

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2021-144

REQUESTING THAT THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION  
CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON A HIGHWAY 278 BYPASS OF HISTORIC  
WASHINGTON STATE PARK.

WHEREAS, Historic Washington State Park located in Washington,  
Arkansas, was established as a period village modeled after Colonial  
Williamsburg, Virginia; and

WHEREAS, Historic Washington State Park has severely restricted  
vehicular access to the historic core of the Historic Washington State Park;  
and

WHEREAS, Highway 278 bisects Historic Washington State Park, hindering  
pedestrian circulation and creating the potential for pedestrian-vehicle  
accidents; and

WHEREAS, Highway 278 impacts the operations of Historic Washington  
State Park; specifically, both visitors and employees are sometimes required  
to cross the highway to travel across the Historic Washington State Park; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism proposed  
a bypass to the west of Washington, Arkansas, for safe pedestrian circulation  
in Historic Washington State Park; and

WHEREAS, in 2017, state and local officials continued to express their  
concern about traffic and safety on Highway 278, and the State Highway  
Commission conducted a Highway 278 bypass feasibility study; and

WHEREAS, a bypass alternative and two other alternatives were developed  
by the State Highway Commission to address the identified need; and

WHEREAS, the State Highway Commission determined the bypass is a  
feasible way to address pedestrian safety and allow the Historic Washington  
State Park to proceed with future development; and

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WHEREAS, the bypass would provide minimal benefits to the state highway system; and

WHEREAS, the estimated cost of construction for the bypass is \$9.2 million; and

WHEREAS, the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission passed a motion at their April 22, 2022, meeting requesting that the Arkansas Department of Transportation update the 2017 feasibility study of constructing a Highway 278 bypass of Historic Washington State Park; and

WHEREAS, on April 27, 2022, the State Highway Commission has authorized the Arkansas Department of Transportation to reassess the need for and the feasibility of a bypass around Historic Washington State Park,

NOW THEREFORE,  
BE IT PROPOSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION OF THE NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House Committee on Public Transportation conduct a study to determine how to provide the funds needed for the Highway 278 bypass of Historic Washington State Park.

Respectfully submitted,  
  
Representative Danny Watson  
District 3

Prepared by: DTP/DTP