

Meeting Summary

IMPROVE I-70 ADVISORY GROUP

11th Meeting

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

March 18, 2004

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

GENERAL

Members Present: Craig Adams, Bernie Andrews, Bob Bechtold, Elaine Blodgett, Susan Clark, Chip Cooper, Skip Elkin, Dave Griggs, Chris Janku, Kory Kaufman, David Mink, Tom Moran, Lowell Patterson, Pat Smith, Lorah Steiner 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:

- A welcome sheet for members of the public that explained the Advisory Group format and procedures.
- The updated “Frequently Asked Questions” list.
- The Impact Summary Matrix.
- An overview of the expected schedule for the remainder of the EIS process.
- Maps of the corridor showing remaining alternatives. These had been mailed to the Advisory Group in advance of the meeting.
- A 21-page handout entitled, “Recommended Preferred Alternative.”

Meeting Goals

The overarching goal for this meeting was to hear about and discuss the recommended preferred alternative for improving the I-70 in the Columbia area. Other related goals included:

- 1) Hear about recent activities and updated material;
- 2) Preview the EIS topics and timing;
- 3) Identify and discuss topics of interest from the Advisory Group; and,
- 4) Identify next steps in the planning process.

Preliminary Items

Two items were discussed at the opening of the meeting.

First, Bob Brendel from MoDOT gave the Advisory Group an update about the presentation that had been made to the CATSO Coordinating Committee and the neighborhood meetings that had been held earlier in the month at Sunrise Estates, Parkade, and Whitegate. Over 100 people attended those meetings.

Second, Roy Dudark from the City of Columbia reported on the evolution of the City's economic study which had just begun to incorporate the new "footprint" information as a basis for projecting economic impacts.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND ADVISORY GROUP INPUT

Review of Progress to Date

As the Group turned to its substantive work, the "Recommended Preferred Alternative" handout was distributed to everyone present. Buddy Desai from CH2M Hill began with a description of the process to date. He emphasized that as the number of alternatives under consideration narrows the amount of site specific data increases.

Mr. Desai reminded everyone of the corridor screening that had taken place which had eliminated consideration of both the Near North and the Far North conceptual corridors. This had been followed by analysis of five Preliminary Concepts. At the end of that analysis the "Basic Widening" and "Stack Section" concepts had been eliminated, leaving the "One-Way Frontage Roads," "Two-Way Frontage Roads," and "Collector-Distributor" concepts still under consideration.

These three remaining concepts were then subjected to an operational analysis, which focused on travel and access patterns, local connections, access to properties, local road capacity parallel to I-70, freeway access, local versus through traffic, weaving, right-of-way and maintenance. Following this analysis it was concluded that a two-way frontage road system was best for the east and west portions of the corridor and various "hybrids" were developed for the core sections. This "mixing and matching" produced reasonable alternatives that were discussed at the February Advisory Group meeting. These discussions set the stage for this evening's identification and discussion of the Recommended Preferred Alternative.

Before turning to specifics, Mr. Desai also reminded the Group of the public involvement that has occurred so far. He cited 19 public events and emphasized that the community's input about community values, travel desires and environmental concerns has been particularly helpful. He also directed the Group's attention to the Impact Summary Matrix and highlighted several of its components.

The Recommended Preferred Alternative

Mr. Kevin Nichols from CH2M Hill provided an overview of the reasonable and preferred alternatives throughout the Columbia area. During his presentation, he relied on a series of

slides, which had been passed out to Advisory Group members and which summarized the reasonable alternatives that had been under consideration, identified the recommended preferred alternatives, and set forth the key factors that reinforced the decision to select the particular preferred alternative.

Mainline Widening. The first topic was mainline widening.

- Western Columbia. Mr. Nichols started on the western edge of the study area. He indicated that from Route BB to U.S. 40 the reasonable alternative was six lanes with a road median and widening to the south. The recommendation was to stay with that configuration. By widening to the south, there are fewer impacts than with either a symmetrical or northern widening. From U.S. 40 to Stadium, the preferred alternative was eight lanes with an urban median and widening slightly to the south.
- Central Columbia. Between Stadium and 63, the recommended preferred alternative was for eight lanes and an urban median. Generally, the widening would be symmetrical, but this was adjusted to avoid impacts in certain areas. For example, Mr. Nichols said, “We adjusted the centerline between Stadium and 70 West to shift it to the north in order to stay out of the businesses in this area on the south side of the freeway. As you go from 70 West to Garth, as a result of some of our discussions with the Parkade neighborhood, we have shifted this alignment further to the south to stay away from impacting all these residences on the north side.”
- Eastern Columbia. From U.S. 63 to Route Z, the reasonable alternative and preferred alternative was the same. It called for eight lanes with an urban median. The urban median reduces impacts and the symmetric widening reduces construction costs and travel delays.

Mr. Desai commented about the construction timing and scale. He reminded the Advisory Group that even though the preferred alternative calls for eight lanes, the initial construction will be for three lanes in each direction with the additional lanes to be added when necessary and when funding becomes available. The interim construction, however, would be conducted in such a way that the ultimate build out to eight lanes could be accomplished without major disruption.

Interchanges. After some discussion, Mr. Nichols and the Advisory Group turned their attention to interchanges and again discussed them from west to east through the study area. Certain interchanges were relatively straightforward and non-controversial. Others generated more interest and discussion. Some of the highlights included:

- “Western” or Scott Boulevard Interchange. Mr. Nichols cited recent discussions about the possibility of a western interchange or extending Scott Boulevard up to I-70. He indicated that they have completed a fair amount of analysis evaluating the impact of that proposal and how it might improve operations at the Stadium interchange. He commented that Stadium was a problem and that, regardless of the improvements that might be pursued at Stadium, the improvements are projected to be insufficient if they focus on Stadium alone. There is too much traffic for the Stadium interchange to handle now and this is even more the case in the future. Some solution is needed to divert traffic from Stadium. Mr.

Nichols also noted that the controlling intersection is Bernadette, just south of the Stadium interchange. The analysis concluded that while a western interchange would draw some traffic from the Stadium interchange, it would not draw sufficient traffic to solve problems at Stadium.

The team also concluded that ramps to and from the east of a full interchange at Fairview must be part of the solution. Mr. Nichols noted that shifting some traffic to Fairview reduces the load on Stadium and I-70 interchange. With a full interchange at Fairview, there is even more relief for Stadium and more relief at Bernadette. The team plans to examine the impacts of the Fairview interchange options on Fairview itself from I-70 to Broadway.

- Stadium Boulevard. Four reasonable alternatives were presented for Stadium Boulevard. Each involved Fairview as part of the solution. The preferred alternative was for a tight diamond interchange at Stadium with ramps to and from the east at Fairview. The tight diamond has fewer right-of-way impacts and lower construction costs than some of the other interchange options. The land use and traffic projections indicate that some connection at Fairview will be needed in the future. However, the actual construction sequencing would be dependent upon development. Mr. Desai noted that the likely sequence at Stadium is to build the tight diamond interchange soon and only build the Fairview ramps when they become necessary in the future and when there is funding and support for them. The study team, as noted above, plans to evaluate the impacts on Fairview between I-70 and Broadway.
- I-70 Business Loop West. The recommended preferred alternative for Business Loop West is a two-point diamond. But other options remain under consideration and the recommendation is therefore tentative and still under review. This is an awkward area and further examination is focused on more conventional solutions than those originally drawn if they can be made to work. Any changes in the recommendation, however, would not affect those made to the west or east along I-70. Mr. Desai indicated that some resolution about the recommended preferred alternative in this area should be available within about two weeks.
- Routes 163/763/Business Loop East (“Triplets”). In this area, two alternatives were examined – a one-way frontage road system and a collector-distributor (CD) system. The recommended preferred alternative is for the one-way frontage road system. Mr. Nichols noted that there is very little difference between the two in terms of the footprint. Mr. Desai commented that despite the similarities in the footprint, the one-way system did have considerably fewer residential impacts. From an operational perspective, the one-way system was viewed as being more compatible with the interests of the public, City and CATSO priorities, and the desires of MoDOT management. It was recommended that the City, through its economic evaluation, not focus exclusively on the one-way system, but consider the C-D system as a viable alternative as well. The study team, however, will proceed with recommending the one-way system in the draft EIS and will only revisit the issue if the City finds that a C-D system would be more beneficial to Columbia.
- U.S. 63 and Business 63. There are two interchanges in this area. The proposed solution adds ramps so travelers can make direct, no-stop moves between the connector and the

bypass to and from the west. It was noted that 75 percent of the traffic comes to and from the west at I-70. This preferred alternative was chosen because it is a tight configuration minimizing impacts while improving the Business 63 interchange substantially. Mr. Desai noted that only five businesses are impacted within two miles with this proposal. There was a related question about impacts on motels along I-70. The answer to this question was that, throughout the 18-mile stretch, three motels are impacted.

- Eastern Columbia. There are two interchanges in this area, Lake of the Woods and Route Z. Two reasonable alternatives had been proposed for Lake of the Woods and the recommended preferred alternative is a tight diamond interchange. Similarly, for Route Z, there were two reasonable alternatives under consideration and a diamond interchange was recommended as the preferred. It is viewed as a simple design with few negative impacts.

Questions and discussion. An open discussion followed this explanation about the recommended preferred alternatives.

One of the initial questions was about a potential threatened or endangered species. It was noted that this was the Bristled Cypress.

There was a question about how quickly growth was moving toward the east and the adequacy of an interchange, such as that being proposed at Lake of the Woods or Route Z. Mr. Desai responded, saying that the type of problems experienced at 63 would not occur at either of these locations. He indicated that from an access-management standpoint, the interchanges could handle significant future growth in traffic.

A question was raised about roads that are shown on the maps, but do not exist today and whether they are considered part of the I-70 improvement project. The response was that all these roads will be included in the study documentation, but the issue of who pays for the construction will not be addressed in the draft EIS. The focus is on what needs to happen and the nature and magnitude of the impacts.

A follow-up question related to the interdependency of various state and local construction and the fact that the ideal solution would not be possible without a comprehensive plan embraced by various state and local entities. The Stadium interchange was cited as an example. The solution requires local improvements as well as interstate improvements. The response was that, while it is impossible to force such coordination, a good deal of the priority setting conducted by MoDOT relies on what can be built cost-effectively. Historically, MoDOT has funded projects at a 100 percent level, but Ms. Harvey stressed that “the times are changing.” There is a significant trend toward greater cost-sharing of projects and collaborative planning.

It was also reinforced that the recommended preferred alternatives being proposed are ultimate solutions for 2030. In many instances, some sequencing of construction would likely take place that will reduce the amount of financial outlay in the near term.

EIS Preview

Buddy Desai then drew the Advisory Group and the audience's attention to the overview handout about the EIS and noted that he expects that the first draft will be ready sometime in the July time frame. Once the draft is out for review, a 45-day comment period starts. The plan is to have another Advisory Group meeting about this time. The comment period will include an official public hearing, probably in the August time frame. Mr. Desai was encouraged not to schedule the public hearing before the start of school as many families travel out of town in August. Once the public comment is over the draft EIS document is revised and then released for a final review in a 30-day period; this revised version will likely be available in November. The goal is to have the document finalized so that the Federal Highway Administration can publish its Record of Decision (ROD) before the end of 2004. When that happens this phase of the Improve-I70 project will be complete.

General Discussion

Following Mr. Desai's overview discussion began with one Advisory Group member suggesting that in the period between the signing of the ROD and the start of construction, this Group remain informed and be convened if necessary as it represents "such a good cross-section of the community."

A question was asked about sound walls. The answer was that, although general locations for sound walls are identified in this study, precise locations are dependent on the more detailed design that occurs later. In response to a question about enhancements, one Advisory Group member expressed a desire to convene people early to deal with if and how Columbia might secure or commit additional enhancement money. Bob Brendel said he would be glad to meet with more groups on such topics and was only awaiting the invitations.

The Group was asked for any final observations or questions. Some highlights were:

"I thought that we had been through a useful process and that it seems that we have reached a relatively reasonable conclusion."

"I just think you've done a remarkable job with the communication of the information, something that's been a very, very difficult process to try and make simple. You've done a good job."

"I'm also very impressed with the process of eliminating alternatives...looking at all alternatives and coming down to a conclusion... I hope that...they require trucks to just use two of the three lanes... it certainly makes it easier driving. It makes it safer."

"I hope that right-of-way purchase is given top priority."

"I think this has been a great process. It's been a huge learning experience."

"I do have some concerns...One of those is a concern over the validity of extrapolating 30 years out using current projections...in light of current knowledge that gas is expected to hit \$3 a gallon this summer... to suggest that...truck traffic is going to double in 30 years... they

might have to rethink how they do that... Another concern is that perhaps there is too much emphasis on CATSO's desires for what's going on in this area, because CATSO's desires are mainly done without substantial public input or involvement. Another concern would be the lack of true public hearings in the process. We've had lots of public meetings, but the public doesn't get to hear concerns of other members of the public at a public meeting, and that's a very integral part of the governmental decision-making process.”

“I appreciate the work particularly that was done in compressing the footprint near Parkade... I think it's been an excellent process... hopefully, our future public processes in Columbia will benefit from learning from this one.”

“I think that after eliminating one of the bypasses, that this is a good, safe, alternative. It accomplishes...the truck traffic with the other local traffic. I guess some concerns I still have would be the amount of businesses that could be displaced. Where are they going to go? ... I think it's been a good process, and it's been a diverse group, and I appreciate hearing everybody else's interests in the process.”

“And I feel good about the process, and the process, to me, is just as important as the product, and I share their ideas that I hope that it sets as a model for other public input in the community.”

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned with a reiteration of the invitation to members of the public to ask questions of and provide input to the Project Team, which remained available as long as anyone wanted.

NEXT STEPS

UPCOMING ADVISORY GROUP MEETING

TBD
Likely in July

Agenda

IMPROVE I-70 ADVISORY GROUP

Meeting 11
4:00-6:30 p.m.
March 18, 2004

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

Meeting Goals: 1) Hear about recent activities and updated material; 2) Understand and discuss the recommended preferred alternative; 3) Preview the EIS topics and timing; 4) Identify and discuss topics from the Advisory Group; 5) Identify next steps in the planning process.

- 4:00 Convene Meeting**
The Osprey Group
- 4:05 Updates**
The Osprey Group
- 4:20 Reviewing the Methodology and the Impact Evaluation Matrix**
Buddy Desai, CH2MHill
- 4:40 Identification of the Recommended Preferred Alternative**
Kevin Nichols and Buddy Desai, CH2MHill
- 5:50 EIS Preview: Timing and Content**
Buddy Desai, CH2MHill
- 6:00 Other Questions or Comments: Advisory Group**
The Osprey Group
- 6:25 Closing and Next Steps**
The Osprey Group
- 6:30 Adjourn**



WELCOME

I-70 Advisory Group Meeting #11

March 18, 2004

Welcome to tonight's meeting of the Improve I-70 Advisory Group. This meeting will provide the latest information about MoDOT's efforts to plan for the future of I-70, and will include a review of the study team's recommended preferred alternative for the Columbia area.

The attached questions and answers sheet is a good resource for background information about the study and the advisory group. You may also take a copy of the presentation being made tonight.

While members of the public are welcome this evening and at all meetings of the Advisory Group, **no public questions or comments will be taken during the meeting (4:00 to 6:30)**. The study team will be on-hand after the meeting until 8:00 p.m. to talk with you and address your concerns. You are welcome to review the maps and other exhibits at that time. We appreciate your cooperation in respecting the Group's meeting process.

As customary, **maps shown at tonight's meeting will be available on the project Web site** at www.ImproveI70.org by the end of the week following the meeting. If you have trouble accessing or printing the maps, you may request an 11x17 copy of the area of interest to you by calling the project hot line at 1-800-590-0066.

This is not the only or last time to provide your opinions about I-70 improvements in Columbia. Official study documentation will be provided later this summer and will be followed by a public hearing to gather input. A notice about these activities will be sent all on the project mailing list. Please remember to sign in to ensure you receive future notices.

Thank you again for your attendance.





Frequently Asked Questions Columbia, Missouri March 18, 2004

During the course of the Improve I-70 effort a number of questions have been asked. Here is a summary of frequently asked questions and the most current issues.

1. Why is this study being conducted?

Interstate 70 was designed and built in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is an outdated facility that no longer efficiently moves cars, trucks and people. To improve it, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) is responsible for ensuring that dollars spent on improvements today are consistent with long-term growth patterns and Missouri needs. The Improve I-70 studies will develop a comprehensive plan for how I-70 will look and operate in the future. The plan will allow MoDOT to make short-term improvements that advance I-70 toward its long-term vision. Additionally, completion of the studies is required by the federal government before more detailed design, and ultimately construction, can begin.

2. When can we expect construction to improve I-70 to begin and how long will construction take?

Currently no funding is available to completely design, rebuild and widen I-70. However, MoDOT continues to spend what it can to maintain I-70's pavement and bridges, including investing \$87 million in the rural portions of I-70 in the past five years. At a minimum, in the coming years motorists will see continued resurfacing projects and installation of guard cable barriers in the median of rural areas to improve safety.

In Columbia, an interim project at the U.S. 63/I-70 interchange has already begun as part of this ongoing maintenance and safety improvement approach.

3. How will this project be funded?

Long-term improvements will require funding substantially beyond MoDOT's current funding levels. A number of implementation plans are being developed based on a variety of funding scenarios. Ultimately, MoDOT will improve I-70 to the extent it can with the funds available. MoDOT is keeping transportation policy makers informed on the needs of I-70 and encouraging local, state and federal officials to support special funding for I-70 improvements.

4. What are the estimated costs of the entire project?

Cost estimates for this 18-mile stretch of I-70 are being updated now that more detail is beginning to emerge. More exact estimates will be developed as this study moves to its conclusion and will be included as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) expected to be available in summer 2004.

5. Could I-70 become a toll road to help address I-70 improvement needs sooner?

Studies have indicated that if tolls were implemented they could generate from 70 to 90 percent of the cost to widen I-70. But at the present time, MoDOT does not have the constitutional authority to operate toll roads. A constitutional amendment would have to be approved by the legislature and, ultimately, by a vote of the people. Given the importance of the I-70 improvement needs and the shortfall in funding, MoDOT's number-one legislative priority is seeking tolling authority.

Current federal law does not allow the imposition of tolls on existing interstate highways. However, this is a serious impediment for all state departments of transportation. Reauthorization of the federal transportation bill, currently underway in Congress, is expected to address this issue.

6. What is the priority of Columbia in the context of a statewide construction schedule? How are construction priorities going to be determined?

The statewide construction schedule has not been determined. Columbia's higher capacity needs, though, would likely place it high on the priority list. Construction priorities will ultimately be based on the needs in the corridor at the time funding is received, the amount and timing of the funding.

7. Would the existing interstate need to be expanded if there is a separate bypass?

Yes. Building a bypass around Columbia does not move sufficient traffic off the existing interstate. Traffic projections for 2030 indicate that there will be increased demand for existing I-70 even if a new bypass is built, thus the need to build more highway lanes in the existing corridor.

8. The decision to widen I-70 seems based on the assumption that long term traffic growth will continue. Does the study consider other scenarios such as a long term reduction in traffic due to increased oil prices or new technological developments?

Traffic projections for I-70 in 2030 consider estimated population growth, land use changes and continued demand for roads to get goods to the marketplace and people to jobs. It is also clear that the existing I-70 is already an outdated facility that has difficulty meeting even today's demands. While telecommuting and other technological advances may reduce some travel demand and make future travel more efficient, it is critical that efforts get underway to address existing and future mobility needs. While trends might change, recent national traffic trends show that vehicle miles driven are rising faster than population growth and that truck traffic is growing faster than automobile traffic.

9. 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?

Two northern bypass options were considered and eliminated because they didn't remove enough traffic off of the existing I-70 to solve the capacity problem. The existing route would still have needed more lanes, and as long as improvements had

to be made to the existing corridor, it made more sense to invest only in the existing interstate and avoid many of the costs and environmental impacts associated with acquiring right-of-way and constructing a bypass. Future growth north of I-70 may be more appropriately accommodated with an arterial loop such as is on the CATSO long range plan, or through some other local roadway system.

10. Two of the obvious weaknesses of I-70 currently are how it handles local traffic and interstate truck traffic. How are these problems being addressed in the study?

In the urban area of Columbia, the alternatives under consideration include methods to separate local traffic from through traffic. These methods are associated with the type of frontage road system in place. Feasible concepts for this include one-way frontage roads or a collector-distributor system for the Rangeline/Providence/Business 70E interchanges. Either of these two systems enables local traffic to access local streets without getting on and off I-70. Each alternative has advantages and disadvantages, so engineers are looking at a combination of techniques that moves traffic smoothly with the least amount of impacts. In addition to the frontage road system, several connections are being made between local streets, such as linking the north and south frontage roads across Perche Creek and extending Clark Lane across I-70 to Business Loop 70.

11. 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?

Widening and rebuilding existing I-70 will be disruptive for a short amount of time, but the safety and traffic capacity improvements will be realized for decades. Many of the I-70-area businesses originally located here to attract and serve customers who use this main thoroughfare, and most want to see it improved so it can bring even more people past their doors. Increased traffic can lead to increased business and tax revenues over the long-term.

12. What are the most significant environmental and social impacts associated with this improvement?

This study evaluates impacts to both the human and natural environments. Human environment impacts include residential and business displacements and their economic impacts. Natural environmental impacts include acres of affected wetlands, floodplains, woodlands, parklands (Cosmo Park) and agricultural lands as well as impacts to historic properties and threatened and endangered species, like the Bristled Cyperus. For more detail on these impacts, please see the Impact Summary Table posted on the Web at www.ImproveI70.org.

All of this information will be used in evaluating the alternatives and refining the preferred alternative to minimize impacts to the area's residences, local businesses, and environmental concerns.

13. What provisions are being made for pedestrian and bicycling access?

MoDOT will make provisions for bike, pedestrian and wheelchair access across I-70 wherever possible and reasonable, but most likely not at every crossing. For example, it is probably not reasonable to provide access on U.S. 63 over I-70 due to high traffic volumes and traffic mix.

This study will not determine a specific plan for pedestrian, bicycle and wheelchair access across I-70. However, improvement alternatives being considered will not preclude that access. A more specific access plan will be developed during a later design phase.

14. My neighborhood hears a lot of noise from cars and trucks on I-70. What provisions are being made for noise walls?

The Improve I-70 Team is completing a sound analysis of the I-70 corridor to measure today's noise levels and forecast how noise might change by the year 2030 due to I-70 widening. This analysis will help the team identify general areas where noise walls might be needed in the future. The team's analysis and recommendations will be included in the study's environmental impact statement.

This study will NOT determine exactly where noise walls could be or what they might look like. Those decisions would be made during a detailed engineering design phase which would follow this study but that is currently unfunded.

During the design phase, MoDOT would use federal and state policies to guide decisions about noise walls. In general, the following criteria must be met before a sound wall can be constructed:

- Noise levels must exceed 65 decibels (the sound of normal conversation three feet away);
- The sound wall must provide noise reduction of at least five decibels for those homes closest to the highway;
- The sound wall must provide decreased noise for more than one home;
- The sound wall cannot be taller than 18 feet;
- The sound wall must not interfere with normal access to the property;
- The sound wall must not pose a traffic safety hazard; and
- The majority of the benefited residents must agree that a sound wall is desired.

For more information on sound walls, visit MoDOT's Web site at www.modot.state.mo.us/local/d6/hottopics/MiscTopics/swbrochure.html.

15. Are provisions being made to save room for eventual rail service along I-70 some day?

All Improve I-70 studies across the state are using criteria that would enable possible passenger (not freight) rail service along I-70 to be considered in the future. In the rural areas, the median will be extra wide and the horizontal and vertical alignments would work with passenger rail in the median. However, in urban areas like Columbia and other areas along existing I-70, placing any kind of rail service in the median would not be possible. Instead, rail service would likely leave the I-70 corridor in urban areas and be routed to a community train station that would be easily accessible by all residents. In the event passenger rail service is not determined to be the right solution, the wide median in the rural areas could accommodate some other type of transportation improvement as well.

16. What kind of enhancements might be included in the new I-70 to make it more visually appealing and pedestrian-friendly?

MoDOT has developed an I-70 Corridor Enhancement Plan to ensure that, to the degree funding allows, major improvements to I-70 are attractive and result in a cohesive “look” across the state. While the plan does not recommend specific enhancements for specific locations, it presents a vision for the future look of the interstate across Missouri and establishes a baseline for the types of enhancements MoDOT will fund.

The plan includes a range of possible enhancements that could be applied along I-70 to complement natural features and enhance the visual quality of the route. Images within the plan show how color, textured surfaces, lighting, landscaping and other decorative features might enhance bridges, retaining walls, railings and other elements of I-70. The plan will be available on the project Web site this spring.

The images in the plan provide a general design direction and serve as a starting point for local discussions about I-70 enhancements. Results of those discussions and any commitments made by MoDOT or local communities will be record in the study’s environmental impact statement (EIS). The EIS will serve as a guide in later, more detailed efforts to determine where and to what degree enhancements will be included in major I-70 improvements.

17. Will the study determine the economic cost to the community during and after construction of lost business and business and residential relocations?

The Improve I-70 Study looked at the character of the business community and how businesses might be impacted by I-70’s widening. In addition, the City of Columbia has commissioned an economic impact study to assess the overall economic impact to the community during and after the construction of I-70. Results are expected later this spring.

All of this information is being used to evaluate improvement alternatives and refine the preferred alternative to minimize impacts to the area’s residences, businesses and environmental concerns.

18. Where is information available on how people will be compensated if their property is needed for I-70 improvements? When will such an acquisition process begin?

Property acquisition will not begin until a design phase is complete (which can take several years) and construction funding is in place. At this time, no funding has been allocated for design or construction. The Improve I-70 website includes MoDOT’s “Pathways to Progress” brochure, which outlines MoDOT’s right of way acquisition policies and procedures. You also may call 1-888-ASK-MODOT to speak to a right of way specialist about your concerns.

19. 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?

Elected officials and technical experts from the City of Columbia, Boone County and many other organizations, as well as local citizens – those who know this area best – have been involved in this effort. Traffic forecasts, for example, have used CATSO’s traffic model and incorporate the city’s and county’s land use projections. All parties will continue to play an integral role in the planning process as it moves forward. The

study team frequently briefs CATSO about its progress and city and county staff have been continually involved with Study Team planning and with the Columbia Advisory Group, which has met throughout the study.

20. What opportunities are there for the community to be involved and provide input? And, does the community input matter?

Public input is critical to the success of this project. The public knows this corridor and issues better than anyone. The study team relies on public input to shape, refine and evaluate the alternatives that are being considered. In developing the alternatives for I-70, the study team has benefited from input from the Columbia Advisory Group, several neighborhood meetings, multiple open houses, a public workshop and other public input.

People can continue to be involved by giving us comments, attending an Advisory Group meeting, leaving comments on the Web site at www.ImproveI70.org, or calling our hotline at 1-800-590-0066.

21. What will happen next in the study?

The Improve I-70 Study Team will evaluate the alternatives based on how well they solve the corridor's operational problems, then evaluate the impacts to the natural and human environments for those alternatives that solve the operational problems. A preferred alternative for improving I-70 through Columbia will be identified in the Draft EIS. It will be published early this summer. This document is required by the Federal Highway Administration and the National Environmental Policy Act, and will be made available for public review before a formal public hearing expected mid-summer. Public input received at the hearing will be used to develop a Final EIS, which FHWA will review before issuing a "Record of Decision," hopefully by the end of 2004. This will be followed by the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission's approval in early 2005. Should funding be available at that time, this project could move into the final design phase and eventually construction.

22. What is the "shelf life" of the EIS and the decision documents that go with it? How will the EIS be augmented or updated if funding is not available for several years?

The EIS has a three-year shelf life after the Federal Highway Administration issues its "Record of Decision." If no project development activities such as plan preparation, right of way acquisition or construction occur within that time but conditions in the I-70 corridor change and/or the project scope changes, a re-evaluation is required. The Improve I-70 study effort, however, would not have to be completely re-done.

If you have questions or concerns about the study, contact the project office at 1-800-590-0066, or log on to www.ImproveI70.org.





OVERVIEW

Environmental Impact Statement and Public Hearing – Section 4 (Columbia)

Information gathered and analysis conducted by the Improve I-70 study team in Columbia will be contained in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The document will provide an evaluation of all the reasonable options for widening and rebuilding I-70, and describe how those options might impact the natural and man-made environments.

The document goes through a number of steps before it is finalized. Those steps are defined by federal and state policies, and include an official public hearing and comment period to gather citizen input. Below is an outline of the steps and a targeted timeframe for their completion.

Step	Timeframe	Description
Draft Document Distribution and Comment Period	July 2004	A draft version of the environmental impact statement (DEIS) will be written and circulated to state and federal agencies and public officials. At the same time, copies will be made available for public review at a variety of locations such as libraries and government buildings and on the project Web site. Anyone can review and comment on the draft during a specified period that lasts at least 45 days.
Official Public Hearing	August 2004	About three weeks after the draft document has been available for review, an official public hearing will be held to gather citizen's comments.
Final Document Development	September-November 2004	After the review period ends, the study team will assess all substantive comments submitted by the public and government review agencies and begin work on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS is basically an update of the draft version and includes the substantive comments and the results of any additional evaluations or analyses performed in response to those comments.
Final Document Distribution	November 2004	The FEIS is provided to the same state and federal agencies, public officials and public locations that received the draft, and is posted on the project Web site. The final document will confirm the preferred alternative and will serve as the basis for future actions related to I-70 improvements.
Document Approval	December 2004	The Federal Highway Administration has responsibility for approving the FEIS. After the FEIS is circulated the agency will publish a Record of Decision (ROD). This ROD announces the selected alternative for the I-70 improvements which then can proceed to the next phases of development – design, right of way acquisition and construction (all dependent on funding availability).