

APPENDIX R

FOREST SERVICE MEETING



KY 59 / KY 344 / KY 377 Planning Study
Item Number 9-231.00
KY 9 in Vanceburg to KY 799 (Big Perry Road)
KY 59 in Triplett



Project: KY 59/KY 344/KY 377 Planning Study
 KY 9 in Vanceburg to KY 799 (Big Perry Road) in Triplett
 Item Number 9-231.00

Purpose: Meeting with U.S. Forest Service, Morehead

Place: USFS Cumberland Ranger District Office 10:00 A.M. EST

Meeting Date: September 1, 2015

Prepared By: Annette Coffey

Attendees:

Jon Kazmiersti	US Forest Service	jkazmierski@fs.fed.us	606-784-6428
Jeffrey F. Lewis	US Forest Service	jefflewis@fs.fed.us	606-784-6428
Joe Callahan	KYTC D9 Planning	joe.callahan@ky.gov	606-845-2551
Karen Mynhier	KYTC D9 Environmental	karen.mynhier@ky.gov	606-845-2551
Darrin Eldridge	KYTC D9 Project Dev.	darrin.eldridge@ky.gov	606-845-2551
Brent Wells	KYTC D9 Planning	brent.wells@ky.gov	606-845-2551
Annette Coffey	QK4	acoffey@qk4.com	502-352-2197
Tom Springer	QK4	tspringer@qk4.com	502-585-2222
Larry Ginthum	QK4	lginthum@qk4.com	502-585-2222

Introduction:

Joe provided an overview of the project, noting that we are in the very early stages of the project.

Regarding the boundaries of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land, Jon said there were two levels of mapping, the GIS Team and for more detailed information, the Plat Book. The information provided on Qk4's mapping appeared correct, as compared to USFS mapping. However USFS, GIS and Qk4's GIS will coordinate to check the boundaries. Jon requested and we committed to sending our Shape and KMZ files of the FS boundary along with any PVA information to help the FS GIS folks with boundary verification.

Jon said one of the main overall goals as an agency is to keep the forest together, and reduce bisecting the forest. Overall, forest segmentation and fragmentation are not preferred because it hinders biodiversity. However, he understands that KYTC must meet the safety objectives of the project.

Jon said there are no planned additional land acquisitions for the study area. Jeffery noted that the northern portion of the forest, where the project is located, is a lower priority for land acquisition than in the south.

Sheltowee Trace:

Karen asked if USFS owned easements for the Sheltowee Trace. Jeffrey said USFS does own the right of way (r/w) for the trail in our study area. Overall, sometimes the USFS owns r/w, sometimes they do not. In some places the Sheltowee Trace Association has acquired or gained an easement to some of the trail. Other sections are on private land. Because a good portion of the Trace is in public ownership, it is most likely that FHWA would consider any crossing of it a Section 4(f) resource.

According to the USFS, the Sheltowee Trace is a National Recreation Trail, which elevates it to a higher level of concern for the USFS. The Sheltowee Trace has been around since the 1960s and 1970s. The trail, while important, would not be historic like the Appalachian Trail. However, avoidance would be preferred. Several of the special interest groups want the trail completely removed from road crossings. If we cannot avoid it, during design KYTC must accommodate a safe and context sensitive crossing to maintain the connectivity of the trail. Bridging or tunneling would be preferred over an at-grade crossing, although everyone understands that would most likely be cost prohibitive. Jon said that if we were to experience any opposition it would most likely come from the Sheltowee Trace advocates.

Steve Barbour is the representative of the Sheltowee Trace Association, and is employed by the Association. KYTC will coordinate with Steve as the project progresses.

Alternatives:

Jon said while the Alternative 3D-1 (pink) alignment splits forest land, it keeps a large part of the Sheltowee Trace in place. This option would also provide access to land they currently own but cannot access.

The Alternative 3E-1 (blue alignment), while it avoids National Forest land, would be bisecting a contiguous section of the Sheltowee Trace and the users' experience of the trail. The users do not really know or care that they are in or out of the forest; it is the continuous hiking experience that is a concern for them.

Overall, Jon stated their first preference would be to use the existing corridor for improvements; a second preference would be the Alternative 3D-1 (Pink) alignment. Per their documentation, they will need to justify why we would not use the existing alignment if we go off alignment through the FS land.

Environmental Documentation:

A NEPA document for FHWA will be required. Because of the likely USFS involvement, USFS will be involved as a resource agency at least, and possibly a participating or cooperating agency, depending on the specific project limits and involvement of FS land. Regardless of the level of involvement, an Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) permit and ESA (Endangered Species Act) permit will be required by the USFS prior to conducting any field work.

Once federal funds are allocated to the project, the first step for complying with NEPA will be to hold a Scope Verification Meeting to scope the required environmental work for the project. The meeting will include both FHWA and USFS.

Jon stated that if this project will cross the FS land at any other location; we will need to consider them as one action to address the cumulative impacts of the project to the FS land. He stated that the preference would be if a crossing was needed that there be only one.

Future Steps:

Jon informed us there are user groups that follow the USFS actions and will be interested in this project, and it is better to engage them earlier rather than later. He stated he would provide the Project Team with a list of user group contacts to invite to the public meetings. He also agreed to attend any alternatives analysis meetings if beneficial.