



US-69 Rural Safety & Economic Vitality Project in Atoka County

BUILD Grant 2026

Oklahoma Department of Transportation

Merit Criteria

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Merit Criteria 1: Safety

Safety is a primary purpose of the US-69 Rural Safety and Economic Vitality Project in Atoka County (Project). The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

Protect Motorized and Non-Motorized Travelers from Safety Risks

The Project directly addresses documented safety risks for both motorized and non-motorized travelers along the US-69 corridor. Between 2017 and 2021, 111 crashes occurred within the Project Area, including 19 injury crashes. Nearly 50 percent of all collisions were rear end crashes, and approximately 30 percent occurred at the US-69 and Boggy Depot Road intersection, showing clear evidence of location-specific geometric and operational deficiencies. Although no fatalities occurred when the most recent crash data was collected, [a fatal crash was recorded in Tushka](#) in 2025 (Figure 1), highlighting the ongoing need for safety improvements. A detailed breakdown of crash types and frequencies is provided in Table 1.

Figure 1: News Clipping from Fatal Crash in Project Area, South of Boggy Depot Road
2 North Texas teens killed, 1 injured in five-car crash in Oklahoma, officials say

Two North Texas teens were killed and a 16-year-old was injured in a multi-car crash, according to Oklahoma Highway Patrol.



Source: [WFAA](#), 2025

Table 1: Total Crashes

Collision Type	Property Damage Only	Injury	Total
Rear End	46	9	55
Angle Turning	14	2	16
Sideswipe – Same	11	1	12
Sideswipe – Opp.	4	0	4
Right Angle	5	2	7
Other	4	3	7
Fixed Object	5	1	6
Head On	1	1	2
Overturn	2	0	2
Total	92	19	111

Source: [ODOT Traffic and Safety Office](#), 2026

Note: 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.

The three Project elements, described in the **Project Description**, directly mitigate the dominant crash patterns present today. The first element widens US-69 from a four-lane undivided roadway

to a five-lane section with a 16-foot two-way left-turn lane (TWLTL). This new configuration is a well-documented countermeasure for reducing rear end and turning collisions, particularly where left-turning vehicles currently stop in the inside through lane. According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), dedicated left turn lanes [reduce crashes by 28 to 48 percent](#).

The second element reconstructs the skewed US-69/Boggy Depot Road intersection (see **Figure 2**). The existing 60-degree skew contributes to angle crashes as they require travelers to cross longer distances when crossing the intersection and create sight obstructions, including possible obstructions from the traveler's vehicle. [FHWA research](#) shows angle crashes are most common at skewed angles around 65 degrees. Realigning the intersection to a 90-degree configuration improves sight distance and reduces the distance and time required for vehicles to cross opposing lanes, which in turn lowers the number and severity of conflict points. Correcting the skew therefore enhances both safety and overall intersection operations by making turning and crossing maneuvers quicker and more predictable.

Figure 2: Skewed Intersection at Boggy Depot Road



Source: [Esri](#), 2025

Figure 3: Boggy Depot Road Intersection



Source: [Google Maps](#), 2026

The third element addresses critical non-motorized traveler safety needs, particularly near the [Tushka K-12 School](#). Currently, the corridor has no sidewalks, no outside shoulders, no crosswalks, and minimal working lighting, creating a physical and safety barrier for students using non-motorized travel modes to school, as shown in **Figure 3**. The Project adds sidewalks on both sides of US-69, LED lighting, a designated school crossing, and pedestrian signal push buttons at

the Boggy Depot Road intersection. The [FHWA](#) identifies sidewalk installation as a proven safety countermeasure, typically reducing pedestrian crashes by 65 to 89 percent.

Together, these elements form a comprehensive safety strategy that directly reduces the corridor's most frequent and severe crash types and significantly improves protection for non-motorized travelers. The Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) applies crash modification factors for each improvement and estimates an overall crash reduction of 7.63 total crashes per year (see **BCA Narrative**).

“Our school campus is divided by US-69, which makes transportation of students, to and from school, extremely unsafe on a daily basis.”

Matt Simpson, Superintendent of Tushka Public Schools (see Letters of Support)

Incorporate Safety Improvements Part of a Documented Safety Risk Mitigation Strategy

The Project incorporates multiple improvements consistent with documented, nationally recognized safety risk-mitigation strategies, including those in the [FHWA Highway Safety Manual](#), the [National Roadway Safety Strategy Plan](#), and [proven FHWA countermeasure guidance](#). These include:

- Adding a continuous TWLTL to reduce rear end and turning conflicts;
- Correcting skewed intersection geometry to reduce angle crashes;
- Installing sidewalks and lighting, addressing non-motorized traveler exposure risk;
- Adding a marked school crossing and pedestrian signals, consistent with [Safe Routes to School](#) best practices; and
- Improving sight distance and intersection visibility, reducing the probability and severity of conflicts.

These improvements together provide a corridor-wide safety benefit, addressing risks across all traveler groups.

Merit Criteria 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 nationally significant [Strategic Highway Network](#) (STRAHNET) corridor carrying approximately [23,000 average daily vehicles](#), with **trucks accounting for 56 percent** of total traffic (combines T [all commercial trucks] and T3 [semi-trailer trucks]). Reliable operation of this corridor is essential for freight movement, emergency response, and daily commuting. The Project improves the resilience of US-69 within the Project Area by directly addressing existing flash flooding problems and upgrading the roadway drainage system. Southeast Oklahoma is prone to intense rainfall, flash flooding, and [severe storms](#), and these improvements will enable the corridor to better withstand extreme weather events and natural disasters while maintaining safe and reliable service for all travelers.

Flash flooding along this stretch of US-69 has repeatedly compromised safety, most notably illustrated by a [recent crash in Tushka](#) in which a driver lost control after hydroplaning during a flash-flooding event. The incident demonstrated how quickly water can accumulate on the pavement when storm intensity overwhelms the limited number of functioning inlets, creating shallow but dangerous ponding that reduces tire traction and increases the risk of loss-of-control crashes.

“...the car hydroplaned into the median and southbound lanes....The vehicle was hit, causing a chain reaction crash.”

Eye witness account of roadway resiliency issues. Source: WFAA, 2025

Existing drainage conditions along this stretch of roadway are inadequate to handle the volume of runoff generated during severe storms, with only two or three inlets functioning effectively during heavy rainfall events. During storm events, this limited drainage capacity allows water to collect across travel lanes, contributing to hydroplaning, reduced visibility, and declining pavement performance over time.

The Project directly addresses these risks by installing 111 new drainage inlets and modernizing the roadway’s stormwater system. These upgrades combined with roadway widening, resurfacing, and targeted full-depth reconstruction will significantly improve how quickly water is captured and conveyed away from the travel lanes during high-intensity storms. By reducing surface water buildup, the improved drainage will substantially lower hydroplaning risk, protect pavement from water-related deterioration, and enhance the corridor’s ability to remain safe and operational during extreme weather events. Together, these measures strengthen the overall resilience of US-69 and ensure safer, more reliable travel for all travelers.

Figure 4: Deteriorated Culvert on US-69



Source: ODOT, 2020

Merit Criteria 3: Quality of Life

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

Improve Travel Experience for Families

The Project significantly enhances the daily travel experience for families who use the US-69 corridor, particularly those traveling to and from the Tushka K-12 School, whose campus is located on both sides of US-69. Reconstructing the US-69 and Boggy Depot Road intersection creates a safer and more predictable environment for parents transporting children, school buses navigating

turning movements, and caregivers walking with strollers. Realigning the skewed intersection improves visibility and reduces unexpected conflict points, which helps family members navigate the corridor with less stress and risk.

Figure 5: Tushka K-12 School



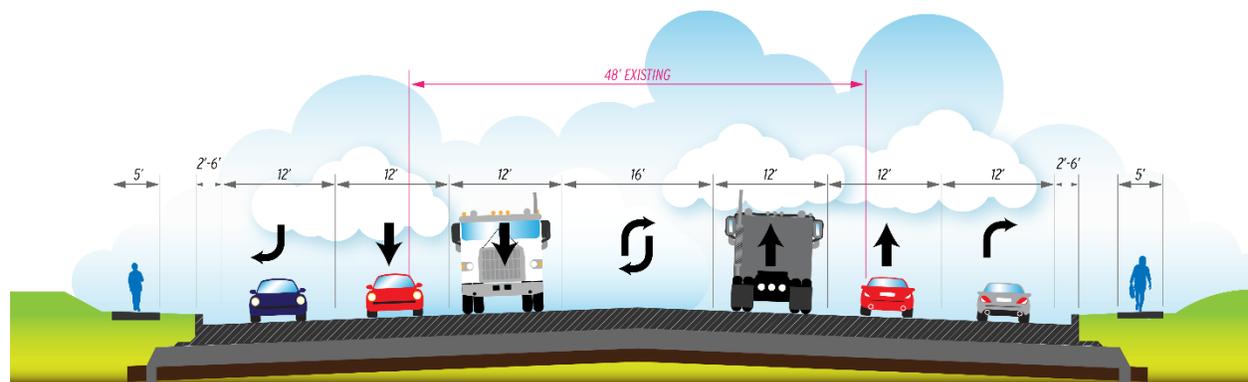
Source: [Google Maps](#), 2026

In addition, the Project introduces the corridor’s first pedestrian-activated signalized crossing at the Boggy Depot Road intersection. This crossing directly serves as a school access point and allows families and children to cross US-69 safely using the push-button system. FHWA identifies marked pedestrian crossings with signals as a [proven safety countermeasure](#), reducing pedestrian crashes by up to 40 percent. The Project also provides sidewalks throughout the corridor, giving families the option to walk to school, community buildings, and places of worship without relying solely on a vehicle. These sidewalks will connect to future sidewalk connections in the town of Tushka.

“We feel this project will be paramount for student and community safety.”
 Matt Simpson, Superintendent of Tushka Public Schools

New sidewalks also improve comfort and convenience for families walking with strollers, small children, or mobility devices. The sidewalk network is complemented by LED lighting, which improves nighttime visibility and increases safety for evening school events, community gatherings, and everyday travel.

Figure 6: Proposed Alignment at Boggy Depot Road and US-69



Source: ODOT

Improve Wayfinding and User Experience

The reconstructed intersection, improved lighting, and sidewalks all contribute to a more intuitive and predictable corridor. Enhanced visibility helps drivers better anticipate turning vehicles, pedestrian crossings, and approaching intersections. Families and caregivers benefit from the

improved predictability of operations, especially during school pickup and drop-off times when congestion and uncertainty can create safety issues. The dedicated pedestrian crossing with push-button activation and marked crossings serves as a wayfinding anchor within the corridor. The crossing visually communicates to motorized travelers that pedestrians, including schoolchildren, are present, improving driver awareness.

Merit Criteria 4: Mobility and Community Connectivity

Improving mobility and strengthening community connectivity is a primary Project purpose. The following subsections provide data and documentation to substantiate the benefits claimed.

Figure 7: Bottleneck at the Boggy Depot Road Intersection



Source: [Google Maps](#), 2026

Improve Vehicular Roadway Capacity

The Project enhances motorized mobility by converting the existing four-lane undivided section of US-69 to a five-lane facility with a continuous TWLTL. This improvement directly addresses one of the corridor's most persistent bottlenecks at Boggy Depot Road (see **Figure 7**), a skewed and constrained intersection where the lack of dedicated turn lanes forces turning vehicles to stop in through lanes, creating long traffic queues. This intersection regularly generates long queues,

particularly during peak periods, and prevents trucks from moving efficiently through Tushka. Crash data shows that nearly 50 percent of corridor crashes were rear end collisions, an indicator of operational bottlenecks caused by stopped turning vehicles in the

Figure 8: Motorized Traffic on US-69 through Tushka



Source: [Google Maps](#), 2026

through lane. By providing a center turn lane and removing these conflict points from the through lane, roadway capacity is increased, improving travel times for commuters and freight movement.

Remove Physical Barriers and Reconnect Communities

US-69 currently acts as a barrier within the community because it lacks sidewalks and safe crossings. Students at the Tushka K-12 School must cross US-69 to reach the [school's gymnasium](#), and without dedicated pedestrian facilities this crossing presents a significant safety concern. Residents on either side of the highway have no safe way to cross the corridor or walk along it, forcing them to depend on vehicle travel or unsafe informal crossings. The Project removes this barrier by installing sidewalks on both sides of the corridor, adding a protected school crossing, and improving intersection geometry. Working in tandem with a complementary county project, these improvements will create continuous sidewalk connections between the school, the gymnasium, and surrounding community areas. Together, the projects restore safe, accessible routes for non-motorized travel and connect users to key amenities such as the Tushka K-12 School, places of worship, local businesses, and the Tushka Community Building.

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

The Project applies [Universal Design principles](#) to ensure the corridor is accessible, intuitive, and safe for all travelers, including individuals with disabilities, young children, elderly travelers, and caregivers managing strollers or mobility devices. The seven Universal Design principles are reflected in the Project's ADA-compliant sidewalks and accessibly curb ramps, which support comfortable travel regardless of ability, and in the corridor's first pedestrian-activated signalized crossing at the Boggy Depot Road intersection, which uses intuitive features to enhance safety for all travelers. The improvements reduce physical effort, improve predictability, and minimize hazards which are all key aspects of Universal Design that make it easier for families to walk to school, access the Tushka Community Building, and nearby destinations.

Merit Criteria 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.

US-69 through Tushka is among the top five percent rural bottlenecks in Oklahoma (ODOT Freight Transportation Plan, p. 5-5)

Address a Freight Bottleneck

US-69 through Tushka forms a key bottleneck on one of Oklahoma's most important north-south freight corridors, a route the [Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan](#) highlights as essential to statewide and national freight mobility due to its high truck volumes and heavy through freight dependence. Over [half of the traffic](#) within this specific project area are commercial trucks, semi-trucks, or oversize loads. The corridor carries heavy commodity truck flows that typically include 35 to 54.99 million tons of grain, coal, aggregate, lumber, and petroleum, underscoring the high value of reliable, delay-free operations ([ODOT Freight Transportation Plan](#), p. 2-10). This corridor on US-69 is identified by among **the top five percent rural bottleneck locations in the state of**

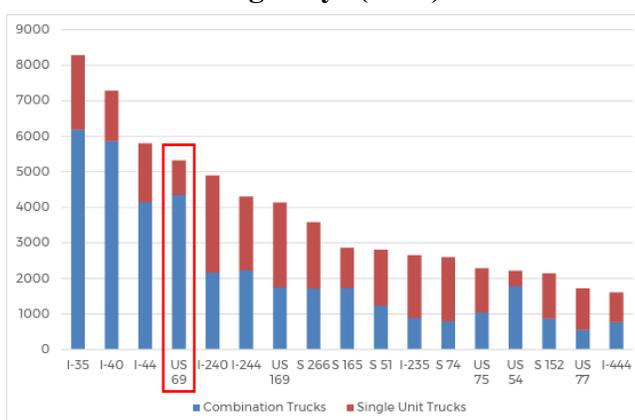
Oklahoma (p. 5-5). With no alternative southbound freight route from McAlester, crashes, drainage failures, poor pavement, or geometric constraints in Tushka can trigger systemwide delays and supply-chain disruptions because detour options are limited.

A major contributor to the bottleneck is the constrained roadway geometry through Tushka, where the absence of TWLTL forces left turning vehicles to stop directly in the through lanes. Combined with a key intersection lacking dedicated turn lanes, these conditions generate queues, truck idling, and delay that impede freight throughout, increase operating costs, elevate emissions, and reduce reliability. Adding appropriate turning accommodations and addressing corridor-wide geometric deficiencies relieves the Tushka bottleneck and improves travel time, safety, and reliability, consistent with the bottleneck definitions and performance priorities in the Oklahoma Freight Plan.

Promote Economic Growth

US-69 is one of Oklahoma’s most important freight corridors, designated as a Critical Rural Freight Corridor (CRFC) because it carries high truck volumes and connects to major interstates, ports, rail hubs, and key agricultural and industrial production areas. It is on the National Highway System (NHS) and [Strategic Highway Network](#) (STRAHNET) and carries the fourth-highest truck traffic volume in the state (see **Figure 9**). More than 12,800 trucks travel on the corridor each day, comprising approximately **56 percent of average daily traffic**. In

Figure 9: Major Oklahoma Truck Traffic Highways (2021)



Source: [ODOT Freight Transportation Plan, 2023](#)

Oklahoma, CRFC designation is limited to 160 rural miles and is reserved for corridors with high freight volumes that connect interstates and ports or serve energy and agricultural production areas. US-69 meets these criteria by carrying substantial truck freight, connecting rail hubs, diverting freight outside major metropolitan areas, and linking several industrial and agricultural hubs. By improving deteriorating infrastructure and enhancing safety and mobility along this segment, the Project strengthens a vital rural freight link that supports regional and national goods movement while improving travel efficiency for all travelers. As previously discussed, this corridor experiences a significant bottleneck, which constrains the efficient flow of goods and limits the effectiveness of freight operations throughout the system. As new industrial and logistical developments continue to emerge both upstream and downstream, their success depends heavily on a reliable, unconstrained corridor to move freight.

Oklahoma moves around [433 million tons of freight](#) annually by truck, rail, water, air, and pipeline. By 2050, Oklahoma freight movement into, out of, or within the state is projected to increase to 634.2 million tons with through-freight representing a major share of truck traffic on north-south corridors like US-69. Improving the Tushka segment addresses key freight performance issues identified by the State, like pavement condition, drainage failures, geometric constraints, and weather-related disruptions. These issues can impose high costs on shippers as identified in the [Oklahoma Freight Plan’s](#) bottleneck definition.

Recent and ongoing economic development activity along the US-69 corridor further underscores the importance of strengthening this segment to support regional industry growth. In Durant, approximately 25 miles south of the Project, several major employers anchor the regional economy, including [Indian Nation Wholesale Distribution](#), which has grown its Durant operation into the 19th-largest distributor in the nation and serves more than 2,500 accounts across multiple sectors. Cardinal Glass FG continues to

Figure 10: Truck Traffic on US-69



Source: Google Maps, 2026

expand its advanced float-glass manufacturing capabilities following a major facility upgrade that increased production quality and sustainability. [BrucePac's](#) \$20-million protein processing facility supports national retail and food-service markets, while CMC Metals' high-tech micro-mill produces steel products for fast-growing regional construction demand. Additionally, new energy-sector investment is emerging along the corridor, including [Green Li-ion's](#) first commercial-scale lithium-ion battery recycling plant in Oklahoma, bringing next-generation clean-energy manufacturing to the region. Together, these developments demonstrate rising freight and workforce activity along US-69 and in the region, reinforcing the need for improved reliability, safety, and pavement performance to support continued economic growth.

Improve Intermodal and/or Multimodal Freight Mobility

Within the Project Area, US-69 runs parallel to a Missouri-Kansas-Texas Class I line, providing a strong multimodal connection. The Project enhances the corridor's performance within the regional multimodal network by improving safety, flow, and connectivity with nearby distribution routes. In addition, ODOT's [2024 Advanced Mobility Strategy](#) identifies US-69 as part of its broader advanced mobility strategy and a "corridor of the future" (p. 66-76). US-69, from Durant to McAlester, has been identified as an Airspace Operating and Testing Area, leveraging the economic impact that this corridor already has for the state and reinforcing the importance of upgrading the Tushka segment to support long-term freight efficiency, system reliability, and statewide economic competitiveness.

Promote Industries of National Interest, including the Defense Industrial Base

Although the Project is primarily a rural freight mobility and safety improvement, it also meaningfully advances national economic competitiveness by strengthening access to one of the most important defense-industrial facilities in the United States. The [McAlester Army Ammunition Plant](#) (MCAAP), located only 50 miles north of the Project corridor, is the largest ammunition storage facility in the nation and a critical installation under the U.S. Army's Joint Munitions Command. MCAAP produces, stores, renovates, and distributes munitions that support global

military operations, and its mission depends on reliable, high-capacity links to the National Highway System.

US-69 serves as MCAAP’s primary north–south logistics corridor, used daily by military flatbeds hauling munitions, parts, and equipment to interstate routes and national distribution hubs. The Oklahoma Freight Plan identifies US-69 as a strategic freight asset due to its high truck volumes, intermodal connectivity, and role in serving major industrial and agricultural production areas. Ensuring that the corridor remains reliable and free of bottlenecks is essential to preventing disruptions in the defense supply chain and avoiding costly detours that can impede the movement of sensitive or oversized military freight. MCAAP’s operations rely on consistent access to this corridor for both routine and surge-capacity movements, including rapid deployment scenarios requiring uninterrupted freight flows. Improvements to the Tushka segment therefore directly support the modernization, resilience, and efficiency of the defense industrial base.

In strengthening the US-69 corridor, the Project aligns with federal priorities to protect and reinforce defense-critical infrastructure, promote the resiliency of domestic industrial capabilities, and support the reshoring and modernization of strategic sectors essential to national security.

Merit Criteria 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 Existing Core Infrastructure Assets That Have Met Their Useful Life

The pavement and shoulder conditions along this segment of US-69 have [consistently been rated in “fair” or “poor” condition in ODOT’s pavement management system](#). Conditions continue trending downward, with visible cracking, rutting, and patching that indicate structural fatigue, as shown in **Figure 11**. Due to repeated short-term maintenance, the roadway now contains approximately **18 inches of asphalt overlay**, an indicator that the pavement has exceeded its useful life and no longer responds effectively to resurfacing alone. This level of accumulated overlay is typical of corridors that require full-depth rehabilitation rather than continued temporary patching. The corridor’s unusually high percentage of trucks ([56 percent](#) of

Figure 11: Poor Pavement Condition on US-69



Source: ODOT, 2020

average daily traffic) further accelerates pavement deterioration, as freight vehicles impose exponentially greater loading stresses than passenger vehicles, causing the pavement structure to reach failure thresholds faster than comparable roadways with lower truck volumes.

Pavement conditions at the US-69 and Boggy Depot Road intersection are especially degraded due to constant stop-and-go movement from heavy trucks, which apply high loading pressures that accelerate rutting and surface failures. Without modernization, ODOT will be required to continue frequent spot repairs, creating recurring disruptions for travelers and compounding long-term costs.

In addition to pavement deterioration, multiple culverts and stormwater infrastructure within the Project area are approaching the end of their service lives. Observed corrosion, joint separation, and inadequate hydraulic capacity contribute to roadway edge failures and shoulder erosion. Modernizing these assets ensures the roadway remains structurally sound, reduces stormwater-related pavement damage, and restores reliable drainage functions.

Reduce Construction and Maintenance Burdens

ODOT performs recurring pavement patching, striping repairs, signal maintenance, and stormwater system clearing along the corridor. Under the Baseline scenario, these activities are expected to cost approximately \$488,095 per year, reflecting the high maintenance needs of deteriorating pavement and aging drainage infrastructure. With the Project, ODOT anticipates reducing annual maintenance requirements to \$95,238 per year, a reduction of \$392,857 annually, equaling **\$7.8 million** in avoided costs over the analysis period. These values are documented in the BCA and represent lower spending on patching, overlays, striping applications, and emergency repairs (see **BCA Workbook and Memo**).

The Project uses efficient, well-integrated design to minimize future maintenance burdens. Full-depth reconstruction in failing segments, replacement of structurally compromised drainage components, and upgrading traffic control elements all reduce the frequency of repairs and improve long-term asset performance. Because roadway widening and intersection realignment occur primarily within existing right-of-way (ROW), long-term costs associated with new infrastructure needs are minimal.

Address Current or Projected Transportation System Vulnerabilities

This corridor faces increasing pressure from both traffic growth and truck activity. Daily traffic is expected to increase from 23,000 in 2025 to 26,600 by 2045 (see [Supporting Documents](#)). If truck percentages remain consistent, almost 15,000 trucks per day will use the corridor by 2045. Heavy trucks are a leading contributor to pavement distress due to large loads, and without reconstruction deterioration will continue to accelerate.

The corridor is also vulnerable to disruptive failures associated with deteriorating stormwater infrastructure. Deteriorated culverts increase the risk of flooding and shoulder failures which require costly emergency repairs and compromise traveler safety. By addressing these vulnerabilities now, the Project restores asset integrity, improves long-term resilience, and brings the corridor into a state of good repair so it can serve freight movement, school traffic, community access, and regional connectivity.

Merit Criteria 7: Partnership and Collaboration

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

Engage Residents and Community-Based Organizations

The Project represents an opportunity for partnership at the federal, state, local, and private levels. Besides the primary Project parties, there are businesses, elected officials, and community organizations that have expressed their [support](#) for the Project, including:

- Town of Tushka
- City of Atoka
- Southeastern Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SERTPO)
- Atoka County Board of Commissioners
- Southern Oklahoma Development Association (SODA)
- Tushka Public School
- Oklahoma Bicycle Society
- U.S Representative Josh Breecheen
- The State Chamber of Oklahoma
- U.S Senator Lankford
- U.S Senator Mullins

Through engagement with the local businesses and community, the Project design was refined to minimize impacts to property owners along the corridor. Letters of support can be found as part of the [submittal documents](#). The team will continue to engage with the community as the team approaches construction.

Partner With High-Quality Workforce Development Programs

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.

Merit Criteria 8: Innovation

The following subsections document the innovative approaches and resulting benefits.

Innovative Project Delivery

The Project benefits from ODOT's participation in a [Programmatic Agreement](#) between FHWA and ODOT for Processing Categorical Exclusions (CE), executed on October 28, 2024. The Agreement establishes procedures for expeditious and efficient approval of CE-level projects, such

as this project specifically, that do not involve significant environmental impacts. By setting clear responsibilities for FHWA and ODOT and allowing ODOT to prepare CE documentation that FHWA can process without procedural delays, the Agreement supports faster environmental approvals and greater predictability in project delivery. This predictable and accelerated CE process allows ODOT to integrate environmental compliance timelines directly into construction planning, reducing schedule risk and enabling earlier coordination of staging, ROW needs, and contractor mobilization.

ODOT further strengthens delivery through the use of digital as-builts, enhanced traffic control monitoring, and data-driven work zone safety evaluations. Weekly reviews of work-zone performance and traffic behavior enable real-time adjustments to lane shifts or warning devices, minimizing unexpected conflicts and supporting ODOT's commitment to adaptive, evidence-based construction management. This integrated approach demonstrates the Project's ability to incorporate innovative delivery practices that shorten timelines, reduce risk, and optimize construction impacts for a rural community with limited alternative routes.

Lastly, the project team is implementing a staged construction approach to maintain traffic operations and freight movement throughout the 2.5-mile corridor. Rather than relying on extended full closures, staged construction enables a coordinated work sequence that supports paving, widening, intersection realignment, and sidewalk installation while maintaining most roadway capacity. This reduces delays for the community and freight, limits detour requirements, and minimizes disruptions to school operations at the adjacent Tushka K-12 School.

Innovative Technologies

The Project will implement innovative traffic management features consistent with FHWA's [Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian](#) (STEP) initiative, an [Every Day Counts](#) (EDC)-5 innovation. Each of the EDC innovations pose various benefits. The Nighttime Visibility for Safety innovation suggests a 33 to 38 percent nighttime vehicle crash reduction while pedestrian involved crashes are expected to be reduced by 42 percent. At crosswalks, this innovation projects a 25 to 47 percent pedestrian and bicycle crash reduction depending on the crosswalk enhancements. Crosswalk visibility enhancements at the Boggy Depot Road and US-69 intersection include enhanced signing, pavement markings, and lighting which help drivers detect non-motorized travelers more easily, particularly at night. Continuous LED lighting will also be installed throughout the corridor to support FHWA's [Nighttime Visibility for Safety](#) initiative (EDC-7) which emphasizes lighting upgrades capable of reducing nighttime injury crashes by improving lighting at non-motorized traveler conflict points. These measures have been proven to reduce pedestrian-related crashes and improve safety for vulnerable users, enhancing operational safety and reducing the likelihood of severe crashes.

During construction, ODOT deploys [Intelligent Transportation Systems](#) to support [Smart Work Zones](#), an [EDC-3 innovation](#). These temporary systems such as cameras, sensors, and dynamic message signs monitor speeds, congestion, and queuing to support real-time incident management and protect both travelers and workers. FHWA notes that Smart Work Zone technologies minimize delays, improve safety, and maintain consistent access for businesses and residents during construction.

The Project also strengthens the environment for connected vehicle applications by deploying intelligent work-zone devices, including speed-feedback signs, queue-warning trailers, and

temporary dynamic message signs. These technologies mitigate safety risks in real time and create the foundation for future connected-vehicle warning systems that depend on accurate detection of changing roadway conditions. By reducing congestion and supporting safer movement for the 56 percent of trucks using this corridor, the Project promotes more reliable freight operations.

In addition, ODOT may use [Warm Mix Asphalt](#) (WMA), an FHWA-promoted innovation that lowers asphalt production temperature by 30 to 120 degrees, reducing fuel use by approximately 20 percent while improving working conditions and air quality at paving sites. Lower temperatures also slow asphalt cooling, extending the paving season and improving compaction efficiency. These benefits together create safer conditions for workers due to fewer fumes and less smoke exposure.

Innovative Financing

The Project does not employ TIFIA, RRIF, private activity bonds, congestion pricing, or demand-management strategies.

ODOT is evaluating the option to bundle the US-69 Tushka Project with a related improvement in Atoka to achieve efficiencies in financing and delivery. FHWA defines [project bundling](#) as using a single contract to deliver multiple projects, which can reduce design and construction costs, shorten delivery schedules, and create economies of scale. By aligning the financing and procurement for both US-69 segments, ODOT can attract more competitive bids and streamline permitting and administration. This approach allows federal BUILD funding to be leveraged more efficiently than if each project advanced independently.