

# Route 19 Bridges Environmental Assessment (Shannon County, MO) MoDOT Project Number: J9P3305



## Meeting Notes

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**Meeting Purpose:** Corridor Advisory Team (CAT) Meeting #1

**Date:** December 17, 2020, 4:00- 5:00 pm

**Attendees:**

Stacy Smith	Carr's Canoe Rental
Trent Courtney	South Central Council of Gov'ts
Jessica Gillespie	Echo Bluff State Park
Todd Hamilton	Timber Fire District
Dennis Purcell	First District Commissioner Dent County
Bill O'Donnell	Shannon County First Responders
Dr. Andrea Hunter	Osage Nation THPO
Candace Parker	Osage Nation
Richard Moore	MoDOT Environmental Preservation Manager
Elquin Auala	MoDOT Area Engineer - Shannon County
Mike Meinkoth	MoDOT Historic Preservation Manager
Pete Berry	MoDOT Project Manager - Willow Springs
Chris Rutledge	MoDOT Assistant District Engineer - Willow Springs
Andy Meyer	MoDOT Assistant District Engineer - Sikeston
Mark Croarkin	MoDOT District Engineer - Sikeston
Emily Elmore	Single Wing Creative
Dave Kocour	HG Consult
Buddy Desai	HG Consult
Laurie Brown	Vireo
Becca Pruett	Vireo

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- **Team Introductions (Dave Kocour)**
    - Corridor Advisory Team (CAT) members, Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) staff, and Consultant Team members present on the Teams call introduced themselves.
    - The meeting presentation and summary will be provided on the project website: <https://www.modot.org/roundspringbridges>.
  - **Project Introduction**
    - The lead agency for this project is the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

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- The National Park Service (NPS) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) are cooperating agencies.
- The Consultant Team has had communications (formal and informal) with US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Native American Tribes.
- Consultant Team has reviewed and consolidated the 23 concepts from the Rehabilitation Study. This is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) phase of this project.
- In this phase, bridge type is important, but location (clearing the corridor) is more important. Bridge type will be addressed more thoroughly in the design phase.
- Dave explained what the three levels of NEPA documentation are: Categorical Exclusion (Cat Ex), Environmental Assessment (EA), and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This study is currently an EA, in which if the study concludes that there will be no significant impacts to environmental, social, and economic resources, the Team will develop a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and the project can then move forward into the design phase.
- **Purpose and Need (P&N)**
  - What is the problem and what are the symptoms?
  - The Purpose and Need was discussed in more detail later in the presentation.
- **Concept Alternatives (Buddy Desai)**
  - Team consolidated alternatives focusing on bridge location rather than bridge type with the goal of trying to keep piers out of the Current River and minimize impacts on environmental and cultural resources.
  - Currently, the Current River bridge is 18' wide, 1-lane, with 1' shoulders each side; and the Spring Valley bridge is 20' wide, 2-lane with no shoulders.
  - There were no upstream alternatives looked at for the Current River bridge due to the presence of Carr's Canoe Rentals, which are believed to be contributing elements for the historic district designation.
  - There were no downstream alternatives looked at for Spring Valley Creek due to the presence of park amenities like the campground.
- **Initial Screening**
  - Any new bridge would satisfy all P&N criteria.
  - Bridge rehabilitations would not meet the 75+ year service life.
  - It is unknown whether bridge rehabilitation would bring these bridges up to current seismic design criteria standards.

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- Costs for rehabilitation are comparable to new, therefore recommend not carrying forward the rehabilitation alternatives.

- **Discussion**

- Q: Bill O'Donnell - What's the time span shown in the accident data?

A: Buddy - A Five Year Period between 2015 and 2019

Discussion

- Bill – Believes there has been more crashes than indicated by the data.
  - Buddy – This is MO Highway Patrol data. There may have been other minor accidents that were not reported to the Highway Patrol.
  - Pete – This is a common issue with more accidents happening than are getting documented.
  - Bill – If accuracy is important, consider checking into NPS records.
  - Buddy – Accuracy of data is important, generally with these projects, condition of the infrastructure and safety are the big issues. Particularly on this one, with the bridges being so narrow, that's why you're seeing these crashes. Bridge capacity does not seem to be the main issue.
- Q: Trent Courtney - Regarding the Current River pedestrian bridge vs vehicular bridge, do all alternatives include a separate pedestrian bridge?

A: Buddy – Yes and no, the alternatives accommodate bikes and pedestrians in one of three ways: existing pedestrian bridge remains in place; the temporary vehicular bridge becomes the new pedestrian bridge; or bikes and pedestrians would be accommodated on the new bridge.

Discussion

- Trent –MODOT's new Show Me Zero Plan speaks to a high rate of non-motorized fatalities that occur. Is it because they aren't separated enough? Are the pedestrians having to use the same area as the vehicles?
- Buddy – The Ozark Trail runs really close to the Current River Bridge, and part of this trail network comes out at what it is called the "Round Spring Loop" that connects a trailhead right at the northern side of the Current River bridge to the Ozark Trail. Quite a few people are using the area. Also, there is a Current River Challenge that includes a 4-mile float and 4-mile hike that ends right at Round Spring. There is traffic all year but, there are days where up to a 1000 people might be participating in this event. Ozark Trail did not have any numbers or data they could provide. We have an open request to NPS for any data they might have regarding numbers.

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- Dave
  - An email was sent to the CAT team with the project web address: <https://www.modot.org/roundspringbridges>.
  - The alternatives are on the website so you can study them at your leisure.
  - Please feel free to provide comment through the website.
- Buddy
  - The website also has an option to be added to the email list. Please feel free to share with others who may be interested in this project.
  - Team members can be available to meet with you one on one if you have any questions.

- Q: Todd Hamilton – Is the Team recommending the flow of traffic be kept open during construction?

A: Dave - Yes, given there are no other bridges in the area, and that a detour would be anywhere from 50-60 miles, it is critical to maintain traffic during construction.

#### Discussion

- Todd – During the rebuild of one of the other bridges (Sinking Creek Bridge), our timber/charcoal company was seriously affected. Most of our raw material comes from the south, and it was about 5 weeks before we could access this bridge.
  - Pete – I don't recall if this bridge was shut down. The load posting was what affected most people.
  - Todd – Yes, with the load posting we could go south on Route 19, but when we came back our loads were 70-80 thousand pounds, so we had to go a different route.
  - Buddy –For the Current River bridge, some of the alternatives during construction keep it as a one lane bridge, which is important to think about.
  - Todd – As long as there is traffic flow, it won't affect us. Our company has 30+ loads coming across those bridges every week.
- Q: Bill O'Donnell - Has the aesthetic design for the bridge been decided yet? This area gets several million tourists floating under that bridge in the Ozark Scenic Riverways. Would like aesthetics considered during bridge design.

A: Dave - As one of the commitments in the environmental document, the Team will work with the public and interested parties on the bridge aesthetics. There are a lot of things that can be done like 'form liners' that can create a bridge that looks old but is new.

- Discussion
  - Bill – Classic styling of the bridge would be good.

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- Buddy – Commitments within the NEPA document are very closely enforced and monitored. MoDOT will work with the NPS to ensure that the look of the bridge is acceptable.
- Buddy – The purpose at this point in the project is to clear the environmental footprint. So, we likely won't get into design details. The Team is looking at bridges that don't put a pier in the middle of the river.
- Dave - At the Current River Bridge, there is scour on the pier and water eroding soil in the riverbed that creates a hole on the downstream side. This is affecting bridge stability. Removal of the existing pier is also better for wildlife.
- Bill – This is also better for canoers. Water coming around the pier creates interesting hydraulics downstream. Would be glad to see the pier go away.
- Buddy – This will likely happen.
- Q: Dr. Andrea Hunter – What is the Section 4(f) / 106 MOU line item in the study schedule beginning in December?

A: Mike Meinkoth – There is overlap from the Round Springs Project with the Three Bridges Historic District. The archeological component is really not the pressure there. That line item references an agreement document, covering the bridges at that location. This is basically saying that the Section 106 process will be followed for archaeology and that mitigation measures have been developed for adverse effects to the bridges as part of the Three Bridge Historic District. No commitments or decisions have been made yet.

- The following are questions and comments received during a recent phone conversation between Dave Kocour and John Mark Brewer (Eminence Chamber of Commerce), who was unable to attend the CAT meeting.
  - Curious why the tribes were invited? Explained it is a courtesy and that they are also involved at an agency/tribal coordination level. In NEPA EIS an EA studies it's a common practice to reach out to different groups to make meetings more manageable and easier to participate. The tribes have indicated concerns to MoDOT with this project. MoDOT and FHWA thought it would be helpful for the tribes to hear the local communities' concerns on this project as these bridges are a vital part of their transportation infrastructure and livelihoods.
  - What are the alternatives? Briefly explained they are No Build, rehabilitate the existing structures, replace existing structure on existing alignment, and construct new structure on slightly offset alignment.
  - Are we talking about one bridge location or two? Two the Current River Bridge and Spring Valley Creek Bridge.

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- Even though it would cost about the same, he would prefer the rehabilitation options because of the iconic look of the existing bridges, but if you do go off existing alignment please don't go very far. Explained if we go off alignment, we will be essentially adjacent to the existing structures.

