

Western North-South Connector Study

Virtual Public Meeting

June 21 – July 13, 2020



Background

ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

MINUTE ORDER

District: Nine

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County: Benton

Category: Miscellaneous

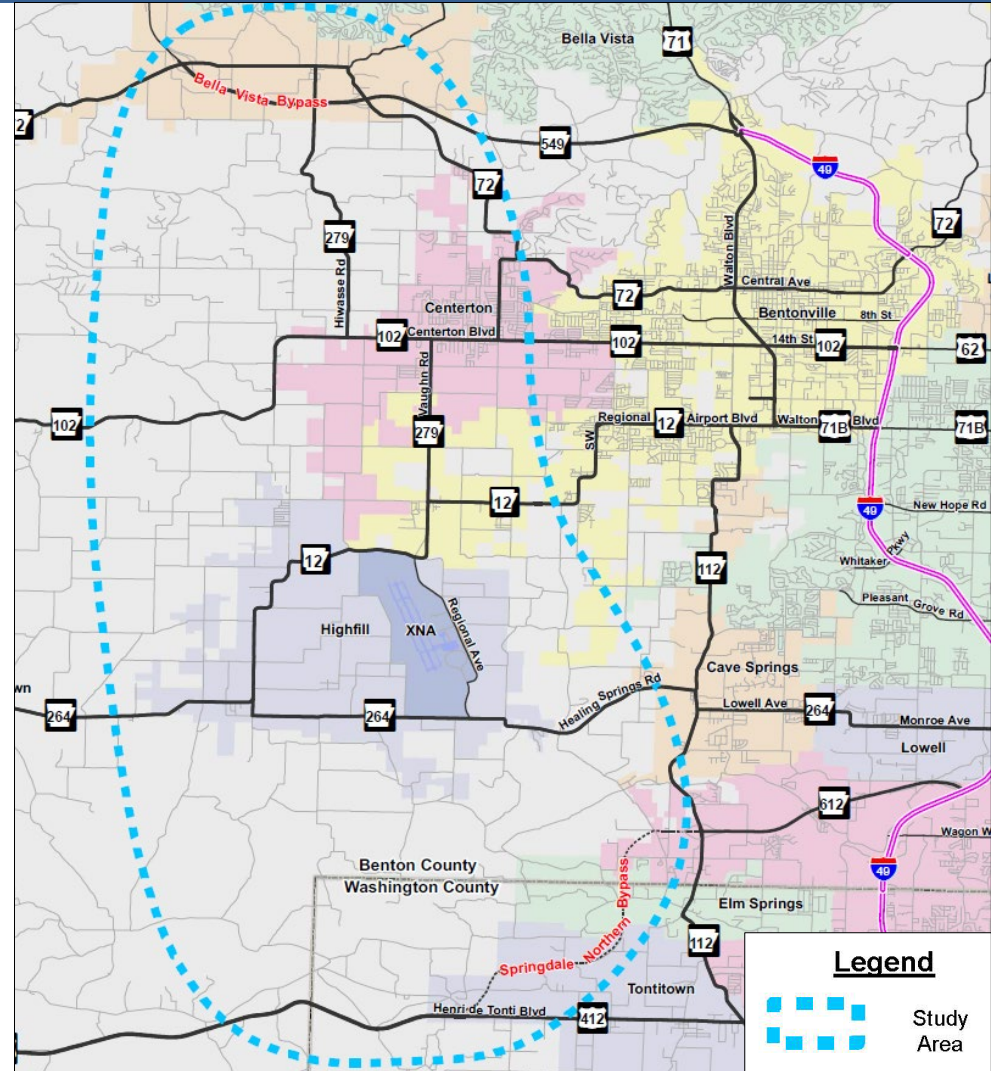
WHEREAS, IN BENTON COUNTY, local officials have suggested that a highway connection from the proposed Highway 612 (Springdale Northern Bypass) to Highway 549 (Bella Vista Bypass) west of Interstate 49 and in the vicinity of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport could improve regional mobility.

WHEREAS, a comprehensive study of the existing highway network, upcoming highway improvements and possible new location alternatives in this region should be considered.

NOW THEREFORE, the Director is authorized to conduct a planning study of the region west of Interstate 49 to identify the need for and feasibility of a western connection between the Springdale Northern Bypass and the Bella Vista Bypass.

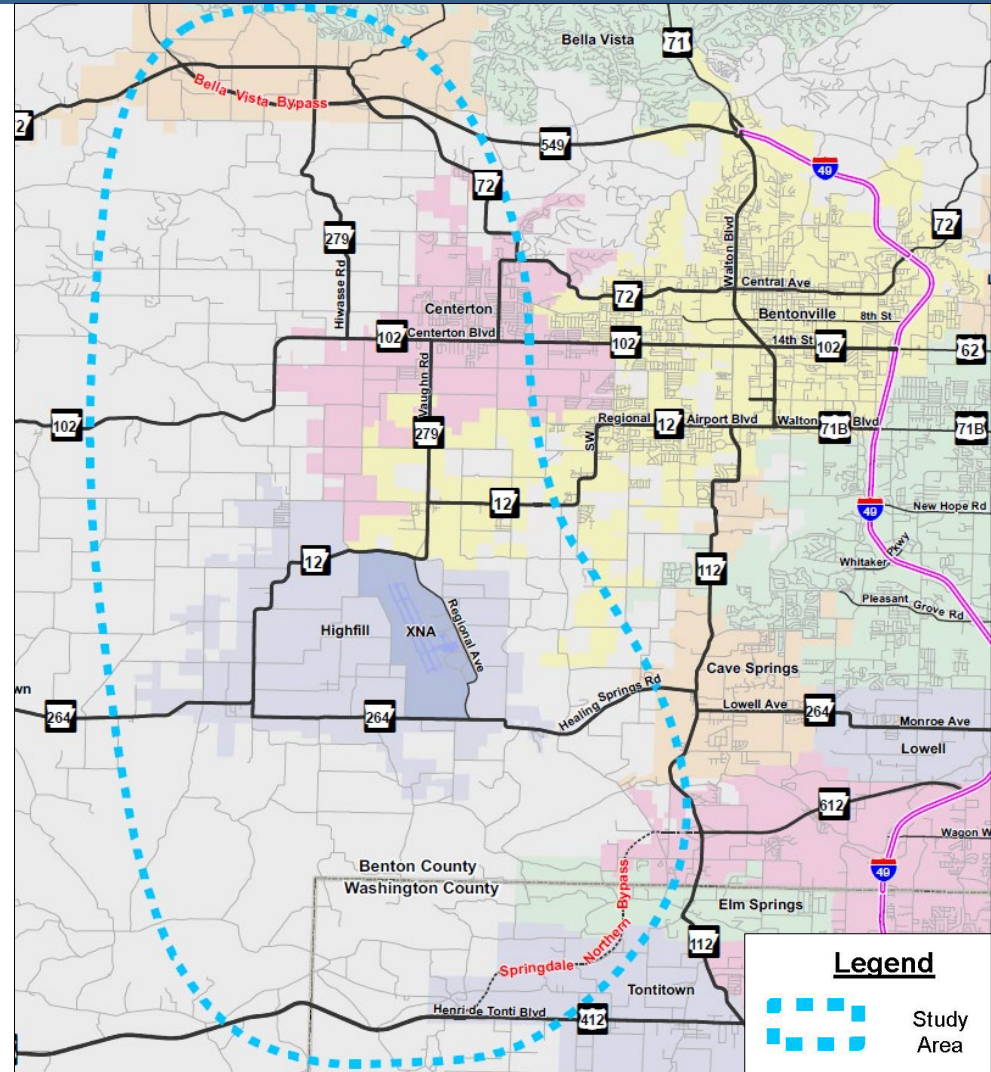
Study Purpose

- Determine the need for a new highway connection from the proposed Highway 612 (Springdale Northern Bypass) to Highway 549 (Bella Vista Bypass) west of Interstate 49
- Identify feasible alternatives for addressing regional needs



Study Purpose

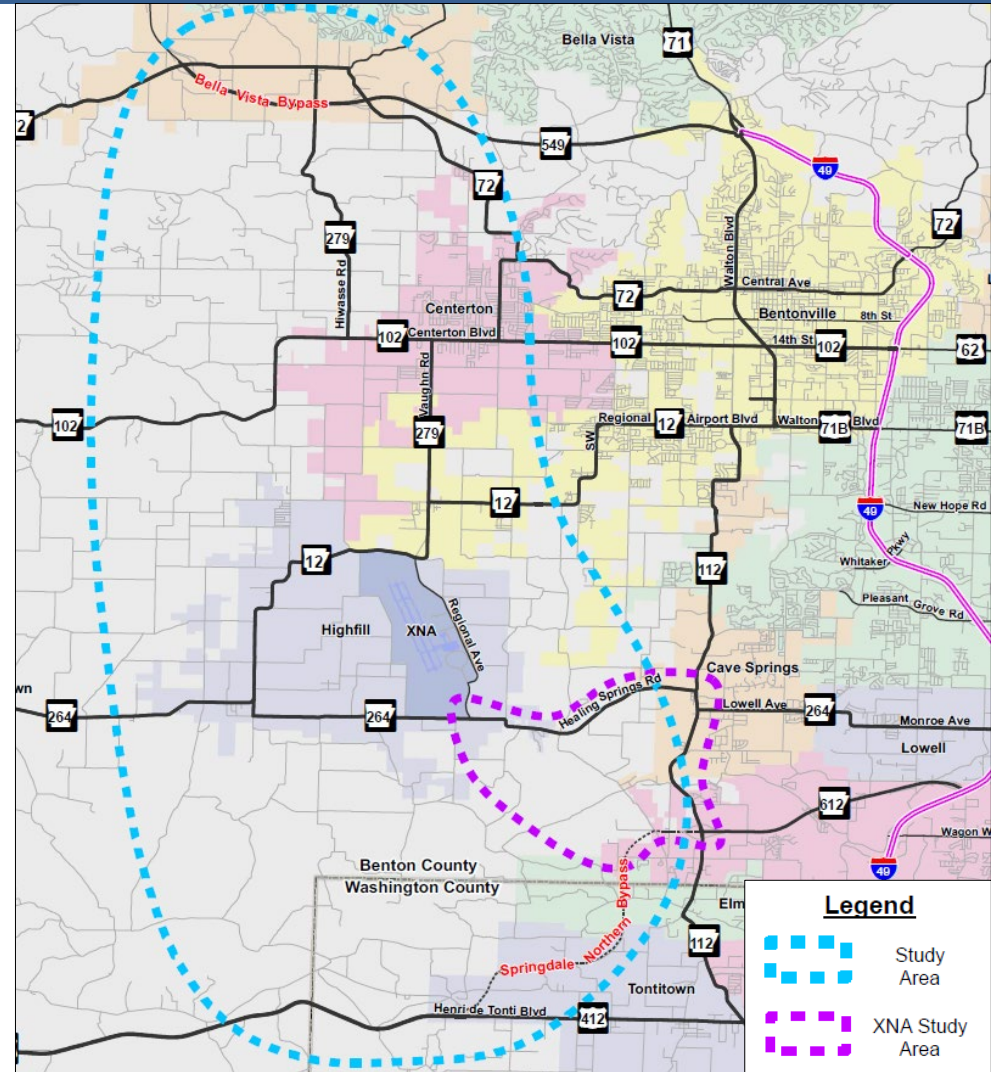
- Develop cost estimates for each alternative
- Engage with stakeholders throughout the study process
- Note: The 2040 Northwest Arkansas Metropolitan Transportation Plan proposes north-south corridor improvements within the study area.



Study Purpose

How does this study relate to the ongoing XNA access road study?

- ARDOT is performing an Environmental Assessment to evaluate alternatives for the proposed XNA access road
- This study will incorporate the findings and recommendations of the XNA access road study



Study Purpose

How does this study differ from the Northwest Arkansas Western Beltway Feasibility Study (2011)?

	Western North-South Connector Study	NWA Western Beltway Feasibility Study (2011)
Purpose	Improve regional mobility	Alternative to continued widening of I-49
Limits	Bella Vista Bypass to Springdale Northern Bypass	Bella Vista Bypass to I-49 near Greenland
Alignment and Cross-Section	To be determined based on needs assessment and stakeholder input	Primarily new location with interchanges at major intersections
Tolling	Will not consider	Considered – found not viable to finance construction
Traffic Forecasts	Thru 2045, using current regional model	Thru 2035, using previous regional model

Study Goals – Proposed



Improve connectivity
(primary study goal)



Improve mobility/
relieve congestion



Strengthen economic
competitiveness



Improve reliability



Support alternative
transportation choices



Enhance safety/
security



Maintain a state of good repair



Improve resiliency



Minimize impacts to
the natural, historic and
cultural environments

Study Goals

What are your concerns and priorities?

- Lack of direct north-south routes within the study area?
- Lack of highway infrastructure to support regional growth?
- Traffic congestion on existing routes?
- Poor freight mobility, reliability, or other freight issues?
- Indirect access to XNA from the north?
- Safety issues on highways within the study area?
- Potential impacts to existing development?
- Potential environmental impacts?
- Potential community impacts?
- Other?

Next Steps – Public Involvement

- Virtual Public Involvement Meeting
 - Sunday, June 21 – Monday, July 13
 - WNSConnector.TransportationPlanRoom.com
 - Presentation
 - Displays
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Comment Form

Next Steps – Remaining Work

- Mid 2020 through Early 2021 –
 - Continue to analyze traffic, safety, environmental, and other data and compile with public comments to determine the need for improvements
 - Prepare traffic forecasts
 - Coordinate stakeholder meetings to discuss local and regional plans
 - Develop and analyze improvement alternatives

Next Steps – Remaining Work

- March/April 2021 – Second round of public involvement activities to present and discuss preliminary findings
- July 2021 – Submit draft final report