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TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Williamson County Public Meeting
State Route 397 Extension

April 16, 2015
5:00 p.m.

Pearre Creek Elementary School
1811 Townsend Blvd.
Franklin, Tennessee 37064

Elite Reporting Services
www.elitereportingservices.com
Sarah M. Motley, LCR
Post Office Box 292382

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3 MS. JENSEN: Thank you so much for being
4 here tonight. My name is Heather Jensen. I'm the
5 Community Relations Officer for TDOT for this region,
6 Middle Tennessee. I appreciate you being here and
7 giving up your evening for us. We do have a lot of
8 information to give you, so we'll try to get through
9 it as quickly as we can so we can open up the floor
10 for questions, if you've got those.

11 I didn't see any of our local leaders
12 here. They may poke their head in a little bit
13 later. Oh, hey.

14 MS. PETERSEN: I'm Ann Petersen, Alderman
15 At Large.

16 MS. JENSEN: Thank you for being here.
17 Anyone else that I may have missed? I
18 apologize. I'm trying to scan the room. Yes, I know
19 you.

20 MR. STUCKEY: I'm Eric Stuckey. I'm the
21 City Administrator, City of Franklin.

22 MS. JENSEN: Thank you for being here.
23 We appreciate it. I know that we did have several
24 city and county leaders that wanted to be here this
25 evening, so they may be trickling in. And they have

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1 been very good to us in making this a joint effort
2 and really being committed to moving this project
3 forward. So we greatly appreciate their partnership.

4 Like I said, a lot of stuff to get
5 through. We've got a presentation that we wanted to
6 do. We had intended to start at about 5:15, but
7 people were still trickling in so we pushed it back a
8 little bit. But we do have a quick presentation to
9 give you.

10 After that, we'll do a Q-and-A session
11 where you guys can ask some questions. We do ask
12 that you hold your questions until the end of the
13 presentation, simply so we can get through
14 everything, and some of those questions may be
15 answered by the presentation. But we'll be happy to
16 answer anything after that.

17 Once we do our formal Q-and-A session, we
18 will break out so that you guys can continue to view
19 the displays that you saw a little bit earlier. And

20 if you've got specific questions about a particular
21 property or intersection, we'll be happy to answer
22 those, as well. We've got a lot of TDOT and
23 consultant representatives here that will be able to
24 assist you with those questions.

25 We also have a lot of information for you

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1 to take home with you. Be sure to pick up a handout
2 that was on the sign-in table. Make sure you sign
3 in. This is a lot of information, I know, but this
4 is something you can take home with you. Take a
5 couple if you know neighbors or anyone else that
6 might be interested.

7 We also have the comment card, and this
8 is important because if you think of something once
9 you leave here, if you've got questions or just
10 general comments, please fill this out and get this
11 back to us. You've got 21 business days to get it
12 back to us, and we do want to hear from you. That's
13 a primary purpose of us being here, so that we can
14 get your feedback and make sure that we noted it for
15 the official record.

16 In addition to the comment card, we do

17 have a court reporter here. So if you don't feel
18 comfortable sending it in or talking to us directly,
19 please feel free to approach her directly and she
20 will make sure that your comments are noted for the
21 official record. And then the transcript, after this
22 meeting, will be posted online if you're interested
23 in that.

24 Talk a little bit about why we're here.

25 We do have a federal requirement to hold this

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1 meeting, so this meeting will fulfill that
2 requirement. This is talking about the environmental
3 portion that we are required to do. But this is also
4 a great opportunity to get feedback from you about
5 what we're doing with this project. Unfortunately,
6 we don't have a timeframe, right now, available on
7 any funding of construction, but we can tell you
8 where we are now and what comes next and we think
9 that will be helpful to you.

10 We're going to talk about some of the
11 changes to this project, not only the phasing, but
12 the impact of the project. So again, that will be
13 important information. And we also want to answer
14 your questions, address any concerns that you might

15 have, and get your input, and again, make that part
16 of the formal record. We've got a lot of folks here
17 with us today, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of
18 people here to answer your questions.

19 But first, I'm going to turn it over to
20 Jim Ozment. He is our Environmental Division
21 Director, and he's going to, again, tell you where we
22 are with this project.

23 MR. OZMENT: Thank you. Thank y'all for
24 coming out tonight. Again, I'm Jim Ozment. I'm
25 Director of the Environmental Division for TDOT. We

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1 are the people that do the environmental studies at
2 the very beginning of the project, but we wind up
3 being involved throughout the project. So we're
4 going to talk a little bit about this tonight and
5 explain why we're here and what we're doing, and
6 basically, this is one more step closer to
7 construction. So we're pleased that we can move to
8 this phase, as well.

9 I really apologize for the light. Kind
10 of blinding our slides here. If you want to move
11 closer, now might be a good time. I think it's a

12 little better if you are closer.

13 In your handout -- most of the maps that
14 I'm going to use are in the handout. There's two
15 primarily, and it may be easier to talk off of them
16 than off of the slide, but I'll refer to them at this
17 point.

18 If you'll look on your slides -- or in
19 your handout, one slide is for showing you where the
20 alignment is. This is -- this whole project involves
21 the western half of the Mack Hatcher Parkway that was
22 originally designed to be a circle around Franklin.
23 Half of it is built. This is the other half.

24 Whenever we do an environmental study, we
25 have to talk about the entire project that was

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1 studied, even though we build projects in phases.
2 We're here to specifically talk about the
3 northeast -- or northwest -- excuse me -- segment of
4 this project. But we also have to announce that this
5 entire project is being reevaluated with an emphasis
6 on the northwest, which is what's moved the
7 construction plans further forward.

8 I doubt you can see the animation. Just
9 to talk about the steps in the environmental process.

10 Projects usually start in the planning phase, where
11 you have a concept of where you would like to build a
12 road. Then they move to the environmental phase. If
13 you hear me refer to the word "NEPA," it stands for
14 National Environmental Policy Act. It's the
15 regulations that require the study of environmental
16 impacts from both a social, cultural, and natural
17 environment. Once that's done, we're done and have
18 completed an environmental impact study. That was
19 completed in 2009. So that's where we are from the
20 environmental standpoint.

21 From there, it moves to the design.
22 People come out and survey the project. Designers
23 start working on putting it on paper as to exactly
24 how the road is going to be built. This was done in
25 partnership with our partners in Franklin. They

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1 funded the design and part of the right-of-way
2 themselves to get this project moving even further
3 along.

4 After the design is complete, the project
5 moves into the right-of-way phase, where we go out
6 and we buy the right-of-way. That's also been

7 completed, so we've completed that step. Then the
8 next step is construction. So --

9 But before we get there, the
10 environmental process does not actually stop. We
11 stay with it throughout the entire process. There
12 are reevaluations that occur at two different places.
13 One is after the design and before right-of-way is
14 purchased, we look and see, were any of the things
15 that were noted in the environmental impact statement
16 that should be avoided, did all of that happen? So
17 we go back and look and be sure that everything that
18 was committed to was actually done.

19 We also do that right before construction
20 in order to ensure that nothing actually slipped in
21 to a set of plans or anything else that's been built.
22 These projects, obviously, take a long time. There
23 can be new development. The age of certain
24 structures could age to a point where they might
25 become historic. There's a lot of different things

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1 that could happen in a project. Traffic
2 intersections can change. Growth patterns can
3 change. So we consistently go back and reevaluate
4 that throughout the process.

5 So that's kind of where we are tonight.
6 We're here to talk about the reevaluation from our
7 NEPA perspective. The other reason we do this is any
8 time in the past three years, after we have a Record
9 of Decision, we have to go back and talk to the
10 public and say, hey, we've looked at this; we want to
11 make sure everything is still correct. So there's a
12 legal obligation for that in order to make it as
13 ready as it needs to be and move on forward toward
14 construction. So following this, based on
15 availability of funding, project could move forward
16 to construction.

17 I apologize if these are tough to read.
18 And these are not in your handout. But we talk about
19 the purpose and need of this project. And if you're
20 here tonight, you probably already realize its
21 purpose and need. But it's to reduce congestion to
22 connect the roadways throughout the system that were
23 already in place, to increase the efficient movement
24 of people and goods, improve safety for the traveling
25 public, and emergency response vehicle times to be

1 reduced, and to conform with local planning documents

2 for how the locals feel that the County is going to
3 grow.

4 To talk a little about why this is
5 confusing. Our next -- well, I probably ought to
6 keep you on the first map in your handout because I
7 know you won't be able to see very much off of this.

8 Whenever we did the initial study, we had
9 a number of alternatives that we could pick from.
10 Unfortunately, we numbered them all, and it ran up
11 through about 18 or so different segments. So when
12 they went and put the project together, they picked,
13 sort of, Segment 1 and then Segment 9, and all of
14 these segments became the ultimate chosen and
15 preferred alternative.

16 So if you'll see on here, there's segment
17 numbers. Sometimes in the slides, I'm going to refer
18 to the one we're talking about tonight, Segment 17.
19 That's pretty much the northwest corner of the
20 project area. The project actually extends across
21 Hillsboro Road in the north onto the existing Mack
22 Hatcher, as well as across Columbia Pike and south to
23 where the existing Mack Hatcher ties into there.

24 So next slide. This is also in your
25 handout. A little bit more detail in your handout

1 than what's on the slide. But this talks about where
2 Segment 17 is in detail. It shows that it starts
3 south of 96, just south of where we're at now,
4 crosses 96 and goes up and across the Harpeth at two
5 locations, crosses over Hillsboro Pike, and
6 basically, ties into the existing Mack Hatcher
7 Parkway up there.

8 So you can see, from this particular
9 thing in your handout, that we're going to build this
10 project in phases. One of the things that TDOT does
11 quite often is phase projects for construction costs
12 so that we can get in and build something now while
13 it can be afforded because these projects are going
14 to be more and more costly as time goes on.

15 So the phasing at this point has that
16 we're going to build two lanes -- two 12-foot lanes,
17 have grass shoulders, and a 12-foot multi-use path.
18 That's only half of it. Phase 2 would be the other
19 half, and that would be -- would include the median
20 and both the shoulders or two lanes and shoulder on
21 that side. Not two. Excuse me. One. So that would
22 be the ultimate cross-section for this project.

23 What we did during the reevaluation was
24 we backed up and we looked at traffic to see if
25 traffic numbers changed. Once traffic numbers

1 change, it kind of kicks off a series of things that
2 have to be looked at. If traffic numbers change,
3 that can change the air quality numbers. It could
4 change the amount of noise that would be generated by
5 the traffic. Having it phased also causes a
6 difference. So we go back and reevaluate those
7 changes to this, based on new design. We also update
8 the ecology report in case there's new endangered
9 species, things of that nature.

10 Things that we didn't change along the
11 way was most of the other stuff, which included
12 archeological, historic, recreational resources,
13 hazardous materials, poor quality. Most of these
14 things, there were no changes that we found from the
15 first previous study.

16 In your handout, this is probably going
17 to be something else you'll need to read. On the
18 almost next to the last page, there's a listing of
19 the changes that we found between the original study
20 and most recent reevaluation study. We updated the
21 traffic in this particular area. There was not a lot
22 of changes to the traffic. The land use has not been
23 changed significantly. The displacements and

24 relocations, all the right-of-way has been purchased,
25 and we are, at that point, complete with the

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1 right-of-way. At this point, it's 74 acres. Total
2 would be 74 acres of farmland, would be converted to
3 transportation purposes.

4 Noise. There will be some noise impacts
5 from the project. We're still in the evaluation
6 phase to decide if there's anything about mitigation
7 that can be done. So I can't give you a definitive
8 answer at this point, but that will be done before
9 final construction plans are completed.

10 We also talk about habitat, how much
11 habitat for wildlife would be impacted. And there's
12 94 acres of habitat that would be converted. At this
13 point, there are 47 streams -- or not streams. But
14 basically, water bodies or water features that were
15 identified in the most recent 2014 ecology study.
16 That's a significant number, more than previously,
17 but that is primarily because of the way that we -- I
18 guess, more likely, the intensity at which the study
19 is done, as well as the regulatory interpretation by
20 some of the federal agencies by what actually is a
21 water feature and what's wet weather conveyance,

22 what's a ditch. That number grows. So out of that,
23 we only really -- out of the number of features that
24 are found, we're only going to have to permit nine of
25 them because of impact. So the level of impact

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1 doesn't rise to the need for permit except for nine
2 of those features.

3 The same thing goes for wetlands.
4 Originally, there was not very many confirmed here.
5 Rainfall patterns changed. Regulations changed. We
6 now have 20. But out of 20, only just over half an
7 acre of wetlands are going to be permitted or have a
8 permit action taken with a federal agency.

9 So threatened and endangered species. We
10 also go back because species are added. In this
11 particular case, there's one species, the Indiana
12 Bat, that was added, and six state species that were
13 identified within a four-mile radius. Luckily, when
14 we did the study and actually looked at our
15 right-of-way, none of these species exist in the
16 right-of-way that we purchased, so there's no impacts
17 of threatened or engaged species.

18 So that pretty well concludes what we

19 have done thus far. We expect, by the summer, to
20 have this reevaluation completed and ready for FHWA,
21 Federal Highway Administration, to review and sign.
22 They won't ultimately sign that until it's funded and
23 put into the three-year plan for the Metropolitan
24 Planning Organization here in Middle Tennessee.
25 That's called the TIP, Transportation Improvement

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1 Plan. So once it's in the TIP, then it can be signed
2 by the FHWA, and we would be complete, and the next
3 step would be moving it toward construction.

4 Again, your comments are very important
5 to us during this process. We want to be sure we've
6 answered all your questions tonight. We have more
7 than enough people, I think, here to answer any
8 question that you might have concerning almost any
9 subject.

10 So we'll be glad to take those questions,
11 either up here to begin with, but we'll also be glad
12 to talk to you afterwards individually, if you'd like
13 to go back and look at a map. If you have property
14 that you have concerns with or a particular location,
15 it may be better that we actually talk to you around
16 one of the maps so we can point and have a little

17 better conversation. And again, I apologize for the
18 quality of the slides with the light here.

19 Our project manager is Darrell Moore.

20 Darrell, where are you at? Darrell is right here.

21 He's been the project manager on this. This is his

22 contact information. If you have additional

23 questions, you can contact him.

24 And at this point, I'm going to turn it

25 back to Heather. And any questions, we'll be glad to

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1 talk about them.

2 MS. JENSEN: Like I said, it's a lot of

3 information. I know it can be a little bit

4 overwhelming. And it is a little technical because

5 it is environmental, but that doesn't mean that we

6 don't want to hear from you.

7 So at this point in time, I do want to

8 open it up for questions. If you have a question,

9 just stand up. Please say your first and last name

10 for our court reporter so that she can document it.

11 And we'll take questions. Anybody?

12 MS. FITZPATRICK: Leah Fitzpatrick. I

13 was just wondering. I know y'all don't really know a

14 lot about the noise barriers yet. But what is the
15 criteria for using -- if you're going to figure out
16 if you're going to install them or not.

17 MS. JENSEN: That is a design question.

18 MR. OZMENT: The question was, what's the
19 criteria for building noise barriers. There's really
20 kind of three hurdles you have to get over.

21 First, you have to be considered to be
22 impacted. So we do a lot of modeling of what we
23 believe the traffic is going to cause this noise and
24 how far out that will propagate, and that goes in
25 decibel levels. One of two ways. It can either go

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1 over 66 decibels or it could be a substantial
2 increase from where it will be.

3 So a lot of this farmland has a very low
4 decibel level. You put the traffic there.
5 Obviously, it rises significantly. So that would be
6 one criteria that you have to get over.

7 First, we have to declare that you're
8 impacted. If that's true, then it comes back to two
9 other tests. One of them is called feasibility. Can
10 we build something that could actually protect or
11 reduce the noise significantly enough to justify

12 building a wall; are there any physical barriers to
13 doing that?

14 And thirdly, it comes back to a
15 reasonableness equation, which talks about how
16 much -- in essence, the underlying part of it is, how
17 much would a noise barrier cost compared to the
18 amount of residents it would protect?

19 So if it meets all three of those tests,
20 then it's considered reasonable and feasible and
21 would be included. We would ultimately take that to
22 the public to ask, do you want the noise barrier,
23 also, because we don't want to force it upon somebody
24 that doesn't want it. But it goes through that
25 process. And right now, we're still talking about

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1 design feasibility.

2 And we've already done the studies and
3 know what the noise levels are and can tell you that.
4 If you have a particular location you'd like to talk
5 about, after this is over, we can do that.

6 MS. JENSEN: Anyone else?

7 (No response.)

8 MS. JENSEN: All right. You guys are a

9 quiet group. With that, we will close the formal Q
10 and A. If you guys want to, please, take a look at
11 what we have, as far as plans laid out here. If you
12 have specific comments or questions that you would
13 like to submit to the court reporter or one of our
14 staff members, please do so. We definitely want to
15 hear from you. Again, I know this was a little bit
16 more of a technical meeting, but your input is still
17 very, very valuable to us. And thank you so much for
18 coming. Appreciate it.

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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3 STATE OF TENNESSEE

4 COUNTY OF WILLIAMSON

5 I, SARAH M. MOTLEY, Licensed Court Reporter,

6 with offices in Nashville, Tennessee, hereby certify

7 that I reported the foregoing proceedings of
8 TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC MEETING
9 by machine shorthand to the best of my skills and
10 abilities, and thereafter the same was reduced to
11 typewritten form by me.

12 I further certify that I am not related to
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