

## US 281 Bridgeport Bridge over South Canadian River *Fourth Section 106 Consulting Party Meeting*

<b>Meeting Date:</b> February 1, 2021	<b>Time:</b> 1:30 p.m.
<b>Location:</b> Via WebEx Video Call	
<b>Project:</b> US 281 Bridgeport Bridge over South Canadian River Caddo, Blaine, and Canadian Counties, OK	

**Call Participants (33 Total):**

Name	Organization/Affiliation
Tori Raines, David Neuhauser, Scott Stegmann	CP&Y
Scott Sundermeyer, Greg Maggard, Jenny Droscher, Kimi Diedrich	ODOT Env. Programs: Cultural Resources
Siv Sundaram, Frank Guerrero, Amber McIntyre	ODOT Environmental Programs
Andy Wilson	ODOT Project Management Division
Justin Hernandez	ODOT Bridge Division
Laura Chaney	ODOT Strategic Asset & Performance Management Division
Cody Boyd	ODOT Media and Public Relations
Steven Gauthe, Rick Howland	ODOT District 4
Karen Orton, Ralph Nguyen	FHWA
Lynda Ozan, Sara Werneke, Cate Wood, Jennifer Bailey	Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office
Chantry Banks	Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.
Kitty Henderson	Historic Bridge Foundation
Betsy Merritt	National Trust for Historic Preservation
Kaisa Barthuli, Meg Frisbie	National Park Service
Nathan Holth	HistoricBridges.org
Anne Haaker	Route 66 Road Ahead
Rhys Martin, Marilyn Emde	Oklahoma Route 66 Association
Rick Mitchell, Alex Borger	Mead and Hunt

## **Introduction**

A Section 106 consulting party conference call for the US-281 Bridgeport Bridge over South Canadian River was held via WebEx at 1:30 p.m. on February 1, 2021. Thirty-three people attended the conference call.

## **Project Background Review/Updates**

The purpose of the meeting was to update project stakeholders on recent developments with the historic Bridgeport bridge, including the recent awarding of the federal Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funds for the project, the recent NRHP listing of the bridge as an individually eligible resource, information on the virtual open house held in the fall of 2020, and to request input on the draft alternatives analysis document prepared in advance of the Section 4(f) documentation process.

Scott Sundermeyer, ODOT-CRP, began the meeting briefly discussing the project history, including reminding the attendees that three previous Consulting Party meetings were held for the project in June 2015, September 2016, and July 2020. After an initial unsuccessful application for a BUILD grant from USDOT, ODOT applied for a second BUILD grant for the project and in September of 2020 was awarded the grant for \$22 million.

## **Virtual Open House**

Tori Raines with CP&Y shared additional information about the Virtual Public Open House. The open house window for viewing and comment was increased to three weeks from the standard ODOT two week timeframe to accommodate the additional anticipated interest. A total of 346 individual users accessed the site, and 31 viewers signed in. A total of 34 comments were received, with most of the commenters offering their support for the project and reiterating the importance and historical significance of the bridge. In addition, five commenters requested some sort of tourist accommodation, like a parking area at the end of the bridge or a turnout to safely take photographs and view the bridge. ODOT is considering this request/suggestion, but nothing has been decided yet. Additionally, two commenters asked about proposed improvements to the nearby Tower Bridge. ODOT is currently at the early stages of looking into a potential rehabilitation project for the Tower Bridge, but that would be a separate project at a later date.

David Neuhauser, CP&Y, then added some information about proposed work on the roadway to clarify that the existing pavement would not be disturbed, other than a few feet at the approaches to the bridge.

## **Alternatives Analysis Report**

Scott Sundermeyer then reminded the group of the recently circulated design analysis report and reiterated that the proposed alternative (Alternative E:2) would construct a new multi-beam superstructure and attach the historic truss panels to the new bridge. The truss panels would no longer function as load-carrying members. The roadway on the bridge would be widened from 24 ft. to 28 ft. within the bridge extents. This alternative would maintain the feel of the original bridge, while also increasing safety for passing vehicles and large trucks. This alternative would preserve the existing concrete piers and incorporate context-sensitive bridge rails. He indicated that ODOT had made a finding of adverse effect to the bridge with this alternative, with a finding of no adverse

effect to the NRHP Bridgeport Hill-Hydro District in which the bridge is located. He noted that coordination with SHPO is underway and that formal comments have not been received yet.

Scott Sundermeyer opened the meeting for discussion/questions.

### **Discussion**

Below is a summary of the main comments communicated at the meeting.

- Kitty Henderson asked what would happen if FHWA does not approve the 28 ft. widening of the bridge
  - Scott Sundermeyer indicated that FHWA has not yet approved the project, he has no indication at this time that it will not be approved in the future. The reason for this meeting is to move toward FHWA approval.
- Rhys Martin asked whether any information had been found about the original color of the bridge (was it yellow from the beginning?).
  - Scott Sundermeyer did not have that information, but that we would continue to search as-built drawings to identify the original color.
  - Raines noted that several written comments included reference to the “yellow bridge,” though that is not necessarily indicative of yellow as the original color.
- Kaisa Barthuli expressed concern that the alternative presented as a proposal is now unable to be changed because it is in the BUILD grant application. Was under the impression that the previous meetings have been informational, and that today’s meeting would be to discuss alternatives. Hearing that changes to the design would void the BUILD grant award means that discussing other options is not feasible at this point.
  - Scott Sundermeyer apologized for any confusion and indicated the formal Section 106 consultation has been ongoing since 2015, with multiple meetings and coordination with consulting parties having occurred since that time.
- Kaisa Barthuli emphasized that the bridge is extremely significant and is a crown jewel of the overall Route 66 roadway at the national level, as evidenced by the recent NRHP individual listing at the national level. One of the character-defining features is the width of the bridge and roadway, so she is concerned that widening to 28 ft. could have an impact not only to the bridge but to the district. She noted the relatively low ADT and low accident rate as indicators that 28 ft. width may not be necessary. She expressed concern that the widening of the bridge might invite additional traffic and large trucks to use the bridge and have long-term impact to the district.
  - Scott Sundermeyer reminded her that the initial BUILD grant application was for an alternative that maintained the 24 ft. bridge width, and ODOT did not receive the funds. Without the BUILD grant funds, the project would again have to be halted, and the bridge would have to be closed. He also noted that there are large trucks that do currently use the bridge (21%) and included within that figure are RVs of tourists visiting the bridge and driving the roadway.
- Kaisa Barthuli suggested, as a mitigation stipulation, that ODOT develop a maintenance plan for the overall NRHP district as a mechanism for protecting the rest of the district from future impacts and again stressed the importance of the district. She also requested ODOT please consider Alternative E:1, which would maintain the 24 ft. width of the bridge.

- Scott Sundermeyer clarified that only a small portion of the district is on ODOT's system; the rest of it is locally owned by the County. Therefore, ODOT would not have authority to implement or enforce such a plan, though they could offer guidance to counties.
- Meg Frisbie asked if there were any other mitigation options that had been developed.
  - Scott Sundermeyer indicated that nothing formal had been developed, but that internally some had been considered:
    - 3D LiDAR of the bridge structure (Sundermeyer requested any direction on the mitigation option that the consulting parties might have, as ODOT has not undertaken a LiDAR project yet)
    - Context-sensitive rails have been incorporated into the plans already, and they could be formalized in an MOA
    - A pull-out for tourists and visitors to safely view and photograph the bridge
    - NRHP inventory and evaluation of statewide Route 66 roadbed and resources, including portions that are off system
- Meg Frisbie indicated that a Programmatic Agreement for Oklahoma bridges has been discussed, and that now might be a good time for it to be formally developed. Kitty Henderson asked if such a PA would be for state-owned bridges only? Scott Sundermeyer indicated it could apply to any bridge on which a federal undertaking was proposed.
- Nathan Holth brought up floor beam detail that he had mentioned in previous discussion and correspondence. He suggested using an I-beam to connect trusses to new floor system, rather than long-leg verticals.
  - David Neuhauser indicated that the truss bracing was designed to withstand wind loads and deflection. The use of horizontal steel angles as struts would provide a similar look to the existing floor beams.
- Sara Werneke asked about the approaches and how they would transition from 22 ft. to 28 ft.
  - Scott Sundermeyer clarified that the bridge is already 24 ft., so there is already a transition from the 22 ft. roadway to a wider bridge.
  - David Neuhauser noted that a small amount of guardrail would be at 28 ft. before the asphalt shoulder widening would taper back to the 22 ft. The roadway would be striped as it is now.
  - David noted that they would use precast concrete panels for the deck, in order to minimize impacts to the Arkansas river shiner, and that the deck would continue to be concrete with a 30 ft. approach slab.
  - Justin Hernandez also clarified that the existing asphalt overlay extends further than the proposed guardrail.
- Rhys Martin inquired about plans for the existing plaques on the bridge and the sensitive issue of the William H. Murray Bridge name.
  - Sara Werneke indicated that during the NRHP listing process, the name of the bridge was formally changed to Bridgeport Bridge.
- Meg Frisbie suggested incorporating Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation as a mitigation option.

- Scott Sundermeyer indicated that the HAER might be redundant, given that the bridge had been recently listed on the NRHP, but noted that HAER documentation has been utilized in many instances including for a nationally significant bridge in Guthrie, OK that was submitted to the Library of Congress due to its significance.
- Scott Sundermeyer wrapped up the discussion, reminding all participants that he is available for any additional questions or concerns, and that all materials will be available on the project website.

**Follow-Up**

Scott Sundermeyer will follow up via email with additional information about the proposed guardrail.