

2.0 STUDY ISSUES AND GOALS

2.1 Project Issues

Based on the technical analyses, as well as extensive public involvement, the Project Team identified a number of important issues for consideration in examining US 51 in Bardwell. A summary of the issues is given below.

Vehicular Safety and Highway Design – There are a number of roadway deficiencies on US 51 in the study area, including poor lines of sight, narrow shoulders, sharp curves, damaged curbs and sidewalks, an unwarranted signal, no turn lanes, lack of access control, and angled intersections. Locations with safety concerns include US 51 through town (high crash rate); the curve by the Methodist Church (poor line of sight), and the hill by the Lions Club (steep grade). There is also a curve 1.5 miles south of town where a fatal accident occurred.

Pedestrian Safety – There are sidewalk deficiencies on US 51 through Bardwell, including sections without sidewalks or adequate shoulders. Local residents view improved pedestrian connections between the senior housing, post office, and bank as very important. This is a particularly important issue for senior citizens, children, and residents without cars.

Truck Traffic – Truck traffic is an important part of the local and regional economy; however it also creates issues for the local transportation system and community such as geometric requirements, safety, and truck noise. Truck percentages on US 51 range from 9% to 22% in the study area. Through truck traffic includes logging and poultry trucks. One reason for the high truck volumes is that the next major river crossing to the south is near Dyersburg, TN (I-155). Many trucks from northwest Tennessee and southwest Kentucky likely use US 51 to cross the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers at Cairo, IL. The movement of farm equipment through the study area is a related issue. There is also recreation vehicle traffic going to and from Columbus-Belmont State Park.

Traffic Flows – The current highway system operates well with regard to traffic flow, with minimal delay and congestion. There is even some concern that traffic volumes are too low (they are down from the mid 1970s). The one traffic signal in town is unwarranted. In the future, assuming traffic volumes grow, delay may increase for traffic turning left onto US 51 from US 62 and KY 123. This may cause peak hour level of service deficiencies in 2010 and 2020, respectively.

Economic Development and Regional Access – The relationship between US 51 and local economic development is a critical study issue. Promotion of economic development is important to both Bardwell and Carlisle County. Preservation of current businesses is one significant concern, while another is the attraction and/or development of new businesses in the area. One focus for economic development in Carlisle County is on the tourism and recreation industry. There is only a moderate amount of local business in tourism and recreation at present but the desire is to

increase this business sector. Local leaders are also pursuing businesses and development related to a family oriented community and a retirement community. The community has never had a large manufacturing / industrial base and they do not appear to desire it now. New commercial development in Bardwell has occurred north and east of town. Most new residential development in the County is occurring in Cunningham, which is closer to Paducah, with little new residential development in Bardwell. A third issue relates to connections from the County to other regional roadways such as US 62 to Paducah.

Bicycle / Pedestrian Facilities and Streetscape Improvements – The Great River Road Scenic Byway runs north-south through the western portion of Carlisle County (west of Bardwell). The Ramblin' River Tour bike route runs east-west through Bardwell on KY 123. The Mississippi River Trail bike route also runs north-south west of Bardwell. The presence of these official routes is in line with the local goal of promoting tourism and recreation businesses. Therefore, residents requested that streetscape enhancements and bicycle facilities be considered in the study.

Community Character and Beautification / Amenities – Maintaining and preferably enhancing the character and quality of life in Bardwell is an important issue. This includes building on current assets, improving the town visually, and avoiding major adverse affects on the resident and business communities.

Utilities and Drainage – Many of the utilities in Bardwell are municipally owned including water, sewer, and electric. There are a number of issues with the current systems such as drainage problems on US 51 in town (e.g. near US 51 / KY 123, Jennings Street, and across from the Dollar Store) and stormwater infiltration to the local sanitary sewer system. The town is currently planning to upgrade the local water system, including the water main along US 51. Utility relocations may be required for certain improvement alternatives.

Historic Preservation and Property Impacts – Preservation of the Methodist Church as well as the two cemeteries is an important issue. With regard to highway widening, the potential for property impacts is a concern.

Low-Income and Senior Populations – There is a substantial low-income population in the study area. These residents should be involved in the study process to the greatest extent practicable. There are also many seniors with and without access to vehicles. Therefore, both senior drivers and pedestrians should be considered.

Environmental Issues – The study area may contain state or federal threatened or endangered species and does contain many wetlands. Avoidance, minimization, and/or mitigation should be pursued with respect to these sensitive environmental features. The potential for earthquakes in the region is another issue for consideration.

2.2 Project Goals

The goals for projects to be evaluated in the US 51 study directly relate to the key issues discussed above. These goals were developed with extensive input from the

local community. Local leaders and citizens participated through the Project Work Group in proposing specific goals and even assisting with drafting the language for the goals. The general public also had opportunities to propose and comment on the goals. The key project goals include:

1. Mitigate the negative impacts of heavy truck traffic on US 51, while maintaining an efficient through route for trucks and other vehicles;
2. Preserve downtown business and community character;
3. Maintain appropriate traffic controls and traffic flow conditions;
4. Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate property takings as well as other community and environmental impacts (This was put forward specifically by many local citizens and has been included even though it is understood to be part of the normal KYTC planning and design process);
5. Improve highway geometry and drainage;
6. Enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety on US 51 in the study area; and
7. Enhance the visual aspects of the community infrastructure and provide improved recreation (bicycle/pedestrian) facilities in keeping with the local economic development goals.

The issues discussed above were put forward by the Project Team, Project Work Group, or the general public. However, they were also supported by the technical analysis that is presented in the following chapters. Similarly, the goals were put forward by various individuals, but were related to documented issues and/or significant public concerns.

Overall, the project goals and issues were critical to the success of the study. The list of issues was utilized to make sure that key concerns were given proper attention. They were also used to develop the project alternatives. The goals were employed to focus the study and move it toward completion. They were also used to evaluate the alternatives and to make sure the final recommendations achieved the goals set for the project.