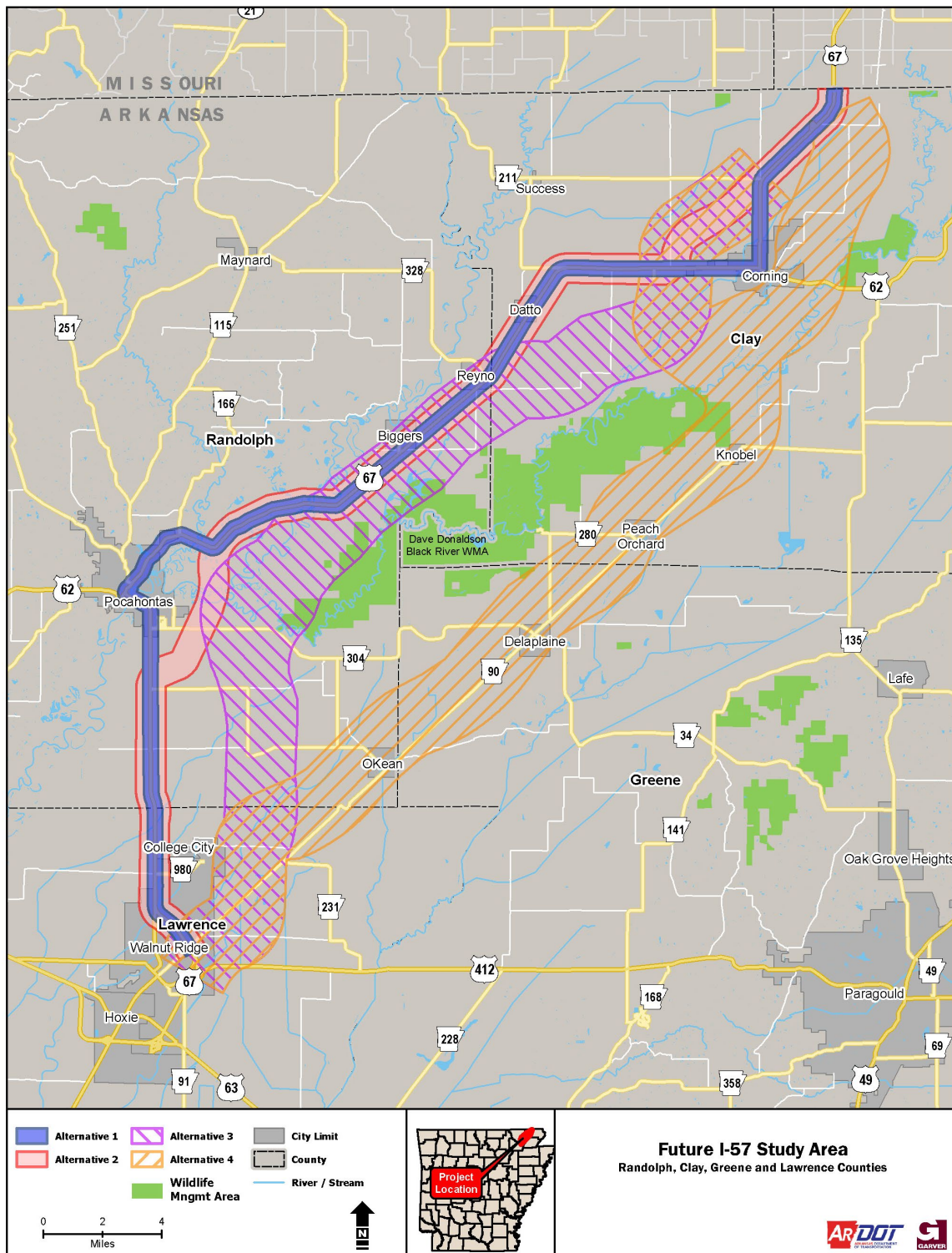
FHWA is the lead agency, while ARDOT, working on behalf of and in conjunction with FHWA, has been designated administrative and technical responsibilities for carrying out NEPA and related processes. The Plan outlines the responsibilities for compliance with the various aspects of the environmental review process and how the lead agency will provide opportunities for input from the agencies and the public and other stakeholders in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The Plan may be augmented over the course of the Project as needed.

Project Description and Scope

Project Description

The FHWA has initiated an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to improve the Highway 67 (Hwy. 67) corridor in Clay, Greene, Lawrence, and Randolph counties, Arkansas. The proposed limits for the Project extend from Walnut Ridge, Arkansas to the Arkansas-Missouri State line, approximately 40 miles in length (see **Figure 1**). Within these Project limits, Hwy. 67 passes through the cities of (south to north) Walnut Ridge, Pocahontas, and Corning to the Arkansas-Missouri State line. South of the Project limits, between central Arkansas and Walnut Ridge (approximately 125 miles), Hwy. 67 is generally a continuous four-lane interstate facility. North of the Project in Missouri, most of Hwy. 67 to Sikeston (approximately 80 miles) is four-lane divided with a mix of freeway and interstate facilities. Within the Project limits, between Walnut Ridge and Pocahontas, Hwy. 67 is a four-lane highway with partial controlled access; and between Pocahontas and the Arkansas-Missouri State line, Hwy. 67 is a two-lane highway with no access control. The Project will examine alternatives to improve the section of Hwy. 67 from Walnut Ridge to the Arkansas-Missouri State line to interstate standards on existing or new location to enhance connectivity and continuity of the National Highway System. The improvements will be designated as Future I-57.

Figure 1: Future I-57 Study Area



Size and Complexity

The Project will evaluate build alternatives including improving existing Hwy. 67 and various new alignment corridors (shown in **Figure 1**). The Project will also evaluate a no-build alternative and other potential build alternative options such as Travel Demand Management (TDM), Traffic Safety Management (TSM), and High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (HOV) to determine if they meet the purpose and need.

The complexity of the Project lies in the constraints within the study area that require evaluation as part of the EIS process and providing timely coordination with various federal, state, and local agencies.

Goals of Public and Agency Involvement

As outlined herein, the Project will involve, and be responsive to, local communities in an established manner in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 12898¹ and 13166², Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and compliant with the American Disabilities Act. This PIP shall discuss outreach approaches for both the general public and targeted strategies for Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations. This Plan was completed in accordance with ARDOT's Public Involvement Handbook³ and reflects the Project Team's desire and overriding goal of involving the public in the decision-making process.

This Plan is intended to be proactive and provide opportunities for timely and productive public review and comment. Public meetings and activities will be scheduled to coincide with the Project's various milestones. Public involvement opportunities will be made available through a range of techniques including virtual and scheduled meetings at accessible community meeting places.

Within this context, the following goals have been developed to guide the Project's public and agency involvement:

- Identify important Project issues.

¹ EO 12898 – *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. Include Title VI and ADA*

² EO 13166 – *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.*

³ ARDOT Public Involvement Handbook – *Public Involvement Section – Environmental Division, 2017.*

- Identify stakeholders who are affected and may have an interest in the Project.
- Ensure that traditionally underrepresented populations have opportunities to engage and contribute input.
- Provide facility users, property and business owners, elected/local officials, agencies, community groups, and other stakeholders with opportunities to contribute input.
- Create a forum and opportunities to gather comments, recommendations, and input from stakeholders as well as provide information to stakeholders.

Mailing List

The Project Team⁴ will develop and maintain a mailing list database of names/addresses of stakeholders; elected officials; federal, state and local resource agencies; tribes; media outlets; abutting property owners; and other parties that expressed an interest in the Project. The mailing list will be used to distribute cooperating and participating agency invitations, solicitation of views (described below), meeting announcements, and disseminate other important information as the Project progresses. The mailing list will be updated as needed to assure the appropriate contacts as well as the most current contact information is captured.

Solicitation of Views

Early in the scoping process, a solicitation of views (SOV) letter will be mailed to resource agencies and other stakeholders identified as having an interest in the project. The Project Team will coordinate with ARDOT to identify which stakeholders have an interest in the project and should receive the SOV. The purpose of the SOV letter is to inform and obtain input from interested persons and agencies about the Project. The SOV will request responses within 30 days and is made up of three parts: the SOV cover letter, the preliminary Project description, and the study area map. This will be updated with the SOV letters mailed to each applicable agency/stakeholder once completed.

Agencies Roles and Responsibilities

The sections below outline the roles and responsibilities of agencies in order to establish a protocol for communication, early identification, and resolution of issues, and to resolve issues that could delay completion of the environmental

⁴ The term "Project Team" refers to Garver and its assembled consultant team.

process or could result in denial of any approvals required for the Project under applicable laws.

Lead Agency

The FHWA will be responsible for the overall direction of the environmental review process and ensure that all environmental commitments are completed for the Project. The lead agency is also responsible for the content of the environmental documents, and will furnish guidance, independently evaluate, and approve documents under their authority, and ensure that Project sponsors comply with mitigation commitments. The lead agency will:

- Identify and involve cooperating and participating agencies.
- Prepare a single environmental document in coordination with cooperating agencies and ensure that the FEIS includes an adequate level of detail to inform decisions by all agencies with review or authorization decision responsibilities.
- Inform cooperating agencies of changes related to the Project.
- Develop the purpose and need, develop the range of alternatives, identify the preferred alternative, and determine whether to develop the preferred alternative to a higher level of detail.
- Provide cooperating agencies the opportunity to review and contribute to key milestones of the EIS; and obtain a written concurrence from cooperating agencies whose authorization is required for the Project at key milestones.⁵
- Prepare and publish a single ROD for all federal agencies with authorization responsibility for the Project to support any necessary authorization decisions.
- Maintain a consolidated Project file of the information used by the cooperating agencies as the basis for their environmental reviews.

Cooperating Agencies

Cooperating agencies are invited to assist in the preparation, coordination, and review of the EIS. Cooperating agencies have jurisdiction by law or special expertise, and have a higher degree of authority, responsibility, and involvement in the preparation and review of the environmental documentation than those of

⁵ Purpose and need, range of alternatives, and preferred alternative.

participating agencies. The responsibilities specific to cooperating agencies include:

- Designate, at the request of the lead agency, a point of contact to represent the agency in interagency consultations about the Project.
- Coordinate and synchronize their reviews with the lead agency's development of the EIS.
- Identify information necessary to complete application review and authorizations in accordance with the Permitting Timetable (discussed in subsequent section).
- Ensure issues that may delay the Permitting Timetable are promptly brought to the attention of the lead agency.
- Maintain the administrative record associated with its authorization decisions and provide this information to the lead agency upon request.

Any affected cooperating agencies must approve changes to shorten the schedule and evidence of this will be included in the administrative record. The cooperating agencies may develop information or prepare portions of the EIS concerning their area of expertise and may adopt the EIS of the lead agency.

Letters will be sent by FHWA to the following agencies inviting them to serve as cooperating agencies:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- U.S. Department of Interior (USDOI) National Parks Service (NPS)
- Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

If a federal agency chooses to decline, their response letter must state that the agency (1) has no jurisdiction or authority with respect to the Project, (2) has no expertise or information relevant to the Project, or (3) does not intend to submit comments on the Project. If the federal agency's response does not state the agency's position in these terms, then the agency should be treated as a participating agency.

Participating Agencies

All federal, state, tribal, regional, and local government agencies that may have an interest in the Project are invited to serve as participating agencies by FHWA.

Participating agencies are to comply with their reviews and provide necessary input in compliance with the requests of the lead agency. The roles and responsibilities of participating agencies as outlined in *SAFETEA-LU*⁶ include, but are not limited to:

- Participate in the scoping process.
- Participate in the environmental process with regard to development of the purpose and need, range of alternatives, methodologies, and the level of detail for the analysis of alternatives.
- Identify and provide early input on issues of concern regarding the Project's potential environmental impacts.
- Provide meaningful and timely input on unresolved issues.

See **Attachment A** for the participating agency list and invitation letters.

Cooperating and Participating Agencies Summary

Accepting a role as a cooperating or participating agency does not imply that an agency supports the Project or has jurisdiction or special expertise with respect to the evaluation of the Project. The following agencies have accepted as cooperating (**Table 1**) and participating agencies (**Table 2**). The Plan will be updated if additional agencies are confirmed.

Table 1: LIST OF FEDERAL COOPERATING AGENCIES
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT)

Table 2: LIST OF STATE PARTICIPATING AGENCIES
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
Department of Arkansas Heritage *

*Note: * The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP) and Arkansas National Heritage Commission (ANHC) are divisions of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Unless otherwise instructed, the AHPP and ANHC are included as one entity with the Department of Arkansas Heritage, the proposed participating agency. The AHPP and ANHC are included on the mailing list as agencies/stakeholders and will be included in Project scoping and Project outreach activities.*

⁶ *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy of Users (Pub. Law 109-59).*

Permitting Timetable

In consultation with cooperating and participating agencies, a Permitting Timetable that identifies the actions and associated milestones for applicable environmental reviews and authorizations for the Project will be developed.

The Permitting Timetable will account for intermediate and final completion dates for any environmental review or authorization required for the Project. It will include estimated milestones for the Project sponsor to develop and submit complete applications and any other information required for federal authorization of the Project, including required authorization decisions by non-federal entities. The environmental review and authorization milestones to be included in the Permitting Timetable are included in the Permitting Timetable worksheet presented in **Attachment A**.

Following consultations with cooperating agencies, ARDOT and FHWA will update, and, as necessary, modify, the Permitting Timetable at least on a quarterly basis. A modified Permitting Timetable will be transmitted to each cooperating and participating agency point of contact and to the Project sponsor. A copy of the Permitting Timetable and any modifications will be made available to the public online, including, as appropriate and practicable, through the Federal Permitting Dashboard.

Agency Review Time

The environmental review process will be conducted concurrently with the applicable authorization decision processes. Accordingly, ARDOT will obtain a written concurrence from all cooperating agencies whose authorization is required for the Project at three key milestones:

- 1) Purpose and Need
- 2) Alternatives to Be Carried Forward for Evaluation
- 3) Preferred Alternative

Cooperating agency points of contact will be asked to respond to ARDOT's request for concurrence within 10 business days. Failure to respond within 10 business days may be treated as concurrence, at the discretion of the lead agency.

ARDOT will ask for cooperating and participating agency input on the schedule, including agency review time periods, and will make every effort to maintain the time periods established for review. Input will be solicited from cooperating and participating agencies at scheduled agency meetings. All review periods and

circulation periods will follow ARDOT guidelines and be reflected in the schedule. Each agency will implement policies and procedures to ensure completion of the review process in a timely, coordinated, and environmentally responsible manner. It would be assumed that the cooperating and participating agencies agree with the Project schedule if their input has been solicited and they have not commented otherwise.

Other Agencies/Stakeholders & Tribes

Other federal, state, and local agencies (not otherwise included as cooperating or participating agencies), elected officials, and stakeholders are included on the Project mailing list and will be included in Project scoping activities, as applicable, and agency/stakeholder and public outreach activities⁷. Consultation letters were sent to native American tribes that may have ancestral ties to the project area. Native American Tribes will also be included in public outreach activities.

Coordination Meetings

Project coordination meetings will be held throughout the study process as follows:

- Up to three federal and state agency office meetings and two field review meetings.
- Up to three public meetings
- Up to three agency/officials' meetings that will take place the same day and prior to the public meetings, as practicable.
- Up to eight additional stakeholder meetings.

The Project Team will identify, recommend, schedule, and coordinate the logistics for accessible locations for the agency, officials, public, and stakeholder meetings. Meetings will be attended by both technical staff and public involvement representatives. All meeting locations will be approved by ARDOT prior to scheduling the facility.

Agency Meetings

Face-to-face state and federal resource agency meetings will be held at important milestones, as practicable. Agencies invited will include cooperating and participating agencies, as well as other agencies that have important input on the

⁷ Public outreach activities are described in the Future I-57 Public Involvement Plan.

Project. These meetings will likely be in Little Rock where many of the agency points of contact work.

Stakeholder Meetings

Coordination meetings with stakeholders will be held as needed. Coordination meetings are likely to be held with business owners, political and agency representatives, farmer associations, and homeowners who have a role in, or may be potentially impacted, by the Project. These meetings allow for one-on-one or small group interaction with stakeholders to address specific issues that affect their business or community outside of the regular public meetings/hearings.

Public Meetings and Hearings

There will be up to three public meetings, including one scoping meeting. Two series of public meetings will be held at 3 locations along the project corridor to provide convenient access to interested stakeholders across the project area. These locations will be in or near Corning, Pocahontas, and Walnut Ridge. The scoping meeting will be held at a centralized location along the project corridor and held early in the EIS process to identify the major and important issues for consideration during the study. Local officials meetings will be held just prior to but on the same day and location as the public meetings. The second series of public meetings will be held later in the EIS process and prior to the public hearing to update the public, local officials and other stakeholders on Project alternatives and progress, as applicable.

The Project Team will identify, recommend, schedule, and coordinate the logistics for accessible locations for the public meetings. The public meetings will be attended by both technical staff and public involvement representatives. All meeting locations will be approved by ARDOT prior to scheduling the facility.

The format of the public meetings, including the scoping meeting, will be an open house without any formal presentations. The public meetings will be conducted so that attendees can freely view exhibits and obtain Project information from the Project Team via topic-specific tables and/or exhibits. Project Team members will perform attendee registration, address questions and comments, and guide attendees through the public meeting process. Handouts prepared and distributed by the Project Team at the public meeting may include, but are not limited to, a Project location map, a Project overview, and a comment form.

Attendees will be able to submit written comments. The procedure for submitting comments will be described in the display advertisements for the meeting and at the public meeting. Comment tables will be available for attendees to submit

questions, suggestions, and concerns via comment forms. Attendees will also have the option to study and mail/email the comment form via addresses printed on the comment form. Prepaid postage will be provided at the meetings. Unless otherwise indicated by ARDOT or FHWA, attendees who choose to mail back a comment form must have it postmarked within 15 days after the public meeting date for the comment to be included in the public meeting summary report.

Alternative – Virtual Public Meeting

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing, the Project Team has developed a virtual public meeting plan in place of, or in conjunction with, an in-person open house site.

The Project Team will proceed with traditional advertisement and outreach methods while adjusting messaging for virtual public involvement. A phone number will be included on all outreach materials and advertisements for anyone with limited internet access or has general questions or comments regarding the study and virtual public meeting.

The Project Team will develop an online virtual public meeting website to guide attendees through the meeting information. Participants will be able to inspect materials, such as study background information and presentation materials, as well as provide comments via online, email, and mail.

The virtual public meeting website will launch when outreach begins and will be open 3-4 weeks per ARDOT discretion. Attendees will be able to interact with the virtual meeting materials at their leisure.

Publications

The Project Team will create display advertisements for review and approval by ARDOT. These display advertisements will be published for each public meeting by the Project Team in local newspapers⁸.

In addition, the Project Team will develop a news release providing information on the public meetings and opportunities to provide input. The ARDOT Public Information Office will review, approve, and publish (unless otherwise noted by ARDOT) the news release to a list of applicable media outlets included on its mailing list.

⁸ Will include a publication in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette and other local papers, as applicable, in the vicinity of the public meeting locations.

Other announcement documents will be prepared for the public meetings as needed, such as flyers and letters. Census data will be pulled for each county to determine Limited English Proficiency. Reasonable steps will be taken in preparation for and during the public meetings to ensure identified LEP persons have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information provided by ARDOT. This may include flyers distributed to local businesses and communities affected by the Project, letters to minority churches distributed prior to the public meeting, and/or a public service announcement on local minority radio stations, as appropriate, providing interpreters at the public meetings and translating documents. The Project Team will identify active social media sites and invite them to post information on the public meetings by providing a Tweet Sheet of suggested text and graphics to use.

Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held in or near Corning, Pocahontas, and Walnut Ridge to formally present the DEIS findings and receive public and stakeholder input on those findings. The public hearing will be conducted after approval of the DEIS by FHWA. This hearing may be conducted under the alternative virtual meeting process described above.

The Project Team will identify, recommend, schedule, and coordinate the logistics for an accessible location for the public hearing. The public hearing will be attended by both technical staff and public involvement representatives. The public hearing will be held at locations along the Project corridor and will be approved by ARDOT prior to scheduling the facility.

The public hearing format will be an open house without any formal presentations. It will be conducted so that attendees can freely view exhibits and obtain Project information from the Project Team via topic-specific tables and/or exhibits. Project Team members will perform attendee registration, address questions and comments, and guide attendees through the public hearing process.

Materials prepared and distributed by the Project Team at the public hearing may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *A Welcome to the Public Hearing Packet* – May include right-of-way acquisition and relocation assistance program procedures; environmental impact documentation.
- Handouts – Project location map, Project overview, and comment form.

Attendees will be able to submit written and/or verbal comments. The procedure for submitting comments will be described in the notice for the public hearing and at the public hearing. Comment tables will be available for attendees to submit questions, suggestions, and concerns via comment forms. Attendees will also have the option to study and mail/email back the comment form via addresses printed on the comment form. Prepaid postage will be provided. Unless otherwise indicated by ARDOT or FHWA, attendees who choose to mail back a comment form must have it postmarked within 15 days after the public hearing date for the comment to be included in the public hearing summary report.

Publications

The Project Team will publish one legal notice and two display ads in local newspapers⁹.

- Notice 1: A legal notice published no less than 30 days before the public hearing date that includes information on the hearing, where documents may be reviewed, and announcing the 45-day comment period.
- Notice 2: A display ad published approximately 15 days before the public hearing date.
- Notice 3: A display ad published the week of the public hearing date.

The notices will state when and where the public may review the Project information, will include a brief description of the Project, and the location and time of the public hearing.

In addition, the Project Team will develop a press release providing information on the public hearing and opportunities to provide input. The ARDOT Public Information Office will review, approve, and publish (unless otherwise noted by ARDOT) the news release to a list of applicable media outlets included on its mailing list.

Other announcement documents will be prepared for the public hearing as needed, such as flyers and letters. Census data will be pulled for each county to determine LEP. Reasonable steps will be taken in preparation for and during the public hearing to ensure identified LEP persons have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information provided by ARDOT, as determined necessary. This may include flyers distributed to local businesses and communities affected by the

⁹ Will include a publication in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette and other local papers, as applicable, in the vicinity of the public hearing location.

Project, letters to minority churches distributed prior to the public hearing, and a public service announcement on local minority radio stations, as appropriate.

Summary Reports

Upon completion of each public meeting and the public hearing, a summary report will be prepared by the Project Team and submitted to ARDOT for review and approval. The closing date to receive public meeting/hearing comments will be 15 days after the meeting/hearing date, unless otherwise noted by ARDOT and/or FHWA. Comments received after 15 days will not be considered in the summary report (official public record), but will be maintained within the study record.

The summary reports will include an accounting of the meeting/hearing logistics and attendees. They will also include, as applicable, a written transcript of oral statements recorded, the written comments received at each public meeting/hearing, copies of the public meeting/hearing display advertisements and/or public hearing legal notice, copies of any handouts and materials utilized at the meeting/hearing, meeting/hearing photographs, and a summary analysis of comments received concerning the Project. The public hearing summary will include an adequate response to the received comments.

MoDOT Coordination

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) completed a FEIS for Hwy. 67¹⁰ from just south of St. Louis, Missouri to a point just south of Neelyville, Missouri, which is approximately two miles north of the Arkansas-Missouri State line. The southern termini of the MoDOT study was identified because it would not dictate where ARDOT had to locate their northern terminus. The two-mile gap north of the state line would allow MoDOT to align their final section of Hwy. 67 to be compatible with the future ARDOT termini.

In order to provide a basis for a coordinated planning process between the states of Arkansas and Missouri, ARDOT and MoDOT signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in August 1998 allowing the two states to cooperate on the northern terminus of ARDOT's section of Hwy. 67. In accordance with this MOU, ARDOT will set up coordination points with MoDOT at the following project milestones: range of alternatives identification and preferred alternative identification. These coordination points are subject to change based on project progress and coordination needs.

¹⁰ *Final Environmental Impact Statement, U.S. Route 67, June 22, 2005.*

ATTACHMENT A

Environmental Impact Statement Permitting Timetable Worksheet for Permitting Dashboard

Project Title: Hwy. 412 – Missouri State Line P.E.
State Project Number: Job No. 100512
Sponsor: Arkansas Department of Transportation

Federal Lead Agency/ Action:

FHWA - Environmental Impact Statement

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Issuance of Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	7/15/2021	
Scoping	8/15/2021	
Official Notice of Availability of a Draft EIS published in the Federal Register (FR) beginning both the public comment period and concurrent CAA Section 309 Review	6/31/2022	
Official Notice of Availability of a Final EIS published in the FR beginning both the public review period and concurrent CAA Section 309 Review	2/28/2023	
Issuance of Record of Decision or combined Final EIS / Record of Decision	2/28/2023	

FHWA- Cultural Resources

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Consultation initiated with SHPO/THPO	8/31/2021	
Section 106 Consultation Concluded	5/31/2022	

Responsible Agency: FHWA POC: Randal Looney
Phone: 501.324.6430 Email: randal.looney@fhwa.dot.gov

Cooperating / Participating Agency Actions:

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Section 404, 10, and 408 Clean Water Act

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Pre-construction Notification (PCN)/Form ENG 4345/Joint Application Form Received	2/28/2023	
Complete Pre-Construction Notification (PCN)/Application Received (Submittal includes Section 404-408-10 information)	3/31/2023	
Publication of Public Notice	4/30/2023	
Final Verification/Permit Decision Rendered	7/31/2023	

- **This permit requires ADEE Section 401 Water Quality Certification**

Responsible Agency: USACE
 Phone: 501.765.9938
 Cooperating Agency YES

POC: Johnny McLean
 Email: Johnny.I.mclean@usace.army.mil
 Participating Agency Only NO

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Section 7 Endangered Species Act Consultation

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Request for ESA Consultation Received	1/31/2022	
Consultation Package (Formal Consultation):	3/02/2022	
Conclusion of ESA Consultation I	6/15/2022	

Responsible Agency: USFWS
 Phone: 501.513.4489
 Cooperating Agency YES

POC: Lindsey Lewis
 Email: lindsey.lewis@fws.gov
 Participating Agency Only NO

State, Local, Tribal, Other Non- Federal Agency and not cooperating or participating agency

Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Section 401 Water Quality Certification

Milestone	Target Date	Completion Date
Initial Application Received	1/31/2023	
Issuance of decision for permit/approval	7/31/2023	

Responsible Agency: ADEE
 Phone: 501.682.0744
 Cooperating Agency NO

POC: Beck Keogh
 Email: Keogh@adeq.state.ar.us
 Participating Agency Only NO

