

---

## **Chapter VI**

# **Agency and Public Comments/Responses**

### **A. Summary of Comments and Coordination**

Involvement, coordination and communication with the public and stakeholders in Section of Independent Utility 3 (SIU 3) took place throughout the course of the study. A variety of forums and tools were utilized to encourage and facilitate public and agency interaction and to receive input and feedback. These activities included public meetings, a community drop in center, individual meetings with local officials and interested citizens, a project Web site, written correspondence, agency coordination meetings, telephone conversations and field visits. A complete discussion of these activities is available in the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA).

### **B. Document Distribution and Public Hearing**

The public hearing for SIU 3 of the Improve I-70 Studies was held Tuesday Dec. 7, 2004 at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Boonville, Missouri. The meeting was held in an open-house format from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Sixty-five (65) people attending the meeting signed the attendance register.

The study team advertised the hearing through a mailed notification to the entire SIU 3 mailing list. The letter was sent approximately three weeks prior to the hearing and included the date, time and location of the hearing, as well as a listing of the public review locations where the SIU 3 Draft EA was available for review. Additionally, legal notices announcing the document availability and hearing were published in the Boonville Daily News and the Columbia Tribune. A notification letter sent to agencies and individuals receiving copies of the SIU 3 Draft EA also provided details of the public hearing and public review locations for the SIU 3 Draft EA.

Document distribution of the SIU 3 Draft EA included hard (paper) copies and Compact Discs (CDs). Hard copies were sent to six federal agencies and four state agencies. Compact Discs were sent to two local government agencies, 12 elected officials, and three stakeholders.

In addition, the SIU 3 Draft EA could be examined at the following locations:

- Boonslick Regional Public Library, 618 Main Street, Boonville;
- Boonville City Offices, 525 Spring Street, Boonville;
- Cooper County Courthouse, County Clerk's Office, 200 Main Street, Boonville;
- Boone County Government Center, 801 East Walnut, Columbia;
- Columbia Public Library, 100 West Broadway, Columbia;
- Missouri Department of Transportation General Headquarters, 105 West Capitol Avenue, Jefferson City; and
- Missouri Department of Transportation District 5 Office, 1511 Missouri Boulevard, Jefferson City.

Copies of the Draft EA for SIU 3 were available for review by meeting attendees. Exhibit boards that could be viewed included:

- Recommended preferred alternative for each SIU 3 interchange
- Recommended preferred alternative for SIU 3 mainline
- Section of Independent Utility 3 Environmental Features/Cultural Resources

- Section of Independent Utility 2 Route 135 interchange (Exit 98)
- Section of Independent Utility 4 Routes J/O interchange (Exit 117)
- Improve I-70 background information displays:
  - Second Tier Study Process
  - Overall Improvement Process
  - Funding and Implementation
  - Corridor Enhancements and Noise/Sound Walls

Upon signing in, attendees were provided with the project handouts *Reader's Guide for Environmental Documents*, *Corridor Enhancements* and a leaflet showing the meeting room layout. Comment forms were provided for meeting attendees to fill out on the premises or return by mail. In addition, a court reporter was available to accept verbal comments. A copy of the SIU 2 EA was also available for inspection at the hearing.

The Missouri Department of Transportation and consultant study team members were present to discuss the study with meeting attendees. Comments and remarks made in these discussions were of a general nature, with no substantive study-related concerns expressed. Written and oral comments received at the hearing are described below.

Three comment forms were submitted at the hearing:

- Albert M. Schlueter: Request for project map II-4 (Option B).
- Jackie Sieckman: Request for project maps III-2H and III-2I. Stated that a lake is located on property affected by the recommended preferred alternative. Concerned about how the proposed improvements could affect runoff into the lake.
- Raymond Widel: Suggested that statewide improvements to I-70 should consist of widening the existing facility by adding two lanes to the existing median with a Jersey barrier installed to prevent cross-over crashes.

No written comments were received by mail during the official comment period of Nov. 15 to Dec. 15, 2004.

Five oral comments were recorded at the hearing:

- Albert M. Schlueter: Owns Bobber restaurant at Route B and I-70 (Exit 103). Stated that Option B (recommended preferred alternative) will be detrimental to operation of restaurant and truck stop at this location.
- Danielle Blanck, Mayor of Boonville: Supportive of proposed improvements to I-70, hopeful that state legislature and voters will approve funding for improvements.
- Mescal Sell: Residence is near I-70 at Route 87 (Exit 106). Concerned about noise and favors compensation for noise impacts. Also concerned about access to property with proposed improvements. Home is built on foundation of Hail Ridge School; old cemetery is located on property. Implied support for Amendment 3.
- Gerald Sell (husband of Mescal Sell): Comments implying support for Amendment 3 and that highway improvements statewide are overdue.
- Chris Zeller: Family owns property at Route 5 and I-70 (Exit 101). Concerned that recommended preferred alternative at Route 5 interchange will be detrimental to car and boat dealerships operating on property.

Study-related information was requested from the following public hearing attendees, and was mailed the day following the hearing:

- Albert M. Schlueter     project map II-4 (option B)
- Jackie Sieckman       project maps III-2H and III-2I
- Clarence Widel         project map III-2A and A-62-A (SIU 2)

- Larry Twenter project map A-62-A (SIU 2)
- Bryce Kappelman project map A-12-A (SIU 2)
- Mr. and Mrs. Peach project map A-54, 55, 56 (SIU 2)
- Rosemary Kraus project map A-59 (SIU 2)

## C. 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 of the Draft EA 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 Draft EA 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 of the Draft EA (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 visitor's 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.

## **D. 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 (MoDOT) 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 (MDNR) (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 MDNR, MoDOT, 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 coordination meeting was held on March 30, 2004 with the MDNR, Division of State Parks, regarding issues relating to the Katy Trail. There are two crossings of the trail, one at mile marker 100 and the other at mile marker 114. Of primary interest is the existing overpass at mile marker 100. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources responded to the proposed project in a letter dated April 8, 2004 and had the following comments:

- The Missouri Department of Transportation will provide MDNR ample advance notification of any temporary Katy Trail closures so trail users can be notified of pending trail detours.
- The Missouri Department of Transportation will provide adequate signage notifying users of any temporary trail detours and signage notifying motorists of the presence of trail users on the road being used for the detour.
- The Missouri Department of Natural Resources requests that all temporary closures be made during non-peak use of the trail.
- The Missouri Department of Natural Resources has concern over the removal of the existing 1958 railroad bridge. It is almost 50 years old and because of its connection to the MKT railroad, could be considered a cultural resource worth preserving. They strongly encourage MoDOT to use the existing bridge in place and to incorporate it into a longer crossing.
- The Missouri Department of Natural Resources does not consider a bridge replacement as mitigation for the loss of 1.08 acres of Katy Trail right of way.
- It will be MoDOT's responsibility to construct a crossing suitable for rail service, should rail service resume on the MKT line.

A corridor-wide consultation effort was also conducted by the 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. While a Mid-Missouri visitor center may be considered in the future (depending upon joint funding), the proposed action does consider replacement of the existing rest area within SIU 3.

The Overton Bottoms Subcommittee considered the location of a visitor center/rest area in the vicinity of the Manitou Bluffs. However, it was determined that due to limitations in design and logistical detail, no interagency commitment for joint development of a Mid-Missouri Visitor Center could be made at this time. However, such a facility may be considered in the future as joint funding commitments are made.