

The Scott City

LINK

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MODOT - SOUTHEAST DISTRICT

Linking Interstate 55

You'd think an interstate highway would be pretty much set when it comes to linking communities; after all, they were built to link the entire nation. But with the communities surrounding Jackson, Cape Girardeau and Scott City growing, improving upon that link has never been more important.

"We have a few things going on," says Project Manager Eric Krapf. "First, we're seeking to make improvements to the Scott City area. The interchange and capacity have caused problems for drivers for some time. The other thing we're looking at is Interstate 55 between Fruitland and Scott City. This stretch has the highest traffic volumes on I-55 in Southeast Missouri and we need to look at how to plan for the future."

Krapf says those plans include an environmental assessment of the Scott City

area to determine the appropriate solution for improvements. MoDOT will also be creating a purpose and need statement for the I-55 corridor. That sounds like great transportation lingo, but what exactly does it mean for you?

"These are required steps in our process," Krapf explains. "We have to work through them in order to develop the best plan that takes both engineering data and public impacts and input into consideration."

Both processes stem from the National Environmental Policy Act, a federal law requiring transportation agencies to look at the impacts projects have on the environment and to prevent or eliminate damage. Environment in this case includes standards such as wetlands, streams and endangered species but also includes human factors such as people and neighborhoods.

The environmental assessment is basically a document that includes evidence gathered about the project's impacts to the people and places in the area. This document captures everything in the process of developing the project including the alternatives under consideration and their effects as well as input gathered. The document is used to inform decision makers and provide a full discussion of the possibilities. The document also serves as a record of the process.

A purpose and need statement is the beginning of a process to determine what the problem is and look at what the needs are. Once determined the process can go further by looking at alternatives to address the problems. Of course all action is subject to funding, and we take a look at what's available for this area inside.

Slow Moving On Route K Is Smoother

Drivers used to early morning and afternoon peak travel times in Scott City have at least gotten a nicer surface on which to drive.

MoDOT completed resurfacing two and a half miles of pavement and shoulders on Route K/M (Main Street) from just west of I-55 to Route N.

The work is part of MoDOT's Smooth Roads Initiative made possible by the passage of Amendment 3 in November 2004. The Smooth Roads Initiative plans to have 2,200



miles of the most heavily traveled roadways across Missouri smoother and safer by the end of 2006.

Most of the Smooth Roads Initiative work in the Cape area has finished up. For more information about the Smooth Roads Initiative, visit our website at www.modot.org.

For more information on MoDOT's plans to help congestion in Scott City, read on.

The Options For Scott City

The environmental assessment for Scott City will be focused on a corridor from south of Scott City to Route AB as well as the city's connectivity to I-55.

The work was spurred by \$5 million in funding earmarked for the project through this past summer's federal transportation bill. The money was to assist MoDOT, Scott City and Scott County in construction of a bridge over Ramsey Creek and the roads necessary to connect Scott City to Route AB.

"We'll be looking at the best way to connect Scott City with Route AB," says Project Manager Eric Krapf. "We'll be hosting several public hearings along the way as we develop ideas to get the public's feedback. That will be an important component of the process. I look at our project team as the experts on getting the job done, but we need the public to address its needs and everyone has to balance safety with improved access."

Don't expect the improvements too soon. Krapf says the EA could take anywhere between a year or year and a half to complete.

"It is a thorough process, and while several meetings with different options may seem exhaustive, it really is crucial to get the public's thoughts every step of the way," he says.

Krapf cautions that gathering public input doesn't mean meeting until everyone agrees. With the project in a developed area of town, there will be impacts to residents who may not be so pleased with that.

"I've never been involved in a project this large where everyone agreed on the same alternative. We just work with them to address as

I-55 at Scott City



many of their concerns as we can while still keeping the entire public's needs and their safety at the forefront. It's a challenging process," Krapf says.

No stranger to the challenge, Krapf serves as project manager for the Route 34/72 improvements in Jackson where around 170 residences and businesses were impacted.

"Route 34/72 was seeing a great deal of through traffic that was leading to safety and congestion concerns, and with continued growth around Jackson that was only going to increase. For

the sake of safety, we really had to look at a way to control the access to improve safety. With the Scott City project, so many of the residents are already inconvenienced by long waits in traffic and really only one main way in and out of town, that I think there will be many who are ready to see improvements," he says.

What and where exactly those improvements will be is still under consideration. Krapf says looking at connectivity to Interstate 55 may or may not result in additional construction.

Krapf encourages everyone to participate in the meetings and share their thoughts during the project development process. An easy way to stay informed is to visit MoDOT's website at www.mdot.org/southeast and sign up to receive e-updates--e-mails informing you of work in the counties or on the routes in which you are interested.

"This will be a valuable process, and I look forward to working with everyone to make improvements of which we can all be proud," Krapf says.

Outer Road at Ramsey Creek



The Funding Future For Improvements

With \$5 million in federally earmarked funds, financing the project shouldn't be a worry, right? Hopefully, not, but transportation projects are expensive and just as your budgets have taken a hit with the increase in oil prices, so have ours. Higher oil prices equal higher operating expenses for MoDOT, and we've even seen increased prices on project bids. The federal funding isn't totally financing

the whole project. MoDOT has a commitment from Scott City for funding its portion of the project. Scott City plans to contribute the following funds:

- **\$100,000 Delta Regional Authority grant**

- **\$100,000 existing STP Urban Funds (This is federal funding dedicated for local transportation improvements based on population.)**
- **\$225,000 to be paid prior to letting**

Mayor Says Improvements Bring Better Everything

Scott City Mayor Tim Porch is excited about a study getting underway that will move the city that much closer to what he sees as vital transportation improvements. Porch knows the improvements are needed to answer growing congestion problems, but he's hoping they'll also be an answer to the city's growth.

"The Ramsey Creek Bridge and roads should open up a new commercial corridor or at least a new place for new businesses to look," Porch says. "We need new businesses. We need hotels, restaurants, we need different businesses that will bring more jobs to ensure the city continues to grow. These improvements are a matter of getting people here more quickly."



Mayor Tim Porch

Porch says naturally the Ramsey Creek Bridge and the accompanying roads are a step in the right direction to address the city's transportation challenges. He hopes the future also holds an interstate connection and possibly a center turn lane.

"My hopes for these improvements are that they can bring about a lot of positive change for the community. I think we are fantastic, but with future growth we need to keep improving. We could hopefully lower the tax burden, we could have better water, better sewer, better roads, better police and fire protection, better everything," he says.

Porch knows that all improvements come with a price. The project is focused in a heavily residential area. Whatever alternate is decided upon means some residents may be looking at selling a portion of their property or even relocation.

"The whole idea of this process is to gather ideas and decrease impacts to residents. Those folks will have to look at the impact to them and make a determination of whether it is worth it. Some people may not be happy with the outcome, but growth keeps a town alive and we need to look forward to that growth."

Porch says an economic development focus certainly doesn't take precedence over the community's wishes, but he believes the improvements will benefit everyone in Scott City.

"There's nothing worse than trying to go home and not being able to get there timely. Our residents are tired of getting tied up in traffic. They want convenience. They want easier access especially for our emergency services."

And The People Say ...



"There's too much traffic. It's crazy. Traffic backs all the way from the interchange past Rhodes. We definitely need different access."

--Roger Noel

"Scott City has a traffic problem in the morning. I think improvements that have been made like the resurfacing have enhanced the area, but I do have concerns about the congestion. Our fleet leaves between 6 and 8 a.m., and it's tough. We schedule our departures and arrivals to beat the congestion. Another method of entrance to the city would be great. The potential for another interchange is interesting and additional access is needed. We're hoping to grow, so that would help."



--Ron Gjerstad, Buchheit Trucking

Scott City has also offered to take several state routes into its system upon completion of the Ramsey Creek Bridge project. That means the city will be responsible for roadway maintenance including snow plowing and mowing. The routes include:

- **Portion of west outer road**
- **Portion of east outer road**

- **Portion of Route 61**
- **Route K/M within city limits.**
- **Route N from southern end of railroad bridge south to city limits**

"That will basically complete the local match," says Planning Manager Bill Robison,

"meaning that the Ramsey Creek portion (work north of Route K) is fully funded. The work north of Route K is our first priority. We have the funding, we will work through the process to determine a preferred alternate and any remaining funds may be applied to a southern connection to I-55 if the location study shows that as a need."

Slot Stitching Proves Successful



MoDOT has wrapped up a repair project to the Scott City interchange to put a stop to cracking on the interchange ramps.

A process called slot stitching was used to keep the cracking in the pavement as shown in the photo from continuing. A slot across the crack was made and a reinforcing steel bar placed into the slot. Then, concrete was used to seal the slot. The result keeps the pavement cracking from getting worse.

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