

Meeting Summary

IMPROVE I-70 ADVISORY GROUP

9th Meeting

Columbia Activity and Recreation Center
1701 W. Ash Street
Columbia, Missouri

November 20, 2003

This is a summary of the key informational and action items from the ninth meeting of the Improve I-70 Advisory Group.

GENERAL

Members Present

Members of the Advisory Group attending the meeting: Craig Adams, Bernie Andrews, Jeff Barrow, Bob Bechtold, Elaine Blodgett, Susan Clark, Chip Cooper, Skip Elkin, Dave Griggs, Chris Janku, David Mink, Tom Moran, Bud Moulder, Lowell Peterson and Bob Walters.

Dennis Donald and John Huyler of The Osprey Group facilitated the meeting.

Materials Available at the Meeting

In addition to the agenda, materials, available for discussion at the meeting included:

- Update about the Columbia Area Business Survey
- Preliminary Evaluation Matrix Summary
- “Pathways for Progress,” a pamphlet on CDOT’s land acquisition procedures
- Draft of “Questions About I-70 Improvements in the Columbia Area”
- Updated I-70 Columbia Project Schedule
- Article from the Columbia Missourian entitled “Widening Meeting Planned”

Meeting Goals

The overall goal of this meeting was to have the Advisory Group understand and provide input to the ongoing refinement of alignments and widening concepts.

Specific goals were: 1) Hear the results of the business survey; 2) Understand the analytical refinements of the concepts and alignments under consideration; 3) Clarify the process and timing to reach a preferred alternative; 4) Explain the property acquisition process used by MoDOT; 5) Identify the desired role for the Advisory Group over the next several months.

Preliminary Items

Buddy Desai of CH2M Hill told the Group about a meeting that involved people particularly interested in Stadium Boulevard. Mr. Desai reported that the purpose of the meeting was to exchange information about the roles and responsibilities of people working on the EIS and the interests and activities of others.

Bob Brendel then reported about the November 4th Drop-In Center which attracted some 230 people. He said that, in addition to the helpful feedback the Team had received from many citizens, the drop-in provided a good opportunity for many business owners to complete their surveys.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND ADVISORY GROUP INPUT

Business Survey Preliminary Findings:

Gary Vanderlicht of The Louis Berger Group summarized the progress made to date on the business survey. He referred people to the handout and reported that he expects a better than 50 percent response rate. Based on the responses so far, Mr. Vanderlicht indicated that:

- Thirty nine percent of the respondents indicated that if they have to relocate, they want to stay within a quarter mile or a half mile of an exit.
- The majority indicated that they think improving I-70 will be of benefit to the economy; they support the improvements.
- A key concern to many businesses is the apparent lack of suitable alternate sites if they must relocate.
- Another concern is about temporary business impacts during construction.

Mr. Desai then added to what had been said, emphasizing that because of the survey the team will be better able to understand the business community, the nature of their interests, and the magnitude of impacts associated with planning decisions. The team will also be positioned to avoid or minimize the negative impacts to businesses along the corridor.

The Refined Alignments and Concepts

This presentation and discussion was conducted in two stages. First, Kevin Nichols and Buddy Desai from CH2M Hill made opening remarks about the various alignment alternatives. Second, the presentation and discussion continued around a series of maps that graphically presented the alignment options for the rural and urban portions of the study area. In the urban area, three alternative concepts were developed and discussed: a two-way frontage-road concept, the C-D road concept, and a one-way concept. This screening of the concepts is a key step in moving toward the creation of a set of reasonable alternatives, some of which might be hybrid options that capture some of the strengths and minimize some of the negative aspects of each individual concept. These “reasonable alternatives” will be available for the Advisory Group to review at its next meeting in early 2004.

Mr. Nichols provided the initial remarks and set the stage for Advisory Group discussion. He noted that all the plans had been updated for consistency. The maps also reflected the footprint or anticipated construction impact associated with the various concepts. He noted

that the footprint also provided for the possibility of adding an additional lane on the interstate for future capacity.

The projected traffic for all three concepts has been evaluated preliminarily. Mr. Nichols stressed that these numbers were still subject to review. How various concepts operate from a traffic perspective was the focus of his presentation. He also reintroduced the notion of level of service (LOS) that had been discussed at earlier meetings

Developing the Reasonable Range of Alternatives

Level of Service (LOS) is a measure of how effectively a highway can move the volume of traffic it carries. Ranging from LOS A (free-flow conditions) to LOS F (gridlock), the measure takes into account the driver's speed, freedom to maneuver and proximity to other vehicles. Of course a highway facility operates at different levels of service at different times of the day. Traffic operations during peak periods like morning and evening rush hour are much different than the middle of the night, for example.

As engineers plan for I-70 improvements, they must determine the number of lanes and basic design needed to reach a minimum level of service during peak periods in the future. This ensures that traffic operations will be acceptable during the busiest times, but also means traffic will not operate perfectly all the time.

Consistent with standards used throughout the country, the minimum LOS being used for I-70 through Columbia during peak periods in the future is C in the rural areas and D in urban areas. This means that during the busiest times, traffic will move well and at other times it will operate better. Mr. Nichols stated that designing to a LOS A all the time would not only be cost prohibitive and an unwise use of resources; it would generate many unacceptable impacts to the community.

Mr. Nichols then identified various problems areas, such as ramps and interchanges, which would operate at unacceptable levels given projected 2030 traffic. He also noted that the solution in several of these cases would not be to simply add another lane on the freeway. As an example, he stated that the Stadium interchange is "broken today" and, given future increases in traffic, it will operate at an even more unacceptable level.

A question was asked about the LOS design goal. It seemed to one Group member that we are designing for something mediocre. How do we know that designing for something better would be too costly? Mr. Nichols noted that certain locations will operate at level of service A. But, because this is such a complex system, there are going to be certain points that are going to operate at a lower level of service. So, the threshold for decision as to whether something is broken or not is the minimal criterion, level of service D or C depending on the location. He also noted that attempting to operate at level of service A through Columbia during the busiest times of the day might require an additional three lanes of interstate beyond what is currently envisioned.

Another question was raised about what is presently rural and might these areas become urban by 2030? Mr. Nichols indicated they had taken that change in land use into account in their modeling.

A follow-up question was asked about whether these design levels were based on peak volumes. Mr. Nichols responded that they were based on design hourly volumes. Elaborating, he said that design hourly volumes reflect morning and afternoon peak traffic when many are commuting to and from work. So, they are designing for peak traffic. During many times of the day, the various parts of the system will operate fine, but during these peak times, certain locations, such as Stadium now, will be operating at poor levels.

Property Acquisition Process

After emphasizing that the acquisition of property is certainly not imminent, John Huyler introduced Terry Sampson, the Right-of-Way director for MoDOT. Mr. Sampson began by saying that public meetings such as the one we were having this evening are an important part of the pre-negotiation process. They allow property owners to become informed generally and enable MoDOT to begin to understand local issues.

Once MoDOT begins to understand the precise right-of-way that is needed, it initiates an initial relocation contact with property owners followed by the appraisal process. Certified appraisers contact property owners and ask for permission to inspect their property. Owners are invited and encouraged to go along for this step since they know more about their property than anyone else. The appraisers will then do an appraisal, an estimate of value, of the “before” and the “after” values of property taking into consideration land prices and any damages that might occur as a result of MoDOT’s actions. Damages might be such things as loss of access, proximity damage to improvements, fencing acquired or reduced parking. Once all these calculations are made the property owner is offered the difference between the before value and the after value. That appraisal is then reviewed by a chief appraiser in each district for consistency and fairness. Once the appraisal has been completed and reviewed, a negotiator contacts the property owner. He or she will probably be a senior right-of-way specialist or right-of-way specialist. That individual will make an offer in writing and attempt to explain all the details. At that time if the property owner feels that the appraisal has missed something it is important to explain why as the negotiator acts as a liaison between MoDOT and the property owner. Mr. Sampson added that there are also provisions for relocation assistance such as down payment assistance and rental subsidy payments in certain cases for renters. For businesses there are fundamentally two avenues: 1) relocation assistance or 2) a fixed payment based on average annual net earnings. Additional detail is contained in the pamphlet that was distributed and in additional written information available on request.

In response to a question Mr. Sampson said that acquisition begins several years in advance of construction once three conditions are met: 1) the environmental study is approved to a point that it is clear that major environmental problems do not affect the parcels being acquired, 2) right-of-way plans have been approved, and 3) MoDOT has money programmed in that fiscal year to buy right-of-way.

NEXT STEPS

Several next steps in the planning process, especially as they involve the Advisory Group, were discussed.

- It was noted there is a public workshop in December.
- Over the next couple of months, the team will develop hybrid alternatives and refine the concepts developed to date.
- It is proposed that the Advisory Group meet in early February. At this meeting, Mr. Desai indicated they will have several proposed reasonable options, including the hybrid alternative(s) and preferred interchange locations. He expects some unanswered questions to remain about Stadium and 63.
- It is proposed that there be a meeting with the Advisory Group in March to review the preferred alternative and describe the EIS process in some detail.
- After the March meeting, the draft environmental document will be circulated for public and agency comment.
- A public hearing is anticipated in late April or early May.
- The current plan is to have a final Advisory Group meeting around July to review comments received and the proposed responses to the comments and where the process goes from that point forward.
- The study itself is expected to be complete in November 2004.

After hearing these future expectations the Advisory Group spent some time reviewing and discussing a set of questions about the I-70 project. These questions, once answered, will be used as a communication vehicle to allow many in the community to have access to straightforward responses to key questions about the process to improve I-70. The goal is to have a mixture of questions, from the basic to the most sensitive that the Advisory Group thinks ought to be raised and answered. A preliminary list of questions was sent to the Advisory Group ahead of the meeting and the Group was asked to critique the list, suggesting additions, deletions, or refinements. Some suggestions included:

- What steps are being taken to alleviate local traffic in the I-70 corridor?
- How is truck traffic being addressed?
- Has the need for this project been truly demonstrated?
- What is the process for revisiting the environmental document or Record of Decision over time? (Mr. Desai noted that it is typical to review the environmental document and prepare a supplemental EIS, though not necessarily the ROD, every three years or if there has been a significant intervening event that might have changed the analysis or its conclusions).
- What is the total cost impact to the community, including the economic impact to local businesses and the fiscal impact to local governments, under each alternative?
- Have alternative approaches for funding this project (such as toll roads) been explored?
- How are neighborhoods going to be impacted and what are their remedies (similar to question #14)? And, how can this information best be shared with those who live in the area?
- How will the construction of I-70 impact cross-state traffic?

It was also mentioned that responses to these questions, and those on the previously developed list, should be clear and succinct and identify how the information was developed.

UPCOMING ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

Thursday, February 5th, 2004
4:00 – 6:30 pm

Columbia Activity and Recreation Center
1701 West Ash Street

Agenda

IMPROVE I-70 ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting 9
4:00-6:30 p.m.
November 20, 2003

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Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Goals: 1) Hear the preliminary findings of the business survey; 2) Understand the analytical refinements of the concepts and alignments under consideration; 3) Clarify the process and timing to reach a preferred alternative; 4) Explain the property acquisition process used by MoDOT; 5) Identify desired role for the Advisory Group over the next several months.

- 4:00 Convene Meeting**
The Osprey Group
- 4:05 Updates**
The Osprey Group
- 4:15 Business Survey Preliminary Findings**
Gary Vandelight, The Louis Berger Group
- 4:30 The Refined Alignments and Concepts**
Kevin Nichols and Buddy Desai, CH2MHill
- 5:40 Developing the Reasonable Range of Alternatives**
Buddy Desai, CH2MHill
- 5:55 Property Acquisition Process**
Terry Sampson, MoDOT
- 6:15 Closing and Next Steps**
The Osprey Group
- 6:30 Adjourn**



COLUMBIA - AREA BUSINESS SURVEY November 20, 2003 Update

GOAL OF SURVEY

To support the environmental studies and screening of alternatives and to gather information on local businesses that may face partial or full displacement and/or may experience access changes. The business survey seeks information on the background of businesses, employment at the facilities, location and site selection issues, access and parking needs, and individual concerns. ***The survey can be used by the local planning and the economic development community to understand the needs, requirements and preferences of local businesses and develop responsive land use strategies to minimize the adverse effects of displacements and relocation.***

SURVEY STATUS – Still Collecting and Tabulating

▪ Business properties identified	326
▪ Business owners receiving surveys	235
▪ Telephone contacts made	1,175
▪ Business surveys sent to corporate offices (not yet returned)	17
▪ Face to face contacts/visits	76
▪ Business owners interviewed	67
▪ Business surveys returned to date (11/17/03)	102

HIGHLIGHTS/CHALLENGES IN SURVEY-TAKING

1. The uncertainty of the project ever happening because of funding constraints caused several businesses to question whether to spend their time on the survey.
2. The “Drop-in” Center Event conveyed the seriousness of the survey to the business community and became a watershed moment for the survey process, making it easier to schedule interviews.
3. Business owners cited the need for running their business as one reason for their reluctance to participate in the survey. Pre-screening to identify appropriate contacts was hampered by voice-mail and corporate “gate-keepers”.

KEY TAKEAWAY MESSAGES – PRELIMINARY

1. Several businesses registered concern regarding the lack of suitable relocation sites near I-70 -- which are the most desired sites for businesses. ***Key challenges for City and County are to identify and convey suitable alternative locations for these businesses against a backdrop of rising property values.***
2. Concern was registered about the temporary business impacts from loss of access and traffic disruptions (i.e., restaurants) during construction.
3. Adequate notice will be needed to prepare businesses for displacement and relocation.
4. Business community accepts the need for I-70 improvements yet is hopeful that potential impacts will be minimized to their business.

USE OF SURVEY IN STUDY PROCESS

1. Results of the survey will be used to better describe the business community in the “Affected Environment” section of the environmental impact statement (Chapter 3).
2. Site-specific data on the parcels within the study area will provide important information to the project team as they craft and refine improvement alternatives – allowing the team to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to the extent possible. The usually anonymous buildings on the mapping are imbued with greater meaning, at an early stage in the engineering process.
3. The survey will assess whether businesses are prepared to relocate within the region or whether the project will cause irreplaceable losses to the business community of Columbia-Boone County. This will help the study team assess whether business impacts are significant, negative and avoidable. The survey will also identify relocation needs, allowing other appropriate agencies to develop plans to meet those needs.
4. The survey will be a useful component in the project's public involvement process. The methodology of the survey involves determining the proper recipient; this personal contact will bring people into the dialog, who might not otherwise become involved.

NEXT STEPS

1. Finalize data collection / target non-respondents to extent possible
2. Finalize tabulation and analysis
3. Prepare summary report and distribute to MoDOT, City/County partners and Advisory Group
 - Sample Output: business size, site preferences and needs by business type
 - Sample Output: number and type of businesses not prepared to relocate

QUESTIONS ABOUT I-70 IMPROVEMENTS IN THE COLUMBIA AREA
(For Advisory Group Discussion on November 20th)

1. Why is this study being conducted?
2. When can we expect construction to improve I-70 to begin and how long will construction take?
3. How will this project be funded? What are the estimated costs of the whole project?
4. What is the priority of Columbia in the context of a statewide construction schedule and how are construction priorities going to be determined?
5. It seems like expanding I-70 in its current location fails to recognize the growth that is occurring north of Columbia. Wouldn't a more strategic, longer-range solution be to develop a bypass that accommodates future growth?
6. Given what would seem like a major disruption to businesses along the interstate with similarly large declines in tax revenue, why doesn't a separate bypass make more sense for this community?
7. Would the existing interstate need to be expanded if there is a separate bypass?
8. How have the City of Columbia, Boone County and other local governmental units been involved in this planning process? How will they be involved in the future?
9. What opportunities have there been for the community to be involved and provide input? And, does the community input matter?
10. What are the most significant environmental and social impacts associated with this improvement?
11. What provisions are being made for pedestrian and bicycling access?
12. How about aesthetics? Are there funds to assure that the new facilities are visually appealing and convey an image of quality and progressiveness we want in Columbia?
13. What have you learned so far from the business survey and how will this information influence your planning?
14. What happens to residents or businesses that are seriously impacted by this construction and expansion of I-70?
15. How are decisions related to I-70 and those related to the possible interchange west of Stadium being coordinated and integrated?
16. What will happen next in the study?

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION MATRIX SUMMARY

Improve I-70: Columbia Area (SIU #4)

20-Nov-03

EVALUATION FACTORS/PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES	Concept				
	1	2	3	4	5
	Basic Widening	One-Way Frontage Road	Two-Way Frontage Road	Collector-Distributor Road	Stacked Highway
PURPOSE AND NEED					
1. Accommodate existing and future traffic volumes on I-70					
-Increase capacity to 6-lanes in rural/8-lanes in urban areas	+	+	+	+	0
-Meet highway Level of Service guidelines (volume/capacity)	+	+	+	+	+
-Flexibility for future expansion in the corridor	0	0	+	+	-
2. Improve existing I-70 deficiencies					
-Uncorrectable design elements associated with Concept	0	+	+	+	0
3. Implement a better strategy for accommodating all users of I-70					
-Make provisions for all major I-70 traffic streams	-	0	+	+	+
-Implement interchange designs with acceptable Level of Service	+	+	+	+	0
-Maintain Columbia-area access points	-	0	+	+	0
4. Improve user safety					
-Comply with MoDOT Access Management guidelines	-	+	+	+	-
-Effectively manage truck traffic	-	0	0	+	0
-Eliminate identified crash precursors	0	0	+	+	0
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS					
Avoid Section 4(f) sites like Cosmo Park, other parks, historic sites	-	-	-	-	-
Total expected Phase I Environmental Site Assessments	0	0	0	0	0
Avoid prime farmland parcels	0	0	0	0	0
Avoid impacts to the "waters of the United States"	0	0	0	0	0
Avoid impacts to threatened and endangered species	-	-	-	-	-
Avoid noise impacts	0	0	0	0	-
Avoid cultural resource impacts (e.g. sites on Historic Register)	0	0	0	0	0
LAND USE IMPACTS					
Business displacements	0	+	-	-	0
Business access impacts	-	0	+	+	-
Residential displacements	+	+	-	-	0
Residential access impacts	-	0	+	+	-
Secondary impacts	0	0	0	0	0
SOCIO-ECONOMIC/COMMUNITY IMPACTS					
Expected travel pattern disruptions	-	0	+	+	-
Visual impacts	0	0	0	0	-
Potential for Environmental Justice issues	0	+	+	+	0
Potential for community service disruptions (EMS, fire, police)	-	0	+	+	-
Expected neighborhood/community values impacts	0	0	+	+	-
ENGINEERING					
Estimated construction cost	+	0	0	0	-
Total estimated Right-of-Way (ROW)	+	+	-	-	0
Constructibility	0	0	0	+	-
Maintenance of traffic	0	0	0	+	-
Displacements	+	+	-	-	0
Other engineering-related constraints	0	0	0	0	-

Legend	
Positive Impact - Important Decision-Making Factor	+
Neutral/Unclear/Contradictory Impact	0
Negative Impact - Important Decision-Making Factor	-



I-70 Columbia Project Schedule

