

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Agency and Public Comments/Responses**

#### **A. Public Hearings**

Two official public hearings regarding Section of Independent Utility (SIU) 1 were held as part of the public involvement process, one in Odessa and one in Blue Springs. Approximately 125 people attended the two meetings, which utilized an open house format. The open house format included large format display maps of the Recommended Preferred Alternative, copies of the SIU 1 Draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Copies of the First Tier Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and other pertinent information allowing the interested persons to come and go at any time during the hearing. Members of the study team and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) staff were on hand to talk with interested persons about the project and to answer any questions. Comment forms and a certified court reporter were available for attendees to make official comments.

##### **1. Notification**

The study team mailed a notification of the hearings to the entire SIU 1 mailing list approximately three weeks prior to the hearings. Legal notices announcing the hearings were published in the Kansas City Star, the Blue Springs Examiner, the Odessan and the Daily Record newspapers. These notifications referenced the public viewing locations, instructions for submitting comments and information regarding the date, time and location of the public hearings.

##### **2. Odessa Public Hearing**

The first public hearing was held from 4-7 p.m. on November 29, 2005 at the Odessa Community Building in Odessa, Missouri. Approximately 65 people attended this meeting. Fourteen comments were received, 1 by letter, 12 by comment forms, and 1 transcribed by the court reporter.

##### **3. Blue Springs Public Hearing**

The second public hearing was held from 4-7 p.m. on November 30, 2005 at Vesper Hall, in Blue Springs, Missouri. Approximately 60 people attended this meeting. Eight comments were received, two by comment forms and six transcribed by the court reporter.

#### 4. Odessa Stakeholder Briefing

Representatives from MoDOT conducted an additional stakeholder briefing with Odessa citizens, representatives from the City of Odessa and a Lafayette County representative. The meeting was conducted from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on January 13, 2006 in Odessa. The meeting focused on the need for a connection across I-70 at Route 131 in Odessa. Those in attendance were encouraged by MoDOT representatives to submit comments and data regarding emergency response in the area. It was also stated at the meeting that the official comment period, which was initially scheduled to close on December 9, 2005, would be extended to February 10, 2006 in order to provide time to receive these comments and have them included in this Final EA.

## B. Document Availability

Copies of the SIU 1 Draft EA were mailed to all persons/agencies who were on the SIU 1 circulation list. The document was distributed in the form of a hard copy to all government agencies, while public officials and other stakeholders received the document in an electronic format on a CD. All recipients of the electronic format were also informed as to how to receive a hard copy of the document if they desired.

The SIU 1 Draft EA was made available to all interested parties at [www.ImproveI70.org](http://www.ImproveI70.org). The Web site address was promoted through media relations, public meetings, project team presentations, and newsletters. A full-color hard copy was also made available to the public for review and comment at several locations in and near the SIU 1 corridor. The Public viewing locations were as follows:

- MoDOT Central Office - Jefferson City, Missouri
- MoDOT Kansas City Area Office (District 4) - Lee's Summit, Missouri
- Kansas City Central Library - Kansas City, Missouri
- Independence Courthouse - Independence, Missouri
- Independence Library (South Branch) - Independence, Missouri
- Blue Springs Library (North Branch) - Blue Springs, Missouri
- Grain Valley Library - Grain Valley, Missouri
- Oak Grove Library - Oak Grove, Missouri
- Odessa Library - Odessa, Missouri

## C. Summary of All Comments

On October 26, 2005, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and MoDOT, in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, issued the Draft Second Tier EA for the Interstate 70 SIU 1 Corridor from Independence to Odessa, Missouri. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), substantive comments offered by public agencies, the general public, or other interested parties need to be addressed by the SIU 1 Final Second Tier EA. A substantive comment is one that places a fact on the table that must be addressed. The 30-day minimum comment period on the SIU 1 Draft

Second Tier EA was originally scheduled to end on December 9, 2005, but was extended until February 10, 2006. A comment received from the Odessa Fire and Rescue Protection District after the comment period had closed was included in this Final EA as well. The required 30-day minimum comment period was exceeded for this EA.

## **1. Summary of Public Comments**

Several public comments were submitted during the official SIU 1 Draft Second Tier EA comment period. Comments were received at each of the two public hearings, by mail through the Improve I-70 Program P.O. Box, via voicemail through the Improve I-70 Program hot line and via e-mail through the Improve I-70 Program Web site. All comments received were reviewed and considered as part of the SIU 1 Final Second Tier EA. A summary of the issues raised in the public comments is as follows:

- Opposition to the removal of the Route 131 grade separation in Odessa
- Request for three full interchanges in Odessa to meet the needs of future growth
- Opposition to the Johnson Road interchange in Odessa
- Opposition to the proposed Odessa improvements in general
- More signage needed to convey that the left lane is for passing only
- Opposition to limiting access to Mock Avenue in Blue Springs
- Proposal to make Mock Avenue in Blue Springs four lanes
- Complaints about the condition of existing I-70 and truck traffic
- Finalize proposed improvements and move forward with funding
- Concern about the impacts to businesses
- Concern about highway noise and mitigation
- Opposition to the Bates City interchange due to impacts to a new industrial park

## **2. Agency Comments**

Comments on the SIU 1 Draft Second Tier EA were received from the following agencies:

- The City of Bates City – November 29, 2005
- Wellington-Napoleon Fire Protection District – November 29, 2005
- Lafayette County Planning and Zoning - November 29, 2005
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources – December 8, 2005
- Odessa Police Department – January 23, 2006
- Odessa EMS – February 9, 2006
- Odessa Fire and Rescue Protection District – February 21, 2006

Copies of the agency comments are included in Appendix B of this document.

### 3. Response to Comments

While only substantive comments receive a formal response, all comments made were documented and reviewed by the study team. The following provides responses to substantive comments received during the comment period.

**Comment Summary:** The proposed improvements would impact the newly developed Industrial Park in Bates City.

**Source:** Mayor and Aldermen of Bates City; and Public Comments.

**Response:** The Industrial Park in Bates City has developed after the initial field work and data collection was conducted for the SIU 1 Draft EA. The Missouri Department of Transportation will continue to work with communities to minimize impacts to business in the project area.

**Comment Summary:** Bridges should be constructed on all larger streams.

**Source:** Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

**Response:** The Missouri Department of Transportation is only committed to replacing structures in-kind. During final design, MoDOT shall complete hydraulic studies to assess floodplain and regulatory floodway impacts. All impacts be documented and meet the requirements of all state and federal regulations (See Chapter IV for detailed information regarding floodplain impacts and mitigation).

**Comment Summary:** Air Quality. Include the recently adopted 2005 Kansas City Maintenance Plan for Control of Ozone. Table III-8 clarifications.

**Source:** Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

**Response:** The Air Quality sections of this Final EA address the recently adopted 2005 Kansas City Maintenance Plan for Control of Ozone. A revised Table III-8 is included in Appendix C of this Final EA.

**Comment Summary:** To avoid increasing response times of emergency services within Odessa as well as to and from surrounding communities that share services, an interchange at Route 131 should be retained.

**Source:** Odessa Police Department, Odessa EMS, Odessa Fire and Rescue Protection District, Wellington-Napoleon Fire Protection District and Public comments.

**Response:** A grade separation at Route 131 over I-70 has been added to the Recommended Preferred Alternative that was identified in the SIU 1 Draft EA. The Selected Alternative discussed in this SIU 1 Final EA includes a grade separation at Route 131 as well as the impacts and associated costs.