



Response to Public Comments

DATE: June 27, 2023
BY: City of Decatur
PROJECT: Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study

A public involvement meeting was held May 2, 2023, for the Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study project to gather input and feedback for the purpose and need of the proposed project, feasibility criteria for all alternatives, and recommended alignments or potential solutions for traffic concerns. The meeting was an open house meeting and took place at the Turner-Surles Community Resource Center. Public comments were collected during the meeting via comment cards and a court reporter. Comments were also received via email until June 2, 2023. The City of Decatur received 11 written comments, 15 emails containing comments and 9 verbal comments via the court reporter. The comments were grouped and addressed by content. This document provides a response to each comment grouping.

Comment Grouping No. 1: We received written, verbal and hand-drawn feedback from stakeholders showing where a new bridge could be located and how it should tie back into the surrounding area. These suggestions are now alternative alignments.

Response Grouping No. 1: *The design team will compile a map of these alternative alignments and include all of them in the feasibility study. Each alternative will be studied by the consultant team and the results of this analysis will be presented to the public at the next public involvement meeting being held for this project in late August. At that meeting we will have a team of experts available to explain the findings of our study as well as gather additional feedback from you about the alignments.*

Comment Grouping No. 2: We received comments expressing concern about the impact of this project to Swan Creek and Mallard Fox Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) located within the Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study Area. In addition to the Swan Creek WMA, the portion of the WMA that is dedicated to the shooting range was of concern. Introducing a roadway in proximity to the shooting range could affect their ability to continue to operate a shooting range.

Response Grouping No. 2: *The City of Decatur is using a combination of local funds and federal grant funds to conduct the Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study. The City of Decatur anticipates the financing for the future design and construction of the project to include federal funding. The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study is following the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Compliance with NEPA is required for all stages of a project if any phase includes federal funding. Portions of the WMAs*



are considered protected areas and therefore any alternative considered on this project is required to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse impacts to these protected areas.

In response to the public concern about the shooting range, the consultant team will also include the effects each alternative would have on this facility to continue to operate because of the project. This analysis will be presented to the public at the next public involvement meeting being held for this project in August. At that meeting, we will have a team of experts available to explain the findings as well as gather additional feedback from the public about the alignments.

Comment Grouping No. 3: We received comments suggesting the existing “Steamboat Bill” Memorial Bridges, located along ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20 be widened to accommodate more capacity across the Tennessee River. These suggestions are now an alternative alignment.

Response Grouping No. 3: *The design team will compile a map of alternative alignments and include all alternative alignments in the feasibility study. Each alternative will be studied by the consultant team and the results of this analysis will be presented to the public at the next public involvement meeting being held for this project in August. At that meeting we will have a team of experts available to explain the findings of our study as well as gather additional feedback from the public about the alignments.*

Comment Grouping No. 4: We received comments expressing concerns about congestion and safety at intersections adjacent to the existing “Steamboat Bill” Memorial Bridges, located along ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20.

Response Grouping No. 4: *The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study developed a proposed need and purpose for the project which includes: “Relieve congested conditions along ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20 in the areas adjacent to the current ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20 bridges over the Tennessee River”. The consultant team will conduct a detailed analysis on the alternatives that are determined to be feasible as part of the study which will include operational and safety needs at intersections.*

Comment Grouping No. 5: We received comments expressing a desire to see aesthetics, branding, lighting, parks etc. as part of the project.

Response Grouping No. 5: *The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study will determine the feasibility of alternatives to address the need for additional capacity crossing the river. Consideration for aesthetics, branding, lighting, parks etc. will not be included in this phase of the project.*

Comment Grouping No. 6: We received comments expressing a desire for Bicycle and Pedestrian accommodations be included in the design.

Response Grouping No. 6: *Bicycle and Pedestrian accommodations will be included in the design.*



Comment Grouping No. 7: We received comments expressing concerns about the project impacting property. We refer to this as Right-of-Way Impacts.

Response Grouping No. 7: *The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study will determine the feasibility of alternatives to address the need for additional capacity crossing the river. There has been no alternative selected at this phase of the project. Right-of-Way impacts have not been identified at this time but there will be impacts to property by any alternative.*

Right of Way impacts identified in future phases of the project will follow the law with regards to acquisition and relocation services. Because this project will likely involve federal funding The Uniform Act is the primary law for right-of-way related acquisition and relocation activities.

Comment Grouping No. 8: We received comments expressing concerns about the project following the appropriate environmental permitting process.

Response Grouping No. 8: *The City of Decatur is using a combination of local funds and federal grant funds to conduct the Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study. The City of Decatur anticipates the financing for the future design and construction of the project to include federal funding. The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study is following the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Compliance with NEPA is required for all stages of a project if any phase includes federal funding.*

Comment Grouping No. 9: We received comments expressing concerns that the study area is not broad enough and the need and purpose is too narrow.

Response Grouping No. 9: *The project study area is defined as being bound by Route 20 to the west and I-65 to the east. Route 20 to the south and South of Tanner to the north. Connectivity east of I-565 should be addressed by review of community plans for consistency of the study alternatives.*

Comment Grouping No. 10: We received comments expressing a desire for any new bridge crossing to include a dedicated lane for transit.

Response Grouping No. 10: *The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study will determine the feasibility of alternatives to address the need for additional capacity crossing the river. The study will include all adopted transportation plans (including transit) in the region, state, county, city, and Decatur MPO.*

Comment Grouping No. 11: We received comments expressing a desire to reduce the truck traffic along ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20 in the areas adjacent to the current ALT US 72 / US HWY 31 / SR 20 bridges over the Tennessee River.

Response Grouping No. 11: *Each alternative will be studied by the consultant team and the results of this analysis will be presented to the public at the next public involvement meeting being held for this project in August. We will include information in the analysis about the effect each alternative will have with regards to the changes in truck traffic patterns because*

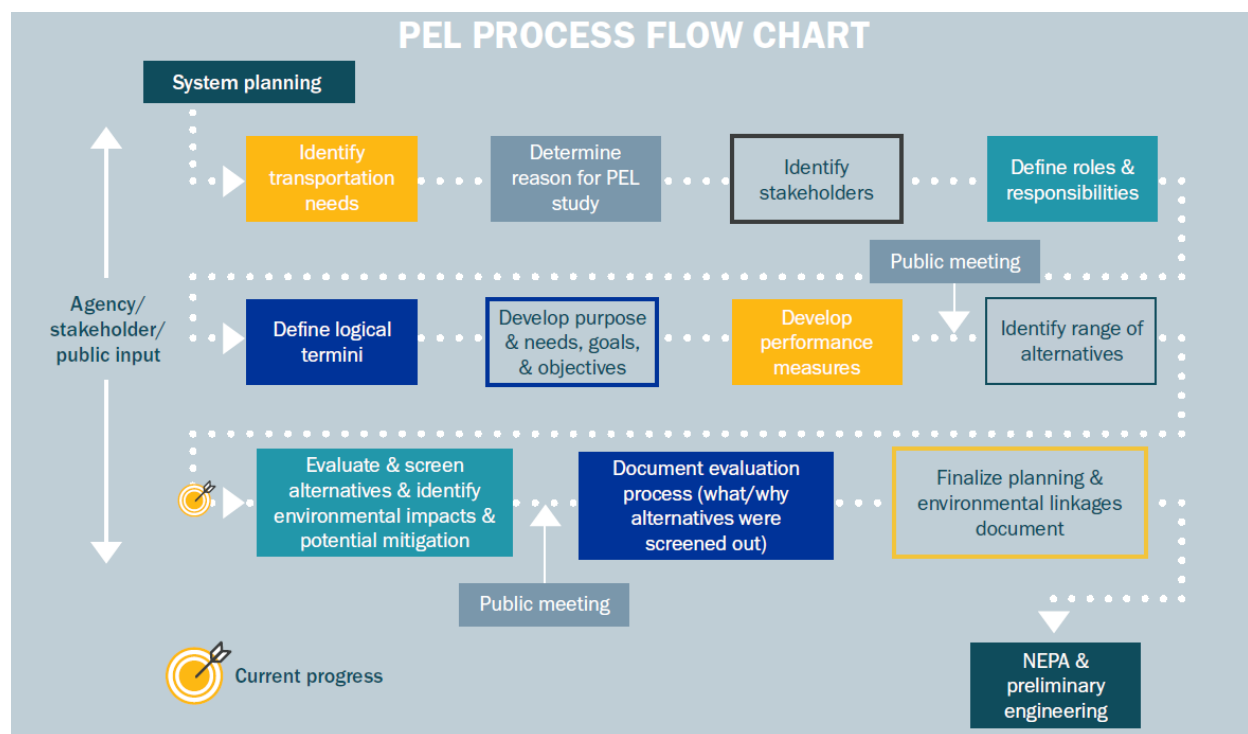


of the alternative. At that meeting we will have a team of experts available to explain the findings of our study as well as gather additional feedback from the public about the alignments.

Comment Grouping No. 12: We received comments expressing concern about the design of a new bridge over the Tennessee River being designed to accommodate large flooding events.

Response Grouping No. 12: *The Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study will determine the feasibility of alternatives to address the need for additional capacity crossing the river. There has been no alternative selected at this phase of the project. In future design phases all federal, state and local design criteria will be followed including the required hydraulic analysis that will be included in the design of the new bridge.*

We appreciate your feedback from our first public meeting held for the Tennessee River Bridge Feasibility Study project. Your participation and individual comments are a very important part of this study. The chart below depicts the entire Feasibility Study Process:



For current project information please visit the city's website: <https://www.cityofdecalur.com/departments/metropolitan-planning-organization/>

The City of Decatur will host an additional public meeting to present the feasibility study's findings in August 2023. The second public involvement meeting will allow the public another opportunity to provide feedback on the findings of the feasibility study and proposed feasible solutions. We look forward to your participation in our next meeting.