

MAY 2019

Since the fall of 2018, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have been evaluating the benefits and impacts of needed improvement for the South Lawrence Trafficway. The process for the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) includes reviewing all initial concept alternatives for how it meets the project Purpose and Need Statement.

At the public meeting held in November 2018, the study team asked for input on the Purpose and Need Statement and what issues concerned the public.

The key areas of concern are:

- **Safety**
- **Traffic congestion**
- **Access, particularly at Farmer's Turnpike**
- **Tolling**

Purpose & Need

Overall, participants at the meeting expressed support for improvements to address safety and congestion concerns. The areas of concern are in line with the Purpose and Need of the project, which is:

- **Reduce congestion** and improve the traffic capacity to meet existing and future travel demands,
- **Enhance safety** to help address high crash locations within the study area,
- **Promote a multi-modal transportation system** by ensuring the project accommodates the needs of other transportation modes, and
- **Support local and regional growth** by providing and coordinating transportation connections to be consistent with planned and proposed community land use and development.

Alternative Evaluation Process

The process to develop a preferred alternative starts with reviewing a lot of information and determining the range of initial alternatives. Each of the alternatives are evaluated by how well they meet the Purpose and Need Statement. The alternatives that best meet the Purpose and Need will be carried forward for additional screening and evaluation.



The Initial Alternatives Considered

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- **No Action**—this alternative makes no capacity improvements beyond ongoing maintenance and what is planned for the area. As part of the required NEPA process, this alternative must be carried forward throughout the project as a baseline option.



- **Transportation Systems Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM)**—TSM uses technology strategies like coordinating signal timing or intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to manage the transportation system to improve capacity and traffic flow. TDM includes working with users to modify driver behaviors to benefit capacity by suggesting carpooling, flex hours or promoting transit use.



- **Multimodal**—this alternative includes reasonable measures to enhance crossing of the corridor for bicycles and pedestrians while also increasing the effectiveness for freight and transit options in the corridor.



- **Add Capacity-Expressway**—this alternative upgrades the existing two-lane undivided west section of SLT to a median divided expressway, which means existing interchanges would remain and the existing at-grade intersections would be improved, but remain in place.



- **Add Capacity Freeway**—this alternative upgrades the existing two-lane west section of the SLT to a median divided, fully access controlled freeway with either four or six lanes, depending on future needs. With the freeway alternative, all at-grade intersections would be improved to a grade separated interchange.



- **Add Capacity Tolled Highway**—this alternative is like the Freeway alternative; however, it includes the ability to collect tolls to fund construction and maintenance of the road.

Screening Criteria

The screening criteria used evaluated the alternatives for the Purpose and Need, environmental criteria and engineering criteria. The initial evaluation compared the alternatives to each other and to the No Action alternative with either No Achievement/Impact, Some Achievement/Impact, Moderate Achievement/Impact, Substantial Achievement/Impact or High Achievement/Impact. From the initial screening, the proposed alternatives that best meet the Purpose and Need are:

- No Action (this alternative must be carried forward as a baseline)
- Build—Add Capacity Freeway
- Build—Add Capacity Tolled Highway

Portions of the TSM/TDM and Multimodal components could be incorporated into any of the build options, but don't meet the Purpose and Need as stand-alone alternatives. These options make the most sense to carry forward, because:

- The No Action Alternative is a baseline and the NEPA process requires that it be considered against other alternatives.
- The Freeway Alternative does the most to improve safety and relieve congestion by adding additional lanes and by creating safer access opportunities through interchanges. It provides continuity with the east leg of K-10.
- The Tolled Highway Alternative is being carried forward for the same reasons as the Freeway Alternative plus consideration for the additional physical improvements associated with the Tolled Highway (i.e.; gantries)

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Corridor Access Considerations

As the SEIS moves forward, how and where access should be provided will be evaluated.



This map provides a representation of access modifications. Not to scale.

Next Steps for Evaluating the Alternatives

The project team will develop more detailed interchange concepts for the Build Alternatives and they will evaluate things like:

- How different interchange locations affect traffic patterns and how they impact the local street network or alternative routes.
- Alternative interchange configurations based on traffic demand and how each impacts congestion and safety.
- How tolling could divert traffic.
- Potential improvements to US 40 addressing changes to traffic patterns as access is modified with each of the alternatives.
- What impact tolling (and other funding options) have on underserved populations.
- Impacts of the alternatives on the natural and man-made environment (i.e.; noise, wetlands, farmland, residential and/or commercial buildings, etc.)
- How construction could be phased based on priority and available funding.

A viable funding source(s) must be identified as part of the SEIS process. If tolling is ruled out too early, the SEIS process would need to be repeated, wasting valuable time and effort.

Interim Improvements

North Junction (K-10/I-70)

- Light Pole for K-10/Farmer's Turnpike, Construction Fall 2019
- Pavement Markings and Rumble Strips, TBD

K-10/27th Street/Wakarusa

- Queue Backup Warning System, Operational May 2019
- Advanced Signal Warning System, Construction Spring 2020
- Interim Intersection Improvements Study, Report Complete Fall 2019

SLT Corridor (I-70 to East 23rd St Interchange)

- Three Dynamic Message Signs, Construction Spring 2020

Tolling

Recognizing limited State resources, one of the most important decisions of the Kansas Transportation Vision task force is to look to local units of government to help fund transportation improvement projects. KDOT will not actively pursue tolling on a project if the community does not want it. If a community is interested in exploring tolling, they need to contact KDOT and request that a feasibility study be done. Based on that study, along with the results of a public outreach process, the community and KDOT would discuss with the Kansas Turnpike Authority Board. Ultimately, the State Finance Council would decide if a project could be tolled. There is a separate informational handout to address the considerations related to the tolling legislation.

Upcoming Activities

As the project team refines the alternatives and develops access options and interchange concepts, there will be additional opportunities for input through an electronic survey and focus groups. We will also be providing project information at selected community events during the summer and fall.



To request a presentation or to provide project comments, please email

info@slt-ks.org

To learn more about the SEIS and its progress, please visit

www.slt-ks.org

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