

## **CHAPTER V**

# **CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION**

Consultation and coordination related to planned improvements to I-70 began with the First Tier Study and continued as part of the statewide Second Tier National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) efforts for each of the seven Sections of Independent Utility (SIUs). During the I-70 Improvement Study, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) provided numerous specific and ongoing opportunities for public input. These efforts are documented in the First Tier Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Second Tier public involvement program provided further and more specific opportunities for public input. These efforts have involved and continue to involve interested agencies, local units of government and the general public through various means and the effort has resulted in a wide range of comments and input into the development and evaluation of the various improvements defined in the Second Tier NEPA documents for I-70.

Specifically, the Second Tier public involvement program was implemented to accomplish the following objectives:

- Define the scope of the environmental investigations, issues to be addressed and focus of the technical studies, as they relate to public interests and concerns;
- Inform the public about the proposed project, its objectives, purposes, alternatives, activities and importance to the area;
- Continue to involve residents, interest groups, state and local government and relevant public agencies in the planning process;
- Monitor and address the respective viewpoints of residents, interest groups and public entities;
- Educate interested community members regarding the Environmental Assessment (EA) process; and
- Create a visual and written record of the study from initiation through completion.

This chapter provides a summary of the agency coordination and public involvement that occurred through completion of this EA and focuses on input directly related to SIU 2. The following discussion summarizes agency coordination and public participation and comments.

## A. Agency Coordination

The environmental scoping process for SIU 2 began when the scoping process for the First Tier Study began in 1999 with *The Route I-70 Feasibility Study* as described in Section A of Chapter I. The scoping process for the Second Tier NEPA process for SIU 2 and the other SIUs began with the signing of the Record of Decision for the First Tier EIS in 2001. As part of the scoping process, special coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was accomplished for the merging of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Clean Water Act (Section 404 Permit) processes.

Resource agency coordination began with the Second Tier process and is ongoing (Appendix E). These efforts were supplemented by direct consultation and coordination efforts with agencies represented by members of the Statewide Study Management Group (SMG) and other agencies, including city and county officials, interested organizations and stakeholders. With regard to Native American consultation, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has contacted nine indigenous tribes that would have an interest in the I-70 corridor. One response, from the Sac and Fox Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Confederacy was received (Appendix E).

In March and April 2003, the Missouri Department of Transportation, the FHWA and the Missouri State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the historic eligibility of Interstate 70 (Appendix H). It was agreed that a formal assessment of the eligibility of I-70 would be conducted when the interstate reaches 50 years of age, or the national task force has reached an opinion regarding eligibility of the interstate system. It was further agreed that, in the interim, information would continue to be collected and should I-70 or any part thereof be determined eligible, the FHWA and MoDOT shall enter into consultation with the Missouri SHPO and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation pursuant to 36 CFR 800.

## B. Public Participation

Public involvement for the Improve I-70 program began with the First Tier EIS, which was completed in 2001. Public involvement during the Second Tier process has consisted of the following primary outreach efforts:

- An Internet Web site for the Improve I-70 Program: [www.ImproveI70.org](http://www.ImproveI70.org);
- A statewide newsletter with a targeted mailing list for each SIU, including SIU 2;
- Public workshops in Concordia and Blackwater in April 2003;
- Regular meetings of the SMG, composed of representatives from key public agencies; and
- Other meetings with key community leaders throughout SIU 2.

The SIU 2 public involvement process started with initial strategy meetings to determine the goals and objectives of the public involvement plan. Once the goals and objectives were established, key publics were identified. These included I-70 users, potentially impacted landowners, residents, neighborhood groups, business owners, public elected officials, civic groups and many others. Once the key publics were identified, a Public Involvement Plan for

SIU 2 was developed. The Public Involvement Plan included activities such as mailing informative postcards, hosting public workshops, media outreach, newsletter publications and SIU attendance at community meetings.

The first newsletter was published in February 2003 and was mailed to approximately 469 individuals within SIU 2. Following the newsletter publication, a postcard was mailed to the SIU 2 address list to remind residents of the public workshops. In addition to the informational postcards, news releases were sent to area papers and radio stations regarding the dates, times and locations of the public workshops. Two public workshops were held in SIU 2. The first workshop was held on April 15, 2003 at the Concordia Community Center between 4 and 7 p.m. Ninety individuals attended the Concordia meeting and 12 comment forms were completed and returned. A summary of those comments is provided below. The second workshop was held on April 16, 2003, between 4 and 7 p.m. at the Blackwater R II School in Blackwater, Missouri. Seventy people attended the public workshop in Blackwater and six of them completed and submitted comment response forms. Two additional comment response forms were completed and returned via mail.

At the public workshops, maps of mainline I-70 were displayed to illustrate the preferred mainline widening strategy, either to the north or south of the existing mainline. In addition, conceptual interchange designs were displayed over an aerial photograph base of each interchange area. At least one conceptual design for each interchange was displayed. Comments and feedback from the public workshops are summarized later in this section.

During the summer and fall of 2003, two additional newsletters were developed, published and sent to the same address list that was used for the first newsletter and postcard. Subsequent to the public workshops, the public involvement team met with community leaders in Concordia, Sweet Springs and Marshall.

### **Concordia Meeting**

This meeting was held on July 14, 2003 at the Concordia City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with the city administrator and other community leaders regarding the conceptual designs of the Route 23 interchange and the potential impacts associated with the implementation of each conceptual design on businesses, residences and potentially city owned property. The city administrator, the Concordia economic development director, the editor of the Concordian newspaper and six representatives from the SIU 2 team were present at the meeting. This meeting lasted for approximately one hour and resulted in discussions regarding the potential impacts associated with Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 on the business and job economy of Concordia. At this meeting, it was mentioned that the City prefers the implementation of Alternative 3, the single point urban interchange design, as implementation of this design would have the least impact on Concordia.

### **Sweet Springs Meeting**

This meeting was held on October 16, 2003 at the Sweet Springs Chamber of Commerce building. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the conceptual interchange design relative to the proposed medical center complex to be potentially located in the northwest quadrant of the Route 127 interchange. Present at the meeting were six members of the I-70 hospital board, two MoDOT representatives, the Sweet Springs mayor, one representative from the Marshall-Saline Development Corporation and three representatives from the SIU 2 team. The meeting lasted for approximately one hour and the discussion was focused on avoiding impacts

## SIU 2 – MoDOT Job No. J4I1341E

to the potential hospital site with an interchange design that would meet the access management guidelines and continue to serve the needs of Sweet Springs. The result of the meeting was a modified conceptual design of what was presented at the initial public meetings.

**Marshall Meeting**

This meeting was held on October 15, 2003 at the Marshall-Saline Development Corporation office in Marshall, Missouri. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the U.S. 65 interchange with the Marshall-Saline Development Corporation. Five representatives from MoDOT, two representatives from the Marshall-Saline Development Corporation, one Saline County commissioner, two different developers with U.S. 65 interchange interests and three representatives of the SIU 2 team were present at the meeting.

The meeting lasted approximately one hour with the discussion focused on the proposed conceptual interchange designs for U.S. 65. The Marshall-Saline Development Corporation and the two developers mentioned that they preferred the diamond interchange design because it would provide the type of quadrants required for future development. The result of this meeting was that MoDOT would determine if the diamond design would be feasible for this interchange.

In addition to the public workshops, community meetings and the mailings, numerous other correspondences have taken place with key identified publics. These have involved telephone conversations, personal meetings and other mailings.

## C. Summary of Comments

The key questions and comments that were raised during the agency coordination and public involvement process included:

- How would the I-70 improvements affect individuals' residences, businesses or private and commercial lands?
- Existing I-70 is in ill repair and needs a plan for improvement;
- Why does the median need to be so wide?
- Why do the frontage roads need to be so expansive?
- How would the I-70 improvements increase safety with respect to large trucks?
- How would the I-70 improvements affect farmland and wildlife habitat?

Other comments, questions or concerns received during the scoping process included:

- I-70 is dangerous to travel and they do not drive on it unless they have to;
- The need for guard rails on the hill near Odessa;
- Some expressed concern about eliminating overpasses and further restricting access to I-70;

- Additional lanes need to be added to accommodate the daily traffic;
- The construction should start in Columbia, then Kansas City, then St. Louis and lastly tie the rural sections together;
- Truck lanes should be added with no passing for trucks allowed and their speed limits should be reduced to 55 mile per hour (88.5 kilometers per hour);
- In flood-prone areas, MoDOT should plan for the worst 100-year flood; and
- How does MoDOT plan to maintain twice as much roadway along I-70 as they currently have?

No comments were made concerning the north/south alignment of the mainline. The following specific comments were provided with respect to the alternatives carried forward for analysis in this document:

## **1. I-70/Route K Interchange**

- Moving the interchange to the east would make the eastbound exit ramp much safer by moving away from the curve along I-70. This would also enhance commercial development by allowing some distance to see what is coming up before vehicles approach this ramp;
- Several comments were in support of the proposed design in a new location east of the existing interchange at Route K. Reasons for this support included restoring access lost in 1960 and the impacts of an on-site alternative to the proposed Chimney Rock Estates subdivision, Chimney Rock geological feature, potential cultural resources and wildlife habitat;
- Moving the interchange to the east would be less costly because MoDOT would not be required to move as much of the current pavement compared to construction at the existing interchange;
- Property owners on the north and south side of I-70 in the vicinity expressed concern about their real estate and possible land acquisition and displacement;
- Moving the interchange to the east would have the least amount of financial impact on the Blackwater area.

## **2. I-70/Route127 Interchange**

- Meeting attendees noted that the aerial photography used in conjunction with the alternatives was outdated and did not show recent development;
- One attendee noted that the Route 127 crossover should be moved 200 feet (61 meters) to the east. A new business, located on the southeast corner, would be impacted;
- Some attendees asked how this design would affect the proposed hospital;
- Some attendees opposed concept #2 because it would divide a family home from a barn that has been in the family for three generations.

## SIU 2 – MoDOT Job No. J4I1341E

- The “Gibson” trailer court would be impacted by both alternatives as presented at the public workshops. This long-standing area has housed low-income people for over 25 years. The revised preferred alternative would not impact the trailer court.
- Various attendees expressed opinions on the positive and negative attributes of the Sweet Springs alternatives.

### **3. I-70/Route 13 Interchange**

- The owner of the farm on the east side of Route 13, north of I-70 is concerned because his farm would end up being split in three different ways. The new Route 13, as proposed by the 1999 EIS and subsequent Record of Decision, would sever his house from his main barn and the full access frontage road of the Second Tier Alternate 3 would split divide his house from his garage.

### **4. I-70/Route 23 Interchange**

- Concordia officials questioned the alternatives being considered for the town and asked that more discussion take place before a preferred alternative is identified. They noted that the “Proposed Comprehensive Plan for Concordia Missouri” is based on the “split diamond” interchange approach. The SIU 2 team obtained a copy of the plan and met with local officials on July 14, 2003 for discussion of the Route 23 interchange. Local officials continue to be concerned about economic impacts caused by displacement of local businesses but seemed to favor Alternative B, the single point interchange.
- Several business owners expressed concerns about access to their businesses from Route 23 with the roundabout design.