



KNOW THE FACTS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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FUNDING

HOW WILL THE PROPOSED 30 CROSSING PROJECT BE FUNDED?

The funding sources for the project are outlined below. Percentages are based on an estimated \$631.7 million budget. The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department's constitutional authority is primarily limited to the construction and maintenance of highways. Authority relating to transit and other modes of transportation is restricted to the planning phase, with no authority to provide funding for implementation or operations.

- 64% Connecting Arkansas Program funds
- 16% Design-Build Finance funds
- 15% Federal Bridge funds
- 3.5% Interstate Rehabilitation Program funds
- 1.5% National Highway Performance Program funds

WILL WIDENING I-30 REQUIRE ALL CONNECTING FREEWAYS TO BE RECONSTRUCTED AT AN ESTIMATED COST OF \$4 BILLION?

The \$4 billion estimate was produced by Metroplan staff based on assumptions that if AHTD's planning process results in a recommendation to widen I-30, then the same planning result applies to every interstate in the region. This assumption does not accurately portray the Department's planning process.

Prior to improving a highway facility, the Department performs a planning study of the corridor and a project-specific environmental study to determine the best methods for mitigating any current and future deficiencies. These studies look at many factors, such as safety, congestion, cost, and environmental impacts to try to determine what methods of improvement are most feasible for the corridor.

Each corridor poses different constraints and challenges, which can result in different planning recommendations. The property currently owned by the Department in the 30 Crossing corridor provides ample room for widening without requiring expensive and environmentally challenging purchases of additional property.

This unique corridor feature makes widening a viable option for improvements to the 30 Crossing corridor. This is not the case in every corridor, and a study in an area with less available property or other similar constraints



could result in a recommendation other than widening.

It is therefore improper to assume widening of a highway corridor prior to the completion of a corridor study.

SCHEDULE

WILL THE BROADWAY BRIDGE BE OPENED BEFORE THE 30 CROSSING PROJECT BEGINS?

Yes. The current schedule for the 30 Crossing project has the Department entering into a contract with a Design-Build team in the summer of 2017. Because 30 Crossing is a Design-Build project, the Design-Build team will have to design the project before construction can begin. With this design work occurring in late 2017 and early 2018, construction is not anticipated to begin on the 30 Crossing project until mid 2018 which is expected to be after the opening of the Broadway bridge. If at any time schedule changes result in the Broadway bridge still being closed when the 30 Crossing project is ready for construction, the Department will delay construction on any portion of the 30 Crossing project that impacts traffic until after the Broadway bridge is open to traffic.

COMMUTERS

WHAT WILL FUTURE IMPACTS BE FOR COMMUTERS TO AND FROM LITTLE ROCK AND NORTH LITTLE ROCK IF THE CORRIDOR IS NOT WIDENED (NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE)?

Congestion Increases: Based on the Future 2041 "No-Action" traffic modeling data, bottlenecks and congestion continue to increase during morning and evening peak hours. Peak direction travel speeds are anticipated to decrease to 20-30 mph resulting in corridor-wide travel time increasing to 16-18 minutes (nearly three times that of free flow conditions).

Crash Rates Increase: In 2012, there were 528 crashes along I-30 and I-40 in the study area. This resulted in a crash rate more than three times the crash rate for a similar facility in the state. When the 2012 crash rates were applied to the projected No-Action traffic volumes in 2020, it showed that annual crashes would increase to 598 (a 13% increase). By 2040, it is forecasted to rise to 729 (a 38% increase), equating to another 200 annual crashes a year within the corridor.

HOW WILL COMMUTERS BENEFIT FROM THE NEW PROJECT?

No design alternative has been selected at this time. However, below are general areas where drivers will experience improvements within the corridor.

- Proposed additional lanes and interchange improvements throughout the corridor will reduce congestion, improve drive times, and help traffic move more efficiently.
- Entrance and exit ramps will be longer.
- Distances for weaving, merging, and diverging will provide more-adequate space for safe lane changes.
- Narrow lanes and shoulders will be widened, and in some places, constructed for the first time.
- In North Little Rock, frontage roads will become one way with the addition of a North Locust Street Bridge connecting southbound traffic across the railroad yard.
- Left-hand exits on I-40 between I-30 and U.S. Highway 67 will be converted to right-hand exits to improve weaving issues.

HOW WILL I-30 TRAFFIC BE MANAGED DURING CONSTRUCTION OF THE 30 CROSSING PROJECT?

The approach for this project is to perform construction at one time over 3-4 years rather than as individual smaller projects that will cause I-30 to become a long-term construction zone. During the 30 Crossing construction, the Highway Department will work hard to minimize the impact and inconvenience to drivers through an in-depth maintenance of traffic plan.

Wherever and whenever feasible, the Department's policy will be to keep three lanes of traffic open in each direction during peak travel times. In addition, the I-30 river bridge will remain open during construction. Drivers within the construction zone can expect the following as ways to manage traffic during construction:

- Lane widths reduced in certain areas
- Temporary lane closures / rolling barriers
- Speed limits reduced
- Temporary detours



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STUDIES & TRENDS

HAVE OTHER STUDIES BEEN CONDUCTED REGARDING THE NEED FOR WIDENING I-30?

Yes. Central Arkansas Regional Transportation Study (CARTS) was commissioned by AHTD and Metroplan in 2003 to conduct two Areawide Freeway Studies. The studies analyzed the Arkansas River crossings and regional freeway network for the 2025 design year. Traffic on I-30 was forecast to increase by 23% between 2001 and 2025. The reports concluded that I-30 warranted 10 lanes by 2025 to achieve a desirable level of service.

The study identified a new Arkansas River Crossing at Pike Avenue, but after further analysis concluded that the new river crossing would only divert a small number of daily vehicles from I-30. The study also considered enhanced transit as an option for the corridor but concluded that even a robust transit system wouldn't divert enough traffic to mitigate the need for regional highway improvements.

In addition, for more than a decade Metroplan has reported serious to extreme congestion levels exist on I-30 and I-40 and recommended interchange improvements at I-30/I-630, I-40/I-30 and I-40/Highway 67. Even as recently as January 2011, Metroplan reported the need to widen I-30 and I-40 to 10 lanes from I-630 to Highway 67/167 as indicated in their Congestion Management Process Report. This was the same recommendation that was indicated in the 2003 CARTS Areawide Freeway Study.

WILL WIDENING THE INTERSTATE NECESSITATE ADDITIONAL HIGHWAY WIDENING, URBAN SPRAWL, AND INNER CITY JOB LOSS?

The need to widen I-30 and I-40 is a direct result of current and forecasted population increases in the Little Rock and North Little Rock regions. According to Metroplan, the region is expected to grow by more than 220,000 people between 2015 and 2040, with 75% of that growth occurring outside of Pulaski County. That translates to approximately 1.2% annual growth per year.

Severe congestion on I-30 near downtown Little Rock and long commutes to the Central Business District could incentivize businesses to move out of downtown and to the suburbs. In addition, Metroplan's System Analysis congestion charts and maps do not show that the widening of the 30 Crossing corridor has a negative

impact on the regional system. Finally, the improvements are not just for added capacity, but also to address the complex merging and weaving of the numerous interchanges in the corridor.

WILL CORRECTING THE BOTTLENECKS IN THE CORRIDOR SIMPLY MOVE EXISTING BOTTLENECKS ELSEWHERE?

Bottlenecks will continue to get worse within the entire region if action is not taken now by studying areas with the greatest bottlenecks and recommending ways to improve them. I-30 is the central backbone of the entire regional network. Currently, the worst bottlenecks occur in the downtown area. By improving the central corridor, these bottlenecks will be removed from the downtown area and drivers can start to take advantage of multiple routes to their destination.

As bottlenecks are moved away, their severity will also decline. In regard to the Regional Arterial Network (RAN) being the solution to congestion on the freeway system, the RAN operates together with the freeway system to move traffic, and therefore congestion on the freeway system will have a negative impact on the RAN. It is therefore improper to assume widening of a highway corridor prior to the completion of a corridor study.

IS THE IMPACT TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS BEING CONSIDERED, SUCH AS IMPROVEMENTS FOR PEDESTRIAN, BICYCLE, AND TRANSIT?

AHTD is a proponent of multimodal transportation and a vibrant downtown for Little Rock and North Little Rock.

As part of the 30 Crossing planning process, the Department has been regularly meeting with city representatives and transit agencies to make sure the corridor is built to accommodate their future plans.

However, as the state's department of transportation, AHTD has the responsibility to take into account everyone's needs and compromise to do what's best for the entire region and state. This includes the existing users of the roadway in addition to bicycle, pedestrian and other types of mobility. There is an obvious need to continue to provide a safe way for drivers to access downtown.

Pedestrian, bicycle routes and transit are included in the PEL recommendations and are being evaluated further in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) study.



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CONCEPTS

IF VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED DECLINES, WILL I-30 STILL REQUIRE IMPROVED CAPACITY?

According to the FHWA, national vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is at an all-time high. In the November 2015 Traffic Volume Trends report (U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration), there was a 2.9% increase in Arkansas VMT compared to November 2014. Previous month comparisons also reflected this increase in VMT. In addition, according to Metroplan, the Little Rock metro area is expected to increase by 220,000 people by 2040, with 75% of the growth expected outside of Pulaski County. Furthermore, Metroplan's System Analysis says VMT will increase by more than 30% between 2010 and 2040, even if I-30 is not improved.

WOULD A FUTURE DECREASE IN TRAFFIC MAKE A BOULEVARD A REASONABLE ALTERNATIVE?

VMT would have to decrease by more than 50% before a boulevard could be considered as a reasonable alternative. Current congestion problems warrant immediate action and public meeting attendees have also stressed that immediate action be taken now.

IF THROUGH TRAFFIC WAS DIVERTED TO I-440, COULD I-30 BE CONVERTED INTO A BOULEVARD?

There are currently several ways through traffic is alerted that I-440 is a downtown bypass route. Signage on I-40 westbound directs drivers to take exit 159, interstate I-440, to go to Texarkana. Signage on I-30 eastbound directs drivers to take exit 138A, interstate I-440, to go to Memphis. In addition, Google Maps and other mapping software will often recommend that drivers moving through the area take I-440 to I-30 or I-40 because it is the shortest current travel time.

According to Metroplan, I-30 through traffic is estimated to be less than 18% of total I-30 traffic in 2040. Due to the origin of the trips being taken, not all of this traffic will be willing to reroute to I-440, resulting in less than 18% of traffic being diverted from I-30. This would leave more than 82% of the 2041 forecasted traffic still on the I-30 corridor attempting to use a 6-lane boulevard, which has a capacity that is less than 50% of the existing 6-lane freeway. Congestion on a boulevard would be higher than what is shown in the 6-lane freeway future no-build scenario. This congestion would be worsened still with

the implementation of pedestrian light sequencing at the signalized interchanges, which would require long pauses in traffic movement so that pedestrians could cross six lanes of traffic.

Travel patterns on this corridor have been established over time as a result of how Little Rock and North Little Rock have developed. Dramatic changes in these traffic patterns cannot be made in a short amount of time unless other corridors are able to handle the excess volume of traffic without having significant impacts on businesses, housing patterns, and the general economic vitality of the region. I-440 isn't an option for drivers coming from all directions to access locations downtown. If they do use it as an alternate route, it can add significant time and distance to their commute to work or travel to the airport.

WOULD CONVERTING I-30 TO A BOULEVARD IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW DOWNTOWN AND BE MORE PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FRIENDLY?

Based on Metroplan's VMT data, as a boulevard, I-30 would be unable to handle the current traffic using the corridor resulting in worse delays than are currently experienced in the corridor. To date, no traffic analysis has shown how a boulevard could function with both existing and future traffic estimates, including what routes the current 115,000 – 125,000 vehicles traveling through the I-30 corridor daily would take to get to their downtown destinations.

In regard to improved mobility and safety for other modes of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, and transit), the boulevard will actually have a negative impact on these modes of transportation. While the Department's proposed alternatives would keep pedestrians and bicyclists separated from the main traffic flow, the boulevard would place these users directly in conflict with vehicular traffic. To protect pedestrians and bicyclists from this at-grade conflict across a wide 6-lane boulevard, lengthy pedestrian phases would have to be added to the traffic lights. This would result in greater congestion, not only in the corridor but also in the downtown grid. Pedestrians will also be less likely to cross the corridor because of the risk of crossing at-grade and the wait time associated with the traffic signal timing. Adding dedicated transit lanes will also complicate the signal phasing and cause further delay on the corridor for both vehicles and pedestrians.



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TRANSIT

DOES AHTD HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO FUND PUBLIC TRANSIT ON ITS PROJECTS?

The Department's authority in relation to transit is primarily limited to assisting in the transit planning process, with no authority to provide funding for transit implementation or operations. In addition, funds allocated to the Department through the Connecting Arkansas Program half-cent sales tax are not intended for transit improvements but for widening and improving the state's highway system.

AHTD has worked with Rock Region Metro on the I-30 project to identify ways to accommodate transit in the corridor, and Rock Region Metro serves as a member of the I-30 Technical Work Group. As a result of this coordination, AHTD has committed to providing full-depth, full-width shoulders along the I-30 and I-40 corridors to accommodate future bus-on-shoulder operations in the corridor.

CAN TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS HELP DECREASE EXISTING AND FUTURE CONGESTION ON I-30?

As part of AHTD's I-30 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, the project team developed conceptual estimates of transit ridership and costs for an express transit system to test the potential of reducing traffic volumes on I-30 and other freeways in the Little Rock area. The concept included seven express routes serving different parts of the metro area, including four that would affect traffic on the I-30 river crossing. The I-30 PEL study concluded that peak hour traffic volumes on the I-30 river crossing could be reduced by up to 11 percent with maximum transit investment in the corridor; however this reduction was not sufficient to achieve an acceptable reduction in congestion in the design year for A.M. and P.M. peak hours.

In order to achieve this reduction in traffic volumes of up to 11%, enhanced 10-minute headway (the frequency of bus service) express service is needed during peak hours. The recently proposed 2016 Pulaski County transit tax initiative was to provide service frequencies on "important routes" of 15, 20, 45 and 60 minutes (stated as longer term investments); there was no mention of 10-minute frequencies. Therefore, an even greater investment than that proposed in the transit tax initiative would be necessary to achieve the best case transit scenario of removing 11% of traffic off of the corridor.

In summary, while an increase in bus service could remove some traffic from the 30 Crossing corridor, the amount of traffic removed from the corridor in the best case scenario is not sufficient to remove the need to increase capacity in the corridor.

HAS LIGHT RAIL TRANSPORTATION BEEN CONSIDERED? IF SO, WOULD IT REDUCE CONGESTION IN THE CORRIDOR?

The Areawide Freeway Study (2003), a study jointly funded by the Department and Metroplan, evaluated the impact of implementing light rail between Little Rock/North Little Rock and Cabot and Conway. The results of that study showed having light rail transportation would only reduce vehicular traffic on all river crossings by 3%. In addition, as part of the I-30 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, which was completed in 2015, both light rail (street car) and commuter rail were identified as alternatives and studied.

Light Rail (Street Car) – The Rock Region Metro (RRM) (formerly known as the Central Arkansas Transit Authority) Strategic Plan (10-year plan) does not include light rail improvements. Light rail is part of RRM's long range plan; however, RRM has indicated that they would implement Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) before implementing light rail along future light rail corridors. This alternative was screened out in the PEL study as a result of RRM not including light rail in their 10-year Strategic Plan and the lack of a dedicated funding source identified in the Metroplan Long Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Commuter Rail – The Rock Region Metro Strategic Plan (10-year plan) does not include commuter rail, nor is it included in RRM's long range plan.

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Additional FAQs and information is available online at 30Crossing.com.

If you have questions or comments, please contact the project team:

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