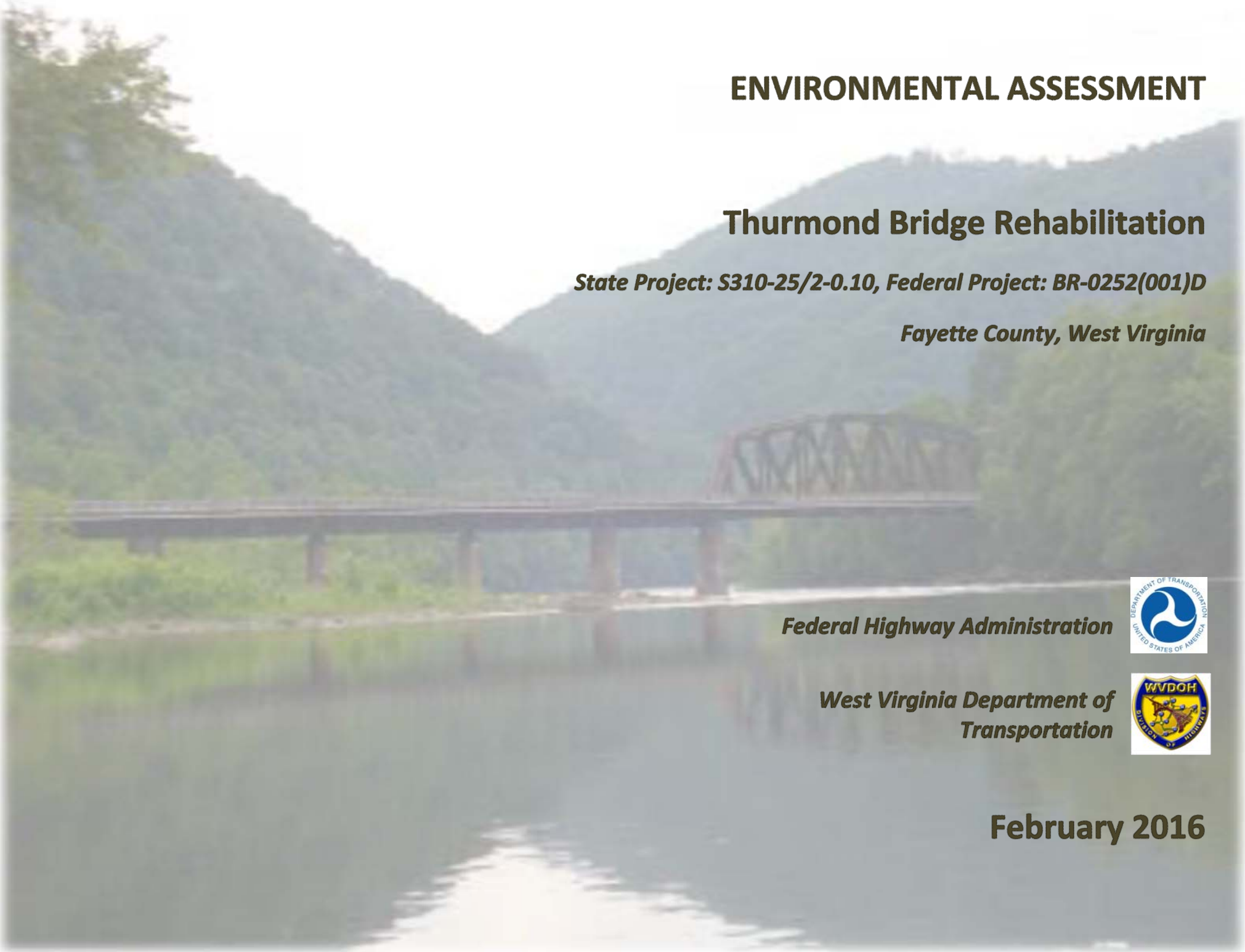

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Thurmond Bridge Rehabilitation

State Project: S310-25/2-0.10, Federal Project: BR-0252(001)D

Fayette County, West Virginia

Federal Highway Administration

West Virginia Department of Transportation

February 2016

APPROVAL SIGNATURES

THURMOND BRIDGE REHABILITATION

FAYETTE COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

STATE PROJECT S310-25/2-0.10 FEDERAL PROJECT NO. BR-0252(001)D

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Submitted Pursuant to 42 USC 4332(2)(C) by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways

Paul A. Matthews, Jr.

For West Virginia Department of Transportation

2/2/16

Date of Approval

For Federal Highway Administration

2/4/16

Date of Approval

The proposed project consists of the rehabilitation of the Thurmond Bridge, which carries Fayette County Route 25/2 over the New River, to maintain or increase the vehicle weight capacity of the bridge and to improve the safety of pedestrians accessing the Thurmond Historic District and the National Park Service Interpretive Center.

For Information Contact

Mr. Ben Hark
Environmental Section Head, Engineering Division
West Virginia Division of Highways
1334 Smith Street
Charleston, WV 25301

Mr. Jason Workman
Director, Program Development
Federal Highway Administration
Geary Plaza, Suite 200
700 Washington Street, East
Charleston, WV 25305

Public Comment Period

Comments on this Environmental Assessment are due March 23, 2016. Written comments on this document can be submitted through the engineering project website (http://go.wv.gov/dotcomment) or by mail to the following address:

Mr. R.J. Scites, P.E.
Director, Engineering Division
West Virginia Division of Highways
1334 Smith Street
Charleston, WV 25301

CONTENTS

Introduction 1
What is the Purpose of the Project? 3
What are the Needs for the Project? 3
What is the Preferred Alternative? 5
What will Happen if the Preferred Alternative is Not Implemented? 7
How Well Do the No Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative Meet the Purpose and Need? 7
What are the Impacts Associated with the No Build Alternative and the Preferred Alternative? 8
What Are the Commitments to Mitigate for Impacts Associated with the Preferred Alternative? 13
Permits and Clearances Required for this Project 14
Outreach and Opportunities for Stakeholder Participation 15
Distribution of the Environmental Assessment 16

TABLES

Table 1 Purpose and Need Summary for the No Action Alternative and Preferred Alternative 7
Table 2 Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative and the Preferred Alternative 8
Table 3 Mitigation Measures for the Preferred Alternative 13

FIGURES

Figure 1. Project Location Map 1
Figure 2. Thurmond Historic District 2
Figure 3. Existing Condition of Thurmond Bridge 3
Figure 4. Detour Route 4
Figure 5. Preferred Alternative 4 6
Figure 6. Cover of May 2015 Public Meeting Handout 15

APPENDICES – PROVIDED DIGITALLY ON DISC

Appendix A Evaluation for Applying the "Programmatic Section 4(f) Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges" to the Thurmond Bridge Rehabilitation Project

Appendix B Correspondence with the State Historic Preservation Officer

Appendix C Memorandum of Agreement By and Among the WV State Historic Preservation Officer and WVDOH, dated November 2015

INTRODUCTION

The West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Highways (WVDOH), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to rehabilitate the Thurmond Bridge, which carries County Route (CR) 25/2 over the New River in Fayette County, West Virginia (Figure 1). This bridge lies within a small but historically significant town, and also within the New River Gorge National River Park (Figure 2).

The Thurmond Bridge was built in 1915-1916. In addition to the roadway, the bridge carries a single track of the Dunloup Branch Railroad, which meets the C & O Railroad in Thurmond on the north side of the river. The roadway component was originally built as a walkway from Thurmond Station, a railroad depot on the north side of the river, to a hotel on the south side (U.S. Dept. of Interior Nomination Form). It currently carries a single lane of traffic.

The bridge has undergone many repairs through its long life. In 2012, use of the bridge was restricted to vehicles less than 3 tons. With the addition of anchoring devices in 2013, the weight restriction was raised to 10 tons.

Constraints of the bridge design also limit the bridge's service to vehicles and pedestrians. Being along a National River and within a historic district, the Thurmond Bridge offers a valuable opportunity for sight-seeing. However, with only an 11-foot width and no shoulder or sidewalk, the bridge cannot safely accommodate vehicles and pedestrians simultaneously.

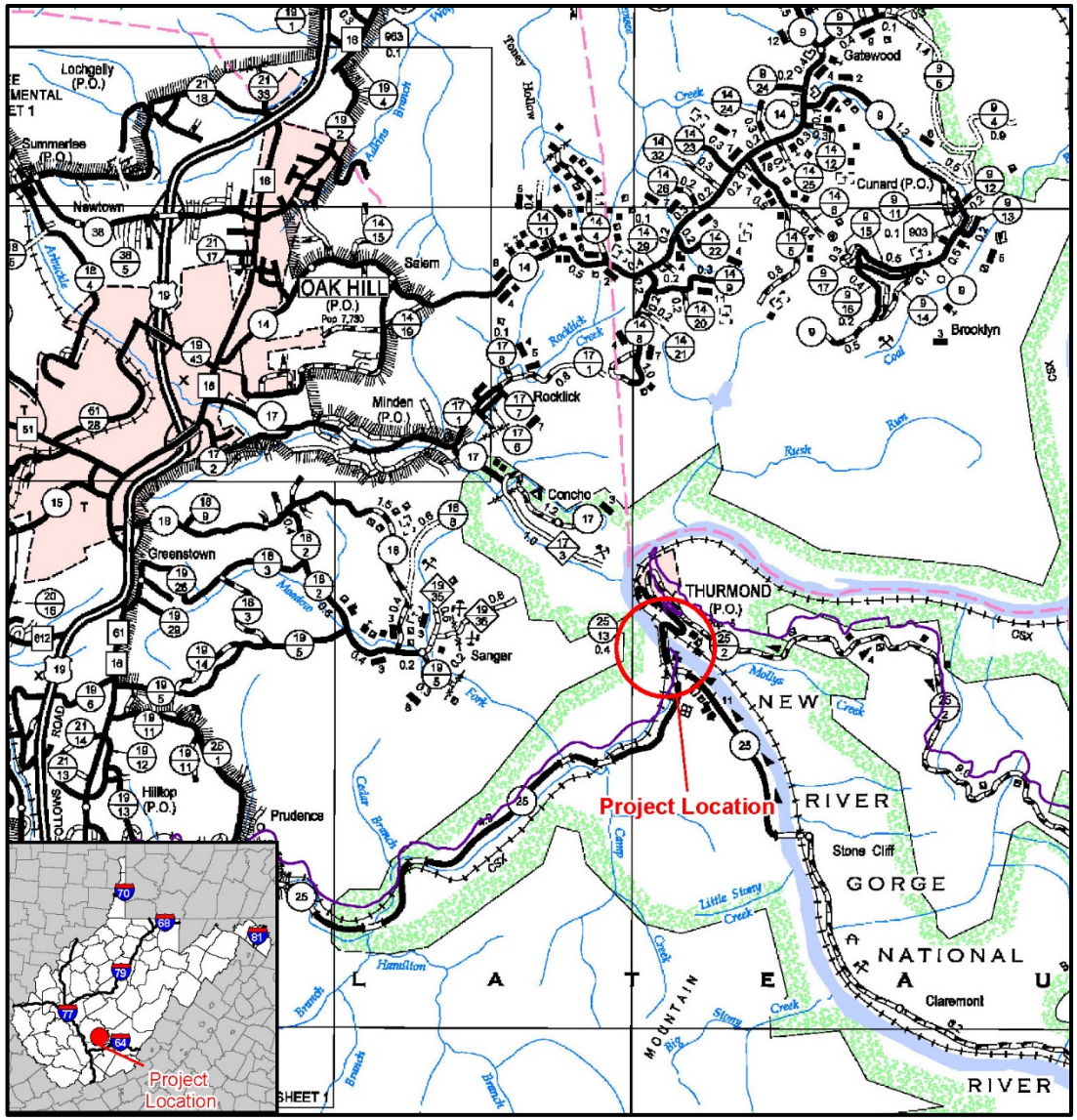

Figure 1. Project Location Map

The proposed rehabilitation project will not add any travel lanes to the bridge, but will allow the bridge to remain open, will increase the weight capacity, and will provide observation bays adjacent to the roadway at periodic intervals. Pedestrians can stand in the bays to be out of the way of vehicles while crossing the river or relaxing to enjoy the view.

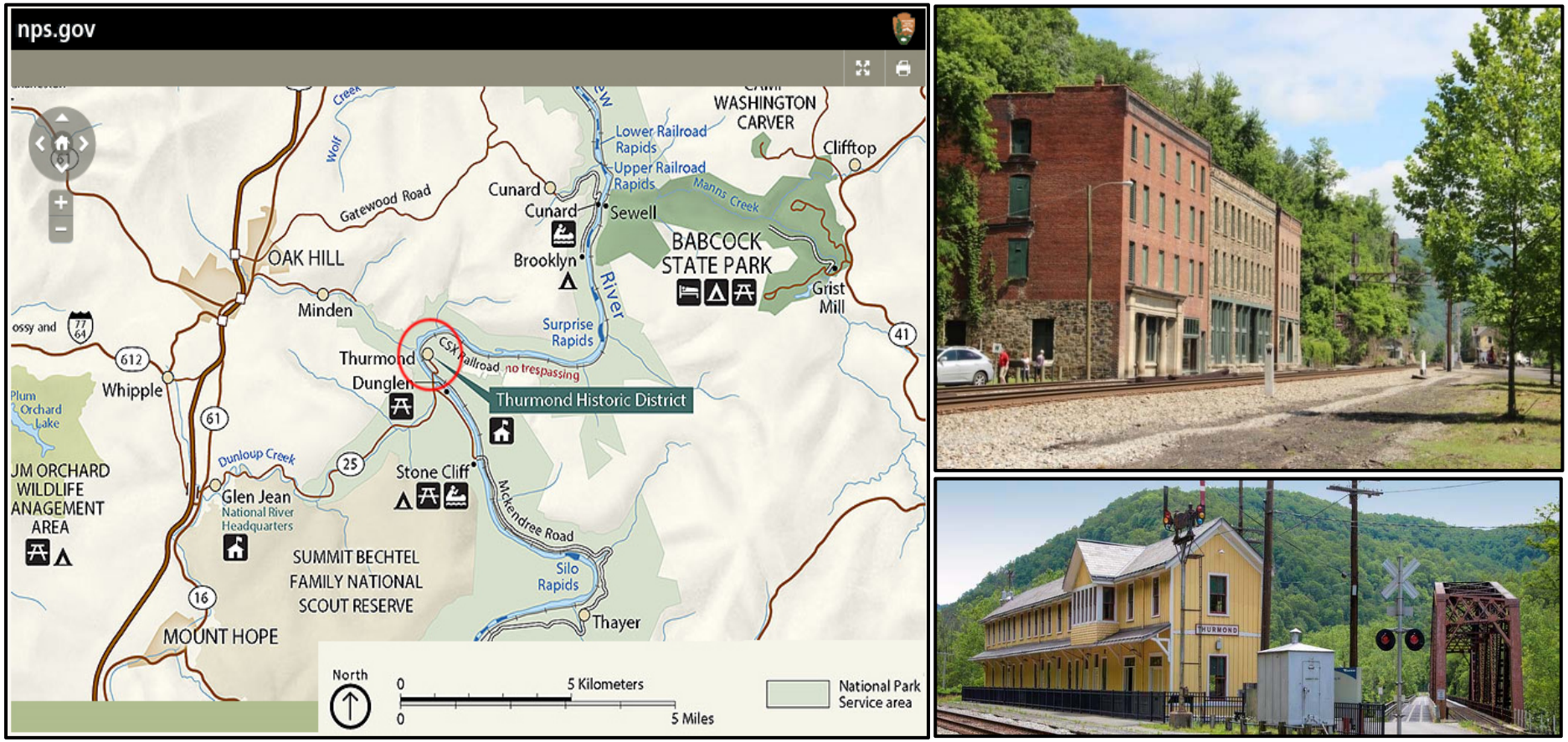

Figure 2. Thurmond Historic District Left: Project vicinity (red circle) as shown on a portion of the National Park Service's New River Gorge National River park map, available from www.nps.gov/neri. Top Right: View of C & O Railroad line through Thurmond Historic District, facing east. The historic National Bank of Thurmond building is on the left, and the historic Thurmond Station (railroad depot), now used as a Visitor's Center, is in the distance to the right. Bottom Right: Historic Thurmond Station, renovated in 1995 to serve as an Interpretive Center for the New River Gorge National River Park, and the Thurmond Bridge, with the railroad on the right and CR 25/2 to the left.

What is the Purpose of the Project?

The purpose of the project is to rehabilitate the Thurmond Bridge with a structure that continues to provide vehicular and pedestrian access to Thurmond, WV and its National Park Service resources and that provides increased safety for pedestrians utilizing the bridge.

What are the Needs for the Project?

Rehabilitation: In 2012, the Thurmond Bridge was thoroughly inspected, and it was found that the condition of the bridge was critical. It was recommended that WVDOH consider closing the bridge temporarily to vehicle traffic and/or take other precautions until proper tie-downs could be installed. WVDOH responded by reducing the load limit of the bridge to 3 tons and beginning temporary repairs. Those temporary repairs were completed in 2013, and subsequently the load limit was raised to 10 tons.

However, those temporary repairs did not offer long-term solutions to all of the issues affecting the bridge's ability to remain in service. As stated in a Bridge Renovation Study completed by WVDOH in 2013, "The most serious deficiencies include the dislocated truss bearings; decaying wingwalls; deterioration of the concrete substructures; undermining of girder bearings, corroded anchor bolts, and areas of advanced section loss to steel members." Only the girder bearing problem was addressed in 2013. Some of the deterioration is evident in Figure 3.

If the needs for rehabilitation are not addressed, the bridge will have to be closed. This would necessitate a long detour to join the town of Thurmond to reach the closest business centers and highways (Figure 4). To access Thurmond from the south side of the bridge, residents and visitors would have to travel far south around Highland Mountain, a trip that takes over 40 miles and an hour and a half to travel. Such a detour would have social and economic costs to the residents and hamper use of the Thurmond Historic District as a cultural and scenic resource.

Figure 3. Existing Condition of Thurmond Bridge Top: Deteriorating conditions underneath the vehicular/pedestrian bridge. Bottom: A pedestrian's view north along the Thurmond Bridge with an on-coming car.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY: Improving safety for pedestrians is a priority with this project because 1) pedestrian use of the bridge is an important component of the bridge's historic character, 2) pedestrian use of the bridge is anticipated to increase, and 3) the National Park Service wants to improve pedestrian safety on this bridge, which crosses one of the parks under their jurisdiction and serves as an access point for their Interpretive Center. Each of these points is discussed in Section D.1.2 of the evaluation document included with Appendix A. In summary, the National Park Service anticipates growth in the number of visitors to the historic area as it continues to restore more structures in Thurmond. The National Park Service owns over 20 structures in the town, and in 1995 the agency restored the Thurmond Railroad Depot to be used as an Interpretive Center for the New River Gorge National River Park (Figure 2). Visitation has risen in recent years, and yet there is very little parking in downtown Thurmond. After limited spaces are filled, visitors must park on the south side of the river and walk across the Thurmond Bridge. The bridge is only 11 feet wide and has no shoulder or sidewalk. The mixing of pedestrians with vehicular traffic presents possible safety concerns, as is evident in Figure 3.

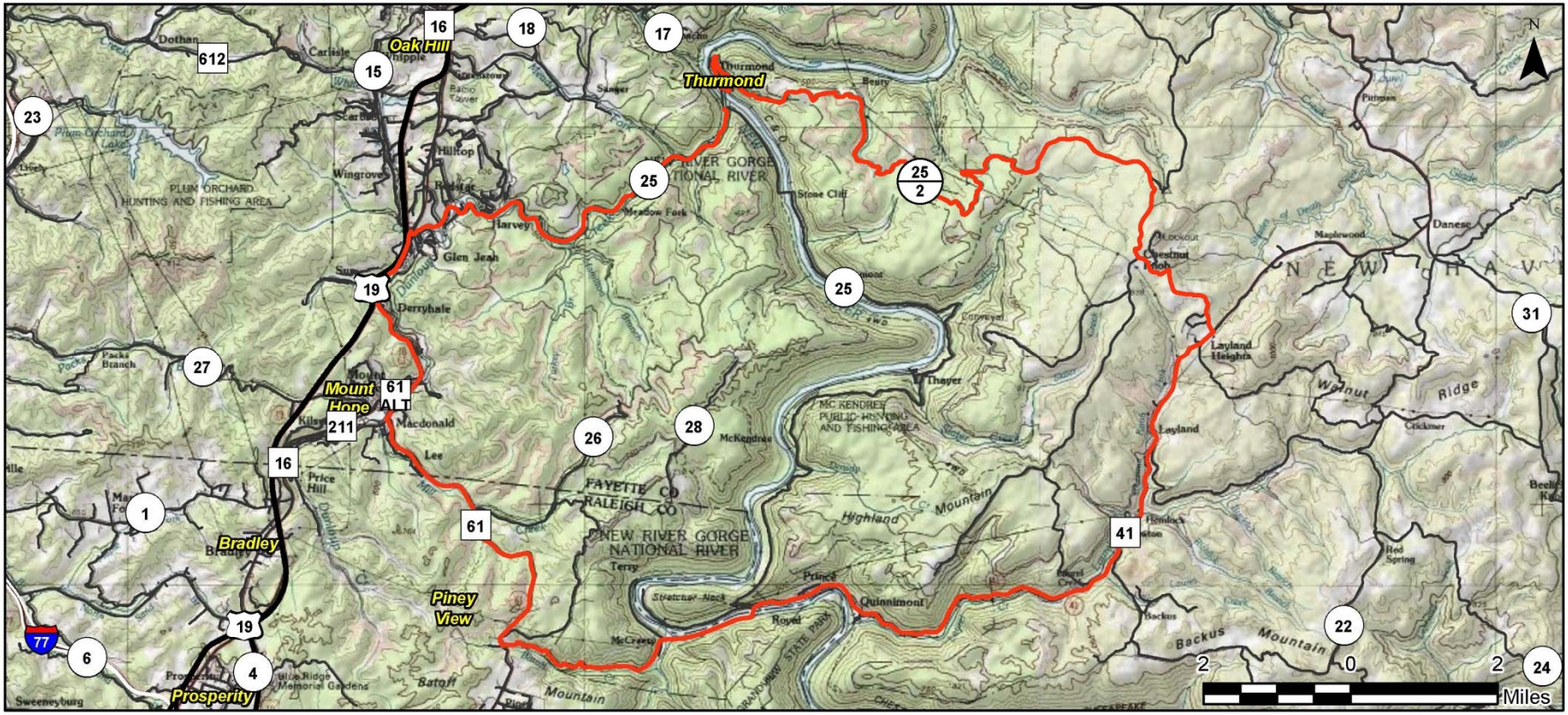

Figure 4. **Detour Route**

WHAT IS THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

From a range of alternatives developed and considered for this project, WVDOH and FHWA are proposing Renovation Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative. Preferred Alternative 4 best maintains the historic integrity of the bridge while remaining a feasible alternative that fulfills the purpose and need of the project.

Prior to arriving at this decision, WVDOH and FHWA assessed a range of new bridge alternatives in studies completed in 2000 and 2001. None of the new bridge alternatives were determined to be feasible and prudent, as detailed in Appendix A, Section E.2. After the most recent bridge inspection (2012), WVDOH developed six (6) alternatives for renovating the bridge instead of replacing it. WVDOH concluded that any renovation of the bridge must include the following suite of repairs in order to meet the design standards for this bridge (i.e., a 12-ton load limit) and to preserve it for the foreseeable future:

- Replacement of deteriorated timber ties and planking.
- Jacking and temporarily supporting the truss and girders while the bearings are replaced.
- Bearing replacement.
- Extensive concrete patching, crack sealing, and seat re-construction.
- Wingwall reconstruction.
- Structural repairs to the deteriorated steel members and connections, including:
  - Plating of the truss low chords at a few areas of heavy loss;
  - Replacement of several truss lateral gusset plates and cap plates with heavy loss;
  - Plating of several girder flanges, stiffeners and lateral gussets that exhibit significant loss with through holing;
  - Strengthening of roadway brackets 2, 5, 8 and 27-31 and several connection repairs to the bottom flanges;
  - Repairs to strengthen truss gusset plates; and
  - Stringer strengthening repairs.
- Replacement of deteriorated rivets with bolts.
- Cleaning, sealing, and painting.

The six (6) renovation alternatives all included these measures, but have different means of addressing the need for increased pedestrian safety. The detailed study of the renovation alternatives is included in its entirety and discussed in Appendix A. As detailed in Section F.2 of Appendix A, five (5) of the renovation alternatives were dismissed for one or more of the following reasons:

A) Infeasibility, i.e., it could not be constructed as a matter of sound engineering judgment. This is the case for an alternative that includes a full length sidewalk along the upstream side of the bridge.

B) Not satisfying the project's purpose and need. This is the case for alternatives that do not adequately address pedestrian safety.

C) Greater impact to the historic integrity of the Thurmond Bridge and other historic property. This is the case for alternatives that include a full length sidewalk along the downstream side of the bridge and/or require the acquisition of right-of-way from the historic district.

All of the renovation alternatives as well as the "No Build" alternative were presented to the public at a Open House Public Meeting in Glen Jean, WV on May 7, 2015. Details of this meeting are provided toward the end of this document (see "Outreach and Opportunities for Stakeholder Participation").

After consideration for comments received in response to the public meeting, WVDOH and FHWA chose Renovation Alternative 4 as the Preferred Alternative. Again, details of the selection process are provided in Section E of Appendix A.

Figure 5. Preferred Alternative 4 This figure shows a computer generated depiction of the renovation, including the pedestrian refuge bays and concrete-filled strip of the roadway (by Michael Baker International for WVDOH).

In addition to the rehabilitation measures listed above, Preferred Alternative 4 will include the following features, as depicted in Figure 5:

- Refuge bays on the upstream side of the bridge. The refuge bays allow pedestrians to move clear of oncoming vehicles and provide unique vantage points of the New River. Four bays will be located in line with bridge pier locations, at approximately 200-foot intervals.
- A 4-foot wide strip of pavement along the full length of the bridge's decking to provide safer pedestrian passage.

Preferred Alternative 4 will cost approximately $8.7 million, and will take approximately 10 months to complete. Over the course of 3 months, there will be approximately 27 days of bridge closure, with no more than 3 consecutive days at a time. The rehabilitation will take place without any work in the New

River. As confirmed through correspondence with the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the rehabilitation will have an adverse effect on three historic properties. Details on project impacts and mitigation for those impacts are provided later in this document.

What will Happen if the Preferred Alternative is Not Implemented?

The No Build Alternative involves taking no action other than routine maintenance activities, allowing the Thurmond Bridge to continue to operate under existing conditions. Allowing the deterioration to continue will eventually result in posting additional weight restrictions on the bridge and ultimately its permanent closure. To cross the river will require a detour of over 40 miles and approximately an hour and half of travel (Figure 4).

The No Build Alternative does not provide a structure that meets current design standards and is not able to maintain or improve the services the bridge currently provides travelers and pedestrians. Therefore, the No Build Alternative does not meet the project purpose and need. However, the No Build Alternative is retained in this environmental assessment as a basis for comparison.

How Well Do the No Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative Meet the Purpose and Need?

Table 1 summarizes the ways in which the No Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative 4 meet the elements of the project's purpose and need statement.

Table 1. Purpose and Need Summary for the No Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative

Purpose and Need Element	No Build Alternative	Preferred Alternative 4
Continue to provide vehicle and pedestrian access.	NO With this alternative, the bridge will eventually be closed.	YES This alternative maintains the existing structure and restores a higher weight capacity to the bridge.
Increases safety for pedestrians.	NO This alternative does not change unsafe conditions for pedestrians.	YES This alternative allows pedestrians to avoid conflicts with vehicular traffic by providing observation bays at periodic intervals along the bridge.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE AND THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

The No Build Alternative and Preferred Alternative 4 have been evaluated for impacts to physical, social, and natural environmental resources. Table 2 provides a summary of impacts. In this table, direct and indirect effects are described as applicable.[1]

Preferred Alternative 4 does not require new right-of-way and will avoid any work in the river. The rehabilitation does not include demolition or dismantling of the bridge. Because the proposed project will not directly disturb any land or aquatic habitat, the potential effects to many environmental resources were determined to be minimal and not necessitating further discussion in this document. These resources include fish and wildlife, eagles and migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, waters of the U.S., water quality, floodplains, hazardous sites, land use, Section 6(f) (for the acquisition of certain lands), and right-of-way. Potential exists for several of these resources to be affected in a minor, indirect way from fugitive dust, noise, vibration, or accidental spills during rehabilitation activities on the bridge. Those topics are addressed collectively under "Construction Impacts" in Table 2.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the No Build Alternative and the Preferred Alternative

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
Transportation Resources	The principal means of accessing the town of Thurmond is across the Thurmond Bridge, which carries both CR 25/2 and the C&O railroad. The bridge is also important for pedestrians (see Parks and Recreation below). The last bridge inspection report (2012) concluded that the general overall condition of the bridge is critical.	Deterioration of the bridge will lead to increasing restrictions on the vehicles using the bridge and eventually to bridge closure. This will mean travel from one side of the river to the other in the project area will require over 40 miles and an hour and a half of travel.	The vehicle weight restriction will be raised to its design capacity of 12 tons, allowing more vehicles to use the facility safely. The life of the bridge will be extended. Pedestrians and wheelchairs will have a solid surface walkway and refuge bays to avoid vehicular traffic. To ensure safety during rehabilitation, the project will require temporary closures of the bridge.	1
SocioEconomics	The Town of Thurmond has five (5) residents, no active post office, no schools, and no emergency services. Economic activity is	Without rehabilitation, the bridge will eventually be closed, forcing residents and visitors to use a much longer route (40 miles and over 1.5 hours) to access	The project will allow larger vehicles to use the bridge, allowing more deliveries of goods, services and visitors, and will improve the passage for pedestrians and wheelchairs. No	2

[1] As defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), direct effects are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place, and indirect effects are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. 40 CFR § 1508.8

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
	limited by the restricted parking and little developed land. Unless working from home, residents most likely access jobs via the Thurmond Bridge and a 7-mile drive to the closest large town (Glen Jean) and highway access. Outdoor activities and educational opportunities with the Historic District draw visitors. The Thurmond Depot stills serves as a train stop for Amtrak 3x/week, and also serves as an Interpretive Center for the National Park Service. More visitors are anticipated as the historic district buildings are renovated by the National Park Service. See also Parks and Recreation.	jobs and commercial services, and to receive mail, school, and emergency services.	permanent relocations of homes or businesses are needed with the Preferred Alternative. Environmental justice has been considered and is not a concern with this project. Although it is possible that one or more residents have an income below poverty level and/or are minorities, the project will not disproportionately affect certain residents more than others, and, particularly with mitigation measures in place and with the long-term economic benefits, the overall effects are not considered high and adverse. Additionally, residents have been asked to participate in the project development. During rehabilitation, bridge closures will temporarily interrupt the socioeconomic environment.	
Parks/Recreational Resources	The Thurmond Bridge crosses the New River Gorge National River Park and is adjacent to lands owned by the National Park Service. When limited parking is full, visitors to the Park's Interpretive Center in Thurmond must park on the south side of the river and walk across the bridge. The Town draws visitors for biking and hiking the area's trails and for	Without rehabilitation, the bridge will eventually be closed, reducing access to the cultural and recreational resources on the north side of the bridge.	The rehabilitation will facilitate access to the cultural and recreational resources on the north side of the bridge and will allow easier viewing of the New River. See also Visual Effects/Aesthetics. During rehabilitation, bridge closures will temporarily interrupt access.	3

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
	annual summer events, including Thurmond Train Day, a Thurmond Reunion for past residents, and the Thurmond Triathlon.			
Visual Resources/ Aesthetics	Views of the New River from the Thurmond Bridge are cited as a reason to visit the town. Views from the bridge also include the historic district, which is increasingly being restored. The yellow wooden Thurmond Depot building, built in 1905 and restored in 1995, is featured on a National Park Service brochure and websites.	None.	Views from the bridge will improve because pedestrian and bicyclist viewers can take refuge in the new bays that will allow them to stop while avoiding vehicular traffic. Views of the bridge from most of Thurmond will be unchanged because the largest changes will be to the upstream side of the bridge. Some views of the bridge will change with the new paint and the refuge bays. These changes could be considered improvements or detriments, depending on the viewer.	4
Historic Resources: • Thurmond Bridge	The Thurmond Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a contributing resource to the Dunloup Branch Railroad and Thurmond Historic District historic properties. As an individual structure, Thurmond Bridge is significant as a representative example of a Warren through truss and deck plate girder railroad bridge with the uncommon feature of a cantilevered vehicular and pedestrian roadway.	The No Build Alternative includes routine maintenance. It is possible that maintenance could affect the historic character of the bridge.	The SHPO determined that the project “will result in an adverse effect to the Thurmond Bridge” (see Appendix B, letter dated December 31, 2014).	5

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
Historic Resources: • Thurmond Historic District	The Thurmond Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district encompasses 98 acres, mostly on the north side of the bridge, but also including the bridge itself and a small area to the south of the bridge. It is considered historically significant in the areas of archaeology, architecture, commerce, and transportation.	The No Build Alternative includes routine maintenance. It is possible that maintenance could affect the historic character of the bridge, which is a contributing resource to the district.	The Preferred Alternative does not directly impact land from within the Thurmond Historic District. It will directly impact one contributing element, the Thurmond Bridge (see above). Because of changes to the bridge, the SHPO determined that the project "will be an adverse effect to the Thurmond Historic District" (see Appendix B, letters dated December 14, 2014 and January 14, 2015).	5
Historic Resources: • Dunloup Branch Railroad	The Dunloup Branch Railroad is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The 16-mile stretch of railroad is a single freight track that extends from a junction with the C&O main line at Thurmond, WV, to the town of Pax, WV, about 16 miles to the southwest. It is considered historically significant as a transportation link.	No direct impact. Indirectly, routine maintenance of the Thurmond Bridge could impact the historic character of the railroad.	The Preferred Alternative does not directly impact the Dunloup Branch Railroad. It will directly impact one contributing element to the railroad, the Thurmond Bridge (see above). Because of changes to the bridge, the SHPO determined that the project will be an adverse effect to the Dunloup Branch Railroad (see Appendix B, letters dated December 14, 2014 and January 14, 2015).	5

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
Construction Impacts	The project is located in a rural town, across a wide river within a National River Park.	Routine maintenance could have minor, temporary air, noise and vibration that could disturb residents and/or wildlife.	Minor, temporary air, noise and vibration during rehabilitation activities could disturb residents and/or wildlife. Fugitive dust could enter the water below the bridge. Additionally, potential exists for spills from construction sites.	6
Cumulative Impacts	Cumulative impact is the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.	No other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions contribute to the impacts posed by the No Build Alternative.	No other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable actions contribute to the impacts posed by the Preferred Alternative.	NA
Impacts to Section 4(f) Property	Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 provides protections to significant publicly-owned public parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and significant historic sites. 49 USC Section 303, 23 CFR Part 774. Properties qualifying for protection under Section 4(f) regulations within the project area include the New River Gorge National River Park, the Thurmond	None.	The Preferred Alternative will use a 4(f) property, the Thurmond Bridge itself. Other Section 4(f) properties will not experience a "use" as defined in the regulations. The analysis provided in Appendix A demonstrates that the "Programmatic Evaluation and Approval for FHWA Projects that Necessitate the Use of Historic Bridges" can be applied to this project. The Programmatic Evaluation states that there are no feasible and prudent alternatives to the use of the bridge and that the project has included	5

Resource	Context	No Build Alternative Impact	Preferred Alternative 4 Impact	Mitigation No. in Table 3
	Bridge, the Thurmond Historic District, and the Dunloup Branch Railroad.		all possible planning to minimize harm from the use. See Appendix A.	

WHAT ARE THE COMMITMENTS TO MITIGATE FOR IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE?

Table 3 presents the mitigation measures that will be incorporated to the project to reduce adverse effects of the Preferred Alternative. The numbers in the left column correspond to numbers in the right column of Table 2.

Table 3. Mitigation Measures for the Preferred Alternative

#	Mitigation Category	Impact	Mitigation Commitment	Timing/Phase that Mitigation will be Implemented
1	Transportation Resources	Temporary closure of bridge.	Temporary closures will be limited to a 3-month period and to a total of 27 days. Closures will not last more than 3 days at a time.	Rehabilitation
2	SocioEconomic	Temporary closure of bridge.	See item #1 for limitations placed on closure times. WVDOH will provide the option for residents to stay at a hotel during closures and will provide added security to the town while residents are gone.	Rehabilitation
3	Parks and Recreation	Temporary closure of bridge.	See item #1 for limitations placed on closure times. To the extent possible and practicable, the closures will take place outside summertime to avoid conflicts with the busiest visitation season and events.	Rehabilitation
4	Visual Resources/ Aesthetics	Slight changes to view of the bridge.	Design of the new refuge bays, the most prominent new feature within view, has carefully considered aesthetics and been coordinated with the SHPO. See also Mitigation Item 5.	Final design
5	Historic Resources	Changes to the Thurmond Bridge will affect the bridge itself and views of the bridge from the	In July of 2015, WVDOH presented a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to the SHPO to formalize commitments to mitigate the adverse effects to historic resources. The Town of Thurmond, the National Park Service, and FHWA are also signatories to the agreement. A final version of the MOA was executed on February 4, 2016 and is included as Appendix C. The MOA sets forth the following commitments, which will minimize adverse effects:	Prior to, during, and after rehabilitation

#	Mitigation Category	Impact	Mitigation Commitment	Timing/Phase that Mitigation will be Implemented
		adjacent areas of the Thurmond Historic District and the Dunloup Branch Railroad.	1) Thurmond Bridge will be documented in its present historic setting. The documentation package will include 5”x7” black and white digital prints in accordance with the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Survey Photo Policy Expansion of May 2013. 2) The rehabilitation of the bridge is part of the mitigation to save this historic structure. Refuge bays are being added for the safety of the public. Plans have been submitted to the SHPO and have been approved. 3) 500 color brochures of the Thurmond Bridge will be developed by WVDOH and distributed to the National Park Service and the Town of Thurmond. A CD containing the brochure will also be given to the groups to print brochures when the original total has been exhausted. The SHPO will be given the opportunity to review all materials developed for this stipulation. 4) The Thurmond Bridge will be featured on a future website listing historic bridges under rehabilitated bridges.	
6	Construction Impacts	Temporary air, noise and vibration effects that could disturb residents or wildlife.	Contractors will avoid disturbing nesting birds to the extent practicable. Best management practices will be used to reduce the amount of fugitive dust, noise, and vibration. Pollution control measures will be included with the project in accordance with the WVDOT’s Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction.	Rehabilitation

PERMITS AND CLEARANCES REQUIRED FOR THIS PROJECT

One permit will be required: a Clean Water Act Section 10 Permit for work over the New River. However, again, the project does not involve work in the waterbody itself.

Outreach and Opportunities for Stakeholder Participation

In 1999, WVDOH met with the National Park Service as well as local residents to discuss plans for the Thurmond Bridge Rehabilitation project and alternatives for vehicular and pedestrian access. Although no agreement on a particular proposal was achieved, the groups agreed that the historic integrity of the Thurmond area must be maintained. For subsequent studies, WVDOH incorporated renovation alternatives for consideration.

After completion of the 2013 bridge renovation study, WVDOH sent letters to resource agencies and the Town to present alternatives. Responses were received from the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Mayor of the Town of Thurmond. Their comments were considered in the alternative development and selection process. Feedback on the many values of the New River Gorge National River (such as recreational, ecological, historical, etc.) encouraged WVDOH to avoid any impacts in the river. Also, the National Park Service's request for improved pedestrian access influenced aspects of design of several alternatives, including the Preferred Alternative with its paved walking lane and refuge bays.

On May 7, 2015, WVDOH hosted an Open House Public Meeting in Glen Jean, WV, approximately six (6) miles from the project area and home to the National Park Service's New River Gorge National River headquarters. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public and receive comments. Other than WVDOH and FHWA personnel, a total of seven (7) individuals attended the Open House. A summary of the project was provided in a handout, and large copies of the handout figures were displayed on boards around the room for review.

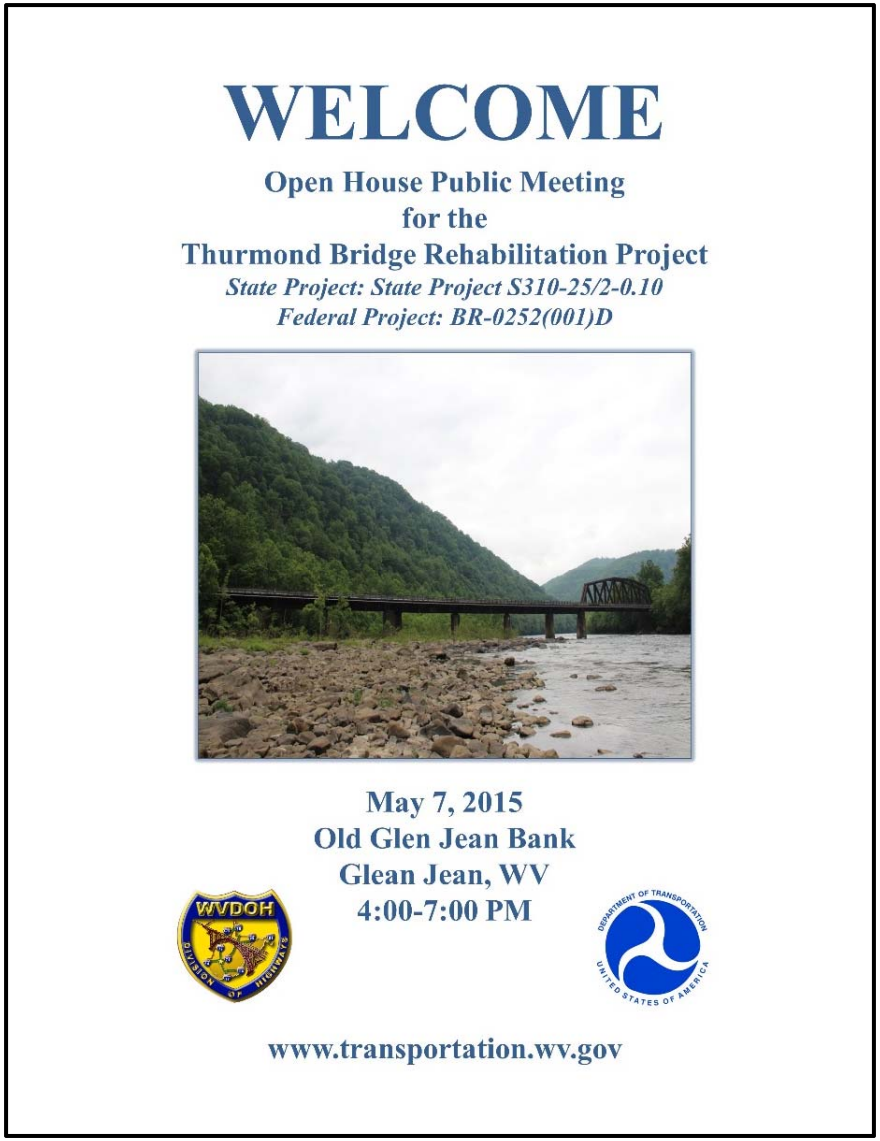

Figure 6. Cover of May 2015 Public Meeting Handout

A comment period followed the meeting for 30 days (through June 8, 2015). One letter was received. The Mayor of Thurmond wrote to express support for Alternative 6, which proposes a full length sidewalk on the downstream side of the bridge. Renovation Alternative 6 would disturb both the downstream side (for the sidewalk) and the upstream side (for the roadway renovations) of the historic bridge; therefore, it was not the alternative that satisfied the purpose and need while minimizing impacts to the historic integrity of the bridge. Additionally, Renovation Alternative 6 is less preferable than Preferred Alternative 4 because it requires additional right-of-way for a trail to provide pedestrian access to the new sidewalk from the parking lot, and because it requires construction on the railroad, which is not owned by WVDOH.

Coordination and consultation will be on-going through completion of the alternative selection process, final design, and construction, as appropriate. Because of the limited scope of the project and the low level of response to the first public meeting, and because a public meeting is not a regulatory requirement for Environmental Assessments, another public meeting will not be held for the review of the project. However, this Environmental Assessment is being sent to those who attended the public meeting and those who commented in May-June, 2015, to the Town of Thurmond, and to the National Park Service. It will also be available for viewing or download at the WVDOH's project website: http://www.transportation.wv.gov/highways/engineering/comment/thurmondbridge/. Comments on this Environmental Assessment are due 30 days after its release. Specific instructions for submitting comments can be found in the introductory pages of this document and at the project website.

Distribution of the Environmental Assessment

The following agencies and government representatives have been mailed a copy of this Environmental Assessment:

Federal Agencies

Barbara Okhorn
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 3- Environmental Services Division
Office of Environmental Programs
Mail Code: 3EA30
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Jessica Martinsen
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region 3- Environmental Services Division
Office of Environmental Programs
Mail Code: 3EA30
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Ginger Mullins
Chief, Regulatory
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Huntington District
CELRH-RD
502 Eighth Street
Huntington, WV 25701-2070

John Schmidt
Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
West Virginia Field Office
694 Beverly Pike
Elkins, WV 26241

Ron Wigal
Environmental Specialist
Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1550 Earl Core Road, Suite 200
Morgantown, WV 26505

Mary Ann Tierney
Regional Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region III
615 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Trish Kicklighter
Superintendent
National Park Service
104 Main Street
Glen Jean, WV 25846

West Virginia Agencies

Randy Huffman
Cabinet Secretary
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
601 57th Street, SE
Charleston, WV 25304

Patty Hickman, Acting Division Director
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
Division of Land Restoration
Office of Environmental Remediation
601 57th St, Room 1072
Charleston, WV 25304-2345

Scott G. Mandirola
Director, Division of Water and Waste Management
Permitting and Engineering Branch
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
601 57th Street, SE
Charleston, WV 253041-2345

William Durham
Director, Office of Air Quality
West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection
601 57th Street, SE
Charleston, WV 25304-2345

Danny Bennett
West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 67
Elkins, WV 26241

Robert Fala
Director, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
Building 74
324 Fourth Avenue
South Charleston, WV 25303

Susan Pierce
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Division of Culture and History
1900 Kanawha Blvd East
Charleston, WV 25305

Danielle LaPresta
Executive Director
Preservation Alliance of WV
421 Davis Ave #3
Elkins, WV 26241

Regional Agencies, Senators, and Delegates

Melanie Dragan
Mayor, Town of Thurmond
174 Main Street
Thurmond, WV 25936

Melissa Dragan
Council Member, Town of Thurmond
562 River Crest Road
Thurmond, WV 25936

Fayette County Historic Landmark Commission
218 Woods Avenue
Oak Hill, WV 25901

Senator William Laird
Room 229W, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Delegate Kayla Kessinger
Room 227E, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Delegate Tom Fast
Room 228E, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Delegate David G. Perry
Room 233E, Building 1
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

APPENDICES – PROVIDED DIGITALLY ON DISC