FHWA-AR-EIS-06-1-D
State Project 090069
Federal Project FAP HPP 0238(1)

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS REGIONAL AIRPORT INTERMODAL ACCESS ROAD

Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Submitted Pursuant to: 42 USC 4332(2)(c)
42 USC 303
42 USC 138
By the
The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority

Oct. 4, 2012 — Scott Van [illegible]
Date of Approval — Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority

10-12-2012 — Scott A. Bennett
Date of Approval — Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department

10-16-2012 — [illegible]
Date of Approval — Federal Highway Administration

The following persons may be contacted for additional information considering this document:

Brenda Price
Arkansas State Highway
and Transportation Department
Environmental Division
PO Box 2261
Little Rock, AR 72203-2261
(501) 569-2281

Randal Looney
Federal Highway Administration
Arkansas Division Office
700 West Capitol
3130 Federal Office Building
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 324-5625

Scott Vanlaningham
Northwest Arkansas
Regional Airport Auth.
One Airport Boulevard
Suite 100
Bentonville, AR 72712
(479) 205-1000

This project is a proposal to construct a four-lane, fully controlled access highway, designed to Interstate standards, on a new location connecting the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport to the state and federal highway system. The proposed highway would be approximately 8 miles (12.9 kilometers) in length through Benton County, Arkansas. Several alternatives were considered including the No Action Alternative.

Comments on this DEIS are due by Dec. 14, 2012 and should be sent to:

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority
One Airport Boulevard
Suite 100
Bentonville, AR 72712

Contents

Chapter 9: Distribution List of EIS

Appendices

Tables

Figures

Summary

Introduction

In late 1990, the Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority was formed to evaluate, plan, and develop a new commercial service airport to serve the air trade area of Northwest Arkansas. The Authority then prepared a feasibility study, site selection study, master plan, and environmental assessment for a proposed new airport. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) then prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed site for the new airport. In August 1994 the FAA issued a Record of Decision (ROD) on the EIS. Land acquisition and construction on the new airport commenced very shortly after issuance of the ROD. The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport (NWARA) started operation in November 1998 as a new primary commercial service airport serving air traffic passenger demand in northwest Arkansas, southwest Missouri and northeast Oklahoma areas.

The Airport, located in the community of Highfill, Arkansas, accommodates both jet and turboprop passenger aircraft, along with general aviation and cargo operations. In addition to commercial service, general aviation, and cargo operations, the airport provides passenger terminal facilities, air traffic control facilities, aircraft rescue and fire fighting facilities, aircraft maintenance and refurbishing facilities, and corporate aviation facilities. The primary entrance road connects the NWARA to Highway 264 at the south end of the NWARA. A secondary airport entrance road connecting to Highway 12 is located at the north end of the NWARA

The need for improved access to the new Airport was identified in the NWARA Site Selection Study in 1993. In 1994, the FAA's Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport EIS identified the need for "capacity improvements and safety enhancements" for the existing highway facility "or an alternative direct access route to the airport should be considered." In 1998, Congress enacted the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which identified an intermodal connector access road to the NWARA as a high priority project and authorized Federal-aid under the High Priority Project

Program to partially fund the construction of the project. The Northwest Arkansas Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) included the project in the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for Fiscal Years 2003-2005, adopted in 2002, and the project has been included in the TIP ever since.

The Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Authority, in cooperation with the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), initiated the environmental planning process in early 2000. The environmental planning process consists of preparing an EIS on the proposed project. The EIS identifies the need for the proposed project, viable alternatives to meet the need, and the impacts, both positive and negative, associated with the implementation of the viable alternatives. The public has been involved in the process at several different steps. Figure S1 is a simplified chart of the EIS process that was followed for the preparation of this document.

The proposed project will ultimately be a four-lane divided highway designed to meet American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) criteria, which has been adopted by the FHWA and the AHTD. The highway will be designed for a speed of 70 mph (110 km/h) with full access control between interchanges. Initially two lanes of the ultimate four-lane facility will be constructed to provide an acceptable initial Level of Service (LOS) to the public. A full right-of-way width, consisting of an average of approximately 300-feet (100 meters), will be purchased for the proposed ultimate four-lane facility. The Intermodal Access Road will connect to the southern entrance to the NWARA at Highway 264 and connect at the eastern end to I-540. Portions of the Intermodal Access Road will be co-located with the Springdale Northern Bypass (SNB) proposed by the AHTD, which received a ROD on the Selected Alternative in 2006. Connection to I-540 would be through a full access controlled interchange. The terminus at the Airport for the initial two-lane facility would be a signalized intersection; however, a grade separation at Highway 264 would be constructed for the ultimate four-lane facility. Highway 112 and several county roads would be crossed by grade separations to provide continuity of roads and local travel patterns.

From a funding standpoint, both toll and no toll options are being considered for the Intermodal Access Road. The alignment alternatives are the same for each option, however the traffic forecast for the no toll option is slightly higher than the toll option. This is based on the results of a preliminary traffic and toll feasibility study performed for the project. This is due to the motorist's willingness to use the roadway under a toll condition.

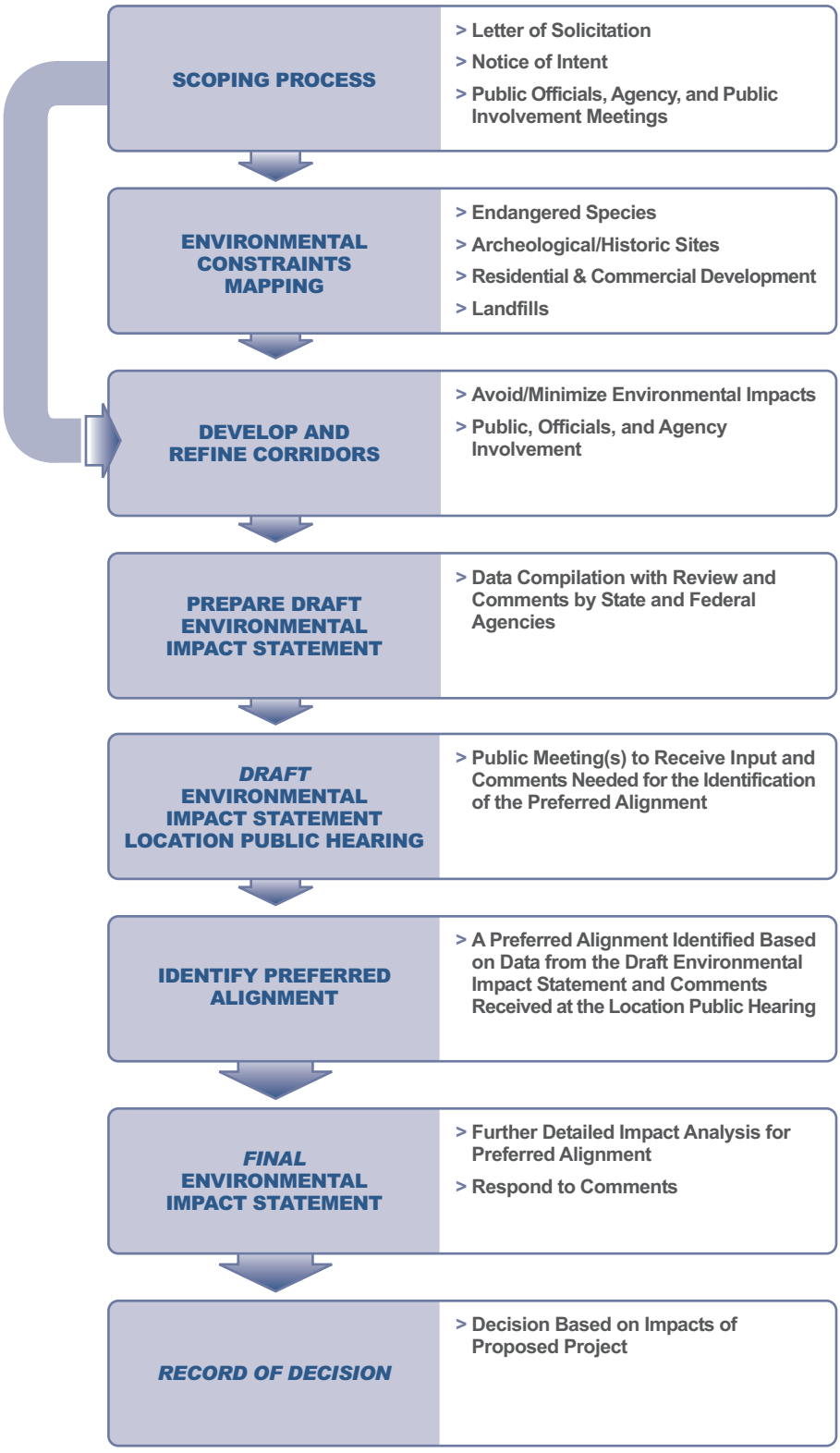

Figure S1 **Environmental Impact Statement Process Chart**

Springdale Northern Bypass Selected Alignment Alternative

There is one other major Federal action underway in the Study Area, the Springdale Northern Bypass (SNB). The AHTD prepared a Draft EIS (DEIS) and a Supplemental DEIS (SDEIS) on proposed alignments for the SNB, which is proposed as a bypass of existing Highway 412 through Springdale. The DEIS presented information on four alignments. The DEIS provided engineering and environmental documentation for the entire length of the sixteen reasonable and feasible segments utilized for the four alignments. Location Public Hearings were held in April 2002 to display DEIS study information and maps of the alignments. Comments received at the public hearing suggested two additional alignments for consideration that were not documented in the DEIS. These additions were a "split interchange" alignment that uses a segment of I-540 as part of the proposed bypass, and a "northern" alignment. The SDEIS was prepared to document the feasibility and reasonableness of these additional proposed alignments and compare any identified impacts to the previously evaluated alignment alternatives.

After review of the SDEIS and receipt of public comments, AHTD prepared a Final EIS (FEIS) which considered two alternatives; the No Action Alternative and the Preferred Line Alternative. The Preferred Line incorporated the "northern" alignment evaluated in the SDEIS, which includes that portion of the SNB which would be co-located with the Intermodal Access Road. The FEIS was published in October 2005 and a ROD approving the Preferred Line alternative was issued in February 2006. Since the Preferred Line alternative will be identical to a portion of the Intermodal Access Road, this DEIS incorporates by reference the ROD issued for the SNB for those portions which are co-located and the only additional impact analysis that will be performed for that co-located segment will be as a result of changed conditions since the issuance of the SNB ROD, or special circumstances. The selected SNB alignment is shown in the following figure, Figure S2, entitled *SPRINGDALE NORTHERN BYPASS SELECTED ALIGNMENT*. The co-located portion is identified as Segment BC on the map.

During the design process, an alignment adjustment was made to reduce the impact on existing homes in the area between I-540 and Highway 112. As of this date, a design reassessment for that area has not been completed by AHTD. Any changes in environmental impacts associated with that portion of the SNB alignment that has been modified following the ROD will be addressed by AHTD during the design reassessment. As AHTD will address the new impacts associated with the modifications, this environmental document will address only the resultant updated traffic, relocations, and noise impacts associated with the new alignment.

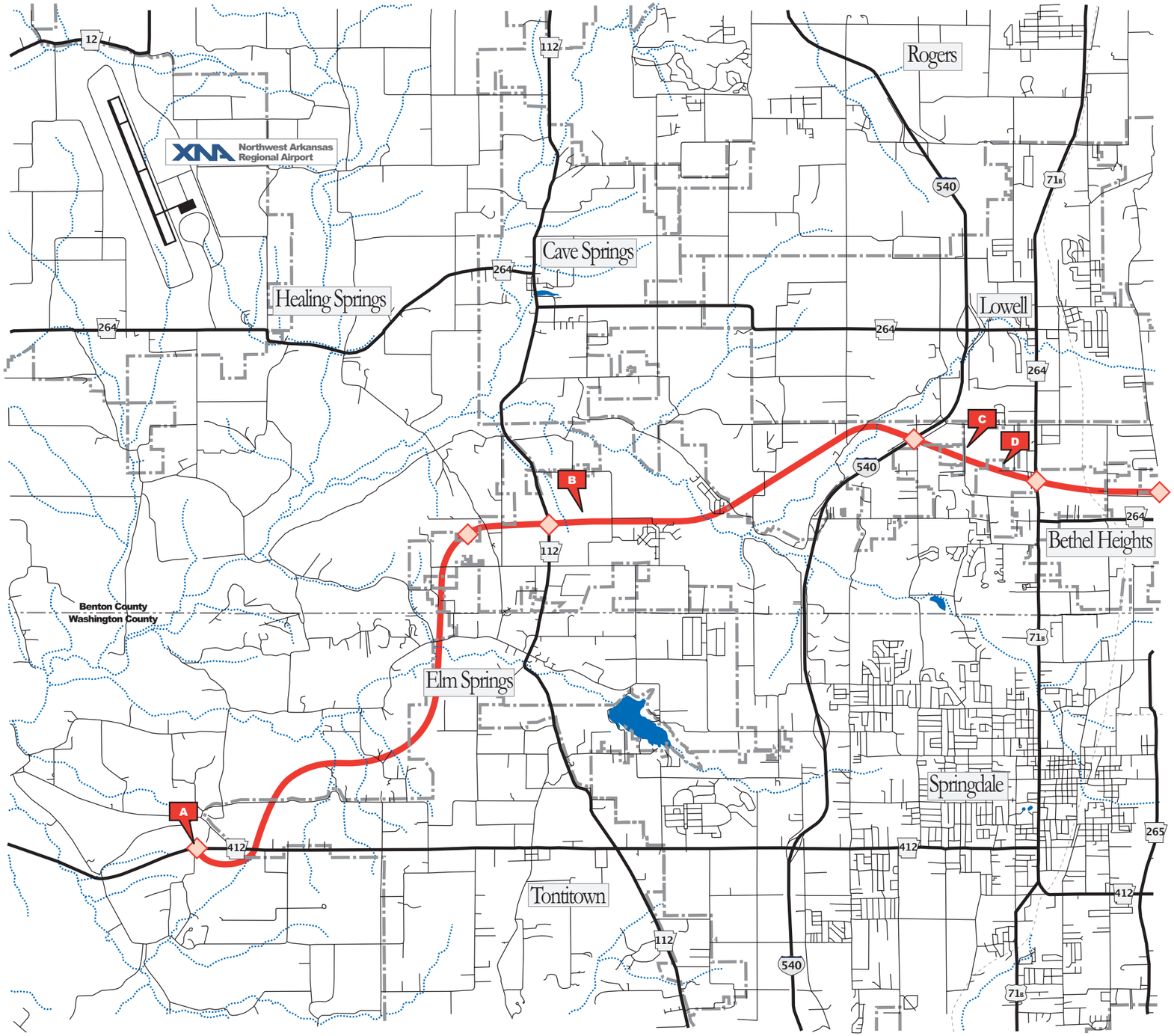

Figure S2 **Springdale Northern Bypass Selected Alignment**

- *Selected Alignment*
- *Section Breaks*
- *Interchange Location*
- *Interstate Highway*
- *U.S. Highway*
- *State Highway*

N

Approximate Scale
1" = 6,000'

Northwest Arkansas
Regional Airport
Intermodal Access Road
Environmental Impact
Statement

XNA

Purpose and Need of Proposed Project

The current highway system providing access to the primary airport entrance does not safely and efficiently accommodate existing traffic demand. It has a traffic mix consisting of automobiles, trucks, farm equipment, school buses and mail carriers, and contains roadway geometric conditions that will contribute to projected congestion and low levels of service in the future. Based on the crash history, it can be concluded that the route has a higher crash rate than similar roadways. These roadway conditions indicate a need for improved access to the NWARA. Without additional roadway capacity, congestion, travel times, and crash rates will likely continue to increase, and access to the airport will be somewhat restricted.

In summary, the existing roadway system capacity is limited in its ability to accommodate existing and future traffic demand. Traffic congestion is projected to increase with a resulting decrease in the level of service (LOS). LOS is used to describe general operating characteristics along long segments of a roadway or at specific intersections. It also describes the general operating conditions of a roadway at peak travel periods and is directly related to either the traffic volume to capacity ratio or the duration of delay. LOS is given a letter designation from A to F, with LOS A representing very good operating conditions and LOS F representing very poor operating conditions with lengthy delays and heavy congestion. As a practical consideration, LOS D is generally considered the limit of acceptable operations in urban areas, with LOS C or better being the desirable condition in rural areas. This is consistent with the 2000 Highway Capacity Manual.

Therefore, the purpose of the project is to provide improved vehicle access to the NWARA, and provide higher levels of safety and traffic efficiency for the existing and future traffic demand.

Development of Alternatives

The development of alternative alignments for the Intermodal Access Road was a multi-stepped process that screened possible locations against more detailed environmental and human factors. Corridor development was the first step and utilized broad design considerations and existing areas of residential concentrations. Design factors consisted mainly of topographic, stream crossing and interchange considerations, in addition to known locations of endangered species habitat.

An additional consideration during the development of the alternatives was the on-going EIS being conducted by AHTD for the SNB. The SNB will begin at an interchange with

existing Highway 412 west of Tontitown where the highway presently changes from four to five lanes and will end with an interchange on existing Highway 412 between the Springdale eastern city limits and Beaver Lake. From the beginning of both projects, commitments were made to coordinate closely the projects and to evaluate the possibility of sharing portions of the roadways to minimize impacts. This would not only minimize direct impacts, but also would reduce overall construction cost and reduce or minimize cumulative impacts associated with the two projects. Information gathered for each project was shared and used in the development of alternatives.

Six initial corridors were considered for the Intermodal Access Road and evaluated against additional environmental criteria. Such factors consisted of more detailed endangered species habitat information, residential displacements, the ability to meet purpose and need, and consequential impacts. This process allowed for the corridors to be further refined into two new location alignments, each considering a toll/no toll funding alternative. In addition, the No Action Alternative was also considered and was retained throughout the process as a basis for comparing the impacts associated with the build alternatives. The No Action Alternative consists of no improvements to the present major access road, Highway 264, other than maintenance. The two build alignments, along with the SNB Selected Line, are shown on the following figure, Figure S3 *ALIGNMENTS SUMMARY*. As can be seen, the airport alignments are very similar in the western portions and both are co-located with a portion of the SNB Selected Line in the eastern portion for intersection with I-540. This DEIS evaluates impacts for Alternatives 4AB and 5AB, along with the No Action Alternative. The document incorporates and identifies those impacts disclosed in the SNB FEIS and ROD, to the extent feasible, for Segment BC, the co-located segment.

Summary of Impacts

Construction of the proposed project would provide the following benefits:

- Provide a vital link to the National Highway System, as well as to the state and regional transportation system.
- Provide connectivity between the NWARA, the SNB, and I-540.
- Improve ground transportation safety and efficiency.
- Provide safe and efficient movement of ground vehicles to and from the NWARA.
- Alleviate congestion along the existing access road.
- Meet the existing and future traffic demand and level of service by construction of a fully access-controlled facility.

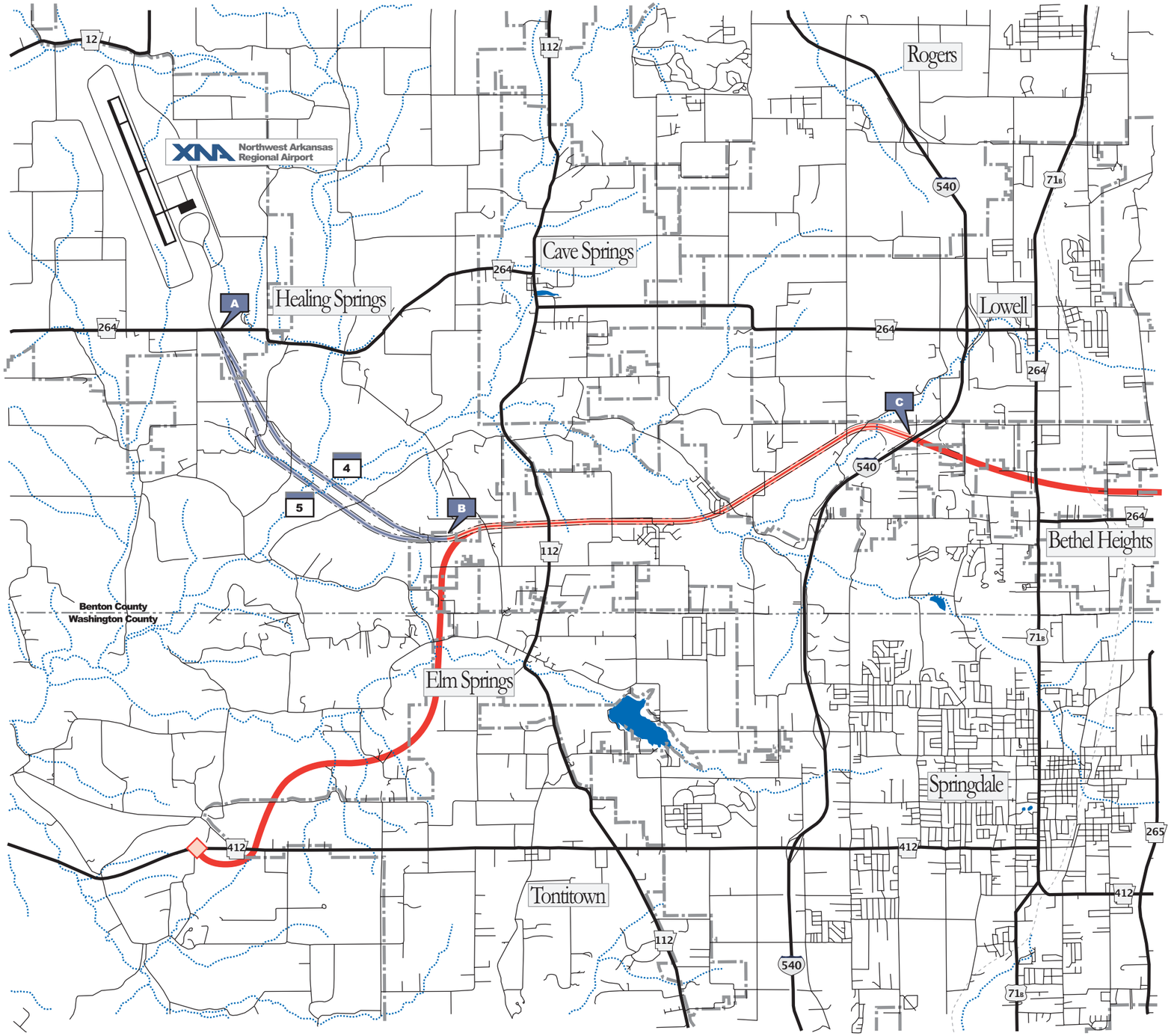

Figure S3 **Alignments Summary**

- *Springdale Northern Bypass Selected Alignment Alternative*
- *Segment A-B*
- *Segment B-C*
- *Segment Breaks*
- *Interstate Highway*
- *U.S. Highway*
- *State Highway*
- *Intermodal Access Road Alternatives*

N

Approximate Scale
1" = 6,000'

Northwest Arkansas
Regional Airport
Intermodal Access Road
Environmental Impact
Statement

XNA

- Reduce cumulative impacts with the SNB.

A summary of the impacts is presented in the following figure, Figure S4, entitled *IMPACTS SUMMARY MATRIX*.

Other Federal Actions/Permits Required

The following actions must occur in order to implement this project:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must issue a Section 404 permit for the placement of dredged and fill material in waters of the United States as required by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
- Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality must issue a Section 401 Water Quality Certification and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit as required by Section 401 and 402 of the Clean Water Act.
- Completion of the Section 106 Consultation process for historic and cultural properties in conjunction with the Arkansas State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation.
- Continued coordination with the Cherokee and Osage tribes during the planning and implementation of the project.
- Approval of the Federal Highway Administration for connection to the SNB.

Figure S4 **Impacts Summary Matrix**

	Compatible Land Use	Farmland Impacts	Direct Social Impacts	Temporary Social Impacts	Cumulative Impacts	Relocation Impacts ***	Economic Benefits	Air Quality Impacts/Conformancy	Noise Impacts***	Water Quality Impacts	Wetland Impacts	Biotic Communities	Threatened and Endangered Species	Floodplain Impacts	Historic and Archeological Preservation	Hazardous Waste Sites	Section 4(f) Properties	Infrastructure/Utility Impacts***	Traffic	Costs*
Segment 4AB	Compatible	**Prime** 21.7 Acres (8.8 Hectares) **Statewide Important** 18.6 Acres (7.5 Hectares)	Low	Low	Med	5 Residential 8 Others	**Toll** $526 Million **Without Toll** $639 Million	Insignificant, in Conformance	**Toll** 13 **Without Toll** 13	2 Stream Crossings	0	242.0 Acres Displaced	Insignificant	11.0 Acres (4.73 Hectares)	3 Sites; All are Recommended for Additional Analysis	0	0	2 County Road Closures 3 County Road Relocations	Positive	**Toll** $92.5 Million **Without Toll** $92.0 Million
Segment 5AB	Compatible	**Prime** 25.9 Acres (10.5 Hectares) **Statewide Important** 10.9 Acres (4.4 Hectares)	Low	Low	Med	3 Residential 2 Other	**Toll** $510 Million **Without Toll** $620 Million	Insignificant, in Conformance	**Toll** 14 **Without Toll** 14	2 Stream Crossings	0	249.3 Acres Displaced	Insignificant	11.2 Acres (4.53 Hectares)	2 Sites; 1 is Recommended for Additional Analysis	0	0	2 County Road Closures 1 County Road Relocation	Positive	**Toll** $93.0 Million **Without Toll** $92.5 Million
Segment BC	Areas of Non-compatibility	**Prime** 46.4 Acres (18.8 Hectares) **Statewide Important** 40.7 Acres (16.5 Hectares)	Medium	Low	Low	30 Residential 13 Others	**	Insignificant, in Conformance	**Toll** 136** One School **Without Toll** 138** One School	2 Stream Crossings	0	**	Insignificant	8.26 Acres (3.34 Hectares)	4 Sites; 1 is Recommended for Additional Analysis	0	0	6 County Road Closures 2 County Road Relocations	Positive	**
No Action	Compatible	0 Acres	High	Low	High	0 Residential 0 Others	Unknown	Insignificant, in Conformance	Insignificant	0	0	0	Could Be Significant	0	0	0	0	0	Negative	N/A

* Includes Right-of-Way and Construction Costs.
** Effects of Segment BC are included in Segments 4AB and 5AB.
*** Updated subsequent to the SNB Location Public Hearing conducted by AHTD.