

## CHAPTER V

# Comments and Coordination

### A. Public Involvement

The public involvement planning efforts began with the development of a corridor-wide and a section-specific public involvement plan in April 2002. This comprehensive plan provides the general framework for conducting public involvement activities throughout the study. The corridor-wide plan, coordinated by the Public Involvement Consultant (PIC), includes the following tools: survey research, toll-free hotline, newsletters, a fact sheet, brochures, media kit, media releases and advisories, an access management video, general and section mailing list databases and a Web site. The PIC also coordinated a mailing to land owners along the I-70 corridor, notifying them of the second tier studies and requesting property access for possible environmental research. These landowners receive all mailings and notices about study events. The SIU 7 plan, coordinated by the Section Engineering Consultant (SEC), includes:

- Local Land Use Forum
- Interchange Workshops
- Drop-In Center
- Public Meetings
- Public Hearing
- Section-level Newsletter Updates

The media provided good coverage of SIU 7 activities throughout the study. Initially, MoDOT hand-delivered media kits to the key media outlets within the section and mailed kits to others. Public events were announced and covered regularly by the Journal newspapers in Warrenton, Wentzville and St. Charles, the St. Louis/St. Charles Post Dispatch and the Marthasville Record. MoDOT staff also appeared on several call-in radio shows in Warrenton.

#### 1. Targeted Outreach Activities

During the course of the study, several outreach activities were held to solicit input from local residents and business owners, commuters and local and regional land use planning officials, helping the study team to produce refined and more effective proposed improvements. In SIU 7, the following outreach activities were conducted to engage various audiences in the study process:

##### a. Land Use Forum

On August 14, 2002, a Land Use Forum was held in Wright City to solicit input from the local and regional staffs regarding current or future land use implications of the conceptual corridors that were being considered. All of the local communities and regional agencies responsible for land use planning, transit agencies and cities with transit authorities, or transportation districts within or near the four conceptual corridors being considered for improvements, Near North, Far North,

Existing I-70, and South, were invited to the forum. Nearly 30 representatives attended the forum to offer comments on how improvements in the four corridors would affect their community, agency and the region. Participants were also provided with comment forms and encouraged to add any additional information that would be relevant to the corridor evaluation. A list of attendees is included in the summary in Appendix G.

Most participants thought that widening existing I-70 would have fewer negative impacts to their community or the region as a whole. Many indicated their concern that building any of the conceptual corridors would lead to increased urban sprawl. A summary of the Land Use Forum comments is included in Appendix G.

A meeting summary was sent to all those invited to the forum. The study team produced a Conceptual Corridor Reevaluation Report that used both technical data and input from the Land Use Forum to evaluate the I-70 conceptual corridors, resulting in the recommendation to widen and improve the existing I-70 corridor. Land Use Forum participants were sent special invitations to attend the public meetings announcing the recommendation to the general public in April 2003.

**Figure V-1: August 14, 2002 Land Use Forum**



#### **b. Interchange Workshops**

As detailed work began on the interchange development phase of the study, input was sought from the communities at the existing I-70 interchanges. Six workshops were held throughout the corridor over a three-day period in May 2003. A media advisory was prepared in advance of the workshops. Over 30 local, county and regional officials including mayors, county commissioners, and economic development staff members participated in the hands-on, small group workshops designed to obtain specific comments on the preliminary draft interchange alternatives.

Each workshop began with a brief presentation on the alternatives development, factors affecting interchange design and screening criteria to evaluate the alternatives. Participants

viewed the access management guidelines video, discussed specific issues and provided comments on each interchange in their area. As a result of comments received in some of the workshops, alternatives were dropped. Alternatives were modified for some of the interchanges by incorporating some of the suggestions made in the individual workshops. The refinements made to those interchange alternatives were then presented to the public at the open house meetings held in September 2003. Summaries of each workshop are included in Appendix G.

### **c. Special Outreach Meetings**

Special outreach public meetings were used to inform the public or to solicit input regarding changes or additional considerations during the study.

#### *Drop-In Center*

After the September 2003 meetings, refinements were made to the alternatives prompted by input received at the public meetings, additional analysis of traffic data and efforts to avoid impacts to properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. A drop-in center was held on November 24, 2003, at the Warren County University Outreach and Extension Center to update public officials, the media and the general public regarding the changes to the alternatives. In addition to the news release, a postcard invitation was sent to the entire mailing list of nearly 2,000 people. The postcard advised the public of the limited number of specific locations where changes were made.

Although the primary purpose of the drop-in center was to present recent changes, alternative boards for the entire corridor were available. Many who were unable to attend the public meetings in September used the opportunity to view the alternatives maps for all areas of SIU 7. Nearly 80 people attended the drop-in center and 15 completed comment forms. Most comments were requests for copies of the alternatives maps or questions about how their property might be affected by the proposed alternatives.

A copy of the drop-in center meeting summary is included in Appendix G.

## **2. Public Meetings**

Two sets of open-house style public meetings were held to solicit input at key milestones during the study. The meetings were held in April and September 2003, in both Wentzville and Warrenton.

### **a. April Public Meetings**

The purpose of the meetings was to present the evaluation criteria for the four conceptual corridors and the recommendation to widen and improve existing I-70 through the Warrenton, Wright City and Wentzville areas. In addition to the news release sent to media outlets, the entire study mailing list received a postcard notifying them of the meetings. A notice of the meetings was included in the Spring 2003 issue of the study newsletter, *Momentum*, and posted to the Web site.

Identical meetings were held in Wentzville (April 9, 2003), at the Progress Park Banquet Hall, and Warrenton (April 10, 2003) at the University Outreach and Extension Center. Attendees were given a comment form, funding information sheet and a separate questionnaire on

funding. Improve I-70 newsletters and fact sheets were available for attendees who did not receive them by mail.

A total of 47 comment forms were completed at the meeting or received by fax, mail or e-mail. A public officials and media preview hour drew 11 attendees on each date. More than 280 people attended the meetings and overwhelmingly supported the decision to widen and improve existing I-70. A summary of the meeting and comment matrix is included in Appendix G.

**Figure V-2: Study team discusses Lake St. Louis interchange with public officials and nearby businesses.**



#### **b. September Public Meetings**

After the interchange workshops in May 2003, two public meetings were scheduled to solicit public input on the preliminary mainline and interchange alternatives. Identical meetings were held at The Mall at Wentzville Crossings, September 23 and at Blackhawk Middle School, in Warrenton, September 25. The study mailing list received a postcard notification of the meetings and a news release was sent to local media. Maps of the alternatives were presented and videos covering access management and the function of roundabouts were shown. Attendees were provided with a comment form and a copy of the Next Steps display board from the meeting. Improve I-70 newsletters and fact sheets were available for attendees who did not receive them by mail.

A preview for public officials and the media was held one hour prior to each meeting. Due to potential impacts from the proposed alternatives, directly affected business owners at the Lake St. Louis interchange were also invited to attend the preview, allowing time for personal assistance in reviewing the maps and answering questions. A total of 12 public officials, media and Lake St. Louis business representatives attended the preview hour prior to both meetings.

The meetings drew more than 170 people, who completed 23 comment forms. A summary of the meeting and comments matrix is located in Appendix G.

### **3. Public Hearing**

Following publication of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a public hearing will be held within the study area to allow local officials and citizens the opportunity to enter their comments on the project into the official record. All comments received during the comment period will be considered prior to a final decision on the proposed action.

### **4. Hotline**

A toll-free telephone hotline was created as an additional means for the public to ask questions, request information, and provide input to the study team. To date, the toll-free hotline has generated more than 60 inquiries and comments in SIU 7. Questions regarding right-of-entry forms mailed to landowners requesting property access for environmental fieldwork generated the most hotline calls. Other popular inquiries included questions regarding specific impacts to property and general comments on safety along I-70.

### **5. Web site**

The study Web site, [www.ImproveI-70.org](http://www.ImproveI-70.org), offers another means to increase public awareness and participation in the study process. The Web site covers corridor-wide information providing an overview of the study process, schedule, project publications, issues relating to interchanges and access management, construction, truck traffic and funding.

The Local Focus area of the Web site includes maps and graphics, section documents, news, events and the study schedule for each designated Section in the corridor. The Contact Us section encourages the public to call the hotline, write, or e-mail from the Web site any questions or to join the mailing list.

The Maps and Graphics area generates the most interest in SIU 7. This section contains maps and display boards from the April and September 2003 public meetings. The additional alternatives and updates displayed at the drop in center on November 2003 are also found in this section. The News section covers the current project status and all news releases for SIU 7. Section Documents has a summary of all the public meetings, interchange workshops and the Corridor Reevaluation Report.

The Web site is updated frequently throughout the study, ensuring that the most current information is available between meetings, newsletters or other direct communications.

### **6. Newsletters**

Three issues of the Improve I-70 newsletters, called *Momentum*, have been produced and distributed to date. These newsletters included corridor-wide information, as well as specific information on each section of the I-70 study, including upcoming events and activities. Newsletters were mailed to the entire Improve I-70 database, including about 2,000 entries within SIU 7.

## a. Newsletter Synopsis

### *Issue One – Spring 2003*

- The initial newsletter addressed background information on the Improve I-70 study process, an overview of why I-70 is being studied, how each section will address environmental documentation, access management issues, a calendar of events and status updates for each section. At this point in the study, SIU 7 was completing the screening process to determine which of four conceptual corridors should be carried forward and preparing for public comments at the April open-house meetings. The newsletter served as a first announcement of the meetings and the screening process, which was followed by a direct postcard mailing.

### *Issue Two – Summer 2003*

- Principal topics covered in this issue included the overall study status, a calendar of events, guard cable safety, funding and prioritizing improvements and maintenance of traffic during construction. SIU 7 information included updates from the April public meetings and the interchange workshops, and announced the upcoming fall meetings.

### *Issue Three – Fall 2003*

- The third issue of the newsletter presented a study status update, a calendar of events, a description of how impacts will be quantified and a summary explanation of NEPA and the decision making process. SIU 7 information included a summary of the September public meetings and described the next steps in the study process, covering refinements to alternatives, environmental documentation and the upcoming public hearing.

## B. Agency Coordination

Coordination with local governments, regional agencies and MoDOT districts has been ongoing throughout the second tier process. Formal resource agency scoping meetings were not necessary as this was accomplished in the First Tier EIS and the agencies participated in developing the second tier approach. However, the environmental scoping process has been performed since the beginning of the Improve I-70 process in January 2002. This process has helped identify the issues and concerns that would affect the definition and evaluation of the alternatives. In addition to the formal scoping process, a Management Team monitors progress within SIU 7 periodically.

### 1. Notice of Intent

The Federal Highway Administration filed a Notice of Intent to prepare the Second Tier Environmental Impact Statement: Montgomery, Warren, Lincoln and St. Charles Counties, Missouri. The notice was published in the Federal Register: May 10, 2002 (Volume 67, Number 91, Page 31861). Appendix H contains a copy of the Notice of Intent.

### 2. Scoping Process

The scoping process and agency involvement was discussed at the April 19, 2002 Study Management Group (SMG) Meeting, held at the FHWA Division Office. Representatives from

the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) -Headquarters, General Engineering Consultant (GEC), FHWA, Missouri Department of Natural Resources (MoDNR), Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), United States Coast Guard and United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) make up the SMG and participated in the meeting. A brief summary of the SMG Meetings is included in Section 4 of this chapter.

### **3. SIU 7 Management Team Meetings**

Regular oversight of the process of determining and studying the alternatives developed for SIU 7 was provided by the Management Team. This team is made up of representatives from the SEC, the GEC, MoDOT Headquarters, MoDOT Districts Three and Six, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the Boonslick Regional Planning Commission and Metro (formerly Bi-State Development Agency).

The Management Team met regularly, reviewing reports and concepts as they were completed, and providing guidance and insight throughout the Second Tier Environmental Impact Statement development process.

### **4. Study Management Group Meetings**

A Study Management Group (SMG) was assembled and organized to coordinate and share information about this project on a corridor-wide basis. In contrast to the SIU 7 management team, who's responsibility it was to oversee the detailed operations of the DEIS process, the SMG consisted of upper level resource agency staff and looked at issues at a corridor-wide level. Five meetings have been held to date. Representatives from MoDOT-Headquarters, FHWA, MoDNR, MDC, USEPA, NRCS and USACE participated in the meetings.

The kickoff meeting was held on April 19, 2002. Topics included the project status, scoping process, public involvement update, Overton Bottoms and Mineola Hill issues, and corridor-wide bicycle and pedestrian opportunities.

The second SMG Meeting was held on August 22, 2002. A summary of the Median Study, Public Involvement Plan, Rest Area/Welcome Center Study, Corridor Enhancement Subcommittee Meeting, study funding and schedule issues was presented. SIU 7 provided an overview of the conceptual corridor options, screening criteria, Land Use Forum, travel demand modeling/land use impact scenarios and interchange concepts.

Another SMG Meeting was held on May 20, 2003. An update was given on the program status and schedule, cultural resources, interagency coordination, subcommittee activities (i.e. – Mineola Hill, Overton Bottoms, Corridor Enhancement) and public involvement. SIU 7 presented a summary of the completed Conceptual Corridor Reevaluation Report, Rural Areas Alternative Screening and recently held public meetings. Upcoming work on alternatives screening, cultural and environmental fieldwork and additional public meetings was also discussed.

The September 11, 2003 SMG Meeting included a discussion of the program status and schedule, cultural resources update, interagency coordination and completed corridor-wide documents, the Corridor Enhancement Plan and the Rest Area Study. An update on public involvement and future activities was also discussed. SIU 7 provided a section update on mainline and interchange alternatives to be presented at the upcoming public meeting, environmental field studies and a schedule of future activities.

The most recent SMG Meeting was held on April 20, 2004. An update on the program status and schedule was provided, including a discussion on frontage roads. Specific issues within each SIU were discussed. Challenges within SIU 7 have been in limiting the right of way impacts. A cultural resources update was provided for each section. The Missouri State Historic Preservation Office has completed its review of the SIU 7 architectural report (see Appendix H). Interagency coordination, public involvement and future activities were also mentioned.

## 5. Agency Agreements

In order to facilitate preparation of the NEPA documents for the improvement of I-70, the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, Missouri Division, have executed a number of formal agreements with other agencies.

A Cooperating Agency agreement was signed by FHWA and USEPA. In this agreement, USEPA has committed to participating in the Cooperating Agency Coordination meetings and in a cooperative merged NEPA/404 process for SIU #7. See Appendix H for a copy of the Agreement.

The Federal Highway Administration, NRCS, MoDOT and the Farm Service Agency signed an interagency agreement to work cooperatively regarding Wetland Reserve Program lands, Conservation Reserve Program lands, and prime and unique farmlands. A copy of the Interagency Cooperative Agreement on Agricultural Lands is included in Appendix H.

The Federal Highway Administration, the United States Army Corps of Engineers and the Missouri Department of Transportation have executed an Interagency Partnering Agreement for the Improve I-70 project to work toward the timely completion of a merged NEPA/404 process. This merged process will include concurrence points in: purpose and need; alternatives carried forward; joint NEPA/Section 404 public hearing; selected alternative; mitigation and Record of Decision. See Appendix H for a copy of the Agreement. Appendix H also includes documentation of the Corps' concurrence at the project purpose and need concurrence point.

## 6. Native American Coordination

With regard to Native American consultation, the FHWA has contacted nine indigenous tribes that would have an interest in the I-70 corridor. The only response received was from The Sac and Fox NAGPRA Confederacy. The Confederacy indicated the Sac and Fox inhabited the SIU 7 area extensively. The Confederacy requested to be notified immediately should any funerary objects or human remains be unearthed. Copies of the correspondence and response are included in Appendix H.