

# South Loop Study

## Frequently Asked Questions

The South Loop corridor study was jointly sponsored by Metroplan and the Port of Little Rock to identify a preferred route for a roadway connecting I-440 and I-530. This update builds upon previous efforts to study this corridor.

The responses below accompany the South Loop Planning Study published in September 2024. They further assume that federal funding, which requires a specific process to be followed, would be used as a source of funding for construction

### **Emphasized Questions**

Has the route for the road been set yet?

No. The corridor study only defines a preferred route. The next step in the federal process is to conduct a detailed environmental review (National Environmental Policy Act - NEPA) that considers results of the corridor study, public input, and carefully studies a number of environmental and cultural concerns. The NEPA process sets the actual route/alignment. The environmental study is not required to follow the recommendations of the planning study but will likely follow a similar route. The environmental review provides more detail for the roadway's location.

When will the South Loop be built?

No date has been set for the construction of the South Loop. After a funding source is secured, a start date for design and then construction will be determined. A timeline to acquire funding is unknown and largely dependent on additional economic development in the Port of Little Rock.

Will the roadway affect my property?

Impacts to individual properties are unknown at this time because the planned route has not been determined. The NEPA process determines property that is likely to be affected. The design process will take place after NEPA review and will determine the project's exact Right-of-Way requirements. Right-of-Way acquisition is required to follow the federal Uniform Relocation and Acquisition Act.

### How much additional Right-of-Way will be required for the project?

The project is expected to be largely constructed as a two-lane roadway with 80-100 ft of Right-of-Way. Existing segments of roadway may initially be widened to 3 lanes with minimal impact to existing property. The project will not be constructed as a freeway.

### Can I provide comments on the study?

Residents are encouraged to provide comments. Comments can be submitted to Metroplan via email [comments@metroplan.org](mailto:comments@metroplan.org) or mailed to 501 West Markham; Suite B; Little Rock, AR 72201. These comments will be used to inform a full environmental review of the project.

## **Additional Questions**

### 1. What is a corridor study?

A corridor study is the first step toward developing the route (alignment) for a roadway. It evaluates broad corridors, potential impacts, and feasibility. It does not identify specific impacts.

### 2. What happened to the prior studies?

The South Loop has been previously studied, with the most recent feasibility report from 2006. These studies identified a need for the roadway, but because only low volumes of traffic were forecasted at the time the studies were performed, the South Loop was not prioritized for construction funding. The 2024 study updates those reports with current information.

### 3. Why is the study requested now and who ordered it?

The Little Rock Port Authority requested the study because the Port of Little Rock has seen steady growth, adding more than 2,500 employees in the past 10 years. Employment in the Port now exceeds 10,000. With increased development, additional access points into the Port will be necessary. The arrival of a new large business could necessitate construction sooner than expected.

### 4. When will the project start construction?

No date has been set for the construction of the South Loop. The project has not been through the NEPA process, a specific route has not been identified or designed, and no funding for construction has been identified.

5. How will the project impact communities along Hwy 365?

The roadway will be designed to minimize effects on communities along Hwy 365. Potential impacts will be fully considered in a full environmental study. Construction of the South Loop is expected to provide small business and work force housing opportunities to serve businesses within the Port.

6. Will the South Loop impact my property?

Impacts to individual property are not defined in the corridor study.

7. How will I be compensated for impacts to my property?

Property needed for the roadway will be purchased under the Uniform Relocation Act if federally funded, which requires just compensation to owners.

8. What can people who live in the community do to get ready for this project? How do we maximize the potential benefit for the community and ourselves?

The South Loop study focuses on the transportation corridor. It recommends an area planning effort that would link transportation and land use. This overall development plan and strategy anticipated to follow would ensure the area is prepared to take advantage of any future construction.

9. What type of job opportunities will the project create?

Construction of the roadway would provide temporary job opportunities. Small businesses serving the Port would likely locate along the roadway creating additional job opportunities in the corridor.

10. What is roadway's design?

The specifics have not been determined yet, but the roadway is expected to be constructed as 2 lane highway. Within the Port Industrial Park, some sections may be 4 lanes. The project would not be designed as a freeway.

11. What about the train tracks?

A key benefit of the South Loop is that a new railroad overpass would be required by the project. This would improve access and reduce delays for communities along Highway 365.

12. What are the next steps for the project?

The next phase of the project involves a full NEPA environmental study. This would narrow the corridor alignment and determine specific impacts. The environmental study would consider the findings of the 2024 South Loop corridor study but could also look at other alternatives. Community impacts would be included in the environmental study. Funding for the environmental study phase has not been identified.

If federal funding is used for construction, the Federal Highway Administration is required to sign off on the environmental document.

13. What are potential funding sources for the project?

Project costs are expected to exceed \$50 million. Funding is likely to come from a combination of federal, state and local funding sources. Both transportation and economic development funding may be used.

14. Why was alternative 3 selected as the preferred alternative?

Alternative 3 was selected as the preferred alternative because it provides the direct connection into the Port of Little Rock Industrial Park and potential development sites, avoids existing communities, lowers emergency response time, and is cost effective.

15. Where can I find updates about the study?

Updates on the project will be posted on the Metroplan website at [www.metroplan.org](http://www.metroplan.org)