

METROPLAN WHITE PAPER SUMMARY

30 CROSSING PLAN AND TIP AMENDMENTS

FEBRUARY 2017

The Issue

The complexity and magnitude of the 30 Crossing project has generated much interest among the general public and intensive analysis among professionals at all levels.

Currently under consideration are an eight-lane and a ten-lane project design. Further, there are two distinct interchange approaches in downtown Little Rock — a Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI) and a Split Diamond Interchange — for each main lane alternative. These alternatives are currently under review as part of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Federal Requirements

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) were created by federal law in the 1960s in response to increased opposition from citizens and local officials as state DOTs began the construction of interstate highways through densely packed urban areas.

Status of the Project

Two remaining actions by the MPO are needed in order for this project to proceed to construction:

1. An amendment to the long-range metropolitan transportation plan (LRMTP), *Imagine Central Arkansas* — the 20-year financially possible list of projects.
2. An amendment to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the four year work program for the long-range plan.

Estimated Project Cost: **\$631.7 Million**

Considerations for the *Imagine Central Arkansas* Amendment

There are two divergent lines of thought regarding the proposed amendment:

1. A detailed plan amendment, favored by some, would limit the project to the locally preferred alternative.
2. A more general plan amendment would not to give the appearance that alternatives were being prematurely eliminated from the NEPA process.

A resolution from the Metroplan Board expressing a preference for a given alternative accompanying a general plan amendment would be appropriate.

Timeline for the Plan Amendment Actions

- February & March: Staff updates systems analysis; AHTD releases modeling data
- April: Board releases draft Plan Amendment for public comment
- June 2: RPAC issues recommendation on Plan Amendment
- June 28: Board takes formal action on Plan Amendment
- After June: Board considers final TIP Amendment

Considerations for the TIP amendment

? Which comes first –the TIP amendment or the FONSI?

A The Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or a Record of Decision (ROD) is the final federal action on the project planning. FHWA has advised that this federal action will not happen until a TIP/STIP amendment is approved for the project.

The TIP amendment is the last controlling action that the MPO can take on the project and therefore, the last best chance for the impacted local jurisdictions to have a veto on an unacceptable project design.

Conclusion

In order for project approvals to move smoothly, FHWA and local officials must communicate closely and clearly as the draft EA/ FONSI is prepared.



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