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March 31, 2014

Ms. Sandra L. Otto
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
700 West Capitol Street
Room 3130 Federal Building
Little Rock, AR 72201-3298

Re: Interstate 49

Sandy
Dear Ms. Otto:

Reference is made to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) October 2013 approval of the Department's request for the designation of Interstate 49 between the Louisiana State Line and the Texas State Line north of Texarkana. This approval was contingent upon Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approval and construction completion. Accordingly, we request FHWA approval for the designation of Highway 549 from the Louisiana State Line to the Texas State Line north of Texarkana as Interstate 49.

Highway 549 is currently constructed to Interstate standards from Doddridge to the Texas State Line. The portion from the Louisiana State Line to Doddridge is currently under construction to Interstate standards and is expected to be open to traffic in June 2014. There are no design exceptions for this route.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LaDOTD) anticipates completion of the 11 mile segment from Hosston, Louisiana to the Arkansas State Line early this spring. This will complete the segment of Interstate 49 from Shreveport to the Arkansas State Line. The Department is coordinating with the LaDOTD to ensure Interstate 49 is opened to traffic in both Arkansas and Louisiana simultaneously. In addition, the Department will notify the Texas Department of Transportation of the decision to designate Highway 549 as Interstate 49.

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION
Little Rock, Arkansas

Ms. Sandra L. Otto
March 31, 2014

Page Two

Enclosed are a map of the area and a copy of the approved Record of Decision (ROD), which did not require a 49 USC 303(c) Section 4(f) approval.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. If additional information is needed, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Scott E. Bennett
Director of Highways
and Transportation

Enclosures

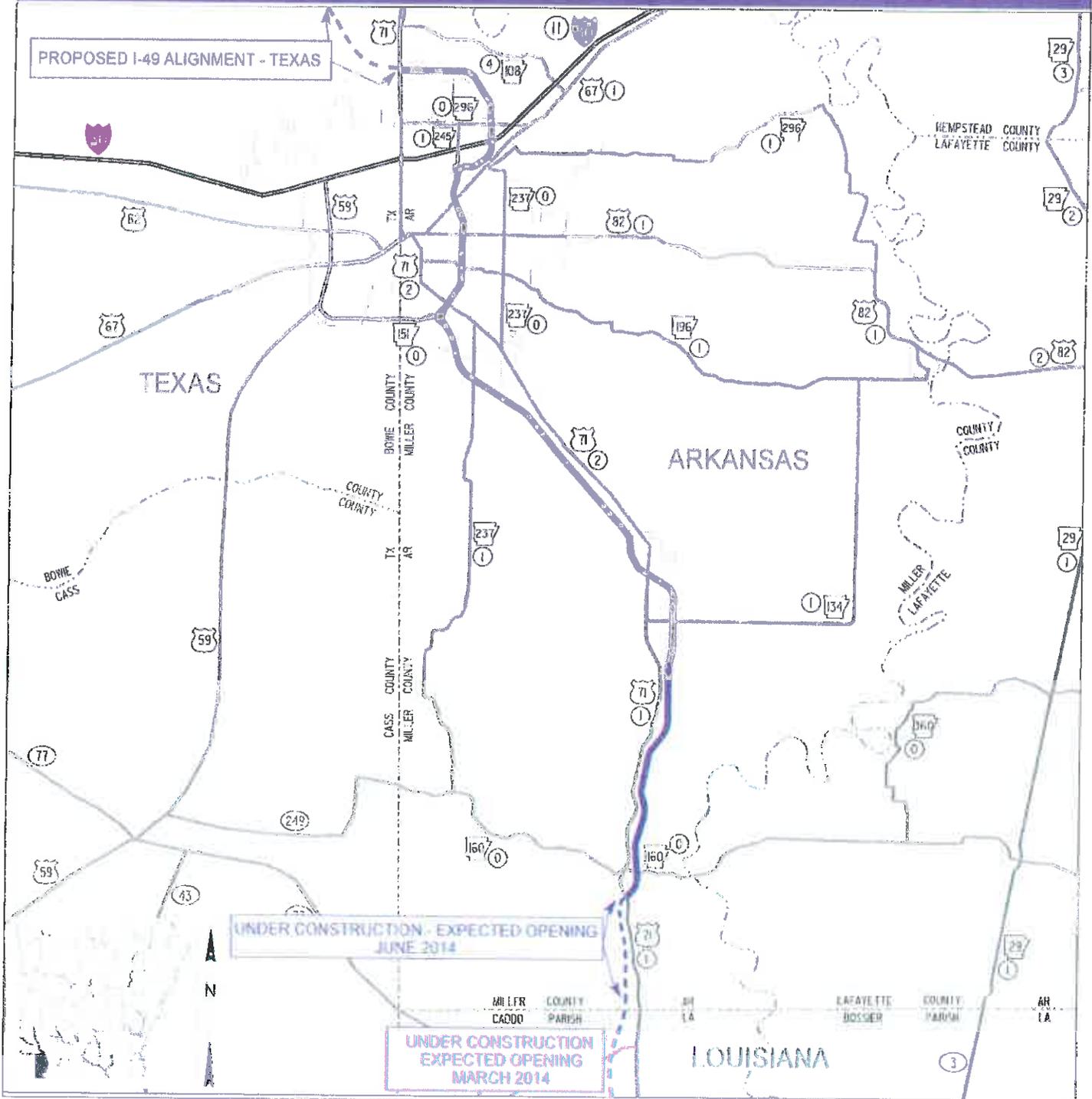
c: Deputy Director and Chief Engineer
Assistant Chief Engineers
Programs and Contracts
Roadway Design
System Information and Research
Transportation Planning and Policy
Sherri LeBas, Secretary - Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
James M. Bass, Interim Executive Director – Texas Department of Transportation

INTERSTATE 49 DESIGNATION REQUEST LOUISIANA TO TEXAS



PROPOSED DESIGNATION AS I-49

PROPOSED I-49 ALIGNMENT - TEXAS





US Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject **FHWA-AR-EIS-94-01-F, US-59** Date **July 25, 1996**
U. S. Highway 71
Miller County, Arkansas

From **Director** Reply to **HPP-06**
Office of Planning and Program Development Attachment **6650-AR**
To **Fort Worth, Texas**

Mr. William D. Richardson
Division Administrator (HDA-AR)
Little Rock, Arkansas

In accordance with prescribed procedures, the thirty-day period, since the FEIS Notice appeared in the Federal Register, has ended. There were no comments received on the subject FEIS. Therefore, I have signed the ROD which provides environmental clearance for the project. The project may now proceed in a normal manner.


Peter A. Lombard

Attachment



RECORD OF DECISION

**Arkansas Project R30079
FAP Number DPS-A015(002)
FHWA-AR-EIS-94-01-F
U.S. Highway 71
Texarkana, Arkansas to Louisiana State Line
Miller County, Arkansas**

Preferred Alternative Decision

The purpose of this project is to construct a four-lane, fully controlled-access freeway. This facility begins at Loop 151/245 on the south side of Texarkana in Miller County, Arkansas and extends south for 47 kilometers (29 miles) to the Louisiana state line near Ida, Louisiana. The new freeway will require an average right-of-way width of about 91 meters (300 feet). Chapter 2 and Figure 2-5 in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) explain and depict the preferred alternative.

This project will:

- improve traffic flow and reduce congestion on existing U.S. 71 and its connecting roadway network
- improve safety on existing U.S. 71 and major collectors
- help satisfy the need for a freeway facility between Kansas City, Missouri and Shreveport, Louisiana
- accommodate the traffic volumes projected through the year 2020 and increase regional mobility in western Arkansas

The preferred alternative was chosen after all social, economic, environmental, and engineering impacts had been carefully evaluated. The preferred alternative was identified by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) as having the least impact on the environment, and was therefore considered to be the "environmentally preferred" alternative. The major advantages of the preferred alternative were that it:

- required the fewest wetland acres

- had the least floodplain encroachment
- is the most acceptable to the public
- maintains direct access to existing U.S. 71 and the local communities
- provides the greatest opportunities for economic growth

The FEIS includes detailed information on the purpose and need for this project in Chapter 1.

Alternatives Considered

A number of alternatives were considered for this project which included the (1)no-action, (2) transportation system management and mass transit, (3) reconstruction along existing U.S. 71 alignment, and (4) new location alternatives. Each alternative alignment began on the north at Loop 151/245 south of Texarkana and terminated on the south at the Louisiana state line in the general vicinity of Ida, Louisiana. The potential impacts and relevant discussion of all reasonable alternatives and their non-selection are discussed in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

All environmental consequences were considered to be important factors in the decisionmaking process. Table 2-6 of the FEIS depicts an alternative comparison of several major environmental components (relocatees, wetland area filled, prime farmland area converted, floodplain encroachment, construction cost, and stream crossings).

Measures to Minimize Harm

Measures to reduce and minimize harm resulting from stormwater runoff are contained in Chapter 4 of the FEIS. The AHTD will prepare and implement, prior to any construction, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan in accordance with the requirements of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit to be obtained from the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology.

The FEIS indicates that since there is no practicable alternative to avoid construction in all wetlands, the AHTD proposes compensatory mitigation for the unavoidable wetland impacts. The alignment of the preferred alternative has been shifted where practicable to minimize impacts to wetlands in the project corridor. Special conditions to minimize and mitigate harm to wetlands and other aquatic resources are included in Chapter 4 and Appendix K of the FEIS. AHTD will continue to coordinate the final mitigation plan with the Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers.

The preferred alternative will cross several streams and creeks, and the Sulphur River in Miller County, Arkansas. Miller County's flood hazard boundary maps have been prepared through the Flood Insurance Administration, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. AHTD will submit construction plans for the highway stream and river crossings to Miller County for their review and approval, or permitting, as specified by their local floodplain ordinances.

A Programmatic Agreement (PA) has been formalized with the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Federal Highway Administration that ensures that project effects on historic properties will be taken into account. With this PA in place, the SHPO has no objection to the proposed undertaking.

The relocation of residences and businesses will be administered under the Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1970, as amended. This law establishes a uniform policy which provides advisory assistance and payments to help offset expenses incurred by those who are displaced. The FEIS discusses relocation impacts beginning on page 4-20 of Chapter 4.

Severance of prime farmland will be minimized by the location of the preferred alternative near property lines. There is some bisection of prime farmland which may result in the disruption of farm operations, farmland access, haul routes and farm facilities. Any severance damages will be established through the appraisal process and as appropriate will be paid to affected owners. The severed farmland is expected to remain in production through lease or sale to adjacent landowners.

The proposed alternative will impact the rural quality of the existing landscape. The view from the new freeway will be mitigated by screening with preserved vegetation or with plantings appropriate to the location. Existing vegetation will be retained where feasible. The FEIS describes the opportunities to minimize harm beginning on page 4-16 in Chapter 4.

All of the landfills, producing oil wells, and storage tank facilities identified during the field survey of the preferred alignment or during construction of the new freeway can be effectively avoided.

A preliminary noise abatement analysis indicates only one area where a noise barrier might be feasible. This area identified in Chapter 4 of the FEIS beginning on page 4-30 will receive further detailed study. A decision on the installation of appropriate noise abatement measures will be made after completion of the project's final survey, design and coordination with the receptors directly affected by any proposed noise abatement measures. Noise impacts caused by construction will be temporary and "short-term" in duration. Sensitive noise areas in urban Miller County will be identified and, if needed, work restricted to daylight hours.

Monitoring Measures

The **Measures to Minimize Harm** section discussed above will be monitored by Federal, State and local governments at the appropriate time during further project development. These

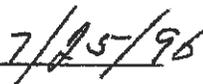
reviews, any permits required, and contract plans and special provisions will ensure the mitigation measures are implemented.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and evaluation contained in this project's FEIS and after careful consideration of the analysis of the social, economic, environmental, and engineering factors and input from the public involvement process, it is my decision to adopt the recommended alternative as the proposed action for this project.



Federal Highway Administration



Date