

Public Hearings

Public hearings are scheduled for:

June 2 - Burfordville Baptist Church, Route 34, 4-7 pm

June 7 - Piedmont AARP Center (located next to Clearwater High School)
Route 34, 4-7 pm

June 9 - Marble Hill Senior Citizen Nutritional Center, 505 3rd Street, 4-7 pm

The public hearings will take place in an open-house format similar to previous public meetings held as part of the study. No formal presentations will be made. All interested citizens will be able to view and comment on the study's preferred alternative, the DEIS, and other important study-related information. Comment forms will be available, and you will have an opportunity to provide oral comments as well. Project team members will be on hand to answer questions and discuss the study. Your attendance, participation and feedback are encouraged.

A 45-day public comment period coincides with the public hearings. During the comment period, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be available for review at a number of public facilities, such as libraries, county courthouses and city halls. The dates of the comment period are May 6, 2005, to June 24, 2005.

What is NEPA?

NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969) is required for projects that receive federal funding and which could significantly affect the environment. It requires agencies such as MoDOT to consider the potential impacts to people and the environment during the planning and decision-making process. Public involvement plays an essential role in this process. The goal is to find a solution that is in the best overall interests of the public's transportation needs.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

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SPRING 2005
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**Missouri
Department
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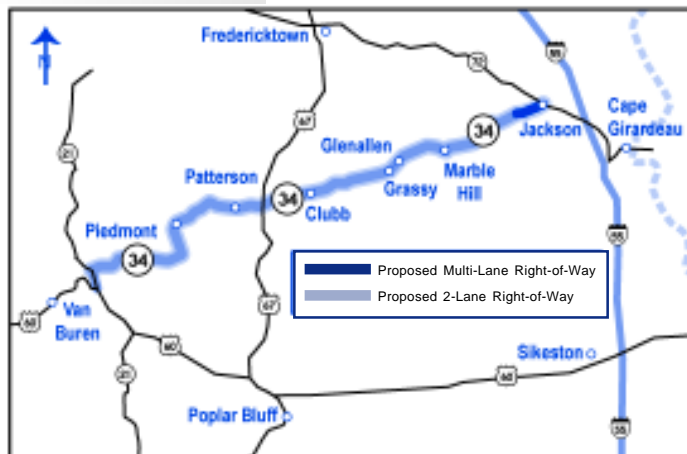
Dear Resident,

The Missouri Department of Transportation appreciates your patience during the Route 34 Improvement Study, encompassing 85 miles of Route 34 from west of Jackson to Route 60 east of Van Buren. MoDOT knows that many of you are interested in the results of the study. As the study nears its final stages, MoDOT remains committed to keeping you informed and a part of the overall study process. Your feedback is important. This newsletter will help bring you up-to-date on the study's progress, and what you can expect over the next few months and in the future.

We look forward to seeing you at the study's public hearings on June 2, 7 and 9 and encourage you to get in touch with us if you have any comments or questions. I can be reached at (573) 472-5261, or toll-free at 1-888-ASK MODOT (1-888-275-6636).

Sincerely,

Eric Krapf
MoDOT Project Manager



Route 34 Study Update

The study team has completed its evaluation of the preliminary corridor alternates, and has spent the past several months documenting the study's findings in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

As part of this federally-mandated process, the DEIS has been reviewed by MoDOT, the Federal Highway Administration and other agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Missouri Department of Conservation. The study team has revised the DEIS to include input from these agencies.

The document has been circulated to representatives of these and other agencies and has been distributed to legislators and local officials for their review. The public will also have an opportunity to examine the DEIS (at libraries and municipal buildings, for example) during an official comment period and at public hearings (please see page 4 for details).

Why Conduct This Study?

Anyone who travels Route 34 would agree that our modern-day needs place tremendous demands on the roadway system. Increases in commuter traffic, recreational travel and agricultural vehicles are all common occurrences along Route 34 that differ from the roadway's original purpose.

In order to improve Route 34 and help make it a better facility for all Missouri motorists, the study's Purpose and Need identified several objectives:

- Improve safety on Route 34 by reducing the potential for accidents
- Address roadway deficiencies, such as curves, hills and bridges
- Relieve traffic congestion in Piedmont, Marble Hill and areas west of Jackson
- Create better links to Interstate 55 and Route 60

Study Modifications

At public meetings in February 2001, proposed improvements to some sections of the study area called for four lanes. However, after detailed evaluation by the study team some of these sections are now proposed as two-lane facilities with passing lanes and turning lanes where warranted. These areas include:

- West of Piedmont to the Route 34/67 intersection
- Marble Hill and the immediate vicinity
- Route UU to Byrd Creek Bridge (Cape Girardeau County)

Specific areas which are being recommended for multiple lanes are: part of the preferred alternative near Woodland R4 School in Marble Hill (three lanes); and Byrd Creek to the Route 34/72 intersection in Cape Girardeau County (four lanes).

There are several reasons for these modifications. The Midwest Research Institute in Kansas City recently published a report on the benefits and criteria for passing lanes. This report showed that adding passing lanes to two-lane roads can dramatically improve traffic operations and safety at substantially less cost than widening to four lanes. Accident rates were cut in half on roads where passing lanes were installed.

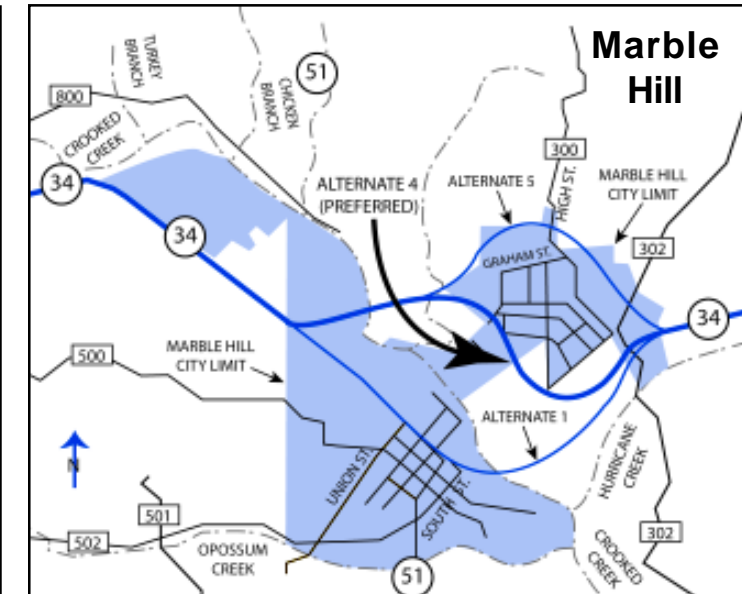
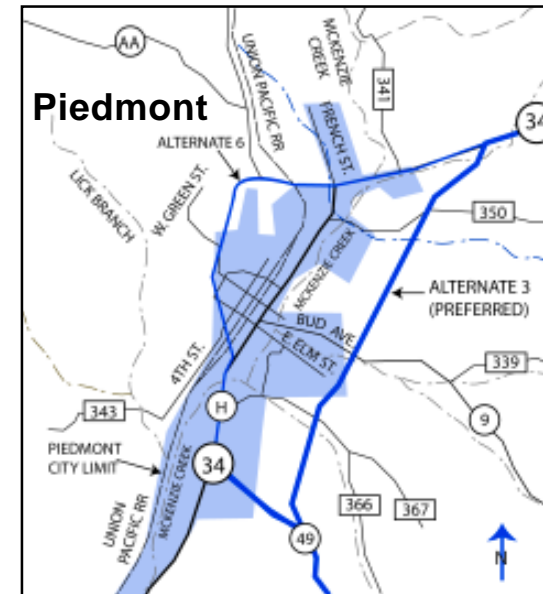
Based on this research and the current shortage of transportation funds, the study team determined that the best solution for improving Route 34 was to incorporate a substantial number of passing/turning lanes instead of four-lane construction exclusively. This approach is more financially attainable, and does not eliminate the possibility that four lanes could be constructed at some point in the future. A two-lane highway with passing/turning lanes will improve congestion and result in a safer Route 34.

Selection of the Preferred Alternative

In order to facilitate the environmental assessment and the development of alternates, the study area was divided into six sections. Within each section, an evaluation took place that examined the potential social, economic, engineering and environmental consequences of each alternate, in combination with public input. This evaluation resulted in a preferred alternative, which is made up of one or more alternates in each section. Pictured at right is the preferred alternative for Piedmont and Marble Hill.

The preferred alternative improves traffic mobility on Route 34 and has relatively lower impacts to a variety of environmental resources, as compared to the other study alternates. In Piedmont, the preferred alternative has significantly lower impacts to residential and commercial property and areas of developed land. Floodplain areas affected by the preferred alternative are considerably lower as well. At Marble Hill, the preferred alternative has lower impacts to Crooked Creek and its FEMA-regulated floodway, results in far fewer displacements and will not affect severe terrain north of the city. The amount of new construction needed at Marble Hill is also lower.

The Preferred Alternatives



What Happens Next?

A 45-day public comment period and a series of public hearings will provide the public with an opportunity to view and comment on the preferred alternative and the Draft EIS (please see page 4 for details). The study team will evaluate all comments, and address and incorporate substantive comments into the Final EIS (FEIS). The FEIS will then be reviewed by MoDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A Record of Decision will be issued if MoDOT and FHWA accept the study's findings. A final alternative will be identified as a result of this process.

There are currently no immediate plans for construction of the improvements recommended as part of the study. However, two projects are anticipated in 2009 for improvements to Route 34 in Cape Girardeau County. The first involves

replacing the bridge two and a half miles west of the Route 72/34 intersection. The second project includes replacing two bridges nearly a mile east of the Route OO/UU intersection at Burfordville. Because of the length of the proposed improvement (85 miles), construction would have to take place over an extended period of time, and be completed in sections to minimize disruptions and inconvenience to motorists on existing Route 34.

Annually, MoDOT produces a list of transportation needs within the 14 counties of the Southeast District. This list is created in partnership with the district's regional planning commissions. The general public and local officials are encouraged to share comments and concerns with MoDOT and with their respective regional planning commission. By working with local transportation partners, needs are prioritized for the entire district, thus setting the direction for the development of the state transportation program.

