



# Centennial Pathways: Enhancing Community Connectivity on US-69 in Muskogee

BUILD Grant 2026

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Merit Criteria

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## Table of Contents

Criterion #1: Safety.....	1
Protect Motorized and Non-Motorized Travelers from Safety Risks.....	1
Incorporate Specific Safety Improvements as Part of a Documented Safety Risk Mitigation Strategy .....	2
Reduce Fatalities or Injuries in the Project Area .....	2
Criterion #2: Environmental Sustainability .....	3
Improve the Resilience of At-Risk Infrastructure.....	3
Criterion #3: Quality of Life.....	4
Improve Travel Experience for Families .....	5
Criterion #4: Mobility and Community Connectivity .....	6
Improve Vehicular Roadway Capacity.....	6
Include Transportation Features that Increase Accessibility for Non-Motorized Travelers in Underserved Communities.....	6
Enhance Accessibility of the Transportation System for Families and Americans with Disabilities Using Universal Design.....	7
Criterion #5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity.....	7
Improve Intermodal and Multimodal Freight Mobility .....	8
Promote Economic Growth.....	10
Criterion #6: State of Good Repair .....	10
Restore and Modernize the Existing Core Infrastructure .....	10
Address Current or Projected Transportation System Vulnerabilities.....	11
Criterion #7: Partnership and Collaboration .....	12
Engage Residents and Community Based Organizations.....	12
Coordination with Other Projects – Economic Development.....	12
Workforce Development Partnership .....	12
Criterion #8: Innovation.....	13
Innovative Project Delivery .....	13
Innovative Financing .....	13
Innovative Technologies.....	14

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## List of Figures

Figure 1: Project Location and Components .....	1
Figure 2: News Clipping After Pedestrian Collision in Muskogee .....	3
Figure 3: Flooding of US-69 in Muskogee in May 2021.....	4
Figure 5: Community Resources Near Project Area.....	5
Figure 4: Pedestrian on US-69 Shoulder .....	5
Figure 6: Pedestrian on US-69 Roadway in Muskogee.....	6
Figure 7: Intersection of US-69 and Border Avenue with No Pedestrian Infrastructure.....	7
Figure 8: Major Oklahoma Truck Traffic Highways.....	7
Figure 9: Economic Generators .....	8
Figure 10: Oversized Truck Detour Routes .....	9
Figure 11: Existing Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge.....	10

## List of Tables

Table 1: Total Crashes 2017 to 2021 .....	2
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## Criterion #1: Safety

Safety is a primary purpose of the Centennial Pathways: Enhancing Community Connectivity on US-69 in Muskogee Project (Project). The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

### Protect Motorized and Non-Motorized Travelers from Safety Risks

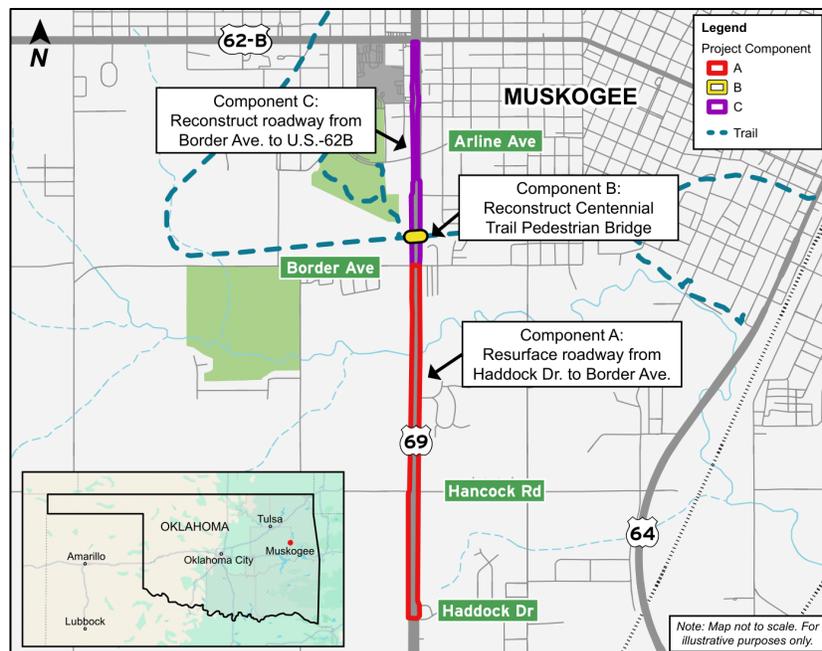
Muskogee has the second highest fatality rate for non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries per 10,000 people among cities under 50,000 in population (p. 64, Table 3). The city of Muskogee also ranks within the top ten statewide for total fatalities and serious injuries. The reason for this is due to the lack of non-motorized infrastructure, as shown on the cover page.

The northern half of the Project, known as **Component C**, which is located within the town limits of Muskogee (see **Figure 1**), reconstructs the roadway to add capacity, two-way left-turn lanes (TWLTLs), sidewalks, and crosswalks. The lack of sidewalks and crosswalks throughout the Project Area forces non-motorized travelers on US-69 into dangerous conditions. Adding sidewalks, crosswalks, and improved lighting will enhance safety for non-motorized travelers. Additionally, TWLTLs can be expected to reduce collisions by removing left turning vehicles from the through lane, improving efficiency and safety on US-69. **It is expected that the Project would reduce crashes on this segment of US-69 by 6.6 collisions annually** for total crashes which equates to a crash rate reduction of 14 percent in the Project Area. (see **BCA Narrative**).

### Other Safety Improvements

The Project will enhance safety and traffic flow while providing improved infrastructure for travelers. The Project includes three components, explained in the **Project Description** and shown in **Figure 1**. **Component A** – road resurfacing – will enhance the existing ten-foot-wide outside shoulders and widen the inside shoulders to four feet. Paved shoulders have been found to reduce casualties by 25 to 40 percent and play a crucial role in minimizing the risk of crashes by offering a designated area for emergency

Figure 1: Project Location and Components



Source: ODOT

stops and disabled vehicles away from the travel lane, allowing for drivers to make steering corrections before veering off the road, and providing room for evasive maneuvers. Additionally, shoulders can be used by non-motorized travelers in rural areas, improving safety. **Component B** includes reconstructing the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge to meet modern vertical clearance

design standards and widen the bridge to 12 feet. The multi-use path will allow non-motorized travelers to safely cross US-69 and connect them to the Muskogee Trail system without navigating directly on the roadway. The existing roadway sag vertical curve and low bridge vertical clearance will be corrected, enhancing safety by allowing trucks to continue on US-69 rather than detouring through downtown Muskogee. **Component C**, also described above, includes reconstructing the roadway to add capacity, two-way left-turn lanes (TWLTLs), sidewalks, and crosswalks.

**Incorporate Specific Safety Improvements as Part of a Documented Safety Risk Mitigation Strategy**

The Project is consistent with multiple regional and local planning documents and incorporates nationally recognized safety strategies. In 2023, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) conducted [Vulnerable Road User \(VRU\) Assessment](#) which identified Muskogee as a VRU Safety High-Risk Area based on the rate of fatalities and injuries per 100,000 residents (p. 56). As noted in the previous section, Muskogee has the second highest fatality rate for non-motorized users for non-metropolitan cities. ODOT stated that additional analysis, consultation, and resources to improve non-motorized traveler safety would be necessary due to the high risk for VRUs. In the [2023 Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#), ODOT cited actions for high-risk areas including identifying and upgrading at-risk roads, establishing criteria for road diets, and educating drivers on safety. This at-risk corridor will receive new sidewalks on both sides of the roadway, crosswalks, lighting, and signage that will benefit both non-motorized and motorized travelers.

The Project implements key safety countermeasures outlined in the [National Roadway Safety Strategy Plan](#), including crosswalk visibility enhancements, adding sidewalks, and adding dedicated left- and right-turn lanes at intersections. The Project also reflects recommendations from the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) [SAFE ROADS Initiative](#) by providing wide sidewalks and clearly marked crossings. The Project supports the goals of the [Muskogee \(Creek\) Nation Safe Streets for All \(SS4A\) Plan](#) (2026) by improving roadway geometry, signage, and lighting to reduce crash frequency and severity.

**Reduce Fatalities or Injuries in the Project Area**

As noted earlier, the Project will reduce crashes in an area that has the [second highest fatality rate](#) of non-motorized fatal and serious-injury crashes per 10,000 people among cities under 50,000.

From 2017 to 2021, 238 vehicle crashes occurred within the Project Area, resulting in 62 injuries and no fatalities. The 2017 to 2021 data set represents the most recent and complete data set from ODOT. Data from after 2021 has not yet been fully tabulated and is not an accurate representation of safety concerns for the corridor. **Table 1** provides more details about the collisions in the Project Area.

**Table 1: Total Crashes 2017 to 2021**

Collision Type	Property Damage Only	Injury	Total
Rear End	80	28	108
Right Angle	10	13	23
Angle Turning	30	8	38
Other Angle	1	0	1
Sideswipe	37	3	40
Fixed Object	7	1	8
Pedestrian	0	4	4
Animal	2	0	2
Overturn	0	4	4
Other	9	1	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>238</b>

*Source: ODOT Traffic and Safety Office, 2017-2021  
Represents the most recent completed 5-year data set.*

The Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) used a crash modification factor (CMF) for the resurfacing treatment expected to occur as part of construction, which is determined to reduce the likelihood of fatal, injury, and property damage only crashes in all weather conditions. **It is expected that the Project would reduce crashes on this segment by 6.6 collisions annually** for total crashes which equates to a crash rate reduction of 14 percent in the Project Area. (see **BCA Narrative**).

Between 2017 and 2021, 45 percent of collisions within the Project Area were classified as rear end collisions. According to the [FHWA](#), rear end collisions are commonly observed on roadways where traffic stops in travel lanes and sudden deceleration from vehicles is required. This characterizes the current bottleneck at the Centennial Pedestrian Bridge where the roadway dips, causing sudden deceleration. This sag vertical clearance will be corrected when the roadway is reconstructed.

The current roadway has no sidewalks or crosswalks, which has contributed to safety issues for non-motorized travelers. While pedestrian collisions accounted for approximately 1.7 percent of crashes from 2017 to 2021, the collisions involving pedestrians always resulted in injury which could have been prevented if safe non-motorized infrastructure

**Figure 2: News Clipping After Pedestrian Collision in Muskogee**

**PEDESTRIAN KILLED AFTER BEING HIT BY MULTIPLE VEHICLES IN MUSKOGEE**

A pedestrian died after being hit by several vehicles in Muskogee. It happened around 10 p.m. Wednesday Highway 69, near the West Shawnee Bypass.

Thursday, October 3rd 2013, 5:22 pm  
By: News On 6



Source: [The News on 6](#)

was provided throughout the corridor. The Project intends to improve non-motorized traveler infrastructure, including sidewalks and crosswalks, to enhance traveler safety on US-69. Therefore, reconstructing the roadway will help to reduce injuries in the Project Area.

## Criterion #2: Environmental Sustainability

Improving infrastructure resilience is a primary Project purpose. The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

### Improve the Resilience of At-Risk Infrastructure

US-69 is a critical rural corridor that must remain operational during extreme weather events, supporting emergency response, community evacuation, freight movements, and military mobilization. However, within the Project corridor, US-69 has suffered from flooding vulnerabilities, notably during the 2021 flood events (see **Figure 3**) that repeatedly disrupted mobility for residents and travelers that frequently rely on US-69 as a primary north-south route. These recurrent disruptions have forced travelers onto parallel detour routes, reducing regional network reliability and increasing travel times and safety risks. The detour route, shown in **Criterion #5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity**, requires oversized loads to detour

15 miles off of US-69 on alternative routes that cannot withstand the increased loads, leading to accelerated pavement deterioration.

The Project directly addresses these vulnerabilities by correcting the sag vertical curve that creates a bowl-shaped area where runoff collects during heavy rainfall, shown in **Figure 3**. This geometric correction is a major resilience improvement, as it eliminates the low point where stormwater repeatedly ponds, reducing visibility and causing temporary closures or slowdowns. Eliminating this depression increases the reliability of US-69 during extreme rainfall events and significantly reduces the risk of closures that currently prevent community, freight, and military movements from passing beneath the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge.

**Figure 3: Flooding of US-69 in Muskogee in May 2021**



*Source: ODOT, 2021*

To complement this geometric improvement, the Project includes 45 drainage inlets, a 51% increase of inlets over existing conditions, paired with conveyance capacity designed to move water off the roadway more quickly and prevent flooding. This combined approach ensures that the highway maintains operational integrity during severe rainfall, protecting the pavement from deterioration and reducing the chances of ponding and hydroplaning.

These improvements directly support emergency and disaster resiliency. By ensuring the highway remains passable during major weather events, the Project preserves access for law enforcement, fire response, and community evacuation. Critically, the increased clearance and reduced water pooling beneath the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge creates a more reliable passage for oversized freight shipments and military mobilization from [nearby installations](#), allowing US-69 to serve as the primary north-south movement corridor during and after extreme weather events. This added redundancy reduces reliance on rural detour routes that have lower structural capacity.

### Criterion #3: Quality of Life

Improving the quality of life for Muskogee residents and travelers is a primary Project purpose. The improvements provide clear, direct, and data-driven benefits to families, caregivers, non-motorized and motorized travelers.

### Improve Travel Experience for Families

The three Project components work together to transform US-69 from a high-speed barrier into a corridor that supports safe, comfortable, and intuitive accommodations for families, children, and other travelers. Today, the lack of non-motorized traveler accommodations



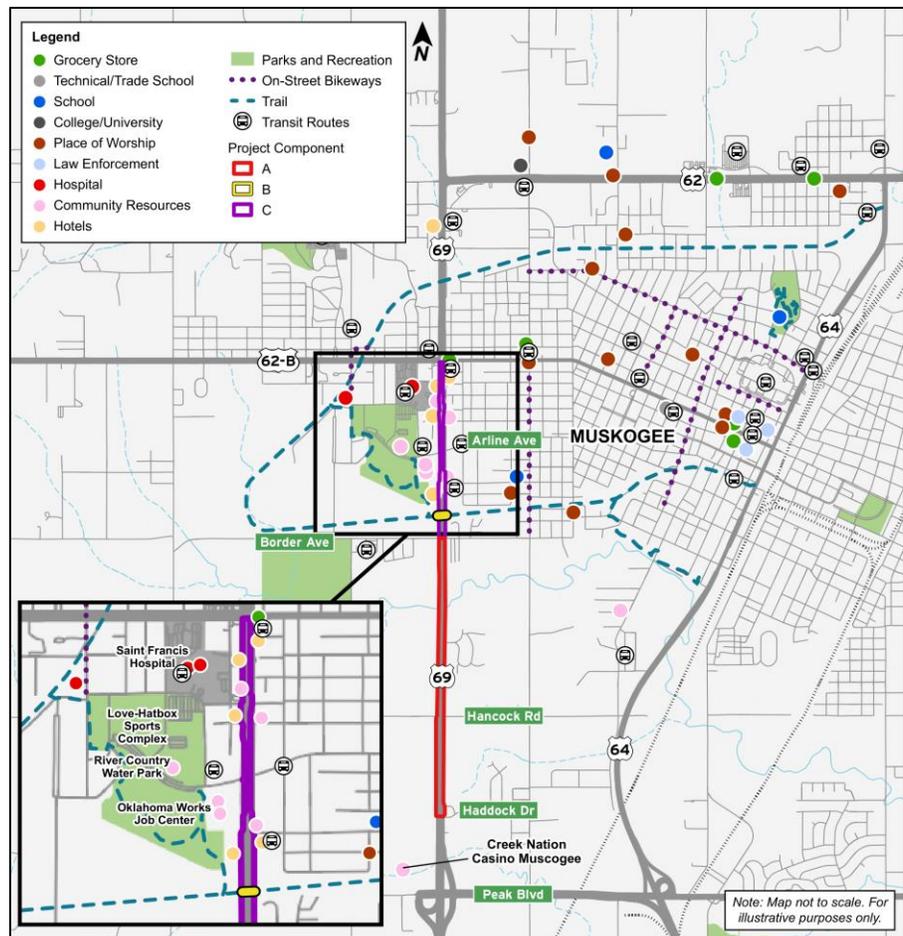
Figure 4: Pedestrian on US-69 Shoulder

Source: [Google Maps](#), accessed January 2026

forces community members to walk on narrow shoulders or make illegal crossings at signalized intersections (**Figure 4**). By adding sidewalks, crosswalks, and an improved grade-separated pedestrian bridge, the Project allows families to move safely along and across the corridor, making everyday trips to schools, parks, and other community destinations easier and more comfortable.

**Component B**, the replacement of the aging Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge, meaningfully improves quality of life by creating a safe, dedicated, and grade-separated connection that children, caregivers with strollers, and families can use comfortably. The bridge connects communities on both sides of US-69 to the seven-mile Centennial Trail system, expanding access to schools, community facilities, and parks (**Figure 5**). The bridge’s modern design featuring a wider, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant deck ensures that people using strollers and other non-motorized modes can

Figure 5: Community Resources Near Project Area



Source: ODOT

easily travel the route, allowing children and adults to cross the highway without interacting with traffic. This vastly improves daily travel comfort and provides a reliable way for families to reach parks and trails without driving.

**Component C** further enhances this experience by constructing continuous sidewalks and adding ADA-compliant, clearly marked crosswalks at signalized intersections. These improvements remove the physical barrier created by the high-speed, high-volume US-69 corridor, giving families predictable, designated places to walk and cross. Enhanced lighting expands the usable hours for non-motorized travelers, making early morning and evening travel safer for parents, students, and workers. By creating a more intuitive non-motorized environment with clear wayfinding, consistent lighting, and accessible crossings, the Project ensures that families can navigate the corridor confidently.

## Criterion #4: Mobility and Community Connectivity

The Project Area is located within Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP), where residents face limited mobility options and higher transportation burdens. As a primary project purpose, the Project addresses these challenges by removing long-standing physical barriers and providing safer motorized and non-motorized facilities in Muskogee.

### Improve Vehicular Roadway Capacity

The Project improves vehicular roadway capacity along US-69 by addressing longstanding bottlenecks, correcting geometric constraints, and expanding the corridor’s ability to carry traffic safely and efficiently.

**Component A** widens inside shoulders to four feet while preserving ten-foot outside shoulders, creating more operational space for emergency maneuvers and unplanned stops. **Component B** removes the capacity-limiting sag vertical curve at the Centennial Trail

Pedestrian Bridge, where trucks currently decelerate into the dip and queue at the downstream signal. Reconstructing the bridge and raising the roadway eliminates this bottleneck. **Component C** adds new capacity by reconstructing the corridor into a six-lane section with a TWLTL, reducing conflict points at the intersections and providing smoother traffic flow through a segment that currently experiences congestion. These improvements eliminate a prominent bottleneck, add through-lane capacity, improve turning movements, and create a more reliable and higher-performing roadway that better accommodates current and projected traffic volumes.

*“Four or five o’clock it is bad... it makes it hectic... the big semis and all the traffic from out of state.”*

Muskogee resident audio interview on US-69

Source: [KJRH–2 News Oklahoma, Jan 2025](#)

### Include Transportation Features that Increase Accessibility for Non-Motorized Travelers in Underserved Communities

Both Census Tracts (1 and 10) that make up the Project area are [confirmed Areas of Persistent Poverty](#). [Census data](#) shows that in Census Tract 1, 10 percent of residents lack access to a vehicle, and in Census Tract 10 the

Figure 6: Pedestrian on US-69 Roadway in Muskogee



Source: [Google Maps](#), accessed January 2026

amount rises to 12 percent, compared to approximately eight percent of residents nationally and six percent of residents statewide. This underscores the need for dedicated non-motorized transportation facilities in the area.

Today, US-69 functions as a high-speed barrier between residential neighborhoods on the east side of Muskogee and commercial, retail, and community destinations on the west. Without sidewalks or crosswalks, travelers must walk on shoulders and cross multiple lanes of traffic, creating hazardous conditions, as shown in **Figure 6** and the cover page. The reconstruction of the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge provides a safe, grade-separated crossing that allows people to reach destinations without a vehicle. The additional construction of sidewalks, wider inside/outside shoulders, pedestrian markings and signals at intersections, and street lighting provides options for non-motorized travelers to safely access community resources such as ones shown in **Figure 5**.

**Enhance Accessibility of the Transportation System for Families and Americans with Disabilities Using Universal Design**

The new 12-foot width of the bridge meets ADA standards and applies the [seven principles of Universal Design](#) to create a comfortable, predictable facility suitable for all ages and abilities. Aside from the bridge, the absence of crossings at intersections forces travelers onto shoulders or uneven terrain creating significant safety risks. With new sidewalks, accessible curb ramps, and marked crosswalks, people of various abilities will be able to safely reach the Muskogee trail network, downtown Muskogee, and a variety of community resources.

**Figure 7: Intersection of US-69 and Border Avenue with No Pedestrian Infrastructure**

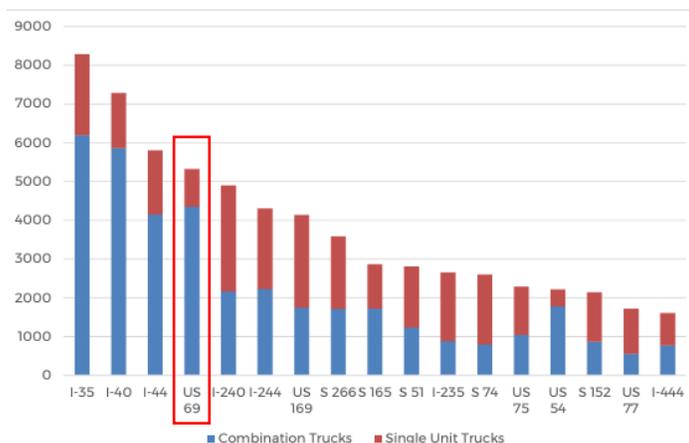


Source: [Google Maps](#), accessed January 2026

**Criterion #5: Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity**

Promoting economic growth and improving the efficiency of goods movement are primary purposes of the Project. The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

**Figure 8: Major Oklahoma Truck Traffic Highways**



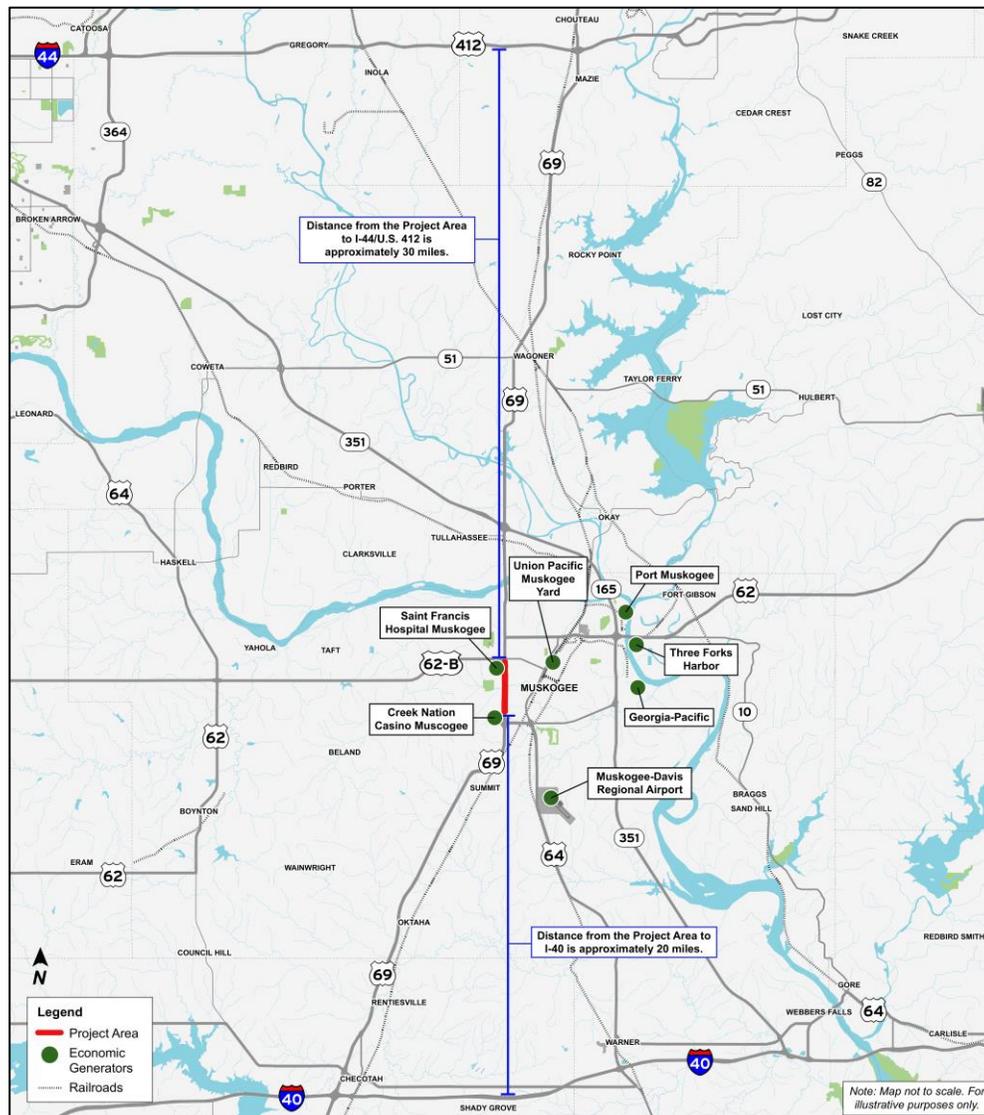
Source: [ODOT Freight Transportation Plan](#), p. 2-7

### Improve Intermodal and Multimodal Freight Mobility

The Project is located along US-69, which has the **fourth highest volume of truck traffic in the state** (see **Figure 8**).

US-69 is a major north-south corridor through the United States, is on the National Highway System (NHS) and has multiple segments listed in the Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET). Throughout the Project Area trucks make up over one quarter of the vehicles traveling along US-69. The corridor experiences heavy commodity truck flows that typically carry 15 to 34 million tons of grain, coal, aggregate, lumber, and petroleum ([ODOT Freight Transportation Plan](#), p. 2-10) through Muskogee. This corridor also supports highways such as US-62B north of the Project Area, which is dependent on US-69 through Muskogee as the north-south connection to [Port Muskogee](#) and [Three Forks Harbor](#), both six miles from the Project Area, as shown in **Figure 9**.

**Figure 9: Economic Generators**



Source: ODOT

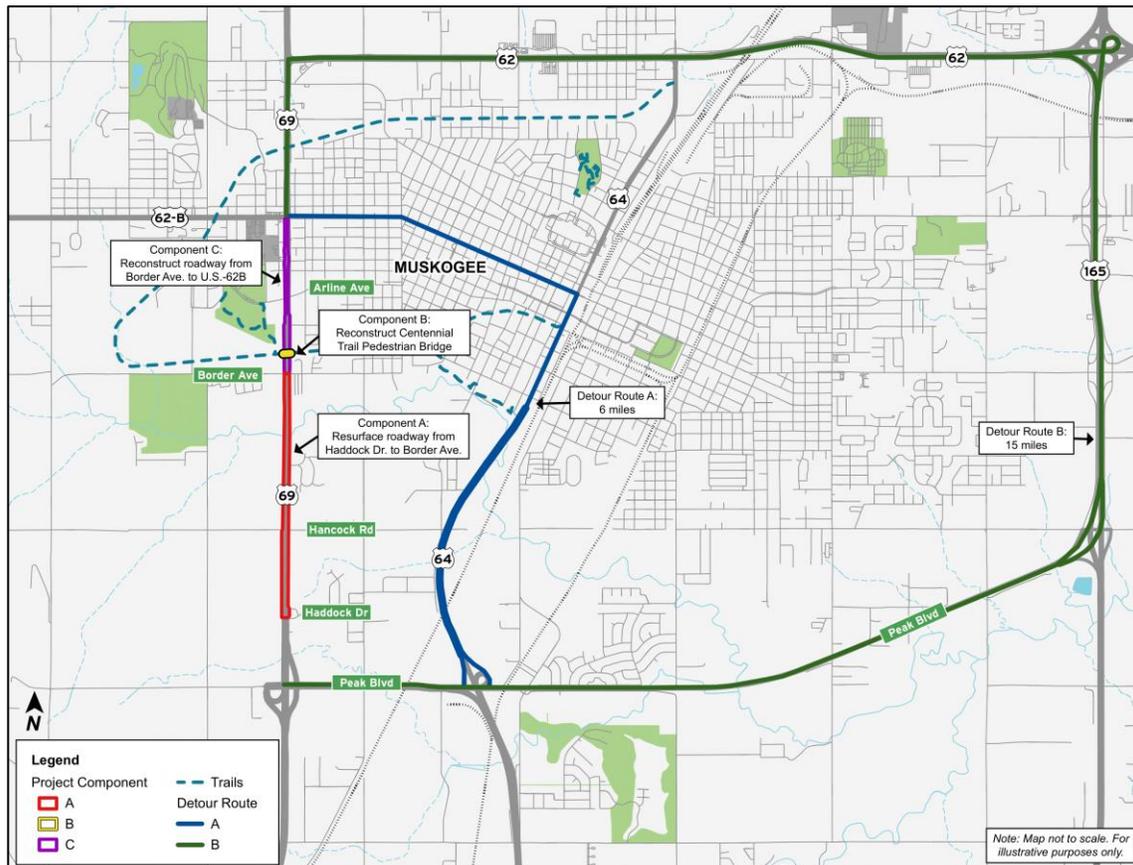
Port Muskogee is an economic driver of the region, including full-time staff devoted to ensuring businesses located at the Port Muskogee facilities and industry within the City and County of Muskogee have the resources to grow and thrive. The Port is home to nearly [85 industries](#) which employ more than 6,000 people with more than \$300 million in annual payroll.

*Bottleneck Preventing Direct Access to Port Muskogee and Other Facilities*

In 2025, approximately 25,000 vehicles per day drove on to Project corridor with an average daily truck traffic of [26 percent](#). By 2045, daily traffic is anticipated to increase to 33,600 vehicles. Oversized trucks are required to detour off US-69 through Muskogee on the routes, shown in **Figure 10**, due to the insufficient clearance at the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge (Component B). These trucks are restricted to authorized detour routes defined in the [Muskogee’s Code of Ordinances](#) which prohibits trucks from using any city streets that are not designated as truck routes. As a result, oversized loads are legally required to follow the approved truck routes set in Sec. 78-447 in the Code of Ordinances. Until the vertical clearance deficiency is corrected, oversized and overweight trucks will have to continue detouring off US-69 through Muskogee.

Detour A is approximately six miles in length, utilizing US-64 and goes directly through downtown Muskogee. Detour B is approximately 15 miles in length, utilizing US-62 and US-165. This detour avoids downtown Muskogee but is significantly longer, increasing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and operating costs. as discussed in the **Criterion #1: Safety**. By addressing the

**Figure 10: Oversized Truck Detour Routes**



Source: ODOT

sag vertical clearance and replacing the pedestrian bridge, oversized trucks will be able to continue on US-69, eliminating the need to detour and creating travel time and cost savings for freight shippers.

Enhanced mobility from allowing oversized trucks to continue on US-69 monetizes benefits in the form of travel time savings, and operational cost savings **will result in a total discounted savings of \$38.8 million for the Project**. This equates to an overall annual program savings of \$1.9 million per year (see **BCA Narrative**).

### Promote Economic Growth

The City of Muskogee and Port Muskogee have significantly invested in new developments. In November 2025, [Google](#) announced plans for two new data center campuses in Muskogee County, one four miles south of the Project along US-69. A new [Stardust Power](#) battery-grade lithium refinery is under construction at Port Muskogee, joining the active [Polaris Technologies, Inc.](#) and [Core Scientific, Inc.](#) data centers. The Core Scientific Inc. data center brought more than \$4 billion in capital investment to the site and approximately \$182 million to the local economy, supporting 150 jobs and average salaries exceeding \$65,000. US-69 is the primary freight and workforce corridor linking these developments to regional interstates, US-62B, and the Port’s intermodal facilities.

The Project’s enhancements will support the City of Muskogee’s commitment to large-scale industrial growth. By supporting efficient freight movement and improving access to the Port, the Project strengthens the competitiveness of Muskogee’s logistics and manufacturing sectors. Improved corridor reliability reduces transportation costs for existing employers, enhances market attractiveness for new businesses, and expands the labor shed by enabling workers to reach job centers more safely and predictably. Collectively, these improvements help solidify Muskogee as a destination for industrial expansion, high-tech investment, and long-term economic vitality.

## Criterion #6: State of Good Repair

Bringing the US-69 corridor into a state of good repair is a primary Project purpose. The following subsections document existing and projected operational vulnerabilities and demonstrate how the Project restores reliable performance to facilities that are currently overburdened or operating beyond their intended function.

### Restore and Modernize the Existing Core Infrastructure

The new bridge will conform to modern design standards. The Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge was constructed in 1952, prior to the adoption of the [ODOT](#)

Figure 11: Existing Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge



Source: [Google Maps](#), accessed January 2026

[roadway design manual](#) which includes the requisite vertical clearance for pedestrian bridges, 17 feet nine inches. Currently, the pedestrian bridge has a clearance of 14 feet 10 inches and piers located within the clear zone in the median and off the shoulders, which pose fixed object impact hazards (**Figure 11**). The 74-year-old bridge will be replaced by raising the US-69 grade approximately five feet and constructing a new 12-foot-wide structure using prefabricated bridge elements and systems (PBES) which will then reconnect to the existing trail system.

ODOT understands the necessity to modernize the bridge and roadway as a means to minimize maintenance. ODOT expects to spend approximately \$88,000 per year on maintenance without the recommended Project improvements. However, if the Project is constructed, maintenance is expected to cost on average \$7,500 per year (ranging between \$5,000 to \$10,000) in the Build Scenario. This equates to an overall operations and maintenance savings of \$80,500 per year, equaling \$1,610,000 in undiscounted avoided costs (see **BCA**).

The corridor will be maintained in accordance with ODOT's maintenance schedule. ODOT maintains a detailed [Asset Preservation Plan](#) for existing infrastructure and future transportation improvements within each county. These plans begin with ODOT staff identifying needs and priorities based on pavement and bridge conditions and ensure that the plans for maintenance are fiscally constrained and balanced across districts. Through this process, ODOT ensures the Asset Preservation Plan reflects a balanced investment in maintaining the transportation system.

### **Address Current or Projected Transportation System Vulnerabilities**

As discussed in **Criterion #2: Environmental Sustainability**, the corridor is susceptible to disruptive failures associated with the existing roadway sag vertical curve and low bridge vertical clearance. The corridor's sag vertical curve creates recurring truck bottlenecks causing variations of speed and potential collisions. By raising the grade of the road and increasing the low bridge vertical clearance, oversized trucks will be able to continue along US-69 reducing the burden on other routes and restoring the integrity of the asset. In addition to improving vehicular infrastructure, the Project adds wider shoulders, sidewalks, ADA-compliant crossings, and the new Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge which will all provide safe accommodations for non-motorized travelers along and across the corridor. The bridge will provide a 12-foot wide, universally accessible multi-use path allowing non-motorized travelers to safely cross US-69 and connect to the Muskogee trail system. By addressing these vulnerabilities now, the Project will improved access for both non-motorized and motorized travelers using and moving under the bridge, resulting in safer and more efficient corridor operations.

The existing infrastructure has been strained by increasing load capacities occurring on the roadway, currently [26 percent](#) of vehicles that travel in the corridor are considered medium or heavy trucks. US-69 through Muskogee is a heavily utilized freight corridor, connecting US-69 to [Port Muskogee](#), the [McAlester Army Ammunition Plant](#) (MCAAP), and other industrial sites. The strain these heavy vehicles put on the deteriorating infrastructure causes it to fail quicker than similar facilities and can damage passenger vehicles on the roadway, causing increased stress on the movement of people and goods in this corridor.

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## Criterion #7: Partnership and Collaboration

The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

### Engage Residents and Community Based Organizations

ODOT and partners have engaged residents and community organizations across the [Project lifecycle](#), beginning with development of the [Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan \(STIP\)](#), adopted January 2026. The STIP process included ODOT, FHWA, Tribal Governments, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and used public meetings, advisory groups, and multilingual materials to ensure broad participation.

The Project is supported by a broad coalition of private sector and institutional partners, including the Muskogee Chamber of Commerce, Northeastern State University, Oklahoma Trucking Association, and Oklahoma Bicycle Society, alongside local businesses. These partners have provided letters of support, participated in stakeholder engagement meetings, and are engaged in strengthening safety, freight, mobility, non-motorized travelers access, and community connectivity.

For this Project, ODOT conducted virtual stakeholder engagement. A [virtual Stakeholder meeting](#) was held on November 2, 2020 and a [virtual open house](#) from December 18, 2020 to January 18, 2021, with meeting notices sent to state and local elected officials, Muskogee County Commissioners, Muskogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief Floyd, City of Muskogee leadership, and key city staff including the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Public Works Director. Meeting discussion focused on six- vs. seven-lane options, safety and crash performance, and an interest in an economic comparison between the options. Stakeholders expressed overall support.

During construction, ODOT will provide ongoing public updates via social media and the [Construction Updates website](#) to maintain transparency and access.

### Coordination with Other Projects – Economic Development

The Project is programmed in the [2026-2029 STIP](#) and coordinated with FHWA, Tribal Governments, and MPOs to ensure alignment with regional transportation, land use, and economic development priorities. Locally, ODOT collaborates with the City of Muskogee, Muskogee Parks & Recreation, and the Eastern Oklahoma Development District to support safety, multimodal access, recreation connectivity, and corridor revitalization to reinforce the City's broader economic growth strategy. This coordination is especially important given the major industrial and technology investments underway at Port Muskogee including lithium refining, data center development, and multibillion-dollar technology campuses, which all depend on reliable connection to US-69 for workforce access and freight mobility (see **Merit Criteria #5**). By ensuring the corridor improvements integrate seamlessly with these complementary projects, ODOT and local partners are aligning infrastructure upgrades with Muskogee's emergence as a regional logistics and technology hub, strengthening long term competitiveness and economic resilience.

### Workforce Development Partnership

The State of Oklahoma currently has [two apprenticeship pathways](#): U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and Oklahoma CareerTech Apprenticeship (CTA), which are pivotal to enhancing workforce skills, particularly in key sectors such as

transportation. ODOT is exploring leveraging the state’s workforce development initiatives to support the Project’s construction phase. This includes evaluating opportunities to connect contractors and subcontractors with established apprenticeship pathways that can provide hands-on training, skill advancement, and access to good-paying jobs for local workers.

These apprenticeship programs do not include any DEI-related preferences or union labor preferences. As construction advances, ODOT will work with contractors to identify appropriate apprenticeship programs, encourage participation, and help generate local economic growth through job creation tied to infrastructure improvement. Through this approach, the Project strengthens Oklahoma’s long-term transportation workforce pipeline by utilizing high-quality apprenticeship programs already vetted by the DOL.

## Criterion #8: Innovation

The following subsections document the innovative approaches and resulting benefits.

### Innovative Project Delivery

A delivery innovation that will be implemented on this Project is the use of [Accelerated Bridge Construction \(ABC\)](#) through [Prefabricated Bridge Elements and Systems \(PBES\)](#) on the Centennial Trail Pedestrian Bridge. The prefabricated elements are constructed at a nearby location away from the construction site, then transported to the site and placed into their final position. PBES improve project delivery timelines, site constructability, bridge quality, and durability while minimizing traffic impacts during construction.

Figure 12: Example of PBES Installation



Source: [Iowa Department of Transportation](#)

### Innovative Financing

The Project will use funding from the [Rural Economic Reliability and Optimization \(RETRO\) funds](#), as established by House Bill 2079 in 2021. RETRO is the single highest appropriation that goes towards rural transportation in Oklahoma state history. RETRO funds are administered by ODOT and are used to assist in the prioritization of construction, repair, and maintenance of state highways in rural areas where robust economic development has resulted in traffic safety and circulation difficulties. “Robust economic development” is defined as conditions of the highways in counties with a population of less than 75,000 where traffic volumes have increase to become so impaired or hazardous to constitute a threat to the safety of people traveling over or upon the highway. RETRO funding cannot be used for more than 50 percent of the total Project cost.

The ODOT’s [2026 to 2033 Eight-Year Construction Work Plan](#) contained over \$8.6 billion worth of crucial transportation improvement projects. In addition to the Work Plan, the Oklahoma state legislature committed \$200 million to the RETRO fund to accelerate construction, repair, and

maintenance of the Eight-Year Construction Work Plan projects in qualifying rural areas. The US-69 Project has been approved for \$4,000,000 of RETRO funds in 2024 and is a candidate for funds in later years ([State Fiscal Year 2024 RETRO Projects](#), pdf p. 10).

### **Innovative Technologies**

During construction, ODOT will use [Intelligent Transportation Systems](#) to ensure work zones on US-69 are safe and to minimize delays for travelers. Smart Work Zones are an [Every Day Counts 3](#) (EDC-3) innovation and use temporary cameras, sensors, and message signs to monitor travel speeds and congestion, support incident management, enhance the safety of travelers and construction workers, and maintain business and resident access.

As discussed in **Criterion #7**, ODOT engaged residents through a virtual stakeholder meeting and a virtual open house in January of 2021. [Virtual public involvement](#), an [EDC-5](#) innovation, offers a convenient, efficient, and low-cost method for informing the public, encouraging participation, and receiving input.