

CHAPTER IV

Coordination

Coordination and communication has occurred with state and federal agencies, Native American tribal representatives, the cities of Boonville and Rocheport, Cooper County and Boone County officials, interested citizens and various interested parties and residents of the Section of Independent Utility (SIU) 3 study area. A variety of means were utilized throughout the course of the Environmental Assessment (EA) planning process to encourage and facilitate agency and public interaction and to receive input. These activities included public meetings, a community drop-in center, a project Web site, written correspondence, meetings with city and county officials, agency coordination meetings, telephone conversations and field visits.

A. Public Involvement

1. Summary of Public Concerns

Public involvement for the SIU 3 DEA took place in a number of public forums throughout the course of the study. These forums included a public meeting, a public drop in center meeting and individual meetings with local officials and interested citizens. In addition, a number of public involvement tools were utilized to inform the public, share study information and give interested citizens and stakeholders an opportunity to provide their comments, input and feedback on the project.

As a result of public outreach efforts, a number of universal issues were identified by the public as concerns:

- Improvements to Interstate 70 (I-70) are necessary and overdue.
- Existing facility is unsafe, highly congested and deteriorating.
- Impacts to natural areas (including Overton Bottoms, river bluffs and karst areas) should be avoided.
- Impacts to businesses and residences at interchanges and along the mainline should be minimized.
- Loss of access to businesses should be minimized.

2. Public Meetings

In order to engage the public and encourage dialogue in SIU 3, public meetings were held at key project milestones and focused on sharing information and decision-making processes between the study team and the public. The meetings offered residents, business owners and other potentially affected interests an opportunity to discuss components of the study with Missouri Department of Transportation and consultant study team members, provide their input and have their voices heard. Two public meetings have taken place to date.

The first public meeting was held May 3, 2003 at Boonville High School. The meeting was conducted in an open-house format, with no formal presentation made and consisted of two separate sessions. The morning session was for property owners in the SIU 3 study area.

Property owners were informed of this special session through invitation letters sent prior to the meeting. The afternoon session was for the general public and was announced in a media release, the project newsletter and the project Web site.

The purpose of both sessions was to share study information, discuss the corridor screening process and present preliminary conceptual options for improving the interchanges between Boonville and Rocheport. The information presented at both sessions was identical, however the property owner session was intended to provide residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the study area a forum to learn about the project and discuss issues relevant to their particular situations.

A total of 144 people attended the sessions; 89 attended the property owner session and 55 attended the general public session. Exhibits available for review included: corridor-wide project background and issues; SIU 3 issues and access management; SIU 3 study area maps and interchange alternatives; SIU 3 Missouri River bridge and traffic data; and schedule and funding issues. A Frequently Asked Questions handout, project newsletters and fact sheets were available for meeting attendees. In addition, comment forms were provided for the public to register their comments, concerns and feedback. Thirteen comment forms were returned to the study team.

Most meeting attendees indicated they had a general understanding of the project. The prevailing sentiment was that improvements to I-70 were welcome and overdue. No significant opposition to the project was voiced at either session. Oral and written comments included the following:

- preferences for various interchange options;
- residential impacts should be avoided as much as possible;
- business owners were concerned about access and property acquisition; and
- air quality and noise levels.

The second public meeting was held Nov. 6, 2003 at Boonville City Hall. The meeting was structured as an informal drop in center, with longer hours than the first public meeting in order to give the public additional opportunity to discuss the project and provide their input. A news release was provided to local media outlets announcing the meeting. In addition, invitation letters were sent to public officials and a postcard announcement was distributed to 463 individuals on the SIU 3 mailing list. Information about the meeting was also posted on the project Web site.

The purpose of the meeting was to present the refined SIU 3 interchange alternatives to the public for review and comment including modifications that had been made to interchange alternatives as a result of feedback that was provided by the public at the meetings in May 2003. A total of 56 people attended the meeting. MoDOT and consultant study team members were on hand throughout the meeting to discuss the project, answer questions and address concerns of meeting attendees. Copies of current and previous project newsletters were available and comment forms were available for the public to register their feedback and concerns. The study team received 12 comment forms which expressed the following general comments:

- Improvements are necessary, overdue and will make I-70 safer and provide better access to communities.
- Improvements will benefit the city of Boonville.
- Medians and ramps should be designed for emergency response vehicle needs.
- Frontage roads are unnecessary – spend money wisely.

- Preferences for various interchange options were noted.

3. Small Group Meetings

Small group meetings were an important component to the project's overall public outreach efforts and served to facilitate a meaningful exchange of information, ideas and dialogue between the study team and local officials and stakeholders. These individual meetings took place and are summarized as follows:

- May 7, 2002 Vernon Zeller, Boonville property owner. History and status of the study and Mr. Zeller's property at the Route 5 interchange were discussed. Mr. Zeller made suggestions for improvements to the interchange.
- June 5, 2002 City of Boonville Officials, Cooper County Commission and Boonville Chamber of Commerce. History and status of the study and access at interchanges were discussed. Although these officials support I-70 improvements, they voiced concerns about business access at interchanges.
- July 3, 2002 Boonville Kiwanis. History and status of the study were presented to this group. A number of questions unrelated to the study were made.
- Dec. 19, 2002 City of Boonville mayor and city administrator. History and status of the study were discussed. Preliminary interchange concepts were presented. The city officials described several new commercial developments at Route 5 and Route B.
- Jan. 24, 2003 Patrick Cronan, Rocheport property owner. This meeting consisted of discussion and inspection of the Cronan property in order to identify significant environmental features.
- Feb. 3, 2003 Boonville City Council. History and status of the study and preliminary interchange concepts were presented. Questions were asked about funding and public meeting schedule.
- Feb. 3, 2003 Rocheport City Council. History and status of the study and preliminary interchange concepts were presented. Questions were asked about outer roads, new Missouri River bridge, north vs. south widening and impacts to the winery store.
- March 5, 2003 Boone County Commission. History and status of the study were presented. Outer roads, median width, Missouri River crossing and public meeting schedule were discussed.
- March 19, 2004 Curtis Bourgeois, Les Bourgeois Winery owner. Progress of the study and Route BB interchange alternatives were discussed. Mr. Bourgeois presented expansion plans for the winery's facility at the interchange.

4. Other Public Outreach

Newsletters and fact sheets were produced and distributed throughout the SIU 3 study area to property owners, local officials and other potentially affected interests. These publications featured general corridor-wide project information as well as issues specific to SIU 3. The project Web site, www.ImproveI70.org, provided SIU 3 information and visitors could submit their comments electronically or register for the project mailing list. In addition, a toll-free telephone number, 800-590-0066, was established for public comment and input. A standard U.S. Mail postal address was also available for interested citizens to provide their input. These efforts resulted in 38 contacts with the Public Involvement Coordinator and 12 contacts with the MACTEC team on SIU 3 specific issues. This feedback can be summarized as follows:

- questions about progress of study and other general project-related questions;
- requests for maps or to be added to mailing list;
- questions about right of entry forms;
- general support for the study;
- preference for specific interchange options;
- concerns about access, property impacts, interchange design and outer roads; and
- provide information to study team regarding features on property such as cemeteries.

5. Public Hearing

A public hearing will be conducted in conjunction with the issuance of the DEA. Advertising for the hearing will include public notices printed in local newspapers. A news release will be issued to inform the public of the hearing. The DEA will be provided to public facilities in and around the study area including city halls, courthouses and libraries.

B. Agency Coordination

A variety of means were utilized throughout the course of the study to encourage and facilitate agency coordination. These included correspondence, phone conversations and meetings. An initial agency scoping packet for SIU 3 was submitted to a broad list of conservation and regulatory agencies. Information received as a result of that written coordination effort is included in Appendix D and was given consideration in the SIU 3 study process.

A number of formal meetings were held with agency representatives throughout the planning process in order to keep them apprised of the study progress, communicate study methodology and to solicit their formal input. Meetings were conducted in an interactive manner in order to encourage constructive comments and to obtain input regarding sensitive regulatory and natural resource issues.

The Study Management Group (SMG) was an interagency body that was brought together to be part of the I-70 Second Tier environmental studies. Membership of the SMG included:

- Federal Highway Administration;
- U.S. Coast Guard;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture);
- Missouri Department of Conservation;
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources; and
- Missouri Department of Transportation.

The initial SMG meeting on April 19, 2002 was designed to encourage an exchange of information. Agencies were provided with an overview of the study area, the purpose of the DEA and an outline of the project schedule. Feedback from SMG members was requested regarding critical resource issues within the study area. This feedback was provided verbally in the context of the meetings and in written form as presented in Appendix D (USEPA letter dated Sept. 19, 2002 and Missouri Department of Conservation letter dated Nov. 12, 2002).

Subsequent periodic meetings were held with the SMG to provide updates as to study process, study findings and problems and difficulties encountered as part of the SIU 3 study. Additionally, the SMG was solicited for input into the process as it related to obtaining agency file and database records, the communication of agency issues and concerns and obtaining periodic input as to direction of the study. Dates of the SMG meetings were as follows:

- April 19, 2002;
- Aug. 22, 2002;
- Feb. 4, 2003;
- May 20, 2003; and
- Sept. 11, 2003.

Attendees varied slightly at each agency meeting. Below is a list of agencies in attendance at one or more of the agency meetings held:

- Federal Highway Administration;
- U.S. Coast Guard;
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers;
- Missouri Department of Conservation;
- Missouri Department of Natural Resources;
- Missouri Department of Tourism;
- Missouri Department of Transportation;
- Missouri Rivers Community Network; and
- Overton Levee District.

A special subcommittee, the Overton Bottoms Subcommittee, was also formed to consider issues unique to the Overton Bottoms area. The dates of the Overton Bottoms Subcommittee meetings were as follows:

- July 2, 2002;
- Dec. 17, 2002;
- April 29, 2003; and
- July 29, 2003.

This subcommittee was convened to provide critical input into a number of important issues: (1) the crossing of the Missouri River and the natural lands within the Overton Bottoms and (2) joint development/enhancement opportunities. Joint development/enhancement

opportunities include assessing the feasibility of locating a Mid-Missouri Visitor Center in the vicinity of Overton Bottoms, bicycle and pedestrian opportunities and opportunities for wildlife enhancement and wetland mitigation.

As a result of this coordination, it was determined that due to limitations in design and logistical detail, it is not possible to make a firm commitment to a visitors center in the region. Such a concept may be considered again in the future when interagency funding, additional design details and the location are more readily available.

C. Other Coordination Efforts

Several other coordination meetings were conducted throughout the process. This included one occasion in which Missouri Department of Conservation, Missouri Department of Transportation and MACTEC representatives worked together to investigate the nature and character of a cave-like opening in the Manitou Bluffs. Results of this effort included the assessment of the characteristics of the opening and its potential to support cave-dwelling species (e.g., bats, etc.).

An additional coordination effort was also undertaken with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (Historic Preservation Office) to evaluate standing architecture with respect to eligibility for National Register of Historic Places listing. A field review meeting was held on Oct. 20, 2003 which entailed a site visit and review of several sites initially thought to be potentially eligible. Representatives of Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Department of Transportation, HNTB and MACTEC were present during the field review. As discussed previously, this coordination effort resulted in the determination that none of the standing architectural resources within SIU 3 are eligible for National Register of Historic Places listing.

A corridor-wide consultation effort was also conducted by Federal Highway Administration with Native American tribal representatives. This consultation was undertaken to communicate the purposes of the project and identify potential concerns that tribal representatives had regarding ancestral lands and burial sites. The only response received as a result of the coordination effort was from the Sac and Fox NAGPRA Confederacy; however, no concerns were expressed regarding the lands within SIU 3.

Meetings with the Overton Bottoms Subcommittee created an effective forum to present information regarding the studies performed within SIU 3, communicate issues of sensitivity within the Overton Bottoms (wetlands, floodplains, endangered species, Missouri River hydraulics issues, etc.) and obtain feedback from agency representatives. Additionally, the Overton Bottoms Subcommittee was effective in sharing information relative to enhancements within the region (e.g., Missouri River side channel restoration, wetland restoration activities, improvements to Taylor's Landing, etc.). Evaluation of the feasibility of a Mid-Missouri Visitor Center was also an important activity undertaken by the subcommittee.