

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**

**STATE ROUTE 170 WIDENING IN ANDERSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE- EASEMENT AND SECTION  
26A APPROVAL**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) is requesting a shoreline construction permit under Section 26a of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act of 1933, as amended, and a permanent easement to allow for a proposed bridge replacement spanning Melton Hill Reservoir at Clinch River mile 48, including demolition of the existing bridge, and the widening and realignment of a section of state route (SR) 170 located in Anderson County, Tennessee. This proposed project (Project) would impact approximately 12.21 acres of TVA property, which is part of a larger 6.18-mile corridor spanning the section of SR-170 from SR-62 (Oak Ridge Highway) to SR-9 (United States Highway 25W, Clinton Highway) that was analyzed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and TDOT in an Environmental Assessment (EA) that was approved by FHWA and finalized on October 10, 2025, and a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) published on January 10, 2026 (TDOT PIN 124121.00). TVA has independently reviewed the FHWA/TDOT EA and found it to be adequate. TVA is therefore adopting this EA, which is incorporated herein by reference.



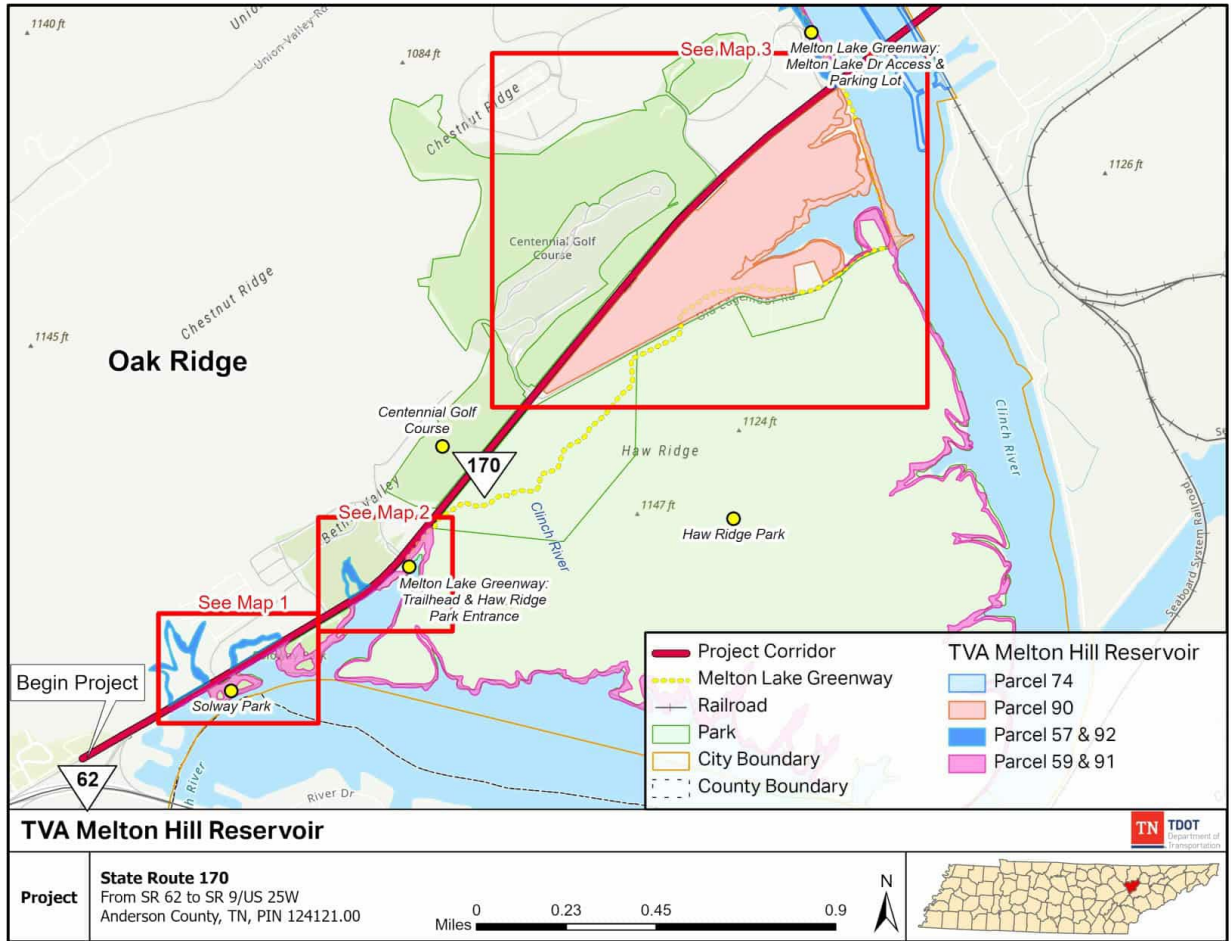


Figure 2. Map of TVA Property Affected by the Project

## PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

TDOT’s purpose and need for this Project is to correct geometric deficiencies in the roadway, improve connectivity and mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and meet the legislative intent of the “Improving Manufacturing, Public Roads, and Opportunities for a Vibrant Economy” (IMPROVE) Act and the “Transportation Modernization Act” (TMA).

Section 26a of the TVA Act requires TVA approval prior to construction, operation, or maintenance of any dam, appurtenant works, or other obstructions affecting navigation, flood control, or public lands or reservation across, along, or in the Tennessee River watershed. On TVA reservoirs, this jurisdiction typically extends to the limits of the 500-year floodplain or to the upper limits of TVA’s flowage easement rights or property boundary, whichever is higher. Because the Project would be located partially on TVA property, TVA has Section 26a jurisdiction over portions of the project area and must consider whether to approve or deny the Section 26a permit application.

TVA must also consider whether to grant a permanent easement over approximately 12.21 acres of property impacting portions of TVA Tract Nos. MHR-1, MHR-4, XMHR-57PT, XMHR-59PT, XMHR-74PT, XMHR-92PT, XMHR-91PT, and XMHR-90PT to allow for

proposed construction over these tracts. The City of Oak Ridge currently holds licenses over portions of these tracts for recreational use.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

FHWA/TDOT evaluated a No Build Alternative and a Build Alternative in their EA and named the Build Alternative as the Selected Alternative because it meets their purpose and need. Under the Selected Alternative, TDOT would widen the existing two to three-lane typical section to a four-lane typical section (two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction) with a variable median and 8-foot shoulders west of Walnut Valley Road, and a five-lane section (two 12-foot travel lanes in each direction and a center 12-foot turning lane) with 8-foot shoulders east of Walnut Valley Road. The Project would also include curb and gutter, a 5-foot sidewalk to the north, a 10-foot shared use path to the south, and guardrails as needed. Proposed improvements would also include adding turn lanes at strategic intersections, realigning and reconfiguring several intersections along the corridor, and replacing the existing two-lane bridge over the Clinch River with a four-lane bridge with a painted median.

TVA has two alternatives regarding the proposed Project. Under the No Action Alternative, TVA would not issue the Section 26a permit or grant a permanent easement necessary for the bridge replacement or widening of the section of SR-170 impacting TVA property. Under this alternative, TDOT's project needs would not be met. Under the proposed Action Alternative, TVA would issue the Section 26a permit and grant the easement required and TDOT would make the necessary improvements to SR-170. TVA's preferred alternative is the proposed Action Alternative.

## **SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Analysis conducted in the FHWA/TDOT EA determined that TDOT's Selected Alternative would have no impacts on managed and natural areas, geology, visual resources, air quality, noise, botany, aquatics, or navigation. Implementation of the Selected Alternative could create minor impacts to the human environment, including land use and prime farmland, transportation, recreation, wetlands, soil erosion and surface water, socioeconomics, floodplains, and solid and hazardous waste. Positive impacts to transportation and recreation are also anticipated with implementation of the Selected Alternative. Impacts to Terrestrial Zoology and Cultural resources would be minor with implementation of mitigation measures.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) Act of 1966 (Title 49 US Code (USC) 303) includes a special provision – Section 4(f) – which stipulates that FHWA and other Departments of Transportation cannot approve the use of land from publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and public or private historic sites eligible for listing/listed in the National Register of Historic Places unless the following conditions apply:

- There is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of land; and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use;
- OR

- FHWA determines that the use of the property will have a *de minimis* impact.

TVA-owned property in the proposed project area was evaluated by TDOT for potential Section 4(f) recreation and Cultural resources. The primary impacts of TDOT's Selected Alternative include the following:

- Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Use of NRHP-eligible Bull Run Fossil Plant Historic District and NRHP-eligible Guy M. Jones House (signed October 10, 2025, see Appendix K of the FHWA/TDOT EA);
- Section 4(f) *De Minimis* Use of five recreational resources (Solway Park, Haw Ridge Park, Melton Lake Greenway, Tennessee Centennial Golf Course, and TVA Melton Lake Reservoir) (signed October 10, 2025, see Appendix H of the FHWA/TDOT EA).

Under TDOT's Selected Alternative, the interpretive panels located at Bull Run Fossil Plant installed by TVA would not be permanently altered. Panels would be temporarily removed and replaced at the same location on the newly graded site. TDOT would also provide new parking spaces for the overlook at the newly graded site. As confirmed by the State Historic Preservation Officer, this path forward would not result in an adverse effect to the Bull Run Fossil Plant Historic District and would qualify as a Section 4(f) *de minimis* impact.

Executive Order (EO) 11990 (protection of wetlands) requires federal agencies to minimize wetland destruction, loss, or degradation and avoid new construction in wetlands wherever there is a practicable alternative, while carrying out agency responsibilities on federally owned property. Throughout the design process, TDOT would endeavor to mitigate impacts to streams, wetlands, or any other jurisdictional water features through avoidance and minimization. Where impacts cannot be avoided or sufficiently minimized, compensatory mitigation for permanent stream/wetland impacts would be accomplished either through permittee-responsible mitigation, mitigation banking, or in-lieu fee mitigation to satisfy statutory requirements.

EO 11988 (floodplain management) requires that federal agencies avoid the 100-year floodplain unless there is no practicable alternative. Approximately 2.20 acres of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Clinch River are located within the limits of TDOT's Selected Alternative. The design of the Selected Alternative would be consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FHWA and Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA). It would be consistent with the requirements of floodplain management guidelines for implementing EO 11988 and FHWA guidelines 23 Code of Federal Regulations 650A.

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no impacts, including beneficial impacts, to any of the resource areas analyzed.

## MITIGATION AND SPECIAL PERMIT CONDITIONS

To minimize or reduce the environmental effects associated with the Action Alternative, TVA would require adherence to all routine environmental protection measures listed in the FHWA/TDOT EA and all applicable state and federal regulations. TDOT proposes to mitigate impacts to Terrestrial Zoology, Recreation, and Cultural Resources caused by their Selected Alternative as follows:

Peoples Cemetery, Anderson County, Tract 141, parcel ID 096 027.00, shall be avoided with a ten-foot buffer outside the fence. No vehicle entry, material staging, or laydown may take place in the buffer. While this does not directly impact TVA property, it is considered a connected action that TDOT would adhere to.

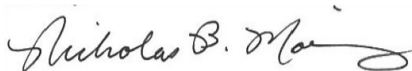
Mitigation of effects to the Bull Run Fossil Plant Historic District are covered by the Programmatic Agreement (PA) related to the demolition of the facility as long as the stipulations associated with the PA can be fulfilled.

Impacts to threatened and endangered bat species are addressed by the Range-wide Programmatic Consultation and Conservation Strategy covering FHWA, Federal Transit Administration and Federal Railroad Administration projects for the Indiana bat and northern long-eared bat. All necessary tree clearing within project limits would be completed between November 16 and March 31. This would affect TVA property and be listed as a condition of the Section 26a permit and the permanent easement.

Prior to construction, TDOT would coordinate with the Officials with Jurisdiction, the City of Oak Ridge and TVA, for Melton Lake Greenway to develop and implement mitigation measures to minimize or avoid (where possible) the extent and duration of temporary closures of the greenway during construction. All agreed-upon mitigation measures would be documented and incorporated into the Project's construction plans and specifications. Accommodations for adequate notification to the public would be provided prior to any disruption of access.

## CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

Based on the findings listed above and the analyses in the FHWA/TDOT EA, we conclude that issuing a Section 26a permit and granting a permanent easement to allow for the proposed Project would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding of no significant impact is contingent upon adherence to the mitigation measures described above.



Nicholas B. Morris on behalf of

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Dawn Booker, Senior Manager  
NEPA Compliance  
Tennessee Valley Authority

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May 6, 2026

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Date Signed

