

Chapter I

Project Background

Interstate 70 (I-70) is a major interstate highway crossing the United States in a general east-west direction. Interstate 70 is part of the Eisenhower Interstate System of Highways and retains its separate identity within the National Highway System. The National Highway System includes the Interstate Highway System as well as other roads important to the nation's economy, defense and mobility. Within Missouri, I-70 is a multi-lane, divided and fully access-controlled highway.

The Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have proposed improvements to I-70 between the metropolitan areas of Kansas City and St. Louis (I-70 corridor) to meet the current and future transportation-related needs of the corridor. A tiered environmental process was used to evaluate the improvements within this I-70 corridor. A tiering process is a procedure that allows compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act by using two separate stages, or tiers, of decision making. The First Tier Environmental Impact Statement (available upon request) and Record of Decision process resulted in a decision document that established the overall transportation strategy.

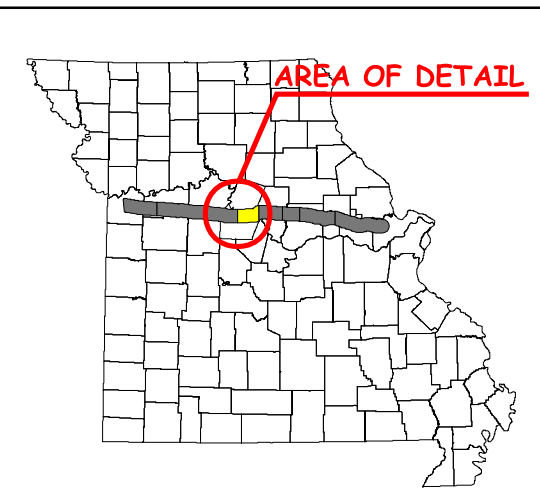
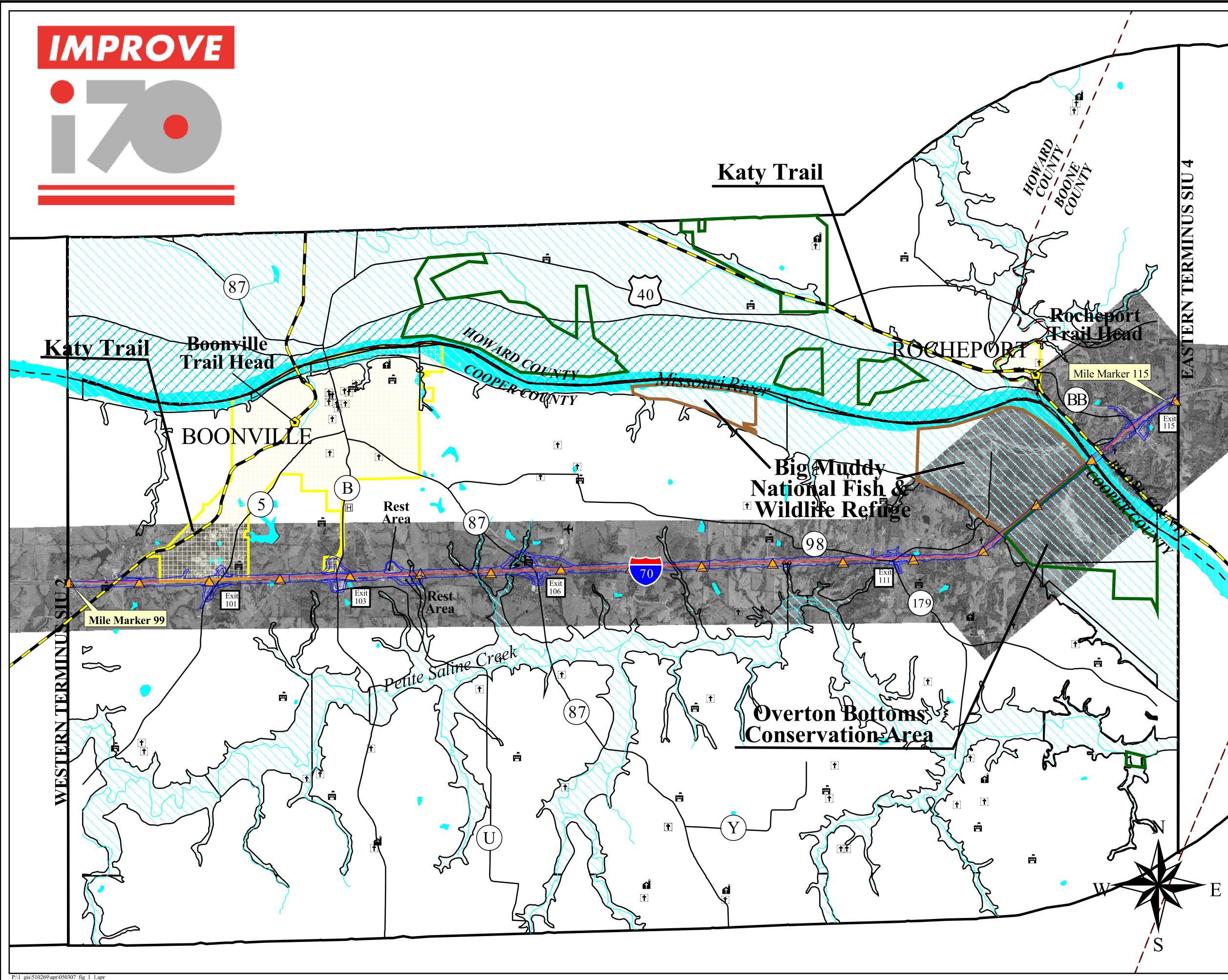
The First Tier Study process concluded with selecting the Widen Existing I-70 Strategy between Kansas City and St. Louis, Missouri. The findings of that study are documented in the First Tier Environmental Impact Statement (FHWA and MoDOT, 2001).

The second tier process considered by this Environmental Assessment (EA) addresses narrower or more specific issues for Section of Independent Utility (SIU) 3 and includes a more detailed consideration of alternatives, environmental impacts and possible mitigation and enhancement measures. This report represents an abbreviated revision to the previously published Draft EA (Oct. 14, 2004), which is hereby incorporated by reference. The study area for SIU 3 is defined as an approximate 700-foot (213.3-meter) wide corridor centered over existing I-70 within which alternatives will be developed (Figure I-1). For SIU 3, the following study area boundaries were defined:

- approximately two miles (3.2 kilometers) west of the Route 5 interchange in Cooper County near mile marker 99 (western terminus); and
- 0.6 mile (0.97 kilometer) east of the Route BB interchange in Boone County at mile marker 115 (eastern terminus).

The distance between the project logical termini is approximately 16 miles (26 kilometers). The study area includes five interchanges and expands at each to account for improvements to the interchanges.

The project's independent utility, indicating that the proposed improvements in SIU 3 can be completed without construction of any additional aspects to the west or east of the project termini, is based off of the conclusions of the First Tier Study. Specifically, the proposed project meets the purpose and need even if no other improvements are made.



Legend

Exit #	County Limits
Cemeteries	Katy Trail
Airports	Rivers
Schools	Interstate 70 Centerline
Hospitals	Roads
Churches	Limits of Construction
Katy Trail (Trail Head)	Water
	Missouri River Floodway
	Floodplains
	Wildlife Refuges
	Conservation Areas
	City Limits

Miles

1:84000

Figure I-1
I-70 SIU 3
Study Area

