

**CANYON ROAD EAST
NORTHERLY EXTENSION PROJECT
52ND STREET EAST TO 70TH AVENUE
EAST– RIVER CROSSING PROJECT
NEPA/SEPA Environmental Review
Public Comments and Responses**

Prepared for
Federal Highway Administration
Washington State Department of Transportation
Pierce County

Prepared by
Pierce County Planning & Public Works
September 2020

FEDERAL AID NO. STPUL-3170(003)
Environmental Application No. 937178

Comments and Responses

Milroy Bridge

1. Comment:

Can the Milroy Bridge be repurposed for bicycle/pedestrian use or local only traffic?

Response:

The Milroy Bridge is considered functionally obsolete because of its geometric configuration and alignment. While the Milroy Bridge is historic, an engineering study determined that it was not possible to correct the bridge geometry and alignment without significantly impacting the historic features of the bridge. The maintenance costs and environmental impacts are too costly to maintain the bridge for non-motorized uses or local only traffic. Its continued use could potentially be hazardous for fish in the Puyallup River because of the potential for paint, rust, or sediments to fall into the water. The new bridge will have a pedestrian bridge suspended under it, with at-grade (at street level) pedestrian crossings on River Road and Levee Road.

We have evaluated the option of rehabilitating the Milroy Bridge for bicycle/pedestrian use and have concluded that rehabilitation is not feasible due to costs and environmental constraints. Estimated cost for rehabilitation ranges between \$7.9 and \$12.4 million. Not included in the rehabilitation cost estimate is the cost to acquire rights to have the bridge over Puyallup Tribal land (per the Puyallup Land Claims Settlement of 1990). Removal of the Milroy Bridge also provides the opportunity to restore the river and riparian habitat that will help offset impacts associated with the new crossing.

2. Comment:

Can the Milroy Bridge be moved to a different location?

Response:

Pierce County does not have funding to move the bridge or maintain it in a new location. We have evaluated the option of removing the bridge for the purpose of offering the bridge to other interested parties. We estimate the cost to remove the bridge in a way that allows reuse at between \$4.3 and \$5.3 million. Removing the bridge in a way that precludes reuse is estimated at around \$4 million. Any party interested in using the bridge would need to incur the cost of transporting the bridge, storing the bridge, and rehabilitating and constructing the bridge at a new location. The costs (and risks) associated with moving and constructing the bridge in a new location would far exceed the cost to construct a new steel truss bridge of similar size and purpose in the desired location.

The Milroy Bridge is considered functionally obsolete. While the Milroy Bridge is historic, it does not meet criteria for preservation, per Federal Historic Preservation Laws. Additionally, it would

potentially be hazardous to fish because of the potential for paint, rust, or sediments to fall into the water negatively affecting water quality.

3. Comment:

How will River Road and Levee Road connect to the bridge? Why is this the preferred alternative?

Response:

The proposed bridge will be elevated over River Road and North Levee Road, connecting Canyon Road south of the river to 70th Avenue East north of the river with fewer congestion points. This means River Road and Levee Road will not connect directly to the bridge. To reach River Road from northbound Canyon Road, travelers will turn left on 66th Avenue East. To reach Levee Road from southbound 70th Avenue East, travelers would turn left onto 48th Street East to access a new road connecting 48th Street East to Levee Road. The grade-separated alternative best meets the project purpose and need for a reliable freight corridor and transportation system. This option eliminates two signalized intersections on either side of the bridge and reduces overall travel time through the corridor in all directions.



Visualization of the future bridge over the Puyallup River. View is looking northwest, with River Road to the south and Levee Road to the north.

[Design/project plans](#)

4. Comment:

What are the plans for widening Canyon Road from 84th Street East to Pioneer Way East?

Response:

The expansion of Canyon Road from 84th Street East to 72nd Street East is part of a separate project that we expect to construct starting in 2021. This segment of Canyon Road will look similar to the rest of Canyon Road south of 84th Street East with four lanes of traffic, center turn lanes where appropriate, sidewalks, street lighting, and additional curbs, gutters, and an enclosed storm drain system. For more information, [visit the project website](#).

Pierce County is in the early design process for expanding the corridor from 72nd Street East to Pioneer Way East, with plans to construct the improvements either just before or at the same time as the Northerly Extension Project. For more information, [visit the project website](#).

5. Comment:

What are the plans to widen 66th Avenue East between River Road and 66th Avenue East? Is the plan to use the 52nd Street East/66th Avenue East intersection to merge onto the future Canyon Road (currently 52nd Street East) in both directions?

Response:

Drivers on River Road wishing to cross into Fife will use 66th Avenue East to access Canyon Road, turning north onto Canyon Road to cross the new bridge over the Puyallup River. Pierce County will make improvements to 66th Avenue East to accommodate this new traffic flow.

6. Comment:

Will traffic leave 70th Avenue East (new Canyon Road extension) and be able to enter I-5 north and south? Will exit ramps be created from north and southbound I-5 to access the new Canyon Road?

Response:

The project will connect Canyon Road via new bridges over Clarks Creek and the Puyallup River into the City of Fife. The improvements related to this project will end on 70th Avenue East near the intersection of 70th Avenue and 45th Street in the City of Fife. The City of Fife's 70th Avenue East corridor will connect to the new SR 167 extension which will provide access to I-5.

7. Comment:

Levee Road traffic must wait for numerous light changes before we can clear the bridge due to the numerous cars and poor traffic light system. What are your plans to eliminate this problem?

Response:

The improvements will create more direct, less congested routes for travelers to cross the Puyallup River, relieving pressure on local roadways caused by commuters taking shortcuts to avoid congestion. The bridge will have four lanes (two in each direction) and no signals at either end, which addresses the congestion issues experienced with the current bridge crossing.

8. Comment:

How will it ease congestion from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.?

Response:

Pierce County is directly addressing congestion during peak periods by adding capacity with the new bridge and creating a direct route that creates more reliable travel times for drivers. We predict the project will decrease travel time for the heavy through-traffic along Canyon Road East by approximately 58 to 69 seconds during peak hours.

9. Comment:

How do you propose to move the additional traffic once the vehicles move to 70th Avenue East?

Response:

The City of Fife is improving the existing 70th Avenue East from I-5 to Valley Avenue East in segments, as design and construction funding becomes available. A new bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad will replace the existing at-grade (street level) crossing. Fife's upgraded facility will match the street improvements Pierce County and the City of Fife already made on each end of the project, eliminating the bottleneck that currently exists.

10. Comment:

My immediate concern is that traffic is now going to back up southbound 70th Avenue East the distance between West Valley Highway East (Valley Avenue East) and Levee Road. What is the plan for this?

Response:

The improvements will create more direct, less congested routes for travelers to cross the Puyallup River, relieving pressure on local roadways caused by commuters taking shortcuts to avoid congestion. The new grade-separated structure over the Puyallup River eliminates signalized intersections at either North Levee Road or River Road, and thus the cause of traffic backups.

11. Comment:

As a neighbor in the area, I would like to know what will be done to discourage traffic on Bentley Road, which is a small road without lane striping that has been used as a commuter thoroughfare in order to avoid Canyon Road from Pioneer Way East to 72nd Street East. The speed and frequency of cars must be deterred.

Response:

Pierce County is in the early design process for a separate project, CRP 5903 72nd Street East to Pioneer Way East. This project will expand the Canyon Road corridor from 72nd Street East to Pioneer Way East to two lanes in each direction. The County plans to construct these improvements either just before or at the same time as the River Crossing Project. The expansion of Canyon Road in this area will allow increased traffic flows and will thus be a more desirable travel option than a small two-lane roadway such as Bentley Road.

12. Comment:

What do you plan to do about the improvement of Canyon Road between Pioneer Way East and 72nd Street East?

Response:

Pierce County is in the early design process for a separate project, CRP 5903 72nd Street East to Pioneer Way East. This project will expand the Canyon Road corridor from 72nd Street East to Pioneer Way East to two lanes in each direction. The County plans to construct these improvements either just before or at the same time as the River Crossing Project.

13. Comment:

Why doesn't the proposed new bridge offer a ramp to River Road (SR 167) in either direction? It seems that ramps providing access toward/from I-5 would be rather critical.

Response:

With the completion of both the River Crossing Project and the SR 167 extension, we project traffic flows to change dramatically. The primary flow of traffic through this area will be north/south along the Canyon Road corridor, not east/west along River Road. Without the high traffic demand, the proposed local surface street network improvements provide a more cost-effective solution to provide these connections compared to elevated ramps.

14. Comment:

It would be very desirable to have a dedicated bike path, following the Puyallup River, that connects East 11th Street in Tacoma to the Riverwalk Trail.

Response:

The purpose of this project is to create regional north-south connections between the Port of Tacoma and the Frederickson industrial centers. Trail development is not an explicit element of this project. Pierce County recognizes that there are other multimodal transportation goals and projects in the region and has included provisions for pedestrian and bikes on the new bridge. The project's design includes a bridge for pedestrians and bicycles suspended under the main roadway, with street-level crossings on River Road and Levee Road. The proposed pedestrian bridge and crossings will accommodate any future trail development, such as the planned Riverwalk Trail between Tacoma and Puyallup.

15. Comment:

How will traffic from Levee Road get to River Road if the Milroy Bridge is taken out? From pictures of the new bridge, I don't see on and off ramps to allow that to happen. I assume commuters will have to bypass Levee Road and instead take River Road to get to I-5?

Response:

Travelers headed from North Levee Road to River Road will access a new local road that will extend from North Levee Road to 45th Street Court East to access the new bridge via 70th Avenue East. Travelers will then travel south on the new bridge and use 66th Avenue East to access River Road.

16. Comment:

How about doing an underpass or overpass for the farms so they are not impacted?

Response:

We are working with local farmers and agricultural groups to minimize the project's effects on agricultural lands. We selected the overall Canyon Road alignment with the smallest impact on agriculturally zoned land when we studied alternatives beginning in the 1990s. Part of the planned roadway is elevated to allow farm equipment to travel underneath. In 2021 we will begin the process of working with individual property owners in the project area to develop solutions to specific property issues and make sure the project design provides adequate access to continue their operations.

Environmental

17. Comment:

What are your intentions to protect the habitat while construction is in the area?

Response:

The project team has identified various fish and wildlife habitats throughout the project area, including those connected to Clarks Creek and the Puyallup River. Pierce County has worked to address preliminary concerns about environmental impacts through the design process. The bridge design reflects these efforts, and does not place any piers within the water of the Puyallup River and Clarks Creek. Pierce County has minimized the removal of vegetation by constructing walls to limit the extent of grading through riparian areas. Where impacts cannot be avoided completely, Pierce County will mitigate impacts to these habitats in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. Construction of the project will include typical best management practices, such as temporary erosion and sediment controls as well as construction exclusion fencing to minimize environmental impacts during construction. Pierce County may identify additional construction measures during the environmental review and will incorporate them into the construction requirements.

18. Comment:

How will the increase in traffic impact the contaminants to the food grown here?

Response:

The project team cannot currently determine the impact any increased traffic will have on the crops grown in the area, but we will identify possible mitigation measures to avoid potential negative impacts. The stormwater improvements will increase flood storage capacity and help prevent damage to farmland. Pierce County complies with all air and noise regulations at the state and federal level. We will conduct air quality and noise analyses to address emissions from vehicles and noise generated on our roadways. The project team will draft an air quality

discipline report as part of the environmental review and share the results with the public in early 2022. Pierce County's improvements have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve regional air quality due to the decrease in traffic congestion.

19. Comment:

What is the plan to prevent runoff, litter, and build up from the road into the creek and river below? Another concern is the wildlife in the area, including the salmon, eagles, cranes, and other wildlife that live in the trees and creek which the road will run through. Will the runoff cause more flooding to the land and homes surrounding the creek? Will the runoff continue to cause more erosion near the creek as well? What are the plans to prevent these environmental concerns?

Response:

The project team has identified various fish and wildlife habitats surrounding the project area, including those connected to Clarks Creek and the Puyallup River, and will mitigate impacts to these habitats as necessary. Several federal and state policies protect wetlands and streams and Pierce County will work to protect these resources and minimize impacts if we cannot avoid them. Our studies have shown any runoff from the new roadway will not contribute to more flooding in the area. The River Crossing Project will be designed per Pierce County's Stormwater and Site Development Manual and includes constructing stormwater treatment and storage facilities to manage and clean water that runs off the new roadway. The stormwater improvements will increase flood storage capacity and help prevent damage to farmland. Currently no such facilities exist in the project area south of the Puyallup River.

ROW/Property impacts

20. Comment:

Will 70th Avenue East be a problem for those of us who live at Ardenia Gale mobile home court which is right after Levee Road and 70th Avenue East?

Response:

Mobile home parks are often protected under environmental justice requirements, and we will review this as part of our environmental review. Until the project team completes the preliminary design, we will not have enough information to understand individual impacts. The team plans to start reaching out to property owners to discuss possible impacts in early 2021. We will keep community members informed as we know more. The project team will schedule a meeting with Ardenia Gale residents to discuss plans further.

21. Comment:

On the Fife end of the project on 70th Avenue East and 48th Street East, there is a 55+ mobile home community. It appears the bridge will block the current entry point. I understand there will be alternative entry points, but I am wondering if the project intends to try to buy this property? And if so, how much notification would the residents be given, as the older community may need additional time to relocate?

Response:

Until the project team completes the preliminary design, there is not enough information to understand individual impacts. We plan to start reaching out to property owners to discuss possible impacts in early 2021. We will keep community members informed as we know more and are happy to meet with residents to discuss project plans further.

22. Comment:

Will these new roadway improvements affect local farms at all?

Response:

We are working with local farmers and agricultural groups to minimize the project's effects on agricultural lands. We selected the project alignment with the smallest impact on agriculturally zoned land when we studied alternatives beginning in the 1990s. In 2021 we will begin the process of working with individual property owners in the project area to develop solutions to specific property issues and make sure the project design provides adequate access to continue their operations.