

## SECTION 7: COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

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The general public, local elected officials and state and federal resource agencies were encouraged to participate in this project from its inception. This section describes the coordination with these groups throughout the study process. List of public and agency meetings are included at the end of this section.

### 7.1 GENERAL PUBLIC

Public outreach has involved public meetings, public notices, website postings and attendance at community events. The first public meeting held July 10, 2000 was conducted as a part of the scoping process. Follow up meetings were held on April 23 and April 24, 2001 to provide project information and solicit comments concerning proposed alternative route locations. Throughout the process, current project information, including an interactive scoping questionnaire, has been maintained on a Conway Planning Department website. Appendix C provides summaries of the public meetings.

### 7.2 TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY GROUP

A group of civil leaders including the City Planner, City Engineer and the Major Transportation Committee of the Conway Chamber of Commerce served as a communications link to the community. This group identified local transportation needs and disseminated study findings to the public. Meetings were held with representative of this group throughout the study process beginning with a meeting held on March 13, 2000.

### 7.3 ELECTED OFFICIALS

The first meeting with the Mayor of Conway and the City Council was held on May 25, 2000, during the scoping process. Follow up meetings were held throughout the study to keep this group informed and to solicit comments.

### 7.4 RESOURCE AGENCIES

A notice of intent (NOI) was published in the Federal Register on May 11, 2000. A copy of the NOI is included as Appendix L. An agency scoping meeting notification was sent to the resource agencies and a scoping meeting was held on May 25, 2000. The "Scoping Meeting Report" is included in Appendix B.

### 7.5 LIST OF PUBLIC AND AGENCY MEETINGS

Through coordination with the agencies and comments from the public resulting from the meetings listed in **Table 7-1**, several compact areas have been identified as being of special concern to Conway area citizens and resource agencies. These impact areas include:

1. Accessibility of selected route to users.
2. Project impacts on:
  - Existing land use.
  - Existing neighborhoods.

- Existing traffic.
  - Lake Conway.
  - Wetlands.
  - Cultural Resources.
  - Prime farmlands.
  - Urban sprawl.
3. Protection of property owner's rights.
  4. Project costs.

These impact areas have been considered as the alternatives were evaluated.

**TABLE 7-1  
PUBLIC AND AGENCY INPUT OPORTUNITIES**

<b>Meeting Description</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number in Attendance</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Agency scoping meeting	March 17, 2000	Conway City Hall	26	
Citizen scoping meeting	May 25, 2000	Chamber of Commerce	100	68
Public information meeting	April 23, 2001	Ellen Smith Elementary	53	17
Public information meeting	April 24, 2001	Mayflower Middle School	18	4
Public information meeting	May 5-6, 2001	Toad Suck Daze	34	2
Report to Conway City Council	March 27, 2001	City Hall	11	
Meetings with Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee	August 22, 2001	Chamber of Commerce Building	9	
Conway Planning Website				28
<a href="mailto:Conwayloop@garverinc.com">Conwayloop@garverinc.com</a>				3
Signed DEIS	February 4, 2004			
DEIS distributed for public and agency review	February 15, 2004			
Legal notice in local paper	February 15, 2004			
DEIS Public Hearing	March 18, 2004	Ellen Smith Elementary School	186	71
End of comment period	April 5, 2004			13 additional
Public meeting with City Council	June 15, 2004			Approx. 75
Council selection of Preferred Alternative	August 10, 2004			

## 7.6 RESPONSE TO PUBLIC AND AGENCY COMMENTS

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was approved for public and agency review on February 2, 2004. Copies were distributed to resource agencies and made available for public review prior to February 15, 2004.

A legal notice was placed in the Log Cabin Democrat on February 15, 2004. The notice identified locations at which the DEIS was made available and announced a Location Public Hearing date of March 18, 2004. The hearing was held at the Ellen Smith Elementary School between the hours of 4:00 and 7:00 p.m.

A printed handout was provided to each attendee at the Location Public Hearing. The handout described the project, the current project status and the upcoming events. A questionnaire was included to encourage thought and comment. One important purpose of

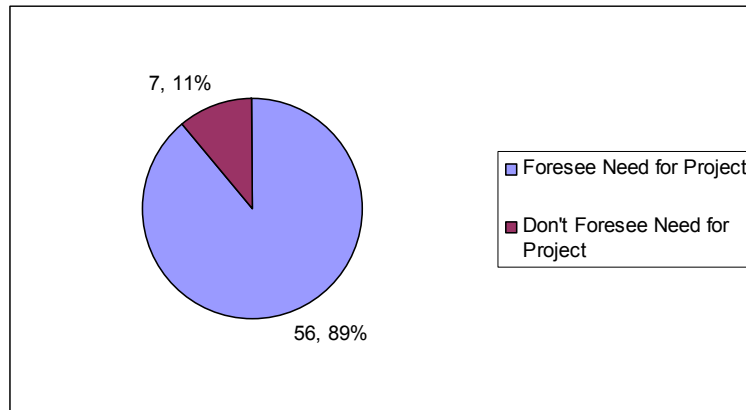
the questionnaire was to obtain input to determine the basic values the public desires be applied in selection of the Preferred Alternative. The attendance roster was signed by 186 attendees. There were 71 citizen questionnaires or comment letters received during the comment period.

**7.6.1 Questionnaire Results**

At the Location public Hearing 58 questionnaires were marked by attendees with preferences and/or comments. The comment period remained open until April 5, 2004 and an additional 13 responses were received via mail. Not everyone responded to every question or ranked every item on the questionnaire. The following information summarizes the data received from the Public Hearing:

**FIGURE 7-1**

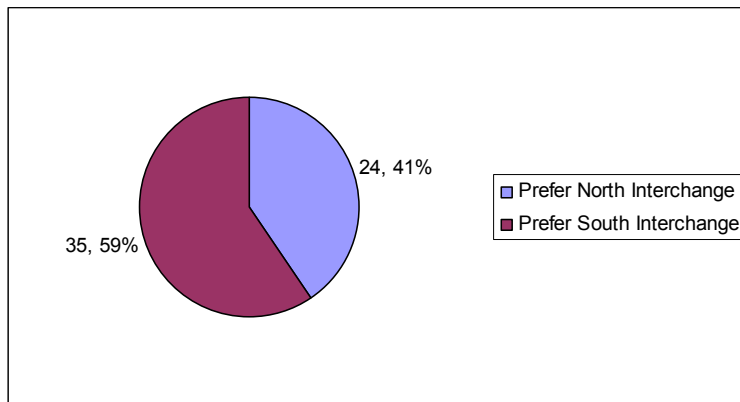
**PERCEIVED NEED FOR NEW ARTERIAL IN WEST CONWAY**



***The first question on the questionnaire was: Do you believe there is (or will be) a need to construct a new arterial route (Conway Bypass) in western Conway? Figure 7-1 shows that according to the questionnaire responses the citizens in the Conway region recognize a present or future need for a new arterial route in western Conway. Only seven of the 63 responses to this question did not see a need for this project. Therefore, 89% of the respondents foresee a need for the project.***

FIGURE 7-2

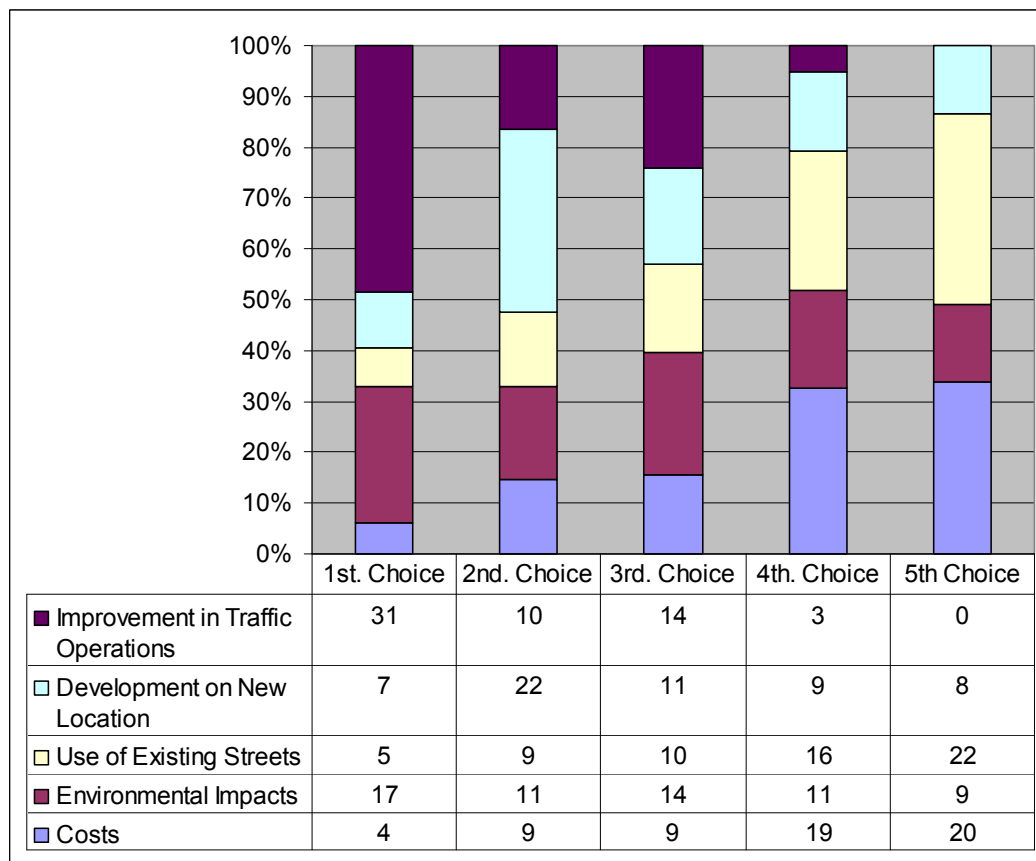
PREFERRED INTERCHANGE LOCATION



The second question on the questionnaire was: *If only one new interchange can be added to Interstate 40 which of the proposed interchange locations (north or south) do you believe would most benefit the Conway region?* Figure 7-2 shows that if only one interchange can be added or improved there is a preference for an interchange on the south side of Conway.

FIGURE 7-3

ROUTE SELECTION CRITERIA



**The third response category on the questionnaire was:  
Rank the following factors in the order you believe they should be considered when selecting a preferred alternative (1 thru 5, with 1 being the highest rank).**

Figure 7-3 illustrates the ranking preferred by respondents relative to the factors to be used in selection of the final location of the proposed arterial route. The weighted responses for selection factors (with the smallest number being the highest preference) are shown in Table 7-2.

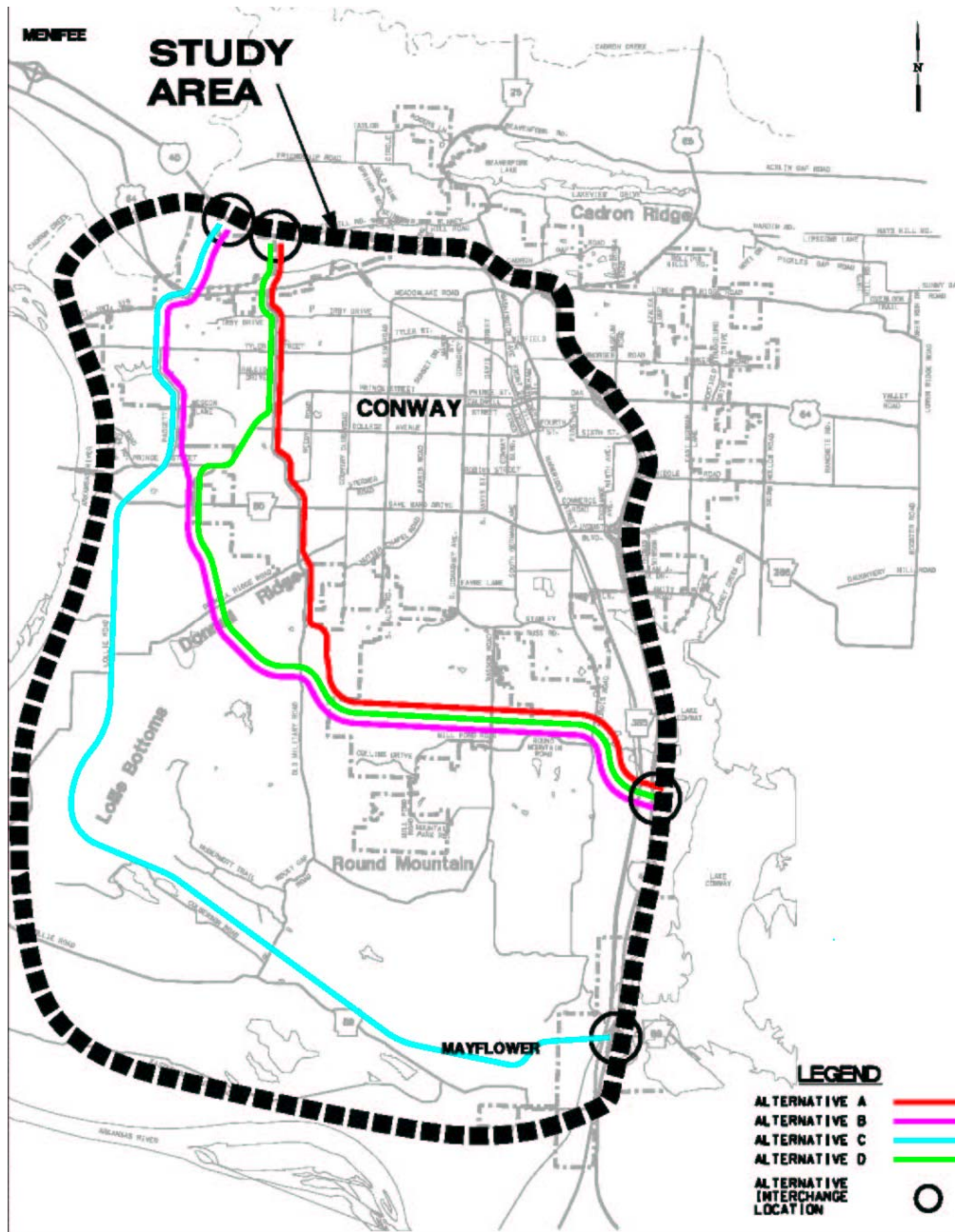
**TABLE 7-2  
RESPONDENT RANKING OF ROUTE SELECTION**

Factor to be considered	Respondent Ranking
Estimated project costs	3.7
Potential impacts to the natural and human environment	2.7
Potential for use of existing street corridors	3.7
Potential for new location(s) through undeveloped lands	2.8
Potential for improvements to traffic capacity and travel safety	1.8

31 respondents had “Improvement in Traffic Operations” as their highest preference and none ranked it as their least highest preference. Alternatively, only four respondents ranked “Project Costs” as their highest preference and 20 ranked it as their lowest preference. “Environmental Impacts” were ranked as the highest preference by 17 respondents, second in the highest priority total ranking behind “Improvements in Traffic Operations.”

FIGURE 7-4

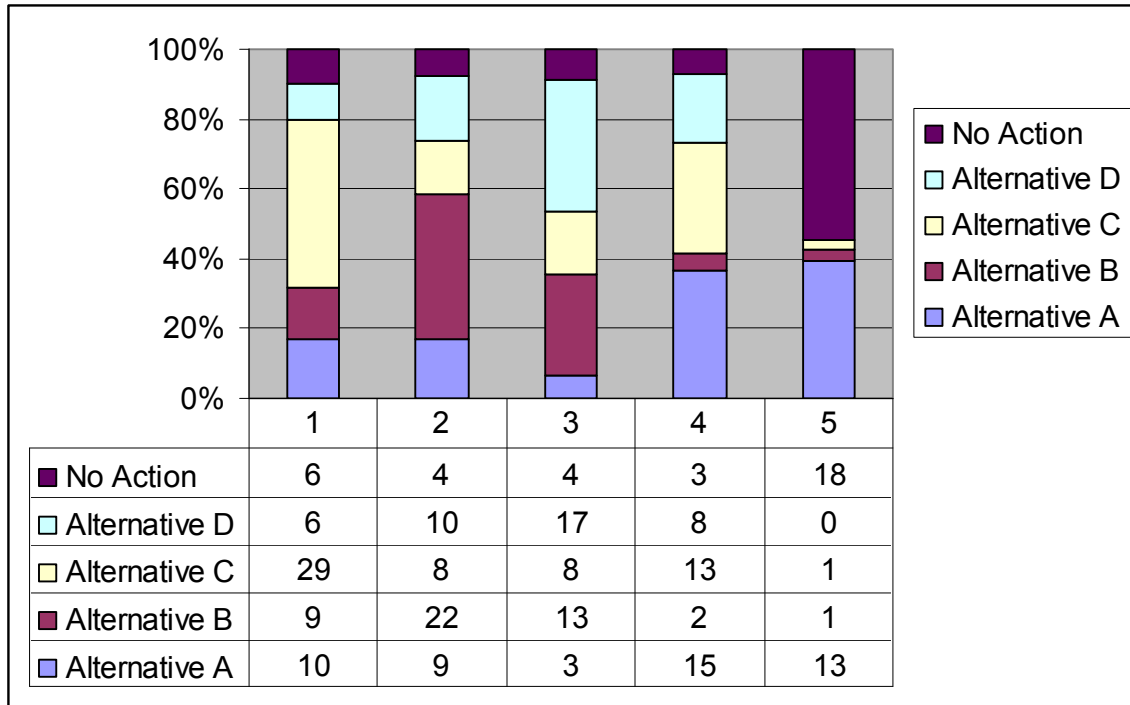
PREFERRED INTERCHANGE LOCATION



The locations of the alternatives that have been considered in the DEIS are shown in **Figure 7-4**. These alternatives were displayed in detail at the Location Public Hearing and citizens were encouraged to view and ask questions concerning the alternative horizontal layouts.

FIGURE 7-5

PREFERENCE FOR ALTERNATIVES



**The final response category on the questionnaire was:**  
**Rank the proposed alternatives in the order you believe would best serve the Conway region (1 thru 5, with 1 being the highest rank):**

**Figure 5** exemplifies the fact that there is a strong public preference for Alternatives C and B. The weighted responses for route preference (with the smallest number being the highest preference) are shown in **Table 7-3**.

TABLE 7-3

RESPONDENT RANKING OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative Being Considered	Respondent Ranking
Alternative A	3.2
Alternative B	2.2
Alternative C	2.1
Alternative D	2.7
“No Action” Alternative	3.7

The previously identified desires to improve traffic capacity and travel safety and to minimize environmental impacts both support selection of Alternative A or D.

**7.6.2 Citizen’s Comments**

The comments listed below have been selected from those resulting from the Location Public Hearing and those received as a result of the published notice of the DEIS availability for review and comment. Several of the comments were either specifically in support or

directly opposed to the project and don't require a response for clarification. However, several of the comments justify recognition and a response. The following comments have been selected because they are: made repeatedly and indicate some issue that should be cleared up; indicate individual citizen's questions and comments that reflect careful study and should be addressed to strengthen the FEIS; or, have been received as letters from community organizations such as a property owner's association or the Conway School Board. All the comments received during the process have been made a part of the project file.

1. *There is no need for an additional arterial now since Dave Ward Drive was just widened.*

**Response:** Widening Dave Ward Drive has increased the system traffic capacity and the access control plan that has been instituted for Dave Ward Drive should maintain that capacity well into the future. That increased capacity has been accounted for in the traffic forecast used to plan the proposed arterial loop. However, the need for the proposed arterial loop is not based as much on a need for increased east-west traffic arterial capacity as the need for increased system capacity between the connections of the collector and arterial system and the Interstate. The proposed arterial would draw traffic from Dave Ward Drive thus reducing the traffic demand on Dave Ward Drive. More significantly the loop would divert traffic away from the three existing I- 40 interchanges in Conway.

2. *Hogan Lane is becoming increasingly congested and already needs additional travel lanes, left turn lanes and improved turning radii. Using Hogan Lane as a part of the Western Conway Arterial Loop will cause more congestion.*

**Response:** Hogan lane is currently a two-lane roadway with left turns in some locations. The current ADT for Hogan Lane is approximately 9,000 vehicles per day on the north side of Prince Street. This volume of traffic indicates there is already a need for additional traffic lanes. Hogan Lane is classified as a major arterial route on the Conway Master Street Plan and should be widened to four lanes at some time in the future. Developers along Hogan Lane are required to dedicate right of way for a major arterial route. Traffic volume forecast indicate that for Alternative A and D, which both use the part of Hogan Lane north of Prince Street, the ADT for the year 2025 can expect to reach 11,000 vehicles per day. A four lane roadway with left turn lanes at major intersections can be expected to handle this traffic volume, especially if proper control of access is initiated with the improvements. As a matter of comparison, the year 2000 traffic volume on Dave Ward Drive between Stone Dam Creek and the Union Pacific Railroad was in the range of 20,000 vehicles per day. The classification and planned use of Hogan Lane along with possible options for phased development will be addressed in greater detail in the FEIS.

3. *If the new arterial loop is developed too close to central Conway, will an additional loop be needed in 20 years?*

**Response:** Alternatives A, B, and D have routes that are close to south Conway. Traffic forecast used to plan for these routes show that the proposed arterial routes would provide acceptable traffic capacities well past the 2025 time frame considered in the studies.

4. *Has population expansion in the Conway area been considered?*

**Response:** Environmental impact assessments for the proposed routes particularly those related to traffic volumes have included allowances for population growth.

5. *There is already access to I-40 north of Conway via Interchange 117 at Menifee. Why is another interchange needed?*

**Response:** Traffic forecast indicate that about two thirds of the traffic using a new interchange north of Conway at I-40 would make eastbound trips. These vehicles would not use the interchange at Menifee. The Conway Arterial Loop interchange in north Conway has been proposed to relieve congestion at both the interchanges located at Highway 65 (Harkrider Street) and Highway 64 (Oak Street).

6. *West Conway needs more retail and commercial areas to relieve the demand to travel between west Conway and east Conway.*

**Response:** The purpose of the proposed arterial would be to meet the need for alternate traffic routes between west Conway and Interstate 40 without going through downtown Conway. The route is being proposed with limited access to reduce its impact on existing or planned land use. The proposed route would not be constructed to encourage the expansion of commercial development in west Conway.

7. *We need a connection between Dave Ward Drive and I-40 at Mayflower.*

**Response:** Alternative C would provide this connection. Any of the proposed alternatives could be developed in phases so that critical links could be made first. For Alternative C the first phase might include that part making the connection between Dave Ward Drive and I-40 at Mayflower. This connection might also be an add-on phase to one of the other alternatives. Any connection to I-40 north of Dave Ward Drive might be delayed and added as the need arose or as funding became available.

8. *Conway doesn't need five interchanges. West Little Rock doesn't have that many to serve twice the traffic.*

**Response:** Although a comparison of Interstate operations in West Little Rock and Conway are not in the scope of this study, it can be safely stated the design, development history and current operations of the Interstates and connecting facilities in the two cities vary widely. We have evaluated the operation of the system in Conway and have identified deficiencies that result in traffic congestion in the area. The proposed arterial loop has been planned to meet those needs.

9. *Alternative C has positives with no obvious negatives. It does not obstruct east and west traffic in the City. It provides opportunity for future development of industrial property and accommodates Conway's potential as a distribution center. It would serve the proposed new airport and provide for any potential intermodal connections through a possible harbor.*

**Response:** The proposed Western Conway Arterial Loop is being evaluated as an independent utility and is not linked with the proposed Conway airport. At this time there are no known plans for a distribution center or intermodal harbor.

10. *Proposing a route without wetland considerations, drainage and environmental effects is like a beauty contest held in the dark.*

**Response:** The locations of wetlands, drainage considerations and other environmental effects have been considered in the development of the proposed route alternatives and are stated in the DEIS. As a part of the route selection process we will identify a preferred alternative and report it in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS). As part of the process field surveys will be conducted to obtain specific wetland delineations as soon as the preferred alternative has been selected. Design measures will be undertaken to avoid wetland areas and other environmental impacts where practicable.

11. *There are serious problems with the proposed Alternatives B and C: First of all the cut through Cadron Ridge will be costly and will destroy natural beauty and bike/hiking trails; secondly Spencer Lake is one of the very few remaining natural habitat areas and is home to ducks, geese and other wildlife year-round (Conway should be trying to make this a city park); and third, a new intermediate school with 800 students is being planned at Padgett and Wescon and will be impacted by traffic volumes and resulting noise.*

**Response:** In the event either Alternatives B or C is selected as the preferred alternative, the concerns stated will be considered and where appropriate, design measures will be identified to avoid, minimize or mitigate the resulting impacts. These measures will be identified in the FEIS.

12. *Add 20 to 50 feet to the required right of way and construct bike/walking paths to provide connectivity for pedestrian modes of transportation throughout the limits of the proposed arterial route.*

**Response:** The typical section for the proposed arterial route includes provisions for sidewalks within the urban area. Other than these sidewalks, there are no specific provisions for independent bike/walking paths. Although these items are important to provide true multimodal transportation routes throughout Conway and would provide connectivity to existing bike/walking paths in Conway, they are not identified in the project purpose and need.

13. *Alternatives A and D would cause the most construction congestion and the least long term impact. Alternative B should be constructed first with Alternative C as a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase.*

**Response:** Consideration of phased development of either one preferred alternative or a combination of more than one alternative will be considered and identified as appropriate during the completion of the FEIS.

14. *If traffic volumes are increased through the neighborhoods in west Conway, existing traffic conditions will worsen. Additionally there will be new problems for people who do not have problems now. Alternatives B or C seem to give the best solution by providing access at the north and south sides of Conway and looping around the congestion not through it.*

**Response:** It is true that there would be the potential for “new problems” in any neighborhood in close proximity to the proposed route. However, there would also be the potential for great benefit to those neighborhoods. Traffic volumes for the proposed arterial in west Conway are not forecast to increase beyond a volume that can be acceptably carried on the proposed roadway. Whereas the traffic on that roadway would be higher than now being experienced, the roadway and associated intersections would be designed to accommodate the traffic much better than at present. The proposed arterial loop would be a way of providing needed traffic relief that otherwise might not be available.

15. *Any of the inner loops would be a poor first choice. We do need more traffic lanes, but they need to be as far west as possible to disperse traffic to the perimeter of the city and away from the more populated urban areas. Hogan Lane in particular is already congested and widening it will probably be a short-term solution due to continued residential/commercial growth in that vicinity.*

**Response:** While the “inner loops” (Alternatives A, B, and D) have been projected to have traffic volumes that are higher than Alternative C, traffic forecast show that a four-

lane arterial constructed with a divided median and proper access controls will provide acceptable capacities out past the 2025 analysis period. The traffic forecast show that that Alternative C will attract substantially less traffic than the other alternatives. (See also the response to Comment No. 3).

16. *Construction costs alone do not provide an “apples to apples” comparison. Expanding one of the inner routes from two lane to four lanes will cost from \$84 million to \$89 million, whereas four brand new lanes in Lollie Bottoms will cost about \$124 million. To avoid being criticized as short-sighted, economic decisions should consider much more than initial investment. A present worth analysis over the useful life of the longest-lived project would be more appropriate.*

**Response:** Each of the inner routes proposes to add four new travel lanes between Dave Ward Drive and Interstate 40. They do propose to widen routes to the north from two lanes to four. As noted in the comment, the cost to construct these routes would be less than constructing the outer loop represented by Alternative C. It has been projected that all of the routes would adequately provide for future traffic demands. Those forecasts also show that the traffic volumes that would use the inner routes are substantially higher than those that would use the outer loops. The analyses indicate that traffic congestion would actually increase for parts of downtown Conway if Alternative C is selected. The studies indicate the benefits accrued from development of Alternatives A or D would be much greater for each dollar spent than the benefits accrued for developing either Alternatives B or C.

17. *Throughout the document reference is made to “interstate log miles”. A map showing these locations would be helpful in reviewing the document.*

**Response:** The Interstate log miles are identified indirectly on Figure 1-3, a figure showing traffic at existing I-40 interchanges. Additional identification can be provided in the FEIS.

18. *A map depicting the 1994 arterial loop route would be helpful to better understand the “Project History” section.*

**Response:** The general location of this route will be identified on Figure 1-1 in the FEIS.

19. *In the “Capacity Analysis” section it states that several existing or near term deficiencies have been identified. It is not clear that the computed capacities factored in new and approved road/interchange improvements.*

**Response:** At the time this study was conducted the planning for improved road/interchange improvements were not sufficiently defined to allow for evaluation of capacities. Additional investigations will be conducted and the appropriate results incorporated into the FEIS.

20. *In the “Public and Local Involvement” section the following statement is made: “The main concern voiced in these public comments was the need to provide an alternative arterial route around the city of Conway while allowing access to local roads.” The summary of public comments found in Appendix D does not clearly indicate that this was the main concern. The EIS should appropriately, without bias, reflect and address legitimate, and substantial concerns raised by the public.*

**Response:** Comment noted.

21. *The only alternatives addressed in any detail in the DEIS were the “no-action” and “bypass construction” alternatives. It would seem appropriate to have included and alternative that was intermediate between these, such as a combination of the*

*Transportation Systems Management approach and a full Highway 25 Interchange or new Hogan Road Vicinity interchange.*

**Response:** Comment noted.

22. *Consideration should be given to taking a “phased” approach if bypass construction is adopted. Each phase should be self-contained and include a traffic analysis study upon completion to determine the necessity of the next phase. Construction should begin with the Hogan Road Interchange in Conway at the north end of the project where it is most likely to have immediate impact. Corridors should be protected until used or determined to no longer be needed.*

**Response:** As the preferred alternative is established, it may be either one of the specific alternative that have been defined or may consist of some combination of more than one of the alternatives. As the preferred alternative is identified and a route clearly decided, the issue of “phased” development will be addressed in detail.

23. *It is unclear that the bypass option would significantly improve congestion problems in Conway. Much of the traffic is not the result of commuters passing through the area, but patrons visiting in-town businesses, stores and schools. It should be noted that traffic congestion cycles with college semesters.*

**Response:** The purpose of the West Conway Arterial Loop is to provide an alternate route to access Interstate 40 without traveling through downtown Conway. It has been demonstrated by the values computed by the traffic model that not only will the loop draw traffic from the downtown interchanges but will also reduce traffic congestion in downtown Conway. Annual vehicle hours traveled (VHT) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in downtown Conway would be reduced and the volume to capacity ratio weighted by vehicle miles of travels (V/C weighted by VMT) would be improved for all alternatives except Alternative C.

24. *Commuter traffic is cited as detrimental to the character of downtown Conway. However, urban sprawl is, and has been, a far greater threat to the “unique” character of the downtown area, but is not addressed in the DEIS.*

**Response:** Development continues to occur in Conway, not only to the west but also to the north and east. The connections to I-40 to the north and east are limited to the three existing interchanges in Conway. These three interchanges and the existing arterial connections to Conway will not adequately provide for future traffic. As traffic, whether that generated by commuters, patrons visiting in-town businesses or that related to the colleges, increase it will continue to cause a deterioration of the operational function of the transportation system and will impact the character of downtown Conway. The addition of an interchange at Highway 25 has been planned and programmed as have capacity improvements to the I-40 interchange at Highway 65B. These interchange improvements will provide some short term relief to the existing system but will not meet future demands as indicated by traffic forecasts. This study has not attempted to quantify the impacts of urban sprawl on the character of downtown. Without considering additional data, one cannot conclude that “urban sprawl is, and has been, a far greater threat to the “unique” character of the downtown area.”

25. *The DEIS does not adequately address the potential impact to sensitive species in the project area. The document only considers species with a stated “Threatened” or “Endangered” status, ignoring other sensitive species in the area. This approach fails to adequately account for potential adverse environmental impacts, and loss of biological diversity.*

**Response:** This is an issue that has been identified by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

26. *It seems unreasonable to assume that secondary impacts to streams following construction will not increase substantially, especially since Alternatives A, B, and D cross and parallel a significant portion of Gold Creek on the southern end. Roads can impact streams in a variety of way including: runoff from road pollution, alteration to hydrological and flood patterns, and removal of riparian vegetation and cover, all of which affect water quality. A more in-depth discussion of adverse impacts and potential mitigation measures is warranted.*

**Response:** This issue will be considered in greater detail in the FEIS.

27. *The impact to terrestrial and aquatic communities seems greatly understated. Road construction alters habitat, and can have adverse impacts to wildlife, apart from direct mortality from car collisions. Roads open areas to invasion by exotic species that can out compete native ones, fragment forests, alter animal migration and movement routes, change animal behavior patterns, and interfere with reproductive success. Additionally, roads make wild areas more accessible to development and additional habitat loss. A more in-depth discussion of adverse impacts and potential mitigation measures is warranted.*

**Response:** This issue will be considered in greater detail in the FEIS.

28. *The document acknowledges that the construction of the bypass could result in a modes increase in commercial development in rural areas, and counts it as a positive impact that “may provide nearby residents more convenience and accessibility.” This is inappropriate since it discounts the worth of a rural lifestyle and assumes everyone places greater value on convenience than the intangible benefits offered by a rural lifestyle. Measures, such as zoning and access limitations to mitigate conversion of rural landscapes should be investigated.*

**Response:** This issue will be considered in greater detail in the FEIS.

29. *Considering the amount of traffic that would have to be contended with, Alternatives B and C would create a very unsafe situation for our staff to attempt to maintain a constant vigil. Therefore, due to the traffic and safety concerns that these routes present, the Conway School District Board of Education strongly opposes Alternatives B and C.*

**Response:** The concern stated in this comment will require additional consideration in the FEIS if either Alternative B or C is selected as the preferred alternative. A new route in the vicinity of the new school would allow easier access to the facilities. However, careful planning and design of the route would be required to provide a safe environment for the school. These issues will be addressed in the FEIS.

### 7.6.3 Agency Comments

Copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement were distributed to the following agencies and organizations:

#### **FEDERAL AGENCIES**

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Little Rock, AR  
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development - Little Rock, AR  
U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish & Wildlife Service – Conway, AR  
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Dallas, TX  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Washington, D.C.  
U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency - Denton, TX  
Natural Resource Conservation Service – Little Rock, AR

#### **STATE AGENCIES**

Arkansas Department of Health, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism - Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Department of Pollution Control & Ecology - Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Forestry Commission - Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Game and Fish Commission - Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Geological Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Natural and Scenic Rivers Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Soil & Water Conservation Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas State Planning and Development Clearinghouse, Little Rock, AR  
Arkansas Waterways Commission, Little Rock, AR  
Office of the Governor, Little Rock, AR  
Office of the State Archeologist - Fayetteville, AR

#### **LOCAL OFFICIALS**

City of Conway, Director of Engineering  
City of Conway, Director of Planning  
Faulkner County Judge  
Mayor of Conway  
Mayor of Mayflower

All agency correspondence will be included in an appendix to the FEIS. The following agencies provided a response;

**United States Environmental Protection Agency – Region 6 -**

The EPA rates the DEIS as “LO” i.e., EPA has “Lack of Objection” to proposed action.

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

**Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality -**

*Air The long term impact that the Conway Loop will have on local air quality will be the emissions from motor vehicles. The emissions are in direct proportion to vehicle miles traveled (VMT). All four of the alternate routes are 1 to 2 miles longer than the portion of I-40 that they circumvent. Vehicle emissions will increase approximately 15 to 20% for traffic traveling the loop. However, this increase should not significantly impact Conway’s NAAQS 1-hour ozone standard attainment status.*

**Response:** Comment noted. Although the potential for increases in vehicle emissions may increase due to a part of the traffic stream traveling greater distances, travel forecasts indicate that overall VMT and VHT within the study area would decrease. These values will be reviewed and if appropriate addressed in more detail in the FEIS.

*Water The Water Division recommends that a route be selected with the minimum amount of impact to the environment. Once the route has been chosen, the City of Conway will need to apply for a DPDES General Storm Water Construction Permit.*

**Response:** Comment noted. Minimizing environmental impacts will be an important consideration in selecting the final route for the Conway Loop. Commitments to compliances with all applicable permitting process will be stated in the FEIS.

**The Department of Arkansas Heritage -**

*Our agency provided information on known locations of sensitive species within the study area to CH2M Hill in May of 2000. At that time our records indicated the possible occurrence of twelve species of the state concern within the study area. A copy of our letter is included in the DEIS, as well as a map depicting approximate locations of sensitive species. The discussion in the DEIS related to state species on considers four plants. These appear to be plants known to occur in Faulkner County that our agency has given the administrative designation of “threatened”. Although it is appropriate to consider these in the review process, the other state concern species reported for the project area should also have been evaluated. Of the species provided, we feel there is the potential for one of the plants, a twistflower (*Streptanthus macalatus* ssp. *Obtusifolius*) to be present on hillsides along Gold Creek...Since Alternatives A, B, and D share the corridor along Gold Creek, this area should be evaluated if any of these alternatives are selected. If the species is found, measures should be taken to avoid and minimize adverse impacts.*

**Response:** In the event that either of the Alternatives A, B or D are selected as the preferred route, the corridor across the hillsides along Gold Creek as referred to in this comment will be evaluated to determine if the species of concern is present in the area and if so identify measures to be taken to minimize adverse impacts.

*One additional species of state concern has been recorded in the vicinity of project area since our 2000 review. Bird-voiced treefrog (*Hyla avivoca*) has been reported from Flag Pond located south of Round Mountain...This treefrog could be present in similar areas along proposed Alternative C. Should this be the selected route efforts should be made to avoid and minimize impacts to this species.*

**Response:** In the event that Alternative C is selected as the preferred route, efforts to minimize impacts to the species will be identified and reported in the FEIS.

**Arkansas Department of Health -**

*Design of Alternative B and Alternative C should minimize adverse impacts to the existing drinking water treatment plant for the City of Conway.*

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

*Construction plans and specification for any water and sewer improvement/replacement must be reviewed and approved by this office.*

**Response:** Commitments to compliance with all applicable permitting and review processes will be stated in the FEIS.

**United States Department of the Interior – Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance**

*Section 3.4 (beginning on page 3-11) of the DEIS contains information on surface waters within the project area, and section 3.5 (page 3-17) discusses the absence of wild and scenic rivers in the project area. However, the analysis fails to mention the presence of Cadron Creek in the extreme northwestern corner of the project area and very near the westernmost proposed interchange with I-40. Cadron Creek is listed on the Nationwide Rivers Inventory (NRI) maintained by the National Park Service (NPS).*

**Response:** The location of Cadron Creek and the potential for impacts on Cadron Creek will be identified in the FEIS.

*Text descriptions in the DEIS use road names, topographic features, and other landmarks to convey the route of each alternative. However, not all of the maps have the names of roads and landmarks on them. A U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic map (USGS Topographic Maps Home Page) with all the appropriate names should be used as a base for the maps in the DEIS.*

**Response:** The maps used in the DEIS will be reviewed and, where appropriate, the USGS topographic maps will be used as the base maps. All text and maps will also be reviewed to assure consistency in the names used for roads, topographic features, and other landmarks.

*Geological hazards have not been adequately addressed in the DEIS. An analysis of the complete geologic environment, including any potential hazards, should be included in Section 3: Existing Conditions, and a possible mitigation plan for each hazard should be included in Section 4: Environmental Impacts Assessment.*

**Response:** A geotechnical report, *Geotechnical Feasibility Investigation – Western Arterial Loop*, addressing potential hazards and mitigation needs for each of the proposed alternatives was prepared by Grubs, Hoskyn, Barton & Wyatt. Appropriate information will be incorporated into Section 3 and Section 4 of the FEIS.

*Cuts through Cadron Ridge, Cedar Ridge, and Round Mountain are in soils that are prone to slope stability hazards, such as rock falls and creep. Analysis of cut-and-fill operations through these unstable ridge soils should address safety concerns as well as costs of long-term road maintenance.*

*The proposed roads, and more importantly the bridges, are constructed on alluvial, wetland, and bayou soils. Although the area has a predicted peak ground acceleration of 0.24 g with 2% probability of exceedance in 50 years, which is a relatively low earthquake*

*hazard...Conway is in the New Madrid seismic zone and with fine sands, silts, and shallow ground water, liquefaction is a potential geologic hazard that need to be addressed.*

**Response:** To the extent these issues were addressed in the Geotechnical Feasibility referenced in the previous response they will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*The clay soils that the roadway will cross, especially the Moreland-Perry soils, produce a shrink/swell hazard that needs to be addressed in the DEIS.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be made in the FEIS.

**United States Department of the Interior – Fish and Wildlife Service -**

*The primary concern of the service at this time is the potential impacts to wetland areas which may not have been thoroughly inventoried during initial field surveys or which may be impacted by interchanges or service roads that were not included in initial plans for the Conway Bypass. Field surveys by members of our staff identified potential jurisdictional wetlands within proposed alignments that were not identified in the DEIS.*

**Response:** Comment noted. Upon selection of the preferred alternative, field surveys will be conducted to identify jurisdictional wetlands within the corridor surrounding the preferred alternative and allow for avoidance where practicable.

*Alternatives A, B, and D are much less likely to impact a large number of wetland areas and are therefore preferable to Alternative C. Alternative C is a much longer alignment which has a greater potential to impact wetlands within the Lollie Bottoms area southwest of the City of Conway.*

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

**Arkansas Geological Commission -**

*Eastern Route*

*1) This route will have to cross the east to west Cadron Ridge north of Conway. This ridge is composed of sandstone of the Middle Atoka Formation.*

*2) The parts of the eastern route southwest and south of the city will have to cross sandstone ridges in Upper Atoka Formation. These hills are Donald Ridge, Sturgis Hill and some of the northern sections of Reynolds Mountain.*

*3) The rest of the route would be on the relative board flat valleys of shale in the Upper Atoka Formation.*

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

*Western Route*

*1) This route will have to cross the east to west Cadron Ridge north of Conway. This ridge is composed of sandstone of the Middle Atoka Formation.*

*2) The Western side of this route crosses a long distance in the alluvial valley of the Arkansas River. The river sediments of clay and sand are 55-70 feet thick before reaching solid bedrock.*

*3) The southern portion of this route will encounter sandstone ridges along the south side of Reynolds Mountain. The sandstone is in the Upper Atoka Formation.*

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

**Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission -**

*Based on a) project miles, b) new cuts through Cadron Ridge, c) cost, and g) wetland impacts, it appears as if Alternative D has the least cumulative impacts. Therefore Alternative D is recommended as the preferred alternative.*

**Response:** Comments noted. No response required.

**United States Department of Homeland Security – FEMA –**

*The concerns of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are directed towards the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the possible negative impact upon identified flood hazard areas and wetland within the outlined project boundaries. We suggest that when any new development or construction is being considered that you consult with the local Flood plain Administrator (FPA) for counties and communities that may be affected.*

**Response:** Commitments to compliance with all applicable permitting and review processes will be stated in the FEIS.

**METROPLAN -**

*(S-8) Expand on cultural impacts for alternatives.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(S-8) Change Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology to Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-2) Change annual growth rate for Conway to 4.6%.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-5) Missing Hwy 266 (Siebenmorgan Rd.) as #9.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-6) Change principle to “major” or “primary”.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-11) US 65B is not planned as a 5 lane facility but with 2 Eastbound Lanes and 3 Westbound lanes between I-40 exiting/entering ramps.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-11) Finish last sentence in fourth paragraph.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-12) Expand on how ADT capacities for arterials were determined (also for interchange capacity).*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-12) Table 1-1, year 2000 ADTs do not correspond to official AHTD/CARTS reported ADTs.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-13 & 1-14) Include Level of Service for eastbound I-40 traffic.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-15 & 1-16) Expand on Crash Rates and what years analysis is for. Add discussion for any abnormally high crash rates and summary of crash results by severity.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-16) Discussion about RAN. Only Hwy 64 and 65B have critical segments.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-22) Add discussion of two RR Grade separations.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(1-23) Correct population to the year 2000.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-6) Where does Hwy 25 rehabilitation end?*

**Response:** STIP will be reviewed to determine project limits.

*(2-6) Address capacity improvements scheduled for 2004 at I-40/65B.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-6) Need to identify whose 5-year TIP (e.g. Conway, AHTD, Metroplan, etc.)*

**Response:** Reference is to the State Transportation Plan (SITP).

*(2-7 & 2-9) Table 2-2 and Figure 2-2 should match.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-7) Classify roadway as Arterial.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-8 to 2-11) Show RR grade separations on figures.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-8 & 2-13 & 2-19) Expand on Donald Ridge cut and what would be required.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-8) Replace McNutt Rd with Nottingham Drive in third paragraph.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-19) Explain why Prince Street was chosen.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-27) Roadway types are designated how.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-28) The differences cited in Section 2.4.1 comparing VMT for 2000 and 2025 does not correspond with the numbers listed in Table 2-3.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-39) Crash rates should be based on cross-section facility type (e.g., 4-Lane Undivided, 4-Lane Divided, etc.)*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-43) Discuss the need for TSM with or without loop and if building the loop would actually avoid the need for any other roadway improvements in Conway.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-44) Argument regarding a transit alternative is weak. Note that rail option must be considered in a regional context which is beyond the scope of study area.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(2-45) Why is utility relocation with alternative C so much higher also other questions noted on page?*

**Response:** The planning estimates of base cost used for analyses if the alternatives are primarily a function of project length and the utility relocation cost is a contingent percentage of that base cost. Therefore the longer the project, the higher the utility cost.

*(3-2) Expand on "non-attainment" issues.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-70) The new City of Conway Plan is nearing completion.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-80) Connect(ion) to Hwy 365 is not described in Alternative C.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-85) Update population growth using data provided by Metroplan.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-87) Use more recent data for Per Capita Income.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-88) Use more recent data for median HH income.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-92) Report 2000 Census Data.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(3-94) Income data for 2000 census has been released.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(4-1) Expand on Air Quality with reference to 8 hour standards and check with ADEQ.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(7-1) Fill in blank on 7-1.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(8-2) Acquire more recent Metroplan newsletters.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

*(Maps) Show connection with US 64 for Alternatives B and C.*

**Response:** Comment noted and appropriate revisions will be incorporated into the FEIS.

## 7.6.4 Summary

### Citizens Comments

Comments made by citizens during the DEIS review period show the following preferences:

Eighty nine percent of those responding foresee a need for a new arterial loop in western Conway.

If only one interchange can be constructed, 59 percent of those responding prefer the interchange proposed for the south side of Conway.

The public responses showed strong support for using the forecast improvement in traffic operations (roadway capacity and travel safety) as the first criteria for selecting the preferred alternative. The second choice was consideration of environmental impacts and the third choice was consideration of the potential for using undeveloped land for new location of the route.

The public responses show a preference for Alternatives C and B. These alternatives would locate the new arterial loop further away from Hogan Lane.

The Conway Public School Board has gone on record with comments stating their preference for either Alternative A or D in order to avoid the new school located at Padgett Road and Wescon Lane.

### Agency Comments

The agency comments were directed more at the completeness and accuracy of the DEIS:

- The Department of Arkansas Heritage has requested additional studies relative to listed state concern species that have been reported to be in the project area.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service has pointed out that jurisdictional wetlands within the corridor of the preferred alternative should be delineated and avoided as the details of the selected route are finalized.
- Metroplan has requested updates to forecasted traffic volumes to account for planned Interstate interchange improvements at Highway 25 and Highway 65B.

Agency recommendations relative to selection of a preferred alternative support selection of either Alternative A, B or D. The overall preference is for Alternative A since it is the alternative with the fewest environmental impacts and least cost.

### Remaining Tasks

Prior to preparing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Conway Western Arterial Loop the following actions will be required:

- The City of Conway, as the lead agency, will need to identify a preferred alternative for the route to be advanced to the FEIS. The selection process should include input from and represent consensus with the other governmental jurisdictions that may be involved in the project. These would include the City of Mayflower and Faulkner County. Alternative A would; 1) best meet the project purpose and need statement by diverting the most traffic from downtown Conway; 2) result in the fewest adverse environmental impacts; and, 3) have the lowest project development cost.
- After the preferred alternative has been identified additional field surveys will be conducted to: 1) delineate wetlands; 2) investigate in detail the potential for existing cultural resources; 3) identify specific endangered species and plan for mitigation if required; and, 4) update traffic forecast.

The actions taken to select a preferred alternative by Conway in concert with other governmental jurisdictions will be disclosed in the FEIS. Follow up surveys and studies that have been identified during the DEIS review period will also be described in the FEIS.