

# Location and Design Public Hearing and Environmental Assessment for:

## POCAHONTAS BYPASS

RANDOLPH COUNTY, ARKANSAS

## ARDOT Job 101140

July 23, 2024

### How do I become involved?

- Complete the sign-in form to register your participation in this location and design public hearing.
- Review all the materials provided in the location and design public hearing.
- Written statements may be submitted anytime between Sunday, June 23, 2024 and Wednesday, August 7, 2024 by using the comment form and mailing/emailing it to Garver, Attn: Caitlin Hetzel, 4701 Northshore Drive, North Little Rock, AR 72118; or [PublicInvolvement@GarverUSA.com](mailto:PublicInvolvement@GarverUSA.com).
- Your attendance and participation are greatly appreciated.

For more information, please call (501) 823-0730 or email [PublicInvolvement@GarverUSA.com](mailto:PublicInvolvement@GarverUSA.com)

Garver  
Attn: Caitlin Hetzel  
4701 Northshore Drive  
North Little Rock, AR 72118



# **Location and Design Public Hearing and Environmental Assessment Information**

## **What is the purpose of this hearing?**

Through the materials at this hearing, we will present the design plans and Environmental Assessment (EA), and you will have an opportunity to express your opinions. Public participation is needed to identify and discuss any problems or controversial issues. It is important to clearly identify your issues and concerns, and if needed, you can call or email us for clarification on any matters related to this project. Phone and email contact information is provided above. We request your cooperation and participation.

The hearing information has been prepared to provide general information about the proposed project. Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) and Garver staff are here to answer your questions and provide you with information. Additional information is available on the project website or by contacting ARDOT.

## **What is being proposed and what would it accomplish?**

ARDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), with support by ARDOT consultant Garver, is conducting this Location and Design Public Hearing to present and discuss the design plans and EA for the proposed new road connecting Highway 90 and Highway 67 north of Pocahontas in Randolph County. Proposed improvements are needed to reduce heavy truck traffic and improve mobility in the Pocahontas Central Business District (CBD).

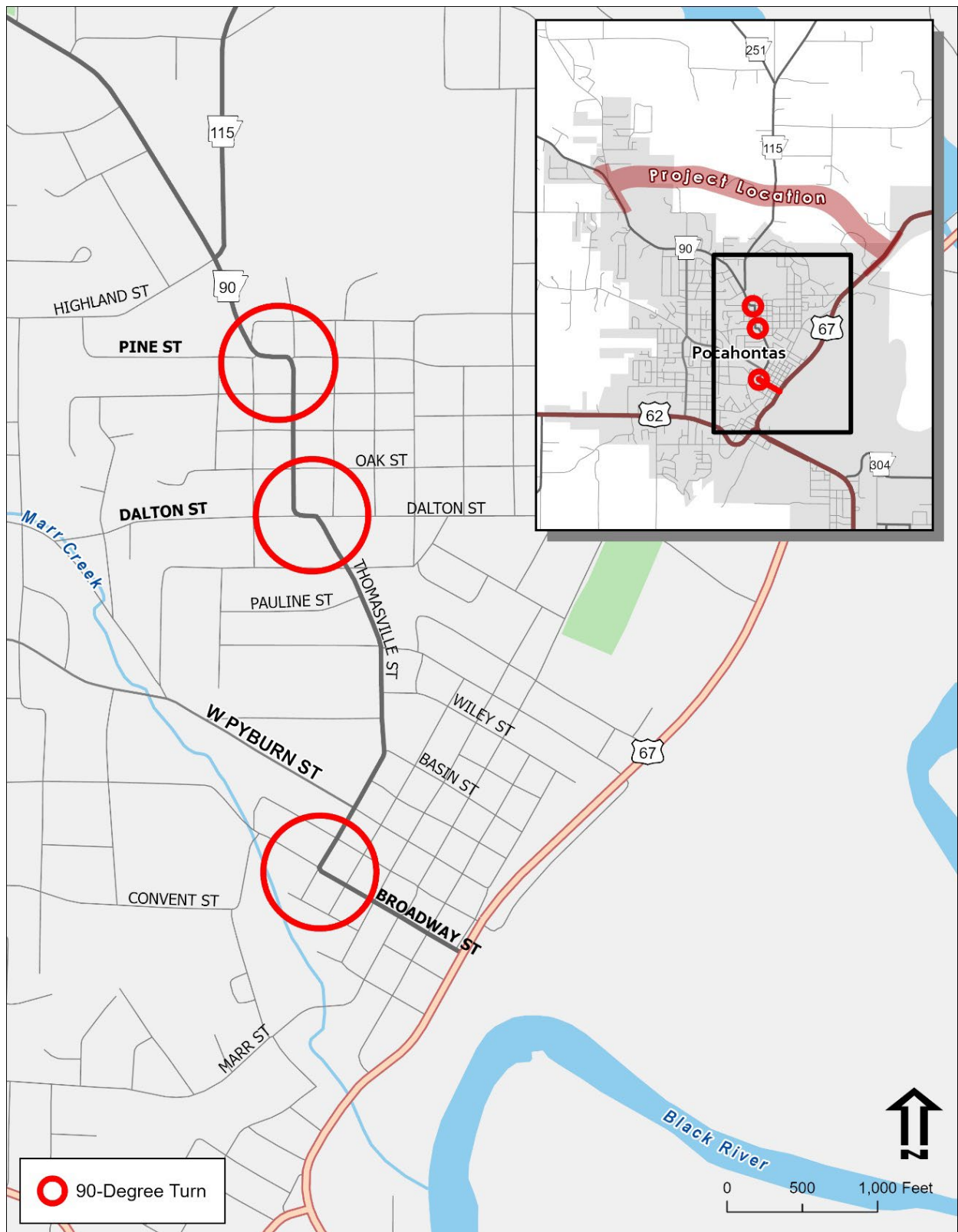
Currently, it is estimated that 800 trucks travel daily on Highway 90 through central Pocahontas. Highway 90 is an important route for industrial and agricultural industries in the area. This route includes three 90-degree turns and several other less tight turns and can be seen in Figure 1. Frequent travel delays and reduced mobility are present in the Pocahontas CBD when trucks must slow down to navigate these turns and often must wait for approaching vehicles to make their turns before the necessary room is available to move through the intersection.

The EA promotes informed decision making in the development of a transportation solution(s) by explaining the purpose of the proposed action, evaluating social, economic, and environmental impacts, soliciting feedback from the public and decision-makers, and determining whether further analysis is necessary or if the impacts are minimal enough to warrant a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

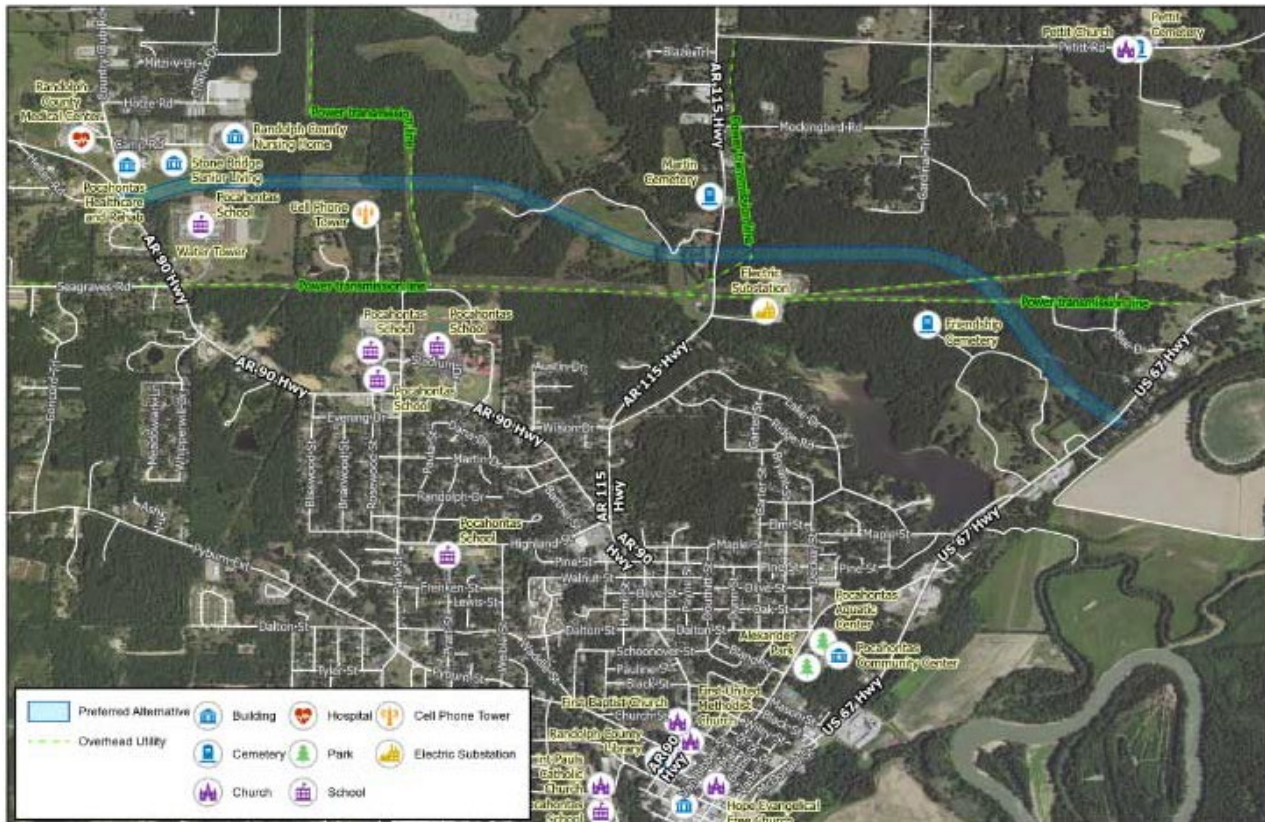
## **What is the preferred alternative?**

As shown in Figure 2, the proposed project would provide a bypass connection north of Pocahontas from Highway 90 to Highway 67. This would be a new location two-lane connection between Highway 90 north of the CBD and Highway 67 northeast of Pocahontas with an intersection at Highway 115. The total project length is approximately 2.6 miles. The Preferred Alternative, Alternative B, is identified on Figure 2 as a blue line.

Figure 1: Identified 90-Degree Turns on Highway 90



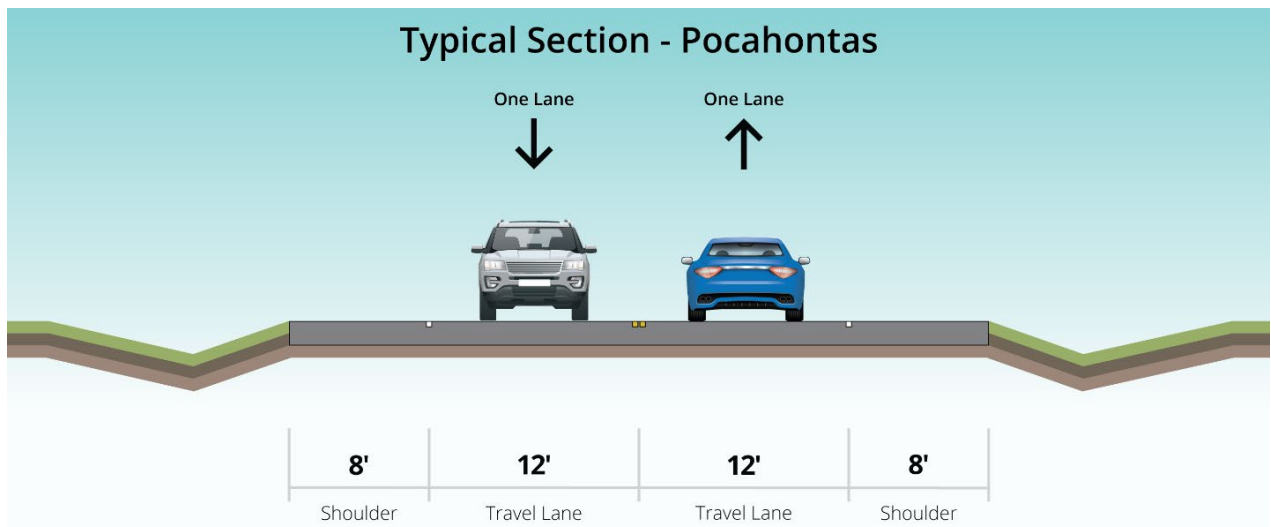
**Figure 2: Preferred Bypass Alternative – Alternative B**



## What will the highway look like?

As shown in Figure 3, the proposed roadway would consist of two 12-foot-wide travel lanes and two 8-foot-wide shoulders.

**Figure 3: Typical Section**



## What are the impacts of the Preferred Alternative?

Regarding the environment, the most important impacts from the project are shown in Table 1. While every effort has been made to minimize negative impacts during the alternative studies, and additional efforts have been made during the detailed design, there is not an alternative that avoids all impacts.

Two build alternatives (Alternatives A and B) were evaluated in the EA. Alternative A has a high potential to impact recently discovered unmarked graves. Additionally, a preference for Alternative B was communicated by the public at the public involvement meeting held in October 2023. Alternative B has been identified as the Preferred Alternative and best maximizes the benefits from the project while minimizing the negative impacts to the extent possible.

**Table 1: Preferred Alternative Impacts**

Resource Category	No Action Alternative	Alternative A	Preferred Alternative (Alternative B)
Total Construction Cost in Millions	None	\$19.5	\$19.5
Right of Way Acquisition	None	65.5	66.2 acres
Relocations Required	None	2 businesses	2 businesses
Farmland Impact Rating Score	0	103	102
Undetermined Cultural Resource Sites Present	None	1	3 sites
Risk to Adjacent Grave Site	None	High	Low
Wetland Impacts	None	0.4	0.8 acre
Stream Impacts	None	5,234	5,567 LF
Floodplain Present	None	5.4	3.7 acres
Tree Clearing	None	41.8	41.2 acres
Noise Receptor Impacts (Existing and Future)	4 existing, 6 future	None	None

## What if my property would be affected by the project?

ARDOT Right-of-Way Division personnel will contact property owners affected by the project when the environmental process is complete. These staff members may include appraisers, negotiators, closing agents, and property managers.

The initial step in the acquisition process is the property valuation. Once the valuation is prepared, reviewed, and approved, a negotiator will contact the property owner by mail or in person to begin the negotiation process. If negotiations are successful, a Contract to Sell is executed and submitted for payment. Once ARDOT completes the title opinion and the deed is prepared, a closing agent will be in touch to get the deed signed and deliver the check. At this time, the state takes possession of the property.

For those cases where all efforts to negotiate are unsuccessful, the tract is submitted to the ARDOT Legal Division to file condemnation. The appraisal amount is deposited in the court and the landowner may withdraw the funds placed on the deposit without affecting their right to claim additional compensation.



No one will be required to surrender possession of their property or improvement until just compensation has been made. A detailed policy and procedures brochure is available at this hearing or through the ARDOT Right-of-Way Division.

## **What if my business or home needs to be relocated?**

The relocation assistance program is intended to help offset expenses incurred by those who are displaced by federal aid highway projects. This program provides advisory assistance and payments to help offset those expenses.

No one can be required to move without at least 90 days' advance written notice and comparable replacement housing will be made available to all residential displaces before project construction begins. The replacement housing must be fair housing and offered to all affected persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Relocation assistance, which is separate from the compensation a person receives for real estate, comes in two basic forms – physical assistance and monetary assistance. In order to be eligible for relocation assistance and compensation, a person must be in occupancy at the initiation of negotiations for the property. The type of relocation payments an individual is eligible for depends on whether they are a property owner or renter.

Relocation assistance and payments will be provided until everyone has been relocated from the project. If a person is not satisfied with the amounts that have been offered as relocation compensation, an appeal may be filed, and the case heard promptly and carefully reviewed by an ARDOT Appeals Officer. Relocation assistance brochures explaining each payment and eligibility requirement in detail are available at this hearing.

## **What happens after this hearing?**

The FHWA and ARDOT invite interested individuals and entities to provide comments. The design plans and EA, and appendices, can be viewed and downloaded from the project website at: [PocahontasBypass.TransportationPlanroom.com](https://PocahontasBypass.TransportationPlanroom.com)

The public comment period began June 23, 2024, and will extend until August 7, 2024. FHWA and ARDOT will review and consider all comments and prepare a response document for inclusion in the FONSI.. Personally identifiable information provided by individuals submitting public comments may be published.

Copies of the design plans and EA have been placed at the following locations:

- Website: [PocahontasBypass.TransportationPlanroom.com](https://PocahontasBypass.TransportationPlanroom.com)
- Randolph County Library, 111 W. Everett St., Pocahontas, Arkansas 72455

After a review of comments received from citizens, public officials, and public agencies, a FONSI document will be prepared for review by FHWA. The FONSI will only be prepared if no significant impacts associated with the Preferred Alternative are identified. The approval of the FONSI by FHWA would identify the Selected Alternative and conclude the environmental process. Right-of-way acquisition could then begin.

*Thank you for your attendance and participation in this hearing!*