



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

DESIGN DIVISION
SUITE 1200, JAMES K. POLK BUILDING
505 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-1402
(615) 741-0835

JOHN C. SCHROER
COMMISSIONER

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

January 7, 2013

Ms. Carolyn A. Stonecipher, P.E.
Director, Design Division
1300 James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Re: Design Public Meeting Response
Project No. HPP-71(16), 78008-1244-14; Pin No. 104959.01
SR-71 (US-441, Chapman Highway), From SR-35/338 (US-411) to Macon Lane
Sevier County

Dear Ms. Stonecipher:

I have reviewed the transcript of the Design Public Meeting held October 4, 2012 at the Seymour High School for the subject project. Approximately fifty people attended this meeting. Thirty-two comments (2 verbal, 15 comment cards, 15 letters) were made by the public. Many of the questions during the question and answer period were answered during and after the session. The following responses address issues of importance to the public and also individual issues that had to be researched further by the Design Division.

COMMENT: The main safety component of this project is the addition of a center turn lane. There was overwhelming support of this feature.

RESPONSE: No response necessary.

COMMENT: A large amount of discussion centered on the proposed shift of the centerline (approximately 26') to the south at the crest of the hill. The property owners who are most affected by this shift (tract #12 Cruze, tract #23 Bales, tract #25 Christenberry) are supportive of the project as a whole but are very much opposed to the line shift. Since the existing right-of-way width is wide enough for the proposed typical section, they (and some others in attendance) want the widening to be symmetrical at the crest of the hill as it is throughout the rest of the project. Some other concerns that the shift creates are the retaining wall type and location and the relocation of driveways.

RESPONSE: Besides the center turn lane, the Advance Planning Report (APR) also recommended lowering the grade at the crest of the hill to improve the sight distance, not only for vehicles driving along Chapman Highway but also for vehicles attempting to enter Chapman Highway from side roads and driveways. It was determined that lowering the roadway at the crest by about 4.5' will improve this condition for 45 mph traffic.

An important factor is the current traffic volume. With over 30,000 vehicles passing through this section of roadway each day, it is necessary to maintain 2 lanes of traffic in each direction during construction. There are no adequate options for traffic to avoid the area. The alignment shift will allow the contractor to build the project and keep 4 lanes of traffic open. A symmetrical widening at the crest will not provide enough room for the grade to be lowered and 4 lanes of traffic maintained.

Shifting the alignment to the north side would have more impacts than the proposed shift to the south. There are a couple of side roads and about 10 business entrances along the north side, including one for the Seymour Fire Station. With a shift to the north, many of these side roads and entrances will become steeper as well as the loss of parking spaces. All this was compared with the south side which has 3 residential tracts affected, one where the house will be impacted. The department will review the proposed driveway changes for the best possible solution. Geotechnical testing and analysis will determine the most appropriate solution to the rock cut adjacent to the Bales' house.

Other options were looked at and rejected which shifted the alignment more and/or lowered the grade more than proposed. Considerable input has been received from the area, local officials, and the TDOT regional office. The Design Division believes that a Context Sensitive approach has been taken at this location and that the most appropriate decision was made for the area and for the many vehicles driving along this section of Chapman Highway.

COMMENT: There were some comments questioning the need for the shoulders and sidewalks. The shoulders (proposed 4' width) were not viewed as necessary, especially if the main purpose will be as a bicycle lane. In addition, sidewalks were not viewed as necessary because of low pedestrian traffic in the area.

RESPONSE: The 4' shoulder width matches the Advanced Planning Report and is considered a minimum shoulder width for this highway. The shoulders will increase the safety of the facility by providing additional sight distance, areas for storm water collection, and additional space for emergency situations. If bicycle usage increases in the future, the width will be available for that purpose as well.

Eliminating the sidewalks will not reduce the footprint as some attendees thought. We have a required 10' width behind the face of curb for the purpose of utility relocation. It is also an area in which sidewalks can be placed if deemed necessary. The department will discuss this matter further in order to make a decision whether sidewalks fit the context of the area.

COMMENT: Lt. Michael Cook, Mr. Corky McCarter, and Mr. Ron French all commented on behalf of the Seymour Volunteer Fire Department (tract #16). There have been crashes and many close calls when emergency vehicles attempt to enter the highway. They request something more than flashing warning lights for their situation. They were also concerned about the grade of their entrance onto the highway.

RESPONSE: The department will look at providing a signal at this location which will only be activated when emergency vehicles leave the fire hall. The entrance grade will be the same as it currently is.

COMMENT: Mr. Michael France (tract #30) lives on Hutcheson Road. He doesn't think the side road should be widened as shown on the plans.

RESPONSE: The typical section and construction limits for Hutcheson Road will be reviewed and adjusted if feasible.

COMMENT: Ms. Lisa F. Burgess (tract #31) is concerned about the effects of the widening on her property which sits lower than the roadway. She requests a retaining wall instead of the earthen slopes in her front yard. She also mentioned a gravel parking area to be preserved.

RESPONSE: The department will determine the cost effectiveness of a retaining wall. In addition, this gravel parking area will be located and preserved if possible.

COMMENT: Mr. Adam Tvedt of the River of Life Outreach Assembly of God (tract #26) and Mr. Bob Bilbo of the Seymour United Methodist Church (tract #32) requested an additional turn lane on Simmons Road for right-turn traffic onto Chapman Highway.

RESPONSE: The requested turn lane will be evaluated and added to the project if warranted.

COMMENT: There was some discussion about excessive speed of the drivers and whether the posted speed of this and other sections of Chapman Highway could be lowered. Also, is it possible to add cameras for speed enforcement.

RESPONSE: The posted speed along this section of Chapman Highway is 45 mph. This is also the proposed design speed of this project. Amanda Snowden (Region 1 Assistant Director) explained the procedure for determining the posted speed for any given section of a state route. Given that Seymour is an unincorporated city, the responsibility for determining the posted speed lies with the department. Enforcement cameras have not been considered for this project.

COMMENT: Mr. Buddy Greene asked how the storm water will be handled with the proposed design.

RESPONSE: Storm water will be captured by the curb inlets and directed into the storm drainage system. The system will release the storm water at designated outlets along the project.

COMMENT: There were questions about other sections of Chapman Highway and what improvements the department will be undertaking.

RESPONSE: Ms. Snowden mentioned other projects currently being considered for various sections of Chapman Highway.

COMMENT: There were other questions about cost of the project, cost of the utility relocations, and the funding source.

RESPONSE: An attempt was made to answer these questions although data is very preliminary at this stage.

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I am requesting your concurrence with these responses and that we are allowed to proceed with the development of the right of way plans for this project.

Sincerely,

Frederick M. Miller

Frederick M. Miller, P.E.
Assistant Director, Design Division

Reviewed & Approved: *Carolyn Stonecipher* DATE: *1/7/2013*
Carolyn A. Stonecipher, P.E.
Director, Design Division

FM

cc: File